

1. NEED FOR PROJECT

Project CREATE: Culturally Responsive Evidence for Alaska Teacher Effectiveness is a collaboration of nonprofit, education, and Alaska Native partners. Working together, *Project CREATE* will develop an integrated teacher evaluation system that will increase teacher effectiveness. The centerpiece of the system will be project-created *examples of excellent instruction in the context of cultural relevance*. Newly developed teacher evaluation tools will attest that effective, culturally responsive teaching **is** occurring. Undergirding *Project CREATE* is the *recognized need* for highly effective teachers in remote school districts who, by integrating cultural examples, can close achievement gaps and engage students in school through graduation.

1.1 District Overview

The Bering Strait School District (BSSD) pilot site in northwest Alaska serves fifteen isolated villages on the Seward Peninsula, on the eastern end of Norton Sound, and on two islands in the Bering Sea. SY 2011-12 district enrollment reached 1,868 students of which 96.4% (1,801) are Inupiat, Yu'pik, or Siberian Yu'pik. Villages in BSSD's catchment area range from 145 to 752 residents, and its schools range from 32 to 220 students. While the number of students served is relatively small, the geographic area covers *80,000 square mile* (about the size of Kansas). Many schools are accessible only by small bush aircraft; others can be reached only by snowmobiles in winter and boats in summer (BSSD, 2012). None are accessible by road. BSSD's schools have the largest percentage of Alaska Native students in the state, the highest poverty levels, and the highest percent of students (52.8%) who are LEP (AKDEED, 2012).

1.2 The Pilot District's High Needs

1.2.2 Poverty: Poverty is extreme in BSSD, with 86.7% of students qualifying for free and reduced price lunch. Rates in individual BSSD schools range from 56% to 99%.

1.2.3 Graduation and Drop-Out Rates: In BSSD, only half of students graduate—55% for Alaska Native students and 44% for those with LEP. These rates are obviously far less than the 68% graduation rate for Alaska or 75% for the United States as a whole (BSSD; AKDEED; NCES, 2012). According to *cultural discontinuity* theories in Alaska (Alaska Native Knowledge Network, 1999; 2000; AQUKKASUK, 2012) and elsewhere (Cholewa & West-Olatunji, 2008; Fast, 2008), children raised in a distinctive culture often experience dissonance in a school system that segments the values of the larger society apart from the students’ own culture. Real or imagined, students feel they are forced to choose one culture at the expense of the other. In small, isolated villages such as BSSD, the schools are often at the losing end of this unintended “tug of war” where success in one setting represents failure in another (Yanu, 2006). ***Cultural discontinuity and its impact on achievement (AKDEED, 2012; BSSD, 2012) undergird the importance of this project emphasizing that teaching and learning in Alaska be culturally relevant and reflective of the community.***

1.2.4 School Improvement Status: While all schools in BSSD qualify for Title 1 school-wide, seven are Tier 1, and three, Tier 3. That is, fully two out of every three BSSD schools (67%) fall within the bottom 5% of the state’s Persistently Lowest Achieving Schools based on state testing and graduation rates.

1.2.5 Student Academic Achievement: Student academic achievement in BSSD is low. Fewer than half the students achieve proficiency on any state test. (Detailed academic data is presented in Section 1.6.3, in support of Priority 3.)

1.3 Lack of Strong Cultural Relevancy

The culture in these small villages, the native language, and the harsh environmental challenges are all important “realities” teachers must use to build student achievement through

highly effective teaching. A student's native language shapes students' thoughts and foundations for learning. Cultural bridges linking local traditions with school-based academics will make learning more meaningful, thereby increasing student engagement and achievement.

1.4 Teacher Turnover

1.4.1 Cultural Disparities among Teachers and Students: In BSSD, just eight teachers out of 224 (3.6%) are Alaska Native (BSSD, 2012). In this case, BSSD's diverse teaching staff is only somewhat less representative of the local population than Alaska as a whole where only 5% of teachers are Alaska Native (Hill & Hirshberg, 2012). Teacher recruitment in BSSD and statewide occurs of necessity outside the state. While teachers come to Alaska to teach in remote isolated villages, they often do not remain there past a year or two. Equally of concern, those teachers who do come are new and inexperienced. Most have little or no knowledge of local Native cultures or language, and this lack of knowledge adversely impacts learning (ACC, 2012, ANKN, 1999). Apart from the need to train and recruit more Alaska Native teachers, it is critical to develop strong professional development programs to immerse teachers in the culture of the villages in which they teach (Doyle, Kleinfeld & Reyes, 2009).

