

Negotiated Success: Contractual Benefits that Enhance Recruitment and Retention

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Abstract

This report summarizes monetary and non-monetary items used in Collectively Bargained Agreements (CBAs) to enhance retention and recruitment of educators in and outside of Alaska. This report is one of a series commissioned by the *Alaska Department of Education and Early Development* to support a stakeholder-informed action plan to address the state's recurring critical challenges in recruiting and retaining teachers. To approach this task, we narrowed our focus to a review of provisions contained within CBAs in Alaska and a sample of districts in the nation, reviewed relevant literature, and collected stakeholder feedback to further inform the report content and organization. We restrict our analysis to the information contained in CBAs, which are negotiated at the district level, with the noted limitation that CBAs are not exhaustive of all educator benefits (e.g., retirement is an important benefit that is managed at the statewide level).

The report details benefits in five broad categories and 15 subcategories, which are bookmarked in this abstract for easy access: coming and staying ([signing bonus](#), [longevity/retention bonus](#)); benefits – health and wellbeing ([healthcare](#), [sick leave](#), [other leave](#)); benefits – moving and living ([travel and relocation](#), [housing and utilities](#), [childcare](#)); knowledge and growth ([transferable experience](#), [education and certification](#), [professional development](#)); and work life ([contract length and workday](#), [extra duties](#), [hard-to-staff areas](#), [performance pay](#)). Overall, we find that benefits and compensation vary significantly across districts in Alaska, and even more substantially across districts in the national sample, reflecting the diversity in the sample in terms of state, region, size, and location.

About the authors

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Executive Summary

Alaska has experienced difficulties recruiting and retaining teachers for many years. In 2020, at the behest of the state’s Governor, Michael Dunleavy, the *Alaska Department of Education and Early Development* (DEED) convened the [Teacher Retention and Recruitment working group](#) to understand why the state has been experiencing these difficulties and propose solutions accordingly. Extensive input from the working group, as well as surveys, interviews, and focus groups, led to the writing of an [action plan](#), which was released in April of 2021. To support the implementation of the action plan, DEED commissioned several reports, including this compilation of monetary and non-monetary items used to enhance retention and recruitment of educators in and outside of Alaska, specifically focused on items included in Collectively Bargained Agreements (CBAs). We limit our analysis to the information contained in CBAs, unless otherwise noted, with the caveat that districts may advertise or provide other benefits.¹ When possible, we report the value of benefits in dollars, with the noted limitation that the actual buying power of those dollars varies across districts in Alaska as well as the nation. It is important for the reader to understand that this report is a listing of these items from CBAs in Alaska and the nation, and not a list of recommendations.

As [national teacher labor shortages have reached “crisis” levels](#), many states are exploring strategies to attract teachers into jobs, and incentivize them to stay. Many factors have been shown to affect teacher turnover decisions. Working conditions, including the physical work environment, school leadership, workload, and compensation are some of the [best predictors of teacher turnover in Alaska](#). However, [compensation packages do have a role to play](#) and are a place of policy opportunity.

The report leverages multiple sources of information: all CBAs in Alaska, select CBAs from around the nation, school district websites, research and news articles, and policy reports. The sources identify a range of monetary and non-monetary items:

- **Coming and staying:** Districts may offer financial incentives to entice teachers to accept an offer of employment and eventually, stay in the district and/or job.
 - [Signing bonus](#): A signing bonus is a payment offered to prospective teachers as an incentive to accept a position. In Alaska, they range from \$1,000 to \$4,000. In the national sample, they range from \$1,000 to \$20,000.
 - [Longevity/retention](#): Some districts offer bonuses to incentivize a teacher to stay in a job from one year to the next or for multiple years of service. Bonuses range from \$100 to \$2,500 per year in Alaska and \$100 to \$3,000 in the national sample. Retirement bonuses in the national sample range from \$200 to \$12,500.
- **Benefits – health and well-being:** Districts offer benefits related to health insurance and leave.
 - [Healthcare](#): Districts pay all or a portion of employees’ monthly healthcare premiums and sometimes their dependents’ as well. In Alaska, the minimum district contribution is 80%, and it is 66% in the national sample.
 - [Sick leave](#): In Alaska, sick leave is codified in statute and teachers accrue one and one third days of sick leave per calendar month. In the national sample, the range is five to 15 days.

¹ For examples of benefits beyond CBAs, the reader may consult the TEACHER RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT [Financial Opportunities](#) report.

- [Other leave](#): Other leave may include personal leave, parental leave, professional leave, or vacation days. This ranges from two to eight days in Alaska and one to 22 in the national sample.
- **Benefits – moving and living**: Districts may help teachers offset the cost of moving into a school site, and some costs incurred while living there.
 - [Travel and relocation](#): It can be expensive to move into and travel to and from some school sites, especially isolated ones off the road system. Moving cost benefits in Alaska ranged from \$750-\$5,000 and \$1,000-\$4,000 in the national sample.
 - [Housing and utilities](#): Districts may pay, supplement, or supply housing and utilities. In Alaska, rental benefit stipends ranged from \$150 to \$1,150 per month. In the district in the national sample reporting this information, the range was \$130 to \$350.²
 - [Childcare](#): While no example of a childcare benefit was found in Alaska CBAs, one district in the national sample provides subsidized on-site childcare and others offer childcare and flexible enrollment options for employees' children.
- **Knowledge and growth**: Districts may compensate teachers for the experience and education they bring to the district and acquire during their tenure.
 - [Transferable experience](#): Districts typically recognize teachers' prior experience in another district and state by crediting this service time to their placement on the salary schedule. In Alaska, districts recognize between four and 19 years of in-state service, and four and eight years of out-of-state service. In some districts in the national sample, there is no limit to the number of transferable years.
 - [Education and certification](#): Some districts offer bonuses for teachers acquiring an additional degree or certification. These bonuses range from \$1,000 to \$4,000 in Alaska and in the national sample, an additional \$250 to \$8,000 if the teacher works in a hard-to-staff position or setting.
 - [Professional development](#): Districts may support the professional growth of their teachers with paid leave or travel for professional development or reimbursing tuition and fees.
- **Work life**: Districts have rules in place that govern what teachers do and how they are compensated for it under various circumstances.
 - [Contract length and workday](#): A teacher's contract specifies the number of days that they must work in an academic year, as well as how many hours they must work each day. In Alaska, on average, a contract is 188 days, with two extra days for new teachers and a seven-hour workday; we did not track contract days or workdays in the national sample. Weekly preparation time ranges from 150 to 300 minutes in Alaska versus 225 to 450 minutes in the national sample.
 - [Extra duties](#): Some districts offer teachers additional compensation for taking on an additional role. Compensation ranges from \$15 to \$10,500 in Alaska and \$25 to \$18,000 in the national sample.

² Housing is a good example of how comparing benefits across communities is a challenge. Housing costs differ tremendously across communities, and within communities, the quality or size of housing can differ substantially as well. While we are able to report dollars, these variations make it difficult to calculate the local value of those benefits.

- [Hard-to-staff](#): A financial incentive may encourage or reward a teacher for working in a hard-to-staff position, subject area, or setting. In Alaska, one district offers a \$1,500 bonus and another a \$4,000 based on where the teacher works. In the national sample, dollar amounts range from \$125 to \$20,000.
- [Performance pay](#): Districts may reward teachers based on how well they perform their jobs. In Alaska, only one district offers a performance incentive in their CBA, and it is based on student growth, program development, and other praiseworthy efforts. In the national sample, performance pay is based on evaluation ratings or attendance.

