Arizona State Board for Charter Schools

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July 31, 2013

Mr. Roger Hall
Buchalter Nemer
16435 N Scottsdale Rd, Suite 440
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RE: American Leadership Academy

Dear Mr. Hall:

On or about July 12, 2013, we had a conversation about the Board's July 8 decision to deny American Leadership Academy's ("ALA") request for a new school site and request to increase its enrollment cap. It is my recollection that during the conversation I shared that the Board would not reconsider the matter. I also recall that, while reviewing the original submission during our conversation, we determined that the enrollment request was unclear as to whether the 1500 student increase was to support the "organic growth" and/or the new site. Based on that discrepancy, I suggested that a new request could be submitted if there was a need to increase the enrollment cap of ALA so that the existing schools could support their "organic growth". With regard to what should be included with the submission, I recall the following:

- I shared that I had met with representatives of ALA for an hour after the July 8 meeting and discussed the matter.
- I shared with you that I encouraged the representatives to listen to the recording, review their initial submission, consider the Board's motion, and submit a new request that included specific information to address the Board's concerns during the July 8 meeting when the original requests were denied.
- You requested that a meeting be scheduled to discuss what should be included with the submission and I declined such a meeting because it was incumbent upon ALA to provide the information it determined was important for the Board to consider.

When the conversation ended I anticipated that ALA would submit a new Enrollment Cap Notification Request for the Board's consideration. I believe I stated that if the request was submitted by July 19th, given the matter had previously been reviewed, it could potentially be included on the Board's August meeting agenda.

On July 19, 2013, I received a hand delivered packet of information from your office regarding ALA. The cover letter to the packet stated, in part, "ALA now believes that it has completely corrected the problem, can demonstrate that there was no intent to try to 'game the system,' and would like its enrollment-cap notification request and new-school-site-notification request to be reconsidered at the August 12 Board meeting in light of the facts and circumstances that have become known since the July 8 meeting."

In reviewing the information provided, the following has been determined to be "facts and circumstances that have become known since the July 8 meeting":

1. ALA has stated that school staff who will implement attendance reporting practices will now be trained to do so. Training slides were provided. No documentation was provided as evidence that the appropriate individuals had received the training.
2. A new truancy and absence policy, as contained in the ALA Parent-Student Handbook was provided. A reference is made in the cover letter that this policy was written in conjunction with ASBCS staff. That statement is not accurate. Moreover, it is not clear from the information you provided how students who are absent for ten or more consecutive days, and who, under ALA's *Office Handbook: Attendance* "may be withdrawn" will be reported to the Department of Education under A.R.S. 15-901(A)(1). Also, there appears to be a conflict between ALA's mandate that students under an attendance contract lose their priority enrollment status and the language in A.R.S. 15-184(A) that "a charter school *shall* give enrollment preference to pupils returning to the charter school in the second or any subsequent year of its operation."
3. ALA determined that an Infinite Campus generated list of 57 students, that incorrectly limited the identification of students, was used to identify students who would be subject to the aggressive truancy and absence policy adopted early in the second semester of FY13. A "QCHS Un-enrolled student list" ("List") with 59 possible students purported to have been on the Infinite Campus list was provided. The List does not appear to be the Infinite Campus generated list of 57 students. The List includes SAIS ID numbers of only 38 of the 59 students.
4. Of the reported 57 (actually 59) students identified on the List, 13 students were purported to be students whose absences had been sufficiently explained by their parents and therefore were not subject to the adopted policy. Nine "School Attendance Policy Exemption" forms were provided. Three of the nine forms could be matched to students on the List by what was assumed to be a SAIS ID number on the form. Four of the nine forms provide no "Parent's view of attendance difficulties", yet the form was submitted to represent absences that had been sufficiently explained by their parents. None of the nine forms contain information as to who completed the form, when the form was completed, or reference support documents for information included on the form.

The Board is not required to reconsider a previously denied amendment or notification request. The lack of detail and inconsistency in information as enumerated above and provided in the request for reconsideration is consistent with staff's experience in collecting information from ALA during its review of the attendance processes as detailed in the staff report that was included in the Board's consideration of the Enrollment Cap Notification Request and New School Site Notification Request. Information has not been provided to demonstrate that ALA has identified how its attendance fiasco occurred and therefore has not provided sufficient information that it has the capacity to implement operational systems that comply with statutory and contractual responsibilities regarding attendance reporting at its current sites. The matter will not be reconsidered.

Sincerely,

DeAnna Rowe
Executive Director