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BEFORE THE PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION

STATE OF NEW MEXICO

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS
OPEN PUBLIC MEETING
December 11, 2018
9:00 a.m.

Mabry Hall, Jerry Apodaca Education Building
300 Don Gaspar
Santa Fe, New Mexico

REPORTED BY: Cynthia C. Chapman, RMR-CRR, NM CCR #219
Bean & Associates, Inc.
Professional Court Reporting Service
201 Third Street, NW, Suite 1630
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87102

JOB NO.: 603N (CC)

SANTA FE OFFICE
119 East Marcy, Suite 110
Santa Fe, NM 87501
(505) 989-4949
FAX (505) 843-9492



MAIN OFFICE
201 Third NW, Suite 1630
Albuquerque, NM 87102
(505) 843-9494
FAX (505) 843-9492
1-800-669-9492
e-mail: info@litsupport.com

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A P P E A R A N C E S

COMMISSIONERS:

MS. PATRICIA GIPSON, Chair
MR. GILBERT PERALTA, Vice Chair
MS. KARYL ANN ARMBRUSTER, Secretary
MR. R. CARLOS CABALLERO, Member
MR. TIM CRONE, Member
MR. DAVID ROBBINS, Member
MS. TRISH RUIZ, Member
MS. CARMIE TOULOUSE, Member

PED STAFF:

MS. KAREN WOERNER, Deputy Director, Options for
Parents and Families Division
MS. MELISSA BROWN, Director, Technical Assistance
& Training, CSD
MS. BEVERLY FRIEDMAN, PED Custodian of Record
and Liaison to the PEC

PEC COUNSEL:

MS. AMI JAEGER, Attorney at Law
MR. MARK CHAIKEN, Attorney at Law

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- 3 1. Visitor Sign-In Sheets
- 4 2. Speaker Sign-In Sheet - La Academia de Dolores Huerta
- 5 3. Speaker Sign-In Sheet - Cesar Chavez Community
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- 8 School

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1-800-669-9492
e-mail: info@litsupport.com

1 THE CHAIR: Good morning. I'm going to
2 bring to order this meeting of the Public Education
3 Commission. It is Tuesday, December 11th. It's
4 9:01 a.m.

5 Commissioner Armbruster, will you do roll
6 call, please?

7 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Yes.

8 Commissioner Robbins?

9 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: Present.

10 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
11 Toulouse?

12 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Present.

13 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
14 Armbruster is here.

15 Commissioner Conyers is not here.

16 Commissioner Peralta?

17 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Here.

18 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
19 Gipson?

20 THE CHAIR: Here.

21 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
22 Crone is not yet here.

23 Commissioner Ruiz?

24 COMMISSIONER RUIZ: Here.

25 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner

1 Caballero, not yet.

2 So we have five -- six.

3 THE CHAIR: Six. Please make it six.

4 So we do have a quorum so we can proceed.

5 So just a little -- a couple of points of
6 order. I know I spoke to some people this morning
7 as they were coming in. But if you're wishing to
8 speak for a school during the time they are up for
9 their renewal, there's a separate sign-in sheet by
10 school over here by our liaison, Beverly Friedman.
11 So we would appreciate if you signed up there,
12 because if you signed up just out back, that's for
13 general public comment.

14 So if there's any -- sure. And you --
15 they can do it when we go into Executive Session,
16 even. So there's time to do it. But just be aware
17 that the separate sign-in sheet is -- is over there.

18 And before we continue on, I want to, once
19 again -- this is a bittersweet meeting, because we
20 get to welcome our new Commissioners. And day by
21 day, we've got new Commissioners that will be
22 joining us.

23 And we have Glenna Voigt here, once again,
24 today, who is taking Commissioner Toulouse's
25 place -- spot, not place.

1 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Hopefully, both.

2 THE CHAIR: But this arduous task of this
3 week is also the final hurrah, the thank-you to all
4 of our Commissioners for the time that they've put
5 in; so Commissioner Toulouse and Commissioner
6 Peralta. And we have -- I've lost my train of
7 thought -- Commissioner Conyers -- I apologize --
8 who is not here today, and that's why I lost my
9 train of thought with him -- this is their last
10 meetings. So -- and we'll spend some time this week
11 saying goodbye and thanking them further; but I
12 wanted to recognize that as we started the meeting
13 today.

14 But we'd like to continue now, seeing as
15 we do have a quorum.

16 So we'll start with the Pledge of
17 Allegiance, led by Commissioner Robbins, and the
18 Salute to the New Mexico Flag, by Commissioner Ruiz.

19 (Pledge of Allegiance and Salute to the
20 New Mexico Flag conducted.)

21 THE CHAIR: So we are on to Item No. 2,
22 which is Approval of the Agenda.

23 Do we have any changes to that agenda? I
24 know I don't. Maybe.

25 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: Move for approval.

1 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Hold that
2 thought.

3 THE CHAIR: I had to take back the --
4 (Chair consults with counsel.)

5 THE CHAIR: Okay. I do have one change.
6 At this moment in time, I'm going to recommend that
7 we remove Item No. 12 from the agenda.

8 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: I move for approval
9 with that amendment.

10 COMMISSIONER RUIZ: Second.

11 THE CHAIR: There's a motion by
12 Commissioner Robbins, a second by Commissioner --
13 oh, I'm sorry. I was looking at the wrong thing. I
14 am sorry. I have to amend that.

15 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: Go back?

16 THE CHAIR: Yes. 11. It is Item No. 11.
17 I was looking at the wrong paper. So I am going to
18 ask that the agenda be amended and the removal of
19 Item No. 11.

20 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: I move that we
21 approve the amended agenda.

22 COMMISSIONER RUIZ: Second.

23 THE CHAIR: There's an amendment --
24 there's a motion by Commissioner Robbins, a second
25 by Commissioner Ruiz.

1 Any discussion?

2 (No response.)

3 THE CHAIR: All in favor?

4 (Commissioners so indicate.)

5 THE CHAIR: Opposed?

6 (No response.)

7 THE CHAIR: Hearing no opposition, the
8 motion passes.

9 We are now onto -- and I do believe that
10 this individual who signed up here for Open Forum is
11 for Southwest Secondary. So that name is going to
12 go on that list.

13 Okay. So there is no one who has signed
14 up for Public Comment.

15 We are on to Item No. 4, which is the
16 Consent Agenda. And we have all been e-mailed the
17 materials for these schools.

18 Do I have a motion to approve the --

19 COMMISSIONER RUIZ: So move.

20 THE CHAIR: There's a motion to approve
21 the consent agenda.

22 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Second.

23 THE CHAIR: A second by Commissioner
24 Toulouse.

25 All in favor?

1 (Commissioners so indicate.)

2 THE CHAIR: Opposed?

3 (No response.)

4 THE CHAIR: Hearing no opposition, the
5 motion passes.

6 So we are on to Item No. 5. And I'm going
7 to move the Public Education Commission enter into a
8 closed session. The items discussed will be
9 attorney-client privilege pertaining to threatened
10 or pending litigation in which the PEC is or may
11 become a participant, pursuant to NMSA 1978, Section
12 10-15-1 (H)(7), specifically:

13 A. Christopher Ruszkowski, in his
14 Official Capacity as the Secretary of the New Mexico
15 Public Education Department and the New Mexico
16 Public Education Department's Decision and Order to
17 Reject the Public Education Commission's Decision to
18 Grant Raíces Del Saber Xinachtli Community School
19 Charter with Conditions.

20 B. Appeal of the Governing Council of the
21 New Mexico Connections Academy, and the New Mexico
22 Connections Academy v. Christopher Ruszkowski, in
23 his Official Capacity as the Secretary of the
24 New Mexico Public Education Department.

25 Do I have a second?

1 COMMISSIONER RUIZ: Second.

2 THE CHAIR: There's a second by

3 Commissioner Ruiz.

4 Roll-call vote, please.

5 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner

6 Ruiz?

7 COMMISSIONER RUIZ: Yes.

8 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner

9 Gipson?

10 THE CHAIR: Yes.

11 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner

12 Peralta?

13 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Yes.

14 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner

15 Armbruster votes "Yes."

16 Commissioner Toulouse?

17 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Yes.

18 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner

19 Robbins?

20 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: Yes.

21 THE CHAIR: Motion passes, six-zero.

22 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Six-zero.

23 THE CHAIR: We're -- I thought Bev said

24 she had 110. Is -- I thought Bev said that she had

25 110 available for us to move.

1 MS. KAREN WOERNER: I know we discussed
2 it. I don't --

3 THE CHAIR: Because there would be more
4 people, so that it would be easier for us to move
5 than everyone else leave. I know when we had the
6 agenda conference, she said she would check on 110.
7 Yeah.

8 (A discussion was held off the record.)

9 FROM THE FLOOR: Commissioner Gipson, it's
10 Room 128.

11 THE CHAIR: So you folks can stay here.
12 Please be sure you bring the draft with you.

13 (Executive Session conducted.)

14 THE CHAIR: I move to end Closed Session.
15 The matters discussed in the closed meeting were
16 limited only to those specified in the motion for
17 closure, and no vote was taken during the Closed
18 Session.

19 COMMISSIONER RUIZ: Second.

20 THE CHAIR: There's a second by
21 Commissioner Ruiz.

22 Any discussion?

23 (No response.)

24 THE CHAIR: And will the record please
25 reflect that Commissioner Caballero is now present?

1 Commissioner Armbruster, roll-call vote,
2 please.
3 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
4 Robbins?
5 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: Yes.
6 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
7 Toulouse?
8 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Yes.
9 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
10 Armbruster votes "Yes."
11 Commissioner Peralta?
12 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Yes.
13 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
14 Gipson?
15 THE CHAIR: Yes.
16 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
17 Ruiz?
18 COMMISSIONER RUIZ: Yes.
19 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
20 Caballero?
21 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Yes.
22 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: That's seven
23 votes for and none against.
24 THE CHAIR: Motion passes, seven-zero.
25 Thank you.

1 I am now going to move that the Public
2 Education Commission appeal the decision and order
3 of Secretary Designate Ruszkowski and the Public
4 Education Department.

5 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Second.

6 THE CHAIR: There's a second by
7 Commissioner Peralta.

8 Any discussion?

9 (No response.)

10 THE CHAIR: Commissioner Armbruster,
11 roll-call vote, please.

12 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
13 Peralta?

14 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Yes.

15 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
16 Robbins?

17 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: Yes.

18 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
19 Caballero?

20 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Yes.

21 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
22 Toulouse?

23 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Very definitely
24 yes.

25 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: I'll put two

1 checks.

2 Commissioner Ruiz?

3 COMMISSIONER RUIZ: Yes.

4 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
5 Armbruster votes "Yes."

6 Commissioner Gipson?

7 THE CHAIR: Yes.

8 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Seven-zero vote.

9 THE CHAIR: Motion passes, seven-zero.

10 Thank you very much.

11 And we are now on to the meat of the
12 meeting, which is Item No. 8, and that is the
13 charter school renewal applications.

14 So just so that I will remind anyone who
15 may have come in in the meantime, if you're wishing
16 to speak for a particular school, there are separate
17 sign-up sheets over here for each school with our
18 liaison, Ms. Friedman. So you may -- you need to
19 sign up there.

20 There is an eight-minute total allowed for
21 that public comment, so that I will divide up as
22 evenly as I can calculate the time; so that if there
23 are a number of you that wish to speak, you might
24 want to think about what you're all going to say and
25 divide it out so you make sure that you've got all

1 the points covered that you wish for a school that
2 will fit into that eight minutes. So if anyone
3 still needs to sign up, please do so.

4 So that the format that we take is fairly
5 simple. CSD will offer their remarks. Then we will
6 allow the school 15 minutes. Then we go into the
7 public comment time period. And then it's our
8 opportunity to ask any questions that we wish, and
9 then we will take a vote before you folks leave.

10 Okay?

11 So the first up is Southwest Secondary
12 Learning Center.

13 FROM THE FLOOR: Madam Chair, Savannah has
14 a folder for each Commissioner. She's just going to
15 bring those around, and we're ready.

16 THE CHAIR: And you can move seats from
17 this -- around the middle table here, if you need,
18 for additional seating.

19 FROM THE FLOOR: We're ready for you.

20 THE CHAIR: Thank you so much.

21 Okay. I guess we're ready.

22 MS. KAREN WOERNER: Thank you. Thank you,
23 Madam Chair, members of the Commission.

24 Good morning, everyone. My name is Karen
25 Woerner. And I'm pleased and honored to have

1 recently been selected as the Deputy Director of the
2 Options for Parents and Families Division. And with
3 me is Melissa Brown. She's the administrator of the
4 Technical Assistance and Training side of the house
5 in Charter Schools Division.

6 Most of the Charter School staff members
7 are present here today and are prepared to answer
8 questions, if there are any.

9 And first, I'd like to just take a minute,
10 since this is the first school up for this week, to
11 just describe what's -- briefly what's in your
12 packet and the materials that are in the binders.

13 Obviously, those are the recommendations
14 from the PED with a brief summary.

15 On the second page of each school's
16 section, there is a chart providing evaluation
17 ratings of the school's progress report, which is
18 otherwise known as "Part B." These ratings were
19 determined from the school's Part B, as confirmed at
20 the site visit using the rubric that was in the
21 application.

22 Commissioners, if you would like to see a
23 copy of that, it's in the back of your binder for
24 your reference, that rubric is.

25 Following that is an outline of the entire

1 application, Parts A through F, which those folks
2 here at the schools are very familiar with, with a
3 chart listing -- if you look close to Page 5 in each
4 packet, there is a chart that lists -- for each
5 school, it lists the performance framework
6 indicators from the PEC's performance framework and
7 how the school was rated during the annual site
8 visits.

9 And then the documents go sort of
10 backwards in time, if you will. The school's
11 response to the preliminary analysis. Prior to that
12 was the preliminary analysis. I should point out
13 that that section provides the rationale for the
14 ratings that were listed on Page 2.

15 And, lastly, you have the Part A data
16 analysis conducted by the CSD from the school grade
17 information and the S.T.A.R.S. data. Each packet,
18 of course, for each school is set up the same way.

19 As was decided by the PEC and advised by
20 Chairwoman Gipson, Parts B through F were not copied
21 for the binder; but we do have one set for each
22 school here by Melissa in case the Commission has
23 questions or wants to reference those materials.

24 Of course, all of those sections were
25 provided electronically to the PEC and were posted

1 on the PEC Web pages. But we want you to know
2 there's a hard copy here in case you need reference
3 to it.

4 And with that, I will proceed with our
5 first school before you today. Southwest Secondary
6 Learning Center.

7 As you know, the Southwest Secondary
8 Learning Center was on a short-term two-year
9 contract and, therefore, has only completed one
10 school year under the current contract.

11 The school was on a temporary contract for
12 '17-'18 and recently signed the 2018 version of your
13 contract for '18-'19. And I say all that to explain
14 the lack of trend data in Part A, because,
15 technically, they were only under this current
16 contract one year thus far.

17 One of the conditions of the short-term
18 contract was regarding financial concerns due to the
19 unfortunate history of the school in this area. The
20 Board of Finance was returned to the school by PED
21 in January of 2018, almost one year ago, which
22 demonstrates a lot of hard work by the governing
23 board and the school staff.

24 The school's letter grade for 2017-'18 was
25 a "C"; but I want to point out that the school

1 actually earned a "B," indicating strong academic
2 outcomes for its students. The grade was lowered a
3 full letter grade due to penalty for not meeting the
4 95 percent participation rate in their PARCC math
5 testing. They did test 99 percent in the ELA; but
6 they didn't meet the 95 percent in the math.

7 The students are demonstrating growth more
8 than expected in both reading and math. And if I
9 could refer Commissioners to Page 15 of -- I do
10 apologize. Some of these have dual page numbers,
11 because they were various things combined. But if
12 you look at the lower right corner on Page 15 of 25,
13 you will see there that the growth index in both
14 reading and math are above the line.

15 So zero means they're meeting the expected
16 growth on these growth indexes. In this case, the
17 school is exceeding expected growth in both reading
18 and math.

19 There was one area -- all of their
20 component grades for their school grade were good.
21 One -- there was one area that was pointed out as in
22 need of attention, and that was simply the points
23 earned for graduation, where the Secondary School
24 Learning Center earned fewer than the statewide
25 benchmark. And that's on Page 17. I think it's 17.

1 Yes. At the bottom of Page 17 in Chart 11.

2 Regarding the performance framework
3 indicators that are weighted during our annual site
4 visits, please go back to Page 5. And as I pointed
5 out earlier, you will see that ratings for last
6 school year, I will tell you that the two Falls Far
7 Below ratings in red are due to the audit findings.

8 But please remember that these reports
9 lagged by one year. So the audit report rated here
10 was for '16-'17 school year. The remainder of the
11 ratings, as you can see, are either Meets Standard
12 or Working to Meet Standard.

13 I also would like to comment on the
14 school's response on Page --

15 THE CHAIR: You've lost your microphone.

16 MS. KAREN WOERNER: It's still on.
17 Beverly turned it down because I'm yelling. I'm
18 probably talking too loud. Just tell me. I'm
19 sorry.

20 I also would like to comment on the
21 school's response.

22 The school did, indeed, address each of
23 the concerns identified during the site visit and
24 took the steps as indicated on Page 7. And that is
25 how the school actually earned the Working to Meet

1 Standard that you see on the rating sheet. As a
2 result, the school did earn the Demonstrates
3 Substantial Progress back on Page 2, No. 3B.

4 So that chart on Page 2 shows the school
5 has Demonstrated Substantial Progress or Met the
6 Standard in each area. And as a reminder, in order
7 to earn a Meet Standard in this section, the rubric
8 states, quote, "In each year of the contract term,
9 the school has demonstrated a record of meeting all
10 standards, which is supported by evidence."

11 In this case, though the school may not
12 have been meeting all standards at the site visit,
13 they did institute remedies to get into compliance.

14 Finally, the school did provide a complete
15 and timely application, including the E-Occupancy
16 Certificate.

17 And as a result of all of that, the PED
18 recommendation is for a five-year renewal, with
19 conditions that they implement a plan to address the
20 graduation points and receive an unmodified audit
21 finding with no material weaknesses -- excuse me --
22 significant deficiency or repeat findings, as listed
23 on Page 1.

24 Thank you.

25 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Can I just stop --

1 I don't have the Wi-Fi password. I thought I got
2 the Wi-Fi when I came in this morning. And I
3 apologize. I left my notes with questions for this
4 school at home. I had to have someone take pictures
5 of it last night for me so I would be able to get --

6 MS. MELISSA BROWN: Here it comes.

7 THE CHAIR: I thought I was being so good
8 with having everything. I'll take just a second.

9 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: I brought the
10 computer and realized I can't get on.

11 THE CHAIR: Thank you for your patience.
12 And I'll just ask you to please identify yourself
13 for the record and spell your last name.

14 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: To begin with?

15 THE CHAIR: Yeah.

16 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: Christine Lutz,
17 L-U-T-Z, Head Administrator of Southwest Secondary.

18 MS. REBECCA WELDON: Rebecca Weldon,
19 W-E-L-D-O-N, math teacher and test coordinator.

20 MS. DENISE DIXSON: And Denise Dixson,
21 D-I-X-S-O-N, SMART Lab teacher and Academic Dean.

22 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: Are you ready?

23 THE CHAIR: Yeah, whenever you're ready.
24 Sorry.

25 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: We're ready.

1 Good morning, Chairwoman Gipson and
2 members of the Commission. My name is Christine
3 Lutz, and I am the Head Administrator for Southwest
4 Secondary Learning Center. With me today I have
5 Denise Dixson; SMART Lab teacher and Academic Dean,
6 and Rebecca Weldon, math teacher and test
7 coordinator.

8 In the audience, we have our business
9 manager, Justine Vigil; Interim Administrator,
10 Walter Feldman, and legal counsel, Patricia
11 Matthews.

12 I am here today to request a five-year
13 renewal without conditions.

14 In spite of all our difficulties in the
15 past, we have maintained a student-centered
16 community that never lost sight of the school's
17 mission. I have teachers and staff that are
18 dedicated to the long-term success of each child.
19 They, along with our students and parents, are the
20 faces of Southwest Secondary Learning Center.

21 I could not be prouder of the staff and
22 need to honor them with the greatest degree of
23 respect and reverence.

24 Whereas, I would like to begin with our
25 students and our academic programs, because they are

1 our strength, it is best to address what concerns
2 both the Commission and the public first. As we all
3 know, of greatest concern is solid financial
4 management on the part of the school and audit
5 results.

6 On January 1, 2018, Secretary Christopher
7 Ruszkowski fully reinstated Southwest Secondary
8 Learning Center's Board of Finance authority to our
9 governance council. We have supplied the letter in
10 your folder for reference.

11 In that letter, Secretary Ruszkowski
12 stated that all financial improvements have been
13 completed. SSLC now has sound policies and
14 procedures to guide our daily practices and strong
15 internal controls that include our governance
16 council.

17 SSLC received an unmodified audit opinion
18 in 2017 with minor findings which were immediately
19 corrected.

20 Our Fiscal Year '18 audit was completed in
21 August. I think that you will be pleased with the
22 results when they are released in January. The
23 results best serve the children of this state.

24 Southwest Secondary Learning Center first
25 opened its doors in 2001 and originally served

1 Grades 7 through 12. After nine years with APS, the
2 school chartered with the State in 2010 and renewed
3 in 2015 and '17. Per recommendations set forth by
4 the PEC at our last renewal, SSLC now serves
5 Grades 9 through 12.

6 Southwest Secondary uses a highly
7 successful hybrid model that integrates technology
8 with personal responsibility and access to
9 dual-credit coursework to motivate and educate
10 students. With the support of parents and sponsor
11 teachers, students create an individualized program
12 that seeks to prepare them for dual enrollment,
13 post-secondary endeavors, and career.

14 This semester alone, we have 44 students
15 taking 323 credit hours at CNM. The majority of
16 these students earn "A"s and "B"s in their college
17 coursework. Last May, one graduate earned four
18 Associate degrees, and we honored two finalists in
19 the National Merit Scholarship program.

20 Our growth over time indicators and test
21 results show that our highest performing students
22 are making steady gains.

23 Like any society, a school community must
24 also be judged on how it serves -- services those
25 that need extra support and encouragement. In the

1 last two years, we have added an intensive support
2 lab to assist those struggling in math and English
3 language arts. This lab is staffed by two certified
4 special education teachers, one of which is TESOL
5 endorsed. This staff member has been instrumental
6 in the proper identification, assessment, and
7 servicing of students with ELL needs.

8 The intensive support lab is open to any
9 student and is an integral component to our SAT
10 process and early intervention programs.

11 Certified math and English teachers rotate
12 through this lab to provide content-specific
13 assistance.

14 Our Q1 growth rates in reading and math
15 have shown a downward trend. However, the majority
16 of indicators for our subgroups remain positive.
17 Over the next contract period, it will be our
18 responsibility to address and support all student
19 subgroups. To support progress towards graduation,
20 new policies were developed, and we have hired an
21 additional math teacher for the spring of 2019.

22 As I get ready to turn the mic over to my
23 trusted team, I would like to address SSLC's overall
24 grade for the 2017 and 2018 school years.

25 In 2017, SSLC earned 72 points for a "B"

1 and was 2.41 points away from an "A." In 2018, SSLC
2 earned 70 points for a solid "B."

3 In both years, our "B" letter grades were
4 reduced a fuller grade to a "C" due to a PARCC math
5 participation rate of less than 95 percent. During
6 those two years, we had participation rates of 100
7 and 99 percent in reading. Due to this fact, we
8 felt it was prudent to investigate the discrepancy
9 between our reading and math participation rates.

10 Prior to the appeal process, we asked the
11 Assessment Bureau to provide a comprehensive list of
12 students identified as not tested. In August, we
13 were denied that information and were instructed to
14 submit our appeal without the ability to defend our
15 in-house testing rate.

16 Only by identifying those students who
17 were not tested could we address and fix the problem
18 for the future. By our calculations and with
19 supporting documentation, a testing rate of
20 90 percent in math for last year is in error and
21 should be corrected.

22 I will turn the specifics over to
23 Mrs. Weldon.

24 MS. REBECCA WELDON: Madam Chairwoman,
25 members of the PEC, my name is Rebecca Weldon, math

1 teacher and test coordinator.

2 According to our school grade, we did not
3 make our participation rate in math. The
4 Accountability Division of the PED believes that we
5 failed to test 38 students, or approximately
6 10 percent of our population.

7 After being supplied the SSID numbers of
8 the students not tested in November of 2018, we
9 found four students that had, in fact, been tested
10 in their expected classes.

11 The biggest discrepancy we discovered was
12 in 26 of our students marked Code 5, as instructed
13 by the Assessment Bureau in an e-mail dated
14 March 21st, 2018. Code 5 is designed to address the
15 inequity caused by testing students that have
16 completed less than 50 percent of the course at the
17 time of testing.

18 It is bad for students to test over
19 100 percent of the course material when they have
20 only seen half or less of the total lessons for the
21 course. In a traditional classroom, if a student
22 fails Semester 1, they would automatically be moved
23 to Semester 2 and be expected to take the PARCC test
24 due to being exposed to the material of the full
25 course.

1 We operate on a mastery system. The
2 student does not move on to Semester 2 until they
3 have completed and passed Semester 1. During the
4 2017-2018 school year, these 26 students either only
5 completed the first semester of the PARCC-aligned
6 course or failed to complete that semester's worth
7 of material at all.

8 Code 5 excuses these students from math
9 testing altogether. We should have earned a
10 95.6 percent participation rate in math for the
11 2017-2018 school year.

12 I will now turn it over to Mrs. Dixson to
13 address any concerns about our graduation rate.

14 MS. DENISE DIXSON: Madam Chair, members
15 of the Commission, good morning. My name is Denise
16 Dixson. I'm currently in my 18th year of teaching
17 at Southwest Secondary Learning Center. In addition
18 to my duties as SMART Lab teacher, this year, I took
19 on the position of Academic Dean.

20 Since 2014, our school has had five head
21 administrators. With the appointment of Christine
22 Lutz, we now have the continuity and stability that
23 our school has been severely lacking the last few
24 years.

25 With that said, I and Ms. Lutz and the

1 entire staff are very aware of the school's current
2 standing and began this school year with our eyes
3 wide open to the work ahead of us. We put in a lot
4 of effort over the summer to draft and implement new
5 policies to address specifically our graduation
6 rate.

7 Our virtual absence policy and our
8 monitored enrollment policy was written with the
9 goal of increasing our graduation rate by improving
10 our course completion rate. By doing so, we have
11 instituted, in policy, a proactive approach to
12 students not completing coursework. Instead of
13 waiting until they are already behind, we are
14 catching them immediately; interventions are put in
15 place to ensure their progress is consistent with
16 successful course completion.

17 Our virtual absence policy addresses the
18 hybrid nature of our program. Full-time students
19 need to be working a minimum of 30 hours on their
20 coursework. A portion of those hours are done on
21 campus, and a portion are completed at home. All
22 assessments are proctored on campus, but students
23 can access lectures and assessments outside of
24 school.

25 Students who are behind are generally not

1 putting in enough hours. We have established a
2 strict schedule for collecting data to determine who
3 is behind, intervene early, and track progress
4 towards completion.

5 We have always had sponsor teachers who
6 have collected, analyzed, and communicated data from
7 the students they were assigned. Never before have
8 we had a true administrative position that also
9 collects weekly course data and analyzes it quite
10 the way I'm doing it now.

11 This data has shown many of our students
12 do not put in the required time at home and, thus,
13 require more time on campus in order to stay on
14 track. I began with an early identification of
15 these students that are behind. At three weeks into
16 the semester, students who are identified as behind
17 are given an early intervention in the form of
18 additional scheduled sessions on campus in our main
19 lab, as well as other potential interventions, such
20 as small-group setting in our support lab.

21 Our initial three-back data cycle resulted
22 in a 47 percent decrease in students behind in
23 current courses. This data analysis continues every
24 week. And as students are identified, I personally
25 meet with them and parents and create a personalized

1 plan to get them on track.

2 As of December 6th, 83 students have been
3 placed on a student virtual attendance contract. Of
4 those 83, 42 are now on track to completing their
5 courses on time at semester's end.

6 One recent trend that we have noticed in
7 the last few years is the number of students
8 enrolled lacking credits to be on track with our
9 graduation cohort. To address this, we implemented
10 our monitored enrollment policy, which identifies,
11 upon enrollment, students behind on credits and
12 institute a plan to get them graduated.

13 Parents and students are monitored by
14 their sponsor teacher as well as myself.
15 Additionally, I schedule a mid-semester and
16 end-of-semester meeting for students and parents to
17 check on progress and adjust the plan, if needed,
18 going forward.

19 While nothing is a quick fix, the
20 preliminary data collected does show incremental
21 gains. We will, of course, not know the true
22 results of these policies until a later date. I am,
23 however, confident that given enough time to show
24 meaningful impact, the creation of these policies
25 and procedures will subsequently show positive

1 growth in our graduation rate.

2 That said, I would like to address the PED
3 renewal recommendation of the following condition,
4 which is to implement a Continuous Improvement Plan,
5 such as NM DASH, to improve graduation points
6 resulting in the letter grade of at least a "C" in
7 the category in the A-to-F school grading report
8 during each year of its contract.

9 According to the Public Education
10 Commission approved academic performance framework,
11 graduation is worth 10 percent of approved
12 indicators and measures of a successful academic
13 program. The PEC's academic framework is tied to
14 the tier rating system, which is tied to the
15 criteria for renewal decisions.

16 Imposing a condition for our next renewal
17 that requires SSLC to maintain a "C" for graduation
18 rate conflicts with PEC's approved framework,
19 because it disproportionately weighs the category of
20 graduation in comparison to the rest of the
21 indicators. SSLC would respectfully ask that this
22 condition be removed altogether.

23 In closing, I would like to end on a
24 positive note and mention that although we have work
25 to do in some areas, we have and have been

1 consistently doing well in many other areas.

2 If I could point you to the graph we gave
3 you in your blue folder, Exhibit A, '17-'18 math
4 proficiency, and Exhibit B, reading proficiency
5 graphs, our students perform better the longer they
6 are with us, signifying that we are having a
7 positive impact overall on our students' academic
8 growth in the long-term.

9 Looking at Exhibit C, PARCC Comparison
10 SSLC to State graph, our students are performing
11 significantly better than other students in the
12 state and on par with neighboring states.

13 And last, on the back, our SSLC average
14 ACT scores five-year trend data shows our scores
15 have improved every year in almost all areas. For
16 reference, our overall composite for 2018 was 24.9,
17 while the state was 19.4.

18 We are very proud of the scores our
19 students have earned and the hard work our students
20 and entire staff have put into our school successes,
21 and we thank you.

22 THE CHAIR: I think you got that done
23 in -- do we want to tell them how much time they
24 have left?

25 MS. FRIEDMAN: 20 seconds.

1 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: We practiced. Thank
2 you.

3 THE CHAIR: Thank you. And, as always, I
4 appreciate everything that you do every day, most
5 importantly; but, certainly, the time and effort. I
6 expressed concern with the two-year contract when we
7 did this. And the reason is exactly this, that
8 we're just dealing with one year's worth of, you
9 know, information. And it just -- I don't think it
10 does any of us the service that -- but we're here.
11 So we're going to move on with it.

12 So I have a couple of questions. And I
13 apologize, because my handwriting is awful. And now
14 that I'm looking at a picture, it's really even
15 worse.

16 But I had a question. There was -- and
17 I'm going to try to find, if I can, my picture of
18 it. So that there was a -- a piece in your contract
19 that talked about the special ed hours. And there
20 was a -- and I'm trying to find it, and I can't pull
21 a picture up.

