

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

ASD MEMORANDUM #143 (2004-2005)

December 15, 2005

TO: SCHOOL BOARD

FROM: OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATION FOR TERMINATION OF VILLAGE
CHARTER SCHOOL CONTRACT

RECOMMENDATION:

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board approve and authorize the Superintendent to terminate the contract for Village Charter School effective January 15, 2005.

PERTINENT FACTS:

The Administration's preliminary decision to terminate the Charter School Contract is based on the following reasons, all of which constitute good cause for termination. The following areas of deficiency have been discussed previously with Village Charter School through various memorandums, public meetings with the School Board, and in meetings with District Administration.

Failure to meet enrollment projections. Despite a projected enrollment of 163 students for the 2004-2005 school year, current enrollment is 103 students, down from a high of 125 students in October 2004. Village Charter School's enrollment pattern has been characterized by withdrawal of existing student populations and an inability to recruit new students to the school. The enrollment numbers do not generate revenues sufficient to permit operation of a successful charter school.

Failure of fiscal management standards. Despite a budget shortfall due to declining enrollment, Village Charter School hired an additional administrative position for the 2004-2005 school year and approved a contract for the former administrator even though she was traveling during a portion of the first semester of this

school year and was not teaching regularly at the school. Such management and budget decisions fail to take into account the best interests of students when Village Charter School is operating with less than half of its anticipated budget.

Failure to comply with Board policies, state law, and negotiated agreements. The District Administration has brought forward several continuing violations of policies, laws, and procedures. These include failure to follow leave procedures for the former administrator, failure to hire teachers under contract terms required by state law and the negotiated agreement with the Anchorage Education Association, failure to comply with state law requirements for TRS/PERS, and failure to submit a revised budget. At a minimum, these concerns have been brought forward during the annual review in June 2004, and during a meeting with union representatives and administration on November 17, 2004.

Failure to ensure a safe and successful learning and working environment for students and staff. During a School Board meeting on December 13, 2004, Village Charter School staff expressed numerous concerns about their supervision and working environment. These concerns have been a continuing problem, resulting in unusually high staff turnover. Of additional concern is a lack of supervision of young students in the school. Finally, as discussed during the Board meeting of June 14, 2004, the Board and Administration have concerns regarding student performance on required standardized and benchmark tests.

Failure to correct deficiencies despite notice. Most of the present concerns represent continuing problems with the operation of Village Charter School. These were addressed during the annual review in June 2004 and in continuing discussions between Village Charter School and Ms. Bensler, Ms. Christensen, myself and others. Prior to that, concerns with the operation of Village Charter School resulted in a two-year rather than ten-year renewal in 2003. Rather than work cooperatively with the District to further the mutual goal of a successful learning environment for students, Village Charter School has resisted assistance and direction. The result is that deficiencies have not been corrected and there is no confidence that correction will occur in the future.

Breach of the Charter School Contract. The above deficiencies constitute numerous breaches of the Charter School Contract, specifically: ¶ 1, Compliance with Regulatory Requirements; ¶ 4, Administrative Policies and Procedures; ¶ 8, Budget and Accounting; ¶ 10, Teachers and Staff; and ¶ 18, Contract Compliance.

As set forth in Paragraph 16 of the Charter School Contract, the Board may terminate the contract for the Charter School's failure to meet fiscal management standards, for a default in any material provision of the Contract, or for other good cause." As further indicated in Paragraph 16, "[i]f Charter School fails to remedy the cause for termination within the time provided in this notice, then this contract shall automatically terminate at the end of the stated time. Any unused funds shall immediately be returned to the School District upon such termination."

It is with great regret that I am making this recommendation. I do believe that students deserve an excellent education in the Anchorage School District, this is not occurring at the Village Charter School. I believe the termination of the contract will allow staff and students at Village Charter School to have a successful and productive second semester.

CC/mks

Prepared/Approved by: Carol Comeau, Superintendent