

SEMESTERS

NEWS AND SUPPORT FOR ALASKA'S EDUCATORS AND SCHOOLS

Greetings from the UAS Alaska College of Education



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MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE DEAN ATWATER

Happy New Year! As we begin 2021, we are optimistic that going forward, some of the restrictions of the pandemic will soon begin to ease and more of our students will once again have the opportunity to ...[see more](#)



AKCOE SEMESTERS' FEATURES

Kaneyo Hirata - UAS Secondary MAT Student Intern, East High School
Education: Master of Arts in Cross-Cultural Studies
Prior Experience: Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation, Facilitator

Michael Thompson - East High School Social Studies Teacher; Social Studies Department Chair
Education: Master of Arts in Education, Chadron State College
Major: Educational Administration
Focus Area: Principal-Secondary (7-12) Bachelor of Science, University of Wisconsin La Crosse
Major(s): Broad Field Social Studies and Political Science



Kaneyo Hirata entered the Secondary Education MAT program with a Master's degree in Cross-Cultural Studies from UAF, while Michael Thompson came into this online mentorship/host teaching role with 24 years of classroom experience and a Master's degree in Educational Administration from Chadron State College. Having only met virtually all school year, they are just one example of mentees/mentors committed to maintaining an effective teaching practicum despite the difficulties of the COVID-19 pandemic.

To teach and mentor completely online has been challenging for both, but Michael has led and modeled with patience, humility, and excitement. He notes, "While I love teaching in the traditional setting, I was excited to cut my teeth in this new format. I firmly believe that effective teachers must be in a constant state of growth and my experiences as an educator during the pandemic have given me the opportunity to connect with students and families in new and exciting ways."

Mr. Thompson recognizes that virtual instruction has also had its benefits for teaching interns which may work to their advantage when it comes to in-state hiring opportunities. He states, "By providing an opportunity for them to learn how to navigate district/state tools such as Canvas, Zoom, Nearpod, and Peardeck in low-pressure situations, they have had time to learn the strengths and weaknesses of these tools before they take on full-time teaching duties."

Beyond learning to grapple with the necessary technical skills in a virtual setting, Kaneyo has shared with her cohort all of the fundamental teaching skills she learned while observing and working with Mr. Thompson, ones that have proved vital for effective teaching and learning online (and eventually in-person). She has also seen the



power of relationship building - the respect Mr. Thompson has gained because students are drawn to his calm approach and his respect for them and his value of their thoughts and thinking. Kaneyo shared, "My mentor teacher is a great example of what it means to be an inclusive, culturally relevant and responsive teacher... he creates a classroom climate that piques student interests in topics that are relevant to students, their cultures, their community and current events. It often feels like we are on a radio or talk show. We have fun and engaging conversations with our students, we laugh and share our thoughts and life experiences with them. Mr. Thompson is always trying to find a better way or solution to help students learn. I hope to be a teacher like him, one who has influenced so many students because of a passion and love for teaching."

The UAS Alaska College of Education thanks all of the host/mentor teachers that have been working so hard during this complex and challenging time in education.

Welcome to the second issue of "Semesters", a bi-annual newsletter provided by the UAS AKCOE. While this second issue is being provided via email, please subscribe to our social media to receive all future updates and issues. If you have any questions, please contact us at 907-796-6050. Thank you!

Message From the Dean



Happy New Year! As we begin 2021, we are optimistic that going forward, some of the restrictions of the pandemic will soon begin to ease and more of our students will once again have the opportunity to physically be in K-12 classrooms. Although the pandemic did not cause us to pivot our instruction to online-we were already there- it did cause us to modify the clinical phases of our programs. Thanks to each of Alaska's school districts that helped us successfully make this transition. Thanks also to our students who persevered through all the uncertainty of last year's university experience while coping with all the new stressors brought on by the virus. Although 2020 was a difficult year, there were a few positives that are important to recognize.

