

# Lower Kuskokwim School District

Largest REAA in Alaska

Demographics:

27 Schools

22 Village K-12 Schools (17 Dual Language Schools)

5 Schools based in Bethel

1 Youth Facility based in Bethel

Approximately 4100 student K-12

95% Alaska Native

90% Poverty Rate

~350 Certified Teachers

27 Principals

5 Ass't Principals

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~ 1000 Total Employees

# Lower Kuskokwim School District

## LKSD Mission Statement

The mission of the Lower Kuskokwim School District is to ensure bilingual, culturally appropriate and effective education for all students, thereby providing them with the opportunity to be responsible, productive citizens.

LKSD runs Dual Language programs in 17 of our 22 village schools. We have one Language Immersion Charter School in Bethel.

Why do we focus on Language and Culture?

We know that language and culture are inextricably tied to the identity of who we are as humans. LKSD is in one of the last remaining areas where the indigenous language is still relatively intact. We also know that students do not check their Yup'ik Culture at the school house door.

The very fact that we are able to teach kids in a culturally relevant atmosphere is a huge strength for us and provides a level of engagement we would not otherwise have.

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To give it a bit more context.

LKSD has developed Dual Language (DLE) Programs in 17 (soon to be 18) of our 22 village schools.

DLE Programs can go through 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

The DLE program determines the strongest L1 (first language) for our students, either Yup'ik or English. Their program of study incorporates Language Arts instruction in their strongest language. We have developed Standards Based curriculum for our Yup'ik programs. This elevates the Yup'ik Language to the same status from an academic stand point as English.

Math is always in English

Social studies and science are in Yup'ik.

Seal of Biliteracy – LKSD was the first district in the nation to offer a Seal of Biliteracy in an Indigenous language. This is a rigorous language assessment developed by an assessment organization in Oregon in partnership with LKSD and Anchorage School District.

Dual Credit Classes in Yup'ik Language and Orthography

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Impact of the Proposed Cuts

~16 million for LKSD

The proposed cuts would lead to:

- Loss of at least 50-75 certified teaching positions
- Loss of certified administrative positions
- Loss of classified positions
- Reduced hours for classified positions
- Increased class size
- Loss of Professional Development Days
- Reductions in Work Force
- Furlough Days
- Loss of sports programs
- Less travel for student activities
- Career Pathways Program cuts
- Severe cut back on our career ladder program

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But it would also lead to:

Reduction in Social Workers and Academic Career Counselors.

LKSD is in an area with one of the highest suicide rates of anywhere in the nation. We employ 9 masters level social workers and 6 academic career counselors to support the social, emotional, and academic needs of our population.

This is not only a plea for investing in education. It is also a plea to invest in Law Enforcement and Social Services and Behavioral Health.

Our staff, our teachers, principals, classified staff, social workers, and counselors are on the front line everyday to help students deal with the mental health issues associated with life circumstances and those adverse childhood experiences that cause trauma to our students.

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## No Excuses:

We don't use these challenges as an excuse for low academic performance. And in fact, in spite of these challenges, LKSD has almost doubled the number of graduates over the last 5 years. In FY18 alone, our graduation rate was up over 10%.

In 2014 LKSD had 9 schools in the lowest 5% of the schools in Alaska as determined by the AYP.

In 2018, with the new System for School Success, LKSD had no schools in the lowest 5%, and in fact, had no school in the lowest 10%.

And yet nobody is happy with the status quo. We simply have to do better academically. But we will struggle if our budgets are cut.