





## The Bering Strait School District

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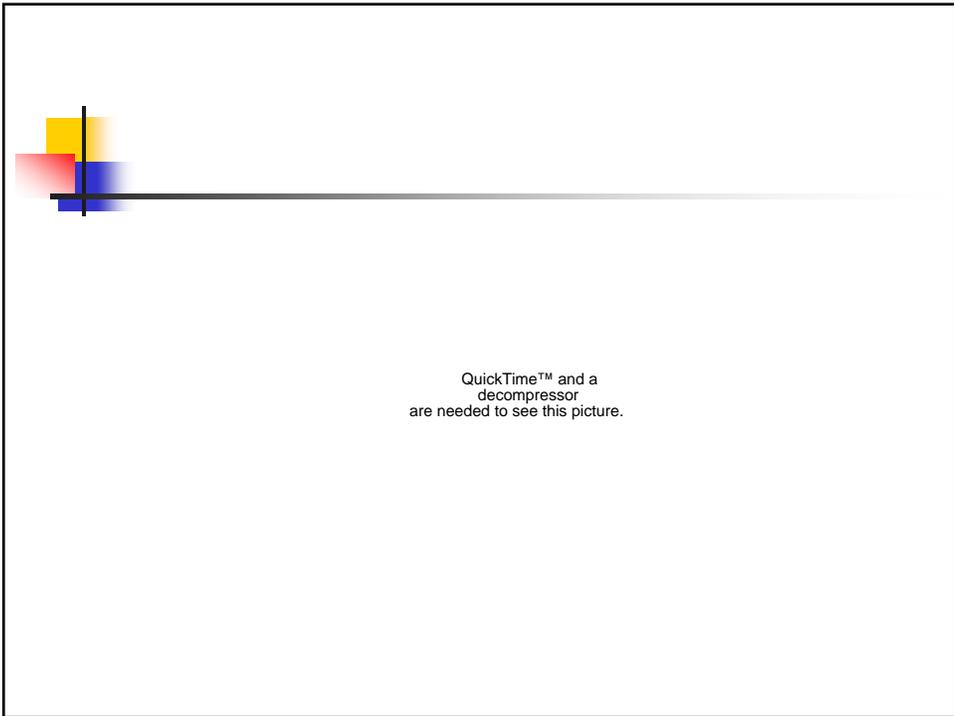
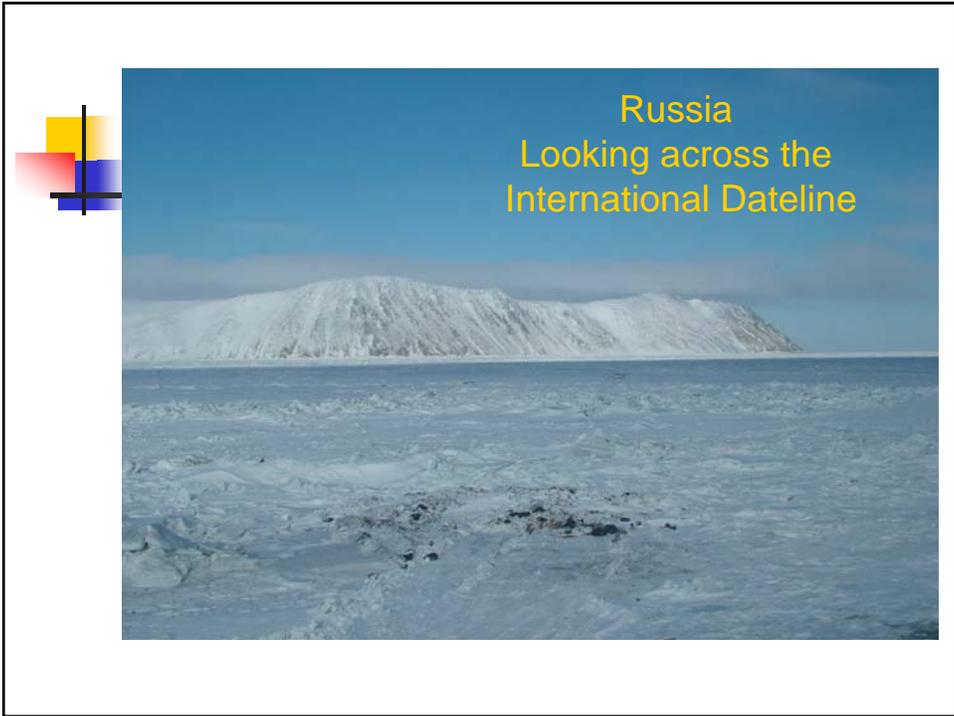
- 400-700 air miles from Anchorage
- Russia and International Dateline
- Arctic Circle on the north
- Yukon River on the east
- It is not connected by road
- District is the size of Minnesota