1.4.2 Teacher Experience: Schools in BSSD (with similar outcomes in other Alaskan villages) lose one-third of their teachers (35%) each year. This high turnover rate means two things: (1) a lack of teaching continuity in a district already challenged by other teaching and learning issues; and (2) constant new faculty with minimal teaching experience. For example, in BSSD 15% of teachers have three to five years' experience, and 48% less than two years (BSSD, 2012). Research has shown that all else remaining equal, teacher experience greatly impacts student achievement (Barton, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2010).

1.5 Professional Development Needs

Many teachers in small schools across Alaska, including those in BSSD, teach multi-age and multi-grade classes. To be successful in those classrooms, teachers need to master both the strategies for imparting content knowledge from beginner to advanced levels, and the pedagogical agility to accomplish that feat on a daily basis. The unifying connection across grade levels can be greater attention to cultural relevance in the classroom.

1.5.1 The Challenges of Professional Development: Improving teacher quality is one of the most effective strategies for improving educational outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2010). And yet, in remote culturally ethnic Alaska Native villages such as those in BSSD, recruitment, retention, and professional development pose many challenges.

- **The Challenge of Content:** *Even though Alaska Native students are “majority minorities” in over half the districts of Alaska, there are relatively few instructional venues specifically addressing their needs (ACC & AKDEED, 2012).* The prevailing issues are those of *relevance*—whether cultural, academic, or technical. And research shows that if students see a clear link between what they are studying and the reality of their surroundings they will work harder to succeed (ANKN, 1999). In one study, more than 80% of high-school dropouts stated they would have stayed in school *if the learning appeared at all applicable to their real world* (Bridgeland, Dilulio & Morrison, 2006).
- **The Challenge of Delivery:** In remote villages scattered across BSSD, ongoing face-to-face professional development is complex, costly, and in winter months almost impossible. To provide teachers with professional growth opportunities and support, *Project CREATE* embraces a *blended learning program*—e.g., several days of face-to-face workshops, reflection and application followed by virtual coaching and ongoing instruction.

1.6 Competitive Preference Priorities

1.6.1 Priority 1: Inclusion of Alaskan Nonprofit Organizations: The Bering Strait Native Association (BSNA) will work closely with SERRC and BSSD on *Project CREATE*. BSNA elders will serve on the Advisory Board and work directly with SERRC and ANEA (Alaska Native Educators Association) on integration of cultural standards into the evaluation system and professional development. BSNA will provide the social and educational support for infusing culturally relevant teaching into the daily instructional platform.

1.6.2 Priority 2: Improving the Effectiveness and Distribution of Teachers: Although BSSD has 152 teachers with Bachelor’s degrees and 71 with Master’s degrees, and 81% of the core academic courses are taught by highly qualified teachers (vs. 89% in the state; AKDEED, 2012), the district’s persistently low student achievement suggests *the need to “redefine” what constitutes effectiveness. Project CREATE does just that by intensifying professional learning and adapting a teacher evaluation system steeped in cultural relevance for Alaska Natives.*

1.6.3 Priority 3: Turning Around Persistently Lowest-Achieving Schools: In BSSD, 49% of students achieved proficiency in State Assessments in Reading, 46% in Writing, and 45% in Mathematics in SY 2010-11. Scores on the Alaska High School Graduation Qualifying Examinations (HSGQE) are at best, similar and at worse, far lower:

| Grade | Reading Proficiency | Writing Proficiency | Math Proficiency |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 10 th Grade (n=84) | 52% | 39% | 43% |
| 11 th Grade (n=17-19) | 24% | 32% | 30% |
| 12 th Grade (n=12-24) | 42% | 46% | 18% |

Culturally relevant education delivered by a new definition of effectiveness in teaching—unique to Alaska’s needs—will change these poor academic outcomes.

2. QUALITY OF THE PROJECT DESIGN

Project CREATE takes an innovative approach to effective teaching by shining a light on cultural relevance—in teacher evaluations, teacher professional development, teacher classroom activities, and teacher satisfaction and commitment. All development will align to Alaska’s Professional Standards for Teachers, emerging new state teacher evaluation regulations, and the Cultural Standards for Educators. For the pilot, *Project CREATE*’s professional development process will also integrate with the district’s implementation of Robert Marzano’s *Art of Science and Teaching (AST)*, currently funded at four BSSD sites through a School Improvement Grant.

2.1 Goal and Objectives

The overarching goal of *Project Create* is to assure teachers become highly effective in their delivery of culturally responsive K-12 instruction. Corollaries to this goal suggest an exemplary model of teaching and learning: (1) By helping more teachers become more effective, BSSD and Alaska will be more equitably distributing *effective* teachers. (2) In promoting culturally responsive instruction, more effective teachers will more positively impact student achievement (Gay, 2010). (3) Students who see themselves reflected in the curricular context are more likely to be engaged (ACC, 2012; ANKN, 1999), and those who are more engaged are more likely to stay in school and learn (Bridgeland et. al, 2006). *Project CREATE* will meet the following objectives by the end of the grant period:

- Increased retention /decreased turnover rate of effective teachers
- Increased ability of all 224 BSSD teachers to be highly effective in instructional delivery as measured by proficiency levels on the evaluation instrument.
- Full integration of Alaska’s cultural standards into BSSD’s evaluation system.

