

DOE plans television network

By LOUISE DONHAUSER
Tundra Times Staff

Instead of being reprimanded for watching television school students in rural Alaska soon may be asked to watch television as part of their class work.

The Alaska Department of Education is planning to start a television network called LEARN/Alaska and the network will be combined with audio conferencing to allow communication between broadcasters and viewers. The network will also air some Alaskan productions.

The Department of Education (DOE) hopes to have the network going out to 80 communities in Alaska by late September. The network would be on the air seven days a week. Primary users of the network would be educators, elementary, high school and college students.

Before viewers receive the network, a 10-watt, mini-television transmitter has to be installed in each community. Each mini-transmitter costs approximately \$40,000. DOE received \$1.125 million from the state Legislature last year to purchase the mini-television transmitters. DOE has applied for 100 televi-

sion licenses. It takes anywhere from three to six months for the Federal Communications Commission to approve a license. Bill McGuahn from the University of Alaska, Anchorage said, adding, "These (licenses) seem to be moving along pretty well."

Unlike regular television stations, DOE's network will allow broadcasters and viewers to communicate. An audio conference system will be installed to allow communication.

Jennifer Wilke, DOE instructional television coordinator said, "What we're developing is audio conferencing for the educational system. The Legislative Affairs Office already has a number of audio conference terminal throughout Alaska.

Wilke said some communities have more than one audio conference terminal. According to Wilke, more than 100 education-affiliated people have been trained to operate the audio conference terminals. DOE was appropriated \$90,000 to develop an educational audio conference system.

The network will also show Alaskan productions.

Alaska Film Studios will pro-

duce four programs. AFS, which is based in Anchorage, went to Petersburg, Tununak and Hoonah to film each program. A program was also filmed in Anchorage. Each film is about one or two children in the communities.

Alaska Video Production which is based in Fairbanks, will do a pilot program for junior high school students on careers in Fairbanks.

KAKM, Anchorage's public television station, will do a pilot program on the geography of Cook Inlet. Elementary teachers and students in grade 406 would be the primary audience of this program.

Alaska Review, another Anchorage-based production house, will produce a series of 16, 10-minute programs. The topics vary from iceworms to oil spills.

Funding for the programs also came out of a legislative bill that was passed last year. Some \$775,000 was appropriated for the programs. Part of the \$775,000 will be spent on instructional television guides and on educational video use.

The network will be funded on a yearly basis, through the Department of Administration and the Telecommunications Office.