





## NORTH SLOPE BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

### M E M O R A N D U M

**TO:** Nancy Rock, President  
Members of the School Board

**THROUGH:** David Vadiveloo, Chief School Administrator 

**FROM:** Theodore VanBronkhorst, Interim Director of Human Resources 

**DATE:** April 29, 2022

**SUBJECT:** **Employee Recruitment and Retention Plan** **Memo No. SB22-190**  
**(Discussion Item)**

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#### NSBSD Strategic Plan:

3.0 Staff Success: Strengthen the recruitment and retention of highly effective staff and inspire more Iñupiaq teachers and administrators.

3.1 Hiring & Recruiting: Improve the hiring and on-boarding process for all employees.

3.3 Retention: Support and retain quality teachers, administrators, and staff.

3.4 Staff Cultural Integration: Provide cultural training and hands-on experience for teachers and Principals to enhance understanding and integration.

4.0 Financial & Operational Stewardship: Effectively employ our operational and financial resources to support our strategic plan goals and long-term stability of the district.

#### NSBSD Policy Manual:

BP 411134311 Recruitment and Selection: The District shall employ the most highly qualified person available for each open position. The Superintendent or Designee shall develop recruitment and selection procedures to ensure that every effort is made to find and hire fully qualified teachers for all classrooms... Staff members involved in the selection process shall recommend only those candidates who meet all qualifications established by law and the Board for a particular position. Nominations for employment shall be based upon appropriate screening devices, interviews, observations, recommendations from previous employers, background and reference checks, and any requirement of applicable collective bargaining agreements.

BP 4111.2/4211.2/4311.2 Legal Status Requirement: The district shall hire only citizens and aliens who are lawfully authorized to work in the United States. District employment practices shall not discriminate on the basis of citizenship status or national origin, nor shall they discriminate against any... persons qualified for permanent or temporary residency.

BP 4112.1 Contracts: After January 1, the Board may issue teacher contracts for the following school year.

- Alaska Administrative Code: 4 AAC 18.021 Employment of Substitute Teachers:
  - (a) a person employed to replace a teacher who district authorities know will be absent for more than 20 days in which the school is in session must possess a valid teacher's certificate from this state.
  - (b) If district authorities know that a teacher will be absent for more than 20 in-session days, the district must employ a long-term substitute teacher.

BP 4112.10 Employment of Retire Teachers: It is the policy of the Board that teacher vacancies be filled in a timely manner by qualified personnel. The District administration is authorized to employ retired teachers in accordance with AS 14.20.136 in cases of teacher shortages, and to notify the Administrator of the Teachers' Retirement System that it is hiring retired teachers pursuant to that statutory provision.

BP 4122 Student Teachers: The School Board is legitimately interested in the quality of teacher training programs and encourages the use of student teachers in the district. Such use shall support the instructional needs of the district and may enable future teachers to fulfill state requirements, learn how to teach, and receive valuable feedback that can enhance their competence.

BP 3312 Contracts: The Superintendent or designee may enter into contracts and memoranda of agreement on behalf of the district. All contracts and MOA's with a dollar value of \$10,000 or greater must be approved by the School Board... Contracts between the district and outside agencies shall conform to standards required by law and shall be prepared under the direction of the Superintendent or designee. Contracts, where appropriate, shall be submitted to the legal advisor of the district for review and approval.

### **Issue Summary:**

Current certified vacancies: 61

Expected job vacancies at August 5 if we maintain the same approach to recruitment: 45-50

Expected job vacancies at August 5 if we implement the plan: 25

### Narrative:

In my experience as an HR Director I would describe the current situation for the NSBSD in terms of recruiting and retention as critical. I'm aware that many factors have contributed to this situation. To support the District as we look to address this crisis I have prepared an overview of the challenges and then presented some solutions that we believe will assist in turning the staffing situation around. I've tried to provide as much information as possible to show the upsides and downsides of the different recruiting paths we can adopt.

### Overview:

#### External Challenges

Very small applicant pool  
National teacher shortage of some 300,000 teachers  
Teachers leaving the profession  
Job Fairs are no longer an effective recruitment tool

#### Internal Challenges

Turnover in the HR Department  
High employee turnover rate  
Teacher Contract distribution calendar

#### Current Administrative vacancies

Director of Curriculum and Instruction  
Director of Human Resources  
Principal and Assistant Principal (5)



