

BEFORE THE PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION
STATE OF NEW MEXICO

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS
COMMUNITY INPUT HEARING
R.I.S.E., NEW MEXICO CHARTER SCHOOL
August 20, 2013
7:45 a.m.
New Mexico Activities Association
6600 Palomas Avenue, Northeast
Albuquerque, New Mexico

REPORTED BY: Cynthia C. Chapman, RMR-CRR, NM CCR #219
Bean & Associates, Inc.
Professional Court Reporting Service
201 Third Street, NW, Suite 1630
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87102

JOB NO.: 8092K(CC)

SANTA FE OFFICE
119 East Marcy, Suite 110
Santa Fe, NM 87501
(505) 989-4949
FAX (505) 843-9492



MAIN OFFICE
201 Third NW, Suite 1630
Albuquerque, NM 87102
(505) 843-9494
FAX (505) 843-9492
1-800-669-9492
e-mail: info@litsupport.com

A P P E A R A N C E S

COMMISSIONERS:

MS. CAROLYN SHEARMAN, Chair
MR. EUGENE GANT, Vice Chair
MR. JAMES CONYERS, Member
MS. CARMIE TOULOUSE, Member
MS. MILLIE POGNA, Member

STAFF:

MR. TONY GERLICZ, Director, Options for Parents
MR. BRAD RICHARDSON
MS. RACHEL STOFODIK
MS. KAREN EHLERT

SANTA FE OFFICE
119 East Marcy, Suite 110
Santa Fe, NM 87501
(505) 989-4949
FAX (505) 843-9492



MAIN OFFICE
201 Third NW, Suite 1630
Albuquerque, NM 87102
(505) 843-9494
FAX (505) 843-9492
1-800-669-9492
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1 THE CHAIR: Ladies and gentlemen,
2 according to my computer clock, it is 7:45. I call
3 this hearing back into session. I'll ask Vice Chair
4 Gant for a roll call, please.

5 COMMISSIONER GANT: Commissioner Pogna.

6 COMMISSIONER POGNA: Here.

7 COMMISSIONER GANT: Commissioner
8 Convers -- I know I said that wrong.

9 COMMISSIONER CONYERS: Conyers. Here.
10 Here.

11 COMMISSIONER GANT: Commissioner Toulouse.

12 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Present.

13 COMMISSIONER GANT: Commissioner Shearman.

14 THE CHAIR: Here.

15 COMMISSIONER GANT: Commissioner Gant. We
16 have five present.

17 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Vice Chair. Let's
18 have the Pledge of Allegiance. And, Vice Chair, if
19 you'd lead us in that as well.

20 (Pledge of Allegiance and Salute to the
21 New Mexico Flag conducted.)

22 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Next item is
23 approval of the agenda. The Chair will entertain a
24 motion.

25 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: So move.

1 THE CHAIR: Motion and second. All those
2 in favor, please say "Aye."

3 (Commissioners so indicate.)

4 THE CHAIR: Any opposed, same sign? Thank
5 you very much.

6 We'll move on to public hearing on
7 State-chartered charter schools. First of all, I
8 would like to ask, if anyone has an electronic
9 device, that you turn those off or silent or stun or
10 whatever works best for you, please. We have some
11 general information I'd like to share with you.

12 This meeting is being conducted -- oh, by
13 the way, we do not have microphones in here. So if
14 everyone would speak up. And, if you can't hear,
15 please say so, and we'll all yell a little louder.

16 This meeting is being conducted pursuant
17 to New Mexico Statutes Annotated, Title 22, Section
18 8B-6J 2009. The purpose of these community input
19 hearings that will be held from August 19 through
20 August 21, 2013, is to obtain information from the
21 applicant and to receive community input to assist
22 the Public Education Commission in its decision
23 whether to grant the proposed charter applications.

24 According to this section of the law, the
25 Commission may appoint a subcommittee of no fewer

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119 East Marcy, Suite 110
Santa Fe, NM 87501
(505) 989-4949
FAX (505) 843-9492



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(505) 843-9494
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1 than three members to hold a public hearing.
2 According to the law, these hearings are being
3 transcribed by a professional court reporter.

4 And this is our reporter today. So we'll
5 be sure, when you speak, that she gets your name and
6 the spelling of it.

7 The total time allocated to each
8 application is 90 minutes, which will be timed to
9 insure an equitable opportunity to present
10 applications.

11 And Brad is going to be our timer today.
12 During the hearing, the Commission will
13 allow for community input about the chapter --
14 pardon me -- the charter application. The time for
15 public comments will be limited to 20 minutes. If
16 you wish to speak regarding the application, please
17 sign in, and we ask that you do that 15 minutes
18 before the applicant's presentation.

19 Please be sure that you indicate on the
20 sign-up sheet whether you are here in opposition or
21 support of the charter school. The Commission
22 Chair, based on the number of requests to comment,
23 will aggregate time to those wishing to speak. If
24 there are a large number of supporters or opponents,
25 they are asked to select a speaker to represent a

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119 East Marcy, Suite 110
Santa Fe, NM 87501
(505) 989-4949
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1 common opinion.

2 We will try to allocate an equitable
3 amount of time to represent the community
4 accurately.

5 Secondly, the Commission will follow this
6 process for each community input hearing:

7 The Commission will ask each applicant or
8 group to present at the table in front. They will
9 be given 20 minutes to present their application in
10 the manner they deem appropriate. The Commission
11 will not accept any written documentation from the
12 applicant, but the applicant may use demonstrat- --
13 demonstrative exhibits to describe their school, if
14 necessary. However, the time for setup, if
15 necessary, will be included in the 20 minutes.

16 Following the applicant's presentation,
17 the local school district or their representatives,
18 which include the superintendent, administrators,
19 and board members, will be given ten minutes to
20 comment.

21 Subsequently, the Commission will allow
22 20 minutes for public comment, as described above.

23 Finally, the Commission will be given
24 40 minutes to ask questions of the applicant.

25 Commissioners, if are you ready?

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119 East Marcy, Suite 110
Santa Fe, NM 87501
(505) 989-4949
FAX (505) 843-9492



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201 Third NW, Suite 1630
Albuquerque, NM 87102
(505) 843-9494
FAX (505) 843-9492
1-800-669-9492
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1 COMMISSIONER GANT: We're ready. R.I.S.E.
2 Charter School, please come forward. And I see
3 you're already here. Thank you. For the record,
4 please state the name of your school, the names of
5 the founders of the school, and any other person who
6 is here today on behalf of your school.

7 You will have 20 minutes to present
8 information about your application. And your time
9 will begin after you introduce yourselves.

10 MS. LOPEZ: All right. We are R.I.S.E,
11 New Mexico Elementary. My name is Vanessa Lopez,
12 and I am a founder. This is Eppie Lopez. He is
13 also a founder. And we have a Governing Board
14 member, Natalie Salazar, who will be speaking on
15 behalf of our Governing Board.

16 MR. LOPEZ: We also have people that are
17 coming, but they're delayed in the Paseo traffic.
18 You had mentioned that they have 15 minutes prior to
19 us starting.

20 THE CHAIR: They may sign in, until it's
21 time for them to speak.

22 MR. LOPEZ: Well, I want to thank the
23 Public Education Commission. I want to thank every
24 one in this room for their dedication and commitment
25 to our students. I believe we have a wonderful

1 opportunity to create the beginning of something
2 truly unique with R.I.S.E., New Mexico. In our
3 application, we mention R.I.S.E. is more than a
4 school; it's a belief in New Mexico. And I'm
5 flattered to be -- flattered and proud to be in a
6 position where others have taken notice of us, and
7 not just the remarkable people and stunning
8 colleagues in this room, but, such programs as
9 Partners for Developing Futures, LEAD New Mexico,
10 Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, who are willing
11 to invest in such a program.

12 I know, personally -- and speaking for
13 many of us -- we didn't -- we didn't come into
14 education for the money. But it's refreshing to be
15 in a room where all our intentions and hearts are in
16 the right place in helping New Mexico students.

17 I remember, during my graduation
18 commencement from USC, which was given by Don
19 Shelby, who is the first in California, and second
20 in the nation, to start a charter school, who has,
21 now, 50 high-aspiring schools where children are
22 performing, from the lowest socioeconomic areas.
23 Said, "Education and" calling -- "and the calling
24 that faces [verbatim] to me is the most noble and
25 dignified of all professions. It allows us to offer

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119 East Marcy, Suite 110
Santa Fe, NM 87501
(505) 989-4949
FAX (505) 843-9492



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1 us in service to others, and it's the one endeavor
2 that can change the opportunity equation for so many
3 areas.

