

# REPORT TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

## BOARD OF EDUCATION

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*"A shared vision is not an idea... it is rather, a force in people's hearts..."*

*at its simplest level, a shared vision is the answer to the question "What do we want to create?"*

*--Peter Senge*



*break is over and we are moving heading toward a wonderful spring..*

## SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE

**Jack Foster, Superintendent**

### CURRICULUM PROGRESS

This is a very exciting time for Southwest Region Schools. I am very proud of the team effort being made to make the Writing Assessment, our Curriculum Audit of Language Arts and Mathematics and our Yup'ik Studies Curriculum Steering Committee make great progress. You will learn more

about these in individual department board reports.

### SITE VISITS

It is so wonderful to have such beautiful schools for our students. The new schools and new teacher housing has really helped raise the level of the education going on in our schools.



*a break for some reading with students at Aleknagik*



I am very excited at what is happening in our schools. The quality of the education that the students are receiving is improving every day. Students are starting to take ownership of their own education.

The most exciting things to see are the happy faces of the students and teachers. I got a chance to read with some students and listen to them read dur-

ing visits in December. I visited all of our schools before Christmas and I am very proud of what I saw occurring.

### **BUDGET PROCESS**

We have a workshop scheduled for January 23rd to work the board and a presenter from AASB to begin the process of updating goals and looking at our budget for next year.



## **CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION**

**David Piazza, Director of Instructional Programs**

### **H1N1 Pandemic Influenza Update**

The District continues to monitor the efforts of the regional task force regarding the H1N1 Swine Flu. More information may be found at <http://www.pandemicflu.alaska.gov/> and <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/qa.htm>.

According to the Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation in December, Kakanak Hospital had received more Seasonal Flu Vaccine and H1N1 flu vaccine.

### **eRate**

The FY2010 application filing window for E-Rate opened on Thursday, December 3, 2009 and will close on Thursday, February 11, 2010. The district has completed the Form 470 which began our 28 day waiting period to allow vendors to provide quotes for service to meet district needs. This timeline will be met by the time of the board meeting and we should be in the process of completing the Form 471 Application to meet the filing deadline.

Again we do not expect major changes in service due to our existing contract with GCI for Internet and Distance Learning services that remain in effect for the 2010-2011 school year.

### **Curriculum (Deb Endicott)**



#### **Math in a Cultural Context**

Math in Cultural Context is continuing to provide our teachers and paraprofessionals with workshops to earn credit toward the Highly Qualified requirements. The next workshop will be held in Dillingham on January 23, 2010 and will focus on Designing Patterns.

#### **Curriculum Audit**

The Curriculum Audit is continuing. The language arts team and the mathematics teams met before break to address a need voiced at sites to assist students who are having difficulty with SBAs and the HSGQE at the high school level. The committees selected several sets of materials that have promise and the process of reviewing those programs at selected sites has begun. Meetings are scheduled throughout the spring.

#### **Yup'ik Studies Curriculum Committee**

The Yup'ik Studies Curriculum Steering Committee met for the first of a series of meetings to create a plan for revitalizing Yup'ik studies in the SWRS

curriculum. At our second meeting, the group created a draft of program outcomes and goals. (see draft goals attached) The group meets again later this month.

### **Counseling/State-wide Assessments (Steve Ito)**



#### **IPT Testing**

The District completed the annual EED mandated Idea Proficiency Testing (IPT) coordinator training updates for the spring 2010 Limited English Proficiency (LEP) testing cycle. Coordination of IPT training at all sites will take place in January. Identified teachers will complete web-based proficiency training in order to be qualified assessor/proctors for the February administration of the IPT to required grade level students. The IPT is family of tests are comprehensive standardized tests that assess listening, speaking, reading and writing and are required for all students who are classified as LEP.

#### **Alternate Assessment**

The District is in the process of identifying and training a certified staff SPED member to be an Alternate Assessment Protégé for the 2010 spring testing of significant cognitively disabled students. The Alternate Assessment exists for students with significant cognitive disabilities to have access to, participate in, and make progress in general education curricula. The Alternate Assessment is based on Alaska standards but measured against alternate achievement standards.

#### **HSGQE Scores**

The Spring HSGQE & SBA district wide testing enrollments have been submitted to Data Recognition Corporation. Pre Code labeling data transfer will take place in January. Submitting enrollments and Pre-Code data greatly enhances the quality and accuracy of test administration during the mandated

spring Standards Based Assessment and High School Qualifying Exam testing window.

