

CHAPTER 3

EMELI IN JUNEAU, AK: ADDRESSING EQUITY IN A SMALL CITY

INTRODUCTION

This is the story of a team of five educators who attended EMELI from 1996-98. In this case study (for readers who are interested in learning about what it means to “do equity work”), we describe how EMELI influenced them and what happened as the team tried to address issues of equity in their hometown of Juneau, Alaska. We also depict some of the work they have done.

Why Juneau?

The EMELI Juneau team was compelling to follow and document for several reasons. First and foremost, the issues of equity in Juneau revolve primarily around an Alaska Native population, and their situation seemed potentially distinct from that of other minority groups. The long-standing cultural, linguistic and economic differences between Native and non-Native populations stood out as being worthy of exploring. The other major reason that researchers wanted to track the team was because of its composition. The team make-up – four teachers and one district administrator – differed from most other teams. This raised the question: How would a primarily teacher-based team approach this work, and would their mode of working locally be significantly different than that of other more vertically integrated teams? Other significant characteristics of the community influenced our decision as well, such as the size and nature of the Juneau community. What would it be like to do equity work in a relatively small, close-knit but quite socially stratified district? In addition the team members all had some experience with math education reform and standards-based mathematics – would the connection between math and equity be clearer in their work as a result? Finally, as a district Juneau had already begun to address some of its equity issues, which implied that the work of the EMELI team might contribute to broader educational and social programs already in place. Our research team kept these questions in mind as we set out to learn about the experience of Juneau’s EMELI team.

I. THE PLACE

The City of Juneau

The islands and channels that form the southeastern tail of Alaska hug the western coast of British Columbia and eventually tumble into the Gulf of Alaska. Nestled in the northern third of that stretch of land, surrounded by the impressive Mendenhall Glacier, Mount Juneau, Mount Roberts, and the Gastineau Channel, is the city of Juneau. The capital of Alaska, Juneau is the regional hub for business, health care and sporting and arts events. Yet it still has a small-town feel, centered around one main street lined with small businesses. Contributing to Juneau's provincial atmosphere is the fact that the city is accessible to outsiders only by sea or air, and people who come here (coming for the natural beauty or the relative isolation) tend to stay, adopting the mentality voiced by one community member, "I can't imagine living anywhere else." Most of the city was built at the turn of the century – a result of the American rush that followed the discovery of gold in 1880. However, the last of the major mines closed in the 1920's. Currently the city relies on the summer tourist season, commercial fishing and the legislature (when it is in session) for economic stability.

Juneau has a population of approximately 31,000. Nearly one-third of its residents is Alaska Native. A large portion of the Alaska Native population in Juneau identifies itself as Tlingit – a group of coastal Indians more similar to Native American tribes along the coast of present-day British Columbia than to other Alaskan groups. The Tlingit traditionally occupied much of the islands and mainland of current southeast Alaska. (Alaska's indigenous people, who are jointly called Alaska Natives are generally divided into five major groupings: Aleuts, Northern Eskimos or Inupiat, Southern Eskimos or Yupik, Interior Indians known as Athabascans, and Southeast Coastal Indians who are either Tlingit, Haida or Tsimpsian.)

The Juneau community is also currently experiencing a considerable influx of other ethnic groups, particularly immigrants from Russia, China, the Philippines, and South/Central America. But it is the rich cultural heritage of the Native Alaskans that makes Juneau distinct, and most of its residents seem justly proud of that heritage. Art and architecture around town pay homage to Native cultures. The Alaska State Museum devotes a large portion of its space to explaining the history of the region's earliest residents. There are annual cultural events (the most well attended of which is simply known as "Celebration") which honor the indigenous cultures. Still, the Alaska Natives are the clear minority. The Caucasian and Alaska Native populations have struggled during the past century to better understand one another. When compared to other similar historical "conflicts" between cultures, theirs is fairly young. Certain prejudices, due to racial and economic differences, still exist. One resident described Juneau as operating under a "caste system" in which Alaska Natives are "second-class citizens." He continued, "In many circles, women don't fare much better." While Juneau has all the advantages and disadvantages that one would associate with "small-town, USA," the race component resulting from the strong Native Alaskan presence provides added complexity to life there.

Juneau takes pride in being the political center of Alaska; the city has a statewide reputation for having strong schools and an educated citizenry. To a certain degree this comes with being a state capital (and being home to the Alaska Department of Education and a campus of the

University of Alaska). The city operates in a kind of fishbowl. There is a sense that the eyes of the state are on Juneau and that what happens there can have a larger impact throughout Alaska. Moreover, as in any small American community, city residents know each other quite well, and local events, decisions and change are readily discussed, debated and often published in the local newspaper. It is the rare change that goes unnoticed.

The Juneau School District

“The mission of the Juneau School District is to empower each student to learn the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for life-long learning and success in our changing world by providing a comprehensive educational program based on school, family and community.”

–Juneau School District (JSD) Mission Statement

The district serving Juneau consists of seven elementary schools (one of which is a charter school), two middle schools, and one high school, which together enroll approximately 5,600 students. According to 1995 district data, the student body is approximately 70% white and 20% Alaska Native. The remaining 10% are Asian (6%), African American (2%) and Hispanic (2%).

The JSD teaching and administrative force is largely non-Native (a number representative of the larger community), but many of the educational leaders have extensive experience working with Alaska Native populations, generally outside of Juneau. For example, the superintendent served as administrator in central Alaska for more than a decade before taking her current post. The high school principal spent much of his career in the Tlingit village of Angoon before coming to Juneau. There are also a highly committed group of Alaska Native educators who bring their experience and expertise to the JSD community. In addition to community events and museum exhibits, schools also make a notable effort to honor Alaska Native heritage. All schools celebrate Native American Heritage Month in November and Elizabeth Peratrovich Day in February. At one elementary school, students make and display “Stone Age” tools (fishing spears, axes, etc.) many of which indicate influence of the native culture. At the high school, a number of art projects (especially some student-painted murals) portray positive culturally-based images.

However, many of the more prominent examples of inequity in the Juneau community show up most clearly in the Juneau school system. First, there are the seemingly subtle indicators of unequal school experiences based on race, class and gender. As described by one principal, there is a strong “hierarchy” with clear “haves and have-nots” in the schools. “The kids will tell you how very difficult it is to enter into multiple social groups.” But there are also more explicit examples of inequities: consistently, there are fewer Alaska Natives enrolled in higher level academic courses and the group as a whole has lower achievement scores. Specifically, there is under-representation of Alaska Natives and females in more advanced mathematics courses and an overrepresentation of Alaska Natives in the more “general” mathematics classes. In addition, in 1996 the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) cited the Juneau School District for over-referral of Alaska Natives to special education.

As one administrator noted,

[the Alaska Native community in Juneau is] an invisible community within the city...and there are not a lot of people who understand that culture – how rich it is and the extent to which students are affected by it...

There are myriad reasons for these differences in enrollment, achievement and treatment – some more easily identified than others. In general, the Caucasian community is not well versed in Tlingit culture or alternative ways of learning that might better reflect Native traditions and values. In particular, in some parts of the Caucasian community there are long-standing misperceptions about Alaska Native home and family life as well as about cultural mores. For instance, because of the limited role of formalized schooling in their culture, some Native parents are unsure of how to participate in their children's schools; they trust the educators' expertise to support and nurture the child while he/she is at school. Thus they may be only peripherally involved in school-related decisions or the homework of their child, and may communicate with the child's teacher only rarely. As one Native educational activist noted, this stereotype has been divisive within the Native community (as many Native parents work to be highly involved in their children's schooling) and has caused friction within the larger school community which expects and rewards parental involvement. Many schools and teachers "have assumed indifference on the part of Native parents" and have perhaps reacted indifferently in response. Whatever the reason, the feeling held by many in Juneau is that in the absence of this vital alliance and support system, Native Alaskan students tend to "fall through the cracks" more easily.

The implication of this and other similar behavior is that the disparity between the Caucasian and Native students' achievement widens as they get older. Few Alaska Native students take courses beyond the required level; many fail to complete high school. Enrollment in advanced math classes tends to be predominantly Caucasian and male. Acknowledging this reality, the leadership of the Juneau School District has made recent efforts to more proactively support its Alaska Native students' experience in school as well as to boost their achievement. Superintendent Mary Rubadeau in particular has a strong commitment to improving conditions for Alaska Native students in the district. Drawing on some of her experience in village schools in central Alaska, she articulated the need for creating more awareness of "Native ways of knowing" and better assessing students' prior knowledge in Juneau.

These sentiments are echoed by a number of Native community groups whose purpose is to support the progress of Alaska Native students in the district (and local colleges). They include the Juneau Native Education Commission (JNEC), the Indian Studies Parent Board and the Alaska Native Sisterhood. These organizations, essentially acting as watchdog groups, play a prominent role in the community; their representatives and those from the district are constantly grappling with the most effective ways to collectively address Native students' issues.

The district also has a number of its own committees and school-based groups designed to provide additional support for Alaska Native students and to monitor policies and practices that might contribute to inequities. For example, there are four Strategic Action Committees, each one tied to one of four district "strategies." These four committees all deal with student issues that have a potential equity link. However, the Strategy #2 Action Committee has the specific

task of improving conditions for Alaska Native and minority students. Administrators, teachers, parents, and community members serve on each of these committees.

District Strategies

Eight years ago the district adopted four district “strategies” to be addressed by distinct task forces or Strategic Action Committees.

The strategies (adapted for the 1998-99 school year) are:

- I) Increase student achievement by implementing district content standards in language arts and mathematics.
- II) Institutionalize and strengthen successful programs to ensure that all Native and minority students have opportunities to achieve success.
- III) Improve student learning by strengthening family, school-to-work, and community partnerships.
- IV) Improve healthy social, emotional and physical attitudes and behaviors for all Juneau students.

Other district efforts to institutionalize a commitment to achieving educational equity are outlined briefly below.

History of Equity Work

There are two ways to get a sense of the district’s work around equity issues: one is through its programs and another is by the indicators of the culture of the district. In Juneau in the past decade many small steps have been taken with the hopes of achieving district-wide equity. There have been specific instances of cross-community “reaching out,” and some programs that show the beginnings of a cohesive effort toward attaining equity have been instituted. For example, most recently a new middle school was christened with a Tlingit name – Dzantik’i Heeni – and an annual “community-building” tea for all teachers is now hosted by the Alaska Native Sisterhood. Still, the district needed new tools and a unifying philosophy to make a lasting change. EMELI provided such tools and direction. But the EMELI effort ultimately builds on what already exists in JSD, and thus we note those programs below.

The major district programs seeking to secure an equitable educational environment within the district have brought together teachers, administrators, parents and other Native community members to better support Juneau’s lower achieving students. For example, the CORE team is a district-community based leadership team whose goals have included raising expectations for Native students district-wide. (The origins of this team – whose name is simply a nod to a “core” curriculum – lie in the Office of Civil Rights investigation, but it has continued to operate in the district.) This includes training teachers on the teaching of diverse learners, raising awareness about over-referral of students (especially Alaska Natives) to special education, and improving understanding about language development of young students. The superintendent calls this team “by far the biggest and most engaged group” involved in issues of Alaska Native students.

Staff Collaboration Teams (SCoTs) were also established in response to the 1996 OCR citation. When a student is referred to Special Education, a school-based SCoT team determines whether or not the referral is appropriate, and suggests a variety of instructional and/or behavioral interventions that should occur before any official referral. SCoTs now exist in each school. Their meetings include teachers, a special education staff member and the child's parent, among others. Special education referrals have decreased significantly since the creation of the SCoTs process.

Other equity efforts include piloting portfolio assessment, district-wide gender equity training (which was roundly supported by the community), and community-school partnerships which encourage Alaska Native high school students to do internships in a local businesses owned by Native community members. Finally, the district has made efforts to reduce the dropout rate of all of its students, but particularly Alaska Natives as they are half of all students who leave school early but compile only 20% of the total student body. After-school tutors, an off-campus alternative high school setting, "Saturday Academies" and a homework hotline are among the structures in place to help keep Juneau students in school.

