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BEFORE THE PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION
STATE OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE MATTER OF:
ASPEN GROVE ACADEMY

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS
CHARTER SCHOOL PUBLIC INPUT HEARINGS
August 17, 2010
10:21 a.m.
CNM Work Force Training Center
5600 Eagle Rock, Room 101
Albuquerque, New Mexico

REPORTED BY: Sally Peters, RPR, New Mexico CCR 57
Bean & Associates, Inc.
Professional Court Reporting Service
201 Third Street, Northwest, Suite 1630
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87102

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A P P E A R A N C E S

COMMISSIONERS :

MR. ANDREW GARRISON, Chair
MS. CAROLINE SHEARMAN, Vice Chair
MR. EUGENE GANT, Secretary
MS. KATHRYN KRIVITZKY
MR. VINCE BERGMAN
MS. MILLIE POGNA

STAFF :

DR. DON DURAN
MR. SAM OBENSHAIN
MR. MICHAEL C DE BACA
MR. RUDOLPH ARNOLD, Attorney for PED
MS. MARJORIE GILLESPIE
MS. CORINA CHAVEZ
MS. KAREN EHLERT

ATTACHMENT :

Letter of 8/16/10 from Albuquerque Public Schools

1 CHAIR GARRISON: Call the meeting back
2 into session.

3 The purpose of this hearing is to solicit
4 both written and oral input on the proposed charter.
5 In accordance with the Charter Schools Act, the
6 commission shall receive applications for initial
7 chartering and renewal of charter for charter
8 schools that want to be chartered by the state and
9 approve or disapprove those charter applications.

10 In addition the Charter Schools Act states
11 that the chartering authority shall hold at least
12 one public hearing in the school district in which
13 the charter school is proposed to be located to
14 obtain information and community input to assist in
15 its addition decision whether to grant a charter
16 school application. Community input may include
17 written or oral comments in favor of, or in
18 opposition to, the application from the applicant,
19 the local community, and for state chartered
20 schools, the local school board and school district
21 in whose geographic boundaries the charter school is
22 proposed to be located.

23 The applicant at this time will be the
24 Aspen Grove Academy. At this time we would like to
25 hear from the applicant. Please for the record

1 state the name of the school, the names of the
2 founders of the school, proposed grade levels to be
3 served, and membership projection of the school.

4 MS. SCHEIB: Thank you, Chairman, and
5 Members of the PEC. It is an honor to be here today
6 and to have this opportunity to discuss our charter
7 application and our vision for a unique school,
8 Aspen Grove Academy. This school is a K-12 charter
9 with a maximum enrollment of the 260 students. We
10 believe our school will become an example of how
11 innovation improves student achievement in the
12 Albuquerque community.

13 My name is Elizabeth Scheib, and I am an
14 educator and master's candidate in UNM's educational
15 leadership program. Also speaking today will be
16 three of my co-founders: Tiffany Roth, the office
17 manager for local public charter school and the
18 parent of two children at APS; James Wisch, an
19 educator with a master's in educational leadership
20 and curriculum development who works as a certified
21 technology and networking consultant for many
22 schools in New Mexico; Glenn Nicol has been a
23 software developer for 18 years and is the parent of
24 a student currently enrolled in a local elementary
25 charter school.

1 I would also like to welcome today our
2 three other co-founders, Greg Scheib, Bryce Roth,
3 and Elizabeth Gallagher whose biographies are
4 included in our application.

5 Thanks for making the effort to be here.
6 Also to our community supporters who are here, thank
7 you for making the effort to be here and support
8 choices for students in public education.

9 CHAIR GARRISON: I would now request that
10 you state for the record a brief description of the
11 school, the reason you believe the school will
12 benefit the students and citizens of this community,
13 and any other information you would like the
14 commission to know about your application. You have
15 15 minutes, so please be as brief and precise as
16 possible during this time. You can now begin.

17 MS. SCHEIB: First I would like everyone
18 here to consider what pertains to the core themes
19 outlined in our mission statement. I will pause for
20 a moment after each one to give you time to reflect.
21 There are several, so please bear with me.

22 Mentoring. Remember a mentor in your
23 life. What do they encourage you to achieve? What
24 role do they play in shaping who you have become
25 today?

1 Museums. Have you ever visited a museum
2 and been in awe of what of you saw or heard or
3 learned? Did it inspire you? Did you act on this
4 inspiration?

5 Democracy. Have you ever been a part of a
6 group that advocated for itself or a cause it
7 believed in, and then enjoyed the satisfaction of
8 having affected positive change?

9 Constructivism. Were you ever lucky
10 enough to have a teacher, in or out of school, who
11 so skillfully built upon your previous knowledge and
12 connected learning to your interests that you
13 surprised yourself as you demonstrated that
14 learning?

15 Transformational leadership. Have you
16 ever worked with a leader or someone in an authority
17 position over you who urged you and made room for
18 you to take on leadership roles yourself? How did
19 that transform you?

20 Engaged learners. When was the last time
21 you were totally engaged in a learning experience in
22 or out of school? What engaged you? The subject?
23 The teacher? What you got to do? How did your
24 engagement motivate you to achieve?

25 Now, please remember yourself as a

1 student. What if you could have woken up every day,
2 and known that when you got to school, all these
3 concepts were available to you, were part of your
4 school culture, were supporting your academic
5 achievement and social development? Well, this is
6 the culture and support for achievement that Aspen
7 Grove Academy students will have. We are building
8 on the vetted practices that exist in many schools,
9 including mentoring programs, museum programs, and
10 democratic governance.

11 Every day in this country, thousands of
12 students participate in mentoring programs during
13 and after school and finding additional adult
14 support they need to improve academic achievement,
15 to graduate, to stay off drugs, to stay out of
16 gangs, to discover and follow their passions.

17 Aspen Grove Academy is committed to
18 creating a culture of mentoring at our school with
19 our mentoring program, providing everyone, students
20 and staff, with mentoring opportunities. To do this
21 we will hire a mentoring coordinator to oversee the
22 program, train mentors and mentees, and utilize the
23 resources of our supporters who provided letters of
24 intent, including the UNM Mentoring Institute as
25 well as the City of Albuquerque's Department of

1 Senior Affairs. Use of the mentoring program is
2 embedded in our SMART goals and data will be
3 collected and used to enhance the effectiveness of
4 the program for student achievement.

5 Every day thousands of students across
6 this country wake up and go to museum schools,
7 schools that draw upon the richness of exhibitions
8 and the informal education museum educators provide.
9 These schools apply the principles of constructivist
10 education through their use of museums to improve
11 student achievement. Our additional use of a
12 student-created museum forum to display student
13 outcomes, to engage students in rigorous
14 expectations, and to allow students to have a
15 conversation with the community is a unique
16 innovation. Our museum coordinator will work with
17 the educators, exhibit developers, and experts from
18 our nine museum supporters, including the Natural
19 History Museum and the Albuquerque Museum. This
20 person will continue to expand our museum
21 associations and exhibit venues.

22 Every day thousands of students enjoy
23 attending schools, rooted in a century old tradition
24 of democracy in education. This means holding
25 student choice, self-advocacy, and positive group

1 efficacy as paramount to creating a climate for
2 student success and achievement. Aspen Grove
3 Academy has embedded processes of individual choice
4 and group democracy into many aspects of our school
5 where it is appropriate and allowable by law.

6 Parents, community members, students, and
7 staff are afforded decision-making and advisory
8 voices within their respective bodies, including the
9 governing council, the school congress, school
10 assembly, and school committees. We expect these
11 bodies to adhere to and engender a higher quality of
12 transparency, accountability, and discussion.

13 Our organizational SMART goals reflect
14 this expectation through involving students,
15 parents, and teachers in appropriate decision making
16 processes. We have made time within our school's
17 block schedule for the school congress and its
18 committees to meet. We are committed to the
19 professional development that will be required to
20 train our teachers and staff to meet these goals.
21 We are looking at constructivist, data driven,
22 professional development programs to adapt to our
23 structure, such as those coming out of the Marzano
24 based I have 90/90/90 schools.

25 Our democratic governance provides a

1 foundation for student achievement, motivation, and
2 ownership of their school. Our mentoring program is
3 our support and part of our community involvement.
4 Our student created museum is our forum for rigorous
5 outcomes and another part of our community
6 involvement. These three pillars synthesize into a
7 dynamic system, where academic achievement is
8 attainable for all students as the school constantly
9 uses data to adapt to student needs.

