

AGENDA ITEM EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Application for New Charter

Request

Think Through Academy (“Applicant”) submitted a new charter application package on June 23, 2017. The Applicant is requesting a charter to serve grades 9 through 12 in Phoenix. The Technical Review Panel (“TRP”) evaluated the application package and determined that the revised application package exceeds the minimum scoring requirements set by the Board for the 2018-2019 application cycle.

APPLICANT SUMMARY

Mission Statement

The mission of Think Through Academy is to equip learners with the 21st century skills necessary for success within and beyond school, through a highly effective and differentiated curriculum delivered by an effective instructional staff within a collaborative environment.

Proposed School Name	Target Start Date	School Location	Grade Levels	School Calendar
Think Through Academy	August 6, 2018	Phoenix	9-12	185 days

Target Population

The following summary was created from excerpts and summaries of the information submitted for the Applicant’s Educational Plan A.2: Target Population narrative.

Think Through Academy will target 9th through 12th grade students ages 14-22 who reside in northwest Phoenix. The targeted population includes students who reside in 85015, 85017, and 85019 ZIP code. The Applicant will serve high needs students. These students are at risk of educational failure or otherwise in need of special assistance and support since they are living in poverty while attending high-minority schools and are left far below grade level. The income per capita is \$12,929, well below the national average of \$29,472. The population of the targeted area is about 35,600. 41% are home owners, while 59% rent. The above poverty indicators characterize the community with Free Reduced Lunch (Title 1) with an average rate of 91.07%. The Applicant’s targeted student population is racially and ethnically diverse, characterized by extreme poverty. Most of the students are also impacted by other factors such as homelessness and refugee status.

Proposed Locations:

Unconfirmed locations (see Business Plan C.1: Facilities Acquisition)

- 3345 North 19th Avenue, Phoenix
- 1726 West Camelback Road, Phoenix
- 3232 West Thomas Road Phoenix

Program of Instruction

The following summary was created from excerpts and summaries of the information submitted for the Applicant’s Educational Plan A.3: Program of Instruction narrative.

For students to excel in college and careers, they will need to use technology that has not yet been invented and for jobs that have not yet been created. To meet future challenges, students need to think critically. Think Through Academy students will be given the opportunity to think critically and learn the 21st century skills while learning in any subject, regardless of their current academic performance level. All students will have access to high-quality learning opportunities in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects which often require deep engagement with dynamic, complex content. The Applicant will follow the rotational model to implement its Differentiated Instruction, Response to Intervention, Project Based Learning and STEM. In this model the teachers model for students in a large group setting, then students collaborate in smaller groups on specific tasks at various stations, before they move on to complete independent work. Interdisciplinary, aligned to the school’s vision, mission, and core values, and based on the Arizona Standards Think Through Academy’s rigorous curriculum emphasizes literacy and numeracy in all disciplines.



Governance

Corporate Board and School Governing Body Members	Type
Najat Benaoussar	Ex Officio Member
Naureen Hasan	School Staff
Kari Klein	Charter Organization

See G: Principal Resumes

Three Year Plan

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
Grade Levels	9-12	9-12	9-12
Enrollment	200	300	400

TRP Recommendation and Scoring

The TRP assessed each application package against the published evaluation criteria. Approval is based on either receiving 95% or higher for each plan (Educational, Operational, and Business) and/or through showing capacity throughout the interview process. The following is a summary of the qualitative evaluation information in support of the recommendation by the TRP based on the revised application package and the capacity interview.

Overall Scoring Results

	Preliminary TRP Scores		Revised TRP Scores	
Any Falls Below the Expectations ratings?	Yes		No	
Any section in which more than one evaluation area scored Approaches?	Yes		No	
		Percent Meets		Percent Meets
Educational Plan Score ≥ 95% Meet standard?	No	53%	Yes	97%
Operational Plan Score ≥ 95% Meet standard?	No	83%	Yes	100%
Business Plan Score ≥ 95% Meet standard?	No	54%	Yes	100%

The TRP provided the Applicant with written technical assistance based on its review of the preliminary written application package and the revised written application package prior to the in-person capacity interview.

