

North Country Alternative Charter School

CHARTER SCHOOL

APPLICATION

SUBMITTED TO THE

New Hampshire Department of Education

SUBMITTED

December 12, 2003

SUBMITTED BY

NORTH COUNTRY EDUCATION SERVICES AGENCY

a nonprofit education service agency qualified to submit

under RSA 194-B: 3, V, (a)

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NORTH COUNTRY ALTERNATIVE

CHARTER SCHOOL

APPLICATION

INTRODUCTION

The North Country of New Hampshire consists of a defined rural and remote geographic area that includes, but is not necessarily limited to, the northern one-third of the state of New Hampshire. Some families have been in the area for over a century and some have just moved here to establish their own roots for a better life.

The North Country identified a very strong need for an alternative school option based on primarily 1) the distance (and duration of bus ride) to existing alternative schools for North Country students, 2) a high dropout rate combined with a significant number of students who are at risk of school failure and do not thrive in a “conventional” school atmosphere, and 3) the proven ability of NC Schools to collaborate through the North Country Education Services Agency to meet their challenges.

The establishment of an alternative charter school in the North Country will make it possible to mobilize a higher level of student and parental involvement in the education process to the great advantage of the pupils and community. For these reasons, the North Country

Education Services Agency coordinated the efforts of leaders in nine North Country SAUs to establish a charter school. We respectfully submit this application to the New Hampshire Department of Education, and we are committed to working closely and effectively with our member district school boards to carry out this transition in a swift, smooth manner. The primary elements of this application include the following items:

Enrollment target: 60 students (4 half-day sessions of 15 students each divided between two geographic locations)

Grade configuration: 7-12

a. Educational mission

The North Country Education Services Agency is strongly committed to the children of the area. We have developed our vision and philosophy of the North Country Alternative Charter School based on this commitment.

The mission and philosophy statement will be revisited continually over the next three years, and will be revisited throughout the life of the school.

The North Country Alternative Charter School (NCACS) Mission

THE NORTH COUNTRY IS A PLACE OF LEARNING INHABITED BY PEOPLE WHO TREASURE OUR COUNTRYSIDE AND ITS BEAUTY AND ABUNDANT RESOURCES, WITH A COMMITMENT TO ALL CHILDREN AND THE COMMUNITY. IN THIS SPECIAL SETTING WE SEE EACH INDIVIDUAL

ACHIEVING HIS/HER HIGHEST POTENTIAL IN A POSITIVE (CAN-DO), GOAL-ORIENTED, NURTURING, AND SECURE ATMOSPHERE.

CORE BELIEFS

In striving for educational and personal excellence, the NCACS core beliefs are as follows:

Each Child is Unique

Though there are many factors that enhance school success, the only absolutely essential factor is that we (students, parents, teachers, and community members) must recognize and allow for the differences in student learning abilities and individual social styles.

We also believe that all students have strengths that can be identified and developed and weaknesses that can be improved upon. It is our focus to provide an environment where each child can have experiences of success in both areas.

Goal Setting is Essential

To develop those experiences of success, it is our job to help students develop THEIR personal vision and goals for THEIR life and help them align THEIR visions and goals with parents, teachers, community, and global interests.

Success Begets Success

When we see ourselves as being successful, we are intrinsically motivated to become even more successful. As parents, teachers, and community members, it will be our focus to RECOGNIZE and PRAISE our children for accomplishing THEIR goals. It will be our goal to encourage SELF-EVALUATION of THEIR visions and goals and to help each child make adjustments throughout their school-age years.

Social Skills

In addition to academic excellence, we believe that there is a crucial need to develop personal character, people and social skills, through a character education program that will enhance the long-term success of our children.

Commitment to Excellence Requires Time

Our school communities will constantly look for creative ways to increase time for multicomunity collaboration, time for developing a multi-age, place-based curriculum, time for gathering feedback, and time for designing programs that will result in educational excellence.

Quality Requires Feedback

Our programs will be effective when they include a method to measure program success through evaluation that includes the entire school community. The result of the evaluation must then be fed back into the implementation of the program in order to ensure that the program is actually helping us to achieve our purpose.

The Best Decisions Result in Win/Win Solutions

The process of decision-making should be collaborative whenever possible and reasonable. There will be a partnership among parents, the school, the local community, the charter board, and the districts that will generate decisions that result in the most efficient use of resources for maximum educational benefits. It is understood that such a philosophy requires us all to be open to dialogue and not assume that our personal priorities are always the correct priorities.

PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

THREE-YEAR GOALS (2004–2007)

The flexible nature of this rural charter school means that these goals are ever evolving. The NCACS board will work closely with families, students, teachers, director, and community members to make sure they are evaluated and met. It is also understood that the Charter School Accountability Committee will annually report the outcomes of the evaluation to the North Country Education Services Agency School Accountability Committee.

