

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

ASD MEMORANDUM #161 (2002-2003)

January 13, 2003

TO: SCHOOL BOARD
FROM: OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT
SUBJECT: FRONTIER CHARTER SCHOOL

RECOMMENDATION:

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board approve the application for the Frontier Charter School, which would open in the fall of the 2003-2004 school year as a home school with administrative offices in non-District facilities as specified in their application (page 9 of Attachment A). The Administration recommends that the School Board approve the request for waivers as described in section 17 (17.1.1 through 17.1.4). Each waiver speaks to the unique nature of Frontier's home school model. The School Board has approved these waivers for a previous charter school, which operates under a similar model successfully. The request for waivers to the ASD/AEA contract has been withdrawn due to assurances from the Anchorage Education Association that a waiver would not be necessary in either case. A copy of the letter discussing this issue is provided in Attachment B.

In addition, the School Board authorizes the Administration to submit the approved application with addenda to the Commissioner of Education who will forward it to the State Board of Education for approval as required by AS 14.03.250. Upon approval by the State Board of Education, the Administration will finalize contract negotiations with the Frontier Charter School, which will include housing for the administrative offices, and make a recommendation for final approval of the contract at a subsequent School Board meeting.

PERTINENT FACTS:

The Administration has met with the developers of the Frontier Charter School since the fall of 2002. There have been several reviews of their proposal including a formal administrative review. The concerns and questions that arose

from these meetings have been addressed by Frontier Charter School to the satisfaction of the Administration.

The School Board Work Session was held December 3, 2002. At the work session, the concern about waiting until third grade to assess student progress being too late was addressed. The developers agreed to earlier assessments of children. It was also suggested that all teachers participate in District staff development initiatives. Bylaw changes were made to clarify some confusion as to the election process for the Academic Policy Committee (APC) members. The issue of AEA and the work day was clarified with Bob Roses, AEA President. The Board had several concerns about who will act as the chief administrator for Frontier Charter School. The developers have acknowledged the need for a chief administrator and will hire one from the onset. This decision allays many of the concerns held by the Board and Administration in this area. The issue of special education services and how they are handled has been addressed. Frontier students will be enrolled part-time at Frontier and part-time at their local school where their IEP needs will be met. A major change for Frontier Charter School from a previous home school model will be the implementation of the academic advisor rather than the sponsor teacher. Academic advisors will be full time staff members whose job description is included in 6.6.2.1. The developers of Frontier Charter School feel that this model will improve the ILP process and its credibility. The developers of Frontier Charter School addressed the concern of where the students will come from for this school. There is currently a wait list for other home schools in the Anchorage Bowl. There are also at least 1,000 students in the area that do not attend Anchorage Schools, but are qualified due to their residency. This issue continues to be a concern for the Board and the Administration.

If the School Board approves this proposal, the Administration is committed to working through any unresolved issues. The Administration is hopeful that all issues will be resolved satisfactorily. The Administration feels that this charter school has support from some members of the community and will provide this community with another option for students to receive home schooling with a distance learning component as part of the Anchorage School District.

If the charter school is approved, the Frontier Charter School Academic Policy Committee will be able to submit an application to the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) for planning and implementations costs for this charter school; these applications are due to the DEED no later than 20 days beyond the approval date by the local School Board. Once a charter is approved, the Academic Policy Committee can refer to the DEED web site under charter schools to access grants available to them for start up costs.

CC/CB/mks

Prepared by: Connie Bensler, Charter School Liaison

Approved by: Carol Comeau, Superintendent