

Educating All Our Students to Become Responsible Citizens

FROM OUR SUPERINTENDENT

As many know, the Governor declared a state of emergency yesterday, in order to free up and coordinate resources to prepare Alaska for Coronavirus COVID-19. This pandemic represents uncharted territory for our nation and others across the globe. As of this writing (March 12th), there are 1292 cases of COVID-19 in the US, but none so far in Alaska, although we do expect that to change. When this article is published on the 18th of March, school will be out for Spring Break, and the numbers in the US will have gone up, and the situation in Alaska MAY have changed. What we need to do is learn about COVID-19 from trusted sources, to prepare for our families and communities, and to make sure we are looking out for each other. While any adult can be impacted, what seems to be the biggest worry is protecting our elders, with heaviest impacted being those in their 70's and 80's. Young people seem so far to be far less impacted than other groups, and what we really worry about is them bringing home the virus where it could cause a problem for those over the age of 60.

Steps being undertaken in the district

- ▶ School staff have been cleaning common touch points in the school at least 4 times every day, including door knobs, light switches, handles, keyboards, and counters, etc...
- ▶ We are making sure that there are "no-touch" digital thermometers in each school, and have ordered several sets to replace any that don't work.
- ▶ Everyone who comes into the school is being asked to disinfect their hands
- ▶ Students and Staff who appear symptomatic of the flu or a cold (who are running a temperature, have a cough, or are out of breath) will be sent home.
- ▶ We are teaching a hygiene regime to students and staff to help keep our families safe. Everyone in the school should wash their hands when they arrive in the morning, and several times throughout the day, and to avoid touching their face
- ▶ Sick students and staff will be requested to remain home
- ▶ Teaching and encourage students to wash hands often, use hand-disinfectant, cough into tissues and toss tissues away.

The district has met with the TCC and with Public Health about preparing. They are asking for the following:

- ▶ That all adults get their flu-shot...as of this writing it is not too late.
- ▶ Call the clinic before going in if you are symptomatic
- ▶ We are making plans in the event that we end up having to close school to continue classes via the internet. In the event of a closure the district is looking at the possibility of providing computers to families, and providing a reimbursement stipend to our AGSD families that they could use to either up their bandwidth or purchase a month or so of service, with teachers contacting.
- ▶ Travel is being monitored, and possibly curtailed. We are taking travel seriously as we don't want our kids getting stuck on the wrong side of a state or international border, or bringing home the virus.

What you can do to help

- ▶ Insist on a heightened level of cleanliness...wash hands often, use warm soap and water on surfaces, wipe down your door knobs and other common touch areas.
- ▶ Keep everyone in your home healthy and well rested.
- ▶ Be as prepared as possible for a several weeks at home should quarantine be necessary.
- ▶ Please don't argue with school staff if your child is sent home because they exhibit symptoms...it is for everyone's safety, and even though it most likely is not coronavirus, these are the kinds of things that could complicate the virus if/when it does get here. If you disagree, please get them checked and cleared at your local clinic.
- ▶ If you have elders who live near you, even if you don't know them, it would be a good time to reach out and establish contact before the flu gets here. If they don't need help, give them your contact information in case that changes, and check in on them as we all go through this. You might find out if they need groceries deposited at their doorstep if they can't go to the store, or check their heating oil or firewood supply. If they use social media like Facebook, or some other form of technology to communicate regularly, we have a way of checking in with them so they don't come into contact if they don't have to.

Key points:

- ▶ Please be accurate! DO NOT SPREAD RUMORS! Keep informed, with accurate information. Be aware that there are already hackers who are using fake virus maps to hack computers. Use only trusted sources.
- ▶ It is unlikely that we are going to be able to stop COVID-19, and there is lot we don't yet know. Having said that, we are very confident that we can slow down its spread locally if we work together, which will help conserve and focus resources, and reduce exposure to those who seem most at risk, while giving our research and healthcare teams more time to learn how to treat it, or even to prevent it.
- ▶ There is no reason to panic, but there is every reason to take it very seriously.
- ▶ Please check the AGSD web page regularly...we are posting current information from trusted sources...John's Hopkins, the CDC, and the Alaska Department of Health.

GATEWAY AFTERSCHOOL GRANTEE ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Grantee Advisory Council for the GAP grant met on Wednesday, Feb. 5th with a total of 18 students, staff, and community members present. A review of the goals of the grant, the purpose of the advisory group and current GAP sites were shared with the group by the program coordinator. The students attending represented Tetlin, Northway, Mentasta, and Tok school program sites. These students serve as important advisors to and as part of the Grantee Advisory Council.

Meeting attendees then broke up into school groups with a community member joining each of the groups for a survey activity. Each group was asked to come up with questions and/or ideas for activities that teens would like to see or are already a part of GAP. The brainstorming lists will be compiled and sent to the GAP Site Coordinators for follow up with the students at their sites and possible revisions/additions to their respective GAP schedules. Students were also presented with the task of making posters for their schools to encourage their fellow students to participate in GAP.

The last half hour of the meeting was a PHlight Club presentation by Amy MacDonald representing Brightways, one of our grant partners. A tentative date has been set for June for a PHlight Club "summer camp" experience. PHlight Club is for students in grades 7 and up. Those teens that have attended PHlight Club in the past shared what they liked about it and some of the highlights for them.

The number of teens in attendance representing their respective schools along with community members/partners provided the opportunity for productive discussions on ideas for activities that kids would like to see at GAP. A continual emphasis throughout the meeting time was "we want you to be part of the program, help choose activities in order to have a successful program".

The next meeting will be scheduled for some time in late April.

WELCOME NEW COUNSELOR

Mr. Jeff Deeter is not new to Alaska Gateway School District having served on our Regional School Board since 2012. Mr. Deeter resigned from his board position in order to fulfill the role of counselor in our district. He will work with students in grade 9 -12. His role will include academic counseling, college and career advising and support, social emotional counseling and community/family outreach, along with local and state organization affiliations. We welcome him to this new role within the district.

TANACROSS ENTREPRENEURS

Students at Tanacross School worked with botanist Mr. Peter Miller to harvest poplar buds for a salve. They learned how to make a logo for the product and how to produce and package the harvested material. The salve will be available for sale to assist in the school's fundraising efforts to go to Hawaii in 2021. The opportunity was made possible through our RAVE Grant, from the Department of Education.

Alaska Gateway School District was pleased to host the annual science fair at Tok School in February. Students from Northway and Tok School entered projects. Fourteen K-2 projects were entered with 1st Place going to Grayson Combs, 2nd Place to Tristian May, and 3rd Place to Willow Garber.

Ten Projects were submitted from grades 3-5 with 1st Place going to Lilly Akaran, 2nd Place to Minacie Jimmie and Cyan Luke . In 3rd Place was Owen Gross. Elementary winners were from Tok School.

The Middle School awarded went to Lorraine Nutting and Mable Demit from Walter Northway School and the high school first place was awarded to Kira Sam and Sharee Frank also from Walter Northway.