

Native School has reserved support

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An Anchorage group is trying to squeeze \$100,000 out of the troubled 1981 Alaska Legislature to pay for a feasibility study of an alternative high school for Native students in Anchorage.

One group member who is instrumental in working for the study is Bert Campbell who says the proposal seeks to fill some void in a Native students life that is leading to incredibly high

drop-out rates. In 1981, the Anchorage Native drop-out rate was 2 to 1.

The group feels that an alternative or optional high school, which would focus primarily on Native students, could be one solution to the high drop-out rate.

The group, called the Native Education Coalition, has about 25 members and is chaired by Jackie Guzialek. Members of the committee come from area organizations and committees de-

voted to serving the Native community and Native organizations.

Idea for the school is modeled on the Indian Heritage schools which operate throughout the Lower 48. Heritage schools focus heavily on Indian culture and Heritage teachers have heavy cultural training.

In Anchorage, the instructors would be required to go through intensive cross-cultural training and many classes about historical and contemporary Native af-

fairs would be offered. Optional classes also would be taught in hunting, fishing, smoking fish, animal skinning and other traditional skills.

Elders would be brought into the school system to teach and advise students and political classes on Native corporations would be taught.

Campbell envisions the school as having a smaller, more close-knit atmosphere among students and the school would also focus on building ethnic pride and

giving a sense of identity in the Native community.

The funding request includes \$3,500 for a director, \$2,000 per month for two researchers, \$1,666 for clerical help and approximately \$43,000 for office space, travel expenses, data processing, supplies and consultation and legal fees.

The bill has been introduced to the Legislature for consideration and is in the Senate Operating Budget Committee and the
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Native school proposal aims at lowering drop-out rate in Anchorage

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House Capital Budget Committee says Campbell.

Despite some high expectations, the proposal for the school has drawn some reserved opinions about the school proposal have been voiced and one fear is segregation.

Sylvia Carlsson, who works with the Alaska Federation of Natives, says she is concerned about isolation of Native students. "When you talk about an alternative high school it isolates people out."

School Superintendent Gene Davis said the Anchorage district is interested in the proposal and is conducting a follow-up of students who have and have not graduated to learn what helped or hindered them.

He said he is concerned about the legality of an all-Native school. "We understand the study would look at all aspects of the proposal, legality, costs and other factors. We're very interested in working with the Native

community to help Native students."

Campbell said the school would not be limited only to Natives and that other ethnic groups could attend as space permits.

"The capacity to join the school is not going to be limited to Natives."

Carlsson also said she feels a study should be made of why Native students are dropping out at a 2 to 1 rate over those graduating.

And despite some conflicts about the proposal, all concerned agree that there is a problem with education of Native students.

Campbell said he viewed the problem personally when he held a job of algebra instructor in a school. He said he had to teach basic mathematics skill of adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing to the algebra students because they didn't have those academic skills.

Campbell said "expectation

levels are lower (among Natives) and there's a lack of pride in Native students." He said the Indian schools outside were fantastically successful.

Another important factor is parents. "Parents are not becoming involved. They don't attend

meetings. Parent involvement is crucial to the success of this school. The learning process wouldn't be just for kids, it would be for parents too," he said. Anderson said school "difficiencies have to be corrected." He added, "Natives have been too trusting of the schools."

Campbell said, "I'm not going to sit back and wait for it to get better in 20 years." He went on, "Students do not feel a part of the school. They're not part of the student activities, so it's no big loss for them to leave school."