



Explore Academy

Explore Academy

Strategic Plan

May 8, 2018

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- Who we are: Explore Learning Model
- Why grow? Our intended impact and theory of action
- How will we grow? Pace, place, and org design

Explore Academy is a single site charter school serving grades 9-12 in Albuquerque, NM that was founded in 2014

Mission



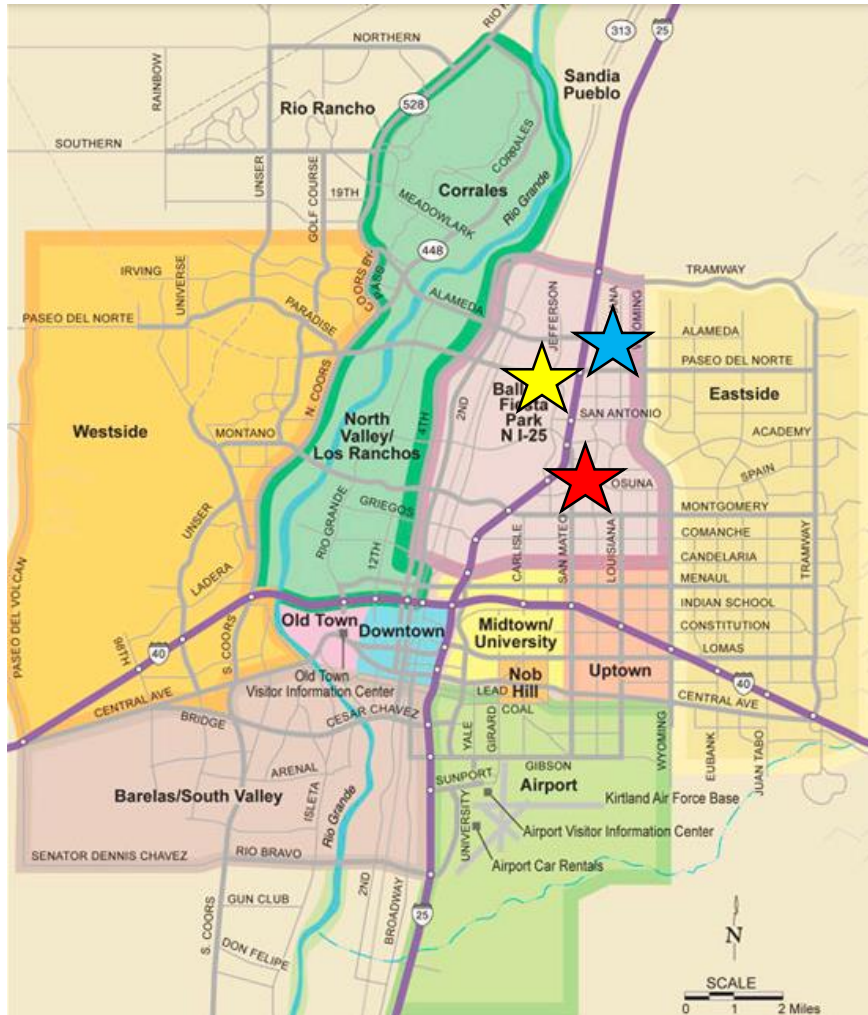
Explore Academy will provide each student with a personalized educational experience through the power of student choice, allowing each student to create a unique educational pathway in preparation for a college future.

Core Philosophies

- Provide students choice in how they learn... everything!
- Allow students to create their own customized education
- Provide a rigorous and challenging curriculum for students
- Provide students rigorous preparation for college

Explore is located in northeast Albuquerque; the most proximate public high schools are Del Norte and La Cueva

