

# Some ABCs

## in education

By RON INOUE

*Editor's Note: If you have any questions or suggestions regarding this or future "ABC's" articles, 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.*

Festivals, celebrations, or other local commemorations can provide a theme for students and teachers to build some exciting learning activities. Does your community have an annual festival or celebration? Many places across the state do, but the purpose for each varies.

Is the purpose of a commemoration of an historical event like the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4th? Is it an event which doesn't have a set date, but depends on a culminating activity like Ketchikan's "Blueberry Festival," when craftsmen and local organizations set up booths for the sale of food, arts and crafts, and things made of blueberries? Does it honor people as the Barrow "Nalaquataq" honors the whalers? Does it have a special mythological origin like the Cordova "Ice Worm Festival," or create its own activities like the "Fur Rendezvous" in Anchorage?

Students could prepare written histories of a celebration's origins. Photographs and sketches could be made of the current year's celebration to document the activities and become part of the written report. Students could also be involved in planning the event, assisting the members of the local organizing body with the pre-planning, execution, and clean-up.

A literature review could be made of the historic literature to learn the basis of the local celebration. Is it a continuation of a more traditional event like the "bladder festivals" or the infrequent joining of two villages together? Old newspapers and photograph albums in the community might be searched for clues about individuals who had roles in past celebrations. Visual displays could be shown in local store windows; oral discussions might be featured on the radio station, or a short video tape could be made for the local mini-TV or cable system.

Reports on how the local festival has changed could be presented to local civic organizations during luncheon addresses. Local merchants could be interviewed to learn if significant numbers of non-residents come to attend the festivities and, if so, how their attendance affects the local economy. Do the health clinic, fire department, and police department need to be expanded to anticipate the influx of nonresidents? How extensive does the planning for such events need to be? Do stores need to order their increased supplies several months in advance to be prepared for the festivities? Do the air charter operators have significantly increased operations?

Is the festival local or regional in impact? Do people from the village, who are now living elsewhere, traditionally return for the festivities? Do families plan reunions during the festivities? What roles do civic, religious and private organizations play in the celebration? In reviewing all of these factors, possibly students may determine age groups of people who are currently not provided activities in the celebration and for whom such activities may be presented in the future. Analyzing local festivities can provide a way for students to research and broaden their understanding of local activities which are usually taken for granted.