

Program of Instruction Amendment Request

Charterholder Info

Charter Holder

Name:
Desert Sky Community School,
Inc.

CTDS:
10-87-32-000

Mailing Address:
1350 N Arcadia Avenue
Tucson, AZ 85712
> [View detailed info](#)

Representative

Name:
Shelly Adrian

Phone Number:
520-444-9343

Fax Number:
520-745-5110

Downloads

 [Download all files](#)

Description of changes

Change From:
The Program of Instruction in our charter does not currently specify that classes are stand-alone or combined.

Change To:
What Desert Sky Community School is requesting is an amendment to our charter to clarify that instruction may occur in stand-alone classes or classes with combined grade-levels.

Attachments

Board Minutes —  [Download File](#)

Narrative that describes 1) the change, to include rationale and background and 2) how the program of instruction change will support the educational philosophy and target population served. —  [Download File](#)

Additional Information*
No documents were uploaded.

Signature

Charter Representative Signature
Shelly Adrian 05/12/2015

MINUTES

Desert Sky Community School

Regular Board Meeting

4:00pm to 5:30pm Tuesday, May 12, 2015

At Desert Sky Community School, 1350 N Arcadia Ave

Grade 4/5classroom

Pursuant to Arizona revised Statutes A.R.S. 38-431.02 notice is hereby given to the members of the Desert Sky Community School Governing Board, and to the general public, that the Governing Board will hold a regular meeting open to the public at the location specified above. The Board reserves the right to change the order of items on the agenda, with the exception of any public hearing. The Governing Board may vote to go into executive session, which will not be open to the public, to discuss certain matters.

In compliance with state law, Board meeting notice and agenda are posted at our website (www.desertskyschool.org) and in the bulletin board outside the school office, at least 24 hours prior to the board meeting.

Regular Board Meeting

I. WELCOME

- A. Call to order. Matt Conley called the meeting to order at 4:15pm.
- B. Verse.
- C. Roll Call. Board members present: Stephanie Petersen, Matt Conley, Erich Saphir. Board members absent: Vicky Westover. Guests: Shelly Adrian, Katie Dieterman, Kindra Perea, Andee Franklin.
- D. Approval of Agenda. Erich moved to approve the agenda, Stephanie seconded, motion carried.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES of board meeting on April 28, 2015. Stephanie moved to approve the minutes, Matt seconded, motion carried.

III. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Program of Instruction Amendment
Stephanie moved to approve the consent agenda, Matt seconded, motion carried.

IV. CALL TO THE PUBLIC

This is the time for the public to comment. Please limit your comments to five minutes per individual. Please be aware that the board may not discuss items that are not on the agenda. Therefore pursuant to A.R.S. 38-431.01(G), action taken as a result of public comment will be limited to directing further study of the matter, responding to criticism, or scheduling consideration and decision at a later date.

V. DISCUSSION: Moving towards Waldorf -- Erich Saphir follow-up after a discussion with Amy Bird about how we implement "Public Waldorf"

VI. FINANCIAL REPORTS - Aspire Business Consultants & Stephanie Petersen

- A. Current Financials for April 2015

MINUTES

- B. Proposed Budget for 2015-2016
- C. Aftercare Review for 2015-2016 (See Strategic Plan #6)
- D. Activity Fee Review for 2015-2016

VII. DISCUSSION & DECISION: Growth Task Force Expansion Plan

- A. Proposed Expansion Plan
- B. Costs and funding of plan

Matt moved that up to \$6,000 be approved for implementation of the proposed expansion plan, Erich seconded, motion carried.

VIII. DISCUSSION & DECISION: Using School Space with outside groups (See Strategic Plan #2) - Andee Franklin

- A. Draft of Facilities Agreement/Contract (Andee is still working on it)

IX. DISCUSSION & DECISION: 2015-2016 Board Officers & Meeting Dates (See Strategic Plan #12)

Matt will serve as Board President next year, Erich will serve as Vice President, Stephanie will serve as Treasurer and Secretary. Vicky and Erich will continue to serve as Development Committee chairs, Matt will continue as Master Plan Committee Chair, Erich will continue as Marketing Committee Chair, Stephanie will continue as Weihnachtsmarkt Committee Chair, Vicky will continue as Search and Hiring Committee chair.

