

Enriching Education With Culture

Need for Project (25)

They have only 3-5 hours of sunlight in the winter. They go to school in the dark and return home in the dark. These Eskimo children now punch a clock rather than live with the sun as their ancestors did. They hear stories of what their culture was like and yet, looking at their lives today, one sees more of the Western culture than that of a once proud people who were self-sufficient and free of the problems that alcohol, drugs, television, and bingo bring. They continue to survive with one foot in yesterday and one in tomorrow.

“Bush” Alaska is unique compared to the “Lower 48” and even the urban areas of the state. Our villages are small and isolated. Many of the houses do not have running water or flush toilets. Snowmobiles have replaced the dog teams and aluminum boats have replaced the walrus skin boats. The stress of a changing culture weighs heavily on many people, from the young to the elderly. The decline of cultural identity has led to alcoholism, drug abuse, violence, and most devastatingly, suicide. Children are told to be proud of their culture, but as they study what the culture of their grandparents at their age was, the youth see little similarity. The lifestyle of the youth is much different today. Where their ancestors spent their young years gathering food, hunting, fishing, and trapping, the young Alaska Native people of today spend much of their time in the village with little to do that reflects their historical culture.

Added to cultural stress is the academic stress of meeting a goal that is annually raised. Students in our schools that formerly made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) are now being told that they are no longer “proficient” and that their schools are in need of improvement. Understandably, there is a feeling that they are not succeeding in either

world. Before No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was mandated, our children had cultural experiences in school, albeit minimally. With the onset of NCLB, those time slots were given to reading, writing, and math. There was so much pressure to teach the standards that cultural classes fell by the wayside and little or no cultural integration occurred. Our bicultural paraprofessionals now feel that their program is of little importance. There has been turnover in some of the bicultural positions (held by local Native Alaskans) and they need training and a scope and sequence to follow. They need formal cultural units developed. We need to give the same importance and attention to the bicultural program as we have to the core academic program.

Bering Strait School District (BSSD) is responsible for teaching at-risk students in **15 high-poverty schools**. Although we have had schools make AYP, most of them have done so using Safe Harbor. Our test scores remain dismal and are flat lined. Going through another cycle of strategic planning last year involving parents and community members helped us realize that, while still maintaining the academics, it is important that education is more relevant for the students. In order to do this we must integrate culture into the academic curriculum and prepare students for the lifestyle of their choice.



There are many factors beyond their control that put these children at risk. Ninety-eight percent of the students in BSSD are of the minority group Alaska Native. All 15 schools have schoolwide programs under Title I. Poverty levels in the villages range from 55% in Unalakleet to 99% in Elim. Alcohol and drug abuse are serious problems and there are children that are

affected by Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Fetal Alcohol Effect. We have made gains in English proficiency as measured by the Alaska English Language Proficiency test and with those gains is further loss of the Native language. Our most prolific Native language is St. Lawrence Island Yupik and even that is seeing a decline. Although Gambell and Savoonga on the island have the highest percentage of Limited English Proficient students, children are beginning school speaking a village version of English where once they spoke their Native language.

As we look at the cultural history of the Eskimo people, we find that theirs has been an oral, hands-on culture. Children learned at the side of their parents by watching and then doing. Instructions, guidance, history, and stories were passed down by word of mouth. It has been only in the last several decades that formal education has found its way into the lives of these people. Many of the elders in their society went no farther than the 6th grade, if they were schooled at all. Parents may have finished high school. The Alaska Native students know their heritage where teaching was done by parents and grandparents and dealt largely with traditions, subsistence, and survival skills. However, they have been mandated into the educational system of today with its Western curriculum, high stakes testing, a push toward post-secondary education/ training, and modern technology. Alaska Native parents of today must deal with the cultural changes their children are going through. Parents may still be trying to live a semi-traditional life-style while rearing children who have moved into more modern times. This creates confusion, turmoil, and conflict about one's cultural identity.

¹Research shows that there is a correlation between cultural identity and academic success. Students who are more secure in their cultural identity and self-esteem do better in school. A disconnect between home and school causes an identity crises and that is what many of our

¹ Demmert, William G., Jr. "Improving Academic Performance Among Native American Students: A Review of the Research Literature." ERIC: 2001, p. 32

students are going through. Adding to this disconnect are teachers who come from the Lower 48 to spend one to three years in the villages, teaching students by the Western way in which they themselves were taught. Many of them have little or no understanding of the Native culture and unknowingly add to their students' identity crises by imposing Western ways and values during the school day. Students are then caught between two worlds every day. Our teachers need a curriculum designed to help them better understand the culture in which they are working and by which they can better help the students.

