

**a. Project Need:**

*“One dollar invested in high-quality early childhood education programs by policy makers results in a return of thirteen dollars in preventative costs associated with incarceration, truancy, school dropout, and teen pregnancy.” (Belfield, 2006)*

This proposal addresses the important issue of engaging parents in the process of getting their child ready for the first day of school, by helping students be ready by engaging them in a transitioning process that extends from pre-kindergarten through the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, and by providing professional development for certified and classified instructional staff. The goals of the *Gateway READY!* project are long term and institutionally systemic and represent the conversation that we need to all be having about improving our schools by focusing on getting our kids ready to learn.

**Profile of proposed service area:** Alaska Gateway School District (AGSD) serves a total of 388 students enrolled K-12, in seven communities spread out over the Upper Tanana Valley, a region twice the size of the state of New Hampshire. Fifty-four percent of our students are Athabaskan Indians. Four schools, (Northway, Mentasta, Tetlin, and Tanacross) are 100% Athabaskan. Eagle, and Dot Lake are over 60%, and the largest school, situated in the regional hub of Tok (pop. 1500), is 49% Athabaskan.

**The AGSD service area has chronic low income and high rates of unemployment and poverty.** All of the schools in AGSD are Title I designated. According to the US Census, 15.9% of families with children in the Upper Tanana, live in poverty, while the national average is 12.5%.<sup>i</sup> The national per-capita income is [REDACTED] but is just [REDACTED] for Alaska Natives in the Upper Tanana. In Tetlin, with a poverty rate of 48.4%, it is [REDACTED]. All but one of our schools are 100% eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch, and 56% of our students live in households receiving AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children). The official regional rate of unemployment, as

determined by the Alaska Department of Labor is 44%, but TCC has estimated the actual rate for our villages at over 80%.

**There are high drop-out and migration rates, and low attendance and graduation rates:** The district graduation rate at one school was just 29% last year. One-third of students are enrolled in Migrant Education. Attendance has been a chronic problem at several schools in the district. This year Northway and Tetlin have absentee rates of 18.78% and 21.01% respectively, to date. Of the 28 students enrolled in Northway High School, 11 have missed 15 days or more, and in Tetlin, 12 have missed 15 days or more just this semester.

A longitudinal study by Dr. Jerry McBeath of the University of Alaska Fairbanks that he began in the 1980's and continues today, points very clearly to the critical role of family and community engagement with the school as a primary indicator of success for students. His contention is that in Alaskan villages, student performance has more to do with the "Educational Culture" of a given community than any other variable. With that in mind, it becomes clear that any solution to the problem of low student performance must address a means by which to create community and family engagement in the school

**The Alaska Native population of our region is in cultural transition.** The Alaska Native population of our school district is in the active throes of cultural upheaval. This complicates the academic learning climate of any community. Current research indicates that full language assimilation from an indigenous language to English takes up to three generations, which would imply that we are midway through that process. Notions such as individualism (versus collectivism), pragmatism (versus philanthropy), and materialism (versus spiritualism) are Western ways of thinking, and have contributed to the modification of indigenous community values and beliefs. It is through the identified need for greater community engagement, that the proposed

program of this application will focus its efforts, in order to increase the academic achievement of all students, including those target populations.

**Our region has low levels of literacy and educational attainment.** It is clear that levels of parent education have an impact on student educational achievement. The TCC report identifies 6.8% of their survey respondents as having a 4-year degree, and 41% having a post-secondary education. 27.7% did not have a high school diploma. These numbers are confirmed by the parent survey conducted last fall by the regional Head Start program, identifying 6% of their respondents as having graduated from a four-year program, 23% having some post-secondary training, 31% having a high school diploma or GED. Forty percent had not completed high school or attained a GED. Alaska ranks 46<sup>th</sup> out of the 50 states in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading attainment. Against that measure, 81.5% of Alaskan 3<sup>rd</sup> graders were proficient on the 2011 State Standards Based Assessments. 57.7% of AGSD 3<sup>rd</sup> graders were proficient, and just 43.8% of our Alaska Native 3<sup>rd</sup> graders. While our schools are able to bring them up to the middle percentiles by the time they hit high school, they suffer from the gap that they come to school with, but never quite get over.

