

## Alaska Native Education Program

## Anchorage School District

Project Puqigtut-Illu (Smart People, Too!): High School Success for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Alaska Natives

**(a) Need for project.**

Project Puqigtut-Illu is a three-year project that will meet the educational needs of Alaska Native high school students in the Anchorage School District (ASD) who are at risk of failure or dropout. Project Puqigtut-Illu is a continuation and expansion of ASD's Project Puqigtut ("smart people") which began in 2009. This three year initiative of ASD's Title VII Indian Education has been supported through a FY 09 Alaska Native Education Program grant. Puqigtut-Illu means "smart people, too!" (Cup'ik translation; Cup'ik is a dialect of the Yup'ik language). This proposed project is the next phase; it builds on the successes and effective practices of the past three years, which have resulted in rising graduation rates, lower dropout rates, and narrowing the achievement gap for Alaska Native high school students.

Puqigtut-Illu provides innovative online courses in core subjects of Language Arts, Social Studies, Math, and Science—courses that are rigorous, engaging, and that are adapted and infused culturally responsive elements that make the content come alive for Alaska Native students. The project builds in social services and academic support for students and families experiencing poverty, dislocation, or cultural alienation. The project will reach students through a blended environment, with face-to-face and online learning opportunities that offer flexibility of time, space, and pace. Project Puqigtut-Illu will preserve and sustain what works best while expanding opportunities for under-performing Alaska Native high school students to stay in school and to succeed in school—despite roadblocks that often cause even the most promising "smart people" to fail or drop out. Puqigtut-Illu will serve 350 students in Year 1, increasing to 450 by Year 3.

Puqigtut-Illu is a consortium with Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Inc. (CITC). (Competitive Preference Priority 1) (MOA/Consortium Agreement, Appendix D). CITC is an Alaska Native regional non-profit organization. Puqigtut-Illu continues and strengthens a longstanding collaborative partnership between CITC and ASD. Conquering the high dropout and low graduation rates of Alaska Native students is a shared, top priority. CITC currently operates programs at two ASD high schools, with teachers and counselors who offer classes and services to Native students. The consortium is further strengthened by partnerships with the University of Alaska, Anchorage (UAA) Center for Community Engagement and Learning and United Way's Anchorage United for Youth (AUY), a new community initiative to boost ASD graduation rates.

ASD's Alaska Native students struggle academically. They score among the lowest of all NCLB-designated groups on state standards-based assessments (SBA). (ASD Assessment and Evaluation ((A&E)), 2011). SBA proficiency data is shown in the table below.

**Table 1. 2011 Alaska Standards Based Assessments**

2010-2011		% Proficient Reading	% Proficient Writing	% Proficient Math	% Proficient Science
Grade 9	Alaska Native	72.83%	64.39%	47.17%	Not tested
	ASD	82.12%	75.85%	60.62%	Not tested
Grade 10	Alaska Native	61.06%	59.66%	47.03%	59.64%
	ASD	74.97%	75.28%	64.74%	68.89%
<i>Source: 2010-2011 Profiles of Performance, ASD Assessment and Evaluation</i>					

Proficiency of Native students is 10% to 17% lower than the ASD as a whole. These scores represent the bottom end of the achievement gap. The gap has narrowed in the past five years, down from as wide as 25% in some categories—but is still unacceptable. In contrast, Project Puqigtut students are gaining in proficiency each year. Average proficiency rates for each year's Project Puqigtut students, based on their most recent SBA scores, have increased dramatically,

climbing from 38% to 63% in Reading, 38% to 60% in Writing, and 25% to 52% in Math. Note that this jump happened in just three years, and with highly at-risk students.

Alaska Native high school students are highly at risk. The table below shows the graduation and dropout rates for the 400 Project Puqigtut students we have served (first two years of project; third year data is pending), Alaska Native students in the ASD, and all ASD students.

**Table 2. Graduation and dropout rates.**

Students	On-time Graduation Rate		Dropout Rate, Grades 7-12	
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2009-2010	2010-2011
All Alaska Native	44.01%	50.88%	7.23%	8.4%
<b>Project Puqigtut</b>	*	<b>48%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>2%</b>
ASD	71.04%	72.14%	3.59%	4.27%
* sample size too small for statistical significance. <i>Source: ASD A &amp; E 2010-2011 Profiles of Performance and Project Puqigtut Data.</i>				

The dropout rate for Alaska Native students is about twice that of the district as a whole.

Graduation rates are improving, but are still far below the ASD as a whole. ASD's Alaska Native students have the lowest graduation rate and highest dropout rate of any NCLB-designated group. Note that Project Puqigtut serves at-risk students, yet these data show that project students as compared to all Alaska Native students are nearly on par for graduation rates and have lower dropout rates. The expected graduation rate for Project Puqigtut's third year, after spring 2012 graduation ceremonies, is least 51%. We are seeing exciting, positive change!

Native students often face a cascade of problems that influence their academic performance.