22 Page 61 of the kit. And it was a Page 77
23 of 536 on my PDF. So I don't know what you're --
24 exactly you're looking at. But there was a time
25 when special ed students were only required to do

1 17-and-a-half hours of instruction, and regular ed
2 students were doing 28. That's how I read it. And
3 I -- I wasn't -- I was confused by that. So is that
4 the case?

5 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: No. And that was
6 brought up at our site visit. I was wondering if we
7 wanted to back up to public comment before I answer.
8 Or would you like me to answer?

9 THE CHAIR: Oh, I'm sorry. I missed that,
10 didn't I? I absolutely apologize. That's my error,
11 because we did not --

12 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: And I'd be glad to
13 answer.

14 THE CHAIR: And I don't -- yeah -- because
15 I was looking at this. And I knew -- I didn't have
16 anyone on this anymore. Because this is the wrong
17 one. Thank you.

18 And we still have that same person. So
19 there's one person that did sign up for public
20 comment. And that is Rebecca Weldon. Oh, I'm
21 sorry.

22 MS. REBECCA WELDON: It's a letter.

23 THE CHAIR: You can't do -- you can't do
24 public comment.

25 MS. REBECCA WELDON: Can we have another

1 person read the letter from the board president?

2 It's not a letter from me. It's from the board
3 president.

4 THE CHAIR: Right. I'd prefer that
5 someone else read it.

6 MS. REBECCA WELDON: Sure.

7 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: We had checked, and
8 we thought that was okay; so --

9 THE CHAIR: And I'll remind you to please
10 just state your name and spell your last name.

11 MS. SAVANNAH LOPEZ: My name is Savannah
12 Lopez, L-O-P-E-Z. And I'm reading a letter from our
13 school president, Deborah Lansdell.

14 "Dear Public Education Commission. As the
15 governing council president of Southwest Secondary
16 Learning Center and due to the conflicting
17 priorities, I am unable to attend the renewal for
18 our charter school's renewal in Santa Fe,
19 New Mexico. However, I did not want my work
20 commitment to negate the importance of communicating
21 my support. No.

22 "I am also a parent to a sophomore at SSLC
23 who has attended since her seventh-grade school
24 year. Over the last charter term, July 1, 2017, to
25 present, Southwest Secondary Learning Center has

1 made significant strides in demonstrating
2 substantial progress in various areas: Academic
3 performance, financial compliance, contractual,
4 organizational, and governance, which, lessons
5 learned, have contributed toward successful outcomes
6 and will continue.

7 "SSLC is committed toward an innovative
8 educational program for its students via high
9 expectations in a blended education model based on
10 computer literacy through an individualized,
11 self-directed, and flexible learning environment
12 that empowers students to attain their full
13 potential as responsible, ethical, and productive
14 citizens in this diverse and ever-changing world.

15 "Within the last two years, I have served
16 as a governing council member and believe we have
17 made it our mission to facilitate, coordinate, and
18 guide toward identifying and utilizing resources
19 essential towards SSLC's transformation of
20 instructional practices, offering initiatives that
21 support personalized learning, school culture,
22 professional development, and extended learning
23 opportunities for all students.

24 "Within the last six to seven months, SSLC
25 has also consulted with many resources toward

1 improving student accountability with engagement and
2 expectation. In addition to communicating with
3 parents and guardians, which is a key contributor to
4 current student performance, resources include, but
5 are not limited to, Brian Carpenter, from BASIS
6 Schools, Incorporation [verbatim], of Arizona, and
7 Naviance.

8 "Through information gathered from
9 resources, SSLC has made improvements through
10 monitoring, evaluating, and reviewing curriculum and
11 methods in addition to implementation of revisions
12 to various policies and procedures.

13 "Over the last year, we, the governing
14 council, PED, and the Charter School Division, have
15 formed partnerships to work collaboratively to
16 establish expectations and accountabilities in areas
17 that will reduce irresponsibilities and
18 unacceptabilities within SSLC's charter, that will
19 strengthen relationships to enhance and strengthen
20 overall performance of staff and students.

21 "Without a doubt, my fellow governing
22 council members and I are committed to continuously
23 supporting all aspects of the transformation of SSLC
24 under the leadership of its new Head Administrator,
25 Ms. Christine Lutz.

1 "As a leading advocate for improvements, I
2 believe this next charter term will bring the
3 following: Full and effective implementation of
4 initiatives proposed and recommended by PED and CSD
5 within the renewal term with support from SSLC's
6 leadership team and the governing council.

7 "Data driven from decision-making that
8 informs instructional practices, identifies student
9 needs, and is used to make adjustments to better
10 meet those needs.

11 "Schedules that build time for teachers,
12 analysis and use of data.

13 "Student Learning Communities for student
14 and teacher collaboration and learning.

15 "And a variety of opportunities for
16 extended learning to meet individual student needs.

17 And confidence in SSLC's Head
18 Administrator, Christine Lutz, to lead the important
19 initiatives proposed within this charter renewal,
20 and increases in student academic achievement.

21 "On behalf of SSLC, I pledge my support
22 for the renewal of the SSLC's charter renewal. And
23 thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter
24 in lieu of my inability to attend in person.

25 "In closing, please note that I honestly

1 believe that we could not have achieved any
2 improvement without collaboration and assistance
3 from former and current members of the PED and CSD.

4 "Thank you for your commitment toward
5 student success by providing practices and support
6 that provides initiative and quality education for
7 SSLC's students, staff, and our community.

8 "Very respectfully, Deborah Lansdell."

9 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Okay.

10 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: Shall I go back to
11 your question?

12 THE CHAIR: Yeah.

13 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: So, yes, previously
14 our special education director used 17-and-a-half
15 hours to calculate ancillary services. So the
16 17-and-a-half hours came from 10-and-a-half hours in
17 our main lab, three-and-a-half hours of PE, and
18 another three-and-a-half from SMART Lab.

19 So those would be the actual hours on
20 campus. But she did not include the 10-and-a-half
21 hours they're required outside the building.

22 Immediately after that site visit,
23 actually, Baylor was very instrumental in helping
24 us. We sent out a letter, opened our lab for extra
25 time for those students. And this year, going

1 forward, we're basing all services on 28 hours,
2 which includes the 10-and-a-half and which
3 Ms. Dixson is now monitoring.

4 THE CHAIR: Thank you. I appreciate,
5 because it was --

6 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: It was a little
7 cryptic in my response to --

8 THE CHAIR: It was, like, "What?"

9 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: So I figured -- yeah.
10 So that's how we're calculating them now and going
11 forward.

12 THE CHAIR: Okay. All right. Just a
13 quick question. Your educational technology plan
14 was labeled under Southwest Primary in the packet.
15 And I didn't know whether that was because of
16 facilities or -- I was confused by that.

17 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: I'm thinking it's an
18 error.

19 THE CHAIR: The packet that I have, the
20 educational technology plan was headed "Southwest
21 Primary." So I don't know whether I -- there was
22 the wrong paperwork that was put into our packets or
23 what ended up happening. But -- so I don't know
24 whether you can answer that for me or not, whether
25 that was something you did or that was something

1 that --

2 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: In which packet?

3 THE CHAIR: The --

4 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: The renewal packet?

5 THE CHAIR: Right, the renewal packet that
6 we were -- and we were -- we received electronic
7 copies of them. So my question is, did we get --
8 did someone else's get put into that electronic,
9 but --

10 MS. KAREN WOERNER: May I?

11 THE CHAIR: Uh-huh.

12 MS. KAREN WOERNER: So the facilities plan
13 that was submitted for both schools included a
14 section that has a technology plan as part of the
15 Facilities Master Plan, I believe -- because it was
16 all together in that facilities plan -- that
17 included a technology piece. So I think it may
18 apply to both schools; but it was in both schools'
19 packets.

20 THE CHAIR: And that was incredibly
21 confusing that it's labeled "Southwest Primary."

22 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: Well, they don't
23 exist anymore. And --

24 THE CHAIR: And I understand that. And
25 that's why I was confused that that was part of the

1 packet, something that was labeled "Southwest
2 Primary."

3 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: If it was our
4 Facilities Master Plan --

5 THE CHAIR: Right.

6 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: -- it's an old one.

7 THE CHAIR: Right.

8 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: And our new one is
9 due to us in January. So we didn't pull it apart.
10 We put it in as a whole. So that one was done five
11 years ago with Southwest Primary.

12 THE CHAIR: Right. Okay.

13 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: We have a new one
14 coming in January.

15 THE CHAIR: Right. If I'm not incorrect,
16 you've had four new governance members recently?

17 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: We have one new one
18 this school year that I'm --

19 THE CHAIR: Oh, I was looking at that
20 chart.

21 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: And we -- for this
22 school year, since the fiscal year, we have one.

23 THE CHAIR: I'm assuming it's probably the
24 two years. And I have to apologize, because we got
25 these -- I have -- we've had, like, four different

1 versions of -- of these.

2 So I am -- I can't even truly identify to
3 you exactly which version I looked at to find that.
4 It's been a -- it's been a concern that we had that
5 we had multiple versions of materials sent to us.
6 And it's -- but that's --

7 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: With -- I can't
8 answer from my recollections this year. We had a
9 new board member in September of this year. And our
10 board president resigned in June of 2018, our
11 previous one. She has a senior in high school, and
12 she wanted to just be a mom this last year.

13 THE CHAIR: Okay.

14 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: So she did resign.
15 Other than that, I'd have to say, considering what
16 we've been through, I really cannot be more grateful
17 to our boards for the time they've invested in the
18 school.

19 THE CHAIR: Okay. Thank you. And in the
20 narrative in your kit, you mention that part of the
21 rationale for your declining graduation rate was
22 students requiring special ed has changed. And
23 economically disadvantaged.

24 But your -- the demographic charts that we
25 have don't show us any significant changes in the

1 economically disadvantaged, in particular; so...

2 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: Meaning our -- how
3 many students we have?

4 THE CHAIR: I'm assuming -- because your
5 rationale for why your graduation rate has not been
6 what it should be, the rationale was, A, students
7 requiring special ed services, and, B, economically
8 disadvantaged.

9 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: I know that our -- we
10 have a downward trend, certainly, for our
11 economically disadvantaged.

12 THE CHAIR: Right.

13 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: We did go from
14 38 percent to -- I just calculated it yesterday --
15 to 42 percent in free and reduced. I would say the
16 school is very much in transition, learning how to
17 deal with our new populations. I don't think it's
18 because of them. It's our ability to service them,
19 and for our staff to adjust and give them more
20 support.

21 That's why we added the support lab, a
22 TESOL-endorsed teacher, and now, we have -- we
23 doubled from one to two special education teachers.

24 MS. DENISE DIXSON: Can I add to that?
25 Another -- which I kind of referenced the trend of

1 enrolling students that are coming to us behind
2 their cohort year.

3 This year, for 2018, we have 53 cohort --
4 2019 cohort students. 33 of those are on track with
5 their cohort. 20 of those are behind. Of the 20
6 that are behind, 13 of them came to us with less
7 than one or two years' impact on us, meaning they've
8 only been here -- this is their first year or this
9 is their second year, and they're six or more
10 credits behind when they enrolled.

11 So when we enroll a lot of these students
12 that come to us two or three years behind their
13 cohort, we'll get them graduated; but they're not
14 going to graduate on time. So that's another trend.

15 THE CHAIR: And I understand that. But
16 the rationale that was provided was those two areas,
17 in particular. And I just had -- you know, I had --
18 I also had a question as to why you -- you know,
19 have you looked at why you think maybe a particular
20 type of student is not attracted to your school than
21 other schools, and that's why you don't seem to have
22 the number of economically disadvantaged -- you
23 know, a number of your demographics don't match the
24 rest of your local schools.

25 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: Well, we -- so we did

1 go, and we looked at PARCC data from the other
2 schools, the surrounding high schools. And our
3 demographics actually very much mirror the three
4 large high schools in our area. And say the rest of
5 your question.

6 THE CHAIR: No. I was just -- because the
7 information that we received doesn't show that. So
8 that was my -- that was my -- so you're saying that
9 that information isn't really accurate?

10 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: Well, I think we're
11 not attracting the students, partially because where
12 we've been, and a letter grade of a "C" that's
13 really a "B." I will say parents actually really go
14 to that website. They look it up, and they see
15 that.

16 I would say there's a greater competition
17 amongst charter schools, too. There's a lot of good
18 opportunities out there. And we need to make sure
19 that we are now advertising, addressing those -- and
20 attracting those kinds of students, rather than just
21 credit recovery or their -- sometimes we're their
22 last chance.

23 THE CHAIR: Right.

24 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: We are. And with
25 fidelity to the lottery, we take them where they

1 are, when they come to us, and we do our best to
2 service them at any point in the year, actually.

3 So, yes, I would love for us -- we're
4 actually looking at a new building where we might be
5 able to offer some additional services and more
6 intensive support in reading and math to help boost
7 that graduation rate.

8 THE CHAIR: A new building close to where
9 you are, or --

10 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: Well, we're just in
11 the very preliminary stages. It might mean
12 lease-to-purchase of our own building. It might
13 mean a different spot. We're just simply out of
14 space to do much of anything else right now.

15 THE CHAIR: Okay. All right.

16 Commissioners?

17 Commissioner Ruiz?

18 COMMISSIONER RUIZ: Yes. I just want you
19 to -- I know you've kind of addressed this a little
20 bit with Commissioner Gipson. But I guess I need a
21 little more in-depth analysis from you.

22 You have Merit Scholars there, and that's
23 wonderful. But you still are lower in Hispanics,
24 ELLs. You have a lower percentage of disadvantaged
25 students. You have a lower percentage of students

1 with disabilities. That's a big concern for me.

2 And so what I want to know is I know you
3 said you advertise. But what are you doing as far
4 as community outreach to make sure that you're
5 engaging ELL kids and disadvantaged kids and kids
6 with physical challenges, please?

7 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: So right now, I will
8 tell you the last two or three years, we have been
9 in survival mode and really haven't had the
10 opportunity to reach out to the community members.

11 I will say we draw students from all over
12 the city. And, again, our demographics very much
13 mirror the high schools that are -- that surround
14 us. Interestingly, our Hispanic graduation rate was
15 higher than our Caucasian graduation rate. So
16 that's a positive.

17 I'm not sure how much we differ. But as
18 of yesterday, we have 11 percent special education.
19 We have 18 percent students on 504 plans. Our
20 gifted IEP rate is 8 percent. And, again, our
21 free-and-reduced population stands at 42 percent.

22 THE CHAIR: So can I just interrupt a
23 second, because I'm still confused. The information
24 that we're provided shows basically a statewide
25 average.

1 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: Okay.

2 THE CHAIR: So are we saying that the
3 three very large schools that are close to you also
4 don't mirror the statewide average? Because there
5 seems to be a disconnect somewhere. So that is it
6 true your surrounding community doesn't reflect the
7 demographics as shown in the average in the state,
8 so that -- 'cause we're looking at that chart which
9 shows state -- you in comparison with the state.

10 You're also saying that those three larger
11 high schools in your area are -- also do not mirror
12 the state?

13 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: Correct. Correct. I
14 have it in here. And as soon as I find it, I do
15 have my --

16 THE CHAIR: Commissioner Toulouse?

17 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Madam Chair,
18 they're located in a part of town that is more
19 upscale, but also is harder to get to with buses or
20 with other directions. And they are close to Sandia
21 High School, which has the International
22 Baccalaureate and some of the others.

23 So it is a different demographic than over
24 in the Southeast, where I live, and where you would
25 get -- at MAS and some of those other schools,

1 because I've been in there for basketball games and
2 whatever; so it is.

3 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: We do serve our
4 surrounding -- some of our kids walk to school. And
5 I did find it.

6 Hispanic, in particular, SSLC, we have
7 45 percent. La Cueva and Eldorado High School are
8 at 36 and 38 percent, respectively. So we -- you
9 know, we do take kids from all over the city.
10 Sometimes they can't get there. I think we would
11 have more if there were -- we do have one bus coming
12 from the Westside. But the majority of our kids
13 that come from the South Valley, et cetera, are
14 providing their own transportation.

15 THE CHAIR: But -- yeah. But I think it
16 clears it up better that the local high schools,
17 also, you're reflecting what would be the community
18 that would most likely fill in your student
19 population.

20 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: We did specifically
21 go look at that, because we felt it seemed negative
22 in our Part A. And, really, we're pretty proud that
23 our Hispanics have a graduation rate higher than our
24 Caucasian.

25 THE CHAIR: Okay. Thank you. I think

1 that sort of clears it up. Yeah.

2 COMMISSIONER RUIZ: Uh-huh.

3 THE CHAIR: Commissioners, any other
4 questions?

5 Commissioner Robbins?

6 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: I did have a
7 question for Ms. Lutz in terms of the PED
8 recommendations with conditions. And what you were
9 putting -- as far as the recommendation requiring an
10 improvement plan such as NM DASH, that you wanted to
11 resist that, that it was wanting to have -- and I
12 understand what you were saying -- is that it tends
13 to overemphasize that one score. And I would tend
14 to probably agree.

15 But based upon the last few years, is it
16 maybe reasonable to have that -- I mean a "C" is not
17 that hard, I don't think, for the school to attain.
18 Your results and what you're doing right now, I
19 don't think the "C" is going to be hard to attain.
20 So sometimes if it's a big leap, that might be a
21 challenge.

22 The one thing in -- I just wanted -- that
23 was more of a comment than anything.

24 For Ms. Woerner, I wanted to ask, on the
25 second condition, receiving an unmodified audit to

1 avoid material weakness, significant deficiency
2 findings -- that's great, wonderful. And B, repeat
3 findings at any classification level one year prior
4 to -- at any classification level?

5 So a repeat finding -- so if they
6 misplaced one invoice. If they misplace -- you
7 know, if they had one minor \$10 purchase that they
8 couldn't -- the auditors couldn't find, they'd fail
9 this?

10 MS. KAREN WOERNER: So, Commissioner
11 Robbins, you're certainly welcome to modify that
12 condition based on what you just pointed out there.
13 That was a condition that was provided for us as a
14 recommendation. But maybe, from what I hear from
15 you, you're finding that to be too harsh. So I
16 recommend that you --

17 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: With the number of
18 purchases, the number of payments that are being
19 made by any school, if it happens to come across
20 one, and it's not a material or significant finding,
21 I would hate to put a black mark on any school
22 simply because of something that is very, very
23 minor, very, very -- really insignificant. You'd
24 note it and everything like that. But it can
25 happen, I mean, a repeat finding on something minor.

1 My issue is if they have a repeat finding
2 on a material or significant, that would be cause
3 for concern --

4 MS. STEWART: Absolutely.

5 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: -- that there
6 should be no material significant findings that's
7 repeated.

8 But minor findings -- you can have process
9 findings that are really not anything to do -- you
10 may have a policy that says, "You do A, B, and C,"
11 and you forgot to do C, something happened, and that
12 could be a process finding, and it could happen the
13 next year because you have a new employee and that
14 employee doesn't learn.

15 So I'm really concerned about that second
16 one. I'm not concerned about the requirement for
17 New Mexico DASH.

18 I would -- the no material or significant
19 deficiency findings and no repeat findings of those,
20 that's how I would probably phrase that.

21 In the first condition, you know,
22 Ms. Lutz, if you could address -- you know, would it
23 be an overreach or a burden, you know, to have that
24 imposed upon the school?

25 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: I think the school's

1 concern is that it will create some confusion at our
2 next renewal. And I expect that we're here at our
3 next renewal. The performance framework already
4 addresses graduation rate. And when I look at it,
5 it says, "Improvement, improvement."

6 So I did read this. I believe that it is
7 addressed in the performance framework. It is our
8 sincerest hope. When we got our report cards, the
9 very next week my staff met. And I was so proud of
10 them about the suggestions they came up with for
11 improving our graduation rate. If you want to hear
12 them, I'll share them. But I'm sure you have more
13 things to do today.

14 So that's up to you. I would really --
15 that's a condition I think that has already been
16 addressed in the performance framework.

17 THE CHAIR: Right. And I just -- I have a
18 question tied on to that. Because you mentioned
19 that that was a recommend- -- that the condition was
20 a -- a recommendation by whom?

21 MS. KAREN WOERNER: Well, it's from the
22 CSD. Initially, it was written by Baylor Del
23 Rosario in his initial recommendations. And so it's
24 from the Charter Schools Division.

25 THE CHAIR: Because the way you couched

1 it, it sounded like that condition was coming from
2 some -- when Commissioner Robbins asked you, you
3 said that was a -- that was a condition that was
4 provided or something. And I -- and it didn't sound
5 like it was coming from CSD. It sounded like it was
6 coming from someplace else.

7 MS. KAREN WOERNER: My apologies. I
8 understand.

9 THE CHAIR: All right.

10 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: Commissioner Gipson,
11 we have Ms. Matthews with us as well. If she could
12 make a comment?

13 THE CHAIR: About?

14 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: Graduation rate.

15 MS. MATTHEWS: The condition, Madam Chair.

16 THE CHAIR: I don't think we're at that at
17 this point in time. I don't --

18 MS. MATTHEWS: I just want to make sure
19 that Commissioner Robbins didn't get left out,
20 because I'd really like to address it.

21 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: I wasn't left out.

22 THE CHAIR: I understand. But I don't
23 think we're at a point yet where we're having a
24 discussion about potential conditions with the vote.
25 That's the only thing I'm saying. I think that's a

1 little --

2 MS. MATTHEWS: Could we reserve the
3 opportunity to speak to it then?

4 THE CHAIR: Certainly, yes. If the need
5 be, absolutely.

6 MS. MATTHEWS: Thank you.

7 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: Just for
8 clarification, I wanted to point out that Ms. Lutz'
9 response, I think, clarified it, that it may be
10 redundant to have this as a condition since it's
11 already in the performance framework.

12 THE CHAIR: Right.

13 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: And I have no problem
14 with the performance framework.

15 THE CHAIR: Thank you.

16 Commissioner Toulouse?

17 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Madam Chair, I'm a
18 little concerned that you don't have a governance
19 council member here speaking with you and doing this
20 presentation; because, you know, when it comes time
21 for the contract, this Commission contracts with the
22 governance council, who then employ you and oversee
23 the school.

24 And I will tell you, personally, I have
25 received a complaint on your governance council

1 chair. And it was a fairly difficult one, but I
2 didn't know where to take it, because no one really
3 oversees governing councils.

4 So it is very hard to take a complaint on
5 how a governance council is being run by a chair
6 or -- by their child's involvement at being at
7 meetings and those kinds of things that we really
8 don't have a way to address that.

9 But I had hoped that she would be here and
10 I could ask her some questions.

11 And that's just a comment. I -- you don't
12 have anything to do, I know, with that side of it.
13 But I am concerned, with all of the problems we
14 had -- because, well, yes, the original problems we
15 had, clearly everybody in this room, I'm sure, knows
16 and has still read about it on the paper and seen it
17 on TV recently.

18 And I'm really, really tired editorially
19 of Mr. Glasrud trying to do the mea culpa when he
20 still got away with tremendous amount of money and
21 his wife, or his ex-wife, got away scot-free. But
22 that's over and done with. But I would like to hope
23 now that he's been sentenced and whatever, that
24 that's passed.

25 But when I came on the Commission, we were

1 having to deal with that. And it has been very
2 difficult, because we still -- the FBI still has not
3 released any of the records or anything for us to
4 know. So you can understand, too, why we were
5 suspicious and we were only doing a couple of years
6 at a time.

7 We would sort of like to have closed the
8 schools. But without any documentary proof, we
9 couldn't go with newspaper reports. And when the
10 FBI refused to tell us anything -- I do appreciate
11 how far you have come with all of this. But I, like
12 the others, do have an ongoing concern about the
13 makeup of your students; because I talked to some
14 people who have come and gone and come back. And I
15 don't know how you address those students who are
16 more interested in not being there, but getting the
17 credit.

18 Because that's what I hear. Because I --
19 I have younger students, kids in my family and
20 people who know that that's one of the things --
21 "Oh, I like going there, because, oh, well, they
22 tell me I need to be here: But they don't always
23 know whether I'm here or whether I'm doing the
24 work."

25 And it sounds like you're trying to

1 address that. Is that still a problem?

2 MS. DENISE DIXSON: If I could address
3 that briefly?

4 We are -- have been dealing with the
5 perception that our school is self-paced. You can
6 come -- the perception is there from some of the
7 students.

8 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: That's coming from
9 your students.

10 MS. DENISE DIXSON: Absolutely. That's
11 one of the struggles we have. That's why we have
12 the policies that we're doing now. We're not
13 self-paced. We're self-directed. We're flexible.
14 And you have to graduate in four years. You need to
15 graduate on time. The only way you're going to do
16 that is to put in the work.

17 They're not doing assessments at home.
18 Everything is proctored. They're in the building.
19 And when you're not working at home -- because some
20 students, they won't work at home, and they don't
21 have a computer, then you're putting your 30 hours
22 in the building.

23 And we're working really hard to change
24 that perception. We know it's out there.

25 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Change in student

1 turnover, then.

2 MS. DENISE DIXSON: Absolutely, yes.
3 We've lost students this semester for that exact
4 reason. "Now it's too hard. We don't want to do
5 that."

6 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: You may want to
7 keep track of that for your statistics, too, as time
8 goes on, to show you've made this improvement.

9 Another thing is just a comment. I'm not
10 sure I agree with either of the conditions we've put
11 on, first of all. On audits, it takes so long to
12 get them back, get them cleared. Yes, you get an
13 exit interview, and you certainly should use that
14 exit interview to fix everything up by the time -- a
15 year, even two years, depending on how the State
16 Auditor releases it for everyone to look at. You
17 don't have to wait to fix it till then.

18 A good auditor's job is to find something.
19 If I had an auditor -- and I spent 30 years in State
20 government and 12 years, all of which I -- at CNM,
21 all of which I chaired our finance committee on the
22 CNM board -- I am very suspicious of an audit that,
23 more than one year, comes out with nothing. Then I
24 wonder about the quality of that audit, because
25 their job is to catch something before it becomes a

1 huge problem so that it gets fixed before you have
2 the findings that have us in here saying, "Okay.
3 What are we going to do now? You need a Corrective
4 Action Plan. You need to fix this." Maybe you're
5 in enough trouble you're going to get closed.

6 And so I'm not as concerned -- I don't
7 like repeat audit findings. Anybody who was at CNM
8 while I was there and we had public discussions in
9 the meetings, they didn't want to come because I was
10 the first one on the board after all my time --
11 because 20 of my 30 years in State government, 21 of
12 them were in management -- I called people on their
13 repeat findings, because I don't believe any repeat
14 findings -- yes, you can have your employees; but
15 they should have been told, "This happened last
16 time; you don't do it again."

17 But a one-time or something minor, we have
18 other ways here to deal with those. And these are
19 sort of generic conditions that were looking like
20 they were being put on most of the schools.

21 I don't see any specific condition I would
22 want to impose on this school, because you're
23 already doing it. And if you're following all of
24 what's already in the contract and you will be doing
25 in the new contract, there's not a problem. That's

1 my feeling; so...

2 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: If I could tag on
3 to what Commissioner Toulouse said, a couple of
4 years ago at Workforce Solutions, we had an audit
5 finding because we have to -- State rules say if you
6 have people that travel, and they're going to have
7 more than \$1,500 dollars in a single year in total
8 travel expenses. Now, you can do that in one
9 travel, depending upon if it's a weeklong or
10 whatever, or if you're in New York City for a week
11 for a conference, you could hit that. But during
12 the course of the year, you accumulate \$1,500 worth
13 of travel expenses.

14 And we have some people that are traveling
15 every month. Figure in New Mexico. If they're not
16 on a letter that goes to DFA indicating that they're
17 going to go over \$1,500 that gets signed by the
18 Secretary, that's an audit finding.

19 We have almost 200 people on the letter.
20 It's easy to miss one. So I'm just saying that's an
21 example that could be a repeat finding. Yes, I
22 address it with the staff and things like that,
23 saying, "Hey, we have to stay on top of this."

24 But it's very easy for something like that
25 to slip through as a repeat. And so, to me, a

1 repeat finding, if it's not material, if it's not
2 significant, to me, yeah, you have to do a better
3 job. And you're right. You have to train better.
4 To me if you get three or four years of that repeat,
5 yeah, that seems to be a systemic issue. But a
6 single repeat finding on a very minor thing, I think
7 we need to maybe not look at that.

8 I would like to modify the second
9 condition to say that there shall be no material or
10 significant findings, in part, because I think that
11 represents fiscal laxity, for lack of a better word.
12 It's not really staying on top of the fiscal things,
13 that that should be something in a charter school
14 and because -- partly because of the history of this
15 school, I think that may be a caution that we want
16 to add as a condition here. But I think, in
17 general, I wouldn't want any other conditions.

18 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: My problem with
19 all of this is the delay in us getting the audit
20 findings. When I first came on this Commission, we
21 weren't getting them at all. And we asked for them,
22 and it took us two years from the first time --
23 didn't it, Gilbert? We even asked to get it. And
24 then we only got a summary of them.

25 So it's only been the last couple of years

1 we've been able to get access, in a timely fashion,
2 to them.

3 Yes, I know any one of us could
4 eventually, when they're posted, go on the State
5 Auditor's website. But by then -- I mean, it's late
6 enough, we shouldn't have to be looking. And it's
7 not that easy, always, to find those audits on that
8 website.

9 So I think -- that's another one of my
10 reasons. If we don't get it in a timely way to deal
11 with it, I expect that's something the governance
12 council had better be dealing with. And I would
13 hope we have more training for governing councils.

14 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: And I also believe
15 that there are things statutorily and procedurally
16 to address material and significant findings when
17 they do arise by the time that they're made known
18 that can be addressed, other than putting a
19 condition in the contract.

20 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Right. And we
21 have done that. Madam Chair?

22 THE CHAIR: Yes, we have.

23 Commissioner Caballero?

24 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Thank you. Thank
25 you, Madam Chair. And I learn a lot from our

1 Commissioners. And so I am curious if you, as a
2 staff now, have an idea how the ethnicity breakdown
3 has moved from some years back to now. Do you have
4 an idea what that was before?

5 You shared your information about the
6 surrounding schools. And I was very concerned,
7 because I understand APS -- and so your percentages
8 don't match. But if they're in the neighborhood --
9 your neighborhood, the students you serve. But how
10 has that -- has that moved? Has that changed in the
11 years prior?

12 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: I would say we have
13 pretty stable ethnicity ratios. I've been there
14 since 2010. And I haven't seen a huge shift from
15 one direction. I will say we are getting more
16 Native American students. We appreciate that. Our
17 African-American enrollment, APS is 3. Statewide is
18 2 percent. SSLC currently is at 5 percent.

19 It's not gigantic. I really believe it
20 mirrors our neighborhood. And we are a neighborhood
21 school.

22 As we consider maybe moving, my greatest
23 heartbreak is leaving our little community there.
24 We are one of the few -- we are the only charter
25 school in the Northeast Heights. And it's very much

1 a little community school. I really believe that.

2 Did that help?

3 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: That does help.

4 Thank you.

5 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: Okay.

6 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: And I do agree
7 with what has been said on the conditions. When I
8 first came to the -- to PEC, we did not have the
9 performance framework. But with that, I truly don't
10 believe we need to have conditions.

11 But all of that is in statute. And the
12 performance framework allows us to be more proactive
13 throughout the five-year term. Everybody has to
14 improve. Everybody has to move the students higher.
15 Everybody has to zero in at the bottom and move them
16 up.

17 So I'm not all in tune with the
18 conditions. I think that they're -- they serve no
19 purpose.

20 I thought at the time we were doing a lot
21 of conditions that if we put a condition, we set up
22 the school to failure. Because in the contract, it
23 gives a condition -- once you don't meet that
24 condition, your contract automatically drops.

