AGENDA ITEM: New Charter Application – Camino Montessori

Camino Montessori submitted a complete charter application package for the Board's consideration. The revised application package meets the requirements set by the Board for the 2012-2013 application cycle. This report contains:

1. A staff overview of the application package, including a description of the proposed education plan, a description of the applicant's organization with a summary of information submitted regarding applicant education and experience, and a description of the applicant's business plan,
2. Additional background information regarding the qualifications of the applicant, based on affiliations with current or prior charter operations, and
3. 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 July 1, including the technical assistance provided to the applicant and review of the revised application package submitted on December 15, and
- Each section of the revised application.

SUMMARY OF THE TITLE PAGE

Camino Montessori is an Arizona nonprofit corporation formed in November, 2009. The authorized representative for the corporation is Judith Webster. The proposed school, Camino Montessori, will serve grades K-2 in Maricopa.

Mission Statement

The stated mission of Camino Montessori is as follows: The mission of Camino Montessori is to provide a high quality authentic Montessori school in the City of Maricopa area... ...that empowers every child to realize their fullest potential through active, reflective, and creative education. ...that fosters a love for learning through active partnerships involving students, parents, teachers, staff, and the community at large. ...that embraces our diversity and unique talents in a safe, challenging, respectful, and supportive environment. ...that recognizes that personal growth is life-long and involves responsibility towards ourselves, others, and the earth; thus becoming self-determined, self-motivated, and contributing members of society..

A. EDUCATION PLAN – The following summary was created by pulling key phrases from the narrative of the applicant's Education Plan.

Educational Philosophy	**Philosophical approach** Camino Montessori's philosophy emphasizes using the Montessori framework for curriculum design and implementation. Montessori classrooms are composed of two, three, or more age levels in a classroom community. Children of mixed age levels and of different abilities work together for several years. Students will be taught and encouraged to use cooperative strategies for learning and as a guide for their behavior. Since the child learns to glean information from many sources, instead of being continually directed by the teacher, it is the role of teachers to prepare and continue to adapt the environment and to link the child to it through carefully planned lessons. The daily schedules will allow for flexibility, and provide for at least one uninterrupted 2-3 hour work period ("Great Period"). Children will be supported in selecting their own work, and progressing at their own pace. Classroom emphasis will be placed on direct,

	personal hands-on contact with educational materials and/or concrete models. Children will have a considerable amount of freedom of movement and choice, within well-defined limits on the range of behavior. **Rationale** Camino Montessori is committed to implementing an authentic Montessori education program for students and families in the City of Maricopa. There is currently no private or public option for a Montessori elementary level. Several local business leaders agree a Montessori education option would benefit the community. Approximately 1,200 K-12 students leave Maricopa each day to attend elementary and high schools in the Phoenix area. The applicant believes that providing a Montessori option in Maricopa will meet the needs of some of these diverse learners going elsewhere, but will also help to strengthen the community on wider economic and social levels.
Target Population	The City of Maricopa is located in Pinal County, with a population of 43,482. About 60% of the population is White, 25% Hispanic, and the remaining 15% is primarily African and Native American. About 25% of children in Maricopa are currently considered 'below poverty level'. The area within a 10 mile radius of Maricopa includes the Ak Chin Indian Community with a population of around 700, and the Gila River Indian Community with a population of approximately 14,000. Legacy Montessori, Inc. is a preschool that has been serving families and children in this community for about seven years (many of these children are now enrolled in Montessori elementary schools in the Metro Phoenix area), and they are actively supporting the applicant's efforts to open Camino Montessori in Maricopa.
Program of Instruction – the applicant was required to describe a program of instruction that supports the educational philosophy and target population.	**Framework:** The narrative states that Camino Montessori will have "Cosmic Education," as developed by Dr. Montessori, as the essence of their educational framework. Cosmic Education has six essential pieces: • A unitary vision of the world • Knowledge of the universe as an organizing whole • An appreciation of interdependency • An awareness of our own "cosmic task" • Humanity's experience of a new way of life, and our great potential for peace • A scientifically based pedagogy that passes from the whole to its details. The unified and integrated curriculum unfolds as a spiral, and uses themes, which are referred to as "Great Stories", designed specifically to engage the child's "awakened curiosity", and to provoke within them an awakening sense of time, of place, and of purpose for being. **Methods of Instruction:** The narrative lists the Montessori Method to be used as the primary method of instruction. Using the power of 'story' to connect with and engage the child, Montessori teachers present new concepts by telling a story, presenting an impressionistic lesson which may include concrete props or materials that illustrate key concepts, or by posing questions that promote discussion and motivation to learn more. The Montessori teacher serves as facilitator/director of student learning by actively engaging them in pursuing answers to their questions, either individually or in small research groups. Through observation and recordkeeping, the teacher is able to plan appropriate sequences of lessons and remediation that responds more specifically to each child's or group's needs.

