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STUDENT LEADERSHIP AND EXTENDED LEARNING
PROGRAMS IN ALASKA:
RATIONALE AND METHODS OF EVALUATION

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ABSTRACT

Purpose

At the request of the Alaska Department of Education, this study:

1. Examines the rationale for student leadership and extended learning programs. These include Close-Up, Future Problem Solving, the Alaskan Honors Institute, the Rural Student Vocational Program, Student Government and Vocational Student Leadership Organizations.
2. Reviews available research evaluating the effectiveness of these programs.
3. Identifies practical methods of evaluation that program staff can use to find out what students are learning from these programs and whether students are actually using what they have learned.

This study is not an evaluation of these programs. It attempts to inform program staff about current educational thought concerning leadership, experiential learning, and methods of evaluating experiential learning programs.

Methods

This study reviewed the literature on leadership and experiential learning, conducted a survey of Alaska schools to examine local support for out-of-school learning programs, and interviewed key informants knowledgeable about each program.

Findings

1. Can leadership be taught?

Student leadership programs make a critical assumption--that leadership is a skill that can be taught. If leadership is viewed as a set of personality traits, training programs to develop leadership make little sense. The qualities studies have found to be most strongly related to leadership--originality, popularity, sociability, judgment, aggressiveness--are not qualities educators know how to teach.

Most contemporary scholars, however, view leadership not as a set of personality traits but as a set of group tasks--deciding upon goals, figuring out strategies for accomplishing them, creating unity. This approach to leadership suggests a set of specific skills leadership programs can teach. Alaska's student leadership programs generally develop these types of skills.

2. When do students learn from experience and when do they float through experience?

Most student leadership and extended learning programs teach through primary sources--direct experience and observation--rather than secondary sources such as books and lectures.

Experience, however, is not always the best teacher. Often students learn little even from rich experiences or draw the wrong conclusions. Educators in the extended learning field emphasize that experiential programs must help students reflect on the experience and figure out what it means. It is reflection which turns experience into experiential education.

An effective experiential program has three stages:

1) Focus--program staff must direct students' attention to just what they can learn from the program.

2) Action--the essence of the program is observing and trying things out.

3) Debrief--the learning is discussed to help students form concepts and make generalizations.

3. How can staff tell how much students are learning?

In our view, most of the student leadership and extended learning programs have reasonable objectives and appropriately designed activities. Few formal evaluations of individual programs have been carried out. We found, however, little disagreement about the benefits of these programs. There is no dispute about these programs that would justify the expense of a formal scientific evaluation.

Program staff, however, do need easy-to-use, practical ways of finding out whether students are learning from these programs or just having an exciting time. Questionnaires which ask students to rate their experiences (the evaluation method most commonly used) do not provide this information. Indeed, studies of experiential learning programs have found that student ratings of the program have no relationship to what students learn when learning is measured by objective tests.

This study suggests informal evaluation methods (such as simulations and role playing exercises) that program staff can use to find out: 1) what students are learning from the program, and 2) whether students are using what they learned outside the program. These evaluation methods, moreover, add to, rather than steal time from, the educational experience; they help students think about what they have gotten out of the program.

SECTION I

STUDENT LEADERSHIP AND EXTENDED LEARNING PROGRAMS:
GENERAL ISSUES

"Hey, come over here. Want to see something?" A thin boy with horn rimmed glasses ("Einstein" to his friends) called me over at the Vocational Industrial Clubs of America (VICA) Conference.

He pointed to a copy of the VICA constitution. "We need to get this changed so John here can get elected president," he said. His two buddies nodded. "The way it is now--there can't be presidents from the same school two years in a row. We got that rule changed last year so we could get our man in. Now we gotta change it back again so John can get elected. He'll be a senior next year and it's his last chance."

Later he waved to me in the hall, "There was a debate, but we did it!"

BACKGROUND

Alaska's Department of Education (DOE) directly sponsors or provides funds to a number of statewide educational programs. Some of these programs-- Close-Up and Vocational Student Leadership Organizations--aim at developing leadership ability. The Twelfth Alaska Legislature established an "Alaska Student Leadership Development Fund" to support student leadership organizations and other leadership development programs.*

Other statewide DOE programs are designed to provide rural districts

* In 1981, the Legislature appropriated \$689,000 to DOE for this fund. DOE contracted with the Southeast Regional Resource Center to run the Close-Up and Future Problem Solving Programs. DOE also contracted with the Northern Institute for a Student Leadership Project. This project provided block grants, advisor stipends, leadership training workshops, and other assistance to Distributive Education Clubs of America, Future Farmers of America, Future Homemakers of America/Home Economics Related Occupations, Office Education Association, Vocational Industrial Clubs of America, and the Alaska Association of Student Governments. As part of this project, the Northern Institute also gave workshops on parliamentary procedure, goal setting, and other topics to student leaders and other students in 83 Alaska schools.

with valuable educational experiences that their districts cannot easily arrange. The Rural Student Vocational Program, for example, brings students from remote communities to Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau to try out the kinds of jobs found in cities. The Honors Program (which operated only in the summer of 1981) brought together academically talented students from across Alaska to take special college coursework at the University of Alaska's Fairbanks campus. As the director of this program commented:

It is not really the mission of local school districts or the university to offer these programs. And they are important, especially in Alaska where kids are so isolated. The kids share problems and points of view.

Aside from their official purposes, these programs all provide opportunities for students from different Alaska schools to get to know each other. Program directors view the role modeling that occurs and the widening of students' perspectives as major benefits of the programs, a partial antidote to the provincialism common in Alaska. Student government officers, for example, see "super student leaders" in action. Close-Up students from cities hear the political views of village students.

Several of these programs--Future Problem Solving and Vocational Student Leadership Organizations--also offer statewide competitions in vocational and intellectual skills, just as sports organizations offer competition in athletic skills. As in athletics, these competitions and the incentives of travel and recognition stimulate students' efforts. "You know what, Mom," an elementary school boy said after his Gifted and Talented teacher explained the Future Problem Solving competition, "Today at G/T we learned about this problem solving thing. If we win we get to go to

Anchorage and stay in a hotel with a SWIMMING POOL!"

Students and teachers are enthusiastic about many of these programs. They see flying to Juneau, observing the legislature, and talking to their state representatives, for example, as "a wonderful experience." How much, however, are students learning from these experiences? Do students rate these programs highly mostly because they enjoy the excitement of travel and the novelty of meeting new people and seeing new places? How can program staff find out what students gain from these programs?

The goal of leadership development itself--the official purpose of many of these programs--also requires thought. "Leadership" is a highly valued trait in middle-class American society; politically, "leadership development" is a highly attractive goal. Yet, what is leadership and can it be taught? Is this goal a reasonable aim for educational programs?

PURPOSE OF STUDY

At the request of the Department of Education, this study:

- examines the rationale for DOE's student leadership and extended learning programs. What are these programs attempting to accomplish and are these reasonable goals?
- reviews research evaluating the effectiveness of these programs. What evidence is available about whether these programs are accomplishing their goals?
- identifies practical, informal methods of evaluation that program staff can use to help find out what students have learned from the program. How can staff tell whether students are learning or just having a good time?

This study attempts to inform DOE staff, program directors, and teachers and advisors working within these programs about current educational thought in several relevant areas--leadership, experiential learning, and methods of evaluating educational programs where students are expected to learn from direct experience, not only classroom instruction.

This study, we emphasize, is not an evaluation of DOE's student leadership and extended learning programs. We summarize available evaluations of these programs. We suggest possible methods of evaluation. We do not evaluate any specific program.

This report is divided into three sections. The first part examines issues generally relevant to these programs:

1. Can leadership be taught?
2. When do students learn from experience and when do they float through experience?
3. How can staff tell how much students are learning?

The second section discusses each program individually. The specific programs DOE asked us to examine are:

1. Close-Up
2. Future Problem Solving
3. Student Government
4. Vocational Student Leadership Organizations
5. Rural Student Vocational Program
6. The Honors Program

For each, we summarize the program rationale and objectives, activities,

funding, participants, and available evaluations. Each program description concludes with a list of issues which program directors may want to consider. Teachers and students raised some of these issues during our interviews; the research literature suggested others. We offer these ideas as topics for discussion; we do not advocate any of these views.

The third section of this report defines extended learning and relates the goals of student leadership and extended learning programs to the goals for Alaska education proposed by the Governor's Task Force on Effective Schooling.* These programs, we suggest, provide educational experiences important to the goals the Task Force identified as central responsibilities of schools.

STUDY METHODS

This project reviewed the research literature on leadership and experiential learning to examine educational thought in these areas. We also conducted a survey of Alaska public school districts and private schools with high school programs to inquire about local interest in experiential approaches to education apart from state programs. Response rate among the 48 public school districts surveyed was 98 percent; among the 21 private schools surveyed, response rate was 92 percent.

To describe each state program, we interviewed a small group of key informants from different regions of Alaska. These included DOE staff, program directors and coordinators, and especially active teachers and students. We conducted a literature search through the ERIC system to

* Governor's Task Force on Effective Schooling. Effective Schooling Practices. A Report Presented to the Honorable Jay S. Hammond, Governor of Alaska, January 6, 1981.

locate research on these programs, particularly evaluative studies. We contacted national sponsoring organizations to locate unpublished evaluations. We also obtained recent Alaska program reports.

Where possible, we also observed program events--the FFA and VICA conferences in Fairbanks, the Student Government conference in Anchorage, a Northern Institute leadership training workshop, the statewide Future Problem Solving competition, and a mini-Close-Up session in Juneau.

The small number of observations we were able to make are a limitation of this study. In addition, we lacked the funds to interview a large representative sample of program participants. Such a study--covering six different programs across many different Alaska schools--would be an expensive undertaking.

This study, we stress again, is not an evaluation of these programs as they operate in any particular region or school. An evaluation would require a quite different approach than the one this study used.

CAN LEADERSHIP BE TAUGHT?*

Many different types of educational programs in Alaska attempt to develop leadership ability. Several rural school districts, for example, organize special student leadership conferences. The Alaska Native Foundation has established a leadership development program for Native adults. Boy Scouts, 4-H, and other youth organizations see their programs as preparing adolescents to be community leaders.

These programs, as well as those DOE sponsors, make a critical

* This section is based on two major reviews of the literature on leadership. Ralph M. Stogdill, Handbook of Leadership: A Survey of Theory and Research. New York: Free Press, 1974; C.A. Gibb (Ed.) Leadership. Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1969.

assumption--that leadership is a skill that can be taught. Whether or not leadership can be taught, however, is a question which can have different answers. The answer one gives depends on one's view of what leadership is.

- If leadership is viewed as a special set of outstanding personal qualities--what distinguishes a Gandhi, a Nehru, a Roosevelt--then educational programs can do little to develop it.

- If leadership is viewed differently--as the task of influencing others and accomplishing goals in a group--then educational programs can help to develop certain leadership skills.

Leadership as Personal Qualities

People commonly view leaders as individuals with unusual force and skill, those who set the course that others follow. Such "great man" theories dominated early thinking about leadership. Historians viewed leaders as superior individuals, people of great acumen, energy, and personality force, who led the masses. Psychologists attempted to identify the specific traits and abilities that distinguished leaders from other people. Many studies defined the characteristics of military leaders, student leaders, community leaders, business executives, etc.

This research succeeded in identifying certain traits common among leaders. In his classic review of this literature, Stogdill* finds uniformly positive evidence from 15 or more studies that the average

* R.M. Stogdill, "Personal Factors Associated with Leadership: A Survey of the Literature." In C.A. Gibb (Ed.) Leadership. Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1969, pp. 91-131.

person in a leadership position exceeds the average member of the group in:

- * intelligence
- * scholarship
- * dependability in exercising responsibilities
- * activity and social participation
- * socio-economic status

Stogdill finds uniformly positive evidence from 10 or more studies that leaders exceed the average group member in:

- * sociability
- * initiative
- * persistence
- * knowing how to get things done
- * self-confidence
- * alertness to, and insight into, situations
- * cooperativeness
- * popularity
- * adaptability
- * verbal facility

If we view leadership as composed of these personality traits, then training programs to develop leadership make little sense. The characteristics most strongly related to leadership are originality, popularity, sociability, judgment, and aggressiveness.* These are qualities that educators have little idea how to teach.

* Ibid. These characteristics are those most highly correlated with leadership in particular studies. The other characteristics discussed above (e.g. intelligence, dependability) are those most consistently related to leadership; the relationships are not necessarily strong.

Leadership as a Set of Tasks in a Group

This view of leadership traits, however, has serious limitations; indeed most contemporary scholars reject it. Who becomes a leader depends not only on the qualities of the people but also on the demands of the situation. The leader of a platoon engaged in a military attack will not have the same qualities as the leader of an English Department engaged in a review of the curriculum.

Characteristics of leaders also depend on the cultural setting. The type of leader admired in countries with an Anglo-Saxon heritage--a firm, decisive, take-charge person--is rejected in traditional Eskimo villages as bossy and boorish. A Mahatma Gandhi may not become a compelling leader in the United States; nor an Abraham Lincoln in India.

The realization that the kind of person who becomes a leader and how a leader behaves depends on the situation, the culture, and the times has led to a more complicated concept of what leadership is. After reviewing masses of evidence on the qualities of leaders Stogdill* concludes:

Leadership is not a matter of passive status, or of the mere possession of some combination of traits. It appears rather to be a working relationship among members of a group, in which the leader acquires status through active participation and demonstration of his capacity for carrying cooperative tasks through to completion.

Contemporary scholars have found it useful to regard leadership not as a characteristic of individuals but as a function carried out in groups. In this view, such qualities as intelligence or responsibility are related

* Ibid.

to leadership because groups assign leadership tasks to members whose qualities help the group achieve its goals.

Leadership itself, however, is viewed as a set of tasks--deciding upon goals, figuring out how to accomplish them, creating unity in a group. All these tasks may be centered in a single individual--the leader. These tasks, however, may also be carried out by different group members. One member, for example, may lead the group forward by offering an insightful interpretation of the problem. Another may suggest a feasible solution. Another may use humor to prevent people from hardening into opposing factions.

