

Festival of Ideas

REVIEW COPY

DRAFT

Emerging best practices from the Alaska School Leadership Institute
Transforming Leadership and Learning
May 31 - June 4, 2010 • Captain Cook Hotel, Anchorage

FOI Number 1

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured - Assessment

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

X is a k-8 school with 34 students in a X village of approximately 240 people. The Principal/teacher has been at the site for 3 years with another teacher with 1 year experience there along with 2 new incoming teachers. We currently have been using AIMSweb for the past 2 years. We have adopted Open Court for the our Language arts program for grades k-6.

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

Priorities: Assessment. Fully implement AIMSweb. Develop progress monitoring groups based upon reviewing fall data.

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)

We ran correlation data on AIMSweb data in both reading and math district wide grades 3-8 comparing them to the SBA scores. Data suggests that there isn't any correlation between math AIMSweb and SBA scores but the data suggests a good correlation in the reading CBM and the SBA scores. With this data we built our progress monitoring groups based around students who were below target. Students are put into small groups separate from their language arts class and given specific interventions. When students reach their target they move back into the mainstream group. If students lag behind then they are put back into these intervention groups.

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

Students have raised their Star reading scores and AIMSweb scores.

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

Teachers are becoming more comfortable with the AIMSweb process. They are able to read and understand the reports that can be generated.

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

Students realize that when they are in the intervention groups they will see success when effort is put out. They also know that when they succeed they can be mainstreamed so it gives them a goal to strive towards. Based upon SBA scores that were sent out two weeks ago we have seen an increase in our non-proficient students progress

FOI Number 2

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured - Instruction

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

District wide.

X is in Level 4 of failing to make AYP. We serve approximately 390 students enrolled K-12, in seven communities located in Alaska's eastern interior. Fifty-four percent are Native Natives. All of our schools are Title I, Targeted Assistance schools. Our lowest performing sites have 100% of the student population eligible for free and reduced lunch.

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

A focus of the district this year has been on curricular fidelity, and on methods that can be used to monitor classroom practice related to the use of the approved curriculum.

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)

Curricular fidelity is an issue the district is focusing on. Among several other tools that we have collaboratively developed to assist in monitoring the use of curriculum in the classroom, the district has developed a Lesson Plan Template, which is a FileMaker database that allows teachers to save and quickly develop lesson plans that incorporate Alaska GLE's using pull down menu's. While this tool is not mandated, it is designed to be so easy that all teachers will want to use it, and it incorporates all the required elements of a lesson plan.

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

Document use of the approved curriculum by easily being able to monitor teacher lesson plans.

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

Staff and administration provided input, along with the software developer, to ensure a smooth look to the tool, and that it is easy to use. Consistency in it's use, by using an evaluation rubric to assess lesson plans.

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

Not to mandate use, rather, create a tool that is easy to use. Insist upon proper completion of lesson plans.

FOI Number 3

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured - Supportive Learning Environment

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

X had a history of a tough place to work and learn. The school and the kids did not have a strong foundation from which to learn so they didn't. Their were and are strong teachers at the school, but there was no real stable environment to learn from.

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

Stability, consistency, accountability, goals and a "will do" attitude were key. We had to develop a stable place to learn and work, then keep a consistent method of delivery while holding students, staff and community accountable. Then showing them this is the goal - either "yer with us, or against us!"

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)

Staff was given school rules and regulations for students and staff. Kids were informed of the rules and regs Staff held to those rules and regs. Kids rebelled Staff stayed consistent. Students and family were made aware of the students documented behavior. Teachers and family began to dialog about behavior, issues in family and community and discussing ways to address behavior at home and school. Students began to calm down. Teaching and learning took place.

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

There were a number of students who rebelled against the structure, but then when they were out of it they would rush to get back into the consistency and rhythm of the school and the way business was conducted.

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

Attendance picked up from key kids who were chronic absentees, parents would contact the school with issues, resources were there to meet the kids who we were able to identify. Parents would contact us to assist us with delinquent kids. We would send out letters VHF information to the community Worked with Troppers and State of Alaska Truancy policy for ticketing kids and families. Told students that can come to school and learn or they can stay home and become a statistic.

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

We stood our ground and involved the community. We made sure that people understood that we were not here to preach to them, save them from sin or apologize for being from the lower 48. We were / are here to teach them and to assist them with preserving their culture and the easiest way to do that is through education and not legislation.

FOI Number 4

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured - Professional Development

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

X is a K12 school located on the Lower Yukon river delta. It is the best school in the entire world. Our student population is 99.9% Alaskan Natives. We have a 100% free lunch count. Over 89% of our parents are unemployed. A large number of our families are subsistence based. We turn over about 25% of our teaching staff every year. We lose about 15 students to boarding schools every year, as well. We are on a standard and level based instructional model. We do use the Carnegie system at the high school. We have had over 18 principals in the last eight years. I am the first principal in a long time that has returned for their third year.

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

Our main priority for the was building a professional learning community. We have spent the year building effective leadership, staff cohesiveness and trust.

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)

Research says that the most important factor to having a successful school is to have an effective principal. X School has seen 18 principals in the last eight years. The teaching staff has turned over at a 25% rate every year. Some years the staff has seen a 50% change in staffing. I could see that without a principal ensuring the “daily stuff” is done on a consistent basis the school falls into a leadership vacuum. This lack of leadership allows the aggressive teacher to take over the school and the rest of the staff move into their classrooms and close their doors. A staff dedicated to the development of a PLC is one that works towards staff cohesiveness. The staff dedicated themselves to becoming a group of professionals dedicated to building a team. Working with staff, we agreed on several key issues. For example, how we treat each other, meeting norms and chain of command. A level one change I implemented was to purchase shirts for all staff members (think bowling team). My thinking was “dress like a team act like a team”. Nothing worthwhile happens in school until you have trust. The staff did not trust the leadership or each other. They did not have anyone setting the “trust standard”: the standard that each school must have in order to do the difficult job of teaching and learning. We open up our staff meetings. Everyone has an equal opportunity to share. As a principal, if I said I was going to do something I made sure I did it.

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

The indicators of impact and improvement are visible if you visit our school. You can also hear it from the staff if you ask them, “How are things going?” They will tell you that this is the best school year they have ever had. They will tell you that we only lost two teachers this year and one of the teachers retired. They will tell you that they enjoy coming to school and working with each other. They will tell you that if one of them needs something someone on staff will give it to them. They will tell you they feel supported by the principal. They will tell you that this is the best school in the world.

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

We still have some “bugs” to work on regarding becoming a true PLC. The staff success can be attributed to District PLC training and effective leadership. The X School District has focused on providing PLC training to every school this year. Every Wednesday of the week each school released their students at 2:30. This extra hour of planning time was spent working with a PLC expert via web-ex and teleconference. We focus on the PLC strategies while improving our writing instruction. I truly believe that we would not have improved without having an experienced principal leading the charge. There are many pitfalls to becoming a PLC that the newly minted administrator would encounter.

FOI Number 4 cont.

4. Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

There was many key lessons learned on our path to becoming a PLC. First, make sure that everyone's opinion is heard. Second, ensure that everyone understands what decisions they may have be involved with. Third, the principal is responsible for all decision made by a staff. Fourth, don't move too fast or too slow. Fifth, no one is allowed to take anything personally. Finally, laugh often, play hard and smile like you did something wrong.

FOI Number 5

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured - Professional Development

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

The district serves approximately 302 students (K – 12) at schools in X rural communities. As a result of the continued low proficiency rates achieved by our district on state assessments, we did not meet Annual Yearly Progress (AYP), under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) regulations, and were placed in Corrective Action with the State Department of Education. Being in Corrective Action has required us to adjust and change our attitudes (about schooling, instruction, collaborating with community, etc.) in order to increase our overall effectiveness in the classroom, or as administrators. The most effective teachers and administrators in our district have been those who are being proactive by implementing new strategies and looking for additional opportunities to improve the culture of the school and/or district. These teachers believe that teaching is the act of facilitating learning and that teaching is NOT complete until the students have met the standards. They design instruction so that students are actively engaged in and interacting with the content continually.

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

Priorities for Improvement 2009-2010: • Address the needs of students with different learning styles, including students with special needs (all exceptionalities, LEP, GT, etc.) • Provide teachers with the training and tools they need to effectively integrate technology into their classrooms • Ongoing support, through professional development, for teachers to improve their practice of teaching and assessment of student learning • Use data results to specifically target individual student needs for increased proficiency levels in core academic areas, especially low performing students district-wide (ex: Starfish Project) • Professional Development through PEAK (Performance Excellence for All Kids) to encompass the domains of instruction, curriculum and leadership Strategies for Improvement 2009-2010: • Facilitate learning (i.e. teaching is NOT complete until the students have met the standards) • Design instruction so that students are actively engaged in, and interacting with, the content continually • Ensure students are practicing correctly; i.e. practice develops proficiency and makes permanent (focus on 100% of students practicing correctly 100% of the time) Think about this...If students practice doing things correctly, they will develop long-term proficiency BUT if they practice incorrectly, they WILL get better at doing things incorrectly...If we want different results, we MUST do things differently... • 28/3 • Ongoing assessments used to increase learning before evaluations provide scores • Programs based on best practices & tailored to student needs and talents • Learning opportunities are authentic and reflect real world situations • Develop and implement PLCs for collective and collegial learning

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)

District-wide Professional Development Initiatives • PEAK – research-based practices/strategies for classroom instruction, management & use of assessment; • Administrative debriefs; • Summer Institutes (basic, advanced, leadership) • YKSD August Institute • YKSD Site Visits - on-going support (coaching, mentoring, modeling) for targeted schools (level 2 or higher) – coaching teams 3x per year for 3 days each visit • PEAK strategies are adjusted to meet student population and are culturally responsive by including staff input/feedback, site-based training within the schools, classrooms, and communities • Just in Time Coaching (PEAK coaches can watch live lessons and provide instant feedback, mentoring, and coaching)

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

FOI Number 5 cont.

Indicators of impact and improvement: • Improved classroom/school environment • Strong focus on the Six Keys (posted in classrooms, student awareness) • Evidence of PEAK strategies within lesson plans • Evidence within school community • Improved teacher retention rates • Improved teacher attitudes (teachers feel refreshed & validated; i.e., they are more responsive because they feel that what they have to share matters; they know they have something to offer that no one else can give)

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

Description of key supports leading to success: •Continuous, ongoing professional development (not just a onetime event) both on-site and through district-wide trainings •Dedication •Activities that are specifically targeted to increase the academic achievement of low performing students (and low performing schools) •School Board and Community support of initiatives •YKSD PEAK team (and money)

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

Summary of key lessons learned: •Includes key components of quality professional development •Aligned with other district initiatives/priorities (i.e., ClassBright, Assessment (AIMSweb, RTI), Classroom Management, & Integrative Youth Development – Assets & Resiliency) •Important to stay focused (aligned) •Common vision that establishes the direction in which the district is heading, and reflects the district's values and commitments (or reason for being) – allowing us to see things the way they can be, not just the way they are. •Collected action, agreed upon purpose, and belief in attainment • Established culture reflects a shared vision that gives the district its identity and standard for expected behaviors Our current status compelled us to diagnose our needs and then examine our current structure more closely to establish the changes that must occur in order to increase overall academic performance and specifically target the academic needs of low performing students. With new district leadership has come some important attributes that make for a vital organization (hope, trust, respect, integrity, and fidelity to our mission). Generally speaking, an improvement in our school culture is transpiring. Our district has adopted the slogan – Our Kids are WORTH whatever it takes! All school staff supports this slogan and a school culture of working collaboratively (rather than in isolation) has been established. The district office has been restructured to provide more support to teachers and school sites. This, in turn, has caused our teachers to become more committed because they see the value in what we are doing.

FOI Number 6

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured: Supportive Learning Environment "Literacy Acceleration"

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

The village has an approximate population of 50 residents during the school year. The school has a K-8 population of 12 students. The school has 2 certified employees and 4 part time classified employees. The 2010 school year will consist of 1-K, 2-2nd, 2-3rd, 1-5th, 2-6th, 3-7th, and 1-8th students.

