



FEAdback

By Danette L. Peterson • Apr 18, 2024

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President's Message - Turning the Tide on Teacher Morale

I recently registered for a webinar hosted by Education Week. It promised to help me understand how to turn the tide on teacher morale. I listened to the recording in an airport with pen and paper in hand ready to write the secret formula to rekindle the joy of teaching that many have lost. As you might imagine, no magic words were uttered that I can share with you. Nonetheless, the study was informative and there were a few nuggets worth sharing.

One reason cited for low teacher morale is undercompensation and a lack of benefits. Generally, teachers are undercompensated for their level of education as compared to those with similar degrees. On a national level, our salaries here aren't bad. But we have the worst retirement offering, with no defined benefit or promise of social security.

A budget reflects the values of a society and our state budget says that education is not a priority. Without the promise of certain funding, we ride the BSA roller coaster annually and wonder who will be laid off and if they will be rehired in July or simply move to Washington or Oregon where prospects are better. The Alaska House budget offers \$175 million in one-time funding which doesn't allow for long-term planning for administrators or stability for those in the classrooms. We don't annually cut doctors at public health clinics, engineers at the Department of Transportation, or attorneys at the District Attorney's Office and expect them to wait around to see if they will be rehired. Why do we think this is an acceptable way to treat teachers? It's not. One-time funding needs to become a permanent increase. Join our community, students, partners, and businesses on April 24th and let our elected officials in Juneau know that we appreciate the BSA increase, but one-time funding is not an answer.

A second reason for low teacher morale is working relationships with administrators. Fortunately, I have worked with some great principals. Some I vowed I would not work with one more year and others I would have followed to the edge of a cliff because they were so amazing. The research shows that the doughnuts on Fridays and coffee mugs at the start of the years are appreciated. However, what teachers really want from administrators is different. They want meaningful feedback. They want to be truly appreciated and recognized for the things that they are doing to increase student learning. As administrative positions get cut, their ability to do this lessens. Teachers also want administrators to

advocate for them and to bring issues up the chain rather than being told to make the best of a tough situation. And, teachers need administrators that have their back. They want to know that they will positively respond to difficult student behaviors and intervene when a parent is hostile.

One final takeaway that I had was that teachers desire different professional development than what is generally offered. They don't want professional development that is irrelevant and feels like a waste of time. They are overworked and time is precious. What they do desire is more independent planning time. They want time to look at student data, create units of meaningful instruction, and reflect on their teaching practices. Teachers are professionals and desire to be treated as such. Their plates are beyond full and their tolerance for sitting through one more meeting that could have been an email or one more PD session that doesn't apply to them causes frustration and resentment.

To that end, I ask you to share your thoughts on what Professional Development *you* would desire in August. Please share your thoughts in this poll or email your suggestions as I will share that information with the District's Teaching and Learning Department as they begin to plan for the August Districtwide PD Day.

Which of the following PD sessions in August would you be most interested in attending?

- [Time and support to work on mandatory trainings](#)
- [An opportunity to learn about your negotiated agreement](#)
- [Better understand your health insurance plans and coverage](#)
- [How to make PLCs work for you](#)
- [Grading that matters without feeling overwhelmed](#)

Your response is anonymous

I welcome other suggestions and input. [Please email me.](#)

I challenge you to do one small act this week to turn the tide on low teacher morale. Let a colleague or administrator know that they make a difference. Give positive feedback that is specific. Tell a classified staff member that you appreciate their work. We can lift each other up and one kind word can carry us through a day, a week, or even longer. And, I encourage you to attend #FBXEdFest on April 24th as our community comes together to celebrate what we are doing every day in our classrooms. I feel truly supported by our community and hope that you do too.

#FBXEdFest Is Almost Here!

April 24th
#FBXEdFest
5:00 - 6:30 PM
Golden Heart Plaza
1st Ave & Lacey St
<https://bit.ly/FBXEdFest>

April 24th
#FBXEdFest
Golden Heart Plaza
5:00 - 6:30 PM
Enjoy good food and live music from Eielson's student musicians while learning about ways you can support vital funding for public education!

