ARIZONA STATE BOARD FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS

CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION RECOMMENDATION REPORT 2017

NOVEMBER 20, 2017

New Charter Application for the operation of

Da Vinci Tree Academy (DaVTA)

Submitted by

Science Technology Engineering and Math Arizona

Report Summary

			Recommendation:	Approve	
Applicant Name:	Science Technology Engineering and Math Arizona				
Proposed School Name:	Da Vinci Tree Academy (DaVTA)				
Grades Served Year 1:	K-8	Grades Served Year 2:	K-8	Grades Served Year 3:	K-8
Location:	East Tucson, Arizona				
Mission Statement:	Da Vinci Tree Academy's mission is to provide students with a challenging, well-round learning environment with special emphasis on (STEM) Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Literacy to inspire thinking that prepares them for college and improves their opportunities in global technological economy.				

Section Scores

A substantively complete application package meets the following scoring requirements:

- No evaluation criteria receive a score of falls below the expectations; and
- No more than one evaluation area in each section is scored as approaching; and
- 95 percent of the evaluation areas in each plan (educational, operational, business) score at the meets level.

	Preliminary TRP Scores		Revised TRP Scores	
Any falls below the expectations ratings?	No		No	
More than one evaluation area in each section scored approaches?	Yes		No	
		Section Score		Section Score
Educational Plan Score ≥ 95%?	No	90%	Yes	98%
Operational Plan Score ≥ 95%?	No	78%	Yes	100%
Business Plan Score ≥ 95%?	No	77%	Yes	100%

In-Person Interview Summary

Four out of the five Charter Principals were present and participated equally in the interview. All interviewees were able to respond readily to questions about all parts of the application. Though the TRP was impressed with the overall quality of the written plan, they had concerns about its data system proposed in the Academic Systems Plan. The TRP had questions about its data system, Hierarchy of Assessment Data Relevance ("HADR"), the TRP is unfamiliar with the term (Educational Plan A.5: Academic Systems Plan, page 20). However, the concern was allayed during the interview. The Applicant articulated well and explained that HADR is a data system to track students' academic progress based on their strengths and weaknesses (Capacity Interview, 50:56). The TRP is confident that the Applicant has the capacity in launching a charter school.

TRP Qualitative Analysis Summary

The TRP recommends that the revised application package for Science Technology Engineering and Math Arizona be approved because its Operational and Business Plans obtained perfect scores in meeting the Board's criteria. The concerns about its Educational Plan were allayed during the Capacity Interview. The TRP recommends that the application be approved without any reservation.

Educational Plan

	Preliminary TRP Scores				Revised TRP Scores			
Educational Plan Score ≥ 95%?	No	44	Of	49	Yes	48	of	49
Number of "Falls Below" ratings	0				0			
Number of "Approaches" ratings	5				1			

Plan Summary

The Applicant proposed to serve students in grades K-8 in the zip codes of 85709, 85710, and 85730 roughly defined as the region between Tanque Verde Road and Irvington Road and between South Freeman/South Old Spanish Trail Road and Swan Road. Sixty-nine percent of the students in the area qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch with 25% to 30% passing on the AzMERIT in Reading and Math. The educational philosophy is to provide students a challenging, well-rounded learning environment with an emphasis on Science, Engineering, Mathematics, and Literacy to through Inquiry-Based and Hands-on instruction (Educational Plan A.1: Educational Philosophy, page 1).

The Applicant proposed 200 days for the school calendar; 161 days, 4-day a week for Kindergarten, between 5 and 6 hours of instruction per day based on grade level (Educational Plan A.4: School Calendar and Weekly Schedule, page 1).

The proposed curriculum is aligned with the Arizona Standards utilizing McGraw-Hill, Saxon Math, Houghton Mifflin publisher materials. Spanish and Mandarin Chinese will be offered. Bi-weekly formative assessment and trimester summative assessment will be administrated to measure student achievement (Educational Plan A.3: Program of Instruction, page 6).

Analysis

The educational plan meets the criteria for approval because the selected curriculum and instructional strategies are clearly linked to the needs of the target population including its subgroups. The highlights of the proposed methods of instruction are hands-on and inquiry-based learning, integrating technology, and interdisciplinary/cross-curricular. The Enrichment Fridays and Response to Intervention are well-thought strategies to provide additional academic assistance to students who are in needs. In addition, the Friday schedule provides students with opportunities for a more unstructured and/or self-guided approach, allowing for student-lead pathways to learning, clubs, projects, and competitions (Educational Plan A.3: Program of Instruction, page 7).

The TRP had questions about its data system, Hierarchy of Assessment Data Relevance (HADR), that team is unfamiliar with the term (Educational Plan A.5: Academic Systems Plan, page 20). However, the concern was allayed during the interview. The Applicant articulated well and explained that HADR is a data system to track students' academic progress based on their strengths and weaknesses (Capacity Interview, 50:56).

The Applicant team has combined rich experience working as classroom teachers and leaders in understanding underserved students in Tucson. The Applicants were engaged and knowledgeable during the capacity interview and were comfortable discussing all parts of the application.