10 That's our school. We are all of these
11 things, because our founders are educators and
12 parents who know that it takes more than one good
13 idea or one practice to support students' success in
14 school, in college, in the workforce, and in life.

15 So how do you make a school like this
16 work, meet the state standards, meet AYP, and meet
17 the higher standards of accountability that charter
18 schools adhere to? We are going to address some
19 questions that will not only demonstrate our
20 capacity to establish a public charter school, but
21 also alleviate concerns that a unique school like
22 ours may raise.

23 I would like to invite James Wisch to
24 answer the following question: How are all these
25 methods and systems going to be employed in the

1 school and classroom and lead to greater student
2 achievement? Most importantly, how will we know
3 that they're achieving?

4 James.

5 MR. WISCH: Aspen Grove Academy will know
6 that students are achieving academic success through
7 constantly collected and analyzed data from student,
8 teacher, community, and state assessments. We will
9 use that data with proven constructivist teaching
10 methods, vetted curricula, rigorous assessment and
11 reflection processes to radically improve student
12 engagement and achievements.

13 We have a clearly delineated plan for
14 students to choose rigorous standards based classes
15 and reflect on their achievements with parent and
16 teacher guidance through quarterly portfolio short
17 cycle assessment. We are working with museums to
18 develop curricula and an outcomes based forum to
19 connect student learning to real world applications.
20 Learning will be driven by a plan, do, study, act,
21 PDSA method, similar to the Deming/Baldrige problem
22 solving cycle, and will be intimately meshed with
23 curriculum design.

24 At the level of the individual student,
25 this will occur via daily reinforced reflection and

1 self-assessment strategies, quarterly assessments,
2 and standardized testing. In their short cycle
3 assessment meetings, students will look at their own
4 test scores and be guided to evaluate how to use
5 them to improve their own achievement. Our school
6 will use assessment to help students take control of
7 their own learning, to transform themselves into not
8 merely engaged learners, but educational leaders who
9 inspire their peers to greater academic achievement.

10 Classes at Aspen Grove and the teacher
11 created curricula used in them will be vetted by our
12 curriculum committee before ever being implemented
13 in the classroom. This committee will look at a
14 number of rubric based criteria, including state
15 standards, special populations, scope and sequence,
16 use of the museum and mentoring programs, and
17 assessments to measure student achievement.

18 We will retain data and reflections for
19 analysis the next time the class comes up. With
20 each successive offering improving on the former,
21 these will then be compared with state assessments
22 to determine how better to use the curricula to
23 improve those scores. This will be an ongoing
24 process of data driven improvement at the school.

25 And then at the whole school level,

1 besides collecting data on involvement in our
2 programs, we will be serving our students, staff,
3 parents, mentors, and museum partners to get data
4 about the effectiveness of our mentoring and museum
5 programs, as well as the process of student choice
6 and democracy for student achievement.

7 At least one of our school committees will
8 be a data team that compiles and shares the data
9 with our school congress, school assembly, and
10 governing council.

11 Next we are going to discuss finance, and
12 let's see, Tiffany, how is the school going to
13 finance the educational plan and ensure the
14 safeguard of public funds?

15 MS. ROTH: Thank you. We looked at three
16 priorities when we established what we submitted as
17 a proposed budget. The first priority, of course,
18 is staffing and professional development that goes
19 along with making sure that our staff can support
20 this educational plan. We know it's an ambitious
21 curriculum, and we know it will take the lion's
22 share of the school's resources to do it well.

23 Secondly we identified funding the
24 mentoring and museum program. They are integral to
25 the success of the school, and we have identified

1 two positions: The mentoring coordinator and the
2 museum coordinator who will launch those programs
3 and manage them effectively. And finally the third
4 is, of course, it's always the stickler with charter
5 schools, facilities, safe adequate facilities that
6 will house the museum forum and highlight the
7 rigorous expectations that we have of our students.
8 So that's where we really approached the budget
9 from, and we think that the proposed budget shows
10 that this can be funded with a lot of frugality and
11 commitment to the program.

12 We talked a lot about safeguarding public
13 funds. Everyone in this room knows the use of
14 public funds in education has garnered a lot of
15 attention recently, and it is no small task to make
16 sure that these items are taken care of. We are
17 aware that the financial evaluation of the school is
18 crucial to establishing its reputation, and we do
19 not take that charge lightly. It is vital to the
20 charter school movement that transparency and
21 accountability are apparent when using state and
22 federal funds.

23 Short of listing the myriad policies that
24 go along with generally accepted accounting
25 principles and practices, we are going to highlight

1 some of the things that we will be doing. We are
2 going to contract with a licensed business manager
3 in the planning year to establish the policies and
4 procedures and to launch the internal controls that
5 are so often in audit findings. We are going to
6 work with the PED with the planning year checklist.
7 We are going to take advantage of the New Mexico
8 Association of School and Business Officers, the
9 Spring Budget Workshop, the resources that the state
10 has wisely developed to help charter schools. And
11 we believe that we have got a plan in place that
12 will launch effective, transparent, and appropriate
13 funding from day one for the school, because it is
14 essential to the future of our school and the
15 students we will be serving.

16 Glenn.

17 MR. NICOL: I would like to talk about
18 governance at Aspen Grove Academy. You have heard
19 us talk about democracy and choice embedded
20 throughout our school. Does this conflict with the
21 school's legal authority structures? No, not at
22 all. To balance and allow for this choice within
23 our school, we have created a concrete, grounded
24 governance structure that fulfills and abides by all
25 legal requirements.

1 At the core of our governance is our
2 organizational structure. You will recognize it as
3 a typical top-down hierarchy. The governance
4 council oversees the school's finances, develops
5 school policies, and is elected to two year terms.
6 The principal teacher is hired by and reports to the
7 governance council and runs the school day to day.
8 The business manager, teachers, mentor coordinator,
9 museum manager, and support staff all report to the
10 principal teacher. This hierarchy grounds the
11 school in the public charter school statutes for
12 governing structure.

13 The school congress and the school
14 assembly are two additional bodies that provide for
15 shareholder voices in the school's governance. The
16 school congress is made up of students and staff
17 that will meet weekly to discuss and vote on
18 day-to-day issues at the school that affect them.
19 Examples of these day-to-day issues could include
20 issues around school culture, lunch procedures,
21 playground rules, library etiquette, encouraging
22 respectful behavior, and the hundreds of other
23 details of a student's day to day life in the
24 learning community of a school. It is in working
25 through these kinds of issues that students will

1 take ownership of their learning experience and
2 transform into leaders.

3 Any concerns that the school congress may
4 have with the school policy will be sent to the
5 governance council as an issue of advisement. The
6 authority and grounded structure set in place by the
7 governance council and principal teacher provide the
8 environment to allow for the democracy of the school
9 congress.

10 The school assembly is where our school's
11 stakeholders will meet quarterly to discuss, review,
12 plan, and vote on school issues. Voting members of
13 the school assembly are parents, teachers, support
14 staff, students, museum consultants, and mentor
15 volunteers.

16 The school assembly is responsible for
17 recruiting and voting on governance council members.
18 The principal teacher will be the organizational
19 leader of the school assembly but not a voting
20 member.

21 We have a potential location for the
22 school at the former Boy's and Girl's Club in Old
23 Town. We have a letter of intent from the
24 property's landlord and the PSFA has inspected the
25 property and found it to be a viable educational

1 facility.

2 Finally while staying within the
3 parameters set forth in the law for charter school
4 governance, Aspen Grove Academy has created forms
5 for students, staff, parents, and the community to
6 have a voice in the school that creates an authentic
7 learning community.

8 We the founders of Aspen Grove Academy are
9 committed, passionate educators and parents who
10 believe that mentorship, museum study, and democracy
11 in a public school can create supported systems for
12 achievement for all students. Thank you for your
13 time, and we look forward to answering any questions
14 you may have.

15 CHAIR GARRISON: Thank you.

16 The local school board and district
17 representatives, at this time we would like to hear
18 from the local school board and/or district
19 representatives. As was mentioned before, we do
20 have a letter from Albuquerque Public Schools that
21 we will place into the record.

