

Kotzebue kids boost culture, academics after school

BY HANNAH HEIMBUCH
Arctic Sounder

This weekend, students and parents are welcomed to the June Nelson Elementary School in Kotzebue for a Super Saturday event. The special two-hour session is a part of a new afterschool program at JNES that provides literacy support, cultural learning opportunities, physical activity and community involvement.

Those elements cover the four basic goals of the grant-funded program, said Alberta Demantle of Alaska Learning Labs.

"Teachers brainstorm ways to get all those in," Demantle said. "We've been able to hire about eight staff."

The program is fueled by a five-year 21st Century Grant, one awarded to Alaska's non-profit educational resource center SERRC — Special Education Regional Resource Center.

All in all about 60 of JNES's kindergarten to second grade students have enrolled, Demantle said, since the program got up and running in October.

Community members are able to participate by teaching cultural activities, sharing stories and spending time with kids during specific activities.

"They try to get as many people from the community in to help with storytelling, or whatever talents they may have," Demantle said.

This weekend's Super Saturday will run from 10 a.m. to noon. For the last hour, parents are welcomed in for either a presenta-



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Tina Shrader strikes a pose during an afterschool session at June Nelson Elementary School in Kotzebue.

tion from their child, or a family read.

A parent event in April will introduce a variety of literacy strategies for families to use at home, helping prepare kids for a successful school year. The program will also be looking for input and ideas for the program from parents at that time.

"It's going really well," Demantle said. "Kids seem to really enjoy it. The teachers are awesome with their creativity and making afterschool time unique and fun. Kids feel safe, they can learn and have fun."

March 7, 2013