

To: Kuspuk School District School Board
From: Emily Vanderpool, Curriculum and Instruction
Re: Board Meeting Report
Meeting Date: December 2019

Current 1003a School Improvement Grant

Our school improvement plans have been put into action at all sites. Our State Support Coaches have been helping sites with implementation, progress monitoring and assessment. I received a very good email last week from our coach in Kalskag who had this to say:

*"I always love to send good news, and so this week I'm sending you the class PM graph from 1st grade in Kalskag for NWF on DIBELS. You will see that **every single student** has PM scores that are following a trend line to get to the target by the end of the year. There are a few that are not on trend for NWF CLS, but in each case they are performing well on NWF word reading (the bottom graph for each student.) There are several students in the class that began the year **QUITE** low, and so their progress on this measure is truly awesome!"*

As part of our strategic goal to increase reading skills, we have recruited Kalskag's support coach to provide district-wide Professional Development every week for the next 6 weeks, to cover how to teach foundational reading skills/phonics for K-5 teachers. After each session teachers are given "homework" to try out in their own classroom. The support coach has reported that teachers are doing their homework and reporting back to her. Using the strategies & practices with the students is the best way for teachers to learn the skills, and make it part of their instructional routines. We are very lucky to have Carol Thompson assigned to our district. In Crooked Creek, after spending months gathering data, and researching evidence-based programs, the staff has decided to purchase the Lexia program with school improvement funds to target individual literacy needs of each student. A 2 year license was purchased and it will be a good trial to see if the program might be useful for other schools in the district.

Zackar Levi Elementary has decided to purchase the MyOn reader program as part of their school improvement plan—the company has given us permission to use the program district-wide for no additional charge. Richard Spencer provided training on the program during the October in-service, and it became available to all teachers on December 1st. It is a research-based reading program that offers students a variety of high-interest digital texts including books, articles, first-hand documents, non-fiction texts, poetry, etc. These programs are all supplemental to our core curriculum. After-school tutoring has also begun at many of our schools.

1003a School Improvement Grant Planning

This year the School Improvement Grants are being done slightly different at the state level. As usual, eligible schools must apply for the grant money, but this year we were allowed to submit a partial grant for "planning activities" prior to the March 15th deadline. By March 15th, we will be required to submit an updated grant for the entire amount (\$60,000 per CSI school and \$35,000 per TSI school). On November 15th, following collaboration with principals, I submitted a preliminary grant proposal for approximately \$37,000 (out of a possible \$250,000 we will apply for by March 1st) to be used for planning activities. These activities include stipends for school improvement teams to hold community meetings, gather stakeholder input, analyze data, and research evidence-based interventions. It would also provide funding for a team of teachers and administrators to attend the Response to Intervention conference in Anchorage, where we will hold our own School Improvement planning meeting a day prior to the conference to develop our school improvement plans based on the input we've gathered, research, and data analysis. The meeting in Anchorage will be co-facilitated by State Support Coach, Pat McDonald and myself. After the meeting, School Improvement Teams at JJSS, AJSHS, GMSHS, JOGES, and ZLES will have approximately a month and half to finish writing their school improvement plans, and do any additional research before the

March 15th deadline. All Kuspuk schools will create a School Improvement Plan, however the five designated schools are required to submit their plans, with a budget to the state for grant funding. This money is renewable yearly for qualifying schools.

Alaska Safe Children's Act & Curriculum Writing

As some of you may know, the Alaska Safe Children's Act went into effect June 30th, 2017. The Act is a combination of two laws in Alaska State Statute (also known as Erin and Bree's Law):

AS 14.30.355 (Erin's Law) requires that the governing body of each school district adopt and implement a policy, establish a training program for employees and students, and provide parental notices relating to sexual abuse and sexual assault awareness and prevention for students enrolled in grades kindergarten through twelve.

AS 14.30.356 (Bree's Law) requires that the governing body of each school district shall adopt and implement a policy, establish a training program for employees and students, and provide parental notices relating to dating violence and abuse in grades seven through twelve. A training program adopted under this section must emphasize prevention and awareness.

Over the past two years the district has taken steps to be compliant with the law. We have provided training for staff, and adopted Curriculum to meet the requirements. We will continue to look at our policies to make sure they are in alignment with the laws, and continue seeking ways to better prepare our staff for teaching these sensitive topics. A year ago I was asked to participate on a state-level curriculum writing committee. The department of school health has been tasked by the state to create our own Alaska state curriculum that meets the requirements of the Act. I am serving as 1 of 2 rural curriculum consultants to both help write & design the curriculum, as well as make sure the end product is culturally relevant and meets the needs of our students. I'm excited that we are nearly finished with the grade 7-9 materials, which should be ready for districts next fall.

Battle of the Books

We had our first round of practice battles the week of November 15th. Students from Kalskag, Aniak, Sleetmute, and Crooked Creek participated with teams from Kindergarten through 6th grade. We had 14 teams (Over 40 students) participate in the K-2 practice battle alone! This was the first year that K-2 students in Crooked Creek have participated in over 8 years, so that was exciting! We will likely have one more round of practice battles before Christmas to help us prepare for the district battle in February.

District Benchmark Testing

We are currently in the process of completing assessments for our mid-year benchmark window. Between December 2nd and 20th all students in the District will take the STAR reading & math tests, and all K-5 students will be given the DIBELS mid-year benchmark assessment. The data gathered will be analyzed at the January in-service to see what progress students are making, if we are meeting growth targets, and to help us determine where we need to make changes. Teachers will also use the growth data for planning instructional groups, and diagnosing needed interventions.

Classroom Visits

I have begun making my second round of classroom visits. During these visits I will be observing teacher's instructional practices, student engagement, evidence of learning, and cross-referencing with teacher lesson plans to see where I might be able to offer instructional assistance or provide further training. I hope to make it to as many classrooms as possible before the end of the semester. I'm really hoping we will be able to travel with the school plane again soon!