

Arizona State Board for Charter Schools
Arizona State Board of Education
1700 W. Washington St., Room 164, Phoenix, AZ 85007
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MAR 30 2010

CHARTER GRADE LEVEL AMENDMENT REQUEST

(Charter Holder Name) Nosotros, Inc (CTDS) 108707000

(Charter Holder Mailing Address) 440 N Grande Ave

(City, State) Tucson, AZ (Zip) 85745

(Charter Representative's Name) Paul M. Felix

(Phone Number) 520-624-1023 (Fax Number) 520-624-7999

Failure to submit all required documentation will result in the Amendment Request being returned without being processed. Faxed copies will not be accepted. Please send originals.

Check appropriate box

Adding grade levels served for charter

Included are the following:

- Board minutes approving the change (minutes must comply with Open Meeting Law ARS §38-431.01) ✓
- Narrative describing how the additional grades support the philosophy, methods of instruction, special emphasis, and mission of the charter
- Mastery of coursework for additional grades
- Expected student performance on state mandated tests at all grade levels impacted by the addition
- Timeline for implementation
- Changes in staffing to support the requirements for Highly Qualified.

For K-8

For each grade level being added, provide the following as a representation of a program of instruction aligned to the State Academic Standards and to the methods of instruction described in the charter:

- Math - A completed curriculum sample template including all required attachments as outlined on the template attached.
- Language Arts - A completed curriculum sample template, for both reading and writing, including all required attachments as outlined on the template attached.

For 9-12

For each grade level being added, provide the following as a representation of a program of instruction aligned to the State Academic Standards and to the methods of instruction described in the charter:

- Math - A math course description and a completed curriculum sample template including all required attachments as outlined on the template (template is available on the ASBCS website).
- Language Arts - A language arts course description and a completed curriculum sample template, for both reading and writing, including all required attachments as outlined on the template (template is available on the ASBCS website).
- Graduation requirements (number of credits in each content area and electives)
- Course level proficiency required for credit and acceptance of transfer credit

Decreasing grade levels served for charter

Included is the following:

- Board minutes approving the change (minutes must comply with Open Meeting Law ARS §38-431.01)
- Rationale for decrease in grade levels served and effective date of change

The Arizona State Board for Charter Schools and Nosotros, Inc. (Charter Holder), herein agree to amend the terms of the charter contract as follows:

(MK) FROM: 6-12
TO: 3-12

In witness whereof, Charter Holder has signed this contract amendment as of this 29 day of Mar, 2010, and the State Board for Charter Schools has signed this contract amendment as of this 29 day of Mar, 2010, to take effect at such time as it is signed by both parties.

Paul M. Felix PAUL M. FELIX
Charter Representative Signature

Representative Signature for the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools

NOSOTROS ACADEMY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

DATE: Wednesday, January 20, 2010

LOCATION: Nosotros Academy
440 N. Grande Ave.
Tucson, Arizona 85745

MEMBERS PRESENT: C. David Foust, Chairman
Ruben Suarez, Vice Chair
Margaret Romero, Member
Luis Kamei, Member
Gene Benton, Member
Rudy Gallego, Member

MEMBERS ABSENT: Hector Morales, Member

STAFF PRESENT: Paul M. Felix, Principal & CEO
Ron Kovar, CPA

CALL TO ORDER: C. David Foust – 3:27 p.m.

CALL TO AUDIENCE: Andrew Shuta – Website

Website presentation by Mr. Shuta allowing an opportunity for the Board Members to give suggestions. One suggestion offered by the Board is to offer a Spanish version.

MINUTES: **Motion to approve the December 3, 2009 minutes as printed.**

- Motion: R. Suarez
- 2nd: R. Gallego
- Approved by unanimous voice vote

ACTION ITEMS:

Motion to approve adding grades 3-5

Discussion of ad hoc curriculum committee report given by Romero and Benton. Review of curriculum with Karen Salvador.