Cultural disconnect (Reyhner, 2001) and high rates of transiency and poverty are contributing to the lack of academic success. Family transience is a major contributing factor for dropping out of school (First Alaskans Institute, 2006). ASD's overall transiency rate is 30% (ASD *Profiles of Performance*, 2011); the schools see much higher rates for Native students. Many students travel to and from villages, withdraw from one school and enroll in another, and almost

never pick up where they left off. Some students miss school for weeks at a time for subsistence activities. ASD's program for homeless students reports that a significant number of Natives are among ASD's 2,400 identified homeless students (ASD Child in Transition/Homeless, 2012).

Transiency creates inconsistencies and gaps in schooling. Students with frequent or extended absences or who relocate during the school year experience major academic regression. No matter how bright they are, they tend to fall hopelessly behind in their classes. As setbacks mount, graduation seems increasingly unattainable. Project Puqigtut helps fill the void. Our flexible, supportive structure restores students' access to their education.

Anchorage, population 282,000, is Alaska's educational, medical, and commercial hub and the center for in/out-migration from rural and remote villages. Anchorage is Alaska's largest "Native village," with over 25,000 Native residents. ASD is a large, urban system—the 92nd largest in the nation. Over 40% of our students live in poverty (ASD Assessment and Evaluation Department ((A&E)), 2011). A large portion of these are Native. The ASD's 8,600 Natives (including multi-ethnic Natives) are our largest non-white group. About 2,000 are high school students. ASD has more Alaska Native students than any other district in the state.

In Anchorage, many Native families find that the struggle for economic survival sometimes overrides attention to their children's academics. Many parents have low literacy, do not know how to help students with homework, or hesitate to become engaged with the school when problems arise. High school students may care for younger siblings, or their own child, or get a job to help support the family. For all of these reasons, capable students fall behind in school, fail core subjects, and do not accumulate credits necessary for graduation. Puqigtut-llu students and families will receive support from project staff who understand their situation.

Cultural dislocation and isolation is contributing to the lack of success for Native students.

To many Native students and parents, ASD's gigantic high schools seem impersonal and intimidating. Urban Native students in the urban environment lack opportunities to connect with their heritage, to know who they are and their place in the world. "Urban natives often don't know their own culture... if you let them, they will melt into the woodwork" notes a CITC high school teacher. Project Puqigtut-llu embeds Native culture and role models into learning.

This project will serve at-risk Alaska Native high school students currently or formerly enrolled, including those from CITC's *Partners for Success* program in ASD high schools. The project creates eight new, core subject courses needed for graduation, infused with culturally relevant curriculum appropriate for Alaska Native learners, and placed online, accessible from anywhere, any time. Our first three years of using a blended format combining face-to-face support sessions with online learning has proven to be highly effective.

Puqigtut-llu breaks down barriers to success using 21<sup>st</sup> century tools as keys to both academic and cultural learning. It brings together ASD's and CITC's experts in cultural education and technology to develop 21<sup>st</sup> century-style online learning opportunities. Built-in flexibility meets individual student needs. Social services complete the circle of support. New in Puqigtut-llu is a summer mentorship program through which under-achieving students will be mentored by local businesses and Native organizations, for career exploration and to envision successful futures.

Project Puqigtut-llu meets the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century learners. Today's teenagers have been using technology for as long as they can remember. Technology is most effective when it becomes an integral part of the core curriculum (Johnson, 2012). Project Puqigtut-llu brings Native culture and tradition into the 21<sup>st</sup> century online learning environment. The blended learning environment deepens the impact through frequent interactions with project staff and successful Native and community role models.

This project provides alternative pathways to success and graduation for Native students who are under-achieving in urban high schools. Students can begin an online course any time. Small groups are a cultural value. The flexibility of the blended environment with face-to-face and online learning addresses all learning styles. Students highly value the self-pacing, the extra help, the chance to get back on track. Students and families receive support for needs that, when unmet, lead to school disconnect and failure.

Online courses personalize learning and address varying learning styles, family situations, and student schedules. “Online courses are great for kids at risk because they work at their own speed and comfort level...especially valuable for students who travel back and forth to village communities.” – ASD graduation coach. A recent ASD survey found that 91% of students’ households have reliable access to computers and internet; only 30% of Native students do. Our students can borrow from our bank of existing mini-laptop computers with mobile internet. The project draws in students who are disconnected from school. Every semester, we are enrolling four to six students who do not set foot high school but are earning credit in Puqigtut courses.

This project responds to research on dropout prevention and on the needs of Native Alaskan high school students. Family transience and poor attendance are the top two dropout indicators (Drew, 2009). This project’s online courses make education accessible for students who might otherwise be withdrawn from school for non-attendance. Native students who practice their cultural traditions have higher graduation rates (Ward, 2005). Our online courses will be infused with culturally relevant material. Low socio-economic status directly correlates with dropping out of high school (Ingrum, 2006). The project provides materials, transportation, and social services to help families deal with issues that contribute to school failure and dropout.

By the end of the project, we will have a replicable model dropout prevention program

with six years of data. Our findings will inform the national effort to beat the dropout problem increase graduation for Native students. With this project, we will refine and strengthen the model that is making real, positive change for Alaska Native students.

**(b) Quality of the project design.**

*“Without ‘Project P’ we would see a decrease in the graduation rate and student success.”*

This high school teacher’s claim captures the essence of the project. Puqigtut-llu will identify and recruit a higher number of at-risk Native students, will remove barriers to their success, and will provide upper level courses to keep them on track to graduate.

