

ALASKA LEGISLATURE SPECIAL COMMITTEE / SUBJECT FILE 8672
1768 SCOMM 71: JOINT COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL PERFORMANCE, 1989-90 1336

SCOMM 71: JOINT COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL PERFORMANCE, 1989-1990

MEMBERSHIP:

SENATOR LLOYD JONES, CO-CHAIR
REPRESENTATIVE EILEEN MACLEAN, CO-CHAIR
SENATOR AL ADAMS
SENATOR JOHNE BINKLEY (EX OFFICIO)
SENATOR JACK COGHILL
REPRESENTATIVE CHERI DAVIS
REPRESENTATIVE JOHNNY ELLIS (EX OFFICIO)
REPRESENTATIVE NIILLO KOPONEN

Established by LR 53, 1989 (HCR 18).

Contents: 1 file of committee minutes, transcripts of hearings (9/21 and 12/4/89 in Barrow and Petersburg), and materials discussed at each meeting. 23 tapes are also available of meetings held 8/4/89 - 6/8/90.

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MICROFICHE #

1. COMMITTEE MEETINGS
2. REPORT: "NEW DIRECTIVES IN SCHOOL PERFORMANCE: THE LEGISLATOR AS ADVOCATE AND GUARANTOR" JAN. 1991

SCOMM

71:1

8/4/89

JOINT COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL PERFORMANCE
August 4, 1989

MEMBERS PRESENT

Rep. Eileen P. MacLean, Co-Chair
Sen. Al Adams
Rep. Johnny Ellis (Ex officio)

MEMBERS ABSENT

Sen. Lloyd Jones, Co-Chair
Sen. Jack Coghill
Sen. Johnne Binkley (Ex officio)
Rep. Cheri Davis
Rep. Niilo Koponen

WITNESS REGISTER

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ACTION NARRATIVE

SENATOR AL ADAMS, District L, recognized Rep. MacLean as Chairperson for the meeting of the Joint Committee on School Performance.

DON GRAY, member of the State Board of Education, addressed the committee in the place of President Barney Gottstein. He distributed (Attachment A), How Can The State of Alaska Improve School Performance?, and (Attachment B), a draft of the current State Board Subcommittee on Education Outcomes.

This attachment includes the goals that the State Board of Education is working on for this coming year. The six major items that the Board is concerned with are:

- * Early childhood, parenting and language programs;
- * Community based child services as a multi-agency responsibility;
- * At risk incentive program alternatives;
- * Reevaluation of schooling options;
- * Improving teaching practices and providing support for teachers in rural Alaska;
- * Building on the strengths of Native languages and cultures.

Mr. Gray stated that the Board plans to establish several committees comprised of Alaskan educators, parents, and community members, that would be able to come up with specific recommendations for the next session regarding the major concerns of the State Board of Education. He added that the schools in Alaska, for the first time this year, will be giving one achievement test in all the districts. He noted that the disadvantage of this test is that it is not geared toward what Alaskan communities have expressed they wish taught in their schools. He felt that the advantage would be to raise skill levels and provide information to teachers in Alaska. He thought that this would raise student performance on future tests.

Mr. Gray observed that Alaska has varying levels of performance in schools within certain districts. He added that because of a budget cut, the Alaska Specific Achievement Test project (grades 4 through 8) was terminated.

Mr. Gray explained that the board had asked for recommendations and guidelines to address the functions of certain school districts that were falling below the percentage of the Achievement Test.

Mr. Gray commented that the board had not developed one particular recommendation. However, the question was raised as to how to treat the basic inequity within different parts of the state. He noted that many states are aware of the economic imbalance created by the redistribution of the education dollar. Alaska has established the Education Foundation Program, which tries to distribute the education dollar equally among the school districts within the state.

Mr. Gray declared that the effectiveness of the Education Foundation Program will be more clear after the same test is given throughout the state for the first time in April 1990. This test will show which school districts and children are below the national level of the basic skill

level. Mr. Gray further stated that the management of education should be at the local level, with both the professional educators and the parents working together. "The purpose of the school system is to educate the children, not to provide employment for the teachers. The more that the community level involvement is encouraged, the better the education system will become."

Mr. Gray expressed the opinion that the consolidation and "boroughization" of the school districts would lead to the diminishment of districts. He speculated that by requiring local contribution, local residents would take a greater interest in how the money was being spent and how the programs are implemented. He thought this would lead to more effective programs.

Chairperson MacLean asked what is the percentage and age level of the "at-risk" kids.

Mr. Gray referenced Attachment A, noting that the percentage among Native Alaskans is much higher than that of caucasian students within the state and definitely higher in the high school age group. He noted that, although the high school drop out level is the most obvious, the "at risk" child can often be identified as early as second or third grade. He expressed that the emphasis of solving the drop out problem needs to be placed on the early childhood and primary grade levels.

Chairperson MacLean asked if the concentration of middle school drop outs is an area that needs to be addressed and if it is due to the transition from an elementary to a high school type curriculum?

Mr. Gray responded that the transition was a concern but he stated that the problem is more obvious at the high school level. He felt they needed to look at this to determine if it is a social issue or an educational issue and to try to get all the related agencies working together on the solution. Some of the social issues which directly affect educational issues are: the number of Alaskans under 18 who have families living below the poverty level; the teenage pregnancy rate in Alaska which is one of the highest in the nation; and drug and alcohol abuse, which is also substantial.

Chairperson MacLean asked if the School Board has considered the amount of suicides within the school system as one of the priorities that should be addressed?

Mr. Gray answered that it is a problem. Presently, neither he nor the Board is certain on how to prevent these deaths, or deal with this problem and he added that issues of self-worth are the kinds of questions that need to be addressed.

Chairperson MacLean asked what the goals and priorities are of the State Board for this fiscal year.

Mr. Gray answered with reference to Attachment B, the State Board of Education, through collaborative efforts, will develop an action agenda to increase support for public education. Implementing this is ultimately a local decision.

Chairperson MacLean noted that the question of time frame was raised by the Joint Committee on School Performance. She expressed the desire of the committee to work with the State Board and not duplicate its work.

Mr. Gray suggested that the Committee work directly with the Commissioner's Office and with Rosemary Hagevig, Executive Assistant.

Chairperson MacLean reiterated that these goals were planned to be implemented this fiscal year. Then she asked if each school district had its own competency test base for their students.

Mr. Gray answered that some school districts do and some do not. The State Board is requiring that each district administer the same test throughout the State at the same grade levels. If the district also wants to give their own test it would be in addition to the ITBS that all students would take.

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNNY ELLIS suggested that the State Board of Education meet in Bethel with the House Hess Committee to coordinate the needs of these two groups. He stated that the HESS Committee will be looking at health facilities in various villages and school sites.

Chairperson MacLean reminded everyone that this meeting is planned for the first week in September. Rep. MacLean restated that the Committee on School Performance really did want to work closely with the State Board of Education on the issues that are affecting our school drop out rate and suicide rates.

Chairperson MacLean asked what the State Department of Education accomplished to date regarding goals and objectives with assistance from the prior year's School Performance Committee.

WILLIAM G. DEMMERT, COMMISSIONER, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, responded to Rep. MacLean by distributing Attachment-C, concerning the work done jointly between the Alaska Department of Education and the Joint Committee on School Performance. He also submitted Attachment-D, the last basic skills performance report of Alaska students.

Regarding the definition of "at risk," he stated that the department was working on one and that they are looking at some of the national definitions and using that which the other states have developed.

Chairperson MacLean questioned the definition of "at risk" where schools have adopted the no-fail system, and where students are promoted without acquiring that knowledge for that level and grade.

Commissioner Demmert stated that he thought there were certain things that needed to happen for a student to succeed and if they do not happen the chances for that student to succeed will be severely limited.

Chairperson MacLean stated that one of the first goals the State Board of Education listed was creating a model outcome for competency. She asked if this ties directly into the concept of the no-fail system. She added that the student who moves from one grade to the next needs to be at a certain competency level.

Commissioner Demmert stated that the focus has been on the students who are expected to have difficulty completing high school. He referenced Attachment-C. The number of school districts have been reduced to 54 in the past year, of which there are 463 public schools within the state. The enrollment for the 1989-1990 school year is estimated at 102,000 students for grades K-12. School students represent about 1/5 of the state's total population. There are 7,735 certified staff and 6,511 classroom teachers. He added that 90% of the teachers are white, 3% black, 3.2% Alaska Natives and 2.8% represent other ethnic groups. The average pupil-teacher ratio is 16:1. City-boroughs spend on the average of \$5800 per pupil while REAAs spend an average per pupil of \$11,790. Twenty-two of Alaska's fifty-four school districts have enrollments that exceed 75% Native Alaskans. Thirty-one districts have at least 50% Native enrollments in the class room. There are 21,654 Alaska Native students and 170 Alaska Native teachers. Alaska Native students represent about 20.8% of the total student population and Native teachers represent about 3.2%. This is a major disparity. There are 172 different languages spoken in Alaska, with the five basic Native Alaskan languages comprising the largest group. Yupik speakers have the largest number of students entering school, other than the English language base. The Alaskan Native population has risen from 16% to 21%. Student achievement in the State of Alaska is at or above the national average in the Standardized Test for children K-12 as well as in the college entrance examinations (S.A.T. and A.C.T.).

Dr. Demmert briefly reviewed some of the social issues concerning the Alaska educational system. There are 72,000 functionally illiterate persons in the State of Alaska. He added that 6.5% of persons under 18 years of age live in families with income below the poverty level and that they know that children living in this situation are one third less likely to graduate from high school. At this point, Mr. Demmert made reference to Attachment C, page 12, concerning partnerships that have been developed over the past two years.

Commissioner Demmert proceeded with the recommendations of the State Board of Education (Attachment C-page 16).

Chairperson MacLean asked about the "restructuring" concept of grades K-4.

Commissioner Demmert responded that "restructuring" would be the major emphasis of the Department of Education and that they would be identifying seven schools within the State which would be interested in working with the Department in this effort. Language development is probably the key to academic achievement. In restructuring K-4, the curriculum focus will be changed by integration in order to identify the best way to teach language, and then train teachers. Commissioner Demmert added that another aspect of this restructuring will be to bring together teachers, parents, school administrators and community leaders to discuss the content of the restructuring. The Alaska Department of Education spent about \$14,000 to help develop the Summer Focus program in Anchorage. Seven schools participated with representatives including teachers, parents, school board members and some of the school administration. These people met and consolidated ideas about the meaning of "restructuring," the development of a plan and its implementation over the next three year period. The Board would like to duplicate this over the next three or four summers, and add more schools each year.

Rep. MacLean asked if the topic was centered around language.

Commissioner Demmert responded that the topic was centered around language development, specifically relating to rural schools where the primary language spoken is not English. He noted that the school experience needs to begin with the home language as the language of instruction. Evidence finds that those youngsters that start with the language that is the home language and then move on to the language at school do much better academically than those children that are forced to switch to another language upon entering school. The focus is to identify a language base from which students can learn, and use that as a base from which the student can learn other languages including the language of the school.

Commissioner Demmert explained that the Alaska Department of Education has decided to put together a major paper on language development because there is very little available regarding this. The department, in agreement with the Ministers of Education from Norway, Sweden, Finland, the Northwest Territories in Canada and Whitehorse, hopes to pull together five or six papers from each country that focus on language development to use as a base to find a way to teach languages more effectively. Edna MacLean, Rural and Native Education Administrator, will be doing the paper for the Northwest. The Northwest Regional Lab is willing to help research information that is available on this. Once again, Commissioner Demmert identified language development as the top priority for this next year.

Commissioner Demmert was asked a question concerning the "restructuring" of K-4 and the legislation which was passed two years ago and submitted by Rep. Cotten, to change the date of entrance for kindergarten. Commissioner Demmert was questioned if he thought this change has helped or deterred education of our smaller children in this age group.

Commissioner Demmert commented that children develop at different intellectual and physical rates. This fact reinforces the idea that chronological age often is not the best tool to determine a child's readiness for school. The Department hopes to address this in the "restructuring" of K-4. He noted that an equally important issue to address is the preschool factor which can stimulate intellectual development and prepare the youngster for those grades. Children who attend Early Childhood Education Programs before kindergarten end up doing much better throughout their school experience. The National Association of Early Childhood Education believes that most testing is not good for preschool and K-2. He suggested that this raises questions concerning the tests used in Alaska for kindergarten, and expressed the concern that they might not be the most appropriate. He noted that there have been some changes in the past three years with this test.

Commissioner Demmert reiterated the focus of language development stating that it is essential to build upon a child's language base. "From this point forward, we are building upon this base and if we are to talk about improved academics we have to keep this in mind. First, a person's language ability is significantly determined by the time they are three years of age. Second, language development is the key to academic achievement. Third, whatever we do after age three is basically building on that base. The younger the child is when this is introduced, the easier it will be for them to make this adjustment."

Chairperson MacLean asked about the basic skills needed to be taught in school in the primary years and how they fit in the system based around primary language.

Commissioner Demmert stated that language is the academic focus. Cultural and developmentally appropriate activity must also be focused on the following abilities: intrapersonal; interpersonal; spatial; music and other fine arts; athletic; mathematical; and social and cultural.

Senator Adams observed that an item that needs addressing by the Department is whether or not the State is funding bilingual education to move students from English to their Native tongue, and if so, this tactic is reversed in the urban centers, such as Anchorage, where students are taught from their Native based tongue to English. He noted that this information needs to be made available to the urban legislators, so that they will understand that bilingual is meant to move in both directions.

Commissioner Demmert acknowledged Sen. Adams' point to take a look at the bilingual statutes in the State of Alaska and the rules and regulations under which that program is operated. He noted that currently there is discrimination against those rural Native Alaskan students who have moved away from a Native language as a base into English as a base, but have not been able to develop either language sufficiently to do well in school. The State needs to provide opportunities for the Native dominant language student to the bilingual program and also needs to provide increased opportunities for those students who are moving from one language to another and are still in the process of developing the second language. Currently, this is not being handled well and he noted this is an area of high interest for the Board.

