

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

ASD MEMORANDUM #115 (2004-2005)

December 13, 2004

TO: SCHOOL BOARD

FROM: OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

SUBJECT: ALTERNATIVE PROGRAM PROPOSAL: WORLD DISCOVERY
SEMINAR PROGRAM AT CHUGIAK HIGH SCHOOL

RECOMMENDATION:

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board approve and adopt the World Discovery Seminar Program at Chugiak High School as an official School-Within-a-School Alternative Program of the Anchorage School District.

PERTINENT FACTS:

The World Discovery Seminar Program (WDS) at Chugiak High School is largely based on the Paideia philosophy of education first proposed by Mortimer Adler. WDS has operated successfully for five years as a smaller learning community within the parameters of the large high school. The program was established in the fall of 1999 as a pilot project by a parent group responding to a community need for alternative educational programs at the secondary level in the Chugiak-Eagle River area. The area has a long established open-optional alternative elementary education program. The first phase of development for the WDS concept was strongly influenced by prior association of staff members with The Seminar School (TSS) School-Within-a-School at Service High School and the Humanities Interdisciplinary Program (H.I.P.) at Bartlett High School.

The WDS curriculum differs from the standard program in that it is not textbook-driven. Language arts and social studies courses are considered in a holistic fashion based on primary texts and samples of art. Two years are devoted to Global Studies and two years to American Studies. As with other ASD seminar programs, the WDS program's main texts consist of readings by authors included in the Great Books, along with other original source materials. Students work with seminal readings and examples of art selected each semester on a

four-year rotation. Integrated history and literature are offered in a blocked period seminar course, as are government, economics and literature. Other academic studies incorporated into seminar classes include mythology, philosophy, humanities, expository writing, comparative world religions, area studies, geography, law, motion picture, poetry, acting and creative writing.

The World Discovery Seminar Program is a well-established and meaningful smaller learning community at Chugiak High School. The program varies significantly from the Anchorage School District's standard secondary program and thus meets all criteria for School-Within-a-School status. From the program's student-centered approach, its reliance on primary sources versus textbook materials, and Socratic seminar methodology, to its high level of parental involvement and community service-oriented activities, the World Discovery Seminar Program offers students in the Chugiak-Eagle River area a definitive alternative to the traditional curriculum.

CC/JC/MH

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