

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