

U.S. Department of Education
2018 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [] Title I [] Charter [X] Magnet [X] Choice

Name of Principal Mr. Jay Reed Whitmore

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Steller Secondary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 2508 Blueberry Lane

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

Anchorage AK 99503-2622
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

County Anchorage Municipality

Telephone (907) 742-4950

Fax

Web site/URL

http://www.stellerschool712.org/main/

E-mail whitmore_reed@asdk12.org

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Ms Deena Bishop

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) E-mail Bishop_Deena@asdk12.org

District Name Anchorage School District Tel. (907) 742-4000

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Ms Starr Marsett

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

Part I – Eligibility Certification

The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. All nominated public schools must meet the state's performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group and all subgroups, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2018 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2012 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, or 2017.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
9. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
10. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
11. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
12. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2017-2018) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 65 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 11 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 15 High schools
 - 12 K-12 schools
- 103 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 - Suburban
 - Rural or small city/town
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2017 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	26	30	56
8	27	30	57
9	23	24	47
10	23	24	47
11	21	25	46
12 or higher	19	20	39
Total Students	139	153	292

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 4 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 7 % Asian
 - 2 % Black or African American
 - 5 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 1 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 66 % White
 - 15 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2016 – 2017 school year: 10%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain.

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	11
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2016 until the end of the 2016-2017 school year	19
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	30
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2016	287
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.10
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	10

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1%
3 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):

Arabic, Armenian, Bengali, Chinese, German, Japanese, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, Tagalog, Turkish, Yupik

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 0%
 Total number students who qualify: 0

8. Students receiving special education services: 7 %
19 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| <u>2</u> Autism | <u>1</u> Multiple Disabilities |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>3</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed | <u>7</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>2</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>2</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Intellectual Disability | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 4
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	13
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher, etc.	1
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	0
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 23:1

12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013
Daily student attendance	94%	95%	94%	94%	93%
High school graduation rate	100%	96%	98%	93%	95%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2017.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	36
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	83%
Enrolled in a community college	3%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	3%
Found employment	3%
Joined the military or other public service	6%
Other	3%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award. 2005

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

To provide an enriching environment that values diversity and encourages students to take responsibility for learning while developing the attributes to contribute to the community.

16. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

For public schools only, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

Lotteries are held two times each year: During the last week of March and the week prior to registration in the fall. In order to participate in a school or program outside of the child's neighborhood school, an application must be submitted. ASD's online system allows parents to easily apply to the desired school or program. If the child is currently attending a school/program as a result of a lottery or zone exemption placement, a new application is not necessary for that school each year. Parents log into the system where they can apply to multiple schools or programs for each school-age child and check the status of each application. Parents are notified by email of changes to the application status as well as acceptance into the school or program. The system is accessible from both traditional laptop and desktop computers or mobile devices to apply, check status, and confirm or decline positions. The system produces randomly selected student lists that have been organized and ranked according to the district's lottery policy. No student shall be denied participation because of a learning disability, handicapping condition or special need. Lottery procedures are determined by the school board.

PART III – SUMMARY

“Only the educated are free” – Epictetus

Steller Secondary School, a lottery-based school of choice within the Anchorage School district, offers an alternative to traditional education. It is named after Georg Wilhelm Steller, a German naturalist who traveled with Vitus Bering on his voyage of exploration to Alaska in 1741. He became the school’s namesake because of such personal traits as independence, love of knowledge, courage, and a pioneering spirit.

Established in 1974 in response to parents interested in having their children continue their education in an environment which fosters the creation of independent, courageous people capable of dealing with the shifting complexities of the modern world, Steller Secondary is dedicated to providing young people a leadership curriculum based on the ideal that responsible freedom is a supreme good.

Steller has up to 300 students in grades 7-12 from across the Anchorage attendance area. The primary emphasis of our program is attaining an education through responsibility to self and to the community, both within our school walls and beyond. Students, parents, and staff participate in the democratic process of setting school policy and procedures. Students play an integral role in all aspects of the program from planning and scheduling activities, mentoring and assisting younger students, designing course work and units for independent study and peer taught classes, to aiding in the selection of teaching staff and the content and evaluation for regular educational curriculum.

