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HOW DOES COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IMPACT STUDENTS?

**Every Student Succeeds Act underscores the importance of quality schools
and family engagement to student achievement and thriving schools**

By Lori Grassgreen - Director, Alaska Initiative for Community Engagement

This is not a new message for us in Alaska. The Association of Alaska School Boards is one of a few school board associations nationally that have prioritized and adopted the support role for community, family, and youth engagement through the Alaska Initiative for Community Engagement into the organization.

Alaska ICE takes family, student, and community engagement seriously building on the research that these are essential to help students. A significant body of research has developed to indicate that family engagement for students is a greater predictor for children's academic achievement more than family characteristics, such as education, family size, marital status, socio-economic level and student grade level.

Schools and communities working intentionally for higher engagement have resulted in improved school climate results, improved attendance, improved academic performance, and reduced risk behavior for students.

So often school boards, district staff, and school staff want to know what does effective community engagement look like?

Community engagement means that the best solutions are developed in partnership with community and consider carefully the uniqueness of each community. Like any area of school improvement or student achievement, there is significant research and lessons learned on effectively engaging families, engaging students, building school climate, and working with community coalitions effectively.

To have a lasting and meaningful impact it is important that engagement is fully embedded in the mission, vision, activities of a district and all schools.

Some common steps for successful community engagement include:

1) Decide as a board, a district, and school to make community engagement a priority and determine the

structures and dedicated human resources you need to have in place.

2) Decide in partnership with the community what areas of engagement and school climate building you are working to change making sure that students, young leaders, families, and Elders have an opportunity to be a part of leading the way.

3) Develop an intentional plan for engagement that will have the most impact and truly considers the uniqueness of your community. Having a shared vision and roadmap for the community is essential to community partnerships and leveraging funding.

4) Get the support you need by turning community supporters into advocates and ongoing coaching for your engagement champions.

5) Tell your story to the community and get feedback so you can continue to improve the impact on students and schools.

Positive impact through engagement stems from partnerships between schools, parents and communities that are based on mutual benefit, respect and accountability. Engagement for impact goes beyond temporary or limited outreach on the part of educational institutions.

The Association of Alaska School Boards Initiative for Community Engagement (Alaska ICE) works with school boards, district staff or schools to create engagement plans that are sequential, comprehensive, and can have significant impact on student outcomes.

Alaska ICE provides ongoing coaching, trainings, and support for community engagement staff.

For more information contact Lori Grassgreen, lgrassgreen@asb.org or Mark Calvert, mcalvert@asb.org

NEW STAFF & DISTRICT ACTIVITIES AT ALASKA ICE



Konrad Frank

Konrad Frank has completed his first month at AASB with the ICE team and we are happy to have him. He joins Mark Calvert, Heather Coulehan and Jenni Lefing as Community Engagement Educators. Here is Konrad's introduction:

"I wanted to take this time to introduce myself. My English name is Konrad Frank and in Tlingit, I go by Shák' Sháani Éesh. I grew up in Angoon where my father's people are from, while my mother's side comes from Sitka. As a recent graduate from UAS in Alaska Native studies and my experience growing up in rural Alaska, I hope to be a great resource to the team. I look forward to learning from you all. Gunalchéesh axh'éit yísa áxh.ée. Thank you for listening."

i3 CRESEL GRANT

(Heather, Konrad, Lori):

The i3 innovation grant will support the implementation and evaluation of district embedded culturally responsive social and emotional learning. Currently, seven districts are signed up in Alaska (Bering Straits School District, Lower Yukon, Nome Public Schools, Kodiak Island, Kuspuk, Sitka, and Hydaburg City Districts).

Lori and Heather have been working with each district to map out their SEL planning processes, timelines and budgets. We have been working with First Alaskans to finalize our processes for hosting community conversations on culturally responsive social and

emotional learning.

Working with the evaluation team match pairings were created and 18 implementation schools were chosen as a part of a randomized control trial.

