



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

2018 Charter School Renewal – Explore Academy

PED RECOMMENDATION

The PED recommends a **renewal term of five (5) years with the following conditions:**

- Receive an unmodified audit devoid of: (a) material weakness and significant deficiency findings and (b) repeat findings at any classification level one year prior to and during the term of its contract (Audit reports released during the 2018-2019 through 2022-2023).

Summary of Performance

Academic. The school performed well in all of categories of the A-F School Grading Report since 2016. The school received a “*Meets Standard*” rating on its one school specific goal in 2017-2018. It received an “*Exceeds Standard*” rating (pertaining to exit test for student coursework) and a “*Falls Far Below Standard*” rating (pertaining to interim assessment that is no longer addressed due to an approved amendment request) during prior years’ ratings. The school’s Overall School Grades during the contract term were: D, A, A, and A.

Financial. The school had a total of nine (9) audit findings with one (1) repeat during the past three (3) years. One (1) of the findings was at the significant deficiency classification.

Organizational. During the most recent year (2016-2017), the school received two (2) “*Falls Far Below Standard*” ratings and also received two (2) “*Falls Far Below Standard*” ratings the previous year in 2016-2017 (related to business management and oversight; overdue Safe Schools Plan).

Renewal Application - Explore Academy

PART A: Data analysis provided by CSD

Please see Part A - Summary Data Report based on data from Current Charter Contract term

PART B: Progress Report provided by the School

Please see Part B for the school’s self-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.

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>

The ratings above, based on the rubric in the renewal kit, are also listed in the margin below. In addition, the Performance Framework results for the last two (2) school years (2016-2017 and 2017-2018) are provided in Appendix A.

1) Academic Performance

*Demonstrates
Substantial
Progress*

a) Department’s Standards of Excellence - A-F Letter Grades

Schools that have maintained a C or better letter grade over the term of the contract AND have not earned a D or F in any indicator of the letter grade in the past two years do NOT complete this Section.

Academic Performance Framework 1a: Overall NM School Grades: D, A, A, and A.

*Demonstrates
Substantial
Progress*

School Specific Charter Goals

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

Academic Performance Framework 1b and 1c:

Mission Specific Goals, Optional Supplemental Indicators, & any School Specific Terms

- Average exit exam score will measure at proficiency: *Meets Standard*
- Measure at proficiency or above OR demonstrate one year’s growth in reading on Riverside Interim Assessment: *Removed via an amendment request*

2) Financial Compliance

*Demonstrates
Substantial
Progress*

a) **Audit**

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.

Organizational Performance Framework 2a and 2b

*Meets the
Standard*

b) **Board of Finance**

Schools that have maintained all Board of Finance authority during the entire term of the contract do NOT complete this Section. If required to complete this section, provide a narrative explaining the actions taken (improved practices and outcomes).

c) **Additional Financial Information**

Financial Performance Framework #1-8: Self-Assessment Survey

3) Contractual, Organizational, and Governance Responsibilities

*Meets the
Standard*

a) **Charter Material Terms**

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

Organizational Performance Framework 1a: Material Terms

- **Shorter learning modules (seminars)**
- **Flex periods for Rtl and services**
- **Assisting parents in monitoring student progress**
- **Parent Teacher Organization meets regularly**

b) **Organizational Performance Framework**

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.

Organizational Performance Framework 1b-1g, 4a-4c, and 5a-5c

Any OCR complaints or formal special education complaints, identify those, provide all communication related to those, and describe the current status in Appendix, referenced in narrative by name. List complaints: none known

*Demonstrates
Substantial
Progress*

c) **Governance Responsibilities**

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

Organizational Performance Framework 3a and 3b

*Demonstrates
Substantial
Progress*

X

PART C: Financial Statement

A financial statement that discloses the costs of administration, instruction and other spending categories for the charter school that is understandable to the general public that allows comparison of costs to other schools or comparable organizations and that is in a format required by the department.

PART D: Petitions of Support

X

- 1) A petition in support of the charter school renewing its charter status signed by not less than sixty-five percent of the **employees** in the charter school, with certified affidavit.

Number: 33 out of 37 Percentage: 89 %

- X 2) A petition in support of the charter school renewing its charter status signed by at least seventy-five percent of the **households** whose children are enrolled in the charter school, with certified affidavit.
Number: 345 Percentage: 87 %

PART E: Description of the Charter School Facilities and Assurances

A description of the charter school facilities and assurances that the facilities are in compliance with the requirements of Section 22-8B-4.2 NMSA 1978.

- X 1) A narrative description of its facilities
- X 2) Attach x facility plans or the school’s Facility Master Plan as Appendix D
- X 3) Attach a copy of the following
- X a) Copy of the building E Occupancy certificate(s)
from City of Albuquerque number 201492248 and 2018-09918
- X b) Letter from PSFA (dated 2017) with the facility NMCI Score 11% indicating that the school meets the requirements of Subsection C of 22-8B-4.2 NMSA 1978 (if the charter school is relocating or expanding to accommodate more students).
- X 3) Provide assurances that the facilities are in compliance with the requirements of Section 22-8B-4.2 NMSA 1978, including subsections A, C, and D. A template is available from the PEC’s website.
 Public (Cert A) Private (Cert B) x Foundation (Cert C)

 X **PART F: Amendment Requests**

OPTIONAL: Identify any amendments the school would like to have considered as part of the renewal process to be considered by the PEC as changes to the material terms that would become effective as part of the new contract.

Number of proposed amendments submitted by school for new contract: 3

- **Potential increase in overall enrollment cap (to 550-600 students)**
- **Addition of a potential second and third school site**
- **Adjustment to management structure to include a contracted management entity to oversee the school’s operations as well as operations of a potential second and/or third school site**

Number of prior Amendment Requests on file with CSD: 3 since 2014

- Change in Interim Assessment APPROVED 5/15/18.
- Amendment request to expand to serve grades 6-7 (in 2018-2019) and grade 8 (in 2019-2020) and enrollment increase to serve 500 students APPROVED 9/1/17.
- Amendment request to change/move permanent location of the school APPROVED 8/31/17.
- Amendment request to expand to serve grades 6-7 (in 2017-18) and grade 8 (in 2018-19) DENIED 1/13/17 due to previous school grade of D

attached **School Response to CSD Preliminary Analysis**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Explore Academy	2016-2017	2017-2018
	Category I. Academic Performance Framework		
<input type="checkbox"/>	I-A.00 (1a) NM A-F School Grading System	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
<input type="checkbox"/>	I-A.01 (1b) Mission Specific Indicators	Falls Far Below (or Does Not Meet) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
<input type="checkbox"/>	I-A.02 Optional Supplemental Indicators (school specific items in charter)	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
	Category II. Financial Performance Framework		
<input type="checkbox"/>	II-A.00-06 (#1-8) Operating Budget/Audits/PeriodicReports/Expenditures/Reimbursements/AuditReviews/Meals	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
	Category III. Organizational Performance Framework		
<input type="checkbox"/>	III-A.00 (1a) Educational Plan: material terms of the approved charter application	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
<input type="checkbox"/>	III-A.01 (1b) Education Plan: applicable education requirements	Working to Meet Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
<input type="checkbox"/>	III-A.02 (1c) Education Plan: protecting the rights of all students	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Working to Meet Standard
<input type="checkbox"/>	III-A.03 (1d) Educational Plan: protecting the rights of students with special needs (IDEA, 504, gifted)	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
<input type="checkbox"/>	III-A.04 (1e) Educational Plan: protecting the rights of English Language Learners (Title III)	Working to Meet Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
<input type="checkbox"/>	III-A.05 (1f) Educational Plan: complying with the compulsory attendance laws	Working to Meet Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
<input type="checkbox"/>	III-A.06 (1g) Educational Plan: meet their recurrent enrollment goals	Working to Meet Standard	Working to Meet Standard
<input type="checkbox"/>	IV-A.00 (2a) Business Management & Oversight: meeting financial reporting & compliance requirements	Falls Far Below (or Does Not Meet) Standard	Falls Far Below (or Does Not Meet) Standard
<input type="checkbox"/>	IV-A.01 (2b) Business Management & Oversight: following generally accepted accounting principles	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
<input type="checkbox"/>	V-A.00 (3a) Governance and Reporting: complying with governance requirements	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
<input type="checkbox"/>	V-A.01 (3b) Governance and Reporting: holding management accountable	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
<input type="checkbox"/>	VI-A.00 (4a) Employees: meeting teacher and other staff credentialing requirements	Working to Meet Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
<input type="checkbox"/>	VI-A.01 (4b) Employees: respecting employee rights	Working to Meet Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
<input type="checkbox"/>	VI-A.02 (4c) Employees: completing required background checks	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
<input type="checkbox"/>	VII-A.00 (5a) School Environment: complying with facilities requirements	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
<input type="checkbox"/>	VII-A.01 (5b) School Environment: complying with health and safety requirements	Falls Far Below (or Does Not Meet) Standard	Falls Far Below (or Does Not Meet) Standard
<input type="checkbox"/>	VII-A.02 (5c) School Environment: handling information appropriately	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
	Category: Organizational Performance Framework		
<input type="checkbox"/>	School Specific Terms: data on any terms specified in the school's Performance Framework	Not Applicable	Not Applicable

