

# Student Responsibility, Sitka High School Spring '09

Sitka High School is a connected, compassionate, positive, and diverse learning community with a declining student population of approx. 350 students, grades 9-12, located in Sitka Alaska (southeast panhandle).



Last year we established a school wide focus to improve student responsibility. The intent was that student achievement will improve as students show more commitment to three responsibility goals:

- Courtesy and Respect
- Work Ethic
- Participation

We held, and are still participating, in small and large group collaborative discussions sharing assignments, rubrics, student work, etc.

Our model has prompted focus, discussion, and consequently action on what we are doing to encourage student responsibility, in hopes that student performance, both in and out of the “academic realm,” increase. We have had numerous meetings discussing what we are doing and what successes we are having.

Teachers/departments have met and shared with everyone what successes they have had both in and out of the classroom with students, what techniques they have used to encourage student responsibility, and what perceived ramifications these efforts have had on student successes. Some of the “bars” included increased homework completion, increase/decrease in required lab participation, overall classroom participation, office referral data, and discussion and formulation of data collection in general.

It would seem that the process itself had as much of an impact as the plan/expectations. The process prompts open and honest discussions about what is working in classes, as well as what is not working in class, in relation to student responsibility.

We do not have direct department chairs at SHS, but in each and every department, there are educators that have taken the lead to streamline and keep the group focused, encourage peers to celebrate successes openly with everyone, and lead tough discussions on what needs to be closely looked at, even if it means changing something that has been institutionalized. It is interesting that schools across the network are experiencing the same challenges.

