

# Kids these days

The publication for people who care about Alaska's Kids!

## Inside



Helping Your Child Do Well  
in School  
Page 2



MYAC Leadership Workshop  
Page 3



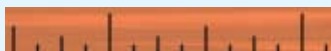
PACE Trek, Alaska  
Page 4



SOY announces new director  
Page 5



Taking an Active Role  
with Adults  
Page 6



Measuring School Climate  
and Connectedness  
Page 8

## Chalkyitsik Art and Culture Camp

by Vicki Salmon, Yukon Flats School District Community  
Engagement Advocate



Paul Williams, Jr. of Beaver works with youth making fry bread and other foods.

Over 60 youth, adults, and elders from Interior villages participated in the Chalkyitsik Art and Culture Camp. The weeklong camp took place in June and featured a celebration of Gwich'in language, crafts, cooking, stories, songs, and survival skills.

The camp was held in conjunction with the Yukon Flats Summer School program. Paul Williams, Jr. (Beaver) was invited to be the culture teacher. Vicki Salmon (Chalkyitsik), Yukon Flats School District Community Engagement Advocate, Laverne Alexander (Minto), Tanana Chiefs Conference Counselor, and Candace Nathaniel (Chalkyitsik), Chalkyitsik Village Council, all collaborated to create a fun, safe, and positive experience.

**"I will hold nothing back,"** said Williams.  
**"Whatever I can pass on to these kids I will."**

The Gwich'in language, an Athabascan dialect, is at risk of being forgotten with the passing of Elders in this area, and traditional values are not always top of mind, so the theme *Athabascan Values* was chosen as the guiding principle for the camp. Students were taught Gwich'in songs, stories of survival, subsistence skills, traditional beading, and fish net setting.

*"When a people lose their language and culture they lose their identity,"* said Salmon. **"It is important that you know who you are and where you have come from."**

This gathering helped to unite the community as each person had a skill or piece of knowledge to contribute. Many are looking forward not only to next year, but continuing craft and culture honoring times throughout the year.

See more about YFSD's community arts events at <http://www.alaskaice.org>.

# A Parents Guide to Helping Your Child Do Well in School

from the National Education Association

Schools that have high expectations for all students—and give them the support necessary to achieve those expectations—have high rates of academic success. When schools set high expectations, students work harder and aim higher because they learn to believe in themselves and in their future. From the principal to the cafeteria worker, all school employees have a role in helping students feel supported and respected. A sense of belonging and caring relationships are essential to developing self-esteem, independence, and a positive outlook on learning.

Because today's student population is more international, all schools should offer communication such as newsletters, bulletins, and even the school Web site in parents' native languages in order to ensure full participation. But parents need to be proactive to make sure their child receives all the resources to which they are entitled.

Parents should ask about school-linked social services, lunch programs, and after-school activities—particularly programs for underachieving students. Extra-curricular activities should be open to all students. Research shows that after-school activities are linked to higher achievement and help students ease into the school culture. If possible, get involved in your child's



school by volunteering or attending parent meetings. School is a partnership between administrators, teachers, students, families, and the community. It's up to all of us to help engage children in school so when they graduate they will be prepared for the challenges ahead.

Families have a major role in encouraging academic success. Adults must grab every opportunity to let children know that they have high expectations for their education. During daily conversations, adults should help children set goals and encourage them to create a plan of action to meet those goals—whether it is getting up in the

morning on time or perfect classroom attendance, every small step taken helps build momentum to academic success.

### When their parents are involved, students gain:

- Higher grades and test scores
- Better attendance
- More positive attitudes and behavior
- Higher graduation rates
- Greater enrollment in post-secondary education

(from Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence)

Download the *Parents Guide* pamphlet at:  
<http://tinyurl.com/6g2rp2> (pdf)

***"We're glad to share resources with AASB and others who care about great schools. Whether we're administrators, school board members, teachers, or education support professionals, we're all working toward the same goal: providing an excellent education for every child in Alaska."***

***--Barb Angaiak, President  
NEA-Alaska***



Produced by:  
The Association of Alaska School Boards'  
Alaska Initiative for Community Engagement  
1111 West 9th Street, Juneau, AK 99801  
(907) 586-1083 Fax: (907) 586-2995  
E-mail: [aasb@aasb.org](mailto:aasb@aasb.org)  
Web: [www.kidsthesedays.org](http://www.kidsthesedays.org)

Editors: Ryan Aguilar, John Greely

© 2008 - All rights reserved. E-Kids These Days is produced by the Association of Alaska School Boards.

