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BEFORE THE PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION
STATE OF NEW MEXICO

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS
OPEN PUBLIC MEETING
VOLUME TWO
December 12, 2018
9:00 a.m.
Jerry Apodaca Education Building - Mabry Hall
300 Don Gaspar
Santa Fe, New Mexico

REPORTED BY: Cynthia C. Chapman, RMR-CRR, NM CCR #219
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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. JAMES CONYERS, Member
MR. TIM CRONE, Member
MR. DAVID ROBBINS, Member
MS. TRISH RUIZ, Member
MS. CARMIE TOULOUSE, Member

PED STAFF:

MS. KAREN WOERNER, Acting Director,
Charter School Division
MS. BEVERLY FRIEDMAN, PED Custodian of Record
and Liaison to the PEC

PEC COUNSEL:

MS. AMI JAEGER, Counsel to the PEC
MR. MARK CHAIKEN, Counsel to the PEC

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1 THE CHAIR: I'm going to bring out of
2 recess this meeting of the Public Education
3 Commission. And it is Wednesday, December 12th, and
4 it's 9:07 a.m. And we are going to continue with
5 our renewals.

6 And the first school that we have up this
7 morning is Middle College High School. And I
8 will -- in case anyone wasn't aware, we have a
9 separate sign-up sheet for public comment for each
10 individual school. And Ms. Friedman here on the
11 corner has those sign-up sheets.

12 There's only eight minutes allotted for
13 public comment; so we divide up the time based on
14 the number of people that have signed up. So if you
15 have a large number of people that wish to speak, I
16 would strongly recommend you condense and figure out
17 what points each person wants to cover so that you
18 get everything stated that you want to, and we know
19 that you've been -- you've been heard as best we
20 can.

21 So the sign-up sheet is over there. If
22 you haven't had an opportunity to -- to sign up,
23 please do so. And that goes for every school that's
24 here today has a separate sign-up sheet.

25 Okay. Thank you.

1 We actual- -- there -- okay. That's okay.
2 There's six of us here right now -- seven of us here
3 right now.

4 My understanding is Commissioner Caballero
5 is here, just not physically here right now. So we
6 don't have to take roll call today, because we're
7 continuing on. But I would like to recognize, once
8 again, that this is the final meeting of two of the
9 Commissioners that are here today, Commissioner
10 Peralta and Commissioner Toulouse. And Commissioner
11 Peralta -- the individual that is going to take
12 Commissioner Peralta's seat is here, Mike Chavez.
13 So we appreciate you coming. And once again, Glenna
14 Voigt is here who is taking Commissioner Toulouse's
15 place. So, welcome.

16 MS. FRIEDMAN: Madam Chair, Ms. Davis is
17 here also.

18 THE CHAIR: I'm sorry. I did not see you.
19 So Georgina Davis is also here. She will be taking
20 Commissioner Conyers' spot. Commissioner Conyers
21 unfortunately had a flat tire so that he won't be
22 able to join -- because he comes in from the Gallup
23 area. So he's not going to be able to join us
24 probably until late this afternoon.

25 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Bloomfield.

1 THE CHAIR: I don't know. Okay. So
2 thanks for all the housekeeping pieces.

3 So the folks from Middle College are
4 welcome to step up, take a seat. If you need more
5 chairs, please feel free to take chairs from around
6 here.

7 CSD will make their presentation. Then
8 you'll have your 15 minutes. Then we'll do the
9 eight minutes of the public comment, and then we'll
10 have time to ask questions.

11 So I will ask you, when you -- when you do
12 start speaking, if you would just identify yourself
13 for the record. So, thanks. Okay.

14 MS. KAREN WOERNER: Thank you,
15 Madam Chair, members of the Commission. Good
16 morning, everyone. My name is Karen Woerner, Deputy
17 Director of the Options for Parents and Family
18 Division. And with me is Melissa Brown. She is the
19 administrator of the Training and Technical
20 Assistance side of the house in Charter Schools
21 Division.

22 We did those introductions yesterday, but
23 many people here were not here yesterday; so -- the
24 first school before you today, as you said,
25 Chairwoman, Middle College High School, is an early

1 college high school that has been operating as a
2 charter school in Gallup since 2002.

3 The current contract was signed by the
4 local authorizer on August 13th, 2018, and is for
5 the current school year only. Renewal
6 recommendations are generally based on data from the
7 current contract only, and, as you saw with schools
8 yesterday, looking at one year.

9 Obviously, this current contract is this
10 year only. The school did provide documentation
11 from several prior years for the school's version of
12 Part A, the data, and Part B, their progress report.
13 Therefore, the CSD has included data for the past
14 two years to provide trend lines for the
15 Commissioners.

16 The school's letter grade for 2017-2018
17 was an "A" overall with three "A"s, two "B"s, a "C,"
18 and one "F" in the individual components. The "F"
19 was in the improvement of lowest performing
20 students.

21 If I could direct your attention to
22 Page 10 of your packets, Commissioners, the -- yes,
23 Page 10. Sorry, Page 10, Chart 1. All of these
24 charts show upward trends.

25 Chart 1 indicates the upward trend of the

1 overall school from the prior year from a "C" to an
2 "A."

3 Chart 2 shows that the math proficiency --
4 I'm sorry -- reading proficiency has gone up. Math
5 proficiency sort of held its own at the same rate
6 one year to the next.

7 Chart 3 shows that the current standing
8 increased by two letter grades; that's one of the
9 components. And continuing on the next page, the
10 same is true for the school improvement points, with
11 the growth two letter grades from one year to the
12 next.

13 Chart 5. We've talked about this chart
14 several times yesterday. But the growth index
15 chart, again, notice that closer to the zero means
16 they're growing as expected. Above the line is
17 better; below the line is less than expected.

18 And as you can see here, the first year,
19 there was some less than expected in the math area;
20 but they've sort of caught that up in the following
21 year with both math and reading being at the
22 expected growth level for their students.

23 And, again, that's based on the student
24 population and their last two test scores to see --
25 to determine their peer group and how they're

1 growing compared to that group.

2 In addition, on Page 15, you will see that
3 the Chart 11 shows that the graduation points earned
4 have also significantly increased.

5 So that's really the report card pieces.

6 The CSD team did review evidence during
7 the renewal site visit that also indicated that the
8 school has either met or exceeded each of its
9 mission-specific goals last year.

10 Regarding finances, the school's last
11 audit record had zero findings.

12 And regarding the Board of Finance, as you
13 know, the school is presently under a local
14 authorizer, and, therefore, the governing board has
15 not functioned in that capacity. But the school and
16 the board president have indicated they're prepared
17 to pursue the Board of Finance, if approved.

18 All but one governing board member
19 completed all their required training hours last
20 year. And the only one that did not meet the total
21 number of hours missed three; but, in fact, he had
22 joined the board at the very end of the school year;
23 I want to say May.

24 Middle College High School's current
25 authorizer uses the same performance framework used

1 by the PEC -- or the past performance framework, not
2 the new one, to be clear. And -- however, the CSD
3 was unable to provide ratings on Page 5 in your
4 packet, as we referred to yesterday, because we were
5 unable to obtain annual site visit reports from the
6 local authorizer; in fact, both the school and the
7 local authorizer acknowledged that those annual site
8 visits had not been done.

9 But if you go back to Page 2 of the
10 packet, the evaluation of the school progress
11 report, as confirmed at the renewal site visit,
12 indicates that the school has met the standards or
13 has demonstrated substantial progress in all areas.

14 And, finally, the school did provide a
15 complete and timely application, including the
16 E-Occupancy Certificate that we received last week.
17 And as a result of all of this, the PED recommends a
18 five-year renewal with a condition on implementing a
19 school improvement plan to address the improvement
20 of lowest performing students.

21 Thank you.

22 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Good morning, once
23 again.

24 MR. DAN HILL: Good morning, Madam Chair,
25 and members of the Commission. I'm Dan Hill. I'm

1 an attorney for Middle College High School, joined
2 at the table by -- with Dr. Robert Hunter, who is
3 the CEO of the school, and Tony Major, who is the
4 governing council president. I am going to keep my
5 remarks really brief, other than to say that the one
6 issue in the application that's -- as the PED has
7 acknowledged has been resolved -- was an outstanding
8 E-Occupancy. That's been obtained. It was really a
9 clerical issue. It's been submitted.

10 And with that, I'll turn it over to
11 Dr. Hunter to give the school's remarks.

12 THE CHAIR: It's good to see you again.

13 MR. DAN HILL: It's nice to see you as
14 well.

15 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: Thank you. I have a
16 prepared statement, and I'll go ahead and recite it.

17 Madam Chair, members of the Commission,
18 thank you for the opportunity to address the Public
19 Education Commission on behalf of the Middle College
20 High School. My name is Dr. Robert Hunter, and I'm
21 the CEO of the school, here today with several
22 members of our staff and faculty, parents, students,
23 and interested stakeholders.

24 I moved to New Mexico after graduating
25 from Michigan State over 23 years ago. At first, I

1 was just going to be here for the summer building
2 houses with Habitat for Humanity. But I fell in
3 love with the mountains and decided I'd stay a
4 little bit longer. And then not long afterward, I
5 met an enchanting Navajo woman and have been here
6 ever since.

7 THE CHAIR: It happens.

8 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: Along the way, I've
9 worked in a handful of public and tribal schools.
10 But when it came time to plant roots and nurture the
11 best possible environment for our twin daughter and
12 son, finding a place we could believe in became the
13 priority.

14 And I was familiar with Middle College
15 High School because my niece had graduated from the
16 school.

17 As I've also taught college courses at
18 various post-secondary institutions, I thought, what
19 better place to bring these experiences together, to
20 work for a school that makes college a reality for
21 so many college high schools whose families would
22 otherwise have a difficult time affording these
23 opportunities.

24 A little history about our school. It was
25 New Mexico's very first early college high school.

1 So in the educational landscape, that's a pretty
2 cool accolade. The state's pioneering early college
3 high school of which there are now approximately two
4 dozen of them started as a charter school. In the
5 spirit of innovation, we are still a charter school.

6 So since 2002, we have been located on the
7 campus of UNM-Gallup. And as our mission states, we
8 provide an innovative and high-quality
9 individualized learning environment for students to
10 receive expanded opportunities for post-secondary
11 advancement.

12 And we do this well. There are plenty of
13 schools that send their graduates to four-year
14 institutions; but I've been out here long enough to
15 know that that's the only -- the first half of the
16 statistic. What matters is whether or not these
17 students remain in college.

18 For years, I've seen students go off to
19 school in the fall, only to be back home in the
20 spring. This is not the case with Middle College.
21 Starting with the class of 2017, we followed up more
22 than half a year later to see what these graduates
23 were up to. We knew that 82 percent of them had
24 gone on to college; and of these students, we
25 couldn't be more proud to learn everyone was still

1 there.

2 And when we examined this trend amongst
3 our subgroups, we found this number was even higher
4 for our Native American students at 92 percent.
5 Come January, we're going to follow up with the
6 class of 2018, with whom we expect to find similar
7 numbers.

8 I'm not surprised with our students' rates
9 of success. We expect a lot of them; but we give
10 them the supports to meet those expectations. We
11 have a full-time faculty of four, while two
12 additional staff, the counselor and I, also pitch in
13 and teach a course apiece.

14 What impresses me most about our faculty
15 is that every one of them is also credentialed to
16 teach college. And this is good for our host
17 institution as well. In fact, we contribute three
18 courses to the UNM schedule that are regularly
19 taught by our own instructors. And UNM has asked
20 two more of our instructors to add evening courses
21 to the spring schedule to accommodate growing demand
22 and fill in for a professor that's going to be going
23 on paternity leave.

24 So let me just tell you about the niche we
25 fill in Gallup. When I came on board as the

1 assistant principal and counselor three-and-a-half
2 years ago, we didn't do a new student orientation.
3 Instead, we met with the families one-on-one and
4 always asked what brought them to Middle College.

5 And it was astonishing to hear from just
6 about every one of them that they were looking for a
7 place to escape the bullying that was going on in
8 the local high schools. And, indeed, as the school
9 that bridges high school to college, we occupy a
10 place that isn't defined by the usual cliques. In
11 fact, in our part of the state, there is a dearth of
12 high-performing schools, and MCHS is presently the
13 only high school to receive that "A" letter grade.

14 I think that speaks to the need of schools
15 like ours, places where underserved and particularly
16 Native American students can get a jump start on
17 their college education. And that speaks to another
18 observation I made about our school early on, that
19 it needed to increase its Native enrollment.

20 When I came on board, Native students were
21 the third largest subgroup. But three-and-a-half
22 years later, those numbers have nearly doubled and
23 it's now the largest enrollment demographic.
24 Moreover, there wasn't a single Native American on
25 staff. But this year, 25 percent of our full-time

1 staff is Native American.

2 We obviously can't give enrollment
3 preference to students; but we do go out to tribal
4 chapter houses and advertise in the Navajo Times.
5 So when the Navajo Nation passed a resolution to
6 support Middle College in September, we couldn't
7 have been more pleased. As it affirms, we're
8 meeting our mission of making college a reality for
9 so many of our area students and families.

10 This is not to say we don't need to change
11 anything, however. While it's true our students
12 demonstrate much higher rates of proficiency in
13 math, reading, and science than many of the other
14 area high schools, we do recognize the need to focus
15 on the growth of our Q1 students, particularly in
16 reading. At an early -- because an early college
17 high school's curriculum is heavily based on reading
18 and it's very writing intensive, if we don't improve
19 our students' growth in these areas, they're going
20 to have difficulty accessing the college-level
21 material that we're mission-bound to prepare them
22 for.

23 So to this end, we are supplementing our
24 lower division English courses with online
25 diagnostic and intervention components.

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1 I guess to say in closing, we really
2 appreciate the CSD's recommendations and generally
3 welcome the opportunity to work with them in
4 partnership. After 16 years without any authorizer
5 support or oversight, we embrace the idea of
6 unbiased accountability. Anything we can do to
7 better support our students and families to get more
8 students transitioned successfully to college is
9 what it's all about.

10 I was always taught that education works
11 best when we borrow and share ideas with one
12 another, rather than taking an insular and
13 territorial approach that does little to address the
14 needs of the students we serve. The community and
15 culture we serve sees learning as a collaborative
16 enterprise; so it's only natural that we deliver on
17 those expectations.

18 So thank you very much for the opportunity
19 to meet with you today. It's very greatly
20 appreciated.

21 THE CHAIR: Are you done?

22 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: I think I'm finished.
23 We may have some public comment. Our board
24 president is here as well.

25 THE CHAIR: We do.

1 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: Sure.

2 THE CHAIR: Do you want to say something
3 now? Because you've got how much time left?

4 MS. FRIEDMAN: Eight minutes.

5 THE CHAIR: So --

6 DR. TONY MAJOR: Thank you, Madam Chair,
7 members of the Commission. My name is Tony Major.
8 And as Dr. Hunter said, I'm the governing council
9 president. I've been involved with Middle College
10 for about ten years now on the governing council and
11 in other areas.

12 My day job, currently, I work for Navajo
13 Technical University. I've been there about seven
14 years, and was at UNM Gallup prior. That's how I
15 got involved with Middle College.

16 I just want to assure the Commission that
17 the governing council is fully in support of this --
18 this move, and we're committed to do whatever it
19 takes to do what we need to do for our students.
20 And that's really why we're here is to provide this
21 excellent opportunity for the students.

22 So, again, I want to thank you all.

23 THE CHAIR: Thanks. We have four people
24 that have signed up for public comment. And I'm
25 going to apologize. The first one, I can read,

1 which is -- each of you is going to have two
2 minutes, because there's only four people. The
3 first one on the list is Stefanie Mortensen.

4 FROM THE FLOOR: Good morning, everyone.
5 My name is Stefanie Mortensen. I am the parent of a
6 senior currently attending Middle College and of a
7 child that has graduated. I would like to share a
8 statement from my daughter, because she was unable
9 to attend due to finals.

10 "I was a Middle College student from 2014
11 until 2016 when I graduated with both my diploma and
12 an Associate's degree. I recently worked in
13 Washington, D.C., as a foreign service intern for
14 the U.S. Department of State, and I will continue my
15 internship at a U.S. embassy overseas this summer.

16 "I am currently the senior editor at the
17 New Mexico News Port and a writer for Albuquerque
18 Live, the magazine. On Friday, at the age of 20, I
19 will graduate with my bachelor's in journalism. I
20 owe every ounce of my success to the education I
21 received at MCHS.

22 "I view this opportunity as the gift that
23 keeps on giving. I was granted two years of a
24 college education in an authentic college
25 environment. I was challenged and trusted with

1 additional responsibility concerning my education
2 that most kids my age were not.

3 "The staff at the Middle College put an
4 arm around me and provided me with all the tools I
5 needed to thrive as a young college student. My
6 experiences my sophomore through senior year
7 encouraged and prepared me to continue pursuing a
8 higher education.

9 "I did not fear attending a larger
10 institution because I was ready. I was a freshman
11 with a degree. I was immediately accepted into a
12 program, because I had already completed my basics.
13 And this sparked the beginning of my career in
14 journalism.

15 "I am still a young student with a world
16 of opportunities ahead of me; but I recognize that
17 the crucial decision I made five years ago to attend
18 Middle College High School is the reason why I am
19 where I am today. And I would not want to be
20 anywhere else.

21 "I am one of many Middle College success
22 stories because my charter school equipped all of us
23 with the tools of leadership and independence. So
24 why revoke a charter that has done so much good
25 within our community?

1 "Recently, I have considered where I would
2 be without MCHS. I think of how people are
3 seriously considering depriving hundreds of young
4 leaders from having the same opportunity I did, and
5 it boggles my mind. It simply does not make sense,
6 and it is not fair.

7 "As a graduate of this institution, I will
8 continue to fight and stand alongside my community
9 for this charter, because MCHS is a great school,
10 run by even greater people. I can only hope to make
11 a fraction of the impact they have in my future
12 endeavors.

13 "Thank you for your time."

14 THE CHAIR: Thank you so much.

15 Next is Sharlene Begay-Platero.

16 MS. FRIEDMAN: You have five minutes left.

17 FROM THE FLOOR: Ya'at'eeh. Good morning.
18 I'm Sharlene Begay-Platero. I come from a community
19 called Church Rock, which is near Gallup. My
20 husband and I have two children, a boy and a girl
21 who are twins who are juniors at Middle College High
22 School. My children were previously at a private
23 school called Rehoboth Christian School; but my
24 husband and I wanted our children to benefit from
25 what Middle College, the only "A" high school in

1 McKinley County, had to offer in our community.

2 The statistics at Middle College are
3 something to be celebrated: a high school that
4 permits the students to graduate with their first
5 two years of college completed in a very worthy
6 model.

7 When 92 percent of the school's Native
8 American enrollment goes to college, we should be
9 promoting this achievement. The resolutions passed
10 by Navajo community chapters near Gallup, the
11 Department of Education and -- from the Navajo
12 Nation Council need to be taken seriously. These
13 are the voices of our Navajo relatives and community
14 members.

15 I brought you a copy of the Navajo Board
16 of Education resolution in support of Middle
17 College, which is like an equivalent to you all for
18 the State of New Mexico.

19 I request your support in protecting a
20 school that has given its students a tremendous head
21 start in college, allow our families the choice to
22 achieve these goals in a school that has proven
23 these outcomes.

24 Please vote "yes" for our school's
25 renewal. Thank you for your time.

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1 THE CHAIR: Thank you. We're going to
2 apologize. I know it's "Ed De," and it begins with
3 an "A."

4 FROM THE FLOOR: De Armond. Sorry.
5 Everybody does that to my last name. And my writing
6 is not very clear. So I apologize for that.

7 THE CHAIR: Mine isn't. That's why I
8 print.

9 FROM THE FLOOR: I'm sorry. Please
10 forgive me.

11 THE CHAIR: No problem.

12 MS. FRIEDMAN: Excuse me. You have four
13 minutes total.

14 FROM THE FLOOR: I'll make mine quick.

15 Ed De Armond. I'm from Gallup. I'm a
16 proud father of a student from the Middle College.
17 She's a senior this year. She's been in attendance
18 there since her sophomore year and has gained so
19 much from the school. Unfortunately, with the
20 bullying from the Gallup-McKinley County School
21 Board and Central Administration, they -- this year,
22 the same administration -- okay. I got off track
23 there. I'm sorry.

24 But while the current superintendent's son
25 attended Middle College there and was allowed to

1 participate with activities such as homecoming,
2 dances, assemblies, and proms, this year the same
3 administration and school board banned all these
4 amazing students from participating in these events.

5 Why? All these students are trying to do
6 is better themselves with higher education and a
7 more challenging curriculum.

8 The Middle College is the only "A" in the
9 district. Why would anyone even want to shut it
10 down? It has and will continue to give students a
11 chance to get ahead on college and should be allowed
12 to continue.

13 I am an advocate for not only my own
14 child, but others able to attend the school. With
15 your support, the youth of our community will be
16 able to have a higher education.

17 And it's all about the children. Nobody
18 else. Thank you.

19 THE CHAIR: Thank you so much. And,
20 finally, we have Jennabah Platero.

21 FROM THE FLOOR: Hi. My name is Jennabah
22 Platero. I'm currently a junior at the middle
23 college. I am here today just to say that Middle
24 College has been a huge blessing in my life.
25 Despite criticism and discrimination from the

1 district, the staff of the Middle College has still
2 gone out of their way to push me to be my best.

3 Throughout middle school and my freshman
4 year of high school, I was not academically
5 challenged, and teachers weren't necessarily there
6 for me, pushing me to do my best.

7 Here at the Middle College, the staff does
8 that and beyond. I just want to stay thank you to
9 them. And I don't want my school to close down. It
10 has been the best school I've ever gone to. And
11 they push me to be a smart, strong, successful young
12 woman.

13 Thank you.

14 THE CHAIR: Thank you.

15 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: Madam Chair?

16 THE CHAIR: I'm figuring there's someone
17 else that came later.

18 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: We have a Navajo
19 Nation Council delegate that arrived. Do we have a
20 minute remaining?

21 MS. FRIEDMAN: You have a minute and 15
22 seconds.

23 THE CHAIR: Please, take a seat if you
24 want, or you can stand, whichever makes you most
25 comfortable. But please just identify yourself for

1 the record.

2 FROM THE FLOOR: Thank you. Madam Chair
3 and committee, my name is Olin Kieyoomia. I'm the
4 Council delegate of the 23rd Navajo Nation Council.
5 I sit on the Health, Education, and Human Services
6 Committee of the Navajo Nation Legislative Branch.

7 I am here on behalf of Middle College. In
8 relation to that, the Navajo Nation Council took
9 action as far as a resolution to address this
10 concern in renewal of Middle College High School.

