

Ayaprun Elitnaurvik

Bethel's Yup'ik Language Immersion Charter School

PARENT HANDBOOK

Updated August 2021



**Lower Kuskokwim School
District
Ayaprun Elitnaurvik**

PO Box 1468 Bethel Alaska 99559

AYAPRUN ELITNAURVIK PARENT AGREEMENT

We, the community of Ayaprun Elitnaurvik, believe and agree that:

- The success of a student comes from having strong parental involvement and support.
- Second language learning improves a child's understanding and appreciation of his/her first language.
- Preparation for college and many careers is enhanced through second language acquisition.
- Knowledge of a second language promotes cross-cultural understanding, and mutual respect.

The Yugtun language can only be preserved if our children learn to speak, read, and write it fluently and pass it on to the next generation.

== Mission, Beliefs, Goals ==

Ayaprun Elitnaurvigmi elluarrluta Yugtun qaneryaram tungiinun elitnauriciqukut: ellaturivkarluki, taikanivkarluki Yugtun piciryaraput, qaneryaraput, yuuyaraput-llu.

We, the community of Ayaprun Elitnaurvik, will strive to provide a high quality Yugtun immersion education: empowering our diverse students by strengthening their knowledge, use, and understanding of Yup'ik core values, language, and culture.

Our Goals include the following: To provide the benefits of proficiency in Yup'ik language and understanding of Yup'ik culture.

- To achieve academic growth and mastery of the regular subject area curricula.
- To provide students with communicative competence in speaking, reading, and writing in Yugtun as well as English, appropriate to their level of language development.
- To enable students to have expanded educational and career opportunities.
- To foster in students high levels of motivation, achievement, self-confidence and mutual respect.
 - To help preserve the Yugtun language

Parent's Pledge

As a parent, I pledge to:

Participate in my children's education by supervising and making sure my children complete and turn in their homework on time, talking with my children about school, and volunteering.

Accept my children for who they are. I will try to nurture those qualities that make my child(ren) special.

Read to, or read with my children every day of the year.

Expect the very best from my children at all times as I lead by example.

Never let a day go by without telling my child(ren) each of my children that I love him or her.

Turn off the electronics for homework, reading time, and for family time.

- The Parent Institute

Participation

When a child is enrolled into Ayaprun Elitnaurvik, so are their parents. Ayaprun Elitnaurvik follows Yup'ik values in behavior expectations. We accept responsibility to help each other to achieve our goals and the mission of our school.

As a parent/guardian, I agree to become an active member of Ayaprun Elitnaurvik and to help my child(ren) learn the Yup'ik language, culture, values and traditions.

Please rewrite the above sentence in your own handwriting. Or, Please rewrite the above sentence the way you understand it.

As a parent/guardian,

Parent signature _____ Date _____

AYAPRUN ELITNAURVIK PARENT CONTRACT

The parent(s)/guardian(s) of _____ have read and agree to abide by the following:

WHEREAS, the undersigned parent(s)/guardian(s) has/have made a personal decision to enroll my child(ren) at Ayaprun Elitnaurvik in order to provide my child with a unique educational opportunity to connect with Yup'ik

culture and strengthen the Yup'ik language;

WHEREAS, my desire and decision to enroll my child at Ayaprun Elitnaurvik is based upon my desire to become an active partner in the education of my child; and

WHEREAS, I recognize that Ayaprun Elitnaurvik is a public charter school of choice, not entitlement; NOW THEREFORE, in consideration of the foregoing;

1. As a parent/guardian of a student at Ayaprun Elitnaurvik, my commitment is to abide by the following rules and regulations adopted by the Academic Policy Committee:

Please initial on each line.