Discussion of budget requirements for the additional grades.

- Motion: R. Gallego
- 2nd: M. Romero
- Approved by unanimous voice vote

NEW BUSINESS:

Ron Kovar and Paul M. Felix

- Title I report (see attached)-Felix
-Discussion of Title I auditing process.
- 09-10 Budget State Report – Kovar
-Discussion of a break even scenario for 09-10.
-Discussion of possible staff layoffs as a last resort to mitigate losses.
-Discussion of course offerings at the Academy

OLD BUSINESS:

None

ADJOURNMENT:

C. David Foust 4:09pm

Nosotros Academy
440 N Grande Ave
Tucson, Arizona 85745
520-624-1023

Arizona State Board for Charter Schools
Charter Grade Level Amendment Request

March 29, 2010

Nosotros Inc. submits this application to add primary school grades three, four, and five to its charter.

Narrative:

The Nosotros curriculum is based on individual skill mastery. Students do not go on until they have mastered the current unit. Students receive one-on-one instruction from highly qualified teachers and teacher assistants to assess understanding. Students who master the material quickly are able to move forward to the next unit. Students who need more time to comprehend are allowed this time. This is based on educational research by Dr. William Glasser and the quality classroom and choice theory. According to Dr. William Glasser, the classroom environment can be changed so that discipline problems are eliminated. Emotionally, a Quality Classroom is one in which choice theory is the foundation, reality therapy is the method of communication for problem diagnosis and solving, and emotionally connecting with students replaces discipline. Academically, Quality Classrooms teach only higher thinking and are Competency Based Classrooms. Competency Based Classrooms impose no time limit on reaching subject competency (B, A, and A+) and eliminate labels implying mediocrity or failure: C, D, and F. Nosotros has been working towards this end since 2002, refining and enhancing Glasser's work and the results have been reduced discipline issues and higher quality student engagement and learning.

Nosotros Inc. has successfully provided a high school education for grades 9-12 since 2002 and recently added grades 6-8. Nosotros Inc. has provided a quality, customized education for a predominantly high risk population. Nosotros has developed and maintained an excellent dual enrollment program and relationship with Pima Community College. On average, 11 Nosotros students are accepted into the school's dual enrollment program each semester, earning college credits and college confidence by the time they have graduated. These students are well prepared to continue higher education after graduating. Since the program's inception in January 2005, a total of 146 students have participated in the program. Our records show more than 28 students per our records have continued at Pima College after graduation from our high school.

Nosotros Academy's Mission Statement: We will create a high quality center for education that will promote empowerment of the student, engagement of the family, and community building through mutual commitment to academic success by providing customizable instructional services in a safe, user-friendly atmosphere that meets the needs of students so they can excel as members of the greater community.

Nosotros Academy's Vision Statement: Nosotros Academy believes that all students have the right to discover, set and realize high academic, post-secondary, professional and personal goals and uses the best K-12 educational practices to help our students reach those goals.

Nosotros Academy's Special Emphasis: To recapture disenfranchised students by providing an individualized, customized curriculum designed to strengthen academic weaknesses in the most expeditious manner. Students receive one-on-one instruction from highly qualified teachers and teacher assistants to reinforce and enhance the learning environment.

Nosotros Academy's Philosophy is and always has been: All students can meet high standards and expectations when immersed in a small, positive and supportive educational environment. Our late CEO, Frank O. Romero was stopped on the streets before his death by a former student's cousin. She explained to Mr. Romero how grateful she was for our school. Her nephew had completed his Associate's Degree at Pima, a degree he began at Nosotros Academy in our dual enrollment program when he was a junior. She excitedly told Mr. Romero that Humberto was accepted as the youngest person to enter the FBI Academy at Quantico. She said that if not for Nosotros Academy, Humberto never would have imagined himself ever attending college. Humberto came to us a special education student. He thought that made him incapable of achieving what a "regular" student could achieve. One of our teacher assistants during Humberto's high school years taught him chess. This quiet, unassuming young man excelled in the game and thoroughly enjoyed competing against other students during scheduled chess matches. This is only one example of many thankful family members and student successes since fall of 2002.

