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HANNA SKANDERA
SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

SUSANA MARTINEZ
GOVERNOR

December 5, 2014

Dear Public Education Commissioners:

Enclosed is the Final Recommendation for the Anthony Charter School 2014 renewal application. Charter Schools Division (CSD) staff at the Public Education Department analyzed the renewal applications, reviewed past performance of the school, conducted site visits and gave full consideration to the information gathered in this process.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Matthew Pahl".

Matthew Pahl
Interim Director
Charter Schools Division

I. Recommendation

APPROVE

APPROVE WITH CONDITIONS

The Charter School Division recommends 2 year renewal with conditions, to be determined, through an improvement plan. The school did not fulfill the terms of its initial 2 year charter and, as a result, the PEC has placed the school on a strict improvement plan for the 2014-15 school year. To date, the school has met the conditions of its present improvement plan. The Governing Board's has replaced the former director with an experienced team in order to turn the school's compliance issues around.

PROPOSED CONDITIONS

The Applicant will negotiate a contract with the Public Education Commission pursuant to 22-8B-9.1: to include:

1. A shortened contract term of two or three years
2. Completion of an improvement plan specific to the school
3. Two annual monitoring visits by CSD

DENY

Overall the application is either incomplete or inadequate; or during their Capacity Interview, the applicant(s) did not sufficiently demonstrate the experience, knowledge, and competence to successfully open and operate a charter school.

The Charter Schools Act, in paragraph 1 of Subsection L of Section 22-8B-6 NMSA 1978, states that a chartering authority may approve, approve with conditions or deny an application. A chartering authority may deny an application if:

- (1) the application is incomplete or inadequate;
- (2) the application does not propose to offer an educational program consistent with the requirements and purposes of the Charter Schools Act;
- (3) the proposed head administrator or other administrative or fiscal staff was involved with another charter school whose charter was denied or revoked for fiscal management or the proposed head administrator or other administrative or fiscal staff was discharged from a public school for fiscal mismanagement;
- (4) for a proposed state-chartered charter school, it does not request to have the governing body of the charter school designated as a board of finance or the governing body does not qualify as a board of finance; or
- (5) the application is otherwise contrary to the best interests of the charter school's projected students, the local community or the school district in whose geographic boundaries the charter school applies to operate.

CHARTER SCHOOLS DIVISION

By:  _____
Matthew Pahl, Interim Director of Charter Schools Division, or Designee

CSD Summary and Final Recommendation

Anthony Charter School (ACS) was originally authorized in 2008 by the Gadsden School District. On February 28, 2013, the PEC approved a conditional 24 month charter for the school. "The mission of Anthony Charter School is to work with students and families to identify student abilities, both academically and social-emotionally, using a Personalized Education Plan as a pathway to ensure graduation."

CSD recommends 2 year renewal with conditions, to be determined, through an improvement plan. The school did not fulfill the terms of its initial 2 year charter and, as a result, the PEC has placed the school on a strict improvement plan for the 2014-15 school year. To date, the school has met the conditions of its present improvement plan. The Governing Board's has replaced the former director with an experienced team in order to turn the school's compliance issues around.

The school was initially given a two year contract by the PEC. During contract negotiations in 2014, the PEC imposed a strict improvement plan due to continuing concerns over compliance issues. The governing board has removed the previous director and appointed an experienced administrative team to turn the school around. All conditions of the current improvement plan have been met to date and the new administrator has provided an updated response to the application analysis. October 9, 2013, two members of CSD staff, Julia Barnes and Kelley Callahan, visited the school and created a detailed Conditions Action Plan for which included a condition to utilize Discovery short cycle assessment data as a basis for analyzing student progress and making plans for improvement. The plan also specified the Governing Board would develop a self assessment process and a strategic plan for the school. During the April 14, 2014 site visit, CSD staff noted Discovery short cycle assessment data were not being utilized to assess student progress or to create a plan for improvement and WebEPSS was not being updated. Also at that time, CSD staff was not given the Governing Board strategic plan and the Governing Board has not assessed itself. As a result, during the contract negotiations this year, the PEC imposed a School Improvement Plan specifying dates by which short cycle assessment data, WebEPSS goals, SSIS assessments, and Next Step plans be completed and submitted to the CSD. To date, the following conditions of the improvement plan have been met: WebEPSS has been uploaded and is in process, SSIS assessment and PEP plan have been submitted, the first Discovery short cycle assessments have been administered and a plan submitted to CSD. On October 20 & 21, 2014, General Manager Julie Lucero and EA-A Edward Woodd conducted a monitoring at the school which included interviews with all stakeholder groups.