4 "Education is a place where one's dreams
5 are realized, through celebrating others who have
6 had their aspirations met as a result of their
7 interactions with us. And the profession of
8 education, added to the [inaudible], are everything.
9 Consider the protagonist of the Neil Simons play,
10 'The Goodbye Girl.' Elliott reaches a point of
11 frustration with his own situation and laments,
12 'There is only one thing worse than a hopeless
13 romantic, and that's a hopeful one.'

14 "Being a hopeful romantic is what it takes
15 to succeed in education. And I'm thankful to be in
16 a room full of hopeful romantics.

17 About purposeful disruption. There is two
18 quotes that I remember, two phrases that helped me
19 along the way, "purposeful disruption" and "dictate
20 directionality." About purposeful disruption. It
21 was clear in the same way that FedEx makes the U.S
22 postal system better, competitive school choice in
23 the same light brightens the future for all kids.
24 After all, there has always been school choice,
25 because if you could afford to live wherever you

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119 East Marcy, Suite 110
Santa Fe, NM 87501
(505) 989-4949
FAX (505) 843-9492



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(505) 843-9494
FAX (505) 843-9492
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1 want, then you chose to go to a good school district
2 and a good school, or a neighborhood with a good
3 school. To me, that seems fundamentally unfair.
4 And, now, we are beginning to see that choice for
5 everyone.

6 His, and my wish, for us is to create
7 purposeful disruption, becoming an inpatient
8 optimist, because the kids in this state and in this
9 country need it.

10 Dictating directionality. We have a
11 chance to dictate directionality, where we're
12 headed. And the best compass I know to me to figure
13 out where I'm headed is my heart. I trust the
14 direction where my heart sends me. I do what I
15 love. I earn what I need, and I take a few big
16 risks.

17 And I'm glad to be here and part of this
18 unique program surrounded by my stunning colleagues
19 and our opportunity to create something truly
20 special in New Mexico.

21 R.I.S.E., New Mexico is a culturally
22 relevant and inspirational, nontraditional
23 educational model, which builds self and empowers by
24 deliberately employing dual-purpose instruction that
25 integrates cognitive and noncognitive skills

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119 East Marcy, Suite 110
Santa Fe, NM 87501
(505) 989-4949
FAX (505) 843-9492



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(505) 843-9494
FAX (505) 843-9492
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1 development to help all youth succeed in school and
2 life.

3 I want us to focus on some of these words:
4 Relevant, inspirational, self, and empowered. Those
5 words weren't just created out of a whim, out of --
6 just because they sounded -- they mean something;
7 they have purpose; they have relevance; they have
8 sustainability.

9 Relevant. "Relevant" not only means just
10 the ethnicity, the cultural relevance; it means the
11 relevance of our students and what they learn and
12 how they learn. They're technological natives. So
13 our approach to this is not only just focusing on
14 the ethnicity and the cultural -- and the low
15 socioeconomics. It's relevant to today's student.

16 Inspirational. Inspiration is throughout
17 our program. The kids that we are focusing on --
18 and, you know, in particular, all low socioeconomic
19 students need to have some type of inspiration,
20 considering all the challenges that they're facing.

21 Self. Self-regulation, self-efficacy,
22 self-empowerment, self-esteem. And empowers.
23 That's what we're truly trying to have the students
24 to know, to learn, and a belief in themselves.

25 These are the students that we're focusing

1 on right now in the -- in the South Valley,
2 Southwest Heights, approximately -- close to 10,000.
3 There's only one elementary charter in that area.
4 Traditionally, education has been a top-down,
5 teacher-effort approach, focusing on the cognitive.
6 We've been looking at and working with -- I've been
7 a teacher for up to 14 years. Traditional approach,
8 best practices, monitoring, assessments,
9 professional development, traditional curriculum and
10 instruction, a "one size fits all" model approach.

11 And, in my experience, what we've -- what
12 I have found, and what research shows, is that kids
13 just aren't -- they're not buying it. They're
14 disengaging. These skills are important, and
15 they're needed. They are necessary. We need to
16 focus on top grades. We need to focus on the -- we
17 want them to be analytical. We want them to be
18 evaluative. We want them to understand the
19 importance of this.

20 But, what happens is, especially with
21 lower socioeconomic children, what -- they come in
22 with a ton of weight already showing them that they
23 can't succeed. They're focusing -- their focus is
24 on maybe eating or the poverty that they see
25 continually at home, the lack of experience from top

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(505) 989-4949
FAX (505) 843-9492



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1 role models from people, that say, "You know what?
2 You can do this. You can succeed. This is how --
3 and this is how."

4 Socioeconomics and language barriers.
5 Again, we talked about role models, bias. Sometimes
6 in the classroom, children are faced with bias,
7 unfortunately, so they become disengaged. There's
8 no connection; there's a lack of motivation. Bored
9 and disruptive behavior. Do you know what these are
10 referred to? Coping skills. This is how they deal
11 with it.

12 I mean, children just don't disrupt a
13 class or go into something funny to them because
14 they're comfortable. It's a way of having to deal
15 with the embarrassment of -- of what they don't
16 know.

17 Our program is a bottom-up, student-effort
18 approach. It lets the students know that they have
19 some say in what they can do about their lives,
20 through noncognitive skill development. Our
21 programs are asset-based, dual-purpose,
22 inspirational curriculum, social-emotional approach,
23 CPR model, and then culturally relevant. The
24 students nowadays need to know that they can
25 persevere, that they will learn how to be resilient,

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119 East Marcy, Suite 110
Santa Fe, NM 87501
(505) 989-4949
FAX (505) 843-9492



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(505) 843-9494
FAX (505) 843-9492
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e-mail: info@litsupport.com

1 that confidence can take them to certain levels that
2 they've never been.

3 Consequently, data shows that the
4 barriers, the coping skills, are changed. Their
5 perceptions change. And bringing the best of both
6 worlds, the top-down teacher-effort and the
7 noncognitive skill development, bottom-up effort,
8 create success in school and life.

9 Again, the relevancy, the inspiration, the
10 self and the empowerment are embedded throughout our
11 application. There's something that is necessary,
12 and each and every part important for us to succeed,
13 to help our children succeed.

14 All these motivational outcomes -- either
15 just the motivational outcomes of being inspired,
16 all these are data-relevant, they're -- they're
17 important in the sense that it's not something that
18 I just experience. It's something that the data is
19 showing nowadays.

20 The bottom-up component allows students to
21 feel they've accomplished something, while knowing
22 they're improving while doing so. They begin to
23 understand the correlation between work and reward,
24 learning and earning, education and success.
25 They're working hard to acquire rewards in return

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(505) 989-4949
FAX (505) 843-9492



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FAX (505) 843-9492
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1 for their investment. Their effort put into their
2 work, not only academic work, social-emotional work,
3 are being rewarded. They're creating a strong work
4 ethic.

5 Students require some form of stimulus to
6 activate, provide direction for, and encourage
7 persistence in their study and learning efforts.
8 They need to know, "What's in it for me?" They need
9 to understand that -- "Why? Why?" We need to
10 answer that. And what R.I.S.E., New Mexico does is
11 answers why.

12 The self-outcomes, gaining a sense of
13 accomplishment, increased self-esteem, confidence in
14 their abilities. They're able to control their
15 environment and attain the realization that they can
16 succeed.

17 I think that's huge right there. They're
18 able to control their environment. I believe that's
19 why gaming is such a huge attraction to students
20 nowadays, because they create the avatars and they
21 can be successful in being in an environment in
22 which they can manipulate and control.

23 Change in belief system in self and
24 others. Translating pessimism to optimism.
25 Optimism. Enabling, dismantling, or overcoming the

1 impediments to change and developing skills to
2 comprehend literal and inferential information.

3 Again, we're not just working on the
4 non-cognitive; we're working on the cognitive
5 together.

6 The empowerment outcomes: Sense of
7 control and empowerment over their lives through
8 academic, social, and emotional skills. A gap has
9 been bridged between the two dimensions, between
10 what they realize at home, what they see at home,
11 and what they are experiencing at school.

12 The needs of dual-purpose education. You
13 all are familiar with these. There is no
14 antipoverty tool we can provide for disadvantaged
15 young people that will be more valuable than the
16 character strengths in such impressive qualities:
17 Conscientiousness, grit, resilience, perseverance,
18 and optimism. Research is bearing out that students
19 who earn the highest grades often aren't the ones
20 with the highest IQs, but the ones working the
21 hardest.

22 "The Grittiest Students," a 2007 article
23 in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,
24 said, "Gritty students muck through challenges
25 despite failure, adversity, plateaus in progress."

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119 East Marcy, Suite 110
Santa Fe, NM 87501
(505) 989-4949
FAX (505) 843-9492



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(505) 843-9494
FAX (505) 843-9492
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1 Again these were all in our application,
2 I'm just reiterating, because of the importance.