Featuring:

- Golden Heart Strong
- Great Alaska Schools
- Coalition for Education Equity
- Fairbanks Education Association
- Education Support Staff Association
- Fairbanks Children's Museum

April 27th
Early Voting Rally
10:00 AM
Noel Wien Library to Shopper's Forum Mall
<https://bit.ly/FBXEarlyVotingRally>

April 27th
Early Voting Rally
Noel Wien Library to Shopper's Forum Mall
10:00 AM
Support Prop A and funding for our schools by voting early and receive a coupon for Golden Heart Strong's kick-off party at Golden Heart Performing Arts 11 AM - 1 PM

VOTE ABSENTEE

- By mail: Application due to Borough Clerk's office by Apr 30
- Electronically: Application due to Borough Clerk's office by 12pm May 6

VOTE EARLY
Shopper's Forum Mall

- Apr 27 - May 2: M-S: 10 AM - 7 PM
- Apr 28: Sun: 11 AM - 6 PM

VOTE IN-PERSON ABSENTEE

- City of Fairbanks Borough Clerk May 3 - May 6: 10 AM - 7 PM
- City of North Pole Clerk's Office Apr 29 - May 6: 8 AM - 5 PM

Across Alaska, each association has been asked to plan an action to let legislators know that we need adequate education funding for our students and communities.

Naturally, Fairbanks is doing our Day of Action in style. [#FBXEdFest](#) will bring together families, educators, business partners, and other community partners as we enjoy fun, food, and music from Ben Eielson choir students.

This event will feature guest speakers across our community, including Dr. Luke Meinert, student leaders, parents, and local businesses. Additionally, organizations supporting public education, will be there to share information and opportunities, including:

- Great Alaska Schools
- Save Our Schools

- Golden Heart Strong
- Coalition for Education Equity
- Alaska Public Pension Coalition
- FEA & ESSA
- Fairbanks Children's Museum

Please join our community partners and show how much we appreciate their support. Let our elected officials in Juneau know that one-time funding increases are not sustainable. We are in this together. Strong public schools = strong communities.

Can we count on you to attend #FBXEdFest?

[Absolutely!!](#)

Your response is anonymous

Please share this link with others: <https://bit.ly/FBXEdFest>

#AKLeg Update



You may have learned over the weekend that Anchorage Superior Court Judge Adolf Zeman [issued a ruling](#) in the *Alexander v. Acting Commissioner Teshner* case in which the plaintiff's challenged the constitutionality of Alaska correspondence schools using public funds for private and religious education materials and tuition. [Click here for a 10-minute summary of the ruling.](#)

The Alaska Constitution is very plain in the language used about public education: *"The legislature shall by general law establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all children of the State, and may provide for other public educational institutions. Schools and institutions so established shall be free from sectarian control. No*

money shall be paid from public funds for the direct benefit of any religious or other private educational institution.”

NEA-Alaska supported the plaintiffs in their lawsuit because of the clearly unconstitutional language contained in the statute. The language reads, "*families may use these allotments to purchase nonsectarian services and materials from a public, private, or religious organization.*"

In NEA-Alaska President Tom Klaameyer's #AKLEG Update from April 15th, he offered clarity on NEA-Alaska's position on the ruling:

- NEA-Alaska believes that parents should have access to whatever type of learning environment will best serve their children.
- NEA-Alaska supports neighborhood schools, public charter schools, home school programs, and correspondence schools provided they are spending public funds on constitutionally valid programs and resources.
- NEA-Alaska plans to request a stay of the judge's decision in this case until the end of the fiscal year so no parents are left in the lurch this school year and give legislators time to fix this problem quickly.
- It is also important to remember that homeschooling generally, remains legal. The only thing that is prohibited by the judge's decision is the allotment program (meaning there can be no reimbursements for correspondence expenses until the statute is fixed).

If you are not receiving President Klaameyer's updates, please reach out to Alex Strickland at alex.strickland@neaalaska.org or 907-456-4435.

Your Professional Certificate and DEED Webinar



Alaska Department of Education & Early Development

Teacher Certification Virtual Information Sessions

As you're likely aware, DEED has seen a major backlog in both new and re-certifications due to staffing shortages. Consider joining this webinar to learn more and make your experience smoother.

