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BEFORE THE PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION  
STATE OF NEW MEXICO

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS  
COMMUNITY INPUT HEARING  
SIX DIRECTIONS INDIGENOUS SCHOOL  
August 17, 2015  
8:30 a.m.

University of New Mexico - Gallup Branch  
SSTC - Room 200  
705 Gurley Avenue  
Gallup, New Mexico

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A P P E A R A N C E S

COMMISSIONERS:

MR. VINCE BERGMAN, Vice Chair  
MS. KARYL ANN ARMBRUSTER, Member  
MR. JAMES CONYERS, Member  
MS. PATRICIA GIPSON, Member  
MS. CARMIE TOULOUSE, Member

STAFF:

MS. KATIE POULOS, Director, Charter Schools Division  
MS. JULIE LUCERO, General Manager, Options for  
Parents

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1 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: I am going to call  
2 this Community Input Hearing before the New Mexico  
3 Public Education Commission into session.

4 Today is Monday, August 17th, 2015.  
5 Before I get into what we're going to do, I would  
6 ask that all of you please either mute or vibrate or  
7 shut off your cell phones and any other electronic  
8 devices that might interrupt this meeting.

9 We have one Commissioner that's not  
10 familiar with Gallup, and she's still trying to get  
11 here, and she'll be here when she gets here; so  
12 she'll come in whenever she's here.

13 I am Vice Chairman Vince Bergman. I  
14 represent District 8, which is Roswell, Southern  
15 New Mexico, and the central part of the state, all  
16 the way up to Mora County, believe it or not.

17 Normally the Chairwoman, Commissioner  
18 Shearman, who is from Artesia, would be here today;  
19 but she had a last-minute health issue, and her  
20 doctor forbade her to drive, which made it very  
21 difficult to get here. So she and I came on this  
22 Commission together almost seven years ago, and in  
23 the previous six years that we've held these tours  
24 around the state of New Mexico, I don't believe she  
25 has ever missed a hearing.

1           She's one of the hardest working people  
2           it's been my privilege to be associated with; and so  
3           she's quite sad that she's not here today, and she  
4           sends her regrets.

5           Thank you.

6           I'm going to do a form of roll call. What  
7           I will ask my fellow Commissioners to do is just  
8           identify yourselves and say where you're from, and  
9           that will constitute a roll call. Starting with  
10          Commissioner Gipson.

11          COMMISSIONER GIPSON: I'm Patti Gipson,  
12          and I represent District 7, which is Doña Ana and a  
13          smidgen of Otero County.

14          COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: I'm Carmie  
15          Toulouse. I represent District 3, which is the bulk  
16          of Albuquerque, not -- most of the west side, not  
17          the far South Valley, and not the far northeast; but  
18          the rest of Bernalillo -- Bernalillo County, or --  
19          is mine, which means I have the majority of charter  
20          schools in the whole state, whether they're district  
21          charters or State-chartered.

22          COMMISSIONER CONYERS: Oh, you're down  
23          here. I'm Jim Conyers. I represent District 5,  
24          which is all of San Juan, all of McKinley County,  
25          part of Rio Arriba, and part of Sandoval County.

1           VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: And the Commissioner  
2 that's not here, but will be here shortly, is Karyl  
3 Armbruster. I don't know exactly what district  
4 number she is; but she's from Los Alamos. So she's  
5 from north of Santa Fe.

6           So she will be here, actually, at some  
7 point.

8           Before we get into this, Commissioner  
9 Toulouse, would you lead us in the Pledge of  
10 Allegiance, and, Commissioner Conyers, would you  
11 lead us in the salute to the New Mexico Flag?

12           (Pledge of Allegiance and Salute to the  
13 New Mexico Flag conducted.)

14           VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Thank you, both.

15           All right. I will begin the hearing for  
16 the Six Directions Indigenous School by reading the  
17 following statement. And since we don't have sound,  
18 we're all going to have to speak up.

19           You have a microphone over there. Good;  
20 but I don't think it's going to be worth running  
21 back and forth with it.

22           This meeting -- or this hearing,  
23 actually -- of the Six Directions Indigenous School  
24 is being conducted pursuant to New Mexico Statutes  
25 Annotated, Title 22, Section 8B-6J, 2009.

1           The purpose of these community input  
2 hearings that will be held from August 17th through  
3 August 21st, 2015, is to obtain information from the  
4 applicant and to receive community input to assist  
5 the Public Education Commission in its decision  
6 whether to grant the proposed charter application.

7           According to this section of the law, the  
8 Commission may appoint a subcommittee of no fewer  
9 than three members to hold a public hearing. Since  
10 we currently have four, and will have five, we have  
11 satisfied that legal requirement.

12           According to law, these hearings are being  
13 transcribed by a professional court reporter. The  
14 total time allocated to each application is  
15 90 minutes, which will be timed to ensure an  
16 equitable opportunity to present applications.

17           Who is going to be our official  
18 timekeeper?

19           MS. POULOS: (Indicates.)

20           VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Thank you.

21           During the hearing, the Commission will  
22 allow for community input about the charter  
23 application. The time for public comments will be  
24 limited to 20 minutes. If you wish to speak  
25 regarding the application, please sign in at least

1 15 minutes before the applicant's presentation.

2 And I'm always wondering how that could be  
3 done, because we're all seated when that's going on;  
4 but that's what the law says.

5 Please be sure that you indicate on the  
6 sign-up sheet whether you are here in opposition or  
7 support of the charter school.

8 The Commission Chair, or the Acting Chair,  
9 based on the number of requests to comment, will  
10 allocate time to those wishing to speak. If there  
11 are a large number of supporters or opponents, they  
12 are asked to select a speaker to represent their  
13 common opinions. We will try to allocate an  
14 equitable amount of time to represent the community  
15 accurately.

16 The Commission will follow this process  
17 for each community input hearing:

18 The Commission will ask each applicant or  
19 group to present at the table in front. They will  
20 be given 20 minutes to present their application in  
21 the manner they deem appropriate.

22 The Commission will not accept any written  
23 documentation from the applicant; but the applicant  
24 may use exhibits to describe their school, if  
25 necessary. However, the setup time for exhibits,

1 et cetera, will be included in your 20 minutes.

2 Following the applicant's presentation,  
3 local school district representatives, which  
4 includes the superintendent, administrators, and  
5 board members, will be given ten minutes to comment.

6 Subsequently to that, the Commission will  
7 allow 20 minutes for public comments, as described  
8 above.

9 Finally, the Commission will be given 40  
10 minutes to ask questions of the applicant.

11 Commissioners, are we ready to proceed?

12 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Mr. Chairman, we  
13 did not approve the agenda, if it's on our agenda.

14 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: We probably should  
15 approve that.

16 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: So, Mr. Chair, I  
17 move we approve our agenda.

18 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Thank you,  
19 Commissioner Toulouse.

20 Do I have a second?

21 COMMISSIONER GIPSON: Second.

22 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: All in favor?

23 (Commissioners so indicate.)

24 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Thank you very much.

25 Yes, ma'am, I certainly missed that.

1 All right. Let's see. I would ask that  
2 the representatives of Six Directions Indigenous  
3 School come forward. I assume that is the group  
4 that's here at the front table.

5 This is a little awkward arrangement.  
6 We'll work with it as best we can. We'll do what we  
7 can.

8 For the record, please state your name,  
9 and if it's a unique name, please spell it for the  
10 court reporter. Your time does not start yet. So  
11 please identify yourselves.

12 MS. CAVNAR: Hi. Good morning. My name  
13 is Carmen Cavnar, C-A-V-N-A-R. And I'm the Director  
14 of Finance for the Network, and also for the school.

15 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: I would suggest you  
16 use the microphone, because you have a soft voice.

17 MS. CAVNAR: I think I could speak louder.  
18 Did you hear me?

19 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Please use the mic.  
20 Pass it back and forth as you talk.

21 MS. CAVNAR: Is it even on? Can you guys  
22 hear me?

23 Good morning. My name is Carmen Cavnar,  
24 C-A-V-N-A-R. I'm the Director of Finance for the  
25 Network and also for Six Direction.

1 MR. SOCE: Good morning. My name is Ben  
2 Soce, S-O-C-E, one of the founders for  
3 Six Directions Indigenous School, also a director  
4 for the National Indian Youth Leadership Project.

5 MR. TOWERY: Good morning, Vice Chairman  
6 and Commissioners. My name is Lane Towery.  
7 L-A-N-E, T-O-W-E-R-Y. I have the privilege of being  
8 a fellow for NACA Inspired Schools Network and one  
9 of the founders of Six Directions.

10 MS. LEYBA: Good morning. My name is  
11 Madeline Leyba, and I am working with Teach for  
12 America. I also am a board member with Six  
13 Directions.

14 MR. BLUEHOUSE: Good morning, Chair,  
15 Commissioners. My name is Philmer Bluehouse. I'm a  
16 member of this governing council with  
17 Six Directions. My role, basically, is to bring  
18 forward the cultural aspects of people in this  
19 region that want to deal with understanding Navajo  
20 culture and tradition, with other traditional and  
21 cultural aids.

22 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Thank you very much.  
23 I do have one question. When you say you're part of  
24 "the network," are we walking about the NACA  
25 network, N-A-C-A?

1 MS. CAVNAR: NISN.

2 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Let the record show  
3 Commissioner Armbruster is now here. Tell these  
4 fine folks what district you represent.

5 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: I represent  
6 District 4.

7 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: If they're ready to  
8 begin their presentation, if our timers are ready,  
9 you will have 20 minutes to make your presentation  
10 in whatever manner you wish to do so.

11 MR. TOWERY: Thank you, sir.

12 MR. SOCE: Good morning. Good morning,  
13 Vice President and the Commission. Welcome to  
14 Gallup, New Mexico.

15 My name is Benjamin Soce. I'm from the --  
16 a clan called "Tachii'nii," which is the Red  
17 Forehead People. I am born for the Tabaaha Tribe,  
18 the Water Edge People. My maternal grandparents are  
19 the Salt People. And my paternal grandparents, they  
20 are from the Badlands Clan.

21 A couple of years ago, we -- they had a  
22 hard time just dealing with Gallup-McKinley County  
23 Schools. I've got four kids, three older boys.  
24 They've all managed to graduate from Gallup High  
25 School -- Miyamura High School. Sorry. Their

1 experiences made me wonder about the goals of  
2 Gallup-McKinley County Schools.

3 I want to take you back to 1984-1985,  
4 okay? That's the year I graduated from Tse Bonito  
5 Elementary, and I got a chance to go to Gallup  
6 Mid-School. It was quite an experience. Tse Bonito  
7 Elementary is predominantly a Native American  
8 school. It's probably 20 minutes out of Gallup,  
9 towards Arizona and Window Rock. It was a good  
10 school, small classes, a lot of Navajo and Native  
11 American staff members.

