

**Research on Motivational Factors
That Lead to Success of Alaska Native Students
In Middle School and High School**

By

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Abstract Statement

This study is intended to provide helpful information to educators, administrators, parents and community members on ways to motivate Alaska Native students. Drop out rates are high for Alaska Native students. Statistics in Alaska and the United States show the need for more information on what we can do to address the lack of Alaska Native student success in middle school and high school. This research examined ways to motivate Alaska Native middle school and high school students in school. 153 interviews were conducted with Alaska Native students, teachers, Native administrators and business professionals.

Results from the interviews provide evidence that suggests relationships between teachers and their students is a key factor to success of Alaska Native students. Interviewing the wide range of students showed similar patterns as to what motivated them in school. Teachers and their teaching strategies are the major factors that motivate Alaska Native students. Results from the interviews found common, effective identified teaching strategies. Effective teaching strategies are: cooperative learning group activities, hands-on activities, visual examples, clarity of instruction when explaining lessons, helping students, and giving students choice and freedom.

Research shows that teachers who were effective put rigor into their program, they push their students, encourage them, talk to them, listen to them, and they also have a relationship built with the students so they can be honest with them about their progress. Results also show that students prefer participant structures of small group learning and one-on-one work with teachers and peers. Another significant finding is that students are motivated when culture is integrated into their curriculum program.

The most significant finding in the interviews from students, teachers and administrators and Alaska Native business professionals is that the relationship the teacher develops with the student truly makes a difference. Students are impressionable and they value what their teachers say. Students are aware of their teachers' teaching style and students know how they learn best. The classroom teacher is one of the support networks towards resilience and success in the education of Alaska Native students in middle school and high school.

Introduction

Different Paths

*What happened? Where are they?
Our parents are still friends, keeping in contact, seeing each other
And sending Christmas cards.
We don't. My childhood friends- a band of twenty.
Where are they?*

*As young children, we began on the same path,
Walking to school, chanting at the bus stop at Paxton Manor,
Playing hide-and-go-seek, kick ball, baseball, and having sleepovers.
Pooling together our small change to purchase various sizes of nails,
Scrounging around the neighborhood perimeter for plywood and two-by-fours,
Tree fort building in the Hemlocks and Spruces, pinecone fighting,
Playing basketball until the curfew bell rang in the summers,
Exchanging tiny Christmas presents that meant so much,
Sledding down Kirkman Hill, getting Buttermints from the nice Candy Man,
And occasionally listening to our mother's visit,
While playing together at our homes.*

*My friends and I were the same, bonded with Alaska Native ancestry,
The same housing project, the same school and teachers,
Celebrated the same holidays and birthdays,
And our parents attended the same boarding school,
Who still reunite as brothers and sisters.*

*In high school my friends and I changed,
Choosing different paths.
Alcohol and Drugs devoured some,
Down a different path, the Path of Self-Destruction.
What happened to them? Where are they?
What happened to US? Our ties with each other?
We don't have what our parents have, yet we had a rich childhood of memories.
What happened? Where are my friends?*

*We were the same, yet different,
Some of us were resilient and some weren't,
Some had support networks and some didn't,
Some of us had special gifts and some never found them,
Some of us knew we had a Purpose and some didn't.*

*Why didn't I keep in touch with them?
It pains me. It pains our parents.
How can I help them and their children?
And their children. (A. Jones, 2005)*

As the student spirals downward somewhere between end of
middle school and high school years, he/she leaves
“with a whisper, not a bang” (Briggs, 2004)

There is a growing concern at the high rate of Alaska Native student dropouts in Juneau, Alaska. Over a six-year period, 17-22% of the Juneau Douglas High School population has been Alaska Native students. During that time period 34%-56% of the dropout at JDHS were Alaska Native students (JSD, 2004). Interestingly enough, more than 50% of the Alaska Native students that drop are testing at “proficient” and “advanced proficient” levels on the standardized tests (Loseby, 2005). These statistics indicate that for over half of the Alaska Native high school dropouts within the five-year period, there is a reason other than academic competence for their withdrawal from school.

An indication of the detachment of Native students is the lack of participation in school sports, especially basketball. Basketball, in particular, is a universally known and loved sport by Native communities in Alaska and around the United States. It often is one of the central focus event activities in Native villages. In the Juneau Douglas High School program, six Native girls (4%) and four boys (3%) played on the high school team in 2004 (JSD, Loseby). The Native student body at JDHS was 400 students of the 1650 total students. That is troublesome, especially when their parents and grandparents also have a high regard for the game. Alaska Natives greatly enjoy basketball at all levels, however, young people choose not to try out for the competitive school teams. Possible barriers may be grade requirements, practice hours, self-discipline and hard work, family responsibilities or costs.

Herbie Didrickson, a legendary basketball player throughout the state was a boarding school graduate from Mt. Edgecumbe High School in the 1950's. He is an example of resilience for Alaska Native youth in the school systems. Herbie is Norwegian and Tlingit, a Chookaneidi Eagle-Brown Bear. His Tlingit Indian name is "Gin kooten", which means "hands that see" or "Chief see hands", which turned out to be fitting, given his notorious basketball talent. Herbie is in his mid 70's now. Herbie is a typical success story of resilience in high school and college by doing well because he was involved in a school activity-basketball. Herbie states, "A lot of our kids give up because of hard work nowadays. I wanted to play so bad. I had to keep my grades up to play. If you were not up on grades, you couldn't play. You were graded on citizenship, attitude and chores too. It was a daily thing you were expected to do. Before every game you had to get the okay from teachers." Herbie was resilient and chose the right path due to his love for sports, particularly basketball.

An elder told students, "Always keep learning". Peacock says, "In a way, learning in school is all about resilience, finding ways to bend instead of break and tapping intrapersonal resources to learn in a variety of ways." When school gets tough for them, they need to find ways to keep learning in school (2003, p.107).

Besides students being resilient to succeed, teachers play a key role in success of native students. A story of an American Indian girl, Maria, reflects the important impact a teacher has on a Native student. She shared her story on her schooling experiences with frustration and success. She felt the school staff was unfair to her because other students wore coats in school and she felt singled out that she could not. She also felt singled out in the hallways and getting asked about being in the hallways without passes too. She

said white kids weren't stopped and she and her group were. The feeling of inequity was a common theme with resilient students. She also shared positive experiences in her story. She had a history teacher who she trusted. He tried to understand her culture by taking classes on her culture in the summers and she saw him at pow wows. He even liked fried bread. He joked around with the students and he let them laugh in class. He also gave chances with their work if they didn't do it right or have it done. He let her share her cultural projects in class and was genuinely interested in them too. Maria stated, "A lot of my culture is lost; nobody is doing anything to bring it back. Now, there's a drum group in the grade school again. It's not cool for Native students to learn about their culture, so they learn about other things like gang activity." She also said, "I think a lot of us are just lost, searching for something to belong to," and ended with, "I'd like to see more of the Native American ways taught in school, all the way through schools. Then those ways would start over again" (Bergstrom, Cleary, & Peacock, 2003).

Cultural relevance in the school curriculum is important to keep interest of Alaska Native students. Several United States Department of Education grants fund Alaska Native education grants in Juneau and Alaska to help assess and address the problem of the Native student failure rate. It is currently believed that place-based education programs with cultural relevance and rigor have been successful for retaining Alaska Native students. These programs are based on the theory that cultural relevance in the curriculum plays a key role in the teaching of Alaska Native students by giving them meaningful connections with their environment and culture in their learning process. Without meaningful connections it is hard for them to be engaged and motivated to learn.

Summer culture and science camps play an important role in place based

education curriculums throughout Alaska. Subsistence is ranked as one of the top priorities in Alaska Native households. Summer camps often create their curriculum around a subsistence theme to make the camps meaningful, rigorous and successful. Summer camps, which have a place based education theme, have some common elements. The first is participant structure, which is carefully grouping students into compatible groups after staff does relationship-building activities with them the first couple of days. Other important elements of camp are elder involvement with Native knowledge, rigorous western science curriculum with hands-on field activities, essential question that helps students understand how the unit relates to their life, and a culminating task to share their findings.

Two examples of place based education camps are A.N.S.W.E.R. Camp (Alaska Native Student Wisdom Enrichment Retreat) and Camp W.A.T.E.R. (Wilderness, Adventure, Tradition, Enrichment, Retreat). Students are immersed in the environment and have daily interactions with elders and traditional knowledge. Students work in small groups while learning and practicing western science methods of mathematics, science, and technology through integrated projects. Some activities include building smokehouses, learning traditional methods of preserving seafood, preparing traditional foods, using medicinal plants and creating salves and teas, gather plants and conduct experiments on PH levels and water loss while drying them. The camps are two to three week summer camps in southeast Alaska where students are with each other at a site, away from family and community, but have frequent contact with elders in the community.

There is very little research concerning the effects of summer place based education programs. Qualitative research suggests that cultural camp programs have a lifelong impact on Alaska Native students. Federal grant program evaluators for Camp W.A.T.E.R. cited a common theme from parent surveys. They noted an “incredible level of self-confidence and respect their children returned from camp with”. Similarly, camp teachers noted that the Native students thrive at Camp WATER, even those student that struggle in school. Camp students commonly felt a strong sense of cultural connection with science and the environment during the program (Moser, 2005).

There are some difficulties in measuring with quantitative data of the cultural camp programs and their long-term effects. One problem with assessing the effectiveness of the grant programs is that they are often focused on short two-week camp programs, making it difficult to measure impacts over a short time period. Another hurdle with evaluating the success of Native education grant programs is the frequent change of state testing in the schools, which create problems in comparing performance from year to year. This concern was discussed at the Federal Alaska Native education grant recipient conference.¹

Even with the generous support from the Federal government to address the achievement gap in Native student success, there is limited information and measurable data on the effectiveness of student enrichment in Native education programs. The lack of data and research points to the need for more research on Alaska Native student success strategies.

¹ Sponsored by SERRC, Southeast Regional Resource Center, Julie Staley and Mike Travis, Spring, 2005

With numerous funding resources focused on Alaska Native education, Native student success continues to be one of the biggest challenges in the Juneau School District. The difference in test scores between Native and non-Native students is discouraging to the students' parents, the Native community, the school district, and the school board. During the 2004-2005 year, Juneau School District results showed an achievement gap between Alaska Natives and Caucasian students across all grade levels. 3,175 Juneau School District students were tested with the Alaska State assessment in Language Arts and Mathematics. 61% of the Alaska Native students were proficient or advanced in Language Arts. At the same time 86 % of Caucasian students were proficient or advanced proficient. In Mathematics 55% of Alaska Natives students scored proficient or advanced proficient. 79% of Caucasian students were proficient or advanced proficient (Loseby, 2005). See Table 1 below for difference in scores of Native and Caucasian students, Grades K-12:

Table 1
2004-2005 District Results on State Assessments

	Alaska Natives	Caucasians
Proficient or Advanced Proficient In Language Arts	61%	86%
Proficient or Advanced Proficient In Math	55%	79%

One very concerned and passionate health teacher/counselor referred to her Native students as ghosts, quietly floating in and out of the classrooms and sometimes not there at all. Once they slip through the cracks, often times there isn't enough staffing support or follow through to get them back on track. There isn't a system in place to

aggressively persuade them into coming back to school. There are so many students skipping classes that it is difficult for a truancy tracker to track all of the students to keep them in and motivated (Seamount, 2005). One main reason students drop out of high school is attendance issues and missing too many consecutive days of school, with a strict attendance policy in place. In the fall of 2005, there were 150 freshman Native students enrolled in the Juneau Douglas High School. Sixty-four students had F's with an average of 17 absences. On a positive note, 66 students had A's with an average of 3 absences (Hamley, 2005). Attendance is an important factor in failure and success of high school Alaska Native freshman. See table 2 for correlation of absences to grades:

Table 2

Freshman Native Student Absences and Grades
Fall 2005-Juneau School District

64 Native students with an average of 17.6 absences for class periods at a total of 1,127 missed class periods	64 Native students with F's after first quarter grades
66 Native students with 3.06 with an average of absences for class periods at a total of 202 missed class periods	66 Native students with A's after first quarter

Table 3 gives recent statistics with dropout rates in the Juneau School District:

	Demographics	% Of Total Population	# Of Dropout to date 05-06	% Of Total Dropout #	If Dropout proportional to total pop.
Alaska Native	324 students	19%	33 students	46%	14 students
Non-Alaska Native	1325 students	81%	39 students	54%	58 students
Total	1669		72		

Current Juneau Douglas High School enrollment data for the 2005-2006 school year

indicates that Alaska Native students, as a percentage of the total High School population, are more than twice as likely as non-Alaska Natives to drop out or withdraw from high school. There are various reasons for students dropping out. Several transfer schools or communities. Not all are due to failing the school system, but these statistics are still alarming (Hamley, 2005).

