

SUBJECT

Monticello Montessori Charter School Proposed Charter Amendments

APPLICABLE STATUTE, RULE, OR POLICY

I.C. §33-5206(8)
IDAPA 08.02.04.302

BACKGROUND

Monticello Montessori School, Inc. (Monticello) is a public charter school approved by the Public Charter School Commission (PCSC). Monticello began operations in 2010 and serves approximately 230 students in the Idaho Falls / Ammon area.

DISCUSSION

Monticello has submitted proposed charter amendment relating to the school's provision of health insurance as an employee benefit.

Previously, Monticello has offered group coverage to employees and has provided \$200 per month towards the premiums of employees who work 20 hours or more per week. In the context of increasing group health plan costs and the passage and implementation of the Affordable Health Care Act, the school has found that insurance through the Idaho Exchange may be more affordable for Monticello's teachers. Coverage through the Exchange is only available to individuals whose employers do not offer group coverage.

The proposed amendment allows Monticello increased flexibility in the manner in which the school meets its statutory obligation to ensure that employees have health care coverage. Monticello has communicated that, if this amendment is approved, the board will develop a policy regarding the process the school will use to ensure that employees have health care coverage.

IMPACT

If the PCSC approves the proposed amendments, Monticello will immediately begin operating under the amended charter and bylaws. If the PCSC denies the amendments, Monticello could appeal this decision to the State Board of Education, or could decide not to proceed any further.

STAFF COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Monticello has worked closely with PCSC staff to ensure that the school's proposed amendment is in compliance with statute. Staff recommends approval of the proposed charter amendments as submitted by Monticello Montessori Charter School.

June 17, 2014

COMMISSION ACTION

A motion to approve the proposed charter amendments as submitted by Monticello Montessori School, Inc.

OR

A motion to deny the proposed charter amendments as submitted by Monticello Montessori School, Inc. on the following grounds:

_____.

Moved by _____ Seconded by _____ Carried Yes _____ No _____

Dear Charter Commission,

Monticello Montessori Charter School has provided a group health plan to employees over the last four years. The school currently pays \$200 a month toward an *eligible* employee's personal premium (Employees that work 20 hours or more). However, the premiums of those participating in this group health plan are increasing 49% this year—making health care plans for individuals and their families unaffordable for some of our employees. During an IASBO meeting earlier this year, one of the presenters called attention to the benefits of dropping traditional group health plans for smaller schools. Over the last two months the School Board has called in an insurance broker to testify of the impact it would have on our teachers if we were to keep a group health insurance; instead of having them sign up for health insurance on the Idaho Exchanges (something they cannot do if their employer offers a group health plan). The insurance broker gathered confidential information on each employee and obtained quotes from every health provider in Idaho. Results showed that even without the \$200 benefit from the school, the vast majority of the eligible employees next year, would benefit more from obtaining their own health insurance from the Idaho Exchanges, than to stay with the school's group health plan.

The Board also discussed that the money previously allocated toward employees' health insurance premiums would be used to implement a new salary schedule for teachers and the administrator. Currently the school follows the State Salary grid, which does not help attract or retain teachers to the Charter School. The new salary schedule is more competitive with the surrounding school districts and would help attract new teachers and retain current teachers more than providing a group health insurance plan that significantly reduces net income. Employees have come to the last two Board Meetings to listen to the discussion on eliminating group health insurance and no opposition has been voiced. In addition, the business manager of the school and the administrator have visited with the staff concerning this topic and they have voiced approval because many of them would be able to cover family members that they have previously dropped because of affordability. The School Board also heard from an employee who is currently benefiting from the exchange program because she missed the open enrollment period for the group health plan. She testified concerning the price difference and the benefits of having her current health plan.

Due to these discussions, the Board is seeking approval to eliminate the line in the school's charter under the Tab 6 section that states: "A health insurance provision is also available for certificated and non-certificated personnel" and add, in accordance with the Public Charter School Commission's feedback to Monticello Montessori, the words: "Monticello Montessori Charter School will ensure that all eligible staff members are covered by health insurance."

Thank you for considering this issue,

Monticello Montessori School Board

08. Tab 6 Personnel

The staffing plans for Monticello will change each year depending upon the needs of the school.

A. Personnel Qualifications

Monticello meets or exceeds, at the discretion of the Governing Board, Idaho Code for statutory requirements for charter schools.

*Monticello will implement the following recommendations from the American Montessori Society's "Essential Elements of Successful Montessori Schools in the Public Sector:"**

- Employ Montessori teachers who have Montessori credentials for the levels they teach.
- Maintain an active and open recruitment for Montessori credentialed teachers.
- Budget for future Montessori teacher education for non Montessori-credentialed teachers.
- Provide professional Montessori in-service by experienced credentialed Montessori educators.
- Contract for on-going internal and periodic external Montessori consultation and/or professional support as a follow up to Montessori teacher education.
- Employ one paraprofessional per classroom, each having received Montessori orientation for that role.

B. Health and Safety

The school building, administrative offices, and other facilities will be in compliance with all required federal, state and local regulations required for public schools.

Parents are expected to demonstrate that their children obtain proper immunizations upon admission according to Idaho Statutes (39-4801). Parents who object to having their children immunized may sign an exemption form. Immunization forms and other pertinent medical records are kept (confidentially) by the school administration.

Monticello will conduct criminal history checks for all employees in compliance with Idaho Code 33-130.

Monticello will utilize the Bonneville Joint School District No. 93 Emergency Operations Plan / Crisis Response Plan.

Additional policies and procedures are implemented by the Board, as needed.

* American Montessori Society. *Essential elements of successful montessori schools in the public sector.*
<http://www.amshq.org/schoolExtras/publicEssentials.html>

C. Employee Benefits

All staff members of the Charter School are covered by the public employee retirement system (PERSI), federal social security, unemployment insurance, and worker's compensations insurance. ~~A health insurance provision is also available for certificated and non-certificated personnel.~~ Monticello Montessori Charter School will ensure that all eligible staff members are covered by health insurance.

D. Transfer Rights

Employees of Monticello are not employees of Bonneville Joint School District No. 93. Teachers at Monticello will not be eligible for an in-district transfer to another school in District No. 93.

E. Collective Bargaining

The staff of the Charter School shall be considered a separate unit for the purposes of collective bargaining.

F. Written Contract

All teachers and administrators shall be on written contract as required by Section 33-5206(4), Idaho Code.