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Glossary

- [Certified staff](#): An employee who has been awarded a license showing that they have successfully completed all requirements for their position (e.g., teacher, administrator).
- [Collectively Bargained Agreement](#) (CBA): Also known as a Collective Bargaining Agreement, negotiation between employees in a union or association and employers that “defines the terms that govern certain aspects of the workplace...This document defines the terms of condition of employment and includes details about things like wages and hours.”
- [Defined contribution plan](#): “A defined contribution plan...does not promise a specific amount of benefits at retirement. In these plans, the employee or the employer (or both) contribute to the employee's individual account under the plan, sometimes at a set rate, such as 5 percent of earnings annually. These contributions generally are invested on the employee's behalf. The employee will ultimately receive the balance in their account, which is based on contributions plus or minus investment gains or losses. The value of the account will fluctuate due to the changes in the value of the investments. Examples of defined contribution plans include 401(k) plans, 403(b) plans, employee stock ownership plans, and profit-sharing plans.”
- [Defined benefit plan](#): Often referred to as a pension, a defined benefit plan “promises a specified monthly benefit at retirement. The plan may state this promised benefit as an exact dollar amount, such as \$100 per month at retirement. Or, more commonly, it may calculate a benefit through a plan formula that considers such factors as salary and service - for example, 1 percent of average salary for the last 5 years of employment for every year of service with an employer. The benefits in most traditional defined benefit plans are protected, within certain limitations, by federal insurance.”
- [Employee Assistance Program](#): “A voluntary, work-based program that offers free and confidential assessments, short-term counseling, referrals, and follow-up services to employees who have personal and/or work-related problems.”
- [Health Savings Account](#): “A type of savings account that lets [an employee] set aside money on a pre-tax basis to pay for qualified medical expenses.”
- [Longevity](#): Years of service with an employer.
- [Preparation time](#): “Time carved out for teachers to do professional work,” for example, “write lesson plans, grade papers, analyze student data, research a lesson topic, [and] meet with parents or colleagues.”

Introduction

Context

Alaska has experienced difficulties recruiting and retaining teachers for many years. In 2020, at the behest of the state’s Governor, Michael Dunleavy, the *Alaska Department of Education and Early Development* (DEED) convened the [Teacher Retention and Recruitment working group](#) to understand why the state has been experiencing these difficulties and propose solutions accordingly. Extensive input from the working group led to the writing of an [action plan](#), which was released in April of 2021. Working group input was supplemented with a survey of a representative sample of educators with Alaska-certificated teacher licenses, interviews of educators who had left the state or the profession and focus groups with district recruiters. To support the action plan implementation, DEED commissioned several reports, including this compilation of monetary and non-monetary items used to enhance retention and recruitment of educators in and outside of Alaska that are included in Collectively Bargained Agreements (CBAs).

A CBA is a contract negotiated between teacher associations and school districts. Alaska has 54 independent school districts; the Alaska chapter of the *National Education Association* (NEA) represents bargaining units in 47 of them and *Alaska Public Employees Association/American Federation of Teachers* represents four. Typically in Alaska, each district negotiates a new CBA every three years within the confines of applicable statutes, outlining teacher duties and compensation including salary and benefits, which comprise retirement (e.g., pensions, tax sheltered annuities); health insurance (e.g., medical, dental, vision); other insurance (e.g., life, disability, professional liability); leave (e.g., sick, personal, maternity/paternity, military duty, jury duty); housing placements or stipends; tuition support or reimbursement; professional development stipends; and opportunities to earn bonus pay.³

Research

The research on how benefits factor into employee recruitment and retention outcomes is thin. Though there is [credible evidence that non-wage employee benefits matter in job choices](#), these are usually omitted in studies of teacher compensation. Other researchers have either assumed that benefits [vary little across districts](#) or indicated that data are difficult to compile and thus [prohibit quantitative analysis](#).

However, [districts use a wide variety of benefits to make jobs more attractive to teachers](#), and we see wide variation in teacher compensation packages throughout the state. The [last time we formally analyzed teacher compensation packages](#) in Alaska in 2015, minimum teacher starting salaries ranged from \$29,915 to \$55,729, with an average at \$44,840. District and teacher payments for health insurance also varied widely, with district costs ranging from less than \$4,000 to almost \$27,000 per year per teacher, with the teacher’s contribution ranging from zero to \$4,800. When it comes to benefits, districts work to maximize their value; that is, [some benefits may be worth more to teachers than they actually cost the district](#), meaning districts can leverage their available resources to craft benefit packages that are most attractive to teachers. Research finds that [benefits constitute a larger](#)

³ Readers interested in retirement may wish to consult the Teacher Retention and Recruitment [Options and Analysis Supporting Retirement Plan Design](#) report.

[portion of compensation for teachers](#) than they comprise for other professionals, yet not enough to make up for lower salaries.

Sources and structure

This report leverages multiple **sources** of information: all CBAs in Alaska, select CBAs from around the nation, school district websites, research and news articles, and policy reports. The sources identify a range of monetary and non-monetary items used to enhance retention and recruitment of educators in and outside of Alaska.

We have **organized this report** into six sections. First, we present teacher benefits in five categories, adapted from a [study of salary and benefits schedule and teacher tenure](#) in Alaska as well as a forthcoming study on the effectiveness of financial incentives at recruiting or retaining teachers in Alaska (Berman & DeFeo, forthcoming): coming and staying ([signing bonus](#), [longevity/retention bonus](#)); benefits – health and wellbeing ([healthcare](#), [sick leave](#), [other leave](#)); benefits – moving and living ([travel and relocation](#), [housing and utilities](#), [childcare](#)); knowledge and growth ([transferable experience](#), [education and certification](#), [professional development](#)); and work life ([contract length and workday](#), [extra duties](#), [hard-to-staff areas](#), [performance pay](#)). For each category, we provide an overview of the benefit as defined in Alaska CBAs and follow with a description of how that same benefit category is treated in a sample of other states in the nation. We conclude with evidence of effectiveness where available. [Final thoughts](#) are presented in the last section of the report.

Our analysis of Alaska CBAs is limited to information contained in the most recent Alaska CBAs for each district. This presents two limitations. First, CBAs may not reflect the full range of benefits that districts offer. For example, we found that some districts advertise benefits on their websites that are not noted in the CBA. Second, CBAs are negotiated at the district level, and some benefits like retirement or sick leave are codified in state statute and are thus not negotiated during the collective bargaining process.

We describe the methods used for the analysis in a separate [appendix](#), along with how we selected a diverse group of districts from around the nation and sought feedback on the report from a variety of stakeholders. In the process we created an easy-to-search [database](#) of benefits in the national sample districts. All resources are hyperlinked and can be found in a [reference list](#).

It is important for the reader to understand that this is a list of items from CBAs in Alaska and the nation and not a list of recommendations. Further, while we appreciate the value of teacher compensation, which is the focus of this report, we acknowledge that it is one of multiple areas of policy and practice improvement needed to change the teacher turnover and retention challenges in Alaska.

Findings

Our analysis finds variation across Alaska school districts, and within the national sample, in monetary and non-monetary incentives included in CBAs. As CBAs are unique to each district, the information they contain and the manner in which benefits are framed is not uniform. When possible, that is, when a benefit was readily quantified, we present findings with tables or charts. We also note that we did our best to compare the content of Alaska CBAs to other districts in the nation directly and identify some differences. Thus, where the report may appear to have an “uneven” distribution of information, this reflects the highly varied nature of the CBAs themselves.

Note: Readers interested in other financial opportunities used to augment salaries in Alaska and the nation, that may or may not be listed in CBAs, may also access the *Teacher Retention and Recruitment financial opportunities* report. For each topic here that is also covered in the financial opportunities report, we indicate the page number in that report for ease of access. Text in quotes in the evidence of effectiveness sections below comes from that report.

Coming and staying

Districts may offer financial incentives to entice teachers to accept an offer of employment and eventually, stay in the district and/or job.

Signing bonus



See also [financial opportunities report](#), p. 2.

A signing bonus is a payment offered to prospective teachers as an incentive to accept a position, often a hard-to-fill one. Per Alaska CBAs:

- Seven districts offer a signing bonus.
- One district offers a signing bonus in hard-to-staff areas.
- Bonuses range from \$1,000 to \$4,000.

Examples from the nation

In the national sample, signing bonuses come in two forms: bonus for new hires and referral bonuses.

Bonuses for new hires are generally a lump-sum and range from \$1,000 to \$20,000. They can also be a percentage of salary (35% in one district). This can be paid one time or in installments over time, which may help promote retention. Only some groups of staff may be eligible (e.g., certified staff). Eligibility and amount may vary depending on whether the employee is teaching a shortage subject area, is working in a hard-to-staff setting or provides evidence of student growth. Staff may need to commit to a number of years of service.

