

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

ASD MEMORANDUM #202 (1999-2000)

February 23, 2000

TO: SCHOOL BOARD

FROM: OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

SUBJECT: CONCEPT APPROVAL: MANDARIN CHINESE IMMERSION
ALTERNATIVE PROGRAM

RECOMMENDATION:

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board provide concept approval for the establishment of a Mandarin Chinese Immersion Program at the elementary level.

PERTINENT FACTS:

A group of parents and interested citizens approached the Administration and the School Board earlier this school year with a charter school proposal to establish a Mandarin Chinese Elementary Charter School in Anchorage. During the discussion with the Administration, the possibility of an alternative program, as opposed to a charter school program, was broached. The parent group was provided with the guidelines for Alternative Programs and asked to consider their options. The group has opted to request consideration for an alternative program rather than a charter school. Their revised proposal, reflecting the request for an alternative school program is attached.

The Administration generally supports the alternative education proposal. The program, if ultimately approved, would start at K — 1 and add a grade level at a time over the years. Support for the program would come from the elementary budget and the World Languages portion of the Curriculum and Instruction budget.

The biggest issue is finding a suitable location for the program. To that end, the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction has met with elementary principals as a group to discuss the concept and to ascertain interest on the part of the principal and to determine which schools might have space availability. Assuming concept approval is provided by the School Board, the Assistant Superintendent will continue working with the Elementary

Division and the principals to identify a specific site or list of potential sites for the program.

In addition to finding a location for the program, finding certificated primary teachers fluent in Mandarin Chinese poses a challenge. Janice Gullickson is working with the Elementary Division and the Assistant Superintendent to identify possible teaching candidates who are fully-certificated teachers and who can teach the content areas in Mandarin Chinese. Schools in Portland, Oregon; Montgomery County, Maryland; and San Francisco, California, have been visited and contacted for sources of possible teachers. One strong possibility for a teaching position is currently a bilingual tutor in Fairbanks and is working on acquiring certification this year. Recruiting this spring will focus on this as a high priority area of need.

If one or more potential sites are identified, the proposing group will meet with the principal(s) and local PTA officers to discuss the program and set up information opportunities as per the Alternative Education Procedures. These procedures will be followed to finalize the proposal and bring a final recommendation to the School Board.

It must be clearly stated that the Administration is not intending to force this alternative program into a school. There must be internal support from the staff and community in existing schools as well as long-term potential for space in order for the next steps in the Alternative Education Procedures to be undertaken.

BC/CC/FS

Attachment

Prepared by: Fred Stofflet, Executive Director, Curriculum and Evaluation

Carol Comeau, Assistant Superintendent, Instruction

Approved by: Carol Comeau, Assistant Superintendent, Instruction