Puqigtut-llu will expand our menu of online courses that are culturally responsive, engaging, rigorous, and aligned to standards—in core subjects that students must pass in order to graduate. The students’ learning environment is blended, with face-to-face time with teachers and peers and working on a computer at their own pace. Our courses have differentiated curriculum that is infused with culturally relevant materials, and free of the constraints of schedule, location, and large-school angst. Courses are open-entry, open-exit, school year and summer; access to school is 24/7. The flexibility and rich content of online courses, blended with face-to-face academic and social support by caring adults, is what is making a difference for our Alaska Native students. Research shows that online course with no face-to-face teacher/support staff contact have not been successful for at-risk populations (Davis and Roblyer, 2005). Moreover, a high level of face-to-face support for at-risk online learners reduces attrition (Frankola, 2001). Thus, Puqigtut-llu is an optimal blended model. Project Puqigtut-llu will be led by a team of Native educators and others with extensive knowledge of Native culture and educational issues. We have a Project Facilitator and two Transition/Social Service Coordinators. One Language Arts and one STEM teacher (dual-certified Math/Science) will teach full time, starting in Year 2.

“Site teachers” for this project are regular ASD high school teachers who teach an online course after school in addition to their regular day.

Courses in English, Algebra, and Social Studies from our original project will continue. Our students are demanding that we expand upward! We will roll out Geometry, the next critical step after Algebra. We will offer English 11 for our juniors. Students are asking “When will ‘Project P’ have Science?” Our response will be Integrated Science and Biology. We are building capacity and sustainability; courses are developed, then offered continually as needed. We will adapt ASD-owned online versions of English 11, Geometry, Integrated Science, and Biology for Project Puqigtut-llu in Fall/Spring Year 1 for rollout in summer 2013. New and existing course are listed below.

**Table 3. Online courses.**

<b>Core Subject</b>	<b>Project Puqigtut (existing)</b>	<b>Puqigtut-llu (new)</b>
Language Arts	English 9-1,9-2* English 10-1,10-2	English 11-1, 11-2
Social Studies	World History 1, 2 Alaska Studies** U.S. History from Native Amer. Perspective 1,2	
Math	Algebra I-1, I-2 Algebra A-1,2 and B-1,2	Geometry 1,2
Science		Integrated Science 1,2 Biology 1,2
* The numbers “1” and “2” refer to 1 <sup>st</sup> /2 <sup>nd</sup> semester. **ASD-created; offered by Proj. Puqigtut.		

Courses and subjects to be offered each semester in all years will be selected from the above list, based on greatest student needs. Site teachers will teach a total of 19 courses during the school year in Year 1. Full-time Language Arts and STEM teachers will teach a full load of 5-6 courses per semester starting in Year 2. The need for site teachers lessens when our full-time Puqigtut-llu

teachers begin in Year 2; hence we expect to need site teachers for only four courses in Years 2 and 3, primarily for Social Studies.

All courses offered in this project are or will be adapted to be culturally responsive for Alaska Native students. We break from traditional course content and bring in elements that resonate with Native students. We saturate our courses with culturally appropriate and relevant stories, examples, pictures, standards-aligned rich media, and even music—completely housed online. This is done by Highly Qualified teachers who are experts in online pedagogy, and in Native history, culture, and learning styles. We work closely on course adaptations with our consortium partner CITC, which over the years has developed culturally responsive high school courses that are currently being taught by CITC teachers in our high schools. Courses are rigorous and will be aligned to national Common Core Standards as ASD transitions to them.

Examples of cultural adaptations: Geometry students use the angle of the sun to determine heights and distances, as did their Native ancestors. Projectile motion (physics) is applied to hunting: the speed, angle, and recoil of a spear will affect whether it will strike a seal. Project Puqigtut’s U.S. History course, developed by an ASD Native American teacher, covers the nation’s history told from a Native American perspective. Our approach is supported by research: “Work with local educators and community members to develop culturally relevant curriculum... has been shown to provide specific benefits to Alaska Native student learning and achievement.” (Lipka and Adams, 2004).

Courses are interactive and highly engaging for students. They are not electronic worksheets! Our courses have step-by-step modules for self-pacing. Students can talk openly with their teachers through online discussion forums and email. Teachers see absolutely everything a student does in class and provide frequent feedback. Parents can easily view student progress.

Learning is not always in front of a computer. Assignments are to read a novel, interview an Elder, collect insect specimens, or build a toothpick structure. The budget includes materials required for online courses, such as jump drives for storage, Geometry software, educational videos, and novels, e.g. *Yup'ik Lore* and *The Winter Walk* by Inupiaq author L.O. Cox.

The traditional Native way of learning – watching, then doing – easily translates to the online learning environment. Our teachers use student-centered approaches and embed social and emotional learning. Online instruction is easily differentiated to match student needs. Our students find that being online is less intimidating than in regular classrooms. The learning environment is free of biases. Students can work as fast as they wish. They can slow down, think before they respond, and re-do without penalty, without embarrassment.

