

**MINUTES OF THE ANCHORAGE SCHOOL BOARD  
REGULAR MEETING OF OCTOBER 11, 2004**

The Anchorage School Board met in Regular Session on Monday, October 11, 2004 at 6:30 p.m. in the Board Room at the Anchorage School District Administration Building. President Tim Steele presided.

A. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, FLAG SALUTE

Board Members Present: Tim Steele, Mary Marks, Jeff Friedman, Crystal Kennedy, Macon Roberts. John Steiner arrived at 7:25 p.m.

Board Members Excused: Jake Metcalfe

Others Present: Carol Comeau, George Vakalis, Janet Stokesbary, Mike Henry, Jerry Sjolander, Patricia McRae, Gail Opalinski, Jeff Wood, Jan Christensen, Eric Tollefsen, Michelle Egan, Marie Laule, Ophelia Dargan-Steed, Mark Mew, Ed McLain, Debbie Bogard, Larry Wiget, Stan Syta, Steve Kalmes, Mary Kay Sambo, the press, and other interested people.

B. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Macon Roberts announced his attendance at the CASA and Guardian Ad Litem Conference last week at the Millennium Hotel. He stated that both he and Crystal Kennedy were CASA volunteers. Mr. Roberts also announced that he and Jeff Friedman attended the Mayor's Diversity Dinner on October 15 along with the Superintendent and other administrative staff. He stated that Carol Comeau and Michelle Egan were both recognized for their work on this project.

Mary Marks reported that she attended the NSBA CUBE Conference in San Antonio and served on an after school care panel. Ms. Marks discussed how our after school programs work and how the School Board promotes the program. She commented that Anchorage has a very diverse population, and it was interesting to the panel members on how the Anchorage School District promotes diversity within our schools. Ms. Marks also stated that she represented the Alaska Association of School Boards at this conference.

Jeff Friedman noted that the School Board Policy Subcommittee will meet on Thursday, October 14, 2004 at 8:30 a.m. to discuss charter school policy.

Crystal Kennedy stated that the School Board Legislative Subcommittee will set a meeting date this next week. She thanked Larry Wiget and the Board for sponsoring the legislative forums held last week. Ms. Kennedy noted that there was great participation from the candidates, and the Board gained a lot of valuable information. The forums were recorded and will be rebroadcast on Channel 14; the dates are available on the ASD Web site. The Web site also will include the surveys that the legislative candidates filled out. Ms. Kennedy commented that this will allow the public to see how the candidates answered the survey questions.

Tim Steele thanked the legislative candidates publicly for attending the forum.

C. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Jeff Friedman made a motion to approve the agenda for October 11, 2004 and move ASD Memorandum #65 - School Board Goals FY 2004-2005, to the end of the consent agenda; Mary Marks seconded. The agenda was unanimously approved as amended.

D. MUSICAL PERFORMANCE

The East High String Quartet performed for the audience under the direction of Margaret David.

E. AWARDS/RECOGNITION/PRESENTATIONS

1. ASD Memorandum #55 - ML&P Safety Supplies Donation

Clark Middle School considers student safety and emergency preparedness a top priority. Earlier this year, Cessilye Williams, Clark Middle School principal, commented that her school needed additional first aid supplies to outfit classrooms for emergencies or natural disasters. Upon hearing of this news, Jim Posey, General Manager of Municipal Light & Power, contacted Ms. Williams and resolved to remedy the situation.

With the cooperation of Alaska Safety, Inc., ML&P purchased safety supplies at cost, filled 60 safety packs and delivered them to Clark Middle School for each of its classrooms.

"It's important to create a safe and nurturing environment for all of our students," says Ms. Williams. "We are very fortunate at

Clark to have a supportive business community partner whose contribution has increased the level of safety and support at our school.”

It is requested that the School Board recognize Municipal Light & Power for its generous donation of safety supplies to Clark Middle School.

2. ASD Memorandum #56 – REMAX Office Furniture Donation

Having a professional, warm, and inviting atmosphere at Clark Middle School is important to school principal Cessilye Williams.

Several months ago REMAX Properties, Inc. General Manager, Mark Korting, contacted Clark Middle School and expressed a desire to donate office chairs, file cabinets and additional furniture items for Clark’s front office and several classrooms.

According to Ms. Williams, the office furniture donation was a wonderful gesture and has enabled Clark Middle School to enhance the appearance and organization of the school.

It is requested that the School Board recognize REMAX Properties, Inc. for its generous donation of office furniture to Clark Middle School.

3. ASD Memorandum #63 – Pollution Reduction Devices

Nationwide there is an effort in place to conduct school bus retrofit projects to help reduce diesel school bus emissions. Each school year Anchorage School District and First Student buses travel 3 million miles transporting students to and from school.

Anchorage School District Fleet Manager Jay Adams recently volunteered countless hours to help retrofit 74 District school buses with emission control devices that will reduce particulate matter, carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons and promote cleaner, healthier air.

In cooperation with the Department of Environmental Conservation and the Environmental Protection Agency, Mr. Adams successfully oversaw the retrofit project and was recently

presented with an Environmental Award Certificate by DEC Commissioner Ernesta Ballard for his work to promote cleaner air.

It is requested that the School Board recognize Jay Adams for his tireless efforts and initiative in reducing bus pollution and promoting cleaner air for the citizens of Anchorage.

4. ASD Memorandum #85 - After School Ambassador for Alaska

The Afterschool Alliance, a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization, recently selected Bonnie Hardy, Manager of the Anchorage School District's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center, as one of 23 Afterschool Ambassadors nationwide for the 2004-2005 school year.