#### **McKinley-Vento Data**

The District updated the McKinley-Vento homeless school data as required by The Department of Education and Early Development.

### **Media Center (Shannon Clouse)**



#### **Koliganek Imagination Library**

We recently received the Imagination Grant from Best Beginnings for \$1750 to fund a high quality age appropriate book for all children in Koliganek from ages 0 to 4. We have this grant for a year and hopefully will secure funding for it to continue for a while. If the program continues children will have the opportunity to collect a library of 60 books before they reach Kindergarten. All the required paperwork for this grant was being submitted in December and hopefully children will be registered in January.

#### **Reading Is Fundamental**

The 2009 year for RIF is over with the Performance Report and Proposal for 2010 submitted. Both Brian Tesch (Manokotak) and Rochelle Bushey (Clarks Point) were nominated for doing exceptional jobs as RIF coordinator at their sites. Recently Shannon Clouse was asked to be the Alaska RIF Ambassador, which she accepted. Shannon will take on this role in January and will, "...expand RIF's reach by engaging neighboring RIF programs and volunteers through a selection of activities." Along with the additional duties the SWRS RIF program will receive an additional \$500 grant and \$100 for ambassador activity expenses.

#### **Battle of the Books**

The first round of practice battles were held in December with a very large turn out of teams.



We had three teams participate at the 3/4 level: New Stuyahok, Clarks Point and Togiak. The 5/6 group had 5 schools participate with 4 teams in Togiak. The 7/8 grade had four teams participating and High School had an individual practice with Togiak. Battle of the Books district competition will take place January 25-29 with the winning teams going on to compete at the state level in February.

### **Student Records?PowerSchool Support (Nate Preston)**



The end of Semester grading reports are being processed by the sites. Report cards should have been sent to parents right after the holiday break.

The Federal Impact Aid Source

Check forms have been returned from sites and the data has been processed to complete the Impact Aid application that is due at the end of January.



## **FEDERAL & STATE PROGRAMS**

**Jon Clouse, Federal/State Programs Director**

### **American Reinvestment & Recovery Act (ARRA) No Child Left Behind (NCLB)**

The Department of Education and Early Development (EED) has approved the district's State Fiscal & Stabilization Fund upon clarifying some points that EED personnel brought to the district. The curriculum committees are making progress on the K-12 comprehensive curriculum audit. An after school program has been developed and implemented at Manokotak 'Nunaniq' School which was one factor attributed for making adequate yearly progress.

### **Highly Qualified Teacher Plan**

#### **No Child Left Behind (NCLB)**

Highly Qualified Teacher Plan was completed and submitted to the state. This report contains data about the number of courses taught by staff new to the profession, staff new to the district, and staff that are not highly qualified. The report also included data comparing the categories listed above between schools that made adequate yearly progress versus schools that did not make AYP, as well as comparing information between school in improvement at level 2 & above versus schools in improvement at level 1 & below. The plan outlines actions to assist educa-

tors that are teaching content area courses in which they are not highly qualified become highly qualified. The plan also outlines professional development opportunities for teachers teaching content area courses in which they are not highly qualified in order to support those educators during the process to become highly qualified. Lastly, the district is required to sign a funding agreement because the district has not made adequate yearly progress for three consecutive years and have not reached the 100% goal for highly qualified courses. The funding agreement states that the district will not use Title I-A fund for the employment of new paraprofessionals unless the hiring is to fill a vacancy created by the departure of another paraprofessional funded under Title I-A and the paraprofessional is highly qualified, or a significant influx of population has increased student enrollment, or there is an increased need for translators or assistance with parent involvement activities. A copy of the plan is included in the board packet.

### **Carl Perkins**

#### **No Child Left Behind (NCLB)**

District has secured Carl Perkins IV funds for the 2010 fiscal year. These funds are used to audit

career & technical education curriculum with an emphasis on industrial arts and computer applications. Some of the funds have been used to supplement the current curriculum in the architecture and construction area, as well as, supplement the tools supply to effectively teach the skills necessary to be successful.

