



Fronteras Spanish Immersion Charter School

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Charter Renewal Committee Report

December 13, 2011



The Charter Renewal Committee met on Thursday, December 8, 2011 to review the current draft of the Fronteras Charter Application that is to be submitted to the Department of Education and Early Developing this spring.

The meeting was attended by six APC members. There were three current board members in attendance, a former board member who is parent to a Fronteras student, and two APC parents.

The primary focus was to review a number of questions that arose during the review and proofreading process that was coordinated by APC parent volunteers. The specific questions reviewed are attached.

In addition to review of the questions, the topic of board composition was considered by the committee. It had been noted that the current bylaws regarding board composition are confusing and difficult for the board to implement. The following were some of the primary considerations:

- The current board composition uses variable numbers to define the size of the entire board, as well as the sub-groups that comprise the board. For instance, the bylaws state that there can be between 2 and 4 teachers on the board, but it doesn't specify the conditions under which teacher seats that are filled by parents (when there aren't enough teachers applying to be on the board) get converted back to teacher-held seats. It was discussed that this structure is impractical, and very rarely seen on other boards.
- The current board is large (currently at eleven members); it can be difficult to fill vacant seats when they become open.
- The Community Member at Large-designated seats guarantee that a Community Member at Large who joins the APC could be seated on the board despite not being voted onto the board through the APC election process which operates on the premise of a popular vote.
- Having a board that is comprised of too many Fronteras staff makes it difficult for the board to evaluate the principal, which is one of the primary functions of the Fronteras Board.
- The variability in total board size and the additional variability in the size of the sub-groups make it difficult to manage vacant seats during both election periods, and also throughout the year as seats become vacant.

With these considerations in mind the committee developed proposed changes to the APC bylaws regarding board composition. The following changes affect “Article IV, Section 3” of the bylaws and will be presented and potentially voted on at the upcoming APC Board meeting on December 13, 2011:

Current rules regarding board size and composition

A. Number

The number of Governing Board members shall be between seven (7) and eleven (11) voting members, and one (1) to three (3) advisory members.

B. Board Composition

The Governing Board will consist of:

1. 2-4 staff members (At least two (2) shall be teachers).
2. 2-4 Parents. An effort will be made to have parent members on the Governing Board with children in different grade levels. Only one parent per family may serve on the board at one time.
3. 1-3 Community members at large. These Board Members may also be non-teaching staff, or parents of students in the school, although efforts shall be made to recruit Board Members from diverse segments of the community, including business, education, industry, government and human services.
4. 1 Representative member of the Fronteras Parent/Community Organization. This member can be a parent, staff member or community member.

Proposed rules regarding board size and composition

A. Number

The number of Governing Board members shall be nine (9) voting members.

B. Board Composition

The Governing Board will consist of:

1. Two (2) Fronteras staff members. In the event that either of these seats becomes vacant, they will be filled with new Fronteras staff members. In the event that Fronteras staff members are not able to fill these seats, the seats will remain vacant until a staff member applies for the vacant staff-designated board seat.
2. Seven (7) non-Fronteras staff APC members. Only one (1) APC member per family may serve on the board at one time.

These proposed changes do not impact the principal’s role on the board, nor the ability for the board to have advisory members who will not have a vote.

Attached proofreading and review notes:

Notes:

Pages 33-34 - The District's Risk Manager retired in September, 2011. The position has not been filled and is not expected to be filled. I'm not sure who at the District level will take on the responsibilities, if anyone. May be worth a call to the "Head Shed" for clarification. – Response: <i>Replaced reference to Risk Manager with reference to Executive Director of Instruction, per clarification from the Mat-Su School District.</i>
Page 35 – Question about adding additional minutes within the application. Response: <i>Put a line in referring the reader to the website for a complete history of board meeting minutes.</i>
Page 38 – Composition rule #1 was changed to clarify board composition and recruitment process and a fifth composition rule was introduced as a suggested addition to the bylaws. Per the bylaws, amendments to bylaws require a vote and adherence to a formal process. Amendments to bylaws page 50. Response: <i>The committee agreed that a bylaw amendment of this nature would require a vote.</i>
Page 68 – Fiscal Solvency – Question from reviewer regarding whether we needed more detail or specific evidence that we are complying with audit requirements and whether or not we are operationally efficient. Response: <i>The committee agreed that we should secure budget and audit documents to attach as appendices in the application.</i>
Page 71 – Facility Plans – Question about the exact number of students we could accommodate with the current facilities that are in place. Current draft specifies 225, but reviewer suspected it may be closer to 240. Response: <i>A committee member in attendance concurred that 240 was a closer number, and this number will replace the 225 currently referenced in the application.</i>
Page 72 – Teacher-to-student ratio – Section C. The term "special programs" should be qualified to detail what it means, or we should provide a reference to where this is discussed in a different section of the charter. Response: <i>The committee agreed to replace the term "special programs" with "alternative instructional methods"</i>
Page 72 – Teacher to student ratio – Section A. We need to identify evidence (this is what EED will be looking for) that we have a target teacher-to-student ratio. There should be a declarative policy that sets a target. Current numbers look like simple reporting of current ratios rather than targeted levels. Response: <i>The committee could not produce any documentation of targeted teacher-to-student ratios. We will continue to look for documentation outlining these ratios as an educational strategy.</i>
Page 76 – Teaching method/curriculum – Section E. Students with Disabilities – No mention of any specific ability to serve Special Education population. Response: <i>The committee added language that details that Fronteras maintains one teacher who works as a Special Education coordinator.</i>

Other changes were made to the charter application as well. However, those changes were primarily related to grammar and phrasing, and also to present information that wasn't available when the first charter application was originally written.