22 DR. DURAN: Mr. Chair and Members of the
23 Commission, for the record, it should be noted that
24 no one was here from the district during this
25 hearing. There is a public input that was given to

1 the commission that will be passed out.

2 CHAIR GARRISON: Please repeat the last
3 part.

4 DR. DURAN: There was a letter that was
5 submitted as public input that you all will have a
6 copy of, but it should be noted for the record that
7 there was no one from the district for this charter
8 application.

9 CHAIR GARRISON: Understood. But that
10 wouldn't be public input. It was submitted as local
11 school board input, correct?

12 DR. DURAN: I just looked at it, and they
13 submitted it to the PED as public input as well.

14 CHAIR GARRISON: Okay. Thank you. So
15 submitted.

16 Seeing no representatives from the local
17 school board or district representatives, we will
18 move forward to community input. Is there anyone
19 that would like to speak on behalf of the community?

20 Public comments and observations regarding
21 the application will be heard at this time. There
22 will be a four minute time limit per presenter.
23 Persons from the same group and having similar
24 viewpoints are asked to select a spokesperson to
25 speak on their behalf. Multiple and repetitious

1 presentations of the same view will be discouraged.

2 Will everyone please state your name
3 clearly for the record and then also sign in on that
4 sheet at the end of the table. Thank you.

5 MR. HERNANDEZ: Chairman Garrison and
6 Members of the PED, my name is Danny Hernandez. I
7 would like to speak to one aspect of the Aspen Grove
8 Academy, which is the --

9 CHAIR GARRISON: All right. You're on.

10 MR. HERNANDEZ: I would like to speak to
11 one aspect of the Aspen Grove Academy which is the
12 process of inclusive self-governance and how it can
13 engage and empower a school's community.

14 Let me introduce myself a little bit. I
15 am a former chairman of the Greater Albuquerque High
16 School Advisory Committee, my main association with
17 University Heights Association, the Graduate and
18 Professional Student Association at UNM. I am a
19 current member of the Albuquerque Metropolitan
20 Arroyo Control Authority, and I am a former chair of
21 all of those. Some of those committees are
22 advisory. Some of those committees make policy.

23 I am also a member of the National
24 Association of Parliamentarians, so I feel for you.
25 The reason I bring all this up is because most

1 Americans think of the way we make decisions as
2 being very alien, maybe even a black box. They
3 don't understand how this happens, and I believe
4 that's part of why America is so disenfranchised,
5 and they don't vote. And I believe that by
6 educating children and their families on how
7 decisions are made, both formally and informally, I
8 think that you will be empowering, not only future
9 voters and probably board members here, but you are
10 also empowering children and families in their own
11 schools.

12 And I used the term disenfranchisement a
13 while back, and it's not just voters that are
14 disenfranchised. I see that people using schools
15 are disenfranchised, because obviously they are not
16 engaged. I really strongly believe that having
17 children, staff, faculty, and anybody else who wants
18 to be involved, I'm assuming, to be engaged in how a
19 school is run, obviously with the limitations that
20 are necessary, because obviously you are not going
21 to have a sixth grade, a fifth grader or sixth
22 grader make decisions on fiscal policy. But
23 certainly they can talk about how their playground
24 is run or whether we should have raisins in our
25 cookies or chocolate in our cookies. But at least

1 it's engaging the student body which makes them own
2 up to their own education, which is the opposite of
3 disenfranchisement.

4 I also think that making decisions is a
5 skill that is sorely lacking in America today, and I
6 think that this school will be teaching that. And I
7 also believe it's a tool that will carry forward to
8 whether they decide to become members of the US
9 Congress or just their own board of directors for
10 whatever private agency they work for. Anyway, I
11 would like to support the Aspen Grove Academy
12 application. Thank you for your time.

13 CHAIR GARRISON: Thank you, sir.

14 Other community input.

15 MS. HAGENON: Thank you to the commission
16 for the opportunity to talk with you today about
17 Aspen Grove Academy and its vital importance to my
18 family. My name is Erin Hagenon. I am a citizen of
19 Albuquerque.

20 Our son, Orion, is in fifth grade. He
21 recently last year transferred from a traditional
22 APS elementary school to Montessori of the Rio
23 Grande. At that time he was in fourth grade. We
24 felt like we won the lottery. Orion has an IEP for
25 writing and math. He was pulled out of the

1 traditional APS elementary school two hours a day,
2 and those two hours were two hours that I felt he
3 was actually enjoying school at the traditional APS
4 elementary school. The other hours of the day I
5 felt that he was enrolled in academics where he
6 wasn't being inspired or excelling.

7 Now that he is at Montessori, he is
8 excelling. As you may know, Montessori of the Rio
9 Grande has met its AYP score for the last year,
10 other than three actual criteria. This is a
11 nontraditional learning environment that is
12 excelling at its AYP very similar to Aspen Grove
13 Academy. Excuse me. I'm very nervous.

14 What we found is that Orion has, at
15 Montessori of the Rio Grande, become a natural
16 leader. At this point there is no need for pull
17 outs, because of the hands-on project based learning
18 environment. This learning environment is going to
19 be very similar to the philosophy proposed by Aspen
20 Grove Academy, and he is absolutely excelling,
21 whereas when he was at the traditional APS
22 elementary school, he was simply existing.

23 I would like to move on and talk a little
24 bit about the museum. Last night Orion asked, when
25 is the school going to start, because I need to get

1 started on that museum. And that's a quote,
2 unquote, that any parent or educator would be
3 thrilled to hear from their child or student. Orion
4 has, through his hands-on project based education at
5 Montessori, become a natural teacher and leader, a
6 nascent quiet leader that wasn't apparent in the
7 traditional environment. He is also going to begin
8 training as a young docent at the New Mexico Museum
9 of Natural History, and because museums have been
10 such an important part in his life, we are very
11 excited to be able to incorporate that into his
12 learning environment.

13 Finally he will be surrounded by mentors
14 at Aspen Grove Academy, and he will become a mentor.
15 Thank you, and this will only encourage his newly
16 blossoming leadership skills. Finally we chose,
17 when we became new parents, to create a noncoercive
18 parenting style in the home environment, and that
19 has worked out very well, at least for this child.
20 We have a second one on the way, and I'm sure it
21 will be fine for him too.

22 But what we found with the traditional APS
23 elementary school is that he had been, from first
24 grade to third grade, immersed in what I believe to
25 be a coercive, rather punitive environment that

1 wasn't conducive to his naturally sweet temper and
2 open comportment.

3 (The timing bell rang.)

4 MS. HAGENON: So I am very much looking
5 forward to the fact that we can transition from
6 Montessori of the Rio Grande to Aspen Grove Academy
7 in sixth, seventh, and eighth, and on.

8 CHAIR GARRISON: Your time is up. Thank
9 you.

10 MS. HAGENON: Thank you.

11 CHAIR GARRISON: Is there anybody else
12 that would like to provide the community input?
13 Please step forward, state your name, and please
14 sign in.

15 MS. FIGUEROA: My name is Amber Figueroa.
16 I am a marketing consultant and executive coach. I
17 hold an MBA from Thunderbird School of Global
18 Management, and I am currently in the midst of
19 completing my postgraduate work at UC Berkeley in
20 corporate social responsibility. I am also a
21 graduate of a democratic school.

22 I attended four years of high school at
23 Stellar Secondary, a democratic school in Anchorage,
24 Alaska. From the moment I stepped into the school,
25 it was clear that Stellar was really different from

1 all the other traditional schools I went to. All
2 the teachers were on a first name basis, which is
3 really cool. There was an absence of cliques that
4 plagued the other schools. People actually really,
5 truly seemed to like each other, despite the fact
6 they had different clothes and different hairdos,
7 and different makeup. Kids in the student lounge
8 talked about philosophy homework, not because it was
9 required but because they are actually doing the
10 homework, and teachers would be invited to join in
11 the conversation.

12 I remember one of my first all school
13 meetings. It was a meeting -- all school meeting
14 are called by the students basically whenever they
15 need to talk about something important. This
16 meeting was called because some of the students were
17 concerned that the curriculum was getting a little
18 bit stale and boring and a lot like all the other
19 traditional schools in the city. So, imagine that,
20 students really taking their education into their
21 own hands and telling teachers, hey, we want a more
22 rigorous study.