12 I was kind of at the top of my class. And  
13 when I transitioned to Gallup Mid-School, I was  
14 separated from my friends, all the people that I  
15 knew. I got tracked into the high achieving  
16 classes, and I was recognized in my old school.  
17 They did a full story on me after my first semester,  
18 because I had gotten an honorable.

19 But it didn't feel right. I started  
20 missing the things I had in elementary, my friends  
21 that I had. The new classes I had, they were full  
22 of people not like -- like me at all. And I started  
23 yearning for my old friends. I'd see them between  
24 classes, and I'd see them at lunchtime and after  
25 school. Those are the only times it seemed like I

1 would have a good time. I was smiling; I would  
2 laugh.

3 But in the classroom, it was different. I  
4 couldn't connect to anybody. People didn't really  
5 know who I was, and I felt like I was the outsider,  
6 like a foreigner or something.

7 So based on that, I started not doing so  
8 well in school, on purpose. My reasoning was  
9 because I wanted to get back to my friends. They  
10 were in the classroom, you know, that weren't  
11 challenging. And I knew that. But at the same  
12 time, I yearned for them.

13 So for the next couple of years, I tried  
14 my hardest not to do so well, just so I could be  
15 with them. I needed to get away from that feeling  
16 of nervousness and awkwardness and feeling  
17 uncomfortable.

18 I've been working with the National Indian  
19 Youth Leadership Project for the past 15 years now.  
20 I wondered, "What if there was a program there  
21 called 'Project Venture' when I went to mid-school?  
22 I'm sure that would have helped me out. I'm sure  
23 that would have helped me adjust to my surroundings  
24 and the new challenges that I experienced."

25 Within NIYLP, there's a popular pedagogy

1 called experiential education and [inaudible]  
2 education that really resonated with me. Through  
3 the 15 years I've been working there, I've noticed  
4 Project Venture and NIYLP, it really benefits the  
5 Native Americans and students, especially  
6 mid-schoolers. I just maybe wish I had had  
7 something like that when I was in mid-school.

8 With experiential education, a lot of  
9 times, we had to do things with our bodies to make  
10 us understand what we were talking about.

11 So with the Commission and the public  
12 here, I'd like to try something, if you guys don't  
13 mind, okay? I want to show you guys how I felt when  
14 I transitioned from elementary to mid-school.

15 Six Directions, we're going to try to have  
16 a school for mid-schoolers and high-schoolers. So  
17 we want to see if we can make that transition a lot  
18 better for young people.

19 So, everybody, if you don't mind, go ahead  
20 and fold your arms, please. I know I have a couple  
21 of minutes; but I want to make sure everybody has a  
22 chance to experience what I experienced, okay?

23 Everybody just go ahead and fold your arms  
24 and relax, okay? Take a deep breath. When you take  
25 a deep breath, I want to you look down at your arms

1 and see which arm is on top of the other. This is  
2 your comfortness. This was me back in elementary  
3 school, being comfortable and being used to what I  
4 was used to.

5           Once you make note of which arm is on top,  
6 you're going to go ahead and let your arms free a  
7 little bit, okay? You're going to refold it; but  
8 when you refold it, make sure your other arm is on  
9 top this time.

10           And I'd like to hear from folks. How does  
11 that feel? Does anybody have any -- is there a  
12 difference? Is there anybody here that feels like  
13 it's a little bit different than what it was before?

14           VARIOUS UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Yes.

15           MR. SOSE: Okay. After a while, your body  
16 will adjust, your new position, your new arm fold,  
17 it'll feel comfortable. I didn't allow myself that  
18 much time to get comfortable at mid-school. I  
19 folded my card right away. [Verbatim.]

20           The feeling that you have right now,  
21 that's the feeling that I got when I was in  
22 mid-school. Even though there were some other  
23 Native American students there, I didn't know them.

24           So with Six Directions, we want to see if  
25 we can get our young people with a little bit more

1 familiar faces, more Native American teachers and  
2 staff members; and not only that, but also make the  
3 learning content a little more relevant, because we  
4 want to focus on some Native American writers and  
5 teachers that I really didn't get a chance to  
6 experience with the regular Gallup-McKinley County  
7 School system.

8 So we want to make sure that school is a  
9 comfortable place for them. That's one of the main  
10 things I want to emphasize.

11 So -- so speaking on behalf of  
12 Six Directions School and the National Indian Youth  
13 Leadership Project, and my experience and the  
14 experience of other educators, I feel like the  
15 school would benefit the community, would benefit  
16 the City of Gallup and a lot of those elementary  
17 schools not inside the city; because I went to a  
18 school in elementary that was 20 minutes away from  
19 town. And there are, like, maybe five or six more  
20 other schools outside of town that the students  
21 would benefit from our school.

22 So thank you. Thank you for your  
23 participation and your ears. I appreciate that.

24 MR. TOWERY: Thank you, Ben.

25 Vice Chairman Bergman, Commissioners,

1 thank you all for being here this morning. I'd like  
2 to start with our mission statement, as I think we  
3 always should.

4 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Please identify  
5 yourselves each time so the recorder will be sure  
6 who's speaking.

7 MR. TOWERY: Absolutely. Lane Towery.

8 I'd like to start with our mission  
9 statement, because that's where everything begins.  
10 The Six Directions Indigenous School, through a  
11 commitment to culturally relevant indigenous  
12 education and interdisciplinary project-based  
13 learning, will develop --

14 THE REPORTER: Could you slow down,  
15 please? Thank you.

16 MR. TOWERY: Absolutely. And if you need  
17 to remind me multiple times, you can. My  
18 grandmother tells me I talk too fast.

19 The Six Directions Indigenous School  
20 through a commitment to culturally relevant  
21 indigenous education and interdisciplinary  
22 project-based learning, will develop critically  
23 conscious students, who are engaged in their  
24 communities, demonstrate holistic well-being, and  
25 have a personal plan for succeeding in

1 post-secondary opportunities.

2 Our school began, really, a year ago with  
3 a group of citizens who shared a concern about  
4 historic and persistent inequity in public school  
5 options in and around Gallup.

6 We've spent the last year really  
7 fundamentally asking ourselves one question, which  
8 is, "How do we provide an excellent education to  
9 youth in Gallup, and knowing that upwards of  
10 5 percent of youth in the City of Gallup and nearly  
11 100 percent of youth outside of Gallup are Native?  
12 In particular how do we provide an excellent  
13 education to Native youth?"

14 The answers we've come up with are  
15 primarily about culturally responsive education,  
16 about frameworks of positive youth development, and  
17 holistic wellness, and about engaging families and  
18 youth in authentic and trusting ways. In our  
19 application, we have articulated three goals that we  
20 are all about providing excellence for youth in  
21 Gallup.

22 The first specifically is around Short  
23 Cycle Assessments and NWEA, which is about academic  
24 excellence explicitly. We expect our students to be  
25 on grade level, and if not, to be on a path to

1 returning towards grade level if they arrive behind  
2 grade level. NWEA is a tool to help us assess  
3 whether or not that's true.

4 Our second goal we've articulated is  
5 around holistic wellness. This is all about  
6 assessing and prioritizing non-academic aspects of  
7 student development that we think fuel their success  
8 academically in the long run, that are all about  
9 student preparedness to learn.

10 These things have sort of been  
11 triangulated through, like I mentioned, frameworks  
12 of positive youth development; but also around sort  
13 of theories around trauma informed services, as well  
14 as local indigenous concepts of holistic health.

15 And for that, we've chosen a tool, with  
16 the help of the National Indian Youth Leadership  
17 Project, from an institute called the THRIVE  
18 Institute. It is a psychometrically normed tool  
19 based on extensive data. And we think that's the  
20 tool that's going to help us decide if we are  
21 meeting the holistic needs of youth so that they're  
22 ready to succeed their best at middle school.

23 And then our last goal is around middle  
24 school attendance, which was primarily about finding  
25 a metric to serve as a proxy for the last part of

1 our mission, which is are our students on track to  
2 graduate? And for that, we looked to research, wide  
3 research, from Chicago Public Schools, which showed  
4 that in middle school, attendance rates were more  
5 predictive than even GPA for whether or not students  
6 persisted in high school and graduated.

7 And so we said, well, based on that data,  
8 we think that if we're keeping students in school  
9 every day and middle school, it's going to be a good  
10 predictor of whether or not six or seven years down  
11 the line, we're on track to ensure they're  
12 graduating from high school.

13 All those goals together are the goals  
14 that we have proposed that we think align to  
15 excellence.

16 We've also proposed a curricular framework  
17 that we think has been designed in its entirety to  
18 meet those goals and our mission. The first part  
19 that I'll mention is the skills lapse component,  
20 which is the short, small-group, direct instruction  
21 every day, around math, reading, and writing skills.

22 This is developed with Short Cycle  
23 Assessment data to make sure this aligns to  
24 Common Core standards to ensure that students are  
25 getting the direct instruction and skills that they

1 need every single day.

2 The core curriculum that we've proposed is  
3 delivered through the project-based learning,  
4 curricular methodology, and the culturally  
5 responsive teaching pedagogical model.

6 We propose planning through an  
7 Understanding By Design framework, to ensure  
8 excellence; but also to ensure sort of a marriage of  
9 two things: to ensure that Common Core standards  
10 and New Mexico State Standards are the core learning  
11 standards of the curriculum, while we bring in  
12 essential questions, enduring understandings, and  
13 projects that are all local that are authentic and  
14 that are meaningful to our youth, so that they're  
15 practicing those standards through localized,  
16 meaningful, authentic projects.

17 UBD, Understanding By Design, will also  
18 ensure that we're not doing activities for the sake  
19 of activities; but that we're doing rigorous  
20 project-based learning.

21 And then, finally, of course, we've  
22 proposed a series of electives, a large part of  
23 which is heritage language programs in Navajo and  
24 Zuni, but also coursework aligned to New Mexico  
25 Content Standards and physical education, as well as

1 other student interests related to local themes and  
2 ideas.

3 We have some pretty rigorous and ambitious  
4 time lines and benchmarks set for ourself for the  
5 coming year to ensure that we can bring this idea to  
6 life and serve students really effectively by next  
7 August.

8 The first of them is creating five ad hoc  
9 committees out of our governance council. Those are  
10 going to be our curriculum committee, our wellness  
11 and positive youth development committee, our  
12 facilities and operations committee, our staff  
13 recruitment and hiring committee; and finally, our  
14 family engagement and enrollment committee.

15 Through those committees, I think we do  
16 two things. We both continue to live out our value  
17 for engaging a wide swathe of stakeholders and  
18 families in the process of designing our school,  
19 which we think is, by itself, a strategy aligned to  
20 providing really good services to youth and  
21 families; but it also means that we just have a lot  
22 of people working together to ensure that we're  
23 sticking to a time line to be ready by 2016.