Commissioner Demmert continued to address the second critical priority for improving academic achievements among those students that currently fail. This is to provide a support base that allows intervention of social barriers that limit a students' opportunity to succeed in school. This means the development of partnerships between schools and social service agencies and between schools and community groups. He gave the examples of churches, and school counselors that serve as coordinators between social service agencies and schools. He noted that this could also mean safe houses in communities where there are drug and alcohol dependencies and in which the child's safety might be an issue. Alaska needs to expand and develop new programs that deal with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.

Commissioner Demmert stated that the third priority is the promoting, developing, and expansion of partnerships between schools, business/industry, Native organizations,

government and other employers. "Partnerships that provide students with a sense of relationship between what one learns in school and what is required in the real world, giving the student a sense of responsibility, of contributing to society, a sense of accomplishment and an opportunity to understand what it is to earn an income."

Commissioner Demmert continued with the fourth priority essential to improvement of schooling as the need to improve teaching and teachers. He noted that there is a need to build partnerships between schools and the University to train teachers specifically for our schools, particularly for rural schools with large numbers of Native students. The Native teaching force in Alaska should be about 20%. This is a very difficult idea to implement. "The information that we have from other communities around Native tribes in the lower United States and Canada points out the social problems of the students has decreased, the academic achievement level of those students has increased and the attitude toward education in those communities is very positive in those communities where there is a larger percentage of Native teachers or teacher aides."

Commissioner Demmert ended by stating that the fifth and equally important recommendation for improving schools and student performance is to build a strong Alaskan education and research base. "This research can tell us if what we are doing is working, research that gives us evidence for new direction, research that can help improve what we now do." Commissioner Demmert suggested an Alaskan research base and an opportunity to build research capacity.

EDNA MACLEAN, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, RURAL AND NATIVE EDUCATION ADMINISTRATOR, remarked that bilingual programs do enhance academic achievement in English, at the same time they enhance the language heritage of a child. She suggested that there is no detrimental effect in a bilingual program. She also responded to the research that the Board of Education is looking into, reiterating that it will enhance the students' academic achievement for minority students. She stated that there are six parameters that have been established by the International Research Project, which stems from a base out of France, under the Office of Educational Research Innovations:

1. Incorporation of a child's heritage language and culture in a school.
2. Encouraging community involvement.
3. Developing different ways of teaching that meet the needs of different learning styles.
4. Assessment - determining where the student is and preparing a program to meet those needs.
5. The use of computer-assisted instruction.
6. An early childhood education information base.

Sen. Al Adams commented that one of the things missing in the recommendations is alternative education facilities. "It is under the Constitution that we have provided education to all Alaskans, consequently, we need to address the option of the alternative facility such as boarding schools for those students that live in the village areas and would like to come to Anchorage or Fairbanks for their education." He asked what is the position of this Department surrounding these options.

Commissioner Demmert replied that this is a priority for the State Board and department to look at. He added that there is an interest in developing some new regional attendance areas or boarding schools. He stated that the Job Core Center which they were able to obtain for Alaska would help the department to look at this issue. Karen Ryals, administrator of Adult and Vocational Education, initiated the development of this proposal through the Department of Community and Regional Affairs and in cooperation with the Mat-su School District. Three million dollars have been secured for the program per year, for up to a ten year period. This budget will cover construction of a dormitory for between 200-250 beds.

Commissioner Demmert added that he is concerned that recent high school graduates be able to incorporate more skill development for job preparation. This should possibly include an extension to grades 13 & 14.

Sen. Al Adams suggested that he would like to see a joint-partnership between the University system and K-12. He recommended that the academic achievement in various school districts is insufficient to meet the standards of colleges and he would like to see something occur between the school districts and the University to consolidate this information.

Commissioner Demmert stated that there are four points that need to occur and he noted that there was a meeting between the State Board of Education and the University of Alaska Regents concerning this. Their discussion was about the new college entrance examination and the exit requirements of the high school and the need to coordinate these. "In working with the colleges and universities, we are attempting to develop new and better ways to train teachers so that they will be more effective in the classrooms." The idea of internships in the classroom is a concept that instigates debate. The third point the commissioner raised, is the possibility of improving quality education through having master-teachers work with new teachers for a prolonged basis. He noted that there has been discussion on the need to improve the performance of university students in math, science and language arts and suggests

that some teachers of these subject areas need to improve their teaching skills. This is a difficult cooperative effort to work out.

Sen. Al Adams spoke about the appropriation of funding for education and suggested that perhaps an education endowment could be addressed in the Legislature this year. Sen. Adams questioned the Board's position on this.

Commissioner Demmert commented that the Board has four priorities:

1. The endowment - which the Education Board supports.
2. To provide order to school construction and debt retirement.
3. New legislation on high-risk children which the Board has developed some recommendations for.
4. The Foundation Program will need some changes to meet the equity tests.

Dr. Demmert restated that the Department of Education wants to be able to coordinate with the Committee on School Performance. He pointed to Edna MacLean as the person within the Department to provide education and technical assistance toward this.

Rep. MacLean recommended that the State Department of Education submit their schedule of upcoming meetings in education and conferences that may be planned this year to the committee so that they could coordinate meetings.

Rep. MacLean suggested that there needs to be a review of the committee goals and objectives. She suggested that the committee choose Co-Chairs.

Sen. Al Adams suggested Senator Jones as Co-Chair.

Rep. MacLean cited the need to hire a Research Assistant and to outline the project scope and the expenses for the Committee on School Performance. Frank Darnell was recommended for the position of Research Assistant.

She noted that a committee hearing could be coordinated with the International Education Conference in Barrow in September 19th - 21st to obtain further comment from school districts in that area and the public. Sen. Adams agreed and a meeting was tentatively scheduled.

Chairperson MacLean adjourned the meeting.

HOW CAN THE STATE OF ALASKA IMPROVE SCHOOL PERFORMANCE?

ALASKA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Strategic Planning Meeting

Anchorage, Alaska

June 6 and 7, 1989

Barney Gottstein, President

Don Gray, Vice-President

Janie Leask, Second Vice-President

Sue Wilken, Member

Jack Chenoweth, Member

Catherine Herrnsteen, Member

Cora Sakeagak, Member

Lt. Colonel Matthew Kenney, Military Advisory Member

Raychelle Daniel, Student Advisory Member

FOREWORD

In May 1989, the Alaska Legislature requested the State Board of Education to charge the Department of Education to develop recommendations to improve schools whose students score low on national achievement tests. The measure known as House Concurrent Resolution Number 33, asks the State Board of Education to submit its recommendations to the Legislature no later than February 1, 1990.

On June 6 and 7, 1989 the State Board of Education and the Department convened a meeting to plan the strategy to address this resolution. The critical question addressed by the Board and those attending the meeting was: WHAT SHOULD THE STATE OF ALASKA BE DOING TO HELP LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS IMPROVE THE LEVEL OF SCHOOL AND STUDENT PERFORMANCE?

Barney Gottstein, President of the State Board of Education, invited the group of school superintendents, teachers, parents, university officials, school board members, and early childhood and Head Start program managers to address the following issues:

- *The education system clearly is not working for large numbers of Alaskan youth.
- *At least 25 percent of our young people are not graduating from high school.
- *Large numbers of children from minority and poverty backgrounds score among the lowest in the nation on national achievement tests.
- *Far too many youth commit suicide, have unwanted pregnancies, struggle with drug and alcohol abuse, and experience psychological and physical abuse from their families.
- *These children are not prepared to learn in the public school classroom, and the public schools are unprepared to deal effectively with these children.

Mr. Gottstein asked those participating in the meeting to assist the Board in identifying deficiencies in the current educational delivery system. He noted that other states with far fewer resources than Alaska are tackling these issues.

"They are developing programs and adapting models for early childhood education, for enhanced parenting skills, for more counselors and more effective teaching structures. It's about time Alaska did the same. Our at-risk children need not be doomed, but they will be unless we begin to address the problem now."

President Gottstein emphasized that the Department of Education is seeking a broad cooperative effort among parents, legislators, educators, community organizations, employers, the university and others to bring about needed fundamental changes to enable the public school system to become effective at educating a much greater percentage of young Alaskans. We cannot afford to allow students to drop out or slide out of school before developing basic skills they need to become useful, responsible citizens and productive members of Alaska's work force.

The following pages summarize six major topics that participants at the m identified as important areas that need improvement. They are not meant all inclusive, but should be viewed only as an initial beginning point. areas are:

- * Early Childhood, Parenting and Language Programs
- * Community Based Child Services as a Multi-agency Respons
- * At Risk Incentive Program Alternatives
- * Re-evaluation of Schooling Options
- * Improving Teaching Practices and Providing Support for T in Rural Alaska
- * Building on the Strengths of Native Languages and Cultur

The State Board of Education and Department of Education plan to invite educators, parents and other citizens to develop proposals for addressir of the six areas. In considering each of the topical areas, work group: be asked to consider recommendations to the Board based upon local dist: needs, statewide needs, and models that have been proven successful in and other locations in the country. The State Board will examine each for appropriate methods of implementation, including submission as legislation. Committee proposals will be submitted to the State Board November 1989, to allow sufficient time for the State Board to prepare legislative proposal prior to the beginning of the January 1990 session

In summary, three questions will be used as a preliminary framework wit which the working groups will focus their efforts:

1. What are the "at-risk" issues in Alaska?
2. What have we learned from the experiences of other states and loca districts as they have dealt with this problem?
3. What should the State of Alaska be doing to assist local school d: improve the level of school and student performance?

Early Childhood, Parenting and Language Programs

1. Organization and development of pre-school options for Alaska
 - * What funding alternatives should be considered to support quality programs?
 - * What is the best process for insuring maximum community involvement?
2. Identify alternatives which enhance language skills for young children that will lead to increased academic proficiency
 - * What model programs that are culturally and developmentally appropriate for pre-school and early elementary populations have been identified which could be replicated in a variety of Alaskan situations?
 - * Identify the complexities associated with increasing the level of understanding regarding the need for such programs in each community and the necessity for building strong local support prior to program implementation
3. Determine criteria under which pre-elementary children will be identified as eligible for participation in state funded preschool programs
 - * What are the characteristics of "at-risk" pre-schoolers both in rural and urban settings?
 - * How much flexibility should there be for additional children to have access to these programs?
4. Discuss process for assuring maximum level of interagency coordination and cooperation in implementation and delivery of programs (Head Start, private providers, local school district programs)
 - * What is the best procedure for encouraging all preschool providers to work in a non-competitive environment to assure a maximum level of program quality for all children?
 - * What are the most practical options for coordinating pre-school programs with local elementary school K-4 programs?

Community Based Child Services as a Multi-agency Responsibility

1. Explore alternatives for coordinating education and health/human services funded and delivered by the State and other agencies
 - * What alternatives should be explored to encourage better cooperation between schools and Health and Social Services, ANHS, and local non-profit social services corporations which which would provide the maximum level of service to students?
 - * How can the system which identifies services that children need be improved in all areas of the State? What services now exist? How should such services be funded? Who is responsible for different levels of service?
2. Make recommendations for a statewide policy which would create a delivery system that carefully identifies the appropriate role of the various agencies as they work together in a collaborative effort to provide for educational and the health and social services needs of at-risk students
 - * What models are being used in Alaska and other states that could be replicated?
 - * Identify options for a village based model which could be piloted in rural communities with most urgent needs and minimum resources
 - * Consider alternatives that urban school districts and health/social services providers could implement to support interagency coordination of education and health and social services for at-risk youth (eg. shared use of facilities)
3. What can the State do to better prepare education professionals to deal with the health and social concerns of students that affect the education process? Conversely, how can the State improve the expertise of health and social services professionals in dealing with mental and physical problems of children and youth that affect personal and social development, and school performance?
 - * Should the Health and Social Services confidentiality regulations be reviewed to provide for two way transmittal of information between teachers and social services providers when specific students are experiencing tramatic situations? Should the education regulations include requirements for teachers to adhere to certain standards of confidentiality when involved in these kinds of cases?
 - * Are there techniques that educators could use to provide a better educational experience for children who continue to live in "at-risk" environments?
 - * What is the best way to help teachers cope with student health and social problems that are a detriment to learning, and become skilled in making appropriate referrals for students under their supervision?
4. What can be done to help children and youth relate to health issues as being personally applicable?
 - * What are effective ways to help young people work toward personal responsibility for their own well being?
 - * What are effective methods for helping children and youth understand the role of helping agencies, and to accept their assistance when appropriate?

At Risk Incentive Program Alternatives

1. What is the definition of "at-risk" for Alaska applications?

- * What are the characteristics of "at-risk" elementary and secondary students both in rural and urban situations?
 - Income level?
 - Base language skills?
 - Academic proficiency?
 - Health and social impediments to school success?
 - Potential high school drop out?
 - Ability to make a positive transition to postsecondary education or the world of work?
- * Are all students "at-risk" at some time or another?

2. What alternative programs could local communities and school districts consider to meet the specific needs of particular populations of at-risk students?

- * Evaluate some suggestions offered at the June meeting:
 - Extended learning time?
 - Work experience opportunities for students that utilize educational concepts?
 - Expose students to various options?
 - Consideration of various methods for delivery of academic programs?
 - Establish JTPA rural programs?
 - Remedial summer school?
 - Structured mentoring/tutoring activities?
 - Expansion of high school ROTC programs to rural school districts?
 - Improving counseling programs?
- * Identify possible funding sources, including reallocation of existing funds, incentive grants, and categorical funding
- * What programs that have been successfully implemented in other states could be adapted for use in Alaska?
- * Consider viability of programs which would ease the transition from rural high school to postsecondary activity

3. What can school districts do to build more positive relationships between small communities and their schools, based upon trust and mutual understanding?

- * How can the State help establish a commonality of purpose among school administrators, local school board members, parents, teachers and students which will lead to increased school performance and student achievement?