Many needs are cited for Alaska Native students dropping out, however this research will focus on ways to motivate them in middle school and high school. There are other external factors contributing to the poor attendance, such as partying, family duties, not doing homework, difficulty with classes, lack of sleep, lack of parent support, or working too much while being in school.

There needs to be more focus on what truly works to motivate Alaska Native students in our middle schools and high schools. My research question began with the question, “What content motivates Alaska Native/American Indian middle school and high school students?” However, there was a pattern that became apparent early in the study that content was not the key factor in whether students stayed in school as previously thought. I therefore changed my question to “What motivates Alaska Native middle school and high school students?”

Rather than conducting research based on theories and studies, I went to the source of the issue-the students- and followed up interviewing several of their effective teachers. I wanted to know what patterns effective teachers used to help Alaska Native students succeed in middle school and high school.

This research project is designed to support teachers, staff, administrators, and communities by sharing with them key factors that motivate Alaska Native students. It

will help answer questions of how to provide more support for exiting eighth grade students transitioning into high school. Grant programs are currently in place in the Juneau School District and hopefully this research project will assist in ways to use grant money more effectively in the Juneau School District. What is currently in place is not working for the majority of Alaska Native students. Research on ways to motivate Alaska Native students will be beneficial to the teachers, the parents, and the community of Juneau.

Review of the Literature

The Need for Motivating Alaska Native Students

Over time, Alaska Natives and American Indians have endured many hardships, such as disease, war, genocide, and being “Americanized” during the boarding school period (Strand & Peacock, 2002). Schools of the past have rewarded only those Natives who assimilated to western culture and values. Presently schools still fail to support Native academic success. The focus of this research will be on finding ways to motivate Alaska Native students to achieve academic success.

There is a growing need for motivation and success with Alaska Native students in middle schools and high schools in the United States.² Nationally, Alaska Natives and American Indian students have the highest dropout rate of any ethnic groups at 25.4% for students who should have graduated in 1992 (St. Germaine, 1995). Alaska Native and American Indian drop out rates were 15%, based on students between ages 16 and 24 years old. The overall average of all groups was 9.9% (NCES, 2003). The only ethnic group with a higher drop out rate was Hispanics with 23.5% dropouts that year.³ The group, which showed the least amount of progress with the dropout rate between 1990 and 2003, was Alaska Native, according to the NCES 2003 study. There are variations in the statistics because some of them measure drop out data from the beginning of a school year to the end and some track the students from their freshman year to their senior year. It was difficult to categorize all Alaska Natives under one group (St. Germaine, 1995).

² When referring to ‘Alaska Natives’, American Indians are also included in the same category throughout the report.

³ The data presented here represent status dropout rates, which is the percentage of 16- to 24-year-olds who are out of school and who have not earned a high school credential. The status dropout rate includes all dropouts regardless of when they last attended school, as well as individuals who may have never attended school in the U.S. such as immigrants who did not complete a high school diploma in their home country. Another way of calculating dropout rates is the event dropout rate, which is the percentage of 15- to 24-year-olds who dropped out of grades 10 through 12 in the 12 months preceding the fall of each data collection year.

There were different theories why Native students are performing below expectations in the school systems. Three are cultural discontinuity, low expectations and low self-concept.

A possible cause for failure with Native students is the cultural disconnect between Native students and non-Native teaching methods. It is referred to as cultural discontinuity, which means a break in the cultural pattern a culture is used to or a clash in cultures. Participant structures play a role in the issue of cultural discontinuity. This refers to how Alaska Natives best learn in physical settings with their teacher. The students prefer one-to-one or small group learning rather than whole group or individual learning (Ledlow, 1992). An example of cultural discontinuity and participant structural differences was given by a study of Canadian Sioux students on a reservation. Twenty-three of the reservation students performed very well. The students had high expectations, they were attentive and they were interactive. Their classroom sizes were small, and physically they worked in small groups with round tables. The teacher circulated around the room. An Indian architect who designed the school set up the school in a circular design. The circular design has spiritual value with many Indian nations. After ninth grade, the students needed to enroll and get bused to a new high school in the city. The rural students faced racism, isolation and low expectations from their teachers. The school system was different. It was rectangular in structure, desks in rows and not conducive to interaction with the teacher and peers. 18 of the 23 students dropped out of school almost immediately.

Another possible cause for failure is that Native students are living out the “low expectations of others” (Peacock, 2003). When one sets the bar high, students will

perform greater than a bar set low. Students don't generally go beyond that. Students who have a high self-concept perform better in academic achievement in math and students they also have a higher drive for themselves (House, 2001).

Despite the high drop out rate for Alaska Native students and other reasons contributing to it that are not mentioned, there are success stories of students overcoming barriers and their resilience in the education system and their lives.

Resilience of Students and Overcoming Barriers

Many Native students have had some form of traumatic experience growing up. Resilience is "the ability to bounce back from adversity"(Strand & Peacock, 2002). In the Strand and Peacock study, people who were resilient overcame barriers, with support from family, extended family, schools and community members that helped them. They came back stronger. Even with failures in school and life stress they did not give up.

The Alaska Ice Grant Program developed a book about the on assets of successful students based on research by a Minnesota study of 700 children for 40 years. It was found that children who were resilient and succeeded had some "protective factors" to help them succeed.

Some main external and internal factors that fostered resilience and well being are identified (p. 15, Schleich, 2003). Some are family support and other adult support, school connections, empowerment, and constructive use of time. Student connections with family members contributed to student resilience. The students having school connections with teachers or other adults made a difference too. They had the "Power of Five" (p.4, Schleich). Five adults played a supportive role in the lives of successful

youth. They had a network of five people caring for them, whether it was family members or school staff. Peers were also important. Examples given were students feeling close to people, getting along with students and staff and having other students treating them fairly. Empowerment also played a key role in resilient youth. The students needed to feel valued and appreciated for what they did.

As well as external factors being critical to success, some key internal factors fostering resilience were a commitment to learning and being motivated, having positive values, having good social skills, and having a positive identity (Schleich, 2003). The students were motivated and had high expectations of themselves. They had good social skills with peers and others too. The resilient students had a positive identity, which means they felt good about themselves and they felt loved. They also had healthy, positive values, such as honesty and responsibility.

Alaska Native students who were resilient also had some form of a cultural, spiritual connection they believed in (Strand & Peacock, 2002). There are four known themes or Native beliefs that Native people value which foster resilience:

Spirituality-Everything living is interrelated

Mental well-being-clear thinking,

Emotional well being-emotionally balanced

Physical well being-respecting your body

There are also four ways to build self-esteem for Native youth, which begin at birth:

Sense of belonging-with parents and family

Mastery of skills-through story telling and role modeling

Independence and motivation to do things

Generosity giving to the community and giving back to others

Despite the many barriers Alaska Native students have and the grim statistics of their lack of success, there are effective strategies to contribute to their academic improvement and success.

Motivating Alaska Native Students

And Ways to Help Them be Successful

There have been collaborative national studies done to find out what motivates Alaska Native students in school. Based on research findings of interviews and data collection, various studies and conferences have found suggested methods to promote success and motivate Alaska Native students.

Three collaborative groups that have similar suggestions on the improvement of schooling Alaska Native students are the Indian Nations at Risk Task Force, a Northwest Regional Laboratory review report on programs and practices with Native American students and a team from the University of Minnesota-Duluth. Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory brought together master educators and educational researchers from around the country that researched effective schooling practices. Three University of Minnesota-Duluth professors conducted a national study. The Minnesota team interviewed 120 Alaska Native/American Indians high school students throughout the country. The team recorded lengthy interviews with students and published journals and a textbook about their findings (Bergstrom et al, 2003). The Minnesota group went right to the source and conducted interviews with high school students. Following the interviews, they provided excellent information with what works when teaching Alaska

Native and American Indian students. Nations at Risk Task Force designed an inventory of ways to gather baseline data and improve schools with American Indian and Alaska Native students using a system with an integrated approach (Nelson et al, p. 2, 2002). The panelists met for a week and developed a new strategy for success of Native students. They moved outside of the classroom walls and emphasized the significance of community support with the school district. The purpose for the inventory was to provide the community baseline data to see how communities were doing in regards to Native student success.

The research by the three groups suggested several action steps of effective practices for success with Alaska Native students. These action steps include: change school size; community support within schools; culturally relevant curriculum; indigenous language taught in schools; place based education curriculum; culturally relevant curriculum supported by administration; cultural values taught in schools; appropriate participant structures and addressing learning styles; parent support, having a support network which leads to self-motivation; and positive teacher interaction and support.

An action step towards success of Alaska Native students was reducing school size if the school is too large. If the schools were too large they should be restructured to a school-within-a-school concept. Schools more than 1,000 students were considered too large (St. Germaine, 1995).

Ronalda Cadiente-Brown, the former principal of successful Yakoosege Daakahidi Alternative High School states, “The school’s small environment also contributes to its success. The size and less formal relationships with the staff are main

factors with the success rate. Community involvement and cultural inclusion are important in serving Native students” (Linik, p. 11, 2004).

Along with school size being an important factor for success of Alaska Native students, community involvement was also critical. Communities show their student support towards academic achievement by funding cultural activities and events. Leaders such as school board, administration, community leaders and school team members must be involved. Panelists noted, “Public education begins with dialogue between the school and the public community.” “Every student, school and community is unique, making local cultural context essential in school reform” (Nelson et al., p. 3, 2002). Funding plays a supportive role with community involvement to support student achievement. “Clearly the best teachers of Native science and other Indigenous knowledge are community members. When both educators and community members respect each other’s knowledge, alienation can end and schools can become integrated parts of the communities they serve” (Jacobs, p.4, 2003).

Another action step towards success with Alaska Native students is having teachers be culturally responsive. They can do this by conducting ongoing communication with students through interviews, observations and giving informal assessments of the local Native culture, the student learning and the students’ everyday life (Apthorp et al. 13, 2002).

A critical action step towards effective teaching of Alaska Native student success is integrating Native knowledge into the curriculum. Curriculum should be culturally relevant with materials that are meaningful to Alaska Native/American Indian students

(Nelson, 2002). Culturally relevant teaching materials engage Alaska Native students (Demmert, 2001.)

Culturally based education programs have six elements:

1. Recognition and use of Native American languages
2. Pedagogy that stresses traditional cultural characteristics and adult-child interactions.
3. Pedagogy in which teaching strategies are congruent with the traditional culture and ways of knowing and learning.
4. Curriculum that is based on traditional culture and that recognizes the importance of Native spirituality.
5. Strong Native community participation (including parents, elders, other community resources) in education children and in the planning and operation of school activities.
6. Knowledge and use of the social and political mores of the community.

(Demmert, p. 8-9, 2003)

There are model programs in place that have culturally based curriculum and have been proven effective with Native student success. The Kamehameha Early Education Program (KEEP) in Hawaii is an effective culturally based education program with a positive academic success rate of students in the program. The Kamehameha Early Education Program implements Ethnomathematics into their curriculum.

Ethnomathematics is the study of traditional and everyday mathematics, based on math content standards. It has proven to be an effective way to teach math to Alaskan and

Hawaiian children. Children learn from meaningful connections with problem solving.⁴ “Congruency between the school environment and the language and the culture of the community is critical to the success of formal learning” (Demmert, p.17, 2002). When culture is integrated in to curriculum programs, it puts meaning and relevance into the curriculum for the Native students. However, culturally based education programs should not replace other high standard educational programs, but should be integrated in to the curriculum.

A leader in Alaska with Native ways of knowing curriculum from the University of Alaska professor, Jerry Lipka, says, “These programs are a way to connect the culture of the community to the culture of the schools”. Students are able to make personal connections with the cultural components, therefore, are motivated to learn (Barton, p. 1, 2002).

Rural and urban sixth grade students studying math with culturally relevant curriculum proved effective in another study by Lipka and Adams. The students were 97% Yup’ik and they were located in four rural sites and one large urban site. The control and treatment groups were pre and post tested with a unit studying perimeter and area. The treatment groups received a culturally based curriculum on perimeter and area, while the control groups in the urban and rural settings did not. The test results were significantly higher with the treatment groups who received culturally relevant curriculum with perimeter and area. This is one of the few quantitative studies, with the pre and post math tests (Demmert, 2003.)

⁴ There were limitations with the study since there were only three sites from kindergarten to fourth grade in Hawaii, Alaska and Montana, as well as middle school rural partners in Alaska.

