



**EDUCATING ALL OUR STUDENTS TO REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL AS RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS**

**FROM OUR SUPERINTENDENT**



It is no secret that there is a growing national teacher shortage, or that Alaska has struggled for many years to keep quality staff. As a state, Alaska has an average educator turnover rate of about 40%. The average turnover rate of teachers and administrators in rural Alaska is much higher, and in some Alaska districts it is as high as 80% annually. According to research done by University of Alaska Anchorage's Center for Alaska Education Policy Research, about 400 educators... teachers and administrators...are hired from outside Alaska each year to staff our rural schools, but most stay less than 2 years. These researchers have unsurprisingly and consistently pointed the quality of educators and the support of communities for their schools, as the determining factors in being able to provide a quality education to our kids. We know that students who attend schools with lower rates of staff turnover perform better, and that consistency in a school system matters a great deal. It is with this in mind that the School Board has made it a written goal to improve the retention of quality educators.

I did a statewide study on Educator Retention a few years ago, of nearly 400 administrators and teachers who worked in rural and bush communities from all across Alaska. I was interested in why some teachers stayed in their communities, and what school systems could do to better support their teachers. What I learned is that teachers left and stayed for basically the same reason...if they didn't feel that they were making a difference for kids and their communities, they left. If they felt that they were making a difference, they stayed. If they felt that their communities didn't support their schools...they tended to leave, looking for a community that did. If they felt that they were a part of a community that was committed to their schools, they tended to stay. The work being done by other research teams asking similar questions mirrors that finding, which boils down to what is essentially a basic human condition, the desire to make a positive difference.

The real question now that we know this, is what can we do? At the district level, we are starting with simply asking them. To do that, we have started to use Staff Exit Surveys in order to understand why a teacher is deciding to leave. Some of the things we are doing include a workplace satisfaction and school climate surveys, asking about how the district is doing as an employer, and looking at what we can do to address the problems we learn about. And, we have been studying how we evaluate our staff in ways that result in improved classroom practice. All of our new staff also take a UAF course on how we do things in AGSD, so that they are familiar and comfortable with our systems. On a community level, everyone can all help our teachers by making them feel welcome to their new home. For example, Northway and Tanacross last year both hosted a community welcome dinner for all school staff, which we hope to do again this year. Just greeting new teachers with a simple hello goes far to help feel wanted and welcome. It is the little things that are easy to do that makes a difference, creates continuity in our schools, and improves the whole system for everybody.

**8TH GRADE GRADUATION TOK SCHOOL**

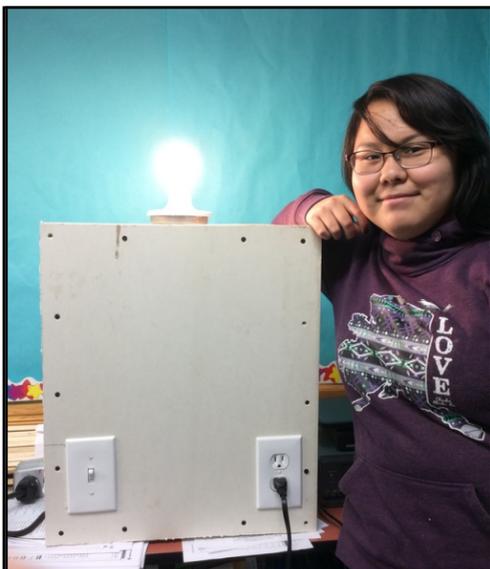
Students graduating from 8th Grade at Tok School were fortunate to have the Alaska Commissioner of Education give their commencement speech at the ceremony held in Tok School at the end of May. Dr. Michael Johnson addressed the 8th Grade students along with parents, community members, teachers and district staff who attended the event. Mr. Paul Kelley and Mr. Scott Holmes also addressed the graduating students. Certificates were handed out to the students by Mr. Holmes assisted by Ms. Kristie Charlie and Mr. Keane Richards. The commissioner made time to tour Tok School and meet with Mr. MacManus the District's Superintendent.