Our foundational work with Project Puqigtut has shown the importance of wraparound support for students. Transition/Social Service Coordinators (TSSC) Eric Saetre and Andrew Na coordinate with school personnel to identify and address the academic, attendance, health, and social service needs of individual students. Mr. Saetre and Mr. Na are experts at finding kids! They maintain contact through home visits, school visits, phone calls, letters, text messages, and e-mail. They go online and monitor student progress in online courses. They promote, explain, sign up, and follow through with students. TSSCs will provide **Smart Sessions** after school and in-service days. These are face-to-face, four days per week, two hours per day, 120 sessions per year, on a rotating basis at ASD high schools. Smart Sessions are a key component of our blended learning model. A CITC teacher observes: “They don’t expect the kids to figure it out for themselves. Students know there is someone willing to help and they also have a person holding them accountable.”

**Super Smart Sessions** will be held every other week, after school, for about three hours, organized by the Project Facilitator and TSSCs. Sessions are “super” because project teachers are

there to help student with their coursework, and because part of each session is for cultural activities. We bring in Native guest speakers, do Eskimo dancing and drumming – students even learned how to skin a seal! Locations are the ASD Education Center or UAA and CITC facilities. Our students will receive tutoring from college students, free of charge. The UAA Center for Community Engagement and Learning will send 15 college students per semester, each for 10 hours per week. College students will come to Super Smart Sessions to assist with coursework, lead discussions, and provide technical assistance.

Project Puqigtut-Illu will have a six-week **Summer Institute**. We will offer nine of our online courses, selected based on student need. There will be four Smart Sessions per week; one is a Super Smart session. Summer learning is important for giving our students an extra edge; at-risk students lose two to three months of achievement each summer (Peterson, 2012). The influence of caring adults has been so positive for our students that we will take this to the next level by starting a **mentorship program**. This will be in summer when students can devote time to exploring their interests while earning credit through real-world career mentorships. The Project Facilitator will plan the program, locate business mentors, and launch a trial run in Year 1's Summer Institute with three to five students. Each summer, we expect to add more mentors and mentees, making it possible for students to create future visions for themselves.

Project Puqigtut-Illu takes a leap into the wider community with a brand new partnership: United Way/Anchorage United for Youth (AUY). AUY is Anchorage's new, community-wide initiative that is working to galvanize the community, including parents and businesses, to support youth and graduation. AUY will help us find business partners for our summer mentorships and volunteers for Smart Sessions.

The project provides computers and internet access to those in need. FY 09 Project Puqigtut's investment in sturdy, inexpensive mini-laptops has resulted in an inventory of over 200 computers for student use. Providing individual students with a computer and internet access are key factors in increasing academic success, reducing dropout rates, and increasing graduation rates (Johnson, 2012).

Project staff will reach out to students and parents individually, at school events, in guidance offices, and via information tables at CITC, Alaska Federation of Natives Convention, Elders and Youth Conference, Native Youth Olympics, and through the project website.

Face-to-face orientation meetings with Project Facilitator and TSSCs will be held monthly for students enrolling in online courses and their parents. Students can check out mini-laptops, internet keys, and supplies. TSSCs will give an overview of the online courses, ASD iSchool policies, and how to communicate with teachers. Project students will demonstrate how the courses work.

Lack of transportation is a big barrier for some of our Native students. The project invests in transportation for face-to-face sessions using CITC vans and taxis where buses are not an option.

All project teachers will receive professional development, in-kind ASD. All teachers take *iTeach*, a workshop taught by the ASD Online Learning Department. *iTeach* gives an overview of online teaching, best practices for creating an online community, and technical tips. *Culturally Responsive Online Teaching* is a two-credit, graduate-level credit course that was developed through our original project and will be offered through ASD's annual teacher academy. ASD/ CITC teacher: "The course was very valuable for understanding Native kids, urban vs. rural Natives, importance of relationship building, wait time, pace of speaking, watching and doing learning style. Native kids don't want things dumbed down."

Project Puqigtut has served 460 students over the past three years, growing each year and filling over 600 seats in online courses. With the addition of new courses and full-time online teachers, and based on lessons learned, we expect the program to grow. We have learned that having 10-15 students per semester-long course is most effective for at-risk students.

The goal of Project Puqigtut-Illu is to increase high school success for Alaska Native students. Measurable objectives and expected outcomes for Project Puqigtut-Illu are as follows.

**Objective 1:** *The percentage of students who have been in the project and who have earned sufficient credits to be able to graduate on time will increase each year by 20% over the previous year, as shown by student academic records (GPRA 3).* **Objective 2:** *Each year, on average, the gap between credits earned and credits needed to graduate on time will decrease.* Outcomes for Objectives 1 and 2 – More Alaska Native students will accumulate credits sufficient to graduate from high school within four years. **Objective 3:** *The dropout rate for students in the project at each grade level in each year will be at least 5% lower than that of all other Native high school students (ASD annual data reports).* Outcome – More Alaska Native students will stay in school. **Objective 4:** *In a year-to-year comparison, the percentage of students who are in this project and who score “proficient” or above on Alaska Standards-Based Assessments for reading, writing, mathematics, and science will increase by 2.5 percent in each grade level tested (9th and 10th) each year.(ASD annual data reports) (GPRA 1).* Outcome – More students will be proficient in core subjects. **Objective 5:** *One-credit courses in core subjects of Language Arts, Social Studies, Math, and Science will be online, and will be adapted and infused with Alaska Native cultural materials and activities, as shown by ASD’s online course offerings and evaluation of course content by experts in Alaska Native education and in online pedagogy, based on a rubric developed by the evaluator for that purpose.* Outcome –Native high school students learn

through flexible, online core courses that are culturally responsive. **Objective 6:** *The project will successfully serve an increasing number of Alaska Native students each year, as shown by the following measures: a) Anticipated enrollment of 350 students in Year 1, 400 in Year 2 and 450 in Year 3. b) A 70% overall passage rate each year. i. Each year, the percentage of students earning a B or better will increase by at least 3% over the previous year. ii. Each year, the percentage of students earning a C or better will increase by at least 4% over the previous year.*

