

**New Mexico Public Education Commission
and
Public Education Department
Options for Parents: Charter Schools Division
*2017-18 State Charter Renewal Application Kit***

Updated July 2017



**Effective Options
for New Mexico's
Families
Charter Schools**





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Through charter schools, the Public Education Commission (PEC) as Authorizer, and the Charter Schools Division (CSD) in the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) seek to provide families with effective, quality educational options. The CSD provides staff support to the PEC and will review your renewal application, conduct the renewal site visits, and make a recommendation for renewal, non-renewal, or a conditional renewal on behalf of the Public Education Department. The PEC makes the final decision regarding the renewal application after reading it, reading the CSD preliminary analysis and school's response, and, finally, considering the information provided by the CSD in their final recommendation to renew, renew with conditions, or deny a school's renewal application.

Renewing charter schools have the option to seek renewal from either their local chartering authority (district) or the PEC as the state chartering authority. All renewal applications must be submitted by **October 3, 2017**, to the charter school's selected chartering authority. In accordance with Subsection A of 6.80.4.13 NMAC, the chartering authority must then rule in a public meeting on the renewal of the application no later than **January 1, 2018**.

The PEC developed this state charter renewal application kit to assist charter schools in the development of their renewal applications to the PEC. The template for the state renewal charter application kit will be posted on the CSD website at <http://www.ped.state.nm.us/charter/index.html>. CSD will provide technical assistance training that focuses on the state-authorization charter school renewal process. If you are intending to renew with a district authorizer, you should check with the district on the forms and process that they require.

The enclosed renewal application is divided into six parts: **Part A: Your School's Summary Data Report and Current Charter Contract; Part B: Progress Report, Part C: Financial Statement; Part D: Petitions of Support; Part E: Description of the Charter School Facilities; and Part F: Amendment Requests.** These sections address

the requirements of NMSA 1978 § 22-8B-12(J) and are intended to provide the PEC the information necessary to determine if the school's past performance supports renewal of the charter. NMSA 1978 § 22-8B-12(K) provides that a charter may be not renewed if the chartering authority determined the school (1) committed a material violation of any of the conditions, standards or procedures set forth in the charter contract; (2) failed to meet or make substantial progress toward achievement of the department's standards of excellence or student performance standards identified in the charter contract; (3) failed to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management; or (4) violated any provision of law from which the charter school was not specifically exempted.

Part A is provided by the CSD and PED for the school in the summer before Renewal, updated after the newest data is released, and then is provided as Part A to the School's Renewal Application when the PEC receives it in October. The School is asked to verify the information in Part A. The school should also use the information in the contract to report on academic performance goals and other contractual requirements.

Part B offers a School the opportunity to provide information regarding their academic performance, financial compliance, and organizational, contractual and governance responsibilities and improvement actions over the term of their most current charter. This Part of the Application is divided into three sections: Section 1 – Academic Performance, Section 2 – Financial Compliance, and Section 3 – Organizational, Contractual and Governance Responsibilities.

In **Section 1 – Academic Performance**, the school reports on its academic performance during the term of the contract, including achieving the goals, student performance outcomes, state standards of excellence and accountability requirements set forth in the Assessment and Accountability Act.

Subsection a - A school that has not maintained a C or better letter grade in each of the last four years should provide a narrative that addresses the improvement actions and the success of those actions. The purpose of the narrative is to demonstrate substantial progress toward maintaining a C or higher letter grade. Implementation of the described improvement actions should be verifiable through evidence at the site visit. Schools that have maintained a C or better letter grade in each of the last four years will not complete this Section.

Subsection b - All schools will report on their performance in relation to school specific charter goals found in the negotiated performance framework. Performance reports related to school specific goals should be supported by raw data (masked to protect PII), provided in an appendix. The school should report on the performance in each of the last four years. Schools that have **not** met their school specific goals in each of the four years should provide a narrative that addresses the improvement actions and the success of those actions. The purpose of the narrative is to demonstrate substantial progress toward meeting the school specific goals and maintaining that performance level. Implementation of the described improvement actions should be verifiable through evidence at the site visit. Schools that have met their goals in each of the years of the contract term **will not** provide a narrative.

In Section 2 – Financial Compliance, the school reports on its financial compliance during the term of the contract, including all findings identified in external audits completed and released during the term of the contract, and the requirements of the Financial Performance Framework.

Subsection a – For each year in which the school had findings identified in the external audit, the school **must** provide a narrative explaining the improvement actions made to meet financial compliance requirements and the effectiveness of those actions in improving financial compliance. Success should be identified by specific changes in practice and changes in the audit findings in subsequent years. The purpose of the narrative is to demonstrate substantial progress toward achieving and maintaining financial compliance. Implementation of the described improvement actions should be verifiable through evidence at the site visit.

Subsection b – For each year in which the school **did not meet** the standards of the Financial Performance Framework, the school **must** provide a narrative explaining the improvement actions made to meet financial compliance requirements and the effectiveness of those actions in improving financial compliance. Success should be identified by specific changes in practice and changes in the ratings on the framework in subsequent years. The purpose of the narrative is to demonstrate substantial progress toward maintaining financial compliance. Implementation of the described improvement actions should be verifiable through evidence at the site visit.

Subsection c - If the school’s **Board of Finance was suspended** at any time during the term of the contract, the school must provide a narrative explaining the actions taken on the school’s own initiative to correct financial compliance and regain the Board of Finance Authority and the success of those actions. The school must also describe the current status of the Board of Finance and continuing actions to ensure the same financial challenges do not reoccur. Success should be identified by specific changes in practice. The narrative must be supported by evidence provided in an appendix.

In Section 3 – Contractual, Organizational and Governance Responsibilities, the school reports on its organizational, contractual and governance responsibilities during the term of the contract, including achieving the objectives, state standards of excellence and a and other terms of the charter contract.

Subsection a - Each school will provide a brief narrative describing how they have implemented the Material Terms of the Charter including the operational structure, the mission of the school, and the educational program of the school (including student focused terms, teacher focused terms, and parent focused terms). The narrative will be verified during the site visit. If the school has made substantial changes or has not met any of the material terms of the contract during the term of the contract, the school must provide a narrative to

explain the improvement actions the school made during the term of the contract in order to meet those charter objectives. All schools must provide a narrative for this section of the application.

Subsection b – Each school will identify any organizational compliance findings from the Organizational Performance Framework over the term of the contract and provide a narrative to address improvement actions it has made to correct those findings. The purpose of the narrative is to demonstrate substantial progress toward meeting organizational performance expectations. Implementation of the described improvement actions should be verifiable through evidence at the site visit. If the school has received any OCR complaints or formal special education complaints, the school should identify those, provide all communications (redacted to protect PII) related to those complaints in an appendix, and describe the current status of the complaint process. If any of those complaints have been resolved and resulted in a finding that the school violated any law, the school must provide a narrative describing the required compensatory and corrective actions required and their status in implementing those actions. The implementation of such actions must be verifiable through evidence during the site visit.

Subsection c – Each school will identify how they have met governance responsibilities during the term of the contract. Specifically, the school will identify any time when membership on the governing body fell below the requirements in their by-laws or the statutory minimum of 5 members. The school will identify the amount of time any vacancies were open. The school will also identify any board members that did not complete required training hours in any of the years of the contract term. If the school identified any governance requirements they were unable to meet, the school must provide a narrative describing the improvement actions the school implemented to move toward full compliance with governance responsibilities. The purpose of the narrative is to demonstrate substantial progress toward meeting all governance requirements. The implementation of such actions must be verifiable through evidence during the site visit. All schools must provide a narrative for this section of the application.

Part C offers a School the opportunity to demonstrate the financial stewardship it has implemented over the term of the contract. The school must provide a financial statement that discloses the costs of administration, instruction and other spending categories for the charter school. The financial statement must be understandable to the general public and must allow comparison of costs to other schools or comparable organizations. For schools that have earned a D or lower letter grade, the report should specifically address how the school has prioritized resources toward proven programs and methods linked to improved student achievement until the public school earns a grade of C or better for two consecutive years. The department has created a form for the report that is incorporated as part of the application. All schools must provide a response for this section of the application.

Part D offers a School the opportunity to demonstrate the community support for the continuation of the school. NMSA 1978 § 22-8B-12 requires the school provide two petitions (1) a petition in support of the charter school renewing its charter status signed by not less than sixty-five percent of the employees in the charter school; and (2) a petition in support of the charter school renewing its charter status signed by at least seventy-five percent of the households whose children are enrolled in the charter school. These petitions must be completed in the school year in which the applicant is applying for renewal. The school should identify the date on which the petition was completed and the number of eligible signors on that date. Original signatures must be provided in the application. All schools must provide a response for this section of the application.

Part E requires the school to provide a description of the charter school facilities and assurances that the facilities are in compliance with the requirements of Section 22-8B-4.2 NMSA 1978. The school must provide supporting documentation to demonstrate the assurances are correct in an appendix. The required documentation includes the E-Occupancy Certificate, a letter regarding the NMCI from PSFA, and a copy of any lease documents. All schools must provide a response for this section of the application.

Part F allows the school to identify any amendments it would like to have considered as part of the renewal process. These amendments may include changes in facility location, enrollment cap increases, changes in grade levels served, changes in the educational program and other standard amendment requests.

Upon receipt of the completed application, the CSD will review the application, verify data, and conduct a site visit to verify information provided in the application. Afterwards, the CSD will write a preliminary analysis of the School's Renewal Application and send a copy to the School as well as to the PEC. The School will have a chance to respond to the analysis provided. After CSD receives the School's response, it will evaluate all information available and make a recommendation for a renewal, conditional renewal, or non-renewal.

New Mexico law, in subsection K of Section 22-8B-12 NMSA 1978, includes the four reasons for non-renewal of a school's charter. It provides that a charter may be not renewed by the chartering authority if the chartering authority determines that the charter school:

- committed a material violation of any of the conditions, standards, or procedures set forth in the charter;
- failed to meet or make substantial progress toward achievement of the department's minimum educational standards or student performance standards identified in the charter application;
- failed to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management;
- violated any provision of law from which the charter school was not specifically exempted.

Please contact charter.schools@state.nm.us, with any questions regarding the state charter renewal application kit.

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Instructions: 2017 State Charter Renewal Application Process and Review Stages

Form and Point of Contact	All submissions should be prepared utilizing the 2017 State Charter Renewal Application Kit. Brevity, specificity, and clarity are strongly encouraged. Any questions regarding the application and the review process must be directed to charter.schools@state.nm.us .
Deadlines and Manner of Submission	<p>2017 State Charter Renewal Application Kits must be submitted using your charter school account through Web EPSS Website. You will learn more about using the Web EPSS site at one of the Technical Assistance Workshops mentioned below. If you have any questions or feedback after reviewing the guide, please contact charter.schools@state.nm.us</p> <p>Files must be submitted via your account on the WEB EPPS no later than 11:59 p.m. (mountain time) Tuesday, October 3, 2017.</p> <p>Note: Submission prior to October 3rd, 2017 of the current year will not change the deadlines for review. Early submissions are welcomed; however, they do not put applicants at an advantage. All applications are treated equally and fairly as long as they are submitted by the deadline above.</p>
Technical Assistance Workshops (June – September 2017)	The CSD will provide technical assistance workshops for the charter renewal application process between June and September 2017. The first training will take place June 7, 2017 and will be an all-day. Details regarding this training and future trainings are available at: http://ped.state.nm.us/ped/CharterSchoolsOpportunities.html .
Renewal Application Review Period (October 3–November 6)	A CSD review team will analyze your Renewal Application Kit. The CSD staff will schedule your Renewal Site Visit prior to the completion of the CSD Renewal Analysis. This site visit is designed to verify the evidence and documentation supporting the renewal application kit and evaluate compliance with academic, organizational, contractual, financial, and governance requirements.
CSD Preliminary Renewal Analysis (November 6)	The CSD will send each renewal applicant and the PEC a Preliminary Renewal Analysis. This analysis will synthesize the strengths and weaknesses of the charter school as found by the CSD Review Team in relation to the statutory reasons for non-renewal.
Response to Preliminary Renewal Analysis (November 20)	Renewal applicants may respond in writing to the information contained in the Renewal Analysis. These responses must be submitted using the Web EPSS.

PED Recommendation (December 4)**	The PED will send a recommendation to the PEC to approve, approve with conditions, or deny the renewal application on Monday, December 4, 2017 . Renewal applicants will receive a copy of the recommendation prior to the PEC acting on the application.
Final Authorization Meeting of PEC (December 14-15)**	The PEC will hold a public decision-making meeting to approve, approve with conditions, or deny the renewal application on December, 14-15, 2017 .

State Charter Renewal Application Evaluation Standards

Based on the completed renewal application kit, the charter school Renewal Site Visit(s), the Renewal Analysis from the PED staff, status reports provided by the PED's divisions and bureaus, and, if applicable, the local school district, the PED will make a recommendation to the PEC regarding renewal of a school's charter. The following questions guide the PED's recommendation regarding renewal and are based upon the four reasons that a chartering authority must determine a charter school has violated in order to refuse to renew a charter pursuant to Subsection K of Section 22-8B-12 NMSA 1978.

Has the school committed a material violation of any of the conditions, standards, or procedures set forth in the charter?

The school's performance contract defines the terms under which it proposes to operate and the performance framework defines the measurable goals that the school agreed to meet. The PED will analyze the evidence presented in the application from the school, during the renewal site visit, and from the monitoring conducting during the term of the contract to determine if the school committed a material violation of any of the conditions, standards, or procedures set forth in the charter. For applicants that were previously authorized by the district.

Has the school failed to meet or make substantial progress toward achievement of the PED's minimum educational standards or student performance standards identified in the charter application?

The PED will analyze and evaluate student achievement data on required state tests and on other measures set forth in the contract. The school must report data for school specific goals both throughout the term of the contract and as part of the renewal application. The school's own analysis and supporting data will both be considered.

Has the school failed to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management?

The PED will rely on documentary evidence based on the annual independent financial audits and reports from the School Budget and Finance Analysis Bureau and the Audit and Accounting Bureau with regard to whether the school has met generally accepted standards of fiscal management.

Has the school violated any provision of law from which the state-chartered charter school was not specifically exempted?

The PED will rely on documentary evidence gathered by the PED or, if applicable, local district authorizer staff during the term of the school's charter to determine if the school has compiled a record of substantial compliance with applicable state and federal laws and regulations. Evidence will also be evaluated during the site visit and from monitoring reports throughout the term of the contract.

Glossary of Terms

Amended Charter School Act: In 2011, the New Mexico Legislature amended the Charter School Act (Act) in several ways. The purpose of the amended Act is to increase accountability of charter schools and authorizers. The primary changes to the Act were the addition of a separate “Performance Contract” (§22-8B-9 NMSA 1978) between the authorizer and the charter school and “Performance Frameworks” (§22-8B-9.1 NMSA 1978).

Assessment: A method, tool, or system used to evaluate and demonstrate student progress toward—or mastery of—a particular learning standard or goal (e.g., a standardized test, short-cycle tests, teacher-developed tests, a portfolio-judging system, etc.).

Current Charter: The current charter is the approved charter (or charter contract) with any amendments and/or changes that have been authorized for the current operational term.

Material Term: The PEC/PED will use the following definition used by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) for **Material Terms**:

The term *material* means that the authorizer deems the matter relevant to

1. The authorizer’s accountability decisions including but not limited to decisions about whether to renew or non-renew or revoke a charter; or
2. Information that a family would consider relevant to a decision to attend the charter school.

The material terms will be the provisions that the charter school will need to amend in order for the school to modify any of the terms of the contract. **Please note:** The material terms are those essential elements with which the charter school agrees to comply. These are **not** the only terms that could be breached in the contract and do not identify the only terms that could be subject to “material violations.” There could be a material violation of any term in the Performance Contract or as demonstrated by the results of the Performance Framework.

Material Violation: A material violation occurs when one party fails to perform their duties as specified in a contract. A contract may be violated by one or both parties. A material violation may result in the need for corrective action or other action as allowed by law to be taken by the Authorizer. There could be a material violation of any term in the Performance Contract or as demonstrated by the results of the Performance Framework.

New Mexico Condition Index (NMCI): The PSFA ranks every school facility condition in the state based upon relative need from the greatest to the least. This metric is used to compare and prioritize schools for capital outlay funding.

Performance Contract: (§22-8B-9 NMSA) The charter authorizer shall enter into a contract with the governing body of the applicant charter school within 30 days of approval of the charter application. The charter contract shall be the final authorization for the charter school and shall be part of the charter. If the chartering authority and the applicant charter school fail to agree upon the terms of or enter into a contract within 30 days of the approval of the charter application, either party may appeal to the secretary to finalize the terms of the contract,

provided that such appeal must be provided in writing to the secretary within 45 days of the approval of the charter application. Please note: the charter school and PEC may agree to an extension of the 30-day deadline.

Performance Frameworks: [§22-8B-9.1 NMSA] The charter contract will also include a performance framework tied to annual metrics and measures for:

- (1) Student academic performance
- (2) Student academic growth
- (3) Achievement gaps in proficiency and growth between student subgroups
- (4) Attendance
- (5) Recurrent enrollment from year to year
- (6) If the charter school is a high school, post-secondary readiness
- (7) If the charter school is a high school, graduation rate
- (8) Financial performance and sustainability
- (9) Governing body performance

PSFA: Public Schools Facilities Authority. The PSFA serves as the staff to the Public School Capital Outlay Council (PSCOC) to implement the New Mexico Condition Index (NMCI) as well as to approve and monitor lease assistance applications.

2017 State Charter Renewal Application Process

The Charter Renewal Application Process includes the following:

Part A—School's Summary Data Report and Current Charter Contract (provided by the CSD)

Part B—Progress Report

Part C—Financial Statement*

Part D – Petitions of Support*

Part E – Description of the Charter School Facilities*

Part F – Amendment Requests

Please Note

- ☐ Read the entire Renewal Application before you begin to prepare your written documents. Please complete the application thoroughly. In an effort to help you understand the requirements included in the Renewal Application, the CSD will hold a minimum of two technical assistance workshops (May–September). You will be notified of the dates, times, and locations of the workshops.
- ☐ Review your current charter, including any approved amendments, prior to completing the Renewal Application Kit.



Part A—School’s Summary Data Report and Current Charter Contract

(CSD will provide pulling from information provided during the charter term.)



Part B—Progress Report

(A report on the progress of meeting the academic performance, financial compliance and governance responsibilities of the charter school, including achieving the goals, objectives, student performance outcomes, state standards of excellence and other terms of the charter contract, including the accountability requirements set forth in the Assessment and Accountability Act during the Current Charter Term)

The following rubric will be used to evaluate the narratives in Part B:

Meets the Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In each year of the contract term, the school has a demonstrated record of meeting all standards, which is supported by evidence.
Demonstrates Substantial Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The narrative describes specific adult (teachers, leaders, board) actions taken to improve performance and outcomes by addressing the root cause of the inadequate performance; and The narrative identifies specific evidence the site visit team should review to understand the improvement actions taken. An evaluation of this evidence supports the implementation of reported improvement actions; and The narrative identifies sustained, measurable successes resulting from the improvement actions over the contract term. An evaluation of all data and evidence supports the reported successes.
Approaching Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school does not have a demonstrated record of meeting all standards in each of the years of the contract term. <p style="text-align: center;">AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The narrative describes general improvement actions to improve performance and outcomes, which may or may not be connected to specific root causes; or The narrative fails to identify evidence the site visit team should review to understand the improvement actions taken. Or an evaluation of this evidence does not fully support the implementation of reported improvement actions; or The narrative identifies measurable successes resulting from the improvement actions over the contract term, but the successes are inconsistent and not maintained over time. Or an evaluation of the data and evidence does not fully support the reported successes.
Failing to Demonstrate Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school does not have a demonstrated record of meeting all standards in each of the years of the contract term. <p style="text-align: center;">AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The narrative is focused on describing circumstances that connected to the poor performance or excuses for the poor performance, but either does not describe improvement actions or describes minimal improvement actions; or The narrative does not identify any evidence the site visit team should review to understand improvement actions. Or there is no evidence for the site visit team to review to support the implementation of improvement actions; or The narrative fails to identify any measurable successes over the contract term, or the data demonstrates performance that has continued to decline or remained at an unacceptable level, or evaluation of the data and evidence directly contradicts reported successes.

1. Academic Performance

The Charter School Act provides as follows:

A charter may be suspended, revoked, or not renewed by the chartering authority if the chartering authority determines that the charter school... failed to meet or make substantial progress toward achievement of the department's standards of excellence or student performance standards identified in the charter contract.

a. Department's Standards of Excellence – A-F Letter Grades

The Public Education Department, pursuant to NMSA 22-2E-1, et seq., annually assign a letter grade of A, B, C, D or F to each public school pursuant to criteria established by department rules. In addition, pursuant to NMSA 22-2E-4(D) and (F), it has been established that a letter grade of D or F does not meet the standards of excellence. To meet an acceptable level of performance, a school must earn a grade of C or better for two consecutive years. NMSA 22-2E-45(E).

For any school that has not maintained a C or better letter grade in each year of the term of the contract, or that has received a D or F in any indicator of the letter grade in the past two years, provide a narrative that describes the improvement actions targeted to improve the school's letter grade (school/adult/leader/teacher actions) and the success of those actions (student academic successes/improved outcomes). The purpose of the narrative is to demonstrate substantial progress toward achieving and maintaining a C or higher letter grade.

Implementation of the described improvement actions should be verifiable through documented evidence at the site visit. **Please identify specific evidence of both the school/adult/leader/teacher actions and the student academic successes/improved outcomes in the narrative.**

The narrative should reference performance data that can be reviewed and verified either during the site visit or during the "desk audit" review of the application. If providing data, please attach in an appendix and reference the appendix by name in the narrative.

Schools that have maintained a C or better letter grade over the term of the contract AND have not received a D or F in any indicator of the letter grade in the past two years do NOT complete this Section.

School response:

- Overall grade in 2013- 14 = D*
- Overall grade in 2014-15 = C*
- Overall grade in 2015-16 = F
- Overall grade in 2016-17 = F*

History of NMCA Letter Grades

As educational professionals, we firmly believe that all students can and must learn and perform at high levels of academic achievement. We are working hard to improve student outcomes, especially in math, an area that has been deficient. We own the state performance scores and are implementing improvement plans in

collaboration with the Public Education Department (PED), as described in this renewal application narrative. It is also important to give context to the data.

As the PED notes in Part A of this renewal application, “NMCA’s letter grades were reduced by [a] letter grade in the last four years (2014 – 2017) because it failed to test 95% of eligible students.”

State testing in a virtual environment is an enormous endeavor. In brick-and-mortar schools, students are used to coming to a building every day, so testing is just another school day. For our virtual school students, state testing is outside the normal pattern and includes travel to a testing site and spending the day in an unfamiliar environment. We work hard to prepare students for testing, but it has been difficult to meet 95% participation.

For the 2013-14 school year, our school received a D letter grade. If our school had met the state testing goal of 95% participation, our school would have received a C letter grade. For the state reading assessment, 93% of students participated (approximately nine too few students). For the math state assessment, 95% of students participated. The parent movement to opt out of state testing has been extensive (as evidenced by websites like New Mexico Refuse the Tests (<http://www.nmoptout.org/>), leading our school to struggle to meet the required participation in state testing (<http://progressnownm.org/2015/03/01/statewide-student-walkouts-planned-on-monday-heres-everything-you-need-to-know/>).

This issue was also a factor in the 2014-15 school year, when our school received a C letter grade, missing the target and a B letter grade by one percentage point in one subject area. For the reading state assessment, 95% of students participated and for the math state assessment, 94% of students participated.

In the 2015-16 school year, 88% of students participated in the reading assessment and 90% of students participated in the math assessment and our school received an F. For both the reading and math state assessments in the 2016-17 school year, 88% of students participated and our school received an F.

Improvement Actions

We continue to encourage and make every reasonable effort to ensure that all students participate in state testing. We provide 18+ test sites around the state so that students do not have to travel more than 50 miles from their homes to test. We choose test sites by community availability, accessibility, and the ability to meet student needs. The sites must be able to accommodate the technology needs required by the state tests.

We inform families of the testing dates via WebMail (our internal, secure email system), message boards, weekly phone calls from teachers, and postcards mailed via USPS to student homes. If students do not attend testing, we immediately contact families to schedule alternate testing times. Despite our planning and communication, some families simply choose to opt out or otherwise not attend state testing, which is difficult for any school to completely control. We will continue to work to refine communications, emphasize the importance of testing to all families who enroll, and make every effort to provide a positive testing experience for students and families.