### **District & School Improvement:**

#### **No Child Left Behind (NCLB)**

The district is working with certified and classified staff to meet the highly qualified requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act. There are a number of certified staff that took Praxis II exams in specific content areas to become highly qualified on November 14th in Dillingham. Also, the district has contacted the company that administers the Praxis exams and that company has agreed to create testing centers at our four high schools. This means that most of our staff will not be required to travel to Dillingham to take a Praxis exam but instead can take a Praxis exam at their school. Currently, 77%

of our classes are taught by highly qualified staff. About half of our instructional paraprofessionals meet the requirements to be highly qualified. One method to become highly qualified is by obtaining an Associate of Arts degree or 48 semester hours. The other method is to take an assessment. The previous assessment (HELP exam) is not longer available and the State Board of Education will adopt a replacement exam in December. Once a replacement exam is adopted, the district will be working with the UAF – Bristol Bay Campus to create a class to prepare instructional paraprofessionals to take the replacement exam.

#### **Indian Education: U.S. Dept. of Education**

The Yupik Studies steering committee continues to make progress in the K-12 comprehensive curriculum development process. Ferdinand Sharp was able to sit-in on the steering committee meeting in November. Resources to assist in the development of the Yupiaq Studies curriculum have been identified and are being purchased for future meetings.



## **EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY**

**Steve Noonkesser, Technology Coordinator**

### **T4 Renewal**

As we look at a renewal of the district's T4 laptop project, we have begun looking at some of the new low-priced Linux-based netbooks to determine how, or if, they might fit into our programs.

### **Internet Safety & Acceptable Use Agreement Update**

We continue to discuss the issues surrounding cell phones in our schools and are preparing a recommendation for administrative regulation. We want to be proactive regarding potential challenges.

### **Curriculum**

Work continues at a good pace on language arts, mathematics and Yup'ik Studies. A calendar has been set for meetings in all of these areas during the

spring with the goal of having recommendations to the board ready by the May-June meetings.



### **Computer Aided Instruction Specialist (Corey Evans)**

The Technology department has recently completed a full update of the district's technology inventory system in preparation for our renewal.



### **Technology Specialist (Les Parks)**

As the chair of the Mathematics curriculum committee, work has been progressing on an HSGQE preparation course for students struggling with the mathematics portion of the exam.



## Aleknagik School

Jeff Ambrosier, Lead Teacher

### The First Semester Flew By...

The first semester has flown by and both the staff and students have seen considerable growth. As a school, we are using the Responsible Thinking Process to work with student behavior issues as they come up. In addition to RTP we believe that by modeling good behavior and kindness to the students that they will in turn treat each other and the staff with that same respect.

Having the staff working together has really helped develop the RTI (Response to Intervention) process. We have modified schedules to give students the interventions that they need to increase their achievement. So when a student is undergoing interventions and progress monitoring, when they reach their benchmark, their intervention time is reduced so schedules are constantly being modified to meet the needs of the students.

Specifically in the classrooms, Mr. Christners K-2 students are doing readers theater with the Alvin and Chipmunks Christmas Song. Kids will be working on reading fluency as well as singing. They are also working on reading with expression and using their voice appropriately. In Mrs. Burke's classes they are getting ready for the Christmas program where the kids will be performing sock puppet plays and playing the kazoo. Her other group has just performed to the class a thirty second commercial after reviewing what makes a good persuasive commercial. Mrs. Schiaffo's reading class has started listening centers for 25 minutes every morning. Students are listening to higher level books while reading along to increase fluency, comprehension and vocabulary skills. They recently read *The Chocolate Touch*, *Flat*



*Stanley*, and *Flat Stanley and the Magic Lamp*.

They are able to discuss the stories in groups of two or three and earn AR point as well! In Mr. Ambrosier's class, the younger students have made great strides in understanding fractions. Typically we use either pizzas or blueberry pies as our models when we are discussing and drawing out our fractions.

The school would not be running as smoothly as it is without the help of the classified staff. There isn't one person who works at the school that won't help out someone else when there is a need so I'm very thankful for the effort that each person gives on a daily basis.

Basketball has started practicing and currently Mr. Christner has 9 students out for practice and they are looking forward to the upcoming season. However, we are all looking forward to the upcoming break and getting out to enjoy time with family and friends.

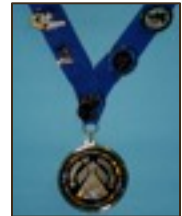


## Clarks Point School

**Doug Bushey, Principal**

### Celebrating Holidays and Excellence!

The students have enjoyed the Thanksgiving & Christmas Breaks and are ready to return to school. The student council hosted a Christmas Program based upon "Christmas Traditions Around the World." Each student reported on a Christmas tradition from a country they picked. The program was followed by a community potluck with over forty people attending. The evening was completed with the student council hosting prize Bingo.