Clearly a number of programs have been designed to help a diverse student body achieve success in the district. Still, negotiating the relationship between disciplinary reform and equitable practice is complex. For example, there appears to be uniform agreement in the district that certain mathematics should be accessible to all students. The extent of that accessibility is still unclear, however, as is what happens to the upper end of the mathematics curriculum that remains attainable to only a few. Below we provide more details of Juneau's reform efforts in mathematics education.

History of Mathematics Education Reform

Math has [traditionally] been a system that has screened kids out rather than trying to keep them in.

–Principal

The Juneau district is now in the midst of a decade of educational reform, particularly with respect to mathematics. In June 1996, the state published its content standards. The mathematics standards bear a loose resemblance to the 1989 NCTM Standards with a focus on problem solving, applications, communications, and understanding mathematical relationships. Soon afterwards, the district adopted its standards (which, in the words of the Alaska Department of Education's math specialist, are "not only aligned, but far exceed our State standards"). The implementation of math standards and their associated programs became a vehicle for providing high quality mathematics for all students in Juneau.

In that vein, a few years ago the district, in collaboration with University of Alaska Southeast, received an Eisenhower grant providing \$100,000 over three years. The grant was based on the Equity 2000 model which supposes that students completing algebra and geometry by 10th grade will be much more likely to attend college, among other things. Juneau students at 6th-10th grade were targeted, and the money was used for strengthening the curricula and for teacher training. In the 3rd year of the grant the Juneau School Board adopted an "Algebra for All" policy for all 9th

grade students. Two years later, after considerable effort, a district core curriculum was instituted, providing for students a sequence of essential skills to master in high school.

It is important to note that some leaders in the Alaska Native community are concerned about the district's "Algebra for All" campaign – fearing that it may exacerbate the dropout problem. The president of the community-based Juneau Native Education Coalition (JNEC) asked,

Are we simply going to have more kids who can't jump over the bar we are setting? How are we going to raise them up? I am not saying that the Alaska Native kids can't do it. They can, but they need support.

Elementary and secondary grade-level "Math Cadrés" (grade-alike groups of math teachers who meet regularly) were also a product of the Eisenhower grant. With standards-based materials as their vehicle, these groups have focused on deepening the understanding of all teachers and administrators about the diverse learning needs of all students.

Given the equity focus of the district's math education reform efforts, sponsoring a team to attend the EMELI workshops seemed logical and appropriate. In the next section we discuss the selection of the team, the team itself, and its role within the Juneau district.

II. THE EMELI TEAM IN JUNEAU

The Juneau Team joined EMELI as part of Cohort 4 in November 1996. The group stood out immediately as a collection of confident, articulate, and concerned educators, particularly interested in improving conditions for Native populations. In Cohort 4, many of the teams applied as a result of other reform projects, like the Cleveland USI or the Colorado SSI – programs which could potentially "host" or provide structures in which to carry out EMELI work. Juneau was not involved in such an effort, and was considerably smaller than many of the other districts that sent teams to Santa Barbara. Also, while none of the members of the Juneau team were strangers to equity work in mathematics education, theirs consisted almost entirely of teachers – not a common team composition for EMELI. Even more rare was the participation of their enthusiastic Assistant Superintendent as the team's leader. Seldom has an EMELI team had a district leader play such an integral role.

When the Juneau School District first decided to send a team to EMELI, the selection committee wanted to put together a group that spanned grades K-12, represented different schools, and reflected the district's prior equity work in math. They decided to limit applicants to teachers involved in the Math Cadrés and chose two from each. According to the EMELI guidelines, those naming the team also wanted to create gender and ethnic balance. Below is the group of people they selected – what one Juneau principal called "a rather unlikely team."

ANNIE CALKINS–ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

Annie Calkins is the one and only Assistant Superintendent of the Juneau School District. In that role she supervises all federal programs and grants, curriculum, instruction and assessment for the district. She not only serves as the team's leader, but she was also part of the district leadership who put together the original EMELI team. Annie brings a fiery spirit as well as strong local administrative connections to the role of team leader. She is in her 4th year as Assistant Superintendent for JSD. Prior to serving in this role, she worked as the Director of Curriculum and Assessment for the district. Before that, she was employed for ten years by the State Department of Education, located only two blocks from the district office in Juneau. Annie speaks knowledgeably about the cultural history of Alaska and its Native people, although she herself is non-Native.

Annie is the kind of Assistant Superintendent who seemingly has her hand in everything. She is in constant motion: writing grants, visiting schools, meeting with parents, preparing to address the school board, and so on. In recent years, she has taken a particular interest in the progress of girls and Alaska Natives in the district's math program. She supported the "Algebra for All" program at the high school and played an instrumental role in implementing performance assessments in mathematics and language arts throughout the district. As Annie reflects on the district's equity work over the past five to ten years, she sees EMELI as the essential next phase.

FRED HILTNER–PRIMARY TEACHER

Fred Hiltner is a Caucasian man teaching in a multi-age primary classroom at Harborview Elementary in downtown Juneau. An observer can instantly recognize the cultural and pedagogical richness of Fred's classroom. The children move comfortably about the room, engaged in a variety of activities, largely of their own choosing. Seldom are more than two or three students engaged in the same activities at the same time. Throughout a math period, Fred gathers small groups of students to work with him at a small easel in the front of the room. There he can assess individual math needs and orally evaluate student progress on one topic on another – that is, when he is not helping to resolve a conflict or getting down on the floor to talk face-to-face with a student. Most of Fred's students have the good fortune of working with him for three consecutive years.

Fred is the constructivist and the idealist of the EMELI group. He speaks passionately about the work of EMELI as being at the heart of what he is trying to do as an educator and the issues that the district is attempting to confront. He credits EMELI with renewing and strengthening his resolve to stand up for what he knows is right. "I can no longer be silent. I just can't sit there anymore and say nothing. It's as if I simply must speak." We get a sense that Fred has a reputation for being somewhat outspoken in his views, particularly with regards to minority students. He is not afraid to challenge authority when fairness is the issue.

A Presidential Award winner for math/science education, Fred has been active in the Alaska State Math Consortium. Not surprisingly, he has been a leader within the district's Elementary Math Cadré since its inception. He has found this collection of teachers a welcome audience for the work of EMELI. Fred has also served as a support group leader for EMELI Cohort 5.

CAROL FUJIOKA–4TH GRADE TEACHER

Carol Fujioka is a Japanese-American woman teaching 4th grade at Mendenhall River Elementary School. A veteran elementary teacher, she possesses an unassuming and soft-spoken manner. Carol admits to slowly but surely becoming more comfortable with the “leadership role” that she believes comes with participating in EMELI. While she does not see herself as a leader – “I’m not the kind of person who’s going to be out in the forefront,” she says – Carol has joined with her team members to present EMELI work in local schools and at regional workshops. She admittedly often plays more of a supporting role, but the team continues to challenge her to take on more facilitation duties. Carol has a distinct talent for single-handedly connecting with a room full of teachers. She collaborated with Fred in bringing the work of EMELI to the Elementary Math Cadre.

In her classroom, Carol reports using dyads regularly with her 4th graders, as a means of getting students to articulate their mathematical thinking. As Carol sees it, “EMELI has basically changed the way I view kids, especially the kids in my classroom – and it has changed the way I think about teaching math.” This has been especially important during the past two school years when minority student enrollment at Mendenhall River has risen rather dramatically. “My students need time to talk...time to tell their stories.” Carol now makes it a priority to give students that kind of time.

ANGIE LUNDA–7TH GRADE MATH TEACHER

Angie Lunda is an Alaska Native woman teaching 7th grade mathematics at Floyd Dryden Middle School. She describes her EMELI experience quite succinctly: “EMELI has given me a voice...it’s given me the courage, the strength to find my voice.” Since becoming part of EMELI, Angie has increasingly been asked to serve as an intermediary between the district and certain key organizations within the Alaska Native community, such as the Juneau Native Education Commission and the Alaska Native Sisterhood. She has also become a strong advocate for the new middle school mathematics curriculum (the Connected Math Program) within her building and the district at large. Together, she and another 7th grade math teacher are challenging the more traditional mathematics views of their school principal and other reluctant colleagues, generally those responsible for the 8th grade Algebra course.

Angie attended grades K-12 in the Juneau school system. She has experienced firsthand many of the inequities that the team is trying to address – making her EMELI work particularly personal and often emotionally painful. Often in the past two years, she has reflected on how her own public education included nothing about Native cultures, people, and traditions. “I never heard the word ‘Tlingit’ the whole time I was in school.” Angie wants her students and her own children to have a different experience.

Most recently, Angie has begun work with the district’s Strategy #2 Committee which specifically works to ensure equal educational opportunities for Alaska Natives and other students of color. She is also learning to speak her native language, Tlingit. Angie joined Fred in serving as a support group leader for EMELI Cohort 5.

JIM PRESTON—HIGH SCHOOL MATHEMATICS TEACHER

Jim Preston is a Caucasian man who has devoted nearly twenty-five years of his life to teaching mathematics at Juneau-Douglas High School (JDHS), the sole public high school in Juneau. Jim says that it is his “love of kids and mathematics” that has kept him coming back year after year. Not surprisingly, he is more than a just a teacher at the high school – he is an institution. During the changing of classes, Jim stands outside his door to peruse the hallways where he is greeted continuously with smiles, high-fives, and boisterous calls of “Hey, Mr. Preston.” Jim believes in the importance of “connecting with kids” and sees EMELI as a means of improving the skills needed to work with an ever-changing teenage population.

In the classroom, Jim arranges the desks in tables of four so that his students have more opportunities to work together. He also reports using dyads. Jim teaches a variety of courses offered by the math department, among them Calculus, which is one of his favorites. Like many teachers who have experienced success with the traditional mathematics curriculum (both personally and professionally), Jim has viewed the math education reform movement of the past decade with considerable caution. In particular, he has expressed doubt about the necessity of linking this reform movement to equity efforts in mathematics.

Jim’s EMELI colleagues have struggled with what they see as his dichotomous views. On the one hand, Jim speaks very positively about his EMELI experience, about how the issues of equity that often divide Juneau play out in the mathematics classroom, about how he has become more sensitive to issues of racism in his own classroom and the school at large. On the other hand, he has publicly criticized the reform-minded mathematics curriculum at the high school as being “watered down” and “lacking rigor.” He readily admits, “My being on the team is a struggle. The others are more cohesive in their thinking. I don’t know...maybe it’s because I teach the older kids. I’ve taught for 20 years and I guess I’m just more conservative in my thinking. I won’t just jump on some band wagon.”

The Juneau EMELI team valued Jim’s strong community connections and practiced public speaking skills. He is firm in his opinions and willing to express them. Jim also serves as president of the teachers’ union and in this role, he attends most meetings of the Juneau School Board. Under these circumstances, the EMELI team believed that Jim’s membership might provide them with a vehicle for more readily influencing public opinion in Juneau.

Working Together

Over the course of their involvement with EMELI, team leader Annie Calkins has pondered the odd combination of individuals who became the Juneau team. She explains, “People always say, ‘You guys are a team? How did they put you together as a team?’ And sometimes I wonder that myself, but I also think that gives us special strength.” She believes the perception that the team members are so different from each other gives the group more credibility. Outsiders get the impression that there must be something to this “equity work” if that particular collection of people is acting together.

Indeed, prior to their first EMELI meeting in the fall of 1996, the five members of the Juneau team had only limited professional contact with each other. None of them worked in the same building. There was some overlap on district committees or within the Math Cadres, but for the most part, interaction between team members outside of EMELI was minimal. The one thing all five members shared was a strong desire to improve the mathematics learning opportunities for students in Juneau, particularly for Alaska Natives, girls, and students from economically disadvantaged families. Beyond this, however, their professional priorities and values were quite different. Undertaking the work of EMELI would be challenging for a team that did not share a common vision of mathematics for *all* students.

