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2019 CSD Preliminary Analysis of Renewal Application and Site Visit

School Name: La Academia Dolores Huerta

School Address: 1480 North Main Street Las Cruces, NM 88001

Head Administrator: Melissa Miranda

Business Manager: Juliette Sanchez

Authorized Grade Levels: 6-8

Authorized Enrollment: 300

Contract Term: July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2019

Mission: *“La Academia Dolores Huerta’s mission is to create an engaging culturally diverse educational program of the arts and languages that enable LADH middle school students to achieve high personal growth and strong social-cultural identity that leads to academic success.” (Contract, p. 32)*

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>Demonstrates Substantial Progress</i>
2.b	Board of Finance	<i>Meets the Standard</i>
CONTRACTUAL, ORGANIZATIONAL, AND GOVERNANCE		
3.a	Material Terms	<i>Demonstrates Substantial Progress</i>
3.b	Organizational Performance Framework	<i>Demonstrates Substantial Progress</i>
3.c	Governance Responsibilities	<i>Failing to Demonstrate 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 30, 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”. La Academia Dolores Huerta (LADH) earned an Overall Grade of “C” in the first year of the contract term (2015) and an Overall Grade of “F” in the following three consecutive years (2016-2018). A grade of “F” was also received on four of the five indicators (Current Standing, School Improvement, Q3 Performance, and Q1 Performances) for the last two years. The school received a grade of “A” in Opportunity to Learn in 2018. The school reported that LADH has implemented several changes this school year (2018-2019) to address both the school’s grade and the goals specific to La Academia Dolores Huerta. The changes made are discussed in Part B, Subsection A of the application and include the following: hired an Instructional Coach (IC); provides weekly professional development to staff; use of common lesson plan templates; common planning time with weekly Professional Learning Communities (PLCs); weekly classroom walk-throughs conducted; and use of new short-cycle assessments and progress monitoring. The school has been identified as a Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) school and is implementing an NM DASH plan. According to LADH’s application, the school recognizes that several changes must occur to increase student achievement and will continue to make the changes needed to ensure all students are successful. At this time, LADH does not have evidence to support the success of the implemented improvement because the majority of those actions were implemented the current school year. The CSD team has rated this indicator as “**failing to demonstrate progress**” because the school does not have a demonstrated record of meeting all standards in each of the years of the contract term, an evaluation of the data and evidence does not demonstrate at least two years of sustained improvement, and the narrative fails to identify any measurable successes during the most recent year. The CSD did observe beginning stages of implementation during the renewal site visit. The school’s proposed after-school tutoring/intervention program has not yet started.

1b) A school earns a rating of “meets the standard” when the school has 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 all standards in each of the years in the contract term, an evaluation of the data and evidence does not demonstrate at least two years of sustained improvement, and the narrative fails to identify any measurable successes during the most recent year.

The current mission-specific goals are (1) professional development, (2) reading, (3) mathematics, (4) Spanish language proficiency, and (5) English language proficiency (per ACCESS for ELLs assessment). The school received a “falls far below” rating in all five (5) indicators during 2016-2017 and in three (3) indicators (reading, math, and Spanish) during 2017-2018. In 2017-2018, the school earned a “does not meet” for professional development and a “meets standard” for English language proficiency.

Financial Compliance

2a) A rating of “meets the standard” is earned by schools that receive no material weakness, significant deficiency, or repeat audit findings in each of the annual audits during the term of the contract. The CSD team has rated this indicator as “**demonstrating substantial progress**” because the school had five (5) audit findings, including two significant deficiencies, in FY15 and one (1) finding in FY17. However,

new practices and policies are in place via a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) in response to the annual audit, and LADH has not received any material/significant findings since the FY15 school year, thus demonstrating progress toward achieving and maintaining financial compliance. The school also stated that

“the Business Specialist is in the process of acquiring her Business License which will provide her with additional information and knowledge as she and the Business Manager work together (along with the Head Administrator) to ensure LADH continues to achieve and maintain financial compliance. In addition, the Head Administrator has enrolled and is planning to attend the NMASBO 2018 Boot Camp to become familiar and knowledgeable with best practices, policies, state statutes, etc. to ensure LADH continues to manage finances in the best interest of the school. In addition, the Business Specialist and the Head Administrator are looking into obtaining the Chief Procurement Officer Certification to become familiar with the responsibilities of acquiring and purchasing services, good, etc.”