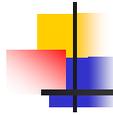


## The Bering Strait School District

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- 15 school sites (k-12)
- 250 professional staff
- 200 support staff
- During the last eight years
  - Building one school a year
  - Building 30 teacher housing units

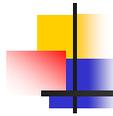




## Quite connected

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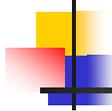
- Satellite television
- Radio
- Internet
- Video-conferencing
- Pizza delivery - *by plane*



## It's People

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- Siberian Yup'ik
- Central Yup'ik
- Inupiat
  - Native language/non-standards English
  - Subsistence hunting and gathering
  - Rural high schools created in 1976-1985



## In 1999 the District...

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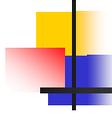
- Community was not clamoring for change
- Staff was not clamoring for change
- Decade long decline in salaries
- Decade long stagnation in funding
- Vocational Ed, Arts and PE eliminated



## The Board was asking why...

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- Their children needed remedial classes in college
- Vocational educations seemed to have disappeared
- What could be done about drop-outs



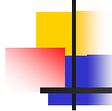
## Educational perceptions...

- Students were happy and attending school
- Students attending post secondary programs
- Teacher turnover was not a problem
- Some concern over drop-out rates
- Testing results were not an issue
- Parents were supportive, ambivalent and some were hostile toward school



## The data...

- Site reading scores ranged from 11% to 70%
- Attendance - as low as 85% in some schools
- Turnover was 35%-40 annually
- Postsecondary completion - low
- Cohort graduation - 50% +/-



## Economically...

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- Low socio-economic
- High unemployment
- Subsistence life-style
- Largest employers
  - Education, health care, governmental & transportation industry



## Our Curriculum

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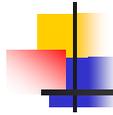
Not well established in spite of much effort

Not well supervised

Not consistently applied

Fragmented

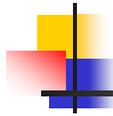
Poor correlation between teacher assessment  
and test data



## Wonderful Teachers

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- All individuals (and taught that way)
- Teach for 2-3 years and move on
- How could we keep teachers?
- Best way was to stop trying



## An “Adult-centric” School

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Age based grade placement  
Letter grades  
Teach what “I” am interested in  
Independent evaluations



## Time

*(counter-culture)*

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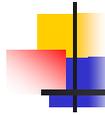
- Delayed gratification
- Live for today
- How to teach when students are not in school?



## *Explaining the Moral Imperative*

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- Be the District's First Teacher
- Need for support
- Need for continuous improvement



## Believing and Dreaming

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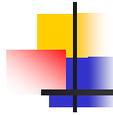
- The most audacious expectation
  - All children can learn
  - We will be responsible
  
- I believe in you
- You can do it
- I am here to help you do it
  - Jon Saphier



## Investigation

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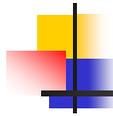
- Who, if anyone, was being successful with like students populations? **RISC**
- What were they doing? **Standards-based**
- Would they share their ideas? **Yes**
- Could we replicate their efforts? **Absolutely, with work**



## Generating Consensus

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- Administrators
- Principals
- Teachers
- Board
- Parents
- Students
- Community



## TEACHING EVERYONE

*building a shared vision*

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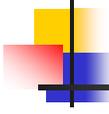
- |                  |                     |
|------------------|---------------------|
| ■ Teachers       | ■ Business Mang     |
| ■ Principals     | ■ Maintenance Staff |
| ■ Central Office | ■ Support Staff     |
| ■ Students       | ■ Community         |
| ■ Parents        |                     |



## Common belief

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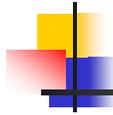
- Our students could learn
- It was our responsibility to teach all children