Hardy will serve a one-year term as Afterschool Ambassador for Alaska and will organize public events, communicate with policy makers, and build community awareness of, and support for, afterschool programs. Her ambassadorship is sponsored by the JCPenney Afterschool Fund, which also has provided financial assistance for the District's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center.

The District's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center afterschool programs, established three years ago, are offered free to children in grades K-8. They focus on academics and allow time for homework, tutoring and enrichment and are provided at one middle school and 12 elementary schools.

It is requested that the School Board recognize Bonnie Hardy for the outstanding professionalism, dedication and enthusiasm that led to her being named Afterschool Ambassador for Alaska for the 2004-2005 school year.

F. SPECIAL ADVISORY REPORTS

1. Student Advisory

Lorett Nabong was absent.

2. Military Delegate

LTC David Jones noted that he sits on the State Board of Education as well as being the military liaison to the Anchorage School Board. LTC Jones reported that when his son took the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam, he was asked to pick a famous Alaska legend and write a paragraph about it. He is concerned that students who have not lived in Alaska any length of time would not have enough knowledge to answer this question. LTC Jones expressed his concern that it may be considered a bias question. Carol Comeau responded that she will pass this information along and encouraged LTC Jones to notify the Commission of Education and Early Development about his concern.

LTC Jones stated that the naming committee for the new high school in Eagle River is going well and the committee hopes to have the recommendation to the School Board by the end of October. He commended both Mike Henry and Natalie Burnett for well run meetings and having excellent in-depth discussions.

3. MECC

William Johnson noted that the MECC participated in diversity week activities; attended the Ministerial Alliance town hall meeting on September 30; and attended the diversity forum at West High. The next MECC meeting is scheduled for October 21 at 12 noon in Room 320 in the Administration Building. He encouraged everyone to remember the school bonds that are on the ballot for November 2.

Mary Marks asked if MECC is promoting the school bonds. Mr. Johnson stated that the topic was discussed at the last meeting and the committee decided to speak in favor of the bonds if they became a topic, but responded no that they had not been charged with making a public announcement.

Jeff Friedman suggested to Mr. Johnson that if any future events occur, School Board members would be happy to join them.

Carol Comeau reminded everyone that printed fact sheets for the school bond propositions are available in her office. Tim Steele noted that he has School Bonds Yes signs available.

G. PERSONS TO BE HEARD ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Speaker Wesley Griffith stated that bus ride for students from Clark that attend Goldenview is too long; the students are spending three hours and 18 minutes on the bus number 671. Steve Kalmes responded that he thought there may be a special education route available later this week to transport the students in a reduced time.

Speaker Susan Merrick works for Division of Health and Human Services and is the manager for the state FAS Surveillance Project. She stated that she knows this is an issue of concern for the District and parents. Ms. Merrick brought handouts listing the current data methodology for their project and noted that approximately 163 Alaskans born annually are identified as being affected by maternal alcohol use during pregnancy. Alaska has the highest documented rate of FAS in the United States: 1.5 per 1,000 births. That means that an average of 15 Alaskan infants are born each year with fetal alcohol syndrome. More than 6,500 people under the age of 45 living in Alaska may have been faced with a disability as a result of prenatal alcohol exposure. Of those 6,500 individuals, about 2,000 might be women of childbearing age; about 2,500 might be school-aged children; and about 600 could have full FAS. Many children born affected by prenatal alcohol exposure have brain damage that causes permanent, lifelong disability, even if they don't meet the criteria for full FAS. She explained that it is difficult to estimate how many of these children and adults may have been involved with the foster care system, presented with learning disabilities and/or behavior problems in schools, and been involved with the juvenile and criminal justice systems. Babies born to Alaska Native women have higher rates of FAS than other races. The current FAS prevalence among Alaska Natives is more than 15 times that of whites. Children in other racial groups are reported as affected and do meet the case definition for full FAS, but at a much lower rate than Alaska Natives. The FAS prevalence for the Anchorage/Mat-Su region is approximately 1.0 per 1,000 live births or approximately five children born each year in the region with FAS. She noted that her department expects to have additional data for the rest of the state after the next quarter and by next year, the information will be available to identify the race affected.

Mary Marks asked Ms. Merrick if the age of the mothers was known. Ms. Merrick responded that this information was not available; their data only goes back to 1995.

Jeff Friedman asked if the information on FAS is included in the drug education curriculum. Carol Comeau responded yes.

Speaker Teresa Mercurio is the parent of three children; two of which are affected by FAS or drug related disabilities. She noted that her son has advanced through the District from a 504 plan to an IEP along with support from special education teachers. Ms. Mercurio stated that the support only comes from the demands made by parents. She encouraged the District to develop a plan for these students, which will help the navigation of this quirky disability. Behavior and academic issues must be addressed along with more training for teachers.

Speaker Richard Hermosillo is the chair of the Academic Policy Committee for Village Charter School. He noted that he is here this evening to address two points—funding formula based on enrollment and application procedures. Mr. Hermosillo stated that he sent a letter to the Commissioner of Education and Early Development requesting the count days date for funding be changed to February instead of October. He believes the change in count days will allow them to increase their enrollment. Mr. Hermosillo also stated that he believes the Anchorage School District has not allowed the charter school to operate to the best of their ability. He also noted that Village has been a target for the District. Mr. Hermosillo stated that since 1998, a cultural of intolerance from the leader of the District has been shown to the charter schools. He believes this intolerance is a fact, although subtle, because the District fears the change charter schools are making. Mr. Hermosillo also noted that charter schools have a high number of minority students enrolled in their schools.