# Mayor's Youth Advisory Council's Leadership Workshop 2008

from MYAC's summer newsletter 2008



The Mayor's Youth Advisory Council took part in a Leadership Workshop June 10-14, 2008 in Barrow. Five of the eight North Slope villages participated.

Suzie Gaffney and Shelly Eidsness from the Association of Alaska School Boards led many of the sectionals, including **assets and empowerment, public speaking exercises, team building exercises, and community action plans** for the coming year.

They also had a college graduate panel speak with the students about the importance of getting an education and the opportunities that it brings. The students were able to ask questions, while many of the college graduates (all of whom were raised on the North Slope) sounded off on the highs and lows of finishing school and why they're glad they did.

MYAC also sat through facilitated discussions answering questions that pertained to the well-being of their communities. They talked about the **importance of Inupiaq values**; the necessary skills they possess, and skills that teens need. They also talked about the threats, challenges, strengths, and opportunities they have.

## How can adults help youth to be more active in the villages?

Students want more adult participation in each of the villages. They want encouragement from their parents and elders. They want the older generations to know that their actions affect them and their peers, and would like adults to be more proactive. They want leaders who are committed to being good and healthy role models.

They would like more cultural and traditional activities within the family unit, and would like people to speak to them in Inupiaq so it doesn't become a lost language. They want to know more about their history to get a better sense of their own identities. They want more healthy interaction.

## What can be done to strengthen Inupiaq values to make them a part of daily life?

Our students believe that if more people practiced our values, others would catch on. They want to hear why the values are important today and why they were important to our people in the past. Through the workshop, the youth identified a number of challenges and threats they

were faced with, strengths they held, and opportunities that were available to them. Our students found empowerment with their brainstorming.

The primary mission of the MYAC is to serve the common good of the community and provide a voice for youth in decisions and policies of the North Slope Borough. This is accomplished by:

- Organizing constructive community projects,
- Strengthening relationships among youth, and between youth, adults, and elders, and
- Providing positive activities involving youth.

[www.north-slope.org](http://www.north-slope.org)



MYAC youth take part in a teambuilding activity



Youth and adults, including Mayor Edward Itta (center), learned from one another and had fun at the MYAC Leadership Workshop

# Endurance runner sets sights on Alaska, motivating youth by AASB Staff



Former 5th grade teacher and ultra-endurance runner Paul Staso is dedicated to increasing awareness in children about the importance of health and fitness and the pursuit of their goals and dreams. So much so that in 2006 he attempted and completed a 3,200-mile run across America. He will bring his enthusiasm for education and fitness to Alaska in 2009.

Staso's 2006 run was the result of a promise he made to the 4th and 5th grade students of Russell Elementary in Missoula, Montana, his hometown. In the fall of 2005, Paul issued a challenge to the students: if they could virtually cover the 3,200 miles across America by running and walking in P.E. class within the 2005-2006 school year, he would attempt to do it for real. The 108-day adventure took Paul across 15 states and a total of 3,260 miles, all the way from Cannon Beach, Oregon to Lewes, Delaware. The journey was a success, and on his next adventure, Staso wanted to expand upon the depth and reach of the program and allow for more student involvement, learning, and interaction along the way. This led to the creation of P.A.C.E. Trek.

***“My goal is to get kids excited about physical fitness and the world beyond their TV or video-game consoles.***

***It's a chance for them to set goals, get active, and learn about new cultures and places.”***

***- Paul Staso***



**Paul Staso talks to students about setting goals, the importance of fitness, and the practical challenges of his Pace Trek in Montana.**



**Paul Staso is welcomed by students in Lewes, Delaware toward the conclusion of his run across America.**

P.A.C.E. stands for Promoting Active Children Everywhere. Through P.A.C.E., students in classrooms around the country and around the world can log on to [www.pacetrekk.com](http://www.pacetrekk.com), learn interesting facts about new places and people, track Staso's progress, and virtually 'race' him by adding up their weekly walking/running mileage. His inaugural PACE Trek was a 20-day, 620-mile run through the state of Montana in 2008. Through Paul's journal entries, pictures, videos and audio files posted at the website during the trek, kids got the opportunity to learn more about health, fitness, setting goals, and teamwork. P.A.C.E. Trek 2008 engaged over 8,000 children from eight countries, with 108 teams logging 42,000 miles.

*“My goal is to get kids excited about physical fitness and the world beyond their TV or video-game consoles,” said Staso. “It's a chance for them to set goals, get active, and learn about new cultures and places.”*

Next spring Staso will be in Alaska, launching his second official PACE Trek (April 22 – May 13, 2009) and experiencing a homecoming of sorts. Staso grew up here, attending Eagle River Elementary, Gruening Middle School, Chugiak High School, and Juneau-Douglas High School, from which he graduated in 1983. While he is excited to revisit the state on a personal level, he is still focused on his greater mission.

