

ALASKA LEGISLATURE SPECIAL COMMITTEE/SUBJECT FILE 8672

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grade and then at third grade there was a divergence between white scores and minority children scores.

My wife has done research here for the Petersburg Indian Association and same thing can be seen in our Petersburg schools between white scores and scores of native children.

James Comer began to ask the question: What happens around the third grade that links the success in one case, and failure in another. His surmise was that the working hypothesis was that there is an essential ingredient that homes give children, that is absolutely essential in terms of predicting success in education. And he said the values of home and peer group culture, which tend to predominate over the values of school culture at about the third grade level are divergent from school culture.

The result is alienation and failure.

I begin to wonder in terms of Alaska, if that is some of what we see here. As a result of two schools in New Haven, where he worked with the parent committee to work with those schools. Within five years, test scores with those schools were on a par with the rest of the district. Within seven years, the test scores were higher than the surrounding white, essentially white schools.

They have took this model, and they have replicated it in fifty schools around the nation, with the same success. I wonder in terms of our schools, where families come from or students come from families whether they are lower blue collar socioeconomic groups. Whites, if there is this kind of disparity between the cultural predispositions of schools and family, if that would account for some of it. What we see in terms of failure in our children.

Having worked in inner city Oakland, I had the same experience that he had when he talks about parents who felt that they were completely unworthy even to come into the school, because maybe they didn't know how to read or write. And so they didn't read to their children at night time like we read to our children. They didn't know how to read. They didn't come to the school functions because like I said, they did not feel worthy to be in that building. It is only when they begin to integrate parents from those families, in a meaningful way, with the education of their children and in the social life of the institutional school, will scores begin to improve.

I think that this is something that we need to consider here. How will we do that?

SENATOR JACK COGHILL:

John, on page forty-five of your handout, gives a good draft of the way some of these policies have to come together. And the professional consultant on the one side and the parent group on the other side meeting with the management team before it goes into the system. Of course, I am a strong advocate of the AYI program in Alaska when it comes to the Alaska Youth Institute with the mental health program when it comes to disturbed children or to children that are perceived to be backwards, and I think that tells the story.

Thank you very much for the handout.

JOHN FORNEY:

Well, I think it is a model. They say it has been replicated in fifty dysfunctional schools around the country and virtually every school has been brought to national standard performance if not above.

SENATOR LLOYD JONES:

Thank you John, very much.

JOHN FORNEY:

Thank you.

SENATOR LLOYD JONES:

I have a letter here from a fellow who is probably right here in the room here. A recently retired principal of the school system here. He addresses it:

"Senator Lloyd Jones:

I believe your school improvement committee has scheduled a Tuesday lunch with the Petersburg School Board, with a goal of finding out from them what makes a school excellent. I am sure this will be a worthwhile meeting for you. However, if you wish to include in your deliberations, information on the day to day, hour by hour acts, procedures, decisions, and dialogues within the school buildings themselves, while the kids are there, those things that really make a school tick, you are maybe leaving out the most important ingredient.

I have spent my professional lifetime regularly studying professional materials, persons, and research that have been concerned with identifying those characteristics that cause a school to be excellent. They all agree that the principal is the deciding factor.

With that in mind, I suggest that you balance with what the policy makers say with what the most knowledgeable principals think. Specifically, I believe that your committee should contact Executive Secretary of the Principal Association, Larry Graham, and ask him to identify three to five outstanding principals who have shown that they know how to run excellent schools. I suggest that you ask them to prepare criteria and that you meet with that group at least once, for some in depth dialogue.

Education is very important to me, as I am sure it is to you.

Thank you,

Sid Wright"

I think that is a constructive addition to our meeting here. I think it is a worthwhile idea, and perhaps when we get back to Juneau, we could invite those people to a meeting. We have two principles in our audience. I didn't know that. You are certainly welcome. It sounds like Sid is getting to the heart of the matter.

[unidentified person said "She is not here to go public."]

SENATOR LLOYD JONES:

Well, we certainly welcome any testimony at this time, that you may have or may have observed, in your experience, that could help us out. And we will pursue this idea that Sid has.

Thank you, very much.

MELISSA CARRAWAY, PRINCIPAL, ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, PETERSBURG:

Good afternoon, I'm Melissa Carraway. I am the elementary principal here in Petersburg. And I worked with Sid Wright for a number of years, and he typically does this to me. He takes off and let's me do the dirty work.

The important thing that I would like to share with you, is that as a principal, the most important part of education is the children. And once you have given them some power, they can do wonderful things. People to best help them get that power in school studies is their teacher. Consequently, they need to be empowered. When you begin to ask those teachers to do a hundred and one other things, other than teach in their classrooms, because of all the wonderful programs that make schools special, you begin to burn teachers out and they can't take care of

their number one responsibility. And that is something that concerns me as an educator and as an administrator of education. We want all these wonderful programs, we want to come to all these wonderful meetings, and then yet I should be there with my kids saying good-bye to them right now. They are going home. And that is the best gift I can give to them today, to let them know that I care about them.

I think that we have to be real careful that we don't get too paper oriented in trying to make schools perfect. Because the best thing that we can do for them, is to give them people that care.

You are showing that to us by being here today. Come to school tomorrow, that would even be better.

Thank you.

SENATOR LLOYD JONES:

Thank you.

Are there any questions?

MELISSA CARRAWAY:

Thanks.

SENATOR LLOYD JONES:

Alright. There are some other people out there. Would you like to come forward?

I've never known Harold Bergman to be quiet. He always has something to add.

HAROLD BERGMAN, RETIRED TEACHER AND PRINCIPAL, PETERSBURG SCHOOL DISTRICT:

My name is Harold Bergman. I taught here in Petersburg schools for twenty-five years. I was principal for about fifteen.

I can walk into about any school and be there for about five minutes and tell you whether it is a happy school. And by happy, I mean that the kids are eager to come to school and less than they are eager to go home.

....[INDISC.----MICROPHONE NOT BEING USED PROPERLY]....

TAPE 3, SIDE 1

HAROLD BERGMAN:

....some of the older ones say:

"It's none of your business, Mr. Bergman. That's our home life, and you've got nothing to do with that."

I couldn't understand that. It was way beyond me, because I come from a home where my father drank, but reasonably. On Friday night, he would come home from work where they paid weekly, you know, and he had a little[indisc]....He always had a big smile on his face, and a candy bar, and I accepted that.

I will tell you a story about a boy that came to class, and I said:

"Where's your dad?"

He says, his dad was a janitor, he said:

"My dad got a bottle last night, and he didn't finish is. He's got to stay home and finish it today."

This was accepted. And I think this is still accepted today. And I hope to God that you people can do something about it. I failed. But maybe you can.

So keep a happy school.

Thank you.

SENATOR LLOYD JONES:

Thank you, Harold.

Come right up. All's we need is your name.

NANCY THOMAS, PRINCIPAL, MIDDLE SCHOOL & HIGH SCHOOL, PETERSBURG:

I'm Nancy Thomas and I'm the principal in the Middle School, High School here. And I have just come from St. Lawrence Island. Gamble is the name of the village that I worked for in the Bering Strait School District.

It is real intriguing to me, that it could be said, I was principal there for two years and now my third year here, I have absolutely done wonders because this group I brought up test scores and such...I haven't. There is such a different background, such different problems, and it seems that I am hearing people thinking that the problems in Petersburg are the same as the problems on St. Lawrence Island. And the solutions are the same. And they are not. And the money involved is not the same, and the teacher housing situation.

I also worked with North West Arctic School District, and lived in a shack, in a 11' x 12' shack for a year. Our teachers out in St. Lawrence Island lived in horrible housing, with no running water and so forth. And those people come and go quickly. And you can only live under those circumstances for a year or two. It is so difficult and isolated and remote and so forth.

When I hear things about teacher commitment, this is an absolutely wonderful staff in Petersburg. But there are committed teachers all over that are living under very very difficult circumstances. And I am not sure that their needs are being met like needs here in South East Alaska, where folks can buy a house and belong.

I do think that we really need to consider that this state is made up of a number of different worlds within the state, and we keep that perspective as we look at educational problems.

SENATOR JACK COGHILL:

Yes. I really appreciate those remarks, Nancy, because that's exactly what we encountered in our testimony when we first started on this journey, to try to figure out where we are at. In fact, I made the remark that these were teachers at-risk, because you are sending people into different cultures, and different[indisc.]....the living conditions are different, and the teachers are just not attuned to it.

But, I think that teaching experience should be shared by everyone that is in the educational process. Teachers that come into the larger systems, do not understand that there's a real problem out there in rural Alaska, and I represent a good portion of that. But yet, I got classrooms for schools that have got twenty-five kids in it. The biggest one has got around seven hundred. And yet you have got to try and lead some kid of standard in there. And you are right.

One of the things in our report, we are trying to teach, we want to kinda' crusade with me to teach in the classrooms Alaskan history, Alaskan culture, Alaskan government, Alaskan geography are so different, and then we get some understanding, I think.

You are right, the standards out there have got to be brought out, but you have to bring them up in a different way.

Thank you, Nancy.

SENATOR LLOYD JONES:

Anyone else here in the room like to testify? Any one out there on line that would like to testify, any of the sites.

[THE BRIDGE REPLIED THAT THERE WERE NO OTHER SITES WHO HAD RESPONDED EXCEPT SITKA.]

SENATOR LLOYD JONES:

On the Sitka line, if they are still there, is Joe Beckford still available?

Representative MacLean has a question.

REPRESENTATIVE EILEEN MACLEAN:

Good afternoon, Mr. Beckford. This is Representative MacLean. You were talking about the statewide testing program that you're developing within the Sitka School District, and I wanted to find out what type what type of testing program that you were doing and find what correlates you were utilizing to develop the testing program.

JOSEPH BECKFORD:

....[INDISC. -- VERY FUZZY]....

REPRESENTATIVE EILEEN MACLEAN:

Would you please expand a little on the correlates that were utilized to come up with a testing program that match your current one, a little bit more.

JOSEPH BECKFORD:

One of the things that I could provide to you, would be the[indisc.]....alignment format. But, basically what we did[indisc.]....and see what concepts that need to be developed at what levels for language arts and mathematics, for the areas which we are testing. And to see at what levels these concepts are being introduced.

For example, it might very well be that in one testing format that the division is introduced at one grade level and one format and is not introduced until the next grade level in another testing format. And so we look at the match between what level these concepts are being introduced in our curriculum and whether on what level they are being tested. In the different testing formats.

Could you expand on that question, please?

I would have to check on that. That could be done very easily by checking with the building principles.

[REPLY IS INDISC.....MICROPHONE IS TURNED OFF.]

When I get back to the office, I will make sure that that information is put together for you, and mailed out.

I have listened with interest to the different speakers that have addressed the committee and I think that all of us have a concern when we look at some of the language, for example under Section II on the committee substitute, under Educational Planning, item III says:

"The districts shall annually file with the department and make available to the public a report that item III includes a means of measurement an achievement of goals and priorities ."

And further down under item D, says:

"The results of basic skills achievement tests, in national standardized undergraduate college entrance exams with the appropriate comparisons."

Again, if I could reiterate, in many circumstances, you will find that these national tests, they say that they don't have cultural bias, in fact you will find that they do. That a lot of the concepts, I know, as a teacher myself working many years ago on the Navajo Reservation. I bought a copy of a curriculum designed for low functioning students who are not motivated. Unfortunately, the curriculum that I bought was really oriented towards inner city urban area box, so a lot of the references used were from an inner city type of perspective. I think that you find also as you look at the contents of these standardized tests, that although we said to us that they are not culturally biased, it is very difficult to bring a lot of concepts, that are used in those tests, and to the lives of many of the youngsters in Alaska, face.

I applaud your efforts in looking into this and giving the input, the best input that you can, because the results of whatever actions that you may take are going to have a profound impact. And believe me, I believe, although I would like to hope that it wouldn't happen, but I really believe that as you try to make school districts more accountable in ways that utilize standardized testing, I see the danger of statewide curriculum being developed, as a very real threat. And I think this is quite counter to rational that the state has used in decentralizing education as it did when it established the REAA's, leaving a lot of that decision making for curriculum and what students need to learn at the local level.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to allow me to present my comments and thoughts to you.

[....INDISC....MICROPHONE TURNED OFF....]

Educating Poor Minority Children

Schools must win the support of parents and learn to respond flexibly and creatively to students' needs. A successful program developed in New Haven points the way

by James P. Comer

Thomas Jefferson and other advocates of free public schools believed fervently that an educated populace is the lifeblood of democracy. In their view the school clearly had a political purpose: to socialize children to become good citizens. Jefferson wrote, "I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion."

It is a long fall from this lofty ideal to the grim reality facing youths at the margins of today's society. Poor minority children are undereducated in disproportionate numbers across the

country. Academically such children may lag behind the national average by up to two years. In large cities as many as 50 percent of minority children drop out of school. The failure to educate these children makes ever harder the task of rectifying economic and social inequities. Job opportunities increasingly reside in service and technology industries, but poor minority youths are the least likely to have the social and academic skills these jobs demand. Unless schools can find a way to educate them and bring them into the mainstream, all the problems associated with unemployment and alienation will escalate.

The task seems overwhelming. And yet it can be done. In 1968 my colleagues and I at Yale University's Child Study Center started an intervention project at two inner-city schools in New Haven. Unlike many of the reforms that are now being tried or proposed, which focus on academic concerns such as teacher credentials and basic skills, our program promotes development and learning by building supportive bonds that draw together children, parents and school. By 1980 academic performance at the two New Haven schools had surpassed the national average, and truancy and disciplinary problems had declined markedly. We have now begun to duplicate that success at more than 50 schools around the country.

The perceptions underlying our approach are partly rooted in my own childhood. In 1939 I entered an elementary school in East Chicago, Ind., with three other black youngsters from a low-income community. The school was considered one of the best in the district; it was racially integrated and served the highest socioeconomic group in town. All four of us were from two-parent families, and our fathers made a living wage in the local steel mill. We were not burdened by any of the disadvantages—school segregation, inadequate schools, single-parent families, unemployment—commonly cited as causes of educational underachievement in poor black children. Yet in spite of the fact that we had similar intellectual potential, my three friends have had difficult lives: one died prematurely from alcoholism, a second spent a large part of his life in jail and a third has been in and out of mental institutions.