25 But not everybody agrees with my

1 assessment of how that is. And they say, "No,
2 Carlos, that's not how it works."

3 But I'm still very leery.

4 The thing that I do want to ask is what is
5 SMART, the program?

6 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: SMART Lab? You're
7 talking to her right here.

8 MS. DENISE DIXSON: Absolutely. That's
9 our STEAM program. It's Science, Technology,
10 Engineering, Art, and Math Lab. It's project-based
11 learning. It's career-and-college preparation. So
12 I've been the SMART Lab teacher for 13 of my
13 18 years. Is that -- is that good?

14 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: That's good.
15 Thank you, Madam Chair.

16 THE CHAIR: And I'm going to -- going
17 along with what everyone else has said in terms of
18 conditions, I think with all of the work that we've
19 done with the performance framework, with the
20 accountability ladder, and, in particular, because
21 the -- in all likelihood, the letter grade system is
22 going to change, to put a condition that would place
23 it on a specific letter grade, we're spinning our
24 wheels with that at this moment in time.

25 I think we have all of the systems in

1 place to catch any material violations of this
2 contract through your year-end summary report, that
3 placing conditions and any other concerns that have
4 been publicly addressed here can be addressed
5 through the contract negotiations that,
6 unfortunately, you just went through and are going
7 to have to go through, hopefully, again; so that I
8 think we can -- we can deal with those in that
9 appropriate manner.

10 Commissioner Armbruster?

11 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: I just had some
12 questions. It's not about whether or not -- but I
13 just need to understand some things.

14 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: Sure.

15 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: So do you have
16 only four ELL students? I was reading that you
17 hired a TESOL-endorsed special education teacher for
18 the -- you're serving four ELL students? So you
19 only have four?

20 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: That's correct. We
21 do check. One of our biggest concerns has been, as
22 we take these new students in, is identifying them.
23 It's very difficult. I think the Language and
24 Cultural Bureau has done a much better job of
25 helping us know how to get that information on them.

1 Currently, we only have four students
2 right now.

3 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Okay. Second.
4 So you, I'm sure, have some students arriving who
5 have an IEP, and then you are doing identification
6 of students in need of special education services,
7 whether that's GATE or needs. And so I didn't
8 understand what you meant by 28 hours; because each
9 IEP would require so many whatever in whatever area
10 they need. And so how do they get that, and how do
11 they get that online?

12 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: So service -- we're
13 not supplying 28 hours of service. That's the
14 number of hours we base their services upon.

15 So we -- the students are on campus up to
16 17-and-a-half hours a week. And then we also
17 require at least 10 outside of school.

18 So they -- we are basing -- with Baylor's
19 recommendation, it looked like that we were telling
20 regular ed kids they had 28 hours, and they were
21 only getting 17-and-a-half hours to base their
22 services upon. Did that help?

23 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: No.

24 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: Ms. Weldon. Here.

25 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: When the

1 17-and-a-half hours that a special education student
2 is on campus, that student is getting extra help
3 with whatever need that child has.

4 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: That's when they're
5 being serviced, correct.

6 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: So you wouldn't
7 have -- so you wouldn't have more than 17 --

8 MS. REBECCA WELDON: Do you remember when
9 we used to classify special ed students as B-level?
10 B-level? C-level? D-level?

11 So D-level students would be getting
12 essentially full-time special ed services. However,
13 as you progress up the categorization, A-level
14 students essentially in a regular school would be
15 getting two or three hours of service per week,
16 total.

17 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Right.

18 MS. REBECCA WELDON: So our students take
19 the 28 hours as their denominator versus how many
20 hours they are in our support lab or have social
21 work services or other things to then determine what
22 their percentage of their time is in receiving
23 services.

24 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: And I'm assuming
25 that you probably don't have many D-level students.

1 MS. REBECCA WELDON: We have one student
2 on ability pathway.

3 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: We had two last year.
4 We're down -- one moved out of state, and we're down
5 to one this year.

6 MS. REBECCA WELDON: Correct. And she
7 does spend more hours on campus than --

8 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Okay. Just one
9 second here.

10 My other two comments are -- I guess in a
11 sense, I don't care how you improve your graduation
12 rate. You can do it however you want. My
13 experience on PEC is that when schools -- and I'm
14 not necessarily saying it's yours -- do their own
15 Corrective Action Plan, they don't seem to be as
16 effective as this New Mexico DASH.

17 And I will be totally honest that I
18 haven't done it. I've been to workshops talking
19 about it. And so I think it's something you might
20 at least consider, because in the end, it's the
21 recommendation that you do that. If you don't do
22 it, you don't do it. We can't make you do
23 something. But the results could end in disaster if
24 you don't or don't do something that's at least that
25 rigorous.

1 And it's an interesting thing, a comment
2 that you made regarding the increase in special
3 ed -- special needs, special ed, as well as in other
4 students with more needs. The demographic changes.
5 Because that's probably the third school I've heard,
6 both not necessarily charter schools, who have said
7 exactly the same thing. And the directors of the
8 schools are saying, "The teachers aren't used to
9 working with these students. We have to look at
10 some professional development to see how are
11 successful schools doing whatever to make these --
12 to help the students be more successful."

13 So I just thought that was an interesting
14 comment because you just said it.

15 And my third and last comment is just --
16 quickly -- is, again, it's not affecting my vote.
17 But it's -- but the findings that -- under School
18 Response seem like they're so easy to do. Like,
19 missing background checks. It's -- like, that's not
20 a huge thing like, "All of our kids are failing in
21 the school." It's just, like, these are very small
22 little emergency drills. Extremely important.

23 And so I just -- make that as a comment,
24 because it seems like those should be pretty easy to
25 do, as opposed to many things, much of what

1 Commissioner Robbins has said are not easy. But
2 these are pretty easy checkoff-list kinds of things
3 that -- thank you.

4 THE CHAIR: Okay. Ready?

5 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Thank you,
6 Madam Chair.

7 I move that the PEC renew the charter
8 contract between PEC and Southwest Secondary
9 Learning Center for a term of five years.

10 COMMISSIONER RUIZ: Second.

11 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Second.

12 THE CHAIR: There's a motion by
13 Commissioner Peralta, a second by Commissioner Ruiz
14 and Commissioner Caballero.

15 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: I'll take mine as
16 a third.

17 THE CHAIR: Is there any discussion?
18 (No response.)

19 THE CHAIR: Commissioner Armbruster,
20 roll-call vote, please?

21 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
22 Toulouse?

23 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Yes.

24 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
25 Ruiz?

1 COMMISSIONER RUIZ: Yes.

2 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner

3 Robbins?

4 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: Yes.

5 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner

6 Peralta?

7 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Yes.

8 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner

9 Gipson?

10 THE CHAIR: Yes.

11 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner

12 Caballero?

13 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Yes.

14 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner

15 Armbruster votes "Yes."

16 THE CHAIR: Motion passes seven-zero.

17 Thank you very much. Congratulations.

18 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: Congratulations.

19 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: May I?

20 THE CHAIR: Certainly.

21 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: So with our two

22 seconds left, I, being a newbie, I had a whole

23 section of thank-yous. And one of them was to thank

24 the CSD. There hasn't been a time that I haven't

25 been able to turn to them. I'm brand new at this.

1 And they have been wonderful. They have been very
2 helpful. But mostly, thank you to the Commission
3 for standing by us. Our philosophy this year is,
4 "Moving forward." It's time.

5 Thank you. Thank you for standing by us.

6 MS. DENISE DIXSON: Thank you.

7 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: I couldn't mean that
8 from deeper in my heart. Thank you. The school
9 deserves it.

10 THE CHAIR: Thank you. We appreciate
11 that. And we will see you at contract negotiations.

12 MS. CHRISTINE LUTZ: Thank you.

13 THE CHAIR: Thank you.

14 Commissioners, we're going to take a short
15 break before we --

16 COMMISSIONER RUIZ: Thank you.

17 (Recess taken, 10:56 a.m. to 11:10 a.m.)

18 THE CHAIR: So thank you, once again, for
19 your patience and sitting in there with us. We
20 certainly appreciate that and all the work that
21 you've put into the application. So -- and I do see
22 that there's three people that have signed up; so I
23 do have that. So we're good to go with that.

24 So we will start once again with the CSD
25 summary, and then you'll have your 15 minutes to

1 present.

2 MS. KAREN WOERNER: Thank you,
3 Madam Chair, Commissioners.

4 La Academia de Dolores Huerta has
5 unfortunately not made substantial progress during
6 the current term of its contract. In fact, the
7 school has been on a downward trend over the last
8 four years, as indicated on Page 32 of 46 in your
9 packets in the binder.

10 If you -- if I can refer the Commissioners
11 to that page, 32 of 46, you will see that the
12 overall grade, the proficiency rates, and the
13 current standing points have all declined fairly
14 dramatically over the last four years.

15 The same is true of the school improvement
16 points in Chart 4 shown on Page 33. Chart 5 shows a
17 negative growth index each year in both math and
18 reading, which indicates that the students are
19 growing less than expected, with zero being an
20 expected year's worth of growth. You can see in
21 this chart that some of that growth are negative by
22 quite a significant amount, negative-2 and
23 negative-3 in some areas, showing far less than
24 expected year's growth.

25 The school overall grade for the last four

1 years has been an "F," as was the score in four of
2 the five components. The one area that did not earn
3 an "F" was the Opportunity to Learn component, which
4 represents attendance and surveys.

5 The school has also failed to meet most of
6 the mission-specific goals over the last few years,
7 which you can see on Page 38 of 46. There's a chart
8 there showing the -- summarizing the
9 mission-specific goals.

10 Back on Page 5, as we talked about
11 earlier, your performance indicators and a chart of
12 those -- performance over the last two years is on
13 Page 5.

14 The school has shown improvement in the
15 organizational, financial, and governance aspects.
16 However, as I just described, the school is not
17 making progress in its academic outcomes for
18 students. In fact, the data, as I indicated
19 earlier, shows that the school is on a downward
20 trend in all academic areas.

21 Going back to Page 2, evaluation based on
22 the rubric shows that the school is failing to
23 demonstrate progress, again, in the academic
24 performance.

25 The school did submit a complete and

1 timely application, including obtaining a copy of
2 the E-Occupancy Certificate. However, due to the
3 fact that the school has failed to meet or make
4 substantial progress toward achievement of the
5 Department's standards of excellence and student
6 performance standards, the PED does recommend
7 non-renewal of this school's charter.

8 Thank you.

9 THE CHAIR: Thank you. And I'll remind
10 you to identify yourself and spell your last name
11 for the record.

12 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: My name is Melissa
13 Miranda. M-I-R-A-N-D-A. And I'm the Head
14 Administrator of La Academia for the past two years.

15 MS. GALVAN DE LUCERO: My name is Sylvy
16 Galvan de Lucero. G-A-L-V-A-N, space, D-E, space,
17 L-U-C-E-R-O.

18 I am the assistant principal and
19 instructional coach at La Academia as of August of
20 this year.

21 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: We also have in
22 attendance Mirna Rodriguez, who is our business
23 specialist. We have Alberto Prieto, who is our
24 social studies teacher, and Roberto Renteria, who is
25 our creative media/conjunto Norteño teacher as well.

1 Do I need to spell our last names? No?

2 THE CHAIR: Are you okay?

3 THE REPORTER: I'm fine. Thank you.

4 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: So as you know, we
5 have -- you know, we have not been meeting our
6 academic goals or our school-specific goals. But we
7 have made several changes this school year. One of
8 the changes -- and it's all outlined all in the
9 application -- is we hired an instructional coach.

10 We have common planning time. We also
11 have implemented Professional Learning Communities.
12 And our teachers receive weekly PD to address our
13 academics.

14 In addition, we have submitted a
15 New Mexico DASH plan, and we do analyze our data.

16 We also have several students -- well, all
17 students and several staff -- who were unable to
18 attend. However, they wanted their voices heard.
19 So we do have a video presentation that was put
20 together by students, our creative media students;
21 so we would like to present that at this time.

22 THE CHAIR: Certainly.

23 (Media presentation.)

24 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: Thank you for taking
25 the time to listen to some of our students and staff

1 at La Academia. As you can see, we do gear towards
2 the Mexican culture. And we do understand that our
3 academics has been an issue.

4 We have overcome several issues, which was
5 our facility. To my knowledge, we were the worst
6 state -- I mean -- "the worst state" -- the worst
7 facility for the last couple of years. And we did
8 move into a new facility this year.

9 We have -- again, as stated in the
10 application, we have made a lot of changes. And
11 right now, I'm just here to request time, time to
12 demonstrate that the changes that we're implementing
13 will yield student success.

14 MS. GALVAN DE LUCERO: As Ms. Miranda
15 stated, the school itself -- I'm new to La Academia
16 as of August of this year. I came from the Gadsden
17 Independent School District where I've been an
18 instructional coach for the past six years and a
19 teacher within the District in language arts for
20 12 years prior to that. So I've been in education
21 for a while, and I love our kids.

22 And I agreed to come to La Academia
23 because I love the vision and the goal of the school
24 to help these students build self-esteem through
25 performance, through embracing their culture and who

1 they are.

2 However, I do know that La Academia had
3 struggled for a while due to various different
4 reasons. And Ms. Miranda has had to go through a
5 bit of a housecleaning process. And now that that
6 is taken care of, we have been able to focus on
7 academics as of this year.

8 As the instructional coach, I've come in
9 to kind of help guide that process. We've developed
10 common lesson planning time. We meet regularly with
11 our core teachers. We've also created consistent
12 expectations throughout the campus for all of our
13 teachers, which were not in place before, from
14 lesson planning to how students are assessed on a
15 regular basis.

16 We've also implemented performance
17 contracts that also address the academic performance
18 of our students in those performance groups so that
19 they want to continue to take advantage of those
20 opportunities, that they need to take care of their
21 academic performance as well.

22 We've also brought in the Illuminate
23 assessment system, which is PARCC-aligned and will
24 help give us more regular snapshots of how our
25 students are performing. And it gives us data which

1 we can use in our PD to address the deficits with
2 our students and guide instruction in the classroom,
3 as well as make recommendations for interventions or
4 after-school tutoring that students might benefit
5 from in order to increase their academic
6 performance.

7 Another thing that we are working towards
8 this year, I'm completing the Verizon grant for
9 Project Lead the Way to bring in more of the science
10 and technology component to our campus as well.

11 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: I think we're done.
12 Thank you.

13 THE CHAIR: That's fine. That's fine.

14 MS. GALVAN DE LUCERO: We like to keep it
15 short and simple.

16 THE CHAIR: There are three people that
17 signed up for public comment. So you've got about
18 two-and-a-half minutes apiece. You're not obligated
19 to take the two-and-a-half minutes; but you are
20 afforded that time.

21 And the first person on the list is Albert
22 Prieto.

23 FROM THE FLOOR: Madam Chair and PEC
24 Commission members, first of all, thank you for
25 taking the time and doing this work that you do for

1 all the schools.

2 I don't know if I have to repeat my name
3 and spell my last name?

4 THE REPORTER: (Reporter Indicates.)

5 FROM THE FLOOR: No? Okay.

6 I'm here just to share a little bit about
7 our students. And as you can see in the video, our
8 student population is very unique. Most are of
9 Mexican-American descent. Not that we don't have
10 other ethnic backgrounds; but the majority are
11 Mexican Americans.

12 So we have students that are Gab-ree-EL,
13 not GA-bree-el; right? Natalia, not Natalie. And
14 I'm not saying that those latter names are bad; it's
15 just that those first names are unique to our
16 student population. So what I'm trying to say is
17 that our school provides a positive and proud
18 cultural identity through the performing arts and
19 the close relationships that we build with our small
20 population of students.

21 So part of our school mission is to
22 instill a strong identity so it can lend itself to
23 the academic success. And we have achieved the
24 first part, but have fallen short on the academics
25 for now, as we all understand.

1 But, again, with the changes that have
2 occurred, just the -- the new building that we are
3 in. Previously, I was in a little 10-by-20 area
4 with about 23 students; so classroom management was
5 very difficult, and the facilities did not lend
6 themselves to a classroom. So this new building we
7 are in, it was built as a school. So that's one of
8 the things that we have new.

9 Our head administrator, of course, is
10 striving to make positive changes so we can become
11 in compliance.

12 And then, like Ms. De Lucero was saying,
13 she is with us starting in January. So she is the
14 assistant principal -- August, I'm sorry -- the
15 assistant principal and instructional coach. And
16 with her -- and she has lots of great ideas and
17 strategies that are -- or arrows starting to align
18 so we can have a more systemic approach, especially
19 with the academics.

20 So I'm not going to go over the PLCs and
21 Illuminate and everything else that she has started.
22 But I just wanted to state that any colleagues and I
23 are confident that with a bit more time, we can
24 hopefully reverse this downward trend that we know
25 we are in.

1 Thank you.

2 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Next on the list
3 is Mirna Rodriguez.

4 MS. FRIEDMAN: You have five minutes left.

5 FROM THE FLOOR: Good morning, Commission
6 members. I am here to state that I have been
7 employed at La Academia for the past nine years. I
8 have been one of the staff members that has been
9 there the longest, and I have seen the various
10 struggles that the school has had.

11 I work in the office; so I work directly
12 with the head administrator. And I have worked with
13 three different administrators. I can share with
14 you that one of the concerns of every administrator
15 has been the moving of our facility. The concern
16 was the rating of the State, us being the worst
17 building in the state.

18 And I was very proud and excited to know
19 that we actually were able to move and that I had
20 the opportunity to experience that move into the new
21 facility that we are able to accomplish last school
22 year.

23 I have also been able to observe the
24 stability of La Academia through the new head
25 administrator. I can see that the hiring of the

1 instructional coach and observing how she has
2 instructed or -- or instructs the teachers and plans
3 this common planning time, I have seen that.

4 And not only I have seen that through
5 being an employee of La Academia, but also because
6 my son has the opportunity to attend La Academia for
7 the past three years. He left last school year as
8 an eighth-grader. And he had not only the
9 opportunity to learn more about his culture, but
10 also he did very well academically. And currently,
11 he is attending Early College -- Arrowhead Early
12 College High School in Las Cruces. He is a freshman
13 there, and he is still maintaining his grade level
14 average as "A"s and "B"s. And I can -- honestly, I
15 really feel, as a parent and also as an employee,
16 that La Academia has made a difference in him.

17 THE CHAIR: Thank you. And, finally,
18 Roberto Renteria.

19 FROM THE FLOOR: So thank you,
20 Madam Chair, for the opportunity to speak. I'd just
21 kind of like to keep it brief. I teach CMT and
22 music at La Academia Dolores Peralta. And prior to,
23 I kind of -- I toured for a couple of years, music.
24 So my music is in background. And it was a great
25 incentive for the kids, just the opportunity that I

1 got to tour, because when we put -- when we go out
2 to the community or share our talents, they're not
3 only recognized in the City of Las Cruces, but as
4 you could tell from the video, there's a lot of
5 people that follow the school and the music through,
6 like, in Mexico and Texas and all the way up to
7 Detroit, to Pontiac City, Detroit.

8 So it's very special, this school. The
9 school is very special, and the facility was a big
10 concern. I'm also very glad that for this year, it
11 was the first year that -- like, during the cold and
12 stuff, the kids actually have somewhere to eat.
13 Everybody's nice and warm.

14 So thank you. Thank you for your time.

15 THE CHAIR: Thank you.

16 Okay. And I've publicly stated this, that
17 every time I've walked out of the old building, I
18 kiss the ground that I survived being in that
19 building. No one can understand how bad that
20 facility was unless you walked into it.

21 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: We have T-shirts, "I
22 Survived La Academia."

23 THE CHAIR: It was dark, depressing, and
24 dangerous. That's -- you know, those three -- the
25 triple D's, with cafeteria tables that had to be

1 stored in the hallways and then go outside. It
2 was -- it was a mess.

3 So I truly appreciate -- but full
4 disclosure. Let's -- we have to be fully honest
5 about this. There was a reach-out by LCPS to get
6 you into a better building earlier; so that
7 that's -- I'm going to say publicly, that was a
8 shame that that did not happen. But this could be a
9 different story right now with that facility.

10 So that I appreciate the fact that LCPS
11 reached out again and offered still one of the
12 worst-conditioned buildings in the state because of
13 its age, but a far better place. But it was
14 unfortunate that those doors closed three years ago
15 to get the school into a building. That was the
16 unfortunate fault of the previous head
17 administrator.

18 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: Right. Not me. I
19 would have taken it.

20 THE CHAIR: That -- that was a shame.

21 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: Yes.

22 THE CHAIR: So there's a -- there's a
23 number of elephants in the room that we do need to
24 address.

25 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: Yes.

1 THE CHAIR: Your performance framework
2 included -- your previous performance framework
3 included Short Cycle Assessments, which were not
4 done.

5 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: Right.

6 THE CHAIR: My biggest concern was people
7 knew that they weren't being done. And there didn't
8 even appear to be, after the exit of the previous
9 head administrator, that there was a -- there was
10 any attempt to revive those.

11 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: Yes, we did. Last
12 year, we had Istations in place.

13 THE CHAIR: But that was not -- but
14 here's -- okay. Here's part of the problem. You
15 chose to do that on your own without communicating
16 to the PEC what you were doing, what the goals were,
17 so that you had a performance framework in place.
18 And I know you were one of the schools that had
19 Discovery, I do believe.

20 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: Yes. Yes, we were.
21 We did.

22 THE CHAIR: And then Discovery went away.

23 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: Right.

24 THE CHAIR: But the requirement was for
25 the PEC to be notified. And we had made that public

1 statement that any school that wished to make the
2 switch-out, because it needed to be done, they
3 needed to communicate to us what it was and what
4 those targets were going to be. So that to our
5 knowledge, there was no attempt to complete the
6 performance framework, from any communication to us.

7 So that's, you know, discouraging.

8 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: And I apologize. I
9 Yeah. I wasn't aware of that when we put the
10 Istation, you know, in place. I came on as the
11 interim, and, you know, I was just trying, you know,
12 to get it started.

13 THE CHAIR: I know. And I'm not trying to
14 throw you under the bus. But an excuse that we
15 never take is, "I'm the new head administrator."

16 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: Right. Oh, yeah.
17 No.

18 THE CHAIR: Because a constant -- and here
19 is another elephant in the room -- a constant should
20 be the governance council. And whether there's a
21 new head administrator or not, you have a governance
22 council that is the core that's supposed to be
23 running -- helping to run that school that should be
24 able to keep -- should know the performance
25 framework, should know that contract, should be

1 having those discussions, so that those questions
2 come from the governance council.

3 But here's the second -- the second of
4 multiple shoes that are going to drop.

5 You've had such constant changes on that
6 governance council. And I -- and I understand that
7 part of it is you've got a core of that governance
8 council that there's a requirement that they be
9 current students' parents. You've got that core on
10 your governance council. So those folks are always
11 moving in and out because kids graduate; at least
12 you hope they graduate, so that that happens.

13 But then you've got what's supposed to be
14 your constants. And your constants are constantly
15 changing. And I -- you know, I don't know -- I
16 don't know if you can address it. I don't know how
17 you -- how you address it well. But that is -- even
18 this year, there's been, I think, significant
19 changes on that governance council, if I'm not --

20 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: We've had -- one,
21 the GC president. She had some medical issues. So
22 she stepped down.

23 THE CHAIR: Do you have any governance
24 council members here today?

25 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: No, unfortunately.

1 THE CHAIR: And, see? That's -- as
2 Commissioner Toulouse mentioned before, that's a
3 real concern for us, that if there's -- if there's a
4 real investment -- and I understand -- we all
5 understand investment of time having to come here,
6 you know.

7 And more -- Commissioner Ruiz and I more
8 than anyone understand the travel that's involved in
9 it. And for those folks here that don't understand,
10 this is in my district. This is a school that's in
11 my hometown. So --

12 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: We did have --

13 THE CHAIR: I understand. But you've got
14 how many members on your governance council?

15 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: There's two, three,
16 four, five.

17 THE CHAIR: And one of them can't come up
18 here to show their support for this school? They're
19 the -- they're your -- they're your board. They're
20 the people that are -- that we're charging to run
21 this school. And they can't invest time to come up
22 to show their support. That says a lot to us about
23 investment in this school, you know.

24 So I don't know if you want to -- want to
25 touch -- I don't know if there's a -- if there is a

1 good answer for that governance council issue.

2 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: There was one member
3 who said -- and I don't know if this is -- you know,
4 if you allow this. But she said she could be
5 available via telephone.

6 THE CHAIR: That would have been great,
7 had we known that ahead of time.

8 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: Okay.

9 THE CHAIR: But we don't have that just
10 here. You know, we can set it up.

11 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: Okay.

12 THE CHAIR: But there was no reach-out to
13 us to say, "We have a governance council member that
14 would like to participate but can't make it up
15 here."

16 Because we have a school that we're doing
17 that for for another reason -- for Thursday. They
18 reached out to us and said, "Could you make that
19 available?"

20 We can, but -- you know.

21 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: I just found out
22 this morning that she was available. She was trying
23 to get up here, but I guess her leave wasn't
24 approved so she just notified us this morning that
25 she wasn't going to be able to make it.

1 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: A question on
2 that, Madam Chair.

3 THE CHAIR: Sure.

4 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: How many of your
5 governance council members have full-time
6 employment?

7 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: All of them.

8 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: And that --
9 that's the point. My mom worked at home, and she
10 could only go to PTA meetings after 7:30. And that
11 was her rule. If it's after 7:30, I'll be there.
12 If your teacher wants to talk to me before that, I
13 cannot go. I'll send your older brother.

14 And that was her standard. And if there
15 was a PTA meeting at 4:30 or 3:30 or 3:40, in my
16 neighborhood, nobody showed up, because all the
17 ladies -- mom and dad, both parents, had to work.
18 And we were still poor.

19 And so you have that in some areas of --
20 of Albuquerque and, I'm sure, Las Cruces.
21 Las Cruces probably has more of that. And, you
22 know, it would be nice to have those folks here.
23 And I understand they're the -- they are the -- the
24 board, the governing board. And it's very, very
25 important.

1 But I think we need to look at the schools
2 individually. If -- if -- if they can -- if they're
3 able to make it -- I know that my dad couldn't do.
4 it. He couldn't miss work.

5 THE CHAIR: Okay. And I -- you know, I
6 certainly understand the challenges of having to
7 work. My dad was a laborer. But there were
8 certainly -- always those certain days that he took
9 his leave time when they knew well enough in advance
10 that there was something important in school.

11 And this was -- these were dates that were
12 set well in advance. And I'm just going to say
13 it's -- you know, if the school had wanted folks to
14 be able to participate telephonically, they, you
15 know, could have, had they reached out to us. We
16 certainly would have been able to accommodate that.
17 But we can move on from that.

18 When I was looking at your enrollment,
19 there seemed to be a significant drop from your --
20 from -- there's a -- from 40th day to your 120th
21 day.

22 MS. GALVAN DE LUCERO: I believe that was
23 due to the move of the school. We moved across town
24 to the new facility. And a lot of parents were not
25 ready to make the commitment to drive across town to

1 the new facility.

2 THE CHAIR: Okay. So have you since
3 picked up students from the Mesilla area?

4 MS. GALVAN DE LUCERO: We have. We've had
5 some new ones come in that are brand new to us from
6 that side of town.

7 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: We are hoping that
8 will continue as -- as the community is aware that
9 we have moved to the new facility.

10 THE CHAIR: Right. I'm scrolling through
11 my notes. I apologize. And some of them aren't
12 popping up. So if someone else has a question, I'll
13 gladly --

14 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: If I may -- may I?

15 THE CHAIR: Sure.

16 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Thank you,
17 Madam Chair. I apologize for not remembering names.
18 But the head administrator, your last name again?

19 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: Miranda.

20 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Ms. Miranda. Okay.
21 You mentioned you were at a public school as an
22 educator prior to coming to Dolores Huerta.

23 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: Yes, yes. I was a
24 special education teacher in an elementary school.

25 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Special education.

1 You are a year and a half into your new job here at
2 Dolores Huerta. Yes?

3 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: Yes.

4 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Have you had any
5 other prior administrative experience prior to
6 coming to Dolores Huerta?

7 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: No. I was actually
8 pursuing my admin license when the opportunity came
9 up as the interim administrator. And I only really
10 wanted it for six months until they found somebody.
11 And my contract stated that within the six months,
12 if they didn't find anybody, it would be an
13 automatic six months. And, well, I'm still here.

14 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Well -- I'm sorry.

15 THE CHAIR: So can I ask on that? Have
16 they advertised for a new head administrator?

17 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: I believe so. I
18 believe they did. I -- you know, I'm not
19 100 percent sure if the GC did. But I do believe
20 they did.

21 THE CHAIR: So there's been no discussion
22 at governance council meetings about --

23 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: Yes.

24 THE CHAIR: -- a search committee or --

25 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: Oh, yes. Yes.

1 There was -- they talked about the -- they had a
2 timeline in place of, you know, when they wanted to
3 have the search committee, when they were going to
4 advertise, when they were going to, I guess,
5 interview. But I was appointed.

6 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: And, again,
7 Madam Chair, it goes back to, again, having a member
8 of the governance council to answer those questions,
9 you know, to see what plan is it, if they're
10 pursuing a licensed administrator for the school.

11 And so you mentioned that you have things
12 in place such as the new instructional coach, your
13 assistant principal here, the new assessments of
14 Illuminate. Am I correct?

15 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: Yes.

16 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Professional
17 development for staff, making PLCs for staff and
18 those kind of things. And my understanding is maybe
19 those things commenced at the beginning --

20 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: In August of this
21 year.

22 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: In August of this
23 year. Okay. So tell me what new things you did
24 last year to make an impact or big changes in
25 your --

1 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: So -- so last year,
2 I was working on more of the organizational
3 framework, making sure that we had, I guess, the
4 cleanup from the previous administrator. I did
5 instill the Short Cycle Assessments; although, I'm
6 learning today that we didn't communicate that with
7 you guys. And previous to that, there was no Short
8 Cycle Assessment at all. And also working on
9 getting us into a new facility.

10 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Making the change
11 to the new facility. I think that's with the work
12 of the governing council and that transition and
13 what have you. And when you say "cleanup," what do
14 you mean by that?

15 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: Well, there were
16 some areas where we were falling -- falling far
17 below when you look at the annual -- the renewal --
18 the annual site visit. So, you know, coming into
19 this, I wasn't expecting it.

20 So when -- you know, all the paperwork is,
21 you know, on your desk and, you know, you have to
22 submit the -- you know, the information to show how
23 we're going to improve. So it was more of just
24 trying to get the foundation in place.

25 And, then, so this year, I knew our focus

1 had to be academics, because, you know, we do owe
2 that to the students. And that's why when I was
3 looking at the master plan, having the common
4 planning time, hiring an instructional coach so that
5 we can start those -- the -- the PLCs, all that was
6 not in place.

7 So coming from a public school, I knew
8 when I grew as a teacher, it was when we analyzed
9 data, when we had those collaborations. So that is
10 something that I wanted to make sure that we were
11 starting to move forward with our current school
12 year.

13 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: So those are
14 experiences you had as a special ed teacher at the
15 last public school that you were in, the PLCs and
16 what have you?

17 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: Yes.

18 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Why was that not
19 one of the things that you maybe would have
20 instilled at the onset of your employment as the
21 so-called administrator last year?

22 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: Right. And I guess
23 part of the reason is I wasn't planning on coming in
24 and making any changes, 'cause I honestly didn't
25 think that I was going to be in this position. I

1 was honestly hoping that within three to six months,
2 you know, someone with more experience would come in
3 so that they could change our school. So, you know,
4 I didn't.