Student Characteristics

Students enroll in a virtual school for a variety of reasons. Some students enroll for a specific period of time to

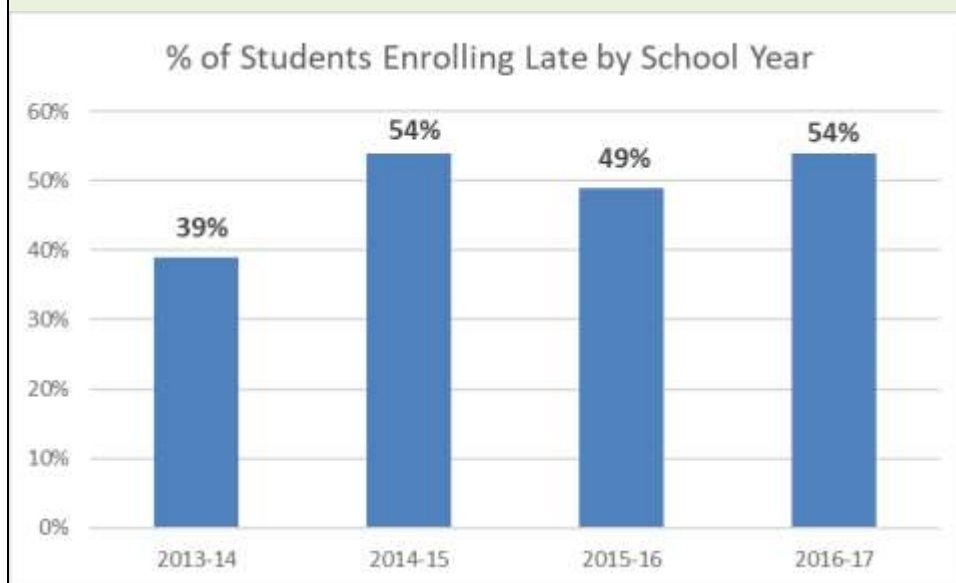
solve a temporary problem (for example, bullying or health issues). Others choose to stay for an extended period of time to address longer-term factors:

- Students who are far ahead or far behind their peers in school, including students at risk of academic failure,
- Students pursuing artistic or athletic careers or career development opportunities that require a flexible schedule,
- Students who are pregnant or homebound due to illness or disability,
- Students who are in rural communities and lack access to public school options,
- Students who are homeless, and
- Students with specific needs.

When students enter our school, there is a necessary transition period. Students need time to adjust to a new way of learning. Some students decide that virtual learning is not the best fit and return to a traditional brick-and-mortar environment; others embrace the virtual model of learning. Our student mobility rate is high for these reasons and this transience affects the students' and school's academic performance. Students who stay longer do better at our school.

Sometimes student and family problems do not manifest themselves until after the school year has begun and that can lead to late enrollment – as evidenced by Figure 1.

Figure 1. Percentage of NMCA Students Enrolling Late by Year



Late enrollment has a serious impact on performance. In the 2015-16 school year, students who enrolled after the first day of school performed 54% lower on the state math assessment and 22% lower on the state reading assessment than students who enrolled on or before the first day of school.

Students who enroll in a virtual school after the first day of school often arrive with a diverse set of challenges, which puts them at risk for adequate yearly academic growth. This is a significant issue in virtual schools.

In the spring of 2013, AdvancEd Source reported on a study titled *“Challenges in Measuring Online School Performance”* written by Barbara Dreyer, founder and former CEO of Connections Education.

(<http://www.advanc-ed.org/source/challenges-measuring-online-school-performance>) The study highlighted several factors that adversely affected the performance of students in virtual schools, including:

- “The timing of a student’s enrollment in a full-time virtual school impacts the student’s state test score performance.” A significant number of NMCA students enroll after the first day of school.
- “A statistically significant relationship exists between a student’s household income level and test performance.” Students who enroll after the start of the school year are more likely to come from lower income families.
- “Family engagement with the decision to enroll in a virtual school has a positive influence on academic performance.” Family engagement during the enrollment process declines after the start of the school year.

Improvement Actions

In order to counteract the negative effects of students enrolling late, NMCA has implemented several onboarding and engagement activities for students and families, including:

1. Completing early welcome calls to families to acclimate them to the virtual learning environment. During this welcome call, teachers talk to the student and parent or guardian and prepare them for the first day of school.
2. Assigning the Getting Started virtual course to students quickly. Our school assigns the Getting Started course to students who enroll even one day late. Our vendor, Connections Education LLC (referred to in this application as Connections), designed this course to acclimate the students to the virtual learning environment. It allows students a day or two to practice on a single course that helps them navigate their virtual school system (Connexus®, the educational management system provided by Connections that organizes the virtual school environment). If a student does not complete the Getting Started course in a timely fashion, teachers quickly intervene. If the student continues to not engage, an administrator arranges a conference with the parent and student.
3. Assigning orientation courses to both students and parents or guardians. Data shows that if parents and students complete these orientations, the students are more successful in the virtual learning environment. Teachers closely monitor completion of the courses.
4. Offering back-to-school LiveLesson (synchronous online) sessions. These sessions provide a chance for teachers to introduce themselves and explain the expectations of their class to the students and parents. These sessions are recorded and posted to message boards for students who enroll late.

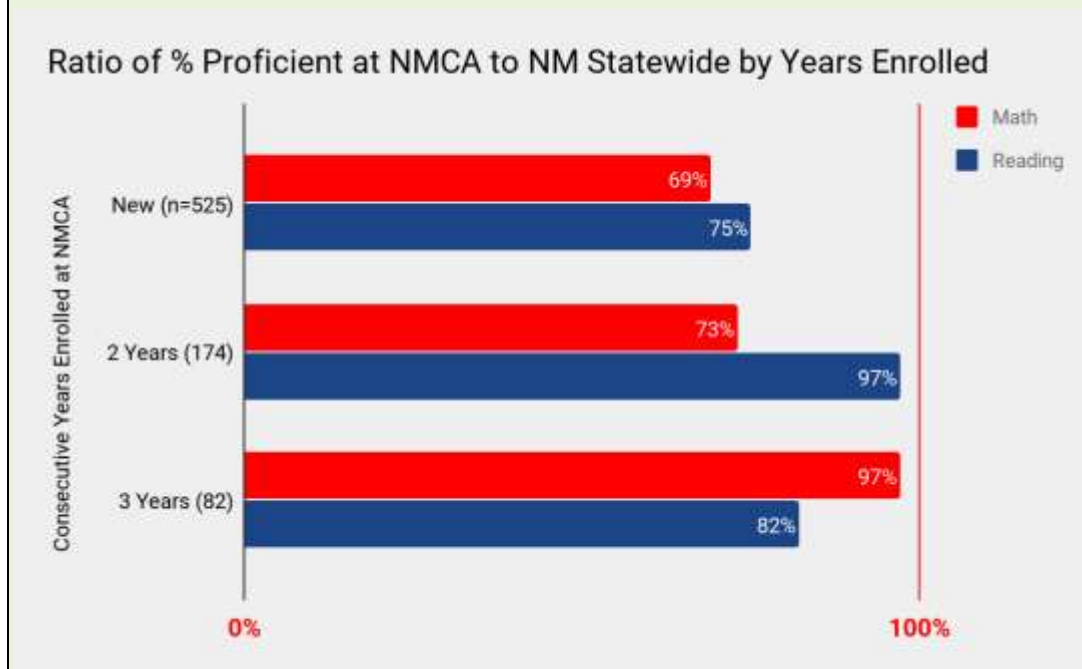
It is equally important to understand how students perform when they are enrolled for consecutive years at NMCA.

A study published in the Journal of Online Learning Research (<https://www.learntechlib.org/p/150993/>) found the following generalities:

- Students who transfer into a virtual charter school experience academic regression in the first year.
- Students who remained enrolled in the virtual charter school beyond a second year experienced an academic recovery.
- Students remaining with the virtual charter school for three years experienced a complete academic recovery and saw significant improvement in years four and five. The value-add in years four and five outpaced that of their matched peers.

The comparisons in Figure 2 are expressed as “*what % of the state proficiency level (represented as 100%) did NMCA students achieve?*” Put another way, if the state proficiency level is set as 100%, how do NMCA students compare? Students enrolled in NMCA for three years scored 97% of the state average in math and 82% of the state average in reading.

Figure 2. Ratio of % Proficient Students at NMCA Compared to Statewide



When students are enrolled for consecutive years at NMCA, the performance gaps between students enrolled in our school and the state average close significantly. When students are enrolled for two consecutive years, reading performance between our students and the average state performance becomes comparable. When students are enrolled for three consecutive years, math performance between our students and the average state performance becomes comparable. We discuss student retention efforts in Section B.3.b of this document (part of Goal 1.g).

Student Performance

Every year, our school provides our Governing Council with a state-of-the-school report during the October board meeting. These reports provide detail on the current state of metrics, our goals for the future, and our action plans to reach our goals. We include a copy of these four reports for 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016 in

Appendix A-1.

In the 2013-14 school year, our student academic performance met or exceeded the state averages in select grades – grades 4, 5, and 6 in math and grades 5, 6, 8, and 9 in reading. By the 2014-15 school year, our school met or exceeded the state averages in all tested grades in reading and in all but one tested grade in math.

In the 2015-16 school year, however, overall school performance declined in some areas. Our school performance met or exceeded the state average in the middle school grades in math and in all tested grade levels in reading except high school. Despite this overall decline, students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) managed to outperform compared to overall general education math performance.

Overall, state test performance declined in reading and math in the 2016-17 school year. However, the gap between the state and students in our school closed in grades 5 and 7 math as well as in Algebra 2 and Geometry. Importantly, these annual performance trends are non-linear so they must be viewed in light of patterns of enrollment – for example, 70% of students were new to NMCA in 2016-17 and the number of students served has increased dramatically since our school's inception, from 481 students (40 Day Count for first year 2013-14) to 1,593 students (end of year enrollment for 2016-17).

Initiatives to Improve Math Performance

We have implemented numerous strategies tied to school improvement efforts including additional teacher training on the use of data to inform math instruction and implementing multiple student engagement efforts. In addition, our curriculum vendor, Connections, is also modifying its curriculum to better meet students' needs. Connections has rebuilt its middle school math curriculum and is currently rebuilding its middle school reading curriculum.

The Math Performance Improvement Project for grades 4-12 included modifications to grade 4 math through Algebra 2. As part of this project, Connections:

- **Created introductory units** for math courses (modeled after Algebra 1 Pilot Ready, Set, and Algebra unit) that prepare students for success in the course.
- **Added reflection questions** to math courses that encourage students to think about and rate their attitudes toward and self-confidence in math, as well as consider their work and study habits.
- **Updated Portfolio assessments** for math courses to ensure they are project-based, hands-on, and aligned to Standards for Mathematical Practice.
- **Revised practice** and instruction and added virtual practices to math courses to promote mastery of skills.
- **Modified course scope** to allow students to focus on fundamental skills and concepts.
- **Added interactive reviews** that simulate Next Generation Assessment functionality and provide guided, specific feedback.
- **Added Core Building Block Skills pages** to high school math courses (Algebra 1, Geometry, and Algebra 2) which allow students to practice prerequisite skills and then assess their comfort level with those skills.

- **Added a review unit** to Semester B high school courses (Algebra 1, Geometry, and Algebra 2) that covers fundamental concepts included in the first-semester courses and allows teachers to reteach areas that have been identified by benchmark testing as areas of deficiency for students.

At the high school level, we are now offering credit recovery math courses that target key math skills that many incoming credit-deficient secondary students lack. Students who failed a previous math course at NMCA or another school take these courses which focus on the skills they missed during their first attempts, and allow students to regain credit and possibly get back on track for graduation. We offer credit recovery courses during the school year and in summer school. The 2016-17 school year was the first school year our school offered these courses and the feedback from both math teachers and administrators was promising.

For 2017-18 school year, we are using new courses in grades 4-5 math, which is part of an aggressive math improvement effort. These new elementary school math courses include:

- An increased focus on students' processes and conceptual thinking.
- Concept skills scaffolded across grades to build on previous knowledge.
- Multiple strategies for arriving at the correct answer are explored and accepted.
- Student exploration of why different processes work.
- Student practice of the use of precise math vocabulary.
- Problem-solving as a habit based on eight key math practices.
- Hands-on activities in every lesson.
- Additional ways to personalize learning for students.

We are also implementing efforts to foster a comprehensive culture shift in how students view math. This multi-faceted approach is called, "Math, We Got This!". For many students, math is intimidating, difficult, and causes a struggle. The vision is to create a full-scale cultural shift toward math acceptance that leads to math love.

The "Math, We Got This!" campaign:

- Expands work on student engagement.
- Focuses on a culture of learning.
- Begins to create a cultural shift in how students, teachers, and Learning Coaches think about math.
- Unveils the hidden math in the world and put its power in students' hands.

Specific Math, We've Got This! initiatives to support students, teachers, and Learning Coaches include the following:

- **Math Curriculum Enhancements** – Grade 4 through Algebra 2 course enhancements are based on the latest learning science research in the areas of practice, feedback, student reflection and engagement, and intervention.

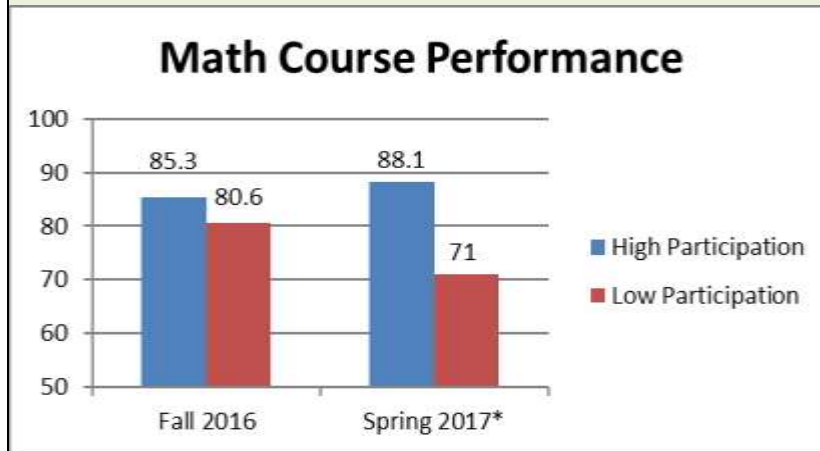
Course enhancements focus on students' oral and written communication of math thinking, reasoning, and problem solving. These efforts are evidenced in the reflection, discussion, and portfolio activities, and in the new Math Time to Talk lesson component.

- **Additional Math Instructional Resources** – Our school provides ImagineMath (an intervention resource previously known as Think Through Math) to elementary, middle, and high school students who are struggling.
- **Teachers** – Connections provides teachers with professional learning related to math through Brown Bag meetings, trainings, and sessions focused on math mindset, resources, and teaching practices.
- **Students** – Our school provides students with targeted activities and discussions focused on math in our day-to-day lives and a growth mindset toward math, including an increased math awareness in the Connections Speaker Series, Fireside Chats, and Student Clubs and Activities experiences.
- **Learning Coaches** – Our school provides Learning Coaches with targeted activities and discussions conducted throughout the year focused on math in our day-to-day lives and a growth mindset toward math. We encourage all Learning Coaches to attend these optional sessions.

During the 2017-18 school year, teachers are implementing the Math Time to Talk Program for students in grades 4 and 5. Time to Talk consists of small group LiveLesson sessions that occur approximately every seven lessons. Time to Talk sessions focus on increasing students' ability to engage in math discourse in such a way that promotes an increase in conceptual understanding. Teachers use tasks during Time to Talk LiveLesson sessions specially designed to reinforce key math skills, improve problem solving, and strengthen math vocabulary and communication skills. Teachers pose a task that has either multiple solutions, or multiple solution paths, and give students three to five minutes to work through the problem. The remainder of the 30-minute session involves students sharing their solutions and methodology while engaging each other with questions that seek clarity, or understanding, of the variety of approaches to the task. After each Time to Talk session, students complete a brief reflection activity within their math course. Connections trains teachers in effective strategies for promoting math discourse and understanding that students make most sense of math when they participate in the sense-making process through conversation.

During the 2016-17 school year, students in grades 3-5 at two schools supported by our curriculum vendor, Connections, participated in a pilot of this Math Time to Talk Program. Among students who participated regularly, their belief that math learning and ability is malleable increased significantly, and math confidence and self-efficacy increased as well (but did not reach statistical significance). This pattern holds true for both the fall and the spring semesters. After controlling for final math course scores in the previous year, grade level, and engagement level, students that participated in at least six sessions had significantly higher final math course scores than the group that did not.

Figure 3. Math Course Performance During Time to Talk Pilot



Initiatives to Improve ELA Performance

Connections revamped its Language Arts courses for students in grades 4-5 for 2017-18. These new courses align to four research-based design principles:

- The learning environment for students must be engaging.
- Students must have the opportunity to practice, review, and revisit concepts.
- Assessments must be varied, relevant, and frequent.
- Course and lesson structure must be consistent to facilitate optimal student learning.

New animated Learning Buddies guide students through lessons, review key concepts, and encourage students to apply their new knowledge in a variety of ways. All five literacy components (reading, writing, language, speaking, and listening instruction) are blended together. In grades 4 and 5, the curriculum builds on this foundation with weekly phonics, spelling, and fluency instruction.

Writing assignments include analytical writing opportunities and long-term genre writing portfolios.

Units are written around a common theme or topic and include a balance of engaging informational and literary texts from different subject areas and cultures.

Assessments in the ELA courses are designed to familiarize students with the more rigorous, technology-enhanced item types found on next generation assessments and there is increased support for assessment follow-up and re-teaching opportunities.

At the high school level, secondary students who arrive credit-deficient have the opportunity to enroll in credit recovery English Language Arts (ELA) courses that target key ELA skills. Students who failed a previous ELA course take these courses which focus on the skills they missed during their first attempt, and allow students to regain credit and possibly get on track for graduation. We offer credit recovery courses during the school year and in summer school. The 2016-17 school year was the first school year we offered credit recovery courses. The feedback from both ELA teachers and administrators was promising.

During the 2016-17 school year, students who needed additional support with reading fluency and comprehension participated in a new reading support program, Reading Plus. Teachers received training on identifying students who would benefit from the support provided by Reading Plus and strategies for monitoring student performance within the program.

Connections also provides a number of nationally-facilitated LiveLesson sessions to Learning Coaches throughout the school year to assist them in supporting their students with language arts. Our school promotes these sessions through WebMail messages, home page announcements, and Learning Coach Link, the monthly newsletter for Learning Coaches. Sample session titles include:

- Exploring the Six Traits of Writing
- Tips for Supporting Writing at Home
- Using Writing Strategies & Rubrics
- Taking Noteworthy Notes
- Reading Comprehension Strategies for Students in Grades 4-5
- Reading Comprehension Strategies for Students in Grades 6-12

School Improvement Plan

Figure 4. 2016-17 Math Improvement Plan

2016-17 Goal: Improve Math Proficiency Actions:	2016-17 Outcome	Goal Met/ Not Met	2017-18 Plan for Math
All students enrolled 30+ days will be assigned the appropriate Math Intervention Tier Code in their Personalized Learning Plans	100% Complete	Met	Continue Goal – moving forward we will revise – while all students were evaluated, not all students became proficient indicating our designations were inadequate
All 2015-16 SY Math non-proficient students (based on PARCC) will be assigned SISP and monitored for success	100% Complete	Met	Continue Goal – moving forward we will revise – while all students were assigned SISPs, not all students became proficient
Grade Level PLCs will set and achieve Math SMART Goals, set strategies and use best practices to increase proficiency aligned to previous SY testing data	Not Complete	Not Met	Complete PLC SMART Goal alignment to areas designated as focus objectives as determined by previous SY PARCC data to increase proficiency
Train-the-trainer and staff sharing of math literacy and number sense (K-5) and standards for mathematical practice (6-12)	Not Complete	Not Met	Complete training. Make sure all staff understand/teach those mathematical concepts.

Identify students not likely to score proficient on state assessments, develop a course of action	Not Complete	Not Met	Identify students not likely to score proficient on state assessments, develop a course of action. Monitor students who are not proficient and complete interventions. Continually check progress through benchmarking.
Identify areas for targeted instruction/support, and develop a plan for providing targeted instruction	Not Complete	Not Met	Identify areas for targeted instruction/support (analyze data to find where students are falling short).

Review of 2016-17 School Math Goals and Outcomes

The 2016-17 Math Improvement Plan included two key components: (1) Identifying non-proficient students and assigning the appropriate SISP and other interventions, and (2) identifying specific areas of deficiency at all grade levels and training staff to modify instruction to provide additional support and instruction to students in these areas.

We identified non-proficient students and provided appropriate Personalized Learning Plans (PLP) and math intervention codes, which were determined based on the prior year's state test scores or pre-testing on LEAP/Scantron. This alerted teachers to students who needed more support. Based on the students' designation of Tier 1, Tier 2, or Tier 3, teachers determine and assign interventions and monitor student progress in the interventions. While we successfully identified the students who needed help and that help was provided by individual teachers, school administrators should have monitored the support and interventions more closely. The teachers were providing interventions but those interventions were not getting to the crux of the students' and the school's issues.

We now realize that it would have been more effective to work on these issues collaboratively. Our goal this year is to work collaboratively with colleagues to identify specific areas of deficiency (for individual students and across the school) and to modify instruction to provide additional direct support to students based on PARCC and formative assessment data. We will target specific standards that need more and more effective teaching and will reach out to students who have struggled with that standard either on previous state tests, pre-tests, or the Assessment Objective Performance Report (AOPR). The AOPR is built into Connexus and allows the teacher to see how the student is doing on the standards, how many times the standard has been assessed, and how many more times the standard will be assessed. In the past we targeted struggling students in general, but not to a sufficient level of detail.

For the 2017-18 Math Improvement Plan, efforts are already underway to create Professional Learning Communities (PLC) of teachers by grade band or subject area to analyze data; identify areas of non-proficiency; and adjust, modify, and accentuate current instructional content to meet the needs and provide additional support. We will work together as teams of teachers to make sure that all students receive the support necessary on the key standards in which they are deficient.

Improvement Actions

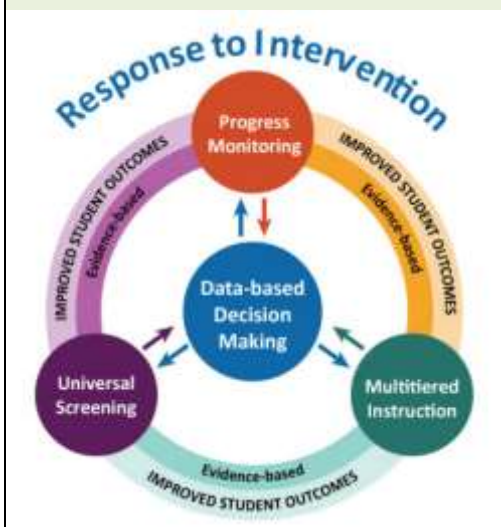
Our school is committed to improving our letter grade. We have developed school improvement action plans that will help achieve our school goals so students can achieve their academic goals. These plans include:

- Using Response to Intervention
- Implementing Professional Learning Communities
- Improving Graduation Rate
- Focusing on College and Career Readiness
- Digging into Data

Using Response to Intervention (RtI)

RtI is a cornerstone of our school and our process is illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Response to Intervention Model



We train all teachers on the multitiered instructional approach. Students who are in need of additional support may be identified using universal screening tools (e.g., DIBELS® Next, LEAP®, Scantron® Performance Series). Teachers offer students whose performance on the universal screener indicates a need for intervention or who struggle with the core curriculum, including differentiated learning activities designed to reinforce key skills and concepts, appropriate research-based instructional interventions that are progressively more intensive and targeted at the student's greatest area of need (GAN). Teachers personalize intervention plans to the individual student's learning style, integrate academic instruction with appropriate behavioral supports, and include ongoing progress monitoring to ensure that students make expected progress.

Our RtI program gives attention to students who are struggling. The Student Support Team (SST) reviews and discusses student performance data and identifies those students who need more intensive support. A teacher makes a recommendation to the SST. The SST evaluates the strategies that have been used to support the student, along with reviewing student performance data, to determine whether the student should receive

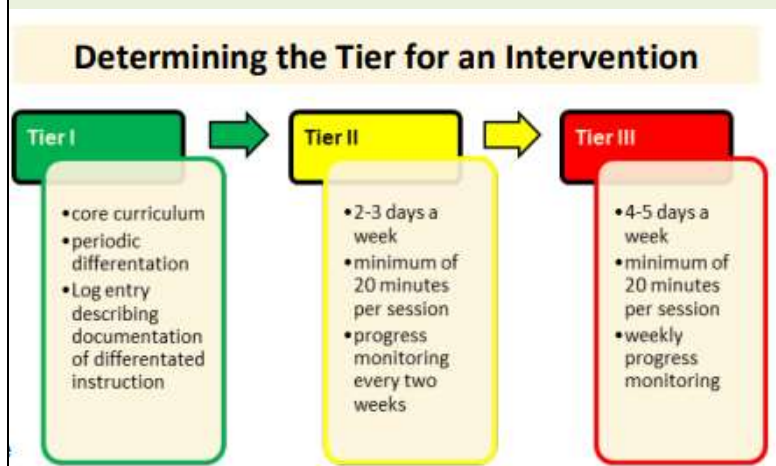
Tier 2 or Tier 3 level intervention.

We focus on evaluating student needs within the first 30 days of enrollment. Once a student enrolls, teachers and counselors pay special attention to students who have prior test scores that show issues, formative pre-test scores with gaps and needs, or who are behind in credits. This attention may include enrollment in Supplemental Instructional Support Programs (SISPs) such as Math XL, Study Island, Raz-Kids, Reading Eggs, Reading Eggspress, SuccessMaker Reading, Headsprout, Reading Plus, Math Whizz, and ImagineMath. The intervention may also be in the form of targeted LiveLesson (synchronous virtual instruction) sessions. These LiveLesson sessions may be small group or one-on-one, but focus on providing targeted instruction based on the academic needs of students, including specific skill deficits as identified by the AOPR and formative assessment data.

We train all teachers in the RtI program/protocols and their role in helping students. We also train teachers to interpret data to make instructional decisions, document their work with students in the PLP, implement strategies for differentiating instruction, identify the most appropriate SISPs for students, and support students who are not progressing, or not engaged, in the instructional program. Teachers also work closely with Learning Coaches to discuss the needs of their students, the RtI process, and any SISPs that might be assigned. Learning Coaches are our partners and are involved with their students throughout the school year.

