

Study Recommends Integrated Urban Regional Hi-Schools

Study Also Favors Large High School Based at Bethel

A special study conducted of the regional high school program for the State of Alaska has recommended in favor of a system of integrated urban based regional high schools to serve the youths from Alaska's many native villages.

The only rural regional high school to be located at Bethel serving the high populated Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta areas.

The plan for urban based integrated regional high schools was recommended over an alternative plan calling for smaller regional high schools to be located in the larger villages around the State. Principal locations of the in-

tegrated urban regional high schools would be Fairbanks and Anchorage, with other possible locations at Kodiak, Sitka, Juneau, and Ketchikan.

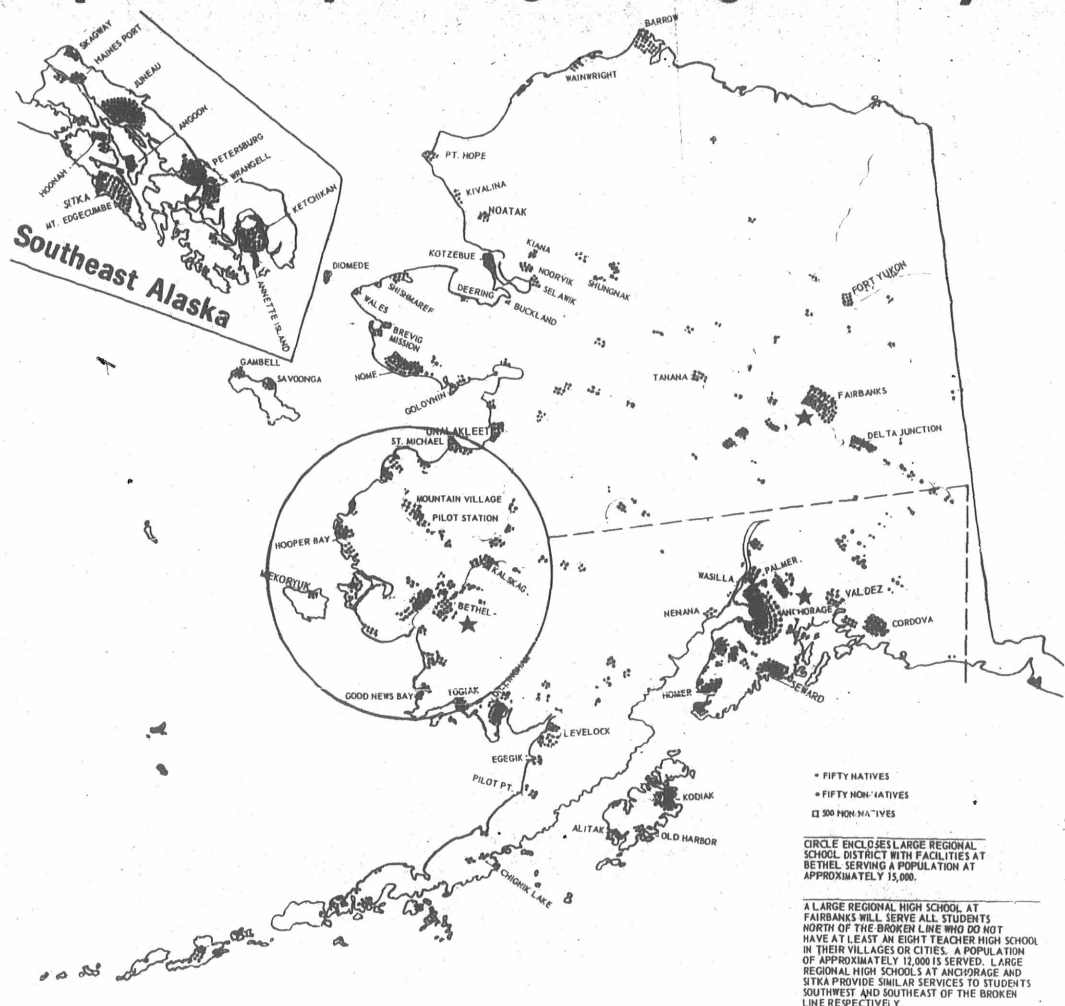
The study was conducted for the State Department of Education by the Training Corporation of America, and grew out of the regional high school legislation that passed the legislature last year.

