

Administrative Review

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

MEMORANDUM

October 20, 2004

TO: WALDORF CHARTER SCHOOL ACADEMIC POLICY
COMMITTEE

FROM: JAN CHRISTENSEN *Jan Christensen*
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT, INSTRUCTION *J.m.k.*

SUBJECT: ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OF CHARTER SCHOOL PROPOSAL

Your charter school proposal was submitted to my office on Friday, October 1, 2004. An Administrative Review meeting has been scheduled for Wednesday, October 27, 2004, from 2:30 p.m. -4:30 p.m. in Room #320 at the ASD Administration Building

The Administrative Review was done by the following individuals representing key departments who reviewed different aspects of your proposal for a charter school: Connie Bensler, Charter School Liaison; Jan Christensen, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction; Enid Hunter, Executive Director, Curriculum and Instruction; Patricia McRae, Executive Director, Elementary Education; Janet Stokesbary, Chief Financial Officer; Marie Laule, Director, Budget; Jerry Sjolander, Executive Director, Special Education; George Vakalis, Assistant Superintendent, Support Services; Mike Klawitter, Director, Risk Management; Eric Tollefsen, Executive Director, Human Resources; and Jeff Wood, Chief Information Officer

Key issues identified by each department are listed below for our discussion:

CHARTER SCHOOL LIAISON

You might want to change the name of the interim APC to simply the APC after you are chartered.

There is a question about selection of new APC members, no all family vote, just the seated APC voting. It limits family participation.

Be able to explain how you will convince all families that they want to participate in a school that is very ecologically minded.

You don't state that you'll not be taking special education funding. You also don't address how you'll handle those students who have IEPs and 504s. Who will monitor them to make sure they are getting what they need?

A question came up about the legality of changing the enrollment age of students from what the State now requires. You might want to check and see if this is doable.

You should describe your dress code.

Be ready to explain how a part time principal will work.

What are the two world languages you plan to offer?

Your teachers' salaries don't include benefits. Check those numbers Marie gave you.

You need to provide more details about your location.

ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT, INSTRUCTION

1. Why is there an "interim" APC for the first five years of this charter school? (p. 2)
2. Why are only current APC members able to nominate and elect new members? (p. 3) Does this limit who can be an APC member?
3. Is the living systems learning component a core part of the Waldorf philosophy? (p. 6) What about parents and students who disagree with being ecologically minded?
4. While the proponents contend there is a need for this type of education for children, there is no quantifiable data to indicate that there is a specific demand for this charter school. It is vital to conduct surveys and/or hold a series of parent-interest meetings to ascertain community interest in this school. (p. 7)
5. The proposal indicates how the school will help students who are not meeting specific educational outcomes (p. 11). Beyond the description on pages 11 and 13, there does not seem to be an indication of how special education students who have specific disabilities will be assisted by the school.
7. Why are the ages indicated for entrance to the school different than those stipulated in state law? (p. 12)
8. What is the student dress code that parents must agree to? (p. 12)
9. Why is the principal for the school going to be only part-time? (p. 13)

10. Are there going to be any special education teachers? (p. 14) How are special education services going to be delivered to special education students? How about students who are on 504 plans?
11. What two foreign languages are students going to be introduced to in first grade? (p. 23)
12. The budget needs additional specificity prior to submitting this proposal to the School Board for a work session. The salaries for teachers seem unrealistically low.
13. What is the location of the school? The Department of Education and Early Development will not recommend approval of a charter school without a definitive location.

CURRICULUM

I commend the community service component. How often do students complete a community service project?

What teacher characteristics determine whether "looping" continues past grade five?

What is the state mandated test in science?

What is the state mandated test in social studies?

You list two parent conferences and a culminating assessment at the end of the year. Do parents receive a formal report at any other time?

What kind of differentiation is available for gifted learners?

Social Studies

How is civics addressed in K-8?

Is there any U.S. History before eighth grade?

The description of first through third grades is lacking content information.

