

ALASKA LEGISLATURE SPECIAL COMMITTEE / SUBJECT FILES 86 / 2

6 SCOMM 3 : HOUSE SELECT COMM. ON EDUCATION 1976

Additionally, teachers will be able to score diagnostic tests themselves or send tests to a central point for machine scoring. In this way, teachers will be able to control the amount of time which elapses between testing and availability of test data.

Administrators and curriculum specialists will have available to them several tests constructed from objectives contained within the bank. Objectives used for structuring these tests will be selected by Alaskan specialists in each content area. These tests will be used for curriculum planning and development; for conducting school and/or district need studies; for identification of necessary resources; and for many other forms of educational planning.

Achievement testing on a statewide basis will also be based upon the Alaska Objectives and Item Bank (AOIB). This test will be administered each spring to a very carefully selected sample of students. Data provided will describe student performance, on a statewide basis, on objectives which Alaskan educators feel are important.

Diagnosis of Student Learning: While each type of test will provide diagnostic information of a particular type, each is designed to serve a different purpose. Because calling all three tests "diagnostic" would be confusing, we elected to name them: (1) diagnostic; (2) mastery; and (3) achievement. This provides a convenient means to differentiate between the different purposes for each.

The testing system will ultimately result in establishment of data bases at each of three critical levels; the classroom, school or district, and state. As a result of the testing system, educators at each level will have available student data upon which to base decisions.

Prescription and Remediation: Several program components focus upon this element. For example, many teachers do not have available the necessary resources to conduct the instruction a diagnostic test indicated was necessary. It is our intent, through a statewide dissemination system, to make a broad range of resources available to each teacher.

In all likelihood, there are educators who do not know how to use test data for these purposes. It is also our intent to provide the necessary training to alleviate this problem.

Also emergent from the testing system will be a procedure for cataloging validated instructional units for objectives included within the AOIB. When this function becomes operational, teachers will be able to select from a continually increasing number of instructional alternatives - without having to do all the planning themselves. In effect, this function will eliminate the need for each teacher to "re-invent the wheel."

Perhaps the most important factor, relative to prescription and remediation, is that teachers and local districts will be free to determine which learning outcomes are most important in their situation and obtain tests which measure those outcomes. In this respect, the Alaska Assessment System is unique - it has been designed by Alaskan educators to satisfy needs existent in Alaska. Perhaps even more importantly, it provides the means to measure what is valued.

PROGRAM STATUS

Throughout the history of the Assessment Program, it has been felt important for Alaskan educators to develop a program to satisfy the unique conditions which exist in the State. These include not only cultural variance within the student population, but also perceptions of different groups about the best, or desired, educational program.

Consequently, the program has been considered developmental in nature. This means that different procedures are employed to ensure all components are continually tested - in school settings - and revised as necessary and appropriate.

The need for widespread participation led to the formation of several educator groups who have actively participated in both design and developmental activities. Coordination of their work has been accomplished by staff from the Office of Planning and Research in the Department of Education.

Participants: Educators who have been involved include a Development Team and two Content Boards. Soon to be added are a Policy Board, Training Board, and appointed District Representatives. The role and activities of each group are described below:

Development Team: Comprised of teacher and administrator representative from 12 school districts throughout the State. They have been responsible for the conceptual structure of the program and establishment of design parameters for testing, data processing, and data utilization.

Content Boards: Two content boards, one each in reading and computational skills, have been formed. They have completed a review of some objectives and test items and are currently in the process of reviewing others. Membership on these boards was based upon recommendations received from various educators throughout the State. It is generally recognized that persons serving on these boards represent the greatest expertise in Alaska in their respective content areas.

Policy Board: We are in the process of forming this group with expected representation to include teacher professional groups, school administrators, school boards, and other concerned groups.

Training Board: The Development Team has been formulating a list of competencies which they believe teachers and others will need in order to obtain maximum benefit from the program. They are also considering alternatives for a Training Board role. Decisions related to each of these, and board membership, will be made in the immediate future.

District Representatives: Because the program is totally committed to the belief that Alaskan educators must be involved in the design of the program, many activities are field-based. For example, we will ask many people to review objectives and test items for such things as relevance to their program, comprehensiveness of the collections, sensitivity to language, etc.

It became apparent, early on, that we would need assistance from the districts if the desired level of review was to obtain. Consequently a decision was made to ask each district to appoint one person who could serve as the district contact. This request will be made in the near future.

District representatives will assist in development of program components by distributing instruments, and objective collections; by explaining the program to their colleagues; and at a later date by conducting training, suggesting resources for teacher use, etc.

Technical Assistance: The state was fortunate to secure the services of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory as prime contractor for development of the AOB. They have been heavily involved in other assessment programs and consequently bring a great deal of expertise to our program.