Why did my life turn out better? I think it was largely because my parents, unlike those of my friends, gave me the social skills and confidence that enabled me to take advantage of educational opportunities. For example, I became friendly with my third-grade teacher, with whom I would walk hand in hand to school every day. My parents took me to the library so that I could read many books. My three friends, however, never read books—which frustrated and angered their

JAMES P. COMER is professor of child psychiatry and director of the School Development Program at Yale University's Child Study Center and associate dean of the Yale University School of Medicine. He received an A.B. at Indiana University, an M.D. from the Howard University College of Medicine and an M.P.H. from the University of Michigan School of Public Health. He writes and consults extensively on school improvement. In his most recent book, *Maggie's American Dream*, which will be published this month by New American Library, Comer writes about his mother, an impoverished black woman who grew up in the rural South.

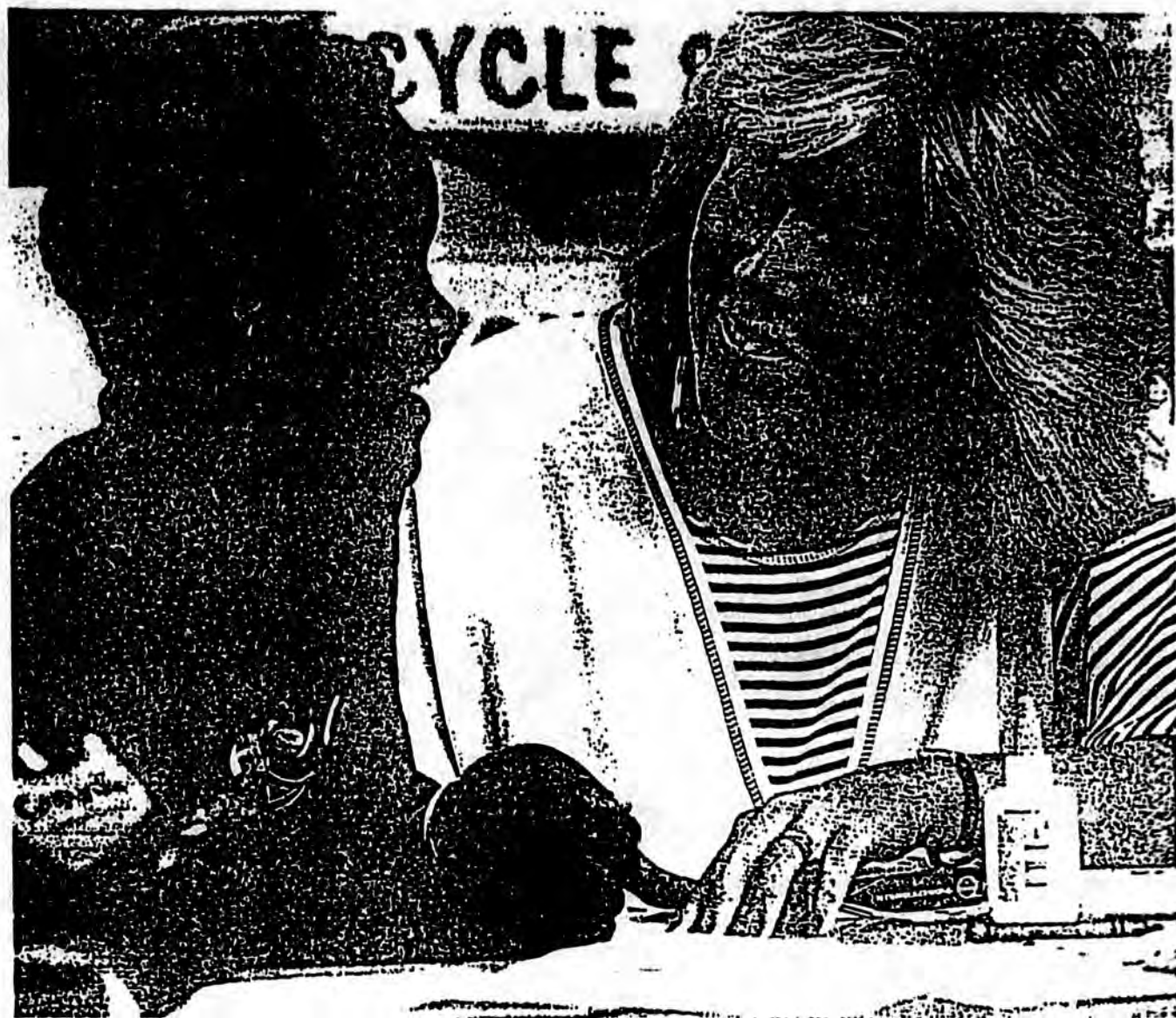
teachers. What the teachers did not realize was that their parents were afraid to go to the library; indeed, they were uncomfortable around white people in general and avoided them.

In the 1960's I began to speculate that the contrast between a child's experiences at home and those in school deeply affects the child's psychosocial development, and that this in turn shapes academic achievement. The contrast would be particularly sharp for poor minority children from families outside the mainstream. If my hunches were correct, then the failure to bridge the social and cultural gap between home and school may lie at the root of the poor academic performance of many of these children.

Yet current educational reforms de-

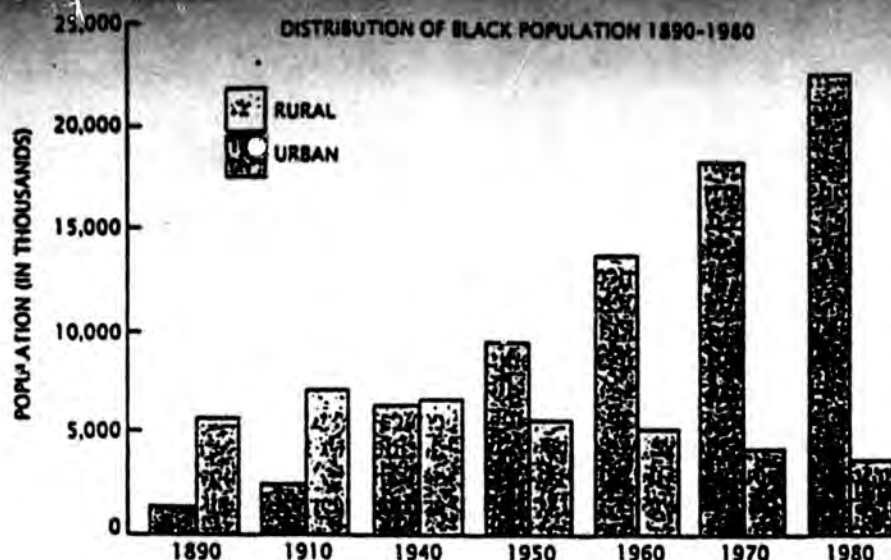
emphasize interpersonal factors and focus instead on instruction and curriculum. Such approaches reveal a blind spot: they assume that all children come from mainstream backgrounds and arrive at school equally well prepared to perform as the school expects them to. Reading, writing, arithmetic and science are delivered to students in much the same way as tires, windows and doors are attached to the frame of an automobile on an assembly line. Yet students do not come in standardized frames that passively receive what is delivered. Most educators do not challenge this assumption, however, and the approach has never been systematically evaluated or modified through direct experiments in schools.

In contrast, Albert J. Solnit and his colleagues at Yale's Child Study Center believed educational reformers should develop their theories by directly observing and intervening in schools over long periods of time. Solnit's ideas inspired the school-intervention research project that was begun by the center and the New Haven school system in 1968 and continued until 1980. I was asked to direct the project and to work with a social worker, a psychologist and a special-education teacher from the center. We decided to immerse ourselves in the schools to learn how they function and then, on the basis of our findings, to develop and implement a model for improving the schools. We were guided by our knowledge of public health,

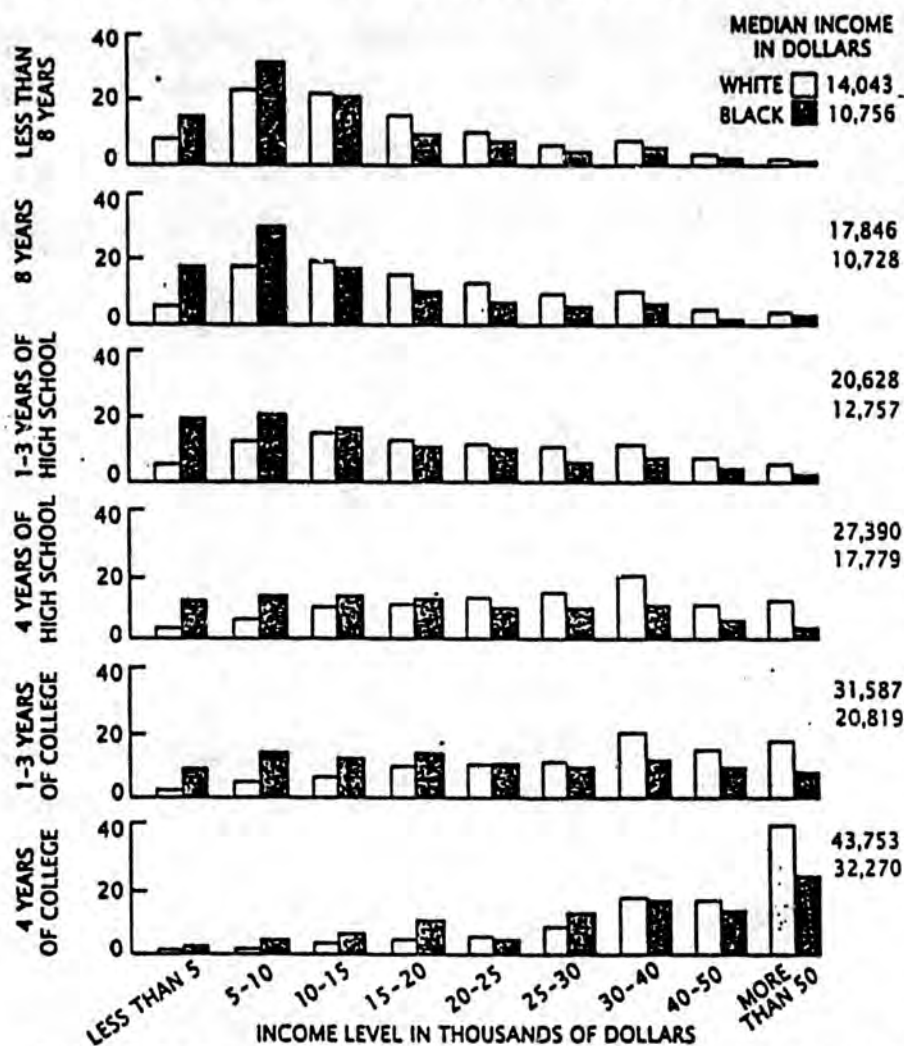


SMILE REWARDS A JOB WELL DONE in teacher Nancy McManus' first-grade class at the Katharine Brennan School in New Haven, Conn. The school, one of two elementary schools in which the author and his colleagues intervened, serves a nearby low-income housing project that suffers from rampant

joblessness and crime. The staff is alert to the special needs of developing children, particularly those from marginal homes, and works hard to get parents involved; 92 percent of the parents visited the school 10 times or more in the past year. The school is now academically one of the best in the city.



BLACK MIGRATION into urban communities (towns of more than 2,500 people) accelerated after World War II. The rural black population once greatly outnumbered the urban population, but the postwar economic boom led large numbers of blacks to move to the cities in search of jobs. Discrimination and lack of adequate education, however, denied many blacks access to the primary urban job markets.



EDUCATION LEVEL correlated to family income for whites and blacks shows that black incomes are at least a third less than the incomes of whites with equivalent schooling. For a given level of schooling completed by the family head, the graph indicates the percentage of families within each income bracket. Lack of education reduces the income of blacks more than that of whites, and black income rises more slowly with education than white income does. The data, for 1984, are from *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1987*, issued by the U.S. Department of Commerce.

human ecology, history and child development—and by common sense.

Our model evolved in two schools: the Martin Luther King, Jr. School, which had about 300 pupils from kindergarten through fourth grade, and the Katharine Brennan School, which had more than 350 pupils from kindergarten through fifth grade. The pupils were 99 percent black and almost all poor; more than 70 percent were from families receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children. At the beginning of the project the pupils were ranked near the bottom in achievement and attendance among the 33 schools in the city. There were serious problems with attendance and discipline. The staffs were discouraged; their turnover rate was 25 percent. Parents were dejected, distrustful, angry and alienated.

Both staff and parents approached the first year of the project with high expectations. But because teachers and administrators could not agree on clear goals and strategies, we had a difficult school opening. Some new teachers tried to have open classrooms, but the children soon became uncontrollable. Teachers blamed the administration for not providing adequate resources, and parents became angry—angry enough to march on one of the schools. Needless to say, the students did not learn much.

We, on the other hand, learned a great deal. The spectacular deterioration of the schools illuminated their social dynamics, something that would otherwise have taken us many years to perceive. We learned, first of all, that both the schools and our project needed more structure; we established regular meetings so that the staff could coordinate plans and set goals. More important, our analysis of interactions among parents, staff and students revealed a basic problem underlying the schools' dismal academic and disciplinary record: the sociocultural misalignment between home and school. We developed a way to understand how such misalignments disrupt beneficial relations and how to overcome them in order to promote educational development.

Our understanding is based on the fact that a child develops a strong emotional bond to competent caretakers (usually parents) that enables them to help the child develop. Many kinds of development, in social, psychological, emotional, moral, linguistic and cognitive areas, are critical to future academic learning. The attitudes, values and behavior

of the family and its social network strongly affect such development.

A child whose development meshes with the mainstream values encountered at school will be prepared to achieve at the level of his or her ability. In addition the meshing of home and school fosters further development: when a child's social skills are considered appropriate by the teacher, they elicit positive reactions. A bond develops between the child and the teacher, who can now join in supporting the overall development of the child.