Map of Albuquerque



Explore Academy



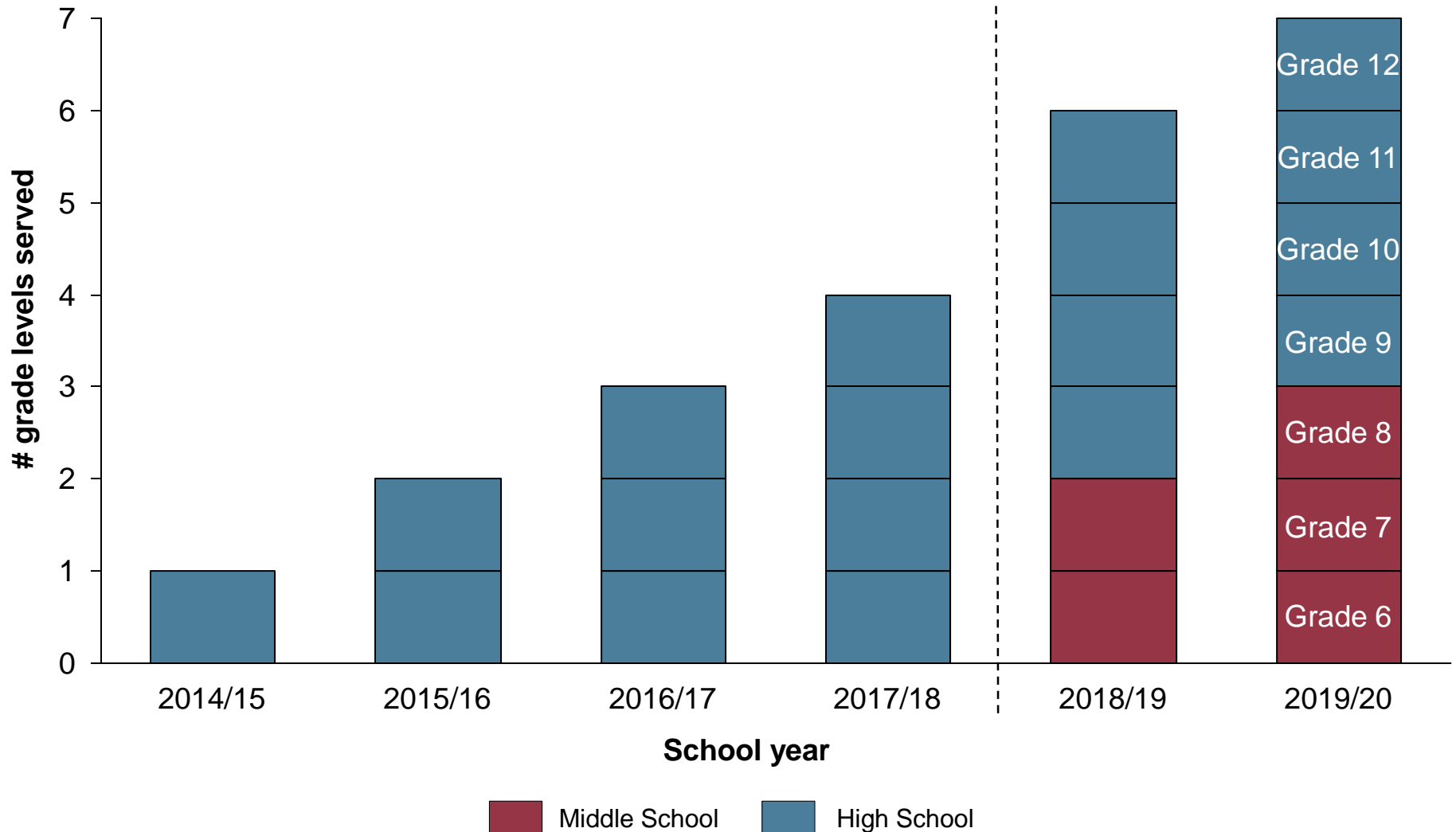
Del Norte High School



La Cueva High School

Explore Academy currently serves ~300 students in grades 9-12 and is planning to expand to middle school next year