One of the more effective ways to bridge the culture gap in the schools is to have more Alaska Native Teachers. BSSD currently employs eight (4%) Alaska Native teachers. Through previous ANE grants BSSD has helped three paraprofessionals complete their coursework and receive their university diplomas and teaching certificates. There are others who are working toward a degree in education who still need support. We need to continue to provide opportunities for our paraprofessionals become teachers. These are the people who live the culture, who will be able to teach our students in a culturally relevant way, and who will provide guidance to new teachers from outside.

This project will bring curriculum and activities into the school that will help students understand academic concepts through their culture as it is integrated into the classroom. Students need to see that remaining in the village and being a whaling captain or an ivory carver is an admirable goal and an acceptable life skill. They also need to see that learning in school can help them be a better contributing member of society wherever they choose to live. College is not for everyone and parents and community members reminded BSSD of this during the strategic planning meetings. However, education IS for everyone and must be relevant and meaningful. This project will place an emphasis on culture alongside the core academic subjects.

We feel that the cultural activities promoted by this project will make education more relevant, teachers more culturally aware, and students more successful. Last year BSSD had only two of its 15 schools make AYP. **Five schools are now persistently lowest-achieving schools.** They are Aniguiin School in Elim, Shishmaref School in Shishmaref, Tukurngailnguq School in Stebbins, Hogarth Kingeekuk School in Savoonga, and Gambell Schools in Gambell.

Table 1 shows the performance of these five schools and the district as a whole on the Standards Based Assessments (SBAs) during Spring 2011. One will notice that district-wide and in four of the five Tier I schools that over half of the student are NOT proficient or advanced in reading, writing, and math. This finding is not limited to FY11 only. Historically, these schools have performed below 50% proficiency, sometimes as low as 16% proficiency. We feel that our project of integrating the culture into the curriculum and better training our teachers and paraprofessionals (paras) will help reverse this trend.

Table 1. Percent of BSSD Students in Grades 3-10 Who Are NOT Proficient or Advanced on the Alaska SBAs in Reading, Writing, and Math, Spring, 2011.

Site	Reading	Writing	Math
BSSD as a Whole	51%	54%	55%
Elim (Aniguiin)	44%	58%	38%
Gambell	56%	64%	72%
Savoonga (Hogarth Kingeekuk)	71%	84%	77%
Shishmaref	59%	54%	55%
Stebbins (Tukurngailnguq)	72%	81%	76%

Attendance, graduation, and dropout rates reflect a need for a different approach. Table 2

shows the data for the same schools as above for FY11.

Table 2. Attendance, Dropout, and Graduation Rates in BSSD for FY11.

Site	Attendance Rate (K-12)	Dropout Rate (7-12)	Graduation Rate
BSSD as a Whole	85.4%	10.8%	52.0%
Elim (Aniguiin)	91.3%	3.3%	37.5%
Gambell	76.6%	25.3%	25.0%
Savoonga (Hogarth Kingeekuk)	76.7%	21.0%	36.8%
Shishmaref	87.7%	17.7%	37.5%
Stebbins (Tukurngailnguq)	81.9%	12.8%	43.8%

²Reyhner (1992), in a paper commissioned by USDOE, concluded the following concerning American Indians and Alaska Natives:

Teachers need to build on the cultural values that Native parents give their children if teachers want to produce a strong positive sense of identity in their students. Attempts to replace students' Native identity with a dominant cultural identity confuse and repel Native students and force them to make a choice to either reject their families' values or their teachers' values. Neither choice is desirable or necessary. Students can be academically successfully and learn about the larger non-Native world while at the same time retaining and developing their Native identity. The solution to the current problem Native students often face is to change schools with Native students so that the Native cultural values are reinforced rather than ignored or depreciated.

² Reyhner, Jon. "Plans for Dropout Prevention and Special School Support Services for American Indian and Alaska Native Students." USDOE: 1992, p. 21.

BSSD needs to bring more of the culture into the classroom. This project is the revitalization of meeting this need in a more aggressive manner. We know that it will make a difference.

Quality of the Project Design (30)

Goals: (1) To improve the academic achievement of students in Bering Strait School District by integrating the Alaska Native culture into the curriculum and (2) to support BSSD paras in professional development opportunities and coursework leading to a teaching certificate.

