AGENDA ITEM: NEW CHARTER APPLICATION – ARIZONA AUTISM CHARTER SCHOOLS, INC.

Arizona Autism Charter Schools, Inc. submitted a complete charter application package for the Board's consideration. The revised application package meets the requirements set by the Board for the 2013-2014 application cycle. This report contains:

1. A brief introduction to the application package,
2. An overview of each section of the application package, including:
    a. A description of the proposed education plan,
    b. A description of the applicant's organization with a summary of information submitted regarding applicant education and experience,
    c. A description of the applicant's business plan, and
    d. Information from the in-person interview,
3. The overall score for the application package,
4. Staff's recommendation regarding this application package.

Additional items in the portfolio include:

- A copy of the final scoring rubric which confirms the application package does meet the requirements as demonstrated through the review of the preliminary application package submitted on June 29 (including the technical assistance provided to the applicant) and review of the revised application package submitted on December 18, and
- Each section of the revised application package.

A link to the audio recording of the in-person interview is found on agenda item N.1.

APPLICATION INTRODUCTION

Arizona Autism Charter Schools, Inc. is an Arizona non-profit corporation formed in 2012. The authorized representative for the corporation is Diana Diaz. The proposed school, Arizona Autism Charter School, will serve grades K-5 in Phoenix.

Mission Statement

The stated mission of Arizona Autism Charter School is as follows: "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."

Target Population

The Arizona Autism Charter School (AZACS) will serve students affected by Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) in grades K-5, living within the Phoenix Union High School District and the surrounding areas in metropolitan Phoenix. Although the target population is students with ASD, the individualized programs of instruction, small class sizes and Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) strategies would be beneficial for any student wishing to enroll.

Student Count

Year	Grades Served	# of Students	# of Sites
1	K-5	81	1
2	K-5	90	1
3	K-5	99	1

School Calendar
Standard, 180 days

A. EDUCATION PLAN

The following summary was created from excerpts and summaries of the documents submitted for the applicant's Education Plan.

Educational Philosophy
The core philosophy of Arizona Autism Charter School, Inc. is a commitment to helping children with ASD rejoin the world and function within it to the best of their abilities. AZACS believes that with the proper intervention, individuals with ASD are very capable and, with the proper training, they can contribute to society in a meaningful way. AZACS will offer an integrated educational approach for our children, offering them the best chance at reaching their fullest potential, both academically and vocationally. Science-based methodologies will include, but are not limited to:

- Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA),
- Verbal Behavior,
- Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) training,
- Structured social skills training,
- Natural Environment Teaching (NET),
- Speech and occupational therapy.

All of these strategies fall under the umbrella of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), which has been proven by empirical studies to be the most effective methodology for children with autism. AZACS will work in collaboration with parents in an effort to provide an integrated, science-based approach towards assisting each student in reaching their full potential.

Program of Instruction
Framework: AZACS will base instruction on the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and Analysis of Verbal Behavior (AVB), which falls under the umbrella of ABA but is more focused on verbal communication. ABA refers to a systematic approach to the assessment and evaluation of, and the application of interventions that alter behavior. ABA is an objective discipline focused on the reliable measurement and objective evaluation of observable behavior. The Analysis of Verbal Behavior (AVB) is a behavioral explanation for how language is learned and how it can be taught to those who do not adequately develop the use of language in their natural environment, which is the case for most children with autism.

Methods of Instruction: The narrative lists the following to be used as methods of instruction:

- Multi-Grade Classroom
- Direct Instruction
- Cooperative Learning Groups
- Differentiated Instruction
- Discrete Trial Training (DTT): DTT involves breaking a skill down into short simple trials.

