AGENDA ITEM: Request to Expand Charter School Operations – Vista College Preparatory, Inc.

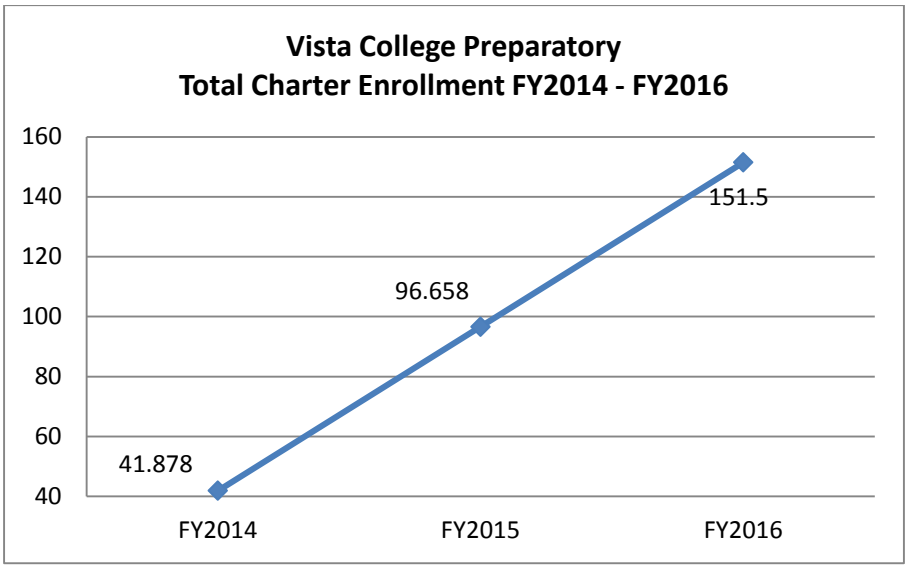
Issue

Vista College Preparatory, Inc. (VCP) submitted a request to expand charter school operations to add a new school site and increase their enrollment cap to 495. VCP has not met the Board's academic performance expectations because in FY 2014, VCP served grades K-2 in their second year of operation, which are not tested by the State of Arizona and received a "No Rating" on the academic dashboard. VCP is asking for additional consideration from the Board to be eligible to apply for an expansion request that would include required information as defined in the Academic Intervention Schedule. The charter is authorized for grades K through 5 and currently serving grades K through 3.

Background

In January 2013, the Board approved the new charter application for VCP to open Vista College Preparatory (Vista) in Central Phoenix to serve grades K-5, with an enrollment cap of 349. Vista opened in August 2013, serving 55 students in grades K-1 as observed during the 1st year site visit. Board staff conducted the 1st year site visit of Vista and it was successfully closed out as noted in the 1st year site visit letter (see Appendix A).

The graph below shows average daily membership (ADM) for the charter based on 100th ADM for FY 2014 and 2015, with FY 2016 ADM based on the estimated count figures (Data provided by Arizona Department of Education).



Request

In the Letter of Intent submitted on September 30, 2015 (see Appendix B), VCP states "Vista is expanding because our scholars have proven that demographics do not determine destiny and stakeholders are asking for our school to serve their communities." Data provided by the Charter Holder display TerraNova Results for the end of year in grades K-2. According to the Charter Holder, "Vista College Prep scholars dramatically exceeded the national median on the nationally normed TerraNova assessment." The data provides the median national percentile for the following grades:

	Year 1 (2013-2014)	Year 2 (2014-2015)
K	88	95
1	65	87
2	n/a	83

VCP has received a planning grant from the Arizona Community Foundation to support the strategic planning of a "strong and sustainable growth model" for the new school site. The grant includes working with local consultants to perform the financial and legal feasibility analysis and leaders of Uncommon Charter Schools to support programmatic analysis of the model. The plan for 2016-2017 is to serve grades K-4 at Vista and open a new school site serving grades K through 1. "Vista intends to grow this second campus in the same way it did its current campus, by starting with kindergarten and first grade in 2016/2017 and growing out to serving K-5 by adding one grade in each successive year."

The Charter Holder has also provided some highlights regarding the accomplishments of VCP in this past year (see Appendix B).

Board staff recommends that if the Board allows VCP to submit the New School Site Notification Request and Increase to Enrollment Cap Notification Request, that the Charter Holder would also be required to submit the required information as defined in the Academic Intervention Schedule.

Board Options

Option 1: The Board may approve the request to be eligible to apply for expansion. 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 the request of Vista College Preparatory, Inc. to be eligible to submit a New School Notification Request to add a new site and an Enrollment Cap Notification Request to increase the enrollment cap to 495 with required information as identified in the Academic Intervention Schedule that includes benchmark data for FY 2015 and FY 2016. Following their submission, the results of Board staff's review of these items will be provided to the Board for its consideration of Vista College Preparatory, Inc.'s expansion requests.

Option 2: The Board may deny the request to be eligible to apply for expansion. The following language is provided for consideration: I move, based on the information contained in the Board materials and presented today, the Board does not find sufficient support to consider an expansion request. The Charter Holder may submit a request in the future when the academic dashboard provides evidence of additional improvement.