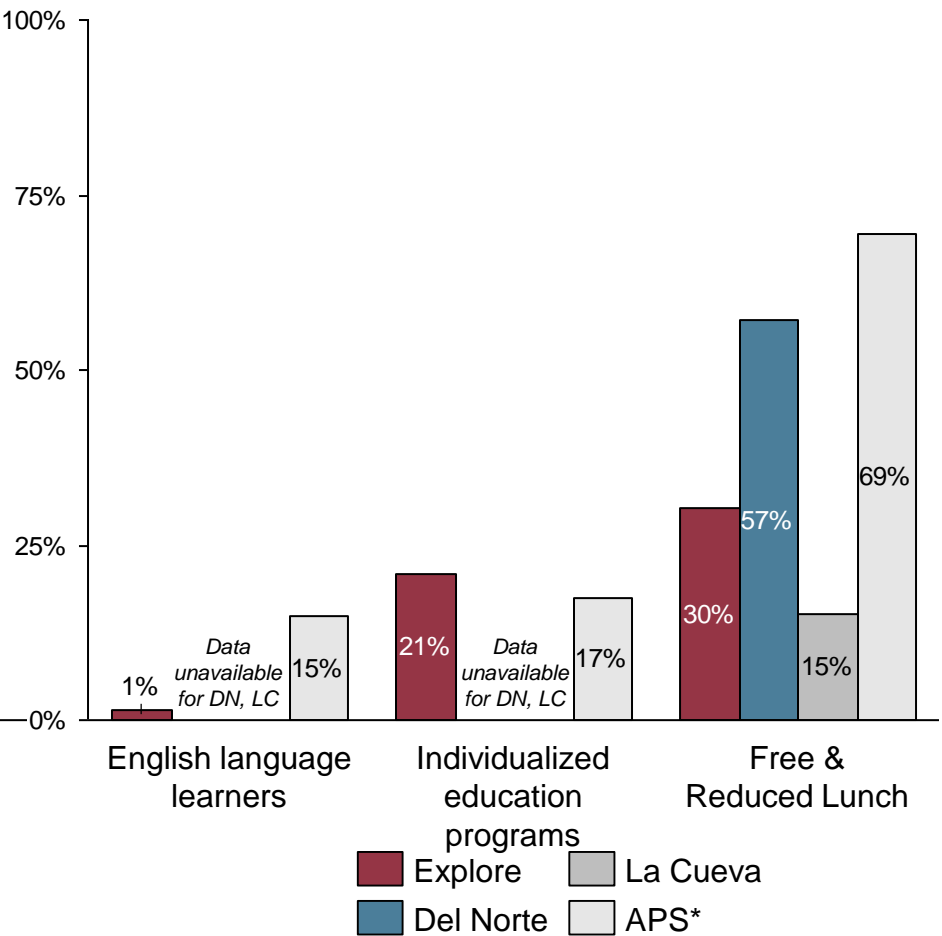
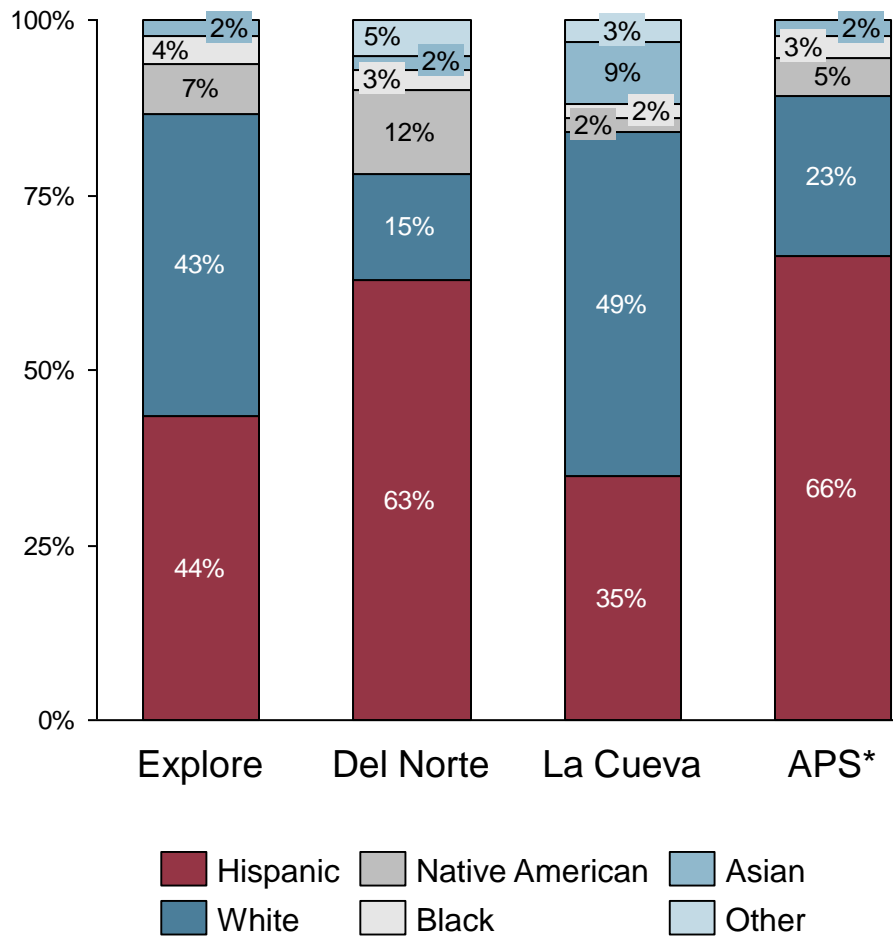
Grade levels offered by Explore Academy by year



