

Alaska Native Student Vitality: Community Perspectives on Supporting Student Success

Report of Findings

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"At one time, we had an educational system among our people, among all our cultures...we gave that responsibility to someone else. And it's a responsibility...It's a responsibility that we have to our children. It is our responsibility to teach them."

Quote from an Alaska Native Elder, 2005

Executive Summary

In the summer of 2005, 45 Alaska Native community leaders, community members, and advocates were interviewed about their definitions of Alaska Native student success and their ideas about the characteristics of effective schools for Alaska Native students. This study came about as frustrations surfaced in the Alaska Native and research communities around the use of measures that are limited to factors such as school attendance, standardized test scores, and high school graduation and dropout rates to define Alaska Native student success. It became clear that in order to work toward developing student and community well being, as well as effective schools, there was a need for broader definitions of Alaska Native student success and more holistic measures and indicators of this success.

Those interviewed discussed several different ideas about success. They talked about individual success, about succeeding in bridging "two" worlds, and success in a community context. Most consistently, however, participants' own definitions of success centered on what it means to be a good human being. For these participants, a successful Alaska Native student is one who can set and achieve goals because he knows his own worth and value, understands his responsibility to his community, and is prepared to pursue whatever life path he chooses. Respondents explained that a student who is confident and secure in who he is will be able to succeed in any life challenge.

This definition also makes clear the interconnection of individual success and community success. A student's ability to self-actualize, or achieve one's full potential, is dependent on one's understanding of his or her responsibility to contribute to community. In order for a student to bear out this responsibility, he or she must know that he or she is capable and needed by others. In this way, the well being of the individual relies on the well being of the community and vice versa. Thus, communities must have a clear role in education and in supporting student success. Respondents explained that Alaska Native leaders and community members have a responsibility to partner with schools and be present in the education of Alaska Native students just as schools have a responsibility to work with local communities. In these interviews, respondents provided some very descriptive ideas about how this community responsibility for education has and should manifest. While that full analysis is not provided here, it was clear that schools cannot work in isolation from communities in supporting student success. According to respondents, schools and communities should work to develop joint goals for student success and work in partnership to attain these goals.

Any discussion of effective schools, therefore, must be framed by a dialogue about the broader goals and definitions of student success, as well as the roles and responsibilities of both schools and communities. Respondents confirmed this by reframing the work of schools as they spoke about the characteristics of effective schools. The work of schools, they explained, is to reflect community values, to support individual student learning needs, and to work in partnership with communities.

This is again clear in that effective schools for Alaska Native students are defined by respondents as those that: 1) are staffed by local, Native teachers, or those who are committed to staying in the community and have culturally-relevant training and supports; 2) have fostered an affirming learning environment; and 3) have developed a culturally-relevant and place-based

curriculum. Of these three criteria, respondents indicated that the most important is a corps of capable and caring teachers who are committed to staying in the communities in which they serve. These teachers are central in affirming students' self-worth and responsibility to contribute, in creating a welcoming and respectful learning environment, and in facilitating meaningful learning experiences for students.

This supports and extends the set of characteristics of effective schools for American Indian and Alaska Native students identified by other scholars; these researchers explain that an effective schools initiative for Native students should meet at least two of the following three criteria: 1) involves community or tribally controlled schools (e.g., Ya Ne Dah Ah, Chickaloon, Alaska); 2) utilizes Indigenous culture and language; 3) and evidences a significant and measurable gain in students' academic achievement (Benally, 2004; Lipka, 2002).

Respondents named a few schools and initiatives that seem to be working in support of student success. Most consistently cited are those that are based on community values, employ Native educators, and have meaningful community partnerships. Some are controlled by the local Native community. Others are those that make learning relevant to daily life or local opportunities; those that foster student, staff and parent connections; those that provide individualized learning supports; and those that help support student transition to and retention and completion of university programs. The key for respondents seems to be around the human resources and relationships in place—are there school staff and community partners who can ensure schools reflect community values, reach out to and support local educators, and grow partnerships between schools and communities? Community-based educators are particularly well suited to build these kinds of relationships.

Finally, there are some measures of success identified in the literature on American Indian and Alaska Native education and by respondents that are more reflective of this definition of success and may be useful in helping us monitor efforts to support student and community well being. These must include student, community, and school measures (see Chart 1). Respondents were clear that standardized test scores are not a sufficient solitary measure of success; they can be useful in helping to identify academic supports and interventions, but should not be the only measure used to signify Alaska Native student success or failure. Consistently, however, respondents explained that any set of measures will never be meaningful or complete unless Alaska Native parents, students, leaders, and community members have a role in defining these measures and in working to support student success. Thus, the dialogue about Alaska Native student success and effective schools must be ongoing and shared by all.

“At one time, we had an educational system among our people, among all our cultures...we gave that responsibility to someone else. And it’s a responsibility...It’s a responsibility that we have to our children. It is our responsibility to teach them.” Quote from an Alaska Native Elder, 2005

Introduction

Alaska Native people have thrived for over 10,000 years in what are arguably the most extreme conditions and in the face of numerous efforts to eliminate their cultures and communities. They learned how to subsist on the rich resources of the land and sea, to persevere in harsh climates and at sub-zero temperatures, and to sustain rich and vibrant cultures and languages over time. There are three Alaska Native people groups—the Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut. Yet, there are five major Alaska Native cultural groups: 1) the Inupiaq (Northwest); 2) Yupiq & Cupiq (Southwest); 3) Aleut & Alutiiq (Southwest island chain); 4) Tlingit, Haida, Tsimpshian, and Eyak (Southeast); and 5) Athabaskan (Interior and Northeast). Within these cultures there is a long-standing tradition of education that has taken the form of Elders passing on knowledge to young people; apprenticeships; community houses; oral histories; and dances and celebrations (E4 Transcript).

It is only within the last 200 years that a ‘formal’, Western system of schooling has been imposed upon Alaska Native students and communities. This schooling has taken many different forms—mission schools, Bureau of Indian Affairs schools, in-state and out-of-state boarding schools, and local public schools. There are some important political and legislative events that have shaped contemporary schooling for Alaska Native students including the 1972 Molly Hootch court case and ensuing *Tobeluk v. Lind* consent decree led to the creation of over 100 rural secondary schools to ensure rural students were not forced to attend boarding schools outside of their home communities. This history is crucial in understanding the current state of schooling for Alaska Native students. There are many resources that can provide a more comprehensive history than we can here. For our purposes, what is important to note is that the system of ‘formal education’ imports educators and administrators largely from outside local communities—and often even outside the state—uses monies that do not necessarily originate in local communities to fund schooling, and relies on knowledge external to these communities about what to teach, as well as how best to address student needs.

Countless community and student indicators suggest that the educational and learning needs of Alaska Native students are not being met. Many Alaska Native languages are in danger of extinction. Alaska Natives are better represented in the prison population (33 percent) than in the general statewide population (20 percent) (Alaska Native Policy Center, 2004). Only five percent of all teachers in Alaska are Alaska Native (2004). And students only now have a formal opportunity to learn about their state and cultural history in schools. The sobering statistic, however is that more than 44 percent of Natives in Alaska are under the age of 20 (2004). There is an urgent opportunity to secure their future and find ways to support their learning now. As such, this study seeks to identify and make central the Alaska Native community’s voice and role in defining and supporting Alaska Native student success.

Before we proceed, we would like to introduce ourselves because our backgrounds and experiences inform our commitment to this project, as well as the questions and analyses provided within this report. We are both Alaska Native students, and we met when we participated in First Alaskans Institute’s 2005 summer internship program. Between us we have had both positive and negative schooling experiences. Yet we are motivated by the support and encouragement of our parents, families, and mentors to pursue education and contribute to the learning of those around us. During our summer internship experience, we were presented with the opportunity to learn how community members and others define Alaska Native

student success. This topic was immediately interesting to both of us because it is foundational to the work we hope to do with students and communities—in education for Malia and in psychology for Rebecca. Through this project we have been challenged to define what success means to us; to dialogue with each other, our peers, and community leaders about what our role as emerging leaders is; and hopefully to make a contribution to ongoing efforts to improve the educational experiences of Alaska Native students and community members. We hope to contribute our voices as Alaska Native people and researchers in this effort.

Malia is Alutiiq, or Sugpiaq, and Filipina. She was born in Honolulu, Hawai'i, and lived in Guam, Florida, and Seattle as her parents were in the U. S. Navy. Her mother is from Kodiak, Alaska, and her father from Honolulu. Her maternal grandmother, Mary Anderson, is from Afognak, Alaska. Malia graduated high school in Seattle and attended Stanford University. Malia then worked for WestEd, a regional education laboratory supporting state and local education in Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Utah. At WestEd, she worked on policy initiatives including efforts to recruit, support and retain Native teachers in Arizona and work to develop and evaluate a culturally-relevant curriculum in Southwest Alaska. She is currently a doctoral student at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Malia is learning the Alutiiq language and hopes to work with local communities to contribute to Alaska Native education.

Rebecca is Inupiaq and Cuban. She was born in Miami, Florida. Her mother is from Unalakleet, Alaska, and her father is from Havana, Cuba. She currently lives in Anchorage, Alaska. Rebecca graduated from Diamond High School in Anchorage. She attended Northern Arizona University and recently completed her Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA). While at UAA, she was an Alaska Natives in Psychology (ANPsych) Scholar. Rebecca plans to pursue her Master's Degree in Psychology. She has research experience examining higher education attainment and retention among Alaska Native students. Rebecca also has experience in the medical field and in marketing. She hopes to work as a psychologist contributing to the mental health and well being of Alaska Native children and adults in the future. Rebecca enjoys spending time with her partner and son in Anchorage, Kotzebue, and Yakutat.

We learned a great deal from Elders and community leaders, from our mentors, from our peers, and from each other over these last nine months. The stories and experiences the Elders and leaders shared with us challenged us to think deeply about identity, responsibility, community, and leadership. Our mentors guided us in developing new relationships with inspirational community members, policymakers, and educators, as well as in coming to new understandings about our work and our communities. Our peers sustained us with their humor, heart, and hope for better supports for students and stronger communities. Central to our learning though was the opportunity to debrief what we heard during our interviews, to discuss what the literature had to say, and to develop our ideas in conversation with one another. Through these discussions, we were able to build off of each other's perspectives, join our visions for our work, and ultimately find a colleague and friend. We also learned the importance of reflection, dialogue, and collaboration. In fact, every step of the way was a learning process, and we take very seriously our responsibility to share the voices of participants and the knowledge we came away with. This report stands as our effort to contribute to the ongoing conversation about what Alaska Native student success is, and what it will take to support it.

Study Description & Methodology

In 2001, First Alaskans Institute and several community partners hosted the First Alaskans Native Education Summit. This was an important opportunity to engage much of the Alaska Native community in a dialogue about what community educational needs and opportunities are. According to the Summary Report (CCTHITA, 2002), the primary messages coming out of this first gathering were: “1) current instructional and administrative methods are not working for the majority of Native students and their families, both urban and rural; 2) such techniques can be changed; and 3) they will change when Native people, in cooperation with non-Natives who care, make them change” (1).

Two subsequent summits have been held and several promising local and regional initiatives have developed as a result. One of these initiatives was a survey of Native perspectives on Alaska issues commissioned by First Alaskans Institute in 2002. Findings indicate that Alaska Natives are not satisfied with how schools are preparing Alaska Native students. Forty percent of those surveyed gave negative ratings of students’ preparation for high school preparation, 47 percent of preparation for college, 37 percent of preparation for the workplace, and 32 percent of preparation for life in their communities (McDowell Group, 2003).

Staff and leaders of First Alaskans Institute engaged community members in these conversations and attempted to analyze the test data about Alaska Native student achievement along with researchers at the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER). From these discussions, it became clear that there are concerns in communities and in policy circles about the current system of schooling and its ability to meet students’ learning needs. Reports on the status of Alaska Native education rarely highlight the successes, possibilities, and capabilities of Alaska Native students and communities. Alaska Natives and non-Natives alike are bombarded with images and stories of Native student failure and disorder. Countless reports exist on the high dropout rates, low graduation rates, and poor test scores of Alaska Native students. In turn, the rhetoric becomes focused on why Alaska Native students cannot keep up with their non-Native peers and how to bridge the achievement gap between Native and non-Native students. This framing of achievement and the achievement gap assumes that the schooling system is neutral, that traditional indicators of school success are useful measures, and that students bear sole responsibility for their success in school.

Existing measures of student success do not encompass the values (e.g., knowing who you are, taking care of others, seeing connections¹) of many Alaska Native communities, and thus raise questions about the adequacy of these tools or indicators to use in reporting on the achievement and well being of students or in engaging families and communities around supporting student success. Thus, First Alaskans Institute and ISER commissioned this study to understand how Alaska Native people and community advocates define student success and school effectiveness. There were two primary research questions:

- 1) What is a successful Alaska Native student?
- 2) What are the characteristics of effective schools for Alaska Native students that support this definition of success?