On May 1st, from 4:00-5:00 PM, DEED is offering a webinar for teachers focused on the following items:

- Certification information for teachers new to Alaska
- TEACH AK online application process
- AK Reads Act Endorsement information

[Register Here](#)

Please take a moment to verify when your [teaching license expires](#). Many licenses expire over the summer when it is easy to miss the deadline. If you need to earn credits for renewal, please do so now! If you have what is needed for renewal, please submit your application early. DEED is going through a transition and is short-staffed which is leading to unusual delays up to 10 weeks.

National Board Certification



Jump Start toward National Board Certification

NEA-Alaska Jump Start is a 4-day workshop that provides support for educators planning to pursue National Board Certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). National Board Certification (NBC) is recognized as a national standard of quality professional achievement. Jump Start is a key component of NEA-Alaska’s mission to provide quality public education for Alaskan children through continued development of its education professionals.

[Register here.](#)

Dates and Times

Tuesday, May 28, 2024 8:30 AM (AKDT) -
Friday, May 31, 2024 4:30 PM (AKDT)

Location

UAA Campus, Gorsuch Commons, Anchorage

Cost

\$99 (Optional; for course credit only)

Why Your Contract Matters: Comp Time, Personal Days & Sick Leave

SCAN ME



FairbanksEducators.org

Article 112

403b SUPPLEMENTAL RETIREMENT ACCOUNTS

The District will match employee's contributions up to 1% of your annual salary. If you want to cash out personal or sick leave, you must notify the payroll department no later than May 1st. - Article 112

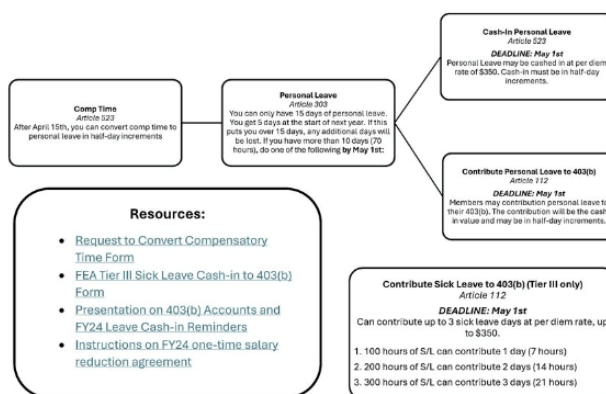
Compensatory time can be converted to personal leave and then contributed to your 403(b). Tier III teachers may also contribute sick leave days to their 403(b) accounts.

Annual requests to cash out personal and/or sick leave must be received by the payroll department no later than May 1st of each year.

Please check out the resources on the [FEA Website](#).

Important Deadlines for Compensatory and Personal Leave

FEA Leave Transfer Guidelines



FEA Spring Election Results

Thank you to everyone who stepped forward and ran for office during our Spring elections. I appreciate everyone who gives throughout the year to serve FEA and our profession in a variety of ways.

Congratulations to those who were elected to the following:

FEA East Region:

- Robin Feinman
- Robyn Capp
- Wendy Demers
- Kim Hughes

FEA Ft. Wainwright Region:

- LaVerne Haakanson

NEA-Alaska Delegate Assembly 2025-2026:

- Kelly Hill Scanlon
- Pepper McFarland
- Melodee Sonnenberg
- Kim Hughes
- David DeVaughn
- Kim Wallingford
- Rebecca Siegel
- Hannah Murrary

NEA Representative Assembly:

- Danette Peterson
- Pepper McFarland
- Dave Devaughn
- Kristen Dullen

-

Retirement Celebration and Donations



FEA is holding its annual retirement dinner party for members. It will take place **Friday, May 10th at Pike's**.

- Retirees are invited to attend as guests of honor and will receive a complimentary dinner;
- All other colleagues and family members are invited to attend;
- Dinner for guests is \$40 per person;
- Colleagues are encouraged to share a few words on behalf of our retirees.
- Please donate items for our auction – individual, business and school donations are all welcome!
- **Please RSVP by Friday, April 26th** to Alex Strickland (alex.strickland@neaalaska.org or 907-456-4435)

- Please contact Kristen Dullen (kristen.dullen@k12northstar.org) with donations or questions.

Per the Negotiated Agreement, resigning or retiring FEA bargaining unit members may contribute up to six (6) unused sick leave days to the Sick Leave Bank.