Operational Plan

	Preliminary TRP Scores				Revised TRP Scores			
Operational Plan Score ≥ 95%?	No	18	of	23	Yes	23	of	23
Number of "Falls Below" ratings	0				0			
Number of "Approaches" ratings	5				0			

Plan Summary

The corporate board of STEM Arizona will act as the school's governing body. The board is responsible for the policy decisions of the charter school, accountable for the school's fiscal, organizational, and academic success. The board will exercise all corporate powers and authority that it possesses to manage the business and affairs of the school (Operational Plan B.2: School Governing Body, page 1). The board consists of four officers (Operational Plan B.1: Applicant Entity Bylaws, page 8). The organization structure was evident (Operational Plan B.1: Applicant Entity Narrative, page 1). The Principal directly reports to the governing board and all other personnel, Special Education Director, Teachers, Office Manager, Custodian and Contracted Services, report to the Principal.

The Applicant proposed to contract services in the areas of Special Education Services, Legal Services, Payroll and Booking Services, Custodial Services, Internet and Communication, Retirement Plan Administration, and Landscaping Services (Operational Plan B.3.2: Contracted Services, page 1).

Analysis

The operational plan meets the criteria for approval because all sections are detailed and reflect an understanding of how a charter school operates.

The proposed governance plan includes detailed descriptions of roles and responsibilities of the board. The qualifications for the board members are clearly described including descriptions of ideal board candidates (Operational Plan B.2: School Governing Body, page 5). Though currently three board members are related, the Applicant affirmed during the interview that once the charter is approved, the President and another related board member would step down from the board that would allow the Vice President taking the position of the President. The Applicant pointed out that two identified individuals would join the board when two positions become vacant (Capacity Interview, 1:00:59). The Applicant demonstrated an understanding of the board structure in compliance with the Open Meeting Law. The organizational charts for the first three years clearly illustrated the reporting structure (Operational Plan B.3: Management and Operation, pages 9-11). The Administrative Plan described the oversight responsibilities of each proposed administrator (Operational Plan B.3: Management and Operation pages, 12-15).

The listed costs and sources for Contracted Services are in relation to the needs of target population as evidenced by the Applicant intending to serve Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) based on "local schools' high percentage of students qualifying for the program" (Operational Plan B.3.2: Contracted Services, pages 6).

Business Plan

	Preliminary TRP Scores				Revised TRP Scores			
Business Plan Score ≥ 95%?	No	28	of	35	No	35	of	35
Number of "Falls Below" ratings	0				0			
Number of "Approaches" ratings	7				0			

Plan Summary

Proposed Location: Option 1: Saint Matthew's Episcopal Church 9071 E Old Spanish Trail, Tucson AZ 85710
Option 2: Former KinderCare Building 8055 E. 22nd Street, Tucson, AZ 85710
Option 3: Industrial Center on Research Loop 1677 S. Research Loop, Tucson, AZ 85710

Facilities Requirement: Year 1: a projected 60 students requiring 3600 sq. ft. with 3 classrooms.
Year 2: a projected 95 students requiring 5700 sq. ft. with 5 classrooms.
Year 3: a projected 124 students requiring 7440 sq. ft. with 6 classrooms.

Budget Summary

	Startup Period	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Projected Enrollment:	0	60	95	124
Total Revenue:	11,335	394,535.40	570,870.40	736,607.40
Total Expenditures:	11,335	381,534.00	567,117.00	709,112.00
Ending Balance:	0	13,001.40	3,753.40	27,495.40

The business plan included three facility options all located within the target area. A timeline for securing the facility and projected facility costs are also included. All three options include a plan for growth through the first three years of operation. The pros and cons of each projected facility are identified. Besides the descriptions of facility requirement, the details of additional spaces in each facility are also provided.

The Applicant proposed a marketing plan to encourage enrollment through collaboration with other organizations, online marketing campaign, and door to door promotion materials distribution (Business Plan C.2: Marketing and Student Enrollment, pages 1-3). The personnel plan provided details in describing professional qualifications and/or experience for each projected position. A chart was included outlining the staffing plan for the first three years (Business Plan C.3: Personnel, page 9). Recruitment plan and hiring process were well written. Teacher training and professional development were proposed as well. The start-up budget included employee salaries, insurance, office supplies, and other maintenance and operation expenditures (Business Plan C.4: Start-Up Budget). Start-up revenues and expenses are the same. Revenue calculations for the three-year operational budget are based on 90% of anticipated full enrollment for the first three years.

Analysis

The business plan meets the criteria for approval because all sections of the plan are detailed and demonstrates the Applicant's understanding to operate a charter school. The facility plan includes the pros and cons of each projected facility. The marketing plan was well written. The Applicant provided the details on enrollment goals for the next three years, plans to attract families, costs and timeline breakdown for marketing plan with its outcomes. The Wage Compensation and Contract Decision Flowchart for Teachers clearly laid out how the salary and bonus are determined (Business Plan C.3: Personnel, page 25). The budget plan is aligned with other sections of the application. The decision to budget revenue at 90% of full enrollment for each of their three years is evidence of their ability to plan for contingencies.

Evidence of Capacity

Applicant Summary

Name	Role	Attended Interview?
Matthew Roll	Authorized Representative, Charter Principal	Yes
David Beyer	Charter Principal	Yes
Bernice Roll	Charter Principal	Yes
Maura Cotter	Charter Principal	Yes
Vivian Ruskowitz	Charter Principal	Yes

Analysis

The TRP finds that the Applicant has the range of knowledge, skills, and experience needed to open and operate a quality charter school. The application is detailed and well-written that all three plans met the Board's criteria. The Applicant team has combined rich experience working as classroom teachers and leaders in understanding underserved students in Tucson. The Applicants were engaged and knowledgeable during the capacity interview and were comfortable discussing all parts of the application. The Applicant demonstrated deep knowledge of and commitment to its plan. The TRP recommends that Science Technology Engineering and Math Arizona for approval without any reservations.