



Kenai Peninsula Borough School District
Golden Apple Award | November 3, 2014

James Reinseth

Educator

Dr. Atwater encourages us to teach students to be conscientious, resilient, and prudent. Mr. James Reinseth, a devoted K-1 teacher at Nanwalek School, exemplifies these qualities while also teaching them to his students through a culture of respect, high expectations, and constant formative feedback that encourages each to grow in academics, social behaviors, and work ethic.

Mr. Reinseth began teaching in Shungnak and remained there for eight years. Nanwalek gained his attention in 2007, and he has been of service to the community and district since, for a total of eighteen years in rural Alaska. Teacher turnover in villages interrupts learning. Mr. Reinseth's longevity and devotion in his bush positions demonstrates commitment beyond what most are willing to offer.

In his words, Mr. Reinseth "lives to teach kindergarten and first grade." Towering over his young students at more than six feet tall, Mr. Reinseth is driven to spend time with students—on the floor, bending over, or from his balcony view. During the last three years, Mr. Reinseth has shown tremendous growth in stepping out of his K-1 environment to participate and actively contribute in collaborations. Initial resistance led to gentle participation, then to active engagement to share his talents. In this, he passes on to others his incredible artistry in teaching.

Mr. Reinseth's most notable contribution which will soon extend throughout the district came when Deb Evensen, an educational consultant, observed that Mr. Reinseth regularly implements with his regular education students the "Eight Magic Keys" that she recommends for students with compromised brains due to Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD) or Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE). Overcoming shyness and his natural inclination to stick to himself, Mr. Reinseth agreed to work with Nancy Kleine, principal; Deb Evensen; and Clayton Holland, director of student services, to capture his teaching for a training film for teachers. This film shows how to teach in ways that help all students without leaving behind those with brain dysfunctions.

After observing Mr. Reinseth over the last two years, Deb Evensen commented on Mr. Reinseth's distinguished teaching: "Watching Jim Reinseth in action is like observing a great conductor lead a symphony. He guides his multi-level classroom of diverse learners through each day using multi-sensory, whole-brain strategies built on positive support and collaboration, and links everything to their daily lives. Jim is simply one of the most skilled educators I have ever observed during my forty year career as a teacher and consultant working with schools throughout North America."

Every single day, Mr. Reinseth's students live the eight magic keys: concrete, consistent, repetitive, routine, simple, specific, structured, and supervised. Literacy is constantly supported. His young students are addressed respectfully as Mr. and Miss. *Thank you* is heard often in Mr. Reinseth's class. If an observer comes, not a beat is skipped in Mr. Reinseth's constant feedback and positive reinforcement for students.

Mr. Reinseth also contributes expertise to other students in the school. Always willing, he has been an anchor to several former students who are struggling with personal issues. During the past two years, Mr. Reinseth taught welding academies for high school students. Every year, during the major holiday of Halloween in Nanwalek, Mr. Reinseth takes the reins for the annual school and community carnival. Finally, Mr. Reinseth endlessly helps new teachers who move to Nanwalek, whether it be to mentor them in curriculum or provide resources in the community.

Any district would be lucky to have a teacher of this caliber. That he is in Nanwalek is highly valued. The Kenai Peninsula Borough School District Board of Education is proud to recognize James Reinseth for his dedication to the students of the school district, past, present, and future.