3 Our program is not just the dual-purpose
4 instruction. Our purpose and our program is a
5 meshing of unique ingredients that will work
6 together to help all students learn that they can
7 succeed. Yes, we have the dual-purpose instruction.
8 But the other programs, the inspirational
9 curriculum, the asset-based campaign, the
10 social-emotional, school-wide program, the
11 dual-purpose, and the way we go about it, all work
12 together.

13 I think all students have been given a
14 high dose of one ingredient, the cognitive. We'll
15 say there's flour. The students are getting a bunch
16 of flour, and they're not accepting it. Their
17 bodies -- it's not nutritious for them. If they
18 continue to get one ingredient, one ingredient, it's
19 not working. What we are working on is, much like
20 baking a cake, we're putting all the ingredients
21 together, not only the flower, but the eggs, the
22 sugar, the milk, other things that we need to make a
23 cake.

24 Henry Ford said, "Whether you think you
25 can or you think you can't, you're right." America

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119 East Marcy, Suite 110
Santa Fe, NM 87501
(505) 989-4949
FAX (505) 843-9492



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(505) 843-9494
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1 was built on the idea citizens have the opportunity
2 to build a better life for themselves and the right
3 to progress to his or her own ability. That's our
4 pursuit of happiness. For many of our students,
5 we're not taught that we can do that. They're
6 giving -- they've been given a curriculum, a set
7 standardized programs, and they don't know why; they
8 don't know how to succeed.

9 Why do we do things then? Folklore,
10 because it was done yesterday and the day before and
11 the day before. And then we get into these ruts,
12 and somehow we stick with these ruts.

13 Why don't others use it? Well, it's a new
14 science that's coming about, and it's uncomfortable.
15 But it presents a real challenge to deeply held
16 political beliefs.

17 I need to read this really quick about --
18 so I can get it correct from the data. "Presents a
19 real challenge to deeply held political beliefs. An
20 easy excuse is just to say 'Character counts. Some
21 have it; some don't.' But research shows that this
22 is not innate, that this is learned, that if we --
23 that if it were innate, then the people from poor
24 environments would always be, and those from wealthy
25 would always be and make great choices. And that's

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119 East Marcy, Suite 110
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FAX (505) 843-9492



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(505) 843-9494
FAX (505) 843-9492
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1 where the responsibility ends. But, in fact, the
2 science suggests a very different reality. It says
3 that the character strengths that matter so much to
4 young people's success are not innate. They don't
5 disappear magically as a result of good luck or good
6 genes, and they are not simply a choice. They are
7 noted in brain chemistry. They are molded in
8 measurable and predictable ways by the environment
9 in which children grow up. That means the rest of
10 us, society as a whole, can do an enormous amount to
11 influence the development of children."

12 R.I.S.E., New Mexico is a belief in our
13 students and creates a belief within them about
14 themselves. It helps them have a realized
15 potential.

16 The collaborative teaching of cognitive
17 approaches and noncognitive skills places a focus on
18 the quality of nurturing, the attitudes, beliefs,
19 self-esteem, and advocacy of children and subsequent
20 behavior are the foundation of all learning. They
21 define what one will become.

22 Margaret Mead, the great cultural
23 anthropologist, said, "Never doubt that a small
24 group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change
25 the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever

1 has."

2 How much time do we have? Okay.

3 MS. LOPEZ: So Natalie Salazar. We have
4 another Governing Board member, Cathie McQueeney;
5 she's sitting back there. Natalie Salazar would
6 like to say something on behalf of the Governing
7 Board.

8 THE CHAIR: Thank you.

9 MS. SALAZAR: Hello. My name is Natalie
10 Salazar.

11 THE CHAIR: Please come up to the table
12 and really speak up so we can all hear you.

13 MS. SALAZAR: Hello. My name is Natalie
14 Salazar. I am here talking on behalf of R.I.S.E.,
15 New Mexico School Charter Board, and as a community
16 member of the South Valley for 21 years. My
17 children attended elementary, mid-school, and high
18 school in the South Valley, and I am excited to have
19 the opportunity to work on the creation of this
20 wonderful concept that R.I.S.E., New Mexico School
21 embodies. R.I.S.E., New Mexico is a true belief in
22 the student and creates a belief within the student
23 to realize what they are able to accomplish, to
24 realize their potential.

25 As you know, traditional education focuses

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1 on cognitive skills, evaluation, facts, analysis,
2 et cetera, which are essential to learning.
3 However, R.I.S.E., New Mexico curriculum will
4 incorporate the best cognitive approaches with
5 noncognitive approaches. Students -- studies and
6 data are now showing noncognitive skills, such as
7 confidence, persistence, and resilience, are also
8 essential to success in school and life. R.I.S.E.,
9 New Mexico combines the two and creates a program
10 which is unlike any in the country.

11 The intentional marriage of approaches and
12 skills shows a student what to learn and reveals to
13 them how to learn it, in turn, helping children
14 realize again their potential. So often, I have
15 heard parents say how dissatisfied they are with the
16 education their child is receiving, how they don't
17 believe the public school system prepares their
18 children to succeed in life beyond school or through
19 continued higher education. They wish they had
20 another alternative to offer their children.

21 To some, this is private school. But that
22 can be far-reached for many. The other alternative
23 is charter schools. And R.I.S.E., New Mexico School
24 would offer that -- just that, with the merging of
25 the cognitive and noncognitive approach to teaching

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FAX (505) 843-9492



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1 and learning.

2 As Board members, we are committed to
3 working diligently in the process of creating the
4 R.I.S.E., New Mexico School. We believe in the
5 vision of R.I.S.E., New Mexico and support the
6 founders in creating this vision. We will work in
7 making this wonderful idea of R.I.S.E., New Mexico
8 become a reality.

9 We will work with the established
10 entities, such as High Bar, to help build, train,
11 support and sustain an outstanding charter school
12 board and an outstanding R.I.S.E., New Mexico
13 School.

14 I thank you for the opportunity to speak
15 to you this morning, and I thank you for listening
16 to the founders of R.I.S.E., New Mexico, and
17 considering their application for approval, and
18 establishing the wonderful school that R.I.S.E., New
19 Mexico will be. Thank you.

20 THE CHAIR: Thank you. You have
21 59 seconds.

22 MR. LOPEZ: Well, if -- I like to say that
23 I understand that this is a tremendous amount of
24 craftsmanship between a great idea and a great
25 product. And I respect the process, because, in the

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1 process, we can have magic. And maybe some people
2 have gotten to thinking that, you know, once you
3 have a great idea, give it to others and run with
4 it, and it'll be done.

5 I know that our process is -- is evolving.
6 We're learning, and we're having experts to
7 continually help us in creating the processes that
8 need to be established to craft something from a
9 beautiful idea to a beautiful product.

10 THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. We
11 appreciate your presentation. If you would be so
12 kind as to vacate the table, we will ask the
13 representatives from the local school district to
14 come up to the table. I would think it might be
15 better if you would move your materials.

16 MR. TOLLEY: It's fine. I don't.

17 THE CHAIR: No? You're okay? I see
18 someone's glasses. I wouldn't want anything to
19 happen to those.

20 For the record, please state your name,
21 the role you play in the local school district.
22 You'll have ten minutes to comment on the
23 application, please.

24 MR. TOLLEY: Mark Tolley. I'm the
25 director of charter and magnet schools for

1 Albuquerque Public Schools.

2 Madame Chair, the superintendent sends his
3 regrets. He had a conflict this morning and could
4 not attend, so you've got me.

5 In my role as director of charter and
6 magnet schools, I have read this application and
7 evaluated it, just like I would one to Albuquerque
8 Public Schools. However, I trust that the Options
9 For Parents, the Public Education Department, and
10 the PEC can evaluate the actual charter application
11 and make a decision without my input on that.

12 I do have a few comments around the
13 R.I.S.E. Academy, their application, things that
14 stuck out, and also the area in which they want to
15 go.

16 According to statute, the consideration of
17 what is in the best interests of the district and
18 the community must be considered. The R.I.S.E.
19 Academy wants to go into the South Valley, an area
20 that currently has 22 elementaries, eight middle
21 schools, four high schools, over a dozen charter
22 schools, various magnet schools, and dozens of
23 programs aimed at helping low-performing students
24 achieve.

25 I commend the R.I.S.E. Academy for wanting

1 to address the cognitive and noncognitive skill set,
2 but I believe it's inaccurate for the writers of
3 their application to assume their school is a
4 totally unique model. In APS, at all of our
5 elementary and middle schools, there are programs
6 around noncognitive skills.

