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**AGENDA ITEM:** Consideration of Revocation or Restoration of a Failing School

**Arizona LEARNS**

In November of 2001, Arizona voters approved Proposition 301 which, among other things, provided funds to the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) to develop “a system to measure school performance based on student achievement, including student performance on the AIMS test.” The legislative requirements for the accountability system are stated in section 15-241 (ARS § 15-241) of the Arizona Revised Statutes. The accountability system created to satisfy the statute is referred to as Arizona LEARNS. The school evaluation given by ADE to each school is referred to as the school’s achievement profile. Arizona law (ARS § 15-241) mandates that the Arizona Department of Education shall compile an annual achievement profile for each public school.

The achievement profile for a school serving grades 3-8 consists of the following performance measures:

1. A status measure based on the performance of students on all three sections of the AIMS (reading, writing, and mathematics) in the current year.
2. A measure of improvement in aggregate student performance on the AIMS compared to the baseline year.
3. A measure of growth in individual student performance. This is the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP).
4. A measure of student performance on the state’s English language proficiency assessment: AZELLA.
5. A measure of whether the school made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as defined by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. In order to comply with the federal requirement that the state have an integrated accountability system, a school’s AYP determination is factored into the calculation of its achievement profile.

Schools are awarded scale score points based on their performance on measures one through five. Scale score points are then summed up for each school and compared to a scale that relates scale score points to the five profile labels: excelling, highly performing, performing plus, performing, and underperforming.

In accordance with A.R.S. § 15-241(O), if a school remains classified as an underperforming school for a third consecutive year, the department of education shall visit the school site to confirm the classification data and to review the implementations of the school’s improvement plan. The school shall be classified as failing to meet academic standards unless an alternate classification is made after an appeal. Pursuant to A.R.S. § 15-241(U), if a charter school is designated as a school failing to meet academic standards, the department of education shall immediately notify the charter school’s sponsor. The charter school’s sponsor shall either take action to restore the charter school to acceptable performance or revoke the charter school’s charter. A [Failing Schools Flow Chart](#) has been included for your reference.

## Background Information (Gila Educational Group)

Gila Educational Group, an Arizona non-profit corporation, operates Gila Preparatory Academy Middle School (School) and Gila Preparatory Academy High School. While the High School (9-12) is currently designated as Underperforming Year Two and did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2009, the focus of this report is on the Middle School (7-8) and its failing status. The Middle and High School share the same Principal and some of the same staff.

Gila Educational Group was granted a charter and began operation in the fall of 2002, serving approximately 39 students in grades six, seven, and eight. An amendment was approved for the 2008-09 school year to change grade levels served to seventh and eighth. The Corporation Commission lists two (2) officers and directors: Crae Wilson (President) and Sherli Skinner (Vice President). The Charter Representative is Crae Wilson, Jr., who is also the Principal for the Middle School and a teacher for the High School. The Governing Body is comprised of Crae Wilson, Jr., Sherli Skinner, Dee Lauritzen, Joy Flake and Joanna Robertson.

Gila Preparatory Academy Middle School is located in Safford, Arizona and primarily serves at-risk students, although the school was originally started with a college prep focus. At the time of the failing school site visit on December 15, 2009, the School reported an enrollment of 29 middle school students. The following chart lists some examples of State and Federal approximate revenues received by Gila Educational Group for the middle and high school from FY 2007 – FY 2010. According to the Arizona Department of Education’s grant management system, the School has not applied to receive any additional grants over the past seven years.

Revenue Category	FY 2010	FY 2009	FY 2008	FY 2007
100 <sup>th</sup> Day Student Count <i>MS=Middle School</i> <i>HS=High School</i>	MS=23 HS=66	MS=22.215 HS=65.917	MS=31.781 HS=55.070	MS=32.494 HS=56.238
State Equalization Assistance	\$576,672	\$619,156	\$520,735	\$576,504
Classroom Site Fund	\$32,957	\$63,565	\$59,318	\$52,416
Federal Monies	0	0	0	0
Total	\$609,629	\$682,721	\$580,053	\$628,920
Per Pupil Revenue	\$6,850	\$7,747	\$6,679	\$7,088