- ____ I will recognize and embrace my role as having primary responsibility for the education of my child.
- ____ I will attend my child's classroom orientation meeting at the beginning of each school year, or at time of enrollment if enrollment is midyear.
- ____ I will attend all conferences scheduled with any member of Ayaprun Elitnaurvik staff.
- ____ I will complete the required days of shadowing if needed with my student in the classroom in accordance with the discipline policy plan of action, in lieu of an out of school suspension.
- ____ I will participate in the Parent Volunteer Program, including volunteering at least 1 hour a month either in or out of school in a way that is helpful to the school, and sign the volunteer sheet for evidence of participation.
- ____ I will arrange for my child to be on time for school every day and to be picked-up from school on time.
- ____ I will ensure my child attends school every day except for absences that are excused, and I understand that three unexcused absences in one semester may result in my child being withdrawn from the program. I agree to notify the school as soon as I know my child is going to miss school.

- ____ I will supply a healthy lunch, either brown bagged or school lunch from Ayaprun Elitnaurvik, each school day for my child.
 - ____ I will be responsible for timely payment of any applicable fees accrued to my account at Ayaprun Elitnaurvik.
 - ____ I will provide a suitable time and place within the home for homework, and make sure my child completes and returns their homework to school daily. I understand that there is a minimum requirement of 1 hour of homework each night.
2. In order to enhance my child's academic growth, I agree to do the following:
- a. To read and use information sent home by the school that is meant to keep parents informed of special events, and the academic topics to be introduced and studied in the classroom
 - b. To promote the use of the Yup'ik language at home, at work, and in the community.
 - c. To provide a suitable time and place within the home for homework, and make sure my child completes and returns their homework to school daily. I understand there is a minimum requirement of 1 hour of homework each night.
 - d. To allow for thirty minutes of reading at home daily.
 - e. To limit television and video games during the week and allow more time for reading, studying, and family time.
 - f. To encourage my child to reach his or her expected academic level with deep commitment and enthusiasm for learning.
3. In the case that the parent(s)/guardian(s) are not fulfilling this contractual agreement the following steps may be taken:
- 1) Parent(s)/guardian(s) meet with the Community-School Coordinator or other school staff and work to meet their parental responsibilities.
 - 2) Parent(s)/guardian(s) meet with the principal to discuss parental responsibilities.
 - 3) Parent(s)/guardian(s) meet with the Academic Policy Committee to

determine corrective action.

I (We) understand that by not fulfilling my contractual obligations to the School and to my child, this may result in my child being suspended, shadowed, or withdrawn and referred to a regular Public School as approved by Ayaprun Elitnaurvik Academic Policy Committee.

(Signature of Parent/Guardian) _____ (Date) _____

(Signature of Parent/Guardian) _____ (Date) _____

(Acknowledged by) _____ (Date) _____

== Acknowledgements ==

Special recognition is reserved for those who have contributed to the development of the Yup'ik Immersion Program. It is impossible to list everyone

who has given their support or participation in promoting and developing the program, yet we wish to extend a heartfelt “Quyanaq-vaa!” to all who have given their time and effort to this project. Their diligence and support have made our program a reality. It would not have happened without them. The following is a list of the organizations that have played a central role.

The Yup’ik Immersion Steering committee
The Bethel Advisory School Board
LKSD department of academic programs
LKSD board of Education
Parents of Ayaprun Elitnaurvik
Supporters of Yup’ik language programs
AVCP Inc
Calista elders Council

== Program Description ==

Student Enrollment and Classroom Assignment

Admission/Enrollment

In order for a student to be admitted to the Yup'ik Immersion School the parent(s) must do the following:

- attend an orientation meeting.
- visit a class in order to determine that the Immersion School is appropriate for their child.
- Participate in a minimum of one class or school event each year.

Lottery

There will be open enrollment until class size limits are met in Kindergarten through the first semester of first grade. Should it become necessary to implement a waiting list then students will be selected for admission to Ayaprun Elitnaurvik by lottery before the 15th of May. Students not selected by lottery will be placed on the waiting list and offered admission as space becomes available based on their placement in the lottery.

Older Grade Enrollment

From the second semester of first grade through 8th grade, applicants must apply and be assessed in order to determine a successful transition into the the Yup'ik Immersion program. The assessment is based on three parts, Yup'ik Language Proficiency, Cultural and substance knowledge and lifestyle, previous school experience.