7 As an example, at Duranes Elementary, they
8 run a micro-society, a national system, and have for
9 years, that involves students in all types of
10 noncognitive skills. We also have several APS high
11 schools in the area working on elective classes,
12 putting those into their schedules to support the
13 students' cognitive and noncognitive skills. Also,
14 we have programs at charter schools, such as
15 Mountain Mahogany, Alice King, El Camino Real;
16 magnet schools, Early College Academy, School on
17 Wheels, New Futures, that actually infuse
18 noncognitive skill sets right into their curriculum.

19 I also am a hopeful romantic. But, in my
20 job as director of charter and magnet schools, I
21 have to look at the hard, cold facts around money
22 and around numbers. And, to infuse another school
23 and cause a dissolution of services in an area
24 that's already inundated with programs and
25 innovative programs going on in to address these

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1 students, would do a disservice to that community
2 and this district.

3 There are many statements in the
4 application about serving noncognitive, serving the
5 whole child, fusing cognitive and noncognitive, but
6 I see very little data to back that up within the
7 application. I feel like the application was very
8 much like the cake analogy, milk, flour, and a bunch
9 of other stuff. "We're going to teach curriculum;
10 we're going to do noncognitive skills, and, then,
11 other stuff to help the kids."

12 At APS, we cannot support this
13 application. We see nothing new in this
14 application. It seems to be a duplication of things
15 that are already being taught at our traditional
16 schools and our charters. Thank you.

17 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Is there anyone
18 else from the district? Seeing none, we will move
19 on to the public comments. I believe Karen is
20 getting the sign-up sheets for us.

21 COMMISSIONER GANT: No, she isn't.

22 THE CHAIR: Rachel, would you mind getting
23 the -- or someone? Brad. Brad is getting them,
24 Rachel, thank you.

25 MS. STOFOS: Brad is faster.

1 THE CHAIR: Okay. I have a second name
2 over on the School District side, Mr. Tolley. Was
3 someone else here, or perhaps someone just signed up
4 on the wrong side?

5 MR. TOLLEY: I think someone signed on the
6 wrong side.

7 THE CHAIR: Okay. So it looks like we
8 have two people signed up to speak during the
9 community input section. We have a total of ten
10 minutes for each person to use the 20 minutes. The
11 first name I see is "Ray" -- and I'm sorry.

12 MR. ZAMORA: I must have signed on the
13 wrong side, then.

14 THE CHAIR: Do you wish to speak?

15 MR. ZAMORA: Yes, I would.

16 THE CHAIR: Please come forward. Give
17 your name to the reporter and spell it.

18 MR. ZAMORA: My name is Raymond Zamora.
19 And it's R-A-Y-M-O-N-D, Z-A-M-O-R-A.

20 THE CHAIR: And if you will watch the
21 timekeeper, you'll know when your time is up.

22 MR. ZAMORA: Well, let me tell you about
23 me real quick. My name is Ray Zamora. I'm a former
24 police officer with Albuquerque Police Department.
25 I served 21 years and retired. In my last five

1 years, I worked specifically with juveniles.

2 I heard about this program. I am in
3 complete support of it, for many reasons. I also
4 own Warrior Boxing, one of the boxing gyms here in
5 New Mexico, where I deal specifically with youth.

6 And, in the last ten years that we've
7 owned this place, we've worked directly with
8 children. And I see this type of program actually
9 helping them tremendously.

10 I see that there has to be options for
11 these children. The traditional school, although
12 those programs may be in place, as I heard this
13 other gentleman from the district, I can see that
14 they're probably not working, or they need something
15 else.

16 A lot of these kids are frustrated. They
17 either end up leaving school, you know, or they
18 just -- they just end up not making it.

19 I'm also the president of USA Boxing for
20 New Mexico. So I represent the entire, you know,
21 section of boxing as it affects here in New Mexico.
22 I sit on the board. I am the president. So I see
23 children, you know, from all backgrounds, all the
24 time.

25 We are constantly working with youth. And

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1 a lot of them are -- it's the same problems, you
2 know. They need -- they need something. And it --
3 all of them need it at different times. There's no
4 way to put your finger on it and say it, "Hey, this
5 is exactly -- this program is going to work; this
6 program is going to work."

7 They need people trying, and that's what I
8 see here. I see two educators that have put
9 something together that is something that can
10 actually have some effect.

11 You know, as far as the South Valley, it
12 speaks for itself. You can look at the dropout
13 rate. You can look at all the kids that are not
14 doing well in school, or being arrested, you know,
15 dealing with the law. I see that. I've seen that
16 side as well.

17 You know, part of my job at the end of my
18 career was specifically to arrest juveniles, to deal
19 with cases that APS had. And -- and, you know, they
20 were some of the worst that you could imagine. And
21 so my thinking is, we have to do something to -- to
22 stop that before it gets to that point.

23 And it may be with the parents; it may be
24 with programs; it may be -- I think all of these
25 things have an effect. But, you know, if your

1 school is teaching you how to learn -- if your
2 school is teaching you how to become a valued
3 citizen, then I think that, you know, you're
4 definitely on the right track.

5 You know, like I said, I don't want to
6 stay up here all day. I want to let you guys know
7 that I am in full support of this program, and I
8 believe it will work. I believe that we need
9 something like this, and we need some change. And,
10 if there is, you know, other programs like this out
11 there in APS, they're not working; they need
12 something else. And, you know, the statistics will
13 show all by themselves.

14 And that's basically it. Thank you for
15 allowing me to speak. And, you know, I'm just
16 giving my opinion. I'm also a South Valley member
17 as well. So I live in the South Valley.

18 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Thank you very
19 much.

20 Julian Salazar. Good morning.

21 MR. SALAZAR: Good morning, ladies and
22 gentlemen.

23 THE CHAIR: Please give your name to the
24 recorder, and watch the time, if you would, please.

25 MR. SALAZAR: Yes, ma'am. Today, I'm here

1 to speak on behalf of R.I.S.E. Academy. Why?
2 Because I feel R.I.S.E. is a school that is built
3 from the -- will be built from the bottom, that the
4 South Valley needs. And I feel that being a
5 resident of the South Valley for 20 years and a
6 parent myself, kids in the South Valley need it
7 more -- or need more.

8 All of us say that there is a lot of
9 programs that is being put out there by the
10 Albuquerque Public Schools. But the thing is, is we
11 see the words coming out. We see it in paper. But
12 when it comes to reality, and you see on our
13 students, on our kids, I don't see it happening.

14 For me, R.I.S.E. will bring something new
15 to the South Valley. It'll inspire our kids, our
16 children, our parents to be more involved. Being
17 that I have a child who is not only a teacher, I've
18 seen that she is very, very into her kids. The big
19 thing that I've seen in the public schools while my
20 kids were going through the schools, was that the
21 teacher ratio was, to me, inadequate, because you
22 had an overcrowded of students. Basically, you had
23 maybe one to 20 kids, maybe more. And the teacher
24 herself could not keep that one -- or any child
25 interested in what she was trying to teach.

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1 One of the big things, when R.I.S.E. gave
2 to me -- when Eppie and Vanessa came to me, what I
3 really, really saw in R.I.S.E, as I was reading
4 through, it is their vision. And I want to read
5 about their vision.

6 "Everything we do we believe in enriching
7 students' lives to awaken the life which lies
8 within."

9 To me, at first, I kind of wondered why --
10 what does this mean? And, to me, I thought, well,
11 do they want to just open a school and go through
12 the same procedures, or the same -- the same as any
13 other school? And I said, "No." This -- they are
14 very, very into being that they are -- knowing that
15 they were -- they're teachers, that they want more,
16 not only for the child, but for the South Valley
17 community.

18 And, like I mentioned before, being that
19 I've been in the South Valley for 20 years, and I
20 moved there 20 years ago, being that I was military,
21 I served 24 years, and I felt that I wanted to
22 retire here and give my kids the opportunity, and I
23 felt the South Valley would give them that, which it
24 did. Both my children went through Adobe Acres,
25 went through Harrison School, went through

1 Rio Grande school. And, not only that, they also
2 got their degrees in UNM. And I felt that me, as a
3 parent -- or we -- me and my wife, as parents, did
4 what we could. And I felt that the South Valley
5 needed more.

6 I want to basically thank the Board for
7 letting me talk in behalf of R.I.S.E. And I want
8 to -- do you -- (consults with Mr. Lopez.)

9 MR. SALAZAR: I know that we have a few
10 representatives here from the South Valley. But I
11 wanted to read -- there was more individuals wanted
12 to come, but for other commitments, they couldn't.
13 So what I want to do is, if it's possible, I want to
14 read a couple of letters.

15 This comes from Tomas Ponce. He's a
16 sixth-grade teacher from the South Valley Academy.
17 He mentions, "As a teacher in the South Valley, I
18 know the importance of character education and
19 instilling grit in our students. Nothing will make
20 a bigger impact on our kids than teaching of
21 resiliency in the face of challenge. R.I.S.E., New
22 Mexico has a challenge to start a school from the
23 ground up with the combination of critical thinking
24 and resilience education. It's important that all
25 students have a chance, an opportunity to become

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1 more than just successful at standards and tests.
2 To build better people, you need to first
3 acknowledge schools' roles in that construction.
4 R.I.S.E., New Mexico is part of that acknowledgment.