Outcome – Greater academic success for Native students. **Objective 7:** *Each year, project students who have taken two or more project courses will report higher degrees of understanding/awareness that education and high school graduation is important to future success; positive attitudes toward high school; and greater motivation, sense of belonging, dedication to learning, and appreciation of the cultural aspects of the project, as measured by surveys, interviews, and focus groups. Outcome: Native students are more connected to their schools, their culture; they envision their own, bright future.*

**(c) Quality of the management plan.**

**(i) ...on time and within budget...responsibilities, timeliness, and milestones...**

All project activities are focused on the stated objectives and designed to fit the budget. By increasing the flexible options and support for our Alaska Native students, more students will graduate with greater educational experiences, stronger confidence, and skills to become successful adults. Project Puqigtut-Illu was designed by ASD Title VII in collaboration with CITC; ASD Departments of High School Education, Educational Technology, Assessment and Evaluation; Evaluator Dr. Patricia Partnow; Alaska Native online and classroom teachers; Alaska Native high school students and parents, and ASD's Native Advisory Committee.

Staffing levels and caseloads adhere to the budget and are appropriate for at-risk students who need intensive academic and/or social supports. The budget is leveraged by local resources. ASD Educational Technology/IT will provide expertise in staff development, instructional support, and technical support to ensure smooth operation of the online courses. ASD's Language Arts and STEM Curriculum Coordinators and their district-wide committees will provide their expertise in curriculum design. Budget expenditures reflect efficiencies we have developed. Project activities are well-advertised with visually appealing signage in schools and the community.

**Job descriptions and resumes are in appendix A. Project Team:**

**Project Director Doreen Brown**, .10 FTE (coordination of federal funds), M.Ed., Yup'ik, ASD Title VII Indian Education Supervisor, 25-year educator. She is a lifelong Alaskan, former teacher in Anchorage and in rural Alaska, and mother of an ASD high school student. She is a respected innovator, educational leader, and role model with a strong background in project management and program development. The Project Director is responsible for overall project management, smooth implementation of the project within ASD, attainment of objectives, grant administration, budgets, and evaluation reports. She will recruit and/or supervision of the Project Facilitator, two TSSCs, teachers, and the administrative assistant. Ms. Brown will collaborate with project partners to develop and support opportunities for community involvement.

**Project Facilitator Karen Cooke Phillip**, 1.0 FTE, B.A., Yup'ik, longtime teacher rural Alaska teacher. Reports to Project Director. Ms. Phillip is a fluent Yup'ik speaker and a lifelong Alaskan, raised in southwest Alaska. Her combined urban and rural experience brings deep understanding of the challenges faced by project students and families. The Facilitator provides direct program support for the day-to-day implementation of Project Puqigtut-Illu. Ms. Phillip

facilitates all project activities in the ASD and with partner organizations. She assists with recruiting of project students and teachers. She facilitates the development and implementation of online courses, including the incorporation of culturally responsive materials and practices and adherence to standards. Ms. Philip will develop and conduct the project's summer career mentorship program for students. As both an educator and bearer of Alaska Native culture, she organizes and participates in the project's academically and culturally rich Super Smart Sessions. She brings in teachers and UAA students for academic assistance, and members of the Native community (including herself) for cultural connections. Ms. Philip works daily with all project staff. She will collect, compile, and analyze project data for the ASD Title VII Indian Education Program and the external evaluator.

**Transition Social Services Coordinators, 2.0 FTE**, reports to Project Director. **Eric Saetre**, B.A., Sociology, **Andrew Moonhan Na**, B.S., ASD graduate, are experienced tutors and advocate for at-risk Alaska Native students. Our experience has shown that TSSC position is critical to the success of the project. TSSCs address the academic and social service needs of highly at-risk students through direct service or referrals; plan and implement strategies to reduce absenteeism, to initiate or increase academic engagement, and assist students in crisis. They create action plans to maximize educational opportunities and solutions for students. Given the transience, poverty, and academic struggles experienced by so many of our Alaska Native students, we expect that a majority of project students will need this support. TSSCs help families develop strategies that keep students in school and on a path to success.