Our project centers on enhancing the culture within the school and classroom and, more importantly, helping students see that culture and education can work together and are not exclusive of each other. Students and teachers must embrace the Native culture while also embracing the educational system. To facilitate this we will develop curriculum materials that reflect the culture of our region. We will provide opportunities for elders and students to work and learn together. We will establish a position (project manager) to work with students and communities to develop, organize, and catalog cultural resources. We will develop a scope and sequence for our bicultural program. We will support BSSD paraprofessionals in coursework and professional development toward becoming teachers. We will help teachers become more effective.

Measurable Objectives:

Objectives 1.1 (2.1, 3.1): During Year 1 (Year 2, Year 3) BSSD will employ a Project Manager to assist the Project Director and to develop and organize cultural resources and make them available to teachers.

Objective 1.2 (2.2, 3.2): During Year 1 (Year 2, Year 3) the BSSD Cultural Advisory Committee (CAC) will be formed to give input into curriculum, the bicultural program, this

project, and other matters pertaining to incorporating the culture. The CAC will meet at least three times per year.

Objective 1.3 (2.3, 3.53): During Year 1 (Year 2, Year 3) this project will support BSSD paraprofessionals in taking coursework toward becoming certified teachers. At least 40 paraprofessionals will take a minimum of 3 credits each year. By the end of this project, at least five paraprofessionals will have earned their degree.

Objective 1.4 (2.4, 3.4): During Year 1 (Year 2, Year 3) this project will support at least 80 BSSD paraprofessionals in professional development opportunities that will enhance their teaching techniques and ability to work successfully with students.

Objective 1.5 (2.5, 3.5): During Year 1 (Year 2, Year 3) the percentage of students proficient or advanced in reading, writing, and math on the Standards Based Assessments will increase by 10% over the previous year. The baseline for the first year of this objective will be the Spring 2012 SBA results.

Objective 1.6 (2.6, 3.6): During Year 1 (Year 2, Year 3), at least 50% (60%, 70%) of the students within each BSSD school will show growth in their scale scores on the Standards Based Assessments. The baseline for the first year of this objective will be the Spring 2012 SBA tests.

Objective 1.7 (2.7, 3.7): During Year 1 (Year 2, Year 3) BSSD will convene Content Area Standing Committees (CASCs) to review and revise curriculum and to integrate cultural activities into at least 5 curricular units each year.

Objective 1.8 (2.8, 3.8): During Year 1 (Year 2, Year 3) BSSD will form a Bicultural Committee comprised of bicultural paras to develop a scope and sequence for the bicultural program along with a minimum of 2 units (K-12) per year and lesson plans specific to the culture.

Outcomes: We expect that as the culture is integrated into the classroom that students will

become more responsive to education and will learn at a greater rate. Their cultural identity and self-esteem will increase, which will lead to higher academic achievement and test scores. We expect that as teachers receive professional development specific to the students' weaknesses or non-growth, they will become more effective and student achievement will increase. We also expect that paraprofessionals will become more effective in working with students and that we will add some Alaska Natives to the teaching pool.

Project Design Implementation

Much work has already been done in the state in the area of defining ways to be culturally responsive. The Alaska Native Knowledge Network (ANKN) produced several booklets³ developed by Alaska Native educators suggesting ways for a variety of people (teachers, administrators, school boards, students, community members, etc.) to be involved in utilizing culture in education. Many prominent Native and Native-serving organizations, such as Alaska Federation of Natives, First Alaskans, University of Alaska, Alaska Department of Education, Alaska State Board of Education, and various Native educator associations sponsored these guidelines. This project addresses several of the guidelines and standards presented. For example, one guideline recommends establishing an accessible repository of cultural resource materials.⁴ Another speaks to enhancing learning opportunities by utilizing local resources and expertise.⁵ We will use these guidelines as references as we develop our cultural projects. Each teacher will receive a copy of the guidelines to help them understand the importance of culture and ways to

³ ANKN. "Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools." 1998.

ANKN. "Guidelines for Preparing Culturally Responsive Teachers for Alaska's Schools." 1999.

ANKN. "Guidelines for Respecting Cultural Knowledge." 2000.

⁴ ANKN. "Guidelines for Respecting Cultural Knowledge.", 2000, p. 8.

⁵ ANKN. "Guidelines for Preparing Culturally Responsive Teachers for Alaska's Schools." 1999, p. 15.

incorporate it into their teaching.

