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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 Montessori Elementary 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

The Charter School Division recommends that The Montessori Elementary School be approved without conditions for a term of 5 years. The school has a state grade average of a C and has a current grade of a B on their most recent School Grade Report Card. Financial matters seem in good order and the school has not violated any provision of law. The school has analyzed its progress and proposed future goals for academic achievement.

APPROVE WITH CONDITIONS

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 Montessori Elementary School (TMES) was established in 2005. TMES currently serves students from kindergarten through eighth grade from Albuquerque and the surrounding areas. The mission of the school is “We believe that learning is best achieved within a positive social atmosphere that supports each individual’s unique development. TMES offers an accelerated program by providing a strong Montessori academic curriculum combined with a unique fine arts program including Suzuki Method, Orff Music, and Visual Arts.”

The Charter School Division recommends that The Montessori Elementary School be approved without conditions for a term of 5 years. The school has a state grade average of a C and has a current grade of a B on their most recent School Grade Report Card. Financial matters seem in good order and the school has not violated any provision of law. The school has analyzed its progress and proposed future goals for academic achievement.

The School’s State Grade Report Card indicates that the school 3-Year Average is a C with 57.7 points. TMES scores have remained relatively consistent with a drop in overall grade for the 2013 school year. TMES has earned a grade of a B on their most recent School Grade Report Card. TMES has demonstrated consistently low growth of lowest performing students with a grade of an F for the last three years. TMES has demonstrated a consistent grade of a C of highest performing students for the last three years. Compared to Los Ranchos Elementary a neighborhood school, TMES outperforms Los Ranchos in 3 out of 5 categories on the School Grade Report Card. The most significant areas to note are current standing, school growth, and student growth of highest performing students. Los Ranchos Elementary has earned an F in these categories where TMES has scored either A B or C.

TMES has provided adequate data addressing the four Student and Organizational Performance Goals. TMES has met most of their goals during their charter term. The goals that were proposed in Section C are in SMART format and will serve as an adequate foundation for Contract Negotiations with the PEC should the school be approved for renewal.

TMES 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. Their audit does not include ongoing concerns disclosed in the notes or an explanatory paragraph within the audit report. TMES also demonstrates complete and timely compliance with applicable laws, rules, and regulations relating to sound financial principles and financial reporting requirements. The school’s FY2013 cash balance is \$42,628.17 which is 2.08% of the operational budget.

TMES has maintained consistency in leadership throughout their charter term. The Governing Council has six community members and been stable with minimal changes in membership. 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. TMES has not violated any provision of the law and feels confident that the school’s leadership and governance are sound.

The Charter School Division recommends that The Montessori Elementary School be approved without conditions for a term of 5 years. TMES has demonstrated that they are performing above the state average in academics on the State Grade Report Card. TMES has demonstrated that they have no material violations, have no fiscal management improprieties, and have no violation of any provisions of law.