



Southwest Region School District

Indian Policy & Procedures

Responses to Parental, Community Member, and Tribal Council Feedback

January 16, 2018

Dear Parent,

Southwest Region School District (SWRSD) values feedback from parents, community members, and tribal organizations. The district is working on increasing collaboration with parents and tribal organizations as educational programs continue to progress and develop. Communication is a key component to having more collaborative opportunities between SWRSD and parents. It is important that you have access to information about educational programs and have the opportunity to ask questions, make comments, and provide suggestions.

In December, a letter was sent out about accessing program information, applications, school/district plans, and evaluations. That letter also outlined the various methods to provide comments or ask questions. In addition, each year there is a public meeting at each of our schools outlining the educational programs, curriculum resources, and individual school plans. SWRSD collected the questions and comments from those meetings and the responses are below.

Date of Public Meetings

New Stuyahok – September 19, 2017

Koliganek – September 11, 2017

Twin Hills – October 4, 2017

Togiak – September 21, 2017

Manokotak – November 2, 2017

Aleknagik – November 14, 2017

Ekwok – September 19, 2017

Question 1 – Who decides what is taught during Eweek (Exploration Week)?

Response 1 – Student interest, teacher strengths and skillset, and local expertise are all used to determine Eweek courses. The district office instructional department approves Eweek courses.

Question 2 - Can we include infant care, home economics, life skills, and accounting in Eweek courses?

Response 2 – There are many home economics and life skills courses that have been approved and are being taught during Eweek? Infant care, accounting, and other courses could be offered if there is someone with the skillset to teach the course including outside experts if available.

Question 3 – Is there a replacement for the Accelerated Reader program?

Response 3 – SWRSD has not replaced Accelerated Readers. Some schools are using a free program called Book Adventure as a substitute to Accelerated Reader.



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Question 4 – Has the district looked into Yup'ik immersion in the elementary?

Response 4 – SWRSD has had discussions regarding a Yup'ik immersion program in the elementary, but have lacked the resources for an immersion program.

Question 5 – When was the Saxon math program replaced by the GoMath program? How effective has this change been?

Response 5 – Saxon math was replaced by GoMath in the fall of 2014 to make sure that the Alaska State Standards adopted in 2012 were being addressed by the mathematics curriculum. In regards to the effectiveness of the program, it is difficult to completely evaluate the effectiveness of the GoMath program because it is still fairly new in the implementation phase. In addition, the state assessment has been changed or cancelled for several years running and the norms of the MAP assessment were recently updated, which makes it difficult to compare to past programs. SWRSD is confident that the GoMath program addresses the more challenging Alaska State Standards.

Question 6 – The curriculum resources for the Yup'ik Studies program was missing from the curriculum guide. What are the curriculum resources being used?

Response 6 – see the end of the letter.

Question 7 – Is the coordination of cultural activities with Eweek a possibility so community planned activities do not conflict with the school?

Response 7 – Yes, the schedule for the Eweeks is determined during the calendar approval process during the previous year. Organizations are encouraged to work with the local schools to coordinate cultural activities during Eweeks. It is critical to plan ahead so that the courses can meet the approval timelines.

Question 8 – Is it possible for SWRSD to partner with other districts, like Lower Kuskokwim School District, for the Yup'ik Studies program to save money?

Question 8 – In the past, SWRSD has utilized some of the materials developed by LKSD and continues to utilize LKSD developed materials that are adapted to fit the needs of our students. It is exciting that the district has finally arrive at a point where we can say our materials represent our region. Resources are developing materials that our Yup'ik Studies instructional staff are proud of and able to teach.

Question 9 – Is it possible to get books that are in Yup'ik and English for elementary students to read?

Response 9 – The district is currently utilizing local Yup'ik legends in the kindergarten through second grade curriculum. There is also a poster series which represents our chants and songs. The goal is to develop books for our younger students but it is important to remember that the focus is on “talk” first then read and write. So currently, the curriculum for grades kindergarten through sixth grade is “talk” first.