In this qualitative study, we conducted semi-structured, open-ended interviews and focus groups with a large group of key informants, including Alaska Native Elders, community leaders, educators, students, and allies and advocates, as described below. We developed a set of interview questions (see Appendix B) to guide these discussions. However, it was important

¹ “Alaska Native Values for Curriculum”. (2006). Fairbanks, AK: Alaska Native Knowledge Network.

to allow the respondents to direct these conversations given their experiences in communities, in education, and in leadership. A key objective of this study is to give voice to these perspectives and to develop further education research on a clear and meaningful conception of Alaska Native student success.

All interviews and focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed. We used the ATLAS.ti software program for open coding and to identify initial themes (Berg, 2001). We looked for patterns and commonalities in the responses to our questions and identified emerging themes across the interviews (see Appendix C for the list of codes and families).

We interviewed Alaska Native leaders in various sectors, including business (e.g., ANCSA corporation officials), politics (e.g., state legislators), education (e.g., school staff, district and state officials, university partners), and community (e.g., non-profit directors, parents, other tribal officials) about their perspectives on Alaska Native student success and school effectiveness. Additionally, we interviewed non-Native community allies and advocates familiar with local Alaska Native community resources and educational needs. We also conducted two focus groups with current Alaska Native college students, who discussed their experiences within schools and their thoughts on success. We completed a total of 45 interviews and two focus groups with 20 participants total. Two individuals also provided us with written responses to our interview questions as they were unable to participate in an interview or focus group. Here we report the findings from analysis of the interviews only.

Our contacts at First Alaskans Institute and ISER provided us with an initial list of Alaska Native community leaders, community members, and other allies and advocates to participate in interviews and focus groups. We then used snowball sampling to identify other participants, asking our early respondents to recommend others for us to contact.

Background & Review of the Literature

Alaska Native students are as varied as the communities in which they grow up. With the multitude of languages, family and community customs, and experiences, Alaska Native students bring a diversity of knowledge and supports with them to school. In spite of this richness in culture and language, research on American Indian and Alaska Native education notes two distinct and conflicting images of success for Native students: 1) one who pursues his or her own individual success; or 2) one who pursues success in the cultural knowledge and traditions of his or her Native community.

The first image is not necessarily a selfish or self-centered one because it can be connected to being a productive citizen or attaining success in order to take care of one's self or family. However, it is often about meeting the external expectations of an institution, like a school, or of a society in order to be granted legitimacy or status as a successful person. For example, markers of success in U. S. society include high school graduation, college completion, employment in a profession, and a high standard of living. Many center on learning to become a good worker, in order to make a living (Jacobs, 2003). While some people take non-traditional routes to attaining this kind of success, there are very defined paths for becoming successful. These paths emphasize individual merit, competition, and the ownership or possession of information (SPI, 2000; Trumbull, et al., 2000; More, 1989). These are all connected to the idea that resources are limited and that only a limited number of people can be successful.

Collective success, on the other hand, has to do with cultural and community survival. This image hinges on maintaining traditions, contributing to community, and bearing out one's responsibility to others (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001; Trumbull, et al., 2000). This is especially important when communities have faced elimination at the hands of dominant, oppressive social policies and practices. While this image of collective success does not explicitly ignore the desires or needs of the individual, the group's needs are often framed as taking priority over those of the individual.

These two images of success frame the individual and community as separate and as having conflicting needs. Much of the literature does not present them separately, but instead talks about the need for Native students to bridge the two sets of goals or 'learn to walk in two worlds' (Agbo, 2004; Benally, 2004; Jones & Ongtooguk, 2002; Lipka, 2002). According to this research, Native students should be prepared to achieve both Western and Native educational goals; this is often called the 'both/and' conception, or paradigm (Agbo, 2004; Lipka, 1998).

Yet, this can serve to bifurcate students, or cause them to feel divided from themselves, and some may come to believe that success in school requires failure in the community and vice versa (St. Germaine, 1995). Students may then choose to disengage from the school or exit the system. Some researchers further caution that this approach assumes that there are only two worlds students must navigate; that there are two, *whole* 'worlds' within which to operate; that students can access both and will be able to draw the best from each world; and that schools can help students navigate the two worlds (Henze & Vanett, 1993). Still others explain that these goals should not be viewed as conflicting, as they can in fact be complementary if reframed (Deyhle & Swisher, 1997; Barnhardt & Kawagley, 1998; Kawagley, 1999; Yazzie, 2000; NWREL, 2002). Instead of viewing success as managing two competing sets of goals, we should see the individual and community as interdependent or symbiotic.

American Indian and Alaska Native community members talk about this as developing students to be good people, or confident, capable, contributing members of their society (Bates, 1997; NWREL, 2002; Jacobs, 2003). Native students have shared with researchers the lessons they

were taught about striving for the 'good path' and learning about their responsibilities as community members and as human beings (NWREL, 2002). Much of the most well-respected American Indian and Alaska Native researchers write about a Native worldview based on metaphysics—a philosophy that might loosely be described as being concerned with the important relationships that exist between all things (Kawagley, 1995; Deloria & Wildcat, 2001). There are specific behaviors and responsibilities we have as human beings, and our success is intimately connected to how we carry out our duties to our selves, each other, and our world (Napoleon, 1996). School success is important as far as it enables and supports students in bearing out these responsibilities, but is only a part of what it takes to be a good person. There are many roles and responsibilities for which schools may not be best suited to prepare students. In this way, the role of local, Native communities in education and development is essential.

The most common outcomes used to discuss American Indian and Alaska Native student success include: high school graduation, school attendance, dropout rates (lower rates indicate higher levels of student success), and achievement on norm-referenced standardized test scores (Butterfield, 1994; St. Germaine, 1995; Jester, 2002). While these are very common indicators of student success in general, many authors point out how limiting these can be and call for the use of broader educational outcomes for Indigenous students (Clinton, 1998; Research Agenda Working Group, 2001; Jones & Ongtooguk, 2002). This is especially important because most of the research on effective schools examines schools that are 'effective' in supporting student success only as measured by these four outcomes.

Within the broader school change literature, an effective school is one that can support and sustain high standardized test scores and has consistent student attendance (Cross, et al., 1994; Purkey & Smith, 1983). Much of the effective schools research takes these indicators for granted and rarely critiques or justifies its reliance on test score and attendance measures. Some researchers do acknowledge that the characteristics of an effective school are connected to local and school culture factors and that elements of effectiveness in one community may not transfer directly or easily to another community context (Deal, 1985; Mells, 1994). Yet, there are only a very small number of reports or articles that clearly involve or include local community participation in defining school effectiveness and several authors call on future research to consider where the conceptions of success are coming from (Klitgaard & Hall, 1975; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Cross, et al., 1994; Deal, 1985; Fox, 2001). Many of these researchers document the failings of schools to respond to community expectations, but rarely go on to identify what would contribute to the development of a more effective school.

The conversation on effective schools has become too narrowly focused on 'school' success, rather than 'student' success, because it takes for granted those things that are said to indicate student achievement. The dialogue is centered on what elements schools need to have in place to bring about higher test scores and consistent attendance. This might serve the needs of school systems, especially amid the high stakes of the standards and accountability reforms facing all schools. However, it is all too clear that this often does not address the educational needs of students and local communities. It is essential that any discussion of effective schools starts by exploring the much bigger question of what contributes to student success, as communicated by the most important stakeholders—students and local communities.

Scholars have identified three criteria of effective schools of American Indian and Alaska Native students. Effective schools initiatives are those that include at least two of the following three criteria: 1) involves community or tribally controlled schools; 2) utilizes Indigenous culture and language; 3) and evidences a significant and measurable gain in students' academic achievement (Benally, 2004; Lipka, 2002). Other characteristics of effective schools and programs serving Native students include:

- Increased participation by parents and community members (Butterfield, 1994);
- Bilingual faculty with low turnover (Apthorp, et al., 2002);
- Culturally relevant curricular materials aligned to assessments (Apthorp, et al., 2002); and
- Use of individualized instruction with consistent monitoring of student progress (Apthorp, et al., 2002).

An effort by American Indian and Alaska Native master educators to develop a rubric for Native communities and schools to identify and support effective schools (NWREL, 2002) also identified nine criteria areas to consider, including:

- 1) visioning, planning, and school improvement;
- 2) administrative leadership;
- 3) parents and community;
- 4) school-wide behavioral climate and policies;
- 5) instructional practices;
- 6) assessment;
- 7) professional development;
- 8) facilities; and
- 9) resources.

Yet, these again are all school-centered criteria. There is a need for further research that emphasizes student and community specific criteria in measuring school effectiveness.

It is here that we hope to locate our work and contribute to improving the educational experiences of Alaska Native students by seeking out the goals, expectations, and resources communities have to offer to their students. By entering into dialogue with Alaska Native community leaders, community members, and allies and advocates, we hope to develop a more meaningful definition of Alaska Native student success and generate some ideas about more useful measures of school effectiveness based on this definition.

Findings

We asked study participants a broad range of questions about Alaska Native student success—how to define it, measure it—their perceptions of schools and their effectiveness, as well as their beliefs about the responsibility of the Alaska Native community in education. In this report, we present our findings on those questions that most directly relate to our primary research questions; they include:

- Question 2: How do you define Alaska Native student success? What is a successful Alaska Native student?
- Question 3: How do schools define Alaska Native student success?
- Question 6: What should schools prepare Alaska Native students for?
- Question 9: What are the characteristics of effective schools?

Below we report findings for each of these questions. We will typically introduce a theme from the responses, provide several specific quotes that connect to that theme, and then offer some summary analysis. In some cases we provide an overall percentage of participants responding in a particular way; in others, we provide the actual number of participants within a particular theme in parentheses. We then identify the broad themes and ideas in the Discussion and Implications section. In Chart 1 on page 39, we also provide a preliminary list of the measures or indicators of success in the literature and within responses to Question 8— Given your earlier definition, how would you measure Alaska Native student success?—that most clearly reflect respondents' conception of success.

How do you define Alaska Native student success? What is a successful Alaska Native student?

Forty-eight percent of respondents (21 of 44) referenced the image of individual success and frequently cited its connections to Western conceptions and school success. Yet, these respondents were not necessarily claiming this image of success as their own; in fact, 8 of the 21 referenced it to contrast their own definitions of student success. For example, respondents explained that, for them, success is not necessarily about individual academic success (5) or connected to money or just making a living (4). Thirty-four percent discussed collective success and its connection to cultural and local values. Remaining participants did not specifically reference either individual or collective descriptions to discuss their beliefs about student success.

While we observed that respondents referenced ideas about individual versus collective success, it appeared that many respondents were not sticking to these distinct categories. Instead, a particular conception of success emerged. Sixty-four percent of respondents explained that, for them, success is about learning to live life as a good human being. In this conception, a successful Alaska Native student is one who can set and achieve goals because he knows his own worth and value, understands his responsibility to his community, and is prepared to pursue whatever life path he chooses. The goal then is not to manage or balance the competing demands of two worlds, but to learn to be the best person you can be in one world, drawing on various sources of strength in order to meet the many challenges that life presents.

When describing what it means to be a good human being, respondents spoke about how students live their lives. Do they know about their lineage and history? Do they understand themselves in a community context? Are they taking on leadership responsibilities? In describing this conception of student success, respondents discussed three primary elements: 1) knowing one's worth and value (22); 2) being prepared to pursue a variety of life paths (18); and 3) understanding one's responsibility to contribute (13). This same group talked about being a good human being as being able to self-actualize, or set and achieve goals that affirm

who you are and your community. In this way, individual success and collective success are not separate or conflicting goals, but are instead deeply interdependent—an individual's success depends on the well being of the community and the community's success relies on the well being of the individual. This is clear in how respondents spoke about what it means to set and achieve goals.

A successful Alaska Native student is one who has the opportunity to make choices and self-actualize...They need to have the opportunity to learn their own histories and know where they stand in the scheme of things, because I think there are things that are subconscious....So the school system can help make those connections. Like cultural disintegration, why are these traumas happening within families? If they could connect that to what happened to the people as a people over generations, it would make sense...The forward thinking is knowing the things that they can deal with and then envisioning what's out there. (E8)

A successful student is one that we've been able to assist them to gain the skills and knowledge necessary to pursue whatever walk of life they want to do, and that means from subsistence to Fortune 500...it is just not about the academic success, it's about the ability to understand what it is to be a community member, a contributing member all those personal and social skills that are so necessary, whether they are confined to a family or an entire state or nation, the roles and responsibilities that go with that. (P3)

Well a successful Alaska Native student I think is someone who's pursuing...their interest in life and it's able to sustain them... the reality is if you want to be a bio-chemist and you're working at that and then you're able to do that and it takes care of your family and you, that's great. If you want to be a welder, and that works for you and you love it and it takes care of you and your family that's great. ...It's fulfilling who you are as a person and taking care of you and your family in a quality way. (E26)

In these quotes, we hear that in order for students to be able to self-actualize—or attain the goals they have set for themselves—they must have a certain knowledge about who they are, know that they have certain “roles and responsibilities”, and feel that they have a variety of choices and opportunities in life paths. “Fulfilling who you are as a person” is directly connected to one's histories and responsibilities to family and community. Yet, individual success does not defer to community success. Instead, family and community connections are viewed as sources of strength and encouragement for moving forward and attaining one's goals. This requires though that students are comfortable with who they are and see themselves as having value.