Re-evaluation of Schooling Options

1. Consider recommendations for developing a structured process in which schools would work closely with local community members, parents, teachers and students to develop a plan of service within the guidelines of the district vision/philosophy and state requirements
2. Should the State and local school districts consider different options for delivering quality secondary education programs to rural students?
 - * Should local districts consider consolidating high school programs in a centralized area within the school district?
 - * Should the State re-visit the regional boarding school concept?
 - * What are the pros and cons of funding such programs?
3. What alternatives should the committee consider for assisting school districts in providing extended learning time for all students in the State, with particular emphasis on students who are not performing at an acceptable academic level?
 - * How can school districts educate parents and students regarding the critical importance of attendance?
 - * What opportunities could be provided for extended learning time?

Improving Teaching Practices and Providing Support for Teachers in Rural Alaska

1. Explore ideas to assist local districts in providing a more structured support system for new teachers in rural areas, including provision of intensive and comprehensive introduction programs in which local residents participate.

- * How can a systematic ongoing support program for new teachers—particularly those in more isolated communities—be developed and institutionalized?

2. What strategies will best assist local school districts as they pursue active minority teacher recruitment?

- * Should career ladder models in some Alaskan school districts be replicated?

3. Consider strategies and incentives for increasing expectations with respect to teacher performance and corresponding student performance

- * How can a better understanding of the multicultural classroom and school be facilitated?

4. Evaluate and make recommendations regarding teacher pre and in-service training and practical suggestions for selection of teachers employed for service in isolated rural settings

Building on the Strengths of Native Languages and Cultures

1. Explore ways to build on strengths of language and culture within the school system
 - * What is the most appropriate way to teach Native language and culture in school? Should it be integrated into the curriculum or taught in a community schools type program format? Should it be a combination of both?
 - * Should adoption of this kind of educational program be a matter of state policy or a local decision?
 - * Should funding for such programs be included in foundation or should alternative sources be identified?
 - * Should the framework for these programs be the existing bilingual programs which are designed to reconnect children in a positive way with their culture and language?
 - * In urban school districts should the "school within a school" concept and other effective models be explored as a way of delivering these programs to Native students?
2. What research and promising strategies could be utilized for Native language instruction?
 - * How could communication between Native speaking parents, students and English speaking students/teachers be improved?
 - * Would the integration of Native language and culture into existing curriculum be significant in improving students' academic performance? What are the implications for rural and urban schools?
3. What can the State do to assist school districts to use the students' first language as a foundation for successful academic experience?

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

Judith Kleinfeld, University of Alaska Fairbanks

The State Board of Education would do a great service by reopening the dialog regarding placement of rural students in large central high schools or very small high school settings. In addition, many small schools and their communities have turned into battle grounds between the community's cultural values and an education system based upon another culture; there's no trust between the school and community. Communities need to reestablish a commonality of values define responsibilities of the school and parents and between teachers and students and establish a sense of common purpose.

Dave Hagstrom, University of Alaska Fairbanks and Principal of Denali Elementary School

All students are at risk at one time or another. It is the responsibility of the school to create a climate to excite and stimulate each child. Each child needs an advocate in addition to parents and teachers. High self esteem is important for students, parents and teachers. School change needs to occur from "the inside out" at the local school level. State Board of Education should encourage grass roots efforts to experiment with restructuring schools.

Darlene Heckler, Teacher, Selawik

Small rural high schools are not good enough. The problems have been identified. It's now time for someone to do something about them.

Claudia Douglas, Junior High Counselor, Fairbanks

It's the responsibility of the education system to find the genius in each child.

Lucy Brown, Counselor, Anchorage

Anchorage needs a Native student residential "safe house." More funds need to be allocated for after school career classes and need to think about tailoring school hours to the needs of students.

Bob Waters, School Psychologist, McLaughlin Correctional Center

Job skills and community service are important for high school students. Personal contact needs to be made to get drop out back in school. A seventh and eighth period needs to be established as part of the school day as a safety net for high risk youth.

Marilyn Rosene, Teacher, Dillingham

Rural children are not well grounded in either their Native language or English. Alcohol, drugs, violence and domestic assault are severe problems for students. Village students need school experiences in larger communities. Village schools needs to place a value on training students for subsistence lifestyle.

Don Oberg, Teacher, Kenai

Schools need to hire more counselors for children of all ages.

Steve McPhetres, Executive Director, Alaska Council of School Administrators

Schools need to build upon their current successes. While recognizing the importance for local control, the State Board of Education should require local school districts to develop a plan of action to increase the achievement levels of more students. The Legislature should increase funding to the Department of Education to provide technical assistance to school districts to develop innovative strategies for addressing programs aimed at high risk youth.

Brad Raphel, Superintendent, Yupik School District

Schools need to experiment with innovative tactics to increase achievement. It's okay to make a mistake and learn from that mistake, but it's a greater mistake to never have tried.

Liz Borio, Assistant Superintendent, Yukon Koyukuk School District

Longitudinal data is important in school improvement. A key element for developing school is hiring the best teachers possible, even at the expense of making EEO hires.

Shirley Holloway, Superintendent, North Slope Borough School District

The Department of Education needs to beef up its technical assistance staff; monitoring without providing technical assistance is useless. Early childhood education is important. Barrow's 10 year history of early childhood programs is starting to show results. Even though educators must be aware of social problems and deal with them realistically, they must remember that their primary mission is schooling.

THE DEMOGRAPHICS OF ALASKA'S SCHOOLS

Dr. William G. Demmert
Alaska Commissioner of Education

School District Information:

*There are 463 public schools in 55 school districts in the state.

*The enrollment for the 1988-89 school year is estimated at 104,000 students in grades kindergarten - grade twelve.

*There are 7,735 certificated staff, with 6,511 classroom teachers. 91% of the certificated staff are White, 3% are Black, 3.2% are Alaska Native and 2.8% are representatives for other ethnic groups.

*The average pupil-teacher ratio's are about 16 to one (with 17-1 in city & Borough Districts and 12 - 1 in REAAs).

*Cities and Boroughs spent an average of \$5,345 per pupil in average daily membership with REAA schools spending an average of \$11,790 in FY88.

*Twenty-two of Alaska's 55 school districts have enrollments that exceed 75% Native Alaskans.

*Thirty-one districts have at least 50% Native enrollments in their classrooms.

Student Information:

69% of Alaska's students are White, 21% are Alaska Native and 10% are representatives from other ethnic groups.

*The average Scholastic Achievement Scores (SAT) for Alaskan students was 475 in mathematics, 441 in verbal tests with 45.7% of Alaska's high school graduates taking the test in 1987.

*The national averages were 476 in mathematics, 428 in verbal scores with 45% taking the test.

*The American College Test (ACT) scores for Alaskan students averaged 18.4 with 36.6% taking the tests.

*The National average score was 18.8 with 31% of the nation's high school seniors taking the test in 1987.

*Alaskan students in 1988 basic skills performance scored consistently higher than the national averages, and information is consistent for the past four years.

*Fifteen of the fifty-five school districts had at least one average score below the 30th percentile, showing a major problem among students in those schools in certain basic skills, such as mathematics, language arts, mathematics computation, and reading comprehension.

*In many districts the basic skills performance was higher in grades K-3 than any other grade groupings. Performance in grades 4-8 was relatively lower.

*The drop-out rate for Alaska is projected at 30% with the Native Alaskan student population significantly higher in urban areas (Juneau -60%; Fairbanks 70% over four years of high school).

*There are 172 different languages spoken in Alaska with the Native Alaskans five basic languages comprising the largest group (Yupic speakers having the largest numbers of students entering school with other than an English language base).

*In recent years the percent of Alaska Native student population has increased from 16% to 21% (even with the high urban drop out rates).

Social Issues:

*Based on the last Census, approximately one in seven Alaskans is functionally illiterate (approximately 72,000 in English).

*It is estimated that adult basic education and literacy volunteer programs in Alaska are able to serve only 5% of those who are in need of services.

*Language and cultural deterioration among Native Alaskan groups is a growing social, cultural, and educational issue.

*Growing numbers of high school graduates that are not ready for entering the work force because they lack basic reading, computation, language, and social skills.

*Estimate that 1 in 6.5 Alaskans under 18 live in families whose income is below the poverty level.

*Children in poverty are one-third less likely to graduate from high school.

*Alaska's teenage pregnancy rate is 13% higher than the national average, ninth highest in the nation.

*For every completed suicide an additional 110 attempts are serious enough to require medical attention.

*Alaska's suicide rate is among the highest in the Nation, with the Alaska Native male, ages 20-24, 13 times the Alaskan average.

*The Alaska Native Health Board, in 1985, suggested a link between suicidal behavior and community stress, specifically citing stress caused by rapid social change as key.

*One in four children in Alaska has an alcoholic parent.

*The alcohol (and other substance abuse) problems in Alaska, resulting in family violence, high rates of criminal activity, and social deterioration, are significant. Student populations are not exempt from this problem.

*Alaska divorce rate is 70% compared to national average of 50% (Alaska second highest in the nation).

*Factors influencing students:

- Breakdown in family composition
- Rising poverty among the young
- Rising teenage births
- Increasing child abuse and sexual assault
- Substance abuse
- Suicide

RESOURCES:

Alaska Department of Education records, 1989

Basic Skills Performance of Alaska's Students, Alaska Department of Education, January 1989.

Baker-Benally, Patricia, Preliminary Descriptive Review of Alaska Native Students in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District, January 1987.

Hensley, William L., et al. Interim Report of the Senate Special Committee on Suicide Prevention, March 1988.

Hocker, Phil, Early Leavers From Juneau Douglas High School City and Borough of Juneau School District, December 15, 1988 (Draft).

Maclean, Edna Ahgeak, Summary of Recent Studies on the Alaska Native Community, Alaska Department of Education, March 30, 1989.

The AFN Report on the Status of Alaska Natives: A Call for Action, Alaska Federation of Natives, 411 West 4th Avenue, Suite 301, Anchorage, Alaska, January 1989.

The New Student Profile: Building a Workforce for the 21st Century, Governor's Council on Vocational Education, Rosie Peterson, Executive Director, 1988.

Literacy Audioconference Information, Barbara Thompson, Adult Basic Education, Office of Adult and Vocational Education.

Our Greatest Natural Resource: Investing in the Future of Alaska's Children, a report of the Governor's Interim Commission on Children and Youth, January 1988.

Testimony Before the State Board of Education
Jo Kuykendahl
University of Alaska Fairbanks

Early childhood education is occurring in Alaska, as nationwide, through many diverse services from birth onward: licensed day care homes; certified preschools; licensed day care centers, Head Start, Military, Johnson O'Malley, other Federally certified programs, and unlicensed exempt centers and homes (not receiving any federal or state money and not serving infants and toddlers). Churches are the largest financial contributor/housers of programs in the nation; hospitals provide the greatest amount of employer support.

According to Department of Community and Regional Affairs Child Care Program, Alaska has 14,457 licensed and military federal certified spaces for children as of May 1989, occurring in 678 homes and 207 centers--up from 13,019 one year ago.

While this is over a 10% increase in these services, future predictions relative to poverty, children at risk, child care and increasing maternal employment suggest a continued increase in the decade ahead. Certainly one of the significant factors impacting this expansion is the societal recognition of the importance of the early years. We know learning is occurring after birth, and will continue--good or bad. The medium long range benefits to disadvantaged children of high quality early childhood programs is well documented by research. The Consortium for Longitudinal Studies, headed by Irving Lazar of Cornell, (published in As The Twig is Bent) provides a collaboration of individual researchers concerned about the overall effectiveness of early childhood education programs of the 60's. When evaluated over a 15 year period, early education had significant impact in 5 areas:

- 1) Developed abilities in early to mid childhood
- 2) School competence in mid-childhood and adolescence
- 3) Educational attainment in late adolescence
- 4) Attitudes toward achievement in adolescence
- 5) Occupational attitudes in early adulthood and,
- 6) Occupational attainment in early adulthood, indirect preschool effects were found

Additionally, the well known High Scope/Perry Preschool work found that for every dollar invested in quality early childhood education for disadvantaged three and four year old children, citizens expect to reap six dollars in savings in the form of reduction in the following:

- 1) high school dropouts
- 2) Retention in grade
- 3) Special education placements
- 4) Delinquency (1986)

In addressing QUALITY, the National Day Care Study, and National Day Care Home Study (NDCH) both found the two most important factors are:

- 1) Group size (including teacher/parent ratio)
- 2) Early childhood/child development education of the LEAD teacher (not short term workshops - but comprehensive study of theory and research with inclusion of appropriate practice).

Why are group size and child development education so important?

Interesting to those of us who studied early childhood in the 60's is the renewed interest in play, components of quality play, analysis of play, and importance of play experiences. The literature of the 80's is punctuated with strategies for appropriately "guiding" play that has the overriding characteristic of VOLUNTARY PARTICIPANT CHOICE. It is child centered (versus adult-directed), unstructured (versus highly structured), divergent in thinking (versus convergent thinking), intrinsic in motivation (versus extrinsic motivation using rewards and operant conditioning), has teacher as facilitator (versus teacher as behavior modifier) and is process oriented (versus product oriented). Play, which is not so simple as we may have thought, is seen by many as the most practical way to develop imagination, initiative and self esteem.

"During free play children develop unique mental images of their experience in the environment. The child then incorporates these images and concepts into existing cognitive and effective neuronal structures thereby enhancing left and right brain modes of thinking. Free play allows fantasizing in any direction; imagining wildly, acting out roles that we fear, admire or to which we would like to temporarily retreat. Free play is needed to allow daydreaming, trying out roles that help us understand ourselves and the viewpoints of others." (Ester Hovey, Cal. State U. Long Beach, NATCET SP 1989).

Implementing play experiences with these quality components with groups of young children - say 20 four year olds (the nationally recommended group size LIMIT), with the assistance of an aide - is not as easy as one would suspect. Try it. It is quite a lot simpler for the adult to step out of the role of the "facilitator" and become highly teacher-directive: as "I'd like you to do this...". It requires a clear understanding of child growth and development and select techniques that expand on the teacher's observation, classroom organization, and LISTENING skills, PLUS an assortment of appropriate mathematical, dramatic, art, science, reading, gross motor, and fine motor materials for hands on experimentation, exploration and work, APPROPRIATELY STRUCTURED indoor and outdoor SPACE, and teamwork from the staff.