Rather than a bonus, a signing incentive can come in the form of a salary enhancement. For example, one school district starts new licensed teachers at Step 3 on the salary schedule, and another has designed a beginning teacher salary incentive program.

A **referral bonus**, a benefit identified in the nationwide sample but not mentioned directly in Alaska CBAs, goes to employees who recommend individuals whom the district ultimately hires. In our sample,

these range from \$25 to \$800, and may be limited to employees teaching a shortage subject area or working in a hard-to-staff setting.

Evidence of effectiveness

“How successful a signing bonus is at convincing candidates to accept a job is unclear. This is in part because it is difficult to determine whether a candidate would have accepted the job regardless of the bonus. Indeed, an evaluation of an earlier inception of the Massachusetts signing bonus (1999-2002) suggested that while the program promoted recruitment, many candidates were already on the path towards a career in teaching. According to one source cited in the study, ‘large signing bonuses...are less effective at attracting teachers and ineffective at retaining them. Large bonuses are both unnecessary and costly’ ([p. 383](#)).

Retention and longevity bonus



See also [financial opportunities report](#), p. 3.

Some districts offer additional bonuses to incentivize a teacher to stay in a job. While many districts in the nation distinguish between retention bonuses, which encourage employees to remain from one year to the next, and longevity bonuses, which reward employees for several years of service, Alaska CBAs were not as clearly delineated. Specifically:

- 14 districts offer a longevity/retention bonus of some kind, including retention bonuses, longevity bonuses, retirement longevity bonuses, service recognition bonuses, retirement benefits, and continuing teacher incentives.
- One district offers a retention bonus for teachers in school sites in remote locations.
- Depending on the district, the bonus may occur as early as in the first year or may be deferred as late as retirement.
- Bonuses range from \$100 to \$5,000 per year.

Examples from the nation

In the national sample, **retention bonuses** range from \$500-\$3,000. They can also be a percentage of salary (2.75% in one district). A bonus may supplement a salary increase. For example:

- One district offered staff a \$1,000 retention stipend in addition to a 6.3% salary increase in 2022-2023; for 2023-2024, it announced a \$1,500 retention stipend on top of the State-funded and authorized increase.
- In another district, teachers who received a base salary increase that was less than \$2,000 in 2021-2022 received a stipend equal to the difference between the amount of their base salary increase and \$2,000.
- Bonuses have been employed to promote retention during the global pandemic.
- Retention bonuses may vary; for example, they can be of different amounts in elementary, middle, and high school.

Longevity bonuses may be triggered when a minimum number of years of service is reached, and the amount can vary depending on that number of years. In our sample, fixed amounts ranged from \$100-\$2,000. Examples of variable amounts include \$175 times the number of years of service, 2% of the indexed salary base, 4% of each teacher’s annual compensation, or 1% per year of employment of their

current step and column placement on the negotiated salary schedule upon leaving the district. The minimum number of years of service required varies from 10 to 20. There may be a minimum age for eligibility and a professional endorsement and/or minimum education level (e.g., Bachelor's +24 or a Master's) may be required.

Retirement bonuses include incentives for notifying the district early of intent to retire or for retiring early, giving the district more time to identify a replacement, and a recognition of reaching the retirement milestone, perhaps encouraging retention.

Rewards for **early retirement notification** may come in the form of a stipend (\$200-\$1,200 in the reviewed sample), a sick day allowance (e.g., up to 2% back of unused sick days, compensation for accumulated sick leave rate of \$90-\$135 per day depending on date of notification, conversion of 5 additional days of sick leave), or an opportunity to skip professional development and non-curricular after-school activities.

Districts may require a specific advance notice (e.g., at least 90 days) and the amount of the incentive may vary depending on the date of announcement. For example:

- \$5,000 - \$7,000 if by December 31 depending on years of service.
- \$3,500 if by December 1, \$2,250 if by February 1, and ability to cash out higher rates of unused sick leave).
- \$1,250 if by January 15, \$700 if by February 15.
- \$1,000 if by January 5, \$750 if by February 5, \$500 if by March 5.
- \$500 if by February 1.

A minimum number of years of service may be required. For example:

- At least four years.
- \$2,500-\$5,000 if at least 10 years.
- \$5,000 if at least 15 years in district and at least 350 hours of accumulated sick leave.
- \$300 bonus if at least five years.

This incentive may be targeted to certain employees (e.g., teachers teaching in a shortage area).

Some districts offer an incentive for **early retirement** (e.g., 120% base rate for teachers with 15-30 years) and others, a reward for reaching the **retirement** milestone (e.g., \$12,500; 1/5th of last annual gross salary contract after 10 years of service).

Evidence of effectiveness

“There is little evidence of a consistent impact of bonuses on retention. As in the case of signing bonuses, it is difficult to ascertain whether someone eligible for or accepting a bonus was going to stay anyway...The Southwestern school district that paid teachers \$5,000 in the middle of the school year as a reward for announcing early the previous year that they were returning experienced high turnover once the lump sum was paid out...In the Alaska district with a bonus opportunity over \$10,000, fewer than 10 percent of staff achieved the required milestone.” ([p. 5](#)).

Benefits – Health and wellbeing

Health insurance and leave are key components of compensation packages, and some of the costliest for districts to offer.

Healthcare

[Alaska has the highest per capita healthcare costs in the nation](#), and this is a significant cost and component of teacher benefit packages. Though CBAs are negotiated every three years, healthcare premiums tend to change annually, so most Alaska districts define either a percentage of the monthly premium or a monthly premium cap that they will pay. None of the Alaska CBAs referenced a waiting period before teachers were eligible to enroll in health insurance coverage.

| | |
|---|--|
| 38 Alaska districts indicate they will pay a portion of the monthly healthcare premium: | 31 Alaska districts define coverage for the spouse and dependents: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A percentage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 14 pay 100% ○ 24 pay between 80% and 97% ● A cap: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 7 districts pay a monthly premium cap between \$1,500 and \$2,500 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 10 pay the full premium for the spouse and dependents ● 14 pay between 80% and 97% of the family premium ● In seven districts, a monthly premium rate ranging from \$75 to \$467 is paid by the employee |

Many Alaska CBAs note that the district and employee will split costs over the cap if premiums rise. Of the districts that explicitly define the health care coverage, 28 specify medical, 23 specify dental, 19 specify audiology, 19 specify vision, and three specify orthodontia.

The two other insurance benefits most commonly mentioned in Alaska’s CBAs are life insurance and long-term disability. Forty-three districts provide life insurance, with benefits specified as flat amounts (range of \$2,000-\$70,000) or as salary percentages (range of 1 to 2.5 times the teacher’s annual salary). Additionally, five districts mention long-term disability benefits, with monthly benefits ranging from \$3,000-\$5,000.

Two districts mention they offer an *Employee Assistance Program*.

Examples from the nation

In most of the national sample districts, the district pays at least a share of healthcare premium costs (66%-100%). Dependents may or may not be covered and may be covered at a lower rate (47%-89% i.e., 9%-38% lower than the employee’s share). Districts may also provide partial coverage for retirees based on years of service (e.g., 75%).

Healthcare premium coverage may require a minimum number of years of service (e.g., two) and may vary depending on start date, plan selected, smoker status, and years of service (e.g., district pays up to \$4,000 in premiums from 55 until qualification for Medicare with 22 years of service). Coverage may be

capped (e.g., \$20,000; district pays premium of up to \$7,970 for current teachers, \$6,150 for retired teachers). An employee may receive a stipend or buyback option if they decline provided health care and have proof of coverage (e.g., \$2,500 in one district).

One school district offers an *Employee Assistance Program* that is available to all staff and their immediate family.

