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 GOVERNOR

2019 CSD Preliminary Analysis of Renewal Application and Site Visit

School Name: Explore Academy
School Address: 5100 Masthead NE, Albuquerque, NM 87109
Head Administrator: Justine Baiardo
Business Manager: Michael Vigil
Authorized Grade Levels: 9-12
Authorized Enrollment: 500
Contract Term: July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2019
Mission: *“Explore Academy will provide each student with a personalized educational experience through the power of student choice, allowing each student to create a unique educational pathway in preparation for a college future.”*

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 School Letter Grades	<i>Demonstrates Substantial Progress</i>
1.b	Specific Charter Goals	<i>Demonstrates Substantial Progress</i>
FINANCIAL COMPLIANCE		
2.a	Audit	<i>Demonstrates Substantial Progress</i>
2.b	Board of Finance	<i>Meets the Standard</i>
CONTRACTUAL, ORGANIZATIONAL, AND GOVERNANCE		
3.a	Material Terms	<i>Meets the Standard</i>
3.b	Organizational Performance Framework	<i>Demonstrates 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 5, 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”. While Explore Academy earned an Overall Grade of “D” during its first year (2015), it has earned an Overall Grade of “A” for the three years since (2016, 2017, and 2018). The CSD team has rated this indicator as “**demonstrates substantial progress**” due to the fact that the school has maintained an A for three (3) years with no Ds or Fs in any indicator due to implementation of several improvement actions: (1) At-Risk List and Structured Flex period, (2) Cuspies Intervention, and (3) Frontloading. (See the School’s submitted Progress Report, Part B, for detailed description of each.)

1b) Schools that meet or exceed their specific charter school goals each year of the contract term are rated as “meets standard”. The CSD Team has rated this indicator as “**demonstrates substantial progress**” because Explore Academy did not meet its goals in 2017. The school sought an amendment to the mission specific goals and was able to meet the goal in 2018.

Financial Compliance

2a) Schools that have received no material weakness, significant deficiency, or repeat audit findings in each of the annual audits are rated as “meets standard”. The CSD team has rated this indicator as “**demonstrates substantial progress**” because the school had one (1) significant deficiency finding in 2015 and 1 repeat finding in 2017. The school provided a detailed narrative on the corrective actions implemented to resolve these, as well as other audit findings.

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 “**meets the standard**” because the school has implemented the Material Terms of the Charter including the operational structure, the mission of the school, and the educational program of the school (including student-focused terms, teacher-focused terms, and parent-focused terms).

3b) The CSD team has rated this indicator as “**demonstrates substantial progress**” because the school received six (6) “working to meet” and two (2) “falls far below” ratings in 2016-2017 and two (2) “working to meet” and two (2) “falls far below” ratings in 2017-2018. The concerns identified that were repeated: (1) recurrent enrollment: 70.07% in 2017 and 73.44% in 2018, (2) audit findings, and (3) no approved School Safety Plan. The school has responded and addressed the concerns regarding audit findings and its School Safety Plan.

3c) The CSD team has rated this indicator as “**demonstrates substantial progress**” due to the fact that three Governing board members did not complete the required training hours in 2017-2018. In addition, the PED did not receive the training documentation for 2016. The school and Governing Board

are aware of the mandatory training requirements and have implemented a system for tracking hours and reviewing the status at the monthly meetings.

Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder interviews were conducted on October 5, 2018 at Explore Academy. The participants included two (2) parents, four (4) students, and two (2) Governing Council members.

The parents mentioned small class sizes, challenging curriculum, sense of community, and lots of support of students as reasons that they like the school. One parent stated that *“because the school is small they can be creative with students with IEPs or 504s”* and that the school accommodates the students’ needs.

The students provided similar reasons as the parents and unanimously agreed that the teachers are supportive and the small classes allow teachers to provide more help to individual students. One student stated, *“At my old school I was always afraid to ask questions, but here I’m okay doing it.”* Another student who shared that he is dyslexic said, *“They really care about your academics, teachers even take time out of their prep periods to help you.”* The students also expressed that appreciate the fact that they can choose the class order and *“flavor”* and that the teachers really focus on you. Areas of improvement, according to the students, are lack of communication (particularly with peer ambassadors) and unexpected scheduling changes that have occurred.

One of the Governing Board members became involved in the school when his daughter enrolled at the school. The school learned of his background and invited him to join the board. In response to questions about academic data and the evaluation of the head administrator, the member was vague stating *“We ask for interim reports from the Head Administrator”* to the former and *“We are currently in the process of formalizing the process”* to the latter.

[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