In addition to participation in the operation of the school, students are encouraged to spend a portion of their career at Steller in community service in order to learn more about, and contribute to, the larger community in which they live. To this end Steller is a participant in many humanitarian efforts within the greater Anchorage area.

Through such meaningful engagement in their own learning process, along with parents and staff, it is our intent to model and demonstrate democracy in action for our entire community. Active and positive participation in governance is a vital element of a dynamic, compassionate democratic society.

We previously used the distinction as a Blue Ribbon School as a recruitment tool, especially at our district’s Alternative Schools Fair. Prospective students and parents are often somewhat hesitant to consider alternative schools, worrying that not attending a conventional high school will hurt their student’s chances at college admission. Having the Blue Ribbon School recognition helped community members see us as a viable educational option and encouraged them to explore what our program has to offer. Perhaps most importantly, the award gave our staff the confidence to take a risk and develop and implement the Passages program, which is now an integral part of our self-directed curriculum.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

English/Language Arts is taught through a variety of literature-based courses, a series of composition classes, and the Socratic-based Paideia English/Language Arts is taught through a variety of literature-based courses, a series of composition classes, and the Socratic-based Paideia Seminar program. Required in eighth grade, and offered throughout the high school years, Seminar is an inquiry-based approach that aides students in understanding age-old questions and their relativity to their own individual sphere of existence and in the broader context of the world at large. Students practice writing in a variety of mediums in response to various genres to enhance their personal writing ability yearly. Composition courses are required for graduation along with a research paper. Writing skills are viewed as a necessary tool along with oratory skills, which are honed via numerous offerings such as Creative and Public Speech, Drama, Debate, and Mock Trial. Working through all of these aspects throughout their time at Steller allows students to excel for the Common Core State Standards of their grade level.

Math instruction is offered in courses from pre-algebra through Calculus, with opportunities to gain additional math credits from the King Career Center, the University of Alaska, Anchorage and Alaska Pacific University. Students also have the flexibility to take online courses through various institutions, including Apex and iSchool, supported by peers and teachers at Steller. Teachers follow the Anchorage School District scope and sequence and use a variety of instructional methods to deliver content, including direct instruction, flipped classrooms, online learning, cooperative groups, and independent study. Students are encouraged to become independent self-directed learners by utilizing teacher availability during 7th period, communicating with peers across math classes, and peer coaching. Courses focus on conceptual learning, application of skills in real-world contexts, and using technology to further student understanding.

Science classrooms incorporate hands-on and lab-based learning environments that inspire students to construct answers to fundamental questions in science, as well as engaging in the scientific process. Our three science educators carefully plan the sequence to ensure that students repeatedly address underlying science standards including scientific writing and integration with math curriculum in addition to state and national standards. We use modern technology including the suite of Vernier probeware, Labquests, and Logger Pro software to gather and analyze real-world data. Middle schoolers may use video analysis to understand that velocity can be represented with a graphical slope, while high school students are able to complete their own projects and experiments using equipment they will encounter again in university. Within all courses, students are encouraged to go beyond the curriculum to investigate contemporary problems with their own projects and experiments.

Social studies are taught via a variety of methodologies and subjects. In conjunction with the more traditional teacher directed classes, such as World History and Economics, Steller offers a wide variety of other classes. Teachers have the flexibility to choose the subject matter for classes to make them relevant to student interest. For example, middle school and high school classes are taught that focus on current issues and events. All social studies classes emphasize critical thinking, research skills, and written and verbal communication skills; using a variety to methods including debate, mock trials, seminars, and projects. Students also are given the opportunity to take a Field Study United States Government. This is a course designed to involve juniors and seniors in a political campaign for one quarter. Students have gone on to serve as legislative pages, aides and even as state legislators. We view this as a highly successful element of our emphasis on individual action in a democratic society.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

In visual arts, students explore the elements and principles of design in an art studio environment with an emphasis on creation of original pieces of artwork. As students advance through the multi-level art program, they are exposed to multiple mediums and techniques in two dimensional and three dimensional construction. The performing arts are represented in Steller's curriculum through Drama, Debate, Band and

Orchestra. Students explore unique opportunities in the arts through our Intensive program where we have offered two-week-long studies in subjects usually not offered in our curriculum. Classes like street art, Shakespeare in the Park, Slam Poetry, Drama, printmaking, and art for community service have been offered recently.