- Increased student motivation, engagement, and achievement as evidenced by the following measures over the grant period: (1) increased graduation rates from a 2011 rate of 55% to a 2015 rate of 60.5%; (2) decreased annual drop-out rates from a 2011 rate of 8% to a 2015 rate of 6.5%; (3) increased proficiency on state assessments in reading from 49% in 2011 to 56% in 2015; (4) increased proficiency on state assessments in mathematics from 45% in 2011 to 51% in 2015; and (5) increased achievement rates for HSGQE from 10th through 12th grade of 3% per year across reading, writing, and mathematics proficiency (as reported in Section 1.6.3 above).

2.2 Strategy 1 – Creating Context for Alaska’s Cultural Standards for Educators

The first strategy for increasing the number and equitable distribution of highly effective teachers is to integrate the state’s *Cultural Standards for Educators* into BSSD’s evaluation system to form one of the bases for transformative reform of the district’s teaching model.

2.2.1 Background: In April 2012, Alaska released its revised draft of the *Guide to Implementing Cultural Standards for Educators*, developed collaboratively by Alaska’s Department of Education & Early Development (ADEED), SERRC’s Alaska Comprehensive Center (ACC), Alaska Native Educators Association (ANEA), and Education Northwest. These standards were an outgrowth of the 1995 Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative (ARSI), which included credits in Multicultural and Alaska Studies in teacher requirements for certification. The impetus for ARSI was the awareness that content, performance, and quality standards used across the state do not specifically address unique issues faced by Alaska’s rural schools and indigenous populations, and that all school districts in the state need to address this issue.

The cultural standards aim to foster a strong connection between school and community by providing in-depth experiential learning in real-world contexts. The standards are predicated

on the belief that a firm grounding in heritage language and culture is fundamental in education. To this end, the curricular focus is shifted from teaching and learning about cultural heritage as a social studies requirement to teaching and learning *through the local culture and world view*.

2.2.2 Overview: The standards create a forum for teacher discussions and evidence-based inquiry into effective *and culturally relevant* instructional practices. Cultural rubrics raise awareness and identify sound instructional approaches such as: (1) incorporating local heritage into the curriculum; (2) using the local environment, parent involvement, and community resources to link school-based learning with life outside school. It is precisely the capture of these approaches that define the scope of *Project CREATE* and its anticipated long-term impact on Alaska Native students and the schools serving their communities.

2.2.3 Proposed Work: In Year 1, *Project CREATE* will conduct a thorough review and analysis of the state's cultural standards, and the descriptions within each standard of teachers' objectives for instruction. Standards define a four-point rubric of effectiveness (emerging, developing, proficient, and exemplary). Based upon findings of this analysis, the project team will create a **series** of culturally based activities and examples for each standard that teachers can use to enhance their K-12 instructional practices for every student. *Project CREATE will develop unique cultural examples specific to each region of the state along with activities and methodologies to help further the use of the state's cultural standards—beginning with villages of the Inupiat, Yu'pik, and Siberian Yu'pik in BSSD.* The following two cultural standards include the broad description and a short draft example (albeit far less specific) of the type of exercise *Project CREATE* will develop.

D4. Seek to learn the local heritage language and promote its use in their teaching. At the “emerging” skill level, teachers will recognize the local heritage languages represented in their classrooms. At the “exemplary” skill level, teachers will engage in conversational heritage language and mentor students in their uses of heritage languages in the classroom.

Project CREATE exercise: The Iñupiaq term aavzuuk is a complete sentence which economizes on sound to maximize meaning. Implied in aavzuuk are seasonal and calendar times as well as harvests linked to astronomical knowledge. Comparing this “sound” with the English words for the same meaning will yield exciting comparisons and contrasts that illustrate the differential use of language in a culture.

B1 Regularly engage students in appropriate projects and experiential learning activities in the surrounding environment. Skill levels build from observing the surrounding environment and local culture (“emerging”) through community interaction to integrating seasonal cultural projects and experiential learning activities across content areas daily (“exemplary”).

Project CREATE exercise: Scheduled berry picking or fishing with awareness and study of the cultural perspective and impact of seasonal hunts and foraging on subsistence.