Another supportive action step by the groups was teacher support with curriculum materials. To have an effective culturally relevant curriculum, teachers must have materials available to support their program.

Administrators can support cultural curriculum as an action step towards success of Alaska native students. They can do this by creating benchmarks to mark learning progress in language arts and mathematical problem solving if they don't already exist.

The school board can develop multiple measures to assess those benchmarks. Measures should be aligned with national standards. The school board can develop observation protocols to ensure culturally relevant material is being taught in the classrooms. Lastly, they can also revise the culturally relevant curriculum, based on assessments and observations that have been developed to create an ongoing successful program (Apthorp et al. 13, 2002).

Having indigenous language as part of the school program contributes to success of Alaska Native students. Alaska Native students perform better in English when they begin schooling years with their indigenous language, then build in English as a bilingual program (Apthorp et al, 2002). A reputable program modeling indigenous language at an early age is located in Arizona at Rough Rock Community School and Fort Defiance Elementary School. The program has improved academic performance on standardized tests with students since implementing the indigenous language curriculum in their schools. At Fort Defiance, young students begin my learning the Native language, Navajo, then learn English as they progress in grades. Drop out rates declined and 8th grade standardized test scores improved.

“A school curriculum that promotes the language and culture of the community or tribe served-adopted in partnership with that community-holds significant promise for improving academic performance of Native children” (Demmert, p. 9, 2001). Research in linguistics and cultural congruence is extensive and global with findings from around the world supporting the importance of indigenous language and culture in the curriculum (p. 12-17, 2001). Barnhardt states “a school’s philosophy and goals emphasizing language and cultural programs were associated with success” (Demmert, p. 13, 2001).

Along with teaching culture and language, another action step to address success for Alaska Native students is to teach language arts, math and science with a place based education curriculum. It is a natural fit that easily integrates culture and language into the school curriculum. Dr. William Demmert, a Western Washington University professor, defines place-based education as an “educational approach that draws on local history, culture, economics, environment, and circumstances as a curriculum source, sometimes with the explicit goal of connecting students to their community and thereby promoting citizenship, entrepreneurship, community sustainability, or environmental stewardship” (p.22, 2001).

In 2003, 85% of Alaska Natives in rural and urban locations rated subsistence being extremely important. Dr. Oscar Kawagley, a University of Alaska professor says, “It is essential for Native students to receive an education that is clearly tied to their cultural worldview. Although non-Native people tend to view the subsistence way of life (as) being very simple, the Native practitioner sees it as highly complex. A subsistence-oriented worldview treats knowledge of the environment and each part’s interdependence with all other parts as a matter of survival” (Barton, p.23-24, 2004).

To teach place-based curriculum, with integrating culture and language, values should also be taught. Cultural values and importance of valuing children must be taught when teaching cultural curriculum because they are foundations of the cultures.

Traditionally, children were valued and respected more than they are now in the school systems. A way to bring back the high regard for “our sacred children” and for them to recognize the value of our children is to put in place the stories and legends that emphasize the importance of children. Thus, children will recognize they are valued.

Another important value in Native culture is giving and sharing. A traditional educational value of Native cultures is to grow up and be a good person (Jacobs, 2003).

A model program for Alaska Native teens that allows them to “grow up” on their own is in Anchorage, Alaska at the Anchorage House. It has an award-winning program created by the Chugach School District, which is known for its history of real-life situation curriculum program for grades K-12. Students from rural communities in Alaska come to Anchorage for life skills program and they practice a real life living situation by living in a home together with other students. The rural students learn values and how to survive in a city, as well as looking at career opportunities and get more than a glimpse of the work world. The students live in the home for up to ten months and have many skills they learn in that period. During their stay, they learn to balance a checkbook, buy groceries and budget, read a bus schedule, and learn to live with others and respect each other. They have career development training by learning technology skills, service learning and job shadowing community service opportunities. The rural students work with school curriculum in content areas and visit colleges in

Anchorage. Sixty-five other Alaska schools participate in the Anchorage House program in the course of a year (Barton, 2004).

The physical set up of the Anchorage House is a nice environment for Alaska Native students. Students worked in small groups or one-on-one. The house is a live-in situation climate, not a traditional classroom. Participant structures and learning styles combined play a key role in success of Alaska Native students at all levels of school programs.

Two hundred and six American Indian students attending community colleges across the country participated in a study regarding their motivation for learning in regards to environmental and social factors. Students preferred classrooms with a teacher-structured environment, meaning teachers led the activities, but the college students were involved in different learning activities and they did have choices. Students valued an authoritative person leading the classroom over a student-structured set up. Students valued feedback from the teacher, use of media to present material they learned and they liked active roles in the classroom. When working with student-structured activities, students valued group goals and activities over competition and recognition (Aragon, p. 1 & 12, 2002).

When looking at ways to promote success, the learning styles of Alaska Native students must be addressed. Alaska Natives learn best by watching and doing, reflective learning, rather than impulsive learning, which is trial and error, according to studies done on elementary age Native students (House, 2001). “American Indian students tended to show an aptitude for processing visual and spatial information (More, 1989) and to particularly benefit from cooperative learning activities” (p. 3, 2001). Drop out

prevention of Navajo and Hopi Indians included cooperative learning and cultural awareness activities. In an interview with American Indian medical students, Kerbeshian (1989) states factors related to their academic success (in college) were cooperative learning activities, cultural orientation and family responsibilities (p. 3, 2003, House).

Another known action step of successful Alaska Native youth is getting parents involved. Parents need to be involved because they can bridge the cultural discontinuity gap. Parents can be an influential connection between home and school (Nelson et al., 2002). Parental support clearly motivates Alaska Native students.

Self-motivation contributes to student success in school too. Many students with a supportive network were also found to be self-motivated. Looking at the relationship between self-concept and achievement expectancies and academic performance of student research shows that students' self-rating are directly related to college outcomes. Students who did well in college chemistry and math were students who rated themselves high in their overall academic ability and their drive in their coursework (House, p.2, 2001). In a study of improved academic performance of Native students, a number of common traits were discovered. Students had goals early on in school, students were involved in school activities, and some of them were leaders in school activities (Demmert, 2001). A study of 121 Alaska Native/American Indian students in their first six semesters of college in 1996 was conducted. When students enrolled in school they were surveyed on their self-concept of their drive in math, self-rating of their ability in math and their graduation expectations. There was a correlation with student high expectations and higher performance with their grades in college. The study results were consistent with another study in 1994 (House, 2001). On a survey of 160 Alaska

Native/American Indian students, it was discovered students' "self-ratings of overall academic ability and drive to achieve were significantly correlated with the grade performance of American Indian/Alaska Native students" (House, p. 6, 2003). House suggests when educators design educational programs, they keep in mind that self-belief of the students significantly affects their academic performance.

And lastly, an extremely critical piece in motivating Alaska Native students is the relationship with their teachers. Close relationships are an action step that is pertinent in teachers developing a relationship with the Alaska Native students. In the University of Minnesota Resilience study, students say they value teachers who have cultural knowledge and teachers who are encouraging. High school student interviews provide a list of teacher qualities that students thought were good teaching strengths: having cultural knowledge, being encouraging to students, explaining, using examples and analogies they understand, having high expectations, being fair, expecting respect in the classrooms, and being interested in students. They also appreciated a teacher with an open mind, ones that showed caring, patience, and respect for students. They valued teachers who were "fun" and teachers who made a commitment to staying at their school and weren't going to leave after a year or two (Bergstrom et al, 2003).

Given the traumatic history and hardships Alaska Native people have endured, it is no wonder that the educational school system they have had to adapt to continues to be a struggle. National studies and grim statistics prove that there is need to improve upon educating Alaska Native students. Several studies have found strategies that are successful with motivating Alaska Native students.

Alaska Native students are motivated with curriculum that brings their culture alive. These students learn from teachers that have taken time to establish a relationship with them and that serve as a support network for them. Alaska Native students appreciate teachers who encourage them, support them and have high expectations of them. The students prefer to learn in a learning environment that is small and allows for cooperative learning and hands-on activities. Parents and elders supporting Alaska Native students is a critical element in Alaska Native student success too. Community involvement is an important support system for success of Alaska Native students. Teachers, administration, parents and communities can improve student academic success by being aware of and practicing effective teaching strategies that motivate Alaska Native students.

Methods

Juneau is the capital city of Alaska and is a community of approximately 30,000 people, predominantly Caucasian people. Like most southeast Alaska communities, it is only accessible by air or water. The Juneau Douglas High School has approximately 1,650 students and approximately 22% of them are Alaska Native. District-wide they comprise 23% of the population. Other minorities are Asian, African American, Filipino and others. They comprise 17% of the school district population. However, it serves as the hub and city for the native villages surrounding it. The Native community of Juneau is made up of people from outlying villages, such as Angoon, Hoonah, Klukwan, Sitka, and several other small communities. Village sizes generally range from under 200 to 8,000 people. The people have lived in these villages for generations. Juneau is the biggest city in Southeast Alaska, with more job opportunities, so village Natives have moved to Juneau for jobs. Many of the Alaska Natives living in Juneau are “urban Indians”. Their families have been there for two to three generations and the culture is not as rich to families as it is in the villages. They are unfortunately not immersed in their culture as their elders and relatives who live in the rural communities of southeast Alaska. The focus of this research is on Alaska Native students in Juneau, Alaska.

Population

Out of the 153 total interviews, there were over 72 Alaska Native student interviews, and 37 “other” student interviews from various minority groups and Caucasian students. There were 27 effective teachers interviewed from the four secondary schools in the Juneau School District. Evidence from random personal interviews of these various subgroups support findings about what motivates Alaska

Native middle school and high school students. The purpose of the study was to find key factors that motivate Alaska Native students in middle school and high school. A small number of other student populations were also interviewed because in the process they were with their friends when interviewed. The information can be shared with the Juneau School District and the information may help when deciding ways to use federal grant funds that come through the Juneau School District.

During the interview process, several teachers commented on enjoying the interview because it made them reflect on their teaching and they haven't done that in a long time. The teachers who were interviewed were not random but viewed by the students as effective teachers. The teachers were truly flattered being interviewed and greatly appreciated the "pat on the back".

I sense that overall, the students had a closer relationship with their middle school teachers because most students were quick at naming a middle school teacher who motivated them when asked. When it came to naming a high school teacher, there was more wait time before many of them could give an answer. This could be due to the fact they had middle school teachers for larger blocks of time and established close relationships with the middle school teachers. High school students generally have teachers for 75 minutes blocks and have different teachers for each subject. High school teachers have different students for each class period, unlike the middle school and elementary school. Elementary teachers work an even longer period of time with the same student population. Given the different schedule structure, the high school teachers and students are not bonded with their students like elementary and middle school. This is a frustration for staff and students. Students, primarily the freshman students need

relationships and support networks from adults in school. They are going through many changes and have to make many decisions school and non-school related and need support.

Schools and gender break down the populations interviewed. Since my focus was Alaska Native students the breakdowns are more specific with school level, school and gender. Some of the minority and Caucasian populations are lumped together.

Native- The main groups of students interviewed were Alaska Native, predominantly Tlingit Indians. Other Alaska Native people interviewed were part Haida, Tsimshian, Aleut, Alutiiq, Athabascan, Inupiaq, and Yup'ik. Juneau is located in Southeast Alaska and most of the local Natives are part Tlingit. Most Natives are of mixed blood and are often a combination of several nationalities.⁵ In the research, “Native” refers to all Alaska Native groups and does not include non-Natives.

Table 1 demonstrates the number of Native students interviewed:

Table 1

Native Students Interviewed

Dzantik'i Heeni Middle School And Blatchley Middle School-Sitka	22 middle school Native students
Juneau Douglas High School	35 high school Native students
Yakoosege Dakahidi Alternative High School	12 high school Native students
Dropout students	3 high school Native students
Total number interviewed	72 Alaska Native students

⁵ One of the girls in the study was part Cherokee, Sioux, and Dakota Indian. She was a close friend with a Tlingit Indian girl and the interviewer interviewed both of the girls.

There were three Native students interviewed from Sitka, Alaska.⁶ There were a total of 47 Alaska Native high school students and 22 Alaska Native middle school students interviewed.

Non-Natives- Non-Natives refers to Caucasians. Minorities address Filipinos, Hispanics, African Americans and other small minority groups. The range of minority students was directly split between at-risk in the alternative program to self-motivated learners. The Caucasian group leaned heavier on the at-risk level students. The “other” category of research refers to minority students and Caucasians.

