

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

ASD MEMORANDUM #91 (1999-2000)

October 25, 1999

TO: SCHOOL BOARD
FROM: OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT
SUBJECT: CHARTER SCHOOL UPDATE FOR 1999-2000

PERTINENT FACTS:

The Administration would like to update the School Board on 1) the application submitted for a charter school to begin in the 2000-2001 school year, and 2) an update on the four charter schools currently in operation during this school year.

Application Update for School Year 2000 - 2001

School Board Policy 333 on Charter Schools requires all applications to be submitted no later than October 1 of the school year prior to the school year during which the charter school is proposed to begin operation. Proposals for charter schools to begin operations during the 2000-2001 school year were to be submitted no later than October 1, 1999.

One application has been received for consideration by the Administration and the School Board and it is described below. Administrative review has begun on the proposal which has been submitted, and meetings are being scheduled in October to review and discuss the proposal and any Administrative concerns and requests for modification prior to submission to the School Board for discussion and action.

Again this year, the Municipality of Anchorage Planning and Public Works Departments will be represented at these Administrative Review meetings in order to clearly explain zoning codes for charter schools and to avoid the confusion relating to zoning, fire code requirements, and other life safety issues that has occurred in the past.

Alaska Mandarin Chinese Charter School

This proposal is to establish a charter school for 40 elementary school students in grades K-1; the proposers will add a grade level every year thereafter with 60 students per grade.

It was submitted by Mary Thompson and Judy Hurlburt and a group of parents and community members. The mission of the proposal states, "The mission of the Alaska Mandarin Immersion Charter School is to educate students for an enriched life from immersion in two languages—English and Mandarin."

The philosophy of the charter school is "rooted in the belief that the quality of life, both of an individual and a community, are enhanced through language and cultural immersion."

This charter school will offer a hands-on, inquiry-based activities in science, mathematics, health, social studies, art, music, physical education, reading, and language arts. According to the proposers, the design of the Anchorage School District elementary curriculum lends itself very well to this program. In many ways, this program will draw upon the established practices at both the Government Hill Elementary School two-way Spanish Immersion program and the Sand Lake Japanese Partial Immersion program.

The Administrative Review meeting is scheduled on October 29, 1998 at 10:00 a.m. It is anticipated that the meeting will take a minimum of two hours. After that meeting, the Administration will work with the Superintendent to set a time for the School Board Work Session within the appropriate time period.

STATUS REPORT OF CURRENT CHARTER SCHOOLS FOR 1999-2000

Aquarian Charter School

Aquarian Charter School had a very successful start to the school year at its dual locations at the KCC campus (relocatables) and at APU (modular self-contained relocatables). There are 206 students enrolled in grades K-6; there are openings in the school in order to bring their enrollment up to the 220 students approved by the School Board. The school has ten classroom teachers; six of whom are new to the school this year. In addition to the classroom teachers, the Academic Policy Committee has approved a lead teacher who also teaches physical education and supervises the campus at APU, and a Type B certificated principal. The classroom teachers are supported by classroom teacher assistants and an administrative assistant. This charter school will move into the former Northern Lights facility in January after Baxter moves back to their renovated school; Aquarian will occupy most of the space; a four classroom pod is reserved for the Village Charter School and two relocatables on the site are reserved for the Family Partnership Charter School.

Family Partnership Charter School

The Family Partnership Charter School's enrollment is 701 students in grades K-12. This charter school's Academic Policy Committee authorized the hiring of a full time principal and business manager, part-time clerical support and a family advocate. The evaluations will be done by the principal with a current Type B certificate.

The Academic Policy Committee voted to increase enrollment for this year to 660 students plus their +10 percent as allowed in Policy 333. This increase in student enrollment will be brought to the School Board for action as required and should help off-set the decrease in state funding from the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development. This charter school has a strong Academic Policy Committee and is operating very successful after a change in leadership at the end of the 1998-99 school year.

This charter school no longer uses one classroom at Huffman Elementary School due to Huffman's expanding enrollment and need for the classroom space. The school has leased additional space for meetings and storage at their office on Fairbanks Street. In addition to the Fairbanks Street location, this charter school uses many District classrooms and community locations; these arrangements are made on an individual basis by each family. Teaching staff are in three categories: 1) staff hired by FPCS, 2) currently employed ASD teachers on an after school and summer basis who are paid with contract addenda, 3) retired teachers on special activity agreements. This arrangement has been very successful and the program is in great demand.

The ASD Administration has written a letter of support to the Alaska Department of Education for the Family Partnership Charter School to be considered as an alternative school and not a correspondence school for school funding purposes. The Department of Education and Early Development has denied this request and formally notified the ASD and the charter school that this school will be funded at the correspondence program level of 80 percent for this school year. The DOEED has offered a "hybrid" compromise to allow increased funding for students taking actual classes at area schools; other students would be funded at 80 percent. FPCS had filed an appeal of this decision and is waiting for the hearing to be scheduled.

Village Charter School

The Village Charter School was originally approved for 120 students in grades K-8; that number was subsequently revised to 40 students in grades K-8 at the request of the charter school proposers due to lack of housing for a larger number of students. The current enrollment stands at 39 students in grades K-8. The school has two full-time teachers, one for grades K-2 (ages 5-9) and one for grades 3-8 (ages 9-14). One of the teachers oversees the special education program for identified students at the school.

The Administration has worked with the Village Charter School to resolve their housing issues. The school was offered one relocatable at the King Career Center for this fall, but they pursued space at another facility and turned the relocatable back to the ASD; the relocatable was then given to Aquarian for their music and technology program. The school currently occupies leased space in the Z Plaza Mall on Minnesota Street in two spaces renovated to meet E-1 occupancy codes. They may stay there for the remainder of this school year or they may use one space at the Z Plaza and one classroom at the former Northern Lights facility in January, once Baxter has vacated the school. They have asked the Administration to reserve the four classroom pod at Northern Lights for them in the

fall; the Administration has agreed unless another charter school needs the space and Village Charter School does not meet its approved enrollment of 120 students. The Academic Policy Committee has again contracted with a teacher with a current Type B certificate to do the required staff evaluations this year.

Walden Pond Charter School

The Walden Pond Charter School has increased their enrollment to 164 students in grades 7-12. The school is located on the second floor of the Dimond Center and is functioning very successfully this school year. The Academic Policy has by-laws and operating procedures and has had elections. There is a new Academic Policy Committee and a new Headmaster this school year. The program combines academics with alternating workshops geared to student interest and academic learning needs. The Academic Policy Committee made a decision to increase class size somewhat in order to fund their lease at the Dimond Center and to fund a lead teacher who also does the majority of the administrative tasks, though she does teach at least one class, and a full-time administrative assistant. Class sizes at this school continue to be below the District averages; this was a priority for the Academic Policy Committee. A retired principal has been contracted to do the required evaluations of the staff at the school this year.

This charter school continues to increase their academic expectations for their students, many of whom had not been successful in their prior schools. The staff and parents are working together to ensure that strong academic performance standards are in place for all of their students; approximately 25 percent of whom are receiving special education services. There is an excellent working relationship with the Special Education Department and other departments within the District and this charter school at the current time.

BC/CC

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