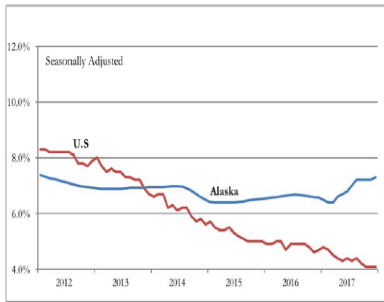


Figure 5. Unemployment Rates, Alaska and U.S.,
January 2012-December 2017



No 4-Year Degree Required for Some Smart Alaskans

Description

[BY DONNLISTON 2018 © DonnListon.com](#)

[This story was originally written as a submission in response to a request by a publisher who ultimately did not use it.

I regret it was not available for discussion during the election.]

Autumn is the season when deciding whether to attend school is an important consideration for people with low skills who want to continue to live in Alaska. This is also a great time to look at how Alaskans seeking to stay here can find meaningful careers.

The economy here is very specific about what human resources it needs during the current recession. To be successful in this job market, training after receiving a high school diploma or GED must consider what have been identified as in-demand “priority occupations”.

Given Alaska’s place among the states academically, and the amount paid for Alaska Public Education, policy makers must consider new approaches to delivering basic education throughout the state.

Alaska Economy Reality

The Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) in July issued its monthly *Economic Trends* magazine looking at the cost of living in Alaska. Economist Neal Fried reports that inflation hovered near a record low for a third straight year during 2017, with the Anchorage Consumer Price Index increasing just 0.5 percent. “That rate has been lower just four other times since 1960, when the Bureau of Labor Statistics began producing inflation data for Anchorage,” according to this report.¹

The Anchorage rate of inflation is much higher than the national rate over the last few years, mostly due to a cooling Anchorage housing market with continuing recession. By contrast, the nation's gross domestic product (GDP) increased at the end of July by 4.1 percent (April through June). This is the fastest growth in four years while Outside housing markets are generally robust.²

A prosperous Outside economy provides incentive for young Alaskans to leave for better job opportunities elsewhere.

“No other economic indicator has more daily ramifications for people than inflation. It's tied to bargaining agreements, wage negotiations, child support payments, real estate agreements, and—as of 2017—minimum wage adjustments. Because inflation has been so low, Alaska raised its minimum wage by just a nickel in 2017 and four cents in 2018,” explained Fried.³

Unfortunately, Alaska's economy was rated worst in the United States in the third quarter of 2017, according to *Business Insider*. Alaska is among the top 10 state's GDP rates—with a per capita of \$70,574—while average weekly wage rate is \$1,012.09. But Alaska's labor market is the weakest in the country with a December 2017 unemployment rate of 7.3 percent.

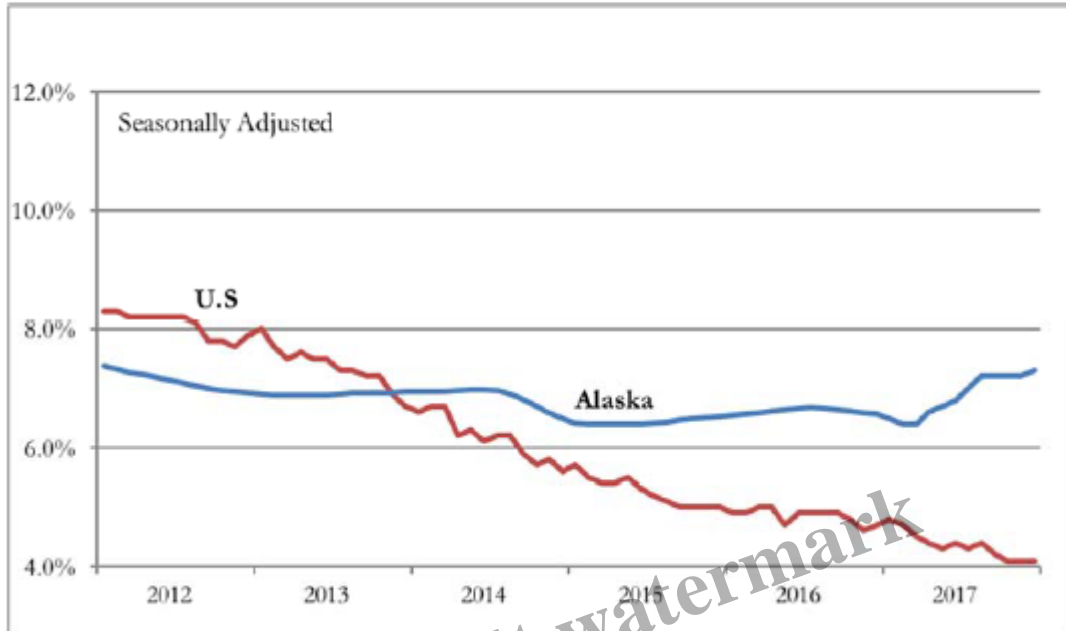
Alaska was one of only two states that lost nonfarm payroll jobs.⁴

There are good paying jobs in Alaska for people trained for them, but it costs more to live in Alaska—always has. That is the first reality of anyone expecting to make a living here. The second reality is that this state has been losing jobs. May 2018 was the 32nd consecutive month Alaska has recorded job losses—down -0.6 percent statewide.

