

FEAdback

By Danette L. Peterson • Oct 26, 2023

Smart Brevity[®] count: 7.5 mins...2049 words

Volume 42, Number 6

Included in this edition:

- President's Message: The Importance of Safety
- New School Board Members and Welcome at FEA Offices
- Borough Testimony
- Alaska Reads Survey
- Your Retirement
- Why Your Contract Matters Parent-Teacher Conferences
- Member Benefits
- Thank You!
- Save the Date and Future Events

President's Message: The Importance of Safety



Many of my conversations with members over the past two weeks have focused on the topic of safety — your safety and the safety of staff.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs ranks safety just above physiological needs required for survival such as food and water. You can't do your best if you don't feel safe in your own place of work. Yes, it's sad that we need to address the topic, but it's real. According to Education Week, violence and harassment of teachers and other educators is taking a toll. (We didn't need a study to tell us that, did we?)

While bargaining our most recent contract, the District's bargaining team often dismissed or downplayed FEA's concerns that the former contract didn't adequately address our members' safety concerns. It wasn't until this summer that the District finally agreed to FEA's demand that stronger safety language be included in the negotiated agreement. Ultimately, we were able to gain significant contractual language to address the concerns of our members.

Article 518 has new language that will require visitor expectations for conduct to be posted in District buildings. FEA tendered its draft of the desired language and the District drafted its version. With the input of ESSA and FPA, the final version is being word-smithed. In light of some recent incidents, I have requested that it be made available before Parent-Teacher Conferences. While it admittedly doesn't prevent a visitor from harassing or berating a staff member, it provides clear guidelines which will make it easier to no-trespass persons who repeatedly fail to meet basic standards of conduct.

Additionally, the new negotiated agreement establishes a Districtwide Safety Committee that will meet quarterly. FEA's two representatives on this important committee are Joseph Rueters, special education teacher at Anne Wien, and Tammy Guy, counselor at Lathrop. Both will bring their unique perspectives and experiences to the discussions. The Safely Committee members will begin working this quarter to address districtwide concerns. I am truly grateful for their service and commitment to our members. We are stronger when we have a seat at the table.

I have discussed with Dr. Meinert the need to provide additional training to administrators so they are able to support staff to the best of their abilities when safety concerns arise. As a result of the conversations that we had, principals were asked to address with their staff ways to deal with confrontational Parent-Teacher Conferences should they arise. I believe that our emergency certificated and early-career educators certainly needed this information and were pleased that it was provided. During my Ladd Elementary visit last week, the staff discussed this very issue during their staff meeting.

While I know that the vast majority of our Parent-Teacher Conferences will go well and will greatly serve our students, please care for yourself just in case a conference goes awry.

- Position yourself near the door rather than a corner if that makes you feel more at ease;
- Have a nearby SOS teacher buddy that you can text or email if something is going sideways;
- Ask a fellow colleague or administrator to sit in a conference with you if you anticipate it will be contentious;
- Ask your fellow colleague to get an administrator if things escalate;
- Stay calm and professional you can never go wrong doing the right thing;
- Report threatening or harassing behavior to building administrators;
- Remember that Alaska is a one-party recording state and that any party (guardian or educator) to a conversation can record a conversation

I am grateful for the discussions that I have had with Dr. Luke Meinert, Assistant Superintendents Kate LaPlaunt and Sarah Gilliam, Human Resources Director Ivory McDaniels, ESSA President Danielle Logan and FPA President Grant Guy around this topic. I will continue to work with

them to ensure your safety today and in the future. I wish everyone great conferences.

Welcome New School Board Members



Incoming School Board Members Meredith Maple (left) and Bobby Burgess (right)

On October 30th, Meredith Maples and Bobby Burgess will be sworn in as the School Board's newest members. Please join us during your PTC break to welcome them. Cake and a light dinner will be served at our **FEA Offices on October 30th from 3:00-4:30 pm**. This is an Open House to allow members to meet the newest members. FEA continues to find ways to work with our school board members in order to support students, staff and create the best school communities possible.

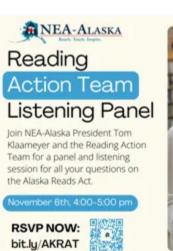
Your Educator Voice Makes a Difference - Borough Testimony

On November 9th at 6 pm members of FEA, ESSA and FPA will share their classroom stories to help the Borough Assembly members better understand why Full Funding for education at the local level matters and how our students are impacted when it doesn't happen.

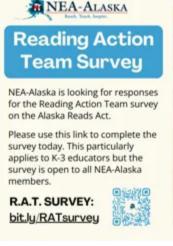
Consider sharing your story or have a small group write a statement to be read. If you need some support preparing your 3-minute story, please join us for an hour of training and practice. Matt Moser, NEA-Alaska Government Relations & Community Outreach Director and all-around legislative guru, will be on hand at the FEA Office on **November 1st from 4-5 pm** to help those wanting to be educator advocates. Learn how to testify before the Borough, School Board or legislators locally or in Juneau.

If you are interested in being an educator advocate, please let us know by filling out an Educator Interest Card <u>HERE</u>.

Alaska Reads Survey









If you haven't already, please take a moment to take the important Alaska Reads survey <u>HERE</u>. This will enable NEA-Alaska to better support its members and to have crucial conversations with legislators and DEED about your concerns and successes.

I also encourage you to participate in the Reading Action Team Listening Panel on **November 6th from 4-5 pm.** Webinar registration is available <u>HERE</u>.

Your Retirement and Alaska Retirement Management Board

State President Tom Klaameyer announced the following in his #AKLEG Update from October 16, 2023.