Appendix A

RESPONSES TO PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

EXPLORE ACADEMY



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

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.)

Response: Although we understand that the first year of operation earned the school a “D” grade, this has been a point of frustration since it was released due to the use of filler data for areas where we did not yet have our own data on which to be scored. With the three subsequent years being “A” years, and with our demonstrated success in both growth and proficiency, we will we met the standard.

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.

No response

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.

No response

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.

No response

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).

No response

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.

Response: We do have an approved SSP, and although it was out of compliance, we did maintain communication with PED and worked to correct the areas where the SSP was incomplete after moving facilities two times in a year and having to make changes with each facility, in addition to adjusting the plan to a new rubric when the whole SSP had been written using a different rubric for its earlier submissions.

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.

Response: We do have documentation for 2016 and were told it was submitted by the Charter School Coalition because all training was provided by their organization that school year.

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.

Response: The board is provided academic and financial data regularly as well as any time they have a

specific request for information. Agenda items are added to monthly board meetings in order to address an concerns or questions the board has about the school's operation and academic progress. Additionally, the board evaluates the head administrator annually and there is a process for the evaluation that has been in place which uses evaluation criteria and a rubric on which the board bases their evaluation of the head administrator.

[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



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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

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Appendices of additional documentation from the school, if any



Part A—School’s Summary Data Report and Current Charter Contract

SECTION 1. ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

School Grading is part of state and federal statute that mandates accountability for all public schools. In 2011, New Mexico lawmakers enacted requirements that schools demonstrate progress through a grading system similar to that applied to students, A-B-C-D-F (§22-2-1, §22-2-2, and §22-2E-1 to §22-2E-4) (6.19.8.1 NMAC – N, 12-15-11). The statute requires the governing body of a charter school rated D or F to prioritize its resources toward proven programs and methods linked to improved student achievement until the public school earns a grade of C or better for two consecutive years (§22-2E-4 [E] NMSA 1978).

In 2011, New Mexico lawmakers also enacted requirements that each charter school authorizer develop a performance framework to set forth academic performance expectations. The statute requires each charter authorizer to collect, analyze and report all data from state assessment tests in accordance with the performance framework (§22-8B-9.1 NMSA 1978).

Each school in New Mexico is included in one of two School Grading systems either for elementary/middle schools or high schools. Although total possible points for either scheme add up to 100 in which points earned determine a school's letter grade, the two grading systems have different point allocations and components. The elementary/middle school grading system emphasizes *“more competency-based, while the emphasis in high school is on successful completion of high school and preparation for college or career. Charter schools are held to the same standards and calculations as regular public schools.”*¹ In addition, schools may earn up to five additional or *bonus* points for reducing truancy, promoting extracurricular activities, engaging families, and using technology. The School Grading Report Card also provides school leaders with information comparing their school to schools with similar student demographic characteristics.

The following information provides a snapshot of the school's academic performance over the last four (4) years. The analysis in this section will discuss the school's performance over time in each component of the letter grade report.²

1a. Department's Standards of Excellence—A-F Letter Grades

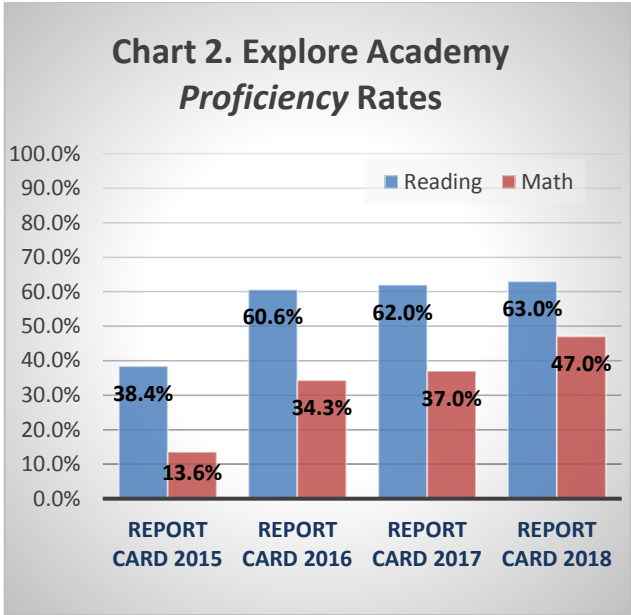
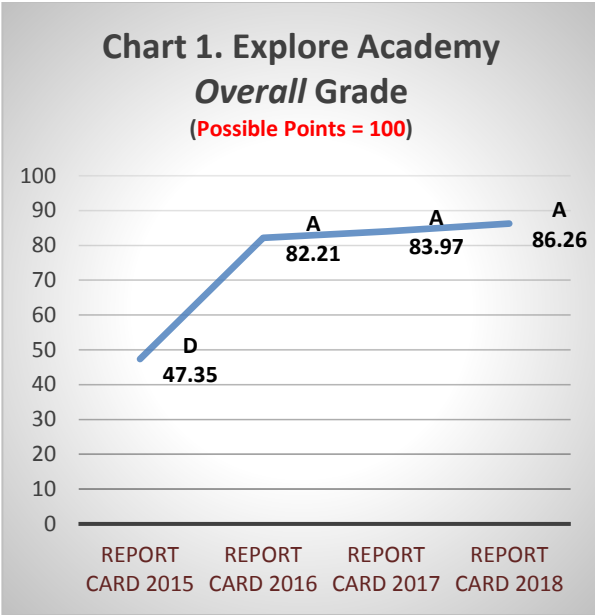
This section includes analysis of academic performance of the school towards meeting the Department's Standards of Excellence –A-F School Grading System through the 2017-2018 school year.

Overall Standing. Chart 1 illustrates Explore Academy's overall school grade in each of the last 4 years (2015-2018). The school earned 3 “A's” and 1 “B” during its contract term. In addition, the school earned bonus points, which if excluded, would have changed the letter grades received in any of the years. Note that beginning in 2018-2019 bonus points will be eliminated as part of the state's federally approved Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Plan.³ Overall points earned ranged from 47.35 – 86.26 during this four (4) year period with proficiency rates in reading and math steadily increasing during the four (4) year period (see Chart 2).