5 "Knowing personally Eppie Lomas, I know
6 his commitment to making the students the primary
7 voice in any school he creates. His ability to
8 connect his students to keep his focus on the kids
9 is what will make this school successful. The
10 current climate makes it hard for a new charter to
11 find its approval, and rightly so. The creation of
12 an educational community is one of the most vital
13 and challenging efforts we have. No issue matters
14 more than the effective education of our young
15 people. This includes the character education of
16 them as well.

17 "R.I.S.E., New Mexico has put together a
18 proposal with initiatives backed by the best data
19 available in education. The curriculum proposed is
20 ambitious and well positioned for the highest
21 efficacy. The curriculum of a dual-purpose
22 education acknowledges the holistic learning that
23 must occur within the education community. The
24 dual-purpose education includes an asset-based
25 campaign, inspirational curriculum, ownership

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1 culture, and school-wide social-emotional program.
2 It is for all these reasons above that I" have --
3 "that I recommend that R.I.S.E., New Mexico is
4 approved by the New Mexico Public Education
5 Commission. Thank you."

6 I'll read one real quick -- another one.
7 And this one is from Mr. Andrew Garrison. He is the
8 CEO and president of the BODYFACTS Wellness
9 Consulting.

10 "Dear Public Education Commission, It is
11 with great honor and pride that I give my
12 professional supports to R.I.S.E. New Mexico
13 Elementary. In my eight years of servitude with the
14 Public Education Commission, this is the application
15 I longed for. With a mission to provide relevant
16 and inspiring education through self empowerment, I
17 had to personally delve into this application to
18 determine sound pedagogy.

19 "I find that the collaborative teaching of
20 cognitive and noncognitive skills focus on the
21 quality of the nurturing. The attitudes, beliefs,
22 self-esteem, and self-efficacy of children and
23 subsequent behaviors are the foundation of all
24 learning; they define what one will become.

25 As R.I.S.E. founders build capacity, they

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1 have further defined the foundational needs to make
2 the R.I.S.E. model a success: Professional
3 development based on annual strategic planning and
4 comprehensive teacher induction will augment the
5 delivery of dual-purpose education, asset-based
6 campaign, and the CPR which models the confidence
7 persistence, and resilience.

8 "They are also venturing into the
9 essential yet chronically" unfounded -- "underfunded
10 sector of wellness by establishing a commitment from
11 me to establish a teacher wellness education and
12 training program based on a three-tiered
13 socio-ecological model approach: teacher
14 effectiveness, teacher wellness and" self -- "and
15 school safety. In addition, the Vistelar Group out
16 of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, stands at the ready to
17 provide verbal defense and influence training to
18 respond to verbal and physical conflict, child
19 bullying, verbal aggression, and campus intruders.

20 "As I can personally attest, highly
21 credentialed organizations of change are committed
22 to the R.I.S.E. evolution. Thank you for your
23 consideration. I miss you all and" wonder -- "and
24 the wonderful work we accomplished together."

25 And I want to thank the Board again for

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1 letting me speak in behalf of R.I.S.E. Thank you.

2 THE CHAIR: Thank you for your comments.

3 As it is the end of the public comments section, we
4 now move to the Public Education Commission question
5 session. We'll have 40 minutes for Commissioners'
6 questions. If the founders would please come back
7 up to the table.

8 Commissioners, do you have questions?
9 Commissioner Toulouse?

10 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Madame Chair,
11 founders, I congratulate you on your ideas. But I'm
12 also a parent and a grandmother and a grandmother of
13 young children just starting. And every one of my
14 kids is in charter schools, so I'm speaking from
15 knowledge.

16 I have a problem where I hear any of this
17 term "culturally" relevant. I'm an anthropologist
18 by training. I would specifically like the idea of
19 what you mean by culture in education, what is
20 culturally relevant. And I can't figure out what
21 your cultural relevancy is. Can you explain to me?
22 "Relevancy," yeah, I get. But the "culturally"
23 part, would you explain?

24 MR. LOPEZ: Be happy to. May I just say
25 that I want to thank the people that were here,

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1 because I think that some of them need to get their
2 children to school and go to work. So I want to
3 thank you for your support, those of you who need to
4 get going. But I truly appreciate your help and
5 your participation. Thank you very much.

6 Cultural. I didn't want it to sound as
7 just like ethnic culture, like Hispanic culture or
8 Anglo culture or Native -- the culture I'm thinking
9 about, and that -- the culture I'm thinking about is
10 the culture of today's student.

11 As an example, my little nephew, he got
12 the phone, and he was swiping -- he's only like --
13 what? Six months? I didn't teach him. I know I
14 didn't teach him. But that's the culture of them --
15 of our children nowadays.

16 The cultural relevancy, meaning the
17 technological natives, meaning that they don't learn
18 by just sitting at a desk and being the -- the
19 teacher being "the sage on the stage," you know.
20 They learn by doing and by acting and interacting.
21 They learn by competition. That's the relevancy to
22 them. They learn by -- by video. They learn not
23 just by the -- you know, the audio, which we, I
24 believe, have been used to in our public education,
25 where it's all focused on, you know, someone getting

1 up and giving us this information.

2 A lot of what the students now need is the
3 visual information, the visual stimulus, as about 20
4 to 30 percent are actual -- like myself and my wife
5 will attest to this -- visual learners, because,
6 fortunately, she can talk to me, and I start to go
7 off. You know, I start to lose that.

8 So the relevancy, again, it's more of the
9 fact of the students nowadays, their style of
10 learning, the way they learn, how they learn, and
11 the best approaches to get them to learn with the
12 culture that they are exposed to nowadays. That's
13 what I meant.

14 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Okay. I
15 appreciate that. I represented the South Valley on
16 the CNM Governing Board for 12 years, and I've grown
17 up in the southeast part of Albuquerque where it all
18 connects. So I also have another concern. Why did
19 you choose the Southwest instead of the Southeast?
20 I see a much greater need for kids in some of my
21 area in the Southeast, especially in the area that
22 they now call the International District, which we
23 think of as the "War Zone." And I see fewer people
24 going in there than I see resources going into the
25 South Valley.

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1 Years ago, the South Valley was neglected.
2 Now, I see they've been able to find a voice and get
3 heard and get resources there, and I'm not finding
4 that anybody pays any attention to this other part
5 of the area that I represent now. So why did you
6 make your choice of South Valley rather than some
7 other parts of Albuquerque?

8 MR. LOPEZ: I guess it's just because it's
9 personal, in the sense that I was born on Atrisco --
10 I was raised on Atrisco Road, but I was born in a
11 hospital, actually. But, yeah. Atrisco Elementary,
12 and the experiences I've had there, some very
13 wonderful, some very tragic. And I know that the
14 need for a program to build the children isn't just
15 confined to the South Valley. And it's not just
16 confined to a certain region.

17 It's social -- it's the poor. It's really
18 the poor who don't have the voice. Unfortunately,
19 Madame Chairman -- or Commissioner -- how do I
20 address you?

21 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Commissioner.

22 MR. LOPEZ: Commissioner, that I wish that
23 my desires that we replicate and that we can place
24 these programs where they are needed the most. It's
25 so unfair that -- I'm thinking of an article I

1 read -- "No Child Left" -- "No Rich Child Left
2 Behind," that the top 1 percent, the 1-percenters
3 are outperforming the world globally. You know how
4 we have the -- the tests that show where the U.S.
5 ranks? The U.S. is always ranking 17th, 18th. But
6 the top 1-percenters are ranking one. It's the
7 lower socioeconomic population that bring the rest
8 of the scores down.

9 That's so inherently criminal, in my mind.

10 MS. LOPEZ: I think another reason why, as
11 well as -- we were both raised in the Valley, in the
12 South Valley, went to schools in the South Valley.
13 And then, upon graduating UNM, we both went to
14 different states to teach. I went to California.
15 Eppie went to Colorado. And what we saw happening
16 over there opened our eyes to realize that we didn't
17 have that type of education growing up here in the
18 Valley.

19 And, so, we both came back, taught at
20 schools in the South Valley. And that is what
21 inspired us. We saw what was happening in the
22 schools that we were teaching at. And it wasn't
23 comparable to what was happening in California; it
24 wasn't comparable to what was happening in Colorado.
25 And we sort of stepped back and said, "What's going

1 on here?"

2 Parents of students that we -- that were
3 in our classrooms would talk about how they wanted
4 more choice. They wanted to be able to -- to have
5 the choices. But there was only one other charter
6 school in that area that they could send their
7 children to.

