AGENDA ITEM: Request to Expand Charter School Operations—Arizona Autism Charter School

Issue

Arizona Autism Charter School (AACS) did not have sufficient academic performance data to demonstrate meeting the Board's academic performance expectations for 2014, and was required to submit a Demonstration of Sufficient Progress (DSP) Report with any expansion request. AACS submitted a request to add grade levels 7 and 8 to the charter on September 13, 2015.

Summary of Narrative Provided

Rationale for Expansion Request

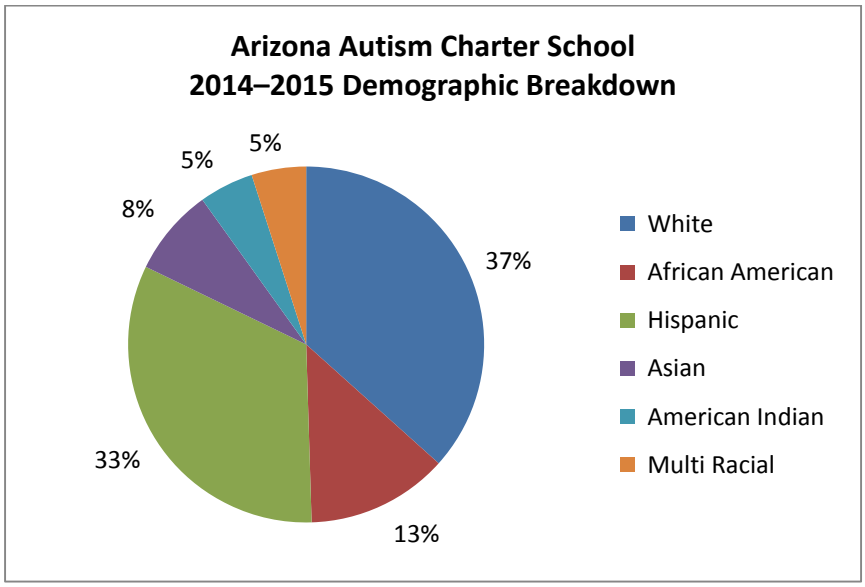
According to the narrative (presented in the portfolio: b. Amendment Request), AACS is requesting expansion to its grade levels in order to offer middle school grades. AACS plans to add 7th grade in FY17 and 8th grade in FY18. The charter was approved in 2013 to serve grades K–5. The charter currently serves grades K–6. The narrative states that the school was the first to be approved with a focus on serving students with autism, and that the enrollment quickly filled, with a number of students on a waitlist.

I. Background

AACS was granted a charter in January 2013, and is currently approved for grades K–6. AACS operates 1 school. See table below.

School Name	Month/Year Open	Location	Grade Levels Served	Current Status	2016 40th Day ADM	Enrollment Cap	Instructional Days
AACS	August 2014	Phoenix	K–6	Open	97.488	108	180

The demographic data for AACS from the 2014–2015 school year is represented in the chart below.[1]



[1] Information provided by the Research and Evaluation division of the Arizona Department of Education. If the percentage of students in a non-ethnicity-based demographic group is 0% or 100%, the percentage for that demographic group was redacted.

The percentage of students served by AACS in the 2014–2015 school year that are classified as English Language Learners, classified as students with disabilities, or are eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch (FRL) is represented in the table below.[2]

School Name	English Language Learners (ELL)	Free or Reduced-Price Lunch (FRL)	Students with Disabilities
AACS	*	90%	98%

As stated in Board policy, prior to a request being considered by the Board, staff conducts a compliance check as part of the amendment and notification approval process. The Charter Holder is in compliance in all areas.

