

Some ABC's

in education

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(Editor's Note: If you have questions or suggestions regarding this or a future "ABCs" article, please let the author know by writing him at the Center for Cross-Cultural Studies, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, 99701, or by calling (907)479-7185.

The recent Beaufort Sea Outer Continental Shelf oil and gas lease sale has received much attention in the state's press and among the state's citizens. That lease sale, combined with the international energy crunch, helps to focus on public interest on energy issues. These issues can be effectively used as learning tools in the classroom. Using the recent lease sale as an example, one can develop many classroom and library activities, particularly in anticipation of the scheduled 1980 lease sales which will include the Gulf of Alaska and the Kodiak areas.

Information about the respective lease areas can be obtained from state and federal offices. The Legal Notices section of any newspaper lists agencies which can provide further information to the students and teachers. The environmental impact statement for the proposed sites provides an excellent source of information. That information, though seemingly technical and vast, has good indices which isolate the information being sought. Maps accompany the text. In the case of the Beaufort Sea impact statement, the maps proved to be valuable for locating the various types of wildlife and their migration routes, etc. In general, impact statements are helpful to teachers because the contents include many disciplines and the narrative is non-technical in intent.

Other information can be obtained from the various agencies supporting or opposing the sales. Students could listen to the news, comb the newspapers for the names of such organizations, and then write to them for further information. That information could then be organized into classroom files and used by students to prepare visual displays for younger students or for display in the community, or possibly on the local mini-watt TV station. Speech students could debate the relative merits of the lease sales. Science students could analyze the scientific data and make their own recommendations, not only in a mock setting, but also to government officials who have a particular interest in public testimony about such matters. Local, state, and federal officials might be invited to visit the classroom and to provide continuing information as the date of the sales approaches. Representatives of private industry could also be invited to present their position on these important lease sales.

Students could also arrange pen-pal exchanges with students in schools which are close to the proposed lease area to learn of their counterparts' observations, and the human impacts of the proposed sales.

The outer continental shelf gas and oil lease sales are issues of importance to Alaskans, and teachers can use them to guide study, research discussion, and debate within classrooms. These energy issues are important ones, not only for classroom study but also for the future of all students currently in the state's classrooms.