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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 South Valley Preparatory 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 CSD recommends a 5 year term of renewal with conditions to be determined through an improvement plan. The school's grade has declined over the past three years from a B in 2012, to a C in 2013 and a D in 2014. They have complied with all provisions of law and are meeting all financial requirements. The governance and administration of the school are stable.

### 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

The charter was initially granted by the PEC in October of 2009, therefore this is their first renewal. "The mission of South Valley Preparatory School is to provide a small, safe learning community so that students in the South Valley can engage in a rigorous and relevant academic curriculum. We believe it is here, within a unique family framework; where individual student's strengths can be cultivated while expanding academic horizons and fostering active citizenship."

The CSD recommends a 5 year term of renewal with conditions to be determined through an improvement plan. The school's grade has declined over the past three years from a B in 2012, to a C in 2013 and a D in 2014. They have complied with all provisions of law and are meeting all financial requirements. The governance and administration of the school are stable.

The school provided a thorough and comprehensive analysis of its report card grades for the past three years. Student Reading Proficiency score in 2012 was 52.8% proficient and advanced. In 2013 the score was 54.8% proficient and advanced. In 2014, the score was 46.5% proficient and advanced. The math proficiency score in 2012 was 27.6% proficient and advanced. In 2013, the score was 19.9% proficient and advanced. In 2014, the score was 25.2% proficient and advanced. Compared to Jimmy Carter Middle School, the closest district middle school, SVP students are scoring higher in both math and reading. The administration noted that the school has been enrolling a higher percentage of students who are often multiple years behind in reading and math proficiency.

In growth of highest performing students (Q3), the 2012 grade was an A. In 2013, the grade was also a B, and in 2014 the grade was C. Growth of lowest performing students (Q1) was B in 2012, F in 2013, and F again in 2014. The school has addressed this decline by hiring a school social worker full-time and an experienced math teacher. They also have implemented a 4 day school week with Fridays being mandatory for students falling behind.

In the analysis of goals provided by the school, 3 of 5 goals were met. The school provided adequate tracking data to assure they are measuring student progress. The math and reading goals were not met, but the social studies and science goals were met. The school far exceeded the writing goal which may be an indicator of the success of their daily literacy block. In the Looking Forward section (Part C), the school provided a thorough and comprehensive analysis of deficit areas and presented specific goals written in SMART format with metrics. The goals provided are adequate for negotiations if the school is renewed.

South Valley Prep demonstrates compliance with applicable laws, rules, and regulations relating to financial management and oversight expectations as evidenced by an audit devoid of significant findings and conditions, material weaknesses, or significant internal control weaknesses. The school has no material violations and it appears that the school operates efficiently in terms of Governance procedures, its reporting duties, and organizational stability. The end of year cash balance for FY 2013 was 22.9% of the operating budget.

Organizationally, the school is stable. The Director is one of the founding members of the school. Two of the Governing Board members interviewed are administrators in other Albuquerque schools. They are fully aware of their oversight responsibilities and they conduct a thorough annual evaluation of the director. The Governing Board has yet to adopt a formal self-evaluation but intends to this year. A full-time social worker has been hired to provide needed training to staff and social/emotional support for

students. A new math teacher has been hired and a new math program adopted. Parents interviewed were supportive of the school. Some credited their children's success in high school to having attended SVP. Students interviewed indicated that they are pushed to do their best academically. They pointed to small class sizes, demanding teachers and a supportive culture as reasons why they like SVP. Teachers interviewed stated they are supportive of the students on a personal level since many of them come from difficult circumstances. They highlighted programs like Cottonwood Gulch, robotics and other learning opportunities outside the school grounds as incentives for them and the students to engage meaningfully. Several experienced teachers have recently joined the school because they believe in what it is doing for this population.

The CSD recommends a 5 year term of renewal with conditions in order to help the school bring its grade back up. Given the decline in grades over the past three years from a B in 2012, to a C in 2013 and a D in 2014, the school has recommended strategies to bring performance back up.