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

The majority of the students assessed through Star Reading are below two grade levels. Due to this data the faculty welcomed the students to attend school 30 minutes early to participate in "Literacy Acceleration" program. Through quality instruction and additional time the goal is to increase the reading level of each student.

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)

Incomplete

FOI Number 7

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured - Assessment--instructional formative assessment

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

As the district compared the SBA scores and the AIMSweb information, it became evident that there was a need for teachers to have a method of measuring a student's understanding throughout the instruction in order to provide students with on-going and meaningful feedback. Due to the teachers focus on other methods of testing every 2 weeks, the important piece missing was frequent formative assessment.

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

The priority was for teachers to effectively use formative assessment to improve student learning. The first strategy was to deliver the message to the principals and teachers at each school site.

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)

We began our work on the domain of assessment by gathering background research information to create a message take spoke to the need and value of formative assessment. This message will be carried further during the coming school year.

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

Our approach to the focused use of formative assessment is in the early stages and will be taken to the next level this coming school year. In addition, there are always new staff members to in-service as to the district's adopted educational practices.

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

Though we have no measurement on our focus at this time, continued professional development on "instructional best practices" will be a key component to its success.

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

We understand the Leadership Team is key in delivering a strong message as to the expectations, but we also see the need for continued involvement of principals and teachers in the on-going creation of related professional development.

FOI Number 8

Alaska Self-Study Tool domain(s) addressed: CURRICULUM

Background about school (maximum 100 words)

Our K-12 school enrollment at the beginning of the school year was 201. We have twenty-one certified staff; the principal and six teachers were new this year. We implemented a new reading program, Imagine IT!, district wide this year. At our school we also had an intervention time during the day where the majority of our students were in a SRA Corrective Reading class.

Priorities and strategies for improvement 2009-2010 (Maximum 50 words)

Priorities: Curriculum Strategies:

Professional development for teachers in the instructional delivery of our new reading curricula Imagine IT!

Professional development for our Literacy Leader in coaching/training strategies to insure that our teachers are instructing our reading programs with fidelity.

Professional development for teachers and paraprofessionals in the instruction of the SRA Corrective Reading program.

Use curriculum mapping to plan out instruction for the year, helping teachers pace the lessons to improve curriculum implementation fidelity.

Consultant visits, Literacy Leader coaching, and walkthrough feedback improves curriculum implementation fidelity.

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)

Fully implement reading curriculum in the elementary grades K-6. Implemented Corrective Reading in grades 3-12.

Literacy Leader worked closely with teachers to insure curriculum fidelity and pacing. The Imagine IT! consultant visited on a monthly basis. Consultant and Literacy Leader met with teachers individually following classroom visits for feedback.

Training was provided for teachers and paraprofessionals in correct instruction techniques of the Corrective Reading program. Instructional leader walkthroughs data and Literacy Leader coaching/training sessions help correct any techniques that will not lead to fidelity of the program.

Indicators of impact and improvement (Maximum 100 words)

In the beginning of the Imagine IT! curriculum all students are given a benchmark test and the results are plotted on a graph. At the end of each section a benchmark test is given and it is also plotted to show if a student has had growth. The comment from most teachers is that their students are showing growth and becoming better readers.

Any student that was "below proficient" in reading on the 08-09 SBAs was given the corrective reading placement test. From their score they were placed in a level of decoding and a comprehension. They were then placed in a reading intervention class.

Teachers are commenting on how the Corrective Reading interventions are helping many students in the regular reading class. Students are increasing in words/minute and comprehension skills.

FOI Number 8 cont.

Description of key supports leading to success (Maximum 100 words)

The Consultant visits Literacy Leader coaching/training and the principal walkthroughs are vital to insure consistency in instruction across the grades. Having paraprofessionals trained in the ability to instruct Corrective Reading helped ensure that students were instructed daily and class size were kept low.

Summary of key lessons learned (Maximum 50 words)

When implementing a new curriculum, providing a consultant on site for monthly coaching/training is a vital part of making sure the curriculum is implemented with fidelity. The Literacy Leaders feedback to teacher affects the curricular implementation. The instructional leaders attitude and belief in the curriculum has an impact on teachers and their instruction, which passes on to the students.

FOI Number 8 (credit project)

2. Alaska Self-Study Tool domain(s) addressed (Curriculum, Assessment, Instruction, Supportive Learning Environment, Professional Development, or Leadership)

CURRICULUM

3. Background about school (maximum 100 words)

Our K-12 school enrollment at the beginning of the school year was 201. We have twenty-one certified staff; the principal and six teachers were new this year. We implemented a new reading program, Imagine IT!, district wide this year. At our school we also had an intervention time during the day where the majority of our students were in a SRA Corrective Reading class.

4. Priorities and strategies for improvement 2009-2010 (Maximum 50 words)

- Priorities: Curriculum Strategies:
- Professional development for teachers in the instructional delivery of our new reading curricula Imagine IT!
- Professional development for our Literacy Leader in coaching/training strategies to insure that our teachers are instructing our reading programs with fidelity.
- Professional development for teachers and paraprofessionals in the instruction of the SRA Corrective Reading program.
- Use curriculum mapping to plan out instruction for the year, helping teachers pace the lessons to improve curriculum implementation fidelity.
- Consultant visits, Literacy Leader coaching, and walkthrough feedback improves curriculum implementation fidelity.

FOI Number 8 (credit project)

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)

- Fully implement reading curriculum in the elementary grades K-6. Implemented Corrective Reading in grades 3-12.
- Literacy Leader worked closely with teachers to insure curriculum fidelity and pacing. The Imagine IT! consultant visited on a monthly basis. Consultant and Literacy Leader met with teachers individually following classroom visits for feedback.
- Training was provided for teachers and paraprofessionals in correct instruction techniques of the Corrective Reading program. Instructional leader walkthroughs data and Literacy Leader coaching/training sessions help correct any techniques that will not lead to fidelity of the program.

6. Indicators of impact and improvement (Maximum 100 words)

- In the beginning of the Imagine IT! curriculum all students are given a benchmark test and the results are plotted on a graph. At the end of each section a benchmark test is given and it is also plotted to show if a student has had growth. The comment from most teachers is that their students are showing growth and becoming better readers.
- Any student that was “below proficient” in reading on the 08-09 SBAs was given the corrective reading placement test. From their score they were placed in a level of decoding and a comprehension. They were then placed in a reading intervention class.
- Teachers are commenting on how the Corrective Reading interventions are helping many students in the regular reading class. Students are increasing in words/minute and comprehension skills.

7. Description of key supports leading to success (Maximum 100 words)

The Consultant visits Literacy Leader coaching/training and the principal walkthroughs are vital to insure consistency in instruction across the grades. Having paraprofessionals trained in the ability to instruct Corrective Reading helped ensure that students were instructed daily and class size were kept low.

Progress monitoring for students who are not at their reading level is projected to be every two weeks using AMISweb material.

Through professional development, teachers and administrators will be able to ensure that student data will inform and differentiate instructional practices.

FOI Number 8 (credit project)

The district has begun planning professional development for the 2010-11 school year. Collaborative meetings are planned with an early release one day a week to provide for this collaboration time. Monthly videoconferences are being scheduled so that teachers can engage in professional development within and across grades and subjects.

8. Summary of key lessons learned (Maximum 50 words)

We will continue the use of SBAs to determine placement for upper grades in supplemental Lab classes. We will also continue the use of AIMSWeb benchmarks as one component of identifying student placement according to the RTI model of differentiated instruction.

When implementing a new curriculum, providing a consultant on site for monthly coaching/training is a vital part of making sure the curriculum is implemented with fidelity. The CORE Literacy Trainer, Nancy Volpe will continue to make monthly visits to offer whole group training and individual classroom support for the SRA Imagine It! Language Arts series. She will work with staff on differentiation of instruction and strategies for ELL students in addition to providing basic training for newly hired teachers.

The Literacy Leaders feedback to teacher affects the curricular implementation. The instructional leaders attitude and belief in the curriculum has an impact on teachers and their instruction, which passes on to the students.

Parent involvement and understanding of our curriculum is important, therefore, a course on parent involvement will begin in August and the Alaska Parent Information and Resource Center will support training. There will be monthly follow up training offered via videoconferences.

The need for to deliver the instruction with fidelity is a high priority, this is always a challenge with the teacher turnover we have at our school. We will have Training starting in August for all staff, including administrators, to provide initial information in AIMSWeb, ACFA, and other data bases so teachers can begin to grasp how and where to house information on reading and math assessments. The training will show staff how to set goals and add interventions as the school year begins. Once the first benchmark test date comes, staff will have formative data to set up progress monitoring schedules. Weekly collaboration meetings will afford teachers the time to look at data together and support instructional strategies. The trainers will continue to work with staff throughout the year as needed.

FOI Number 9

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured - Professional Development and Professional Learning Communities

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

District wide - multiple sites

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

One of the many areas we focused on for improvement this year was the use of Professional Learning Communities to improve communication, instruction, and student learning. Each school site held weekly PLC meeting to collaborate with other staff around specific topics. Every third week the PLC meeting was held with all district teachers using an Internet based collaboration program. This district wide PLC was an opportunity to share successes and struggles regarding the projects we were working on. One of the projects for the year was to improve writing through the use of Six-Traits.

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)

In an effort to improve communication, collaboration, and opportunities for professional growth, we decided to start using the PLC format for our weekly collaboration meetings. This allowed us to set up a regular schedule of times that the staff could get together and share successes and struggles in the classroom. Some of the challenges included creating a system to organize how 170 staff would communicate using a single online collaboration platform. We tried to use a strict limit of no more than one hour online to share ideas. The staff would work in groups at their own school site during collaboration meetings to brainstorm solutions and review data. The results from the on-site collaboration meetings were shared when all of the staff got together online, every 3rd week.

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

The district staff collected a lot of information on many topics from these meetings. This included writing strategies that could be use at all levels and in all content areas, student test preparation strategies, and staff retention ideas.

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

The support from the instructional leaders was key, as well as the support from the collaboration organizer. Almost all of the staff regularly participated and this is key to the success of any collaboration effort and PLC.

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

1. Trying to meet online with everyone every week was too much 2. Providing a good overview of the direction and purpose of the collaboration was important 3. Providing time for the staff to participate was key to the success and buy-in of the teachers 4. Providing small group time outside of the online meetings was important to include everyone

FOI Number 10

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured - Curriculum, Assessment, Instruction, Professional Development Leadership

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

X is a 6-12 school. The student population is approximately 350 students. There are three administrators that oversee the building a head principal and two assistant principals.

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

The focus of our school in the 09-10 school years was to raise our test scores using test data and reconnect the students who were disconnected.

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)

The staff met weekly the goal was to build staff confidence through the concept of family. In doing so we met every Monday we ate a great meal, and began to disaggregate test data by department. Prior to the disaggregating of the data the administration met with teachers individually and described the urgency of understanding test data in order to drive instruction. The purpose of meeting with each teacher was to relay the importance of understanding individual student and their test scores. The disaggregated data allowed teachers and students to start at a realistic point.

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

Improvements included an increase in our at risk students test scores. School wide there was a continued increase in test scores. Staff moral and confidence was raised through collaboration and individual coaching from administration. Common goal setting was a major factor with our improvements.

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

Prior to the disaggregating of the data the administration met with teachers individually and described the urgency of understanding test data in order to drive instruction. The purpose of meeting with each teacher was to relay the importance of understanding individual student and their test scores.

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

The importance of one on one interaction with teachers. The understanding of disaggregated test data. Disaggregating data personalized the teaching experience.

FOI Number 11

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured - Professional Development

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

X Elementary school serves students from preschool through grade 5. There are currently 605 students enrolled. There are forty certified teachers, 25 classified employees, and two administrators. The primary focus is to provide the students with a high quality education while integrating the X language and culture into the students school experience.

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

There are a range of new and seasoned teachers at X Elementary. The goal is to build collegiality through staff led professional development sessions with the ultimate goal of building a professional learning community. Strategies: 1. Staff discuss in identify effective instructional practices. 2. Grade level teams sign up to lead three instructional strategy presentations throughout the school year. 3. Each Wednesday afternoon, one grade level each week would present their instructional strategy to the rest of the teachers during the collaboration meetings.

