Ventana Academic Charter School
Renewal Executive Summary Report

I. Sources of Evidence for this Document

A.R.S. 15-183.I states that "[a] charter school that elects to apply for renewal shall file an application for renewal…which shall include a detailed business plan for the charter school, a review of fiscal audits and academic performance data for the charter school and a review of the current contract between the sponsor and the charter school."

The Arizona State Board for Charter Schools (ASBCS) determined that renewal of a charter is based on affirmative evidence in three areas:

- Success of the academic program, including academic achievement
- Viability of the organization, including fiscal management and compliance
- Adherence to the terms of the charter, including contract and legal compliance

Evaluation of the charter holder's success in these three areas is based on a variety of information that will serve as sources of evidence in determining renewal. These sources include:

- Written application for renewal
- Student performance data
- Independent financial audits
- Five year interval summary reviews
- Site visit reports
- Monitoring reports

II. School Profile

Ventana Academic Charter School was granted a charter by the State Board of Education, effective on the first day of the operation of the school which was September 5, 1995. The Charter Holder transferred the charter to the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools on June 8, 2009. Ventana Academic Charter School is a non-profit in good standing with the Arizona Corporation Commission. The charter representative is Dorothy Tucker. The school, Ventana Academy, is located at 6424 E. Cave Creek Road in Cave Creek, serves K-8, and had a FY10 ADM of 110.523.

Mission Statement:
Ventana Academy, a K-8 school of choice, provides a superior quality educational experience that instills students with a love of learning and imbues them with the essential academic skills and knowledge relevant to both today and tomorrow. Ventana uses rigorous, innovative, data-driven instruction with a focus on Science and technology in small class sizes that nurture their intellect and spirit while surrounding them in a sincere, cooperative environment rich with the contributions from our parents and extended community.

III. Academic Performance

Fiscal Year	AZ LEARNS	Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)
2009	Performing	Yes
2008	Performing	Yes
2007	Performing Plus	Yes

Status Scores	2009	2008	2007
Reading	77	71	83
Math	72	74	65
% of students school-wide who passed AIMS.			

Student Growth Percentile (SGP)	2009	2008	2007
Reading	57	27	44
Math	27	42	52
% of students demonstrating typical growth compared to similar students.			

IV. Fiscal Compliance

Except for fiscal year 2005, the charter holder has timely submitted the annual audit for the past five years. For the same five years, the audits revealed no audit issues requiring a corrective action plan and no repeat issues were identified.

Ventana Academic Charter School has received exceptions from the Uniform System of Financial Records for Charter Schools and State procurement regulations.

V. Legal and Contractual Compliance

Except for fiscal years 2006 and 2008, the charter holder has timely submitted the Annual Financial Report. The charter holder has timely submitted the Budget for the past five years. All Declarations were submitted to the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) in a timely manner. The Highly-Qualified Teacher report, updated on November 3, 2009, indicated 13 core teachers with four being reported as non-highly qualified. In 2004 noncompliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was determined by ADE Exceptional Student Services

and a Corrective Action Plan was required. A Five-Year Interval Review by ASBCS took place in 2006.

VI. Renewal Application

A. Education Plan

The Charter Holder was required to submit a Performance Management Plan in the academic section of the renewal application.

The introductory narrative for the Performance Management Plan describes the process the school community undertook for data examination and analysis. Data reviewed included AIMS grade level percent passing and student growth percentiles. Based upon the data analysis, the school determined to focus the plan on continuing improvement efforts for enriching the math academic program to include additional resources, support systems, and administrative oversight.

Indicator: **Math**
Duration of the Plan: August, 2009 – May, 2012
Strategies:
- Administrative Oversight
- Additional Instructional Time
- Increased Resources

BENCHMARK TARGETS:

CURRENT YEAR 2009	Year 1 2010	Year 2 2011	Year 3 2012	Target For This Plan
Current AIMS scores on 2009 (74%)	Increase % of students passing AIMS to 78%	Increase % of students passing AIMS to 82%	Increase % of students passing AIMS to 85% or higher	85% or higher of all students will pass AIMS
Current median SGP based on 2009 AIMS data (26%)	Increase median SGP by 10 points to a median growth percentile of 36	Increase median SGP by 10 points to a median growth percentile of 46	Increase median SGP by 10 points to a median growth percentile of 50 or higher	80% of all students will maintain a 50% or higher growth rate annually
Current AIMSweb Fall benchmark data (61 %)	Increase % of students in grades 1-8 who are above the 40th percentile on end of the year AIMSweb benchmarking to 66%	Increase % of students in grades 1-8 who are above the 40th percentile on end of the year AIMSweb benchmarking to 72%	Increase % of students in grades 1-8 who are above the 40th percentile on end of the year AIMSweb benchmarking to 80%	80% of all students who fall below the 40th percentile on the AIMSweb fall benchmark will meet or exceed their targeted goals by year's end

In the Performance Management Plan Ventana Academy scored 25 points out of a possible 40 points. Sixty percent of the sections scored at meets or exceeds level.

B. Detailed Business Plan

Organization

The Governing Board and Charter Holder are one and the same and oversee the Director of Business and Operations, a new position created in March, 2010, and the Principal. The Director of Business & Operations is to be instrumental in the school's long term success by providing the means for maintaining and increasing enrollment, by ensuring community awareness of the existence and desirability of the education provided by Ventana and by consistently building, promoting, and safeguarding the image of Ventana Academy.