A child from a poor, marginal family, in contrast, is likely to enter school without adequate preparation. The child may arrive without ever having learned such social skills as negotiation and compromise. A child who is expected to read at school may come from a home where no one reads and may never have heard a parent read bedtime stories. The child's language skills may be underdeveloped or non-

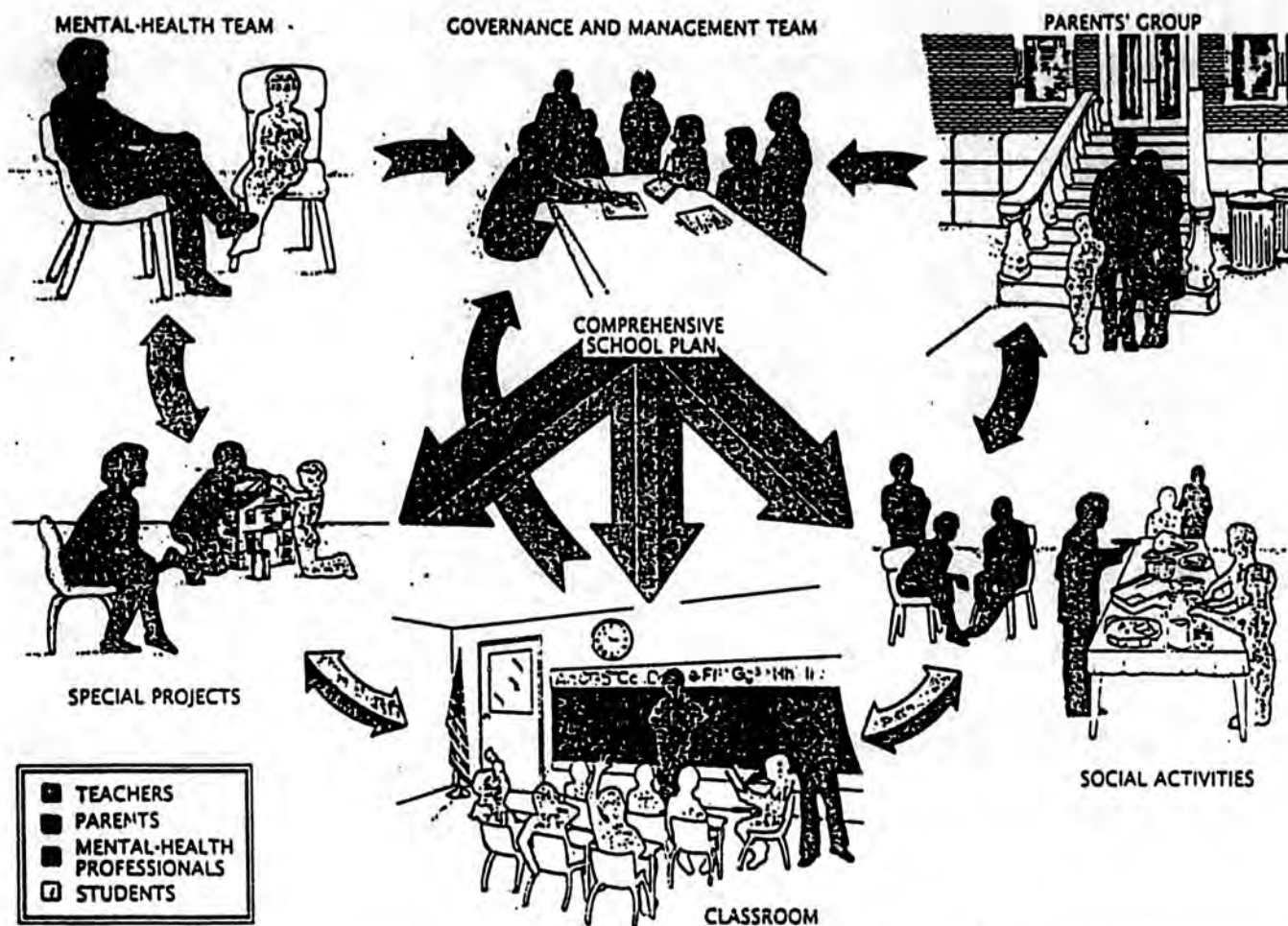
standard. Expectations at home and at school may be radically at odds. For example, in some families a child who does not fight back will be punished. And yet the same behavior will get the child into trouble at school.

Such lack of development or development that is at odds with the mainstream occurs disproportionately often among children from the minority groups that have had the most traumatic experiences in this society: Native Americans, Hispanics and blacks. The religious, political, economic and social institutions that had organized and stabilized their communities have suffered severe discontinuity and destruction. Furthermore, these groups have been excluded from educational, economic and political opportunity. These themes are particularly vivid in the black experience.

Blacks arrived in this country forcibly uprooted from their own culture, and they had another culture—that of

slavery—imposed on them. Slavery was a state of enforced dependency and inferiority, which offered no future. The dominant Anglo culture, in contrast, placed a high value on independence and personal advancement. The dominant culture devalued the imposed black culture, and many blacks in turn developed a negative self-image. After the abolition of slavery, widespread discrimination denied blacks access to education and to the political and economic mainstream. Yet in spite of these psychological and social handicaps many poor black families, particularly in rural areas, were able to develop strong religious and cultural support systems and to function reasonably well.

After World War II opportunities for rural work diminished and many black families migrated to cities, but as a result of discrimination they were largely shut out of the primary job markets. Moreover, urban jobs de-



SCHEMATIC of the school-intervention program shows its key components and the relations among them. A governance and management team, consisting of the principal, parents, teachers and a mental-health worker, develops a comprehensive school plan covering academics, social activities and special programs, such as a Discovery Room for children who have lost interest in learning. Social activities, such as potluck

suppers, teach children social skills and enable parents to meet teachers. Some parents become teachers' aides. The mental-health team assigns a member to work with a child who is having difficulty. It also tries to prevent behavior problems by recommending changes in school procedures. By reducing behavior problems and improving relations with parents, the program creates a school climate conducive to learning.



MENTAL-HEALTH TEAM of the Katharine Brennan School meets weekly under the direction of principal Dietria Wells (center). Members track the progress of students who are having problems and discuss intervention strategies, which often involve the children's families. Participants include staff member Bridget Hardy (left), speech pathologist Judith Campbell (right) and psychologist Karen McCleu (far right).

manded a higher level of education than rural ones, and blacks, undereducated in prewar years, were at a disadvantage. At the same time, they experienced severe stress resulting from the loss of supportive communities. For all these reasons, many black families began to function less well and could not provide their children with preschool experiences that would enable them to succeed in school.

Furthermore, blacks were able to achieve mainstream success only in limited professional areas. Thus they could not gain a significant share of political, economic and social power in the larger society and thereby help to advance socially marginal blacks. With time, marginal blacks came to resent mainstream blacks and whites for being unable—and apparently unwilling—to help them, and they defensively rejected the mainstream.

In spite of their alienation from the mainstream, many poor black parents still look to the school as their hope—indeed, their only hope—for the future, even though at the same time they expect the school to fail them and their children as other mainstream institutions have. And in fact the schools often do fail them. Typical schools, with their hierarchical and authoritarian structure, cannot give

underdeveloped or differently developed students the skills and experiences that will enable them to fulfill expectations at the school. Instead such students are labeled "bad," unmotivated or stupid. Staff people punish the children and hold low expectations for them, often blaming the students, their parents and their communities for the problems. Parents, for their part, take the problems as a personal failure or as evidence of animosity and rejection by the mainstream. They lose hope and confidence and become less supportive of the school. Some parents, ashamed of their speech, dress or failure to hold jobs, become defensive and hostile, avoiding contact with the school staff.

The result is a high degree of mutual distrust between home and school. A black first-grade teacher in an inner-city school with a nearly all-black student body recalled explaining classroom rules on the first day. When she finished, a six-year-old raised his hand and said, "Teacher, my mama said I don't have to do anything you say." Fortunately this teacher understood the underlying problem, but most teachers would have reacted angrily, whereupon any chance of gaining parental cooperation would have quickly evaporated. This degree of alienation between home and school makes it

difficult to nurture a bond between child and teacher that can support development and learning.

The consequences of alienation become most apparent when these children reach the age of about eight. Around this age they are expected to progress academically at a rate that begins to exceed their level of development. In addition the children begin to understand how they and their families differ in income, education and sometimes race and style from other people in the school. At this age, moreover, children seek to decrease their dependence on adults and on the approval of adults.

Unable to achieve in school, these children begin to see academic success as unattainable, and so they protect themselves by deciding school is unimportant. Many seek a sense of adequacy, belonging and self-affirmation in nonmainstream groups that do not value academic achievement. Such children are at risk for dropping out, teen-age pregnancy, drug abuse and crime. On the other hand, the decision to pursue academic achievement and to join the mainstream also exacts a heavy price: such a choice means rejecting the culture of one's parents and social group.

Our analysis of the two New Haven schools suggested that the key to academic achievement is to promote psychological development in students, which encourages bonding to the school. Doing so requires fostering positive interaction between parents and school staff, a task for which most staff people are not trained. Such changes cannot be mandated or sustained from outside the school. Our task, then, was to create a strategy that would overcome the staff's resistance to change, instill in them a working understanding of child development and enable them to improve relations with parents.

From our experience during the first difficult year it was obvious that we would make no progress until we had reduced the destructive interactions among parents, teachers and administrators and given cohesiveness and direction to the schools' management and teaching. To this end we created in each school a governance and management team of about a dozen people led by the principal and made up of elected parents and teachers, a mental-health specialist and a member of the nonprofessional support staff—all the adults who had a stake in the outcome. The teams decided issues ranging from the schools' aca-

demarc and social program to changes in school procedures that seemed to engender behavior problems.

Several rules guided these teams. First, team members had to recognize the authority of the principal but, equally important, the principal could not push through decisions without weighing the concerns of the team members. Second, we agreed to focus efforts on problem solving and not waste time and energy in placing blame. Third, we made decisions by consensus rather than by vote; this promoted cooperation by reducing the harmful tendency of groups to polarize into "winners" and "losers."

The teams were not fully accepted at first, nor were they immediately effective, because we at the center were viewed as outsiders (from Yale, to boot, which working-class people in New Haven have always regarded with suspicion). But as we helped the principals to see that power sharing increased their own ability to manage the school, and as teachers and administrators benefited, the staff became more willing to apply our expertise in social and behavioral sciences to every aspect of the school.

We invited parents from among the group that had protested against us in the first year to join the team. With their input we developed a program that involved parents at three levels: shaping policy through their representatives on the governance and management team, participating in activities supporting the school program, and attending school events.

At one point about a dozen parents worked as classroom assistants and formed the core of the parents' group. (They were paid the minimum wage.) Parents and staff sponsored activities such as potluck suppers, book fairs and graduation ceremonies. These social gatherings fostered good relations between parents and staff, so that when a child was having problems, the staff could discuss the matter with the parents without eliciting defensive reactions. As a result the school climate and student behavior improved, and more parents began to attend school activities.

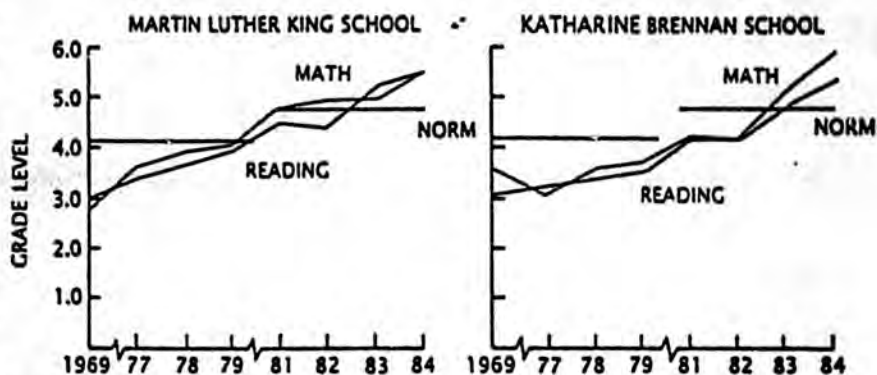
In a typical school, students who have emotional, learning or behavioral difficulties are seen by the school's psychologist, social worker or special-education teacher, who all work independently of one another. In our project, however, they worked as a team. We found this to be more efficient; the team would discuss each case and assign one member to it. The

team approach also made it easier to detect patterns of troublesome behavior and to determine whether some aspect of the school was making them worse. Through its delegate on the governance and management team, the mental-health group recommended changes in school policies and practices so that students' developmental needs would be served better and behavior problems prevented.

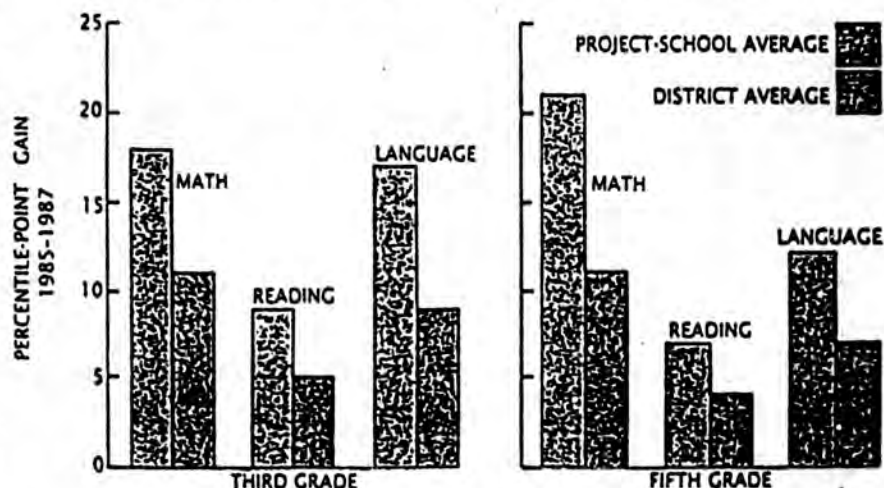
These actions reduced the sense of failure, the feelings of anger and the loss of confidence that can lead to problem behavior among students. For example, an eight-year-old who was transferred into King from another school was taken directly to the classroom. He panicked, kicked the teacher in the leg and ran out. Usually such a child is punished. If nothing is

done to reduce the child's anxiety, the cycle is often repeated until the child is labeled disturbed and referred for treatment. Our mental-health team helped the school staff to understand that the child's anxiety was a natural reaction to being thrust among strangers, and, together with the staff, we developed an orientation program to introduce transfer students and their parents to the school.

In the course of the 12 years we spent in the New Haven schools, other programs emerged in response to students' needs. In one school, children were kept with the same teacher for two years. A Discovery Room enabled "turned off" children to form a trusting relationship with an adult and, through play, rediscover an interest in learning. A Crisis Room provided a



FOURTH GRADERS at the two New Haven schools taking part in Yale University's Child Study Center's intervention program registered steady gains in achievement-test scores from 1969 through 1984. The graphs show mean scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in reading (red) and mathematics (blue); scores in 1969 are for the Metropolitan Achievement Test. From 1969 through 1979 the tests were given in the fall (when the norm is a score of 4.2); from 1981 through 1984 the tests were given in the spring (norm score 4.8). Scores have stayed near the 1984 levels since then.