A successful Alaska Native student is an individual who recognizes and identifies who they are and is comfortable with that. That's success: if they're comfortable with who they are, they can succeed in anything...It doesn't necessarily have to be academic success...It could be a person who is extremely happy with what they are doing, what they've chosen to do. And that's having had a choice with what they can do, that's a successful person. (E23)

A successful Native student is one that goes into the school, that is...because of where their parent and grandparent influences, is very much aware of his own language, his or her own language and culture and does not get that leached out of their system, so by the time that they graduate from high school...a successful Native high school graduate is one who feels very good about themselves and feels that they can do anything that they want to, they can be successful as a subsistence hunter-trapper, and that they can become successful as an airline pilot or any other professions. And yet they know exactly who they are and where they are from. Never forget those. (E27)

So, being knowledgeable about and comfortable with who you are is central to feeling that you can set and achieve goals, or be successful. Your value and worth is not solely determined by the goals and expectations others have but also by your own understanding about who you are and what you can contribute. According to respondents, this is not an understanding you can come to on your own. Respondents were clear that students must feel supported and needed in order to embrace their self worth. Family support was the most frequently noted kind of support (11), but respondents also spoke about the importance of community and cultural support (6), as well as support at school (4).

So I think a successful student has a lot of support from their educators, and a lot from their communities and families and Elders in the communities, really talking about the importance of the education and making that sort of a community focus. I think that the success of an Alaska Native student has a lot to do with their support network. (E9)

Just as students have a responsibility to learn and to contribute to their community, their community has a responsibility to express how important education is and to support student development. Respondents explained that this support can manifest itself in investing time in students, in ensuring every student is known by someone, and in fostering relationships between students and a core group of adults. Two respondents specifically mentioned the “power of five”, or of having at least five adults who are in meaningful relationships with each student. The consistency and nature of the relationships seem most important though, as students need to know that there are people they can turn to when they succeed and when they fall short.

All of the other variables and factors of course they have an impact or play a role in whether or not they are successful as we call it in terms of making good grades, showing up for school, persevering, living within the systems they have to. Those things are important and many of them don't survive it if they don't have that family support, extended support, someone in the school they can go to give them the guidance and encouragement that they need, we all know that is a need. (E16)

According to respondents, one of the most central ways this support can come through is when families and community members share cultural knowledge and values with students (10), as this is crucial in helping students understand and take pride in who they are. This is about sharing the history and current realities of Alaska Native peoples with students. The following quote communicates the idea that this knowledge is important both for supporting students' healthy identity development, as well as for sustaining their well being and success.

...for me if I look out at the Alaska Native community...the one's that I see as the most successful are those who are holding onto that culture and tradition, but more than that, that are actually practicing our way of life. By that I mean carrying that traditional wisdom and traditional understandings and actually living them, not just being able to talk about them, but actually being the ones who give the most; being the ones who help out the Elders and are telling the stories and are learning the songs ...if a hundred years from now all of our people have \$100K a year jobs and their own vehicles, but they don't know our language anymore, they don't know our songs, they can't eat our foods because they're too polluted, and the land has been too devastated and they don't know who they are—their clans, their tribes—and where they're coming from, I said, I will have considered myself as a leader a failure for my people. So to me, success has everything to me, really for me on a deeper level, coming to an understanding of what it means to be a human being. What it means to walk on this earth, as part of creation and how to walk with respect for all of our relations; not only other human

beings, but also the land, the spirits and all those things, and if we can walk in that way, then that is a successful human being. (C1)

This respondent points out that knowing your histories and who you are is not only connected to being a successful student, but to being a successful human being. It is about making the time to learn from Elders, to honor the people and stories that have come before, and to find out what you can contribute to the health and progress of your community.

For me, it's someone who, in a knowledgeable and informed way, whether or not they stay in an Alaska Native community, they still understand themselves and they understand our societies as Alaska Natives. And they see themselves as contributing to these societies, as well as to the state and the larger...the country as a whole. But they see that as a part of who they are, and they understand it, they're informed. They have a sense of respect, and if they know our accomplishments and they're aware of our shortcomings, which are...and they have a way of trying to at least understand those, the stresses that have shown up in our communities and our societies. And they are willing to support good efforts, and they are able to, in a sustained thoughtful way, shape the direction of the community. That means calling some of our leaders to task. (E4)

And I think it's having the skills and knowledge to be a productive member of society or the village. It is someone who can earn a living, who can be a contributing member to the village, and someone who's willing to participate in the village system or any system. (E14)

The above quotes paint an image of community that is alive in the present and moving into the future, not as existing solely in the past or as stagnant. Communities are ever growing organizations that rely on their members to “shape” them and keep propelling them forward. Thus, it seems a major part of bearing out one’s responsibility to contribute is sharing and passing on knowledge and supporting others, which might happen on a local or a more global level. Respondents specifically spoke about the importance of contributing to peer learning and attaining success *in order to* provide for and one’s self and family. Again, success is described as connected to making a life for yourself in the context of a community. Below, respondents specifically captured this idea by describing the difference between making a life and making a living:

...I think Oscar Kawagley captures the basic issue when he makes the point that schools historically have been set up to prepare students to make a living for themselves, but that's not enough. Especially in the Native students, there's a whole lot more to it, developing identity and understanding their cultural heritage and so on. And he characterizes it as preparing the students to make a life for themselves. And so Native students' success needs to be understood in a broader context—not just passing tests and getting a job, developing job skills—but helping students prepare to make a life for themselves in a world that's changing and very different from what their parents and grandparents [experienced]. (E21)

And I think that...for me, success has nothing to do with money success, has everything to do...in the quality of the life as far as the way in which we live the life as individuals and also within our communities. It's like you can see some Elder's and some people and you can just tell that they are happy you know, and they have because they are coming from that place you know, having those understandings. (C1)

According to respondents, one difference is that making a life is about developing a confidence in who you are *and* learning about your role in the context of community. The first respondent

above makes clear that this is essential given the changing nature of our communities and world. We cannot know the opportunities or challenges children will face in the future. To adequately equip them, they need to understand their worth and responsibility, as well as ensure they are prepared to pursue a variety of opportunities in terms of education, work, and life paths. One respondent explained:

...I guess basically in defining success for a Native student are they prepared for the real world, do they have the skills to succeed, are they proud of who they are and are they wanting to assist their families, communities. Basically that they have the skills, both professionally and personally to succeed in the future, and that's what I believe, I guess that's how I would define success. (E22)

Again and again, success is connected to knowing who you are, having the skills and knowledge to set and attain future goals, and wanting to make a contribution.

While most respondents (34) affirmed these elements of success, they were divided about how centrally success in school fit into this conception. Some respondents (14) explained that meeting common measures of school success—like attending school, making good grades in challenging courses, and completing high school—is a crucial part of what it means to be a successful Alaska Native student. Yet, these same respondents often talked about individual academic proficiency and cultural proficiency as separate things:

I would view it as a child who is actively engaged in meeting academic and social expectations within the school structure. But beyond that they are rooted in their cultural foundations. That would include something like understanding the importance of tribal values, having Elders as models and cultural bearers of models and learning traditions. (E11)

You know you could have academic success...and then you could have success within a community context and be looked at, you know, within the village perspective as somebody who's meeting the challenges of life in the village and may be doing quite well, passing on traditional knowledge. So, or it could be a person who combines, you know it's a very difficult thing. It could be viewed as an individual thing a student's success, it could be viewed as a community, you know as a group. (E18)

A successful Alaska Native student I guess we have to decide on some sort of definition—somebody who is confident, self assured, they are not intimidated to try new opportunities, they've been successful in the Western school system as well as emerging with a pretty strong cultural background, because to me that is a successful student because that is not an easy task. (C4)

These respondents refer to the “expectations within the school structure” (E11) and the expectations in the “Western school system” (C4). Here, academic knowledge and skills are framed as Western concepts, separate and distinct from what it means to be Alaska Native, or even a member of a community. Others (12) were clear however that education is a tool in meeting the goals students set for themselves, not something that should solely be used to meet system expectations. The measure then is not what certifications students attain or benchmarks they surpass, but how they live:

I guess over time we've always had a consensus that ...a student's success is gauged by what they do upon leaving their education...whether you gauge them a success or not in my opinion would depend on what they do... upon leaving the formal education system, how they use it and how they live. Because...if a person leaves their education feeling confident and by that they have to have a strong self identity and a sense of

place understanding—that you know this is their place—they should leave with a strong work ethic and academics in terms of actually developed skills effective in the work force. Because, in Alaska our work force can be anything from you know subsistence based, to trades, to administration, to education. (E3)

This respondent brings to light the idea that students who understand their worth and responsibility to contribute will demonstrate academic proficiency and evidence a strong “work ethic” and “developed skills” that will enable them to pursue their chosen path. This raises a question about whether schools and others supporting student success should focus narrowly on skill development or should also focus more intently on building and fostering students’ self-worth and understandings about their roles and responsibilities in community. The following respondents warned that too tight of a focus on narrow measures of school success can lead to the systematic devaluing of Alaska Native students that promotes a belief that the knowledge and abilities of Alaska Native people are not valid or useful in a Western context.

One can certainly define failure in terms of not passing tests, but there are students, [student name] we have in [village name] who was diagnosed with FAS [Fetal Alcohol Syndrome]...his grandparents raised him...school was not his thing, there was no way he was going to survive in school. His grandparents raised him in the traditional way. He is now the youngest speaker of the language, the best dancer, the youngest and one of the best hunters and trappers, dog team, and I would have to say that he has been prepared to make a life for himself, that is tailor made to [student name], and he is successful at a level that exceeds...as long as you’re not limiting the definition of successfully passing a test, you have to include [student name] as someone who is successful. Academics alone would not...he would be [a failure]. Which is one of the problems in the whole [adequate yearly] progress criteria and whole emphasis on the tests as the only basis that counts any more. (E21)

I think the big disconnect is trying to—we’re running two cultures, I think we’re running a very fine and noble Native culture, and then we try to bridge that somehow through education into White culture, if you will, or Western culture, and somewhere there is a bit of a disconnect, and I think that is what causes some of the frustration. Because all of your young life you’re doing fine, you’re understanding the things that you’re supposed to do, and then you get tossed into this new world that doesn’t quite click or fit. I think that is what causes some of the problems and frustrations and we see that in alcoholism, suicide, crime, and crime not necessarily because they are trying to gain something but in frustration they are trying to act out, making poor choices. (P4)

Most kids, for that matter, most teachers in my experience, believe it’s an either-or thing. Either you go live with your grandma, hunt, fish, trap, live a subsistence lifestyle and drop out of the global economy, or get with the program, pass your SATs, go to college and get your global economic skills. But one at the cost of the other. And I believe that that’s deadly, that that literally tears kids apart and socially and psychologically and spiritually and ultimately physically kills them. That we’re doing more harm than good in the name of education as long as we bifurcate the kids. (C3)

The ideas here describe a very dangerous situation as Alaska Native students are made to choose between two separate and conflicting cultures—one Native and one Western. One message that comes through is that to be successful in the Western world, Native people are told or believe that they must forego their cultures, traditions, and ways of being in the world. But, as this last respondents points out, this is false and is contributing to the destruction of Alaska Native students and communities. Instead, we must recognize that there is only one world—the world the students will face tomorrow. In order to prepare them to face this

future, we must make sure they know they are valued, needed and supported in making life decisions.

How do schools define Alaska Native student success?

Interestingly, when asked how schools define Alaska Native student success, 77 percent (30 of 39 respondents) discussed indicators of success. Rather than offer what we might typically think of as a definition or a conception of success, these respondents provided an image very narrowly focused on performance measures. They talked about “statistics,” “rates,” and “numbers.” More than half of these respondents (19) specifically cited test scores as the primary characteristic of success, as defined by schools. Others spoke about graduation rates, dropout rates, academic achievement, achieving performance standards, school readiness, and participation in extracurricular activities as common examples of these “numbers”.