III. THE TEAM'S CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THEIR GOAL

Given their background and experience, it is not surprising that coming to a consensus about a team role and accompanying goals proved difficult for the Juneau group. The team members' diversity and lack of shared vision was one reason. Another was the scarcity of existing structures in the district into which they might readily incorporate their EMELI activities. Working with the Eisenhower grant's residual Math Cadrés was one viable possibility. The Strategy #2 Action Team was another. However, in truth JSD had no current and obvious structure in place to actively "host" and support the work of EMELI (as some of the other EMELI districts did). Moreover, the history and complexities of the Juneau context made contemplating where and how to begin what EMELI termed "equity work" all the more daunting a task.

Nevertheless the team was eager to begin its work, but upon the advice and counsel of EMELI staff, members agreed to begin their work slowly and individually – in classrooms. As a teacher-based group, they recognized that their sphere of influence was likely to be most prominent in classrooms and in informal sharing/small group work with other teachers. Trying out and sharing about dyads, support groups, and so on, allowed members to take some initial steps in equity work with their close colleagues.

Still, after some time the team's collective work needed to be engineered. Objectively the most pressing issue to address in district conversations was that of race – specifically, Alaska Natives and their achievement in mathematics. But how best to approach the delicate topic was not immediately clear. After half of their EMELI training, the team was still somewhat unsure of its role, and while they shared the common goal of improving the mathematical opportunities for Juneau students, individuals' experiences left them with conflicting views about how best to do so. (For example, at times the Alaska Native teacher's perspective clashed with that of the non-Native and more traditional high school teacher.) Further, the team felt some pressure to not "ruffle any feathers" in this small community. As a result, the less contentious issue of gender became the initial rallying point for their work.

Because of the recent district mandate (based on state regulations) that all school staffs participate in gender equity training, the EMELI team discovered that they had a "captive audience" for this topic. As they began talking with schools about providing in-service workshops, they focused on their ability to work with staffs surrounding issues of gender. The capacity to provide gender equity training was a strong selling point for the EMELI team. Therefore, their initial workshops

highlighted the gender component while examining “the key three” – issues of race, class, and gender. These sessions were a vehicle for getting started as a team and providing a service to the district at the same time. Understandably, the EMELI team quickly gained a reputation as the “gender equity group.” The down side, as one team member pointed out, was that “these were not the biggest issues facing us.” (In fact, on our first visit to Juneau in November 1997, all of principals we interviewed understood the team to be working solely to address issues of gender. This surprised us because in all of our meetings with team members, they indicated that issues of race and class were their priority.)

The initial school-based workshops and members’ individual work in their own classrooms helped the team to feel more confident about the importance of its work. Team members began to acknowledge that issues of race and class needed be at the public forefront of their EMELI work. The superintendent, who had been trying to highlight these issues during a good part of her tenure, held similar views. She observed,

There have been low expectations for Native kids for a long time ... I find that the most insidious form of racism. I also know that you don't turn corners over night. We've tried a lot of things, most of which haven't had a huge impact. The [Strategy #2] Action Team is trying to get more issues on the table. But a big part of this is changing perceptions and changing the attitudes of people, and that's where I think the EMELI team comes in.

The team’s focus on these topics began with the infusion of some race discussions into meetings of the Math Cadrés and the Middle School Math Group. Ultimately, members realized that they would redesign their school-based workshops in order to explore the more delicate issues of race and class with the depth they warranted. The team revised their workshop model, making it more closely resemble some of their own EMELI experiences and hoping to facilitate workshops at every school in the district. As is illustrated in the following section, this work was important and well received, but not without its difficulties.

IV. THE RECEPTION OF EMELI IN JUNEAU

Bringing the EMELI message back to Juneau proved to be a more delicate endeavor than most team members anticipated. As mentioned earlier, Juneau is a small and isolated community. It is difficult to act anonymously. Any news travels quickly via word of mouth or the local newspaper. Culturally, the Alaska Native presence is strong, but economically and politically, Caucasians largely control the town. Under these conditions, the team expected that surfacing issues of equity, especially those involving Alaska Natives, would be painful and difficult. However, the EMELI team tended to underestimate both the extent of the resistance that they would encounter locally and the level of vulnerability some team members would feel when confronted with attempting the reality of the work at home. Questions surfaced early about whether the Juneau community was ready to address the kinds of race and class issues that the team had identified during their EMELI workshops in Santa Barbara. Not wanting to immediately draw a lot of attention to itself, the team knew they would need to start small and tread gently. However, in the midst of facilitating their first few local workshops, volatile issues relating to equity and

mathematics were bubbling to the surface in the Juneau community, particularly at the high school – issues that necessarily involved the EMELI team.

Three years prior to the team’s involvement in EMELI, the district had begun implementing a standards-based integrated mathematics curriculum for grades 6-12. The program had met with some success at the middle school level. However, opposing views about the quality and success of the program at the high school had produced considerable tension among parents and teachers. By December 1997, the conflict was growing increasingly contentious and political. Most criticisms came from vocal parents of high achieving students and veteran teachers responsible for the more advanced courses. Their concerns were those that often surface when a school or district implements an integrated secondary mathematics curriculum: that having students transfer from an integrated program to a traditional program (or vice versa) is nearly impossible, that students were not learning the algebra skills they needed, that there was too much emphasis on conceptual thinking at the expense of mastering standard mathematics content, and that the program simply lacked rigor. Reflecting on the debate at the time, one middle school principal told us, “I want product – I want kids who are going to be mathematically competent. Let’s get the buildings blocks down first before we try anything else.” Because of their own divided feelings on the issue, the Juneau EMELI team could not steer clear of the escalating conflict – they were quickly drawn into the fray.

The Math Wars

One of the basic tenets of EMELI is that standards-based¹ curricula and teaching will provide students with more equitable access to rich mathematical experiences. The majority of the Juneau EMELI team members made a strong connection between doing equity work, the larger issues of mathematics education reform, and supporting implementation of the district’s Integrated Math Program. Using the NCTM Standards as their model, they viewed the new curriculum as more inclusive than the old, more connected to student experience, and more likely to interest students in mathematics. However, the team’s high school teacher, Jim Preston, viewed the new curriculum more skeptically. Teaching from the new textbooks for the third year at the Juneau Douglas High School (JDHS), he found his students not making the kind of mathematical progress to which he had been accustomed. He described the Integrated Curriculum as watered-down, repetitive, and confusing.

It’s based on exposure, not mastery. The kids don’t get the spiral approach because they don’t remember that much from year to year. And if they don’t understand what happens in class, they can’t figure out anything from the book. I have 3rd year kids who do not know how to solve a basic two-step linear algebra problem in one variable (formerly part of the 9th grade Algebra course). It’s ridiculous!

For the rest of the team members, however, supporting the new curriculum, particularly during the early years of implementation, was an extension of their equity work. They wanted math to be

¹ When the term “standards-based” is used in this report, it refers to the standards prepared and published by the NCTM: *Curriculum and Evaluation Standards for School Mathematics* (1989), *Professional Standards for Teaching Mathematics* (1991), and *Assessment Standards for School Mathematics* (1995). It should be noted that some states have adopted standards inconsistent with the NCTM Standards.

accessible to *all* students and believed the integrated program, if well implemented, would help accomplish that goal. Jim said that he, too, believed all students could learn math. However, he worried that making math more accessible to *all* students would ultimately limit the opportunities of students interested in pursuing mathematics in more depth. While Jim struggled with meeting the needs of students at “the upper end” of the curriculum, his EMELI teammates concerned themselves with students who had traditionally occupied “the lower end.” Herein lay the cause of disunity within the Juneau team – a reflection of the friction in the district and in the mathematics teaching profession at large.

This conflict within the Juneau team was apparent from the outset. The group uniformly thought that they would somehow work through it – that as they continued to work together they would find common ground. However, during the 1997-98 school year, the Integrated Curriculum was under increasing attack. Hope for a compromise dwindled as a growing number of parents complained to the Juneau Board of Education that their children were receiving an inadequate mathematics education at the high school – and that the new textbooks were to blame. As tensions mounted, the Integrated Curriculum became much more than a textbook or even a curriculum – it became the center of a political debate. The issues surrounding equity and reform that divided the EMELI team soon divided the high school community and ultimately the district – coming to a head in the winter and spring of 1998 – a period Superintendent Mary Rubadeau calls “the math wars.”

Amidst growing pressure from parents and teachers, the Juneau Board of Education scheduled a board work session at the end of January 1998 as a means of providing a forum for community discussion. The stated purposes were threefold:

- To gather information and ideas from math teachers in the district regarding the Math Program texts.
- To consider preliminary recommendations for future district action in relation to math.
- To discuss the Core Content Standards for secondary math.

Annie Calkins and Jim Preston both attended the meeting in their official roles as Assistant Superintendent and Union President. As board members listened to teachers and parents, trying to learn more about the differences between the high school’s “integrated” math program and a more traditional math program, Jim Preston spoke out against the integrated math program. He advocated for reinstating the traditional curriculum and giving students a “choice” between the two. One of Angie Lunda’s 7th grade teaching partners, who attended the meeting on behalf of her middle school colleagues, challenged him. She argued that such a change would be no different than going back to the old system in which some students took college preparatory mathematics and others took basic classes, which were the equivalent of middle school mathematics. She described the old basic math classes as being filled with “a sea of brown faces.” In striking contrast, the 9th grade geometry classes, for advanced 9th graders, were 100% Caucasian and mostly male. Jim Preston suggested that having a choice would be “having the best of both worlds,” but he also indicated that the Integrated Program would be better suited for students interested in a liberal arts education – that it would not be adequate for those interested in “the hard sciences.”

Implications for the Team

No explicit decisions were made about the Integrated Curriculum during the school board's working session, but for the members of the EMELI team, especially Assistant Superintendent Annie Calkins, Jim Preston had crossed a line. The next morning, a lengthy cover story with Jim's picture and numerous quotes graced the front page of the *Juneau Empire*. All team members recognized that they would need to collectively address the role that Jim had played in the School Board Meeting and how his stance might affect their collective work. Team leader Annie Calkins called a meeting of the group. What followed would alter the course of the group's collective work.

The team's two-hour meeting was immediately heated and emotional. It ended with feelings aired but little resolved. Soon afterward, Annie met with Jim individually. She tried to point out what she saw as the disconnect between the work of EMELI and the public stance that Jim had taken at the board meeting. As team leader, she sought counsel from Julian Weissglass who advised her to require Jim to make a choice. Soon after meeting with Annie, Jim announced that he would resign from the team. He felt he had been forced to do so.

For all team members, including Jim, the outcome of their meeting produced a combination of conflicting emotions: disappointment, anger, frustration, and relief. Angie Lunda reflected on all that had transpired:

I feel so strongly about tracking, and throwing out that [Integrated] curriculum means we will have a tracked system again – I take that personally. I worked hard, I put a lot of time and energy into helping us dismantle that tracking system. ... I think that it's basic beliefs about math that we're talking about and basic beliefs are hard to change.... I think that losing [Jim] is a huge loss. But it comes down to those basic beliefs; the EMELI experience did not change [his] basic beliefs about math.

The "math wars" conflict had clearly taken its toll on the EMELI team. However, there was hope that the loss in membership, while decreasing the diversity of perspectives, would at least be compensated by a gain in cohesive philosophy and outlook. The team might now find it easier to act collectively.

