

Adding Grade Levels to Charter Amendment Request

Charterholder Info

Charter Holder

Name:
Blue Adobe Project

CTDS:
10-85-01-000

Mailing Address:
Sky Islands
6000 E 14th St
Tucson, AZ 85711
> [View detailed info](#)

Representative

Name:
Shari Popen

Phone Number:
520-382-9210

Fax Number:
520-382-5888

Downloads

 [Download all files](#)

Current Grade Levels

Current Grade Levels Served

- 9th Grade
- 10th Grade
- 11th Grade
- 12th Grade

New Grade Levels

For each grade level being added, provide the following as a representation of a program of instruction aligned to the State's approved academic standards and to methods of instruction described in the charter. Please note that a separate upload must be prepared for each grade level and content area and be named as such. Additionally, applicants must restate the name of the file in the Brief Description box (e.g., First Grade Reading, HS Algebra II).

For K-8

Language Arts & Math: A completed curriculum sample for reading, writing, and math for each grade level being added including all attachments as outlined on the [required template and instructions](#).

For 9-12

Language Arts & Math: A completed curriculum sample for reading, writing, and math coursework for each grade level being added including all attachments as outlined on the [required template and instructions](#). Each course must align with the State's graduation requirements.

Add Grade Levels

7th
8th

Curriculum Samples

No documents were uploaded.


Effective Date

07/01/2015

Attachments

Board Minutes —  [Download File](#)

Narrative —  [Download File](#)

Timeline for implementation —  [Download File](#)

Additional Information

 [Download File](#) —

Signature

Charter Representative Signature
Shari Popen 04/07/2015

Blue Adobe Project
Governing Board Meeting
6000 E 14th St, Tucson, Arizona 85711
4:00 Nov 12, 2015

Present/ Members: Duffy Galda, Lukas Bogard, Shari Popen/ Director

Absent Member: Carole Edelsky (vote given to Lukas Bogard)

Present/ Guests: Sandi Rosado/ Associate Director

Meeting is convened at 4:00 by Shari Popen/ Director

Director's Report: Spring term

- Wednesday A la Carte activities has been changed to CapaCITY Building. Each teacher has chosen a group of students he will meet with every Wed as his advisory group. He will be responsible for keeping track of his students' performance and advising parents. Each advisory group will select their Wed activity from a menu of activities that are intended to build teamwork and individual capacity. This replaces the A la Carte menus where students signed up each week for an activity and it gives Wednesday activities greater structure and planning without sacrificing choice.
- Brad Richter at UA's Lead Guitar program approached us about offering classical guitar lessons for the 2015—16 school year. The program is in part funded by an Arts grant, but the school will have to contribute as well. It offers a music class that we do not currently offer and I said yes. The teachers are all on board. Mike Bagesse, our Projects Manager, has played guitar professionally and will coordinate the guitar class with the UA. We already have 3 acoustic guitars but will need to purchase several more. I purchased the ones we have at Bookmans, where I get a good discount and the prices are discounted. Students may also want to buy their own. Brad will come to the school this spring to talk with students about the class and to perform. It's a great addition to our program.
- Hitomi—our Japanese teacher—has inquired about offering Japanese classes at the school on Friday afternoons, 4:00 to 5:30, to young people between the ages of 4 to 14. There is large Japanese community here in Tucson and it is the language we teach at school. It fits well with our Koi pond and our annual participation in the Japanese Speech contest. Hitomi will reimburse the school for use of the facilities, so it could also be a fundraiser. I told her to keep working on it and develop a plan—how many students, what would she charge, etc. She agreed to do that. Hitomi said her initial survey revealed about 50 students who were interested at this point. Next year she will return to our staff to teach a new section of Japanese 1 and a section of Japanese 2.
- On Jan 22 students and 2 staff members joined the Sierra Club for the 3rd year to travel to Phoenix and participate in Environmental Day at the Capital. It's become a well-attended event and again this year every student (12 total) showed up to catch the bus at 6am.
- We have a big Schoolyard clean-up day scheduled for this Sat and expect 30—40 people to show up to do weed control and landscape the front of the school. We've had rocks and

Respectfully submitted Feb 16, 2015 SPopen

boulders delivered and students have created passive water harvesting basins around the 3 olive trees.