5 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: So with the lack of
6 administrative experience that you were under in the
7 last year, what kind of support did you get from the
8 school to try and help you with implementation of
9 such programs that are necessary in trying to
10 bring -- turn around the school? Did you get any
11 support at all from anyone in the school?
12 Governance council? I see now you have your
13 assistant principal who's got a wealth of knowledge.

14 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: No. And that's, you
15 know, why I looked to, you know, have the support,
16 to look to somebody as well that, you know, had the
17 instructional coaching background; because I did
18 feel that we do owe it to the students, and not only
19 the students but the staff. You know, how do we
20 want our staff to get better if we're not providing
21 the support that they need as well?

22 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: And so where are
23 you now currently with your administrative --

24 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: Oh. I graduated in
25 December of last year.

1 THE CHAIR: So you're currently licensed?

2 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: Oh, yes, yes. I was
3 licensed as of January.

4 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Well,
5 congratulations.

6 Thank you, Madam Chair. No more
7 questions.

8 THE CHAIR: Commissioner Toulouse?

9 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Madam Chair, I
10 don't really have questions. I have comments.

11 One of -- a couple of them are very
12 generic, because I've compared, over the last few
13 years, grades of middle schools. We don't have many
14 middle charter schools here, just middle schools.
15 Most of them either go K through 8 or 6 through 12.

16 And it is very clear to me when you
17 compare the grades, when you look at all school
18 districts, both charter and public schools, the
19 lowest grades are in the middle schools. There are
20 an awful lot of "D"s and "F"s that there are not in
21 elementary schools and high schools.

22 So we have kids going into those schools
23 doing fine and going to another school and doing
24 fine.

25 So to me, we have two problems:

1 Number one, I am not sure we have figured
2 out, in this state, how to teach specifically that
3 age group of kids who are going from being kid to
4 being teens.

5 And the second one is I don't think we
6 know how to evaluate them.

7 And until we get that, I have a problem
8 with looking at school grades on them. And so I am
9 concerned with going only on the school grade. It's
10 when -- again, if you go back and look at the grades
11 that are just out or last year's grades or the grade
12 before, it holds true for middle schools all across
13 this entire state, whether -- I mean, the only
14 school -- I'll use Karyl Ann as an example from
15 Los Alamos. They had all "A" schools except their
16 middle school, you know.

17 And so, again, that shows very clearly,
18 kids -- and to me, that's an evaluation problem.

19 I also have a real concern about your
20 governance council. Because no school runs well
21 without a good governance council. In my six years
22 of sitting here, every school that we have closed,
23 we have closed with problems that started with their
24 governance council. Didn't always end there. But
25 either they were too weak or they were too strong or

1 they were totally uninvolved.

2 And I think that's where your problem is.
3 And I know that's nothing that necessarily you can
4 do, except you've got to find a way to guide your
5 governance council if you will continue to stay
6 open, because you need their backing to do what
7 you're doing. And right now, it looks to me like
8 everybody's out there floating on their own.

9 I like the concepts of your school. I
10 don't want to close your school down, because I see
11 you making progress. I'm not sure I want to give
12 them five years. But I don't want to close, because
13 I see that you are making a difference. But it's --
14 this one's got to have some conditions, if we
15 approve it, of what you're going to do and how to
16 give you the support that your governance council
17 isn't giving you.

18 I do want to commend you on what you've
19 done. And I think just the new facility should make
20 a difference in how your students are responding.
21 And they haven't had a lot of time yet to respond to
22 that.

23 And you do have this new group of students
24 coming in. And I would like to see it given a
25 chance to do. We don't teach enough of our local

1 cultures around this state as it is. That's been
2 one of my groups that I have supported for six years
3 on this Commission and will continue to support from
4 outside it, that we have such a rich diversity of
5 cultures in this state.

6 I mean, culture in the Las Cruces area is
7 very different than the culture in Taos. The
8 culture in the Navajo Reservation is very different
9 than the Pueblo cultures. The Anglo cultures of
10 Albuquerque, Santa Fe and all are very different
11 than the ones on the east side of the state.

12 And I don't know why we can't do more,
13 taking those into account as we teach our students
14 the basics they have to have that we don't teach
15 them.

16 And so I encourage any school that is
17 teaching it -- because, most of us in New Mexico
18 carry more than one culture. Most of the people
19 here know, but you people don't know me. I mean, my
20 family has been here for over 200 years. I'm
21 related to half of Northern New Mexico. I don't
22 necessarily by the way I look, because my dad's
23 family were the French fur trappers and traders who
24 came in here, and they intermarried with all kinds
25 of people. And I have cousins, who I don't know if

1 they're blood-related or, just, they were related to
2 the in-laws of somebody four generations ago. I was
3 told they were primos, you know.

4 And so I think that's the kind of thing we
5 need to look at, that most of us carry more than one
6 culture. And it's important to continue those other
7 cultures besides this general "American" culture
8 that gives us our strip malls and our generic
9 restaurants and all that we all go to, too. But
10 that there's room. There's room for our arts and
11 crafts. There's room for our music, you know. And
12 we have schools that are doing that.

13 So I don't want for myself to see this.
14 But there needs to be some plan that gives you a
15 strong governance council, or you will not succeed,
16 no matter what all of you and the faculty do.
17 Without that strong governance council, you will not
18 succeed.

19 So thank you, Madam Chair.

20 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: If I can. I can
21 tell you, working at La Academia, it's made me learn
22 to appreciate my culture as an adult. So I think
23 instilling it when the students are young, I think
24 it's wonderful. I wish La Academia was around when
25 I was in middle school.

1 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Well, my favorite
2 story that most people have heard is my grandson
3 who's been in a dual language program told me --
4 he's now 12 -- when he was about 7. He said,
5 "Grandma, your accent is great, but your grammar is
6 poor." Because I grew up speaking Norteño, plus
7 that's a lot of Spanglish. And, "So people
8 understand me, honey."

9 But if my accent is good, I'm pleased with
10 that. But I've been very careful not to speak
11 around him much. So we have room for that.

12 THE CHAIR: Commissioners, any questions?

13 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Question.

14 THE CHAIR: Commissioner Caballero?

15 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Yes. When I see
16 100 percent economically disadvantaged and
17 98 percent Hispanic, what comes to mind is it's
18 weighted down with students with a huge amount of
19 needs. I mean, huge. And so your work is more than
20 other charter schools.

21 I know that speaking to parents across the
22 state, especially around Albuquerque, some tell me
23 that their niño was pushed out, or, "Mi niña, no la
24 quiera." They didn't want her because she was at
25 the bottom economically. Or scholastically, she

1 just didn't have the skills. And it would be an
2 additional burden to the charter schools.

3 Though I bring it up and try to pull it
4 out of the charter schools, I suspect charter
5 schools balance their student population so that
6 they're not so weighted down. You may not be so
7 lucky to be able to do that.

8 So you have a lot more work, a lot more
9 work. And it's going to take a lot more work from
10 parents to be able to pull this off.

11 Now, you're saying that you have made some
12 progress through Illuminate. And you're comparing
13 it to PARCC. Can you illuminate me on that?

14 MS. GALVAN DE LUCERO: Yeah. Illuminate
15 is a new online program that actually I learned
16 about through my experience with the Gadsden
17 Independent School District. We had brought it in
18 to the campus to start guiding it as a PARCC-aligned
19 assessment.

20 All of the assessments on Illuminate are
21 aligned to the Common Core standards within English,
22 math, science; and now they're starting to bring in
23 the social studies component as well. We can send
24 the Illuminate Corporation all of our social studies
25 standards we use with the state, and they will

1 upload them into the system, and teachers can use
2 that system to either access already pre-designed
3 assessments that are paced according to a yearlong
4 pacing guide that should prepare students for the
5 PARCC assessments in the spring.

6 So they are color-coded -- for example, we
7 just finished administering what we call the
8 "orange" assessment, "orange" for fall. They say
9 basically, "Within the first quarter or the first
10 nine weeks of school, in order for your students to
11 be successful on PARCC, they should have already
12 mastered these skills."

13 It is an assessment that the students can
14 take online. It mirrors Illuminate [verbatim], all
15 of the same tools, all of the same environments that
16 they would be in when they are testing on PARCC when
17 they take that assessment.

18 Within 24 hours, the teachers have a
19 report that they can print out that is identified --
20 actually, there's multiple reports, either by
21 standard for the whole entire class or by student
22 individually, by question group, so on and so forth.
23 But they can use that data. And we sit down in PLCs
24 to say, "Okay. Juanito, he was really weak in
25 reading for informational text and analyzing data.

1 So we need to pull him, and he was consistent across
2 the board in all of the question groups. So we can
3 pull him in and work with him one-on-one. Because
4 everyone else on that report, they got it."

5 So now, I know this is just that one
6 student.

7 Or vice versa, it will say, "You know
8 what? All of the kids missed this as a whole.
9 Let's look at the factors."

10 Were there any distractions? Were there
11 interruptions? Were there any other things going
12 on? If not, how can we reteach and readdress this
13 standard in a way that will help the students to
14 better understand so that they can move forward,
15 instead of letting those gaps get bigger and bigger
16 because we don't have timely data in order to
17 address those deficiencies? And then PARCC comes in
18 March, and we're still playing catch-up the entire
19 time.

20 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: So is Illuminate
21 allowing you to see that there's progress being
22 made --

23 MS. GALVAN DE LUCERO: Yes.

24 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: -- on those
25 short-cycle --

1 MS. GALVAN DE LUCERO: On the short-cycle
2 assessments, yes.

3 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: That's all I
4 have, Madam Chair.

5 THE CHAIR: I just want to follow up a
6 little bit with the conversation with Commissioner
7 Peralta.

8 You mentioned that when you -- last
9 academic year, when you -- when you started as the
10 interim, that your first goal was to get the
11 organizational framework in alignment. What
12 exactly -- two things: What exactly did you do?
13 And why did you determine to do the organizational
14 and not the academic?

15 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: The reason why is I
16 had received a phone call from Baylor telling us
17 that the report was due. I -- you know, like I tell
18 you, I was new. I didn't understand any of it. So
19 he was kind enough to go through it with me.

20 So that, honestly, is why I went ahead and
21 started there, since it was due. I didn't want us
22 to -- because in the past, I believe we hadn't
23 addressed some of the concerns. So I wanted to make
24 sure that we did address the concerns.

25 And it was also a good learning

1 opportunity for me to see what was -- they were
2 going to look at in the future.

3 Academically, I guess, you know, it was
4 more me just feeling -- I didn't know how long I was
5 going to be in this position, and I didn't want to
6 make changes to the staff and then someone new come
7 in, and then they make other changes as well.

8 So this year, knowing that it's -- it fell
9 on me, I'm the head administrator, I accepted the
10 position, I took it, and I ran with it and made sure
11 that what I should have done, I did this year.

12 THE CHAIR: Okay. But I still -- I still
13 don't -- I haven't heard what you did to get the
14 organizational performance framework in line. And,
15 secondly, "academic" means not just changing staff.
16 So there's multiple things that you can do to help
17 guide the academics without changing staffing in the
18 school.

19 So -- and the academic portion of the
20 framework deals -- because we don't have control
21 over staff; so that we're looking at the outcomes
22 from the students, not just the staffing pattern in
23 that academic framework. So that's my overarching
24 concern and question.

25 I haven't heard specifics about what you

1 did to get that organizational framework in line, if
2 it was, in fact, out of line, and what was done to
3 try to support academic performance a year ago.

4 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: Okay. So then I
5 guess for the academic performance, we went ahead
6 and we got a short-cycle assessment in place. We
7 did look at the data. We created data folders, you
8 know, that the students and the teachers could use.

9 And for the organizational framework, it
10 was -- I mean, I would have to look to -- you know,
11 to see if I could remember. But whatever it was
12 that we stated that fell far below, we, you know,
13 got it into par that year, whether it -- I'm just
14 trying to think because I -- I'm thinking of this
15 year's and last year's. Do you mind if I take a
16 look?

17 THE CHAIR: Sure.

18 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: Okay. So I think
19 some of it -- if I remember correctly, our
20 instructional hours -- or our instructional day --
21 wasn't correct. So this year, you know, we made our
22 calendar so that we could make sure that
23 instructional hours were in place.

24 I did provide some professional
25 development, also, to help with academics, that we

1 didn't have in the past. I brought in a gentleman.
2 His name was Mr. Carmona, who was an expert in the
3 sheltered language instruction. So we brought him
4 in to help.

5 I wanted the teachers also to become
6 familiar with the teacher evaluation system. So we
7 brought in somebody to help with that as well. And
8 we went over the rubrics. I'm just trying to
9 remember what -- we went over the Common Core
10 standards with the staff.

11 However, this year, I feel we've really
12 dug into them deeply.

13 Let me see. So there was also issues with
14 our [incomprehensible] policy that we were able to
15 bring -- we were able to align. And now it's -- I
16 believe it's Working to Meet or Meets Standards.

17 We also worked on our -- what is it
18 called? -- the service log for our special education
19 so that we can ensure that they're receiving the
20 instructional time that is reported on their IEPs.

21 And those are the ones that I can just
22 remember off the top of my head.

23 THE CHAIR: Okay. Thank you.

24 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: May I?

25 THE CHAIR: You may.

1 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Thank you,
2 Madam Chair.

3 If I may ask -- again, I'm not great
4 remembering names -- instructional coach, assistant
5 principal?

6 MS. GALVAN DE LUCERO: Yes.

7 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Years of experience
8 in administration?

9 MS. GALVAN DE LUCERO: This is my first
10 year as an administrator officially. I have had my
11 administrative license for four years; but I was
12 working as an instructional coach kind of as the
13 right hand to the administrator at Santa Teresa High
14 School.

15 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: So indirectly as an
16 instructional coach is your vast experience.

17 MS. GALVAN DE LUCERO: Correct.

18 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: So going to the
19 Head Administrator here, have you -- being that
20 you're so fresh, just, you dove into this, you know,
21 last year, you did a service to the school about
22 just trying to take the lead and do the best you
23 can.

24 And now that you are a licensed
25 administrator, have you possibly -- what have you

1 done professionally as far as maybe some extra
2 training, maybe some mentorship, those kind of
3 things? Principals Pursuing Excellence is a good
4 program that the PED has.

5 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: I actually looked
6 into the Principals Pursuing Excellence. But you
7 have to apply in January. And when I found out
8 about it, it was after the fact. But it is
9 something that I'm interested in, because I do feel
10 we need more -- or I need more professional
11 development.

12 I also did seek out my own mentor last
13 year, as well, to help guide me. He was a principal
14 at -- at a public school -- Las Cruces Public
15 Schools. So I did reach out to -- you know, to
16 Mr. Carmona to also help me, you know, because I was
17 fresh. You know, it was -- I was an interim -- I'm
18 still new at this position as well. So he's still
19 one that I keep in contact with as well.

20 So those were some things that I did
21 look -- you know -- look into. And, you know,
22 hopefully, I will -- they will accept me for the
23 Principals Pursuing Excellency [verbatim] program.

24 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: It seems that
25 possibly the team here would definitely look for,

1 you know, some more support in that area as well.

2 All right. Thank you.

3 THE CHAIR: Commissioners, any other
4 questions? I'll entertain a motion.

5 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: I have a motion.

6 THE CHAIR: Certainly.

7 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: I move that we
8 renew the charter contract between -- what is the
9 correct name? -- La Academia Dolores Huerta. And I
10 am not sure if there's a need for conditions. But
11 I'll just leave that motion like that for
12 discussion, Madam Chair. I know Commissioner
13 Toulouse was talking about a certain number of
14 years. And so I will just leave --

15 THE CHAIR: It has to be part of the
16 motion.

17 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Okay. In that
18 case, my motion -- I want to read it as three years'
19 contract, so that the school can show progress with
20 what they're doing. No?

21 THE CHAIR: If you wish to place the
22 conditions, they need to be part of the motion.

23 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: No. The motion,
24 actually, Madam Chair, would be just to renew the
25 contract for three years.

1 THE CHAIR: And that's it?

2 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: That's it.

3 THE CHAIR: Okay.

4 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: And on the three
5 years, Madam Chair, I truly believe two years is not
6 enough.

7 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: No, it's not.

8 THE CHAIR: You're correct.

9 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: We set up them
10 for failure.

11 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: We all agree on
12 that.

13 THE CHAIR: We all agree. And I think the
14 previous school was the perfect example of that.
15 Two years isn't enough time to turn the data around
16 to really show any significant change.

17 Do I have a second for that motion?

18 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Madam Chair, I'll
19 second it, because I think that conditions can come
20 under the performance framework.

21 THE CHAIR: Okay. That's fine.

22 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: So I think it
23 can -- a performance framework would work well for
24 that. So I will second the motion. I think this
25 school needs the opportunity to move forward with

1 what they started. If they hadn't started anything,
2 if they weren't concerned or weren't aware or didn't
3 have the new staff and the new approach to things,
4 then I would not say this. But I think they deserve
5 a chance.

6 THE CHAIR: Okay. There's a motion by
7 Commissioner Caballero. There's a second by
8 Commissioner Toulouse.

9 Is there any discussion?

10 Roll-call vote, please?

11 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
12 Toulouse?

13 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Yes.

14 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
15 Robbins?

16 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: Yes.

17 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
18 Gipson?

19 THE CHAIR: It hurts my heart; but I'm
20 going to have to say "no."

21 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
22 Armbruster votes "no."

23 Commissioner Peralta?

24 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: No.

25 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner

1 Ruiz?

2 COMMISSIONER RUIZ: No.

3 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner

4 Caballero?

5 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Yes.

6 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: The motion fails
7 four to three.

8 THE CHAIR: Do I have someone that wishes
9 to propose an alternate motion? And I'm going to
10 express -- at this point in time, I'm going to
11 explain why I couldn't support that motion. I think
12 the school has failed to show leadership with the
13 governance council and with the current
14 administration to successfully move this school
15 forward.

16 And I, more than probably anyone else
17 here, understands what this school means to that
18 community. But ultimately, this is a public school,
19 and the school has an obligation to provide the best
20 education it can for the students in that community.
21 And I feel that this school has failed to
22 demonstrate that it is capable of moving the school
23 forward as it should.

24 There has been a continual lack of
25 leadership in the school. And this school's been in

1 existence now for nine years. And we can't keep
2 looking back and saying, "It's not our fault; it's
3 the previous administrator."

4 There's been a year and a half almost now
5 to right this ship. And the school -- the
6 application, to me, showed a lack of understanding
7 of what governing the school truly means. And
8 unfortunately, so did this presentation.
9 Absolutely.

10 I think the school failed to understand
11 what it truly needed to show us, when it came here
12 today, what they were doing to right this -- right
13 this ship, that there was -- there was a lack of an
14 ability to truly answer the questions as they needed
15 to be answered.

16 And I am truly sorry for that, because,
17 like I said, I know what this -- what this school
18 means to the -- to the community.

19 Commissioner Ruiz?

20 COMMISSIONER RUIZ: I'll make a motion,
21 Madam Chair. I move that we recommend non-renewal,
22 because this school has not made substantial
23 progress, demonstrating a downward trend towards
24 meeting the Department's standards of excellence and
25 student performance standards. And in addition, the

1 school only met one of five school-specific goals
2 during the past two years.

3 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Do I have a
4 second?

5 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Second.

6 THE CHAIR: There's a second by
7 Commissioner Peralta.

8 Any discussion?

9 (No response.)

10 THE CHAIR: Commissioner Armbruster?

11 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
12 Peralta?

13 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Yes.

14 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: I'm sorry. You
15 said "Yes"?

16 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Yes.

17 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
18 Robbins?

19 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: Yes.

20 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
21 Ruiz?

22 COMMISSIONER RUIZ: Yes.

23 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
24 Caballero?

25 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: No.

1 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
2 Gipson?

3 THE CHAIR: Yes.

4 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
5 Armbruster votes "Yes."

6 Commissioner Toulouse?

7 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: No.

8 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: The motion
9 passes, five to two.

10 THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. I am --
11 I am truly sorry about this.

12 MS. MELISSA MIRANDA: Thank you for your
13 time.

14 THE CHAIR: Commissioners, we're going to
15 take a short break before we bring the next school
16 up. Thank you.

17 (Recess taken, 12:18 p.m. to 12:47 p.m.)

18 THE CHAIR: We're going to move on and
19 continue with a working lunch. So please forgive
20 the chewing occasionally. We'll keep our
21 microphones, hopefully, off so it doesn't get too
22 loud.

23 But we have Explore Academy next. And
24 we're hoping that we can move through -- and we
25 might even, if we can, we might even be able to get

1 to Alma today if they're all here and ready. So
2 we'll see.

3 Good afternoon, and thank you for bearing
4 with us this morning. We appreciate it. And do --
5 I'm sorry.

6 Bev, do we have anyone that signed up for
7 public comment for Explore?

8 MS. FRIEDMAN: No, we do not.

9 THE CHAIR: All right. That saves us
10 eight minutes. Thank you.

11 MS. KAREN WOERNER: Good afternoon,
12 Madam Chair, members of the Commission. Oops. My
13 budget calendar for the school just came up you
14 asked for. I'll switch screens.

15 Explore Academy has submitted a complete
16 and timely application including their E-Occupancy
17 Certificate. The school has earned an overall grade
18 of "A" for the last three years. In fact, the
19 school overall score has increased each year even
20 within that A.

21 Proficiency rates have increased slightly
22 each year. And if you would turn to Page 14, I
23 believe, of 30 -- but I'm not in the right section;
24 so, sorry -- page 14 -- yes, 14 of 30 shows the
25 increase in overall grade as well as the proficiency

1 rates.

2 And then sort of the -- maintaining the
3 standard on the current standing points that they've
4 earned each year, the chart on Page 15 of 30 is --
5 we've been looking at the Chart No. 5 that shows the
6 growth index.

7 As you can see here, this school has had a
8 positive growth index each year in both reading and
9 math. That, and that indicates that their students
10 are growing more than expected in both subjects when
11 compared to their academic peers across the street.

12 And to be clear, those are determined by
13 comparing students to those who had the same score
14 the last two grades. It's not just necessarily by
15 the grade level, but by the last two scores that the
16 students earned on a PARCC assessment.

17 In addition, students remaining enrolled
18 and teacher attention rates are also showing an
19 upward trend, which is further back in the packet.

20 If you go back to Page 5, again, the
21 performance indicator sheet that we've been
22 referencing for each school, the ratings chart does
23 show that the school has struggled with some audit
24 findings and was also late in getting a school
25 safety plan approved. However, the school has

1 addressed that safety school plan in its response,
2 indicating in their response that they moved
3 locations twice, had to rewrite plans under a new
4 rubric, et cetera. And I can assure you that the
5 safety plan has since been approved.

6 The -- again, the financial pieces are a
7 year lag, as you all notice.

8 Page 2 in the evaluation, based on your
9 rubric for the progress report, does indicate the
10 school has met standards or demonstrated substantial
11 progress in each area. And, therefore, the PED
12 recommends a five-year renewal with the condition
13 that the -- ensures that the school focuses on
14 continuing to decrease the findings in the annual
15 audit, specifically receiving an unmodified audit
16 devoid of material weaknesses and significant
17 deficiencies. And in deference to what Commissioner
18 Robbins pointed out earlier, I would say that the
19 repeat findings piece maybe was a little too harsh
20 in there; so I'm going to say that the
21 recommendation is devoid of material weaknesses and
22 significant deficiencies.

23 Thank you.

24 MR. JUSTIN BAIARDO: Good afternoon.

25 THE CHAIR: Good afternoon.

1 MR. JUSTIN BAIARDO: My name is Justin
2 Baiardo. I'm the principal of Explore Academy.

3 MS. ASHLEY WOLFEL: My name is Ashley
4 Wolfel. And I'm the business manager for Explore
5 Academy.

6 MS. ELISHA VARELA: Hi. I'm Elisha
7 Varela, and I'm with Operations for Explore.

8 MR. JUSTIN BAIARDO: Madam Chair, members
9 of the Commission, thank you for your consideration
10 of Explore Academy's renewal today. I'll keep my
11 comments brief.

12 This is a significant moment for us, to
13 say the least, as we reflect and look back on the
14 last five years. We've come a long way over the
15 course of our first term in growing and developing
16 what is an academic model that is so novel and
17 innovative and seen nowhere else in the state or
18 beyond, turning theory into reality over the last
19 several years has proven to be quite the feat.

20 We've made adjustments, I feel like every
21 day, almost, as needed, and our staff has adapted to
22 the different challenges that we've faced. That
23 being said, and I've said this to parents every time
24 we've had to relocate our facility, is that no
25 matter what challenges we faced, the instruction in

1 the classroom has been and always will be consistent
2 and exceptional.

3 It's been over five years since I came
4 before you with this proposal of this school model,
5 which was widely different than anything I think
6 anyone has ever seen. And I am proud that despite
7 any challenges we have faced, the model that was
8 proposed is still the focus of what we do every day
9 at Explore Academy, and that despite our success,
10 we're still not where we can be.

11 And in that respect, we still do have a
12 long way to go, and we look forward to the
13 opportunity to furthering our growth and perfecting
14 our practices.

15 Thank you.

16 THE CHAIR: Thanks. And there's no one
17 for public comment. So we're open for
18 Commissioners' questions.

19 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Madam Chair?

20 THE CHAIR: Commissioner Toulouse?

21 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Mr. Baiardo, I'm
22 glad to see your success, because I know I've been
23 one of the ones that have given you a hard time; but
24 it's because I hoped this would work. How are your
25 younger students working out?

1 MR. JUSTIN BAIARDO: Great. We brought in
2 sixth and seventh grade. Seventh grade is a little
3 bit of a challenge, because we have to reengineer
4 them to an extent after having a year of middle
5 school; adjustments with -- they move every two
6 months. They shift around classes.

7 So that's -- you know, getting used to
8 that. But I think since we did our first shift with
9 students back in October, and there was a little
10 trepidation moving into that period, they -- I think
11 that was overshadowed by how excited they were to
12 have new teachers also, and to experience new
13 teachers and different ways of teaching and stuff.

14 So I think all in all, it's been very
15 successful. Like I say, the sixth-graders are
16 excited every day. And it's -- you know, hearing
17 from parents -- of course, you hear differently from
18 middle school versus high school parents, it's kind
19 of a different breed of input that you hear or
20 receive. But it's been successful so far.

21 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Thank you. But
22 where is your governance council member? I'm asking
23 this of everybody. Because I don't know why this
24 year, it looks like most of the schools decided it
25 was just up to the ones of you on the frontline to

1 come present. And it should be, in a sense.

2 But in the other sense, you work for the
3 governance council. And they're the ones who we
4 contract with. So if they're not here to hear what
5 we say, I have a concern.

6 MR. JUSTIN BAIARDO: Sure. Understood.

7 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: So...

8 MR. JUSTIN BAIARDO: I briefed them on --
9 when the agenda was released, I forwarded it to
10 them. I briefed them that we would be coming up. I
11 think it was up to their discretion as to whether
12 they wanted to attend.

13 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Well, I think they
14 made a mistake. And I have a concern, no matter how
15 good your school is, it's because you have a good
16 governance council. But they need to know that we
17 hold them accountable as well as you. And it
18 bothers me, because now we've had every school so
19 far has not had somebody. And I hope anybody
20 sitting out there in the audience who doesn't have a
21 governance council member sends for them quickly or
22 arranges to have them on the phone, you know,
23 because it is important.

24 Otherwise, I really don't have anything
25 else. I think you're doing an excellent job. And

1 having two seventh-grade grandsons, I wish you well.

2 MR. JUSTIN BAIARDO: Thank you.

3 THE CHAIR: I know this has been -- I
4 think it was part of the reason why one of your
5 amendments didn't pass maybe two years ago, a year
6 ago when you came up, because there was a concern --
7 and I do applaud you, because your Q1, you certainly
8 addressed over the length of this past contract.

9 But you still -- you don't look like most
10 of the other schools around you in terms of your
11 demographics.

12 And I know as, you've mentioned, it's --
13 it's a different model so that it's not
14 necessarily -- where people don't understand; so,
15 therefore, they don't look at the school as a viable
16 option.

17 Is there anything that you have been doing
18 or intend to be doing in terms of reaching out to
19 the community for a better education of what the
20 school really does do?

21 MR. JUSTIN BAIARDO: Let me start. We've
22 been -- we advertise in a way that is not specific
23 to any ZIP codes within the Albuquerque area. I
24 mean, we have buses that go as far down as
25 South Valley as addresses -- where the student

1 addresses are. That being said, it's a long bus
2 ride, too. And I feel for -- I applaud the kids
3 that are on the bus for an hour each way every day
4 to get from further south, even further north.

5 But we've made, I think, some purposeful
6 efforts to try and do some more, like, online social
7 media advertising within those areas. But at the
8 same time, you know, we are somewhat centrally
9 located, maybe a little bit north-centrally located.
10 And I think that does put us a little bit out of the
11 reach from some populations that I think we'd like
12 to serve better.

13 THE CHAIR: So are we really looking at a
14 similar situation as we did with the school earlier,
15 that your demographics really are closely aligned
16 with the -- your local community? It's just not
17 necessarily all of APS?

18 MR. JUSTIN BAIARDO: Correct. Correct.
19 Yeah.

20 THE CHAIR: And that's where these charts
21 sometimes throw us off a little bit. Because you
22 may not -- your local area that you're pulling from
23 may not look like all of APS.

24 MR. JUSTIN BAIARDO: Sure. That being
25 said, I think we're conscious of trying to expand

1 our reach. I mean, now we're -- so much more of the
2 advertising that's done is actually done from
3 current parents. And so they're feeling that. And
4 so if they're coming from similar pockets of
5 communities, then their friends are coming from
6 similar places, too; so, yeah.

7 MS. ELISHA VARELA: And we did see a
8 shift. When we were located off of I-40 and Unser,
9 more or less, we had -- I mean -- because when we do
10 the bus routes, we see the change in the addresses.
11 So making the move back central -- to the central
12 part of the city, it did change our population
13 because of where we were.

14 But we also, when we presented at the
15 middle school charters to -- in the spring to kind
16 of advertise and get to know people, we do hit as
17 many of the schools in the South Valley as we can,
18 partially because we want the entire city
19 represented, and not just the area central to where
20 we are.

21 It's part of the reason why we do the six
22 buses, because every single area of the city needs
23 to get hit. So we do focus a little bit more there.
24 We Facebook-blast there. But that bus ride, and the
25 one from Rio Rancho, is kind of horrendous. It's

1 over an hour. We did see a shift in the population,
2 both ELL and Hispanic, when we moved again from that
3 temporary location back to the central part of the
4 city.

5 THE CHAIR: But now at least you're going
6 to stay where you're going to stay.

7 MR. JUSTIN BAIARDO: Yes. Yes.

8 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: So in -- if the
9 school is comparing itself locally to the
10 surrounding areas, what schools are those, may I
11 ask?

12 MR. JUSTIN BAIARDO: Del Norte, La Cueva.

13 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: What's the
14 Hispanic population there, in Del Norte?

15 MR. JUSTIN BAIARDO: Of the surrounding
16 schools?

17 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Hispanic
18 population.

19 MS. ELISHA VARELA: Probably 55 or 60.
20 And La Cueva is 30 or 40 percent. But we're pretty
21 similar to the average of those in that area.

22 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: So you don't know
23 for sure.

24 MS. ELISHA VARELA: I have -- I've looked
25 it up before. I just don't know it off the top of

1 my head.

2 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: And economically
3 disadvantaged, APS is 69 and statewide is 74. And
4 you only have 23 percent. And mind you, some
5 charter schools are weighted down, like the last one
6 we had.

7 And I keep saying that charter schools
8 make an effort -- a concerted effort. I may be
9 called a liar and all kinds of stuff. But I hear
10 from parents that charter schools are making sure
11 they don't get weighted down by too many poor kids
12 or too many Hispanic kids. And some of that comes
13 from the policy of allowing siblings to come in.