Sitka (Heather and Lori):

Heather and Lori continue to work with the Sitka School District to prepare their leadership team to work on social and emotional learning. Heather and Lori worked with Blatchley Middle School administrators to prepare for fall implementation. In a recent Sitka in-service focused on curricula, educators and counselors had the choice of which academic content area they wanted to participate in and 18 chose to participate in the SEL work group. Heather worked with the group to review and adapt SEL standards to meet the needs of SSD.

Kodiak (Heather):

Heather facilitated SEL and family engagement professional development for the Kodiak High School staff on April 7-8th. In February, the elementary, rural and middle school staff participated in this professional development so the entire KIBSD staff has now received this in-service training. As a partner in the i3 CRESEL grant, KIBSD will be able to move forward the work in an intentional way with supports and resources.

Hydaburg (Heather, Lori, Konrad):

Heather and Lori facilitated a two-day planning process with district staff and community stakeholders. The Hydaburg team was able to get grounded in SEL, establish their SEL goals and key activities. Konrad and Lori worked with the First Alaskans Institute to host community conversations looking at how to make schools more culturally responsive and how to build cultural integration into this project. There was a very heartfelt conversation. This trip provided an opportunity to begin relationships,

Bering Straits (Heather):

Bering Strait School District invited

Heather to participate in their school counselor meeting on April 11. Heather facilitated conversation about the i3 grant and pre-planning for the BSSD SEL leadership team meeting in May.

Nome (Heather):

While in Nome, Heather met with both principals and the superintendent of Nome Public Schools to prepare for the NPS SEL leadership team meeting in May.

Steering Committee: A steering committee will be put together to serve as advisors. This will include EED School Recognition and Support Staff; Alaska Afterschool Network, First Alaskans Institute, district staff, and regional partners.

Evaluation: Lori is working closely with the evaluation team, the American Institutes for Research, to establish evaluation structures for the randomized control trial. Lori is working with both AIR and EED to troubleshoot baseline assessments of student academic achievement.

ICE PARTNER DISTRICTS:

Annette Island School District (Konrad/Mark):

Konrad and Mark helped AISD with student "takeover day" - we led students in team building and problem solving games. Mark and Konrad helped with orientation of the new superintendent and met with several members of the community to strengthen collaboration in the community.

Kuspuk (Lori/Mark):

Kuspuk school district has been hosting "fun" math nights at the library. The district also hosted the Winter Bear as a way to discuss and prevent suicide. Kuspuk Community Engagement Advocate has been working with Mark and a videographer, Katie Basile, to put together e-books and digital stories with Kuspuk students and Elders.

Nome: Nome continues to build on its recent successes with engaging families. The first of the series resulted in 300 people attending the family learning and fun nights. The second fun in literacy was hosted this week. Nome also continues and is one of the few districts working on youth leadership in the elementary school with great success.



Metlakatla middle school and high school students take part in a team building game during a Spring 2016 "Takeover Day", sponsored by AISD.

School Climate and Connectedness Survey Updates (Jenni):

School Climate and Connectedness Survey closed with 29 districts participating. The data is being cleaned and reports will be distributed to districts in the upcoming months Jenni is working to set up dates for data planning workshops using the school climate and connectedness survey and we are working with districts to create integrated data snapshots.

(Jenni/Lori/Konrad): After reviewing piloted cultural scales, AASB is working closely with First Alaskans and partners to develop a cultural scale for Alaska. We are inviting members from the ANDORE Educational Advocacy group and the ARISE Culture Group to be a part of the discussion. If you are interested in being a part of this conversation as we develop this scale please let us know or fill out this survey. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZH3QB7X>

Additional Projects:

Digitizing Books (Mark): Mark has been working with a copy editor and external contractor to update the content of Helping Kids Succeed Alaska Style and The Power of an Untapped Resource. We are working to refresh the

look, content, and feel of these materials and to develop some videos, audio, and social network resources to help promote assets among youth, within schools, and within communities.