Facility

Ayaprun Elitnaurvik is currently housed in the Kipusvik Building until a new school building can be built.

School Hours

7:30 AM School doors opens. Students are supervised from 7:30-8:25 in the main lobby area. Breakfast is served when students arrive. If children are dropped off earlier than 7:30 AM, there will be no supervision. Keep the weather conditions in mind, and make sure your child is adequately dressed for the weather conditions.

Normally students at Ayaprun gather first thing in the morning in the main meeting area for daily yuuyaraq to talk about upcoming events, value of the week, birthdays, yuuyaraq recital, etc. This is on hold until Covid protocols are changed.

Attendance at School

Excused Absences

The Superintendent or designee may excuse student absences for health reasons, family emergencies or other reasons the Superintendent or designee determines constitute good cause.

Student absence for religious instruction or participation in religious exercises away from school property may be excused. No student excused for a religious holiday(s) shall be denied the opportunity to make up a test given on the religious holiday or be denied an award or eligibility to compete for an award.

Pre-arranged Absences

When students contemplate absence for personal reasons, their parents/guardians shall write the site administrator to ask that the expected absence be excused. (If no written request is received, the absence will be considered unexcused.) The site administrator or designee may deny the request if he/she believes that the absence would be educationally harmful to the student or set a poor example in matters of school attendance for the student or other students. If the request is denied, reasons will be given.

Tardiness

Students in grades kindergarten through sixth who come late to school within the first 59 minutes of the start of morning and afternoon classes are considered

tardy. Being late more than 60 minutes in either morning (1/2 day) or afternoon (1/2 day) class sessions will be considered an absence.

Late Start or School Cancellation

Occasionally we have a bad weather day when school must be cancelled or postponed. Per Advisory School Board, Bethel Schools will be closed when the ambient temperature or wind chill reaches the range where students are in danger of frostbite within seven minutes. Schools may be closed due to other weather conditions such as, but not limited to, high winds, poor visibility, or icy roads.

In some cases, school may start as late as 10:00. In the case of a late start, dismissal times will not be changed. Radio announcements are made as early as possible on closure and late start days. If in doubt, call the school. Weather closure will be made up at the end of the school year.

Language Acquisition and Cultural Education

Experts who study second language learning and immersion programs distinguish between language learning and language acquisition. Acquisition and learning are two very distinct ways of developing knowledge and skills in a second language. Basically, *acquisition* means “picking up” a language through the natural process of using it in everyday situations that require communication, whereas language *learning* involves developing a conscious knowledge of grammatical and other formal “rules.” The difference is between *using* language for meaningful social and academic purposes instead of *talking about* language.

Though both forms of developing understanding of a language are important and have their place, comparative studies of second language acquisition programs and second language learning programs consistently show that acquisition-centered programs are far more effective in developing actual communicative competence in second languages than are programs that emphasize formal language learning. There are many aspects of explanation for this, but the most basic is that the more natural language acquisition approach organizes classroom activities around curricular topics of interest to the children rather than focusing on the teaching of the language itself. The emphasis is on teaching the usual curriculum subject matter using the second language in a language-rich and emotionally supportive environment. The bibliography section lists sources of more information on language acquisition. (See especially Krashen and Terrell.)

Language immersion programs have three primary goals:

- Develop mastery in both a different language and the standard curriculum
- Acquire the cultural knowledge without which knowledge of the target language is incomplete. There are many situations in which

- proper use of language is determined by cultural context.
- Incorporate cultural objectives into the overall plan, and include many cultural materials and activities in the program.

Teaching Methods

Our immersion teachers utilize what is known as the Natural Approach to language acquisition, which makes use of the same kinds of processes everyone goes through in learning their first language. This approach is in contrast to the language lab and textbook-oriented audiolingual and grammar-translation methods of language learning often used with older students and adults, which are beyond both the comprehension and patience of young children. The Natural Approach emphasizes real communication for practical purposes in which the focus is on the learning activities involved, not primarily on the language, so that students indirectly acquire linguistic understanding through direct involvement in learning and play activities that are meaningful to them. Grammar study is introduced only in the later grades when students have acquired sufficient competence in Yup'ik and are ready for this sort of analysis. Visits to the immersion classrooms will provide firsthand understanding of the Natural Approach in operation. For those interested in knowing more about language acquisition techniques, including theory and research, a list of Resources for Parents and a Bibliography are provided in this handbook.

