

CUSTOM MADE TEXTBOOKS FOR NATIVE CHILDREN MADE READY

Texts Designed to Give Sense of Dignity, Identity

Custom made textbooks for Lower Kuskokwim Eskimo and Athabascan Indian youngsters went into production this week at The Alaska Rural School Project of the University of Alaska.

"Existing material is inadequate," Frank Damell, executive officer of Alaska Rural School Project, explained. "The problem of learning to read is complex enough without having to learn words for objects and concepts that are foreign to a youngster's experience.

The new textbooks will be designed to give youngsters a sense of dignity towards

their own identity.

Stories will center around the lives of the children who read them. They will have illustrations of familiar village objects, animals and clothing.

The books also will take into consideration the special difficulties a southern Eskimo or an Athabascan child might have with the English language. They will use words and sentence patterns most easily understood by these youngsters.

The textbooks will aim at first through third graders and should be ready for use in village schools by fall, 1968.

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TEXTBOOKS . .

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Virginia Jones of Oswego (N.Y.) State College is writing the Athabascan text with assistance from Ann Wasescha and Carol Carnihan. Miss Jones is a reading specialist and an educational writer.

The Kuskokwim tests will be written by four experienced Alaskan bush teachers. They are Mr. and Mrs. Jim Henry, Ekwuk; Mrs. Hannah Kangus, Glenallen; and Janet Lindeman, Bethel.

All material will be reviewed by a cultural anthropologist, two rural teachers, a linguistics expert and a psychologist. Before going to press, the books will be tested in bush schools.

Funds for the books have been given by the Ford Foundation and the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Portland. The Laboratory is an independantly run but federally financed project designed to improve the quality of education for culturally different youngsters.

Specially designed texts for Northern Eskimo and Southeastern Indian youngsters will be developed later, Darnell said. Eventually, he hopes to develop many different materials, including wall charts, and audio visual tools for each group of youngsters.