Nosotros Academy's Credit Transfer Policy: All in-state credits are accepted when students enroll. Out-of-state credits: are accepted. If there is a unique system that does not readily transfer, credits are evaluated and calls are made to the student's previous school to determine the appropriate equivalency of the credit or credits in question. International credits: are evaluated to determine appropriate equivalency to Arizona's requirements so that credits can be fairly transferred in the best interests of the student.

Nosotros expects skill mastery in all coursework for its students. Students must earn an 80% or better in reading and writing and a 75% or better in mathematics. This is an aggressive expectation because students enrolling at the school often test more than two grade levels below their current grade level. By adding grades three through five, Nosotros believes it can meet the academic needs of primary students, thus better preparing them for middle and high school and the dual enrollment program with Pima Community College. Nosotros already has demonstrated its ability to run a successful middle school program. Nosotros Inc. earned AYP and Performing determinations from 2004 through 2007 demonstrating its ability to provide a quality education for all of its students. Nosotros Academy was recognized in *Success Measured*, a study conducted by the Arizona Charter Schools Association, for the high reading achievement of its students. It was its middle school that originally called attention to the entire school district. Nosotros Academy was in the top 29 schools out of 259 charters schools reviewed.

Expected student performance on state mandated tests at all grade levels impacted by the addition is expected to improve by 5% in reading, 8% in writing, and 3% in mathematics as Nosotros is able to intervene at a younger age, students entering high school will be better prepared for state mandated tests.

The expected timeline for the primary grades is as follows:

- June 10, 2010** All course work for Language Arts reading and writing is completed
 - Mathematics course work is 60% complete for all grades
 - Additional course work for P.E. and art to be discussed
 - Classrooms are designated and wired for computers; furniture for classrooms is in storage ready to go
- July 10, 2010**
 - Mathematics course work completed
 - Science course work will be 25% complete
 - Social Studies course work will be 25% complete
 - P.E. and art course work completed

August 1, 2010 All science and social studies course work will be 100% complete
Classrooms will be cleaned and ready for furniture; furniture will be brought out of storage and set up in classrooms

August 1, 2010 Highly qualified teachers will be hired for course work to be delivered to grades three, four, and five and will begin professional development and teacher training in preparation for the first day of school on August 16, 2010.
Classrooms will be ready for occupancy; computers will be set up on network and ready for student/staff use

Changes in staffing: In expectation of a favorable outcome of this amendment, Nosotros is already reviewing potential highly qualified staff for the three primary grades, with hire date to be no later than August 1, 2010. Nosotros Academy will need new teachers as follows: one (1) third grade teacher with elementary certification and preferable GATE and mathematics endorsements; one (1) fourth grade teacher with elementary certification and preferable GATE and mathematics endorsements; and one (1) fifth grade teacher with elementary certification and preferable GATE and mathematics endorsements. Nosotros Academy currently employs teachers who will be utilized in the primary grades: (1) art teacher highly qualified with K-12 certification; one (1) elementary teacher highly qualified K-8 with K-12 special education certification. Nosotros Academy will also have two (2) teacher assistants dedicated to the primary grades, currently on staff with Nosotros Academy. They are highly qualified, having more than 60 hours of college credits and/or successfully completed WorkKeys Proficiency Certification.

Adding primary grades enhances the educational environment and promotes continual improvement on a greater scale. It provides a wider focus for educational success that benefits students in all grade levels served. Nosotros has expanded its community outreach, engaging more parents and community members in the educational process. Tucson's west side is a better place to live and educate students because of the educational commitment Nosotros Inc. has made to the community. The addition of a charter school in 2002 merely deepened a commitment to improve its community that began more than thirty years ago.

We ask that our application be approved.