These goals will serve as a foundation for annual accountability goals through our first three years.

Community Goals

Goal: To implement an existing alternative school curriculum (the Ombudsman Education Services curriculum) for this Charter School.

Objective:

- A. Adopt a 7-12 curriculum.

Goal: Develop collaboratively annual goal(s) to define student, school, and community involvement in the NC Alternative Charter School.

Objective:

- A. Students, teacher/director, and the NCACS board will meet and establish specific goals for student involvement based on needs identified by members of the group.

Goal: Develop an effective governing board and policies that focus on community stewardship, collaborative and democratic decision-making, fostering the school mission.

Objectives:

- A. The Charter board of trustees will be established to represent all members of the school community, including students, staff, parents, and community members.
- B. By the opening of School, governing policies will be in place.
- C. Board meetings will be offered during an hour that attracts community participation.

Goal: Identify and serve recent school dropouts or those who do not learn by “conventional methods” and are at risk of dropping out and provide an alternative for academic success.

Objectives:

- A. Assessments will show 100% of the students will be at or above grade level, or be on an individual learning plan.
- B. All students will score proficient or above on their NHEIAP or be on an individual learning plan.

Goal: Sustain high performance in attendance rate, at 95% or above.

Objectives:

- A. Enrolled students will want to be in the charter school.
- B. Parents of enrolled students will want to be involved with the charter school and have their children in attendance.

Evaluation:

- A. Record and report percentage rate of annual attendance.
- B. Survey students and parents to determine if they want to be at the charter school and what are the obstacles of 100% attendance rate.

b. Governance and organizational structure and plan

The founding board of the North Country Alternative Charter School (NCACS) is comprised of individuals committed to the philosophy and goals of this public alternative charter school. The main function of the NCACS board is to appoint the initial board of trustees.

In accordance with 194-B:§5, the charter alternative school will be governed by a board of trustees, ranging from 5 to 11 members. By the fourth year, the board of trustees will be comprised of 7 voting members. The anticipated representation on the board of trustees will be

- two members who are parents of student enrolled in the school;
- two members who are professional educators or direct student service providers;
- three members who are community leaders.

Within three months of approval, the board of trustees will be made up of 7 members including one or more founding members of the NCACS. The initial board of trustees will develop the schedule of terms for board members and policies for filling board vacancies.

For purposes of conducting business, a majority of the board members present and participating in person or through video conferencing shall be considered a quorum. Records and minutes of meetings will be kept in accordance with the New Hampshire's Right to Know statute, which applies to all public schools.

The board of trustees will have officers. Initial officers shall include a chairman, vice chairman, secretary, and treasurer. Officers of the board shall be elected by a majority vote of board members present at the annual organizational meeting in July and will serve in their elected capacity until the following organizational meeting in one year.

The board of trustees will have subcommittees, as they deem necessary, to pursue specific topics and report back to the board for action, unless the board specifically votes to give a subcommittee specific authority to act. One standing subcommittee will be for board recruitment so that potential board members are identified in a timely manner.

The board of trustees will exercise its authority to set policy and make decisions that serve the mission of the NCACS and will have authority to render final decisions on matters pertaining to

- approval and oversight of annual budget;
- hiring of the project director and professional personnel;
- setting policy;
- appointment of one or more advisory members or committees;
- establishment of educational priorities and measurement standards;
- overseeing and revising bylaws as needed;
- setting professional salaries and a total compensation package;
- any other matters that are not administrative in nature and/or that are prescribed in statute or rule.

The board of trustees' plan for governance will support National School Board Association "Key Work of School Boards," which focuses governance on student achievement. The eight (8) key action areas are

1. Accountability—publishing an annual report with achievement data; using data to improve the program and track the school’s success; assuring students and staff know what is expected.
2. Systems thinking—acknowledging the imperative of student achievement as the top priority.
3. Collaborative Relationships—building relationships with political and business leaders and others who promote high student achievement as the top priority.
4. Alignment—basing staffing and resource allocations on student achievement priorities; professional development is tied to student achievement priorities in meeting charter school goals.
5. Assessment—measuring student success at regular intervals, the school will use multiple measures instead of relying on a single high stakes test; students will learn to do their own self-assessments as an integral part of instruction.
6. Continuous Improvement—continually using data to improve the program, creating a positive climate for student success; fostering a culture that promotes the highest expectation for achievement of all students.
7. Climate—creating a positive climate for student success; fostering a culture that promotes the highest expectation for achievement for all students.