Description of Your Emerging Best Practice - (Maximum 100 words)

The emerging best practice was the use of the classroom teachers to provide ideas and examples of best practices with their colleagues. This was the beginning of our staff coming together to center their discussions around best teaching practices. This also allowed for teachers to become the local experts by sharing with other staff members.

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

Indicators of improvement include an increase in collegiality, teamwork and a common sense of shared goals. As the year progressed, teachers shared ideas, websites, and best practices with each other.

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

Grade level teams were allowed to select the instructional strategy they wanted to present, as well as the time of year. There were no restrictions on how or what to present to the other teachers.

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

The comfort level of the teachers varied among the group. The administrators helped to build an environment where the teachers felt safe to share their ideas. The only expectation was that all grade levels sign up for three instructional strategy presentations and that all teachers participate.

FOI Number 11 (credit project)

Alaska self-study tool domain featured:

Professional development

Background information:

X Elementary serves students from pre-school through grade 5. There are currently 605 students enrolled. There are forty certified teachers and two administrators. The primary focus at X Elementary is to provide the students with a high quality education while integrating the X language and culture into the students' school experience.

Priorities and strategies for improvement for the 2009-2010 school year:

There are a range of new and seasoned teachers at X Elementary. The goal is to build collegiality through staff led professional development sessions with the ultimate goal of building a professional learning community.

Strategies:

1. Staff discusses and identifies effective instructional practices.
2. Grade level teams sign up to lead three instructional strategy presentations throughout the school year.
3. Each Wednesday afternoon, one grade level each week would present their instructional strategy to the rest of the teachers during collaboration meetings.

Description of emerging best practice:

The emerging best practice was the use of classroom teachers to provide ideas and examples of best practices with their colleagues. This was the beginning of our staff coming together to center their discussions on best teaching practices. This also allowed for teachers to become the local experts by sharing with other staff members.

Indicators of impact and improvement:

Indicators of improvement include an increase in collegiality, teamwork and a common sense of shared goals. As the year progressed teachers shared ideas, websites, and best practices with each other.

Description of key supports leading to success:

Grade level teams were allowed to select the instructional strategy they wanted to present, as well as the time of year. There were no restrictions on how or what to present to the other teachers.

Summary of key lessons learned:

FOI Number 11 (credit project)

The comfort level of the teachers varied among the group. The administrators helped to build an environment where the teachers felt safe to share their ideas. The only expectation was that all grade levels sign up for three instructional strategy presentations and that all teachers participate.

Post conference refinement/clarification of emerging best practice:

After attending the Alaska State Leadership Institute, I began to reflect on the conversations and presentations that occurred throughout the week. My goal is to continue the instructional strategy presentations with my staff next school year with some refinement to the process.

Plan:

In the 2009-2010 school years, grade level groups were given the leeway to select the instructional strategy that they wanted to present. I plan to ask grade level teams to select their first, second, and third choice for instructional strategies. We will discuss which strategy will best match the needs of their students and have the grade level focus on the one or two strategies for the school year. The grade level teams will focus on implementing that strategy with their own students, as well as sharing the information with the rest of the staff. This will benefit both the teachers and students by focusing on one strategy at a more in-depth level for an extended period of time.

Support for the teachers will be provided in the form of current articles, books, and online references to assist them with implementing the chosen strategy. We will also utilize the district instructional coaches to provide additional support and guidance throughout the school year. I would also like to rename our grade level teams and call them data study teams or study groups. This would allow for group members to be reassigned to different groups each week depending on the topic or where their expertise can be utilized. Specialists (such as the music and PE teacher) were not incorporated very well into last year's instructional strategy presentations. My goal for this coming year is to have the specialists spread out among the grade level teams to bring an added dimension to the groups.

Possible strategies:

- *Small group instruction
- *Differentiated instruction
- *ELL/SIOP
- *Assessment (formal and informal)
- *Modeling and practice
- *Building background knowledge
- *Strategies for active student engagement

FOI Number 11 (credit project)

Analysis of student needs:

X Elementary is at level 5 in regards to not making AYP. The subgroups that have typically struggled are: Alaska Native, ELL, and Special Education. Many of the students fall into all three categories. The school as a whole dropped 13 points in math on the SBA's during the 2008-2009 school year. Math is normally the strongest area for our students who take the SBA's. When reflecting on that drop in scores, we have had the same Saxon Math program for the past ten years. It is unclear why the drop was so large that particular school year.

The focus continues to be on reading at X Elementary School. The SBA reading scores fall below the target for school as a whole, Alaska Native, Special Ed, and ELL. All students receive 120 minutes of reading each day, plus a 45 minute intervention block for students who are below proficient on the AIMSweb assessment. It is imperative that the instructional strategy presentations focus on the areas where our students are struggling the most.

FOI Number 12

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured - Supportive Learning Environment

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

K-12 site. Our K-12 school enrollment at the beginning of 2009 was 128. We have 16 certified staff. We implemented the process four years ago.

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

1. There is evidence that the school culture and climate provide a safe, orderly environment conducive to learning. 2. Effective classroom management strategies that maximize instructional time are evident throughout the school. 3. School wide operational procedures are in place to minimize disruptions to instructional time. 4. School wide behavior standards are communicated by staff and understood by students.

Description of Your Emerging Best Practice (Maximum 100 words)

The process is anchored to all the objectives. It has made the school a quiet learning atmosphere. Cultural responsiveness: The Responsible Thinking Classroom Teacher is a classified local person. She gives the students the time to figure out what they want, which does go with the cultural, "When they are ready".

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

Percentage of students that were Proficient 2005-06 SBA scores: LA-28 Math-19 Percentage of students that are Proficient 2009-10 scores: LA-51 Math-62

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

All teachers are in-serviced on the process in the fall. The district has adapted two-3 credit classes that are offered through UAF. These classes are taught through district delivery to anyone that wants to take them.

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

Imagine a student discipline program that actually teaches students to take responsibility for their own behavior without in anyway trying to control them or do something to them to make them change the way they behavior. Yes, no punishment. Where students decide the amount of time they are away from class or, in the case of serious acts of misconduct, away from school. And, surprisingly, with few exceptions, the students believe the program to be fair. And yet, the same program provides remarkable results in improved discipline throughout the school, with reductions in suspensions and detentions, fighting and bullying, and where the teachers have more time to teach with less classroom disruptions. Here is a process by which students are taught to monitor their own behavior by taking responsibility for what they do. Rather than telling students what to do where you do the thinking, why not ask them what they are doing in relation to the rules or standards of where they are? That means teaching them how to think on their own and create their own effective plans rather than someone else doing the thinking for them. Everyone in school, that is teachers, administrators, and students, should be held accountable for respecting the rights of others. Students have to be taught this skill.

FOI Number 13

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured - Supportive Learning Environment

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

X is an isolated village of 200 people X School is a school of 52 students grades K-12. There are 4 certified FTE and 8 classified staff members. The principal has been there for 2 years and certified staff retention has been fairly good in recent years.

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

Improve Student Attendance, Address Student Behavior In A Positive Way, Increase Parent and Community Involvement

Description of Your Emerging Best Practice - (Maximum 100 words)

The Program is a program of “Classroom Management That Manages Itself.” There are 4 elements: a) Student responsibility for managing classroom logistics; in other words, a heavy emphasis on student Classroom Duties that enable teaching to proceed and remain in continuum without disruption, as positive reinforcement and discipline are managed through the Classroom Duties. What those duties are specifically, and how they mutually reinforce themselves and the classroom environment of learning cannot be simply explained and needs full elaboration to actually enable implementation of the program. b) A miniature economy, where students earn through positive work, through performance of their classroom duties; they are fined for infractions of expectations. The “money” is called “mandala money” which are an intricately designed set of money. c) A simple discipline monitoring record that renews each week with increasing consequences for continued infractions throughout the given week. d) Parental and community buy-in of support for the positive reinforcement and disciplinary aspects.

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

The impact is noticeable in each given hour of instruction and in all points of transition. Teaching proceeds without the teacher taking time away from planned and dynamic instruction as the class duties that manage that. Positive reinforcement through the miniature economy brings about a noticeable motivation for success and making attempts at advanced achievement, as the farther one proceeds and advances the more responsiveness is obtained in economic gain, and thus, economic “buying power.” Positive reinforcement comes too through the well publicized monthly Awards Assemblies, wherein building to obtaining awards students are aware of what classroom demonstrations of success: academically, behaviorally, and in attendance, will earn them an Award given in front of peers, relatives, and community members. Disciplined high expectations, clearly defined to students and to parents and community leaders, sets of the standard creating an organized learning environment. In its second year of implementation the students showed gains in this past 1 year of approximately 12% gains in Reading and Math as measured on the Spring SBA’s.

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

A certain funding support is necessary for the purchase of items desirable to be purchased by students with their “mandala money,” though they also acquire purchasing power for items of importance to them other than objects, in that they can buy minutes of free time, get “Buy my name off the gym list” tickets, or “Get out of jail free” cards. Parental support of the discipline expectations is vital and demands a continual conversation with parents and community leaders of its necessity that enables educational advancement within the school to occur and continue.

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

FOI Number 13 cont.

When new Teachers have been exposed to the intensity of the organization, it becomes clear the teachers themselves have to remake and put their focus in new directions in how they manage the classroom environment. Students themselves have helped new teachers to understand the Teacher's role in enabling the program of student responsibilities to proceed. Students have shown they feel less empowered, less in control of their own learning environment, less respect for the learning environment when the program is in lapse for given circumstances at various points in time.

FOI Number 14

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured - Curriculum

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

District is about 650 students at multiple sites

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

We are in the process of redoing the Districts curriculum. This is the first time it has been worked on in over 10 years. When we are done we will have a uniform curriculum for all sites linking standards with GLEs with district approved resources. It will also have a tiered intervention process embedded in the curriculum.

Description of Your Emerging Best Practice - (Maximum 100 words)

Curriculum is being linked with the GLE's District approved resource list which will allow for training and support for teachers implementation of the curriculum.

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

This was finished two days before we traveled here for Language, Arts and Math. We are hoping to see and improvement in SBA scores for next year.

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

We have a Curriculum Specialist which can be contacted for questions. In addition, we will have training on the new curriculum prior to implementation next year.

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

Redoing the districts curriculum takes time, money and patience in order to have everybody on the same page.

FOI Number 15

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured - Instruction

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

X School has historically had enrollment right at 250 students in a K-12 program. X School has not met AYP requirements and is currently in level 5 of the School Improvement Plan. X students are 100% LEP and all are eligible for reduced or free meal programs.

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

We will improve reading, writing and math academic scores by implementing Intensive Intervention Strategies in these content areas.

Description of Your Emerging Best Practice - (Maximum 100 words)

Reading: X School has continued to use Literacy by Design as the adopted curriculum in reading. Additionally, we are using Intensive Intervention tutoring, SES after school tutoring and assessing students with AIMSweb. Writing: School is currently working with district on Learner Focused Continuous Improvement, training all staff and students in the use of the 6+1 Traits of Writing. Math: School has continued to use Saxon Math as the adopted curriculum in math. Additionally we are using Intensive Intervention tutoring, SES after school tutoring and assessing students with AIMSweb

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

2000-2008 SBA results: 18% LA, 20% math. 2009 SBA results: 28% LA, 30% math 2010 SBA results: not reported

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

Students identified as being below proficient will be enrolled in either or both of the Intensive Intervention Programs being implemented. Additional certified teachers will be hired to support and instruct targeted students. Students will double the instructional time in the content areas that need improvement. Also, School will be providing students with test taking skills to prepare for the SBA tests. Practice tests from EED will be implemented in lessons throughout March. Efforts helping students with the 6+1 Traits of Writing will be continued. Media and parental attention will be given to help attendance rates increase during testing.

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

Increasing reading and math instructional time for students who are below proficiency may be the key to allow them to achieve proficiency. Students targeted who were in the group range of 251 and 299 in reading and mathematics were increased to a maximum of 2.5 hours of instruction in reading and 2.0 hours of instruction in math. Additional time was also available to students who were enrolled in our SES After School Tutoring Program.