ICE Website Updates (Konrad):

Konrad has been working to revamp our ICE website. We are consolidating and making this website easier to use. This will be a platform to share our digitized and refreshed assets materials.

Integration of Services

(Lori/ Lon/ Steve/ Bob): Various members of the AASB team have been working together to offer a more holistic model to school improvement and student achievement. We are developing ways to share the information with EED, districts, and interested boards.

Coaching Boys into Men (Mark):

Working with the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, Mark facilitated a workshop for Coaches from across the state. The 1.5 workshop provides an opportunity for coaches to get more tools to support their athletes to become respectful and healthy men.

Partnerships:

AASG (Mark and Konrad): Mark and Konrad attended and helped facilitate the AASG con-

ference in Kodiak. More than 295 students attend, representing 36 schools from throughout Alaska. During the three days of the conference the student leaders passed numerous excellent resolutions covering a wide variety of topics important to students in Alaska and nationwide, conducted a caucus, and had fun. ICE is working with AASG to consider how to best engage rural students and to provide on-going support to AASG representatives and advisors.

Alaska Native Discussions on Racial Equity:

Lori participated in ANDORE calls looking at how to take the next step after the racial equity summit. This was also an opportunity to move forward and share how individuals and organizations were moving forward the racial equity work.

EED-Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council:

Lori serves on this council. The last call was focused on a Governor's Grant that AECCC received to focus on early childhood policies and infrastructure. Timi and Lori met with the conveners of this group who were interested in sharing information with the AASB membership. We also discussed ways to more fully support districts with their early learning innovations and development.

JUNE NELSON MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP ESSAYS

The 25th annual June Nelson Memorial Scholarship program awarded 10 Alaska high school students and two freshman college students with \$1,200 scholarships this spring. The following are examples of essays written by the award-winners on the topic of:

What is something you have done or have seen done in your school that has promoted kindness and respect towards ALL students?



Jennifer DeGraffenried
West Anchorage High School

I cannot pinpoint a singular occurrence that promotes kindness and respect in all students of West High because it's more of a daily disbursement of events that go unnoticed by most. I consider myself quite fortunate to have grown up in Alaska and had the chance of going to the school

I do. Don't get me wrong; I'm not here trying to advertise for West because like all schools, and everything in life, it's not perfect. There is, however, one thing I admire and find to be the ultimate kindness and respect weaving idea, and that is the idea that there is a little bit of something here for everyone.

This idea is supported by the enthusiastic teachers that want to guide you to your love

of knowledge and give you the tools to build your world; the plethora of sports teams and coaches that want you to reach your fullest potential; the vast amount of clubs, classes and activities where you meet new people that share interest in the same things you do; and the cultural diversity that exposes you to the world and people waiting just outside your current field of view. These are the things that build the West High community, and these are the things that promote respect and kindness in all the students within it.

A sense of community is important because it is a major ground zero to feeling connected and having a sense of fulfillment. Because the students can feel connected and important in the clubs that specifically appeal to them, or on a team where their contributed efforts matter, it creates a sort of self-understanding and accomplished feeling within themselves. We know that when kids aren't happy with who they think they are or are having a hard time at home or school they can lash out, possibly

even bully other kids. If all the children that went through those difficult circumstances had a club they belonged in, a team they felt connected to, or teachers that wanted to share their love of learning with them, the lashing out and bullying would diminish. It sounds like a perfect world, but the beauty of it is that it's not far out of reach because it doesn't have to be perfect. That's why I love West, because there are pockets of community all strung together and you can find yourself in one or even many of them.

The little pockets of community are what I mean by "weavers of kindness and respect" in the sense that when you find somewhere you belong, and everyone has their thing that they can dedicate time and effort to, there's a happiness which is what promotes kindness and respect in all. West just happens to have a large sum of these little pockets, a little bit of something for everyone. These are the things I see everyday that I think create a peace at my school, whether it be the yoga club, the

laughing club, football, soccer, partners club, or even the cheese club (all of which we have here), when students are involved their world is transformed into a place of opportunity.

