
Silver Sands Montessori Charter School: Charter School Renewal Application

Pursuant to AB 205 Subsection 3 of Section 20

Prepared by:

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Introduction



Document Introduction

This is a renewal application to be submitted to the State Public Charter School Authority for sponsorship renewal of a six-year charter contract for Silver Sands Montessori Charter School. This renewal application is comprised of requirements described in Subsection 3 of Section 20 in Assembly Bill (AB) 205 of the 2013 Nevada Legislature that was attached along with requirement dates in a renewal letter from Dr. Steve Canavero. Responses for (a) through (c) of Subsection 3 is included in this application, and (d) is not applicable as the Authority, as our sponsor, did not prescribe that additional requirements or information be included in our application.

Section 20 applies to an operating charter school's transition from a written charter to a charter contract. Silver Sands Montessori Charter School's written charter was approved to begin on August 14, 2009, and expire on August 14, 2015.

Silver Sands Montessori

Silver Sands Montessori Continuing Mission

“To provide quality Montessori education in an environment that encourages a child’s love of learning and respect for self, others, community and the world.”

Silver Sands Montessori Charter School (SSMCS) began as a state sponsored charter school in August 2009. Opening its doors that Fall with grades K-5 with 5 classrooms and 132 students. Today, Silver Sands Montessori serves grades K through 8th, with 11 classrooms and 288 students. The school is located in Henderson, Nevada, and is the only public Montessori school in Southern Nevada.

Silver Sands Montessori methodology is built around the concepts of self-directed learning, multi-aged classrooms, collaboration, creativity and social responsibility. It is based on the child’s developmental needs for freedom within limits, in a carefully prepared environment of learning through tangible lessons, sensory appealing materials and guided experiences. The Montessori method of instruction or pedagogy teaches the whole child, to help cultivate independence, love of learning, understanding of cultural differences, respect for self and others, above and beyond their academic learning. Students learn how they can contribute to their classroom, their community, and the environment around them.



SSMCS Board of Trustees

The Silver Sands Montessori Board of Trustees is made up of seven voting members. By statute, two of the members are licensed teachers, one member is a parent in the school, and the other members are representatives from the community who are willing and able to commit their service and expertise in supporting the growth and well-being of Silver Sands Montessori Charter School.

Kristofor Jacobson, President

Robert Mader, Vice President

Melissa Theobald, Secretary, Parent Member

Denise Fritz, Trustee- Licensed Teacher

Denise LaBree, Trustee- Licensed Teacher

Susan Stewart, Trustee

Michael Wiener, Trustee- Licensed Teacher

Vision and Plans

(a) A description of the academic, financial and organizational vision and plans for the charter school for the next charter term;



Academic

With the State's transition to Common Core State Standards with the Nevada Academic Content Standards, and new state assessment system, SBAC, we are expecting that there may be some adjustments to our current curriculum. Montessori lessons have aligned well with the new standards, however, in our upper grade levels we are continually seeking new supplemental materials that might align better with the new standards. Our continuing goal of our school is that every learner will be provided with the opportunity to achieve proficiency in Reading, Mathematics, Writing, and Science, with the objective of maintaining a high level of school-wide proficiency rates.

Beginning this year, we are excited to begin work on our playground area, and also enhancing our outdoor learning areas which includes our garden boxes around our school that supplements our science, botany, art and cultural lessons.

Each year we add more computers to our school, whether it be in the classrooms, the technology labs, or the libraries. With the new assessments being conducted entirely on computers, we want to make sure that during the testing season that there is an ample number of computers to sufficiently conduct the testing within the testing timeframe.

Extracurricular sports has grown at our school with excitement from our students and families since we joined the Nevada Charter School Sports League this school year. We had a team participate in volleyball and flag football in the Fall, and we currently have four teams in various basketball brackets. Teachers and parents are already planning how to grow our sports program and possible funding solutions.

Financial

In FY 2013-14, our school had a small setback in funds due to a faulty water sprinkler which caused serious water damage to half of our building. With a lack of action from the insurance company, the school was fortunate in keeping to a budget in prior years, and setting aside contingency funds allowed the school to cover the costs of the remediation and reconstruction without extreme financial hardship on the school.

in 2010-2013 with an extension, Silver Sands Montessori was awarded a Federal Charter School Start-up Grant from U.S. Department of Education in the amount of \$230,650 that went towards furniture, equipment, classroom/technology/library supplies, Montessori materials, and training and professional development. This fiscal year, we will see our first year since year 1 without grant funds from the Federal Charter School Startup Grant. There was also a reduction in special education funding from the State, so our budget will definitely be tighter. With that said, the administrative team will be in search of other grant or other funding opportunities during this renewal term to assist with supplementing our State funding. The administrative team will also start the process of incorporating the school as a 501(c)(3) organization, as this will open more opportunities for outside funding.

