



**“Be proud of
your heritage.
Respect yourself
and others.”**

Theresa Vaska

Russian Mission, Lower Yukon



“You’re a Raider alright, you rock, ooh-ooh!” I exclaim that quote each time my Russian Mission students pass their Accelerated Reader quizzes accompanied with a clap, a slap, and claps for each syllable. In addition I use this quote “Raider Math”. My

students hear me saying, “Raiders do it this way!” and “You need to do it the Raider Way, remember?” My 3rd - 4th grade students are at the age where these quotes are highly motivating, and **reminders that they ARE Russian Mission Raiders gives them pride in their math work and encourages them to make the extra effort.**

I chose the teaching profession because all of my life the school atmosphere has made me feel safe, secure, and comfortable.

I attended elementary and middle school in a two-room school, and in 1973 I went to Mt. Edgecumbe for my freshman year. Later, my parents wanted me closer to home so I attended Bethel Regional High School. In that December, I earned all the required credits to graduate so **I applied at Russian Mission for the very first bilingual teaching position and was hired.** After one year I applied for a regular classroom aide, and for two summers I attended summer school at KCC in Bethel. **A teacher in Russian Mission, Mrs. Jackie Smith, encouraged me to apply for college so I attended Sheldon Jackson College in Sitka where I earned my Bachelor’s degree. I’ve been teaching ever since.**

I enjoy teaching because each year is a new beginning with new challenges and a new class of students.

As I continue to learn about how students learn, it is exciting for me to be able to guide their learning. In the same token, I also like the challenges of helping struggling students find success as well. I deal with the frustrations that are all a part of the teaching profession. It is all worthwhile for me. Teaching is a personal passion for me aside from my family. Once I got married and we had our first son, I talked my husband into quitting his roofing career and his job in Anchorage to stay home and raise our three sons so I could devote my time to my teaching career. I have no regrets. As for creative teaching, **the best lessons are when we use our local resources such as the seasonal animals, plants, and activities such as dog mushing and harvesting. We are fortunate to live in the midst of a beautiful country of hills, trees, and the Yukon River.**

My teaching philosophy has changed over the years. But one thing remains the same – the students:

I believe that if I am sincere with students they will buy into whatever it takes to get a quality education with high expectations, and to be a lifelong contributor to any community in which they choose to live.

My advice for students is to remain true to yourself and to not let anything or anybody sway you from your values and beliefs. Be thankful for everything you have or are given.



Educator Nomination Submitted by the
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