**Full-time online teachers, 2.0 FTE**, report to an ASD principal TBD. These will begin in Year 2, when ASD iSchool transitions to full-time online teachers. One teacher each in Language Arts and STEM (Math/Science dual-certified) will be hired from a strong pool of Highly Qualified

ASD teachers with expertise in educational technology, curriculum development, and culturally responsive education. Having full-time teachers will make it possible to shift many student support functions from TSSCs to teachers in Years 2 and 3. Highly Qualified **Site teachers** will teach online courses on an added duty basis; typically one course per semester. **ASD teachers** will adapt courses for cultural relevance. Teachers will be Highly Qualified, experienced in virtual learning, and knowledgeable of Native culture. For example, our English expert, Rebecca Gerik, M.A, B.A., National Board Certified, has adapted and taught Puqigtut’s exemplar English 9 /10 courses; we will invite her to do so for English 11.

**Administrative Assistant**, .5 FTE, provides clerical support for project activities, e.g. purchasing, contracts, records, computer checkout to students, and community outreach.

**Table 4. Project Puqigtut-llu Timeline and Milestones.**

Obj.	Milestone	Semester by			Personnel
		Year 1, 2, & 3			
		Fall	Spring	Sum.	
1-7	Hire Administrative Assistant	1			Proj. Dir. D. Brown, Project Facilitator Karen Phillip
1-7	Site teachers teach online courses	1,2,3	1,2,3	1,2,3	Project Director & Project Facilitator
1-7	Recruit, refer, and enroll students into online courses	1,2,3	1,2,3	1,2,3	Project Facilitator, TSSCs
1-7	Face-to-face orientations for students & parents	1,2,3	1,2,3	1,2,3	Project Facilitator, TSSCs
1-7	Offer online courses. blended with face-to-face learning	1,2,3	1,2,3	1,2,3	Site teachers; full time teachers in Years 2 and 3
1-7	Smart Sessions	1,2,3	1,2,3	1,2,3	TSSCs, Project Facilitator
6,7	Super Smart Sessions	1,2,3	1,2,3	1,2,3	TSSCs, Project Facilitator, teachers, UAA students, Native cultural guests
5	Adapt Geometry 1, Biology 1, Integrated Science 1, English 11-1 to be culturally responsive	1			ASD teachers
5	Adapt Geometry 2, Biology 2, Integrated Science 2, English 11-2 to be culturally responsive		1		ASD teachers
5	Adapted courses evaluated		1	1	External Evaluator Dr. P.

	according to rubric				Partnow
1-7	Hire full-time STEM & Language Arts online teachers	2			Proj. Dir. D. Brown, Project Facilitator, ASD principals
1-7	English & STEM online courses taught by full-time tchrs	2,3	2,3		Puqigtut-llu full time STEM & Language Arts teachers
7	Establish guidelines & partners for summer career mentorships	1	1	1	Project Facilitator, community partners, local businesses
7	Launch mentorship program			1	Project Facilitator, partners
7	Summer mentorship program			2,3	Project Facilitator, partners
1-7	Summer Institute with online courses, mentorships			1,2,3	Proj. Fac., TSSCs, teachers, community partners
1-7	Attend iNACOL Virtual School Symposium	1			Project Facilitator & Puqigtut-llu teacher
1-7	AUY meetings	1,2,3	1,2,3	1,2,3	Project Facilitator
1-7	Social services for individual students & families	1,2,3	1,2,3	1,2,3	TSSCs
5, 7	<i>Culturally Responsive Online Teaching</i> graduate credit course			1,2,3	Proj. Director & Facilitator, project teachers
5	<i>iTeach</i> course for teachers	1,2,3	1,2,3	1,2,3	ASD Online Learning
1-7	Native Advisory Comm. mtgs.	1,2,3	1,2,3	1,2,3	Project Director D. Brown
1-7	Puqigtut-llu Project Team meetings	1,2,3	1,2,3	1,2,3	All project staff, partners, Dr. Partnow
1-7	Data collected	1,2,3	1,2,3	1,2,3	Project Facilitator, ASD A&E, Dr. Partnow
1-7	Evaluation Report			1,2,3	Dr. Partnow
1-7	Technical Assistance Meeting	TBA			Project Director & Facilitator

**(ii) ...procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement...**

Puqigtut-llu breaks new ground and thus is carefully designed for ongoing program assessment for what works and what must change. The project's strong evaluation team has specific expertise in formative evaluation methods, feedback, and interchange. Project Puqigtut and Puqigtut-llu are part of ASD iSchool, an ASD high school program. Thus it is supported by a full administrative structure that ensures oversight and regular procedures for supervising teachers and assessing the program.

Project Director Doreen Brown will meet quarterly with all project personnel and with representatives from project partners to examine all project data and make any needed program improvements. As Project Director, she is accountable to district administration and the school

board. She will supervise the project staff and participate in the evaluation of the project teachers throughout the implementation of the project.

Ms. Brown will bring feedback from monthly meetings of the Native Advisory Committee (NAC). NAC is an advisory committee to the Title VII Indian Education program and ASD school board. The committee members, mainly Alaska Natives, are volunteer citizens who are interested in improving education for Alaska Native students. The committee meets monthly and will provide ongoing advice and consultation for the project. The NAC and all project partners will receive annual summaries of the project and how their contributions have guided program successes and improvements. All partners will be invited to quarterly project meetings to provide feedback, ask questions, and spark new ideas. Project Facilitator K. Phillip meets weekly with project staff to discuss day-to-day operations, problem-solve, and celebrate student successes.