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

- Formative assessments include:
  - Teacher observations and anecdotal records,
  - Student portfolio samples and artifacts of work,
  - Student & teacher created rubrics, peer & self-evaluations,
  - Individual and group projects & presentations, etc.
- Summative assessments include:
  - Teacher made assessments
  - Standardized assessments, such as summative screening and diagnostic assessment tools used to establish benchmarks and track progress in the core academic areas of math and reading,
  - Required norm and criterion referenced assessments (i.e., AIMS, and Stanford 10).

School Calendar

Standard, 182 days

Student Count

Year	Grades Served	# of Students	# of Sites
1	K-2	40	1
2	K-2	55	1
3	K-2	70	1

Curriculum Samples

Curriculum samples for Camino Montessori were provided for grades K-2. 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	+	+	+	

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 in place and appropriate for providing a quality education for each student it serves. It is also intended to focus the school on meeting the Board's level of adequate academic performance.

The table below indicates the criteria in the revised PMP that met Board requirements (+), or had deficiencies (-). Details can be found in the attached Scoring Rubric.

Evaluation Criteria	Math	Reading
Predicted Baseline for percent passing in AIMS	66%	64%
Aligns with the applicant's Education Plan.	+	+
Presents a viable plan for managing student academic performance that includes a predicted baseline and annual benchmark targets for the first two years of operation which reflect incremental progress toward the end target.	+	+
Identifies action steps, timeline, responsible party, evidence of meeting action steps, and budget for accomplishing all four prescribed strategies.	+	+

	Reveals a progression of actions from start to finish for each strategy that are sequential, timely, and contribute to the school's ability to meet the identified end target.	+	+
	Creates action steps that complement and support the other strategies to the extent appropriate.	+	+
	Includes artifacts that provide evidence of the implementation of each action step.	+	+
	Provides adequate resources, i.e. time, money personnel, etc. to implement the action steps that support the strategies.	+	+
	Reflects costs from the Performance Management Plan in the Start-Up and Three-Year Operational Budget.	+	+
	For reference, FY 2011 AIMS State Average Passing Percentage is provided below. Parentheses indicate change from FY2010 State Average Passing Percentage. K-8 Math: 61% (+2%) K-8 Reading: 75% (+2%)		

Education Plan Findings

Preliminary application package: 20/40 scoring areas did not meet the criteria.

The revised application, for which consideration is being given, did not meet Board requirements in 1/40 scoring areas in the Education Plan section. Details of the scoring areas that did not meet, listed below, can be found in the attached Scoring Rubric.

A.4c

B. ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION

Camino Montessori is a nonprofit corporation, located in Tempe, Arizona, that was created on November 23, 2009 for the purpose of operating a charter school with five Directors: Judith Webster, Kevin Webster, Alvaro Otalora (resigned on unknown date), Marianne Mulligan, and Rebecca Brandon. Later, Carol Hoover was added (took office 05/10/10). The corporation as it is being considered today includes 5 Directors.

Roles and Responsibilities

Corporate Board	Governing Body
Camino Montessori's Board of Directors is currently a "planning and development" Board. It is the intent of Camino that, upon award of a Charter, the Board will begin its shift to a governing board model. Camino will move current members to the new Board. The duties of the President shall consist of supervising the corporation's business and affairs. The President will be responsible for the appointment, removal, replacement and supervision of all the corporation's employees and will be the officer responsible for entering into agreements on behalf of the corporation. The Executive Director will also be responsible for overseeing the development and implementation of the preschool and elementary programs at Camino Montessori.	At Camino Montessori there will be no unwritten Board policies. The only policies, decisions, authorizations, or limitations in effect at the Board level are those explicitly stated as written policies after a vote of adoption. These policies will be given to the Executive Director, who has exclusive authority over his or her staff. Camino Board members will not advise staff members. Policy oversight will involve four essential elements of Board policies that must be in place to govern the behavior of a business or organization. Policy oversight will specify: • The ends to be achieved by the organization. • Unacceptable means to those ends, or means limitation. • The authority of and powers of delegation to the Executive Director (ExD).

The narrative indicates that Judith Webster shall serve as both President and Executive Director (ExD). The narrative also indicates that the ExD will sit on the Board as a non-voting ex-officio member.	• Ongoing monitoring and directive development. The ExD will sit on the Board as a non-voting ex-officio member and will function as chief advisor to the Board, guiding it the full range of its activities, and serve as the chief communicator between the Board and the faculty and staff.

