

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

ASD MEMORANDUM #304 (2006-2007)

May 14, 2007

TO: SCHOOL BOARD

FROM: OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

SUBJECT: ANNUAL REVIEW/END OF YEAR REPORT FOR FY2006-2007  
WINTERBERRY 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 SBA reports; recommendations for remediation for 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 501 © (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 years, 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 Winterberry 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.

Connie Bensler, the Charter Schools Supervisor for the Anchorage School District has worked closely with the Administration and Academic Policy Committee of this school. Ms. Bensler attends monthly APC meetings and provides assistance to these groups when working within the confines of the Anchorage School District and Charter School Law, policies and regulations.

It has been said, what a difference a day makes. In this case, “what a difference a year makes” applies to the state of Winterberry Charter School. A year ago, Winterberry had finished a very difficult first year with a budget that was reduced by half because of a shortfall in student enrollment caused by several factors including lack of a building until Oct. 30, 2005. This year, their enrollment has remained stable, their building has been completed and their budget has made up last year’s deficit and financed this year’s basic needs. Everyone at Winterberry is looking forward to next year with the hope that there will be enough money to finance a school beyond basic needs. Additional support staff is high on the list of wishes since the school has been functioning with only a principal and a .4 FTE administrative assistant. The school has a full complement of teachers, but was not able to hire specialty teachers for its afternoon classes. The core teachers have also been functioning as the specialty teachers with limited offerings to students.

If you visited Winterberry, you would not get the sense that anything was deficient. In fact, you would experience a sense of joy and fulfillment from students, teachers and parents. The school has unqualified support from those who attend school there or work there. The attitude universally is that if something needs to be done, it gets done with or without financial resources. The parent volunteers at Winterberry have taken volunteerism to a new height. The Parent Guild, which is the non-profit organization for the school, has raised a significant amount of money that has been given to the school to pay for mentoring, web site development, and many other activities. They work tirelessly to make landlord-approved improvements to their building, as well as provide parent support in the office and classroom. This school community believes in giving to the school because they believe that the school is the best choice for their children.

The principal, Shanna Mall, has done an incredible job of keeping the school running smoothly in spite of the lack of support staff available to her. She does this with a sense of humor and a work ethic that is beyond outstanding. Her administrative assistant, Donna Beaulieu, presents to the public a friendly and helpful demeanor that makes you feel instantly welcome. The teaching staff is dedicated and hard working. No one works the contract day at this school. People are here at all hours and on the weekends creating an atmosphere that is not only true to the school's charter, but also full of energy and enthusiasm for the education of young people in general. The Academic Policy Committee continues to learn their role in guiding the school and working with policy development. All in all, there isn't a person involved in the school that isn't giving 100 percent to making the school run smoothly and adhere to the philosophy set out in the charter.

As the school discusses the direction it wants to take in future growth and class configuration, the issue of the current facility comes into the discussion. Their current site has a maximum capacity of 180 students. Since the school hopes to add seventh grade this coming fall, that capacity is likely to be reached very shortly. Their current lease ends at the end of the 2008-2009 school year. Whether or not to extend the lease is a current topic of discussion. They have established a growth committee not only to look at their current facility but also to explore other locations as well. There are mixed opinions on whether to remain in the current facility or move when the lease is up. That discussion is on-going and not likely to be concluded soon.

To see a school that struggled so much last year survive and have such a successful year this year has been a pleasure. The school would not have made it without all members of the school community being dedicated to making the school work. There is now some room for growth and expansion as well as some movement from meeting basic needs to providing some enrichment to the school program. It will be an honor to work with this staff and APC again next year. They deserve many accolades for what they have accomplished so far.

CC/RG/CB

Attachment

Prepared by: Connie Bensler, Supervisor, Charter Schools

Approved by: Rhonda Gardner, Assistant Superintendent, Instruction