Speaker Guy Okada is the president of the Anchorage Principals' Association. He informed the School Board and Superintendent that the mediation regarding their contract failed on September 29. Mr. Okada stated that the principals are actively involved in both state and national levels and continue to serve in the highest offices. ASD principals have been named state principals of the year and have received Milken awards; their professionalism goes beyond the scope of their duties. Mr. Okada reminded the Board that principals deserve a fair and equitable compensation. He appreciates the accolades for their leadership and the APA membership hopes to come to terms with the District for a fair and equitable contract.

Speaker Theresa Obermeyer stated that no one believes what she has lived through; she is only trying to be reasonable. She loves her country

just like LTC Jones. Ms. Obermeyer stated that she was on the School Board 14 years ago and remains concerned with what is being done to protect the children. She is impressed with the parents for being bulldogs to make sure their children's needs are being addressed. She is also concerned about LTC Jones' son who took the HSGQE and did not understand one of the questions. Ms. Obermeyer noted her concern with the fact that her twin's test results from the March testing were not received until October 15. She is concerned that students' needs were not known until fall, which prevented the students from attending summer school.

#### H. CONSENT AGENDA

Consent Agenda attached. **All attachments referred to in memoranda recommendations are on file in the Superintendent's Office.**

1. ASD Memorandum #57 – Resolution for Affordable Housing

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board adopt the attached resolution recognizing the link between student mobility and the lack of affordable housing in Anchorage and advocate for affordable housing.

2. ASD Memorandum #84 – Resolution in Support of Keeping the Lights on After School – October 14, 2004

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board adopt the attached resolution designating October 14, 2004 as Lights on Afterschool in the Anchorage School District.

3. ASD Memorandum #66 – Resolution for School Bus Safety Week

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board approve a resolution recognizing October 17-23, 2004, as School Bus Safety Week in the Anchorage School District.

4. ASD Memorandum #49 – Comprehensive Annual Financial Report

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board approve the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2004 and authorize the Superintendent to

forward this report to the Commissioner of Education, State of Alaska, and the Anchorage Assembly.

5. ASD Memorandum #30 - School Board Policy Revisions: Section 350 - Recognition of Religious Beliefs and Customs (Second Reading)

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board approve on Second Reading, the proposed attached changes to School Board Policy 350 Recognition of Religious Beliefs and Customs and 350.1 Observance of Religious Holidays.

6. ASD Memorandum #65 - School Board Goals FY 2004-2005

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board approve and adopt the Anchorage School District Mission Statement and Goals as shown on Attachment A. For comparison purposes, the Goals for 2003-2004 are shown on Attachment B.

7. ASD Memorandum #86 - AASB Board of Directors Nomination

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board nominate Tim Steele for a seat on the Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB) Board of Director for an additional term.

8. ASD Memorandum 87 - Outstanding AASB School Board Award

It is requested that the School Board submit a nomination package for the Alaska Association of School Boards (AASB) Outstanding School Board Award for 2004-2005. It is also requested that the School Board adopt the 2004-2005 AASB Board Standards.

9. ASD Memorandum #83 - Sale of Surplus Property

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board approve and authorize the Superintendent to dispose of the listed surplus property by sealed bid sale or public auction in accordance with Board policy 732.1. Prior to the sale, these assets will be offered to the Municipality of Anchorage for extended public use.

10. ASD Memorandum #68 - Personnel Report

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board approve the attached Personnel Report.

The following items were removed from the Consent Agenda: Memorandums #57; #66; #49; #30; and #65.

ACTION:

Moved by Jeff Friedman	to approve Memorandum #84;
seconded by Mary Marks	Memorandum #86;
	Memorandum #87;
	Memorandum #83, and
	Memorandum #68.

VOTE:

Ayes: Kennedy, Marks, Steele,  
Friedman, Steiner, Roberts

Nays: None

Absent: Metcalfe

MOTION PASSED

ASD Memorandum #57 - Resolution for Affordable Housing

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board adopt the attached resolution recognizing the link between student mobility and the lack of affordable housing in Anchorage and advocate for affordable housing.

ACTION:

Moved by Mark Marks	to approve Memorandum #57.
seconded by Macon Roberts	

Dan Fauske stated that he was appointed to the bipartisan Millennial Housing Commission established by congress; he is also the CEO/Director of Alaska Housing Authority. Mr. Fauske applauded the School Board for their resolution to help the homeless in Alaska. He stated that in Alaska, the number of homeless is estimated to be about 3,000 individuals or families. The homeless can be divided into two categories: chronic or transitional. The chronic includes individuals with mental illness or an addiction to drugs or alcohol. Transitional homeless individuals or families, often with children, generally are very low income households, out of a job, or impacted by illness or injury. Mr. Fauske indicated that he had attended a meeting with the Alaska Interagency Council on Homelessness today, October 11 to discuss the

homeless situation in Alaska. They discussed what can be done to prevent people from losing their housing in the event of illness, injury or lay offs; what steps can be taken by state departments to reduce the number of persons being discharged to homelessness from institutions such as correctional facilities or API; and how eviction prevention/intervention services can be expanded throughout the state of Alaska. He explained how the commission also addressed the housing/shelter situations; income; services and treatment; and regulatory/policy barriers for the homeless population. Mr. Fauske also stated that he would be willing to work with the District to establish a core curriculum that would help students become better renters or home owners.

