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REAA

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UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA

FAIRBANKS, ALASKA 99701

November 3, 1977

Representative Charles H. Parr  
Chairman, Legislature Standing Committee  
on Health, Education and Social Services  
6.5 Chena Hot Springs Road  
Star Route, Box 50559  
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701

Dear Representative Parr:

This letter is to invite you to attend an all-day seminar sponsored by the Center for Northern Educational Research on the topic: A Report on the REAAs After One Year. The seminar will be held on the Fairbanks campus of the University on Friday, November 18 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and will include a luncheon.

As you are aware, CNER is developing a report on this topic. The purposes of the seminar are directly related to the report:

- (1) To review the report in progress, including drafts of chapters contributed by those outside of CNER, and to give the contributing authors the opportunity to interact with each other;
- (2) To relate findings to SB 35 legislation and its implementation, and to discuss whether additional or revised legislation is necessary; and
- (3) On the basis of the report, identify issues in need of further policy study, evaluation and research.

The seminar will be recorded and a selected, edited version of the discussions will be included in the report.

I plan to send participants as much of the report in draft form as will be available by November 10, so you will have time to review it before attending the seminar. Contributing authors will have an opportunity after November 18 to review their papers to take into account ideas and suggestions from the meeting.

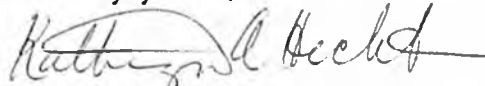
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November 3, 1977

Please return the enclosed sheet today, so I can estimate how many will be attending. I will wait to send out the draft material until I have heard from you. The number invited is small, so I hope you can come.

I look forward to seeing you November 18 as I am sure you have a substantial contribution to make to the seminar.

Sincerely yours,



Kathryn A. Hecht, Ed.D.  
Associate Professor  
Center for Northern  
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KAh; ds

Enclosures

J. Alter

## A TEACHER PERSPECTIVE OF DECENTRALIZATION

One of the striking facts about education in Rural Educational Attendance Areas (REAA) is that teacher turnover is high. Although complete information is not yet available for school year 1977-78 a check on about half of the teachers in REAA's last year revealed that teacher turnover between the 1976-77 and 1977-78 school years was approximately 40%. Out of every 100 REAA teachers 40 did not return to their school district. This contrasts with roughly a 20% turnover in independent, rural school districts and about a 10% annual turnover in the old State-Operated rural schools (SOS).

Quality education demands that questions such as: "Why are teachers leaving REAA's in such large numbers?" and "What can be done to slow and, hopefully, stop this exodus?" be asked. Some of the answers can possibly be found by examining the change in rural education from the teachers' perspective. As the person who directly and regularly represents the REAA's to the students and their parents, the teacher has a unique vantage point. He/She experiences, on a daily basis, the effects of the decentralization of SOS. Furthermore, that experience is the result of input from several directions: namely, the REAA board, the administration, the parents, and the students.

Of course the input and resultant perspective is neither uniform nor obvious. That is virtually impossible with roughly 700 teachers in the 21 REAA's that evolved from SOS. Those teachers are spread over the 19° of latitude and 48° of longitude that include Alaska. They teach in schools that range in size from one teacher to 47. The situations in which they teach vary widely as do their attitudes

and feelings about teaching in rural Alaska.

Thus, any proposed teacher perspective will certainly not be true of every REAA, every rural school, or each teacher. Instead, it will be both speculative and somehow general, as is what follows. The basis for these specific conjectures is conversations that have taken place as REAA teachers have worked to cope with the new school systems in which they work.

Over the past year and a half teachers seem to have become a favorite scapegoat. Politically motivated REAA board members seem to believe that it is fitting and proper to publicly criticize teachers, whether deserved or not. As an illustrative example consider the REAA board that was plagued with erratic attendance that continually threatened the maintenance of a quorum, even after all board members were in town for a meeting. Last spring, rather than dealing with this issue, the board chair launched an attack on the region's teachers, charging them with erratic attendance at school. However, when his allegation was challenged, he could cite no instances. Nevertheless, he persisted in his attack.

Although in the past such demagoguery was blindly accepted as the truth by gullible outsiders, today's teachers know better. So do superintendents and statewide organizations such as the school board association. Yet, they continue to encourage boards to engage in this sham, apparently for self-serving purposes. A common ruse is to characterize teachers as the REAA "rip-off" artists. Their salaries are said to be exorbitantly high and skyrocketing. However, their salaries are, on the whole, lower than those of teachers in other districts and have risen no faster than the cost of living. The employees whose salaries are higher than their

neighbors' and skyrocketing (a 40% increase since the 1975-76 school year) -- the superintendents -- rarely receive any criticism.

Just as they can no longer accept hypocrisy like that mentioned above, neither can teachers accept a board's claim of innocence. Rather, they see demagoguery stemming from irresponsibility, if not calculated deception. To teachers, board members who have failed to actively participate in their meetings, find out the facts of a situation, and exercise independent judgement have behaved irresponsibly. In response to this, teachers have left the REAA's.

Teachers have also left because of the burgeoning central bureaucracies with which they must deal. Often times the new bureaucracies seem even more top-heavy and unresponsive than the SOS's was in Anchorage. A typical frustration was that of a teacher who sought an explanation of three different REAA policies/procedures -- including teacher evaluation -- from the superintendent. For each of the three he was told that although each of the policies/procedures did exist in written form he must see a different person in the district office. None of the three was in the office that day. Thus, the teacher left a written request for the information desired and ultimately got one of the three.

The increase in REAA-central-office personnel and budgets between the 1975-76 school year and this one supports teacher perceptions of a rapidly expanding central bureaucracy. REAA's employ 75% more central office administrators and spend almost 50% more money for central offices than SOS did.

The administrative bureaucracy developing within REAA's has been especially difficult for teachers to cope with not only because of its size but also because of its incompetence. Seemingly, super-

intendents and top administrators were hired not on the basis of their skill and background but, instead, because they were available when the REAA's were formed. Of the 21 new superintendents last year, 16 came from SOS and three more from within Alaska. This year all but 2 of last year's superintendents still hold those positions. This differs significantly from other Alaskan districts where, over the past few years, superintendent turnover has ranged from 20 to 30%.

Those hiring new administrators seem to be abrogating their responsibilities to thoroughly screen these applicants. Otherwise, administrators nonretained by one district wouldn't be immediately hired by another. Typical of several instances of this type is the case of the building principal who failed miserably in a village of about 500. Because he couldn't work with his staff and was a social isolate in the village, the regional board nonretained him. Yet, during the summer this person was hired by another REAA to be its assistant superintendent for curriculum development.

Often the typical REAA administrator has gained his/her position "instantly". He/She has had neither extensive teaching experience nor adequate training in how to skillfully administer schools. This quickly becomes obvious to teachers in the general area of personnel relations. Frequently there is no administrative attempt to be honest, direct, straightforward, or sincere. Consider, as illustrations: the assistant superintendent who lies to new teachers he is recruiting from "outside" about the housing conditions in a village with neither running water nor sewage; the superintendent who never discusses concerns with a village teacher while visiting the village but, instead, relies exclusively on written memos mailed

later; the principal who polls a faculty on which option to follow and, after announcing the poll results, unilaterally selects an option that received no support; or the superintendent who fines teachers who notify him as early as April that they will not return the following September.

Another obvious area of administrative deficiency and attendant teacher frustration and dissatisfaction centers around an REAA's response to teachers as an organized group. More often than not administrators lack even a rudimentary understanding of employer-employee relations. As a result high levels of animosity and polarization have developed over activities such as teacher negotiations. During last year 12 of the 21 REAA's had serious breakdowns in teacher contract negotiations. This never would have happened if the administrators had only understood the process. With increased understanding neither would superintendents have attempted to directly inject themselves into the affairs and organization of a teachers' association. Nor would board negotiators agree to an item at the table only to either totally reverse themselves at a later time or try to unilaterally rewrite what was agreed upon.

Teachers are also disenchanted with teaching in REAA's because of the disregard for their basic due process and citizenship rights. Typical of this disregard is: the principal who told a teacher she had to quit because she was going to take maternity leave; the superintendent who attempted to hold a hearing on the nonretention of a teacher without giving the teacher any due process rights; or the board which said a teacher couldn't write letters about the school system to other people. Administrators should never let

incidents like these occur. They should know what a teacher's rights are, or at least consult the district lawyer. Yet, REAA lawyers are rarely contacted. Instead an attitude that says, "We can do whatever we please and ignore, with impunity, the laws," seems to prevail.

The difficulty of the teaching assignment that an REAA teacher is given has also contributed to the high teacher turnover. Consider the typical new REAA teacher -- a young, inexperienced teacher from out-of-State. He/She is simply not prepared for what he/she encounters. No one has advised him/her what his/her new community is like. Neither was he/she provided with a meaningful pre-service orientation to the district, its people, students, and procedures. Thus, he/she starts school in a state of shock which may never be overcome.