*“The Alaska journey is my way of trying to make an impact in the childhood obesity issue and the continuing decline of youth health and fitness,” Staso says. “The adventure will be a fun, educational trek for all kids in grades K through 12, regardless of where they're located. Since it's a free and unique opportunity, I hope that school teachers and coaches will sign up a team and support the aim of getting kids up, moving, and learning.”*

**To learn more about P.A.C.E. Trek 2009 in Alaska, or to sign your classroom or school up to participate in the FREE educational adventure, visit [www.pacetrekk.com](http://www.pacetrekk.com).**

# Spirit of Youth announces new Executive Director

by AASB Staff



Spirit of Youth (SOY) is proud to announce the hire of Karen Zeman as its new Executive Director.

Prior to her new position with SOY, Karen served as Director of Measurement and Planning for Boys & Girls Clubs of America in Atlanta, GA.

SOY ([www.spiritofyouth.org](http://www.spiritofyouth.org)) is dedicated to creating, promoting and recognizing youth involvement in communities across Alaska. In 2008, the Spirit of Youth positive media campaign and annual awards recognized over 300 youth from 57 Alaska communities.

Spirit of Youth has 36 active teen members -- 16 as members of SOY's Teen Action



**Karen Zeman will begin as E.D. this fall**

Council, and 20 as teen members of the Alaska Teen Media Institute (ATMI) that are dedicated to sharing positive stories about youth and elevating youth voice in the media. SOY/ATMI piloted an Internet

blog with the Anchorage Daily News and has published 43 entries since its inception in February 2008. You can visit the blog at: [www.adn.com/soy](http://www.adn.com/soy).

The SOY Board of Directors looks forward to working with Zeman to lead SOY into an expanded and more sustainable position for promoting meaningful youth engagement opportunities. Zeman started September 2.

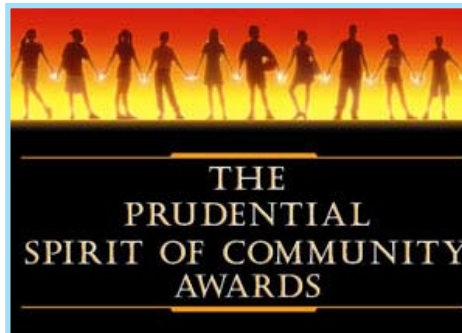


## Prudential Spirit of Community Awards

[www.prudential.com/spirit](http://www.prudential.com/spirit)

The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards honor young people in middle and high school for outstanding volunteer service to their communities.

Created in 1995 by Prudential Financial in partnership with the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), the awards constitute the United States' largest youth recognition program based solely on volunteering. Over the past 13 years, the program has honored more than 80,000 young volunteers at the local, state, and national level.



### 2008 State Honorees and Distinguished Finalists for Alaska

**Ariel Lyon**, 17, of Juneau, Alaska, a senior at Juneau-Douglas High School

**Noelle Schmitter-Schrier**, 14, of Soldotna, Alaska, an eighth-grader with the Connections Homeschool Program

**Molly Watkins**, 17, of Kenai, Alaska, a junior at Kenai Central High School

**Vienna Schmitter-Schrier**, 11, of Soldotna, Alaska, a sixth-grader at Soldotna Montessori School

**Applications for 2009 volunteer awards must be received by October 31, 2008.**

### Dos and Don'ts of Successful Volunteering

- **Do be flexible.** It is rare to find the "perfect" fit right away. Keep an open mind—you might discover something new that interests you.
- **Do be responsible.** Show up on time and follow through with your commitments. People will be depending on you.
- **Don't think that volunteering has to be a group effort.** You can start your own volunteer program and do it on your own time.
- **Do expect to get plenty of personal enjoyment and satisfaction from your volunteer experiences.**

[www.prudential.com/spirit](http://www.prudential.com/spirit)

# Taking an Active Role with Adults

from a study by Brockman, Hoffman Tepper, Russell



## What does it mean for youth to take an active role with adults?

Youth taking an active role with adults has been defined in different ways during the last several decades. More recently, the process of youth participation with adults has been described as youth and adults actively working together in intergenerational partnerships to influence the decisions that affect their lives (Checkoway, 1998; 2003). Other terms, such as “youth infusion,” “youth governance” and “youth decision-making” have also been used to describe youth involvement with adults (Zeldin, McDaniel, Topitzes, & Calvert, 2000).