Figure 6 illustrates the increase in the frequency and intensity of instruction and progress monitoring based on a student's tier of intervention.

Figure 6. Determining the Tier for an Intervention



Implementing Professional Learning Communities (PLC)

All teachers participate in a Professional Learning Community (PLC). These PLCs focus on three areas: Math achievement, English Language Arts achievement, and Graduation Rate. Teachers in each PLC will spend their initial meetings digging into the most recent student test data. This deep data dig highlights areas of success and areas of weakness. Teachers use this information to decide where they need to focus for the upcoming year (Are there areas where students performed well? Are there areas that need more concentration?). This leads to creating SMART goals. SMART goals focus on standards with which our students struggle. Teachers

work together to decide how to better teach these standards so that all students are successful.

Teachers in the PLCs also develop common grading practices, assignment expectations, and re-teaching and relearning policies. All students should have multiple opportunities to learn the material and to show their knowledge. Teachers understand that not all students learn at the same rate or pace, and it is acceptable to allow students to retake tests to show their mastery. The teachers' job is to reteach students the material in the learning method that works best for them. This takes time and differentiation, and is a non-negotiable expectation for all staff members.

This year we are planning to use professional development funds to have more of our teachers trained in PLCs. We are committed to making this a priority this school year.

Improving Graduation Rate

We aim for all students to graduate within four years of entering high school. We also understand that for some students to show mastery of the curriculum, it could take longer, especially since so many students come to NMCA credit deficient. Graduation rate is an area that we will emphasize in the upcoming school year. We have developed Freshman Success and Senior Success courses that students must take. The purpose of the Freshman Success course is to acclimate students to high school and the idea of earning credits towards graduation. In this course, we review high school graduation requirements, course progression, state testing, GPA, and all the resources available at the school level (counselors, teachers, administrators) available to help the students succeed. The Senior Success course gears its units to life after high school – searching for a college, educational records, college applications, and reflection on plans for the future.

We assign each student an advisory teacher. Advisory teachers serve as the primary point of contact for students. Advisory teachers support the whole child (grades in all of their classes, engagement, attendance, test scores). They work with students on issues that cross the curriculum (social/emotional/engagement). Advisory teachers act as an advocate for the student with all of his or her teachers. Advisory teachers are the early warning system to make sure that each student succeeds in all of his or her classes and remains on the road to graduation in four years. Advisory teachers use LiveLesson sessions to improve student performance and to provide direct instruction to students in areas such as study skills, graduation requirements, and others as determined by the school administration and/or counseling team. They create a welcoming environment in the school that fosters personalized learning, respect, and communication among students, Learning Coaches, and teachers. Advisory teachers ensure students adequately participate (meet attendance requirements, complete lessons and assessments, and communicate regularly) in the program. Advisory teachers monitor students' escalation statuses on a regular basis and work with Learning Coaches to keep students "On Track".

The 2016-17 school year was the first year that we had a four-year graduation cohort. There is room to improve on the graduation rate in 2017-18. We will:

1. Make sure counselors carefully review and place students into the appropriate courses. If the student is credit deficient (53% of incoming students are), counselors will create a graduation recovery plan for that student as part of their Next Step plan. The school counselor and advisory teacher will develop the Next Step plan in conjunction with the parent and the student and will monitor the Next Step plan. The purpose of the plan is to create a roadmap for getting the student back on track to graduate with his or her cohort. This plan may include credit recovery courses to help the student

obtain credit in a course that he or she previously failed.

2. Help students decide if they should double up on elective credits. Attending a virtual school means students are not bound by the constraints of a typical six-period day. If students are able to take more courses, counselors will encourage them to do so where appropriate.
3. Offer summer school for students to earn credits in courses they have previously failed.
4. Give qualified students the option of dual credit to gain elective credits at the college level. This allows students to both make up credits they are missing and provide exposure to college opportunities.

The next step, after assisting enrolled students who are off-cohort to earn the credits they need to graduate on time, is to ensure students pass the courses in which they are currently enrolled. Administrators and teachers monitor completion data constantly. If a student is struggling in a course, teachers provide one-on-one phone calls, tutoring, and synchronous instruction to get the student back on track. This is part of a student's Next Step plan. The manager of each teacher monitors passing/completion metrics during bi-monthly touch base meetings. The managers ask the teacher what actions are being taken to support the student in passing the class.

If a student is not engaging in the curriculum, the student may enter the truancy system and be classified as a "habitual truant" or "student in need of early intervention," in accordance with New Mexico compulsory education and attendance laws. Administrators notify parents and put into place a plan that will get the student back on track. If intervention strategies are not working, our school reports the student's truancy to the Office of Probation Services in the judicial district in which the student resides. Reporting students as truants is a last resort. All staff members work to create a trusting environment where students want to learn and have the tools to do so.

In addition, state reporting factors into our graduation rate. Unfortunately, many students enroll at NMCA as a last resort. The student has typically tried their local public school and perhaps a charter school, but has not been successful. The student is typically credit deficient and looking for a school that will fit his or her needs. Some students thrive in the virtual learning environment, as it frees them from the constraints of a brick-and-mortar school, and they succeed.

Other students may enroll, try the virtual learning environment, and decide that the tough curriculum is not what they expected and then decide to leave. We encourage these students to find another schooling environment and to not drop out. We also will work to better follow up, to the extent possible, with those students who leave but do not tell us where they are going next, whether that be another New Mexico public school, a private school, a school out of state or out of the country, or homeschooling. Our teachers, administrators, and administrative assistants are working hard to meet this goal.

Focusing on College and Career Readiness

The counselors and advisory teachers work with students and parents to develop Next Step Plans. These plans will help to guide course, college, and workplace decisions throughout a student's tenure at our school. We work hard as a staff to make the plans meaningful and to use them to drive discussions of future opportunities and possible challenges.

We plan to increase dual credit agreements with colleges around the state to assist more students to take and

to pass dual credit courses. Our core curriculum is geared toward preparing students for college and beyond. Students have access to Advanced Placement®, Honors, College Preparatory, and Basic programs. Students also have the opportunity to participate in the Post-Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) program, in which they can earn dual high school and college credit by attending post-secondary institutions. We will continue to provide educational field trips across the state that include college visits and invite all students grade 7-12 to these field trips. We will increase awareness and opportunity of college options through LiveLesson sessions hosted by our counselors. We want students starting in middle school to see themselves as college graduates someday. Connections also provides our students with several clubs to encourage students to focus on college and career. These include:

- Career Club: Middle school and high school students learn about potential careers and explore fields that interest them.
- College Planning Club: This is designed for students in grades 9-12 who are considering college. Members develop a portfolio that focuses on elements sought by college admissions committees.
- First Generation Club: This is for students in grades 9-12 who aspire to be the first in their families to graduate from college.

Since some of our students are not planning on going directly to college, we plan to add a new course that focuses on life skills and internships allowing students to earn credit while they maintain a job and learn on-the-job work skills.

We plan on adding workforce readiness courses and Career Technical Education (CTE) courses to prepare students for a chosen profession (for example, in business, medical, or technology fields). Our counselors will increase communication, awareness, and participation on/around ACT®, SAT®, and Advanced Placement® testing opportunities. We develop a Next Step Plan (NSP) for each high school student. The NSP is a personal, written plan that is developed by each student at the end of grades 8–11 and during the senior year. The purpose of the plan is to target the student’s postsecondary interests, and set forth the studies he or she will complete during high school in order to be on track for graduation. The student reviews and updates his or her NSP annually, and each year’s plan must explain any differences from the previous year’s NSP.

These opportunities engage our students in planning their futures (and graduating from high school).

Digging into Data

We will create PLCs based on standard academic deficiency areas. An examination and analysis of 2015-16 and 2016-17 school year PARCC data demonstrates specific deficiencies in the proficiency of our lowest achieving students. Figure 7 provides the specific areas of focus that have been identified as most grade-level deficient. This area will serve as the focal point of all grade-band specific PLC SMART goals and best practices.

Figure 7. English Language Arts (Based on 2016-17 School Year PARCC Data)

Grade Level	Common Core State Standard	PLC Areas of Focus
11	RH.11-12.3	Literacy in History/Social Studies
10	RL.9-10.3	Understanding Literature
9	RI.9-10.5	Understanding Informational Text
8	RI.8.6	Understanding Informational Text
7	RI.7.1	Understanding Informational Text
6	RST.6.8.1	Literacy in Science & Technical Subjects
5	RI.5.8	Understanding Informational Text
4	L.4.5	Language Usage

ELA Strategies/Improvement Actions: - How will the lowest learning indicators be re-addressed?

- Implement small group instruction in both reading and writing LiveLesson sessions.
- Use interactive “read-alouds” to model comprehension strategies and academic conversations.
- Teach “close reading” in every reading LiveLesson unit in grades 4-6.
- Continue to provide guided observations in both reading and writing LiveLesson sessions to improve focus lessons, conferences, and small group instruction in grades 4-6.
- Continue to implement grade level inquiry LiveLesson sessions based on the areas of deficiency outlined by the previous school year PARCC data in all grades.
- Provide increased instruction in, and opportunities for, student writing about reading in all grades.
- Consistently use instructional strategies (thinking routines, academic conversations, and questioning strategies) that require all students to make their thinking visible in all grades.
- Integrate science and social studies curriculum into both reading and writing LiveLesson sessions, providing students with more opportunities to engage with informational texts across curriculum areas in all grades.
- Identify students not likely to score proficient on state assessments by end of the first quarter and develop a personalized intervention plan to address the identified areas of deficiency.
- Establish and implement common grading practices and assignment expectations.

Figure 8. Mathematics (Based on 2016-17 School Year PARCC Data)

Grade Level	Common Core State Standard	PLC Areas of Focus
11	A-REI.D.11	Reasoning with Equations and Inequalities
10	G-GPE.4	Expressing Geometric Properties with Equations
9	A-REI.A.04	Reasoning with Equations and Inequalities
8	8.EE.A.04	Expressions & Equations
7	7.RP.A.02	Ratios and Proportional Relationships
6	6.SP.A.01	Statistics and Probability
5	5.NF.A.02	Number & Operations - Fractions
4	4.NF.B.03.c	Number & Operations - Fractions

Math Strategies/Improvement Actions: - How will the lowest learning indicators be re-addressed?

- Teach precise mathematical vocabulary to support student problem solving in intervention-based LiveLesson sessions.
- Use additional LiveLesson and tutoring sessions to support and extend our differentiation of mathematical problem solving.
- Use instructional strategies consistently (thinking routines, academic conversations, questioning strategies) that require all students to make their thinking visible in Content Based Assessments (CBAs) and assessments.
- Include visual models and real life application of problem solving including number bonds, tape diagrams, number lines, pictures, and real world examples in LiveLesson and tutoring sessions.
- Identify students not likely to score proficient on state assessments by end of the first quarter and develop a personalized intervention plan to address the identified areas of deficiency.
- Establish and implement common grading practices and assignment expectations.

All students can and must learn and perform at high levels of academic achievement. Our school faces challenges, including state test participation and late student enrollment, but must improve its overall academic performance.

Most students who remain with us over multiple years demonstrate growth and improvement. To build on this success and to better serve new students, we are implementing new programs and curricula and redoubling its efforts in serving students and families. We look forward to improvement in the years ahead.

b. School Specific Charter Goals*

Pursuant to NMCA 22-8B-9.1, each charter school authorizer must allow for the inclusion of additional rigorous, valid and reliable indicators proposed by a charter school in each school's performance framework to augment external evaluations of its performance, provided that the chartering authority approves the quality and rigor of the indicators and the indicators are consistent with the purposes of the Charter Schools Act.

All applicants must report on each school specific charter goal that is included in the school's performance framework. Applicants must provide a summary analysis of their performance on each goal in over the term of the contract. This analysis must state, for each year of the contract, whether the goal was met and must include longitudinal data that can show the progress of the school over the contract term. For each goal, the applicant should provide a visual representation of the longitudinal data.

For any applicant that did not meet all of their goals in each year of the contract term, provide a narrative that addresses the improvement actions (school/adult/leader/teacher actions) targeted to improve the school's performance on that school specific goal and the success of those actions (student academic successes/improved outcomes). The purpose of the narrative is to demonstrate substantial progress toward achieving and maintaining sufficient performance on the school specific goal. The narrative should only address a goal that was not met in each year of the contract term.

Implementation of the described improvement actions should be verifiable through documented evidence at the site visit. **Please identify specific evidence of both the school/adult/leader/teacher actions and the student academic successes/improved outcomes in the narrative.**

The narrative should reference performance data that can be reviewed and verified either during the site visit or during the "desk audit" review of the application. If providing data, please attach in an appendix and reference the appendix by name in the narrative.

School response:

In 2016-17 we did not provide mid-year data to support the school's mission-specific goals. This was an oversight on our part and we have taken steps to make sure that it does not happen again.

Improvement Actions

NMCA has a workflow system called Issue Aware (IA) that is built into Connexus, our Educational Management System. This system allows us to assign tasks to people in the school with a due date and reminders. Connections has worked with us to set up a workflow task in the IA system for this important report. Everyone involved in gathering the data from the school (Principal and Assistant Principals) and from Connections will be stakeholders on the IA ticket. There will be a due date for the task several weeks in advance – and this will trigger automatic reminders for all stakeholders to complete the task. We are confident that with these changes in place, the report will be completed and submitted on time this year.

Mission-Specific Indicators

GOAL 2.a

2.a. All full academic year students for grades 4-8 will maximize their potential in one academic year by applying strategies and skills as addressed on the Longitudinal Evaluation of Academic Progress® (LEAP) in reading.

(Negotiations are underway with NWEA to use MAP and Renaissance Learning to use STAR and if either is successful and we are able to assess students remotely using either tool by September 1, 2013, that will be used instead of LEAP.)

Full Academic Year is defined as a student who is enrolled on day 40 and enrolled during the testing window.

Please note that following negotiations with NWEA, we chose to continue with LEAP for student benchmarking.

We met this goal in two of the four years.

LEAP defines a year's worth of growth as a 10 percentage point gain or proficiency.

- Exceeded Standard = 15% or more of full academic year 4th-8th grade students will make more than a 10% gain from pre to post test on the LEAP in reading and 70% or more of full academic year 4th-8th grade students will be proficient from pre to post test on the LEAP in reading.
- Meets Standard = 70-84% of full academic year 4th-8th grade students will make at least a 10% gain from pre- to post-test or be proficient from pre to post test on the LEAP in reading.
- Does Not Meet Standard = 55-69% of full academic year 4th-8th grade students will make at least a 10% gain from pre to post-test or will be proficient pre to post test on the LEAP in reading.
- Falls Far Below Standard = 54% or fewer of full academic year 4th-8th grade students will make at least a 10% gain pre to post-test or will be proficient pre to post test on the LEAP in reading.

Was the Goal Met During Each Year of Charter?

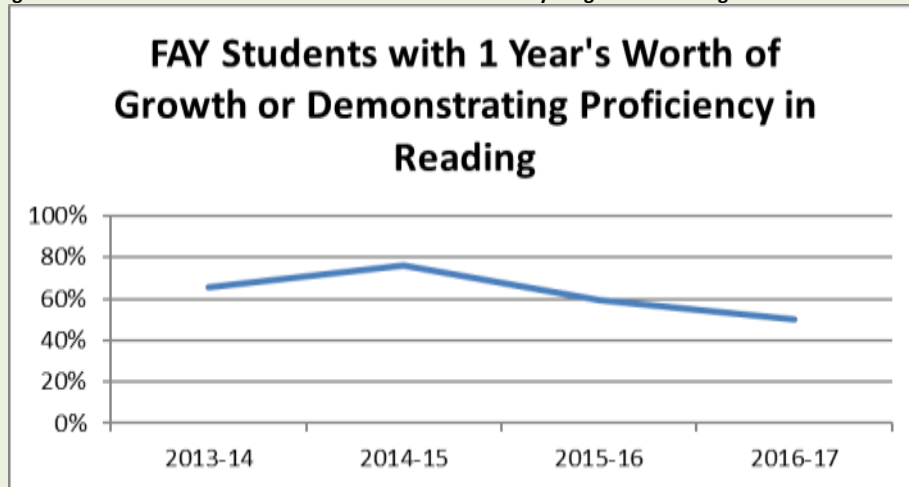
- 2013-14 – Meets Standard*
- 2014-15 – Meets Standard
- 2015-16 – Does Not Meet Standard
- 2016-17 – Falls Far Below Standard

* The goal was changed to the current percentages after the first year. For 2013-14, the definition of "Meets Standards" was "In 50-74% of full academic year 4th-8th grade students made at least one year's worth of growth on the LEAP (or MAP or STAR) in reading."

Figure 9. Full Academic Year Students Making a Year's Worth of Growth or Demonstrating Proficiency – Reading

	FAY Students with 1 Year's Worth of Growth or Demonstrating Proficiency in Reading
2013-14	65.70%
2014-15	76.60%
2015-16	59.20%
2016-17	50.30%

Figure 10. Full Academic Year Students who Made Satisfactory Progress in Reading



We have seen a decline in our students' performance on the LEAP reading test.

Evidence provided in School Goals Upload to WebEPSS

- LEAP Reading Data – 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17

Evidence provided in Appendix A

- Connections Formative Assessment Cycle Overview (Appendix A-2)
- LEAP Assessment Reliability and Validity (Appendix A-3)

Improvement Actions

Our teachers use LEAP as an early warning system to target students who need extra attention. If a student does not perform well on this formative benchmarking, the teacher is notified via real-time data on his or her Teacher Homepage within Connexus. Visual icons referred to as "intervention indicators" assist teachers in identifying students who need additional academic support. Teachers make instructional decisions and monitor student progress based on a multi-tiered instructional model. Additional academic support may include:

- Delivering targeted individual or small group instruction via a synchronous LiveLesson sessions.
- Modifying a lesson or assessment within a course.
- Assigning a supplemental program to support the development of foundational skills needed to be successful with grade level work.

Students who continue to struggle within the core curriculum (Tier 1) are identified by teachers as early as possible so that differentiated activities can be assigned and student progress can closely be monitored (as part of the RtI process). For students demonstrating a more intensive need (Tier 2 and Tier 3), the tiered approach allows for more instructional support and increased progress monitoring.

We train teachers on how to use the AOPR which displays statistics on assessment questions – whether they are assigned, whether they have been taken, the scores that the students have received. These assessment questions are mapped to the state standards (and can also be aligned to the LEAP scores). This allows teachers to track student success on mastering key objectives as they progress through the assessments in the curriculum. Teachers have access to real-time data to see how many assessment items the student has completed for each objective and whether the student has mastered these objectives. This allows the teacher to have the data they need to make decisions on whether to intervene with a student, provide additional instruction or instructional resources, or to celebrate the student’s achievements. The AOPR can be used side by side with the LEAP results to drive instructional decision making and move student growth forward. We are going to focus on using this report to raise growth scores.

After analyzing the outcome, we realize that in order to increase LEAP scores and show more growth, we now need to focus on performing a detailed analysis of the testing by student and by standard. In the past, our teachers have reviewed the overall score to identify struggling students and assigned appropriate interventions and then monitored those interventions.

In 2017-18, we have changed our strategy to dig deeper into the standards that seem to be difficult for individual students and groups of students and intensively re-teach those standards through custom assignments, one-on-one tutoring, and LiveLesson sessions. Teachers will check that the student has mastered those difficult standards by using the AOPR. In addition, we will provide additional training to teachers on how to use the AOPR and LEAP together, enabling the teachers to see if students are making progress or whether they need additional assistance.

After analyzing the last two to three years of data, we realize that in addition to analyzing student data to identify areas of deficiency, we also need to adjust instruction to better meet those areas through re-teaching with a focus on mastery. In the last two to three years, teachers may have identified particular areas of deficiency, but struggled to make decisions based on that information. In 2017-18, we have made this a major area of focus (through PLCs and extensive training) to not only retrain teachers on how to read and analyze student data to identify these areas, but also on how to adjust and customize instruction to assist students in making real improvement.

Goal 2.b

2.b. All full academic year students (as defined by New Mexico accountability system definitions) for grades 4 thru 8 will maximize their potential in one academic year by applying strategies and skills as addressed on the Longitudinal Evaluation of Academic Progress® (LEAP) in math.

(Negotiations are underway with NWEA to use MAP and Renaissance Learning to use STAR and if either is successful and we are able to assess students remotely using either tool by September 1, 2013, that will be used instead of LEAP.)

Please note that following negotiations with NWEA, we chose to continue with LEAP for student benchmarking.

We met this goal in all four years.

- Exceeds Standard = 10% or more of full academic year 4th-8th grade students will make more than a 10% gain from pre to post test on the LEAP in math and 65% or more of full academic year 4th-8th grade students will be proficient from pre to post test on the LEAP in math.
- Meets Standard = 60-74% of full academic year 4th-8th grade students will make more than a 10% gain from pre to post-test as indicated on the LEAP in math or will be proficient from pre to post-test as indicated on the LEAP in math.
- Does Not Meet Standard = 45-59% of full academic year 4th-8th grade students will make more than a 10% gain from pre to post-test as indicated on the LEAP in math or will be proficient from pre to post-test as indicated on the LEAP in math.
- Falls Far Below Standard = 44% or fewer of full academic year 4th-8th grade students will make at least a 10% gain pre to post-test or will be proficient pre to post test on the LEAP in math.

Was the Goal Met During Each Year of Charter?

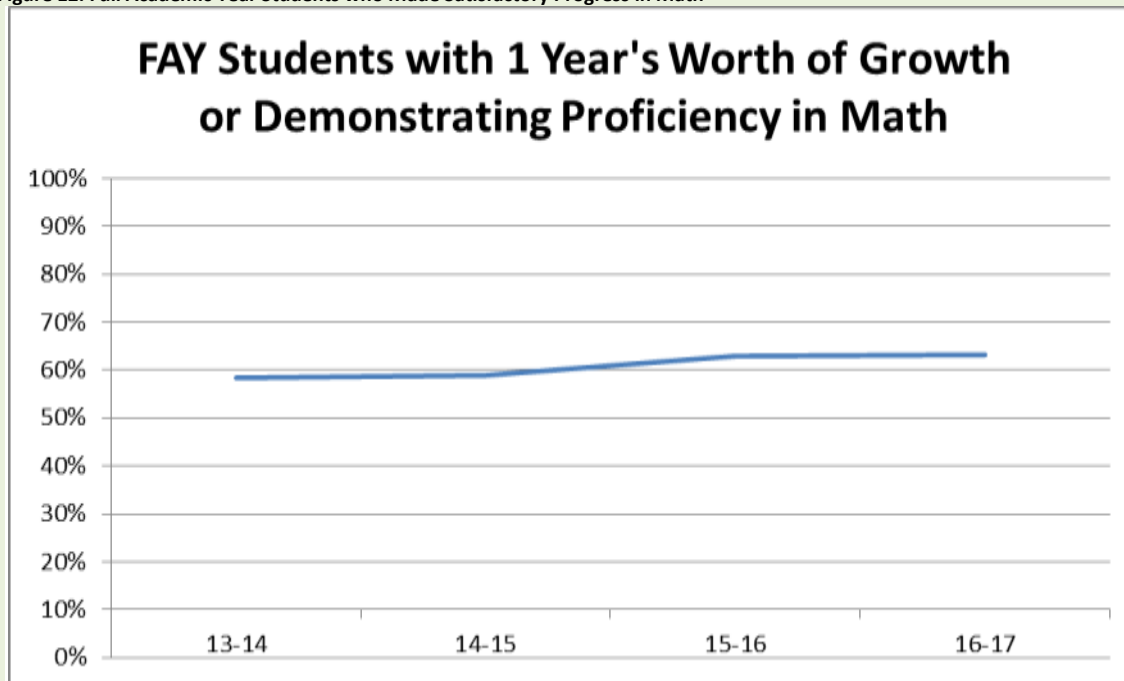
- 2013-14 – Meets Standard*
- 2014-15 – Meets Standard
- 2015-16 – Meets Standard
- 2016-17 – Meets Standard

* The goal was changed to the current percentages after the first year. For 2013-14, the definition of “Meets Standards” was “In 50-74% of full academic year 4th-8th grade students made at least one year’s worth of growth on the LEAP (or MAP or STAR) in math.”

Figure 11. Full Academic Year Students Making a Year's Worth of Growth or Demonstrating Proficiency – Math

	FAY Students with 1 Year's Worth of Growth or Demonstrating Proficiency in Math
2013-14	58.30%
2014-15	58.90%
2015-16	63.00%
2016-17	63.30%

Figure 12. Full Academic Year Students who Made Satisfactory Progress in Math



We have seen a small increase in our students' performance on the LEAP math test.

Evidence provided in School Goals Upload to WebEPSS

- LEAP Math Data – 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17

Evidence provided in Appendix A

- Connections Formative Assessment Cycle Overview (Appendix A-2)
- LEAP Assessment Reliability and Validity (Appendix A-3)

Improvement Actions

The action plan for helping students to become proficient in reading is the same as the plan for math. We want our teachers to use the tools in Connexus to identify students who are struggling, to figure out where they need help, and to provide remediation to increase student learning. Our teachers use LEAP as an early

warning system to target students who need extra attention. If a student does not perform well on this formative benchmarking, the teacher is notified via real-time data on his or her Teacher Homepage within Connexus. Visual icons referred to as "intervention indicators", assist teachers in identifying students who need additional academic support. Teachers make instructional decisions and monitor student progress based on a multi-tiered instructional model. Additional academic support may include:

- Delivering targeted individual or small group instruction via a synchronous LiveLesson sessions.
- Modifying a lesson or assessment within a course.
- Assigning a supplemental program to support the development of foundational skills needed to be successful with grade level work.

