

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

MEMORANDUM #33 (2008-2009)

September 8, 2008

TO: SCHOOL BOARD

FROM: OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

SUBJECT: ANNUAL REVIEW/END-OF-THE-YEAR REPORT FOR  
FY 2007-2008 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. 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 September 15 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 school supervisor for the Anchorage School District has worked closely with the administration and Academic Policy Committee of this school. Ms. Bensler attends APC meetings and provides assistance to these groups on working within the confines of the Anchorage School District and Charter School Law, policies and regulations.

Winterberry Charter School is a K-8 Anchorage School District Charter School. It has been part of the district for three years. During that time, it has changed dramatically from a struggling new school barely able to survive to a robust, exemplary school of choice for students in the ASD. The principal, Shanna Mall and the exceptional staff at the school have made a dream a reality. Ms. Mall has provided outstanding leadership from the early days of survival to the very successful present. The staff has remained extremely stable, to the point that the teachers are able to loop with their students starting in first grade and continuing through sixth grade. Parents have remained loyal to the school and rarely transfer to another school once their children have attended Winterberry.

Among the many good things that happen daily at Winterberry, is the emphasis on learning to live with the natural world in a responsible and respectful way. Service learning projects are part of every student’s experience at Winterberry. The downtown community the school is located in has embraced the school wholeheartedly and find the children and staff a welcome addition to the neighborhood. The school’s enrollment has grown along with the seventh and eighth grades. There is constantly a need to find additional space both for future growth and school-wide activities.

Winterberry did not make AYP in 2007-2008 in math. There has been a significant amount of discussion among the staff and at the APC meetings regarding this. In addition to the low math scores, test scores in all areas for grade 3 were not acceptable to Winterberry staff and parents. After reflecting on the many causes of these low test scores, it was decided that a number of steps needed to be taken to raise these scores to an acceptable level in the future. One aspect of the Winterberry model is always going to prove to be problematic to Winterberry test scores and that is the pace of introduction of academic concepts in first and second grade. The model compensates for this slower pace by developing skills in these grades that are unique and in the end very useful to a child in his/her educational development. The ability to question and explore is

a large part of Winterberry's philosophy. The children who attend school at Winterberry scored across the board at least 30 points higher than students in the rest of the District and the State in the science SBA's. These skills are extremely important to the overall education of a child.

Plans have been developed that should help teachers in addressing some of the testing shortcomings of students. Bonnie River Curriculum Guides and Assessment Rubrics have been adopted and are now in use at Winterberry. In the coming year, a daily mathematics practice period will be implemented. Teachers will be selecting a teacher math textbook to help guide them in lesson development. The special education teacher will be working more closely with those students who may need additional math time. Along with all of these plans, there will be a concerted effort to use the ARS to find and track students who need extra attention in math.

Winterberry continues to be one of the special schools that elicit comments such as "what is that school about? The school is so pretty and the kids seem so happy." It can easily be said that the school is about providing the best possible place for parents who believe in the school's methodology to educate their children. It is a pleasure to continue to work with such a great group of people.

CC/RG/CB

Attachment

Prepared by: Connie Bensler, Supervisor, Charter Schools

Approved by: Rhonda Gardner, Assistant Superintendent, Instruction