

Some ABCs

in education

BY RON INOUE

Editor's Note: Should you have questions or suggestions about this or future "ABC's" articles, please let the author know by writing him at the Center for Cross-Cultural Studies, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, 99701, or by calling (907) 479-7185.

Monday, January 14, signaled the beginning of the legislative session in Juneau. With the convening of the legislature comes new opportunities for teachers and students to learn about the operation of state government.

As a reference on state government, the *Alaska Blue Book* is basic. It contains information and statistics about the people and state, the names and mailing addresses of elected officials, diagrams on legislative processes, and ways to procure state agency services. Also listed are the State Constitution and the state song and numerous facts. Using the *Alaska Blue Book*, teachers and students can learn about the organization of the state legislature as well as about their locally elected senators and representatives. The illustrations of election districts can be related to the formation of legislative coalitions in the passage of legislation.

The *Alaska Blue Book* is compiled and published biennially by the Division of State Libraries, and copies are available in public libraries and most commercial bookstores. Information about the paper-bound volume can be requested from the Alaska State Library, Pouch G, Juneau 99811.

To supplement the *Alaska Blue Book*, classes could use newspapers to keep current on significant bills and issues. Clippings files, systematically organize and maintained by students, could provide a valuable history of legislation. The regional Legislative Information Office in Anchorage, Juneau, Bethel, Fairbanks, Kenai, Ketchikan and Sitka can provide copies of bills as well as discuss how citizens can best communicate with legislators and legislative committees. Addresses for the respective offices are: Anchorage-1024 W. 6th Avenue, 99501; Fairbanks-100 College Road, 99701; Bethel-P.O. Box 886, 99559; Juneau-Pouch Y, 99811; Kenai-P.O. Box 3280, 99611; Ketchikan-415 Main, Room 301, 99901; and Sitka-210 Lake Street, 99835.

Students could analyze proposed legislation for its potential impact on their local community and its significance to the rest of the state and then inform their legislators of the findings. Those findings could be sent to Juneau by personal letter, through RCA's special "Public Opinion Messages," or via the teleconferencing network of the State legislative information offices.

By viewing and listening to the news broadcasts of the public radio and television stations, students could monitor legislation and learn about the issues and personalities of the legislature. Alaska Public Radio Network's "Alaska News Nightly" and particularly the television coverage on "Capitol '80" provide in-depth discussion and analysis of legislative issues.

Devising methods for getting students to learn about their legislature is not easy. Using the standard text and talking about hypothetical situations is adequate in some instances; however, supplementing text with activities constructed around the operation of our state legislature will provide students with skills they can use upon leaving school. Students can not only learn about state government, but can also become a part of it.