

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

MEMORANDUM #46 (2009-2010)

September 14, 2009

TO: SCHOOL BOARD

FROM: OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

SUBJECT: ANNUAL REVIEW/END-OF-YEAR REPORT FOR
FY 2008-2009 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. 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 Highland Tech High (HTH) 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 previous charter school supervisor for the Anchorage School District, worked closely with the administration and Academic Policy Committee of this school. Ms. Bensler attended APC meetings and provided assistance to these groups on working within the confines of the Anchorage School District and Charter School Law, policies and regulations. Her successor, Mary Meade-Olberding, looks forward to continuing this relationship.

The 2008-2009 school year was perhaps the strongest yet in Highland Tech’s six year history. Many of the benefits of a standards-based, student-centered school are beginning to show in several ways, including the increased test scores this year. Students at Highland Tech High achieved AYP for the first time in five years, and their graduation rate climbed to an all time high of 65 percent from the previous year’s 46 percent. Their student population remained near 250 students, grades 7-12. Former principal, Mark Standley, moved on to other endeavors at the end of the year, and after an exhaustive process involving all members of the school community, veteran administrator Dr. Ginger Blackmon was chosen to be the new principal. Her enthusiasm and expertise have already shown that she is an excellent fit for this unique program.

Highland Tech uses a standards-based approach to assessing academic success and works closely with the Reinventing Schools Coalition (RISC), receiving annual training and support from RISC to increase stakeholder fidelity to their model. Students are required to complete standards at a proficient level (equals a traditional grade of “B”) in order to receive mastery credit towards graduation. Student performance in over 840 standards across eight content areas is their main measure of achievement. Staff at Highland is able to track individual and group attainment of standards using a comprehensive software program called “eDucate;” and students, parents, and staff use this system to monitor progress, set pacing goals, and communicate student performance in their eight content areas.

An important school goal this year was to increase contextual learning opportunities for students in order to enhance retention, allow for application for learning for life, and increase student motivation for achievement. They wanted more opportunities for students to engage in meaningful real-life activities. Some of these activities included elective classes (music, art, drama, Judo,

robotics, science fiction, etc), as well as more contextual learning opportunities in regular classes. Students also explored our community by visiting school business partners to shadow, volunteer, or intern.

As word has spread about Highland Tech's unique program, numerous visitors came to visit their school this year from other Alaskan school districts and districts in the Lower 48 and other countries. In their own words, "This year was by far our best and most visible to the external world for pursuing a model that helps us achieve our shared vision of *educating for leadership, educating for life.*"

CC/EG/MM

Attachment

Prepared by: Mary Meade-Olberding, Supervisor, Charter Schools

Approved by: Ed Graff, Assistant Superintendent, Instruction