Sick leave

Sick leave is a benefit that is codified in Alaska statute (4 AAC 15.040, AS 14.14.107): teachers accrue one and one third days of sick leave per calendar month, which equates to 12 or 13 days per year depending on the school calendar. Sick leave can also be transferred between school districts in Alaska. Alaska statute also specifies that sick leave can be used as earned credit towards retirement for teachers who started working prior to June 30, 2006 (4 AAC 15.040). Some districts allow employees hired after June 30, 2006, to cash out sick leave to a supplemental retirement account. Beyond the statute, many districts create sick leave banks, and some CBAs further specify various restrictions around how much leave can be used annually, and when leave can be used. Additionally,

- One district combines sick leave and personal leave, giving teachers more latitude about how they choose to use their earned leave.
- Three districts offer an annual monetary bonus for unused sick leave days that does not reduce the number of days accrued.

Examples from the nation

[Accessing accumulated leave](#) has recently been negotiated or considered in other states and the number of days of sick leave available to employees varies from five to 15 in the national sample. How many days are allowed depends on experience and years of service (e.g., first year teachers have 70 hours of sick leave, and then the allowance drops to 56). The district plan may include a sick leave bank with the possibility to accrue up to 190 days or 1,920 hours, or earn time (e.g., one day per month of service or 10 days each year).

Sick leave carryover varies between districts in the national sample: there may be no carryover of sick leave, it may be limited (e.g., up to five days), or unlimited. Some CBAs in the national sample specify that a teacher may retain accumulated sick leave from another district in the state (e.g., up to 75 or 90 days).

Unused sick leave may be cashed out at the end of the year, at retirement, or upon termination of contract. The rate varies. Cash out may be contingent on a minimum number of days or years of service and may be capped. At retirement, sick leave may be:

- Cashed out (e.g., \$20-\$150 per day; more if notice is given on or before a given date and the teacher completes the remainder of their contract) and counted toward retirement.
- Deposited into a retirement account (e.g., \$35 for every seven hours of unused sick time; there may be a minimum [e.g., 420 hours before it can be redeemed]).
- Deposited into a *Health Savings Account*.

Other leave

Personal leave accrual and accumulation

Personal leave is time taken away from work for reasons not otherwise covered by other leave policies. Like sick leave, there are restrictions on how much can be used each year and accumulated. In Alaska CBAs, these vary on three dimensions: accrual, accumulation, and cash-out. Though the most common number of annual accrued leave days specified in Alaska CBAs was three, it ranges across districts from two to eight. Some districts with more generous personal leave policies may subtract substitute pay from the teacher's leave pay, meaning that personal leave days are not paid at the teacher's full rate. All districts allow some accumulation (or "carryforward") of personal leave days; this is most commonly capped at 10, and across Alaska districts, this ranges from three to 15. Fifty of Alaska's districts allow for personal leave cash out:

- 30 districts reimburse at the teacher's per diem rate.
- Three districts reimburse at the certified substitute rate.
- Other districts reimburse at a daily rate between \$100-\$300 per day.

| Personal Leave Days | n | Mean | Mode | Min | Max |
|----------------------------|----------|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|
| Min accrued | 52 | 3.8 | 3 | 2 | 8 |
| Max accrued | 52 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 8 |
| Max accumulated | 52 | 7.4 | 10 | 3 | 15 |

Parental Leave

Parental leave allows employees to care for newborns, newly adopted children, foster children, or other children needing care. This is generally available regardless of medical need; in other words, it is not pregnancy related. This may be deducted from sick or personal leave (as might other leave, such as emergency or bereavement). In Alaska CBAs:

- Two districts offer paid parental leave.
- One district offers five paid days of parental leave that is not charged to sick leave.
- One district offers five paid days of parental leave upon exhaustion of other personal leave.

Examples from the nation

Depending on the district, in the national sample, employees may receive five to 22 days of paid leave, one to 12 days of personal leave, and two to four paid days of professional leave. One district offers half paid salary for sabbatical leave. Some districts offer maternity and paternity leave (e.g., 12-week paid paternal leave in one district).

The number of paid vacation days can vary with years of service (e.g., increase from five days to 20 days, one extra day of personal leave for 10 years or more, two additional days for over 20). It can accrue up to 40 days. Teachers can earn personal leave days (e.g., four if no sick days were used the previous year,

two if fewer than five sick days were used). Teachers may be able to carry over days (e.g., five or six) or cash out unused days. For example:

- Cash out at a daily amount (\$75-\$200).
- Opt to get paid at the substitute rate.
- Receive a bonus for not taking personal leave (e.g., one to three times the substitute rate).
- May only be possible up to a number of days (e.g., five) or for days above a certain number of days (e.g., two or five).
- May depend on years of service (e.g., 15 year-minimum).
- Can cash out at end of year.
- Can cash out annual leave at retirement (e.g., up to 30 or 180 days, 25% of daily rate).

Employees can convert unused leave to sick leave (e.g., 15 days of paid leave per year converts to sick leave at the end of the year, personal leave converts to sick leave if the teacher opts not to be reimbursed for it at the end of the year) or retirement credit. Cash out may be capped (e.g., \$5,000, six hours, or two to five days).

Other health and wellness benefits

In Alaska, one district offers a wellness benefit for teachers and their family members, which includes a pool pass and use of the school gym. Another district offers a parks and recreation membership for teachers and their families which includes use of pool, gym, and community center.

Benefits – Moving and living

It may behoove school districts to help offset the costs of moving to and living in their community as incentives for teachers to take on and stay in jobs. **Relocation incentives** are reimbursements for expenses teachers incur when they move to a new location for a job, because moving is generally an expensive endeavor. This is particularly true in off-the-road communities, where it is also expensive to travel to and from a hub or city. Housing is a basic need and can be very expensive and/or difficult to find.

Travel and relocation



See also [financial opportunities report](#), p. 17.

Many teachers who live in Alaska – particularly rural Alaska – do not live in their school communities year-round. For communities that are not on the road system, teachers must travel into an Alaska hub or city in order to access healthcare or other amenities. Responsively, some districts specify personal travel in their CBAs, both for the initial move to Alaska, and for personal purposes while teachers are on contract.

Relocation incentives for new teachers are noted in CBAs for 11 Alaska school districts. Some districts make explicit provisions for moving costs, and others indicate that these benefits are available at the discretion of the school board or Superintendent. Seven districts specified a reimbursement amount for moving expenses, which ranged from \$750 to \$5,000. Of those seven districts, two districts indicated that they would pay extra for moving with family members, either \$500 per person or \$1,500 for the

whole family.⁴ **Personal travel benefits** for in-service teachers are noted in CBAs for 17 Alaska school districts. Personal travel benefits are more common in the districts in Alaska’s Southwest and North. How they are documented and offered varies. For example, some districts offer round-trip tickets (typically one to two tickets between the school site and a hub), and other districts specify a dollar amount for travel stipends, which range from \$250-\$1,050. Some districts offer an air freight/shipping stipend, ranging from 200-400 pounds. Two districts offer personal travel/shipping benefits for teachers’ family members.

Examples from the nation

In the national sample, moving costs for new teachers usually take the form of a stipend, such as a one-time \$1,000 relocation stipend for new teachers moving into the district. It can be distance-based, for example:

- Moving costs of up to \$2,000 if moving more than 75 miles.
- Relocation stipends of:
 - \$2,000 if within 100-200 miles.
 - \$4,000 if over 200 miles.

Evidence of effectiveness

“The research review did not identify evidence on the impact of relocation incentives except for studies that showed that the moving bonuses of up to \$10,000 in Tulsa, OK, and Vermont had benefited the economy. The Vermont program was cost-effective within two years of implementation” ([p. 17](#)).

Housing and utilities



See also [financial opportunities report](#), p. 19.

Twenty-three Alaska districts mention housing benefits, which may mean that the districts subsidize rent or supply housing. Housing benefits are more common in smaller districts and in the Alaska’s Southeast and Southwest regions. The cost of housing to teachers (i.e., rent) varies by district location, size of the housing, amenities, and condition. Subsidized rents ranged from \$150 to \$1,150 per month, with the size ranging from an efficiency apartment to a four-bedroom unit. Rental unit types included apartments, trailers, houses, and cabins. Four districts specifically mention teachers may share or be assigned to the same unit. Several districts also noted that teachers were expected to utilize the district housing as a condition of their employment.

