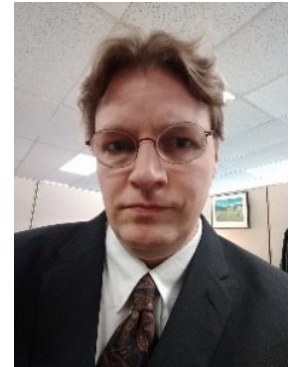

National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION SINCE 1982

ERIC CALDWELL, NBRS LIAISON, ALASKA
Interview Transcript

I'm Eric Caldwell, a research analyst with the state of Alaska, Department of Education in Early Development. I've been involved with the NBRS Program for nearly a decade as the state liaison for Alaska. In approaching the work, the payoff for the liaison is definitely the phone calls to the principals whose schools are being considered for nomination. The excitement on the voices of the principals upon hearing that they are being considered for NBRS is palpable.



When I'm putting together the nominations I'm looking at not only who has met the minimum qualifications but also how they met those qualifications and which schools out of those that can be nominated, should be nominated. Part of what I do is I prepare information for the Commissioner's analysis that shows where the prospective nominees rate in comparison to each other so that we can look at them together and decide which schools best represent Alaska's diversity as well as performance.

The context for when we are nominating schools depends greatly on which schools are eligible to be nominated. Alaska does look at the rural-urban divide. We also look to see which schools have the most reportable subgroups. If the school meets the minimum requirements because they simply have so few subgroups to be judged against, that does not make nearly as much of an impression as a school that is serving a broad range of students.

The NBRS Program is very much recognized by the professionals in the field. We have superintendents, principals contact us every year asking whether they can be considered for nomination. The NBRS Program is very competitive. There are only a handful of schools in the state that can even be considered and so the ones that are selected are selected because they have made significant achievements and have very high performing students.

The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development publicizes the award recipients and makes certain that state wide media are aware of the accomplishments of these schools. In addition, the districts themselves and the principals are also in communication with their local media so word about the NBRS Program is disseminated state-wide every year through the accomplishments of awardee schools. Word is not just spread through the media, but also through the department's own communications to state-wide education stakeholders. Once the school receives it, they have that recognition, that they can put front and center in front of all of the teachers, all of the parents, all of the students. The reward that comes from that sort of achievement resonates through that entire community.