I know that just from the experience of being a parent here, I know that the school really addresses numbers... I feel that by just pushing numbers and things, these are the test scores from last year, these are the scores from the year before that and these are where we're at right now, and they're really low. That just really intimidates the students, because they know that they have to get these scores above a certain amount, or a certain average in order to be looked at. They just really make it look like a number and that's what I see as the schools defining student success as. (E10)

They define it in a quantitative way, which is separate from what I just described to you. It's all on measurements of benchmarks, and of course the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam. (E13)

...their success is mainly if [students are] doing what the teacher asked, and glean information from text, comprehend what the teacher is lecturing about, be able to demonstrate that on tests, standardized test. (E15)

Well like, not passing the High School qualifying exam, having lower reading rates by the time they're in third grade, not being ready for school on the kindergarten qualifying assessment, all those kinds of things. (E26)

Sixty-four percent of respondents spoke about school definitions of success in negative ways. In the last quote above, success is described using only using negative examples—“not passing”, “lower reading rates”, and “not being ready”. Some respondents were clearly frustrated with how schools frame success. The heavy emphasis schools place on standardized tests, benchmark exams, and other measures make the focus *school* success rather than *student* success. A few respondents (4) recognized that schools report things like graduation rates and test scores to meet accountability requirements established by the state and federal government. And that many of these requirements—like the disaggregation of test scores—are used to monitor how schools are doing to provide an equitable education for all students. In either case though it seems that when discussing school definitions of success, the focus is on how schools are doing instead of how students are doing. Some respondents (5) talked about this focus on school success as an “assimilation” effort and as a “hopeless thing” because students are made to fit into an image of success that does not affirm who they are and where they come from.

To be honest it's always been like a negative...almost like a hopeless thing. Like whenever we talk about numbers or student success, it's always like, well we're low here, we're low there, we're struggling here, we're struggling there. (E25)

My experience is that the school system always defines Alaska Native student success as such things as test scores, levels of drop outs, which doesn't tell you much about a student who is successful. Because we have a lot of Alaska Native students who drop out or don't complete the school system and that could be for a whole number of reasons. Those students make a good, and I say make a good choice in not continuing in the school system because it's not relating, it's not relevant at all to them. So many of our school systems unfortunately are operating on a real different, system of measuring success that doesn't take into account the Native cultural values, knowledge for the most part, it's just a college prep model that hasn't worked in regular America let alone Alaska. (C4)

So that the idea was, one way to solve the Indian problem was to wipe out their sense of being Indian. So the first boarding school was a part of the Department of War...Education's a helpful thing but then you poison it with the direction that is opposed to Native communities continuing to be Native communities... Most of us have no sense of that history...I think especially the people who are inside carrying out the school policies today. Most of them have no idea of the legacy of schools, the assimilation program and the consequences of it, the reasoning for boarding school...the really tricky part are the people who are well intentioned about this, they work 12 hour days, 6 days a week. They care about their individual kids and they're trying to assimilate them as fast as they can. It's almost, that's the heart breaking part of it in the whole system. (E4)

These respondents point out that the words and ideas used to define Alaska Native student success contribute to an image of deficiency, hopelessness, and failure that can even affect how many educators view their work with students and communities, despite good heartedness and good intentions. According to respondents, this image of success is shaped by federal and state requirements, is connected to the needs of the business community, and often does not reflect community definitions of success.

The school system, as you know with No Child Left Behind, unfortunately takes a lot of the local control on what academic standards are for Alaskans. And those 34 districts which are predominately Alaska Native, before No Child Left Behind they did have some authority on setting the standards, for their student outcomes. But now the federal government has taken that away, and it's extraordinarily frustrating for me, I think it's wrong minded. It's an assimilative model unfortunately. It's putting pressure on schools and again, I'm not so idealistic that I don't understand the realities of having a young person read or write or compute that of course I would like young people to do that, but do they have to do it in English? Who made that law? Sure you've got to be able to count how many fish are in your net, there are many ways to count...I think right now, school systems, school teachers, and remember most of our teachers come from the Lower 48, so did I...we came from somewhere other than Alaska, and now we are serving Alaskan kids, and we bring our culture our talent and moving our paradigm for how the world should work. (C2)

...the biggest problem with No Child Left Behind is that it's national with so little flexibility for local input and local needs. So that you have somebody from out of state saying this is what the standard will be, and maybe that standard isn't all that important in that particular community...so I think some of our schools that are on probation, makes all of the kids in the whole school and the whole village feel inferior. Why should the federal government in Washington be sending that message to our villages in Alaska? That wasn't their intent I grant you, but that's the message they're getting, that we don't measure up. That we're somehow backward or stupid or at least falling behind. (C3)

Yes, I can go in to classrooms now and cannot tell whether it's 1977, '87, '97 or 2007. Seems to me it's the same thing going on. There are standards posters on the wall now, which weren't before, but still it's manned by people who are generally from elsewhere and really don't have a vested interest in the place. (E15)

The words used by the respondents express a perceived danger in allowing external definitions to drive Alaska Native education. Words and phrases like “assimilative,” “inferior,” “backward or stupid,” and “manned by people who...don't really have a vested interest” make plain that Alaska Native students and communities can be devalued when definitions of success do not take into account the voices, hopes, and expectations of local community members. This danger is not imagined as the history of schooling in Alaska—particularly as relates to boarding schools, teacher recruitment, and curriculum development—bears witness to the systematic devaluing of the knowledge and traditions of education Native people hold (Deyhle & Swisher, 1997; Kawagley, 1999; Jacobs, 2003).

Yet, a potentially greater danger may be if Alaska Native people start taking these messages to heart and begin to believe that they are less than and unworthy. Fifty-four percent of respondents countered these images by pointing out that they are in fact inconsistent with the image of success that many Alaska Native people hold. They explained that schools define success differently from Alaska Native people, use external definitions of success originating from outsiders, and even apply definitions that make students feel inferior or encourage them to ignore their community's history. One respondent summarized a primary difference:

When we do that [focus solely on test scores], we turn students out, we're just adding to the drop out rate, because we're narrowing education and schooling down to such a limited sort of activities, that students don't see the relevance of it. So, it's not that I would reject having the test as being an appropriate element, part of that, but that in and of itself works against, in my estimation, against the whole No Child Left Behind [philosophy]...and that the test scores should be seen as a means, one means to an end, not as an end in and of themselves. (E21)

So the test scores and common measures of school success can be useful as a tool. However, a narrow focus on test scores can turn into the pursuit of school success instead of student success—without a clear focus on students' learning and developmental needs. An important question becomes, ‘how can we use other measures of student and community success in concert with these existing measures of school success to support student learning and growth?’ One major area of concern for respondents is that this narrow focus on test scores can contribute to a culture of low expectations for Alaska Native students in schools, and for rural Alaska Native students specifically (8). These lowered expectations can have catastrophic results.

There's been a complete economic and social revolution that's occurred the last 20 years. No one would have predicted that Alaska Natives would be generating 1-3 billion dollars annually to the Alaskan economy, and a growing part of it. And the schools are still graduating Alaska Natives and non-Natives to be completely ignorant of this transformation, so it's not neutral or even positive, it's a negative. They're actually teaching—at the end of 12 years, if you've got a majority of students who are Alaska Native and they haven't read a single Alaska Native author, at that point you're in ethnic cleansing. (E4)

I'll tell you that I think we need to continually need to struggle and do better on our expectations for all students, that includes Alaska Native students, we need to have the same high expectations for them, as for any other student, no matter what their

background is educationally, or socio-economically, or culturally, or if they have just come to us from rural Alaska. I think we have a long way to go. (E17)

I think because if we're going to compare ourselves to the Western students, we are behind probably, we're going to take some tests, but that doesn't necessarily mean that we're not as intelligent. Like when we had one meeting once, I remember my...students knew they had to take the Benchmark exams and both years, my...students compared from the beginning of the year to the end of the year, they had excelled tremendously. When I first got the news back on how they did, they were like, 'they're in the thirtieth percentile, they're struggling with their math', but they never put out in front that, they jumped ten percent over the year. It was always to me, we being Alaska Native, I'm very sensitive when it comes to where I feel like I'm being talked down on or overlooked. So I always kept that in mind when we're talking about test results, or how our students are doing and I'd never want to focus on trying to find negatives. (E25)

In the first and second quote above, respondents emphasize the importance of holding high expectations and the impact this can have on the experiences of Alaska Native students in schools. For these respondents, holding high expectations means sharing with students important and positive elements of the Alaska Native community and working to provide an equitable educational experience for all students. The last respondent above points out that a culture of low expectations for students in a school can also have a negative impact on teachers who might otherwise have high hopes for Alaska Native students. This may ultimately result in a self-perpetuating cycle where the expectation of failure can lead to failure, which can then produce lowered expectations and on and on. While many respondents (38 percent) struggled to identify examples of effective schools for Alaska Native students, no respondent claimed that there are no examples of promise or that there are not some really skilled and caring educators working to support student learning. From the tone and words used to discuss school definitions of success, to respondents' perceptions that the focus is on the school over the student, to this later discussion of low expectations, it is apparent that respondents see a culture of low expectations and failure when asked to describe how schools define Alaska Native success that can overwhelm affirming and positive efforts of individual teachers and staff. As such, respondents later spoke powerfully about the importance of school-community partnerships. In response to this question, a small number (3) specifically suggested here that education must be the responsibility of the Alaska Native community, and that schools should respond to the needs as determined by the community.

I asked this question in writing for a book I'm starting to write with a friend: how is it that our schools can take bright, beautiful five year olds, and in ten years make them depressed, suicidal fifteen year olds...And I think it's time for us to say, schooling is killing our kids.... right now we're focusing so much on that narrow, college bound academic, we're alienating and even harming the majority of our students...[we're] burying them at the age of fifteen...the parents are standing on the sidelines wringing their hands saying, well it's out of our control. And to the extent that schooling takes that responsibility away from the community and away from the parents, it's deadly. (C3)

I had excellent teachers...The successful ones are the ones that actually tune into a community that wanted to be a part of the community, as opposed to the 'I want to change your community'. (P4)

Seven respondents did acknowledge that schools have an important role in supporting students' skill development and explained that some schools define success as skill acquisition—are students developing their language, literacy, and learning skills? This is different, however,

from other participants' notions that skill acquisition is something that comes about, or is a result of, students knowing their worth and understanding their role in the community.

When I in fact got the data from our project to back this up, we've argued that if a school attends to the larger kinds of questions and issues and does a good job of it, provides a well rounded education in that context, those students will pass any test you put in front of them or be able to deal with all these other things that we intend to narrow it down and say that's the only thing. (E21)

There were some respondents (12) who spoke about schools' definitions of Alaska Native student success as positive and affirming. They mentioned that schools are interested in helping students to do things like attain cultural knowledge, become contributing members of society, and participate in extracurricular activities.

Our school we want them to get the basics from our curriculum, and with the basics in the curriculum we've always given them a quality education; we have so many credits they have to acquire, we want them to pass the high school qualifying exam of course, and encourage them to do extra curricular activities. (E19)

But, as is clear in the above quote, many of these focus on getting students to demonstrate proficiency on school-determined measures of success and on meeting benchmarks. These can be very useful elements in monitoring and guiding student learning and development, but in the way that respondents discussed them, they must be connected to an effort to help students live their lives in better and more meaningful ways.

What should schools prepare Alaska Native students for?

According to respondents, schools should prepare Alaska Native students:

- To pursue their own goals and have a choice in a variety of options (77 percent);
- To value and remain in their communities (64 percent); and
- To be confident and well rounded (54 percent).

Here again we heard the importance of providing various opportunities for students to choose a life path, of fostering a responsibility to contribute to local communities, and of building their confidence. These ideas are consistent with how respondents define Alaska Native student success. Respondents were explicit here about the need to prepare students to value and remain in their communities, which connects to earlier ideas about supporting students to make choices about the kinds of lives they want to create for themselves. As such, they should have opportunities to make a life in a rural community context just as they have opportunities to do so in an urban or suburban context. Respondents also extended the earlier discussion about students needing to understand and embrace their self-worth by pointing out how critical it is for their identity development that they see their cultures and communities as living and growing, as holding promise for their futures. They specifically explained that students should be encouraged to take on leadership roles in their local communities, to pursue jobs in their villages, and to contribute to the capacity of the community to create new opportunities. According to respondents, a crucial part of providing this encouragement and support is explicitly working against the idea that the only way to be successful is for students to leave their villages or to live in urban communities.

