# 2003-2004 *No Child Left Behind—Blue Ribbon Schools Program* Cover Sheet

Name of Principal Ms. Nancy Nicholson
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Iditarod Elementary School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 801 N. Wasilla Fishhook
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address)

Wasilla Alaska 99654-6430
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

Tel. ( 907 ) 376-5371 Fax ( 907 ) 373-5931

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I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2, and certify that to the best of my knowledge all information is accurate.

_____ Date_____
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent* Mr. Robert Doyle
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Matanuska-Susitna School District Tel. ( 907 ) 746-9255

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2, and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

_____ Date_____
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson: Mr. Mike Chmielewski
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this package, including the eligibility requirements on page 2, and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

_____ Date_____
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

**Private Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

# PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school has some configuration that includes grades K-12. (Schools with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)

2. The school has not been in school improvement status or been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's adequate yearly progress requirement in the 2003-2004 school year.

3. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, it has foreign language as a part of its core curriculum.

4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 1998.

5. The nominated school or district is not refusing the OCR access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.

6. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if the OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.

7. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school, or the school district as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.

8. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

# PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

**All data are the most recent year available.**

**DISTRICT** (Questions 1-2 not applicable to private schools)

1. Number of schools in the district:
   __18_ Elementary schools
   ___5_ Middle schools
   _____ Junior high schools
   ___8_ High schools
   ___7__ Other (Briefly explain)
   (3 Charter Schools, 1 Correspondence Home Study School, 1 Youth Facility, 1 Safe School, 1 Long Distance Learning)

   __38___ TOTAL

2. District Per Pupil Expenditure: $7,543.16

   Average State Per Pupil Expenditure: $4,169 (Base figure, varies by school district)

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:

   [ ] Urban or large central city
   [ ] Suburban school with characteristics typical of an urban area
   [ ] Suburban
   [x ] Small city or town in a rural area
   [ ] Rural

4. ___3___ Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school.

   _____ If fewer than three years, how long was the previous principal at this school?

5. Number of students enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

| Grade | # of Males | # of Females | Grade Total | | Grade | # of Males | # of Females | Grade Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **K** | 35 | 30 | **65** | | **7** | | | |
| **1** | 36 | 35 | **71** | | **8** | | | |
| **2** | 20 | 27 | **47** | | **9** | | | |
| **3** | 28 | 22 | **50** | | **10** | | | |
| **4** | 25 | 24 | **48** | | **11** | | | |
| **5** | 34 | 30 | **64** | | **12** | | | |
| **Multi** | 9 | 5 | 14 | | | | | |
| **1-22-04** | | | **TOTAL STUDENTS IN THE APPLYING SCHOOL →** | | | | | 359 |

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the students in the school:

| | |
|---|---|
| 75 | % White |
| 2 | % Black or African American |
| 3 | % Hispanic or Latino |
| 1 | % Asian/Pacific Islander |
| 18 | % American Indian/Alaskan Native |
| 1 | %Other |
| **100% Total** | |

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the past year: ___34_____%

(This rate includes the total number of students who transferred to or from different schools between October 1 and the end of the school year, divided by the total number of students in the school as of October 1, multiplied by 100.)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **(1)** | Number of students who transferred ***to*** the school after October 1 until the end of the year. | 66 |
| **(2)** | Number of students who transferred ***from*** the school after October 1 until the end of the year. | 61 |
| **(3)** | Subtotal of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)] | 127 |
| **(4)** | Total number of students in the school as of October 1 | 376.5 |
| **(5)** | Subtotal in row (3) divided by total in row (4) | .337 |
| **(6)** | Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100 | 34% |

8. Limited English Proficient students in the school: ___15___%
___53____Total Number Limited English Proficient
Number of languages represented: ____3____
Specify languages: Russian Ukranian Spanish

9. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: ____47____%

_169_____Total Number Students Who Qualify

If this method does not produce a reasonably accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families or the school does not participate in the federally-supported lunch program, specify a more accurate estimate, tell why the school chose it, and explain how it arrived at this estimate.