First New Business Action item: Despite our efforts to advertise and redesign our website, enrollment continues to be low. Parents and potential enrollees have inquired whether we'd consider adding middle school to our program. To do that we'd have to do the following:

1. Amend our lease with TUSD to include lower grades.
2. Amend our State Charter to add grades 7 and 8.

In support of adding grades 7 and 8:

1. We do have the space. Tucson Children's Project will be vacating the north building and we will be required to continue paying TUSD the rent as per our lease agreement.
2. It will provide us with an opportunity to bring students' skill levels up so that they have a better chance of successful mastery in high school classes.
3. It will also enable us to expand our environmental activities and curriculum to younger students and to better prepare them for developing an ecological awareness in high school and beyond.

Discussion:

- Shari said that it was never in the plan for Sky Islands to add lower grades, but the low enrollment makes rethinking that important.
- Duffy asked about designing the curriculum for lower grades and hiring teachers.
- Shari replied that programs designed for environmental activities were more available for lower grades. So integrating the environment into 7th and 8th grade standards would not present a big hurdle. Likewise, teachers who had K-8 certification or were highly qualified at those grade levels were more likely to be 'generalists' and not as specialized as high school teachers. Secondly, middle school teachers were also better trained to teach reading and writing, skills critically needed in our students.
- Sandi was concerned that middle school students would be sharing space with older high school students and that it would create a situation that was not 'age-appropriate'. But Sandi also said that we could stagger lunch hours and computer room hours so that there was minimal contact, especially given that middle school hours required longer days.
- Lukas was concerned that enrolling middle school students would dramatically change the culture of the school and perhaps divert high school students away.
- Shari replied that she had asked a few current students how adding grades 7 and 8 would be received and they replied they supported it. Current students realize that enrollment is low and adding grades 7 and 8 will help that and increase funding. They did not express any serious concerns, surprisingly.
- Shari also said that she and Sandi had considered other factors—adding to admin work, supplies and classroom materials, increased utility expenses, longer days and different state testing schedules. In the end these issues are nothing we haven't already confronted in the new building and over the last 7 years. Shari said it would be work, yes, but work we knew how to do.
- Duffy asked if we might consider adding one grade (8) this next year and then adding the second (7) in the following year, depending on enrollment.

- Shari replied that she had considered that approach but in the end it made more sense to just ‘bite the bullet’ and, since we needed to hire additional staff regardless, to go for both 7 and 8 together. Shari said they would seek to enroll 30 to 40 students total into 7th and 8th grades.

Vote: There was no further discussion at this time. Shari moved to approve adding grades 7 and 8. Motion seconded by Lukas. All voted in favor of adding grades 7 and 8 for the 2015—16 school year. There were no abstentions.

Second New Business Discussion Item:

- Shari introduced the second discussion item—summer school—as a second attempt to increase enrollment. She proposed a 3-week course for June titled “Weather Camp” that would involve several local organizations in both instruction and participation. Central would be the UA’s CLIMAS program, NOAA, and NWS. Shari has already contacted the outreach staff member at CLIMAS and he/Ben responded very positively. He said that they have been developing a program for 12—18 year olds and we set up a time to meet and move forward. Shari said that the course would be very hands-on, participatory, and involve students traveling to weather stations, meeting forecasters, learning to read computer models of storms, and studying how weather develops—gulf streams, winds, climate change, etc.—and research by making a weather station and learning to collect data. The Weather Camp summer program is still in design stages, but students would be required to pay for the course to support the expenses (staff and materials) and could get credit if aligned to State standards.
- Duffy asked if we wanted to take on both adding grades 7 and 8 and summer school in the same year. Lukas agreed it was a bold move.
- Sandi replied that by adding one class this summer, and perhaps using it to increase our visibility and our new grade levels, we could substantially add to our enrollment for the next school year.
- Shari replied that there is quite a bit of curriculum available already so that no one needed to reinvent the wheel to design a class from scratch, although we would definitely need to make sure it held sufficient content to meet standards. Basically it would be a pilot course—Shari said that there were NOAA grants available and if we got started with one course it might be possible to partner with CLIMAS and NOAA to write a Federal grant to support further development of the course. The larger plan is make “Weather Camp in June” an on-going, successful Sky Islands’ summer program.

Vote: There was no further discussion at this time. Shari moved to approve moving forward with the summer Weather Camp. Duffy seconded the motion. All voted in favor of continuing to pursue it as an real option with the participation of UA CLIMAS. There were no abstentions.