Under the current contract, the NWREL has developed objective collections for reading and computational skills. They have also developed test items for each objective; began a design for computer storage and retrieval of objectives and test items; and initiated the design of procedures to cross reference instructional materials to objectives.

Key Decisions: A number of important decisions have been made relative to the design, development and operation of the system. Included are the following:

- (a) Achievement testing on a statewide basis will be done during the spring of each academic year in grades 4 and 8;
- (b) Test items used for statewide achievement testing will be secure, i.e., they will not be available for other test purposes.

- (c) All schools in the state will be requested to participate in the sample design for statewide testing (necessary to insure generalizability of data);
- (d) Norms for the statewide achievement test will be established;
- (e) Upon the request of local districts, the D.O.E. will assist in the establishment of local norms;
- (f) Districts may construct parallel forms of the statewide achievement test;
- (g) Security measures will be employed which will prevent unauthorized use of test data, i.e., to prevent inappropriate comparisons between teachers, schools, and districts;
- (h) Reporting procedures will be designed to ensure data being of maximum usefulness. This may include technical assistance for interpretation; special reporting procedures and formats, etc;
- (i) The D.O.E. will provide all funds necessary for statewide achievement testing;
- (j) The D.O.E. will fund development of the total system; including such activities as board participation, field reviews, test item development, and computer programming;

There are still many important decisions to be made when more information is available. For example:

- (a) How will schools or districts participate in the diagnostic and mastery testing components?
- (b) What quality of graphics is necessary in the tests? And how will that level be achieved?
- (c) Can objectives be placed on a continuum? And if so, how does that continuum relate to the present grade structure of our schools?
- (d) What funding arrangement will best satisfy the data needs of teachers and districts?
- (e) In what ways should the testing system be expanded? (i.e., social studies; language arts; science; etc.).
- (f) In what ways should the D.O.E. support the system to ensure maximum benefit for teachers and others?

We will be contacting many of you seeking information and opinions, which will support making these decisions.

Product Time-Line: A partial listing of products to derive from both our contract with the NWREL and D.O.E. studies is shown below:

<u>Expected Completion Date</u>	<u>Product/Event Description</u>
completed	Content Board established
completed	Math Content Blueprint
10 October 1975	Content Board approval of field review for math objectives and test items
1 Nov. - Dec. 1975	Field review of objectives
1 December 1975	District Representatives appointed
15 December 1975	Reading Content Board review of objectives
15 November 1975	User decision information needs identified
5 January 1976	Objective Directory for Math
5 January 1976	Training program initiated by D.O.E.
10 January 1976	Reporting procedures and forms for diagnostic and mastery testing completed.
15 January 1976	Design for resource base completed
1 February 1976	A.O.I.B. Cross-referenced to instructional materials
1 March 1976	Pilot trial of achievement and testing program
15 April 1976	Scoring procedures designed and tested
15 April 1976	Prototype system operational
15 May 1976	Norms established on statewide achievement test.

<u>Expected Completion Date</u>	<u>Product/Event Description</u>
30 June 1976	Test item characteristics established
30 June 1976	Annual review of A.O.I.B. completed

As in most developmental projects, these dates are subject to revision as more precise information becomes available and/or revisions in proposed components are found to be necessary.

Continuing Program Development: The nature and amount of participation requested from Alaskan educators will increase as the program moves closer to becoming operational. As pointed out, the program is being designed by Alaskan educators to improve the quality of Alaskan education. This fact is clearly evident in assumptions which have served to structure the conceptual framework and developmental activities. Included among these are:

- (a) Educators in Alaska are concerned enough about improving programs to make significant changes;
- (b) Conditions in Alaska are sufficiently unique that traditional instructional delivery models are inappropriate - when quality education is the goal;
- (c) Widespread participation by potential users in the design and operation of any system is necessary if the system is to be of maximum benefit;
- (d) Factors such as economic diversity, population mobility, and changing technologies will require that greater emphasis be placed upon development of individual student capabilities;
- (e) People will be most satisfied with - and consequently derive the greatest benefit from - programs which allow them to satisfy their own perceptions of "necessary and sufficient" educational experiences;
- (f) The use of contemporary technology can simultaneously increase the effectiveness and reduce the cost of education;
- (g) It is technically feasible to provide a full, rich education in remote areas;
- (h) Support services can be provided which will allow each teacher to provide special learning experiences for each student - without a disproportionate increase in the amount of work required;

- (i) Centralized instructional support services do not require adoption by local districts of a prescribed curriculum or instructional model; and
- (j) A comprehensive communication system, in which rates are not distance-dependent, will become a reality in Alaska.

Persons who have actively participated in development of the program are listed on the attached pages. Feel free to contact them about their activities. If you have specific questions and/or concerns about the Assessment Program, you are urged to contact:

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