Student Evaluation

The schedule, process, and criteria for evaluation of students in the Yup'ik Immersion program are the same as for non-immersion students. Students receive a quarterly report card with evaluation on effort and achievement in the usual subjects showing what standard and the phase that has been met on the continuum, as well as in social skills and language development. Grading is as follows: A, B, C, and F or E (excellent), S (satisfactory), N (needs improvement), and U (unsatisfactory)

To provide more detailed information and facilitate parental input, formal parent-teacher conferences are scheduled following the first and third quarters, and additional conferences may be initiated by either parents, teachers, or the administrator. Parents are always encouraged to contact their child's teacher to schedule an appointment when they have questions, concerns or information to provide regarding any aspect of their child's effort, behavior or progress.

Visitation

It is extremely important that parents of students enrolled in the immersion program be well informed about its goals and methods. This handbook provides a foundation for this knowledge. It is equally important that parents be involved with the program at various levels. One essential way to become both more knowledgeable and involved is to visit your child's classroom during the school day, and all parents are strongly encouraged to make whatever arrangements may be necessary to visit at least once each semester.

===Means of Communication===

We have an open door policy and the more you come the more you can assist and support our school. We love to see parents and welcome input on ways to help our school do better.

Newsletters

A monthly parent letter will be sent home from the secretary. The letter will also be posted on the school website and facebook. Teacher newsletters will also be sent home by the students' classroom teachers.

Phone

Call the office at 543-1465 to leave messages with the office during school session for least disruption to the student learning. Emergency messages will be forwarded to the classrooms. Teachers are available between 8-8:30 and 3:30-4 PM at school.

Email

All staff members have emails as well. All email accounts are firstname_lastname@lksd.org.

Website

Our school has a website: ayaprun.lksd.org Check out the events, daily bulletin, photos, etc. Newsletters and homework are posted on the web.

Notes Needed

If your child has any specific medical needs, a note must be sent to the teacher. If there is a transportation change, a note is also needed to avoid

confusion. The teachers have many students to keep track of, so try to avoid last minute changes. Consistency is vital.

== Parent Involvement ==

Commitment on the part of parents is critical to the success of any language immersion program. Your active interest and support will greatly influence your child's success; you must be an *advocate* of the program with your child. Parents must understand how the program works, support its goals, and make a *long term commitment* to their child's participation, as it takes years for children to develop near-native fluency in a second language. We thus strongly encourage parents to take an active part in the Yup'ik Immersion Program. The results will be well worth the effort. Following, then, are several areas in which you can contribute to your child's success.

At School, parents may contribute to both the program's and their child's success by volunteering and making sure your child is in school daily. Volunteers may serve either during the school day or otherwise. Opportunities for volunteers will be announced and coordinated by the Volunteer Coordinator. Examples of ways parents can be involved at school include making and/or duplicating materials for classroom use; helping a teacher with a group activity (like chaperoning a field trip); demonstrating arts, crafts, or cultural skills such as cutting fish or meat; bringing in game for students to prepare (prepared game meat will be returned to its provider unless other arrangements are made); assisting with potlucks, and visiting to observe class activities. Following are a few handy hints:

- Attend the Academic Policy Committee meetings. This meeting is essential for parents because much helpful information will be provided and many questions will be answered. Parents should also attend as many parent meetings and other immersion activities as possible. The following parent meetings regarding these activities will be mandatory: promotion, school trips, sports activities.
- Show your child your interest and concern for her or his achievement by scheduling class visits and other involvement activities for yourself and

by talking with his or her teacher. Visits and activities will also help you get to know your child's teacher and become more knowledgeable about the immersion program. Parents are asked to please be patient and understanding during this critical adjustment period and, of course, meetings with teachers may still be arranged during these initial weeks. Daily attendance for your child is very crucial to your child's learning. Become a class parent representative

