Issue
On March 28, 2013 Empower College Prep (ECP), a non-profit entity, submitted a complete Adding Grade Levels to Charter Amendment request to add grade 3.

Background
ECP was granted a charter in 2012. It operates one school: Empower College Prep, serving grades 4-5 in Phoenix. The current enrollment cap is 100. According to ADE, the 100th day count for FY13 is 74.747.

Rationale for expansion request
In the narrative submitted, ECP describes its emphasis as "serving low-income communities, especially those who are currently performing grade-level." The addition of 3rd grade is described as a necessity due to the promotion requirements of Move on When Reading. According to Move on When Reading (A.R.S. §15-701.2.a) requirements for the promotion of students include the requirement that "a pupil not be promoted from the third grade if the pupil obtains a score on the reading portion of the Arizona instrument to measure standards test, or a successor test, that demonstrates that the pupil's reading falls far below the third grade level." The narrative describes success ECP has had with students that fall into this category: "More than 11 per cent of the fourth-graders who enrolled in our school this year did score Falls Far Below on their 3rd Grade Reading test at their previous schools. On the Galileo AIMS-predictive tests given this winter, 100% of these scholars scored Approaches on the 4th Grade assessment". The addition of third grade would allow ECP to extend the reach of their program to students that are performing below-grade level and would not be eligible to enroll as 4th graders.

Support for methods of instruction and mission of the charter
The submitted narrative provided information to demonstrate that the addition of 3rd grade supports the philosophy, and mission of the charter "to empower children in low-income communities to compete academically with children from any school in the country, go to college, and change the world". The method of instruction is described in the narrative as "an accelerated curriculum that combines conceptual understanding with a gradual release approach to ensure retention and real-world application".

The board minutes submitted describe the unanimous board approval to amend the charter to add 3rd grade.

The curriculum samples for 3rd grade Reading, Writing, and Math have been reviewed and meet the criteria.

Eligibility

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. ECP opened in August 2012 and does not yet have state assessment data. Because ECP has not been in operation long enough to receive an Overall Rating, a Demonstration of Sufficient Progress (DSP) was required as part of the amendment request. The DSP was evaluated using the criteria provided in Appendix D of the Board's *Academic Performance Framework and Guidance* document. The DSP is available in Appendix A. The evaluation of the submitted DSP is available in Appendix C.

An initial evaluation of the DSP indicated that it met all the required areas and resulted in a determination of Acceptable. The charter holder provided assessment data demonstrating increases in the percent of students demonstrating mastery and described systems and processes 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.

On April 18, staff conducted a site visit and met with Brian Holman, School Director and Charter Representative, to review the initial evaluation of the DSP and confirm the information included in the charter holder's Demonstration of

Sufficient Progress submission. All the evidence discussed in the DSP was confirmed at the site visit. Board staff conducted classroom observations and reviewed documents including curriculum maps, lesson plans, unit assessments and data, and a presentation from a quarterly data review meeting. A discussion with Brian Holman addressed systems and processes in place at ECP. This included a description of how curriculum maps are used to guide the creation and evaluation of lesson plans. Mr. Holman described the individualized feedback teachers receive and provided documents demonstrating follow-up and feedback communication with a single teacher over an extended period of time. A description of a scheduled visit to observe classroom instruction at a local high performing school was provided. Mr. Holman described the process used for quarterly data meetings and how that information resulted in the decision to make adjustments to the daily schedule. The revised daily schedule increased the hours of instruction for Reading and Math to 3 hours of Reading instruction and 2 hours of Math instruction. Assessment data was reviewed and Mr. Holman discussed the process for identifying students to participate in Saturday school. The schedule for Saturday school and sample lessons for Math and Reading were reviewed. Appendix B contains the summary of the materials/items referenced in the Demonstration of Sufficient Progress for ECP and whether the evidence was confirmed as sufficient during the site visit.

Staff has determined, through an evaluation of the submission, including information and documentation collected at the site visit, that the charter holder demonstrated sufficient progress toward meeting the Board's academic performance expectations.

The charter holder is in compliance in all other areas and is currently in good standing with the Arizona Corporation Commission.

Board Options:

1. Approve the amendment request for Empower College Prep. Staff recommends the following language provided for consideration: I move to approve the request to add 3rd grade to the charter of Empower College Prep.

2. The Board may deny the amendment request. The following language is provided for consideration: I move to deny the request to add 3rd grade to the charter of Empower College Prep for the following reasons:
    - Failure to meet or demonstrate sufficient progress toward the Board's academic performance expectations because it failed to (Board member must specify reasons the Board found during its consideration.); and
    - Other specific reasons the Board may have found during its consideration including…