8. Standards—using state and national standards that define what students are expected to know; keeping standards constantly in front of students, parents, and staff; developing curriculum so achievement is measurable.

c. Methods by which trustees and terms are determined

The initial board of the North Country Alternative Charter School will be considered “founders” of the NCACS. Founders will research and appoint the initial board of trustees, which may include one or more NCACS founders. When the board of trustees is formed and when the NCACS is approved to begin, the NCACS founders will no longer be a controlling entity in the day-to-day operations of the school. Governance will then transfer to the charter school board of trustees.

Terms of trustees will be staggered three-year terms. Approximately one half of the initial trustees may be appointed for two- or four-year terms to allow for initial school stability and evolving staggered terms. The board may appoint a member to fill a vacancy to complete a term according to established term timelines. Ex officio board members will have two-year terms, if so approved by board majority.

d. General description and proposed or potential location of facilities to be used, if such information is available

The Ombudsman alternative education model that we propose to employ in the NCACS, promotes the utilization of “store front” locations

for alternative school programs. This utilization of nonschool facilities proved a successful component of their program because it allowed unconventional students to “escape” from the traditional school environment and begin their alternative school experience away from many of the elements of the traditional school that may have contributed to their lack of success. A significant challenge—ever present in our North Country region, relative to centralized direct-service student programs—is the distance between population centers. This challenge is compounded by the mountainous terrain and significant winter climate during a large part of the school year. Because of these challenges, the NCACS founders will work closely with the Ombudsman program to locate and secure the use of facilities in business centers that are closest to the largest number of students who will enroll. We anticipate that because of the expanse of geography covered by our North Country Education Services Agency members, that we will require two locations to meet our commitment of minimizing travel for students.

e. Maximum number grade or age levels and, as applicable, other information about pupils to be served

As a choice high school program, North Country Alternative Charter School will serve up to 60 high school students in two centers, divided into morning and afternoon sessions and two classrooms per center (2 teachers, 15 students per teacher/session). NCACS proposes to serve

students, typically in the 14-21 age range, who dropped out of school or are at risk of dropping out. This alternative charter school is proposed as a “last chance” option to retain a student in school after other measures have been tried. Enrollment is considered voluntary and students must be committed to personal success in the program. Once a student is referred to or shows interest in the alternative program, an interview is scheduled at the center. A parent or guardian is required to attend the interview. At that meeting, a staff member will review the program expectations, then determine the student’s degree of commitment and the potential for cooperation by parents/guardians. Students and parents must agree in writing to the following rules:

- Attend school every day
- Make reasonable academic progress
- Do not interfere with the learning of others
- Do not use, possess or distribute any illegal substances in or near the center
- Do not participate in gang activity
- Failure to follow any of the rules is reason for termination from the NCACS

Once the student is accepted and enrolled, an individualized learning plan (ILP) is developed. This ILP takes into consideration the student’s learning ability, needs, motivation, and competency goals. NCACS, in cooperation with the home district, determines the number of

credits that can be earned and the courses that are needed. Learning activities will then be structured around the needed courses. However, a student's day-to-day learning activities will not reflect adherence to a traditional school course syllabus. Learning activities will be structured from all areas of the Ombudsman Catalog of Competencies based on the student's academic levels.

After the ILP is developed, the student works in the competency areas, toward academic goals, at his or her own pace, based on individual diagnosis, individual learning needs, and individual learning abilities, for a concentrated block of time each day, five days a week.

In the Ombudsman program, competency means a student must demonstrate mastery of a skill before moving to the next level. Upon admittance, each student is presented with and agrees to the ILP. Periodic reviews of the ILP are conducted by both the teachers and the student and reported quarterly to the student's "home" public school. The program provides a wide array of educational technology and courseware as the core of the educational delivery system. The use of technology and interactive learning programs provide the student with a highly structured, individualized learning environment.

f. Curriculum

The curriculum of a comprehensive high school or middle school cannot be replicated in an alternative program. Therefore, it is critical

that NCACS teachers and directors, every referring agency, students, and parents/guardians understand the learning process and results of the Ombudsman program that we employ.

The Ombudsman curriculum is based on competencies in seven major areas:

Basic skills

Citizenship/social studies

Careers/college preparation

Science

Life management

Health/recreation, and

Aesthetics/ethics.

Regardless of previous coursework, each student is required to perform in all of the competency areas. The core of the Ombudsman curriculum is essential skills with heavy emphasis on reading/language arts, mathematics, science and social studies, but with extended learning in other subjects. Further, the curriculum is carefully scoped and sequenced from the elementary to the college level.