Another important component of quality is parent involvement. When a member of a child's family takes part in his school life in a positive manner, even briefly and infrequently the child's self-esteem appears to soar. Such positive participation sends a signal to the child: the family endorses this OTHER world. Teachers often find that children whose families are involved in various roles at school over the years have higher aspiration levels and more motivation than the children whose families teachers never see. There is little evidence, however, that the amount of parent involvement in their children's schools is a critical variable; a very SMALL amount may do the trick. It seems to be the amount of respect given to the parent that is relevant to children's attitudes. Reaching out for and showing respect for all of our children's families is part of enhancing the children's self respect (self-esteem), which in turn leads to greater learning.

Implementing quality parent involvement programs, again, is no easy trick. It requires understanding parenting and parents, and understanding how to effectively utilize their knowledge, skills, and interests. It also requires regulatory support. For 16 years I have implemented an active parent involvement component at Discovery Center, an early childhood program in Fairbanks.

This service component builds on the former parent cooperative model, more popular before the need for two working parents was as acute. Recently, a former parent volunteer stopped me to explain how impressed she was that the parents who volunteered at Discovery during the years she was there are the same ones active in PTA's and volunteering in classrooms across the community where they are welcome.

During the last 4 years, regulations have made it increasingly difficult to use parent volunteers and I am one, if not the only program in Fairbanks, still struggling to keep active parental involvement alive. I have requested the Tri Department - now a team of 6 agency leaders - to address the potential of a Volunteer Certificate with some incremental training requirement based on a Head Start Volunteer Certificate model already being used in the state. Thus, parents possessing this certificate could legally volunteer in their child's programs for a specified number of years.

Problems, such as this one with parent volunteers, in early childhood programs often go unresolved. Alaska exists without an office of child advocacy, office of children or other early childhood and family policy and procedure communication hub. Thus, programs must investigate and lobby individually, (or collectively, if they have the time and money to put that all together) to arrive at fair solutions. Without this kind of communication, coordination among and between service entities is fragmented, duplication of efforts exist, and extremely valuable expertise doing valuable kinds of delivery remains unknown to others. I have long supported addressing communication needs as a top priority within Alaska.

While early childhood programs in Fairbanks are a financial nightmare, the reality is that care and education cost, no matter who is providing it. Cost of care for a four year old is running \$4,080 per year, plus an additional \$264 or so paid by the state through the Child Care Grant program, for total revenue per year per child running under \$4,400 for 10 hours of care per day, 5 days per week, 12 months of the year. Budgets are tight running \$11.27- \$16.19 for one hour's revenue for one teacher of 7-10, share of administration, 245-350 sq. feet of space, heat, lights, garbage, insurance, toys, maintenance, books, staff training, etc. for that hour. To increase the level of preschool program quality, I have urged the Department of Education to address the voluntary levels of quality discussed several years ago, move forward with voluntary quality standards, and tie increased funding incentives to high quality programs undergoing increased costs through the lower group size and higher educated staff. Additionally, identification of these quality program models could facilitate increased in-state sharing of resources, trainers, and educational ideas.

The public schools are playing a larger role in providing prekindergarten programs or before-and after-school child care. A recently released state study in Kentucky of over 600 parents found that about 50% favored preschool programs for 3 or 4 year olds in the public schools, with lower income parents showing higher levels of support, and younger parents having more interest than older.

Before implementation of such programs, however, a community needs assessment is important to determine:

parents' work patterns, parental preferences, parental ability to pay, site preferences, what currently exists, transportation needs and desires, parental attitudes towards providing or locating volunteer help

Each community is unique; planning should be done by a team of community agencies and resources. School district planning must assess "existing space, teaching and support personnel, supervisory capacity, public resources benefits for new employees, transportation funds and avenues and good parenting-community reactions." (NAECTE SP. 89 p. 5) Programs for preschool children can work within public school facilities, but they require careful planning, grassroot support, and careful attention to ensuring the two quality components: group size (pupil/teacher ratio), and child development education of the lead teacher. In a state without a four year baccalaureate degree in child development and family studies and where a graduate in early childhood cannot be found this factor is of grave concern.

Jeffery Burkhardt from Concordia College has recently addressed kindergarten screening and he states that there exists within the literature evidence that it doesn't work to hold kids back. There is little justification for retention or for programs that add a year to a pupil's career in school. The evidence is quite clear and nearly unequivocal that the achievement and adjustment of retained children are no better - and in some instances worse - than those of comparable children who are promoted. Retention (including 2 years in varied kindergarten of developmentally or behaviorally delayed kindergarten - eligible children) is one part of the current reform package that doesn't work. School districts should reevaluate their academic expectations of kindergarten students relative to admittance to first grade as we may be putting undue pressure on kindergarten academic achievement expectations. (National Association of Early Childhood) (Teacher Educators "Developmental Kindergarten - in the Child's Best Interest? Jeffery Burkhardt, Concordia College, St. Paul.)

When looking at length at kindergarten days, a recent study of Chicago kindergarten programs showed that class size is a better predictor of school achievement than length of the school day. When kindergarten classes contain more than 16 students, according to that study, reducing class size should be the primary concern of school officials. Only when kindergarten classes are smaller than 16 will lengthening the school day pay off in later school achievement. (3/87 Phi Delta Kappan p. 526)

Lastly of increasing concern is the need for a four year degree programs in early childhood, child development and family studies in the State of Alaska. This is because Alaska needs to move forward on preschool/kindergarten teaching certificate and requirements for an early childhood endorsement credential to teach kindergarten. Early childhood directors, head teachers, and lead teachers need to meet the National Association for Education Training recommendations, and our state system for higher education needs to move forward to ensure that this level of education is available. Concurrently, regulations must be increased, for ensuring the highest possible level of quality standards for educating our youngest citizens.

According to the consortium for Longitudinal Studies, the search for the perfect curriculum is probably futile. What is important is that there's a curriculum with specific goals and a real assurance that the teachers are carrying out the curriculum. "All of the programs were effective and none were more or less effective than the others as measured by the school outcome indicators. Independence of separate studies makes findings highly reliable. Several other recent studies have associated negative behavior (such as aggression and juvenile delinquency rates) in children with cognitively oriented early childhood programs.

A growing body of research has emerged recently affirming that children learn most effectively through a concrete, play oriented approach to early childhood education. The trend toward early academics is antithetical to what we know about how young children learn. Programs should be tailored to meet the needs of children rather than expecting children to adjust to the demands of a specific program. A major determinant of program quality is the extent to which knowledge of child development is applied in program practices - the degree to which the program is developmentally appropriate, and that look at a child's functioning in the context of its surrounding community.

1 IN THE HOUSE

BY THE HEALTH, EDUCATION AND
SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

2

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 33

3

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

4

SIXTEENTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

5

Relating to improving school perfor-
mance.

6

7 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

8

WHEREAS the state has a constitutional obligation to maintain a system
9 of public education in the state under art. VII, sec. 1, Constitution of
10 the State of Alaska; and

11

WHEREAS the state should be striving to provide the highest quality
12 education for each student, for the long-term benefit of each student, and
13 for the state as a whole; and

14

WHEREAS student achievement test scores show great disparity between
15 school districts in the state; and

16

WHEREAS the state has the responsibility to ensure that educational
17 opportunities are equitably available throughout the state;

18

BE IT RESOLVED by the Alaska State Legislature that the State Board of
19 Education is respectfully requested to direct the Department of Education
20 to develop a plan to help those districts where education performance is
21 suffering the most; and be it

22

FURTHER RESOLVED that the State Board of Education is requested to
23 work with the appropriate legislative committees to develop a plan for
24 improving education in the state and to suggest legislative remedies; and
25 be it

26

FURTHER RESOLVED that the State Board of Education is requested to
27 report back to the legislature by February 1, 1990, concerning efforts to
28 improve school performance in the state.

AGENDA
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
STRATEGIC PLANNING MEETING
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA
JUNE 6-7, 1989

TUESDAY, JUNE 6, 1989

STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION FOR ADDRESSING THE CHARGE TO THE STATE BOARD
IN HCR 33 WITH RESPECT TO SCHOOL PERFORMANCE: STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
AND ALASKAN EDUCATION COMMUNITY

9:00 AM SBE PRESIDENT BARNEY GOTTSTEIN: Statement of purpose of the
meeting and the challenge before the Alaskan Education Community

- * Determination of the role and responsibility of the State in meeting
the needs of school districts which have demonstrated consistent
substandard student academic performance.
- * Identification of components of a plan or plans which the State Board
of Education should consider to meet these needs as mandated by
legislative directive in HCR 33.

COMMISSIONER WILLIAM DEMMERT: Overview of major Alaskan "at-risk" issues

I. OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL TRENDS AND DISCUSSION OF SPECIFIC ALTERNATIVES
ADOPTED IN OTHER STATES

GENE WILHOIT: Executive Director National Assn. of State Boards of
Education -- Meeting Facilitator

ROBERT RATH: Northwest Regional Education Laboratory

II. Initial presentations from invited experts/practitioners/school
district superintendents/University research experts -- problem
definition; recommendations for alternative options; identification of
specific strategies which might be considered for replication

- * University of Alaska Research Panel: Judy Kleinfeld/Secondary
Education; Dave Hagstrom/Elementary Education; Jo Kuykendahl/
Preschool-Early Childhood Education

- * Teachers/counselors/NEAlaska: Bob Waters - McLaughlin Youth
Center; Lucy Brown - Counselor East High School; Darlene Heckler -
Selawik; Marilyn Rosene - Dillingham; Claudia Douglas - Fairbanks(Jr.
High and Alternative High School

- * Superintendents/Alaska Council of School Administrators

III. Opportunity for all other interested persons to share
observations/opinions/hands-on experiences with State Board of Education
and education community

Structured dialogue/interaction between State Board and education
community -- problem identification/analysis of status quo by local
school districts/SBE

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 7, 1989

IV. Summary of Tuesday discussion/ clarification/determination of the role of the State in addressing the identified problems

V. Consideration of various alternatives for short and long range implementation

VI. Discussion of process for continuing work on the identified alternatives

- * Identify "doable" initiatives
- * Identify committed individuals and organizations to work on specific initiatives
- * Identify leaders responsible for each unit of work
- * Set specific "firm" timelines (June-December)
- * Interaction with various legislative committees engaged in similar activities
- * Coordination of all of the above

PARTICIPANTS

<u>Name</u>	<u>Organization</u>
John Anttonen	South West Region School District/Department of Education/Juneau
Gary Baldwin	Lower Kuskokwim School District/Bethel
Liz Borrero	Yukon-Koyukuk School District/Nenana
Lucy Brown	ASD Indian Education Counselor/Anchorage
Jean Buchanan	Anchorage School Board
Jack Chenoweth	Alaska State Board of Education/Juneau
Susan Cocklin	Kids Corporation Head Start/Anchorage
Cheryl Cole	DCRA/Anchorage
Chris Converse	Mat-Su Indian Education Program/Palmer
Rick Cross	Fairbanks School District
Rachelle Daniel	Alaska State Board of Education/Tuntutuliak
Claudia Douglas	NEA Alaska/Fairbanks
Carol Evertt	Alaska Congress of Parents and Teachers/Anchorage
Harry Gamble	Department of Education/Juneau
Don Gray	Alaska State Board of Education/Fairbanks
Rosemary Hagevig	Alaska Department of Education/Juneau
David Hagstrom	University of Alaska Fairbanks
Sandi Haynes	Kids Corporation Head Start/Anchorage
Darlene Heckler	NEA Alaska/Selawik
Cathy Herrnsteen	Alaska State Board of Education/Kodiak
Shirley Holloway	North Slope Borough School District/Barrow
Toni Jones	Department of Education/Juneau
Matthew Kenny	Alaska State Board of Education/Juneau
Sam Kito	Alaska Federations of Natives
Judy Kleinfeld	Fairbanks Rural College
Carlton Kuhns	Bethel High School - Lower Kuskowim School District
Jo Kuykendahl	University of Alaska Fairbanks
Rob Lapham	Josten Learning - Alaska/Anchorage
Janie Leask	Alaska State Board of Education/Alaska Federation of Natives/Anchorage
Dori Luht	Alaska State Board of Education/Fairbanks
Danille Madigan	Kids Corporation Head Start/Elmendorf AFB
Ann McCoy	Alaska Congress of Parents and Teachers/Anchorage
Nicki McCury	Yukon Koyukuk School District/Nenana
Edna McLean	Department of Education/Juneau
Stephen McPheters	Alaska Council of School Administration/Juneau
Sally Mead	Health and Social Services/Anchorage
Charlie Mae Moore	Department of Education/Juneau
Patricia Newan	Kids Corporation Head Start
Eileen Norbert	Nome Public Schools
Leona Okakok	North Slope Borough/Barrow
Pat Pourchot	Alaska State Senate/Juneau
Bradley Raphael	Yupit School District
Marilyn Rosene	NEA Alaska/Dillingham
Lynda Sather	Fairbanks School District
Ginny Stocker	Kids Corporation Head Start/Chugiak

Dorothy Mae Thomas
Sam Towarak
Carol Waters
Sue Wilken
Mary Wolcott
Sharon Young

Rural Cap Incorporated
Bering Strait School District/Unalakleet
Anchorage School District
Alaska State Board of Education/Fairbanks
Department of Community and Regional Affairs
Association of Alaska School Boards/Juneau

MEMORANDUM

State of Alaska

Department of Education

TO: All Superintendents

DATE: July 24, 1989

FILE NO: sbe

TELEPHONE NO: 465-2800

FROM: Sue Wilken, Chair 
State Board of Education
Education Outcomes Subcommittee

SUBJECT: Education Outcomes

In its ongoing effort to improve the status of education in Alaska, the State Board of Education identified goals and initiatives as a framework within which to achieve this end. The Board organized itself into a number of subcommittees, which would be responsible for working closely with the education community and Department of Education staff to define a systematic process for implementation of the goals. A copy of the goals and the subcommittee structure is included in your packet.

