



September 2, 2010

Mister Chair and PEC Commissioners:

I am submitting my recommendations for nine of the twelve charter school applications that the Charter Schools Division (the Division) received between June 1, 2010 and July 1, 2010. My recommendations are based on the application, the Division's analyses, and any clarifications that we received from the applicants during the public input process.

I wanted to remind the Public Education Commission (PEC) that this process began even before the Division received the first letters of intent. Our staff, along with the commission, began a continuous improvement process immediately after last year's decisions. The Division conducted surveys of all the applicants, readers, commissioners, and other stakeholders involved in the process. We shared our information with you and, based on the data, we worked toward improving a process that would be transparent and would lead to the submission of quality charter school applications.

In order to assist the applicants, the application kit, which included the evaluation tool that would be used to analyze the applications, was posted on both the PED and PEC websites. The Division, in partnership with the New Mexico Coalition of Charter Schools, held five technical assistance workshops on specific areas of the application. Throughout the process we communicated that the applicants must submit a complete and adequate application which responded to all of the requested information. We emphasized that it was the responsibility of the applicants to submit an application that required no new information in order to be complete and adequate. Although the applicants were provided the opportunity to clarify and verify concerns raised by the Division's preliminary analysis and respond to questions from the Commissioners, new material which went beyond the clarification and verification was not considered in my evaluation and ultimate recommendation.

The final recommendations that I present to you are based on countless hours of collecting data on each application. Each application is unique and was evaluated on its own merits. No comparisons were made or should be made with other applications. Ultimately, the recommendation for each application is based on whether the application met the requirements outlined in both statute and rules published by the department that govern the charter application process. The overriding question on each application was whether the application was complete and adequate to deliver the educational plan aligned with the mission of the proposed school.

I have used the following criteria to evaluate the quality of the responses in each section of the application:

- **Inadequate:** The section lacks significant detail, demonstrates lack of preparation, or otherwise raises substantial concerns about the applicant's understanding of the issue in concept and/or ability to meet the requirement in practice.
- **Approaches:** The section addresses some of the criteria, but lacks meaningful detail and requires important additional information in order to be reasonably comprehensive.
- **Meets:** The section indicates solid preparation and grasp of key issues that would be considered reasonably comprehensive. It contains many of the characteristics of a response that exceeds even though it may require additional specificity, support or elaboration in places.
- **Exceeds:** The section reflects a thorough understanding of key issues and indicates capacity to open and operate a quality charter school. It addresses the topic with specific and accurate information that shows thorough preparation and presents a clear, realistic picture of how the school expects to operate.

Sincerely,

Dr. Don Duran  
Assistant Secretary of Education  
NMPED-Charter Schools Division

cc: Charter School Applicants  
Sam Obenshain, Program Manager, Charter Schools Division