2.3 Strategy 2 – Integrating Cultural Relevance into Evaluation/Professional Development

The second strategy for increasing the number and equitable distribution of highly effective teachers is to create the contexts for implementing cultural relevance into *any district’s selected evaluation/professional development system*. The demonstration of this effectiveness will take place in the BSSD pilot site, which utilizes Robert Marzano’s *Art and Science of Teaching*. The examples developed in Strategy 1 will be firmly integrated with Marzano’s

system, which will undergird the “observation” component of the evaluation system. All of BSSD’s teachers will be fully trained in the adapted system by the end of the grant period.

2.3.1 Overview of the Model: The adaptation of the Marzano Casual Teacher Evaluation model to include examples aligned with Alaska’s Cultural Standards for Educators offers *Project CREATE* an outstanding opportunity to test the efficacy of cultural relevance in increasing teacher effectiveness and student achievement within the structure of a reliable and valid model. Marzano’s model (2011) is based on more than 5,000 studies, which continue to correlate effective teaching with student achievement.

2.3.2 Specifics for Implementation in BSSD: The Marzano Observation and Feedback Protocol in the proposed framework identifies 41 key strategies in the classroom-focused domain of effective teaching. The 41 strategies are organized into nine questions which look at the design of effective instruction as well as teachers’ reflections of their own teaching and relationship building with students. For example, questions address communicating in the classroom, tracking student progress, celebrating success, helping students understand and practice new knowledge, engaging students, and establishing classroom protocols. As a result of this *Project CREATE* strategy, each of these questions will be infused with cultural examples and activities that reflect Alaska’s cultural standards, giving teachers a full range of opportunities through which to create a culturally dynamic, evidence-based, successful teaching platform.

2.4 Strategy 3 – Alignment of the Teacher Evaluation System

The third project strategy for increasing the number and distribution of highly effective teachers is to align the work in Strategies 1 and 2 with Alaska’s emerging regulations for teacher evaluation in every district, to be fully implemented statewide by 2015, the end of this grant period. Development will overlay the emerging revisions to AKDEED’s requirements with the

work conducted in *Project CREATE* to build teacher-based activities for the cultural standards and to assure their seamless integration into reliable independent evaluation systems such as Marzano's. With this strategy, *Project CREATE* will prepare BSSD, and by extension other Alaskan districts, for the 2015 state requirements.

2.5 Strategy 4 – Training the Trainers for Continuous Professional Development

The fourth strategy for increasing the number and equitable distribution of highly effective teachers is to open up an avenue for continuing teacher support within the new systems created in this grant. In addition to the *blended delivery model*, *Project CREATE* will develop a Train-the-Trainer model in BSSD, with a cadre of teacher trainers who will be available to every school in the district during and beyond the grant.

The flow for training is as follows: (1) *Project CREATE* will train teachers in the new evaluation system to assure a full understanding of the cultural components incorporated into the system. This onsite training will take place over two separate monthly visits; (2) virtual training will be provided in the off-months; (3) additional workshops will be delivered virtually -- further highlighting the integration and use of the cultural examples; (4) on-site follow-up training will be conducted after four months by the SERRC trainers and additional district-based trainers who complete the Train-the-Trainers program. While assuring the sustainability of the work in BSSD, the Train-the-Trainer model developed in *Project CREATE* will be in place for export of this work across Alaska.

2.6 Strategy 5 - Export to All of Alaska

In Year 3, SERRC will develop a comprehensive step-by-step operations and guidance manual for dissemination to AKDEED and for direct sharing with other districts in Alaska. The manual will include cultural examples appropriate for various districts and geographic regions in Alaska, the process for developing teacher and student engagement, the application of cultural

relevance in any teacher evaluation system, and a list of frequently asked questions. *Project CREATE's* Project Director will be available for consultation through SERRC.

3. QUALITY OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

3.1 Key Staff and Responsibilities

The Southeast Regional Resource Center (SERRC) will direct the grant; coordinate the instructional design resources, trainers, and Advisory Board for the grant; manage the continuous improvement process (with the RGI evaluation team); post materials to the SERRC website; provide online Webinars, and develop other training as needed. Bering Strait School District (BSSD) will serve as the pilot site; provide facilities, teachers, and substitute staff for all training hours; and assure all student and teacher data collection for the new instructional design and teacher evaluation systems. The Alaska Native Educators Association (ANEA) will serve as the lead advisor for developing cultural examples of evidence for teachers and students. ANEA will assist in the provision of related resources necessary for cultural adaptation of the Marzano model. The Bering Strait Native Association (BSNA) will recruit village elders to assist SERRC, BSSD, and ANEA to develop training materials specific to the cultural examples. RGI will lead the evaluation efforts for the entire project and systematically provide the data for documentation of effect and continuous improvement.

