AGENDA ITEM: Charter Renewal – Reconsideration of Renewal Application

Issue

Although Children's Success Academy, Inc. did not meet the conditions set forth in the Board's renewal decision that would allow it to request the Board review the FY2014 Dashboard to consider whether conditions exist to grant a renewal, the Charter Holder has submitted such a request because the school it operates, Children's Success Academy, received an FY2014 A-F Letter Grade of B. Although it has been provided two opportunities, Children's Success Academy, Inc. has failed to submit a Performance Management Plan that meets the Board's evaluation criteria.

Background

Prior Renewal Consideration

At the June 9, 2014 meeting of the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools (Board), the Board voted to deny the request for charter renewal and not grant a renewal contract for Children's Success Academy, Inc. for the reasons that the charter holder failed to meet or make sufficient progress toward the academic performance expectations set forth in the performance framework in accordance with A.R.S. § 15-183(I). The Board's decision included a provision that would allow the Charter Holder to request the Board review the FY2014 Dashboard to consider whether conditions exist to grant a renewal if the FY2014 Academic Dashboard for the school operated by the Charter Holder, Children's Success Academy, reflected an Overall Rating that improved by at least one category as compared to the 2013 Dashboard (DNM to Meets) and the school was assigned a letter grade of C or better.

The portfolio considered by the Board as well as an audio recording of the discussion during the June 9, 2014 meeting regarding Children's Success Academy, Inc.'s renewal application is available at: https://asbcs.az.gov/board-staff-information/meeting-dates-materials.

On June 12, 2014, Board staff emailed a letter to the charter holder which informed the charter holder of the Board's decision to deny Children's Success Academy, Inc.'s request for renewal, the conditions for requesting the Board review the FY2014 Dashboard, and the process for appealing the Board's decision.

Children's Success Academy, Inc. did not appeal the Board's decision.

Request for Reconsideration

On January 2, 2015, the Charter Holder notified the Board that Children's Success Academy has been assigned a B letter grade by the Arizona Department of Education (Department) and requested further consideration of its renewal request. Children's Success Academy, Inc. did not meet the conditions set forth in the Board's renewal decision as the Charter Holder could not demonstrate that Children's Success Academy had improved its Overall Rating by at least one category. Children's Success Academy received an Overall Rating of "Does Not Meet" on the FY2014 Academic Dashboard.

FY2014 Academic Performance Data

On July 25, 2014, the Department notified the Board that a FY2014 A-F Letter Grade has not been calculated for Children's Success Academy because of concerns that data related to some AIMS test results showed certain irregularities. The Department conducted an investigation to determine whether AIMS test records

and/or student enrollment data used to make an accountability determination for the school had been manipulated and submitted under fraudulent pretense.

On November 6, 2014, the Board received a copy of the "Notice of Findings of Accountability Investigation" sent from the Department to Children's Success Academy, Inc. In that notice, the Department notified the Charter Holder that it would invalidate 4 individual Mathematics results for Children's Success Academy. The student test records that were invalidated met two criteria 1) "the number of wrong-to-right erasures on each invalidated test record exceeds the state's erasure average for that grade and subject by five standard deviations," and 2) "the percentage of wrong-to-right erasures as compared to total erasures for each record exceeded 55%." The department further found that there were similar irregularities present in the FY2013 AIMS test results, which had not been investigated.

Children's Success Academy, Inc. was notified of its right to appeal the findings of this investigation; no appeal was filed.

The Department calculated the Children's Success Academy's FY2014 A-F Letter Grade using the remaining student test records, which did not meet the invalidation criteria. Based on that data, the school was assigned a B letter grade.

Children's Success Academy's FY2014 Academic Dashboard (portfolio b. Academic Dashboard) was calculated as a small school, using the FY2014 student test records that were not invalidated along with FY2012 and FY2013 student test records. Children's Success Academy's Overall Rating remained at a "Does Not Meet." Children's Success Academy, Inc. did not meet the conditions set forth in the Board's renewal decision to request additional consideration of the renewal decision.

On January 7, 2015, Board staff notified Children's Success Academy, Inc., through its authorized representatives – Nanci Aiken and Scott Duerstock, that while the Charter Holder had not met the required conditions, Board staff would present the Charter Holder to the Board for additional consideration of the renewal decision upon submission of a Performance Management Plan (PMP) that meets the Board's evaluation criteria.

Performance Management Plan

On February 2, 2015, Children's Success Academy, Inc. submitted a PMP.

On February 25, 2015, Board staff evaluated the PMP and provided the Charter Holder with an evaluation and technical feedback. The evaluation indicated that for Action Steps the PMP was evaluated as Does Not Meet in three areas and Falls Far Below in one area, and for Evidence the PMP was evaluated as Does Not Meet in three areas and Falls Far Below in two area.

On March 11, 2015, Children's Success Academy, Inc. submitted a revised PMP. Board staff evaluated the revised PMP and determined that the PMP was still not acceptable, receiving evaluations of Does Not Meet in four areas for both action steps and evidence and Falls Far Below in one area for evidence (portfolio c. Revised PMP Evaluation). During this evaluation, Board staff identified that in two areas, Assessment and Monitoring Instruction, the Charter Holder had ignored nearly all of the technical feedback provided on February 25, making only very minor revisions to the responsible parties or timelines.

Board Options

Option 1: The Board may choose to take no action. Because the Charter Holder failed to appeal the Board's decision to deny the request for charter renewal and not grant a renewal contract, the charter contract between the Board and Children's Success Academy, Inc. will expire on June 30, 2015. Children's Success Academy, Inc. will no longer be authorized to operate a charter school under the Board's sponsorship after that date.

Option 2: The Board may direct staff to continue working with the Charter Holder to develop an acceptable Performance Management Plan and renewal contract. The following language is provided for consideration: I move that the Board direct staff to continue working with the Charter Holder to develop an acceptable Performance Management Plan and renewal contract. This matter should be revisited at the May Board meeting.