- During visits, please respect the program's policy of teachers speaking only Yugtun when students are present (for reasons explained in this Handbook). Any conversations with teachers not in Yup'ik will have to be held when students are not present or notes written on paper.
- Ask your child's teacher how you might help with preparing materials, assisting in classroom or outdoor activities, sharing traditional knowledge, storytelling, demonstrating an art or craft, etc.
- Each homeroom is expected to have class parents. The class parents will call parents or email to let you know if volunteers or events are happening in your class. If you have not signed up for the phone tree, call your child's teacher to get on that list. This will help you stay informed. If you are interested in being a class parent, contact your child's teacher.
- All parents of sixth graders are required to coordinate the promotion of the sixth grade class using the traditional "first dance" model. This is not the teachers' responsibility.

At home, parents can encourage their child by following a few basic guidelines:

- Encourage your child by letting him or her know how proud you are that he or she is learning Yup'ik. Compliment his or her progress.
- Do not attempt to correct your child's pronunciation, expressions or grammar if you are not certain of this yourself. Most errors will self-correct with sufficient experience, and in any case indirect "correction" through modeling is more effective.
- Be patient! *Don't expect* your child to be speaking much Yup'ik after the first few days, weeks, or even months, and never force them to do so. Children will not speak until they have internalized a sufficient amount of

language structure and content, and they will do so at their own individual pace.

- Do not ask your child to translate. Primary age children do not understand this concept very well, and translation is difficult until considerable language has been acquired.
- If possible, promote Yup'ik language and culture at home by speaking Yup'ik with your child, reading and telling Yup'ik stories, doing traditional arts and crafts, and viewing videos produced in Yup'ik or with Yup'ik cultural content. Recruit grandparents or other relatives or friends to help with these. These exercises are also important in the English language.
- If you have a bilingual home, use both languages. There is research to support academic achievement where each parent consistently models a different language. Remember: Do not mix English and Yup'ik in the same sentence, or put Yup'ik endings on English words. Whether you speak Yup'ik or English to your child, do so in complete, grammatically correct sentences.
- Resist the temptation to compare your child's progress to that of other children. At any given time, children with different teachers may be learning somewhat different things, and no two children in the same classroom will always learn exactly the same things at the same time.

Developmental readiness among any group of young children varies greatly.

- Make a daily habit of talking with your child about what they did at school. When they don't have much to say, try asking a few specific questions, such as, "What did you like most about school today?" or "What did you do that was really fun?"
- Make sure your child does homework. Research has shown doing homework helps a child progress.
- Above all, be supportive and encouraging. This will be especially important if your child expresses frustration or dislike of the program. Adjustment to both school and a new language will take time. The important thing is that you let your child know that *you* are determined that she or he should stick with it and do their best. If difficulties persist, you should discuss this with your child's teacher.

In the Community parents of children in the immersion program will always be looked upon as ambassadors of the program. Thus parents should become informed of the program's purpose and goals, how immersion programs operate, the benefits of being bilingual, and they should keep up-to-date on program activities and developments. There will be many opportunities to share information with others who will be curious about immersion, what you think of it, how your child is doing, and so on. Parents can also give further support to their child's success by taking advantage of the many opportunities to expose them to Yup'ik language and cultural events in Bethel, while visiting in villages, at fish camp, berry picking, etc.

An Immersion Academic Policy Committee meets monthly and coordinates parent involvement activities and is the policy-making committee for Ayaprun Elitnaurvik. This committee is composed of parents, teachers, elders, and the principals. Parents interested in volunteering to serve on the Immersion Academic Policy Committee should contact the Ayaprun Elitnaurvik office for information. Meeting information is also included in weekly classroom bulletins.

== History of Immersion Education in LKSD ==

Early 1970's: Kilbuck Elementary in Bethel had a half-day "bilingual kindergarten" for parents who wanted their children taught all in Yup'ik . It arose because of parent interest and the request: "How about making the afternoon class one taught in Yup'ik?" This continued for three years, but did not survive the changes in the school system.

