

## Project Vision & Developments

Formed in AY05, the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project (ASMP) is a unique partnership between the Alaska's Department of Education & Early Development and the University of Alaska statewide system. Built on a continuous improvement model to serve early career teachers (ECTs)—teachers in their first or second year in the profession—the project's vision is to ensure that every student in Alaska has an effective, high-quality teacher. Great teachers enable our children to learn, grow, and thrive; they make learning exciting, and tap into the knowledge, skills, and resources of local communities to help students achieve

both personal and academic success. The mentor's role is to help ECTs become more effective more quickly.

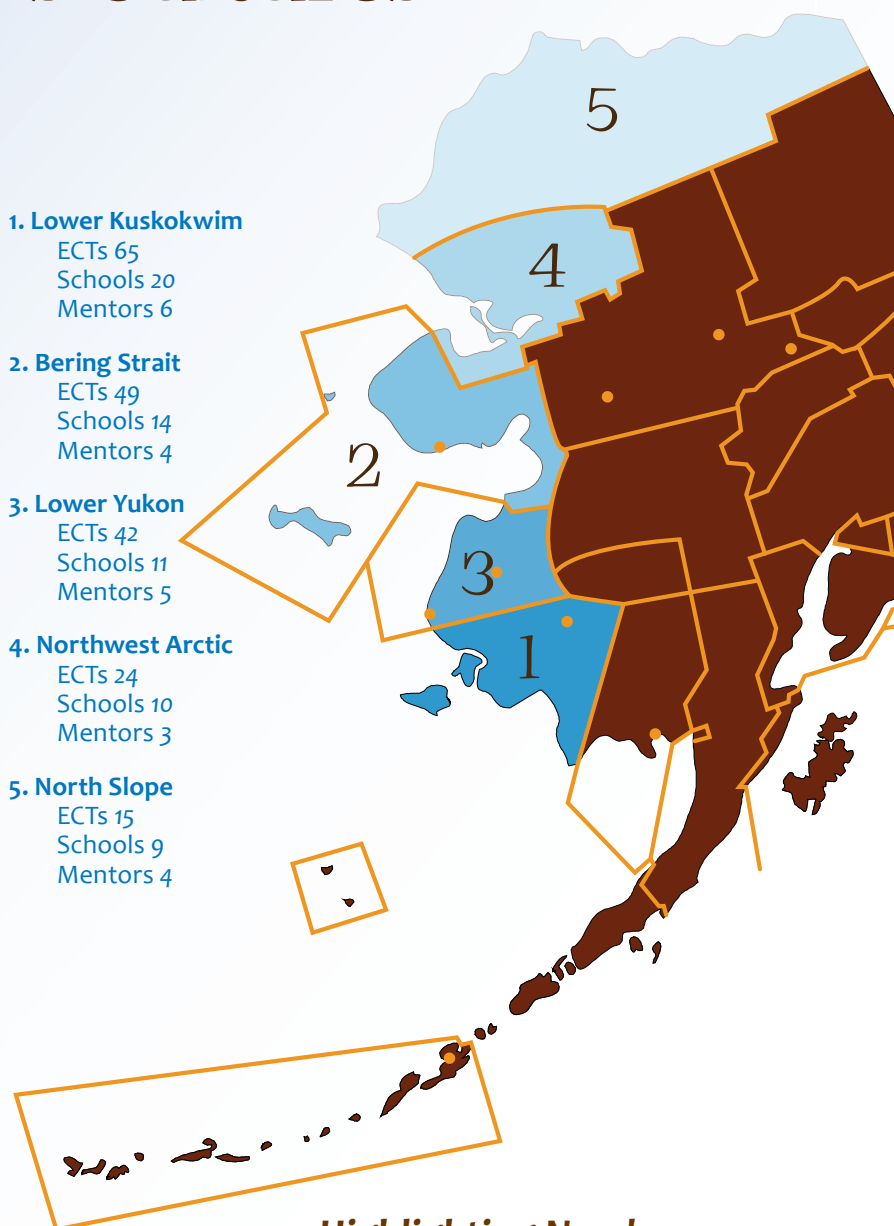
Historically, ASMP has been funded by an appropriation from the State legislature, with some additional support from EED's special education (SPDG) grant. The first award period of the SPDG grant expired in AY10, and provided funding for eight (8) Alaska Statewide Mentors; the second award period began in AY11, and while this new grant supports the broader needs of special education—such as travel to the statewide conference in February—only two (2) mentors are now funded by this source.