Table 2 demonstrates the number of “Other” students interviewed:

Table 2

Other Students Interviewed

Dzantik’i Heeni Middle School	3 Minority middle school students
	7 Caucasian middle school students
Juneau Douglas High School	5 Minority high school students
	1 Caucasian high school students
Yaakoosge Daakahidi Alternative High School	5 Minority high school students
	5 Caucasian high school students
College and graduate level minority students	11 minority and Alaska Native/American Indian graduate and Doctoral students
Total number of Minorities	24 minority students
Total number of Caucasians	13 Caucasian students
Total number of other students	37 Other students

⁶ Two of the three Sitka middle school students are having some struggles at the middle school level so the interviewer felt their interviews would be helpful data.

The total number of middle school minority and Caucasian students was 10 other students and the total number of minority and Caucasian high school students was 16 other students.

It was important to get some “other” student interviews to see if there were consistencies with the answers. While conducting the interviews, Native students were with peers other than just Alaska Native so it was a natural fit to interview some, a small percentage of their peers as well. The interviewer did state to all subjects that it was mainly an Alaska Native student research project. All subjects were very willing to assist with the project. After conducting the research, teachers and administrators would be interested in the information for all students.

Eleven college and doctoral minority and Alaska Native/American Indian students participated in the interview. Most of the doctoral and master’s degree students were interviewed at the Society For Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS) Conference and they were an extremely motivated group of scientists and mathematicians. They were all chosen as SACNAS Scholarship recipients, based on their outstanding performances in school. Some of the interview questions focused on their support networks as well as what motivated them to do as well as they did. This interview piece was an important and unplanned part of the research project. It helped with looking at long term, postsecondary perspective of what truly motivates successful students and what support networks they had to become top notch, doctoral students in the country.

Of the total number of middle school and high school students interviewed 72 of the 98 students were Alaska Native. Including the graduate/doctoral minority students,

there were 109 interviews of students, ranging from middle school and high school to some post secondary highly successful minority and Alaska Native/American Indian students.

While conducting the Juneau School District student interviews, particular teachers' names came up as motivating. Administrators recommended other teachers to be interviewed that they knew used the teaching strategies mentioned by students as motivating. These teachers were interviewed. Table 3 shows the level at which they taught:

Table 3

Successful teachers with Alaska Native students

Juneau Middle Schools-Dzantik'i Heeni And Floyd Dryden Middle School ⁷	13 middle school teachers (All non-Native, but one Alaska Native Para educator included. 9 male and 5 female)
Juneau Douglas High School	12 teachers (All non-Native-8 male, 3 female)
Yaakoosge Daakahidi Alternative High School	2 teachers (Both non-Native and female)
Total number of middle school and high school teachers	27 teachers and includes one Alaska Native Classified, experienced Para educator

Six Alaska Native administrators in the Juneau School District who were experienced teachers were interviewed.⁸ Five of the administrators were previously teachers at the middle school and high school levels. One administrator is a recently

⁷ Floyd Dryden Middle School is the other middle school in Juneau, Alaska. The students were not interviewed due to the interviewing choosing one middle school site to interview. However, the assistant principal at Floyd Dryden Middle School is Alaska Native, originally from a rural Tlingit village of Angoon. Her input was valuable and she provided the interviewer with some names of Floyd Dryden teachers that are successful working with Alaska Native students.

⁸ One of these six administrators counted as a teacher taught Tlingit language at the alternative high school when she was the principal there. Although she doesn't have her teaching certificate, she is a life long educator with her administrative experience, her curriculum development work, and all of the rich knowledge and experience of working directly with students and parents. She has over 25 years of experience working with Native education and schools.

retired Alaska Native administrator who worked with a middle school for several years. He now works with the high school Native education program through a Native organization. The Native administrators comprise 22% of the current administrative staff. Table 4 demonstrates the number of “Other staff” which is comprised of administrators, mostly Alaska Native, counselors and Native leaders in education interviewed on ways to motivate Alaska Native students from personal and professional experiences:

Table 4

Staff--Other Category--
Administrators, counselors, and Native education leaders-
Interviews on Motivation and Success of Native students

School district Native administrators	6 are principals, assistant principals, or principal intern ⁹
Counselors	1 minority (was interviewed as an administrator) ¹⁰
Native education business professionals	4 Alaska Native
Indian Studies Para educators	2 Alaska Native veteran Para educators with middle school and high school students currently in the school district
Total number of Administrators, counselors, Para educator/Parents and Native education leaders interviewed	13 Alaska Native and experienced with Native education in the Juneau School District

Fifteen interviews have been completed in the staff “Other” category. A total of 153 interviews have been conducted for this research on Motivation and Success of Alaska Native students.

⁹ One is currently an intern principal

¹⁰ The counselor was a middle school assistant principal for many years and now works for a Native organization as a Johnson O/Malley counselor, providing much data on Native student success and failures in the school district.

Materials

Interview Questions

The interviewer used the same five interview questions for all middle school and high school students. Table 5 demonstrates the questions students were asked:

Table 5

- 1) What content do you like in school and why?
- 2) What middle school teacher(s) are you motivated to learn from and why?
- 3) What high school teacher(s) are you motivated to learn from and why?
- 4) What class are you motivated to go to and what makes you motivated with it?
- 5) How do you learn best? (What teacher strategies have you noticed work for you?)

Following and during the student interviews, the interviewer asked the successful teachers questions about their teaching practices with Alaska Native students and at-risk students. Table 6 demonstrates the questions given to successful teachers:

Table 6

Interview Questions for Successful Teachers

- 1) What do you think you do that motivates students to come to your class?
- 2) What do you do to motivate at risk students in your class?
- 3) What do you do to motivate Native students in your class?
- 4) What strategies work best for Native students that you use?
- 5) What content interests Native students?

Eleven graduate and doctorate Alaska Native/American Indian and other minority graduates were interviewed on what motivated them to be successful students and what support network they had growing up.¹¹ Table 7 demonstrates the interview questions to the motivated graduate and doctoral students:

Table 7

Interviews with Motivated Graduate and Doctoral Students:

- 1) What three people in your life motivated you to value education and pursue a college education?
- 2) Was it the content (or subject) in middle school/high school or your teacher that motivated you to pursue college?
- 3) What teaching strategies did teachers do that connected you or helped you in school?

Another significant population in the study was the experienced voices of the school district administrators, school counselors, Native education leaders in the community, and the Indian Studies Para educators who are also parents of Alaska Native students in the school district. This population has been struggling with the Native student success issue for many years and it pains them to still be resolving the issue of Native student failure in the Juneau School District. Table 8 demonstrates the interview questions for this “Other” group:

¹¹ The graduate students and doctoral students were meeting at the annual SACNAS Conference-2005 in Denver, Colorado. Society for Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science Conference brings together 2000 mostly Chicanos and Native American Scientists, Mathematicians, and educators learning and sharing new areas in math, science and technology. There are many graduate and doctorate students who had just completed their programs and had received scholarships. They share their research at this annual event.

Table 8

Interview Questions for Juneau School District administrators, school counselors, Native education leaders, and Indian Studies Para educators/Parents:

- 1) What do you think you did that motivated students to come to your class?
- 2) What do you did to motivate at risk students in your class?
- 3) What do you did to motivate Native students in your class?
- 4) What strategies worked best for Native students that you used?
- 5) What content interests Native students?

Procedure

Interviews

The setting of middle school interviews was at the Dzantik'i Heeni Middle School. The interviewer chose the school based on its teaming and integrated approach to learning. The school is divided into four houses and sixth through eighth grade student's work with the same team of teachers for all three years of middle school. Most teachers teach two content areas and much of the instruction is project-based learning. The middle school has blocks of times for most exploratory classes too. Students in a Tlingit Language and Media exploratory classes were pulled one or two at a time for the interview.

The interviewer randomly selected mostly Native students and their partner from class. The classroom structure allowed for students to come and go from one room to the next, where the interviewer conducted the interviews. The names of the student remained

anonymous but the interviewer did ask them about their ethnicity and she tallied it following each interview.

Each interview was seven to ten minutes long. The interviewer explained each question and was careful not to provide information to the subjects to give them answers. Some were given several examples of teaching strategies to choose from. Examples given were: cooperative learning, small group learning, lecture style teaching, and hands-on learning.

At the high school level, the interviewer went to both high schools and randomly picked mostly Native students and their friends. The Juneau Douglas High School commons and Yaakoosge Daakahidi commons were popular interview locations. The students were able to sit with the interviewer between classes and after school.

Other students were located at the teen center and visiting at the interviewer's home. Some were also located in Sitka at a family holiday gathering. Some Alaska Native students were in the Early Scholars Program and (Preparing Indigenous Teachers for Alaska Schools) PITAS classes where the teacher allowed interviews at a convenient time. Early Scholars and PITAS programs are Alaska Native student classes at Juneau Douglas High School that prepare students for college and/or the teaching profession..

The teacher interviews were completed at work locations of the staff. They took ten to twenty five minutes. They were chosen based on student interviews and students naming them as teachers that motivated them in school.

The other interviews of administrators, counselors and Native education leaders took place mostly at their work place. The length of the interviews ranged from fifteen to thirty minutes. They were interviewed because of their experience and knowledge with

Native education. The college graduate students were interviewed in the coffee break area of the Denver Convention Center and at the break and ending of a class session.

Interviews lasted ten to twenty minutes.

Interviewer

I was the interviewer and the researcher in this project. Being almost half Alaska Native and growing up in Southeast Alaska, I had passion for the topic on a professional and personal level.

On a professional level, I am an experienced Alaska Native teacher in the Juneau School District for grades two through eight, with mostly middle school teaching experience in several content areas. I also taught fifth grade for many years before my last ten years at the middle school level. I currently work with Native education federal grants in the Juneau School District with middle school and high school programs. I have seen change occur between sixth and eighth grades students in my school. I noticed that many of my former Native students did not graduate with their graduating class and it disturbs me. The continuous reports of Native student failure continue to bother me and bother our Native community. What is happening in our school system to have such a low success rate of our Native students? Why are they failing in our system, particularly the sharp drops at the high school level?

My passion with researching Native student motivation also came from trying to understand my own resilience with many barriers growing up. Like many Sitka Native families, my parents attended and met at the Alaska Native boarding school, Mt. Edgecumbe High School in the 1950's. My late father was half Tsimshian Indian and half Hispanic. My mother is Aleut, Russian, German and Swedish. My parents divorced

when I was four years old. My three other siblings and I were split up between mother and father. My father took the two older siblings and relocated in Seattle, Washington, where they grew up. My mother raised my younger brother and me, where we remained in Sitka, Alaska. Sitka is a small southeast Alaska island community. Sitka was a community of 7,000 people and a similar Native student percentage population to Juneau. My neighborhood was a diverse blend of Alaska Native families who wanted to stay in Sitka following their boarding high school experience. It was a low-income housing complex, Paxton Manor. At ten years old, my mother married a supportive man, who valued and modeled the importance of education. We moved out of the affordable housing units, but chose to buy a home near to our friends and neighbors in the same area. We had a support network of families and friends and a rich childhood experience.

Even though I had support from my parents, I had many barriers growing up. I had been teased about being Alaska Native in elementary school, after switching from a Native segregated kindergarten to the public school system of all Sitka students. When I was in elementary school neighbor boys abused some of my friends and me. Both my parents and biological father in Seattle sometimes had dysfunctional issues and bad home situations that were alcohol related. I lived in affordable housing and qualified to receive free and reduced lunches up to ten years old. Amidst the barriers with prejudice, abuse, alcoholism in the family and related traumatic experiences, poverty, and overcoming low self-esteem issues, I had a very rich upbringing with true friendships, a loving family, spirituality, and an understanding of the importance of my education. I understand modern Native youth have barriers growing up similar to mine, but with all of the barriers

and trauma I have experienced, I continuously try to understand why Alaska Native students are having such a hard time with their motivation for success in school.

Discussion

In this study I set out to explore my beliefs about motivating Alaska Native students. Through exhaustive research and 153 personal interviews directly with the students, their effective teachers, counselors, administrators and Alaska Native administrators, several themes emerged. The interview results are broken into subgroups. There were some discoveries of common ground.

Beginning with common findings of the major group studied, Alaska Native middle school and high school students, several factors contributed to motivating this first group. This student group was often motivated by their teachers and by the kinds of activities they did in their classes. This group is broken down later in my study.

In general, Alaska Native middle school and high school students were motivated with teachers and classes with several common themes: characteristics their teachers had, kinds of activities and strategies their teachers conducted, and their relationships with their teachers. These themes were found to be true for the minority and Caucasian populations that were interviewed as well:

Teachers with the characteristics of being nice, cool, and friendly motivate Alaska Native middle school and high school students:

“...She is a good teacher and she is nice and interesting most of the time...because she is fun.”