Of the 23 districts that provide housing, eight specifically mention how utilities (i.e., fuel, electricity, and water) will be managed. Depending on the housing arrangement, some teachers pay utilities, some districts supplement utility costs, and other districts specify a flat rate for utilities. Two districts indicated that teachers would receive reductions in rent for disruptions in utilities, suggesting that service disruptions may be frequent in some communities. Internet service was not indicated in any of the arrangements.

Examples from the nation

⁴ Moving expenses are another example of how comparisons across CBAs can be challenging. While we are able to report raw dollars, the value of the benefit will vary dependent upon where the teacher’s place of origin, the size and weight of the teacher’s household items, and the destination site.

In the national sample, three districts provide a housing benefit in their CBA. One, a town of about 8,000 on the Navajo Nation in Arizona, includes housing available for rent with monthly rental fees ranging from \$130 to \$350. Another, a rural county of almost 2,000 in Nevada, owns housing units, which are made available for rent to new staff members for a two-year period. One district, in the South Carolina County that is home to the state capital, offers home closing cost assistance of \$1,000. A fourth district, a rural community of about 200 in Montana, does not include this benefit in the CBA, but mentions on the webpage presenting CBA information that the district has housing available for rent.

Evidence of effectiveness

“Research on housing incentive programs is limited. Yet it suggests that housing initiatives may be associated with higher teacher recruitment and retention rates...A small town, low performing school district in New Mexico reports almost eliminating vacancies the past few years by subsidizing rents in a neighborhood of small, affordable homes built specifically for its teachers. Offering housing and promoting a community for teachers both helped. A North Carolina school district states that it recruited enough teachers by offering affordable housing to launch a foreign language program. In a national survey, almost a quarter of teachers who stopped teaching and were thinking about coming back mentioned housing support as a decisive factor. A little over half of about 300 teachers surveyed in Texas in 2010 agreed that low-interest housing loans their district offered was an incentive to stay in their school district while only about a third felt the same way about subsidized rents” ([p. 21](#)).

Childcare



See also [financial opportunities report](#), p. 21.

Childcare was not highlighted in any Alaska CBA as a benefit, even though it can be very expensive and affect a teacher’s ability to work. Two Alaska districts noted that flexible spending accounts could be set up through their insurance to pay for childcare expenses. One district simplifies the zoning waiver process for teachers’ children.

Example from the nation

In one district in the national sample, bargaining unit members have access to on-site childcare provided by the district at a monthly rate not to exceed \$150. Beyond traditional childcare, there is some flexibility in school attendance for employee children. For example:

- Free out-of-zone enrollment or tuition vouchers are available for employee children.
- Teachers can have their own children attend their school and receive after school care.

Evidence of effectiveness

“A review of research on financial opportunities to augment teacher salaries did not identify childcare incentives or any impact they may have, except for a 2010 survey of about 300 Texas teachers, almost two-thirds of whom agreed that the district offering childcare was a reason to stay” ([p. 21](#)).

Knowledge and growth

Districts may compensate teachers for the experience and education they bring to the district and acquire during their tenure.

Transferable experience

Transferable experience is relevant when discussing teacher compensation, because starting salary for teachers in Alaska - and [in nearly all school districts](#) - is usually determined by two factors: years of prior teaching experience, and level of education. This is typically referred to as a “step-and-lane,” or “uniform salary schedule,” and was developed at the turn of the century, [largely resulting from collective bargaining to both resolve concerns about pay equity and create incentives for teachers to stay in the profession](#).

For experienced teachers transferring into Alaska from out-of-state or between Alaska districts, the amount of “credit” they receive for their prior teaching experience varied significantly between school districts. Some of this is governed by statute [AS 14.20.220]. However, even adhering to this, a teacher with 20 years of experience outside of Alaska would earn as much as a fifth-year teacher in the Alaska district with the strictest limits on transferable out-of-state experience, and as a 20th year teacher in Alaska’s most generous district.

| Transferable experience (years) | n | Mean | Min | Max |
|---------------------------------|----|------|-----|------|
| In-State Credit | 44 | 8.3 | 4.0 | 19.0 |
| Out-of-State Credit | 42 | 7.0 | 4.0 | 8.0 |

Examples from the nation

In the national sample, teachers coming into a district may receive credit for prior teaching experience in the form of a lump sum (\$500-\$700 per year). The amount may vary depending on the number of years of experience and may be capped (e.g., up to 10 years of previous teaching experience). The incentive may come in the form of educational reciprocity and starting higher on the salary scale with previous credit. For example:

- In one district, new employees may be placed on the salary schedule based on years of experience in public education in neighboring states as well as credits and/or academic degrees earned.
- In another, hires from outside of the district are placed on a step commensurate with and up to 15 years of their actual previous experience plus one step.

As seen in one example, an experience bonus may be capped (e.g., up to 10 or 15 years of previous teaching experience) or unlimited.

Education and certification



See also [financial opportunities report](#), p. 21.

Though teachers typically earn salary increases as they earn more education, some districts also offer one-time bonuses when teachers are awarded advanced degrees. Three Alaska districts offer a bonus for obtaining a master’s degree; these bonuses range from \$1,200 to \$2,000 to a 1.25% annual salary supplement. Four Alaska districts offer a bonus for obtaining a doctorate; these bonuses range from \$1,000-\$4,000 to a three percent annual salary supplement.

Sixteen Alaska districts offer a *National Board Certification* bonus, which ranges from \$1,000 to \$3,500. Three districts provide *National Board Certification* reimbursement.

Examples from the nation

In the national sample, incentives for increased skills and knowledge reward advanced degrees, National Board Certification, professional learning, and mentoring. Examples of ways districts reward **advanced degrees** include:

- A Bachelor's bonus of \$250.
- A Master's bonus ranging from \$500 to \$2,500.
- A doctorate bonus ranging from \$500 to \$4,500.
- A doctorate bonus based on 7% of the beginning step.

Bonuses for *National Board Certification* may be a lump sum (\$260-\$8,000 in our sample) or a percentage of salary (4-12%). These may be one-time or annual stipends. There may be supplements. For example:

- Upon certification and/or re-certification (e.g., \$1,000 annually + \$2,300 one-time).
- If working in a hard to staff position or setting (e.g., \$5,000 for certification+ \$5,000 for position or setting; \$6,000 annually + up to \$5,000 annually in high-poverty school).
- For maintenance over time (e.g., \$3,750 annually for certification + \$750 annually if maintained for 10 years or more).

They may be capped (e.g., \$1,000 annually up to \$10,000) and targeted (e.g., teaching large class sizes, receiving high evaluation ratings). There may also be a reimbursement for obtaining certification (e.g., \$1,900).

Evidence of effectiveness

"There is...limited evidence that incentivizing *National Board Certification* with a supplement for working in a low-income school encourages certified teachers to work in those schools" ([p. 14](#)).

A more recent [study](#) of a bonus to *National Board*-certified teachers in high-poverty schools suggests that a bonus increases the recruitment of those teachers in those schools as well as their retention.

