

Along with the rest of the world, Nunamiut School has undergone many adjustments to our regular daily routine this past year for both students and staff alike. Everything from class schedules, sports activities, and even school lunches and bus runs have changed in ways we never anticipated, and sometimes with very little notice. As expected, however, our resilient students met the challenges head on, as masks and face shields, hand sanitizer and social distancing all became part of our “new normal”. Nunamiut School staff rose to the challenge as well, finding new ways to accommodate our students’ needs while continuing to provide a well-rounded education.

Nunamiut School ended 1st quarter with 98 students. Of those, 12 students are in ECE, 64 are in grades K – 8th and 22 are in high school. Students are almost evenly split into two groups, with Group A attending in person classes on Mondays and Tuesdays, and Group B attending in person on Thursdays and Fridays. Ten students are homeschooling this year. A few grades with smaller class sizes are able to attend in person every day, with Wednesdays set aside for teacher interaction with our homeschooled students and their parents.

At the end of last school year, two of our longest serving teachers transferred to Barrow and a third relocated to Nome, so this year we welcomed three new teachers to Nunamiut School. Candis Cook, our new PE teacher and sports coach, comes to Anaktuvuk Pass from Texas. Brandi Bowles, also from Texas, is our new 6th grade teacher. And Teresa Vossler, our new math teacher, has experience working in Southwest Alaskan villages, most recently in Chefnak. All three have been warmly welcomed to Anaktuvuk Pass and became part of our Nunamiut School family right from the start. Josh Morry-Mekiana, one of our high school graduates from last year, is now working as an Inupiaq class Teacher Aide, and has been mentoring with Inupiaq teacher Louisa Riley in the hopes of becoming a teacher himself one day.

In October we had our SAC election for the current year. Longtime SAC member and President Nolita Madros stepped down at the end of her term, and all of us thank her for her many years of service to the school and community. New SAC members are Georgeanne Gordon and Matt Regen, joining current members Lillian Gordon, Jalen Sheldon and Violet Kakinya. We anticipate a busy school year and we look forward to playing an active role in the coming year’s events.

Some of the accomplishments of this year’s first quarter we’d like to highlight are as follows:

Inupiaq Class: Louisa Riley is back for another year as our Inupiaq teacher. The first lessons taught this year to our younger students involved learning their own Inupiaq names as well as Inupiaq words for animals, numbers, colors, and body parts. The older students are now speaking and writing longer sentences in Inupiaq, while also learning traditional skills like cooking and sewing. This past week the middle and high students made tuttu soup, maktak salad and donuts for the students, staff and elders. We are also anticipating getting a whole caribou for our older students to learn the valuable skills of how to skin and prepare a tuttu.

Student Council: Earlier this month, as the nation held elections for President, Congress and the state house, Nunamiut School held our own elections for Student Council. While not quite as contentious as the national election, it was still a close one. Elected to this year's Student Council were President Daniel Morry, Vice President Jeremiah Ticket, Secretary Krista Hugo and Treasurer Ethan Stone. Rounding out the rest of Student Council are Alex Galloso, Justus Mulcahy, Anna Nukapigak, Elijah Burris, Tyler Hugo, Rashawn Stone, Kevin Gordon, and George Bifelt.

Battle of the Books: 15 of our 3rd, 4th and 5th graders formed a team for Battle of the Books and have been meeting twice a week after school with their advisor, 3rd grade teacher Donald Torres. They each picked a book from among a couple hundred books provided by Erin Hollingsworth, and will compete later this year in a reading contest with other participating schools. Parents and teachers alike are happy to see so many kids excited about reading!

Sports: With night rec closed to the students and community this year, we wanted to find alternative ways to keep the kids active, healthy and in good shape. PE teacher Candis Cook designed an evening activity schedule that allows for sports practice for students of all grades, separated into hour long blocks for each age group. There is skiing on Wednesdays and Saturdays with our science teacher Polly Bass, and even Little Dribblers and high school sports conditioning classes after school. She also started Thursday and Friday night Pick Up Games for volleyball and basketball, in which community members form teams to play against our high school athletes. All sports activities are structured to allow our students to continue training throughout the year while maintaining the highest health and safety standards required in our community.

Cross-Country: Nunamiut School hosted the opening weekend of Cross-Country season on September 12th, but this year with travel restrictions and health mandates in place the races were held virtually across the district. Students from each school raced separately on their own village course, and their times were then compiled together into a single district-wide list. In the end, Justus Mulcahy and Kevin Gordon placed 1st and 2nd in the district among Middle School boys, followed by Jeremiah Ticket, George Bifelt, Tyler Hugo, Ethan Stone and Rashawn Stone. Brianna Morry and Arianna Hart raced for the Nunamiut School girls. Science teacher Polly Bass coached this year's Cross-Country team for Nunamiut School, and by all accounts it was an exciting season for our community.

Scouts: Every Saturday between 10 and 20 elementary students meet at school for boy scouts and girl scouts and both groups have been planning exciting activities. The boys are looking at projects ranging from hiking in the tundra to building dog houses for the village. The girls are beginning to gather materials for their own activities as well, learning traditional skills including sewing hats and mittens and cooking traditional meals, all while acquiring cultural lessons from members of the community.

Finally, we'd like to express our sincere appreciation for the immense support we've received so far this year through these uncertain times. The months ahead will no doubt be demanding for all of us but with the continued encouragement from the district and the community of Anaktuvuk Pass we are fully prepared to meet whatever challenges lie ahead.

Thank you for your time.