How do pupils get a sense of historical time from studying the local geography and environment?

There are 3 + years on ancient civilizations and world history, but no explicit mention of U.S. History. Sixth grade description disjointed in its attempt to be concise.

Physical Education/Movement

Is there a K-6 health curriculum? What constitutes “health and safety awareness”? What about drug and alcohol awareness curriculum, human growth and development, nutrition?

Activities like javelin, discus, vaults, handsprings require some prior skill-building. I can’t see that.

Where would gymnastic activities like rings and bars occur?

Science

Appears to be all life science until sixth grade – no physical or earth science.

There also appears to be very little “doing” of science.

Unsure what concepts are actually taught – broad generalizations are used. I am unable to make judgments about age appropriateness, etc. because of this.

Math

Targeted to basic skills, but appears weak in algebra and functions, geometry, data analysis (probability and statistics), communications (writing), reasoning and problem solving, and making real world connections.

Many of the topics that are tested on the GLEs are not introduced until one to two years after they are tested. Curriculum needs to be aligned to the GLEs so students are not disadvantaged because they have not yet studied the tested topics.

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Program Philosophy

Is “Waldorf-based Whole Child Curriculum” different than the Waldorf curriculum? (p.3)

What does “rigorous academic program” mean? (p.3)

If a child is not progressing at an adequate rate with the teacher with whom they are looping for many years, is there an opportunity for the child to change to another classroom? (p.3)

I appreciate that the learning environment avoids “boring day to day routines”. On the other hand, teaching routines for things that children do each day (i.e. caring for their coats and supplies, giving the teacher their attention when it is requested, working in independent learning centers to accomplish a task, etc.) is critical to efficient use of learning time. Are these kinds of routines taught and utilized? (p.4)

On page 4 it states, "teachers will plan activities to suit the attention span of a given class..." How does differentiation described in "the whole class dynamic" (p.5) and individualized instruction fit into this model? (p.4)

I appreciate the attention to a cooperative learning environment that focuses on building intrinsic motivation. (p.5)

How is classroom management addressed in addition to using "story as a classroom management tool" with younger students? (p.5)

"Need" for this charter school is described as having a school in which "childhood is appreciated and allowed to unfold and where capacities of imagination and intelligence... are nurtured and strengthened". While there are many obvious differences in the Waldorf model from a neighborhood elementary school, I do not see this description as a valid reason for need. In other words, I believe that our existing neighborhood and alternative programs support the philosophy that childhood is appreciated and children's capacities of imagination and intelligence are nurtured and strengthened.

Student Assessment

I share the same question posed by Enid Hunter.

How we will help students not meeting the outcomes

Does this follow the requirements set by IDEA? (p.11)

Admission and Policy Procedure

The minimum age set by state law for entry into kindergarten is that children must turn five years of age on or before September 1. For first grade, children must turn six years of age on or before September 1. Does this pertain to charter schools as well? (p.12)

Admission policy and procedures state, "a family must complete this process and also actively demonstrate their level of commitment to the school and its philosophy". Are there consequences when stated expectations (volunteer hours, limited exposure to electronic media, etc.) are not met? (p.13)

Teachers and Administrators in the Charter School

Why is the principal in a school of 180 students part time? (p.13)

How many teachers on the eligible to hire list and/or currently employed by ASD have had Waldorf teacher training? How many hours does this training encompass for teachers who have not been trained? (p.13)

Food Service

Are public schools obligated to provide free/reduced lunches to students who qualify? (p.14)

Curriculum

It does not appear as though the reading/language arts curriculum is in alignment with state and local grade level expectations. What is the source of information used in this section of the application? (We now have state grade level expectations (GLEs) for third, fourth, fifth, and sixth grades and the ASD has identified GLEs for kindergarten, first and second grades.) The assessment system is based on the state standards, but in some cases standards are not addressed (for example in third grade writing, the Waldorf School will “meet all of the standards, but will address revising student’s own work in fifth grade). My concern is that we are expecting students to perform with proficiency in third grade on standards in which they have not received instruction.