Remember when we had great increases in summer employment? This was a destination for many young Americans going to college and working in cannery slime lines or setting chokers for Southeast logging operations. High pay long hour natural resource opportunities have been lost, and replaced by low-pay tourism service jobs.

Total visitor spending in 2014-15 was estimated to be \$4.17 billion producing 39,700 jobs and a total Labor Income of \$1.29 billion, according to the Alaska Department of Commerce.⁵

Figure 5. Unemployment Rates, Alaska and U.S.,
January 2012-December 2017



The best spin to be put on Alaska's employment situation is job losses during the current recession were at their worst back in September 2016 (-2.5 percent).

While Alaska's unemployment rate is highest in the nation, it is right at its 10-year average, according to Fried. Alaska is still losing ground on wages, but the losses are getting smaller: **Overall Alaska ranks 50th in the nation for unemployment rate, 50th for private sector job growth, 50th for overall job growth, 46th for government job growth and 42nd for construction job growth.**⁶

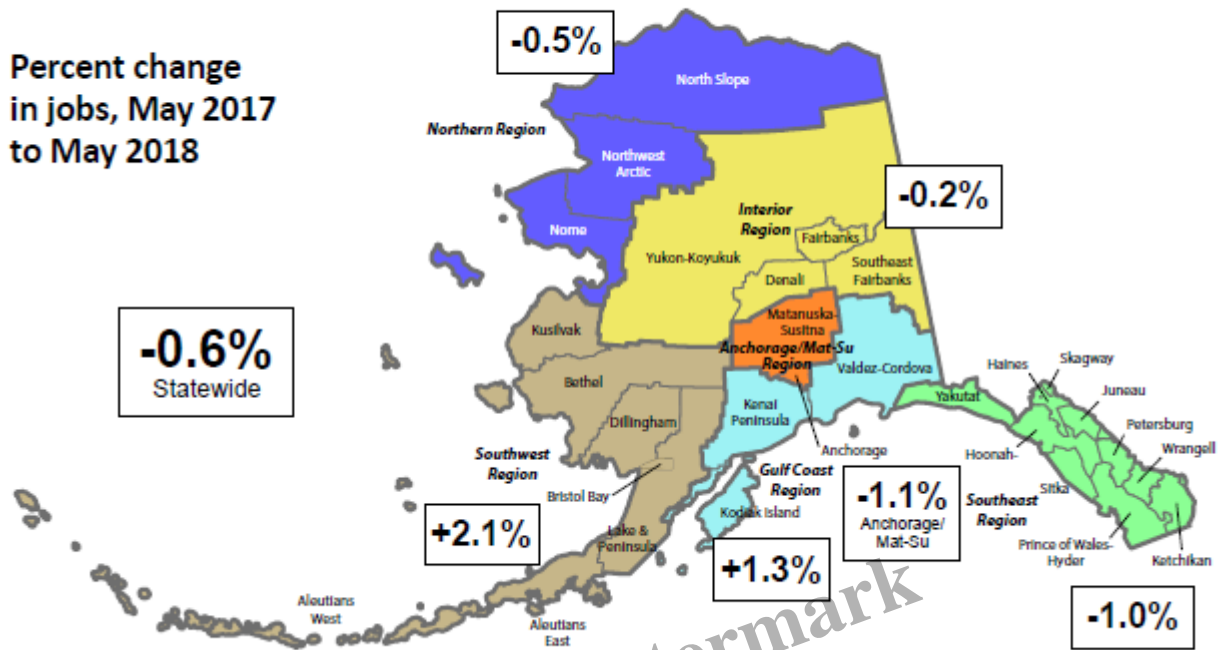
Given this reality, what are the possibilities for a young person determined to stay in Alaska expecting to enter a career that would provide long-term employment security? Let's look at the unemployment profile:

Unemployment is highest in rural Alaska, according to DOLWD: During May of 2018 the Interior Region was at 7.0% unemployment, Northern Region was 12.1%, Southwest Region was 11.8%, Gulf Coast Region was 7.3% and Southeast Region was 5.7%, bettering the Anchorage/Mat-Su rate of unemployment, which was 6.4%.

