

Parental Involvement

Critical Education Need

In a recent statement prepared for a meeting by the Governor's Cross-Cultural Education Commission, Byron Mallott, new Executive Director of the Rural Alaska Community Action Program, said that one of the most critical needs in both the State of Alaska's and the Bureau of Indian Affairs Rural Education Program is parental and community involvement in the development of basic educational policy.

"Advisory boards are not good enough," Mallott stated, "for they do not place the ultimate burden for the development of the local education program on the parents or the community."

"Alaska's rural education system is one imposed upon communities not one developed with active, local participation and responsibility. This needs to be remedied."

"RurALCAP administers 40 headstart programs throughout rural Alaska with an enrollment of some 930 youngsters. Preschool education in Alaska needs to be expanded to include all of Alaska's villages in a quality preschool educational system which ideally should begin the educational process at an even earlier

age than 3 years which is the standard at present," Mallott commented.

The Executive Director further stated that "because most rural schools only provide for an 8th grade education locally, most rural people do not gain an educational achievement much beyond grade 8."

"This indicates to me that Alaska must make a high priority of the establishment of high schools throughout rural Alaska. The regional high school system is a giant step in the right direction and needs to be established quickly."

In closing, Mallott said that it was his belief that the development of a quality educational system for rural Alaska including preschool and high school programs must be given the highest priority or Alaska's rural native people would in coming years not be able to keep pace with other Alaskans.

Mallott commended Governor Miller for his concern and his desire to confront the problems of cross-cultural education as evidence by the establishment of the Cross-Cultural Education Commission.