FOI Number 16

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured - Instruction, Supportive Learning Environment Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

During the 2010 Census X totaled 351 people. 99% of the resident of X are Alaska Native. X has met AYP requirements during 2005, 2006, 2007. Despite having proficiency rates in near 60%, X has not met AYP during the 2008 and 2009 school years. We look to identify areas for academic improvement and refining our Place-Based Education program.

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

Improve Reading, Writing, and Math scores by utilizing research based intervention programs/strategies in addition to core curriculum. Our school also focused on developing daily class schedules provide optimum opportunities for student achievement/learning.

Description of Your Emerging Best Practice - (Maximum 100 words)

Reading Workshop: This strategy includes scheduling in 50 minutes of reading workshop time during the period immediately proceeding lunch. Groups rotate between teachers every three weeks. Groups are required to read and discuss a high interest novel/piece of literature and complete the reading and other associated activities during the three week period. Each year our student complete approximately 12-15 works of fiction/nonfiction. Place-Based Education Program: Students in grades 7-12 participate in a variety of place-based education activities. These activities range from camping and subsistence activities to snowboarding and cultural exchanges. Our goal with these activities is to validate the importance of where we live by making it an essential component of classroom instruction. Our students embrace these opportunities to get out into our surrounding environment and interact with it in a purposeful and meaningful way.

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

School reading scores for grades 3-10 have been nearly 65% or better since instilling the reading workshop program. When we offer activities for our students we improve our 7-12 attendance rate to over 90%. Our students look forward to hands on learning experiences and produce high quality work when they are given the opportunities to share their experience through writing or other projects.

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

Reading Workshop: requires a collaborative effort among 7-12 staff. Teachers must agree to utilize predetermined strategies and processes to ensure students build a common set of reading skills, strategies and fluency. Place-based Education: Building a strong relationship with community leaders and cultural experts is essential to making these activities possible. If a teacher from the "outside" can partner with a community member that possesses the local and cultural knowledge, great things can take place outside and inside the classroom. By building and maintaining these relationships the school and community can begin working in unison improve collaboration and sense of school pride.

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

Any program or set of processes used in a school require quality personnel to help the programs be as effective as possible. Set aside plenty of collaborative time to discuss, reflect and refine strategies to ensure staff delivers the best learning experience possible for students.

FOI Number 17

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured - Curriculum

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

X has a population of about 250 people. X has not made AYP in two years 2008-2010. The majority of our students that would be in high school would leave and attend boarding schools.

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

Improve reading, writing, and math scores by focusing on aligning instruction with assessments, primarily the SBA's. Developing ILP's for every student.

Description of Your Emerging Best Practice - (Maximum 100 words)

1. Print out all SBA's and group staff into elementary and highschool 2. Use a matrix to identify students who are Below, and Far Below and the strand and content. For instance Eq.Math---Numeration---Grade---Name 3. Using test bank items in Classbright create folders for every child who is below or far below in any content any strand on the SBA's. In classbright: Go to resource tab (say saxon course 3), go to search, Type in: Item bank, select your grade, select assessment, select your content area, click go find, select adobe icon and print. 4. Watch for the answer sheets inside the test bank items, white out answers that student need to work on. 5. Draw a calendar, cross out non instructional days (spring break, in-service, regionals) then map out each day with the strand or standard you will focus on-Include a practice test and review. 6. Make student folders for Math, Reading, Writing. You could also place the vocabulary for each subject in the folders.

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

We implemented this only in January, through April 5th. This gave exposure to our students on what is asked on the tests, as a teaching group we were all onboard for all areas that needed the most focus. We hope to see improvement this upcoming year.

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

Teachers must agree to set up a calendar, to touch all areas of need. We will align our teaching to those GLE's that need the most work.

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

In small schools all teachers must work collaboratively to find the individual needs that should be focused on.

FOI Number 18

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured - Instruction

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

X is a village of about 500 people. There are approximately 160 students in grade K - 12. I have been principal here for one year.

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

Priority: Instruction 1. Implement school-wide organizational tool utilizing 3-ring binders in all secondary classrooms. 2. Plan with teachers the uses for these binders, including homework, handouts, class notes, journals, GLE checklists, grade progress, and any other pertinent information. 3. Utilize binders to help students track their own progress, organize their materials, and communicate student progress to parents.

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)

This practice has evolved from a need to assist students with staying organized, having materials in class every day, and increase awareness of course objectives and their progress towards completing those objectives. It is an attempt to adapt our classroom procedures to student habits by assisting them with organization. These binders are better than standard student planners that can be purchased commercially, because they contain student work and classroom handouts that planners do not have.

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

We used this method in two classrooms this year and are expanding it to all classrooms next year. The impact was students having all materials in class every day (the binders do not go home, they stay in the classroom), and students becoming more aware of their progress and course objectives.

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

Immediate feedback to teachers of having students prepared in class and having handouts and course materials kept in one place without losing them. Students have learned to use course notes in assignments and refer to handouts that are readily available to them.

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

1. Adapting to our students and resisting traditional methods is key. Criticisms are that students are not being taught responsibility because we are organizing their work for them. The response is that we must first teach organization before we can expect students to be organized. 2. We are moving away from using laptop computers to store the above information. Laptop use must be carefully controlled in order to keep students on task. Having papers all in one place that can be referred to is better than having a file on a computer that can get lost, is hard to find, or having other applications serve as a distraction (iTunes, email, etc.).

FOI Number 19

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured - Professional Development

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

District wide program. FY'10 staffing includes 378 certificated and 542 classified employees.

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

Presently, there are 62 Alaska Native teachers and other certificated employees in X. Current efforts are focused on increasing the numbers of instructional classified employees participating in the Career Ladder program toward becoming certified teachers.

Description of Your Emerging Best Practice - (Maximum 100 words)

The Board of Education provides significant and on-going funding to support three Teacher Education initiatives referred to as the Career Ladder program. The district has a long history of supporting the training of Alaska Native teachers, dating back to the early '80's. Presently, the 3 components include: Scholarship program for graduates pursuing a teaching degree • Fully supported "On-Campus" program for current paraprofessional employees--provides full funding for coursework and living expenses. (employee goes on educational leave status) • Fully supported "Off-Campus" program for current paraprofessional employees-- provides full funding for distance delivered coursework while living/working at site (employee remains on full pay status but works half-time)

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

There is an unmistakable benefit observed in terms of reduced turnover rates in the district (annual teacher turnover rates are between 10-15%), and in meeting the district efforts of providing a culturally relevant instructional setting. However, recent statistics indicate that the replacement rate for retiring Alaska Native teachers is not sufficient. The rate of employment of Alaska Native teachers has declined from a high of 24% to approximately 16%. This challenge is a direct result of the competition from other non-teaching professions that appeal to our young Alaska Native graduates.

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

The success of the Career Ladder Teacher Education initiative is a direct result of the consistent and strong support from the School Board and Administrative Leadership over decades.

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

We have learned that the program requires continuous support to be maintained as a high priority. We have learned that the management of this program must be a priority as well. We have learned that the overall mission of the program must be kept in focus, despite some years with minimal results. It is how we do business.

FOI Number 20

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured - Curriculum - We are focusing on improving writing with our students.

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

We are a K-12 school of about 220 students in a small village. This was the principal's second year and my first as his assistant. We added three new teachers this year and will be losing about half of our instructional staff at the end of this year. We are in the 5th year of our plan of improvement.

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

We have chosen the area of writing to work on this year. We believe that if we help our students become better writers, it will improve their reading and understanding in all other areas, including math.

Description of Your Emerging Best Practice - (Maximum 100 words)

All staff were trained this year by X at the elearning center. Initially we met live and online every other week, then once a month. 2. Collaborative PLC meetings were held every Wed. at 2:30 to assist with implementation and sharing of ideas and successes. 3. PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Act) forms were introduced to plan each weeks emphasis on writing and check for progress and understanding. 4. We adopted the 6-Traits of Writing format and the 6-Traits rubrics to guide us in the implementation of the program and to teach the various components of writing.

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

Three writing prompts were given throughout the year. One at the beginning, then midway through the year, and again near the end of the school year. Each prompt told us where the students were and what we needed to focus on. They also showed the improvement students were making. Overall students improved by 2-4 paragraphs in length in their writing. They learned how to focus their thoughts and to use graphic organizers to give their ideas direction resulting in a significant increase in their volume of writing as well as the quality of their sentences and paragraphs.

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

Use of the 6-Traits program was vital in getting everyone focused in the same direction. It also allowed teachers to customize the emphasis need in each classroom depending on their students needs and weaknesses. Also, the use of the PDCA forms help teachers focus their attention on what they needed to do each week and provided the data needed at the PLC meetings each week. This allowed teachers to share what worked and get ideas for what didn't work from their colleagues. Administrations involvement in following up has been important in ensuring all staff are making the needed adjustments each week.

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

1. Having the whole school participate gave focus to everyone. 2. Training on what to teach is critical. 3. Using the PDCA forms gave us focus each week and provided the input for the PLC discussions. 4. Effective follow-up (the check and do portions) were critical for the success of our students. 5. Administrations involvement in guiding the collaborative meetings and following up with the teachers was vital.

FOI Number 21

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured - Professional Development, Leadership

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

District wide.

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

We have 3 main ongoing initiatives: Improve School Climate and Connectedness, including an effective system of Positive Behavior Supports. Implement Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol in all classrooms in the District Improve our Continuous Progress Curriculum with and embedded RTI process and ensure that it is implemented with fidelity across the District.

Description of Your Emerging Best Practice - (Maximum 100 words)

At the beginning of the 2008-09 school year, we changed the focus of our "Site Administrator Meetings" to become PLC based "Site Administrator In-services". In practice that is a change from periodically bringing all 27 Site Administrators together to disseminate information to meeting together to learn as a group that includes the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent and Directors. This year the Site Administrators have divided into 3 groups of "pilot sites", each focusing more heavily on one to the 3 main initiatives. Each of these groups has formed PLCs that are involved in a variety of learning activities surrounding their focus area.

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

Site Administrators report that the In-services are energizing and productive. Solutions to problems, and sharing best practices as a team have produced better results, and take advantage of collective skills and knowledge. Members of the team are valued as professionals who contribute to the district wide effort to improve. The products of the "pilot site" PLCs are showing strong promise for improvement. Many Site Administrators are now using a PLC based approach for professional development with their school staff.

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

By modeling good supervision skills that value the professionalism of our administrators, while addressing poor performance privately and directly we are maximizing their contribution to the organization. In turn most of them are using the same skills to maximize the potential of their school staff.

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

Our Site Administrators are a very high performing and dedicated group of professionals. They are itching to make major changes for improvement at an accelerated pace. We have become aware that we have been lacking in bringing other stakeholders along in our efforts to improve. We are now taking steps to do so.

FOI Number 21 (credit project)

Transforming Administrative Meetings into a Professional Learning Community

This “best practice” was implemented district-wide. X is Alaska's largest rural districts with approximately 4000 K-12 students of mostly X heritage, served by the district's 348 teachers, 32 Administrators, and numerous paraprofessionals. One-fifth of the certified teachers are X, the greatest percentage of indigenous educators of any district in Alaska.

Most of our students enter kindergarten speaking both Yup'ik and English, with limited proficiency in both languages. To address their needs, we adopted a Yup'ik First Language program in the early 1980s, which was designed to teacher literacy in the Yup'ik Language to form the basis for a transition into English literacy. The design was based on the assumption that most incoming kindergartners entered school with solid fluency in Yup'ik, and limited or no English. This assumption was accurate at the time, but as stated above, most incoming kindergartners no longer have strong fluency in Yup'ik. As a result of this transition, we are in the process of working with our communities to re-design our language programs. The process involves having each community answer the question, what do you want your high school graduates to know and be able to do in a language way? Nearly all of our communities have decided that their goal is fluency and literacy in both languages. We are currently considering adoption of the Gomez, Gomez 50/50 Dual Language model as the best way to reach this goal. In addition to renovating our language program, we have three main initiatives for school improvement, implement a system of Positive Behavior Supports and improve School Climate (PBS/SC), to implement an effective Response To Intervention (RTI) program, and to implement the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) in all classrooms.

