

Alaska ICE is the Alaska Initiative for Community Engagement, a statewide initiative of the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB).

Community Engagement is the intentional action of groups and individuals working together to create healthy environments that support the growth and education of children and youth.



Physical Activity and Play Enhance Learning

A study conducted at the University of Illinois suggests that physical activity may increase students' cognitive control and also result in better performance on academic achievement tests.

(*Science Daily, 2009*)

Ultra-endurance athlete Paul Staso recently completed P.A.C.E. Trek Alaska 2009, a youth fitness and education project involving over 22,000 children worldwide.



Over 1,000 youth here in Alaska participated.

Learn more about the project at: www.pacetrek.com

Relevant innovation, collaboration in Cordova

Students are energy experts and innovators in Cordova, according to Adam Low, science teacher at Cordova Junior/Senior High School. Low is working with colleagues on a project-based learning program that he helped to develop around energy and energy conservation...the colleagues: his students.

How was the project created?

Adam Low: In 2008 the energy crisis affecting Cordova, and rural Alaska presented a unique opportunity to involve students in project-based learning. Through the fall of 2008 I worked with our local community and my Physics class to address these energy needs and meet the curricular objectives. The project evolved into the idea of the Cordova Energy Center as way to empower students to collaborate with community members and experts to address community energy issues.

The project objective was to teach the curricular goals of physics through a relevant community project, directed at addressing the community's energy needs. The project design consisted of:

- 1) Students establishing contacts with community members from a variety of local organizations;

Youth-adult partnerships build healthy communities

Empowering youth to take the lead in serving their communities, and partnering with adults, is the thrust behind AASB/Alaska ICE's 2009 Summer Service Projects. Open to individuals, organizations, and communities across Alaska, the project promotes positive youth-adult relationships and provides applicants with a stipend toward a service project of their choice.

Youth interacting and working with adults in meaningful ways that are community-based and service-oriented are the kind of partnerships that can have positive, lasting effects on the entire community, now and in the future.

We are currently reviewing applications, and are excited about the range of projects we've received.

Past projects have included smaller-scale volunteer efforts; activities connecting youth, adults, and elders; been faith-based, arts intensive; or even larger-scale community-wide events.

A few of the past projects follow:



Cordova students involved in the wind project

- 2) Partnering with industry energy organizations for support and equipment use; and
- 3) Developing a website that encompasses the nature of the community project to share results and information.

What input/ideas did students bring to the process?

AL: Students embraced the idea of addressing the needs of the community with energy and enthusiasm. They purposefully poured over text, researched energy topics online, and met with locals to discuss possible options for solutions to the energy crisis.

Please see "Cordova innovation" on Page 2



Youth and adults collaborate on a mural (Delta, AK)

- Students at Holy Name Catholic School in Ketchikan invited their grandparents and adopted grandparents to their production of a Wearable Art Show;
- Students in Fairbanks worked with Fairbanks Quilters

Please see "Youth-adult projects" on Page 2



Project-based Learning Adds Relevance, Motivates

Project-learning can invigorate your learning environment, energizing the curriculum with a real-world relevance and sparking students' desire to explore, investigate, and understand their world.

(Edutopia, 2008)



Youth-Adult Partnerships Good for All Involved

Youth involvement in positive social relationships and activities with adults is associated with a decrease in risk behaviors, stronger communication skills and leadership experience, increased status and stature in the community, and improved competencies and self-esteem.

(Kirby & Coyle, 1997)

Let us know what's happening in your community for kids!

Contact us at:

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Cordova innovation - continued from Page 1

And, with support from the local electric cooperative, our class was able to send several students to attend the Alaska Rural Energy Conference in Girdwood and report back on their learning. Armed with information from the conference, students discussed, debated, and finally chose two projects, one being a wind feasibility study and the other an energy conservation analysis and awareness program.

Students then took further steps, installing a donated wind anemometer to measure wind speed, discussing their challenges in class and in an online forum, and developing a website as a means to share information and to work with the community. Sharing their findings makes their work even more relevant and useful for the entire community. The students as researchers are filling useful roles in the community and the adults value their work.

How were different forms of technology incorporated into the project?

AL: Technology was used as a tool for acquiring information, communicating, decision-making, analyzing, and delivering information. Not surprisingly, little effort was needed to teach technology skills to the students. As the need arose, they learned to use various forms of technology quickly. The students were dedicated and focused, assigning each other tasks that were appropriate to their abilities and following up with one another.

The Cordova City School District is a member of AASB's Quality Schools/Quality Students (QS2) initiative, and works closely with AASB to improve school capacity and community engagement to support student achievement.

Youth-adult projects - continued from Page 1

to make pillows for seniors living at a Pioneer Home;

- Youth and adults at *Rhema Samoan Assemblies of God* in Anchorage planned a July 4th celebration called "Empowering Our Youth";
- A group of seniors and youth spent a morning making light switch covers, scarves, journals, and beads at the *Anchorage Senior Center*; and
- In Coffman Cove, young people helped senior citizens with outdoor chores and pressure washed their decks.

Partnering youth with adults, providing the opportunity for youth to claim a leadership role, creating positive outcomes for their school, neighborhood, or greater community are all steps that lead to better supported youth, and stronger, healthier communities.



The Juneau Student Symphony is one example of an activity that connects youth and adults. Made up of about 75% youth and 25% adult participants, the Student Symphony goes a long way toward building assets, positive experiences and qualities essential to raising successful young people.

Evaluation of Alaska ICE provides evidence of change

AASB recently received an evaluation of Alaska ICE. The report, by the American Institutes for Research®, a nationally recognized research firm, looked at 1) whether the environment for youth has changed in communities supported by Alaska ICE, 2) whether adult support for youth has changed, and 3) whether youth outcomes improved in the areas of social and emotional learning, youth risk behaviors, and youth academic engagement and achievement. The evaluation covers 2005-2008, and looked at 15 QS2 districts as a group and three individual communities to document impacts.

Key findings: Communities supported by Alaska ICE...

- adopted policies and practices that build assets;

- developed sustainable networks and coalitions as vehicles for change;
- showed substantial improvements in adult-youth relationships and adult involvement with youth in some communities;
- reduced vandalism, fights, and alcohol use;
- saw Alaska Native students report increasing levels of high expectations, a more respectful school climate, reduced drug use among peers at school, and increased academic achievement.

Look for more details on the findings in future issues of this newsletter.