Response per April 9, 2010 Arizona State Board for Charter School's request for additional information:

The challenge Nosotros Academy has in evaluating its AIMS test scores is the small number of students taking the tests and determining what changes are statistically significant. The scores of two students can positively or negatively impact test scores for the entire school. Another factor that exerts a strong influence over the AIMS scores of our school is our comparatively transitory student demographic. Students join our school throughout the school year, and at markedly different and varying levels of education and academic preparedness. For example, of the sophomore cohort that participated in the Spring 2009 reading and writing AIMS evaluations, only 40% had been enrolled at Nosotros Academy from the beginning of the academic year or years prior. The remaining 60% had enrolled within the 6 months between the start of the school year and the date of the AIMS testing.

Furthermore, when comparing these two groups within the sophomore test-taking cohort of 2009, the performance levels and scores show distinct trends. The average reading score in 2009 for sophomores that had been enrolled at Nosotros Academy from the beginning of the 2008-2009 academic school year or earlier was 24.1 pts higher than that of the group of students who had enrolled later than this. This difference in means was also shown to be statistically significant using an unpaired student-t test for significance ($p=0.037$). Additionally, not only was the mean score greater for the group of students with longer enrollment, the performance levels were more successful. No student who started the school year at Nosotros fell far below the standard for reading in 2009; all of the sophomore cohort that fell far below the standards for Spring 2009 reading had enrolled late within the year and had been enrolled at Nosotros Academy for 6 months or less. (See figure 1)

We, however, do not begrudge these new enrollees for this sort of an effect on the AIMS scores and performance of our school. It is our mission at Nosotros Academy to target students that have found themselves behind and need extra assistance catching up to their peers, meeting state standards, graduating and achieving their goals. For reading evaluations, students that did not meet the standards in the Spring of 2009 improved their scores by an average of 19 pts the following Fall-- a statistically significant feat (paired student-t test, $p=0.002$).

Determining the actual cause of the gains or losses must include the analysis of data beyond the AIMS. Nosotros Academy reviews AIMS scores, teacher input, and TABE scores (Test of Adult Basic Education—used as a pretest and posttest). As class sizes and teacher to student ratios are small, teachers are a powerful asset in helping to determine students' weaknesses and strengths and are also an integral part of the solution. Although they might not directly correlate to achievement on the AIMS, TABE scores do provide a great deal of information regarding students' skill sets in reading and mathematics. Students testing at a 4th or 5th grade level in reading or math will need intervention to prepare them for mastery of high school standards. Data analysis is included.

TABE scores for reading show our students average a 4th to 5th grade equivalent in skills needed for reading. Students who start with us have reading skills more than four years below grade level. The skills students require the most assistance with are sentence phrasing, words in context, vocabulary, recalling meaning, and word meaning. Deficits in these areas impact students' ability to read with

fluency. Nosotros is dedicated to intervening on behalf of its students to improve reading skills as quickly as possible in order to be able to comprehend more challenging high school requirements.

TABE scores for mathematics show our students average a 5th grade equivalent in skills needed for mathematics. Students who start with Nosotros Academy have mathematics skills more than four years below grade level. The skills students require the most assistance with are fractions, dividing whole numbers, estimation, decimals and multiplying by whole numbers. These areas are expected to be mastered by high school, but the reality is that they are not and Nosotros has to bring the students up to speed as quickly as possible so that they can begin comprehending high school standards.

In addition to analysis of TABE scores for our students, a full 3 year analysis of AIMS results has identified the standards tested that pose the greatest challenges to our students. For reading, we observe, for example, that students struggle considerably more with vocabulary than with comprehension strategies. Additionally for math, analysis of change is a standard that proves difficult for testing groups each year.

Our job as a school is to find the most efficient means to accelerate our students so that they can graduate at, or close to, their cohort group. Nosotros Academy graduates more than 30% of its students each school year. On the one hand, Nosotros Academy is doing its job in supporting students to achieve their graduation goals. On the other hand, Nosotros Academy replaces one-third of its student body each school year with students typically more than four years below grade level. It is an awesome task, but everyone benefits when students are successfully recaptured.