This Best Practice was developed to address the domains of Leadership and Professional Development. As a new Superintendent in the spring and summer of 2008 I began to reflect about how to make significant improvements in student learning along. The admin team has many years of experience in x as a teachers and administrators, so we have had the opportunity to observe school successes and failures over many years. Our District, like much of rural Alaska has a history of instability due to high turnover of professional staff, and challenging logistical conditions.

A historical view of our District shows that most of our schools cycle between periods of strong performance and weaker performance. A closer look at what characterizes the high performing years usually shows several years of strong educational leadership. Another characteristic of these success periods is a strong staff working together as a team, a condition heavily enhanced by good educational leadership. From our reflection, it became clear that our efforts to improve schools would benefit by strengthening the educational leadership of all of our administrators including ourselves.

Throughout the history of our District, we have brought our Site Administrators in to the District Office 4 or 5 times per year. Typically these meetings were management oriented and used primarily for

FOI Number 21 (credit project)

District Office department heads to disseminate information to the Site Administrators. Site Administrators usually left these meetings tired and overwhelmed, carrying a box full of paperwork.

X has an unusually strong group of administrators who, collectively, have tremendous skills and knowledge. As we reflected, it seemed obvious that finding a way for us to learn together to develop our own best practices would bring about the greatest school improvement. Making better use of our Site Administrator meeting time seemed like a good place to start, so at the beginning of the 2008-09 school year we changed the concept and title of our meetings to “Site Administrator In-services”.

The original guidelines were simple. For each in-service, everything on the agenda would have a strong focus on educational leadership, and be delivered using effective learning strategies. Anything focused on school management such as budgets, lunch program, and plant facilities would be dealt with using other systems of communication. District Office department heads responded this in very different ways. Some were pleased at not being required to present information any more, but others were upset at not having access to tell the Site Administrators what to do. To help drive the point home, I calculated the cost of salaries for our entire group of administrators at \$3,000 per hour, and asked the question, what do you need to tell them, that is worth that much, and can't be sent in an e-mail message?

As the in-services developed, our group of administrators began to function more like a Professional Learning Community, and we began looking for opportunities to have individual and groups of Site Administrators present their own best practices, or teach the group specific skills or systems that they had developed to enhance their abilities as educational leaders. In the fall of 2009 the leaders of our Administrator's Association suggested that we have an audio-conference with a couple of their members before each in-service to discuss current issues, and potential items for our agenda. We were pleased with their commitment in bringing this suggestion forward and have incorporated it this year.

Developing this Professional Learning Community has had some additional ‘spin off’ benefits. In the spring of 2009 we asked each school to select one of our three main initiatives, PBS/SC, RTI, or SIOP for special emphasis. During the 2009-10 school year the Site Administrators from each of these 3 groups formed PLCs that focus on the best way to implement the initiatives. Their work is piloting each of the initiatives, which, if successful, will provide the basis for the rest of the schools to implement them. Their PLC activities have occurred via e-mail, two way video, and group meetings. We have used time during Site Administrator In-services for them meet as a group and to report to the whole group on their progress and findings. This process has resulted in very productive discussions about how all-3 initiatives fit together to form the “big picture” of the direction the district is going. At the site level, most of the Site Administrators have been using their professional development time to study their “pilot” initiatives with their staffs.

The development of our PLCs has had significant positive impact on our efforts for school improvement. Site Administrators generally report leaving our in-services energized and excited about being part of the team. The work completed by the combined work of all of our PLCs has produced some very promising results. Our administrators have developed significant understanding of and commitment to the direction that we are going as a district, and most schools staff members have bought in as well.

FOI Number 21 (credit project)

The key supports required for the success of this transformation are:

- Protection of our administrator's meeting time for professional development purposes.
- Providing resources to enhance Site Administrators learning.
- Modeling respect for our Site Administrators as high performing professionals.
- Willingness to listen to constructive criticism with an open mind.
- Using input from the Site Administrators to set direction.

I have learned an important lesson from implementing this Professional Learning Community. As I mentioned above, we are blessed with a very strong group of Site Administrators. Being energetic and dedicated, we are all chomping at the bit to move forward with our initiatives. I realized early on that it would be critical to have the support of our Board other stakeholders as we move forward, but I may not have been as aggressive with providing information as I should have been. We had some very successful work sessions with the Board where we seemed to have consensus about our initiatives, but in most of those, a significant number of members were absent, and still do not understand what we are trying to accomplish. I am learning that for implementation of key initiatives, there cannot be too much communication. The lesson I learned is that when establishing PLCs; do not underestimate their power, especially when you have such a strong group of professionals. It is a bit like stepping on the gas pedal of a muscle car. You have to be careful that you don't lose control, but it is great to have all that horsepower heading the right direction.

FOI Number 22

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured - Curriculum, Assessment, Instruction, Supportive Learning Environment, Professional Development, Leadership, Member of Cohort #1 for STEPP Program

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

We are a school district that is committed to making changes to curriculum and instructional strategies. Meet with AKEED about the STEPP Program and agreed to become a member of the Pilot Cohort #1 Group

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

Audit of curriculum for Language Arts, Math and Yupik Studies Increase teacher instructional strategies with Peak and Core programs

Description of Your Emerging Best Practice - (Maximum 100 words)

Audit the curriculum process identified the many different programs being used at the different sites. Working with a team of teachers, administrators will align the curriculum to GLE and use only two different programs. One for elementary and the second for MS and HS.

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

Use resources better and more cost effective for tight budgets. Able to focus on professional development for new teachers to learn how to use all component parts of the program. Looking to use the program assessment piece to measure success and adjust instruction from the data.

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

Support from the site administrators to help facilitate the changes in the school. Use current staff to provide training of partner teachers new to the program.

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

To facilitate this change was a major undertaking. Teachers were very reluctant to give up their books and learn new. Due to high turn-over in this grade group, the switch became much easier. Only 20% of the staff is remaining and will change their curriculum.

FOI Number 23

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured - Instruction

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

District wide

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

The RTI initiative resulted in significant student gains in 2008/2009 and will be a continued focus. Rachel Brown-Chidsey provided the following support: • A three credit, year-long, course offering in RTI • Fall and Spring on-site professional development • A Spring Literacy Retreat - February 28 thru March 3 • On going professional development (minimum days) and staff support

Description of Your Emerging Best Practice - (Maximum 100 words)

Response to Intervention has been a part of X for several years but never evolved into a useful process to alter instruction. With the creation of an RTI committee, the process was refined and made meaningful for classroom educators. The emphasis shifted from a paperwork requirement to data-driven instruction. Several front running schools led the way and showed evidence of student success based on the RTI Model.

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

Benchmark (proficient or advanced) Student Comparison 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 % performing at benchmark in Math 33% 34.7% 46.3% 48.5% 58.4% 66.8% % performing at benchmark in Reading 55.1% 60.9% 67.8% 66.1% 67.3% 75.5% % performing at benchmark in Writing 46.1% 54.1% 51.1% 56.2% 62.1% 67.6%

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

• Dedicated Staff • Flexible Schedule • Staff Willing to teach outside content area • District support in providing data based resources • Benchmarking data used in modifying instruction • Teacher-led professional development at inservices • District-wide data collection

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

• Good data is invaluable on a district-wide level – universal screening is a must. • Modify instruction to meet student needs based on data. • It is essential educators have time to collect, evaluate and implement data.

FOI Number 24

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured - Assessment

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

There are about 700 people in the community. More than 90% of the community residents are of X Lineage. The school population ranges from 210-240. The school is at level five in a plan of improvement. The school has not yet met Average Yearly Progress, although it met Safe Harbor four years ago.

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

On a district-wide basis, the X is focused like a laser on raising student performance on the writing strand of the high stakes tests.

Description of Your Emerging Best Practice - (Maximum 100 words)

The X is focused on the Assessment domain to improve its testing results. The district has concentrated its efforts on improving student writing performance for the high-stakes tests. All district teachers, including the School staff members, participated in this program to boost student writing skills. The teachers were taught to use rubrics. All staff members were involved in the program. The teachers assigned writing exercises to their students and evaluated their efforts with rubrics. The teachers worked together in PLC groups to discuss and determine the best interventions to improve each student's writing. With interventions in place, new assignment was set new and corrected. The teachers in PLC groups met then again to measure student progress and change or continue interventions as needed. Some teachers taught their students to peer teach.

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

In the time we employed this writing system, the staff noted the students' writing skills improved. The writing initiative showed much promise. This year, we are improving the writing initiative by including more preparation and instruction for the teachers. Although our writing skills did not improve measurably on the high stakes tests, I believe the program holds much potential to develop the students writing skills.

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

The key supports included every teacher working with students on writing. The writing initiative was taught in addition to the usual writing in classes. The instructors working in PLC groups worked together to support the students' best learning. Frequent formative assessments, intervention, adopting interventions to meet student needs, and re-assessment were all key supports leading to developing writing skills.

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

The staff must have adequate training and preparation for such comprehensive programs to be most effective. Best teaching practices must be part of the plan for any program to be successful.

FOI Number 25

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured - Curriculum, Assessment, Instruction

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

We have about 230 students K-12 with about 20 certificated staff. Students are taught at their appropriate instructional level using a standards-based model of instruction.

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

Involve all instructional staff in the Learner Focused Continuous Instruction (LFCI) initiative to create a standard writing tool for instruction and assessments.

Description of Your Emerging Best Practice - (Maximum 100 words)

A standard tool was created for every teacher to utilize as they worked to include writing in their curriculum regardless of content area. The Plan, Do, Check, Act (PDCA) form provides a simple way to express the process of instruction. The PLAN is the initial planning of the writing method being focused on during instruction. The DO description describes in detail how and when this would be covered during instruction. The CHECK creates a conscious determination of what type of formative assessment to be used for student understanding and the ACT is how the teacher modifies instruction based on data from the assessment. This tool provided a common language and process all staff could use in collaboration efforts and discussion involving best instructional strategies and practices for writing instruction in every classroom.

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

Using a common tool assisted in collaboration efforts because everyone understood the process and could easily discuss best practices in writing instruction. This tool has been implemented in the whole district which provides rich discussions and collaboration with teachers across the district. For some content area teachers (like math) there was a lot of difficulty in the beginning figuring out how writing could be included in their instruction but with a common resource like the PDCA form discussions among same content area teachers could take place across the district.

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

Initially teachers had difficulty seeing how the PDCA form and process was needed in their planning. Although some had to change their current way of planning writing instruction the tool did have a positive impact on writing instruction in all content areas. Before the PDCA form was implemented very few content area teachers (outside of reading and writing) processed how they used writing instruction in their content area. Standardizing writing across all content areas has increased writing instruction. In the next few years we will see how this will pay off in the way of test scores.

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

Standardizing and creating common tools for instruction and assessment help with dialogue and collaboration across content areas and because this was a district effort our conversations extend beyond our school with other teachers in the district. All of this will work to help all students succeed in the writing process.

FOI Number 26

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured - Supportive Learning Environment, Professional Development

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

X School is a K-12 school that has 57 students. School is in a X community of about 250 people. We have five certified staff members and six classified staff that work around 3-5 hours a day. We created a Professional Learning Community at the school to promote effective practices and peer dialogue. Another goal of the PLC was to establish a collaborative community at the school where teachers practices were more transparent.

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

Priorities: Improve the Professional Environment at the school. 1. Site administrator attend a PLC webinar with Al Bertani to gain more knowledge. 2. Create a need and focus for a PLC in our school. 3. Professional Development for teachers in PLC's. 4. Establish a time and protocol for a PLC on a weekly basis. 5. Self-monitor and reflect back often on the progress and effectiveness of the PLC.

Description of Your Emerging Best Practice - (Maximum 100 words)

Created a PLC in our building. 1. All teachers meet for 2.5 hours on Friday morning. The site principal and the classified staff take the entire student body to do team building and counseling activities with older students. 2. Teachers wrote a SMART goal that clarified the essential standards that needed to be addressed. 3. Teachers started doing peer observations about best practices while trying new strategies to improve student engagement. The PLC time created a time to share and problem solve ideas about what strategies worked the best for our students.