This is all the more likely if the teacher, as frequently occurs, encounters a teaching situation for which he/she is totally unprepared. Maybe the teacher, whose specialty background is, at best, in two discipline areas, is instructed to instantly develop and implement a complete high school curriculum. Or maybe the inexperienced teacher is told to take over a multi-graded, bilingual, elementary class.

As if these instructions were not mind-boggling enough, our typical teacher soon discovers that he/she is on his/her own. Materials, personnel, and money seem to be minimally available. Not surprisingly, many of these teachers quickly decide (10% in one REAA, as of October) they will leave as soon as possible.

For other reasons the experienced bush teacher is also leaving the REAA. He/She is often painfully aware of the fact that class sizes in about 2/3 of the REAA's are up over two years ago -- half of those as many as three or four students. He/She also may object

to the administration's determination that the instructional program shall be standardized, using the same texts, scope and sequence, and methodologies. Possibly~~his~~/her objection stems from the fact that such standardization removes an important element of teacher flexibility or it just is not the standard the teacher would have picked.

Another thorny contributing factor to teacher turnover in the REAA's is the absence of housing. In SOS days the problem of housing was not as severe as now. There weren't as many teachers without adequate housing and the rents were low enough to make the inadequacies and scarcity of housing tolerable. Furthermore, SOS was generally perceived as clearly trying to find a housing solution. Today the situation is reversed.

As under SOS, today in most communities teachers cannot build their own homes because land is simply not available for private owners. Teachers are forced to be renters. Nevertheless, their rental rates are rapidly increasing. Typically, REAA rental rates have doubled or tripled in the past two years. The rates of private landlords have often increased even more. Meanwhile, salaries have increased about 15%. Thus, the teacher's purchasing power has been significantly diminished.

In most REAA's housing is much more difficult than it used to be for teachers to obtain. Often the district has given up its teacher housing or stopped guaranteeing private units for teachers. Furthermore, in many communities, especially those with new secondary programs, there are more teachers seeking the same low number of houses. Inevitably, some teachers end up living in the school or in a very substandard house.

The final irritant with respect to teacher housing is that many REAA's have denied any interest or concern in even considering possible solutions to the need. Instead, they claim there is no housing problem and indirectly encourage landlords to charge exorbitant rates for their rental units. Predictably enough, teachers have reacted to this unsympathetic attitude by leaving the REAA's for districts with better housing opportunities.

The problems discussed above have most definitely been real and serious for REAA teachers. They have decidedly influenced teacher attitudes and actions. However, teachers have not responded to them only by leaving. Many have stayed and reacted in other ways.

One way has been to organize into teacher associations for the purpose of collective action. Far more REAA teachers belong to a teachers' association than two years ago. In fact, association membership in the REAA's has increased over the past two years by almost 40% while it has stayed steady or slightly dropped in other Alaskan districts. Furthermore, the level of active involvement in these associations has increased many fold. While before a relatively few teacher leaders represented SOS teachers, now there are 21 sets of leaders representing REAA teachers. Another consequence of this increased involvement has been a heightened awareness among all teachers of their collective, as well as individual, rights, benefits, and concerns. No longer do teachers think only about their instructional interaction with the students.

Teachers have also reacted to the changes that REAA's have brought by becoming more involved with their local communities. This involvement has, in turn, resulted in local alliances of parents, community leaders, and teachers to combat regional dema-

goguary and harassment. Consistently, over the past year, the parents and citizens of local communities have rallied to the support of their teachers when they felt the teachers were getting a raw deal at the regional level. Sometimes that support -- often in the form of petitions, statements, or letters -- has reversed the action of an REAA board and/or superintendent. Other times, when it hasn't, it has resulted in lingering community hostility toward the REAA board and central administration.

The involvement of the bush teacher in the political process is also slowly building. As the result of experiences over the past two years, teachers are increasingly aware that potential solutions to their problems lie in the hands of politicians -- at both the regional and State level. Thus, they are contributing more money and effort to political campaigns, lobbying their board members and legislators more, and more closely monitoring the actions of these representatives on items of interest.

Because of their basically optimistic orientation, REAA teachers generally hope and feel that things will get better. They know that in at least a couple of REAA's exciting educational things are happening. They know that teachers in those REAA's feel they are dealt with individually and collectively in a fair, evenhanded manner. Teachers in those districts are valued as professionals striving to better the quality of education. Those boards and administrators work with the teachers to solve problems rather than against them. Whether these few REAA's are the precursors of the future or the exceptions to the rule is unclear. Teachers certainly hope they are the indicators of changes to come.

## REAA Questionnaire Survey

CNER distributed questionnaires in June 1977 to each REAA, with a letter of explanation to Superintendents and Board Chairs. (See Appendix - for questions and accompanying letter.)

Questions were asked of Superintendents, Board Chairs, individual Board Members and the Board as a Whole. Although responses were received from approximately half the REAAs (10), none responded fully. Nine superintendents responded but only three board chairs and sixteen board members. Only one board responded to the two questions asked of the board as a whole. Even with follow up by letter and phone, the response rate improved little.

Reasons for the poor response rate can only be speculative, based on past experience and informal inquiries. Mail questionnaires are not a good way to collect data in any case but visiting every REAA was beyond the resources of the study. (When the questionnaires were field tested in one REAA with a staff member present, few difficulties were encountered.) Waiting until the end of the REAAs' first year was probably a mistake, as summer is a busy time in rural Alaska and one when staff and board members are often hard to reach. Also, there were a number of high priority issues, including Lau compliance, during this time which demanded board attention when they could meet. It has also been suggested that some board members had difficulty in interpreting the questions and writing responses.

In the analysis of responses which follows, emphasis was placed on responses from the superintendents, as the most complete source of data. Selected responses from board members and chairs also are included. These responses may not be representative of all REAAs; they will give those who did not respond a chance to compare their perceptions.

Although one might have predicted that superintendents would have had

similar responses due to similar educational backgrounds and administrative experiences and the frequency with which they communicate with each other, this did not prove to be the case. Superintendents' responses to almost every question showed large differences in how they perceived their REAA's progress for the first year. They differed most on questions considered to be basic to SB 35 and REAA development, such as local control and community school committees. It is reasonable to assume the variety of responses reflect actual differences in experiences among the REAAs.

### Origin of REAA Board Business

Superintendents were asked to describe the origin of business that comes before the Board by estimating the proportion (or percent) from the twelve sources listed on the questionnaire. The percent allocated to each group varied widely, as shown by the range figures. For example, the highest average (mean) percent was recorded for REAA Central Administration--averaging all responses, 34% of business brought before the Board was said to come from this source. However, the responses to this item ranged from 5% to 60%, indicating that there is great variation.

Origin of REAA Board Business	Average % (mean)	Range
REAA Board Chairperson	10	1 - 25
Other Board Members	9	1 - 18
REAA Central Administration	34	5 - 60
REAA Principals and Principal- Teachers	5	0 - 15
REAA Teachers	5	1 - 12
Community School Committees	4	0 - 9
Parents	2	0 - 5
Students	3	0 - 5
General Public	4	0 - 15
State Dept. of Education	17	0 - 70
State Dept. of Public Works	6	0 - 15
Other	2	0 - 10

Distribution of Board Time by Subject:  
Approximate and Ideal

On the question concerning the distribution of REAA board time by subject, Superintendents' answers were extremely varied, as indicated by the range of responses shown below:

<u>Approximately</u> what proportion of Board time was spent on:	
Subject	Range (in Percents)
Budget	(5 - 80)
Curriculum	(1 - 30)
Facilities Planning	(0 - 30)
Federal Programs	(1 - 15)
Federal Regulations	(1 - 10)
Operations & Maintenance	(1 - 10)
Personnel	(1 - 15)
State Regulations	(5 - 25)
Student Concerns	(0 - 7)
Teacher Negotiations	(1 - 15)
Other	(5 - 60)

Only two-thirds of the superintendents responding answered the second part of the question, where superintendents were asked to ideally distribute Board time across the same subjects. Those subjects which showed greatest agreement as to a discrepancy between approximate and ideal time were Curriculum, State Regulations and Student Concerns. Five of six superintendents responding indicated they felt too much time was spent on State Regulations and too little on Curriculum and Student Concerns.

Comments on this question included an explanation to the 60% response under "Subject: Other" and an explanation of why one superintendent did not fill out the ideal column:

"The board spent an arduous amount of time (and wasted energy) on "political" considerations which offered no relevancy to education of students. Subject matters were too diverse to recall, but certainly not related to those listed."