- Natural Environment Teaching (NET)/ Pivotal Response Treatment (PRT): NET and PRT encourage learning in the natural environment. Students are taught using materials in their natural environment and that are highly motivating to them.
- Applied Verbal Behavior (AVB): AVB is the application of the science of behavior analysis in teaching verbal behavior. Some of the primary verbal operants, which are most often initially taught to children with autism, are vocal imitation, making requests or mands, object labeling, and intraverbals, or responding to wh- questions (who, what, when, where, why).
- Errorless Teaching: Errorless teaching is an instructional strategy that ensures children always respond correctly.
- Scaffolding/Shaping: Students will be given support through a variety of different so that they are able to be successful.
- Task Analysis

Methods of Assessment: The narrative lists the following to be used as their methods of assessment:

All students at AZACS will be given a diagnostic exam upon entering the school to determine appropriate classroom placement and ability level. The main diagnostic tests used will be the Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills (ABLLS), the Verbal Behavior Milestones Assessment and Placement Program (VB-MAPP) and previous AIMS or AIMS-A test results.

Formative assessments will consist of pre and post tests, formal and informal observations and self-evaluations. Information gathered during the formative assessment process will help teachers determine how quickly students are grasping the material.

Summative assessment will include the use of pre and post assessments in specific core content areas. The main summative assessments for the year will be the AIMS and AIMS-A.

PMP
The Performance Management Plan (PMP) for new applicants is for the purpose of ensuring the school's curriculum, instruction, monitoring of student achievement, and professional development are ready to be implemented.

The applicant submitted a PMP that met the criteria in all areas for both Reading and Math.

Curriculum Samples
Curriculum samples for Arizona Autism Charter School were provided for grades K-5. The table below indicates which curriculum samples in the revised application package met all Board requirements (+), and which had deficiencies (-). Details can be found in the attached Scoring Rubric.

Grade	Math	Reading	Writing	Science
K	+	+	+	
1	+	+	+	
2	+	+	+	
3	+	+	+	
4	+	+	+	+
5	+	+	+	

EDUCATION PLAN FINDINGS

PRELIMINARY WRITTEN APPLICATION PACKAGE:
5/73 scoring areas (7%) did not meet the criteria.

During the in-person interview the applicant responded to the questions regarding the submitted Education Plan.

The individuals who participated in the interview were able to answer questions with responses that provided clarification or added detail to the preliminary written Education Plan.

The TRP provided the applicant with written technical assistance based on its review of the preliminary written application package and responses provided during the interview.

REVISED WRITTEN APPLICATION PACKAGE:
0/73 scoring areas (0%) did not meet the criteria.

B. ORGANIZATION PLAN

The following summary was created from excerpts and summaries of the documents submitted for the applicant's Organization Plan.

Arizona Autism Charter School, Inc. is a non-profit corporation, located in Phoenix, Arizona, that was created on June 25, 2012 for the purpose creating a school, public or private, with a focus on children with autism and to offer parents an educational option that is currently not available in the State of Arizona and many other states, with six Directors: Diana Diaz, Ron Harrison, Gregory Torrez, Josephine Torrez, Mary McEvilly-Hernandez, and Leo Valdez. On June 26, 2012 Joseph Gentry became a director.

Education Service Provider
Arizona Autism Charter School Inc. does not intend to contract with or have a governance relationship with an Educational Service Provider.

School Governing Body
Pursuant to A.R.S. 15-183 (E)(8),the corporate board for Arizona Autism Charter School, Inc. will act as the School Governing Body. When the term for a board position expires, the remaining Corporate Board members will make recommendations to fill the vacancy. Potential members of the board will also be required to fill out an application and obtain a fingerprint clearance card. If an individual is still interested after reviewing the handbook, visiting the school and talking to other existing board members, then the board president will facilitate an interview process. If the applicant meets the criteria, the new member would be appointed to the board by a majority vote of the existing members.

School Governing Body Member Type	Number	Name
Organization Principal(s)	7	Diana Diaz Joseph Gentry Ronald Harrison Mary McEvily-Hernandez Gregory Torrez Josephine Torrez Leo Valdez

School Staff	0	
Parent(s)	0	
Community	0	
Other-Business Community	0	
Other – Institute of Higher Education	0	

Roles and Responsibilities

The Corporate Board shall be the Governing Body, with duties including:

- Hiring and management of the School's Executive Director
- Approval for all policies and procedures
- Financial responsibility and accountability
- Raising funds from the private sector to supplement the school's public funds
- Compliance with laws and terms of the Charter Agreement
- Legal documentation
- Annual budget approval
- Approval of personnel recommendations
- Negotiation and approval of all contracts, unless authority delegated for certain agreements
- Appeals for student discipline
- Assurance of mission and vision of the school
- Audit review and compliance
- Compliance with Arizona's Public Records and Open Meeting Laws
- Maintenance of Board records documenting minutes, Board action and approved policies.
- Lead short and long term school development efforts
- Attend annual Board training

Charter Principals Background Information

Authorized Representative: *Diana Diaz*
Confirmed Education History: Masters of Arts in Education, Claremont Graduate University, 1991
Confirmed Employment History: Senior Corporate Communications Specialist, Salt River Project, August 2009 – Present; Communications Director/Public Information Officer, Arizona Lottery, February 2009 – June 2009; Hispanic Outreach Specialist, Southwest Autism Research & Resource Centers (SARRC), March 2007 – February 2009
Arizona FCC Expires: 7/10/18
Review of Individual Financial Position: No follow-up required
Current or Past Charter Affiliations: None

Principal Name: *Joseph Gentry*
Confirmed Education History: Doctor of Philosophy in School Psychology, Illinois State University, 2006
Confirmed Employment History: CEO/President Gentry Pediatric Behavioral Services, PLLC, February 2009 - Present; Director of School Consultation Services – Southwest Autism Research & Resource Center (SARRC) August 2007 – February 2009; Behavioral/Educational Consultant – The May Institute, August 2005 – August 2007
Arizona FCC Expires: 5/31/2013
Review of Individual Financial Position: No follow-up required
Current or Past Charter Affiliations: None

Principal Name: *Ronald Harrison*
Confirmed Education History: Master of Business Administration in Management, Western International University, 2005
Confirmed Employment History: Lead AV Coordinator, Salt River Project, 2008 – Present, AV Coordinators I, II, and III, Salt River Project, 1992-2008
Arizona FCC Expires: 5/14/2018
Review of Individual Financial Position: No follow-up required
Current or Past Charter Affiliations: None

Principal Name: *Mary McEvilly-Hernandez*
Confirmed Education History: Bachelor of Arts in NDP Board of Governors/Spanish, Northern Illinois University, 2001
Confirmed Employment History: Vice President/ General Manager, Univision Radio, November 2004 – May 2012
Arizona FCC Expires: 5/31/2018
Review of Individual Financial Position: No follow-up required
Current or Past Charter Affiliations: None

Principal Name: *Gregory Torrez*
Confirmed Education History: No post-secondary degree claimed
Confirmed Employment History: President/CEO, Torrez International LLC, 1997 - Present
Arizona FCC Expires: 5/18/2018
Review of Individual Financial Position: No follow-up required
Current or Past Charter Affiliations: None

Principal Name: *Josephine Torrez*
Confirmed Education History: Bachelor of Arts in Education, Arizona State University, 2000
Confirmed Employment History: Director of Business and Community Partnerships, Torrez International LLC January 2011 – Present; Instructional Assistant, Phoenix Elementary School District, July 2010 – November 2010; Manager of Production, Azteca Plaza, June 1987 – July 2010
Arizona FCC Expires: 9/22/2016
Review of Individual Financial Position: No follow-up required
Current or Past Charter Affiliations: None

Principal Name: *Leo Valdez*
Confirmed Education History: Master of Public Financial Management in Applied Public Financial Management, American University, 1979
Confirmed Employment History: Senior Vice President and Manager, Hutchinson Shickey Erley & Co., October 1997 - Present
Arizona FCC Expires: 6/18/2018
Review of Individual Financial Position: No follow-up required
Current or Past Charter Affiliations: None

ORGANIZATION PLAN FINDINGS

PRELIMINARY WRITTEN APPLICATION PACKAGE:
3/24 scoring areas (13%) did not meet the criteria.

During the in-person interview the applicant responded to the questions regarding the submitted Organization Plan.

The individuals who participated in the interview were able to answer questions with responses that provided clarification or added detail to the preliminary written Organization Plan.

The TRP provided the applicant with written technical assistance based on its review of the preliminary written application package and responses provided during the interview.

REVISED WRITTEN APPLICATION PACKAGE:
0/24 scoring areas (0%) did not meet the criteria.