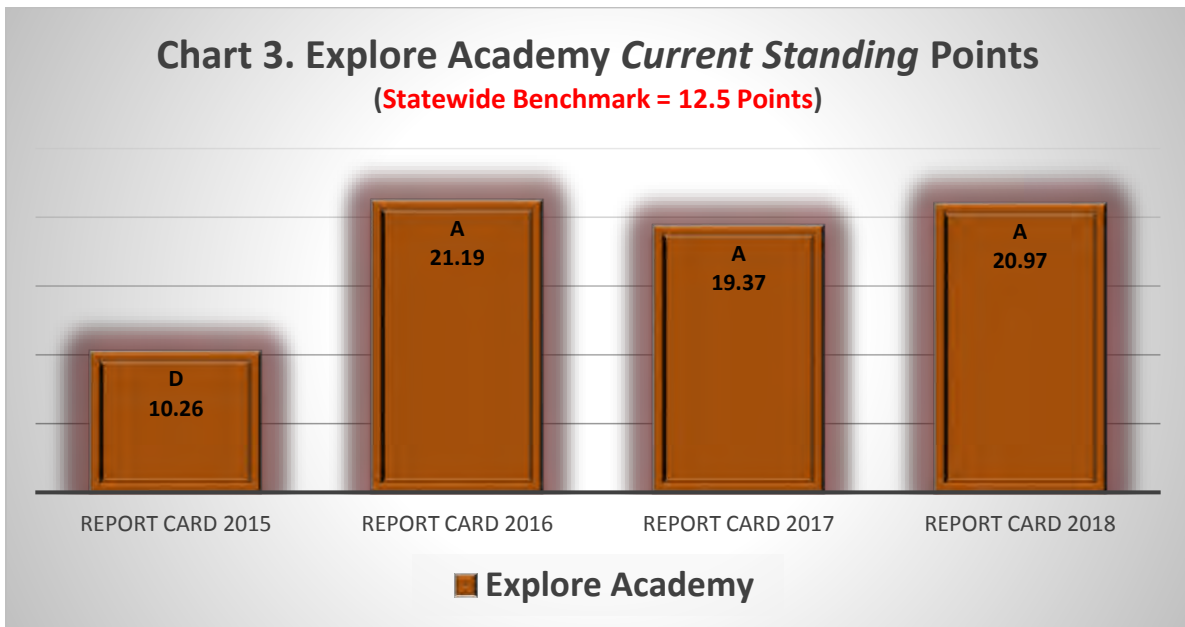
¹ The “A-F School Grading: Frequently Asked Questions [FAQ]” by the New Mexico Public Education Department may be obtained at: <https://aee.ped.state.nm.us/SchoolGradingLinks/1516/TECHNICAL%20ASSISTANCE%20FOR%20EDUCATORS/School%20Grading%20FAQs.pdf>.

² Final Part A excludes similar schools comparison because such information was not available at the time this report was completed.

³ See New Mexico Rising: New Mexico's State Plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act, p. 70 which may be obtained at: <https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/stateplan17/nmsca2017.pdf>

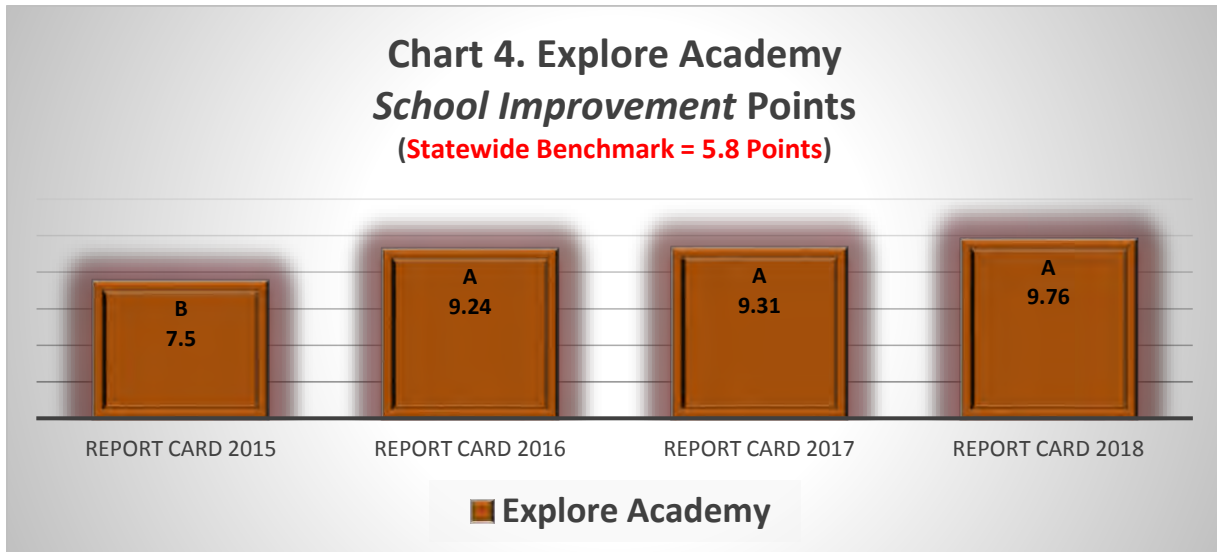


Current Standing. Current standing measures both grade level proficiency and student performance in comparison to expected performance based on statewide peer performance; statewide peers are identified based on prior achievement and student mobility. In 2018 (Chart 3), the school earned 20.97 points out of 30 possible points in this category, which was significantly above the statewide benchmark (established in 2012) of 12.5 points. The school has steadily maintained points earned in the category during the past 3 years.



School Improvement. The *school improvement* performance (formerly known as *School Growth*) on the School Grading Report compares overall student performance from year to year was examined as well as

compared to similar schools. Growth can be positive or negative. When it is positive, school performance is better than expected when compared to others schools with the same size, mobility, and prior student performance. In Chart 4, the school earned between 7.5-9.76 points consistently earning a letter grade of “A” in the category during the last 3 years and a “B” during the first year of its contract. All scores were above the statewide benchmark of 5.8 points.



Under the *school improvement* section of the School Grading Report growth indices for both reading and math are presented (Chart 5). A growth index of zero (0) indicates the expected score for each area when compared to other schools with the same size, mobility and prior student performance. A positive index indicates that the school performed better than was expected while a negative index indicates that the school did not perform as expected when compared to similar schools and students.

In all years a positive growth index with large growth residuals (between 1.11-2.66) during the last 3 years were observed in both reading and math.