**DANCING WITH THE SPIRIT**

Tanacross School, Reach Academy, Mentasta and Northway students had the opportunity to work with a team of talented musicians from Dancing with the Spirit. Students learned to play guitar, fiddle, ukulele and mandolin. Dancing with the Spirit brings local musicians to rural communities to support students to learn music. The team also helps repair instruments, helps schools and councils with funding for more instruments and connect with elders to send healthy messages to the students and community.

In one week students learned the basics of playing with a unique color coded method. They learned to play and sing a number of songs. The week long program culminated with a concert for each of the communities that participated.



The Basics of Wiring  
by Robert Litwack  
Principal Tetlin School

Our middle and high school students finished their basic wiring class. Students built a box put in a power source, an outlet, a switch and a light. They had to complete the project themselves and work on completing tasks, following their schematic, and measuring and cutting drywall. All in all they did a wonderful job.

On May 29-31, principals and administrators from AGSD attended the Alaska School Leadership Institute in Anchorage. Each year the Alaska Staff Development Network hosts this conference to bring together leadership teams from Alaska's rural districts. This year, teams worked together to develop plans for communication and facilitation strategies to promote teacher efficacy at the building and district level. Teacher efficacy relates to how effective teachers are, as well as how empowered they feel to make a difference.

According to John Hattie's Visible Learning research, teacher efficacy is at the top of the list for influencing learning in a school.

AGSD's district leadership team explored ideas such as:

- How to have better conversations and lead more productive meetings and professional learning.
- Concrete steps to support effective mathematics instruction in the schools
- How to use school and district data to develop a deeper school and district needs

## WELCOME NEW STAFF



My name is Ashlee Copper. My family is very excited to be here in Tok! We have lived in Barrow, Ketchikan, Kodiak, Mountain Village, and Arizona, but no where else has been quite as friendly as Tok! I have taught from the pre-school level up through the college level and been a principal, curriculum coordinator, educational technology director, and online learning director. As the RAVE CTE counselor and program coordinator, I look forward to supporting AGSD students in finding and being successful along a career pathway that best aligns with what they are passionate about.



Hello. My name is Rob Fabian and I am excited to be the R.E.A.C.H. Principal Teacher for the 2018-2019 school year. I have been an educator and coach for over 20 years. I received my bachelor's degree in history and education from Illinois State University in 1993 and earned my master's degree in geosciences from Mississippi State University in 2010.

My wife and I have lived in Tok for the last two years and have enjoyed getting to know people in the Alaska Gateway communities.

I look forward to working with the R.E.A.C.H. families and students as a partner and resource for achieving their educational goals.



### REACH Academy

Resources for Educating Alaska's Children at Home

REACH Academy is the perfect homeschool service for families. Dedicated, professional staff can advise you on curriculums, required classes for high school students and resources that make homeschooling enjoyable, interactive and personalized. Enrolling in REACH ensures you belong to a community of parents striving in excellence in education for their students. Being part of REACH enables families to network and support one another at regular events facilitated by REACH staff. REACH also has an extensive library of resources available to students for check out. STEM materials, books, music enrichment, language arts supplements and so much more can be found at the REACH office located within Tok School. Families are actively welcomed to call in and browse resources, share learning triumphs and gain support from staff and other parents.

Here is what a parent recently wrote about the REACH Academy: *"Thank you REACH for helping me feel successful as a parent educating my child. Calling into the Academy is always such a pleasure, I feel as if I am being cheered on towards my goal of quality education for my child....."*

**It is not too late to enroll in Reach Academy for the 2018/2019 academic year. Our knowledgeable staff would be glad to meet with you to build an individual path of learning for your child.**

#### Summer Office Hours During the month of July

Thursday July 5th, 19th, and 26th.  
10AM - 4PM

Additional hours can be arranged by appointment by calling the REACH office or emailing Rob Fabian REACH Principal Teacher at [rfabian@agsd.us](mailto:rfabian@agsd.us)

Please call 883-2591 if exterior doors are locked during office hours.

Work session on the District's Summer Maintenance was held at 5.00pm. Director Wade Boney presented to the board on costs of proposed maintenance activities.