24 Another aspect of our planning year is  
25 that through the fellowship that I have, I'm lucky

1 to be able to work full-time on this project for the  
2 next year, which we think is a pretty unique and  
3 special opportunity that we have.

4 So for the next year, I'll continue to  
5 work at the direction of the governing council and  
6 those committees to make sure day-to-day work of  
7 planning a school and opening a school is getting  
8 done.

9 Over the course of the next year,  
10 certainly, our governance council will recruit,  
11 evaluate, and hire a principal. That principal will  
12 become the head administrator and leader of our  
13 school. They will hire staff. They will answer  
14 directly to the governance council.

15 We've proposed that I continue on for the  
16 next few years as the executive director of our  
17 school. And this comes from two places: to ensure  
18 continuity between the planning stages and  
19 implementation stages of our school; but also  
20 because a state chartered school is in many ways its  
21 own district in terms of operations, I think it  
22 allows us to focus on the success of our students  
23 and allow the head administrator to be the  
24 instructional leader of our school and do the things  
25 that a principal can and should be doing on a daily

1 basis, while delegating to the executive director  
2 operational needs on a day-to-day basis.

3 In terms of our facilities, we have a  
4 pretty ambitious time line for ourselves with a goal  
5 to move into our facility by May of 2016. Along  
6 that line, we've been working with multiple realtors  
7 in Gallup to identify commercial real estate. We've  
8 spoken with local school board members to speak  
9 about options within the district.

10 At this point, we've got a list of about  
11 ten options that we think are all good, and our next  
12 step, obviously, is to work with PSFA and project  
13 managers to winnow down that list to the most  
14 feasible options. We're really lucky, again, to  
15 have a relationship with the NACA Inspired Schools  
16 Network to have support of folks in that network who  
17 work on operations; but also to have some grant  
18 funding to help us prepare a facility to be ready.

19 For our governance council, over the  
20 course of the next year -- I think that our  
21 governance council already has tremendous knowledge  
22 and skill in terms of our mission. And they're also  
23 very committed over the next year to continue to  
24 prepare to build their own capacity in terms of  
25 knowledge and skills related to governance councils.

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1 So we have plans to attend New Mexico Charter  
2 Schools Coalition trainings, PED trainings,  
3 New Mexico School Board Association trainings, State  
4 Attorney General trainings.

5 And then we're also lucky to have informal  
6 capacity-building, again, through the NACA Inspired  
7 Schools Network. We're really going to prioritize  
8 over the next year clarifying the roles and  
9 responsibilities of the board, how to provide  
10 effective oversight and best practices in terms of  
11 setting policy.

12 Our benchmark for ourself is to have all  
13 of our policy approved by the end of December, so  
14 that we're heading into the new year with policy  
15 approved for our school.

16 We think that one of the great strengths  
17 of our work is that we've been doing this for almost  
18 a year together. And we've really valued reaching  
19 out to a lot of different voices and a lot of  
20 different people in this process.

21 I think that shows, in the fact that we  
22 have support from an organization like NACA, that  
23 we've had really great mentorship and support from  
24 the organization, and the National Indian Youth  
25 Leadership Project that we're thrilled about, that

1 UNM-Gallup and their executive director have been  
2 hugely supportive of our work, that council  
3 delegates have supported our work.

4 Local chapters, without us being a formal  
5 organization, have passed resolutions of support for  
6 our work. We think that's all demonstrative of the  
7 type of community work we've done so far, and we're  
8 really excited to continue our work with community  
9 groups. I think the committee structure that I've  
10 articulated for the next year is all about ensuring  
11 that that work continues.

12 In closing, I'll say Gallup Schools  
13 locally have long suffered inequity in their  
14 outcomes, and not for lack of trying on behalf of  
15 educators or administrators locally, but for a lot  
16 of historic reasons.

17 We believe we've designed a school that's  
18 all about overcoming and changing that history,  
19 through fueling academic excellence through cultural  
20 responsiveness and through engaging families in  
21 authentic and trusting ways.

22 And we think that through those, we can  
23 help realize -- create a blueprint for a model that  
24 can be really successful for all students in Gallup.  
25 I personally think that Gallup can, and should be, a

1 model for really, really effective and academically  
2 excellent and culturally responsible schooling, not  
3 just in our state, but I think Gallup has an  
4 opportunity to do it nationally. I think we have  
5 the resources locally to be really great at this.

6 And so we're here today to ask for the  
7 opportunity to be a part of that vision to bring  
8 really excellent and culturally relevant education  
9 to youth in Gallup.

10 Thank you all so much for your time. I  
11 know you all had to probably drive in to Gallup  
12 today; so thank you for coming to our community. We  
13 really do appreciate that. Thank you for being  
14 here. [Spoken Navajo.]

15 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Is that it? Anyone  
16 else want to speak?

17 MR. TOWERY: That's -- I know I have a  
18 minute or two left; but I think that's it.

19 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Well, thank you for  
20 those comments, then.

21 Next step, then, will be I will ask, is  
22 there anyone from the local Gallup Independent  
23 School District, or McKinley-County Schools, however  
24 it is, that is present here that wishes to speak,  
25 either for or against this application?

1 I see none; so I will note that there is  
2 no one from the local school district present here  
3 today.

4 Katie or Julie, can you bring me the  
5 sign-up sheets for the public comment, please?

6 Thank you. Wow. Okay. Six, seven,  
7 eight, nine, ten, 11 -- 20, 23, 26, 28.

8 All right. Obviously, in 20 minutes, it's  
9 going to be very difficult to have 28 people speak.  
10 You'll have about 30 seconds each, and that won't  
11 be -- so is there someone -- are you, as a group,  
12 here today, or are you all individual?

13 MR. TOWERY: Is everyone checked to desire  
14 to speak on the right column, sir?

15 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: All right. That's  
16 not quite as many. One, two, three, four, five --  
17 eight, nine. Okay. All right. With nine of you,  
18 and we have, I believe, 20 minutes, why don't we do  
19 two minutes each?

20 And I think I would suggest that you stand  
21 up, and would someone carry the microphone to them,  
22 please?

23 SPEAKER: I can do that.

24 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: I know I'm going to  
25 mispronounce some of your names. Please bear with

1 me. Esther Bemis?

2 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Two minutes, please.

3 MS. BEMIS: Good morning, Commissioners.

4 Can you hear me?

5 Good morning. Are you ready?

6 My name is Esther Barela Bemis, and I'm  
7 from Zuni. I work with the Zuni Youth Enrichment  
8 Project. And I'm here with Zoe Banteah.

9 I would like to thank you for the  
10 opportunity to comment and support the applicant. I  
11 just wanted to say that we have a dynamic group of  
12 individuals here who are implementing this school.  
13 And we need to say this statement here on paper? Do  
14 we need to say this statement here on --

15 MR. TOWERY: That's just if you want to.

16 MS. BEMIS: But we fully support it, the  
17 application, only because we both work with youth in  
18 an after-school program in Zuni, and we're hoping  
19 that some of our youth actually have a chance to  
20 apply and be students at the school. So that's  
21 really very exciting.

22 Their philosophy matches our own ideas on  
23 what we think youth should have in a school and have  
24 the opportunity to have in school. And the art  
25 programs and after-school program, the thought of

1 having that in school is really just phenomenal, a  
2 phenomenal thought.

3 I think that they have a -- as Mr. Towery  
4 mentioned, they have a really genuine group of  
5 partners in Gallup and in Zuni. So I think that the  
6 reality of this is going to be wonderful.

7 MS. BANTEAH: Just quickly, I just wanted  
8 to mention, I really appreciate the efforts that the  
9 group has really done in reaching out to nearby  
10 communities, actually coming to Zuni and asking, If  
11 you were to create a school for indigenous youth,  
12 what would you like it to entail? Nobody's ever  
13 asked me that as a parent, as an educator; so that  
14 really went a long way.

15 So having that sort of conversation  
16 started has really helped me to support this.

17 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Time. I'm going to  
18 have to interrupt you. I'm not being rude. But we  
19 try to adhere to the time limit. So thank you for  
20 your comments.

21 MS. BEMIS: Thank you.

22 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: The next name I see  
23 on the list is Brenda Chicharello.

24 MS. CHICHARELLO: Yeah, you said it right.

25 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Thank you.

1 MS. CHICHARELLO: Hello, Commissioners.  
2 Good morning. My name is Brenda Chicharello. I've  
3 lived in Gallup all my life. I am a parent, and  
4 I've also graduated from Gallup-McKinley County  
5 School District.

6 I'm a very active parent. I'm a part of  
7 the Indian education community that's also  
8 affiliated with the school district, Gallup-McKinley  
9 County School District. It's a group of parents.

10 We -- why I mentioned that is because a  
11 year ago, Lane came to our community and asked what  
12 would we like, as parents, for a charter school.  
13 And just like Lane has said before, I was -- no one  
14 has ever asked me that. And it's really weird,  
15 because I've graduated, and no one has really ever  
16 asked me what would I like in a charter school, what  
17 would benefit -- benefit not just the students, but  
18 my ideas.

19 And I was really surprised at that. And I  
20 told him that I would really like it to be  
21 curriculum based and cultural and history. I feel  
22 that that is being neglected in the school district.

23 I've graduated from Gallup-McKinley High  
24 School, and I -- I really, really -- I really didn't  
25 get that education base of learning about our Navajo

1 Code-Talkers, our history.

2 Language was, you know, down to a minimum.  
3 But the need for it, it's -- to me, I told Lane,  
4 is -- I said, "You know, as a student, I always felt  
5 like we were the outside."

6 And I always thought, "How can parents  
7 teach students when they don't even understand us,  
8 when they don't even understand our history, when  
9 they don't even know who we are as Native Americans,  
10 and how do we bridge that gap?"

11 Because even I see in the school district,  
12 why we always say, "Native Americans are low  
13 educators." It's not that. It's the fact that  
14 we're not being heard, and the fact that, as being  
15 Native Americans, it's not being addressed in the  
16 school system.

17 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Time. Thank you for  
18 your comments.

19 McClellan Hall?

20 MR. HALL: Good morning, Commissioners,  
21 and thank you for being here, and thank you for the  
22 opportunity to speak for a few minutes. My name is  
23 McClellan Hall. I'm from the Cherokee Nation in  
24 Oklahoma. I've been married into the Navajo Nation  
25 for 36 years. My children grew up in school here,

1 went through the Gallup school system, and I'm a  
2 recovering teacher and principal myself.

3 And I've been the principal of two tribal  
4 schools, one for Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma, and  
5 one at the Tacoma Indian Center. I went to school  
6 at the University of Washington, and I did my  
7 student teaching at Rough Rock, Arizona, which was  
8 the first contract school in the United States.