This approach to leadership does not make a sharp distinction between "leadership" and "followership." Both are ways of working effectively in a group. In this view, the opposite of leadership is not followership. The opposite is social isolation--the person who will not or does not know how to participate in a group.

If leadership is viewed as a set of group tasks, then certain leadership skills can be taught. People can be taught, for example, how to persuade others. They can be taught how to suggest different solutions to problems, how to create good feeling in a group, how to disagree without giving offense, how to develop a consensus. They can be taught the formalities of group decision-making--setting an agenda, using parliamentary procedure, taking a vote.

DOE's student leadership programs attempt to teach just these kinds of leadership skills. Future Problem Solving, for example, presents a specific problem-solving strategy--make the problem specific and manageable, list alternative solutions, and develop criteria for evaluating them.

Future Problem Solving goes beyond simply telling students about the method; it gives them repeated practice in using it. Similarly, Close-Up teaches young people how to participate effectively in political decision-making, essentially how to become a member of the group attempting to influence public decisions. The Northern Institute's leadership workshops present parliamentary procedure, goal setting, and other leadership skills. Student Government and VSL0's give students the opportunity to practice running a meeting, trying to persuade the school administration to change school policies, and organizing events like dances, pep rallies, and canned food drives.

These programs are all possible methods of teaching leadership skills. Which are better ways of developing leadership? Where should DOE invest its limited student leadership development funds?

The second section of this paper, which reviews specific programs, provides DOE with some information relevant to these budgetary decisions. Here we offer one general consideration about effective ways of teaching leadership.

Leadership skills--suggesting alternative solutions to a problem, running a meeting, speaking persuasively--are actions. The most effective way of teaching actions is practice. People learn how to ride a bicycle by trying to ride a bicycle. People learn how to play basketball by playing basketball. Learning how to achieve goals in a group is not altogether different from learning how to achieve goals in a game. Practice--and usually a lot of practice--is essential. Talking about how to play the game is also useful--as long as it is not a substitute for actually playing the game.

Leadership programs are most effective when they involve actual practice, not when they are limited to workshop presentations alone. Most of DOE's leadership and other extended learning programs do involve direct practice and experience, but a few do not. We question how useful it is to teach students how to use parliamentary procedure or set group goals in a workshop, for example, without at the same time giving them realistic opportunities to practice these skills.

Direct experience is important in leadership development and other kinds of educational programs; experience alone, however, is not enough. Experiential education programs, as we discuss in the following section, are most effective when they combine personal experience with opportunities to reflect on that experience, so that students can think about how to do things better next time.

WHEN DO STUDENTS LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE AND WHEN DO STUDENTS FLOAT THROUGH EXPERIENCE?

Most of DOE's student leadership and extended learning programs teach through primary sources--direct experience and observation--rather than secondary sources, such as books and lectures. In RSVP, for example, students learn about child care occupations by reading stories to three year olds at a day care center, zipping up snowsuits, and breaking up fights. In Close-Up, students learn how to influence state legislation by talking to their representatives about the Student Loan Program.

Personal experience is memorable and convincing. It creates understanding, a feeling for the situation, an intuitive sense of what it

is possible to do. As an old Chinese proverb expresses it:

I hear, and I forget;
I see, and I remember;
I do, and I understand.

Students exposed to classroom instruction alone can mouth abstract principles and pass paper and pencil tests; often they cannot apply what they have learned.

Experience, however, is not always the best teacher. Some people learn a great deal from what happens to them. Others can float through the same experience and learn little.

In Learning from the Field Experience, Conrad* gives an instructive example. The student was working in a nursing home. She wrote in her learning diary twice weekly for six weeks:

Today I got to the nursing home at 2:00. Talked to some ladies. Passed out popcorn at the movie. Went home at 4:00.

As Conrad points out:

The student quoted above was surrounded by human drama. On every side were loneliness, love, struggle, joy, death, dignity, injustice, and concern. There were people with wisdom she could draw upon, and with pains she could ease. There were more than a dozen health-related careers to observe and to experiment with. There was more--all missed She was needed there. She was engaged in tasks that mattered to others. But she'd seen, felt, experienced virtually nothing: "Passed out popcorn at the movie. Went home at 4:00."

* Learning from the Field Experience: A Guide for Student Reflection in Youth Participation Programs. New York: National Commission on Resources for Youth, 1982, p.4.

People can draw the wrong conclusions from their experience. Conrad observes, "We may, like Mark Twain's apocryphal cat . . . learn from sitting on a hot stove never to sit again."^{*} Because personal experience is so intuitively convincing, wrong conclusions are hard to change.

Educators in the field emphasize that an experiential education program must do more than provide students with a rich experience. The program must also help students think about the experience, figure out what it meant, and draw conclusions from it. As Joplin expresses it, "Experience alone is insufficient to be called experiential education, and it is the reflection process which turns experience into experiential education."^{**}

Some people routinely analyze their experience. They consciously think about why things are going well, for example, or exactly what went wrong, or why other people are behaving as they are. Many students, however, must learn how to learn from experience. Indeed, learning how to learn from daily experience is one of the most valuable skills an educational program can teach. As Conrad comments:

We are little more born with the skills to learn from experience than we are born with the skills to learn from a lecture or a book. Reflection is a skill, more accurately a cluster of skills, involving observation, asking questions, putting facts and ideas and experiences together to add new meaning to them all. Learning to learn in

* Ibid.

** Laura Joplin, "On Defining Experiential Education." In Journal of Experiential Education, 4 (1), 1981, 17-20.

this way, and instilling the practice as a habit, is what can allow the experiences in a program to live on in the students' lives in new experiences and new learning.*

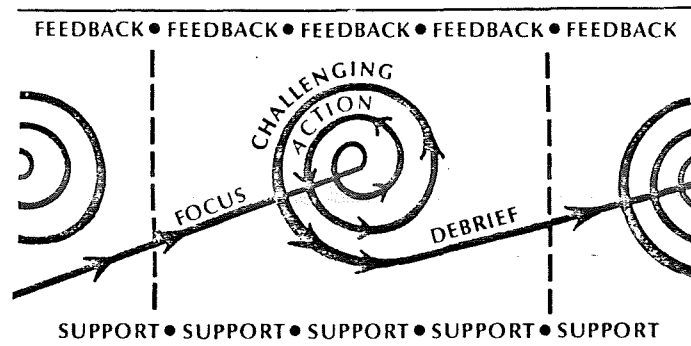
Evaluations of experiential education programs show the importance of a weekly seminar or some other opportunity for students to discuss their experience. A large national study of different kinds of experiential programs (career, community service, outdoor adventure, community study) found that the factor most strongly related to positive student change was the presence of a formal weekly seminar.**

Educators have proposed several useful models of effective experiential education programs. These models suggest practical ways in which the staff of such programs as Close-Up, RSVP, or VSL0's can help students learn through program experience, rather than float through it. Joplin uses a "hurricane-like" model to represent visually how students learn through experiential programs.***

* Conrad, op. cit., p.6.

** Dan Conrad and Diane Hedin. Executive Summary of the Final Report of the Experiential Educational Evaluation Project. University of Minnesota: Center for Youth Development and Research, 1982.

*** Joplin, op. cit.



The model has three stages:

Focus. Program staff must define clearly what students can learn through the program experience and direct the students' attention to it. Good focusing orients the student but also leaves room for unplanned learning.

Some of DOE's student leadership and extended learning programs have a built-in focusing stage. Future Problem Solving, for example, informs students that they will be learning a creative problem-solving process and defines the steps before students try to solve problems.

Other programs, such as RSVP, rely mostly on the students' teachers to help them figure out what they should be learning from working on a job in the city or from living with an urban family. Good preparation for the experience--focusing--may not always occur.

In Student Government and VSLO's, student officers have the experience of running an organization and also participate in seminars. These seminars can be used to help student figure out what specific

leadership skills they can learn from being an officer; the seminars can thus do much more than provide training in specific areas such as parliamentary procedure.

Action. The essence of experiential education is observing and taking action--talking to a legislator about a pending bill, running a meeting, seeing how the school principal reacts to a proposal to increase time between classes.

DOE program staff are well aware of the importance of teaching students through experience and activities. Close-Up, for example, uses simulation games, such as log-rolling, to illustrate the legislative process. Program directors continually pointed out to us that in good VSLO's the students, not the advisors, did things--planning the annual conference or organizing a dance.

Debrief. In this stage, the learning is recognized and discussed. The student forms concepts and makes generalizations which can be tested in new situations. These lessons are often ideas for how to do better next time. VSLO officers, for example, may conclude that they need to prepare time-filling activities in advance so there won't be some dead space at the Student Conference. These lessons may be personal insights. An RSVP student, for example, may conclude she really doesn't enjoy working with pre-schoolers. These lessons may be insights into how institutions really work. A Close-Up student, for example, may be amazed to learn that the head of the Student Loan Program is not the "villain" advocating loan reductions but is actively lobbying against them.

Programs can provide private debriefing opportunities, such as requiring students to keep a learning log. Experiential educators have found, however,

that it is best to debrief through discussion groups. People who have had similar experiences can then ask provocative questions or make comments that help students think more about the situation. Some DOE programs already provide opportunities for reflection. Future Problem Solving, for example, sends student external evaluations of their solutions to problems. Students and teachers can discuss these evaluations. In Close-Up, some students make presentations to the class or to their sponsors when they return.

Deliberately creating opportunities for students to get together to discuss their experiences while the experience is "hot" would increase learning. Experiential educators have developed interesting exercises to help students reflect on their experience.* In some exercises, for example, students role play how they and co-workers act on a job and discuss the influence of personality on job success. Staff working with Close-Up, RSVP, and other programs may find they can use or adapt some of these activities.

In sum, most of DOE's student leadership and extended learning programs take students out of the classroom and provide potentially valuable experiences--seeing the legislature in action, working in the city, organizing a statewide student conference. The danger is that DOE program staff can become so absorbed by the enormous, time-consuming work involved in bringing students to Juneau or placing them in jobs that they overlook what makes experiential programs educational.

* See, for example, Learning from the Field Experience: A Guide for Student Reflection in Youth Participation Groups. New York: National Commission on Resources for Youth, 1982.

HOW CAN STAFF TELL HOW MUCH
STUDENTS ARE LEARNING?

Formal Scientific Evaluation. An initial goal of this research project was to develop a strategy for evaluating DOE's student leadership and extended learning programs. This evaluation was to have been the focus of a second year of research. At this time, however, we see no need for DOE to spend its limited student leadership funds on funding formal evaluation. Our reasons are as follows:

1. Formal evaluation is useful when people dispute the value of a program or threaten to cut or end it. In our first year's work, we found strong support for these programs. Occasionally, teachers raise such questions as whether the RSVP experience is worth the money or whether the Honors Institute is "elitist." Such critical comments, however, were rare. School districts also see the value of experiential learning programs. Most Alaska public school districts (79 percent) indeed sponsor local programs, and another 17 percent want them (see Table 1).

2. Evaluators lack good methods for examining the effects of experiential learning. Without sensitive measurement techniques, a formal evaluation might fail to show benefits of DOE programs when these benefits are actually occurring.

Evaluations of experiential learning programs typically yield inconclusive results.* Fundamentally, when evaluators ask students directly whether the program increased self-confidence or helped career decision-

*Michael R. Crowe and Kay A. Adams, The Current Status of Assessing Experiential Education Programs. Columbus, OH: National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 1979.

TABLE 1

DISTRICT-SPONSORED OUT-OF-SCHOOL LEARNING PROGRAMS IN ALASKA

	Public School Districts*	Private Schools**
Have out-of-school learning programs	79%	33%
Do not have out-of-school programs but want them	17	19
Do not have out-of-school programs and don't want them	4	48
	100%	100%
N =	48	21

* Public school districts often contain more than one high school; consequently we do not average together private and public schools.

** All schools with grades 9 or above were included.

SOURCE: Survey conducted by the Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1982. Response rate was 98% among public school districts and 92% among private school districts.

making, for example, most students are enthusiastic about the program and its benefits. When "objective" tests and conventional "experimental group/control group" research designs are used, students who participated in the program do not usually score higher than students who did not have the experience.

Possibly the experiential program actually yielded few benefits. "Testimonials" alone are not entirely convincing. It is equally likely, however, that the paper and pencil tests commonly used to measure program effects were insensitive. Such tests very likely measure verbal facility, not the changes in actual competence--the ability to do things--that experiential programs attempt to produce.

The "experimental group/control group research" design also has limitations in evaluating experiential learning. Students who volunteer for experiential programs may be different at the start from students who do not. Also, students who do not enter a particular program may have substitute experiences which accomplish much the same thing; student government may develop leadership ability, for example, but so may being senior patrol leader in a Boy Scout troop or president of a church youth group.

These obstacles to evaluating experiential education programs are not insurmountable. Stentz and Lambert found that Close-Up students in Cleveland, for example, developed greater interest in politics, greater political self-confidence, greater trust in the responsiveness of public officials, and greater belief in the effectiveness of citizen participation in government.*

*Michael Stentz and David Lambert, Evaluation Report: An Assessment of the Impact of Close-Up on Student Participants from Metropolitan Cleveland Ohio. Bloomington, IN: Social Education Associates, August

In an evaluation of 27 different experiential education programs (community service, outdoor adventure, career internships, and community study) Conrad and Hedin also found positive effects.* In contrast to comparison groups, students in these programs developed a stronger sense of social responsibility, more positive attitudes towards adults, and greater interest in being active in the community. These programs, however, were carefully selected to represent the best example of experiential education available. Indeed, the point of the research was partly to show that it was possible to document positive effects of experiential education programs using objective tests rather than testimonials.




In sum, the state of the art in formally evaluating experiential education programs makes a reliable evaluation of Alaska's programs difficult. We have developed a general evaluation design for formally evaluating Alaska's student leadership and extended learning programs (see Table 2). This design uses the new evaluation techniques stressed in the research literature. First, the study uses a student comparison group. A group of randomly selected students who participated in these programs would be matched with a comparison group who did not participate.

Second, the evaluation emphasizes performance measures, not only paper and pencil tests. The specific tasks would depend on what program was being evaluated. At the beginning and end of the school year, students would be asked to perform (or role play) such tasks as conducting a meeting or making a public presentation. Their performance would be videotaped.