**Students are entering kindergarten without the requisite skills needed to be successful in school.** Using every measure available, it is clear both anecdotally and on standard assessments, that the Alaska Native students in our region who enter kindergarten are at an academic disadvantage before they even begin school. The results of the Alaska Kindergarten Developmental Profile is one measure indicating that kindergarten students in our district are enrolling in kindergarten with among the lowest levels of academic competency in the state. In this assessment, five basic areas are assessed and in each, our incoming students are among the lowest in the state. Students who are entering Kindergarten in our district often do not know their basic colors, do not know the alphabet, can not to count to five, and have a total vocabulary of under 500 words. This fall, 75% of incoming kindergarten students who were assessed using

AIMSWeb on Letter Sound Fluency (LSF) registered in Tier 3 (far below proficient), and 25% registered in Tier 2 (below proficient). Not one student in this entering group was assessed as Tier 1 (proficient). This lack of school readiness can turn into years of playing academic catch up, in the form of remediation. Students who are not reading at grade level when they enter the 4<sup>th</sup> grade almost never catch up, and are likely to drop out of high school. Until we are able to address the knowledge gap that takes place from birth to 5 years of age, when a student starts kindergarten, our students are not going to show the academic ability that they are capable of.

*Gateway READY!* project targets Alaskan Native students aged 3-5 in the seven communities served by the Alaska Gateway School District. This demographic has been selected because the consortium believes this population has the greatest chance to experience long-term, meaningful positive effects from a locally designed program that is based on best practices. Research confirms that the biggest gains are to be made with children when they are youngest, and that engaging parents in a meaningful way is the very best way to increase a student's growth.

**Parents are often distrustful of schools.** The parents of many of our students have had negative experiences with institutions of education, and there remains a resentment left over from the days when a Native child may have been punished for speaking their own language. Working with these parents early on in a child's life, to re-establish a positive relationship that is built on trust and the mutual expectation that everyone is doing the best they can for our children, is based on the premise that a parent is a child's best and most important teacher.

When it comes to learning, home is where the best start occurs. Young children learn best through active involvement with people they love and trust. They also learn best when repetition is frequent and in a secure environment. *Gateway READY! for Kindergarten* classes encourage parents and teachers to talk, sing, read and play with their children in simple ways that foster essential pre-literacy, pre-math and social-emotional skills. Age-appropriate activities are

designed to start at birth and continue through age five. The curriculum is based on current research and replicates what parents and preschool educators of successful students have done for years. Parents and caregivers choose activities from *READY!* classes to enjoy at home based on their child's personality, abilities and interests, and their family's values and culture. Sessions are held three times per year (Fall, Winter and Spring) and participants choose from one of five classes depending on their child's age. Each class is a 90-minute interactive lesson led by a trained instructor. The targets, materials, activities and tools used in class are the parents to take home and enjoy with their child.

**b. Project Design:**

This project targets Alaska Native students aged 3 through third grade in the seven communities served by the Alaska Gateway School District. This demographic has been selected because the consortium believes this population has the greatest chance to experience long-term, meaningful positive effects from a locally designed program. When reviewing possible programs to model for this project the district discovered that most of the early educational programs are heavily focused on an urban model that depends on larger numbers of students. This project is still based on those best practices, while being designed to be a system that is more responsive to the extremely rural settings that many Alaska Native children are raised in within our region. Parents who take the *Gateway READY!* class will get free tools, which are toys, games, puzzles, books, music and rhymes that help them to guide their child's learning. These learning tools are kept in a special place in the home until the child and parent are ready to play and learn together. Parents are trained to make the learning fun, and to continuously adjust the difficulty level so that their child is successful. *Gateway READY!* lessons emphasize the parents role in adapting all the information to reflect the child's interest and abilities, and be able to incorporate family and

cultural values into the activities. Talking to the child (vocabulary), and rhyming with the child (phonemic awareness), have a big impact too. The project encourages this sort of intentional play between parents and children for at least five minutes a day using one of the many activities that are learned in the *Gateway READY!* program.