Students who are continuing to struggle within the core curriculum (Tier 1) are identified by teachers as early as possible so that differentiated activities can be assigned and student progress can closely be monitored (as part of the RTI process). For students demonstrating a more intensive need (Tier 2 and Tier 3), the tiered approach allows for more instructional support and increased progress monitoring.

We train teachers on how to use the AOPR which displays statistics on assessment questions – whether the assessments are assigned, whether the assessments were taken, and the scores the students earned. These assessment questions are mapped to the state standards (and also aligned to the LEAP scores). This allows teachers to track student success on mastering key objectives as the student progresses through the assessments in the curriculum. Teachers have access to real-time data to see how many assessment items the student has completed for each objective and whether the student has mastered these objectives. This provides the teacher with the data necessary to make decisions on whether to intervene with a student, provide additional instruction or instructional resources, or to celebrate the student's achievements. The AOPR is used side-by-side with the LEAP results to drive instructional decision making and move student growth forward. We will focus on using this report to raise growth scores.

Goal 2.c

2.c. All full academic year students in grades 9-12 will maximize their potential and meet the highest performance standards by earning a minimum of 6 credits for the school year or, if taking fewer than 6, all of the credits in which they are enrolled.

We met this goal in three of the four years.

- Exceeds Standard = 70% or more of full academic year 9th-12th grade students earned a minimum of six credits for the school year.
- Meets Standard = 55-69% of full academic year 9th-12th grade students earned a minimum of six credits for the school year.
- Does Not Meet Standard = 40-54% of students of full academic year 9th-12th grade students earned a minimum of six credits for the school year.
- Falls Far Below Standard = Less than 40% of students of full academic year 9th-12th grade students earned a minimum of six credits for the school year.

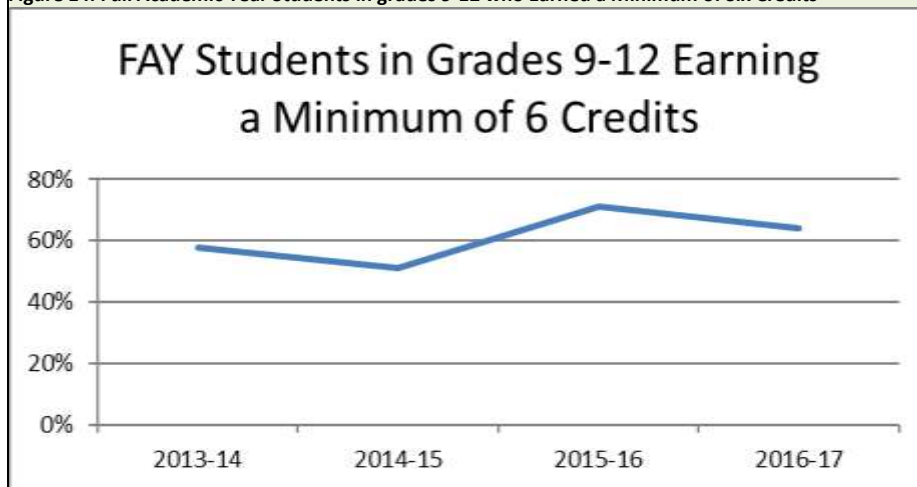
Was the Goal Met During Each Year of Charter?

- 2013-14 – Meets Standard
- 2014-15 – Does Not Meet Standard
- 2015-16 – Exceeds Standard
- 2016-17 – Meets Standard

Figure 13. Full Academic Year Students in grades 9-12 who Earned a Minimum of Six Credits

	FAY Students who Earned a Minimum of Six Credits
2013-14	58%
2014-15	51%
2015-16	71%
2016-17	64%

Figure 14. Full Academic Year Students in grades 9-12 who Earned a Minimum of Six Credits



We have seen a moderate increase in our percentage of students earning a minimum of six credits.

Evidence provided in School Goals Upload to WebEPSS

- Credits Earned Data – 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17

Improvement Actions

An important component of graduation rate is course completion. Students need to complete all courses and earn all of their credits to graduate on time. We have met this goal for most of the charter term, but did not reach the goal in 2014-15. That data was unacceptable and we put plans in place to do better – subsequent years' results demonstrate those plans worked.

1. In the 2015-16 school year, we hired a new school leader. The new school leader followed the policy of “what gets measured and tracked gets done.” She implemented a renewed emphasis on graduation rate and increasing student success in courses in order to reach the longer term graduation rate goal. The school focused on assisting students with passing their courses, intervening when they were failing, and working with students to show mastery.
2. The expectation became to use the tools provided by Connections to better track this metric. School leadership monitored the Gradebook Distribution Report three times each week to allow accurate and timely updates on student performance. This high-level report allows the school leader and other managers to see what is happening in a teacher's gradebook. Administrators are able to see scores/grades broken down by teacher, subject/course, grade, subject, IEP student by subject, and so forth. This information allows the manager to see crucial information and act on that information as needed. Some examples of questions that the report might lead the manager to ask include:
 - If two teachers teach the same course, why might one teacher have a high passing rate and another have a low passing rate?
 - What are the passing rates for high school English Language Arts?
 - How does that compare to middle school English Language Arts? Why?
 - If Student X is passing all of her classes except for Physical Education, what is going on with Physical Education?

This data led to twice monthly discussions between teachers and managers. The manager might ask why a given percentage of students were failing the class and what are teachers doing to help Student X, Y, and Z to pass. These discussions about student success and analysis of patterns by teacher or course help the teacher and administrator to work together to brainstorm what the issues are and how they might be solved.

3. This information is supplied to teachers as well, in easy to digest reports. All advisory teachers can find their students and their students' grades listed in the Section Performance Report. This report is also generated three times per week. For RtI purposes, the report shows students who are need of an intervention (they did poorly on the formative and/or state assessments), students who are currently assigned a Tier Code (2 or 3), and their current grades in that corresponding area (ELA or Math). The report combines several sources of data (RtI, state testing results, formative assessments, and Curriculum Based Assessments) into one comprehensive report. This allows a teacher to quickly see if students who are in need of an intervention are passing or in need of more academic supports like tutoring or one-on-one phone calls.
4. Accepting failure is not part of our school's culture. We are constantly striving to individualize instruction, create a culture that embraces re-teaching and relearning, and push students to show mastery. To help teachers continue to successfully shift students and themselves from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset, we began offering a series of Professional Development courses on virtual education and pedagogy (including a specific growth mindset session called “Math - We've Got

This!”). Additionally, we established a focus on PLCs both within our school and among school leaders from schools supported by Connections nationwide to create a schoolwide collaborative culture to support teachers in their data analysis and re-teaching strategies. All students can and must learn. This message is incorporated at the very foundation of the school and is even a part of how we hire and train new staff. We will continue to strive to improve on this goal.

These actions helped us to improve and meet this goal in the last two school years.

Goal 2.d

2.d. All students who are eligible will be strongly encouraged to enroll in advanced STEM courses.

Note: Advanced STEM is defined as any STEM course above the chronological grade level for a student or a course that is labeled as Honors, Advanced Placement, or Dual Credit.

We met this goal in all years.

To assess this goal, NMCA divided the number of students completing one or more advanced STEM course with a B grade (80% or higher) or C grade (70% or higher) by the total student enrollment for whom advanced STEM is available.

- Exceeds Standard = 15% or more of all students who enroll in advanced STEM courses will successfully complete the course with a grade of B or better and 10% or more of all students who enroll in advanced STEM courses will successfully complete the course with a grade of C or better.
- Meets Standard = 50% or more of all students who enroll in advanced STEM courses will successfully complete the course with a grade of C or better.
- Does Not Meet Standard = 40-49% of all students who enroll in advanced STEM courses will successfully complete the course with a grade of C or better.
- Falls Far Below Standard = 39% or fewer of all students who enroll in advanced STEM courses will successfully complete the course with a grade of C or better.

Was the Goal Met During Each Year of Charter?

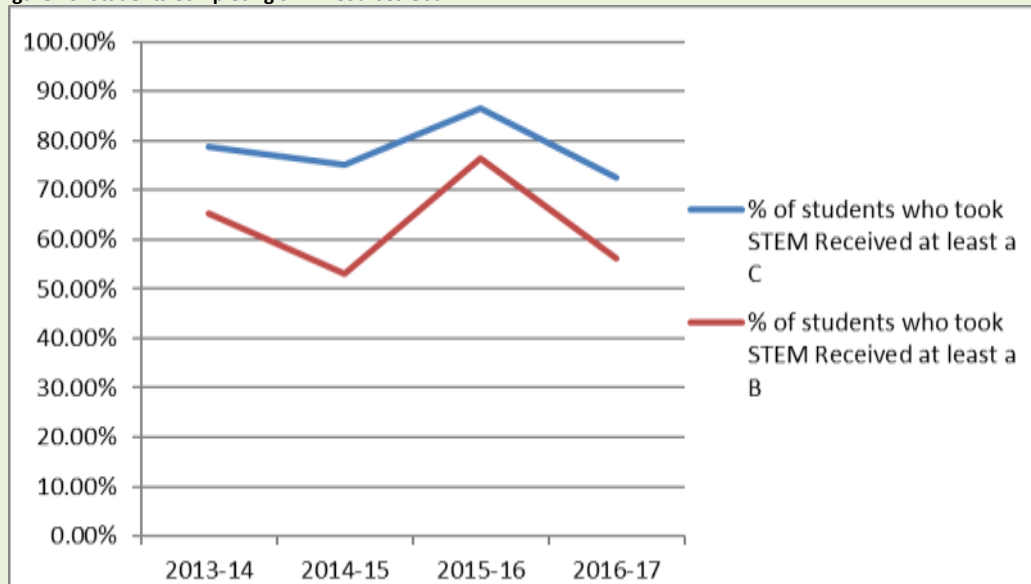
- 2013-14 - Exceeds Standard*
- 2014-15 - Meets Standard
- 2015-16 - Meets Standard
- 2016-17 - Meets Standard

* The goal was changed to the current percentages after the first year. For 2013-14, 8% or more of the total student enrollment completing one or more advanced STEM course with a C grade or better was considered to be exceeding this goal.

Figure 15. Students Completing STEM Courses Goal

	% of Students who Completed STEM Courses	
	Received at least a C	Received at least a B
2013-14	79.70%	65.20%
2014-15	75.00%	53.10%
2015-16	86.50%	76.50%
2016-17	72.50%	56.20%

Figure 16. Students Completing STEM Courses Goal



We have seen variation with a flat trend line in our percentage of students earning a B or C in advanced STEM courses.

Evidence provided in School Goals Upload to WebEPSS

- STEM Grade Data – 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17

Supplemental Indicators

Goal 3.a

3.a. Parents, guardians and adult students will be satisfied with New Mexico Connections Academy as measured by the Annual Connections Parent Satisfaction Survey, which will be in addition to that required by state law, rule or regulation.

We met this goal in all years.

Connections contracted with third-party independent market research firm, Shapiro+Raj (<https://www.shapiroraj.com/>), to survey NMCA households.

Satisfaction was measured by the question of the Annual Parent Satisfaction survey that says: “Based on your experiences In the 20XX-20XX school year, what grade would you give the NMCA Program overall, for all your students?” Satisfaction is defined by an A or B score.

To assess this goal, we divided the number of households rating our school as an A or B overall by the total number of households completing the survey.

Survey data is attached in Appendix A-4.

- Exceeds Standard = 90% or more of parents/guardians/adult students are satisfied with the school
- Meets Standard = 75%-89% of parents/guardians/adult students are satisfied with the school
- Does Not Meet Standard = Less than 75% of the parents/guardians/adult students are satisfied with the school

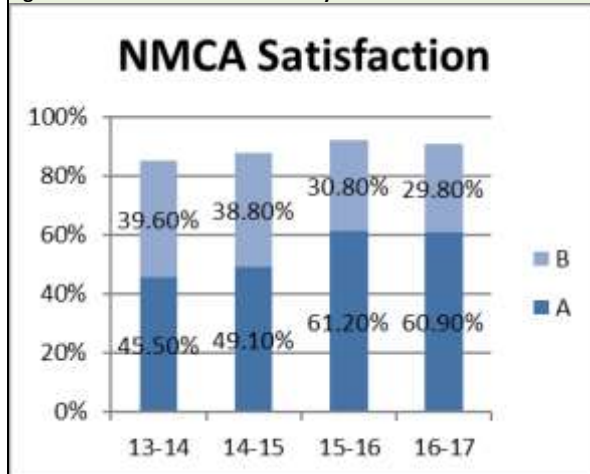
Was the Goal Met During Each Year of Charter?

- 2013-14 – Meets Standard
- 2014-15 – Meets Standard
- 2015-16 – Exceeded Standard
- 2016-17 – Exceeded Standard

Figure 17. Percentage Rating NMCA a A or B

	Rating NMCA an A or B
2013-14	85.1%
2014-15	88.0%
2015-16	92.0%
2016-17	90.7%

Figure 18. Parent Satisfaction Survey Goal



We have seen an increase in family satisfaction.

Evidence provided in Appendix A

- Parent Satisfaction Survey Data (A-4)

Goal 3.b

3.b. Parents, guardians of students and adult students enrolled during the Annual Connections Parent Satisfaction Survey window will complete the survey.

We met this goal in all years.

Connections contracted with a third-party independent market research firm, Shapiro+Raj (<https://www.shapiroraj.com/>), to survey NMCA households.

To assess this goal, we divided the number of households completing the survey by the number of households with at least one student enrolled during the Annual Connections Parent Satisfaction Survey window.

Survey data is attached in Appendix A-4.

- Exceeds Standard = 55% or more of identified parents, guardians, or adult students completed surveys
- Meets Standard = 40%-55% of identified parents, guardians, or adult students completed surveys
- Does Not Meet Standard = Less than 40% of parents, guardians, or adult students completed surveys

Was the Goal Met During Each Year of Charter?

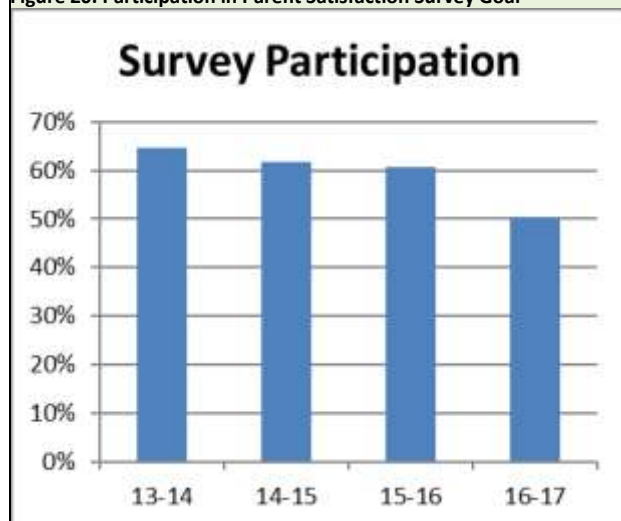
- 2013-14 – Exceeded Standard
- 2014-15 – Exceeded Standard
- 2015-16 – Exceeded Standard

- 2016-17 – Meets Standard

Figure 19. Percentage Responding to Survey

	Responding to Survey
2013-14	64.6%
2014-15	61.8%
2015-16	60.6%
2016-17	50.5%

Figure 20. Participation in Parent Satisfaction Survey Goal



We have seen a decrease in survey participation, while still meeting the goal each year. This is something our vendor sees across schools it supports. As a school matures, parents are less likely to provide feedback. We plan to reverse this trend this year by:

1. Creating a banner message on every parent/guardian homepage in Connexus reminding them of the survey.
2. Reminding parents and teachers of the importance of the feedback in bi-monthly phone calls and newsletters.

Evidence provided in Appendix A

- Parent Satisfaction Survey Data (A-4)

Goal 3.c

3.c. All Learning Coaches of full academic year students will have at least two conference meetings with a New Mexico certified teacher to discuss academic goals and progress of the student, and to update the student's Personalized Learning Plan (PLP).

We met this goal in two of the four years.

To assess this goal, we divided the number of FAY students who had at least two conference meetings with a New Mexico certified teacher by the total number of FAY students.

- Exceeds Standard = 90% or more of Learning Coaches of FAY students had 2 conference meetings with a New Mexico certified teacher at which the PLP was updated.
- Meets Standard = 80-89% of Learning Coaches of FAY students had 2 conference meetings with a New Mexico certified teacher at which the PLP was updated.
- Does Not Meet Standard = 70-79% of Learning Coaches of FAY students had 2 conference meetings with a New Mexico certified teacher at which the PLP was updated.
- Falls Far Below Standard = Less than 70% of learning coaches of full academic year students had two conference meetings with a New Mexico certified teacher at which the PLP was updated.

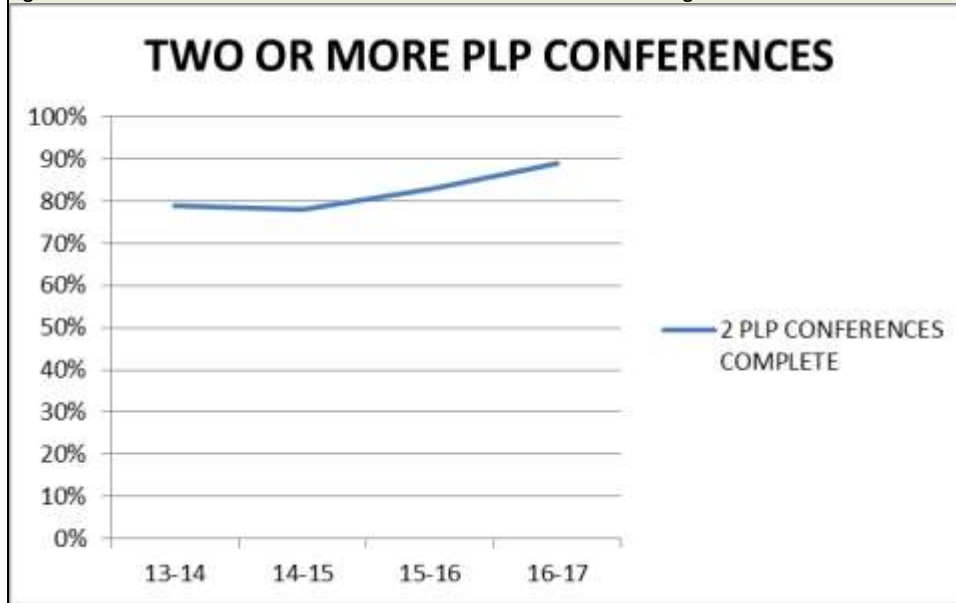
Was the Goal Met During Each Year of Charter?

- 2013-14 – Did Not Meet Standard
- 2014-15 – Did Not Meet Standard
- 2015-16 – Meets Standard
- 2016-17 – Meets Standard

Figure 21. FAY Students who Received at Least Two Conference Meetings

	FAY Students with at least Two Conference Meetings
2013-14	79%
2014-15	78%
2015-16	83%
2016-17	89%

Figure 22. Full Academic Year Students with at least Two Conference Meetings



We have seen an increase in the percentage of students with at least two conference meetings.

Evidence provided in School Goals Upload to WebEPSS

- PLP Conference Data – 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17

Improvement Actions

NMCA did not meet this goal in 2013-14 or 2014-15. Administrators realized that teachers were not prioritizing these important meetings with students and parents and took several action steps to improve in the 2015-16 school year and beyond. These actions steps included:

- Hiring a new school leader who prioritized a positive communicative culture with high expectations for teachers to complete student and parent contacts.
- Consistently monitoring parent phone call metrics. Managers meet with employees at least two times per month. During these meetings, managers and teachers discuss and evaluate a variety of phone call and communication metrics. Managers retrain teachers who fall behind in their parent or student phone calls in time management, how to log calls, and the importance of the calls. Managers encourage teachers to block time in their day for these important parent and student meetings. Managers encourage teachers to help one another complete the calls if another teacher is falling behind.

These actions helped us to improve and meet this goal in the last two school years.

2. Financial Compliance

The Charter School Act provides as follows:

A charter may be suspended, revoked, or not renewed by the chartering authority if the chartering authority determines that the charter school...failed to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management.

a. Audit

Every charter school is subject to the Audit Act. NMSA22-8B-4(C). The Public School Finance Act requires the audit committee of each charter school governing body to track and report progress on the status of the most recent audit findings and advise the local school board on policy changes needed to address audit findings.

For any school that has received audit findings in any annual audit during the term of the contract provide a narrative explaining the improvement actions made (school/adult/leader/board actions) to meet financial compliance requirements and the effectiveness of those actions (improved practices and outcomes) in improving financial compliance. The school should use the work of the audit committee in “tracking and reporting progress on the status of audit findings” to develop this narrative.

Success should be identified by specific changes in practice and changes in the audit findings in subsequent years. The purpose of the narrative is to demonstrate substantial progress toward achieving and maintaining financial compliance.

Implementation of the described improvement actions should be verifiable through evidence at the site visit. **Please identify specific evidence of both the school/adult/leader/board actions and the improved practices and outcomes in the narrative.**

Schools that have received no audit findings in each of the annual audits during the term of the contract do NOT complete this Section.

School response:

Our Governing Council has a legal and ethical duty to be a good steward of public funds.

We have received audit findings and responded appropriately with improvement actions to ensure financial compliance. This section documents those findings and explains our corresponding actions to address, as well as the effectiveness of those actions.

Fiscal Year 2014 (2013-14)*

We received six audit findings, including:

1. An undercollateralized balance,
2. Mileage reimbursement rates,
3. Lack of a second signature on checks,
4. Purchase orders subsequent to invoices,

5. Undetermined timing of deposits, and
6. An expenditure exceeding budgetary authority.

* Please note that the FY 2014 and FY 2015 audits were done simultaneously, due to New Mexico firing its auditors. This allowed some findings to repeat between years while our school was still in the process of addressing the findings.

Figure 23. Fiscal Year 2014 Audit

Finding	Response	Action / Prevention
<p>2014-001 Pledged Collateral Requirements</p> <p>Condition: During test work, we noted that NMCA was under collateralized by \$139,914 at June 30, 2014.</p> <p>Cause: NMCA was not monitoring the account balances of NMCA to ensure that proper amount of pledged collateral was being maintained.</p> <p>Recommendation: It is recommended that NMCA monitor cash balances to ensure that they are meeting all requirements of the State Auditor.</p>	<p>A Pledged Collateral agreement was established as of July 2014 in compliance with state statute.</p>	<p>In July 2014, we realized that the cash balance was under collateralized and entered a Pledged Collateral agreement to prevent a reoccurrence.</p>
<p>2014-002 Mileage Reimbursements</p> <p>Condition: For the year ended June 30, 2014, it was noted that NMCA reimbursed employees for mileage at a rate of fifty six cents per mile.</p> <p>Cause: NMCA contends that it is a Local Public Body and not a State Agency. As a Local Public Body, NMCA contends that it may reimburse mileage at the full amount authorized by the IRS. The PED has indicated to the auditors that charter schools chartered under PED are a component unit of PED and should reimburse mileage at the rate approved for a State Agency.</p> <p>Recommendation: NMCA should</p>	<p>The rate reimbursed is the rate previously required by the PED and previous auditors. The PED had previously sent out a memo which stated charter schools are "Other Public Bodies" as defined in state statute. As an "Other Public Body" the reimbursement rate can equal 100% of IRS rate. The school chose to reimburse at this rate. This change would move charter schools to be classified as "State Agencies". The PED allowed the 100% rate for the first part of FY14 changing the interpretation at the end of FY14. We provided the PED with the earlier released memo at that time.</p> <p>It should be noted that the prior auditors of the state charter schools</p>	<p>May 2015 - Governing Council discussed that PED had changed its position from defining charter schools as "Other Public Bodies" to "State Agencies".</p> <p>May 2015 - Administration and Business Manager discussed the change in PED policy and audit guidance for mileage reimbursement.</p> <p>June 23, 2015 - Governing Council approved an updated Mileage and per diem Travel policy reflecting that mileage be reimbursed at 80% of IRS rate.</p>

reimburse mileage at 80% of the internal revenue service standard mileage rate set January 1 of the previous year for each mile traveled in a privately owned vehicle.	issued a finding for schools that did not pay as an "Other Public Body" and instead paid as a State Agency at the 80% rate. The school will continue to comply with direction issued by the PED.	July 2015 - We implemented the updated reimbursement.
<p>2014-003 Dual Signatures on Checks**</p> <p>Condition: In a sample of 60 expenditures there were six instances (\$134,420.82, \$130,922.51, \$41,708.74, \$8,342.30, \$3,333.33, and \$3,333.33) in which checks were only signed by one authorized signer, and one instance (\$355.31) in which a check cleared the bank without any signature at all.</p> <p>Cause: A second authorized check signer was not available when the checks were being processed.</p> <p>Recommendation: NMCA should follow its own internal policy of having two authorized signers sign all checks of two thousand five hundred or more dollars.</p>	The school will authorize two signors at the school site to make sure no checks over \$2,500 are mailed out without dual signatures. A review of the signed checks should ensure this error does not occur again.	<p>May 2015 - Governing Council discussed the need for additional authorized signers.</p> <p>May 2015 - Administration and Business Manager discussed the addition of authorized signers at the school site.</p> <p>June 23, 2015 - Governing Council approved the addition of the School Leader and Certified Purchasing agent as authorized signatories on the bank account.</p>
<p>2014-004 Purchase Order Subsequent to Invoice</p> <p>Condition: During our testing of sixty cash disbursements, there were seven instance (\$41,708.74, \$35,625.00, \$11,100, \$962.43, \$450.75, \$140.00, \$10.00) in which the Purchase Order was prepared subsequent to the vendor's invoice date.</p> <p>Cause: NMCA personnel did not follow established procurement policies of the School.</p> <p>Recommendation: All NMCA personnel should be reminded that initiation of a purchase order is not sufficient for ordering; that an</p>	School procedures will be emphasized to staff to ensure compliance with school policies and procedures as well as state laws and regulations.	<p>December 2015 - Administration and Business Manager discussed the process and need to educate the staff on existing policy.</p> <p>January 2016 - Governing Council discussed the finding.</p> <p>April and May 2016 - We publicized the existing policy with staff.</p>

approved Purchase Order is required per School and State guidelines.		
<p>2014-005 Timely Deposits</p> <p>Condition: For four of four miscellaneous cash receipts tested, it could not be determined if the items were deposited timely. The amounts tested were \$625.00, \$394.32, \$250.00, and \$21.14.</p> <p>Cause: NMCA was in its first year of existence. NMCA personnel were not yet familiar with all New Mexico State Statutes.</p> <p>Recommendation: We recommend that NMCA create a procedure to ensure that all funds are properly receipted and deposited within one banking day.</p>	The school will review its cash receipting procedures to ensure timely deposit of funds.	<p>December 2015 - Administration and Business Manager discussed the cash receipting policy and the need to review it with staff.</p> <p>January 2016 - Governing Council discussed the finding.</p> <p>April and May 2016 - We reviewed the existing policy with relevant staff to ensure timely deposit of funds.</p>
<p>2014-006 Budgetary Conditions</p> <p>Condition: NMCA has expenditure functions where actual expenditures exceeded budgetary authority for the following fund:</p> <p>Entitlement IDEA-B-24106 Instruction \$(8,935)</p> <p>Cause: Actual expenditures were not being adequately monitored by management.</p> <p>Recommendation: We recommend NMCA establish a policy of budgetary review by the governing council or finance committee at the end of each quarter and have the governing council approve the necessary budgetary adjustments to ensure funds are not over expended.</p>	School budget procedures will be reviewed to ensure all budgets are in compliance with state budget requirements.	<p>January 2016 - Governing Council discussed the finding.</p> <p>January 2016 - Business Manager established procedures to monitor expenses do not exceed budgetary authority.</p> <p>April and May 2016 - At Finance Committee meetings, the Business Manager comments on budgetary authority and presents the adjustments to correct it.</p> <p>Ongoing - Governing Council approves budgetary adjustments when required to ensure funds are not over expended.</p>
** The findings for "dual signatures on checks" were slightly different in FY 2014 and FY 2015. The FY 2014		

audit finding was for non-compliance. The Business Manager did not obtain two signatures on some checks over \$2,500. The FY 2015 occurrence was due to the fact the Business Manager did not realize this minimum should apply to contractual repetitive checks that the full Governing Council was aware of, such as rent. The Business Manager now understands that the minimum applies to all checks and we raised the limit for dual signature checks to \$6,000 on May 24, 2016.