* Conrad and Hedin, op. cit.

TABLE 2

FORMAL EVALUATION STRATEGY FOR STUDENT LEADERSHIP/EXTENDED LEARNING PROGRAMS

1. SELECT SAMPLE 	2. TEST PERFORMANCE BEFORE PROGRAM 	3. EXAMINE PROGRAM EXPERIENCES 	4. TEST PERFORMANCE AFTER PROGRAM
<p><u>Program Participants</u></p> <p>Randomly select students participating in target programs.</p>	<p><u>Tests of Performance:</u>[*]</p> <p>a) Videotape students performing tasks program is expected to teach--e.g. conducting a meeting, making a speech, planning an event, etc.</p> <p><u>Tests of Problem-Solving Strategies</u>[*]</p> <p>b) Give tests asking students how they would approach certain types of problems--e.g. setting an agenda, making long term organizational plans, dealing with student disinterest.</p>	<p>Interview and observe students to examine what they did in the program.</p>	<p>a) Repeat pre-test performance measures.</p> <p>b) Repeat pre-test problem-solving measures.</p> <p>c) Ask students to describe and evaluate their program experiences.</p>
<p><u>Comparison Group</u></p> <p>Match experimental group with students who did not participate in these programs. Students will be matched by sex, age, school, grade point average, and socio-economic background.</p>	<p>a) Same as above.</p> <p>b) Same as above.</p>	<p>Interview comparison students to see what comparable experiences they had during the year.</p>	<p>a) Same as above.</p> <p>b) Same as above.</p> <p>c) Ask students to describe and evaluate related extracurricular experiences.</p>

* For specific examples of performance and problem-solving tests useful in evaluating these types of programs, see Joan Knapp and Amiel Sharon, A Compendium of Assessment Techniques, CAEL, Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service, 1975.

A panel of judges (who did not know whether students had participated in a student leadership/extended learning program) would rate their competence. In addition, students would be interviewed and asked how they would approach solving organizational problems--setting an agenda, influencing a legislator, developing school spirit in an apathetic student body.

Such a formal evaluation, however, would be of more interest to researchers interested in developing better measurement methods than it would be to Alaska educators. Due to the expense of such research and the lack of controversy about Alaska's student leadership/extended learning programs, we do not recommend carrying out such an evaluation at the present time.

Informal Practical Evaluations. Directors of such programs as Close-Up or RSVP need easy-to-use ways of finding out what students are actually learning from such experiences as going to Juneau and talking to legislators or coming to the city and trying out a job. Most students enjoy such programs--the excitement of taking a plane and seeing new places, the novelty of watching a senate session, the fun of meeting students from around the state and shopping and eating out in restaurants. Since students enjoy these experiences, they may rate the program highly regardless of what they learned.

At present, most student leadership/extended learning programs use questionnaires to evaluate the programs. In 1982-83, for example, Close-Up asked students at the end of their Juneau session to rate on a one to five scale different experiences--the speakers they heard, the luncheon with

their elected representative (see Figure 1 for an example). In a follow-up survey the program also asked students what they did when they returned home, for example, whether they had presented reports on Close-Up to their class or the school board (see Figure 2).

These questionnaires are useful in finding out how students reacted to particular program events. They tell the program staff, for example, which events students found boring. These kinds of questionnaires, however, do not tell program staff what students learned from the program. Giving such questionnaires is like giving an English test that asks students to rate on a one to five scale how much they learned about how to spell or punctuate.

Indeed, a national study of the effects of experiential learning programs found that such questionnaires were quite poor measures of learning. Whether students rated these programs as "excellent" or "good" had little to do with how much they had gained socially and intellectually from the program (as measured by objective tests).^{*} Students rated the programs as "excellent" or "good" when they felt the experience was "interesting" and when they felt they were "appreciated for their work." Students gained socially and intellectually from the program when they had a chance to reflect and discuss the experience and when they did things themselves, rather than only observing. These findings underscore the need for Alaska program staff to find out what students are learning from the program, not only how students rate the experience.

Program staff need answers to two questions:

^{*} Conrad and Hedin, op. cit.

FIGURE 1

ALASKA CLOSE-UP: EXAMPLES OF METHOD IN
1981-82 FINAL EVALUATION

Teacher _____
Student _____

This evaluation is intended to assess your overall opinion of Alaska Close-Up. As you complete this evaluation please keep in mind that you are evaluating the entire program and how much items 1-5 have increased your understanding of the governmental process.

- | | High | | | | Low |
|---|--------------------|---|---|---|-----|
| 1. Generally speaking, what is your opinion of the speakers you have heard? | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. How do you rate the Senate and House of Representatives sessions you attended? | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. What is your opinion of the legislative committee meetings you attended? | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. How do you rate the luncheon you had with your elected representative? | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 5. How much has the information you received helped in making you an active, concerned citizen? | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6. To what extent did your contact with participants from around the state increase your awareness of other sections of Alaska? | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. How do you rate the Close-Up staff who worked with you? | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 8. If you had it to do over again, would you attend Alaska Close-Up? | Yes _____ No _____ | | | | |
| 9. What did you like best about the entire program? | | | | | |
| 10. What did you like least about the entire program? | | | | | |

11. Additional comments:

SOURCE: Final Report, Alaska Close-Up Program. Juneau, AK Southeast Regional Resource Center, 1981-82, p. 27.

FIGURE 2

ALASKA CLOSE-UP: EXAMPLE OF FOLLOW-UP
EVALUATION IN 1981-82

FOLLOW-UP

PARTICIPANT FOLLOW UP

1. On my return from Close-Up I presented a report (oral or written) to:
(Check as many as applicable)

Class	<u>71%</u>	Local Civics Group (Elks, PTA, etc.)	<u>5%</u>
School Board	<u>26%</u>	School Group (Student Council, etc.)	<u>29%</u>
Teachers	<u>57%</u>		
Other:	<u>31%</u>		

2. Did you write to anyone about your experiences on Close-Up? (i.e. newspaper, letters to school board, your legislator, etc.) If so, please list below.

Yes 64% No 36%

3. Did your school or teachers require any feedback about your experiences? If so, what (i.e. English report, oral speech to class etc.)

Yes 65% No 35%

4. Have you continued to read articles, watch news shows, investigate local concerns since your return?

Yes 100% No

5. Looking back on the experience, would you encourage your school and classmates to attend Alaska Close-Up?

Yes 100% No

6. Additional comments:

- 1) What did students learn from the program? Knowledge?
How-to-do-it-skills? Changed attitudes? Wider interests?
- 2) Are students using what they learned? Are they using the creative problem-solving process, for example, at home or in other classes? Are they writing or talking to their legislators after Close-Up more than they did before?*

Evaluators in the field of experiential education have developed some useful techniques to answer questions about what students learn from experiential programs. Many of these methods are interesting simulation games and role playing exercises (see Appendix A for a discussion of simulation tests along with excellent illustrations. These were compiled by the Educational Testing Service).

In a simulation, the student is asked to pretend he or she faces a real task--deciding how to use organizational funds in a meeting with other officers or trying to convince a legislator to support a bill. The task should be as similar as possible to the real-life tasks the program is attempting to teach. Program staff decide on the evaluation criteria and rate students' performance.

Leaderless Group Discussion, for example, is a role playing exercise commonly used to measure leadership capability (see Appendix B for the procedures). A group of students receives a problem to solve--such as deciding how to use organizational funds for the next year. Judges observe (or videotape) the discussion and rate each student on leadership behaviors--suggesting ideas, motivating others to participate, expressing

*The 1981-82 Close-up evaluation contained a question in this area: "Have you continued to read articles, watch news shows, investigate local concerns since your return?" The question needs to be more specific and ask about changes in student behaviors after Close-Up.

thoughts effectively.

Such evaluation measures need not be separate from the program-- a burdensome, time-consuming "evaluation." Many can be built into the program as educational activities.

Pre-test: Program directors can use evaluation measures before program experiences (the "focusing stage" of an experiential program) to direct students' attention to exactly what it is they should be learning.

Post-test: Program directors can repeat these measures (the "debriefing stage" of an experiential program) to help students think about and discuss what they learned.

We will illustrate how this could be done in evaluating Alaska Close-Up. When students first get together in Juneau, they would be asked to complete a written simulation game (evaluation pre-test and focusing stage activity). Students, for example, would be given a copy of a pending bill of interest to them (such as the Student Loan Program) together with arguments on both sides of the issue. Then they would be asked questions such as those illustrated in Figure 3.

After the Close-Up experience, students would get back a copy of their papers along with a fresh answer sheet. (Program staff would keep originals as a pre-test.) Students would be asked to change or expand on any of their answers as they wanted (evaluation post-test and program debriefing). Afterwards, the students would discuss their answers as a group and add to each other's knowledge.

Program staff could use the pre-program and post-program answers

FIGURE 3
EXAMPLES OF CLOSE-UP EVALUATION

What Have Students Learned?			
<p>(Students receive a copy of a pending bill with a list of arguments for and against the bill.)</p>			
1. Decide whether you are for or against this bill. Suppose you want to tell legislators what you think. However, you are at home and you don't want to spend more than half an hour and \$5.00 on this project.			
a. Name as many different ways to communicate your views as you can. Be <u>specific</u> . (Don't just say "send a letter." Who would you send a letter to? What other ways could you send a message?)			
b. What do you think happens to these kinds of communications?			
c. How much influence do you think your communication will have?			
<input type="checkbox"/> A LOT <input type="checkbox"/> SOME <input type="checkbox"/> NOT MUCH <input type="checkbox"/> NONE AT ALL			
2. Suppose this bill is very important to you. You are willing to spend several days and several hundred dollars to get the bill passed or defeated.			
a. What kinds of actions would you take? (Name as many as possible and be specific.)			
b. How much influence do you think you will have?			
<input type="checkbox"/> A LOT <input type="checkbox"/> SOME <input type="checkbox"/> NOT MUCH <input type="checkbox"/> NONE AT ALL			
Are Students Using What They Learned?			
	NEVER	ONCE	MORE THAN ONCE
Since Close-Up have you:			
--written to a legislator about a public issue?	_____	_____	_____
--sent a Telex message through your Legislative Affairs Office?	_____	_____	_____
--attended a legislative hearing?	_____	_____	_____
--attended a city council, school board, or other local political meeting?	_____	_____	_____

to see what the students had learned from the session and what they had not picked up. (Did students, for example, mention calling the Legislative Affairs Office to send a free Telex message? Did they think of a personal telephone call? Did they specify that letters should be personally addressed, not a mass mail out?) Any experienced teacher knows that reading over these kinds of answers is embarrassingly informative about where one's teaching has gone astray.

In addition, program staff could use these answers to examine any changes in students' attitudes about the responsiveness of public officials.* Did they say, for example, that their letters would be tossed in the wastebasket? Did views change after the program?

These measures evaluate what students know at the end of the program; they do not evaluate whether students are using what they learned later on. Close-Up's 1981-82 follow-up survey is a useful approach to answering this question. The survey needs to be expanded and to include more specific questions (see Figure 3, "Are Students Using What They Learned?"). The Close-Up program could give such a survey before Close-Up to find out whether students had taken such actions before the program.

Similar strategies can be used to evaluate other student leadership and extended learning programs. Future Problem Solving, for example, needs little additional evaluation other than a follow-up survey to see if students are applying what they learned. (In our exploratory interviews,

* In addition, Close-Up program staff could give an attitude scale at the beginning and end of the program to see if Alaska students' beliefs about the responsiveness of public officials change as did the attitudes of participants in a national Close-Up program. For specific measures, see Appendix B of Stentz and Lambert, op. cit. (Can be obtained from the National Close-Up Foundation.)

several students said they used the problem-solving method on the playground and at home.) Program directors can systematically compare students' work on early practice problems and later problems to see if students are learning the problem-solving process.

To evaluate student leadership organizations, program staff giving leadership training workshops can use simulation games. These could be written problems--what to do about student apathy, how to go about getting the school administration to increase the amount of time students have to go between classes. Program staff could also use role playing exercises--for example, how should the president react when students challenge a raise in dues? Videotaping these exercises and reviewing them with the officers would be a particularly useful way to help students think about their personal leadership skills.

In sum, program staff can use informal, practical ways of finding out what students are actually learning from student leadership/extended learning programs and whether they are applying what they have learned. Simulation games, for example, not only test learning. They also increase learning by focusing students' attention on what can be learned from the program and helping students to reflect on it. These methods add to, rather than steal time from, the educational experience.

SECTION II

THE STUDENT LEADERSHIP AND
EXTENDED LEARNING PROGRAMS

The Alaska Close-Up Program
Alaskans Honors Institute
Future Problem Solving Program
Rural Student Vocational Program
Student Government
Vocational Student Leadership Organizations

THE ALASKA CLOSE-UP PROGRAM

Introduction

The Alaska Close-Up Program, initiated in January, 1981, is designed to give high school students a "close up" look at state government to increase their understanding of and involvement in public affairs. In 1981-82, the program brought 111 students and 45 teachers from 44 school districts to Juneau for seven days of seminars, workshops, observation, and social activities. Students met with the Governor, Lt. Governor, legislators, and a Supreme Court Justice. They participated in simulations of researching and voting on legislation.

The Alaska program is modeled on the national Close-Up Program run in Washington, D.C. Sponsored by the Close-Up Foundation--a nonprofit, multi-partisan organization--the national program, in its first 11 years, has brought 95,000 students and teachers to Washington, D.C. to observe the federal government in action. During their week in Washington, students attend seminars where they hear political actors actually involved in what's happening--not merely observers commenting on and interpreting events. They also receive background briefings on current political happenings from the Close-Up staff and visit with their legislators. Topics covered include the executive branch, lobbying, media, foreign and defense policy, domestic policy issues, Congress, the Judiciary, and local issues.

Close-Up programs in various states closely resemble the national program. All have the same objective--to make students aware of how government affects their lives and how they can become involved in and affect government. The program is thus an extension of the typical civics course with an emphasis on

students' direct observation of and participation in governmental processes.

Objectives

The four primary objectives of the Alaska Close-Up Program are: 1) to increase students' knowledge of politics and government and their ability to analyze events and issues; 2) to orient students toward participation in the political process; 3) to make students aware that the political system is responsive to citizen input; and 4) to help students understand the link between their political behavior and the general good. A final objective is to provide opportunities for students to meet peers from other areas in Alaska and understand their points of view.