## Building our own...

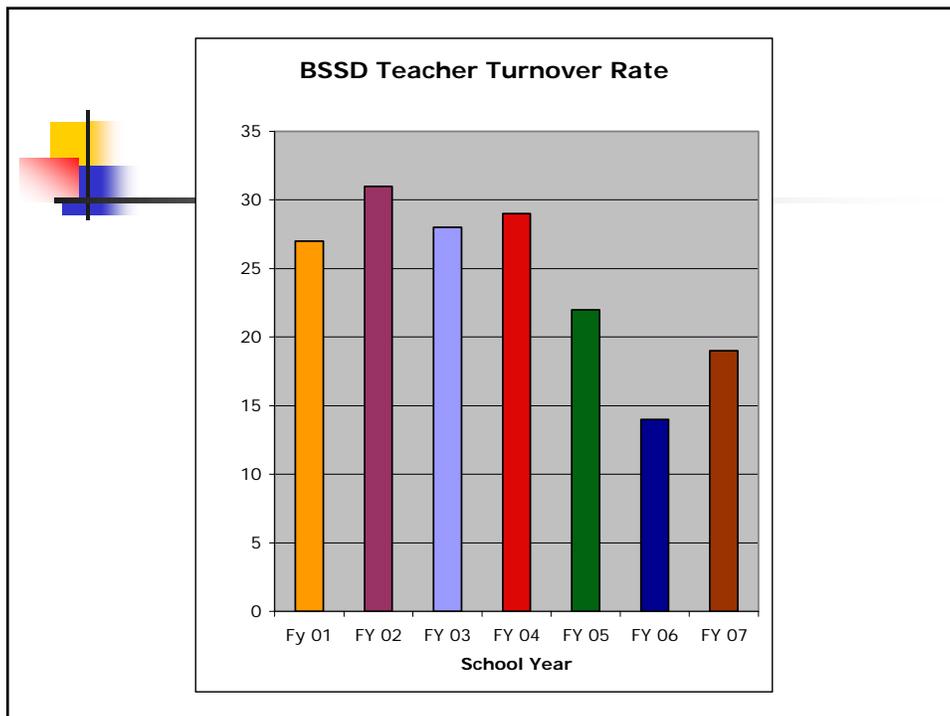
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- Leadership Capacity
- Common Curriculum
- Common Assessment