Fiscal Year 2015 (2014-15)*

NMCA received four audit findings, including:

1. Mileage reimbursement rates,
2. Lack of a second signature on checks,
3. Purchase orders subsequent to invoices, and
4. Missing evidence of payroll deductions.

* Please note that the FY 2014 and FY 2015 audits were done simultaneously, due to New Mexico firing its auditors. This allowed some findings to repeat between years while we were still in the process of addressing the findings.

Figure 24. Fiscal Year 2015 Audit

Finding	Response	Action / Prevention
<p>2015-001 Personnel Files</p> <p>Condition: Ten personnel files were examined in our payroll testing. One of these files did not contain evidence supporting authorization for payroll deductions.</p> <p>Cause: The school is not reviewing the personnel files for compliance with State Statutes.</p> <p>Recommendation: The school should review all personnel files to ensure that required documentation required by NMAC 6.20.2.18 is available.</p>	<p>The school has procedures in place to review all personnel files for completed required documents for each school employee. The Business Manager will ensure that all files have been reviewed by December 31, 2015.</p>	<p>January 2016 - Governing Council discussed the finding.</p> <p>February 2016 - We adopted a new procedure where the administrative assistant will review all personnel files in the spring to ensure they contained required documentation and are complete and ready for audit.</p> <p>May 2016 - The administrative assistant reviewed all files for required documentation.</p>
<p>2014-002 Mileage Reimbursements</p> <p>Condition: For the year ended June 30, 2015, it was noted that NMCA reimbursed employees for mileage at</p>	<p>We disagree with this finding.</p> <p>The issue is not one of internal controls at the school but rather one of a change in opinion by the PED and external auditors. Previously the PED</p>	<p>May 2015 - Governing Council discussed that PED had changed its position from defining charter schools as "Other Public Bodies" to "State Agencies".</p>

<p>a rate of fifty six cents per mile.</p> <p>Cause: The School contends that it is a Local Public Body and not a State Agency. As a Local Public Body, the school contends that it may reimburse mileage at the full amount authorized by the IRS. The PED has indicated to the auditors that charter schools chartered under PED are a component unit of PED and should reimburse mileage at the rate approved for a State Agency.</p> <p>Recommendation: The School should reimburse mileage at 80% of the internal revenue service standard mileage rate set January 1 of the previous year for each mile traveled in a privately owned vehicle.</p>	<p>had issued a memorandum from the deputy secretary of education which stated charter schools were able to pay the mileage rate at the full IRS rate. Prior auditors had given charter schools audit findings for paying at the rate suggested here. The school followed prior PED and auditor instruction in paying the rate. The finding should be that the PED and auditors should be consistent in the interpretations issued to schools.</p> <p>Auditor's Rebuttal: It has been determined that the school is a component unit of the New Mexico PED. Because the school is a component unit of a State Agency, it must follow state statutes which limit mileage reimbursements to 80% of the Internal Revenue Service standard mileage rate.</p>	<p>May 2015 - Administration and Business Manager discussed the change in PED policy and audit guidance for mileage reimbursement.</p> <p>June 23, 2015 - Governing Council approved an updated Mileage and per diem Travel policy reflecting that mileage be reimbursed at 80% of IRS rate.</p> <p>July 2015 - We implemented the updated reimbursement.</p>
<p>2014-003 Dual Signatures on Checks**</p> <p>Condition: In a sample of sixty expenditures there were three instances (\$4,845.04, \$3,745.00, and \$3,033.83) in which checks were only signed by one authorized signer.</p> <p>Cause: A second authorized check signer was not available when the checks were being processed.</p> <p>Recommendation: The school should follow its own internal policy of having two authorized signers sign all checks of two thousand five hundred or more dollars.</p>	<p>The school will authorize two signors at the school site to make sure no checks over \$2,500 are mailed out without dual signatures. A review of the signed checks should ensure this error does not occur again. The Business Manager will ensure that two authorized signors are in place at the school site by December 31, 2015.</p>	<p>January 2016 - Governing Council discussed the finding.</p> <p>January 2016 - The Business Manager recognized the requirement for dual signatures was for all checks over the threshold, including those resulting from contracts the entire Governing Council had previously approved.</p> <p>May 10, 2016 - The Finance Committee decided to recommend raising the limit for dual signature checks to \$6,000.</p> <p>May 24, 2016 - Governing Council approved raising the limit for dual signature checks to \$6,000.</p>

<p>2014-004 Purchase Order Subsequent to Invoice</p> <p>Condition: During our testing of sixty cash disbursements, there were four instances (\$1,504.12, \$407.12, \$350.00, and \$124.28) in which the Purchase Order was prepared subsequent to the vendor's invoice date.</p> <p>Cause: School personnel did not follow established procurement policies of the School.</p> <p>Recommendation: All school personnel should be reminded that initiation of a purchase order is not sufficient for ordering; that an approved Purchase Order is required per School and State guidelines.</p>	<p>School procedures will be emphasized to staff to ensure compliance with school policies and procedures as well as state laws and regulations. The Business Manager will coordinate this training. We anticipate that training will be completed by December 31, 2015.</p>	<p>December 2015 - Governing Council discussed the finding.</p> <p>January 2016 - Administration and Business Manager discussed the process and need to educate the staff on existing policy.</p> <p>April and May 2016 - We publicized the existing policy with staff.</p>
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** The findings for "dual signatures on checks" were slightly different in FY 2014 and FY 2015. The FY 2014 audit finding was for non-compliance. The Business Manager did not obtain two signatures on some checks over \$2,500. The FY 2015 occurrence was due to the fact the Business Manager did not realize this minimum should apply to contractual repetitive checks that the full Governing Council was aware of, such as rent. The Business Manager now understands that the minimum applies to all checks and we raised the limit for dual signature checks to \$6,000 on May 24, 2016.

Fiscal Year 2016 (2015-16)

We received three audit findings, including

1. Missing new background checks for returning employees,
2. Overpayment for employee reimbursement by \$1, and
3. Erroneous reimbursement for alcohol of \$5.

Our response to the PED Audit Supervisor is included in Appendix A-5.

Figure 25. Fiscal Year 2016 Audit

Finding	Response	Action / Prevention
<p>2016-001 Background Check</p> <p>Condition: Through our testing procedures performed, we noted the following: In a sample of 25</p>	<p>The school will implement procedures to ensure compliance with background check requirements. The school will use a new hire checklist to help with the</p>	<p>February 2017 - Governing Council discussed audit finding and use of a checklist.</p>

<p>disbursements tested, we noted two instances where there was not a valid background check on file.</p> <p>Cause: Management was not aware a new background check was required if an employee returns to work.</p> <p>Recommendation: Training and supervision is necessary to avoid all of the above issues.</p>	<p>new hire process to ensure all documents are completed timely. The employee whose background check was missing is no longer employed at the school. The Principal and Office Manager will do a review of the employee folders semiannually to ensure all employee documents are up to date and complete. This process will start January 1, 2017.</p>	<p>January and February 2017 – Administration conducted semiannual review of employee folders.</p> <p>June 2017 - Administration discussed and trained Human Resources staff on background checks for returning employees.</p> <p>June 2017 - We provided response documentation to the Audit Supervisor at PED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Policies for the management of personnel files and background checks for new and returning employees •Current background check and proof of termination for employees identified in the audit report •New-hire checklist •Letter from Human Resources declaring staff has studied and understands the audit issue •Process for compliance with background checks and review of personnel files <p>Ongoing - We will continue to implement semiannual reviews of employee folders.</p>
<p>2016-002 Travel and Per Diem Calculation</p> <p>Condition: Out of a sample of 25, Travel and Per Diem disbursements tested, we noted the following: There was one expenditure where an employee received the daily cap for meals but did not accrue the daily max per receipt totals. Employee was</p>	<p>The school will put additional procedures in place to ensure overpayment will not happen. A second review will ensure reimbursements are calculated correctly and not overlooked. The business manager is responsible this gets completed by December 31, 2016.</p>	<p>February 2017 - Governing Council discussed audit finding.</p> <p>June 2017 - Administration and Business Manager discussed process for receipt calculations.</p> <p>June 2017 - We implemented procedure for Business Manager to</p>

<p>overpaid for meals by \$1.</p> <p>Cause: Overlook of re-calculation and review of employee travel request receipts.</p> <p>Recommendation: Review receipts and employee calculations to ensure it abides with New Mexico Per Diem and Mileage Act.</p>		<p>conduct second reviews and provide a signature in the event of changes.</p> <p>June 2017 - We provided response documentation to the Audit Supervisor at PED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies for mileage and per diem calculations with a sample reimbursement form • Letter from Business Manager documenting procedure for correctly calculating reimbursements
<p>2016-003 Disbursement for Unallowable Cost</p> <p>Condition: During our dual internal control and risk assessment and compliance test work over disbursements, we noted that one of forty disbursements tested included reimbursement for alcohol. Total disbursement was for \$695.92, portion related to alcohol was approximately \$5.00.</p> <p>Cause: Pay receipt was overlooked.</p> <p>Recommendation: Greater oversight of reimbursements to exclude payments for unallowable costs per NMSA 13-1-25 and 1.4.1.48-52 NMAC.</p>	<p>The school will put additional procedures in place to ensure unallowable expenses do not get reimbursed. The employee will cross out all alcohol charges. A second review will take place. The business manager is responsible this gets completed by December 31, 2016.</p>	<p>February 2017 - Governing Council discussed audit finding.</p> <p>June 2017 - Administration and Business Manager discussed reimbursement process and allowable/unallowable costs.</p> <p>June 2017 - We adopted and publicized new procedure whereby employees are to cross out all alcohol charges.</p> <p>June 2017 - We implemented procedure for Business Manager to conduct second reviews and provide a signature in the event of changes.</p> <p>June 2017 - We provided response documentation to the Audit Supervisor at PED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of recent communications with staff demonstrating staff are regularly informed that alcohol must be purchased on a separate receipt • Governing Council policies for the reimbursement of petty cash,

		<p>mileage, and per diem</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation verifying Business Manager performs second reviews, including an example reimbursement form with second signature • Letter from Business Manager documenting procedure for correctly calculating reimbursements
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b. Financial Performance Framework

Pursuant to NMCA 22-8B-9.1, the performance framework for each charter school must include performance indicators and performance targets for financial performance and sustainability.

For any school that has received a rating below “meets standard” for one or more financial performance framework indicator during the term of the contract provide a narrative explaining the improvement actions made (school/adult/leader/board actions) to meet financial compliance requirements and the effectiveness of those actions (improved practices and outcomes) in improving financial compliance.

Success should be identified by specific changes in practice and changes in the performance rating in subsequent years. The purpose of the narrative is to demonstrate substantial progress toward achieving and maintaining financial performance and sustainability.

Implementation of the described improvement actions should be verifiable through evidence at the site visit. **Please identify specific evidence of both the school/adult/leader/board actions and the improved practices and outcomes in the narrative.**

Schools that have received a rating of “meets standard” for all financial performance framework indicators during each year of the term of the contract do NOT complete this Section.

School response:

- **2013-14 – Not Rated**

Our school was rated on the Charter School Performance Framework in July 2014 (included in Appendix A-6) but the Financial Performance Framework criteria were stricken with the following note included: “NOTE: New Mexico Connections Academy was under the original Financial Performance Framework from the first year of contracted schools (2013-14A). Due to the delayed nature of the results regarding that framework, the school will not receive a rating for this year. The financial stability of the school is determined by the business and management oversight questions within the Organizational Framework. Next year, the school will be rated according to the new PEC-approved Financial Framework.”

- **2014-15 – Not Rated**

Our school was not rated on the Charter School Performance Framework this year.

While there are draft Performance Framework documents in WebEPSS, we did not receive a rating and never received a final report. We contacted the CSD several times for the status of the report. However, we were advised that due to staffing changes the report was never completed.

The 2014-15 Monitoring Instrument Item Report (empty) is included in Appendix A-7.

- **2015-16 – Meets Standards**

We were rated Meets Standard for all Financial Performance Framework indicators.

The 2015-16 Monitoring Instrument Item Report is included in Appendix A-7.

- **2016-17 – Meets Standards**

We were rated Meets Standard for all Financial Performance Framework indicators.

The 2016-17 Monitoring Instrument Item Report is included in Appendix A-7.

The self-evaluation for the Financial Performance Framework was submitted on August 29, 2017, after the Monitoring Instrument Item Report showed “No Current Concerns” for each financial indicator. This is included in Appendix A-8.

Evidence in Appendix A

- Charter School Performance Framework 2013-14 (Appendix A-6)
- Monitoring Instrument Item Report – 2014-15 (empty), 2015-16, and 2016-17 (Appendix A-7)
- 2016-17 Financial Performance Self-Evaluation (Appendix A-8)

c. Board of Finance

Pursuant to NMSA 22-8-38, failure of the governing body of a state-chartered charter school to qualify for designation as a board of finance constitutes good and just grounds for nonrenewal or revocation of its charter.

Further, pursuant to NMSA 22-8-39, the department may at any time suspend a local school board or governing body of a state-chartered charter school from acting as a board of finance if the department reasonably believes there is mismanagement, improper recording or improper reporting of public school funds under the local school board's or governing body of a state-chartered charter school's control.

When the governing body of a state-chartered charter school is suspended from acting as a board of finance, the department is required to consider commencing proceedings before the commission to revoke or refuse to renew the charter of the state-chartered charter school.

If the school's **Board of Finance was suspended** at any time during the term of the contract, the school must provide a narrative explaining the actions taken (school/adult/leader/board actions) on the school's own initiative to correct financial compliance and regain the Board of Finance Authority and the success of those actions (improved practices and outcomes).

The school must also describe the current status of the Board of Finance and continuing actions to ensure the same financial challenges do not reoccur. Success should be identified by specific changes in practice.

The narrative must be supported by evidence provided in an appendix and verifiable through evidence at the site visit. **Please identify specific evidence of both the school/adult/leader/board actions and the improved practices and outcomes in the narrative.**

Schools that have maintained all Board of Finance authority during the entire term of the contract do NOT complete this Section.

School response:

The NMCA Board of Finance has maintained all authority during the entire term of the contract.

3. Contractual, Organizational, and Governance Responsibilities

The Charter School Act provides as follows:

A charter may be suspended, revoked, or not renewed by the chartering authority if the chartering authority determines that the charter school...committed a material violation of any of the conditions, standards, or procedures set forth in the charter...*and/or*...violated any provision of law from which the charter school was not specifically exempted.

a. Charter Material Terms*

Pursuant to NMSA 22-8B-9, each charter contract must contain material term of the charter application as determined by the parties to the contract. The PEC's contract identifies all material terms in Article VII., Section 8.01(a)(i)-(xvii) of the Performance Contract.

Each school must provide a brief narrative describing how they have implemented the Material Terms of the Charter including the operational structure, the mission of the school, and the educational program of the school (including student focused terms, teacher focused terms, and parent focused terms).

The narrative will be verified during the site visit.

If the school has made substantial changes or has not met any of the material terms of the contract during the term of the contract, the school **must** provide a narrative to explain the improvement actions (school/adult/leader/board actions) the school made during the term of the contract in order to meet those charter objectives and terms.

Success should be identified by specific changes in practice and achievement of the terms in later years of the charter. The purpose of the narrative is to demonstrate substantial progress toward achieving the material terms of the charter.

Implementation of the described improvement actions should be verifiable through evidence at the site visit. **Please identify specific evidence of both the school/adult/leader/board actions and the improved practices and outcomes in the narrative.**

School response:

Was the Goal Met During Each Year of Charter?

- 2013-14 – Meets Standard
- 2014-15 – Not Rated

While there are draft Performance Framework documents in WebEPSS, we did not receive a rating and never received a final report. We contacted the CSD several times for the status of the report. However, we were advised that due to staffing changes the report was never completed.

- 2015-16 – Meets Standard

- 2016-17 – Meets Standard

The Monitoring Instrument Item Reports are included in Appendix A-7.

Our school's mission is to help each 4-12th grade student, throughout the state of New Mexico who needs an alternative to the traditional classroom for a particular time period, maximize his or her potential and meet the highest performance standards through a uniquely individualized learning programs, access to high quality NM-certified teachers, and high parental involvement. This mission also includes a school-with-in-a-school model with a focus on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).

All key stakeholders, including the Governing Council, School Leader, administrators, teachers, and support services, believe in the stated mission. The Governing Council's management and the school's day-to-day actions maintain and abide by the mission of our school. We strive every day to work towards achieving the school's mission and objectives.

To that end, we have faithfully implemented the Material Terms of the Charter described in Section 6.02(c) of NMCA's Charter School Contract.

(i) Educational Program of the School

We operate as a fully-virtual public charter school enrolling and serving students across the state. We had 1,622 students enrolled as of June 30, 2017, from 32 of 33 New Mexico counties.

Each student has a Personalized Learning Plan (PLP), developed collaboratively by teachers, parents/guardians, and the student. Example PLPs will be provided at the site visit. When a student enrolls, the homeroom or advisory teacher reaches out with a welcome call. During this call, the teacher welcomes the student to the school and starts to build a relationship with the student and parent or guardian.

The teacher later calls a second time to develop the PLP. PLPs take into account the student's areas of strength, goals, interests, plans for the future, learning styles, assessment data, proposed interventions as needed, and so forth. Teachers follow up on a regular basis with calls to each student to discuss PLPs and curriculum based assessments. Students in grades 9-12 and their parents and guardians also complete the Next Step Plan, which is tied to their PLPs.

We offer a STEM focus, including over 40 STEM courses and enrichment activities including clubs, field trips, guest speakers, and community service opportunities. STEM courses offered include:

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|---|---|
| • 2D Animation | • Astronomy:
Exploring the
Universe Business
Information
Systems | • Honors Algebra 1 A/B
• Honors Algebra 2 A/B
• Honors Biology
• Honors Chemistry
• Honors Earth Science
• Honors Earth Space
Science | • Introduction to
Computer
Applications
• Introduction to
Medical Assisting
• Physics
• PreCalculus A/B
• Programming I:
VBNET
• Programming II:
Java
• Statistics A/B
• Web Design A/B |
| • 3D Art 1 - Modeling | • Calculus A/B
• Chemistry
• Engineering Design
• Forensic Science 1
• Game Design
• GT Math 6 A/B
• GT Math 7 A/B
• GT Math 8 A/B
• GT Science 6
• GT Science 7
• GT Science 8 | • Honors Geometry A/B
• Honors Physical Science
• Honors PreCalculus A/B
• HS Digital Arts 1
• Introductory
Astronomy | |
| • Accounting 1 | | | |
| • Accounting 2 | | | |
| • Anatomy and
Physiology | | | |
| • AP Biology | | | |
| • AP Calculus AB A/B | | | |
| • AP Calculus BC A/B | | | |
| • AP Computer Science | | | |
| • AP Environmental
Science | | | |
| • AP Physics | | | |
| • AP Statistics | | | |

Some of the STEM-related clubs that are available include:

- Robotics
- Math Club I: First in Math
- Math Club II: Math Olympiads
- Gaming and Computer Technology
- Science Club
- Science in the Kitchen
- Science Sleuths: Weird Science
- Science Sleuths: Wild Weather

During the 2016-17 school year, we provided the following STEM opportunities for students:

- September 2016 - Los Alamos Science Museum - Students engaged in exhibits that included information on the laboratory's research on life sciences, achievements in space, supercomputing, energy, and the environment. Students interacted with over 40 exhibits within the museum's three galleries. Students were given an overall idea of the broad range of exciting science and technology research that is improving our nation's future.
- September 2016 - Santa Fe Walking Tour - Students engaged in a historical walk through Santa Fe. Students were introduced to the unique geography of Santa Fe and how this has led to settlement. The Santa Fe Institute was introduced which was founded to research complex systems in the physical, biological, and economic and political sciences. Students were also introduced to the National Center for Genome Resources focusing on research on the intersection among bioscience, computing and mathematics. Throughout the tour, the technology companies that have formed within the region were discussed. Santa Fe also serves as a host to many scientific groups due to the presence of Los

Alamos National Laboratory and Sandia National Laboratories.

- October 2016 - Chase Ranch - Students engaged in the history of ranching which began in 1875 in this area. Students learned about the geography, the management of the ranch, and the animal sciences that are involved within the ranching industry.
- October 2016 – University of New Mexico (UNM) College Day Event - Students toured UNM and learned about the different academic opportunities, including STEM, of the University.
- October 2016 - Wagner Farms - Students engaged in a tour of the farm, including how the produce is grown. Students engaged in the science of agriculture including how the ground is prepared, how crops are rotated, and how produce is harvested and shipped to market.
- November 2016 - Albuquerque Aquarium - Students engaged in a wide variety of activities focused on the diversity of aquatic life, water conservation and care, coral propagation programs, plant conservation, and worldwide conservation. Students interacted with scientists and experienced some of the interesting programs taking place with the animals, plants, and aquatic habitats at the aquarium and around the world.
- November 2016 - Las Cruces Museum and Art Experience - Students explored the Natural History Museum, interacted with a scientist, and engaged in hands on activities.
- January 2017 - Movie Hidden Figures - Students watched the movie and asked questions pertaining to the math performed by the characters, and explored historically the importance of the work.
- March 2017 - Challenger Learning - Lunar Quest - This program “transports students to a cutting-edge Mission Control room and a high-tech Space Station. Whether their mission is flying to the moon, intercepting a comet, visiting Mars, or studying the Earth from the International Space Station, students see classroom lessons brought to life in the engaging, dynamic, simulated learning environment.” Our group landed on the moon!
- March 2017 - Natural History Museum in Albuquerque - Students engaged in the planetarium “Earth’s Wild Ride” and explored the moon in the year 2081. Through the exhibits they explored the Earth and the new research taking place around the globe-including here in New Mexico. Students handled fossils, and engaged in discussion about the collection at the museum and newly discovered specimens within the state. The Hall of the Stars explains how the night sky is organized. Our students explored the sky and learned many different astronomical concepts, from the changing of the seasons to types of deep sky objects that they can see from their own backyards.

(ii) Student – Focused Term(s)

We offer students hundreds of courses including Advanced Placement® (AP), foreign languages, dual credit, and electives. As a virtual public charter school, we are uniquely positioned to offer a catalog of courses that a brick-and-mortar school would have trouble staffing, scheduling, and providing physical space. In 2016-17, we offered the choice of 341 courses, although due to student course selection, not all courses were taught. The

course catalog may be found in Appendix A-9.

Students also have opportunities to socialize through student-to-student interactions. Interactions occur in course LiveLesson sessions and through clubs, activities, and field trips. A list of the clubs we offer may be found in Appendix A-10 and a list of field trips during the 2016-17 school year may be found in Appendix A-11.