In the fall of 2007 Gila Preparatory Academy Middle School was designated as a first year underperforming school in accordance with A.R.S. §15-241. The School was required to notify the parents of the students attending Gila Preparatory Academy Middle School of the underperforming classification and create an Arizona School Improvement Plan (ASIP). Following the submission of the ASIP, the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) scheduled a Solutions Team to visit the School and meet with stakeholders. This visit took place on March 26 - 27, 2008. Using the *Standards and Rubrics for School Improvement*, the team answered three questions:

1. Does the school’s Arizona School Improvement Plan appear to be a sound plan for improving student performance?

2. Do the structures and conditions appear to be in place for successful implementation of the school's Arizona School Improvement Plan?
3. What recommendations can be provided that will assist the school with the implementation of its Arizona School Improvement Plan?

Gila Preparatory Academy Middle School received a copy of the Solution Team's Statement of Findings to use as technical assistance to validate or to re-direct the School's improvement efforts as well as offer specific recommendations for moving forward. An underperforming school may revise its ASIP at any time, using new data to evaluate and revise its goals and benchmarks as appropriate. An ASSIST Coach was also assigned to offer support for school improvement efforts. The School did provide evidence of a current revised ASIP for 2009–10.

In addition, the school was designated as a second year underperforming school in the fall of 2008 and subsequently Failing to Meet Academic Standards in 2009. This failing designation led to a joint evaluation of the School by staff from ADE's School Effectiveness Division and the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools (ASBCS). The remainder of this report includes findings from the failing school site visit conducted on December 15, 2009, in which interviews with school personnel and the leadership team members were conducted, and the School was provided the opportunity to produce evidence of progress made toward school improvement. The findings include the review of all areas required in A.R.S. 15-241.U. A summary and staff recommendation follows.

### Summary of Findings

- In the fall of 2007, the School was designated as a first year underperforming school in accordance with A.R.S. § 15-241.
- The School was designated as a second year underperforming school in the fall of 2008.
- The School was designated as Failing to Meet Academic Standards in the fall of 2009.
- In FY 2003 through 2009, the Middle School did not make adequate yearly progress (AYP) six out of the past seven years.

Year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
AYP	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No

- The joint failing school site visit on December 15, 2009 by ADE and ASBCS reveals a low percentage of outcomes met the criteria on all seven (7) outcomes that include twenty (20) indicators in this report.
  - 50% of the outcomes failed to meet criteria
- 60% of the instructional staff (3 of 5) are non-highly qualified in the core content area they are assigned to teach.
- The School has not developed or implemented an explicit, written curriculum for Reading, Writing, and Math that is aligned with Arizona Academic Standards.

### Findings

#### Outcome 1: Has the school properly implemented its school improvement plan?

- To some extent the school is actively and with consistency, reliability, and commitment implementing the Arizona School Improvement Plan (ASIP) as outlined by the specific steps, actions and prescribed timeline.

- To a minimal extent the priorities of the Solutions Team Statement of Findings have been addressed.
- To a minimal extent the ASIP has been revised and adjusted to address ongoing needs based on data.

**Outcome 2: Is the school curriculum aligned with Arizona Academic Standards?**

- To a minimal extent the school has developed an explicit, written curriculum for at least Reading, Writing, and Math that is aligned with Arizona Academic Standards down to the performance objective level.
- There is not a process for monitoring, evaluating, and reviewing the curriculum in place.
- The curriculum does not integrate the fine arts, social studies, and science *for elementary grades served*.

**Outcome 3: Does the school provide teacher training/professional development?**

- Teacher training activities are not linked to the ASIP goals. Professional development activities are not evaluated to determine effectiveness and relativity to the ASIP.
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- To a minimal extent follow-up occurs after training sessions to provide feedback and to ensure that training is applied in the classroom.
- There is no plan to evaluate on-going, job-embedded professional development. (teacher training programs)

**Outcome 4: Has the school prioritized its budget?**

- To a minimal extent resources are allocated to match the identified student needs outlined in the ASIP.
- To a minimal extent procurement of instructional materials and resources is consistently compliant with school calendar and instructional timelines.
- To a minimal extent school-wide comprehensive professional learning is funded to support continuous improvement of school staff.

