



Festival of Ideas: Best Practices in Alaska's Rural Schools & Districts

As a special feature of the 2010 Alaska School Leadership Institute (ASLI), participants will be asked to share school and/or district best practices that are improving learning and addressing the cultural challenges of working in Alaska's rural village schools.

The Festival of Ideas is intended to highlight "how to" best practices that would be useful to RAPPS schools and districts.

Participants will be asked to lead a 15 – 20 minute group discussion about their best practice with 10 – 12 colleagues from across the RAPPS schools and districts.

- Best practices should reflect one or more of the six domains from the EED Self-Study Tool for Alaska Schools.
- Participants will be partnered with colleagues from like-schools and districts.
- NO Powerpoint presentations, posters, or other handout materials are needed.
- New ASLI attendees are not required to contribute a best practice to the Festival of Ideas.

In preparation for the Festival of Ideas, all returning participants are asked to submit a brief description of their featured best practice.

Using an online form, participants will contribute a one-page write-up responding to eight prompts. These prompts and your responses will serve as guide for your group discussion.

Included in this document are three examples intended to model the write-up that is requested.

Please review these examples and submit your own best practice online by Friday, May 7.

Enter your best practice online at: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ASLIideas>

Information you will need to fill out this form:

1. Contact Information (School, District, Principal phone and email)
2. Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain(s) addressed (Curriculum, Assessment, Instruction, Supportive Learning Environment, Professional Development, Leadership)
3. Background about school (maximum 60 words)
4. Priorities and strategies for improvement 2009-2010 (Maximum 50 words)
5. Description of your emerging best practice - anchored to the domains
(Describe the practice. Discuss how it evolved. Highlight key elements, including cultural responsiveness.) (Maximum 100 words)
6. Indicators of impact and improvement (Maximum 75 words)
7. Description of key supports leading to success (Maximum 50 words)
8. Summary of key lessons learned (Maximum 50 words)

You can compose your answers in a Word document and then cut and paste them into the form, or you can type directly into the online form.

The description that you submit online will be available at the institute for you to use as a handout during your group discussion. You do not need to bring any additional handouts or materials. The Festival of Ideas will produce an institute publication as well as case materials featuring Alaskan examples.

EXAMPLE RESPONSE: Assessment

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

We are a remote village in the Humble school district and we have 174 students K-12. Principal has been in village for 2 years and we have 3 new teachers this year. We use Learning Town for reading and Saxon for math. We have used Aimsweb for 2 years.

Priorities and Strategies for Improvement for 2009-2010 (Maximum 50 words)

Priorities: Assessment & Curriculum Strategies: 1. Fully implement Aimsweb screening assessment 2. Provide additional professional development for teachers 3. Use screening data in teacher meetings 4. Become efficient at using AIMSweb reports for examining student achievement

Description of Your Emerging Best Practice - Anchored to the Domains Describe the practice. Highlight the key elements. Discuss how it evolved. (Maximum 100 words)

Fully implement Aimsweb screening assessment.

1. Principal monitors and supports teachers with giving the assessment 3 times a year to all students and entering the data into the data base. Last year we only assessed some students part of the year
2. Provide additional professional development for teachers- Teachers received formal inservice in the fall and winter when results are in. We didn't know how to use the reports very efficiently last year and needed lots of practice.
3. Use screening data in teacher meetings- principal participates in teacher meetings to analyze data and make instructional plans. All teachers bring data to teacher meetings. Reports and data sets are identified for the meeting and communicated to teachers. We use Criterion referenced data for analysis.
4. Become efficient at using AIMSweb reports for examining student achievement-learning plans are developed for students who fall below Benchmark on the screening assessment. Principal uses the learning plans to guide principal walk-throughs. Last year we didn't address student needs after looking at the data. We were more concerned with overall performance rather than individual students,

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 75 words)

Increased results: 08-09 spring results:

2008- 24% of students in first grade were proficient with RCBM—2009 results: 46% of students in first grade were proficient with RCBM. 2008- 37% of students in Kindergarten were proficient with PSF—2009 61% of students in Kindergarten were proficient with PSF

2008- 34% of students in 4th grade were proficient with RCBM—2009 51% of students in 4th grade were proficient with RCBM in spring.

Description of Key Supports Leading to Success (Maximum 50 words)

Teachers now understand the purpose of the assessments and how to use the reports to look at student progress. We are better at knowing when a child is at risk for reading failure. When a student is identified as "at risk" we meet as a group to build a plan for that child for more intervention or targeted instruction. The learning plans help us focus on that child very specifically and watch their progress closely. Teachers are now excited to get results and are beginning to believe that student achievement can increase dramatically. The principal's involvement was the most influential factor. Having the leader attend the meetings and hold teacher accountable created the expectations and focus that the school needed. Identifying the reports that we use was also helpful as there are so many reports to choose from in the data base. Professional development made a huge difference in creating confidence with teachers and analyzing data.

