

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

ASD MEMORANDUM #142 (2007-2008)

December 17, 2007

TO: SCHOOL BOARD

FROM: OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

SUBJECT: WINTERBERRY CHARTER SCHOOL RENEWAL APPLICATION

ASD Goal: Establish and maintain a supportive and effective learning environment by providing safe, caring, barrier-free schools; promoting health and wellness; continuing to retain, recruit and train highly qualified staff with an emphasis on improving staff diversity to better reflect our student body; challenging each student academically; maximizing opportunities for lifelong learning, including the development of 21st century skills; offering reinforcing extracurricular activities and collaborating with other community agencies to maximize opportunities for lifelong learning.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board approve the renewal of the charter for Winterberry Charter School for an additional 10 years, chartering the school through the 2017-2018 school year.

PERTINENT FACTS:

Anchorage School Board policy and Alaska Department of Education and Early Development regulations require charter schools to reapply for approval of their charters within 12 months of the expiration date of the charter. Winterberry Charter School's charter will expire June 30, 2008. They are subsequently reapplying to the Anchorage School Board and the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development for a 10-year renewal of the Winterberry Charter School.

In January 2005, the Anchorage School Board chartered Winterberry for three years. During that time, the school has overcome a budget shortfall, a building not completed in time to occupy on the first day of school, and a subsequent reduction in staff. After the first year, having overcome these problems, the school flourished and grew and has become a stronger learning community because of them.

In the initial school year, Winterberry's building at 2nd and E street was not ready for occupancy when school started. The school start was delayed by 6 weeks. This caused some parents to take their children out of Winterberry which reduced student enrollment to an average during the count period of 146 students. Because this number falls under the average enrollment of 150 students, Winterberry's budget was reduced by approximately \$600,000 based on the State formula for funding of charter schools. The need to reduce staff was a direct result of this reduction in funding which in turn caused more parents to take their children out of Winterberry. In spite of all these difficulties, the school remained open and produced a viable learning environment for its students. During the second and third years, the school has been fully funded and has thrived. The parents and teachers have fully supported the school's philosophy and teaching style. The students have done very well academically and re-enrolled each year. The school has expanded to include a seventh grade with plans to have an eighth grade in year 2008-2009. The original charter approved the school for grades kindergarten through eighth grade.

Several outstanding features of the school make it extremely successful to its parents, students and staff. One of these is the extensive training and mentoring that takes place year around for the staff. All teaching staff receives training in becoming certified public Waldorf teachers. There is a mentoring team that visits the school twice a year to work with teachers, staff and parents on public Waldorf education and philosophy. Another feature which is very popular with the school community is the Parent Guild. This group, which meets monthly, is made up of parents, staff and the principal. The group has provided many happy occasions for families to interact and learn more about the school, as well as having organized several fund raisers for the school. These fund raisers have provided financial support for teacher training in the summer. Another key feature of the school that everyone supports is the looping of teachers with their students starting in first grade and going at least to grade five. Looping is fundamental to Winterberry's philosophy and has been embraced by the school community. Finally, each month the Academic Policy Committee meets to review issues brought to them by the principal, staff, students and parents. Because of their dedication to the school and the vision of the school, they have been involved in making the school function at such a successful level.

CC/RG/CB

Attachment

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