AGENDA ITEM: Adding Grade Level to Charter Amendment Request – The Paideia Academies, Inc. – Paideia Academy of South Phoenix

Issue

On March 21, 2013 The Paideia Academies, Inc. (TPA), a non-profit entity, submitted a complete Adding Grade Levels to Charter Amendment request to add grade 6.

Background

TPA was granted a charter in 2012. It operates one school: The Paideia Academy of South Phoenix, serving grades K-5. The current enrollment cap is 450. According to ADE, the 100th day count for FY13 is 314.327.

Rationale for expansion request

In the narrative the charter holder has stated a goal of expanding grade levels each year until 12th grade is reached. According to the narrative submitted, the addition of 6th grade will accommodate 57 fifth-grade students advancing through the Paideia method of learning.

Support for methods of instruction and mission of the charter

The submitted narrative provided information to demonstrate that the addition of 6th grade supports the philosophy and mission of the charter "to help learners discover their individual worth, immeasurable potential, and inherent gift of agency for the good of others". The narrative states that developing students into proactive, independent, aggressive learners "will take more than the years of Kindergarten through fifth grade."

The board minutes submitted describe the unanimous approval of the addition of 6th grade.

The curriculum samples for 6th 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. TPA opened in August 2012 and does not yet have state assessment data. TPA has not been in operation long enough to receive an Overall Rating and was required to submit a Demonstration of Sufficient Progress (DSP). 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.

The initial DSP provided minimal data and a narrative that 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. The data provided were graphs showing benchmark assessments results for Reading and Math for grades 1-6.

On April 22, staff conducted a site visit and met with Dr. Winsor, Charter Representative and school Principal; Beth Mendonca, Assistant Principal; and Amanda Leach, Curriculum Director, 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 Demonstration of Sufficient Progress submission. A discussion with the leadership team began with a focus on the data dialogues that occur every two weeks. Mrs. Leach described the process she uses in facilitating the meetings and provided an example of data analysis identifying areas of weakness in the math curriculum. The discussion also revealed that once a month the campus leadership council, comprised of the school leadership team and leaders of the school's professional learning communities, meet to review data. Staff reviewed data binders including student level reports that demonstrate increasing student proficiency on benchmark assessments for Reading and Math. The leadership team described the process for identifying students to receive intervention instruction in Math or Reading through the school's Response to Intervention process. The leadership team also described how instruction is provided to English Language Learners and students identified to receive special education services. Lesson plans and assessment data

related to the intervention program were reviewed by staff. Curriculum maps, weekly pacing documents and sample lesson plans were reviewed by staff. Dr. Winsor described the process used for observing and evaluating instruction, including follow-up communication and meetings with teachers that occur after observations. Copies of formal and informal evaluation forms were provided. Staff reviewed professional development agendas and the professional development calendar. Appendix B contains the summary of the evidence and documentation provided by the charter representative during the site visit regarding all areas not sufficiently addressed in the submitted Demonstration of Sufficient Progress and whether the evidence was determined to be sufficient.

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.

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

Board Options:

1. Approve the amendment request for The Paideia Academies, Inc. Staff recommends the following language provided for consideration: I move to approve the request to add 6th grade to the charter of The Paideia Academies, Inc.

2. The Board may deny the amendment request. The following language is provided for consideration: I move to deny the request to add 6th grade to the charter of The Paideia Academies, Inc. for the following reasons:
    - Failure to meet or demonstrate sufficient progress toward the Board's academic performance expectations when 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…