11 The Navajo Nation Council and Health,
12 Education, and Human Services Committee Legislative
13 Branch has supported the ongoing efforts of
14 Dr. Hunter and his staff as well as the students.

15 Judging by what we receive as reports from
16 the Navajo Nation Council, we have seen the
17 significant increase of 21 percent rise to
18 40 percent in Native American student growth. This
19 is the largest demographic in our area as far as
20 kids attending this institution, whether it be
21 Navajo or Zuni. So with that significant increase,
22 and also with the many programs, we have seen
23 numerous Navajo students graduate with their high
24 school diplomas as well as their degrees, an
25 Associate's degree, or even higher, a Bachelor's.

1 We would like to continue this program and
2 like to mention our failed efforts as far as trying
3 to advocate and resolve this problem at the local
4 level with the local public school.

5 But as a remedy to this issue, we are
6 asking this committee to go ahead and approve Middle
7 College High School. We believe, as a Navajo
8 Nation, that this institution has been a benefit to
9 our Native American children. As you guys know, we
10 come from a high impoverished area, one of the
11 poorest counties in New Mexico. So we ask of you
12 here today to consider all of the influential things
13 that this college has provided to the Native
14 American students, as well as the other minorities
15 that attend this institution.

16 So I'll greatly appreciate it if you guys
17 would continue this as an ongoing effort to pursue
18 our Native Americans' education to be
19 self-sufficient as far as providing services back to
20 our nation.

21 Thank you.

22 THE CHAIR: Thank you so much. Okay.
23 Welcome, once again. And thank you for everything
24 that you do every day. We certainly appreciate all
25 the work that you -- that you continue to do.

1 And I'm just going to say that thank you
2 for being able to steer this ship, especially this
3 past probably year and a half, through the
4 difficulties that have arisen, unfortunately, with
5 your local district, that it's -- I can't imagine
6 the challenges of trying to do what you do every day
7 knowing that there's that cloud constantly
8 surrounding you.

9 So it's -- and it's unfortunate that as
10 educators as a group, that sometimes we do things
11 like that. And that's -- that's unfortunate. So
12 thank you.

13 And without a doubt, it has become more
14 than obvious the support of the local Native
15 community for you. And we appreciate that. Because
16 I do know that that was identified through your
17 local authorizer as a concern early on, because the
18 Native American population wasn't, they felt,
19 appropriately represented in the school population.

20 And I remember reading something about the
21 challenges with only having 100 students. So I'm --
22 I know you received the E-Occupancy. But I'm not
23 sure -- what's the capacity of the building?

24 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: So the E-Occupancy is
25 on the buildings that we own that are on leased

1 space from UNM. I believe that is at 68. But the
2 reality is that the majority of our students are in
3 classes on the UNM campus. So we also lease
4 classrooms -- four classroom spaces in Gurley Hall.
5 We never have anywhere close to 68 that are in
6 the -- the buildings that we actually own.

7 THE CHAIR: Right. So this is just, you
8 know, going forward. Do you perceive that sometime
9 in the future, you would be looking to look to
10 increase the -- the cap of the school so that you
11 could continue to service more of the community? I
12 don't know if that's something that you're looking
13 for.

14 And do you have a vision for what that --
15 you know, has the governance council had any
16 discussions about that? What's the -- what's the
17 future looking like?

18 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: Sure. And I feel
19 we're obligated to continue trying to make an
20 amendment request due to the wait list, you know,
21 and not being able to serve all the students that
22 want to get in. And ironically, that's what got us
23 into the issue in the first place.

24 We came before the Gallup board twice last
25 year trying to get just a 20-student enrollment

1 increase, and we were met with revocation the second
2 time that happened. Our governing council president
3 can speak to the fact that that is something we've
4 been wanting to do for a long time is to service
5 more students who are underserved.

6 Do you want to --

7 DR. TONY MAJOR: Sure. Thank you,
8 Madam Chair and members of the Commission. Yes,
9 we've had numerous conversations at our governance
10 council meetings about increasing our enrollment.
11 As Dr. Hunter said, we're not limited to our current
12 buildings, because a majority of our students meet
13 at the UNM-Gallup campus.

14 It's kind of a win-win, because the Branch
15 has seen a significant decline in enrollment over
16 the last few years. So by having our high school
17 dual-credit students being able to take classes
18 there, it actually helps the Branch.

19 And we're looking, you know -- we would
20 like to see in the neighborhood of probably 175 to
21 250 students in the next three to five years.
22 That's what we're looking at. Yeah.

23 THE CHAIR: And I don't know whether -- if
24 you have this information. I know there's been talk
25 throughout the university system of closing some of

1 those satellite campuses. I don't know. And I
2 don't know if you know if Gallup is one of those
3 that's on that short list.

4 DR. TONY MAJOR: Madam Chair, I don't
5 think so, because of the -- because of where it's
6 located and the high Native student population
7 that's served there. So I don't think UNM would
8 look to close that down.

9 THE CHAIR: Okay. All right. Thanks. So
10 now that we're on the subject of the campus, there
11 are challenges with co-locating. You've got adult
12 students; you've got underage students. So can you
13 talk to us about the policies and procedures that
14 you have in place if there is a -- if there's a
15 complaint, if an issue arises, how is it handled,
16 how, if at all, the Univer- -- the college gets
17 involved with any potential complaints and any
18 administration of the -- the solution?

19 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: Sure. Yeah. Well,
20 we're fortunate that we are on the UNM-Gallup
21 campus. So we have our own Code of Conduct; but we
22 also have married that Code of Conduct to UNM's
23 student Code of Conduct.

24 And so if ever such an instance arises, we
25 will -- we have access to also the campus police,

1 and we'll involve campus police. We involve the
2 Director of Student Services. Of course, we deal
3 with it internally, too. We meet with students and
4 their families as well.

5 So all the mandated reporting
6 procedures -- ironically, the counselor and I are
7 two individuals who, prior to coming to Middle
8 College, we trained the entire Gallup-McKinley
9 School District on mandated reporting requirements.

10 So those are things that we follow. It's
11 nice to have access to the campus police and the
12 Director of Student Services. And so they actually
13 do our Title IX training for us each year with all
14 of our students. And so it's -- it's pretty
15 seamless.

16 DR. TONY MAJOR: I just want to add that
17 our students are UNM-Gallup students. I mean, they
18 are -- they are enrolled at UNM; so they have all
19 the rights and privileges that UNM students do, as
20 well as being concurrent at Middle College.

21 THE CHAIR: Right. Right. But I -- no, I
22 was just expressing, you know, that -- you know, the
23 concern because you've got underage students that
24 oftentimes feel themselves very mature, you know.

25 DR. TONY MAJOR: We've been dealing with

1 it for 16 years; so it's not new to us.

2 THE CHAIR: No. I just felt we needed to
3 get that out there. So thank you.

4 So now let's look at the Q1 students
5 briefly.

6 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: Sure.

7 THE CHAIR: And other Commissioners may
8 have some additional questions with it. But that
9 you've identified it's obviously a challenge that
10 you have, especially in the reading. And you
11 mentioned in the renewal application that you had
12 tried one particular testing model. And, obviously,
13 the one size -- I think you even used the phrase,
14 "one size fits all," didn't work.

15 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: Right.

16 THE CHAIR: So you went back. And now
17 you're using some kind of online identifier.

18 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: Right. So what we did
19 last year is we designed intervention courses. And
20 we plugged them into the master schedule for
21 students that needed to make some further growth.
22 And actually, we ran an analysis just about three
23 weeks back and noted that -- what we did is we did a
24 control group, and we did the group of students who
25 took the intervention course.

1 And so although the intervention students
2 didn't show tremendous growth, they showed quite a
3 bit more growth than the control group. So this is
4 working, but not well enough.

5 And so what we did is we looked at some of
6 the online diagnostic and intervention solutions,
7 those that have the algorithms that when a student
8 is -- and they do this supplementally. So as they
9 are areas that need more practice with being
10 identified, they're getting more of those types of
11 items presented to them in the computer interface.

12 It's not going to supplant classroom
13 instruction, by any means. But it's a part of what
14 they'll do in their weekly schedule.

15 THE CHAIR: Okay. And they're
16 identified -- are they identified solely through
17 PARCC score?

18 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: Yes, that's how we've
19 done it.

20 THE CHAIR: Okay. But you also do
21 administer --

22 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: The ACCUPLACER.

23 THE CHAIR: Right. So you don't identify
24 any students outside of ACCUPLACER?

25 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: We could. We haven't

1 thought to do that. I mean, we do know with
2 ACCUPLACER is we use that -- rather than reinventing
3 the wheel and death by testing, for our short-cycle
4 assessment, we do the ACCUPLACER in the fall, and we
5 do it in the spring. That way, we can measure
6 growth. That's one of our mission-specific
7 indicators, as is tracking the post-secondary
8 graduates.

9 I know yesterday, there was conversation
10 about how difficult that is. Really, you know, we
11 thought it would be. And it wasn't that hard,
12 because when you're graduating anywhere from 30 to
13 40 students a year, you've got their contact
14 information; you've got their e-mails; you've got
15 their family's phone numbers. You go back to the
16 files; you call; you find out where they are. So --

17 THE CHAIR: I agree with you to some
18 extent. But I also think that to a certain
19 degree -- and this isn't putting a negative
20 connotation to any schools. But I think to a
21 certain degree, if a child identifies strongly with
22 the school that they graduated from, they're more
23 likely to respond back to that reach-out.

24 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: That may be. Yeah.

25 THE CHAIR: So that I think, you know,

1 that little unknown quantity becomes -- you know,
2 it's in there, I believe. So -- and as you know, it
3 has to be -- they have to be willing --

4 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: Right.

5 THE CHAIR: -- to do that reach-out. So I
6 think if someone doesn't have that strong emotional
7 type of attachment to the school, they may not feel
8 the -- you know, the strong need or desire to
9 respond back.

10 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: Right. We mostly
11 phone-called. And, you know, I was surprised. It
12 took us, like, two days. Yeah.

13 THE CHAIR: And, of course, it is, I
14 think, somewhat easier as well if you have a
15 community that's not maybe as transient; so that the
16 families are still there. And that becomes
17 challenging sometimes in areas like Albuquerque.
18 There's a lot of movement in and out; so the
19 families aren't even there any longer.

20 So there's -- I think we've got -- I
21 think, as a whole, we have to do a better job of
22 making sure that we have prepared our students for
23 the life that we thought we were, and to see if they
24 are succeeding. And I certainly applaud you for
25 being able to get those responses, and the fact --

1 because it's always been that challenge. Everyone
2 has that statistic. "90 percent of our graduates
3 went to college." But there's the -- you know, when
4 the shoe drops, how many were still there the
5 following May?

6 And that's the -- you know, that's the
7 critical piece. Even if they're not doing what they
8 thought they were doing because life happens. But
9 if we're -- if we gave them the skills to even be
10 able to make that decision to change their mind and
11 go do something else, that's -- that's what our job
12 is, to be able to do that.

13 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: I agree.

14 THE CHAIR: So it's nice to hear that
15 statistic as well.

16 Commissioners? I don't want to take up
17 all the time.

18 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Okay. Qls, I'm
19 ready. Hi.

20 So I have a couple of things to say.
21 Number one, I really thank you for your letter.
22 What I was reading last night -- although I got new
23 things today. Yeah, we agree, and you're right in
24 we're going to go do it, rather than, "We couldn't
25 help it," and blah-blah-blah. Thank you for just

1 being honest and saying, "Hey, doesn't matter how we
2 got here, this is we have to do."

3 So I do want to thank you for that.

4 So -- and I just wanted to understand this
5 thing. So there's a diagnostic program that kind of
6 intervenes and tells you what areas in writing that
7 the school needs to -- or the child needs to work
8 on?

9 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: In reading, it's
10 called My Reading Lab. And it's often taught in
11 supplement to, like, your English 110 or your
12 English 120 courses at college.

13 And so in addition to live instruction,
14 there may be some time carved out in the college
15 classrooms, and, of course, this is what we're doing
16 where the students are online. And when I say
17 "diagnostic," it's using this algorithm, and it
18 identifies the areas that they're tripping up in,
19 and it's giving them more exposure to those areas.

20 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: And so part of
21 the overall goal, if I'm understanding this
22 correctly -- and I may not be -- is you want them to
23 be able to write more coherently, as the young lady
24 who -- your daughter -- was writing. That's your
25 goal for these kids, and those who are not yet able

1 to do that easily, is that's your goal to improve
2 that.

3 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: Absolutely. You know,
4 when we get them -- if they're not ready for the
5 English 110 courses, then we don't put them in the
6 English 110 courses, and they take -- fortunately,
7 the Zuni lady that we hired who teaches English, we
8 stole her from CNM. So she's a college instructor.

9 And she's taught a lot of the college
10 remedial courses. So she spends a lot of time
11 getting those students transitioned into the
12 English 110. When they get there, they're
13 successful.

14 So these are the pieces that we're
15 building, because that's the whole point. And, you
16 know, it's -- sometimes you get the students who
17 say, "Well, I just don't like writing."

18 "Well, you do know you're on a college
19 campus, and you do know you're going to have to do a
20 lot of reading and writing."

21 And so we really try to instill good
22 habits to study and get them to understand what's
23 necessary to be able to do well in their courses and
24 to be able to progress into the next courses that
25 follow as prereqs.

1 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: I think you're
2 one of the few schools who actually recognizes that
3 writing -- skill in writing is probably what affects
4 the PARCC scores; because I know that although I've
5 not actually ever seen the PARCC score, I know there
6 are some parts that you fill in the bubble.

7 But there are parts that you actually have
8 to write the answers. And if you can't write, it
9 doesn't matter whether you know the answer, because
10 you have to be able to explain. So I think that's a
11 lot of the reason that PARCC scores tend to be
12 lower.

13 And so then for the -- for your graduating
14 class, do you have, like, then 100 percent of the
15 twelfth-graders graduating?

16 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: Yeah. We did last
17 year -- or wait a minute. We had a 92 percent
18 graduation rate, I think it was. And, of course,
19 that goes by cohort. So the expectation is they
20 finish, you know, within four years of starting high
21 school.

22 And so that's kind of the rub sometimes;
23 because you'll get students who come in maybe as a
24 senior, and they're a couple of years behind. Well,
25 they're supposed to be a senior. And, obviously, we

1 give no enrollment preference, you know. So long as
2 they've successfully completed ninth grade, they're
3 welcome.

4 And so when you get those types of
5 students, sometimes it can have an impact on your
6 graduation rate. But we work hard at trying to
7 close that gap and to try to -- to move them to
8 where they're supposed to be as quickly as they can.

9 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: So you have some
10 sort of -- I'm going to use this word; it may not be
11 what you call -- like, recovery mechanism to help
12 those students who don't have enough credits to
13 graduate?

14 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: We do. We have enough
15 flexibility to do that, because the courses are
16 based on semester. So we can track them a little
17 bit more quickly.

18 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Okay. Thank
19 you.

20 THE CHAIR: Commissioners, anyone else?
21 Commissioner Caballero.

22 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Yes. Thank you,
23 Madam Chair. I have a few questions.

24 Will you be following up on the
25 graduat- -- graduates of 2017 in the next following

1 years to see if they do stay, besides just entering
2 the first year in college?

3 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: We could. We haven't.
4 We were going to track, by the end of January, the
5 2018 cohort and see where they are. But we still do
6 have contact information. We could -- we could
7 follow up and see.

8 Most of them who graduated have the first
9 two years already done. And so, really, it's their
10 junior year that we're taking a look at to see, you
11 know, "Okay, now that you've been off our campus
12 without the supports that we provide, you've been a
13 semester away, are you starting this next semester
14 away? Are you still there?"

15 And we felt like that would be a really
16 good metric for us to take a look at. Maybe it was
17 because of the time that I had spent as a school
18 counselor on the reservation and seeing that a lot
19 of students were going off to college, but then they
20 were coming back, like, the very -- they'd spend a
21 semester and then they would come back, we felt like
22 we really needed to focus on the retention piece.
23 Are they staying there? Are they completing
24 degrees? So --

25 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Okay. The -- the

1 other question is for the president of the governing
2 board.

3 Do you feel -- and my concern right now is
4 the Native American board members. Do you have
5 Native American board members in your board?

6 DR. TONY MAJOR: Yes, we do.

7 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Okay. Does it
8 kind of reflect a percentage of students -- or the
9 community?

10 DR. TONY MAJOR: Yes, it does.

11 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Okay. And the
12 other thing is, I noticed that 36 percent are --
13 only 36 percent is economically disadvantaged. What
14 is a factor for this low percentage? Do you have
15 any ideas what may be affecting that?

16 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: The socioeconomic --
17 the measure we used for that is looking at the
18 median income in Gallup. And then when our families
19 fill out their enrollment packets, we ask for some
20 demographic data, you know. And part of that data
21 asks some income questions. They're not
22 super-obvious; but they can help us to get at that.

23 And as we did an analysis of the students
24 we presently have, we found that 36 percent of them
25 were at income levels that was lower than the median

1 income level, which is already pretty low. So if we
2 use some other standard, maybe that would be higher.
3 I'd have to look and see, like, what does the local
4 district use for that measure?

5 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: I'm not so much
6 concerned on how you come to that demarcation, let's
7 say. But what my concern is is that I send all my
8 children to private schools and magnet schools. And
9 the magnet schools always started with a very nice
10 goal and always went onto the news about helping the
11 low income, the neighborhood.

12 And within a -- within the second year, it
13 was only the well-to-do and the ones that had the
14 resources to take advantage, and the rest of the
15 kids either never went in or were pushed out. I had
16 to drive my son about 45 minutes to get him to a
17 magnet school. And I tried to take as many
18 disadvantaged students from his feeder school. And,
19 really, I wasn't able to convince the parents that I
20 should do that. And they wanted to do it
21 themselves; but they never did.

22 So there's got to be a special effort.
23 Otherwise, the -- the good intentions of a charter
24 school or a private school ends up with -- like my
25 son's magnet school -- end up with a very wealthy,

1 not even from El Paso. They were the very wealthy
2 from across the border.

3 And these folks are very wealthy. They
4 had their kids in private schools and ended up the
5 taxpayers of El Paso paying for it, because they had
6 the means to take the kids, to pick them up, to pay
7 the extra whatever they had.

8 So my concern is what are the factors? Is
9 it transportation? Taking the kids from wherever
10 they get dropped off? Where do we go?

11 I know that your area is unique because of
12 the reservation and the high poverty. Economically
13 disadvantaged in Gallup is 100 percent.
14 Gallup-McKinley. That's a large percentage. And so
15 I'm assuming that families with high income have
16 found an alternative for their children so they
17 don't have to be with the other kids.

18 But there's got to be a very concerted
19 effort to move up the percentage every year. And I
20 know it's difficult, because kids that come from an
21 economically disadvantaged family do not necessarily
22 get the same motivation, the same push.

23 If the child is on its own pushing
24 himself, they will get there. It doesn't matter who
25 their parents are. But for the most part, if you

1 come from a poor family, you're not going to go --
2 chances are you're not going to go to college.
3 Chances are you're not going to get an Associate.
4 Chances are you're not even going to graduate from
5 high school.

6 And so there's got to be -- there's got to
7 be an effort to -- and your grade count is
8 fantastic. Other than that, that -- what I see is
9 what is the efforts? And it'll probably take you a
10 few years. And I'm going to be here for at least a
11 few years. I want to see a very honest effort.

12 And I know that we have this policy of
13 picking up siblings from the same family.

14 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: Right.

15 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: So the
16 composition on its own stays the same because of
17 that. If you have 40 percent Hispanic, oh, we
18 always have siblings in a Hispanic family. They're
19 going to continue to be 40 percent. But they're
20 not -- the -- the population percentage is not that
21 high. And so I'm really glad to see the high
22 percentage of Native Americans. That's fantastic.

23 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: It's been difficult
24 to -- with the 100-student cap, you know, if we got
25 an amendment to get more students, then, you know,

1 by default, we would get more socioeconomically
2 disadvantaged students in our school.

3 I know it wasn't -- it didn't make me very
4 popular when I had gone to the Gallup-McKinley
5 County board and that item had come up, and I had
6 mentioned -- because I had done the analysis. And
7 maybe I shouldn't have said anything. When
8 30 percent of our enrollment are children of our
9 administrators who happen to not be from a
10 socioeconomically disadvantaged background or even a
11 minority background, if that's part of the issue, if
12 you increase our enrollment, so -- and we're also in
13 a district that refuses to negotiate transportation
14 for our students.

15 So it's another issue that we're forced --
16 so, yes, you're right about that. That's one of the
17 areas that we want to get figured out. An early
18 college doesn't have your typical 8:30-to-3:30
19 schedule; so transportation doesn't always make
20 sense in that respect.

21 But I think it would help us if we could
22 reach out and negotiate transportation -- we have
23 some of our students take A:Shiwi Transport from
24 Zuni. We've been talking with Navajo Nation
25 Transit; some of our students take that

1 transportation to come into the school. That's
2 nice, too, because that transportation doesn't -- it
3 follows a different kind of schedule than 8:30 to
4 3:30.

5 We've got a little bit of transportation
6 going on our own.

7 It has been a challenge trying to work
8 with a district that won't negotiate with us.

9 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: And food? Do
10 you -- are you providing food for students? Or
11 you --

12 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: So we are providing
13 food. In fact, we're in conversation with the other
14 two local charter schools right now about how can
15 the three of us, you know, do hot meal services
16 where we're not having to contract with the private
17 school in town to bring them out.

18 Or we have a -- in our case, we work with
19 a local vendor, and we stock the cabinet. You know,
20 we've got the granola bars; we've got the noodles;
21 we've got the fruits and things like that that the
22 students can have.

23 So we recognize the need to have something
24 available for students. But we want to do more. We
25 want to have a hot meal service. When you've got

1 three smaller charters coming together, then you've
2 got numbers that are attractive to potential vendors
3 to come in and do that.

4 So we're actually -- we've had a
5 conversation about converting a space in Six
6 Directions into a kitchen area that all three
7 schools could benefit from. Because we're all right
8 there in the same area.

9 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: One last item on
10 the low performing students, a lot of the community
11 from low-income families or low-income
12 neighborhoods, if they talk among themselves, if
13 their child -- parents know where the children are.
14 They know if their child is at the bottom, at the
15 middle, or at the top. They know.

16 And if your reputation is that you take on
17 the child at the bottom and you bring them up at
18 least to the middle, I would say that your
19 enrollment in that sector will jump.

20 And so see it as an effort to diversify
21 and to recruit from that by pushing that quadrant
22 more successfully up the performance, and you will
23 see the difference. The parents will do whatever
24 they need to do --

25 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: Right.