Organizational

In our third year, we added our 8th grade level to our middle school program, and took over the final portion of the building, so our growth has stabilized. However, we are looking to expanding our middle school by 20-25% (for a total of 72 to 75 middle school students), this would allow us to hire either a part-time licensed teacher or a support teacher to the program. Our middle school program continues to evolve to find a better balance between Montessori and a more traditional methodology that they will most likely transition to for high school.

A continuing goal that is at the heart of our school is community building. Throughout each year we encourage community building with family activities and events which our PTO plays a big role in organizing; student council, administration, and individual classrooms organize community service

projects, events or opportunities to invite other businesses and/or organizations to be a part of our school community.

We remind ourselves each school year, of the need to work on school-wide communication. We have a website, a Facebook page, a PTO Shutter-fly site, a monthly Student Newsletter, a School Newsletter every other month, and our teachers send out weekly updates and communications to parents. That is a lot of communication, however, our goal is to give more attention to the quality of content.

Renewal Supportive Data

(b) Any information or data that the governing body of the charter school determines supports the renewal of the charter under terms and conditions for the issuance of a charter contract;



State School Performance Framework

In years 1 to 3, Silver Sands Montessori has always made Adequate Yearly Progress, and in 2 of the 3 years was designated as High Achieving. Within the Nevada School Performance Framework, Silver Sands Montessori never received lower than a 3-Star; and celebrated the 5-Star designation for both of our Elementary and Middle School programs for the 2013-2014 school year.

Designated by the Nevada Department of Education:

- 2009-10: AYP Designation: High Achieving-Status
- 2010-11: AYP Designation: Adequate
- 2011-12: AYP Designation: High Achieving-Growth
- 2012-13: Nevada School Performance Framework: 3-Stars (Elementary) and 4-Stars (Middle)
- ★ 2013-14: Nevada School Performance Framework: 5-Stars (Elementary) and 5-Stars (Middle)

Silver Sands Montessori has consistently performed at or above State and local school district in Reading/ELA, Math, and Science.

Positive Sponsor Relations

Silver Sands Montessori has always worked to maintain a positive relationship with its sponsor. From the beginning, the administrative team understood expectations in operating a charter school because of prior experience which made the opening a lot smoother than not. However, with a new sponsor, new positions, new procedures, new reports and regulations, etc., there was still a lot to figure out, ask, and understand. Which is why we appreciate that the Charter School Authority has always had a strong team, that is extremely helpful and approachable, which makes having a positive relationship with our sponsor easy.

Annual Audits

In year 1 and 2, the school kept in good standing with the State Department of Education Auditors during the annual count day audit, and the annual performance audit of the different areas including student records, personnel records, finances, governing body documents, etc. When the Authority became our sponsor and took over the annual audits, the first one was a little tricky as it was the first time we uploaded the majority of our audit document and reports to AOIS. However, it worked out great for us the following year because since we had no outstanding issues in our 2011-12 A.P.A., we were not required to go through the old rigorous annual audit. And we haven't since, as the Charter School Authority began the transition to Performance Framework Audits.

External Audits

Starting with our first external audit in our second year, FY2010-11, we have consistently remained in compliance without any abnormal findings or deficiencies in internal controls that required remediation. See Appendix A.

Ready, Set, High School!

There has been two graduating 8th grade classes so far from Silver Sands, and 50% went to their zoned CCSD schools and have academically adjusted with ease, 41% went to CCSD magnet schools and are doing excellent, 5% went to charter and another 5% to private and those students are excelling both academically and socially. In talking to our alumni, it seems that the transition to a much larger school size is what most distresses our students, which also affects how they transition socially; academically, they were set.



