B.1 Applicant Organization

Desert Star Academy, Inc. History

Desert Star Academy, Inc., a nonprofit corporation, was organized in 2011 by Margie Montgomery and Will Hookstra (Corporate Directors) to offer families of the Mohave Valley and south Fort Mohave areas a "choice" for high quality education. The Directors, who were once colleagues, began planning Desert Star Academy in January of 2011 with the hope of materializing a preschool through sixth grade charter school that would provide students with an education that was driven by the Common Core Standards and offered a curriculum in which all students would participate in the core content areas of reading, math, language arts, social studies, science and physical education. Both Directors shared the same vision that educating a successful college bound scholar would require academic excellence, family involvement and community support. Scholars needed a structured, student centered learning environment that would empower every child to become a college bound scholar, active citizen in the community and leader among their peers and in society. Further, teachers would need to differentiate instruction in order to match their diverse learning styles and skills of each student. The goal was to offer a rigorous, well-rounded educational foundation that would build self-confidence and academic success among all learners.

In its first year, Desert Star Academy, Inc. opened Desert Star Preschool. The Preschool officially opened for business in January of 2012. Organized as a non-profit educational organization, the preschool will be independent from Desert Star Academy charter school and be directed by the corporate board of directors. The School Director, Margie Montgomery, has been responsible for the marketing and operation of the preschool while at the same time creating and drafting the Desert Star Academy. Desert Star Academy charter school is proposed to open in August of 2013 and will serve as an elementary charter school under the direction and guidance of the Desert Star Governing Board, a board appointed by Desert Star Academy Corporate Board for the sole purpose of providing governance and oversight for Desert Star Academy charter school.

Organizational Structure

Margie Montgomery will be the Corporate Director and the primary stakeholder of the Charter as well as an employee of the school. William Hookstra will serve as a Corporate Director and consultant in the formation of the school board, writing policies and procedures. He will advise in the policies and procedures for all students with special needs. He will not be an employee of the school. Together they will seek and invite a diverse group of men and women in the community to fill the remaining Corporate Director seats as well as an equally diverse group of men and women to fill the Governing Board seats. The Desert Star Corporate Board will relinquish all responsibilities and operations for the charter school to the Governing Board. Once the Governing Board seats are filled and the charter application is approved, hiring a staff of certified and classified personnel will be in order. During the first year of operation Desert Star Academy School Director will interview and hire four teachers, two teaching assistants, and

one clerk who will report to the school director. In future years, the Governing Board will hire the School Director and the School Director will interview and hire school personnel.

Margie Montgomery will serve on the both Corporate and Governing Board as a non-voting member as well as be the Director of the school. With a proposed student population of 75 to 90 students the first year, a full administration team is not necessary. The certified and classified staff will report to the School Director. The organizational chart is attached. The Corporate Board of Directors will be responsible for the direction and oversight of the corporation and the direction of the preschool. The operation and managing of the Desert Star Academy will be granted to the Desert Star Governing Board. The Governing Board of Directors will have full autonomy over any and all school direction and decision.

Corporate Directors

Margie Montgomery is the visionary and driving force behind the organization. She will be the authorized agent/representative of the school. She will serve on the Corporate Board of Directors and initially the Governing Board of Directors as a non-voting member as well as be the School Director overseeing the direction of the preschool and charter school. Mrs. Montgomery is uniquely qualified for this position as she has a Master's Degree in Education Leadership from Northern Arizona University and at this time has only an internship to complete for a second Master's Degree in Special Education from the University of Phoenix. Her Bachelor of Science degree from Colorado State University is in Merchandising, with an emphasis on Marketing. The marketing knowledge and experience will allow her to create, build and develop the school and market the establishment throughout the community and the state. Her experience in the education environment includes being Special Services Director in a K-12 charter school, an elementary and middle school administrator and high school teacher. Her administrative experience with the charter school included building a successful special education / English Language Learner (ELL) program where she implemented new curriculum, technology and instruction for special needs, ELL, and excelling students. The new and revised curriculum increased student achievement scores on AIMS by 30% over a two year period in math and reading. The special services department, under her direction and supervision, met the state target for reading for the first year in the school's history. She took the students from 25% passing AIMS to 50% passing in reading and from 17% passing to 45% in math over three years. The students met the state target in Reading and missed the state target in math by 3%. She hired staff members and wrote grants and budgets for both the elementary and high schools. In addition to her Director responsibilities, Mrs. Montgomery was the school leader responsible for analyzing all AIMS results. She developed, implemented and assessed a school-wide improvement plan to increase student achievement. Through this endeavor she utilized the Arizona Growth Model as a tool to teach teachers how to analyze and use student data to implement and drive classroom curriculum and instruction. She presented and facilitated several staff development trainings on this subject. She is very knowledgeable and versed in how successful charters can improve the quality of education and student improvement. She has attended many seminars and trainings to gain "best practice" experience in organizing and operating a successful charter school.