The Fallout

From that point on, the Juneau EMELI Team became a team of four. Word of Jim's departure spread slowly. Meanwhile debate about the Integrated Math Program continued in Juneau throughout the months of February and March: at meetings of the JDHS Site Council, in the newspaper, via email. The school board eventually voted on the issue at their April 7th meeting. According to an article that appeared in the local paper the next day:

“The Juneau School Board gave some dissatisfied parents what they wanted Tuesday night – a return to a more traditional math program and a more traditional book. After hours of discussion, the board voted unanimously to start offering algebra I, geometry, and algebra II as separate courses again, instead of the

integrated algebra-geometry program that schools started using four years ago. The board also agreed to change textbooks, back to the book that was in place before the new integrated program began.”

– Juneau Empire

However, the board did not vote to bring back the traditional curriculum as a “choice.” With the help of district administrators, notably Annie Calkins, the Juneau Board of Education recognized the proposed choice plan as reminiscent of tracking, which the district had worked long and hard to eliminate. The district leadership informed the board that they could not support a two-tier system. If the Integrated texts were posing problems for “some” students, then everyone would go back to the traditional curriculum – detracked. The “Algebra for All” mission remained intact.

The math wars were finally over. Both sides had won some battles and lost others. Reflecting on the period nearly six months later, Superintendent Mary Rubadeau lamented:

The whole thing was much more political than it needed to be. The teachers were unhappy, unhappy with a book. They didn't like the spiraling. The teachers said most kids did not learn well that way. We could have handled it internally, just working with the teachers.

She explained how the conflict had taught her some important lessons about the impact of our technological age. As it turned out, much of the fuel for the debate in Juneau's relatively small school district had come from “the lower 48,” California in particular, where the state-wide “mathematically correct” debate was in full swing. Between Web sites, email, and fax machines, Juneau's “math wars” could not remain entirely local. Instead, they became an extension of the battles going on elsewhere.

In September 1998, the math teachers at JDHS packed away the integrated texts and distributed new books to students. Math course offerings returned to the sequential list: algebra 1, geometry, algebra 2, etc. The district proposed selling the integrated books, but put off that decision when teachers said that they intended to supplement instruction with activities from the integrated series.

Data collected during implementation of the integrated program indicate that the combination of the district's “Algebra for All” and the standards-based textbook series may have had some positive impact on student math achievement. Records show that the percentage of students completing 2nd-year math increased from 39% in 1993 to 48% in 1995. In 1995, in a graduating class of 259 students, only 19 had completed less than four semesters of mathematics. However, a breakdown of the numbers by sex and race pointed toward inequities: the majority of these students were female and nearly half of them were Alaska Native. Both groups were disproportionately represented, but the Alaska Native students more so. Examining the data for trends that combined gender and race showed that Alaska Native females were more likely than any other group to have dropped math prior to completing the second-year level. Such results, coupled with the absence of Alaska Native parents in the “math wars” debate, gave the remaining EMELI team members a renewed sense of purpose. They recommitted themselves to addressing local inequities based on race and class, and proceeded to plan their work.

V. EQUITY WORK

The Juneau team, like most EMELI teams, constructed a range of ways to share their EMELI learning with their community. The following section describes the activities that the team has organized, engineered or shepherded within the context of promoting equity in Juneau. There are examples of what we and the team have come to define as “equity work” – everything from implementing the EMELI structures in classrooms to conducting school trainings to working with parents to facilitating regional conferences. The work has expanded and been refined over the last two years, as has the leadership capacity of the team members. The two go hand in hand. Indeed, as the team has engaged in the work, equity knowledge and understanding has been infused into their classroom practice, into their school contexts and has expanded into the district and even across the state.

But it is important to point out that this team, more than others we followed, came to realize that its goals (and thus its work) were personal as much as professional and, true to the EMELI model, were grounded in a process of individual growth, and even transformation. Changing attitudes and perceptions, recognized early on by the superintendent, has been at the heart of its work. As one team member said,

We're not the kind of team that's going to have these big state events, but our impact is no less. It runs deep. It's the daily stuff ... taking a stand in front of your colleagues about the new curriculum, listening to a kid and hearing his story in a different way, talking to a parent ... even calling the parent – calling because you know you have to...that is the work of EMELI. That's what we're doing. We're doing the trainings too, but I'm not convinced that that's really the most important part. It's the day-to-day stuff that affects kids' lives.

Because of this team's emphasis on individual and personal connections, it has been somewhat challenging to document what it means to “do equity work” in Juneau. There is much that goes on which cannot be characterized as events or workshops impacting a large number of practitioners. However, through the “day to day stuff” and through some larger events, the work is being done. Thus we have characterized the Juneau team's equity work in two major ways. First we provide examples of the ways in which the team infused equity into existing structures: the classroom, the school, or the district's professional development offerings. Secondly, we present examples of the ways in which the team created new events, structures or forums to address equity.

Infusing Equity into the Life of the Classroom

Each teacher on the Juneau team has worked to infuse equitable practices and stances into his/her classroom. At times this has meant employing the use of the EMELI structures with students, and at other times it has meant introducing more general “inclusive” practices into the classroom infrastructure. When team members have implemented the EMELI structures, which most did soon after their first few EMELI workshops, they have found them to be an important factor in increasing student confidence and engagement in mathematics. Their use also affirmed team members' belief in the power of personal stories and sharing.

All members have adapted the structures to fit the needs of their students. For example, Carol Fujioka started using dyads with her fourth graders during math lessons but referred to them with students as a “talk and listen.” Now her students regularly engage in a “talk and listen” to discuss their mathematical reasoning with a peer. In another example, Fred Hiltner has used a form of support groups and personal experience panels (PEPs) in his classroom. With the influx of other ethnic groups in Juneau, issues of language and communication across cultures are of increasing concern in the classroom. For example, of the 24 children in Fred’s multi-age classroom, 13 are designated bilingual, and yet he has received little bilingual support. Establishing small support groups in his classroom has enabled him to better support these students.

The EMELI structures provide specific and regular opportunities for open and reflective dialogue (among all students) in these classrooms. Other mechanisms employed by team members, inspired by EMELI, have also worked to generate more balanced student-to-student and teacher-to-student discourse. For instance, while she is limited to a certain extent by the desk and chair units that are found in her middle school classroom, Angie Lunda arranges the seating in her math classes so that students can easily pair up with a peer to share ideas. In addition, students have more opportunities to more regularly present and defend their mathematical strategies and thinking in front of their peers by using the overhead projector. Further, she has made an effort to make math more locally relevant to students; for example, the class recently used the Gastineau Channel’s tide tables when studying positive and negative numbers.

Infusing equity into the classroom then implies that there is a greater appreciation of learning styles and backgrounds, that teachers’ wait time for a student response is longer, that there is an increased likelihood that students will have some choice in their classroom activities (and thus will feel more invested in them). In short, there are more ways for students to be successful in an equitable classroom, and all of the EMELI team members have worked to create such an environment for their students. In sometimes seemingly small ways, they have altered their practice, pedagogy and thinking about teaching and learning in the last two years, and the process is ongoing.

Supporting Student Thinking

“How did I support that child? How did I further their thinking?” These are the EMELI questions that Fred Hiltner asks himself throughout the day, especially during the math period. Fred believes in tailoring the math learning opportunities in his primary grade classroom to meet the individual needs of each student. He does not use a particular textbook series or a specified curriculum. Instead, he designs the mathematics materials his students use.

My math program is constructivist based, constructivist theory, but some people think that means you don't do anything, you just let them figure it out. I'd put my program against any program anywhere. It is not about just hanging out and seeing if they are going to get it, but giving them problems that support their thinking.

– Fred Hiltner

On a given day during the math period, an observer sees students engaged in a variety of activities: completing math journals, solving paper and pencil problems, exploring math choices activities, doing mental math. While some students practice their math facts, others build their algebra skills, finding multiple pairs of integers that satisfy equations like $x + 2y = 12$. Fred tells us, “They love to do [math], they love the excitement of thinking.”

Throughout the room, there is evidence of children being respected, listened to, and met on their own terms. The discourse is rich. Students and teacher share ideas, debate a little, and synthesize their viewpoints. Student feedback is kind; teacher input is positive and affirming. As an educator, Fred fosters his students' independence by giving them as much choice as possible within the limits that he determines. For example, because computers are rather distracting for primary students, the class needed to set some ground rules. Fred decided to make them available as a math choice only on Mondays and Thursdays. However, he asked the class to come up with an amount of time for “turns” at the computer. After much discussion, the group settled on nine minutes. They try to monitor themselves.

Fred also provides time in math for the entire class to gather as a group. This usually occurs at the beginning of the period – a time for the students to settle in and collect themselves before pursuing their individual work. It is also a time for Fred to check-in with students individually. He has a ritual that enables him to make eye contact with each student. After making clear what activities are available for students to choose from, he says, “When I wink at you, you may go and get your work.” Students eagerly anticipate each wink and beam as they receive this signal of Fred's approval and support.

Infusing Equity into the Life of the School

We have also seen equity work infused into the life of schools in Juneau. The schools of team members have been influenced in a number of ways – often through one-on-one conversations with peers and sharing ideas with teaching teammates. But the two most prominent ways that the lives of the schools have been impacted is via the promotion of standards-based instruction in mathematics and the increased connection with students' families.

Promoting Standards-based Instruction

The use of standards-based curricula and teaching is central to EMELI's effort to ensure all children's equitable access to high-quality and important mathematics. EMELI team members have worked tirelessly to keep standards-based mathematics “front and center” in their classrooms but even more so in their schools. They believe that its very presence will provide students school-wide with the opportunity for richer mathematical learning. In addition, they are confident

that teachers who use such curricula will be forced to engage in some kind of dialogue or reflection about why that broader opportunity for learning is (or is not) important. Deeper deliberation about the general nature of classroom practices in Juneau schools may even follow.

By way of example, for the last few years but particularly in the face of the ever growing controversy over the math curriculum at the high school, Angie Lunda has made it a priority to advocate for the standards-based middle school curriculum, the Connected Math Program (CMP). Under her and others' leadership, a Middle School Math Group was formed. The group meets regularly and is a forum for teachers to discuss their efforts to implement the three-year old math program, as well as to receive training and support. Meetings like these, and Angie's increasingly public stance about her beliefs in the value of the program (e.g., with colleagues, at district meetings, etc.), have kept the topic of standards-based instruction at the forefront of middle school dialogue.

Additionally, capitalizing on her position as district curriculum director, Annie Calkins continued to support the CMP program, especially during the decision-making process, to suspend the use of the Integrated Curriculum at the high school. Her endorsement has been vocal and public, and, as it was equated with that of the district, it sent a message to teachers about what was being valued at the highest levels of the system. It also increased the survival chances of the program.

Connecting with Families

Uniformly, the teachers on Juneau's EMELI team talk about their renewed commitment to getting to know their students' parents and home lives, and to fostering their schools' support of families as a way of promoting equity at their school sites. In order to accomplish these tasks, all have undertaken different strategies.

Angie Lunda's strategy (conscious or unconscious) has been to increasingly identify herself as Alaska Native with her students and their families. As a teacher and citizen, she had identified as Alaska Native and been involved in certain Alaska Native community groups, like the Alaska Native Sisterhood. However, her Alaska Native voice has become markedly stronger and more public in the last two years. As that evolution has taken place, she has become increasingly willing to participate more actively (and even take on leadership roles) in various community groups which has empowered her to forge connections with and to act as an advocate for Native families.

Regarding the practice of parents requesting teachers for their children, another team member has gone out on a limb to see to it that all parents have the opportunity to make such appeals. In the past parents could simply fill out a teacher request form at the school office. However, as Alaska Native parents were seldom on campuses (or were not aware of this practice), they rarely completed the forms for their children. Circumventing school policy, Fred Hiltner mailed request forms to the parent of every child in his class. Among Fred's primary areas of concern are practices within his school (and the district) that perpetuate imbalance. One strategy he uses to counter these inequities is arranging translators for all family conferences involving the ESL students in his classroom – roughly one-third of the children he teaches. He began this practice after participating in EMELI and reflecting on ways to better serve the needs of his students who did not speak English at home. According to Fred, the voices of Alaska Native parents as well as

those of other minority groups are practically silent. “It’s a big puzzle but I have new eyes to look at it [as a result of EMELI].”