**1st
Graduating
Class from
Silver Sands**

Improvements

(c) A description of any improvements to the charter school already undertaken or planned; and



Playground and Outdoor Learning Area

As mentioned above, we are excited to get working on our playground and enhancing our outdoor learning area. We have been fundraising since the school opened its doors in 2009. Our fundraising efforts over the years has been decent, however, a playground does not come cheap. A year and a half ago, when we were in the middle of trying to put the school back together after the water damage, our building was sold to a new owner. We were a little nervous as we had a good relationship with the original owner and did not know what to expect with the new one. Well, it turns out that our new owner was very nice, and very excited to be leasing a property to a public school. When we signed the new lease it included funds to help us when we started building our playground.

Library and Music Room

With the Federal Charter School Startup Grant, we purchased furniture, book shelves, library software, labeling supplies, and BOOKS! But, because of the water damage incident, only one of the libraries got set up. So, we are stepping back and planning the secondary library which is for our older students,

Upper Elementary (4th & 5th grade) and our Middle School (6th, 7th and 8th grade). This room also doubles as a Music room, and we currently have an amazingly creative and fun music teacher, so we want to make sure the room is functional for him, too.

Technology

Also mentioned above, we will be adding more computers to our school. But with more computers comes more issues to resolve, for example, faster internet bandwidth, additional wireless boosting stations, electrical and in general a better way to manage all this hardware since we do not have a technology specialist on our payroll, or at least not yet. We currently have two computer labs with 28 computers between them, there are 12 classroom computers, 5 special education laptops, and 8 computers in the office area, for a total of 53. If space and infrastructure allows, we would like to add another dozen computers.

“There is Always room for Improvement”

It’s true. At the end of each year, administration meets with each staff member and asks for feedback and reflection. We strive to improve so that Silver Sands Montessori can continue to be a school and a community that is making a difference. We see the results in our students as they develop and grow to their fullest academic potential, have cultivated independence, love of learning, understanding of cultural differences, and respect for self and others.



INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT ON COMPLIANCE AND ON INTERNAL CONTROL OVER
FINANCIAL REPORTING BASED ON AN AUDIT OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS PERFORMED IN
ACCORDANCE WITH *GOVERNMENT AUDITING STANDARDS*

Board of Directors
Silver Sands Montessori Charter School
Las Vegas, Nevada

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of the governmental activities, and the aggregate remaining fund information of the Silver Sands Montessori Charter School (the "School"), as of and for the year ended June 30, 2010, and have issued our report thereon dated October 25, 2010. We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards*, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States.

As part of obtaining reasonable assurance about whether the School's financial statements are free of material misstatement, we performed tests of its compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts and grant agreements, noncompliance with which could have a direct and material effect on the determination of financial statement amounts. However, providing an opinion on compliance with those provisions was not an objective of our audit, and accordingly, we do not express such an opinion. The results of our tests disclosed no instances of noncompliance that are required to be reported under *Government Auditing Standards*.

In planning and performing our audit, we considered the School's internal control over financial reporting as a basis for designing our auditing procedures for the purpose of expressing our opinions on the financial statements, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the School's internal control over financial reporting. Accordingly, we do not express an opinion on the effectiveness of the School's internal control over financial reporting.

A control deficiency exists when the design or operation of a control does not allow management or employees, in the normal course of performing their assigned functions, to prevent or detect misstatements on a timely basis. A significant deficiency is a control deficiency, or combination of control deficiencies, that adversely affects School's ability to initiate, authorize, record, process, or report financial data reliably in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles such that there is more than a remote likelihood that a misstatement of the School's financial statements that is more than inconsequential will not be prevented or detected by the School's internal control.

A material weakness is a significant deficiency, or combination of significant deficiencies, that results in more than a remote likelihood that a material misstatement of the financial statements will not be prevented or detected by the School's internal control.

Our consideration of internal control over financial reporting was for the limited purpose described in the first paragraph of this section and would not necessarily identify all deficiencies in internal control that might be significant deficiencies or material weaknesses. We did not identify any deficiencies in internal control over financial reporting that we consider to be material weaknesses, as defined above.

This report is intended solely for the information and use of management, Board of Trustees and the Nevada Department of Taxation, and federal awarding agencies and pass-through agencies and is not intended to be used by anyone other than these specified parties. However, this report is a matter of public record and its distribution is not limited.