3.2 Adequacy of the Plan

3.2.1 Project Management Team: The *Project CREATE* Management Team led by the Project Director Gerry Briscoe of SERRC will oversee all grant activities to insure a successful implementation including all compliance with federal and state reporting. The team will consist of the partners, including two SERRC education specialists. Members will be responsible for developing activities, reviewing outcome benchmarks regularly to address potential barriers to success, and prescribing corrective actions.

3.2.2 Grant Advisory Board: The Project Management Team will be assisted by a Grant Advisory Board, a project-based board incorporating representatives from each of the partners, 2 representatives from AKDEED, and a cross-section of district superintendents outside of BSSD. The Board will review all activities derived from the application of cultural standards to provide invaluable input as to the applicability and relevance to the project design, outcomes and materials to all of Alaska.

3.2.3 Supplemental Funding: *Project CREATE* is designed to augment SERRC's work begun in SY 2011-12, which was funded by a School Improvement Grant (SIG) to Alaska's lowest-performing schools, including four sites within BSSD. These four sites will provide the first cohort trained for *Project CREATE* to test the impact of culturally based examples embedded in evaluation systems aligned with state standards.

3.3 Key Staff

Gerry Briscoe, the Professional Development Director at SERRC, will serve as the grant's Project Director and oversee all grant activities including the fiscal and reporting responsibilities to SERRC, the state, and the federal government. Gerry will also serve as an interface with project partners, AKDEED and the Advisory Board.

Sue Johnson, School Improvement Grant Coordinator for BSSD, will serve as the District Grant Liaison, ensuring data collection in BSSD. Sue will also participate in the *Project CREATE* Train-the-Trainer activities and liaise between the *Project CREATE* development and ongoing activities in the Marzano evaluation model for the district.

Jan Neimeyer, will serve as one of *Project CREATE*'s Education Specialists, with 2 additional Educational Specialists to be hired upon award. Niemeyer is an enrolled member of the Calista Native Corporation. The three Education Specialists will assist with development of

cultural protocols including those that pertain to other Native groups in Alaska. They will also be responsible for aligning the new evaluation system with Alaska Standards for Professional Educators and Cultural Standards for Educators.

Sheryl Weinberg, SERRC Executive Director, will supervise the Project Director and will participate on the Advisory Board. Sheryl has served as Project Director for five previous successful ANEP-funded projects.

Joan Pardes, SERRC Communications Director, will be responsible for “branding” the project first within and then beyond BSSD, and coordinating a direct Web interface with ANKN, BSSD, ANEA, and AKDEED.

Dr. Ryan Landvoy, Senior Evaluator for RGI Research Corporation will lead the evaluation team for RGI. Ryan has directed multiple evaluations in Alaska for SERRC and numerous others throughout the United States.

3.4 Sustainability

SERRC’s monthly *Art and Science of Teaching* webinar trainings, including the use of Alaska Native examples in the Marzano framework, will form one foundation for promoting the success and sustainability of *Project CREATE*. By integrating the work of *Project CREATE* into evaluation systems such as Marzano’s, sustainability is assured with the requirement for teacher evaluation system standards by 2015 that expect responsiveness to the state Guide to Implementing Cultural Standards for Educators.

3.5 Implementation Model

The Project Timeline in the following section draws from principles of the State Implementation and Scaling up Evidence-based Practices (SISEP) model. These principles will augment *Project CREATE*’s implementation and evaluation design to help effect organizational

change. SISEP identifies four implementation stages—**exploration, installation, beginning** and **full implementation**—which support ongoing partner involvement and growth. To date, the *exploration stage* has been initiated (as part of this grant planning and proposal development).

3.6 Timeline, Responsibilities and Milestones

3.6.1 YEAR 1: October 2012 – September 2013: exploration, installation, and beginning implementation.

- Clarify expectations for project evaluation and initiate Continuous Improvement Process (CIMP). **October.** *Responsibility: Project Director, Project Evaluator.*
- Participate in Marzano AST Certification Trainings. **Ongoing.** *Responsibility: Project director, Education Specialists, District Grant Liaison, 2 BSSD staff.*
- Establish meeting schedules and identifying subcommittee activities for the Project Management Team. **October.** *Responsibility: Project Director; Project Management Team.*
- Convene **quarterly** Management Team meetings. *Responsibility: Project Director; Project Management Team, Project Evaluator.*
- Convene initial meetings with the BSNA. **October.** *Responsibility: Project Director, SERRC Executive Director*
- Convene biannual Advisory Board meetings. **Fall and Spring.** *Responsibility: Project Director, Management Team, Project Evaluator*
- Develop presentations and written materials to communicate grant goals and objectives to a statewide audience and solicit input from interested stakeholders around the state. **Fall.** *Responsibility: SERRC Communications Director, Project Management Team*
- Establish Project Management Team subcommittees to begin reviewing cultural standards and developing cultural examples and activities aligned with the *Art and Science of*