Seeking Out Parents

Carol Fujioka tells us that EMELI has strengthened her pedagogy – confirming her desire to have the students work in groups and giving her new structures for strengthening student discourse. However, practically speaking, the EMELI experience has only moderately changed the way she teaches mathematics. Instead, Carol sees EMELI’s strongest impact in the way she views her students and feels the need to connect with them on an individual basis. This includes engaging the support of their parents in the learning process.

Each year, Carol has a group of students who struggle to complete their homework and who miss more school than others. She tries to give them extra time during and after school. Often, she calls their parents to rally extra support. Each year, there are also one or two parents who show little interest in Carol’s concern for their child. In the past, Carol has generally accepted these circumstances. This winter, however, Carol found it increasingly difficult to be satisfied with the unanswered phone calls and notes home that may or may not reach their destination. She decided to go directly to the student’s home – unannounced – where she was certain to interact with the parents and observe firsthand the student’s home environment. She reflected, “That’s something I never would have done before EMELI.”

When strategies for promoting equity such as these are incorporated into a school, the expectation is that school norms will begin to shift. As more teachers make changes in their mode of working, it will become commonplace for staffs to consciously consider the needs of all their students, especially when designing and carrying out new policies and practices.

Infusing Equity into Existing Professional Development

The EMELI team made considerable efforts to infuse equity into existing professional development in JSD. Again, although during the first six months of their work in the district equity-related discussions and information-sharing often took place informally in staff development sessions, with time higher level and more regular dialogue about equity in the Juneau system occurred. Indeed, at a number of the meetings mentioned below, equity was the main topic of discussion. Below we describe some of these professional development events.

Math Cadre Meetings

The EMELI team began to see meetings of the Eisenhower Math Cadres as feasible and significant arenas in which to promote discussion about equity and mathematics. Two EMELI team members were regular and active participants of the elementary Cadre. Thus, it was in elementary Cadre meetings that discussions began. Fred Hiltner and Carol Fujioka shared information from their EMELI workshops with the group after each trip to Santa Barbara, and at times they demonstrated and modeled EMELI activities with the group. Teachers, in turn, had the opportunity to grapple with questions of equitable practices, curricula and policies in Juneau. Meetings of the Elementary Math Cadre generally occur once a month and include a dozen or more elementary teachers who are designated math leaders in their buildings.

Middle School Math Group Meetings

What started as an informal gathering of middle school teachers interested in supporting each other in the implementation of the Connected Math Project evolved into a regularly convening group whose primary focus is to help teachers feel more confident and conversant with the materials for 6th, 7th, and 8th graders. As noted earlier, Angie Lunda has been an active participant in this group's monthly meetings, and so highlighting topics of equity as they related to the new curriculum and its implementation was quite natural. Over time, the group's discussions have become more pointed and deliberate. These teachers are committed to keeping CMP in middle school classrooms even though the Integrated Curriculum has been eliminated at the high school.

Leadership Development Meetings

The district holds Leadership Development Sessions for district leaders four times a year. In the 1997-98 school year, the EMELI team was invited by the administration to facilitate a two-part workshop on equity in mathematics education for all district administrators, principals and one teacher from each school entitled "The Alaska Quality Schools Initiative: A Focus on Equity." In January 1998 the team ran the first of two sessions, and in March 1998 held a follow-up meeting where the facilitator was EMELI Director, Julian Weissglass.

In the first session, participants spent time defining equity and examining their own assumptions, followed by reading and discussing portions of Lisa Delpit's Other People's Children, Richard Dauenhauer's Conflicting Visions in Alaskan Education and Julian Weissglass's article "A Call for Educational Change Leadership." Participants engaged in dyads and discussed the Alaskan Equity Standards as well as "next action steps" for Juneau. In the second meeting, Julian Weissglass shared the EMELI "Perspectives on Equity," discussed the political-social context of reform and facilitated a personal experience panel of Alaska Natives. The discussion about reform centered around the notion that much of the opposition to reform is based on "classism." Julian used SAT data to support his point, data that participants had never seen. The PEP enlisted some of the Alaska Natives in the group to share their educational experiences.

Principals Meetings

In monthly meetings, Annie Calkins facilitated principal discussions covering a wide range of topics. Soon after beginning her EMELI training, Annie began using the district principals' meetings as regular opportunities to engage administrators in the examination of student performance data. Most data was disaggregated by race and sex, specifically for the purposes of considering equity trends. Principals became more open to collectively examining data, surfacing inequities, reflecting on the educational practices in the district, and considering how they might improve conditions for students in their individual schools.

Strategy #2 Action Committee Meetings

The district's four Strategic Action Committees meet regularly as well. Over the last two years, the Strategy #2 team has increasingly focused its attention on issues of equitable access for Alaska Native students. Angie Lunda is a member of this district committee. Her growing knowledge

and leadership via EMELI have brought new ideas to the work of this group. In recent months, Fred Hiltner has also begun attending Strategy #2 meetings.

Thus, through varied avenues, the team has worked to enrich and expand the district's existing professional development. It was more difficult than in other places because there was no obvious structure (such as a larger reform effort like an LSC or USI) to hook into at first, but the team and its work ultimately managed to penetrate a number of events.

Creating New Events and Structures to Address Issues of Equity

The Juneau team soon realized that the practice of infusing equity into existing events, while important and often effective for raising people's awareness, was not reaching and influencing a broad enough audience, nor did it allow participants to grapple deeply with Juneau's most pressing equity issues. In order to "grab the attention" of district administrators and teachers (and to ensure their direct engagement with these issues), the team realized that they would have to create their own events and structures where equity was the central focus.

School-based Workshops

The team started by conducting equity workshops at Gastineau, Harborview, and Mendenhall River Elementary Schools in December 1997. These workshops emphasized examinations of gender-based inequities but also included some discussions of race and class. In small groups the staffs studied JSD Math Assessment data, for example, noting differences between 4th grade boys and girls' results on processing, understanding and communicating. They also considered and discussed the discrepancies between Alaskan Native students' overall performance as compared with that of other groups.

Subsequent sessions with more of a direct emphasis on race and class (and the EMELI structures) followed. The team planned to offer trainings to all Juneau schools serving K-8th grade students and came close to accomplishing this goal in one year. The workshops engaged participants in the EMELI structures – primarily dyads and PEPs – and also shared more testing and enrollment data of Juneau students, immediate and compelling evidence for teachers to learn and think about the challenges of their students.

“What’s Equity Got To Do With It?”

The team’s first offering of their revised workshop format entitled “What’s Equity Got to Do With It?” took place at Dzantik’i Heeni Middle School and Floyd Dryden Middle School during the month of March 1998. At Dzantik’i Heeni Middle School the EMELI team facilitated a two and one-half hour session with the whole faculty. They enlisted some members of the staff to participate in a PEP which was described as “heart-wrenching,” and the rest of the afternoon was spent looking at student work.

The principal discussed the session afterwards.

The equity stuff raises lots of good questions. We have some kids here where there is little correlation between grades and performance. And we were failing some kids. Turned out that they weren’t doing homework and that correlated very much with their home situation...It just doesn’t make sense to fail kids (who are passing the assessments) simply for not doing homework.

He went on to commend the EMELI team for the specificity and relevance of their work.

There were three things that made working with the EMELI team so successful...actually before that you need to know that this staff was ready – this is a group that values reflective practice. That said, the EMELI group was different than anything we’d done before. First, they’re a group of teachers – our staff could look at them and say, ‘This is us.’ Teachers listen to teachers. The other thing was that the data they brought was local, and a lot of the data was about kids in this building. The third thing was that the reading they asked us to look at was about Alaska Natives and that never happens. We’re always reading about some other ethnic group and having to apply it. Those are the things that really made it a success. The feedback we got was incredibly positive.

In these earlier workshops team members were “finding their way.” Questions arose about who was to take leadership, how to build consensus and how to most effectively process the information and issues that were raised. At the beginning the team was uncertain how to address those concerns. As Annie Calkins remembered,

The first Harborview workshop we gave, it was like a bad game of football. We were throwing each other the ball because nobody was going to be the leader and so we didn’t quite know what we were doing, and we all [wondered] afterward, ‘who was in charge there?’ We sort of talked about it [beforehand], but we didn’t have it orchestrated.

In later workshops, the team reworked their design and the sessions felt stronger as a result. Indeed, the positive feedback of the teachers at those schools was an indication of the team’s development as well as of their growing presentation skills.

...As a team [you] need to be able to take the lessons learned and adapt them to what fits for you...The [later] workshops, the half day sessions that we did with the personal experience panels and dyads, they were very thoughtful. Those were very powerful emotional experiences. I think to this day, those teachers remember them.

Regional Work

- ***Equity Academy***

After a year the work of the Juneau team started to spread into other areas of the state. In the spring of 1998 Annie Calkins applied for and received matching funding from the Science and Math Consortium for Northwest Schools (SMCNWS) for the team to run a three-day summer Equity Academy as part of the annual Southeast Academy for Instructional Improvement. The program was designed to attract Native and non-Native teachers from the approximately twenty Southeastern Alaska school districts. The Juneau Academy – entitled “Can All Students Meet the Standards?” – began in June and had a follow-up session in October 1998. EMELI Associate Director Ana Becerra helped the team to facilitate these meetings, the first of which was attended by 24-30 math and equity educators from the Southeast region. Nearly half returned for the October meeting.

Both portions of the Academy were, in effect, shortened versions of a “traditional” EMELI workshop. In June the group focused on race while the October follow-up explored issues of class. Each time, teachers engaged in mathematics activities and readings, followed by dyads, PEPs and support groups. Participants conversed and processed new learning about race and class and its effect on student achievement. They reflected on the implications for work in their own districts, and facilitators consistently asked teachers to pay particular attention to the situation of Alaska Native students. For example, in the class workshop, participants were asked to bring a lesson, teaching strategy or unit that was especially effective with Alaska Native students. Strategies were shared, discussed and distributed to all participants. There was also time allotted for teams of teachers from the same district to meet, processing such questions as, “What is your district doing that supports or blocks learning for ALL students? What needs to change?” The team has applied for and recently received funding to conduct a second round of Academy sessions, to begin in 1999.

- ***2nd Alaska EMELI Team***

The original EMELI team from Juneau has provided impetus for the formation of a second Alaska team, from the Mat-Su Borough School District near Anchorage. The contact was originally initiated via an administrative connection with Annie Calkins. The Mat-Su EMELI is also a team of administrators and teachers and became a part of EMELI 6. Members of the new team were invited to participate in the Equity Academy, and then in the spring of 1999, the Mat-Su team traveled to Juneau for a planning meeting of the two teams. The team leader of the Mat-Su team described the meeting in an email to Julian Weissglass:

...The trip to Juneau was great. You were right about our teams needing to meet and share our long range and short range goals. The Juneau team was receptive and it was like going to a mini-EMELI. I felt safe and supported! This meeting has spurred me to do more reading and to get the message to others. I saw in the faces of the Juneau team the same commitment and desire that I have held inside. We have many opportunities awaiting us in the years ahead.

The two teams continue to be in contact and to support each other’s work.

Summary

The equity efforts of this teacher team are clearly multi-faceted. The work is ongoing. Over time, all members of the groups repeatedly tell us that the EMELI work has penetrated their lives – it has simply become a part of who they are and what they do. Still, the details of their individual and collective efforts offer suggestions for how other educators might choose to undertake equity work in their own setting. Some strategies are more conducive to those with prior EMELI experience, others are not. In the box on the following page, we list many of the ways that Juneau EMELI team members continue to work every day.

When teachers engage in the local work of EMELI, they...