Reading/Language Arts

Rate and Comprehension Skills

Reading Skills

Reference Skills

Language Skills

Spelling

Vocabulary Building Skills

Following Directions

Advanced Language Arts

Reading Interpretations

Writing Skills/Composition

Mathematics

Whole Numbers

Fractions

Decimals

Measurement

Metrics

Averaging

Percents

Estimating

Ratio and Proportion

Rounding

Algebra

Factoring

Geometric Concepts

Exponents

Trigonometry

Square Roots

Calculus

Order of Operations

Science Concepts

Earth Science

Biology

Physical Science

Life Science

Basic Chemistry

Elements of Physics

Social Studies

Government (U.S. and State)

U.S. History

World History

Citizenship

Geography

Environmental Studies

Current Social Issues

Independent Studies for

Extended Learning

In addition to the core curriculum, Ombudsman students also expand their knowledge base in areas we call Extended Learning.

Extended Learning

Health and Recreation

Ethics

Aesthetics

Life Management

Career Preparation

College Preparation

Keyboarding

Computer Literacy

Community Service

School to Work/Vocational

For half a day, five days per week, NCACS students will complete their school day through one of two options, pursuing vocational skills training in one of the North Country vocational training school programs (Littleton, White Mountains Regional, or Berlin), or in an approved community work placement coordinated by the NCACS Coordinator.

g. Academic and other learning goals and objectives

Our curricula will stress depth, rather than breadth, of subject matter. In order to accomplish this, we will concentrate on curricula that 1) continually expands and develops skills through grade levels, 2)

integrates subjects, and 3) are the result of a collaborative effort. Our vision is that every child will leave our schools with

- strong basic cores of academic knowledge meeting New Hampshire's content standards and an awareness of how to apply that knowledge in their lives;
- self-confidence and an ability to identify a personal vision and goals, as well as, celebrate their own strengths;
- social skills that demonstrate self-discipline, a respect for self and others, and an ability to work effectively with others;
- social responsibility and a sense of belonging to a community and to a place, both locally and globally;
- the capacity and confidence to be a risk-taker and an independent thinker who can solve problems, make decisions, and use time wisely;
- a life-long love of learning and recognition that knowledge is essential and powerful in their lives;
- the tools and the ability to learn, acquire, and evaluate information as needed through a variety of resources and current technologies;
- the ability to evaluate and value the quality of their own work, striving for excellence;
- a balance of work, leisure, health and nutrition, arts, physical activities, and academics.

h. Achievement tests to be used to measure pupil academic and other goal achievement including, but not limited to, objective and age-appropriate measures of literacy and numeracy skills, including spelling, reading, expository writing, history, geography, science, and mathematics

The North Country Alternative Charter School will comply with RSA 194B§8,V, which states: “At least annually and near the end of each school year, a charter school shall evaluate the educational process of each pupil, as specified in RSA 104B§3,II(h). Such evaluation shall include, but not be limited to, the New Hampshire statewide education improvement and assessment program, as provided in RSA 193C. The cost of the state assessment program shall be borne by the state.” Currently, this would involve assessment in grade 10 in our charter school.

The NCACS will implement criterion-referenced curriculum assessments to measure student learning and use the results to improve student-learning success. Test scores will be available to help students, teachers, and parents focus on curriculum standards, improve teaching, improve the school design and curriculum, and improve student learning. Test results will not be used to push low scoring students into special education or unintentionally discourage students, thereby encouraging them to drop out of school. End-of-course assessments will be given for a cumulative assessment of what students have learned.

The charter school program will emphasize literacy—student progress in reading, writing/language, and math. Computerized assessment in literacy areas will be completed no less than three times annually using Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) or an equivalent normed test, designed for immediate feedback and information to the student and teacher. The MAP assessment program is designed to comply with state standards and Title I requirements for individual, class, and school achievement data and progress monitoring.

In-house computerized assessment, as an integral part of the Plato computerized curriculum, allows for no lag time between assessment and the determination of appropriate work levels or remedial work. The MAP assessment system is server-based with the tests downloaded to the school's server. At the end of each testing day, tests are uploaded to the distributor's website; completed reports can be accessed 24 hours later. Prompt turnaround time for assessment results is helpful to parents, teachers, and students. Results will be directly tied to the curriculum (diagnostic/prescriptive). The assessment results will also provide benchmarks used for moving a student from one grade to another and for meeting graduation requirements. Frequent testing means that each student has access to individual indicators of his/her progress and timely feedback to give reinforcement on mastery of skills.

i. Graduation requirements

One academic credit is issued based on a full-year class that is successfully completed. A minimum of nineteen and one-half (19.5) credits is needed to graduate and receive a NCACS diploma. This requirement is based on students completing roughly five credits each year for four years. Therefore, for a NCACS student to be classified as a sophomore, he/she will be required to complete five credits; for a junior, ten credits; for a senior, fifteen credits; and to graduate, nineteen and one-half credits. Students may choose as an option to complete the credits they lack from their “home” school district through work completed at the NCACS, but receive their diploma and graduation recognition from the home school. Under this option, they would meet the credit requirements of their school. NCACS will also offer credit for approved online classes and allow students to use them as part of an approved program for graduation recognition.