The second quarter ended with "Celebration of Excellence" assembly. There are six categories students can earn award pins in Attendance, Citizenship, Math Mastery, Reading, and Conservation. These awards will be presented at the end of each quarter to recognize student achievement.

The students are continuing with Math in a Cultural Context (MCC). They have completed the "Drying Salmon" unit and the "Berry Picking" unit. The students are currently working on "Patterns & Parkas" and will complete this unit during the third quarter. The data collected from the pre-assessment and post-assessment from each unit is significant. Mrs. Bushey will continue to receive MCC professional development through UAF in January and February in Dillingham.



## William 'Sonny' Nelson School

**Audra Finkenbinder, Lead Teacher**

### Happy New Year!

The school year has been passing at an unbelievable pace – here we are already in the second semester.

In November, the 7th and 8th graders received laptops to use while at school and they have been thoroughly enjoying them. The students will arrive before school and stay after in order to use the laptops as much as they can.

In December, the Warriors had their first basketball scrimmage against the New Stuyahok Eagles and both teams played well. It will be exciting to watch how both teams progress over the next two months.

William "Sonny" Nelson School had a Christmas Program, RIF book distribution and cakewalk on December 15th. The program consisted of an acrostic poem, a guitar solo by one of the students, some well-known Christmas carols including Jingle Bells, which was performed in Yupik, and a candle dance. The students and staff would like to thank



Mr. Foster for coming to watch; we enjoyed having him as our guest.

The second semester brings many important events, including two rounds of AIMSweb testing and the SBAs. As we begin the third quarter, we will be focusing on reading comprehension, the writing process, and math skills.





# Manokotak 'Nunaniq' School

Herman Gerving, Principal

## Wrapping up a great semester!

A recruiter from the Marines visited with students and we celebrated local military veterans with an assembly and potluck. Additionally, Manokotak Nunaniq School hosted an awards assembly to recognize academic and attendance excellence.

We were quite pleased with the results of the retake of the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam. With the results and data received Manokotak Nunaniq School is preparing for the spring state tests.

The District Writing Assessment was administered to students grades 3-12. Whitney Christiansen and Nick Gilbertson assisted in the district-wide scoring process.



Our very small senior class continues their fundraising efforts, with the strong support of their parents, whose efforts are greatly appreciated.

Principal Herman Gerving taught the Responsible Thinking Program class for Southwest Region Schools this fall and is looking forward to instructing Responsible Thinking Program Class II and a college-level math class in the spring semester for Bristol Bay Campus.

Planning for the holidays has included Christmas Program preparations, open gym scheduling, and New Years activities at the school by the HeadStart program and Manuquataq Trading Company.

Upcoming in-services planned for staff after Christmas vacation will address school climate and connectedness. Effective teaching, Harry White, Yukon Koyukuk School District will be giving an In-service for Manokotak Staff and other teachers in the district on Teacher Effectiveness: Strategies and Techniques important for reaching excellence for all kids. CPR/First Aid training will be offered to all teaching staff and support personnel.

## School Featured in National Magazine!

The students and staff of Manokotak were featured last month in a national magazine. A reporter from Time Magazine for Kids wrote a very nice article featuring.

<http://www.swrsd.org/home/images/students/TimeForKidsArticle.pdf>

**TIME FOR KIDS NEWS SCOOP**  
timeforkids.com

Teaching the Cover Story on  
**A Yup'ik Village in Alaska**

**SUMMARY**  
Alaska's Yup'ik people blend a modern way of life with traditional practices.

**FAST FACTS**

- For centuries, the **Yup'ik** people have lived in small, far-apart villages in **southwestern Alaska**.
- Today, there are about **30 Yup'ik communities**. Manokotak has a population of around 400 people.
- Yup'ik means "**real person**."
- Traditional dance ceremonies**, once an important part of Yup'ik culture, were suppressed by missionaries in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.
- Speaking Yup'ik** was also discouraged in some areas.
- In many villages, efforts are being made to **bring back traditional dance** and the Yup'ik language.
- Like their ancestors, many Yup'ik people still depend on **subsistence fishing, hunting and gathering** for most of their food.
- Yup'ik men do most of the **hunting**. Animals, such as moose, caribou, and seals, are used for food as well as clothing.
- In the summer, many families move to **fish camp**. Kids help with **fishing and with splitting, drying and smoking** the fish that are caught.