1 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: -- to get their
2 child there. Because all parents, no matter the
3 economic sector, they do want their children to
4 succeed. They just --

5 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: It's our most urgent
6 need. We've also done some things with the local
7 media, where we'll have them to come out and
8 interview our students and feature their stories in
9 the paper.

10 You can imagine which students we select
11 for that, to make sure that, you know, those
12 students and families who otherwise might not have
13 considered they could attend this school are seeing,
14 you know, themselves reflected in the students'
15 stories that are in the papers, and those particular
16 students are being targeted in that particular way.

17 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: That's all I
18 have, Madam Chair.

19 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Can I just ask a
20 transportation question? On the topic of
21 transportation, now that you'll not be a part of
22 Gallup-McKinley, are you considering looking at
23 possibly contracting out? And I don't know what the
24 possibilities are in terms of service providers in
25 the area for transportation on your own now.

1 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: Yeah. In fact, that's
2 going to be a challenge, in that the local school
3 district is the sole provider; although, there is a
4 private school that does transportation. And that
5 might be something -- actually, I've been meeting
6 with the other charter leaders in our area monthly,
7 I started meetings with them. And that is a topic
8 that's come up, because we're all faced with that.

9 So one of the potential answers would be
10 to check into Rehoboth and see if that's something
11 they might be able to do.

12 THE CHAIR: Okay. Thanks.

13 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Madam Chair?

14 You know, I sensed a tone with people who
15 talked to us, like it was, "Don't be mean to us,"
16 you know. "Don't be McKinley County." We're not.

17 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: Right.

18 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: And I wanted to
19 get that across to people. We're welcoming this
20 school in. If we close a school, it has nothing to
21 do that we want their programs or we want their
22 facilities. It has to do mostly with fiscal
23 mismanagement. That's the major reason that we end
24 up closing schools here.

25 So I want to assure all of you in the

1 audience and ones of you up here at the table, I
2 won't be here, but my replacement will have the same
3 attitude I do toward all of our schools, and
4 especially the ones that have more minority students
5 or more people with cultural differences, because
6 that's been one of my soapboxes that we need to
7 address all of that for my six years here.

8 So I just wanted to reassure you that
9 we'll get sticky on the special ed. People here
10 will -- you know -- just your lower students;
11 because not all of those students who are making
12 lower grades are your special ed students. They're
13 students who just aren't challenged enough, or you
14 haven't found the right thing to spark them.

15 I know; I have six grandsons, I understand
16 kids getting sparked in certain ways. I was also
17 the kind of kid that if I liked the subject, I got
18 "A"s, and didn't think about it. If I didn't like
19 the subject, I barely got by, and that was only
20 because I didn't dare fail when I got home.

21 And as it was, I got chewed on big-time,
22 because I was the oldest of five children. Both of
23 my parents were younger ones, and they were both
24 overachievers, and I was not.

25 So I understand where that comes. And

1 those kids take a lot of effort, too, to figure out
2 what sparks them and move them ahead.

3 But I'm glad that you are here. And I
4 hope that the local school board will not continue
5 to hinder you since you are now part of this big
6 family of schools.

7 THE CHAIR: Not quite yet.

8 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Well, they're
9 sitting here today. And I'd have a hard time, with
10 their letter grade and with everything else, voting
11 no.

12 And I just want -- I'm speaking as much to
13 the parents and the people out there -- is that I
14 think this will be a better fit. We've had schools
15 that came over from other school districts who have
16 been incredibly mismanaged and didn't survive
17 because they weren't able -- they hadn't had any
18 help at all.

19 You people look like you've done it on
20 your own, that you have the resources there, and
21 your governance council and your faculty and your
22 parents to do it. So I don't see any reason that
23 this school will not prosper and succeed.

24 And I really appreciate how far you've
25 gotten with your Native population. But I think all

1 students -- I mean, I have a grandson who went to
2 college one semester and came home. You know, we
3 all go through that. Doesn't matter what your
4 background is.

5 I also want to suggest, though, that one
6 of the ways Albuquerque Public Schools gets their
7 low income, and they're figuring out their
8 free-and-reduced lunches, is they interface with the
9 Human Services Department's benefits. If they get
10 Medicaid or food stamps, they pull it out, and then
11 they're automatically eligible.

12 So a lot of your families that are even at
13 the median income are still going to get one of
14 those benefits that make them eligible. That might
15 be a way to address, coming up with better evidence;
16 because I think you probably have more people who
17 fit in that low income and whose students would
18 benefit from -- and the families -- from having the
19 free-and-reduced lunches.

20 That's all, Madam Chair.

21 THE CHAIR: I think I tend to agree with
22 Commissioner Toulouse. I think if you figured out a
23 different way of determining economically
24 disadvantaged, I think you'd find that you probably
25 have a higher percentage than your -- than you are

1 showing. Not to dismiss the fact that I think you
2 mentioned 30 percent of your student -- current
3 student population? Or Gallup-McKinley's staff
4 people?

5 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: Last year, right.
6 When I had gone before them asking for an enrollment
7 increase and they brought up that issue. Yeah, we
8 had looked at that, and what's what the numbers had
9 shown. This year, it's not as high, given the stuff
10 that's been in the media and what have you.

11 THE CHAIR: Right. But certainly, that
12 transportation creates that challenge for families
13 to be able to get their students to you. So that I
14 hope that that conversation can continue with the
15 other charters, so that there can be -- because
16 that's a challenge for all of our charters across
17 the board, is if we want -- if, truly, they are a
18 public school, and we want to make them available,
19 there has to be transportation.

20 And I know it's a conversation that's
21 going to come up during the Legislative Session as
22 well in terms of support. So thank you.

23 Commissioners, anything else?

24 (No response.)

25 THE CHAIR: Okay. Are we ready for a

1 motion?

2 And I do believe -- I probably took it
3 home last night.

4 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: Madam Chair, I can
5 go ahead and make the motion, if you'd like.

6 I move that PEC renew the charter
7 contract -- or, actually, extend a renewal contract
8 for -- between the PEC and Middle High School --
9 Middle College High School, excuse me -- for five
10 years.

11 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Second.

12 THE CHAIR: There's a motion by
13 Commissioner Robbins, a second by Commissioner
14 Toulouse.

15 Is there any discussion?

16 (No response.)

17 THE CHAIR: If not, Commissioner
18 Armbruster, roll-call vote, please?

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 Armbruster votes "Yes."

2 Commissioner Robbins?

3 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: Yes.

4 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner

5 Gipson?

6 THE CHAIR: Yes.

7 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner

8 Caballero?

9 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Yes.

10 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner

11 Crone?

12 COMMISSIONER CRONE: Yes.

13 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner

14 Ruiz?

15 COMMISSIONER RUIZ: Yes.

16 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: That is an

17 eight-to-zero vote.

18 THE CHAIR: Motion passes, eight-zero.

19 Congratulations. We will see you sometime after the

20 Session for contract negotiations. So we look

21 forward to that.

22 DR. ROBERT HUNTER: Okay. Yeah. Thank

23 you.

24 THE CHAIR: I think that was a snarky

25 remark.

1 And we're going to take a short break.

2 Thank you.

3 (Recess taken, 10:10 a.m. to 10:28 a.m.)

4 THE CHAIR: Our next school is School of
5 Dreams.

6 Good morning.

7 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: Good morning.

8 THE CHAIR: Good to see you again.

9 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: Good to see you.

10 THE CHAIR: Okay. Whenever you're ready.

11 MS. KAREN WOERNER: Thank you,
12 Madam Chair, Commissioners. As you said, School of
13 Dreams.

14 Over the last four years, the school's
15 letter grade has been a "D," "C," "B," and then a
16 "C," demonstrating an upward trend and then a drop
17 last year. For 2017 and '18, the overall school
18 grade was a "C," with an "F" in the improvement of
19 lowest-performing students.

20 If you look to the data analysis on
21 Page 27 of 45, the charts demonstrate that upward
22 trend, and then the dip in the overall grade and the
23 current standing charts on that page.

24 Similarly, Chart 2 shows that the school's
25 proficiency in both reading and math was improving

1 each year, but has stayed the same the last two
2 years.

3 In addition, if I may direct you to
4 Page 35 of 45, this page shows the mission-specific
5 goals. And the school has had mixed results in
6 meeting its mission-specific goals.

7 Also, further on on Page 39, the downward
8 trend in recurrent enrollment and teacher retention
9 are depicted on the graphs on, again, Page 39.

10 The governing board members are all
11 continuing members and have remained fairly constant
12 over the years. Two of the board members did miss
13 some training hours last year, five and eight hours
14 respectively.

15 The last financial audit report for --
16 which, of course, as you know, is for the '16 and
17 '17 school year, listed ten findings, two that were
18 repeats and one that was a material weakness.

19 Also, regarding finances, the school
20 received a letter from the PED Accountability
21 Bureau. The letter, which was provided in your
22 packets, states that a T&E, or Training &
23 Experience, audit was conducted in December, and
24 that review revealed that 20 of the 40 staff files
25 were not in compliance, which resulted in an

1 adjustment in the SEG, decreasing it by \$244,506.66.

2 Regarding the performance framework
3 indicators that are rated during the annual site
4 visits, please see Page 5, as with all the schools
5 we've been doing. Page 5 -- oops. Sorry. Need to
6 take a look myself. Page 5 at the beginning of this
7 section.

8 It shows you the ratings for the last two
9 years. As you can see, there are many Falls Far
10 Below ratings -- those are in red -- for the last
11 two years. This past year, 2017-'18, of the
12 20 indicators, the school had six Falls Far Below,
13 with five of those being repeated from the prior
14 year.

15 Unfortunately, concerns were again
16 identified in some of these areas of the renewal
17 visit in October. One of those is the identifying
18 and serving of English Language Learners.

19 And with that, I would like to address
20 sections of the school's response. And that is --
21 let me see -- oh, immediately following -- let's
22 see -- Pages -- the response starts on Page 9 and
23 goes all the way through to Page 20, it looks like.

24 But if I could take -- could tell you that
25 in that response, the school appears to acknowledge

1 the fact that they're not providing adequate English
2 language development services. They do state that
3 four of the 28 teachers on staff have TESOL
4 endorsements, but they are regular classroom
5 teachers, or the district test coordinator; so they
6 are not actually providing school-wide English
7 language development support.

8 The response states -- and I quote --
9 "SODA does provide a sound ELL program, wherein the
10 ELL population follows the New Mexico Language Usage
11 Survey."

12 Of course, following the usage survey and
13 screening does not constitute a sound program. And
14 in fact, we learned at the site visit that the
15 school could not -- could only locate half of the
16 kindergarteners' language usage surveys, had not
17 screened some students whose language usage survey
18 indicated they might be eligible, and had a list of
19 EL students who had not been identified.

20 For the second year, the CSD team
21 described how to use S.T.A.R.S. data to investigate
22 and assess the history of these students and then
23 correct the coding in the student information
24 system. This time, we did involve the S.T.A.R.S.
25 coordinator in that conversation. And I can tell

1 you that a follow-up visit -- not a follow-up. But
2 was at the school for another purpose, and I did see
3 that they were using that assessment data now.

4 The school does point out, on Page 20 of
5 45, that the charter schools newsletter provided
6 kudos for the highest English language proficiency
7 rates at 10 percent. Of course, that is true. We
8 did. It wasn't August. Prior to realizing that the
9 school was not properly identifying, and, therefore,
10 not testing all students whose English language
11 proficiency should be tested annually, via the WIDA
12 ACCESS assessment.

13 Other sections of the school's response
14 are also concerning on its face, particularly in
15 regards to the NWEA short-cycle assessments and
16 projected growth for students. The school indicates
17 that there's no way to determine projected
18 improvement.

19 However, the NWEA is used by many of the
20 charter schools and does provide class lists for
21 target growth goals, which vary by individual
22 student, based on each student's grade level and raw
23 score at the beginning of the year for most grades.
24 It doesn't provide them, I think, for 11th and 12th
25 grades. But the rest of the school grades could

1 have those target growths for each individual
2 student. In addition, the normative tables can be
3 used to determine cutoff scores for each grade.

4 On Page 2, the evaluations -- again, based
5 on the rubric from Part B of the application,
6 indicates that several ratings are failing to
7 demonstrate substantial progress. And that's the
8 ones I've highlighted here.

9 Finally, the school did provide a complete
10 and timely application, including the E-Occupancy
11 Certificate. I think they have one for every
12 classroom set out there.

13 As a result of what I've stated, the PED
14 recommendation is for a five-year renewal with
15 several conditions to address the concerns
16 identified.

17 Those conditions include, or are,
18 implement a school continuous improvement plan that
19 results in a letter grade of at least a "C" in each
20 category; attain an overall rating of Meets Standard
21 in the organizational framework for each year under
22 the contract term; attain an overall rating of Meets
23 Standard in the indicator for identifying and
24 servicing English Language Learners for each year
25 under the contract term; meeting all governing board

1 requirements, including maintaining the five-member
2 board and all members completing all mandatory
3 training hours and topics for each year of the
4 contract term; and receive an unmodified audit with
5 no material weaknesses and no significant
6 deficiencies -- scratch Part B that I had listed in
7 there -- during the term of its contract.

8 Thank you.

9 THE CHAIR: Thanks. Good morning, once
10 again. And I'll just ask you to please identify
11 yourself for the record.

12 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: Good morning. Sorry
13 for my voice. I'm fighting something.
14 Commissioners, Madam Chair, my name is Michael Ogas.
15 I am the head of School of Dreams Academy and one of
16 the founders.

17 I have with me today Mrs. Kathy Chavez,
18 our governing council president, and Mr. Kim
19 Johnson, our statistician.

20 I wanted to say just a few words and then
21 have Mrs. Chavez have an opportunity to state a
22 couple of things.

23 We have, over -- over the years, last four
24 years, seen our school become quite a complex school
25 in terms of things that we have going on. And I

1 think it's a very, very good thing we have seen a
2 rise in ELA scores, as well as a rise in our
3 diversity in population.

4 We -- in '14-'15, we were designated as an
5 early college high school, which has impacted a
6 number of students. We offer between 12 and
7 15 courses annually on campus in conjunction with
8 UNM-Valencia, as well as many of our students go out
9 to UNM-Valencia and earn college credits. That way,
10 we're designated as an early college high school in
11 '14-'15 and are awaiting the final designation on an
12 application we submitted to the College and Career
13 Readiness Bureau this past year.

14 We've had 15 students over the last four
15 years obtain their Associate's degrees. Many
16 students, almost -- well into the hundreds, have
17 obtained 50 to 100 more credit hours during their
18 stay with us. In 2018, one of our high school
19 graduates was also a valedictorian at UNM-Valencia
20 campus, having achieved three Associate's degrees in
21 engineering, science, and general studies.

22 We have, over the course of this charter
23 contract, maintained our Advanced Ed accreditation
24 successfully. We're in our second year of our
25 second renewal on that.

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1 We successfully implemented an elementary
2 school 3Y4Y program for developmentally disabled
3 children, as well as we now serve kindergarten
4 through fourth grade, and we'll be coming back to
5 the Commission to add the additional two grades in
6 succession.

7 We serve all students. We're very proud
8 of that. Over the years, over the last four years,
9 we've also implemented a free-and-reduced lunch
10 program. We're an FUP-designated school [ph], so
11 100 percent of our children in school eat free, both
12 breakfast and lunch. We also offer transportation
13 services within the Los Lunas District boundaries.

14 We had, when we first started, run a
15 bus -- run two buses, actually, into the Belen area
16 and were told we could not do that. So we pulled
17 back, which is something that we're going to
18 question here in the spring. But we feel that that
19 hurt us enrollment-wise. And we're going to revisit
20 that.

21 As -- what we have for the students coming
22 from Belen, and even the South Valley, is we are now
23 located walking distance from the Rail Runner. We
24 purchase train passes for those that can ride the
25 train both to and from. And that has seemed to

1 help; but it does make for long days for some of
2 those children.

3 Over the last four years, we've added two
4 new counselors and two social workers. We now have
5 an in-house business manager. We're keenly aware of
6 the -- the findings in the audits and the
7 difficulties that we've -- we've seen in that area.
8 And without making any excuses for that, we are on
9 top of making fixes for it, actually. And one of
10 those is to hire an in-house business manager so
11 that that person is with us all the time.

12 We still believe that we are a very
13 community- and parent-friendly school. We have
14 strong support from local businesses and public
15 entities, UNM-Valencia, the City of Los Lunas,
16 Sisneros Brothers, Facebook, Cultivating Coders, and
17 all three Chambers of Commerce, just to name a few.

18 We offer a full range of services in
19 special education. We've increased that. A year
20 and a half or so ago, we were under Corrective
21 Action Plan with the Public Ed Department for
22 special education. We met every goal prior to the
23 deadline and received a letter, basically saying
24 that we were no longer a concern in those areas, and
25 we continue to offer a full range of services,

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1 including diagnostic and ancillary services.

2 Like I said, we are aware of things that
3 need to be improved. We've had very good
4 conversation with Ms. Woerner and her staff with
5 respect to that. So we look forward to moving
6 forward with, you know, solutions and improvement
7 plans, including, you know, dealing with the audit
8 findings, ensuring that we manage our data better
9 through both New Mexico DASH as well as S.T.A.R.S.
10 reporting.

11 Our personnel files were a little bit of a
12 surprise to me; but we have, in fact, decided that
13 we will meet whatever, you know, the T&E
14 requirements are. We already are making strides to
15 correct those. Many of the transcripts and things
16 that were missing have been corrected already.

17 And when we get, you know, hopefully, to
18 renegotiation, we look to maybe looking at some of
19 our performance goals and redirecting those.

20 I believe I've said this in the past. We
21 shot a little too high, and we maybe didn't quite
22 understand the ramifications of how the NWEA worked,
23 especially at the high-school level. And that's why
24 Mr. Johnson is here, if we have any in-depth
25 questions about that.

1 With that, that's all I have right now.
2 I'm going to turn it over to Mrs. Chavez to say a
3 couple of words.

4 MS. KATHY CHAVEZ: Good morning,
5 Madam Chair, and members of the Commission. Thank
6 you for allowing us this time.

7 I've been with the School of Dreams since
8 day one, and before that, in the planning stages. I
9 worked and retired from YDI, Youth Development,
10 Incorporated, which is a nonprofit organization that
11 works with high-risk youth. In fact, that was -- we
12 were originally partners with the School of Dreams
13 and provided the ancillary prevention programs for
14 them.

15 And I am here on behalf of the governing
16 council and, if I may, members that could not be
17 here, which schedules just did not permit, which are
18 very much involved and, you know, are very
19 supportive of the School of Dreams. And that is
20 Catherine Smith. And she was -- she took ill last
21 night.

22 And work schedules that didn't work out
23 for Dr. Schneider and a newly elected sheriff,
24 Denise Romero, and a lifelong educator, Mr. Kenny
25 Griego. And I'm sure all of you are familiar with

1 him. He's at college graduation for his daughter.

2 But -- and we just wanted to let you know
3 that we are in total support of the School of Dreams
4 Academy, and we are totally committed to the
5 students' success.

6 And for myself, being a native of Valencia
7 County, kids have always been my heart. And, you
8 know, that's been my profession. And right now, we
9 just -- you know, we just stand behind them. And we
10 take all of this very, very seriously. So we are
11 looking to do whatever corrections are needed.

12 Thank you very much.

13 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Are you --

14 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: Yes, ma'am. I'm done.

15 THE CHAIR: Okay. Thanks. We have two
16 people that have signed up for public comment for
17 the school. So that you actually have four minutes
18 apiece, if you so choose. And the first one on the
19 list is Krystal Salazar.

20 FROM THE FLOOR: Can you guys hear me
21 without the mic? Is this better?

22 THE CHAIR: It's more the --

23 FROM THE FLOOR: Hi, Madam Chair and
24 members of the Commission. I am Krystal Salazar.
25 And I am actually a multi- -- sorry. I wasn't

1 intending on speaking today, so I'm simultaneously
2 trying to compile my thoughts. And I felt compelled
3 to share some things with you guys here today.

4 I do view myself as a multi-level
5 stakeholder at the School of Dreams Academy. I
6 don't know why I'm so nervous. I have been born and
7 raised in Valencia County; so I've been a
8 longstanding community member there. I currently
9 raise my own family in Valencia County as well.

10 My three children attend the School of
11 Dreams Academy currently. So I'm a parent of three
12 different students there. I previously served as
13 the elementary school counselor, and I'm currently
14 the secondary school counselor there; so kind of a
15 wide range.

16 But what brought me to charter schools is
17 a little bit different, being that I hear many
18 stories where people were looking for something
19 different. And, truthfully, I didn't know I was
20 looking for something different, going to a charter
21 school.

22 I felt very blessed in my community to
23 have awesome teachers and an education that I owe my
24 current success to; and the same for my children,
25 same when they started school, great teachers in the

1 public school district.

2 So I really didn't know I wanted something
3 different until I went to School of Dreams. And
4 that, for me, was a professional decision that I
5 felt more compelled as a professional to serve
6 students who didn't quite fit into the normal school
7 setting. And that's just kind of where my heart as
8 a counselor came in.

9 My children followed me to this school.
10 And all of a sudden, it kind of clicked. The pieces
11 kind of fit in together, where, again, I didn't know
12 what I didn't know. And now being at the School of
13 Dreams Academy, the only way I can try and
14 conceptualize it is just the heart -- the heart of
15 the school that really just keeps students as the
16 main thing.

17 And I say that, because my students and my
18 children go to school every day and leave there
19 feeling like they've really been seen, like they've
20 really been heard, and that they have a place to
21 belong. For my own children, in particular, they've
22 always thankfully tested proficient. They've always
23 kind of been able to meld in whatever environment
24 they're in.

25 But I know that's not the case for all

1 students. I know a lot of students need something
2 different, and they need people to take the extra
3 time to really try to understand their unique
4 abilities and circumstances.

5 And what we have found there is that once
6 our children feel heard and that they have a sense
7 of belonging, they're able to reengage back into the
8 classroom. And we've seen a really good success
9 rate from that.

10 And the only thing I can attribute that to
11 is really the heart and belief that Mr. Ogas and
12 Kathy Chavez and the founders have created the
13 school on, which is keeping students at the heart of
14 everything we do, all the decisions we make. It's
15 given teachers a lot of autonomy to get the time to
16 know those students.

17 I've walked into parent-teacher
18 conferences where the teachers tell me something
19 about my own kids, and I'm, like, "Yes, I kind of
20 knew that, but now that you say it, that makes
21 perfect sense." And it's just really been amazing
22 to see as a parent and then to take that
23 professionally as encouragement in the work that I
24 try and do with the students as well.

