

Nome School System Uneasy

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(SECOND OF TWO STORIES)

The doors of the Nome Public School and the William E. Beltz Regional High School swung open on the same day this year in preparation for the time when all the students will enter through one set of doors—those of the Nome-Beltz School.

The time for consolidation is still a couple of years away and will require a doubling of the classroom space at Beltz, the site of the merged school.

However, school officials

from both systems are taking small steps now in order to make the transition as easy as possible.

During a recent interview at Nome, these officials looked to a brighter future as they discussed the changes now taking place.

The past has held little brightness.

As discussed in last week's article, both schools have been strongly criticized: Nome for its loss of accreditation and poor teaching facilities; Beltz, a boarding school, for a poor academic program and lack of recreational and planned activities. Both have about 150 students in grades 9-12.

The Beltz Regional School Board is scheduled to meet this week in Nome to discuss the merger and other plans for the two school. The board is comprised of representatives from each of the villages sending students to Beltz.

Superintendent of both schools, Ira Alley, pointed out that the board will also be reviewing educational specifications for the merged school which have already been approved by the Nome School Board.

These specifications contain a guiding philosophy of education for the region as well as a

detailed breakdown of the proposed resource center that will offer films, tapes, and slides as well as the traditional library books. Also, suggested was the

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selors who might be able to direct students in the vocational arts.

As one step toward consolidation, Alley explained, the two schools are operating on the exact same schedules for the first time.

Furthermore, some of the students are being exchanged on a two-hour block for certain classes. The Beltz School is about three and a half miles from the downtown Nome School.

And, Alley added, some of the teachers are splitting their time between the two schools.

Also, a joint effort will be made to attain accreditation for both schools. Nome High School lost its accreditation about 2 years ago. Beltz, which opened in 1966, as a new school is required to conduct a three-year self-evaluation before seeking accreditation.

A steering committee was appointed at a joint meeting of the two faculties, Alley said, to seek accreditation of Nome and Beltz simultaneously so that when they merge, the merged school will be accredited.

Possibly, the most noticeable changes in the schools have been in personnel.

Alley, a former elementary principal in Nome, replaces Clifford Meyers, who reportedly left the position to further his education.

Beltz High School has a new principal, Donald Flipppo from Mobile, Ala. During the interview, he seemed more than willing to meet the students halfway in improving conditions at the school.

The dormitory operation there will be headed by John Leonard, who has taught at the school for a couple of years. A largely-built man, Leonard has received compliments from several sources on his ability to communicate and work with the students.

Concerning specific changes at Beltz, Flipppo said, the school will try to transport as many teachers as possible out to the villages on breaks or holidays so that they can better understand the background of their students.

A program to place students on jobs first in the Nome community and then in Fairbanks and Anchorage for a month during the school year will be continued and expanded to reach more students. Under this program, the student lives with his employer and must depend on his earnings to support himself.

Also, an aviation course offering ground training has been added to the regular curriculum.

Concerning disciplinary problems at the school, the new principal said that he and the dorm director would be cooperating on such matters with each other and with the teachers and would approach each case on an individual basis.

Furthermore, the community is being asked to take more of an interest in the Beltz students rather than feeling that the young people are no concern of theirs.

As pointed out in a report by the Human Rights Commission, one source of the disciplinary problems seemed to be a lack of recreational and planned activities for the students.

A new gym now under construction and slated for completion in November or December may help alleviate the problem.

Also, according to Leonard, classes are being offered Monday through Friday in the dorm on carving, art, alcoholism education, piano, organ and other topics.

When possible, native speakers will be brought in. And two interns will be on hand to conduct a recreational program, he said.

In the cafeteria, a native food table has been added to the regular menus thus providing such foods as reindeer and dried salmon to the native students.

Robert Willard, executive director of the State Human Rights Commission, said last week that as soon as possible he would be reviewing the operation at Beltz to see which of the changes recommended by the commission had been implemented. These and other findings will be revealed, he said, in a report to the state legislature the first of the year.