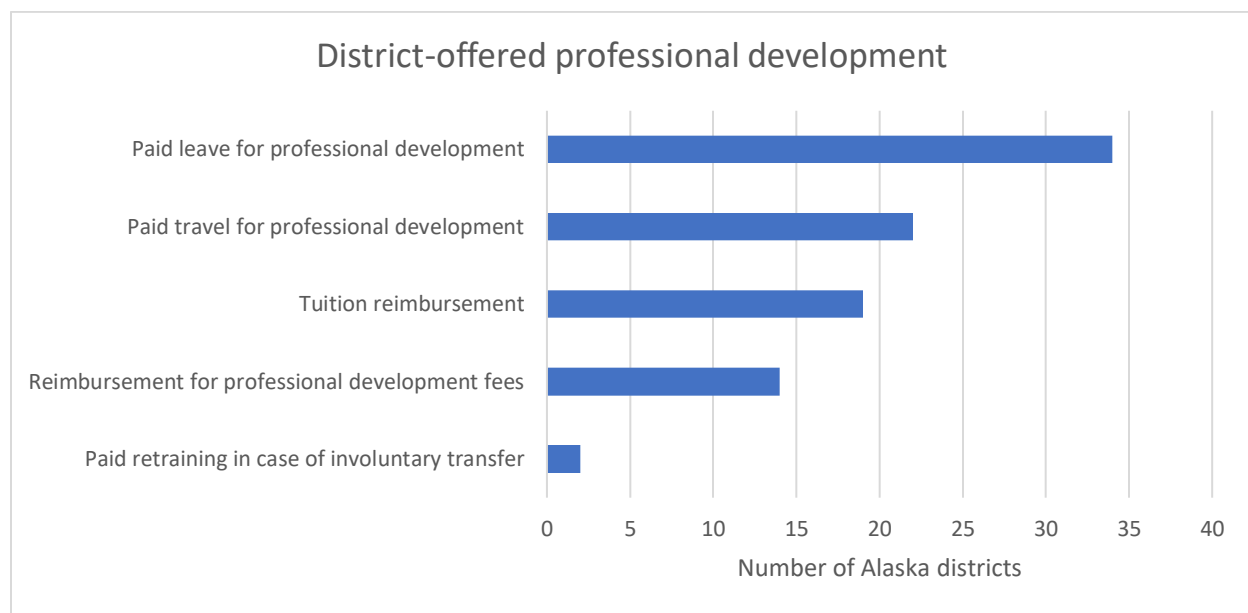
Professional development

Professional development for continuing teachers is important. With coursework, teachers can move up in the salary scale. Teachers may also need professional development to take on additional responsibilities that can lead to increased compensation, such as department head or student club advising. Outside of direct compensation benefits to teachers, professional development is important when teachers need to learn how to better serve diverse student populations (e.g., students who are English language learners, who have disabilities, or who are culturally and linguistically different from the teacher).

When looking at Alaska districts, we limit this section of the analysis to individualized teacher-selected professional development. In other words, we are not reporting about district-required training that is typically delivered during district-wide in-service days, though this is also important as that kind of

professional development can help strengthen the school climate and solidify collaboration and cooperation amongst teachers.

Districts encourage and support their teachers in obtaining professional development by structuring benefits in a variety of ways, as noted in the histogram below.



Eight districts mentioned offering mentoring in their CBAs.

Examples from the nation

Incentives for **professional learning** in the national sample may include credit (e.g., courses that meet certain requirements accepted for horizontal movement without purchasing graduate credit, up to 60 hours/four credits), paid leave to visit other schools in the district and attend training, or stipends such as,

- \$450 per unit up to two per year.
- \$150 per day for attending a district-mandated workshop when exceeding the 200-day contract.
- \$2,000 annually for an instructional improvement program.

Some professional learning may be embedded such as professional learning communities that are written into the CBA. Mentoring is usually available for one to three years to new teachers, who may receive a stipend to participate (e.g., \$32 per hour in one district).

Tuition reimbursement may be per year, course, or credit. It may be capped, and it may be conditional. For example, it may require teachers to work for a number of years in the district before being eligible (e.g., three years) or it may be limited to specific content areas (e.g., Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math [STEM], special education, reading). Examples from districts in the reviewed sample include:

- \$500-\$1,000 per year.
- \$1,000 per year with career maximum of \$6,000.

- \$800 per course.
- 12 credit hours of tuition reimbursement per year if approved in advancement.
- 85% of course reimbursement.
- Up to \$1,000 annually toward a graduate degree; up to \$5,000 if requested by the Superintendent.

Evidence of effectiveness

As we noted in prior work on [the cost of teacher turnover in Alaska](#), “even for teachers with classroom experience, transitioning to a new environment requires additional time and support, especially if they are moving to a school that is culturally distinct from their previous experience. This is especially pronounced for those moving to rural Alaska” (p. 10). Additionally, in-service teachers may take on new professional duties. This means that even after completing a teacher preparation program, many teachers “yearn for additional opportunities for professional growth, value employers that provide them, and are encouraged to stay and work for those employers.”⁵ Providing those opportunities may also boost recruitment – a national survey of employed individuals revealed that many would apply for a different job that offered valuable professional development opportunities” (p. 14).

There is evidence from [Alaska](#), the [nation](#), and [Utah](#) that mentoring, along with induction and other supports, can increase retention. Mentoring that involves matching new teachers with experienced teachers who teach in the same school, grade, and subject are most effective, as the knowledge imparted is most pertinent. Such arrangements position mentors to share directly applicable knowledge with new teachers and help them plan for and reflect on the curriculum and instruction in their assigned role. Retention also improves when mentoring is part of a comprehensive package of supports, including for example training, coaching, feedback, and observation.

Work life

Districts have rules governing teacher workloads and duties, as well as how teachers are compensated for variations in responsibilities.

Contract length and workday

A teacher’s contract specifies the number of days that they must work in an academic year, as well as how many hours they must work each day. All Alaska CBAs specified teacher contract length, and there was variation in contract days, length of workday, and teacher preparation time. There was also variation around the number of extra days for new teachers, which are usually worked as training days at the beginning of the school year before continuing teachers come back on contract.

| Benefit | n | Mean | Mode | Min | Max |
|---------|---|------|------|-----|-----|
|---------|---|------|------|-----|-----|

⁵ The reviewed research does not distinguish between opportunities that teachers pursue to progress on the salary scale and/or for recertification and additional opportunities they choose based on personal preferences or district incentives.

| | | | | | |
|---|-----|-------|-------|-----|-----|
| Contract Length (days) <small>includes paid holidays</small> | 53 | 187.8 | 188 | 172 | 193 |
| New Teacher Extra Contract Days | 16 | 2 | (1-2) | 1 | 5 |
| Workday (hours) ⁶ <small>excludes lunch break</small> | 50 | 7.3 | 7.5 | 7.0 | 8.0 |
| Weekly Prep Time (minutes) <small>for districts with different prep time for elementary and secondary schools, an average was used</small> | 230 | 283 | 250 | 150 | 300 |

Examples from the nation

In the national sample, we found three detailed examples of preparation time:

| Weekly preparation time | Elementary School | Middle School | High School |
|-------------------------|-------------------|---------------|--|
| District 1 | 225 minutes | 425 minutes | 425 minutes |
| District 2 | 400 minutes* | 450 minutes | 400 minutes |
| District 3 | 225 minutes | 225 minutes | Planning period equal to a daily teaching period |

* Plus one day each quarter.

One school district allows job sharing, and another features a four-day school week. The four-day week does not affect total number of contract hours, compensation, nor the allocation of non-student contact time and teachers work a combination of 8.5- and 6.5-hour workdays.

Supply reimbursement

Nine Alaska districts offer a supply/equipment reimbursement, which ranges from \$200 to \$400. One district offers \$1,000-\$2,000 per site.

Extra-duty pay



See also [financial opportunities report](#), p. 7.

Some districts offer teachers additional compensation for taking on extra duties in the school, such as serving as a coach, activities director, student advisor, student event chaperone, test coordinator, curriculum coordinator, student club sponsor, prom coordinator, student government advisor, yearbook advisor, science fair coordinator; serving on professional committees; or filling in for lunch duty. In Alaska, extra-duty pay is generally calculated by base pay (base pay times a percentage per activity). Some districts may increase the compensation by years of service, whereas others offer a flat rate or hourly rate for certain activities.

⁶ We recognize that the length of a duty-free lunch break may itself be a retention tool.

| Other duties range | n | Mean | Mode | Min | Max |
|----------------------|----|---------|---------|-------|----------|
| Other duties minimum | 48 | \$570 | \$500 | \$15 | \$2,443 |
| Other duties maximum | 45 | \$5,147 | \$3,000 | \$500 | \$10,500 |

In the eight districts that mentioned offering mentoring in their CBAs, extra duty pay ranged from \$500-\$1,000 per year.

Examples from the nation

In the national sample, extra-duty roles may include such duties as building leaders, department heads, team leaders, teacher leaders, lead teachers, responsible teachers, mentors, mentor coordinators, advisors, specialists, substitutes, choir/band teachers, coaches, academic club leaders, or extracurricular activity leaders. The reward can be a bonus or additional pay and may be negotiated annually. Amounts vary considerably. For example, one district pays mentors a \$165 bonus and another \$7,100. As another example, one district (Indianapolis Public Schools) pays a stipend of up to \$18,300 taking on an additional role as a culture teacher.

