

# The Facts about Alaska's Standards for Culturally Ready Schools



*Toward preparing students to be college, career, and culturally ready graduates*

The Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools were written to complement state content standards, and to address issues of importance to rural schools. The State Board of Education & Early Development adopted them in 1998. They are endorsed by a cross-section of Alaska Native organizations, including the Alaska Federation of Natives and the Alaska Native Knowledge Network.

## **The need for Cultural Standards**

Alaska's indigenous populations have a unique relationship to the community and environment as defined by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971. The state's 53 school districts are spread across a geographically and culturally diverse landscape, with each regional school board exercising local control of their schools' curriculum. The State Board of Education determined that all certified teachers must take classes in multicultural and Alaska Studies.

The Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative formed in 1995 to document Alaska's many indigenous knowledge systems and develop pedagogy that incorporates them into the educational system. The Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools is a product of the initiative.

## **The standards are a guide for including local culture in the classroom**

Unlike content standards which say what academic skills and knowledge should be taught, the cultural standards begin to answer the question of *how* to teach Western academic content to a diverse indigenous population, without marginalizing traditional ways of knowing. Alaska's cultural standards are not intended to replace pedagogical skill, but rather inform and add to an instructor's existing talents. The standards are primarily targeted at teachers, schools, and districts serving rural and remote areas and Native communities;

however, many of the standards are applicable to all students and communities because they focus on in-depth study.

The standards are divided into sections that provide guidance for students, instructors, schools, communities, and curricula.

## **Potential uses**

Some of the ways the standards might be used include:

1. To review school and district goals, policies, and practices.
2. To support family and community involvement in education.
3. To devise locally appropriate measures of review for student and teacher performance.
4. To strengthen commitment to local languages.
5. To identify effective instructional practices that honor cultural contexts.
6. As a professional development tool for teachers.
7. To evaluate supplemental academic and cultural programs.

For more information, please visit the EED website and click on the "standards" star.