Some of these communities, they know that students aren't all gonna go to college. We push that and higher ed is a good way to go, and more education's great. But look at the things that are so important to our Alaska Native culture; crafts, the artistry, the

natural beauty that's there, the working with the animals, the different styles that are out there. So, there's one push and that's what is the focus, and everyone that falls out of there either didn't make the cut—is how sometimes students are made to believe. (E24)

They should be facilitating better lives for their students. And the better lives can't come from a strictly Western definition, it has to take in account that they come from a different culture, which has different values than Western society has and that they are going back to the villages and they should be able to take back what is good about Western civilization and integrate it into their daily lives. We need health care in the villages, we need education in the villages, we need administration and economic development, there's all kinds of Western information that can be applied to those areas, and it's also income-producing jobs that are going to be in the economy in rural areas. If a student desires to go back and live in the village, we should give him the ability to make a living, which includes the subsistence lifestyle, and includes some of the things that Western civilization offers us. (E20)

We have another related thing, where, especially rural communities, we have a brain drain, or something going on a lot of people are leaving rural Alaska to urban cities for more opportunities. They want more opportunities for the children as well so the future of rural communities is in danger but how do you keep, you need strong leadership at the village level as well. (C4)

The second respondent above talks about Native and Western culture as having different values, but that there are things to be gained in sharing knowledge and building communities through this shared knowledge. This is a very different perspective than one that says that knowledge of one is more important or more valid than knowledge of the other, or even that these are separate and always conflicting cultures. One problematic result of viewing these as separate and conflicting cultures is that higher education become a Western arena, and success in higher education is often framed as adopting Western values and ways of knowing. According to respondents, this can ultimately leave large numbers of students unsupported and uneducated. Also, because there are few options for post-secondary education or training in many rural communities, students who choose to pursue these opportunities must leave their homes. There are few jobs to return to after attaining degrees and certifications, contributing to "brain drain", which can weaken the economic and community prospects of rural villages (Alaska Native Policy Center, 2004). This is not to say that schools should not prepare Alaska Native students to go to college, but that students need to be prepared to pursue a variety of options, both within and outside of their home communities, which might include providing more higher education opportunities in rural areas.

Several respondents (18) asserted that schools should also prepare Alaska Native students for opportunities within the world of work. For these respondents, this preparation includes providing career counseling, sharing information about job opportunities and vocational programs, and developing students' workplace and technical skills.

I think they should actually prepare them for life and reality. That there is more responsibilities than just getting good grades or what is going to help you get out and get into college or secondary education, but they need to focus more on, you're going to have to get a job. I know there are some of those, what we call family living classes, where they prepare you for life after school in a sense. But it's not to the extent that the teachers work with local community programs where we can have high schoolers going to school part time, or even just mentoring programs, or volunteering to get credits for coming to an office and doing some filing or typing up papers. I think that would be a great goal for the schools in this area to prepare students. (E10)

They again should prepare them for the business world, and the business world is also inclusive of college...I'm not jumping over that. They should prepare them for the rigors of college, for the rigors of being independent. (E13)

This last respondent points out that being prepared for the world of work is just as much about being ready to pursue a career as it is being ready to be independent—to provide for yourself and family and to make a contribution. Just as with academic achievement, it is a means to an end of making a life. Respondents were clear that this requires that students know about opportunities, understand what it takes as far as knowledge and training, and feel a sense of confidence in themselves to pursue these opportunities. As is apparent earlier, this confidence comes about as students see themselves and their cultures as having value. And, as respondents suggest below, this confidence can enable students to face new challenges with strength and determination.

...schools should be preparing kids, it's not an easy world out here, it's a very competitive world. And there's sort of a mythology that if you have the right skills you can compete, it's not true. If you have the right self-image, if you have the right level of confidence you can compete. (C2)

I think schools should be doing more to prepare Native students to feel self confident and assured that they can pretty much go where ever they want to go and feel successful. (C4)

So public schools make sure that every kid who leaves their doors feels...empowered, feels strong, feels like they can handle anything that comes their way from a tragedy in a car accident to winning the lottery. Can we? Do they? And it's not a skill set because nobody knows what skills they're going to need when they get into that car accident. It's more of a mental release that hey, I was told that all through my life I was told that I will get through it all, and here I go, so I'm going to get through it all. This what we do, this is what me and my people do we get through it all. Sometimes it is enduring, sometimes it is persevering, and it's uh, it's real hard to educate to that vision because this is more how we do schools, than what we teach in schools. It's more the attitudes that we all convey in that edifice about that kid. (C2)

Most respondents (31 of 39) did not say explicitly what schools should do. Instead, they spoke generally about what kinds of goals schools should work towards, which centered on communicating value to students and ensuring they have a choice in life paths—which is more about “how we do schools” and the “attitudes we...convey”. When respondents did talk about what schools should do they mentioned that schools should affirm various learning styles; provide positive learning environments; and convey supportive attitudes about students. These again are primarily about valuing students and responding to their individual learning needs.

Sometimes a learning atmosphere in the school is interesting; if there is race prejudice floating around the school it makes a bad atmosphere for the minorities. And it's well for the school system to provide ways that the atmosphere of learning on the school grounds that there is no hatred...no slangy words thrown, racial slurs and the kind, shouldn't be there. If it does it's very harmful to the students. (LD1)

I think our counselors definitely need more cultural training and to really look past maybe a shy Alaska Native student you know, or one that is just not comfortable advocating for themselves, or if a student is very talented, many times as I understand, and I could be wrong, the Native view of the world people do not brag about their

accomplishments so it's really important for our educators to realize talent and encourage those young people to pursue scholarships at the highest level of educational opportunities. (E17)

By teaching student teachers—or what do you call them paraprofessionals—of how to look at different learning styles, like the Sylvan Learning programs that are going on down here...I don't know if they're up in Alaska...it shows students what success is. Then a teacher can see that when they...a paraprofessional can see that when they become a teacher, and know what to look for. Students the way they look at you, you can tell the light didn't come on. (E24)

In the way respondents answered this question, it was clear that many believe that schools cannot educate students in isolation from the efforts of local communities. Several respondents (19) explained that local communities have an essential role in articulating and communicating values, in directing and working in partnership with school leaders and staff, and in continuing to build local capacity (e.g., develop leaders, teachers, curriculum, and direction) to prepare students to make a variety of choices. Five specifically stated that Alaska Native communities should direct and control schooling.

...but for me I feel like our real liberation, our real capacity as Indigenous peoples only come when we're really self-determined as Indigenous peoples again, when we're defining what is knowledge, what is truth, and what qualifications there needs to be to be passing on knowledge that will prepare our young people to survive in these times in a way that carries our spirit...I wish...that the 1.2 million that comes into our community for education would just come into the laps of our tribal leaders, and our tribal leaders to say, okay, we're going to run a school where we pay \$20k a year to ten Elders rather than having just you know, 2 or 3 Western teachers in that year, to have them full time in there working with our young people and at the same time, bring in you know, people like myself of the younger generation who have Western degrees, some of us with bachelor's, some of us with master's...to also be in that school and to really be able to work with that community in shifting the educational system...I think that as long as we're stuck following into another person's definition and model, then we're going to struggle... I think that absolutely it's full tribal control of the education systems. And I know that not all of our communities would be prepared today. And a lot of them would probably say, "No, we're not ready we don't want to do that," but for those who are ready and want to make that transition, I think it would be one of the most important things that could happen—is for that shift—could occur. Because then it gives, it places that understanding that as Indigenous peoples we have the capacity, and the knowledge, and the wisdom, and the energy to want to, to be there and provide the best forms of education and passing of knowledge onto our younger generations. (C1)

This sentiment came out most clearly when we asked respondents about the characteristics of effective schools for Alaska Native students.

What are the characteristics of effective schools for Alaska Native students?

Respondents seemed to struggle with this question most of all. At first, we thought it might be because of their own personal experiences in schools, or because it is often easier to discuss what is wrong with schools than what might be working. Yet, as we listened to the responses, many participants seemed to struggle because of their ideas about how this topic should be framed. One consistent theme in their responses, which we will discuss more deeply in a moment, was that a discussion of the characteristics of effective schools must be framed by a discussion about the goals of education and roles and responsibilities of those involved in

supporting students in reaching these goals. To some, posing this question in this way was like seeking out a ‘magic formula’ for structuring schools, when the issues might have more to do with the culture of community-school relations, the overarching purpose of education, and beliefs about who is responsible for Alaska Native student success. Thus, some themes that emerged from this discussion centered on school connections to families and communities, relevancy of schooling to local needs and values, and the support systems and mechanisms at work to foster community partnerships and a shared responsibility for student success.

In describing what specifically characterizes effective schools for Alaska Native students, respondents spoke about educational goals—for what purpose do effective schools educate students? They then talked about the work of schools—or what roles and responsibilities schools take on given these educational goals and objectives. Finally, respondents explained what school-specific characteristics are necessary to do this work. Again, respondents asserted that a question about the characteristics of effective schools must be framed by a discussion about the purpose of education, as well as the roles and responsibilities.

Articulating the goals of education. According to respondents, the goals of education should be to prepare students for a variety of opportunities (41 percent); to develop skills (26 percent); and to foster social responsibility (9 percent). Preparing students for a variety of opportunities is about ensuring students know about educational and job opportunities, have choices in their paths, and value education. For these respondents, students need to understand that learning connects to life, and that the opportunities they have through education better prepare them to have a variety of choices in life.

Effective schools make school meaningful to individual kids. That is not a huge task to overcome. It doesn't mean that we talk just about our culture or specific things that are interesting to those specific kids; it's about making a connection from reading, writing and math, and demonstrating to kids how this is actually going to impact them in life outside of the walls of the school. If you do that and move them forward through their academics and non-academics at a pace that sets a high bar but recognized they are individuals—we all don't learn at the same pace—if you recognize that and engage kids so you don't frustrate them by either moving too rapidly or too slowly, kids will get it and they'll go much further than any bar we set for them. But they have to feel it's valued not just by teachers, but by community, by parents. The expectations have to be there. (P3)

To be prepared to choose a life path, students need to develop several skills including language skills—Native language and English language acquisition—literacy skills, music and arts training, and job skills. Effective schools also guide students in understanding how to apply their skills to contribute to their community and society, fostering social responsibility.

People have to learn—when I say people, I mean we're talking about Alaska Natives—that you've got to be able to do something, produce something, offer a service in return for your welfare, for your own earning capabilities. I think it's the...I mean everyone needs to have some kind of a job. We all have to produce something. We're all taking something away from Earth in this life, and we all have to put something back. And that's usually in the form of some kind of labor, whether it's mental or physical. This needs to be impressed upon Alaska Native students. (B1)

Reframing the work of schools. Respondents explained the primary work of schools is to respect and partner with local communities. Seventy-four percent explained that schools must reflect and respect community values, while 44 percent said that schools must work in partnership with communities. Partnering with local communities supports the work schools do

directly with students, which according to respondents should focus on building student confidence and sense of self (18) and to support and respond to individual learning needs (13).

Respondents note that in order to build students' confidence, schools must provide a sense of belonging, a way for students and staff to connect, and supports along the way. For example, respondents talked about making sure the community and culture is reflected in schools and classrooms and developing trust and caring between staff and students through mentorship or small group initiatives. This is important for helping students connect education to their lives.

Well, it would have to be culturally relevant and you'd have to be able to associate, like when you want to picture yourself in a classroom, like in your community, you probably want pictures of local Elders or your own Native heritage, like arts and crafts. More local people coming in as speakers. Making that connection in the classroom. As soon as you walk into a classroom you can tell whether you feel welcome or whether you feel a little out of place...just that feeling of okay, this is a place where I'm going to be learning. And if you feel at home it makes a whole world of difference, and using people from the community to come in and share their learning experience, share their knowledge, that gives ownership. These are my people, they're smart people, they know a lot of information. So that belonging is very important. (E25)

Respondents also explained that schools should have various checkpoints for monitoring students' progress and needs. If a student misses several days of school, someone needs to check in with the family. If a student's progress declines or stagnates, someone needs to talk with the student and the family. If a student seems dejected or withdrawn, someone needs to find out what is going on. If a student accomplishes a major goal, the school and family should celebrate together.

In addition to providing this sense of belonging and being cared for, schools should work to support students' individual learning needs. According to respondents, this really begins with helping students understand their worth and value *as students*. Specifically respondents noted that schools can work to provide a personalized learning environment, to meet students where they are as far as their learning needs, and to engage students. Additionally, schools should help students understand their worth and value *as Alaska Natives*. For respondents, this includes instilling pride, affirming different learning styles, and providing role models.

...where all the staff knew all the students names, all the students knew all of the adults and they all felt there was at least one adult they could go to, to find somebody to talk to or to listen to them and where they felt comfortable being themselves in school and not feeling that they had to conform to everybody else's peer pressure, but they really felt they were able to be themselves...the teachers and the staff truly take an interest in each of the students, and they really get to learn [students'] own learning styles, what makes them tick if you will and what gets them motivated to help them be more successful—something that is a personalized learning environment where everybody knows each others' names. (E17)

The message here appears to be that students who do not feel valued as learners or as people, may not see the importance of education and may not strive to learn; while those that feel they have adults who know them and support them will develop the inner strength and confidence to persevere.

This can be an overwhelming set of responsibilities for school staff to take on. Respondents recognized this and explained that schools cannot and should not be solely responsible for ensuring students feel valued as learners and as Alaska Native people. Alaska Native leaders and community members have an important role to play in guiding and working with schools to

support student learning. Respondents were clear that effective schools must then reflect and respect community values and work in partnership with communities. This can mean fostering and welcoming community involvement, partnering with regional and cultural organizations, and providing the expectation that parents be involved with their children's education. It might also mean ensuring that schools are being guided by local, community educational values.