9 I have 40 years of experience with native  
10 youth programs and have conducted a national native  
11 youth leadership camp for 33 years. And I'm the  
12 founder and executive director of the National  
13 Indian Youth Leadership Project, which is based here  
14 in Gallup.

15 We're the developer of a nationally  
16 recognized, evidence-based program that has been  
17 implemented in 27 states and 11 sites in Canada.

18 I'm on SAMHSA's Expert Panel on Prevention  
19 for the last ten years, and I'm co-chair of their  
20 American Indian/Alaskan Indian Task Force on suicide  
21 prevention, also.

22 My organization is totally supporting this  
23 request for this charter school. Thank you very  
24 much. I actually got through.

25 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Thank you so much.

1 Susan Carter.

2 MR. HALL: Okay. Don't go anywhere.

3 MS. CARTER: Good morning.

4 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Good morning.

5 MS. CARTER: Good morning, Commissioners.

6 Thank you for being here. And thank you for the  
7 opportunity to speak on behalf of the Six Directions  
8 Indigenous School.

9 I'm very excited to see this school come  
10 to fruition. This is -- this is very special to my  
11 heart. I've been working as an educator in many  
12 different capacities for 40 years like Mack. Mack  
13 is kind of like my big brother.

14 Twenty-one of those years has been working  
15 with Mack as an independent researcher and  
16 consultant. My specialty in educational research,  
17 starting back with the Navajo and pueblo teacher ed  
18 programs back in the 1970s and '80s, research  
19 director at Santa Fe Indian School, recovering  
20 mid-school teacher, and now working with NIYLP and  
21 other tribal communities around the United States  
22 and Canada as a research and evaluation consultant  
23 for this Project Venture that Mack just mentioned,  
24 which is our evidence-based program.

25 And this -- what we've learned over the

1 last 20, 30 years is that this model that is really  
2 embedded in the Six Directions School of  
3 adventure-based, culturally respectful,  
4 project-based, experiential, adventure-based  
5 learning is very, very powerful. And then if we can  
6 reach young people through the social-emotional  
7 filter, through positive youth development  
8 strategies, we know -- we have -- you know, decades  
9 of research documented the power of this model to  
10 predict really positive academic outcomes, as well.

11 So we're not only going to be preparing  
12 young people who have school smarts, but who also  
13 have world smarts and heart smarts, who are really  
14 good human beings and will be able to contribute  
15 back to their communities.

16 It's really -- really connects with your  
17 holistic model. And I really appreciate being  
18 consulted by Lane and the team, and I know he's done  
19 a fabulous job connecting --

20 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Time is up.

21 MS. CARTER: Thank you.

22 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Thank you so much.

23 Now, the next name I see on the list is  
24 Zoe. Was that you? So you've already gotten your  
25 time to comment?

1 MS. BANTEAH: Yes.

2 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: All right.

3 Patrick S? It just says "S." So we're in  
4 disguise.

5 MR. P. SOCE: Good morning. My name is  
6 Patrick Soce, S-O-C-E. I'm a recovering graduate  
7 from Gallup-McKinley County Schools. And I've got  
8 to say this type of school would be really good for  
9 this type area. Going through public school myself,  
10 I feel like I've been dealing with the same thing  
11 every day, and it's just a really long process. And  
12 it doesn't really give you much of anything other  
13 than what you're taught from the same person every  
14 day.

15 As I see in a lot of other people that I  
16 went to school with, they feel, like, we're, I  
17 guess, undereducated in a way. As in adventure-type  
18 learning, we get different types of areas and  
19 different experiences. Like, I love learning from  
20 experience. I feel like it just helps people in all  
21 ways. And I wish there was a charter here when I  
22 was going through high school and mid-school. It  
23 would have helped me kind of get more on track in  
24 school.

25 I could have tried harder; I know that.

1 And it could have been a lot better. And -- yeah,  
2 thank you for listening.

3 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Thank you for your  
4 thoughts.

5 Let's see. Nicole Atencio.

6 MS. ATENCIO: Good morning. My name is  
7 Nicole Atencio, I just graduated from Miyamura High  
8 School. A-T-E-N-C-I-O, if you need that.

9 So, yeah, I just graduated, and I went to  
10 public school, like, all my life. And honestly, I  
11 was never really exposed to what I should have been  
12 exposed to, what every kid should be exposed to,  
13 especially if you're Native, like -- I don't know.  
14 Honestly, I didn't get that exposure into pretty  
15 much what should be essential to a kid, as in, like,  
16 responsibility.

17 Yeah, everyone can have book smarts; but  
18 that type system doesn't work for everyone. Like, a  
19 lot of people don't understand that. But I believe  
20 that the -- bringing this charter school to Gallup  
21 will be a huge contribution to our Native society  
22 here, 'cause --

23 Honestly, I don't -- I agree with  
24 everything that's holistic and alternative. Like,  
25 you have no idea.

1           But I agree that -- I don't know. This is  
2 just -- it's going to be great. Just watch it flow,  
3 and it'll grow. And you'll see different --  
4 honestly -- so I didn't get exposed to anything like  
5 that until I joined NIYLP, with -- National Indian  
6 Youth Leadership Project -- with Celeste and Ben  
7 Soce. And the message they use really, like, opened  
8 my mind in ways -- I don't know -- some people  
9 wouldn't understand.

10           But seeing the other participants grow,  
11 like Patrick and all the other younger ones that we  
12 were working with to do different projects and  
13 stuff, seeing them grow in that way is just amazing;  
14 like, you won't see that anywhere else if you're not  
15 teaching them that, you know?

16           Like -- but I agree -- I'm in full support  
17 of this school; so I hope you guys are, too.

18           VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Thank you.

19           MS. ATENCIO: Thank you.

20           VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Alan Brauer?

21           MR. BRAUER: Good morning, Commissioners.  
22 My name is Alan Brauer, B-R-A-U-E-R. And I have the  
23 privilege of being the NACA Inspired Schools Network  
24 Fellowship Director. In our nonprofit, we support  
25 our fellows, like Lane, through a two-year

1 fellowship. He just finished up his first year as a  
2 fellow and is going through his planning year in  
3 developing out Six Directions.

4 We have ten staff members supporting him,  
5 anywhere from operational supports in finding and  
6 locating, you know, a site; financial support, as  
7 well, both in terms of advice and counseling in how  
8 to do the financial aspects; teaching and learning;  
9 building curriculum instruction; as well as  
10 performance management, when the time comes, when  
11 the school opens.

12 And so from my experience with Lane and  
13 his team here, I just -- I'm just so inspired by the  
14 vision that they set forth. I think that the focus  
15 in on academic excellence and relevance is really  
16 what all of our students here in McKinley County are  
17 deserving of.

18 I also -- you know, other than being the  
19 fellowship director, I also have had the pleasure of  
20 living in Gallup and in -- for those of you who know  
21 Smith Lake near Crownpoint, that's where I actually  
22 started my career in education.

23 And the one thing that really moves me and  
24 really inspires me about Six Directions is that  
25 they're really focused in on student leadership. We

1 really need our students -- and they're deserving of  
2 this -- to be the leaders of McKinley County and our  
3 country. And I think that their focus in on  
4 culturally responsive teaching, as well as high  
5 levels of rigorous academic excellence is the ticket  
6 to make our students the leaders that we know they  
7 are.

8 So thank you very much.

9 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Thank you for your  
10 comments.

11 Celeste Yazzie.

12 MS. YAZZIE: [Navajo spoken.] My mom, Big  
13 Water. I'm from my dad's side, grew up here, born  
14 and raised in Gallup. I am a graduate of Gallup  
15 High School.

16 And I come on behalf of -- in support of  
17 Six Direction Indigenous, and that's because of my  
18 experience in school, as well, just like these  
19 fellow students said, as well.

20 You know, I look back at my high school  
21 and mid-school and elementary years, and there's  
22 just a handful of teachers, like maybe four teachers  
23 that come to mind that were encouraging, only  
24 because they made education different for me, you  
25 know, going outside and allowing me to -- you know,

1 there's one that's really dear to my heart.

2 One of the history teachers asked me to do  
3 a biography of my che [ph], my grandfather. And I  
4 was honored to do that, because when he passed, I  
5 was able to do the eulogy, because I was able to  
6 tell about his life story.

7 And, you know, when I look back at my  
8 education life, it's -- the values, the purpose of  
9 my family, you know. My mom, she taught me how to  
10 pray, praying every morning and every night. It was  
11 my che [ph], my grandfather, who taught me the  
12 purpose of life, of hard work, you know, going in  
13 the fields, going out to livestock, you know,  
14 herding sheep, you know.

15 And I think about, you know, that was what  
16 got me to college, you know. When I was in college,  
17 those were the things that came into my head. It  
18 was never school. Actually, high school was what  
19 made me want to become a teacher, because I always  
20 remember sitting there and just reading a book and  
21 then answering the questions in the back; like, that  
22 was all that I remember.

23 So this kind of school is very, you know,  
24 dear, because a better education is needed.  
25 Experiential ed is needed. Thank you.

1           VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Thank you very much  
2 for that story. We have one two-minute slot left.

3           Is there anyone who did not sign and wish  
4 to speak? I will give you this opportunity now.

5           MR. BLUEHOUSE: My name is Philmer  
6 Bluehouse. First name is spelled P-H-I-L-M-E-R.  
7 Last name is Bluehouse, B-L-U-E-H-O-U-S-E. I  
8 consider myself as a Navajo traditionalist, you  
9 might say recovering from Christianity. I'm  
10 recovering from the educational system that has been  
11 out here in these parts for the longest time.

12           And all along in my life, I've always  
13 talked about the ideas that were brought forth  
14 through what Lane here described. And to many of  
15 you, I'm hearing the same thing, resonating the same  
16 thing, that our culture and our tradition in this  
17 region, not only the Native American culture, but  
18 the Hispanic culture and others who are in this  
19 area, new cultures coming in, people from the Middle  
20 East and groups like that, that we need to learn to  
21 share with and understand.

22           And I think that this would be that  
23 opportunity, as a model for the nation, for this  
24 community, for McKinley County, for the State of New  
25 Mexico, particularly you fine folks up here, to

1 really provide this support that we need to continue  
2 this idea that we have. I think it's so critical  
3 and so important that we learn how to not only have  
4 book smarts, but have also the practicality of life  
5 in general. And I think that's so critical in my  
6 mind as I have come up in my life in that way.

7 I began mentoring -- I was mentored when I  
8 was 12 years old to become a -- what people call a  
9 "medicine man"; but I look at myself as a person who  
10 leads people to healing rather than being a medicine  
11 man. I'm not the medicine; I'm just a leader. I  
12 carry the flashlight, so to speak, to help people  
13 find their own healing. And that's what I've done  
14 all my life.

