

**NEVADA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
NEVADA STATE BOARD FOR CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION**

Friday, October 10, 2008

Department of Education
9890 South Maryland Parkway
Conference Room #228
Las Vegas, Nevada

MINUTES OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON CHARTER SCHOOLS

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Cindy Reid, Chair
Barbara Myers, Member
Anthony Ruggiero, Member

DEPARTMENT STAFF PRESENT:

Keith Rheault, Superintendent of Public Instruction
James Wells, Deputy Superintendent, Administrative and Fiscal Services
Bill Arensdorf, Director, Office of Fiscal Accountability
Tom McCormack, Consultant, Office of Fiscal Accountability
Doris Arnold, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent of Public Instruction

LEGAL STAFF PRESENT:

Dr. James E. Irvin, Deputy Attorney General

AUDIENCE IN ATTENDANCE:

Jill Petersen, Alpine Academy
Denise Quirk, Alpine Academy
Cheryl Hecht, Elko Institute for Academic Achievement
Karen Ash, Elko Institute for Academic Achievement

1. Call to Order

Chair Cindy Reid called this subcommittee meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. and turned the meeting over to Mr. Bill Arensdorf, Director, Office of Fiscal Accountability.

2. Application Review of Alpine Academy Charter School for State Board Sponsorship

Mr. Bill Arensdorf explained that Alpine Academy submitted their application for a Subsection 7 Charter in September of 2007 and staff has been working with their Committee to Form a Charter School. Mr. Arensdorf stated that the Department is recommending that the Board approve the Subsection 7 with certain conditions that must be met before requesting a full charter can be approved.

The Alpine Academy Charter School is proposing to open in Fall of 2009 as a high school serving students in grades 9-12. The school has projected first year enrollment of approximately 120 pupils. The school will hire their own teachers and will not be using an Education Management Organization (EMO). The school will provide an opportunity for high-risk students. Those students identified as at-risk do not complete high school or deemed credit deficient. The school is not distance education nor completely vocational. It will be located in Washoe County. The proposed curriculum will be aligned to Nevada's academic standards though not mirroring Washoe County curriculum.

Chair Reid asked what is unique about the school curriculum as opposed to any other school in Washoe County.

Mr. Arensdorf stated the curriculum was one of the issues discussed with the Committee to Form this School. They have designed their curriculum to appeal to at-risk youth although he was not sure he could pinpoint the actual significant or diverse classes that were different from Washoe County. Mr. Arensdorf indicated Alpine Academy would be providing parents yet another choice within Washoe County.

Mr. McCormack referred the members to page 4 in Alpine's application, which discusses the At-Risk program and their uniqueness.

Mr. Arensdorf pointed out that the small size of the school makes it easier to concentrate on the success of these students.

Chair Reid asked for a list of charters in Washoe for High School students.

Member Myers asked where the school would be located; she would be concerned if it was not in Sparks.

The conditions for granting the Subsection 7 are as follows:

- Approve facility location with an occupancy permit that satisfies the jurisdiction to operate as a school;
- Provide evidence of Fire and Health Department inspections with verification of insurance, and approval of their lease;
- Provide more clarification and more details on the salary and benefits of employees of the school;
- Additionally, the projected revenue (DSA) needs to be revised to reflect current numbers, with a contingency plan if the revenue is lower or higher; substantiation of the detailed budget including inflation costs built into the plan. Currently missing in the budget on the expenditure side are the administrative fees of 2% the first year and 4% the second year.

The school has two years to meet these conditions before they can apply for a full charter. There is also a matter of \$50,000 federal grant money that was built into their revenue, which is no longer available through the Department of Education. Those funds must now be applied for directly, since the Department lost the ability to provide those funds.

Chair Reid asked about other charters still in the pipeline and schools who have a Subsection 7 and have yet to apply for full charter.

Mr. McCormack said he received eight new charters in September, 2008 plus the ones the staff is currently working on which brings the total to 13. In particular, in Washoe County School District the

High Desert Montessori is requesting to add a high school to their current existing charter for elementary grades. Mr. Arensdorf added that E-Tech has reapplied as they have defaulted on their Subsection 7.

Ms. Jill Petersen, Liaison for Alpine Academy, first thanked the NDE for all of their help. She then explained what needs the Academy feels it can fulfill. In Washoe County, there are 18,813 students and 12 high schools. She has taught at North Valley High School with a class size of 33, which made it difficult for her to actually get to know each students' strengths and weaknesses. In a charter school the class size is much smaller and offers a better opportunity to work with each student. In Washoe County, graduation rates are at 75%, which means that 4,700 children are not graduating. Ms. Petersen explained that the goal of Alpine Academy is to help more at-risk teenagers graduate high school. It will be a community-based school with parents and community members all participating. Progress plans will be individualized for each student and will be discussed at quarterly conferences. The progress plans will include career paths discussed with high school advisors. Alpine plans active parent involvement opportunities and mentoring by community businesses offering career internships.

Ms. Petersen described the people who are on the Committee and who would eventually be on the Board of the Alpine Academy. In answer to earlier questions, they have applied for the federal grant that is no longer available through the Department of Education. No location for the school has been chosen.

