



Part B—Progress Report

(A report on the progress of meeting the academic performance, financial compliance and governance responsibilities of the charter school, including achieving the goals, objectives, student performance outcomes, state standards of excellence and other terms of the charter contract, including the accountability requirements set forth in the Assessment and Accountability Act during the Current Charter Term)

1. Academic Performance

The Charter School Act provides as follows:

A charter may be suspended, revoked, or not renewed by the chartering authority if the chartering authority determines that the charter school... failed to meet or make substantial progress toward achievement of the department's standards of excellence or student performance standards identified in the charter contract.

a. Department's Standards of Excellence – A-F Letter Grades

The Public Education Department, pursuant to NMSA 22-2E-1, et seq., annually assign a letter grade of A, B, C, D or F to each public school pursuant to criteria established by department rules. In addition, pursuant to NMSA 22-2E-4(D) and (F), it has been established that a letter grade of D or F does not meet the standards of excellence. To meet an acceptable level of performance, a school must earn a grade of C or better for two consecutive years. NMSA 22-2E-45(E).

For any school that has not maintained a C or better letter grade in each year of the term of the contract, or that has received a D or F in any indicator of the letter grade in the past two years, provide a narrative that describes the improvement actions targeted to improve the school's letter grade (school/adult/leader/teacher actions) and the success of those actions (student academic successes/improved outcomes). The purpose of the narrative is to demonstrate substantial progress toward achieving and maintaining a C or higher letter grade.

Implementation of the described improvement actions should be verifiable through documented evidence at the site visit. **Please identify specific evidence of both the school/adult/leader/teacher actions and the student academic successes/improved outcomes in the narrative.**

The narrative should reference performance data that can be reviewed and verified either during the site visit or during the "desk audit" review of the application. If providing data, please attach in an appendix and reference the appendix by name in the narrative.

Schools that have maintained 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 in the past two years do NOT complete this Section.

School response:

In the first year of the contract, Explore Academy's letter grade fell just below a C, leaving year one with a letter grade of D. In the three years since, we have earned an A each year, with the point value increasing each year (47.35 > 82.21 > 83.97 > 86.27).

Response:

After the D letter grade earned in the first year, there were several improvement actions implemented to improve the letter grade.

At-Risk List and Structured Flex - The need to identify students who are struggling academically and intervene to provide them support was a driving factor in the development of the at-risk list and intervention protocol for structured flex periods. In this intervention, teachers identify students weekly who are having academic issues in class and place them on the at-risk list for that week. The list is then compiled by administration and student reports are generated and sent home to parents outlining the areas in which their child is struggling academically. Then, for the following week, the at-risk students are placed in structured flex periods, a study group held during their free flex period, where they receive tutoring, monitoring, and support. This allows the students to not only seek help for the class(es) in which they are struggling, but also allows the study group teacher to monitor their grades and progress to make sure they are not falling further behind. The at-risk list and structured flex proved to be very effective by increasing student growth and decreasing failure rates.

Cuspies Intervention - As another intervention for students who are not demonstrating sufficient academic progress in one or more areas, the “cuspie” list was developed as a way to identify and support the students who are “one the cusp” of academic success. Halfway through each year, the entire staff collaborate to take an in-depth view of all the students and their progress throughout the year so far. During the cuspie meeting, each teacher scores the students based on their performance in class and overall academic success. The resulting data allows the administration to compile a detailed report of students who are labeled as “cuspies” and need more academic support to be more successful in the Explore Academy academic model. Then, every staff member adopts a cuspie and mentors that students for the second half of the school year, providing academic and moral support for them as they improve their skills and level of academic responsibility. This system has allowed the teachers to reach out more specifically to students who may otherwise either struggle academically or decide to leave Explore in favor of a school with less rigorous academic expectations. The goal was to keep and support more students as they become more involved and capable of supporting themselves academically.

Frontloading - Another system that was put in place to support the academic efforts of students campus-wide was the instructional practice of frontloading. While developing a better way of balancing homework and classwork that provided authentic learning experiences for students, the staff and administration researched the practice of “flipped classrooms” and using targeted, out of class instruction that is then practiced in class with the guidance of the teacher. With some practice and more research, the use of “frontloading” was implemented in all classrooms as a way to partially “flip” the Explore Academy classrooms so that work outside of class was more applicable to class while also engaging students more effectively. The frontloading has been very effective in that students come to class already prepared for the daily lesson and invested in the material after having prepared for it beforehand. The students are also held accountable for their work outside of class since it is used when they walk into class. Additionally, since the students are prepping for class before it starts, the time in class is used less for notes and introduction of new concepts and more for working through problems and practicing skills under the direct guidance of the teacher. So, where traditionally, students will learn concepts in class and practice them at home alone for homework, frontloading at Explore allows students to be introduced to concepts in frontloading and then practice the new material in class with their teacher’s help. This practice has made a big difference for proficiency rates and academic progress for all students.

b. School Specific Charter Goals

Pursuant to NMCA 22-8B-9.1, each charter school authorizer must allow for the inclusion of additional rigorous, valid and reliable indicators proposed by a charter school in each school's performance framework to augment external evaluations of its performance, provided that the chartering authority approves the quality and rigor of the indicators and the indicators are consistent with the purposes of the Charter Schools Act.