25 Being involved in School of Dreams Academy

1 in so many capacities has allowed me to see the
2 opportunities for growth that are present there; and
3 yet, it hasn't wavered my confidence in the
4 possibilities that we have to become -- to
5 continuously become better, and also in the
6 meaningful work that we're currently doing and the
7 impact we're having on students within a community
8 that's truthfully very near and dear to my heart.

9 So with that, I'm here in support of
10 School of Dreams Academy, and I ask you all to
11 continue to believe in us, too. I believe in us,
12 and I entrust my own children with the staff and the
13 belief in just the vision that it's built on.

14 And I thank you for your time and being
15 patient with my jumbled thoughts.

16 THE CHAIR: Thank you.

17 And the second person is Donna Jaris [ph]?

18 FROM THE FLOOR: Jarvis.

19 THE CHAIR: Jarvis.

20 FROM THE FLOOR: Madam -- I'm nervous,
21 too.

22 Hello, everybody. I am -- was introduced
23 to the School of Dreams by my daughter. She works
24 for the School of Dreams. My grandson attends the
25 School of Dreams. I am probably one of the newest

1 members of the School of Dreams. I am the new
2 business manager they have hired.

3 My daughter came home and called me -- I
4 lived in El Paso -- and said, "Mom, you cannot
5 believe the school that I just got hired on by.
6 They have the most unique way of teaching their
7 kids, and I get the privilege of being my own person
8 and running with this."

9 She calls me -- called me on a daily basis
10 inviting me to go visit, come see what they're
11 doing, come be there. So I did.

12 Camera in hand, I showed up to a fall
13 festival. 300 pictures later, I went, "Wow, look at
14 what they're doing," from the band playing, to the
15 guitars playing, the dances -- dance recitals, the
16 kids enjoying every minute of this fall festival.

17 And then I got invited back to attend an
18 FFA banquet where kids were being honored. FFA
19 Robotics. Our kids are going -- have gone to World
20 twice in robotics. I had a little boy stop me as I
21 was walking up the ramp and said, "Stop, stop.
22 Don't open that door."

23 And I said, "Why?"

24 "I'm supposed to open it for ladies."

25 These are the kind of values that are

1 being taught at our school.

2 As the newest member, I know that we have
3 some struggles. We have some restructuring we need
4 to do. But I'm 100 percent in.

5 Mr. Ogas, Mrs. Ogas, Mrs. Chavez sitting
6 here are not alone. They have such an enormous
7 group behind them. And I'm only one person. But I
8 feel very comfortable in saying that their whole
9 staff stands behind them, and we want this school to
10 succeed.

11 Your decision today will affect not only
12 kindergarten through high school, but you're going
13 to affect people in the community, people that are
14 eagerly waiting for their kids to join SODA.

15 And I want you to know I'm excited about
16 being a part of SODA. I want to help make changes
17 that are good. I want you to feel my excitement. I
18 want more little students -- I actually have
19 students coming into my room going, "Hello, please
20 listen to me, look what I'm doing, come be where I'm
21 at."

22 Thank you for listening.

23 THE CHAIR: Thank you so much.

24 Okay. So I guess I need a clarification;
25 because when I was reading -- I do believe it said

1 that the 2017-'18 audit showed a lack of completion
2 and compliance with the special ed cap; so -- but
3 then --

4 MS. KAREN WOERNER: It's been resolved.

5 THE CHAIR: But Mr. Ogas said that it's
6 been --

7 MS. KAREN WOERNER: It's been resolved.

8 And I believe the school received a letter -- I
9 thought it was in the packet.

10 THE CHAIR: It might be here. I don't
11 know whether -- I don't remember seeing it; but that
12 doesn't mean it's not here.

13 MS. KAREN WOERNER: My understand- --

14 THE CHAIR: We've got --

15 MS. KAREN WOERNER: Madam Chair, my
16 understanding is that the cap that was with the
17 Special Ed Bureau has since been resolved. I think
18 at one site visit, there was a concern about it,
19 that it was in process and not yet resolved.

20 But it has since been resolved, and they
21 received a letter from the Special Education Bureau
22 that it has been closed.

23 THE CHAIR: Okay. All right. Thank you.

24 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: May I respond to that,
25 Madam Chair?

1 THE CHAIR: Sure.

2 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: I just wanted to let
3 you know it was resolved over a year ago, and we
4 received the letter almost immediately. And there
5 was a question under a previous director that it
6 hadn't been resolved, and it had already been
7 resolved by then.

8 THE CHAIR: Okay. All right. Thanks.

9 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: Yes, ma'am.

10 THE CHAIR: Yeah. And like I said, the
11 letter may be here; but there's --

12 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: We can provide it to
13 you if you need it. I think it's in there
14 somewhere.

15 THE CHAIR: Sometimes they get buried in
16 500 pages of stuff, and we just don't necessarily
17 pick it up. But I know I made the note about, when
18 I saw that audit finding, that it was concerning.
19 So you -- all of your IEPs are currently up to date?

20 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: Yes, ma'am. And one
21 thing that I did forget to say is currently, we're
22 at almost 27 percent of our students have IEPs. And
23 that's because when they come in, we don't ask. And
24 we found out -- let me give you an example.

25 Seventh-graders come in brand new, because

1 we don't have a feeder in seventh grade yet. So we
2 had 65 to 70 new seventh-graders. And this past
3 summer, our special ed coordinator was looking
4 through files. And virtually half of them had IEPs
5 once they had already been enrolled.

6 So then when we went to the process, it's
7 really -- it's a lot of work to get them all up to
8 date by the 40th day. And we've made that
9 commitment to do that.

10 THE CHAIR: Okay. Thank you. And I
11 remember reading somewhere -- and I think it might
12 have been in the section where -- might have been
13 talking about your mission-specific goals; I'm not
14 sure. But there was a statement that was made --
15 I'm trying to pull it up -- that said -- no. It had
16 to do with the report card.

17 And I think it was the lowest quartile,
18 that there was a question that you raised because
19 you don't know how they're -- how these kids get
20 into that quartile. And there was a -- I believe
21 there was a remark that you made that said because
22 you don't have student files, so that you don't
23 know -- I'm assuming you were referencing students
24 as they're coming into your school, so you don't --
25 and my question is why don't you have that

1 information.

2 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: So we -- yes, ma'am.
3 Good question. We do get the student files in terms
4 of whatever records they have, why they may be in
5 any kind of program previously. What we don't have
6 access to readily -- and, actually, Mr. Johnson is
7 the one that brought up that -- is their test data,
8 their two previous years that apparently are figured
9 into whatever quartile they belong to.

10 THE CHAIR: Right.

11 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: So any new student that
12 comes in, it's difficult for us to determine what
13 quartile they're in. So what we do with our, you
14 know, short-cycle assessments is we try to meet
15 where they are and move them forward.

16 But that has been a challenge. And that
17 came up when we were actually analyzing, you know,
18 why -- why did the lowest quartile do the way it did
19 when previously it hadn't done that. So, you know,
20 we were really trying to dive in. That was one of
21 the major reasons that we brought Kim on to help us.

22 THE CHAIR: I guess you do learn something
23 new every day. Because I did not realize that that
24 information did not follow the student. So I --

25 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: It doesn't come in a

1 cume folder.

2 MS. KAREN WOERNER: No, it doesn't come in
3 a cume folder. And because of the way they -- they
4 take the students from each -- and I don't -- if you
5 need -- I can probably find someone in Assessment
6 and Accountability to answer it better than I. But
7 what I do understand is that the way that the -- the
8 growth is determined -- I'm not sure about how the
9 quartile is determined and if that's really on two
10 years' worth previously. I thought the lowest
11 quartile was the bottom 25 percent of the school --
12 student population based on their raw score.

13 But in terms of their growth expectations,
14 that is true, that they take -- if you take -- and I
15 think we've talked about this before. But if you
16 take all the students in a single grade level across
17 the state and then group them based on their last
18 two PARCC test scores, that performs their academic
19 peer group; so that you get an adequate growth
20 expectation based on how -- what their ability level
21 is, meaning that really high performing students
22 might have a lower expectation in terms of growth
23 and a student on the lower end needs to grow a
24 little bit more than a year's worth to catch up.

25 But not only that, but they look at what's

1 the average for that group. And that's the
2 expectation -- or expected performance.

3 So that is how the -- the growth is
4 determined. I'm not sure how they identify the
5 individual students at the school. And I think I'm
6 going to have to find more information, because I
7 think there's something inaccurate here. It is how
8 the expectation for growth is determined; but I
9 don't believe it's how the bottom 25 percent for the
10 individual school is determined.

11 THE CHAIR: Okay. All right.

12 MR. KIM JOHNSON: Yes, Madam Chair and
13 members of the Commission. If -- the only thing I
14 know is what is in the Technical Manual. The
15 Technical Manual very clearly says if a student has
16 been in the lowest quartile over the past two
17 years -- previous two years, and then that would
18 include the year that they're graded on, that they
19 are counted as Q1.

20 So a matter of identifying them and
21 finding out what is that growth target that is
22 needed is -- I don't know how to do that. I would
23 love to have help from the PED saying, "This is how
24 you go about doing it"; because right now, we're
25 kind of in the dark.

1 Now, that doesn't excuse the -- you know,
2 the one "F" grade on the lower quartile. But it
3 would be of great, great help if we had that
4 information so we could do some, you know,
5 significant targeting ourselves. And -- and if the
6 manual is -- if that's not -- if what's happening is
7 not what the manual says, it would nice to know
8 that, too. Yeah. So --

9 MS. KAREN WOERNER: I am not an expert in
10 that area. We, in Charter Schools Division, are
11 very generalist. So I'm sure that the Technical
12 Guide, if you've read the most recent version, is
13 absolutely correct. And I will get you people some
14 contact information here at PED who can answer your
15 question more accurately than I.

16 MR. JOHNSON: Thank you.

17 THE CHAIR: Thanks. So while we're
18 talking about that lowest quartile, regardless of
19 how they got there, can you just talk a little bit
20 more about the interventions that you're doing?

21 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: Yes, ma'am. We -- we
22 have a full range of IEP-related services, special
23 education and ancillary services from -- from
24 resource room help all the way to more
25 self-contained settings.

1 But another thing that we've done -- and
2 we began it last year in a different kind of way,
3 but more so this year -- was we added -- we went to
4 an eight-period block, which our challenge at having
5 tutoring after school or before school is getting
6 kids from all over the Valley to our school and
7 allowing them to stay, because they have to get
8 home, right?

9 So we -- we really thought about it. And
10 by adding an eight-period block, we added another
11 40 sections, if not better, of opportunities to
12 offer intervention programs, as well as to offer
13 acceleration, if necessary. And we do some of that
14 as well.

15 But by adding those periods into our
16 schedule, we've -- I've identified students who need
17 intervention. Some have IEPs; some don't. But they
18 all needed intervention, whether it's in reading or
19 math. And we've placed them into classes where they
20 can get that.

21 And then once they -- they take -- you
22 know, they test out and they start to do better,
23 then we look at putting them into another -- you
24 know, another program. So it's basically -- it can
25 be a fluid kind of thing.

1 It's a little bit of a scheduling
2 nightmare; but we have purposefully included the
3 entire staff on that rather than identify, you know,
4 two or three people. We've trained, or we've done
5 in-services on interventions with all of our staff.
6 We are fostering an environment that all our staff
7 are interventionists. And we are working that way
8 to try to raise kids' scores and abilities where
9 they are and move them forward.

10 THE CHAIR: And you mentioned IEPs and
11 special education services. But I have to presume
12 that there are other students that are in that
13 lowest quartile --

14 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: Absolutely.
15 Absolutely.

16 THE CHAIR: -- that are not classified in
17 some manner.

18 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: We do know --

19 THE CHAIR: So how do you identify those
20 students for your school?

21 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: What we do is we look
22 carefully at the available PARCC scores that we
23 have, if we generate them, as well as our
24 short-cycle assessments. We do use MAP. And we
25 started using Istation all the way into -- as an

1 intervention piece into the lower high school,
2 middle school areas, depending on what grade levels
3 are -- come up with respect to the short-cycle
4 assessments and that kind of thing.

5 So we're much better at identifying the
6 students and getting them some type of intervention
7 help. So it does -- in our school, it matters; but
8 it doesn't matter whether a kid has an IEP or not.
9 If there's a student who has a certain grade level
10 that they need addressed, we're addressing it, you
11 know.

12 And we are very well aware of what happens
13 with IEPs and the ramifications and that kind of
14 stuff. That was my career for 27 years.

15 So we are aware of that. But at the same
16 time, we have some students with IEPs that are never
17 proficient in some areas. So they move on in either
18 language arts or math or science and those kinds of
19 things. And then others that aren't. And then we
20 may have some kids that may be very high in some
21 areas that have weaknesses. So we identify all
22 those.

23 THE CHAIR: Okay. Thank you. Can we just
24 briefly address -- I think it was just the one year
25 that you -- it appeared to have a significant staff

1 loss. And I'm trying to find the chart.

2 MS. KAREN WOERNER: Page 39, I think.

3 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: 19 -- no.

4 MS. KAREN WOERNER: 19 of 27. 39 of 45 in
5 your packet.

6 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: I've got a mark
7 there, too, Madam Chair.

8 THE CHAIR: And I'm scrolling through my
9 online one. And I know I -- you know, I popped in a
10 question there about, like, "What happened?"

11 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: So those were not all
12 teachers. Some were support staff. It was -- I
13 believe that was the year that the State had a
14 significant budget shortage. We were forced into a
15 RIF that spring. I think it was the spring of '16.
16 And that -- that created -- that created a bumper
17 effect of us having to make budget.

18 So part of it was driven by -- by finances
19 and having the RIF and then make do with what was
20 left, you know. And then with that comes -- comes
21 perception --

22 THE CHAIR: Let me just stop you. Because
23 this chart that I have here says 2018, your teacher
24 retention rate was 43 percent.

25 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: Okay.

1 THE CHAIR: You had had a high of
2 75 percent.

3 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: Well, we've had some
4 movement. I mean, I'm not going to negate that.
5 But we've also been able to fill positions. Some
6 people go into a charter school with different
7 perceptions, and they're not quite sure -- you know,
8 some-- what we do is we've had a tendency to
9 maybe -- I can think of one who was a little more
10 experienced teacher who had been used to a -- a
11 public school setting, where -- where things were
12 outlined specifically, and then coming into a
13 charter school and there were some different roles
14 that maybe needed to be played.

15 And some of that plays into just the
16 different environment.

17 THE CHAIR: And I think -- I looked at it,
18 also, because it's sort of -- not quite as much --
19 but it sort of correlated with the percentage of
20 students remaining. It was that -- that -- between
21 '17 and '18, you had a dip in your teacher retention
22 and your student retention. So it kind of looked
23 like what was there, you know.

24 So it just -- you know, it piqued my
25 curiosity when I saw those two. It wasn't quite the

1 same percentages. But I didn't know whether -- you
2 know, if there was something --

3 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: We've noticed that.
4 We've looked into it and tried to make some
5 determinations. We haven't come up with anything
6 really definitive or significant at this point.

7 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: On that point,
8 Madam Chair, can I ask a question?

9 THE CHAIR: Sure.

10 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: It was mentioned
11 that the school was started in an effort to address
12 certain things by CYFD -- CY -- and so my point is,
13 was the school -- the vision of the school was to be
14 the alternative for a class of students that were --
15 had been pushed out, cast away? Or are you getting
16 that type of student anyway?

17 And -- because I see the truancy is high.
18 And they leave, also.

19 Two things come to mind. I've worked
20 teaching -- and I was hired to work with those
21 students. And it was very, very hard to bring
22 them -- for them to attend school and for them to
23 stay in class while I had them. And so I never
24 pushed them out. I kept them in.

25 But the reason why I was hired was

1 teachers wouldn't stay with that -- that type of
2 student. They just would wear down, wear out.

3 And so is that what is happening in the
4 school? Because I see high truancy. I see a lot of
5 movement of students leaving the school. That's why
6 your graduation rate is not as high as it should be.

7 Is that the environment of the -- of the
8 students that you get?

9 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: Commissioner, I believe
10 that's part of it.

11 So we have -- we created the school to be
12 an option within the community for all students.
13 And over the years, we have been able to do that.
14 We've had -- we've had students that would, you
15 know, normally have gone to a private school in
16 Albuquerque attend our school and do extremely well.
17 We've had students that have come out of being
18 adjudicated and have done very well.

19 And it goes in waves. You know, what I've
20 noticed over the last ten years is the diversity of
21 students shifts. And I think part of it is you're
22 seeing that our community has a significant amount
23 of need, you know. And we -- we work very hard to
24 try to address that. So I think that's a very -- a
25 very keen perception.

1 Initially, we partnered with Youth
2 Development, Incorporated, when we first wrote the
3 charter, because there was a number of services that
4 they offered -- and they still do. They offer a TOP
5 program to us and a couple of other things out of
6 the Valencia branch.

7 But because of budget things on their end,
8 they haven't been able to move too much out of the
9 Albuquerque area any longer.

10 So those kinds of things, we've been --
11 for example, we've hired our own behavioral health
12 people, you know. We've looked at -- and we have
13 different people working truancy. And we've gone to
14 a very -- well, we've always had. But we've
15 modified our advisory teams. Every teacher has an
16 advisory group of maybe 15 to 22 students that they
17 are tasked with monitoring.

18 We're trying very hard. We spend a lot of
19 time on the phone tracking kids down for lots of
20 different reasons.

21 We do work closely with CYFD, and
22 especially when we're identifying kids with
23 free-and-reduced lunch and that kind of stuff.

24 So it's a combination of all of that, to
25 be honest with you.

1 And I don't want to paint a picture that
2 we're an alternative school; because we're not. But
3 we do -- but I think families tend to gravitate
4 towards us because we care and because they know
5 that we're going to give it a shot, you know. And
6 with kids. And with their kids. Where maybe they
7 haven't found successes in other places.

8 And sometimes -- you know, most of the
9 time I can say we do. But I can also say that there
10 are some times that we haven't been able to help.
11 You know, we don't -- we don't compromise safety,
12 for example.

13 So, I mean, there are strict rules around
14 that. And we're very strict on, you know, if a
15 student chooses to be unsafe, then that's a problem
16 for us. But, you know, we do.

17 Another thing with the dip -- if I could
18 just mention the dip of enrollment a little bit. We
19 did lose, and we continue to hear because we're not
20 running a bus into the Belen District anymore.
21 That's a significant factor. The fact that we still
22 have fragmented grade levels; that's a factor as
23 well, because parents don't -- because they -- they
24 may be in other schools in either of the other two
25 school districts, and they can't split their time

1 that way.

2 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: You were running
3 the bus to pick up kids --

4 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: We were running -- when
5 we first started transportation. We didn't make any
6 bones about it. We were in Valencia County. We
7 were going to run a bus through Valencia County. We
8 were a State-authorized charter school. We believe
9 we read in the law that we could do that. We did do
10 that.

11 We were told we couldn't do that. We had
12 to eat the cost of it. We didn't get reimbursed for
13 it. The next year, we weren't allowed to do that.
14 I think it's something to revisit.

15 THE CHAIR: Just to clarify?

16 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Please.

17 THE CHAIR: They have to stay within the
18 school district's boundaries. You can't go outside
19 the school district's boundaries. Just because
20 you're a State charter, you're still obligated by
21 statute to stay within the traditional district's
22 boundary.

23 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Okay. Just to
24 further clarify that, Madam Chair? So they cannot
25 deny a student coming out of the boundary if the

1 child wants to go.

2 THE CHAIR: With their own -- to provide
3 their own transportation.

4 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: But a charter
5 school cannot go --

6 THE CHAIR: They're not going to get
7 funded to provide that transportation outside the
8 district.

9 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Okay. Okay.
10 Thank you.

11 THE CHAIR: Yeah. It's -- it gets very
12 convoluted at times. It really does. And you get
13 stuck in it.

14 Thank you. So let me clarify. You use
15 Istation and MAPs. Are you no longer using NWEA?

16 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: NWEA is MAPs. Yes,
17 ma'am.

18 THE CHAIR: Got you. Okay.

19 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: We are using NWEA.

20 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: That is MAPs.

21 THE CHAIR: That was my fault. I just --
22 you know.

23 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: We also use ACCUPLACER,
24 ACT, PSAT. We became our own testing center this
25 year. So we actually for the first time offered the

1 PSAT test on campus, which we were able to almost
2 triple the number of kids that we tested this year.

3 THE CHAIR: But the NWEA goals is not --
4 that's where you've fallen short. And I saw the --

5 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: And we knew that was
6 going to happen.

7 THE CHAIR: In your response to --

8 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: We had attempted, in
9 maybe 2015, to try to change those goals. I think
10 we put some correspondence in there. And then,
11 honestly, with the focus -- and I got caught up in
12 it, too, the focus of the school grade. I mean,
13 everybody was more interested in -- you know, our
14 lives depended on the school grade. So we were
15 trying to figure out how to increase school grade.
16 But we got caught up in that.

17 THE CHAIR: Right. Right. And it's --
18 it's a vexing problem for us. Because we don't
19 renegotiate, because we'd end up renegotiating --
20 you know, if all the schools that didn't meet the
21 goal or just barely fell short, they'd want
22 renegotiations, and we'd be in this just continual
23 cycle of negotiations with -- with schools, that the
24 hope is that a school, when they come to us well
25 enough first, with their school and the short-cycle

1 assessment, whatever they're wishing to use, that
2 the target is rigorous, but hopefully attainable
3 throughout the life of the contract.

4 And it does -- we just -- we can't do
5 this. So it does become challenging. I'm looking
6 back now at that correspondence and saying with both
7 of us. And I think we have to do a better job of
8 communicating that.

9 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: Absolutely. I think
10 we're going to be better prepared to develop goals,
11 if that's what we need to do this next go-round.

12 THE CHAIR: Right. So one last thing. Do
13 you still have two governance council members that
14 are short on -- because it -- there were -- there
15 were two that were listed here as not complete, were
16 in the training.

17 MS. KAREN WOERNER: Yeah. And that was
18 for last school year.

19 THE CHAIR: That was for last school year.
20 So they just finished out the school year. So how
21 are they doing this school year?

22 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: We're on track to be
23 compliant with all five.

24 THE CHAIR: Okay. All right. Thank you,
25 I appreciate it.

1 Commissioners? Oh, sure.

2 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Thank you. Good
3 morning, Mr. Ogas. I'm going to speak to the audit.
4 And I'm make reference to the letter from Ms. Saiz
5 that we have here in our packet. The substance
6 stands about the non-compliance of the T&E Manual
7 procedures and the requirements for employee
8 personnel files.

9 And I think you made small mention in your
10 opening statement that you did hire now a in-house
11 business manager, is that correct? And I believe
12 that's Ms. Jarvis who spoke.