TRP Qualitative Analysis Summary

The TRP recommends that the application for Think Through Academy be approved because all three sections of the written Application package met the Board’s criteria, the education plan provides a rigorous and innovative approach to meeting the needs of an underserved population, the business plan appears sound and is supported by the resources of a multi-year Arizona Charter Start Program (“AZCSP”) grant, and the Applicant team demonstrated in the in-person interview strong capacity to effectively implement the planned program.

The Educational Plan includes a number of elements aimed at addressing the academic challenges inherent in the historically underserved target population, including a longer school day and year, block scheduling, a highly-engaging, hands-on approach including an inquiry-based rotational model with a project-based component and an online component, a Response to Intervention program for addressing individual instructional gaps. These elements were described both in writing and by the Applicant team in their interview to form a coherent whole supported by research and the experience of the team members.

Both the Business Plan and the Operational Plan were well thought out, described with good detail, and supported by the team in the interview. The Applicant understands the difficulty in attracting students and staff to a newly-opening school, and had contingency plans in place to address potential issues. The members of the Applicant team impressed the panel with their vision, passion, and evident capacity to serve the target population.



In-Person Capacity Interview Summary

The Applicant team at the interview included 2 of the 3 listed Charter Principals: Najat Benaoussar (also Authorized Representative) and Naureen Hasan. Kari Klein was not present. The two Principals present shared the responses evenly, and both demonstrated thorough understanding of the contents of the Application package, and allayed the few concerns felt by the TRP.

Prior to the interview, the TRP had concerns about the development of curriculum. The Program of Instruction (Educational Plan A.3) described a model that included block scheduling, a rotational model within a class block, an online component, double-dose scheduling of English Language Arts (ELA) and Math, and other uncommon features. Both Ms. Hasan and Ms. Benaoussar were able to describe in detail how the curriculum would be developed and implemented, including that they were in the process of developing a significant amount of curriculum for teachers to use (Capacity Interview 25:15). The Applicant team also described how the budgeted sums would be deployed to purchase adopted and resource material to support teachers in the development of instructional resources and units targeting the school population (Capacity Interview 31:30). The depth and details of the answer confirmed to the TRP that the Applicant team had the capacity to implement their Program as described.

Another area of concern for the TRP prior to the interview was the business management capacity of the Applicant team. The written materials presented all three Charter Principals as having significant instructional and school leadership experience, but did not list the same degree of financial experience. Ms. Hasan noted that she had earned a Masters of Business Administration, and both members described how they intended to add board members with suitable experience to support them (Capacity Interview 1:13:49). These answers, combined with the evidence provided by 100% scores on both the revised Operational and Business Plans, and the fact that this Applicant had been awarded the substantial financial support of an AZCSP grant allayed the concerns of the TRP.

APPLICANT BACKGROUND SUMMARY

Additional data is provided in relation to the Applicant's principals' experience and qualifications, as an indicator of the Applicant's ability to implement a charter or operate a charter school.

Principal Name: Najat Benaoussar

Current Affiliation(s): 1 year as a Math Instructor at Cesar Chavez High School.

Past Affiliation(s) of Note:

- 7 years as Math Teacher/Assistant Principal at Precision High School (Phoenix)
- 2 years as High School Math Teacher at Icademy (Online)
- 1 year as 8th grade Math Teacher at Ira A. Murphy Elementary School (Peoria)
- 2 years as Academic Assistant Principal at Precision High School

Principal Name: Naureen Hasan

Current Affiliation(s): 2 years as Department Chair (High School Math, Science Technology) at Sequoia Choice Precision School (Phoenix).

Past Affiliation(s) of Note:

- 2 years as Department Chair (High School Math, Science Technology) at Precision High School (Phoenix)

Principal Name: Kari Klein

Current Affiliation(s): 15 years as Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction at Buckeye Union High School District (Buckeye).

Past Affiliation(s) of Note:

- 15 years as Assistant Superintendent at Buckeye Union High School District.