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Question 10 – Is the curriculum meeting the requirements of the new state exam known as PEAKS?

Response 10 – The district adopted curriculum is aligned to the Alaska State Standards. The PEAKS test assesses performance on those standards. The district is confident that the curriculum meets those standards. The district recognizes that there is a lot of room for improvement on the PEAKS assessment and is working to address those improvement areas.

Comment 1 – Concern about teacher turnover at the secondary level.

Response 1 – SWRSD has the same concern and understands this is a challenge that is not unique to our schools and communities. The district continues to support new staff by offering an mentorship programs and access to professional development.

Comment 2 – Student governments should go to local government/tribal meetings and maybe run a CSC or council meeting.

Response 2 – SWRSD believes this would be a valuable experience and encourages tribal organizations to work with their local school on this effort.

Comment 3 – Students should participate in a science fair.

Response 3 – The idea of a science fair is great. This is something that the district has supported in the past. It would be great to contact your local school to see what options are available for a science fair and how parents and community members could volunteer.

Yup'ik Studies Curriculum Resources

- SWRSD published books include: Pal'aq, Agnucinraanuk Kangipluk-Illu, Atkiq
- Materials Published from the Indigenous Language Institute: How Do I Say..., The Moray Language Center: Total Immersion Plus for Adults (The Student's Handbook), Learning Language at Super Fast Speed: Methodology and Strategies, Developing Culturally Relevant Language Immersion Teaching Guides, Activities and Assessments., etc.
- The Alaska Native Knowledge Website
- Curriculum/Bilingual Department: Lower Kuskokwim School District: Numerous Materials.
- Alaska Native Language Center – University of Alaska Fairbanks: Yup'ik Dictionary by Steven A Jacobson, A Practical Grammar of the Central Alaskan Yup'ik Eskimo Language by Steven A. Jacobson and numerous other materials.
- A number of materials edited by Ann Fienup-Riordan including
 - The Living Tradition of Yup'ik Masks: Agayuliyararput Our Way of Making Prayer



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- Boundaries and Passages: Rule and Ritual in Yup'ik Eskimo Oral Tradition
- Eskimo Essays: Yup'ik Lives and how We See Them
- Wise Words of the Yup'ik People: We Talk to You because We Love You
- Yuungnaqpiallerput/The Way We Genuinely Live
- Words of the Real People: Alaska Native Literature in Translation
- Hunting Tradition; Yup'ik Elders at the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin
- Where the Ego Began and Other Oral Traditions from Southwest Alaska
Recorded by Hans Himmelheber
- Yup'ik Words of Wisdom: Yupiit Qanruyatai
- Ellavut: Our Yup'ik Worls and Weather: Continuity and Change on the
Bering Sea Coast
- Anguyiim Nalliini/Time of Warring: The History of Bow and Arrow Warfare
in Southwest Alaska
- The Real People and the Children of Thunder: The Yup'ik Eskimo Encounter
with Moravian Missionaires John and Edith Kilbuck
- Freeze Frame: Alaska Eskimos in the Movies
- Agayuliyararput/Our Way of Making Praer: Kegginaqut, Kangiit-Llu/Yup'ik
Masks and the Stories They Tell
- Yup'ik Words of Wisdom: Yupitt Qanruytait

There are a number of opportunities for parents to provide comments or ask questions including but not limited to the following:

- Public comment section of SWRSD School Board meetings
- Public comment section at local CSC meetings
- Complete questionnaire's or feedback forms
- Participate in the Parent Advisory Committee
- Contact your local principal
- Provide comment by email at feedback@swrsd.org

You can access educational program resources at www.swrsd.org under the Parent Information tab.

If you are interested in being a member of a Parent Advisory Committee, please contact Jon Clouse

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Esther Ilutsik
Director of Yup'ik Studies

David Piazza
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