



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

CHRISTOPHER N. RUSZKOWSKI
SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

SUSANA MARTINEZ
GOVERNOR

2019 CSD Preliminary Analysis of Renewal Application and Site Visit

School Name: Alma d’ Arte Charter School
School Address: 402 W. Court Ave Las Cruces, NM 88005
Head Administrator: Holly Schullo
Business Manager: Alfredo Diaz
Authorized Grade Levels: 9-12
Authorized Enrollment: 280
Contract Term: July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2019
Mission: “To graduate artist/scholars prepared to succeed” (Contract, p. 33)

Part B (Progress Report) Evaluation
based on the rubric contained in the application

Chart 1, below, summarizes CSD’s ratings of the school’s renewal application and site visit:

Chart 1. Renewal Application Ratings by Indicator		
Section	Indicator	Final Rating
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE		
1.a	Department’s Standards of Excellence— A-F Letter Grades	<i>Failing to Demonstrate Substantial Progress</i>
1.b	Specific Charter Goals	<i>Failing to Demonstrate Substantial Progress</i>
FINANCIAL COMPLIANCE		
2.a	Audit	<i>Meets the Standard</i>
2.b	Board of Finance	<i>Meets the Standard</i>
CONTRACTUAL, ORGANIZATIONAL, AND GOVERNANCE		
3.a	Material Terms	<i>Failing to Demonstrate Substantial Progress</i>
3.b	Organizational Performance Framework	<i>Failing to Demonstrate Substantial Progress</i>
3.c	Governance Responsibilities	<i>Demonstrates Substantial Progress</i>

CSD Review of Part B (Progress Report) and Renewal Site Visit in October

The PED team reviewed the Part B (Progress Report) submitted by the school and conducted a renewal site visit on October 29, 2018. The following sections provide additional analyses supporting the ratings summarized in Chart 1, above.

Academic Performance

1a) Schools that maintain a C or better letter grade over the term of the contract and have not received a D or F in any indicator of the letter grade are rated as “meets the standard”. Alma d’Arte Charter School earned an Overall School Grade of C (in 2015), D in 2016, C in 2017, and D in 2018, during the current contract term.

In the most recent school grading report card (2018), the school earned F grades in Current Standing, School Improvement, Improvement of Lowest-Performing Students (Q1), and Graduation and a grade of D in Improvement of Highest-Performing Students (Q3). These scores decreased by at least one letter grade from the prior school year, except for Improvement of Lowest-Performing Students (Q1) which received an F for both years. Due to these reasons, the CSD team has rated this indicator as **“failing to demonstrate progress”**. The school provided a detailed list of improvement actions that the school intends to implement, beginning this school year (2018-2019), including the school “will become a data-driven school committed to continuous improvement utilizing NMDASH,” “data will be analyzed in Professional Learning Communities”, “Zeroes Aren’t Possible (ZAP) tutoring,” and “Teachers will create standards-based rubrics and lessons.” While’s the school progress report included several proposed actions, the school did not address its D grade for its higher-performing students.

1b) A “meets the standard” rating applies to schools that have met or exceeded their specific charter school goals each year of the contract term. The CSD team has rated this indicator as **“failing to demonstrate progress”** because the school has not met any of the goals for the last three years. The goals are to: (1) improve graduation rate; (2) complete arts electives; and (3) demonstrate career and/or college readiness.

Financial Compliance

2a) The CSD team has rated this indicator as **“meets the standard”** because the school received no material weakness, significant deficiency, or repeat audit findings in each of the annual audits during the term of the contract.

2b) The CSD team has rated this indicator as **“meets the standard”** because the school has maintained all Board of Finance authority during the entire term of the contract.

Contractual, Organizational, and Governance

3a) The CSD team has rated this indicator as **“failing to demonstrate progress”** because the school has not implemented the Material Terms of the Charter. Specifically the school did not provide evidence of staff professional development as stated in the contract: *“Alma will provide annual training for teachers in integrating curriculum, including arts with core and the reverse”* (see Section 8.01[a][iii] entitled ‘Educational Program of the School’ under ‘Material Terms of the Contract’, p. 34).