10. Students receiving special education services: ___21_____%
___74_____Total Number of Students Served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

| | |
|---|---|
| ____Autism | ____Orthopedic Impairment |
| ____Deafness | _1__Other Health Impaired |
| ____Deaf-Blindness | _15__Specific Learning Disability |
| __1__Hearing Impairment | _55__Speech or Language Impairment |
| __1__Mental Retardation | _1___Traumatic Brain Injury |
| ____Multiple Disabilities | ____Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

11. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

| | **Number of Staff** | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Full-time** | **Part-Time** |
| Administrator(s) | ___1___ | _____ |
| Classroom teachers | __15___ | _____ |
| Special resource teachers/specialists | ___6____ | _____ |
| Paraprofessionals | ___2____ | _____ |
| Support staff | ___5___ | ____4___ |
| Total number | ___33___ | _____ |

12. Average school student-"classroom teacher" ratio: ___24____

13. Show the attendance patterns of teachers and students as a percentage. The student dropout rate is defined by the state. The student drop-off rate is the difference between the number of entering students and the number of exiting students from the same cohort. (From the same cohort, subtract the number of exiting students from the number of entering students; divide that number by the number of entering students; multiply by 100 to get the percentage drop-off rate.) Briefly explain in 100 words or fewer any major discrepancy between the dropout rate and the drop-off rate. (Only middle and high schools need to supply dropout rates and only high schools need to supply drop-off rates.)

| | 2002-2003 | 2001-2002 | 2000-2001 | 1999-2000 | 1998-1999 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Daily student attendance | 93.8% | 93.3% | 93.4% | 93.6% | na |
| Daily teacher attendance | 94.1% | 97.3% | 97.2% | na | na |
| Teacher turnover rate | 20% | 29% | 29% | 35% | 38% |

na=not available

14. **(*High Schools Only)***

# PART III - SUMMARY

Iditarod Elementary School is a K-5 school located in the heart of Wasilla, Alaska. Iditarod is one of 37 schools in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District (MSBSD). MSBSD has a student population of approximately 13,000. The district encompasses more than 24,000 square miles (an area larger than the state of West Virginia); houses Mt. McKinley, the largest mountain in North America; and is home to the internationally famous Iditarod Trail dog mushing competition.

Iditarod was originally built in 1971, but a fire in the early 1980's left only the outside walls intact. Renovations resulted in rooms of various sizes and shapes, with many nooks and crannies, thus giving Iditarod a charm all its own.

Student enrollment is 359 students, almost equally divided between male and female. Class sizes range from 17 to 30 students in 15 classrooms. Iditarod houses a district sponsored at-risk pre-school for 3 and 4 year old children identified by the Child Find program. As a result of the school district's efforts to stabilize boundary exemptions, mobility rate has decreased this year. Iditarod hosts students from a local high school who seek either community service opportunities or school to work transition credit. Iditarod is fortunate in having a diverse population including Alaska Native, Russian, and Ukrainian students.

Iditarod is proud to have achieved the No Child Left Behind requirement of making adequate yearly progress (AYP). To strengthen the achievements of all of students, Iditarod utilizes the services of a resource teacher, English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher, and a Federal Programs Teaching Team which includes a certified teacher.

Title I staff manages before and after school options. Remedial assistance in reading, mathematics and writing are offered on a rotating basis each morning; each afternoon's homework help combined with specific remediation is available. Iditarod has a small, but strong parent teacher association (PTA). The PTA sponsors numerous fundraisers which support projects such as playground equipment, buses for field trips, and cultural events. Iditarod PTA is currently in the second of a five year plan for improving the school playground.

Parent involvement ranges from 90% attendance at student conferences to approximately 2% participation in formal meeting structures. Parent volunteers are in classrooms daily. Staff annually honors parent volunteers with a Volunteer Tea. Last year, 80 parents were honored, representing approximately 30% of school families.

Current academic progress is an expression of the beliefs as articulated by the MSBSD school board, "Higher expectations yield higher results."

# PART IV – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

## Meaning of Assessment Results

The State of Alaska initiated statewide Benchmark examinations in the year 2000. Initial data identified Iditarod Elementary School as the lowest performing school in the district. The Benchmark examination is a criterion referenced test (CRT). A CRT measures students' abilities against a specific standard. The findings revealed the number of students that exceeded or reached the standard and how far away some students were from meeting the standard.

Data revealed the biggest challenge to be in the area of writing. Seventy-eight percent of students taking the test were below proficient or not proficient. Statistics over the next three subsequent iterations demonstrated a significant improvement. More than 150 students took the assessment in its first three iterations. Of those, only one student scored in the Advanced category. In the fourth iteration of the assessment, 8 % (or 5 out of 64) students scored in the Advanced category. Even though the data is cohort specific, Iditarod staff believes programming changes facilitated this trend.