All applicants must report on each school specific charter goal that is included in the school's performance framework. Applicants must provide a summary analysis of their performance on each goal in over the term of the contract. This analysis must state, for each year of the contract, whether the goal was met and must include longitudinal data that can show the progress of the school over the contract term. For each goal, the applicant should provide a visual representation of the longitudinal data.

For any applicant that did not meet all of their goals in each year of the contract term, provide a narrative that addresses the improvement actions (school/adult/leader/teacher actions) targeted to improve the school's performance on that school specific goal and the success of those actions (student academic successes/improved outcomes). The purpose of the narrative is to demonstrate substantial progress toward achieving and maintaining sufficient performance on the school specific goal. The narrative should only address a goal that was not met in each year of the contract term.

Implementation of the described improvement actions should be verifiable through documented evidence at the site visit. **Please identify specific evidence of both the school/adult/leader/teacher actions and the student academic successes/improved outcomes in the narrative.**

The narrative should reference performance data that can be reviewed and verified either during the site visit or during the "desk audit" review of the application. If providing data, please attach in an appendix and reference the appendix by name in the narrative.

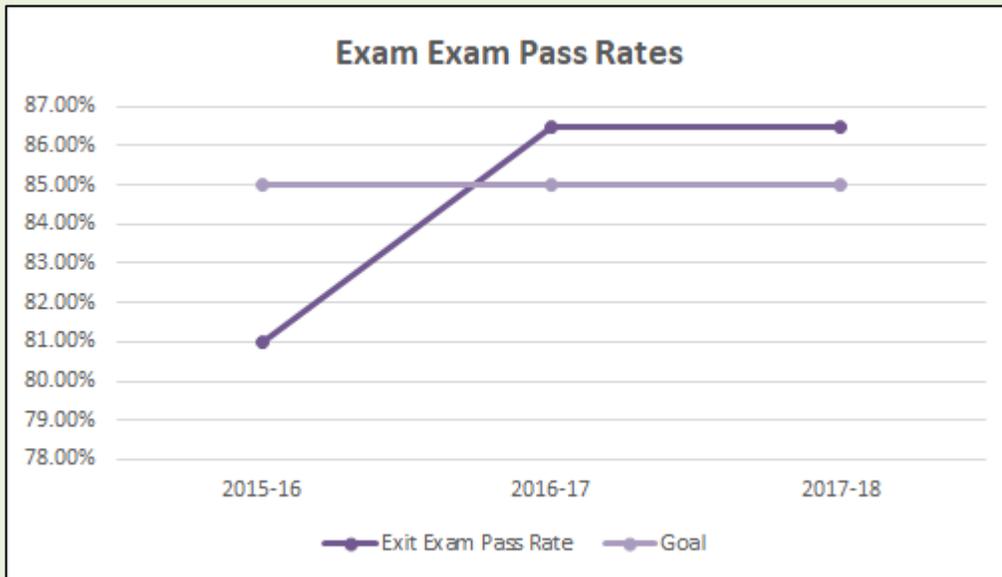
Schools that have met all of their school specific goals in each year of the contract term do NOT provide a narrative.

School response:

GOAL 1A - EXIT EXAMS: The School average exit exam score will measure at proficiency by the end of the school year. The average measured rate of proficiency will be at or above 85%. This average value will be calculated based on student exit exam scores for a Full Academic Year (FAY). Exit exams incorporated in the average will be for those students who spend or have previously spent the FAY at Explore Academy.

NOTE: While the PEC typically does not use average scores, given the large number of exams given and the high score needed for each standard, the PEC has accepted the school's proposal to use average scores.

Response:



Exit Exam Goal across academic years:

15-16 - 81%

16-17, 17-18 - 86.5%

After the 15-16 school year, the improvement actions that were put into place to increase student performance on exit exams were frontloading, structured flex, and the at-risk process. Frontloading, the school-wide instructional practice of having students complete work in preparation for class each day, increased the engagement level of students in their classes. This practice allowed for teachers to start lessons quickly since students come into class already prepared for the day's lesson, allowing for more time where students are actively interacting and learning the required class content. This led to an increase in learning and thus in exit exam scores.

The at-risk list and structured flex periods also increased proficiency by allowing intervention to take place frequently and quickly when a student is struggling in any of their classes. Since teachers compile the list of at-risk students on a weekly basis, students who may be struggling in class are assigned to structured flex and receive academic support that prevents them from falling behind in a class and in turn failing their exit exam. The at-risk list is ongoing throughout the year and has allowed students to make more progress in their classes due to immediate and frequent support any time there are academic concerns.