**Outcome 5: Does the school provide other proven strategies to improve academic performance?**

- To some extent systems and procedures are in place to create and maintain a safe school environment, a positive climate and productive culture that sustains the instructional and school improvement process.
- The school does not have a comprehensive assessment plan that utilizes data in a variety of ways to measure student performance and plan for teaching and learning.
- The school does not provide scientific research-based, intensive intervention strategies for those students who are identified as *Falls Far Below* or *Approaches the Standard* in Reading, Mathematics, or Writing.

**Outcome 6: Has the school demonstrated improvement in its ability to meet grade level academic standards in Mathematics and/or Reading and increase student academic achievement based on a review of the measures used to calculate AZ LEARNS achievement profiles?**

- AIMS reading scores in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade decreased from 2008 to 2009.
- AIMS math scores in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade increased from 2008 to 2009.
- 2009 AIMS reading and mathematics student scores were less (anywhere from 42% to 66%) than the State average as displayed in the table below:

Middle School	Reading (State Avg.) 2009	Reading Gila 2009	Math (State Avg.) 2009	Math Gila 2009
8 <sup>th</sup> grade	69%	29%	63%	21%
7 <sup>th</sup> grade	73%	7%	73%	21%
% students scoring at the meets or exceeds levels on AIMS in 2009.				

- 2007, 2008, and 2009 AIMS reading and mathematics student scores:

Middle School	Reading 2007	Reading 2008	Reading 2009	Math 2007	Math 2008	Math 2009
8 <sup>th</sup> grade	29%	33%	29%	7%	6%	21%
7 <sup>th</sup> grade	21%	25%	7%	14%	19%	21%
% students scoring at the meets or exceeds levels on AIMS in 2009.						

**Outcome 7: Does the charter and school have the capacity/sustainability for continued improvement?**

- There is no evidence of the roles and responsibilities of corporate entity, governing body and school leadership being appropriately implemented.
- There is no evidence that the leadership is capable of supporting the school site in the allocation of resources (fiscal, human, physical and time); and in the ongoing monitoring and technical assistance necessary for the school to progress on their ASIP goals.
- There is no evidence that school leadership demonstrates the skills necessary to lead a continuous school improvement process focused on increasing student achievement.
- To a minimal extent the instructional staff is capable of supporting the school; utilizing sufficient knowledge of subject matter, instructional techniques and assessments.

**Board Options**

- Make a determination to refer the matter to hearing for consideration of revocation of the charter.  
OR
- Provide an opportunity for the charter operator to enter into a Consent Agreement to restore the charter to acceptable performance by Fall 2010 for the Board’s consideration at its next meeting.

## **Staff Recommendation**

Refer the matter to hearing for consideration of revocation of the charter.

I move that, pursuant to A.R.S. § 15-241(U), the Board refer this matter to hearing for consideration of revocation of the charter of Gila Educational Group. The hearing will be held by this Board in accordance with the uniform administrative hearing procedures contained at A.R.S. §§ 41-1092 through -1092.12. The Board will consider the evidence and testimony and then make Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law, and issue a Final Order.

I further move that:

- Within 48 hours of receipt of the Notice the charter operator shall notify staff and parents/guardians of registered students of Gila Preparatory Academy Middle School and Gila Preparatory Academy High School the Notice of Intent to Revoke and the Notice of Hearing and provide a school location where the copy may be reviewed;
- Within 20 days of receipt of the Notice the charter operator shall provide copies of all correspondence and communications used to comply with the preceding provision; and
- Within 20 days of receipt of the Notice the charter operator shall provide the Board with the names and mailing addresses of parents/guardians of all students registered with the school.

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**Gila Educational Group**

Site: Gila Preparatory Academy Middle School

**Background Information**

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**Findings**

**OUTCOME 1: Has the school properly implemented its school improvement plan?**

**Background:** ADE provides training and a template for completing the prescribed format for the ASIP. Additional support may be requested for completing the plan. As stated previously, a Solutions Team does provide a Statement of Findings, which includes priority recommendations to assist the school in successfully implementing and sustaining its ASIP.