**Vacancies by site**

<b>Site:</b> Nuiqsut Trapper School	8 Teacher vacancies, 1 Administrator, 1 Counselor
<b>Site:</b> Tikigaq School, Point Hope	7 Teacher vacancies, 1 Administrator
<b>Site:</b> Nunamiut School, Anaktuvuk Pass	6 Teacher vacancies, 1 Administrator, 1 Counselor
<b>Site:</b> Alak School, Wainwright.	5 Teacher vacancies
<b>Site:</b> Meade River School, Atqasuk	5 Teacher vacancies, 1 Administrator, 1 Counselor
<b>Site:</b> Harold Kaveolook School, Kaktovik	3 Teacher vacancies, 1 counselor
<b>Site:</b> Kali School, Point Lay	2 Teacher vacancies, 1 counselor
<b>Site:</b> Ipalook Elementary School	4 Teacher vacancies, 1 counselor
<b>Site:</b> Hopson Middle School	6 Teacher vacancies
<b>Site:</b> Barrow High School	3.5 Teacher vacancies, 1 Administrator
<b>Site:</b> Kiita Learning Community	1 Teacher vacancies

**Current Subject Area (number of vacancies)**

Special Education (7)  
 Math (5)  
 Counselor (7)  
 Language Arts (3)  
 Inupiaq Language (4)  
 Elementary (14)  
 ECE K3/K4 (5)  
 Kindergarten (3)  
 Social Studies (1)  
 Interventionist (1)  
 Science (1)  
 Physical Education (1)  
 Long Term Substitute (3)

Given the challenges and our expected shortfall, it is important to review and revise our recruitment and retention strategies. We currently have over 60 certified vacancies including administrators, and more than 50 classified vacancies. The number of vacancies shifts daily as new candidates are hired and other employees submit resignations.

We have divided the strategies into short-term that can be put into place immediately, and middle or long-term solutions that will take sustained effort to implement but will pay off in the future. We will need to consider multiple solutions for what is a difficult problem. We must recognize that staff recruitment is a year-round process.

The most important task we can do to improve the services to our students is to recruit and retain the highest quality employees and keep them in the District for as long as possible. The goal is to make NSBSD a district where teachers and other employees will recommend our District to others. Positive word of mouth among educators is a very powerful recruitment tool.

**Short-Term Strategies**

**J1 Visa Recruiting (guaranteed positions as required – we are thinking up to 10-14)**

J1 Visa recruiting involves bringing teachers from overseas to the United States to fill teaching positions. Because there is no residual cost involved in the J1 recruiting it is actually no different than recruiting from the lower 48 and is actually cheaper for the district. The J1 Visa recruiting pathway presents an extremely simple, efficient, and cost-effective way of recruiting and could provide our district with a critical supply of teachers into villages at this time of crisis.

Bering Strait School District has been using the J1 Visa recruiting path from the Philippines for five years and in that time has recruited 28 teachers. Bering Strait has had 100% retention and has been described by the superintendent as a huge win for the district.

Superintendent Bobby Bolen noted “there are few if any downsides to this, there has been no financial loss that we can see, they work extremely hard, there have been no departures of teachers in 5 years and they’ve been welcomed and settled well into communities.”

J1 Visa candidates pay a fee to an independent company in order to be listed for consideration in the recruiting pool. School districts simply identify the grade level teacher they require and the subject matter being taught and then provide those to the company. The company then provides an average of 4 candidates for consideration for every teaching position. The company sets up all interviews and conducts all reference checks. The school district conducts the interviews and as such is able to assess English proficiency and the general character and demeanor of the candidates.

Reports from the Bering Strait superintendent indicate that these candidates are extremely diligent teachers. They have no problems adjusting to the curriculum. They are able to work across all subject areas except Special Education. They are happy doing extra duty contracts and helping around the school and in the community. The superintendent there recommended that teachers are recruited in pairs or groups of three to allow them to settle faster and to live together in housing.

Both HR and the Business Office have indicated that this recruiting arrangement will work with our current personnel and pay structure. It will require some different recruiting and supports during onboarding but the teacher candidates in Bering Strait pay back the expenses incurred by the district.

We are told the turnaround on this recruiting is typically 8 - 10 weeks from the day we notify the recruiting company to the day the teachers land on site. This timeframe can be affected by embassy timings but that is not able to be assessed at this time.

Timing:

It would be preferable to proceed with this recruiting pathway as soon as possible in order to have teachers available for in-service in Fall.

Possible issues: We haven’t recruited in this way before – these teachers are coming from overseas and have English as a second language – we may want to check with each Village about whether this approach works for them.

Expected return: We are looking for 10-15 FTE’s to start and gauge our decisions going forward based on performance of the recruited teachers.

**Long-term Substitutes (possible 3-5 positions)**

We should work hard to recruit long-term certified substitutes to fill vacancies. I am aware of the discussion about paying for leases for these staff but in light of the recruiting challenges we are facing the District may wish to re-consider paying for housing as an incentive.

Long-term subs are posted on the Alaska Teacher Placement website currently to establish a pool of qualified candidates.

Possible issues:

Expected return: Based on current staff vacancy trends we may require up to 10 long term subs but given the national shortage and depending on incentives we may only be able to secure between 3-5.

**Itinerant Recruiter (5-10)**

During the April 4 Board meeting the Board supported an informational proposal to engage one traveling recruiter on a temporary employment contract to will make personal visits to teacher programs at colleges in the Lower 48 beginning in May.