Primary responsibility for GOAL I: STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT, was given to the subcommittees on education outcomes and accountability. These subcommittees have been working for the past year and one-half to determine the best method for meeting this important statewide goal. The State Board, in its frequent interaction with the Legislature, has identified the need for a single comprehensive statement of education outcomes for Alaskan children, and for a method of evaluating the effectiveness of those outcomes. The Board realizes that the majority of school districts in the State have already been involved in this kind of activity, however the need exists to pull this information together in a succinct format which can then be shared with policy makers and among local districts. This information will also assist the Department in making a more realistic assessment of district progress during the mandatory monitoring cycle. The University of Alaska is also interested in acquiring this information to tailor its programs to be more responsive to district expectations.

We are introducing the first public draft of the proposed education outcomes to you at the Summer Superintendents' Conference. We are anticipating that members of your organization will be able to provide valuable suggestions in response to this draft. We welcome your recommendations and comments based upon your personal experiences at the local level. How can the State Board of Education assist local school districts in implementing a common set of educational outcomes for all Alaskan children?

OUTCOMES FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

The Alaska State Board of Education believes that the purpose of public education in this State is to ensure that each student possesses the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for responsible citizenship, economic productivity and personal fulfillment.

The State Board of Education expects that each student in Alaska will:

1. Communicate effectively.

1. Develop oral language skills through listening and speaking in order to effectively express his or her feelings, ideas and concepts.
2. Develop reading comprehension skills to respond to the written information he or she faces in daily activities. The student will also develop positive attitudes toward reading as a lifelong activity.
3. Develop awareness and appreciation of languages other than English to promote understanding and communication among people of different cultures.
4. Learn to write effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences.

2. Think logically and critically.

1. Develop thoughtful responses to new information and ideas.
2. Solve problems using different modes of inquiry and analysis.
3. Be curious about the world and himself or herself, and be open to new ideas.
4. Develop decision-making skills.

3. Discover and nurture his or her own creative talents.

1. Develop an aesthetic appreciation for the world around us.
2. Participate in multi-media, interdisciplinary thematic projects and activities.
3. Use divergent thinking and a variety of media to understand and express the rich complexity of our world - yesterday, today and tomorrow.
4. Discover and nurture creative talents of individuals and groups.

4. Master essential technological skills.

1. Communicate effectively in a global society, including use of computers, video, and audio technologies.
2. Learn information retrieval skills to gather, analyze and evaluate new information and opinions.
3. Critically evaluate information presented by the mass media.

5. Demonstrate responsible citizenship.

1. Develop the values needed to be a responsible citizen and to actively participate in a democratic society.
2. Acquire basic knowledge, skills and the self concept needed to be a global citizen who accepts diversity and respects people of other cultures.
3. Participate in extracurricular activities and/or community service projects. developing social skills in leadership, cooperation and communication.
4. Develop an understanding of his or her relationship to the environment and a commitment to the wise use of resources.

6. Develop a commitment to health and fitness.

1. Demonstrate a commitment to his or her physical and mental well-being.
2. Incorporate healthy practices as a lifelong response to social, environmental and physical changes.

7. Develop personal responsibility to sustain oneself economically.

1. Become familiar with the expectations and be prepared for the traditional and nontraditional opportunities of the local, national and international work place.
2. Develop the desire to continue to learn.
3. Acquire a healthy, realistic work ethic.
4. Develop economic and consumer skills necessary for making informed choices that enhance the quality of life.

8. Acquire a positive self-image.

1. Learn about himself or herself and develop a positive and realistic self-image.
2. Experience success in activities that develop his or her talents and skills and build his or her self-esteem.
3. Learn to form satisfying relationships with others based on respect, trust, cooperation and caring.

990ARC

MEMORANDUM

State of Alaska
Department of Education

TO: Members, State Board of Education

July 25, 1989

FILE NO: SBE

TELEPHONE NO: 465-2800

FROM: Rosemary Hagevig

SUBJECT: SBE Subcommittees

The following is the list of SBE subcommittee assignments as revised to include new Board membership.

TEACHERS AND TEACHING

Don Gray, Chair
Sue Wilken
Janie Leask
Dori Luht

NON K-12 ISSUES

Cathy Herrnsteen, Chair
Jack Chenoweth

DEFINING EDUCATION OUTCOMES

Sue Wilken, Chair
Don Gray
Janie Leask
Lt. Col. Matt Kenny
Dori Luht

MT. EDGE CUMBE

Cora Sakeagak, Chair
Jack Chenoweth
Janie Leask

EDUCATION COALITION

Janie Leask, Chair
Sue Wilken
Don Gray
Cathy Herrnsteen

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

Janie Leask, Chair
Jack Chenoweth
Sue Wilken
Cathy Herrnsteen

REGULATIONS

Jack Chenoweth, Chair
Cathy Herrnsteen

SBE REPRESENTATIVE TO THE POSTSECONDARY COMMISSION

Jack Chenoweth

AT RISK STUDENTS

SBE Committee of the Whole

ACCOUNTABILITY

Cathy Herrnsteen, Chair
Jack Chenoweth
Cora Sakeagak

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION GOALS

GOAL I STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The State Board of Education will act to improve the educational experiences of students in order to assure that each student may reach his or her full potential.

Initiatives related to Goal I

- * Require all school districts to develop and define minimum outcomes and competencies of local public education efforts
- * Develop a "model" set of outcomes and competencies for use by local school districts to be used as a framework by school districts
- * Provide State leadership in identifying and disseminating successful instructional characteristics and model programs
- * Advocate a balance between classroom performance and extra-curricular activities that promote academic, athletic, social and cultural skills
- * Provide a climate for innovation and improvement of local practices including such activities as:
 - considering alternatives for the organization and structure of schools;
 - providing incentives for excellence;
 - exploring ways to raise expectations for students;
 - facilitating networking activities between school districts;
 - establishing recognition programs which reward improvement
- * In conjunction with the school districts, develop a statewide student assessment program that is designed to meet the needs of students, teachers, administrators, parents, policy makers and legislators
- * Recommend changes in resource allocation and instructional methods based on ongoing evaluation of assessment program outcomes
- * Advocate the integration of Native Alaska and other minority language and culture programs and perspectives, and the development and incorporation of relevant Pacific-Rim-related course objectives, materials, and activities into the curriculum of elementary and secondary schools
- * Identify and develop innovative practices for distance learning; advocate funding for such practices

GOAL II "AT-RISK" STUDENTS

The State Board of Education will define and identify "at-risk" students and develop and support preventive and remedial strategies to assist those students to overcome the factors and circumstances that place them "at-risk".

Initiatives related to Goal II

- * Examine factors that contribute to student drop-out, compile data, and develop appropriate and effective remediation
- * Search for solutions to existing problems associated with substance abuse, teen pregnancy, adolescent suicide, and other social and health problems
- * Form collaborative relations to inform and galvanize public support, coordinate efforts, develop comprehensive programs and assure adequate funding for early childhood education
- * Work with education coalition to develop strategy for increasing the number of counselors in schools and level of service to students
- * Establish collaborative relations to enhance parenting skills as a strategy to assist in meeting needs of students
- * Promote the development of a primary language base for young children
- * Explore structural alternatives for increased learning time and improved instructional practices

GOAL III PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The State Board of Education will strive to improve the skills of teachers, school administrators, and education support personnel in their professional growth and development.

Initiatives related to Goal III

- * Restate what teachers, school administrators, and certificated support staff are expected to know and be able to do when they enter into their professional duties, and devising means by which to measure accountability
- * Examine professional certification and endorsement: consider standards to require that teachers be placed in teaching situations consistent with their areas of endorsement or preparation; consider teacher competency testing
- * Recognize excellence in professional performance
- * Recommend strategies to improve the proportion of minorities employed in professional positions in education
- * Work with the University of Alaska and other state postsecondary institutions to strengthen teacher education programs, and to include support for professional development schools
- * Examine the teacher/administrator evaluation system and recommend improvements, including parent and student evaluations
- * Examine teacher tenure as it affects quality of education and district program management
- * Provide support and resources to support continuing professional development opportunities for certificated personnel; including, especially, professional training initiatives applicable to Pacific Rim-related course objectives, materials and activities.

GOAL IV DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

The State Board of Education will encourage incentives and alternatives to promote greater efficiency in the administration of school districts.

Initiatives related to Goal IV

- * Initiate discussions with school district board members, through the Association of Alaska School Boards, to identify areas of mutual concern regarding school district administration
- * Examine the costs, in both dollars and time commitments, and benefits to be derived by certain school districts should administrative functions be consolidated
- * Identify incentives that would accomodate a change in administrative operations by school districts that would protect district identity, and make funds which are spent on district administration available for instructional programs

GOAL V SUPPORT OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

The State Board of Education, through collaborative efforts, will develop an action agenda to increase support for public education.

Initiatives related to Goal V

- * Continue to participate in the Alaska Coalition for Education
- * Initiate efforts to provide a greater degree of stability and predictability for allocation of state aid for education in order to improve financial planning by school districts
- * Identify effective methods for garnering public support for implementation of remedies for these concerns, and develop a plan to marshal forces to achieve political solutions to the identified concerns
- * Decide on a method to determine what the actual cost of education in the state should be; consider involvement in the area cost differential study being conducted by the Legislature when appropriate
- * Support efforts to assure equity of state aid distribution among school districts
- * Develop cooperative programs with the University of Alaska to provide research and technical assistance for school districts

GOAL VI DEPARTMENT SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Recognizing that many of the programs of the Department of Education can be valuable supplements to classroom initiatives, the State Board of Education will define, develop and support these programs so as to better assure that each contributes to public educational opportunities.

Initiatives related to Goals VI

- * Review, evaluate, initiate and support policy and program changes in programs assigned by law to the Department, that meet the State's commitment to public education, including:
 - expanded opportunity for placement of vocational rehabilitation clients in state and school district employment;
 - adult and postsecondary literacy efforts;
 - revised support for library operations in smaller communities;
 - revision of mission statement of the state museum, and adoption of regulations to support community-based museums and a traditional Native arts grant program
- * Align division activities with State Board of Education goals

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Testimony of the
~~Alaska~~ Department of Education
to the
Alaska State Legislature
Joint Committee on School Performance

Submitted by:

William G. Demmert, Ed.D.
Commissioner
August 4, 1989

Testimony of the
Alaska Department of Education
to the
Alaska State Legislature
Joint Committee on School Performance

August 4, 1989

I would like to thank the Joint Committee on School Performance for the opportunity to present information about the Department's work in school performance and student achievement, with a focus on ways to improve learning opportunities for Alaskan students. Especially those students that are not currently doing well, or those that are expected to have difficulty completing high school because of a variety of barriers. We know there are social, economic, cultural and physical barriers that must be overcome if they are to succeed in the formal school setting prepared to participate as successful adults in our free enterprise system, and as effective citizens in our democratic society.

I will organize this presentation into six parts. First will be a quick review of some important educational demographics; second will be a summary of student achievement in the state; third will be an overview of social problems that serve as social barriers to academic achievement; fourth will be an identification of partnerships that the Department of Education has built with other groups; fifth, a summary of Department activities; and finally a listing of recommendations that we believe are important for the State of Alaska to respond to meet the immediate and long range needs of students in need of special help.

School District Information:

- There are 463 public schools in 54 school districts in the state.
- The enrollment for the 1989-90 school year is estimated at 101,809 students in grades kindergarten through grade twelve. Public school students represent about one-fifth of the total state population.
- There are 7,735 certificated staff, with 6,511 classroom teachers. 91% of the certificated staff are White, 3% are Black, 3.2% are Alaska Native and 2.3% are representatives for other ethnic groups.
- The average pupil-teacher ratios are about 16 to one (with 17 to one in city and borough districts and 12 to one in REAAs).
- Cities and boroughs spent an average of \$5,846 per pupil in average daily membership with REAA schools spending an average of \$11,790 in FY88.
- Twenty-two of Alaska's 54 school districts have enrollments that exceed 75% Native Alaskans.
- Thirty-one districts have at least 50% Native enrollments in their classrooms.
- There are 21,654 Alaska Native students and 170 Alaska Native teachers. Alaska Native students represent 20.8% of the total student population and Alaska Native teachers represent 3.2% of the total teacher population.

Student Information:

- 69% of Alaska's students are White, 21% are Alaska Native and 10% are students from other ethnic groups.
- The drop-out rate for Alaska is projected at 30% with the Native Alaskan student population significantly higher in urban areas (Juneau at 60% and Fairbanks at 70%, over four years of high school).
- Several studies on dropout rates in Alaska's urban schools show that a majority of Alaska Native students are not faring well. A recent study of student dropout rates for Juneau-Douglas High School indicates that in a single class of entering freshmen approximately 63% of Alaska Native students would leave before graduation. A 1987 study of Alaska Native students in the North Star Borough School District centered in Fairbanks shows that 72% of entering Alaska Native freshmen dropped out or withdrew before graduation. In the Anchorage School District for 1986-87 the dropout rate of Alaska Natives over their high school careers was 28% according to the 1987 publication Profile of Student Performance, 1986-87.
- There are 172 different languages spoken in Alaska with the Native Alaskans' five basic languages comprising the largest group (Yupik speakers having the largest numbers of students entering school with other than an English language base).
- In recent years the percent of Alaska Native student population has increased from 16% to 21% (even with the high urban drop out rates).

Student Achievement:

College Bound Students

- The average Scholastic Achievement Scores (SAT) for Alaskan students was 475 in mathematics and 441 in verbal tests, with 45.7% of Alaska's high school graduates taking the test in 1987. The national averages were 476 in mathematics and 428 in verbal scores, with 45% taking the test.
- The American College Test (ACT) scores for Alaskan students averaged 18.4 with 36.6% taking the tests. The national average score was 18.8 with 31% of the nation's high school seniors taking the test in 1987.

Kindergarten Through Twelfth Grade

The Alaska Department of Education has published two annual reports entitled Basic Skills Performance of Alaska's Students. The publications reported the latest scores from national achievement tests in reading and math for each school district. The first reported the most recent three years, the second reported the most recent four years. In addition the reports included a written narrative that described each district's students, classrooms, graduation requirements and testing programs. The major conclusions of the most recent report are:

- During the past four years Alaska's students on nationally standardized basic skills tests scored consistently higher than the national averages.