Kindergarten is only noted in the curriculum section of the document in the area of “English and Language Arts”. Although on page 11 of this section the heading for Math indicates “Math K-8”, there is no description of math curriculum in kindergarten. This is true for science, supplemental subjects, history and social science and music as well.

World Language

On page 23, the document states that students will be introduced to two foreign languages through the immersion method. What specific method is this? Immersion is a method of foreign language instruction in which students learn the target language through content instruction, taught by native speakers. Are teachers going to be native speakers? Teaching foreign language through songs and stories is identified as FLES (foreign language in the elementary school). Please see the attached chart that identifies various language instructional models. I believe it is important to correctly identify the model of foreign language instruction.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Overall, the proposal for an Anchorage Public Waldorf Charter School is very well thought out. However, there is information provided in the budgetary section of the proposal that requires further clarification.

- How will special needs services be provided, including special education and bilingual education services? The amount of funding provided in the General Fund is determined upon whether the charter school elects to receive the special needs factor portion of the State funding formula and also provide these services through the charter school’s budget.

- The following comments pertain to the revenue and support portion of the Executive Budget Summary provided in the charter school's proposal:
 - Based on 160 students excluding the special needs factor of the State funding formula, the operating budget in the General Fund for Waldorf Charter School is estimated to be \$1,005,069 rather than the \$984,000 that is indicated in the Executive Budget Summary of the charter school's proposal.
 - Request further information on how the amount of the \$350,000 of start-up grant for equipment and training was derived. Additionally, a separate expenditure budget outside of the general operating budget needs to be provided.
 - The per student material fee charge of \$200 is on the high side. The \$36,000 total amount does not appear to allow for any waiver provision for students who are not able to pay the material fee. What is the charter school's policy if a student is unable to afford the fee?
 - Any amounts received through fundraising and donations will be accounted for outside of the charter school's operating budget in a special revenue fund. These funds do not require a budget and can be used only after the funds are received.
- The following comments pertain to the expenditure portion of the Executive Budget Summary provided in the charter school's proposal:
 - Separate expenditure budgets need to be developed for the general operating budget (referred to as ASD funds in the proposal) and the start-up grant. It is also preferable that a separate budget be set up for the material fees to be accessed. Currently, a potential School Board Policy revision is being considered that would require the material fees to be separated from the general operating budget.
 - Would like clarification as to whether the personnel costs include benefits as well as salary for the 14 positions listed under Salary & Benefits. The column heading indicates Salary & Benefits, although the dollar amount per position appears to be low.

It is recommended that members of the Anchorage Public Waldorf Charter School proposing group contact the Budget Department for information on how to calculate both the revenue and expenditure budgets.

If you have any questions, please contact me.

BUDGET

Budget

The proposers of the Anchorage Public Waldorf School must be applauded for their insight and enthusiasm on starting a charter school with the Waldorf philosophy. More information is requested on several items in the budget presentation and I am looking forward to working with the proposers to resolve the budgetary concerns during the administrative review. The following areas have been identified for discussion from the budgetary perspective.

Revenues

- The revenue generated from the Alaska Public Funding program for the General Fund based on a projection of 160 FTE students is \$1,005,069. This is \$21,069 more than the amount presented in the Anchorage Public Waldorf School proposal. The \$1,005,069 incorporates the \$4,576 basic student allocation and \$16 for Quality Grants. The \$1,005,069 does not include the 20 percent special needs factor. The current 4.38 percent indirect cost rate has been applied but is subject to change; therefore, the revenue/expenditure ceiling could be adjusted once the District receives the approved rate for FY 2006. The expenditure budget for the General Fund should equal the \$1,005,069 total.
- The \$350,000 Start-Up Grant referenced in the FY 2005 Executive Budget Summary will need to be modified. Grants are not recorded in the General Fund. The grant funding and expenditures will be recorded in the Local/State/Federal Projects Fund. Does the \$350,000 include two years of the Federal Implementation Grant, as well as one year of Federal Planning grant funding? It is unclear and more clarification is requested.
- Is it realistic that all students will be able to contribute the \$200 for Materials Fees? Typically, all students are not able to contribute and waivers will need to be granted. Will these funds support the General Fund? If so, the revenue presentation needs to be modified with these funds supporting the General Fund.
- More clarification for the Fundraising/Donations is requested. How will these funds be accounted for to support the expenditures?

