

## **Questions from the Charter School Committee meeting on October 16, 2018**

### **Aurora Borealis High School Budget**

Please find the attached proposed budget for a projected enrollment of 40 students.

### **Socio-Economic Diversity**

ABCHS would follow a lottery enrollment system. There would be no preference given on race, sex, religion or any other socioeconomic factor. This keeps enrollment opportunity equal to everyone in the community. Our committee feels that allowing graduating 8<sup>th</sup> graders from ABCS preferred lottery status over the community is no different than area charter schools taking siblings of enrolled students for their kindergarten with a preferred lottery status. Per the Alaska State Statute Sec 14.03.265 Admission, “(b) A charter school shall enroll all eligible students who submit a timely application, unless the number of those applications exceeds the capacity of the program, class, grade level or building. In the event of an excess of those applications, the charter school and the local school board shall attempt to accommodate all of those applicants by considering providing additional classroom space and assigning additional teachers from the district to the charter school. If it is not possible to accommodate all eligible students who submit a timely application, students shall be accepted by random drawing. A school board may not require a student to attend a charter school.”

Our policy of wearing uniforms also combats disparity of enrollee socioeconomic status and is there because we feel it takes distraction away and provides everyone with an environment of equality.

### **Transportation**

Section AS1409-10 (g) does not require a school district to establish dedicated transportation routes for the exclusive use of students enrolled in a charter school. Since school demographics are determined by lottery the service area of ABCHS could potentially extend to the farthest reaches of the KPBSD boundaries. Additionally, parents who wish to have their students attend a school outside of their local schools service area are not provided with district transportation; a policy that is practiced by the KPBSD and other districts as well. [LINK](#)

ABCS and by extension ABCHS enjoy a greater geographic diversity due to the nature of student transportation. The current ABCS student population is and has traditionally been 33% from Kenai Central High School boundaries, 33% from Soldotna High School boundaries, and the final 33% split between Nikiski High School Boundaries and Homeschool. Our school most likely would not benefit greatly with transportation if these student home populations remain similar to ABCS. By requiring ABCHS to become a neighborhood school that provides transportation, it would increase competition for KCHS. As students in upper grades become vehicle operators, the reliance on district transportation would diminish, as evidenced by the number of vehicles in high schools parking lots.

Carpooling has been a very successful option for student and families and helps to foster a greater community mindset. Families drive long distances not because they can afford it, but because they value the education at atmosphere of excellence that the current ABCS provides.

Additionally, we have researched other Charter Schools in the State of Alaska. Of the 30 listed charter schools in the state of Alaska 10 schools do provide bus service, 3 schools provide partial bus service, and 17 schools do not provide bus service.

### **Facilities**

We have contacted the local fire marshal with the City of Kenai Fire Department to examine the units located in the Carrs Kenai mall to assess its compliance to house an educational classroom. They are currently working with our local schools and fire safety last week and we anticipate their response by the November work session. The units in question however, do have a sprinkler system installed in them which is usually the biggest facility obstacle we've come across with regards to fire safety compliance. Aside from minor changes to the unit, we do not foresee any issue with these units to be used as an educational facility.

Since our meeting at the Borough Building with you, we have also spoken again with the City of Kenai in regards to the Beacon Building. This building is still very much a viable option for ABCHS and we look forward to working with the City of Kenai as we move forward with ABCHS. Since this facility is used as a fire training facility, we have little concern that it wouldn't pass fire marshal inspection, however, when we speak with the fire marshal at the city of Kenai we will run this option by him as well.

For the first year, portables may still be an opportunity to provide educational classrooms at ABCS.

### **School Lunches**

No school lunch program will be offered. An exit survey conducted on exiting ABCS students, no student cited a lack of a lunch program as their reason for their departure.

Due to the logistics of a new program including, staff, facility, and space requirements to serve a lunch program we will not offer a lunch program at ABCHS.

### **Testing Of Children For Enrollment Purposes**

There will be no testing for enrollment purposes. Previously earned credits will determine the students incoming grade level placement.

### **Students with Special Needs**

Aurora Borealis Charter High School will comply with KPBSD and State of Alaska's laws and statutes regarding special education students. Aurora Borealis Charter High School will identify and serve special education, gifted and bilingual students. If a special service student or student with a 504 Plan enrolls at Aurora Borealis Charter High School, a review of the student's IEP or 504 Plan will be conducted with the IEP/504 Team. The IEP/504 team will then determine if ABCHS can meet the student's individual learning needs via the methodology and curriculum materials available at the school. The IEP team will include district office representation and a member of the student's neighborhood school. If the IEP/504 team determines that ABCHS cannot adequately address the needs of the student the decision will be disclosed to the parent at the meeting and documented with a Written Notice. Notice to the parent will include a copy of the Procedural Safeguards.

### **Does ABCHS Plan to Seek Accreditation?**

ABCCHS intends to seek accreditation at some future date after the school has successfully established grades 9 through 12.

### **How do we plan to handle transfer students coming into upper grades?**

High school students will be enrolled (or entered into the lottery) based upon credits already completed rather than age. In a lottery enrollment form students will need to include how many credits and in what subjects they have taken to correctly place them in the lottery. Evaluation of transfer credits will be considered in student placement in any class or lottery for classes. Accredited and approved online classes may be considered for remediation.

### **Extra-Curricular**

Extra-curricular activities would be an area the school would look to develop. ABCCHS would not be able to offer ASAA sanctioned extracurricular activities at first, and wouldn't have the full gamut of offerings even after a few years, but there will still be opportunities for students to participate in extra curricular activities.

Short Term Option: Student may participate at other local high schools much like Connection students do now, where they declare a high school as their school of eligibility.

Short Term Option: The first few years, ABCCHS participates as an unsanctioned ASAA school, since their population would largely be underclassmen, the students could participate in activities as ABCCHS as an unsanctioned group; playing C teams and other smaller area schools. With the intention of ASAA sanctioned extra-curricular offerings on a scale that the student body supports as the school matures and enrollment stabilizes.

Long Term Opportunity: ABCCHS works with a local high school in a co-op situation, where ABCCHS students are able to participate in extra-curricular activities at ABCCHS and at another local area high school with a formal agreement between the two schools and ASAA. Students would be able to participate in ABCCHS offered extra-curricular activities and if something they wanted to participate in was not offered they could go to the co-op school.

### **Community Interest**

The board questions about community interest are twofold.

First, there was the expressed apprehension of ABCCHS taking students from Kenai Central High school. ABCS and by extension ABCCHS is a geographically diverse community. The current ABCS student population is and has traditionally been 33% from Kenai Central High School boundaries, 33% from Soldotna High School boundaries, and the final 33% split between Nikiski High School boundaries and Homeschool. The fear that an ABCCHS student population would take 'approximately 100 students from KCHS' is highly unlikely as ABCS population takes from several area schools.

Survey results show there will be 8<sup>th</sup> grade students that leave after their graduation from ABCS to area high schools for expanded social and extra-curricular opportunities. Right now, of the 20

students that will be graduating 8<sup>th</sup> grade from ABCS approximately 13 have expressed interest in continuing on to ABCHS should it be available. This would leave approximately 11 seats open to lottery from the community outside of ABCS.

We would like to note that we have gathered support for ABCHS from parents currently outside of the local school system that are intimidated with the prospect of home schooling their high schooler and would like the option of ABCHS. Parents from non-district schools have expressed interest in enrolling their children into ABCHS. We have an 'Enrollment Interest Form' that can be used to identify families and children that would like to attend ABCHS for potential future enrollment.