Basic Skills are Necessary to Access Higher Level Training

Employment by Region

Percent change
in jobs, May 2017
to May 2018

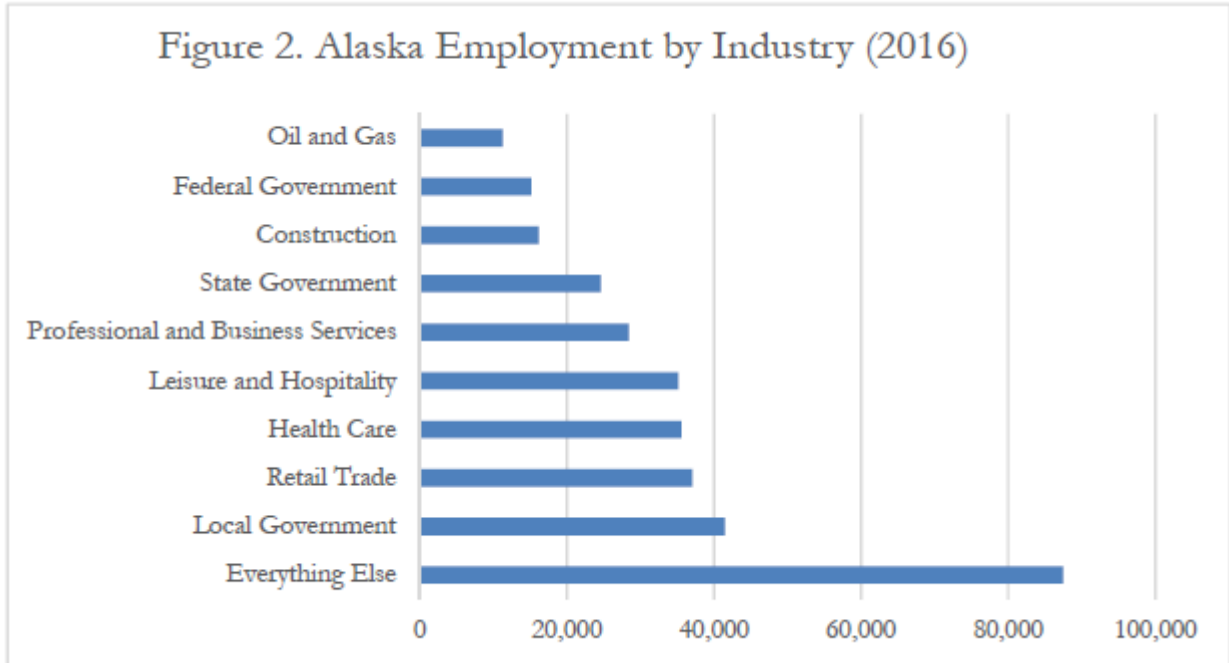


An estimated 92 percent of Alaskans have a high school diploma or higher, compared to 86 percent nationally. This is good as far as it goes, but the academic decline of Alaska Public Education makes this a meaningless statistic.

Let's use the government's own numbers to examine the problem. The **Alaska Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Combined Plan 2018 Update** was released July 2. Each governor of each state must submit a plan to the U.S. Secretary of Labor that outlines a four-year workplace development strategy. Among the requirements of the plan is a "Strategic Planning Elements" section that analyzes the State's current economic environment and identifies the State's overall vision for workforce development. Additionally, since Alaska receives significantly more Federal spending than most other states, this is a critical piece of the state's economy. According to this report, Alaska also enjoys a concentration of typically high-wage natural resource and mining jobs that are more than three times as concentrated here than in other parts of the nation.⁷

These are the jobs Alaska should be targeting to be filled.

From the WIOA Report:



Overall job growth of 5.8 percent is projected by a gain of 19,700 anticipated Alaska jobs between 2014 and 2024. Health care and “social assistance” sectors are expected to grow 16 percent. Leisure and hospitality are projected at 11 percent. Professional and businesses services, seven percent.

By contrast, mining employment—including oil and gas—is expected by DOLWD to lose 1,100 jobs over those 10 years. Our once mainstay Alaska construction sector is expected to grow only 11.7 percent.⁷

These projections should not cause young Alaskans to give up on their dreams of living here, however. Being a report to the federal government, it is meant to provide arguments for more funding.

Figure 3. Sample of Statewide Industry Sector Projections (2014-2024) for Industry Growth in Alaska.

Industry	Percentage
Ambulatory Health Care Services	22.2%
Health Care and Social Assistance, All Other	14.7%
Water Transportation	14.2%
Truck Transportation	9.5%
Hospitals	8.3%
Retail Trade	7.6%
Mining (Except Oil and Gas)	5.5%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	4.0%

But there is more to worry about:

This Alaska WIOA Plan says there is ongoing concern that 15 percent of 18-to-24-year-olds have not completed high school. According to the “2010 Alaska Career and Technical Education Plan”, every

year approximately 8,000 Alaska students graduate from high school. This report was generated as a joint effort between the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), DOLWD, and the University of Alaska, establishing that several thousand Alaska youths reportedly exit without securing a high school diploma. Of the graduates, less than half transition into college and only 18.5 percent will still be in school by age 19. The report states: **Alaska ranks fifth in the nation for teens not in school and not working.** ⁸

Our state has 54 school districts, including a statewide boarding school, most of which have at least one career and technical education program (CTE) geared toward one or more of Alaska's "priority industries", according to the AWAI Plan Report. Many districts have articulation agreements with the University of Alaska so students can earn concurrent secondary and postsecondary credits, making the UA system our new statewide high school.