Unfortunately, even at West's height of student involvement, there are always those who don't care to be involved or interests that have not been expressed academically. Worldly circumstances such as funding and time weigh into the process, if only in a dream all the students would have everything they need to become ingenuitive members of our society and lead happy lives. I only mean this to say that even though West is a great place for student involvement, with money and natural human imperfection we only get so far. These clubs and activities expose students to new people and ideas, their world grows and they learn things like humility and understanding, how to cooperate and compromise.

These ideas lead me to conclude that when high schools offer a wide variety of subjects, activities, sports, and clubs trying to find something for every student, the happier students are and the kinder and more respectable they turn out to be. I respect those students I see that are dedicated to their sports teams and athletic goals. I respect the diligent students I meet when working on group projects and discussions topics. I really think that such excellence in all aspects including simple human decency is due to their after school sports and music and their teachers that actually care. We want to enjoy learning, and it's as simple as that.



Emma Wetter
Dillingham
High School

Spreading respect and paying attention to when others promote kindness and respect has been an important part of high school for me. Making sure everybody is included when doing something for students is important, so they don't feel left out because that defeats the purpose of the project.

I have been honored to be apart of projects and see them being done.

In my school I have had the opportunity to participate in many positive group projects.

One of the projects I worked on was writing a kind message on sticky notes and putting them on every person's locker. We made sure that nobody was left out and every locker had a sticky note. The notes said "you are loved" and it was inspired by a story we saw about a girl who had done it in her school and it had made a big difference. We wanted to follow her footsteps and try to accomplish the positive influence she

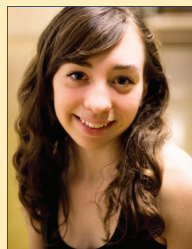
had. Another project we did was a coffee hour before school started. All student and community members were welcome to come and grab breakfast and coffee. They were able to either talk to the people there or take it with them.

If people stayed to talk we tried to encourage topics about sharing respect and good relationships in our school and community. Recently for our National Honor Society project we created a giant calendar on a bulletin board. We listed events and holidays coming up and student and teacher birthdays. This is something we want to continue each month even after we graduate, so all students have a chance to have a special birthday recognition. It encourages others to be kind and say happy birthday. These projects were just some of the one I have had the honor of working on.

I have seen other students stand up for each other when someone is being bullied. This might not seem like it directly affects all students, but it does because standing up and saying bullying isn't okay promotes kindness for everybody. Students at my school can make a positive difference if they want to and they do a lot of good work. Seeing my fellow students make positive changes for the benefit of others inspires me to do better work that helps people. I am a part of different groups such as student council, Youth Dillingham Leadership Group and National Honor Society. In all of these groups I get to see group members making positive changes in the roles they play in the group. They have helped to encourage other students to help with things like collecting canned food and other essential items for people in need. This helps the students in the school make a positive difference and see what they are capable when they put their mind to it.

All of these things have promoted respect and kindness to all students and have benefitted my school and community. They have had a positive impact and were beneficial to everybody involved. I am glad to have participated in them and they have given me skills for the future.

JNMS Second Year Winner



Kaya Duguay
Sitka High School

"What advice would you give to graduating seniors about the transition from high school to college/business/trade school? What hurdles have you had to overcome and why has the experience been worth it?"

Forget a freshman orientation manual; what incoming students need is an encyclopedia. The problem is, when everything about life changes, there's unfortunately no perfect formula for how to react. What I'd like to try to do is reflect on my experiences—an equal source of successes and cautionary tales.

One of the elements of college that hit me over the head was the nearly unlimited scope of opportunities on campus. When so many enthusiastic people are consolidated in one place, amazing things happen. If possible, try as many new things as you can—since I came from a small town, I loved the chance to experience opportunities I had never before been exposed to. The flip side, though, was balance: I had to come to terms with the fact that there simply wasn't enough time in the day to be involved with everything that interested me. Through this, I discovered a new game plan: try everything, but don't be afraid to pull back. Freshman year is a time of flux; it's perfectly okay and expected to stretch out into different things before finding what makes you happiest. After experiencing the support of so many communities on campus, I came to realize that everyone knows this and is willing to help people find that balance.