j. Staffing overview

In staffing the North Country Alternative Charter School, the board of trustees will comply with RSA 194-B:14§IV, which requires the teaching staff of a charter school to consist of a minimum of fifty percent teachers—either New Hampshire certified or having at least three years of teaching experience. The school will hire teachers with the academic coursework and/or career background and experience in the subjects or

fields they are hired to teach. It will be necessary for teachers to have proficiencies and competence across the curriculum and in multiple subjects. Paraprofessional staff will also meet all state requirements. Because we plan to contract instructional services from the Ombudsman program, they will have responsibility for meeting these staffing requirements on our behalf. It is anticipated that we will operate two centers staffed as follows:

1.0 FTE Program and Vocational Coordinator

2.0 FTE Teachers

2.0 FTE Paraprofessional teacher assistants

2.0 FTE Program secretary/receptionists (1.0 FTE total)

k. Personnel compensation plan, including provisions for leaves and other benefits, if any

The NCACS will comply with all state and federal laws pertaining to employment compensation and leave provisions. The school will comply with all laws pertaining to pre-employment requirements, such as Criminal History Records under RSA 91A:1.

Teacher compensation will initially range from \$25,000 to \$48,000 per year, depending on experience and training. Ombudsman, the contracting agent for our program, will determine specific pay and benefits.

I. Pupil transportation plan

Charter alternative school students will have access to district bus transportation and in most cases additional routes will be established to afford students access to the program. As per RSA 194-B:2§IX, alternative charter students will be provided transportation on the same terms and conditions as provided for in RSA 189:6 and RSA 189:8.

m. Statement of assurances related to nondiscrimination according to relevant state and federal laws

The North Country Alternative Charter School shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, or marital status in the selection of students or staff or in the administration of its educational programs or in any other way as is prohibited by law.

The board of trustees shall develop and adopt a policy and will have administrative procedures to address any complaints.

n. Method of coordinating with a pupil's local education agency (LEA) responsible for matters pertaining to any required special education programs or services including method of compliance with all federal and state laws pertaining to educationally disabled pupils

The NCACS will comply with federal and state special education laws and rules applicable to a New Hampshire charter school setting.

These laws and rules are continually being revised, but over time, the basic concepts are consistent.

CHARTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

Under New Hampshire's charter school statute, RSA 194-B:11, III, the local school continues to be responsible for special education decision-making for any identified student who seeks attendance at a charter school. Decision-making for special education services needed and student placement stays with the local school district. In an individualized program with tutorial support, students otherwise requiring special education may be more independent of special education services.

Local school district responsibility is current law for students placed in private schools or other public schools. Thus, these guidelines represent no change from current decision-making placement and services procedures.

RSA 194-B:11§III states that all options available to the parent and the local education agency are retained. Regarding special education, options now available to parents and the local district include 1) the parent accepting or rejecting the district proposed education plan in full or in part, 2) the local education agency providing some services to the child outside the assigned district school or outside the typical school hours, 3) an education plan of short duration or one that allows for a trial

period in a program, 4) either the parent or the schools initiating the resolution of disagreements about the district's recommended program through the Department of Education.

COORDINATION WITH A PUPIL'S SCHOOL DISTRICT

The North Country Alternative Charter School will respect the role and responsibility of the local school district. Because the North Country Education Services Agency will act as the founding agency and administrative agency for this charter, coordination with the school districts will be a natural function in that NCES is an area education service agency formed through the collaborative efforts of the North Country schools thirty-three years ago. Charter school personnel will 1) respect the LEA's statutory authority for handling special education decision making, and 2) assign a charter school liaison to collaborate with the local education agency on individual student matters.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND STANDARDS

The Charter's educational program will parallel the school district's currently developed frameworks and benchmarks. The program will be enriched by allowing the teacher, students, and parents to shape a program that is academically sound, place-based, and meets or exceeds the New Hampshire Content Standards as adopted by the Department of Education.

This program will blend a content rich curriculum with place-based student learning projects to balance academic excellence with engaging meaningful learning. The purpose of these projects is to encourage student learning through pursuing their passions and therefore will be designed with student input. Student learning projects will align with content standards and include a community service component.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

In compliance with New Hampshire state laws and policies regarding student assessment the NCACS will closely parallel the student assessment plan used by the North Country School Districts. We will use the district's writing assessment to assess writing skills, and the NHEAP to assess the academic areas that are required, by state law, to be assessed annually. Our evaluations of student learning projects will indicate proficiency in the state standards in all content areas.

o. Admission procedures

For each year, the board of trustees will determine the number of spaces available and develop a plan for allocating spaces among categories and grades of students. For students whose legal residence is outside the North Country service area, the NCACS will serve as a charter and open enrollment school. Enrollment at the NCACS will be open to all North Country School District residents. At-risk students of the Charter School founding members will be given priority. Thereafter, student

positions will be filled on a first come first serve basis until capacity is reached. In future years, all returning students will be given priority, and other available slots filled on a first come first serve basis, to capacity.