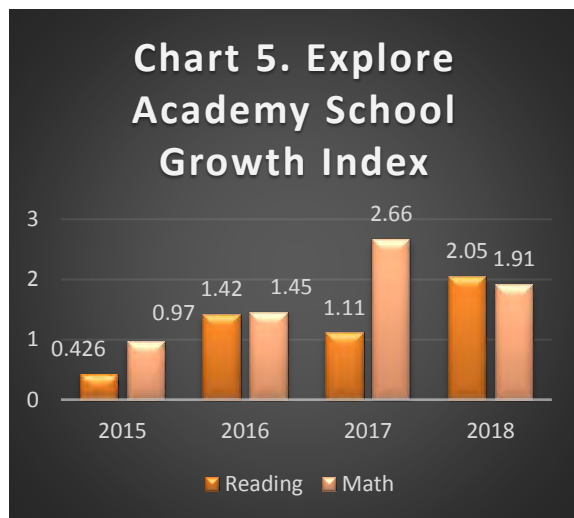
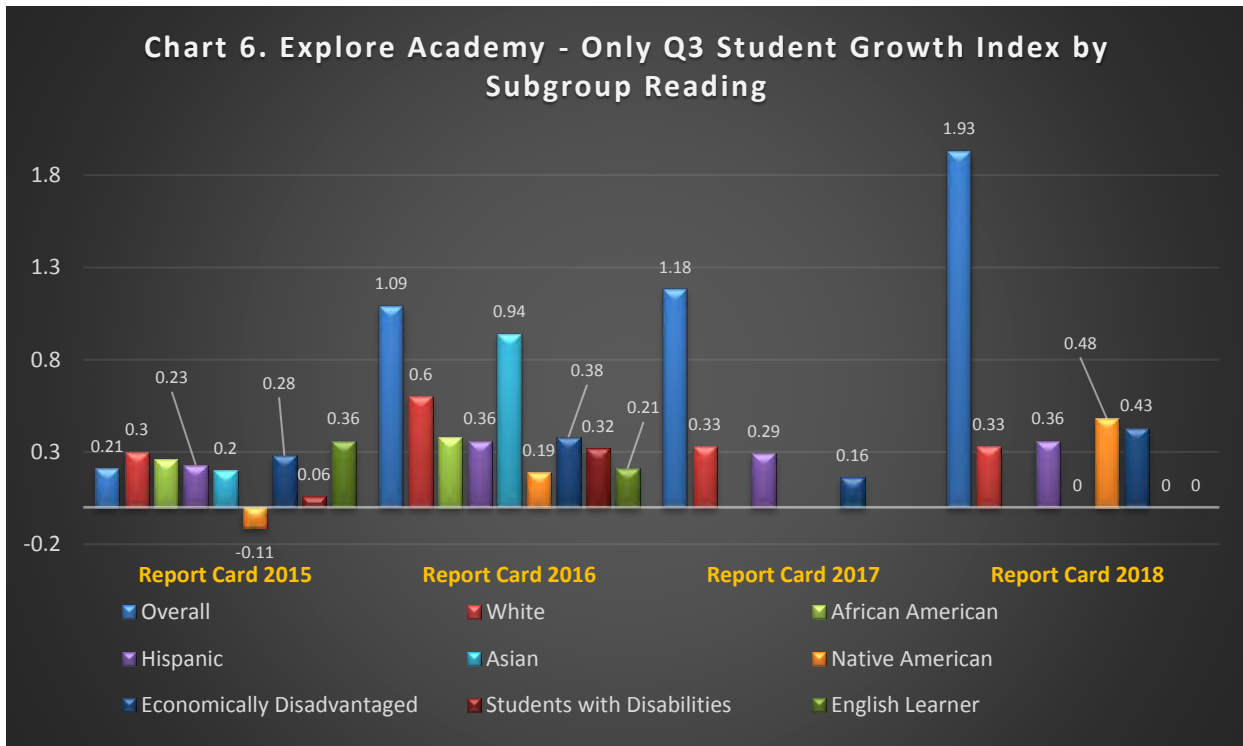
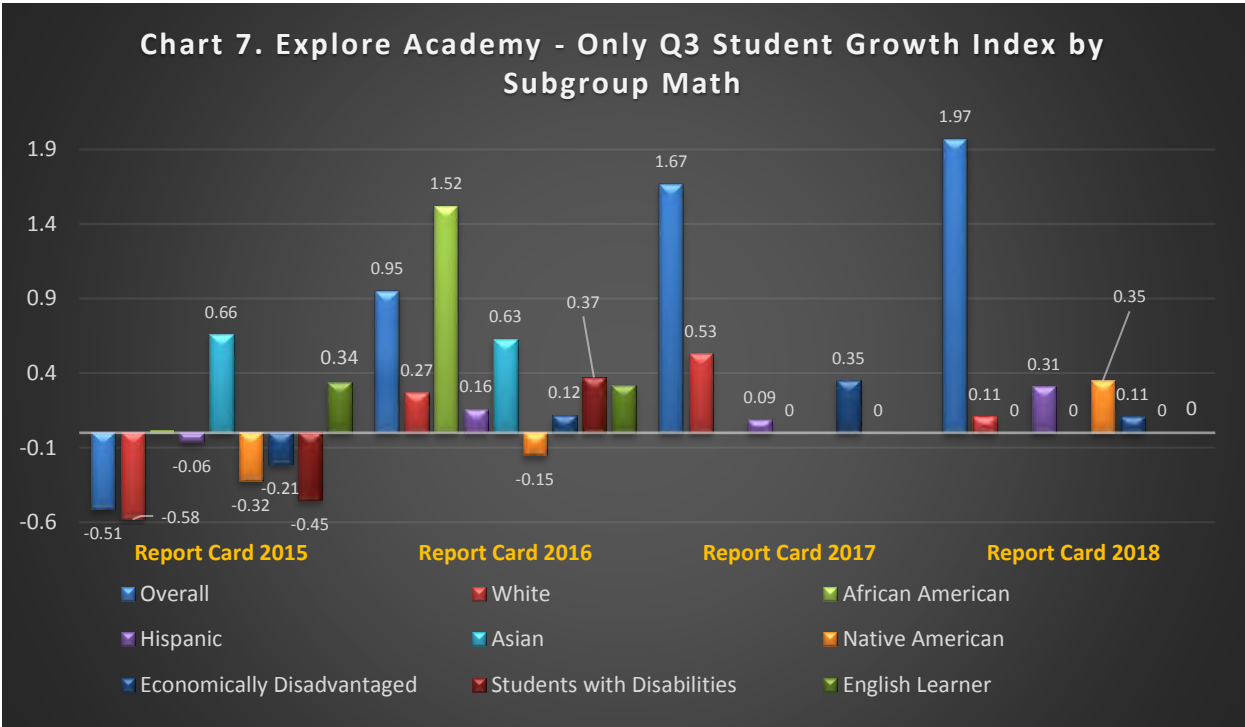


Figure 1. Points earned in School Improvement section (10 total points possible).

	Points Earned in Reading	Points Earned in Math	TOTAL <i>*Possible 10 points</i>
2015	3.33	4.17	7.5
2016	4.61	4.63	9.24
2017	4.33	4.98	9.31
2018	4.90	4.86	9.76

Subgroups within Higher-Performing Students (Q3). In Q3 student growth, the indicator evaluates changes in comparative performance for the school’s higher-performing students (top 75%). All subgroups (excluding masked data) in most years of the contract term met expected growth in reading with overall student growth being met in 4 of 4 years. Large growth residuals were observed during the last 3 years. In math, all subgroups in most years met expected growth with overall student growth being met in 3 of 4 years. Large growth residuals during the last 2 years were observed.





Subgroups within Lowest-Performing Students (Q1). In Q1 student growth, the indicator evaluates changes in comparative performance for the school’s lowest-performing students (lowest 25%). All subgroups (excluding masked data) in most years of the contract term met expected growth in reading with overall student growth being met in 4 of 4 years. Large growth residuals were observed during the last 3 years. In math, all subgroups in most years met expected growth with overall student growth being met in 3 of 4 years.