Online learning environments are in fact ideal settings for the continuous improvement process. The courses' built-in assessments allow frequent data collection and compilation. Student data is automatically calculated as students work through the course and as teachers assess student actions in the online environment. This monitoring of student progress and responses to the program will help us determine how the online courses and the cultural elements of the curriculum are working.

The new, summer mentorship program will start with 3-5 students in the first year, an intentionally low number. This is a new strand for the project; starting small will give us time to build the mentorship program gradually as we evaluate, improve, modify, and eventually add more "mentees" and more community business mentors.

The Project Facilitator and one site teacher (substitute provided) will attend the iNACOL (International Association for K-12 Online Learning) Virtual School Symposium in October

2012 in New Orleans, LA. This symposium will feature national and international experts in cutting-edge K-12 virtual education. Our participation will guide our continuous improvement process as we learn about the latest research, trends, and best practices in online learning.

**(d) Adequacy of resources. (i) costs are reasonable ...anticipated results and benefits.**

*“Taikuu to Project Puqigtut...a life changing moment for my child...” – Parent*

Project costs are carefully constructed and are reasonable for serving highly at-risk and underserved youth. Project Puqigtut is breaking ground. Highly at-risk students are learning core subject material through the lens of their own Native heritage, they are staying in school, and they are graduating from high school. Over the past three years we have found that the expenditures that support this project’s navigation of the school system, advocacy for students and families, and direct student support are absolutely critical for student success and will result in a project that succeeds and demonstrates the effectiveness of this model. The budget supports salary/benefits for the Project Facilitator; program supplies and internet fees for the project staff; and salary/benefits, supplies, software, and equipment for project teachers. A .5 FTE administrative assistant will be sufficient to perform necessary clerical functions. The budget also includes transition/social services appropriate to the needs of highly at-risk students who are likely to experience difficulties that interfere with their ability to attend school and succeed in classes. This is part of a lifeline of support that will enable students to succeed in online classes. These services will be critical to the well-being of our students and consequently to the likelihood that they will stay in school.

Because we are serving a high-needs student population, the project also provides basic materials and supplies required for online courses, mobile internet access, and transportation for students who need these supports in order to fully access the online courses and face-to-face

learning opportunities. The online courses are embedded into ASD's iSchool for continual use and availability beyond the project period.

The project builds capacity in partnership with our consortium member and community partners. Combining resources brings cost-savings and efficiencies in providing services. Existing Title VII services are wrapped in, such as annual professional development for Title VII staff, and Title VII Community Counselors who provide services to Native students at most ASD high schools. Puqigtut-llu will serve an expected 350 students in Year 1, 400 students in Year 2, and 450 in Year 3. Over time, the cost per student will decline—from about [REDACTED] per student in Year 1 to about [REDACTED] per student by Year 3.

**(ii) ...relevance and demonstrated commitment of each partner...**

ASD has more Alaska Native students than any other Alaskan district. Increasing the graduation rate is a high priority for the ASD. The district has placed graduation coaches in our high schools. Project Puqigtut-llu works in conjunction with ASD iSchool. This is an online “school” for students with schedule conflicts, transience, or who do not thrive in traditional high schools, as is the case with many Alaska Native students. The project is a Title VII Indian Education initiative within ASD. Through ASD's collective efforts, including Puqigtut, the district's graduation rate has risen from 64% in 2008 to over 72% in 2011. ASD is contributing significant in-kind resources of staff time, professional development, and program space. ASD will place the project's online courses on the ASD Moodle (online course site) and into ASD iSchool, and train and supervise project full-time teachers as full members of the ASD iSchool staff. ASD and Title VII will provide grant accounting and reports.

CITC, our tribal consortium partner, is the major non-profit serving Native people in the Anchorage area. CITC operates programs and places teachers directly in ASD schools. CITC supports youth through after-school and summer programs, job-seeking and training, and family

activities. The attached MOA (Appendix D) details ways in which CITC will provide staff expertise and content for our online courses, provide space for project activities, assist with our new mentorship program, and refer students to Project Puqigtut-Illu.

UAA Center for Community Engagement and Learning will provide a cohort of 15 college students who will help at our Super Smart Sessions. Each student will devote at least 10 hours per semester. They will provide one-on-one tutoring, lead discussions about course topics, and provide technical assistance. United Way /Anchorage United for Youth is a new, community-wide collaboration of more than 50 partners working toward the goal of 90% graduation in ASD by the year 2020. AUy recognizes the challenges faced by Anchorage's Alaska Native youth and has named Project Puqigtut-Illu as an official Endorsing Partner of AUy. CITC and UAA also are AUy partners. AUy's Youth Leadership Team is chaired by Greg Razo, Vice President of Cook Inlet Region, Inc., an Alaska Native Corporation. Mr. Razo himself wrote AUy's letter of commitment for this project. AUy will promote the project through its advertising and community outreach events, recruit volunteers and career role models for Smart Sessions and mentorships, and receive and sharing project data. (Letters of Commitment, Appendix C).