“When they are nice and they try to pay attention...because he is fun”

“Teachers that are outgoing and fun.”

Alaska Native students appreciated teacher who acknowledge them and embrace various cultures:

“In literature because the way she taught was inspirational and she believed in me so much.”

“Tlingit language and art [really motivated me]. Hearing a new heard language is really motivating.”

“Language and learning about other cultures”

“Native art, I like to learn about Native Art”

Teachers who took time to talk and listen to students motivate Alaska Native students:

“English teacher, she always talked to me about my family and school. We talk all of the time and I really have her trust. I never wanted to miss her class. The way she treated me made me want to come to school.”

“[I am motivated by] step-by-step learning and interacting with the students”

“A teacher that motivates me has a sense of humor, is fun and uses your [student] name.”

Most Alaska Native students were motivated by activities and teacher strategies with several common factors.

Teachers who explain things well and give examples motivate Alaska Native students:

“[In] History, she helped me a lot. We did hands-on activities. [In math] she explained things where I could understand.”

“In math he explains things and is calm.”

Hands-on learning was the most popular strategy for motivating middle school and high school Alaska Native students. Kinesthetic-tactile or hands-on learning style is also referred to as learning by doing and is a traditional way of learning:

“In British literature class because of my teacher and how we learn from him, such as skits, memorizing our own poems, etc.”

Another effective strategy that motivated many Alaska Native students was cooperative learning activities or group work. In the Review of the literature, Susan Ledlow found the same results in her research by Susan Philips regarding participant structure. Alaska Native and American Indian students work best in small groups or with one-on-one help. Many students commented on liking group work, just as much as the high school as the middle school level:

“Working with my friends or one on one with my teacher, that’s how I learn better.”

“Working in groups and sharing.”

“Being entertained, visual things, and group discussion.”

Alaska Native students were also motivated with choice in lesson and freedom in the class:

“Art-I can choose my own work and pace.”

“In Literature class she doesn’t say anything but her silence allows you to work. [It is a] good atmosphere. [There is] a lot of freedom and a good environment.”

Lastly Alaska Native students were motivated by visuals and examples in the classroom:

“[I am motivated by] hands-on and visual learning.”

“[I learn from] hands-on and worksheets.”

“[I learn] when we use white boards and have examples.”

“[I learn from] mostly hands-on.”

“[I learn from] hands-on and visual lessons.”

Alaska Native students also valued and were motivated by teachers with whom they developed relationships. Some of the ways teachers developed relationships with the students were relationship building at the beginning of the year, and after the relationship was built being frank and having heart to heart talks with students individually. This built an ongoing relationship. One very well liked teacher by many students states:

“ I don’t mind being frank with them. I build a relationship first. I play the ‘pride’ issue. I give them a gut check with pride and they all respond to that. No matter what their academic level is, they KNOW what pride is. I am down to earth with them and real. I was adopted into a Native clan at three years old and let them know I know of culture and the pride value. I share stories growing up. (There’s no excuse. You failed, Dude. How much longer?) I am frank to the tough boys and talk about steps to get them out of the ‘dummy role’, like learning multiplication. None of them want to be labeled that way.”

Teachers also developed relationships by communicating with students about topics other than content area:

“I make sure I don’t make school ‘too heavy’ for them. I spend a lot of time teaching them how to be a good citizen. I push a lot of character development. I talk individually with them about their dreams and down the road and discuss

how they can get there. (Is all of this academic stuff [with science] going to make you a better person?) This class is little in their big picture. I tell stories and am frank with them about the topics related to science. Almost on the edge, but they listen, they smile, they are having a good time and learning.”

Another effective way teachers developed relationships in the classroom was by embracing cultures in the classroom:

“Welcome culture and elders. Start year with a plant unit, incorporates Native knowledge and they can share and be in the limelight if they know about them. Tells me who is plugged in with their culture. Throwing Tlingit phrases in with my limited vocabulary.”

“Identify with Native culture. I speak to relevance of Native culture. Field trips with cultural relevance. I don’t get angry. I wear cultural t-shirts and have a ring with an Alaska Native design.”

Teachers developed relationships with Alaska Native students by not giving up on students, pushing them, and setting high expectations of attendance:

“Relationship, passion and enthusiasm, clear expectations and expect them to focus when in my room.”

“Heart to heart talks. The Pride Talk works. They all know what that is. They posture so much and play the role. I confront them on it and tell them they are going to be successful by doing things. We talk real life situation. I teach real life situation with science. I share the big picture. I don’t cram too much information. I list two things they will learn in the lesson before they walk out. Minimal. I use a lot of anecdotes. Tons. I use humor and stories. I

share myself and I cry. I make everything related to them. I share arguments they can relate to. Teens are egocentric-It's all about them. They use notebooks. We talk of thousands of relevant and related stories with science. I keep it grounded to their overall picture. (Is all this stuff going to make you a better person?)”

Teachers that are effective with establishing relationships with Alaska Native students also give the students encouragement:

“Be gentle. Use a softer voice. Get to know their interests to connect to them. Praise their efforts and help them often. Humor.”

“[He] always helped me do stuff. All other teachers gave up on me.”

Breakdown by Groups

For clarity in this lengthy discussion, groups interviewed are broken into eleven subgroups. They are separated by various categories of students, teachers, administrators and “others”, and Alaska native professionals.

Alaska Native Dropout students

The first subgroup interviewed in my study, Alaska Native male dropout students, enjoyed teachers, mainly their science teachers at both middle school and high school that were cool, nice and friendly. They enjoyed teachers that were concerned about different cultures and gave choice and freedom. This is similar to Alaska Native students:

“[I enjoyed my] health teacher [who was] concerned about different cultures.”

“Science, you are in charge, there is choice, teacher is friendly and a buddy, and is a different teacher.”

Alaska Native male dropout students enjoyed activities in classes that were fun, offered choice, hands-on activities, and note taking was helpful. They enjoyed math because it was easy for them, science because it was fun. They enjoyed the field trips at the high school level. They enjoyed media because of the freedom:

“[I enjoyed] science-field trips”

“[I enjoyed] animals, hands-on science and freedom of choice in media class”

Alaska Native Alternative High School Students

The second subgroup interviewed in the study, Alaska Native alternative high school students, enjoyed a variety of content areas. There is not a consistent pattern with their vast and varied content interests.

Middle school teachers motivated Alaska Native alternative high school female students by being fun and having fun and exciting assignments:

“I like fun teachers and always had fun and exciting assignments to do.”

Some female students had no middle school teachers they could think of that motivated them.

Teachers who pushed them and wouldn't let them give up motivated Alaska Native male alternative high school students:

“She was always on my case to push me to pass.”

“He really pushed me and wouldn't let me give up.”

Teachers that were down-to-earth cool, hilarious, and entertaining motivated the male students:

“He was cool and a hilarious teacher.”

“He told it like it was and down to earth.”

High school teachers that were there when they needed them, were fun and happy motivated Alaska Native alternative high school female students:

“She is a fun and happy person. She is always there when I need her. I can ask her about anything.”

“[She] always kept me on task in math.”

Alaska Native alternative high school male students were motivated by high school teachers when they were pushed, and when teachers had high students expectations to do the work and to be at class:

“I was motivated in Math. My math teacher he never gave up on me.”

“I am motivated in English. My English teacher makes me be there.”

They enjoyed math teachers because they get extra help when they need it and it makes it more interesting:

“I like Math. She helped me all of the time when I was stuck on a math problem.”

“I like Math, I learn and get it fast.”

“I like Math, It’s easy for me.”

Alaska Native alternative high school students were motivated by a wide variety of classes for various reasons. Only three females were interviewed in this category, so it is difficult to have these three females represent opinions of other Alaska Native female alternative school students. The few females interviewed were motivated with government and correspondence courses. Males were motivated with music, art, Tlingit art, media and culture because they are fun and they learn about culture.

Strategies and kinds of activities that worked best for two female Alaska Native alternative high school students were having structured reading and assignments and the other learns best by working independently with correspondence courses:

“I learn from correspondence class-it is easy to learn and read on my own and I don’ t have to wait on the rest of the class.”

“[I] like reading and assignments.”

The male students learned best working in small groups, hands-on activities, getting examples and getting encouragement from their teachers:

“[I enjoy] hands-on learning and cooperative learning activities.”

“Someone telling me-directions. Small classes because I know everyone.”

“Teachers that encourage me. Communication. Teachers that give extra help.”

“I learn from group activities. Teacher giving examples.”

“I learn best in groups. Give examples.”

Alaska Native Middle School Students

The third subgroup of the interview process and study was Alaska Native middle school students. This group enjoyed a wide variety of content areas because they were meaningful to them, hands-on learning and fun or they had personal interests in the subjects:

“I like Science, it’s fun and you get to see different stuff and how thing live. It’s really cool.”

“I enjoy English, I like to write.”

“I enjoy Social Studies and most exploratory classes.”

They enjoyed various exploratory classes because they were fun, hands-on and active:

“I enjoy PE because it gets you motivated.”

“I like Sewing-you can make your pants your own style and cooking you make foods you like.”

“I enjoy Band, learning how to do music is pretty interesting.”

“I like Media, fun projects and filming, he’s nice and fun.”

Several Alaska Native middle school students also enjoyed Tlingit language class:

“I enjoy Tlingit language to learn my ancestor’s language.”

“I enjoy Tlingit language, it’s very fun.”

“I enjoy Tlingit language and art. Hearing a new heard language is really motivating.”

“I enjoy Drama-you get to act and Tlingit language-it’s fun to speak another language.”

Strategies and kinds of activities that Alaska Native middle school students found effective were from teachers that explained things, gave examples, let them work in small groups, and by doing hands-on activities:

“I learn from teachers that explain really good.”

“I learn from hands-on activities.”

“I learn from teachers that explain things well and working in small groups.”

“I learn from examples and handouts.”

Middle school teachers motivated Alaska Native middle school female students by explaining things, by pushing them, and helping them:

“I am motivated in Art because she helps students and makes things fun.”

“I am motivated in Music because she explains things and do them differently and math because she explains things.”

“I am motivated in Math because she explains it well and is strict. She goes over everything well and sets high expectations.”

Middle school teachers motivated Alaska Native middle school male students by being nice, being fun, and being good at discipline:

“I am motivated in Science and media-he doesn’t yell (either teacher) and Social studies and is fun and the content I like.”

“I am motivated in Media because he is nice and fun.”

“I am motivated in Media because he is nice and good at discipline, not too hard of punishment.”

Alaska Native middle school students appreciated being encouraged and having a fun teacher.

“She encouraged everyone’s differences and with that, it motivated us.”

“I am motivated in Science because he brought fun to science and I learned a lot.”

“She motivated me to learn because she had fun activities.”

“I am motivated in EL Math, it was cool and she encouraged us to get good grades.”

Alaska Native middle school students valued a teacher taking time to build a relationship with them:

“I am motivated in Science-He (teacher) played chess with us at lunch and built our relationship.”

“The ones who like to teach, who can be more than a teacher, and have time to help because it makes school a friendly environment.”

Alaska Native High School Students

The fourth subgroup in the interview process and study, Alaska Native high school students, enjoyed many content areas and it cannot be generalized which areas they liked. The quality of teaching and relationship of the student and teachers greatly influenced what content areas they enjoyed:

“I am motivated in AK Government-she treats us like people and doesn’t look down on anyone. I am motivated in science because he is still a teenager at heart. Math-he is just hilarious because he makes fun of math and takes time to help everyone.”

“I am motivated in Science--She motivates me by giving me lots of opportunities. Another teacher makes us keep track of our own work and then we know our grade and why.”

“I am motivated in Drama--Expressive. Cool, fun and she’s out there.”

Teaching strategies and kinds of activities that worked best for Alaska Native high school students included many responses for hands-on activities, visual organizers, teachers who set high expectations, give them choice, explain things and help them when needed:

“I learn from hand-on projects and experiments.”

“I learn from hands-on, visual lessons.”

“I learn from visual and hands-on. Teaching in all different ways (addressing learning styles) helps me.”

“I learn from hands-on projects, one on one with teacher and bookwork and notes.”

“I learn from visual examples, definitely, following and example.”

“I learn from a lot of examples after instruction.”

Alaska Native high school students were motivated with classes that involved cooperative learning groups and socialization with their peers.

“Definitely ‘not’ traditional! Group discussions and teacher clarifying-I learn a lot this way.”

“I learn from hands-on projects and group projects.

“We connected, got along with everyone. My three years in Choice we had fun in class. You were friends with everyone.”