"Considering the various situations confronting the board, I believe the time devoted to the various topics was correct. As superintendent, I do not have an "ideal" format for the Board; they control the schedule according to what interests them. Whatever is, is "right" for this district. Each board member would have a highly unique view as to how an 'ideal' breakdown would look. The superintendent's job is to facilitate the individual board members so they can function together as a board."

## Decision Referrals

This question on decision making was concerned with which decisions within the REAA are referred and to whom they are referred. Topics mentioned by more than one superintendent for each referral category are noted on the chart below, with the number of responses above 2 indicated in parentheses.

### Topic and Direction of Decision Referrals

Board to District Administrator	District Administrator to Board
Administrative functions including budget (5) Employment (4) Curriculum program approval (4) Research Policy drafting Purchase of equipment and supplies	Hiring personnel (8) Policy (3) Negotiations (3) Budgets (3) Matters required by law Federal programs Current district state of affairs Facilities planning Maintenance projects
Board to Community School Committees	Community School Committees to Board
School calendar including extra-curricular activities (5) Recommendation of certificated staff (4) Community use of facilities (3) Curriculum planning (3) Decision for/against high school	Matters required by law and/or policy Curriculum review Use of school facilities

Assistance to REAAs  
(Other than School Board Development)

Responses to the question about assistance to the REAAs other than School Board Development illustrated the wide variety of needs the new districts experienced and the variety of people enlisted to meet them. Those mentioned by superintendents as provided by the Department of Education include:

- Technical assistance, particularly with federal programs and special education
- Bookkeeping and accounting training
- Budget direction
- Vocational curriculum
- Policy topics advice
- Legislative requests to the Department of Education, the Governor, etc.
- Liaison visits
- Community School Committee
- Program evaluation
- Talent bank
- Curriculum experts
- Inservice

Topics related to funding (accounting and budget) were the most frequently mentioned DOE services.

Only two of nine superintendents noted assistance that had been requested from DOE that had not been received. Services not received included:

- Comprehensive assistance in organizing business operations and obtaining eligibility for Title I sites
- Other tasks that require long-range assistance or aggressive action such as drafting new legislation, etc.
- A more consistent and equitable form of funding rural schools.

All nine superintendents reporting said that their REAA received assistance from sources other than DOE. Eighteen different sources were recorded for the following types of services:

Statistical data	Construction	Special Education testing
Legal aid	Assessment needs	Program planning
Bilingual Aid	Curriculum planning	Psychological testing
Affirmative Action	Board training	Administrative training
Teacher negotiations	General aid	

Superintendents were divided on the question "Are there any services currently available that your REAA needs now or on the future?" Of those four responding yes, the following were noted:

Program development for small high schools  
Training for bilingual/bicultural programs  
Curriculum development  
Board leadership training  
Educational philosophy  
Leadership training to teachers and principal/teachers  
[Needs] "too numerous to mention: We need MASSIVE professional assistance (applied research funds and/or expertise, etc.) to attack problems we have already identified; to meet needs we already recognize we have."

## REAA Issues

Numerous issues came up in each REAA the first year of operation. Superintendents were asked to classify and describe issues on the basis of their experience as to whether or not the issues had been anticipated and as to whether they had been resolved. The largest number of issues listed were considered anticipated and had been resolved. The second largest group was anticipated but had not been resolved. It would appear from this listing that superintendents dealt with many problems in the first year of REAA administration, but that there were few surprises.

### Anticipated/Resolved

- Teacher negotiations (3)
- Fiscal operations/accounting (2)
- No district office, quarters, or rentals for employees or teachers
- No business/administrative systems developed - No curriculum or staffing plans - No Tobeluk settlement plans
- Lack of teacher awareness concerning the entire gamut of change engendered by SB 35
- Classified salaries
- Financial/funding problem (2)
- Teacher hire
- Policy manual - completed

### Unanticipated/Resolved

- Lack of knowledge about SB 35 - what it meant, etc.
- Lack of understanding concerning the Tobeluk settlement by parents, students, teachers, Juneau administrators, CSC members, etc.
- Building program
- Resignation of a principal teacher (new teacher hired)

### Anticipated/Unresolved

- The need for additional funds for staff development
- The need for additional funds for developing satisfactory program and staff evaluation plans
- The need for additional funds for applied curriculum research
- CSCs
- Classified suit
- Role of CSC vs. Regional Board
- Policy (practically completed)
- Teacher negotiations (2)
- Building needs

Unanticipated/Unresolved

Lack of willingness of local CSC members and others to consult with REAA board members  
Lack of adequate REAA Board member communication networks with local people  
The lack of ability of individual districts to obtain significant, informed assistance in a coordinated manner from the DOE or other large agencies where change comes about very slowly  
Funding cut by legislature  
Bilingual issue  
Great fluctuations in student population

Additional Comments

"Another problem/issue that so far has been resolved concerns the degree to which the initial board training for the area encouraged the development of 'adversarial groups'; the future members were told to 'watch teacher power'; teachers were advised to beware of administration and board members. We have attempted to restore a more professional atmosphere so that groups have a basis for working with one another that is based on mutual respect/awareness. We give a great deal of attention to process, as well as product."

"A hectic year."

Examples of REAA  
Board in Action

Superintendents were asked to describe examples of situations where the REAA Board acted (1) effectively and (2) ineffectively when confronted with a major problem or issue. Those situations identified with effective and ineffective Board action noted below.

Situations where REAA Board Acted Effectively

- The position taken on a 50% reduced level of funding
- Reversal of decision to take over BIA schools regardless of village desires
- The Board decision to implement a bilingual/bicultural program without aid of the state and to negotiate directly with OCR
- When it hired a superintendent - (Basically their most important single decision is who the superintendent will be/is)
- When it decided to put a focus on improving schools rather than merely developing an administrative machine that was very adept at preserving the wrong thing.
- Acted on pushing forward a building program
- Teacher negotiations were often confrontations and too divisive for our small system

Situations where REAA Board Acted Ineffectively

- Present position [on reduced level of funding] to the bureaucrats properly
- Decision to take over BIA schools where REAA established high school
- The Board has acted effectively on all major problems and issues
- When it becomes involved in making personnel decisions and more or less forcing the hire/termination of certain individuals... Board member friends are not necessarily the most qualified, dedicated, intelligent, etc.
- When it acts without understanding how their actions are limited by the broader society (DOE, U of A, OE, etc.)
- Negotiations issue was taken to public by teachers - Board rightly rejected community demands for immediate raise - Resulted in Board recall
- Holding regular meetings - difficult communicating - phones often out and radio not available due to power loss some-times

## Community School Committees

Superintendents responding indicated most CSC met regularly. All but one responded that the REAA had a written policy concerning duties and functions of CSCs but only one superintendent attached it, the others replying that the policy was unavailable. About half said there had been training sessions for the CSCs. All but one superintendent noted at least some input from the CSCs. Most judged their Board's relationships with the CSCS to be fair. Three superintendents noted the relationship was uneven, some CSCs working better than others within the REAA.

In response to the question, "Do you see a need for CSCs?" the superintendents were divided:

"Yes, so villagers can have a vehicle to formally express their views."

"Yes - information from these provides the Board with local information."

"Yes - Adoption of district plans, practices to local needs and as a source of ideas for school program improvement."

"Yes - handle local problems."

"If community desires."

"No, not in our area. Our school communities are adequately represented on the regional board."

"No, we have two schools in the district and they are five miles apart. The people would rather participate directly with the district board."

"No - communication should be such that they are either useless or valueless. Of course, if they are not listened to now, we still don't need them, but too often they constitute local 'axe-grinding' forums."

## Local Control and Local Government

When superintendents were asked specifically to comment on the effectiveness of SB 35 and creation of REAAs in bringing local control to rural Alaska, a wide variety of opinions were expressed, ranging from very effective to little change. Comments included:

"If the funding issues had been addressed three years ago, the effects would have been very favorable. However, difficulties created this year has set this district back 5 to 10 years, i.e., the ten BIA villages transferring."

"Very effective here." (Three respondents)

"Excellent."

"Local control has very little to do with SB 35. SB 35 created 21 new Districts and so resulted in 'district control' rather than 'local control'. SB 35 holds the district board responsible, not local communities."

"Very little change. Virtually all the issues which we have time to address are forced upon us by DPW (Department of Public Works) DOE (Department of Education) and USOE (U.S. Department of Education), etc. Conversely, it gave the CSCs the impression of control so we take flack from both sides. Regulators telling us we have control when we don't. CSC wanting to know why we don't do anything different."

"Reasonably so, but too many board members and superintendents have overestimated the amount of authority which the Board has and underestimated the responsibilities."

Interest in local government was noted by most superintendents to have stayed about the same. Two noted an increase in interest while one had no opinion.

