



**STATE OF NEW MEXICO
PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
300 DON GASPAR
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO 87501-2786
Telephone (505) 827-5800
www.ped.state.nm.us**

HANNA SKANDERA
SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

SUSANA MARTINEZ
Governor

December 5, 2014

Dear Public Education Commissioners:

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

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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

Matthew Pahl
Interim Director
Charter Schools Division

I. Recommendation

APPROVE

APPROVE WITH CONDITIONS

The Charter Schools Division at the PED recommends a 3 year renewal term for Southwest Primary Learning Center. Financial difficulties at the school are the primary reason for a 3 year term. The Federal Bureau of Investigation recently began an investigation into the school, and the PED has taken over the school's board of finance and is conducting a forensic audit. Results from the investigation and the PED's forensic audit are not yet known. These recent events present considerable risk to the appropriate use of public school funding, and any conditions of the three year term should focus on the school's financial difficulties.

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 Preliminary Recommendation

The Southwest Primary Learning Center (SPLC) was chartered by the state in December 2009. Their first year of operation as a state chartered school commenced in 2010 in order to coordinate all 3 Southwest schools to be on the same renewal cycle. The school's mission is: "The mission of the Southwest Primary Learning Center is to sustain a high-performing learning community." SPLC feeds directly into the Southwest Learning Center Intermediate and Secondary schools.

The Charter Schools Division at the PED recommends a 3 year renewal term for Southwest Primary Learning Center. Financial difficulties at the school are the primary reason for a 3 year term. The Federal Bureau of Investigation recently began an investigation into the school, and the PED has taken over the school's board of finance and is conducting a forensic audit. Results from the investigation and the PED's forensic audit are not yet known. These recent events present considerable risk to the appropriate use of public school funding, and any conditions of the three year term should focus on the school's financial difficulties.

This school has no record of material violations; the school's 3-year grade average is B; the leadership and governance are sound; the school has analyzed its progress and shortcomings and proposed future goals in SMART format to assure continued growth for next charter term.

Southwest Primary Learning Center's 3-year report card average is a B with scores from B (2012 and 2013) to C (2014); a 3-year school growth of highest performing students earning from B (2012) to F (2013 and 2014); a 3-year school growth of lowest performing students consistently earning F (2012, 2013 and 2014). The school outscored or equaled 2 of the neighborhood schools, (Chelwood, Mitchell) in all areas for 2014 from final school grades of C (SPLC), C (Mitchell), D (Chelwood); current standing of A (SPLC), C (Mitchell), D (Chelwood); scored lower in school growth with F (SPLC), C (Mitchell), D (Chelwood); and equal to growth of highest performing students with F in each school ; the growth of lowest performing students was equal to Mitchell with F but lower than Chelwood earning B but the school plans remedial measures to correct this grade.

The school has reflected upon and created three SMART format goals for the new charter term. Goal 1 requires students to meet or exceed the Student Growth Target in ELA. Goal 2 requires students to meet or exceed the Student Growth Target in Math. Goal 3 requires students to show expected growth rate on the short-cycle assessments, as defined by Renaissance/STAR tables. Charter Schools Division recommends the third goal to be reworded to include, "meet or exceed" expected growth rate to create a more ambitious goal.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation recently began an investigation into the school, and the PED has taken over the school's board of finance and is conducting a forensic audit. Results from the investigation and the PED's forensic audit are not yet known. These recent events present considerable risk to the appropriate use of public school funding, and any conditions of the three year term should focus on the school's financial difficulties.

The Southwest Primary Learning Center has had minimal instability with administration. The former director was replaced with the current administrator in August of 2014, having been a staff member for many years. 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 school is meeting all provisions of law. The school complied with reporting out on material terms and Home Language and Parent surveys. The Charter Schools Division finds the school operates efficiently in terms of governance procedures. The school has a full 7-member board which evaluates the administrator on an annual basis using the HOUSSSE instrument. There is no formal evaluation of the Governing Board members, though they are creating an evaluation document for the next charter term. All Governing Board members have met required training hours provided at NMCCS conference and many in-house opportunities in summer and fall 2014.

They have complied with charter laws and show stability in governance and operations. The parents, students, staff and administration indicate they are eager to begin anew with goals to improve the school. The goals are adequate for negotiations if the school is renewed.

The Charter Schools Division at the PED recommends a 3 year renewal term for Southwest Primary Learning Center. Financial difficulties at the school are the primary reason for a 3 year term. The Federal Bureau of Investigation recently began an investigation into the school, and the PED has taken over the school's board of finance and is conducting a forensic audit. Results from the investigation and the PED's forensic audit are not yet known. These recent events present considerable risk to the appropriate use of public school funding, and any conditions of the three year term should focus on the school's financial difficulties.