15 And I'm also -- educated background about  
16 criminal justice. I worked for the United States  
17 Attorney's Office out in Phoenix and New Mexico  
18 and -- Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah, and sometimes  
19 Colorado districts. That's my professional  
20 background is criminal justice.

21 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Time. Time is up.

22 MR. BLUEHOUSE: That's me. But I do  
23 really want you to support this. And that's what  
24 I'm asking from the bottom of my heart. Thank you.

25 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Thank you.

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1           Thank you for all your thoughts and your  
2           comments today. We appreciate the support that we  
3           see here for this school.

4           I believe our next step, then, is we're  
5           now down to the time for Commissioners to ask  
6           questions. That is allocated at 40 minutes.  
7           Hopefully, we will ask some intelligent questions in  
8           that time period.

9           We'll start the clock, then.

10          Commissioners, who would like to start the  
11          ball rolling?

12          Any questions?

13          Commissioner Toulouse?

14          COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Mr. Chair, I want  
15          to thank everybody who shared their stories. My  
16          family has been in this area for several hundred  
17          years. And I know my background is I got angry  
18          every time I had a textbook on American history, and  
19          there was nothing about the Native cultures. There  
20          was a paragraph on the Spanish Entrada; then nothing  
21          until we get to the Westward Expansion.

22          And this area has a 10,000-year or more  
23          history, and we need to teach it, whether it's yours  
24          or anybody else's. And I want to see us do that.

25          I still get angry when I see the

1 New Mexico textbooks my grandchildren have. We  
2 don't teach it right.

3 But I have one organizational question  
4 here that hit me, having been on other boards and  
5 all.

6 You say you're going to have five  
7 committees on your governance council, and they're  
8 going to all be involved. How many people do you  
9 have on your governance council, and how much time  
10 are you going to expect these people to take,  
11 because any one or two committees takes a lot of  
12 time. So if you're going to have five -- I hope  
13 you're going to have more than five governance  
14 council members.

15 MR. TOWERY: Thank you for that question.  
16 Right now we have five governance council members.  
17 Our charter is written to have as many as nine.  
18 We're still actively seeking governance council  
19 members to have, especially with legal expertise and  
20 financial expertise.

21 The five ad hoc committees that I've  
22 described are only for the planning year. We  
23 described fewer standing committees once the school  
24 is open.

25 I agree with you it's a daunting task to

1 think about that amount of work. We've described  
2 that, because we feel like to be ready to do a  
3 really excellent job in a year, that's the work  
4 that's necessary; that's the work that has to get  
5 done.

6 And I think the folks that are sitting  
7 here with us are pretty committed to getting that  
8 work done together.

9 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: And I was also  
10 very, very glad to see the Zuni Tribe being included  
11 in this, because I was wondering about that, how  
12 much involvement there was. And I'm glad to see  
13 that.

14 I also want to say -- and then I won't  
15 take any more time, unless some other answers bring  
16 something up -- but my one other comment is, is I'm  
17 relatively new to the Commission; this is my third  
18 year through with these hearings.

19 I think this is the first hearing -- and  
20 I've done all but one of them -- that there wasn't  
21 somebody who got up and spoke against the school,  
22 whether it was from the community or from the school  
23 district.

24 So I'm obvious -- obviously, you've done  
25 your work well. And if you can keep going with that

1 and keep your community involvement, I think you've  
2 got a good chance. Thank you.

3 MR. TOWERY: Thank you, ma'am.

4 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Thank you,  
5 Commissioner Toulouse.

6 I would like to explore the governing  
7 council just for a second.

8 MR. TOWERY: Sure.

9 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Refresh my memory.  
10 Did you put a range in your application, or did you  
11 just initially say five members?

12 MR. TOWERY: We have a range, I believe,  
13 from five to nine.

14 COMMISSIONER GIPSON: Nine.

15 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Oh, good. Thank you.  
16 That actually is important, because if you go below  
17 five governing council members, that is considered a  
18 material violation of your charter. So I always  
19 recommend that schools have more than five. That  
20 way, if someone quits or gets sick or whatever, you  
21 don't get into that material violation thing.

22 And I believe you have 45 days to replace  
23 that member; but that can be difficult, as you well  
24 know, trying to find qualified people that are  
25 willing to put in the many, many hours to serve as a

1 governing council member. That is -- it is a  
2 difficult task, I know. So thank you.

3 Commissioners?

4 Commissioner Gipson?

5 COMMISSIONER GIPSON: I have a question.  
6 And I'd like to thank everyone. This is my first  
7 go-round where I'm sitting up here. I sat through  
8 most last year, so I'd have some idea of hopefully  
9 what I was doing when I got up here.

10 But I do certainly appreciate and do also  
11 reiterate that it's amazing that there are no  
12 comments against opening the school. So that  
13 certainly does speak to the community support of the  
14 school.

15 But I just have a couple of questions, I  
16 guess, on -- do you have any vision of what some of  
17 these project-based learning ventures will be that  
18 you'll -- you know, have you thought that far yet?

19 MR. TOWERY: Yeah. That's an excellent  
20 question.

21 We don't have -- we haven't designed the  
22 specifics of the whole curriculum explicitly,  
23 because we want family input --

24 COMMISSIONER GIPSON: Right.

25 MR. TOWERY: -- in projects that we choose

1 to pursue. I think the value is -- our values are  
2 they should have local resonance when we pursue  
3 them. So whether that means, say -- sort of like  
4 what Celeste says, maybe we're learning about being  
5 a historian through a local oral storytelling  
6 project. Maybe we're learning science through  
7 taking local water samples or learning about local  
8 geology.

9 I think there's any number of ways you can  
10 bring project-based learning with local residents  
11 that still connects with Common Core standards.

12 So part of the plan for both the family  
13 engagement committees and curricular committees is  
14 to take a lot of input into how would you want to  
15 apply local learning in sixth and seventh grades for  
16 next year.

17 My background, I started my teaching  
18 career in Washington, D.C., at an expeditionary  
19 learning school. So I had the experience of  
20 teaching expeditionary-style, project-based  
21 learning, which was interdisciplinary, sort of  
22 semester-long, project-based learning.

23 Masika, one of our co-founders who's not  
24 here this morning because she's a teacher and in the  
25 classroom this morning, is also a really passionate

1 curriculum developer. We have a lot of thoughts how  
2 we want to pursue that Understanding By Design  
3 process with community members. But I don't have  
4 exact answers as to what we want those projects to  
5 be today.

6 COMMISSIONER GIPSON: Okay. And one more.  
7 The -- your -- from the Thrive Institute,  
8 is that a rubric that you're using for a holistic --  
9 and I don't remember if there was an example in the  
10 application.

11 MR. TOWER: Yeah, absolutely. We put an  
12 example of part of the rubric in our application.  
13 It's a rather large tool. It is; it's a rubric.  
14 It's aligned to -- there are sort of, like, six main  
15 themes. But within each one of those themes,  
16 there's subcategories. They're aligned to things  
17 like cultural identity; but also, just things like  
18 goal setting and persistence, all sorts of things  
19 that we would consider aligned with positive youth  
20 development theories and, like, youth psychological  
21 development theories.

22 It's a tool -- we found out about it  
23 because the National Indian Youth Leadership Project  
24 began using it in their assessment with their  
25 programs. We've been in contact with that

1 organization over the course of the past year as to  
2 how best to utilize that tool in a school setting.  
3 Yeah, so it's a rubric.

4 Imagine sort of like, as a teacher, I  
5 almost feel like a [inaudible] writing rubric kind  
6 of tool. It's very, very descriptive across  
7 multiple sort of metrics and indicators.

8 COMMISSIONER GIPSON: And is this  
9 something that would be looked at quarterly, or --

10 MR. TOWERY: So, yeah. The way we propose  
11 using it is that it sort of comes alive in the  
12 advisory setting that we propose. And that -- we  
13 propose using a trimester schedule in our school.  
14 And so with each trimester, we're proposing a  
15 student-led conference. And so during their  
16 advisory time with their advisers, students would do  
17 their own self-assessment using a rubric, their own  
18 self-goal setting using a rubric, and with their  
19 adviser, set sort of next steps to pursue. And then  
20 each trimester coming back, hopefully, their  
21 advisers -- each trimester, having a moment of  
22 reflection on that tool.

23 COMMISSIONER GIPSON: Okay. Just on a  
24 personal note. Is this the school that was going to  
25 perhaps teach a rammed earth building?

1 MR. TOWERY: No, ma'am. I don't know what  
2 that is.

3 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: That's way down  
4 south.

5 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: On the border.

6 COMMISSIONER GIPSON: I've got a lot that  
7 are just melding together.

8 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: As the Commissioner  
9 commented, we have seven this year; so they all tend  
10 to -- we read seven applications. We read seven  
11 analyses from the CSD. We read a lot of other  
12 information. So it does tend to flow together every  
13 once in a while.

14 Anyone else have a question?

15 COMMISSIONER CONYERS: I have some  
16 comments.

17 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Commissioner Conyers?

18 COMMISSIONER CONYERS: Like the other  
19 Commissioners, I'd like to thank you all for being  
20 here and your comments today. Those are very  
21 helpful to us.

22 I've been involved in education in  
23 New Mexico for 45 years. I started in Farmington at  
24 the Navajo Methodist Mission, and also spent  
25 30 years in Bloomfield Schools, and retired a couple

1 of years ago from -- I was executive director and  
2 principal at Dzilth-Na-O-Dith-Hle, which is a grant  
3 school, which is similar to charter schools, under  
4 the Navajo Nation.

5 And kind of -- you hit a cord there with  
6 attendance. And I know -- and even in the state  
7 now, there's emphasis on that. And for years,  
8 people talked about it but never did a lot about it.

9 I know there are ways to, you know, try to  
10 involve parents. There's incentive programs.

11 Do you have any silver bullets or magic  
12 kinds of things that -- 'cause it's a -- it's a big  
13 issue, and it's comprehens- -- you don't just do it;  
14 it's a thing you build. What are your thoughts on  
15 that?

16 MR. TOWERY: That's a great question. I'm  
17 confident I don't have a silver bullet; but I'll try  
18 to tell you what our strategies are.

19 I began my teaching career here teaching  
20 at a BIE school on the Navajo Nation, at which we  
21 frequently received, you know, very low attendance  
22 at, say, parent-teacher conferences; maybe 25,  
23 30 percent.

24 So I remember beginning to do home visits  
25 after that in order to try to connect with some of

1 my families who weren't coming. It was striking to  
2 me the degree to which, when I came to people's  
3 homes to talk about their children, they frequently  
4 said, "What did my student do wrong?"

5 "They didn't do anything wrong. They're  
6 wonderful. I came to say how wonderful they are."