## SB 35: Positive Features and Suggested Changes

Superintendents were asked to reflect on their experiences and comment on SB 35 and the REAA system. All responding replied to this question. The aspect of local control heavily dominated responses about positive features. Suggestions about CSCs were prominent among needed changes. Selected comments follow.

### Most positive features of SB 35

"The ability for decisions to be made on a regional level."

"Local control." (Three respondents)

"Expedites decision-making and problem-solving."

"Provides programs designed for and by local people."

"Allows local control on expenditures."

"Allows local control on employment of administration/teachers."

"SB 35 is allowing some rural residents who were previously unfamiliar with 'why' things were as they were to understand and realize the immense difficulty any change causes.... SB 35 gives rural residents increased hope for better schools."

"More efficient than control by SOS or AUSBD."

### Things which need to be changed

"Rules, regulations, laws which prevent full use of capital bond monies; i.e., overhead administrative costs in Fairbanks, Juneau, and Anchorage."

"CSC election procedure."

"Method of election for board members."

"Clarification of duties of CSCs."

"While SB 35 is a major experiment in obtaining better schools and involving people, it was quite inadequate in one respect. It did nothing to adequately prepare the people to truly manage their own schools.... SB 35 did not set up any agency or 'Talent Bank' that was specifically charged with assisting the new districts. Had such an office been created in the DOE, I believe it would have been possible to solve problems in a more efficient manner."

( Things which need to be changed continued )

"More careful delineation of REAAs as 'School Districts.'"

"Making CSCs optional and advisory."

"Eliminate CSCs -- or at least the need for them."

"Organization of board responsibilities. The board uses the legal format for personal opinions, philosophies, and ideologies without any concern of students."

"Need better access to specialists; however, they are available if one works at it."

## Special Topics

Superintendents were asked if their districts had a position or opinion on the topics listed. The only topic that did not evoke response was Municipal Development, which was considered not applicable by most.

Selected comments follow.

### BIA Schools

"Their funding is 35% more than state's."

"Seek to cooperate; will not take over unless requested."

"Favor continuation of BIA control and funding of BIA schools in the district. We have an informal policy of working with the BIA so as to better meet children's school needs/desires."

### Bilingual/Bicultural Programs

"A definite mechanism for villages to identify with the school."

"Mandated by Board; will expand in the future."

"Strongly supports programs desired by the local communities. It (the district) also sympathizes with the actions and concerns of the Office for Civil Rights concerning Bilingual/Bicultural education, etc."

"We have no bilingual children and should not be expected to go through all the effort and cost of 'proving it.'"

### State Regulations/Hearings

"Useless."

"New hearing process procedures must be developed since all such hearings are ONLY held in larger communities."

"There are too many state regulations especially those relating to procedures of the local board."

"Due to our isolation, we can't attend meetings often, but we do offer written comment!"

### Certification

"Must be at the district level."

"Believe the entire matter must be totally re-examined by all concerned. The post-secondary institutions, etc., control the process. \_\_\_ District would like to develop its own certification system that would meet district needs, etc."

"No problem for us."

### Village High Schools

"If funding is sufficient to support proper activities."

"Mixed feelings--at the present time, the CSC and REAA Board has decided not to establish high school in the village."

"Stongly support local secondary programs but believe the state must devote more money to making options possible for kids."

"We have all of ours operating."

### Regional Resource Centers

"Approved services and endorse the RRC concept."

"\_\_\_ District is willing to give the concept a test. We question the degree of thought that went into the original planning for such centers."

"We don't want them."

"None needed--until their specific function could be identified, exactly what they could do for the district and at what cost."

### Federal Programs

"Eliminate categorical funding!"

"Mixed feelings--bilingual/bicultural is the most controversial. Title IV part A is an accepted part of the school programs."

"We need them to in order to help compensate for inadequate state funding compared to need."

"Form a very small part of our budget. They are not worth the effort except for PL 874 which should not be used as a threat because it is in lieu of local taxation."

"Too many strings attached. Too much paperwork."

"Did not want JOM because (it is) discriminatory."

"Often difficult to assess their worth."

### Curriculum Planning

"It's been a joke this past year! "

"Heavy emphasis."

"A major (the major) focus. If we can't come up with a better curriculum and program, we might as well go back to a state-operated system."

"We need time (taken from the above areas) to work on this."

"Key to a good school. Last year was one of survival. This year we plan to work on that."

### Fiscal Resources

"Very conservative."

"Inadequate compared to our need."

"Our funding was cut 10% by this legislature without any basis in fact or data."

"No problem in our district."

### Board Travel

"Funding level allows for less than  $\frac{1}{2}$  the normal district meetings."

"Lots necessary."

"Believe in limited travel."

### Other Comments

"The Board is 'agin' 'em all.' The administration tries to keep an even keel and remain legal--the certified staff complies if required--the students hope!"

### Other Comments

In response to the question, "Is there anything else you would like to tell us?" the following superintendents' comments were received:

"Appreciate your interest and follow-up."

"Good luck with your efforts. The results should be quite informative."

"This certainly was a long form. I hope it helps."

"The financial situation is a problem in sorting out all the regulations and items."

"Much, but time is short and unpleasantries are often painful for recollecting. This Board accepted little if any responsibility for making timely decisions - they were reluctant to accept any advice from anyone about anything. DOE and others were often openly and always privately criticized for 'interfering' or 'over-regulating' -- It was impossible to get a board policy manual approved. Also, there were no other policies or procedures approved by the board."

"I believe that our little two-school district has been a great success with pupils receiving adequate to very good education and that most of the residents of our two communities are pleased with our schools."

...to be continued

Responses of REAA Board Chairs  
and Board Members  
to be added

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Those REAAs who returned one or more questionnaires are:

Alaska Gateway  
Bering Straits  
Chugach  
Copper River  
Delta Greely  
Lower Kuskokwim  
McGrath  
Pribilof  
Southwest  
Upper Railbelt

REAA Superintendent Responses\*

Origin of REAA Board Business

Distribution of Board Time by Subject: Approximate and Ideal

Decision Referrals

Assistance to REAAs (Other than School Board Development)

REAA Issues

Examples of REAA Boards in Action

Community School Committees

Local Control and Local Government

SB 35: Positive Features and Suggested Changes

Special Topics

Other Comments

\*Based upon questionnaires  
from nine REAAs

November 18, 1977

TO: Seminar Participants  
FROM: Kathryn Hecht  
SUBJECT: "Related Studies and Issues"

For this section of the report, I would like your advice and suggestions.

(1) Do you feel there are any important issues concerning the first year of the REAAs not covered by the report which should be mentioned? If yes, please describe each issue in a few lines.

(2) Do you know of studies related to the REAAs (other than those described in this report) that are either in progress or completed? If yes, please describe and list a contact if you can.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
(in case I need to contact you for  
further information)

(Please use the other side if necessary)

## OUTLINE

### REAA Board Minutes Analysis for First Year of Operation, 76 - 77

#### I. Analysis Procedures/Process

- a. method of acquisition of minutes
- b. variation within a single REAA
- c. variations among REAAs
- d. topical approach

#### II. Regarding the REAA Board Meetings

- a. frequency
- b. location
- c. number of members; male/female ratio
- d. resignations/appointments

#### III. Common Contracted Services

- a. bank
- b. auditor
- c. legal counsel
- d. bookkeeping
- e. etc.

#### IV. Issues and Discussion

(The issues which appeared to be most topical among all the REAAs are listed; i.e., the #1 topic from each of the 21 REAAs is listed in descending frequency and discussed.)

- a. Community School Committees
- b. facilities, planning, and maintenance
- c. etc.

#### V. Creative Solutions to Local Problems

- a. CSC representatives are designated Associate District Board Members with travel provided to District Board meetings
- b. decentralization of materials' purchase from Central Office to schools up to a specified dollar amount
- c. district liaison designated to meet with CSCs and communities

#### VI. Unique Issues

- a. 12th grade not adopted for Togiak due to lack of school and teacher housing space
- b. Board acceptance of donations from villages to schools - cash would not be accepted but local foods could be integrated into the hot lunch program

Report Outline

NEW SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN RURAL ALASKA:  
A REPORT ON THE REAAs AFTER ONE YEAR

I. Introduction and Background

Highlights from the Report

Overview of the Study - Kathryn Hecht

Historical Perspective - Frank Darnell

Time Line - Ron Inouye

"Perspectives on Progress" - Kathryn Hecht

II. Study-collected Data and Analysis

Survey of REAA Boards and Superintendents - Kathryn Hecht and Ron Inouye

Analysis of REAA and State Board Minutes (second draft) - Kathryn  
Hecht and Ron Inouye

Case Study of an REAA - Paul Goodwin

III. Contributed Chapters\*

Municipal Development - Pat Poland (Final Draft)

Community School Committees - Sue Horton

New Secondary Education Programs in One REAA - Margo Zuelow

School Finance in the REAAs - E. Dean Coon

BIA/REAA Relations - Don Dafoe

Teachers' Views - Jim Alter

Bilingual Controversy - Sylvia Carlsson

\* Note: These are listed by subject rather than the title which will be used.

