



K-12 Program

Background Information

Institution: The Yukon-Koyukuk School District

Program Address: 4762 Old Airport Way, Fairbanks, AK 99709

Telephone: (907) 374-9424

Web Address: <http://www.yksd.com>

Contact person:

Name: Susan Paskvan

Title: Native Language Teacher

Address: 3250 Monroe Street City, Santa Clara, CA 95051

Email: spaskvan@yksd.com

Telephone: (907) 374-9424

Fax: (907) 374-9400

Languages/dialects taught: Denaakk'e (Koyukon and lower Tanana) Athabascan

Grades taught: PreK-K, 1-5/6, 6/7-8, 9-12

Program Description

Purposes and goals of the program: Students will learn basic Denaakk'e (Koyukon or Lower Tanana Athabascan) through daily instruction. They will learn how to greet one another, know how to use Denaakk'e in the classroom setting, learn vocabulary for different items, and use it in sentences. The students in grades K-4 receive 30 minutes of instruction in Denaakk'e every day. Students in grades 5-12 receive instruction if a teacher is available.

Type of program: Bilingual program

Countries of origin: Alaska (USA)

Total student enrollment: 307

Program origin: In 2003 the program was opened by the school district.

Parents

Parents' expectations for the program: The parents expect their children to learn how to greet one another, be happy about learning the language, and know how to say phrases in the correct dialect.

Staff

Instructors' and administration's expectations for the program: For students to participate fully in the classes, so that they know how to communicate in sentences with each other. Staffs also expect students to ask the teacher for help in Denaakk'e and to honor their elders. In the 30 minutes per day that we have, we would like students to use and gain an appreciation for their native language.

Students

Students:

- Native Americans: 95%

How the program identifies heritage speakers: All students in the classrooms that choose to receive instruction are enrolled. YKSD has small multi-grade classrooms. We also identify heritage speakers through the parent language questionnaire (developed by the state of Alaska) an oral interview, and a survey conducted of students, parents, elders, and educators in 2005.

Possible reasons for student withdrawal: They no longer attend the school.

Students' expectations of the program: They are willing to learn their language if it is offered as part of the school day.

Instructors

Numbers of instructors in the program: 23

Languages in which instructors are proficient: 13 of the teachers are learning the language as they are teaching it (12 Koyukon Athabascan and 1 Lower Tanana Athabascan).

Proficiency level: Most of the staff have strong listening skills but have difficulty speaking. Fluent speakers (elders) participated in the program when there was funding.

Credentials: Alaska teacher certification and credentials. Teachers have BAs in elementary education.

Professional development opportunities instructors have: When there was funding, 11 teachers and 8 teacher aids participated in summer institutes to learn to speak and to teach Denaakk'e.

Professional development opportunities instructors need: We need to have funding again to support the above mentioned activities. Also, teachers need to learn more Denaakk'e and how to teach a second language.

Instruction

Total contact hours per week: 2.5 hours per week

Student grouping: Depending on school population, the grade levels in one class vary for each classroom. We have very small schools.

Language skills

Skills developed by the program: Heritage and English language skills

Language skills:

- listening
- speaking
- reading

Additional comments: The elementary school students (specially K-1) do not learn to write. They read books.

Culture

Aspects of culture taught: Geography, history, festivals, customs, traditions/beliefs, folktales, arts and crafts dances, songs, rhymes, social and cultural norms, cultural appropriateness, and literature. Some teachers are able to integrate Denaakk'e instruction into other areas of the curriculum such as math and science.

Kind of student identity program fosters: Self-identity of healthy Denaak children.

Additional comments: Athabaskan values are included in instruction. Values include respect for elders, and desire to be hard workers and care for the language and community.

Methodologies

Methodologies and instructional strategies used in the program: Curriculum frameworks have been developed. We are in the second year of implementing the frameworks. Hands-on activities, TPR, songs, and reading are used as instructional strategies.

Materials

Other materials used for instruction: All of our materials are made locally by the teachers and elders. We have adapted ideas from Teaching Yukon Native Languages, Yukon Native Language Centre, and White Horse Canada. Books were translated from the Lower Kuskokwim School District, Bethel, Alaska.

Technology used for instruction: Some quizzes and activities are developed on the www.quia.com Web site. Students in grades 6-12 must develop a presentation using Power Point, Word, or a Web site.

Additional comments: Many of our language teachers have received instruction in learning styles, so they have created materials to address the different learning styles of the students.

Assessment

Assessments used to evaluate students' progress: School/district developed tests, student self-assessment instrument, teachers' observations, and performance-based tasks or assessment. We need more professional development on creating assessment instruments.

Articulation

How the program develops home/school connections or promotes parent involvement: We would like to develop portfolios and take-home sheets so parents can participate. Many parents do not speak Denaakk'e, so the children are teaching them what they learn. We would also like to develop a Web site so parents can learn on their own if the Internet is available. An area we would like to develop more is how to better teach the parents.

Opportunities for using the heritage language and developing cultural knowledge outside the program: They can speak with each other and with elders.

What the program has in place

Financial support the program receives: US Government

Other support the program receives: 2003-2007 US Department of Education OELA

Solicitation of funding: Yukon-Koyukuk School of District. If tribes would like to participate, they could solicit funding.

Assistance or funding the program would like to receive: Tribal organizations fund participation of elders and community members to teach language and culture at different events, such as camps. We would like tribal organizations to promote language use in the community, professional organizations, and universities so that professional development is continued. We would like be a part of the development of Web sites and other language communities so that we learn from each other.

How students graduate and/or how they receive credit: Students can receive high school credit; if co-offered with the University of Alaska, college credit.

Special challenges

Challenges the program has experienced: Adults want to learn Denaakk'e, but it takes time and commitment. The staff to develop the curriculum, materials, and assessments is very small (one works full-time).

Additional comments: The students are excited and happy to learn. We're all life-long language learners. I'll learn our language for the rest of my life. I may never be able to speak like my parents, but I won't give up.