

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

ASD MEMORANDUM #132 (2001-2002)

December 10, 2001

TO: SCHOOL BOARD

FROM: OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATION FOR GIFTED PILOT PROGRAM AT  
GOVERNMENT HILL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AND CHUGACH  
OPTIONAL SCHOOL: JANUARY 2002 – JUNE 2003

RECOMMENDATION:

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board approve the request for a gifted pilot program at Government Hill Elementary School and Chugach Optional School beginning in January 2002 until June of 2003 as described in Attachment A. It is further recommended that the School Board approve the expenditure of \$105,986 for this pilot program.

PERTINENT FACTS:

For a number of years, the staff and parents of Government Hill Elementary School and Chugach Optional School have requested consideration for a change in the IGNITE gifted enrichment program at their schools so that all of the identified students could participate and not lose valuable class time while being transported to another school for the program. In addition, the staff and parents were concerned that this IGNITE off-site model interfered dramatically with the integrated instructional program at their schools.

The Administration met with the principals during the 2000-2001 school year and again in the fall of this school year, and explored various ways of accommodating this request. The Superintendent proposed that the two principals put together a proposal for a pilot program for consideration and further discussion. Attachment A is the result of that request.

The Administration has received similar requests from many school principals and parents over the years for a change in the current model of the elementary

IGNITE program due to the concerns of lost instructional time spent on busing, interrupted gifted services during certain times of the year when busing was not available (parent-teacher conference days, testing days, in service days, etc.), and a general feeling that the gifted program, while challenging and fun, was not connected in most ways to the regular program.

The IGNITE program has evolved over many years into its current configuration and overall meets many needs of gifted students. Some parents have removed their students from the IGNITE program at various schools because of the busing issue. The Administration has also felt that the current model needs revision. The Superintendent has discussed this issue with other Districts who provide these services at “home schools” and in some cases, via distance education. No other districts in Alaska bus their students to cluster sites in order to provide gifted services to their students.

The recent change in State Law and Regulations for Gifted Education separated Gifted and Special Education. The State requires each district to design a program for gifted services, but specifies no requirements as to how the program is to be delivered. The Superintendent has directed the Supervisor of the Gifted Program to meet with parents, teachers, principals, and students prior to recommending a change to the current gifted plan of service. The Superintendent intends to schedule opportunities for the IGNITE staff and parents and elementary principals to meet with her to discuss these issues during this school year. Once a recommendation for a revised plan of service for gifted education is submitted to the Superintendent, this plan will be reviewed by the Administration and then brought forward to the School Board with a recommendation for approval.

One model that may be more effective is one similar to that proposed by Government Hill and Chugach Optional on Attachment A. The Administration would like to try this model and analyze whether this is a more effective delivery of the services to students at these two schools, and at the same time connecting more with the instructional program at each school. The instructional staff at both elementary schools support this change; they want to work with the gifted staff in a collaborative manner as they do with all other itinerant program staff. There is no connection now to what goes on in the regular classrooms and the IGNITE classrooms at these two schools.

The staff feel that there would be less disruption and more integration of instruction with a different model. This is not a request for the classroom delivery model, but rather an on-site program which supports and enhances the regular program in a meaningful way. If successful, the Administration would propose an expansion of the pilot to other elementary schools, perhaps as early

as the fall of 2002, but more realistically, beginning in the fall of the 2003-2004 school year, pending School Board approval.

There is some resistance from the current IGNITE staff at these two schools because of this proposed change, but the Administration supports this request because it will provide meaningful input to the Administration as the plan of service is being revised. The IGNITE staff will be offered the opportunity to work in other schools in the gifted program; current IGNITE staff will be offered the opportunity to transfer into this pilot program. If there is not interest, then new teachers will be hired for these positions.

There will be an evaluation done at the end of the 2001-2002 school year, mid-way through the 2002-2003 school year, and prior to budget development of the 2003-2004 school year. Input will be sought regularly from parents, students, staff, and the Administration. Progress on all assessments will be monitored, as well as anecdotal comments and records comparing both models to the past model of instruction.

The Administration believes that gifted students must be nurtured and encouraged in our elementary schools. If the pilot program proves to be a more effective model of delivery and one which provides more time for gifted services, the Administration will bring forth a recommendation to change the model of the delivery of gifted services in the elementary schools.

**The supervision of this pilot will be done jointly by the two school principals and the Supervisor of the Gifted Program.** Much cooperation and communication will be required of all parties, but all are optimistic that better collaboration and improved services for students will result. All staff will receive training at the beginning of, and during, this pilot; other IGNITE staff will be invited to participate in the training opportunities.

Attachments

CC

Prepared by: Sharon Meacham, Principal, Chugach Optional  
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Carol Comeau, Superintendent

Approved by: Carol Comeau, Superintendent