William Hookstra is the co-founder of Desert Star Academy and will serve as a Director on Corporate Board. He will not be a paid employee of the corporation or charter school. His areas of expertise include school psychology and student behaviors, and special services. He has been a school psychologist for the past seven years in the local elementary school district. With this experience, he will direct Desert Star Academy effectively in the type of curriculum and instruction that is most effective for the target student population that will be attending the newly developed charter. Working at Mohave Valley Elementary School District for the past seven years, Mr. Hookstra brings a wealth of knowledge to Desert Star Academy in terms of knowing the target population, understanding the learning needs of the students, the areas in which they need improvement and some of the learning modalities that would be effective with the target population. He has graduated from the University of Nebraska – Lincoln with a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and International University in Alameda, California.

Mr. Hookstra also comes from a family with strong ties to the education community. His father is Superintendent for an elementary school. Mr. Hookstra's sisters work in education and child psychology. Mr. Hookstra is dedicated to serving youth and working to create an educational plan to best serve their individual needs. He is knowledgeable in the many federal laws and state regulations regarding students, teachers and the administration of special services. He continued with his education and earned his Master's Degree is School Psychology from Alliant Services.

Recruiting Corporate Directors

The Corporate Directors, Margie Montgomery and Will Hookstra will recruit additional members to serve on the corporate board after the meeting in January 2013. The vacant board seats will be filled with members who have expertise in one or more of the following areas, law, politics, real estate, facilities management, community leadership, human resources, finance management, business operations, or fundraising. Each recruit will possess a deep commitment to the mission and vision of Desert Star Academy as well as faithfully execute the responsibilities and obligations of a Trustee on the Corporate Board.

Currently the co-founders are seeking quality Directors for the Desert Star Academy from former Board members of other organizations committed to the educational opportunity and serving the community. After identifying high-quality potential Directors whose interests are aligned to the mission of Desert Star Academy and who have the desired expertise, the next steps are to meet with these individuals, share the vision for Desert Star Academy, and communicate the responsibilities they would be required to fulfill is they became Directors. Additionally, individuals who express their desire to make this commitment will be required to attain a fingerprint clearance card and be elected by the existing Directors before serving on the Board.

