AGENDA ITEM: Transfer Application – Edkey, Inc. dba Sequoia Ranch School

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Issue
Edkey, Inc. dba Sequoia Ranch School (ESRS), submitted a complete Transfer Application for the transfer of Sequoia Pathway Academy from the current K-12 charter held by Edkey, Inc. dba Sequoia Ranch School to a new charter to be held by Edkey, Inc. to operate Sequoia Pathway Academy (SPA) serving grades K-12.

Background
ESRS was granted a charter in 1998 and has opened five schools sites under this charter. See table below.

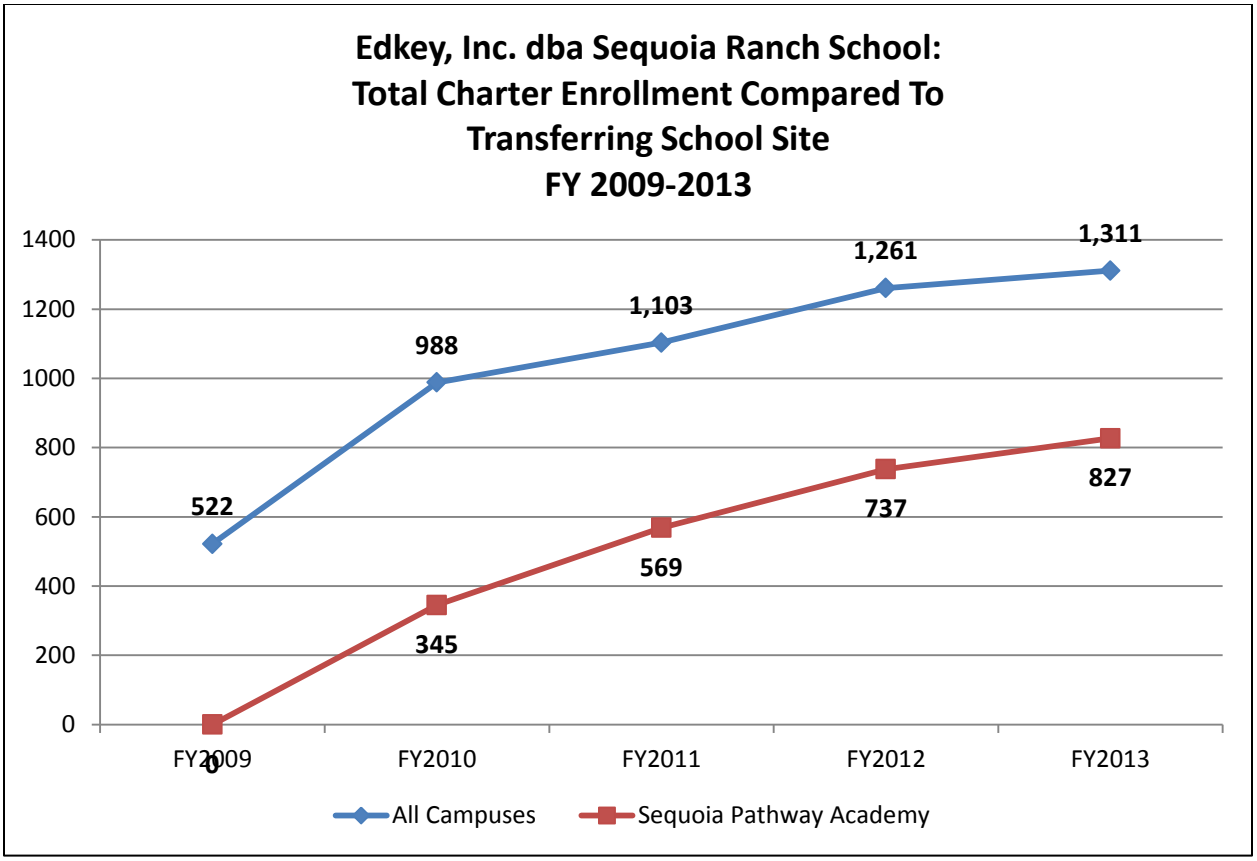
School Name	Month/Year Open	Current Grade Levels Served	Current Status
Sequoia Ranch	September 2002	K through 12	Closed voluntarily May 2012 – due to low enrollment
Sequoia Family Learning	August 2003	K through 12	Closed May 2010 – merged with schools under the Edkey, Inc. dba Learning Crossroads Basic Academy charter
Children First Academy-Phoenix	July 2008	K through 8	Open
Children First Academy-Tempe	July 2008	K through 8	Open
Sequoia Pathway Academy	August 2009	K through 12	Open

According to the narrative, SPA was established to provide the community of Maricopa "an Arizona public school serving as an alternative to traditional public schools and charter schools in Maricopa." Currently, the most recent demographic data submitted by the charter holder indicates the school community of SPA is serving 849 in grades K through 12. Approximately 51% of the students are categorized as Free & Reduced Lunch.