23 So, of course, not all the school meetings
24 were that interesting. A lot of them were about
25 school lunches, student parking, dance themes, and

1 things like that. But the important thing is that
2 we were taught that our opinions mattered. We were
3 encouraged to share ideas and participate in a
4 matter totally unlike any other school. Because of
5 this, we worked together to build our community and
6 we actively sought out ways to make it better and
7 more productive.

8 Because of its democratic structure,
9 Stellar students were considered equal but different
10 participants in their learning community. As such,
11 we were given the responsibility and the authority
12 to take on its leadership for the community and for
13 ourselves. In addition to teaching us how to be
14 good humans, we also became excellent students.
15 Stellar consistently delivers SBA scores between 15
16 and 30 percentage points higher than the state
17 average on all measures. Additionally graduation
18 rates stand at near 30 percentage points above the
19 state average also.

20 Because of its democratic structure, I was
21 treated as a responsible individual from the moment
22 I matriculated -- responsible for my educational
23 experience, responsible for my achievements,
24 responsible for my failures, responsible for
25 applying all of my knowledge to become a fully

1 self-sufficient individual.

2 Because of its democratic structure, I
3 learned how to set goals for myself, to create an
4 action plan, set my course to achieve them. I
5 learned that in order to be a productive member of
6 my community, I need to be informed, to take
7 responsibility for action, and to hold myself
8 accountable to the results. I learned that
9 everyone's opinion has value and how to carefully
10 consider all the information available and to
11 discern what was valuable to me. I learned to be
12 more open, creative, authentic, because I wasn't
13 constantly being directed and ordered about.

14 Most schools today operate on an
15 authoritarian model, with the teachers and the
16 administrators at the top and the students
17 diligently taking orders underneath. While this may
18 be the accepted system, this is not a system that
19 supports self-sufficiency and independence. It
20 certainly doesn't teach anyone about how to
21 participate in a democracy. It does, however,
22 create a community of order-takers that accept the
23 rules and rarely question authority.

24 As one Stellar alum wrote to me, "We don't
25 teach driver's ed without cars, home ec without

1 kitchens, or English literature without books.

2 (The timer bell rang.)

3 MS. FIGUEROA: So why on earth would we
4 try to teach our children to become participating
5 members of a democratic system without them ever
6 having experienced a democracy firsthand.

7 CHAIR GARRISON: Thank you for your time.

8 MS. FIGUEROA: Thank you.

9 CHAIR GARRISON: Any other public
10 comments?

11 MS. BLALOCK: Good morning. My name is
12 Ginger Blalock and I am an educational and career
13 development consultant and a retired professor of
14 special education at UNM, and I work closely with
15 schools and colleges primarily in the area of career
16 development in preparation for adulthood.

17 I would like to add a few comments to the
18 others based on 35 years of working with teachers
19 and children and youth, the youth, particularly, who
20 face a great deal of barriers to success in life and
21 school. Aspen Grove Academy offers or proposes to
22 offer several aspects of engaging students in their
23 own learning so that they choose to stay in school,
24 to achieve at high levels, and to connect with a
25 future through a path that they either co-create or

1 create depending on their ability.

2 There are several features that Aspen
3 Grove Academy offers or proposes to offer that
4 include, among others, contextualized learning,
5 student use of their own data, problem-solving as a
6 mode of negotiation and learning, social learning,
7 especially in groups and teams, which is the most
8 paramount area of development that folks need
9 throughout their lives, self determined choices, to
10 which I will return, project based learning that's
11 based in real world application, mentoring as a key
12 mode of development that's also tied to real world
13 context.

14 So these features have research to support
15 them, and particularly to work together as a body or
16 package of interventions that can really make a
17 difference in the outcomes that young people
18 achieve. So let me elaborate for a minute on the
19 self determination skills that this democratic
20 process will produce, and those are skills that are
21 not systematically taught in the schools and many
22 classes in traditional schools in the Albuquerque
23 area and across New Mexico.

24 There is a large and growing body of
25 evidence emerging that shows that self determination

1 skill development, this ability to know yourself,
2 your dreams, your goals, your skills, your limits,
3 your needs for support, and then also the ability to
4 express those in ways that get you where you need to
5 go, that development leads to significantly better
6 adult outcomes, particularly in going on for further
7 learning and in employment, than those students who
8 do not have the opportunity to develop those skills.

9 In particular the research coming out of
10 the University of Oklahoma and also the University
11 of North Carolina at Charlotte, and it also includes
12 a large study that was conducted in New Mexico in
13 the last couple of years.

14 And anecdotally I have to add, that when I
15 work with higher ed staff here in the state, they
16 tell me they can tell the difference between a young
17 person who walks through their doors who has learned
18 these skills -- how to self-advocate, how to create
19 a path -- just the same skills that the young lady
20 just described. And those students, they can see a
21 difference between those students and those who have
22 not learned those skills, and the difference is
23 about a year and a half of process, of going
24 through, spinning their wheels, among those who
25 don't have those skills. They haven't figured out

1 where they are going or how to get there, and the
2 year and a half and that saves can be key for moving
3 on into the future.

4 Aspen Grove Academy proposes several such
5 strategies as a powerful package of approaches,
6 which is what it takes for this very complicated
7 process of preparing youth for a successful future
8 and particularly struggling students. So I want to
9 thank you for the opportunity. May I ask if I have
10 one more minute?

11 MR. C DE BACA: You have 20 seconds.

12 MS. BLALOCK: I will read quickly a
13 paragraph from the letter of a colleague that I will
14 submit to you.

15 "As the former coordinator of the School
16 Work Initiative and the first state director of
17 Workforce Investment Act, I am impressed by the
18 school's plan to involve adults to mentor their
19 students and incorporate extensive learning and work
20 projects at local museums. Both approaches are
21 central to ensuring the students understand how
22 their learning fits into the real world and to help
23 them develop" --

24 (The timer bell rang.)

25 MS. BLALOCK: -- "their career plans as

1 they progress through their educational process."

2 Thank you.

3 CHAIR GARRISON: Thank you. Is there any
4 other community input?

5 DR. DURAN: Excuse me. If you would
6 submit that to the address that the commission has
7 asked --

8 MS. BLALOCK: Okay.

9 Ms. WISCH: I'm not quite sure where to
10 put this. Is this picking up. My name is Christina
11 Wisch, and I am here today speaking as a mother of
12 three gifted children in the APS community. One of
13 my children is not just gifted. He is also high
14 functioning autistic.

15 So I have over the past ten years pretty
16 much run the gamut as far as educational
17 opportunities and needs for my children. I have
18 home schooled. I have had my children in charter
19 schools, regular schools, special ed. I have
20 attended IEPs. I have volunteered. I have taught
21 in classrooms when there were not art teachers
22 available. I have also worked in the legal field,
23 specifically in the area of children's rights,
24 children and students' rights, so I have seen on
25 professional levels, as well as the personal level,

1 the manner in which our students need alternative
2 educational opportunities.

3 What I would like to say is the biggest
4 difference I have seen when my children have
5 attended charter schools is the level of
6 accountability, and specifically in schools in which
7 they were given a voice to develop their own
8 projects, to develop their own learning, to track
9 their learning, and to hold themselves responsible
10 for meeting their learning goals. Those have been
11 the schools where my kids woken up ready to go to
12 school every morning and cried when they have had to
13 be absent.

14 I have also seen in the classrooms where
15 they are not given a voice, where they are not given
16 options, they are not given choices. Those are the
17 classes where my kids do not do their homework,
18 where my kids, even though they have the ability to
19 perform at or above grade level, fail to do so,
20 because they are not engaged learners.

21 I have also noticed -- not noticed. I
22 have seen that when parental involvement is not just
23 requested or invited, but it's mandatory, I have
24 seen my children exceed and excel beyond anything
25 that we ever hoped for. When I am held accountable

1 for my children's education, when I am required to
2 go to meetings, when I am required to be in the
3 classroom and helping, my children see that this is
4 important, and they do not fail.

5 These are some aspects that Aspen Grove
6 Academy is offering to new students, to be
7 self-directed learners, to have parental
8 involvement, not just encouraged but required, and
9 these ultimately lead to children's success. And,
10 you know, every year where we as parents are told
11 that our attendance, children's attendance lead to
12 that success, well, I have seen it on a firsthand
13 level.