14 So if you have 43 percent white, that
15 concentration will pretty much stay. It's like
16 private universities. They have that policy of
17 taking in their alumni, children of alumni. And not
18 until they were forced -- through the Civil Rights
19 era, that they were forced to bring in other types
20 of students.

21 And so I don't know if that has been the
22 case in yours. And the only way to -- to work
23 against it is to really put a concerted effort in
24 the feeder schools, like what you mentioned. But
25 maybe a little bit more than -- a lot of the poor

1 Hispanic families are not going to go to Facebook,
2 okay? Let's face it. They're not going to go to
3 the Internet. It's all pen-and-paper. It's all
4 fliers. It's all grocery stores, and, believe it or
5 not, even Hispanic radio.

6 And I've seen some of our charter schools
7 advertised in my neighborhood. And I thought that
8 was pretty ingenious, because everybody's going into
9 the Internet. And if you -- we don't do that, then
10 at least a composition of ethnicity and economics
11 will stay, and we will -- it defeats itself.

12 So that's all I have, Madam Chair.

13 THE CHAIR: Okay. Thank you.

14 Commissioner Armbruster?

15 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: I can't make
16 this go on. Oh, sorry. I just -- former student.

17 So I have a couple of things to say. I
18 actually do hear what you're saying,
19 Commissioner Caballero. And I've sort of changed my
20 attitude in a number of ways since I've been on
21 here, because sometimes kids need a different place,
22 regardless of whether they're rich or poor or
23 whatever, just because they -- they need the same
24 thing.

25 It's -- I totally agree with you. And I

1 don't think they're trying to be exclusive. But
2 this kind of was brought to me when they started
3 thinking about a charter school in Los Alamos. And
4 people said, "Whoa, why would you do that? They're
5 all 'A' and 'B' schools."

6 By the way, they're B schools this year.
7 They were "A" last year. But, anyway, we would say
8 that. But there were different issues, just leave
9 it at that, not to put down what you were saying, by
10 the way.

11 But the other question that I had -- two
12 questions. So do you all have lunch available?

13 MR. JUSTIN BAIARDO: Yes.

14 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: So students in
15 need could get lunches?

16 MR. JUSTIN BAIARDO: They do. They do,
17 yeah.

18 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: They do. So I
19 think that's a positive, because I think when you
20 don't offer -- we went through that with that
21 school, if you all remember. When you can't do
22 lunch, that really does separate kids if you need
23 that food. I say that as a positive.

24 THE CHAIR: And they do transportation,
25 which --

1 MR. JUSTIN BAIARDO: I'll say with the
2 lunch, with that percentage -- because I go through
3 the Direct Cert process with the students that we
4 pull in who are receiving State assistance and
5 qualifying, we receive a number of applications
6 that -- that -- for free lunch that are based on
7 income that aren't -- that don't show up in a state
8 date base. So I don't know if that percentage is
9 accurate. But, you know, there's more to that
10 statistic, I think, as well.

11 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: I think it's a
12 positive draw from other areas who -- you know, that
13 are poor areas. I think that's kind of what we're
14 saying.

15 But the other thing. I just wanted to ask
16 about your sixth and seventh-graders. I know
17 there's not been a huge amounts of testing because
18 you just got them. I'm just curious. Were they
19 considerably far behind? Do you see them catching
20 up at a greater rate than a year progress because a
21 year isn't going to do much?

22 MR. JUSTIN BAIARDO: I think we're seeing
23 a very similar trend to what we first saw when we
24 had ninth and tenth grade when we first opened. The
25 tenth-graders, we had to reengineer, similar to our

1 seventh-graders we're working with now.

2 It varies. I think students come in all
3 over the map, reading and math. We try to
4 standardize that to bring them all to the same
5 place, and then we all move forward together.

6 Some students have -- we've had to build
7 in kind of a separate -- separate classes or
8 separate supplemental classes to help elevate them,
9 in a sense, if they are -- if they don't have some
10 of the skill sets that other students might have; so
11 by the time they go into maybe seventh grade,
12 they'll all be standardized and ready to move
13 forward together.

14 It's been a challenge; but a similar
15 challenge with eight-graders going to ninth grade.

16 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Right. It's
17 always that. Thank you.

18 THE CHAIR: Commissioner Robbins?

19 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: Well, I do
20 congratulate your school on the excellent academic
21 successes and things. A couple of questions.

22 Commissioner Caballero, when he was
23 mentioning the lottery and giving preference to
24 students who all already have -- APS does the same
25 thing. APS -- and, again, if you have to drive your

1 student to school, and you have them in a charter
2 school, it's a lot easier to have them in the same
3 charter school than to take them all over the
4 district. So I think that's a reasonable thing, and
5 APS even recognizes that.

6 Unfortunately, APS even gives preference
7 for transfer students to employees over some other
8 classes of students, which I don't think is fair,
9 because your -- it's a public school, and you
10 shouldn't be given preference just because you
11 happen to be the kid of a teacher or something like
12 that. So I think that is a good thing.

13 One or two of the areas that do kind of
14 raise a red flag -- and this is something that I do
15 think you need to continue to pay attention to --
16 were the two areas where the standard was you fell
17 Far Below, and that was on the business management
18 and oversight; because what we have seen in charter
19 schools, when that is not careful -- and, again,
20 going to the thing of not having the governance
21 council here.

22 The governance council is the finance
23 committee, and they have to be on top of that. They
24 have to be. They have to be monitoring the
25 administrator, and they have to be monitoring the

1 business manager and making sure that things are
2 being done correctly; because even if you have an
3 outside firm handling a lot of the things, what
4 happens inside the school really does matter.

5 And then the other thing is the school
6 environment with regard to complying with health and
7 safety. Those are very -- I mean, children are in
8 schools, and the parents are putting them there
9 feeling that those students are safe and that
10 they're in a healthy environment. We have to focus
11 on those things.

12 So those two areas, I would just caution
13 to really stay on top of those things, because if
14 they slip a little bit, it can really create
15 problems.

16 The academics, you're doing great on.
17 Continue doing that. I love the upward progress and
18 everything. Work on the diversity to try to maybe
19 make it a little more representative of the overall
20 community. Del Norte is a higher Hispanic area
21 than, obviously, La Cueva. Given that you're
22 pulling from both of those areas, Del Norte has its
23 own challenges. Even though they've rebuilt the
24 school and they've done a lot of things there, it
25 does have its challenges, simply because of its

1 location.

2 And, you know, you're doing a good job. I
3 applaud you for that. The two big areas, keep an
4 eye out for them, okay? Don't let those slip.

5 Thanks. That's all.

6 THE CHAIR: Thank you. I had hoped that
7 we had finished with the audit findings about travel
8 reimbursement. They were issues from two years --
9 significant issues from two years ago, because there
10 were actually some charter lawyers were disagreeing
11 with the reimbursement amount and advising schools
12 that, "No, you can actually reimburse at this rate,"
13 when the State says it has to be -- what is it? The
14 90 percent?

15 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: 80 percent of the
16 federal rate.

17 THE CHAIR: 80 percent of it. And schools
18 fell into trouble then, because they were listening
19 to this advice, and they weren't following -- but,
20 unfortunately, you still had that -- I'm assuming
21 that's the one -- one of the Falls Far Below was the
22 travel reimbursement ding that you received in '16,
23 and then the deposits. So those were the two Falls
24 Far Below.

25 But I want to go back just quickly to the

1 organizational framework, where there were the audit
2 findings in regards to some of the staff files, that
3 there were forms that were not either fully
4 completed or they weren't there, and to just
5 double-check that there's been a conversation by the
6 GC, and that there's either policies or something
7 that's in place to make sure that those -- and, you
8 know, we've had schools that have come up to us and
9 said, "That's just busy work."

10 And on a day-to-day, it may appear to be
11 that; but those dings are going to show up.

12 MR. JUSTIN BAIARDO: Yes, those have been
13 corrected. And we have the policy in place now that
14 requires a semi-annual review of all files just to
15 ensure that that's all that's required. The issue
16 that year was the I-9 changed format, and there was
17 miscommunication as to whether those who had the
18 previous version of the I-9 had to be grandfathered
19 in, or did everyone have to get a new I-9. So
20 everyone has a new I-9, yeah.

21 THE CHAIR: Thanks. I appreciate that.
22 At this time, I just have a housekeeping question,
23 because the last amendment wasn't put into the
24 application.

25 MS. KAREN WOERNER: Oops.

1 THE CHAIR: Which isn't on you. So I was
2 just wondering, how come that one isn't there? It's
3 alluded to in some of the narrative by the school.

4 But it wasn't actually put into --

5 MS. KAREN WOERNER: Part F?

6 THE CHAIR: Right, yeah. So...

7 MS. KAREN WOERNER: Well, which one was
8 that?

9 THE CHAIR: The PARCC -- the short-cycle
10 assessment one.

11 MS. ELISHA VARELA: Riverside.

12 MS. KAREN WOERNER: Yeah, the one last
13 year that's not here. Your memory is better than my
14 work.

15 THE CHAIR: Thanks. Just a "How's come"?
16 Okay. Any other questions?

17 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: I'm sorry. So
18 is there an amendment to this?

19 THE CHAIR: No, there's not -- no.
20 There's an amendment that was granted that's not in
21 the -- wasn't populated into the list. And that was
22 another question, simply because on the checklist
23 that we received, it indicated that the school had
24 three amendments.

25 MS. KAREN WOERNER: Oh. That was --

1 THE CHAIR: And I read in the narrative
2 that there was the intention of. Didn't see any;
3 but then the checklist we received indicated that
4 there were three amendments. And I never saw them.
5 Doesn't matter, because it's not on the agenda, so
6 we couldn't deal with them.

7 So -- but there -- one of the checklists
8 that we received, three amendments is -- it's
9 checked off, and it says, "Three amendments."

10 MS. KAREN WOERNER: And -- yes,
11 Madam Chair. And on the Part F, where I omitted the
12 one amendment that was approved, I did list the
13 three amendments that they are pursuing. Because
14 the way the application is currently written, they
15 can -- it asks, in Part F, to list any amendments
16 they might be requesting. And the school did list
17 three things that they might request moving forward.

18 And those are potential increase --

19 THE CHAIR: No, I got that. I got that.

20 MS. KAREN WOERNER: Oh, okay.

21 THE CHAIR: But then on the checklist, it
22 says "Three amendments." So it reads to me like
23 they actually did do them. I read where they had
24 the intention, but they didn't attach any. So I
25 presumed they weren't pursuing that. But then we

1 got the checklist that said, "Three amendments."

2 So it's like, where are -- it's like,
3 where are they? So I'm good. I'm good. I know
4 what they said that they were anticipating doing;
5 but, obviously, they didn't. So we're -- we're
6 whole.

7 MR. JUSTIN BAIARDO: Our thought is that
8 let's get renewed, and then --

9 THE CHAIR: Right. And then -- yeah.
10 Just so that you're aware, the one amendment, if we
11 do pursue it in terms of expansion, there is an
12 absolute strict timeline when you have to apply for
13 that by, because there's steps that have to be taken
14 prior to our being able to vote on it. One of them
15 is a community input hearing, as an example.

16 So there's things that need to fall into
17 place, so that that has to -- and that's all
18 outlined on the -- on the website, okay? Just so
19 that -- I don't want you to fall into some what may
20 look like a trap.

21 Okay. Thank you.

22 Commissioners, any other questions?

23 If not, I'll entertain a motion.

24 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: Madam Chair, I
25 would move that the PEC renew the charter contract

1 with PEC and Explore Academy for five years.

2 COMMISSIONER RUIZ: Second.

3 THE CHAIR: There's a motion by
4 Commissioner Robbins, a second by Commissioner Ruiz.

5 Any discussion?

6 (No response.)

7 THE CHAIR: If not, Commissioner
8 Armbruster?

9 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
10 Peralta?

11 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Yes.

12 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
13 Robbins?

14 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: Yes.

15 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
16 Caballero?

17 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Yes.

18 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
19 Armbruster votes "Yes."

20 Commissioner Toulouse?

21 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Yes.

22 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
23 Ruiz?

24 COMMISSIONER RUIZ: Yes.

25 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner

1 Gipson?

2 THE CHAIR: Yes.

3 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: It's a
4 seven-to-zero vote. Motion passes.

5 THE CHAIR: Motion passes, seven-zero.
6 Congratulations. Thank you for all the work that
7 you do every day.

8 Are we good to continue? Just doing a
9 health check.

10 (A discussion was held off the record.)

11 Cesar Chavez? So next on our agenda is
12 Cesar Chavez. Yes? Is that not next?

13 MS. KAREN WOERNER: Yes.

14 THE CHAIR: Is there no one here from
15 Cesar Chavez?

16 FROM THE FLOOR: Hi. Sorry. We're just
17 getting our GC member signed up to speak.

18 THE CHAIR: Oh. And I guess I need to
19 restate that; because some people may have come in
20 later.

21 If you're wishing to speak for a
22 particular school, we have a separate sign-up sheet
23 at the desk here with our liaison, Ms. Friedman,
24 that you need to sign in under the school's name.

25 Whenever you're ready.

1 MS. KAREN WOERNER: Thank you,
2 Madam Chair, Commissioners. Cesar Chavez Community
3 School, as you know, is a high school identified as
4 a SAM, or a Supplemental Accountability Model
5 school, serving an at-risk population. It is
6 100 percent economically disadvantaged, 35 percent
7 English Language Learners, and 24 percent students
8 with disabilities.

9 The school has demonstrated progress in
10 most years of the contract term, earning "C"s each
11 year. And there was a dip to "D" in 2017, but
12 they've brought it back up to "C." The school
13 exhibited satisfactory performance in over half of
14 the components or categories in the school report
15 card since 2015. However, the school has shown low
16 achievement in current standing and improvement of
17 lowest performing students, also referred to as Q1,
18 which the school has addressed in their response.

19 The chart on Page 5, again, regarding the
20 performance indicators -- I'm in the wrong section
21 again. Page 5 does show the ratings for the last
22 two school years based on our school site visits.
23 As you can see, all are either Meets or Exceeds
24 Standard or Working to Meet Standard.

25 The school responded that they have,

1 quote, "addressed in a timely fashion any issues
2 that were brought to our attention," end quote. The
3 Charter Schools Division concurs with that
4 statement.

5 Further, in its response, the school
6 outlines concerns with a few components of the
7 school grade, specifically pointing out a need to
8 address criteria to be identified as a SAM school
9 and modifications to the school grade calculations
10 for these schools, which I know the Chairwoman is
11 well aware.

12 The school has submitted a timely complete
13 application including a copy of the E-Occupancy
14 Certificate. And the PED does recommend a five-year
15 renewal, with the condition of implementing a school
16 improvement plan to improve lower performing student
17 achievement and current standing. And it's further
18 recommended that based on the information we read in
19 the school's response to, that the school work with
20 both PEC and PED on revising metrics for alternative
21 schools such as Cesar Chavez.

22 Thank you.

23 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Welcome once
24 again. Good to see you.

25 MS. TANI ARNESS: Hi. Good to see you.

1 Am I coming through okay sound-wise?

2 THE CHAIR: No. Is the green light on?

3 MS. TANI ARNESS: There we go. Hi. Thank
4 you, Madam Chair and Commissioners. We are grateful
5 for this time to tell you a little bit more about
6 our unique school. My name is Tani Arness, and I am
7 the Executive Director of the school.

8 FROM THE FLOOR: And my name is Nathan
9 Everett. I'm the Dean of Students at the school.

10 MS. TANI ARNESS: I am in my 14th year
11 working at Cesar Chavez Community School. And I'm
12 proud to be here today with our excellent business
13 manager, Katie Shelton, as well as our governance
14 council president, Anacelie Verde-Claro.

15 Cesar Chavez Community School, CCCS, is a
16 reengagement high school that tackles academic
17 challenges innovatively. We understand the need for
18 flexibility, options to accelerate credit earning,
19 and personalization in instruction.

20 And while we see a role for online and
21 packet curricula, we do not accept that online or
22 packet curricula are the best options for our
23 students to engage in the most meaningful and
24 applied learning.

25 Therefore, CCCS has moved to a more

1 cooperative model of direct instruction that
2 includes reading, writing, listening, speaking, and
3 hands-on application, as well as self-paced options.

4 Our school culture does not allow a
5 student to sit in the back of a classroom day after
6 day and do nothing. We ask all students to
7 participate each day, and teachers work one-on-one
8 with all students every day.

9 CCCS practices a school culture of
10 reflection and progress. At least twice a year, our
11 staff reflects on what is or is not working for our
12 students and what improvements can be made for both
13 students and families. This process has led us over
14 the years to create many unique and innovative
15 systems. We've added to our curriculum with field
16 trips, daily tutoring on campus, and service
17 learning opportunities.

18 Our high classroom expectations stretch
19 the limits of some of our students; yet, with
20 intensive supports in place, students experience
21 success. Our students take part in regular Socratic
22 seminar discussions in the classrooms. They win
23 national scholastic awards in arts and writing.
24 They play guitar concerts and perform poetry
25 readings.

1 We believe in supportive social-emotional
2 learning through the arts.

3 We also believe in interactive learning
4 and that it's essential to students' whole
5 development. As evidenced by our New Mexico DASH
6 plan, we believe that requiring critical thinking is
7 essential and adds to the stamina and engagement
8 that our students need. Our students participate in
9 science labs, hands-on math challenges, field trips,
10 and we bring in guest speakers from our community,
11 including local poets, writers, and artists, who
12 have similar upbringings as our students.

13 We have built a system where 80 percent
14 minimum participation is required in every class in
15 order to pass that class. There is also
16 flexibility, including different options for
17 completing assignments and making up work. We
18 require students to spend extra time in classes to
19 make up for absences.

20 Our school is also unique in that we
21 provide a full range of opportunities to all of our
22 students. Sometimes alternative schools are good at
23 meeting students where they're at but can get stuck
24 in just remedial learning. CCCS provides students
25 with support in their remedial skills, such as math

1 basics, while simultaneously facilitating
2 higher-level abstract thinking skills needed for
3 things like algebra and geometry.

4 Students work through fluid and
5 multifaceted instruction and are challenged to go
6 beyond what they thought they could do. Students
7 can work their way into leadership class, join
8 student council, join robotics or guitar classes.
9 All students are strongly encouraged to take
10 dual-credit classes as well.

11 Dual-credit classes are challenging for
12 remedial students, and most of our students will
13 tell us that they have not even considered taking a
14 college class. However, we have found that with
15 teacher support on our campus, we can offer
16 introductory dual-credit classes and help students
17 bridge the gaps and build the confidence and skills
18 needed to succeed in a college class.

19 We have been thrilled to grow our number
20 of dual-credit classes taken per year from
21 23 classes in 2015 to 78 classes in 2017. This is
22 an important opportunity for our students. And we
23 have found that without the scaffolding and extra
24 supports in place, our students generally do not
25 make it to or through college classes.

1 We are ambitiously tackling this obstacle
2 and finding that students taking these steps can be
3 ready for such a leap with our support.

4 An important aspect of reengaging students
5 in their own education is to help students make
6 connections to their own goals.

7 We work with every student on identifying
8 or creating post-secondary goals and creating an
9 individualized graduation plan. Years ago, we
10 noticed a heartbreaking trend of students that were
11 so focused on the goal of just graduating from high
12 school that they graduated and then floundered.

13 To address this issue, we have put in
14 intensive steps, where every potential graduate
15 meets one-on-one with our academic counselor, and,
16 together, they fill out the FAFSA form, college
17 applications, other post-secondary applications.
18 They are helped to apply for scholarships, including
19 the Bridge scholarship and Suncat scholarship at
20 CNM. Students also go on field trips to college
21 campuses.

22 Every student who graduates from CCCS now
23 takes the ACT WorkKeys preparation and exams so that
24 80 percent of our graduates now leave with a
25 nationally recognized WorkKeys certificate,

1 verifying their readiness for differing levels of
2 careers. All CCCS graduates leave with a graduate
3 transition portfolio that includes a resume, a model
4 cover letter, a recommendation letter, a career
5 exploration essay, as well as career interview essay
6 and, usually, an ACT WorkKeys certificate, along
7 with a college admissions test score or vocational
8 program admission.

9 Another key to the notable success we've
10 had with our students is creating a team of staff
11 who are deeply committed to our students and have
12 excellent communication and teaching skills. All of
13 our staff are trained in restorative discipline
14 practices, healthy boundaries, and trauma-informed
15 responses; as well, they go the extra mile with
16 differentiation and individualized interventions in
17 each of our classes.

18 Many of our students have been previously
19 suspended, expelled, or have spent time
20 incarcerated. Our students tend to need a lot of
21 structure and consistency; yet they do not respond
22 well to authoritarian or punitive systems. Our
23 teachers must have excellent skills at engaging
24 students and individualizing instruction for a very
25 broad range of student skill levels in a classroom.

1 We utilize school-wide systems of behavior
2 supports and problem-solving to avoid negative
3 behaviors.

4 We hold our staff to a high bar, and we
5 provide ongoing training and supports, including
6 eleven full professional development days each year
7 on top of regularly scheduled weekly professional
8 development time.

9 In order to help teachers best navigate
10 the additional challenges of working with at-risk
11 students, we mentor all new teachers no matter how
12 much previous teaching experience they have. We've
13 been excited to see our staff ratings in NMTEACH
14 grow from 8 percent highly effective in 2015 to over
15 50 percent highly effective in 2017 and '18.

16 In summation, I want to talk to you about
17 why students choose Cesar Chavez Community School.

18 Our school has existed since 2004, and we
19 have become an essential asset to the community we
20 serve. We know the relatives, parents, and
21 generations of students in our community. We are
22 praised by past and current students and families,
23 and students continue to come back year after year
24 and visit us and bring in new friends and family
25 members to enroll.

1 Families choose our school because it is
2 small, safe, welcoming. They love our staff, and
3 they tell us every year, "We get more help and
4 support here than we've ever had."

5 Students come to us dealing with
6 incarceration and probation, substance abuse issues,
7 trauma, depression, anxiety, long histories of poor
8 attendance, behavior problems, academic failures,
9 and instabilities at home. Students enroll at our
10 school with an average of a fifth-grade level in
11 both math and reading and an average of eleven "F"s
12 already on their high school transcripts.

13 There is a wide gap in skills, often due
14 to long histories of missing school and/or failing,
15 which has caused distrust of schools, fear of
16 trying, a general disengagement, and a lack of
17 self-confidence in the classroom. We welcome
18 students wherever they are at and help them build
19 both the skills and the mindset to reconnect to
20 learning and to move forward.

21 Families also choose CCCS because we offer
22 a full range of supports that they have never
23 experienced in traditional schools. CCCS assigns
24 every student and family a personal staff mentor
25 with whom they meet regularly one-on-one and work

1 together toward academic goals.

2 CCCS caps our class size at a maximum of
3 17 students and employs five educational assistants
4 so that every math class has two instructors helping
5 17 students, and other classes can have extra
6 assistance for students, as needed. CCCS also
7 employs a full-time attendance interventionalist,
8 social worker, counselor, and Dean of Students to
9 work closely with students to problem-solve
10 challenges that have been preventing success in
11 school.

12 We at CCCS know that without strong staff
13 and flexible systems, struggling students get stuck,
14 and they give up. We know the work that we do is
15 vital to individual lives, as well as to our
16 community in Albuquerque, where approximately one
17 out of every three high school students are still
18 dropping out of school, and thousands of adults are
19 trying to survive without a high school diploma.

20 Our students continue to live in an
21 environment that is fraught with violence, and our
22 school is an oasis.

23 Why does Cesar Chavez Community School
24 need to continue to exist? Because there is no
25 other school in our community providing the quality

1 of education and support that we offer, thereby
2 saving hundreds of young people in our community
3 from incarceration or even premature death.

4 There is no other school -- I'm sorry.

5 Our community is -- our school is helping
6 students find a path forward to success and
7 stability as adults, where they can make positive
8 contributions to society.

9 Thank you. And I do have copies of our
10 statement that I'd like to hand to you if I can just
11 pass them around.

12 THE CHAIR: Sure. Thank you for that.
13 There is one person that signed up for public
14 comment. And it is Anacelie Verde-Claro.

15 FROM THE FLOOR: That's me.

16 Hello. Thank you for allowing me to be
17 here. I just wanted to express my support, as the
18 president of the governance council. Years ago, I
19 was an educational assistant at Cesar Chavez. So I
20 have seen the school from the classroom setting.
21 And now, in a more overseeing role, I get to see
22 what an amazing job Tani Arness does as the
23 Executive Director of the school, and how tirelessly
24 she works and how hard the staff works.

25 I was amazed by the school when I worked

1 there, and I continue to be so. And I just want to
2 thank you.

3 THE CHAIR: Thank you. And I'm just going
4 to echo that thank you, because I think this school,
5 without a doubt, is a shining example of why
6 charters were originally created. You -- you're the
7 shining example to -- for those individuals that
8 say, "Our kids are poor, they're disadvantaged in so
9 many ways, they can't do." And you're that example,
10 hopefully, to the state, as to how you -- how you
11 reach out and how you meet the needs of these -- of
12 these students.

13 I've spent the better part of almost two
14 years with the -- listening to the LESC on
15 trauma-inspired learning. And it's unfortunate that
16 we have so many schools that don't embrace the
17 concept and aren't bringing more and more of those
18 strategies into their classroom. And you're
19 probably sitting there saying, "We already knew all
20 that."

21 So I -- I applaud you. I thank you. I
22 know how actively you are engaged in the
23 conversation with SAMS. And I just really only have
24 one question. When I went through my file, and my
25 big cloud question was, "What happened in 2017?"

1 You know, that's my overarching question,
2 because it just seemed like in 2017, everything
3 just, across the board, took a dip, some bigger than
4 others. And I don't know if there is an answer.
5 But I know how actively you look at all of data. So
6 is there a -- you know, is there an answer?

7 MS. TANI ARNESS: Well, thank you,
8 Madam Chair. And, yeah, that's a good question. I
9 think it's a more complex answer, maybe, than we can
10 dig into in full detail. But what I would say is
11 that one, as we know, the proficiency rates for
12 current standings have changed each year. I think
13 that affected our grade.

14 If you actually look at the point change
15 from 2016, 2017, and 2018, it's all still within a
16 fairly close range. We're right around that
17 C-minus, you know, mark.

18 But the other piece, I think, that comes
19 into that is that in a SAM school like ours, we have
20 a wide fluctuation of students each year. So
21 because of high mobility, you have students coming
22 in and out. And so there is a lot of things left up
23 to chance in terms of what students come in or out
24 in a given year and how those students perform
25 compared to the rest of the state. So I think that

1 also affects grade.

2 Our -- our internal short-cycle
3 assessments growth has stayed solid with a 1.4-year
4 average growth in math over the past four years and
5 a 1.7-year average growth in reading over the past
6 four years. So I think the growth has continued.
7 But how that stacks up in a system that rates on a
8 bell curve can vary from year to year depending on
9 our students.

10 THE CHAIR: All right. Thank you.

11 MS. TANI ARNESS: Yeah.

12 THE CHAIR: Commissioner Toulouse?

13 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Madam Chair, I
14 just want to say I have a soft spot for this school
15 because, to me, it's my community school. I don't
16 live very far away. I worked for 30 years in human
17 services. I know exactly the kinds of students that
18 are there. And I think it is very important that
19 instead of them just dropping out, they have
20 students who want to come back.

21 I think I've also talked to this group
22 over time about their use of WorkKeys, because with
23 the WorkKeys certificate, that can get people a job.
24 If it's silver or gold -- definitely with the
25 gold -- although with a gold they need to go to UNM

1 and usually do -- but you walk in the door to any
2 employer with a WorkKeys certification, and you've
3 got probably an entry-level job.

4 And I think that is so important to do. I
5 wish more of our schools used WorkKeys. And I know
6 that PED had quit paying for it. But I also
7 understand that through the Perkins Grant, they will
8 pay for WorkKeys.

9 And there's just no reason why more
10 schools don't do this. But it's also very hard
11 work. And one of the things that I saw them do a
12 few years ago was make a very good transition from
13 one administrator to the other. There was a whole
14 year's transition. And I was in and out, Tani
15 knows, during that time where the work was shifted
16 over little by little, to the end of the year, it
17 was shifted over.

18 So there was not a huge uproar. Because
19 even in the schools where the person may have been
20 there, I'd never seen a transition done that way
21 before. And it worked. And I think they have a lot
22 to teach everybody.

23 And while I'm not sure it should be a
24 condition of their -- I don't think we need the
25 first condition on the New Mexico DASH, because they

1 already use New Mexico DASH very effectively. The
2 second condition, I don't think that should be a
3 condition. I think it should be a request from the
4 Commission to work with us and PED. And I think
5 they're more than willing to do it. But I don't see
6 how we should make that a condition of -- because
7 it's there; if they want to, fine.

8 And I just think they deserve a renewal
9 with no conditions and with our request, "Please
10 help get a better set of ways to look at the
11 performance of these SAM schools and other kinds of
12 alternative schools."

13 THE CHAIR: Right. And just so that the
14 Commissioner is aware, during the Coalition
15 conference, we met with the SAM schools. And we are
16 actively pursuing the creation of that definition
17 for us, so that it would be effective for our
18 performance framework. So that we are -- we are
19 doing that.

20 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: And I'm aware of
21 that, just like I'm aware we tried it a couple of
22 years ago, too. And I hope this time it will work.
23 Remember Secretary Skandera came in and --

24 THE CHAIR: Well, this would only be for
25 our purposes.

1 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: I know. But we
2 were doing it for our purposes then, too. And she
3 came in and asked us to please put a hold on it
4 because they were doing it for all of the schools.
5 And then it never went anywhere.

6 So I would definitely encourage, now that
7 I'm gone, PEC do it for our schools. And then the
8 others can pick up with what we've done and use
9 it -- or what you've done, since I won't be a part
10 of it; but --

11 THE CHAIR: Thank you.

12 Commissioners, any other questions?

13 (No response.)

14 THE CHAIR: If not, I'll entertain a
15 motion.

16 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Madam Chair?

17 THE CHAIR: Commissioner Toulouse?

18 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: May -- I move that
19 the PEC approve a five-year charter for Cesar Chavez
20 Community school with no conditions.

21 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Second.

22 THE CHAIR: There's a motion by
23 Commissioner Toulouse, a second by
24 Commissioner Caballero.

25 Any discussion?

1 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Just a question.

2 THE CHAIR: I'm sorry.

3 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: I've never seen a
4 truancy rate of -- that high.

5 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: When you have a
6 lot of homeless students, for instance, or ones that
7 are supporting their families, too.

8 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: I went to school
9 where the change in my classroom was 50 percent.
10 Only 50 percent of us would finish the year. And if
11 our teachers were rated on a -- on progress in the
12 classroom, they would never get a contract, because
13 all the new students were just too far behind.

14 And -- but the truancy rates were high,
15 but not -- but I know that you described your
16 population, and I can understand why it's that high.

17 MS. TANI ARNESS: May I respond on that as
18 well?

19 THE CHAIR: If you wish, yes.

20 MS. TANI ARNESS: Yeah. The attendance is
21 one of our biggest challenges. And these are
22 students who have a lot of things going on that keep
23 them out of school. And there's a wide array of
24 things happening there that we could go into.

25 What we have focused on is our attendance

1 interventions. So we have a very strong
2 intervention system. And that is part of why we
3 introduced that 80 percent participation
4 requirement, so that rather than students who can't
5 attend -- because what we found is even if you
6 threaten them with, "You'll fail all your classes,"
7 they still can't get there.

8 So rather than have them just not attend
9 and fail all of their classes, which is often what
10 happened to them at APS, for instance, in various
11 schools, we started implementing makeup work and
12 makeup time. And they -- we found that they've been
13 able to commit to that.

