

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

ASD MEMORANDUM #371 (1999-2000)

June 12, 2000

TO: SCHOOL BOARD
FROM: OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT
SUBJECT: COMMUNITY SCHOOL CLOSURES

PERTINENT FACTS:

On April 4, 2000 the Anchorage Assembly voted to reduce the requested 2000-2001 Anchorage School District financial plan by \$8,000,000 and to reduce the requested local tax contributions by \$5,074,774. As a result of that Assembly action and subsequent approval of the Collective Bargaining Agreement with the Anchorage Education Association, the District was required to reduce the proposed budget by \$11.2 million. A portion of that reduction was identified as \$436,000 in the Community Education budget. This reduction equated to eight community schools. Subsequent efforts to restore the funding failed to get Assembly approval.

Eighteen volunteers and three District staff representing Community Schools, Community School Coordinators and Principals formed a Task Force to determine recommendations for making the Community School reductions. A list of these participants is shown on Attachment A. On May 17 and May 24, 2000 the Task Force met in deliberation to accomplish this goal.

The Task Force designed a community process which involved the development of criteria to be reviewed prior to site selections. Selections were then made to determine which 10 of the current 18 community school sites would remain in operation in the 2000-2001 school year. Criteria selected included:

- Geographic location
- Advisory Board strength
- Volunteer participation
- Classes and activities offered
- Classroom enrichment contributions
- Satellite site activities
- Community partnership development
- Demographics
- State grant goal and objective activity, and

- Other available services in the area.

The Task Force was charged with bringing forward a recommendation based on geographic location in high school regions in the Anchorage bowl area. It was recognized that the reduction in funds would effect a severe change in the operation of Community Education in Anchorage. The Task Force chose to maintain as fully as possible the integrity, strength, viability and potential sustainability of the program by recommending full staffing of 1.0 FTE at the remaining sites.

Four of the 10 sites were chosen by virtue of their positions in the newly awarded 21st Century Community Learning Center grant. The federal grant provides for after school programs at Creekside Park, Chester Valley, Tudor and Fairview Community Schools, in addition to eight other sites. The School District's contribution to the grant includes the salaries of the four Community School Coordinators at those sites.

The following recommendation for Community School site designation was derived through group consensus and brought forward to the regular meeting of the Anchorage Community Education Advisory Board on June 7, 2000. Community School sites recommended by the Task Force to be closed are identified by underlines at:

Bartlett Region

Chester Valley/Susitna*
Creekside Park*
Nunaka Valley

Dimond Region

Sand Lake
Four Valleys in Girdwood
Campbell

East Region

Baxter
Tudor*
Rogers Park/Lake Otis

Service Region

Rabbit Creek
Bear Valley
Service/Hanshew

West Region

Fairview*
Inlet View
Turnagain

Chugiak Region

Gruening
Fire Lake
Chugiak /Mirror Lake

Please note: * denotes schools named in the 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant.

At the June 7, 2000 meeting testimony was provided from representatives of the Rogers Park/Lake Otis and Campbell Community Schools. The representatives of these two community schools expressed concern about the process used to select the schools to recommend for closure. Several important issues were raised regarding the selection process. Concern was expressed regarding the reduction of programs in Chugiak/Eagle River and in the South Anchorage areas. In addition, the entire set of

criteria was questioned and the request was for the Anchorage Community Education Advisory Board to reconsider the recommendation. Ultimately, the Advisory Board voted to support the Task Force recommendation by a vote of 10 to 4.

I attended the June 7 Anchorage Community Education Advisory Board meeting. I felt some important issues were raised including a request to see some form of objective data on all community schools if at all possible. I also convened a meeting on Friday, June 9, 2000 at 10:30 a.m. to discuss the pros and cons of possibly keeping all community schools open until the November, 2000 vote on the tax cap ballot issue. The idea to keep all 18 community schools open for the first five months of the next school year was reviewed by the community school representatives and the community school coordinators at the June 9 meeting. Everyone was told that in order to retain the 18 schools for five months there would need to be total agreement by the coordinators and a waiver to the ACE contract layoff provisions and timelines. There was no consensus nor majority opinion expressed to keep all schools open given the risk that if they were open up through November and the tax cap passed, then they would all be closed as of December, 2000. Very valid reasons were expressed as to why this would not work especially for the employees involved. Absent the consensus that this option was viable, I determined that keeping all community schools open through November, 2000 would not work.

It is evident that the direction to have geographic balance and the desire to retain the 21st Century Learning Grant for the elementary schools impacts a pure numerical ranking in deciding which schools to close. In summary, no matter which criteria is used to identify the school to close, the schools which are very close in numerical criteria—Baxter and Lake Otis/Rogers Park in the East area and Campbell and Sand Lake in the Dimond area will be a difficult choice. After reviewing all of the available data over this past weekend, I have decided to accept the Anchorage Community Education Advisory Board recommendation on which schools to keep open. We do need to be sensitive to the issues raised but in some cases neither choice would be a good choice.

BC/EM
Attachment

Prepared and Approved by: Ellen Montague, Director, Community Education