14 What excites me about Aspen Grove is it
15 doesn't just give the children a choice in their
16 education or a choice in their projects, but it also
17 instills the responsibility. If a child fails at
18 their whole project, there is nobody to blame. It's
19 not a mean teacher. They know from the beginning,
20 they set their goals, they have to do the work, and
21 it's up to them to succeed or fail. They will also
22 know that they have the support through the
23 mentoring services, through their teachers, through
24 all the various services that are going to be
25 available.

1 A good example of -- well, give me just a
2 moment here. The concept of the personal
3 accountability doesn't just end with the academics
4 at Aspen Grove Academy. It also extends to the
5 personal conduct of each student and staff member.
6 In terms of discipline in the schools, this is a
7 really exciting concept. All too often in our
8 public schools, because of over-crowding, because
9 the teachers are busy or the principal is busy, if a
10 child has a disciplinary problem, the discipline is
11 met with basically arbitrary and disconnected
12 punishments. Children are given a detention for
13 calling somebody a name, but yet they are never held
14 to be face to face accountable to the child that
15 they hurt.

16 In Aspen Grove Academy, through the
17 process of mediation, through the process of
18 negotiation and diplomacy, the children are going to
19 learn on a very individual level --

20 (The timer bell rang.)

21 CHAIR GARRISON: Thank you.

22 Any other community input?

23 MR. ZIMMERBERG: Chairman, Members of the
24 Committee, my name is Moe Zimmerberg, and I am the
25 head administrator or principal, if you like, of the

1 Tutorial School in Santa Fe. For the last 18 years
2 we have been using a lot of the methods that are in
3 this proposal. Specifically the emergent democracy,
4 transformational leadership, culture of mentorship,
5 and constructivist learning. And I can tell you
6 that this stuff works. I have seen kids' lives
7 turned around, kids that would have been a burden on
8 society go on to become productive members. I have
9 had students go on to become top students in their
10 colleges.

11 If you approve this charter, you are going
12 to be pulling a lot of children into the public
13 school system. That's all.

14 CHAIR GARRISON: Thank you.

15 MS. COMPER: Hello, my name is Ronnie
16 Compher, and I am a cofounder and director of an
17 Albuquerque charter school on the west side of
18 Albuquerque. And for the past two years, I have
19 been very fortunate and honored to have as my
20 employees two of the cofounders of this school that
21 is being proposed, and that is Elizabeth Scheib and
22 Tiffany Roth. During their work with my school,
23 both ladies have not only showed extreme
24 professionalism, which I am sure you just noticed
25 when they presented their proposal before you, but

1 they also were very important and instrumental in
2 making changes that were absolutely necessary for
3 the maintenance of the honesty and integrity of the
4 finances of our school.

5 We struggled greatly the year before that
6 with some issues of a prior administrator. These
7 two ladies took it upon themselves to step forward,
8 at the possibility of risking their own positions in
9 the school, and took forth the actions that were
10 necessary and that helped me to lead forth with the
11 change that needed to occur.

12 So I am here to speak on behalf of their
13 honesty, their integrity, their excellent sense, and
14 the superb instruction that I saw and I have
15 witnessed in the Ms. Scheib's classroom. She did
16 perform a lot of the things that she described here
17 in the independent studies and democracy within her
18 program were the best I have ever seen in
19 instruction. Thank you very much.

20 CHAIR GARRISON: Thank you.

21 MS. MAGOVERN: Good morning. My name is
22 Laurie Magovern. I just want to personally thank
23 you for all of your extra work that you put in to
24 make sure the citizens of Albuquerque have great
25 educational options. Thank you. I think it's a lot

1 of work.

2 I am currently the curator of education at
3 the Anderson-Abruzzo Albuquerque International
4 Balloon Week, and I am pleased to be here in support
5 of this charter application. I am very impressed
6 that the organizers have gathered nine museums to
7 work together in support of this program. That is a
8 daunting task, and she has done it well and we have
9 many on board.

10 Before working at the Balloon Museum, I
11 lived in Washington, DC. I am a local Albuquerque
12 resident, so I am very committed to making this city
13 a wonderful place. But I did move to Washington,
14 DC, because after receiving my master's in theater
15 and art education here at UNM, I wanted exciting job
16 opportunities, and Washington, DC allowed me to work
17 at the Smithsonian and the Kennedy Center, and other
18 professional theaters. So for the last ten years, I
19 have tried to find ways to collaborate with schools
20 and professional organizations, such as museums and
21 art organizations, and I have learned so much and
22 feel that it is an outstanding way to incorporate
23 students' rigorous studies into real life
24 opportunities.

25 One thing that is very exciting about

1 museum studies is that once you have the information
2 learned, you need to learn how to communicate that
3 information. We want our students to learn, learn,
4 learn, learn, but what museums can teach and model
5 is how to communicate. How to communicate what you
6 have studied in science, arts, history, and here in
7 Albuquerque, we have fabulous museums to model that.
8 And so it's also not an extra thing that's added on
9 to academics. If done well, it is incorporated and
10 integrated into what you are studying to make those
11 studies stronger.

12 And what we all need -- and I am just
13 going to say again -- you then take that
14 information, and how do you communicate it in a
15 fair, honest, well-researched way? You also have to
16 learn from emotional language, how do you get people
17 to come to your exhibitions? You also have to learn
18 how to communicate verbally when you are a docent.
19 Student docents, those that curate their own
20 exhibits and then have to docent it as well, it's a
21 well-rounded way to communicate.

22 So I just thank you very much for the
23 opportunity to speak here, and again, getting nine
24 museums to agree to work on this project is a really
25 great thing. Thank you.

1 CHAIR GARRISON: Any other public comment?

2 MS. RECTOR: Hello. My name is Ema
3 Rector, and I am a freshman at Manzano High School.
4 I want to be part of the mentorship program at Aspen
5 Grove Academy. When I was three years old, my mom
6 taught me how to read, and in kindergarten I read to
7 myself. I was very disengaged in my reading class
8 and bored, and my teachers suspected I had ADHD,
9 because she didn't know I could read.

10 When my mom asked if she knew I could
11 read, she simply replied that she had not gotten to
12 know the students personally. I think this is a
13 great issue in the APS school program, because there
14 are kids who are being denied certain rights because
15 nobody knows their strengths.

16 After I went to the first school, I was
17 put in APS family school, which uses many of the
18 methods used in the charter of Aspen Grove Academy,
19 such as portfolios. It was very helpful as a
20 student to chart where we were when we started a
21 specific project and where we were after we finished
22 the project, because we could see how we excelled
23 and what we still needed to work on. And even after
24 if we didn't meet our goal, we didn't fail the
25 class. We were allowed to try again as much as we

1 needed to be sure we truly understood the concept.

2 I also attended Cottonwood Classical in
3 its first year of existence. It was also very much
4 like Aspen Grove Academy, and since then, every time
5 we had an opportunity to vote on something and every
6 time we had an opportunity to discuss something, we
7 did, and that helped us grasp a further
8 understanding of a concept.

9 Interdisciplinary classes that incorporate
10 every subject help make things interesting, so I
11 could see why we use something from a specific
12 subject in every class, why we use graphs, why we
13 have to use proper grammar, everything like that.

14 I like working out of my age level. I
15 most particularly like working with older students,
16 because I know I am an advanced student. This helps
17 me understand things further than most students my
18 age understand and develop relationships out of my
19 age level. I also like teaching. I like helping
20 younger students learn, because it is enjoyable to
21 make sure that somebody understands what they do and
22 why they do it.

23 In sixth grade when I was tested for
24 gifted, I excelled at a college writing and reading
25 level and a ninth grade math level, because I take

1 it into my own hands to make sure I totally
2 understand the subject, and I don't just know what
3 the textbooks tell me. It is my goal in life to
4 become an educator, because I want to instill
5 passion into our youth, because learning is fun.
6 And to prepare for this, I'm going to volunteer my
7 time and be a mentor at Aspen Grove Academy.

8 CHAIR GARRISON: Thank you very much.

9 Are there any other public comments?

10 At this time the Public Education
11 Commission reserves time to address any questions
12 that the commissioners may have of the applicant, so
13 if we could have the applicant come up to the table
14 again.

