

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

ASD MEMORANDUM #340 (2004-2005)

June 27, 2005

TO: SCHOOL BOARD

FROM: OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

SUBJECT: ACCEPTANCE OF GRANT AWARD: CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES  
REFUGEE ASSISTANCE PROJECT

RECOMMENDATION:

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board approve and authorize the Superintendent to accept grant funds from the Catholic Social Services (CSS), Refugee Assistance Project (RAP), in the amount of \$16,000. This grant focuses on providing additional support service specifically for Hmong refugee students.

PERTINENT FACTS:

The Hmong is an ethnic group that traditionally lives in the highland areas of Laos and Thailand. The CIA and United States Army recruited many Hmong during the Vietnam War. After the war, Laos fell to the communist Pathet Lao movement. Thousands of Lao and Hmong crossed the Mekong River to Thailand, where refugee camps were established.

The migration into Thailand continued steadily for many years, despite protests by Thailand that many were economic migrants, not true refugees. Most of the Hmong spent several years in refugee camps there. Eventually, nearly all of the Hmong refugees were settled in other countries; most of them came to the United States. In 2001, there were approximately 200,000 Hmong living in the United States who were concentrated in Minnesota, Wisconsin, California, and North Carolina.

Last summer (2004) the U. S. State Department granted refugee status to 15,000 Hmong who had been living at Wat Tham Krabok Refugee Camp in Thailand. Of that number, approximately seventy-five were expected to settle in Anchorage with families who are sponsoring them. As of May 24, 2005, nineteen families comprising eighty individuals, who range in age from two days to seventy-two years, have actually arrived. Of that number, twenty-six are of school age and are enrolled in Anchorage School District

schools: William Tyson (17), Clark (3), East (4), Bartlett (2), and Newcomers' Center (nine middle and high school students). More families are expected to arrive this summer.

Through collaboration among and the combined efforts of CSS, ASD, Anchorage Literacy Project (ALP), and community volunteers, the settlement of the Hmong refugees has been positive. Attempts are being made to meet the linguistic and cultural needs faced by the families as they settle into their new environment. In November 2004, two days of training were provided by the Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning. The staffs (principals, teachers and support staff) at the schools experiencing the most immediate impact of their arrival were targeted for the training. Topics included: culture - what it is, how it impacts learning; communication - skills and active listening exercises; refugees - who they are, information specific to Hmong refugees; diversity in ASD classrooms and the challenges and opportunities of such; engaging parents with the school and encouraging their own learning; and low literacy - strategies and techniques for working with low level English proficient students.

To further enhance skills for addressing the needs, CSS wrote and submitted a grant proposal and was awarded funds from the federal government. Embedded in the CSS grant was the proposal to provide additional tutorial assistance from ASD staff for Hmong students after school hours, on weekends and during the summer months. The project was designed to achieve three goals:

- To provide tutors to support refugee students in ASD programming.
- To provide access to parent-teacher conferences regarding student progress.
- To provide quarterly reports of progress of refugee students to CSS.

BUDGET SUMMARY:

Added Duty Classified	\$ 12,509
Fringe Benefits	3,491
TOTAL	\$ 16,000

CC/JC/EH/MH

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