

CNER Report Asks Education Change

FAIRBANKS — Sweeping changes in elementary and secondary education in the unorganized borough of Alaska are called for in a report released by the University of Alaska's Center for Northern Educational Research (CNER).

The recommended changes came from various concerned groups, throughout the state during the past 11 months. Culminating activity of this effort to obtain "grassroots" input was a three-day forum on education in the unorganized borough held in Anchorage in early December.

Highlights of the recommendations:

— Proposed state legislation concerning education in the unorganized borough must be de-

ferred, in favor of legislation to implement recommendations of the report.

— The Alaska State-Operated School System (ASOSS) must be limited in its responsibility and must be phased out on a specific, legislatively-set timetable.

— ASOSS and Bureau of Indian Affairs' schools should be phased out no later than 1980.

— New school districts should be formed to supervise and operate the educational program in the presently unorganized borough.

— The transition from unorganized borough to organized school districts should be supervised by the State Department

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of Education.

— On-base military schools should operate under contract with local school districts, rather than with ASOSS (with the exception of Adak).

The new report is titled "Pre-Higher Education in the Unorganized Borough: Analysis and Recommendations." It was prepared at the joint request of the Alaska Legislative Interim Committee on PreHigher Education and the Alaska State Department of Education in cooperation with the Human Resources Committee of the Alaska Federation of Natives.

The report was compiled by the CNER staff. Authors are Drs. Frank Darnell, CNER director, James Orvik, and Kathryn Hecht. CNER worked closely with representative state and regional organizations to solicit and analyze the divergent opinions.

Conclusions of the report note a universal dissatisfaction with the delivery of educational services in the unorganized borough and a lack of a single clear answer to eliminate this dissatisfaction.

Most legal conditions necessary for residents of the unorganized borough to establish local control of schools exist in the statutes concerning municipalities, the report states, and it goes on to suggest the undesirability of creating any new kinds of special service districts. The Alaska State-Operated School System was cited as an example of a special service system that

isn't working satisfactorily.

The report stressed the willingness and ability of local residents to assume local educational responsibilities and the necessity for a planned program to acquaint them with services which are available to them.

A state program of incentive planning grants was proposed to aid citizens in forming the information, planning, and training services during the formation and early operation of the districts. Special help in these areas should be provided by the State Division of Community and Regional Affairs in cooperation with the Department of Education.

Emphasized throughout the report was the need for continuing involvement of citizens in the development of any new plans for school governance in the unorganized borough. At the same time, the report recommended that those communities with adequate population and economic base be required to incorporate by 1975 as first class cities or third class boroughs.

An in-depth study of the effect of these proposed changes upon the school finance program is called for in the report.

Copies of the report have been distributed to the sponsoring groups, including all members of the legislature.