5405 North Oracle Road, Suite 101
Tucson, Arizona, 85704
www.RisingSchool.org

Arizona State Board for Charter Schools
P.O. Box 18328
Phoenix, AZ 85009
CC: Ms. DeAnna Rowe, ASBCS Executive Director

Dear Arizona State Board for Charter Schools:

As the Authorized Charter Representative of The Rising School (TRS), I am writing to request a Good Cause Extension of the opening of our school to August 4, 2014. We understand that this is a *one-time* extension. We believe that we have good cause to extend the opening of our school, and we thank you in advance for considering the following information in support of our request.

TRS was chartered by the ASBCS on January 22, 2013. A week later, TRS submitted its application for an Arizona Charter School Program (AZ CSP) grant, which would enable the school to take a planning year from April 2013 through July 2014, opening on August 4, 2014. However, on March 25, 2013, TRS's application for an AZ CSP grant was denied. There were irregularities in the grant process, so TRS appealed the denial of the grant. This appeal process eventually took six months to resolve. In the meantime, on April 8, TRS's Governing Board met to discuss the situation, eventually concluding that a planning year without an AZ CSP grant was unwise. Consequently, the TRS Board voted to move aggressively to open in August 2013, with the one change that the school would plan to start with 50 students rather than 100 and in a correspondingly smaller facility.

TRS immediately instructed its real-estate agent to assertively search for facilities. After touring several sites, TRS found a seemingly excellent building: it was the right size (just over 3,000 square feet) and was in a complex with three other vacant buildings totaling another 12,000 square feet, which would enable the school to easily increase enrollment in the ensuing years. Furthermore, the landlord granted $60,000 in tenant improvements to redesign the building and to bring it up to E-occupancy code. The landlord assured us that he was experienced in these matters and that this $60,000 would cover all costs, including architectural design to our specifications, demolition of the interior, and build out of our design. Additionally, the facility was located directly across the street from Townsend Middle School, a Tucson Unified school that was being closed, so its students may have been looking for a new neighborhood school. Within two weeks of searching for a facility, on April 12, TRS signed a lease for the building.

With a facility secured, TRS inaugurated a recruiting blitz for students. TRS Board members, friends, community members, and six paid canvassers went door-to-door to houses, apartments, and businesses in the community on a daily basis. The school also used targeted direct mail,

signs, and community meetings to market the school to neighborhood parents and students. In seven weeks, TRS enrolled 14 students and had six others who said that they planned to attend the school; these 20 recruited students represented an average of 3 students recruited per week. During this period, moreover, TRS also put up ads for faculty, interviewed dozens of candidates, and eventually hired four excellent teachers.

By May 22, TRS had completed all of its requirements outlined in its charter-acceptance letter. On that date, I signed the charter contract with ASBCS Executive Director DeAnna Rowe. Ms. Rowe advised me that, if the school decided not to open in August, we should make the decision sooner rather than later; it proved to be wise counsel.

In early June, the landlord informed TRS that the tenant improvements would cost $150,000, $90,000 more than the $60,000 allowance that TRS had been given. Furthermore, future tenant improvements for the three adjacent buildings would cost another $600,000, for a total of $750,000. Thus, the cost was prohibitive, far above the budgeted amount. Although the landlord was contractually obligated to pay 80% of the overrun for the first 3,000 square feet of space (TRS's portion was 20%), the landlord would not commit to giving any allowance to cover the projected $600,000 worth of future tenant-improvement expenses for the rest of the space.

Additionally, with just 14 solid commitments from students, the school would need to recruit another 36 students over the next eight weeks. While this was certainly possible, it was risky.

Consequently, on June 13, TRS's Governing Board voted to shut the operation down and to open in 2014 rather than 2013. The Board also voted to begin negotiating a termination of the lease (the negotiations eventually concluded with an agreement in September). This decision allowed two months for students to find another school and for teachers to find other employment.

On September 25, after six months, the Arizona State Board of Education ruled in TRS's favor, thereby granting TRS an AZ CSP grant for $230,000 for FY 2014, with a possible two-year renewal, for a total of $690,000. This ruling enabled TRS to continue its planning year to prepare for opening in August 2014. TRS hired a Principal and Office Manager, and it is in negotiations to lease a turnkey-ready facility, which housed a school from 1998-2013, located at 1 W. Orange Grove Road in Tucson.

In closing, we appreciate ASBCS's consideration of our Good Cause Extension to open our school in August 2014. We believe we have good reasons for this extension. Our Governing Board and I continue to be excited about the school's opening and future success. We wish to assure you that we are making all efforts toward a strong launch next fall. If you have any questions or require further information to process this request, please do not hesitate to contact me at George.Rising@Risingschool.org or at (520) 272-8541. Thanks very much!

Sincerely,

George G. Rising, PhD
Authorized Charter Representative
The Rising School