15 Commissioner Bergman.

16 MR. BERGMAN: Thank you. After reading
17 the application and the preliminary analysis, a
18 couple of things jumped out at me. On page 60 of
19 your application, it was noted that your model would
20 provide real world, case based learning environments
21 rather than predetermined instructional sequences,
22 and the note I wrote to myself there -- and that's
23 what I want you to address, my own note -- means no
24 plan, and I put a question mark. Can you address
25 that?

1 MS. SCHEIB: Yes, I can. I just want to
2 find that sentence. In the second paragraph?

3 MR. BERGMAN: I'm not sure which
4 paragraph. Somewhere around page 60.

5 MS. SCHEIB: I am not seeing it. Would
6 you mind repeating the actual sentence if you have
7 it, so I'm just clear on the question.

8 MR. BERGMAN: Providing real world, case
9 based learning environments rather than
10 predetermined instructional sequences, and I don't
11 have your application in front of me, so I can't
12 refer to that.

13 MS. SCHEIB: Yes. So I think I understand
14 what you are asking. In other words, is it an
15 either/or situation, we are doing this but we are
16 not doing this?

17 MR. BERGMAN: Rather than suggest.

18 MS. SCHEIB: Yes. And that may have been
19 a miswording, but throughout our application, we
20 discussed the extensive planning that actually will
21 be going into sequencing curriculum. We have a
22 curriculum committee dedicated to that, and what we
23 are requiring of any curriculum that's taught in our
24 school, that prior to a teacher stepping into the
25 classroom and starting to deliver that curriculum,

1 it has been vetted through the curriculum committee.
2 One of the things is we develop the rubric that the
3 curriculum committee will use to approve curriculum,
4 or send it back for revision or not, is how does it
5 fit into sequencing with other curriculum at the
6 school.

7 MR. BERGMAN: And then kind along those
8 lines -- it's about a three-part question I have
9 here.

10 MS. SCHEIB: Sure.

11 MR. BERGMAN: In several places in your
12 application, you talk about self directed learning,
13 part of your democratic model. Maybe you can expand
14 on how K through say six or seven have the capacity,
15 the ability to self direct their learning.

16 MS. SCHEIB: Yes, yes, absolutely. So it
17 is always, as we have talked about in the
18 application, in the context of class with a
19 certified New Mexico teacher, it's with guidance.
20 So what we mean by self directed, just that some APS
21 public schools use student led conferencing. It
22 doesn't mean that the only things discussed at the
23 conference are the things that the students decided
24 upon. So that within the context of a class, a
25 student will -- we will be encouraging our teachers,

1 and as one of the things we will be looking at in
2 curriculum is for students to have choices within
3 that class.

4 For example, in my English classes I have
5 taught, I may teach a thematic unit, and within that
6 unit, there may be several novels available that
7 reach that theme that students are able to choose
8 from, so that they have some ability to self direct
9 the direction or the specific content that they want
10 to use to access.

11 We also have open classes where students,
12 much as with family schools, as Ema pointed out, are
13 able to develop a syllabus with a teacher guide that
14 is in accordance with state standards.

15 MR. NICOL: And also, a part of that
16 choice is that the standards are -- they don't get
17 to choose what standards they learn. So they get to
18 direct -- they get to make choices in their
19 learning, but if you are in fourth grade, you are
20 going to have learn the fourth grade standards.

21 MR. WISCH: And I also want to point out
22 that we have a system of scaffolding in place
23 starting with the initial portfolio review, which is
24 really a goal setting session, you know, with the
25 teacher working with the student. And that begins a

1 cycle that's repeated every year and reinforced
2 every single year. So we don't expect students,
3 especially if they are coming out of public school,
4 to initially be able to totally self direct their
5 own learning, but we want to begin and we expect
6 them to begin to make their own choices. Then like
7 I say, build that up over the course of 12 years,
8 hopefully, of school.

9 MS. SCHEIB: I'm sorry. Can I add one
10 thing?

11 MR. BERGMAN: Yes.

12 MS. SCHEIB: I just wanted to add that, as
13 part of it, to be clear, students have an
14 opportunity to choose a class. Once they have
15 chosen that class, they are in that class. In other
16 words, it's as if they have made a contract that
17 this is something I am interested in and I know what
18 this class is about, and I'm going to subscribe to
19 doing my best to meet those standards and everything
20 else that that class's curriculum has.

21 MR. BERGMAN: And even up into the high
22 school years, some students are mature enough and
23 have the discipline to do these things. How are you
24 going to approach the ones that don't? Definitely
25 no class is totally disciplined and mature, so you

1 are going to have some that are not.

2 MS. SCHEIB: Yes, absolutely. So are you
3 talking about still just the choice.

4 MR. BERGMAN: Well, how are you going to
5 guild them along this self directed path?

6 MS. SCHEIB: Yes, I agree. But it also --
7 I just want to be very clear that as part of our
8 enrollment process and orientations for teachers and
9 parents, we will be very clear about the choices
10 that are available, within parameters that students
11 have to be willing, for example, to sign up for
12 classes that meet all the state standards that are
13 required for their school level and their school
14 year. So just as while we allow them more choice,
15 it doesn't mean that there aren't expectations that
16 they must be given access to the standards.

17 MR. WISCH: And to address that issue,
18 especially at the high school level, which pretty
19 much summed me up before I started a democratic
20 school myself, again we have the same sort of
21 scaffolding in place with the quarterly portfolio
22 reviews. We have this mentorship program that is
23 going to be working especially with those disengaged
24 students who come into the school from outside,
25 which we definitely expect.

1 However, it's been my experience that
2 after a little bit of a school down period in which
3 kids can participate in sort of the open class
4 setting that we have described in the charter, we
5 have a system for transitioning them into more
6 regularly scheduled formal classes. So we expect
7 kids, especially coming out of public school, older
8 kids, to really have a negative socialization, a
9 negative reaction to education. These are kids who
10 are the most disengaged, and in the charter, you see
11 we have a system for letting them back off a little
12 bit, do their independent learning that they feel
13 they need to do.

14 And my experience personally in democratic
15 charter school is that as you see your peers really
16 interested and engaged in their learning, you start
17 to wonder, "Well, what's this all about? I kind of
18 want to get involved." And then pretty soon you
19 find yourself in a group that becomes a class, that
20 becomes a curriculum, and, voila, you are an engaged
21 learner and it's life changing absolutely.

22 MS. SCHEIB: Just one final point to meet
23 a question about remediation, we are doing a block
24 schedule which allows for at least eight classes in
25 the afternoon, where we have made room for some

1 enrichment classes. Students who have fallen behind
2 will have the opportunity for remediation, as well
3 as potentially being able to go into all the
4 curriculum we offer.

5 MR. BERGMAN: The final part of my
6 question, somewhere around page 80 or 81, you
7 suggest that students will have the capacity to
8 exempt themselves pretty much at will from classes.
9 You are not just saying they are going to say, "If I
10 don't feel like going to class today, I am not going
11 to class"? You are not saying that, are you?

12 MS. SCHEIB: No, we are not. We are
13 talking about more of a -- I believe it's a three
14 step process, over the course of three days. If a
15 student has signed up for a class, let's say, and it
16 is not working out for them for whatever reason,
17 what we have instituted is a situation where,
18 instead of that student starting to act up and being
19 sent to the principal sitting in the office, as what
20 happens and is often cited as the reason for why
21 discipline issues occur, we are allowing that
22 student to opt out for the first day of the class
23 and go to a study hall type situation, where there
24 will be a certified licensed teacher who can help
25 them continue with their studies in more study hall

1 like environment.

2 And the second and third tier bring in
3 parents, as well as teachers, to discuss
4 conferencing and discuss whether continuing to
5 access those standards that that class identified
6 are the best route for the child, or at this point
7 it would be best to move to an open class where they
8 develop a specific curriculum with a certified
9 teacher there to continue to access and accomplish
10 those standards. And I would like to kind of
11 reserve the right to maybe answer it even more fully
12 in writing, okay?

13 MR. NICOL: So we do give the students the
14 chance to opt out for a day, maybe for two days, but
15 then in the application, we have a system or a
16 process that, you know, if they keep opting out, we
17 are going to step in. We are going to be more and
18 more aggressive in helping them. That's an example
19 how we give the students a lot of choice and a lot
20 of flexibility, but we have also built a very solid
21 structure, that if they step out of it, we can step
22 in and make sure they are going on the right path.