#### REGULAR MEETING ACTION ITEMS FOR MAY 21, 2018

The regular meeting of the Regional School Board for the Alaska Gateway School District was called to order at 6.00pm at Northway School. Board members present were Lisa Conrad, Loraine Titus, Peter Talus and Steve Robbins. Jill Kranenburg called in. The board acted on the following items.

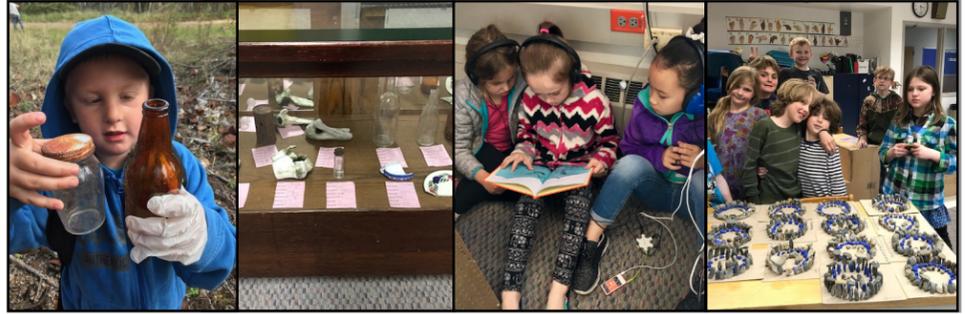
- Approved the selection of Gerald "Stretch" Blackard to the Board
- Approval of the agenda
- Approved the RSB minutes for April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018
- Approved Personnel Actions as presented
- Approved FY19 School Calendars
- Approved transfer of funds to Summer Maintenance
- Heard Superintendent's, CFO and Director's reports
- Reviewed Principals reports
- Discussed site visit schedule, student enrollment, facilities, teacher housing, progress on the biomass project, JOM supplies and materials at Northway School, FY19 budget and staffing future and future RSB meeting sites.

➤ *The Regional Board Meeting was adjourned at 7.15pm. The next regular meeting is tentatively scheduled for 6.00pm on Monday, June 18<sup>th</sup>, at Tok School.*

*Respectfully, Scott MacManus, Superintendent*

## SUMMER READING FUN

Students of the district were able to attend a reading camp at the beginning of June. The Dig into Reading program allowed students to become archaeologists as they read about the archaeologists creed, wrote their names using cuneiform and built small models of Stonehenge, an ancient monument in Great Britain. Students went on a modern day archaeological dig. Pictured are the artifacts they uncovered and cataloged as part of their reading discoveries.



## STEM SUMMER DAY CAMP

Students took a magical journey of inquiry and exploration last week at the Tok School STEM camp. Mr. Kelso steered his trusty crew on an ocean voyage to Trash Island. Once at the island camp participants had to work in teams to solve the challenges they encountered. Teams learned of ocean gyres, made physical ecosystems webs, kept a water proof boat log (that they had designed themselves) and invented ocean trawls that would dissipate the impact of trash in the worlds oceans. 27 students participated in this fun interactive camp. Mr. Kelso congratulated all students on their commitment to embrace such a worthy project while on summer vacation.



## STRATEGIC PLAN FOCUS ON STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

### Student Engagement

We believe in engaging all students with meaningful opportunities to discover their interests and pursue their passions.

### About Student Engagement

All of our professional development opportunities to some degree focus on the important aspect of student engagement. We recognize that although engagement doesn't necessarily equate to learning, it's impossible to have deep learning without it. Through blended and personalized learning practices in our classrooms, hands-on relevant learning experiences in our variable schedules, and small classes sizes, where teachers can have personal connections with students, we constantly look for ways to draw our students into the learning. We want students to understand why they are learning, and encourage them to follow their own interests and passions to become lifelong learners.

### Programs/Initiatives that address Student Engagement:

Blended Learning

Variable Schedule

RAVE Programs - Greenhouse, CTE, STEM, Makerspace

A-CHILL programs - Cultures & Dog Mushing, Veterinary Technology