

Senate school committee calls for 12-point program

The Senate Special Committee on School Performance this month proposed a 12-point program to raise levels of student achievement in Alaska's schools.

Chaired by former Sen. Willie Hensley, D-Kotzebue, the committee is calling for legislative adoption of provisions for accountability, grants to encourage school-based change and an enhancement in the ability of the Department of Education to foster school improvement.

To encourage school-based change, the committee is urging, among other things, a program of competitive grants to individual schools to help them redesign schooling practices to become more effective. Under the committee's proposal, schools could win grants of up to \$50,000 to engage in planning with students and their parents to improve the performance of their schools.

A competitive grant program for colleges and universities to enable them to carry out complementary activities is also proposed.

The committee's report endorses the Department of Education's plan to ad-

minister a uniform basic skills achievement test and proposes two additional approaches to obtaining accountability from the schools: a "report card" to be prepared by individual schools on themselves and the filing of an annual plan for school improvement by each school district.

In its report, the committee also calls for the transfer of state-funded broadcasting to the Department of Education, provision for alternative requirements for teacher certification, funding for specialists on education issues, appointment of a school improvement coordinator and minority affairs policy assistant, increased authority for village advisory school boards, study of Mt. Edgecumbe for summer use and dissemination of information about effective schooling.

The committee also urges the establishment of a joint committee of the House and Senate to continue the work of the special committee.

The total cost of the committee's proposals is \$1.8 million, calculated by the committee to be equivalent to 10 cents a day for each child enrolled in school.