I think an effective school would take into consideration the population that is being served, specifically Alaska Natives. A school within the community that has a healthy relationship for the population, their culture, their values, and they embrace that in everything that they do and encourage students to succeed and meet whatever the requirements are within the school...But I think there needs to be a recognition of the students' cultural identity that needs to be embraced, and they need to be aware of who they are and be proud of who they are, to succeed. (C5)

Treating them with respect, first of all. Again, honoring who they are, recognizing and knowing about the Native culture and what role it plays in their lives. (E22)

So for these respondents, the school is not the starting place for education, but is instead a partner with students and the community in developing a meaningful educational experience. This partnership is not necessarily about increasing the efforts of school staff and leaders to reach out to family and community members, though this might be an important piece of the larger process. Instead, the focus is on developing joint goals and responsibilities for supporting student learning and success.

One example that several respondents cited involved the Fairbanks community. The Fairbanks Native Association, Tanana Chiefs Conference, the Doyon Foundation, the Association of Interior Native Educators, and the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District came together to form the Overall Alaska Native Education Committee after members of these various groups attended an Education Summit hosted by First Alaskans Institute. With some additional partners, including researchers at the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative, this group has worked to establish the Effie Kokrine Charter School, which has a critical mass of Native teachers, a curriculum based on regional cultural values, and relationships with Elders and other community members that support student learning. An important precursor to this school was the development of several materials published by the Alaska Native Knowledge Network based on the Alaska Cultural Standards and Guidelines. These standards and guidelines were developed by Alaska Native educators and community members to identify how communities and schools can work together to meet the needs of students. Materials are available for guiding schools, teachers, and school boards in this process, as well as related to developing early childhood and language revitalization programs.

Through their discussions of the Effie Kokrine Charter School and other community-based efforts, respondents shifted the focus away from the school and onto the role of the community in directing education.

[Success is] having an informed sense of who we are, and the risk that we face because we are dual citizens. We're citizens of our tribe; we're citizens of the United States. And this is an uneasy place to be, but it's a whole lot better to be informed of that sort of precarious position than to be ignorant of it...So the effective education in a tribe that takes responsibility, tribal groups, and Alaska Native communities that are asking, 'how do we effectively educate our members, our people?' That's the right question, and school is a footnote to that question. (E4)

Schools are an important partner in this, but respondents were clear that schools cannot and should not work in isolation from parents and community members.

Describing what it takes to do the work. Effective schools for Alaska Native students, according to respondents, must have several elements in place in order to meet the goal of preparing students for a variety of life paths by supporting individual learning needs and working with communities. Sixty-percent of respondents noted that school effectiveness depends on who the school staff and leaders are and how they understand their work with students and communities. Respondents spoke explicitly about how important it is for schools to:

- Employ community teachers (8);
- Prepare culturally responsive teachers (6);
- Be guided by knowledgeable, local, and collaborative leaders (5);
- Provide dedicated staff to guide students (5);
- Retain teachers (4);
- Be staffed by good teachers (4); and
- Ensure students and staff members connect (3).

The consistent theme here is that an effective school is able to recruit, support, and retain capable, committed, and caring educators. We heard over and over again about the pain and damage caused by the revolving door of teachers in many Native communities, as well as the powerful impact locally-based, Native teachers can have. Respondents explained that these teachers are already familiar with the community context and thus more likely to stay, and they are also familiar with the cultures and needs of students.

I think it would definitely have to have teaching staff, not just support staff but teaching staff from the community. Because what I found, and I even go back to my own experience in my K-12 education, I found that there was more expected of me as a student from the teachers who were from my home area. Because they're not just channeling through or—you see what I mean? It isn't just a job, they know who you are and what you're capable of, and they want more for you. (E3)

But it doesn't mean I'm saying that non-Natives are not good teachers. My own experience, my own teaching, I always felt that the Native teachers were just more in tune, even though they don't have to say much, just by their actions, how they treat others in the classroom. You could tell that they understand, that they know, that they relate. Like with my students, just eye contact when they're behaving a certain way, like oh my god, you know like how you do with your own kids, that kind of thing. So it's just that I think that connection, that history, the background that you share, the values that we share is very important and I think that's one of the great reasons that we need more Alaska Native teachers. (E25)

Additionally, respondents believe that it is essential that schools are guided by culturally knowledgeable and collaborative leaders. They spoke about the importance of school board members being knowledgeable about the cultural values and needs of the local community and having the authority to make important education decisions. Two specifically talked about importance of a collaborative principal. For example, one respondent shared a story about the principal in the Village of Marshall who encourages students to incorporate their experiences with subsistence fishing and hunting into their school learning. A successful moose hunt extends into a lesson in anatomy and biology. Elders and parents are seen as valued resources and partners in education.

Thirty-eight percent of respondents also emphasized the importance of fostering a welcoming learning environment. Effective schools are those that hold high expectations, emphasize education and learning, foster a sense of belonging, and encourage peer support and learning.

Essentially, respondents explained that students need to feel that school staff believe they can learn.

The expectation was that she could learn and she would learn...they knew you could learn. And so the expectation was there. And I'm not sure we have a lot of expectations for our students right now. (E7)

I know a lot of graduates from Mt. Edgecumbe...they're excellent people. And they have great work ethics, and they're just good human beings. And those are no nonsense schools, or they were at least. And the emphasis is not upon making a real good basketball player or what have you. The emphasis is upon education and learning. (B1)

To me what's really important is are we really setting a good tone for our Native kids that they are truly welcomed. Are we really meeting them at the door? Are we really embracing them where they're at? Are we already slapping a special education label on these children? What kind of labeling are we really placing on these kids? Do we really see success, or do we see Indian Education dollar signs? And are we really providing the services that are due them, whether they're gifted, right in the middle, or just struggling because they want to go back to the village. (P1)

[T]he Alaska Native engineering program at UAA is an incredible example of what can be done when you motivate somebody, you instill a pride in them and you have a little open competition, and that is so important. And you have a...there's a certain peer pressure, but there's a peer camaraderie too to help and assist each other. I think that's a fantastic program. (B1)

From these responses, we hear the importance of staff providing meaningful supports for student learning that make use of all available resources, including other students.

Finally, 32 percent of respondents said that effective schools require an effective curriculum. Respondents defined an effective curriculum as one that is primarily culturally relevant and also place-based. According to these respondents, developing a culturally relevant curriculum is one important way to respond to individual student learning needs and to reflect the cultural values of the local community. They explained that students need to see themselves and the familiar reflected in the school curriculum in order to feel that they are valued and to understand how learning connects to life.

Well, I think we need to have a whole curriculum in what I would call a traditional education. All of which will include math, science and language arts. You're not going to be able to do any of those things without math, science, and language arts. We've just never been explicit about it. What's mathematical about a hunt; what's scientific and biological about fishing? I mean we could design a whole biology course on the life cycle of the salmon; the life cycle of the bear; the life cycle of the caribou; the life cycle...the vegetation of the...we could do medicinal uses of plants. (C3)

I guess there is some philosophy of education that says you have to meet every child where their knowledge level is in order for there to be relevance to what you're teaching. So for a lot of children we don't reach that zone. We come in and we're teaching "Hat's for Sale" in the books. And yes, we have to make that connection about what that book is and what does it mean, and why are we studying this book. And unless you have a good teacher who understands and who can make those connections for those kids, connections aren't made. (E14)

We see some important connections between this characteristic and the others that respondents cited. First, locally-based, Native educators are essential in developing a culturally relevant curriculum. It takes time, but respondents cited recent efforts in the Yukon-Kuskokwim region and elsewhere in Alaska that have produced powerful impacts on student learning, on community and school partnerships, and on the educational experiences of Alaska Native students and communities. Second, in order to foster a learning environment, schools must guide students in understanding the importance of education and its relevance to their lives. A culturally relevant curriculum can help students see themselves in learning and begin to understand the opportunities and possibilities available to them through education, especially if the curriculum draws on place-based examples and resources. One respondent spoke extensively about how powerful a curriculum would be that drew on the specific attributes of a particular region—coastal, interior, arctic, island. Imagine the history, economics, science, politics, language, and art lessons!

Lastly, a culturally relevant curriculum can help to address systemic issues because the collaboration and effort that it takes to develop such a curriculum requires that local community members—including Native Elders and educators—work with school staff and leaders to create this curriculum and share knowledge. These kinds of joint efforts are essential in addressing systemic issues having to do with inequitable resources (e.g., teachers, facilities, and training), inconsistent support for local education, and unmet educational needs of students.

Five respondents raised specific concerns about students in rural communities suffering most because of these systemic issues. They explained that rural schools are not meeting the needs of Alaska Native students, in large part because teachers come and go. Four respondents wondered about school size and whether overly large or too small schools could provide a quality education. These respondents explained that schools should not be too large that they prevent meaningful exchanges between students and staff, or too small that they cannot support staff or school programs and limit students to fewer schooling opportunities. Finally, three respondents lamented the fact that promising initiatives had ended when staff or funding went away.

Then you've got schools who have done some pretty amazing things, that are excellent models. The problem has been that they're on again, off again, because they're dependent on one or two [leaders] with a good combination of teachers at some point and time, like the Russian Mission principal and Elders who were able to pull it off and do some amazing things for five years or so. Those are models for the moment, how to extend their reach...We need a whole lot more Russian Missions, we need Russian Missions that stay in business. (E21)

These examples raise questions about whether or not systemic issues can be solved by the system itself. In answer, respondents spoke over and over again about the importance of joint efforts between schools and communities to transform education:

Big strong working relationship, partnership between teachers, parents, community members and students. Creating a whole new kind of extended family. Create a whole new kind of extended family and context. (E28)

Promising Examples of Effectiveness

Thirteen of the 34 participants who responded to this question also hesitated and struggled to identify any specific examples of effective schools for Alaska Native students. Several respondents (9) wanted to talk specifically about the roles and responsibilities of Alaska Native communities rather than the characteristics of effective schools. Some mentioned their own

experiences in schools, others referred to what they knew about schooling in other countries, and still others spoke about what they had experienced or heard about particular schools in Alaska. With some time and a little prodding these examples emerged:

- Effie Kokrine Charter School; Fairbanks, Alaska (4)
- Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC); Seward, Alaska (3)
- Mt. Edgecumbe; Sitka, Alaska (3)
- Elitnaurvik Within East, East Anchorage High; Anchorage, Alaska (3)
- King Career Center; Anchorage, Alaska (2)
- American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) (1)
- Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative (AKRSI); University of Alaska, Fairbanks (1)
- Bowman Elementary School; Anchorage, Alaska (1)
- Partners for Success Program; Anchorage, Alaska (1)
- Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program (ANSEP), University of Alaska (1)
- Chugach School District; Anchorage, Alaska (1)
- Cultural camps (1)
- Haskell Indian Nations University; Lawrence, Kansas (1)
- Native Student Services (NSS); University of Alaska, Anchorage (1)
- Rural Student Services (RSS); University of Alaska, Fairbanks (1)
- Russian Mission School; Russian Mission, Alaska (1)
- Village of Marshall School; Marshall, Alaska (1)
- Ya Ne Dah Ah; Chickaloon, Alaska (1)

This is a varied list of schools, programs, and services—from community-controlled schools and programs, to traditional public schools and districts, to public boarding schools, to school programs, to university student support programs. Yet, there do appear to be themes within this list. First, there are several schools and initiatives cited that are based on community and cultural values, employ Native teachers and educators, and have meaningful community partnerships—and in some cases are controlled by the community itself.

- Effie Kokrine Charter School; Fairbanks, Alaska (4)
- Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative (AKRSI); University of Alaska, Fairbanks (1)
- Cultural camps (1)
- Gualik Language Immersion (1)
- Haskell Indian Nations University; Lawrence, Kansas (1)
- Russian Mission School; Russian Mission, Alaska (1)
- Village of Marshall School; Marshall, Alaska (1)
- Ya Ne Dah Ah; Chickaloon, Alaska (1)

Next, vocational and technical schools offer students career skills and support with high school completion and/or job placement. Respondents explained that in these schools learning can appear more relevant to daily life and may keep students more engaged.

- Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC); Seward, Alaska (3)
- King Career Center; Anchorage, Alaska (2)

There is a set of initiatives that are school-based that outreach to parents and communities, as well as foster student and staff connections to make learning relevant and caring.

- Elitnaurvik, School within a School (SWAS), East Anchorage High; Anchorage, Alaska (3)

- Bowman Elementary School; Anchorage, Alaska (1)
- Partners for Success Program; Anchorage, Alaska (1)

There are also schools applying national reform models, like Total Quality Management and a Quality Schools Model, that emphasize comprehensive school improvement, standards-based reform, and individualized learning supports for students.

- Mt. Edgecumbe; Sitka, Alaska (3)
- Chugach School District; Anchorage, Alaska (1)

Finally, respondents also referenced university-based retention programs. These programs offer support to students in content areas like science and engineering coursework, as well as social and emotional support by providing a community-base and guidance.