If you are resigning or retiring this year, I hope you will consider donating days to help the colleagues you leave behind.

The donation form can be found on our website here: [FEA Sick Leave Bank Donation Form](#)

FEAdback Classified Ads



FOR SALE: KAGAN KIT \$355 est. value, asking \$50 OBO Wide-range of useful KAGAN Cooperative Learning materials: will email list of materials to interested parties. 603-913-7887

FOR SALE: GEM JARS Reward System for classroom/home use. Positive Reward System for even the toughest classrooms. IT IS MAGIC! 1st - 8th Grade students respond magically, maybe even HS. Directions included. REWARDS are Visual (200+ pretty marbles [flat ones]), Auditory (when a marble is dropped into the jar – “kerplunk”)

and the final reward is what they achieved, as promised! WIN! WIN!
WIN! \$25. 603-913-7887

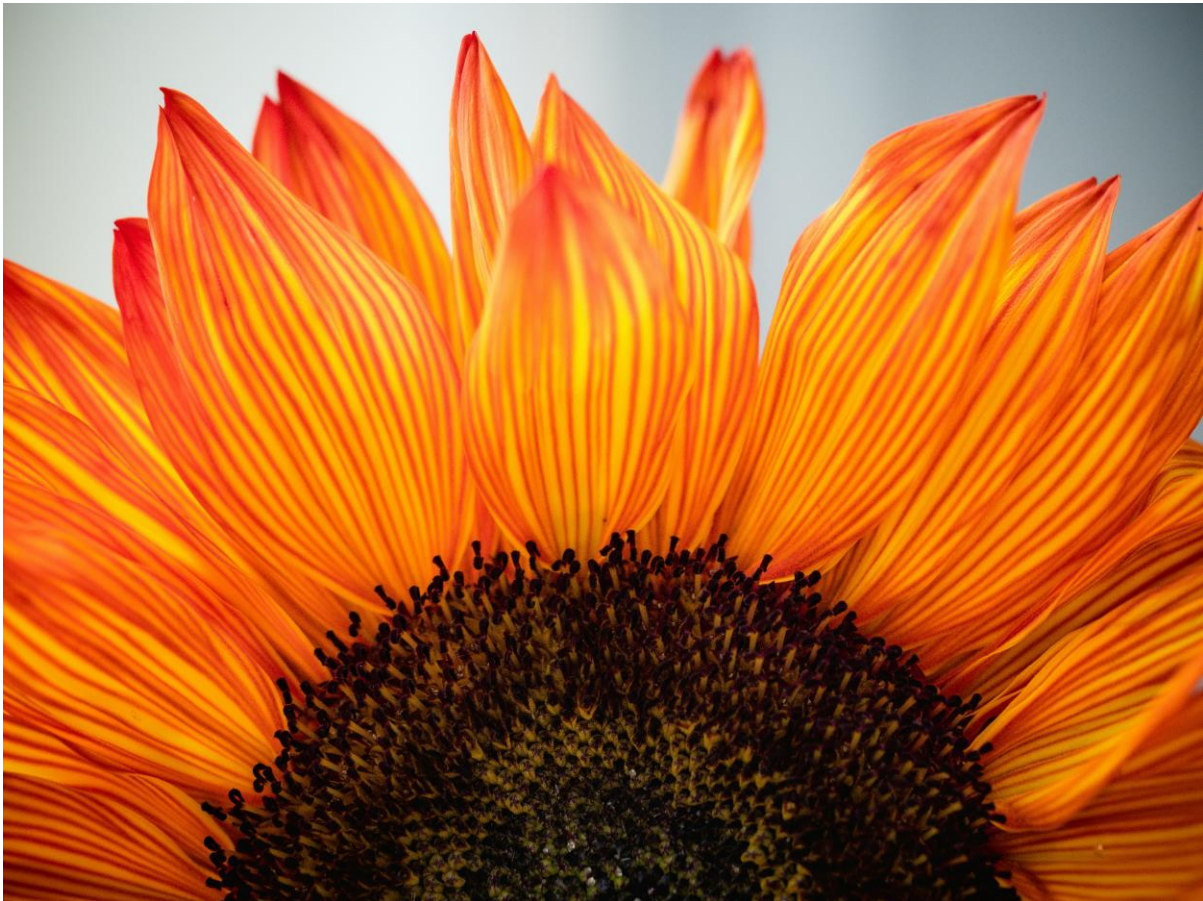
FOR SALE: WEDDING DRESS Women's size 8, full-length,
Beautiful off-the-shoulder sleeves, sweetheart neckline, Fitted bodice,
Cathedral train Princess skirt, cleaned and hermetically sealed. \$125
oBO 603-913-7887