14 THE CHAIR: Right. Thank you. And you're
15 right. It's high; but --

16 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: It's high.

17 THE CHAIR: But it's a challenging
18 population. It truly is a challenging population.

19 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: I was a foster
20 parent for a young lady in high school in El Paso.
21 That was the biggest challenge with her. She just
22 didn't like to go to school. But she would get all
23 "A"s. So we ended up having to put her in
24 private -- it wasn't a charter school. But it was a
25 private school, very far away from our house, and

1 ended up having to subsidize that myself.

2 But she had been kicked out of every high
3 school I took her to because she just wouldn't
4 attend class.

5 Thank you, Madam Chair.

6 THE CHAIR: Let the record reflect that
7 Commissioner Crone is now here. Welcome.

8 If there is no other discussion, we'll do
9 a roll-call vote.

10 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Are there any
11 abstentions?

12 COMMISSIONER CRONE: I will abstain.

13 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Okay.

14 Commissioner Robbins?

15 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: Yes.

16 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
17 Ruiz?

18 COMMISSIONER RUIZ: Yes.

19 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
20 Toulouse?

21 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Yes.

22 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
23 Peralta?

24 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Yes.

25 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner

1 Caballero?

2 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Yes.

3 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner

4 Gipson?

5 THE CHAIR: Yes.

6 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: And Commissioner

7 Armbruster votes "Yes."

8 There are seven yeses.

9 THE CHAIR: The motion passes seven, with
10 one abstention. Congratulations. And thank you
11 once again for everything you do every day.

12 MS. TANI ARNESS: Thank you for your
13 support. And we look very much forward to working
14 with you on the SAM school performance.

15 THE CHAIR: It's exciting. It really is.

16 MS. TANI ARNESS: Thank you very much to
17 each of you.

18 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Madam Chair, I
19 would like to also say, I appreciate the governance
20 council chair getting here; because as you probably
21 know, we had none here before. That was my soap box
22 for the day. So thank you.

23 THE CHAIR: Thank you.

24 We're going to take a real short break,
25 and then we will move on to Southwest Aeronautics.

1 (Recess taken, 2:04 p.m. to 2:07 p.m.)

2 THE CHAIR: So the record reflects that
3 Commissioner Ruiz had to leave for the day.

4 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: So we're still
5 at seven, because Tim came.

6 THE CHAIR: Correct. And everyone who
7 wanted to speak, all one of you is on the list. So
8 we're good. All right. Welcome.

9 FROM THE FLOOR: Thank you. Thank you.

10 THE CHAIR: And thank you for the work
11 you -- I tell everyone, "Thank you for the work you
12 do every day." But this additional work that I know
13 can get burdensome, to get this application
14 together; but we hope worthwhile, at least at some
15 point.

16 FROM THE FLOOR: I agree. Yeah. I would
17 say so. Thank you.

18 THE CHAIR: And whenever you're ready.

19 MS. KAREN WOERNER: Thank you,
20 Madam Chair, Commissioners.

21 As you know, Southwest Aeronautics Math
22 and Science Academy was on a short term two-years'
23 contract, and, therefore, has only completed one
24 school year under the current term. That
25 explains -- again, similar to the school earlier --

1 the lack of trend data in Part A.

2 One of the conditions of that short-term
3 contract was regarding the financial concerns due to
4 the history of the school in that area. The Board
5 of Finance was returned to the school by PED in
6 January of 2018, almost one year ago. As -- as with
7 the school we talked to earlier, demonstrated a lot
8 of work by the governing board and the school staff.

9 The school's letter grade for 2017 to 2018
10 was a "C," with a range of grades in each of the
11 subcomponents. Most notably, there was a "D" in
12 current standing and in school improvement, and an
13 "F" in the improvement of lowest performing
14 students.

15 And this is indicated somewhat on the
16 growth charts -- growth index charts on Page 8 of
17 18, I believe? Is that right? Yes.

18 You can see here, it shows that students
19 are demonstrating growth. And the chart is a little
20 bit deceiving, in that if you look at the distance
21 from the zero line, zero being expected growth, the
22 distance away from that, the further away, the more
23 either positive or negative. Positive would be more
24 growth; negative would be less growth than expected.

25 But in most of all of these -- in fact,

1 all of them -- are less than a .5 difference away
2 from the zero line. So they're really clearly
3 around the expected growth in both reading and math
4 for their students.

5 Regarding the performance framework
6 indicators that are rated during the annual site
7 visits, if I could direct your attention again to
8 Page 5, the color-coded chart, you will see that the
9 ratings for the last school year -- again, the two
10 Falls Far Below ratings in red are due to the audit
11 findings.

12 As was pointed out earlier -- but I'll
13 restate for the school here -- these reports lagged
14 by a year; so that audit report rated here was
15 actually for the '16-'17 school year. And the
16 remainder of the ratings, as you can see, are either
17 Meets Standard or Working to Meets Standard, all the
18 way down the list.

19 It was confirmed during the renewal site
20 visit that the school that recently taken several
21 action steps to address lowest performing students,
22 as was outlined in the school's response. However,
23 as you -- since they are recently initiated, the
24 student achievement outcomes of those initiatives
25 could not be determined by our team at the time.

1 On the evaluation on the second page, you
2 will see that the school has demonstrated
3 substantial progress on nearly all of the
4 indicators, and with one that Meets the standard.
5 And as a reminder, in order to earn a Meets Standard
6 in this section, the rubric states that, "In each
7 year of the contract term, the school has
8 demonstrated a record of meeting all standards in
9 that category, which is supported by evidence."

10 Finally, the school did provide a complete
11 and timely application, including the E-Occupancy
12 Certificate. As a result of all the above, the PED
13 recommendation is for a five-year renewal, with two
14 conditions: To implement a school improvement plan
15 that addresses those areas I've discussed, the
16 current standing, school improvement, improvement of
17 the lowest-performing students, as well as receive
18 an unmodified audit, devoid of material weakness and
19 significant deficiency findings.

20 And since this one happened to exclude
21 letter B, it must have known -- I must have known
22 somehow, Commissioner Robbins. So earlier today,
23 Commissioner Robbins pointed out that the "B" I had
24 in here was no repeat findings in any area. And
25 that can be a little harsh, because there are some

1 areas that are rather minor in perspective.

2 So I'm going to leave it how it is here.
3 Strike the "and B." "Receive an unmodified audit
4 devoid of material weaknesses and deficiencies
5 during the term of the contract."

6 Thank you.

7 THE CHAIR: Thank you.

8 FROM THE FLOOR: Thank you.

9 THE CHAIR: And just a reminder to
10 identify yourself for the record.

11 FROM THE FLOOR: Good afternoon. I'm
12 Coreen Carrillo, C-O-R-E-E-N. And --

13 THE CHAIR: I don't think the mic is on.

14 MS. COREEN CARRILLO: Good afternoon. I'm
15 Coreen Carrillo. C-O-R-E-E-N, C-A-R-R-I-L-L-O. And
16 our board president, Larry Kennedy is to the right
17 of me.

18 And we have some amazing people that have
19 worked hard that are with us today. We have another
20 board member on his way, Roland Dewing. He should
21 be here any minute. Kenneth Lairsey, our assistant
22 principal. Ronda Joyce and Alice Chavez, our
23 business managers. We have our school lawyer
24 representing, Jacque Archuleta-Staehlin. Jill
25 Brame, our testing coordinator. And our aviation

1 director, Nathan Hardin.

2 And I hope I got everybody. And we're
3 excited to be here, and we thank you for hearing --
4 letting us present to you our school.

5 Let me see. I'd like to address -- our
6 goal at SAMS is for students to be academically
7 successful.

8 I'd like to address the PED
9 recommendation, which I appreciate. And I ask that
10 all conditions be removed, as we will address any
11 concerns during negotiations. And, if I may, I'd
12 like to address the systems that we have put in
13 place to help our students achieve academic success.

14 We are currently using New Mexico DASH. I
15 have -- I'm in my second year in the PPE program,
16 the Principals Pursuing Excellence. So we've been
17 using New Mexico DASH, with our goals being school
18 culture and data-driven instruction.

19 Our Q1 students' achievements in the --
20 let me see -- Q student achievement resulting in a
21 letter of grade of at least a "C" in each category
22 on the report card, we have put -- I'm asking for
23 that condition to be removed because of the things
24 we've put in place.

25 And one of the things we've put in place

1 is we have, with our i-Ready testing. We test our
2 students with i-Ready. And when those students test
3 below their grade level in reading and math, we have
4 a Success Lab that is mandatory they attend. And in
5 Success Lab, they are instructed in reading and
6 math. And we just recently tested them again, and
7 they -- we showed gains, which we're very excited
8 about.

9 We also are addressing our lowest
10 performing students with academic success. And I'd
11 like our assistant principal, Mr. Lairsey, to
12 present at this time. This is Ken Lairsey.

13 MR. KEN LAIRSEY: Good afternoon,
14 Chairperson and Board. We are checking all of our
15 students on a weekly basis. We have 275 students.
16 We are a blended online learning. So most of our
17 students work at home beside at school. Every week
18 I track their data to see if they're progressing
19 through their classes where they need to be to
20 finish in a timely manner.

21 We -- when they fall behind, we put them
22 on contract to get them back on pace to finish. We
23 want them to finish by the end of semester. This is
24 new to the school this year. This is -- we have
25 seen a lot better results than we were a year ago on

1 kids completing and finishing their courses in a
2 timely manner.

3 Hopefully, this will keep moving forward,
4 and we will have the majority of our students
5 finishing the courses in a timely manner, which will
6 help them with their PARCC scores and graduation
7 rates to finish in a four-year time.

8 MS. COREEN CARRILLO: Thanks. All right.
9 In addition to Mr. Lairsey's weekly monitoring, we
10 have sponsor teachers e-mail students and parents
11 biweekly, sometimes weekly.

12 We now have implemented quarterly parent
13 conferences. We didn't have that before.

14 We have biweekly PLCs by grade level -- it
15 wasn't by grade level before -- as well as
16 sponsorship of students by grade level as well.

17 We have also hired an EL coordinator who
18 monitors and works with our EL students. And our
19 aviation program currently has 10 students flying,
20 17 in our ground school.

21 We hold weekly student conferences with
22 our special education students, and we monitor
23 progress.

24 As far as our unmodified audits, we have
25 the unmodified audit -- we received an unmodified

1 audit in 2016-'17, and our current audit is not
2 public yet, but we are doing everything to address
3 those concerns.

4 And I have some handouts here for you as
5 well if you'd like. It's got, on the front, that we
6 are currently in New Mexico DASH and the policies
7 and procedures we've implemented to address any
8 resolved issues in our finances. There aren't any
9 unresolved. We addressed the past unresolved.

10 THE CHAIR: Don't panic us at this time.

11 MS. COREEN CARRILLO: I'm sorry. I'm
12 still trying to catch my breath.

13 So any questions so far?

14 THE CHAIR: Well, we go to public comment.
15 We go to the comments, and then we'll have
16 questions.

17 MS. COREEN CARRILLO: Okay.

18 THE CHAIR: So there is one person who did
19 sign up. And -- and that is Nathan Hardin.

20 FROM THE FLOOR: Good afternoon. My name
21 is Nathan Hardin. I'm the aviation director at
22 SAMS, recently started there the beginning of this
23 last school year. I wanted to speak in support of
24 SAMS. I moved my family from Colorado just for
25 this, because I really believe in what they do. I'm

1 glad I'm part of the team.

2 I think it's an incredibly unique aviation
3 program. It's the only one in the country that does
4 what we do the way we do it. I think it's of great
5 benefit to the students. I think it would be very
6 difficult to find anything that's more actively
7 engaged in STEM education. And I think it serves
8 the students very well in the future, from my -- not
9 just in the educational standpoint, but
10 professionalism and further employment in the
11 aviation industry that really needs it right now.

12 So I think SAMS is a unique program, and I
13 think especially the aviation program is something
14 that needs to stick around. So I just wanted to
15 kind of let you all know my support of the school.

16 Thank you.

17 THE CHAIR: Thank you. On that note,
18 isn't it Taos -- isn't it one of the schools in Taos
19 that has started an aviation program? We were
20 talking to someone.

21 MS. COREEN CARRILLO: I think it was Taos
22 Academy, because I was here for that. And you
23 mentioned they should hook up with us. That's a
24 great idea.

25 THE CHAIR: That's also what charters are

1 supposed to be doing is collaborating that way, and
2 why have to reinvent the wheel, you know, that
3 you're a core program. Maybe they won't have their
4 own plane, but if they could fly everything else...

5 MS. COREEN CARRILLO: It's about our
6 students, and it's about New Mexico. It really is.
7 Uh-huh.

8 THE CHAIR: Exactly. So while we're on
9 that topic, just out of curiosity, do you have an
10 idea of how many of your graduates end up involved
11 in an aviation-related career? Have you -- do you
12 track that at all?

13 MS. COREEN CARRILLO: We've been tracking
14 it just recently. And many of them come back to
15 visit us. And some of them go on to Embry-Riddle, a
16 school in Arizona.

17 THE CHAIR: I had an uncle that taught
18 there.

19 MS. COREEN CARRILLO: Some of us -- I ran
20 into a graduate from the airport who had bought his
21 own plane and wanted to work in the medical field.
22 I was really stunned at that.

23 A lot of them go on to be pilots in the
24 aviation industry, where there's a shortage. Right
25 now, we have a student, a girl, who just got a

1 scholarship to Embry-Riddle. I think it was
2 \$60,000.

3 THE CHAIR: Yeah. It's that ancillary
4 flight time that kills you with Embry-Riddle with
5 the tuition, because that's not embedded in that
6 tuition.

7 MS. COREEN CARRILLO: And you need to hear
8 this, too.

9 FROM THE FLOOR: Madam Chair,
10 Commissioners, I'm Larry Kennedy. I've served as
11 the president of the governing council since the
12 inception of SAMS. And I have a bit of a success
13 story of my own, in that my son graduated from
14 Secondary and went on to graduate from Embry-Riddle.
15 He is a certified commercial pilot, multi-engine.

16 He's now pursuing a career in instructing.
17 And had it not been for this type of a program, he
18 might be turning a wrench in a garage somewhere and
19 not flying airplanes.

20 And I totally agree with you with the
21 ancillary hours at Embry-Riddle. Holy cow.

22 So he is now pursuing a career in teaching
23 and hopefully to get to a cargo airline sometime,
24 FedEx or someplace like that. But without this
25 program, he would not have been able to do that.

1 And that is the reason I got involved with
2 SAMS is because I saw what it did with my son, and
3 if -- if we can have that kind of a thing help other
4 kids, other parents, to be able to succeed in
5 something that I had no idea he was even interested
6 in. But flying with him, I understand why he is.

7 And if I can be a part of seeing what --
8 what the transformation that was with my own kid and
9 see that happen with other kids, that's why I'm
10 here.

11 And it's been a long road. And we -- we
12 survived. And we want to continue to survive. And
13 we want to continue to succeed. And we've had kids
14 graduate with degrees from CNM. They're graduating
15 high school with Associate degrees. And that, to
16 me, is amazing. And I'd like to see it obviously
17 continue and to see the success that other folks
18 have the opportunity to have.

19 Thank you.

20 THE CHAIR: And if you've been there since
21 the start of this school, then I applaud you for
22 hanging in through those rough times.

23 MR. LARRY KENNEDY: There have been times.

24 MS. COREEN CARRILLO: It's been rough.

25 THE CHAIR: Absolutely. Unfortunately, we

1 had to -- some of our Commissioners had to live
2 through the early years of that. I came on at
3 the -- at the tail-end of it, because my first year
4 on was right after your -- that --

5 MS. COREEN CARRILLO: Two-year renewal,
6 right.

7 THE CHAIR: Yeah. So --

8 MS. COREEN CARRILLO: You know, we look
9 past the stone throwing. And there was a lot of
10 things said. We weren't there for that. We were
11 there for the kids to make sure they survived.

12 It has been rough, as it has been rough
13 for you, I am sure. I appreciate the supports,
14 especially from all of you, and PED, and the finance
15 at PED, David Craig. I appreciate the patience and
16 the support.

17 THE CHAIR: Right. Right. 'Cause, you
18 know, above all else, it's -- hopefully, the job of
19 public school education is to open as many windows
20 as possible so that the kids see the possibilities
21 that are out there; so that it's -- you know,
22 "Whoever knew that that was something that I could
23 do."

24 And it's exciting when someone has that
25 opportunity. And that's what we all should be

1 highlighting and showing folks that, "Look-it," you
2 know, these possibilities do exist out there, and,
3 therefore, anyone that can, you know, see the -- see
4 their way through it. And that's really -- and I
5 applaud you for that.

6 I had just opened up my notes, because I
7 just had some. And you touched on the system that
8 you've got to try to make sure kids stay on track
9 and that you notify them on Sundays.

10 Do teachers do, like, a end-of-the-week
11 report to keep you apprised of who's short? Or
12 exactly how does that system fall into place?

13 MR. KEN LAIRSEY: So I track their
14 progress every week. And I send out e-mail
15 notices -- every student has a sponsor teacher.
16 They track their progress, also, sending out
17 notices. As soon as we see a kid falling behind, we
18 try to build a contract with them, either through
19 the sponsor teacher or myself.

20 We'll meet with the parents and the
21 student and build a contract to get them back on
22 track. And then we monitor that, if they're meeting
23 the contract then at that point.

24 Hopefully, these things we put in place --
25 I will tell you we're on goal to double what we had

1 finish on time last year.

2 THE CHAIR: Okay. Great.

3 MS. COREEN CARRILLO: We're thrilled about
4 that. We really are.

5 THE CHAIR: So if it -- so there's
6 another, you know, example, that if you've got
7 something that really seems to be working, why don't
8 we share that out with other people?

9 MS. COREEN CARRILLO: Exactly. Because I
10 really do feel the online curriculum has its own
11 challenges within itself. But we're going more and
12 more towards that. So I feel like we're digging
13 through those challenges and making a way for it to
14 work.

15 THE CHAIR: Right, because the -- those
16 online courses are -- we find incredibly challenging
17 in terms of making sure that folks are actually
18 doing that work.

19 MS. COREEN CARRILLO: The hours are met
20 and they're working.

21 THE CHAIR: Exactly. Yeah.

22 MS. COREEN CARRILLO: So we give them an
23 academic absence if they haven't put in their hours.
24 That's been new to our school. And we've had very
25 little complaints from parents. More complaints

1 from students, but very little complaints from
2 parents. So we're pleased.

3 THE CHAIR: So are you tracking when
4 they're logging on? Is that how you're --

5 MS. COREEN CARRILLO: Yes.

6 MR. KEN LAIRSEY: That's part of it.

7 MS. COREEN CARRILLO: That's part of it.
8 We can see --

9 THE CHAIR: None of that is live; right?
10 There's no interaction.

11 MR. KEN LAIRSEY: We can't see -- we can
12 see if they're currently logged in. But it's always
13 after the fact how many hours they've put in.

14 THE CHAIR: So during, like, a lesson,
15 someone can't submit a question to an instructor.
16 It's not set up that way.

17 MS. COREEN CARRILLO: They can e-mail the
18 instructor.

19 THE CHAIR: They can e-mail the
20 instructor.

21 MS. COREEN CARRILLO: And our teachers can
22 see on a screen what each child is working on. It
23 shows us their screen; so --

24 THE CHAIR: Okay. All right. Because
25 it's -- you know, I think it's been a vexing problem

1 for us in terms of online platforms.

2 MS. COREEN CARRILLO: I can understand.

3 Uh-huh.

4 THE CHAIR: And your other GC person is
5 here. So --

6 MS. COREEN CARRILLO: Yes. This is Roland
7 Dewing. He's in aviation as well.

8 MR. ROLAND DEWING: My name is Roland
9 Dewing. I'm in the Civil Air Patrol. I'm the
10 Director of Aerospace Education for New Mexico. And
11 I've been in it for 45 years. And so I saw the
12 opportunity to become a board member at SAMS Academy
13 to utilize my aviation and aerospace education
14 experience. And I've been doing that.

15 THE CHAIR: Thank you. And I think it
16 is -- I think Taos is -- what -- using the -- if I
17 remember correctly the Civil Air Patrol. That's who
18 they're working through. Yes?

19 MS. COREEN CARRILLO: Exactly. Uh-huh.

20 THE CHAIR: Commissioner Robbins?

21 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: Yes. Thank you
22 very much. I appreciate it, Ms. Carrillo,
23 Mr. Kennedy, and Mr. Dewing, thank you very much.
24 Years ago, I worked at a company. And the owner of
25 that company flew -- he was a pilot from the

1 Air Force back in the '50s, and he flew gliders.
2 And he actually taught.

3 And I sat in a couple of times, and he was
4 talking about the flaps and the -- aerions [ph]?

5 MR. ROLAND DEWING: Ailerons.

6 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: Ailerons. The
7 fascinating thing was not just what makes the plane
8 work and everything, but the weather. You have to
9 learn so much about the weather, because you have to
10 use the air currents in order to stay up and away
11 from downdrafts and things like that. So it was
12 very interesting, the science that he brought in.
13 Just the little bit that I heard of it is
14 fascinating.

15 Now, I'm going to touch on a couple of the
16 areas that were audit findings or -- you know,
17 previously. And the two areas where it Falls Far
18 Below are the accounting principles, not following
19 Generally Accepted Accounting Principles and meeting
20 financial reporting and compliance requirements.

21 You know, stay -- as the governing council
22 and finance, stay on top of that. One of the things
23 I noted in your 2016 controls, it said -- there were
24 two disbursements, purchase orders drafted after the
25 invoice date.

1 You know, you can have a policy in place
2 that before that's paid, that gets reviewed, that
3 gets double-checked, and then it doesn't become a
4 finding.

5 The State does that, that I -- you know,
6 my area, I have 20 requisitioners. And sometimes
7 they happen to get an invoice in before they -- you
8 know, it's dated before the purchase order. And
9 there's a process we have to go through. It goes
10 through all the way up to the State Controller; he
11 has to approve it. And once that's approved, we can
12 go ahead and pay it.

13 We have to explain why it happened, what
14 we have to do to prevent it happening, things like
15 that so -- and that prevents an audit finding. So
16 sometimes these audit findings can be addressed very
17 simply. But if it's just ignored or put into a file
18 and said, "Well, we won't worry about it for a
19 while," that can be taken care of.

20 So pay attention to those types of things.

21 MS. COREEN CARRILLO: Absolutely.

22 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: And the repeated.

23 In previous ones today, we've talked about,
24 obviously, repeat findings, especially if they're
25 significant or material, that concerns me

1 dramatically. And the history that SAMS had and
2 Southwest Secondary, those are issues. And because
3 of that history, I think that the board should take
4 a very active role in avoiding those and working
5 with your -- your finance folks at the school to
6 make sure that those things aren't repeated.

7 But I really applaud the work that's being
8 done. And we look at everything that's happening in
9 the country with aviation, with drones, with, you
10 know, space exploration and things. And we need
11 pilots; we need people who are familiar with
12 aeronautics and things. That is a huge future for
13 not just the state, the country, but for all people
14 on this planet.

15 MS. COREEN CARRILLO: Absolutely. Thank
16 you. And to comment on what you just said, they
17 have come in and observed internal controls. They
18 come in and visit us often in the business office.

19 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: That's great.

20 THE CHAIR: Thank you.

21 Commissioners, any other questions?

22 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: I have
23 questions.

24 THE CHAIR: Commissioner Armbruster.

25 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: The same one I

1 ask all the time. So for your special ed
2 population, one, can you tell me what that
3 percentage is? And, number two, how do you address
4 their needs, particularly when they're doing
5 something online? I mean, "blended" means they're
6 in class part of the time. How do they deal with
7 that?

8 MS. COREEN CARRILLO: Well, we have about
9 29 students in special ed. And in the main lab,
10 where the core curriculum takes place, each special
11 ed student has a binder. And in that binder,
12 weekly, we meet with them. And weekly, we see their
13 progress, where they're -- what they're doing, where
14 they're lacking, what they may need.

15 And so that's a weekly binder that we
16 check with them every week, as well as we have
17 special ed support, ancillary staff. And then not
18 all special ed kids are in our Success Lab; but most
19 of them are. They get more of a one-on-one.

20 In our Success Lab, we have two licensed
21 teachers. One is a regular ed; one is a special ed.
22 The special ed support is in our Success Lab, as
23 well, giving our students that one-on-one support.

24 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Okay. Thank
25 you.

1 THE CHAIR: And I just had one quick
2 question about that Success Lab. Because I know in
3 one part of the application, you said you kind of
4 restructured what you do in that Success Lab. So
5 are students, outside of students that have an IEP,
6 where they might automatically be in there for that
7 specific reasons, students get in -- is it optional?
8 Is it -- or both?

9 MS. COREEN CARRILLO: Actually, it's kind
10 of both; because first, we didn't -- it was
11 mandatory if they tested below, reading or math.
12 But we had students ask to go in there that didn't
13 even really qualify under the i-Ready. So if they
14 ask, we say, "Sure."

15 If they need it, we let them in.

16 THE CHAIR: So you qualify through
17 i-Ready.

18 MS. COREEN CARRILLO: Yes.

19 THE CHAIR: Through your short-cycle --
20 through the short-cycle assessments.

21 MS. COREEN CARRILLO: Yes. That's how
22 they qualify. And we take into account their PARCC
23 scores as well. And so mainly, i-Ready and PARCC.
24 But this semester, we've had students ask, "Can I go
25 in there?" And so we -- "Absolutely."

1 THE CHAIR: Okay, good. Okay. If there's
2 no questions, I'll enter- --

3 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: Ma'am, I would like
4 to go ahead and make a motion that we, the PEC,
5 renew the charter contract between PEC and Southwest
6 Aeronautics, Math and Science Academy for five
7 years.

8 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: I'll second it.

9 THE CHAIR: There's a motion by
10 Commissioner Robbins and a second by Commissioner
11 Peralta.

12 Any discussion?

13 (No response.)

14 THE CHAIR: If not, Commissioner
15 Armbruster?

16 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
17 Peralta?

18 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Yes.

19 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
20 Robbins?

21 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: Yes.

22 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
23 Caballero?

24 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Yes.

25 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner

1 Toulouse?

2 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Yes.

3 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner

4 Gipson?

5 THE CHAIR: Yes.

6 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner

7 Armbruster votes "Yes."

8 Commissioner Crone?

9 COMMISSIONER CRONE: Yes.

10 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: It's

11 seven-to-zero; it passes.

12 THE CHAIR: The motion passes unanimously,

13 seven-to-zero.

14 MS. COREEN CARRILLO: Thank you.

15 THE CHAIR: Congratulations. Thank you so

16 much for everything that you do. And you'll be

17 hearing from us soon about contract negotiations.

18 MS. COREEN CARRILLO: That sounds good.

19 Thank you so much. Thank you for believing in us

20 and standing by us during some -- the darkest days.

21 And we're moving forward.

22 THE CHAIR: And hopefully, we can move

23 forward without it being in the papers anymore.

24 MS. COREEN CARRILLO: Absolutely. Thank

25 you so much. Thank you.

1 MR. ROLAND DEWING: Thank you.

2 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: And, Madam Chair?

3 Thank you for having your governance
4 council members here, since I'm the one who brought
5 it up. The first three schools did not have them.
6 And our contract is with you. It is not with the
7 head of your school. And so it's bothered me
8 because we've always had them here before. Since
9 this is my last hurrah, I decided to get on my
10 soapbox.

11 MR. LARRY KENNEDY: I'm not so sure my
12 tires actually touched the pavement on the way here.

13 MS. MELISSA BROWN: But you got here.
14 (A discussion was held off the record.)

15 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: Good morning -- good
16 afternoon, Madam Chairwoman, members of the
17 Commission. My name is Gene Elliott. I've been
18 here before. I'm president of the governance
19 council of Alma d'Arte Charter High School in
20 Las Cruces, and I'm very pleased to be here; because
21 in the --

22 THE CHAIR: Now I'm going to stop you. I
23 thought you were just introducing yourself. Because
24 CSD goes first.

25 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: Excuse me.

1 THE CHAIR: I thought you were just going
2 through and introducing the folks who were --

3 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: I apologize.

4 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: We all would like
5 to get through quicker.

6 MS. KAREN WOERNER: No worries. No
7 worries.

8 So on Alma de Arte Charter School, over
9 the last four years, the school has had a letter
10 grade of a "C," a "D," a "C," a "D" thereby meeting
11 the standard one-half of the term. The 2017-'18
12 overall school grade was a "D," with an "F" in four
13 of the seven components. That was current standing,
14 school improvement, improvement of lowest performing
15 students, and graduation.

16 In the data analysis beginning on Page 23
17 of 39, it does show that the -- the charts
18 demonstrate a decline, particularly in the last
19 school year, in overall grade proficiency rates and
20 current standing.

21 On the following page, Page 24, the school
22 improvement appeared to be rising, but then declined
23 significantly last year.

24 In addition, if I may direct the
25 Commission to Page 31, there are charts showing the

1 mission-specific indicators. And you can see
2 there's a decline there as well in meeting their
3 mission-specific goals.

4 Going back to the performance framework on
5 Page 5, those -- the indicators that are rated
6 during the annual site visit, this one shows the
7 last two years. And you can see, in the '17-'18
8 school year, of the 20 indicators, the school had
9 six Falls Far Below, two of which were in the
10 academic area; and seven Working to Meet Standards.

11 Unfortunately at the annual renewal site
12 visit in October, there were some continued concerns
13 in some of these areas. For example, at that
14 time -- which was, again, the very end of October --
15 the head administrator had been working for the
16 school since July, yet had not yet applied for a
17 school admin license, nor had the school sought a
18 provisional license for the school administrator.

19 That has since been resolved with an
20 application filed and license issued in
21 mid-November.

22 There were several expired or overdue IEPs
23 for students with disabilities. In addition to
24 students who were formally in a study skills class
25 for special needs services were now either in a yoga

1 class or working as a teaching assistant.

2 The English language status was being
3 determined incorrectly via a language usage survey
4 which should only be used for students that are new
5 to public schools in New Mexico.

6 The Charter School Division team provided
7 an error report from the S.T.A.R.S. system for the
8 school. And this report showed the discrepancies
9 between what the school reported for EL students and
10 whether those students had had an ACCESS test in the
11 past for them to work on rectifying those
12 discrepancies.

13 After pointing out the concerns regarding
14 identifying and serving EL students and providing
15 that list, the school's response was that they had,
16 quote, "formed a committee that was looking forward
17 to identifying and servicing English Learners."

18 The school also gave a list of activities
19 that were intended to address English Language
20 Learners, none of which focused on how to help
21 students achieve language proficiency in English,
22 other than a yet-to-be -- an upcoming training for
23 teachers.

24 Also, the CSD team interviewed
25 stakeholders, which, as you know, includes governing

1 board, parents, students, staff. As part of the
2 renewal process we observed groups of students as
3 many as 15 sitting alone during class period
4 unsupervised. Many parents heard that we were on
5 site and came to speak with us about their concerns.
6 Most of those were related to their children with
7 special needs.

8 The parents do claim to have addressed
9 their concerns with the head administrator and the
10 governing board without any resolution. I do
11 know -- I am aware that at least one parent has
12 filed a complaint with the Special Education Bureau
13 that is being investigated. So we don't know the
14 results of that.

15 There were background checks missing again
16 this school year, with at least four of the employee
17 files, including the head administrator.

18 As for the financial matters, there were
19 only five audit findings over the last three years.
20 As noted in the letter from Molly Saiz of the PED
21 Accountability Bureau, they did a T&E audit in
22 September, which you got that letter as part of the
23 packet here.

