

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

MEMORANDUM

April 29, 2001

TO: CAROL COMEAU  
SUPERINTENDENT

FROM: JIM TAYLOR, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION

SUBJECT: SMALLER LEARNING COMMUNITIES

In October of 2000, the Board authorized the Superintendent to accept an award from the U.S. Department of Education in the amount of \$199,263 for the Smaller Learning Communities Planning Grant.

Four of the six comprehensive high schools worked together to plan for smaller academic units within the larger institutions. The other two schools participated to the degree allowed by the grant.

This memo outlines the efforts of the comprehensive high schools to study the efficacy and desirability of planning for smaller academic communities. Each school has an Administrative Coordinator and a school Staff Coordinator, who facilitate and serve as points of contact for individual school committees as well as communicate with Smaller Learning Communities Committees from the other high schools. Cynthia McCray, Secondary Supervisor, and Pat Podvin, Acting Principal at Service High School, are doing District coordination.

The Administrative Coordinator and the Staff Coordinator from each school will be available to answer questions during the Smaller Learning Communities segment of the Board Work Session on May 7, 2001. Other members of school committees have been invited to provide information and respond to Board questions.

As expected, there are a variety of approaches to this restructuring effort, but there are many common components in the collective work. They will be more fully explored during the Work Session. An outline of these efforts can be placed into four general categories.

## COMMUNICATION

- Meetings and retreats were planned for staff, students, parents and other community stakeholders, specifically designed to discuss school community needs and how to address those needs through Smaller Learning Communities.
- Surveys soliciting opinions on Smaller Learning Communities (SLC) were given to students, parents, staff, community groups and business partners.
- Updates were provided to parents through newsletters
- An SLC Website was linked to the school website. (BHS)
- Committee presentations were made to faculty forums, student groups and parent organizations.

## RESEARCH

- Staff members from each of the comprehensive high schools attended a national conference on issues involved in restructuring.
- Compilation and analysis of information was done utilizing information gained from surveys distributed to stakeholder groups.
- School data and goals, and student information was drawn from the VAX, SMS, and the individual school report cards.
- At two schools, instructional information was extracted from the summary of a recent Northwest Accreditation Study. (CHS & DHS)

## EDUCATION

- Credit classes have been available through University of Alaska, Anchorage.
- Stakeholders have been polled for information and input.
- Reports from steering committees have been reviewed and analyzed.

- An analysis has been done of programs that are in place and currently successful.
- Research on promising practices as they relate to community needs has been conducted.

#### COORDINATION

- Incorporation of current restructuring information, successful curriculum practices, as well as other information gained through research efforts has been recommended.
- Future needs as identified through student, staff and school community input should be considered in program planning for SLC.
- Insure that educational program information collected is a significant part of planning for future construction or renovation of each school's physical plant.

JT/rs