Scores on the mathematics portion of the Benchmark have indicated an upward trend. In 2000, forty-one percent of our students demonstrated struggles with the mathematics portion of the assessment. In 2003, fifteen percent (or 9 out of 64) of students demonstrated struggles with the mathematics portion. Iditarod acknowledges that these are cohort specific students and continues to believe that program changes relative to this data promoted the upward trend.

Figures on the reading section of the 2000 Benchmark indicate 34% are struggling readers. In 2003, only 12% (or 7 out of 64 students) were struggling readers. The district move to a consistent, district wide reading series has stabilized Iditarod's reading program.

These scores indicate that reading is not an issue which significantly impacts the writing or mathematics programs. However, improving achievement in writing may have positively influenced student performance in mathematics.

The review of 2003 data indicates that out of 64 students only 1 student is not proficient in reading; 2 students are not proficient in mathematics; and 2 students are not proficient in writing. When the data is further reduced, less than 5 students out of 64 students are significantly at risk.

Alaska's formula for computing AYP combines the Benchmark test data with Terra Nova test data. When the formula was applied to Iditarod's performance, the result was AYP. An examination of the disaggregated data indicated two areas of concentration. Two subgroups require monitoring in the area of language (reading and writing).

Currently, Iditarod Elementary School's achievement ranks among the top third of the district's elementary schools' performance.

# PART IV – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

**School Use of Data**

Assessment data energized Iditarod staff to implement a school-wide action plan for improving academic and instructional programs with an emphasis on the writing process.
First, writing practice across the curriculum was examined. This examination revealed that minimal time was given to the writing process in any curricular area. As little as 2% of planned academic time was dedicated to teaching or engaging in the writing process. As a result of this self-study, a consultant was engaged to move the staff from data to more effective practice. This consultant has provided on-going, on-site professional development to support the Six Trait Writing model.

Mathematics figures indicated about 40% of Iditarod's students were having difficulty in math. A survey of building math practice found five different mathematics programs in place. A multi-faceted approached was needed: continue consistency in reading, implement consistency in mathematics, and increase expectations in writing while establishing consistency in that curricular area. MSBSD Department of Instruction suggested three programs originating from the University of Chicago Mathematics Project. Of these three programs only one of the selections, Everyday Math, had been identified as a promising program by the USDOE Mathematics Expert Panel. Everyday Math program was selected. Iditarod has a staff member who acts as an on-site liaison with the Everyday Math Company to provide a direct point of contact for questions and concerns.

Iditarod's goal is to maintain the current level of reading proficiency while increasing the level of proficiency in writing and math. The Department of Instruction used a district wide committee selection process to provide a consistent, stable reading framework. Working groups have been established for each curricular area to provide support and use data to drive curricular choices, professional development choices and resource support choices.

**Parent and Community Involvement**

Assessment data is communicated to parents through a variety of media and school wide efforts. All parents are given results of assessments during parent – teacher conferences in November and April. If parents are unable to attend these conferences, teachers set up additional times to ensure all data is communicated. The local newspaper prints school wide data for community members. At the end of each year, a report card to the public is maintained on the State of Alaska's web site www.eed.state.ak.us . This information is accessible on the state Department of Education and Early Development. With the assistance of the district Management Information Systems department, schools will soon be able to place allowable student information on MSBSD's web site. At the same time, password accessible only information will be available to parents allowing access to their child's data.

# PART IV – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

**Sharing Our Success**

Iditarod Elementary School will share its success through a variety of means. The primary avenue will be to post successes on both district web site www.msb.matsuk12.us and school web site www.ide.ak.us . At the end of the year, successes will be outlined in our Report Card to the Public. The Report Card to the Public will be placed on the State of Alaska Department of Education and Early Development web site. Our local newspaper has a section devoted to school activities. This past year, all schools AYP status was published as it became available.

Iditarod's parent community provides grass roots communication. Successes are shared through community voices. The PTA publishes a monthly newsletter which ensures all families are kept informed of school news. Bi-weekly school newsletters provide messages to the community. This newsletter keeps families apprised of activities and triumphs.