The first of these is that much of the public is more appreciative of our state's teachers. The myriad of cobbled together home school experiences caused a recognition of how difficult it is to teach. My hope is that this increased appreciation of what our teachers do will help to raise the profession's social esteem and in turn, steer more people to teaching. A second positive is that there is a deeper understanding of online learning and the skillset needed to effectively teach in this medium. While the return to in-person teaching will reduce the dependence on online learning, my sense is that we will not return to how it was in March 2020 and that there will be a greater expectation that learning to teach online is a basic part of teacher preparation. We are responding to this expectation by instructing our students to use a variety of online teaching tools including applications such as Flipgrid, Padlet and Nearpod. A third and perhaps most significant positive, is the increased awareness of the digital connectivity inequities that exist for our public-school children. During the past nine months, the shift to online instruction for K-12 exposed this inequity and causes us here at the College to more deeply commit to the work that will improve schools to benefit all students. Diversity and equity are core beliefs that we infuse in our programs and expect our students to embrace and employ when they are teachers. Access to a robust Internet connection should not be an issue for our students. I hope that there will be new federal support that can begin to address the state's digital connectivity inequities. A student's education should not be compromised by their zip code. The image of Alaskan elementary students in a remote community, huddled outside against a school wall to access the Internet will stay with me for a long time. Although 2020 was a very difficult year, let's hope that each of these positives causes lasting change and that in reflection, allows us to view the year as leading to some lasting positives.

Looking ahead, the spring semester promises to be busy--our enrollment is larger this spring than it was for spring 2020--with our College continuing to review and refine our programs to better imbue our core beliefs and values. Included with this work is making the changes to ensure that our graduates have a good understanding of the limitations of traditional Western education on many of our state's students. Our College is using the Tlingit word *Yaakoosgé* (knowledge) to summarize the approach that our programs are taking to give our future teachers strategies that they can employ to treat students as individuals and to incorporate the local context and culture into their instruction.

Thank you for your interest and support of the Alaska College of Education. All of us at the College look forward to our continued work to prepare teachers for Alaska. I wish you a healthy 2021.



Steve Atwater

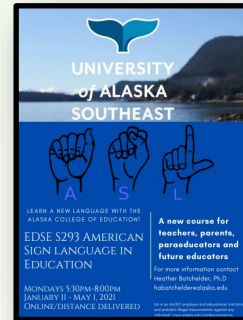
Executive Dean
Steve Atwater, Ph.D

AKCOE & the UA “Day of Giving”

The University of Alaska's first-ever Day of Giving, held on October 20-21 2020, was a great success. We want to thank all of the faculty, staff, alumni and community members who gave in support for Alaska College of Education students. Your support helps us build a brighter future for Alaska.

AKCOE Course Spotlight: Featured EDSE S293 for Spring 2021

American Sign Language (ASL) in Education will introduce basic American Sign Language vocabulary, fingerspelling and grammatical structure. The student will gain the manual skills to engage in basic dialogue, visual cues, and receptive skills to understand general conversations in ASL. Students will apply their skills in very creative fun ways while playing games, signing stories, and learning about Deaf Culture. These skills will greatly benefit educators in communicating with a wide spectrum of students now and in their future careers!



Preparing Indigenous Teachers & Administrators for Alaska’s Schools Update

The PITAAS program supports Alaska Native students in programs at UAS that lead to teacher certification in Alaska. Our students span from undergraduate students pursuing an initial teaching license, to seasoned administrators pursuing advanced certification through our Master’s in Educational Leadership or Superintendent Endorsement area. PITAAS scholarship support generally covers all tuition/fees for eligible students, and seeks to address the shortage of Alaska Native educators. Alaska Natives make up roughly 20% of the state population, but remain underrepresented in the field of education.

PITAAS has operated since 2000, in partnership with Sealaska Heritage Institute. We currently have students from Ketchikan to Utqiagvik, and Juneau to Bethel. As of this newsletter, PITAAS is supporting 26 students pursuing education-related degrees in the Spring 2021 semester. PITAAS also supports students who express an interest in education but have not yet committed to a field through individual scholarships for courses in Alaska Native language and culture. This Spring 2021, more than 10 undergraduate students are slated to receive funds for individual classes, intended to encourage enrollment in an education program.

We caught up with one of our most recent graduates, Daniel Felton (pictured), who finished his Master of Arts in Teaching, Special Education program this Fall 2020. Daniel shares he is “*grateful to PITAAS, Sealaska, Huna Totem, my many UA faculty, and my advisor for having made this dream achievable. My goals in the near future are to continue working for the Anchorage School District in Special Education, honing my craft through the many changes that are occurring in public education at present. May all of you reading this have a blessed 2021 and pursue your dreams ardently throughout this New Year!*” Daniel joins more than 160 Alaska Native educators who have completed a program through UAS with PITAAS support since 2000.