8 And some of them had -- had experienced
9 that charter school and then decided that that
10 wasn't what they wanted for their children, either.
11 But they wanted something that taught the whole
12 child, you know, that taught those cognitive and
13 noncognitive skills.

14 And so we wanted to take our expertise
15 from other states into the South Valley and teach in
16 the schools that were already existing. We did
17 that. And we came out of it realizing that there
18 needs to be more.

19 So that was our reasoning for choosing
20 that area. And, like Eppie said, our hope is that
21 we can expand and go into the Southeast and other
22 areas, where it is -- it's needed as well.

23 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Thank you. Now
24 I'll turn you over to the educators. I'm the one
25 non-educator on the Commission. My background is

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(505) 989-4949
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1 higher ed, and it's in the human services area and
2 in social sciences. So I've tried to keep it there.
3 And here are the educators. So let them take at you
4 now and your other philosophies, and your budgeting
5 and your planning and your goal setting.

6 THE CHAIR: Commissioner Gant?

7 COMMISSIONER GANT: I'm looking at Page 14
8 of the application. And, on there, you talk about
9 the -- I guess you call it the "Houghton Mifflin
10 Harcourt's Skills"? I assume this is an online
11 service?

12 MR. LOPEZ: Yes, it can be.

13 COMMISSIONER GANT: And it requires
14 licensures?

15 MR. LOPEZ: (Indicates.)

16 COMMISSIONER GANT: How many are you
17 licensed -- how many licenses will you have to
18 support the number of students you have?

19 MR. LOPEZ: Well --

20 MS. LOPEZ: I think that all depends on
21 how many -- what our population is. So this --

22 COMMISSIONER GANT: Do you have an
23 estimate of what it's going to cost per license?

24 MR. LOPEZ: To answer your first question,
25 how many online services are we going to have? We

1 will have as many as we have students. How much
2 it's going to cost? I don't even want to venture to
3 guess. But what I looked at was that we do have the
4 ability, thank goodness, of programs that are
5 waiting on the cusp for us to support us to be able
6 to provide this. Because I know, Mr. Gant, that
7 unfortunately, it's all about -- no, it's not all
8 about. A lot of it is about money, being able to
9 provide.

10 And we, thankfully, have these programs,
11 these foundations, that see the value in it. And I
12 looked at it more for the -- the Basic Skills Tutor,
13 because I did the research, and I went to a few
14 schools that are using it. The Southwest Learning
15 Academy is using it.

16 MS. LOPEZ: Southwest Learning Center.

17 MR. LOPEZ: Southwest Learning Center is
18 using that, and they're using it very well and
19 showing remarkable progress.

20 So the cost of it was put more as not the
21 emphasis I was looking at. I was looking for the
22 quality of such a program that could help our lower
23 socioeconomic students succeed. And I'm hoping that
24 when -- when these foundations fund us, we will have
25 the capacity to provide the necessary means for the

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(505) 989-4949
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1 students. Not only are the higher socioeconomics --
2 can they attain such things, but we can, too. So --

3 COMMISSIONER GANT: I've got to go back
4 and preface this. What -- the questions we're
5 asking is for more knowledge. And your application,
6 as it stands today -- not what you wish it will be,
7 what you're going to add to it, what these
8 foundations may or may not give you -- is not going
9 to be on the vote. It's what is in this
10 application.

11 Now, what line number -- what line item in
12 the budget is for this Skills Tutor? I mean, you
13 have several lines in there for software, but
14 they're so minor -- I know what software costs. And
15 they're so minor, I can't find out where you have
16 the -- where you have these in the budget. Okay?

17 That's what we have to vote on: What's in
18 the budget, what's in the application. So I can't
19 pull that out there.

20 MR. LOPEZ: I see. Am I correct to
21 know -- to understand, then, that with the funding,
22 there is a certain amount that does go into
23 curriculum? Right?

24 COMMISSIONER GANT: You get an SEG.

25 MR. LOPEZ: Yes.

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1 COMMISSIONER GANT: And you do with the
2 SEG what it takes to educate the kids, to spend it,
3 as long as it's legal, as long as it meets the
4 budget that's approved by the State.

5 MR. LOPEZ: Right. And, in that SEG,
6 we've allocated money for curriculum, which is
7 designated by the State, was it not? \$30,000,
8 approximately?

9 MS. LOPEZ: Uh-huh.

10 MR. LOPEZ: So, if we're going to get the
11 funds, just to sustain -- just like you mentioned,
12 just from the application, that's where it would be.
13 And, hopefully --

14 COMMISSIONER GANT: But my issue is, you
15 have a lot of programs in your application. But I
16 cannot pull out what you are doing for licensures.
17 That's what I can't pull out. Let's go to Page 46.
18 And it has to do with governing -- governance.

19 In one part on Page 46, it states, "The
20 Board will consist of five to nine members."

21 And, then, it -- then, in the next
22 paragraph, it talks about, "There will be no fewer
23 than five members."

24 But -- and, then, it says, "The terms will
25 be overlapping. The Board shall determine, prior to

1 February the 1st of each election cycle, whether the
2 makeup of the Board shall be increased or otherwise
3 changed."

4 Why are you changing the makeup of the
5 Board in numbers? Do you see it on that, number of
6 members of Boards?

7 MR. LOPEZ: We shouldn't change the
8 number.

9 COMMISSIONER GANT: But that's what you've
10 got in here. All right. Along with that question,
11 you realize that every time you change a Board
12 member, you have to re- -- you have to get --
13 qualify the Board as a Board of Finance? And you're
14 talking about changing the Board once -- once --
15 some of these will be there for one year; some will
16 be there for three years. How come the spread and
17 how -- why the Board's going to be -- it's down to
18 the next paragraph.

19 Why is it one to three years, they're
20 going to be on the Board? That seems like confusion
21 to me. Why?

22 MR. LOPEZ: We shouldn't. It should be a
23 consistent program, and that we are -- and our
24 bylaws will create the consistency. And, also, we
25 are focusing on -- much like we had said earlier,

1 that we are evolving and we are growing.

2 And I know, Mr. Gant, you said that it is
3 what's in here. But are we not afforded the ability
4 to work with consulting programs that are experts in
5 Board governance and policies and regulation, that
6 we comply with, and do what is the most effective
7 and efficient way to run a Board?

8 And that's where -- that's where our focus
9 is. Just like I had mentioned about the
10 craftsmanship of the process. I am an expert in
11 education. I am a Master in education, a Master in
12 the art of teaching. But I am no "Master" in Board
13 governance and finance. But we have the capacity,
14 the ability to get the best.

15 I think it's -- in the sense of saying,
16 "I'll get the best person to work for me and move
17 out of the way, as long as they follow the
18 policies."

19 And that's what we intend to do, sir. I
20 know that some of these words and ideas aren't the
21 most effective and efficient. But I guarantee you I
22 will work religiously to get the best experts in
23 Board governance, and that are there for us and our
24 Board to training us in the right way.

25 MS. LOPEZ: It also says, "Members can

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119 East Marcy, Suite 110
Santa Fe, NM 87501
(505) 989-4949
FAX (505) 843-9492

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1 serve up to three consecutive years." So that
2 doesn't necessarily -- they do have that one-year
3 term that they would be leaving. So they are --
4 there is that. You know, they can stay for up to
5 six years -- or three years, for those members that
6 have served the one year.

7 COMMISSIONER GANT: Yes, I read that.
8 Thank you.

9 But did you have anybody at all help you
10 write the governance piece on this? Who?

11 MS. LOPEZ: Yes. We had people who were
12 experts that read over it.

13 COMMISSIONER GANT: Okay. Next question.
14 Page 50. It's right below A bowlegs 3. And what is
15 the process of select- -- you have in mind for
16 selecting Board members? Explain your process for
17 selecting Board members.

18 MS. LOPEZ: Okay. So we have committees,
19 obviously, that are part of the Board. And there's
20 one Board member serving on each committee. So what
21 we want to happen is community members who are -- we
22 already have a lot of community members, businesses,
23 other things within the community, people who are
24 interested in R.I.S.E. So we want the committees to
25 get community members involved, and, then, that will

1 create a funnel for future Governing Board members.

2 So the community members who are serving
3 on the different committees and helping with that
4 committee work will become familiar with R.I.S.E.,
5 will understand the mission of R.I.S.E., and then
6 will then lead into those -- those positions, coming
7 up into those positions.

8 COMMISSIONER GANT: So how will they
9 become members of the Board?

10 MR. LOPEZ: The Governing Board members
11 are going to be in the subcommittees. And, again,
12 I'm learning this as I'm going along, but I'm not --
13 and I will hire -- I will work with the people that
14 are experts. But my understanding is they're going
15 to -- members will be selected by subcommittee
16 process of the Board.

