Arizona State Board for Charter Schools

Physical Address:
1616 West Adams Street, Suite 170
Phoenix, Arizona 85007
Phone: (602) 364-3080
Fax: (602) 364-3089

Mailing Address:
PO Box 18328
Phoenix, Arizona 85009

June 6, 2013

Glenn Way
American Leadership Academy, Inc.
2350 E. Germann Road, Suite 26
Chandler, AZ 85286

SENT VIA EMAIL: gway@alaschools.org

Dear Mr. Way:
On May 23, 2013, Board staff visited American Leadership Academy's charter offices because staff's review of the information provided by the charter holder on May 6, 2013 identified remaining issues as well as matters that required clarification. During the visit, Board staff met with District Registrar/Student Information Systems Manager Ellen Baker and discussed the information provided by the charter holder for 10 of the 22 students addressed in the May 6th response.

Following the visit, Board staff sent an email summarizing the information that the charter holder was required to provide to the Board and/or the changes that the charter holder would make to the student attendance data in SAIS. The May 23rd email included a deadline of May 31st for completion of the required action.

On May 29th, our office received an email from Ms. Baker, which stated, in part, "They have all been uploaded to SAIS and just to confirm, I checked the 72 and the correct dates were there." The email also included information regarding the students identified in the Board's May 23rd email.

On June 3rd, Board staff accessed the fiscal year 2013 SdADMS72 reports ("June 3rd 72 Reports") for all five campuses operated by American Leadership Academy. In comparing the information provided by the charter holder on May 29th to the June 3rd 72 Reports, Board staff identified the following discrepancies for 2 of the 10 students:

- SAIS ID 39911087 – The supporting documentation provided showed the student had excused absences on January 22nd, January 23rd, January 24th, January 25th, January 28th, January 29th, January 30th, January 31st, February 1st and February 4th. The charter holder's May 29th email states the student's "withdrawal was removed and excused absences were added". Based on this statement, the expectation was to see continuous enrollment from October 15, 2012 to present with the excused absences reported. Instead the June 3rd 72 Report shows the student as only enrolled between October 15, 2012 and January 18, 2013. Due to the January 18, 2013 withdrawal, this student's SdADMS71-1 Report accessed on June 3rd does not show any of the absences identified in the supporting documentation provided on May 29th. The June 3rd information from ADE reports conflicts with the correction that the charter holder stated had occurred.

- SAIS ID 31300254 – During the visit on May 23rd, Board staff confirmed that the charter holder had updated the Infinite Campus program to reflect a withdrawal date of August 6, 2012 for this student. However, the June 3rd 72 Report for the American Leadership Academy campus still reflects a withdrawal date of August 7, 2012.

Additionally, for 4 of the 10 students, Board staff's review of the information provided by the charter holder on May 29th did not support the explanations provided by the charter holder on May 6th for why certain students were withdrawn and later re-enrolled.

SAIS ID (Campus)	**3/20/13 72 Report**	**5/6/13 Charter Holder Explanation**	**5/29/13 Charter Holder Explanation**	**6/3/13 72 Report**
29209682 (American Leadership Academy – Queen Creek)	1/7/13 to 1/23/13 and 1/24/13 to n/a	"Student was withdrawn by school for consecutive unexcused absences; parents were un-contactable. Student later returned to school. Mother explained that the child had a brain tumor, and in the stress of the situation she had forgotten to inform the school."	"Scott and I went into SAIS and deleted his withdrawl. I called the former employee who was responsible for attendance at the time, it was determined that student came into school with his mother the week of Jan 7th, but never actually attended school until January 28th due to the brain tumor. His enrollment date has been changed and absences prior to enrollment date removed."	1/28/13 to n/a
39838155 (ALA Mesa)	7/30/12 to 12/20/12 and 1/28/13 to n/a	"Student was withdrawn after 20 consecutive days of absence and inability to contact parents. Parents later re-enrolled student."	"Please see supporting documents attached (Withdrawal form from ALA, Attendance Detail Report showing Absent Unexcused for the 7th and 8th of January, and the Request for Records recieved on the 9th from the school he was attending)." *Based on the "Request for Records", the school withdrew the student effective 12/20/12, or the last school day the student attended the school.*	7/30/12 to 12/20/12 and 1/28/13 to n/a
23359444 (American Leadership Academy – Queen Creek)	8/6/12 to 9/14/12 and 9/24/12 to n/a	"Students parents were called and messages were left regarding excessive absences to ascertain the whereabouts of the student. Upon the 8th absenc. The attendance clerk was able to make contact with the father who indicated that his	"[Student's first name] withdrawal was removed. I added her 5 unexcused absences back into the system. Just by chance I saw that her brother withdrew on 9-14-12 which was just before [student's first name] absences and I think what	8/6/12 to n/a

		daughter no longer attended our school. Father would not come into fill out withdrawal form. Student was withdrawn. Shortly thereafter, student returned to school without explanation."	happened was when the HS called regarding [student's first name] absences, the parent thought they were calling regarding [brother's first name] non-attendance and said 'no longer attending'."	
39911087 (ALA San Tan)	10/15/12 to 1/18/13 and 2/7/13 to n/a	"Student was withdrawn after 10 consecutive days of absence and inability to contact parents. Parents later re-enrolled student."	"Please see supporting documents attached (Attendance Log indicating Excused Absences), her withdrawal was removed and excused absences were added." *The "supporting documents" showed that a staff member of the school spoke daily with the student's mother or father, who reported the student as being sick on the school days occurring January 22nd through February 4th.*	10/15/12 to 1/18/13 *Please see page 1 of this letter.*

As you recall, this review began in March 2013 when Board staff attempted to determine why students at various campuses were withdrawn one day and then re-enrolled the next school day. At that time, Board staff was informed that there was a misunderstanding at the school level about the implementation of newly developed school policies and also a misunderstanding about the ability to withdraw students for excessive absences.