High school CTE programs are aligned to industry, academic, and employability skills, and to school-to-apprenticeship standards: "Districts are trying to keep CTE programs viable by forming consortiums with other districts or programs, offering alternative delivery models such as intensive academies, using equipment simulators for training, or partnering with local employers or other agencies to share facilities or instructors," says the report. ⁹

Additionally, many Alaskan parents unhappy with public education options in their respective ZIP codes have enrolled their children into enterprise programs from far away rural districts like Delta or Iditarod, and taken on the job of homeschooling their own children. The measure of this is hard to determine in terms of actual students being home schooled, but DEED lists 30 such Correspondence Schools in its directory. ¹⁰

PEAKS tests

A list of most Alaska school districts, with superintendent salary correlated to Alaska PEAKS Test scores is provided herein. Given the outcomes from investment some may ask how long can we accept this broken system?

Employer Training to Supplement Public Education for "Priority Occupations"

The "trickle-down" effect of inadequate public education is high-level employers must find potential employees who can train up to skill levels needed to meet the challenges of Alaska's core GDP needs. Some are even setting up their own apprenticeship programs, as unions have long done with apprentice training programs. For typical Alaskans the choice is either college or skill training through a trade school and apprenticeship. DOLWA has prepared a comprehensive Employer Tool Kit for establishing a registered apprenticeship program for almost any business. ¹¹

As an Adult Basic Education instructor at the Mat-Su Job Center 4-1/2 years I learned that the first thing asked of any new job seekers is: "Do you have your high school diploma or GED?" If not, visitors are urged to get one before attempting to find work using available state databases.

The GED Assessment is updated periodically. In 2014 it was changed from a paper and pencil test to a controlled computerized assessment nationally normed at 12th grade.¹⁰ The normed grade level of Alaska public education graduates is unknown, but statewide assessments in 2018 have placed Alaskan students at or near the bottom of all U.S. states.¹²

Alaska High School Graduation Qualifying Exams (HSGQE) under the federal No Child Left Behind Act initiative were given twice to high school sophomores, and twice again each successive year—11th and 12th grades—until passed. HSGQE measured 10th grade skills. Certificates of Graduation were given in lieu of diplomas until the HSGQE was passed, even allowing students to take the test when they were no longer in attendance.

When the Alaska Legislature revoked requirement to take the HSGQE in 2014, with passage of HB 278, all students who could not pass it were given their diplomas retroactively, thus reducing the value of all public education graduation certifications for the past nearly two decades.¹³ **Sec. 14.03.075. College and career readiness assessment; retroactive issuance of diploma**

DOLWD provides an Adult Basic Education program separate from the Department of Education. At each job center “WorkKeys” assessment of employees is utilized to assure basic skills of applicants prior to referral to potential employers. According to the website: [ACT WorkKeys® assessments are the cornerstone of ACT workforce solutions. The assessments measure foundational skills required for success in the workplace, and help measure the workplace skills that can affect job performance.](#)¹⁴

This is all part of our hodge-podge approach to training people to find a career.

Professed outcomes of the Adult Basic Education program at DOLWD is “for adult learners to reach a higher level of self-sufficiency as individuals, community members, and employees.”¹⁶ People as young as 16 years old can now take the improved GED (with parental permission) and skip traditional high school for direct access to college or career training options. To take the GED a student must withdraw from the public school they are attending. The GED is also an appropriate way to validate a home school education.

Priority Industries require certain skills in Alaska’s Workforce.

Alaska hire—the prioritizing of Alaskans over bringing other skilled workers to the state—has always been a challenge, and methods have been developed to measure it. Alaska has long been the only state that requires employers to report the occupations of their workers as part of mandatory unemployment insurance reporting.¹⁵ The detailed occupational data reported by employers, together with Permanent Fund application data on residency of individual workers, allows Alaska to produce a report each year showing the industries and occupations with the highest percent of nonresident hires. Certain “Priority Occupations” have been identified as generally providing a livable wage and being either difficult to fill with qualified Alaskans or in high demand as a result of projected growth or attrition/turnover.¹⁶

Likewise certain industries have been identified as “Priority Industries” because they are thriving in Alaska and need employees in identified Priority Occupations. **Reliance on nonresident workers in priority industries and in-demand occupations indicates a skill gap.**