Mid-1980s: Concern among Bethel parents led to the establishment of a community committee appointed by the Bethel Advisory School Board. This committee formally requested that:

- Bethel schools improve their Yup'ik language programs
- The number of hours per week for Yugtun instruction be increased
- Yup'ik language instruction be made a required subject for K-6

1990: A bilingual education task force was created to assess how Yugtun was being taught and made specific recommendations to strengthen the program. The task force presented the ASB with a formal request that a total immersion Yup'ik

language program be started in Bethel. The report was accepted by the ASB but no action was taken.

1992: A Group of Kuskokwim Campus instructors, parents, and elders began meeting regularly sharing information on how Eskimo languages are used in the schools of Russia, Alaska, Canada and Greenland. They talked about how local languages and cultures were being supported in some of these schools, while in others the overall effect of schooling was having a negative impact on local language, culture and self- identity. After much discussion, including local radio and TV news, this group of Bethel community members again approached the ASB and formally requested that an immersion education program be started. Although the board chose to take no action, the principal at Mikelnguut Elitnaurviat did send a questionnaire to parents and over 40% of the M.E. School parents specifically asked for a total immersion Yup'ik program.

1994: Members of the Bethel ASB, including some who had participated actively in the earlier work groups, introduced a formal resolution to establish a Yup'ik immersion program in Bethel in 1995. After much debate – and especially after a large amount of direct parental requests of the ASB – **the resolution was passed!**

1994-95: Parents and the LKSD Bilingual Department worked at getting ready for the very first Yup'ik language immersion program ever. The parents' Yup'ik Immersion Steering Committee met monthly and then weekly with the LKSD Curriculum Bilingual Department (Department of Academic Programs) to plan overall features of the new immersion program. In the spring, two Yup'ik Immersion Kindergarten teachers were hired for the following school year and over the summer they joined with the Mikelnguut Elitnaurviat site administrator in preparing for the opening of school.

Spring of 1999: Yup'ik Immersion Steering Committee successfully applied for Charter School Status from the Alaska Board of Education. The focus of the application was to provide for comprehensive Yup'ik program autonomy, consolidate under one administration and secure associated charter grants to fund Yup'ik language material development. Parents, teachers, and administration work collaboratively on the planning and implementation of our program.

Spring of 2002: The school saw its first sixth grade graduation. These students

were the first full time enrollees in the then pilot immersion program. We now have annual graduation for our sixth grade classes. Between 1995-2001, the Yup'ik Immersion program expanded one grade level at a time. In 1997-98, the second grade students moved to Kilbuck and were consolidated into one classroom, but the K-1 program remained at M.E. In 2001-2002, the first full K-6 program had an enrollment of 198 students. The school has been noticed by other school districts statewide. Educators and distinguished visitors from various organizations and US Department of Education continue to visit our school. Our immersion school has worked collaboratively with many schools in Alaska (e.g. Lower Yukon, Kashunamiut, Kotzebue). They visited Bethel to observe and make plans for their own indigenous language immersion programs. We've also had visitors from the media from both Bethel and Anchorage.

== Alaska World Language Standards ==

Standard One

A student should be able to communicate in two or more languages, one of which is English.

Standard Two

A student should expand the student's knowledge of peoples and cultures through language study.

Standard Three

A student should possess the language skills and cultural knowledge necessary to participate successfully in multilingual communities and the international marketplace.

== What To Expect/Common Questions ==

Those of us who are interested in language immersion education - either as administrators and teachers, or as parents who are considering enrolling their child in an immersion program - quite naturally want to know as much as possible regarding immersion education. We hope that the questions and answers that follow will address the most common of these concerns. Please feel free to contact any of the persons listed under Resources for Parents to further discuss these or any other questions you may have.

