

## Site Report – Meshik School – February, 2021

**To: Superintendent Ty Mase  
and LPSD School Board Members**

**From: Kristin Henke, Head Teacher  
Jack Walsh, Principal**

### **Outstanding Activities and Events**

The Meshik School has had a challenging winter as our community has experienced significant losses. At the same time, the community came together to support each other, to honor the losses and celebrate the individuals and families most affected. A famous poem reminds us... 'No Man is an Island'. The death of any person is a loss for all, and diminishes a part of each of us. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families and children.

We are back in school which has been helpful, and we all are doing our best to maintain a safe environment so we can continue to stay open for the remainder of the year. We want to thank the District Covid Committee and our local Covid Committee for all the support through these challenging times. Our parents, students, and staff have done a great job being safe and following our safety protocols. We also want to thank our partners at BBAHC who developed plans to vaccinate staff and community members. On March 11<sup>th</sup> everyone who wanted it received their second Covid shot. That was an important milestone and we are grateful to have reached that place so early.

We saw some great accomplishments by students this spring, too. Recently, several of our secondary students completed their small engines class and earned certificates from Honda. One of our students, DJ, was also recognized by the program and teacher for being the most successful student in the program due to his efforts in class and his willingness to help others in the class. Later this year we will honor all of them in our end of year celebrations.

Another event that involved students recently was an ANSEP event that middle school students participated in this past weekend. In this workshop students built a personal computer as an introductory activity. ANSEP is a program that supports Alaska Native students in science and engineering pursuits that lead to training opportunities and careers that can make a real difference. We are all proud of the participants, and the staff members that made it possible.

### **Standards Based System/Curriculum Progress**

Elementary students have started to engage with Everyday Math. Teachers have received the materials and some initial training. Because some of the teachers had used the program before they have jumped right in and are also helping colleagues learn more about the program and how it is best implemented.

Last month we mentioned we had started hosting weekly meetings with the entire school based on our Alutiiq Values and talking about how they help us in life. It's a framework and effort that we think could help us improve our school climate in the months and years ahead.

### **Technology Progress**

The pandemic situation has caused us to be prepared for a lot of things we have never experienced. We are grateful for the effort the district made to support students and families with their home internet needs. Without that assistance online courses and other connections would not have been possible. Despite only being closed to in person learning for short periods, there were multiple students who had to quarantine at home throughout the year.

### **Facility Update**

I felt that this month I would mention something new for the Board to see... We are grateful for the ongoing support we get from the district office and maintenance staff. Their efforts to keep our building, housing units, and appliances in good shape and operating is greatly appreciated. It has been appreciated for a long time. We just don't mention it a lot or often enough.

A continuing concern is community members and leaders are hopeful that the Borough and the District start making plans for a new school at a new site. Concerns about the facility are often mentioned in community meetings and there are historic concerns about the water and terrain around the school. While we realize big projects like this are costly and take years to complete, the LSAC is still considering sending a letter to the Board about this concern.

### **LSAC Activity**

Port Heiden LSAC has been very active this year as advocates for students and staff at the school. LSAC Members include: Toni Christensen, Jaclyn Christensen, Miranda Shangin, Charlie O'Domin, and Billie Schraffenberger. We cannot say enough good things about this group and all they do to support our students. With everything else we have experienced this winter it was impossible to meet in February and we should be meeting next week. The LSAC has stayed in contact with staff and administration and continues to be one of our greatest assets.

### **Volunteer Report**

Meshik School has navigated the virus realities carefully and that has limited some access to our school for community members and volunteers. Our LSAC and our local Covid Advisory group continue to be called on regularly to help us and they never let us down. They each contribute the greatest numbers of volunteer hours on behalf of students and staff. Another group of our unsung volunteers is our staff and they contribute many extra hours as volunteers and jump in regularly, and give up planning and personal time to cover for absent staff, run freight, and do so many other things to support our efforts and students.

One special mention this month is to thank Dr. Skleba, a dentist in the suburbs of Chicago who sent some toothbrushes for our students. The doctor and his staff do a lot to help promote dental health and support students in their area, and when they learned about our school, they chose to include us in their generous efforts. We are working on some photos and a thank you card to recognize that effort.

Schools can always use volunteers and we are grateful that Meshik School has a long history of people helping our students, and we also have a history of students giving back to the community and the people most important in their lives. The concepts of giving back and paying it forward are alive and well in Port Heiden and we are a better community and a better school because of that.

### **Professional Development**

During the past week we participated in a very good training session to help us better support students. We were lucky to have him include not only current staff, but our next head teacher, too. We continue to take advantage of the PD opportunities presented by the district, Alaska Staff Development Network, the universities, and other grants and partnerships. It has been challenging this year with limited times to gather with colleagues, especially from other sites. The May training scheduled at Alyeska was recently cancelled due to the covid concerns and restrictions. We know that was necessary, but we had looked forward to the opportunity to get together with friends and colleagues after the long absence. We know the new year will be different and we are looking forward to a return to more traditional PD opportunities in the fall.

### **Pupil Attendance**

I left this item unchanged from last month or even longer, because it truly is a concern we have to get better at. Without consistent attendance and family buy-in, student progress is challenging, graduations are delayed, and these are not the goals parents imagine for their children or staff for their students.

We continue to see attendance as a challenge we are always struggling with and yet, considering the new requirements to quarantine and isolate we have not seen a major increase in absences. We are committed to work with students and families to improve in this area. We are grateful that everyone is making the efforts they are to be at school every day.

### **Student and Staff Safety**

We continue to see this as a top priority and whether it is our focus on cleanliness in light of the pandemic or making sure we are keeping student behaviors in check. The students and staff have started to have weekly all school meetings. We hope this helps us develop an even better and safer school culture.

### **Subsistence Calendar**

The 2020-21 calendar has had some slight changes since the start of the year and there were a few more adjustments related to the carnival and other circumstances made this spring.

Looking ahead to next year, there are a variety of possible changes that the district is considering. With new staff coming in, and the inability of our LSAC to meet last month, we have not set our calendar for 2021-22 yet. Chances are that will happen next week, but we also realize we will be prepared for any unanticipated events... but hopefully none like the pandemic has created in the last two school years.

### **Finally...**

There are so many good things that happen at our school every month, and this site report just barely scratches the surface. As Board Members I know you love to see the difference your efforts as a board make in every community and school. I hope the report helps you understand how important the board and district efforts are to support our students. Meshik School is grateful for your support, and so is every other school.

But what I am disappointed in, is that this is the first report in a while where there are no pictures to help illustrate what a great school experience our students have in Port Heiden this month. Unfortunately, last month's report had a few too many photos and people had trouble opening it. I hope to have that issue resolved by the next report. The photos are far too important for you not to see them.