**CROSS-INDUSTRY
WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES**

FOR THE ALASKA MINING, OIL & GAS,
CONSTRUCTION, MARITIME, AND
HEALTH CARE INDUSTRIES

PREPARED FOR THE ALASKA PROCESS INDUSTRY CAREERS CONSORTIUM APRIL 2016

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A McDowell Group 2016 study titled ***Cross-Industry Workforce Development Priorities*** identified key skills, trainings, and concepts needed across Alaska’s construction, oil and gas, mining, health care, and maritime industries. The Alaska Process Industry Consortium (APICC) is made up of companies in those Priority Industries. They paid for the study whose goal was to identify priority occupations and workforce needs in common between the various priority employers.¹⁷

A young person looking for a skill set leading to a broad-based career in Alaska’s economy should consider what they want to do and how they might assure employability, as explained in this study.

Pathways of interest in those industries include 1. Manufacturing production process development, 2. Engineering and technology, 3. Transportation operations, 4. Therapeutic services, 5. Construction, 6.

Natural resources systems, and 7. Maintenance, Installation, and Repair.

The McDowell study found: “Common skills needed include critical thinking, active listening, reading comprehension, social perceptiveness, speaking, writing, complex problem solving, mathematics and science, time management, and active learning.”

Instructional note: This is boilerplate jargon for what employers want in ANY high skilled position. Basic skills, plus training for specific employability lead to a workplace tailored for Alaska’s economy.

From the McDowell Report: The following first pair of charts detail identified top “priority occupation” skilled jobs in Alaska, with number of expected openings, and wage ranges available.

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ALASKA DOL&WD TOP JOBS

The Alaska DOL&WD conducts an occupational forecast every two years, with the last forecast published in October 2014 (see Table 7).¹³ Expected openings include openings from attrition/turnover as well as new jobs created during

the forecast period. Wage quartiles are shown with designations; \$\$\$\$ represents the top quartile (jobs making \$73,245 annually) and \$\$\$ is equal to a salary of \$54,373,245.

Table 7 Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development "Top Jobs"

PRIORITY OCCUPATION	DEGREE REQUIRED	EXPECTED OPENINGS 2012-2022	WAGE QUART
Registered Nurses	Associate Degree or Postsecondary Nondegree Award	1867	\$\$\$\$
Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	High School Diploma or equivalent	1344	\$\$\$
General and Operations Managers	Bachelor's Degree	1005	\$\$\$\$
Carpenters	High School Diploma or equivalent	956	\$\$\$
Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	Bachelor's Degree	867	\$\$\$
First-Line Supervisors of Office and Admin Support Workers	High School Diploma or equivalent	822	\$\$\$
Electricians	High School Diploma or equivalent	791	\$\$\$\$
Administrative Services Managers	Bachelor's Degree	702	\$\$\$\$
Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	High School Diploma or equivalent	627	\$\$\$
Airline Pilots, Copilots, and Flight Engineers	Bachelor's Degree	597	\$\$\$\$
Accountants and Auditors	Bachelor's Degree	522	\$\$\$\$
Secondary School Teachers, Except Spec and Career/Technical Education	Bachelor's Degree	517	\$\$\$
Medical and Health Services Managers	Bachelor's Degree	412	\$\$\$\$
Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians	Associate Degree or Postsecondary Nondegree Award	412	\$\$\$
Construction Managers	Bachelor's Degree	392	\$\$\$\$
Commercial Pilots	High School Diploma or equivalent	391	\$\$\$
Geological and Petroleum Technicians	Associate Degree or Postsecondary Nondegree Award	378	\$\$\$
Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics, Except Engines	High School Diploma or equivalent	378	\$\$\$
Supervisors of Construction and Extraction Workers	High School Diploma or equivalent	360	\$\$\$\$
Chief Executives	Bachelor's Degree	353	\$\$\$\$
Service Unit Operators, Oil, Gas, and Mining	less than high school	349	\$\$\$
Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	High School Diploma or equivalent	335	\$\$\$\$
Financial Managers	Bachelor's Degree	324	\$\$\$\$

¹³ Martz, Paul. (2014). Alaska Occupational Forecast: 2012-2022. Alaska Economic Trends, October 2014:11-17.

