

# Bush High schools get good ratings

Alaska School Board Presidents are generally satisfied with the ability of small high schools to provide for basic academic needs of rural youth, according to a study revealed this week by the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB).

Conducted by the Institute of Social and Economic Research at the University of Alaska in Cooperation with the Association of Alaska School Boards, the study examines school board presidents' attitudes toward Alaska's rural high schools. Most board presidents have personal knowledge of both the boarding school and village high school situation and most have lived in both rural and urban settings.

"The urban skeptic looks at the small high school and says: 'This thing can't work. It's not a real school,'" concludes the study. But "board presidents see the village high school not as the whole of rural students' education, but as

its center."

Thirty-one of the 35 school board presidents who have small high schools in their districts were interviewed in the study and 74 percent favor having small high schools in the communities in their districts. Only about a third supported reopening Mt. Edgecumbe, with most preferring other options for strengthening rural education, including mini-courses, traveling teachers, short-term boarding programs for special purposes, and, if necessary a regional boarding program.

But school board presidents are not satisfied with the capacity of small high schools to prepare students for the academic and emotional demands of college and to prepare them to deal with different kinds of cultural and social situations. The small high school needs that school board presidents hear most about from their con-

stituents are: 1) more variety in courses; 2) more extracurricular activities; 3) better facilities; and 4) more vocational education.

On balance, village high schools are good because they allow young people to grow up with their families; students receive more personal attention and intensive tutoring from teachers, while the scale of local education provides more chance to participate in sports and maximize personal use of school facilities. According to the study, Alaska school board presidents see the ideal village high school as a hub with roads stretched out so that educational resources may enter and students may leave for special needs; not as a whole of rural students' education but as it center.

Researchers for the study included Dr. Judith Kleinfeld, G. Williamson McDiarmid and Sharon Young.