Third Business Item:

- Shari distributed copies of the FY2015 Budget. The only significant change made was to shift the \$1525 line item for the 200/ Special Education from 2900/ Other Support Services to 2400/ School Administration on page 1/ Expenses. This reflects the fact that we no longer need to purchase a Bryteldea IEP web-based form from Ryan Larkin-Smith because we are now using

Toren Lockerman for SPED services. That amount can be shifted to pay for Toren's services. There was no discussion.

Vote: Lukas moved that the Board vote to approve the Budget as Adopted. Duffy seconded that motion. All voted to Approve the FY2015 Budget as Adopted. The Board members also signed the Adopted Budget Cover page.

There was no additional new business at this time. Shari moved and all voted to adjourn the meeting at 4:30pm. The next meeting will be held in May. No date was set.

SKY

ISLANDS
Public School
6000 E 14th St, Tucson, AZ 85711

March 12, 2015

DeAnna Rowe, Executive Director
Arizona State Board for Charter Schools
1616 W Adams St, Suite 170
Phoenix AZ 85007

Re: Adding grade levels 7 and 8

The Blue Adobe Project dba Sky Islands has been chartered since 2008 as a high school, grades 9—12. We would like to add grades 7 and 8, allowing Sky Islands to enroll grades 7—12. There are several reason for this change. One, despite the fact that we are in our 7th year of successful operation, we remain consistently under-enrolled. In part this is due to our location in a vacated TUSD building that is tucked back in a residential neighborhood. The City of Tucson has denied our request and subsequent appeals to allow us to advertise the school on Wilmot, the main road. So our visibility, despite the desirability of this location for a school, is restricted.

Secondly, we would like to ‘grow our own’ high school students by enrolling grades 7 and 8 into our educational program. There are, again, a couple of reasons for this. Many of our students in the high school classes are increasingly very low-skilled in areas that are critical for success in high school, especially content-area reading and writing. It is difficult to address that lack of skill and to teach the required content areas. The curriculum for grades 7 and 8 would be designed to develop the academic skills needed to achieve successful mastery in high school work. I have already approached a former UA graduate student of mine who has been teaching the 100 level reading courses at PCC to help us design a reading program that is developmentally appropriate and rigorous.

Third, we currently occupy less than one half of the building’s capacity. Tucson Children’s Project/TCP has been subletting a smaller space that is attached to the main building by a covered walkway. (see map attached) TCP will be vacating that space by end of May and our plan is to move the 7th and 8th grades into that space along with the art classroom. The high school students and middle schoolers will have limited and highly supervised activities that are shared, including use of the art room, the cafeteria, and the gardening beds, all at different times of the day.

We have been approached by parents and community members who want us to add grades 7 and 8. Our environmental curriculum is unique in Tucson, and our small classes (10–16 per classroom) is a big draw for parents and students who experience often twice that in the district schools. Our hands-on activities provide opportunities for students to develop capacities in areas not directly taught in the formal content areas, such as learning to make observations in their environments, building positive relationships, and engaging in community outreach. Additionally, we have developed a reputation for close supervision of our students and contacting parents/guardians for teacher conferences and help keeping their students on track.

I do know that we will need to add qualified staff as instructors for grades 7 and 8, and that the additional enrollment will increase the administrative responsibilities across the board. Standardized testing will be different, and content areas likewise will need to be adjusted to meet the middle school curriculum core standards. The State requirement for classroom hours is also different—and higher—for middle school. Schools that expand do sometimes forget to factor in hidden costs, such as cleaning, utilities, furniture and supplies, and technology. We are already paying some of those costs for that site, and have already taken into account the expenses we will incur by adding grades. Those expenses will be in part offset by the additional state funding.

Our intent is to enroll grades 7 and 8 for the 2015–16 school year beginning in August. The building is currently being used by TCP and when they vacate before June we will shift its use to middle school and the art classroom. It will help to house the 7th and 8th grades separately for at least the first year. I anticipate enrolling 30 students into the additional grades the first year, keeping classroom size approximately 15 each. When enrollment allows in the next 2 years we will expand into a wing of our current building that is currently unused. There are 7 classrooms in that wing and a small suite of offices that can easily accommodate a higher enrollment. Because this was built as a district school there are sufficient bathrooms and water fountains for student use as we expand.

I do think we are well positioned to add the two grade levels. My first priority is to serve all of our students and their parents well, provide a sound and comprehensive educational program, and enable the staff and students to take advantage of this extraordinary site.

If you have any further questions, please ask.

Best regards,

Shari

Dr Shari Popen/
Director and Charter Holder
The Blue Adobe Project dba Sky Islands