3b) The CSD team has rated this indicator as **“failing to demonstrate progress”** because the school received seven (7) “working to meet” and seven (7) “falls far below” ratings in 2016-2017 and seven (7)

“working to meet” and three (3) “falls far below” ratings in 2017-2018. The concerns identified included:

- **Long-term substitute waiver:** The school did not provide evidence it sought waiver approval (long-term substitute or licensure endorsement flexibility waiver) from the Department for a health course taught by an unendorsed teacher [NMSA § 22-10A-16; 6.29.1.9(C)(9)(d) NMAC].
Notice to parents: The school did not provide evidence of written notification to parents of students taught by a long-term substitute teacher or teacher not holding the requisite licensure endorsement in health [6.29.1.9.C.9.b NMAC]. The school has removed and/or replaced the teachers in question. The school now has a Level III licensed teacher for ceramics, has cut the dance class (with will be offered full-time next year as enrichment), and hired a biology/health teacher.
- **English Language Learners:** The school did not provide evidence of properly: (a) identifying, (b) administering screening assessment, and (c) servicing eligible students [6.29.5.11.E NMAC]. The response from the school and the evidence at the site visit indicates that the school is still not properly identifying English language learners. After sending guidance and resource materials regarding this concern, the Head Administrator responded “*We understand the next steps and appreciate all of your assistance and resourcefulness. We have created a committee that is looking forward to identifying and serving English Learners.*” In addition, while addressing English Language services, the school state “*We are creating more avenues of service*” and went on to discuss bilingual faculty members, encouraging parents to join the PLT, making parents aware of parental rights under McKinney Vento, upcoming SIOP and GLAD training, arts integration for cultural heritage, and that the school will offer Spanish beginning in Fall 2019.
- **Governance requirement.** The school did not provide evidence of maintaining five (5) board members throughout the term of the contract. PED records indicate the board dropped to below five (5) members prior to September 2017. It is unclear when the board initially dropped below five members [NMSA § 22-5-1].
- **Evaluation of head administrator.** The school did not provide evidence that the governing council evaluated the head administrator during the 2016-2017 or in previous year [6.29.1.9.B.2 NMAC].
- **Background check.** The school did not provide evidence of completed background checks for two (2) instructional staff [NMSA § 22-10A-5]. The school claims that it is “*now in full compliance for all personnel files*”, however, the CSD’s review of files at the renewal site visit revealed that background checks were missing for four (4) employees, including the Head Administrator.
- **Health and safety.** The school did not provide evidence of providing child abuse and neglect detection training to staff [NMSA § 22-10A-32; 6.29.1.9(D)(3)(f) NMAC]. The evidence provided by the school was a list of online required staff trainings and did NOT include the training regarding detecting and reporting child abuse and neglect.
- **Business Management and Oversight.** The school provided evidence that it is implementing its audit Corrective Action Plan (CAP). The school reports that it has conducted an internal audit and has hired a new business manager this school year. Results of these efforts cannot yet be evaluated.
- **Students with Special Needs.** The school received a “working to meet standard” in the indicator for protecting the rights of students with special needs in FY17 and FY18. During the renewal site visit on 10/29/18, the CSD team learned that the only special education-certified teacher on staff had been placed on paid administrative leave and subsequently resigned on 9/26/18. The CSD observed at least 5 files of students whose IEPs were overdue and many parents came to the school with concerns regarding their students and the lack of service being provided. Students who had previously been scheduled for a study skills class with the teacher who left

were now scheduled in a yoga class, working as teacher/office aides, and/or sitting in the cafeteria, unsupervised, for study hall. This is a serious concern that CSD has discussed with the Special Education Bureau. Also, at the site visit, the CSD team communicated the urgency of conducting IEP meetings and complying with the required services on the IEPs and the fact that the school is legally obligated to do so.

- **School Administrator License.** At the time of the site visit, the Head Administrator had not yet applied for licensure. The school had also not sought a provisional license for her despite hiring her in July 2018. According to NMSA § 22-10A-3 (C), *“A person performing the duties of a licensed school employee who does not hold a valid license or certificate or has not submitted a complete application for licensure or certification within the first three months from beginning employment duties shall not be compensated thereafter for services rendered until he demonstrates that he holds a valid license or certificate.”*

3c) While the Governing Board dropped below five members during August 2017, the CSD team has rated this indicator as **“demonstrates substantial progress”** because it was rectified several months later and there are currently 5 seated members. The board members did not complete required trainings in FY15 and FY17, however, all Governing Board members completed the mandatory training hours and topics in FY18.

