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**2017 Charter School Renewal Recommendation – Anthony Charter School (ACS)**

**PED RECOMMENDATION**

The PED recommends **non-renewal** of ACS, because the school has failed to meet, and has not demonstrated, substantial progress toward the department’s minimum educational standards. The school’s improvement actions are not targeted to address specific root causes, are required actions in the contract or in law, and appear to be in only the beginning stages at the start of their tenth year of operation. The school has demonstrated a downward trend in nearly all measures, but especially in growth measure over the past five years<sup>1</sup>. In addition, when comparing ACS to similar schools that have equivalent risk indexes (32 schools) their performance on the A–F School Grading System shows a clear pattern of underperformance. The school has also failed to meet some of its specific-charter goals, school specific terms, and governance responsibilities. Further, the school has been outperformed by other schools in the local school district, all of which are demonstrating sustained improvement while ACS is not.

**EVALUATION SUMMARY**

Section	Indicator	Rating
<b>ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE</b>		
1.a	Department’s Standards of Excellence—A-F Letter Grades	<i>Failing to Demonstrate Progress</i>
1.b	Specific Charter Goals	<i>Failing to Demonstrate Progress</i>
<b>FINANCIAL COMPLIANCE</b>		
2.a	Audit	<i>Approaching Progress</i>
2.b	Financial Performance Framework	<i>Meets the Standard</i>
2.c	Board of Finance	<i>Meets the Standard</i>
<b>CONTRACTUAL, ORGANIZATIONAL, AND GOVERNANCE</b>		
3.a	Material Terms	<i>Meets the Standard</i>
3.b	Organizational Performance Framework	<i>Failing to Demonstrate Progress</i>
3.c	Governance Responsibilities	<i>Failing to Demonstrate Progress</i>

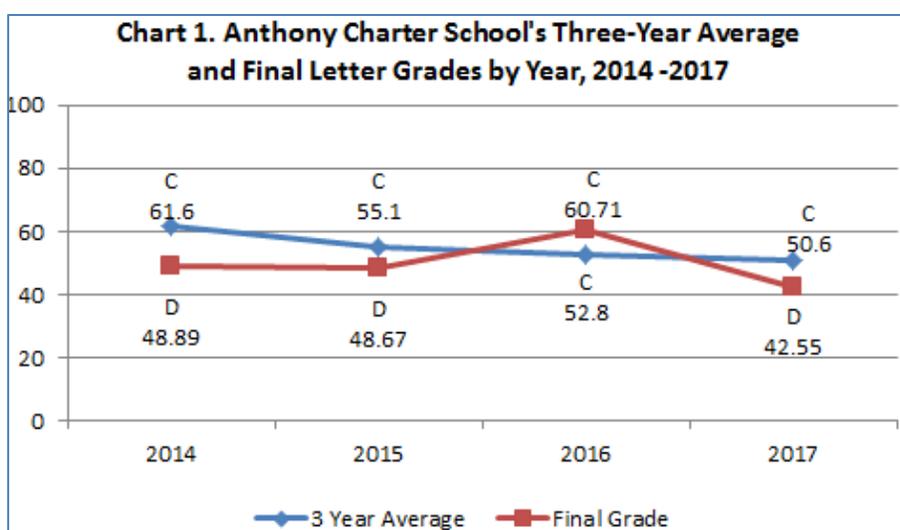
**SUMMARY EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

On the 2014–2017 School Grading Report Cards, ACS has failed to meet the department's standards of excellence and the student performance standards identified in the charter contract. Chart 1, below, illustrates ACS's three-year average grade and its final school grades from 2014 through 2017. Overall,

<sup>1</sup> The school’s contract term per the court settlement is July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2018.

ACS earned a D grade, with F grades in current standing, school improvement, improvement of lowest-performing students, and graduation. The school earned a D grade in 2014 and 2015, a C in 2016, and a D once again in 2017. While the school’s 3-year average grade is a C, the points earned have shown a downward trend since 2014 and the school is only .7 points from a D, which they would have earned if bonus points were removed from the school grades.

The school has (1) not demonstrated a record of meeting all standards in each of the years of the contract since the 2013-2014 school year and (2) the “data demonstrates performance that has continued to decline” and has “remained at an unacceptable level” (i.e., well below the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile in five of seven categories during the 2016-2017 school year when compared to similar schools) (see Renewal Application Rubric, p. 15). Further, (3) the general improvement actions described by the school to improve performance and outcomes do not appear to be connected to any specific root causes but instead are part of the school’s charter program requirements or are required by law, and (4) during the site visit, evaluation of evidence did not fully support the consistent, sustained implementation of reported improvement actions.



The cluster of schools<sup>2</sup> to which ACS was compared in 2017 totaled 32 schools (see Table 1 below). Among the similar schools to which it was compared, ACS ranked in the bottom half in 4 of 7 indicators (current standing, school growth, highest-performing students, and graduation). ACS was also outperformed in the current standing indicator by surrounding middle and high schools in the Gadsden Independent School District (GISD) in each year of its contract term. Most notable is that GISD middle schools outperformed ACS in 3 of 4 academic indicators in nearly all years of its contract term.