17 COMMISSIONER GANT: Do you understand, as
18 I understand it, anyway -- and correct me, other
19 Commissioners -- Board members have to be selected
20 in an open meeting, a public open meeting? Do you
21 understand the Open Meetings Act.

22 MR. LOPEZ: I do. But what I want to tell
23 you is that, at the core of this all -- of all of
24 this, is we are definitely following, and will
25 follow, and be guided by the people that will

1 guarantee that we follow the policies and the
2 procedures of doing this correctly.

3 MS. LOPEZ: Well -- and I think what will
4 happen is these committee members will be, like,
5 nominated as potential Governing Board members. So
6 yes, they will be selected in an open meeting. It's
7 not just something that's going to happen behind the
8 scenes. But these people are a great funnel, in
9 order to say, "This person is really committed and
10 has expertise in finance. I would love to nominate
11 them to be part of the Board when X member leaves,"
12 and then be chosen in that -- in that forum.

13 COMMISSIONER GANT: Okay. I just have a
14 few more. I know we're halfway through the time, so
15 I'll make it quick.

16 Page 59. No. Let's skip that one. Go
17 over to -- go to 80, Page 80. And, on that page, it
18 talks about disenrollment. And, also, in the
19 appendices, on Page 56, it talks about student
20 discipline. And I read through these several times,
21 page 80 and 56, and the appendices, student
22 discipline and disenrollment. Do you know what is
23 in Section 6.1 -- correction -- 6 -- 6.11.2,
24 New Mexico Administrative Code, when it deals with
25 discipline, student rights?

1 MR. LOPEZ: Right offhand, I don't know.

2 COMMISSIONER GANT: That's what's supposed
3 to be in here.

4 MR. LOPEZ: We will get that fixed.

5 COMMISSIONER GANT: There is no reference
6 in the application -- please explain this one to
7 me -- no references in the application or appendices
8 to the discipline, removal of students with
9 disabilities, procedures for detention, suspension,
10 expulsions, appeals -- the list goes on.

11 MS. LOPEZ: And I think our understanding
12 was that, do you have some basic -- student
13 policies? It didn't say that it needs to be
14 exhaustive, every single thing that could possibly
15 happen. So I think we put our understanding of some
16 of the policies showing, yes, we understand that
17 this is how policies are -- should be written, and
18 this is some of what needs to be included.

19 But I don't think that the application was
20 clear enough to state that every single -- because
21 we did -- we have a 50-some page document, "Student
22 Policies." We chose some of them to represent
23 our -- that we understand what student policies are.
24 So...

25 COMMISSIONER GANT: Could you have not

1 just referenced the Administrative Code and
2 sections?

3 MS. LOPEZ: We could have, yes.

4 COMMISSIONER GANT: My last question -- I
5 know you have a lot of questions -- in looking clear
6 through this several times -- and we talk about the
7 relevance of students. But the relevance of
8 students and what you're going to be teaching
9 starts, in my view, at home.

10 MS. LOPEZ: Uh-huh.

11 COMMISSIONER GANT: And I cannot pull out
12 of your application anything that says, "This is
13 what we are going to do to help parents understand
14 what they need to do."

15 I see you talk about IEPs. You talk about
16 some parents' involvement in different boards and
17 stuff, committees and all that.

18 But the home.

19 MS. LOPEZ: So --

20 COMMISSIONER GANT: That's -- that's where
21 it starts.

22 MS. LOPEZ: Exactly.

23 COMMISSIONER GANT: Not at school, but
24 where it starts at home.

25 MS. LOPEZ: And there was no specific

1 question that said -- it said something about, "How
2 are you going to let parents know about grades," and
3 all that. There was no specific question saying,
4 "How are you going to reach those parents? How are
5 you going to educate your parents?"

6 We know how important it is for parents to
7 be involved in the education. We, in the
8 background, have -- and there was no question in the
9 application asking how we were going to do it. But
10 we believe in home visits. I mean, if there was a
11 section that said, "How are you going to get these
12 parents on board," we would have put every single
13 thing that we know that has to do with parents.

14 We believe that teachers should have home
15 visits with students. That way, they can see where
16 the students are coming from. That way, the parents
17 can have that time, that one hour, allocated for
18 every single child for that teacher to sit in their
19 home and talk. And it gives the parents time to,
20 you know, get to know the teacher, the teacher to
21 get to know the parents, and it brings the parents
22 on board. That's one of the things that we are
23 going to institute.

24 We also know that, in the South Valley,
25 parents need to be educated on certain things that

1 they may not have the skills in. So we know that we
2 want people to educate parents. So there will be,
3 hopefully, teachers who would volunteer to have
4 those classes.

5 We have community meetings every month.
6 So parents can come in and have the input in what's
7 going on in the school. If there is a question that
8 was specifically asked, that, then, we would have
9 went for days on the things that we're going to, you
10 know, do with parents. But there was no specific
11 question, except for, "How are you going to
12 communicate with the parents about the academics,"
13 and that was it.

14 So, yes, we have thought about that
15 extensively, and we have a lot of programs that we
16 are going to -- to put in place.

17 COMMISSIONER GANT: Thank you. I have
18 another. But you go ahead. If we have time, I'll
19 ask it.

20 THE CHAIR: Okay. Thank you. Let me just
21 ask you to look at Page 82, under Section J,
22 "Waivers." And I notice that you have identified
23 all waivers that you will be requesting, except
24 school principal duties and driver's education.
25 You've indicated you will be requesting those

1 waivers.

2 However, in the directions, it asks you to
3 describe how use of this waiver will support your
4 school's plan. And that information is not there.
5 Is it perhaps somewhere else?

6 MR. LOPEZ: I'm just looking for some
7 information. This was also addressed to us in
8 the -- in the application. And I just want to refer
9 to those notes, that we met -- that we wrote. So if
10 you will afford us just one minute until we --

11 Okay. So the goal of our school is to
12 allow for flexibility of grouping. And I think
13 that's perhaps why we didn't address --

14 THE CHAIR: I can't hear you.

15 MR. LOPEZ: Our goal of the school is to
16 allow for the flexibility of the grouping.

17 THE CHAIR: I understand that. I really
18 do. But I'm asking you specifically for this
19 particular information, that the directions ask you
20 to put it in this section, when you ask for the
21 waiver, the rationale for asking for that waiver.
22 And, so, you're saying, as far as you know, it's not
23 somewhere else?

24 MR. LOPEZ: As far as I know, yeah, it's
25 not --

1 THE CHAIR: All right. In the interest of
2 time, let's move on. Commissioner Gant started to
3 ask you a question about Page 59 and decided not to.
4 I am going to ask you about Page 59. That's your
5 staffing plan.

6 And you have indicated that many of your
7 special ed people, curriculum director, IT
8 coordinator, ancillary services, business manager,
9 and custodian will all be contracted. However, I
10 could not find in the budget where the funds were
11 allocated to pay for those. Could you direct me to
12 the correct spot in your budget where those are
13 going to be paid?

14 I did find one item for contract services
15 in your budget for \$60,000. But I know that can't
16 be sufficient for all of these.

17 MR. LOPEZ: I believe that, to answer that
18 question honestly, is this -- it's a preliminary
19 budget with what we thought and are going and hope
20 to need, and that the budget will be adapted to meet
21 the needs of our -- of our plan.

22 THE CHAIR: Okay. Let me just -- I don't
23 want to beat this to death, but let me reiterate
24 what Commissioner Gant said. We're looking for a
25 complete plan here.

1 MR. LOPEZ: Right.

2 THE CHAIR: We cannot consider what might
3 be. This has got to be the complete plan. If we
4 said, "Open the school tomorrow," this would be the
5 plan you would have to use. And --

6 MR. LOPEZ: So, then, we won't have the --
7 the way it's written, we won't have the ability --
8 or we couldn't fund these services because it's not
9 in there.

10 THE CHAIR: That would certainly be the
11 way I would read it. And you can't have school
12 without these services, if you have special ed
13 students.

14 And I -- I understand there are some
15 issues there. But we have to know that you are
16 prepared to deal with whatever student population
17 you've got.

18 MR. LOPEZ: Understand.

19 THE CHAIR: Okay. So -- you talked a lot
20 about locating in the South Valley. You talk about
21 it on Page 98 of your application. Let me ask you
22 this hypothetical question.

23 If this school were approved, and you were
24 going out tomorrow to look for the location for this
25 school, and you couldn't find one in the South

1 Valley, what would do you?

2 MR. LOPEZ: Well, go into the -- the
3 Southeast.

4 THE CHAIR: Because, you see, we've had
5 this come to us before. And we've approved a school
6 that was specifically going to be in the South
7 Valley, and they ended up over on Yale because they
8 couldn't find a facility. And I -- I certainly want
9 to bring to your attention that facilities, as far
10 as we've been told, in the South Valley, are
11 difficult to find, adequate facilities at an
12 adequate price.