Member Myers asked what percentage of at-risk students in this area are special education students. Ms. Petersen replied that it would be about 20% and they have already decided to use the Response to Intervention Model for those students. Ms. Petersen stated Alpine Academy is interviewing a teacher currently employed in the Washoe County School District who presently is using the Response to Intervention Model.

Mr. Ruggiero asked what the teacher-student ratio would be. Ms. Petersen answered 15 to 18 students per teacher. He asked what methods they are going to use to obtain the 120 enrollment they have projected.

Ms. Petersen stated they would be doing various advertising. Once they have a location they would begin conducting open house. She also disclosed that she was a teacher at TEAM A for four years but had no affiliation with their administration or governing board.

Chair Reid asked what makes Alpine Academy different or unique from other charters for at-risk students located in Washoe County.

Ms. Petersen indicated that many other at-risk charters have waiting lists and that Alpine is hoping to offer a small, community-involved school.

Mr. Arensdorf recommended granting the Subsection 7 for two years. Motion to approve the Subsection 7, with the conditions as recorded, was made by Member Ruggiero; Member Myers seconded the motion.

Chair Reid stated that while she was in favor of charter schools, she is not pleased with the direction these charter schools are taking in Nevada. She is concerned that the charter schools feel that they alone can rescue at-risk students. She reminded the Subcommittee that there are already seven charters in Washoe that offer no discernable differences. With that and the current budget constraints, she does not feel another charter school is warranted.

Member Ruggiero voiced some of the same concerns as Chair Reid, but feels that the governing body for Alpine Academy is very solid in their administrative experience.

Member Myers stated that as a board member representing half of Washoe County, she has not heard any complaints about Washoe County having another charter since Washoe is quite a large area.

A motion to approve the Subsection 7 for Alpine Academy for recommendation to the full State Board was approved. Members Ruggiero and Myers voted yes; Chairwoman Reid voted no.

3. Application Review of Elko Institute for Academic Achievement Charter School for State Board Sponsorship

Mr. Arensdorf, NDE stated that this application originated September of 2007. The Elko Institute for Academic Achievement Charter School would serve grades 2-8 and would be for all students. He indicated this would be the first charter in Elko County and the curriculum will be modeled on the curriculum used in Elko public schools and would focus on high achieving. The Department feels that a Subsection 7 should be granted for one year with the following condition:

- Obtain a facility;
- Pass local fire and health inspections;
- Provide an acceptable lease;
- And provide evidence of insurance.
- In addition, there are some budget verification on salary and benefits and apportionment allocations updated based on current year. A Contingency fund plan both for operating and enrollment verification and detailed substantiation for inflation factor from year one to year two needs to be established and the inclusion of expenditures, to include administrative fee for sponsoring at 2% the first year and 1 ½ % the second year.

Cheryl Hecht introduced herself as a member of a grassroot parent group (PAGE) and discussed how the Committee to Form started. Elko County has 13 elementary schools across 17,000 square miles. She is a teacher who would like to utilize the differentiation method similar to RTI using smart boards for visual spatial learning.

Karen Ash introduced herself and gave her teaching background and experience. She is certified to teach ELL. Her vision is to offer a parallel language program, one class in English and one class in Spanish, which is not currently offered in the Elko public schools, but is needed due to the large population of Spanish speaking students. The school will offer this much-needed service as well as a concentration on science and math.

Ms. Hecht talked about how the school was going to make sure that the community understands that learning a second language is an advantage and not a detriment. She has also talked to Great Basin College about using the school as an observation unit for student teachers.

Member Ruggiero is concerned about whether the school can attract the projected enrollment of 120.

Member Myers voiced concerns about which curriculum they are going to use. There has been many different styles talked about and it does not reflect what is on the school's application. The school has mentioned curriculums including dual immersion, College of William and Mary gifted students, plus a

concentration on science and mathematics by using a curriculum that National Conference of Teachers of Mathematics has approved.

Mr. Arensdorf stated that he is somewhat concerned about the projected enrollment and the viability of the school. He again stressed the preconditions that need to be met prior to full conversion.

Member Myers said that she would like to have a condition to provide a clear curriculum be added into the Subsection 7 .

Member Ruggiero made a motion to approve the Elko Institute for Academic Achievement Charter School with the conditions that the Department Staff recommended and an additional condition showing clarification of which curriculum they plan on using and reemphasizing the mission of this school.

Member Myers seconded the motion.

Member Reid and Member Myers both asked for the clarification of whether the school is a “gifted and talented” or ELL concentrated school. Additionally, the textbooks need to match the curriculum.

Jim Wells, Deputy Superintendent for Fiscal Services, stated that there are currently 33 students in Elko County registered for virtual long distance learning courses.

A vote to grant a Subsection 7 charter to Elko Institute for Academic Achievement Charter School was unanimously approved with the subsequent conditions.

3. Public Comments

Ricki Elkins Rodriguez, Executive Director for Charter School Development made the public comment that she is excited and impressed that the Board is taking such an active role in discerning whether a charter school will be needed and viable.

5. The meeting was adjourned 3:10 p.m.