The *Gateway READY!* program proposes to modify a successful research based pre-kindergarten program called *READY! For Kindergarten*, to work with our rural Alaska Native students and their families in a way that addresses the stigma attached to the traditional western system of education. *READY! For Kindergarten* currently enrolls approximately 8000 families a year in the family course, and since its introduction in 2003, has been implemented in over 100 school districts across the country and graduated over 50,000 families in those districts.

It is important to note that this project will focus on “families” rather than “parents”. The Native cultures of the Upper Tanana Region where this project will take place typically have a large extended family structure, with grandparents, aunts, uncles, and even siblings frequently intimately involved in the raising and home education of young children. As such, it is vital to the success of any caretaker education program to recognize that more than just the immediate parents of a child need to be involved and actively welcomed and recruited into activities.

By addressing the needs of very young children, this project will provide a solid early foundation for students to build upon throughout their lives rather than trying to address needs during later grades when knowledge gaps and bad habits are already entrenched. By working in collaboration with families, positive habits and a tradition of family participation can be developed early and built upon in later years. There is perhaps no educational goal that is more vital than involving families in their children’s education. Research has shown that having family participation in a child’s education has an effect on their academic success that is up to twice as

great as the families' socioeconomic status. Very intensive family involvement programs have been shown to have effects that are up to ten times the effect of other factors. (Wahlberg, 1984).

In addition to benefiting children, family involvement benefits schools by creating a higher level of support from the family. Increased family involvement leads to feelings of ownership by the family. This, in turn, leads to an increased willingness to support schools. (Williams, 1989).

The primary project goal is to build an early foundation for student academic, social and emotional success. Three primary objectives will be focused on to accomplish these goals.

***Objective 1: Implement the Gateway READY! program for families and students in Pre-K through third grade that will show measured improvements on age level targets.***

Research has shown that early education sets the stage for later success. By focusing on students before they even begin school, then carrying the program through the early elementary, this project will give students a solid foundation to build the rest of their education on.

The *Gateway READY!* project will utilize a modified version of the very successful Kennewick *READY! for Kindergarten* program, which is designed to provide families with effective ways to work with their children to develop basic skills in the home. Although parents are often willing and eager to help with their children's learning, they do not always realize why their involvement is important, or how to go about helping. The *Gateway READY!* program not only gives families the knowledge and tools to work effectively with their children, it also reinforces the fact that a child's first and most important teacher is their family. Building the understanding of the importance of the family in a child's education is a vital component to assuring the continued active involvement of families in the local education process.

The *Gateway READY!* program provides families with a set of tools and manipulatives, and the training on how to use them with their children in the home. Consortium staff will attend a

“train the trainers” course and attend the associated conference yearly, and will then offer the class locally to enrolled families. The main target audience for this course will be families of 3-4 year olds, but families of younger children will be welcomed to participate as well. Research has consistently shown that the single most effective form of parental involvement is a parent working directly with their children on learning activities at home. The fact that this program is being developed for Pre-K students is doubly powerful as the earlier parental involvement begins, the greater the effect of that involvement.

Family participants in the *Gateway READY!* classes meet together three times a year, and focuses on teaching families how to work effectively with their children in fun and engaging ways. They learn to use age appropriate educational games that are designed to develop the language, literacy, and numeric knowledge that students entering Kindergarten need to be successful. Research has shown that schools do not cause skill gaps with students as much as they maintain the deficiencies children enter school with. By working to address the knowledge gap based on established developmental guidelines from the *Gateway READY!* program very early before children actually enter public school, this project will greatly reduce the need for remediation and increase the overall skill level of students entering the district schools, effectively improving the education for all students by increasing the level of instruction for all students.

***Support, Education and Enrichment Opportunities:***

In addition to the *Gateway READY!* class meetings, the consortium will offer monthly educational opportunities for families at each of the project sites. These opportunities will be based on interest surveys conducted with families at each site. Whenever possible, these sessions will be led by local families or community members with expertise in the area. Some anticipated opportunities include: child nutrition; Alaska Native cultural songs, stories, and foods; shared and

group reading times; educational games and songs; and health and safety activities such as swimming lessons for children at the local pool.