DESERT STAR ACADEMY, INC.
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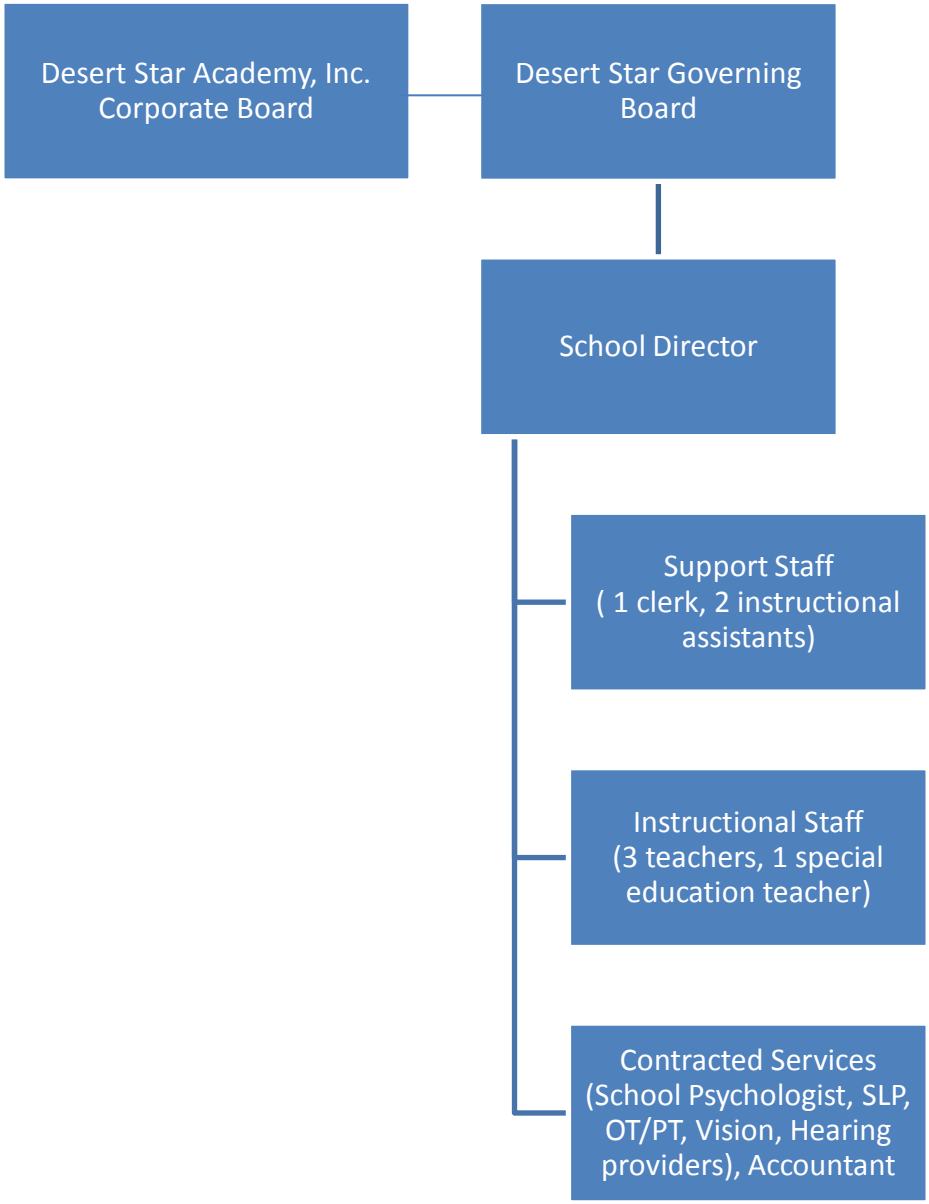

