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HANNA SKANDERA  
SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

SUSANA MARTINEZ  
GOVERNO

December 5, 2014

Dear Public Education Commissioners:

Enclosed is the Final Recommendation for the Turquoise Trail charter 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 Turquoise Trail Charter 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 an A on their most recent School Grade Report Card. The school has no material violations, and the CSD finds that the school operates efficiently in terms of Governance procedures, its reporting duties, and organizational stability. 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 and fluency in 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

### 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

Turquoise Trail Charter School (TTCS) is a public conversion charter school within the Santa Fe Public Schools. The school was founded in 1990 through community advocacy as a school dedicated to the principles of holistic, hands-on, innovative education. TTCS continues to uphold the same purpose established under the original charter granted in June 1994 and the charter renewals granted in 1999 and 2004. The schools mission is "Turquoise Trail Charter School will be a high-achieving student-centered learning school preparing students academically and socially for lifelong success."

The Charter School Division recommends that Turquoise Trail Charter 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 an A on their most recent School Grade Report Card. The school has no material violations, and the CSD finds that the school operates efficiently in terms of Governance procedures, its reporting duties, and organizational stability. 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 and fluency in 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

The School Grade Report Card indicates that the school 3-Year Average is a C with 59.4 points. TTCS scores have improved greatly, earning a score of 56.3 in 2012 (a grade of C), 45.5 in 2013 (a grade of D), an increase to 76.78 in 2014 (a grade of an A). TTCS has earned a grade of an F for lowest performing students on both 2012 and 2013 School Grade Report and a D for the most recent year. TTCS demonstrates consistency with their grades of growth of highest performing students with a grade of a B in 2012, a C in 2013, and finally a grade of a B in 2014. TTCS is located in a remote area of Santa Fe which makes it difficult to compare options for students. Amy Biehl Community School would be the closest neighborhood school and both schools are very similar on all categories for academic performance on the School Grade Report Card.

TTCS provided limited data addressing the four Student and Organizational Performance Goals. TTCS met only one goal 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.

TTCS 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. TISA 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 \$327,350.00 which is 10.21 % of the operational budget.

The current administrator has been in place since the fall of 2013. The Governing Council has seven 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. TTCS has not violated any provision of the law and CSD finds that the school's leadership and governance are sound.

The Charter School Division recommends that Turquoise Trail Charter School be approved without conditions for a term of 5 years. TTCS has demonstrated that they are performing above the state average and showing tremendous academic growth. TTCS has demonstrated that they have no material violations, have no fiscal management improprieties, and have no violation of any provisions of law.