Chart 8. Explore Academy - Only Q1 Student Growth Index by Subgroup Reading

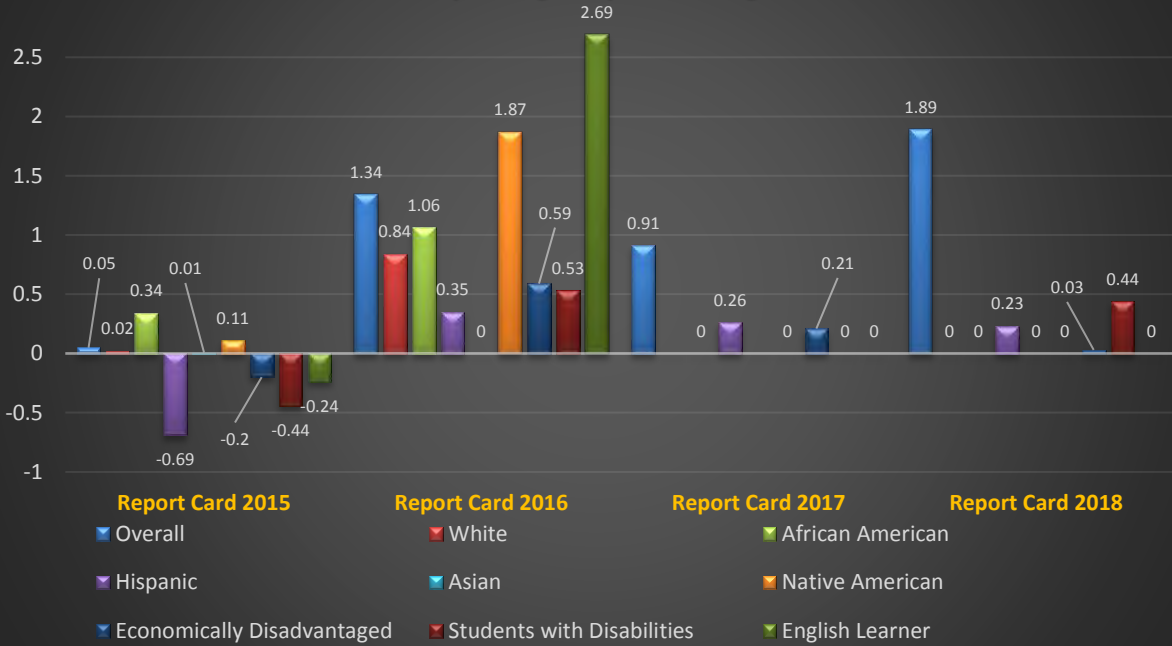
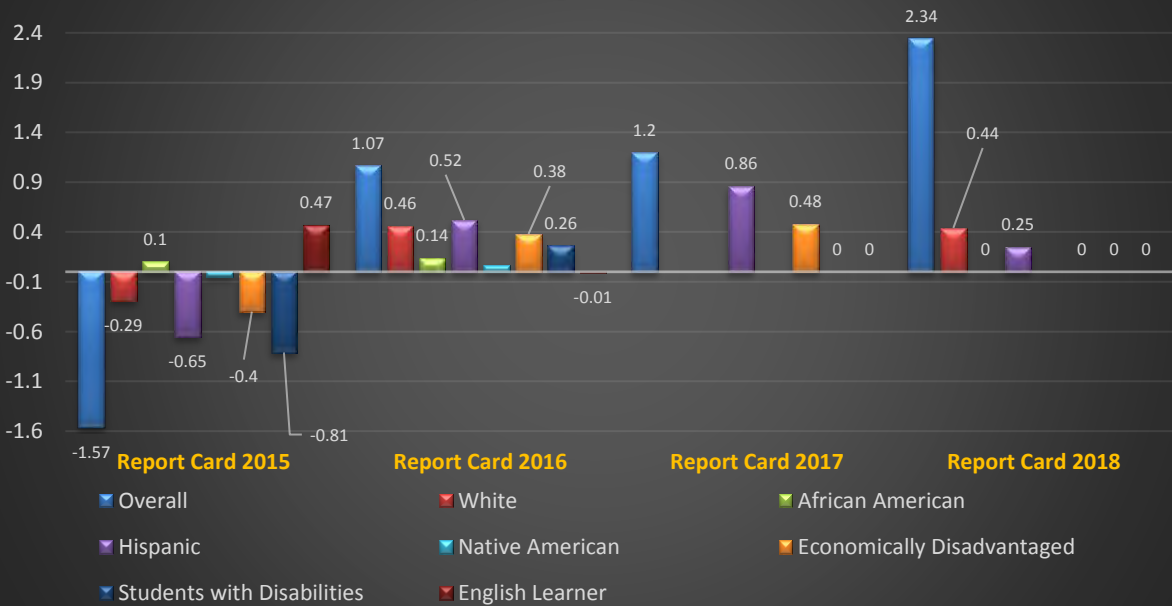
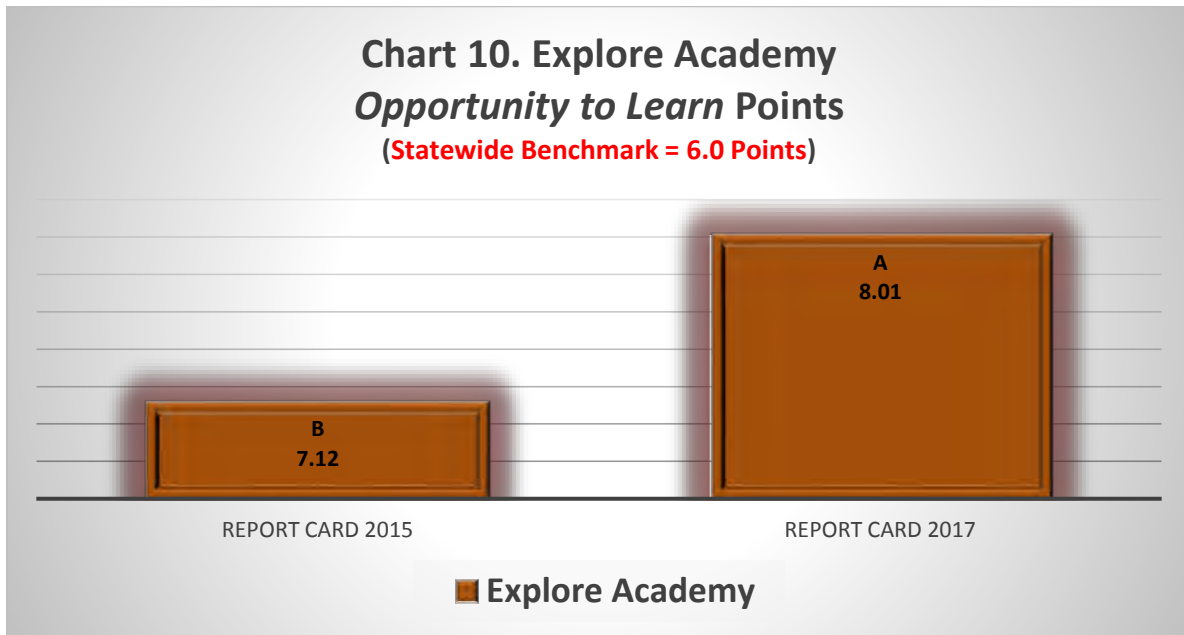


Chart 9. Explore Academy - Only Q1 Student Growth Index by Subgroup Math



Opportunity to Learn (OTL). Opportunity to learn represents the quality of learning environment schools provide⁴. This indicator is based on attendance and a classroom surveys administered to students (or parents in grades K-2). High schools can earn 8 total points (3 for attendance, 5 for the survey). The target for attendance is 95%. Explore Academy has performed well since 2015 exceeding the statewide benchmark in all years applicable that a letter grade was assigned to the category (2 of 2). The school earned letter grades of “B” in 2015 and “A” in 2017. Only attendance was assessed in 2016 and 2018 in which letter grades were not assigned.



High School Graduation. No data available to date.

Graduation Data by Subgroup (2017). No data available to date.

College & Career Readiness (CCR). No data available to date.

⁴ The “New Mexico School Grading Technical Guide: Calculation and Business Rules for Schools and Districts” document by the New Mexico Public Education Department may be obtained at:
<https://aae.ped.state.nm.us/SchoolGradingLinks/1617/Technical%20Assistance%20for%20Educators/Technical%20Guide%202017.pdf>.

1b. Specific Charter Goals

This section includes analysis of Explore Academy's progress towards meeting its Specific Charter Goals or Mission-Specific Indicators through 2016-2017 (the renewal application kit will be updated with data from the 2017-2018 school year once it is made available). In 2 of 3 years the school met or exceeded standard in all goals except for reading during 2016-2017.

Charter Specific Goals

1.A 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."

1.B RIVERSIDE INTERIM ASSESSMENT:

Based on the school's chosen short cycle assessment, Riverside Interim Assessment, 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

Explore Academy will utilize Riverside Interim Assessments (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt) for its short cycle assessment tool. The definition of "proficiency" is based on Riverside's cut score standards set forth below. "One year's growth" is based on the movement from one proficiency benchmark to the same range within the next highest benchmark. For example: a student moving from the "High" range of the Needs Improvement benchmark to the "High" range of the Approaching Proficiency benchmark would demonstrate one year's growth.