Colleen Bickford stated that it takes a family income of over \$30,000 to keep an average apartment in Anchorage at \$875 per month. The average cost of a home in Anchorage is \$256,000. Federal guidelines state that no more than 30 percent of your monthly income should be spent on your housing. Ms. Bickford stated that we have to create and maintain more affordable housing. She suggested adding home builders and owners to the resolution before us tonight.

Carol Comeau thanked both Mr. Fauske and Ms. Bickford for their testimony tonight. She assured them that the District and the School Board recognize the serious need for affordable housing. She reviewed the Profile of Performance document and noted that student achievement was low in the schools with a high transiency rate. Ms. Comeau stated that many families are moving to the Mat-Su Valley in order to secure affordable housing.

Debbie Mahoney, Anchorage Neighborhood Housing and Anchorage Mutual Housing, stated that they deal with homelessness and affordable housing each and every day. Two issues they face are the case management and the supply and demand of the housing. Management of property is also a concern. She suggested training and educating those individuals on how to live on their own. This makes for a better renter and landlords are more apt to rent to someone who knows how to care for their unit and understands that they have an monthly obligation.

Jeff Judd, Director for Operations for Cook Inlet Housing Authority, supports the resolution before the School Board tonight. Mr. Judd stated that the fair market rate for a two bedroom apartment is \$916 instead of \$875 as stated in the resolution. He stated that having a home is essential to the well being of a family. One of their properties is Strawberry

Village, which has 60 homes and has an occupant's average income of \$30,000 per year. The turnover rate has been about seven percent per year, which shows when good affordable housing is provided, people tend to stay in place. Mr. Judd stated that their goal is to build 100 new units per year. He thanked the Board for their support of this resolution.

Macon Roberts noted that it appears that landlords and property owners are becoming more amenable to subsidies offered by the state. Jeff Judd agreed with Mr. Roberts.

Mary Marks noted for the public that Cook Inlet Housing Authority is available for the community and not just for CIRI shareholders. She also encouraged the District to look at developing a curriculum to teach students how to balance a checkbook and how to live on their own. Carol Comeau responded that it is already part of our basic consumer skills curriculum. She noted that she was part of the Habitat for Humanity project and helped build a home for a family in Mountain View. Ms. Comeau would like to see potential home owners also learn about yard maintenance as this is an important part of owning a home.

John Steiner mentioned that the dollar value for a two bedroom apartment went up and asked if it was a reliable statistic. Jeff Judd responded that the fair market amount is published by the Fair Housing Market every October, but is not sure how they derive at the number. John Steiner suggested that we add the correct number to update the resolution. He also offered an amendment to make sure that the private sector is involved in developing affordable housing.

AMENDMENT:

Moved by John Steiner  
seconded by Jeff Friedman

to amend the eighth paragraph to read as follows:

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Anchorage School Board recognizes the plight of homeless and highly mobile families and will advocate for the development of solutions by the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, Anchorage Neighborhood Housing Services, Cook Inlet Housing Authority, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, private sector developers and homebuilders, and the Municipality, which will result in a plan for an increased number of safe, stable, affordable housing units, which in turn, will diminish the impact on schools and student achievement, and create a healthier learning atmosphere for our students.

Crystal Kennedy asked who drew up this resolution and if there is anything else that the Board can advocate for. Carol Comeau responded that the whole issue is to be part of a resolution that responds to the needs in the community and to make sure that housing is safe and affordable. Advocating any place where it is appropriate is good for students so they are able to focus on learning; we need to keep this issue very broad.

Carol Comeau stated that once we get the latest figures on the fair market rate, the resolution would be updated.

VOTE:

Ayes: Kennedy, Marks, Steele, Friedman  
Steiner, Roberts

Nays: None

Absent: Metcalfe





basis for their opinions. He further stated in his opinion, the financial statements presented fairly, in all material respects, the respective financial position of the governmental activities, each major fund and the aggregate remaining fund information of the District, as of June 30, 2004, and the respective changes in financial position and cash flows, where applicable, thereof and the respective budgetary comparison for the General Fund and the State and Federal Grants Special Revenue Fund for the year then ended in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Mr. Beckman stated that the audit was conducted for the purpose of forming opinions on the financial statements that collectively comprise the Anchorage School District's basic financial statements. The combining and individual fund financial statements and other schedules, listed in the table of contents as supplementary information, are presented for purposes of additional analysis and are not a required part of the basic financial statements. Such information has been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audit of the basic financial statements and, in their opinion, is fairly stated in all material respects in relation to the basic financial statements taken as a whole.

Macon Roberts commented that it was a pleasure to be a member of the Audit Subcommittee; it is important to review the books and examine all the transactions.

John Steiner asked what the balance was in the undesignated fund balance. Janet Stokesbary responded that it is \$27 million dollars.

VOTE:

Ayes: Kennedy, Marks, Steele,  
Friedman, Steiner, Roberts

Nays: None

Absent: Metcalfe

MOTION PASSED

ASD Memorandum #30 - School Board Policy Revisions: Section 350 - Recognition of Religious Beliefs and Customs (Second Reading)

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board approve on Second Reading, the proposed attached changes to School Board Policy 350 Recognition of Religious Beliefs and Customs and 350.1 Observance of Religious Holidays.

ACTION:

Moved by John Steiner to approve Memorandum #30.  
seconded by Macon Roberts

Speaker Susan Cantor stated that her involvement in this religious policy change began over three years ago and found the administration very receptive to a possible change. She noted that the policy change clarifies the existing policy in three different areas. The purpose of the developed guidelines was to foster a greater awareness of the District's diverse population and to encourage the very best use of instructional time throughout the school year. Ms. Canton emphasized that she wants all families to feel comfortable in the system. She also wants to make sure the District implements the policy; teachers need time to incorporate the policy in their lesson plans. Ms. Canton suggested one small change to the policy revision: Section 353.3 - Religious Symbols.

