

Danielle Riha & Susan Zeek

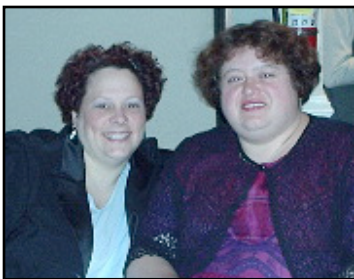
Chief Ivan Blunka School, New Stuyahok, AK

Middle School Interdisciplinary Teams

6th-8th Grade



2005 Honorees



From left: Ms. Riha and Ms. Zeek

“Chief Ivan Blunka School is in its fourth year of Annual Yearly Progress Improvement. Basically, this means that if we do not significantly improve in testing and show evidence of advancement in reading, writing, and arithmetic by next year, all state and federal funding will cease. For this reason, our district decided to transfer us to this site. Their theory is that since we have made evident progress at a similar school site, that we might be able to encourage staff and community to embrace our enthusiasm and teaching strategies. Our creativity shines as we use a wide variety of materials, develop engaging thematic units, share clear expectations, and teach kids how to self-evaluate themselves and develop intrinsic motivation all the while, meeting curriculum objectives and improving testing skills.”

“One of the ways we help students take their learning and use it in other areas is by developing thematic units where main ideas and concepts are shared in all subjects. We also base much of the learning on several strategies, which help students get meaning from what they read. These strategies include making connections, making inferences, summarizing, creating images, and asking questions. What is so wonderful about these teaching strategies is that we let students know how the strategies work and they in turn become aware of how they learn.” – Danielle Riha and Susan Zeek

“Every week Ms. Zeek and Ms. Riha send out a weekly article called ‘Middle School News’ for the parents to read, which is always very informative and appreciated not just by the parents, but by the community as well. The weekly newsletter is continually anticipated as both teachers never fail to praise the parents for their involvement with the children, and they also point out the students successes which I know is very important to each student. Certain budget cuts within our school district have limited the activities for our students, but Ms. Zeek and Ms. Riha have been encouraging and promoting their classrooms to have fundraisers toward a classroom Spring trip to Anchorage for the Pentathlon; which consists of writing essays, telling stories, giving speeches, reading newspapers to keep up with current events, and doing Math and Science tests. This weekend activity has many benefits as I’ve seen improved writing skills, social skills, and an increase in self-esteem among the students in Middle school.”

– Fevronia Neketa, parent of current students

Other Highlights:

Members, Kappa Delta Phi

Members, Golden Key Honor Society

President (Zeek) and Vice President (Riha), Southwest Region School District Education Association

Riha: A.A. from Brookhaven Community College and B.Ed. from University of Alaska

Zeek: A.S. from Tidewater Community College and B.Ed. from University of Alaska

Years Teaching: 4 (both)

Average Class Size: 20

Classes Taught Per Day: n/a

School’s Percent of ESL Students: 90

School Type: Public, Yupik Eskimo Village

Type of Class: Inclusion, Teams