PITAAS accepts students on a rolling basis through each semester. For questions about PITAAS eligibility and application process, please visit our website at <https://uas.alaska.edu/PITAAS>, or contact Ronalda Cadiente-Brown or David Russell-Jensen at uas.pitaas@alaska.edu, or 907-796-6029.

AKCOE Partners with DZ and Juneau-Douglas City Museum

“The rise of the machines is upon the Juneau-Douglas City Museum. As Alaska’s COVID-19 [case counts soar](https://www.juneauempire.com/news/domo-arigato-assister-roboto-museum-uses-robots-to-allow-visits-from-anywhere/), the idea of visiting a museum might seem ludicrous. But technology is reversing that narrative, allowing those interested to see the Juneau-Douglas City Museum from the comfort of home — no matter where on Earth that home is...”
<https://www.juneauempire.com/news/domo-arigato-assister-roboto-museum-uses-robots-to-allow-visits-from-anywhere/>

AKCOE Hosts Dual-Enrollment Classes for Alaska’s High School Students

The UAS Alaska College of Education is partnering with eight (8) Alaskan School Districts and Educators Rising Alaska to offer dual-enrollment courses for local high school students. The high school students are enrolled in the UAS Introduction to Education course with some students taking the course virtually, and others being taught by their high school teacher. Educators Rising Alaska is paying for the tuition of the high school students.

AKCOE: Virtual Supervision of Interns During COVID-19

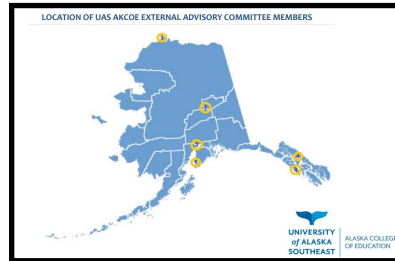
For all initial licensure programs, our supervision goal is that our university faculty supervisor observe at least 3 lessons or class periods each semester. Ideally, when scheduling permits, there is a conference with the intern prior to the observation, so that the goals and objectives for the lesson can be discussed. During the pandemic, these pre-meetings take place through Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or another tool in use by the school district. The observation can happen in different ways. If the instruction happens in a face-to-face setting, the supervisor can observe through a tool like Zoom, using a laptop, a tablet, a webcam or other device. If the lesson is taking place online, the intern and host teacher invite the supervisor as a guest to the synchronous online session. AKCOE follows all district policies regarding privacy and confidentiality. These sessions are generally not recorded, unless the district grants permission in advance. No personal or academic data on K-12 students is disseminated in any way.

After the evaluation, a conference to debrief the lesson is arranged with the intern and ideally the host teacher as well. During the conference, the interns receive detailed feedback on their teaching. The College uses the Student Teaching Observation Tool (STOT) to reflect on the student’s practice, or for formative or summative evaluation, depending on the progress of the intern. The supervisor completes the STOT after observing a lesson. The host teacher also completes the Professional Characteristics Assessment (PCA), and the results are sometimes discussed during the conferences with the supervisor, the intern, and the host teacher.

Through phone calls, email, online courses, webinars and virtual meetings, the supervisors keep in close contact with the interns.

Introducing the UAS AKCOE External Advisory Committee

We recognize the need to stay connected with our K-12 colleagues. One significant way that we keep in touch with the realities and needs of our K-12 partners is through our External Advisory Committee. Since our meetings began in 2018, we have continued to regularly examine our programs and seek feedback from our stakeholders to determine whether UAS continues to meet the teaching needs of Alaskan school districts. Our committee's membership includes teachers, principals, a superintendent, an executive director for an Alaska Native nonprofit and a legislator (locations marked by yellow circles). The Committee meets biannually to review our College's new activity and to provide insight into organizational activity across Alaska. This insight is invaluable to help us maintain a current understanding of what is happening at the school and education policy level.