In a similar note, one of the single most important things I've learned is that diverse social circles are the basis of an amazing college experience. As I arrived on campus, I was understandably mildly overwhelmed and tended to group together with my suitemates. I have never been an extrovert, being irrationally nervous of putting myself into strange situations. Yet, as classes started and I started joining extracurriculars, I began to find the sheer variety of things I had in common with different people. I met equally amazing friends in my astrophysics class as in an ultimate Frisbee tournament, or in the dance groups I joined. After that, everything snowballed: my chemistry study partner bonded with a member of my dance group over a musical, I discovered that the girl I met via astrophysics was close to a friend in my residential college, and the connections just kept surfacing. I cannot stress enough how amazing it was to meet so many other perspectives and to realize that ultimately they all interlock in some way.

So yes, college is a huge change. However, it also offers the opportunity for us to change as well; I've learned that sometimes the best way to adapt to the new environment is to evolve, becoming more open to new things and trying to overcome inhibitions. Above all, I'd urge students to find the line between personal well-being and community involvement, because letting go of either one makes it impossible to make the most of your time at college. And, honestly? Don't worry. Everything you need to learn, you will learn one way or another and come out the other side a little wiser. I guarantee... call it speaking from experience.

(The author is a college freshman who was awarded a June Nelson scholarship in 2015. She is a repeat recipient in 2016).



TECHNOLOGY BRINGS ADVANTAGES TO PERSONALIZED LEARNING

By Dr. Robert Whicker & Steve Nelson - Director and Project Coordinator, AASB Consortium for Digital Learning

Most of us can remember nights of cramming for tests using memorization techniques like flashcards, creating rhyming word associations, poring over written notes, or discussing a teacher's lecture with fellow students.

Which study method worked best was a hotly debated topic among my peers. The fact is, none of us were right. We all learn in different ways.

Individual Learning Styles

Researchers have developed models to identify types of learning styles, such as the VARK model, which stands for Visual, Auditory, Read/write, and Kinesthetic—four primary sensory qualities used to assimilate information.

Each of these learning styles respond best to different methods of teaching. Visual learn-

ers prefer to see ideas represented graphically. Auditory learners remember information better when reciting it out loud. Reading/ writing learners interact best with text, while Kinesthetic learners enjoy participatory activities.

The challenge for educators is determining how best to accommodate and engage these four unique types of learners. It can be done.

Years ago, it was sheer joy watching a kindergarten teacher I supervised practice her art. She was a truly gifted educator who made sure that every lesson engaged every student in every modality through the individually-paced tasks to do at learning centers and direct instruction she provided. Her success rate was phenomenal in teaching children to read. The work she did in preparation for each day was astounding. Students were nurtured and felt their success daily. If only we could take the art of that teacher and include it in the science of our teaching today.

Pinpointing the most effective learning method and providing the opportunity for each student to engage in it is critical to content mastery. When a student does not fully grasp a key concept before the class moves on, gaps in understanding result. Left unchecked, learning gaps can become chasms, leading to underachievement and dropout.

Finding the pathway that unlocks a child's understanding is a magical moment for teachers. Yet how can we make sure that every child "gets it"?

What is Personalized Learning?

One of our traditional approaches to learning provides every student with the same instruction, assignments and assessments with little, if any, modification.

Personalized Learning refers to instruction that is more tailored to the individual learning styles, needs, and ability levels of each student to facilitate their academic success. One definition of personalized learning can apply established standards of content and communication to methods that enable different learning styles to be used and expressed.

"The challenge for educators is determining how best to accommodate and engage these four unique types of learners."

"Instruction tailored to the individual learning styles, needs, and ability levels of each student to facilitate their academic success."

Setting the Stage

So what does that look like in a school? To make a successful transition to personalized learning, certain criteria need to be in place. For many of our schools, making this fundamental shift will require a comprehensive and very intentional effort.