**TEACHING TIPS**

**Before Reading**  
**Make Connections**

- Have students bring in, and share with a partner, an item that represents their culture.
- Ask: What do you think the man on the cover of this week's TFK is teaching the kids?

**Start a Discussion**  
**Critical Thinking**

- Why is it important for people in Manokotak's village to work together?
- How has life for the Yup'ik people changed since McKenzie's grandparents were kids? How has life stayed the same?
- Is it important to hold on to your family's traditions? Explain.
- Would you like to live in McKenzie's village? Why or why not?

**Build Comprehension**  
**Compare and Contrast**

- Have students compare and contrast life in their community with life in Manokotak.

**Extend Learning**  
**Reflective Writing**

- Have students write about a lesson they learned from a grandparent or from another relative.

**Assess Comprehension**  
**WU** [timeforkids.com/wuqit](http://timeforkids.com/wuqit)  
Access comprehension of this issue with our printable multiple-choice quiz.

**COVER STORY STANDARDS**  
Social Studies (NCSS)  
• Culture  
Students explore and describe similarities and differences in the ways people, societies and cultures address similar human needs and concerns.

**Topics Addressed**  
• Alaska Natives  
• Culture and Traditions  
• Community

**Worksheet Skills**  
• Comparing and Contrasting, page 4  
• Making Inferences, page 5  
• Reading a Map, page 6

**RESOURCE**  
**A Kid's Guide to Native American History**  
by Thomas Wilson Dennis and Adele Hirschfelder  
(Chicago Review Press, 2009)  
Hands-on activities, games and crafts celebrating the diversity of Native American cultures.

**THE PUBLISHING SCHEDULE**

timeforkids.com





# Koliganek School

**Cody McCanna, Lead Teacher**

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## Our Vision

As the leader of Koliganek School it is with great pride that I am able to say that our school now has a clear vision that had input from all stakeholders in our community. We are currently using our vision as a way to reflect on our educational practices to determine if they are aligned with our vision.

*"Koliganek School is committed to providing every student with the opportunity to grow and develop as life-long learners. We believe school should be a positive place where students are actively engaged while working cooperatively with staff and other students to reach their full potential. Our staff, students, parents, and community members work together to create a support network for all students to learn and become productive citizens."*

## Husky Pride

Our volleyball team won the Regional Tournament in Naknek and placed 5th at the State Tournament in Anchorage. We also had one wrestler who competed at the State Wrestling tournament in Anchorage as well. We have a boys and a girls basketball team this year and they are practicing hard for their upcoming season.

## Professional Learning Communities (PLC's)

The certified staff members at Koliganek have been in the process of learning about PLC's and how they can be used to improve teaching and learning at our school. Staff members will be creating specific PLC groups during the January in-service time. The PLC's will give staff members the opportunity to create a time when they can get together and discuss specific learning areas that need improving.

## Student-Led Conferences

Students in grades K-12 conducted Student-Led Conferences on the 21st of December. This gave students the opportunity to share their learning with their parents/guardians while doing some goal writing for the next semester. It was a positive experience and a great opportunity for students to reflect on their learning and take responsibility for their education.



# **‘Chief’ Ivan Blunka School**

**Bob Thompson, Principal**

As we end the 1st semester and begin the new semester it is time to evaluate our progress and reflect on what is working and what needs changing for the upcoming school term. Through this continual process of self-analysis we can stay on a path of continuous improvement. Teachers will look at data and make decisions on programs. The Responsible Thinking Process will be part of this mid-term review as well as academic programs.

As we evaluate our progress we have many successes to celebrate. Students are definitely making progress. Reading and math scores continue to climb. Our student government is very active and involved with our school. Nearly half of our students are making honor roll. A record number of exams were passed in the high school qualifying re-test this fall.

Our extra-curricular programs are thriving. We had large turnouts this year for both girls' volleyball and wrestling. Both teams had very successful seasons with home tournaments for middle and high school in wrestling and in volleyball. Everyone is looking forward to the upcoming basketball seasons.



Events at our school have brought members of our community and surrounding villages to our school where we have been able to showcase our new facility. The response from visitors has been 100% positive. The regional wrestling tournament brought 13 teams together with 100 wrestlers attempting to qualify for state. We got a preview of the state championships watching Dillingham and Bethel battle to 1st and 2nd place respectively. New Stuyahok won the small schools title.