23 MR. WISCH: To me it's really about
24 providing that free and appropriate education to the
25 child. And in my own experience with my son, who is

1 special needs, has been that all too often he is
2 essentially denied that free and appropriate
3 education, because in any regular public school,
4 because the teachers can't handle it or its an
5 inclusion classroom, he is allowed to essentially
6 opt out, sit in the corner, go to some another
7 place, and there is no monitoring. I am even
8 sometimes called to go and pick him up, these sorts
9 of things. This is to alleviate those sorts of
10 issues, and I think we will do a much better job of
11 getting them, as Glenn said, and aggressively
12 addressing student needs.

13 MR. BERGMAN: Thank you. I appreciate
14 your answers.

15 MS. SCHEIB: Thank you.

16 MR. GANT: Well, I guess I'll ask my
17 questions now.

18 You brought up block scheduling, and I
19 read through, but I missed it somewhere in there, I
20 guess. In the concept of open classes now, there
21 are several models for block scheduling. Which one
22 are you using?

23 MS. SCHEIB: Well, you mean, of the
24 choices out there? I mean, I will just relate a
25 little bit about our plan, but it's also, again,

1 something I would like to further explain in
2 writing. What we are looking at, and I believe what
3 we outlined in the charter, is two blocks in the
4 morning and two blocks in the afternoon on an
5 alternating day schedule, with Wednesdays being a
6 day where all classes meet, and allowing time in
7 the -- I'm sorry, all the core classes, the morning
8 classes meet -- and allowing time in the afternoon
9 then for the school, the weekly school congress
10 meeting.

11 MR. GANT: I am aware of that. I just
12 wanted to know which one you were using. I am well
13 aware of blocks. That's all we use in Cruces.

14 MS. SCHEIB: Great.

15 MR. GANT: That all three schools have
16 different block schedules and it works. But then
17 you go to this open class thing, open class concept,
18 and they are free to move around, and if they don't
19 get along the first class period, they go to study
20 hall, and then they -- somewhere in there they --
21 when are they going to settle down? You know, with
22 the block schedule you can lose a lot of instruction
23 in a short amount of time on a block schedule.

24 MS. SCHEIB: As part of the -- were you
25 done?

1 MR. GANT: Go ahead.

2 MS. SCHEIB: As part of the curriculum
3 that's developed, teachers -- and we have it in our
4 list, the beginning list of rubric items that we
5 would be looking for in a curriculum -- one of the
6 things that the teachers will have to address is
7 what will they provide students in those couple of
8 days, until the remediation happens, about what's
9 happening with them staying in the class. They will
10 have to provide work that can go with the students
11 to that study hall situation.

12 And then as I said, after that three, I
13 believe it's a three step process, then a
14 determination will have to be made, and they will
15 eventually have to settle down, either in an open
16 class -- which I just want to be clear, isn't a
17 thing where we are wandering around. It will be a
18 specific, designated place they go -- or to rejoin
19 and stay in the regular class that they signed up
20 for.

21 MR. GANT: So how long does this three
22 step take?

23 MS. SCHEIB: I believe it's just three
24 days, but I want to be sure to answer that clearly
25 in writing and double check with our charter.

1 MR. GANT: I note that block schedules can
2 leave kids that miss one or two days in a situation
3 where they really get behind.

4 MS. SCHEIB: We are hoping that by
5 offering kids this opportunity, instead of staying
6 home to miss a class, like some students choose to
7 do when they know they are going to get to school
8 and be in that class they don't want to be in, they
9 will come to school knowing they do have this option
10 to start making a change or to remediate any issues
11 they are having in the class that will allow them to
12 rejoin the class. So we look at it as a preventive
13 measure to sort of avoid the rampant absenteeism
14 that occurs. So during those open classes, they are
15 studying the curriculum of the class that they are
16 missing.

17 MR. WISCH: That's a key point.

18 MR. GANT: A question on facilities. You
19 say you were looking at one and you talked to the
20 owner, I guess, for an 11,000 square foot facility;
21 is that correct? Again, I don't have a note in
22 front of me. How many students total?

23 MS. SCHEIB: It's 260. PSFA came and
24 looked at it for a 260 student population. We
25 included in our appendices their report. They saw

1 it as a viable educational facility. However, there
2 is a large piece of the property that is open, that
3 does have a playground, and we would also be
4 considering and looking at putting some modular
5 classes out there to provide us with more space.

6 MR. GANT: I was going to have a question
7 of K-12, and you start with K. They are all going
8 to be in one building?

9 MS. SCHEIB: I'm sorry. What do you mean?

10 MR. GANT: We have kindergarten kids and
11 high school kids.

12 MS. SCHEIB: Yes. Well, I mean, obviously
13 we haven't signed a lease. But this first property
14 that has come up as being available to us, and the
15 landlord is very interested in having a charter
16 school there, yes, it is one structure. There are
17 divided up rooms, and if we were to put any modular
18 classes on there, those would be separate buildings.

19 MR. NICOL: And also in terms of putting
20 the K through 12 together, our school congress is
21 going to be meeting weekly, so all the students of
22 all these age groups will be getting together in the
23 school congress, and so they are going to have to
24 interact together. They are going to do that on a
25 regular basis. It's not going to be like a regular

1 high school where the freshman don't interact with
2 the seniors. So some of the age differences are
3 going to be alleviated because they are going to
4 meet weekly to discuss issues.

5 MS. SCHEIB: And in the mentoring, as part
6 of the mentoring program, we want peer mentoring as
7 well as intergenerational mentoring.

8 MR. WISCH: That's absolutely right.
9 That's all about creating a culture of mentorship
10 within the school. I would point to Albuquerque
11 Family School which has for many, many years, of
12 course, scored very high on AYP scoring and all of
13 that, but also focuses on mixed age grouping. In
14 sort of a limited fashion, we definitely expect that
15 to occur. I think that's in our charter.

16 But also with the property that we are
17 looking at with those portables that we are going to
18 put sort of on the lot, you have got the building.
19 It actually has separate wings, not just separate
20 rooms to put things, and the playground area. And
21 then behind that will be the three external
22 classrooms hopefully. Those will be through K --
23 for K, first, and second grade, so that they have
24 sort of a cordoned off area. And as you may note,
25 we kind of have a separate sort of developmental

1 curriculum for those grades as well.

2 MR. GANT: I note your comment here about
3 the gym. What is your link to the Boy's and Girl's
4 Club? There is a sentence in there that talked
5 about a link to the Boy's and Girl's Club. What is
6 that?

7 MS. SCHEIB: Oh, I'm sorry. That is the
8 building. The building was originally established
9 as a boys' and girls' club, I believe, in the
10 forties or fifties. It actually has a plaque on it.
11 It's just typically called the Boy's and Girl's Club
12 of Old Town.

13 MR. GANT: All right. Thanks.

14 CHAIR GARRISON: Commissioner Shearman.

15 MS. SHEARMAN: Thank you. Good
16 afternoon -- good morning, I should say.

17 I am looking at your student center SMART
18 goals. And I am real picky about goals, and so I
19 hope you respond fully and elaborate on the things
20 that were questioned on your goals, page 96, 99, and
21 so forth. The one that really struck me, though, is
22 the one -- I believe it's goal one, where you
23 propose to average all test scores together in each
24 content area to yield an average minimum gain of
25 three percent per year separately in each content

1 area. That's sort of a unique perspective on
2 things. Really I think, though, I am questioning
3 more the three percent growth than the method of
4 arriving at it, particularly since we live in the
5 era of No Child Left Behind, and they are asking
6 for, I believe it's next year, an 11 percent
7 increase, and by 2014, everybody will be 100 percent
8 proficient. So would you speak to that three
9 percent and see how it will get you where you need
10 to be as far as AYP is concerned.

11 MS. SCHEIB: Yes, I will. First of all,
12 we expect that some students will come in not at the
13 lowest level of proficiency. If all students came
14 in at the lowest level of proficiency, I understand
15 the concern about three percent. We chose the
16 three percent looking at some of the goals of other
17 schools and also wanting to do something that was
18 attainable. We really took achievable and
19 attainable as part of the SMART goal directive.
20 Seriously we didn't want to put something out there
21 that seemed unrealistic. So our hope is that at
22 three percent, over time that these students will
23 ultimately, that we will have a 100 proficient
24 students.

25 MS. SHEARMAN: Okay. It just strikes me

1 as a little less possibly than ambitious.