AVERAGE PERCENTILE GAINS on California Achievement Test scores from 1985 through 1987 were larger for 10 mainly black schools in Prince Georges County, Md., that use the Comer program than they were for the school district as a whole. Test scores of black students still lag behind those of white students, but the gap is narrowing. The school district, the 15th-largest in the U.S., has 105,000 students, 62 percent of whom are black. The schools using the program are more than 90 percent black; they receive extra staff and funds because they have been hard to integrate.

refuge for children who were "out of control." We discovered that this behavior could often be traced to a traumatic home experience, and so staff members helped the children to handle their feelings and regain a sense of control. With each intervention the staff became increasingly sensitive to the concerns of developing children and to the fact that behavior problems result mainly from unmet needs rather than from willful badness—and that actions can be taken to meet these needs.

By 1975 the program was clearly having an effect. Behavioral problems had declined, relations between parents and staff had improved and the intelligence of the children had become manifest. In that year we drew up a formal School Development Program based on the key ingredients of our success: the governance team, the parents' program and the mental health team.

Having established a way to achieve and maintain a smoothly functioning school, we decided to see whether the school might also play a role in redressing the problem of social misalignment. We argued that it should be possible to teach our nonmainstream students the social skills that are expected of them in school, and that the acquisition of these skills would help them to succeed academically.

Staff and parents devised a curriculum of social skills, with instruction in the subjects children would need to know: politics and government, business and economics, health and nutrition, and spiritual and leisure activity. The staff chose specialists to help develop the program. Children learned how to write invitations and thank-you notes, how to serve as hosts, how the body functions, how to write checks, how to plan concerts, and so on. Each activity combined basic academic skills with social skills and an appreciation of the arts. These activities were an immediate and dramatic success. Students, parents and staff alike all felt a surge of excitement and a growing sense of participating in the mainstream.

The Intervention program in New Haven produced significant academic gains. The students had once ranked lowest in achievement among the 33 elementary schools in the city, but by 1979, without any change in the socioeconomic makeup of the schools, students in the fourth grade had caught up to their grade level. By 1984 pupils in the fourth grade in the two schools ranked third-

and fourth-highest on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. By the early 1980's attendance rates at King were either first or second in the city. There have been no serious behavior problems at either school in more than a decade.

In 1980 our group left the schools. The program was fully integrated into the normal practices of the staff, who continued to carry it out. In the same year we began to develop a way to apply our program in other schools. We left intact the key elements of our success in New Haven—the governance and management team, the parents' program and the mental-health team, along with our operating rules—while allowing specific social and academic activities to vary with the needs of a particular school. In a sense the program enables school personnel to engage in a "clinical practice": armed with theories of child development and education, together with observations of children and school systems, they can diagnose problems in the school and develop solutions.

The Prince Georges County, Md., and Benton Harbor, Mich., school districts, which serve mainly low-income black children, have been using the program for several years; they have achieved successes on a par with those of the two New Haven schools. The program is being introduced to all New Haven schools, as well as to three other districts: Norfolk, Va., Lee County, Ark. (both also serving mainly poor black children), and Leavenworth, Kans. The program is now being implemented in more than 50 schools around the country, including two middle schools and one high school.

All the money and effort expended for educational reform will have only limited benefits—particularly for poor minority children—as long as the underlying developmental and social issues remain unaddressed. Yet most teachers and administrators are not trained to organize and manage schools in ways that support the overall development of students. Nor does their training enable them to analyze, much less solve, the social-misalignment problems of children from outside the mainstream.

The first step toward improving the education of these children, then, is to induce teachers' colleges and schools of education to focus on student development. Teachers who invest time in training will have an incentive to use what they have learned. The efforts of individuals will not be enough; the entire staff of a school must embrace new ways of thinking.

School districts, state and local governments and school boards must actively support these changes. They must recognize that students' social development is as important to society as their academic ability. They must select, certify and reward teachers and administrators who are skilled in nurturing the development of students. They must evaluate schools by their ability not only to produce high test scores but also to prepare students to assume adult responsibilities. And they must provide necessary funds.

The Federal Government must play a leading role in bringing about national educational reforms that can prepare young people to be effective and responsible citizens. Besides appropriating funds and establishing programs, the Government must facilitate the interaction of state and local government, educational authorities and private interests—foundations, businesses, colleges and universities.

To pull all of this together, I believe a National Academy of Education is needed. Its purpose would be to set national priorities, assess current research in education, learn how to implement approaches that work, identify areas for further study and allocate resources effectively. Such an academy must be free from the pressures of political expediency, and the interests of researchers must be balanced against those of educators. It could be created largely from existing Federal programs and governed by those who have a stake in education: educators, parents, government and business. A National Academy of Education could spearhead a process of change that is geared above all to the needs of children and to the national interest. It could set a timetable and move forward at a rational pace that recognizes the urgent need for reform and at the same time is guided by knowledge and common sense.

FURTHER READING

SCHOOL POWER: IMPLICATIONS OF AN INTERVENTION PROJECT. James P. Comer. The Free Press, 1980.

FAMILY LIFE AND SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT: WHY POOR BLACK CHILDREN SUCCEED OR FAIL. Reginald M. Clark. University of Chicago Press, 1983.

GOOD SCHOOLS: WHAT RESEARCH SAYS ABOUT IMPROVING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT. Willis D. Hawley and Susan J. Rosenholtz in *Peabody Journal of Education*, Vol. 61, No. 4; Summer, 1984.

WHY THE CURRENT WAVE OF SCHOOL REFORM WILL FAIL. John E. Chubb in *The Public Interest*, Vol. 90, pages 28-49; Winter, 1988.

1/8/90

JOINT COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

January 8, 1990

3:30 p.m.

SENATE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sen. Lloyd Jones, Co-Chair
Sen. Al Adams
Sen. John Binkley
Sen. Jack Coghill

HOUSE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Rep. Eileen P. MacLean, Co-Chair
Rep. Niilo Koponen
Rep. Cheri Davis
Rep. Johnny Ellis

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

WITNESS REGISTER:

William G. Demmert
Commissioner
Department of Education
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Committee Consultant

Dr. Frank Darnell
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Committee Consultant

ACTION NARRATIVE:

TAPE 1, SIDE 1
Number 094

WILLIAM DEMMERT, COMMISSIONER, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, welcomed the opportunity to work with the committee and Dr. Frank Darnell. Commissioner Demmert noted that there was nothing in the report that conflicted with any program activities within the Department.

Number 127

SENATOR COGHILL explained that the committee report highlights several issues that could be obtained in the current legislative session. He praised the task force from the state school board for their good work and suggested that their written report be made accessible to the members of the legislature to augment the committee's objectives.

Number 159

Commissioner Demmert clarified that an Executive Summary of the state board's report was being prepared and he offered to distribute the report widely.

Number 214

CO-CHAIR REPRESENTATIVE MACLEAN introduced Dr. Frank Darnell and asked him to summarize his report.

DR. FRANK DARNELL explained the text as being a composite of different approaches including: ideas gathered from committee members and witness testimony at committee meetings; a review of testimony by witnesses at hearings held by the Senate Committee on School Performance; consultation with members of the education profession such as the Department of Education's staff, state board members, teachers, and faculty at the University of Alaska as well as Pacific University in Anchorage; input from leaders and members of the various professional associations; and a review of the professional literature as it applied to the school reform movement nationally. Dr. Darnell affirmed that the text, which occupied most of his time, reflected a middle-of-the-road approach. He assured that he made an effort to adhere to a principle of compromise. Dr. Darnell acknowledged that some of the points or recommendations in the text should be debated, with the hope that a consensus might be reached if there was a difference of view. He explained that the report listed 8 broad subjects for priority legislation and addressed 3 of them in detail, including 6 recommendations under a total of 5 subheadings. He reminded the Committee of the second report due date, the first day of the next legislature in January 1991. Dr. Darnell proposed that the Executive Summary remain with the main body of the report, but that it also be printed as a separate document under its own cover, since it would have a much broader distribution than the report.

Senator Coghill requested that the Committee review the Executive Summary, a highlight of the main draft, and then after questions were answered, review the main draft, which would save time.

Number 472

Dr. Darnell outlined the purpose of the Executive Summary regarding the statement of justification for the committee's existence. Specifically, he made reference to the testing programs that had come forth from the Department of Education (DOE). He noted that the paragraph on page 64, on the second page of the Executive Summary, would be brought up to date to include the 1989 test results that he had just obtained from the supervisor of testing at DOE. Dr. Darnell pointed out that the results revealed a wide disparity between the lowest and highest performing districts. He emphasized that 20 of the school districts in the state fall below the 20th percentile, and that the study represented 12% of the student population for the entire state, with the lowest performing districts being those that suffer from poverty and social dysfunction.

Dr. Darnell discussed the first issue on "Mandated Alaska State Goals of Education." He pointed out that the recommendation in the Senate report was well accepted by most people as a broad statement of a legislative goal, and that it was presently before the legislature in bill form. He explained that his report suggested that there be legislation to require local school districts to develop their own goals that are consistent with state policy. He recommended that there be legislatively mandated measures of achievement. Dr. Darnell said he agreed with the practice of school districts reporting back to the state board and legislature on specific items that are worked out jointly among school districts. He concurred with the Senate recommendation of school improvement incentives as part of meeting the goal section. He explained that the Department of Education also will recommend in their report that a fund which enables school districts to fulfill goals with special innovative ideas be established.

Number 703

Senator Coghill questioned the creation of another funding mechanism for administrators in which grants would not be used for the purpose for which they were intended. He proposed amending the report to limit applicants to no more than two grants in the five year period to ensure compliance with the intent.

Number 745

REPRESENTATIVE KOPONEN recommended that the state Department evaluate the programs and disseminate the results of the more useful ones to all districts, so successful programs could be emulated.

Senator Binkley concurred with Representative Koponen.

Number 758

Dr. Darnell noted that advisory school boards in particular would have authority to submit grant applications directly to DOE, so that they're not subject to a central district that may be quite removed from village conditions.

Number 780

REPRESENTATIVE CHERI DAVIS expressed concern that the report would become a "political football" in the legislature. She questioned whether the particular grant program was separate from the foundation program.

Co-chair MacLean agreed that it was a separate issue.

Senator Binkley concurred with Rep. C. Davis and Co-chair MacLean.

Number 838

Commissioner Demmert said that the state board had recognized the need to address the foundation program as well as the need to stimulate innovation and direction for special kinds of activities like the grant program.

Number 850

Representative MacLean said that it needed to be stated in the report that schools should receive no more than 2 grants in a five year period.

Number 889

Representative C. Davis recommended that school districts only receive grants every 2 years. She explained that it would still be limited but would not inhibit creative innovations.

Senator Coghill asked that it be left up to the state board to decide, depending on what funds were available. He reiterated that the number of grants to the same school should be limited.

Chairperson MacLean asked if anyone objected to Senator Coghill's proposal.

Rep. Koponen reemphasized that successful programs should be emulated.

Number 958

Dr. Darnell discussed the fourth item on page 64 of the report. He said this item reflected the greatest need among those students that were hard to teach and involved coordinating different agencies that typically were disjointed.

Number 019

Senator Coghill recommended, on page 69, the establishment of a "special" coordinating agency instead of a permanent agency.

Number 029

Representative C. Davis suggested that there should be a person in the inter-agency group who is outside the bureaucracy so as to keep track of funds spent.

Dr. Darnell said that some states follow this method.

Number 079

Representative Koponen suggested that it was the legislature's role to monitor agencies' spending. He said that he would like to see procedures developed that would allow coordination at the grass-roots level.

Number 140

Dr. Darnell endorsed Rep. Koponen's idea. He emphasized that the impetus of the idea needs approval from the highest administrative level.

Dr. Darnell then discussed pages 52 - 58 in the report. He predicted that this section would generate the greatest concern because of the \$10 million expense. He explained that the money would be used to service the large numbers of children who satisfied all of the Head Start requirements, but were not being served due to a current lack of funding. Dr. Darnell stressed the success of the program in preparing children for school.

REPRESENTATIVE ELLIS asked about the eligibility status of the children not being served.

Dr. Darnell said the children who were not being served met the income level, as well as age criteria, for the program.

Number 237

Dr. Darnell further stated that if every child who qualified for the Head Start Program were being served, the \$10 million would still not be sufficient.

Representative Koponen recommended that there be an itemized separation of the costs of the program. He said that the lack of qualified people working in the program posed a serious problem and should be listed separately, instead of as part of the overall cost. He disagreed with the concept of the state funding the total project, and felt there needed to be local involvement.

Number 365

Representative C. Davis asked Dr. Darnell if the federal government would provide funding to proliferate the program.

Number 395

Dr. Darnell said that there was a chance of obtaining some funding, that the program was supported by both parties. In addition, he clarified that this was not just a rural issue and there were children in need urban areas as well, so there would be support from urban areas that would otherwise be overlooked.

Number 459

Senator Coghill said he was troubled by the Department of Community and Regional Affairs' responsibility to administer early childhood education programs. He said if the emphasis was going to be shifted to the state, it should come under the Department of Education which could better administer the program. Senator Coghill proposed this point be mentioned as an adjunct to the report's recommendations.

Number 529

Representative Ellis pointed out that increased parental involvement accounted for the success of the Head Start Program. He recommended that parental training in conjunction with early childhood education be recommended in the report.

Dr. Darnell agreed with Rep. Ellis.

Senator Coghill recommended that the report include language in support of early childhood and parenting education.

Representative MacLean concurred with Senator Coghill.

Number 664

Senator Coghill said that page 72, item number 6, should include history, culture, and geography. He also wanted areas of emphasis in the main report typed in solid print. He further suggested that on page 34, drug awareness data in the "Development and Commitment of Health" section of the report be included.

Number 754

Dr. Darnell said that he would have to approach the state board to enact such changes.

Number 759

Senator Coghill felt that on page 39 in the section on test results, the results of minorities and whites should be separated.

Dr. Darnell said he didn't anticipate a problem in addressing the recommended changes.

Number 826

Senator Coghill recommended that after the report is printed, before it is distributed, there be another meeting to discuss recommendations as to the longevity of the committee.

SENATOR COGHILL MOVED and asked unanimous consent that the report be accepted by the committee. The motion was seconded.

Number 857

Co-chair MacLean declared that the motion carried, and the report would go to print.

The meeting was adjourned by the chair at 4:45 p.m.