C. BUSINESS PLAN

The following summary was created from excerpts and summaries of the documents submitted for the applicant's Business Plan.

Site Information

Proposed School Name:	Arizona Autism Charter School
Proposed Location:	Unconfirmed location: 12th Street and Washington in central Phoenix.
Proposed/Secured Facility:	The facility will consist of approximately 10,000 Sq. Ft., including 9 classrooms, a multipurpose room, five offices, a library, computer lab, and three sets of bathrooms. The facility has a parking lot with 38 parking spaces. The applicant has engaged the owner/lessor to convert half of the parking lot into a fenced playground area at no cost to AZACS.

Budget

Start-up Budget
The start-up budget, in the amount of $70,000, covers the costs described in the Start-Up Budget Assumptions narrative with revenue that has been verified. At the end of the start-up period, verified revenue exceeds expenditures.

Secured Funds
The applicant has secured a loan from Joe Diaz and Diana Diaz for start-up purposes. The secured funds, in the amount of $70,000 as stated by the applicant, are available as confirmed by Wells Fargo.

Annual Operating Budgets
The operating budget for Year One is based on 85% of anticipated student enrollment of 81 students, with a projected per-student equalization funding of $23,140 as calculated based on FY2012 revenue worksheets, including base support level weights, weighted students counts, and with additional assistance multipliers. At the end of each year revenue exceeds expenditures, with the following year-end balances: Year 1 ($17,983); Year 2 ($82,155); Year 3($155,252).

BUSINESS PLAN FINDINGS

PRELIMINARY WRITTEN APPLICATION PACKAGE:
4/28 scoring areas (14%) did not meet the criteria.

During the in-person interview the applicant responded to the questions regarding the submitted Business Plan.

The individuals who participated in the interview were able to answer questions with responses that provided clarification or added detail to the preliminary written Business Plan.

The TRP provided the applicant with written technical assistance based on its review of the preliminary written application package and responses provided during the interview.

REVISED WRITTEN APPLICATION PACKAGE:
0/28 scoring areas (0%) did not meet the criteria.

OVERALL SCORE

Preliminary application package: 10% of the scoring areas did not meet the criteria.

Revised application package: 0% of the scoring areas did not meet the criteria.

BOARD OPTIONS

Option 1: The Board may approve the application package. Staff recommends the following language for consideration: Based upon review of the contents of the portfolio provided for this applicant and the information provided by the representatives of the applicant during consideration, and given it is within the sole discretion of the Board to approve or deny a charter, I move to approve the application package and grant a charter to Arizona Autism Charter Schools, Inc. to establish Arizona Autism Charter School charter school to serve grades K-5.

Option 2: The Board may deny the application package. The following language is provided for consideration: Based upon a review of the contents of the portfolio provided for this applicant and the information provided by the representatives of the applicant during consideration, and given it is within the sole discretion of the Board to approve or deny a charter, I move to reject the application package and deny the request for a charter of Arizona Autism Charter Schools, Inc. to establish a charter school for the reason(s) that its application failed to meet the requirements of Title 15, Chapter 1, Article 8 due to: (member making the motion should select all that apply and complete the sentence where necessary).

- ❑ Lack of an Education Plan that meets the Board's criteria as stated in the scoring rubric and/or demonstrated through responses to interview questions,
- ❑ Lack of a curriculum aligned to state standards as stated in the scoring rubric,
- ❑ Lack of an Organization Plan that meets the Board's criteria as stated in the scoring rubric and/or demonstrated through responses to interview questions,
- ❑ Lack of a Business Plan that meets the Board's criteria as stated in the scoring rubric and/or demonstrated through responses to interview questions,

And/or I move to reject the application package and deny the request for a charter of Arizona Autism Charter Schools, Inc. to establish a charter school for the reason(s) that:

- ❑ The applicant is not sufficiently qualified to operate a charter school based on (insert the facts from the background/fingerprint/credit report of the specific Officers, Members, Directors, or Partners that form the basis for the decision).
- ❑ The applicant is not sufficiently qualified to operate a charter school based on the (insert the facts from the financial, operational and/or academic performance of associated schools that form the basis for the decision).