Expenditures

- There is no bottom line amount for the expenditure budget with several question marks in between; therefore, it is difficult to provide a detailed analysis of this budget. Examples are: Personal Service K at \$24,000; Special Activity Agr.@?????; and Special Ed as needed.

- Classroom materials of \$36,000 in the line item budget presentation indicate that this is General Fund expenditure. Therefore the expenditure budget could be increased by a realistic amount for the Materials Fees as referenced under the revenue comment above.
- The entry level (BA Step 1 on the FY 2004-2005 Salary Schedule) of \$35,284 generates a minimum expenditure level for salary and benefits of \$51,657. As indicated in the above Revenue section, expenditures can be increased by \$21,069. However, with the teaching staff as presented in the proposal, the other staff and expenditures for the General Fund, it appears that there are not sufficient revenues to support the expenditures. It is difficult to determine, as there are a few unknown expenditures as well as not knowing in some of the line items if they are all inclusive of salary and benefits, i.e. special education. The Anchorage Education Association (AEA), contract is scheduled for negotiations for FY 2005-2006, which could also effect the expenditures for the AEA positions.
- The building lease will need to be reviewed by the Purchasing Department for guidance before negotiating the final contract. Typically, the custodial and utility expenses are included in the building lease; therefore, it is assumed that this is not a full service lease.
- As requested, the 20 percent special needs funding under the State funding formula is not included as part of the charter school's revenue budget. Therefore special needs services will be provided by the District at the students' regular home schools with transportation being provided by the parent and/or charter school. Further discussion and review of the staffing levels within the District will be required in order to ensure that there is sufficient staff to cover the Waldorf requirements.
- The Liability Insurance amount appears to be low. This item should be reviewed with the Director of Risk Management.

Other

- The budget presentation will need to be revised to show the General Fund expenditures separate from the grant funding.

RISK MANAGEMENT

- Early school facility identification is important
- Fire Marshall approval is required
- Asbestos issued will need to be identified and addressed
- Risk Management & Emergency Preparedness & Security should also have the opportunity to view the facility
- Charter school insurance requirements are attached and should be budgeted for: most charter schools use a brokerage firm to market their coverage (Willis of Alaska is one source and can be reached at 273-4141)

HUMAN RESOURCES

- In total, how many people will make up the APC and what is the length of the term they serve?
- Information on budget (revenue and expenses) seems sketchy and inaccurate.
- Is the revenue of \$984,000 correct for 160 students? I thought Village would get somewhere around 1.5 million for that number of students.
- Expenses for salary and benefits are inaccurate. They are budgeting a teacher with benefits at \$43,500. The true number, for a beginning teacher, would be closer to \$52,000. An average teacher's salary and benefits would be closer to \$69,000.
- It appears that there are no contractual concerns since they are not requesting any waivers and are agreeing to adopt ASD administrative policies and procedures.

INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY

This appears to be a technology free school. There is no mention of or funding identified for any technology, student workstations, internet access, administrative workstations, administrative systems and servers, network infrastructure or access to the ASD technology support systems, such as our Student Management System.

This may be an oversight that will need to be addressed.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Mr. Sjolander, Executive Director of Special Education, will provide his review at your meeting on Wednesday, October 27.

Cc: Carol Comeau
Connie Bensler
Jan Christensen
George Vakalis
Enid Hunter
Patricia McRae
Jerry Sjolander
Janet Stokesbary
Marie Laule
Mike Klawitter
Eric Tollefsen
Jeff Wood