1/22/90

JOINT COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL PERFORMANCE
January 22, 1990
9:00 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Lloyd Jones, Co-Chair
Rep. Eileen Panigeo MacLean, Co-Chair
Senator Al Adams
Senator Jack Coghill
Rep. Cheri Davis

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ACTION NARRATIVE

TAPE 1, SIDE 1
Number 015

Co-Chair MacLean called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. and noted the following members present: Senators Adams and Coghill and Representative Cheri Davis. After the committee adopted the day's agenda and the minutes from the January 8th meeting, Senator Coghill praised the committee's report, entitled "Excellence In School Performance: the Role of the Legislature," and called for the drafting of model legislation that would implement the report's recommendations.

Number 041

Dr. Frank Darnell initiated the discussion on the plans for the committee's activities in 1990 and on the second report that the committee is required to present on the first day of the Seventeenth Alaska Legislature. The members discussed committee funding for Fiscal Year 1991 and the prospect of having Dr. Darnell return to help write the second report.

Number 150

At 9:15 a.m., Co-Chair Jones joined the committee.

Dr. Darnell discussed the proposed committee budget for Fiscal Year 1991 and noted that the total was less than the amount used during fiscal year 1990.

Dr. Darnell suggested that the committee hold four meetings for the purpose of completing the second report. He

suggested that the first meeting be held in Kotzebue in June, the second meeting be held in Fairbanks during the third week in July to coincide with the Eskimo Olympics and with teachers attending summer school, the third meeting be held in Anchorage in September, and the fourth meeting be held in Juneau in late October or early November.

Rep. Davis advised that the fourth meeting be scheduled so as not to interfere with the November state elections.

Senator Coghill asked that the committee hold two-day meetings at a time in order to allow the public plenty of time to participate.

Number 262

Senator Adams suggested having the committee co-chairs write letters to the chairmen of the Senate and House Finance Committees regarding funding for fiscal year 1991. He deferred to Senator Coghill the task of drafting the letter.

Number 301

Jim Nordlund, committee aide to the House Health, Education, and Social Services (HESS) Committee, told the committee that the Senate and House HESS Committees shall meet on Monday, January 29, to hear the formal presentation of the joint committee's report.

Number 325

Senator Coghill suggested drafting legislation that would implement the recommendations of the joint committee. After some discussion, the members agreed to meet at 8:00 a.m., Thursday, January 25th, to discuss drafting legislation.

Number 424

Commissioner William Demmert announced that the State Board of Education would like to meet with the joint committee and that it would offer help in supporting legislation sponsored by the joint committee.

TAPE 1, SIDE 2
Number 001

Commissioner William Demmert offered the joint committee support from his department and from his special assistant, Edna MacLean.

Number 043

Due to conflicts in schedules, the members changed the January 25th meeting time from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Number 065

Co-Chair MacLean adjourned the meeting at 9:45 a.m.

1/25/90

JOINT COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

January 25, 1990

4:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Senator Lloyd Jones, Co-Chair
Rep. Eileen Panigeo MacLean, Co-Chair
Rep. Cheri Davis
Rep. Niilo Koponen
Rep. Johnny Ellis, Ex Officio

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ACTION NARRATIVE

TAPE 1, SIDE 1
Number 001

Co-Chair Jones called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m. and noted the following members present: Representatives MacLean (Co-Chair), Cheri Davis, Johnny Ellis, and Niilo Koponen. The members then approved the day's agenda and the minutes from the previous meeting which was held on January 22, 1990.

Number 078

Joint committee consultant, Dr. Frank Darnell, described the various pieces of draft legislation that would implement the five major recommendations made by the joint committee in its report, "Excellence in School Performance: the Role of the Legislature."

The first draft reviewed by the committee would implement joint committee recommendations 1 (mandated Alaska state goals of education); 2 (legislatively mandated measures of achievement); and, 3 (school performance improvement incentives). The cost of implementing school performance improvement incentive grants was estimated at \$3,000,000. Senator Jones asked if the amount would cover the costs of administering the incentive grants.

Number 174

Department of Education Commissioner, William Demmert, answered that his department would need the authority to administer the grant, otherwise, his department would need a direct legislative appropriation.

Number 208

The joint committee reviewed a draft resolution that would respond to the joint committee's fourth recommendation, establishing an interagency coordinating committee that would address health and family service programs related to school performance.

Dr. Darnell stated that the joint committee has the authority to sponsor bills rather than having to request legislation through the Rules Committees.

Number 246

The joint committee reviewed a draft bill that would respond to its fifth recommendation, establishing a departmental coordinating committee that would address early childhood and parenting education.

Number 269

At 4:25 p.m. Rep. Peter Goll joined the committee meeting.

Number 298

The joint committee discussed funding for the Head Start program. Part of its recommendation (number 5) included a request for \$10 million of funding for the Head Start Program. Rep. MacLean suggested that some of that money should be used to address early childhood education.

Number 367

Regarding the first piece of legislation, Dr. Darnell suggested adding language that would give the Department of

Education authority to develop preschool or early childhood education curricula. Dr. Darnell noted that this legislation was based on CSHB 231 (HESS), sponsored by Rep. MacLean. Rep. MacLean suggested that her bill be held and replaced by the new draft before the committee.

Number 470

Rep. Peter Goll requested that an amendment addressing school building maintenance programs be included in the new draft. The members agreed to include it in the next draft.

Number 608

Commissioner Demmert reported that the Board of Education was pleased with the direction the joint committee was taking and was ready to provide support to the committee.

Number 634

The members decided to meet at 8:30 a.m. on Monday, January 29, in Room 106 of the Capitol Building.

TAPE 1, SIDE 2

Number 006

The joint committee adjourned at 5:03 p.m.

1/29/90

JOINT COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL PERFORMANCE
January 29, 1990
12:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Sen. Lloyd Jones, Co-Chair
Sen. Jack Coghill
Rep. Eileen P. MacLean, Co-Chair
Rep. Niilo Koponen
Rep. Cheri Davis
Rep. Johnny Ellis

MEMBERS ABSENT

Sen. Al Adams
Sen. John Binkley

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

Discussion on legislation implementing committee
recommendations.

WITNESS REGISTER

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Barney Gottstein
President
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Position: Committee Consultant

ACTION NARRATIVE

TAPE 1, SIDE B
Number 004

Co-Chair MacLean called to order the meeting of the Joint Committee on School Performance at 12:10 p.m.

Co-Chair MacLean stated that the agenda included discussion regarding the revised letter to Senate President Tim Kelley and Speaker of the House Sam Cotton.

Co-Chair MacLean outlined the revisions to the letter, which included stated support for Head Start type programs and the specification of children ages 3-5 in the development of an early childhood curriculum.

Number 059

Senator Coghill affirmed that the Department of Education should be the lead agency in developing early childhood development programs instead of the Department of Community and Regional affairs.

Number 125

DR. FRANK DARNELL, committee consultant, responded that the bill establishing an Early Childhood and Parenting Education Committee would address Senator Coghill's concern in debate during the coming year.

Number 160

Senator Coghill moved that the Committee approve the letter as drafted to Senator Kelley and Representative Cotton.

Number 200

Hearing no objections, Co-Chair MacLean declared the motion passed.

Number 206

Senator Coghill moved that the letter to Representative Mike Davis, Chairman of the Legislative Council, be approved and submitted.

Number 215

Dr. Darnell announced that the Committee would employ a part-time person in his absence. He noted that it would be necessary to change the letter to accommodate the increased amount of money needed.

Number 252

Co-Chair MacLean estimated the cost of a half-time person to be approximately \$10,000.

Number 271

Senator Coghill said that Chairperson MacLean should negotiate the added cost with Speaker Sam Cotton.

Number 295

Co-Chair MacLean, hearing no objections, declared the motion passed to send the letter to Representative Mike Davis.

Number 304

Senator Coghill suggested that the Joint Committee introduce only House bills instead of introducing duplicate bills on the Senate side.

Senator Coghill made a motion to amend the language in work draft 62006A on page 2, line 7, changing Permanent Interagency Coordinating Committee to Special Interagency Coordinating Committee.

Number 425

Co-Chair MacLean, hearing no objection, declared the motion carried.

Co-Chair MacLean moved on to agenda item Work Draft 6-2278 and asked for questions.

Number 478

Senator Jones asked if the responsibilities outlined in the draft should be placed under the Department of Education rather than the Department of Community and Regional Affairs (DC&RA).

Number 500

WILLIAM DEMMERT, Commissioner, Department of Education, responded that generally the DC&RA was the funding organization that provided for health and safety, while the Department of Education provided technical assistance in the development of those programs.

Number 525

Dr. Darnell proposed that the Commissioner of Education be the chair of the committee specified on line 24.

Number 622

Co-Chair MacLean proposed a change to the title to place the Early Childhood and Parenting Education Coordination Committee within the Department of Education and having the DC&RA as participants.

Number 662

Senator Coghill reiterated that Early Childhood Education should be within the Department of Education.

Number 572

BARNEY GOTTSTEIN, President, Department of Education, pointed out that there exists community based Head Start type programs outside the school system that are not intended to be incorporated into the schools.

Number 707

Senator Coghill maintained that the transition would have to take place eventually.

Number 707

Senator Jones agreed with Senator Coghill that there should not be two agencies trying to achieve the same function.

Number 736

Representative Koponen replied that the Head Start program was an important part of the Community and Regional Affairs' community development program and has established a large constituency statewide. He cautioned putting this program in the Department of Education, which may create an unnecessary opposition to the resolution.

Number 912

Co-Chair MacLean, hearing no objections to Senator Coghill's amendment on page 24, which specifies that the Commissioner of Education chair the committee, declared the motion carried.

Number 942

Work Draft 6-2027A, as amended, was adopted by the Committee.

Number 960

Co-Chair MacLean asked for discussion of 6-20328, establishing a state education policy relating to powers and duties of school districts.

Number 178

Senator Coghill recommended that the language be softened to encourage local schools to work with an advisory school board for the improvement of education, but this shouldn't be mandated.

Number 231

Dr. Darnell agreed with Representative C. Davis that some of the words should be limited.

Number 240

Senator Coghill expressed his concern about local school districts being required to consult with an advisory board before hiring teachers. He suggested that the language be amended to give local school officials the option of consulting with these individuals.

Number 032

President Barney Gottstein pointed out that education would be enhanced by the creation of a cooperative relationship between the community and the schools.

Number 094

Representative C. Davis proposed an amendment on line 9 to remove the word "organization" and on line 10, page 5, remove language specifying the appointment of personnel.

Representative C. Davis suggested that the local advisory board should advise the regional board on the operation of schools.

Number 170

Senator Coghill made an amendment to insert on line 8 that the advisory school board shall advise the regional school boards on all items concerning their schools, and asked for unanimous consent.

Number 222

Co-Chair MacLean, hearing no objections to the amendment, declared the motion carried.

Number 267

Representative C. Davis asked when the state required testing to take place.

Number 282

Commissioner Demmert clarified that there was a fall testing program that would provide information by the middle of February.

Number 379

Senator Coghill pointed out that the section on testing had to do with a plan for achieving district goals that would be presented to the legislature.

Number 481

Commissioner Demmert expressed concern about the possible lack of coordination that would be created by the number of reports that the Department and the school districts had to develop.

Number 524

Representative MacLean noted the modification on line 10 to delete the words legislature and Governor.

Number 591

Representative C. Davis pointed out that the good points should be included in the report card, as well as overall information.

Number 616

Dr. Darnell said that this could be accomplished by adding one item which includes indicators of school performance as selected by the local districts.

Number 677

Co-Chair MacLean reconfirmed concurrence with the changes on line 11, page 2, as well as the addition of a new number 7 after line 29.

Number 701

Representative C. Davis raised concern that there was no assurance that the grants applied for by different individuals related back to the district goals.

Number 858

Senator Jones recommended that the district screen who applies for grants.

Number 904

Co-Chair MacLean directed attention to Section 14, page 3, where it states that the commissioner shall make grants to a district located in the state for purposes of improving school performance.

Number 948

Senator Jones maintained that it is necessary to have screening at the local level.

Number 962

Commissioner Demmert recommended that the Committee draft language that authorizes the State Board to work out some of the details being discussed.

Number 054

Co-Chair MacLean suggested that language be deleted from line 21, page 3, to line 16, page 4, and to give authority to the State Board to establish the guidelines.

Co-Chair MacLean said that the report should be presented to the legislature, with the revisions coming later.

Co-Chair MacLean adjourned the meeting of the Joint Committee on School Performance at 1:20 p.m.

6/8/90

JOINT COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL PERFORMANCE
SPECIAL COMMITTEE

June 8, 1990

10:00 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Rep. Eileen P. MacLean, Co-chair
Rep. Cheri Davis
Rep. Niilo Koponen
Sen. Lloyd Jones

MEMBERS ABSENT

Rep. Johnny Ellis
Sen. Jack Coghill
Sen. Johnne Binkley
Sen. Al Adams

WITNESS REGISTER

John Anttonen, Director
Education Finance and Support Services
Department of Education
P.O. Box F
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0500
Phone: 465-2865
Position Statement: Provided explanation of the foundation
funding formula, teacher certification, school governance

Darby Anderson, Administrator
Office of Basic education
Education Program Support
Department of Education
P.O. Box F
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0500
Phone: 465-2841
Position Statement: Provided explanation of the alaska
studies program

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

Presentations by Department of Education officials on the
state foundation formula, teacher certification, school
governance, and the Alaska studies program.

ACTION NARRATIVE

Co-chair Eileen Maclean noted that Martha Stewart was
present in lieu of Senator Adams.

Co-chair Maclean asked the committee to review Dr. Frank Darnell's contract for approval. She noted that the contract began on June 1, 1990 and expires by December 31, 1990.

Representative C. Davis mentioned that Dr. Darnell needed to hire clerical assistance for the interim. She further expressed concern about meetings getting the proper amount of advertising. Rep. C. Davis recommended inclusion of that responsibility under the statement of work in the contract to read: adequate notification of public hearings.

Representative C. Davis moved that the committee accept Dr. Frank Darnell's contract, as amended.

Co-chair Maclean, hearing no objections, declared the contract approved.

Co-chair Maclean then reviewed three measures sponsored by the committee, two of which were approved by the legislature last session, HB 469 and HCR 46, and a measure the committee intends to pursue further, HB 470.

