

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

MEMORANDUM #159 (2004-2005)

January 10, 2005

TO: SCHOOL BOARD

FROM: OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATION ON WALDORF PUBLIC CHARTER
SCHOOL

RECOMMENDATION:

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board approve the application for the Waldorf Charter School, which would open in the fall of the 2005-2006 school year in non-District facilities, as specified in their application (Attachment A).

PERTINENT FACTS:

The Administration met with the proposing group of the Waldorf Charter School for its initial meeting on August 11, 2004. Their original charter application was submitted for consideration with an administrative work session held on October 27, 2004. The School Board work session was held on December 15, 2004.

Following the Board work session, one of the Board members submitted a list of concerns to the Superintendent. These concerns will be addressed during the discussion on the recommendation.

At this time, the applicants have not requested any waivers to School Board policy or bargaining unit contracts.

In addition, the School Board authorizes the District to submit the approved application with addenda to the Department of Education and Early Development who will forward it to the State Board of Education for approval as required by AS 14. 03. 0250. Upon approval of the State Board of Education and Early Development, the Administration will finalize contract negotiations with the Waldorf Charter School and make a recommendation for final approval of the contract at a subsequent School Board meeting.

The Waldorf proposing group successfully responded to most of the concerns and questions put forth by the Administration. One area of concern is the alignment of curricula to the State Performance Standards. This alignment has been completed and is in the final application. The remaining area of concern was the lack of a definitive facility. The DEED will not approve any charter school application that does not have a facility identified by the time of the application submission.

During the School Board work session, there was a concern in addition to the facility issue. There were no professional educators in the proposing group. Several Board members felt that without someone with educational experience some key issues may be ignored when setting up this school. It is recommended that at least one teacher/administrator join the founders to offset this lack.

The school will be designed to follow the Waldorf model of education. Initially, the school will have a target enrollment of 175 students. It will have kindergarten through six grades with plans to add seventh and eighth grades in the future. There will be only half-day kindergarten classes, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. The school will recommend a dress code for students. Parent involvement will be a large part of the campus environment. Students may be "looped" in the primary grades with the same teacher for several years. Looping is also being considered for the intermediate grades. In the Waldorf philosophy, crafts, music, poetry, art, motion, and discovery are emphasized from the onset.

Any special needs students will be served on campus with the appropriate staff and supports in place. Pullouts will be discouraged. As much as possible, all students will be involved in the daily routine with other students. Special classes held separately for students will be avoided with students' needs being served in the regular classroom as much as possible.

The use of textbooks will be introduced gradually. The teachers in the primary grades will rely on folk literature, role modeling, and multi-sensory delivery of curricula. Math, science, social studies and language arts will be presented in a way that involves activities and hands on learning in addition to formal instruction. Math instruction is spiral, built on previous skills, reviewing and revisiting these skills as new ones are added. Science begins with a life science emphasis. Earth science is added in grade six. Community service projects will be part of every student's year. The idea that the school community is a smaller part of the greater Anchorage community will be fostered through required community service projects at all grade levels. Being part of the greater community will also be part of the early years' social studies curriculum. Gradually, the students will be introduced to other aspects of social studies such

as history and geography in a more formal delivery mode. Language arts include a whole language approach, as well as phonics instruction. It is a developmental curriculum, following the developmental stages of a child's growth. World languages will also be available to Waldorf students. Japanese and Spanish are the two targeted languages. They will be presented using the FLES model of language learning.

Waldorf Charter School plans to participate in the March Anchorage School District lottery to obtain students. There are significant numbers of parents and students currently interested in attending this charter school. Additional enrollment, if necessary, will be obtained through later lotteries and enrollment activities.

The proposing members of the Waldorf Charter School are thanked for their efforts in putting forth this proposal. There is a great deal of community interest in this school and will provide the parents another option for the education of their children. The Administration is dedicated to working with the proposers to make the transition from ideas to reality as smooth as possible.

If the charter school is approved, the Waldorf Charter School Academic Policy Committee will submit an application to the Department of Education and Early Development for planning and implementation costs for the 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 and implementation grants.

CC/JC/CB

Attachment

Prepared by: Connie Bensler, Charter School Liaison
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Approved by: Carol Comeau, Superintendent