In health, students participate in textbook and hands-on activities, engage in debates on current health-related topics, and research issues pertaining to healthy lifestyles. Community resources provide first-hand knowledge on health-related issues. Sophomore Day focuses on healthy relationships, sexual health, and teen issues through presentations and group activities.

In physical education, students engage in team and individual activities to develop life-long skills. Our two-week intensives often have athletic themes. Sports clubs are offered for biking and ice skating. Our tradition of intramural gym hockey encourages all students and staff to participate. Teachers of other disciplines offer a class or an event, such as contra dance, the February Freeze Up Run, Steller Olympics, and many others. Students have a variety of opportunities to develop skills for healthy living.

World language study is available to students beginning their seventh grade year and continues through level 6, providing students the opportunity to become proficient in a language throughout their time at Steller. Steller prepares students to interact within a broader global community through emphasis on oral proficiency skills as promoted by ACTFL (the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Language). Steller has two teachers who combine for a total 1.2 FTE for Spanish language instruction to teach Spanish I, II, III, and IV/V/VI. Our text series is Vista Higher Learning DESCUBRE and is used in conjunction with many other supplemental materials. Each year students are assessed using Avant STAMP assessment - a national computer-based proficiency exam that scores students on the ACTFL scale of novice low through advanced high. Students in the junior and senior years can qualify for the district's Seal of Biliteracy. In the 2016-2017 school year, three seniors graduated with this honor and nine sophomores and juniors met the qualifying requirements. Approximately half of our students enroll in a world language class during each semester. Students interested in acquiring a different language do so through ASD ischool, APEX, UAA, community course offerings and / or attendance at other schools.

Engaging with the technological world of programming, coding, and technology begins with learning through play at Steller. Spheros—programmable robots that students control—are available for students after school, for check out, and are incorporated into science curriculum. Students also learn to use software, phone applications, advanced calculators, and robots to produce their own information including programs, data sets, and digital stories. Besides these practical skills, students also manage classwork and information through teacher and community hosted websites, SMS reminder programs, interactive online textbooks, and online class calendars. Technology also increases the accessibility of education as components of blended instruction and flipped-classroom content are available beyond the normal school day. Students have many opportunities to use technological advances in a broad range of learning environments, from keeping track of and submitting classwork, to catching up with missed instruction Steller strives to strike a balance between promoting technological literacy and its responsible usage.

Students may expand their course choices by taking classes not offered at Steller or at other Anchorage schools, including local high schools and universities. Our district also offers Credit-by-Choice which includes: work study, educational travel, credit by examination, and select correspondence course work.

Through the Passage Program and independent study programs, students create classes tailored to their own interests. Passages are semester long classes, where students choose a subject of interest that falls into one of six categories-creativity, practical skills, logic and inquiry, adventure, career exploration, and community involvement. At the beginning of the semester, they work with a teacher to develop their course of study, methods, resources, and goals. They spend the semester pursuing their goals, sharing their progress and getting feedback from their peers, teachers, and outside mentors. Students also have the opportunity to teach their own peer-taught classes, co-teach classes (with a teacher), and act as seminar coaches where they work with groups of eighth graders within a seminar class.

Additionally, Steller offers four opportunities for students to learn by teaching. They can, under supervision, plan and teach a class of their own design, co-teach a course with the teacher of record, coach a seminar, or become a peer tutor in and out of the classroom.

3. Instructional Methods, Interventions, and Assessments:

Students at Steller are exposed to instructional methodologies ranging from teacher-directed and traditional to student driven and progressive. In a six-year career a student may be involved in classes taught via film, video, online, by other students, parents, or community members alongside classes taught lecture-style or by Socratic method. Students are required to graduate with a minimum of three Passages in which they work closely with a teacher to ensure rigor of study, but design their own course content, procedure and evaluation based on a personal area of interest or passion.

