AGENDA ITEM: Adding Grade Levels to Charter Amendment and Enrollment Cap Notification – La Tierra Community School, Inc.

Issue

La Tierra Community School, Inc. (LTCS), requested to add grades 7-8 to the charter currently approved for grades K-6, and to increase the enrollment cap from 91 to 200. As they received an Overall Rating of NR for 2012 due to being a small school, the charter holder was required to submit a Demonstration of Sufficient Progress (DSP).

Summary of Narrative Provided

Rationale for expansion request

According to the narratives (presented in the charter holder's portfolio: b. Amendment request materials and c. Notification request materials)., LTCS is the only elementary school in Yavapai County offering an Expeditionary Learning (EL) program of instruction. Currently, an EL program is offered by a high school and a college in Prescott. Adding middle school grades to LTCS would offer students a seamless K-16 EL experience. The school plans to move from mixed-grade classrooms to self-contained classrooms in K-6, and the increase in projected enrollment would account for their strategic growth plan.

Support for methods of instruction and mission of the charter – Adding Grade Levels

The narrative states that the addition of grades 7 and 8 will complete the original vision of the charter. The school uses cross-curricular units of study to cover the skills and concepts from the State Standards for Science and Social Studies, as well as curriculum maps and pacing guides for English Language Arts and Mathematics extended to the middle school grades. The narrative supports the addition of grades 7 and 8 to the charter.

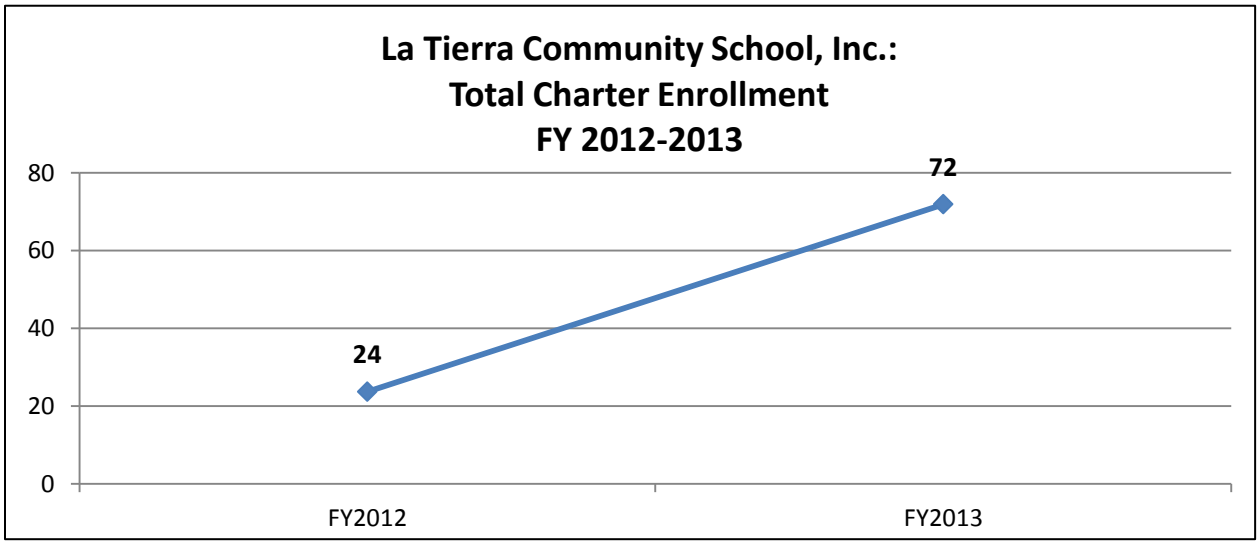
Supporting Information – Enrollment Cap

A letter from the City of Prescott Community Development Department confirms that the capacity of the current facility is 230, sufficient to accommodate the 109 additional students requested.

Background

LTCS was granted a charter in January 2011, and operates one school site under this charter (La Tierra Community School, serves grades K-6 in Prescott since August 2011).

LTCS operates on a 180-day calendar. The graphs below show actual 100th day average daily membership (ADM) for fiscal years 2012-2013.



Academic Performance

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 LTCS for the FY2012 school year, as based on the Board's academic framework, is represented in the dashboard below.