“Early Scholars class motivates me because I have lots of friends there and I know a whole bunch of people there.

Some Alaska Native high school students commented on liking to be in classes where their learning connected with real life situations:

“I like teacher who tells stories-real life situation.”

“I like working with hands. Connecting topics to real life.”

“I like Biology. She teaches up so many interesting facts about life.”

Alaska Native high school students also liked classes where their teachers had a passion for what they taught, knew the content well and provided other opportunities for student success.

“Some classes I don’t learn from. I love math, but not this math. Not a monotone teacher and I can’t stand her grading system.”

“I like outgoing teachers. Ones that know and love what they are teaching.”

“I like teacher who gives grade updates, missing assignments, gives extra credit, and giving opportunity is the key.”

“Science, she motivates me by giving me lots of opportunities. Another teacher makes us keep track of our own work and that we know our grade and why.”

Alaska Native high school students appreciated rigor and teachers who believed in them:

“I was motivated in EL Math. She kept us on it and set high expectations. I felt smart.”

“I was motivated in Math--My teachers never gave up (on me) and explained how and why it was that way and geography-I loved it and he was a good teacher just because of the way he taught it.”

“I was motivated in EL Math, it was cool and she encouraged us to get good grades.”

“I was motivated in Science-He sets very high standards.”

“I was motivated in Literature-She’s really smart and a really good literature teacher. She could probably teach college. She has high expectations.”

Alaska Native high school students enjoyed classes with teachers that were fun and nice to them. It was apparent that middle school teachers who were fun, happy and nice motivated Alaska Native high school students:

“I was motivated in PE-he was funny and outgoing.”

“I was motivated in Math-He was really funny and we got along really well. I always wanted to go to his class because he made it fun.”

“I was motivated by my Science teacher-he made things interesting and fun.”

“I was motivated in Science because he was funny and cool. He also motivated me.”

“I was motivated in Science because he brought fun to science and I learned a lot.”

“...She motivated me to learn because she had fun activities.”

“I was motivated in English, she was enthusiastic and had a good attitude towards us.”

“I liked Science, he did fun ways to do things.”

Teachers that helped them and encouraged them motivated Alaska Native high school students.

“I am motivated in Science-He pushed us all of the time

“I learn in math, he is a calm, nice guy and he explains things better than our text and literature because she is nice.”

“I was motivated in Literature, It is a really fun class, still hard. It’s interesting.”

Alaska Native high school students also learned best with a teacher who developed a relationship with them. Alaska Native high school students were motivated by teachers who respect them, build a relationship with them, and who are nice to them:

“I learned best in Language Arts and Social Studies in 6th grade. She was funny, nurturing and made me feel comfortable.”

“The ones who like to teach, who can be more than a teacher, and have time to help because it makes school a friendly environment.”

Surprisingly, Alaska Native high school students did not mention Tlingit language and art, as the middle school Alaska Native students did. This may be because they did not have cultural class opportunities like they had at the middle school. The cultural connection at school stopped after middle school years.

It is important to create educational cultural opportunities for the high school Alaska Native youth so they have a connection with their past, present and future. Being involved in an extracurricular activity, particularly after school would be beneficial. Their culture is an important part of who they are and having more cultural after school programs would be an excellent support system for the Alaska Native students.

Minority Middle School and High School Students

The fifth subgroup in the study, which was a small group and not the main focus of the study, was minority middle school and high school students. They liked a broad range of content areas with a wide variety of personal interests in subjects. No patterns could be established. Classes that minority middle school and high school students were motivated with varied greatly, but the classes the students enjoyed were influenced by a positive relationship with their teacher:

“I like all classes. Teachers are encouraging, caring and helpful at the high school.”

“I am motivated in Social Studies. She helps a lot, knows my parents, and she is nice and science. He is funny, he’s awesome, and he’s a good teacher.”

“I am motivated in math. He connects. He cares. He’s awesome.”

“I am motivated in math. Surprisingly, I hate it but I am actually learning it. It’s getting easier. I love it!”

“I like Math, she works her heart out for me. I’m pushing to graduate and she’s making me get the classes I need. She is very encouraging. She would be the big influence.”

“Math, I wasn’t motivated before. She really cared and bugged me to get good grades.”

“I really care about my teachers and I need to get good grades to get my dream.”

“I like drama, high energy teacher. Her energy is contagious.”

“I like Sociology. She’s nice and fun topic.”

“It depends on the teacher. Algebra--he is lively, funny and tells jokes.”

Minority middle school and high school students learned best by teaching strategies and activities that involve hands-on learning and cooperative learning activities:

“I learn from active learning. I like hands-on activities.”

“I like hands-on, a lot of humor.”

“I learn from group talk instead of writing the whole time.”

“I like group working.”

High school teachers that gave good examples on specific things and were helpful motivated minority high school students:

“One-on-one with a teacher. They a not willing to give up.”

“When they help me study. When they give me examples.”

“Personable rather than front and center.”

Caucasian Middle School and High School Students

The sixth subgroup in the study was the smallest group of thirteen students, yet their interview results had some consistencies with other groups. Caucasian students at the middle school were motivated by wide range of content areas, but enjoyed many

exploratory courses the most because of their broad range of personal interests. Classes that motivated Caucasian high school students also varied greatly due to their wide array of personal interests. No pattern could be found, other than them enjoying classes based on their personal interest. Like other groups, along with personal interests, their relationship with their teacher influenced how motivated they were with classes:

“I like drama because I like my teacher. She’s an all around, fun person to hang out with and she relates to kids and Biology because he is involved and funny. He is cultured-German “

“Math and history because the teachers I had were great in those classes.”

Strategies and kinds of activities that motivated some Caucasian middle school and high school students were: hands-on activities, group activities, as well as visuals and listening:

“I like PE because it is fun and we get to exercise and work out.”

“I hate long lectures. I like activities.”

“I learn best by doing hands-on projects and by listening.”

“I like visual and hands-on work.”

“I am motivated in science and history classes because you are constantly moving to new subjects and activities. I believe students can get more involved with classes rather than listening to a teacher blab on for an hour or two.”

“I learn from labs involved with hands-on learning, group work with team projects, syllabus works effectively and musical study sessions.”

“I learn from labs and history classes that you study in groups with other students as teammates.”

“On really big projects I like working in a group but usually I like to be either with a friend or by myself.”

“I learn by sharing. Also by oral discussion--vocabulary given.”

“I like group activities and projects.”

Teachers who made an effort to try to help each student, who explained things well and encourage students motivated Caucasian students too:

“Math because she teaches things so well and encourages us and she always keeps things flowing.”

“I like how teachers explain themselves and work thoroughly.”

“One-on-one. I need lots of attention because I ask lots of questions and I need to be able to have my questions answered and explained.”

Caucasian students were motivated with nice teachers. One student recognized sarcasm from a teacher, even if it isn't directed at them it can bother them:

“Art because her class was fun and we go to do arts and crafts. She was very involved with her classes and never put anyone down when they couldn't do as good as the other kids.”

Caucasian middle school students appreciated middle school teachers who were interesting and fun:

“ I like Social Studies/Language Arts because he makes things interesting.”

“Music motivates me because he makes his class interesting.”

“Social Studies/Language Arts motivates me because she is sometimes hard but most of the time she makes learning really fun.”

“Social Studies motivates me because he [the teacher] always makes me laugh and I learn better when I’m having a good time.”

“Science because he was awesome. He told us stories. He was funny and it was a good atmosphere.”

“My math teacher because it was most fun.”

(Preparing Indigenous Students for Alaska Schools)

PITAS Students

The seventh subgroup in the study was Alaska Native high school PITAS students. There are approximately 13 students in the high school PITAS program and have courses every week with two teacher mentors who teach a curriculum of meaningful activities to inform and prepare them for a teaching career. It is a smaller learning environment with a very comfortable atmosphere. Their interview questions were different and their questions pertained to motivation in school and support systems they had to pursue college. Answers varied, but teachers, rather than content, motivating several PITAS students was an important factor that contributed to their motivation to pursue college:

“Some of my teachers motivate me to pursue college because some are more hands-on.”

“All teachers have told me to go to college. I am also motivated myself and a lot from my mom.”

“Math teacher, she would tell us about different colleges and scholarships and how going to college will open doors.”

“Teachers motivated me. I like seeing how fun my they made their jobs and how much fun they made mine. Also how they always referred to college as a good thing to take up.”

“My study hall teacher. She said she liked my essays and current events I gave her.”

High school PITAS students recognize a variety of teaching strategies that help them learn. It was interesting to note that engaging hands-on, interactive activities such as games and visuals help them learn:

”Making it relate to us and visual.

“One that “gets into the lecture” gets me more into the class. I like doing activities that relate to the class and I love field trips.”

“Visuals, creative things, study halls.”

“Making it funny and teaching us by games they made.”

“Flashcards with rules and letters really helped me.”

“Activities and games. Spending a lot of time in areas and learning about it.”

“Learning through singing, learning through outdoor activities and involving life through learning.”

There were a large number of high school PITAS students that enjoy games. An interesting analysis is that methods commonly used at the elementary school and the middle school are still quite effective with student learning at the high school level.

PITAS students value the personal relationship, support and encouragement from their teachers:

“One-on-one with me and we get time to interact with the teacher.”

“Supportiveness and encouragement along with personal relationship.”

“By taking time in class to talk about people’s future plans after high school.”

Significant people that motivated PITAS students were their mother, father or both and other close relatives and some teachers:

“Dad, Uncle, Mom.”

“Dad, Godmother, and volleyball coach/mentor.”

“Three high school teachers.”

“Father, Counselor, Asst. principal and teacher.”

Society for Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science

(SACNAS)

The eighth subgroup in my study was the SACNAS graduate student group. Most of these high achieving students had a science teacher in middle school and/or high school who motivated them to pursue a college degree in math or science. The SACNAS students often had a relationship established with their teacher/mentor:

“Three MS/HS dynamic teachers (English, Biology and science) who I admire.

They were enthusiastic about their subjects and inspire others to discover their own learning.” --Cherokee microbiologist.

“I decided to go through science in middle school from my teacher motivating me to participate in science fairs and I did it successfully. All of my teachers in 4th-

6th grade and 7th-9th grade motivated me to continue growing.”--B.A. Biology and M.S. Environmental Planning.

“The content was important. I always liked science. The praising from my teachers and personal contact with them was very important and most essential.”--Biology Teacher.

“My chemistry teacher explained Madame Curie. I trusted her. They were supportive”--Chemical engineering student.

“Teachers and personal connections. Creating peer to peer trust” --Geography, Chicano studies, and Geology minor.

The SACNAS students recognized teaching strategies that were effective for them. They were hands-on labs, active learning with songs, rigorous attention to detail, homework, specific schedule, traditional teaching, higher level thinking content, and science inquiry:

“Labs.”

“Chemistry songs, video relating science to James Bond. It made it fun.”

“Rigorous attention to detail.”

“Teachers that send us a lot of homework and give us a specific schedule for studying for classes.”

“Inquiry method of science content, choice of higher level thinking projects.”

“Traditional teaching. Recognition by teachers for several nominations to ‘Who’s Who’, also local recognition.”

Praise and personal connection was also important to success of the SACNAS students:

“Teacher’s praising and providing solutions to problems”

“A lot of praise when I was successful in fifth grade”

“Personal connection creating peer-to-peer trust”

All SACNAS students were motivated to pursue college and value education from family members. All eleven of them had listed their mother as one of the people that motivated them. It was interesting that a couple of them had listed their younger siblings as motivating them because they wanted to be a good example and role model for them. Some other people listed were: science and math teachers, high school advisors, other siblings, father and a grandparent.

Alaska Native Teachers and Alaska Native Administrators

The ninth subgroup in the study was Alaska Native teachers and Alaska Native administrators. One people in this category were in the “other” category with Alaska Native educators. Their years of experience as cultural paraeducators and Alaska Native parents was insightful, so it was important to have them in the experienced Alaska Native educator section since they do teach Alaska Native students. Alaska Native teachers and Alaska Native administrators suggested ways to motivate students to come to their class, based on their personal experiences working with students and for most, being Alaska Native. A critical element often mentioned was building relationship with students before pushing the curriculum:

“Make them feel accepted and part of the classroom. Validate them. They want to feel needed and have attachment to a peer group. Students need to feel part of that learning environment. Teachers want to push curriculum through, but they need to build the relationships first.”

“Forming a reciprocal relationship first. Take time for a genuine interest in the student. They want to perform. Provide affirmations and kindness.”

“Connections to real life so students know why they need to learn it. See a connection.”

“Make the classroom interesting. Give encouragement and warmth. Be welcoming. Get to know the students and try to make time for each one.”

