

No "Dumb Boys" With No Grade

Part III in a series on
Bush Schools

By MARY MOSES

Increased interest in local community control of schools has often led to looking for ways to make the schools better. Even under the presently common advisory board system, when enough parents and community members take a real interest in the schools, it usually leads to new and better programs.

The nongraded, individualized elementary school at Tanana last school year was a very successful

example of the improvement community interest can make.

Last winter, the children at Tanana were placed in levels, not grades, grouped by reading ability. There were 16 levels in the first six years of school. Each child worked through the levels at his own speed. He went to a new level just as soon as, but not before, he had learned all the skills in the old level. Reading, language skills, and math were taught in levels at each child's individual rate.

This system has several advantages. One is that no one ever fails. Some go faster than others, but everyone "passes" from level to level when he's

ready. Another advantage is that every child is doing work that he is able to do. No child is "lost" in a class doing work too hard. No child is bored by work too easy. A third advantage is that the levels are very systematic: the teachers and the children all know exactly what they must learn, and in what order. There are no "holes" in what is learned.

The nongraded system at Tanana was the result of continued community interest in the school. Three years ago a large school committee of about 30 parents, teachers, community members and older students was formed. The committee met once or twice a month to discuss ways to make the school better. No one was satisfied with the school program the way it was. The nongraded idea was one of the committee's suggestions for improvement.

The following year, the school staff spent the entire year planning and preparing for the non-graded school. It didn't happen overnight. It was a lot of hard work for the teachers and administrators but they did it because the community wanted it. The advisory board strongly supported the idea also, and granted the teachers planning time and other help as needed.

When the nongraded program was started, standard report card systems were also discarded. The new way was a longer report form, which told exactly what the student could do and what his weaknesses were. There were no A, B, C, D, and F grades. Parents came to the school to talk to the teachers several times during the year, and especially any time a child had difficulty learning a new thing. The parents were always told exactly how each child was doing, and often the parents gave the children a lot of help.

It took a little time for the students, teachers, and parents to get used to the new way. Some were not too happy with it at first. But the school board kept supporting the idea and by the end of the year every teacher felt it was a success. Most of the parents really liked it because the children were learning more, and seemed happier. The achievement test scores showed improvement.

One little boy who had spent four years in school and failed to learn to read summed it up in an essay at the end of the year: "I am nine years old and I have been in school four years. This year I learned to read and write better. I am not a dumb boy any more. I am a smart boy now."

Ex-GIs May Enroll

(Reprint from the Calistemo Erimii "the semi-monthly newsletter of the Calista Corporation")

According to Morris Thompson, Area Director for Bureau of Indian Affairs, people who were in the military service as of March 30 may still have time to enroll. These people are protected by the Soldier's and Sailor's Relief Act, which exempts them from the March 30 deadline.

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Bilingual Spreads

Thirty-Two Villages Now Included

By JOHN KITO
Director Bilingual Education

The Alaska State-Operated Schools Department of Bilingual Education is conducting in-service training workshops in Inupiat, Yupik, Athabaskan and Aleut which involve training native people in literacy, classroom management and techniques for 32 rural Alaskan villages. The workshops are open for any village which is in the general language area.

Since the fall of 1972, the development of Bilingual Education, with the aid of the legislation passed in 1972, the program has increased greatly. Initially, there were two programs. By the middle of the winter of 1973, there were 20 Alaska State-Operated School System villages participating, not including the B.I.A. effort which has 7 in the Yupik area.

With the policy of community based effort and decision, many Title I eligible sites planned and developed their own program. They number 15. Recently, our effort has been concentrated on the Inupiat language area and we are involved with the development and training of 11 more Eskimo sites.

The total number of Native Language Instructors now working with the Alaska State-Operated School System is 65 not including all Title I village participants. The total number of villages now participating in the language program numbers 36.

We are presently working to develop additional programs in all areas this year. We have just graduated 35 Inupiat trainees at Nome. These people will go back to their village and put into practice what they have learned.

There are presently 40 ASOSS personnel and B.I.A. people being trained at Bethel in the Yupik language. They anticipate completion of the training August 10, 1973.

There is also training going on in Atka, Alaska, 4 Aleut trainees, and Huslia, Alaska, 8 trainees, all of whom should complete their training next month.

The Alaska State-Operated School System is operating

Native Language Programs in the following language areas: Yupik, Aleut, Athabaskan, and Inupiat. We have used consultants, resource people, Summer Institute of Linguistics personnel and professional linguists to reach our goals of increasing self-image, academic achievement and literacy of ones own language.

Culture Shock

Alaska Methodist University at Anchorage has been awarded a \$190,000 grant from the Carnegie Corp. of New York to improve education of Native students.

Thirty-nine per cent of the student body at AMU is drawn from the Native population.

John Picton, university president, said, "Alaska Natives have not been able to truly affect the education available to them because so much of it has been actually a transplant of the pattern of the lower 48."

"This grant will allow us to tackle some of the basic problems of Alaskan Natives as they move from a subsistence culture to a more cash-oriented economy brought on by Alaskan pipeline activity and the Alaskan Native Claims Settlement," Picton said.

The funds are to go to two areas. First, to lessen culture shock for students coming in from bush villages and secondly, to devise a counseling system to provide the individualized academic support and attention necessary for minority students in an unfamiliar situation and to develop the curriculum and teaching styles that work on cross-cultural lines.

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Minimum of a Bachelor's Degree and eligible for Alaska Teachers Certificate. Administrative experience essential. Knowledge of Alaska Native Affairs and culture essential.

Make application prior to August 10, 1973.

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\$22,300 - 23,500 depending upon training and experience.

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COORDINATOR INDIAN EDUCATION ACT PROPOSAL

APPLICANTS:

Education should include Associate Arts Degree, with a Bachelor's Degree in Education or Social Services desirable. Knowledge of Alaska Native Affairs and culture essential.

Make application prior to August 10, 1973.

SALARY:

\$14,000 - 21,800 depending on training and experience.

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WANTED

SOCIAL WORKER INDIAN EDUCATION ACT PROPOSAL

APPLICANTS:

Bachelor's Degree in Social Services or Guidance and Counseling desirable. Successful experience in Social Services or related field. Knowledge of Alaska Native Culture essential.

Make application prior to August 10, 1973.

SALARY:

\$10,500 - 12,500 without Degree
\$12,500 - 16,000 with Degree

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