The regional high school bond issue, resulting from the same legislation and providing funds for school construction, was approved by the voters of the State at the Nov. 8th general election.

The study was prepared by Dr. John Garcia, who visited

(Continued on Page 4)

Map of the Proposed Regional High School System



Study Recommends Integrated Urban Regional Hi-Schools

(Continued from Page 1)

the State last August and September, and the study is now being circulated for comments and suggestions.

The recommendation of the larger urban based high schools is in the hopes of many small communities throughout the state, who hoped to obtain boarding facilities for students from nearby villages. However, the study recommends the continuation of small community high schools for larger villages.

High cost of construction and probable high turnover of teachers in rural based high schools were significant factors working against recommendation of small village based regional schools.

However, Dr. Garcia, voiced several strong warnings concerning the urban regional high schools, and indicated that their success depended largely on how they were implemented.

The study indicated that a barracks dormitory type boarding arrangement in the urban areas was least desirable, and that such an arrangement would encourage dropouts. On the other side of the coin, the study recommended a fos-

ter home arrangement with students living with carefully selected families. Another alternative would be cottage dormitories with small numbers of students living in each cottage.

Under the urban arrangement students would live in dormitories, or with private families; and attend local urban high schools. The local high school in turn would be subsidized by the state and would perhaps be able to offer a broader curriculum due to the number of increased students.

Advantages listed in favor of the integrated school included the broad program of instruction in academic and technical fields possible in a larger school, and stressed the social and cultural involvements with a broader culture as the most important advantage.

The per pupil annual cost of the integrated urban regional high school would also be lowest, ranging to a possible low of \$2,000.

This compares with a high per pupil figure of up to \$4,500 encountered at the present Nome Vocational School.

However, the report warned that urban based regional high schools would not necessarily contribute in the near future to the social and economic development of the villages. It points out that the urban oriented school might hasten disintegration of certain villages by enhancing opportunities for young people elsewhere.

"In placing the child in an urban environment we will enable him to learn alternative ways of life and give him a choice among these alternatives that he would probably never have in his village," the report stated.

The integrated school concept would further require a certain amount of curriculum and teaching readjustment on the part of local urban schools in order to meet the special needs of the native child ren, the report said.

Specially trained guidance counselors were suggested. It was further indicated many students might suffer from cultural shock.

"In any case, it is believed that a cultural shock in the context of a flexible individualized high school sys-

tem is preferable to a shock in a rather inflexible college system with rigid standards of performance," the study said.

The study pointed out that teacher turnover in large urban centers of Alaska was considerably lower than in the bush. Rural turnover is about 40% per year compared with a rate of 20% for urban areas. The national average is about 14%. The study indicated the relation between an effective educational system and teacher retention was great.

The study also pegged construction costs as much as four times of Seattle for bush areas, while urban areas were considerably less costly.

Recommended for the Bethel area was a 700 to 1,000 student high school to serve the high populated delta areas. Over 12,000 people live within 120 miles of Bethel in some forty villages.

The study indicated oil and gas potential, fishing, and the deep water port of Bethel, held out hopes of economic progress in that area justifying the rural regional high

school.

The alternate plan for smaller regional high schools in the larger villages throughout the State might have seen high schools in communities with as little population as 600. Boarding students would be brought in from nearby villages.

The plan showed proposed high schools in Barrow, Nome, Kotzebue, St. Lawrence Island, Unalakleet, Huslia, Tanana, Fort Yukon, Fairbanks, Nenana, St. Marys, Hooper Bay, Kodiak, Dillingham, Levelock, Valdez, Cordova, and southeastern communities.

The advantage of such a system would be that between 25% to 90% of the students might be able to live at home, depending on the size of the village where the regional school was located.

The advantage of such small schools are the fact a student gets to attend school near home, in a cultural environment he is familiar with, but apparently the small school program runs afoul of the already strained state budget.