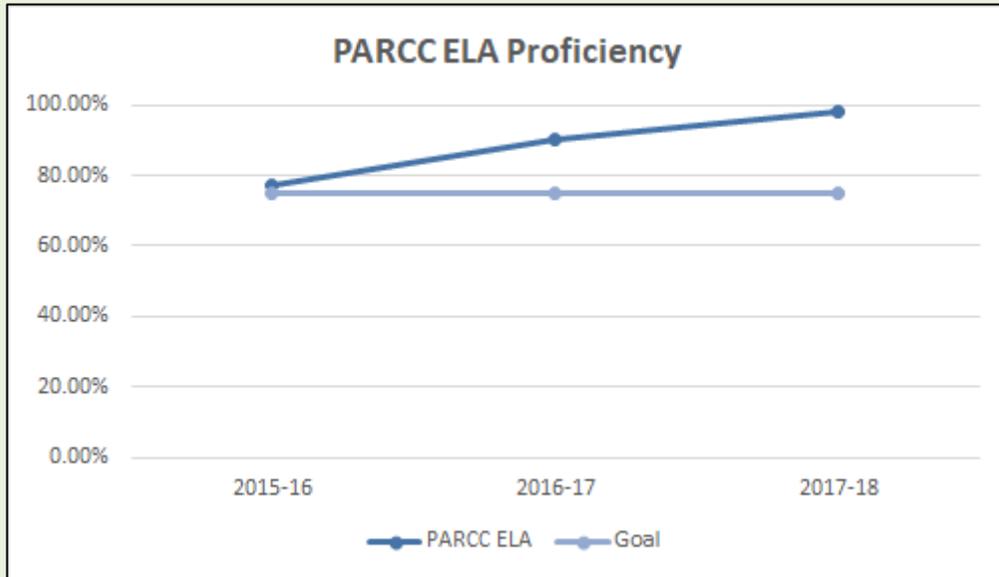
GOAL 1B* - Reading Proficiency/Growth: Based on PARCC scores annually, 75% of students will either:

- Measure at proficiency or above in the area of reading OR
- Demonstrate one year's growth in the area of reading

Students whose data will be included in the goal above will be those students who attend Explore Academy for the entire eight terms of the school year.

*amended to replace Riverside Interim Assessments with the PARCC exam

Response:



15-16 - 77% proficient in reading or made one year's growth in reading

16-17 - 90.1% proficient in reading or made one year's growth in reading

17-18 - 98% proficient in reading or made one year's growth in reading

This goal, 1B, was met for every year of the contract.

2. Financial Compliance

The Charter School Act provides as follows:

A charter may be suspended, revoked, or not renewed by the chartering authority if the chartering authority determines that the charter school...failed to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management.

a. Audit

Every charter school is subject to the Audit Act. NMSA22-8B-4(C). The Public School Finance Act requires the audit committee of each charter school governing body to track and report progress on the status of the most recent audit findings and advise the local school board on policy changes needed to address audit findings.

For any school that has received material weakness, significant deficiency, or repeat audit findings in any annual audit during the term of the contract provide a narrative explaining the improvement actions made (school/adult/leader/board actions) to meet financial compliance requirements and the effectiveness of those actions (improved practices and outcomes) in improving financial compliance. The school should use the work of the audit committee in “tracking and reporting progress on the status of audit findings” to develop this narrative.

Success should be identified by specific changes in practice and changes in the audit findings in subsequent years. The purpose of the narrative is to demonstrate substantial progress toward achieving and maintaining financial compliance.

Implementation of the described improvement actions should be verifiable through evidence at the site visit. **Please identify specific evidence of both the school/adult/leader/board actions and the improved practices and outcomes in the narrative.**

Schools that have received no material weakness, significant deficiency, or repeat audit findings in each of the annual audits during the term of the contract do NOT complete this Section.

School response:

2017 - 1 finding

2016-001 Personnel Files Other Matter

Condition: We tested 25 payroll transactions and noted the following:

- Three I-9 forms could not be located.
- Two I-9 forms were in the personnel file, but section 2 was not completed.
- Three W-4 forms could not be located.
- Five personnel action forms could not be located.
- One background check could not be located.

Auditor’s Note: The Schools has not been able to locate the missing information for the files, nor have they requested new ones.

Response: Explore Academy's current Administrator along with the Business Office will be overseeing and maintaining all supporting documentation for current and new employees. The school will ensure that controls are in place so that all personnel files are being properly completed by November 2017. The school’s Administrator will also ensure that files are being periodically reviewed and that all paperwork is up to date.

2016 - 3 findings of other matters

2015-002 Review and Approval of Purchases Other Matter

Condition: During our cash disbursement testwork we tested forty-two purchases and noted the following:

- Six items tested, totaling \$6,527, did not have proper approval in the form of purchase requisition and purchase order before the purchase was made.
- We also noted one item where the purchase order was \$1,837 more than the purchase requisition.
- We noted an additional item where the invoice was \$11 more than the purchase order.
- In four cases, we were not provided with the purchase requisition; these items amounted to \$3,459.
- There were also two purchases for which we were not provided any supporting documentation totaling \$141.

Response: The school currently has proper controls in place. These controls have been re-emphasized to staff as of November 4, 2016, to ensure compliance throughout the year. The schools Business Manager and Head Administrator will be the responsible party to ensure all controls will be followed.

2016-001 Personnel Files Other Matter

Condition: While all forty personnel files we tested included an I-9 form, sixteen of them were not fully completed, four of them did not include proper copies of applicable documents and thirteen were not signed by School personnel.

Response: Additional controls of maintaining all supporting documentation of personnel files and any employee changes have been established. The school's Head Administrator will be responsible to ensure that all supporting documentation for each employee is complete and up-to-date by June 2017.