# PART V – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

**The School's Curriculum**

Iditarod Elementary School has spent the last few years increasing the academic rigor of the curriculum. Iditarod's reading curriculum is framed around the district-adopted Harcourt Reading Series. A process that included teams of teachers from across the district selected four options from a variety of offerings. These options were then studied in depth for alignment with district goals and state standards. The district web site contains grade level outcomes for easy access by staff members and parent community.

This is the third year of a phased implementation of the Everyday Mathematics Program. Everyday Math is a research-based program from the University of Chicago Mathematics Project. At the time of selection, Everyday Math had been identified as a promising program which meets all criteria, and one of two bonus criteria selected by an expert math panel. Implementation has included professional development which has been promulgated in conjunction with other schools in the school district. The professional development has been offered every year for the past three years. This professional development is designed to maintain and increase the confidence and expertise of staff. The district web site contains grade level outcomes for easy access to staff members and community.

The Iditarod writing program has changed significantly over the past several years. Using Alaska Content and Performance Standards and district criteria, Iditarod has developed a writing program using the Six Trait Writing Model. The program has included professional development, release time for scoring and utilizing test scores to drive classroom instruction. Professional development has included opportunities for academic growth for staff as well as students. The district web site contains grade level outcomes for easy access by staff members and community.

Science, health, and social studies are also taught at each grade level. Specific standards can be found on the district web site relative to the aforementioned content areas. In the academic year 2006-2007, science will become an area requiring mandated assessment. In preparation, a school team is surveying current practices in order that appropriate professional development can be designed and resources can be allocated.

## Reading Program

Iditarod's reading program begins in kindergarten with the Harcourt Reading Series framework supplemented with Phonemic Awareness activities, literature-based materials, Wright Group take home materials and Rigby take home materials. This approach addresses the many styles of early learners. Build-up readers are initiated in the second semester in order for kindergarten students to begin to actively participate in the reading process both at home and at school. In first grade, Harcourt framework is continued and supplemented with Action Reading, Saxon Phonics, Wright Group materials and a leveled library. In second and third grade, Harcourt framework is supplemented with Saxon Phonics, Accelerated Reader books and a leveled library. Fourth and fifth grades maintain the Harcourt framework and may add as appropriate supplement with Harcourt Literature Links, Accelerated Reader books, and Battle of the Books selections. Each classroom maintains a library of books selected by the teacher over the years. It also contains treasured books donated by class members, as well as books written by class members. Harcourt was adopted by the school district in the 2000-2001 academic year.

One Iditarod staff member is endorsed in the area of Reading and is in the process of receiving a master's degree. Her master's thesis is a study of the possible correlation of curriculum based measurement (CBM) with the AGS GRADE (Group Reading Achievement Diagnostic Evaluation). This teacher leads the school's reading team and has been instrumental in this year's efforts to initiate fluency testing as part of the school wide assessment program. Iditarod uses the AGS GRADE test in the fall and spring to assess our students. With the administration of the assessment in May 2004 we will have three years of consistent reading data.

## One Other Curriculum Description

About three years ago, the Department of Instruction studied its overall mathematics performance as a district. The result was an offering of three programs developed by the University of Chicago Mathematics Project. Iditarod chose the Everyday Mathematics Program. Everyday Math was considered a promising program. This meant it met all four criteria and one of two bonus criteria set by the United States Office of Education Expert Math Panel. Everyday Math is a spiraling curriculum which serves our student demographics well. Our student population is transient and may lose valuable skill development opportunities due to frequent episodes of mobility. A spiraling curriculum offers these students the opportunity to capture at various points skills, which in more linear curriculums would be lost to them. The Everyday Math curriculum also offers a set of rigorous problem-solving activities that promote active participation. It has been noted that there is a lack of a computational component. Teachers may choose to supplement the Everyday Math curriculum with a variety of computational materials. Our teachers understand that one program is not able to meet all of the needs of every child all of the time. With this in mind, professional development has been offered each year of the

implementation to address supplemental needs and solutions. This has led to a more balanced approach to our mathematical program. An increase has been noted on the Alaska State Benchmark Exam in the area of mathematics. Thirty percent more third grade students were proficient or advanced on the last administration of the test.