IV. Summary and Forecast

Related Studies and Issues (see form)

Seminar of Contributors: Edited Comments

Appendix

Selected News Clippings

REAA Map

Survey Questions

Additional Material: "REAA Superintendents Address the First Year"

NEW SECONDARY EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN ONE REAA  
(Tentative Title)

NOTE:

This paper has been submitted by Margo Zuelow, currently of The State Department of Education.

The research which is reported upon here is summarized from her dissertation, recently completed at the University of Oregon. A reference to the complete study and how it can be obtained will be included in the final version.

Dr. Zuelow requested I distribute the paper beginning with page 10 due to its length.

Kathryn Hecht  
11/17/77

### Local Background

During the 1976-77 academic year, five new small secondary education programs were started in the Iditarod Area School District, Regional Education Attendance Area #11, in Alaska. One village high school program that had existed prior to this time was continued. Another village extended its program from grades 9-10 to 1-12. The secondary student population ranged from 2 to 52 students in each of the communities. The largest secondary school in the district, McGrath, has four secondary teachers. New programs were begun in the villages of Grayling, Anvik, Takotna, Telida and Lime Village (see map, Figure 4). Regulation 4AAC 05.070 of the Alaska State Department of Education requires that:

a) For each of the first three years of operation of a school established under Section 40 of this chapter, the chief school administrator of a school district shall develop and have approved by the governing body of that district, annually and no later than that body's first meeting in October, an educational plan for each school established.

b) Subsequent to the close of each school year for which an educational plan must be developed under (a) of this section but no later than the governing body's first meeting in September, the chief school administrator shall prepare and submit to the governing body of the school district an evaluation of each new school operated by the district.

c) The chief school administrator of a district shall insure maximum on-going local community participation in the development and preparation of the educational plans and evaluation of the plans required in this

section.

Copies of the plan developed under this section must be maintained on file for public inspection in the school district office. A copy of each plan and evaluation must also be filed with the Commissioner, Pouch F, Juneau, Alaska 99811. A copy must also be furnished to the local school committee of the community in which the school to which the plan or evaluation relates is located.

In this study, community school committee members, staff and students of the Iditarod Area Schools (IASD), REAA No. 11 were interviewed.

The Iditarod Area School District covers 41,500 square miles of Interior Alaska. McGrath, on the Kuskokwim River with a population of 300, is the district headquarters. This is an old gold mining site, which still has a large non-Native population. Other villages on the Kuskokwim are Nikolai and Telida, both Athabascan Indian Villages of one hundred or fewer people. The community of Lime Village is also an Athabascan Village located south of McGrath on a tributary of the Kuskokwim. Takotna is a largely non-Native, former gold mining community on Takotna Mountain west of McGrath. The four Yukon River villages of Holy Cross, Anvik, Grayling, and Shageluk are all Athabascan Villages of one to three hundred people each. Traditional subsistence living is practiced by some Indian members of each community, which includes hunting (moose, caribou, bear, goats, and sheep), fishing (seasonal runs of salmon and other fish), and gathering (wild berries and other edible plants). A limited number of cash income jobs now exist in all villages with principal employers being the school, Native corporations, the State of Alaska (policeman, airstrip

maintenance man, etc.), United States Public Health Service (village medical aide), and the corporation which owns the local store or trading post. Some small private stores and other businesses such as a pool hall or movie concession exist. Most villagers speak English except in Lime Village, Nicolai, and Telida where the population is mixed in their ability to speak the Native language and English. An interpreter was needed while interviewing the community school committee members in Lime Village. Some homes are made of logs with homemade wood burning stoves and furniture. Others are constructed of saved lumber with furniture and appliances from a mail order catalogue. All combinations of the two extremes exist.

The Board, acting to meet the intent of the Tobeluk Decree,<sup>5</sup> took steps to initiate partial or full local secondary programs in those communities that requested such programs in the fall of 1976. The district developed plans so that the basic academic instructional program in each community would be taught by certificated teachers. The district also planned to maintain a pupil-classroom teacher ratio of no larger than 15 to 1 in each new secondary or combined elementary and secondary school. Correspondence courses were used to augment the basic secondary program in each community. Vocational education courses were made available to all students beginning in the second quarter of the school year, with instructional delivery being accomplished through the use of automated (slides and tapes) programmed teaching materials.

The superintendent of the Iditarod Area School District recommended to the IASD Board that the district create an on-going long-range develop-

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<sup>5</sup>See footnote, p. . Tobeluk Decree is the title of the consent decree given to the settlement of this case.

ment plan for a comprehensive secondary education program that would offer students a choice between five curriculum emphasis areas or major educational alternatives regardless of which school a student attended in the district.

Emphasis Area 1: This program is designed to prepare the student for successful life in his/her home community and region upon graduation. This emphasis area assumes the student will not, at least immediately, pursue additional training or college.

Emphasis Area 2: This program is designed to prepare the student for (1) successful entrance into a trade, business school, or community college trade or business program upon graduation, (2) jobs that may exist in the region that require a limited knowledge of business or trade skills. This emphasis area is not a "prescription for a major sequence." Courses offered within a subject field should enable the student to plan for a specialization by including courses to assure the student sufficient opportunities to develop a degree of proficiency in a subject field while being exposed to other areas as well.

Emphasis Area 3: This program is designed to prepare the student for successful entrance into a public college or university upon graduation.

Emphasis Area 4: This program is designed to prepare the student for successful entrance into the armed services of the United States upon graduation.

Emphasis Area 5: This program is designed to prepare the student for any combination of goals 1-4.

The long-range plan was drafted by IASD administrative staff and consultants in order to help meet Board concerns about the relevancy, effectiveness, and equality of opportunity of schooling provided students served by IASD schools. It was introduced and copies distributed in August and September, 1976, in the seven communities with IASD schools. Each principal-teacher was asked to review the plan with community school committee members, students and teachers during the school year. Depending upon responses to the plan, the district proposed expanding and implementing the plan by developing required and elective courses for each of the curriculum emphasis areas by no later than during the 1977-78 school year.

### Data Analysis

Two major objectives were accomplished during the data collection phase of this study; one was the evaluation of the secondary education programs in the Iditarod Area School District, the other was a test of the interview technique for gathering data in rural Alaskan situations.

The evaluation was formative in nature. This was the first information collected in a systematic manner about the operation of these particular schools. Since it was a new program some people, as planned, were still actively involved in the creation of what was to remain a flexible curriculum. This was also the first time the community school committee members were given large amounts of control and decision-making power. Their responses indicated that they were making decisions (approving the hiring of teachers). A sense of pride showed in their feeling that "this is our school, it no longer belongs to some agency far away" and in their awareness that they were moving things in a direction they thought appropriate. In some cases there was a reluctance to evaluate "our new program" too soon, before it had a chance to prove itself, which indicated an ownership feeling.

The four broad questions asked were: (1) Is the new school program what people expected? (2) What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a secondary school in the village? (3) What are the problems in implementing the new program?, and (4) To what extent were members of the community involved in planning the new program?

First it was clear that many subjects expected a more traditional

building in appearance. This is an interesting expectation since most village residents are likely to be aware from past experiences that it takes two building seasons (summers) to complete any large building and they voted on the issue of whether or not to have a school in August of 1976. With this in mind, the comments about the new school buildings may have been more suggestions than expectations. From 40 percent to over half of the members of each group expected a program like the one they got while the rest had not pictured one much different from the elementary school. These subjects were generally happy with the new program.

Whether some things were considered advantages or disadvantages was dependent upon the village from which the respondent came. One limitation of this study is that subjects were guaranteed anonymity. Some responses that fell into the above category concerned specific equipment or facility needs. Advantages mentioned by all groups were flexibility in class schedules and the small classes. Having a high school in the village at all was seen as an advantage because so many students had dropped out of, or had refused to attend boarding school. The expressed disadvantages concerned facilities, equipment and staff. It would seem that having the students attend school at home was seen as the more emotional concern. The disadvantages seemed to carry the weight of suggestions for making desirable village school the best possible (using individual criteria for best).

Problems in implementing the new program concerned the curriculum emphasis areas. The most useful emphasis area according to all groups

is preparation for business and trade school. Least useful for all groups was preparation for entrance into the armed services. Considering the long history of educators' preference for vocational training for Native students, this is not an unusual finding. Possibly there is lack of knowledge concerning alternatives. It is clear that the reasons given for rejection of preparation for college by teachers and parents indicate low expectations on their part for Native students in general.