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PRIORITY OCCUPATION	DEGREE REQUIRED	EXPECTED OPENINGS 2012-2022	WAGE QUARTILE
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	High School Diploma or equivalent	318	\$\$\$
Captains, Mates, and Pilots of Water Vessels	Bachelor's Degree	311	\$\$\$
Dental Hygienists	Associate Degree or Postsecondary Nondegree Award	270	\$\$\$\$
Environmental Scientists and Specialists, Including Health	Bachelor's Degree	270	\$\$\$
Sales Managers	Bachelor's Degree	260	\$\$\$\$
First-Line Supervisors of Mechanics, Installers, and Repairers	High School Diploma or equivalent	252	\$\$\$\$
Middle School Teachers, Except Spec and Career/Tech Ed	Bachelor's Degree	250	\$\$\$
Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists	High School Diploma or equivalent	243	\$\$\$
Zoologists and Wildlife Biologists	Bachelor's Degree	243	\$\$\$
First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	Associate Degree or Postsecondary Nondegree Award	239	\$\$\$\$
Civil Engineers	Bachelor's Degree	228	\$\$\$\$
Computer and Information Systems Managers	Bachelor's Degree	225	\$\$\$\$
Hazardous Materials Removal Workers	High School Diploma or equivalent	198	\$\$\$
Petroleum Engineers	Bachelor's Degree	198	\$\$\$\$
Geoscientists, Except Hydrologists and Geographers	Bachelor's Degree	193	\$\$\$\$
Correctional Officers and Jailers	High School Diploma or equivalent	192	\$\$\$
Education Administrators, Elementary and Secondary School	Master's Degree	190	\$\$\$\$
Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	High School Diploma or equivalent	189	\$\$\$
Lawyers	Doctoral or Professional Degree	188	\$\$\$\$
Probation Officers and Correctional Treatment Specialists	Bachelor's Degree	185	\$\$\$
Compliance Officers	Bachelor's Degree	179	\$\$\$
Water and Wastewater Treatment Plant and Systems Operators	High School Diploma or equivalent	176	\$\$\$
Air Traffic Controllers	Associate Degree or Postsecondary Nondegree Award	176	\$\$\$\$
Mental Health Counselors	Master's Degree	175	\$\$\$
Purchasing Agents, Except Wholesale, Retail, and Farm	High School Diploma or equivalent	173	\$\$\$
Family and General Practitioners	Doctoral or Professional Degree	172	\$\$\$\$
Physician Assistants	Master's Degree	166	\$\$\$\$
Radiologic Technologists	Associate Degree or Postsecondary Nondegree Award	164	\$\$\$
Medical and Clinical Laboratory Technicians	Associate Degree or Postsecondary Nondegree Award	149	\$\$\$

These are identified Alaska “Top Jobs.”

Of 53 listed Priority Occupations in this report, 17 require a minimum of HS Diploma/GED while 8 more mandate an Associate Degree or Postsecondary Non-degree Award. 21 other job categories call for a Bachelor degree and only 3 require a Master’s Degree.

Given this cross-section of job categories, a person seeking career stability by training into skills having multiple priority employment possibilities, can also cross reference priority jobs to skills with the following charts:

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COMMONALITIES BETWEEN INDUSTRY PRIORITIES

OCCUPATIONS

Table 8 combines the priority occupations of the five industries documented in this report and presents them by total expected openings predicted by the Alaska Department of Labor for the next decade. It is important to

note total openings and other occupational data reflect jobs in Alaska for a given occupation, not necessarily limited to the five industries of focus in this report.

Check marks in Table 8 indicate the industries in which an occupation was listed as a top priority.

Table 8 Expected Job Openings, Total Jobs, and Average Salary for Priority Occupations in the Alaska Mining, Oil & Gas, Maritime, Construction, and Health Care Industries

OCCUPATION	EXPECTED OPENINGS 2012-2022	NUMBER OF JOBS 2014	AVERAGE SALARY 2014	M	O&G	MA	C	H
Direct Care Worker	3,502	13,042	\$13,421					
Nurses	1,954	6,809	\$55,969					
Operating Engineers	1,344	5,751	\$49,802	●	●		●	
Carpenters	956	5,427	\$31,328			●	●	
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	901	4,873	\$41,842	●			●	
Electricians	791	3,193	\$59,795			●	●	
Behavioral Health Clinicians	700	1,768	\$31,196					●
Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	627	2,480	\$54,282		●		●	
Vessel Operations	623	2,504	\$34,255			●		
Geo/Chemical/Env. Lab Techs	566	1,300	\$50,556	●				
Equipment Maintenance	504	1,940	\$62,256	●	●			
Oil/Gas Drilling	499	3,125	\$71,733		●			
Electrical and Instrumentation	416	1,405	\$68,246	●	●			
Process and Plant Operations	409	2,071	\$42,304		●			
Construction Managers	392	1,753	\$88,083				●	
Geological and Petroleum Technicians	378	781	\$59,719	●	●			
Pharmacists	360	1,195	\$47,779					●
Construction Supervisors	359	1,606	\$84,837				●	
Platform and Pipeline Operations	343	1,366	\$97,510	●				
Welders	318	1,579	\$41,154		●	●	●	
Environmental Specialists	270	864	\$52,830	●				
Fishery Biologist	243	998	\$39,078			●		
Diesel Mechanics	242	1,219	\$49,535	●	●	●	●	
Primary Care Providers and Practitioners	242	790	\$106,460					●
Fish and Wildlife Technician	240	908	n/a			●		
Commercial Seafood Harvester	229	2,457	\$14,088			●		
Civil Engineers	228	1,053	\$76,688		●			
Hazardous Materials Removal Workers	198	895	\$34,770				●	
Petroleum Engineers	198	595	\$200,765		●			