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

Instead of feeling isolated and personally responsible for student achievement, teachers are now talking about "our" students and feel comfortable asking for help and asking their peers to come into their classroom and collect data for them. Teacher's tell the principal on a regular basis how powerful the PLC has been in helping them improve their teaching practices. Teacher moral is high and all teachers want to return to the school next year to continue the work.

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

Al Bertani's webinar about the Nuts and Bolts of Professional Development was a must! 1. The principal and District leadership team must create the time for PLC to occur and be willing to allow teachers to "try new things and fail" without being evaluated on those attempts. 2. Taking the time to slowly go through the development of a PLC was a critical step. This allowed teachers the opportunity to slowly walk into the process and be involved in the decision making without feeling overwhelmed by the idea. 3. It is critical to create a school culture where everyone understands and buys into the idea that we are all learners who can improve our practices.

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

Professional Learning Communities will change your school!!! Teachers become empowered when they are given the opportunity to work together to solve the problems in our school while feeling supported from their peers. The bottom line is simple. PLC's = Higher Teacher Efficiency = Increased Student Learning

FOI Number 27

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured - Curriculum, Instruction, Curriculum and Instruction

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

District wide.

District has moved from site-based management toward a mapped and aligned curriculum. Research and our student scores did not support site-based management. The district has put in place efforts to map and align the curriculum at the same time integrating the X culture, language and history. Until this process is complete, the X has implemented best practice, scientifically researched programs to support an array of student abilities through the RtI model.

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

Through using AIMSweb, our student data shows areas where we need to continue focus for increased growth. Weekly data analytic collaborative time provided through a minimum day for all sites/teachers allows for constant review and corrective action based on individual student data. Professional development in-services at each site focus on training and implementation of the Response to Intervention process (RtI) to best meet the individual student learning needs.

Description of Your Emerging Best Practice - (Maximum 100 words)

Implementation of the RtI framework through use of the X Literacy Plan. The plan was created in partnership with the Consortium of Reading Excellence (CORE) as a guide for our teachers to differentiate instruction to our students in language arts. The attached document outlines our four tiers of intervention specific to student needs: Green Tier 1 - Advanced, Grey Tier 2 - Targeted, Yellow Tier 3 - Intensive, Red Tier 4 - Intensive. Please note the additional targeted tier. Please see hand out.

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

It has been largely implemented across the district. We know that the majority of our students are receiving the appropriate amount of reading time with the addition of intervention time as necessary per the Literacy Plan and specific student need. The individual learning plans (ILPs) for each student envelop the data gained through implementation of the plan. The individual student goals/data are reviewed during weekly collaborative times and adjusted throughout the year. We initially experienced an implementation curve but anticipate this best practice will continue to impact our growth in a positive way. Increased results - last year the district had 6 schools make AYP and early indicators this year show positive growth. As teachers are given a road map, through an aligned and culturally relevant curriculum with identified programs and materials to use across all grade levels and schools, student achievement will continue to increase.

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

We used CORE consultants to assist with the development of the plan. We provided a two day in-service at the beginning of the year for all principals and teacher leaders outlining to review and train this best practice. Site in-services have focused on RtI implementation as well. CORE consultants visited each school site three times during the school year to for implementation support. Additionally district literacy coaches were assigned to each site for building support with implementation of this model. Principals were given ongoing RtI professional development throughout the year. With the district's level of turnover each year, it is important to differentiate the professional development to both principals and teachers and make sure it is ongoing.

FOI Number 27 cont.

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

We need to integrate the X culture, language and history in to the materials to make it more relevant to our students. Communication at all levels is key. Having identified programs as a roadmap that teachers can follow assists our teachers to deliver instruction with fidelity. Principal leadership, participation and understanding are critical. Ongoing, leveled professional development is vital as is embedding it in the classroom. We understand that to truly make a difference with student learning we need to give our principals and teachers the best tools possible. We need to give them tools relevant to their work. The X Literacy Plan has been one of those tools.

FOI Number 28

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured - Assessment, Instruction

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

X is a remote village school in the X School District. We have 173 K-12 students. This is the Principals first year. We have fully implemented Aimsweb screening assessments for over 3 years. We are using Rigby Literacy by Design, Intensive Phonics and Inside/Edge for our Reading programs. We are also using Saxon for Math.

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

We benchmark 3 times a year (Fall, Winter, Spring) with Aimsweb. Within the framework of PLC's we constructed PDCA's for writing and test taking strategies as staff development activities for grades K-12.

Description of Your Emerging Best Practice - (Maximum 100 words)

The district provides additional professional development for all teachers in the form of professional in-service during the fall and winter periods. In PLC's we analyzed the data from the aimsweb results after each benchmark period. As we review the results, we also share instructional and intervention strategies with each other. In PLC's of 2 to 3 grade levels, we plan how we can monitor and adjust instruction and strategies so we can get positive movement within the tiers with the next benchmark assessment. The Instructional Leader offers feedback from his daily walk-throughs and possible impact on instructional delivery.

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

Due to high staff turnover, (we had 5 new staff members this year and we will have 8 new staff members next year) it is very hard to pinpoint where and who could have the biggest or the smallest impact on our outcomes. As we look at aimsweb results, our tiers and graphs are very inconsistent. Our attendance does not help nor assist our situation. Staff and student attendance is also a concern that we strongly believe without a doubt affects our results. We are anxiously hoping, wishing and anticipating that our SBA scores will show some improvement and get us out of AYP.

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

Key supports leading to success for us would be a consistent, competent, dedicated and intentional staff. Our district and leaders has done an admirable job of providing support, supplies, tools, resources, training and time to get the job of improvement done.

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

It is very frustrating to try and turn a school around (work toward serious improvement) when you have to fight unprofessional and lazy staff members. Our students may not be highly motivated but it only compounds the problem when your staff motivation is worse then your students. It is very frustrating with you have to spend so much unnecessary time and energy on issues, attitudes and problems that have nothing to do with motivating and educating K-12 students.

FOI Number 29

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured - Instruction, Supportive Learning Environment

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

There are between 250-300 community members and between 50-60 students in Pre-K through 12th grades. Most of the village families are X with a rich heritage and culture.

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

X met AYP three years in a row with through the school years ending 2008-2009. It continued to be important to improve school readiness and grade level improvements for each child, build the basic foundations in reading, writing, and mathematics; as well as tie everything together for social studies, science, art, music, and physical education improvements in the curriculum.

Description of Your Emerging Best Practice - (Maximum 100 words)

Although the district provided many weekly collaborative agendas and materials, inservice topics, and trainings; the X staff worked together for an increase in parent involvement and motivating students. For Domain 3 (Instruction Rubric)- brainstorming and working with other teachers and aides to develop more of a variety of instructional strategies during and after school to help students at various skill levels. For Domain 4 (Supportive Learning Environment)-Students need to see how courses and activities connect to their world and future. By having people from various entities visit the school and share opportunities with students and how the hard work of school courses will empower students in achieving dreams and goals. Parents and community members were kept informed of various accomplishments and activities through daily announcements and monthly involvement activities.

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

Students improved attitudes toward the importance of education and parents/community members became more involved as the year progressed. Elders shared in the celebrations according to their specific interest or just wanting to celebrate with the children. The community wants to see success and with more people involved with helping the students, there will continue to be more success for everybody.

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

The collaboration of all of the X staff (classified and certified) in all positions working to find ways to support and encourage each student was one of the keys to some successes. Asking and listening to students and parents/guardians about what was important or what goals students had and the brainstorming to achieve those goals was another important key to successful interventions and activities.

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

There is no perfect school, district, state, or learning environment; however, continually fine-tuning what is working and collaborating with others to find what will work for each specific setting is important. Including many levels of educators to recognize and appreciate the brainstorming and hard work of putting the ideas in practice is central to achieving more success for all people involved.

FOI Number 30

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured - Curriculum, Instruction, Supportive Learning Environment

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

We are a K-12 school with approximately 135 students. Nearly 100% of the students in our school are X and most qualify for free and reduced lunch. In addition to high rates of poverty in our school we also have high numbers of limited English proficient speakers. Historically, X has had very low test scores, but over the past 8 years we have seen improvement. Our school focuses on teaching the state GLE's and has taken a much more deliberate approach to educating students, adopting a tailor made student data system that also tracks students progress through a leveled instructional system.

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

The major priority for improvement this past year was in the writing content area. Our district as a whole selected writing as an area that we have historically struggled in and so decided to create a district-wide PLC to address concerns and potential solutions. The entire district educational staff would meet once a week to discuss students progress and interventions strategies that could be used to improve student comprehension.

Description of Your Emerging Best Practice - (Maximum 100 words)

The practice that I am most excited about is the creation of style checklists in my 7-12th grade writing classes. This checklist was introduced this past year as a way for students to use a rubric to check their own writing before it is turned in to the teacher. The checklist would remind students to add similes, metaphors, "ly" words, strong verbs, adjectives and other important literary devices to their writings. Additionally, the teacher had the students rate their responses on a three tiered level; smiley (great response), frowning (poor response) and calm (decent, but could be improved response). Using this quick grading system students began to classify writing samples quickly and learned more about what makes up a great writing response.

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

When we compared the list of students who used style checklists during their SBA assessments to students who did not we noticed that students did significantly better on the writing portions of the SBAs after applying that particular writing strategy. We will need to gather more data to ensure the correlation is valid, but we are confident that by giving students a process to improve their written responses, they became more aware of their own writing and also the degree to which they could be improved.

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

The creation of a style checklist was something that occurred at the beginning of the year because our 7-12 grade language arts teacher felt that students did not understand how to use rubrics to improve their own work, or how the writing process was used to improve upon initial writing samples. Over the course of the year it became a requirement for every student to use a style checklist to improve their writing. This would happen both through self reflection and peer editing in the classroom. As the year continued students began to incorporate the style checklist into all writing assignments. Next year we will try to add the expectation that they use their style check list in social studies and science assignments.

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

The main lesson that was learned was that we need to be more deliberate in the creation of a process that students can easily apply to their own procedures in the classroom. By creating a process for student improvement that was non-invasive and student led rather than always being teacher led (red ink corrections on papers) students were more comfortable injecting rich, descriptive elements into their written responses. However, we need to target the students who learned how to use the checklist, but failed to use it during the SBA's.

FOI Number 31

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured - Supportive Learning Environment, Responsible Thinking Process (RTP)

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

District wide.

Teacher turnover remains at 20%-30% per year. We have been training and implementing RTP for 5 years.

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

1. Get school staff buy-in. 2. Initial training for new staff. 3. New staff participate in year long weekly course discussing readings and implementation issues. 4. Staff work closely with RTP classroom aide and site administrator to develop consistent and realistic procedures.

Description of Your Emerging Best Practice - (Maximum 100 words)

The responsible thinking process is designed to teach educators how to teach students to develop a sense of responsibility for their own lives and to respect the lives of everyone around them. The process is both non-manipulative and non-punitive. It creates mutual respect by teaching students how to think through what they are doing in relation to the rules of wherever they are. This gives students personal accountability for their actions. The key component of this classroom discipline process is its focus on how students can achieve their goals without getting in the way of others who are trying to do the same thing. It teaches students how to respect others. <http://www.responsiblethinking.com/>

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

The students at schools that have implemented RTP demonstrate respect and take responsibility for their actions. The halls during transition time are calmer and quieter. The classroom learning environment is not interrupted by students negative behaviors as much as before. The Responsible Thinking Classroom is not a detention room. The perception of parents, students, and staff continues to view this in a positive light as more time is spent discussing and implementing the process.

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

Superintendent X is the key support to this program. His understanding of the program and first hand experience implementing the process in 3 districts, provides the underlying foundation for the program. Books are provided to new staff as soon as they are hired. Training is provided at the beginning of the year from the RTP founder and support team. Inservice sessions at a various implementation levels are provided during the all staff inservice.

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

The site administrator has to be involved at a high level in the discussion and implementation of RTP. The program has to be implemented site wide with full participation from all staff including teachers, aides, and all classified support staff. The common language and processes must be utilized and followed. Communication to parents and other community members must be frequent to minimize negative perceptions based on inaccurate data.

FOI Number 32

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured - Curriculum

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

District wide. The X School District is in level 5 of school improvement status.