These additional steps may lead to improved financial compliance, however, cannot be evaluated as these measures were not implemented until the current school year.

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 **“demonstrates substantial progress”** because the school has improved its implementation of the Material Terms of the Charter from a “working to meet standard” rating in FY17 to a “meets standard” rating in FY18.

3b) The CSD team has rated this indicator as **“demonstrates substantial progress”** because the school received four (4) “working to meet” and three (3) “falls far below” ratings in 2016-2017 and four (4) “working to meet” ratings in 2017-2018. The concerns identified in 2017-2018 included: (1) instructional days/hours; (2) compulsory attendance 5-day notice; (3) audit findings; and (4) emergency drills. The school has implemented remedies and has provided action plans to resolve the concerns. The CSD team confirmed that the school meets minimum requirements for instructional hours, observed the 5-day attendance letter, and is current on emergency drills thus far this year.

3c) The CSD team has rated this indicator as **“failing to demonstrate progress”** due to the fact there has been repeated non-compliance in completing mandatory training and three(3) of seven (7) Governing board members did not complete the required training again in 2017-2018. The school acknowledged that record-keeping and getting Governing Council members to attend all trainings has been challenging. This year, the school has amended its bylaws to appoint the Governing Council Secretary as keeper of a Governing Council training log. This step may bring the school into compliance on this indicator but, at this time, cannot be evaluated.

Stakeholder Interviews

As part of the school’s renewal site visit on October 30, 2018, following a musical performance by the middle school students, stakeholder interviews were conducted at La Academia Dolores Huerta. The participants included three (3) parents, three (3) students, three (3) Governing Council members, and four (4) staff members. The following provides some additional context regarding the school from various perspectives.

The parents chose to send their children to this school for the bilingual program and the arts, including ballet folklórico. One parent remarked, *"We chose to come here because we come from a Hispanic Mexican background, which the school also has. The school is really small and that allows more attention to the kids."* One parent told us that she travels 30 miles to get her student to the school and has had nothing but good experiences. Another parent commented, *"I'm very happy with [my son's] education these past three years. He has improved in math and English. He speaks Spanish and English fluently. My son likes coming to school."* A parent of a student who receives special education services said that her son *"always had a hard time concentrating and would be bullied.....[and] is now a straight A and B student when he was an F and D student before. His self-esteem has improved. This school is more like a family."*

When asked why they wanted to attend La Academia Dolores Huerta, students cited the arts, the Ballet Folklórico, and creative media. One said she is *"doing a lot better in math because teachers have more time to help each kid."* The students claimed that they wouldn't really change anything about the school, except for funding because the school *"had to let go of a couple of teachers because we didn't have the money to pay for them."* The students also stressed that everyone is willing to participate in fundraisers to support the school.

Governing Board members listed a daughter who attended the school, former work with the school, and involvement in arts as reasons for joining the board. When asked about the academic performance, it was stated that the school has *"not performed academically the way they were expected. The last few years have not gone well. The last years our grades have been lower. I know we switched programs this year to look at monthly assessments."* Regarding evaluations of the Head Administrator, one of the members reported *"It is a work in progress. The last evaluation was one we thought was not sufficient enough. We are looking to coming up with a new evaluation. This governing council is having to clean up a lot of what was happening in the past..."*. They also confirmed the new procedure for tracking completion of mandatory training for all Governing Board members and that the Secretary was designated as the keeper of the log.

The staff members included the school secretary (a former student of the school), the business specialist who handles many operational tasks, and two teachers. Comments made include *"I love the small environment we have here"* and *"My son attended here.....He is now attending early college and maintaining As and Bs."* When asked about addressing struggling students, it was stated that *"Getting everyone on the same page makes everything a lot easier. I think this institution does a good job of identifying struggling students and everyone who has that student provides input."* Another explained that he follows the IEP accommodations and the staff have conversations about students at schoolwide meetings. The interviewers asked the staff to address how the Instructional Coach has improved academics at the school and the response was that she is the Assistant Principal, leads the PLC meetings, and has helped to standardize what teachers include in lesson plans and how classrooms are set up. The staff also confirmed the weekly PLC meetings that have covered data, common core, lesson plans, etc. *"We have a more systematic approach and the Head Administrator is doing regular classroom walk-throughs."*

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