- American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) (1)
- Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program (ANSEP), University of Alaska (1)
- Native Student Services (NSS); University of Alaska, Anchorage (1)
- Rural Student Services (RSS); University of Alaska, Fairbanks (1)

Discussion & Implications

Alaska Native people want their students and communities to flourish and prosper. This study was commissioned by Alaska Native people to gather information and begin to document what community members and advocates believe about and hope for Alaska Native student success. This study also came about to determine definitions and measures of student success that builds on student and community assets, rather than deficiencies.

What has emerged is a definition of Alaska Native student success that many respondents view as being very different from the existing school conception of success. A successful Alaska Native student is one who can set and achieve goals because she knows her own worth and value, understands her responsibility to her community, and is prepared to pursue whatever life path she chooses. This image of success is distinct because it fundamentally challenges the idea that there are two separate worlds that Alaska Native students must bridge. In the media, educational research, policy, and daily discussions about schooling these two worlds could be the 'Western world' and the 'Native world'; or they might be the 'school world' and the 'community world'; or they could be the 'world of individual academic achievement' and the 'world of collective success'. Whatever form they take, they are framed as having competing and conflicting values that students must learn to navigate and somehow hold together in order to be successful. The definition that respondents offered, however, sees individual and community success as woven together, unable to be separated from one another.

Furthermore, this image of student success affirms the fact that schools cannot and should not bear sole responsibility for supporting student learning. When they do, they are often unable to see beyond a narrow focus on individual academic success as it is currently defined because that is often what they are mandated and charged to focus on. Knowledge, intelligence, and motivation become 'Western' attributes. Words like merit, competition, and proficiency are held up as goals. Students are deemed successful based on how they perform—or what they do—not who they are as people or how they live.

Respondents were clear that, in order to be successful, students must know that they are valued and have responsibilities. They were also clear that schools working in isolation from local communities cannot support this success. **So, an effective school is one that both responds to individual student learning needs and works in partnership with local communities.** This partnership should not be cursory or an afterthought, but instead should impact the core work of schools—the recruitment and training of staff, the learning environment, the curriculum, and other major educational decision-making.

At the same time, Alaska Native leaders and communities have a responsibility to partner with schools and provide direction for the education of Alaska Native students. Several of respondents spoke about self-determination as Native people controlling schools and making educational decisions for their students. For others, self-determination in education is about sharing family and community histories with students, helping them to understand who they are and that they are needed so that they will have strength to draw on in figuring out who they will become and what they will contribute. This does not have to be an either-or situation, as some would say that in order to share these histories, Native people need to control the schooling of students. And this is not necessarily about exiting the system of schooling because many Native people and communities see the value in sharing knowledge across communities and understand that we are becoming a global society where boundaries of information and technology are more fluid. What does it mean to be an Alaska Native person in the 21st Century and beyond? What kinds of educational needs do Alaska Native people have? And how can the community of leaders, educators, students, and others work together to improve education?

These are the questions that should drive a discussion about effective schools for Alaska Native students. And if there is one take-away from this report, it should be that we must engage in meaningful, ongoing, active dialogue about how we define and support Alaska Native student success. At the very least, there are multiple conceptions of success out there (e.g., individual success, collective success, success as a good human being), and whichever one we hold determines how we think about the goals of education, the work of schooling, and what it takes to do the work. Without constant dialogue, we may be working towards separate ends, leaving students without the support and guidance they need to become healthy and contributing leaders and members of our communities.

A number of communities around the State have begun these dialogues, and a few promising initiatives have emerged as a result. There are clear limitations of using school success as a proxy for student and community well being because the focus is on the school, not the student or the community. The measure of effectiveness of these schools and initiatives should be who their students are and how they “make a life for themselves.” Respondents spoke about specific measures and indicators of success, and while that full analysis is not provided here, Chart 1 that accompanies this report captures many of the outcomes respondents and the literature on American Indian and Alaska Native education reference. A few examples are listed below:

- **Community Measures:** Parent involvement; community health and wellness; civic participation
- **Student Measures:** Student health and wellness; leadership and community service participation; employment positions and rates
- **School Measures:** Attendance; test scores; graduation rates; dropout rates

Some might argue that any parent or community member would want their students to attain this kind of success, and that there is nothing uniquely ‘Alaska Native’ about this conception of success. It is true that this is a meaningful goal for any child. But what is unique here is that many Alaska Native parents and communities are not in the same position to have their voices heard or taken seriously in the schooling of their children because of institutional racism, historic and present-day oppression, and the systematic devaluing of Native peoples and local knowledge in schools and institutions of higher education. When only 5 percent of current teachers are Alaska Native, there is a systemic problem (Alaska Native Policy Center, 2004). When 20 percent of the State population is Alaska Native and 33 percent of the prison population is Alaska Native, there is a systemic problem (Alaska Native Policy Center, 2004). When only a handful of tenured professors in the State university system are Alaska Native, there is a systemic problem. And when our focus is on why Alaska Native students cannot seem to meet the standards schools have set, there is a systemic problem. So, if we intend to develop healthy Alaska Native students and communities, we must be intentional about working together to transform this system or create a new one that allows us to better attain the goals we have set out for students.

These findings appear to confirm much of the research that cites the importance of supporting students’ development as good human beings. And hopefully this report helps to make clearer the important interconnection between individual and community success. Finally, it seems to offer both support for and further insight into what the elements of an effective school for Native students should be. Existing literature suggests that an initiative to create effective schools for Native students should meet at least two of the following three criteria: 1) involves community and tribally controlled schools; 2) utilizes Indigenous culture and language; 3) and evidences a significant and measurable gain in students’ academic achievement (Benally, 2004; Lipka, 2002). Respondents emphasized that effective schools are those that reflect and respect community values; this definitely affirms both the first and second criteria. Yet, respondents

also spoke about the importance of supporting individual student learning needs, as well as the primary objective of supporting students in setting and achieving their goals. These are important when considering how gains in academic achievement are defined in the third criteria.

We hope that this information and report are useful to Alaska Native community members, educators, and policymakers alike. We had hoped to begin to document what Alaska Native people and advocates expect of and hope for Alaska Native students, as well as to contribute to and encourage ongoing dialogue about Alaska Native student success. In a presentation of the preliminary analysis of this report, a principal of a school enrolling a majority of Alaska Native students approached us and explained that he planned to return to his school and engage teachers in a discussion about Alaska Native student success. Another participant said that these kinds of discussion were ongoing in a school he works with, and he hoped we would come and share our learning with these teachers and hear what they are learning. This is the kind of impact we would hope this information could have—encouraging others to engage Alaska Native community leaders, community members, allies and advocates, students, and each other about what a successful student is, and how we can support students for success.

Concluding Remarks

As of 2004, over 44 percent of Natives in Alaska were under the age of 20, meaning that this large group is school age and coming through the school system right now (Alaska Native Policy Center, 2004). These are our future leaders, educators, parents, and community members. We have a responsibility to think hard about and work together to ensure their success.

We recognize that there are a number of individuals and groups we were unable to include in this study. Specifically, it would be important to talk to Alaska Native students themselves about what it means to be successful and about what kinds of supports are important to them in attaining success. Also, it would be important to hear from more Alaska Native Elders and rural community members. However, this is not something that has to wait on another report being commissioned. These dialogues can be started by anyone, anywhere and need to be happening every day.

And perhaps more important than further study, is creating community and policy action that supports individual student learning needs and directly involves local communities. We should pay careful attention to some of these emerging initiatives to learn what works best in 'doing school' this way, as well as how we can continue to improve. One place to start would be to consider the suggested measures of success noted in the literature and by interview respondents in transforming how we think about what success looks like.

As Alaska Native students, we are committing to doing one thing each day that contributes to improving the educational opportunities of Alaska Native students, to helping them recognize and understand how special and valued they are. We would like to leave you with a final quote from one of our Elders:

At one time, we had an educational system among our people, among all our cultures...we gave that responsibility to someone else. And it's a responsibility...It's a responsibility that we have to our children. It is our responsibility to teach them. (LD3)

We hope to continue the dialogue and the work to bear out this responsibility together and in community.

Chart 1: Suggested Measures of Success

Student Measures	School Measures	Community Measures
Attendance and graduation rates (Butterfield, 1994)	Administrative leadership (NWREL, 2002)	Communication between communities and schools
Belonging (Strand & Peacock, 2002)	Communication between communities and schools	Community health/wellness
Community service or contribution to the community	District support for local education initiatives	Community involvement in schools (Butterfield, 1994; NWREL, 2002)
Competence in knowledge and skills needed for the immediate environment (Thieboux, 1997)	Use of community and peers in learning	Families with a strong basis in traditional knowledge (Clarke, 2002)
Competence necessary to compete at national levels (Thieboux, 1997)	Improvements in facilities (Butterfield, 1994)	Incarceration rates
Cultural competence (Thieboux, 1997)	Improvements in staff development (Butterfield, 1994)	Literacy rates
Employment levels and types	Non-competitive learning in school	Parent involvement in schools (ANSV; Butterfield, 1994; NWREL, 2002)
Extracurricular participation rates (Butterfield, 1994)	Instructional information used as a baseline assessment of school effectiveness (NWREL, 2002)	Parents as teachers
Generosity (Strand & Peacock, 2002)	Rates of local, Native people teaching	Preservation of Native lands
Independence (Strand & Peacock, 2002)	Staff retention (Butterfield, 1994)	Rates of local, Native people teaching
Mastery (Strand & Peacock, 2002)	Behavioral climate and policies (NWREL, 2002)	Urban, rural education and economic trends
Post-secondary success	Implementation of new curricular initiatives (Butterfield, 1994)	Use of traditional tribal values in schools
Rates of completion of degree/certification	Use of criterion-referenced tests (Butterfield, 1994)	What communities deem as meaningful
Rates of participation in AP courses	Use of traditional tribal values in schools	
Rates of students taking leadership roles	Use of portfolio-based assessments (ANSV; Butterfield, 1994)	
Rates student take jobs in local communities	Visioning, planning, school improvement (NWREL, 2002)	
Rates students take jobs in Native organizations		
School vandalism rates (Butterfield, 1994)		
Student health/wellness		
Student reputation in community		
Student retention rates (ANSV; Butterfield, 1994)		
Students' feelings about themselves		

Note: ANSV notation or no notation indicates that the source was a respondent of the Alaska Native Student Vitality (ANSV) project

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Appendix A: Participant Recognition & Profile

Interview Respondents

Kris Anderson
Alaska's People

Susan Anderson
The CIRI Foundation

Ray Barnhardt
University of Alaska
Fairbanks

Clif Bates
Retired Teacher, Kuspuk
School District

**Evon Peter and Enei
Begaye**
Native Movement:
Indigenous Peoples
Rights

Jason Borer
Chugach Heritage
Foundation

Kari Brookover
Former Principal, Mt.
Edgumbe High School

Ronalda Cadiente
Juneau School District

Carol Comeau
Anchorage School
District

William Demmert, Jr.
Western Washington
University

Wayne Don
Southcentral Foundation

Barbara Fleek
Cook Inlet Tribal
Council, Inc.

Mary Francis
Alaska Council of School
Administrators

Sharon McConnell-Gillis
The Doyon Foundation

Tom Hawkins
Bristol Bay Native
Corporation

Erica Hughes
Robert Aqqaluk Newlin,
Sr. Memorial Trust,
NANA Regional
Corporation

Dorothy Jordan
Tanana City School
District

A. Oscar Kawagley
University of Alaska
Fairbanks

Doreen Lacy
Former Teacher,
Hooper Bay

John Larsen
Larsen Consulting
Group

Jerry Lipka
University of Alaska
Fairbanks

Dan Loring
Alaska Parents and
Teachers Association

Mary Marks
Anchorage School
District School Board

Bob Maguire
Learning Styles Center,
The Doyon Foundation

Jerry McBeath
University of Alaska
Fairbanks

Kathleen Meckel
Effie Kokrine Charter
School

**Dennis Metrokin and
Rachel Kane**
Koniag, Inc.

Walt Monegan
Anchorage Police
Department

Harold Napoleon
Yuuk Elder and Author

**Barbara Cadiente-
Nelson**
Sealaska Heritage
Institute

Father Michael Oleksa
Russian Orthodox
Archpriest

Paul Ongtooguk
University of Alaska
Anchorage

Luann Pelagio
Bristol Bay Native
Corporation Education
Foundation

Derek Peterson
Institute for Community
and Adolescent
Resiliency –
Identifying Solutions

Mary Reeve
Native Student Services,
University of Alaska
Anchorage

Ida Roehl
Bristol Bay Native
Corporation Wellness
Project

**Commissioner
Roger Sampson**
Alaska Department of
Education and Early
Development

**Representative Ralph
Samuels**
Alaska State Legislature

Tyan Selby
Koniag Education
Foundation

Walter Soboleff
Tlingit Elder

Willie Templeton
Native Student Services,
University of Alaska
Anchorage

Kay Ann Thomas
Rural Student Services,
University of Alaska
Fairbanks

Shirley Tuzroyluke
Cook Inlet Tribal Council,
Inc.