***Kindergarten Transition Program:***

Currently, the transition into kindergarten for most students in the district represents a complete change in daily dynamics, and a massive adjustment in terms of learning new routines and behavioral expectations. As a result, there is a great deal of potential academic and social development time that is lost at the beginning of each school year developing these routines and daily rituals. Many children currently enter the district already behind in the skills and knowledge that they will need to be successful in Kindergarten. For example, a child entering Kindergarten without basic knowledge such as recognition of some colors, letters, or numbers is going to be at a disadvantage compared with a child who arrives with these basic skills. These two combined factors create an early learning hurdle for young children, and greatly slow the overall progress of Kindergarten classes since the first tasks must be to establish basic behavioral expectations that allow effective teaching to take place, and remediation of social and developmental skills.

The transition program will be conducted yearly at each site with students scheduled to enter Kindergarten the following year, and will last the final quarter of the school year. For students in the communities of Tok/Tanacross and Tetlin, where Head Start programs exist, students who attend Head Start in the mornings will attend the transition program in the afternoons, and visa versa. Northway and Eagle have preschool programs provided by the school district, and they will operate transition activities for the pre-K students after their morning preschool sessions. In the other communities, where there is no Head Start or preschool, the transition program will run for 2 hours each afternoon. One issue frequently faced in small rural Alaskan communities is that while there are children of preschool age, there are frequently not enough to justify a preschool classroom. This project will address that issue by piloting a program

that integrates preschool and Kindergarten children together during the day. By utilizing aides in this room, children will be taught at their developmental level rather than strictly by age.

This program will increase the overall readiness of children entering Kindergarten, and help put all students on an even footing as they begin their school lives. One of the primary approaches to accomplishing this goal will be to work in collaboration with families to help them develop the skills and resources to work at home with their children to develop the basic skills and knowledge that students are expected to bring with them to the first day of Kindergarten.

By familiarizing students with the routines and social expectations of the schools, it will help ease the anxiety of entering Kindergarten. This will, in turn, help students more quickly and easily transition into the school setting the next fall when they enter Kindergarten. Research has shown that it is often difficult for children to adjust to classrooms where the atmosphere, rules, and routines differ from what they're accustomed to in their preschool setting. (Shore, 1998). This transition program will help acclimatize students to the new atmosphere of Kindergarten so that the difficulties associated with the new setting are both mitigated and worked through, before the child ever sets foot in their Kindergarten class.

***Continuation through early elementary:***

One of the first tasks related to this project will be to modify and implement a culturally responsive skill and competency ladder for children aged 3 years through third grade, using the Learning Targets in *READY!* and the established Alaska Early Learning Guidelines. This tool provides the framework for tracking student progress before they even begin school, allowing issues to be addressed before bad habits become entrenched, and before the child becomes so far behind that return to grade/age level education becomes an insurmountable obstacle. The skill and competency ladder will be utilized to develop a professional development plan for teachers in

grades K-3 in the district. Wherever appropriate, this professional development will be made available to parents through a family strand incorporated into district training days.

**Objective 2: Provide early intervention and support for students who lack the identified skills and competencies using appropriate assessment measures**

Assessments of literacy are crucial, not in order to “give students a grade,” but instead to provide accurate, timely information to teachers, schools, districts, and programs about what children have learned and where they still need support to develop their literacy. A comprehensive assessment system *screens* children to efficiently find out who might be struggling, *diagnoses* the source of those struggles, *monitors* the progress of children as they develop reading and writing skills, and *evaluates* the effectiveness of literacy programs. It is important for educators, parents, and community members to have a clear sense of the purpose of different assessments and to have access to the information they need to properly support children’s literacy. By providing effective support, enrichment, and interventions before a child even begins school, this project will give children a solid foundation that can be built upon as the child progresses through life. The earlier an intervention begins, the more likely that it will be effective. Failing to provide this sort of early intervention can effectively cement a problem in place. When a child enters school with a skills deficiency, it creates learning gaps that likely will remain throughout their schooling because schools have a hard time making up that lost time. Addressing these issues early allows students to enter school on a much more even footing.