Based on a review of the information available it has been determined that:

- The school is actively and with consistency, reliability, and commitment implementing the Arizona School Improvement Plan (ASIP) as outlined by the specific steps, actions and prescribed timeline.
- To some extent the school is actively and with consistency, reliability, and commitment implementing the Arizona School Improvement Plan (ASIP) as outlined by the specific steps, actions and prescribed timeline.
- To a minimal extent the school is actively and with consistency, reliability, and commitment implementing the Arizona School Improvement Plan (ASIP) as outlined by the specific steps, actions and prescribed timeline.
- The school is not actively and with consistency, reliability, and commitment implementing the Arizona School Improvement Plan (ASIP) as outlined by the specific steps, actions and prescribed timeline.

The determination is supported by the following facts:

- A copy of the 2009-10 ASIP indicates revisions have been made, to include 10 written goals. Goals range from increasing reading, writing, and mathematics AIMS scores to creating individual professional development plans for teachers.
- The principal provided a written and oral report on the progress made towards the ASIP goals this school year. Some examples are:
  - A written curriculum for core content areas is being developed by a curriculum consultant who was hired in November, 2009
  - Two benchmark assessments have been given to students in the fall of 2009
  - Teachers have created individual professional development plans

- The priorities of the Solutions Team Statement of Findings have been addressed.
- To some extent the priorities of the Solutions Team Statement of Findings have been addressed.
- To a minimal extent the priorities of the Solutions Team Statement of Findings have been addressed.
- The priorities of the Solutions Team Statement of Findings have not been addressed.

The determination is supported by the following facts:

- Priority recommendations made by the Solutions Team in 2008 are marginally addressed in the 10 goals included in the revised 2009-10 ASIP.
  - Solutions Team Recommendation #2 -- Instructional practices must be directly linked to State Academic Standards in all content areas. The ASIP includes

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goals on evaluating teachers incorporating the State Academic Standards into instruction and each teacher creating an individual professional development plan.

- The teacher self-evaluation forms, Rate Your Overall Effectiveness in the Classroom and Rate Your Understanding of Certain State Standards, ask the teachers to rate their overall effectiveness in the classroom and understanding of implementing the standards into instruction.
  - The Classroom Observation form and Walk-thru Observation protocol provided include an area for the Principal to record observation of objectives posted and/or reviewed with students.
  - Solutions Team Recommendation #3 – Professional development must be designed and aligned to meet ASIP goals. The ASIP includes goals focusing on increasing student achievement on AIMS in the areas of math, reading, and writing.
    - The professional development goal in ASIP states teachers will create individual professional development plans.
      - The principal stated in his written progress report on ASIP that teachers were developing their professional development plans based on their weaknesses as evidenced by the teachers' evaluation.
  - According to the Principal, he transitioned into this role in January 2009 and is attempting to address all findings.
- The ASIP has been revised and adjusted to address ongoing needs based on data.
- To some extent the ASIP has been revised and adjusted to address ongoing needs based on data.
- To a minimal extent the ASIP has been revised and adjusted to address ongoing needs based on data.
- The ASIP has not been revised and adjusted to address ongoing needs based on data.

The determination is supported by the following facts:

- The School provided a copy of the 2009-10 ASIP which has been revised and includes the Solutions Team Statement of Findings priority recommendations.
- The school lacks the ability to manage and track data and is confident the purchase of Galileo software in the near future will assist in addressing ongoing needs based on available data. According to the Principal, it is a challenge to obtain current and relevant data.

**OUTCOME 2: Is the school curriculum aligned with Arizona Academic Standards?**

**Background:** Beginning with the 2004-2005 school year, charter schools were required to submit Declarations of Curricular and Instructional Alignment to the ADE. The three parts of the Declaration ensured that the Governing Board of the charter had adopted a curriculum aligned to the Arizona Academic Standards (“Standards”), and that the charter administration

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1) provided instructional materials aligned to the Standards, as well as 2) provided opportunities for teachers to receive training related to the Standards, and 3) utilized an evaluation tool to assess whether teachers integrated the Standards into their instructional practices.