X. REPORTS

A. Administrative Director

1. 2015-2016 Enrollment Update
2. Current enrollment changes
3. Search & Hire Update

B. Faculty Report – Kindra Perea

1. Annual Volunteer Celebration (See Strategic Plan #12)

C. Parent Council – Andee Franklin & Melissa Uribe

Andee will be Parent Council chair next year, Tara will be vice chair, and Melissa will be Third Grade room parent.

D. Marketing & Outreach – Erich Saphir

E. Development – Vicky Westover/Stephanie Petersen

1. Annual Fund Board Participation

MINUTES

- F. Master Planning Committee – Matt Conley
 - 1. Update on Growth Task Force - see above

G. Board Development – all

H. Finance – all (see agenda items above)

I. DSP Update - Shelly Adrian

XI. Announcements & Current Events – see our website!

- A. May 28 - 1:00pm Graduation Assembly
- B. May 29 - Last Day of School and Rainbow Bridge Ceremony for Kindergarten

XII. CLOSING

- A. Verse.
- B. Adjourn. Erich moved to adjourn at 6:33pm, Matt seconded, motion carried.

Pursuant to Title II of the Americans With Disabilities Act [29-CRF 35-106], this document is available in alternative formats by contacting the school at (520)- 745-3888.

Board meetings

| | | |
|--------|----------|--------|
| Sept 9 | Jan 13 | May 12 |
| Oct14 | Feb10 | June 9 |
| Nov 11 | March 10 | |
| Dec 9 | Apr 14 | |

Program of Instruction Amendment

Change From – Program of Instruction does not specify that classes are stand-alone or combined.

Change To* - What Desert Sky Community School is requesting is an amendment to our charter to clarify that instruction may occur in stand-alone classes or classes with combined grade-levels.

BOARD MINUTES -- Attached

NARRATIVE

Description of change

What Desert Sky Community School is requesting is an amendment to our charter to clarify that instruction may occur in stand-alone classes or classes with combined grade-levels.

Rationale for amendment

Upon recommendation of the charter board staff on April 13, 2015, the charter board required a Program of Instruction Amendment be submitted, on the assumption that Desert Sky Community School was chartered only for stand-alone classes.

As described in our charter (page 5 to 12), the Comprehension Program of Instruction is developmental and strengthened by the enduring relationship between the students and their main teachers who travels up through the grades with them. The charter does not specify whether classes are stand-alone or combined grade-level. While the ideal is stand-alone classes, in practice the world over, small Waldorf schools do combine grades to improve instruction. We are not asking for a change in Program; the amendment is to specify that the curriculum, instruction, and assessment of the original charter apply whether the class is combined or not.

Dynamics of curricula, methods of instruction, and methods of assessment

Whether the class is combined or stand-alone, the teachers bring developmental themes and stories to the class as a whole, AND meet each student at their skill level. The teacher brings grade level instruction to the students in reading, mathematics, and writing through developmentally appropriate themed blocks of instruction, presented to the class as a whole, and then diversified to meet each student at their grade and skill level. These block rotations are a premise of Waldorf Education, with a deepening, intensive focus on a topic such as mathematics or language arts for four (or more) weeks for two hours of instruction in the morning. This is balanced by extra main lessons where, generally, the emphasis is similar to a track class in the area that is not the main lesson focus, i.e., if language arts or science is the main lesson block, then mathematics is the extra main emphasis.

Thus the Grade 4 class are met with dramatic epic tales, and they have grasped fractions conceptually and are becoming more facile with their use, yet some students will be more advanced than others in their reading or math skills. After teaching to the group, the teacher will differentiate instruction for challenging elaborations for advanced students, and for students experiencing difficulty, she focuses on the foundations, perhaps working through a few math problems with students that need this support,

while other students are expected to complete work independently. All students are assessed routinely according to grade level to inform and adjust instruction to optimize students' progression through the curriculum.

Course work is rounded out with specialty classes including foreign language, instrumental music, movement classes and the arts to provide a balanced and thorough curriculum that meets the students in an age appropriate way, and allows them to generalize and practice AZCCRS in "real-world" situations. These methods of diversified instruction provide scaffolding and supports for all learners; advanced learners, students in the bottom 25%, and special education students.