2016-002 ERB and RHC Payroll Deductions Other Matter

Condition: We tested forty employee paychecks and noted four cases where the employee's contribution to the Educational Retirement Board (ERB) was calculated using an incorrect rate.

Response: The school's Business Manager and Payroll Specialist will be the responsible party to ensure that each employee is being deducted at the correct percentage rate throughout the year as of July 1, 2016.

2016-003 Travel and Per Diem Non-Compliance

Condition: During fiscal year 2016, the Explore Academy used the IRS standard rate for mileage reimbursements. We reviewed two mileage reimbursements for an employee's private vehicle and the reimbursements were not paid at the IRS standard rate.

Response: As stated in cause, once the final determination was made and issued by the Office of the State auditor, the school adjusted its policy to the 80% rule. The school's Business Manager and Head Administrator will be the responsible party to ensure each travel reimbursement that is made during the year is paid out at the correct amount by July 2016.

2016-004 Timely Deposits Non-Compliance

Condition: We tested 15 cash receipts and noted one in the amount of \$920 that was not deposited within 24 hours of being received.

Response: Procedures are in place to ensure timely deposit within the required timelines. Compliance with these procedures will be emphasized to staff collecting funds. The school's Office Manager and Head Administrator will be the responsible party to ensure all deposits are made within 24 hours of receiving the funds as of July 2016.

2015 - 1 finding of significant deficiency and 2 findings of other matters**2015-001 Lack of Support For Payroll Salary Calculations Significant Deficiency**

Condition: Through our payroll test work we noted the following:

- We were unable to determine how the pay was calculated for three out the 25 payroll transactions tested.
- Management was unable to provide support for two out of 25 raises granted to employees.
- Support for raises could not be provided for one out of the 16 payroll registers tested.
- Explore Academy stated they adopted and utilized the Rio Rancho Public School's Salary Schedule; however, the approved board minutes stated Albuquerque Public School's Salary Schedule was to be adopted.

Response: Additional Procedures have been put in place to provide proper backup for salary calculations.

2015-002 Review and Approval of Purchases Other Matter

Condition: During our cash disbursement test work we noted four out of 25 items totaling \$23,415 in which the purchase order and purchase requisition were created and approved after the purchase had been made. One of these four purchases in the amount of \$21,791 related to a prior purchase order that had been created prior to the fiscal year; however, the approved purchase order could not be provided by management.

Response: Procedures have been put in place to ensure compliance for purchases.

2015-003 Expenditure Exceeded Budget Other Matters

Condition: The Explore Academy has expenditures where actual expenditures exceeded budgetary authority: Fund – Operational 11000 - Operation of Non-Instructional Services; Excess of Expenditures over Appropriations \$(17,497)

Response: Budget is closely monitored to ensure expenditures do not exceed budgetary Authority.

Overall Response:

As the school has stabilized in recent years, it has worked to cement an appropriate level of financial oversight to ensure that the school's financial practices, including spending, are performed with the utmost responsibility. The primary initiative the school's administration has taken is to narrow the scope of the

financial approval process to the head administrator. With a change in administration, the school has made an effort to more precisely monitor spending so that both approvals are in place prior to purchases being made, and that the school works within the provided annual budget. While the school's movement across three sites and the resulting volatility in its enrollment has made financial projections difficult, the recent stabilization of the school, its location, and its enrollment have helped make the annual budget, and the associated expenses, more predictable and as a result increasingly manageable.

The above-mentioned strategy of narrowing the approval authority to the head administrator has resulted in an elimination of the repeated finding type described above. Because approvals require purchase orders prior to spending, and because purchase order approval rests with the head administrator, spending cannot take place without the head administrator approval. Placing this duty within the scope of responsibility of a single staff member, one who coordinates directly with the school's business manager, provides fewer opportunities for mismanagement of spending practices.

b. Board of Finance

Pursuant to NMSA 22-8-38, failure of the governing body of a state-chartered charter school to qualify for designation as a board of finance constitutes good and just grounds for nonrenewal or revocation of its charter.

Further, pursuant to NMSA 22-8-39, the department may at any time suspend a local school board or governing body of a state-chartered charter school from acting as a board of finance if the department reasonably believes there is mismanagement, improper recording or improper reporting of public school funds under the local school board's or governing body of a state-chartered charter school's control.

When the governing body of a state-chartered charter school is suspended from acting as a board of finance, the department is required to consider commencing proceedings before the commission to revoke or refuse to renew the charter of the state-chartered charter school.

If the school's **Board of Finance was suspended** at any time during the term of the contract, the school must provide a narrative explaining the actions taken (school/adult/leader/board actions) on the school's own initiative to correct financial compliance and regain the Board of Finance Authority and the success of those actions (improved practices and outcomes).

The school must also describe the current status of the Board of Finance and continuing actions to ensure the same financial challenges do not reoccur. Success should be identified by specific changes in practice.

The narrative must be supported by evidence provided in an appendix and verifiable through evidence at the site visit. **Please identify specific evidence of both the school/adult/leader/board actions and the improved practices and outcomes in the narrative.**

Schools that have maintained all Board of Finance authority during the entire term of the contract do NOT complete this Section.