**(iii) ... budget is adequate to support the proposed project.**

The budget is carefully directed to the attainment of project objectives and outcomes. It is based on actual records and expenditures for what we have learned is most effective in serving at-risk Alaska Native high school students. The budget is adequate for the project; it has been carefully researched and strategically designed for maximum benefit. Wraparound services are sufficient to ensure the success of the project. Cultural adaptation of online courses is supported; we have found this to be important. By providing transportation, technology, and flexible, blended learning with frequent access to teachers and mentors, we are knocking down the biggest barriers faced by our students. Puqigtut's original investments will carry forward in

Puqigtut-llu. Products include: our culturally responsive online courses, computers for students and staff, course materials for students, professional development, data collection tools and methods, and a model program that helps students graduate. ASD Title VII Indian Education will support teacher addenda in Years 2 and 3; thus, we are building in sustainability.

**(e) Quality of project evaluation. (i) ... methods... goals, objectives, and outcomes.**

*“I have seen Project P. kids who were feeling defeated start to feel proud, and more confident in their school work. They see that they are being successful.”* - CITC Counselor, West High.

The evaluation is keyed to objectives. It will provide GPRA and program data for annual summative reports and will provide formative information for program improvements. Annual benchmarks are keyed to outcomes as measured by rates of course enrollment, successful course completion, graduation/dropout, SBA scores, and participation. Patricia Partnow, Ph.D., is our evaluator, assisted by Seth Partnow (Letter of Commitment, Appendix C). Dr. Partnow is a seasoned program evaluator and a nationally recognized expert in Alaska Native cultures and education. Partnow Consulting has evaluated Project Puqigtut and other Alaska Native Education grants. Dr. Partnow will work the Project Director, Facilitator, and ASD to collect and analyze statistical data and student progress toward graduation for our annual summative performance reports. Evaluation activities for the project objectives and outcomes are as follows.

*Objective 1 – Credit accumulation; on-time graduation.* Devise spreadsheet for tracking credits, annually gather and compare data. *Objective 2 – Decrease credit gap.* Compute baseline in Year 1, annually gather/compare data. *Objective 3 – Decrease dropout rate.* Gather baseline data in Year 1, annually gather/compare with all Alaska Native high school students. *Objective 4 – SBA proficiency.* Gather proficiency data for participating 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students in reading, writing, mathematics, and science; compare annually with previous scores, all Alaska Native

high school students, and all ASD students. *Objective 5 – Adapt and offer online courses.* Use existing rubric (adjusted as appropriate) to assess cultural relevance of newly adapted courses as they are designed and taught, all years. *Objective 6 – rates of participation/successful course completion.* Collect enrollment, course completion, student grades, and attendance data.

*Objective 7 – Students value their own education; appreciation for cultural aspects of project.*

Year 1 - design student survey and interview protocol; all years – administer/review surveys; interview students for perceived value of courses, face-to-face interactions; interview parents.

**Table 5. Data types and collection schedule.**

Type of Data	When collected
Graduation and dropout rates, SBA scores	Annually, Nov.
Credit accumulation, participation, student feedback on program elements	Annually, May
Evidence of culturally responsive content and practices in online courses	Semester-end

Methods: A&E will provide graduation and dropout rates and SBA data for project students compared to a control group of all ASD Alaska Native high school students. Teachers will report enrollment, grades, and credit tracking for each of their online courses, to be compiled by Project Facilitator and provided to the evaluators. The Project Facilitator will maintain attendance rosters for project events. The evaluation team will interview students and parents. The evaluator will examine online course curriculum for culturally responsive content and practice using a rubric developed for that purpose. The evaluators observe a sample and face-to-face meetings, and will interview students, teachers, parents, and the TSSCs at the end of each school year. Instruments developed: All statistical data exists within A&E annual reports. At the start of the project (and refined each year), evaluators will develop a spreadsheet for tracking credits; a survey to gauge student attitudes; and a set of interview questions, Lykert-scale and open-ended, for students, parents, and project staff. Evaluators will adapt and modify as necessary a rubric previously

designed by Dr. Partnow to assess cultural relevance of online courses.

**(ii) ... objective performance measures...quantitative and qualitative data...**

Performance measures are objective, directly related to project objectives and outcomes, and both quantitative and qualitative Project-specific performance measures: Quantitative measures include SBA and graduation rates compared to a control group of ASD Alaska Native high school students not in the project, accumulation of credits, participant numbers, passage rates, face-to-face meetings. Qualitative measures include definable attributes of the cultural content. Data analysis will be done statistically by comparing project students to Alaska Native high school students and overall ASD, numerically using a spreadsheet with graphs for interview responses, and qualitatively through interview and observation results. Open-ended responses will be summarized and analyzed in a narrative report. When available: Reports will be available in June for attendance and participation, in September for tracking credits and interview results, and in December each year for SBA and dropout rates. Evaluators will prepare an annual summative report and a final project report. Information will be used by the Project Team to guide program improvements and modifications. Evaluators will meet with project staff quarterly for updates on program changes, challenges, and highlights. The Project Director is accountable to ASD administration for monitoring and reporting progress. The project will be presented to ASD administration and School Board, and discussed at Native Advisory Committee monthly meetings, with project partners, and other public events as appropriate. Project personnel will attend such events as the National Forum on Dropout Prevention for Native/Tribal Communities, iNACOL, National Indian Education Association Conference, Partnerships in Indian Education Conference, and the Alaska Bilingual Education Conference to report and suggest strategies for replication.