There are several separate, yet intertwined, parts to this project. We will hire a project manager (Obj. 1) to work under the supervision of the project manager. This person will ensure that all aspects of the project are addressed and completed. One major responsibility will be supporting cultural integration. For many classroom activities teachers will need resources. BSSD has several resources within the district, but they need to be organized in order to be useful and available. For example, BSSD has approximately one thousand photos on CDs that need to be made accessible. The Materials Development Center at Gambell has many resources that could be used in the classrooms outside of Gambell, but teachers don't know what they are. There are resources at the district office that need to be formatted and cataloged and made available. Our vision is that the project manager (PM) will work with existing materials and will also travel to the sites to inventory the cultural materials there. While at the sites the PM will work with students to document, publish, and archive the culture and history in their own village. This might be in the form of teaching them how to interview elders, how to operate electronic equipment, or how to organize and complete a project once the groundwork is done. The PM will support the teachers as they assign cultural projects. The PM will also consult with our partner Kawerak to ensure that the cultural materials accurately reflect the local culture. Teachers will also be able to request specific materials to be found or generated.

BSSD will form a Cultural Advisory Committee (CAC) (Obj. 2) comprised of teachers, Alaska Native paraprofessionals, community members, administrators, and a member from our **Bering Strait Education Consortium** partner **Kawerak, Inc., the Alaska Native regional non-profit organization** for the Bering Strait area. The CAC will advise on

cultural integration into the curriculum, rejuvenation of the bicultural program, and other matters dealing with the culture. This committee will work with the project director to give direction in meeting the objectives of this project. The CAC will meet a minimum of three times per year.

Our paraprofessionals are essential to our education program. They are the link between the school and the community. While teachers come and go, the paraprofessionals work in our schools for many years. Although they are happy to help teachers in matters concerning the culture, it is important that they themselves become teachers, not only for truly integrating the culture, but as role models for students who want to become teachers. Through an Alaska Native Education grant, BSSD has helped three paraprofessionals become teachers. We have others that are pursuing their degree and teaching certificate. Four paraprofessionals need only their student teaching to receive their degrees and teaching certificates. We will continue to support the paraprofessionals' coursework (Obj. 3). Most of the coursework is now done online and can be completed without traveling. On-site teachers will be available as needed for tutoring the paraprofessionals while they take courses.

BSSD will also provide professional development opportunities for our paraprofessionals (Obj. 4). There will be some daylong on-site opportunities throughout the year, but the main thrust will be a weeklong training. This training will concentrate on delivery of a major educational area such as reading, writing, math, science, or social studies. This training will give paraprofessionals background information as well as teaching techniques and ways to work with students. They will be actively involved in hands-on, cooperative group learning experiences, which is the Native way of learning.

This training will help them be more effective in the classroom as they work with individual and small groups of children. An example of a viable research-based program that will support this objective is Consortium of Reading Excellence (CORE). Paras will study and practice research-based techniques of teaching reading during the week. The topic of the weeklong training may vary each year, depending on the needs of the paras.

The main goal of education and school systems is to help children learn. There are many measures of learning. In Alaska the primary measurement for the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (EED) is the Standards Based Assessments (SBAs). The results on these tests determine if a school makes AYP. It is our desire to help children be successful. We feel that we will do that by integrating the culture into the school day. We have two objectives that directly address proficiency on the SBAs. Objective 5 is that the percentage of students proficient or advanced in reading, writing, and math on the Standards Based Assessments will increase by 10%. Although this may seem like a low percentage, it is appropriate for our student population. Statewide, Alaska has 18.5% not proficient in reading, 25.6% not proficient in writing, and 25.4% not proficient in math. As Table 1 on p. 5 shows, BSSD has 51%, 54%, and 55% respectively not proficient in those subjects. In some schools, more than one-third of those not proficient score in the Far Below Proficient category.

Although it is more difficult for students to move from not proficient to proficient, it is easier for students to show growth each year (Obj. 6) on the SBAs. We expect for that to happen as the culture becomes more prominent and for it to happen to a greater extent each year. We will look at the growth of students individually and classes collectively. These results will be used to design professional development opportunities for individual teachers as well as teacher groups.