Incentives may vary with steps and years of service. Training may also make a difference (e.g., the amount of the incentive is higher if the individual has completed a district mentoring course). Bonuses may be targeted, for example:

- To those taking on substantial and continuing extra responsibilities.
- To some grade levels (e.g., middle and high school only).
- To coaches only if making playoffs.

Evidence of effectiveness

“Research on career advancement opportunities is limited and indicates that they may increase teacher engagement, satisfaction, self-efficacy, and desire to stay in the profession and their school district.” (p. 8).

Incentives for teaching a shortage subject or working in a shortage area or hard-to-staff/high-need settings



See also [financial opportunities report](#), p. 6.

Some districts offer teachers additional compensation for teaching in a shortage subject or in a hard-to staff setting, typically an under-resourced school. Though [this practice is used in Alaska](#), few districts address it directly in CBAs and instead may promote the availability of such bonuses on websites or at job fairs. Restricting our analysis to CBAs only, we note that in one Alaska district, teachers may receive a \$1,500 signing bonus for working in a hard-to-staff location. Three districts provide a village cost differential between a one-time \$1,000 bonus to \$2,000 to \$4,000 a year. The bonus can be a

percentage, such as a five percent differential in one district.⁷ One district offers a \$2,500 signing bonus for special education teachers and another district states that they may compensate for hard-to-fill positions.

Examples from the nation

Many districts in the national sample included incentives for teaching in difficult-to-staff subject areas or school sites in CBAs.

Incentives for teaching in a shortage subject or working in a shortage area

In the national sample, teachers of classes aimed at language improvement (bilingual, dual language, English as a Second Language, English Language Development, and language Immersion), in special education and schools for specific purposes settings, and math and the sciences are often eligible for incentives. Other eligible areas include early childhood, core courses, career and technical education, advanced courses, physical education, behavior intervention specialists, and mental health practitioners. Rewards can come in the form of a bonus (\$165-\$10,000), a signing bonus specifically (e.g., \$500-\$10,000 for special education depending on license; \$4,500 for dual language teachers; \$4,000 for other areas), a credit for years of professional work experience (e.g., up to 10), moving expenses, or higher salaries. For example:

- Newly hired teachers in shortage subject areas may be placed on any step of the salary grid.
- Non-teaching work experience in STEM fields may count towards steps on the salary scale.
- Experienced STEM and CTE teachers may be placed above the max salary levels based on years of experience and educational level.
- Five per diems above base salary.
- May vary based on services provided.

Incentives may vary based on the services provided and may be one-time, annual, or spread out over one or more years. Bonuses may be targeted based on different factors such as:

- Teachers having demonstrated student growth.
- Highly effective teachers (e.g., STEM and special education bonuses of \$500 in Year 1 and \$510 in Year 2 if rated highly effective).
- Specific grades (e.g., \$1,000 stipend for math in grades 6-12).
- A minimum commitment (e.g., \$10,000 signing bonus for shortage subjects with 2-year commitment, \$20,000 with 3-year commitment).
- Designated schools (e.g., math teachers at designated schools have their own higher salary schedule).

Examples of rewards for teachers in special education include:

- 35% of the stipend base salary (\$1,800).
- Additional 5% salary.

⁷ As of the writing of this report, a [bill](#) introduced by Governor Dunleavy had left the House Education Committee that would give bonuses of \$5,000 to \$15,000 to full-time teachers at the end of each school year, with the largest amounts going to the most remote districts. This bill passing may affect the next round of negotiations on this topic and whether more districts offer bonuses as part of their CBA.

- Base salary + \$500.
- \$320-\$10,000 bonus.
- 7% on the rate of a Master's step 4.

In the area of language:

- 25% of the stipend base salary (\$1,300).
- Base salary + \$800.
- \$320-\$8,000 bonus.
- 4 % on the rate of a Master's step 4.

Incentives for teaching in hard-to-staff/high-need settings

Hard-to-staff or high-need designation may be based on a number of factors including a school being high-poverty or low-performing, in a high cost of living or difficult to reach area, remote, rural, designated as priority, serving particular groups of students, or having high class sizes. Examples of bonuses based on school characteristics include:

- \$3,000-\$12,000 bonus in hard-to-staff locations.
- \$1,000-1,500 stipend in low-income schools.
- \$6,000 annual stipend + signing and retention bonuses in schools that need improvement.
- \$8,000 annual stipend increasing by 1.5% each year in schools receiving enhanced support.
- \$2,000 stipend in schools with an economic disadvantage of 90% or more or an English learner population of 30% or more.

Examples of bonuses based on location include:

- \$1,000-\$3,300 in remote or isolated areas.
- Teachers who work and reside on an island are eligible for a salary addition, a \$1,150 travel expense allowance, and up to \$500 for moving possessions and an automobile.
- Class size e.g., \$200 per month per student prorated in overcrowded elementary classrooms.

These rewards may be annual and spread out across multiple years. They may also be targeted, such as:

- \$10,000 signing bonus for working at a priority school with a two-year commitment.
- \$10,000 annual bonus in high-poverty schools for highly effective teachers.
- Up to \$4,000 salary supplement in low-income or low-performing school for effective or highly effective teachers.

Incentives for teaching a shortage subject or working in a shortage area *in* hard-to-staff/high-need settings

One district offers a \$5,000 stipend in year one and \$1,000 in the next three years for STEM teachers working in hard-to-staff or low-performing schools. Another provides a \$2,000 annual stipend for special education teachers rated highly effective, and an additional \$500 if teaching in a high-need school.

Incentives for teaching in an unspecified hard-to-fill context

These incentives include stipends that vary from \$100 to \$5,000 and may vary with experience (e.g., \$3,000 bonus for new teachers with no teaching experience or \$4,000 for teachers with over 3 years of experience). They may come in the form of a salary enhancement (e.g., as additional steps on the salary schedule). There can be an experience credit (e.g., teachers with over five years of experience receive credit for up to 10-12 years of experience depending on the severity of the shortage), transferable credit, or covering expenses for obtaining visas.

Evidence of effectiveness

“Financial opportunities can encourage teachers to go to and stay in high-needs schools or teach hard-to-staff subject areas and they can be cost-effective. One Alaska Superintendent has had a successful experience with using a bonus to incentivize a teacher to move to a high-need area when they were unable to hire for that position. However, there is a dearth of rigorous research on the topic. Some retention bonuses are associated with lower turnover and review of research internationally suggests that financial opportunities to attract teachers to high-need schools and communities are one of the most promising approaches. Bonuses need to be adequate; yet the research does not yield clear guidance on whether there is a minimum amount for a bonus to be effective. This likely depends on a range of factors including salaries in neighboring school districts and other local professions. Research also does not clarify under what circumstances retention bonuses are consistently effective. Bonuses must also be sustained. A retention bonus is more likely to affect the decision to stay at the time it is paid than in subsequent years. Bonuses alone are less likely to affect retention and benefit from being combined with improved working conditions.” (p. 7).

Specific examples demonstrate the variation in the effect of these bonuses on recruitment and retention:

- One [study](#) found that a loan forgiveness program promoted the retention of teachers in shortage subjects when the incentive was large enough. A one-time bonus program of up to \$1,200 for teachers in specific subjects and grade levels decreased turnover as well, and both appeared to be cost effective. Research from the [United Kingdom](#) suggests that bonuses and scholarships targeted at shortage subjects hold promise.
- Some research has shown that a bonus to teachers in high-poverty schools in Washington state increased recruitment and retention in those schools and improved hiring and reduced turnover in the schools eligible for the bonus; it also points to retention bonuses for highly effective teachers in low-performing, high-poverty schools that improved recruitment.
- [Evidence](#) from rural schools in Peru shows that a bonus aimed at attracting teachers to disadvantaged schools increased teacher retention but made it more difficult for disadvantaged neighboring schools to retain teachers.
- One [study](#) shows that a \$5,000 retention bonus for effective teachers in Tennessee schools that struggle to retain teachers did not affect overall retention rates, but did increase retention for teachers in the tested grades and subjects. This bonus program is based in part on school-level performance, which may encourage teachers to leave low-performing schools.
- One [evaluation](#) finds that a bonus did not increase recruitment or retention in high-poverty schools because teachers went and stayed there for other reasons. The bonus was sometimes seen as a reward for those who received it, but also a deterrent for those in the same schools who were not eligible.