School Preparation

Students who wish to participate in the Alaska Close-Up Program and are selected by their school receive a text from the program detailing the functions of the three branches of government, the rudiments of parliamentary procedure, lobbying, political campaigns and elections, district reapportionment, and the state budget. The text also examines current state issues such as the proposed capitol move, subsistence preference, and the gas pipeline. Information in the text and in other publications provided at registration is discussed during the students' visit to Juneau.

Preparation for the program varies from school to school. Most preparation sessions occur after regular class and vary in number from two to twenty occasions. Minimal preparation consists of reading and discussing the Alaska Close-Up publication supplemented by information from newspapers and television. Some schools require students, in addition, to study the Alaska Constitution,

to write to legislators requesting proposed legislation for class discussion, to identify legislators and issues, and to study lobbying and media news.

Program Content

In Juneau, students hear speakers and participate in simulation games. Speakers vary from session to session--of which there were four this spring. This year, one session both observed the State Supreme Court hearing a case and, later, heard comments from Justice Allen Compton. Other groups watched a jury trial for a murder case. Two groups heard Governor Hammond speak while two others learned about the executive branch from Lt. Governor Miller. To learn about the legislative branch, participants visited House and Senate sessions and had lunch with their district's legislators.

Students participated in three simulation games. In the bill research project, students carried out their own research on bills affecting their regions. Students discussed the legislation with legislators and their staff and used the computerized retrieval system and other primary sources to research the bill. The exercise required them to understand the background and issues involved well enough to make an oral presentation on the legislation to the full group. Students researched legislation involving such issues as subsistence, Senior Citizens, hydroelectric power, alcohol and drugs, permanent fund, recreation and community centers, and student loans.

The committee simulation is designed to help students understand the function of legislative committees in the legislative process and how bills are handled in committee. Students first hear speakers who explain the committee structure and process. They then form their own committees, elect a chairperson, and hear testimony from "witnesses." The committee then votes on

whether or not to pass the bill out of committee. Some of the issues acted on by committees this year were capitol move, law enforcement, student loans, subsistence, permanent fund, the railroad, and hydroelectric power.

"Logrolling" is the third simulation exercise. This process is designed to show students what factors actually influence legislators' votes on legislation. The legislation for this game is taken from the bill research reports. Cards which tell participants how their constituents feel about the issues are passed out. Since the card indicates how the constituents feel on only two of the five issues up for a vote, participants may vote as they wish on the remaining three without alienating their constituents. Then, students must exchange support on one of the non-essential bills for support on an issue important to their constituents. The game ends with a mock voting session to demonstrate the process during a floor session.

Students may also have the chance to testify before actual legislative committees. One student testified at a Senate HESS committee meeting on appropriations for loans, three others spoke to the Senate HESS committee on an appropriation for a student leadership development center, and three Nome students testified via the teleconference network concerning Nome's annexation.

Students are also given blocks of free time so they can interact with other participants and learn about other areas of the state. Cultural and recreational activities include theatre, concerts, bowling, swimming, roller-skating, and dining out.

School Follow-Up

Follow-up Sessions vary from school to school. In one school student participants were required to keep a journal to record their activities and

impressions. Typically, participants are asked to share their knowledge and insights with others during government class. Other schools require participants to make formal presentations in class, before the student body, or to sponsoring businesses. A few teachers reported requiring descriptive papers written on issues that were raised during the program. At one school, participants debated the capitol move and abortion legislation before their government class. In Whittier, two students presented talks on their Close-Up experience during graduation ceremonies.

Alaska Close-Up conducted their own survey of participants to find out what kinds of follow-up activities schools required of students. Results from that survey show that 70 percent of the participants made reports to their class, 26 percent to school boards, 57 percent to their teachers, 5 percent to civic groups, and 29 percent to school groups. When asked if they had written to anyone--newspaper, school board, legislators--about their experience, 64 percent of the participants answered affirmatively. Sixty-five percent reported that their teachers had required feedback about their experiences. Finally, all students reported that they read newspapers and watched TV news to monitor local political concerns.

Funding

The Alaska Close-Up Program was established by an appropriation from the Twelfth Alaska Legislature through a grant from the Department of Education. Total program cost for 1981-82 was \$175,000 of which 54 percent went for travel and 24 percent for personnel.

The project covered the cost of one teacher and one student from each district. The remaining 60 positions were distributed according to district

size. For these additional places, school districts paid \$200 per student-- or roughly 70 percent of the direct cost. Six districts paid all direct costs to send additional students.

The cost of attending the national Close-Up Program is borne by the district, the individual student, or the Close-Up Foundation which offers some fellowships.

Inadequate funding is sometimes an obstacle for students who wish to attend either the state or national program. One of the teachers we interviewed reported that:

Last year, neither of my two students received full funding. This year, one student was fully funded. Inadequate funding brought problems this year because there were 25 interested applicants who wanted to go but couldn't because of the funding. There is a high student interest in the program.

Another teacher, speaking of the national program, said that her students:

. . . had to raise money by selling hot dogs, popcorn and candy at sporting events and movies. They try to find sponsors for funding. . . I also help them by raising money from outside sources. The program is very popular and more students would like to go.

Participants

Forty-four school districts were represented by 111 students during the four Alaska Close-Up sessions this spring. On the following page is a profile of the participants:

<u>Race</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Caucasian	67%	60%
Black	2	2
Eskimo	16	14
Aleut	11	10
Athabascan	5	5
Tlingit/Haida/Tsimpshean	7	6
Other	3	3

Gender

Male	37	33
Female	74	67

Leadership Activity

(i.e., Student Council, Vocational Clubs,
Native groups, Honor Society)

Yes	75	68
No	36	32

Alaska Native students are well represented. Also, most Alaska Close-Up students are active in organizations prior to the program. They may be the kind of students who will become politically active as adults.

Evaluation of the National Program

Stentz and Lambert have carried out an extensive evaluation of the effects of the national Close-Up Program on high school students from Cleveland.* Using

*Michael Stentz and David Lambert, "Evaluation Report: An Assessment of the Impact of Close-Up on Student Participants from Metropolitan Cleveland, Ohio," Social Education Associates, Bloomington, IN, August, 1975.

a sample of 428 participants and a control group of 150, they found that Close-Up participants were more likely than non-participants to belong to other school clubs and organizations, to be leaders in such groups, to make good grades, to take advanced courses, and to plan to attend college.

Using a series of pre- and post-questionnaires, Stentz and Lambert also found changes among Close-Up participants on four attitudinal dimensions--

- interest in politics;
- political self-confidence (i.e., belief that one can be an effective political actor);
- socio-political trust (i.e., belief in the responsiveness of public officials);
- belief in citizen efficacy (i.e., belief in both the potential and actual effectiveness of citizen involvement).

While participants did not show a gain on a test of general political understanding, students reported that they felt they had learned a great deal--much of which was not strictly "academic"--during their week in Washington:

I'm more skeptical. More cynical, you know, kind of on the watch to really make sure that I hear the other point of view. Where before I didn't really care that much, you know now I kind of want to.

. . . it was interesting, but mostly I guess it was just the experience of being in Washington, being in the capitol and seeing things, and what I could learn, "great!"

. . . you just can't learn that much in a week. I keep saying that, but there was just so much to do. You'd sit for an hour and listen to someone and then you'd go touring for an hour, looking around at things, and you can't have so much information in one week like that.

In concluding their evaluation, the authors write that "The Close-Up Program. . . provides an intense experiential base for assisting individuals to become complete citizens. . . [and contributes] in an important way to the quality of democratic citizenship in this nation."

Evaluation of the Alaska Program

The Alaska Close-Up Program conducted their own evaluation of the 1982 sessions. All participants completed the evaluation on the last day. Among the activities, the lunches with legislators rated most positively with 60 percent of the respondents giving this the highest rating for increasing their understanding of government. Observations of the sessions received the highest possible rating from nearly 50 percent of the respondents while the speakers and the committee simulation were rated as very positive but not as high as the other two activities. Sixty percent of the respondents gave the program the highest rating for both increasing their awareness of other sections of Alaska and receiving information that made participants active, concerned citizens. Seventy-five percent gave the Close-Up staff the highest rating possible and over 90 percent said they would attend the program again if allowed. All respondents reported they would encourage classmates to attend the program.

Exploratory interviews which we conducted with nine teachers and six students who participated in the Alaska Close-Up Program coincide with the findings of Stentz and Lambert and with the Alaska evaluation. Participants we interviewed reported greater political knowledge, political self-confidence, political interests, and belief in their ability to make a difference in the political process.

When asked to describe students' experiences during the program, both teachers and students reported gains in knowledge and understanding of government. Typical responses included:

Before Close-Up, I knew nothing about government and had no idea what was going on.

Prior to Close-Up, I had a bad attitude concerning politics and political officials. Legislators spent a lot of time with students in discussion and answering questions which changed my feelings about government.

One teacher spoke for others when she said:

Students learned things that they could not get out of a text. They were able to integrate the different parts of government and how the branches carry out their functions. By talking with government officials, they began learning how to find things in government and how to contact government officials. Students were able to pick up skills to become more effective citizens. Through exposure, students learned more about what to expect out of government.

Both students and teachers expressed their belief that the program had changed participants' political attitudes:

I view legislators in a new light than before and I am more aware of political issues.

. . . I learned how easily one can become involved in government.

I learned how much an individual can benefit from government if they want to become involved.

Students also reported greater self-confidence in political interactions after the program:

Before Close-Up, I was concerned that I may not act right and was a bit anxious in not asking the right questions. Now, after Close-Up, I can write to legislators expressing my opinions and can ask questions.

Most students interviewed also felt that the program had changed their attitudes towards the individual's ability to make a difference in political decisions:

During Close-Up, people taught us how to campaign for issues.

Legislators really listen to your opinions. They need to know how you feel on an issue so that they can vote.

Students and teachers also felt that participants took a greater interest in community affairs after the program. Both groups noted that participants attended more city council, school board, and other local government meetings after the program. Some students even testified at these meetings:

At a city council meeting I testified on an issue concerning building a new road to Whittier which I became familiar with through the Bill Research Project. . . I explained to city council members the views of Kertulla and Colletta on this issue and told them to write to their legislators to acquire more information.

Students we interviewed also reported more political interest, reading newspapers and magazines, and watching media news more frequently. Comments from teachers included:

Both students follow legislative news on TV which they did not do before.

Students definitely read more about state issues and, in November, they will be better able to make decisions voting.

A student reported that:

I now read the Christian Science Monitor and the Wall Street Journal which were introduced to me while I was working on the Bill Research Project in Juneau. . ."

Another area in which students reported positive gains was socio-political trust. Typical comments were:

The experience made me feel that citizens can be effective in the political process. Politicians can not be changed necessarily, but what they can do for citizens can be changed.

Before the trip, I was not involved with politics and was skeptical about the honesty of politicians. While in Juneau, I discovered that politicians are hardworking and do care about the people they represent.

Social awareness was another area in which students reported positive changes. Participants felt they had learned about others' perceptions of issues and their lifestyles:

I learned about interior Alaska and small schools.

I learned about Alaskan towns like Nenana. . . villages in Southeast and Tok which I had never heard of before.

Program Issues

1. *Impact of program:* None of the evaluations done on the effects of the Close-Up Program have examined the issue of how long the initial impact of the exposure lasts. Are students' positive attitudes maintained or do their views change? A longitudinal evaluation would be necessary to determine this.
2. *What kinds of students benefit most:* Teachers we interviewed thought that certain students benefitted more than others from the program. Specifically, several teachers felt that students who did not excel in academics, who were middle achievers with little exposure to urban life and to travel, would show the most change from the experience. In describing the program's effects on one such student, a teacher said:

The most noticeable change was in the level of self-confidence from a Junior student who had minimal contact with urban life. He "blossomed" more than the other students who had lived in Anchorage for some time and was accustomed to those kinds of activities. The trip also improved the student's study habits.
3. *Preparation and follow-up:* Teachers recommended the information packets from Close-Up contain more guidelines for preparing students for the program and a video cassette describing the state government. They also recommended that districts allocate more funds for preparation and schools more in-class time. Students recommended more extensive preparation sessions and more information on issues of local relevance. Participants also recommended more follow-up.

Teachers' suggestions included:

- More emphasis on participants' discussions of experience and issues with fellow students.
- Capitalizing on interest generated by applying [participants'] knowledge in other areas besides government class.
- Students need to go earlier than April so they have enough time to share their information with other students.
- Funds to bring in students from other schools for follow-up sessions.

Students suggested that follow-up should include a summing-up session at the end of the week in Juneau to review all the activities and that students should give talks in their classes "so that other students will want to get involved in politics."

4. *Experience of program:* A number of teachers and students felt the program should be expanded. Teachers' comments included:

Because of student interest and the value of the program, it would be a good idea for more student involvement. I would not like to see an increase in group size because this may affect program quality but the program could increase involvement by having more sessions.

I would like to see as many students as possible to participate, particularly rural students. They have more of a need to observe the political process because they have less access to TV and transportation to acquire that kind of exposure than urban students.

Other suggestions included exposing students to community and state politics with field trips to local city council, borough, and school board meetings; teleconferences with legislators about current issues; field trips to local Legislative Affairs offices; and Close-Up programs at the local level.

5. *Overly Positive View of Government:* Students emerge from Close-Up thinking that they can have a good deal of influence on state government. The Close-Up experience is brief; it does not provide sufficient experience to create a more complex view about how legislative decisions are made. Does the program present a Pollyanna-ish view of government? If so, how could it offer a more rich and subtle understanding of government decisionmaking?

ALASKAN HONORS INSTITUTE

Introduction

The Alaskan Honors Institute of 1981 was an intensive three-week program held during the summer for gifted secondary students and teachers of gifted students. The program consisted of classroom instruction intended to provide advanced instruction in such areas as philosophy and laboratory experience designed to provide "hands-on" opportunities in science and mathematics. To participate, students had to be juniors or seniors. Superintendents nominated prospective participants and a search committee screened the applicants. In 1981, 31 students were selected to participate.