1. What is a language immersion program?

Language immersion is a method of second (or third, etc.) language instruction

that makes use of the language being taught, the “target language,” to teach the regular school curriculum as well as cultural values and traditions within **the context of cultural activities**. In other words, the target language, in our case Yup’ik, is not itself the subject of instruction but serves as the vehicle for teaching of the standard subject matter. In a total immersion program such as ours, all instruction during the first several years (grades K-2), including reading and language arts, is conducted in the target language. English reading/language arts are then introduced in Third Grade (50% in grades 3-6).

2. What are the goals of an immersion program?

Immersion programs share four common goals:

- to develop a high level of proficiency in understanding, speaking, reading and writing the target language;
- to meet the content area learning objectives of the regular curriculum;
- to develop English language skills on par with non-immersion students; and
- to develop positive attitudes toward those who speak the target language and their culture

3. What is the curriculum?

The curriculum is the same as for the non-immersion LKSD programs, which align with the Alaska State Standards.

4. What if my child needs help?

If your child needs assistance beyond what the regular classroom teacher can provide, there are Special Education Services offered through the LKSD Special Education Department.

5. What effect does immersion have on development of English literacy and subject matter mastery?

Considerable research over several decades confirms that literacy skills developed in the target language transfer to English. Studies comparing first language development in immersion and non-immersion students consistently show that fluent speakers of the first language students in early immersion programs perform as well as, or better than, their non-immersion peers on tests of English verbal and mathematical skills. Until English language arts are introduced, total immersion students usually experience a “lag” in English spelling, punctuation, and other language mechanics, though curiously they tend to do well on measures of English reading comprehension. This lag

disappears within a year or so following introduction of English into the program, and immersion students then perform as well as or better than their non-immersion peers on tests, including English language arts and reading. In the long run, learning a second language strengthens rather than weakens students' first language.

6. Is any English used in the Yup'ik immersion classroom?

Not by the Yup'ik classroom teachers. The two most important reasons for this concern the process of language acquisition. First, children will internalize language best when they are exposed to a steady diet of meaningful input, and second, when teachers fall back on using English, students may become insufficiently motivated to learn Yup'ik because they can rely on explanations in English. Students, of course, will speak in English initially, and will be gently encouraged to move into speaking Yup'ik as their competence and confidence grows.

7. What if no one at home speaks Yup'ik?

Most immersion programs are intended for children from families in which the target language is not spoken, so you should not be concerned if it is not possible to speak Yup'ik at home. Communication with teachers can be in either Yup'ik or English, and messages from school and report cards will be bilingual.

8. When will my child start speaking Yup'ik?

This will depend on several factors that vary considerably between children, including their past and present exposure to Yup'ik outside of school, developmental readiness, and classroom participation. By May, some kindergartners will be speaking Yup'ik to varying extents while others will be speaking little or not at all on their own. Just as children began crawling, walking and speaking at different ages, self-initiated speech in Yup'ik will emerge naturally when each child is ready. With young children, parents should resist the temptation to compare their child's development with that of other children. Differences in language development will tend to even out over the years.

9. What dialect will my child learn?

The Yup'ik language in present day Bethel includes a variety of Yup'ik dialects. Our immersion program is designed to provide a solid base of Yup'ik

language from which children will naturally elaborate their own dialect development incorporating dialect influences from home and the community. If you have a traditional dialect which you speak you are strongly encouraged to speak it with your child at home, around town, and when visiting the school. In the immersion program, the teachers, aides and elders will be showing by example that they value and respect dialect differences; children will never be discouraged from using their own families' ways of speaking Yup'ik.

10. What can parents do to help their child be successful?

If you have taken the step of enrolling your child in the Yup'ik Immersion Program, you will quite naturally want to know how you can help ensure your child's success. Please read on in the section on Parent Involvement.

Comments and Suggestions

We want to hear from parents and others in the community. Please visit with your child's teacher or the principal if you have any suggestions that will improve our school.

When Problems Occur

We will make every effort to resolve any problems as quickly as possible. Parents should contact the person closest to the problem. In most cases, it is your child's teacher. If you feel you have exhausted all your possibilities or are not satisfied with the result, come see the principal for assistance.