Stakeholder Interviews

As part of the school’s renewal site visit, stakeholder interviews were conducted on October 29, 2018 at Alma d’Arte Charter School. The participants included three (3) Governing Council members, four (4) students, seven (7) parents, and two (2) staff members. It should be noted that the Head Administrator had not arranged for any people to be interviewed, other than Governing Council members, claiming not to have understood the site visit protocol that was sent prior to the site visit. She did arrange for students and staff, two of each, that day. Parents (and their children who are students) heard about the CSD site visit and came to the school throughout the day to speak to the team. The following provides some additional context regarding the school from various perspectives.

The Governing Board members have served a range of years, from the founding of the school to three years. One of the members stated *“The students that were being encouraged to attend were not the strongest in the past”* and *“The previous administrator did not make it clear that we are first and foremost and arts and academics school. I think we are going to see from [Dr.] Schullo recruitment of the kind of student we want to see.”* The board members were aware that the school consistently gets Ds and Fs in graduation. When asked where the board meeting notices and agendas are posted, one board member responded that *“they should be on the website.....They are posted in the newspaper and on a board in the front of the school.”* The CSD team was unable to locate any meeting notices, agendas, or minutes on the school website. Regarding the concerns with IEPs, the board members explained that *“parents weren’t happy that the previous teacher is not here”*. The board members were not aware of who is currently providing special education services but knew that *“temporary people were here mostly working on the files”*. The board also told the CSD team that the dance program previously provided the PE credit but was cut by the previous administration and that they are trying to bring it back. When asked about the grievance policy and procedures, the President attempted to find it in the policy binder but was unable to find it and advised that he would get it to us later. (It has not yet been received.) He also stated that *“you tell some people this is how things are going to be and they don’t accept it”*, referring to parents.

One student stated that the interest in this school was because *“I am not a socially accepted person”* but this school *“has been pretty laid back, maybe too laid back”*. Another student was attracted by the performing arts offerings. They indicated that the school is welcoming and that the staff are very

respectful of all students, including the LGBTQ+ students. When asked if they would change anything, they said they would add a PE class, bring back dance and orchestra, and eliminate the requirement to go to the bathroom as an entire class or with a teacher's aide. It was also stated that "Dr. Schullo, when she came, said she would clean house." The CSD team also asked about the ZAP tutoring program and the students explained that on Wednesdays the students get out one period early and get sent to the ZAP tutoring class if they are failing for an hour of tutoring. *"Dr. Schullo tried to make it mandatory, but it isn't because of other student organizations."* Two students have been very happy at the school until this year and are now planning to withdraw at the semester break. Students also expressed that they were no longer receiving support services related to their IEPs.

The parents were very respectful but very concerned. The primary concern was voiced by parents of students with special needs; the lack of updated IEPs and lack of services was mentioned to the team by at least six parents. They claim is that little to nothing is being done for their students, including a parent whose student started at the school in August (over three months ago) and still did not have an IEP. (Even if the clock was set when the special education teacher left, it had been over one month.) At least five parents mentioned not having confidence in the current administration. The parents reported that they have tried to speak to the Head Administrator about their concerns but she will not listen. A large group of parents appeared at the September Governing Board meeting and many spoke during public comment. The Governing Board agreed to address the concerns at the next meeting but the parents said that they were not notified of the meeting, it was not posted, and the issues were not addressed. At one of the Governing Board meetings, a parent asked who was certified in Special Education (and could conduct IEPs) and allegedly Dr. Schullo responded that she was; parents claimed to have investigated and reported that this is not true. The CSD team checked with the Licensure Bureau and Dr. Schullo is not licensed as a special education instructor (but does have a gifted endorsement) and is also not licensed as a School Administrator.

The staff members interviewed have been working at the school from one to five years. They like the small class size, their fellow teachers, and the art integration. The teachers confirmed the use of a CK12 online math program that helps identify where students are struggling. They also confirmed that the Head Administrator does walk through the classrooms and provides compliments and some feedback.

[Please see sections of the renewal application package for additional details, as follows:](#)

Part A: Data Report and Current Charter Contract Performance

SECTION 1. ACADEMIC PERFORMANCES

SECTION 2. FINANCIAL COMPLIANCE

SECTION 3. CONTRACTUAL, ORGANIZATIONAL, AND GOVERNANCE RESPONSIBILITIES

Part B: Progress Report

Part C: Financial Statement

Part D: Petitions of Support

Part E: Description of Charter School Facilities and Assurances

Part F: Amendments and Amendment Requests

Appendices of additional documentation from the school, if any