Youth can be involved with adults in numerous ways, with differing levels of responsibility and decision-making power (Hart, 1992; 1997). In general, as young people age they develop the capacity to take on increasingly greater responsibility. However, a number of different factors affect young people’s ability to actively participate with adults. These factors include social, emotional and developmental levels, cultural contexts, and socioeconomic conditions (Hart, 1992). Adults working to participate with youth must consider specific individual, developmental, contextual, and cultural characteristics of young people and structure the experience accordingly.



**What can youth do to take an active role with adults?** Some tips for young people working with adults (from Fiscus, 2003)

- One of the best ways to change adults’ ideas about young people’s capabilities are by showing them what youth can do.
- Take responsibilities seriously, follow through on commitments to others, and come to meetings and activities prepared.
- Confidently and politely speak up, and question and challenge the assumptions of your teammates.

## Why is it important for youth to take active roles with adults?

Youth, adults, organizations, and communities experience many benefits from youth taking an active role with adults (Zeldin, McDaniel, Topitzes, & Calvert, 2000). Youth benefit from such participation by:

- engaging in socially meaningful activities,
- gaining exposure to the world of work,
- developing comfort in interacting with people of different ages and backgrounds, exercising responsibility.

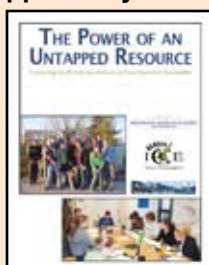
Read more of the study at the **Building Partnerships for Youth** website: <http://tinyurl.com/5u337h>

## The Power of an Untapped Resource

This booklet focuses on the dynamic influence and depth youth can provide on school and other boards and offers direction and guidance to board members for giving youth the opportunity to serve.

Written by a teen member of the Anchorage School Board, this booklet is published by AASB.

View and order online at: [www.alaskaice.org](http://www.alaskaice.org)



*This document was supported by a Grant/ Cooperative Agreement Number U87/ CCU318437-05 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The contents of this document are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

# Thank you for your support

by Dustin Maxwell

Three years ago I never would have thought I would be in these shoes - the dream of being a state champion captured, placing at national wrestling tournaments, and getting offered a scholarship to wrestle at college.

My name is Dustin Maxwell. I recently had a story about me in the newspaper\* about my struggle to make it through high school and my journey to being a champion. Ever since the moment I stepped in the wrestling room, my life has turned 180 degrees around. It wouldn't have been possible without the people who helped me along the way, people who did not have to help me, people who had no obligation to me, and people who had their own life to live.

If it weren't for my coaches, friends' parents, teachers, and my mother, I wouldn't be where I am today. **Thank you!**



Photo credit: Erik Hill/Anchorage Daily News

\* **Maxwell doesn't take sport for granted** was written by Kevin Klott for the Anchorage Daily News.

Read it at the ADN website:

<http://tinyurl.com/56qp2e>

**Research shows that children benefit from connections to their family, peers, community, and activities.**

*Participation in structured after-school activities like clubs or sports contributes to academic achievement, enhanced social and cognitive skills, positive social behavior, and fewer risky behaviors.*

*(Eccles, Barber, Stone and Hunt, 2003)*

## Alaska schools win improvement awards

by AASB Staff

This month, the State Department of Education and Early Development announced the recipients of the 2007-2008 Alaska Public School Performance Incentive Program. School districts with recognized schools include: **Yukon Flats, Southeast Island, Aleutians East, Copper River, Annette Island, Northwest Arctic, Haines, Alaska Gateway, Mat-Su, Lake and Penn, Kenai, Craig, Anchorage, and Iditarod.**

Kathy Holmes, teacher at Mosquito Lake School in the Haines Borough School District, is proud to be receiving this honor for the second consecutive year. She gives credit to a dedicated staff and the well-rounded curriculum available to the students, which includes music, physical education, and visual arts in addition to a strong reading, math, and science foundation.

Additionally, Kathy is quick to recognize the powerful reinforcement that students

receive from their families and positive home environments. In a radio interview with a local Haines reporter, she praises supportive parents and the students' own initiative to get outside and be active, take part in productive family activities like cooking, and using their time outside of school wisely.

You can listen to the KHNS Radio interview at <http://khns.org/listen.php#news>. Click on the Local News – 8.12.08 link in the archive.

**Congratulations to Kathy and all of the 2007-2008 award recipients!**

For a complete list of recipients, go to <http://www.eed.state.ak.us/spip/>.

## Forum of Young Alaskans



On October 4, 2008, young people from large and small communities across the state will convene to discuss, debate, and delve into the issues that are important to them and are affecting the state today. This Forum of Young Alaskans, the first event of its kind, is designed to reach bright young people from across the varied geographical regions of the state and to provide them with an opportunity to share their experiences and knowledge with others.