Although objective six speaks specifically to the SBAs, we have other data that will be used to identify teachers who need additional training in teaching content. BSSD now uses AIMSweb as a benchmark three times a year for all students and every two to three weeks for the lowest achieving students. Currently of the 933 students in grades 1-8 tested this spring we have 331 students (35%) in Tier II and 216 (23%) in Tier III, the lowest performing level. Teachers will continue to receive training in Response to Intervention (RTI) strategies, but we will begin looking at the teachers of those students who are not making expected progress to see what type of specific professional development, be it one-on-one or group training, that is needed. Another source of data that we'll consider by teacher is our Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (ACCESS for ELL). This is an assessment that measures the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium's English Language Proficiency Standards, which have been adopted by Alaska. ACCESS measures the academic language of a student. Students with a low level of academic language will have difficulty in understanding subject content. By using the results of the SBAs, AIMSweb, and ACCESS, we will have a strong foundation for assessing the needs of teachers by the performance of their students on these tests. Professional development will be designed to meet the needs of the teachers to make them more effective, **especially in our persistently lowest achieving schools**. It will be delivered through on-site visits and videoconferencing. Principals will be involved in the activities so that they can support the teachers.

The premise for this proposal is that integrating the culture into the curriculum more (Obj. 7) will result in the students' being more receptive to and interested in school and their subjects and, consequently, their achievement will increase. Their attendance will increase so that they have the opportunity to learn. Integrating culture into the curriculum is a multi-year task. It will

take time, organization, planning, and implementation. BSSD's Director of Curriculum will oversee this process. BSSD already has a procedure in place for reviewing and revising the curriculum. Each year Content Area Standing Committees (CASCs) meet for a week in May for that purpose. Their first meeting for this project will be May 2013. By that time the PM will have a list of some of the resources in the district that committee members can use for integration. They will incorporate these resources into activities and units during their review and revisions. To help with the process, the PM will make notes of suggested activities as he/she catalogs the resources. All of the activities and resources will be made available to teachers to begin using the next school year. Each year new resources and integration activities will be added. During the first year of this project the PM will begin making known resources available through our website. He/She will notify teachers when additional resources are added, including suggestions of how they can be used. During the first year teachers will be encouraged to incorporate the culture in writing and social studies activities with local resources or sources put on the web by the PM. After the CASC meets the first year, teachers will be expected to use the integration activities developed. Additionally, they will be expected to give feedback on the activities so that they can be revised to be more effective.

During the last decade our bicultural program has diminished. Often the bicultural paraprofessionals were reassigned to help with core classes, trying to meet AYP. Today our bicultural paras are struggling to teach cultural classes without a scope and sequence (Obj. 8). Like most districts across the nation, BSSD has concentrated on core academic subjects to the detriment of some important electives. Our bicultural program is one that has suffered. We have seen how this has affected our students over the past decade. A rising AYP bar is not the only reason our dropout rate is rising (over 25% at one school), our attendance is dropping (at 85.4%,

the lowest in nine years), and our graduation rate is only 52%. We are now committed to reviving the bicultural program. Through this project a Bicultural Committee comprised of one bicultural paraprofessional from each site will meet twice a year to develop a cultural scope and sequence. They will also develop units and activities centered on cultural themes, such as Eskimo dancing, kuspuk making, ivory carving, basket weaving, beading, etc. These 15 Alaska Native paraprofessionals live the culture and have a wealth of knowledge concerning what needs to be taught to help improve students’ cultural identity. At the end of each project year, a CASC will meet to further develop and refine the work of the Bicultural Committee.

With these eight objectives BSSD feels that strides will be made in showing value in and respect for the Alaska Native culture. Working with Kawerak, Inc., our Alaska Native regional non-profit organization (Priority 1), will provide support for the curriculum changes we will be making. Our five Tier I schools (**Priority 3**) will benefit and should show the greatest increase in achievement. Two of the schools are in communities (Gambell and Savoonga) where the culture is most intact, the attendance and graduation rates are the lowest, and the dropout rates are highest. We feel that the cultural integration will bring about an attitude change and begin to reverse the disconnect students are experiencing. Specialized training based on SBA proficiency and scale score growth, AIMSweb results, and ACCESS scores will help our new and returning teachers be more effective. (**Priority 2**)

Quality of the Management Plan (20)

The following charts outline the management plan for implementing the components of this project. The duties of BSSD and Kawerak are shown in separate charts.