24 And that revealed that seven of the 11
25 staff files were not in compliance, which resulted

1 in an investment to the SEG for the school,
2 decreasing by \$42,472.38.

3 The school did provide a complete and
4 timely application and has provided a copy of the
5 E-Occupancy Certificate, which took some challenges
6 for them to get, but were able to obtain.

7 So for those reasons, and the
8 inconsistency in their performance, the PED
9 recommendation is for a five-year renewal, but with
10 very strict conditions. And those include, one,
11 that they implement a school continuous improvement
12 plan that addresses the current standing, the school
13 improvement, and the improvement of the lowest
14 performing students.

15 2. Attain an overall rating of Meets
16 Standard in the organizational framework for each
17 year under the contract term.

18 3. Implement a PEC Corrective Action Plan
19 in order to address concerns related to the rights
20 of students with special needs and the rights of
21 English Language Learners, and obtain a rating of
22 Meets Standard in these indicators for each year of
23 the contract term.

24 No. 4. Meet all the governing board
25 requirements, including maintaining a five-member

1 board, and all members completing all mandatory
2 training hours and topics for each year of the
3 contract term.

4 And, 5, Receive an unmodified audit with
5 no material weakness and no significant
6 deficiencies -- scratch "repeat findings" -- during
7 the term of its contract.

8 Thank you.

9 THE CHAIR: Thank you. You're on now.

10 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: Okay. As I said
11 earlier, this is my 15th year with Alma d'Arte. I
12 was one of seven founders of the school. Yes, this
13 past year has been difficult, I think largely
14 resulting from the transition from one administrator
15 to the one who is sitting to my right.

16 And I think the last year, Mr. Hartshorne
17 was -- this is my personal observation -- was not as
18 motivated to do things as he had been in the
19 previous years.

20 So he retired at the end of June. Within
21 a few days, we had Dr. Schullo on board. And you
22 will hear from her in a minute.

23 I want to remind you that our mission is
24 quite simple and that we're trying to focus on
25 accomplishing that mission, which is to graduate --

1 and I might point out the first time I made that
2 statement in public, the audience, largely made up
3 of parents, applauded those two words, "artist
4 scholars, prepared to succeed."

5 It's very simple, very direct, and very
6 comprehensive, I believe.

7 And so we're working to fulfill that
8 mission. And, frankly, there are some areas where
9 we do need to make some improvements. And I am
10 absolutely positively convinced that we now have the
11 leadership in the school to do that.

12 I wish to apologize to the Commission for
13 what appeared to be neglectful avoidance of the
14 five-member requirement. We had a gentleman who
15 suffered a stroke and had to leave the commission.
16 And so -- I mean the council. And so we were
17 looking for a replacement.

18 And, frankly, we don't take that very
19 lightly. We search and search until we find the
20 right person who has competence, skills, and
21 experience, and the time that it takes to devote to
22 this. And it took us more time than we wanted.

23 I would put our recruiting materials up
24 against anybody's for these positions, because we
25 ask them to fill out -- if they're wanting to apply

1 for themselves or somebody nominates them, we ask
2 them to fill out a nomination form that gives
3 reasons why they want to help us, what areas of
4 expertise they have, and are they willing to make
5 the time to serve.

6 And it was difficult for us to find a
7 person of the quality that we wanted. We tried. A
8 number of public and private efforts we made. But
9 we did find Dr. Godfrey Crane, who has been serving
10 in the fifth -- the fifth position ever since we
11 selected him and doing a wonderful job.

12 And I must point out that we are all up to
13 date on our training. We finished that all off this
14 year, and come next time, we'll do it again.

15 One of our single most important
16 accomplishments this year was the selection of this
17 lady, Dr. Holly Schullo. We were told by
18 Mr. Hartshorne at the end of April that he was going
19 to retire the end of June. And we did a thorough,
20 comprehensive, demographically participative search
21 to find the right candidate.

22 We came up with three candidates. One
23 withdrew. We had two candidates, and Holly was the
24 one we selected.

25 And in my opinion, she is -- she has come

1 into a very difficult situation and weathered the
2 storm extremely well.

3 One of the things that I know -- and I am
4 not going to say who scheduled it -- but we did have
5 the renewal site visit, the annual site visit, and
6 the financial -- annual financial audit all on the
7 same day. And school was in session at that time.
8 And Holly was out of breath by the end of the day.

9 You have our renewal documents. And,
10 certainly, we will not hesitate to ask [verbatim]
11 any questions that you may have about any part of
12 them.

13 Like every successful organization that
14 I've ever been involved in, you have ups and you
15 have downs. And you learn from the downs to succeed
16 in the ups. And I think that we now have a
17 governance council, the faculty, the leadership, and
18 the support of the parents to continue to do what we
19 intend to do, and that's produce these graduates.

20 We are working daily, monthly, to
21 accomplish what we need to accomplish for the
22 school. And I would now turn it over to
23 Dr. Schullo, who has some comments and with whom I
24 hope you become very well acquainted, because she
25 brings to us some talents that we needed and that

1 are being very successfully employed.

2 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: Thank you. I want to
3 introduce myself. I'm Holly Schullo. And I think
4 that what I found in Alma is my dream job. I do
5 have a doctorate in English and an MFA in creative
6 writing. I'm a poet. I have a bachelor's degree in
7 English. And none of those credentials on top of an
8 MBA from UNM in educational leadership -- I need all
9 of that and more to steer this ship.

10 We have gone through a lot of changes.
11 May 30th, I interviewed with the council and
12 community. My interview with the school, I came
13 down from Farmington. I oriented myself to
14 Las Cruces. I was still in classes at UNM.

15 And one of the reasons I delayed my
16 license is 'cause I had been working on that school,
17 on our school. And so I, you know, got my
18 background check. We used the wrong ROI number. I
19 had to go back and do it again.

20 So sometimes I have to do things two or
21 three times, and then I get them right, like the
22 E-Occupancy Certificate.

23 But my interview, May 30th, it lasted all
24 day Friday and then the next morning over breakfast.
25 And, really, visiting the school and getting to know

1 the community, a lot of parents came in and met me.
2 And I wanted to make sure, because, like a marriage,
3 you want to make sure that it sticks. And I was not
4 looking for a job.

5 We weren't groomed at UNM to just take a
6 money job. We were groomed through -- I'm a Woodrow
7 Wilson Fellow. So it is to serve. I owe three
8 years of service through UNM and the Woodrow Wilson
9 Fellowship to, like, pay back my MBA. And I got
10 lucky. I have an amazing governing board. I have
11 faculty that, at first, when I was dipping down
12 through June, I would go to school at UNM and keep
13 on driving to Las Cruces.

14 And I did my SWOT analysis. And I met
15 with faculty on their off-time before they got to
16 the building. I asked about contracts and the
17 budget. And I wanted to know, you know, what I
18 could do to get started on. And everything that I
19 found out, I brought that back to my governing board
20 so that they could make decisions. And from there,
21 we were already running.

22 So the decisions that we -- I made. With
23 the special education department, I did my own
24 internal audit on a Saturday. And I realized that
25 that department needed change. So I made that

1 decision to offer yoga for -- some of our students
2 have anxiety. And so I moved a few of them who
3 would benefit.

4 I said, "You can have a teaching assistant
5 job in your area of need, like your math class."
6 And that's really uninterrupted time being tutored
7 on a planning hour with the teacher who can support
8 our regular education teacher.

9 The yoga helped three students. It's not
10 a -- you know, big offering here. But I connected
11 it to a senior who has an apprenticeship. And she
12 needs 100 hours. So that really helped that student
13 earn 100 hours doing her yoga apprenticeship, as
14 she's also working in a yoga studio in our
15 community. So it worked for the mission.

16 And, I guess, moving forward, I got an
17 amazing special education teacher who not only
18 worked on the internal audit on that Saturday, but
19 now is moving us forward.

20 I do acknowledge that there is a parent
21 who filed a grievance with the State. And I'm sorry
22 to lose that family. But I want to be clear in my
23 position. I'm not a special education teacher. I
24 do have a gifted endorsement. So I made the
25 decisions that seemed right -- my area of expertise

1 is not special education -- and moved it forward.

2 I am supporting, actually, this student at
3 their -- the school that they arrived at. They
4 would lose all credits if, you know, they left our
5 school and went to another high school. And I'm
6 moving all of that work and the final exams to the
7 counselor over at that school so that student
8 doesn't lose a semester of work.

9 So I think in hindsight, there is a gap,
10 you know, in service. But right now, we're already
11 capturing compliance. So we hired a great special
12 education teacher, and we have turned that
13 department around.

14 EL service is something that when I was
15 doing my practicum at UNM over last spring, I was
16 looking at dual-language immersion programs in
17 New Mexico, because my passion, although I am
18 receptive to Spanish, is bilingualism. It's like
19 our sunshine here. It is a natural resource.

20 So for me, when I actually looked at our
21 school report card and broke it down, first looking
22 at the report card for my practicum, and then,
23 again, luckily, to make changes for our school, I
24 saw that there were no students identified for EL
25 services at Alma. And it -- I think we're doing a

1 better job now to identify those students. I'm
2 thankful that Commissioner Woerner [verbatim] sent
3 me some resources to work with.

4 We have a TESOL-endorsed -- two
5 TESOL-endorsed teachers that are going to help
6 facilitate that process.

7 So for me, I'm moving forward on a lot of
8 things, that although my educational background
9 gives me certain tools, I don't have all the tools.
10 So I'm moving those things forward.

11 I'm not sure what to say -- I went through
12 this renewal process and a new job and finished up
13 an MBA. I missed my graduation at UNM. And I'm
14 okay with that, because my students decided the
15 Friday night before my graduation ceremony at -- on
16 Saturday, they walked out of the school.

17 And they protested and made beautiful
18 signs, and they protested the loss of two teachers
19 in the building that we put on administrative leave,
20 one, and another that wasn't on contract. And I was
21 so danged proud of my students. I was. I thought
22 that, of course, is the school that I inherited, and
23 we're moving forward.

24 So they have free voice. And we've really
25 all come together as a community. And I thank you

1 for the opportunity to go through the renewal
2 process of this school, because it's now my passion.

3 Thank you.

4 MS. FRIEDMAN: They have a minute and
5 13 seconds.

6 FROM THE FLOOR: I'm Katie. I'm the
7 business manager at Alma d'Arte. And I just
8 transitioned -- I shouldn't say "transitioned."
9 There was no transition.

10 I came into the business manager running
11 in mid-July, and we've been running since. We're
12 doing a lot of work to get good internal controls in
13 place, proper presentation of financials to the
14 governance council and to Dr. Schullo, transparency,
15 oversight, approvals, and we've made great progress.
16 We still have more progress to make. But we're
17 doing what we can to get them caught up to where
18 they need to be.

19 THE CHAIR: Thank you.

20 FROM THE FLOOR: Thank you.

21 THE CHAIR: Okay. As I've said to every
22 school, I thank you for all the work you do every
23 day besides this. And I know the -- the somewhat
24 extraordinary circumstances that have unfortunately
25 developed, and the fact that it's difficult when I

1 come in at the -- really, sort of at the end of the
2 renewal process.

3 I've told Commissioners publicly here,
4 because I've had the opportunity to go to governance
5 council meetings, that it's an incredibly engaged
6 group of people that are absolutely committed to
7 this school. But on the other hand, it's perplexing
8 when we look at the -- the performance goals and
9 they weren't met most of the years.

10 So there's a disconnect there with the
11 governance council that I see, and this. And where
12 did the conversation go wrong, that these goals
13 were, I'm assuming even discussed?

14 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: I think I can speak to
15 that, if you want me to.

16 THE CHAIR: Okay. Sure.

17 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: Because it was on my
18 watch, or all of our watches.

19 I think that one of the things that
20 happened -- and this is a -- this is a trap that
21 governing councils can fall into very easily -- is
22 that we had an administrator that was very strong,
23 very -- very strong in terms of public comment and
24 statement to us that everything was cool, everything
25 was okay.

1 And you either believe that person or you
2 don't believe that person. And unfortunately, we
3 believed him at times that we shouldn't have. And
4 that's the answer to your question.

5 THE CHAIR: Okay.

6 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: One of the -- one of
7 the facts that I think impacts this -- and I'm yet
8 to understand it completely -- is I know the State
9 has their standards and their frameworks. But I
10 come from private business, where we take what we
11 have, and from that, we create a strategic plan
12 that's unique to us.

13 And we've not really done that. And I
14 will -- I will guarantee you that within the year,
15 that will be done. And then we will have to come
16 back to you with that strategic plan and try to
17 match it up with what we are saying in the -- in the
18 State's documents; because it's been my experience
19 that -- I'm going to use a -- an example.

20 Years and years ago, I was an executive of
21 the Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce, and I was asked
22 to be the business representative at a LESC hearing
23 being held around the state and for the one in
24 Las Cruces. And the subject was teacher
25 preparedness, i.e., what makes a good teacher.

1 And the chairman of the LESC was the
2 gentleman that most of you may know, was Senator Tim
3 Jennings from Roswell. And there were all kinds of
4 folk there to speak to this issue. There were
5 deans; there were department heads; there were
6 superintendents; there were principals; there were
7 master teachers. And everybody was making their
8 statement about what makes a good teacher.

9 And I'll never forget this, because it
10 rang so true with me. Tim leaned back in his chair,
11 and he said, "Well, I learned a long time ago
12 there's basically two kinds of people in the world.
13 There's them that can work sheep and them that
14 can't."

15 And I said to myself, "That's it."

16 If you've got a master teacher as one who
17 can -- pardon the metaphor -- work the sheep, you
18 work sheep or any form of livestock, if you've had
19 that experience, the way you find them, and you do
20 what they want to do to get them to do what you want
21 to do.

22 And so I've always used that as an
23 example, because he was right on. I said, "That's
24 good teaching. That's good education. That's good
25 public relations. That's good marketing. That's

1 good human relations. If we think about the sheep,
2 the people out there that we're dealing with and do
3 it to get them to go where we want them to go, it's
4 a lot easier."

5 And so that's what we've got to do with
6 our strategic plan. We have unique students. We
7 are changing a bit our emphasis to go back to our
8 roots, and Holly is a big part of that, of going
9 after the artist-scholar. And we came up with those
10 specific words out of surveying students, faculty,
11 parents, and everybody, and we developed a word
12 cloud, and out of that, the dominant word was
13 "success."

14 The students, everybody said, "We want to
15 succeed."

16 And so that's how we came up with those
17 six or seven words. We want them to be scholars, we
18 want them to be artists, and we want them to
19 succeed. That's it.

20 Now, the how and the why and the when is
21 yet up for debate. But that's what we want to do.
22 And our graduation rate has been extremely high.
23 And our students have gone out. And one of our
24 council member's daughters are now working in the
25 movies in California and extremely successful. And

1 they both graduated from Alma.

2 One of the things that I am encouraging,
3 and we have good buy-in from Holly, is we create a
4 formal alumni relations program. No school does
5 that. Very few schools, if any, does that to find
6 out five years from now, ten years from now, what
7 the graduates are doing and how they got there and
8 feed that information back into the system.

9 And I can say that with authority, because
10 the first job in my career was Director of Alumni
11 Relations at New Mexico State University. And
12 that's what really is going to change our school is
13 how effectively and how well-prepared our students
14 are to succeed out in the world.

15 THE CHAIR: Okay. So I think I just need
16 a point of clarity. The mission statement that
17 you're referring to is the mission statement that
18 was originally -- see, that's --

19 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: No. We came --

20 THE CHAIR: See, that's where I've got --
21 I was afraid that was going to be the answer.
22 Because you can't change your mission statement.

23 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: We came to the PEC
24 five, six years ago, whenever we changed it. And
25 we -- and we got permission to change the mission

1 statement.

2 THE CHAIR: Okay. All right. So that's
3 what I was really asking. So that you haven't just
4 recently changed it to that.

5 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: No, no. We've been
6 following this for five, six years. I don't even
7 remember exactly the timetable that we changed; but
8 we changed it, and we did that formally with this
9 group.

10 THE CHAIR: I saw that amendment request.
11 I just wanted to make sure that there wasn't an
12 additional change that you're making that we were
13 unaware.

14 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: No. Too valuable.

15 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Madam Chair, a
16 point. Amy Biehl High School in Albuquerque follows
17 their graduates.

18 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: Yeah, okay. That's one
19 of the few schools that --

20 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: I'm just going to
21 say, I'm giving you --

22 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: And I'll tell you. I
23 bet they feed that back into their program, that
24 information that --

25 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: And they're very

1 much the experiential school that goes out and works
2 in the community. So they want the feedback from
3 all that. So if you need some help, they might be
4 able to put you in the right direction. I'm sure
5 there are others that do; but that's the one I know
6 does it.

7 THE CHAIR: It is -- we have seen, it's
8 challenging. Because we've had some schools that
9 wanted to make that a mission goal. But for them to
10 be able to truly succeed at it, it's difficult to
11 find a model that they know they can use so that we
12 know that they can be successful and not setting
13 themselves up to not be able to meet that goal.

14 So it is -- because to some degree, it's
15 voluntary on the folks that have departed. And
16 that's tough to rely on their willingness to --

17 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: I don't know of any
18 college or university, for example, that has an
19 answer to that; because you just have to work very
20 hard at it.

21 THE CHAIR: Yeah. And when you're looking
22 at a smaller school, less staff, it becomes even
23 more --

24 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: When you don't have the
25 staff to do it, you either have to have volunteers

1 to do it, or you don't do it. And I think it's such
2 a crucial part of what we should be doing, that
3 somehow, we're going to figure out how to do it.
4 And I hope I can report to you in a year or so that
5 we've really done it, set it up.

6 THE CHAIR: Right. Could you just talk to
7 me a little bit about the interview process for
8 students coming into the school?

9 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: I'll let Holly do that.

10 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: So I guess I'm
11 understanding, you know, more -- I ended in charter
12 schools. I wasn't sure what even charter schools
13 were about. But coming out of UNM, a lot of my
14 cohort works in a charter school. And I -- you
15 know, I didn't know where I would go after to serve,
16 Woodrow Wilson Fellow. But I had to read about
17 charter schools.

18 So I actually interviewed for a position
19 and had to learn about charter schools. And from
20 there, I started actually looking at working in a
21 charter school. It wasn't something --

22 THE CHAIR: Okay.

23 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: -- I was groomed more
24 traditionally.

25 THE CHAIR: I'm not trying to be rude.

1 But I'm not referring to your interview froze.

2 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: Our application
3 process at school. As I understand it, we have an
4 application process. Really, it's registration.
5 You come in and you register. We have a checklist.
6 I have revised it a little bit.

7 One of the mission-specific is we graduate
8 artist-scholars. So I want to interview every
9 student and talk with them and make sure that we're
10 a fit, because one of the things I noticed,
11 researching Alma, in 2014-'13, we were a "B" school,
12 and that's because we were serving the mission. We
13 were serving our demographic, artist-scholars, and
14 students that desired a smaller school of choice
15 like ours, arts integration.

16 So our application process, I actually
17 note that it's modeled on J. Paul Taylor's, similar
18 checklist of things that students bring in,
19 families. And we just register the student.
20 Hopefully, it's a good match for the student and the
21 family. And it's a choice. For arts integration.

22 Thank you.

23 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: Madam Chairwoman, we
24 really -- you know, in my mind, we run a risky
25 course here trying to discriminate against who we

1 will accept and not accept if we are required to
2 accept everyone, everyone who applies.

3 And since we've never met -- we've never
4 risen to the level of requiring a lottery, we simply
5 accept them. And Holly has started really
6 explaining what we ideally do at the school so that
7 the parent and the student can, at that point, make
8 a decision whether or not the school is a good fit
9 for the student.

10 THE CHAIR: And you understand our
11 perplexing problem, that because it is a public
12 school, we need to make sure that, through that
13 process, there's not a discouragement.

14 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: Oh, my gosh, no.

15 THE CHAIR: Because that's -- we're
16 dealing with a multitude of schools. So -- the
17 appearances of it, right. Because we have to have
18 conversations with many schools about, "You can't do
19 that, because we are a public school, and everyone
20 does, in fact, have to be admitted, that arts
21 integration doesn't mean you have to be an artist."

22 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: So that is exactly
23 what I tell people who walk through the door. One
24 of my most recent successes is a student who had
25 been incarcerated in juvenile detention for the last

1 two years. And he is an amazing student this year.
2 And he's becoming -- I don't want to identify any of
3 our students here. But seven out of eight of our
4 students who tried out for All State Guitar made it,
5 seven out of eight.

6 One of our successes there had never
7 played guitar three years ago; so he wasn't an
8 artist when he walked in the door. But he is a
9 dual-enrolled scholar. And that's what we're
10 cultivating. That's what I understand I'm
11 cultivating.

12 I haven't said no to any student who's
13 walked through our door. But I have put in place I
14 want them to walk around with one of our students
15 and take a tour of our school and see us in action.
16 I'll buy lunch, have them have lunch with us.

17 And I talk to the parents at length, and
18 we make sure that it's a good fit for them;
19 though -- because they are choosing. I want them to
20 know exactly who we are and what we want to
21 accomplish.

22 One of my struggles -- and I'm working on
23 this -- is we don't have a credit recovery. So I
24 don't want to deny any student that's academically
25 behind. I'm putting things in place now that help

1 our students recover academically.

2 THE CHAIR: Well, virtually every one of
3 our schools is packed with students who are behind.

4 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: Yes. Yes.

5 THE CHAIR: That's what I consider credit
6 recovery. That's a New Mexico student,
7 unfortunately.

8 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Yeah, that's
9 right.

10 THE CHAIR: There's a difference in terms
11 of the -- the definition of what "credit recovery"
12 is; not just someone who is necessarily behind. I
13 guess I struggle with that whole interview process.
14 I'll be -- I'll be perfectly honest that I struggled
15 with -- is it a requirement?

16 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: It's not a
17 requirement. I just know that --

18 THE CHAIR: Because the application makes
19 it seem like it's -- you know, to me, I read this
20 as, "This interview is required." I don't see it
21 as -- because --

22 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: I'm so sorry. And
23 that's writing, too, that when I wrote it, I
24 understood that one of the goals was to go back to
25 the mission of the charter and maybe call that my --

1 I'm naive. I'm learning.

2 But what we have done is make sure that
3 when parents and students choose -- and I would like
4 to take that on me -- that I wanted to make sure
5 that the student we choose and chooses us in ninth
6 grade graduates from Alma. I want to make sure that
7 they stay with us.

8 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Madam Chair?

9 THE CHAIR: I understand that. But you
10 also understand that by -- if it was the case --

11 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: So it's not an
12 interview.

13 THE CHAIR: By requiring an interview or
14 an in-presence, there is a subjectivity that can
15 come up automatically that becomes problematic. By
16 asking someone that if they -- by requiring that
17 someone has to present themselves to you, there's
18 a -- there's a subjectivity that enters into it that
19 we can't account for.

20 So it become -- you know, because there
21 are -- I get calls all the time, "I was asked that I
22 had to come in for an interview." You cannot
23 require someone to come in for an interview. So
24 this is the way I read this. And it's -- it's
25 concerning.

1 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: So I want to then
2 clarify. We have our registration packet right at
3 the front of the school. So someone would enter the
4 school, pick up the application process and fill
5 everything out and bring it back. And that's what
6 it has been before.

7 So students never toured the school. They
8 weren't sure what they were getting. So for me,
9 there's no portfolio review. My
10 artists-in-residence don't sit down and make sure
11 they're of a certain caliber, if that's what you're
12 asking. And if that's -- I might have used the
13 wrong language there. Thank you.

14 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: I think we're talking
15 about apples and oranges here in a way. But I think
16 if we were remiss and did not say to these students,
17 "We emphasize art and academics here," then we are
18 doing them a disservice because they come expecting
19 A, and we give them B.

20 Now, I don't think we're doing an
21 interview. I think we're just simply saying, "This
22 is what this school is about. It was built on the
23 premise of arts integration, of using arts to teach
24 academics and academics to teach arts."

25 It's a common thing. The Kennedy Center

1 does it. They're one of the masters of it.

2 So when we say to a student, "We spend a
3 lot of time on art here. You might, in a class -- a
4 history class, you might have to learn to dance, the
5 dance of the period you're studying in history."

6 And I think that's a fair statement to
7 tell students, "This is the way we do things."

8 THE CHAIR: And I get that. But that's
9 not what I -- that's not what was written here. So
10 I'm going off of --

11 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: Then I guess I haven't
12 read what you're reading.

13 THE CHAIR: That's why my -- that's why my
14 little cloud question was there, because that --
15 that popped up right away when I read it. It's,
16 like, there's -- there's an issue. And I've got
17 no -- I have no problem with an explanation of what
18 the school's mission is and making sure that it's a
19 fit. "Although we're a public school, we do have
20 unique missions," and I have no issue with the
21 students knowing that.

22 But as written, "and the interviews," that
23 pop- -- that popped up.

24 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: We'll take a look at
25 that. We'll take a look at that at the next

1 meeting. Okay.

2 THE CHAIR: You know, a serious concern,
3 because it's -- it's in the background all the time
4 with us.

5 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: I'm so sorry,
6 Madam Chair.

7 THE CHAIR: So that's -- we just have to
8 make sure that it's -- you know, we're following --

9 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: All right. We'll be
10 happy to take a look at that and pass on whatever we
11 decide.

12 THE CHAIR: Commissioner Toulouse?

13 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: My chair sunk all
14 the way down. And I'm probably going to need help
15 to stand up out of this because it's too low for me
16 to get up. And I'm not staying here till tomorrow;
17 so -- I was laughing when it went down. I'm going
18 to trade it for that chair, and he can deal with it
19 if he gets here tomorrow.

20 I think you probably would be better off
21 having a couple of informational fairs, letting
22 anybody interested just come in and see your --

23 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: I'm so sorry.
24 Commissioner Toulouse. I -- okay.

25 The other thing that's in our charter --

1 and please forgive my newness. We used to send --
2 we just had our first winter showcase. And we
3 usually took that on the road and showed other, you
4 know, eighth-graders and middle-schoolers what our
5 school looks like.

6 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: What it's about.

7 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: What it's about. We
8 would have, not just a "Come on" -- we don't want to
9 have a, "Come on down," but show the value of the
10 school. So we have not had our first open house
11 yet.

12 And then please do realize that I'm just
13 coming off of, you know, studying all of this. And
14 if I knew any better, Gene said maybe I would have
15 run away.

16 It's been a wonderful learning process.
17 And that is my language in the application. That is
18 my language. An interview to me just means more
19 like, "You should meet with the head administrator
20 and know what the expectations are of the school and
21 what we'd like to see of you," you know.

22 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: That word is a red
23 flag in charter schools, because we have had
24 problems with schools trying to --

25 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: That's my mistake.

1 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: And that's why,
2 for me, it's better to do that outside of that
3 enrollment process. And whether you have a day that
4 you bring people in to tour the school or to talk
5 about it, that gets you away from this waving the
6 flag that you're choosing; because all it's going to
7 take is one complaint from somebody who says, "I
8 really wanted my kid there, but they told me my kid
9 shouldn't come here," no matter what the
10 circumstances, and then you're in trouble.

11 And I don't want that to happen to this
12 school, because I know you have graduated some very
13 good students, and I think it ought to continue. So
14 I'm just trying to think a way from calling it an
15 interview and a way from doing it at registration,
16 you know, doing it prior to that.

17 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: One of the things that
18 happened over the last year is these -- I'll have to
19 call them recruiting forays that our students took
20 into the mid-schools and did concerts, many concerts
21 and showed their artwork and lots of other things to
22 show what we did, that was all canceled by the
23 Las Cruces Public Schools because the athletic folks
24 were abusing that opportunity.

25 And so rather than say, "Okay, we'll

1 differentiate between academics and athletics," they
2 just shut down the whole thing. So we have no -- we
3 were talking about this on the way up here. We have
4 got to find an alternate way to attract the
5 attention of those students and their parents about
6 what we do.

7 And one of the things is have major
8 community events, concerts, whatever you want to
9 call it, or art shows or whatever, so that people
10 will identify that kind of activity with our school
11 better than they do now.

12 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Go out to the
13 shopping malls. There's a lot of places that would
14 let you come in and do that where people would see
15 you.

16 THE CHAIR: You haven't been to a mall
17 lately, have you?

18 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: I don't go to
19 malls. That's an example of where you could go.

20 THE CHAIR: There's two people in it.

21 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: There's other
22 organizations, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. The
23 other thing is just to go ahead and talk to your
24 school board again and again, make yourself a pest
25 about, "We're not the athletic programs."

1 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Madam Chair? You
2 know, we are making -- we're emphasizing that
3 charter schools meet their goals. And I love that.
4 But also, we need to give some guidance as --
5 because if charter schools like this one says, "I
6 want -- we want to do this; we can't just anybody
7 and everybody come in, because they're not going to
8 meet their goal."

9 THE CHAIR: Oh, but --

10 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: And -- hold on --
11 you can come in whenever, but not while I'm talking.

12 And so we need to -- if interview,
13 whatever. But I sent my son to a magnet school in
14 El Paso. And he was in a bilingual Spanish all the
15 way through until there was nothing else.

16 And this magnet school had four languages.
17 And I wanted him to continue in Spanish. But the
18 school said, "Not everybody can do Spanish. So you
19 have to agree -- if you're into another language,
20 then whatever is open, you may get something else
21 other than Spanish."

22 So that was a heads-up, and we had to
23 agree with it. The school would accept my son and
24 me with that agreement. And all the others, "No, we
25 don't want to do that," well, it's open for these

1 type of students and their parents that want to do a
2 second language for their children.

3 So my son picked German as the next
4 choice, because he believed that Germany was going
5 to be a dominant nation very soon. At that time, it
6 wasn't. And he ended up in German. And he learned
7 German enough to believe he had it all fixed.

8 But he was -- they talked to him. They
9 talked to me. And we agreed. It was the heads-up.
10 That's what the school was all about.

11 Fortunately and unfortunately, only the
12 ones that had the means to take their child
13 30 minutes out to the middle of nowhere on the side
14 of the freeway were able to take their children.
15 All the ones that had no resources to do that, they
16 weren't available to -- they couldn't take advantage
17 of that benefit.

18 But we have to give guidance to those
19 charter schools that have a school goal as to what's
20 the best way to approach it.

21 If, in fact -- and we have lawyers, and we
22 have staff that can help a school with that.

23 Otherwise, I see charter schools removing their
24 goals, because it's easier not to have a goal.

25 There's a school that had four goals, and they

1 didn't meet any of those; so -- even though those
2 goals were part of the stuff.

3 So I think we need to be more helpful than
4 what we're being by saying, "Well, this is -- this
5 is wrong." I think we need to -- I, personally,
6 don't see a problem with "interview." It's just
7 what happens in the interview that needs to be
8 corrected.

9 But then, again, I think that we need to
10 be more helpful. We have a charter school that
11 deals with dance. All of them love dance. How do
12 you get them in there? You know, there's got to be
13 a way.

14 But, otherwise, we're just going to have
15 schools with no goals. And I don't think that was
16 the intent for charter schools. I think the intent
17 for charter schools was to promote growth in the
18 arts and in math and science and aeronautics. I
19 don't --

20 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: I was going to say --
21 excuse me, Commissioner Caballero. The previous
22 school is a good example of that. They're
23 aeronautics. You've got to be interested -- you
24 have to be capable in math or science to be a pilot.
25 You have to be all that. You just can't get around

1 that.

2 So you have to have a certain amount of
3 skill or willingness to develop your skill to be a
4 good artist or to be a -- we have four categories of
5 endeavor: Visual, literary, performing, and
6 culinary. So there's lots of options there for them
7 to choose from. It's not all everybody has to do a
8 painting, you know.