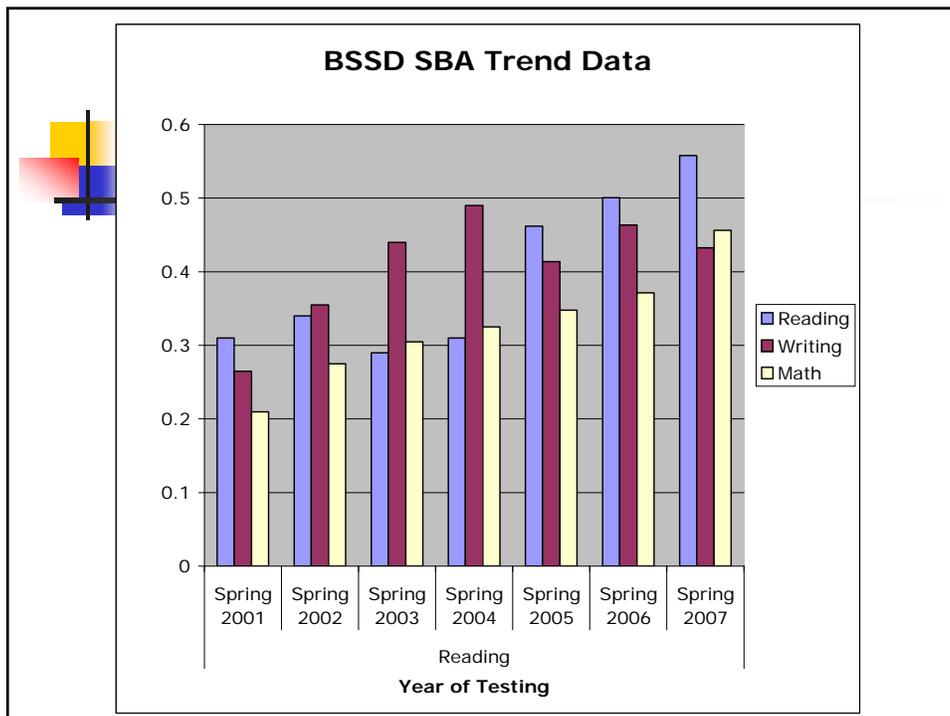
## Teachers

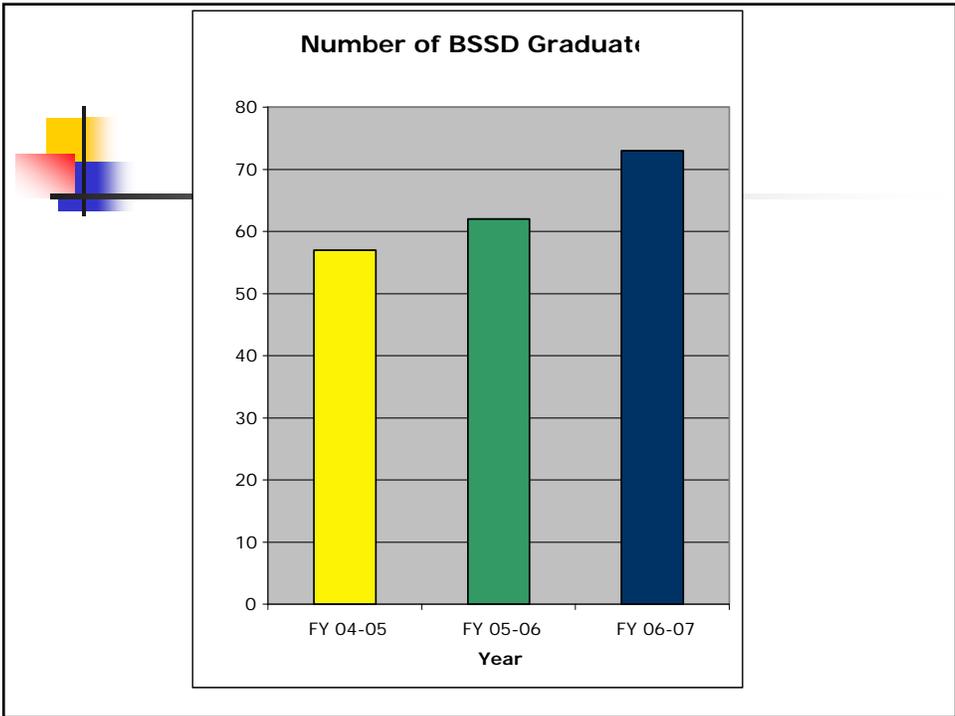
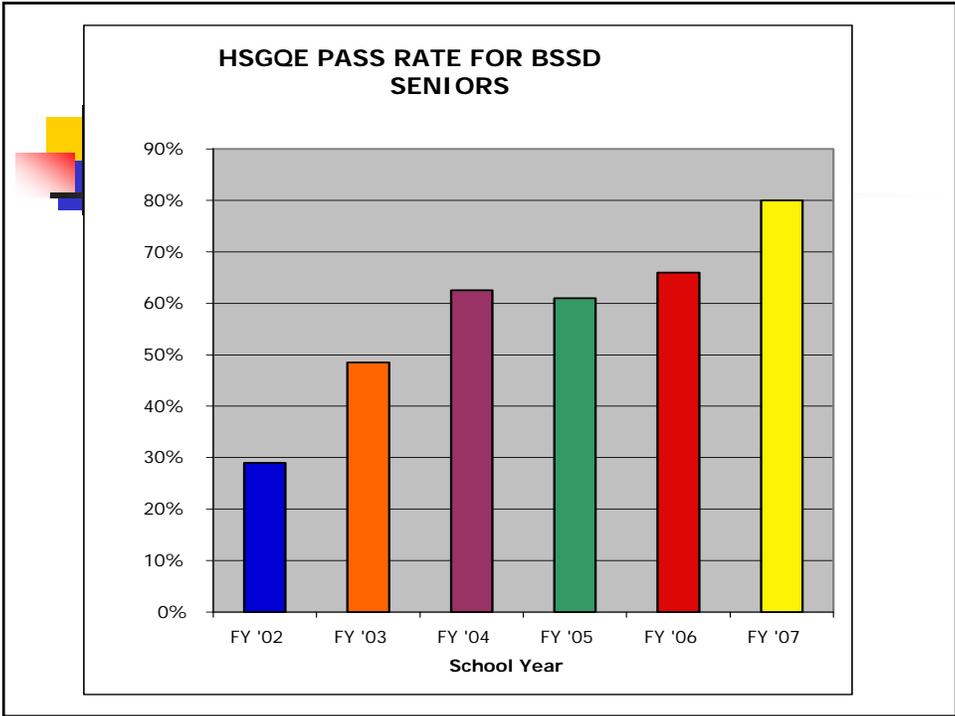
- Turnover
- Teaching what's in the book
- Teaching what is interesting
- Hit or miss staff development
- Teacher focused