In a combined grade level class, the teacher meets a wider range development and skill level. So, Grade 4/5 combination class will begin with the Grade 4 epic tales and end with Grade 5 Greek mythology. The students registered as grade 4 are expected to achieve grade 4 math and reading skills, the grade 5 students are expected to perform at the higher skill level. Teaching a combined class is challenging and the decision to combine classes is not made lightly. If a class is combined, professional development from Waldorf mentors and pedagogical supports are provided for the teachers to assist in meeting requirements for both grades through instructional training and support and assessment assistance from our reading specialist/ special education teacher. Curricular support is also provided by mentors and other faculty members to help combine the course work in a way that is cohesive and comprehensive in scope and sequence.

Align to the mission and educational philosophy

The methods of instruction & assessment, and the curricular rhythms with individualized student emphasis work equally well in stand-alone classes as well as classes that have been combined. The mission of the school is to provide and promote Waldorf Education as a public charter school. It is designed to meet the needs of the developing child, who learns first through imitation, emotion, and experience, while developing a capacity for intellectual thought. The curriculum integrates all academic subjects of a classical education, and engages the whole child – head, heart, and hands—to instill academic excellence, independent thinking, a sense of social responsibility, and motivation for life-long learning. As a charter school, the essential learning objectives include the AZCCRS, and are taught in a Waldorf way: developmentally, imaginatively, experientially, and conceptually. The Waldorf education is a century-old world-wide movement that has since its inception combined a developmental approach with the standards required by local governments and authorizers.

Student achievement and target population

The intention of Desert Sky Community School is to bring quality education and student achievement for all students who attend. While some parents choose Desert Sky Community School for proximity (we are the school in their neighborhood), most families choose Desert Sky Community School for our Waldorf educational philosophy and instructional environment, some driving 45 miles each way to attend this school. Our student population is approximately 50% FRL and 11% SpEd. We strive to meet the needs of all families who choose public Waldorf education. The optimum learning relationship is between a human teacher and students, and the classrooms are alive with the activity of the students and teacher. The clarity provided by this Program of Instruction amendment emphasizes to teachers, parents, and students that students are held to grade level expectations whether they participate in stand-alone or combined classes. Instruction for subpopulations (bottom 25%, special needs, etc) is provided in an

inclusion model with scaffolding, and supported as needed by tutoring and pull-out with a specialist, an approach which is effective whether the class is stand-alone or combined grade-level.

Consistency with class size cap

In accord with our class size cap of 25 students per teacher, combined grade-level classes will not exceed 25 students per teacher.

Triggering event and criteria to consider in decision to combine

The consideration to combine grades is triggered by enrollment of less than 10 students in one grade level, with high priority for supporting the relationship between students, teacher, and parent. The Administrative Committee ("Leadership Team") considers a constellation of factors when deciding on whether to combine classes. Each instance of potential combining is considered separately. Criteria for combining grade levels in one class are:

1. **Too few students.** In general, a group of fewer than eight students does not have the critical mass for the social interactions and the activities of classroom teaching (folk dances, teams). In a very small group, it is easy to see the individuals, but difficult to teach to the class as a whole.
2. **A mid-year loss of teacher, and a familiar teacher is available.** When a teacher leaves unexpectedly mid-year, or if there is a drastic drop in enrollment mid-year, we consider combining grades (as long as the total class number does not exceed 25 students as capped in our charter.) Often the main teachers cross-teach a specialty class and thus know all the students in the school. It may be better to combo the grades for continuity of a student-teacher relationship, rather than hire a teacher who is not familiar with the curriculum or the students (especially if there are behavior issues or diverse learning styles involved).
3. **Too few qualified teachers available.** Combining grades with an experienced teacher may be better for student outcomes than a stand-alone class with a less qualified, less experienced teacher.
4. **Potential growth or decline in class size.** Most enrollment increases occur in Kindergarten, Grade One, and Grade Two. For example, ten students enrolled for next year's Grade One is likely to increase in numbers in the beginning of the school year, and to increase the following year when they are grade two. Four students in Grade Four at the end of the school year is less likely to increase to a full class size for the next year.
5. **After grade-levels are combined in a class,** the specific cohort remains combined unless enrollment growth (beyond 10 students in each of those grades) triggers consideration of splitting apart the grade-levels to stand-alone classes.

Timeline for Implementation

The possibility of combining grade level classes will go into effect immediately upon approval of this amendment and be determined based on the criteria above.

Performance Management Plan Narrative

Desert Sky Community School does not currently have a PMP, as of May 1st, 2015. Per Charter Board requirement, we are developing a PMP and will submit it no later than June 1, 2015. The PMP will not specify that classes are combined. However, in consideration of the aforementioned criteria, grades may be combined under specific circumstances.