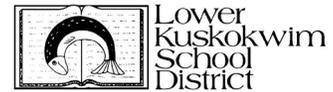


# iTutor in Alaska: Lower Kuskokwim GEAR UP Project 2017-2019



## Lower Kuskokwim School District

iTutor has partnered with the GEAR UP program that services the Lower Kuskokwim School District in Alaska to provide math tutoring and enrichment for students in Grades 4 - 7 participating in the program for the 2017-2018 school year, and for students in Grades 5 - 8 during the 2018-2019 school year.

The GEAR UP program serves students who have barriers to access such as transportation issues, lack of sewage lines and lack of running water. By providing the students access to the internet and to live tutoring sessions with certified teachers that they may not have had otherwise, the GEAR UP program's goal to improve student performance in math became attainable.

### Educator Development and Support

The iTutor Educators assigned to the project received professional development that included cultural norms and traditions of the Alaskan villages where the students live. The sessions also addressed challenges faced by the students and their communities, as well as cultural sensitivity issues and other pertinent situations shared with us by Alex Bernard, the GEAR UP Program Director.

Additionally, the Educators received detailed reports of the students' diagnostic pre-test results. With these results, the Educators then planned their data-driven lessons to address the gaps in knowledge and the themes that proved challenging to the students.

### Results (2017-2018)

Students participated in class an average of 4.47 hours, or 4 hours and 28 minutes. The individual test score gains ranged from a point loss to a gain of over 350 points. The mean pre-test GLE was 3.92 and the mean post-test GLE totaled 3.99. The mean GLE score gain was .26, meaning students gained, on average, 3 months of a school year achieved during the 6-week intervention.

### Results (2018-2019)

These students achieved an average gain of 1.16 GLE points or one year and 2 months of Grade-Level Equivalent learning gains. More specifically, students attended class an average of 10.85 instructional hours.

Of the students who took a pre- and post-assessment, 78% made positive GLE gains averaging 1.665 and had an average attendance of 10.98 hours - **over one and a half years of academic growth- in only 11 instructional hours with iTutor.**

### Growth Over Two Years

Over the course of two school years (spring 2018 and 2018-2019), the students who began the program as seventh graders and ended 2018-19 as eighth-graders had an average GLE gain of 2.208 points. This is particularly noteworthy, in that these students have been performing on average 3 years below grade level, to begin with. **This indicates they ended the term performing over two grade levels above where they began.**

Not only has the downward spiral in lost ground been arrested, but these students have also made dramatic gains in a very short period with this particular live, personalized learning intervention.

iTutor Educators are accelerating their students' growth up to grade level rapidly, while also setting a new trajectory for future academic success. Moreover, the 2018-2019 fifth graders, who started as 4th graders in the spring of 2018, had an average of 1.98 points of GLE gains. These students started at approximately a year and a half below grade level in the spring of 2018.

#### Grade Level Equivalents and Gains for all students from 2017-2019

Grade Level in 2018-2019	Average Pretest GLE in 2017	Average GLE Gains from 2017-2019
5th	2.672	1.98
6th	3.86	1.533
7th	5.083-	0.183
8th	4.825	2.208
all grade levels	3.66	1.736

### Educator Reflections

The Educators on the project were all in agreement about one thing more than any other: they learned so much about the students and from the students!

The students, most of whom are Yup'ik Native Americans, had much to teach all of us. They shared about their town of Bethel, the region most of them had never been out of, and about their culture and tribal traditions. Many of our Educators got to learn some Yup'ik words and phrases, some of them making it a regular part of their class structure.

One Educator in particular "started class by having the students teach me a Yup'ik word or phrase" as a way of engaging them and encouraging the students' buy-in and ownership of the class. Also according to the Educators, the students were excellently behaved, engaged in the lessons, and very enthusiastic. One Educator said the "students were excellent and so curious," this [the program] "was a fantastic experience, and "I want to definitely do this again."

The Educators also shared their culture, their traditions, where they lived, and even shared pictures of their surroundings as well as turning the live camera to their yards and the lights of Manhattan in one instance. "I learned as much from them [the students] as they did from me and they helped me step out of my comfort zone and learn new things about their world," said one of the iTutor Educators.

### Student Feedback

The students found that once they showed up for class, it was worth it. When asked what they thought of the classes, the students responded with things like "this was fun," "I like writing on the board," "playing games was cool," and "math was fun." When asked if they enjoyed their teachers, all students answered with a resounding yes, and one student said, "I really like Ms. S, she has been fun to work with and has taught me a lot."

This same student went from a 5th grade Grade Level Equivalent to working on Pre-Algebra in the five and a half weeks she was in the program. This school year, the student will be working on Algebra as a 7th grader.

### Program Director's Reflections

The GEAR UP Program Director in Alaska was initially concerned about the community embracing the project. Specifically, he was concerned about whether or not the tribal elders, the students, the school faculties and the parents would approve of the project and participate in the program. Soon after the program began, the Program Director was being stopped in the street, approached at the schools, and receiving calls on his personal cell phone. He stated "I was very surprised at the level of support we received for the program" and further stated he received gifts at his office and at his home from community members who were thankful that he had "brought the program to [our] children" and had given the children a positive thing to do after school.

The tribal elders thanked him for the GEAR UP program and how it has positively impacted the children. He continued to receive offerings and thank- you gifts, including a bucket of whale blubber on his front porch, which he shared with the villagers. Most importantly, the Program Director told us **"Your educators opened up a whole new world for our students- we signed up for math and you gave them the world."**