School response:

N/A - Board of Finance was never suspended during any point of the contract

3. Contractual, Organizational, and Governance Responsibilities

The Charter School Act provides as follows:

A charter may be suspended, revoked, or not renewed by the chartering authority if the chartering authority determines that the charter school...committed a material violation of any of the conditions, standards, or procedures set forth in the charter...*and/or*...violated any provision of law from which the charter school was not specifically exempted.

a. Charter Material Terms*

Pursuant to NMSA 22-8B-9, each charter contract must contain material term of the charter application as determined by the parties to the contract. The PEC's contract identifies all material terms in Article VII., Section 8.01(a)(i)-(xvii) of the Performance Contract.

Each school must provide a brief narrative describing how they have 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).

The narrative will be verified during the site visit.

If the school has made substantial changes or has not met any of the material terms of the contract during the term of the contract, the school **must** provide a narrative to explain the improvement actions (school/adult/leader/board actions) the school made during the term of the contract in order to meet those charter objectives and terms.

Success should be identified by specific changes in practice and achievement of the terms in later years of the charter. The purpose of the narrative is to demonstrate substantial progress toward achieving the material terms of the charter.

Implementation of the described improvement actions should be verifiable through evidence at the site visit. **Please identify specific evidence of both the school/adult/leader/board actions and the improved practices and outcomes in the narrative.**

School response:

Charter Material Terms

The School's mission statement is as follows:

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.

The contract identifies the following educational program as a material term of the charter:

Educational Program of the School.

Per its mission, Explore Academy will offer shorter learning modules (seminars) through which students will receive concentrated instruction over a smaller subset of academic standards. At the conclusion of each term, students will take an exit exam in each seminar to determine whether students have reached the required proficiency levels for each standard assessed for that seminar.

The school's choice-based philosophy of education provides students the freedom to choose from a set of seminar-versions. Since each seminar will be offered in three versions, taught by three different teachers,

students will have the choice in the specific theme through which they will receive the instruction over the content of that seminar. Thus, the three versions through which each seminar is offered will be unique in their focus and instructional approach, thus allowing students to choose how they want to learn the content through a set of discrete options. This extends across all core and elective (PE, art) content areas, as well as into the school's unique upper division seminars where students will eventually focus their academics beginning in their 11th grade year (not offered in School Year 1).

Student – Focused Term(s).

Explore Academy students will have two academic flex periods during the day, allowing them to complete homework, collaborate, attend tutoring, pursue credit recovery, attend school meetings, visit teachers (and case managers in the case of special education students), and complete make-up work as needed. Students will register for this flex time as they would for their academic classes. The school's dean of students oversees flex time and will track student attendance.

The school is committed to provide its students this time to supplement their learning. As the school grows in its first three years, the tutoring program will become a significant component of this flex time (as part of the school's academic service requirement, upperclassmen will function as tutors for underclassmen).

Teacher – Focused Term(s).

The school's staff will be provided with time for professional collaboration, such as in professional learning communities, to function as a forum for the sharing of best practices/instructional strategies, data analysis from seminar/exit exams, creation/modification of future exit exams, analysis of student satisfaction data, creation/modification of future seminars, etc.

This collaborative component will be essential in allowing teachers to work together, share their experiences, and streamline their efforts as they work to implement this innovative form of education.

Parent – Focused Term(s).

The school encourages parent involvement in all areas of its operation. To this end, the school is promoting the formation of a parent council for parents to provide input in areas both academic and operational. It is through this council that parents will be encouraged to voice input, although parents may bring their concerns directly to the school's leadership and governance councils if appropriate.

The school is encouraging parent volunteerism, both in areas of instruction and general operation. This may include assistance with school lunch delivery, support of extracurricular activities, parent speakers, creation of/assistance with school-related functions, etc.

Parent data will be tracked through visitor/volunteer logs and parent committee minutes/logs.

The school will communicate with parents through its website and a monthly newsletter for the dissemination of general information, and as needed via phone and/or email for individual student cases (academic, behavioral, etc.). Parents will have the ability to monitor student progress through the parent portal component of the school's student information system.

Narrative

Mission and Educational Program

The school mission and educational program have been followed at Explore Academy through every year of the contract. To implement this, all classes (seminars) are offered in various versions (flavors) from which students pick. With increasing experience each year, the staff has been able to offer a large variety of flavors, sometimes allowing students five options to choose from for some seminars. Seminars are taught during the 22-day terms described in the contract, and both the seminar structure and class schedule has proven to be very conducive to learning as well as the educational program.

The exit exam process has been refined and improved every term through item analysis (efficacy, bias, clarity, rigor, relevance, and depth), student score analysis (pass rates between flavors, between contents, across terms, etc.), and test administration analysis (format of the exams, timing, accommodations and modifications, etc.). Through data-driven analysis and improvement, the staff and administration has refined the exit exam process to best measure and reflect student learning and proficiency. Exit exams follow Bloom's Taxonomy to ensure various levels of questions, ensuring that higher order thinking skills becoming increasingly prevalent as the students progress into higher tiers of each content area. Exit exams are teacher developed, but are peer-reviewed and common among all flavors of any particular seminar, thus allowing us to compare data across teachers and flavors while making sure that all students are held to the same standards regardless of the flavor they have chosen. The 8-% proficiency minimum in all standards of all seminars has truly allowed students to rise to the high expectation, and the level at which students perform is raised each year.