The Institute was a response to the growing concern nation-wide that the most talented and promising students in our public schools are being neglected. Several states have established special "Governor's Schools" or other intensive programs for the gifted. The first was established in North Carolina in 1963. Subsequently, at least nine other states, including Alaska, have developed similar programs.

Only one Honors Institute has been held in Alaska. In 1982, funding difficulties prevented the program from continuing.

Objectives

The objectives of the Alaskan Honors Institute were: To provide instruction for teachers of gifted students and to provide an enriching residential experience for gifted students. For the gifted students, the Institute was intended to develop a number of abilities--logical reasoning, creative inquiry and written expression, problem-solving skills, interpersonal skills, leadership skills, and career planning. Specific seminars and

activities were designed to develop each group of competencies.

For the teachers of gifted students who attended the Institute, the program was intended to increase their understanding of theoretical issues that affect the development and delivery of programs for gifted students. Another objective for teachers was to develop their awareness of "value laden issues" related to educating gifted students such as staff relationships and the psychological and social problems of gifted instruction. Finally, the program aimed to increase teachers' skills in program design, clinical observation, and instructional delivery.

The Students' Program

Students at the three-week Alaskan Honors Institute were required to attend two seminars. The first--entitled Philosophy Seminar--introduced students to the concepts of "logical space" which underlies all ideas when expressed in symbols. This seminar was considered background for other academic courses. The second seminar--Alaskan Issues--required students to use a problem-solving approach in analyzing political, economic, and social issues from a historical and current perspective.

In addition to these mandatory seminars, each student could select an area of concentration from the following:

Oceanography: A study of the ocean as a dynamic system of physical, chemical, meteorological, geological and biological interaction. Students could use the equipment and laboratory of the Institute of Marine Science for analysis and demonstrations.

Mathematics: Study of module systems, finite fields, vectors, matrices and

their use in sending coded messages and decoding those messages. Students had access to the University of Alaska's Honeywell computer system.

Mass Communications: Both a theoretical and practical study of mass media-- newspapers, TV and radio programming.

Psychology: A course in experimental psychology with emphasis on the anatomy of the brain and its relationship to behavior. Research methods and techniques were applied in the University of Alaska's experimental laboratory.

The academic core of the program was supplemented by enrichment and special interest activities. The Career Exploration course, given two evenings per week, featured speakers from the professional community who discussed their work and employment opportunities in their field. In the Follow-Through Planning course, students and faculty discussed areas of personal interest, such as personal relationships between bright students.

Special interest courses offered in 1981 were pottery, swimming, ice skating, tennis, karate, aviation ground school, typing, or a selected option. On weekends, the Institute scheduled recreational learning activities including tours of the Usibelli Coal Mine and McKinley National Park, river rafting, and roller skating.

Another part of the program were the daily journals in which students recorded their activities and perceptions. Institute instructors reported that many of the journals revealed a high degree of sensitivity to others. For example, a student would describe a friend's emotional state and offer an explanation for the friend's behavior.

Institute students also produced a publication, the Rotogravure, in

which they described their experiences during the program. While serving primarily as a memento for the students, it also provided the staff with feedback on students' attitudes toward the program.

Another important feature of the program was to provide academically talented students with the actual experience of going to college. Students lived in university dormitories and attended classes taught by college professors. It was the experience of college life that made the Honors Institute an "extended learning" program, distinct from advanced classroom instruction.

The Teachers' Program

A graduate course--Developing and Delivering Courses for Gifted/Talented Students--was offered to gifted and talented teachers. The course included such topics as the theory of teaching the gifted and talented, assessment methods, classroom program options, methods of evaluating student progress and program effectiveness, staff and community relations, program design, and psycho-social problems in instruction. In addition to this seminar, teachers worked with students to develop and present mini-courses. These mini-courses were videotaped; the teacher and their instructor would together review the tape.

Comparison of the Alaskan Honors Institute with Other Gifted/Talented Institutes

When compared to the eight other state programs for the gifted and talented in the U.S., the Honors Institute is similar in its academic program. Courses in the natural and social sciences and in mathematics and philosophy are common to all the programs. In offering students career information and in providing exposure to Alaskan issues, the Institute was unique. Alaska's

program, however, had minimal offerings in the fine and performing arts-- a major emphasis in other states. The Appendix includes a brief description of other states' programs for educators interested in considering other ways of organizing statewide Governors' Schools.

Funding

The Gifted and Talented Office of the Alaska Department of Education provided the bulk of the funds for the Honors Institute with supplemental funds coming from a federal grant. For the 1981 Institute, the budget was \$32,000. Many staff donated time to the program, due to the small budget.

Grant funds covered students' class and room expenses while their home school districts provided money for board and transportation. Teachers paid all their expenses except tuition which was covered by grant monies.

Tanana Valley Community College (TVCC) and the University of Alaska at Fairbanks' (UAF) School of Education co-sponsored the Institute with the state Department of Education. The administration of TVCC handled the fiscal and management responsibilities of the Institute. Six UAF faculty members taught the academic and enrichment courses and another faculty member presented the graduate seminar for teachers. Other staff included a coordinator for classes and activities and three dormitory counselors.

Participants

The twelve training teachers and thirty-one students were selected from all school districts throughout the state. About a third of the students came from Anchorage, three from Fairbanks, two from Juneau, and one student each from such smaller communities as Haines, Homer, McKinley, Nome, Petersburg,

Soldotna-Kenai, Tok, and Wrangell. Three of the students were from minority groups--Vietnames, Korean, and Tlingit.

After being nominated by their district superintendents, student applicants were screened by a search committee representing various education-related statewide organizations. During the selection process, committee members reviewed applications, transcripts, and essays on which students' names and places of residence were covered. The essay topic required students to describe themselves and their contributions to social improvement fifty years in the future. Of 60 initial applicants, 33 were selected and 31 attended.

Teachers were also nominated by their district superintendents. The selection committee--composed of representatives from public schools, higher education and DOE--gave preference to teachers currently working with gifted students or who were committed to doing so in the future. The program had difficulty recruiting a large number of teachers.

Evaluation

Evaluation of the 1981 Alaskan Honors Institute

Barbara Diele conducted an evaluation of the 1981 Alaskan Honors Institute for the DOE.* Thirty students, twelve teachers, and seven district superintendents responded to a series of pre- and post-questionnaires. In addition, these respondents gave informal oral as well as written evaluations of the program.

All respondents positively appraised the effectiveness and course organization of the program. Participating students and teachers reported greater insight into themselves and others. Problems commonly cited include

* Barbara Diele, Alaskan Honors Institute Program Evaluation, undated.

overscheduling of student time, the segregation of students and teachers, and uncertainty about the Institute's specific goals.

Students indicated that, while they had a general understanding of the purpose of gifted programs, they were unclear about the Institute's purpose. The two areas in which students noted the most effect of the Institute were in "learning in areas of interest" and "exposure to college life." As problems with the program, students cited insufficient information on the expectations, beliefs, values, and rules of the Institute. Possibly these students, like many other adolescents, had difficulty adjusting to the ambiguous nature of university life.

In the area of intellectual development, students felt they had gained in self-discipline and responsibility. They indicated that the knowledge they had gained was practical and would be used in the future. Negative comments focused on the rigidity of schedules.

Participating teachers filled out a "Gifted Awareness Inventory" designed to measure changes in their theoretical and practical knowledge of the gifted. Scores reveal an increase in knowledge about personalities and concepts in gifted education.* On the informal oral and written evaluations, participating teachers cited participant/staff cooperation, small group size, and peer interaction as positive program characteristics. Negative comments included limited opportunity for the teachers to work directly with the Honors students and limited pre-registration information.

* The Program Evaluation data actually shows substantial gains. However, the report itself refers to "small" gains. This is due to an unusual method of computing gain scores. Rather than examining average gains from pre-test to post-test, what is computed is average gain on each test item.

Evaluation of Honors Institutes in Other States

The Georgia Governor's Honor Program has been extensively evaluated.* The program was highly successful in providing an enriching experience for talented adolescents. However, the program was less successful in stimulating local schools to develop methods and materials for the gifted. This report is especially valuable for its extensive evaluation instruments. Future Honors programs might find these measures quite useful.

Exploratory Interviews

We conducted interviews with three of the Institute instructors and two former students to explore program and evaluation issues. Respondents indicated that "academic enrichment" was the best fulfilled goal of the Institute. Reasons for this choice included time devoted to course work and exposure to advanced knowledge not usually presented in high school. Students found Philosophy and Alaskan Issues seminars particularly stimulating.

When asked about leadership development (an official program goal), the student respondents indicated that they felt this goal had been achieved through their interactions with peers who exhibit strong leadership characteristics and through discussions in their seminars. The instructors, on the other hand, thought this goal had not been achieved. According to all respondents, the program did not offer specific training or practice in leadership skills.

In the career exploration area, our respondents offered mixed appraisals. While some thought the career seminar and the academic classes gave students

* Georgia State Department of Education, Evaluation of the State of Georgia's Governor's Honors Program, Atlanta, Georgia, 1972.

the chance to explore future options, others felt the class was inadequate. Students did not observe professionals at work; nor did they have "hands-on" career experience.

Respondents thought that bringing together gifted students from different Alaskan regions was valuable. Instructors noted that students exchanged new ideas and points of views during late night discussions. Students felt that these interactions stimulated new ways of thinking and exposed them to different lifestyles.

Program Issues

1. *Balance between academic and experiential education:* The 1981 Honors Institute focused on academic classwork, seminars, and group discussions. This focus was appropriate; the program simulated the experience of going to college. The leadership and career development goals of the program, however, required more direct experience with actual leadership activities and work roles. In future programs a Career Internship Experience, tailored to individual student interests, might supplement or replace the class.
2. *Selection process:* Because the selection process was rushed, students in rural areas where postal service is slow may not have had enough time to apply. The written essay may have also been an obstacle for bilingual students. No Athabascan or Eskimo students were selected to participate in the program.
3. *Insufficient understanding of the Institute's goals:* The evaluation revealed that participants and staff felt they did not receive enough pre-registration information. School

administrators were often unclear about the general purpose of the Honors Institute.

4. *Lack of courses in the fine and performing arts:* No intensive courses in art, music, drama, or literature were offered. This was a deliberate program decision; other university programs in the arts were scheduled at the same time. If the Honors Institute is started again, this decision should be reconsidered. The arts are featured in most other states' Governor's Schools for the Gifted and Talented.
5. *Program termination:* Respondents indicated puzzlement about the decision to discontinue a program that they felt was valuable.

Participants felt the Alaskan Honors Institute to be a valuable program that should be continued. It cost the state very little--\$32,000-- and offered important educational opportunities, especially to students from small rural schools.

Appendix

Presently, a national program for the gifted does not exist. However, independent state programs have been established to meet the special needs of the gifted. A description of some of those programs follows:

The Governor's School of North Carolina: North Carolina established the first honors program in 1963. Presently, the program has two locations: The Governor's School-West housed at Salem College and the Governor's School-East located at the campus of St. Andrews College. The six-week residential program provides non-credit course work in three academic areas: Area I--Students spend approximately two-thirds of their time in English,

languages (Spanish and French), mathematics, natural and social sciences, and in fine and performing arts such as art, choral and instrumental music, dance and drama; Area II--For one-sixth of their time, students are in classes that emphasize intergration of knowledge in specialty areas that are studied in Area I; Area III--The remaining one-sixth of the total instructional time is spent on a study of "self and society."

Arkansas Governor's School for the Gifted: This is a relatively new program for gifted students that was established in 1980 and is located at Hendrix College. The five-week residential program offers studies in a specific area including art, music (choral and instrumental), drama, language arts, mathematics, natural and social sciences.

Florida: This is another relatively new program that was initiated in 1980. This Governor's School provides a series of programs located on nine community college and university campuses. Each program varies in length, course content, and age groups served. The Florida School encompasses course work in the humanities (English, journalism, creative writing); science and technology (oceanography, marine biology, chemistry, physics, botany, physiology, anatomy, computers and engineering); fine and performing arts (cinematography, drama and music); and mathematics.

Georgia: The Governor's School of Georgia, established in 1964 provides two six-week residential programs housed at North Georgia College and Valdosta State College. Students are expected to concentrate in one of the following academic areas: English, foreign language, mathematics, natural and social sciences, art, drama, music and vocational education. Design of concept-centered courses is stressed to increase the integration of knowledge in major

areas of study.

Louisiana: Located at McNeuse State University, the Louisiana School was established in 1965. It differs from other programs because it serves students from elementary and secondary schools (6th-11th grades). Students study in one of four academic areas that include courses in humanities, science, composition, and fine arts (art, drama and music). A special feature of this program is the student government. In addition, students and faculty produce publications.

Pennsylvania: The arts are the main focus for the Pennsylvania School which offers a five-week program at Bucknell University. The philosophy of the program is that the "arts should be shared and that it is a responsibility of participants in the program to inspire and teach others." The program includes studio experiences, guest artists and lecturers, exhibitions, field trips, films and presentations by students and teachers that emphasize art, dance, music, photography, creative writing and theater. A unique feature of this curriculum is the focus on leadership skills in communication, decision making and group dynamics. The objective is to train students to act as motivators for the arts in their own communities.

South Carolina: The six-week residential program is located on the campus of Charleston College. Students select one of four program offerings that include natural and physical sciences, the humanities, social sciences and fine/performing arts. Classes, seminars, workshops, self-directed studies and projects are incorporated into instruction. In addition, small group exploration and discussion of contemporary values are included.

Virginia: Located on three campuses, Mary Baldwin College, Mary Washington College and Randolph-Macon Woman's College, this program offers four-week residential programs. The curriculum is composed of fine, performing and practical arts, humanities, natural and physical sciences, history and social sciences. Students are provided with workshops, seminars and opportunities for independent studies.

FUTURE PROBLEM SOLVING PROGRAM

Introduction

E. Paul Torrance, who fathered the Future Problem Solving Program (FPSP), had two primary aims in mind: teaching and enabling students to practice a disciplined, creative method of problem solving; and teaching students how to solve problems in a group. The Future Problem Solving Program started as a local activity in Athens, Georgia, in 1975. It soon expanded to a state program and, subsequently, a national program.

