

Educators want Edgecumbe closed

Associated Press

Mount Edgecumbe boarding school in Sitka would remain closed if rural and urban school board members attending a weekend conference of the Association of Alaska School Boards have their way.

Such a closure likely would touch off fireworks in the next legislative session.

Supporters say Mount Edgecumbe — formerly run by the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs, and turned over to Alaska this year — could provide some 200 students with specialized education not available in their hometowns.

The school, which was closed this year while its fate is decided, has powerful supporters in the Alaska Federation of Natives, the state Board of Education and the administration of Gov. Bill Sheffield.

Its importance in educating rural students has been questioned since the state started building high schools in far-flung areas of Alaska in the 1970s.

State Sen. John Sackett, R-Ruby, has argued the state should not take over the facility, despite a \$22 million grant to rehabilitate the old building. But Rep. Al Adams,

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D-Kotzebue, has been a strong defender of the school.

Rural school boards' representatives argued during the weekend conference that Mt. Edgecumbe would take some

of the best students from their districts. And representatives from Anchorage and other Alaska cities said the \$6 million to operate the school is needed for other programs.

Robert Greene, the association's executive director, said

the conference was told that Sheffield was preparing a budget for next year which reflects no increase in educational funding. The school boards' representatives passed a resolution urging that the school receive no money.