(HB 469 creates a state education policy that mandates the Alaska Board of Education to adopt statewide goals implemented by each school district; requires the compilation of a school report card to better access the performance of schools; sets up a fund for the improvement of school performance; establishes advisory boards in unincorporated areas; and, provides for the development and implementation of a physical preventative maintenance program for school facilities. In addition, HCR 46 forms a special interagency coordinating committee on schools to aid social and health services within school districts in identifying and helping students at risk. The bill requires the Department of Community and Regional Affairs, the state Department of Education, and the Department of Health and Social Services to implement the provisions of the bill.

(HB 470 would have set up an early childhood and parenting education committee to provide training for school districts, and set up early childhood programs for municipalities that do not have headstart programs.)

Co-chair Maclean mentioned that even though HB 470 died last session, \$5 million in headstart funds were awarded through welfare reform to start new programs and/or serve some of the 964 children currently on waiting lists throughout the state with existing headstart programs.

Representative C. Davis asked if there exists a listing of all places in the state that have headstart programs, including those areas that are not being served.

Co-chair Maclean answered affirmatively that such information would be provided at the next committee meeting. In addition, she stated that it would be beneficial to know in what areas of the state the department was intending to spend the newly awarded headstart funds.

Committee members vowed to pursue the early childhood and parenting education portion of HB 470 next session.

Co-chair Maclean, after some discussion, noted that the Senate had deleted the \$50,000 for the grant fund incentive program in HB 469. However, she clarified that establishment of the grant fund incentive program was still included in the bill but can't be activated this year because it was not funded.

Co-chair Senator Jones stressed that the committee and Dr. Frank Darnell monitor implementation of the programs mandated by HB 469 and HCR 46, and encourage the state agencies to work cooperatively together.

Rep. C. Davis echoed Senator Jones' concern.

Co-chair Maclean asked Darby Anderson if the Department of Education is preparing to implement the provisions of HCR 46.

Ms. Anderson answered that the department has yet to take action to implement HCR 46.

Co-chair Maclean asked that the committee be kept informed as to the progress of coordination between the agencies.

Co-chair Jones suggested that the committee consultant write a letter to the governor asking for immediate action, sending a copy of the letter to all the commissioners, in conjunction with a press release.

Representative C. Davis asked that the committee continue to focus attention on the preschool and headstart type programs, with the idea of ultimately capturing funding to serve all kids that need these programs. She felt that this would be the biggest contribution to improving school performance in Alaska.

Co-chair Maclean pointed out that the Northwest Arctic Borough has no headstart program but funds its own early childhood programs regardless. She stated that some of the villages have requested funds to implement headstart programs.

MARTHA STEWART, aide to Senator Adams, pointed out that in the past, villages have tried to implement early childhood

programs but could not comply with the Department of Environmental Conservation's standards such as washing hands in villages that do not have running water.

Representative C. Davis stated that most of the districts in the state are having trouble continuing early childhood education, as class size increases.

John Anttonen, director, Education Finance and Support Services, Department of Education, discussed the foundation funding formula noting that several bills were introduced during the last legislative session to alter the formula, but only technical changes to the formula were approved. Mr. Anttonen explained the formula as a mechanism to adequately fund education in the state by meeting the fiscal equalization criteria, which allows the state to use approximately \$70 million within the total foundation funding program.

Mr. Anttonen explained the formula as an assessment of basic need calculated by the average daily membership of kids on count days, identified by grade levels or enrollment in special programs, minus the effort that local government contributes to education.

Representative Koponen said that the area cost differential was put into law several years ago and changes in the economic situation throughout the state have skewed the formula as it applies to funding currently.

Mr. Anttonen mentioned that the increased cost and inefficiency of providing education in rural multiple site districts was factored into the funding formula. Therefore rural education attendance areas receive more money because of the lack of local effort due to an inability of these areas to generate revenue through property taxes. In addition, Mr. Anttonen explained that children who attend school on Native lands put back into the foundation formula in the form of federal impact funds, which is a form of local effort.

Mr. Anttonen stated that there are tremendous differences in per child funding. For example, funding ranges from \$20,734 per child on the North Slope to \$5,988 per child in Mat-Su, thus explaining the reason for Mat-Su's pending lawsuit against the state challenging the inequity of the foundation formula.

Representative C. Davis pointed out that on a per child basis the foundation funding formula does not provide equity. She stressed that the problem is that the same formula is used for funding both single and dual site school districts.

Mr. Anttonen discussed the local share element of the formula explaining that as local property value drops the state contributes more money for education and vice versa. He reiterated that funding is altered only if there are per unit attendance or property value changes. He stated that all additional money over the past few years has gone to school districts where property value has depreciated, primarily urban areas. Mr. Anttonen said that in rural areas, property values generally don't change.

Mr. Anttonen explained that most of the areas receiving increases in funding continued to contribute the same or a higher amount of local contribution, even though property in these areas assessed at less value. He concluded, therefore, that larger municipalities in the state have more money overall for education.

Mr. Anttonen raised the question of whether the state should have school districts that are unincorporated and serve few children. He suggested consolidation or shared governance of school districts as an alternative.

Representative Maclean clarified that there is disparity in the required local effort and the area cost differential components of the formula.

Representative Koponen suggested that a formula should be developed excluding uncontrollable costs so it wouldn't have to be changed in statute continually.

Representative C. Davis affirmed that the inequities in the formula need to be addressed in one package, regardless of the amount of money and politics involved.

Mr. Anttonen mentioned that the education association, a group comprised of members of the state school board and teacher's association, has invited the committee to a meeting July 16-17 in Anchorage to discuss issues of school improvement such as the foundation formula, school performance and shared services (governance). He announced that on the second day of the meeting the group would develop recommendations which will potentially manifest into legislation next session.

Mr. Anttonen discussed teacher certification stating that because HB 203 died in committee last session, the department will continue to grant type b vocational/education certificates and letters of authorization, until legislative action changes the definition of teacher to less than a four year degree.

Mr. Anttonen stated that under the provision of HB 282, the Department of Education will be required to make a report to the legislature regarding shared services. He explained

that the department will examine where in the state there could be shared services so the legislature can consider funding regional resource centers for education. However, Mr. Anttonen clarified that he did not see any mandatory action by the Department of Education regarding governance.

DARBY ANDERSON, administrator, Office of Basic Education, Education Program Support, Department of Education, discussed the Alaska studies program resulting from HCR 19, which ensured that the program would be taught to all school districts. She mentioned that a scope and sequence report had been developed to outline what students should learn from kindergarten through twelfth grade in Alaska.

Ms. Anderson explained that the department was developing regulations mandating courses of study in Alaska schools. She noted that there is a process for monitoring the regulations every three years.

Ms. Anderson further explained that the state board of education developed goals, based on the draft included in the school performance report, and distributed this information to households for public review and comment.

After some discussion, the committee decided to hold public meetings on the following dates:

- July 18, 1990 in Anchorage to coincide with the meeting of the education coalition on July 16 - 17 for committee members who would like to attend.
 - September 13, or 14, 1990 in Juneau.
 - October 8 - 9, 1990 in Fairbanks to hold a joint meeting with the state board of education.
- *January 21 session begins and Frank Darnell is to present a report to the legislature.

SCOMM

71:2

New Directives in School Performance:
The Legislature as Advocate and Guarantor



***REPORT OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE
ON
SCHOOL PERFORMANCE***

To The
Seventeenth Alaska Legislature

JUNEAU, ALASKA
JANUARY 1991

**MEMBERS OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE
ON SCHOOL PERFORMANCE**

**Senator Lloyd Jones, Co-Chair
Representative Eileen Panigeo MacLean, Co-Chair**

**Senator Al Adams
Senator Jack Coghill
Senator John Binkley, Ex Officio**

**Representative Cheri Davis
Representative Niilo Koponen
Representative Johnny Ellis, Ex Officio**

Consultant to the Joint Committee

**Dr. Frank Darnell
Emeritus Professor of Education
University of Alaska Fairbanks**

NEW DIRECTIVES IN SCHOOL PERFORMANCE:

THE LEGISLATURE AS ADVOCATE AND GUARANTOR

.....

***REPORT OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE
ON SCHOOL PERFORMANCE***

**TO THE
SEVENTEENTH ALASKA LEGISLATURE**

JUNEAU, ALASKA

JANUARY 1991

Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments.

Compulsory school attendance laws and the great expenditures for education both demonstrate our recognition to the importance of education to our democratic society. It is required in the performance of our most basic public responsibilities, even service in the armed forces.

It is the very foundation of good citizenship. Today it is a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment. In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms.

**SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES
BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION, 1954**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During the course of the work required to carry out the task the legislature entrusted to the Joint Committee on School Performance much assistance and many ideas have been proffered by a broad cross-section of Alaskans. Although it is not practical to list all by name, there are a few groups that should not go unrecognized.

Essential among all who have contributed are the many citizens from all walks of life who, either through formal hearings or casual contact, have made their concerns and suggestions known. As much as any source, it has been the public at large that has brought out the need for the legislature to advocate and guarantee improved school performance.

Among the various groups that have contributed to the work this report summarizes, the following are noted with special thanks: The State Board of Education, The Department of Education, the Alaska Congress of Parents and Teachers, The Alaska Council of School Administrators, the Association of Alaska School Boards, NEA-Alaska, and the University of Alaska.

Graphics for the report were prepared by the Department of Education's Foundation Program Office in the Division of Educational Finance and Support Services and by the Legislative Research Agency.

Finally, thanks are due Dr. Arthur Petersen, Associate Professor, University of Alaska Southeast for his able editorial review of the draft manuscript.

INTRODUCTION

In its enabling legislation, the Joint Committee on School Performance was instructed to identify and recommend those subjects for priority legislative attention that might lead to improved school performance. As herewith reported, the Committee has accomplished this task. However, from the outset of its work, the Committee was beset with a dilemma. Charged with proposing the means to bring about improved levels of education among all pupils of the state, the Committee soon recognized that because of certain circumstances in some areas, some schools consistently have not served students well; under different circumstances elsewhere, however, other schools have helped students perform at acceptable or better than average levels of academic achievement. (Chapter One describes the extent and nature of this disparity.) The general dilemma, in other words, is that there is no single way to approach or describe the work necessary to help all Alaska students improve their academic performance.

This dilemma can be illustrated by some of the differences encountered in the schools: Performance indicators among schools are high in some places and low in others, but the nature of the various schools do not clearly reveal the causes of high and low scores. Still, some causes are clear enough: there are great geographic, economic, historical, and cultural differences among Alaska's fifty-four school districts, making them inherently different. Furthermore, of the problems the Committee identified, not all are of the same level of severity. With no uniform school system or homogeneous school age population, diverse and disparate are the words that best describes Alaska's school system. Consequently, the Committee has designed its recommendations to address

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Essential among all who have contributed are the many citizens from all walks of life who, either through formal hearings or casual contact, have made their concerns and suggestions known. As much as any source, it has been the public at large that has brought out the need for the legislature to advocate and guarantee improved school performance.

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This dilemma can be illustrated by some of the differences encountered in the schools: Performance indicators among schools are high in some places and low in others, but the nature of the various schools do not clearly reveal the causes of high and low scores. Still, some causes are clear enough: there are great geographic, economic, historical, and cultural differences among Alaska's fifty-four school districts, making them inherently different. Furthermore, of the problems the Committee identified, not all are of the same level of severity. With no uniform school system or homogeneous school age population, diverse and disparate are the words that best describes Alaska's school system. Consequently, the Committee has designed its recommendations to address

Alaska's differences in general, but with greater emphasis on issues affecting those students with the greatest needs because their needs are so dramatically significant. These are the students often referred to as being "at risk"--the students who will not complete twelve years of adequate schooling or who will be unable to realize their intellectual or social potential, regardless of the number of years completed.

Much of the current debate about the ways to improve school performance stems from action taken by the legislature when it mandated statewide standardized testing of Alaska's students three years ago. Although sometimes used to compare one district with another or levels of teacher competency, the testing program was not intended to be applied that way. Standardized achievement tests are analytical tools that may be used to identify what specific areas of knowledge and/or learning processes need greater effort or reiteration for a given child, class, or school. When ordered by the legislature, the primary purpose of standardized tests was seen as a way to establish performance benchmarks on an intra district basis so that increases or decreases in the scores of individual schools could be monitored from within each district. In this way it would be known at the local level when to take measures to encourage, support, and expand programs when they are found to be successful and when to take corrective measures when they are not.

This purpose notwithstanding, the ensuing debate over the reliability of national standardized tests as measures of student achievement, especially as applied to Alaska's multicultural population, has not gone unnoticed by the Joint Committee. Use of nationally normed, standardized tests is only one of several ways to measure school performance. As recently declared by the National Commission on Testing and Public Policy,

Test Scores are imperfect measures and should not be used alone to make important decisions about individuals, groups, or institutions; in the allocation of opportunities, individuals' past performance and relevant experience must be considered. The more test scores disproportionately deny opportunities to minorities, the greater the need to show that the tests measure characteristics relevant to the opportunities being allocated.²

Regardless of how well standardized tests are perceived as an accurate measure of today's school performance, it has been noted by the Joint Committee, as it was by the Special Senate Committee on School Performance, that there has been a general loss of public confidence in many aspects of schooling today. The 1990 National Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools revealed that not many people believe the current wave of school reform has been successful. And when asked the question, "What grade would you give the public schools nationally...?" only 21 % said "A" or "B," and of these only 2 % said "A."³ Judging by the tone of lay and professional testimony heard by the Committee, an exclusively Alaskan poll would not reveal a more positive attitude.

In the first report of the Committee, "Excellence in School Performance: The Role of the Legislature" (attached as appendix A), there is a section on the role of the legislature in improving school performance, thus the title of that report. There the unmistakable responsibility of the legislature for the ultimate state of the education of Alaskans is stressed. There also, the goals of the Joint Committee and its first six recommendations are described in detail. "New Directives in School Performance: The Legislature as Advocate and Guarantor"—the title of this second and final report of the Joint Committee on School Performance is intended to convey, in a general sense, a notion of the work that now should follow.

In this report the words "advocate" and "guarantor" in the title qualify the nature of the legislature's responsibility. The constitutional mandate to "establish and maintain a system of public schools open to all the children of the State..." falls upon members of the legislature; they have the responsibility to advocate educational opportunity on behalf of the children of their constituents. Furthermore, as stewards of the public's funds, legislators have the authority and responsibility to guarantee an equitable system of allocating funds sufficient to carry out the programs that legislators advocate, so that every child in Alaska can develop to their fullest potential.

