



Yukon-Koyukuk School District  
**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Yukon-Koyukuk School District Revs Up Efforts for Boosting Student Success**

In recent years, the Yukon-Koyukuk School District (YKSD) was designated for “Corrective Action” by the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (Alaska EED). YKSD had not met annual yearly progress requirements from No Child Left Behind for several consecutive years, resulting in the corrective action designation.

Seeking to improve this unacceptable trend, the school district applied for and was awarded a five-year federal grant, totaling approximately \$7 million. Only 14 of these grants were awarded nationwide, and YKSD is the only grantee in Alaska. Now in year two of the grant, the district is on course for improving student achievement through its School Success Plan.

Participating in a weeklong training session during the first week of August, YKSD teachers, administrators and paraprofessionals are preparing to implement the next phase of significant change. “This training gives us the tools to provide the best education for our students,” Superintendent Kerry Boyd says. “Our efforts are coordinated with the U.S. Dept. of Education which is funding the grant activities, the Alaska EED to implement the improvement plan, and our own District and Board to provide a better future for our children.” Changes include multiple School Success Plan components; the PEAK Teaching for Excellence Model, Integrated Youth Development and Classroom Solutions a Web-based learning management system. These components of YKSD’s success plan build and improve upon the state-mandated corrective action improvement requirements.

The PEAK Model is an effective integration of research-supported approaches to curriculum, instruction, and assessment principles, strategies, and techniques that have consistently made positive differences in leaving no child behind. The Integrated Youth Development (IYD) program supports youth, families, schools, and communities in giving young people the supports and opportunities that produce environments for their optimal development.

Annette Penn will be a first-year YKSD teacher for the 2008-09 school year, and she is also a parent of six children attending school in the district. The training session has made Penn feel confident that, “My kids will be given tools and positive attitudes from the teachers to help boost their attitude and self esteem. As a parent, it will mean that my children and all children will see less failure and will be more successful. The teachers will also be given the tools to help the children succeed, to want to come to school and learn. We will see more positive students and teachers in a more positive classroom environment.”

Shirley Kruger, Vice Chairman on the YKSD Board, says she understands how everyone involved needs to “Use their imagination and skills to understand that all kids learn differently, and we have to plan and promote, and integrate these learning tools” to help students achieve success. To support this approach, Kruger points out that the plan also includes, “assessing kids at all times and overviewing, so we, as educators, know they are progressing and learning.”

Keeping tabs on student progress is where Classroom Solutions comes in. This Web-based application was developed by educational software pioneers at WorldWide Independent Distance Education of America (WW IDEA), using research-based strategies. At the heart of Classroom Solutions is the ability to track student performance in mastering individual skills, along with integrated curriculum mapping and flexible assessment tracking tools. Grant director Carl Knudsen says, “The fact that Classroom Solutions tracks student mastery of critical skills will be vital to student success in YKSD schools. This software will significantly improve teacher and administrator effectiveness and efficiency in making sure every student achieves academic success.” Furthermore, teachers and school administrators can access the secure online system anywhere they have an Internet connection. This makes cooperative and collaborative teaching especially easy.

“We will continue to work closely with our community members, the Alaska department of education, and our education staff in effort to continually improve service to our students,” Boyd emphasizes. Furthermore, the School



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Success Plan team expects significant improvements over the next several years and hopes that the resources and strategies invested in the YK schools will help provide a replicable program for other Alaska schools facing state-mandated improvement plans.