7 The experience having a teacher coming to  
8 tell them that, in a lot of cases, was frustratingly  
9 new and shocking to many folks.

10 I don't have a silver bullet. I think our  
11 two strategies are this: To design a program that  
12 kids are motivated by that's engaging, interesting,  
13 and active, that makes them want to be at school  
14 every day, that reflects and affirms their identity,  
15 so that they want to be at school every day.

16 The second half is about the strategies  
17 building trusting, authenticate relationships with  
18 families; that is, the process that I feel really  
19 lucky to have been able to begin already -- I think  
20 you heard from a few parents who are here today --  
21 not that that means we have relationships with every  
22 parent who will be at our school, by any means.

23 But we have a plan to, over the course of  
24 the planning year, once we have our first enrollment  
25 window -- which I think I proposed ending in April

1 for our first lottery -- beginning to build  
2 community with families right away, having events,  
3 whether it's potlucks or -- in the park or whatever,  
4 building community with parents, doing home visits  
5 over the course of the summer to get to know  
6 families and youth, having a really active family  
7 advisory committee that has input, and a member who  
8 sits on the governance council.

9 And our hope is by ensuring the parents  
10 know that they have a voice in our school, that they  
11 really want to take an active role, and that we're  
12 able to overcome a history of distrust and  
13 miscommunication between schools and parents who  
14 have lived here.

15 So, again, I don't know that I have a  
16 silver bullet. But I think the two keys are making  
17 sure that kids feel safe and welcome and engaged in  
18 school, and making parents know they have a role to  
19 play in our school.

20 MR. SOSE: Another reason -- well, NIYLP,  
21 National Indian Youth Leadership Project, you know,  
22 we have in-school programming and after-school  
23 programming. These are the programs that kids look  
24 forward to sometimes. Years back, we had a program  
25 with Tohatchi Mid-School, which is a half an hour

1 north from here. And we were working in the -- in  
2 the English class.

3 Because of the program that we had in  
4 there, the Project Venture program, a lot of the  
5 kids started showing up a lot more. Apparently,  
6 they liked the activities and the team-building and  
7 the learning that we had to offer.

8 It got to the point where we had a lot of  
9 students sign up for the after-school program, and  
10 we couldn't take them all; so we had to be  
11 selective.

12 That's one way to kind of help kids stay  
13 in school and keep coming to school. And if you're  
14 going to take a kid away from school to do, like, a  
15 rock climbing trip or a rapelling trip, you  
16 definitely need their parents' trust and consent.

17 So that is another way to kind of build  
18 relationships with young people and their parents,  
19 if they implement a program like Project Venture.

20 Thank you.

21 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Were you done,  
22 Commissioner Conyers?

23 COMMISSIONER CONYERS: I'm done.

24 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Thank you.

25 Commissioner Ambruster?

1 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Yes. I hope  
2 this is correct; but I'm sure you'll correct me if  
3 I'm incorrect. You specifically stated that you did  
4 not want to have a union with your teaching staff?  
5 And --

6 MR. TOWERY: I'm not against having a  
7 union for our teaching staff, at all. We just said  
8 we know there's not the requirement to unionize.

9 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: So -- okay.  
10 Because that sets up the parameters for you, as  
11 administrators, as well, as to what teachers can and  
12 cannot do.

13 MR. TOWERY: Yes, ma'am. Exactly.

14 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: And the other  
15 question I had was I have also been in education.  
16 I've been teaching special education for 39 years,  
17 most recently in Los Alamos, which, of course, is  
18 very different.

19 But let me just tell you that the first  
20 group of students I worked with came from -- in  
21 California, were from Carmelitas Housing  
22 Development. And I think you can just picture that.

23 So I don't have experience with Native  
24 Americans -- I do want to say that upfront -- other  
25 than one -- one Cherokee, as a matter of fact, whose

1 mother I thought was -- whose father I thought was  
2 the Cherokee; but his blonde-haired, blue-eyed  
3 mother was the full-blooded Cherokee. So there you  
4 go. Not something I know very much about.

5 But I am concerned about students being  
6 engaged. I mostly taught in middle school. Got  
7 that one. The middle school. So -- and so what I'm  
8 wondering is, I feel your frustration and maybe a  
9 touch of anger. And I wonder what gets done -- and  
10 this is my first reading, so I get to be forgiven --

11 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Perhaps.

12 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Exactly. Like,  
13 do people go to school board meetings, and do  
14 they -- do they fight for change, just in general,  
15 from a traditional school background? Do they fight  
16 for these things that you know so much about and  
17 feel so passionate about? Or you just have to,  
18 like -- can't do anything, and you have to start a  
19 whole new school? Just wondered.

20 MR. TOWERY: Your question is about trying  
21 to sort of qualify parent behavior currently in  
22 Gallup-McKinley County Schools?

23 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Well, both.  
24 When you're unhappy about something, are you able to  
25 do anything about it, through all these years that

1 you all have been in school here or wherever, to go  
2 to the board. If 100 people go to these meetings --  
3 I know this is an enormous district; so that's not  
4 all that easy -- but to go and to fight for change  
5 and fight for the history books -- which come from  
6 Texas -- don't they? -- which I think that explains  
7 it. And, you know, I just -- it's like an impotent  
8 rage.

9 MR. TOWER: Sure. I understand your  
10 question, I think. I'll try to answer it. I also  
11 imagine some folks up here might have some other  
12 thoughts.

13 There are -- I think there are limits to  
14 families feeling that have input and feedback when  
15 they're frustrated, for a couple of reasons. There  
16 are some pretty big geographic restraints. The  
17 school board most often meets in Gallup. A few  
18 times a year, they might go to other areas of the  
19 district.

20 Our school board currently does not allow  
21 public comment on any items not on the agenda; so if  
22 you have a concern that's not an agenda item, you're  
23 not even allowed to come give comments at a school  
24 board meeting, which is something a lot of people  
25 have brought up repeatedly this year, to the point I

1 think there's a chance that it might change soon.

2 I think, right now, the biggest source for  
3 parents, especially Native parents, to involve  
4 themselves in the district is through the Indian  
5 Education Committee that Brenda mentioned. I don't  
6 know if Brenda is allowed to speak right now.

7 The Indian Education Committee has taken a  
8 lot of stands toward the district asking for  
9 differences in reservation schools, and has  
10 expressed frustration at what is not being heard.

11 So I think there's a lot of folks who are  
12 frustrated and don't feel like there's a real place  
13 to go to be heard, which is part of the reason we're  
14 striking a nerve with folks who are excited about  
15 the work we've done.

16 Ben or Madeline, would you like to add  
17 anything?

18 MR. BLUEHOUSE: That aspect of involving  
19 parents, I think, is so, so critical, absolutely  
20 critical, because as I've been hearing people  
21 talking, sometimes we're not heard. When you go  
22 back to the hogan, when you go back to the pueblos,  
23 when you go back to those things, there's actually  
24 teaching that is happening in their homes, around  
25 the fire, things that are taught not necessarily by

1 book, but through songs, chants, prayers, rituals, a  
2 different way of teaching, a different way of  
3 learning.

4 And that part of it, I think, somehow  
5 needs to be really honored and brought forward.  
6 That way, I see participation from parents, from --  
7 from people who are significant to the child that  
8 we're trying to educate, not only in Western-style  
9 education, but certainly, in our cultural and  
10 traditional ways.

11 I think that component is going to be so,  
12 so strong if we move in that direction. And, you  
13 know, we often ask ourselves, "Why is there so much  
14 absenteeism? Why are there no participation in  
15 schools by parents on the board," and this kind of  
16 thing, you know.

17 It really goes back to that part where I  
18 think Celeste had mentioned, you know, when I  
19 heard -- and I think a couple of other students had  
20 made the same comment -- that, "We're not heard.  
21 We're that silent majority," so to speak. And it's  
22 mis- -- like a miscommunication process that  
23 happens, you know.

24 When we're talking about some of the  
25 methods and techniques of teaching from the cultural

1 and traditional perspective, it's not necessarily,  
2 you know, always written, okay? It's done through  
3 ritual; it's done through ceremony; it's done  
4 through other methodologies.

5 And I think those need to be -- you know,  
6 they've been out there, and they need to be brought  
7 forward. And we need to share that with one  
8 another. It's not only among our own Native people;  
9 but certainly, people who must understand who we  
10 are.

11 I just recently talked to a young lady who  
12 said that she's been here in this region,  
13 New Mexico -- she's been here for 36 years, and she  
14 does not know her neighbors. She doesn't know  
15 anybody from the pueblos. She doesn't know anybody  
16 from the Navajo.

17 I mean, that, to me, is a very, very  
18 significant picture, what is going on here. And I  
19 think that this school will offer that opportunity  
20 to really bring out those things that are necessary  
21 and important for -- to hear that voice that has  
22 been longing to come forward.

23 And I think that with your -- with your  
24 understanding and with your knowledge -- obviously,  
25 there's a vast amount of knowledge out there from

1 the educational perspective. And I think that if we  
2 really look at what is offered from the hogan, what  
3 is offered from the pueblo, the kivas, what is  
4 offered from other cultural and traditional ways, I  
5 think that we'll really grow together as -- as -- as  
6 a school in this region, and, for that matter,  
7 really setting the stage for the rest of America, if  
8 you want to say, to really move forward in that way.

9 MR. TOWER: Do you want to add anything?

10 MR. SOSE: Yeah, just a short word.

11 Yeah, it's not for lack of trying. It's  
12 just a lack of ears, sometimes. What we've -- as a  
13 citizen of McKinley County, one of the things that  
14 I've known, and I found out, is people are scared to  
15 change. They're so set in their ways, whether it's  
16 the school district or the citizens of the town, or  
17 if it's even from the Navajo Tribe. People are  
18 reluctant to change, especially if it's something  
19 they don't know that much about.

20 That's why the school is so important. We  
21 want to make sure kids go beyond that and not fall  
22 into the trap that I fell into, where I felt  
23 discomfort, and I immediately just, you know, done  
24 what I shouldn't have. I should have just kept on  
25 going and just kept getting good grades and

1 everything.

2 The other reason is there's a lot of  
3 historical context, a lot of reasons why people  
4 don't want to stand up and speak their words,  
5 because they're so used to being marginalized that  
6 it seems like it's hard to overcome that sometimes.

7 With this school, students will get a  
8 chance to think beyond that, that they'll know that  
9 there's a possibility, and there's a potential.  
10 They'll be nurtured to make the changes that they  
11 feel like is needed in their life, in their families  
12 and their communities.

13 So with all the things that we're planning  
14 to incorporate into the school, I think, you know,  
15 that the future is going to be bright for our young  
16 people.

17 Thank you.

18 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Thank you.

