

Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for giving me time to talk about the C3 program today. I'll introduce myself and the program, talk about some ideas for this coming year, and take any questions.

My name is Amanda Dale, and I work at the Alaska Humanities Forum as the education program manager. Our partners for this program on the North Slope are the Arctic Slope Community Foundation, the school district, and Iłisaḡvik College. My team at the Humanities Forum includes Lisa Ragland, from Anchorage; Erica Khan, from Utqiagvik; and Zach Lane, from Anchorage.

C3 stands for creating cultural competence, and it's a program for newly hired teachers who are getting ready to move to the Slope. The program is designed so that as teachers or administrators are hired by the school district, we reach out to them to invite them into the program. If they join C3, then the summer before they move up, they will get support in planning their move, have contact with a veteran teacher on the Slope, start to learn about the community where they'll be moving, and they participate in a cultural immersion experience. In non-COVID years they fly up to participate in an in-person culture camp with Elders and youth; currently, in COVID times, we're doing a virtual camp. They also start to learn about their own cultures and the beliefs and expectations they are bringing with them. It's really important that they realize that they're not neutral - they're people with their own cultures and biases and past experiences.

After they arrive, they continue to receive support from cultural and site mentors, they attend midyear gatherings and C3 programming during their first school year that varies from time with Elders to hands-on cultural projects to conversations about how they're adjusting. They also connect with other new-to-rural-AK teachers in the Northwest Arctic Region. Finally, they participate in a three-credit 500-level Multicultural Studies for AK Teachers course that counts toward their Alaska certification. Last year's course instructor was Aaluk Edwardson.

C3 teachers are invited to learn about the cultures of the community they'll become a member of, and also to develop a deeper understanding of their own racial, ethnic and cultural identities, and how those shape their own values and assumptions about teaching. At the heart of C3 is

helping teachers learn how to build relationships that connect them with people, with their communities, and with the region.

C3 began more than 10 years ago in Southwest Alaska, with Lower Kuskokwim School District and Calista Education & Culture. It then expanded to Northwest Arctic, where we partner with Maniilaq and the school district, and last year we started the process of adapting the program for the North Slope, while also adapting to COVID. Now we're entering our second year in the North Slope Region.

We do know from a five-year UAA study published in 2017 that the C3 program increases teachers' growth and grit mindsets, so they're better equipped to adjust when it comes to relationship building and learning how to fit in. For retention data, in LKSD, twice as many C3 teachers chose to stay for a second year compared to non-C3 teachers. In NWA, C3 teachers were 1.7 times as likely to stay,

Next I'd like to share a little about this coming year, the second year of the grant and the first time we've had a chance to plan ahead a bit. We know that our culture camps and gatherings this summer will be all virtual, because health and safety come first, and we are exploring a new way to connect new teachers with cultural mentors: the Adopt A Teacher program.

The idea for Adopt a Teacher came from Mr. Ron Brower, Inupiaq Education Coordinator at the school district. To share some of Mr. Brower's words:

"Teachers play an important role in our schools for many reasons. They bring healing to our schools against divisive social and political agenda that are against our values treasured by our community, family and teachers... So, we must educate them... We know that teachers will need our one-on-one support to stand up to sometimes loneliness and powerlessness in a foreign environment so different from their own cultures and its norms. Working in a new place is not always easy and many do not last very long in Arctic isolation. But local folk are used to seeing this and want to see stability in the education of their children to live in two worlds with one spirit. The two worlds are the Inupiaq Hunting culture and the American culture, where one

can make their dreams a reality. We want our children to thrive in both with equal ease. Long-term retention of teachers is much needed to meet this challenging goal.

Standing together, we can restore our schools and culture for the kids and our communities.”

Mr. Brower has shared about this idea at a teacher in-service and received positive feedback on the idea. I've just started discussing it with the teacher's union, which has been trying to do similar programming for some time now.

Those who adopt teachers would be encouraged to invite the teacher to share a meal or do subsistence activities together; share about their experiences and stories connected to Inupiaq values, history, culture and language; share their hopes for their children; share their experiences and knowledge about the environment and community; help connect them with other Elders, parents and community members who can support them; and to simply make themselves available for questions while the new teacher starts to learn. To again cite Mr. Brower, “this is a long-term commitment that requires two-way communication and interaction.” And above all, it requires empathy for teachers who are experiencing a huge change, and trying to find their footing in a new culture. By helping teachers connect with families and individuals outside of the school, they will expand their support networks and receive encouragement to keep learning and listening and adapting.

I'll stop here and take a breath! What questions have I raised so far?