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## **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.

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

# 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