13 Could I ask Ms. Jarvis to come up for just
14 a moment? Before the hire of Ms. Jarvis, I believe
15 maybe you were contracting out? What firm were you
16 using?

17 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: We were using REC-10.
18 In fact, we still are. There's a transition going
19 on.

20 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: On average,
21 physically, how much time would they spend on your
22 campus doing the work that's required by the
23 business manager?

24 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: Maybe a couple of full
25 days a month. But we also had a person who was

1 processing -- processing the requisitions and
2 things. And I think that's where there was -- there
3 may have been some things missed, between the
4 distance and the time.

5 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: All right.

6 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: Yeah.

7 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Okay. So possibly
8 the ball being dropped with regards to what was
9 found in the audit may have been that the
10 professionals that you signed on with on contract
11 weren't there enough to make sure that things were
12 followed through on.

13 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: I don't want to cast
14 blame. But I can tell you, out of ten years, I
15 guess, I'm not sure if this is the first time we
16 ever were audited under those -- under the
17 guidelines. And I certainly respect and honor what
18 the audit came up with.

19 But I was never aware that that was an
20 issue, because I -- I knew and trusted that we were,
21 you know, receiving transcripts and getting
22 verifications of employment and all those things
23 that we needed.

24 I also found out that the auditor did not
25 like our contract structure, which concerns me,

1 because our attorney developed that contract
2 structure, you know. So we're looking at all of
3 that now.

4 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Okay. Well, that's
5 all over and done with.

6 Have you -- Ms. Jarvis. Ms. Jarvis, if
7 you may, can you speak to your experience and your
8 professional background? And also, have you had --
9 have you taken, really, a good look at the audit in
10 particular with what was stated in the letter, the
11 recommendations from Ms. Saiz? And what have you,
12 or are you planning to do to make sure that the
13 school is back in compliance?

14 MS. DONNA JARVIS: Yes, sir. I have over
15 30 years of experience in bookkeeping. I worked for
16 Western Technical College in El Paso, Texas, for
17 five years, where I was trained under a wonderful
18 lady who did books. I went into the construction
19 business, and then, of course, my daughter brought
20 me here to the School of Dreams Academy. I have
21 gone -- I only started July this year. It's all
22 brand new to me.

23 I am learning everything. Yes, sir, I've
24 read every single page. I know everything that
25 we've been walking through. I've -- since the T&E

1 audit, I have already gone through all of our files
2 again, requested things, asked for things,
3 reorganized, restructured.

4 As for all of our findings, we're doing
5 our level -- my level best, working with Geri [ph],
6 who is the person who was before us; she's the one
7 in T-or-C, working with her. She's also helping me
8 put a format together that we can use from now on,
9 from this time forward.

10 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Have you done
11 anything with restructuring your business staff in
12 any way? Or is that pretty much still intact?

13 MS. DONNA JARVIS: Geri is still
14 monitoring me, because I'm brand new. We work
15 together. I go to her office two or three times a
16 month. She comes down to the school.

17 There are communication between the two of
18 us on a daily basis, sometimes on an hourly basis,
19 depending on what's going on.

20 I have a lot of questions, and I'm asking
21 a lot of questions.

22 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: And where do you
23 see yourself in five years?

24 MS. DONNA JARVIS: I see myself right here
25 talking to you asking for another five years.

1 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Thank you.

2 THE CHAIR: Commissioner Toulouse?

3 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Madam Chair, I
4 want to follow up a little bit on that -- the audit
5 information in here, because I am concerned that it
6 says there are some repeat findings. And I want to
7 ask, because by the time you get the finalized audit
8 and it's released to the public, you've got a
9 two-year delay.

10 But there is an exit conference. Who sits
11 in on the exit conference with your auditors when
12 they're ready to leave?

13 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: We have a budget
14 committee comprised of two board members and a
15 community member and a teacher and a business
16 manager. So we sit on the exit conference. But you
17 are right. There's almost a six-month --

18 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: But do you use
19 that exit conference to get in there and fix all of
20 those things so they don't become a repeat finding
21 the next time? Because that's what I see -- there
22 are a lot of these repeat -- look like they could
23 have been fixed as soon as you heard that.

24 So I also wonder if your staff is more on
25 the education side and not as much on the business

1 side, so that there is not -- you know, it's very
2 hard to balance how to keep your records. And it
3 looks to me like on a lot of this, the business
4 things haven't been done, but the records haven't
5 been kept up, whether it's on your personnel side or
6 it's on your business side.

7 Do you need more staff to see that those
8 records are up to date and kept so that you don't
9 have these? I just -- it bothers me. Because all
10 of these repeat ones look like they could have been
11 fixed following that exit conference.

12 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: I believe you're right.
13 I think you have a very good point. I can tell you,
14 since Ms. Jarvis has come on, I am seeing a marked
15 increase in attention to it, I think because she's
16 right next door and we're talking a lot more about
17 it. And I can see the efforts that she's making
18 bringing staff in to get the files fixed, or, you
19 know, making sure that, you know, requisitions and
20 money is handled.

21 I see her going to the bank every day,
22 clockwork. At 2:30, 3:00, she's out the door taking
23 the deposits.

24 So I am seeing, visually, some response to
25 some of the concerns that have been brought up.

1 Could we have done that earlier? Absolutely. I was
2 dealing with different people. Could I have told
3 them to do that earlier? Absolutely. I -- we --
4 you know, we could have done better.

5 But at the same time, I feel that we've --
6 we truly have a much better handle on it right now.

7 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: But on the fiscal
8 side -- and I'll address this to your board chair --
9 that part really is also under the oversight --

10 MS. KATHY CHAVEZ: Right.

11 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: -- as the Board of
12 Finance. How does -- clearly, it hasn't been
13 handled as it could have been. Are you fixing that,
14 too, that when you see these, you're not just
15 leaving it up to Mr. Ogas to fix. But as the Board
16 of Finance, are you going to be involved?

17 MS. KATHY CHAVEZ: Yes, ma'am. In fact,
18 we -- well, we come together right before our
19 regular meetings. So we do meet every month. And
20 we do address these.

21 As I stated before, all these findings are
22 very -- we don't take them lightly. But I do see --
23 as Mr. Ogas said, we do see a difference with our
24 in-house now; and, you know, 20/20 hindsight, I
25 guess. And you figure that people are their experts

1 in their fields and they're taking care of this kind
2 of stuff.

3 But I see a big difference already, and I
4 really see it being rectified.

5 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: And I'm not trying
6 to really put you on the spot. I'm just thinking --
7 you know, I had 30 years in state government, had to
8 deal with audits all the time. I was on the CNM
9 board for 12 years; I chaired the finance committee,
10 dealt with audits all the time. And the divisions
11 did not like to see me coming if they had repeat
12 findings. They had to present them to the board.
13 So it was in a public meeting where we went through
14 it. And so I developed a problem with that.

15 But I also know we don't provide, in this
16 state, the adequate training to be a board of
17 finance, I don't think. It takes more than the five
18 hours of training or whatever is being done, and it
19 needs to be an ongoing thing.

20 Just having to know the state regulations
21 on purchasing that you are all under takes a lot
22 longer than that. The hiring, you know, how all of
23 that -- the paychecks and all come through. All of
24 that takes more training.

25 And I would hope that that is something

1 that, over time, this Commission will also -- since
2 I won't be here; this is my last chance to fuss at
3 you one way or the other. Although, I've enjoyed
4 watching this school over the six years I've been on
5 the Commission. So I will miss trying to fight for
6 you to get you all the way through on your students
7 every year, and not doing the one year at a time.
8 Because I understood that problem.

9 But this is my last chance to point out
10 that there are ways to keep -- you can't always keep
11 from having the first finding, because you have --
12 even with new staff -- and I tell people, new staff
13 need to be better trained. It looks like you found
14 your way to get your training.

15 But there is that time between a new
16 person taking over and actually learning; yet, those
17 things are going to slip through. So it's the
18 repeat findings I like to look at and see if there
19 are ways to handle those and use any findings as
20 training for anybody who's new who's doing them.

21 That's a message I'm trying to get across;
22 because I don't think you aren't doing most of this
23 stuff right. Most of this looks like, on the
24 financial side, somebody didn't have the time to get
25 it done right at that minute.

1 On the personnel side, it looks to me like
2 somebody didn't have time to stick something in the
3 file. And that's where you've got to make that
4 time. That's all I'm saying.

5 But I have enjoyed this school and wish
6 you well. Thank you.

7 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: Thank you.

8 MS. KATHY CHAVEZ: Thank you.

9 THE CHAIR: Commissioner Robbins?

10 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: If I could follow
11 up on that with the audits and things -- but let me
12 backtrack just a little bit. You have about 5- --
13 or -- 500 students?

14 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: It's about 460 right
15 now.

16 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: 460 right now? So
17 about 460 students. What's your total staff? Total
18 staff.

19 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: Total staff is about
20 63.

21 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: 63. How many are
22 classroom teachers of the 63?

23 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: About 40 -- 42,
24 something like that.

25 MS. DONNA JARVIS: 42, 43, yes.

1 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: Following up with
2 what Commissioner Toulouse was saying about the
3 audits and things, does the board leave it to
4 Mr. Ogas, or do they actually set the idea with all
5 the staff that fixing financial findings are not
6 your bookkeeper's responsibility; they're the entire
7 team's responsibility?

8 I came into an organization
9 four-and-a-half years ago that had 23 audit findings
10 the year before. I fixed all but about a half-dozen
11 of them in three months. Nothing had been done in
12 nine months. They knew that these findings were
13 there, because many of them were repeat findings.
14 But in the previous audit, they had actually
15 stated -- the management response -- it was the
16 CFO's responsibility to fix every single one of
17 them; even though a lot of them had absolutely
18 nothing to do with finance. They were IT problems,
19 things coming out of the IT system, things coming
20 out of HR, the things that we've talked about here,
21 absolutely nothing to do with the CFO.

22 And the CFO doesn't have the
23 responsibility to go tell another department, "You
24 will fix this."

25 Mr. Ogas, you have that authority to go

1 tell staff in these other areas that they need to
2 fix these. Do you do that?

3 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: Yes, sir. I think it's
4 pretty clear back at our school that all of us have
5 taken ownership of this issue. We've provided
6 trainings three years now on procurement situations
7 to all staff. We've provided trainings on handling
8 the money.

9 And I think just started -- some of those,
10 like you said, were in the busy-ness of everything,
11 going on. But we've really backed up and made a
12 concerted effort to -- to comply and tell people
13 "No" and say, "This needs to be done differently."

14 And it started the first day -- it
15 started, actually, last year. But it started the
16 first day of staff development in August. That was
17 one of the first trainings we did.

18 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: And then I'll ask
19 Ms. Chavez. Does the board support Mr. Ogas in
20 enforcing those rules through the policies that you
21 have set on financials to ensure that all staff is
22 trained and maintained as part of your policies
23 that's a requirement?

24 MS. KATHY CHAVEZ: Commissioner,
25 absolutely. We do back Mr. Ogas in whatever he

1 needs. If he does need -- if he has a question or a
2 problem, you know, we give as much counsel as we
3 can. But he's got the authority to do all of that.

4 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: And you've heard
5 from -- you know, if you were here yesterday or --
6 you know, we've had a lot of charter schools that
7 got into problems, not because of the academics;
8 they got into problems because of the fiscal issues.

9 And those are very easy to overlook. And
10 when I'm looking at the list here of the things that
11 meet and don't meet, you know, the financials kind
12 of stand out and the record-keeping stand out. And
13 that's sometimes because we lose track, and we --
14 like you said, we stay focused on how can we improve
15 the grade of the school, you know.

16 And those are focus -- those aren't
17 focused on financial ideas. And we kind of lose
18 track of those things. You know, the students need
19 to do well and -- you know, I'll get off the finance
20 things. Because I do want to look at the high
21 rate -- and you have 23 percent of your students are
22 with disabilities.

23 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: 27.

24 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: 27. That's very
25 high compared to the Los Lunas district, in total.

1 I think that's even higher than APS.

2 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: Yes, it is. It's
3 higher than most everywhere else. I can't explain
4 why. But I can tell you that 95-plus percent of
5 those are students that came to us with IEPs. We --
6 we do -- with the exception of the 3Y4Y program,
7 which is probably 32 students, through -- it's been
8 the highest, I think, 33 students so far -- all
9 those kids have IEPs. And those have IEPs because
10 we conduct active Child Find, and we're part of the
11 Trailblazers program and that kind of thing.

12 But the majority of the other students,
13 like I told you, the kids that are enrolled in
14 seventh grade, half of them had IEPs with them. A
15 good majority of those IEPs are outdated, which puts
16 a real strain on staff. They've come to us with
17 IEPs.

18 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: Do you get a sense
19 a lot of these students -- are they coming from
20 Los Lunas Public Schools?

21 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: They're coming from the
22 local school districts, both of them, and
23 South Valley.

24 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: So they're coming
25 from all over. So do you get a sense, or have you

1 talked to the parents about these students? Are
2 their needs not being met in the local school
3 districts and that's why they're leaving the local
4 school districts?

5 I have a 35-year-old son who was severely
6 disabled. And one of the things that I had to push
7 and I had to be the advocate for was making sure
8 that he was receiving the services that the State
9 and the federal government was giving the money for.

10 And that's a challenge for parents. And,
11 you know, back 30 years ago, there weren't charters.
12 So I didn't have the option of pulling him out and
13 saying, "I'm going to go to a -- thing," and I
14 couldn't afford a private school and things like
15 that.

16 Do you get a sense with parents when they
17 come in with new students with IEPs that they feel
18 that those students haven't been served somewhere
19 else? Because I don't think the Commission can
20 address it. But the State needs to address. We
21 can't be pushing students out we don't want to
22 serve. Whether it's the traditional public schools
23 saying, "We don't want to serve those students," or
24 the charter school intentionally identifying
25 students in a very subtle way, saying, "Either we

1 don't or we do."

2 Because that can drive numbers. If people
3 feel that a school district or charter is actually
4 helping a class of students, you may attract a
5 larger portion. And that's what I kind of get a
6 sense that's happening here is that you're trying to
7 do a good job; but you're picking up slack that
8 other school districts aren't meeting.

9 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: Commissioner Robbins,
10 you make a very good point. And, you know, I'm -- I
11 don't want to be perceived as lambasting anybody
12 else of what they're doing across town or across the
13 Valley. I actually spent 27 years running those
14 programs, I was an assistant superintendent. My
15 career was in special education.

16 And I think part of that is families know
17 who we are. I've been in the Valley 40 years. And
18 they know that we know how to create programs. And
19 the team that I have with me is very knowledgeable
20 and respected in terms of dealing with students with
21 special needs.

22 We have a tremendous diagnostic staff. We
23 have good ancillary people. We have good special
24 education people, particularly early childhood
25 people.

1 So they do try to seek us out. But then
2 they still have to go through the enrollment process
3 or the waiting list and that kind of stuff.

4 Some just enroll. And many don't say they
5 have kids in special ed or say they have IEPs until
6 the problem arises, and they just -- we're at a
7 parent meeting, and they say, "My child has an IEP.
8 Why don't you guys know?" Well, no one told -- so
9 you can't ask, right? We find out in all kinds of
10 different ways. And a lot of our staff is really
11 good, after short-cycle assessments, in trying to
12 figure that out.

13 So, you know, we do know how to do it.

14 Do we do it perfectly? Not always, you
15 know. And it's a sense of frustration sometimes,
16 you know. But the rapid growth in that area in
17 trying to staff it has been challenging, because as
18 you know, there are guidelines around staffing and
19 those types of things.

20 So -- but we've never denied. And we
21 won't. But we have seen -- I thought 19 percent was
22 high at one point in my career. But 27 percent this
23 last year is a milestone for me, anyway, you know.

24 It's --

25 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: I didn't mean it as

1 a criticism. It was an observation.

2 And when you look at the larger school
3 districts in the state, and they're a much lower
4 percentage of students with disabilities than what
5 you have, I kind of start, you know, raising my
6 eyebrows and, you know, raising questions as, "Why
7 is that?"

8 Because Albuquerque is very well-known
9 when you look at the state because there are a lot
10 of services. UNM Hospital is there. There's a lot
11 of services in the Albuquerque metro area that are
12 not available elsewhere in the state: OT, PT,
13 Speech-Language Pathologists, things likes that.
14 They're available in the Albuquerque area and a lot
15 of people with those higher degrees that charge a
16 lot.

17 There's not enough services or revenue,
18 you know, funding available in the remote areas and
19 in the small communities; so they kind of gravitate
20 to the Albuquerque area. And Los Lunas is a kind of
21 bedroom community of Albuquerque, and I'm wondering
22 if that's just -- they wind up -- kind of like they
23 wind up in Los Lunas on their way to Albuquerque, or
24 they overshoot Albuquerque and end up in Los Lunas
25 for different reasons.

1 Thank you.

2 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: It's booming right now.
3 I tell you.

4 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: Thank you.

5 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Commissioners, any
6 other questions?

7 Commissioner Armbruster?

8 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: I have one
9 question after.

10 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: You can go
11 first.

12 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: I just have one
13 question. I see, in Chart 17, the economically
14 disadvantaged at 43 percent. But you mentioned your
15 free-and-reduced lunch at a higher rate. That's not
16 the same thing?

17 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: We're over 85 percent.
18 I'm not exactly sure when our data is going to catch
19 up with that chart, to be honest with you. But this
20 past summer, when we got -- were able to get food
21 services, and we began to see how data needed to be
22 reported, we began reporting them correctly where it
23 needed to fall in order to meet those.

24 And we -- this last summer, we were
25 designated as an FBP [ph] school. In order to do

1 that, you have to be over 75 percent
2 free-and-reduced lunch, so that all of our kids
3 could eat. So -- and I'm pretty sure that we are at
4 least at that, if not higher, right now.

5 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: At -- all right.
6 Thank you.

7 Thank you, Madam Chair.

8 THE CHAIR: Thank you.

9 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: I have a number
10 of questions which may be answered in here. But I'm
11 overwhelmed with paperwork here.

12 So on your 27 percent special ed, is that
13 excluding your 3Y4Y?

14 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: I believe -- it
15 probably includes it. I don't know exactly how the
16 state -- I believe it includes it. Yes, ma'am, it
17 does.

18 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: So it's really
19 not at 27 percent, Commissioner Robbins. That
20 number isn't really quite as accurate as it should
21 be in a sense; because you were saying that you had
22 30 --

23 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: 27 today. 27 or 26
24 right now. Yes, ma'am.

25 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: And that's a

1 large amount of 3Y4Y. And why did you decide to do
2 the 3Y4Y?

3 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: We have a passion for
4 early intervention. We've done that for years.
5 Mrs. Ogas is a Speech-Language Pathologist. Her
6 expertise is early intervention. She started the
7 3Y4Y programs in Los Lunas, along with Lucy Romero,
8 our diagnostician who works for us. She was an
9 early childhood teacher and coordinator and
10 director.

11 We believe in early childhood programs.
12 And we see a need. So -- I mean, there's still
13 tremendous need out there. But we -- plus, we know
14 how to do it.

15 So, I mean, that was a huge plus. We know
16 the early intervention providers. We became a
17 member. We went through all the steps necessary
18 through Trailblazers and the State and the
19 Department of Health and Special Ed Unit. So we did
20 that because that's an area that we are pretty
21 passionate about. Early intervention has really
22 helped lots of students over the years. We've seen
23 it. That's why.

24 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: And so your
25 Istation scores for the end of 2018 are actually

1 lower than the State's in terms of your Tier 1
2 students.

3 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: Okay.

4 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: So I'm not sure
5 how -- what I have is that the -- well, the
6 district, Los Lunas level, is -- an average, because
7 there's a lot of students there, are 63, and
8 kindergarten and yours are 56. And that concerns
9 me. The first grade is -- the difference is between
10 48 and 58 percent, and 60 and 66 percent in second
11 grade.

12 So it concerns me that you're growing.
13 You want to grow your own, because that was the
14 beginning of this conversation a couple of years
15 ago. But they're not showing me that what practices
16 you are implementing are growing those students.

17 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: So, Commissioner, I can
18 answer -- that's a very good question. But I can
19 tell you, part of that is us -- we needed to learn
20 how to use Istation. One -- I believe Ms. Salazar
21 can explain a little bit better, because she was
22 involved in it.

23 When we first started testing, they -- we
24 have kindergarteners who may have never sat before a
25 computer screen before try to meet the time

1 requirements of what the Istation does, and we'd
2 miss it, you know. So there was some of that going
3 on.

4 I can tell you that -- that the academic
5 piece at the early grades is doing really well. And
6 I think new Istation scores are going to start
7 showing growth. And I think you're going to start
8 seeing an increase in those scores once everybody
9 understands what the prerequisites are before you
10 actually take the Istation test.

11 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: And although I
12 know that's true, by the way, I know that's true;
13 but it's also true of everybody else. So we can't
14 say, "Well, only SODA had -- the students didn't
15 know computers."

16 It's kind of the truth about most of the
17 five-year-olds who we're talking about.
18 Kindergarten. I'm just going to express that
19 concern.

20 In terms of this year's scores and kind of
21 in the same thing of their kindergarten scores in
22 November, but even looking at the first grade, who
23 we would assume had been there as kindergarteners --
24 but I realize not all -- it's still -- the Level 1s
25 are at 12 percent. I think that's right. I think

1 I'm saying that correctly.

2 So I just have concerns that these scores
3 are not as high as I would expect them to be.
4 Because you've had the kids. I understand you have
5 your 3Y4Y developmental disabilities, who are also
6 in this group, and it's a significant number. But
7 at the same time, that concerns me, because that was
8 why you wanted to start with kindergarteners because
9 you wanted to grow them.

10 And it's really significantly lower than
11 other schools who are growing their own, too. So I
12 personally want to see that -- an increase in these
13 scores of -- whatever you have to do. I'm not going
14 to tell you what to do, but -- because I don't know
15 what to do. But I think that -- but I think that
16 should be of concern --

17 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: Yes, ma'am.

18 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: -- that your
19 kids are not doing as well as others.

20 Also, I wanted to see -- I know -- and we
21 talked about this last year, because I remember you
22 had five older individuals graduate from the night
23 school and high school.

24 So how many kids are in -- I don't know
25 how to say this --

1 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: Our Graduate SODA
2 program. That's what we call it.

3 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Well -- like,
4 the regular folks who go K-12 and graduate. Because
5 the other ones are in night school; is that correct?

6 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: We have about 17
7 students who are in what you're calling "night
8 school."

9 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: I don't know
10 what you call it.

11 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: We call it our Graduate
12 SODA program. We were asked to provide programming
13 throughout the day a couple of years ago; so we're
14 doing that.