In Alaska, students in different schools form teams and practice solving problems dealing, for example, with drug abuse or endangered wildlife. Teachers (trained by the national Problem Solving staff) work with students on three practice problems during the school year. Solutions are mailed to evaluators in a central location. On the basis of their evaluation of the final problem, five teams in each of three divisions are invited to compete for state honors. The winning team in each division advances to the national competition.

In Alaska, 34 school districts participated in the program in 1981-82. Thirty-eight teachers and at least 652 students were involved. Nation-wide, some 250,000 students participated in Future Problem Solving in 1980-81.

Objectives

Following Dr. Torrance's original idea, the objectives of the Alaska Future Problem Solving Program are: to encourage foresight, creative thinking, and problem-solving skills; to develop cooperation and teamwork skills; and to develop the ability to produce organized, coherent written and verbal communications. As one respondent put it:

Next to reading, writing and arithmetic, I feel that creativity and problem solving are the most important skills a student can learn. Everyone deals with decision making--looking at the elements of a problem and coming to a solution. The skills taught by this program are needed by everyone today.

Program Content

At the beginning of the 1981-82 school year, three regional teacher training workshops were held to train coaches for the Problem Solving Teams. Fifty-seven teachers representing 34 districts attended the two-day workshops. Shortly afterwards, a workshop was held for the eleven individuals who volunteered to work as evaluators. The evaluative role is to read, score, and criticize the practice problems sent in by the school teams.

Trained teachers return to their schools to form teams of four students. Teams can be formed in any one of three divisions: Junior division for grades 4 through 6; Intermediate for grades 7 through 9; and Senior for grades 10 through 12.

The trained teachers introduce students to creative problem-solving methods either as part of a class--often a Gifted and Talented class--or as an extracurricular activity. Of the seven Alaskan teachers we interviewed, five conducted the program as part of a class, whereas three did it as an extracurricular activity.* These teachers trained their students in the individual elements of problem-solving, emphasizing brainstorming and evaluation, and then had students use all the elements together in working on a problem.

* One of the teachers was responsible for the program in more than one school.

After the students have formed into teams and are registered with the state program coordinator, the teams receive three practice problem booklets at intervals during the year.* The practice problems contain what is called a "fuzzy" problem area. A current problem--such as drug or child abuse--is projected into the future, and students are asked to imagine themselves in actual problem-solving roles. For example, for the general problem of drug abuse, the senior level teams were given the situation:

. . . You have been selected to form a team to make recommendations to an organization of concerned young adults in your community to investigate and find ways of reaching out to these people in your community--to inform them, to counsel them and to help them find purpose and meaning in their lives. Once they become productive, self-actualizing members of the community, how can their continuing non-dependence upon drugs be maintained? (Practice Problem 3, 1982)

Students research the problem and then work through it within a two hour time limit. A number of teachers found that students had particular difficulties with the research elements--materials listed in bibliographies were locally unavailable and students did not recognize the need for research.

After students research the problem, they "brainstorm" to break the big problem into smaller, more manageable subproblems. A ten-minute time restriction is placed on this process. Next students restate the problem or the subproblem more specifically, using as an opening phrase "How might we . . ." or "In what ways might . . ." This is followed by brainstorming solutions, again without a ten minute time frame.

*This year's practice problems were: child abuse, extranormal mental powers, and drug use and abuse. The state competition problem was wildlife extinction.

The next task is developing criteria by which to evaluate their solutions. Each criterion deals with only one aspect of the potential solutions. Students then select ten of their twenty solutions on a ten-point scale. Solutions may be combined as the proposed solution to the problem.

Teams document all the steps described above in a booklet which is sent to the evaluators who score each section and give an overall score for the entire booklet. On the basis of team scores for the third practice problem, five teams in each division--Junior, Intermediate, and Senior--are invited to come to Anchorage for the State Bowl.

Teams learn what the state competition problem area is to be before coming to the State Bowl. As no research materials are permitted during the competition, students must complete their research before the Bowl starts. Once the competition is underway, each team is isolated for two hours and goes through the same process used for the practice problems. They are also expected to perform a five-minute skit presenting their solution. The skit competition is separate from the problem-solving competitions and has no bearing on who goes to the National Bowl.

The State Bowl also includes an oral presentation of the winning scenario in the scenario writing contest. This creative writing exercise is described by one coach as: "A scenario is a short scene set in the near or far future that demonstrates what society would be like if a certain chain of events were to come about."

Other activities at the State Bowl include swimming, shopping, seeing a play, and attending the awards banquet. One of the criticisms of the Bowl this year was that not enough time was allowed for students to socialize and enjoy Anchorage.

First place teams in each division advance to the national competition in Iowa. The National Bowl is similar to the State Bowl with the addition of an individual problem-solving competition. Students also help select the problems to be solved by teams the following year.

Funding

The Alaskan Legislature appropriates funds to the Department of Education which, in turn, makes a grant to another educational agency for program coordination. For the 1981-82 school year, the grant was \$104,000, and the recipient agency, the Southeast Regional Resource Center.

Local districts cover the costs for teachers' release time if their teams are invited to the State Bowl and for xeroxing or incidental expenses incurred in researching problems. If students advance to the National Bowl, the state program covers virtually all costs.

Participants

Though the National Program was originally designed for Gifted and Talented students, the Alaska program is open to all students in grades 4 through 12. In the two years the program has operated, it has grown significantly-- from 80 teams involving 320 students in 24 districts in 1981 to 163 teams involving 652 students in 35 districts in 1982.* In 1982, 16 teams involving 62 students from 11 districts competed at the State Bowl.

The process for selecting students varies from school to school. While some students are enrolled in Gifted and Talented classes in which Future Problem Solving participation is mandatory, others either volunteered or were

*The number of teams and students involved fluctuates from one practice problem to another.

recommended by teachers.

Evaluation

While Dr. Torrance has collected pre- and post-test data on the program, he has yet to publish his results. A summary of subjective evaluations by both students and teachers who participated in the Georgia Future Problem Solving Program has been published. Comments from students about what they learned include: the value of group work; self-confidence; leadership; how to think about the future; research techniques; synthesizing ideas; and producing ideas quickly. Teachers thought the FPSP taught: better perspectives on the future; research and analysis skills; creative thinking; wise use of time; respect for the ideas of others; the complexity of social problems; and vocabulary and writing skills.

Exploratory interviews conducted with seven Alaskan teachers and six students revealed similar views. Teachers particularly stressed the contribution of the FPSP experience to teamwork skills:

They are forced to accept the idea that not always are their ideas the best ones and that acceptance of their ideas by the group often means logical and coherent arguments must be presented to the group. They also are locked into the solving of a problem, they can't just walk away if the going gets tough; they have to deal with differences of opinions, work through it and have something come out of it.

When asked about weaknesses in the program, two teachers felt that the program should teach more about the uses of research in solving problems.

All teachers interviewed thought that the competitive element enhanced the effectiveness of the program. Students compete both to improve the scores they receive from the evaluators and to outscore teams in their school and in

other schools. One teacher described students' efforts to improve their scores as follows:

My teams have steadily improved this year in the evaluations and I feel they see the differences in quality of solutions they have presented and will continue to grow through this process of evaluation, then striving to do better. I feel that is one part of the program that will follow them throughout their lives--the striving to improve their ideas.

Most of the teachers we interviewed also felt that the program had positive effects on their students' daily decision-making. One teacher, for example, had taken students to a community meeting evaluating a new building site eight months after they had learned the problem-solving method. Students selected criteria and applied them to the site alternatives, as they had learned in the program. Another teacher overheard his elementary students in the program remarking, "That's not the only way we can do it."

Teachers found it more difficult, however, to cite program effects on students' classwork. Two teachers did indicate that they saw evidence of increased ability to work under the pressure of timed tests. Interestingly, one teacher remarked that the problem-solving method learned through the FPSP could handicap a student in some classes: "The program can also make it difficult for students in other classes since some teachers do not allow for more than one answer."

These types of comments do not constitute an evaluation. However, they do highlight skills and attitudes that FPSP fosters--teamwork, motivation, use of time, and decision-making.

Program Issues

1. *Effects on school operations:* Most of the teachers interviewed noted that the program disrupted the regular school program. Several teachers had to pull students from classes for the problem-solving sessions. Few could run the program within their classes.
2. *Exclusion of some students:* While the FPSP is not limited to Gifted and Talented students, local variations in selecting participants exclude certain students. Five of the teachers we interviewed ran the program as part of a class. Consequently, students not part of these classes were excluded. Programs run as extracurricular activities exclude students who must work or ride a bus.
3. *Disadvantages for rural, Native, or bilingual students:* A rural teacher commented on the program in a bilingual context:

There is an inherent disadvantage in the program for students whose first language is something other than English since they are working out the process in a first language, then translating it into English. The time element does not allow for the time it takes to translate.

She suggested that the statewide competition be in English since "future leaders must be effective in that language" but that there also be a "separate bilingual competition at the regional level" to help students prepare for the state competition. This problem was discussed at the national Future Bowl meetings. Program directors proposed that bilingual students have the option of responding to the problem in their first

language with the booklet later translated.

4. *Including Alaskan problems:* Whether to include problems specific to Alaska is an unresolved issue. Two teachers we interviewed thought that including Alaskan problems would increase the appeal of the program: "It's important to get Native students involved in this program to help them see ways of solving their own problems, and one way would be to provide Alaska-specific problems." Four other teachers, however, felt that students need to be exposed to the international scope of problems. In their view, Alaska is too provincial already. Introducing local problems, it was felt, would undermine the national standardization of the program.
5. *Introducing Olympics of the Mind:* Olympics of the Mind is a program similar to Future Problem Solving. It uses the method of creative problem-solving but emphasizes mechanical or architectural applications. For example, one problem was to design and erect a structure of small strips of balsa wood and glue to support as much weight as possible. Local student teams are judged on solutions to problems given in advance of the competition, spontaneous solutions to problems given the day of the competition, and style of presentation of the solution.

Most of the teachers interviewed indicated they would like to include Olympics of the Mind in their schools. One reason was that for bilingual students, Olympics of the Mind offers a less verbal approach to problem-solving. Another reason was the Olympics of the Mind program starts as low as the kindergarten level, and the

Future Problem Solving Program could then expand upon these skills.

6. *Making FPSP part of the curriculum:* Learning problem-solving processes and learning to solve problems as a group are valuable skills which should not be taught only to special groups of students. All of the teachers we interviewed agreed that some parts of the program should be incorporated into the general curriculum. However, only three felt the entire program would benefit all students. The remaining four felt the program was appropriate for Gifted and Talented or advanced students.

RURAL STUDENT VOCATIONAL PROGRAM

Introduction

Students who attend rural high schools are rarely exposed to the occupational choices familiar to urban students. The Rural Student Vocational Program (RSVP) is intended to give rural students this exposure by placing students in jobs in urban areas for two weeks. The objectives of the RSVP are, then, two-fold: First, to give students direct experience in jobs found in urban settings; and secondly, to give students experience in coping with an urban environment and with families from a different cultural background.

RSVP has grown from a small program involving 65 students in 1971 to a large, state-wide program in which 723 students from 165 schools participated during the 1980-81 school year.

Content

Junior and senior high school students and correspondence study students are selected by their local schools for the RSVP. Students fill out an application--similar to a job application--and a vocational-area selection form.

On the basis of these forms, the regional coordinator for RSVP places students in work situations. There is a coordinator for each of five geographical areas into which the state is divided. The coordinator's responsibility is to structure the work experience for each of their students.

Coordinators have found work opportunities for students in business, agriculture, distributive education, home economics, health, trades, and industry. Students may, moreover, request placements in other fields. In structuring this work experience, coordinators try to give students an insight into the kind of work involved in an occupational area that interests the student.

In addition to arrangements for a job, housing must be found for the RSVP students. This is the responsibility of the housing coordinator. Proximity to the workplace is a major consideration as are other considerations such as the student's religious preference. When possible, students are housed with friends or relatives. Most commonly, however, students live with volunteer families.

Information on the boarding home, the work station, and travel is sent to the local teacher-coordinator. This individual passes on the information to the students and acquaints them with the rules and regulations of the program. The local teacher-coordinator also ensures that all necessary paperwork--parental permission, teachers' releases, and medical forms--are completed. Career preparation and counseling is left up to the individual school. Interviews with teacher coordinators reveal that they usually hold career planning sessions with the RSVP students but the content of these sessions varies considerably.

Students then travel to either Anchorage, Fairbanks, or Juneau to begin their work experience. Each of the five regions conducts an orientation session as soon as students arrive. Topics covered at these orientations include rules and regulations, worksite and boarding home information, career exploration, and urban "survival" information--bus systems, recre-

ational opportunities, and so on.

For two weeks, students spend regular working hours at the job site. The regional coordinators work closely with the job station supervisor to ensure that the student's experience is relevant. Work station supervisors, who enter into a contractual training agreement with RSVP, receive information outlining activities that constitute a worthwhile experience for students. Most jobs combine observation with hands-on experience, though in some fields such as health care students necessarily do mostly observation. Students receive a \$100 stipend for their work, half of which they get after the first week of work and the other half after they return home.

When a work station does not provide enough tasks for the students or when a supervisor is too busy to work with the student or exploits students as general labor, the work station is dropped from the program. Coordinators keep a close eye on what their students are doing, visiting each work site at least twice. Similarly, housing coordinators visit each boarding home at least once. Students who fail to meet their obligations or who violate the rules and regulations are automatically sent home. If there is a problem, it usually involves a curfew violation, drinking, or drugs. In 1981-82, coordinators reported having to send home less than 4 percent of their students.

Follow-up--discussions of the job and urban experience--varies from region to region. Regions II, III, and IV (all of which place students in Anchorage) have no specific follow-up sessions because of the logistical difficulties of getting students together before they leave. Students who work in Fairbanks attend a follow-up that includes a tour of the University and a discussion of their experiences. In Juneau, the follow-up completes a career exploration assignment students work on while in town.

Local teachers also vary in how much attention they give to talking with students about their jobs and urban experience when the students return to school. Some students, for example, have specific assignments to complete for their schools while others have none. The teacher-coordinators interviewed said that such discussion is at the discretion of the individual teacher or counselor.