Student-focused

The student-focused terms have been implemented and adjusted to be both effective and engaging over the course of the contract period. The curricular structure of the school follows the 22-day term design with students taking five content classes (seminars) and two free (flex) periods each term. The dean of students position was renamed and reinvented, becoming the flex coordinator / activities director position. The flex coordinator monitors student attendance during flex, manages study groups (explained below), organizes student sports participation, and manages tutors.

In order to better intervene when students are struggling with their seminars, we implemented study groups, structured flex periods that place students in a study hall for one of their flex periods to ensure that they are getting academic tutoring, skill building exercises, and grade/assignment monitoring. This study group has allowed for increased opportunities for peer tutoring, teacher tutoring, skill building, and progress monitoring that goes above and beyond to keep students, parents, and teachers in communication about each student's academic journey. Students can be assigned to study group on a weekly basis (based on teacher placement on the at-risk list, they are placed temporarily in study group for acute intervention in the content area where they are struggling), or for an entire term (if there are any failed seminars the previous term, they are in study group to help mitigate the risk of falling behind again in the subsequent term). This adjustment to the student focus has been extremely successful, and many students have even elected to be placed in study group when they know they are struggling through a certain term or a particularly challenging seminar.

The tutoring options have also expanded significantly through the contract term. Initially, only a few teachers on prep were available as tutors. As the years have passed and processes have been perfected, there are now several levels of tutoring to provide a variety of academic support to students. First, teachers have arranged

schedules so that there is a teacher in each content free during all non-lunch flex periods, increasing the student's access to teachers who can provide in depth remediation or tutoring in each content. Also, there are full-time tutors employed by Explore Academy who not only facilitate study groups in all grades, but also who are available for flex periods to provide tutoring to students in flex each period. Additionally, there are Peer Ambassadors and upperclassmen who are available for tutoring other students throughout the day. The development of the peer tutoring program is something we are all very proud of because it embodies the idea of giving back to the school community as an upperclassman, helping to guide and shape the younger students as they embark on their academic journey at Explore Academy.

In addition to general education supports available for all students, flex time has also allowed for specialized support services to take place without disrupting students in class. This includes testing, ELL services, special education services, case management, appointments, technology assistance, ancillary services for IEPs, 504s, and ESL, etc.

Thus, with several levels of student support built into the flex periods, in addition to our differentiated curriculum that is entirely based on student choice and academic responsibility, the student-related elements of the educational program have been implemented and function very well.

Teacher-Focused

Fridays have been early student release days for the entire contract term, this collaboration time has proven crucial for teachers for many reasons. Staff is able to meet in person to address any and all school issues, including but not limited to: best practices, required training and professional development, guest speakers, student data-driven discussions, school policies, pedagogy issues/suggestions, PDPs, accommodations and modifications for all students with special needs and documented services, SAT process updates, safety and facility issues, at-risk student discussions, staff recognitions, etc. In addition to the Friday meetings, there are also some Fridays that are dedicated to content teams, allowing each content to meet in their department to focus on department-specific agenda items such as exit exam alignment and improvement, sharing resources, master-scheduling of the content area, courses and descriptions, etc. This time is in addition to the common prep period that is worked into the master schedule that allows several teachers from each content to share a prep period to allow for more collaboration and interaction. Teachers at Explore Academy are given a lot of freedom to teach with their own interests and specialties, and in turn go above and beyond in student feedback, data-driven instruction, staff collaboration, and assistance with school processes and operation.

Parent-Focused

We were able to form our initial PTO the summer before the school opened in 2014 and the organization has remained active every year. They host dances, fundraisers, events, back to school socials, and other activities to promote school engagement and culture. They also help organize volunteers when the school needs help for moving rooms (or school facilities, twice), cleaning, setting up for events and for the start of school, etc. The PTO also announces their meetings openly so that as many parents as possible can attend, in addition to allowing parents to participate via skype or Google Hangouts when they cannot physically be present at a meeting.

The focus on volunteering has also been a strong community builder for us. Many parents for the last four years have been active in Explore Academy activities, sometimes even planning surprises for students and staff to show appreciation or congratulations. There have been parent volunteers who bring materials for the school to use as donations, parents who present to students as experts and guest speakers, parents who train staff and/or students on important topics such as suicide prevention and self-defense, etc.

We feel that our parent focus over the contract term has been not only strong, but extremely beneficial; the parents of our students are often as much a part of the school as the students are and we welcome all families into the Explore community.

*** All schools must provide a response for this section of the application.**

b. Organizational Performance Framework

Pursuant to NMCA 22-8B-9.1, the performance framework for each charter school must include performance indicators and performance targets for governing body performance, including compliance with all applicable laws, rules and terms of the charter contract.

For any school that has received a repeated “working to meet” rating or a first time or repeat “falls far below rating” for one or more of the organizational performance framework indicators on the most recently completed organizational performance framework evaluation provide a narrative explaining the improvement actions made (school/adult/leader/board actions) to meet all legal compliance requirements and the effectiveness of those actions (improved practices and outcomes) in improving organizational performance and compliance.