## Improving Student Learning

In order to improve student learning our staff members have designed several pivotal programs. One is a program called the Phonemic Awareness Learning Strategies (PALS). In this program, three teachers arrive one-half hour before the regular start of the teacher day. Participating students receive extra assistance that has been identified by the Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skill (DIBELS). This program lasts for three months: February, March and April. Our intermediate teachers formed teams last year in order to facilitate the transition to middle school. Students have one teacher for math, science and health; and one teacher for language arts and social studies. This project has increased the success of our students in entering middle school. We have a grade four to grade five looping class. The class is in its grade five year at this time. Our English Language Learner program groups students in a variety of settings to increase opportunities for success. The teacher uses small group instruction and inclusion in the primary grades, with small group and more individualized assistance for intermediate students.

Parents are an integral part of the success of our students. Many parents read with students, assist with assessments such as spelling tests and word identification exercises and math activities. Most teachers use a daily planner or calendar to ensure daily communication between home and school. Student achievement has increased significantly with the initiation of this part of our educational program.

We have been fortunate to acquire the services of a teacher with certification in English as a Second Language. This has allowed us to employ several models of learning for this population, including inclusive settings, small group opportunities, and individualized sessions for monolingual students. This has reduced the distress of assessment and increased participation in the educational process.

## Professional Development Program

Our staff members participate in various training and educational opportunities in order to acquire more specialized skill and knowledge to engage more learners in the educational process. In the last three years our teachers have taken instruction for differentiated instruction. This instruction was applied this year in a new innovative multi-age classroom for struggling students in grades 2-3-4. Many of our teachers have taken Harry Wong's instruction on *How to be an Effective Teacher.* Our district's Human Resources Department offers this option about every other year. Our school has experienced a rise in our English Language Learner population. With the assistance of our Federal Programs Office we were able to participate in a multi-day seminar with Adrienne Herrell, who demonstrated effective methods for improving the educational experience and achievement of English Language Learners. Each grade level had the opportunity for Dr. Herrell to model a lesson in their classrooms and a breakout session following the lesson to ask questions and clarify technique.

## APPENDIX A

### FORMAT FOR STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Grade____3____

Test: Alaska Benchmark Examination

Edition/publication year: 2001 (1st Printing) Publisher: Alaska Department of Education

Reading

| | 2002-2003 | 2001-2002 | 2000-2001 | 1999-2000 | 1998-1999 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Testing month - March | | | | | |
| **SCHOOL SCORES: Percent of students** | | | | | |
| At or above not proficient | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | |
| At or above below proficient | 98 | 92 | 95 | 86 | |
| At or above proficient | 88 | 83 | 83 | 66 | |
| At or above advanced | 24 | 20 | 21 | 8 | |
| Number of students tested | 64 | 59 | NA | NA | |
| Percent of total students tested | 100% | 100% | NA | NA | |
| Number of students excluded | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Percent of students excluded | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| | | | | | |

NA = Not Available

Mathematics

| | 2002-2003 | 2001-2002 | 2000-2001 | 1999-2000 | 1998-1999 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Testing month - March | | | | | |
| **SCHOOL SCORES: Percent of students** | | | | | |
| At or above not proficient | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | |
| At or above below proficient | 97 | 88 | 94 | 89 | |
| At or above proficient | 85 | 72 | 66 | 59 | |
| At or above advanced | 38 | 29 | 31 | 15 | |
| Number of students tested | 64 | 59 | NA | NA | |
| Percent of total students tested | 100% | 100% | NA | NA | |
| Number of students excluded | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Percent of students excluded | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| | | | | | |

NA = Not Available

# Appendix B

**Alaska Statewide Benchmark Examination – Grade 3***

AP = Advanced Proficient
Prof = Proficient
BP = Below Proficient
NP = Not Proficient

| | AP 2000 | AP 2001 | AP 2002 | AP 2003 | | Prof 2000 | Prof 2001 | Prof 2002 | Prof 2003 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| R | 8% | 21% | 20% | 24% | | 58% | 62% | 63% | 64% |
| W | 0% | 2% | 0% | 8% | | 22% | 60% | 55% | 58% |
| M | 15% | 31% | 29% | 38% | | 44% | 35% | 43% | 47% |

| | BP 2000 | BP 2001 | BP 2002 | BP 2003 | | NP 2000 | NP 2001 | NP 2002 | NP 2003 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| R | 20% | 12% | 9% | 10% | | 14% | 5% | 8% | 2% |
| W | 63% | 31% | 38% | 31% | | 15% | 8% | 8% | 3% |
| M | 30% | 27% | 15% | 12% | | 11% | 6% | 12% | 3% |