15 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: So those
16 Graduate -- night Graduate SODA individuals, of what
17 you're telling me are 17, are going to school during
18 the daytime?

19 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: Throughout the day, in
20 and out. They're on individual -- like, learning
21 plans and that kind of stuff, and assignments.

22 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: So how old are
23 those students?

24 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: Most of them are in
25 their 20s. We have had some students as old as --

1 just shy under 50. But we haven't had recently.

2 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: So those
3 students -- because they're still students -- who
4 are, you know, five or six years older than the
5 regular twelfth-graders, they're in there with them?

6 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: No, they're not. We
7 have a separate area. If they -- you know, most of
8 the time, they're coming in, and they're -- they're
9 doing work off-site, or they're doing work there
10 off-line on -- in a separate area. They aren't in
11 mingling with the regular student population, no.

12 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: So let me then
13 go back. So for your -- I hate calling them
14 "regular" --

15 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: Our high school kids.

16 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Typical-age
17 students. Thank you very much.

18 How many of those are in twelfth last
19 year? Not currently, but last year, how many of
20 those students were there? And how many of those
21 students graduated? I'm picking out that --

22 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: I'm going to have to do
23 this off the top of my head. Most of them,
24 actually. We started with about 64 kids that
25 actually were in the twelfth grade. And I think we

1 graduated 62, 63. Where our cohorts get skewed is
2 from the ninth grade up, and --

3 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Right. That's
4 why I wanted take out the over-aged individuals,
5 because it gives a better picture of what your
6 graduation rate is --

7 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: Thank you. Absolutely.
8 Yes, ma'am.

9 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: -- instead of
10 adding on because of the school grade. I don't know
11 why they don't do that, anyway. But I don't run the
12 world; however, I might be asked to. No. Just
13 teasing.

14 So let's see. We answered several of the
15 questions, and I don't want to go back and do that.

16 And maybe last is it would seem to me,
17 regardless of whether or not you know if Student A
18 is in the low quartile, lowest quartile, or not, you
19 would pretty quickly discover that, because you're
20 giving the MAP -- the NWEA MAPs tell us. That's
21 going to tell you pretty quickly, by the RIT score,
22 what their scores will be.

23 Since their scores at the end of the year
24 are compared to the last two years of everybody
25 who's had the same two scores that they've had, it

1 doesn't seem that it matters whether they're going
2 into Quartile 1, because you probably get this
3 NWEA -- I don't know -- end of August-ish?

4 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: Yes, ma'am.

5 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: So you could
6 pretty much self-identify --

7 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: We can get a good idea.
8 But we still wouldn't know the exact PARCC scores
9 that are being counted for those Q designations,
10 which then would not let us know what type of growth
11 they need.

12 That was what I think Kim was getting at.
13 We do know; we can identify and we do do the
14 interventions accordingly. But having the actual
15 scores would be that much more helpful, so that we
16 have a target in terms of -- we had the discussion
17 when we were developing the DASH program. You know,
18 how do we find that, so that we can move that
19 forward?

20 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: I guess I'm
21 missing why it's terribly significant. Because you
22 have Child A, and that Child A needs to go up a lot.
23 The RIT score is 183; it needs to be at 237. So it
24 doesn't really matter, because what you're going to
25 be graded on beside the last two years, which you

1 have no control over, is how much this child is
2 going to grow this year compared to the cohort. I
3 hope I'm saying that correctly.

4 And the other -- so in terms of -- you
5 mention in your letter that a number of kids are not
6 motivated. I know that's true. And so you said
7 it's going to require a considerable amount of
8 research to look into that trending.

9 And so I wondered if you've talked to
10 other charter schools, other high-functioning
11 schools, about where you are to see what they're
12 doing.

13 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: I do speak with other
14 charter leaders, you know, continuously. There's a
15 group that we meet with probably once a month to
16 discuss different things. That is part of the
17 discussion in terms of how are -- how are you
18 motivating students.

19 And, you know, part of it is -- is, you
20 know, moving more toward a vocational training
21 model, you know, and providing some type of -- of
22 hook or key. I've done some of that in the past.
23 We are strongly looking at that as part of our
24 Graduate SODA program, as well as filtering down
25 into other areas.

1 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: So this is just
2 sort of my last question, I think. So...

3 THE CHAIR: You that said before.

4 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: I know that.
5 Did I say that? Didn't I say "maybe"? I'm going to
6 stop saying that.

7 I'm just curious. When students go to
8 take dual credit, do they have to have a certain
9 proficiency in reading to do that? Because a lot of
10 kids can't do the dual credit.

11 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: We do ACCUPLACER. We
12 do everything that UNM requires, which is sort of
13 the paradox of our school, right? Because on the
14 one hand, we have this need that we're trying to
15 meet on the one hand; and on the other hand, we have
16 so many kids enrolled in dual-credit courses, more
17 than anybody in our valley, percentage-wise. And
18 the success rate is really, really good.

19 So they do -- they have to score at a
20 certain proficiency level. We test them between the
21 eighth and ninth grade. And then we test any new
22 students that come in that may be ninth grade and
23 older. We have about 140 students taking
24 dual-credit courses right now.

25 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Thank you.

1 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: Thank you.

2 THE CHAIR: Commissioners, any other
3 questions?

4 (No response.)

5 THE CHAIR: Okay. Do I have a motion?

6 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: I'll do it.

7 THE CHAIR: Sure.

8 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: I move that the PEC
9 renew the charter contract between PEC and the
10 School of Dreams Academy for the term of five years.

11 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Second.

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

15 Any other further discussion?

16 If not, Commissioner Armbruster, roll-call
17 vote -- yeah -- roll-call vote, please.

18 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
19 Gipson?

20 THE CHAIR: Yes.

21 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
22 Robbins?

23 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: Yes.

24 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
25 Ruiz?

1 COMMISSIONER RUIZ: Yes.

2 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner

3 Armbruster votes "Yes."

4 Commissioner Toulouse?

5 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Yes.

6 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner

7 Caballero?

8 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Yes.

9 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner

10 Crone?

11 COMMISSIONER CRONE: Yes.

12 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner

13 Peralta?

14 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Yes.

15 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Eight-zero vote.

16 Passes.

17 THE CHAIR: The motion passes, eight-zero.

18 Congratulations. And we will see you sometime after

19 the Session for contract negotiations.

20 MR. MICHAEL OGAS: Thank you very much.

21 THE CHAIR: Thank you so much.

22 (A discussion was held off the record.)

23 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Okay. Up next is

24 the school of Southwest Preparatory Learning Center.

25 And I believe you mentioned there was somebody for

1 public comment, or --

2 FROM THE FLOOR: Correct.

3 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: CSD, please.

4 MS. KAREN WOERNER: As you know,
5 Commissioners, the Southwest Preparatory Learning
6 Center was on a short-term, two-year contract, and,
7 therefore, has only completed one school year under
8 the current contract. Again, this explains the lack
9 of trend data that was provided in Part A.

10 One of the conditions of the short-term
11 contract was related to financial concerns. And
12 those conditions have been met, and the Board of
13 Finance was returned to the school by PED in January
14 2018, to the credit of their governing board and the
15 school staff.

16 The school's letter grade for 2017-'18 was
17 an overall "B," with a "D" in current standing,
18 which I should point out is made up of both growth
19 and proficiency rates.

20 The students are demonstrating growth as
21 expected when compared to their academic peers, as
22 indicated on Page 7 of 17 in Chart 5.

23 And they -- on the next page, you will
24 also see -- yes, there are several numbers; 7 of 17.

25 And then the next page, the growth index

1 is shown in Chart 6 through 9 for the subgroups. In
2 Q1 and Q3, please remember that close to zero is
3 as -- indicates as-expected, and, again, as I
4 pointed out yesterday for a school, though this
5 chart is spread across -- it looks like a lot, it is
6 all within, in most cases, under .5, meaning that
7 it's very close to the expected growth.

8 So whether it's above or below the line by
9 that little -- by under .5 is still close to
10 expected growth.

11 Regarding the performance indicators that
12 are rated during the annual site visit, again,
13 that's on Page 5. For the ratings for last year,
14 the two Falls Far Below ratings in red were due to
15 the audit findings again lagging by one year; so
16 that was for the 2016-'17 school year.

17 And the remainder of the ratings, as you
18 can see, are either Meets Standard or Working to
19 Meet Standard.

20 This school did provide a complete and
21 timely application, including the E-Occupancy
22 Certificate.

23 And as a result of all this, the PED
24 recommendation is for a five-year renewal. We're
25 requesting two conditions: That they implement a

1 school improvement plan to address that current
2 standing and their lowest performing students; and
3 receive an unmodified audit with no material
4 weaknesses or significant deficiencies.

5 Thank you.

6 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Thank you. Good
7 afternoon, and welcome. And I remind you that if
8 you would please introduce yourself for the record,
9 and you have 15 minutes for your presentation.

10 MR. ROBERT PASZTOR: My name is Robert
11 Pasztor. I'm the head administrator for Southwest
12 Preparatory.

13 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Turn on the mic,
14 please. Make sure it's on.

15 MR. ROBERT PASZTOR: Oh, look at the
16 light.

17 My name is Robert Pasztor. I'm the head
18 administrator for Southwest Preparatory Learning
19 Center.

20 MR. BARRY BERENBERG: And I am Barry
21 Berenberg, an attorney with Walsh Gallegos, and I
22 represent Southwest Preparatory Learning Center.

23 MR. ROBERT PASZTOR: I also have with me
24 today -- Maria Foster is our internal business
25 manager, sitting over here. And Ms. DeEtte

1 Peterson. And she is one of our board members.

2 Thank you for the opportunity to speak.
3 This is where I introduced everybody, which I
4 already did.

5 Teachers and parents -- and we had
6 teachers and parents invited. But this went a lot
7 faster than we expected. We figured we'd be seeing
8 you on Thursday or Friday. The abruptness of it
9 brought just a few of us up here today.

10 The Southwest Preparatory Learning Center
11 was originally chartered as Southwest Primary
12 Learning Center with the Albuquerque Public Schools
13 and opened in August of 2005 serving Grades 4
14 through 6.

15 We renewed as a State-chartered charter
16 school in 2010; again, in 2015; again, in 2017. And
17 this will be our fourth renewal in the 14 years.

18 At the 2017 renewal, the Commission asked
19 us to consolidate some of our schools and programs.
20 After much consultation with the stakeholders during
21 that school year, Southwest Primary Learning Center,
22 Grades 4 through 6, and Southwest Intermediate
23 Learning Center, Grade 7 and 8, consolidated.

24 Southwest Intermediate chose to close, and
25 Southwest Primary absorbed the programs, staff,

1 students, from the intermediate school, changing its
2 name to Southwest Preparatory Learning Center, and
3 now serving Grades 4 through 8.

4 The program, the curricula, and
5 instructional organization remain much the same at
6 the ground level.

7 We have done no advertisement for the past
8 four years. It's been kind of a time of limbo that
9 we've all been in together. I could guarantee
10 tomorrow, but I could not always guarantee next year
11 or the following years.

12 Our population has been pretty much
13 determined by our lottery and our location in the
14 city. I would say everyone that applies gets in.
15 We see very similar populations at the local APS
16 elementary and middle schools in our area.

17 This year, we have a 27 percent special
18 education population, 47 percent free-and-reduced
19 lunch, and 3.8 percent ELL.

20 In response to this changing population,
21 we've added an additional half -- last year, we
22 added an additional half-time special education
23 teacher and had to increase that position to a
24 full-time this year. We added a special education
25 educational assistant, also. At the 80-day this

1 year, just last week, we had a 2.3 special education
2 caseload. So I will have to do a waiver just to
3 maintain what we're working with right at the
4 moment.

5 We've had two two-year renewals in a row,
6 directly as a result of the pending FBI
7 investigation -- anyone who was here would
8 remember -- which is no longer pending, which is
9 very nice.

10 Two-year renewals are very restrictive, in
11 that they only allow an analysis of one year's worth
12 of data in all areas. Two in a row, all I feel like
13 I do is prepare for renewal.

14 However, we are survivors. Ten of our 15
15 employees were with us on July 31st, 2014, when the
16 FBI raided the schools.

17 The experience has made us stronger, and I
18 would like to think that it's made us better. We
19 were in financial corrective action for
20 three-and-a-half years. We certainly grew leaps and
21 bounds in the area of financial responsibility, one
22 reason I can say that I am grateful for the
23 experience. I think it was -- it was a better
24 education than I got in college as far as being an
25 administrator.

1 The mission of the Southwest Preparatory
2 Learning Center is to sustain a high-performing
3 learning community. We are learning to provide
4 instruction that is inclusive of all the students
5 and directly targets individual needs. We are
6 learning to collaborate together with special
7 education teachers and our English Language Learner
8 coordinator to provide accommodations for
9 special-need populations.

10 We would like the opportunity to see the
11 fruits of our labor. Southwest Preparatory Learning
12 Center is asking for a five-year renewal without
13 conditions for the next renewal period. We are held
14 to a high standard through the performance framework
15 that has been established by the New Mexico Public
16 Education Department and the Commission. And we are
17 okay with that.

18 We had very rigorous mission-specific
19 goals for several years, and we worked hard to meet
20 and exceed those goals. These standards are much
21 higher than those for districts in the state, and we
22 have grown accustomed to being under the microscope
23 and wish to continue improving our ability and skill
24 in serving New Mexico's students.

25 Again, thank you for the opportunity to

1 speak.

2 THE CHAIR: Thank you so much. We
3 appreciate it. And we appreciate your patience with
4 all of our own smaller drama than you have gone
5 through; so that -- you don't have anyone here for
6 public comment.

7 And I know, also -- let me just say I know
8 that -- how this is all set up becomes challenging,
9 because we truly can't say, "Yes, you're going to be
10 here," and it just becomes difficult.

11 We're -- we can guesstimate days. But I
12 guess, fortunately, for many of the schools
13 yesterday, it wasn't a difficult task. So we were
14 able to go through five schools, which was more or
15 less a good thing, you know.

16 So it's -- and we want to be able to
17 afford the opportunity for all the Commissioners to
18 be able to ask questions. So we will recess, come
19 back with Commissioners' comments, questions, at
20 3:30. At 3:30. We should be comfortable at 3:30.
21 We told the School for the Arts to be here around
22 3:00-ish. And we --

23 MS. KAREN WOERNER: Someone is still here
24 from the New Mexico -- making sure, I think.

25 THE CHAIR: Yeah. So if everyone is

1 back -- but if we start coming back around 3:00 and
2 we're all here, then we'll start.

3 MS. KAREN WOERNER: With this school? Are
4 we recessing now?

5 THE CHAIR: Yes, we are. We are.

6 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: Madam Chair. I do
7 have to leave at about a quarter of 4:00; so I won't
8 participate in the voting and things like that. If
9 it drags beyond that 3:45, I won't ask questions or
10 anything.

11 THE CHAIR: And we should be fine, because
12 Commissioner Conyers, hopefully, will be here by
13 then. And I'll be -- so there will be one, two,
14 three, four -- we'll have a quorum, right?

15 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: A possible survey
16 of Commissioners who have questions?

17 THE CHAIR: Do you want to stay -- do you
18 want to --

19 (A discussion was held off the record.)

20 THE CHAIR: Okay. If you want to finish
21 it now, that's fine. That's fine.

22 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: I don't have any
23 questions. Because as I told them unofficially, I
24 asked my questions of the other two. And most of
25 them would fit in with this bunch. So I have no

1 questions.

2 THE CHAIR: And I am -- you know, I've
3 said this with the two other schools. And I'm --
4 you know, my sore loser comes up on this. Because I
5 wholeheartedly do not support two-year contracts,
6 for this very reason.

7 I feel like -- not that I don't like
8 seeing all the Southwest folks. But between -- you
9 know, renewals, contract negotiations that we just
10 finished, and now we're back here with renewal,
11 it's, like, I feel like I should be on staff in at
12 least one of these schools, you know.

13 So I -- you know, I'm very comfortable
14 with where the school is at at this moment in time.
15 I truly am.

16 But let me just ask -- one question.
17 Do you still have to do a lottery? Do
18 you?

19 MR. ROBERT PASZTOR: Absolutely, yes.
20 Yes.

21 THE CHAIR: All right. So that's actually
22 a good thing. That, even without you doing any
23 advertising you're still having to do a lottery.

24 MR. ROBERT PASZTOR: That's right.

25 THE CHAIR: So that's nice. Okay.

1 Any other questions?

2 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Where are you
3 located in Albuquerque?

4 MR. ROBERT PASZTOR: Northeast, Morris --
5 the northeast corner of Morris and Candelaria.

6 THE CHAIR: They are --

7 MR. ROBERT PASZTOR: We're in the same
8 building as Southwest Secondary.

9 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Oh.

10 THE CHAIR: Remember yesterday, there was
11 that technical plan issue, one under Primary, and
12 Primary doesn't exist any longer? But -- yeah, they
13 cohabitate --

14 MR. ROBERT PASZTOR: That's us.

15 THE CHAIR: -- in the same building.

16 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: They could share
17 or lease to each other, the students.

18 Another question, Madam Chair?

19 THE CHAIR: Sure.

20 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: I'm looking at
21 your student enrollment comparison rates in the
22 city. And your white students are beyond the -- the
23 APS and statewide, which concerns me. I'd rather
24 have more balance according to APS.

25 But you can explain what your neighborhood

1 is like, which makes a difference. But even if
2 that's so, I do want the charter schools to push
3 their enrollment of economically disadvantaged, no
4 matter where -- what, in the city; because those
5 are -- those are the families that really need help,
6 on the student side.

7 The well-to-do families, a lot of times,
8 have parents that are educated, and they can find
9 help there. But the others, if they don't get it at
10 school, they don't get it.

11 And so can you talk a little bit about
12 that area?

13 MR. ROBERT PASZTOR: I can. So we did do
14 an analysis of the schools that were in our median
15 area, the middle schools, the high schools, and the
16 elementary schools, because we were looking for both
17 schools. And, really, we are very similar in terms
18 of the population that we have.

19 What I can tell you is that -- you
20 mentioned the economically disadvantaged. For many
21 years, we were the only targeted schools in Title I
22 in the State of New Mexico because we were under
23 40 percent. And so today, we're 42 percent. So for
24 many years, we were 31, 32, 33; we were dying to be
25 40 percent so that we wouldn't be targeted. Being a

1 targeted program was much more tedious than just
2 being a school-wide program.

3 And the Title I department created what
4 was a type of waiver that we could apply for that
5 started last year for the first time. But we
6 actually reached 40 percent. And -- and so we've
7 maintained that.

8 I think some of it might have to do with
9 the ability to go out and advertise, which we just
10 haven't felt comfortable doing; because advertising,
11 we -- at one point, we had billboards, and they
12 would pop up at different places in the city, but to
13 be able to let the lower -- the other sections of
14 town, not the Northeast, know that we exist and to
15 be coming there.

16 I think right now, we're really feeding
17 off of previous enrollment, other families that have
18 been enrolled in our area. I think of us as being a
19 real community school. We're the only charter
20 school in the Northeast, that section of
21 Albuquerque. And so we have a lot of kids that walk
22 to school.

23 I have a couple of kid that are on
24 scooters and a lot of bike-riders. And it's -- it's
25 not necessarily -- it wasn't necessarily -- as a

1 charter school, you think you service the whole
2 city. But I do. I think there's a really strong
3 feeling of being a community school there.

4 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Thank you.
5 Thank you, Madam Chair.

6 THE CHAIR: Thanks. Any other questions?
7 (No response.)

8 THE CHAIR: If not, I'll entertain a
9 motion.

10 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Madam Chair, may I
11 make the motion?

12 THE CHAIR: Commissioner Toulouse?

13 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Madam Chair,
14 Committee, I move that the Public Education
15 Commission approve a five-year renewal contract with
16 the Southwest Preparatory Learning Center.

17 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: Second.

18 THE CHAIR: There's a motion by
19 Commissioner Toulouse, a second by Commissioner
20 Robbins.

21 Any further discussion?

22 If not, Commissioner Armbruster, roll-call
23 vote, please.

24 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
25 Robbins?

1 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: Yes.

2 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
3 Crone?

4 COMMISSIONER CRONE: Yes.

5 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
6 Peralta?

7 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Yes.

8 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
9 Toulouse?

10 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Yes.

11 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
12 Armbruster votes "Yes."

13 Commissioner Gipson?

14 THE CHAIR: Yes.

15 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
16 Caballero?

17 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Yes.

18 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: We're back. A
19 different number, seven-to-zero; but the --

20 THE CHAIR: Motion passes, seven-zero.
21 Congratulations. We won't see you for five years
22 now; but we will see you for contract negotiations.

23 MR. ROBERT PASZTOR: Correct. Thank you
24 very much.

25 THE CHAIR: Thank you.

1 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: You benefited from
2 the time crunch.

3 MR. ROBERT PASZTOR: I know.

4 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: If I could also
5 say, Southwest Secondary actually probably led the
6 way in preparing this and making it a little bit
7 easier for this one. You need to give them a little
8 credit.

9 MR. ROBERT PASZTOR: I already did.

10 THE CHAIR: Thanks.

11 MR. ROBERT PASZTOR: Thank you.

12 THE CHAIR: We stand in recess until 3:30.

13 Well, actually, let's say 3:00. Hopefully, people
14 are back, and we can start at 3:00. But I don't
15 make any --

16 (A discussion was held off the record.)

17 (A recess was taken at 12:23 p.m., and
18 reconvened at 3:25 p.m., as follows:)

19 (Commissioner Conyers in attendance.)

20 THE CHAIR: All right. Thank you, all.

21 Welcome back. Thank you for your patience. We
22 truly do appreciate it.

23 This is manic times, with everyone getting
24 ready over there for Session and us trying to finish
25 this. So it's -- and no one wants to listen to

1 anyone else's, "Oh, but this is what I have going
2 on." So we --

3 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: In fact, they
4 said, "We're leaving."

5 Yeah? We're in a meeting.

6 THE CHAIR: So I really do appreciate it.

7 And welcome to Commissioner Conyers.

8 COMMISSIONER CONYERS: Good morning.

9 THE CHAIR: Good morning. I trust that
10 you have a shiny new tire on your car.

11 COMMISSIONER CONYERS: Yes, yes, my wife's
12 car.

13 COMMISSIONER CRONE: He complained because
14 it was only flat on the bottom.

15 THE CHAIR: My problem always is when I
16 have to go in and do that, they say, "You know,
17 those other three aren't looking real good." So
18 it's never just that one.

19 Okay. Thank you.

20 So up right now, and, actually, our
21 finale, is New Mexico School for the Arts. So
22 welcome, once again.

23 FROM THE FLOOR: Once again.

24 MS. KAREN WOERNER: Thank you,
25 Madam Chair, Commissioners.

1 New Mexico School for the Arts has earned
2 an overall school grade of "A" for the last four
3 years. On the 2018 report card, the scores on the
4 components of the grades were two "A"s, four "B"s
5 and a "C," demonstrating that the school is Meeting
6 or Exceeding the standards.