Performance pay



See also [financial opportunities report](#), p. 15.

Districts may reward teachers based on how they perform their job according to a variety of metrics. In Alaska, only one district offers a performance incentive in their CBA: Teachers may earn a bonus of five percent of their salary for “extraordinary performance” as determined by a committee and based on student academic/performance gains, the development of innovative programs, and other meritorious efforts.

Examples from the nation

Performance pay in the national sample encompasses salary increases or bonuses that are based on **evaluation ratings**. For example,

- Additional step-based compensation if volunteering for a student achievement incentive program.
- Salary supplements up to \$4,000 for effective or highly effective teachers in low-income or low-performing schools.
- Annual bonus for highly effective teachers in high-poverty schools (\$10,000) or low-poverty schools (\$2,000).
- Bonus of \$1,500 for effective or highly effective teachers with a second certification in special education or secondary math or science following completion of the second certificate.
- Bonus \$500 in the first year and \$510 in the second year for highly effective STEM and special education teachers.

Districts may reward employees for **attendance** e.g.,

- Perfect attendance
 - \$600 that year.
 - \$400 per term.
 - Buyback of that year’s sick days.
- Good attendance
 - Bonus per semester up to \$120.
 - Bonus per semester is a random drawing for \$500.
 - Bonus if teacher is absent four or fewer days in school year.
 - Bonus for not taking personal leave, one to three times the substitute rate.

Evidence of effectiveness

In general, performance pay is a highly contested ground. For our analysis, we set aside important questions about [whether performance pay affects](#) teaching quality as measured by student performance, and focus on research linking performance pay to districts’ ability to attract and retain qualified teachers. “The impact of performance pay on teacher retention is mixed...One study found no effect on retention even when teachers were paid at the end of the school year rather than the beginning” ([p. 16](#)).

Research suggests school districts with performance pay plans were often able to recruit more effective teachers including new teachers who had graduated from colleges and universities with higher average

SAT scores than other districts. One [district](#) increased recruitment of effective teachers once the performance pay plan (annually the incentive amounted to 12% of base-pay, on average, for full-time teachers) was in place and experienced lower turnover of effective teachers than overall. Several [districts](#) that implemented performance-based pay raises attracted effective teachers from other districts, increasing turnover and decreasing overall teaching quality in those other districts. Another [study](#) looked at the effect of performance pay on teacher retention comparing those in hard-to-staff and not hard-to-staff contexts, and found no difference.

In sum, while performance pay may not increase retention, it may affect the composition of who stays (the more effective teachers) and who leaves (the less effective ones).

Final thoughts

Our analysis offers a broad overview of benefits specified in Alaska’s CBAs, as well as how districts in a national sample have structured their benefit packages. We intend for this report to support dialogue that will optimize teacher compensation and offer some “food for thought.” We identified some key takeaways from our work, that we document as “musings” or discussion starters.

While we did not study how effective benefit packages are at attracting and retaining teachers, the literature suggests that compensation packages – including benefits – do matter. Additionally, though many policy conversations lump teacher recruitment and retention together, forthcoming research from the Institute of Social and Economic Research also notes that the benefits that *attract* a teacher are not exactly the same as the benefits that *keep* that same teacher.⁸

In Alaska and the national sample, salary and benefits vary significantly between districts. There are different ways to interpret variation in benefits. We suspect that when districts are faced with limited resources, they do their best to offer a package of salary and benefits that will be most attractive to teachers in their communities. For example, teachers in rural remote communities may place more value on travel benefits than teachers who work in communities on the road system. Or teachers who work in smaller schools without mentor teachers may place greater value on professional development opportunities than other teachers. Because districts do not have the resources to provide all the benefits this report describes, they must weigh options and design an optimal benefit package with their available financial resources.

Healthcare benefits are some of the most expensive ones to provide, and these costs are variable across districts and from one year to the next. The specific costs of healthcare are not usually specified in CBAs, but as this is an expected benefit, in a fixed budget scenario like we have in Alaska, the inflexible costs of healthcare premiums can put downward pressure on wages and other benefits, which makes it more difficult for Alaska districts to offer teachers nationally competitive salaries.

Some important benefits – like retirement – are codified in statute, rather than CBAs. Our analysis looked only at CBAs, but retirement benefits are uniform statewide. The role of the retirement system in retention and recruitment is a paramount concern of Alaska education stakeholders, and identifying options for restructuring retirement is one of the recommendations of the *Teacher Retention and Recruitment Action Plan*.

When reading our analyses, it is important to remember that districts negotiate a *package* of benefits and salary for teachers. When we present benefits in isolation, noting minimums and maximums, it is important to note that districts that have generous benefits in some areas may be thinner in other categories. These local choices can be a useful approach to utilize limited resources to maximize the benefits that have value for the teachers in the particular context of each school district. For example, some benefits appear to correlate with geographic variation in prices of specific, high-cost services such as housing and travel in remote rural areas. Thus, a benefit that is more expensive to deliver in a remote rural community (e.g., housing or a plane ticket to Anchorage) may register at a significantly higher

⁸ Berman, M., & DeFeo, D. J. (forthcoming). How much is enough? Teacher compensation to address disparities in teacher qualifications in high needs public schools. *Educational Policy*.

dollar value in the CBA even though it may not reflect a real difference in the quantity or quality of that benefit. There would be value in future work that makes cost-of-living adjustments to the benefits described above so they can be compared across districts, and their relationship to teacher retention can be assessed.

Even with our expertise and experience as researchers of teacher compensation packages, we sometimes found it challenging to make comparisons among CBAs, or to understand the value of particular benefits in unique community contexts. Furthermore, CBAs are negotiated at the district level, but many Alaska school districts encompass multiple communities, which can be quite different from one another. How teachers – particularly teachers who are new to their community or new to Alaska – make sense of these nuanced differences in CBAs is an area of research opportunity. Tools that help new teachers to understand community, district, and school characteristics may be useful.

CBAs are a good start but offer an incomplete picture of the array of benefits school districts provide. In particular, we note that despite their legally binding nature, the CBAs leave much to the discretion of administrators, so it is sometimes difficult to determine what teachers really receive, in practice. Additionally, we found some benefits are advertised on district websites that were not specified in the current CBA, suggesting that districts may go beyond the language of the CBA to offer additional benefits that are attractive to teachers.

While CBAs offer some assurances to in-service and prospective teachers, in several Alaska districts, teachers are working on expired contracts. At the time of this writing, 22 of the 47 districts in which NEA-Alaska represents bargaining units were actively engaged in bargaining. Of those, eight were working with expired contracts. Of those eight, two were in mediation and four had gone to arbitration (Tom Klaameyer, President, *NEA-Alaska*, personal communication). How these negotiations and the lack of a current contract factor into teacher recruitment and retention is an area of research opportunity.

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About the Institute of Social and Economic Research

The *Institute of Social and Economic Research* (ISER) at the *University of Alaska Anchorage* has been at the forefront of public policy research in Alaska for 60 years. ISER's multidisciplinary staff studies virtually all the major public policy issues Alaska faces. That work helps Alaskans better understand the state's changing economy and population—and the challenges and opportunities that come with change. The *Center for Alaska Education Policy Research* (CAEPR) is an education policy research unit and clearinghouse for education-related research at ISER.

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Verite Educational Services (VES) is a subsidiary of *Verite Group Inc.* VES is a technology and education consulting company that builds collaborative partnerships with constituents. We have supported federal government missions and private sector enterprises for more than 18 years, and states/schools for more than six years. Our team of consultants brings years of experience as education practitioners in early learning and K-12 in the context of state and local agencies and nonprofits, as well as expertise in program evaluation, research, and grant writing.

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