- make use of mathematics curricula that are inclusive and that acknowledge multiple learning styles
- provide multiple ways for students to be mathematically successful
- encourage students to articulate their individual understandings of mathematical ideas by talking to each other
- modify the EMELI dyad structure for use with children and teenagers
- create opportunities to get to know their students as people, to hear their students' stories
- infuse their teaching with culturally relevant references (via language, customs, art, etc.)
- reflect frequently on their teaching
- provide support for each other through regular meetings
- know students' parents and engage them in conversations
- use multiple strategies for making contact with parents, including making arrangements for translators and going to students' homes
- take time to talk to colleagues one-on-one about issues related to equity
- work with their principals and engage them in an ongoing equity dialogue
- examine school policies and practices for signs of inequities
- attempt to change school policies and practice that perpetuate inequities
- view student placement practices and standardized testing data critically
- encourage their schools and districts to differentiate student achievement data by race, sex, and class
- provide workshops and trainings for their district and regional colleagues
- participate in local organizations committed to improving educational/social conditions for students of color, women, and/or students from low socio-economic backgrounds (such as Alaska Native Sisterhood or Juneau Native Education Commission)
- advocate for the rights of students and their families within their schools (for example, raising issues at staff meetings, interacting with colleagues, etc.)
- support other district groups engaged in equity work

While there is much still to do, Juneau EMELI team members feel that their work is beginning to permeate the landscape. Reflecting back over the last two years, Annie Calkins echoed Angie Lunda's sentiments about the team's activity.

[The equity work] is becoming a different part of the fabric of schooling here. It is not the workshop, it is getting more people to recognize the complexity of what the issues are and who the people are, because that all comes back to the relationships and trust and respect that people have for other people. I think that is different than delivering workshops. It just becomes part of the text of what we do.

VI. EMELI'S CONTRIBUTIONS, BENEFITS, AND IMPACTS

EMELI team members want more than simply to “do the work” – they want to make a difference. They also want others to be moved to the point of taking on the work themselves. From casual conversations to formal workshops, they want to communicate the message of EMELI and encourage others to become advocates for traditionally under-served populations. In this section, we share the impact that EMELI has had in Juneau. Beginning with the team members themselves, followed by the team’s local colleagues, and the school district itself, we portray how EMELI has changed the nature of the awareness about equity issues as well as the people committed to addressing them.

Influences on Team Members

Participants come to EMELI at different stages of readiness for the equity work that awaits them. Differing backgrounds and experiences also make the impact of EMELI necessarily individual. Still, nearly all EMELI participants claim to have been personally transformed by their two years of involvement with the program. The Juneau EMELI team uniformly reports similar results. For example, Annie Calkins talks about having conversations with district colleagues that were not possible prior to EMELI. Jim Preston speaks of being able to see the racism that pervades the high school. Carol Fujioka explains how getting to know her students as people has become a foremost part of her job and that finding the time to do so has become a top priority. Fred Hiltner speaks passionately about how the EMELI experience has fundamentally changed the way he views people in all aspects of his life, from dealings with family members to interactions with colleagues. The list goes on.

Still, among the Juneau group, the impact on team member Angie Lunda is arguably the most profound. Angie talks about how prior to EMELI she seldom spoke out at meetings, even though she had important ideas to share. Since participating in EMELI, she has become a far more active and outspoken member of Alaska Native organizations and district committees. She reflects on being an advocate for her school’s math program:

Being able to stand up to that pressure and defend [the curriculum]...is really important. From all of the training that we have had at EMELI, I [now] have the strength to stand behind it.

Angie sits on a variety of educational committees, including the district’s Strategy #2 Committee and the state’s Science Standards Committee. She has also volunteered to serve on the Site Council of her daughter’s elementary school – a role she doubts she would have considered prior

to EMELI. In that role, Angie has helped the school examine issues of student placement and the “clustering” of gifted and talented students.

Learning the Native Language

One of the most recent developments that Angie attributes to EMELI is her participation in the district’s Tlingit language program. Beginning in the fall of 1998, Angie Lunda became one of a small group of (Native and non-Native) educators in Juneau who are learning the language of the indigenous people of the region, the Tlingit. She believes that both her selection into the program and its very existence have been strongly influenced by EMELI. (Annie Calkins worked closely with the Juneau Native Education Commission to devise the two-year plan which received \$30,000 in a budget allocation from the school board.) In the classroom, Angie tries to share what she is learning with all of her students. She provides Tlingit words for the names of numbers and objects in the handouts she creates. She explains the Tlingit base 20 number system and students grapple with its use. Uniformly, students from all backgrounds take interest in learning more about the local cultural heritage. But for Native students and their parents, Angie’s efforts have special meaning. Mid-year, a number of Native Alaskan parents requested that their children be moved to Angie’s class.

Re-discovery of her own Native heritage has taught Angie the importance of valuing each child’s culture. It has also affirmed her desire to incorporate the local culture into her classroom as much as possible. She explains:

When I went to school none of that happened, and so it wasn’t until I went to EMELI that I even realized that it made a difference to me. It wasn’t until I had been forced to think about it, to dig it out of where it had been buried forever, that I realized how important [valuing the culture] was.

For Angie, the process of surfacing past hurts and sharing them with others has been difficult. She presses on because she knows what good can come from her efforts. Angie wants to see to it that other Native students do not experience the cultural void that characterized her own public education.

Influences on Other Teachers

Through the work of the team, EMELI has had an indirect influence on other teachers in the district – both formally (via school staff meetings, Cadre meetings, district committee work, school-based workshops, equity institutes) and informally (via interactions in the faculty room, exchanges in the hallway, impromptu discussions of students and their performance). The quotes provided below are taken from interviews as well as written evaluations of EMELI workshops. They illustrate some of the ways in which teachers indicate being influenced by the work of their EMELI peers. Most of the impact is in the realm of raising awareness and teachers becoming more reflective about their practice. However, they also reveal that some teachers outside of the EMELI team have incorporated the dyad structure into their classroom. Others report feeling the need to take a more activist role in their approach to equity issues. For example, following their first workshop with the EMELI team, a number of teachers from Dzantik’i Heeni Middle School began reflecting on what they hoped to do differently as educators.

I will set goals to work more closely with Native students who are having problems or not having problems. We need to be more understanding of all students. We need to understand their home life.

I have to re-think my use of sarcasm in the classroom. I also need to re-evaluate the fact that I am a white male who is perceived as threatening to some.

I will be more observant of my actions toward all students and more sensitive to creating a comfortable community.

There was also an indication on the part of the Dzantik'i Heeni teachers that their work with the EMELI team was different than other equity trainings that they might have experienced in the past. One teacher reflected on the personal sharing component:

There were many things I didn't know about Alaska's educational history. The session as a whole raised my level of awareness about equity issues like no workshop before. I was personally very touched at the sharing of the people on the panel and their willingness to be so vulnerable.

Across all of the school-based workshops, teachers expressed gratitude to the EMELI team for bringing the data to their attention and concern about what they could do to improve the situation as educators.

When I saw this data, I was very surprised and sad. Sad because when I saw how low the median scores were for Native children and I had a lot of trouble finding a reason. But after listening to each group speak after reviewing the data, I felt better because [the workshop] gave more understanding as well as hope.

– Elementary Teacher

I'm astoundingly grateful that [we] dedicated this time to EMELI and equity. This was the most valuable thing we did all year. You helped us open our eyes.

– Middle School Teacher

We wondered about the extent to which these sentiments stayed with teachers beyond the workshops. One elementary school principal told us that she was rather surprised to see the lasting impact of their first EMELI workshop. While it is not necessarily typical to see a teacher implementing the structures after one EMELI session, the following story points to the potential of the team's work with teachers:

I walked into a 5th grade classroom just last week. A newer teacher was putting into place that 2 minutes of listening. And I thought, wow, that has been a long time since we have done that and this is with 5th graders who really need to know how to listen. They tend to be so busy telling their own stories that they are not really good about being reflective listeners, or just listeners, period. So they were working on that and they had a whole lesson planned around that skill that we had learned [during the workshop] and I

was very impressed. I thought that was really neat. The kids were right in the palm of his hand.

– Elementary Principal

Teachers who participated in the JSD Equity Academies tended to have even stronger feelings about the impact of EMELI on their work – most likely because they had spent so much more time working with the EMELI team than other teachers – two to four days versus two to eight hours. They also had more time to reflect on how the work of EMELI might be infused into their own work. Reflecting on “next steps,” one teacher reported:

I see my next step as getting more involved in equity issues at a District level, that is, being part of committees, strategy groups, student government. This is something I have avoided for several years, but these past two days have made me realize that if I want a voice I must make the professional time commitment.

– Equity Academy Participant, Alaska Native Teacher

Similar to what we heard from EMELI team members after their first workshop, the teachers quoted here report that exposure to the ideas and structures of EMELI caused them to view their students and professional work differently. They were particularly influenced by student performance data and the powerful personal stories. The combination of the two made issues they had previously avoided all the more tangible. As a result, the inequities that surrounded them seemed more apparent than ever and they wanted to take some sort of action. Within a relatively short time, these recipients of a second generation EMELI experience had also become invested in the work.

Influences on District Leaders

District administrators also had the opportunity to attend workshops facilitated by the EMELI team. However, the most likely source of EMELI influence for this group stemmed from their regular (often daily) interactions with EMELI team leader Annie Calkins. More than any other team member, Annie has had the opportunity to impact the Juneau district leaders – from individual principals to the superintendent. No stranger to equity work herself, Annie believes that EMELI ideas and methods have been infused into all that she does, from tuning district performance assessments to lobbying board members, from writing grants to meeting with parents. Annie’s work with the district’s principals is an area where she has witnessed identifiable progress.

It’s pretty interesting ... how [equity work] filters down or around the district. When you try to get people to think from an equity perspective, a couple of years down the line [you see] how it is different. When you have a whole group of principals in a meeting together, [you see] what they are sensitive to when they work with the information [and disaggregated data], as opposed to how it was in the old days when we never did that.

Grounding the discussion of equity in data was a new, EMELI-motivated approach that appealed to long-time equity advocates as well as those who were more reticent about delving into honest

discussions of Alaska Native student achievement. We had the chance to observe a small sample of these principals' meetings, and were particularly impressed with a meeting we sat in on during a final trip to Juneau. The principals were thoroughly immersed in the task of examining the data. Their observations were insightful. Their comments indicated not only an understanding of equity issues, but a sincere willingness to grapple with the inequities that were illuminated by the analysis.

The Middle School Principals

There are two middle school principals in Juneau – both are Caucasian males, and both are very much concerned about the educational welfare of their students. Beyond these similarities, the two have approached equity issues quite differently, resulting in contrasting experiences with the EMELI team.

Les Morse is principal of Dzantik'i Heeni Middle School (DZ). He views his work largely through an equity lens. Over the course of his career, he has struggled with how best to assist teachers in addressing issues of equity in their work. He says he has experienced an abundance of equity presenters who “failed to understand the issues that are unique to Alaska Native students.” Many were multicultural educators trying to apply highly generalized principles to a very specific situation. Although there is no EMELI team member at his school, as soon as Les Morse learned of the work of the EMELI team, he invited the group to come and work with the staff. He hoped the team would bring something new to the discussion of equity issues in his school. That is exactly what they did. Through their use of local data and EMELI structures, the Juneau team personalized the discussion of racial inequities for the staff at Dzantik'i Heeni – so much so that Les Morse invited the team back a second time – to focus on issues of social class. The data the EMELI team presented reflected the experiences of DZ students in their school. The EMELI team also validated and provided a forum for the personal stories of the staff at Dzantik'i Heeni. Their responses to the workshops were quite positive.