Establishment of Governing Body

The Principals for Camino Montessori are the Members of the Board of Directors. Currently this is a planning Board and it is their goal to transition to a more formal Governing Board upon award of the Charter. Any member of the Board may make a recommendation for new members and the rest of the Board will vote whether to bring that person on after an interview process and clearance of requirements. The school Founder and Executive Director is currently responsible for ensuring that all new Board members receive orientation to Montessori education and the mission of our school. A Camino Montessori Board of Directors Handbook has already been developed and will continue to be refined as the Board transitions beyond its early development. It will be expected that as part of the orientation process, each Board Member will observe the school for at least one full day. The Handbook serves as a reference for policies and procedures, as well as providing a common framework for the Board.

School Governing Body

Member Type	Number	Name
Organization Principal(s)	5	Judy Webster, Kevin Webster, Marianne Mulligan, Rebecca Brandon, Carol Hoover

Charter Principal Background Information

Principal Name	Confirmed Education History	Confirmed Employment History	FCC	Notes
Judith Webster	B.S. Psychology, Excelsior College, New York	2009-present Administrative Assistant, Arion Care Solutions 2001-2009: Lead Teacher – Upper Elementary, Desert Garden Montessori	Valid	There were no concerns identified with the background and internet checks.
Kevin Webster	M.B.A., 2006, University of Phoenix	2009-present: Area Supervisor, Arion Care Solutions 2009-2010: Business Development Manager, FM Solutions 1983-2009: Vice President, The Centers for Habilitation	Valid	There were no concerns identified with the background and internet checks.
Marianne Mulligan	B.A. Human Services, Northeastern University, Boston, MA	2005-present: Vice President of Operations, Arion Care Solutions	Valid	There were no concerns identified with the background and internet checks.
Rebecca Brandon	B.A. Business Management, University of Phoenix, Tempe, AZ	2007-present: Senior Vice President, Beatitudes Campus	Valid	There were no concerns identified with the

		1990-2007: Administrator of Resident Services, Friendship Village of Tempe		background and internet checks.
Carol Hoover	N/A	2004-present: Co-Owner, Preschool Teacher, Legacy Montessori, Inc.	Valid	There were no concerns identified with the background and internet checks.

Organization Description Findings

Preliminary application package: 5/23 scoring areas did not meet the criteria.

The revised application did not meet Board requirements in 2/23 scoring areas in the Organization Description section of the application. Details of the scoring areas that did not meet, listed below, can be found in the attached Scoring Rubric.

B.3f

B.4b

C. BUSINESS PLAN

Site Information

Proposed School Name	Camino Montessori
Proposed Location	Unconfirmed locations: Maricopa, AZ (restored historical ranch house at Porter Rd. & Maricopa/Casa Grande Highway) Maricopa, AZ (retail space within a strip mall on Maricopa Highway at the Garvey intersection)
Proposed Facility	The facility will consist of, in the first year, one flexible classroom space and office/storage space of 2,000-2,500 square feet total. In year 2 this will increase to 2 classrooms and 3,200 square feet, and in year 3, 3 classrooms and 4,000 square feet. Ideally, the facility will include an area for outside education, with water and room for gardening and composting.

Budget

Secured Funds	The applicant has secured a loan from Judith Webster and Kevin Webster for start-up purposes. The secured funds, in the amount of $51,800 as stated by the applicant, are available as confirmed by National Bank of Arizona and Tempe Schools Credit Union.
Start-up Budget	The start-up budget, in the amount of $48,025, includes: salaries and benefits for Lead Teacher, Administrative Assistant, and Teaching Assistants; office and instructional supplies; legal fees, IT setup costs, curriculum material, software, marketing/advertising, lease payments, fees/permits, insurance, utilities, furniture, and technology equipment. At the end of the start-up period, revenue exceeds expenditures.
Annual Operating Budgets	Year one operating budget is based on 81% of anticipated student enrollment of 40 students, with a projected per-student equalization funding of $6,390. Projected annual budget balances are: Year One – $11,189, Year Two – $27,280, and Year Three –$54,920. At the end of each year revenue exceeds expenditures.

Business Plan Findings

Preliminary application package: 6/22 scoring areas did not meet the criteria. The revised application did not meet Board requirements in 1/22 scoring areas in the Business Plan section of the application. Details of the scoring areas that did not meet, listed below, can be found in the attached Scoring Rubric. C.2c

Scoring Rubric Summary

Preliminary application package: 37% of the scoring areas did not meet the criteria.
Revised application package: 5% of the scoring areas did not meet the criteria.

Board Options:

Option 1: The Board may approve the application. 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, I move to approve the application and grant a charter to Camino Montessori to establish Camino Montessori charter school to serve grades K-2.

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 and deny the request for a charter of Camino Montessori to establish a charter school for the reason that the applicant is not sufficiently qualified to operate a charter school due to: (list the specific reasons the Board may have found during its consideration).