2 MS. SCHEIB: I understand, and I would
3 like to take some more time to look at it, maybe
4 look at it from a number crunching standpoint and
5 include that in our written responses. Thank you.

6 MR. WISCH: I also want to point out,
7 though, that what we have done is integrated, you
8 know, taken something that is this SMART goal idea,
9 and really integrated it into a deeper sort of
10 really systems analysis process of student
11 development and student achievement. And I think
12 that three percent is a good number, but ultimately
13 what we want is constant improvement in the school,
14 in the curriculum, and in student achievement,
15 rather than sort of the up and down, you know, with
16 transitions between school, staff, and things that
17 you see in other schools. We want a constant upward
18 spiral of curriculum and student achievement.

19 MS. SHEARMAN: My next questions have to
20 do with the budget. As I asked the applicant just
21 ahead of you, your teacher salaries don't increase
22 over the five years. Your principal director salary
23 does increase, perhaps not as dramatically as maybe
24 others, but a \$5,000 increase one year, 5,000, then
25 a 10,000 increase, and then a \$5,000 increase. I

1 know you have to pay for good staff, and I am not
2 questioning that. I think it's detrimental, though,
3 when an administrator is rewarded additionally and
4 your teachers are not.

5 MS. ROTH: Certainly. We actually talked
6 about this ourselves in group when we were
7 discussing putting together the proposed budget. We
8 wanted to go ahead and show increase in
9 administration cost so that we made sure we met the
10 statutory minimums, because we do start out as a K
11 through six elementary school and then move into K
12 through 12, which means we have to pay the higher
13 principal rate, so we wanted to reflect that.

14 Certainly as a matter of practice, our
15 charter has a philosophy of the principal teacher,
16 and our core priority is making sure that our staff
17 is compensated for what we consider to be an
18 aggressive curriculum. So we are paying, in the
19 proposed teacher salary schedule that we showed, we
20 are paying a higher rate based on a longer contract
21 year, and we hope to increase their teacher daily
22 rate as funding becomes available.

23 MS. SHEARMAN: Okay.

24 MS. ROTH: And then increase in
25 experience, you know, not much. And quite frankly,

1 I can tell you that when we are awarded the PSFA or
2 PSCFC lease reimbursement and we don't have to show
3 in this budget \$96,000 in land lease cost, that we
4 can take some of that out of operational and put it
5 toward our staffing.

6 MS. SHEARMAN: As long as it's an issue in
7 the front of your mind.

8 MR. WISCH: Oh, yeah.

9 MS. SHEARMAN: Good.

10 If you would go to line 48, general
11 supplies and materials, I am just interested in
12 the -- kind of it bounces around -- 6,300, 21,000,
13 19,000, 29,000, 30,000.

14 MS. ROTH: I was very low on general
15 staffing supplies and materials when we first came
16 into the school year, the assumption being that we
17 will be able to use some of the federal start-up
18 funds to initially stock the school basically. And
19 when I came down to preparing general supplies and
20 materials, as well as supply assets and fixed
21 assets, those were areas that we would want to see
22 spending in those asset areas, but those were the
23 three categories that, without going into a detailed
24 OBMS type uniform chart of accounts full budget,
25 where I could just show just general areas where we

1 would be spending money.

2 One of the things that I quite frankly
3 wish that I had done differently was to use a little
4 bit more of that general supply material stuff in
5 textbooks and instructional resources. If I were
6 going to submit this again, I probably would have
7 changed that.

8 MS. SHEARMAN: Thank you. Well, that was
9 going to be my next question, because in your fixed
10 assets more than 5,000, year one is nothing. Year
11 two is 20, and then it goes to 90, 171, and then
12 down to 40.

13 MS. ROTH: We talked a little bit about
14 that.

15 MS. SHEARMAN: What are you buying in
16 here?

17 MS. ROTH: What we are hoping that we are
18 buying is that in the third year, when we launch
19 high school, we are looking at some pretty
20 significant technology and equipment to do some
21 extensive high school curriculum. So where I talked
22 about supplies and fixed assets being funded the
23 first couple of years out of the federal start-up
24 funds, we fully anticipate that when we have our
25 high school grades come in, those two years we are

1 going to want to spend a lot of money to make sure
2 that those kids have the equipment that they need.

3 MS. SHEARMAN: I believe that's it. Thank
4 you.

5 MS. ROTH: Thank you.

6 MS. KRIVITZKY: Okay. Good morning. I
7 have a couple questions, and they are basically
8 related to the analysis that the PED did with your
9 application. One of them was that they were
10 questioning the wording of in good standing when you
11 talked about the lottery process. And I was
12 wondering -- I'm sure you are going to address that
13 in your written response, but I was wondering if you
14 could let us know a little bit about what you meant
15 by a student in good standing being allowed to enter
16 the lottery process.

17 MS. ROTH: If we misspoke, we apologize.
18 The term in good standing only meant that they
19 provided all the appropriate records after the
20 lottery. We will admit anyone who has been selected
21 in the lottery and then provides the appropriate
22 birth certificate, immunization records, those kind
23 of things to complete their enrollment process with
24 the school.

25 MS. KRIVITZKY: So that's more about

1 enrollment rather than being chosen as a lottery
2 student?

3 MS. ROTH: Yes.

4 MS. KRIVITZKY: Thank you. And then I had
5 another question, and this is one very close to my
6 heart, because I run a school, as you know, and that
7 has to do with the governance council. And in
8 charter law, as you know, it's very specific about
9 what it looks like and what it can do. In your
10 application, there were some issues, and I know they
11 brought this up in the analysis.

12 If you don't mind, I'm going to quote from
13 what they said and ask for your response. It says,
14 the inclusion of a principal, as the leader or
15 member of the body that will recruit and elect the
16 governing board members, establishes a clear
17 conflict of interest in that an employee of the
18 school is being involved with the selection of an
19 official, who will then conduct future evaluations
20 of their performance and either disapprove or
21 approve their employment contract. So would you
22 mind talking to that for me?

23 MS. ROTH: We had actually already
24 prepared a written response for that, so I will give
25 you the short version. It was never our intention

1 to indicate that the principal teacher would be a
2 voting member of the school assembly. She is only
3 there to facilitate, to make sure it occurs, to make
4 sure that it's transparent, to make sure it's
5 organized. She does not set the agenda, she does
6 not advocate for any particular governing council
7 members, and she certainly does not vote -- he or
8 she I should say.

9 MS. KRIVITZKY: They are not involved with
10 the recruiting process either?

11 MS. ROTH: We are charging that with the
12 members of the school assembly, with the
13 stakeholders. We want them to be intimately
14 involved with the governing council and the
15 direction that the school takes in honoring that
16 culture.

17 MS. KRIVITZKY: And in your governing
18 council will be people who are not part of your
19 staff or part of your families or part of --

20 MS. ROTH: Right.

21 MS. KRIVITZKY: It will be outside
22 members?

23 MS. ROTH: Right.

24 MS. KRIVITZKY: Thank you.

25 MS. ROTH: Thank you.

1 CHAIR GARRISON: Are there any other
2 questions from commissioners?

3 The commission encourages continued public
4 input in writing until Friday, August 20th at 5:00
5 p.m. Written comments should be sent to Public
6 Education Commission, Beverly Friedman, 300 Don
7 Gaspar Avenue, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501, or e-mail
8 comments to Beverly Friedman, and we do have some --
9 you are already ahead of me.

10 We request that the applicant adhere to
11 the deadline and submit their written responses to
12 both the preliminary and our questions by e-mail to
13 Ms. Friedman to ensure that they are received on
14 time for consideration at our decision-making
15 meeting on September 9, 2010.

16 Thank you all for your time. The
17 commission will now recess the hearing until 1:00
18 p.m.

19 (The hearing concluded at 11:43 a.m.)
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25

1 STATE OF NEW MEXICO)
2 COUNTY OF BERNALILLO)

3

4 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

5 I, Sally Peters, RPR, CCR #57, Certified
6 Court Reporter in the State of New Mexico, do hereby
7 certify that the foregoing pages constitute a true
8 transcript of proceedings had before the Public
9 Education Commission, held in the District of New
10 Mexico, in the matter therein stated.

11 In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set
12 my hand on August 17, 2010.

13

14

15 _____
16 SALLY PETERS, RPR, CCR #57
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