IASD decision-makers (the Board and administration) have used the information obtained from the evaluation to make the following decisions:

1. options in the form of emphasis area choices will be continued;
2. no student will be allowed to take more than two correspondence courses at a time and these will be limited to the above average students;
3. students will travel to schools with specialized facilities, for example, a shop, for short periods of time; and
4. an itinerant curriculum director has been hired who will work with the teachers, community members, and students in each school in an on-going assessment of needs of individual students, development of programs for them, and procurement of materials and supplies needed by the village schools to implement the teaching of the emphasis areas.

A drawback of the interview technique is that it is not efficient in

terms of time or money. All members rather than a sample, of each group were interviewed (if they were in the village at the time). This took a great deal of time as well as physical and emotional energy by both evaluators and subjects. The cost of flying to each village was certainly much greater than sending a questionnaire through the mail. The flexibility of method, richness and reliability of the data, however, outweigh the cost factors in this particular study. This researcher highly recommends the technique to districts planning evaluation studies.

### Recommendations

Two major recommendations are being made as a result of this study. They will be presented as general recommendations followed by specific suggestions for implementation.

Recommendation 1: One geographically isolated school district be established as an experimental or laboratory district for the study of change.

The rationale behind this recommendation would be to illustrate the process of change at the district level using the concepts of change as a variable (dependent upon cultural milieu) and creative change (occurs because of desires of people). A single district is chosen as an experimental district in order that the process can be tried on a small scale in-depth using as many available resources as possible rather than diffusing money and energy in a state-wide effort. Facilitators from the State Department of Education should seek out a district (REAA) which desires to create a curriculum based on the goals, culture, and environment of that particular district. Emphasis would be on helping residents and school people with the communication processes necessary to articulate their goals and procedures for achieving those goals. Individuals should be hired from the University of Alaska, Alaska Native Foundation, Alaska Federation of Natives, and any other agencies that would have employees with expertise in the area of intervention and organizational development. Anyone hired to go into the district would have as their goal the facilitation of the process of decision-making only. The products produced, such as the goals, the curriculum and

administrative procedures for achieving the goals, will be a minimal concern of the facilitators. Since the process of making decisions by Native groups is often quite different from a typical western one as many Native or culturally aware non-Native facilitators as possible should be used. When non-Native facilitators are used they should travel with a Native who will be able to check the suggestions made for cultural integration.

A tentative plan (necessary if decisions are to be made by district people) for the beginning stages of the project follows:

1. Meeting with the school board and administration to determine their intervention and acceptance of the idea. Sound planning is essential to the success of such a process. This plan however, should not become an inflexible guide. The balance between a written plan and a flexible attitude is part of the management function needed. The administrator of the district should be one who demonstrates that he/she has an attitude that creative change is not only an acceptable but a desirable sign of a group in the process of examining its current environmental surroundings, goals, and progress toward those goals. He/she would emphasize (a) communication between groups as well as within groups in the district, (b) development of mutual trust between groups and individuals, (c) interdependence and shared responsibility, (d) wide sharing of responsibility and control, and (e) conflict resolution through bargaining and problem-solving.

2. Meetings of facilitators, community school committee members, teachers, and other members of the public in each village to determine their interest. If people are interested, additional meetings to begin

the goal identification process should be held during an off-season for food gathering. For example, it is difficult to hold meetings during salmon fishing or moose hunting season. Meetings should take place frequently, almost daily, for a week or so, then stopped until requested by the community again.

3. Once the community goals are established, they should be combined at the district level into a set of district goals. If there is a large non-Native population in one or two communities in the district, an extra problematic dimension will enter the process at this point. (To minimize this problem the experimental district might be one without a large population center like Bethel, Dillingham, Kotzebue or Barrow.)

4. Additional funding should be provided for the district to carry out this project. It should be considered at least a three-year project.

Specific Suggestion 1: The experimental district's curriculum and staff members need to compliment the culture and environment of the area.

Decision-making needs to follow a route from grass roots to administration. Emphasis needs to be placed on communication and joint planning between local community school committees and the educational staff. The following guidelines are meant to be of assistance to the school board and administrators.

1. Training in group decision-making should be provided if perceived as needed by the group. Care should be taken to wait long enough for a decision-making process to develop naturally before suggesting training. Some groups make decisions much faster than others.

Intervention too early may interrupt a natural process. The facilitator here should be a Native or depend upon a Native for guidance.

2. After the goals are set, regularly scheduled meetings should continue to be held to discuss future as well as present school operations.

3. Curriculum should be developed by an expert in this area based on the goals set and decisions made at the original goal setting meetings. This curriculum should be sent back to these groups for approval or for changes.

4. A search should be made within the district for community people who are expert in some portion of the curriculum and can teach these courses in the schools. These experts should receive training in instructional skills. An initial survey could be made while the original survey of interest was being made. It will probably be more complete and specific at this point.

5. Administrative procedures for accomplishing the goals should be worked out by the administrative staff based on input from the community groups and subject to their approval.

Specific Suggestion 2: Facilitate community involvement in the educational plans of the district.

During the goal setting meetings consideration should be given to the needs and desires of community members other than secondary school students. Adult basic education and community education funds combined with regular funds could, combined, provide enough money to offer unique and useful programs for all age levels in each village. This type of

program would also justify building a more complete facility because it would be better utilized than a single purpose high school building.

Specific Suggestion 3: Gain the support of the governmental units capable of making program changes available.

The emphasis should be on "How can we convince the legislators of the value of our program in order to obtain the support of the State Legislature?" rather than on "What do we have to include in our program to gain their support?" The experimental district will already have the support of the State Department of Education.

Specific Suggestion 4: A central support service needs to be available to all districts to act as a clearing house and dissemination center for exemplary program ideas and agency referral.

A program planning, evaluation and dissemination center should be established as a division of the Alaska State Department of Education. The planning and dissemination portions of this center are being implemented in 1977 (Luther, 1977). Specifically it will help the experimental district with evaluation. Generally it should assist education specialists in the development and use of processes that will result in the development of successful programs in districts. It should assist education specialists in the development and use of a process that will result in the development of successful programs by:

1. developing guidelines or criteria that describe high quality programs;
2. developing a verification or validation document based on these criteria;

3. assisting in the utilization of the documents in identifying promising practices or the exemplary status of programs;
4. assisting in writing and dissemination descriptions of model programs;
5. assisting in designing processes for adopting or adapting model programs;
6. performing a facilitator and support function for programs seeking national validation;
7. training personnel in the districts to do internal formative evaluations of programs implemented by the districts;
8. performing external summative evaluations of programs implemented by the districts; and
9. performing a formative and summative evaluation of the decision-making process in the experimental district. (See recommendation 2 for methodology.)

Recommendation 2: The process used to create change in the experimental district should be the subject of evaluation research.

Emphasis in this formative (to give feedback during the process) and summative (to evaluate the result at the end of the project) evaluation will be on the process of managing change, not on the innovation (curriculum and procedures developed). The suggested evaluation procedure is an ethnographic model. This model was chosen because it is inductive and does not make assumptions about the types of answers it should find. For the same reasons given in the section on developing the experimental district the procedures suggested here are tentative. They will change as the process of decision-making changes.

1. Evaluation techniques such as participant observation field work used in anthropological studies will be used. Due to the size of the project an evaluation team with four to five members probably will be

needed.

- a) The evaluators will meet with the State Department facilitators, school board and administration when they first meet to determine interest and acceptance of the idea. At this time general purposes and questions to be asked during the evaluation will be determined.
- b) The observers - evaluators will observe in a variety of settings. He/she will also observe his/her own interactions with people in the communities. Examples of settings to be observed are any community school committee meetings; school staff meetings; training sessions held in decision-making, for instance, and social functions related to the school. The observers should keep complete field notes on all processes, in and out of the meetings. The advantage of this procedure is to get at the fine points of what is happening by allowing time for issues to emerge that cannot be seen ahead of time. For example, the evaluator may sense some dissatisfaction in the meetings. It may become clear that the dissatisfaction is with the role of the administrator but specific problems do not come out into the open.
- c) The observers - evaluators will develop some other technique to gather further data on issues that develop. Using the above example he/she might develop a questionnaire or interview schedule, to substantiate the observations.

2. Data should be analyzed and organized inductively by the entire team rather than by individual evaluators. The final report may

be more useful to the State Department for dissemination to other districts (if this decision is made) if the report is presented in some manner in addition to a written report. A film, or slide tape presentation are suggestions.

Evaluators must be themselves skilled in interpersonal relations which includes an understanding of the roles that people assume in groups so that these interactions can be recorded. They must also be skilled in cross cultural communication skills as well as familiar with the culture of the area.

APPENDIX : REAA SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES

The following questions were used to make up the questionnaires sent to REAA superintendents and chairpersons in June 1976, with the accompanying letter. The codes in the upper right hand corner of each page indicate who was asked to respond to the question.