Some classes build in a service-learning component where students transfer their knowledge to community application. Some of these include pottery classes to produce bowls donated to the Bean's Empty Bowl Project; a Fiber Arts class to knit wool clothing donated to the Anchorage School District's Children In Transition Program and peer-coaching for math, science and world language programs.

Students are enrolled at the two area universities for classes and Steller also takes part in the district's Mentorship Program where students are matched with a mentor member or organization in the Anchorage area and serve as interns at British Petroleum, KTUU telecommunications and with area artisans.

To address the individual needs of students, teachers meet with students at lunch and after school to answer questions, offer additional practice, and review student work. A designated math lab is offered four days a week. Twice yearly, during our two Intensive blocks, students enroll in a course of study that lasts two weeks, for one class every day, all day. These intensives include two travel trips, both with domestic or foreign destinations. Trips are supported by a travel scholarship fund, and students may apply for funding equal to one-half the cost of their trip.

Students are encouraged to challenge themselves through leadership roles, including becoming peer-teachers, seminar coaches, peer-tutors or co-teachers.

For students who struggle with disabilities, Steller's Special Education Department offers specialized classroom instruction appropriate to student needs. The Middle School Special Education Program provides education services for students in the least restrictive learning environment. It focuses on helping students increase their independence and make a successful transition to high school. High school special education provides a range of instructional, vocational, transition and support services for students. Students receive services within a continuum, ranging from support and assistance in general education classes to specialized instruction in a special education classroom.

Teachers use individual assessments to determine learning and how to adapt teaching. MAP testing provides information about how middle school students are doing in language arts and math. Teachers can change how and what they are teaching to meet student needs. Some teachers allow for retakes on standards-based assessments and give students more than one opportunity to show learning, promoting self-directed learning.

Assessments include MAP, Peaks, SAT, PSAT, individual teacher created assessments. Data from district created assessments, including STAMP, and SCCS is shared with the public and the school to make informed choices about curricular effectiveness and trends among populations. SCCS is used to affect change within SEL topics. MAP tests inform instructional choices for middle school students within LA and math. Standardized test data is used for individual students to determine placement amongst peers. STAMP testing determines fluency in a foreign language for the student to receive an endorsement on their diploma.

Our school closes the achievement gap with a seventh hour during which all teachers are available to tutor students to provide attention to individual needs. This addition to our school day is optional for all students, but required for students who have shown through their grades that they need additional time with teachers to improve their skills at a more rapid rate. Students may choose which teacher they prefer for support.

Advisors monitor their advisees' progress, discuss concerns, with classroom teachers, and make sure students get the support they need.

Steller Secondary offers higher level courses with the academic rigor to prepare students for competitive universities or AP exams. All teachers have designated time throughout the semester to support student academics, and advisors work with students creating personalized plans for success if a student shows an area which requires additional support.

Students create their own classes through the Passage Program to excel in areas of their choosing. Passages are semester long classes, where students choose a subject of interest that falls into one of six categories- creativity, practical skills, logic and inquiry, adventure, career exploration, and community involvement. At the beginning of the semester, they work with a teacher to develop their course of study, methods, resources, and goals. They spend the semester pursuing their goals, sharing their progress and getting feedback from their peers, teachers, and outside mentors. Students also have the opportunity to teach their own peer-taught classes, co-teach classes (with a teacher), and act as seminar coaches where they work with groups of eighth graders within a seminar class.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

Students at Steller are motivated by their ability to have ownership and choice in their education. They display their contributions to the school and demonstrate their learning and successes at our annual Ice Cream Social Open House, Passages Presentation Nights, and student-led Activity Days. Students build their own schedules with the oversight of their advisors. They make decisions about activities, student opportunities, school murals, committees, and funding through the student-led Op Group.

