

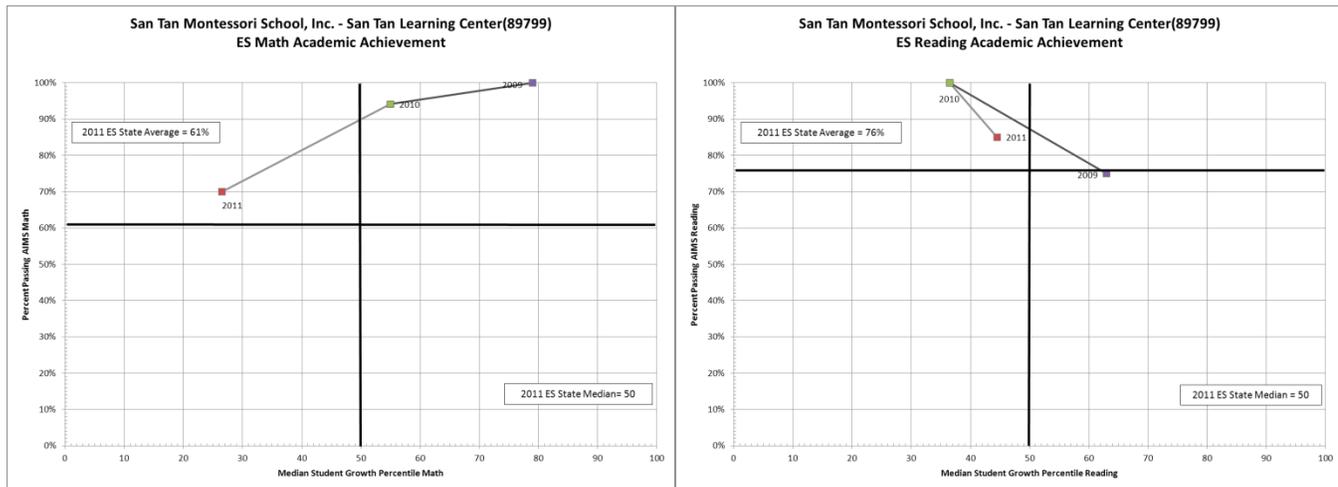
AGENDA ITEM: New School Site and Enrollment Cap Notification Requests - San Tan Montessori School, Inc.

Issue

On February 28, 2011, San Tan Montessori School, Inc., a non-profit entity, submitted a complete notification request to add a new school site and increase its enrollment cap, but does not meet the Board’s criteria, specifically the level of adequate academic performance, for approval without Board consideration.

Background

As stated in Board policy, staff conducted a compliance check as part of the amendment and notification request approval process. The compliance check included an assessment of whether San Tan Learning Center met or demonstrated sufficient progress toward the Board’s level of adequate academic performance. As shown in the academic data graphs that follow, San Tan Learning Center has not met the level of adequate academic performance or demonstrated sufficient growth in Reading and Math, therefore these notification requests were considered ineligible for signing without Board approval. The charter holder is compliant in all other areas.

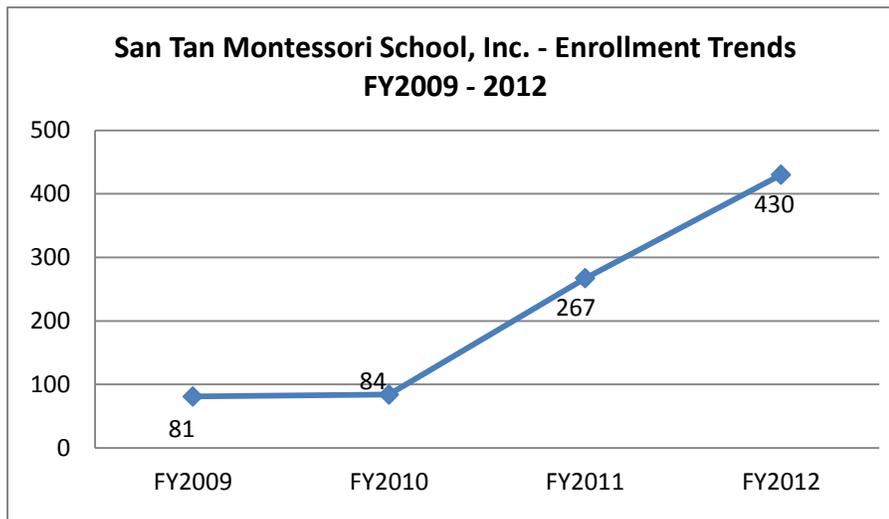


San Tan Montessori School, Inc. was granted a charter in 2008 and opened San Tan Learning Center in July, 2008. The initial enrollment cap of 78 was increased to 208 in May 2008. Later it was increased to 364 in May 2009, and increased again to its current 500 in March 2011. Currently, the charter holder is operating one site serving grades K-6. In March, 2011 they amended their charter to serve grades K-8.

As provided by the Charter Holder in the notification request submission, San Tan Montessori School, Inc. is planning to open one new site for the 2012-2013 school year and will increase their enrollment cap to 1100. The additional site will be located at the Northwest Corner of Arizona Avenue and Chandler Heights Road in Chandler, Arizona.