- Within districts, the trends in student performance has varied. Some districts scored consistently high over the four year period, while others scored consistently low.
- Districts scored consistently low over the four year period where there were high concentrations of students whose families are poor and who live in homes where English is a second language.
- Fifteen of the fifty-five school districts had at least one average score below the 30th percentile, showing a major problem among students in those schools in certain basic skills, such as mathematics, language arts, mathematics computation and reading comprehension.
- In many districts the basic skills performance was higher in grades K-3 than any other grade groupings. Performance in grades 4-8 was relatively lower.

Social Issues:

- Based on the last U.S. census, approximately one in seven Alaskans is functionally illiterate (approximately 72,000 in English).
- It is estimated that adult basic education and literacy volunteer programs in Alaska are able to serve only 5% of those who are in need of services.

- Language and cultural deterioration among Native Alaskan groups is a growing social, cultural and educational issue.
- Growing numbers of high school graduates are not ready for entering the work force because they lack basic reading, computation, language and social skills.
- Estimate that one in 6.5 Alaskans under 18 live in families whose income is below the poverty level.
- Children in poverty are one-third less likely to graduate from high school.
- Alaska's teenage pregnancy rate is 13% higher than the national average and ninth highest in the nation.
- For every completed suicide an additional 110 attempts are serious enough to require medical attention.
- Alaska's suicide rate is among the highest in the nation, with the Alaska Native male, ages 20-24, 13 times the Alaskan average.
- In 1985, the Alaska Native Health Board suggested a link between suicidal behavior and community stress, specifically citing stress caused by rapid social change as the key.
- One in four children in Alaska has an alcoholic parent.

- The alcohol (and other substance abuse) problems in Alaska, resulting in family violence, high rates of criminal activity and social deterioration, are significant. Student populations are not exempt from this problem.
- Alaska's divorce rate is 70% compared to national average of 50% (Alaska is second highest in the nation).
- Factors influencing the educational motivation and academic achievement of students include:

breakdown in family composition,
 rising poverty among the young,
 rising teenage births,
 increasing child abuse and sexual assault,
 substance abuse, and
 suicide.

Alaska Native Information and Issues:

- The low numbers or lack of Alaska Natives as professionals such as teachers, counselors, service providers, lawyers and judges in Alaskan schools, human service agencies and courts, respectively present a challenge to educational institutions in the state.
- During the 1988-89 school year approximately 86 Alaska Native students were enrolled in teacher education programs at the University of Alaska.

- Presently the Alaska Native community numbers approximately 75,000 out of a total state population of 540,000. The largest groups are the Yupiks of southwestern Alaska and the Inupiaqs of northwestern and northern Alaska. There are eleven Athabaskan linguistic groups, four Eskimo linguistic groups, and Aleuts, Tlingits, Haidas and Tsimpshians.
- The Interim Report of the Senate Special Committee on Suicide Prevention by Senators Hensley, Binkley, Eliason, Rodey and Fahrenkamp states that during the years of 1978-1984 Alaska's suicide rate was among the four highest in the United States in every year except 1979. The rate for Alaska Natives of 43 per 100,000 was twice the overall Alaskan rate. The report cited a study which concluded that the highest rate of suicide was among Alaska Native males, aged 20-24 years, 257 per 100,000, 13 times the Alaskan average.
- In 1985, the Alaska Native Health Board, issued a study that suggested a link between suicidal behavior and community stress, citing specifically the stress caused by rapid social change.
- The Senate Special Committee on Suicide Prevention received testimonies that reinforced the tentative findings of the Alaska Native Health Board. Many Alaskans shared the view that "personal, social and cultural pressures contribute to the feelings of helplessness and despair that lead to suicide." Hensley's report also stated that different studies that speculate on the causes of suicide list rapid culture change, disfunctional families, personal and interpersonal instability caused by alcohol abuse, and the overwhelming sense of helplessness and grief that frequent and violent deaths generated.

- The Governor's Interim Commission on Children and Youth received testimony from Alaska Native youth that feelings of discrimination and the inability to identify fully with their heritage cultures play an important role in their emotional, spiritual and physical health. The report further states that testimony from Alaska Native youth "emphasized the role of cultural discrimination in the low self-esteem of many Native youth." The Commission recommended that more multicultural experiences should be provided for in schools "so students can begin to appreciate and understand their own and other cultures." The Commission hopes that incorporation of educational programs that promote awareness and appreciation of other cultures will "counter discrimination and help to curb the dropout rates of Alaska Native students in the urban schools." The report states that "Native children are a large proportion of students or social service clients, but few if any Native teachers, counselors or staff are hired to provide role and cultural models. Many Natives do not possess the degrees or certification requirements these positions require, but they offer the cultural understanding vital for Native young people to succeed in school and for non-Natives to understand Native cultures." The recommendation to alleviate this situation calls upon schools and other agencies serving Alaska Natives to hire qualified Natives as service providers. The recommendation identifies that "elders and paraprofessionals recognized by the Native community are qualified by their life experiences and should be employed where appropriate." The recommendation further calls upon the "Native corporations and the University of Alaska to work together to broaden the availability of programs that prepare Native youth for these jobs, actively encourage Native youth to participate and offer sufficient assistance to ensure that students complete these programs."

Activities that the Department of Education has engaged in include:

Early Childhood and Parenting

- **White Paper on Early Childhood and Parenting**

The Department circulated to all schools in the state a paper entitled "An Early Childhood/Parenting Strategy for Alaska" in October 1988. The paper describes the Department's vision of how early childhood and parenting training should be conducted in the state.

- **Education for Parenting**

- Two pilot projects are underway, in Dillingham and Manokotak, to teach caring and parenting skills to children in K-8 with community involvement activities in the classroom.

- **Kindergarten Network**

The Department launched the Alaska Kindergarten Network, composed of 250 primary teachers, to promote improved teaching strategies for young children. A statewide executive board has been appointed.

- **Migrant Education**

The Department of Education's migrant education program is able to provide increased support in early childhood education for schools because new federal regulations for 1989 have extended the age of

migrant children to be served from 5-17 years old to 3-21 years old. in the Southwest Region School District, for example, FY90 migrant education funding will be used to supplement services to preschool migrant students. Last year the District used an \$18,000 migrant education discretionary grant through the Department to upgrade preschool instructor training, revise early childhood curriculum to assure that it is culturally appropriate, and increase parental involvement in early childhood development.

- Vocational Education Parenting Kit
- The Office of Adult and Basic Education developed and is piloting a series of four traveling parenting kits to teach high school students and adults about child development and good parenting. Each kit is a self-contained instructional unit that schools and communities can borrow to teach about "Choosing Parenting," "Pregnancy and Child Birth," "Caring for Infants," and related special topics. Each kit contains charts and posters, teacher guides, posters, video and audio tapes and other teaching materials. Teachers who worked with the kits in Metlakatla, Quinhagak, Sheldon Point and Shishmaref are helping to revise them in light of how well they worked in classrooms and literacy programs.

Restructuring Primary Schools, K-4:

White Paper on Restructuring Primary Schools, K-4

- The Department of Education is in the process of writing a white paper setting forth the Department's position about why primary schools need to

restructure and how they can go about it. The paper should be done later this fall.

Summer Academy on Restructuring Primary Schools

- Seven schools sent teams (each consisting of a superintendent or designee, principal, two teachers, a parent and a board member) to the Department of Education's Anchorage Instructional Improvement Academy for a week of planning how to restructure their elementary schools. Well known early childhood educators and the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory assisted the Department in this week long event.

Partnerships that have been developed over the past two years include:

Alaska Education Consortium

- The State Board of Education has made considerable progress with its consortium of education organizations in an attempt to influence Legislators on important education issues.

Skagway Student-Operated Salmon Hatchery

- Through federal Carl Perkins Vocational Education funds, the Office of Adult and Vocational Education supported 15 hatchery and marine technology programs in Alaska schools. The Pullen Creek Hatchery operated by the Skagway School was named 1989 Alaska State Vocational Education Program of

the Year. The year-round facility is a fully-functioning hatchery licensed by the Department of Fish and Game and developed in close cooperation with the community.

Juneau Youth Employment Project

- The Department and City and Borough of Juneau will cooperate to put students to work at jobs this summer clearing out fish spawning streams in the Juneau area.

The Alaska Resource Kit

- The minerals project continued in association with the industry-supported and funded Alaska Mineral and Energy Resource and Education Fund (AMEREF). A veteran Alaska geology teacher was hired through AMEREF funds to organize training for teachers statewide in using the kits and developing activities that take advantage of local resources and resource people in the community.

Special Education Parent Training

- The Department sponsored a training session for parents of children with handicaps. This innovative conference attracted over 450 parents and educators.

BLM-Native Forest Service

- The Department has been working with the Bureau of Land Management in Alaska to promote the Resource Apprenticeship Program for Students (RAPS). The federal program allows high achieving rural high school students to

work for 8 to 10 weeks in the summer, earning school credit and job experience with federal resource management agencies. The Department acts as a liaison between the federal agency and the schools and is working to increase ways in which schools can make use of the technical expertise available through these agencies for curriculum development and use of human resources.

Library's Reading to Children Program

- The State Library administered public library assistance grants to more than 90 libraries in the state. The grants helped to fund such activities as a year-long reading program in Haines, literacy projects in several villages, continuing education for rural library aides, and a Celebrity Story Time in Juneau in which public figures read stories to young children in celebration of the Year of the Young Reader and the opening of the new library facility.

International Circumpolar Ministers Group

- Last year the Ministers of Education and Commissioners of Education from across the Circumpolar North met in Juneau to continue activities aimed at improving education for indigenous peoples. The group met in Whitehorse this year.

Alaska-Hokkaido Partnership

- The Department of Education participated in the State of Alaska's meeting with officials from Hokkaido, Japan, the island where all but two of

Alaska's 79 sister schools are located, to advance educational and economic cooperative efforts with communities located on Hokkaido.

QEM/MIT Project

- The Quality of Education for Minorities task force held public hearings jointly with the Senate Special Committee on School Performance. This will be instrumental in influencing final recommendations by the national commission.

Department of Education/University Cooperation:

Commissioner/University Deans Committee

- A Commissioner of Education/University School of Education Deans Committee has been meeting regularly to improve the quality of teacher education programs in public and private universities. The deans have committed to increasing their commitment to education research projects. The group is exploring a joint grant to the federal government, through the Fund for the Improvement of Schools and Teaching, to improve training for teachers of at-risk students and to encourage greater numbers of minorities to enter the teaching profession and other projects.

Summer Teacher Academies

- The Department and University of Alaska have cooperated for a number of years on conducting the very popular summer teaching institutes, now expanded to all University of Alaska campuses and Sheldon Jackson College.

Native Language Policy

- The Department of Education, with assistance from the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks, have developed a recommendation for state policy on the role of the school in the promotion, use and enrichment of Alaska Native culture, literature and languages in the schools.

Recommendations:

The Sixteenth Alaska Legislature created the Joint Committee on School Performance to explore steps that could be taken to bring about higher levels of student achievement in basic skills and other areas, with the specific task of identifying recommendations for priority legislative action during the second session of that legislature.

I believe the challenge of providing young children with a learning base and the motivation from which to develop the skills important to success as adults is one of the most important responsibilities of parents, the schools, the state and the nation.

I commend the Sixteenth Alaska Legislature and the members of the Joint Committee on School Performance for their interest in and commitment to improving schools in Alaska to ensure greater numbers of students completing their education and being better prepared for their adult roles.

The Department of Education has spent considerable time reviewing the professional research literature and talking with educators, parents, school board members, legislators and business leaders to discover the best ways to improve academic achievement among students, especially those students not currently succeeding in schools. In the lexicon of educators, these students are commonly referred to as high risk or at-risk students: at risk of not completing high school and at risk of not developing the skills and attitudes necessary to succeed in today's increasingly technological world.

The Department has come to the conclusion that language development is the key to academic achievement. Without a strong language base, a student lacks the ingredient essential to develop analytic and conceptual skills. Without analytic and conceptual skills a youngster is destined to academic failure. This is true for all students. Furthermore, the Department believes the root cause of school failure for many of Alaska's Native young, as well as other indigenous peoples elsewhere in the world, is that school language arts programs do not adequately meet the needs of students whose primary language is other than standard English.

A youngster's language ability is totally or largely determined by the age of three. For this reason, it has been proven that parents and family members, early childhood experiences, and early environment play an important role in developing a youngster's language ability. Youngsters from single teenage parent homes; youngsters that have alcoholic parents; youngsters that do not have direct access to stimulating learning environments; youngsters that are not exposed to a challenging language environment will not stand as good a chance of developing the language skills necessary for success in school as those students that have the advantages of a home or program that provides a stimulating learning environment.

The two highest priorities for language development must include parenting and early childhood educational opportunities for youngsters that will not have opportunities to develop language early; and primary school programs (kindergarten through grade four) that focus on developing the language base that has been established. These programs must be culturally and developmentally appropriate.

A second and critical priority for improving academic achievement among those students that currently fail is to provide a support base that allows intervention of social barriers that limit a student's opportunity to succeed in school. This means partnerships between schools and social service agencies, community groups (i.e., churches, Native organizations, other social organizations). It may mean school counselors that serve as coordinators between social service agencies and schools; it may mean safe houses for young children and youth; it may mean new programs that deal with one of the worst epidemics in Alaska, fetal alcohol syndrome.

A third priority is promoting the development and expansion of partnerships between schools, business and industry, Native organizations, government, and other employers. Partnerships that provide students with a sense of relationship between what one learns in school and what is required in the real world; a sense of responsibility, a sense of contributing to society, a sense of accomplishment, an opportunity to understand what it is to earn an income.

A fourth priority, important to success of schools and schooling, is an improvement in teachers and teaching. Teacher training institutions must be provided opportunities to develop teacher training programs that attract, place and hold the good teachers. Some retraining has to be done, especially

for those programs that focus on language development, early childhood education, and partnerships between schools and employers. Business and industry spend a significant amount of money to upgrade its work force and keep up with innovations. Education, as a major employer spends very little, and it is mostly through individual and personal interest pursuits (masters and doctoral programs or summer school to meet recency requirements).