SPICE

RSVP sponsors special Student Programs in Career Exploration (SPICE) in response to requests by school districts or students. Currently, four SPICE courses are offered: the State Trooper Academy, Legislative Aide/Page, BLM Firefighting, and Petroleum Technology.

The State Trooper Academy brings students to Sitka for two weeks of training. The Legislative Aide/Page program schedules students throughout the legislative session to work for one week as an aide to their legislator and for one week as a page. Both the BLM Firefighting program and the Petroleum Technology Workshop involve more classroom instruction than on-the-job experience. Students who successfully complete the Firefighting course receive their "red card" and are eligible to be called out on fires during the summer. In the Petroleum Technology workshop, students hear industry presentations, make site visits (including one to Prudhoe Bay), and receive one college credit for participation.

While these programs are sponsored by specific regions, they are open to students from throughout the state. In the Anchorage area, a teller training program is offered in cooperation with the National Bank of Alaska. A week of teller training is followed by a week of on-the-job experience in

Anchorage. When they have successfully completed the program, students are listed for work with their local branches.

Special Education

Regional coordinators also arrange vocational training and/or on-the-job experience for special education students. Often these students are accompanied by their teacher or an aide. In some cases, they attend special training centers while in others they are placed in the regular RSVP.

Funding

As RSVP has expanded, its budget has grown--from \$32,000 in 1971 to \$789,100 in 1982. Federal funding has varied over this eleven-year period; today RSVP is primarily state funded.

Local school districts are assessed a per-student fee; for 1981-82, the fee was \$200 per student. When regional coordinators receive letters of intent from the school districts in January, they draw up a budget and let each district know how many students it can send for the following school year. In the fall, the districts return contractual agreements with their assessed student fees to the regional coordinator.

Per student costs vary, primarily due to differences in air fare. For 1980-81, average student costs ranged from a high of \$1,562 to a low of \$448; the average student cost was \$950.77.

Participants

All juniors and senior who are currently enrolled or have previously been enrolled in vocational education classes are eligible to participate. For some SPICE programs, the vocational education requirement is waived.

The distribution of the 723 students who participated in 1980-81 was:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Male	324	45%
Female	399	55%
Minority Students	444	61%
Special Education	50	7%
Correspondence Study	17	2%

Evaluation

RSVP Reports: A post-program questionnaire is sent yearly to participants, work station supervisors, housing parents, local school administrators, and local vocational instructors. Results from the 1981 student questionnaires were:

- * 24% of the students were enrolled in a course of study in the same work experience.
- * 28% were offered jobs in their RSVP work station.
- * 5% were actually employed in their RSVP work station.
- * 98% felt RSVP had helped them learn more about the world of work.
- * 85% felt RSVP was helpful in obtaining a job.
- * 97% felt RSVP helped them develop more self-confidence in the city.
- * 81% felt RSVP helped influence their post high school decision.

All groups responding to the survey recommended the continuation of RSVP.

RSVP annual reports, however, also indicate certain problem areas. These concern a) the need for more student preparation for the city and the job situation and b) better linkage of student occupational interests to job choices. One RSVP coordinator, for example, noted in the annual report:

As for student preparation, the biggest frustration was those students who didn't seem to know anything about the occupation they had chosen. A few work situations asked why certain students even came to _____ because they were very unprepared to work. We tried to orient students on their first working day but had left the career counseling up to the sending district.

Exploratory Interviews: We conducted exploratory interviews with five participants, four teacher-coordinators, and six regional and housing coordinators to help identify possible program effects which may not have been evident in the RSVP reports. When asked about the advantages of RSVP, the regional and housing coordinators cited exposure to an urban environment, and to a different lifestyle; better understanding of a specific work setting; on-the-job training; and direct experience with work in career-interest areas. One coordinator also felt that families that boarded students were exposed to the culture of rural Alaska. The one disadvantage cited was the possibility that this kind of experience encouraged students to leave the rural areas and seek jobs in the city. Most coordinators felt, however, that after experiencing urban life students had a more realistic basis for deciding whether or not to leave their villages.

Teachers, when asked about the effects of RSVP, commented that students became more aware of possible careers and other lifestyles and increased their social skills. Two teachers noted that students worked harder in class after their RSVP experience. Finally, several of the teachers felt students exhibited greater self-confidence.

Students reported that they had enjoyed their living situation and had learned from it: "I felt it's a good experience since I was shy before RSVP and had to ask questions and talk to people in order to get along." All of the

students said they would recommend RSVP to other students because it exposed them to a real work situation and to new people. While only one of the students was still interested in the area in which she had worked during RSVP, others said that their work had helped focus their career interests.

These exploratory interviews were consistent with the predominantly positive evaluations of the program in RSVP reports. The interviews also suggest that RSVP should be viewed not only as a "work-experience program" but also as a "life-style experience" program. Students emphasized that they were learning social skills appropriate to urban settings.

Program Issues

1. *Student preparation:* Students benefit most from RSVP when they use the program to explore a specific career interest that they cannot experience in their own community. The program depends on local schools to provide sufficient career education so that students know about different jobs in urban areas and how these jobs might relate to students' own skills and interests. Local schools vary, however, in the extent to which they provide career orientation. What strategy should RSVP use to insure that such preparation does occur? Should the program itself provide career exploration materials to teachers or cover this topic in depth during student orientation?

Students also emphasized that the program taught interpersonal and speaking skills relevant to urban situations. Do teachers prepare them for the lifestyle experiences as well as the work experiences? Should RSVP itself develop educational materials

that help rural students understand urban culture?

2. *Opportunities to reflect on the work and urban experience:*

Research on experiential education shows that one factor has overwhelming influence on how much students learn from these types of programs.* This is whether or not the program provides an opportunity for reflection--structured occasions for students to think about and discuss the experience. Work experience programs typically use diaries, learning logs, seminars, or informal discussion groups to encourage students to reflect on their job situation. Are jobs in urban areas different from those in rural areas? Why is the job so structured and clock-oriented? Am I interested in this type of job or lifestyle? How is urban family life different from rural family life? Am I interpreting correctly what work supervisors or urban parents say?

RSVP again relies on local teachers to carry out this type of follow-up. Yet, teachers are not aware of the details of students' urban experience, and their discussions are likely to be superficial.

Could RSVP build opportunities for reflection (such as learning diaries or seminars) into the RSVP experience? The diaries and group discussions would also serve as a useful evaluation function; they would provide RSVP staff with better information on what students are actually learning from the experience.

* See especially Dan Conrad and Diane Hedin, Experiential Education Evaluation Project, St. Paul, MN, Center for Youth Development and Research, undated.

STUDENT GOVERNMENT

Introduction

Student government in Alaska--as elsewhere--operates at several levels: class government, student council government and the Alaska Association of Student Governments (AASG). The latter is affiliated with the National Association of Student Councils. At each level, the rationale for student government is to give students direct experience with leadership and with the democratic process as it is practiced in the United States.

A student council is typically composed of officers--president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer--and other representatives of the student body and a faculty advisor. The council holds elections for offices, provides activities for the student body, meets regularly using parliamentary procedure, and abides by the laws of its constitution.

The Alaska Association of Student Governments is open to all Alaskan secondary school governments and is sponsored by the Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals. In 1982 about 80 schools were members. AASG is composed of a general assembly, an executive board elected by the assembly, a representative to the State School Board, a representative to the Alaska School Activities Association, the advisors and the officers.

AASG holds conferences twice yearly: The fall conference is devoted to leadership training and is open to students from all participating schools; the spring conference is a business meeting to which each school sends one correspondent and a representative.

While the prevailing form for student government in Alaska is the student council, there are alternatives that have supplemented or replaced

the council. For example, at Service High in Anchorage, a student advisory council, composed of the principal and six student government officers, discuss school problems. The focus of this paper is, however, on the traditional form of student council.

Objectives

Leadership skill development and citizenship training are the primary objectives of student government. Students receive instruction and practical experience in the following areas: basic communication skills; decision-making skills; problem-solving techniques; parliamentary procedure; group cooperation; and planning school events. Instruction takes place in specific classes and workshops in leadership skills. Also, students, together with advisors, meet to discuss school problems and plan and carry out school events.

Citizen education through student governments involves practical experience with the public mechanisms for decision-making--participating in meetings, soliciting and respecting the opinions of others, campaigning for office, voting, representing constituents, and delegating duties and responsibilities. This "hands-on" experience, combined with the more abstract knowledge gained in civics and government classes, is intended to prepare students for adult participation in public decision-making and civic organizations.

Activities

Student government organizations--at both the school and the state levels--hold formal meetings using parliamentary procedure. Each officer is responsible for specific duties during meetings. Much of the council's

work is carried out in small groups or committees (standing, ad hoc, or executive).

Student council meetings are typically held weekly and last 40 to 50 minutes. They are usually held outside of class time. Meetings of committees are generally on an "as needed" basis.

The specific activities of student councils vary greatly from school to school. Generally they fall into the following categories: providing information and recommendations to the faculty, administration, and school board; initiating or assisting in school and community service projects; and sponsoring social and recreational activities. Examples of specific student government activities are given below. These examples are taken from interviews with student council officers and advisors.

Service High (Anchorage): The student council has sponsored homecoming, dances, and a canned food drive for Hope Cottage. They have also attempted to increase the time between classes from six to eight minutes. To promote the idea of enclosing an existing walkway between two school buildings, the student council provided the school board with temperature readings taken at various times in the area around the walkways.

Dillingham: The student council has sponsored dances, a canned food drive for the needy, and booths and floats for the Beaver Round-Up Festival. They have sold school jackets to raise funds and cooperate with the administration in investigating behavioral problems and recommending appropriate treatment. When vandalism occurred during a recent council-sponsored activity, members of the council's Executive Board participated in the investigation and recommended suitable punishment to the administrators. The council advisor

recommended suitable punishment to the administrators. The council advisor felt the guilty students accepted the verdict more readily because they felt they had been judged by their peers.

Seward: The student council schedules activities to avoid conflicting events and works with the administration to schedule exams. They also sponsor freshman initiation, the Halloween Carnival, and school picnics. The council has purchased a stereo system for the school and paid transportation for student leaders to attend the Northern Institute's Leadership Workshop.

Valdez: The student council sponsors activities such as homecoming, dances, pep assemblies, "Senior Appreciation Day," and "Teacher Appreciation Day." The student body president reads the daily bulletin to inform all students of school news. The council assists in hosting a career day and in providing services to school clubs such as selling tickets to their functions. From surplus student government funds, the council also provides scholarships.

Nenana: Activities that the council sponsors include Spirit Week, the Halloween Carnival, and Student of the Month. During "Community Clean-Up Day," council officers join with other students and faculty to dispose of refuse around town and along the Parks Highway.

Akiachak: In addition to sponsoring recreational and social activities such as dances and movies, the council has purchased a stereo system for the school and new uniforms for athletes and cheerleaders.

St. Paul: The student government has sponsored a number of social events including dances and picnics.

Leadership Classes and Workshops

Classes in leadership offer students the chance to receive credit for learning leadership skills. Service High in Anchorage offers a leadership class for its student council members. Kotzebue High offers a "leadership development" class to council members which is conducted by the student body president and the council advisor. Time in class is devoted to working on council projects. In Nenana, the student council advisor provides special classes in parliamentary procedure and public speaking to candidates prior to council elections. The Northern Institute also offers workshops in parliamentary procedure and other leadership skills to schools who want such training for student council participants and other students.

Leadership workshops offer intense practical experiences for students. These workshops are often live-in experiences away from school. Teacher-advisors usually serve as staff personnel during these workshops. In addition to learning leadership skills, students have the opportunity to interact with their peers from different regions of the state. Workshops generally consist of two types of sessions: process-oriented and issue-oriented. In the process-oriented sessions, students learn specific skills such as parliamentary procedure or decision-making. Issue-oriented sessions focus on a current issue or concern such as goal setting for projects or improving student government structures.

In Alaska, Boys' and Girls' State and the AASG Leadership Camp are examples of Leadership workshops. Boys' and Girls' State is a mock legislative session sponsored by the American Legion and held in the summer. Campaigning for elective office, lobbying for legislation, debating proposed bills, voting on legislation, and publishing a newspaper are some of the activities included in this leadership program. In 1981, the Alaska Girls' State saw the passage

of legislation banning hand guns, cancelling and reappropriating funds for the development of the MX Missile System, abolishing the Electoral College and mandating the popular vote for Presidential Elections, and establishing a national registry for donated blood. The AASG Leadership Camp in 1982 will include opportunities to learn personal leadership skills, how to involve other individuals in projects, and new ideas for school activities and making new friends.

Funding

This year AASG received \$32,610 from the Northern Institute to which the Department of Education allocated a block grant of \$380,000 to fund student government and Vocational Student Leadership Organizations. AASG also levies dues of \$100 annually on the 80 schools in the state who are represented by AASG.

At the school level, student councils receive funds appropriated by the district school board. In addition, the councils engage in a variety of fundraising activities--dances and movies, soft drink or juice machine concessions, bake sales and selling school jackets and other apparel. AASG supports local councils by partially reimbursing transportation costs to the state AASG conferences.

Participants

The number of students actively participating as officers and representatives in student council governments varies; 15 to 20 students are typical. At the 1982 AASG Spring Conference, there were approximately 90 student representatives and 20 advisors.

Several advisors reported that participation in the student council

was growing at their schools while others indicated that the level of participation has not changed significantly over time. Most advisors we interviewed indicated that turnover in students who participated was 50 percent or greater. Advisors described non-government students as generally apathetic toward student council projects, demonstrating interest usually only during times of need. Individuals who are attracted to student government may share some characteristics in common. According to interviews with student government leaders and advisors, these individuals tend to be extroverted and high academic achievers who do not necessarily possess a strong political orientation.

Evaluation

Despite an extensive literature search, we located no studies in Alaska or elsewhere that evaluated student government as an educational experience. Consequently, we conducted exploratory interviews with eight student council leaders and six advisors as a basis for developing ideas about the educational effects of participation. They cited, as the educational value of participating in student government, developing organizational skills, exposure to broadening experiences, and increasing awareness of governmental processes. When asked what they had learned from their involvement in student government, students responded: "I have learned that one can make things happen if one works at it" "I have learned how to work with others" "I am better at problem solving and at running meetings" "I am better at getting involved" and "I feel more confident." All the students we interviewed indicated that they have learned something from their student government experience.