19 Would you have anything else?

20 I've got some stuff to ask, too.

21 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: You can go  
22 ahead. This is it? Forever?

23 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: If you have more  
24 questions, go ahead.

25 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Well, I'm

1 thinking of them. Go ahead.

2 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Okay. First off,  
3 Katie, was your CSD preliminary analysis -- was it  
4 given to each of the applicants, also? So they have  
5 that? They're familiar with it?

6 Thank you.

7 I actually want to start with your story  
8 that you shared in the beginning, where when you  
9 were school age, you felt not connected, and you  
10 didn't -- with your example, you didn't feel  
11 comfortable.

12 Now, I know some of your answers have  
13 already gotten into this area. But how is your  
14 school going to make those kids be connected? How  
15 are they going to feel comfortable in your school?

16 Anyone can answer that.

17 MR. TOWERY: Do you want to take the lead?

18 MR. SOSE: We're going to start the day  
19 with an advisory time. It'll give a chance to  
20 connect an adult to some students. I think checking  
21 in with a trusted adult might be a good idea. It'll  
22 help with transition from elementary to mid-school,  
23 and will reassure kids that they're at the right  
24 place, that whatever they done in their old school,  
25 you know, it's okay that they can build upon that.

1           With the Project Venture curriculum from  
2 NIYLP, we do a lot of team-building stuff. We begin  
3 the phase of introductory, where each kid starts to  
4 learn about one another. They learn more about  
5 themselves; they learn more about their peers. So  
6 who knows? Maybe they have a potential friend in  
7 that group.

8           Once we get past that introductory phase,  
9 we go to something called the "discovery phase,"  
10 where kids start to find out the things that they're  
11 good in. We find out their strengths and their  
12 skills. And we're going to try to help them nurture  
13 that with them. If their skills are based in  
14 communication, by all means, were going to nurture  
15 them so they'll be good speakers, speaking on behalf  
16 of themselves and their peers.

17           Afterwards, a skill-building phase, where  
18 we take them outside and we teach them more about  
19 the technical side of, like, a rock-climbing trip or  
20 something like that. We show them the ropes and the  
21 equipment and all the necessary equipment that we  
22 need to use for an activity like that. So they're  
23 reassured; they know what the equipment is for.  
24 They know how to take care of it, because  
25 essentially, that equipment will take care of them

1 if they take care of it first.

2 Afterwards, when you combine the  
3 introduction, the discovery, and the skill-building  
4 phases, you put them all together, and then most  
5 times, or not, that's when student leadership  
6 happens. So if we get kids through a cycle like  
7 that, you know, they'll deal with the uncomfortness  
8 and the awkwardness a lot faster than I did; that's  
9 for sure.

10 That's one way. I'm sure there will be  
11 other ways.

12 MR. TOWERY: Yeah. I think there's a lot  
13 of lessons for us to learn by models that Ben talked  
14 about, especially through the advisory setting. I  
15 think comfort comes, and safety comes, from a few  
16 sources. One is relationships with peers and  
17 adults. So the advisory setting is where we've  
18 proposed creating protocols and traditions that  
19 build relationships really explicitly. You know,  
20 data says that for middle-school youth having one  
21 great relationship with one adult is a huge  
22 predictor of staying in school and coming to school.

23 A second is how you build sort of culture  
24 in a school which is deeply tied to relationships,  
25 right? And so I think that's where sort of the

1 frameworks of positive youth development, of  
2 trauma-informed safe counseling and programming come  
3 in, and how those places build culture that is very,  
4 very safe for youth.

5 And then using, of course, core values  
6 designed with community members over the course of  
7 the year to create core values for our school that  
8 hold us to behavioral norms that are really relevant  
9 to youth, that feel like they're similar to what  
10 they know at home.

11 And then the last answer is the  
12 curriculum. I think we can't leave that out. I  
13 think knowing that a curriculum affirms their  
14 identity and that there's -- I suppose sort of the  
15 thesis of everything we've said, right, is about  
16 decreasing dissonance between home life and school  
17 life. The degree to which you're able to accomplish  
18 that brings a degree of safety and comfort in  
19 school.

20 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Thank you. Anyone  
21 else?

22 And here, again, a lot of your answers  
23 have already gone into this question, and you spent  
24 your entire application trying to make this case.

25 But, really, what is going to be unique or

1 innovative about your school, when we compare it to  
2 the area schools or the BIE schools or whatever,  
3 because the CSD noticed, in their analysis, that you  
4 tried, but you didn't make a firm case. That's not  
5 the word they used.

6           What is going to set you apart from the  
7 rest of the schools in this area?

8           MR. TOWERY: I think, at the core, the  
9 thing that sets us apart is the commitment to  
10 cultural responsiveness and sort of the theories and  
11 pedagogies of culturally responsible schooling. I  
12 don't think that is a program that has -- the public  
13 school systems have had the will or the ability to  
14 pull off at scale. So I think that's answer number  
15 one is finding a way to create curriculum and a  
16 pedagogical model that is culturally responsive.

17           I think once you dig into that, there's  
18 any number of ways where our school diverges from  
19 the practice of local public schools, one being the  
20 project-based curriculum, which is, in itself, a  
21 divergence, I think, from most of the curriculum  
22 that I have seen in public schools, and the pedagogy  
23 I see in most public schools, which seems to be  
24 teacher-centric, classroom-based learning.

25           The idea of holistic wellness, I think, is

1 totally different from public schools. The idea of  
2 having a rubric and students goal-setting around  
3 holistic wellness is different from public schools  
4 and diverges from public school practice. And along  
5 with that, the idea of a restorative justice  
6 program, very divergent from sort of the "no  
7 excuses," you know, model that public schools tend  
8 to use here, that results in a lot of kids, I think,  
9 ending up dropping out early or being suspended or  
10 expelled from public schools or local public school  
11 systems.

12 I think our commitment to building  
13 relationships with families in the long run, in ways  
14 that families have a voice in our school, is a  
15 divergence from local school systems. I think all  
16 of that fits under this umbrella of culturally  
17 responsive education, that all of those are ways in  
18 which our school diverges from the practices of  
19 public schools locally.

20 MR. SOSE: The other thing that would  
21 separate us from local schools would be -- we're  
22 going to implement something called a "restorative  
23 justice system." It's a little bit different than  
24 the "zero tolerance" program that local schools are  
25 kind of abiding by. And maybe Mr. Bluehouse can

1 shed more light on that.

2 But one other thing that we're hoping to  
3 do is have high-schoolers mentor mid-schoolers in  
4 that program. Imagine a freshman, and they've gone  
5 through sixth, seventh, eighth grade. Whatever  
6 their experiences were, they'll be able to connect  
7 with a mentor, incoming sixth-graders, again, help  
8 ease the transition of coming to a new school like  
9 this.

10 And Lane talked about holistic wellness.  
11 In public school, there's only two components of the  
12 health that the school district kind of -- they  
13 address. There's physical education, and then  
14 there's mental education, where just a lot of  
15 learning happening.

16 We propose that we also look at emotional  
17 wellness. To do that, we need to have -- to  
18 establish healthy relationships. We need to help  
19 kids regulate their feelings and kind of control  
20 their behavior a little bit and kind of endorse  
21 resiliency and making kids know that it's okay to  
22 experience, you know, challenges now and then. It's  
23 what happens afterwards.

24 Then there's the spiritual side. We don't  
25 want to neglect that. It's all about accepting who

1 you are, where you come from and what your stories  
2 are. It's also about viewing yourself as somebody  
3 important, somebody that's sacred, that your --  
4 there's nothing wrong with who you are. There's  
5 nothing wrong with learning some of your songs and  
6 some of your history, and even prayers that align  
7 with your culture. So those are some of the things  
8 that will be a little bit different.

9 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Thank you. Let's  
10 change directions here just a little bit.

11 Let's talk about your academic performance  
12 indicators. We still have some questions that we  
13 have to get into, so -- I actually salute you. You  
14 put your academic -- your proposed academic  
15 performance indicators and goals -- you used the  
16 format that we suggest in our application, which I  
17 salute you for that.

18 You would think that all applicants follow  
19 that; but a lot of them don't follow that. They  
20 think that -- I guess they just -- they don't know  
21 why we put that in there.

22 We put that in there for a reason. These  
23 are the performance indicators that we use. By  
24 statute now, here in New Mexico, each approved new  
25 school or renewal school must sit down with this

1 Commission at some point after that and negotiate a  
2 performance contract and several associated  
3 performance frameworks in the area of academics and  
4 organization and financial. And this is the format  
5 that we have settled on, as a Commission, over the  
6 years.

7 We've done 48 of those in the last two  
8 years. I've been present for 45 of them. So should  
9 we approve you, you will see me sitting with you,  
10 and we'll negotiate that with you one of these days;  
11 because goals have been my pet project, as those who  
12 have experience with this Commission know.

13 The numbers you put forth, I actually --  
14 again, I salute you for that. Most schools, we have  
15 to drag them, kicking and screaming, to accept  
16 levels of academic performance. The whole purpose  
17 of the Legislature passing that performance contract  
18 bill was obviously, we need students in this state  
19 to improve their academic -- as you've alluded to  
20 throughout -- what's here in the Gallup district is  
21 not unique to New Mexico. Many schools are  
22 struggling.

23 So I salute you for that.

24 I want to talk about a couple of things.  
25 You used the term "typical growth." That's kind of

1       nebulous. What is typical growth?

2                   I don't want to get into that today. The  
3       Public Education Department operates on the basic  
4       premise that every school student in this state will  
5       show one year's growth each year; in other words,  
6       you showed, if you're in the fourth grade, that  
7       you're ready to go into the fifth grade.

8                   Now, we know, in the real world, many  
9       students don't show that one year's growth. And  
10      that is the battle that everyone in this state has  
11      to fight. How do we get those kids that are not  
12      learning at that one-year growth?

13                  So when an applicant or a renewal school  
14      says, "I want my kids to grow one year," that does  
15      not impress me. That's expected in this state.

16                  I want the schools to be challenged. I  
17      want them to come and tell me, "I want my kids to  
18      grow at 1.3 year's growth or 1.4."

19                  But that's what we get into when we do a  
20      negotiation. We get into those kind of things. I  
21      know that's why you want your kids -- you intend, as  
22      every applicant does, that your kids are going to be  
23      successful. That's why we ask questions about these  
24      plans. That's why we require this application.  
25      That's why we want you to show us, and the Charter

1 School Division, that you have the capacity to  
2 operate a school and make the kids successful. And  
3 that's why I asked the questions I did.

4 The -- the CSD noted that there was not a  
5 total amount of rigor and attainability in your  
6 goals. Here, again, we would discuss that in the  
7 future.

8 Let's see here. Just give me a minute  
9 here. I've got, as you can see, a stack of your  
10 paperwork here. Ah, here we go.