Based on the analysis of all data, the following interventions will be revised or implemented for the 2010-2011 school year.

INTERVENTIONS:

1) INTRODUCING a new and improved study skills course for 2010-2011

- Course will be required for freshman and all students new to Nosotros Academy
- Create more efficient learners by developing critical organizational and academic skills

2) WRITING—greater emphasis is needed in the following targeted areas

- Ideas and Content
- Organization
- Word Choice

3) READING

- Three class periods per week, 30 minutes per session devoted to students utilizing the Reading Plus and/or Lexia reading programs. The program (reading Plus or Lexia) utilized by students is dependent on placement scores. The emphasis is on comprehension and vocabulary building. This will no longer be incorporated into the English curriculum, but will be a separate course required of all students who have not yet met the standards for reading. Credit will be earned as an elective.

4) MATHEMATICS

- New algebra textbook is being evaluated for purchase and inclusion into the curriculum by fall 2010. It was determined by teachers that supplemental materials do not adequately address the 2008 revised mathematics standards
- Revisions to offline syllabi to put greater emphasis on the 2008 strands that have been identified as needing the greatest improvement

5) INDIVIDUAL STUDENT PULL OUTS

- Targets students FFB (Falling Far Below)
- Emphasis on weakest strands in mathematics or reading
- The traits of the writing rubric needing attention—especially ideas and content, organization and word choice
- 1 1/2 hours twice each week per student in addition to class time

6) SATURDAY SCHOOL FROM 9 am--Noon

- Available for all students, strongly encouraged for students FFB or Approaching (parental support is gained through meetings and phone calls)
- Emphasis on weakest strands in mathematics and reading
- Emphasis on writing traits: ideas and content, organization, and word choice

MIDDLE SCHOOL evidence of any benchmark assessments that indicate the 6th, 7th and 8th grade level of performance on the AIMS.

Our new middle school currently has eight 6th graders, five 7th graders, and thirteen 8th graders. The same challenges we face in the high school are evident in the middle school. We have two sixth graders with IEPs and one 6th graders with a 504 plan. There are second language issues being addressed and several students enrolled with third grade skills. These students were falling further and further behind in their previous schools. They value the small classroom environment and one-on-one instruction. The middle school teachers are proud of the improvement their students have made since the beginning of the school year.

Nosotros Academy invested in an assessment through A+LS (Anywhere Learning Systems). It was purchased for three reasons:

- 1) The TABE is neither effective nor accurate for younger students.
- 2) A+LS is evolving their assessment to correlate to the AIMS. It currently correlates to the AIMS reading and math is not far behind. The assessment provides an educational course prescription for each student to strengthen their reading or mathematics skills where needed
- 3) The assessment is good for grades k-12. Nosotros Academy is beta testing this assessment in the middle grades this year with the intent to utilize it school-wide if it proves to be a valuable indicator on how well students will perform on the AIMS.

From in-class assessments and the A+LS assessment of the middle school students, teachers are confident that at least 50% of the middle school students will meet the standards in reading. More of the students are struggling in mathematics, but the teachers believe about one-third of the students will meet the standards in mathematics. Teachers believe that the balance of students will approach the standards in reading, none falling far below. Teachers believe the assessments indicate that the three special needs students might fall far below in mathematics because that is their challenge subject, but the rest should approach in mathematics. Teachers are confident that all students are applying themselves and if the current level of improvement continues, next year's results will be significantly better. Considering that more than 50% of the students enrolled with skills well below grade level, this is encouraging. The goal of Nosotros Academy is to intervene as early as possible to recapture students falling behind in other schools. It has dedicated the tools and resources to meet that goal.

We ask that the State Board for Charter Schools accepts our request to add grades 3-5. Thank you.