Bering Strait School District

DATE	ACTIVITY	PERSON
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8/12	Receive award announcement and begin working on activities. Advertise for Project Manager.	Project Director (PD)
9/12-14	Report grant award and activities to BSSD Board of Education	PD
9/12	Hire Project Manager	PD
9/12	Establish all procedures for paras to take courses and receive professional development. Establish budget with business office. Meet with travel clerk to talk about travel needs for year. Prepare for videoconferences with paras.	PD-Yr 1; Project Manager (PM)-Yr 2/3
ongoing	Paras take fall semester courses	PM
ongoing	Update Googledocs with para coursework	PM
ongoing	Inventory cultural resources in the district	PM
ongoing	Establish and update web page with cultural resources and integration activities.	PM
ongoing	Travel to sites to assess local resources and to work with teachers and students on developing new resources.	PM
ongoing	Preserve cultural resources through scanning and digitizing.	PM
ongoing in 2013 - 2015	Conduct training for teachers in light of the SBA results from the previous spring, AIMSweb data, and ACCESS scores.	PD and Director of Curriculum
10/12 9/13-14	Appoint and convene Cultural Advisory Committee (CAC) to advise on cultural matters pertaining to curriculum integration, bicultural program, cultural orientations, etc.	PD

10/12 9/13-14	Assemble bicultural paraprofessionals from each site to form the Bicultural Committee to work on program goals, cultural scope and sequence, teaching units, cultural kits. This committee will report its work to the CAC.	PD, Director of Curriculum
Ongoing	Administer AIMSweb as scheduled according to student needs.	Principals
1/13-15	Convene CAC to advise on cultural matters	PD
3/13-15	Convene Bicultural Committee to continue work on scope and sequence, units, and activities	PD
4/13-15	Administer the Standards Based Assessments (SBA)	Test Coordinator
4/13-15	Convene CAC to give guidance on curriculum integration.	PD and Director of Curriculum
5/13-15	Paraprofessionals receive weeklong training in teaching techniques of selected subject.	PD and Director of Curriculum
5/13-15	Content Area Standing Committees (CASCs) meet to review and revise curriculum. Their major activity will be to develop activities that integrate culture into the academic curriculum and to work on the bicultural curriculum.	PD and Director of Curriculum
8/13-15	Receive external evaluation report annually and summative report in Year 3.	External evaluator
as scheduled	Submit Annual Performance Report	PD
as scheduled	Attend technical assistance workshop in Washington, DC	PD, PM, +1

Kawerak, Inc.

COMPLETION DATE	ACTIVITY	STAFF RESPONSIBLE
9/12	Appoint Kawerak representative to CAC	Kawerak President
three times per year	Actively participate in CAC meetings	Kawerak rep.
ongoing	Be a resource to BSSD for questions concerning the Alaska Native culture. Provide materials from the Eskimo Heritage Program.	Kawerak Staff

This timeline shows a well-organized project with specific activities and experienced staff members to execute them. This timeline will act as a guide to the project director and project manager and will lead to successful completion of the project within budget in a timely manner.

The key personnel for this project are:

(A) **Project Director (PD):** *Jodi Picou* will serve as project director. Ms. Picou has nineteen years of educational experience in Alaska. She has served as a teacher, principal, and district office coordinator. She has overseen BSSD's bicultural program for one year and is a strong advocate for integrating the culture into the curriculum. Having taught in North Slope Borough School District, Ms. Picou has experience implementing a culture rich curriculum and also leading their English Language Learner Program from the district office. Ms. Picou has the skills and a vast knowledge base of cultural integration that will make this project a success.

(B) **Project Manager (PM):** The project manager will be hired upon receiving the project award and will be a full time position. At a minimum, the PM will hold an Alaska Type A

teacher certificate and will have experience in an Alaska cultural setting. The PM will work under the direction of the PD, will coordinate many of the project activities, and will be highly involved in making cultural resources available to the sites. The PM will work with the paras and UAF Northwest Campus to ensure that the courses the paras take meet their degree plans. The PM will work with the Director of Curriculum as he/she designs activities for teachers and will be an active member of the CAC and CASCs. He/She will also work with Kawerak who has given BSSD permission to access the resources in their Eskimo Heritage Program. A complete position description is in the appendix.

(C) **Director of Curriculum:** With seventeen years in education, *Ben Howard* will begin his third year as BSSD Director of Curriculum. He has taught in two BSSD villages and is married to an Alaska Native, giving him an insight into the Native culture. He will work closely with the PD and PM to integrate the culture into the curriculum and to develop the bicultural scope and sequence. This will be an ongoing process with the main thrust being during CASC meetings. Mr. Howard will also be involved in developing training opportunities for teachers who show a need based on student test scores.