However, because of the complexity and the massiveness of the education enterprise, there is much in the process of maintaining a system of public schools that is beyond the range of the legislature and boards of education. Although that operation must be guided by policies promulgated by the legislature, the state board of education, and local boards, each with their own measure of authority, the everyday operation of schools must be left to teachers and administrators. With this concept in mind and recognizing that not all school districts have the same needs, the Committee has been careful to limit its deliberations and recommendations to broad policy issues, leaving to the professional community the responsibility for determining the means to carry them out.

The Joint Committee was established on the grounds that there is widespread public concern for the condition of school performance in Alaska. Since the Committee was activated in August, 1989, arguments advanced for its creation and the need for the legislature to assert itself in public schooling have become even more persuasive. The overall level of educational achievement of many Alaska students as measured on standardized tests and other school performance indicators is simply unacceptable. Reports of school performance indicators for 1990 show continuing decline

from previous years. If Alaska is expected to prosper in the future this trend must be reversed. Accordingly, it is with a sense of urgency that this report is submitted for consideration by the Seventeenth Alaska State Legislature.

CHAPTER ONE

THE COMMITTEE'S FIRST REPORT REVIEWED:

OUTCOMES AND CONCEPTS CARRIED FORWARD

Ultimate responsibility for schooling in Alaska resides in the legislature, a given that was emphasized and described in the opening chapter of the Joint Committee's first report. This responsibility needed emphasizing because legislation several years ago set the tone for concentrated control of education at the local district and REAA level. The result has been to detach involvement of government at the state level. It became clear, however, that the problems of inadequate school performance could not be delegated entirely to local authorities nor ignored by the legislature. This perception led to the publication of the Department of Education's "Basic Skills Performance of Alaska's Students" in 1988 and the Senate's "Helping Schools Succeed at Helping All Children Learn" in early 1989. It became the responsibility of the Joint Committee on School Performance to identify problem areas and recommend measures that would adjust the balance in local-state authority as well as to propose alternative means that might lead to improved school performance. Thus, with publication of the Joint Committee's first report, a more active legislative presence in school performance reform through both oversight and initiative was affirmed.

At the beginning of the last session, three bills that addressed five of the six recommendations made by the Joint Committee in the first report were introduced. Of the five recommendations contained in these bills, four were favorably acted

on, three in their entirety and one partially. A sixth recommendation concerned increasing an appropriation for early childhood education, already under consideration by the legislature. The appropriation was increased markedly, although not to the full extent requested, through a letter from the Joint Committee to the finance committees of both houses. Looked at collectively, the first report enjoyed strong support which is generally believed to be having a positive influence on school performance.

SCHOOL DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY

The most substantial legislation introduced by the Joint Committee last year and enacted by the legislature was HB 469, now codified as Chapter 173. Titled "An Act establishing a state education policy: relating to powers and duties of school districts, the Department of Education, and the State Board of Education with respect to education planning, grants for the improvement of school performance, etc.," it addresses purposes and goals of schooling, school district accountability, and incentives to overcome schooling deficiencies. A survey of the agencies that have been responsible for schooling over the years reveals that there have been many statements on the purposes and goals of education. Church missions (under contract to the U.S. Department of Interior), the U.S. Bureau of Education, the Territorial Department of Education, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the State Department of Education, the Alaska State Operated School System, the Alaska Unorganized Borough School District, the numerous independent, city, and borough school districts, and the Regional Education Attendance Areas (REAs) all declared goals, often banal, for the education of Alaskans. But now, for the first time, there is a statement that defines the purposes of schooling at the legislative level. Chapter 173 declares:

It is the policy of this state that the purpose of education is to help ensure that all students will succeed in their education and work, shape worthwhile and satisfying lives for themselves, exemplify the best values of society, and be effective in improving the character and quality of the world about them.

It would be difficult to rewrite this statement in broader or more flexible language. It is the antithesis of the policies of the federal and territorial government of fifty years ago that called for a uniform and rigidly specific curriculum for all schools alike, regardless of cultural and linguistic considerations necessary for sound schooling practices.

In addition to characterizing statewide purposes of education, the new statute also mandates that the State Board of Education set in regulation a list of expected outcomes of education. This the State Board did on October 19, 1990. The Board's "outcomes of schooling" identify societal needs, at both state and community levels, that only an educated populace can fulfill. The Board has specified that each student graduating from public school will communicate effectively, think logically and critically, discover and nurture creative talents, master technological skills, be a responsive citizen, be committed to health and fitness, accept personal responsibility for sustaining oneself economically, and have positive self-esteem. (The complete regulation, containing several subareas, is attached as Appendix B.)

Furthermore, Chapter 173 requires

1. That school districts:

establish district goals and priorities for improving student performance.

include a plan for achieving district goals and priorities.

include means to measure the achievement of district goals and priorities.

encourage students, parents, teachers, and other members of the community to participate in the preparation of the report.

annually file an education planning report with the Department of Education and make it available to the public.

2. That an annual school district "report card" shall:

be developed by the State Board of Education in consultation with appropriate representatives from the education profession, local school boards, and citizens at large.

account for the school's and students' performance for that year.

be presented to parents, students, and community members at a public meeting.

be forwarded to the Commissioner of Education.

3. That the report shall contain, but is not limited to

the percentage of students in the top and bottom quarter of national achievement examinations.

the percent of students who are promoted to the next grade.

the comments of students, parents, and community members on school performance.

the annual percentage of change in enrollment and the percentage of enrollment change due to student transfers.

the ways in which meaningful parent involvement in schools was achieved.

the extent to which State Board of Education outcomes of schooling have been achieved.

other indicators of school performance selected by the district.

4. That the Department of Education shall:

prepare a summary of district report cards in a manner that allows school performance to be measured against state and district goals established in prior years.

submit its report to the public, the legislature, and the public at large.

Several parts of the act require the participation of parents and teachers in school planning. The act responds to the oft-repeated position of many who have testified at the community level: namely that there is a need to empower parents, teachers, and principals to make programmatic decisions in a more substantial way than in the past.

Compliance with the statute is proceeding on schedule. The Department of Education has developed (in cooperation with local community groups, school boards, and school administrators) a time table to put the school district "report card" plan into effect. The Alaska Coalition for Education, consisting of the state's major education, professional, and lay groups, including the State Board of Education, has made compliance with the new "accountability" law its first priority.

In short, the state now requires by statute that districts provide (1) programs that fulfill the needs of society at large, (2) outcomes of schooling that satisfy the broad needs of individuals as stipulated through State Board regulation, and (3) programs that encourage accommodation of needs peculiar to each Alaska community due to its unique cultural and economic circumstances.

**INCENTIVE GRANTS: A MODEST SOLUTION TO
PROBLEMS OF "STUDENTS AT RISK"**

The incentive grant program, as recommended in the Joint Committee's first report, now established in Chapter 173, came to be known as the Fund for the Improvement of School Performance. Creation of the Fund is intended to restore confidence in the potential of parent groups, teachers, and principals to make a positive difference in school performance. In short, the Fund encourages parent and teacher empowerment; it sends the message that those working at the top of the political pyramid care and are trying to do something positive about poor student performance. It is unique in that it is not categorically specific and that it allows teachers and lay members of the community equal standing as applicants. The primary criterion by which applications are to be judged is whether the proposed activity can be shown to have the potential to improve schooling.

Reasons in the first report for supporting the Fund remain as valid now, if not more so, as they did a year ago. For example, in a Department of Education report to the legislature in January, 1990, it was shown that the number of pupils that the schools were not serving adequately had continued to increase, alarmingly so among some segments of the population. In its report to the legislature in January, 1990, DOE pointed out that

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

An estimated 30% of freshmen entering Alaska's high schools do not graduate. In urban areas, in excess of 60% of Native freshmen do not graduate.

Twenty of Alaska's 54 school districts scored on average below the 22nd percentile in either reading, mathematics, or language arts at the 4th, 6th, or 8th grade [on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills used in

Alaska's statewide standardized testing program]. A score at the 22nd percentile means that 78 percent of other students across the country scored higher on the test.... [See the Committee's first report for a discussion of the reliability of standardized tests, pages 26 - 28].

Total school population in the twenty [lowest achieving] districts is 12,783.

Average percent of students living in poverty in these districts is 56% as opposed to a statewide average of 21.8%....

Sixteen of the districts report an above average level of bilingual students ranging from 23.5% to 100% enrolled in bilingual education programs....⁴

Because up to one third of Alaska's school age population, approximately 36,000 students, fits one of the various definitions of "students at risk," the group that the fund is primarily intended to benefit, the Committee and the State Board of Education had urged that no less than \$3,000,000 be appropriated annually to this fund over the next five years. This amount represents approximately a modest \$100 per Alaska "at risk" student per year, if prorated uniformly. Put another way, \$3,000,000 is less than half of one percent of the total state appropriation for education annually.

Unfortunately, the appropriation part of the Joint Committee's recommendation was not enacted. Although \$100,000 survived the budget process until the final week of the session, even that was cut from the allotment at the close of the Sixteenth Legislature. Thus, the Fund was created in name but not in fact. This status reinforces the perception in the minds of many that the legislature does not take seriously the fact that extraordinary measures will have to be taken to eliminate the unacceptable outcomes of schooling among low achieving districts.

Not only statistics and DOE reports substantiate the need for the Fund. Testimony heard throughout the state calls for measures to reverse the ever-declining quality of learning among "at risk" students and to increase the number of students who complete the twelfth grade. Moreover, testimony bears out the premise that it can be shown that the less "programmatic direction" given to the schools from central administrative units, the more teachers and local community groups are likely to improve school performance when given the proper resources.

The Fund for the Improvement of School Performance was specifically designed with this principle in mind as the language of the legislation passed by the Sixteenth Legislature makes clear. Part (b) of the act provides "that a governing body, district advisory board or nonprofit organization located in the state, or a teacher or principal employed by a school in the state, may apply for a grant to improve school performance by submitting an application to the commissioner." Without funds to accommodate this section of the statute, it serves no purpose. Pupils in need of the creative thinking of teachers and residents at the community level are denied the opportunity that is expected to accrue by means of the Fund. Therefore, as was proposed in its first report:

the Joint Committee recommends that no less than \$3,000,000 be appropriated annually to the Fund for the Improvement of School Performance over the next five years.

HEALTH AND FAMILY SERVICE PROGRAMS RELATED TO SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

A conclusion reached by the Joint Committee in 1989 and stated in its first report declared: "It may be that there are no root

causes of inadequate school performance greater than environmental and social handicaps, especially those that are the result of chronic poverty." Evidence in support of this contention led to the recommendation that the legislature establish a permanent inter-agency coordinating committee that would be required to identify the most critical social and health barriers to learning, establish plans to overcome them, be responsible for their implementation, and issue annual reports on activities and programs. House Concurrent Resolution 46, introduced by the Committee and passed by the legislature, does just that. Plans are now being put into effect through the Office of the Governor in compliance with the Resolution. Consisting of representatives of the *Departments of Education, Health and Social Services, Community and Regional Affairs, and Labor* and a dean from the University of Alaska who is responsible for teacher training, selected by the Governor, the inter-agency group's first report is awaited.

To underscore the sense of importance the Committee gives to this subject, it recommends:

that a resolution calling for better coordinated services among the departments of social services and health, labor, community and regional affairs, and education, similar to the resolution calling for this effort passed by the 16th Legislature, be enacted by the 17th Legislature.

**LONG TERM AND IMMEDIATE NEEDS FOR STATE
SUPPORTED AND COORDINATED EARLY CHILDHOOD
AND PARENTING EDUCATION**

Convinced from testimony and school visits, especially in village Alaska, that more must be done in the field of early childhood and parenting education if school performance is to be improved, the Committee repeats its opening line from the section on early childhood education in its first report. [Fundamental] "causes that deny children the means or motivation necessary to succeed at schooling ... are inadequate or insufficient early childhood and parenting education programs."

Although the Legislature has not been unresponsive to needs for increased early childhood programs, as demonstrated by last year's substantial increase in funds, much remains to be done. The state's appropriation rose from the governor's requested increase of \$1,000,000 to \$5,000,000 after the Joint Committee recommended an annual increase of \$10,000,000. However, that increase should be considered just the initial increment. As the Department of Community and Regional Affairs develops the capability to utilize increased funds and the Department of Education takes a more substantial leadership role in the pedagogy of early childhood and parenting education, additional funds are certain to be required.

Increased appropriations notwithstanding, the means to resolve issues in early childhood education still dodge the legislature. There are differences in opinion about the extent to which there should be parental participation in learning activities, differences in teaching philosophies, and differences in staff qualifications and staffing patterns, all of which have a direct bearing on differences in quality and costs in early childhood and preschool education. Specific issues identified in the first report that still need to be resolved include: 1) the historical rift between the educational

child development and custodial models of early childhood education; 2) the historical conflicts between elementary school and early childhood education over purposes, methods, and control; and 3) the tradeoffs necessary between the costs and quality of early childhood education.⁵

All but the first of the following policy questions, relating to these issues, posed by the Committee in its first report and introduced in the Sixteenth Legislature in HB 470, (attached as Appendix C), remain unanswered: Which children shall be served? How long should early childhood education programs operate? What level of funding should be provided and how should state and local revenue and parent fees be used? What types of funding mechanisms should be provided for administering early childhood education programs? What types of program controls should be instituted? What types of teacher preparation and certification should be required? And what type of curriculum is necessary to meet the linguistic, developmental, and cultural needs of an early childhood education program. The answer to the first question (what children should be served?) is simple and direct. The Joint Committee has concluded that all children are able to benefit from early childhood and parenting programs. Thus every child should be given the opportunity to participate in an early childhood program.

On November 3, 1990, President Bush signed bills to expand the Head Start pre-school program, ostensibly to fund the program fully so that all eligible children will be able to participate. The new legislation authorizes \$2.4 billion for Head Start in 1991, rising to \$7.7 billion in 1994. This amount represents a 553 % increase compared to the 1990 appropriation of \$1.39 billion. It is still uncertain how much impact additional federal money will have on Alaska's Head Start program, but even if it is appreciable, there will remain a large number of individuals in need of early childhood

education who do not come under the definition of a federal Head Start participant. This development at the federal level, however, clearly authenticates the need to have the questions posed above definitively answered.

No program has contributed to improved school performance over the past twenty-five years more than Head Start, in Alaska as elsewhere in the country. Much of the reason for its success has been attributed to substantial involvement of parents in the program, a practice the Joint Committee unreservedly endorses as more early childhood and parenting programs are developed in Alaska.