Teaching, the Alaska Professional Teaching Standards, and the Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools. **Fall.** *Responsibility: Project Director, Education Specialists, ANEA, BSNA, Project Management Team, Grant Advisory Board*

- Develop cultural examples and activities specific to BSSD. **Winter – Spring.** *Responsibility: ANEA, BSNA, Education Specialist.*
- Establish Project Management Team subcommittees to develop a Teacher Evaluation System, assuring the observation tool is aligned with standards and the Marzano model noted above. **Fall.** *Responsibility: Education Specialists, Project Management Team.*
- Select district staff to directly facilitate the training in the expansion of the Marzano model, complete with cultural examples. **October.** *Responsibility: BSSD Liaison*
- Pilot the professional learning with the cultural examples within the AST modules with Cohort 1. **Spring.** *Responsibility: Project Director, Education Specialists, BSSD Liaison, Project Evaluator.*
- Pilot the newly developed teacher observation protocol with cultural examples with Cohort 1. **Spring.** *Responsibility: Project Director, Education Specialists, BSSD Liaison*
- Identify six additional school sites – Cohort 2. **Spring.** *Responsibility: BSSD Liaison.*
- Examine pilot data to refine evaluation instruments and processes before beginning to train the Project CREATE Cohort 2 in BSSD. **June.** *Responsibility: RGI evaluation team, Management Team.*
- Finalize the new professional learning protocols for utilizing Alaska Native examples in professional development, teaching, and teacher evaluation—all in accordance with the new state cultural standards. **July.** *Responsibility: RGI evaluation team, Management Team.*

- Oversee the monitoring and adjustment of the training and teacher evaluation designs in light of analysis of the grant-supported products and processes. **July.** *Responsibility: Project Management Team.*
- Initiate Cohort 2 professional learning. **August.** *Responsibility: Project Director, Education Specialists, BSSD Liaison and trainers.*
- Provide Project Management Team with a project evaluation for all Year 1 activities. **September.** *Responsibility: RGI evaluation team.*

3.6.2 YEAR 2: October 2013 to September 2014: exploration, installation, beginning implementation.

- Participate in Marzano AST Certification Trainings. **Ongoing.** *Responsibility: Project director, Education Specialists, District Grant Liaison, 2 BSSD staff.*
- Convene **quarterly** Management Team meetings. *Responsibility: Project Director; Project Management Team, Project Evaluator.*
- Convene biannual Advisory Board meetings. **Fall and Spring.** *Responsibility: Project Director, Management Team, Project Evaluator*
- Begin the dissemination process of the Year 1 training and evaluation products optimized through a cultural lens. **October.** *Responsibility: SERRC Project Director, SERRC Communications Director.*
- Develop cultural examples specific to other regions of Alaska. **Ongoing.** *Responsibility: ANEA, BSNA, Education Specialists*
- Evaluate the first cohort trained in BSSD. **Ongoing.** *Responsibility: RGI evaluation team, BSSD.*

- Assure sustainability and future dissemination across Alaska by uploading the cultural examples and the teacher evaluation/observation tools to create completely accessible links through the *Project CREATE* website; create website links to AKDEED and the Alaska Native Knowledge Network. **January.** *Responsibility: SERRC Communications Director.*
- Evaluate the two cohorts (across ten schools) trained in BSSD. **Spring.** *Responsibility: RGI evaluators.*
- Expand the professional learning to the final five schools in BSSD (for 15 total sites). **August.** *Responsibility: SERRC Education Specialists, BSSD Trainers.*
- Provide Project Management Team with a project evaluation for all Year 2 activities to effectively monitor benchmarks for the project and establish the framework for Year 3 development. **September.** *Responsibility: RGI evaluation team.*

3.6.3 YEAR 3: October 2014 to September 2015: full implementation of *Project Create* throughout BSSD's 15 school sites with the full complement of 224 teachers receiving training.