Closely tied to teachers and teaching is the need to increase the numbers of Alaska Native teachers and school administrators in the state.

A fifth and equally important recommendation for improving schools and student performance is to build a strong Alaska educational research. Research tells us whether what we are doing is working; research gives us evidence for new direction; research helps improve what we now do. We need Alaska based research and an opportunity to build a research capacity and base in Alaska.

Legislation that allows development in each of the above mentioned recommendations could provide incentives within the educational institutions to develop programs that meet particular needs and priorities important to specific communities.

Thank you!

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Cummins, Jim, Empowering Minority Students: A Framework for Intervention, Harvard Educational Review, Vol. 56, No.1, February 1986.

Hensley, William L. Senator, et al, Helping Schools Succeed at helping All Children Learn, Report of the Senate Special Committee on School Performance, Fifteenth Alaska Legislature, January 1989.

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Hocker, Phil. Juneau Douglas Early Leavers, (draft manuscript) 1988.

Improving Numbers of Minority Teachers in Alaska, Alaska Department of Education, January 1989.

Our Greatest Natural Resource, Investing in the Future of Alaska's Children, A report of the Governor's Interim Commission on Children and Youth, January 1988.

Profile of Student Performance, 1986-87, Anchorage School District, 1987.

Summary of Alaska Public Hearing for Quality Education for Minorities Project together with Alaska Senate Special Committee on School Performance, Anchorage, Alaska, August 26-27, 1988.

The AFN Report on the Status of Alaska Natives: A Call for Action, Alaska Federation of Natives, 411 West 4th Avenue, Suite 301, Anchorage, Alaska, January 1989.

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Rethinking and Restructuring
Alaska's Primary Schools:
Kindergarten through Fourth Grades

Final Draft

William G. Demmert, Jr.
Alaska Commissioner of Education

August 15, 1989

Rethinking and Restructuring Alaska's Primary Schools: Kindergarten through Fourth Grades

William G. Demmert, Jr.
Alaska Commissioner of Education
August 15, 1989

A serious nationwide debate to determine how our youngest school children can best be taught is under way.

At stake is the very health of our country's economic and political future. Will America and Alaska enter the 21st Century economically competitive? Will emerging generations have the stuff it takes to carry them into the next century with the ability to maintain the affluence that most of their parents now take for granted? Will our society be able to offer opportunities to growing numbers and percentages of American minority populations so they can break an oppressive cycle of poverty to become meaningful contributors to society?

Since the 1983 report A Nation at Risk was published, a massive school improvement effort has been underway. Most state and local efforts have been aimed at increasing standards in our nation's secondary schools. Despite these efforts serious problems persist in our nation's schools. A recent survey sponsored by Allstate Insurance Company and Fortune Magazine found that 62 percent of executives polled believe they are now encumbered by public education (National School Public Relations Association, 1989). Nearly 70 percent of service-oriented companies feel hindered by schools. Forty-eight percent said it is difficult to hire new employees with good basic skills and 46 percent said that this lack of skills reduces productivity. Seventy-seven percent rated public schools as fair or poor. And over the next 10 years, 51 percent said they expect hiring qualified employees will become more difficult.

In Alaska, about 30 percent of entering high school freshmen do not graduate. The dropout rate is estimated to be double the rate in urban schools for Alaska Natives as it is in rural schools. (Hocker, 1988; Baker-Benally, 1987). Although the dropout rate is not as low in rural areas (Kleinfeld, 1985), scores on National achievement tests are very low, in some cases among the lowest in the nation. (Alaska Department of Education, 1988 and 1989).

What does all this have to do with Alaska's elementary schools, particularly the youngest children in kindergarten through grade four? There is a growing concern that it may be too late when we try to repair the fundamental problems that present barriers to learning while students are in high school or even in junior high school. So instead of intervention and remediation, why not try prevention? Anne Dillman, a member of the New Jersey State Board of Education, captured this concept in a recent cover article on how young children learn in Newsweek magazine: "When the product doesn't come out right, you try to fix it at the end. But we really have to start at the beginning."

Ernest Boyer of The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, in the same article, said: "We've made remarkable breakthroughs in understanding the development of children, the development of learning and the climate that enhances that. What we know in theory and what we're doing in the classroom are very different."

The knowledge that Boyer was pointing to has been well summarized and promoted by a number of interest groups, most notably the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The theory that Boyer refers to is what NAEYC calls "developmentally appropriate" curriculum and instructional methods for children between 5 and 8 years old. What Boyer identifies as "very different" activities are what NAEYC and other organizations now term "inappropriate practices." (NAEYC; National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education, 1987).

The National Association of State Boards of Education calls for sweeping reform of the education of children ages 4 through 8. (Right from the Start, 1988). The NASBE report, developed by a task force of influential Americans, including Alaska's First Lady Michael Cowper, boldly recommended that early childhood units be established in elementary schools to provide a new methods of working with children ages 4-8 and a central point to improve services for preschool children and their parents. The "early childhood units" that NASBE recommends represent no less than a fundamental restructuring of the system by which our nation's schools deliver educational programs to our youngest students. Specifically, the report recommends:

- A curriculum and classroom environment that responds to learning patterns of children within a given age range, to individual differences among children, and to cultural and linguistic diversity among children.
- A program that actively involves and supports parents as partners in development of their children.
- A program that responds to the comprehensive needs of children for health, nutrition, child care, social and emotional support, and language development as well as cognitive development.
- A program that draws on the resources and expertise of all agencies and informal networks in the community to provide continuity for children in their daily schedules and as they grow and develop.

It is especially important that the restructured primary school build upon the many successes of proven early childhood and parenting programs in Alaska and around the country, particularly Head Start programs. It is equally important that the eventual successes revealed over time in the newly restructured primary schools be applied to the higher grades, i.e., fifth grade and beyond.

The design of the effective early childhood and parenting program was described in 1988 when the Alaska Department of Education called for a "broad based Alaska strategy to address early childhood and parenting issues in as comprehensive manner as possible." (Demmert, 1988).

It is hoped that this paper puts forth an argument supporting the urgent need to restructure Alaska's primary schools. A secondary purpose is to explain the elements that are part of the restructured primary school's learning program. A third purpose is to provide several examples or models of effective primary schools.

Elements of a Strong Early Childhood Program

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT--The development of a solid language base at an early age is the single most important element for academic achievement and cognitive development. If children do not gain a suitable language base from which to learn a variety of skills and develop essential intelligences they will fail. They will fail in school, they will fail as workers, they will fail to reach their full potential socially, culturally, emotionally, and intellectually. A solid language base, so important in early life, is also the essential ingredient for a student's success in school, and during life after school, whether college, vocational-technical school or work.

Several recent findings support the development of a strong language base:

- Low scores of students taking nationally normed tests in English when it is not their first language and they have not developed the second language skills to demonstrate their knowledge or present an understanding of the subject. (Alaska Department of Education 1988 and 1989).
- Examples of success in circumpolar countries where schools use Native languages as a base for learning the dominant language of their country and for learning other languages. (Keskitalo, 1986; Hakuta, 1986).
- Recent research findings concerning the ease with which students are able to learn more than one language very early in life, and the extent to which they are able to keep the languages separate (Cummins, February 1986).
- A gradual recognition that an understanding of language and language usage is critical to learning and that a language base must be established early in life. (Cummins, 1986). In fact, research shows that there is a critical period between ages two and four when a child's special intelligence becomes active for the single purpose of learning language (Chomsky, 1966).

HOME LANGUAGE--The importance of using one's home language as the initial language of instruction is becoming more clearly understood. Bilingualism is no longer recognized as a valid cause of minority students' academic failures. It is, rather, the failure to provide students the opportunity to develop conceptual and analytic thought skills in the home language as a base for learning a second language that contributes to academic difficulties. (Cummins, 1986). Again, the complementing influences of the home and school on language and cultural transmission are recognized as very important to intellectual development. It is crucial, therefore, for the school to be very sensitive of the student's home situation. If the student's home language is other than English, then it is appropriate for the school to provide instruction in the home language, introduce English as a second language and continue to develop the student's abilities in both languages. (Cavazos, 1989). If English is not used in the home, it is better to use the first language in school than a poor quality English. Children who have neither a quality first or second language (English) have a language development deficit and may always be behind in school. (Saville-Troike, 1973).

An effectively restructured primary school, whose students are well grounded in the home language and the second language (English), will exhibit a school climate conducive to success in learning, largely due to the acceptance by teachers of the first language of the students and the culture. It must be noted that widespread school failure does not occur in minority groups that are positively oriented towards both their own and the dominant culture, that do not perceive themselves as inferior to the dominant group and that are not alienated from their own cultural values. (Fuererstein, 1979). More bluntly, Fuererstein (1979) attributes academic failure to the disruption of intergenerational transmission processes caused by the alienation of a group from its own culture.

WHOLE LANGUAGE--A "whole language" approach to learning language is based on the premise that children learn language by hearing it, using it, writing it, thinking it and reading it. There is no isolation of words when using language in a natural way. (Hayward, 1988). In addition, whole language integrates oral and written language, and it integrates development in both with learning across the curriculum. (Goodman, 1986).

Where a whole language approach attempts to integrate language instruction, the traditional way schools teach language is to focus on the separate parts of reading, a departure from the natural way children use language. A traditional approach will often present separate classes or lessons "in reading, in writing, or in separation of skills from content where individual lessons in uses of comma or noun-verb agreement were taught in and for themselves." (Buckley, 1989). Continues Buckley:

Whole language learning also refers to the student as a whole, head and heart, feelings and thinking, personal experiences and public. The new curriculum centers on the learner whose prior experiences must be brought to bear on the new information. Only by connecting prior knowledge with the new knowledge can learning happen. The student as a whole human being learns developmentally, through process. If learning is considered a process, then the student begins with 'first draft' thinking and language. Usually a student 'first draft' is personal, ideographic, and emotional. Teachers build on this and advance the student to a more public, substantiated, reasoned thinking and language.

A key to whole language instruction is to build allies of parents to help in their children's attempts at becoming literate. (Fields, 1988). If teachers effectively work with parents to help them understand the whole language approach, "These informed parents will be able to teach children to read as well as they taught them to talk," says Fields.

Taking this strategy a step farther, parents who cannot read or read well also can be useful partners in helping their children learn to read. This can be accomplished though story telling. But the restructured primary school must establish literacy programs aimed at training parents to become more complete and more effective partners in helping their children read.

DEVELOPMENTAL APPROPRIATENESS--According to National Association for the Education of Young Children, the concept of developmental appropriateness has two dimensions, age and individuality.

Age appropriateness. Human development research indicates that there are universal, predictable milestones of growth and change that occur in children during the first nine years of life. These predictable changes occur in all domains of development--physical, emotional, social and cognitive. Knowledge of typical development of children within the age span served by the program provides a framework from which teachers prepare the learning environment and plan appropriate experiences.

Individual appropriateness. Each child is a unique person with an individual pattern and timing of growth, as well as individual personality, learning style and family background. Both the curriculum and adults' interactions with children should be responsive to individual differences. Learning in young children is the result of interaction between the child's thoughts and experiences with materials, ideas and people. When these experiences match the child's developing abilities, while also challenging the child's interest and understanding, learning will take place.

Many schools still do not offer a developmentally appropriate program for young children. Instead many schools continue to deliver education through a rigid lecture style, an educational setting more familiar to younger children's older siblings in junior high and high school (an approach with dubious value at any grade level). Young children are spending countless hours silently filling in notebook worksheets with information learned by rote. Their days are chopped up into 55-minute blocks with subjects taught in isolation from one another. Students' individual learning styles are ignored. So are their cultural and ethnic differences. Their teachers are being evaluated and rewarded if their young students score well on nationally standardized tests that measure an extremely limited base of knowledge and set of skills. In addition these tests are being used to reward administrators, affect the allocation of resources to school districts and result in changes to the curriculum. (Bredekamp & Shepard, 1989). (Meisels, S.J., in press).

Many of these same teachers have not been trained in the latest research-based theory and practice proven effective for teaching young children.

NAEYC, in a publication entitled Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children From Birth Through Age 8 (1988), describes appropriate practices for primary grade (K-4) children. Since these important practices represent the best and most widely accepted thinking on the subject today, it is tempting to quote the developmentally appropriate practices in their entirety. However, for the sake of brevity and flow, we will instead summarize the practices here and list all the practices as published by NAEYC in Appendix A of this paper. Appendix B will list what NAEYC believes are inappropriate practices.

NAEYC has developed appropriate practices for a number of major areas. A summary follows:

CURRICULUM GOALS--which are designed to develop children's knowledge and skills in all developmental areas, including physical, social, emotional and intellectual, and to help the child learn how to build a base for lifelong learning, improve self esteem, and develop a positive feelings toward learning. Further each child is viewed as a unique individual and as such educators need to develop curriculum and instruction practices that respond to individual differences. Different levels of ability, development and learning styles are expected, accepted and used to design curriculum.

TEACHING STRATEGIES--Curriculum is integrated so that children's learning in all traditional subject areas occurs primarily through projects and learning centers that teachers plan and that reflect children's interests and suggestions. The curriculum is integrated so that learning occurs primarily through projects, learning centers and playful activities that reflect the expressed interests of children. Teachers use planning time to prepare an environment to provide opportunities for children to learn through active involvement among themselves, with adults, older children serving as tutors and with materials. In addition, children should also learn in small groups working and playing cooperatively. Finally learning materials and activities need to be concrete, real and relevant to children's lives.

INTEGRATED CURRICULUM--Teachers provide generous amounts of time and a variety of interesting activities for children to develop language, writing, spelling and reading ability such as looking through, reading, or being read high quality children's literature. Goals are established in math, social studies, science, health and safety, art, music movement and dance with children's interests considered and learning occurring through group projects, spontaneous play, research, experimenting, exploring, and through other creative and meaningful activities and strategies.