Partnering agencies that work directly with children in the target population will collaborate to share data and observations of students to help identify students in need of interventions as early as possible. Once needs are identified, and parent consent is obtained, whichever agency has the best resources for addressing the issue will work to address it in the most

appropriate setting. For example, if a Head Start student is found to be developing a speech or language issue, the school district can provide the student with intervention delivered by a certified expert at the Head Start site during the child's normal attendance time.

Interventions for students in grades K-3 will come in a variety of forms. In some cases these interventions will come in the form of traditional IEPs or 504 plans. In other cases, less formal interventions will be designed collaboratively between project staff and parents.

***Objective 3: Establish a foundation for collaboration between schools and families by building positive relationships.***

One of the most important aspects of this project is the early development of a strong and positive relationship between families and the local schools. Developing an early mutually supportive relationship is particularly important in the project communities since children typically attend the same school site from Kindergarten through graduation. Many residents of our Native communities have already had negative experiences in public schools, and this project seeks to begin the process of repairing that damage by developing trust and positive interpersonal relationships. If a positive relationship can be established early on, then that platform is one that can be built upon over time.

One complaint families often have about school interactions is that they feel they are being preached to rather than treated as partners in the process. The school district recognizes that a child's family is their first and most important teacher, and will use this project to further that goal. One aspect of respecting the families will be to let them decide what training and support opportunities they would like the consortium to make available at the monthly meetings.

An extremely important aspect of the monthly meetings will be more of a social and support thread, as opposed to strictly offering training or education opportunities. This project

recognizes that the role of a parent is often a stressful and even lonely one. By bringing parents together in a forum where they can share their experiences, triumphs and challenges, a situation will be created in which families will help educate and support each other. By including the consortium members in this process the project will serve to form a team rather than the more traditional mechanism of the school district being the “Sage on a stage”, who tells the parents what they need to be doing. This collaborative approach will strengthen the family-school relationship much more than a teacher-learner model. The ultimate result of this positive relationship will be a better learning environment for the child.

The results of Lewis and Henderson’s 1997 study are particularly applicable to the Alaska Native families of the Alaska Gateway communities, who often live in extreme poverty. According to this study, low-income families often become very passionately involved in their children’s education when their school has a policy that helps families to feel supported, encouraged and valued. (Lewis, 1997) Another aspect of the relationship building process between families and the school will be frequent positive family contacts from the project staff. Project staff will contact families at least once a month outside of the scheduled monthly meeting. Contacts will range from phone calls to home visits, with the method being determined by the comfort level and desires of the individual families.

Parents and extended families will be invited to attend district training days as one facet of this project. Training days will be expanded to include family appropriate strands where parents and extended family members can learn side by side with their child’s teacher. This not only helps give families knowledge and skills they might not otherwise be exposed to, it also reinforces that the single most important teacher in a child’s life is their own parents.

**c. Project Management Plan:**

*Objective 1:* Implement the Gateway READY! program for families and students in Pre-K through third grade that will show measured improvements on age level targets.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
1.1 Provide families with Gateway <i>READY!</i> training and supplies. This program gives families the tools necessary to help children develop basic knowledge and skills at home.	Ongoing Yearly. Course meets formally three times a year.	Project Director	Tracking family participation and completion of program.
1.2 Provide regular family support, education, and enrichment opportunities.	Sessions held at each site monthly.	Project Director with Project Staff	Quantifiable family feedback and evaluation surveys.
1.3 Provide three-month transition program for 4-year-old students at school sites. This transition program will not only deliver instruction and skill building exercises to students, but will also help establish the rules and routines students will experience in Kindergarten.	March through May yearly.	District Administration	Compare initial Kindergarten assessment data with past cohorts that did not go through the transition program.
1.4 Provide professional development and standards reviews for PreK-3 <sup>rd</sup> grade teachers and families.	Sessions scheduled through the school year & at district-wide in-service times.	Project Director with District Administration	Training session evaluations; Observations of program staff in classroom.