Speaker Wendy Baum is a parent who also took part in the religious policy revision. She wants all teachers and principals to be educated about the change in policy; it should be for educational purposes instead of a celebration.

John Steiner thanked the speakers and noted that Susan Cantor is the wife of one of his supervisors at work. He commented that the process used was very effective and worked smoothly. Mr. Steiner stated that we all need to be very respectful and show tolerance for all faiths and non-faiths.

Crystal Kennedy expressed some concern about certain religious symbols being banned from the classroom. Susan Canton responded that we should recognize all religious symbols and be respectful of this policy.

Carol Comeau commented that some of the staff felt that they could not have any religious symbols in the classroom, and some teachers have not allowed parents to bring in anything when sharing their religion with students. She emphasized that sharing information is part of the educational process. Some teachers need to be reminded about the difference between being educational and a celebration. Ms. Comeau stated that we need to reinforce the educational value of a symbol and not create a list of banned items.

Jeff Friedman commented that getting this policy implemented is going to be quite an undertaking. He asked if it will be easier to implement this policy by making the suggested change or will it add confusion. Carol

Comeau responded that she believes that it makes more sense to leave it in; the message is clear. John Steiner stated that he sat on the policy subcommittee and this was a product of his writing. Mr. Steiner would feel comfortable taking this out; he does not want this to cause any confusion.

AMENDMENT:

Moved by Jeff Friedman  
seconded by John Steiner

To amend Section 350.1 - Requirements - Religious Symbols: Religious symbols include objects used in the celebration of a religious holiday or observance of a religious belief. Some apparently secular objects have association with religious beliefs or holidays in certain (e.g., candy canes, mistletoe.) Though not religious in themselves, ~~and not banned from the classroom,~~ any use of such items should reflect a thoughtfulness and sensitivity that reflects ASD policy and guidance.

Crystal Kennedy commented that this policy troubles her; she doesn't see a lot of clarity. She went through the policy and tried to compare the changes to the original policy. Ms. Kennedy stated that it appears that there were lots of things that use to be stated in the positive and were permitted, and now a lot of those things are not permitted. The policy gives a very negative flavor. Ms. Kennedy commented that there are some good statements in the policy that are truly admirable. She agreed that we need to be respectful of other cultures and of newcomers to America, but not at the expense of our existing culture. This is a holiday that is sanctioned by the government and is confused by what we are trying to eliminate. Ms. Kennedy asked teachers what they thought this policy change would mean. A math teacher responded by asking if this means she can't decorate her room with holiday items because she can't show an academic connection to the decoration. A kindergarten teacher responded by saying that kids are very visual learners and calendars often have something that designates the month, i.e. a tree for December; she asked if she can still use these symbols. Ms. Kennedy tried to pinpoint the practical things that this policy is limiting. She understands that we must be respectful of all people, but is not sure this policy change

meets our goal. Ms. Kennedy is concerned that this comes down to trying to remove something that is important to a group.

Carol Comeau stated that she understands Ms. Kennedy's concerns; she helped write the policy in 1986 when she was a teacher. Ms. Comeau noted that she had 20 parents meet with her from the Jewish community emphasizing how much they want their children to feel comfortable going to school during the month of December. Their concern is that the preponderance of decorations and music is all directed to a Christian celebration. Ms. Comeau noted that teachers just need to be more sensitive in their classes to all students and their varying religions. She stated that the District is not trying to ban Christmas, but to educate all teachers to be sensitive. Ms. Comeau stated that we must show a sensitivity to what is meaningful to those of different cultures; we must educate all children in a neutral environment.

Jeff Friedman stated that this policy could be viewed as restrictive. We do not have many Muslim or Jewish teachers who put up religious symbols so it may appear that we are targeting those teachers who have been putting up Christian symbols. Mr. Friedman stated that we must talk and encourage all religions to come into the schools and talk about their religions.

Crystal Kennedy is concerned if we are defining this policy adequately so principals and teachers will be able to interpret it. She commented that if we are trying to strike a balance, we need to make sure that we don't swing too far to one side.

Tim Steele asked how the District will be training the staff to interpret this new policy. Carol Comeau responded that this policy change has been discussed for the past year and one-half. The curriculum department under the direction of Enid Hunter was directed to organize a committee to review the current policy and issues. The process took longer, but is more thoughtful with many different perspectives. The instructional division and Jan Christensen will be tasked on how to disseminate the information to the principals and the curriculum coordinators. The music department is already working on addressing the concerns. Ms. Comeau feels the policy will evolve; the culture is changing, but teachers need to adapt what they have been using and make sure that all cultures are addressed.

Tim Steele commented that this policy is going to take teachers out of their comfort zone, but he is excited about the requirements of the educational value; this should help to increase academic achievement.

Carol Comeau stated that many parents do not feel comfortable going to the principal and teacher to tell them how uncomfortable their child may be feeling. She hopes this policy will allow a parent to feel more validated in coming forward with their concerns. Ms. Comeau emphasized that we must now set the standard and this new policy will open up discussions.

Crystal Kennedy agreed with the Superintendent and acknowledged the need for this policy and understands why it is so important. She, as a policy maker, stated that she can't support a policy that will evolve or cause confusion. Ms. Kennedy stated that she does support the policy at the very beginning, but feels there is too much to be addressed. She supports the need to come together for a balanced agreeable statement, but can't support the rest of the policy on how this will be implemented.