At Floyd Dryden, the other middle school in town where team member Angie Lunda teaches, principal Lynn Divelbess has approached issues of equity more cautiously. Our early conversations with Lynn indicated that he was having trouble viewing the work of the EMELI team beyond the local district math debate. Within his school, staff were divided regarding math texts. The 7th grade teachers, including Angie Lunda, strongly supported use of the Connected Math Program, while the 8th grade algebra teacher refused to use the more progressive text, arguing that the traditional approach worked for “his students.” Girls and students of color are generally underrepresented in the 8th grade algebra class at Floyd Dryden. Lynn did not want to take sides regarding the math issue. He seemed hesitant to directly confront issues of differential achievement between boys and girls, and between whites and minorities in his school.

Since that time, Principal Divelbess has attended numerous principal workshops with Annie Calkins as well as the district's leadership development workshop which focused on equity. He has also interacted repeatedly with Angie Lunda over the years and witnessed the impact EMELI has had on what he calls “one of our school's finest teachers.” In a recent follow-up interview, he told us:

There's one thing that EMELI's had a lot to do with ... there's more honesty about how different kids are performing, especially Alaska Native kids ... and poverty kids. And I've really appreciated that – not sweeping it under the rug – which I think is what used to happen.

Beyond the work with the Juneau principals, colleagues in the district office speak of the influence of EMELI on their work via interactions with Annie Calkins and the EMELI team. For example, Charla Wright, Coordinator of Assessment and Instruction, told us about what she perceived as the growing support among district administrators for engaging in equity work:

I think the EMELI conversations have helped us to create more of a district-wide network ... just the support for people to be brave and support each other which is really critical as are all of the techniques for collaboration and understanding. This is really [important because] we lose people from this work... it [takes an] emotional toll. It is very difficult work.

– Charla Wright

District Superintendent Mary Rubadeau confirmed this view and went even further to say:

I have seen a change in the landscape; I have seen it change and I think it has happened as result of having that heart beat [the EMELI team] go school to school and challenge people's thinking. I think [our approach to equity] has gone more from hand wringing, to what are we going to do ... what is happening here and how can we make a difference?

At multiple levels we hear from district leaders that EMELI has provided administrators with the tools for more directly and honestly addressing issues of differential student performance in Juneau. They are more willing and able to have conversations around issues that were previously avoided or simply not discussed. In the next section we briefly highlight the district policies and practices that have been influenced by the work of EMELI.

Influences on District Policy and Practices

As mentioned earlier, sending a team from Juneau to EMELI represented an extremely significant effort during many years of trying to motivate change within the district. Particularly, the administrative team of Mary Rubadeau as Superintendent and Annie Calkins as Assistant Superintendent has worked persistently to confront beliefs and practices that perpetuate inequities in Juneau. It is unlikely that there would have been an EMELI team without their groundwork and support. Under these circumstances, it is sometimes difficult to tease out the changes in district policy and practice that one can attribute to EMELI and those that might have happened otherwise. What we report here are those recent developments in the Juneau equity effort in which we can be confident EMELI had a strong hand.

- Organizing and sharing student performance data

The Juneau School District has seemingly always collected data about its students. As the district first developed and then administered an array of performance-based assessments over the past decade, even more data was collected. However, prior to the work of the EMELI team, data was not being regularly disaggregated to facilitate analysis and public discussions of trends by gender, race, and class. There was also less consideration given to presenting this data in formats that would be readily accessible to larger audiences – principals, teachers, parents, and so on. From all accounts, the Juneau School District is now collecting, analyzing, and reporting student data differently and the consensus is that the experience of the EMELI team has motivated this change.

- Incorporating data into equity training for the district

The EMELI team wanted to build relevant workshops around local data. With the data in hand, they could provide evidence for their case and move forward with enhancing equity training for the district. According to Superintendent Mary Rubadeau, the EMELI approach of taking local data and examining it using “the structures” (i.e. dyads, personal experience panels, and so on) is one that says to participants, “Let’s own this. Let’s see what’s really going on here.” It has been a strong fit for Juneau, particularly in educational circles, where one of the key goals of the district is to have all students meeting the Alaska State Standards – an objective with an implicit equity focus. Increasingly, we hear people refer to the EMELI team as the district’s “on-call” equity experts. It also appears that their model has become the standard against which the success of other equity trainings are now judged. The inclusion of local data has become a necessary component of any equity training.

- Incorporating equity into leadership development for the district

Just as local data has become an integral part of the district’s equity training, a focus on equity has become central to the district leadership development program. Charla Wright explained, “Rather than [doing] leadership development on EMELI, [the district has decided to] make sure it is part of every staff development leadership piece we do, and we certainly have the potential to do that.” Her comments suggest that the district has moved in this direction, and that there is still work to do.

- Asking new questions in terms of hiring

Being more honest and direct about issues of equity has also trickled into district practices surrounding hiring – the kinds of people that the district pursues as well as the questions being asked during the application process.

We have redefined the type of people that we want in our schools as a result of these conversations that we have had about equity.

– Mary Rubadeau

Annie Calkins gave a recent example, explaining that in the past district staff would avoid using “the e-word” (equity) when interviewing applicants. They would talk around it with questions about diversity or soliciting ways to celebrate Juneau’s multicultural student population. This practice, too, has changed.

It becomes a theme, equity and diversity. Now when we are interviewing people, we ask about that all the time. When we interviewed our curriculum director, one of the questions was: ‘How would you promote equity and diversity in a district like Juneau?’ We did not have the word ‘equity’ in there before.

Some say that it is only because of this climate of heightened equity awareness that the district would have made its recent hire of the first Alaska Native principal ever at Juneau Douglas High School.

- Re-committing to detracking

When the School Board voted in 1998 to return to a more traditional high school math curriculum, the district leadership (particularly Annie Calkins) saw to it that this change did not result in a return to tracking. Administrators were quick to point out the disconnect between being committed to equity work and the grouping of students according to their prior academic achievement. The School Board understood this argument and supported a return to the traditional curriculum for all students without instituting remedial courses in a “track.”

- Developing a Tlingit language program

Last year, the Juneau Education Board asked leaders from the Alaska Native community what could be done to better support the academic performance of Alaska Native students. Their response was to give students and teachers an opportunity to learn the Tlingit language. Some members of the board were surprised by their response, expecting a request for more traditional interventions like tutorial support or smaller class sizes. Still, when Annie Calkins and colleagues from the JNEC presented the plan they had developed, the school board voted unanimously to support the program and allotted \$30,000 to get it started. Some skepticism persisted among a few board members, even as the program got underway. One was brave enough to ask at a recent board meeting, six months after its inception, about the difference the program was really making. Annie Calkins related to us how a 5th grade teacher, a Filipino woman, stood up to respond. She said something like this:

Language is the soul of a culture and by acknowledging and respecting and including language in the school, you are honoring and respecting the culture of the people whose land you are on.

– Annie Calkins, quoting local 5th grade teacher Linda Augustine

The program has just completed its first year with seven teachers participating and will continue during the 1999-2000 school year, doubling the number of teachers engaged in the serious study of a highly complex language. A \$400,000 grant was recently received from the Alaska Department of Education to continue and expand a Tlingit language immersion program.

Influences on the Larger Community

Those who know the EMELI team best, including the team members themselves, readily admit that community outreach has not been a significant strength of the Juneau EMELI team. District principals describe the team as “not high profile” and “having only minimal impact” in the larger community. Instead, the influence of the EMELI team has been largely limited to schools and people involved in education.

The team didn't really take the next step and try to do anything with local community people ... but at this point, I don't think that would have felt right, because we had too much internal work to do.

– Mary Rubadeau

While the team's decision to focus on the school district is understandable, some active members of Alaska Native organizations have expressed disappointment that the EMELI team has not formed stronger ties with local organizations – groups whose goals are quite similar to that of EMELI.

I really feel that the EMELI team could work with the Juneau Education Commission, the local Native groups. There are a lot of linkages there that they could connect to, that they haven't.

– Alaska Native Focus Group Participant

Even team member Angie Lunda reports that she has “mixed feelings about what we have accomplished as a team.” That ambivalence stems largely from the group's sporadic direct work with Alaska Native organizations. Angie continues, “I don't think it has been a conscious choice at all.” The combination of busy lives and irregular meetings has made it difficult to call simultaneous gatherings of multiple groups, like EMELI and JNEC. In addition, there has been no forum in which the professional paths of group members have overlapped on a regular basis. Joining forces would require considerable organizational effort and so far, no one has stepped forward to take that next step. According to what we heard from focus group participants, Alaska Native organizations want very much to learn more about the work of EMELI. Now may be an ideal time for the EMELI team to begin strengthening those partnerships.

VII. LESSONS LEARNED

Bringing the work of EMELI back to their home district has taught members of the Juneau team a great deal about what it means to undertake equity-driven reform in the local setting. Here we offer some of the lessons they have learned in this process.

- It is a challenge for one relatively small team to operate in a culturally sensitive environment.

The equity issues foremost on the minds of the Juneau team are based largely on race and cultural differences, with an underlying class component. They are deeply embedded in the history of Juneau – a direct result of the clash of Native and European cultures that occurred nearly 150 years ago. Under these conditions, it is especially difficult for a handful of people to facilitate even the honest examination of such issues, nonetheless significant reform. The community as a whole is hesitant to open wounds and expose hurts, particularly without a clear vision of solutions.

- Taking risks in the kind of “fish bowl” atmosphere that exists in Juneau can be difficult.

As Fred Hiltner said early on in this project, “It's tough to be a prophet in your own district.” This has been true for most EMELI participants – that doing of the work in their local context, with people they see everyday, is more difficult than when they are more of an unknown. Mary Rubadeau echoed these sentiments when she said, “The messages just aren't as well received internally as externally.”

- The history of dedicating Eisenhower monies to address equity issues in mathematics was helpful to the EMELI team's work, but a "host reform program" in the district could have bolstered the team's efforts.

Prior equity-related work that had been done in the district clearly supported the team's endeavors. As Superintendent Mary Rubadeau notes, it is best if a team can build upon the foundation laid by previous work.

Just training a core team of four or five people isn't going to really amount to much unless you have a stream moving in the right direction that they can help move... [It would be very hard] if they just came in cold and there wasn't an overall systems structure [in which] to work and wrestle with these issues, such as [building on] the work that had been done in math [or on] the training in the math cadre [or on] the vision for all kids...

Although buoyed by this prior groundwork, the team did not have the benefit of a host reform program or an evident "home" for its work within the district. Unlike the other EMELI teams that we followed, the Juneau team was unable to use a larger reform initiative, such as an NSF-funded Local Systemic Change (LSC) or Urban Systemic Initiative (USI) project, as a vehicle for promoting and carrying out its work. It had to generate its impetus solely from within itself. Additionally, Juneau team members are not compensated for the additional hours and energy they devote to their EMELI work (whereas in LSC or USI districts conducting workshops or trainings falls often under the purview of team members' regular grant-sponsored jobs). These aspects make the business of doing regular broad-based work that much more challenging.

- Team selection is vitally important.

The make-up of an EMELI team can make or break the effectiveness and sustainability of its work. Identifying Annie Calkins to be the leader of the EMELI Juneau team was wise and strategic. She is one of the few assistant superintendents who is a member of an EMELI team. Her position allowed her to leverage and push through many of the initial ideas that the team proposed.

Similarly, a team that is diverse and representative of many constituents is important. Yet it is also helpful if team members have multiple opportunities to work closely with one another. The Juneau team members had no connection prior to EMELI and thus had no other excuse to meet outside of their EMELI work. They do not teach in the same schools or sit on the same district committees. They are purposely spread across the district, geographically and organizationally. This has its benefits – for example, reaching different audiences – but the drawbacks of rarely meeting informally makes collaboration challenging.

Finally, a team is not well served if members are only selected because they might be "converted" by the EMELI experience. It is difficult to generate cohesive teamwork when members, all well intentioned, fundamentally disagree about the nature of teaching and learning – the "basic beliefs and assumptions" – or on their role as leaders within their district or region.