*Objective 2: Provide early intervention for students who lack the identified age level targets.*

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
2.1 Collaborate with partnering agencies to identify children ages 3-4 in need of early interventions.	Ongoing.	Project Director, District Administration, Special Ed. Director	Track number of interventions identified as necessary.
2.2 Provide early intervention and support to children ages 3-4 identified as in need.	Ongoing.	Project Director Special Ed. Director	Child's performance on evaluations.
2.3 Implement transition and support plans for students with identified needs.	Transition plans developed March-May yearly.	Project Director Special Ed. Director	Track via transition plan monitoring.
2.4 Work in conjunction with Child Find activities to contact families and assess needs	Annually and updated during the school year as needed	Project Director Special Ed. Director	Documentation of services and activities evaluations and feedback forms
2.5 Summer packets of developmentally appropriate enrichment activities and learning "tools" sent out to families.	June, July, and August when school not in session	Project Director School/Head Start Staff	Family feedback surveys Student progress on assessment screening.
2.6 Evaluations and Professional Growth Plans completed for teachers and teachers aides to include student performance assessments	November	Project Director Site Supervisor	Evaluations on file Professional Growth Plan

*Objective 3: Establish the foundation for collaboration between schools and families by building positive trusting relationships.*

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
3.1 Facilitate monthly family social and support meetings.	Monthly meetings.	Project Staff	Meeting log. Family evaluation survey.
3.2 Provide families with the training and support opportunities they identify as important to them. Integrated with inservice. Determined through surveys of families.	Monthly social and support meetings.	Project Staff, District Administration	Track correlation of identified needs with offered opportunities.
3.3 Maintain frequent positive family contacts. These contacts will be utilized to inform families of upcoming educational opportunities, and to help determine what support and social opportunities would be most appreciated by the families.	Bi-monthly contacts with each family of a 3-4 year old in region.	Project Staff	Contact log.
3.4 <i>Gateway READY!</i> classes held fall, winter, and spring	3 times per year, classes held for RFK	Project Staff	Class evaluations Family feedback
3.5 "Welcome to the World!" packets mailed out to families with recent births	Ongoing through the year as births occur	Project Director	Packet evaluation form Feedback from families

**d. Adequacy of Resources:**

The budget was developed to provide high quality services to an estimated 40 preschool age children, with a total of approximately 124 students up to grade 3, incorporating funding requests with in-kind support from RurAL CAP, TCC, and local villages. Resources shared between the partners will provide a substantial amount of in-kind to the project that will enable more students to be positively impacted and lead to future school success.

Training for staff and parents can be costly but cross training across programs will help further spread the resources to have more of an impact on students and their families. The opportunity for staff and parents from different programs to interact also leads to further support of a successful transition program for children ages preK to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and their families. One of the project goals, the development of positive relationships between schools, families, and communities will lend additional support to the project activities and outcomes.

Alaska Gateway School district will partner with Rural Alaska Community Action Program and Tanana Chiefs Head Start to provide a developmentally appropriate preschool transition program. Pilot preschool transition projects will be implemented at three current Head Start/preschool sites, which cover four of our seven school communities. RurAL CAP has committed staff, training, and transportation assistance to the project. TCC Head Start, located in Tetlin, has proposed staff, assistance with screenings, and training resources to the project. The local schools provide in-kind support in the way of school classroom space in Eagle, Tetlin, Northway. Tok/Tanacross Head Start will contract with the school district to transport children from Head Start to the kindergarten classroom at the "big school" (Tok). Transition activities for Tok/Tanacross Head Start will occur in the school, too.

Per the attached budget and budget narrative, funding is requested to provide transition activities for students in pre K through grade 3 in the communities of Alaska Gateway School District. Current Community Assessment information for the Upper Tanana Region was used, along with local input, to determine the current costs of providing services in rural, remote communities. Travel funds are vital to ensure that regular site supervision occurs and professional development opportunities are provided that meet the identified needs of staff and parents. Out of necessity and to monitor costs, experienced in accessing the most cost-effective means of delivering services. Through the strong foundation of community partners that AGSD has established with RurAL CAP and TCC along with the local communities, staff often share certain resources such as travel to help keep operating costs down. Funds have been put into training so that all staff are equipped with the “tools” that they will need to successfully carry out the goals and objectives of the planned transition pilot programs. Careful consideration is given to cost, most effective use of funds, and projected benefits/outcomes to providers and program participants when prioritizing training opportunities.