Suzy Villegas
The 13th Regional Heritage
Foundation

Patty Ware
State of Alaska, Division of
Juvenile Justice

Rosita Worl
Sealaska Heritage Institute

Profile of Interview Respondents

Total: 45

Gender

- Women: 21
- Men: 24

Ethnicity²

- Alaska Native: 33
- Non-Native: 12

Region³

- Southwest Region: 12
- Southeast Region: 11
- Interior Region: 10
- Southcentral Region: 10
- Northwest Region: 4
- West Region: 4

Rural Demographic

Interviewee explicitly stated they were raised in a rural community: 10

Interviewee explicitly stated they had experience in rural communities: 14

² Ethnicity based on respondents' self-identification.

³ Regional affiliations are based on those communities respondents reported working or living in; as such some respondents may be counted in more than one region.

Appendix B: Alaska Native Student Vitality: Community Perspectives on Supporting Student Success, Interview Questions

- 1) Please describe your experience with Alaska Native communities (e.g., tribal affiliation, if any; urban/rural affiliation; any formal roles held).
- 2) How would you define Alaska Native student success? What is a successful Alaska Native student?
- 3) How does the school system define Alaska Native student success?
- 4) What do students need to know to be successful? Who is responsible to share this knowledge?
- 5) What do schools prepare Alaska Native students for now?
- 6) What should schools prepare Alaska Native students for? Are there student outcomes you would like to see recognized that are not currently?
- 7) What is the Alaska Native community's role in education? Can you describe a healthy relationship between an Alaska Native community and its school; specific examples?
- 8) Given your earlier definition, how would you measure Alaska Native student success?
- 9) Please describe an effective school for Alaska Native students. Can you think of any examples?
- 10) Is there anything else you would like to add?
- 11) Are there other people you think we should talk with about this?

Appendix C: Code List and Code Families

Question 2 Code List

- 2_Able to perform on a competitive basis with anyone else
- 2_Accepts responsibility of being community member
- 2_Achieve own goals
- 2_AN parents and communities do not know
- 2_Attending school
- 2_Can earn a living
- 2_Can function within Western society
- 2_Can self-actualize
- 2_Carrying their traditions
- 2_Collective success
- 2_Completes high school
- 2_Completes higher education
- 2_Confident
- 2_Connected to healthy communities
- 2_Contributing to peer learning
- 2_Cultural self is intact
- 2_Depends on the student
- 2_Determined by parents and community
- 2_Documented success in Western world
- 2_Driven by economic realities and needs, jobs
- 2_Engaged in school
- 2_Great quote
- 2_Happy
- 2_Has a choice
- 2_Has a sense of humility
- 2_Has a working understanding of the universe
- 2_Has community support
- 2_Has cultural knowledge and values
- 2_Has cultural support
- 2_Has family support
- 2_Has parents who emphasize importance of education
- 2_Has pedagogic skills
- 2_Has positive self worth
- 2_Has role models
- 2_Has social skills
- 2_Has support at school
- 2_Has the ability to communicate effectively
- 2_Has the same opportunities that others have
- 2_Has time invested in her
- 2_Has work ethic
- 2_How student lives
- 2_Individual academic success
- 2_Inner strength
- 2_Know AN community shortcomings
- 2_Know that AN people have value
- 2_Knowing the strength and power of culture
- 2_Knowledgeable about AN history and present realities
- 2_Known by someone
- 2_Knows about employment opportunities
- 2_Knows consequences
- 2_Knows how to love and respect others
- 2_Knows who they are and where they come from
- 2_Leader
- 2_Learning something
- 2_Lifelong learner
- 2_Maintains cultural sharing of AN community
- 2_Make a contribution
- 2_Make good grades
- 2_Meet Western expectations
- 2_Meeting challenge of life in the village
- 2_Miserable, academically and socially
- 2_Motivated, inner drive
- 2_Need for Native presence in schools
- 2_Not about gaining the most power
- 2_Not connected to money
- 2_Not institutional success
- 2_Not intimidated to try new opportunities
- 2_Not just college preparatory
- 2_Not just to make a living
- 2_Not necessarily about education
- 2_Not necessarily academic success
- 2_Not necessarily college educated
- 2_Not necessarily determined by age 18
- 2_Not one standard definition
- 2_Not Western conception of success
- 2_One who is prepared to make a life for himself
- 2_Passes success to other people around them
- 2_Passing on traditional knowledge
- 2_Pays attention to physical and emotional well-being
- 2_Power of five
- 2_Practices common sense
- 2_Prepared for variety of opportunities, vocational
- 2_Prepared to go to college
- 2_Preparing for post-secondary track
- 2_Pride in being Native
- 2_Productive citizen
- 2_Proud of who he or she is
- 2_Provide for their family
- 2_Public education important when parents define success too narrowly
- 2_Resilient in the school system
- 2_Respects others
- 2_Respects relationships with all things
- 2_Responsible to take care of yourself
- 2_Same for all children
- 2_Schools cannot provide
- 2_Sense of place understanding
- 2_Social, cultural development
- 2_Straddles borders of both worlds successfully
- 2_Success as a human being

2_Success as known in the community
2_Success in a community context
2_Successful member of society
2_Taking challenging courses
2_Understands how to live a healthy life
2_Understands their lineage or history
2_Understands their responsibility
2_Understands themselves in context of community
2_Values education
2_Wants to assist their families and communities
2_Working

Question 2 Code Families

Knows and is proud of who they are
Inner strength and confidence
Happy and healthy
Learning
Respectful
Has cultural knowledge and values
Inner drive
Skilled
Understands world and surroundings
Values education
Supported
Connected to healthy communities
Knows and accepts their responsibility to contribute
Knows about and is prepared to pursue a variety of opportunities
Connected to and driven by parents and community
Can provide for themselves and their family
Depends on Student/Meets own goals
Meeting challenges of life
Successful in school system
Not necessarily connected to school
Connected to work and jobs
Not Western success
Western success

Question 3 Code List

3_Academic achievement
3_Achieve performance standards
3_Assessments of student learning
3_Assimilation
3_Attain cultural standards
3_Attending school
3_Basic math and literacy skills
3_College preparatory
3_Connected to business definition
3_Connected to school success
3_Contributing member of society
3_Degreed or skilled

3_Different for rural students
3_Different from how we should
3_Differently from AN people
3_Drop out rates
3_Education as responsibility of community
3_English language ability
3_External definition from outsiders
3_Graduation rate
3_Great Quote
3_Hopeless thing
3_Ignorant of their own history
3_In comparison to non-Native students
3_Leaving the village
3_Limits on local control
3_Lowered expectations for AN students
3_Makes students feel inferior
3_Malleable, to be
3_Native language acquisition
3_No change over time
3_No clear definition
3_Not about growth
3_Not taking individual needs into account
3_Numbers thing
3_Participation in extracurricular activities
3_Passes all classes
3_Respects others
3_School readiness
3_Shaped by federal/state requirements
3_Success in life
3_Test scores
3_Varies by region, district
3_Western conception

Question 3 Code Families

Numbers, school success
Negative, not affirming
Different from AN communities
Positive, affirming
Skills acquisition

Question 6 Code List

6_Academic opportunities, to know about
6_Academic proficiency
6_Affirm various learning styles, schools should
6_AN communities should control schools
6_AP classes, to take
6_Appreciate their environment and people around them
6_Aptitude, develop individual
6_Bring economic and knowledge resources back to community
6_Career counseling, provide
6_Certificates, AN people should not be constrained by
6_College, to be prepared for
6_Community and parent involvement, schools

foster and welcome
 6_Compertive nationally and globally, to be
 6_Confidence and pride, to have
 6_Connect and support each other
 6_Contribute to society
 6_Convey supportive attitudes about students, schools should
 6_Cultural traditions and values, to be rooted in
 6_Education as a privilege or opportunity, to see
 6_Enter whatever field they are interested in, to feel comfortable
 6_Explore a vocation
 6_Exposure to arts and sports
 6_Facilitate better lives for students, schools should
 6_Feel responsibility to community
 6_Give all students equal supports
 6_Great quote
 6_Have a choice about where to spend their lives
 6_Have a stake in the economic structure
 6_Job opportunities, to know about
 6_Know consequences of not attending
 6_Know history of AN communities
 6_Know their place in community and society
 6_Language and literacy skills, to have
 6_Leadership roles, prepared for
 6_Learn Native language
 6_Learn to interact with others, good for business
 6_Learning skills, to have
 6_Life outside the village, prepared for
 6_Life responsibilities, to manage
 6_Not just focus on institutional success, schools should
 6_Not just for higher education
 6_Not just to get a job
 6_Not just to manage money
 6_Not just to past standardized tests
 6_Positive learning environment, schools should provide
 6_Prepared to handle any situation
 6_Purpose of education, rethink
 6_Pursue their choice or interest, to be able to
 6_Recognized academically, same as others
 6_Rural villages, consider staying in or returning to
 6_Same educational opportunities as others
 6_Scholarships, to seek out
 6_School system cannot prepare students in the right way
 6_Skilled, to be
 6_Specific example, classroom
 6_Stay in school
 6_Teach in rural communities
 6_Technical and vocational skills, to have
 6_Technology skills, to have
 6_To be human
 6_University partnership

6_Value and affirm AN students and communities
 6_Variety of learning settings, offer
 6_Variety of vocations, prepare for
 6_Vocational programs, know about
 6_Well rounded students, develop as
 6_Workplace skills, to have
 6_World of work, prepare for

Question 6 Code Families

To be confident and well-rounded
 See value of education
 Same as any other student
 Work with others
 To value and remain in/Return to their communities
 Have a choice/Know their options/ Pursue own goals
 Make a contribution
 Community should direct
 Manage life and its challenges
 World of work
 Responsibility of schools
 Academic proficiency
 To be skilled

Question 9 Code List

9_Affirms different learning styles
 9_AISES
 9_AKRSI
 9_Anchorage Bowman Elementary School
 9_Anchorage Partners for Success Program
 9_ANSEP
 9_AVTEC
 9_Basic literacy and language skills, students have
 9_Belonging, provides sense of
 9_Celebrates academic success, joint
 9_Choices, ensures students have
 9_Chugiach
 9_Collaborative principal
 9_Communicates value of education to students, joint
 9_Community involvement, fosters and welcomes
 9_Community trust, has
 9_Connects learning to life
 9_Cultural camps
 9_Cultural standards and philosophy, driven by
 9_Culturally relevant curriculum, provides
 9_Culturally responsive teachers, prepares or has
 9_Dedicated staff to guide, provides
 9_Dialogues about change and growth
 9_Differences in ages, responds to
 9_Diverse teaching community, has

9_Early education, provides
 9_Education responsibility of community
 9_Effie Kokrine CS
 9_Embraces diversity
 9_Emphasizes education and learning
 9_Employs community teachers
 9_Engages students
 9_Ensures community and school values are in sync
 9_Fosters competition
 9_Fosters peer support and learning
 9_Great quote
 9_Gualik language immersion
 9_High expectations, holds
 9_In and out of state colleges
 9_Instills pride
 9_Job skills, provides
 9_King Career Center
 9_Long-term sustainability
 9_Meets students where they are at
 9_Mt. Edgecumbe
 9_Music and arts training, offers
 9_Native language acquisition, supports
 9_No best school for all kids
 9_NSS
 9_Opportunities, exposes students to
 9_Personalized learning environment, provides
 9_Place-based curriculum, provides
 9_Practitioners as teachers
 9_Prepare for college or technical training
 9_Provides well rounded education in context
 9_Regional and cultural orgs as partners
 9_Regional hubs provide education
 9_Respects and values students and communities
 9_Responsibility to contribute, one that communicates
 9_Retains teachers
 9_Rigorous curriculum
 9_Role models, provides
 9_Rural schools not effective
 9_Rural Student Services
 9_Rural students, opportunities for
 9_Russian Mission
 9_School and community working in partnership
 9_School board has power and is culturally knowledgeable
 9_Self-actualize, helps students
 9_Size of student body, appropriate
 9_Society, students can function as part of
 9_Sports and non-ed training, too much emphasis on
 9_Staff and students connect
 9_Staffed by good teachers
 9_Student leadership, fosters
 9_Students feel valued, helps
 9_Supports along the way, provides
 9_Supports identity development

9_SWAS
 9_Teachers as advocates
 9_University system not culturally responsive
 9_Uses relevant assessments
 9_Village of Marshall
 9_Vocational training, one that provides
 9_Welcomes and expects parent involvement
 9_Ya Ne Dah Ah

Question 9 Code Families

Prepares Students for Variety of Opportunities
 Develops Skills
 Fosters Social Responsibility
 Helps Build Student Confidence and Sense of Self
 Supports and Responds to Individual Student Learning Needs
 Concern for Rural Students
 Reflects and Respects Community Values
 Works as a Partner
 Related to Staff and School Leaders
 Systemic Issues
 Effective Curriculum
 Fosters Learning Environment
 Emphasizes Education and Learning
 Provides Role for Peers
 Effective Programs