13 MR. LOPEZ: You're very correct about
14 that. The -- we will work aggressively to find --
15 and have been working aggressively to find -- that
16 location. But what has happened is that -- I know
17 you don't like hypotheticals. But, since we are not
18 approved yet, when we are approved, that opens up
19 avenues for us to be able to build. That is our
20 goal is to build.

21 And much -- thankfully, that we have
22 organizations that are on the cusp ready to do that
23 for us. We want to build. Why? Many reasons.
24 Because we feel that these students need to have
25 something that is worthy of something great, too.

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(505) 843-9494
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1 Not to knock the education that goes in the
2 portables nowadays. But why can't we have something
3 wonderful for our poorer socioeconomic students?
4 And that is my hope.

5 So, again, we're aggressively pursuing
6 answers. We'll work with the Public Facility
7 Authority. But we want to build.

8 THE CHAIR: Okay.

9 MR. LOPEZ: We want to build and --

10 THE CHAIR: Thank you. I appreciate that.

11 On Page 4, you talk about the school day,
12 also referenced in Page 59 in the appendices.
13 "School day" is rather vaguely referred to. What
14 are your plans? Is it a four-day-a-week?
15 Five-days-a-week? Will you fill us in, just a
16 little bit more specifics?

17 MS. LOPEZ: So we will be five days a
18 week. I believe what -- you said Page 4?

19 THE CHAIR: I believe that's what I have
20 written on my -- oh, pardon me. Page 59. I'm
21 sorry.

22 MS. LOPEZ: That's okay. We -- in looking
23 at this now, I understand that it is vague. We put
24 this as vague as possible so we could have that
25 flexibility, so when an administrator is hired, when

1 staff is hired, they can come together and have
2 those discussions about what is best. You know, if
3 it's that they want to have an early dismissal one
4 day -- so, yes, it would be five days a week.

5 THE CHAIR: I think I must refer to the
6 application on Page 53. And I know this is in the
7 written evaluation that you already received from
8 the reviewers. But I think I have to bring this up.

9 Starts on the bottom of Page 52,
10 Section C, Leadership and Management. And these are
11 the two statements that the reviewers questioned.
12 And I believe they said you can't do this.

13 The one statement says, "Although the
14 Board will have the power to take action on any
15 issues it chooses..." -- and, of course, that is not
16 legal --

17 MS. LOPEZ: Uh-huh.

18 THE CHAIR: -- "...the Board cannot take
19 action on any issue."

20 Then, on the top of Page 53: "The Board
21 will enter into and revoke all contractual
22 relationships that exceed \$20,000."

23 And, again, the reviewers questioned
24 whether the Board would be getting into professional
25 contracts, teacher contracts. And, of course, that

1 is absolutely forbidden in a Board activity. Just
2 wanted to be sure that was brought to your
3 attention.

4 MR. LOPEZ: And we will insure a clear
5 understanding, monitor, and align our mission with
6 the Board.

7 THE CHAIR: I believe those are my
8 questions. Commissioner Gant?

9 COMMISSIONER GANT: My last -- it's a
10 question, and I'll read what I wrote.

11 Several other charter schools -- some in
12 the South Valley -- have claimed that they will be
13 able to take students who are coming from
14 economically -- socioeconomic disadvantage, broken
15 homes, et cetera, and these schools will be
16 successful in helping students to be educationally
17 successful. Yet, we, the Commission, have seen many
18 times that these other charter schools are not
19 necessarily successful, even though they talk of
20 doing the same things you wish to do for students.
21 Why do you think cognitive/noncognitive -- whatever
22 your parameters -- why do you think this one will be
23 successful when others have gone for eight years and
24 have not been successful, have gone for ten years
25 and the data shows -- and the comment made earlier

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119 East Marcy, Suite 110
Santa Fe, NM 87501
(505) 989-4949
FAX (505) 843-9492



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201 Third NW, Suite 1630
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(505) 843-9494
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1 was, the numbers are not in here. You have lots of
2 research.

3 MS. LOPEZ: I know.

4 COMMISSIONER GANT: But I don't see
5 numbers to back up the research. Numbers, digital
6 numbers. So why do you think you'll be successful
7 when these others haven't been?

8 MS. LOPEZ: Well, we see firsthand what
9 that was like, because we both taught at a charter
10 school in the South Valley. And our experience
11 shows that we need a powerful leader. We need to
12 get an administrator in place that believes in the
13 mission, that believes in our kids, and that has an
14 investment in this community.

15 And I feel by having that type of leader,
16 it's going to do so much good for just the school in
17 general. We've seen lots and lots of turnover in
18 charter schools in the Valley with the
19 administrators. And that doesn't create
20 consistency, for the students, for the staff, for
21 anyone.

22 We saw lots of turnover of staff. So
23 there was never that -- that really strong core of
24 people really driving the mission.

25 So our focus is on really hiring those

1 stunning colleagues, but putting in a principal --
2 the Governing Board will hire a principal that is
3 stunning, that does have the investment in the
4 community, that does know charter schools, that has
5 experience in running charter schools, and has
6 successful experience in running charter schools,
7 and can get those stunning colleagues in the doors
8 that won't just be turning over every -- every year.

9 So, yeah, there are charter schools in the
10 Valley that say that. We've seen it firsthand,
11 what -- what it's all about. And I think it starts
12 with our -- one, our Governing Board being really
13 strong and making sure that they know their job
14 really well, but, also, getting that stunning
15 colleague for the administrator.

16 MR. LOPEZ: Also, our vision isn't just
17 going to end right here. What happens is, we -- in
18 the processes -- not only in our vision, but the
19 processes of this school -- for example, the chief
20 community officer, their role is to continually
21 build the resiliency of our school. Their specific
22 role is to go out and work with our community.

23 Scientifically validated activity shows
24 that social resilience is a key -- like I think
25 you're alluding to, Mr. Gant -- about why such

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119 East Marcy, Suite 110
Santa Fe, NM 87501
(505) 989-4949
FAX (505) 843-9492



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201 Third NW, Suite 1630
Albuquerque, NM 87102
(505) 843-9494
FAX (505) 843-9492
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1 programs work and why such programs don't work.
2 They don't have that community buy-in, someone
3 actually working, as a 40-hour week, work, to go and
4 meet, greet, get the parents in. It builds --
5 there's scientific basis for that for building
6 oxytocin that works within our school, to continue
7 to build the drive, the vision, that it permeates,
8 and that it replicates, and that it continues to
9 evolve in this process of creating from an idea to
10 the product.

11 And, so, there are the intricacies and the
12 personnel that will be --

13 THE CHAIR: I can't believe we're out of
14 time.

15 Thank you, Commissioners, for your
16 questions. Thank you for your presentation. Let me
17 just finish up here. Any member of the public,
18 including the applicants, may submit written input
19 following this hearing. Written comments can be
20 sent to the Commission via the PED Web site using
21 the link www.PED.State.NM.US/Comments. You will be
22 directed to an e-mail format in which to write your
23 comment.

24 Make sure you identify the school you're
25 commenting on in the drop-down menu. Please note

1 that any written input must be received by no later
2 than close of business on the third day following
3 the hearing on the application you wish to comment
4 on.

5 Thank you all for your presentation today.
6 The Public Education Commission will meet in
7 Santa Fe September 26th and 27th, 2013, to render
8 their decision on approval or denial of this and
9 other new charter school applications.

10 The Commission will now recess the hearing
11 until 10:00 a.m. this morning to hear the
12 application of Explore Academy. And, again, we
13 thank you all for your presentation.

14 MS. LOPEZ: Thank you.

15 (Proceedings in recess at 9:15 a.m.)
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1 BEFORE THE PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION

2 STATE OF NEW MEXICO

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4
5 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

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

13 In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my
14 hand on August 29, 2013.

15
16
17 *Cynthia C. Chapman*

18 Cynthia C. Chapman, RMR-CRR, NM CCR #219
19 BEAN & ASSOCIATES, INC.
20 201 Third Street, NW, Suite 1630
21 Albuquerque, New Mexico 87102

22
23
24
25 Job No.: 8092K

SANTA FE OFFICE
119 East Marcy, Suite 110
Santa Fe, NM 87501
(505) 989-4949
FAX (505) 843-9492

**BEAN
& ASSOCIATES, Inc.**
PROFESSIONAL COURT
REPORTING SERVICE

MAIN OFFICE
201 Third NW, Suite 1630
Albuquerque, NM 87102
(505) 843-9494
FAX (505) 843-9492
1-800-669-9492
e-mail: info@litsupport.com