Advisory Groups meet weekly and are composed of students from all grade levels with one teacher/advisor for their entire duration at Steller to build continuity, allowing advisors to get to know their advisees' strengths and weaknesses to encourage them to develop their talents, explore their passions, and work on specific areas of improvement. Advisors work individually with students to plan schedules, set goals, monitor academic progress, and initiate communication between students, parents, and teachers. Advisors and advisees build strong, trusting relationships over the years that create security, confidence, and a feeling of support in students.

Weekly advisory groups share school announcements, plan and host school activities, vote on school proposals, discuss school-related and current event topics, and participate in social emotional learning activities. Within advisory groups, students also bond with one another and create inter-grade friendships, mentorships, and a supportive community. Advisory groups each have a middle school and high school representative in our student government. These representatives take on a leadership role within the advisory group and connect the group to the larger school community. Students share their Passage projects and other extra-curricular events with the advisory group to receive feedback, encouragement, and to give other students ideas and inspiration for their own endeavors.

The school nurse and counselor are also available as a support resource for students to provide a positive safe environment on social and emotional growth needs. The school nurse performs yearly student health screenings for vision, hearing, height and weight to ensure the best academic performance and provides continuous education on self-care management for prevention of illness and injuries.

Steller provides a supportive work environment where teachers meet weekly to discuss student concerns, curriculum issues, school-wide activities, and to participate in professional development and collaboration. School decision making is a democratic process where all faculty have a voice. Teachers are also encouraged to take professional risks in terms of their individual approach to the curriculum, as well as designing and implementing intensive courses. Our faculty continually reviews our alignment to our philosophy and student needs.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

We believe that a successful school program is based upon meaningful participation by all stakeholders. Parents, students and staff work in concert to build curriculum that is current, vibrant and engaging. We encourage others to visit our school, to take tours, and to attend our annual Ice Cream Social Open House which is designed to inform prospective families about our program.

Student achievement beyond the statewide assessments is reported to parents and students through a variety of methods. All student work is graded and input into the Anchorage School District's "Q" grade reporting system to allow students and parents immediate feedback on academic performance. This allows a Progress Report to be viewed at any time during the grading period. Both Steller parents and students have constant access to their academic records via Q and their academic advisor. Each advisor is responsible for an advisory group comprised of approximately 20 students in grades seven through twelve. An academic advisor's role is to support his/her advisees by making sure they are not only taking the classes required to graduate, but are also appropriately challenging themselves in order to grow both academically and socially. Advisors advocate for their advisees and help them learn to advocate for themselves; for example,

helping an advisee communicate with a teacher about a concern in a class or helping a staff member understand an advisee's academic difficulties. Advisors also track student progress throughout the school year to ensure student success; when a student is struggling academically the Advisor first contacts the student to check on their progress and then contacts parents if appropriate progress has not been made. This triangle of advisor-student-parent is another avenue Steller uses to support student success.

In addition to the more traditional methods of sharing data, which include monthly Parent Group meetings, weekly staff meetings, bi-annual All Community Meetings and planned conferences, Steller shares information with families in non-traditional ways as well. Conferences take place at any time upon parent request, end of the year conferences for planning next year's course of study happen each May, and parents are welcome to come in during 7th period (directly following the school day) to informally talk with teachers about their student. Steller believes that students, parents and teachers working together in collaboration and partnership make a meaningful contribution to the lives of our young people.

3. Professional Development:

In an ongoing effort to examine our practices and link them to student achievement, both academic and personal, teachers participate in a variety of professional development activities. In addition to devoting one staff meeting each week to student concerns and another to program development, these have included after-school classes presented on curricular areas that are taught at Steller, including classes/workshops dealing with open optional philosophical issues. We have schools outside Alaska with whom we network to incorporate self-directed learning practices, the unifying purpose of Steller.

Teachers also participate in school-wide in-service training sessions that focus on mandatory district trainings, including data analysis, which help to focus the entire school on ways to promote student learning. The district's Curriculum Committee structure encourages teachers from many schools to collaborate and share successful strategies to meet academic standards across curricular areas of instruction and then return to individual buildings to share with their departments. Teachers at Steller lead sessions at cross-district trainings to share our project-based approach with other schools in the district.

