

Schools - Developmental Session Summary

Ferlin Clark

Lower Kuskokwim School District

Duane Magoon described the programs at Lower Kuskokwim School District in southwest Alaska. The district has about 3,000 students. Almost everyone is fluent or has a Yup'ik speaker at home. The district has a population of 17,000 with about 14,000 Yup'ik speakers. Most children come to school speaking Yup'ik. However, people are becoming aware of the decrease in fluency.

Currently, Yup'ik, and English language assessment instruments have been devised and are being implemented. Bilingual activities include co-publishing books with a Canadian publisher printed in Native languages with northern themes. Plans are being made to bring in elders this summer to co-develop these books and other learning materials using culturally-sensitive themes and materials. About one-third of the teachers speak Yup'ik. There is a need for more Yup'ik teachers. An Immersion Program for kindergarten is being planned for this summer, but the question comes down to materials, dialect, etc.

Alice Fitka, "One Who Scolds," is a kindergarten and 3rd grade teacher. Her village has 300-400 inhabitants. "I am in a Two Strand Language School," she said. "Yup'ik is either taught as a first or second language. In grades 3-10 Yup'ik is taught for one hour. There is a lack of Yup'ik materials; we have to create our own. We seek elders to tell children the history of Yup'ik lore and myths; since we have an oral history, our culture and language must be passed down through the community."

"We name our kids according to our family and culture. It is one way we maintain Yup'ik. Many of our elders are dying out. Many times I translate English into Yup'ik and vice versa. We use classroom activities such as making a family tree [great grandparents and where they stood in Yup'ik society], writing journals, writing a Yup'ik-language school newspaper, and poems created from genealogy. Kindergarten students learn Yup'ik sounds, numbers, etc. There are not too many Yup'ik speakers in third grade. High school students write seasonal stories on the use of traditional tools such as ivory knives. Elders come and tell stories. I tell stories such as using mud and traditional tools. Researchers say the Yup'ik language will be lost in the next century. Students usually respond by saying that they disagree with researchers who claim this."

"Eskimo and Athapaskan are separate. We have different ways of doing things, we have the same outlook on life taught to us by our elders; it is just that I can not speak to others because they do not understand me and vice versa. Location and distance are also factors that contribute to differences. Students use computers, and we started a computer network. Students use e-mail to write to students in other schools, including students in northern Canada. It used to take two weeks to send and receive mail; now it is quick. Students learn to use computers in 1st or 2nd grade."

Peach Springs Public Schools

Lucille Watahomigie (Hualapai) has worked at Peach Springs Public School since 1970. She worked at Arizona State University in teacher training and developed the basis for a bilingual curriculum at Peach Springs. She is now federal programs director at Peach Springs. The school tries to hire people who speak Hualapai. In 1975, 95% of students spoke Hualapai; now as parents why don't they speak and teach Hualapai to their children? Several factors are involved, going back four generations. In the past the Hualapai had no choice in who taught and what they taught within Hualapai schools. The attitude of the outsiders who ran the schools was "come to save the heathen." Young parents still feel the pain that they experienced. "Even though we now have self-determination, we continue to struggle," said Watahomigie.

The Hualapai Reservation has a population of 900-1200 with 200-300 students. There is an all-Indian school board. They are working to build a high school within the next four years even though some parents did not want it because they want their children to prepare for life beyond the reservation. They continue to teach Hualapai within schools, using local people in the school. Seventy-five percent of parents want the school to teach their native language and culture so as to develop self-esteem, pride, etc. Elders decided that they want language and culture taught in schools by using Hualapai activities, elders, community, etc. Sixty percent of students speak Hualapai. The school uses the teaching of Hualapai to meet the Arizona's mandate that all elementary schools teach a foreign language. According to Watahomigie, "We want our own people to become certified teachers. Four recently graduated and have become teachers. Ten Hualapai speaking teacher aides are working towards their degrees."

Philbert Watahomigie graduated from the University of Arizona and became a teacher and for the last seven or eight years coordinator for Peach Spring's Academic Excellence program. The program is funded from Title VII (Bilingual Education Act) as an outstanding bilingual program. It was nominated by the state bilingual department. He works with his staff on the process of curriculum development. They make extensive use of technology and have developed Hualapai instructional material on HyperCard. They use culturally relevant Hualapai material. They scan published materials into the computer and by using sound within HyperCard, and by using a teacher afterwards, students are able to learn and master the language.

They are half way through a three year grant and are currently helping six other schools develop bilingual curriculum. They are using the English alphabet because they can translate easier, back and forth, without too many special symbols.

In the course of developing a bilingual program, materials and staff development needed to be worked on first in case the federal program funds were discontinued. They started back in 1975, and these priorities were keys to making our program successful.

Awareness Presentations are conducted at schools that are interested in replicating the Peach Springs model. Interested schools sign an agreement that says

Peach Springs will provide training at no cost and the recipient schools will provide staff time off for training. They make four two- or three-day visits per year per site. Some city schools are interested, but these schools have many different native languages to cater to, and some may be left out.

Damon Clarke was a teacher aide at Peach Springs and then a teacher. He received his bachelor's degree at Northern Arizona University (NAU) and is now a doctoral student at NAU.

Curriculum development needs to be centered around the child and the experiences they bring into the classroom. The curriculum should fit the child rather than vice versa. The curriculum should first bring in the home environment, then the community, and finally the physical environment, which is a holistic approach with the child at the center.

Curriculum guides are based on thematic units on subjects such as piñons, the Colorado river, and cowboys that integrate math, science, social studies, and other subjects. By using laser disks, television, distance learning, and journals in which student and teacher interact in Hualapai, the guides are designed to reach each child at his or her own academic level and allow for different rates of learning. Learning is based on students' own trial and error. They learn about other races and nationalities through access to internet and field trips, "the real classroom, the real world." At the beginning of the year teachers select the units and guides they want to use throughout the year. Units and guides are based on the school's goals and objectives, which are reviewed every five years.

American Samoa

Bernadette Manase, Mat Fiamalua, and Elisapeta Luaao gave an historical perspective on teaching the Samoan language in the schools. Educational television was introduced in 1965 to Samoans. Television education was not proper, but by the 1980s the Samoans knew what they wanted to do. They received Federal bilingual funds to develop materials in Samoan based on themes that are consistent with family and communities. Currently materials are being developed for students to use during a summer institute for K-12 grades. The effort to relate the language to music, songs, etc., is important. They are networking with other Samoans, but the challenge is standardizing the Samoan dialects so students in the east can appreciate western speaking Samoans. Students are taught social and traditional ceremonies as authentic as they can be.