## Instructional focus

- Time vs. learning - Learning takes time
- Learning Standards were a community decision - not textbook driven
- Assessments were common and freely available
- Students would be taught at achievement level - not age level





## Analysis and Alignment Standard-Instruction-Assessment

State of Alaska Standards-Based Assessment Results for Bering Strait School District students who demonstrated proficiency on an internally developed and administered pre-assessment.

Grade Level	Percent of Students Scoring Proficient or Higher	Percent of Students Scoring in Sub-Sets			
		Advanced	Proficient	Below Proficient	Not Proficient
3	88.89%	38.89%	50.00%	11.11%	0.00%
4	89.47%	31.58%	57.89%	0.00%	10.53%
5	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%
6	100.00%	57.14%	42.86%	0.00%	0.00%
7	100.00%	36.36%	63.64%	0.00%	0.00%
8	100.00%	66.67%	33.33%		
9	100.00%	50.00%	50.00%		

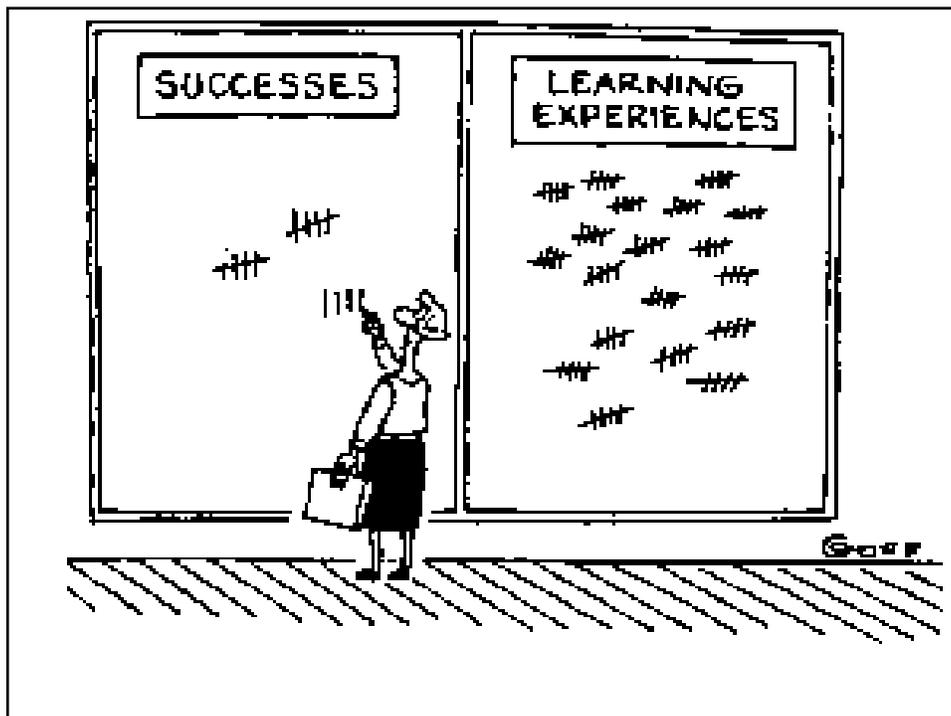
*Alaska Standards-Based Assessment Data Spring 2005.*

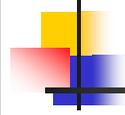
## Process

- Understanding the data
- Question current convention
- Have a set of beliefs (shared vision)
- Believe students can learn and staff can teach (leadership)
- Apply the known (standards-based)
- Practice and practice again (continuous improvement)

## Lessons Learned

- Expect to be leading a parade not in sight
- Letter Grades, graduation, class rank, valedictorian, etc
- People in “comfortable shoes”





*“It is not about  
you, it is about  
students”*

John Davis, 2005

**“Doing the right things in the right ways.”**



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