9 THE CHAIR: But let me be clear. There
10 are guidelines. They are -- all charters are a
11 public school. Outside of New Mexico School for the
12 Arts that statutorily is allowed to select their
13 students to come in, the statute allows them to do
14 that. And the lottery system is not -- doesn't have
15 to be implemented with Albuquerque Sign Language,
16 because of the nature of that school; they have been
17 exempt from that.

18 But outside of that, they're public
19 schools. And we cannot allow a school to establish
20 guidelines that limit access to that school. It is
21 always the free choice of parents if the mission of
22 that school doesn't fit what they feel is in the
23 best interests of their child, that they don't send
24 their child to that school. Because that's what
25 options are, and that's why charters were created,

1 to -- for parents who feel that the local school is
2 not meeting the needs of their child, that they have
3 an option. And this is potentially one of those
4 options.

5 And Cruces is somewhat lucky in that there
6 are several other options, both through the
7 traditional district and through a number of
8 charters that Cruces has, that there are options.
9 Unfortunately, in some areas, there aren't options.
10 It's a one-size-fits-all.

11 But we are -- you know, statute does
12 establish the guidelines for what is permissible or
13 not permissible for a public school in terms of
14 entrance, which is, really, "We're open."

15 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: Well, I would agree
16 with you wholeheartedly. I'm going to ask you a
17 question, then, Madam Chairwoman. If we were to
18 approach it from this -- from this perspective,
19 "Here we emphasize the arts and the integration of
20 arts and academics and academics and the arts.
21 That's our mission. This is what we do. If this
22 suits you, if this fits you, if you like this
23 environment, then welcome aboard," and stop right
24 there and say, you know, "We put forth the
25 proposition. It's up to you to choose. It's a

1 matter of choice." And so if they choose that --

2 THE CHAIR: Absolutely.

3 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: I think some of the
4 problem is that a school might accidentally develop
5 a reputation that spreads, you know. If one good --
6 one parent says, "Well, this school did extremely
7 well for my student, and they had these kinds of
8 problems," and the other parent says, "Well, my
9 student has those kinds of problems," it's kind of a
10 natural connection to say, "Well, maybe that's a
11 good place for my student."

12 But it truly is an individual choice on
13 the part of the student and the family.

14 THE CHAIR: You're absolutely right.
15 Because the first student, that arts integration may
16 have clicked with them, so that's what helped them
17 to succeed. That second student, it may not work
18 well. So I've got no issue with the explanation of
19 the educational program of the school.

20 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: Okay.

21 THE CHAIR: But the -- you know.

22 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: How we use it.

23 THE CHAIR: Right. Right.

24 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: All right. Got you.

25 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: I, again, want to

1 apologize that the word "interview," that was my
2 language. And I want parents to interview me. And
3 maybe I used that word, because when they're coming
4 to the school, they need to know who the head
5 administrator is and what this looks like.

6 I want -- for the record, I am a huge
7 proponent of restorative justice and working with
8 nonpunitive actions for our students, because I
9 don't want them to leave our school, you know. When
10 they choose us, I want them to choose us like you
11 choose family, and I want them to stay with us and,
12 you know, cultivate them until they graduate and
13 follow them thereafter.

14 THE CHAIR: Thank you.

15 Commissioner Armbruster, did you have your
16 hand up?

17 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Thank you. So I
18 have a lot of questions here. Bear with me.

19 So your -- how many special ed -- you have
20 how many kids in the school, period, 9 through 12?
21 What's the population of the school?

22 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: So I believe we have
23 about 161 right now.

24 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: And your cap is?

25 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: I think our cap is

1 250.

2 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: 280.

3 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: 280. Thank you,
4 Commissioner.

5 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: I'm sorry. My
6 phone -- my computer cannot connect to this --

7 THE CHAIR: We're having trouble opening
8 files.

9 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: I'm using my
10 phone to try to do this, and I can hardly see this.
11 So I apologize for the use of my phone. But the
12 other thing I wanted to know is what percent or
13 number of those students are -- have IEPs?

14 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: So out of
15 161 students, we have -- I believe it's 41 IEPs or
16 43. Of those 43, there are, I believe, seven who
17 are gifted.

18 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: So 35, we'll
19 say.

20 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: And then it breaks
21 down from there.

22 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: And so does
23 every one of those students have an IEP? Let's talk
24 about students with disabilities. Does every one of
25 them have a current IEP?

1 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: So I hired a new
2 special education teacher. And we are -- well, our
3 target goal this -- is 100 percent. Everyone has an
4 IEP that should have an IEP.

5 My audit -- and I don't want to speak of
6 all of this now, because part of this is our renewal
7 and part of it was our annual site visit, and I'm
8 not sure where the line is for me -- for us.

9 But when I did the audit on this Saturday
10 morning, I identified some issues before you all
11 came in and did the annual site visit, because I
12 knew it was an area at the school to look at. And I
13 just knew we could do better.

14 So --

15 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: I'm not -- I
16 don't know that information.

17 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: Let me be clear. So
18 on the 40-day count, we sent all of our IEPs up for
19 review. And by the end of December -- well,
20 January -- all of -- anything late will be on time.
21 We will be in full compliance.

22 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: So you're saying
23 you had a number of late IEPs.

24 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: We had a number of
25 late IEPs. Part of that was bridging the loss --

1 our school only had one special education teacher.
2 So that interim time, I didn't hire someone else. I
3 did have this person on contract. And they were
4 coming in for four hours for Monday, Wednesday,
5 Friday, and helping and serving.

6 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: And so --

7 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: Our ancillary services
8 were all in compliance.

9 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: So that you just
10 started this school year; is that correct?

11 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: I just started.

12 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Okay. My brain
13 is full. So last year, the special ed -- they had a
14 special ed teacher there who left.

15 (Portion of transcript deleted at the
16 request of Commissioner Armbruster
17 and Dr. Schullo.)

18 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: Will you please remove
19 that from the transcript?

20 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Yeah, probably
21 you should.

22 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: Thank you. Just
23 that -- I appreciate it.

24 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: So the services
25 are now, for 35 -- we'll just use that as the number

1 of students with disabilities -- is served by one
2 person. And the students are classified for how
3 many hours of special ed, in general? Some are more
4 and less. I don't know.

5 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: Please know my only
6 area of expertise is gifted education. So on the
7 other side of special education, I am wise enough to
8 hire someone who is an expert.

9 And I can only offer that the person in
10 place right now is outstanding. And anyone who had
11 a misconception about what special education should
12 be now says, "Thank you so much. I love the new
13 special education teacher." And we're moving
14 forward with great things.

15 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: And how do you
16 serve the special ed students? Are they pullout?
17 Do they have an extra period a day of remediation?
18 How do they get served?

19 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: So all I can speak to
20 now is the older model that we had was a study
21 skills class. And for me, it was not effective.
22 Tuesday-Thursday, they'd go to their study skills
23 class and were meeting minutes.

24 And for me, I want to move beyond meeting
25 minutes. So we have a learning lab, content

1 mastery, where students are learning test-taking
2 skills. They're working on math and English, and
3 we're pushing into classrooms and taking them out,
4 pullout, a more diversified model of service.

5 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: And how about EL
6 students?

7 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: EL. I'm really
8 excited. So we are piloting ENLACE in one of our
9 history classes. This is -- thankfully, we are
10 getting to something positive here. ENLACE is an
11 arts integration. They're out of UNM. And it's
12 integration with -- oh, gosh -- like an equity
13 service model. So it's history, equity, justice
14 model with arts integration. And they will help us
15 track our students.

16 And then next year, I want to have a
17 Spanish teacher. We offer Chinese now, because it's
18 through Confucius. Next year, we want Spanish in
19 the building.

20 And my struggle here is that we haven't
21 identified EL learners. So I've been given some
22 avenues to find them, like through S.T.A.R.S. And
23 we're working on that right now.

24 So when I said in my response in
25 parentheses, "That's in process," that's something

1 that we have built a committee for. We have some
2 resources. We're looking through the S.T.A.R.S.
3 data. And then we will make a model.

4 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Let me see if
5 I'm paraphrasing this correctly. Sorry. So you
6 don't actually know which students are EL because
7 they don't have a home language survey available?
8 But the ones that you know of are going into this --
9 I'm sure I'm saying this wrong -- ENLACE. It's an
10 arts and integration --

11 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: And bilingual.
12 Bilingual.

13 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: So that person
14 that's teaching that class is fluent in Spanish or
15 has a TESOL endorsement?

16 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: Yes. We have quite a
17 few faculty members that are bilingual.

18 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: But you don't
19 know at this moment how many EL students are
20 qualified.

21 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: Right now, I don't see
22 it. That's why I was saying we need a better way of
23 identifying. So I tried to overcorrect. And I put
24 the home language survey online. I sent it home
25 during our Platica, which is our advisory session.

1 Every single day, our students have advisory period.
2 And on Fridays, it's an extended advisory.

3 That supports our Wednesday gap, like
4 tutoring zero is an impossible program [verbatim].
5 So I was trying to overcorrect that; because when I,
6 you know, walked into a school in Las Cruces, I
7 assume that EL would be a population.

8 But in the years that -- previous, there
9 have been no identifications that I see. So that
10 program has never been created. So I understand now
11 that that's a program that we need to have in our
12 building. What ENLACE does is more of a maintenance
13 heritage program. More of a heritage program --
14 excuse me -- cultural heritage program.

15 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: So -- okay.

16 THE CHAIR: Can I just -- can I just ask
17 about the home language surveys while we're on that?
18 Has that been a problem at site visits? Because
19 that's something that is looked at in the files. So
20 I'm -- yeah, I'm --

21 MS. KAREN WOERNER: So the concern is that
22 unless a student is new to the State of New Mexico,
23 Madam Chair, they should not be issued a new home
24 language survey.

25 So when you're working at a high school,

1 most of their students are not new to public school,
2 and, therefore, they should not be solving their EL
3 identification by distributing another home language
4 survey, which this school was doing and was told to
5 us that's how they were addressing, identifying,
6 their ELs.

7 So we advised them that that is not
8 acceptable and that they need to, instead, try, A,
9 to get the records from the previous school, which
10 we have recognized statewide has been an issue in
11 terms of the school providing that information.

12 So the recommendation from the Language
13 and Culture Bureau is to submit a records request
14 form to the prior school, specifically asking for
15 that information. But we need ACCESS scores in home
16 language survey, knowing that that's not always
17 cooperative.

18 The next step is to look into S.T.A.R.S.
19 to see if the student ever had an ACCESS test in the
20 past and if they were proficient or not on that
21 test, which would then determine if they were -- if
22 they were proficient, of course, that means they're
23 an exited EL that needs to be monitored. And if
24 they're not proficient, you've got yourself an EL
25 student.

1 So when we were at the visit, we did share
2 that information, as well as an error report
3 identifying potential errors based on what they
4 reported their students as and whether or not those
5 students had ACCESS tests in the past. Anything
6 that showed a discrepancy is flagged in this report
7 that can be run from S.T.A.R.S. that was shared with
8 the school at the end of October.

9 And, frankly I would expect that that
10 would have already been addressed by this visit
11 today.

12 THE CHAIR: Okay. All right. Thanks.
13 I'm okay. Sorry.

14 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Okay. So I'm --

15 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: So to be honest with
16 you, Commissioner, I am brand new. So some of these
17 things from the past, I'm working on. I am very
18 surprised when I look at the report cards from the
19 past that there's just a dash for EL. So now I have
20 some tools in place to move forward and find those
21 students.

22 But I also have two teachers in the
23 building that give the ACCESS test. And one is a
24 gifted-endorsed history teacher, and the other is a
25 math teacher. So I say, as I'm finding these things

1 at Alma, I want to fix them. And I am still
2 learning the processes. But I am taking
3 responsibility for things that have not been seen
4 before, like our EL population. I'm ready to move
5 forward and serve when I find those students.

6 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: So -- and I --

7 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: But that is also in
8 our registration packet, home language survey. So
9 when it's not brought back, I'm not sure -- you
10 know, I keep going around with that, too. And I'm
11 sorry for that.

12 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: I did do this at
13 home. So I may have written it incorrectly. And
14 since I cannot get on the Internet, can you kind of
15 help me when I'm saying this if I'm incorrect? I
16 don't want to say something that's not true.

17 MS. KAREN WOERNER: Laurel has a hotspot
18 if we want to try to connect a different way.

19 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: I've written it
20 down. My concern is our standards were that you
21 would have a "C" average over the last four years.
22 And I get -- so I added up all these numbers, and
23 I'm getting, like, 51.5. So I guess if you want to
24 be technical, that's a "C" average over the last
25 four years.

1 But I'm looking at the current standing
2 over the last four years. And they're either "D"s
3 or "F"s; the improvements, a "D" or an "F"; the
4 lowest quartile is all "F"s; the opportunity to
5 learn is great, "B"s and "A"s; the graduation rate
6 was a "B" in '15, and then an "F" and a "D" and an
7 "F."

8 And I didn't know what this -- I wrote
9 something which I couldn't even begin to tell you
10 what I said. It's the last thing on the report
11 card; so I guess it's "D," "C," "B," "C."

12 My concern is not just the grade itself --
13 the overall grade -- and I know you're new about all
14 this. But I've not seen this as a school who -- it
15 just reminds me of the same type of situation that
16 we've done, and not that long ago, about promise of
17 what's going to come up, but not really fulfilling
18 what has already occurred.

19 And that's my understanding of renewals --
20 and it's nothing against you, Holly, at all -- is
21 that we're looking at what the school has done. And
22 what the school has done in the past has really not
23 served their lowest quartile. They're at "F"s,
24 where we would expect -- we've looked at other
25 schools who have "C"s and "B"s. One is a SAM

1 school, so that's even more concerning.

2 I just don't see the school as a viable
3 school right now. I can't -- I'm not saying it
4 can't change. But I'm voting on what has been and
5 not what will be. There's concerns with special ed.
6 There's concerns with ELL. There's concerns with
7 graduation rate.

8 I'm just not feeling that I can grant a
9 charter to a school who has so many issues in the
10 past. Because we're looking at the past. We're not
11 looking at what's going to happen. And that's
12 horrible, by the way. It's a horrible thing. Tugs
13 at our heart strings as well.

14 I'm not saying this in a cavalier manner,
15 by any means. But I see this in exactly the same
16 way as I've seen other schools I've discussed. Our
17 comments is not what you will do in the future.
18 It's what happened, and has nothing to do with you
19 at all because you weren't even there.

20 But that's what I'm seeing here. So I --
21 someone can correct me if I'm wrong because I've got
22 all these pieces of paper.

23 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: Commissioner, when I
24 first interviewed, we had a three-year provisional
25 renewal. Then early September-ish, I think it was,

1 we had a four-year provisional renewal. And right
2 now, we may be looking at a five-year renewal with
3 provisions that I fully accept. And I agree. I
4 began my response to the analyses as, "We agree."

5 I hope that -- well, my faculty has faith.
6 My community members have faith. We had our first
7 showcase this past Friday, and it was perfect. And
8 I have a strong community. I have a strong board.
9 I have a strong finance manager.

10 And I have three years before me of
11 Woodrow Wilson Fellowship coaching, and they are
12 from the University of Virginia, in helping me build
13 that 90-day plan and the turnaround model that we
14 need to reach -- you know, our math scores are low.
15 Our literacy scores are higher.

16 So I understand the struggles that the
17 school has, and I also understand your position.
18 And me, I am between a rock and a hard place.

19 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Absolutely.

20 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: And I believe that in
21 this time, since May 30th, working. I worked June
22 for free because that's how much I loved the school.
23 I moved on my birthday, June 28th, and I was
24 literally falling asleep, because Farmington down to
25 Las Cruces, that's a big drive. And I'm towing my

1 car behind. And I've never driven like that in the
2 desert before.

3 So I'm committed to the school. And I am
4 finding things that we need more resources for. And
5 I'm writing GEAR UP grants. We worked on Title IV
6 funding to direct that to a mission-specific
7 indicator for arts integration and what that \$10,000
8 could do for our school and for our achievement.

9 So there is a lot in the cloud. There's a
10 lot of moving pieces here.

11 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: I wonder if you
12 could kind of -- and you don't know this, but I hate
13 repeating this all the time. I am a special ed
14 teacher, so you and I together could be a perfect
15 person.

16 But I'm just -- so I am concerned about
17 the special ed needs. I guess I should be concerned
18 about the GATE needs. But I actually don't know
19 much about that. So I'm going to go with the
20 students with disabilities, if you can give me some
21 light on that.

22 MS. KAREN WOERNER: Well, what I do know
23 is at the 40-day window is there were 40 students
24 with IEPs that were listed in S.T.A.R.S. Three --
25 three were overdue at that time, according to

1 S.T.A.R.S.

2 But when we did our site visit, Megan
3 Shannon did the reviews of the IEP folders. And she
4 found -- she stopped at five files that were
5 significantly out of compliance in terms of their
6 IEP date.

7 So I did hear Dr. Schullo say that they
8 will have them finished by -- I think if I heard
9 correctly, it was by the end of January. But,
10 clearly, my concern, Commissioner, Madam Chair, is
11 that if those parents so deemed to file a complaint,
12 or, worse yet, file some lawsuit, this school is
13 significantly overdue in the deadlines required by
14 federal law to have those IEPs in compliance.

15 Dr. Schullo did indicate to me that
16 ancillary services are being provided. I think I
17 may have to ask. I'm not sure what that means.
18 What we found is the special services pieces were
19 not being provided. "Ancillary," to me, means OT,
20 PT, RT, social work, those extra ancillary services.
21 I'm not sure that's what she meant. I would direct
22 the question to her on that.

23 But I do have serious concerns about the
24 compliance, given particularly that they're still
25 not completed.

1 THE CHAIR: Can I just ask why someone
2 would stop -- why the stop was at five and not -- so
3 that we don't have a complete picture?

4 MS. MEGAN SHANNON: You want an answer
5 from here? We stopped at five because the area that
6 we were trying to pull the files from, one, were
7 being used for that financial audit; and, two,
8 because our site visit was running over -- I think
9 we got out of there at, like, 6:30 or 7:00. And
10 there was just not enough time to review everything.

11 MS. KAREN WOERNER: We always do a sample.
12 We just random-sample files when we go. So to
13 Megan's defense, that's something we normally do is
14 pull files. Clearly, when she had five that were
15 significantly out of compliance out of the samples
16 she pulled, it didn't seem like it was necessary to
17 go on.

18 But certainly, if you are interested in a
19 complete review, we'd be happy to an audit of all
20 the IEP files. But we don't typically do all.

21 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: So I -- so I'm
22 just -- you know, I hate this job, for which I don't
23 get paid. You know, I see the determination and the
24 passion. And I know that you've started this
25 school, and you have this goal, and it's great for

1 some people.

2 But as a Commissioner, I have to look at
3 what's good for every child, not just certain
4 children. I have to look at these IEPs, because
5 that's my 39 years of life, to see if they're not
6 being served.

7 I'm looking at the EL students. I'm
8 looking at the "F" in the lowest quartile for the
9 last four years.

10 And so those -- these scores concern me.
11 And when I'm getting even a "C," which is one of our
12 standards of excellence, it's a barely; it's barely
13 a "C," unless I -- I did not use my calculator. But
14 I was able to do this. It's barely a "C."

15 So I'm just looking at a school that I'm
16 not sure -- I guess this is becoming one of my best
17 words -- is at capacity, a capacity to be what it
18 needs to be, to be a charter that's doing better
19 than Las Cruces. I think I was just reading here
20 somewhere that the Las Cruces graduation rate was
21 higher than this one. So it's -- I'm just
22 struggling. I'm really struggling. And I don't --
23 I'm just not sure I can support this.

24 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: Madam Chairwoman, I'd
25 like to make a comment. Commissioner Armbruster,

1 you made the statements about we can't make a
2 decision on the future because the past has been
3 checkered, shall we say.

4 If that's the case, then we'd never fly an
5 airplane. We never would have flown an airplane.
6 We never would have gone to the moon. We never
7 would have had a lot of the conveniences that we
8 have. Because you start here and go to the future.
9 You don't start here and go to the past and correct
10 what wasn't. That's just my opinion now.

11 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Sure.

12 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: So I would argue that
13 here and now is more important, and the future is
14 more important than what has been. If the lessons
15 were learned, that's the case. If the lessons were
16 not learned, then you're right.

17 But the lessons have been learned, and
18 it's going to take time for this administrator to
19 correct what was deficiently done by the previous
20 administration.

21 And that's all I can say. This woman has
22 been working 12 to 15 hours a day. I have been on
23 her to take time off and to go home and rest. But
24 she will not give up. She is dedicated to this.
25 And we are dedicated to supporting her.

1 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: And I really
2 hope this is clear, that I am not blaming you. I'm
3 not. It's not a blame game.

4 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: No, I understand.

5 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: It's just that
6 our conditions of life, I guess, is what -- is that
7 we're looking at what has been to decide whether we
8 are going to go. Because everyone is going to do
9 better things in the future. That's -- you know,
10 that's sort of the -- what one would always hope.

11 But in these -- I've been on for three
12 years. So I can't talk about years back. I can
13 only talk about what I know. And I'm not even
14 surely I'm doing that quite well.

15 It's just that how much are we helping
16 kids succeed? What are the other -- the teachers
17 doing? I understand that one was terminated, and
18 that's fine. But it's -- to me, it's a joint thing.
19 We're looking at EL students. We're looking at
20 students with needs. We're looking at graduation
21 rates. We're looking at this school has a cap of
22 250, and 161 students have come to this school.

23 It's just -- to me, it's -- you know,
24 there's no credit recovery; although, I'm sure
25 that's somewhere in there.

1 But you're doing culinary arts, visual
2 arts, performing arts, literary arts, and media;
3 correct? The reading proficiency scores are going
4 down, not up. The math scores are going down.
5 Proficiencies are going down and not up. So these
6 are things. And I'm going to be quiet now.

7 DR. HOLLY SCHULLO: Commissioner
8 Armbruster, we share the same concerns. And I think
9 most people would -- I jumped at the chance. It
10 nudged me. I jumped at the chance to do the MBA in
11 educational leadership.

12 But my background was just English
13 teacher. And then from there, I saw a need for
14 gifted education. And I added on secondary English
15 and gifted education. And deep down, I'm an
16 intellectual. And when I had the opportunity to do
17 the MBA, the first thing that they trained us was
18 the SWOT analysis.

19 So when I researched this school and I was
20 looking at my forever school where I would work and
21 retire from, something that I could really dig into,
22 my training supports changed. My training is going
23 to give me the stamina to see this through.

24 When I did the internal audit of special
25 education, I did that myself. I told my board --

1 after I did it on a Saturday morning, I said, "I
2 think we need to look at some areas at the school
3 here," because I have been supported to create
4 change, because that's what we want.

5 So your concerns are my concerns. I can't
6 move fast enough. And the other is even through,
7 like, a renewal kit, I never received any training.
8 We moved to the PowerSchool platform, and I did not
9 receive any training on that, either.

10 But we're able to track our attendance
11 now. We know how our block schedules really look,
12 how we -- are analyzing, through data, whether or
13 not a block schedule is benefiting our math scores.
14 It works for arts integration. We need more art in
15 our math classes. We need more integration. So we
16 have a lot of moving pieces.

17 But I will -- the SWOT analysis in the
18 beginning, I knew we needed to look at special
19 education. I knew we needed to look at our
20 finances. And I'm not telling my board president
21 anything new, because he knew these things, too. He
22 just wanted to know if he picked the right principal
23 to see things through.

24 I won't share my location. But I live
25 .7 miles from my school. Because when I moved down

1 from Farmington, I knew that I would see the grocery
2 store, my school, and my apartment. I haven't
3 unpacked.

4 And I'm learning. And for me, the process
5 has been amazing. I have been very fortunate to go
6 to the PEC conference over the summer, and right
7 from there, I hit the ground running, networking and
8 making friends and working with the schools in
9 Las Cruces, like New America that has that credit
10 recovery model.

11 I'm looking in my own building. You know,
12 how we are going to work together? How do we work
13 together as schools around each other? How do we
14 share?

15 So we're sharing resources. It's more
16 than passion; it is a plan. I initiated the NM DASH
17 and I thought, "What a great platform."

18 I do a 90-day plan anyway through the
19 Woodrow Wilson Fellowship. I love the NM DASH plan.

20 And when I look at the schools up north
21 that have used them, their portfolios of schools are
22 "A"s and "B"s. And I like the NM DASH also because
23 I can track other changes that we're making in our
24 building, like monitor our Title IV funds.

25 So for me, that's not anything new to me

1 to work with. I like the tools.

2 I think that Gene Elliott wanted to speak.

3 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: No. I just simply want
4 to say that we're committed to the school, and we
5 will -- I would think, Commissioner Armbruster, that
6 our agreement with the conditions that PED placed in
7 their report would compensate for some of the
8 fact -- maybe some of the concerns you might have
9 about the future; because we do agree with that.

10 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: And as governing
11 council president -- and you've been that since you
12 founded the school. Is that -- you've been on the
13 governing council?

14 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: Yes, Commissioner
15 Armbruster.

16 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: So these things
17 have occurred under your watch.

18 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: I agree.

19 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: And that just
20 gives me -- I hate this job -- it just -- I'm just
21 concerned about a capacity. I see your passion, and
22 I can see that you could run a good school.

23 But that's not my job right now. My job
24 is to evaluate what has occurred in the past and
25 hope that you have this going to the future. That's

1 my job; so --

2 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: One of the things that
3 makes a good governance council, however, is that we
4 draw a very distinct line between where our
5 responsibility leaves off and the administrator
6 takes over. And in the past, maybe to error -- I'm
7 not certain about that. But in the past, we have
8 honored that line.

9 And I'm not saying anything that it was
10 not our responsibility to check. But there are so
11 many hours in the month and so many times you can
12 meet on a regular basis to consider the things that
13 we need to consider.

14 And I'm not making excuses at all. I'm
15 just simply talking about the reality of life. And
16 so there may have been some things -- obviously,
17 there are -- that the previous administrator did
18 that has got us to the point where we are. And we
19 did not pick up on it, and we did not question it at
20 all. But we were very conscious about that line.

21 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Were you -- what
22 I'm reading is that the evaluation of the head
23 administrator had not -- there was not evidence of
24 that. Karen, I hope you're listening -- I have two
25 things on both sides -- that the school did not

1 provide evidence that the governing council
2 evaluated the head administrator during the '16-'17
3 or in the previous year, which would have caught a
4 bunch of these things, I would think, because you
5 know what to do and what we're asking.

6 I'm just not feeling capacity here.

7 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: Okay.

8 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: And that's --

9 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: Thank you.

10 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: I only speak for
11 me.

12 THE CHAIR: And I'm just -- and this is
13 nothing against Holly. But our votes aren't -- we
14 don't hitch our wagon to an administrator, simply
15 because it's -- I'll use a sports analogy. You sign
16 on to pay for NMSU with this coach. But the next
17 year, who knows? They've got a better offer;
18 they're gone.

19 And I understand the verbal commitment and
20 so on. But that's not what we can hitch our wagon
21 to, because we make a decision based on the overall
22 health of a school, not on a particular individual
23 who's leading that school, no matter what they say.
24 Because who know -- you never know what's going to
25 happen around the corner. That's -- so I'm just

1 going to say that.

2 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: That's life.

3 THE CHAIR: But are there any other
4 questions?

5 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: Madam Chair. I'd
6 just like to go ahead and make a motion, based upon
7 what has been stated here.

8 THE CHAIR: The motion has been crafted by
9 our attorney; so...

10 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: I think we've
11 discussed this enough. I just want to compliment
12 these individuals. When the head of the governing
13 council said they accept these recommendations that
14 CSD is putting forward as a condition for any
15 renewal, thank you.

16 THE CHAIR: Thanks.

17 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: I move that the PEC
18 renew the charter contract between the PEC and Alma
19 d'Arte for three years. Before I receive a second,
20 I am also going to recommend that the school return
21 back to the next PEC meeting in January so that
22 consideration will be taking place for the school to
23 enact a Corrective Action Plan for the current
24 school year to address the special ed and the ELL
25 deficiencies.

1 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Second. On
2 discussion, I'm -- are you saying this coming
3 January?

4 THE CHAIR: Yes.

5 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Okay. All right.

6 THE CHAIR: Let me just explain a little
7 bit, the concern was that if it became a condition,
8 the contract doesn't go into effect until next
9 school year.

10 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Right. And just
11 to let Commissioner Peralta, I had the same proposal
12 as yours.

13 MS. KAREN WOERNER: Great minds.

14 THE CHAIR: So would you like to second
15 that motion?

16 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Yes. Second.

17 THE CHAIR: There's a motion by
18 Commissioner Peralta and a second by Commissioner
19 Caballero. Is there any further discussion?

20 (No response.)

21 THE CHAIR: Okay.

22 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Are there any
23 abstentions?

24 (No response.)

25 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Hearing none,

1 Commissioner Toulouse?

2 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Yes.

3 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner

4 Armbruster votes "No."

5 Commissioner Robbins?

6 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: Yes.

7 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner

8 Peralta?

9 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Yes.

10 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner

11 Gipson?

12 THE CHAIR: Yes.

13 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner

14 Crone?

15 COMMISSIONER CRONE: No.

16 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner

17 Caballero?

18 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Yes.

19 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: The motion

20 passes, five to two.

21 THE CHAIR: Motion passes.

22 Congratulations.

23 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: Could somebody send

24 e-mail copy of the motion to Dr. Schullo? I know it

25 takes a while for your minutes to come out. We have

1 a governance council meeting on Monday. So if
2 somebody could e-mail the wording of that motion to
3 us so we can present it to the governance council --

4 THE CHAIR: We have to check based on
5 our --

6 (Chair consults with PEC counsel.)

7 THE CHAIR: Right. Let me just -- because
8 you're right. Thanks. The motion is simply for a
9 three-year renewal. See? That's --

10 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: But there were some
11 added comments that go along with that.

12 THE CHAIR: That's not part of the motion.

13 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: Okay.

14 THE CHAIR: That's not a condition of the
15 renewal.

16 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: Okay.

17 THE CHAIR: So there will be a
18 notification coming out to the school of their being
19 on the agenda for January to discuss a Corrective
20 Action Plan. And I'm also going to say --

21 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: That's the part I'd
22 like to have the wording for so I make sure I give
23 it directly to the governance council.

24 THE CHAIR: Okay. All right. We'll do
25 something.

1 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: Just mail it to us so
2 we can place it on the agenda for next Monday, okay?

3 THE CHAIR: Okay. Thank you very much.

4 MR. GENE ELLIOTT: Thank you so very much.

5 THE CHAIR: And we're going to sit in
6 recess until tomorrow morning.

7 (Proceedings in recess at 4:15 p.m.)
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SANTA FE OFFICE
119 East Marcy, Suite 110
Santa Fe, NM 87501
(505) 989-4949
FAX (505) 843-9492



MAIN OFFICE
201 Third NW, Suite 1630
Albuquerque, NM 87102
(505) 843-9494
FAX (505) 843-9492
1-800-669-9492
e-mail: info@litsupport.com

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15 In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my
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19 *Cynthia Chapman*

20 Cynthia C. Chapman, RMR-CRR, NM CCR #219
21 BEAN & ASSOCIATES, INC.
22 201 Third Street, NW, Suite 1630
23 Albuquerque, New Mexico 87102
24
25

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SANTA FE OFFICE
119 East Marcy, Suite 110
Santa Fe, NM 87501
(505) 989-4949
FAX (505) 843-9492

BEAN
& ASSOCIATES, Inc.
A
PROFESSIONAL COURT
REPORTING SERVICE

MAIN OFFICE
201 Third NW, Suite 1630
Albuquerque, NM 87102
(505) 843-9494
FAX (505) 843-9492
1-800-669-9492
e-mail: info@litsupport.com