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2019 CSD Preliminary Analysis of Renewal Application and Site Visit

School Name: Southwest Secondary Learning Center (SSLC)
School Address: 10301 Candelaria Road NE, Albuquerque NM 87112
Head Administrator: Christine Lutz
Business Manager: Justine Vigil
Authorized Grade Levels: 9-12
Authorized Enrollment: 500
Contract Term: July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2019

Mission: *“The mission of the Southwest Secondary Learning center is to sustain a high performing learning community by preparing computer-literate students for college or a career through a blended learning model that is individualized, self-directed and flexible.”*

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>Not applicable</i>
FINANCIAL COMPLIANCE		
2.a	Audit	<i>Demonstrates Substantial Progress</i>
2.b	Board of Finance	<i>Demonstrates Substantial Progress</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>Meets the Standard</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 3, 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”. Southwest Secondary Learning Center (SSLC) has earned a letter grade of C during the first year of the current two-year contract term. However, in 2018, SSLC received a grade of F on the graduation indicator for the first time since 2014. Over the last three years the graduation indicator has dropped from an “A” to a “C” and ultimately to the current “F.” The school indicated that this trend has been noted and given top priority for the 2018 -2019 school year. To address students that are in need of additional services to graduate within a four-year period, SSLC has created two new policies that will help identify and track students in need of early intervention: a new attendance policy (that includes virtual absences) and a monitored enrollment policy. In addition, the staff/faculty collaborates to study the school report card and identify suggestions for improvement that may be implemented. The CSD team has rated this indicator as “**demonstrates substantial progress**” due to the implementation of policies and procedures to support students that were identified and confirmed at the renewal site visit.

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 “**not applicable**” because the school did not have any mission-specific goals for this renewal period.

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”. Since SSLC received two repeated significant deficiencies (cash disbursements and payroll) in 2017 and the school has implemented new policies to address the issues, the CSD team has rated this indicator as “**demonstrates substantial progress**”.

2b) The school’s Board of Finance was suspended on August 28, 2014 by then-Public Education Secretary, Hanna Skandera. Finances at Southwest Secondary Learning Center have improved such that the Public Education Department returned the school’s Board of Finance on January 1, 2018. The CSD team has rated this indicator as “**demonstrates substantial progress**” due to the efforts the school has made and the actions taken to have the Board of Finance reinstated. Please refer to the school’s submitted Progress Report, Part B, for details on actions taken.

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 seven (7) “working to meet” and two (2) “falls far below” ratings in 2018. The areas of concern

are: 1) Special Education IEPs; 2) identifying and servicing English Language Learners; 3) recurrent enrollment (81.82%); 4) repeat audit findings; 5) significant deficiency audit findings; 6) licensed instructor for evening classes; 7) missing background checks for two staff; 8) missing certificates for four staff members regarding training on reporting child abuse/neglect; and 9) emergency drills. The school has addressed all of the concerns as evidenced by the documentation provided via Web-EPSS and confirmed at the site visit.

3c) The CSD team has rated this indicator as “**meets standard**” due to the fact that The Southwest Secondary Learning Center Governing Council has maintained membership of at least five (5) throughout the renewal period and all members completed their annual training requirement in 2017-2018.

Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder interviews were conducted on October 3, 2018 at Southwest Secondary Learning Center. The participants included eight (8) parents, nine (9) students, three (3) Governing Council members, and six (6) staff members.

The three Governing Board members have been on the board for three months to a couple of years. Two of the members are parents of students who attend the Southwest Preparatory or Secondary Learning Center. They each spoke to wanting to get involved and help the school. When asked to describe the academic program, it was described as a “*sound program*” with lots of flexibility and a very welcoming place. One board member stated that he “*would like to see us score better overall*” to which another mentioned that if you look at growth, it has been on a positive trend for the last three years. He thinks this “*shows that what is happening here is working*” but he agrees that he would like to see gross competency scores go up. Two of the members interviewed serve on the finance committee and one serves on the audit team. They believe that the finances are now solid, supported by the fact that the board of finance was returned to the school in January 2018. The board questions any fees or other issues that they see and are probably tighter than most. They “*trust, but verify*”.

The students expressed that they came to this school because they were not having a good experience at traditional public schools. They like the teaching style, working at their own speed, teachers taking the time to talk and help, and the SMART lab allows skill development for actual careers. When asked if there is anything that they would like to change about the school, the students did express that they get impatient waiting too long for help. When asked how long that was, the response was 10-15 minutes and other students responded that it is not long at all and that you can always work on other things or other coursework while waiting instead of just sitting and waiting. The students indicated that they spend 15 – 30 hours on coursework outside of school. Also, when asked about the new attendance policy and secure test access (on campus only), they had positive things to say about the attendance policy, indicating it helps them stay on track and stay up to date in all classes, particularly for the seniors. However, they are not fond of having to do all tests and quizzes at the school. They overall agreed that tests should be taken at school but not being able to take the quizzes at home often prevents them from continuing on and/or they have to come to school and take many quizzes. [Note: This was discussed with school administration later and they indicated that the technical requirement is all or none so they are unable to release quizzes but are working with Edgenuity for a possible enhancement.]

Parents stated that the reason their child is attending this school is that they were not doing well in the traditional public school setting and that they did not like the experience at those large schools. Parents

mentioned that *“Students are comfortable here. Teachers get to know the students and openly communicate with students and parents,”* and *“Students who are shy become comfortable and more open.”* Though the school offers sports and other extracurricular activities, one parent expressed that she would like to see more school participation [spectators] in the sports games from other students.

Staff members ranged in tenure from first year at the school to twelve years, including one who was a graduate of the school. The positives mentioned about the school included one-on-one interaction and the technology focus. When asked about the mission and how it is carried out, the staff described the Main Lab and the individualized coursework and attention to each student. (Staff rotate so each of them cover a late shift each week.) Students can go at their own pace with a flexible schedule. Given the flexibility in scheduling, the school can also encourage and support students to attend dual credit at CNM. When asked how they help students who are falling behind, they responded that *“We do our best to keep open lines of communication to the parents.”* Students are assigned to a sponsor teacher who follows them and emails parents weekly. If students are not putting in the time, then attending more sessions at school is required.

[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 PERFORMANCE5

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