GUIDANCE OF SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT--Teachers promote prosocial behavior, perseverance, industry and independence, encourage individual choice, and provide many opportunities for developing social skills. Teachers at all times facilitate the development of social skills as part of the curriculum.

PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONS--Teachers not only view parents as partners in the educational process, but visit with parents at school and at the home of the parent. Teachers are respectful of cultural and family differences.

EVALUATION--Children's progress is assessed through observation and recording at regular intervals. Results are used to improve and individualize instruction. No letter or number grades are given during the primary years.

Other organizations, most recently the National Association of State Boards of Education, strongly endorse the NAEYC practices. "We agree with the developmentally appropriate curriculum approach defined by (NAEYC)," NASBE states in its book Right from the Start (1988).

NASBE suggests the goals developed for primary schools should:

- provide children with a wide range of experiences
- attend to all key aspects of child development
- support effective and appropriate teaching and classroom environments. (Right from the Start, 1988).

CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES--Twenty-two of Alaska's 55 school districts each have enrollments that exceed 75 percent Alaska Natives. Nine additional districts have at least 50 percent Natives enrolled in their classrooms and seven more have at least one-quarter of their student body composed of Alaska Natives. It is, however, still difficult to find meaningful and effective culturally appropriate developmental activities for Native children. Only 3.2 percent of Alaska's 6,500 teachers are Natives, indicating a dearth of cultural role models. This is caused in part by a formal system of education that has rejected the need for:

- accommodating and incorporating traditional systems of minority communities and
- reflecting the traditional community's knowledge base and unique perspective on the world.

It is critical for the restructured primary school to encourage appropriate cultural role models, just as it is critical for such schools to learn about and integrate cultural differences into programs reflective of the community the school serves. Languages and learning styles peculiar to a given community and use of family and community members to impart content and skills in ways that have worked for centuries are hallmarks of the effectively restructured school. The school also must recognize and respect cultural (fixed customs), values and traditions. This can be accomplished, in part, in two ways: training and hiring more Native teachers and teacher aides in the classroom; and by teaching these skills to teachers and teacher aides so that they are knowledgeable about their students' cultural history, cultural arts (music, dance, visual arts, theater), and traditional ways of learning science, medicine, politics, and social organization and structure. For example, Natives on the North Slope can estimate the distance over a pack to open water by determining the distance from shore of dark clouds on the horizon. This important skill requires a sophisticated knowledge of vector triangles.

COMMUNITY-BASED PRIMARY SCHOOLS--Research has long shown the benefits of meaningful parent involvement. In fact, it has become almost axiomatic that wherever there is a strong educational program there will be a correspondingly strong planned systematic program of parent involvement in the child's education, no matter the level of the child's schooling. (National School Public Relations Association, 1986). More recently, the National Association of State Boards of Education and the National Association for the Education of Young Children have reconfirmed this notion by recommending that primary schools develop parent partnerships. (Right from the Start, 1988). (NAEYC, 1988).

Stanford Research Institute published research in 1973 which showed the corresponding residual effects of involvement between parent and student in the educational process (Journal of Educational Public Relations, 1988). The chart in Appendix C shows how parent involvement, a parent's positive self-image about his or her own competence to participate in the child's education, and how the child's perception that the parent's education is important all lead to the student's improved performance in school and

In addition, The National Association of State Boards of Education also recommended that primary schools develop partnerships with other early childhood programs and community agencies to help improve the quality of parent involvement and to build and improve services for young children and their families. (Right from the Start, 1988)

It is important that these partnerships be cultivated. Universities can offer training to teachers and teacher aides; they can help provide research. Local businesses, agencies, and Native corporations can provide additional expertise.

SMALLER CLASS SIZE--Class size is an important consideration for effective primary programs. NASBE's Right from the Start recommends that local school officials:

Review the need for additional resources necessary to support developmentally appropriate early childhood programs, e.g., limiting the group size (for 3 and 4 year olds, no more than 20 children with 2 adults, for 5-8 year olds, no more than 25 children with 2 adults or 15-18 children with one teacher.)

The argument for smaller class size is born out in the research of Gene Glass and Mary Lee Smith (1979). Their meta-analysis of recent class size research shows that significant gains in student achievement are not achieved until a class size of 15 students to one teacher is reached. This 15:1 pupil to teacher ratio has been supported by the National Education Association since 1969. (Tomlinson, 1988).

It must be pointed out that by reducing class size in Alaska's kindergarten through fourth grade classrooms will bear a large financial increase, not only in the additional numbers of teachers needed to attain the lower class size, but also to build new school buildings to house the added classrooms. Knowing this, the Department of Education believes that attaining smaller class sizes is so important in the early grades that Alaska's policy makers need to seriously consider this issue.

The First Partnership

The first partnership needed for primary schools that aim to restructure is a broad based coalition among the local community to develop a process and a plan for restructuring its primary school or schools based upon local desires. Public school officials should convene the forum. The superintendent, principal or school board president should invite teachers and other educators, school board members, parents, early childhood professionals, language professionals and community leaders. The topic of the forum is to develop a consensus on how to effectively restructure K-4 primary schools. The immediate goal of the forum is to develop a plan for doing so.

Program Models

A number of models for restructuring primary schools are being developed across Alaska. Seven school districts sent teams to a week long K-4 restructuring conference in June 1989.

The teams consisted of the school's principal or superintendent, teachers, school board members, and community members, usually a member of the local Congress of Parents and Teachers (commonly known as the PTA). Nine nationally known experts with experience in restructuring primary schools led the teams over the five day period to build for each school in attendance an elementary school restructuring plan. These restructuring efforts should provide Alaska with a wealth of knowledge about restructuring schools in a variety of Alaska settings, from one of Alaska's largest urban school districts to schools in small remote, Native communities. Plans should be completed by the beginning of the 1989-90 school year, and will be available from the school and the Department of Education.

The two models outlined below offer basic components for Alaska's primary schools:

1. Qargi Model (or, translated from the Inupiaq, the Community Centered Model)

The key element of this model focuses on the cooperation of the community, the public school and the university:

- Elders, middle school and high school students from the community interact with kindergarten through fourth grade students to teach the Inupiaq language and culture.
- Adults learn effective parenting techniques by observing and participating in classroom activities for preschool children.
- The University of Alaska has observed and documented the interactions between parents and preschool to develop a research base on effective parenting skill training.

2. The School-Centered Learning Activity Model

Features of this model:

- In-school group activity
 - * Organized and directed play activity
 - * Storytelling; listening
 - * Reading
 - * Hands-on activity (like playing with geometric blocks)
 - * Socialization (aimed at developing inter-personal and intrapersonal skills)
 - * Field trips
- Individual and small group activity
 - * Exploration opportunities
 - * Computers
 - * Team projects
 - * Free play

- Family and Community Support Activity

- * Interaction with elders
- * Interaction with community adults
- * Parent participation in extracurricular activities
- * Planned family activity aimed at academic and physical development

Next Steps

Earlier in this paper, the hope was expressed that this paper puts forth an argument supporting the urgent need to restructure Alaska's primary schools. It was also stated that a secondary purpose is to explain the elements that are part of the restructured primary school's program, as was a third purpose to provide several examples or models of effective primary schools. It is hoped that these purposes have been accomplished.

The Department of Education pledges itself to continue its efforts to expand the awareness for the urgent need to restructure Alaska's primary schools, and to spur on restructuring activities whenever the opportunities arise, whether at the state level, or, preferably, at the local school level.

DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES--The following is a list of activities at minimum that readers can expect from the Department of Education on an ongoing basis:

- Nurture the development of the seven or eight model primary school restructuring projects that will begin this summer.
- Attempt to develop and expand a school restructuring network to include Alaska educators who are involved in school restructuring efforts.
- Promote school restructuring in formal and informal public appearances before groups and conferences.
- Disseminate written materials about school restructuring projects.
- Invite schools undertaking restructuring projects to share their ideas with the Commissioner of Education and his staff.
- Recruit educators and parents as agents of change for the expressed purpose of expanding the school restructuring effort.

Appendix A

Appropriate Education in the Primary Grades The National Association for the Education of Young Children

Appropriate Practices for Curriculum Goals:

Curriculum is designed to develop children's knowledge and skills in all developmental areas--physical, social, emotional, and intellectual--and to help children learn how to learn, to establish a foundation for lifelong learning.

Curriculum and instruction are designed to develop children's self-esteem, sense of competence, and positive feelings toward learning.

Each child is viewed as a unique person with an individual pattern and timing of growth. Curriculum and instruction are responsive to individual differences in ability and interests. Different levels of ability, development, and learning styles are expected, accepted, and used to design curriculum. Children are allowed to move at their own pace in acquiring important skills including those of writing, reading, spelling, math, social studies, science, art, music, health, and physical activity. For example, it is accepted that not every child will learn how to read at age 6, most will learn to read by 7, and some will need intensive exposure to appropriate literacy experiences to learn to read by age 8 or 9.

Appropriate Practices for Teaching Strategies:

The curriculum is integrated so that children's learning in all traditional subject areas occurs primarily through projects and learning centers that teachers plan and that reflect children's interests and suggestions. Teachers guide children's involvement in projects and enrich the learning experience by extending children's ideas, responding to their questions, engaging them in conversation, and challenging their thinking.

The curriculum is integrated so that learning occurs primarily through projects, learning centers, and playful activities that reflect current interests of children. For example, a social studies project such as building and operating a store, or a science project such as furnishing and caring for an aquarium, provides focused opportunities for children to plan, dictate, and/or write their plans (using invented and teacher-taught spelling), to draw and write about their activity, to discuss what they are doing, to read nonfiction books for needed information, to work cooperatively with other children, to learn facts in a meaningful context, and to enjoy learning. Skills are taught as needed to accomplish projects.

Teachers use much of their planning time to prepare the environment so children can learn through active involvement with each other, with adults and older children serving as informal tutors, and with materials. Many learning centers are available for children to choose from. Many centers include opportunities for writing and reading: for example, a tempting library area for browsing through books, reading silently, or sharing a book with a friend; a listening station; and places to practice writing stories and play math or language games. Teachers encourage children to evaluate their own work and to determine where improvement is needed, and assist children in figuring out for themselves how to improve their work. Some work is corrected in small groups where children take turns giving feedback to one another and correcting their own papers. Errors are viewed as a natural and necessary part of learning. Teachers analyze children's errors and use the information obtained to plan curriculum and instruction.

Individual children or small groups are expected to work and play cooperatively or alone in learning centers and on projects they usually select themselves or are guided to by the teacher. Activity centers are changed frequently so children have new things to do. Teachers and children together select and develop projects. Frequent outings and visits from resource people are planned. Peer tutoring as well as learning from others through conversation while at work or play occurs daily.

Learning materials and activities are concrete, real, and relevant to children's lives. Objects children can manipulate and experiment with such as blocks, cards, games, and scientific equipment are readily accessible. Tables are used for children to work alone or in small groups. A variety of work places and spaces is provided and flexibly used.

Appropriate Practices for Integrated Curriculum:

The goals of the language and literacy program are for children to expand their ability to communicate verbally and through reading and writing, and to enjoy these activities. Technical skills or subskills are taught as needed to accomplish the larger goals, not as the goal itself. Teachers provide generous amounts of time and a variety of interesting activities for children to develop language, writing, spelling and reading ability such as looking through, reading, or being read high quality children's literature and nonfiction for pleasure and information; drawing, dictating, and writing about their activities or fantasies; planning and implementing projects that involve research at suitable levels of difficulty; creating teacher-made or child-written lists of steps to follow to accomplish a project; discussing what they read; preparing a weekly class newspaper; interviewing various people to obtain information for projects; making books of various kinds (riddle books, what-if books, books about pets); listening to recordings or viewing high quality films of children's books; being read at least one high quality book or part of a book each day by adults or older children; using the school library and the library area of the classroom regularly.

Some children read aloud daily to the teacher, another child, or a small group of children, while others do so weekly. Subskills such as learning letters, phonics, and word recognition are taught as needed to individual children and small groups through enjoyable games and activities. Teachers use the teacher's edition of the basal reader series as a guide to plan projects and hands-on activities relevant to what is read and to structure learning situations. Teachers accept children's invented spelling with minimal reliance on teacher-prescribed spelling lists. Teachers also teach literacy as the need arises when working on science, social studies, and other content areas.

The goal of the math program is to enable children to use math through exploration, discovery, and solving meaningful problems. Math activities are integrated with other relevant projects, such as science and social studies. Math skills are acquired through spontaneous play, projects, and situations of daily living. Teachers use the teacher's edition of the math textbook as a guide to structure learning situations and to stimulate ideas about interesting math projects. Many math manipulatives are provided and used. Interesting board and card games, paper-and-pencil and other kinds of games are used daily. Noncompetitive, impromptu oral "math stumper," and number games are played for practice.

Social studies themes are identified as the focus of work for extended periods of time. Social studies concepts are learned through a variety of projects and playful activities involving independent research in library books; excursions and interviewing visitors; discussions; relevant use of language, writing, spelling (invented and teacher-taught), and reading skills; and opportunities to develop social skills such as planning, sharing, taking turns, and working in committees. The classroom is treated as a laboratory of social relations, and children explore values, learn rules of social living, and respect for individual differences through experience. Relevant art, music, dance, and games are incorporated in social studies.

Discovery science is a major part of the curriculum, building on children's natural interest in the world. Science projects are experimental and exploratory and encourage active involvement of every child. The science program takes advantage of natural phenomena such as the outdoors, and the classroom includes many plants and pets for which children provide care daily. Through science projects and field trips, children learn to plan, dictate, and/or write their plans; to apply thinking skills such as hypothesizing, observing, experimenting, and verifying; and many science facts related to their own experience.

A variety of health and safety projects (such as nutrition, dental health, handwashing) are designed to help children learn many personalized facts about health and safety; to integrate their learning into their daily habits; to plan, dictate, and/or write their plans; to draw and write about these activities; to read silently and aloud; and to enjoy learning because it is related to their lives.

Art, music, movement, dance and opportunities for other physical activity are integrated throughout each day as relevant to the curriculum and as needed for children to express themselves aesthetically and physically, and to express ideas and feelings.