Both students and advisors emphasized that student government helped students feel confident in formal leadership roles. Student comments on leadership include: "I feel like a President or an ambassador [as student body president]" "I feel more capable as a leader and can take on responsibility" "I'm better at getting others involved" "Student government has enhanced my public speaking skills."

Most of the students and advisors agreed that another benefit of participating in the student council was better decision-making skills. Students' observations included: "I have to make decisions concerning project goals, setting dates for activities, and offer directions to others in activities" "I feel I can make better and quicker decisions." Advisors reported that students discovered their capacity for planning, organizing and directing successful activities.

Broadened experience was another result of student council involvement noted by all the advisors and student leaders. The principle process for this broadening was travel and interaction with other students who participate in AASG activities. In such gatherings, peer learning seems to be significant; as one advisor reported, students are able to observe "super student government politicians in action," learning from them how to conduct meetings efficiently according to correct parliamentary procedure.

Most students and advisors also felt that student government participation increased awareness of and involvement in the political process. Two of the students reported that their attitude toward politics had grown more positive as their understanding increased. Another student had attended the national Close-Up Program, had served as an alternate at a Republican caucus, had begun to write letters to government officials and to work on

a political campaign, and had applied for a summer internship with an Alaskan legislator. Advisors also remarked on the increased sense of responsibility that students developed through their council duties and activities.

Advisors also described problems with student government. These included: lack of commitment and seriousness among council members; student body apathy; faculty apathy and their resentment of an elite class of students granted special opportunities; insufficient time for meetings; and students' failure to grasp the full potential of a student council.

Program Issues

1. *Student body apathy:* Involving students who are not either officers or representatives in council activities is seen as a major problem. The literature on student government suggests mechanisms for alleviating this problem--student opinion polls, regular reporting of council activities to the student body, open meetings, and avoidance of an elitist attitude.
2. *Over-extended council members:* Many student council members are involved in a number of other activities including athletics and clubs. Student government students suffer because they are over-extended.
3. *Need for formal evaluation:* The direct educational effects and the carry-over effects of the skills and knowledge learned in student government have not been documented. Nor is information available about long-term effects. For example, are council members more likely to be politically active or community leaders as adults?

VOCATIONAL STUDENT LEADERSHIP ORGANIZATIONS (VSLO's)

Introduction

Five nationally based organizations fall under the general rubric of "Vocational Student Leadership Organizations": Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA); Future Farmers of America (FFA), Future Homemakers of America/Home Economics Related Occupations (FHA/HERO), Office Education Association (OEA) and Vocational Industrial Clubs of America (VICA). What makes these career-oriented organizations distinctive is their co-curricular character. That is, the membership is drawn from vocational courses appropriate to the organization. They are incorporated into the regular vocational curriculum and meetings occur during school hours. At the same time, these organizations also have extracurricular components -- service projects, fund-raising, competitions, and so on -- which extend the educational experience beyond the school.

OBJECTIVES OF VSLO's

Career Development

Each of these organizations has, as a primary goal, the sharpening of skills -- both technical and social -- and knowledge that students will need in specific careers. This is accomplished through out-of-school projects and competitions that require the students to use the skills and knowledge that they have gained in their vocational classes. For example, each FFA member is expected to undertake a farm-related project that will require him to use what he has learned in vocational agriculture classes. Closely related to career development is the emphasis VSLO's place on improving communication skills, both written and oral. Students participate in public speaking contests and learn to handle business correspondence.

Leadership Training

These organizations also attempt to foster leadership skills, both by teaching students the fundamentals of conducting a meeting and by providing opportunities to serve in leadership positions. In their local chapters, students are introduced to parliamentary procedure and given the opportunity to preside over or participate in business meetings, run for and serve as an officer in the organization, present ideas to others, delegate responsibility, and plan organizational activities. Statewide VSLO officers receive other opportunities to practice these skills; for example, they preside over statewide VSLO meetings and help to plan the annual convention.

Citizenship

A third common objective for these organizations is to develop citizenship. VSLO's organize a variety of school and community service projects. Local chapters participate in school and community clean-ups, senior citizens projects, Special Olympics, telethons and walkathons to raise funds for March of Dimes and Muscular Dystrophy, and other public service campaigns.

Business Experience

Students become involved in a variety of fund-raising activities to support their local chapters, such as managing the school snack bar. In some of the organizations, students' projects involve raising money to produce a product, sell the product, and invest profits.

Social and Recreational

All of these organizations also provide students with social and recreational opportunities. Meetings are social as well as business occasions

as are the annual statewide conferences that each organization holds. The statewide conference introduces students to peers from different regions of Alaska. In addition, local chapters hold dances and social events for their members.

DESCRIPTIONS OF INDIVIDUAL PROGRAMS: 1981-82

Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA)

Clientele: DECA is open to students enrolled in classes involving marketing, merchandising, and management studies.

Goals: DECA's primary goal is to attract people to careers in marketing and to encourage awareness of the private enterprise system. The organization encourages members to develop in four areas: 1) Vocational understanding: first-hand knowledge of merchandising, marketing, and management, 2) Civic consciousness: recognition of obligations to the community, 3) Social intelligence: knowledge of social skills and the importance of cooperative effort.

Content: DECA attempts to achieve its goals through vocational instruction, projects in marketing, exposure to business leaders, individual and group awards, and practical business experience. Many DECA chapters run their school store or snack bar. They also bring in speakers from community business to address meetings. Community service projects include assisting in such organizations as the Muscular Dystrophy Society. The projects that local chapters work on depend largely on the interests of the teacher/advisor and the members.

Conference: Held annually in the Spring, the state DECA conference consists of a number of competitive events: merchandising, apparel and accessories, foods,

restaurant service, and merchandising, spelling and arithmetic. Elections for state offices are also held. In 1982, about 80 students attended the conference. All participants except those from new chapters enter at least one competitive event.

Alaska Membership:

In 1981-82, DECA had 10 chapters with 161 student members. Approximately 70 percent are in larger towns and cities. DECA is expecting the addition of two new chapters in 1982-83.

Future Farmers of America (FFA)

Clientele: FFA is open to all student currently or previously enrolled in vocational agriculture courses.

Goals: FFA aims to prepare vocational agriculture students for careers in farming and related agricultural business.

Content: FFA use three principle methods to achieve its goals: 1) classroom instruction with FFA advisors using the organization's materials to augment the curriculum; 2) supervised projects in horticulture, forestry, natural resources and agriculture; and 3) skill training which includes parliamentary procedures, public speaking, and time management skills. Community service projects include telethons, assisting in rabies clinics, and running children's farms at the state fair.

Conference: The annual conference features competitive events in leadership and vocational skills--demonstrations of parliamentary procedure, creed speaking, extemporaneous speaking and livestock and poultry judging contests. There are also delegate meetings, officer elections, award presentations and social events.

Alaska Membership: In 1981-82, FFA had 11 chapters with approximately 250 student members. There were three bush chapters: Ambler, Selawik, and Togiak.

Future Homemakers of America/Home Economics Related Occupations (FHA/HERO)

Clientele: FHA/HERO is open to students currently or previously enrolled in courses in home economics, consumer education or family life, or those interested in home economics related occupations.

Goals: FHA aims to prepare students in the areas of consumer education, homemaking and family life; HERO is more vocationally oriented, preparing students for home economics related careers.

Content: FHA/HERO are project-oriented organizations. Members collectively plan yearly programs which include participation in service organizations such as March of Dimes, activities with Senior citizens, school and community projects, walkathons as well as fund raising projects and dances. Recognition and awards are achieved non-competitively.

Conference: The state conference features training for chapter officers, educational workshops in career planning and self-development, and social activities. Some 115 members attended the 1982 state conference.

Membership: 22 chapters with 350 student members. One chapter exists in Anchorage, the rest are in smaller areas.

Office Education Association (OEA)

Clientele: OEA is open to past or present students in office occupations classes.

Goals: OEA aims to develop leadership abilities, interest in the American business system, and competency in office occupations.

Content: Students select goals and objectives for each year. By performing specified tasks in seven categories--from Leadership to Patriotism--students earn points towards Torch Awards. For example, members earn so many points for serving as an OEA committee chairman, additional points for leading the Pledge of Allegiance at a chapter function, and so on. In at least one school, the office class had been set up along the lines of a regular office with one student serving as manager.

Conference: Competitive events in both vocational skills--typing, shorthand, accounting, and so on--and non-vocational skills--job interviewing, parliamentary procedure and public speaking--are featured at the state conference. Participants also attend workshops in such areas as time management, goal setting, and sexual harrassment and elect statewide officers. In 1982, 149 students attended the conference.

Alaska Membership: In 1982, OEA had 20 chapters with 293 student members. Six of those chapters are in the areas the size or Wasilla or larger.

Vocational Industrial Clubs of America (VICA)

Clientele: VICA is open to students enrolled in trade, industrial, technical and health education courses.

Goals: VICA aims to promote career growth, citizenship, recognition by others of how important trade skills are, contact with business and professional leaders, and community improvement.

Content: Students are encouraged to sharpen their trade skills to compete in Skills Olympics. Alaskan chapters have also recycled wastes, made historical signs, and sold greenhouses for arctic conditions.

Conference: In 1982, 105 students attended the state conference which featured competitions in such areas as job interviews, opening and closing ceremonies, speech, and vocational skills. Business, industrial, and union leaders are invited to observe and to serve as judges.

Alaska Membership: In 1981-82, VICA had 12 chapters with 250 members statewide. About 22 members live in the smaller areas of Manokotak and Nunapitchuk; the remainder live in larger towns and cities.

Funding

The Northern Institute received \$380,000 in 1982 to help support the VSLO's and the Alaska Association of Student Government. The level of state funding for each of the VSLO's is:

DECA	\$15,840
FFA	17,010
FHA/HERO	19,740
OEA	18,180
VICA	16,620

According to the state advisors for these organizations, these block grants are spent on travel for leadership conferences, state conferences, communications, public relations, and state projects.

In addition to these block grants to the VSLO's the Northern Institute

used \$52,500 of these funds to compensate state advisors for each organization.

The Northern Institute also uses state funds to put on workshops at Alaska schools in such areas as parliamentary procedure and goal setting. In 1981-82, 24 local workshops were conducted; 888 students participated.

The VSL0's also assess dues of from one to five dollars per student. Businesses or industries contribute money to some of the organizations. For example, industry donations to VICA help support the state Skill Olympics. Finally, these organizations run a variety of fund-raising activities.

Evaluations

Few formal evaluations of the VLSO's have appeared in the research literature. An evaluation carried out in Colorado did include DECA, FFA, FHA/HERO, OEA, and VICA.* The primary evaluative instrument was a survey of 383 randomly selected students from VSL0's and 171 randomly selected advisors. Parents, employees and school administrators were also surveyed. The survey asked about their perceptions of these organizations -- whether they were meeting their objectives and whether they were useful and needed. The findings show an overall positive perception of vocational youth organizations with FFA and DECA receiving more positive responses in Colorado and VICA the least positive responses. Most students said the vocational club offered good educational activities, helped them to work with people, and helped them in job exploration and job preparation. School administrators, however, saw these programs as non-essential and offered little funds or other support. This study made no attempt to measure the success of these organizations by

* Kendrick Spooner. Vocational Youth Organizations, Are They Needed? University of Northern Colorado, June 30, 1974.

criteria other than opinion.

As a basis for exploring more objective evaluation approaches, we interviewed five Alaska state VSLO advisors. The small number of advisors limit the extent to which we can generalize their responses. Nonetheless, their perceptions are interesting.

When asked if they see any carry-over from student participation in vocational organization to other work or activities, three of the five cited examples of where that had occurred. One advisor cited the example of a student who had become involved as an officer in DECA and, subsequently, became President of the Student Council. Another student who had a poor academic record produced a highly successful FFA project. Her heightened self-esteem - the FFA advisor believes - resulted in honor-roll grades. Another advisor noted that a number of his students had started their own businesses upon graduation, using the knowledge and experience they had acquired through VSLO projects.

When asked about organizational problems, all but one advisor cited the lack of funds and time to travel to schools to help organize local chapters:

Since the state advisors of the VSLO's are full-time classroom teachers, many cannot devote the time necessary to do a good job.

All recommended that the Department of Education provide the funds for a fulltime staff member to promote VSLO's.

Finally, the advisors cited the opportunity for vocational students to gain major strength of the organization. As one advisor said:

The Vocational Student Leadership Organizations fulfill a real need for the large group of students who are not involved in athletics or who are not high academic achievers.

Program Issues

1. Extending VSLO's to other schools

Staff personnel are needed who have the time and the funds to conduct teacher in-services and workshops and to visit school sites to help new teacher-advisors get underway.

2. Mandating VSLO's

Should Alaska mandate VSLO's as part of the vocational curriculum? In most states, these organizations are seen as so integral to the voc-ed curriculum that funding for voc-ed depends on inclusion of VSLO's. This leads to increased consistency in the content of the voc-ed programs as well as heightened teacher interest in the organizations.

3. Lack of formal evaluations

Unanswered questions include:

- * What, if any, are the effects of the program in terms of leadership skills, self-confidence and self-esteem?
- * Do these programs have any effect on students' career choices or success in their chosen career?
- * Do VSLO students have a greater tendency than other students to participate in community affairs?
- * What factors influence to what extent teachers use VSLO's in the classroom?

4. Appropriateness of VSLO's in rural Alaska

Should VSLO's modify their program in traditional Eskimo and Indian communities? Research on youth in rural Alaska has found that national organizations (such as scouting or 4-H) take root when they are adapted

to the local culture.* Some successful youth organizations in rural Alaska, for example, de-emphasize meetings, awards, and formal leadership roles; they emphasize community service projects, recreational activities, and educational projects of local importance, such as how to repair dog harnesses.

* Judith Kleinfeld and Anne Shinkwin, Youth Organizations as a Third Educational Environment, Particularly for Minority Group Youth. Report to the National Institute of Education, University of Alaska: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1982.