OCCUPATION	EXPECTED OPENINGS 2012-2022	NUMBER OF JOBS 2014	AVERAGE SALARY 2014	M	O&G	MA	C	HC
Geoscientists	193	561	\$137,101	●	●			
Inspectors	189	637	\$77,526		●	●		
Underground Miner	184	1,012	\$53,078	●				
Permitting Specialist	178	646	\$43,600	●				
Physical Therapists	138	539	\$52,560					●
Telecommunications Specialists	131	975	\$63,305		●			
Health and Safety Specialists	113	532	\$81,926	●	●			
Mechanical Engineers	110	438	\$74,900	●	●			
Electrical Engineers	104	325	\$88,519	●				
Millwrights	97	333	\$77,351	●			●	
Baader Technician	86	664	\$36,742			●		
Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics & Installers	83	565	\$33,170			●	●	
Mining Engineers	71	279	\$69,745		●			
Drillers and Blasters	70	400	\$42,953	●			●	
Ship Builder	68	547	\$19,909			●		
Speech-Language Pathologists	68	368	\$42,762					●
Mill Operators	64	135	\$22,412	●				
Fisheries Scientists	63	230	n/a			●		
Machinists	62	367	\$48,026			●		
Can Machinist	47	197	\$14,339			●		
Automations Technicians	39	76	\$86,069		●			
Vessel Repair and Maintenance	39	178	\$39,108			●		
Nurse Educators	35	106	\$35,981					●
Seafood Production Manager	31	99	\$52,116			●		
Metallurgist	29	81	\$69,885	●				
Psychiatrists	26	75	\$134,448					●
Pile-Driver Operators	23	205	\$49,171				●	
Chemical Engineers	15	79	\$155,885		●			
Fishery Economist, Analyst, and Management Specialist	15	52	n/a			●		
Biometrician	11	34	n/a			●		
Hatchery Manager	11	36	\$38,611			●		
Seafood Plant and Floating Processor Engineer	11	37	\$81,299			●		
Refrigeration Technician	n/a	27	n/a			●		
Specialty Nurses	n/a	134	\$95,799					●

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Source and Notes: Priority occupations derived from a combination of feedback from key industry stakeholders and workforce development plans prepared by the oil & gas (O&G), mining (MI), maritime (MA), construction (C), and health care (HC) industries. The absence of a checkmark for a particular occupation does not mean that the occupation is not needed for a particular industry, only that it wasn't listed as the top priority. Expected openings, number of jobs, and average salary data obtained from the Alaska Department of Labor.

Our economy is in the doldrums. We have a mediocre top-heavy K-12 system in which our Alaska students rank below the national average, and high unemployment for low-skill workers. Young Alaskans wishing to have a sustainable career must use smart strategies that correlate with what our state economy needs to find a career ladder that will remain connected at the top over a working life. What is your passion? Where can you get the training you need? How does what you what to do align with what Alaska's economy needs now and in the foreseeable future? Some smart Alaskans don't need to go to college to figure this out.

Education to Career Policy Considerations

The current structure of Alaska Public Education pre-dates discovery of oil on the North Slope and the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. It is time to update how education funds are spent.

In 1975 Anna joined as a plaintiff in a lawsuit, *Tobeluk v. Lind* in what became the Molly Hootch Case for the Eskimo girl whose name headed the original 1972 list of plaintiffs suing the state for failing to provide rural community high schools. In 1976 Marshall Lind, Commissioner of Education under Governor Jay Hammond, signed a detailed consent decree providing for establishment of a high school program in 126 villages covered by the litigation, unless people in the village decided against a local program. This was the easy political way out; Alaska was about to become wealthy beyond most people's imaginations from oil development, and throwing money at public education meant construction jobs building schools and communities keeping their young people at home in programs run mostly by Outside teachers on their Alaskan Adventures. With more than 50 Alaska school districts, each with an elected school board, this was a political win-win-win for Gov. Hammond.¹⁸

Over the: decades since oil began flowing from Prudhoe Bay our public education system has been a crazy quilt of programs in schools with mostly itinerant teachers. We should have been able to hire the best teachers in the world for what we pay but instead we have a wave of teachers coming and going each year leaving a legacy of lower academic outcomes with ever higher costs.

Suggested Policy Considerations:

Policy 1: Establish a commission to research and consider public education needs for Alaska in context with past commissions established for that purpose.