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

Principal participation makes a great difference in increasing implementation 2. Professional development is critical for success 3. Practice with analysis brings increased confidence 4. Individual students success creates overall school success 5. Analyzing the data without changing instruction has little impact 6. Principal expectations and monitoring those expectations makes a huge difference.

EXAMPLE RESPONSE: Supportive Learning Environment

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

We are a remote site in the Crandall School District with 73 students K-12. The principal has been at the school for 1 year and we have 3 new teachers this year, for a total of 7. We have just begun engaging Positive Behavioral Supports (PBS) this year.

Priorities and Strategies for Improvement for 2009-2010 (Maximum 50 words)

Priorities: Supportive Learning Environment. Strategies:

1. Provide 3 day PBS inservice in professional development for all school staff in August.
2. Continue growing Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) through collaborative meetings.
3. Fully implement PBS school-wide.
4. Use data in collaboration meetings.

Description of Your Emerging Best Practice - Anchored to the Domains Describe the practice. Highlight the key elements. Discuss how it evolved. (Maximum 100 words)

1. All staff (including custodial, food service, 2 students), trained by SESA (PBS contractor), developed a five-item school wide positive behavior protocol; posted prominently around school.
2. Used PLC base for faithful implementation.
3. Student body assemblies: protocol reminders. The principal monitors passing period, all staff also monitor as appropriate. Teachers maintain in classroom. Principal participates in teacher meetings, data analysis, adjustments. All teachers bring data, e.g., attendance data, referral frequencies, into collaboration meetings.
4. Periodic all staff meetings, using small group protocols, continue progress and course corrections.

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

Increased results: Relative to the previous year, referrals to the principal's office were down by 32%; first period absences were reduced by 27%; first period tardies did not change significantly, because kids that had been tardy tended to be on-time while previously absent kids tended now to be tardy; other tardies were down by 46%.

Description of Key Supports Leading to Success (Maximum 100 words)

All staff recognizes the importance of a consistent, positive, common set of behavioral expectations; and, each person has developed a sense of responsibility to support a positive climate in the school. Behavior data has become part of the collaboration meeting data brought into conversations about specific students. Students identified "at risk" (> 3 referrals per semester or >5 tardies in a class or >4 unexcused absences) meet with the principal, parents, a teacher, and a non-instructional staff member to give the individual student encouragement to enjoy positive behavior. The principal's involvement is powerful for holding staff accountable in implementation creating needed focus.

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

1. Having the whole school participate in the process changes school climate.
2. Professional development is critical for success.
3. Identifying and using student information data gave focus to the conversations.
4. Effective consequences must follow data analysis.
5. Principal expectations and monitoring those expectations makes for quick wins.

EXAMPLE RESPONSE: Curriculum

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

The Blueberry Brown Bear Borough School District has 7 rural, off-road, mostly remote K-12 schools ranging in size from 14 to 68 students, for a district total this year of 274. We have aligned our reading and writing curricula to the Alaska Performance Standards/GLEs, and have adopted the researched series, GottaRead for reading and YouCount for math. Gompers School has 47 students, the principal/teacher is new this year, we have 5 teachers total (3 new this year).

Priorities and Strategies for Improvement for 2009-2010 (Maximum 50 words)

Priorities: Curriculum. Strategies:

1. Professional development for teachers and paraprofessionals in the Alaska GLEs and curriculum mapping/pacing.
2. Professional development for teachers and paraprofessionals in reading materials use.
3. Professional development for instructional leader on conducting GLE walkthroughs.
4. Use curriculum mapping to plan out instruction for the year, filling GLE gaps.
5. Walkthrough feedback improves curriculum implementation fidelity.

Description of Your Emerging Best Practice - Anchored to the Domains Describe the practice. Highlight the key elements. Discuss how it evolved. (Maximum 100 words)

Fully implement reading curriculum throughout the school

1. Instructional leader completes walkthroughs three times weekly to support curriculum fidelity – frequency was difficult to maintain, but most weeks had at least 2 walkthroughs. Instructional leader met with teachers individually following walkthrough for feedback.
2. During first inservice, teachers mapped out reading GLEs over the course of the year using SBA-GLE blueprints.
3. Data from walkthroughs supported teachers (a) in identifying GLEs addressed, and (b) in including GLE misses. Subsequent walkthroughs verified corrective actions.

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

All teachers mapped out their respective reading GLEs, and based on instructional leader walkthrough data, completed the year with 93% fidelity of GLE implementation. Students “below proficient” in reading on 09-10 SBAs decreased by an average of 13% across the grades.

Description of Key Supports Leading to Success (Maximum 100 words)

Teachers appreciate the worth of curriculum mapping to ensure adequate student attention to the GLEs tested in the spring SBAs. The instructional leader’s walkthroughs are linchpin components to account for increased student learning.

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

1. Instructional leader walkthroughs provide critical data toward curriculum implementation fidelity.
2. Professional development gives confidence to map the curriculum.
3. Instructional leader feedback affects curricular implementation.
4. Teachers grow confidence that their instruction has significant impact on all their students.