“Personalize the classroom environment as well as the curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Students need to validate and instruction needs to be meaningful, useful and relevant.”

“Welcome them-make students feel that they are wanted. Make the content area interest so that the students want to be there.”

“Many teachers offer incentives – i.e. participation points or passes based on attendance. I also see a strand of teachers who tie attendance to a sign of respect, essentially giving them a guilt trip. Finally, most of the teachers I supervise keep their curriculum varied and ‘interesting’ – balancing projects with worksheets, or individual work with partner activities.”

Alaska Native teachers and administrators suggested ways to motivate at-risk students by making connection with them personally, showing the students they care, treating them fairly, and making meaningful connections to school and life:

“In class motivation seems to vary based on the class and the instructor. Many teachers make an effort to spend some one-on-one time with students who appear to be disengaged. Others may modify assignments playing up individual

strengths or abilities. Sadly, some teachers leave the student to work the issue out on their own.”

“Trusting relationship-building that relationship. Listening to opinions.

Grounded with right and wrong. Fairness and equity. They know when teachers are treating them unfairly.”

“Give them extra time and help. Understand that they have issues and needs not being met. Get to know them. Have a sense of humor. Set clear expectations.”

“They get to know the students and are interested in who they are as individuals. They help students make meaningful connections to their academics and life goals.”

“Feel comfortable. Are understood. Able to express feeling freely without criticism. They get some worth in taking classes.”

“They lack motivation. Society and school pressure motivate them. External pressure doesn’t motivate them. They get to a point where they shut down.”

“Making a connection to them personally. Show them you care. Recognize when they need help. Be welcoming. Connect with them personally. Turn around their attendance.”

Alaska Native teachers and administrators suggested motivating Alaska Native students to come to class by making personal and cultural connections with them, having a rapport with them, making sure they are encouraged and contribute to their classroom. They suggested welcoming the students, embracing cultures, and don’t let them be invisible in the classroom. Alaska Native students learn best, even at the high school

level with hands-on engagement, group learning, and by having several learning styles addressed during instruction:

“I am really proud to tell them I am Alaska Native. Make a personal connection. Making a point to go to Native community. Share myself-example carving. Being a role model.”

“They want to fit in and not feel different.”

“Not the same as at-risk. Active learning and active engagement. Hands-on learning. Teach with a variety of learning styles. Use humor.

Don’t let them be allowed to be invisible in class. Have a rapport with them.”

“Embrace their culture-learn about it and be interested. Involve them and ask them about Native ways. Bring in elders. Accommodate different learning styles. Group work. Hands-on learning and be fair to all.”

“Curriculum, instruction and assessment is personalized and possibly place based. Students are encouraged and they are seen in the classroom as contributing, successful individuals.”

“They feel welcome and understood. Able to do work at current pace. They have to feel they are part of the class. Attendance is so critical to grades. Have a sense of humor. When they don’t fit in the classroom it is no fun. Teacher needs to be flexible and consistent.”

“I see some teachers who try to tie cultural elements into their coursework (i.e. Tlingit short stories during a short story unit). Others work to keep their instruction varied to address specific learning styles. Modified assignments may

come into play here as well. I also see teachers who put themselves out there, in activities community wide, increasing their visibility and presence.”

Alaska Native teachers and administrators suggested strategies to motivate Alaska Native students such as hands-on instruction with learning by doing, visual instruction and making the curriculum meaningful. Teachers should give background information when beginning lesson, have differentiated instruction to accommodate different level learners, and have group learning experiences:

“For all kids-Experiential learning-Doing something to make it real. They love science and nature unit.”

“Teachers demonstrate. Watch, listen and do. How Tlingit people learn as stated by Dr. Walter Soboleff, Tlingit elder.”

“Relationships. Good rapport and communication of the teacher with family, especially positive. Take extra time to walk through. Mistake is good. Use it as a teaching opportunity. Sense of respect and value. Give them guidance by articulating, “When you behave this way, you’re not acknowledging your strengths.” Give them positive affirmations with expectations. Let them know their individual strengths. Kids are so hungry for that. Avoid quick door shutting.”

“Hands-on and meaningful activities. Real-life situation curriculum. Cooperative learning format. Not too much traditional instruction. Build relationships with students at first. Rigor with instruction.”

“Hands-on and visual, group discussion, background information given, relevant vocabulary stressed, differentiated instruction.”

“Have high expectations. Hands-on projects.”

“Integrating cultural elements into curriculum seems effective, especially when it is a constant theme, as opposed to a “special” insertion. I see success with attending community events and activities too, as a way to building a relationship with students.”

Alaska Native teachers and administrators say Alaska Native students like a variety of hands-on classes but more popular classes are technology, media, arts, and cultural activities:

“They are all over the map. Media at middle school. They love math. They love to read. Hands-on-cooking.”

“Science, arts-they can express through other mediums. Hands-on, demonstrating, show, teach and model, build.”

“Native students are as varied as any students, personal [expression]-writing, and drawing”

“[Content areas they enjoy are] technology and media, math, cultural activities.”

“Art, place based core curriculum, content, any content that is connected to the student and who they are and where they came from.”

“[Referring to content areas, this is a] tough one. It’s the teacher.”

“[They enjoy] culture [and learning about] their heritage. They can’t get enough. song and dance as motivators.

Effective Teachers

The tenth subgroup interviewed was effective teachers, based on the student interviews as teachers that motivated them. Some administrators also suggested some of

the interviewed teachers who were effective with motivating Alaska Native students. They have several ways that work for them to motivate students. Several teachers suggested making personal connections with each student. They took the time to develop the relationship in the beginning. After a relationship is developed, it was easier to be frank with the students and set high expectations. They keep learning creative, fun, and relevant. They make the curriculum student-centered, with ideas that interest the students. Middle school teachers have many ways to motivate all students:

“I try to welcome each student individually to class. Greet them with a smile. Create curriculum that they can relate to. I try hard to create a warm environment that is equitable and fair for all students.”

“I try to “start over” each day. My goal is to make learning fun and challenging at the same time. I try to remember what I was like at that age and incorporate social learning with academics.”

“I make sure I don’t make school too heavy for them. I spend a lot of time teaching them how to be a good citizen. I push a lot of character development. I talk individually with them about their dreams and down the road and discuss how they can get there. (Is all of the academic stuff (with science) going to make you a better person?) This class is little in their big picture. I tell stories and am frank with them about the topics related to science. Almost on the edge, but they listen, they smile, they are having a good time and learning.”

“Relationship is important. It takes time to develop this. Joking around when relationship is built works. I have them do small group learning. I recognize some kids lack confidence and need extra support. If you develop a relationship

with a student, it is easier to be frank with them about how they are doing, especially when they need to be pushed. I teach a traditional approach to math. It is predictable with daily and weekly routines. I try to reach students that need it. Active learning is successful with white boards in class. I can see who does and doesn't get it. 8th grade students love them."

"I am lucky because I have high interest and energy subject matter. It's all about them because they are making video of themselves and web pages-self expression. We do hands-on activities. We have a mix of small group activity."

"They get to be creative and see results when they are done. They get recognition that they made it with their hands."

"I keep it fun. It is geared towards learning. We go off content and that is okay. There is a weekly thought for the day quote. I have reward incentives. I keep it positive. They feel safe and respected."

High school teachers have many ways to motivate all students:

"Be personable. Make it welcoming. Explain things. Go over it until they understand (math). Be patient"

"Be welcoming [to the students]. Truly care about all students' success."

"[I] like them and let them know it. I have a flexible grading system. I let them achieve on their own terms. Be very encouraging [to the students]. Never give up on them. I give choices and options when grading."

"I try to talk to each person every day."

"Show concern for each and let them know it. [Establish] personal relationships."

“My class is an entirely experiential based class. Questions are on the board. My class is inquiry based. It is 90% me watching and coaching. The best way to teach is ‘to do’. Passion and enthusiasm of the teacher must be genuine.

Relationships are the key. I small talk outside of classroom door on things about them other than biology. I show I am interested in them.”

“Create environment that is welcoming and fun. Develop personal relationship with each student. Do best to break down barriers with students.”

Greet each student every single day. It may be the only time students are addressed directly all day. Each of us deserves to be noticed and cared for; I try to do that in small ways.”

Teachers motivate at-risk students by spending individual time with them, by talking about things outside of the classroom content, by sharing themselves and speaking to them as a friendly adult mentor. They motivate them by creating curriculum with real life learning situations and curriculum that is relevant to them. They also help them with the big picture and their life. Middle school teachers found some effective ways to motivate at-risk students:

“Individual time with students. Connect by understanding their life outside of school. Talk with them about ‘little things’.”

“Give them a number of chances. Listen to what they say. Keep in mind all students want to learn.”

“Poverty is an issue. I’ve experienced it. There are always a couple lead studs in the park. I target them. Not the lead, but the grey area kids who are low. I share stories of mine that move them. I focus on the tough boys and ask what is causing

them to do what they are doing. No one likes to be labeled dumb. They can have a cover up and shrug it off, but developing a relationship and being frank with them works. I spend a little time with them, find their strengths and weaknesses and help guide them with their interests. It's not just all about the subject I teach—science.”

“Personal contact and find a connection in their life. Share your life.”

“Willing to modify and accommodate students. Modify needs. Bring in parents.”

“Real life skills. Tell them it will be fun. Use tools. Make meaningful relationships with them in the process. Teach skills they need in real life.”

High school teachers have found ways to motivate at-risk student:

“Relevancy—must answer “so what” question. Really work hard on having students see relevancy.”

“Real life situations. Keep them active. Honor student work. Share student’s work.”

“Try to teach the whole student. Let them have a voice and speak their minds.”

“Speak to them as a friendly adult mentor. Call them aside and have a meeting.”

Listen to them, advocate, be a counselor and have frank talks.

“Give them personal attention in class. Encourage them. Be flexible.”

“Let them know options. Open to talk to them.”

“Set high expectations that they know up front. No breaks early on. Rarely offer extra work.”

“Allow what I call ‘grace’—never corner a student or leave him/her without options.”

Many teachers felt they don't treat Alaska Native students any different than other groups, but some do allow wait time, focusing on making positive connections with the students, and sitting beside them to help since Alaska Native students don't usually ask for help. Teachers who are successful motivating Alaska Native students build a good, real relationship with the student. They take the time to sit beside the student, embrace the students' culture, understand learning styles and accommodate, and they make their curriculum relevant to their students. Middle school teachers found several ways to motivate Alaska Native students in school:

"Be gentle. Use a softer voice. Get to know their interests to connect to them. Praise their efforts and help them often. Humor."

"Treat them equally. Fairness."

"Bring in cultural experts from the community that they can relate to and want to see to represent their culture. If they know you respect their culture it is comforting to them. One-on-one with students makes an enormous difference."

"Similar tool as all students, except they respond well to me sitting beside them quietly, listening and answering questions."

"Try to be aware of different learning styles. Accommodate them for their individual needs. Not one size fits all."

"Make curriculum relevant to life in general. Make geology a meaningful relationship to where they are. Be accountable with Native knowledge."

"I treat all kids the same. They are all treated with respect. I let them know they are on a team and work for the same goal. Keep it fun."

High school teachers have found several ways to motivate Alaska Native students:

“Welcome culture and elders. Start year with a plant unit, incorporates Native knowledge and they can share and be in the limelight if they know about them. Tells me who is plugged in with their culture. Throwing Tlingit phrases in with my limited vocabulary.”

“Welcome diversity and culture into the classroom.”

“Care for each person as individual regardless of background. Teens have much more in common than differences. Being inviting to kids and parents. Personal communications.”

“Like to joke. Poke fun and make it fun (math) Personal contact and fairness. Respect of students. I tell stories.”

“Try to reach them with positive connections. I let them know I am different. Aware and sensitive to differences, but try to make connections.”

“As with all my students, I try to find out something about them—carving, music, work—and then ask them about it quietly or refer to their skill when greeting them.”

Strategies that effective teachers of Alaska Native students use involve: quiet one-on-one time, heart-to-heart talks, relationship building, showing them respect, helping them and being there. They teach to different learning styles and accommodate them with hands-on activities and visuals that are meaningful to their life. They build a relationship by being nice, having a sense of humor, embracing culture, having a cultural understanding, and being positive and fair. Effective middle school teachers use several of these strategies:

“I have heart to heart talks. The Pride Talk works. They all know what that is. They posture so much and play the role. I confront them on it and tell them they are going to be successful by doing things. We talk real life situation. I teach real life situations with science. I share the big picture. I don’t cram too much information. I list two things they will learn in the lesson before they walk out. Minimal. I use a lot of anecdotes, tons of them. I use humor and stories. I share myself and I cry. I make everything related to them. I share arguments they can relate to. Teens are egocentric. It’s all about them. They use notebooks. We talk of thousands of relevant and related stories with science. I keep it grounded to their overall picture. (Is all this stuff going to make you a better person?)”