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

-Adoption and implementation of a districtwide reading program (Imagine It!). -Intensive professional development in the implementation of Imagine It!

Description of Your Emerging Best Practice - (Maximum 100 words)

-Purchased new reading program materials and ensured they were available in all classrooms K-6 at the beginning of the school year. -We sent teachers and literacy leaders from all schools to a summer training as an introduction to the new reading program. -Contracted with CORE in delivery of onsite professional development monthly. -Curriculum director and reading consultant worked collaboratively to ensure implementation and fidelity to the reading program.

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

Several teachers, who were successfully implementing the program were identified. These teachers were video taped in order to provide a local resource for newly hired teachers. -Initially many teachers were resistant to the new reading program and by the end of the school year many of those teachers were demonstrating great proficiency in implementing the program.

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

The monthly onsite visits by the reading consultant provided ongoing support for the teachers in successful implementation of the program. The collaboration between the reading consultant and the curriculum director led to greater success in implementation. -The consultant provided support to the literacy leaders at each school.

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

Provide ongoing professional development. -Professional development must be sight based and tailored to the individual teachers whenever possible. -It is important to stick with something to give it time to work even though there may be people who are displeased.

FOI Number 33

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured - Professional Development

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

Our school has a population about 160 students K-12th grade. The principal is a local resident who taught there for 16 years before becoming the principal for the last three years. Six of the twelve teachers are long term (more than five years) while the others are 1st and 2nd year teachers.

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

Priorities: curriculum 1. Choose a program aligned with state standards. 2. Provide professional development for both teachers and principal.

Description of Your Emerging Best Practice - (Maximum 100 words)

Implementation of the new reading curriculum 1. Provide ongoing professional development for teachers and instructional paraprofessionals on using the program. 2. Provide ongoing professional development for leaders to monitor instruction and provide feedback for teachers.

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

Ongoing professional development was provided for teachers, paraprofessionals and administrators to allow for better instruction in the reading program. We made an increase by 8% in reading scores.

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

A focus on teaching the district's adopted reading program with fidelity and consistency by providing ongoing support throughout the year. At the beginning of the year provide district wide professional development to introduce the program components. After a couple of months, further district wide professional development is needed to fine tune some of the areas of the program and also allow teachers to share how they are using it. This is also a time for questions and answers by all. A couple of times throughout the year, a program leader provides on-site training for the administrator on classroom walkthroughs (what to look for and how to provide feedback to teachers) about the program.

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

Ongoing professional development and support for teachers and the instructional leader in the area of instruction is a critical component for the implementation of a curriculum. Having an administrator who takes time for walk-throughs and provides feedback is a key element to school wide success.

FOI Number 34

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured - Leadership

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

400 students K-12, level 5 for seven years

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

Establish the foundation for establishment of a professional learning community with staff understanding the importance of respectful, ongoing collaboration, as a key to improving their professional life focused on improving student learning outcomes.

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)

Incomplete

FOI Number 35

Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain Featured - Supportive Learning Environment

Background Information about the School (Maximum 100 words)

The school is housed in a single building serving approximately 200 students in grades K-12. The schools population is 45% Alaska Native and 80% free or reduced lunch. School facilities also include two softball diamonds, a playground, and an enclosed hockey rink. The school and accompanying facilities were first occupied in 1994 and serve as a center for many community activities.

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

A positive school climate is associated with higher grades, engagement, attendance, expectation and aspirations, fewer suspensions, higher self-esteem, less anxiety, and less substance abuse. 1. Develop and implement a community service learning project for students in grades 6-12. The overall goal is to create: a social environment that promotes communication and interaction. an affective environment that promotes a sense of belonging and self-esteem. an academic environment that promotes learning and self-fulfillment.

Description of Your Emerging Best Practice - (Maximum 100 words)

In response to our Attitudes and Behavior Survey from the spring of 2009 School staff chose to focus on the areas of peer climate and the school/community relationship. School staff believe that the answer to improved performance, in large part, is school climate. Characteristics of schools, such as the physical structure of a school building and the interactions between students and teachers, are two diverse factors that both affect and help to define the broad concept of school climate. If kids want to be in school and they enjoy what they are doing then they will perform. There is research that shows an association between positive school climate and connectedness and academic achievement and reduced risk behaviors. When students feel safe, connected and engaged in their schools, they are more successful and effective learners, and exhibit fewer risk behaviors. Each 6th-12th grade class is given time during the school week designated for class meetings. As part of these meetings each class is to research and implement a community service learning project to be completed by years end.

Indicators of Impact and Improvement (Maximum 100 words)

Students in each class presented to the entire student body the trials and tribulations of their individual class projects. Overall, students commented that they felt the projects were worthwhile and they felt good about giving back to their community. Some of the projects included; 8th grade Cookies for Troopers and Adopt a Hero project, 7th grade canned food drive, 11th grade soap drive for a homeless shelter and the 12th grade assistance with the local health fair. Over 1,000 cans of food were donated to the local food bank in November and an assembly was held to formally present our donation and recognize all of the hard work by our students. As a result of these projects we hope to see a positive increase in several areas of our School Climate and Connectedness Survey. 2009 Results 66.7% of School 6-12 grade students believe that if students like their school, they will do better in their classes. 50% of School 6-12 grade students Agree Some and Disagree Some that Students at X school help each other, even if they are not friends while only 8% agree. 48.7% of X School 6-12 grade students agree or strongly agree that some that students at X school are often teased or picked on. 50% of X School 6-12 grade students agree or strongly agree that most students in X school like to put others down. 70% of X School 6-12 grade students disagree, strongly disagree or agree some/disagree some that adults in the community support the school and know what goes on inside our school. 52.6% of X School 6-12 grade students agree or strongly agree that they care about other people's feelings and points of view.

FOI Number 35 cont.

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

Staff commitment Administration support Community support Goal setting-focused planning School time set aside specifically for this purpose Public recognition Celebration

Summary of Key Lessons Learned (Maximum 50 words)

Schools are successful when they have a clear and shared sense of direction. In a successful school, the culture of the school focuses on establishing a climate where the alignment of values and beliefs are embedded. The service learning projects allowed all involved to develop a sense of group purpose. Students who normally would not participate were involved. The assembly at the end of the year was very powerful as students shared their projects and discussed the impacts it made on their personal lives. In order to be effective time must be given during the school day for sponsors and students to focus on their projects. Clear guidelines must be established and deadlines enforced. It was beneficial for students to be involved in all steps of the planning process including choosing their project

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Alaska Self-Study Tool Domain:

Domain 3.0 Instruction: Effective instruction incorporates strategies and methods to meet the learning needs of students who function at varied levels within a classroom. Instruction that encourages each student to learn at or above grade level builds student depth of knowledge. High expectations ensure that learning is rigorous. Highly effective teachers are actively involved in making decisions about accommodating individual needs, interests, and learning styles.

Domain 5.0 Professional Development: Well-planned, ongoing professional development involves teachers in their own learning and ultimately leads to improved student achievement. It is based on scientifically based practice and is practical, job embedded, and results oriented. Professional learning communities are used to support effective staff development and allow for coaching, mentoring, collaboration, and a collective responsibility for student learning.

School/District Background: District wide. X students are heavily influenced by their Native language. Although many of the students now learn English at home, most of the parents and grandparents do not speak Standard English. The language structure often reflects the indigenous language structure. The practice of speaking this non-standard, “village English” establishes incorrect habits at very early ages. This greatly inhibits students’ acquisition of Standard English language speaking, reading, and writing skills.

Priorities and strategies for improvement: It is the goal of this project to increase the use of variations of formative questioning strategies by the classroom teachers who will be participating. Professional learning communities will be formed within schools and principals will recruit teachers to participate.

Description of best practice: Formative questioning strategies is part of one of the nine categories of instructional strategies from “Classroom Instruction that Works” researched by Marzano and associates. Their findings show that using Cues, Questions, and Advance Organizers effectively increased student achievement by 22%.

Indicators of impact and improvement: BSSD has recently in-serviced all administrators in using Apple’s iTouch to conduct McREL Power Walk-thru’s. These walk-thru’s are used by principals to generate data for teachers and principals to use collaboratively to discuss teaching strategies used in the classroom. Some of BSSD’s principals share the data and discuss it with staff at collaborative meetings. In general, there is quite a bit of data indicating that Cues and Questioning is a commonly used practice among our teachers. In fact, it is the most commonly used effective teaching strategy. This is also

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supported by Marzano et. al. who report that cueing and questioning accounts for as much as 80 percent of what teachers do in classrooms.

For this project, teachers and principals who have formed Professional Learning Communities on this topic will research and become familiar with the top 15 Formative Questioning Strategies as presented by Measured Progress. Then, teachers will set a personal, professional goal choosing the number of different questioning strategies to use in a give amount of time. The overall objective being to increase the number and variety of questioning strategies that a teacher is knowledgeable and able to use in their classroom instruction.

During Power Walk-thrus in participating teacher's classrooms, principals will add notes indicating what questioning strategy is being used when the strategy being observed is Cues and Questions. Although not specifically attributable to this change in instruction, standardized testing results will also be analyzed for an increase in student achievement in the spring.

Description of key supports: Principals will be responsible for completing Power Walk-thrus and noting questioning strategies being used by the classroom teacher. The Professional Learning Community formed for this project will meet regularly to discuss and support each other in their personal, professional implementation goals.

Timeline: Teacher's professional development goals are to be completed by the end of September of each school year. This project will help determine those goals for teachers involved. The Professional Learning Committees will be formed in late August/early September. Discussion and learning about the 15 Formative Questioning Strategies will take place throughout the first semester of the school year during the group's meetings. Implementation of "new" questioning strategies by teachers will be expected throughout the school year according to their personal goals for implementation. Principals will conduct power Walk-thrus all year.

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AK Self-Study Tool Domain(s) Addressed

The best practice addresses the AK Self-Study Tool Domains of Professional Development and Leadership.

Background about school (district)

We are a district serving 11 schools in 8 villages spread out over 89,000 square miles. Our distance delivery system does not always work effectively for delivering staff development. Teacher and principal turnover has been high over the last several years. Although we continue to provide staff development to new and returning teaching staff, it is our principals who are in the critical role of ensuring that through best practices, the board and district goals are implemented at the school level.

Priorities and strategies for improvement 2009-2010

- Professional development for principals in overseeing the implementation of the reading program and in ensuring the use of best practices in the classroom
- Professional development for reading coaches in coaching strategies to insure that our teachers are instructing our reading programs with fidelity
- Professional development of new teachers in implementing the reading programs with fidelity
- Continued professional development in RtI for teachers and principals
- Professional development for principals in facilitating collaboration time with teachers

Emerging best practice

The emerging best practice is the emphasis on providing professional staff development for district principals in a manner that allows them to develop into their own professional learning community and, as a result, use this as a foundation and model for each principal to begin leading the development of professional learning communities at their individual school sites. The idea for this best practice evolved following the district's participation in the AK Dept. of EED's Winter Education Conference in 2009 and the Alaska School Leadership Institute in the summer of 2009. District personnel realized that establishing Professional Learning Communities could be an effective way to ultimately improve student achievement in each of our schools. At the time, however, it was not clear that implementation of the idea would take more time and effort than originally thought. The critical missing component was to model the concept with the administrative staff and provide on-going staff development throughout the process. Until principals had a clear understanding of what a professional learning community was and how it develops, it would be unlikely that the process would be established at the site level.

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Key elements

The district brought principals together at multiple times throughout the school year and provided follow-up meetings via distance delivery. The initial staff development on core district initiatives was provided during a week-long administrator in-service time with additional staff development provided during the following week at “new-hire” in-service. Principals were then brought into X for 3-day meetings/trainings on a quarterly basis, with the first meeting being in September. Monthly meetings were held via audio-conference and facilitated by the Superintendent.

A critical aspect of the quarterly principal meetings was to contract with a facilitator-trainer who could provide some of the staff development, but more importantly facilitate the principal meetings in a manner that allowed principals the opportunity to share and grow as a learning community. Principals were given the chance to visit classrooms, make observations, video-tape lessons (with teacher permission), and collaborate as a group to improve their skills as a classroom observer and instructional leader. Additional staff development on “AIMSweb Data |Analysis for Collaborative Meetings” was provided by and AIMSweb trainer using modeling and sharing of data in a manner that could be replicated at the site level during collaboration time. Principals were provided opportunities throughout the year to provide input on what staff development strategies were effective for them, what follow-up was needed, and what additional staff development training and support they felt was needed to support the implementation of the district’s goals.