Many students enroll in our school because they have struggled in the traditional schooling model. To best serve struggling students and help them rise to grade level expectations, we utilize a Response to Intervention (RtI) model. Focusing on student PLPs and implementing the RtI model ensures each student receives individualized instruction for his or her particular needs. We follow a three-tiered RtI system. We implement a Student Assistance Team (SAT) program that folds into the student's academic improvement plans. The process utilizes state forms. Cases are referred to our SAT coordinator.

RtI is a three-tiered system that escalates intervention intensity based on individual student need. Teachers monitor and record these intervention strategies in the student's Personalized Learning Plan Data View.

Tier 1

Tier 1 students are progressing as they should but occasionally need additional assistance with content mastery. Teachers implement various intervention strategies to meet students' needs and help them achieve proficiency.

Tier 2

Students who are not successful with Tier 1 interventions are escalated to Tier 2. At Tier 2, students receive more intensive interventions and may be enrolled in a Student Instructional Support Program (SISP). Teachers monitor student performance. If the student is progressing as expected then student continues using the current interventions or exits the program if the support is no longer needed.

If a student is not progressing as expected then the teachers will refer the student the Student Assistant Team. The Student Assistance Team further evaluates the student and develops an individual academic improvement plan. The Student Assistance Team process utilizes state-developed forms and state-adopted database systems to monitor students' progress through the process.

Tier 3

Once a student has completed the Student Assistant Team process, the team then determines if an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is needed. If the team makes this determination, then the student is escalated to Tier 3 and placed into Special Education. The team then writes an IEP with academic goals and accommodations for the student. The student is assigned a case manager and the IEP is evaluated and updated yearly or sooner as needed.

(iii) Terms Regarding School Day

Our school follows a traditional school year calendar, which is approved annually by the Governing Council in the form of the School Handbook. A copy of the handbook may be found in Appendix A-12, with the school

calendar information in Section 3.4.

Students have some flexibility with regards to accessing and completing lessons; however, all students are strictly held to state law for attendance and instructional time. To monitor attendance and time-based requirements, we closely monitor completed work, login activity, and student/teacher interactions. These expectations are detailed in Sections 4.2 and 4.3 of the School Handbook and the attendance system can be demonstrated at the site visit.

Unfortunately, a small group of students sometimes use virtual schools to try to avoid state truancy law. As shown in Part A, our habitual truancy rate exceeds the state average. As a public school, we enroll all students; however, students are also bound by state law to attend. To combat and address habitual truancy, we follow the policy provided in Section 4.4 of the school handbook and procedures documented here.

- **Create a truancy Issue Aware (IA) ticket.** IA tickets are used by staff members to track students who are struggling with attendance. All staff members who teach or interact with the student are “stakeholders” on the IA ticket. They can update the IA ticket when they interact with the student or parent or develop a plan for the student. Each stakeholder receives an email each time there is an update to the IA ticket. This allows all stakeholders to be involved as the plan progresses.
- **Send three-day and five-day truancy letters.** As required by state law, if a student continues to be truant, we email a letter to the parent/guardian. If the student is over 18, we send the letter to the student.
- **Hold Truancy Conference.** After we send the three- and five-day truancy letters, the school leader schedules the truancy conference with the parent, sends the parent the final truancy letter, and conducts the conference.
- **Follow Up After Conference-** If the student continues to be truant and has to be withdrawn from our school for non-attendance, the school leader sends the withdrawal information to the Children, Youth, and Families Department (CYFD) as directed by CSD during our last site visit. We also send notification of the withdrawal for non-attendance to the student’s resident district.

If it is determined during the conference that the students should not be withdrawn, we will place the student on an Academic Improvement Plan to track of performance, participation, and engagement. The school leader drafts the plan and places it in the student’s truancy file so that appropriate staff have access and can help to support the plan. We send a copy of the plan to the parent/guardian. The student’s advisory teacher is responsible for monitoring the plan. If the student does not comply, the student is referred back to the school leader for next steps, which may include withdrawal.

(iv) Parent – Focused Terms

Parent and guardian involvement is essential to student success. Parents and other parent-designated responsible adults serve as Learning Coaches and play an active role in the learning process. Learning Coaches are in regular communication with teachers via phone, WebMail, and in-person contact; participate in the design of each student’s PLP; and monitor student attendance, work, and grades with their own Connexus® logins.

We serve and assist Learning Coaches with ongoing communication and training opportunities to learn more

about the school, its technology, and best practices for supporting virtual learners.

Learning Coaches complete a virtual orientation designed to familiarize them with the important role they play in supporting their students as learners. The Learning Coach Program Development Team offers supports for Learning Coaches through the Get Started! and Get Coaching! and Get Connected! Programs.

- **Get Started!** Enrolling with a new school raises many questions — Get Started! offers both assistance and reassurance by providing extensive information about virtual education. The program helps families prepare for a successful school year through such resources as they Prepare for Success website, teacher welcome calls, orientation courses for Learning Coaches, in-person orientation gatherings, and the Learning Coach Success Series.
 - **Learning Coach Success Series**— Before the start of each school year, Learning Coaches can participate in a series of live webinar-style sessions led by parents of currently-enrolled students. This series help families prepare for their first days of school. In addition to open Q&A sessions each week, five different topics are addressed: Virtual School Basics, Roles and What to Expect, Schedules and Routines, Getting Acquainted with Connexus, and Tips and Tricks for Success.
- **Get Coaching!** The program is dedicated to helping Learning Coaches understand their role, providing them with easy access to resources, and ensuring that they are equipped with the tools and strategies needed to motivate and assist their students.
 - **Learning Coach Central** – This award-winning website accessed from the Learning Coach Homepage in Connexus provides multiple resource documents, tutorials, video Quick Clips, and helpful links that support Learning Coaches in their role and providing instructional support to their student.
 - **Learning Coach Link** – This virtual monthly communication is sent to Learning Coaches with articles on instructional best practices, Connexus updates, tips and strategies for motivating reluctant learners, and information about upcoming Learning Coach Resource sessions.
 - **National Learning Coach Resource Sessions** – These virtual sessions are designed to assist Learning Coaches with an understanding of their role and responsibilities, and provide strategies for working with and supporting their student. Sample session topics include: Effective Questioning Techniques to Assess Learning, Improving Student Writing Skills, Providing Valuable Feedback, Nurturing Student Motivation and Engagement, and Unlocking Math in a Virtual World.
- **Get Connected!** - This program assists students and parents who are interested in finding opportunities to connect with other school families. In addition to in-person field trips and virtual clubs and activities, this program offers socialization tips for virtual school families, increased opportunities for students to interact virtually with classmates and teachers, and in some areas, private Facebook groups where parents and Learning Coaches can “meet” to arrange study groups and other informal gatherings.

There are many other ways parents and Learning Coaches to participate as well, including:

- **Parents Involved in Planning the School:** Parents of prospective students were offered multiple ways to provide input on the planning of the school prior to the school’s opening. Parents were invited to attend multiple Information Sessions.

- **Public Comment:** Parents may make public comments at public Governing Council meetings or communicate with school administration at any time.
- **Parent Club:** Parents can also join an exciting club that brings together parents of prospective students who reach out to their local communities to spread the word about our school and provide support and encouragement to parents.
- **StarTrack and Course Ratings:** Parent input is gathered on an ongoing basis via StarTrack ratings for lessons. There is a StarTrack rating box inviting ratings on a five-star scale and an opportunity to provide text feedback on every lesson in the curriculum and the home page for each Learning Coach.

(v) Teacher – Focused Terms

Positive student outcomes rely on a qualified and dedicated teaching staff equipped with the right tools and training. Teaching in a virtual environment is a specific skill and we provide extensive initial and ongoing professional development. We expect teachers to annually participate in 10 professional development days, which exceeds the state requirement of two days. A list of recent professional development trainings is provided in Appendix A-13.

Teachers also value collaboration and learn from one another through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). PLC meeting agendas, meeting notes, and to-do's are tracked in Connexus. The primary purpose of PLC work in the past was to identify and monitor the progress of at-risk students and to place those students in interventions. This year, we plan to revamp PLCs to focus on SMART goals that can be tracked consistently throughout the school year.

PLCs will develop SMART goals to track students' successful attainment of the academic standards. We will spend at least the first month delving into the 2016-17 PARCC scores and disaggregating the data to see where students need more help. We will target those areas and those students who were not successful on the state assessment. We will track success on the standards through the AOPR which displays statistics on assessment questions – whether they are assigned, whether they have been taken, the scores that the students have received, and so forth. These assessment questions are mapped to the state standards, which allows teachers to track student success with mastering key objectives as the students progress through the assessments in the curriculum. Teachers access real-time data to see how many assessment items the student has completed for each objective and whether the student has demonstrated mastery. This allows the teachers to measure the success of their teaching and their SMART goals throughout the school year rather than waiting until the state assessment.

Teachers have a steep learning curve when the first enter into virtual teaching. It is a new environment and requires new skills. We provide extensive professional development and mentoring to help teachers adjust to being a virtual teacher. Teacher orientation covers the basics of how to use the virtual school platform. Once teachers have mastered these skills, the Professional Development then focuses on how to be an effective teacher, these sessions include:

- Connecting with Students to Create Community,
- Helping Students Connect to Learning in Meaningful Ways,
- Practice + Re-teaching: An Integral Part of Learning,

- Effective Questioning to Maximize Achievement,
- Developing Empathy in a Virtual World,
- Deliberate Proactive and Self-Monitoring, and
- Learning with the Brain in Mind.

Despite all of the training and support we provide, some teachers (like some students), find that the virtual environment is not the best fit. As Figure 26 highlights, this is an area in which we are improving.

Figure 26. Percentage of Returning Teachers

School Year	Percentage of Returning Teachers
2014-15	56%
2015-16	79%
2016-17	89%
2017-18	92%

Administrators and staff will further describe and attest to the effectiveness of our professional development and PLCs during site visit interviews.

(vi) Governance Structure

Our Governing Council maintained no fewer than five and no more than nine members from the beginning of our charter contract through August 29, 2017. On September 26, 2017, within the required 45 days, we appointed two parents of students to the Governing Council in order to receive an additional point of view for school governance. Members serve staggered terms of one, two, and three years.

Our Governing Council places an emphasis on diversity in its membership, particularly in individual talents, so as to broaden the Governing Council's range of experience and expertise. Members as of September 26, 2017 and their roles, terms, and backgrounds include:

- **Senator Mark Boitano**, Council President, three-year term until Annual Meeting 2020
A former state Senator and real estate agent, Senator Boitano brings expertise in real estate, school facilities, charter school law, education policy, and business.
- **Jerry Schalow**, Council Treasurer, three-year term until Annual Meeting 2020
Mr. Schalow serves as President of Insurance Services at First Santa Fe BanCorp. He has extensive expertise in financial services, and has held multiple leadership positions within various volunteer organizations.
- **Paul Gessing**, Council Secretary, three-year term until Annual Meeting 2019
Mr. Gessing serves as President of the Rio Grande Foundation, a state policy think tank. He is knowledgeable in policy and business issues.
- **Patrick Chavez**, Council Member, three-year term until Annual Meeting 2018
Mr. Chavez is a civil engineer and the first member of his paternal family to graduate college who understands the importance of education and brings a STEM focus.
- **Lupita Gurulè Dè Martinez**, Council Member, one-year term until Annual Meeting 2018

Ms. Gurule de Martinez is a small business owner, specializing in life skill development, life coaching, and Certified Medical Support, and has previously worked with both the City of Santa Fe and State of New Mexico to develop and implement senior services for residents of the state. Ms. Gurule de Martinez has volunteered on various professional boards in recent years.

- **Anna Harb**, Council Member, one year term until Annual Meeting 2018

Ms. Harb owns a technology startup company which provides network-capable, real-time optical gas and particulate recognition technology. She has over 30 years of experience in business management and corporation startup infrastructure, holding positions in Silicon Valley and Australia.

(vii) Total Student Enrollment

We have complied with the charter enrollment cap of 500 in the first year and up to 2,000 students in the fifth year and have not applied to amend the number of grades or maximum students served.

Total student enrollment is documented in Appendix A-14.

Students and their families deserve to know about all of the educational opportunities that are available to them. To promote equity and access, we allocate resources to hold Information Sessions throughout the state so that parents and students can make informed decisions about whether online learning is a good fit for their family.

Our demographics do not yet match state averages. As a public school of choice, we can encourage, but not force, students to enroll. There are some challenges, such as the necessity of a Learning Coach, travel for state testing, and English-based curriculum that may lead families to choose a different educational option. Other types of students, such as students who are health-impaired, are likely overrepresented in our school.

We strive to be an option for all types of students since a subset of students, regardless of background, may learn best in an online model. To make our school more accessible we:

- Provide computers and internet reimbursements to families in need.
- Send our staff to 18+ testing sites so that no student has to travel more than 50 miles for state testing.
- Provide remote and, if required, in-person Special Education services.

The result of these efforts is that as of August 31, 2017, 22% of our students have an IEP or 504 Plan and at least 41% qualify for free or reduced-price meals. Since we do not serve food, 26% refused to report, so our actual number is certainly much higher. Our August Monthly School Report is included in Appendix A-15.

(viii) Intended School Location

We were authorized to serve students statewide and had 1,622 students enrolled as of June 30, 2017, from 32 of 33 New Mexico counties.

(ix) Facility

The Teaching and Learning Center is located at 4001 Office Court Drive, Suite 201, in Santa Fe. The Facility Master Plan is attached in Appendix D-1.

We have inquired about the availability of public buildings through multiple public entities including Santa Fe Public Schools, the City of Santa Fe, Santa Fe County, and the State of New Mexico. Certification B – No Public Facility Available – is also attached in Appendix D-5.

(x) Facilities Occupancy Requirement

The Public School Facilities Authority (PSFA) has waived the requirement for a building E Occupancy certificate. Instead, we maintain a Business Occupancy License. Our Business Occupancy License is attached in Appendix D-2.

The facility meets the statewide adequacy standards and the landlord is contractually obligated to maintain those standards at no additional cost to the charter school or the state. Please see Section 6.3 and Addendum Paragraph 1 of the Office Court Companies, Inc. lease agreement, which is attached in Appendix D-4.

Our school complies with all state and federal health and safety codes.

(xi) New Mexico Condition Index

The PSFA scored the Teaching and Learning Center as “better than average” on the weighted New Mexico Condition Index (NMCI). The PSFA letter documenting the facility NMCI score is attached in Appendix D-3.

(xii) Facilities Funding

Our Governing Council acknowledges the school is eligible for state capital outlay dollars and has, on a limited basis, applied for capital outlay funding, including a Senate Bill 9 grant that was used to purchase student technology. Our school has not been granted any other facilities funding (including lease reimbursement) by the Public School Capital Outlay Council.

(xiii) Lease Purchase Agreement

Our Governing Council has not entered into a Public School Lease Purchase Agreement and acknowledges that to do so in the future would require prior approval of the PED.

(xiv) Multiple Facilities

We have maintained only one facility and our Governing Council acknowledges that prior approval of the PEC would be required to maintain separate facilities at two or more locations.

(xv) Food Service

We do not offer a food service program and notify potential families of this fact in Section 9 of the School

Handbook, which is attached in Appendix A-12.

For the purposes of demographic documentation and the provision of supplemental educational resources, we ask families who qualify for Free or Reduced Price Meals to identify themselves. This is strictly voluntary. The purpose of collecting this information is to ensure that we are prepared to arrange supplemental educational resources available to students and our school based on incidence of poverty. We fully inform parents that volunteering this information does not entitle their family to meal service. Upon request, we refer these families to social service agencies for food assistance.

(xvi) Transportation

Except as required by a student's IEP or 504 Plan, we do not provide student transportation. Currently no such requirements or arrangements exist.

b. Organizational Performance Framework

Pursuant to NMCA 22-8B-9.1, the performance framework for each charter school must include performance indicators and performance targets for governing body performance, including compliance with all applicable laws, rules and terms of the charter contract.

For any school that has received a rating below “meets standard” for one or more organizational performance framework indicator during the term of the contract provide a narrative explaining the improvement actions made (school/adult/leader/board actions) to meet all legal compliance requirements and the effectiveness of those actions (improved practices and outcomes) in improving organizational performance and compliance.

Success should be identified by specific changes in practice and changes in the performance rating in subsequent years. The purpose of the narrative is to demonstrate substantial progress toward achieving and maintaining organizational performance and compliance.

Implementation of the described improvement actions should be verifiable through evidence at the site visit. **Please identify specific evidence of both the school/adult/leader/board actions and the improved practices and outcomes in the narrative.**

If the school has received any OCR complaints or formal special education complaints, the school must identify those, provide all communications (redacted to protect PII) related to those complaints in an appendix, and describe the current status of the complaint. **If any of those complaints have been resolved and resulted in a finding that the school violated any law**, the school must provide a narrative describing the required compensatory and corrective actions required and their status in implementing those actions. The implementation of such actions must be verifiable through evidence during the site visit.

Schools that have received a rating of “meets standard” for all organizational performance framework indicators during each year of the term of the contract do NOT complete this Section.

School response:

We have not received any OCR or formal special education complaints.

- 2013-14 – Our school received some ratings below “Meets Standards”, which we address in the narrative responses below.
- 2014-15 – Our school was not rated on the Charter School Performance Framework this year.
While there are draft Performance Framework documents in WebEPSS, we did not receive a rating and never received a final report. We contacted the CSD several times for the status of the report. However, we were advised that due to staffing changes the report was never completed.
The 2014-15 Monitoring Instrument Item Report (empty) is included in Appendix A-7.
- 2015-16 – Our school received one rating below “Meets Standards”, which we address in the narrative responses below.

- 2016-17 – Our school received some ratings below “Meets Standards”, which we address in the narrative responses below.

Evidence Provided in School Goals Upload to WebEPSS

- Recurrent Enrollment Data - 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17

Evidence provided in Appendix A

- Charter School Performance Framework – 2013-14, 2014-15, 2015-16 (Appendix A-6)
- Monitoring Instrument Item Report – 2014-15 (empty), 2015-16, and 2016-17 (Appendix A-7)
- School Handbook (A-12)
- Documentation Submitted in Response to the 2016-17 Monitoring Instrument Item Report (A-16)
- 2016-17 PED Governing Body Observation and Response (Appendix A-17)

1. Educational Plan

1.a. Is the school implementing the material terms of the approved charter application as defined in the Charter Contract?

- 2013-14: Meets Standard
- 2014-15: Not Rated
- 2015-16: Meets Standard
- 2016-17: Meets Standard

1.b. Is the school complying with applicable education requirements?

- 2013-14: Meets Standard
- 2014-15: Not Rated
- 2015-16: Meets Standard
- 2016-17: Falls Far Below Standard

The July 2017 Monitoring Instrument Item Report requested the following items, which were submitted on/prior to the September 1, 2017 deadline and are included in Appendix A-16.

- Instructional Hours. The PED instructional hour review as attached indicates the school is NOT meeting the instructional hour and reporting requirements as is required under the performance framework. Please provide a narrative to address the concerns within the attached worksheet and ensure the school will meet minimum instructional hour and reporting requirements in future years.
- Please provide evidence that the school's Next Step Plans are in compliance with New Mexico rules. (Please see 22-13-1.1 NMSA 1978 and state rule at Subsection J of 6.29.1.9 NMAC).

The PED, in its final comments, wrote the 2016-17 “Falls Far Below Standard” rating was justified because “the

school failed to implement the program during the 2016-17 school year (i.e., shortage in instructional hours and non-compliant Next Step Plans). The school did not provide all the requested follow-up evidence and documentation for this indicator. While the school provided a revised Next Step Plan, it did not provide the requested narrative on how it will remedy shortage in required instructional hours. The school's submitted attendance policy erroneously states 990 hours (grades 1-6) and 1080 hours (grades 7-12) as 'recommended'. They are not recommended - these are minimum hour requirements per 22-2-8.1 NMSA 1978. Further, the school did not provide evidence that takes daily attendance, enforces its attendance policy, or that it ensures students receive the annual minimum instructional hours required by law."

NMCA Response to 2016-17 Rating

There are two concerns in PED's 2016-17 rating: (1) that our attendance policy misrepresents 990 hours (grades 1-6) and 1,080 hours (grades 7-12) as 'recommended' and (2) that we have not provided evidence that we take daily attendance, enforce our attendance policy, and ensure students receive the annual minimum instructional hours required by law.

We monitor each student on logged attendance, which is submitted by the Learning Coach, and also on lesson completion and teacher interaction (LiveLesson session attendance, phone calls, and all other interactions). Attendance hours are extracted from the Student Information System and reported into STARS. Raw attendance hours will be reported under the Student Daily Attendance template and a sum of attendance hours is reported under the Student Summary Attendance template.

Further, we are changing our attendance policy to make it clearer that these hours are the minimum required by state law. Section 3.4.2 (Required Instructional Hours) of our School Handbook, which is attached in Appendix A-12, currently uses the erroneous label "Recommended" on the chart. That label is being changed. There is an asterisk on the bottom of the chart that states that these are the minimum hours required by the state, but that more time may be needed to master the curriculum. We are working with our Governing Council to update this language.

Figure 27. School Handbook Guidance on Required Instructional Hours

3.4.2 Required Instructional Hours

Based on a 180 day school year:

Grade (s)	Recommended Hours per Day	Recommended Hours per Week	Recommended Hours per Year*
4 – 6	5.5 hours	27.5 hours	990 hours
7 – 12	6 hours	30 hours	1,080 hours

*Note that these are the minimum hours required by the state and that students are responsible for mastering all material, which may require additional time.

Section 4.2 (Marking and Verifying Attendance) of the School Handbook further describes this requirement:

“NMCA has stated attendance policies that require a student to log in and to demonstrate the state mandated minimum hours applicable to his or her grade level. [...]

New Mexico Connections Academy students must attend school a specific number of hours per week. The hours vary by grade level (please see the chart below). This means that if a student is required to attend school for 30 hours each school week, but attends only 20 hours during a week, your child is absent for one-quarter of that week. New Mexico Connections Academy reports to the state the time your student worked.

Students should attend school for, and Caretakers or Learning Coaches must log in the Connexus attendance system, the recommended number of hours for the day and the week. Note that attendance should be recorded daily. While there are no required hours per day or week, NMCA strongly recommends that students aim to complete at least the minimum recommended hours per day and/or week in order to stay on track to successfully complete the required hours for the year and to avoid truancy.”

Figure 28. Instructional Hours by Grade Level

Grade (s)	Recommended Hours per Day	Recommended Hours per Week	Recommended Hours per Year*
4 – 6	5.5 hours	27.5 hours	990 hours
7 – 12	6 hours	30 hours	1,080 hours

* NOTE: these are required minimum hours. Students are expected to master course material, which may take additional time.

While we do of course “recommend” all students complete the required minimum hours per year, and by policy mark absences and report truancy when students fall short, we will update the title of the last column of the charts to emphasize this point.

Our School Handbook also describes in Section 4.2 (Marking and Verifying Attendance) how we take daily attendance and ensure students receive the annual minimum instructional hours required by law:

“These attendance requirements mandate that a student must log in to Connexus (the NMCA Education Management System), complete the required daily/weekly/annual hours of attendance as required by the state of New Mexico, be in regular, documented contact with their teacher(s), and be documenting in Connexus completion of coursework and lessons at a pace that ensures they will complete all assigned coursework by the end of the semester/school year.

Teachers are in regular contact with students to ensure they are completing their work, that the students themselves are completing assignments, and to provide students with synchronous and asynchronous instruction and support. Parents/guardians (Caretakers) and students are jointly responsible for ensuring that students meet their school’s attendance requirements, and that the student’s attendance is properly documented as required by the school. School authorities are responsible for enforcing attendance laws, and students not attending school as mandated by law will be considered truant.

Only the Caretaker or Learning Coach (not the student) can record attendance. Once the Caretaker enters the number of hours of attendance for a given day, the attendance record cannot be changed by the Caretaker. If the Caretaker has entered incorrect attendance hours, s/he must send written documentation to the teacher requesting a change. [...]

Students should attend school for, and Caretakers or Learning Coaches must log in the Connexus attendance system, the recommended number of hours for the day and the week. Note that attendance should be recorded daily. While there are no required hours per day or week, NMCA strongly recommends that students aim to complete at least the minimum recommended hours per

day and/or week in order to stay on track to successfully complete the required hours for the year and to avoid truancy. [...]

Teachers verify the attendance records. Caretakers or Learning Coaches may include and log attendance for work completed by the student on the weekends or during the official vacations as indicated on the school's instructional calendar, and these hours will count towards that week's hours of attendance. The school week runs from Sunday to Saturday. Because students have flexibility in when they can complete coursework in any given day, a "class period" for a day at NMCA is defined as anytime from 12:00 a.m. to 11:59 p.m. on the day the student completed work."

Section 4.4 (Truancy) explains how we enforce our attendance policy:

"In order to maximize student learning, regular attendance is imperative. The NMCA program offers a great deal of flexibility about how many hours students spend each day on school work and on what days of the week they complete that work. The Escalation System (below) provides to students, Caretakers, Learning Coaches, and teachers early warnings of potential non-compliance with attendance requirements. Caretakers are held responsible for ensuring that their students are fully participating in school, even if they have designated another adult as the Learning Coach. The information below is intended to help Caretakers and designated Learning Coaches understand how to comply with school attendance rules, and to understand the consequences of non-compliance, including truancy. Students who fail to meet NMCA attendance requirements, including reported attendance, required contact with teachers, submission of assignments, and documentation of lesson completion will be considered non-compliant with attendance school rules which may lead the school to eventually institute truancy proceedings, or otherwise report the student to the appropriate authorities, consistent with state law as described below."