7 In addition, the school received Exceeds
8 Standard in two of the three mission-specific goals
9 during the past three years, but did receive a Falls
10 Far Below on the goal for math proficiency. And so
11 the school may want to address that, because I know
12 they had some concerns about that goal.

13 But the chart of the progress towards
14 goals is on Page 19 of 27, where you can see how the
15 school has met those over the term of the contract.

16 Also, if you would turn to Page 22 and 23
17 of 27, you will see that there's a high percentage
18 of the student population remaining enrolled during
19 the school year, over 95 percent, and that
20 reenrolled the following year, over 90 percent.

21 The financial audits have decreased from
22 three in Fiscal Year 2015 to only one in Fiscal Year
23 2017, which was the most recent that we have
24 publicized. That one finding was not a material
25 weakness, a significant deficiency, or a repeat; so

1 really good audit results for the school.

2 Lastly, four of the five governing board
3 members did not complete their required training
4 last year, partly due to some confusion about the
5 required topics rather than just hours. The school
6 does have both an academic and financial exemption
7 due to the school's performance in those areas. And
8 when factoring in that exemption, they are required
9 to complete four hours of training each year.

10 These governing board members did complete
11 four hours; but they were not in the mandatory
12 topics. The school now has a new way of tracking
13 that to make sure that they meet the mandatory, not
14 only hours, but topics.

15 On Page 2, the evaluation ratings indicate
16 that the school has met the standards or has
17 demonstrated substantial progress in each area.
18 And, therefore, the PED recommends a renewal term of
19 five years, with the condition that all governing
20 board members complete the required training
21 annually.

22 THE CHAIR: Thank you. We have -- so you
23 have 15 minutes, if you so choose.

24 MR. ERIC CRITES: Thank you. Madam Chair,
25 Commissioners, Deputy Director Woerner, thank you

1 for having us here. Thank you for the opportunity
2 to speak with you this afternoon. My name is Eric
3 Crites, and it is my great privilege to be the Head
4 of School at New Mexico School for the Arts.

5 This is my seventh year at the school that
6 I love.

7 I also am grateful to have with me Cindy
8 Montoya, who is the president of the New Mexico
9 School for the Arts Art Institute, which is our
10 nonprofit partner, and she's also a founder of the
11 school. And on my left is Chelamia Quintana, our
12 assistant principal.

13 And here's the rest of our crew.
14 Dr. Michael Kaplan and Senator Cynthia Nava from our
15 Governing Council. Thank you for being here.

16 Cecile Hemez, who is our registrar and
17 S.T.A.R.S. coordinator and director of operations.
18 Liza Romero, who is our business manager. Russ
19 Rountree, who is the president of our parent
20 association. And Jayden Chavez, who is a junior in
21 our theater department and an all-around great human
22 being.

23 So, New Mexico School for the Arts is a
24 statewide school, was created ten years ago by
25 special legislation to provide access to a level of

1 arts training that's not available to most young
2 New Mexico artists, whether because of geography or
3 cost.

4 Our mission is to provide access to
5 rigorous mastery arts and rigorous academic high
6 school education for youth with passion and aptitude
7 in the arts, leading to post-secondary learning,
8 careers in the arts, and lives that contribute to
9 society. That's our actual mission statement.

10 And I know every school has a mission
11 statement; but everyone in our school community,
12 from students to teachers to support staff to our
13 governing council to parents to community partners
14 and all these folks live and breathe that mission
15 every day. We really do.

16 Whether our students go on to further arts
17 training, which about two-thirds of them do, or
18 whether they pursue other topics and degrees, like
19 medicine -- we currently have our first BA/M.D.
20 student at UNM, who graduated last year, social
21 work, engineering, or the law, or whatever they want
22 to pursue, we are committed to shifting students
23 trajectories in ways that increase their
24 opportunities and choices in life.

25 There are some things I'd like to share

1 about what makes our school unique.

2 We are one of only eight schools in the
3 state that have received straight "A"s in all seven
4 years that PED has been issuing those school grades.
5 The school was recognized by the U.S. Department of
6 education as a National Blue Ribbon school in 2016.
7 They did try to seat us in an international section
8 when we went to that awards ceremony, because they
9 didn't know we were a state. I'm not joking.

10 MS. KAREN WOERNER: That's really sad.

11 MR. ERIC CRITES: We have a 93 percent
12 retention rate, as Ms. Woerner mentioned, and a
13 96 percent graduation rate. Among the class of
14 2018, our most recent grads, 96 percent of them were
15 accepted into a four-year, two-year college, or a
16 professional performing arts company.

17 We have 20 students living in our
18 dormitory. We have a dormitory up by St. Johns
19 College. Many of our students commute via city bus,
20 regional bus, or Rail Runner every day, including
21 (indicates). Our Las Vegas student. This is our --
22 sorry, Jayden. But our Las Vegas student, that's
23 always our most dedicated student. He gets up at
24 4:30 a.m., catches his bus at 6:00, arriving in
25 Santa Fe at 7:30. And school starts at 9:20. And

1 then he gets back home at 7:30 p.m. each day.

2 Our students hail from 31 New Mexico
3 communities and pueblos, spanning all three
4 Congressional districts. We have served, in our
5 time, students from Farmington, Taos, Santa Clara
6 Pueblo, Las Vegas, Artesia, Pecos, Los Alamos,
7 Grants, Santa Fe, San Ildefonso Pueblo, Silver City,
8 Las Cruces, Española, Albuquerque, Carrizozo,
9 Rio Rancho, Alamogordo, Los Lunas, Ruidoso, Socorro,
10 East Mountains, Peña Blanca, Ribera, Alcalde, and
11 Roswell, to name a few.

12 And by authority of the special
13 legislation that created the school, we admit our
14 students based on a blind audition process rather
15 than on lottery. That means that young artists are
16 admitted based on their passion, promise, and
17 attitude in dance, theater, music, or visual arts.

18 We never look at their transcripts or any
19 other demographic information about them until after
20 the admissions process is completed.

21 What that means is that once our students
22 are admitted, we conduct placement tests to quickly
23 determine their strengths and their needs and meet
24 them exactly where they are. We provide extensive
25 supports to help students all achieve college

1 readiness by the end of their four years with us.

2 We have enjoyed our nine years at the
3 St. Francis Cathedral Elementary School building
4 just down the street, just on Alameda. But we're
5 very excited to be moving into our new permanent
6 campus in the Santa Fe Railyard at the old Sanbusco
7 shopping center, which is even closer to the city's
8 bus and transportation hub, which helps our
9 commuting students, before the start of the
10 2019-2020 school year. So we will be in there for
11 our next school year.

12 And we're also -- we have a non-profit
13 partner, which Cindy is the president of New Mexico
14 School for the Arts Art Institute. And the Art
15 Institute raises funding that's necessary to cover
16 the majority of our mastery arts programming. It's
17 what allows us to have three hours of arts
18 programming every day, as well as funding our
19 outreach and residential programs, our dorm.

20 Our students -- a little bit about our
21 day. Our students spend the morning block, from
22 9:20 until 2:00 p.m., engaged in our academic
23 program, where they earn all the credits that any
24 New Mexico public school student needs to earn in
25 order to get the New Mexico Diploma of Excellence.

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1 And then from 2:00 to 4:45, our students
2 engage in the arts block, where they learn from a
3 rich team of teachers who are all working artists.

4 They also benefit from regular exposure to
5 visiting guest artists from all over the world -- we
6 just had a dance teacher come in from France
7 recently to work with our students -- as well as
8 benefiting from regular public performances and
9 exhibitions.

10 And I do want to make sure you all know
11 you're invited to see our dancers perform this
12 evening at Meow Wolf at 6:00 p.m. You're all
13 invited. I hope to see you there.

14 We deeply believe in the power of arts
15 education for its own sake; and yet we also know
16 that having a dual curriculum with both arts and
17 academics creates a synergy that results in outcomes
18 and achievement that amounts to more than the sum of
19 its parts.

20 We have learned how to leverage what
21 students learn through the arts into academic
22 success, even for our most struggling students.
23 Through the arts, students learn the growth mindset.
24 They learn that learning is iterative, that failure
25 is a step on the path toward success.

1 We explicitly teach students this, and
2 that they -- these same skills can be universalized
3 to help them learn and achieve in math, history,
4 social studies, Spanish, and, really, any aspect of
5 their life where they are learning.

6 We also have an outreach program that is
7 really important to meeting our mission of being a
8 statewide school that reflects the State of New
9 Mexico. The mission of our outreach program is to
10 reduce barriers and increase diversity to ensure
11 that we are meeting that mission and providing
12 access to all the promising young artists of
13 New Mexico.

14 This year, our team is focused on two
15 areas, two geographic areas: Northern New Mexico,
16 with an emphasis on Española and Pojoaque; and the
17 south side of Santa Fe.

18 For example, last week, a team of our
19 teachers, arts teachers and students, went out to
20 perform and teach classes at Pojoaque Middle School,
21 McCurdy Charter School, and Carlos Vigil Middle
22 School, both in Española.

23 We are also planning to take our open
24 house -- we hold open houses for people to get to
25 know our school. And we're planning on taking that

1 open house on the road. So that's a new thing that
2 we're trying. Rather than having people only come
3 to us, we're going to go out to them and meet them
4 where they are with different events across Northern
5 New Mexico.

6 We have also convened an admissions task
7 force with members representing communities from
8 throughout Northern New Mexico to help us develop
9 relationships to encourage a diverse pool of
10 promising young artists to apply to NMSA.

11 I'd like to directly address the concern
12 that -- about the governing council training hours
13 that was mentioned in the Department's
14 recommendations, as Ms. Woerner said and she and I
15 have talked about. Our governing council members
16 are six of the most dedicated, compassionate,
17 conscientious, and student-focused people in the
18 world. They bring with them experience and
19 expertise in educational leadership, the
20 Legislature, State agencies, accounting.

21 And what occurred is that during the
22 summer of 2017, we received an e-mail from, at the
23 time, Director Poulos, sharing the great news that
24 because of our past performance, our governing
25 council members were exempted from a portion of

1 their training, as Ms. Woerner mentioned.

2 During the 2017-2018 fiscal year, each of
3 them took the correct total number of hours;
4 however, we later learned that they had not taken
5 them in the correct categories on the correct topic,
6 such as Open Meeting Act and fiscal responsibilities
7 and so on.

8 We acknowledge that the information about
9 those required categories was included in that
10 e-mail that we got; but we were mistakenly, and sort
11 of excitedly, focused on just the number of the
12 hours, the exemption. We were focused on the wrong
13 part of that e-mail.

14 So -- but we own it that we had that
15 e-mail.

16 When we received our rings on the annual
17 monitoring instrument, the indicator that applied to
18 governing council training hours was rated as Meet;
19 so we also weren't aware of it then, and a few
20 months later, we did become aware that we had not
21 met that requirement. But at that time, it was too
22 late to correct that mistake because the fiscal year
23 had ended, and we found we had missed those correct
24 categories of training.

25 So as mentioned, we have made sure that

1 this won't happen again. We discussed a plan at our
2 October governing council meeting to track and
3 provide support to each member to make sure they had
4 the correct number of hours this year and in future
5 years.

6 In fact, the secretary that works with our
7 board -- we're having a governing council meeting
8 right now -- is updating them on that today. So we
9 don't anticipate this happening again.

10 I'd also like to directly address our
11 student achievement. As I mentioned, our students
12 and teachers have earned a grade of "A" seven times.

13 Our eleventh-grade PARCC English Language
14 Arts proficiency rate has held steady at 87 percent
15 for the past three years, nearly double the State's
16 proficiency rate.

17 Last year, our PARCC Algebra-1 proficiency
18 was 53 percent, over two-and-a-half times the
19 State's proficiency rate.

20 Our PARCC Geometry proficiency was
21 37 percent, nearly twice the State's proficiency
22 rate.

23 Our PARCC Algebra-2 proficiency was
24 30 percent, exactly double the State's proficiency
25 rate.

1 And although it's not included in the
2 school grade, I do want to recognize that our SBA
3 Science proficiency is 76 percent, which is over
4 twice the State's proficiency rate.

5 And yet, we are a school that has, deeply
6 embedded, the principles of continuous improvement,
7 at every level and among all stakeholders, among our
8 students, our teachers, our governing council, our
9 parents. So while these outcomes are positive, we
10 are not satisfied and have spent every year of our
11 existence trying to ensure that every student is
12 growing and that more students are achieving college
13 readiness.

14 Four years ago, we received authorization
15 from the Public Education Department to replace our
16 commercial short-cycle assessments. We were using
17 MAP at the time -- NWEA MAP at the time -- to
18 replace that with our own teacher-designed interim
19 assessments, following the model of Paul
20 Bambrick-Santoyo and the model that the Priority
21 Schools Bureau was promoting at the time.

22 In all academic subject areas, our
23 students take quarterly assessments that are aligned
24 to standards and to the format and level of rigor of
25 end-goal assessments, including PARCC, SBA, PCT,

1 SAT, and EOCs, all the tests they are going to be
2 tested on at the end of the year or later in their
3 careers.

4 After each assessment, teachers spend a
5 day of in-service analyzing detailed data, student
6 by student, standard by standard, and question by
7 question. Those teachers then meet with their
8 content-area peers and administrators to plan
9 reteaching and enrichment based on their findings,
10 to make sure every student is moving and growing.

11 Additionally, I know you noticed the red
12 highlight on our math goal in the Department's
13 recommendation document.

14 As is explained in detail in our
15 application, the target of 60 percent efficiency in
16 math was set a year before PARCC was implemented,
17 and the metric was based on the old SBA
18 eleventh-grade math assessment.

19 The following year, the test changed, the
20 way the scores were reported changed, and even those
21 who take the test changed. Where the SBA assessed
22 all eleventh-graders, the PARCC assesses only
23 students who were enrolled in Algebra-1, Geometry,
24 and Algebra-2.

25 This means our eleventh-graders who are

1 enrolled in pre-calc or calculus, our most
2 proficient students, are not included in our
3 eleventh-grade measure, as was written into the
4 contract.

5 We made several documented attempts to
6 work with Charter Schools Division to amend the
7 goal; but we were not ultimately successful in that.
8 Nonetheless, we are committed to continuous
9 improvement and to ensuring that ever more students
10 at NMSA are college-ready in math. And to that end,
11 we implemented a series of interventions and
12 supports every year as documented in our
13 application.

14 So in addition to interim assessments, we
15 allocated Title I funding to intervention classes, a
16 double-block Algebra-1 class and an academic seminar
17 where students get small group tutoring.

18 And as a result, a PARCC briefing packet
19 released by NMPED last summer, we were highlighted
20 as one of the ten highest performing State charter
21 schools in terms of proficiency in math and reading.

22 Okay. Looks like I'm going to skip that
23 part.

24 I'm going to end with my last line, which
25 is to say that during the first week of school this

1 year, a parent e-mailed me to say that her son was
2 excited about going to school for the first time
3 since kindergarten.

4 And that's how I'd like to summarize our
5 school environment, which I ran out of time to
6 discuss.

7 Thank you, Madam Chair and Commissioners,
8 and Deputy Director Woerner. I have copies of the
9 rest of my presentation if you want to take them
10 home.

11 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: Madam Chair, could
12 I say one thing before I have to leave?
13 Congratulations on the excellent success you have
14 had. Thank you.

15 THE CHAIR: Thank you.

16 MR. ERIC CRITES: Thank you.

17 THE CHAIR: Have fun.

18 COMMISSIONER ROBBINS: Thanks.

19 THE CHAIR: There are three people that
20 signed up for public comment. So you have about
21 two-and-a-half minutes apiece.

22 And the first one is Jayden Chavez.

23 MR. ERIC CRITES: Madam Chair, I think two
24 of them. They're going to go four minutes each, if
25 that's okay.

1 THE CHAIR: Oh, okay.

2 FROM THE FLOOR: Hello. My name is Jayden
3 Chavez. I am a junior in the theater department
4 while working towards a creative writing minor. I'm
5 from Albuquerque, New Mexico, which means that I
6 wake up at 4:45, I take the 6:30 train, which gets
7 me to school at 8:00. And then I take the 5:04
8 train back, which gets me home at about 6:30,
9 sometimes 7:00, depending on delays and things like
10 that.

11 NMSA is like no other. When you walk in
12 the doors, there's this warmth. And, no, it has
13 nothing to do with the fact that we didn't have an
14 AC for a little bit. It's from the energy that is
15 NMSA.

16 So I wrote a little guide to think about
17 while you guys are voting.

18 How to Survive NMSA, in a few pretty easy
19 steps.

20 1. Be wary of the theater students. If
21 you are giving a presentation in class, at least
22 three of them will shout, "Project," as they have
23 been trained to do. If you peek in the doors of the
24 large rehearsal hall, do not be alarmed. The
25 freshmen are not talking to themselves, most of the

1 time. They are talking to their imaginary cubes in
2 which Mr. Chavez is going to teach them a very
3 important lesson in acting.

4 2. Utilize Dr. Seagraves' tea and coffee
5 desk. I don't know how; I don't know why. But hard
6 days seem a lot easier with a cup of tea in your
7 hands.

8 3. Get used to the continuous saxophone.
9 We all have.

10 4. If you stay at NMSA long enough,
11 you'll start to think like us.

12 5. Every jazz band performance will blow
13 your mind. If you don't believe me, you've got to
14 come.

15 6. Ask lots of questions. The artists of
16 NMSA will answer. If you think the performers shine
17 under the stage lights that Ben Rountree probably
18 put up, then you haven't heard them talk about their
19 craft.

20 7. The puns at NMSA are just as bad as
21 any other place, but a little more creative.

22 NMSA has changed my life. I have never
23 been so happy when working so hard. The staff is
24 compassionate and really funny sometimes. And we
25 celebrate each other's successes and we help each

1 other through hardships. We collaborate; we debate;
2 but most importantly, we love.

3 Thank you.

4 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Is this Russ
5 Rountree?

6 FROM THE FLOOR: Yes, ma'am.

7 Madam Chairman, members of the Commission,
8 Deputy, staff, and members of the public, my name is
9 Russ Rountree. I am president of the parent
10 association for New Mexico School for the Arts.

11 Our child attends the school. Our son is
12 a junior in the theater department, as Jayden just
13 pointed out. We have an older daughter that's ten
14 years old. She also went through the schools in
15 Santa Fe. And we have some phenomenal institutions,
16 not only here in Santa Fe, but around the state.

17 But I think one of the things that sets
18 this school apart is the passion that these students
19 have for their learning and their striving to
20 increase their talents. They're all superbly
21 talented, and they bring their best every day and
22 are supported by a wonderful faculty, staff, each
23 and every day that support these kids when they come
24 up with, you know, strange offerings and all sorts
25 of things.

1 It's a very interesting and what I would
2 say unique school atmosphere. I've never seen
3 anything like it. This passion that these kids have
4 is supported every day by the students; it is
5 supported every day by the faculty.

6 The -- you know, when we talk about some
7 of these upper-echelon schools, there are a lot of
8 students that have passion. We see that the student
9 apathy is a terrific problem in our schools across
10 the country. And as Mr. Crites spoke to the
11 proficiency ratios, the completion of people getting
12 their high school diplomas at our school, going on
13 to four-year institutions, it's that passion that
14 shows through.

15 But the other thing that so many of these
16 kids bring is compassion. It's -- especially in
17 this time of rising tribalism, these kids all
18 support each other, no matter what shape, color,
19 size, gender, label; you name it. They are all
20 supportive of them in not only their -- their arts,
21 but also as just people.

22 And in this time of turbulence that we
23 have, it gives me warmth to know that this school is
24 cranking out individuals like Jayden and many of
25 these other students that have both that passion and

1 compassion that hopefully will be borne out as they
2 bring their futures into fruition.

3 Thank you again for your time.

4 THE CHAIR: Thank you. So my
5 understanding is Senator Nava is not going to speak.

6 SENATOR NAVA: I yielded my time to a
7 parent.

8 THE CHAIR: Okay. You still have three
9 minutes, if you wish to say something.

10 SENATOR NAVA: Thank you, Madam Chair,
11 members of the Committee. I'll be very brief.

12 I've been involved with this school since
13 we started the inception of planning it for ten
14 years now. And I will tell you I am most proud of
15 this endeavor of anything that I have had the
16 opportunity to work on.

17 The school is all about its culture. And
18 you can probably get a sense, just from the
19 presentation today, about how these uniquely
20 talented educators have been able to create this
21 wonderful culture in the school. And I wish we
22 could spread it throughout the state, because I wish
23 all of our students could be this successful.

24 But, you know, we have two students that
25 are at Juilliard right now in the dance program, one

1 from Las Vegas and one from Española. And I think
2 that's phenomenal.

3 I'm very proud of all the work they do.
4 But it's the leaders of the school that have created
5 the culture that have made this far beyond what we
6 thought it would be.

7 So thank you.

8 THE CHAIR: Thank you. So, certainly,
9 thank you once again, as we said to every school,
10 for everything you do every day; because that can
11 never be diminished, even when you've got that
12 unique opportunity to have that student body that
13 truly wants to be there so that empathy -- that
14 apathy factor isn't as critical an issue. But,
15 still, the challenges of dealing with teaching our
16 youth is a challenge every day.

17 And I always said, that's what makes it --
18 because every day is a new day. So you never know.
19 And that's what makes it fun after the fact.

20 But we do truly do appreciate this.

21 And I appreciate the fact that you added
22 the diversity issue; because we've spent most of
23 this week discussing the fact that you can't, quote,
24 unquote -- I hate to use the term "discriminate."
25 But you can't say no to students. You sit in that

1 unique position where you do have the opportunity to
2 say yes and no to students, which is different than
3 any other charter that we have; but, as you did
4 express, the desire to reflect New Mexico.

5 And your demographics don't play that out.
6 So I appreciate the fact that you're embracing that,
7 owning it, and reaching out and trying to reach out
8 to all communities throughout New Mexico so that
9 everyone is truly represented there; because that,
10 also, without a doubt, helps to enrich the culture
11 and art that's being promoted at the school. So I
12 do appreciate that.

13 Now, let's -- I'm -- I've got a question
14 about the switch from -- was it NWEA -- the
15 short-cycle assessment, and how that came about.
16 Because you indicated that you -- was that the one
17 amendment? Yeah. That's where I had my confusion.