Indicators of impact and improvement

While this was our first year to begin the practice of providing principals the opportunity to become their own professional learning community, we are nevertheless seeing some indications of impact and improvement. First, principals have indicated through the staff development evaluation process that they wish to continue what was begun this year. Second, reports from the principals and visits to the school sites indicate an increased use of research-based strategies in the classroom; improved use of collaboration time; and a more thorough implementation of district-wide initiatives.

Key supports leading to success

There are several key supports that are a foundation to success in the implementation of this best practice.

- 1) There must be a commitment to providing opportunities for administrators to meet together regularly throughout the school year as a “professional learning community.”
- 2) District office administrators need to have a thorough understanding of professional learning communities and to also begin the process of becoming their own professional learning community.
- 3) Staff development “needs” to support the district’s priorities and strategies should be identified.
- 4) There must be a financial commitment for providing appropriate staff development to support the process.
- 5) Principals must be given the opportunity to provide critical input throughout the process.

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6) Staff development must be provided to principals in a manner that allows for discussion among themselves; opportunities to provide feedback, opportunities to see the strategies modeled; opportunities to practice the strategies prior to implementation; and opportunities to share with each other their successes and concerns throughout the year.

Summary of key lessons learned

We have learned several key lessons throughout the process. First, staff development for principals (and teachers) should be differentiated just as we differentiate instruction for students. Second, implementing too many “initiatives” or priorities at one time does not allow for depth of skill acquisition. Additionally, administrative staff must be provided time and opportunity to build trust amongst themselves and with district level staff. “We’re all on the same team.” Thus, we made a concerted effort to send as many principals as possible to the ASLI in June of 2010. This will lay the foundation for teamwork as we begin the 2011 school year. Finally, it is imperative that the district’s mission, vision, goals, and priorities be clearly established at the start of the school year and be revisited throughout the year. When staff does not understand why we do what we do, there is misunderstanding, division, and roadblocks to collaboration.

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The X District offers educational services to fifteen communities. It is approximately the size of Minnesota with the enrollment of around 1,800 students.

Truancy is a problem in the X School District. Attendance in school is a factor of school success. When students do not attend school they do not receive the instruction from the teachers. When students have high amount of absences it impacts their learning at school.

One of the tools that we have developed is the development of the Truancy Support Office. Site administrators are responsible for monitoring student truancy issues. Exact procedures have been written to support Alaska's law that deals with compulsory education of students (Alaska Statute 14.30.010). A flow chart has been developed which outlines the expectations and procedures to improve truancy violations.

Once a site administrator feels that they have worked with the parents to improve attendance and the parents continue to not send their child(ren) to school, paperwork is then submitted to the Truancy Support Office. The Truancy Support Officer then reviews supporting documentation from the principal and then prepares charging paperwork and then submits this to the District Attorney's office in Nome. The D.A.'s office then files this paperwork with the Magistrate. The court sets a hearing date and communicates the charges to the parents. It should be noted that each parent is charged and is required to participate in the hearings. If found guilty, each parent is fined and/or placed on probation. The Truancy Support Officer supplies the D.A. with recent attendance information and attends the hearings in the Nome Court.

The D.A. and Magistrate are creative when dealing with truancy violators. Oftentimes, they will extend the hearing over several months in hopes that the parents will get their children to school. In many cases, this is all that is required to change attendance habits. The court has also extended probation to students who no longer are covered by the Alaska attendance law. However, those parents who fail to improve their child's attendance are generally fined and placed on probation. It is the responsibility of the Truancy Support Officer to communicate the outcomes of the hearings to the site administrators and superintendent.

While this partnership is rather new and has made some impact, more needs to be done. The court system is a slow. Sometimes it has taken the D.A.'s office or the court up to three months to just set a date for a hearing. This creates frustration for the school and school district's point of view. Valuable learning time is lost because of the time the students are not in school.

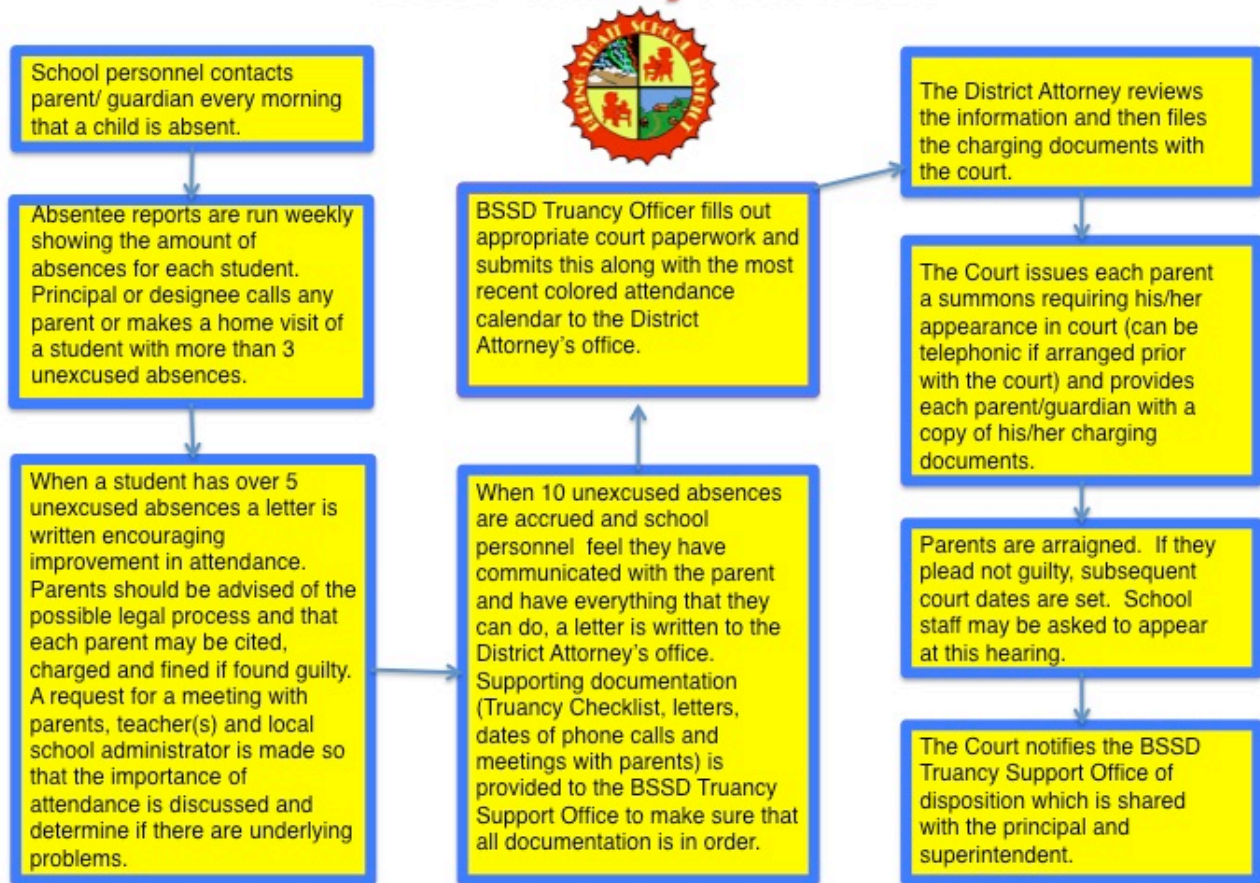
We have seen improvement with many of the parents that we have charged with truancy violations. Generally, if the parents show improvement with getting their children to school, the charges are dropped. However, if there is no change, generally suspended fines and probations are given.

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But, there is hope in the future. During the 2009-2010 school year the commissioner of education and the states' attorney general have come up with a plan that will hopefully expedite the process. It is hoped that school district personnel will be able to submit charging documents directly to the magistrate. Hopefully the legislature will deal with this during the upcoming session.

The following documents explain the procedures that are used in the X District for truancy. In addition, a checklist is provided. I have also included a "Truancy Tool Kit" with sample letters to parents and to the District Attorney's office.

BSSD Truancy Flow Chart



FOI Number 38 (credit project) Truancy/Attendance Checklist

Student Name

Address

Phone Number

Birth Date

Parent/Guardian Names

___ **Phone Calls**

___ **Dates**

___ **Response**

___ **Letters to parents:**

___ **Date Sent**

___ **Copies of letters sent**

___ **Send attendance documentation**

___ **Phone Call/Set Up Meeting with Parent:**

___ **Date of meetings**

___ **Notes of meetings**

___ **Letters to District Attorney's Office**

___ **Date Sent**

___ **Copies of letters sent**

___ **Student Date of Birth**

___ **Legal Parent/Guardian Information**

___ **Color copy of student's attendance calendar**

___ **Date sent to Truancy Support Office**

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Parents' Names
PO Box

Dear Mr. and Ms. XXXX,

The first semester has now ended and I wanted to make you aware of my concern for Student's attendance. According to our attendance records, Student's name has 8 unexcused absences and has been tardy 20 days. That is too much! I am concerned with Student's attendance history and his learning.

It is very important that Student is present and on time each school day to learn everything that he needs to know. Our school day begins promptly at 8:00 each morning. If your child arrives late to school, he misses important information. When your child is absent or late, important lessons are missed. Learning gaps create frustrating and embarrassing situations for children.

The Bering Straight School District is working with the Department of Law and the Alaska Court System to meet our requirement for educating students. This year we are closely monitoring the attendance of all students. If a student has ten (10) unexcused absences, a letter will be sent to the Alaska District Attorney's office in Nome. The D.A. will file charges with the court. The court will issue each parent a summons requiring his/her appearance at court for their failure to send their child to school. The judge may order each parent to pay a fine or be placed on probation. While I hope that this process will not need to be used, I wanted to make you aware of this.

We want your child to be successful. It is important for your child to attend school, on time, every day. Please call me if there is anything that I can do to help get your child to school each day. You may reach me at 985-5515. You may also speak with our Assistant Principal, Ms. Johnson for assistance at 985-5515 .

Sincerely,

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(Date)

(Parent Names)

P.O. Box (Box)

Dear Mr. and Mrs. (Parent Names):

I am very concerned about (child's full name) attendance. It is our goal that the children of Gambell get a good sound education. It is important for you to set good habits of attendance by sending (him/her) to school every day. It is important for (him/her) to learn all the information that will help (him/her) be successful in school. When (child's name) does not attend school, (he/she) gets farther and farther behind. (Child's name) has now missed (# of days). That is too many!

The Bering Straight School District is working with the Department of Law and the Alaska Court System to meet our requirement for educating students. This year we are closely monitoring the attendance of all students. If a student has ten (10) unexcused absences, a letter will be sent to the Alaska District Attorney's office in Nome. The D.A. will file charges with the court. The court will issue each parent a summons requiring his/her appearance at court for their failure to send their child to school. The judge may order each parent to pay a fine or be placed on probation.

You were informed previously of the school's concern about (child's first name)'s attendance. I am requesting a meeting with you and your child on (day of meeting) to discuss their attendance and determine what can be done. Please call if this day and time is not convenient and we can reschedule. Failure to attend this important meeting, will show a lack of interest in improving your child's attendance.

We want your child to be successful. It is important for your child to attend school, on time, every day. Please call me if there is anything that I can do to help get your child to school each day. You may reach me at 985-5515. You may also speak with our Assistant Principal, Ms. Johnson for assistance at 985-5515 .

Sincerely,

John Bruce, Principal

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Dear Mr. and Mrs. (Parent Names):

After repeated attempts, we have not been successful in getting you to send (child's first and last name) to school on a daily basis. (Child's name) has missed (days missed) days this school year. According to Alaska State Law 14.30.010, it is your responsibility as a parent/guardian to ensure that all your children ages 7-16 attend school daily, rested and on time.

I am forwarding a copy of this letter to the District Attorney's office in Nome for further action.

Sincerely,

John Bruce, Principal