- Participate in Marzano AST Certification Trainings. **Ongoing.** *Responsibility; Project director, Education Specialists, District Grant Liaison, 2 BSSD staff.*
- Convene **quarterly** Management Team meetings. *Responsibility: Project Director; Project Management Team, Project Evaluator.*
- Convene biannual Advisory Board meetings. **Fall and Spring.** *Responsibility: Project Director, Management Team, Project Evaluator*
- Continue professional learning in all 15 schools. *Responsibility :SERRC Education Specialists, BSSD Trainers*

- Continue to develop cultural examples specific to other regions of Alaska. **Ongoing.**
Responsibility: ANEA, BSNA, Education Specialists
- Provide Project Management Team with a full summative evaluation of *Project Create*, its processes, and its impact on BSSD. **September.** *Responsibility: RGI evaluation team.*

3.7 Feedback and Continuous Improvement

Synchronous online team meetings will be held quarterly for the Project CREATE management team including the RGI evaluation leads. As needed, more frequent meetings will be scheduled with specific agenda items to be discussed. For regular and ad-hoc meetings documentation will be emailed one week prior to the meetings, and synchronous discussions will be formally held through an online format. Minutes for each meeting, summarizing discussions, will be distributed within the following week. Documents of these meetings with their analyses of issues addressed will feed into the continuous improvement process.

Several issues to be covered in the meetings include the examination of implementation in terms of (1) production of professional learning resources including cultural examples; (2) their use in training; (3) their integration into the teacher evaluation system; (4) the fidelity of the application of professional learning; (5) effect on recruitment, retention and student achievement; (6) documentation and reporting; and (7) sustainability.

The Advisory Board will meet biannually—once face-to-face and once via audio-conference.

4. ADEQUACY OF RESOURCES

SERRC is celebrating its 35th year of service to Alaska's schools and communities. Its multiple decades of state and federal grant-funded services confirm SERRC's capacity to

effectively manage and administer both the programmatic and the financial responsibilities of *Project CREATE*.

4.1 Relevance and Demonstrated Commitment of Partners

Over the past 35 years, SERRC has provided and continues to provide services for all of Alaska's school districts directly, and indirectly for the past six years through its USED-grant-funded programs: the Alaska Comprehensive Center (ACC) and the Alaska Parent Information Resource Center. ACC specifically enables SERRC to build AKDEED's capacity to assist struggling schools. SERRC has a long history in the infusion of Alaska Native culture into its programming. For example, SERRC's ANEP-funded ENCORE Program (Enhancing Native Children Outcomes through Reading Experiences) developed and circulated culturally based reading resources and orchestrated Family Nights to enhance Alaska Native student and family literacy. SERRC's ANEP-funded ANSWER Camps, (Alaska Native Student Wisdom Enrichment Retreats) have provided culturally-based, academic residential summer experiences for Alaska Native middle-school students. Many of SERRC's other funded projects (approximately [REDACTED] in SY 2011-12) revolve around school improvement through professional development, special education, supplementary services and data use for school improvement. SERRC demonstrates absolute fiscal responsibility and performance through its well-developed leadership and management system, validated through annual audits.

BSSD: Bering Strait School District, with a 96% Alaska Native student population, is far more than merely committed to *Project CREATE*. BSSD has begun to implement its prototype teacher evaluation training and is already witnessing some positive effects. With funding from a SY 2011-2012 School Improvement Grant, BSSD is in effect putting its own resources behind this project. BSSD is providing facilities, teachers and substitute staff for all training hours and

assuring all student and teacher data collection for the new instructional design and teacher evaluation systems.

The **Alaska Native Educators Association (ANEA)** is leading the partners in formally infusing cultural examples into the project-developed teacher evaluation system and related professional development. Since 1996, ANEA has served as the state's resource for compiling and exchanging information related to Alaska Native Knowledge systems and ways of knowing. With funding from multiple grants, including NSF, ANEA has bridged connectivity between the *western* education system and the indigenous knowledge systems of Alaska Native populations. ANEA will bring to Project CREATE the beginnings of a curriculum clearinghouse of Alaska Native resources that will be used during the course of *Project CREATE*.

Bering Strait Native Association (BSNA) and its foundation have worked directly and indirectly with BSSD for many years. The Bering Strait Foundation on its own provides education and training opportunities, particularly in vocational education, for all of its villagers. Elders are engaged in directly supporting the promotion of their cultural heritage and traditional values through partnerships with local and national entities.

RGI Research will provide its resources, expertise and many years of successful experience in evaluating large multiple-year federal, state and local educational grant programs in Alaska and other states.

4.2 Reasonable Costs

Estimated project costs per school and per student for Project CREATE include personnel costs associated with project design for professional learning, teacher evaluation reform processes and tools, direct training in instructional improvement, and dissemination of materials. Total costs amount to [REDACTED] per student per year for the entire three-years of the project. Beyond

the grant costs to implement the direct and ongoing professional learning in instruction and evaluation will decrease dramatically as in-district trainers will be certified and practiced due to grant activities and the tools disseminated to other districts statewide.

4.3 Adequacy of Budget

The budget clearly shows *Project CREATE* is adequately funded throughout its three-year implementation. SERRC, BSNA, BSSD and ANEA are each contributing those tasks funded by other grant supported sources and expanding their services with this funding.