The budget is planned for a 3-year period to support successful implementation and continuation of services. The second and third year budgets are adjusted for inflation and rising utility costs. The cost-of-living in rural Alaska is significantly higher than in urban areas and even higher than in many communities of the lower 48. For instance, the cost of a gallon of milk ranges from [REDACTED] to [REDACTED]; a loaf of bread from [REDACTED] to [REDACTED]; and a gallon of gas from [REDACTED] to over [REDACTED] in the most remote areas. Health services including a hospital can be anywhere from 210 to 410 miles away by road. The village of Tetlin is not always accessible all year round due to road conditions. Many travel by either the river when it’s thawed or by snowmachine or bush plane in the winter. During spring “break-up”, several of the local village

roads can become impassable due to flooding or thick mud and swampy areas of tundra that make the road virtually impassable.

Therefore, the costs of getting resources out to communities can be significant. Using the local air taxi service for freight is expensive. Not all of the villages have a local store and those that do must charge rates that are much higher. There are no suppliers of early childhood materials that ship free to Alaska. Shipping a roll of paper for classroom projects can often be more than the cost of the paper. Food for nutrition programs is purchased primarily through Anchorage food service vendor or in the hub community of Tok to help save on shipping costs. Staff traveling out to sites more than often will transport food and other needed supplies to the respective communities that we serve.

In summary, the benefits of implementing pre Kindergarten transition services in partnership with the local Head Start and school district preschool programs, along with strong parent support, will lead to long term student success. Numerous studies about the savings to society by programs serving young children including *The Perry Preschool Project*, demonstrate that savings far outweigh program costs and the results will be students better prepared to enter kindergarten and a strong foundation of school and family support. The study indicates that for every dollar spent on early care and education programs, there is a savings of [REDACTED] in future costs to society (criminal justice system, etc.)

Through the development and sustainability of the partnerships for this proposed transition project for preK through grade 3 in the Alaska Gateway School District; resources will be shared in the most effective and efficient manner in order to provide quality, developmentally appropriate transition services for the identified age groups.

**e. Project Evaluation:**

Evaluation will take place as part of a two-pronged process utilizing both an internal evaluator who will do most of the data collection and compilation, and an external evaluator who will conduct final evaluations of program quality and efficacy. This dual approach allows for both evaluations by an individual familiar with the local communities and families, as well as an objective viewpoint. The combination of these two viewpoints will result in a much more complete and accurate assessment of program quality.

Charlie Johanson-Adams, MA, ED. will serve as the external evaluator, and Dr. Ann Millard will conduct the internal evaluation. Dr. Millard holds a Ph.D. in Educational Research and Evaluation Methodology from the University of Colorado, Boulder. Dr. Millard has worked at McREL as acting Director of Evaluation, and for the Anchorage School District as an associate in evaluation. Johanson-Adams holds an M.A. in Early Childhood Special Education and Family studies from the University of N. Colorado, and is an adjunct professor with Prince William Sound Community College and the University of Alaska.

Charlie Johanson-Adams will develop an annual evaluation timeline; design, collect and analyze the staff survey device; collect and analyze online surveys; collect and analyze program testimonials; make an annual evaluation visit of project sites; and write up the annual evaluation to be utilized by the program director in the annual report.

Dr. Millard will conduct an analysis of SBA data, as well as evaluate student social and emotional learning progress. Dr. Millard will complete the collection of necessary data, perform the required analyses, conduct site observations, and write a report of the results. Findings will be utilized to provide a mechanism for continuous assessment of program success, and provide direction for improvements and alterations of the project operations.

Project evaluation will be conducted on an ongoing basis. In addition to the quantitative data obtained through frequent child monitoring, qualitative data will be collected through family and staff surveys and discussions. Both qualitative and quantitative data will be utilized to determine the effectiveness of activities and interventions on an ongoing basis. Where strategies or activities are found to be ineffective, or not as effective as anticipated, adjustments will be made by the project staff and project leadership team to alter or fine-tune strategies to better meet the needs of the children and families.

