



Michael Angaiak

Principal

Anne Wien Elementary School

Fairbanks, Alaska

The Stats:

- Years as principal: 9

Education:

- B.A., University of Notre Dame
- Teaching certificate, University of Alaska–Fairbanks
- M.Ed., University of Alaska–Anchorage

School details:

- Grade span: K–6
- Number of students: 400
- Title I school
- One-third of students identify as Alaska Native or Native American
- Kindergarten Jump-Start

School mantra:

- “Work hard, play fair, and take care of each other.”

Northern Light

Alaska principal Michael Angaiak on tradition and support

Principal Michael Angaiak is quick to acknowledge the help of others for his achievements. A 2018 NAESP National Distinguished Principal® (NDP), he's actually the third NDP from his school, which to him evidences a strong foundation for his success. But between increasing family engagement online, getting the school's pre-K program up and running, and fostering a strong school culture, his leadership has had a direct impact on Anne Wien Elementary and its "AWESome" students. Here's what he had to say about his career in education, and why he feels "beyond lucky" to be a principal.

On social media's impact at his school

We have worked hard to tell our story through social media at Anne Wien Elementary. We now have a school presence on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter; use Google Forms and surveys to interact instantly with our families; and welcome active engagement with our community. We even started a Lip Sync Challenge in our school district to encourage team building at each of our school's sites. Our school's AWESome video has been viewed on Facebook 60,000 times, and you can find it on YouTube here: bit.ly/2E27jBk.

On leading a school with a large Alaska Native population

As a Yup'ik principal, it is a distinct honor to be the instructional leader of a school where one-third of our students come from Native families. The primary message we have for them—and all members of our community—is that our Native people do not live in the past; we do not belong in a museum. Native people in Alaska and throughout this country are vibrant, living, active members of our communities, working to incorporate our traditions, foods, languages, and ways of knowing into a modern world. I feel best when I am at the overlapping center of all of my cultural, social, and identifying circles. As a Native leader, I've worked hard to encourage others to see the value in their many unique, diverse pieces and parts.

On his family's support

My parents held high expectations and offered endless support for my learning starting as a young child, knowing that education was my access point to the offerings of the world. Additionally, my wife is the current principal at the Catholic elementary school here in Fairbanks. To have my spouse understand, firsthand, the purpose and demands required in leading a school—to be familiar with the ebb and flow and unique challenges of being an educator and principal—has been invaluable in my professional success.

On what he does outside of school for fun

I'm a bit of a baseball junkie, and over the summer months you'll find me coaching my kids' teams and cheering on the San Francisco Giants (my childhood team) and Seattle Mariners (Alaska's closest team). The perfect summer evening for me is having a baseball game on the radio while reading under the midnight sun and watching my kids play whiffle ball in the yard. We live for our summer days—24 hours of daylight and all of the adventures that come along with them. In the fall and winter, I cheer on Notre Dame football (having played in the marching band of the Fighting Irish) and belong to a curling club with childhood friends. Alaska is full of strong, diverse people. I am fortunate to call many of them friends and to call this place home. 📍