Establishing this contact with University Education and Placement offices can be very beneficial.

We will identify and survey outstanding young teachers and seek their assistance in recruiting students at their alma mater. We will assign some of those colleges to our itinerant recruiter to develop personal contacts.

Teacher preparation programs of particular interest are University of Alaska Southeast, Colorado State University (Source of Counselor graduates), Tribal Colleges in the lower 48.

Possible issues: This is a strategy that the recruiter believes will deliver at least a handful of teachers to the district. However, this is more of a mid-long term investment in the very important area of college pipelines to our District

Expected return: We are hoping for between 5-7 FTE's to start. Based on the success of the first temporary contract we may seek to issue another to secure further FTE's if required.

**Retire/Rehire Program**

This program is available to any retiring teacher who may wish to return to a school District after a waiting period following their retirement.

Possible issues: Limited to 1 year

Expected return: We are hoping to recruit 3-5 FTE's. This is a difficult area to accurately predict.

**Professional and technical contracts – external providers**

At this time of chronic staff shortages external provider professional and technical contracts can provide important relief in the short to midterm. The district currently has a range of professional and technical contractors who provide various services in support of education and operations.

For example, counselor positions have been very hard to fill for some time. Contracts for these positions were not able to be discussed last year due to the negotiated agreement but our new Superintendent is confident that an arrangement can be entered into with the NSBEA to make an exception this year and ensure this important service is provided to our students.

We know that we would prefer our employees to be under the District but in the short term and in light of our current situation, we would be benefited by professional and technical contract arrangements in

- counseling
- grants administration
- possibly Human Resources until such time as long-term employees can be secured.

Possible issues: There are holes in our current contracting arrangements but these can be fixed. Professional and technical contracts should be drafted to ensure least risk of liability and most protection for the District and the Board.

The new superintendent has advised that a risk matrix will be developed to do this soon and a review of the current MOA template and other contracts is underway.

To provide the board with an outline of the importance of those contracts being consistent and written to protect the district we've asked Mr Sedor to present some information to the board.

Expected return: Depending on counselor requirements, we are looking at between 5-8 short term or longer term, contained scope of service, contract positions.

### **Mid-Long-term Strategies**

#### **Student Teaching Internships**

This has paid nice dividends for Districts that have developed relationships with a teacher prep college. Depending on the agreement, the upfront costs may be higher but you have a chance to see student teachers develop and hopefully offer regular contracts after graduation.

#### **Part time and job share arrangement**

The District is always looking for more ways to develop and promote local hire. For family, cultural and other reasons, many of our local community members are not in a position to apply for or participate in full-time employment.

We believe that the option of part-time or job share arrangements may encourage more local employment. For example, we are aware of several staff who will leave the District this year due to family commitments.

The Superintendent has had discussions with some of those staff and other staff who have left the District and they have indicated that they would consider returning to work at the District if part-time arrangements could be put in place that would support their ability to raise children, participate in cultural activities and balance their work with family and community responsibilities.

Other districts in the Alaska who have successfully introduced part-time or job sharing arrangements include Juneau School District. In preliminary discussions with the business office the cost to the district of employing part time staff will not have a detrimental impact on our budget

Possible issues: We have started conversations with the Business office about the possible cost implications of this. This investigation will continue.

Expected return: We would look for between 5-7 part-time staff to trial this approach and determine if it can work in the mid-long term for the benefit of our students and the District.

#### **Hiring or longevity Incentives**

Most Alaska districts as well as other industries offer either a signing bonus or a longevity bonus, or both. Signing bonuses usually range from \$1,000 to \$5,000 depending on whether the position is considered "hard to fill".

A longevity bonus offers the advantage of encouraging employees to remain with the district through a deferred bonus. It is usually a tiered payout system. For example, an employee would be eligible for a \$3,000 bonus after three years. At the end of the three years the employee could elect to stay for five years and earn \$7,500. If the employee remained seven years the lump sum bonus would increase to \$14,000 at which point the employee would start over. Other Districts are using this approach.

Possible issues: Financial impact.

### **Educators Rising Alaska**

Encourage our sites to start a chapter of Educators Rising Alaska. This statewide student activity focuses on exposing middle and high school students to the opportunities of a career in education.

### **Paraprofessional Career Ladder**

This program would support paraprofessionals with ambition to become a classroom teacher. In BSSD, financial support was provided for college coursework, testing, and travel through Alaska Native Education grant funds.

### **Provide distance delivery via VTC**

Distance delivery can work well with the right students and courses. Keeping a paraprofessional in the classroom to take roll and assist with classroom management can maintain a productive classroom.

### **Design a district web page for recruits**

Use the website as a way to promote the district for new hires

Have a page of the website specifically for interested teachers that may include:

Starting dates and information on where to report

Personnel forms that need to be completed

Cultural DVD

Photos of the region highlighting the culture and natural beauty

Negotiated Agreement

FAQ