“Be aware of different learning styles. Adapt to it.”

“We do hands-on stuff, small group work. I give some choice. I give friendly guidance. It does not work to get in their face. I pull them aside to address issue.”

“I assess specific needs and do what I can.”

“I use cultural connections. I bring in the elders. We have food.”

“I make it active. We do hands-on learning.”

“I give individual one-on-one instruction. We feel comfortable to say things. I have Native students share and bring things in. I embrace all cultures.”

Effective high school teachers have strategies that work to motivate Alaska

Native students:

“As a teacher, be respectful. Inviting culture. Visual students. Be organized.”

“Refer to their strengths (I’ve noticed you are good at drawing cartoons, at details, at finding common agreement in a discussion, etc.)”

“Be nurturing and caring-treat them as young adults, not just as students.”

“Bring culture into instruction. Bring elders in. Use Tlingit phrases.”

“No specific. Individualized for all students. Spend a lot of time on my content for lecture-storytelling. Kids reproduce notes and have choice in the format. I put ‘a lot’ of thought into my storytelling of my lesson.”

“I give them time and show that them I care about their life--Personalization.”

“I focus on relationship, passion and enthusiasm. I have clear expectations and I expect them to focus when they are in my room.”

Effective teachers of Alaska Native students list a variety of content areas that motivate Alaska Native students, such as hands-on activities, sciences, technology, arts, music, world religions, and meaningful social studies projects:

“ They enjoy music, output--they are very social, Math”

“They enjoy technology, Photoshop, computers, and hands-on activities”

“They enjoy Social Studies, technology, art, music, and science”

“They enjoy Biology experiences”

“They enjoy Technical theatre, power tools, hands-on activities and practical skill building.”

Effective teachers say Alaska Native students are motivated with content areas of real life learning and relationships, as well as their culture:

“They like culture. Language and cultural dance”

“They are motivated with real-life content. Something they can see will make a difference.”

“It depends on students. Many are interested in biology. Community action is a must.”

Alaska Native Business and Educational Professionals

The eleventh subgroup interviewed was a small group of Alaska Native business and educational professionals who are advocates of education. One Alaska Native businessman said he had encouragement from his parents and he was self-motivated.

Other Alaska Native professionals had others who motivated them to pursue college, mostly with support from their business and math teachers and coaches rather than pursuing a college degree for a content area:

“I was motivated by my math teacher who was also my basketball coach”--

Attorney and university administrator

“My civics teacher motivated me.” --Retired teacher with Master’s degree

“My business administration teacher encouraged me.” --Native organization employee, Elder/speaker

“My shop teacher and basketball coach encouraged me.”--Native organization leader

Alaska Native professional business or educational employees say they were motivated by teaching strategies such as real life and experiential learning that allowed creativity and hands-on, active learning. They were also motivated by being praised and acknowledged:

“I learned from real-life, experiential activities.”

“I was motivated by acknowledgement and praise from teachers.”

“I was motivated with more examples and hands-on activities, rigorous requirements, and teaming in class to learn.”

Significant people who motivated Alaska Native professional business or education employees to pursue college degrees were school district staff such as superintendent/principal, and teachers. One parent and one grandparent were also motivating factors for the professionals.

“My superintendent/principal and basketball coach motivated me.”

“I was motivated by my mother, Gil Truitt (Native teacher/administrator), and a 5th grade teacher”

“I was motivated by my grandfather and my high school English Literature teacher”

A Native professional said an individual and counselor who laughed at him for going to college negatively influenced him. The individual said he wasn't college material and that motivated the Alaska Native to earn his degree.

The interview results show some common findings with Alaska Native students. These students are motivated by teachers that have characteristics of: being nice, being friendly, acknowledge them, embrace various cultures, have a sense of humor, and are fun. Teachers who challenge them, encourage them, and set high expectations motivate them too. Alaska Native students are motivated by teachers who establish a relationship with them, who take time to talk to them, to listen to them and who take time to help them. According to the Alaska Native students, the teaching strategies they learn best from are hands-on activities, small group learning, having choice in lessons, having

examples from teachers and having teachers who take time to explain things. They enjoy teachers who have a passion for that they teach, who know their content well and teach them new things. They appreciate teachers who are rigorous and challenge them, yet encourage them too. PITAS students added they are motivated to learn by teachers who let them play learning games.

Alaska Native teachers and mostly Alaska Native administrators were interviewed, as well as cultural specialists. This group emphasized the importance of building relationships with students in the beginning. They suggested welcoming the students, encouraging them, embracing cultures, and praising students. They encourage making parent contacts, rigorous curriculum, and not letting the students be invisible in the classroom. Strategies to motivate them include hands-on engagement, group learning, and making the curriculum meaningful. Beginning a lesson with background information was suggested too.

Effective teachers interviewed had several common strategies they used to motivate Alaska Native students. They take time to develop a relationship in the beginning by sharing and listening to the students. They are frank with students on their expectations after that relationship is developed. Several teachers felt they treat all students the same. Some said they give more wait time, have heart to heart talks, and some sit side by side with instruction if the student needs extra help. Effective teachers also motivate Alaska Native students by embracing their culture, understand and accommodate to the various learning styles, and they make curriculum relevant and real life like for student success. Several also say they make it fun. If the student is having fun, they are motivated.

I also interviewed a few Alaska Native business professionals as to who motivated them in school. Most of the professionals were motivated by teachers and coaches. One professional man was encouraged in school by his parents. Strategies that motivated them with learning were hands-on learning and active learning where they were each engaged in activity. People who motivated Alaska Native business professionals were school district staff, such as a superintendent/principal, and teachers.

All SACNAS students were motivated to pursue college and value education from family members, primarily their mother on all that were interviewed. A science or math instructor and sometimes a high school counselor motivated them too. Teaching strategies that motivated them in school were hands-on labs, active learning with songs, rigorous attention to detail, higher level thinking, science inquiry, traditional teaching, and homework routines.

The extensive interviews were extremely valuable in seeing common themes from students and teachers for effective ways to motivate Alaska Native students. It is easy to read and research effective methods and strategies for motivating students, but to hear numerous students firsthand and to hear common themes from experienced teachers and administrators proved to verify what motivates Alaska Native student success. The most obvious motivation for Alaska Native students is the relationship with their teachers. This was apparent when interviewing the students, the effective teachers, Alaska Native administrators, cultural specialists, graduate students and Alaska Native business professionals. Key strategies that motivated students were hands-on activities, small group learning, having visual examples, being given examples and having them explained to students, getting extra help, and having choices. Students were motivated by

teachers who were rigorous, who pushed them, who were nice, who were fun, who were passionate and who knew the content of what they taught.

Effective teachers and administrators acknowledged many of the same themes the students named. It may seem like obvious information, especially to teachers that use these strategies, but not all teachers do use them. Hopefully, this research can give a few ideas to help teachers motivate Alaska Native students.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to find ways to motivate Alaska Native middle school and high school students so they can have successful learning experiences in school. Research and statistics continue to show the declining success rate of Alaska Native students in our public school systems. In order for teachers, educational leaders, parents and communities to better understand how to make Alaska Native/American Indian students in middle school and high school have a successful educational experience, they need to know what makes students feel successful and they need to know what motivates the Alaska Native/American Indian students in school.

With this gathered evidence, we will better understand what teachers do to motivate Alaska Native/American Indian students, and other students as well. We will discover from students, first hand, what strategies work to motivate them and what teachers do to encourage them in middle school and high school. We will also hear from teachers what they have “in their bag of tricks” to encourage and engage Alaska Native/American Indian students in their classes.

This study involved exhaustive educational research and interviews over a period of nearly one year. The interviews were with students, successful teachers, Alaska Native teachers, administrators, Alaska Native/American Indian and minority graduate students, and Alaska Native business professionals.

Results presented here show us what Alaska Native students and effective teachers have to say support the research findings with Alaska Native student motivation and success.

There are several common findings in both the research and the interviews. These findings are that teachers need to build relationships with students, that there are identifiable strategies to motivate them, that participant structures are important, and that curriculum adaptations to make learning meaningful and real must be made.

The first and most obvious finding found in both the interviews and the research is that teachers building relationships with students in the beginning of the year and continuing to nurture the relationship by listening, sharing, encouraging, giving extra help, being fun and being a real person is important. Students are perceptive and know if a teacher is nice, real, and caring. Teachers create such impressions on students and students are very sensitive to how they are treated. It was apparent in the interviews and the research results from the University of Minnesota study. Alaska Native students can be motivated by the simplest communication and feedback from their teachers.

Another common finding between the interviews and the research is the strategies teachers used to motivate Alaska Native students. These strategies are mainly cooperative learning activities, hands-on activities, giving choices, and accommodating different learning styles with visual examples. Some effective teachers, who acknowledged differences in teaching Alaska Native students say they work side-by-side with the students, listen to and help the students. Some say they speak in a gentle voice to them. Some say they allow 'wait time' when asking questions in the class and give all students time to process their answer. Alaska Native students benefit from teachers who explain things, who give examples and who push, challenge, and encourage them.

Lastly, students appreciate curriculum that integrates cultural knowledge in the classroom with all cultures. They not only are interested in their own culture, but appreciate learning about other cultures as well.

Participant structures, such as one on one work and smaller learning groups, are the preferred methods of learning for Alaska Native students. These two methods of participant structure allow for relationship building with teachers and peers. It was the method used with traditional learning for Alaska Natives.

Effective teachers and students had some similar beliefs. Some effective teachers talked about teaching life lessons outside of the content area they teach. Real life situation learning and learning about their environment motivate Alaska Native students. If curriculum relates to them, they are motivated and if they are motivated, they learn.

From the evidence gathered in this study, Relationships are the key. Alaska Native students need smaller classroom sizes or smaller learning communities to create a more personalized relationship with their teachers and peers. However, not only should there be structural changes to encourage small group learning and relationship building opportunities, but effective teachers of Alaska Native students have several common strategies that are truly effective in motivating students.

Teaching practices should be self-assessed and then adapted with strategies we now know are effective and lead towards Alaska Native student success. Using these strategies will produce positive end results towards motivating Alaska Native students in middle school and high school.

Clearly, addressing the challenges with success of Alaska Native students are complex and varied. The challenges stretch beyond the scope of addressing only

teaching practices and structural changes. This study was restricted to only looking at motivation. The research shows that teachers can greatly influence and have an impact on student success and resilience of students. By being aware of the motivating factors and effective practices, teachers can be a significant person that motivates and influences Alaska Native students in their education.

I See Them

*Here they are.
In my classroom.
Some wear masks and costumes,
But underneath, they are the same.
They want to learn.
They've done their part,
They've come to school.
Now it's my turn.
I need to evaluate my Plan...
To welcome them,
To make them visible,
To celebrate their cultures,
To sit beside them,
To talk to them,
To listen to them,
To encourage them,
To support them,
To push them,
To make learning fun,
To show my passion,
To help them leave their baggage at the door
And make school a positive experience,
The best part of their day.*

*I want them back and they want to come back.
I See Them.
No ghosts slipping through the cracks,
No whispers,
No bangs.
Here they are.
In my classroom,
Here and now.*

(A.Jones, 2006)

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Appendix

Interview Questions

Questions posed to students:

- 5) What content do you like in school and why?
- 6) What middle school teacher(s) are you motivated to learn from and why?
- 7) What high school teacher(s) are you motivated to learn from and why?
- 8) What class are you motivated to go to and what makes you motivated with it?
- 9) How do you learn best? (What teacher strategies have you noticed work for you?)

Questions posed to teachers:

- 6) What do you think you do that motivates students to come to your class?
- 7) What do you do to motivate at risk students in your class?
- 8) What do you do to motivate Native students in your class?
- 9) What strategies work best for Native students that you use?
- 10) What content interests Native students?

Questions for administrators/counselor/staff interview:

- 5) What do you think you did that motivated students to come to your class?
- 6) What did you do to motivate at risk students in your class?
- 7) What did you do to motivate Native students in your class?
- 8) What strategies worked best for Native students that you used?
- 5) What content interests Native students?

Questions for graduate students:

- 4) What three people in your life motivated you to value education and pursue a college education?
- 5) Was it the content (or subject) in middle school/high school or your teacher that motivated you to pursue college?
- 6) What teaching strategies did teachers do that connected you or helped you in school?