18 How did that come about that you
19 received --

20 MR. ERIC CRITES: So that came about --
21 four years ago, we attended a training from the
22 Priority Schools Bureau, and we learned about this
23 model of interim assessments, which are just a
24 version of short-cycle assessments, that we
25 recognized would work really well in our school;

1 because what we were seeing at that time was that
2 even though, as I said, we know that our proficiency
3 levels were above the averages, we also recognized
4 they were not high enough. They were not high
5 enough for us.

6 And so we were looking for a model that
7 would help us move all of our students forward; not
8 just getting kids to the proficiency level, but
9 wherever they were coming to us, moving them all
10 forward.

11 And so what happened with NWEA MAP was we
12 got information that was not giving us a level of
13 detail, a level of granularity that we needed in
14 order to inform instruction on a day-to-day basis.

15 And so because you don't have the test in
16 front of you, you get some feedback about certain
17 areas that kids are strong or have a need for growth
18 in; but you do not get this level of granularity
19 that you would get if you owned the tests.

20 And so we got approval from Deputy
21 Secretary Leighann Lenti at the time to use our own
22 short-cycle assessment in the place of those
23 commercial short-cycle assessments.

24 What that allows us to do is to create
25 assessments that are aligned specifically to the

1 standards of that course. And then our teachers can
2 look at exactly what students got and didn't get.

3 So, for example, they get this very
4 detailed, colorful report that shows them not only
5 that students didn't do well on a question, let's
6 say, but it shows them how many students answered
7 "C" as the incorrect answer.

8 And then the teacher can look at that and
9 see, "What was the error in thinking?"

10 So a math teacher is going to build a
11 question where some of the wrong answers are going
12 to represent common mistakes. And they're going to
13 know that's the mistake the students made, and then
14 they can go back and inform their teaching or
15 reteaching based on that information.

16 Did that answer your question?

17 THE CHAIR: Yes and no; because -- and I
18 appreciate your rationale for why you did it. The
19 concern -- and, honestly, it's not on you. The
20 concern is that those short-cycle assessments, if
21 they were going to be switched out, needed to be
22 switched out through us.

23 MS. CINDY MONTOYA: And may I address this
24 further?

25 THE CHAIR: So it's not on you.

1 MS. CINDY MONTOYA: So our short-cycle
2 assessment that was identified in the charter was
3 the ACT, Explore and Plan. And so a few years ago,
4 that was removed from the short-cycle assessment
5 list. And so we had to come -- that's another --
6 then we had to come up with a replacement.

7 And so that was -- that started us down
8 the path to interim assessments.

9 THE CHAIR: Yeah. Unfortunately, that was
10 misinformation. Because that list -- we were told
11 that list disappeared completely, that there was no
12 list. I've come to find out that there still is a
13 list after -- but -- yeah, there was -- there was,
14 unfortunately -- there was a lot of misinformation
15 and miscommunication.

16 It's not on -- it's not on you, you know;
17 but it's -- it's just fascinating information that
18 we gather. So thank you for that.

19 MR. ERIC CRITES: I will say it's worked
20 wonderfully for us. Sorry to interrupt.

21 THE CHAIR: So I have a question about
22 that. Because on this report, it says you're
23 Falling Far Below on your math. So if it's -- yes?
24 So on -- I'm confused by this. If it's working so
25 well, why are you rated at Falls Far Below?

1 MR. ERIC CRITES: So when the last charter
2 contract was created, the math assessment was the
3 SBA.

4 THE CHAIR: Right.

5 MR. ERIC CRITES: It is a different test.

6 THE CHAIR: Right.

7 MR. ERIC CRITES: And the proficiency
8 benchmark for Meets was set at 60 percent. It was
9 expected that when the State switched to PARCC that
10 those scores would tumble by 30 percentage points.
11 And they did, across the state.

12 So the problem for us was that the test
13 and the range of scores changed on us. And also who
14 is tested changed on us. So with SBA math, it was
15 an eleventh-grade assessment. And so the way it's
16 written, it's asking for eleventh-grade math
17 proficiency.

18 However, with PARCC, it is not an
19 eleventh-grade test. PARCC has an Algebra-1 test, a
20 Geometry test, and an Algebra-2 test, as I'm sure
21 you know. What that means, among our
22 eleventh-graders, many of our eleventh-graders don't
23 take a math assessment during eleventh grade. Our
24 most proficient students already took it as ninth-
25 or tenth-graders, the Algebra-2 test. And that's

1 the last test they would take.

2 So the target changed. And the range of
3 scores changed. And so -- yeah. So that's why we
4 did try to amend that to put it in a more realistic
5 range.

6 And we did see growth in our math scores.
7 But we acknowledge that because of the way that
8 changed, we weren't able to -- to meet that.

9 And so we -- we tried to address that in
10 an administrative way in requesting amendments
11 for -- and Cindy was the Head of School before me;
12 so she was doing this before me -- but over a course
13 of four years, I think, since PARCC was implemented.
14 But we were ultimately unsuccessful. We would start
15 the process, and then with staff change, we never
16 got anywhere in terms of the amendment process.

17 THE CHAIR: Okay. Thanks.

18 Commissioners?

19 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Yes. I -- so
20 what I have -- my question that I have is is only
21 applying on something that has already been brought
22 up. What is a blind admission? [Verbatim.]

23 MR. ERIC CRITES: Sure. So the blind
24 audition means that when the students come in to
25 audition, there is a team that has a rubric that is

1 assessing that student purely on their passion,
2 promise, and aptitude for the art they want to
3 study: Dance, visual arts, or music.

4 It means we do not look at their
5 transcripts. We don't have an application that asks
6 anything about whether they have an IEP or what
7 their GPA was. We don't know anything about their
8 demographics.

9 All we see -- and this is very
10 intentional, because of our mission and our personal
11 commitment, honestly, to meeting the access mission
12 of our school -- it is really important to us that
13 we don't know those things. It is purely based on
14 that passion, promise, and aptitude rubric in the
15 arts. And that's how the admissions decision is
16 made.

17 We then seek as much information as we can
18 about students once they have been offered and
19 accepted admission. Then Ms. Hemez goes into
20 S.T.A.R.S. and we gather all of the information we
21 can on whether they're identified as EL or whether
22 they have IEPs. We try to get past test score
23 information. We try to learn everything we can
24 about the students so that we can serve their needs.

25 What it means is that we get an incredibly

1 diverse population, educationally speaking. And so
2 our students come with a broad range of -- of
3 strengths and needs. And we have students with
4 significant gaps coming into our school, as all high
5 schools in New Mexico do, and across the nation.

6 And so we -- after they are admitted and
7 then accepted, only then do we start looking at
8 those things, because we do not want them to be a
9 factor. That student that comes to us is our
10 student, and we will meet them where they are and
11 help get them college-ready no matter where they're
12 starting academically.

13 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: So would that be
14 a main factor in how your demographics is looking?
15 I'm looking at 56 percent white in a state where
16 it's 16, and 31 percent -- and I'm going by state
17 only, because you are a state school.

18 MR. ERIC CRITES: Right.

19 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Even if you
20 weren't designated a state school, you are bringing
21 in students from all over. So I'm going to compare
22 you to the state.

23 So in the state, you have 62 percent
24 Hispanic. You only have 31, which is half of that.
25 And the white -- your white enrollment is

1 200 percent or more than the actual percentage in
2 the state now.

3 MR. ERIC CRITES: Right.

4 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: And -- and I'm
5 not criticizing the blind admission [verbatim],
6 because I do get why you have to do that. And I'm
7 not criticizing that. And I heard your presentation
8 on your intent to remedy that.

9 But I truly believe that should have been
10 done way before. I mean, you've been around for ten
11 years. I'm sure you've seen the demographics as
12 glaring. And I'm not a stickler so much on
13 ethnicity as I am on economic disadvantage; because
14 I think a student -- a well-rounded student, a
15 group, if they're in that demographic, but if they
16 were a little more economically disadvantaged, I
17 think all the students would get benefit out of
18 that.

19 I'm not so much of a stickler on the
20 ethnicity; though it is important. But -- so
21 what -- what truly do you need to do? Do you need
22 to bring in, let's say, Hispanic faculty, Native
23 American faculty? When you look at the blind
24 admission [verbatim] -- because I can tell you
25 there's a difference in how we view the world.

1 I'm Hispanic. I view the world
2 differently. And I can see a student with a lot of
3 strengths, and my peer, who is not Hispanic, is not
4 seeing the same thing. Native American, also,
5 there's a big difference on how we view the world
6 and how we view individuals.

7 And when I came to New Mexico, I kept
8 saying, "They're so quiet. Why don't they say
9 things?"

10 And so we have to -- we have to adjust and
11 view it differently.

12 So I'm getting that what can be done
13 without messing up your blind admission? And is it
14 money? If you were to get a higher percentage of
15 economic disadvantaged, can you survive as a school?

16 MS. CINDY MONTOYA: Yes.

17 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Because it is
18 expensive.

19 MR. ERIC CRITES: Yes, absolutely. Cindy
20 is going to address this, because she works on
21 admissions and outreach.

22 MS. CINDY MONTOYA: So thank you for the
23 opportunity to talk about this.

24 In some respects, our success has been the
25 downside of meeting our mission. When we started

1 the school, we were over 46 -- 42 percent
2 economically disadvantaged. And as we became more
3 successful, certain demographics understood how to
4 apply to the school.

5 And so in the last two years, we've been
6 trying to remove every barrier to that application
7 process. For example, it's in English and Spanish.
8 We will sit with the family that maybe has never
9 filled out an application and help them fill it out.
10 We work with a pueblo leader from San Ildefonso, a
11 pueblo leader from Santa Clara on a committee, as
12 well as other people in the community.

13 They have scrubbed our rubrics. They've
14 looked at our audition system. We've changed it to
15 be more culturally sensitive in the way -- in the
16 language. We are working with pueblo leaders to go
17 onto -- into those communities, onto those pueblos.

18 So every day, removing the barriers is
19 something we think about.

20 Our -- we all know -- we know we're going
21 to know, with the application cycle, how -- if that
22 work is leading to the results that we expect. But
23 I think the bottom line is we have to cast a large
24 net. We have to get into all of those communities
25 so that they know about us and have them believe

1 that they should and could apply, and that we will
2 help them through that.

3 If that means teaching them what an
4 audition looks like, then we will help either a
5 group of students -- and we're also helping teachers
6 to understand what it looks like.

7 So for us, our success has brought our
8 school to the attention of a dominant culture. And
9 it's all about getting the word out. We're open to
10 discussions, if you have them. We'd love to hear
11 them. But we work on this every single day.

12 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Madam Chair,
13 just -- so if -- if you were to grow in that sector,
14 economically disadvantaged, let's say 20 percentage
15 points --

16 MS. CINDY MONTOYA: Absolutely.

17 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: -- what would
18 that do? Because it's also a matter of budget.
19 Would you have to go to the Legislature and say,
20 "Okay, guys, you gave us this task, you thought it
21 was a good idea"?

22 MS. CINDY MONTOYA: Actually, our statute
23 does not allow public funds, SEG, to be spent on
24 outreach. So the private side raises all the money
25 for that program.

1 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Oh.

2 MS. CINDY MONTOYA: Our legislation does
3 not allow that; nor can we use SEG for the
4 residential program.

5 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: And you cannot
6 ask the Legislature for additional funds for --

7 MS. CINDY MONTOYA: We could seek public
8 funding; but it cannot come through the SEG for that
9 work. Yeah. So...

10 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: So they're stuck.

11 MS. CINDY MONTOYA: We don't feel stuck at
12 all. Absolutely not. Because it's our heart's
13 dream. I mean, we created this school for every
14 New Mexican, for every New Mexico youth who -- you
15 know, I personally would go into communities and see
16 these wonderful artists, some of whom did not even
17 know they had this talent, or loved it, but never
18 thought that they could grow it.

19 And so that is what seeded this school.
20 That was the kernel of watching just these wonderful
21 students and not have the talent or a place in which
22 to grow that talent.

23 And so every day, we work on making --
24 getting us back to that original point. And
25 regarding, could we teach them? Could we reach

1 them? Absolutely.

2 We know our mission is -- we are not a
3 Wait to Fail school. We do not embrace credit
4 recovery. We have chosen to move that fund as
5 monies that we would spend on credit recovery to an
6 academic seminar period which every student in the
7 school is enrolled. And in ninth grade, it's those
8 soft skills. You know, our students come, some have
9 never read a book from cover to cover.

10 So our ninth-grade academy is all about
11 making them -- helping them to understand that there
12 are certain skills that you need to be successful.
13 Along with that is creating the support systems that
14 sometimes it's unique to every student. Sometimes
15 it's a group of students.

16 And in the senior year, we have an
17 academic seminar for seniors, just to get -- to help
18 them understand the college process. You know,
19 that's another barrier for students, all of those
20 forms, financial aid. So we walk with them from
21 ninth grade to twelfth grade.

22 And so we believe if our demographics
23 changed and we had more students that needed help,
24 we can do it. We've got the -- we've got the drive;
25 we've got the resources; and if we have to shift

1 those resources, we know how to do that as well.

2 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Several years
3 ago -- my wife is a legislator. She was invited to
4 a hotel to watch a performance. It was very funny.
5 It was all about issues -- just in the Roundhouse.
6 And it was a satire. And I spent the night, an hour
7 and a half of just laughing and wishing that
8 everybody in the Legislature had -- had been there;
9 because it would have -- it would have cured a lot
10 of the stalemate that was happening at the
11 Roundhouse.

12 And I -- and it was all young people. And
13 it was fantastic. I don't know if it was you guys
14 putting it on. But it was all very, very young
15 folks.

16 MS. CINDY MONTOYA: I don't recall. But
17 we put on over 70 performances a year. But it could
18 have been us.

19 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: That's all I
20 have.

21 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Commissioners.

22 Anyone else?

23 Commissioner Crone?

24 COMMISSIONER CRONE: I did hear you
25 ment- -- excuse me -- mention residence halls.

1 MS. CINDY MONTOYA: Uh-huh.

2 MR. ERIC CRITES: Yes. So because we are
3 a statewide school, we have dormitory space that we
4 rent at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Retreat Center,
5 which is up by St. John's College. We have about 20
6 students there, in the low 20s, year to year is the
7 capacity we have there. Those students take the
8 city bus to the school, down Alameda, nearby here.
9 So they just come down from there on the city bus.

10 Our goal eventually is to have -- we
11 currently have a five-day-week program. We know
12 that presents a barrier to students who live at a
13 far distance. If they live in the far corners of
14 the state, doing that round-trip every weekend for
15 their families is a burden of time and resources.

16 And so one of our goals is to have a
17 seven-day-a-week program so that we can even better
18 meet our access mission of students from around the
19 state.

20 That said, we have a student currently
21 from Farmington. We have a couple of students from
22 Roswell. We have a student from Ruidoso. So we do
23 have students from all over who come and spend
24 Sunday evening through Friday afternoon with us.

25 COMMISSIONER CRONE: What is the target

1 date for occupying the new building?

2 MR. ERIC CRITES: We will be in that new
3 building in July of 2019.

4 COMMISSIONER CRONE: Okay. I'm still a
5 little bit upset, because that was always a source
6 of free parking.

7 MR. ERIC CRITES: Well, we can get you a
8 parking -- no.

9 COMMISSIONER CRONE: I wasn't going to
10 ask. But I can -- I dare not go there again,
11 because of Senator Nava and Michael Kaplan and Paula
12 Tackett. So that's it.

13 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Sorry. So there's
14 no -- because I've seen the rendering of the new
15 school -- there's no residence facility that's
16 included in that plan? Or is there?

17 MR. ERIC CRITES: So in Phase 1, we are
18 moving our current programming, arts and academic
19 programming, over to the school. There is a Phase 2
20 that we have planned that does include adding the
21 residence hall to that property. Anything you want
22 to say about that? That's what Cindy is leading.

23 MS. CINDY MONTOYA: Yeah.

24 THE CHAIR: Okay. Thanks.

25 Commissioner Armbruster?

1 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: I was pretty
2 much going to say the same thing. You know, if
3 you -- if you live in Farmington, you're not going
4 to come here every day. Even Albuquerque, Jayden,
5 it's wonderful that you will do that. It's a long
6 way. And you think of Cuba and Jemez and Gallina.
7 This is not a place where you can just get in your
8 car and go.

9 So I'm hoping that there will be more
10 residence, so that you will be able to serve -- I
11 think you're in this impossible situation. You're
12 trying to serve the whole state, serve areas of
13 greater need, financial need; but there's no place
14 to be here.

15 They're not going to take a -- you know,
16 they can't get here. So it's sort of a Catch-22, I
17 guess. But I like that you're reaching out. I like
18 that you're doing this.

19 I have a small issue with you,
20 Ms. Montoya. I recall going to the school saying,
21 "I don't know. Someone wants me to get on this
22 Public Education Commission, and I should run for
23 that, and I just really can't decide. You know, it
24 sounds like it's a lot of work."

25 "No, it's not."

1 I remember two people saying to me, "Oh,
2 Karyl Ann, you're just going to be fine. Don't
3 worry about it. You'll just be great."

4 It's a lot more work, though. For someone
5 who says -- and she has said to me -- "This is a job
6 that's 24/7 for the last seven years."

7 I'm not quite there. But I'm hoping never
8 to be there.

9 MS. CINDY MONTOYA: It's a labor of love,
10 Commissioner.

11 THE CHAIR: Thank you. Just as a short
12 aside, I was talking to someone -- and I know
13 New Mexico isn't Texas; I'm well aware of that. But
14 the blind students in Texas from the El Paso area
15 get on a plane -- kindergarten students -- get on a
16 plane Sunday night and have to fly to -- I believe
17 it's Austin, and they have to stay in through
18 Friday.

19 And then they get -- and they're allowed
20 to come home once a week. The high school students
21 can only come home once a month. So it's -- you
22 know, it's -- it's -- geography is challenging. It
23 is.

24 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Yes. You can't
25 have everything.

1 THE CHAIR: Right. Right. So thank you.
2 I'm sorry. Commissioner Toulouse?

3 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Madam Chair, I
4 just want to make a comment. I have a young cousin
5 who graduated a few years back, graduated from UNM.
6 Spent time in England in a special program, and he's
7 now working on his Master's degree.

8 And as a young kid, he was unmotivated.
9 But he was a musician; he was an actor. And he took
10 off when he went with all of you. And he's doing
11 beautifully.

12 He got into Albuquerque and immediately
13 volunteered to work at the Vortex Theater and has
14 done a number of productions with them. He didn't
15 wait to do UNM.

16 And we've gone and seen him. And it
17 just -- it was the making of him.

18 So I just wanted to comment that
19 certainly, personally, my family has a success story
20 out of your school. So thank you.

21 MR. ERIC CRITES: Thank you very much. If
22 I may just address -- letting you know -- and the
23 question is about the dorm -- that we are fully
24 committed to addressing that. We agree it is one of
25 the challenges, and it is one we're committed to

1 addressing so we're meeting our mission of being a
2 statewide school.

3 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: And, actually,
4 there's -- there are also parents who don't want
5 their kids to be gone all week. So it's like
6 sending your child to a private school in Maine;
7 maybe a little less than that.

8 But -- so it's both. It's not just --
9 it's not about you always. It's about families as
10 well. So it's kind of a -- you're damned either
11 way. You can be successful either way; it just
12 depends on how that is.

13 THE CHAIR: That's why Albuquerque Sign
14 Language originally developed, because they didn't
15 want to have their kids to have to come to Santa Fe
16 Monday through Friday. So it's -- yeah. And it's a
17 family decision.

18 Commissioner Conyers?

19 COMMISSIONER CONYERS: I keep hearing
20 Farmington brought up. I just drove in from
21 Bloomfield today, which is next door to Farmington.
22 And I want to follow up on Commissioner Robbins. I
23 heard lots of good things about you. And I did know
24 a student from Farmington who had attended. And her
25 mother -- and we talked one time. And she really

1 enjoyed it.

2 I just have one comment. And I know you
3 have a good sense of humor. I think you do; I hope
4 you do. So I'm hoping you understand this when I
5 look at this and I'm trying to keep a straight face.

6 But I noticed in the last six years, you
7 haven't improved your overall grade any. I just --
8 I don't expect a response on that; but --

9 MR. ERIC CRITES: If I may respond, we're
10 still trying. And I also want to say that we've
11 hired two of the most amazing teachers from
12 Bloomfield; so --

13 THE CHAIR: On that final note, does
14 anyone have anything else?

15 (No response.)

16 THE CHAIR: Otherwise, I'll entertain a
17 motion.

18 I move that the PEC renew the charter
19 contract for New Mexico School for the Arts for a
20 period of five years.

21 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Second.

22 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Second.

23 THE CHAIR: Let's not fight over it. A
24 motion by Commissioner Gipson, a second by
25 Commissioners Peralta and Armbruster.

1 Any further discussion?
2 (No response.)
3 THE CHAIR: If not, Commissioner
4 Armbruster, roll-call vote, please.
5 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
6 Caballero?
7 COMMISSIONER CABALLERO: Yes.
8 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
9 Toulouse?
10 COMMISSIONER TOULOUSE: Yes.
11 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
12 Crone?
13 COMMISSIONER CRONE: Yes.
14 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
15 Armbruster votes "Yes."
16 Commissioner Gipson?
17 THE CHAIR: Yes.
18 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
19 Conyers?
20 COMMISSIONER CONYERS: Yes.
21 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: Commissioner
22 Peralta?
23 COMMISSIONER PERALTA: Yes.
24 THE CHAIR: Thank you. So the motion
25 passes -- how many of us are here?

1 COMMISSIONER ARMBRUSTER: We're seven.

2 THE CHAIR: Seven-zero. Thank you so
3 much. We appreciate everything that you do. And
4 we'll be in touch after Session for contract
5 negotiations. Thank you.

6 MR. ERIC CRITES: Madam Chair and
7 Commissioners and Deputy Director Woerner, thank you
8 very much. We really appreciate your time.

9 THE CHAIR: Thank you.

10 MS. FRIEDMAN: Madam Chair, the school has
11 requested if they could take a picture in front of
12 the Seal.

13 THE CHAIR: Sure, absolutely.

14 (A discussion was held off the record.)

15 THE CHAIR: Okay. We'll stand in recess
16 until 9:00 a.m. tomorrow morning.

17 (Proceedings in recess at 4:25 p.m.)

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1 BEFORE THE PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION
2 STATE OF NEW MEXICO

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6
7 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

8 I, Cynthia C. Chapman, RMR, CCR #219, Certified
9 Court Reporter in the State of New Mexico, do hereby
10 certify that the foregoing pages constitute a true
11 transcript of proceedings had before the said
12 NEW MEXICO PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION, held in the
13 State of New Mexico, County of Santa Fe, in the
14 matter therein stated.

15 In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my
16 hand on January 2, 2019.

17
18
19 *Cynthia Chapman*
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