

Student reaction favorable

Many innovative programs are being developed in the Northwest Arctic School District. Will they work? Will young people weaned on English and growing up with satellite TV really be able to learn the language of their

forefathers and make it a part of their lives?

Although the final answer will be decades in coming, enough changes have already been made to allow members of that most important group, the students themselves, to

begin forming some opinions.

"It's great that we are doing this now," says Emma Goodwin, a senior at Kotzebue High School. "I only wish that they had started this a long time ago, when I was younger."

Jackie Schaeffer also feels the program will be of more benefit to the young.

"You enjoy learning a new language when you are young," Schaeffer explains. "It is fun, you can pick it up fast. But when you are our age, it is extremely difficult work."

Gretchen Jessup, recalls some of the difficulties she has faced in learning her Native language. "We were shown a lot of movies, the instructor would talk a lot, and write words on the board.

"Then when we would leave the class, we would have no books to study from." Now, thanks to the Inupiaq Materials Development Center, there are books, and more should be coming in the future.

All four feel knowledge of their language and heritage is important. Schaeffer recalls a trip to Greenland where she accompanied the school's Northern Light Dancers to perform traditional dances.

They met Eskimo youth from Greenland. "They thought it was strange that we could not speak our language," Schaeffer recalls. The Greenland youth not only spoke theirs, but were fluent in Danish as well.

"Now, in 1981 it is important to keep our lifestyle," Jessup explains. "The only way we will save our culture is if we do it,



Jackie Schaeffer performs traditional dances with the Northern Lights Dancers.