



LPSD SHINING STARS, JANUARY, 2026



NAME	LOCATION	REASON	NOMINATOR, POSITION
Justin Zimin	Palmer	Justin contributes to the culture of our school district in a way that feels both grounding and uplifting. He is consistently kind, patient, and deeply understanding, listening with true intent to hear and learn from others. His calm and approachable presence builds trust and ease, and he brings a warmth to everyday interactions that helps people feel comfortable and supported. He approaches his work with persistence and care, especially in his advocacy for culturally responsive teaching and classes. Justin regularly seeks outside perspectives and welcomes feedback in order to see the bigger picture and better understand the systems that influence our processes. With that understanding, he works thoughtfully to make those processes smoother and more supportive for everyone involved, always keeping students at the center of his decisions. He has also been a wonderful cubicle neighbor and the kind of colleague whose presence quietly makes the workday better. I admire his passion and the intention he brings to making education, especially education connected to culture, more accessible to students across our region. His quiet leadership, integrity, and steady encouragement leave a lasting and meaningful impact on our school community.	Cassie McArthur, Student Data/Federal Programs
Dawna French	Palmer	Dawna brings a bright and joyful energy into the office that truly feels like sunshine. Always bubbly and kind, her presence naturally lifts the spirits of those around her. It is impossible not to smile or feel a little lighter when she is nearby. She offers a listening ear without judgment and provides encouragement in the moments it is needed most. Dawna is a true gem who cares deeply not only about the work she does, but about the people around her as well. Her passion and giftedness shine through in both big and small ways, creating a sense of connection and belonging. The warmth and positivity she brings each day make a meaningful and lasting impact to those around her.	Cassie McArthur, Student Data/Federal Programs
Melody Schilke	Chignik Lake	Melody serves our south sites with a presence that is both visible and deeply supportive. She actively engages with students and families within her communities, building genuine connections and fostering a strong sense of belonging. I especially appreciate the way she shares the happenings at her schools, celebrating students, staff, and everyday moments that reflect a healthy and engaged school culture. She is equally supportive of staff and works diligently to ensure that documentation, compliance, and operational details are handled with care and consistency. The role of a principal carries many complexities and behind the scenes responsibilities, and she navigates these demands with steadiness and professionalism. Even in challenging or nuanced situations, she leads with grace and ensures that the focus remains on students and the communities she serves. Melody's commitment and balanced leadership make a meaningful and positive impact across our south sites.	Cassie McArthur, Student Data/Federal Programs
Ed Lester	Newhalen	Ed Lester goes above and beyond for not only his school, but the entire school district and all students. He is a great leader for the students of Newhalen school to look up to. He works hard, gives selflessly and is an all around great person. Thank you Mr. Lester for all that you do for our school we are thankful for the generous amounts of time and love you pour into our school and community.	Administrator, Iliamna Village Council
Evelynn Trefon	Newhalen	Evelynn is equally the Jill of all trades. Evelynn is the calm in all the chaos she prepares for meetings well in advance, keeps our teachers, students and community well informed, ensures all kids are accounted and cared for. Evelynn is someone everyone can look up to and learn from. Evelynn cares for everyone, for example during this cold spell we are having she went out of her way to make sure all students stayed inside after school until parents picked them up, she made sure all elders had enough heating fuel. She truly is one of a kind. Thank you for all your hard work Evelynn.	Administrator, Iliamna Village Council