We have important news for anyone who is in the State of Alaska Defined Contribution TRS III or PERS IV system.

- Your retirement savings may have opted-in to what appears to be an unnecessary and costly product.
- At an Alaska Retirement Management (ARM) Board special meeting last week, they unanimously passed a resolution detailing the **high costs and poor performance** of the Empower retirement "My Total Retirement" product also known as a "managed account".
- Anyone who has an Empower account can be affected and needs to check all of their accounts. My Total Retirement can be in TRS III, PERS IV, or be in SBS, 403(b), and 457(b) Empower accounts held by any tier.

The bottom line: If you are a TRS III or PERS IV employee or have an SBS account, you should log in to your Empower retirement account and <u>try to determine if you are</u> <u>participating in "My Total Retirement"</u>

If you are participating in My Total Retirement you should try and gather more information to see if it makes sense to continue to use this premium product.

NEA-Alaska staff is monitoring this very closely and will be following up with future guidance based on the information presented by the experts to ARM Board members. We always recommend consulting an expert when it comes to your finances and retirement planning.

The bottom line: It appears that the ARM Board has proven that My Total Retirement is expensive, doesn't perform well, and may be unnecessary for most plan participants.

Welcoming New Staff



If there are new staff in your building, please give them a warm welcome (as warm a welcome as Fairbanks in October will allow, at any rate) and let FEA Membership Secretary Pepper McFarland know at <u>pepper.mcfarland@k12northstar.org</u> so we can reach out and schedule a new hire orientation with them.

Why Your Contract Matters: Parent-Teacher Conferences

Pursuant to Article 506 of the negotiated agreement, if you have children in the School District, you can take two hours off during Parent-Teacher Conferences to attend your child(ren)'s own conferences:

Teachers who are parents of school age children will be provided two (2) hours to attend their children's parent-teacher conferences. Teachers are required to provide a proposed conference schedule to their building administrator for approval at least five (5) work days in advance.

An email from HR was previously sent to you about this at the urging of our rep council members. Hopefully, you already took advantage of this contract language and built some breaks into your conference schedule for this purpose. If not, please reach out to your administrative secretaries to see where it might be possible to build in time to confer with your child(ren)'s teachers.

Member Benefits



Are you getting all of the benefits that come with being an NEA member? Find out how to maximize your benefits and learn about special offers <u>HERE</u>.

Thank You!



Teacher Rights Training October 21, 2023

Thank you to FEA Members Kim Wallingford, Stefan Johnson, Pete Daley and Garrett Armstrong, who attended the legislative training with Matt Moser;

Thank you to FEA Members Pepper McFarland, Amy Gallaway, William Voelkerding, Wendy Demers, Kim Hughes, Karen Dullen, Coby Haas, and Jessica Iglesias who attended Fall Event in Anchorage;

Thank you to all of the building reps who attended an afternoon of training last weekend. Building reps are your building's voice and provide a vital connection between you and FEA leadership;

Thank you to everyone who attended Policy Assembly this past weekend;

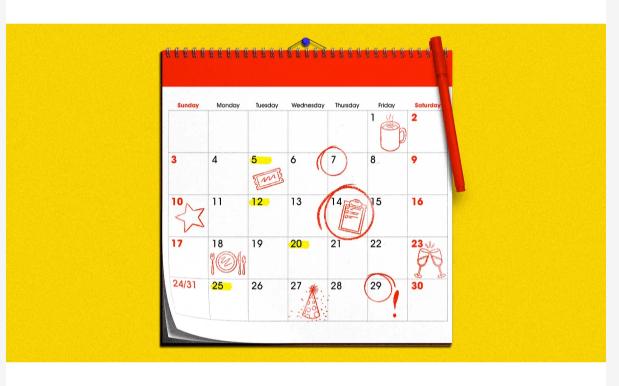
Thank you to Ed Paxson and Allison Curry who serve as FEA Representatives on the District's Budget Committee, and to Mariko Kinikin and William Voelkerding who serve as FEA Representatives on the District's Curriculum Committee;

Thank you for everything that you do to support students, colleagues, and our profession!



Fairbanks educators at NEA AK Fall Event October 13-15, 2023

Upcoming Events & Important Dates



• Monday, October 30th from 3:00-4:30 pm at FEA Offices

Welcome our newest school board members Meredith Maples and Bobby Burgess

• Wednesday, November 1st from 4:00-5:00 pm at FEA Offices

Learn how to use your educator voice and be an advocate for students, colleagues and our profession. Maybe you will find that talking to legislators in Juneau is your passion.

• Thursday, November 9th at 6:00pm at the Borough Assembly

Share your story so that our three new Borough Assembly members and others understand why full funding for education matters.

- Tuesday, November 14th from 5:00-6:00 pm at FEA Offices
- FEA Representative Council meeting
- **Tuesday, November 28th at 5:00 pm at FEA Offices** FEA Board of Directors meeting

FEAdback Classified Ads



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

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

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 Retired Past President: Sandi Ryan NEA-Alaska Directors: Coby Haas, Kristen Dullen, Jessica Iglesias FEA Board of Directors by Region: East Region: Robyn Capp, Wendy Demers, Robin Feinman, Kelly Scanlon West Region: Garrett Armstrong, Natasha Carlson, Dave Devaughn 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 newsletter. Your responses will help us create better content for you!

...

Was this edition useful?

Click here to unsubscribe.

This newsletter is powered by

Like this email style and format? It's called Smart Brevity®. Hundreds of orgs use it — in a tool called <u>Axios HQ</u>— to drive productivity with clearer workplace communications.