Inquiry and introspection, staff development and evaluation, are all important parts of a successful school program. These activities focus our efforts on our mission: the education of our young people and enabling them to grow into their role as productive, positive citizens in a dynamic and evolving world. The district teacher evaluation program encourages teachers to focus on particular aspects of their teaching, such as student engagement through the Danielson Program. In addition, teachers meet regularly to focus on the continuing revision of our self-directed program using the latest best practices.

4. School Leadership:

Steller's mission of self-directed learning and responsible freedom lends itself a dynamic, democratic approach toward leadership. Our school leadership consists of three parts that work both independently and cooperatively to develop program opportunities for students. The staff, operational group (consisting of student representatives from each advisory), and parent group form the three bodies; each with their own focus. Teachers, administration, and staff at Steller run the weekly staff meetings that rotate in purpose between small committees, intensive planning, philosophy discussions, and the general needs of the building. We rotate chair roles to divide leadership among everyone equally and use a system where everyone gets a vote to determine school policy specific to the academic needs of students. The Operations Group holds weekly meetings at lunch for which students write proposals to form committees to accomplish community-building activities, raise funds for projects and community service events, and provide leadership opportunities in and out of the classroom. The Parent Group provides commentary on school activities, raises funds for travel intensives, holds all community meetings with staff to showcase students work, and has a constant presence in our building during the school day to participate in activities. These three groups work together to offer opportunities specific to Steller. Each semester students have two week intensives, engage in self-directed learning projects that require mentors through their Passage classes, and participate in school-wide activities such as Steller Olympics and activity days. These opportunities require the leadership of students to organize events and participate as co-teachers and

learners. The parents provide mentorship opportunities from their wide range of expertise, volunteer during our events to offer more adult supervision, and offer ideas to make these activities more meaningful for their children. The staff integrates all this energy and enthusiasm into the academic school setting to meet standards with as much student leadership as possible by scaffolding our subjects through student-directed projects.

The collaboration of students, parents, and staff provides a leadership structure that makes our school a community with common goals and experiences.

Part VI – STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

At its heart, Steller is a school of self-directed learning. It forms the foundation of our school's philosophy: Steller is a school devoted to an educational setting which fosters the creation of independent, courageous people capable of dealing with the shifting complexities of the modern world. It runs on the energy and excitement of people who have committed themselves to self-directed learning. With the support of parents and staff, it attempts to help provide students with a humane education based upon freedom and responsibility.

We believe that every student should be free to establish his or her own path to becoming a more fully self-sufficient person. We recognize that this search takes place in the context of an interdependent world, and that part of this quest involves the recognition of each individual's role/responsibility in the larger community.

Students are responsible, to the extent each is capable, for defining their own educational goals, selecting or devising a course of study to achieve these goals, and working to fulfill these goals. They are also responsible for assisting in the continuous evaluation of their performance in relation to these same goals.

Starting in seventh grade, classes provide students opportunities to begin to build self-directed skills through choice and project-based learning. Within classes, students work in groups and individually on projects, where they have choices on what they study, their approach to learning, and/or how they present information. These teaching activities continue throughout their time at Steller. As part of their education, they use self-evaluation and reflection, looking at their educational goals and progress in projects and classes.

Once students enter high school, self-directed learning is still found in individual core classes, but students also complete three Passages. Passages are semester long classes, where students choose a subject of interest that falls into one of six categories-creativity, practical skills, logic and inquiry, adventure, career exploration, and community involvement. At the beginning of the semester, they work with a teacher to develop their course of study, methods, resources, and goals. They spend the semester pursuing their goals, sharing their progress and getting feedback from their peers, teachers, and outside mentors. Students also have the opportunity to teach their own peer-taught classes, co-teach classes (with a teacher), and act as seminar coaches where they work with groups of eighth graders within a seminar class.

The goal of self-directed learning is to create lifelong learners who take initiative, set goals, implement learning strategies, and evaluate their outcomes in pursuit of their interests and passions.