Macon Roberts commented that he understands Ms. Kennedy's concerns and agrees that it is a bit more narrow than he had in mind. He doesn't have a problem with a tree being in a classroom as long as other symbols are brought in and the items are of an educational value. Mr. Roberts stated that he is not highly religious himself, but this is a Christian country so maybe a gradual approach to this change might be better. He does appreciate the fact that we are trying to make sure that a student is not being made to be a part of something that he/she feels uncomfortable with. Mr. Roberts feels that the policy is going to be problematic.

VOTE:

Ayes: Kennedy, Marks, Steele,  
Friedman, Steiner, Roberts

Nays: None

Absent: Metcalfe

AMENDMENT TO THE MAIN MOTION PASSED

John Steiner asked the Board's permission to add an amendment since he is the maker of the original motion. There was no objection. Mr. Steiner explained in 350.1 Requirements - Educational Value, in the final sentence that he would remove the word "only" after classroom and remove "and only" after practices and insert at the end "or in a context that celebrates diverse traditions." Crystal Kennedy seconded this

amendment so Mr. Steiner would have the opportunity to explain his amendment.

Mr. Steiner believes the policy is too restrictive. Mr. Steiner stated that the policy removes the ability to have anything up on a wall that is not in the midst of a direct discussion of historical and cultural significance. Because our policy is trying to be tolerant, this is the one place that we said "only" and he feels that it was really quite prescriptive and from his recollection of previous discussions, the Board talked about thoughtfulness and sensitivity; we didn't talk about banning and being prescriptive. This led him to believe that this one part sends the message that we are being super strict. His suggestion is to remove the "onlys" and note that the use in a context that celebrates diverse traditions should fit our tolerance and diversity principles and not be offensive to the sensitivity of children. Mr. Steiner emphasized that it will certainly need to be interpreted in the context with the rest of the policy but also believes that it is consistent with the rest of the policy.

Mr. Steiner reread his amendment as follows:

AMENDMENT:

Moved by John Steiner  
seconded by Crystal Kennedy

to amend Section 350.1  
Requirements - Educational  
Value:

All classroom activities must be selected on the basis on their educational value and their alignment to the District's curricular standards. Holiday activities must be consistent with the academic goals of the classroom. Teachers should assume diversity exists among their students and should choose holiday activities designed to foster appreciation of diversity. If any chosen holiday has religious significance in some traditions, care should be taken to provide instruction about or activities relating to that holiday only if they are objective and religiously neutral. Religious symbols may be used in the classroom ~~only~~ within the context of studying the cultural and historical significance of the holiday or religious practices, ~~and only~~ or in a context that celebrates diverse traditions.

Macon Roberts commented that he likes this amendment it opens up the classroom for more learning and it will allow more people to bring things in, which will satisfy everyone.

Crystal Kennedy stated that this amendment makes the policy more acceptable.

Jeff Friedman stated that what we are doing in terms of religion is similar to what the country is doing in connection to race across our nation. We

are saying that we need to open our classroom to other religions as well. Mr. Friedman commented that is not going to be easy, but is very important.

Crystal Kennedy stated that Christianity is not limited to a certain ethnic group. She noted that her husband travels all over the world and has seen very elaborate Christmas decorations in Seoul, Korea and China. Ms. Kennedy remains concerned over the student concerts and music; she asked the Superintendent if the *Halleluja Chorus* can still be sung because it means "Praise the Lord." Carol Comeau responded that this policy is not meant to exclude this chorus, but many of our school programs have become too lopsided. She noted that the music department is working hard to broaden the selection so that the school programs are more diverse.

VOTE:

Ayes: Kennedy, Marks, Steele,  
Friedman, Steiner, Roberts

Nays: None

Absent: Metcalfe

AMENDMENT TO THE MAIN MOTION PASSED

AMENDMENT:

Moved by Crystal Kennedy  
seconded by Jeff Friedman

to amend Section 350.1 Requirements - Concerts and Music: Concerts and music including music during a religious holiday season, may include music associated with religious traditions so long as it is part of a variety of music that represents various religious and cultural traditions. Religious music may be performed but it must not dominate the program. ~~A program including religious material (musical or otherwise) must emphasize the cultural, rather than the worshipful, aspects of a holiday.~~

VOTE:

Ayes: Kennedy, Marks, Steele,  
Friedman, Roberts

Nays: Steiner

Absent: Metcalfe

AMENDMENT TO THE MAIN MOTION PASSED

VOTE:

Ayes: Kennedy, Marks, Steele,  
Friedman, Steiner, Roberts

Nays: None

Absent: Metcalfe

MAIN MOTION PASSED AS AMENDED

ASD Memorandum #65 – School Board Goals FY 2004-2005

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board approve and adopt the Anchorage School District Mission Statement and Goals as shown on Attachment A. For comparison purposes, the Goals for 2003-2004 are shown on Attachment B.

ACTION:

Moved by Jeff Friedman to approve Memorandum #65.  
seconded by Macon Roberts

Carol Comeau stated that she reviewed the current goals and made suggested changes and the rationale is included in the memorandum. She emphasized that our overall goals have supported us very well and allowed our schools staff to focus on major academic efforts, keep our schools safe, and be accountable to the public.

AMENDMENT:

Moved by John Steiner to amend 1.a – Indicators: The  
seconded by Crystal Kennedy percentage of students at or above  
proficient in each designated  
group will increase or by at least  
10 percent of the percent proficient  
or above in the "all students"  
group and by at least 5 percent for  
each designated group that did not  
make AMO in the previous year.

