



# Alaska School SPOTLIGHT

## Kuspuk School District

September 2023

*This month DEED is highlighting Kuspuk School District. Take a look at their educator commitment to professional development, having an employee recognized as a 2023 Science of Reading Ambassador, and their journey toward reading proficiency.*

Kuspuk School District has intentional and specific goals regarding improved literacy across the district. We would like to highlight two of those main goals and how we are making progress toward meeting those goals. First, by May 2021, and continuing for each school year through 2025, seven Kuspuk Elementary Schools will hold eight monthly family engagement meetings annually with a literacy focus and 50% parent attendance. Next, by May 2025, 100% of teachers assigned to K-5 classrooms will be proficient in teaching foundational skills in reading and designing interventions to match student needs. You can see that our literacy goals started before the Alaska Reads Act, and how we've been able to access DEED opportunities to enhance and complement our overarching literacy goals. We are pleased to already be showing success!



*October Family Literacy Night at Crow Village Sam School*

Our first and earliest literacy goal was to improve family engagement by hosting Family Literacy Nights on a regular and consistent basis. Year 1-2 were post-covid and it was still quite a struggle to get parents into the schools. Year 3 proved different. Thanks to dedicated staff, a lot of hard work, creativity, and out of the box literacy events, we couldn't have been more excited to have hit a 65% average attendance mark! Going into Year 4, we saw another 10% improvement and closed out that year with a 75% average attendance for all Family Literacy Nights. Embedded in the family engagement plan were also two annual at-home reading challenges related to regional activities, both based on sled dog races. One was based on the Kuskokwim 300, called the KuskoRead 300. The other was

IditaRead, based on the Iditarod. This year we hope to exceed our 75% highest average attendance and our hope is that family engagement will become a natural and expected part of nurturing our young readers.

Simultaneously, we've focused on that second big goal for all K-5 teachers to have the knowledge and skills for teaching the foundational skills that readers need to be proficient, including the ability to utilize data to design an intervention process that meets students needs. A needs assessment was conducted to focus on professional development and literacy instructional needs were identified. A subgoal was set that all K-5 teachers would engage in Science of Reading aligned pro-



professional development. This brought on a Literacy Matrix Course through the University of Florida and LETRS Training, as well as attendance at The Reading League Annual Conference and the Alaska Science of Reading Symposium.

Our new learning and continued professional development clearly helped us identify the need for a new core curriculum. We applied for the DEED ELA Core Literacy Grant and were successful applicants. Receiving this grant award assisted with a shift in instructional practices and the adoption of a new SoR aligned curriculum, Amplify CKLA. This is what we will be implementing over the course of this school year. With knowledge learned during professional development we were also able to streamline our Intervention program options for teachers, with only evidence-based programs that align with the Science of Reading.

With a focus on future sustainability, we really wanted to develop our own Model Teachers, implementing the program where master teachers are given additional training in areas of need, then open their classrooms for other teachers to observe. One of these teachers is McKerwin Acdal of Crow Village Sam School, who also was nominated and chosen as an Alaska Reading Ambassador at the 2023 Alaska Science of Reading Symposium for his amazing work at the classroom level and immense training he had committed to.



*McKerwin Acdal is engaging and motivating students to participate in the IditaRead at-home reading challenge.*



*Joseph S. & Olinga Gregory Elementary School  
Family Literacy Night*

Pre- and post-training surveys are showing that teachers are increasing efficacy in teaching foundational reading skills each year. We did not stop there! In order to do really important work on the Tiered interventions piece, we became one of DEED's 18 RTI/MTSS Refresh Districts through an intense two-year grant program. A team of four (Superintendent, Curriculum Director, Principal, and teacher) worked through the process the first year of the grant program. This assisted us with revising our RTI/MTSS plans. We are proud to have a specifically designed K-3 MTSS Plan based on the Science of Reading evidence-based practices.

It will be exciting to see the growth over the course of this school year. It has been helpful to enhance our work toward district goals through the free DEED professional development, ELA Grant, RTI/MTSS Refresh, and Science of Reading Symposium. We look forward to continuing the hard work it takes to provide evidence-based reading instruction to our emerging readers that will help work toward reading proficiency for all!

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Has your school proven great success increasing student reading proficiency utilizing evidence-based curriculum and materials? Do you have something you are really excited about as an outcome of a shift to Science of Reading best practices? We are interested in hearing what amazing things are happening in your school to positively impact student reading proficiency and achievement. Please submit your story to the e-mail below. You may be chosen as the next school spotlight in a future edition of the Alaska Reading Newsletter!

Please e-mail your submissions or questions to: [Jenn.Miller@alaska.gov](mailto:Jenn.Miller@alaska.gov)

You can view the 2022-2023 School Year Alaska School Spotlights here:  
<https://education.alaska.gov/Alaska-Reading-Resources/alaska-school-spotlights>