Academic Performance Rating FY 2012

Charter Holder: La Tierra Community School, Inc.
Entity ID 90900

Charter School: La Tierra Community School
Entity ID 91151, Grades K-6

1. Growth

Small Elementary		1a. SGP		1b. SGP Bottom 25%	
School	School Year	Math	Read	Math	Read
La Tierra Community School	2011-2012	NR	NR	NR	NR
Points Assigned		0	0	0	0
Weight		0	0	0	0

2. Proficiency

Small Elementary		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
La Tierra Community School	2011-2012	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR	NR
Points Assigned		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Weight		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

3. State Accountability & Overall Rating

Small Elementary		3a. State Accountability	4a. Graduation Rate	Overall Rating
School	School Year	Grade	GradRate	
La Tierra Community School	2011-2012	NR	NR	NR
Points Assigned		0	0	0
Weight		0	0	0

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

Additional information regarding the Academic Framework can be found at http://www.asbcs.az.gov/

4/16/2013

LTCS did not enroll sufficient Full Academic Year students to receive an Overall Rating in 2012, and was required to submit a DSP (presented in the charter holder's portfolio: d. 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 portfolio: e: DSP Evaluation Instrument).

The initial DSP submitted by the charter holder provided a narrative describing systems for implementation of curriculum, monitoring the integration of the AZ Academic Standards into instruction, assessment, and professional development that contribute to increased student growth and proficiency in Math and Reading, but lacked detail regarding systems for monitoring the integration of the AZ Academic Standards into instruction for students with growth percentiles in the lowest 25%, and student proficiency for ELL students, FRL students, and students with disabilities. Data was not provided to support sufficient progress for students in these subgroups, resulting in a determination of Not Acceptable for each.

On June 13, staff conducted a site visit and met with Jennifer Roderick (School Leader) to confirm the information presented in the DSP and collect additional information and documentation to be considered in the final evaluation.

Ms. Roderick started by presenting data from Galileo benchmark assessments and described her analysis process. She also described using DIBELS and curricular reading assessments. She uses this data to build intervention groups. She described how data is used for differentiation and inclusion of students with disabilities. She described how the data is used in the biweekly faculty meetings to drive instruction, and provided a copy of the meeting calendar. She demonstrated how the pacing guides are cross-referenced to Galileo, and linked to the curriculum which includes Everyday Math, Literature Circles for ELA, and teacher-prepared Expeditionary Learning Science and Social Studies units. She provided documentation of 45-day screening and IEPs for students with disabilities. She stated that the school has no ELL population, and that since the FRL population is 65-70%, she uses them as the baseline, but the intervention systems in place would work for ELL students. She then moved to the Professional Learning Community and professional development, with topics including differentiation, assessment, and rubric use, driven by observation and teacher feedback. She presented teacher-created assessment portfolios. She described how they switched the calendar to 4 day instructional weeks to free up Friday for PD. She presented documentation and material from PLC meetings. She showed examples of formal teacher evaluations, which are conducted two or three times a year, and informal observation notes from biweekly teacher meetings. She presented lesson plans and described her review process, with feedback in the biweekly meeting journals. She presented a copy of the strategic plan, and reviewed the planning process.

The charter holder provided additional evidence and documentation (presented in the charter holder's portfolio: f. DSP Evidence) regarding all areas not sufficiently addressed in the submitted DSP including instruction for students with growth percentiles in the bottom 25%, and systems for addressing the needs of ELL students, FRL students, and students with disabilities. The charter holder provided assessment data demonstrating increases in the percent of students demonstrating mastery.

Following the site visit, staff determined, through an evaluation of the information and documentation collected at the site visit, 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.

Board Options – Grade Level Expansion Request

1. Approve the amendment request for La Tierra Community School, Inc. Staff recommends the following language for consideration: I move, based on the information contained in the Board materials and presented today, that the Board approve the request to add 7th and 8th grade to the charter held by La Tierra Community School, Inc.

2. Deny the amendment request for La Tierra Community School, Inc. The following language is provided for consideration: I move, based on the information contained in the Board materials and presented today, that the Board deny the requests to add 7th and 8th grade to the charter held by La Tierra Community School, Inc., for the following reasons: (Board member must specify reasons the Board found during its consideration.)

Board Options – Enrollment Cap Increase Request

1. Approve the notification request for La Tierra Community School, Inc. Staff recommends the following language provided for consideration: I move to approve the request to increase the enrollment cap of the charter contract of La Tierra Community School, Inc. from 91 to 200.

2. Deny the notification request for La Tierra Community School, Inc. The following language is provided for consideration: I move to deny the request to increase the enrollment cap of the charter contract of La Tierra Community School, Inc. for the following reasons: (Board member must specify reasons the Board found during its consideration.)