## Engaging Alaska's Cultures

As part of the third year of culture training for mentors, ASMP welcomed Phyllis Carlson, Alaska's Rural Education Director with the Department of Education & Early Childhood Development. This first meeting was designed to lay the groundwork for future collaborations on the new Culturally Responsive Teacher continuum.

One area that is very important is supporting ECTs in connecting with the local community. Phyllis stated, "The way you learn about community is to participate!" She went on to say that "respect is big in all cultures. How it looks may be different." Throughout the previous 3 years, ASMP mentors had completed some preliminary work toward a continuum based on the Culturally Responsive Schools standards. ASMP engaged the challenges presented by differing cultural values, first, with deep and recurring introspection; second, with panel discussions that included perspectives from Native students and village Elders; and third, with drafting language for a feedback tool that will help ECTs visualize their progress toward meeting the Culturally Responsive standards. This work process was shared with Phyllis before she arrived in Fairbanks.

As important as Alaska's Professional Teaching Standards, meaningful involvement in local communities by teachers from "outside" is essential to creating and maintaining a positive, lasting impact for students and their families. ASMP looks forward to continuing to work closely with Phyllis as we focus on supporting early career teachers in rural Alaska.



**Highlighting Need**  
Top 5 Districts Served by ASMP in 2011–12



# New Partnerships in FY13

Investment in the public education system promotes long-term academic and economic success for Alaska; expanded partnerships do provide some supplemental funding, but without baseline funding from the State, there is no mentor project. Since project inception in 2004, fluctuations in funding for ASMP have presented the need to seek additional partnerships in order to serve ECTs in classrooms across the state. In FY12, for example, reduced funds from the legislature and additional grants cut the number of mentors from 31 to 24, which canceled mentoring for more than 75 ECTs who otherwise would qualify for support.

## Alaska Humanities Forum

AHF received an Alaska Native Education grant in which they wrote in ASMP. The grant allows AHF to fund 2 ASMP mentors who attend summer culture camp with ECTs and then continue working with them throughout the school year. The recruitment for ECTs will occur in May through two school districts: Lower Kuskokwim and Northwest Arctic Borough. The camps start two weeks before district in-services in summer 2012 and include 2 days of cultural orientation, 7-10 days of cultural immersion camp and a 2-day debrief in a hub community. Each mentor will attend a camp with about 15 ECTs.

## Investments in Innovation (i3)

The University of Alaska Statewide Office of Academic Affairs was awarded the prestigious Investments in Innovations (i3) grant through the U.S. Department of Education. Out of 587 applications, only 23 were awarded, including this one to expand and validate mentoring through ASMP. Submitted as the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project Urban Growth Opportunity (ASMP U-GO), this expanded research effort will increase the number of ECTs receiving mentoring in urban areas, while also conducting a rigorous experimental design to validate the ASMP model at a high level of statistical certainty. The grant will extend ASMP mentoring to the 4 largest urban school districts, Anchorage, Mat-Su, Fairbanks and Kenai Peninsula. A third-party agency, Education Northwest, will evaluate the effects of mentoring on teacher retention, teacher effectiveness, and student achievement. The setting allows ASMP to examine ECTs with and without ASMP mentoring, and provides the highest level of evaluation of the project's goals to date.

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Alaska Statewide  
Mentor Project  
P.O. Box 755400  
Fairbanks, AK 99775

<<NAME>>  
<<INFO>>  
<<ADDRESS>>  
<<CITY>>,<<STATE>>,<<ZIP>>