(D) **Kawerak, Inc.,** personnel are also important to the success of this project. *Loretta Bullard*, President, fully supports Kawerak's role in this project. She has long been a proponent of culture and will ensure that the Kawerak staff is a resource to the PM in identifying and using cultural resources. (See attached MOA.)

There are numerous times where interested parties can give **suggestions and feedback** concerning the operation of this project. The CAC is formed for that specific purpose. Meeting three times per year, the members will be looking at all aspects of the project and advising the district on items of cultural interest. The Alaska Native members will have a great impact on the

work of this committee. The PM will be making cultural resources available to teachers and will be available on an ongoing basis for receiving requests and suggestions for improvement. As teachers use the units developed, they will complete an evaluation form to give feedback. Test data will also be a form of feedback and will be used to develop professional development opportunities as needed. Each month local Advisory Education Committees meet at each school and discuss educational issues. It will be appropriate for them to give suggestions for improvement, either formally or informally. Additionally, the BSSD Board of Education will be presented with the progress of this project and will give directions as needed. Feedback and suggestions will be considered by several groups, including the local staff, the project director and manager, the Director of Curriculum, and as an agenda item at CAC meetings. It is through feedback from stakeholders and through regular meetings that adjustments and **continuous improvement** will be made. BSSD is open to suggestions and strives to make continuous improvement in all areas of operation.

Adequacy of Resources (15)

Reasonableness of Costs: Approximately 1615 students will benefit from this project. Although we will concentrate efforts on **our persistently lowest achieving schools**, the culture will be integrated into the curriculum district-wide. Paraprofessionals throughout the district will receive professional development and be supported in courses. The PM will travel to all schools to work with the students on cultural projects.

The costs for this project are reasonable. The area cost of living differential for the Bering Strait region is approximately 150% compared to Anchorage. Air travel is a fact of life in BSSD. There is no other reasonable way to get from the district office to the sites. Airfare has increased dramatically over the past three years and is expensive. All of the airfare quotes are

taken from published fare schedules. We will involve a lot of local people who live the culture in this project. It is customary in the villages to pay for their time. Not to do so would be disrespectful. We will also contract with professionals for our paraprofessional training. We feel this is vital to show the importance of the things the paraprofessionals are learning. Paraprofessionals will take courses from UAF at the published rate of \$154/\$187 per credit, depending on the level of the course.

Adequacy of Support: BSSD is committed to this project. Our Board of Education has approved our strategic plan that includes culture. Having previously worked in a culture rich district, our superintendent is a strong supporter of cultural integration. The parents and community members want more culture in the classrooms. We will make this project a success.

Kawerak, our partner, is vastly interested in serving the Alaska Natives of this region. They see this project as a way of helping preserve the culture and documenting it. They will serve on the Cultural Advisory Committee and be an important resource for information about the culture.

UAF Northwest Campus in Nome is the college through which most of our paras take courses. BSSD has an excellent working relationship with them. They have actively recruited and advised our paraprofessionals and offered specific courses that they need in a timely manner.

Our partnerships were forged many years ago and are solid. They will provide strength to this project.

Adequacy of Budget: The budget presented is adequate to support this project. We have funds for travel for the PM, the CAC, paras for professional development, for the technical assistance workshop in DC, and for our contractual commitments. We will buy equipment and supplies to establish a workstation for the PM in the first year. The expansion of our web capacity is also a first year expenditure. We are also supporting the paras in their endeavor to get

a degree in education and become teachers. We are providing professional development to paraprofessionals and teachers. We will be able to do this within the requested budget. There are no frills, but we have allowed for increases in salaries and airfare each year.

This project serves approximately 1615 students K-12 at a per pupil cost of [REDACTED]

Quality of Project Evaluation (10)

Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) Performance Indicators

This project will provide data for the following GPRA indicator: the percentage of Alaska Native students in schools served by the program who meet or exceed proficiency standards for reading, mathematics, and science on the State assessments.

BSSD is committed to a strong evaluation of this project, both internally and externally, realizing that evaluation results show not only project success but can also be used for continuous improvement. The objectives of this project, the data to be collected, and the evaluation techniques follow. The full measurable objectives can be found beginning on page 7.

Goals: (1) To improve the academic achievement of students in Bering Strait School District by integrating the Alaska Native culture into the curriculum and (2) to support BSSD paras in professional development opportunities and coursework leading to a teaching certificate.