Question Code

- S - Superintendent
- C - Chairperson of REAA Board
- M - Member of REAA Board (to be answered individually)
- B - Board (to be answered by the REAA Board as a whole)



UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA

FAIRBANKS, ALASKA 99701

June 13, 1977

Dear Superintendent/REAA School Board Chairperson:

You will remember from previous correspondence, The Center for Northern Educational Research (CNER) is doing a study to follow-up the effects of SB35 and the creation of the REAA system. It has been one year since the REAA boards officially assumed control of education in their regions and we feel now is an appropriate time to reflect on this experience. I hope that the enclosed questionnaires will provide you and your board members with an opportunity to examine the progress and problems of the past year as well as supply us with information to form a statewide picture to be shared with all concerned.

Enclosed you will find three questionnaires:

- #1 A questionnaire for the Superintendent to fill out;
- #2 A questionnaire for the Board Chairperson to fill out (there are several opinion-type questions starred, where the chairperson may, if he/she wishes, consult with Board members);
- #3 A questionnaire in two parts for all REAA board members, (including the Chairperson), to be filled out at a board meeting. Part I includes five questions for each board member to fill out individually. Part II includes two questions that we would like the board as a whole to consider and respond to.

We have field-tested these forms in a draft version with one REAA district board and superintendent and have had them reviewed by staff of the Department of Education. Their comments were helpful in revising the questionnaires.

We have purposely kept the questions to be answered during a Board meeting at a minimum to take up as little meeting time as possible. From the field-test experience, it appears best to consider the questionnaire early in the agenda, when people are fresh. If, in your REAA, English is not the primary language of all members of your board, the Chairperson might wish to read the questions aloud and make provisions for recording responses.

The analysis of the responses we receive from each REAA will become part of a Center report, to be ready by late fall this year. CNER is cooperating with the Department of Education, the Department of Community

PLEASE REPLY BY AIRMAIL

and Regional Affairs, and several individuals (for example, Susan Horton and her study of Community School Committees) in writing this report in order to produce a comprehensive overview of the subject and to highlight areas in need of continued study.

No REAA will be quoted in the report by name but we will use comments, rather than just report numbers, to capture the differences among REAAs as well as the similarities. You will of course receive copies of the report when completed.

Once your REAA has completed all questionnaires, please feel free to discuss your responses with the Board and each other. You might wish to keep a copy of your responses for your own files--perhaps to do your own follow-up next year.

I would appreciate receiving the completed questionnaires by August 1. If you have any questions, please feel free to call or write to me, Ron Inouye or Frank Darnell at CNER.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Kathryn A. Hecht, Ed.D.  
Associate Professor  
Center for Northern  
Educational Research  
479-7173 or 479-7143

KAH:ds

Enclosures

1. How many people serve on your REAA Board? \_\_\_\_\_
- a. Female \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Native \_\_\_\_\_ Non-Native \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. How many were previously members of the local Advisory Board to ASOSS? \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. How many were previously members of the local Advisory Board to BIA? \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. How many different communities do the Board members come from? \_\_\_\_\_
  - f. Does your Board have a student representative? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
 If yes: Does the student have a vote? \_\_\_\_\_  
 If yes: How is the student chosen? \_\_\_\_\_
- 
- g. Does your Board have any associate members? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
 If yes, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is the current occupation of each member? (fill in number of each)

Clerical	Home-maker	Professional	Self employed	Skilled Laborer	Subsistance	Unskilled Laborer

3. Do you, the chairperson, sit on any other (non-REAA) community or statewide committees or advisory boards? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please list:


If you are also chairperson of any of the above listed, please check ( ✓ )

1. The location of REAA board meetings:

\_\_\_\_\_ varies

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ is always in the same place

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Does cost effect this decision? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

2. What type of expenses or compensation, if any, is paid to REAA board members to attend meetings?

3. Which of the following, if any, affect public attendance at REAA Board meetings?

\_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Issues to be discussed: (Do any particular topics draw high or low audiences?)

High: \_\_\_\_\_ Low: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Estimate what proportion of business that comes before REAA Board originates with:

REAA Board Chairperson \_\_\_\_\_

Other Board Members \_\_\_\_\_

REAA Central Administration \_\_\_\_\_

REAA Principals and  
Principal-Teachers \_\_\_\_\_

REAA Teachers \_\_\_\_\_

Community School Committees \_\_\_\_\_

Parents \_\_\_\_\_

Students \_\_\_\_\_

General Public \_\_\_\_\_

State Dept. of Education \_\_\_\_\_

State Dept. of Public Works \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ = 100%

Distribution of REAA Board Time by Subject

SUBJECT:	<u>Approximately</u> what proportion of Board time was spent on:*	<u>Ideally</u> what proportion of Board time should be spent on:*
Budget _____		
Curriculum _____		
Facilities planning _____		
Federal programs _____		
Federal regulations _____		
Operation & maintenance _____		
Personnel _____		
State regulations _____		
Student concerns _____		
Teacher negotiations _____		
Other: _____		
_____		
_____		

\*This should include committee work

=100%

=100%

Comments:

Please check (✓) who usually makes decisions in the areas listed below. If decisions are made by more than one of the groups listed across the top, double check (✓✓) the group with primarily decision making responsibility.

DECISION MAKERS DECISION AREAS	REAA Board	District Administration	Community School Committees	Principal/Principal-Teachers	Teachers	Other (Specify)
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Budget

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Curriculum

Elementary

- Course offerings
- Course content
- Text book selection


Secondary

- Course offerings
- Course content
- Text book selection


Facilities

- Scheduling
- Construction plans


Federal Programs

- Proposal initiation
- Proposal approval
- Program evaluation


Personnel

Hire/Fire

- Administrators
- Teachers
- Other


Evaluate

- Administrators
- Teachers
- Others


Student Affairs

- Rights and responsibilities
- Activities
- Travel


Other

--	--	--	--	--	--	--



1. What training did your REAA Board members experience? -- Please briefly describe:

Topic (Example: teacher nego- tiation)	Group Providing Training	Location	No. of Board members from your REAA attending	Method			Evaluation		
				Con- ference	Work- shop	Visiting Expert	Excellent	Good	Poor

\* 2 Can you identify training needs for your REAA Board that have been met and others which have not:

Met Training Needs	Unmet Training Needs

1. During your first year of operation, what types of assistance and in what areas has your REAA received from DOE (other than board training already noted)?

2. Has your REAA requested any type of assistance from DOE that has not been received? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please explain:

3. Has your REAA received assistance (contracted or at no cost) from any other source than DOE? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please list:

Type of Assistance	Group Providing	Satisfactory	
		Yes	No

\*4. Are there any services currently unavailable that you feel your REAA needs now or in the future? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please list:

- 1. How many CSCs are there in your REAA? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Of those, how many meet regularly? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Do you regularly receive minutes from these CSCs? Yes, from all \_\_\_\_\_  
 Yes, from some \_\_\_\_\_  
 No, from none \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Do you send your REAA board meeting minutes to the CSCs? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

To anyone else in the communities? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

To whom?

- 5. Does your REAA have a written policy concerning the functions and duties of the CSCs? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please attach.

- 6. Have training sessions been held for your CSCs? Yes, for all \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please describe: Yes, for some \_\_\_\_\_

No, for none \_\_\_\_\_

- 7. Does your REAA Board receive much input from the CSCs? Yes, from all \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, or what types of issues and how? Yes, from some \_\_\_\_\_

No, from none \_\_\_\_\_

- \* 8. Overall, how would you judge your relationships with the CSCs to have been this past year?

\_\_\_\_\_ excellent

\_\_\_\_\_ fair

\_\_\_\_\_ poor

\_\_\_\_\_ hopeless

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- \* 9. Do you see a need for Community School Committees? Why or why not?

Does your REAA have a specific position, opinions or interests related to the below listed topics--if yes, please briefly describe. Positive as well as negative comments are encouraged.

BIA Schools

Bilingual/Bicultural programs

State regulations/hearings

Certification

Village high schools

Regional Resource Centers

Federal programs

Curriculum planning

Fiscal resources

Student travel

Board travel

Municipal Development

SB 35

Given your experience as superintendent, please think back on Senate Bill 35 and the new REAA system and list what you feel are:

(a) its most positive features

(b) things which need to be changed

Given the background discussions which led to SB 35 and considering the issues/problems which came up in your REAA this past year (since it was organized), which issues were:

(Please list up to three for each category where applicable)

anticipated/resolved:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

unanticipated/resolved

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

anticipated/unresolved

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

unanticipated/unresolved

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

1. How effective do you feel SB 35 and the creation of REAAs have been in bringing local control of schools to rural Alaska?