Ed McLain commented that the intent of the measure was to look at each goal. The measure of progress was taken from the scores of all students; this makes the target for each student group all the same. Jeff Friedman offered his concern that this amendment might set a target for those who are further behind.

John Steiner commented that his amendment may be confusing, but is concerned that the School Board goals meet NCLB requirements. He does not feel comfortable when School Board goals fail under NCLB.

Crystal Kennedy agreed with Mr. Steiner. She stated having measurable goals helps the Board and the Administration pinpoint any measurable success. Ms. Kennedy commented that we are only successful if all kids are successful. She does not feel that we should put a percent in the goals; we should strive for academic achievement.

Jeff Friedman commented that we do need to set a target goal; we need to have some number to focus on. He stated that we have always said that we want our students to achieve; the question is should our goals be tied to NCLB. Mr. Friedman stated that we need to set realistic goals that our students can make, but still be aware of the NCLB requirements.

Ed McLain stated that there are three things we as a District need to do: 1) establish the direction of student achievement; 2) set some kind of benchmark; and 3) attempt to capture and assure progress for all kids.

Tim Steele stated that a few years ago we put in measurable goals and now we want achievable progress. He commented that we had great success in some of the goals and fell a bit short in others. Mr. Steele reminded everyone that this is just a measure. This data tells us where we need to apply some of the additional resources

Carol Comeau emphasized what Mr. Friedman previously stated. NCLB is a federal mandate and believes that it will be changed after the national election. If we don't target low-achieving students with goals, then why are we pouring resources into these kids. She cautioned the Board that we must not lose sight of all kids – we must look beyond NCLB to show progress.

John Steiner stated that he would like to substitute the amendment currently on the floor. He agrees with the need to increase our proficient students, but we need to push them even higher. There should be some goal for increase in all groups.

SUBSTITUTE AMENDMENT:

Moved by John Steiner  
seconded by Crystal Kennedy

to amend 1.a – Indicators: The percentage of students at or above proficient in each designated group will increase by the greater of at least 10 percent of the percent proficient or above in the “all student’s group or the amount necessary to reach the current state AMO in the final year of the current state AMO standard.

Discussion centered on the reasoning behind the amendment and the importance of setting attainable goals.

Carol Comeau suggested to the Board that they postpone action tonight on the goals. She stated that these are their goals and this should be a very important discussion among Board members.

John Steiner stated that he does not have any comments on the rest of the goals; his intent is to keep the spirit of last year’s goals and not make any major revisions to the rest of the goals.

Mary Marks commented that copies of the goals were given to the Board last month for review and all Board members were requested to send any comments to the Administration. She is not in favor of postponing action tonight on the goals.

VOTE:

Ayes: Kennedy, Steiner, Roberts

Nays: Marks, Steele, Friedman

Absent: Metcalfe

AMENDMENT TO THE MAIN MOTION FAILS

AMENDMENT:

Moved by John Steiner  
seconded by Crystal Kennedy

to postpone action on  
Memorandum #65 until October  
25, 2004.

Mr. Steiner asked for suggested language from the Administration on closing the achievement gap.

VOTE:

Ayes: Kennedy, Steele, Steiner, Roberts

Nays: Marks, Friedman

Absent: Metcalfe

AMENDMENT TO POSTPONE ACTION PASSES

John Steiner apologized for not reviewing the goals document prior to this past weekend. He feels that the discussion tonight has been very thoughtful, and this is the only time and place that a discussion on these types of issues can be discussed openly.

Carol Comeau suggested in the future that a work session be held prior to taking action on the School Board goals. She commented that this is a long agenda and the goals deserve the full focus of the Board.

Ms. Comeau suggested delaying the 21<sup>st</sup> Century report until October 25, 2004. The School Board concurred.

I.. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

1. ASD Memorandum #33 - FY 2005-2006 Budget Development Process

Over the last several years the Anchorage School District has actively sought community input in the budget development process. In preparing the FY 2004-2005 budget, the District engaged over 150 community members, employees and students in budget review teams. This year the budget development for FY 2005-2006 will involve conducting three town meetings.

The community plays a significant role in the development of the preliminary budget prepared by the administration, in the approval of the budget by the School Board and Anchorage Assembly, and in our efforts to secure additional funding from the Alaska Legislature.

At the town meetings during the month of November, the Superintendent and administration will present the community with information on:

- The current status of student achievement as reported in Profiles of Performance, 2003-2004

- An update on No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) Adequate Yearly Progress Report
- An update on the Six Year Instructional Plan
- Potential school calendar options
- Facilities projects update
- Current budget revenue and expenditures and the forecast for FY 2005-2006 revenue and expenditures

Input on the budget will be sought in the following areas:

- Economies and efficiencies in delivery of program and services
- Expansion of effective programs and services
- Reductions in programs and services

The town meetings will be held on:

- Thursday, Nov. 4, 2004      7:00 pm Girdwood School MPR
- Tuesday, Nov. 9, 2004      7:00 pm Chugiak High Auditorium
- Wednesday, Nov. 10, 2004   7:00 pm Wendler Middle School MPR

These forums will be taped for later broadcast on Channel 14.

The District Web site ([www.asdk12.org](http://www.asdk12.org)) will again carry a suggestion box to which community members, staff and students may submit their recommendations. For those without Internet access, suggestion forms will be available from the District through the schools, support departments, and the Communications Department. In addition, input will be solicited from the Minority Education Concerns Committee (MECC), the student advisory board, and employee union groups.