According to data from the Arizona Department of Education, the two Children First Academies (CFA) serve a population that is largely Hispanic, with over 90% categorized as Free & Reduced Lunch, and about 40% listed as homeless.

During the DSP site visit, representatives of the charter holder described the rationale for the transfer application. SPA, as a K-12 charter school in a suburban/rural setting, serves a very different population than the CFA schools, which serve a high poverty urban elementary population with a focus on homeless children. ESRS described how aggregating data from the schools under one LEA both masks the progress being made by SPA, while not reflecting the true need of the CFA population from possible organizations that help lower socio-economic groups. The transfer of SPA from the charter that operates the CFA schools would provide more transparent data for oversight purposes.

Sequoia Pathway Academy operates on a 180-day calendar. The graph below shows actual 100th day average daily membership (ADM) for fiscal years 2009-2013 for Edkey, Inc. dba Sequoia Ranch School – all campuses, compared to Sequoia Pathway Academy.



As stated in Board policy, prior to a charter holder being placed on an agenda, staff conducts an operational compliance check as part of the approval process. The charter holder is in compliance in all areas.

Curricular Emphasis:

The narrative indicates, "Sequoia's approach blends core knowledge mastery with a nurturing and exciting child centered philosophy. At Sequoia Pathway integrated differentiated instruction means subject areas are not taught in isolation. It also means that each child is challenged to reach beyond their comfort level." The methods of instruction used incorporate group instruction lecture, demonstrations, independent learning, collaborative learning, cooperative learning and project based learning with the classroom teachers purpose to meet the needs of individual students.

The methods of assessment described in the narrative include multiple sources of data such as DIBELS, DORA, Math Fact and teacher-created assessments. The narrative states that assessments are administered quarterly and are used to illustrate areas of growth and concern for the purpose of guided instruction and possible interventions. Title I classes are formed through this method of assessment. The teachers use their own assessments and curriculum-based assessments, and are given the latitude of individualizing assessments for different students.

The remediation plan includes assessing all students with a 45-day screener. The narrative states, "The RTI team reviews benchmarks data and classroom data with each teacher at least once a month and it is then determined whether or not a student should receive classroom based interventions to focus on the specific needs of that child based upon a disaggregation of the data."

Academic Performance

The academic performance of Sequoia Pathway Academy for the FY2012 school year, as based upon the Board's academic framework, is represented in the dashboard below:

Academic Performance Rating FY 2012

Charter Holder: Edkey, Inc.
Entity ID 81052

Charter School: Sequoia Pathway Academy
Entity ID 90377, Grades K-12

1. Growth

Traditional K-12		1a. SGP		1b. SGP Bottom 25%	
School	**School Year**	**Math**	**Read**	**Math**	**Read**
Sequoia Pathway Academy	2011-2012	45	44	51	48
Points Assigned		**50**	**50**	**75**	**50**
Weight		**10**	**10**	**10**	**10**

2. Proficiency

Traditional K-12		2a. Percent Passing		2b. Composite School Comparison		2c. Subgroup ELL		2c. Subgroup FRL		2c. Subgroup SPED	
School	**School Year**	**Math**	**Read**	**Math**	**Read**	**Math**	**Read**	**Math**	**Read**	**Math**	**Read**
Sequoia Pathway Academy	2011-2012	61	79	-7.1	-3.2	NR	NR	NR	NR	47	58
Points Assigned		**50**	**75**	**50**	**50**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**75**	**75**
Weight		**7.5**	**7.5**	**5**	**5**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**7.5**	**7.5**

3. State Accountability & Overall Rating

Traditional K-12		3a. State Accountability	4a. Graduation Rate	Overall Rating
School	**School Year**	**Grade**	**GradRate**	
Sequoia Pathway Academy	2011-2012	75	47	55.625
Points Assigned		**75**	**25**	
Weight		**5**	**15**	**100**

Overall Rating	Point Range
Exceeds Standard	> or = to 89
Meets Standard	< 89, but > or = to 63
Does Not Meet Standard	< 63, but > or = to 39
Falls Far Below Standard	< 39