Actual student requests for admission may differ from how applications were estimated. If more students apply and are eligible than the number of spaces available in any grade or program, admissions will be based on a lottery. Prior to student recruitment, admissions and lottery procedures will be reviewed and revised if needed. Eligible students will be pooled and students randomly picked until the available spaces are filled.

Eligible students who are not chosen in the lottery will be ranked in lottery order and placed on a waiting list according to grade or program. If a NCACS student withdraws from the school, the first person on the waiting list for this grade or program will be contacted. If that student is no longer interested in enrolling, the board will continue to contact students/parents in the order listed until a student is found to fill the opening.

Admissions procedures are based on the Textron model whose process is designed to give students and families a chance to experience our school environment and to become comfortable with the decision that our school is appropriate for them. The board may have to adapt its plan to assure all spaces are filled and the budget can be met.

Selection Criteria Based On the Textron Charter School Model:

Commitment statements, oral and written, made by the applicant during the application procedure must be consistent with the commitments required by the school and the goals of the school's program. Prerequisites include the following:

- The student is a dropout or at risk of dropping out.
- The Recruitment Committee determined that this student would benefit from the NCACS program.
- Results of the diagnostic exam indicate the student is able to fulfill the terms of the Student-School Contract.

In the event that the number of qualifying applicants exceeds the available spaces, a lottery will identify successful candidates.

Application Procedures:

1. Student submits completed application provided by the school, including an essay, and returns this to the Student Recruitment Committee (administrator and counselor are involved).
2. Student provides all transcripts from previous schools attended and a release of information for prior school data.
3. Once the program is in place, students will be invited for a visit to the charter school.

4. Student and parent meet with Student Recruitment Committee or assigned staff and review the program, expectations, and commitments needed. The Student, parent, and the school then commit to the school program through a three-party contract that outlines the responsibilities of each party.
5. In order to determine the student's English and math program, the student will be required to complete a brief diagnostic screening in reading, language, and mathematics, unless information is available through other means to the screening personnel.

p. Philosophy of pupil governance and discipline and age-appropriate due process procedures to be used for disciplinary matters including suspension and expulsion

The philosophy of student governance involves having clear expectations for student behavior, clear and fair guidelines, a support system to help students understand and change their behavior, and consequences if students cannot or will not change their behavior. The NCACS is committed to a respectful and safe environment for all. A student may be suspended or expelled from the NCACS in accordance with statute and policy.

The NCACS will provide fair and age-appropriate due process in administering student discipline and will comply with current suspension and expulsion provisions in RSA 193:13 (Suspension and Expulsion of

Pupils) and RSA 194-B: 9, III (a pupil may withdraw from a charter school based on criteria determined by the board of trustees consistent with the advice of the principal and teachers in conformance with RSA 193:13. No public school shall be obligated to enroll an expelled student).

Commitment to Citizenship

The NCACS is designed on principles of mutual respect among and between all members of the school community. The school will strive to be a physically and emotionally safe community with a code of conduct and student instruction in respectful behavior. Staff will promote the Code of Conduct, as adopted by the board of trustees.

The NCACS is committed to helping students learn to be good citizens and will include national guidelines for citizenship education in its curriculum and student expectations.

Commitment to Mediation and Dispute Resolution

Every student and staff member of the NCACS will be trained in mediation techniques, which will be the interventions of choice for resolving interpersonal conflicts within the school community.

q. Method of administering fiscal accounts and reporting, including a provision requiring fiscal audits and reports to be performed by an independent certified public accountant

NCACS will follow public nonprofit accounting guidelines, as required of the North Country Education Services Agency, and will put in

place internal accounting controls necessary to safeguard its assets. NCACS will maintain accurate financial records in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) for nonprofit corporations. An annual financial report will be provided with audit by an independent, certified public accountant.

The NCACS board of trustees will appoint a treasurer who will provide the oversight necessary to monitor the financial status of the school. The board of trustees shall also adopt policies for the financial management of the school, including policies on Conflict of Interest for board members and faculty.

A general account will be set up for the administration of funds, and the treasurer will be the only person with check writing authority. In addition, a discretionary account will be set up. The school's program coordinator as well as the treasurer will have check writing authority for this account. The board of trustees will establish a maximum cap for discretionary expenditures.