The purpose of the narrative is to demonstrate substantial progress toward achieving and maintaining organizational performance and compliance.

Implementation of the described improvement actions should be verifiable through evidence at the site visit. **Please identify specific evidence of both the school/adult/leader/board actions and the improved practices and outcomes in the narrative.**

If the school has received any OCR complaints or formal special education complaints, the school must identify those, provide all communications (redacted to protect PII) related to those complaints in an appendix, and describe the current status of the complaint. **If any of those complaints have been resolved and resulted in a finding that the school violated any law**, the school must provide a narrative describing the required compensatory and corrective actions required and their status in implementing those actions. The implementation of such actions must be verifiable through evidence during the site visit.

Schools that do not have any repeated “working to meet” ratings or any “falls far below” ratings on the most recent organizational performance framework evaluation do NOT complete this Section.

School response:

Summary of “Falls Far Below” Ratings

Business Management and Oversight.

The school did not provide evidence of implementation of their financial corrective action plan or remedies instituted that resulted in compliance or sufficient movement toward compliance for the school’s five audit findings (compliance), four single year audit findings and one repeated audit finding. Also, the school had a repeat finding.

Response:

For FY2015 audit findings, the school sent Amelia Saiz the Corrective Action Plan on April 28, 2016. On July 22, 2016 the school sent a follow up email to Ms. Saiz regarding the Corrective Action Plan Implementation Letter

the school received. The school provided the backup on how the FY2015 audit findings were corrected going into FY2016.

For FY 2016 Audit Findings the Corrective Action Plan was sent to Amelia Saiz on March 7, 2017. On October 25, 2017 a follow up email was sent to Daniel Romero regarding the Corrective Action Plan Implementation letter the school received. The school provided the backup for the Corrective action Plan on the same day they received the letter.

For FY2017 audit Findings the Corrective Action Plan was sent to Amelia Saiz on March 22, 2018. Since then there has been no correspondence from Amelia requesting additional information.

The submissions described above can be presented as requested.

In the case of the repeat finding, the school has streamlined the internal control procedures in order to ensure that approvals are in place (through the generation of a purchase order) prior to the purchase being made. As a result of the repeated finding, the school has implemented a more streamlined system of approval, with the head administrator functioning as the single agent for approval of all purchases. Annual approvals are made on July 1st of each fiscal year, with the amounts based on the previous year's expenditures, to ensure that approval exists prior to the dates of any expenditures in such categories. Because the head administrator oversees all purchases, no staff member can commit to purchase items without the presence of a purchase order, which requires administrator approval, thereby ensuring that purchasing cannot be made without a purchase order in place.

At the time of the site visit, there was no request made to demonstrate the specifics of the above system.

Health and Safety.

The school did not provide evidence that it requires all visitors to sign-in and wear a visitor badge. The school did not provide evidence of an approved Safe School Plan [6.12.6.8(7) NMAC]. Also, the school's Safe Schools Plan (SSP) is overdue by at least 10 months and to date has not been approved by the Coordinated School Health & Wellness Bureau.

Response:

Explore Academy prioritizes the safety of all students, staff, and visitors on campus. Since the opening of the school, there has been a sign in / sign out document at the front desk. The administrative executive monitors all traffic in and out of the school in conjunction with administration and security. When entering the school, all visitors sign in at the front desk. This includes parents, guest speakers, contractors, etc. Teachers also sign in and out when they leave campus. Students who arrive late or leave early also sign in and out to document their arrival or departure time.

This process has been refined and improved in recent years. All visitors, students, and staff now sign in through a digital platform at a computer housed at the front desk. This improvement allows the school to keep a record of all campus traffic to better maintain the safety of the students and staff on site. The digital sign in has also streamlined the process and reduced the issues that arise with illegible handwriting and incomplete entries (since the digital sign in has required fields that must be entered in order to submit the entry).

Previously, there was no procedure for official visitor badges. A lanyard badge was used, but the process for the badge usage was not always consistent. This was corrected in past years, and all visitors are given a visitor sticker that is placed on their person and must remain there for the duration of their stay on campus. Visitors can remove the badge when they visit the front desk to sign out before leaving campus.

The Safe Schools Plan (SSP) has been a long process for the school to complete due to several factors. The plan itself was completed and submitted based on the first facility used by Explore Academy (3831 Midway PI NE). When the campus was forced to move to a temporary facility in its third contract year (6900 Los Volcanes NW), the plan had to be adjusted again with many changes to reflect the new facility. Upon moving for the third time to the permanent facility (5100 Masthead NE), the plan again required changes.

The SSP was then adjusted again to correspond to the new facility and was resubmitted. At this time, a change in Explore Academy administration occurred as well as a rubric adjustment for the SSP, and there was miscommunication about the approval, or lack thereof, of the SSP.

When the Coordinated School Health and Wellness Bureau informed Explore Academy of the status of the plan, it was modified again (in July 2018) to address the areas of concern on the rubric sent by the bureau. The plan was submitted again via email. At this point, Explore was notified that the bureau would not review a plan submitted electronically, so a disc was mailed to the bureau. When a representative of Explore reached out to the bureau after two weeks, they stated that it never arrived. That same day, a thumb drive was mailed to the bureau. Again, the bureau reported never receiving the SSP. At this point, Explore requested address confirmation and mailed a third copy to the bureau via certified mail that required signature and had tracking. This was received and the SSP was quickly approved.