At this time of year, it is also appropriate to celebrate our blessings. We have great students at Chief Ivan Blunka School. We have a wonderful new facility. Our community is terrific. The support for our school is almost overwhelming at times. Community events bring hundreds of people into the school. We have many healthy families and a great amount of support for one another. These things are truly blessings that make New Stuyahok a great place to live and work.

## **Wind for Schools**

Chief Ivan Blunka School has applied to participate in the Wind for Schools program through the Alaska Center for Energy and Power. If awarded the grant, our school will receive a 2.5 KW wind generator that students will use to monitor the potential for wind power in our area and supplement our electrical power.

## **Library Grants**

We have also applied for two grants to upgrade our library collection. The first is a National Education Association grant for \$1,000 to purchase additional books for our library. The second is from the Laura Bush Foundation and would provide \$6,000 to buy library books. The additional books will help our school literacy program and provide additional high interest materials for our students to read.





## Togiak School

**Dave Morris, Principal**

It is hard to imagine that our school year has reached the midway point. It is a nice time to take stock in the progress our students have made over the course of the first semester. Students and staff alike have been committing great effort toward improving our educational programs and student achievement. We are seeing some results which confirm our efforts to date. One example that I would like to highlight is our recently received results of the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam re-takes. Juniors and Seniors who had previously not passed the exam did very well and are making strides toward a high school diploma. Nine of our thirteen students who retook the reading exam earned a passing score. Seven of the seventeen who completed the writing exam passed, and seven of ten students who previously had not passed the math exam achieved proficiency. We are going to continue to intensely focus on students who are in need to passing the HSGQE and do everything we can to ensure they have every opportunity to achieve a high school diploma. It is absolutely essential that our students pass the HSGQE, for it is a gateway to all the other opportunities that lie before them. Concurrently, to help our seniors effectively transition from high school, each Senior will develop a comprehensive transition plan which



will include skills/interest inventories, post-secondary applications, and financial aid procurement. The goal is to have a plan and resources in place so every senior can pursue the post-secondary interests of their choice.

I am really proud to be part of the efforts being made by our entire staff in Togiak to make our school a model for rural Alaska.

On behalf of the all the students and staff of Togiak School we would like to wish everyone a very happy holiday season filled with wonderful memories shared with family and friends. .





## Twin Hills School

**Esther Ilutsik, Principal/Teacher**

As we approach the New Year, we think of all the wonderful things that have happened within the past year. I asked the Twin Hills students to take a moment to remember something that they learned this last fall. Most of the students cited the enjoyment of learning how to Yup'ik dance. The stories embedded within the dances gave them a better understanding and a history of their own cultural heritage. They especially enjoyed dancing for the parents during the *Akutaq* Festival/Fall Open House and during the Christmas performance. We now have a small dance group called the *In-gricuaq* Dancers.



The students also, enjoyed the unit on China where they traveled to many parts of this huge country. The students made “pretend passports” and had to go through “immigration” to get into the country. They visited Beijing where they “climbed” the Great Wall and “visited” the Humongs where the poor people live – a community where they all share a common bath house which holds the toilets, showers and a place to wash clothing. The students tried their hand at writing Chinese characters and then traveled to Xian where they “saw” the famous Terra Cotta Warriors. The students tried their hand at making Terra Cotta Warriors with modeling clay. Just try to image creating a life size model

of a warrior? And then they traveled on to Lasha, Tibet where they “climbed” the Potala Palace the winter home of the Dali Lama. It was fun to try the prayer wheel and send out prayers of goodness and happiness with the prayer flags. The students experienced being blessed with a white prayer scarf. This scarf is used in greetings and blessings in Tibet. They made a quick side trip to Chengdu where the panda bears were featured. Then traveled on to the Yangtze River and were awed by The Three Gorges dam. Our last stop was Shanghai with the students being fascinated by the skyline with the Pearl Building standing out. The unit concluded with a snack of noodles using chopsticks, seaweed wrapped crackers and some Chinese candy.

In Yup'ik, January is called *Iralull'er*. It is translated as an ugly old moon. And it comes with the bitter cold, ice, snow and blizzards. In traditional times, a shortage of food occurred not to mention short tempers. So we begin the New Year with all these warnings in place and hope that we are busy enough with reading, writing, math and learning about many things that it will pass and we will greet the spring with a stronger knowledge base.