5. QUALITY OF PROJECT EVALUATION

5.1 Introduction and Overview

Project CREATE's evaluation design serves both formative and summative evaluation purposes and corresponds with the Objectives and Performance Measures included in Project Design. *Project CREATE's* partners, recognizing the importance of a strong evaluation, provided input to the evaluation design throughout its development.

Independent evaluators from RGI Research Corporation will conduct the program evaluation. RGI has extensive experience in evaluating federal programs. RGI evaluators will also assist the *Project CREATE* Director in preparing the U.S. Department of Education's (US ED's) Annual Performance Reports and the Final Evaluation Report at the project's conclusion.

5.1.1 The Formative Evaluation: The formative evaluation requires that process measures (i.e. benchmarks) relevant to each objective be clearly articulated and then routinely monitored by project evaluators. These measures provide the Project Management Team with the information needed for early identification of any emerging problems or issues associated with project implementation. Driving questions for the formative evaluation include: *Were project activities successfully implemented with fidelity? If not, why not? What was done instead? Why?*

With what results?

5.1.2 Summative Evaluation: The outcome evaluation focuses on specific performance and outcome measures identified and established by *Project CREATE*, and other measures developed during the Project Management Team/Grant Advisory Board meetings. Driving questions focus on outcomes associated with and directly attributable to implementation of professional development, development of cultural examples, and use of the newly developed evaluation tool. These summative questions center on: *Were intended outcomes attained? Were specific performance measures identified for each objective met in the prescribed timeframe?*

5.2 Performance Measures

Because *Project CREATE* is focused on changing curricular content to emanate from cultural examples, intensifying professional development with new teacher modalities, and creating an evaluation of teacher effectiveness within this new paradigm, there will be some lag in the specific outcomes cited as US ED's two GPRA Performance Measures of interest—student achievement and graduation. Two of *Project CREATE*'s measures of ongoing change parallel US ED's driving questions: *Are students graduating on time and are they meeting or exceeding proficiency state academic standards in math, science and reading?*

5.2.1 Data Retrieval and Generation Specifics: RGI Research Corporation has successfully developed and implemented a web-based Management and Evaluation Data Collection System (MEDC) for several of its other large federal grant evaluations. MEDC is accessed by project and school staff via a web-based interface, and will be adapted for use with *Project CREATE* for data retrieval and generation. Project-level data will be continuously maintained and accessed for specific or summary reports on each of the strategies and activities identified herein, i.e., training content and delivery, cultural examples

developed, evaluation tools used, student academic achievement and all other data elements that define *Project CREATE*.

5.2.2 Data analysis: RGI will include attention to the details of implementation and the analysis of performance measures including descriptions of numbers of teachers trained; evaluation systems implemented; implementation fidelity of the evaluation platform and new approaches that reflect cultural relevance; participation data at all project levels; student, teacher, school site and district impacts; and challenges faced and how they were overcome.

The **table on page 25** shows performance measures, type of data to be collected, data methods to be analyzed, key benchmarks and timelines for evaluation design.

5.2.3 Ongoing Performance Feedback and Periodic Progress Assessment: RGI will oversee all data collection activities to develop quarterly reports for *Project CREATE*'s management team. Using a mixed method research approach, quantitative and qualitative data will be included. A case study approach will document overall program development from site to site including assessments of the quality and completeness of services. Notable data points and findings will be shared quarterly at Team and Board meetings. Reports will include interpretations of the data, recommendations for program revisions, and new training strategies as necessary. This ongoing generation of data-driven quarterly reports will allow *Project CREATE*'s stakeholders to review results and make program modifications if needed. RGI's ad-hoc reports on special topics will also be developed as needed. Annual reports will be generated using the quarterly reports, to summarize grant activities, impacts and results each year. A final report will be generated and submitted at the completion of *Project CREATE*.

| Performance Measures | Data-Evidence Indicator | Analysis Methods | Key Benchmarks | Timelines |
|--|--|--|---|---|
| | | | | |
| *Increase student academic achievement and graduation rates *Decrease dropout rates | *State test scores increase *Dropout rate decreases *Student academic achievement increases | *Content analysis *Frequency distribution analysis *Comparison of test scores | *Graduation rate increases to 60.5% *Dropout rate decreases to 6.5% *State test scores increase to 56% in Reading and 51% in Math | *Data collected quarterly *Assessment at end of school year |
| *Creating and evaluating highly effective teachers who deliver culturally responsive instruction | *Training agendas *Training materials/cultural examples developed *Evaluation tools *Teacher instructional delivery evaluations | *Content analysis *Frequency distribution analysis *Student academic achievement | *Pilot will be implemented in BSSD *100% of new teachers will increase cultural competency in instruction | *Data collected at each training *End of year report conducted |