	Current Standing	School Growth	Highest-Performing	Lowest-Performing	OTL	Graduation	CCR
Percentile Rank	31 <sup>st</sup>	22 <sup>nd</sup>	25 <sup>th</sup>	53 <sup>rd</sup>	44 <sup>th</sup>	22 <sup>nd</sup>	53 <sup>rd</sup>
Rank Order (Out of 32 schools)	22 <sup>nd</sup>	26 <sup>th</sup>	24 <sup>th</sup>	16 <sup>th</sup>	13 <sup>th</sup>	22 <sup>nd</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Similar schools are determined based on the demographics of the schools. The analysis uses the percentage of students that are mobile, English learners, students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged, African Americans, Hispanic, and Native Americans. School clusters also include only school that serve the same grades. SAM schools are also evaluated separately.

### **SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SCHOOL SPECIFIC CHARTER GOALS**

ACS has 3 mission-specific indicators that focus on increased: (a) graduation rates by the end of 2015-2016, (b) growth and proficiency rates in reading using Discovery Education Assessment (DEA), and (c) growth and proficiency rates in math using DEA. The school also has 3 optional academic performance indicators that include: (a) development and use of a Personalized Education Planning tool, (b) administration of the Social Skills Improvement System Rating Scale (SSIS) in 2015-2016, and (c) documentation of provision of services based on the SSIS.

The school acknowledged that it did not meet the first mission-specific indicator focused on graduation during the 2015-2016 school year (see Renewal Application, Part B, p. 28) and asserts that its method of determining one-year's growth in DEA reading and math using the definition of "two standard error [sic] of scale score" (Uploaded WebEPSS document entitled, *ACS Discovery Test Results Summary – Test A Fall, 2016*) was appropriate. No such definition exists in the settlement agreement nor was there evidence provided that such approach is sanctioned by the assessment vendor.

Lastly, the school acknowledged that optional academic performance indicators were not met for part or all years and records were "not kept" (Renewal Application, Part B, p. 37) to track progress for at least one indicator (i.e., services for students based on SSIS results). The school's multitude of failures, from flawed methods in calculating academic proficiency rates to lack of record keeping on progress towards indicators, has resulted in failure to meet standards for the majority of its school specific charter goals.

### **SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SCHOOL-SPECIFIC TERMS**

ACS has 5 school-specific terms as a condition for charter renewal that include: (a) identification of Discovery short-cycle assessment alignment with the "academic program of the School" (Exhibit 2 of Settlement Agreement, Performance Framework, p. 23); (b) governing council development of strategic plan measuring Q1 and Q3 growth; (c) governing council development of administrator competencies/indicators; (d) school aligns its curriculum with needs of student population and identifies how individual learning plans are created using curriculum aligned with mission; and (e) school provides evidence that the governing council has approved all policies "required by New Mexico law" (p. 24). The school failed to provide evidence to support fulfillment of all 5 terms with the exception of a "Strategic Improvement Plan for Q1 and Q3 Students" document submitted to PED in fall of 2017. However, the school did not provide evidence of governing council approval.

### **SUMMARY EVALUATION OF FINANCIAL COMPLIANCE**

**Audit.** ACS had 3 repeat findings in FY15 in which the school asserted was "due to delay in release of the FY13-14 audit, meaning corrective actions could not be implemented in time" (Renewal Application, p. 41). The school incurred 2 additional findings that same year. The FY16 audit report had no findings.

### **SUMMARY EVALUATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE**

**Education Plan and School Environment.** During the 2016-2017 school year, ACS received ratings below *Meets Standard* in 8 areas (instructional hours, rights of homeless students, students with disabilities, and English learners, New Mexico residency requirements, recurrent enrollment, management accountability, teacher licensure, and school safety/training). In 2015-2016, the school did not have evidence of a background check for at least one employee.

**Governance Responsibilities.** The ACS governing body "did not always inform the PEC of changes to their governing body membership in a timely fashion; however, the school has been timely for all recent changes" (Renewal Application, Part A, p. 2). Nevertheless, the school did not provide a description of "the improvement actions the school implemented to move towards full compliance with governing responsibilities" (p. 55) as required in Part B of the Renewal Application specifically for the FY14 and FY15 audit findings in which the school did not "have the required members on their audit committee"

(see audit report for both FY14 and FY15). According to PED records, the school has still not submitted its required Annual Report and therefore the PED does not have an accurate count of the number of governing board members the school has seated. The school also failed to provide evidence that its governing council had evaluated its head administrator during the 2016-2017 school year.

#### **PROPOSED MOTION**

Move to **deny the renewal application** presented by Anthony Charter School, because the school has failed to meet, and has not demonstrated, substantial progress toward the department's standards of excellence and the student performance standards identified in the charter contract; the school has earned three overall D grades on the state's A-F School Grading Report in the last four years; the school was ranked in the bottom half in 4 of 7 academic categories on the most recent A-F School Grading Report when compared to similar schools across the state; the school has not demonstrated the implementation of improvement efforts that are effectively improving student achievement; the school has failed to provide evidence demonstrating it has met the 5 terms of condition in all years of its charter contract; and the school has failed to demonstrate the governing board is able to meet its governance responsibilities, such as complying with annual reporting and training requirements.