11 You're going to offer your coursework in  
12 both Navajo and Zuni. Or that is your intention and  
13 your hope, I guess, your dream.

14 I have a question. And it also relates to  
15 the lottery process and everything else.

16 MR. TOWERY: Sure.

17 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Now, you understand,  
18 as an applicant, that you're an open school if  
19 you're approved. You don't get to pick and choose  
20 your students. So there are -- there's at least  
21 some chance that non-Navajo and non-Zuni speakers  
22 are going to come to your school. If you're doing  
23 all your teaching in Navajo and Zuni, how are you  
24 going to accommodate them?

25 You can't tell them, "You can't come."

1 It's open enrollment. How would you address that?

2 MR. TOWERY: Thanks for that question. We  
3 don't propose doing all our teaching in Navajo and  
4 Zuni. We propose, during the elective time, to have  
5 Navajo and Zuni coursework available for students  
6 who want daily language instruction in Navajo and  
7 Zuni.

8 The core curriculum, I think, because,  
9 like I said, Gallup is incredibly diverse, not only  
10 Navajo and Zuni, but Hispanic, Anglo, Middle Eastern  
11 and Filipino, and other native identities, we don't  
12 propose those being in any one native language.  
13 Those would be in English.

14 We also do absolutely acknowledge that  
15 we're a free, open enrollment public school. And  
16 our nondiscriminatory clause is in our application.

17 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Thank you.  
18 Commissioner Toulouse, while I'm fanning through  
19 here, why don't you go ahead and do your follow-up?

20 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Mr. Chair, I think  
21 you covered it. I was going to ask about dealing  
22 with the other ethnicities here; because I know  
23 there's a Muslim community here, an African-American  
24 community here, not to mention the large number of  
25 Hispanics and other mixed-Anglo population.

1 I'm sure you will have at least some  
2 applicants from those schools. And I just wanted to  
3 make sure that the cultural difference that many of  
4 those are feeling in the overall community would be  
5 addressed in yours, as well.

6 MR. TOWERY: Yeah, absolutely. I think  
7 it's a really important topic and one we've  
8 discussed at length over the course of the year.  
9 How do we create a school that is truly inclusive  
10 and culturally responsive in an incredibly diverse  
11 place?

12 So, like I said, right now, we propose  
13 having language programming that's available in  
14 Navajo and Zuni. I think, in our wildest dreams, as  
15 time goes on, if there are students from other  
16 backgrounds who want language programming in their  
17 home language, and we find that we are able to  
18 develop the curriculum to do it, it would be  
19 wonderful to have additional languages.

20 We're not committing to that today; but I  
21 think in our wildest dreams, that would be  
22 wonderful.

23 I think the other idea, culturally  
24 responsive education, while much of what we talk  
25 about is theories and philosophies of indigenous

1 education, based on our population here, culturally  
2 responsive schooling, culturally responsive teaching  
3 is, by definition, about meeting the identity needs  
4 of students from wherever they come.

5 And I think we feel a strong commitment to  
6 ensuring that we do that in our school. And there's  
7 a ton of evidence that culturally responsive  
8 schooling is great for anyone, whether Anglo or not.

9 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Thank you. Any other  
10 Commissioners having any follow-up thoughts or  
11 questions that you had?

12 COMMISSIONER GIPSON: I guess I just have  
13 a question in how you envision the school day laying  
14 out.

15 MR. TOWERY: Sure. Great question. I  
16 know that there's an example schedule in our  
17 application.

18 We imagine the day starting, like Ben  
19 said, with advisory every day. And that's short. I  
20 think we put 20 minutes in our schedule for that  
21 every morning. But a way to meet social and  
22 emotional needs of students and build relationships  
23 before the day starts.

24 The morning, on most days, is taken up by  
25 those three 30-minute skills-based sessions. Those

1 are the small-group. And that would be sort of an  
2 "all hands on deck" model, every educator in the  
3 building, from principal, executive director, you  
4 know, leading small groups that we're meeting kids  
5 needs as best as possible.

6 COMMISSIONER GIPSON: So it's one-on-one  
7 with --

8 MR. TOWERY: Not one-on-one, but as small  
9 as we can possibly make it.

10 COMMISSIONER GIPSON: With a physical  
11 teacher.

12 MR. TOWERY: With a physical teacher,  
13 yeah, one-on-one. And so, you know, for example, we  
14 might have every teacher teaching a math skills lab.  
15 This could be across grade level with the kids  
16 entirely mixed, based on abilities, based on NWEA  
17 data. We might go into reading and writing would  
18 be last.

19 After that, our schedule goes into two  
20 larger blocks: A humanities project-based learning  
21 block and a STEM project-based learning block. The  
22 last thing is two periods for electives kind of  
23 smashed in between there.

24 We also propose one day a week early  
25 release on Wednesdays. I think that's where we put

1 it in. That could obviously be flexible. One day  
2 early release to accomplish, one, teacher and  
3 professional development and collaboration, which,  
4 especially in the early years, especially  
5 considering we're already asking educators to do  
6 something different than they've done before, a  
7 really important part of our day.

8 We've also proposed starting at 9:00 in  
9 order for teachers to have time in the morning to  
10 collaborate, whether it's grade-level collaboration,  
11 project-based learning collaboration, whether it's  
12 SpEd teams collaborating, to have that time in the  
13 morning.

14 Our other days are a little bit extended  
15 time in order to make up for that one day with the  
16 early release.

17 I don't know if that answered your  
18 question entirely; but that's how we envision the  
19 day.

20 COMMISSIONER GIPSON: It does.

21 MS. POULOS: The 40 minutes is up.

22 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: We occasionally allow  
23 ourselves to go over, primarily because we're the  
24 ones that actually vote; so if there's any other  
25 questions, I'm going to allow it.

1 Commissioner Armbruster?

2 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: I'm fine.

3 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: I want to just  
4 explore one other thing, and I know you're aware of  
5 it because it was in the analysis. At one point,  
6 you talked about executive director and the head  
7 administrator.

8 The CSD pointed out there's only one  
9 leader in a school, and that's the principal, or  
10 however you title it. I just wanted to be sure that  
11 you guys understood that you don't have two leaders  
12 in a school. If you have this arrangement when you  
13 actually get in business, if you do, that you'll  
14 have a principal, and the executive director will  
15 report to the principal.

16 MR. TOWERY: Absolutely. And there are  
17 parts in there where we state that, but I'm sure  
18 it's not clear. Yeah, the principal is the head  
19 administrator in the formal sense, hired by and  
20 evaluated by the governance council, and who  
21 delegates other authorities to the executive  
22 director of operations so that that person can lead  
23 the instruction of the school.

24 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Excellent. Thank  
25 you.

1           Anything else? Let me get the script out  
2 again now.

3           All right. Let's see. I will read this.

4           Any member of the public, including the  
5 applicants, may submit written input following this  
6 hearing. Written comments can be sent to the  
7 Commission via the PED website, mailed -- if you're  
8 going to mail them, they're not going to arrive in  
9 Santa Fe before the deadline. So you'll either fax  
10 them to somebody or e-mail them, or hand-deliver.  
11 You certainly can hand-deliver them.

12           The details and addresses are listed on  
13 the handout at the back of the room.

14           Did we have that handout available to the  
15 public?

16           MS. POULOS: It's on the bottom of the  
17 agenda.

18           VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Yeah, I see it.

19           Linda Olivas. Yeah, okay.

20           I -- oh, there's some agenda sheets right  
21 here. So if you did want to make additional  
22 comments, send them to that address on the bottom of  
23 the agenda.

24           You have a deadline. It will be -- you  
25 will have until the close of business on Thursday,

1 August the 20th -- you have three days -- at  
2 5:00 p.m. Anything delivered at 5:01 probably will  
3 not be accepted; so if you -- anyone wishes to make  
4 comments, additional comments or whatever, please  
5 make sure it gets to Santa Fe, at that address,  
6 before 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, August 20th.

7 Anything else? Thank you again for your  
8 presentation. I enjoyed the stories. I would have  
9 liked to have gotten into Nicole's comment about the  
10 "book smarts" thing. But I think some of your  
11 answers talked about that.

12 When I was school-age, I was an introvert.  
13 I don't speak very much, which comes as a surprise  
14 to my fellow Commissioners. But I was one of those,  
15 kind of like you. I was not -- I stuck to myself  
16 and was kind of connected to myself and not the  
17 people around me.

18 So that's why I asked that question. It  
19 is important that you get these kids into a school  
20 and make them feel like they're a part of the  
21 experiment. Give them some say in what's going on.  
22 Give them a role, and I think they will learn better  
23 if you do that.

24 So I will look forward to you -- and I  
25 believe I had -- I thought there was one other --

1 let's see. Where did it go?

2 Oh, yeah. We will meet again in Santa Fe  
3 on September 24th and 25th. That is what we call  
4 our "decision" meeting. That is the day that the  
5 seven applicants will find out -- we will conduct  
6 our votes, either "yay" or "nay," on whether the  
7 applications will be approved or not.

8 So I suspect we'll see a lot of you again  
9 in Santa Fe on the 24th and 25th.

10 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Mr. Chair, they  
11 have a few minutes to make their case again in that  
12 meeting.

13 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Not as much as you  
14 had today. But you'll be able to make a final  
15 comment at that time, or a final push to convince  
16 enough of the Commissioners that they should say  
17 "yes" when their name is called.

18 So you will have one more chance at that.  
19 It's brief; but it won't be -- so -- let's see. I  
20 want to be sure.

21 Commission -- this Commission will now  
22 recess this Community Input hearing until 1:30 p.m.  
23 this afternoon in the community of San Fidel, where  
24 we have a second hearing that we will conduct this  
25 afternoon for a group that's also going to be

1 proposing to do an Indian thing for the  
2 Grants-Cibola County group. And they're going to  
3 call their school "The STEAM Academy."

4 So we'll be doing this one more time this  
5 afternoon.

6 Did you say 1:30 or 1:00? Is it 1:00?  
7 What's on the schedule?

8 MS. POULOS: It's 1:00 p.m.

9 VICE CHAIR BERGMAN: Ah-ha. That's why  
10 Katie is our Director. She keeps us in line.

11 Thank you again for your attendance today.  
12 Have a safe day; have a great day. Thank you very  
13 much.

14 (Applause.)

15 (Proceedings concluded at 10:07 a.m.)

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BEFORE THE PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION  
STATE OF NEW MEXICO

REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I, Cynthia C. Chapman, RMR, CCR #219, Certified Court Reporter in the State of New Mexico, do hereby certify that the foregoing pages constitute a true transcript of proceedings had before the said NEW MEXICO PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION, held in the State of New Mexico, County of McKinley, in the matter therein stated.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand on August 24, 2015.

*Cynthia Chapman*

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