An analysis of Anthony Charter School's State Grade Report Card over the past three years indicates the school has gone from a final grade of C in 2012 to a final grade of B in 2013 to a final grade of D in 2014, with a three year average of C. Reading Proficiency Scores in 2012 indicated 38.3% of students proficient and advanced; in 2013, 56.8% of students proficient and advanced; and in 2014, 41.2% of students proficient and advanced. While significant growth from 2012 to 2013 occurred, a drop of 13.9% occurred from 2013 to 2014. Table 38 in the school's appendices compares 2013-14 reading SBA scores of ACS to local schools, and shows ACS scoring in the middle range with a score of 41.2% advanced and proficient. The range of scores were from a high of 70.6% advanced and proficient at Santa Teresa Middle school to a low of 33.6% advanced and proficient for Gadsden High School. The school's Math Proficiency Scores indicate a steady decline from 35% of students proficient and advanced in 2012, to 25% of students proficient and advanced in 2013, and 20.6% of students proficient and advanced in 2014. Data provided by the school in appendices Table 39, compares 2013-14 math SBA scores of the same set of local schools. The table shows ACS with the lowest score of 20.6% of students advanced and proficient. The top score again was Santa Teresa Middle School with 58.6 advanced and proficient. Growth of Lowest Performing Students (Q1) score was a D, in 2012, 2.1 points below the state average. In 2013 the score was A, 1.62 points above the state average. In 2014 the score was C, 1.1 points below the state average. Growth of Highest Performing Students (Q3) score in 2012 was C, .4 points above the state average. In 2013 the score was A, 6.4 points

above the state average. In 2014 the score was again A, 6.35 points above the state average. Overall, the scores of Q1 and Q3 students indicate the school has done well regarding student academic achievement. CSD is concerned the school lost its entire staff after the 2013 school year in which students posted the best academic performance to date. Anthony Charter School's graduation rate was not recorded for the 2012 school year. In 2013 the score was F, 2.63 school grade points below the state average. In 2014 the score was again F, 5.1 school grade points below the state average. CSD staff is concerned that the school's analysis mentioned only student mobility and facilities as causality for these low scores.

In the analysis of goals over the past two years, CSD staff found no reference to or analysis of the 3 original goals in the school's application. The school submitted 91 pages of data tables that were not uploaded per the application instructions or tied into the school's application. Regarding reading proficiency, Table 2 in the appendices indicates ACS students met the reading goal in 2011, 2012, and 2013. They did not meet the goal in 2014. Table 3 in the appendices addresses the math goal. ACS students met the goal in 2012. They did not meet the goal in 2013, or 2014, indicating a downward trend in student achievement. In the Looking Forward section (Part C), the school presented three goals two of which address reading and math. Neither goal is in SMART format. No metrics are provided as required in the instructions. The third goal addresses social and emotional learning through the personalized education plans. Again, the goal is not in SMART format and provides no metrics whereby standards can be measured.

The 2013 financial audit of Anthony Charter School, conducted by Griego Professional Services, revealed a significant finding. The auditor stated the school did not report its financial information in a timely manner and stated the school's report contained some inaccuracies. The school disputed the audit finding. The cash balance percentage of the operational budget for FY 2013 was 25.16%

Organizationally, Anthony Charter School has experienced instability. Interviews with staff and the administration indicated, in two successive years the school has turned over nearly 100% of its faculty. The Governing Council has appointed three new members within the past two months. These indicators coupled with declining student academic performance lead CSD to the conclusion that the school is in crisis organizationally. The school removed the previous director November 19, 2014, and replaced her with Dr. Abe Armendariz, an experienced administrator in an effort to turn the school around.

CSD recommends 2 year renewal with conditions, to be determined through an improvement plan. The Governing Board's has replaced the former director with an experienced team in order to turn the school's compliance issues around. Compared to other Gadsden schools, Anthony students are scoring higher in reading and math proficiency. Also, all conditions of the current improvement plan have been met to date.