II. Academic Performance

As stated in the Board's *Academic Performance Framework and Guidance* ("*Guidance*") document, a Charter Holder's academic performance will be evaluated by the Board when considering expansion requests. AACS is in its second year of operation. Due to the absence of academic data to create Academic Dashboards for the FY15 year, academic performance information is not available. However, internal benchmarking data was reviewed as part of the evaluation of the DSP Report submitted by AACS. (Refer to Section IV. Demonstration of Sufficient Progress—Data)

The mission of the school is "to educate students with autism and related disorders using evidence based teaching strategies delivered by highly trained teachers, and to make this high quality, specialized education accessible to all students with autism in the Phoenix Metropolitan area. Students will be empowered to reach their full potential in a motivating, compassionate environment using individualized programs so that every child gains the skills to integrate into the community and become a fulfilled, productive citizen."

III. Additional School Choices

AACS is located in Phoenix near the intersection of 7th Street and Indian School Road. The following information identifies additional schools within a five mile radius of the school and the academic performance of those schools.

There are 86 schools serving grades in the range of K-5 within a five mile radius of AACS. The table below provides a breakdown of those schools. Schools are grouped by the A - F letter grade assigned by the ADE. For each letter grade, the table identifies the number of schools assigned that letter grade, the number of those schools that are charter schools, the number of the charter schools that are meeting the Board's academic performance standard for FY14, and the number of schools serving a comparable percentage of students (± 5%) in the identified subgroups.[3]

[2] Information provided by the Research and Evaluation division of the Arizona Department of Education. If the percentage of students in a non-ethnicity-based demographic group is 0% or 100%, the percentage for that demographic group was redacted.
[3] Information provided by the Research and Evaluation Division of the ADE. If the percentage of students in a non-ethnicity-based demographic group is not reported to ADE, or is 0% or 100%, the percentage for that demographic group is redacted.

AACS				90%	*	98%
Letter Grade	Within 5 miles	Charter Schools	Meets Board's Standard	Comparable FRL (± 5%)	Comparable ELL (± 5%)	Comparable SPED (± 5%)
A	23	10	10	1		0
B	21	5	3	6		0
C	26	5	0	8		0
D	15	3	0	10		0
F	1	1	0	0		0

IV. Demonstration of Sufficient Progress

AACS submitted a DSP Report with the Adding Grade Levels to Charter Amendment Request (AGL) addressing the school's systems and data. The Charter Holder was provided a copy of the initial evaluation of the DSP Report and informed that areas initially evaluated as not acceptable must be addressed with additional evidence and documentation through the desk audit process.

Following a preliminary evaluation of the DSP, staff conducted a desk audit to review additional evidence to be considered in the final evaluation of the Charter Holder's DSP submission.

After reviewing documents submitted for the desk audit, Board staff completed an initial evaluation of the DSP (portfolio: d. DSP Initial Evaluation). The following is a summary of the final DSP Evaluation (portfolio: e. DSP Final Evaluation):

Evaluation Summary			
Area	DSP Evaluation		
	Meets	Does Not Meet	Falls Far Below
Data	☒	☐	☐
Curriculum	☒	☐	☐
Assessment	☒	☐	☐
Monitoring Instruction	☒	☐	☐
Professional Development	☒	☐	☐

After considering information in the DSP Report and additional evidence provided for the desk audit, the Charter Holder demonstrated evidence of a sustained improvement plan that includes implementation of a comprehensive curriculum system, a comprehensive assessment system, a comprehensive instructional monitoring system, and a comprehensive professional development system**.**

Based on the findings summarized above and described below, staff determined that the Charter Holder did demonstrate sufficient progress towards meeting the Board's Academic Performance Expectations.

V. Board Options

Board Options—Adding Grade Levels to Charter Amendment Request

Option 1: The Board may approve the request. Staff recommends the following language: I move, based on the information contained in the Board materials and presented today, to approve the request to add grade levels 7 and 8 for the charter contract of Arizona Autism Charter School.

OR

Option 2: The Board may deny the request. The following language is provided for consideration: I move, based on the information contained in the Board materials and presented today, to deny the request to add grade levels 7 and 8 to the charter contract of Arizona Autism Charter School, for the reason(s) that:

- (Board member may specify additional reasons the Board found during its consideration.)