We follow all state truancy guidelines for student attendance, which indicates that we are constantly monitoring students engagement and attendance. Teachers are involved in the process, as well as administrators and counselors. We use the Instructional Hour Worksheet to help guide and make sure all attendance is reported to STARS correctly and accurately

A sample letter demonstrating the process of withdrawing a student due to truancy and notifying CYFD was included in our WebEPSS upload in response to the Monitoring Instrument Item Report's comments on Organizational Performance Framework Goal 1.f and is included in Appendix A-16. We will continue to work with the PED to ensure full compliance with state law, promote understanding of our policies and procedures, and rework any policies or procedures that are unclear or noncompliant.

1.c. Is the school protecting the rights of all students?

- 2013-14: Meets Standard
- 2014-15: Not Rated
- 2015-16: Meets Standard
- 2016-17: Meets Standard

1.d. Is the school protecting the rights of students with special needs?

- 2013-14: Working to Meet Standard
- 2014-15: Not Rated
- 2015-16: Meets Standard
- 2016-17: Meets Standard

Our 2013-14 Charter School Performance Framework was rated “Working to Meet Standard” and stated, “At the end of the 2013-2014 school year, all NMCA IEPs were in compliance, and only two evaluations were overdue. The school reports that it has provided special education and ancillary support services to all of its students during the course of the school year. The overdue reports and evaluations were such when the school eventually received the student records from the sending schools.”

To successfully bring our school into compliance after the 2013-14 rating, we implemented the following actions:

- Put into place process and procedures to ensure all IEPs and re-evaluations were completed on time.
- Trained Special Education teachers on processes and procedures.
- Ensured all students with Social Work, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, and Speech requirements were receiving the appropriate services.
- Hired teachers to meet caseload requirements set by the state. We requested waivers for 2015-16 but there were no waivers for 2016-17.
- Hired an advisory teacher for Special Education to help with IEP meetings and truancy issues.
- Ensured all Special Education hard files were up to state standards for audit, including a current evaluation, current IEP, past evaluations and IEPs, and signature page.

These actions helped us to improve and meet this goal in the last two school years.

1.e. Is the school protecting the rights of English Language Learners?

- 2013-14: Meets Standard
- 2014-15: Not Rated
- 2015-16: Meets Standard
- 2016-17: Meets Standard

1.f. Is the school complying with compulsory attendance laws?

- 2013-14: Meets Standard
- 2014-15: Not Rated
- 2015-16: Meets Standard
- 2016-17: Meets Standard

1.g. Did the school meet the recurrent enrollment goals?

There is some discrepancy in how this goal is to be calculated. During the chartering process, we discussed how difficult it is for virtual schools to retain 85% of students and therefore suggested other goals. After the first year of operation, during the site visit on April 8, 2014, our administration and the members of CSD crafted a recurrent enrollment goal that would take into account the special circumstances of virtual schools. This goal is listed in the draft (but not final) 2014-15 Performance Framework documents that are in WebEPSS (see Goal A). After this school year, the goal reverted back to the “standard” recurrent enrollment goal (see Goal B). We are unclear as to why or how this “reversion” happened, although it may be a result of the 2014-15 report never being finalized by the CSD. The discrepancy in goals may be viewed in the Charter School Performance Frameworks for the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years, both of which are included in Appendix A-6.

Below, the outcome of this goal is figured each way.

Goal A: As negotiated between the CSD and NMCA

During the spring semester of the school year students shall complete letters of intent to reenroll. That number of letters received serves as a baseline for next year’s enrollment. Using the goal as negotiated, each year we were within just a few percentage points from meeting the standard and in 2016-17 were within half of a percentage point.

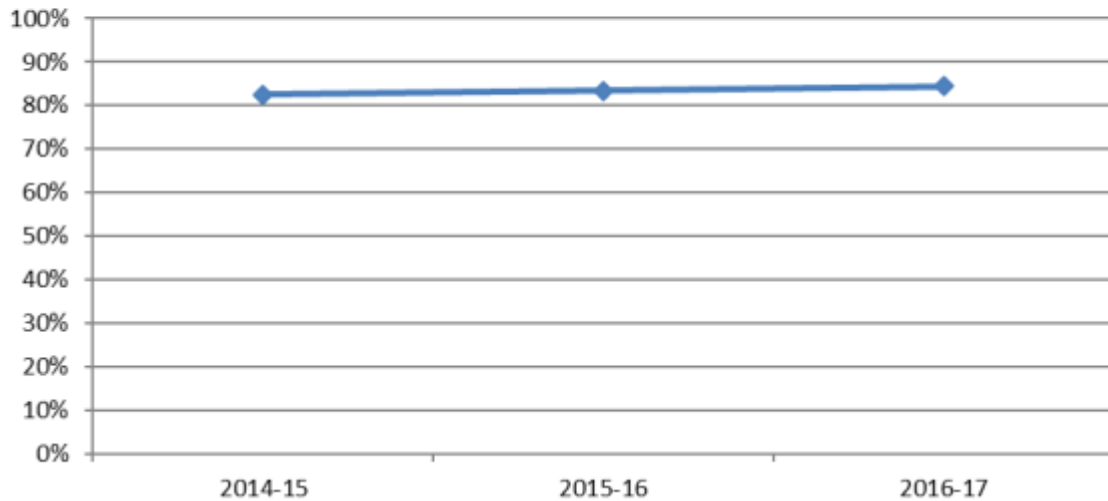
- Meets Standard
85% of those students indicating they would return do in fact reenroll in the following fall semester.
- Working to Meet Standard
Between 50-84% of those students indicating they would return do in fact reenroll in the following fall semester.
- Falls Far Below Standard
50% or fewer of those students indicating they would return do in fact reenroll in the following fall semester.

Results:

- 2013-14: Not Applicable (Our school was in its first year and all students were new)
- 2014-15: Working to Meet Standard
82.5% students indicating they would return did, in fact, reenroll in the following fall semester.
- 2015-16: Working to Meet Standard
83.4% students indicating they would return did, in fact, reenroll in the following fall semester.
- 2016-17: Working to Meet Standard
84.5% students indicating they would return did, in fact, reenroll in the following fall semester.

Figure 29. Reenrollment of Students with Intent to Enroll

Goal A: Reenrollment of Students with Intent to Reenroll



We have seen a slight increase in reenrollment by students with Intent to Reenroll.

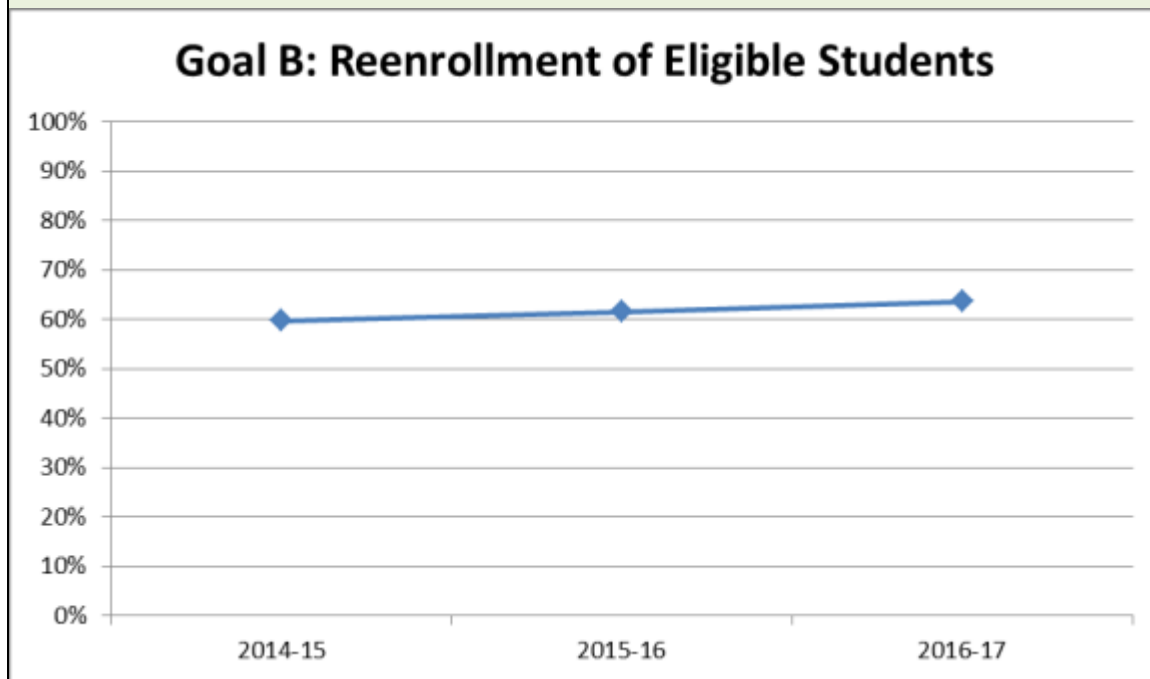
Goal B: Standard Language

- Meets Standard
Of the students eligible for re-enrollment, at least 85% of these students did re-enroll in the school.
- Working to Meet Standard
Of the students eligible for re-enrollment, at least 50% of these students did re-enroll in the school.
- Falls Far Below Standard
Of the students eligible for re-enrollment, less than 50% of these students did re-enroll in the school.

Results:

- 2013-14: Not Applicable (Our school was in its first year and all students were new)
- 2014-15: Working to Meet Standard
59.76% of eligible students re-enrolled
- 2015-16: Working to Meet Standard
61.58% of eligible students re-enrolled
- 2016-17: Working to Meet Standard
63.68% of eligible students to re-enrolled

Figure 30. Reenrollment of Eligible Students



We have seen an increase in reenrollment by eligible students.

Evidence Provided in School Goals Upload to WebEPSS

- Recurrent Enrollment Data - 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17

Although the ratings are the same, "Working to Meet Standards" in all years regardless of whether Goal A or Goal B's methodology is used, we hope the PEC will consider the goal as negotiated, which considers the percentage of students who indicate they will return and then do so.

As a public school of choice, we can encourage, but not force, students to reenroll. We can have more of an effect on this goal than the standard goal of reenrolling 85% of all eligible students, regardless of whether those students considered returning or only needed a virtual learning model for a year.

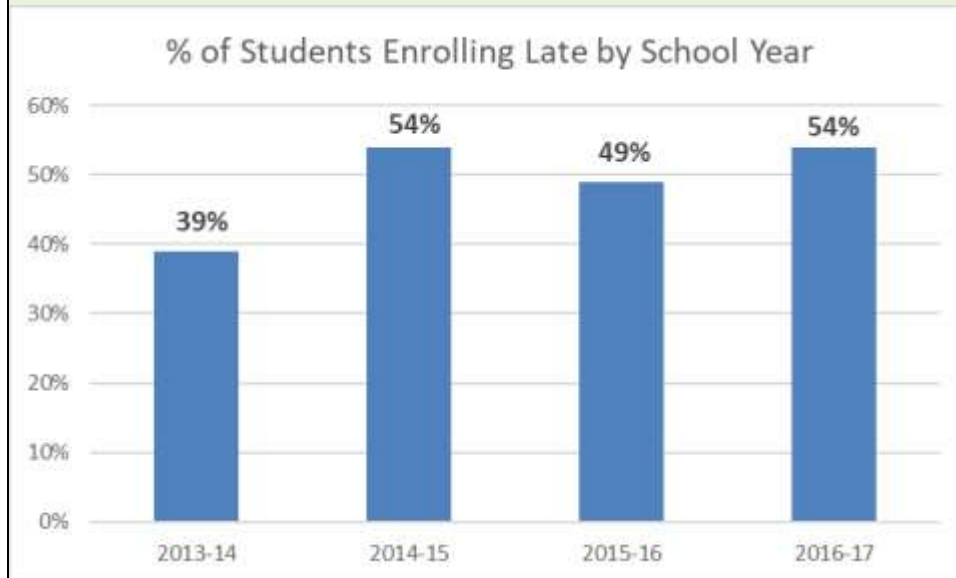
Students may leave to pursue a GED, move out of state, or return to their neighborhood schools. Students often enroll in a virtual school due to a unique challenge (e.g., illness, bullying, anxiety/depression, being off-cohort). Once these temporary academic and social challenges are managed or solved during their time in a virtual school, they may choose to re-enroll in a traditional school. This should be considered a success!

Some research indicates that student mobility has a negative effect on student achievement. Authorizers have at times raised this concern with virtual schools. If students do not stay with their virtual school, will they be negatively impacted after they leave?

This mixes up the causation. Virtual schools do not make students mobile. Mobile students enroll in virtual

schools.

Figure 31. Percentage of NMCA Students Enrolling Late by Year



As shown in Figure 31, over half of students enroll after the first day of school. This indicates (1) these students have tried (at least) one educational model, it was not a good fit, and they are looking to our school as a possible solution and (2) without choices, these students would be between continuing in a sub-optimal situation and dropping out of school.

This dynamic is borne out in research. The Colorado Department of Education, in its 2012 analysis of virtual school programs, (Heiney, A., Lefly, D., and Anderson, A., Characteristics of Colorado's Online Students, Colorado Department of Education, October 2012.) found the following:

- "A greater percentage of students are seeking an online school as their last school option before dropping out. In 2010-2011, 59% of online dropouts had transferred from another Colorado district or school within months of dropping out" but only 34% of statewide dropouts had transferred." (p. 6)
- "Typically online schools have much higher mobility incidence rates than the State, which indicate that individual students in online schools may be much more transient than their brick-and-mortar counterparts." (p. 15)
- "The number of schools attended by online students has a wider distribution ... this may indicate that online student enrollment patterns are much more diverse than brick-and-mortar enrollment patterns." (p. 30)
- "Of students in the statewide sample, 69.4% attended a single school for four years compared to only 13.2% of online graduates ... While graduates attended an average of 1.41 schools in a four year period, online graduates attended an average 2.43." (p. 34)

Students come to NMCA from public, charter, parochial, and home schools. Some students transfer from other virtual schools. A small but significant group of students report having no prior schooling at all.

For many students, we are a perfect option and will help them to achieve their educational goals, but for other students, we will not be the best educational fit. Since virtual schools may not be a good fit for every child, to recommend otherwise in order to meet a recurrent enrollment goal would be a disservice to students and families. We therefore hope the PEC will consider the goal as negotiated between during the later site visit to focus on students who wish to continue with their enrollment.

Still, NMCA needs to improve with the recurrent enrollment of students who complete letters of intent to reenroll. In order to encourage students to stay with NMCA, and to retain those students who indicate their intention to do so, NMCA will:

- Continue to build relationships with students and families. The more connected students feel to the school, the more likely they are to stay. The goal of staff will be to continue to engage families.
- Onboard students. If students start the school year off successfully (with a welcome call and completed orientations), they are more likely to be successful and stay for the school year.
- Teach families about the expectations of virtual learning before students enroll. The more knowledge families have during the enrollment process, the better decisions families can make.
- Implement reteach and relearn policies so students are able to show mastery of the material and not be penalized by an early bad grade. Students who are successful will be more likely to stay in the school.

These efforts have resulted in an uptick in reenrollment by both measures, although there is more work to do.

2. Business Management and Oversight

2.a. Is the school meeting financial reporting and compliance requirements?

- 2013-14: Meets Standard
- 2014-15: Not Rated
- 2015-16: Meets Standard
- 2016-17: Falls Far Below Standard

The PED, in its final comments, wrote the 2016-17 “Falls Far Below Standard” rating was justified “because the school has not implemented the program (i.e., as evidenced by the FY16 findings). The school has not submitted into WebEPSS any documentation demonstrating it has taken corrective action to address audit findings or evidence that it has implemented such corrective action.”

NMCA Response to 2016-17 Rating

We believe that our upload to WebEPSS adequately described how we have implemented corrective action to address the audit findings. The findings included:

1. Missing new background checks for returning employees,

2. Overpayment for employee reimbursement by \$1, and
3. Erroneous reimbursement for alcohol of \$5.

Our Response to the 2016-17 Audit Findings, which was uploaded to WebEPSS in response to the Monitoring Instrument Item Report, is included in Appendix A-16 and details how we have changed and implemented new policies moving forward. The improvement actions and effectiveness of those actions are also documented below.

Figure 32. Fiscal Year 2016 Audit

Finding	Response	Action / Prevention
<p>2016-001 Background Check</p> <p>Condition: Through our testing procedures performed, we noted the following: In a sample of 25 disbursements tested, we noted two instances where there was not a valid background check on file.</p> <p>Cause: Management was not aware a new background check was required if an employee returns to work.</p> <p>Recommendation: Training and supervision is necessary to avoid all of the above issues.</p>	<p>The school will implement procedures to ensure compliance with background check requirements. The school will use a new hire checklist to help with the new hire process to ensure all documents are completed timely. The employee whose background check was missing is no longer employed at the school. The Principal and Office Manager will do a review of the employee folders semiannually to ensure all employee documents are up to date and complete. This process will start January 1, 2017.</p>	<p>February 2017 - Governing Council discussed audit finding and use of a checklist.</p> <p>January and February 2017 - Conducted semiannual review of employee folders.</p> <p>June 2017 - Administration discussed and trained Human Resources staff on background checks for returning employees.</p> <p>June 2017 - We provided response documentation to the Audit Supervisor at PED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies for the management of personnel files and background checks for new and returning employees • Current background check and proof of termination for employees identified in the audit report • New-hire checklist • Letter from Human Resources declaring staff has studied and understands the audit issue • Process for compliance with background checks and review of personnel files <p>Ongoing - We will continue to implement semiannual reviews of employee folders.</p>

<p>2016-002 Travel and Per Diem Calculation</p> <p>Condition: Out of a sample of 25, Travel and Per Diem disbursements tested, we noted the following: There was one expenditure where an employee received the daily cap for meals but did not accrue the daily max per receipt totals. Employee was overpaid for meals by \$1.</p> <p>Cause: Overlook of re-calculation and review of employee travel request receipts.</p> <p>Recommendation: Review receipts and employee calculations to ensure it abides with New Mexico Per Diem and Mileage Act.</p>	<p>The school will put additional procedures in place to ensure overpayment will not happen. A second review will ensure reimbursements are calculated correctly and not overlooked. The business manager is responsible this gets completed by December 31, 2016.</p>	<p>February 2017 - Governing Council discussed audit finding.</p> <p>June 2017 - Administration and Business Manager discussed process for receipt calculations.</p> <p>June 2017 - We implemented procedure for Business Manager to conduct second reviews and provide a signature in the event of changes.</p> <p>June 2017 - We provided response documentation to the Audit Supervisor at PED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies for mileage and per diem calculations with a sample reimbursement form • Letter from Business Manager documenting procedure for correctly calculating reimbursements
<p>2016-003 Disbursement for Unallowable Cost</p> <p>Condition: During our dual internal control and risk assessment and compliance test work over disbursements, we noted that one of forty disbursements tested included reimbursement for alcohol. Total disbursement was for \$695.92, portion related to alcohol was approximately \$5.00.</p> <p>Cause: Pay receipt was overlooked.</p> <p>Recommendation: Greater oversight of reimbursements to exclude payments for unallowable costs per NMSA 13-1-25 and 1.4.1.48-52 NMAC.</p>	<p>The school will put additional procedures in place to ensure unallowable expenses do not get reimbursed. The employee will cross out all alcohol charges. A second review will take place. The business manager is responsible this gets completed by December 31, 2016.</p>	<p>February 2017 - Governing Council discussed audit finding.</p> <p>June 2017 - Administration and Business Manager discussed reimbursement process and allowable/unallowable costs.</p> <p>June 2017 - We adopted and publicized new procedure whereby employees are to cross out all alcohol charges.</p> <p>June 2017 - We implemented procedure for Business Manager to conduct second reviews and provide a signature in the event of changes.</p> <p>June 2017 - We provided response documentation to the Audit Supervisor at PED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of recent communications with staff demonstrating staff are regularly

		<p>informed that alcohol must be purchased on a separate receipt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governing Council policies for the reimbursement of petty cash, mileage, and per diem • Documentation verifying Business Manager performs second reviews, including an example reimbursement form with second signature • Letter from Business Manager documenting procedure for correctly calculating reimbursements
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2.b. Is the school following Generally Accepted Accounting Principles?

- 2013-14: Meets Standard
- 2014-15: Not Rated
- 2015-16: Meets Standard
- 2016-17: Meets Standard

3. Governance and Reporting

3.a. Is the school complying with governance requirements?

- 2013-14: Meets Standard
- 2014-15: Not Rated
- 2015-16: Meets Standard
- 2016-17: Meets Standard

Membership on our Governing Council fell below the statutory requirement of five members for the first and only time on August 29, 2017. The PEC was notified via email two days later on August 31, 2017. The vacancy was filled on September 26, 2017, within the required 45 days.

Our Governing Council responded to the concerns that were noted during the CSD's observation of the Governing Body meeting. The observation and response are included in Appendix A-17.

3.b. Is the school holding management accountable?

- 2013-14: Meets Standard
- 2014-15: Not Rated
- 2015-16: Meets Standard

- 2016-17: Meets Standard

4. Employees

4.a. Is the school meeting teacher and other staff credentialing requirements?

- 2013-14: Meets Standard
- 2014-15: Not Rated
- 2015-26: Meets Standard
- 2016-17: Meets Standard

4.b. Is the school respecting employee rights?

- 2013-14: Working to Meet Standard
- 2014-15: Not Rated
- 2015-16: Meets Standard
- 2016-17: Working to Meet Standard

Our 2013-14 Charter School Performance Framework was rated “Working to Meet Standard” and stated, “The school has proposed and submitted to PED an alternative evaluation program for online teachers, based on international standards developed by iNACOL, designed to evaluate the effectiveness of online teachers; the school is still awaiting a response from PED. In the meantime, the school is operating under its proposed plan.”

We were working with the PED to have an alternative standard for virtual teacher approved, but this did not happen. We therefore have been implementing the New Mexico Teacher Effectiveness evaluation standards for teachers.

To successfully bring our school into compliance after the 2013-14 rating, we used the New Mexico evaluation system. Our administrators were trained on the process, which includes:

- Teacher observations for Domains 1-4. For Domains 1 and 4, teachers submit evidence to the evaluator. For Domains 2 and 3, evaluators view LiveLesson sessions either recorded or live.
- Teachers are evaluated with Option 2 which requires administrators to observe each teacher twice per school year, once in the fall and once in the spring. Two different administrators perform the evaluations for Domains 2 and 3. Domains 1 and 4 are evaluated once in the spring by one administrator.
- At the start of the next school year, teachers are given their summative evaluation and final conferences are held where signatures are gathered.

The July 2017 Monitoring Instrument Item Report demonstrates this effort has been successful; all observations were complete.

However, the July 2017 Monitoring Instrument Item Report also requested the following items, which were submitted on/prior to the September 1, 2017 deadline and are included in Appendix A-16.

- Please provide a narrative explaining the salary discrepancy for the two teachers listed above. Should it be necessary, this narrative should include a plan to address the salary deficiency for these teachers in SY18 and a plan to address the shortfall incurred during the SY18 school year. This plan should include a responsible party, a timeline, and action steps.
- Please provide a copy of the school's written mentorship program that is compliant with NMAC 6.60.10.8.

PED, in its final comments, wrote the 2016-17 "Working to Meet Standards" rating was justified "because the school has not implemented the program (e.g., formal mentorship program that includes compensation for selected mentors). However, the school submitted evidence (i.e., formal mentorship program and explanation for salary discrepancy) that appear to result in compliance with the law moving forward."

NMCA Response to 2016-17 Rating

We implemented this program in 2016-17 and have been paying mentors a stipend for mentoring through the Career Ladder program. The Career Ladder provides extra money for teachers to perform extra duties (from 4-15% of their salary depending on their level on the Career Ladder). Each mentor is on the Career Ladder and one of their extra duties is to provide this formal mentorship to other staff members.

Figure 33. Career Ladder

Name of Mentor	2016-17	2017-18
Tammy Woffinden	15%	15%
Janet Castaneda	12%	12%
Heather Greene		9%

4.c. Is the school completing required background checks?

- 2013-14: Meets Standard
- 2014-15: Not Rated
- 2015-16: Meets Standard
- 2016-17: Meets Standard

5. School Environment

5.a. Is the school complying with facilities requirements?

- 2013-14: Meets Standard
- 2014-15: Not Rated
- 2015-16: Meets Standard
- 2016-17: Meets Standard

5.b. Is the school complying with health and safety requirements?

- 2013-14: Working to Meet Standard
- 2014-15: Not Rated
- 2015-16: Meets Standard
- 2016-17: Meets Standard

According to the 2013-14 Charter School Performance Framework, “The school reports that its Safe Schools Plan was submitted to the PED School and Family Support Bureau (SFSB) on 1/10/14 and was not approved. The school revised the plan according to the guidance provided and re-submitted the plan on 6/3/14. The school is now awaiting a response from SFSB.” The plan was eventually approved.

The July 2017 Monitoring Instrument Item Report notes that NMCA “is an online virtual school and is exempted from Safe School Plan submission requirements.”

We believe this should lead to a revision of the 2013-14 rating to Meets Standard.

5.c. Is the school handling information appropriately?

- 2013-14: Meets Standard
- 2014-15: Not Rated
- 2015-16: Meets Standard
- 2016-17: Meets Standard

5.d. Has the school provided evidence that its short cycle assessment(s) used in the pre and post benchmark assessment are aligned to Common Core State Standards?

- 2013-14: Meets Standard
- 2014-15: Not Rated
- 2015-16: Not Rated
- 2016-17: Not Rated

This indicator has been discontinued.