According to the charter holder, support for an expansion of San Tan Montessori School, Inc. to add a new site is currently based on 10% of the student population that is being served by San Tan Learning Center (approximately 40 students) commutes from Chandler. The narrative states, “Being present in the community where our children live is important in accomplishing our mission because by reducing families commutes to school in addition to families being able to live, work, and play in the community where they live can allow more opportunity and time for students to foster the curiosity, creativity, and imagination born within us all.”

In addition, the charter holder states, “Currently we have reached our enrollment cap for the 2011/2012 school year and have over 100 students on a waiting list for the 2012-2013 school year. Furthermore the addition of our Chandler Campus will add 450 students to our total student count”. The enrollment trends from fiscal year 2009-2012 are included in the following chart.



A previous notification request had been submitted in December 2011. On December 8, Board staff requested additional documents in support of the notification requests. The additional documents include information to support what has been described and implemented in the “improvement plan” document that was submitted with the request.

Upon review of the materials that were submitted, Board staff scheduled a conference call with Dr. Kris Sippel (charter representative), Eric Sloan, and members of the Administrative Team at San Tan Montessori School, Inc. on January 25, 2012, to address questions that arose during the review and discuss information that was expected, but not included. In addition to the questions, the Charter Holder was also asked to address the second part of the narrative requirement for a New School Site Notification, which was not included in the initial submission, “How the additional school site supports the philosophy, methods of instruction, special emphasis, and mission of the charter.”

On January 31, in an email to the Charter Holder, Board staff explained the materials received on January 27 did not include the required narrative and other information requested. On February 1, all required materials were received.

On February 10, Board staff received an email from the Charter Holder, requesting that the item for San Tan Montessori School, Inc. on the February agenda be moved to the March agenda, in order to provide Board staff additional student data that would demonstrate growth in student performance and “provide an accurate picture of student achievement trend”, according to the Charter Holder.

On February 28 a New School Site Notification Request was submitted containing additional documentation to support the “improvement plan” documents that was submitted with the request.

Upon review of the additional student data spreadsheets that were submitted, Board staff sent an email to the Charter Holder on March 6, asking for additional information and clarification pertaining to the following:

- Teacher grade level assignments,
- The student grade level proficiency score on the quarterly math assessment,
- Criteria used to determine when a student is eligible to be assessed using the grade level above assessment, and
- Documentation to demonstrate alignment of the quarterly math assessment to grade level Arizona Academic Standards.

On March 6, the information above was received. Board staff determined that students from grades K-7 were administered quarterly benchmark assessments in reading fluency and math by aligning the teacher name and grade level to the student score. According to the Charter Holder, “there is an A and/or B version of the benchmark assessments given during each testing session. The teacher will switch versions every other session.” According to the Charter Holder, students were considered to be on track for the December assessment if they scored between 45%-50%. According to the charter holder this was calculated by taking the year end benchmark score and dividing that score by four, for the four quarters in a school year. In December some students were assessed using the grade level above

assessment. According to the Charter Holder, once a student reaches the benchmark goal they are administered the assessment for a grade level above for their next benchmark assessment.

The document provided by the Charter Holder to demonstrate alignment to the standards is a correlation designed to show an alignment between the enVisionMATH program and the standards. The Charter Holder stated that the alignment document “shows that the curriculum aligns to the Arizona State Standards which shows the assessments that enVision Math has published aligns to the Arizona state Standards.”

According to the Charter Holder, several initiatives to increase student achievement have been implemented at San Tan Learning Center based on staff surveys implemented in the spring of 2011, test scores, parent feedback, and goals set by the new administrative team. The initiatives that were supported with evidence of implementation include:

- Development of a school-wide professional development plan with emphasis on identifying and practicing effective strategies in math,
- Adjusting the school calendar to incorporate weekly team meetings and multi-grade level articulation days, and
- Administering quarterly benchmark assessments as a means of measuring student progress and as a guide to writing the student goals in the ILP jointly with parents and teachers at the beginning of each quarter.
- Based on the analysis of the student academic data provided for the quarterly benchmark assessments in reading fluency and math for grades K-7, the scores indicate the following:
 - In grades K-6, in the month of December, 80% of the students met or exceeded the reading fluency goal.
 - In grades K-3, from August 2011 to December 2011, 98% of the students showed growth on the enVision benchmark math assessment.
 - In grades 4-6, from August 2011 to December 2011, 84% of the students showed growth on the enVision benchmark math assessment.
 - No analysis of 7th grade performance in Math or Reading was provided.

The narrative and additional documents that were provided by the Charter Holder to support their case for expansion are included in the portfolio for the Board’s consideration.

Board Options:

Option 1: The Board may approve the addition of a school site and increase in enrollment cap. The following language is provided for consideration: I move, based on the information contained in the Board materials and presented today, that the Board approve to add one site to the charter and increase the enrollment cap from 500 to 1100 to San Tan Montessori School, Inc.

Option 2: The Board may deny the addition of a school site and increase in enrollment cap. Staff recommends the following language for consideration: I move, based on the information contained in the Board materials and presented today, that the Board deny the requests to add one site to the charter and increase the enrollment cap of San Tan Montessori School, Inc. for the reasons that:

- The prior academic performance as reflected in the Board’s graph does not demonstrate the Charter Holder has previously provided a learning environment that has improved student achievement, and
- The limited academic data and documentation to support the implementation of the improvement plan does not provide sufficient evidence that the Charter Holder is providing a learning environment that will result in improved student achievement as measured through AIMS.
- (Other specific reasons the Board may have found during its consideration.)