Except for emergency purchases cleared with the school's administrator, all expenditures and contracts will be handled through an encumbrance system of purchase orders for clear tracking of expenditures and status of account balances.

Each individual with check writing authority will be covered by a fidelity bond in accordance with guidelines of New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration. Accounting activities will consist primarily of the bi-weekly payroll paid to school personnel and the maintenance of an accounts payable system to track amounts due vendors of the school.

The NCACS shall comply with all requirements specified in the law pertaining to reporting requirements (RSA 194-B:101-V). This list includes the annual report, annual financial audit and report, program audit, and participation during the annual school budget process.

Pursuant to Ed. 318.07, the NCACS will produce an annual report that will include, at a minimum, the following elements:

- A general progress report regarding the establishment of the initial school program, a process that will require considerable flexibility and energy
- An assessment and report of how the NCACS is meeting its educational and financial goals, as identified in its mission statement
- Changes, if any, in the organizational structure and make-up of the board of trustees
- Assessment and report of business, parent, and volunteer involvement in the school

- Description of community services available at the sites
- A report of enrollment statistics including, but not limited to, attendance, per class enrollment, graduation rates, and any occurrences of withdrawal
- Commentary about successes in program, collaboration, or goal achievement
- School calendar
- Transportation services
- Financial statement and balance sheet identifying NCACS assets, liabilities, fund balances, or equities
- Projections of income and expenses for the upcoming school year

r. Annual budget, including all sources of funding

Materials submitted in this section include

1. a budget plan and explanation during planning period,
2. a budget plan and explanation during start up in Fall 2005,
3. a budget plan summary (anticipated only) during term of charter.

NORTH COUNTRY ALTERNATIVE CHARTER SCHOOL FIVE-YEAR BUDGET PLAN

FISCAL YEARS '04, '05, '06, '07, '08

Planning only is intended for fiscal year 2004. FY '05 will be the first year of operation with 60 students anticipated.

The following budget amounts are provided as estimates only to indicate how the school anticipates fiscal responsibility.

s. School calendar arrangement and the number and duration of days pupils are to be served pursuant to RSA 194-B.8,II

School Calendar:

The NCACS will follow a conventional 180-day school calendar for the basic school year program with start, ending, and holidays/vacations coordinated with the 9 SAU calendars (collaborating members of NCES).

School Day:

Duration (start) of the school day will be dependent to some extent on transportation schedules, but it is anticipated that students should arrive at 8:00 A.M. and start classes at 8:30 A.M. NCACS will comply with required time standards for public school course credit. Some students will complete their academic courses during the A.M. portion of the day, while others will take their vocational classes or complete work-study requirements. The P.M. portion of the day will function likewise, with those who took academics in the A.M. completing their vocational or work-study requirements while those who took vocational classes or worked in the A.M. will report for their academic classes in the P.M.. Dismissal should be at about 3:00 P.M.

t. Provisions for providing continuing evidence of adequate insurance coverage

The NCACS, pursuant to RSA 194-B:1, III, will be a public school subject to the same protections as any public school under RSA 507 (b)

which provides for Limited General Liability for the charter school and its agents.

Insurance carriers will be interviewed to identify insurance and procure adequate and continuing coverage.

u. Identity of consultants to be used for various services, if known

NCACS will utilize the services of the Ombudsman program for securing instructional staff, facilities, curriculum, insurance, technology, assessment, and evaluation. The North Country Education Services Agency will complete the charter school application process, federal/state grants to support the charter school and coordinate services with the founding member school administrative units.

Other specific consultants are not identified at this time, e.g., school attorney, public auditor, etc.

v. Philosophy of parent involvement and related plans and procedures

Parents will be involved in the charter school to the maximum extent possible and in ways that support success of students and success of the school. Initially, parent involvement will include careful review of the school program, curriculum, and expectations for student assistance in deciding if the program is an appropriate choice.

Parents will be expected to meet once quarterly to discuss ways to support student high school success at home and will be welcome to

participate in the policy development for the school. As the school progresses, parents will be represented on the board of trustees.

Lastly, parents will be urged to volunteer two hours monthly in some capacity that shows commitment to the school's overall success. A variety of options for volunteer involvement will be outlined, so that a viable participation option is available for every parent.

A volunteer policy will be developed to establish some involvement from every parent in the course of the school year.

w. A plan to develop and disseminate information to assist parents and pupils with decision-making about their choice of school

To assure all district residents have equal opportunity to apply to the charter school, an extensive public relations effort will be initiated.

With cooperation, information will be sent through all participating school districts, through guidance personnel, to students who have dropped out of school without completing their high school program. Information will be distributed to middle and high school age students and their parents.

Articles and letters will be submitted to area newspapers. Information packets will be available in public offices in North Country communities.

A copy of the NCACS charter school document will be available in North Country schools and libraries.