The information shared with Board staff during the March 2013 site visit and a review of the documentation received from the charter holder on May 6th and May 29th raises questions regarding the charter holder's current student attendance practices at its five campuses. By **June 20, 2013**, please provide the following:

1. A statement indicating that the charter holder has submitted revised data to SAIS for the students with SAIS ID 39911087 and SAIS ID 31300254 and, after making the revision, reviewed the data in SAIS and believes that the data for these students is now accurate.
2. The SAIS ID number and a copy of the withdrawal form for the brother of the American Leadership Academy – Queen Creek student with SAIS ID 23359444.
3. Copies of the attendance related portion(s) of the 2013-2014 parent and student handbooks for the elementary and high school campuses, as well as any school level and charter holder level policies and procedures developed to implement the information disclosed in the handbook(s).
4. A copy of the communication from ADE that resolves the code the charter holder should use when moving a student from a full-day kindergarten program to a half-day kindergarten program or vice versa.

5. A written statement, including a timeline, indicating the steps already taken or that will be taken by the charter holder prior to the start of the 2013-2014 school year to educate the schools' staff regarding the charter holder's student attendance policies and the circumstance under which a student may be withdrawn due to absences.
6. A written statement, including a timeline, indicating the steps already taken or that will be taken by the charter holder prior to the start of the 2013-2014 school year to ensure that the attendance personnel at each school understand statutory and ADE requirements for taking, recording and reporting student attendance and their responsibilities related to those requirements.
7. A written statement, including a timeline, indicating the processes already implemented or that will be implemented by the charter holder's central office to ensure the accuracy of the student attendance data being reported by all of its campuses.

The May 29th information also included the SAIS ID numbers for students who have a withdrawal date because they moved from the full-day kindergarten program to the half-day program or vice versa. A review of the SAIS IDs provided for the elementary campuses found some of the students were not included on the respective June 3rd 72 Reports while others were included but reported in grades other than kindergarten, such as first grade or second grade. Since this information was requested to assist Board staff when reviewing the 72 reports and determining why certain students may have been withdrawn and then re-enrolled, no further response regarding this matter is required at this time.

If you have any questions, please contact our office.

Sincerely,

Andrea Leder
Government & Financial Services Manager

cc: Ellen Baker, American Leadership Academy (Sent via email: ebaker@alaschools.org)

Attachment

Andrea Leder

From: Ellen Baker <ebaker@alaschools.org>
Sent: Thursday, June 20, 2013 2:07 PM
To: Andrea Leder
Subject: Response to letter dated June 6th, 2013
Attachments: Campus community - Moving Calendar tracks.pdf; Attendance_Procedures_21030617 _ebaker_Front_Office_Final_Rev_1.docx; Attendance Policy in 2013-14 Handbook.docx; Front office summer training Agenda-1.docx; Communication from ADE.pdf

Dear Andrea:

The following is my response to your requested items as numbered:

1. The Business Manager, Scott Jensen, has made changes directly in SAIS for SAIS ID 39911087 and SAIS ID 31300254 and has checked the 72 Report to make sure the data is accurately uploaded to SAIS. On June 6th, I emailed screen shots to you showing when the dates changes were initially made to Infinite Campus for both those students.

2. On June 6th, I emailed the withdrawal form for brother of student SAIS ID #23359444 as requested.

3. Attached is a copy of the 2013-14 Attendance Policy from our Parent/Student Handbook.

4. Attached is the communication from our SMS regarding the proper procedure for withdrawing and re-enrolling a student moving from one calendar track to another. Also attached is the communication to date between our Analyst from ADE, Jim Heck and myself regarding the same. The resolution is as follows: Our Business Manager will add a second calendar to each of the K-6 schools in the LEA Calendar Application on the Common Logon. I am still in contact with our SMS support folks to ensure our system is set up properly to use the WK/EK codes when moving a student from one calendar track to another.

5. New teacher training will take place on July 9th. New teachers will be instructed on how to take attendance in our SMS and returning teachers will be re-trained on July 11th, both trainings are from 1pm to 4pm. Attendance, Registrar and Office personnel will attend training on June 25th & June 27th. Office Staff will be instructed that only the following withdrawals will be valid: "Withdrawals include students formally withdrawn from schools and students absent for ten consecutive school days, except for excused absences identified by the department of education."

6. Attendance, Registrar and Office personnel will undergo a half-day training on June 25th and a full day of training on June 27th. During the trainings State Statutes and ADE requirements for taking and recording attendance, enrollment and withdrawal process will be addressed including *the importance of accuracy*. Attached is a copy of the attendance processes Attendance Clerks have been and will be trained on again for taking and recording attendance. I have also included an agenda for the trainings.

7. Attendance reports will be run daily at each school and checked for accuracy by the Office Manager. Office Managers will audit a sampling of school attendance on a weekly basis beginning with the 2013-14 school year. The Central Office will audit a larger sample of attendance and withdrawal codes monthly at each school. Our Business Manager will check the error reports from SAIS, as well as the 72 report when attendance data is uploaded to SAIS and processed back to our SMS, all errors and anomalies that may

occur will be corrected by the SMS Coordinator and any additional training to school staff will be provided throughout the year as needed.

Please let me know if you have any other tips for me in auditing and monitoring our records and keep me in mind if you know of any training I can plug into from either the ADE or ASCB that will assist me in my position. I look forward to working with you and I appreciate your help.

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Sincerely,

Ellen Baker
District Registrar/Student Information Systems Manager

2350 E. Germann Road
Chandler, Arizona 85286
OFC 480-420-2101 x1102
FAX 480-398-2073

ebaker@alaschools.org
www.alaschools.org