

Lind issues call for education cooperation

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State Education Commissioner Marshall Lind Friday urged the Native Community to work closely with the state Department of Education to improve the effectiveness of education in both urban and rural Alaska.

In a speech before the Alaska Native Education Association, Lind said that the Department realizes that the drop-out rate for Alaska Natives is high throughout the State.

"The Department is aware that one of the reasons for drop-outs in rural Alaska is high teacher turnover,"

Lind declared.

"To increase teacher quality and longevity, the department has set up a Teacher Orientation Program in cooperation with the University of Alaska. This summer, sixty new teachers will take cultural awareness courses to prepare them for life in the rural areas. Orientation coordinators will then monitor the teachers' progress for a full year," he said.

Since the program is experimental, Lind requested that ANEA monitor the program for evaluation purposes. He also said that in the future, all teachers may have to take the program for State cer-

tification.

Another reason for drop-outs is the lack of Alaska Natives in teaching and administrative positions.

"The department has had a hard time recruiting qualified Alaska Natives. I am currently holding the position of Bilingual Education Coordinator open for an Alaska Native. I have also requested funds for a commissioner's assistant position to be filled by a minority Alaskan.

According to Commissioner Lind, the department realizes that there are many reasons students drop out. For instance, more Native-related materials are needed.

The Bilingual Materials Development Center headed by Dr. Tupou Pulu, has been cut from the federal budget. The Department of Education (DOE) is going to try to fund the program. The DOE has also requested 20 million dollars to establish a Special Education Program for the entire state.

To solve other problems, the department needs to do more research.

"We desperately need to learn more about the other reasons causing students to drop out," Lind reported. "We need research, more local input and more parent participation."

Governor Hammond recently created a Commission on Effective Schooling. Commissioner Lind believes that the commission should help the DOE to identify the problems and set up a mechanism which will enable the rural public to participate in policy making.

The commission will be holding hearings throughout the state. Jenny Alowa, an Inupiat working with the Eskimo Teacher Education Program in Nome is on the Commission. Commissioner Lind urged the ANEA to work with Alowa to insure input from throughout the entire Native community.