Upon approval of the charter, the NCES board will approve the development of informational brochures describing the school, its

mission, its approach to high school education, and the expectations and opportunities the program will provide. Informational brochures will be distributed to businesses, parents, residents, and school faculty.

x. A global hold harmless clause

The NCACS agrees to indemnify and hold harmless any sending district which sends students to the charter school, and their officers, directors, board members, agents, and employees (the “Indemnified Parties”) from any and all claims, demands, actions or causes of action at law or in equity, and all damages, costs, losses and expenses resulting from any act of omission by the charter school, its agents, employees or staff, relating to the operation of the charter school. The charter school shall have no obligation to hold harmless the Indemnified Parties for any claims, damages, losses or expenses resulting from the Indemnified Parties’ own acts and omissions.

The NCACS, its successors and assigns covenants and agrees at all times to indemnify and hold harmless any school district that sends its students to the charter school and their school boards, officers, directors, agents, employees, all funding districts and sources and their successors and assigns, (the “indemnified parties”) from any and all claims, demands, actions and causes of action, whether in law or in equity, and all damages, costs, losses and expenses, including, but not limited to reasonable attorney’s fees and legal costs, for any action or inaction of

the charter school, its board, officers, employees, agents, representatives, contractors, guests and invitees, or pupils.

y. Severability provisions and statement of assurance

If any provision of the charter agreement is determined to be unenforceable or invalid for any reason, the remainder of the charter agreement shall remain in effect unless otherwise terminated by one or both of the parties in accordance with the terms contained herein.

z. Provision for dissolution of the charter school including disposition of its assets

The board of trustees for the North Country Alternative Charter School is committed to assuring the school is well managed and becomes a success. In the event of subsequent dissolution of the NCACS or upon termination of the charter, all property which the school leased, borrowed, or contracted for use shall be promptly returned or as per contractual prearrangement.

Disposal of other property, furniture, supplies, equipment, vehicles, and the like will be handled as follows:

1. The board will first consider any debt obligations and will research the disposal of property, etc., that best enables the trustees to meet its debts.
2. Once debt obligations are met, any remaining property, etc., will be offered to the North Country Education Services Agency. Items the

NCES does not want will be sold or consigned in the most beneficial manner with the proceeds reverting to the NCES.

3. All property personally or individually owned by the employees of the NCACS shall be exempt from distribution of property as prescribed herein and shall remain the property of the individual teachers and staff. Such property includes, but is not limited to, albums, curricular manuals, personal mementos, and other material or apparatus that have been personally financed or acquired or personally developed by teachers and staff.

All outstanding debts/encumbrances for which the NCACS is legally liable will be properly settled with the creditor of record. Under no circumstances shall the North Country Education Services Agency be liable for any obligations of the dissolved charter school. NCES shall coordinate any planned or voluntary bankruptcy filing with the NCES board to facilitate reintegration of charter students back into member schools. A minimum notice of 120 days for voluntary dissolution of the charter school will be given to the North Country Education Services Agency and its member SAUs.

aa. Not applicable

bb. A plan for the education of the school's pupils after the charter school may cease operation

A plan for each student's continued education, should the school cease to exist, will be determined individually with each student. Reintegration into traditional public school programs will be the likely reintegration option. Upon cessation of operation, the records of all the students will be transferred in a timely manner to the receiving school and the staff and trustees of the NCACS will work with the school districts to make the transition as easy as possible.

A committee will be assigned to explore options available and so advise parents and students. School personnel will also be advised of options and will make recommendations. Students and parents will decide on their preferred next placement.

School personnel will obtain a release for providing student information to the school or program of transfer.

cc. Ed 318.05 Additional requirements

1) Admissions

- a. nondiscrimination in admissions is addressed on page 26
- b. method for conducting lottery is addressed on pages 30
- c. method of providing for special education, coordinating with school district, is addressed on pages 27 and 28

2) Contracting under RSA 194-B: 8, VII, and RSA 194-B: 5, V

It shall be the policy of the NCACS to enter into mutually advantageous contractual relationships with the host community or school district, or sending communities or school districts, that result in the wise and judicious use of resources including, but not limited to, sharing transportation, instructional services, athletics, maintenance, and other services and facilities. Further, the charter school will consider contracting for services with other private or public entities as permitted by law, as it plans and develops the overall operation of the school.

3) NA

4) Information Dissemination

Upon approval of the charter application and award of planning funding, the NCACS board will develop information about its curriculum and policies and disseminate these to all persons and pupils considering enrollment in the NCACS. Upon approval of the charter, information will be available through a website developed for NCACS by NCEC. Until that time, this charter document will be available and posted and will provide all information about curriculum and policies of the school.

Appendix

Letters of Commitment