- Given that the work is often difficult and occurs over the long term, employing multiple strategies for reaching, enlisting and holding on to different segments of the population is critical.

Superintendent Mary Rubadeau acknowledged the comprehensive nature of the work, and the progress the team has made so far.

The work of the EMELI team and their mission of creating greater equity in the Juneau schools ... is difficult work and it is kind of long-term work. It is the kind of 'stay the course' work. It has everything to do with people's belief systems ... about teaching and learning and students' abilities and being able to talk about that. That is difficult work and I think a lot of that ground has been plowed. I think people have had a chance to really talk about those things. But then, beyond that, it has to do with a lot of staff development, because it is not just about belief systems, I think it has to do with skills and... how to really be a good teacher for a variety of kids. We have a variety of kids in all of our classrooms; they might be good teachers for half of the kids, but are they good teachers for all of the kids? ... The work of the equity team... [has been] great, but it is a long-term job.

Indeed, with the broad scope of work that still needs to occur, it also seems important to build alliances and forge relationships with groups outside the immediate core of people with whom the team has been working. The high school staff, for example, for a variety of reasons, has not yet been draw on as a whole (except in a few cases), nor has the Alaska Native parent community. Securing partnerships with these groups could be hugely beneficial to the team's overall efforts. The sustainability of the EMELI work will ultimately depend on it.

- The prevalence of information technology has changed the character of the "local" debate.

Between fax machines, email, and web pages, any local conflict in any American community, even one as remote as Juneau, can become part of the national debate. Even 10 years ago, it would have been unlikely that the "mathematically correct" controversy in California would have taken an interest in the high school mathematics curriculum of Juneau, Alaska and vice versa.

VIII. VISION OF THE FUTURE

The last EMELI workshop for Cohort 4 ended more than a year ago. Even for the EMELI Cohort 5 leadership team members Angie and Fred, regular trips to Santa Barbara will soon be a thing of the past. No longer can they look forward to retreating to the south, if only for a few days, to immerse themselves personally in the work, to be among others engaged in similar struggles, to refuel and to refresh.

The work is hard. As they've heard Julian Weissglass say at least a dozen times, "If it's easy, then you're not doing it." Still, all four of the Juneau team members are committed to continuing their equity work in the months and years ahead. They want to continue to function as a team, though they recognize that as time goes on this will prove increasingly difficult. EMELI brought this

group together and it is their belief in the value of the work that keeps them coming together. However, the equity work they do in Juneau is not compensated; the team's affiliation is not an official one. As a result, future EMELI work will continue to be an "extra" in the lives of these four educators, all of whom already juggle the demands of career and family time.

Recently, a new set of local challenges has surfaced for the Juneau EMELI team. A "changing of the guard" is on the immediate horizon for the Juneau School District. The combination of an enticing state retirement plan and personal circumstances have resulted in the potential departure of many key players – particularly in relationship to the work of the EMELI team.

Annie Calkins, EMELI team leader and Assistant Superintendent, plans to "take a professional break." She leaves her district position effective July 1, 1999. Professionally, she has not decided what lies ahead but says that her commitment to the work of the EMELI team is something above and beyond her official role in the district. She has every intention of continuing to support and work with her team members. Annie will continue to be widely known and respected within the Juneau community, but she will no longer be a daily presence in the district office. The parameters of her circle of influence are changing.

Mary Rubadeau, the persevering and proactive superintendent, will retire effective July 1, 1999. Mary's announcement followed Annie's. The two women have clearly worked as a team in recent years. Replacing her is the district's Chief Financial Officer, Gary Bader, who is pushing for increased accountability and tells us that he "wants to see improved test scores and no excuses."

In the high school math department, Jim Preston, former EMELI team member and math education reform critic, also plans to retire at the end of year. He will be accompanied by the high school's long-time math department chair. Ron Gleason, principal of the high school, self-ascribed math education reformer, and strong EMELI supporter, has also announced that he will retire at the end of the 1998-99 academic year. His replacement is an Alaska Native, the first to be appointed principal of Juneau-Douglas High School. The principal of Floyd Dryden Middle School, where Angie Lunda teaches, also has put in for retirement.

To an outsider, it feels that the pendulum is swinging in Juneau – away from reform and toward tradition, away from responsibility and toward accountability. The EMELI team assures us that this is not altogether the case, that this is merely another time of transition in a place highly accustomed to change. However, until new hires are in place and the team can establish its relationship with the new administration, many aspects of the future seem hazy.

One thing is certain. The EMELI team will soon be a team of three teachers and they will need to establish a new basis of support in the district.

The three teachers who are now on the team, their training will benefit the district if we can keep them together somehow, but there has to be support for that to happen, like an overall district staff development plan where they get some release time.

– Mary Rubadeau, Superintendent

There has been talk of assigning coordination with the EMELI team to the new Assistant Superintendent so that someone in the district office will have responsibility for nurturing the work of the team through the administrative transition period. Members of the team also see some avenues for productive future work. The following is a list of the areas where they see the greatest potential for future impact.

- ON-CALL EQUITY SPECIALISTS

Similar to the role they have played in the district in recent years, the team would like to be available to provide school-based workshops for all district schools on a “by request” basis. They also hope colleagues within their own schools will continue to turn to them with questions surrounding issues of equity as they surface.

- STRATEGY #2 COMMITTEE

Angie Lunda is a member of this district committee, whose task it is to “institutionalize and strengthen successful programs to ensure that all Native and minority students have opportunities to achieve success.” The principal of Carol Fujioka’s school, who speaks appreciatively of the EMELI team’s work, sits on this committee as well. Fred Hiltner also attends the group’s meetings whenever possible.

- NEW TEACHER TRAINING / TEACHER IN-SERVICES

EMELI team members recognize that so much of their work is about teachers and how they relate to students. New teachers, more than any other group, tend to be burdened by the pressure to perform. As Mary Rubadeau put it, “They can forget that the road to success with their students is the same road that brought them to teaching.” New teachers need to be reminded of the importance of looking at each child individually. The work of the EMELI is a strong match.

In addition, the district recently received a grant from Sealaska, a local business owned and run by Alaska Natives, to do further teacher training in the 1999-2000 school year.

- DEEPENING WORK WITH EQUITY ACADEMY CORE GROUP

This group of local and regional educators has gone through four full days of work with the EMELI team – and they want more. Key questions remain. What is the best way to serve the needs of this group? And how might this group help serve the needs of the EMELI team?

- PROVIDING AN EQUITY ACADEMY II

The Juneau team has received funding for a second generation Equity Academy. They now must decide how such an event would support the further work of the original Equity Academy participants, and whether they would use funding to bring on a new group.

- PARTNERSHIP WITH MAT-SU EMELI TEAM

Collaboration with a second Alaska-based EMELI team began in March 1999. The two groups have extensive plans for future collaborations and collective efforts that have the potential for state-wide impact.

- POTENTIAL REGIONAL CENTER

On a number of occasions in the past year, Julian Weissglass has asked members of the Juneau and Mat-Su teams to consider the possibility of establishing a Northwest Regional Equity Center in Alaska. This has never moved beyond the idea stage, but the talk continues.

Enduring Issues

While there appear to be many avenues for the team's future work, a number of issues will continue to challenge them in the months and years ahead. Perhaps the greatest of these challenges is simply maintaining their stamina and being encouraged by the small steps of progress. Despite the team's persistent efforts and relative progress over the past few years, the work required to change conditions for Alaska Natives in Juneau has only begun. Many of the issues in Juneau remain very much the same as when the team started. By and large, Alaska Native students are not experiencing the same success in the Juneau schools as their peers of other ethnicities.

We are struggling. We are not doing a good job with our Alaska Native population in particular and we haven't taken many steps forward and that is a concern.

– Charla Wright

Further, the political context that is Juneau will continue to make equity work especially challenging.

...The political arena in Juneau is tough. If we decided tomorrow we were going to have a fully bilingual Tlingit-English school, even if we had people who could do it because they are fluent Tlingit speakers, I don't know if the political climate would support it. It is going to take awhile to build it.

– Annie Calkins

Yet there is more honesty about the problems, and more constructive dialogue and collaboration (all of which are attributed to the work of the EMELI team), and there have been important steps taken. Team members report there is also more hope; they are particularly encouraged by the most recent district math assessment data from spring 1999 which shows improved results for Native students. A new program matches Native elders with the schools, with one elder associated with each school. Many isolated initiatives have been implemented in the district over the years and have incrementally helped to improve conditions for all in the district, but the EMELI experience and the work of the team has directed the individual efforts to be more of a collective one. In fact, achieving a more equitable educational environment is now more broadly

configured; the district's association with EMELI implies that its endeavors around equity now fit into a local, state and national context.

The EMELI team understands that they have taken on a long-term project for which there are no easy or obvious solutions. They recognize that holding their ground and guarding against "slippage" during the upcoming administrative transition is critical. Through Annie's grant writing efforts, they have secured additional funding to preserve special equity projects like the Tlingit Language Program and the Equity Academy. Moreover, the team has become more savvy and proactive about seeking other financial resources. In the end, it is the successes that the team has experienced and the changes that they have continued to witness in the local culture in the last two years which encourage them to persist in their efforts.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE JUNEAU EMELI TEAM

- Nov. 1996 – 97 Juneau Team attends their first four EMELI workshops in Santa Barbara as part of EMELI Cohort 4.
- December 1997 Team conducts school-based workshops at Harborview, Gastineau, and Mendenhall River Elementary Schools, with a focus on student performance data disaggregated by race and gender.
- January 21, 1998 Team helps facilitate a Juneau School District Leadership Development Session, the topic of which is “The Alaska Quality Schools Initiative: A Focus on Equity.”
- January 27, 1998 School Board meets to discuss Integrated Math Program JDHS and initiates that 3-month review of district math instruction and adopted texts.
- January 1998 Team member Jim Preston resigns from the EMELI team.
- February 1998 Team attends fifth EMELI workshop.
- Spring 1998 Team receives supplemental funding from Science and Math Consortium for Northwest Schools (SMCNS) for equity work.
- March 6, 1998 Team conducts “What’s Equity Got To Do With It?” workshop at Dzantik’i Heeni Middle School, making use of data, EMELI structures, and excerpts from Richard Dauenhauer’s *Conflicting Visions in Alaska Education*.
- March 6, 1998 Team conducts “What’s Equity Got To Do With It?” workshop at Floyd Dryden Middle School.
- March 19, 1998 Team helps facilitate the second half of the Juneau School District Leadership Development Session – “The Alaska Quality Schools Initiative: A Focus on Equity.” (Julian Weissglass serves as the primary facilitator.)
- Spring 1998 Fred Hiltner and Angie Lunda join the EMELI Leadership Team as Support Group Leaders for EMELI C5.
- Spring 1998 Annie Calkins recruits Mat-Su Borough School District in Anchorage to apply for participation in the EMELI program.
- April 1998 School Board votes to purchase new math texts for the high school in order to replace the integrated program with a more traditional curriculum.
- June 1998 Team attends sixth and final EMELI workshop.
- June 8-10, 1998 Team hosts regional Equity Academy – Part I: “Can All Students Meet the Standards?” (Ana Becerra helps facilitate.)
- Oct. 16-18, 1998 Team hosts regional Equity Academy – Part II: “Can All Students Meet the Standards?” (Ana Becerra helps facilitate.)
- Oct. 20, 1998 Team conducts a second “What’s Equity Got To Do With It” at Dzantik’i Heeni Middle School with a focus on class issues.
- March 1, 1999 EMELI 6 Mat-Su AK team meets with Juneau team to do statewide planning.
- Spring 1999 Team receives supplemental funding from Science and Math Consortium for Northwest Schools (SMCNS) for further equity work at the district and regional level.

Spring 1999 Angie Lunda receives Superintendent's Excellence Award with citations for her equity leadership in the district.