For additional information, see *Academic Performance Framework and Guidance*, available on the ASBCS webpage http://asbcs.az.gov

6/3/2013

As stated in the Board's *Academic Performance Framework and Guidance* document, a charter holder's academic performance will be evaluated by the Board when considering expansion requests. The academic performance of Sequoia Pathway Academy did not meet the Board's academic performance expectations set forth in the performance framework adopted by the Board. A Demonstration of Sufficient Progress (DSP) was submitted by the charter representative (presented in the charter holder's transfer portfolio: b. Demonstration of Sufficient Progress).
The DSP was evaluated using the criteria provided in Appendix D of the Board's *Academic Performance Framework and Guidance* document (presented in the charter holder's transfer portfolio: d: DSP Evaluation Instrument).

The initial DSP submitted by the charter holder, provided graphs showing benchmark assessments results for Reading and Math but minimal written analysis of the data and the narrative did not address any of the required areas (curriculum, monitoring instruction, assessment, and professional development) for any of the measures, and resulted in a determination of Not Acceptable

On May 31, staff conducted a site visit and met with Ron Neil (Superintendent) and Doug Pike (Chairman), Charter Representatives, and the school leadership team; Curt Cardine (Chief Educational Officer), Tamara Becker (Assistant Superintendent), Jonathan Gentile (Principal, 7-12), Rachel Lay (Principal, K-6), Nate Lamma (Dean of Students), and Matt Metcalf (Assistant Principal, K-6) to review the initial evaluation of the DSP and collect additional information and documentation to be considered in the final evaluation of the charter holder's DSP submission. A discussion with the leadership team began with a discussion of the curriculum and resources available, and systems for implementing them. Mr. Neil and Ms. Becker described a process by which the district implemented and monitors curriculum maps and guides, with samples of the maps provided. The discussion then went to the online teacher evaluation system, including

both informal observations and formal evaluations, and teacher performance rubrics. Mr. Cardine demonstrated the system, including showing samples of completed teacher evaluations. Copies of the rubrics were also provided. Mr. Neil and Ms. Lay described the benchmark assessment system using DORA (Diagnostic Online Reading Assessment) for Reading and Fastmath for Math, and provided data and analysis regarding student performance. They also described the district Writing benchmark system using both a holistic rubric and a 6 Traits-based rubric, and showed results. Mr. Cardine and Ms. Becker described the professional development system being based on analysis of teacher needs from the evaluation system, comprehensive Title I needs survey, and Arizona Department of Education Standards Assessment Inventory. Ms. Lay described the Title I system, and Mr. Gentile described the growth of the high school program, referring to the preliminary AIMS scores showing improvement, and describing the implementation of new programs.

The charter holder provided assessment data demonstrating increases in the percent of students demonstrating mastery and described systems and process in the areas of curriculum, monitoring instruction, assessment, and professional development that are in place to support and maintain the demonstrated improvement in academic performance. The systems described in the DSP and confirmed at the site visit also align with the action steps outlined in the Performance Management Plan submitted by ESRS at the time of charter renewal on July 9, 2012.

Following the site visit, staff determined, through an evaluation of the information and documentation collected at the site visit, (presented in the charter holder's transfer portfolio: c. DSP Evidence) that the charter holder demonstrated sufficient progress toward meeting the Board's academic performance expectations. The final evaluation of the DSP resulted in a determination of Acceptable in all areas.

Governance Structure:
The charter holder's corporate board consists of Ron Neil, Patric Greer, Doug Pike, Clark Smithson, Vicki Jo Anderson, Tom Crewse, and Mary Gifford, which is consistent with the information listed with the Arizona Corporation Commission. The organizational structure for the board is described as the corporate board providing oversight of an administrative team. The new charter will be held by the same corporate board. As a result, the same organizational structure will be in place to provide oversight of the new charter.

Board Options

1. Approve the Transfer Application for Edkey, Inc. dba Sequoia Ranch School. Staff recommends the following language provided for consideration: I move to approve the request for transfer of Sequoia Pathway Academy from the current K-12 charter held by Edkey, Inc. dba Sequoia Ranch School to a new charter held by Edkey, Inc. to operate Sequoia Pathway Academy serving grades K through 12.

2. Deny the Transfer Application for Edkey, Inc. dba Sequoia Ranch School. The following language is provided for consideration: I move to deny the request for transfer of Sequoia Pathway Academy from the current charter to a new charter for the reasons that: (Board member must specify reasons the Board found during its consideration.)