HB 470 passed the House with little opposition, but it stalled in committee in the Senate during the final hours of the Sixteenth Legislature. The Joint Committee is convinced that expanded programs in early childhood and parenting education are essential if school performance is to be improved. Therefore, as was stated in the Committee's first report *it is recommended* :

that the legislature, by resolution, establish a Committee to address the issues and questions on early childhood education that pertain to the education of Alaska's young children, with particular attention given to those children with environmental handicaps. Included among the Committee's responsibility shall be the development of a plan for a statewide program of early childhood education and preparation of a report on its findings with recommendations to the legislature no later than May, 1992.

The opening paragraph of this report referred to the problem of how to cope with the disparate level of school performance found throughout the state. It is this wide gap between student achievement levels in various locations that suggests a critical need

exists for school reform in some of the most fundamental elements of Alaska's systems of education. Since the first report of the Joint Committee was published, results of the 1989 testing program have been made public. The gap between pupils who are succeeding and those who are not has widened even more over previous years, indicating the problem worsens. An extensive feature article on this condition by Larry Campbell in the Anchorage Daily News on May 6, 1990, draws stark attention to the differences between regions of the state. In the article, Campbell points out:

In the Interior towns of Healy, Anderson and Cantwell are three tiny schools that scored higher on national achievement tests this academic year than any other schools in Alaska, and higher than 70 percent of the schools in America. Their parents make good money at the coal mine in Healy or the Air Force station at Clear, and most have high school diplomas.

In western Alaska, along the Kuskokwim River, the Yupiit School District also serves three small towns. Like the Railbelt district, it has between 300 and 350 students. But the students are all Yupik Eskimo. Hunting and gathering are the mainstays of life. Parents work sporadically, and only a third have high school diplomas.

And Yupiit Schools ranked the lowest of all school districts in the state this school year, 4.55 on the percentile scale, which ranges from 0 to 99....

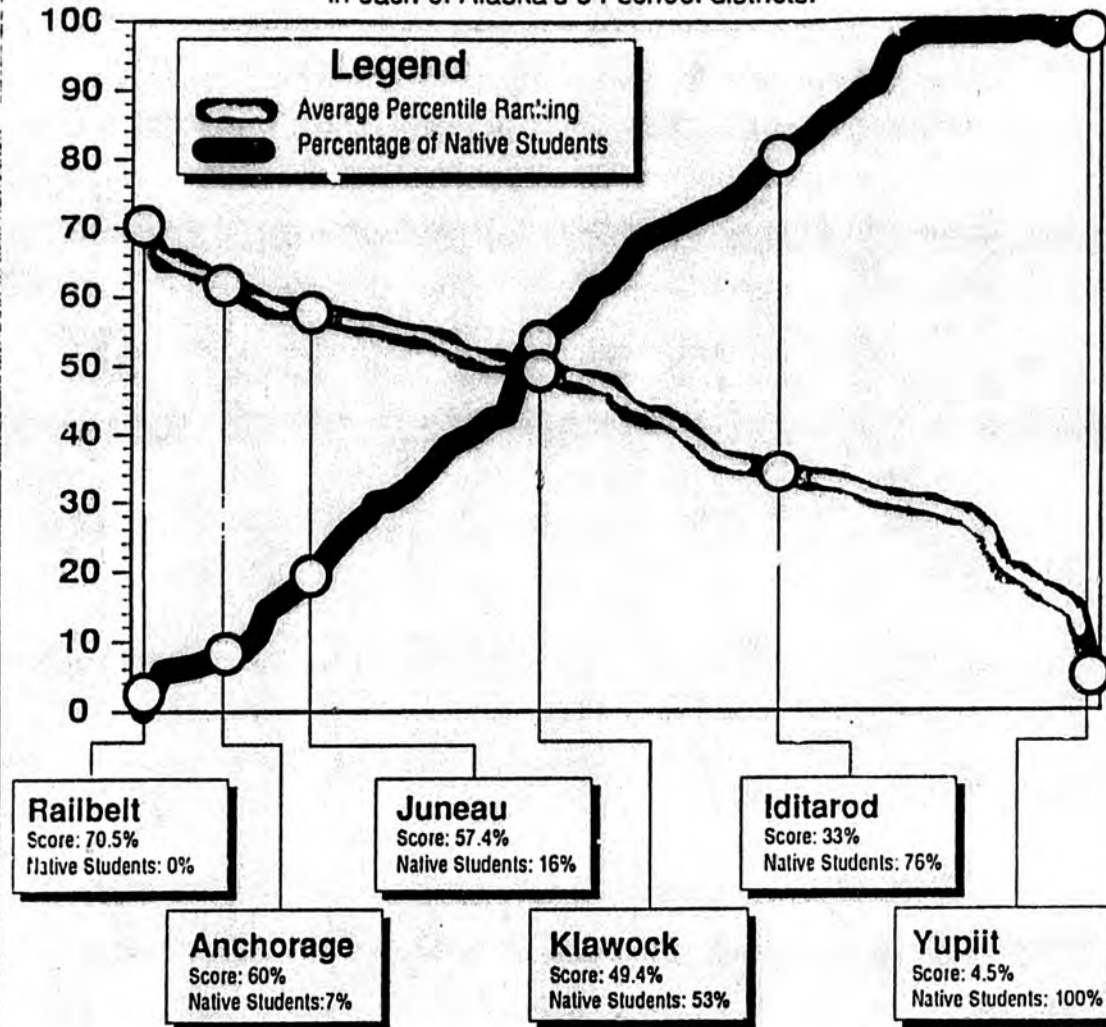
Overall, Alaska's youngsters scored just above the national average, from the 50th to the 56th percentile, meaning they did better than about half the nation's students. That's about where Anchorage fell, ranking in the 60th percentile.

But the averages mask dramatic extremes of academic achievement in Alaska, as demonstrated by stark contrasts between the Railbelt and Yupiit districts. Especially for the state's poorer, predominantly Native schools, the scores

FIGURE 1

Test Scores vs. Percent of Native Students

Comparing Iowa Test Scores to the percentage of Natives in 4th, 6th and 8th grades in each of Alaska's 54 school districts.



• **WHO WAS SURVEYED:** 24,725 Alaska students – 9,010 fourth graders, 8,143 sixth graders and 7,572 eighth graders.

• **WHAT THE SCORES MEAN:** Percentile figures indicate where districts rank in relation to the national average, or the 50th percentile. A district score of 4.5 percent, for instance, would indicate that only 4.5 percent of the nation's students did worse. Overall, Alaska youngsters scored just above the national average, from the 50th to the 56th percentile, meaning they did better than about half the nation's students.

TABLE 1

Anchorage Daily News

Sunday, May 6, 1990

A11

Ways of life influence students' rank

PROFILE OF ALASKA'S 54 SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Including Iowa Basic Test Score Results, October 1989

District	Students	Percentile*	\$ Per Student	% Native Students	Students per Teacher	% Budget Towards Instruction
Adak Region School	658	54.2%	\$4,425	0.0%	17.3	59%
Alaska Gateway Schools (Tok)	463	53.3%	\$5,841	47.7%	15.5	51%
Aleutian Regional Schools	111	41.0%	\$9,987	87.5%	15.8	48%
Aleutians East Borough Schools (Sand Point)	180	42.4%	\$8,969	74.6%	6.8	56%
Anchorage Schools	38,685	60.0%	\$3,152	7.3%	19.3	50%
Annette Island Schools (Metlakatla)	429	32.9%	\$4,428	92.8%	11.4	49%
Bering Strait Schools (Unalakleet)	1,250	31.2%	\$6,915	96.7%	10.8	47%
Bristol Bay Borough Schools (Naknek)	249	58.3%	\$5,560	43.8%	12.4	51%
Chatham Schools (Angoon)	307	47.0%	\$6,713	48.1%	10.4	58%
Chugach Schools	98	38.4%	\$7,045	56.6%	9.4	46%
Copper River Schools (Glenallen)	597	65.3%	\$5,088	18.3%	13.3	54%
Cordova City Schools	428	65.3%	\$4,201	19.2%	13.0	58%
Craig City Schools	218	48.8%	\$4,175	16.9%	16.6	59%
Delta/Grady Schools	895	63.0%	\$3,372	3.2%	15.8	52%
Dillingham City Schools	460	43.7%	\$4,373	71.8%	14.1	58%
Fairbanks North Star Borough Schools	13,189	63.7%	\$3,632	8.5%	16.5	63%
Galena City Schools	147	32.3%	\$6,537	87.0%	7.2	45%
Haines Borough Schools	363	58.4%	\$4,731	14.7%	13.7	60%
Hoonah City Schools	251	35.4%	\$4,219	54.6%	13.7	55%
Hydaburg City Schools	106	27.8%	\$4,827	94.7%	9.1	45%
Iditarod Area Schools (McGrath)	399	33.0%	\$7,907	75.7%	12.7	53%
Juneau Borough Schools	4,589	57.4%	\$3,717	16.3%	17.8	64%
Kake City Schools	181	34.2%	\$4,989	77.5%	10.1	60%
Kashunamiut Schools (Chevak)	165	14.3%	\$5,593	100.0%	9.9	44%
Kenai Peninsula Borough Schools	8,232	55.9%	\$3,791	8.5%	15.8	58%
Ketchikan Gateway Borough Schools	2,480	50.8%	\$3,830	21.1%	17.8	62%
Klawock City Schools	185	49.4%	\$4,684	52.8%	12.4	49%
Kodiak Island Borough Schools	2,273	51.2%	\$3,891	20.4%	16.4	50%
Kuspuk Schools (Aniak)	392	30.2%	\$8,737	82.7%	9.3	57%
Lake and Peninsula Schools (King Salmon)	357	35.1%	\$8,104	78.5%	7.5	48%
Lower Kuskokwim Schools (Bethel)	2,638	19.6%	\$7,338	87.8%	12.4	54%
Lower Yukon Schools (Mountain Village)	1,286	17.0%	\$6,395	98.3%	11.4	47%
Matanuska-Susitna Borough Schools	8,431	58.9%	\$3,226	5.0%	18.6	61%
Nenana City Schools	195	50.7%	\$5,363	23.4%	12.2	56%
Nome City Schools	749	42.4%	\$4,142	63.0%	16.1	54%
North Slope Borough Schools	1,237	29.2%	\$9,307	88.3%	11.7	42%
Northwest Arctic Borough Schools (Kotzebue)	1,614	25.3%	\$4,825	93.4%	14.4	45%
Pelican City Schools	43	35.8%	\$7,780	59.0%	10.3	56%
Petersburg City Schools	658	64.2%	\$3,611	13.6%	16.7	61%
Pribilof Schools	149	30.0%	\$8,003	100%	11.1	40%
Railbelt Schools (Healy)	337	70.5%	\$4,926	0.0%	12.5	54%
Saint Mary's Schools	111	29.2%	\$7,663	95.8%	10.0	43%
Sitka Schools	1,658	54.0%	\$3,664	25.2%	18.1	66%
Skagway City Schools	144	58.3%	\$4,719	3.0%	12.1	55%
Southeast Island Schools (Ketchikan)	517	54.6%	\$7,898	2.9%	10.6	72%
Southwest Region Schools (Dillingham)	466	19.1%	\$7,688	97.0%	12.3	47%
Tanana City Schools	94	33.9%	\$6,650	94.1%	10.0	44%
Unalaska City Schools	188	47.7%	\$5,338	22.9%	12.9	54%
Valdez City Schools	686	68.4%	\$5,638	3.5%	14.4	54%
Wrangell City Schools	518	47.7%	\$4,674	27.9%	13.6	65%
Yakutat City Schools	131	49.4%	\$5,244	63.1%	9.3	52%
Yukon Flats Schools (Fort Yukon)	338	18.0%	\$9,184	85.8%	10.6	51%
Yukon-Koyukuk Schools (Nenana)	509	28.0%	\$8,210	88.0%	10.2	55%
Yupik Schools (Akiachak)	307	4.6%	\$8,223	100%	10.5	38%

Source: Alaska Department of Education

* Percentile Ranking Determined by Iowa Basic Test score.

(Towns in parentheses are district headquarters) LEN FRAZIER / Anchorage Daily News

turned out low, some very low [Table 1 and Figure 1].

That's because those districts have everything needed to produce low test scores: poverty, low levels of education among parents, and traditions vastly different from those of the white, urban culture for which American school systems, teaching methods and texts were designed.⁶

It needs to be emphasized at this point that to avoid erroneous conclusions, use of graphs and tables such as those illustrated here are to be looked at with utmost caution. cursory examination of complex data can lead to unwarranted opinions, attitudes, convictions, and negative stereotyping. Certainly results of Alaska's achievement testing program are not to be construed as statements about the level of ability of any one segment of the population, be it by geographic region, gender, or ethnicity. Nor, as pointed out above, are statistics obtained from the state's testing program to be used to compare one district with another in preferential rank order of performance. The Joint Committee is convinced that "all children can learn," given the proper circumstances and support.

Compounding the problem of unequal school performance among districts, for whatever reason, is the reality that in recent years society in general and the role of schools in particular are changing at an unprecedented rate. As noted by A. Harry Passow, Distinguished Professor of Education at Teachers College, Columbia University:

[In America] There have been profound changes in the students, the families and communities from which they come, and the schools they attend. In the schools, the changes involve authority, power, and interpersonal and professional relationships, as well as the instructional processes, resources, and climate.... Both adversarial and cooperative relationships between students and faculty, faculty

and administration, schools and parents/communities have increased.⁷

This observation also accurately describes the current situation throughout rural and urban Alaska. It is clear that there is a need for statutes that restate education policy so that it is consistent with the means to overcome shortcomings in schooling due to trends in a changing society and the education profession as well as legislation that accommodates Alaska's immense diversity. In this way, negative extremes in the bimodal curve illustrated in the graph above may be reduced and the dilemma they reflect eliminated. There is a need for many new programs to improve the likelihood of success for those students labeled "at risk." The Fund for the Improvement of Education, better coordinated social, welfare, and health services, and enhanced and expanded early childhood are only the first steps of many that should follow.

Appropriately, the first report concluded with a quote from the book Excellence in Education: The States Take Charge: "Just as the opportunities for genuine and lasting reform have never been greater, so too have the dangers of failure never been more stark..."⁸ Certainly this statement holds true in Alaska, even more so today than when the Joint Committee's first report was issued a year ago. In the Chapters that follow, additional recommendations have been set forth as a result of the Joint Committee's deliberations. Implementation of these recommendations alongside those of the first report is a necessary precondition to lasting improvement in school performance.