

Teacher Mobility Stabilizes

The Department of Education reported that the number of professional workers in all public schools for the 1968-69 school year totaled 3,710. Of this number 741 taught in Alaska for the first time. These figures represent a 20 per cent turnover of staff. This compares to 22.4 per cent in 1967-68.

Of the 344 teachers teaching in the rural schools, only 48 were new to Alaska. This represents a very low turnover of 14 per cent, as compared to a 25 per cent of rural teachers in 1967-68.

Commissioner of Education Cliff R. Hartman indicated that a number of factors contribute to reducing mobility of teachers in rural areas. The Alaska Rural Schools Project at the University has provided in-service training and opportunities for advanced

degrees.

The increase in salaries has been a contributing factor. Improved living conditions for teachers and better teaching facilities also enhance holding power. Federal programs have been instrumental in providing more equipment and supplies and other teaching aids.

The State-Operated School Agency has been able to provide more personal contact with teachers in the rural areas, all of which improves rapport, working conditions, and helps to eliminate "cabin fever." The Commissioner reported that the small school districts; such as, Yakutat, Pelican, King Cove, and Hoonah, have a high turnover rate each year. Some of the factors listed above, working in reverse, undoubtedly contribute to this high

mobility rate.

It is interesting to note that 11 teachers who taught in district schools during 1967-68 transferred to the rural school system in 1968-69. The Commissioner pointed out that the State should continue its efforts to retain public school professional workers.

Administrative and instructional continuity of staff is important in developing and implementing curriculum and instructional improvements on a year-to-year basis.

Attitude of the community towards teachers, towards the school as an agency, working conditions, and employee housing are all factors that are as important as salary in reducing teacher turnover.