

Akiak 2007-2008



Who are we? A brief description.

We are diverse group of teachers who have come together to teach and learn in a small Yup'ik village. We have 100 students who are dominantly Yup'ik and have limited English proficiency.

What was the focus of your AEIN work?

- We are exploring the idea of building a learning community of administration and staff (concurrent staff development).
- We desire to create a high performing learning community

Professional Development	Concurrent Staff Development
PD is extra. This takes me away from my work	PD is my work and it helps me achieve my aspiration for my students
UAA (resource) is the expert and Akiak needs my help	We can learn together
This project is <u>the</u> solution to our challenges	These are tools for us to discover what works for our students
The project will "fix" teachers	This project will "support" administrators and teachers in creating their own solutions
Fly in...fly out	Building capacity of administrator and teachers

What was your process or strategy? (e.g. study group, peer observation, retreat, ongoing discussions about a topic)

The central assumptions behind our initiative are:

- Teachers have their own classroom which reinforces their independence rather than increasing cooperation and collaboration.
- The skills teachers need to create learning strategies to promote success for all students requires empathy, understanding, cooperation and creativity.
- Our collective failure to meet the needs of our students comes not from our lack caring or incompetence but our unwillingness at times to change our teaching styles and share successes and challenges with colleagues.

What are learning organizational tools?

- Learning frameworks which increase our ability to understand our mental models (beliefs and assumptions) and the mental models of others (e.g. students, colleagues, parents). These help us understand how we present ourselves and how we perceive others.

What are the high performing learning organizational tools that we are learning and practicing?

- Learning edge; Comfort Zone; Dialogue; Deep Listening; Ladder of Inference; Inquiry; Advocacy

Structure

- Participating in five video conferences (90 minutes) and face to face visits to start and conclude the project.
- Engaging in practice with tools learned between sessions.



What are you learning and how do you know?

These are selected comments from learning journals completed after each session:

- "Learning community is a way to "construct knowledge"—a way to interchange ideas."
- "When the students have a difficult time in class, it could be due to being out of their comfort zone in learning."
- "If you never say it or write it down, how can you expect anybody to know or help?"
- "Wow- I think many teachers including myself are programmed or more inclined to be good at discussions and not as proficient at dialogue - myself and this staff included."
- "Modeling is extremely important for our students to understand what we want from them as teachers."

What further questions does your work pose? What are you excited to pursue more deeply?

How do you shift from a community of discussioners to one of dialoguers?

Who has been involved, what resources have you used?

Akiak teachers, support staff, and Dr. Micah Fierstein from UAA are team members