A critical timeframe for obtaining community input into the budget is during the preliminary planning stage. The Superintendent and the School Board will use input from all of the above sources. All the suggestions received from last year's budget review team participants will also be reviewed and incorporated into the FY 2005-2006 budget process. A School Board work session on the Proforma FY 2005-2006 Budget will be held on November 8, 2004 at 6:30 p.m. This work session will be televised.

Carol Comeau informed the Board of the upcoming town meetings: November 4 - Girdwood; November 9 - Chugiak High; and November 10 - Wendler. Ms. Comeau explained that she will

cover a wide range of topics during the meetings, i.e., budget, school calendar, achievement status as reported in our Profile of Performance, Six-Year Instructional Plan. She will also speak to the Student Advisory Board and various employee groups as well as other community groups.

Jeff Friedman stated that he likes the general idea, but is concerned that too much is being packed into the discussion. He hopes that we are careful to spend enough time on each item. Mr. Friedman asked Superintendent Comeau if the Board could add or adopt priorities on the budget cuts. If additional funding is received, the community would then be informed on what may or may not be reinstated. Carol Comeau responded yes.

Tim Steele asked if the Board was having a work session for the budget on November 8. Carol responded that according to School Board policy, we must establish a budget cost ceiling by setting spending limits and assumptions for the annual budget preparation process by November 15.

Crystal Kennedy commented that she likes the ideas of town meetings, but is concerned that we are packing too much into the meetings. She is also concerned if the needs of the Anchorage bowl will be met. Carol Comeau responded if another meeting is needed, one will be scheduled. She also stated that the meetings will be taped and rebroadcast.

John Steiner expressed a concern with south Anchorage and mid-town; he asked if South Anchorage would have an opportunity to offer input. Carol Comeau responded that she would be happy to schedule another meeting in south Anchorage if it is needed. She feels that fewer meetings are actually better, but will ask the principals to let her know if their communities would like an additional meeting.

John Steiner asked if it would be better to delay the budget work session until after the town meetings. He commented that if something comes up at the town meetings, the Board would then be able to give guidance to the administration. Carol Comeau responded that the Board must take action, according to School Board policy, by November 15 to establish the upper limit of spending for the budget. She also noted that if something comes

up at the town meetings, the Board can address those concerns at the November 15, 2004 School Board meeting.

Jeff Friedman commented that he does not see a problem with the November 8 work session because no decisions will be made and this does not preclude the Board from offering something at the November 15 meeting.

Carol Comeau informed the Board that the Council of Great City Schools visited the Anchorage School District in October and are in the process of writing the report on the strategic financial audit. She also stated that once the report was complete, a copy would be forwarded to the Board. Ms. Comeau reminded the Board that the curriculum audit recommended that the District move toward a curriculum based budget.

2. ASD Memorandum #70 – Project Status Report

This is a report of activities and project status changes in Major Capital Projects during the period of September 17, 2004 through October 1, 2004.

3. ASD Memorandum #71 – Enrollment Status Update: September 30, 2004

Enrollment as of September 30, 2004, the official membership date for the District, was a total of 49,454 students. This enrollment represents 209 (-0.4%) fewer students than the 49,663 reported for the same time last year.

Table 1 compares the September 30, 2004 enrollment, by category, to the comparable figures for September 30, 2003. The enrollment increases this school year, over last school year, were in the Kindergarten, Senior High, and Other Secondary programs. The increase in Kindergarten can be attributed to a change in policy to extend the eligibility cut-off date for students to September 1, rather than August 15.

4. ASD Memorandum #72 – 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center 2003-2004 Year End Report

The 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) 2003-04 Year End Report is the Anchorage School District (ASD) report to

the School Board and the community on the achievement of the afterschool program. The 21st CCLC programs were held in the following elementary schools: Chester Valley, Creekside Park, Fairview, Government Hill, Mountain View, Muldoon, North Star, Northwood, Ptarmigan, Russian Jack, Taku, Tudor, Ursa Major, Williwaw, Willow Crest, and Wonder Park. Programs were also held at Clark and Romig middle schools.

21st CCLC DEMOGRAPHICS:

Enrollment in the afterschool program is by teacher/staff referral with each school having the capacity to serve 100 students from 3:30-5:30 p.m. daily during the school year. Bus transportation home is provided for students who normally ride the bus home after school. A partnership with the Children In Transition/Homeless (CIT/H) program provides cab or other transportation to the CIT/H students.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century report was postponed until the October 25, 2004 School Board meeting.

5. ASD Memorandum #73 - Treasurer's Report/Financial Recap: August 31, 2004

The attached report consists of two parts: the Treasurer's Report and the Financial Recap. The Treasurer's Report and the Financial Recap are presented on a monthly basis. The Treasurer's report and Financial Recap are year-to-date information as of August 31, 2004.

I. TREASURER'S REPORT

The Anchorage School District Treasurer's Report includes a summary of the total demand deposits and investments, which are on hand August 31, 2004, and a summary of the investment transactions completed August 1 through August 31, 2004.

J. PERSONS TO BE HEARD ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

K. COMMUNICATIONS & SCHOOL BOARD COMMENTS

L. EXECUTIVE SESSION - (PERSONNEL/FINANCE/NEGOTIATIONS/LITIGATION)

M. ADJOURNMENT

The Regular Meeting of October 11, 2004 adjourned at 10:45 p.m. by unanimous consent.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Tim Steele, President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jeff Friedman, Clerk

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mary Kay Sambo, Recording Secretary

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Minutes Approved