AKCOE PROGRAM UPDATES



Mary Wegner
Ed Leadership Coordinator

Educational Leadership

Mary Wegner, Ph.D

Students working to earn a Superintendent Endorsement had a chance to practice their advocacy skills during a mock advocacy session co-chaired by Representatives Sara Hannan and Andi Story. Executive Dean Dr. Atwater, as well as faculty and internship supervisors who work with the program, joined the Representatives to provide the students an opportunity to answer questions after their testimony concluded. Thanks to everyone who participated! The students found the experience to be a meaningful way to learn how to advocate for public education, which is a foundational skill for aspiring superintendents.

For more, check out the [Educational Leadership](#) and [Superintendent Program](#) Pages



Special Education Program

Susan Andrews, M.Ed

The BA special education program has been updated to reflect multiple options for meeting the AK Native Graduation Credit. EDSE has created a course dedicated to learning American Sign Language and is open to all interested persons spring 2021. We hope to make this a regular offering. Faculty are in the process of developing two new courses. One will support student engagement focused on trauma-informed practices, UDL, Functional Behavior Supports, and current practice. The other course will be on understanding special education for the Alaskan Context focused on historical influences, bilingual supports, and disability issues. These courses will be incorporated in the BA special education program and offered as electives to students in graduate programs. The Special Education Program is excited to be adding a new tenure track faculty position! Our new Faculty member will begin in the Fall of 2021, with interviews of qualified applicants commencing in Spring 2021.

For more, check out the [Special Education Program Page](#)



Susan Andrews
Special Education Program
Coordinator

BA Elementary Education Program

Jeffrey Lofthus, Ph.D

Our BA Elementary Education student teachers discover early on that Tomorrow is here! During fall student teaching they prepare for upcoming interviews for classroom teaching positions. Program expectations include updating their cover letter and resume, completing teacher interview questions, participating in mock interviews, and completing an application for a position as a professional educator. Past student comments about the process include "the interview questions they asked were spot on with those we completed in class. I felt extremely confident in my responses and I could tell that the principals I interviewed with were impressed as well" and "filling out an application makes graduation feel so real! It's good to think about what needs to be added to my cover letter and resume."

For more, check out the [Elementary Education Program Page](#)



Jeffrey Lofthus
Elementary Education
Program Coordinator



Lisa Richardson
Reading Specialist Program
Coordinator

Reading Specialist Program

Lisa Richardson, Ph.D

Candidates in the Reading Specialist program have been hard at work continually adapting to ever-changing instructional settings, and supporting one another in developing best practices for literacy instruction in their online, face to face and hybrid settings. This Spring, candidates are examining practices related to reading and cognition, reading literature, and developing their capacities as literacy leaders and instructional coaches. In the Reading Teacher as Leader course, candidates are each working to mentor a colleague or intern over the course of the semester, continuing to refine their own reflective practices, and to build capacity for high quality instruction at each of their school sites. The strong collegial relationships that have been developed in the program have made a positive difference in morale, for sure. It's truly a gift to see experienced educators really supporting one another in finding ways to best meet the needs of each of their students in such a complex time.

For more, check out the [Reading Specialist Program Page](#)



Beth Hartley
MAT Elementary Program
Coordinator

MAT Elementary Education

Beth Hartley, Ph.D

Due to COVID-19 moving many teachers to virtual instructional delivery, our teacher researchers in our Classroom Research Course embarked on cutting edge qualitative research to investigate the challenges of engaging students in online learning. One such teacher in Anchorage used online resources and interactive strategies to assist a small group of reluctant readers in her study *Promoting Value of Reading in 5th Grade Boys Using Student Inquiry & Interest*. Another from Anchorage successfully implemented changes in online lecture and engagement strategies with her dental hygiene students in her study *Active Learning: A Pedagogical Approach To Increasing Student Engagement In Online Education*. A third sought to see the effects of choice (screen on or off and seating choices while online) on engagement in her 5th grade online class *Students' Choice and Seating Arrangement*. And finally, a fourth teacher attempted to empower his 5th grade students to reduce distractions while online in his study: *Student Advocacy, Distractions and Engagement Online*. In an on-site classroom a teacher researcher, confirmed the positive effects of arts integration on student learning in her study *The Effects of Arts Integration on Student Learning*. These investigations have highlighted ways we as educators are able to effectively adapt to rapidly changing teaching environments, always looking through the lens of "what if" in order to better support student learning.

For more, check out the [Elementary Education Program Page](#)