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."

Figure 2. Progress towards Charter Specific Goals.⁵

Goal	Description	2015				2016 ⁶				2017			
		Exceeds	Met	Did Not Meet	Falls Far Below	Exceeds	Met	Did Not Meet	Falls Far Below	Exceeds	Met	Did Not Meet	Falls Far Below
1.A	Exit Exams			X		-	-	-	-	X			
1.B	Interim Assessments	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-				X

Goal	Description	2018			
		Exceeds	Met	Did Not Meet	Falls Far Below
1.A	Exit Exams		X		
1.B	Interim Assessments	N/A ⁷	-	-	-

Student Attendance and Enrollment

The following information provides a picture of the school’s attendance and truancy, current student membership (enrollment), and enrollment trends over the term of the contract.

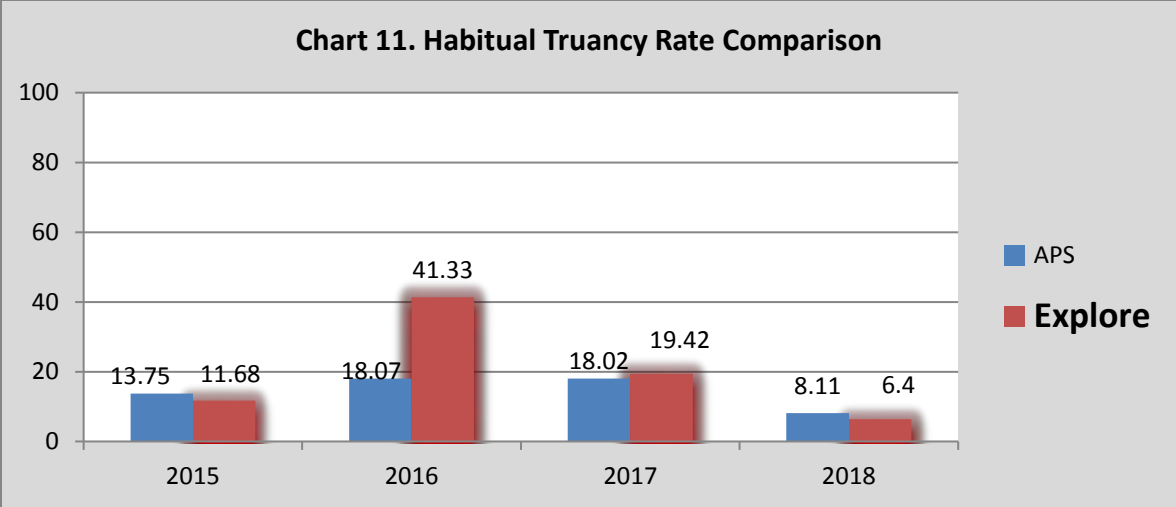
Habitual Truancy

The chart (next page) reflects the school’s habitual truancy rate compared to the local district, Albuquerque Public Schools (APS). Explore Academy’s habitual truancy rate was similar or lower than the local school district each year with the exception of the 2015-2016 school year. The school’s truancy rate decreased from 2016-2017 to 2017-2018 by more than 13 percentage points. Caution should be used when interpreting this data as some schools inadvertently included all absences rather than unexcused absences solely.

⁵ Charter Specific Goals are referred to as “Mission-Specific Indicators” or “Performance Indicators” in the school’s contract and performance framework.

⁶ The goals as documented in the web-EPSS report for 2015-2016 were not rated.

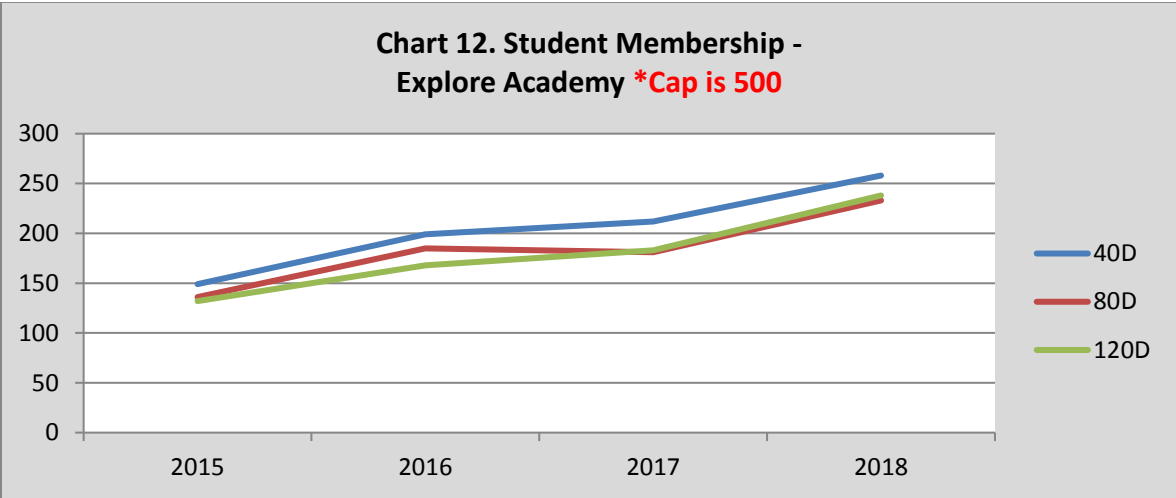
⁷ The school received approval to amend one of its charter goals to replace Riverside short-cycle assessment with PARCC.



Source: STARS → District and Location Reports → Mobility and Truancy → Habitual Truant Student Totals by District

Student Membership (Enrollment)

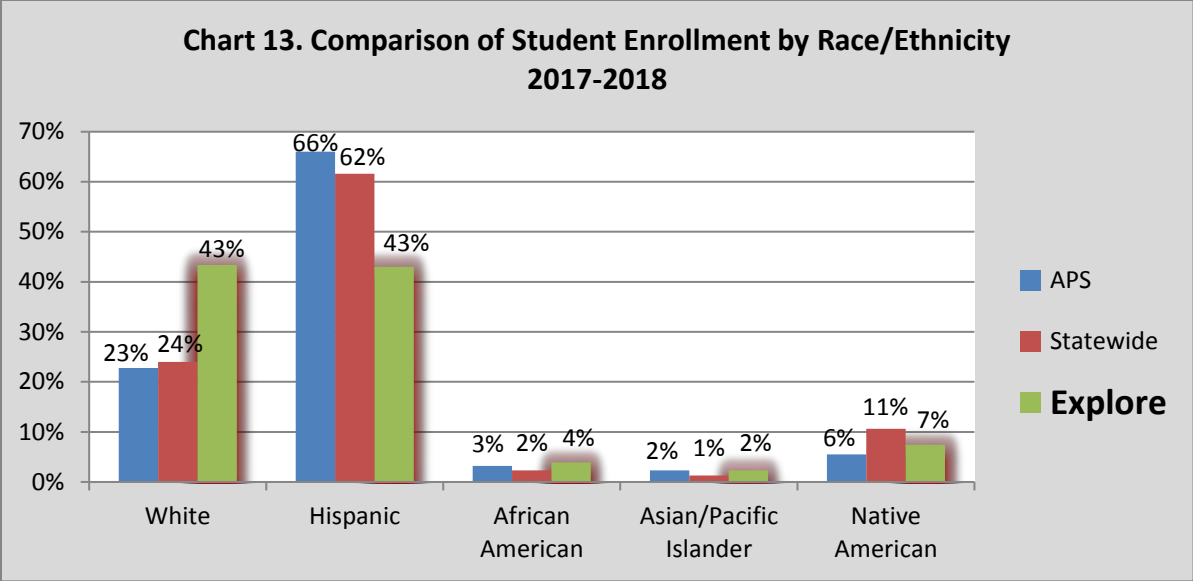
The chart below shows the school’s student membership for each of the years in operation in which a steady growth was observed during the contract term. As of 2017-2018, the school had not reached its enrollment cap of 500. The student enrollment shows that the school is operating at nearly 48% of its approved capacity.