Objective Summary	Data Collection	Evaluation
1. Hire a project manager.	Employment records	Did BSSD hire a project manager?
2. Form CAC; meet 3 times per year	List of members Minutes of meetings	Did BSSD form a CAC and did it meet 3 times during the year?
3. Support at least 40 paraprofessionals in taking a minimum of three college credits	Transcripts	Did at least 40 BSSD paraprofessionals take the required credits?

toward a teaching certificate.		
4. Provide professional development opportunities to paras to increase their skills.	Participant lists, agendas, and evaluations of PD opportunities	Did at least 80 paraprofessionals participate in professional development opportunities?
5. Increase the percentage of students proficient in reading, writing, and math on the SBAs by 10%	SBA test results	Did the percentage of students proficient or advanced in reading, writing, and math on the SBAs increase by 10%?
6. Students will increase their scale scores on the SBAs each year.	SBA test results	Did the designated percent of students increase their scale scores each year?
7. Convene CASCs to integrate culture into the academic curriculum (5 units minimum)	Compilation of work done during the CASCs	Did the CASCs integrate culture into the curriculum? Did they complete at least 5 units?
8. Convene a Bicultural Committee to work on a cultural scope and sequence, units, and activities	Completion of work done	Did the Bicultural Committee meet twice a year? Did they develop a scope and sequence, at least 2 units for K-12 each year, and supporting activities?

The above measurable objectives are thorough, feasible, and appropriate to the goals of this project and provide quantitative data. The numbers and percentages within each objective are appropriate for our students and staff. Past performances were taken into consideration when

developing the objectives. Collectively, these objectives provide a well-rounded project that will accomplish the goals.

We feel that qualitative data is also important to the success of this project and for continuous progress. To this end the PD will develop evaluation surveys for cultural resources and professional development activities. These surveys will have both Likert Scale and open-ended questions. The results will be used to improve future activities. At the end of each semester teachers will be asked to evaluate the activities and resources they have used in the classrooms. It is through these evaluations that the PM and the CASCs will be able to improve the format and quality of the cultural integration. These evaluations will be tallied and the results will be included in the formal evaluation.

Data collection will occur at various times during the year. Committee meeting minutes will be completed within one week of the meeting and forwarded to the PD. The PM will keep an ongoing database in Googledocs showing the courses and credits that the paras are taking. This will allow the PM to monitor whether the goal of 40 paras taking courses will be met. The PM will also keep a database of the paras who receive professional development, both on site and at the weeklong activity. Paras will have a sign in sheet for the on site activities that will be forwarded to the PM within a week of the training. Test results will be available at different times for different students. Results for grades 3-10 are returned in May of each year. They will be analyzed by August of the following school year. This analysis will include proficiency overall and in each tested strand. Data will be disaggregated by subgroups, including ELL students. ACCESS for ELL (K-12) is also an annual assessment with results returned in late spring or early summer. It will be analyzed by September of the following school year. AIMSweb data is available throughout the school year, depending on the tier that each student is

placed. We have a full-time person who will help analyze that data on an ongoing basis and report it to the PD. A major thrust of professional development for teachers of students not showing progress will be in the fall after all the spring data has been analyzed. Other professional development will occur as needed as shown by AIMSweb data. Lastly, work done by the Bicultural Committee and the CASCs will be collected in late May or early June by the PM and made available to the evaluator.

Dr. Virginia Degnan of Alaska Educational Consulting will serve as the **external evaluator** for this project. As a former teacher and administrator in rural Alaska, she is cognizant of the situations BSSD faces. Dr. Degnan's experience in administering grants and working with external evaluators will be invaluable as she evaluates this project. An important part of the evaluation is the on-site visits that the external evaluator will make to selected sites each year. She will look for cultural activities throughout the school and classrooms. She will talk with paraprofessionals who are taking classes. She will be also available to meet with community members for their input. In order to evaluate the project, Dr. Degnan will be in regular contact with the PD, conduct videoconferences with the sites, analyze data, and complete a formal project evaluation each year and a summative evaluation at the end of the project. She will spend approximately 150 hours evaluating this project. Her résumé can be found on page 35.

Summary

This project is much needed as BSSD moves in a direction of better preparing teachers to work with our children. The traditional culture is changing, largely because of the school system. We want to slow that change and help students have a positive cultural identity. We want to build on their rich heritage instead of just paying lip service. This project will begin that process.