5.e. Has the school provided evidence that its curriculum includes 21st Century Skills as outlined by the Partnership for 21st Century Learning <http://www.p21.org/> ?

- 2013-14: Meets Standard
- 2014-15: Not Rated
- 2015-16: Not Rated
- 2016-17: Not Rated

This indicator has been discontinued.

5.f. (now a School Specific Term) Has the school provided evidence that all students were provided computers

who indicated a need for a computer within 45 days of the request and demonstrated efforts to provide connectivity if needed?

- 2013-14: Meets Standard
- 2014-15: Not Rated
- 2015-16: Not Rated
- 2016-17: Falls Far Below

The July 2017 Monitoring Instrument Item Report requested the following item, which were submitted on/prior to the September 1, 2017 deadline and is included in Appendix A-16.

- Has the school provided evidence that all students were provided computers who indicated a need for a computer within 45 days of the request and demonstrated efforts to provide connectivity if needed?

The PED, in its final comments, wrote the 2016-17 “Falls Far Below Standards” rating was justified because “the school did not implement the program (i.e., all students will be provided technology for those ‘who indicated a need for a computer within 45 days of the request’). School did not provide complete information required as part of the term. The documentation provides demonstrates students were tracked to ensure computers were provided within the 45-day request period. However, the school did not provide any evidence regarding its efforts to provide connectivity, if needed. From the documentation submitted, it is cannot be determined: 1) what students need or do not need connectivity; 2) if students were provided connectivity, if needed; 3) how the school documented the requests; or 4) that the school fulfilled the student request for connectivity.”

NMCA Response to 2016-17 Rating

We were asked by the PED to demonstrate our efforts to provide connectivity if needed. However, there have been no requests for connectivity so there was no documentation to provide.

We do make an ongoing effort to ensure families can *afford* connectivity. Section 10.2.5 of our School Handbook, included in Appendix A-12, describes the qualifications and process for our internet service subsidies. In 2016-17, we provided approximately \$41,000 to ensure student access to our program. However, we view this effort to ensure affordability as separate and distinct from efforts to ensure connectivity (that students can connect to the internet from their locations).

No household has informed us that they cannot pay for internet and therefore cannot participate in the program. In that case, we would certainly view it as a connectivity issue and make the necessary arrangements.

One household has reported local speed issues, even though they do have internet connectivity. The student is able to complete the asynchronous curriculum, but synchronous video is more challenging. For this household, we rely more heavily on phone interaction to ensure the student is able to fully access our school program.

c. Governance Responsibilities*

Pursuant to NMSA 22-8B-4, each charter school must, at all times, have at least five members and no members may serve on any other charter school governing body. Further, the governing bodies must operate in accordance with their charter contract and bylaws. The PEC's performance contract requires that the PEC is notified of board vacancies within 30 days, and that vacancies are filled within 45 days.

Additionally, pursuant to NMSA 22-8-12.3, Boards must maintain audit and finance committees that meet statutory makeup requirements.

Further, pursuant to NMAC 6.80.4.20, each charter school governing body member must annually complete five hours of approved training.

Finally, governing body members are held to the conflict of interest requirements laid out in NMSA 22-8B-5.2.

Each school must identify how they have met governance responsibilities during the term of the contract. Specifically, the school must identify:

- the membership of their boards at all times during the term of the contract (with roles and service terms for all members) this should also include membership of the required committees;
- any time when membership on the governing body fell below the requirements in their by-laws or the statutory minimum of 5 members;
- any time when the governing body did not maintain the required committee membership;
- the amount of time any vacancies were open;
- any board members that did not complete required training hours in any of the years of the contract term.

If the school identified any governance requirements they were unable to meet, the school must provide a narrative describing the improvement actions the school implemented to move toward full compliance with governance responsibilities.

The purpose of the narrative is to demonstrate substantial progress toward meeting all governance requirements.

The implementation of such actions must be verifiable through evidence during the site visit.

School response:

Our independent, self-selecting Governing Council comprised of New Mexico residents governs, directs, and supervises NMCA.

Our Governing Council maintained no fewer than five and no more than nine members from the beginning of our charter contract through August 29, 2017. The PEC was notified via email two days later on August 31, 2017. On September 26, 2017, within the required 45 days, we appointed two parents of students to our Governing Council in order to receive an additional point of view for school governance. Members serve staggered terms of one, two, and three years.

We hold members to state conflict of interest requirements, included in our Governing Council's bylaws and policies, attached in Appendix A-18.

Evidence of completed training hours in 2015-16 and 2016-17 is attached in Appendix A-19. All members were in compliance for all years except for Carlo Lucero in 2016-17. Mr. Lucero resigned from our Governing Council on August 29, 2017.

To ensure full compliance with required training hours, we regularly provide information on training opportunities, as well as reminders about hour totals and obligations, to our members. We will continue to emphasize this duty and will provide evidence of past communication and reminders upon request. We are aware of the recently adopted rules increasing hourly requirements for new and veteran members.

We list our Governing Council members herein for each year of the charter, including positions and committee assignments.

Figure 34. 2013-14 Governing Council

Name	Position	Term Date	Committee
Senator Mark Boitano	President	6/29/12	Finance; Audit
Carlo Lucero	Treasurer	6/29/12-8/29/17	Finance; Audit
Paul Gessing	Secretary	6/29/12	
Patrick Chavez	Member	6/29/12	
Jerry Schalow	Member	2/25/14	Finance as of 4/29/14
Yvonne Duhigg	Member	6/29/12-6/23/15	
Jeannine Robinson	Member	7/26/12-5/20/14	

Figure 35. 2014-15 Governing Council

Name	Position	Appointed Date	Committee
Senator Mark Boitano	President	6/29/12	Audit
Carlo Lucero	Treasurer	6/29/12-8/29/17	Finance; Audit
Paul Gessing	Secretary	6/29/12	
Patrick Chavez	Member	6/29/12	
Jerry Schalow	Member	2/25/14	Finance
Yvonne Duhigg	Member	6/29/12-6/23/15	

Figure 36. 2015-16 Governing Council

Name	Position	Appointed Date	Committee
Senator Mark Boitano	President	6/29/12	Audit
Carlo Lucero	Treasurer	6/29/12-8/29/17	Finance; Audit
Paul Gessing	Secretary	6/29/12	
Patrick Chavez	Member	6/29/12	
Jerry Schalow	Member	2/25/14	Finance

Figure 37. 2016-17

Name	Position	Appointed Date	Committee
Senator Mark Boitano	President	6/29/12	Audit
Carlo Lucero	Member	6/29/12-8/29/17	Finance through 4/25/17; Audit through 8/29/17
Paul Gessing	Secretary	6/29/12	Finance as of 4/25/17
Patrick Chavez	Member	6/29/12	
Jerry Schalow	Treasurer	2/25/14	Finance; Audit as of 8/29/17

The current Governing Council members and their terms include:

Figure 38. 2017-18 Governing Council

Name	Position	Appointed Date	Committee	Term End
Senator Mark Boitano	President	6/29/12	Audit	Annual Meeting 2019
Paul Gessing	Secretary	6/29/12	Finance	Annual Meeting 2019
Patrick Chavez	Member	6/29/12		Annual Meeting 2018
Jerry Schalow	Treasurer	2/25/14	Finance; Audit	Annual Meeting 2020
Lupita Gurulè Dè Martinez	Member	9/26/17		Annual Meeting 2018
Anna Harb	Member	9/26/17		Annual Meeting 2018



Part C—Financial Statement*

(A financial statement that discloses the costs of administration, instruction and other spending categories for the charter school that is understandable to the general public, that allows comparison of costs to other schools or comparable organizations and that is in a format required by the department)



Part D—Petitions of Support*

(1. A petition in support of the charter school renewing its charter status signed by not less than sixty-five percent of the employees in the charter school. 2. A petition in support of the charter school renewing its charter status signed by at least seventy-five percent of the households whose children are enrolled in the charter school.)

1. Petition of Support from Employees

A certified petition in support of the charter school renewing its charter status signed by not less than 65 percent of the employees in the charter school at Subsection J of 22-8B-12 NMSA 1978.

Include, as **Appendix B**, a certified affidavit of the Employees' Support Petition from not less than 65 percent of the employees of the charter school that indicates their support of the renewal of the charter.

Following is a suggested form to certify the petition. This form may be attached to the petition. You **MUST** have signatures.

I am the head administrator of the _____ Charter School and hereby certify that: the attached petition in support of the _____ Charter School renewing its charter was circulated to all employees of the _____ Charter School. There are _____ persons employed by the _____ Charter School. The petition contains the signatures of _____ employees which represents _____ percent of the employees employed by the _____ Charter School.

STATE OF NEW MEXICO)

ss.

COUNTY OF _____)

I, _____, being first duly sworn, upon oath state:

That I have read the contents of the attached Petition, and my statements herein are true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this _____ day of _____ 2017.

Notary Public

My Commission Expires:

2. Petition of Support from Households

A certified petition in support of the charter school renewing its charter status signed by not less than 75 percent of the households whose children were enrolled in the charter school at Subsection J of 22-8B-12 NMSA 1978.

Include, as **Appendix C**, a certified affidavit of the household support petition of the charter school renewing its charter status from not less than 75 percent of the households whose children were enrolled in the charter school.

Following is a suggested form to certify the petition. This form may be attached to the petition. You **MUST** have signatures.

I am the head administrator of the _____ Charter School and certify that: the attached petition in support of the _____ Charter School renewing its charter was circulated to households whose children were enrolled in our charter school. It contains the signatures of _____ households which represents _____ percent of the households whose children were enrolled in the _____ Charter School.

STATE OF NEW MEXICO)

ss.

COUNTY OF _____)

I, _____, being first duly sworn, upon oath state:

That I have read the contents of the attached petition, and my statements herein are true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this _____ day of _____ 2017.

Notary Public

My Commission Expires:



Part E—Description of the Charter School Facilities and Assurances*

(A description of the charter school facilities and assurances that the facilities are in compliance with the requirements of Section 22-8B-4.2 NMSA 1978)

F. Facility*

A description of the charter school facilities and assurances that the facilities are in compliance with the requirements of Section 22-8B-4.2 NMSA 1978.

The school must provide a narrative description of its facilities. The school should attach any facility plans or the school's Facility Master Plan in **Appendix D**.

In addition, attach a copy of the building E Occupancy certificate and a letter from the PSFA with the facility NMCI Score as **Appendix D**, indicating that the school facility meets the requirements at Subsection C of 22-8B-4.2 NMSA 1978. (If the charter school is relocating or expanding to accommodate more students.)

The school must also provide assurances that the facilities are in compliance with the requirements of Section 22-8B-4.2 NMSA 1978, including subsections A, C, and D. A template is available from the PEC's website.

School response:

The Teaching and Learning Center occupies a group of suites (3,751 square feet) within standard office space located at 4001 Office Court Drive, Suites 201-204, Santa Fe, NM 87507.

We provide the following documents in Appendix D:

- Facility Master Plan (Appendix D-1)
- Business Occupancy License (Appendix D-2)
- PSFA Letter w/ E Occupancy waiver & NMCI score (Appendix D-3)
- Current Lease Agreement (Appendix D-4)
- Certification B – No Public Facility (Appendix D-5)

In reviewing and selecting this facility, our considerations included:

- Availability of adequate public buildings; none were available
- ADA compliance
- Suite layout
- Stability of landlord
- Ability of landlord to provide a turn-key solution
- Landlord maintenance at no additional cost
- Cost on an annual and a full-term basis
- Security for both the facility and the surrounding area
- Safety for teachers and staff

- Ease of access (location) for teachers, staff, and families
- Special termination provisions in the event of charter suspension or revocation
- Technology, including bandwidth for school operations
- Lighting (natural and otherwise)

We designed the floorplan with an emphasis on instruction, collaboration, collegiality, and document/data security. The layout includes:

- Reception area to safely welcome authorized visitors
- 2 administrative offices
- 4 administrative assistant offices
- 1 counselor offices
- 19 teacher workstations
- 1 conference rooms
- 1 secure document rooms
- 2 closets
- 4 restrooms
- 1 breakroom with kitchenette
- Ample surface parking

The Facility Master Plan is attached in Appendix D-1.

Because we are an online public school, PSFA has waived the requirement for a building E-Occupancy certificate. Instead, we maintain a Business Occupancy License. The PSFA scored the Teaching and Learning Center as “better than average” on the weighted New Mexico Condition Index (NMCI).

Our Business Occupancy License and the PSFA letter waiving the building E-Occupancy certificate and documenting the facility NMCI score are also attached in Appendix D-2.

The Teaching and Learning Center is in compliance with the requirements of Section 22-8B-4.2 NMSA 1978, including subsections A, C, and D. The facility meets the statewide adequacy standards and the landlord is contractually obligated to maintain those standards at no additional cost to the charter school or the state. Please see Section 6.3 and Addendum Paragraph 1 of the Office Court Companies, Inc. lease agreement, which is attached in Appendix D-4.

We have inquired about the availability of public buildings through multiple public entities including Santa Fe Public Schools, the City of Santa Fe, Santa Fe County, and the State of New Mexico. Certification B – No Public Facility Available – is attached in Appendix D-5.



Part F—Amendment Requests

(Submissions that meet amendment request requirements to support PEC consideration of any requested changes to the material terms of the school contract that would become effective as part of the new contract)



New Mexico Connections Academy (NMCA)
MINUTES OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL MEETING
Tuesday, September 26, 2017 at 9:00 a.m. MT

Held at the following locations and via teleconference:

4001 Office Court, Suite 201-204
Santa Fe, NM 87507
and
4801 Hardware Dr. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87109

I. Call to Order and Roll Call

Mr. Boitano called the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m. when all participants were present and able to hear each other. The school location was open to the public. Mr. Boitano conducted a Roll Call.

Governing Council Members Present: Mark Boitano (in person at Albuquerque location); Jerry Schalow and Paul Gessing (via phone);

Governing Council Members Joined During Meeting: Patrick Chavez (via phone);

Guests Present: Ramoncita Garcia, School Principal; Justine Vigil, School Business Manager; Mari Adkins, School staff (in person at Albuquerque location); Debbie Vigil, Amy Earle, and Tammy Woffinden, School staff; Lupita Martinez, Governing Council candidate (in person at the Santa Fe location); Jean Woodward, Julieann Quintana, Shawna Sanchez, Jolene Ortiz, Jennifer Lawson, Christine May, Jolene Lenora, Laci Lockwood and Craig Lockwood, School staff; Anna Harb, Governing Council candidate; Bryce Adams, Jay Ragley, Tanya Lee, Ray Lambert, and Kristin DeGoff, Pearson Online & Blended Learning (POBL) staff (via phone).

II. Routine Business

a. Approval of Agenda

Mr. Boitano asked the Governing Council to review the Agenda distributed prior to the meeting. There being no changes, a motion was made by Mr. Schalow and seconded by Mr. Gessing as follows:

RESOLVED, that the Agenda for the September 26, 2017 New Mexico Connections Academy Governing Council Meeting, as presented, is hereby approved.

The motion passed unanimously.

III. Public Comment

There were no comments at this time.

IV. Nominating Committee Report

a. Consideration of Governing Council Member Candidate, Lupita Gurulè Dè Martinez

Mr. Boitano provided the Governing Council with brief background information on the candidate being brought to the Governing Council for consideration, including the reasons she has expressed interest in joining the Governing Council.

[Mr. Chavez joined the meeting at 9:15 a.m.]

Ms. Gurulè Dè Martinez introduced herself, and provided a brief description of her background as a parent at the school. Governing Council members discussed Ms. Gurulè Dè Martinez's background and candidacy. Mr. Boitano recommended Ms. Gurulè Dè Martinez for appointment. There being no further discussion, Mr. Gessing made the following motion and it was seconded by Mr. Schalow as follows:

RESOLVED, that the appointment of Lupita Gurulè Dè Martinez as a Governing Council Member for a term through the 2018 Annual Meeting, subject to any and all regulatory approvals, as presented, is hereby approved.

The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. DeGroff reminded the Governing Council that pending Ms. Gurulè Dè Martinez's completion of new Board member training, Ms. Gurulè Dè Martinez's would abstain from voting on all items during the meeting.

b. Consideration of Governing Council Member Candidate, Anna Harb

Mr. Boitano noted the Governing Council's intent to consider this item later in the agenda, to allow for Ms. Harb to join the meeting.

c. Approval of Governing Body Membership for the 2017-2018 School Year

Mr. Boitano noted the Governing Council's intent to consider this item later in the agenda, following the consideration of Ms. Harb's candidacy.

V. Oral Reports

a. Principal's Report

Ms. Garcia reviewed with the Board the Monthly School Report, as included in the Governing Council package in detail.

i. Update on Back to School Activities, Staffing, and Enrollment

Ms. Garcia discussed with the Governing Council recent back to school activities. She also reviewed the current enrollment numbers for the school, noting trends and projections for the coming month.

Ms. Garcia introduced Ms. Adkins to the Governing Council, who provided a brief update on special education procedures at the school.

[Ms. Harb joined the meeting at 9:39 a.m.]

Mr. Biotano introduced Ms. Harb to the Governing Council, and reviewed her background as a parent of a student at the school. Ms. Harb provided a brief overview of her previous employment and desire to work with the Governing Council. The Governing Council thanked Ms. Harb for her time.

[Ms. Harb left the meeting at 9:48 a.m.]

ii. School Grading Report Card Improvement Plan

Ms. Garcia reviewed the school report card results from previous academic years, and asked Mr. Lockwood to provide an overview of the School Grading Report Card Improvement Plan for the Governing Council.

Mr. Lockwood introduced the format and process for creation of the Improvement Plan, as well as the staff and administration's input for the Plan.

Ms. Lockwood advised the Governing Council on the anticipated strategies to be used throughout the school year to improve on all areas of the school report card. Governing Council members discussed the Plan in detail with Mr. and Ms. Lockwood, and requested further information on followthrough procedures for the plan.

[Ms. Lockwood left the meeting at 10:26 a.m.]

iii. Renewal Application Site Visit Update

Ms. Garcia provided the Governing Council with an update on the upcoming Renewal Application site visit, scheduled to be held in mid-October. She reviewed the timing of the interview sessions with school staff, parents, and Governing Council members, and requested Governing Council attendance for the interviews.

b. Financial Report

Ms. J. Vigil reviewed the school's financial statements in detail, including the check register, revenue and expense statements, as well as the school's forecast for the school year based on enrollment trends with the Governing Council.

Mr. Schalow advised that a member of the community, Mr. Kelly Wainwright, has been submitted as a member of the Audit Committee, per the necessary requirements. Ms. Gurulè Dè Martinez noted her interest in filling the parent role on the Audit Committee, if permissible.

i. Finance Committee Updates and Recommendations for Approval

1. Approval of Connections Academy of New Mexico, LLC Invoices for August

Mr. Schalow reviewed the August invoice as drawn from the financial report provided in the meeting materials, and reviewed earlier in the meeting. He advised that he reviewed the invoice and found it to be in order and asked the Governing Council whether they had any questions on the invoice or if any items required further explanation. There being no further discussion, Mr. Schalow made the following motion and it was seconded by Mr. Gessing as follows:

RESOLVED, that the Connections Academy of New Mexico, LLC invoices for August in

the amount of \$416,925.00, as presented, is hereby approved.

The motion passed unanimously.

[Ms. Lawson left the meeting at 10:36 a.m.]

2. Approval of Budget Adjustment Reports (BARs)

a. 554-000-1718-0002-I 14000

Ms. J. Vigil provided an update on the budget adjustment reports, as included in the Governing Council materials. There being no further discussion, Mr. Schalow made the following motion and it was seconded by Mr. Gessing as follows:

RESOLVED, that the Budget Adjustment Report: 554-000-1718-0002-I 14000, as presented, is hereby approved.

The motion passed unanimously.

3. Approval of Agreement with Sparkle Maintenance, Inc.

The Governing Council reviewed the Agreement with Sparkle Maintenance, Inc., as included in the meeting materials. There being no further discussion, Mr. Schalow made the following motion and it was seconded by Mr. Gessing as follows:

RESOLVED, that the Agreement with Sparkle Maintenance, as presented, is hereby approved.

The motion passed unanimously.

[Ms. Woodward, Ms. Earle, Ms. Lenora, and Ms Ortiz left the meeting at 10:39 a.m.]

VI. Consent Items

Mr. Boitano asked the Governing Council members whether there were any items from the Consent Items that they wished to have moved to Action Items for discussion, or tabled. There being no items removed from the Consent Items, a motion was made by Mr. Schalow and seconded by Mr. Gessing as follows:

RESOLVED, the Consent Items:

- a. Approval of Minutes from the August 29, 2017 Meeting; and
- b. Approval of Revision(s) to the 2017-2018 School Year State Specific School Handbook: Truancy Procedures; are hereby approved.

The motion passed unanimously.

[Ms. May left the meeting at 10:42 a.m.]

VII. Action Items

a. Approval of Submission of Charter Renewal Application

Mr. Boitano presented this item to the Governing Council, and advised that the application had been reviewed by legal counsel, Sue Fox.

Mr. Adams provided a brief update on the process for submission of the application, as well as the timeline for final review by the Public Education Commission (PEC). Governing Council members discussed the Charter Renewal Application in detail. There being no further discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Gessing and seconded by Mr. Schalow as follows:

RESOLVED, the submission of the Charter Renewal Application, as discussed, is hereby approved.

The motion passed unanimously.

Legislative Update

At the request of the Governing Council, Mr. Adams provided an update on legislative matters that may impact the school.

b. Approval of School Focus Goals for the 2017-2018 School Year

Ms. Garcia reviewed the school focus goals for the 2017-2018 school year included in the Board package with the Governing Council. She advised that the staff worked closely with school leadership and Pearson Online & Blended Learning (POBL), formerly Connections Education, on establishing the school goals. She further advised the Governing Council that the school goals represent the major driver for the staff incentive plan. There being no further discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Schalow and seconded by Mr. Gessing as follows:

RESOLVED, that the school focus goals for the 2017-2018 school year, as presented, are hereby approved.

The motion passed unanimously.

c. Approval of PEC Improvement Plan

Ms. Garcia presented this item to the Governing Council. She reviewed the basis for the Improvement Plan, as well as the correlation with the school's improvement plan and charter goals. There being no further discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Schalow and seconded by Mr. Gessing as follows:

RESOLVED, that the PEC Improvement Plan, as presented, is hereby approved.

The motion passed unanimously.

[Mr. Adams left the meeting at 10:54 a.m.]

VIII. Information Items

a. Update on Staffing

Ms. Garcia reviewed the Staffing Report included in the meeting materials with the Governing Council and provided an update on staffing levels. The Governing Council discussed staffing levels with Ms. Garcia.

b. Legislative Update

This item was discussed earlier in the meeting.

c. Parter School Leadership Team Update

Mr. Lambert presented to the Governing Council on behalf of Pearson Online & Blended Learning's (POBL), School Leadership Team.

i. Quarterly Metrics Update

Mr. Lambert reviewed the document outlining the planned format and data to be included in the school year's School Metrics reports.

d. Governing Council Self Evaluation

Mr. Boitano briefly reviewed the self evaluation, as recently completed by all required Governing Council members. The Governing Council noted their intent to discuss the self evaluation in greater detail at a future meeting.

[Mr. Lockwood left the meeting at 10:59 a.m.]

e. 2017-2018 Items for Board Consideration

Ms. DeGroff reviewed the outline of items planned to be presented for Governing Council consideration throughout the current school year. She further advised the Governing Council that the document was fluid, and items may be included, omitted, or considered on a varied timeline based on a number of factors, including state submission and enrollment deadlines, as well as school need for student support.

f. Curriculum Town Hall Reminder

Ms. DeGroff reminded the Governing Council of the timing of the upcoming Curriculum Town Hall presentation, and encouraged Governing Council members to attend.

Consideration of Governing Council Member Candidate, Anna Harb

Mr. Boitano reminded the Governing Council of the discussion with Ms. Harb held earlier in the meeting. Governing Council members discussed Ms. Harb's background and candidacy. Mr. Boitano recommended Ms. Harb for appointment, and reminded the Governing Council that pending Ms. Harb's completion of new Board member

training, she would abstain from voting during the meeting. There being no further discussion, Mr. Schalow made the following motion and it was seconded by Mr. Gessing as follows:

RESOLVED, that the appointment of Anna Harb as a Class 1 Governing Council Member for a term through the 2018 Annual Meeting, subject to any and all regulatory approvals, as presented, is hereby approved.

The motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Governing Body Membership for the 2017-2018 School Year

Mr. Boitano presented this item to the Governing Council. He reviewed the requirements contained within the Governing Council Bylaws and Charter Contract, and noted the intent of the Governing Council to maintain the current membership of six members throughout the 2017-2018 school year. There being no further discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Schalow and seconded by Mr. Gessing as follows:

RESOLVED, that the Governing Body Membership for the 2017-2018 school year to be maintained with six (6) members, as discussed, is hereby approved.

The motion passed unanimously.

IX. Adjournment and Confirmation of Next Meeting - Tuesday, October 31, 2017 at 9:00 a.m. MT

Mr. Boitano noted that the Governing Council was at the end of its agenda and that the next meeting is scheduled to be held on Tuesday, October 31, 2017 at 9:00 a.m. MT. At 11:04 a.m., Mr. Schalow made the following motion and it was seconded by Mr. Gessing as follows:

RESOLVED, that the adjournment of the New Mexico Connections Academy, Inc. September 26, 2017 Governing Council meeting, as discussed, is hereby approved.

The motion passed unanimously.