FOR SALE: DELSEY HARDSIDE LUGGAGE used once for
international trip, \$240 new, \$38 603-913-7887

*All ads are run for two FEAdbacks, unless notified to remove. To view
previously posted ads, visit our website: fairbankseducators.org and
check the previous electronic editions.*

Classified ads are included on a "space available" basis. ***IMPORTANT
included classified ad in your subject line.***

Gratitude & Thank You



Thank you to everyone who made our early enrollment outreach possible: Lori Mertes, Linda Cozzini, William Voelkerding, Garrett Armstrong, Julie Lougee, Pepper McFarland, Patrick Frymark, and LaVerne Haakanson;

Thank you to our community partners and the organizations that will support public education at #FBXEdFest;

Thank you to our Ben Eielson choir students for performing at #FBXEdFest and Ben Eielson band students for performing the 27th at the early voting rally and Purple Up event at Pioneer Park;

Thank you to everyone supporting our military students throughout the month of April. We hope to see you at Pioneer Park on the 27th for more events to celebrate month of the military child.

Thank you to our military-connected educators who support our students and join our community while loved ones serve our country. We appreciate all you do to enrich our communities while you are here.

Thank you to our retiring educators who have given so much over the years. We are sad to see you leave but excited about your new adventures.

General Membership Meeting

All FEA Members are encouraged to attend our General Membership Meeting at **5:45 on Tuesday, May 14th**. PACE recommendations for the Borough Mayoral candidates will be presented followed by discussion and a vote from the body.

Upcoming Events & Important Dates



- **Tuesday, April 23rd at 5:00 at FEA Offices**
FEA Board of Directors Meeting
- **Saturday, April 27th at 9:00 am at FEA Offices**
CPR Training
- **Friday, May 10th at Pike's**
FEA Retirement Celebration at Pike's
- **Tuesday, May 14th at 5:00 at FEA Offices**
FEA Building Rep Meeting followed by a General Membership Meeting

Fairbanks Education Association

Value Statement

The diverse voices of our members are the strength of the Fairbanks Education Association. We are the teachers, the counselors, the librarians, the therapists, and the psychologists that prepare students to succeed and contribute to a changing society.

Recognizing that a teacher's working environment is a student's learning environment, the Fairbanks Education Association is tirelessly dedicated to attracting and retaining the best quality teachers by strongly advocating for its members, improving salary, benefits, retirement with dignity, and increasing funding for quality public education for all students. We support our members by offering life-long learning opportunities for growth through mentorship and meaningful professional development.

We empower our members to make professional decisions that positively impact our classrooms, community, and daily lives of our students.

FEA Board Members

FEA Officers:

President - Danette Peterson

Vice President - Patrick Frymark

Recording Secretary - Paula Addis

Membership Secretary - Pepper McFarland

Treasurer - Melodee Sonnenberg

Immediate Past President: Sandi Ryan

NEA-Alaska Directors: Kristen Dullen, Jessica Iglesias, Karen Dullen

FEA Board of Directors by Region:

East Region: Robyn Capp, Wendy Demers, Robin Feinman, Kelly Scanlon

West Region: Garrett Armstrong, Natasha Carlson, Dave Devaughn, Kim Wallingford

NEST Region: Sarah Dimmick, Shelby Hooper, Mariko Kinikin, Ed Paxson

Ft. Wainwright: Laverne Haakanson, Julie Lougee

Advisory:

Retired Member Representative: Leslie Conner

NEA-Alaska UniServ Directors: Michael Wenstrup and Grier Hopkins

In solidarity,

Danette L. Peterson

President

Fairbanks Education Association

Feedback

Anonymously tell us what you thought of this edition. Your responses will help us create better content for you!

Was this edition useful?



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