The evaluation team will develop a comprehensive progress and recommendation report at the end of each progress year. At the end of the 3-year project the project evaluator will develop an overall evaluation of the project that includes adjustments that were made through the life of the project, and lessons learned. This report will contain a comprehensive evaluation of which strategies and methodologies were found to be most effective with the target demographic, and what the overall quantifiable effect of the project was.

Additionally, the final report will contain comprehensive guidance for replicating the project. The replication guidance will include suggestions for improvements and further study and ways, which the project might be adapted to different demographics. The guidance for replication will be published by the Alaska Gateway School District on its' web site, and will be presented at applicable conferences and professional development forums by the district.

The following pages detail specific evaluation activities and strategies that are correlated to the project objectives:

Objective 1: Participating children will show increased performance in academic, social, and emotional assessments

Activity	Task	Date of completion	Who is responsible	Outcome
1.1	Develop a record keeping system for home teaching by families.	October 2012	Project director	All families spend at least 20 minutes daily working with their children
1.2	Develop checklists for parents to document interaction with children. Develop parent satisfaction surveys	October 2012	Project director	All parents use tools and training when working their children
1.3	Administer child assessment at 3 month intervals between the ages of 36 months and 60 months to document development	Quarterly - ages of 36 and 50 months	Parents & project staff	100% of students scoring above cut-off score on 60 month assessment after participation in pre-school
1.4	Administer Kindergarten Developmental Profile at beginning of kindergarten to document student readiness.	At the beginning of entry into kindergarten	Kindergarten staff	100% of students scoring above cut-off scores on Kindergarten Developmental Screening
1.5	Complete and train staff on a local, culturally-responsive hierarchy of child skills and benchmarks for ages 36 months through third grade	December 2012	Project director	100% of project staff trained on district adopted hierarchy.
1.6	Administer student assessments for 1 <sup>st</sup> through 3 <sup>rd</sup> graders to assess progress.	Scheduled state testing windows	District Administration	95% of students at grade level after at least 3 years in program.

Objective 2: Children who score below the cutoff scores on project assessments will participate in intervention activities that result in increased rate of development of the skills needed to successfully participate at grade/age level education.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Task</b>	<b>Date of completion</b>	<b>Who is responsible</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
2.1	Evaluate results of the initial preschool assessment to determine children who scored below cut-off scores on any sub skill	September of the year the students enter the program	Project Director.	List of students who need special intervention
2.2	Provide special interventions for parents to use with students who are not making adequate developmental progress	Ongoing from age 3 through age 5	Parents with consultation from pre-school staff	100% of students increase rate of achievement scores above cut-off on all sub skills by 60 months
2.3	Create and implement transition plans for pre-school students in the pre-school program prior to kindergarten entrance.	Yearly during transition program.	Pre-school staff	100% of students scoring above the cut-off scores on the Kindergarten Developmental Screening
2.4	Evaluate K-3 <sup>rd</sup> graders for at-level performance via teacher assessment and standardized district and state assessments.	Quarterly each year.	Project Staff.	List of students who need intervention to perform at grade level.
2.5	Develop and implement individual intervention plans for K-3 <sup>rd</sup> graders performing below grade level	Quarterly each year.	Project staff.	95% of students performing at or above grade level on assessments.

Objective 3: Parents will be active participants in fostering educational readiness and performance for their children

Activity	Task	Date of completion	Who is responsible	Outcome
3.1	Collect data about attendance and participation at monthly family meetings	Ongoing	Project Staff.	100% attendance of parents and children at monthly meetings
3.2	Collect data about use of materials and training provided at monthly meeting by parents	Ongoing from age 3 through third grade.	Project Staff.	100% of parents report use of materials and training
3.3	Document contacts with parents in addition to the monthly meetings. Administer parent satisfaction survey regarding the effectiveness and relevance of the program.	Bi-monthly contacts Survey completed in spring of each year children and parents are in the program	Project Staff.	100% of parents will participate in bi-monthly contacts and will report satisfaction with the program.
3.4	Document parent attendance at Ready for Kindergarten trainings for all parents in of students ages 3 and 4	Ongoing	Project Staff	100% attendance of parents at ongoing training.

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