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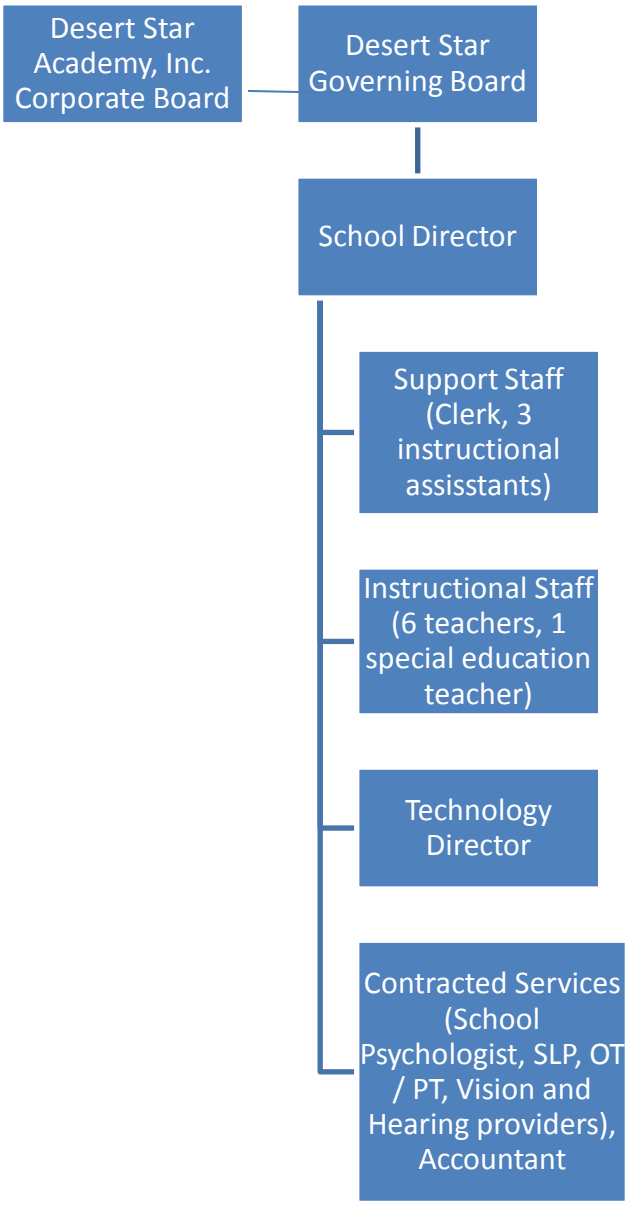
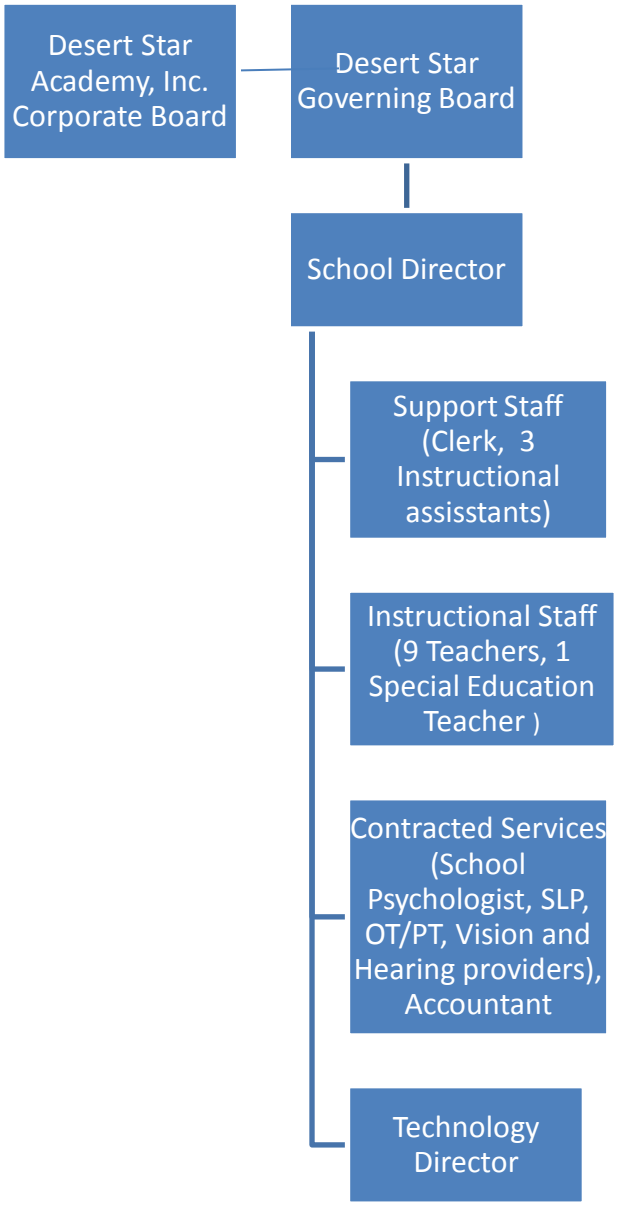
DESERT STAR ACADEMY, INC.
Year: 3