A copy of the updated SSP as well as the rubric on which the corrections were based is available on site and can be supplied as requested. There were only a few areas where the bureau suggested edits and the bulk of the SSP has been approved for many months. The last few sections, mostly related to changes in facility and confusion regarding specific procedures and how they were described in the SSP, have been corrected in the most recent version of the SSP.

Administrative duties that are vital to the operation and compliance of the school have been restructured to prevent issues such as these in the future. There is now an employee assigned specifically to compliance tasks such as the SSP. The management of grant applications and school data is now also assigned specifically to designated staff in order to more efficiently completed all required tasks.

c. Governance Responsibilities*

Pursuant to NMSA 22-8B-4, each charter school must, at all times, have at least five members and no members may serve on any other charter school governing body. Further, the governing bodies must operate in accordance with their charter contract and bylaws. The PEC's performance contract requires that the PEC is notified of board vacancies within 30 days, and that vacancies are filled within 45 days.

Additionally, pursuant to NMSA 22-8-12.3, Boards must maintain audit and finance committees that meet statutory makeup requirements.

Further, pursuant to NMAC 6.80.4.20, each charter school governing body member must annually complete five hours of approved training.

Finally, governing body members are held to the conflict of interest requirements laid out in NMSA 22-8B-5.2.

Each school must identify how they have met governance responsibilities during the term of the contract. Specifically, the school must identify:

- the membership of their boards at all times during the term of the contract (with roles and service terms for all members) this should also include membership of the required committees;
- any time when membership on the governing body fell below the requirements in their by-laws or the statutory minimum of 5 members;
- any time when the governing body did not maintain the required committee membership;
- the amount of time any vacancies were open;
- any board members that did not complete required training hours in any of the years of the contract term.

If the school identified any governance requirements they were unable to meet, the school must provide a narrative describing the improvement actions the school implemented to move toward full compliance with governance responsibilities.

The purpose of the narrative is to demonstrate substantial progress toward meeting all governance requirements.

The implementation of such actions must be verifiable through evidence during the site visit.

School response:

Number of Board Members:

Governing board met the membership requirement for the entire term of the contract and always maintained at least a five-person board.

Board Members Annually Throughout Contract Term:

2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
Jesse Pickard	Jesse Pickard	Jesse Pickard	Jesse Pickard	Jesse Pickard
Gloria Lueras-Kidd	Gloria Lueras-Kidd	Gloria Lueras-Kidd	Gloria Lueras-Kidd (10/2017 exit) / Ray Barton III (11/2017 enter)	Ray Barton III
Stephanie Peterson	Kelly Gwartney	Kelly Gwartney	David Kulb	David Kulb
Joan Hickman	Robert Morrison	Robert Morrison	John Garletts	John Garletts
Cody Murray	Cody Murray	Shane Mulligan	Shane Mulligan (5/2018 exit)	Ralph Montano
		Ralph Montano	Ralph Montano	

Board Member Training Requirements:

Currently, there are members of the board who are not up to date with their training requirements for FY18 as noted in the finalized Part A report: Jesse Pickard, Ray Barton III, and Shane Mulligan.

Response:

Explore Academy acknowledges the lack of training hours for Mr. Pickard. Mr. Mulligan was planning on attending a training in late spring/summer to meet his required hours, but his sudden departure from the board (to relocate overseas) prevented him from completing his required hours. This is documented in the board minutes which shows his departure from the board prior to the end of his term.

In addition, Mr. Garletts, while on the board for several months from the previous year, was not eligible to vote and did not take part in any voting until he had completed his required hours.

Ms. Lueras-Kidd was in a similar position, having left the board on short notice and prior to the end of her term. Had she completed her term, she would have finished her training requirement.

Mr. Barton has completed more than the required number of hours. Documentation is attached.

In regards to the 2016-17 school year, the school's governance council members did complete their required training hours, with certificates awarded from the NMCCS. It is unclear at this point why the PED/CSD have no record of these trainings.

Improvement Actions:

The following actions were implemented by the school to prevent further lapses in board training compliance: In order to maintain compliance, particularly in regard to board member required training hours, Explore Academy's Governance Council developed a process for tracking training hours. A board member has taken on

the role of tracking the training hours for the board as well as gathering information about upcoming training opportunities to make sure that board members are aware of their training hour counts as well as training that is available to them. All training certificates are kept in a binder that is reviewed by the board at their monthly meetings. Additionally, all training opportunities are announced to the board members via email as soon as we know about them, and then these opportunities are announced again at each board meeting.

Explore Academy CPO - Response:

Michael Vigil has been an employee of Cottonwood Classical Preparatory School since he worked on their application over 10 years ago. Explore Academy and Cottonwood Classical Preparatory School entered into a Memorandum of Understanding on April 30, 2018. Under Section 1.4.1.94 NMAC Subsection I, it is allowable for a certified chief procurement officer to be shared amongst state agencies or local public bodies. Michael Vigil is a shared CPO per the MOU and in compliance with New Mexico laws and regulations.

*** All schools must provide a response for this section of the application.**