

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

ASD MEMORANDUM #312 (2005-2006)

June 12, 2006

TO: SCHOOL BOARD

FROM: OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

SUBJECT: ANNUAL REVIEW/END OF YEAR REPORT FOR FY 2005-2006:
HIGHLAND TECH HIGH CHARTER SCHOOL

ASD Goal: *Ensure public accountability through effective communication with students, staff, parents, community and government at all levels.*

PERTINENT FACTS:

School Board Policy 333.10 on Charter Schools requires an Annual Review of each Charter School. To be specific, the Policy states:

“The charter school will be subject to review of its operations and finances by the School Board. Annually, the Academic Policy Committee will submit a concise written report and make a presentation to the School Board and the public no later than June 30 of each school year. This report will include, but is not limited to, information of the attainment of student performance expectations, including copies of the Terra Nova and Benchmark reports; recommendations for remediation of poor student performance; school goal attainment; trends in student/staff enrollment and mobility; an end of year preliminary financial statement showing revenues and expenditures; minutes of the meetings of the governing body of the charter school; descriptions of charter school activities; copies of any leases signed by the charter school; current bylaws of the Academic Policy Committee; notification of establishment of non-profit 501 (c) (3) status; list of officers in any PTA/PTO or other parent organization; any changes in facility location; any major changes planned for the following school year; a list of the Academic policy Committee for the past and coming school year, including officers, and staff members by position; a list of employees and job titles; and other information requested by the School Board.

If there is evidence of a breach of contract, then the School Board, through the Superintendent or designee, shall have a right to investigate this breach of

contract and meet with the charter school to discuss possible remedies and/or possible termination of the contract.”

Representatives from Highland Tech High Charter School will be available to present their Annual Report to the School Board. Their report is presented to the School Board as Attachment A. The Administration will also present remarks at the appropriate time.

Highland Tech High (HTH) has had a successful third year of operation as a charter school and school of choice for the Anchorage School District. Many of the concerns of the first two years have successfully been addressed and remedied this year with a few new challenges presenting themselves. The fiscal concerns of past years have been addressed and are in the process of being resolved. The school will be relocating to a new site, not far from their current location. They will be on the west end of the Boniface Center in a space that is smaller and more affordable. The space is being renovated to meet the school’s needs with improvements that will address not only the fiscal concerns but also some of the environmental and safety concerns. This move will help Highland stay solvent and continue to carry out the mission of their charter. Many of the other concerns of the past have also been addressed this school year. Connie Bensler, the District’s Liaison to Highland Tech High Charter School, has attended the monthly meetings of their Academic Policy Committee, made up of parents and staff. There is a good working relationship between Ms. Bensler and the APC.

The HTH staff and Academic Policy Committee have made a commitment to improve in a number of areas this past school year. One area of concern that has been addressed is student accountability. The staff has established a process called Academic Review in which non-performing students are reviewed by their teachers, parents and peers and eventually given a plan of action to improve their academic performance. If this plan isn’t successful, it is revisited and revised by those involved. This process has been successful in steering some students who are not as motivated as they need to be to succeed in this model to another school or program.

Another area of concern was how to meet the individual needs of the number of special needs students. HTH continues to have difficulty in attracting and keeping special education teachers. This year, they had a part-time teacher, some teacher assistant support and some outside addenda support. It is difficult to meet these students’ needs in such a fragmented way and without a full-time special education teacher on staff. The administration has urged the school to staff this area adequately. The APC has directed the principal, Mark Standley, to staff this area with a ratio of 1 FTE special education teacher for every 16 special

needs students. With additional staffing, these students' needs will be met appropriately. The school model is one that can be very successful for special needs students, but adequately trained personnel need to be there to assist in this effort.

Another issue that has been addressed this year in a positive manner is the makeup of the Academic Policy Committee. In the past, there was at best one parent on the APC with the rest of the members being mostly community members. This year, there are two staff members plus the principal, four parents, and two community members. This combination has proven to be very successful for the school. The parents have also formed a parent forum whose purpose, among other things, is to fund raise and recruit students. Having more staff members on the APC gives the other members an insider's view of the school. This is extremely useful when making policy decisions that affect the day-to-day activities of the school. The community members continue to give the APC a unique perspective that has added depth to the APC. All in all, the school community has worked together to overcome some major concerns and move the school forward in a positive and productive way.

Highland continues to be a wonderful school of choice in many ways. It was a choice for students from Title I secondary schools that did not make adequate yearly progress. It has a unique flavor that gives one a feeling of the cutting edge in education in areas such as standards based assessment, high-end technology, and self-pacing student achievement. Highland is on its way to becoming an excellent future choice for students in the Anchorage School District.

CC/RG/CB/mlh

Attachment

Prepared by: Connie Bensler, Charter School Liaison

Approved by: Rhonda Gardner, Assistant Superintendent, Instruction