Source: STARS → District and Location Reports → Membership Reports → Membership – District Detail Report

Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity.

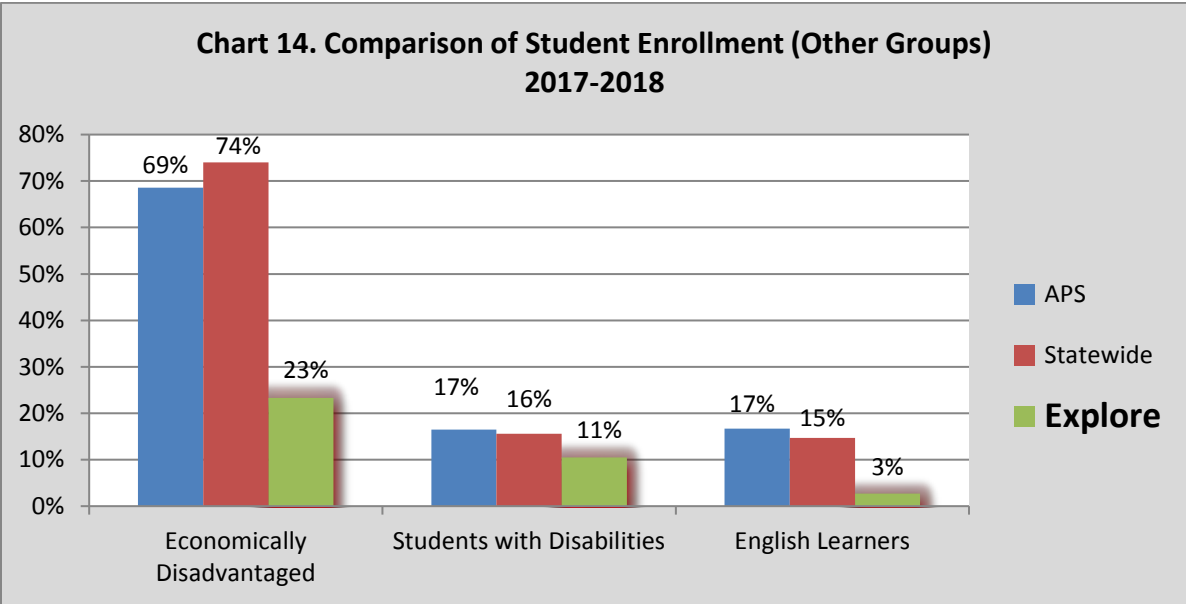
The school’s student demographic data illustrates that it serves a *lower* Hispanic population when compared to the surrounding district. Regarding the remaining subgroups, Explore Academy has similar or slightly above the district rates.



Source: STARS → District and Location Reports → General Reports → School Demographics with Charts

Enrollment by Other Subgroups

The school has a *lower* population of economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and English Language Learners w and the state with those in the economically disadvantaged group having the largest discrepancy when compared to APS and the state.



Source: STARS → District and Location Reports → General Reports → School Demographics with Charts

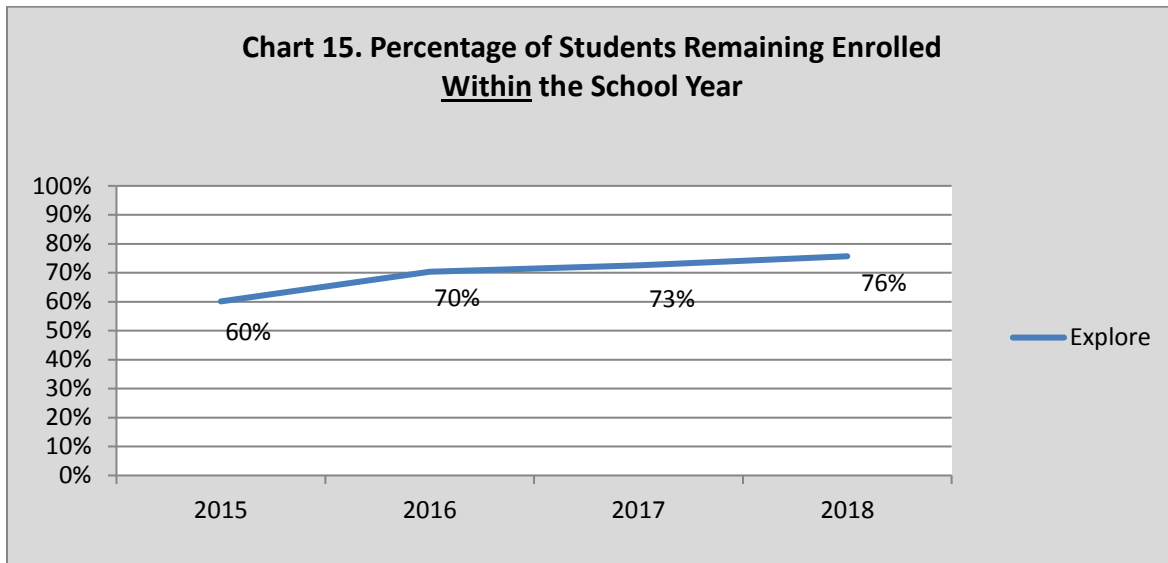
Retention and Recurring Enrollment

In its Performance Framework, the PEC has established student retention expectations. For this school, the PEC established a target of 85% recurrent enrollment between years.

Below, the PED has calculated within-year retention rates to evaluate the percentage of students who remain enrolled in the school from the time they enroll until the end of the school year. This data is

calculated by identifying all students who enroll in the school at any time during the year and then evaluating if the students remain enrolled until the end of the school year. Students whose withdrawal codes indicate circumstances beyond their control are removed from the data set.

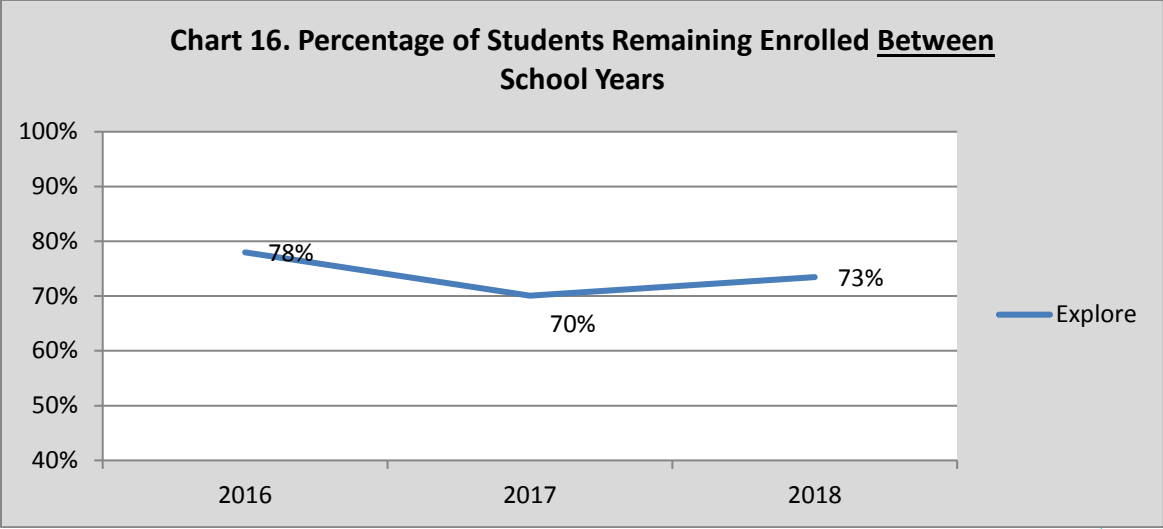
The student enrollment data (below) shows that nearly 24% of students enrolled during the 2017-2018 school year withdrew before the end of the school year. Withdrawals have decreased steadily since 2015. In 2017-2018, 76% of the students remained enrolled until the end of the school year, as compared to only 60% in 2014-2015.