Based on a review of the information available it has been determined that:

- The school has developed an explicit, written curriculum for at least Reading, Writing, and Math that is aligned with Arizona Academic Standards down to the performance objective level.
- To some extent the school has developed an explicit, written curriculum for at least Reading, Writing, and Math that is aligned with Arizona Academic Standards down to the performance objective level.
- To a minimal extent the school has developed an explicit, written curriculum for at least Reading, Writing, and Math that is aligned with Arizona Academic Standards down to the performance objective level.
- The school has not developed a written curriculum for at least Reading, Writing, and Math that is aligned with Arizona Academic Standards down to the performance objective level.

The determination is supported by the following facts:

- The Leadership Team shared that Dr. Tom Sullivan (consultant) has been hired to support the teaching staff in building curriculum guides this year. According to the November 5, 2009 Governing Board Agenda, Dr. Sullivan was approved as a curriculum consultant and the curriculum work would be completed by the end of November or the first of December of 2009. This board approval occurred approximately six weeks prior to the onsite failing school visit.
  - Dr. Sullivan stated during his presentation he has been working with the staff on curriculum for approximately six weeks. Curriculum guides are being placed on teacher computers as some classrooms do not have textbooks.
  - In the written ASIP Progress Report, dated December 7, 2009, the Principal wrote “teachers have worked with Mr. Sullivan and the curriculum is complete as of today”.
    - During the interviews with the teachers, responses indicated the curriculum was not a completed formal written document. No one mentioned a curriculum guide being placed on their computer for access. Teachers disclosed they are responsible for locating teaching materials and ensuring alignment with the standards. They also shared the Arizona Academic Standards are the guide for teaching and lesson planning.
- During the failing school site visit on December 15, 2009, lesson plans from classroom observations were requested, and received on January 14, 2010.
  - The lesson plans for math, basic math, reading, and English are vague and lack details in the areas of standard’s alignment, instruction, activities, assessments, or scoring rubrics.
- Unit plan template samples were placed in a failing school site visit notebook created by the Principal. The unit plans lack details in some essential areas.

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- The sample curriculum guides in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading, writing, and math provided do not consistently contain instruction, activity suggestions or examples, supplementary resources, a variety of effective assessment strategies, or timelines which are standard elements of such guides.
- A systematic process for annually monitoring, evaluating, and reviewing the curriculum is in place.
- To some extent there is a systematic process for annually monitoring, evaluating, and reviewing the curriculum in place.
- To a minimal extent there is a process for monitoring, evaluating, and reviewing the curriculum in place.
- There is not a process for monitoring, evaluating, and reviewing the curriculum in place.

The determination is supported by the following facts:

- No documentation was provided that describes a systematic process for monitoring, evaluating, and reviewing the curriculum.
  - Dr. Sullivan did not discuss a process for monitoring, evaluating, and reviewing the curriculum in his presentation during the failing school site visit.
    - The Principal stated the teachers are learning about this curriculum writing process and working with Dr. Sullivan. It is his intention to review all curriculum once it is developed.

- There is a comprehensive curriculum that fully integrates the fine arts, social studies, and science *for elementary grades served*.
- To some extent there is a comprehensive curriculum that fully integrates the fine arts, social studies, and science *for elementary grades served*.
- To a minimal extent there is a comprehensive curriculum that fully integrates the fine arts, social studies, and science *for elementary grades served*.
- The curriculum does not integrate the fine arts, social studies, and science *for elementary grades served*.

The determination is supported by the following facts:

- A review of the unit plan templates provided on the December 15, 2009 failing school site visit did not include fine arts, social studies, and science. The samples provided were 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading, writing, and math.
- The lesson plans received on January 14, 2010 for the December 15, 2009 failing school site visit did not show any evidence of the integration of fine arts, social studies, or science with the core content areas.
  - The Principal stated reading, writing, and math content areas were the focus of curriculum development this year. The goal is to complete all curriculum areas by May, 2010.