Policy 2: This commission shall review all possibilities for consolidation of current school districts into 12-14 regional school attendance areas, each with at least one regional high school fed by multiple k-8 schools. Mt. Edgecumbe has been a successful boarding school and could serve as a model exemplar.

Policy 3: Examine and consider Alaska Native organization current efforts in public education programming. Seek to establish partnership potentials for sharing the challenges of enhancing quality and efficient public education throughout the state.

Policy 3: Examine the University of Alaska involvement in teacher training and establish guidelines recognizing training and career objectives with curriculum expectations.

Policy 4: Inventory current technology applications in public education and potential for consolidation and economic efficiencies for all schools.

Smart Alaskan parents are helping their young adult children identify their passions, consider entry points to entering chosen careers, and taking steps to find the training paths necessary for lifelong Alaska employment success. An examination of how Alaskans can benefit from our tremendous investment in infrastructure and personnel can result in delivery of better academic programs suited to Alaska's unique needs and opportunities.

Donn Liston, MEd. Is a retired Alaskan teacher whose family first came to the state in 1962 so his father could work as a civilian contractor with RCA Service Company on the White Alice System.

###

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11 https://www.doleta.gov/oa/employers/apprenticeship_toolkit.pdf

12 <https://www.adn.com/alaska-news/education/2018/04/10/alaska-students-math-and-reading-test-scores-below-national-average-on-nations-report-card/>

13<https://www.adn.com/alaska-news/article/alaska-students-who-didnt-pass-exit-exam-can-now-get-diplomas-0/2014/06/05/>

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15http://labor.alaska.gov/wioa/wioa_revised_plan_2018.pdf, pg 29

16 Ibid pg 22

17 McDowell Group Cross-Industry Workforce Development Priorities Report, PG 1

<http://apicc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/McDowell-Cross-Industry-Workforce-Final-Formatted-4.28.16.pdf>

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Alaska Public

What we Pay Superintendents

Provided by the Office of Reporting and Transparency

District	Region	Total ADM (total # students)	Salary
ALASKA GATEWAY	INT	373.2	116,720
ALEUTIANS REGION	SW	N/A	N/A
ALEUTIANS EAST	SW	218.4	110,000
ANCHORAGE	SC	47,561.6	235,000
BRISTOL BAY	SW	109	108,000
CHATHAM	SE	120	60,252
CHUGACH	SC	276.2	92,300
COPPER RIVER	INT	426.8	110,000
CORDOVA	SC	323	112,500
CRAIG	SE	522.1	116,800

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Alaska Publ

What we Pay Superintendent

Provided by the Office of Re

District	Region	Total ADM (total # students)	Sal
KAKE	SE	N/A	N
KASHUNAMIUT	SW	317.15	120,0
KENAI	SC	8,784.83	155,0
KETCHIKAN	SE	2,227.88	135,0
KLAWOCK	SE	125.5	110,0
KODIAK	SW	2444	145,0
KUSPUK	SW	355.05	120,0
LAKE & PENINSULA	SW	285.12	153,4
LOWER KUSKOKWIM*	SW <small>Footer Tagline</small>	4109.4	145,0

Alaska Public Schools

What we Pay Superintendents

Provided by the Office of Revenue

District 03-30-18	Region	Total ADM (total # students)	Salary
SOUTHWEST	SW	588.75	128,900
ST. MARY'S	SW	197.6	Negotiated
UNALASKA	SW	400.75	127,790
VALDEZ	SC	618.38	144,600
WRANGELL	SE	291.48	118,300
YAKUTAT	SE	97.3	106,000
YUKON- KOYUKUK	INT	1516	138,000
YUPIIT	INT	453.65	120,000

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Outline:

This is the season when deciding whether to attend school is an important consideration for people with low skills who want to continue to live in Alaska. The economy here is very specific about what human resources it needs during the current recession and training after receiving a high school diploma or GED must consider what have been identified as in-demand "priority occupations". Alaska Public Education needs new policy considerations.

Alaska Economy Reality

1. High cost of living and inflation
2. Highest unemployment in the US
3. Seasonal jobs are low-paying
4. Minimum number of Jobs exist in rural Alaska

Public Education's expanding mission

1. High School Diplomas aren't worth much
2. GED option provides direct route to training
3. Districts around the state are expanding their missions

Alaska employers have identified "priority occupations" which will be in demand in the foreseeable future.

1. Identified in-demand employer needs
2. Training required to meet those needs
3. Routes to get to those jobs

Recent federal actions provide hope for increased opportunities for Alaska workers.

1. Drilling in ANWR
2. Other development options

While Alaska is in recession Alaskans are resilient people and smart ones will choose career paths leading to long-term success in this difficult economy.

Policy Considerations for Improving Career Success for Alaskans

Category

1. ALASKA! PUBLIC EDUCATION

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