2. Given your experience in local control of schools, has your interest in local government (municipal: borough or city):

\_\_\_\_\_ increased

\_\_\_\_\_ decreased

\_\_\_\_\_ stayed about the same

\_\_\_\_\_ no opinion

Please explain:

From your experience with the REAA Board, please describe two examples:

No.1 One where the Board acted effectively when confronted with a major problem or issue

and

No.2 One where the Board either did not act effectively or failed to take action when confronted with a major problem or issue

For each, describe:

(a) What conditions led up to this situation?

(b) What action was (or was not) taken?

(c) How did this effect the situation?

Example No. 1

(a)

(b)

(c)

Example No. 2

(a)

(b)

(c)



Given your experience as board members, please think back on Senate Bill 35 and the new REAA system and list what you feel are:

(a) its most positive features

(b) things which need to be changed

Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

After one year of operation as an REAA, what does your Board feel are its:

a. Most meaningful accomplishments

b. Most significant problems

Looking ahead, please list the high priority concerns of your REAA board for next year: (they need not be in order of importance)

11/14/77  
K. Hecht  
Second Draft

ANALYSIS OF STATE BOARD OF  
EDUCATION MINUTES: FY 1976-77  
(July 1, 1975 - June 30, 1977)

State Board of Education minutes were analyzed for FY '76 (July 1975 through June 1976), the year of transition from the Alaska State Operated School System to the Regional Educational Attendance Area system, and for FY '77 (July 1976 through June 1977), the first year of REAA operation.

ANALYSIS PROCESS

Approved minutes of the State Board of Education for those two years were read and coded for issues directly relating to the REAAs. Issues arose in general discussions of the Board, by Board action, or as brought to the board by others in attendance. Visitors to meetings were an especially important source of REAA-related comments in FY '77, as Board practice, to be discussed below, had been modified during the previous year to encourage more interaction with local boards at the State Board Meetings.

The analysis process had several limitations. There was considerable latitude for judgment about what constituted an REAA issue. Topics concerning all districts in the state, rural districts generally, or a unique situation in only one REAA were not usually considered a REAA topic. The greatest difficulty came in separating issues generated by or particular to the creation of the REAAs from general issues affecting all districts, such as regulations and hearings, and from rural issues which affect some districts other than REAAs, such as construction, hootch, and financing small schools. Most of these latter were not counted and their inclusion would have greatly increased the number of times REAA-related topics were discussed.

Further, the coding system did not take into account the amount of time directed to an issue, only that it had come up during the meeting. Some issues, for example, were brought up by one person and dismissed quickly while other issues generated lengthy discussions involving several people.

Given these limitations, the data provided by the analysis of State Board minutes generated the following types of information: (1) it indicated gross trends about the types of REAA issues discussed and the frequency of discussion; and (2) it provided an historic source for the identification of direct comment on REAA issues of special interest.

#### TRENDS

As a gross measure of incidences of REAA-related topics, given the limitations mentioned above, 88 REAA-related discussions were recorded from the 17 meetings analyzed. Fifty-seven separate topics were identified, although later some were easily grouped with others to form larger categories. These figures seem to indicate a wide range of subjects and frequent discussion of REAA-related topics, which is supported by an actual reading of the contents of the minutes. Discussions appear rather evenly spaced across meetings, with only one meeting showing no discussion of a REAA topic.

The State Board met eight times each of the years under study, plus one special session in FY'76. The location of meetings was less centered in Anchorage and Juneau in FY'77 than in FY'76, as can be seen in the chart below.

Location of Board Meetings	
FY'76 (8 meetings and 1 special session) Juneau (4) Anchorage (3) Kodiak Sitka	FY'77 (8 meetings) Juneau (2) Anchorage Fairbanks Ketchikan Kodiak Kotzebue & Nome Seward

This shift in meeting locations away from Juneau and Anchorage appeared to be a direct result of a Board priority.

*...at the July session of the State Board of Education, one of the priorities had been the Board's intention to get out and spend more time with the local boards. It had been decided that the first place to visit was to be the Northwest Arctic School District. [It was stated] that the Board feels very strongly that they want to assist local boards in every way, especially following their commitment to local control for the new districts. (9/76)*

Although only three REAA communities were sites for Board meetings, visitors from many of the other REAAs showed up at meetings in nearby (in Alaska terms) locations. At least one visitor, a superintendent, commented favorably on this approach to meeting location:

*[He] said that he appreciated seeing the Board in action and that they took the time to visit the outer districts so that the educators would have the opportunity to talk to them. He felt it a step in the right direction to get away from the urban centers and out into the rural areas. (9/76)*

The three most frequently mentioned REAA issues differed by year as as noted below:

Most frequently mentioned REAA issues	
FY'76	FY'77
School Board Development Reports to the Board on REAA progress Regulations--waive or postpone for REAAs	Finance Lau Compliance BIA School Transfer

Local control as related to REAAs was mentioned less frequently than those above, but equally in both years. REAA/Department of Education (DOE) relations was an issue in both years. As a topic, appreciation to established districts for their help to the REAAs was recorded only in FY'76. Topics of recall statute and high school programs were noted only in FY'77. Most other issues surfaced only once.

#### REAA-RELATED COMMENTS

The following comments are quoted directly from the approved Board Minutes. Issues are presented here in approximately the order of frequency with which they occurred over the two year period except for those noted under "Other Issues." This is not necessarily the same order they might be in if importance rather than frequency had been the criteria.

### REAA School Board Development/Training

For school board training, for the emerging districts \$373,000 was received. The boundary hearings, elections and regional resource centers planning will also be included in this amount. (7/75)

[Board member] felt it was very important that the State Department of Education assume the leadership role for developing a philosophy for school board training. It was requested that the Board receive a status report on school board training at each meeting. (7/75)

...providing assistance in planning programs for emerging and existing school districts ties in with decentralization of the unorganized borough schools activities. The Department also has a contract with NWREL to identify needs and suggest how the department can reorganize in order to respond to the kind of requests that will be coming from the new districts. (8/75)

Another concern is that after the initial school board training is completed, what assurances will they receive that assistance won't be dropped. (10/75)

...another area needing clarification is the term 'school board training' that has been used for activities relating to the decentralization....The Board felt that a position on school board training should be developed....It was determined that this should not be limited to just the REAA's, but should include other school boards as well. (12/75)

...Alaska Association of School Boards' training materials... are the same materials that he uses in training various school boards around the state, and that he will use with the REAA boards... the Association did increase its dues for this current year, and primarily in recognition of the fact that calls for assistance would go up with the emergence of the new districts. (1/76)

School board members and administrators around the state have been eager to help, and that is the only way a program like this [REAA school board development] can work. The department will coordinate others to go out and assist. (3/76)

[A REAA Superintendent] felt that the school district itself should be responsible for the training of new board members, calling upon the expertise of the older members, the State Board or the Department of Education. But to have this function totally sponsored and supported, with guidelines written by the Department, he felt, is a type of inbreeding. He felt that board members totally trained by the Department would mean the loss of some of the individual thinking, philosophies and differences of the districts. (12/76)

## REAA Finance Problems

Senator—also stated that during the last session, the State Senate voted unanimously on the budget, which included the Intent authorizing the Department of Education to come in with supplemental appropriation requests. He felt it was not the intent of Senate Bill 35 to cut lunch programs, teacher aides, janitors, etc., but that it was realized that decentralizing the State Operated School System is going to cost more. (9/76)

...Superintendent of the— School District was concerned that he had not received procedures on how to follow up to the legislature on supplemental appropriations. (1/77)

...Superintendent of the— School District commented on HB 212, which would revise the foundation support program. He stated that his district is currently funded at 133-3/4% area differential, but there is a very strong possibility that they will be reduced to 112%. In past years, they have been adequately funded, and this cut will put them in severe financial difficulties. (5/77)

...Superintendent of the— School District added that his district will also suffer from the same cut in area differential. It was his feeling that the cost differential cutting has no data on which to base the change. (5/77)

President of — School Board expressed his concern over the high cost of insurance. (5/77)

President of the— School District expressed his concern over the high cost of utilities. His district is presently paying for many of the total community utility costs, while the school itself is using only a small percentage of this total. (5/77)

## REAA/BIA Relations

[Board Member] commented that since Kotzebue was the first place that had the major takeover of the BIA school, it will set the tone for the rest, and the success or failure of what happens in Kotzebue will cause other areas to question whether they wish to join the REAAs, in view of the cut-backs. (9/76)

[The Commissioner] responded that the Constitution of the State of Alaska states that there shall be one system of education within the state. It is the policy of the Department that if a new district wants to take over a BIA school, it is their decision along with the community that is affected. (12/76)

[Board Member] stated that during his time on the State Board it has been understood by the Department, the State Board and the BIA, that these school buildings should meet state standards, but that transfers were not based solely on that fact. What is best educationally is the overriding factor. (12/76)