Source: STARS → District and Location Reports → Options for Parents → Charter School Enrollment Report

To evaluate recurrent enrollment as required by the PEC, the PED has calculated this measure by identifying the students enrolled at the end of each year who are eligible to reenroll (not graduated), and then identifying the students who reenroll on or before the 10th day of the subsequent year. Students whose withdrawal codes indicate circumstances beyond their control are removed from the data set.

The chart (next page) shows recurrent enrollment at the school. Student enrollment data indicates that 78% of the students that completed the school year in 2014-2015 returned to the school in 2015-2016. 73% of the students that completed the 2016-2017 school year returned to Explore Academy in 2017-2018. Returning student rate (from one year to the next) had decreased from 2016 to 2018.

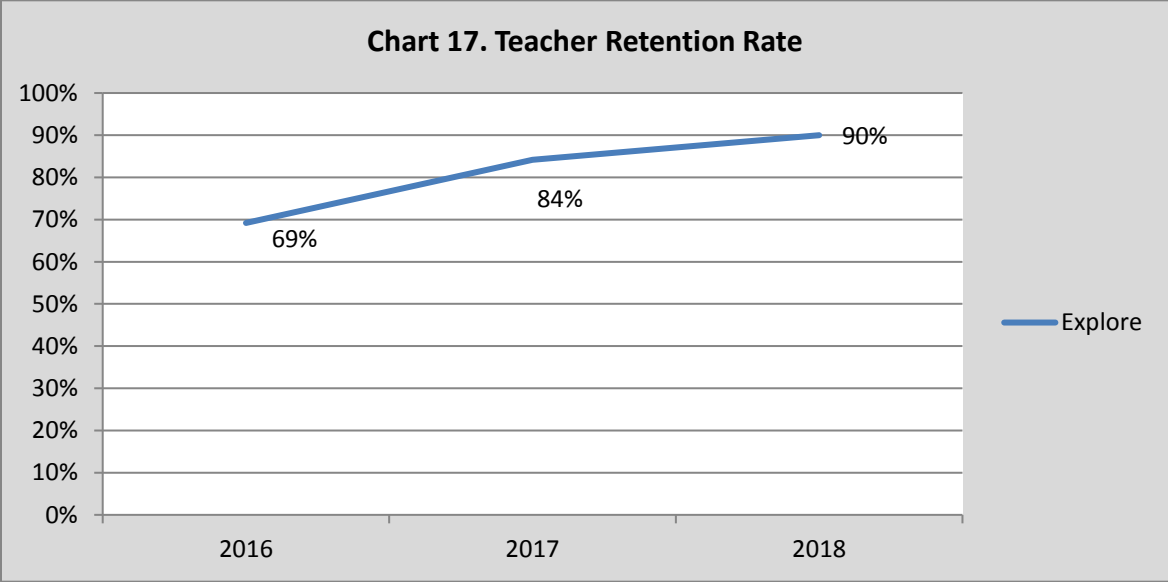


Source: STARS → District and Location Reports → Options for Parents → Charter School Enrollment Report

Teacher Retention Rate

The chart below demonstrates the school’s teacher retention over time. This data is calculated by comparing the license numbers for teachers from one year to the next. For example, all teacher license numbers reported for the 2014-15 school year were compared to teacher license numbers the following year for the same reporting period. The percentage of duplicate license numbers were compared in the second year and the retention rate was calculated based on the percentage of teachers who returned the following year.

The PEC established a goal of 80% teacher retention (lower than 20% turnover) as stated in the performance framework #4d. The chart shows that the school’s teacher retention rate increased over the years: Sixty-nine percent for the 2015-2016 school year, 84% for the 2016-2017 school year and 90% for the 2017-2018 school year. Explore Academy met the teacher retention rate of at least 80% in the last two school years that was established by the PEC.



Source: STARS → State Reports → Staff Reports → Turnover Rates for Assignment Category (Teachers)

SECTION 2. FINANCIAL COMPLIANCE

2a. Audit

Figure 3. Fiscal compliance over term of contract.

Audit Year	# of Findings	# of Repeat Findings	# of Material/Significant Findings
FY17	1	1	0
FY16	5	0	0
FY15	3	0	1

Summary of Fiscal Reports

In **FY17**, the school received **1 finding of other matter** related to personnel files.

- **2016-001 Personnel Files Other Matter Repeated and Modified (not noted)**

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.

In **FY16**, the school received **3 findings of other matters** related to: (1) review and approval of purchases, (2) personnel files, (3) educational retirement board and retiree health care payroll deductions and **2 findings of non-compliance** related to (1) travel and per diem and (2) timely deposits.

- **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.

- **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.

- **2016-002 Educational Retirement Board (ERB) and Retiree Health Care (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.

- **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.

- **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.

In **FY15**, the school received **1 finding of significant deficiency** related to lack of support for payroll salary calculations and **2 findings of other matters** related to (1) review and approval of purchases and (2) expenditure exceeds budget.

- **2015-001 Lack of Support For Payroll Salary Calculations Significant Deficiency**

Condition: Through our payroll testwork 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.

- **2015-002 Review and Approval of Purchases Other Matters**

Condition: During our cash disbursement testwork 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.

- **2015-003 Expenditure Exceed 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)

2b. Board of Finance

The governing council of Explore Academy's Board of Finance has never been suspended during the term of its contract.

SECTION 3. CONTRACTUAL, ORGANIZATIONAL, AND GOVERNANCE RESPONSIBILITIES

3a. 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.

3b. Organizational Performance Framework

The school received two (2) “Falls Far Below Standard” ratings in 2017-2018 and two (2) “Falls Far Below Standard” ratings in 2016-2017

Figure 4. 2017-2018 organizational framework ratings (17 indicators total).

Meets	Working to Meet	Falls Far Below
13	2	2

Figure 5. 2016-2017 organizational framework ratings (17 indicators total).

Meets	Working to Meet	Falls Far Below
9	6	2

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.

- **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.

3c. Governing Body Performance

According to the last reporting from this school, Explore Academy has six members serving on their Governing Body. Based on the information provided to the PED, the following members are currently serving on Explore Academy’s Governing Board:

Figure 6. Current governing council members.

Name	Role	Service Start Date*	Membership Status	FY18 Training Requirements
Jesse Pickard	President	January 2014	Continuing	Incomplete
David Kulb	Member	July 10, 2017	Continuing	Complete
Ray Barton III	Member	July 10, 2017	New	Complete
Ralph Montano	Member	January 2016	Continuing	Complete
John Garletts	Member	November 14, 2017	New	Complete
Shane Mulligan	Member	June 2016	Continuing	Incomplete

According to PED records, the school had not yet completed all training for FY18. Mr. Pickard lacks 8 hours, and Mr. Mulligan lacks 8 hours. The school had five members complete the required training in FY17. The school submitted no training in FY16. The school had five members complete the required training in FY15.

Mr. Garletts did not complete the Introductory training prior to voting as required per 6.80.5.8.B NMAC. This training has now been completed.

Gloria Lueras-Kidd, who left the board in October 2017, has not completed the prorated required training this fiscal year as per 6.80.5.9.F NMAC. As per PED records, Ms. Lueras-Kidd has completed no training this year.

Kyle Hunt is the current business manager of Explore Academy. Michael Vigil is listed as the current CPO of Explore Academy. Mr. Vigil is a contracted employee and is ineligible to serve as CPO as per 1.4.1.94.D(2)(a).