



NORTH SLOPE BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Nancy Rock, President
Members of the School Board

THROUGH: David Vadiveloo, Chief School Administrator DS
DV

FROM: Theodore VanBronkhorst, Interim Human Resources Director DS
TV

DATE: May 4, 2022

SUBJECT: **J1 Visa Program through *I Teach America*** **Memo No: SB22-210**
(Action Item)

2020-2025 Strategic Plan Goal:

3.1 Hiring & Recruiting: Improve the hiring and onboarding process for all employees.

4.0 Financial & Operational Stewardship: Effectively employ our operational and financial resources to support our strategic goals and long-term stability of the district.

Issue Summary:

This proposal relates to employing foreign teachers through *I Teach America* and the J1 VISA program to reduce the current teacher vacancy issue. Currently, the District has 61 teacher vacancies. If the District continues with traditional recruiting methods, we predict a 40-45 teacher vacancy rate on August 5. Through this proposal, we expect to be able to hire 10-15 teachers.

Background:

At the May 2, 2022 Work Session, the Board was informed of a proposal to engage *I Teach America* and the J1 VISA program to fill a portion of our teacher vacancies. This program involves bringing teachers from overseas to the United States to fill teaching positions. Because there is little residual cost involved in the J1 recruiting it is actually no different than recruiting from the lower 48 and is actually cheaper for the district. The J1 VISA recruiting pathway presents an extremely simple, efficient, and cost-effective way of recruiting and could provide our district with a critical supply of teachers for years to come.

Ten of the larger Alaska School Districts are involved with this initiative through *I Teach America*. We have spoken extensively with Bering Strait School District and hope to follow in their steps. BSSD has hired twenty-eight J1 VISA teachers over the past five years and has had very positive results. BSSD has had 100% retention of J1 teachers and has been described by the superintendent as a huge win for the district.

Superintendent Bobby Bolen noted “there are no downsides to this, there has been no financial loss, they work extremely hard, there have been no departures of teachers in 5 years and they’ve been welcomed and settled well into communities.”

J1 VISA candidates pay a fee to an independent company in order to be listed for consideration in the recruiting pool. School districts identify the grade level and subject area they require and then provide the list of requested teachers to the company. The company then provides an average of four candidates for consideration for every teaching position. The company vets the candidates background for the ability to qualify for an Alaska teaching certificate. The company performs a background check, sets

up all interviews, and conducts all reference checks. The school district conducts the interviews and as such is able to assess English proficiency and the general character and demeanor of the candidates.

Reports from the Bering Strait Superintendent indicate that these candidates are extremely diligent teachers. They have no problems adjusting to the curriculum. They are able to work across all subject areas except Special Education. They are happy doing extra duty contracts and helping around the school and in the community. The Bering Strait Superintendent recommends that teachers are recruited in pairs or groups of three to allow them to settle faster and to live together in housing.

District costs in the form of an advance would be paid upfront upon request, to the teachers when they arrive in Anchorage to cover travel and expenses. These advances would be repaid to the District through payroll withholding after the teacher begins receiving a paycheck. BSSD indicates the average advance per teacher to be approximately \$2,000. Both HR and the Business Office have indicated that this recruiting arrangement will work with our current personnel and pay structure.

The turnaround on this recruiting is 6 - 8 weeks from the day we notify the recruiting company to the day they land on site. This timeframe can be affected by embassy timings.

It would be preferable to proceed with this recruiting pathway as soon as possible in order to have teachers available for in-service in Fall.

Expected return: We are looking for 10-15 FTE's to start and gauge our decisions going forward based on performance of the recruited teachers.

Proposed Motion:

“I move that the NSBSD Board of Education approve the Human Resources proposed use of teachers holding a J1 VISA through *I Teach America*.”

Moved by _____ Seconded by _____

Vote _____