L.L. Bradford & Company, LLC

L.L. Bradford & Company, LLC
October 25, 2010
Las Vegas, Nevada



INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT ON COMPLIANCE AND ON INTERNAL CONTROL OVER
FINANCIAL REPORTING BASED ON AN AUDIT OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS PERFORMED IN
ACCORDANCE WITH *GOVERNMENT AUDITING STANDARDS*

Board of Directors
Silver Sands Montessori Charter School
Las Vegas, Nevada

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of the governmental activities, and the aggregate remaining fund information of the Silver Sands Montessori Charter School (the "School"), as of and for the year ended June 30, 2011, and have issued our report thereon dated October 24, 2011. We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards*, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States.

As part of obtaining reasonable assurance about whether the School's financial statements are free of material misstatement, we performed tests of its compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts and grant agreements, noncompliance with which could have a direct and material effect on the determination of financial statement amounts. However, providing an opinion on compliance with those provisions was not an objective of our audit, and accordingly, we do not express such an opinion. The results of our tests disclosed no instances of noncompliance that are required to be reported under *Government Auditing Standards*.

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L.L. Bradford & Company, LLC

L.L. Bradford & Company, LLC

October 24, 2011

Las Vegas, Nevada

APPENDIX A: (3) FY2012



INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT ON COMPLIANCE AND ON INTERNAL CONTROL OVER
FINANCIAL REPORTING BASED ON AN AUDIT OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS PERFORMED IN
ACCORDANCE WITH *GOVERNMENT AUDITING STANDARDS*

Board of Directors
Silver Sands Montessori Charter School
Las Vegas, Nevada

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of the governmental activities, and the aggregate remaining fund information of the Silver Sands Montessori Charter School (the "School"), as of and for the year ended June 30, 2012, and have issued our report thereon dated October 29, 2012. We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards*, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States.

As part of obtaining reasonable assurance about whether the School's financial statements are free of material misstatement, we performed tests of its compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts and grant agreements, noncompliance with which could have a direct and material effect on the determination of financial statement amounts. However, providing an opinion on compliance with those provisions was not an objective of our audit, and accordingly, we do not express such an opinion. The results of our tests disclosed no instances of noncompliance that are required to be reported under *Government Auditing Standards*.

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L.L. Bradford & Company, LLC

L.L. Bradford & Company, LLC
October 29, 2012
Las Vegas, Nevada



INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT ON COMPLIANCE AND ON INTERNAL CONTROL OVER
FINANCIAL REPORTING BASED ON AN AUDIT OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS PERFORMED IN
ACCORDANCE WITH *GOVERNMENT AUDITING STANDARDS*

Board of Directors
Silver Sands Montessori Charter School
Las Vegas, Nevada

We have audited the financial statements of the governmental activities and each major fund of the Silver Sands Montessori Charter School (the "School"), as of and for the year ended June 30, 2013, and have issued our report thereon dated October 30, 2013. We conducted our audit in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards*, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States.

As part of obtaining reasonable assurance about whether the School's financial statements are free of material misstatement, we performed tests of its compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts and grant agreements, noncompliance with which could have a direct and material effect on the determination of financial statement amounts. However, providing an opinion on compliance with those provisions was not an objective of our audit, and accordingly, we do not express such an opinion. The results of our tests disclosed no instances of noncompliance that are required to be reported under *Government Auditing Standards*.

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L.L. Bradford & Company, LLC

L.L. Bradford & Company, LLC
October 30, 2013
Las Vegas, Nevada



L.L. Bradford

Certified Public Accountants & Consultants

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT ON COMPLIANCE AND ON INTERNAL CONTROL OVER FINANCIAL REPORTING BASED ON AN AUDIT OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS PERFORMED IN ACCORDANCE WITH GOVERNMENT AUDITING STANDARDS

Board of Directors
Silver Sands Montessori Charter School
Las Vegas, Nevada

We have audited the financial statements of the governmental activities and each major fund of the Silver Sands Montessori Charter School (the "School"), as of and for the year ended June 30, 2014, and have issued our report thereon dated October 28, 2014. We conducted our audit in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards*, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States.

As part of obtaining reasonable assurance about whether the School's financial statements are free of material misstatement, we performed tests of its compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts and grant agreements, noncompliance with which could have a direct and material effect on the determination of financial statement amounts. However, providing an opinion on compliance with those provisions was not an objective of our audit, and accordingly, we do not express such an opinion. The results of our tests disclosed no instances of noncompliance that are required to be reported under *Government Auditing Standards*.

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L.L. Bradford & Company, LLC

L.L. Bradford & Company, LLC
October 28, 2014
Las Vegas, Nevada