With an anticipated 300-500 youth participants located in several major hubs across the state, plus those in rural branch locations and those who log on to the website, the Forum has the ability to make an unprecedented impact.

**For more information, or to join in the conversation, visit: [www.youngalaskans.org](http://www.youngalaskans.org).**

*The Conference and Forum of Young Alaskans are projects of the University of Alaska operating with corporate financial support.*

# Measuring School Climate and Connectedness

by AASB Staff

School climate and student connectedness are critical elements that directly relate to student achievement.

There is strong scientific evidence that demonstrates **increased student connection to school promotes: motivation, classroom engagement, and improved school attendance.** These three factors in turn increase academic achievement and apply across all racial, ethnic, and income groups. (*Wingspread Declaration on School Connectedness, 2003*)

Evaluation of the perceptions of both students and staff, and the overall environment of schools is key to creating positive, welcoming atmospheres. AASB's School Climate and Connectedness Survey (SCCS) is being regarded by more schools and districts throughout the state as a practical tool to evaluate and create environments that nurture student success. In 2006, just over 100 schools and 15 school districts participated in the survey. Those numbers grew to 150 schools and 14 districts for 2007, totaling 22,000 student and 3,300 staff responses.

**Strong scientific evidence demonstrates that increased student connection to school promotes:**

- **Motivation,**
- **Classroom engagement, and**
- **Improved school attendance.**

- *Wingspread Declaration on School Connectedness, 2003*

**The 2008 SCCS was conducted in 235 schools across 32 Alaska school districts.** All of Alaska ICE's current and former QS2 partner districts participated in the survey, as have all AASB's Consortium for Digital Learning (CDL) one-to-one laptop initiative districts. More than **35,000 students** in grades 5-12 took the survey, as did more than **4,500 school staff.** A pilot version of the SCCS for 3rd and 4th graders was given to an additional 5,800 3rd and 4th grade students in Anchorage elementary schools in 2008.

The goal of SCCS is not only to create positive connections between adults and students, but also between schools, families, and communities.

Results for participants of the 2008 SCCS will be available to schools and districts this fall.

*"We have found the School Climate & Connectedness Survey to be a valuable tool for measuring student comfort in their learning environment and guiding us to make the necessary changes."*

**Jamie Stacks, Superintendent  
Pribilof School District**



*Working together helps to create positive student connectedness*

*"The results of this survey helped us realize what a difference student voice can make. If you want students to be responsible, you must give them the opportunity to get involved in decisions that impact them."*

**LeAnn Young, Principal  
Tok School**

**For more information on cost and scheduling, contact:**

<http://www.alaskaice.org>

**Association of Alaska School Boards  
Alaska Initiative for Community  
Engagement  
1111 W. 9th Street  
Juneau, AK 99801  
907-586-1083  
907-586-2995 (fax)**

## Poetry Out-Loud: Alaskan high school students invited to compete in poetry recitation contest *from the Alaska State Council on the Arts*



Juneau, AK -- The National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation present Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest, in partnership with the Alaska State Council on the Arts and Juneau Arts and Humanities Council. Poetry Out Loud encourages high school students to learn great poetry through memorization, performance, and competition. During January and February, schools and students participate in classroom and school wide and regional contests.

Finalists advance to a state competition in Juneau on March 16, 2009. The state champion will then travel to the National Finals in Washington DC on April 27-28. The National winner receives a \$20,000 college scholarship and then recites his/her poem on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial as part of the festivities to commemorate the Memorial's 200th birthday. Alaskan teachers/students who wish to participate must register by November 7, 2008.



For a registration form, or more information contact the AK Poetry Out Loud Committee [poetryoutloud@gmail.com](mailto:poetryoutloud@gmail.com) (Attention Mary Becker) or call (907) 586-ARTS (2787).

Alev Kelter, a junior at Chugiak High School, Eagle River, was selected as the 2008 Alaska Poetry Out Loud champion and represented Alaska in the 2008 National Finals in Washington, DC.

Poetry Out Loud seeks to foster the next generation of literary readers across the nation by capitalizing on trends in poetry-recitation and performance. The program builds on the resurgence of poetry as an oral art form by inviting the dynamic aspects of slam poetry, spoken word, and theatre into the English classroom. Through Poetry Out Loud, students master public speaking skills, build self-confidence and learn about their literary heritage.



Visit the KTD archive online at:

[www.kidsthesedays.org](http://www.kidsthesedays.org)

and

[www.alaskaice.org](http://www.alaskaice.org)