Implementing a personalized learning model first calls for commitment and participation from administrators, teachers, students and families. New methods will be put in place to support the shift, such as pre-assessing individual student learning styles, modifying instructional strategies, rearranging classroom layouts, changing how students are grouped, taught and assessed, a change from seat time to mastery, and reconfiguring the operational structure of the school.

Providing a customized learning experience for every student will also require setting clear academic goals, providing adequate teacher preparation, and establishing systems of support in the areas of leadership, professional development, and technical training. In addition, state standards must be followed, and personalized learning efforts will need to live within the constraints of those standards.

Education Innovation

The notion of providing every student with a made-to-order educational experience may sound like a shift too large to consider, but new innovations are helping us to create systems of support and instruction to make it a reality.

Some of the critical components needed for personalized learning to truly be effective are

“A made-to-order educational experience may sound like a shift too large to consider, but new innovations are helping us to create systems of support and instruction to make it a reality.”

the same components the Consortium for Digital Learning (CDL) has advocated to schools over the past decade: high access to technology, improved local networks and access to broadband.

Personalized learning platforms have been around for years, but these ready-use-systems have evolved into comprehensive ecosystems that include a variety of integrated components designed to support teacher adoption, individualize student learning, and help make the school implementation process go smoothly. In these systems, teachers have access to:

- High quality, customizable curriculum aligned to standards and written by vetted professionals.
- A wide range of professional learning materials aligned to the most current educational research and modern-day teaching techniques with current tools.
- Micro-credentials for both students and teachers that acknowledge bits of important learning that sometimes are lost or are hard to measure with traditional methods.
- Built-in professional learning communities using social networks and other technologies.

Students have access to:

- Pre-assessment learning profiles determining learning style to assist both teacher and student in selecting personalized course content.
- Curriculum that addresses a wide variety of student needs, such as Remedial/Intervention, Credit Recovery, Core, Honors, AP, Dual Credit and CTE course levels.
- Randomized course content that allows a student to achieve mastery, rather than take the same course repeatedly.
- Continuous assessment of essential components to learning such as completion times, time on task, etc)

More Than Just a Platform

Our goal has to be providing students with a well-defined, rigorous academic experience in a larger context of citizenship and academic/career development.

“CDL offers a range of services to support districts and schools in making the transition to a personalized learning platform.”

While the personalized learning systems provide a solid platform for delivering education, they gain so much more impact when combined with strategies such as project-based learning, experiential learning, real-life practicum and internships in the world of work, and service learning in the community at large.

Since its launch in 2005 the Consortium for Digital Learning, in conjunction with our partners, has undertaken a variety of successful education ventures across Alaska. Building upon this knowledge, we offer a range of services to support districts and schools in making the transition to a personalized learning platform.

With experience in establishing innovative high-level projects, CDL can assist in efforts ranging from project management of personalized learning in a high access environment, the development of high-level STEM projects, professional development for teachers, and tech mentoring for technology professionals.

Facilitating unique learning experiences for each student is an idea whose time has come. It is also the best hope for raising the academic performance of Alaska’s students.

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To find out what type of learner you are, take a few moments to fill out the VARK questionnaire. After submitting your answers, you’ll receive an assessment of your individual learning style and strategies for maximizing your learning success.

If you’re interested in launching a personalized learning project in your district, please contact rwicker@aasb.org.

Link to VARK questionnaire:
<http://vark-learn.com/the-vark-questionnaire/>



ASSOCIATION OF ALASKA SCHOOL BOARDS



Calendar

JUNE

- 11** NSBA Equity Symposium
Washington D.C.
- 12-14** NSBA Advocacy Institute
Washington D.C.

JULY

- 7-9** COSBAC Annual Conference
Denver, CO
- 22-24** AASB Board of Directors
Summer Meeting
Sand Point, AK
- 31-Aug 4** NSBA Executive Directors'
Summer Institute – Lake Tahoe,
CA

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