The Principal is a co-administrator with the Director of Business & Operations and reports directly to the Governing Board. The school Principal provides the instructional and administrative leadership necessary for the purpose of ensuring successful student and faculty performance.

Other key entities represented in the organizational chart include the Business Manager, the Friends of Ventana Advisory Council, the Parent Teacher Organization, and the Registrar.

Sustainability

Fiscal Viability

Ventana Academic Charter School has established certain accounting procedures and processes for fiscal decision-making. The operating budget is initiated annually by the finance committee with the assistance of the school's accountant. The governing board approves the operating budget, and the director of business and operations and the office manager are responsible for its implementation. Monthly, the governing board receives several reports prepared by its independent accounting firm. (Please see the Sustainability section of the charter holder's renewal application for a list and examples of the reports.)

Ventana Academy pursues two major fundraising categories – program support fees and tax credit donations. In addition, the Parent Teacher Organization conducts fundraising activities throughout the year. Program support fees are requested of parents for after school activities and allow for the purchase of baseball team uniforms, soccer balls and helmets for Horse Club. Overall, these fundraising efforts represent approximately 6 percent of the school's operating budget.

For fiscal year 2008 and fiscal year 2009, the independent certified public accountant issued an unqualified (or "clean") opinion on Ventana Academic Charter School's financial statements. In each fiscal year, the charter holder ended the year with positive net assets. The Budget Plan submitted as part of the renewal application indicates that Ventana Academic Charter School's ending net assets will increase between fiscal years 2010 and 2012. The charter holder has projected its ADM to grow from 109.522 in fiscal year 2010 to 190 in fiscal year 2012.

According to the assumptions provided, the three-year Budget Plan incorporates known cuts to State funding.[1]

Strength and Stability of the Governing Body
Strength and Stability of the Corporate Board

The corporate board of Ventana Academic Charter School and the governing board of Ventana Academy are the same. The corporate/governing board currently includes five members:

Dorothy Tucker-Chair & Acting Secretary
Dr. Robert Chartier-Vice Chair
Reginald Monachino-Treasurer
Dana Gonder-Member
Shea Stanfield-Member

The bylaws provide for a five to seven member board. When there are openings, the nominating committee reaches out to parents, interested community members and advocates for education. Interested parties will fill out an application and interview with one or two of the current members. For more information on the current members' backgrounds, please see the application's Strength and Stability of the Governing Board section.

The governing board's major responsibilities include oversight of all financial matters, establishment of school policy, and the employment and removal of the principal and all of the school's paid employees and contractors/vendors. The renewal application provides additional detail regarding the governing board members' responsibilities and, by school function category, lines of authority, accountability and responsibility between the board and the administration.

The principal and special education/Core Knowledge coordinator regularly report to the governing board the school's AIMSweb results. The overall results are shared with the board. The Core Knowledge coordinator will recommend to the governing board when any new or different curricular resources are needed.

<u>Succession Plan</u>

Charter Holder: The application identifies terms of office for the members and expiration dates for those terms. Two members have terms that expire in November, 2011, are unlikely to accept an additional term, and are scheduled to be replaced. A third member's term expires in November, 2012, and is unlikely to continue and will be replaced. The two remaining members are likely to be renewed for three year terms when their current terms expire in 2011 and 2013. Two additional members will be added to the Board in July, 2010. The Board has a Replacement Timeline that was submitted with the application.

Instructional Leadership: At this point, there is one teacher per grade level and a curriculum/special education coordinator. Each teacher is considered the lead teacher for his/her grade. The application states that when the school grows to two to three teachers per grade, it will explore developing lead teacher roles versus the collegial teams now in place across grades.

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[1] The charter holder was required to submit a performance management plan, which, in turn, requires the submission of a fiscal year 2011 month-by-month projection. In reviewing this projection, please note that under the State's new payment schedule, charter holders will not receive a July 2010 state equalization assistance payment, but will receive two payments in June 2011.

The application also mentions performance pay incentives and tuition reimbursement policies that are in place.

Facilities Plan

The application reports that, since June 15, 1998, Ventana Academic Charter School has been leasing and occupying part of the original school buildings belonging to the Cave Creek Unified School District. The property leased is at 6424 East Cave Creek Road in Cave Creek, AZ. The Ventana Academic Charter School Governing Board has renewed a one-year lease with the Cave Creek Unified School District for the property currently occupied. In February, 2008, Ventana Academic Charter School purchased 2.4 acres on the corner of Tapekim Road and Cave Creek Road, in North Phoenix, for the purpose of building a school that could house 250 students. According to the narrative in the application, in order to have sufficient income to competitively compensate staff and offer the programs to the students, the Governing Board has been advised that the school needs to plan for approximately 500 students. At this time, the Board is actively seeking a larger parcel, minimally 5 acres, close to the currently occupied buildings, upon which to build its own new school.

The application reports that Ventana Academic Charter School is in final discussions with the Challenge Foundation to partner with them as a TeamCFA school. The Ventana Academic Charter School Governing Board reports that they have received verbal assurances that the final outcome will be positive and that Ventana Academy will become an affiliated school with TeamCFA. According to the application, TeamCFA has provided assurances of an outright loan for the construction of new facilities, or will guarantee a bond to finance the design and build of a new facility. Plans are to complete construction and have the new school ready for the 2011-12 school year.

VII. Staff Recommendation

Based upon the information in the application, academic performance over the charter term, fiscal compliance, and legal and contractual compliance, I move to approve the renewal application and grant a renewal contract for Ventana Academic Charter School.