Explore Academy serves a population that falls in range of local schools', though is less disadvantaged than APS'

Explore Academy vs. APS student body by subgroup

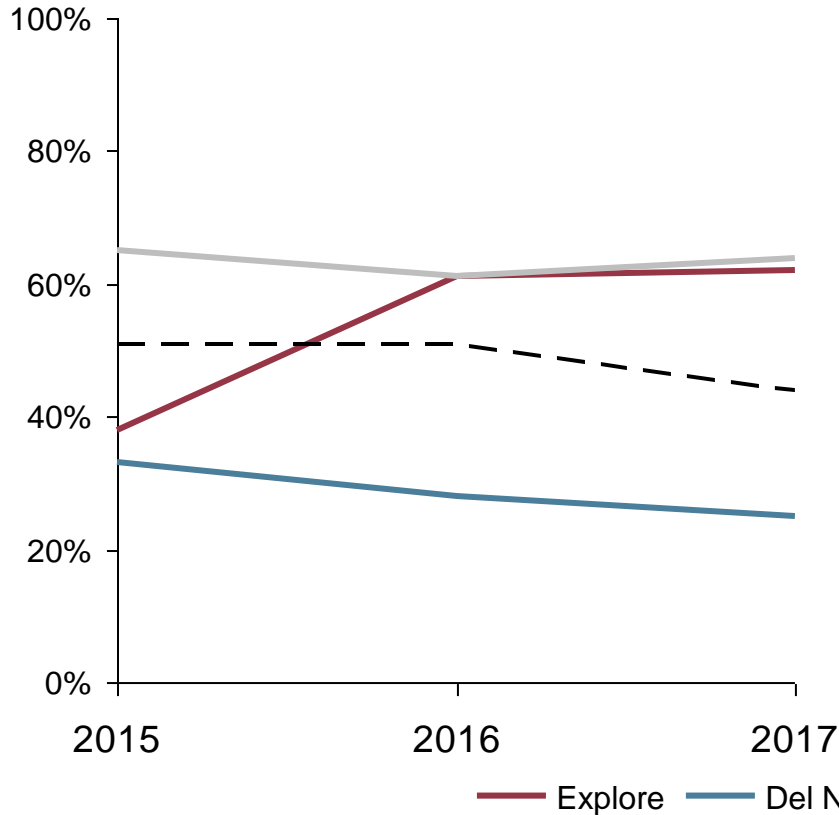
Explore Academy vs. APS student status



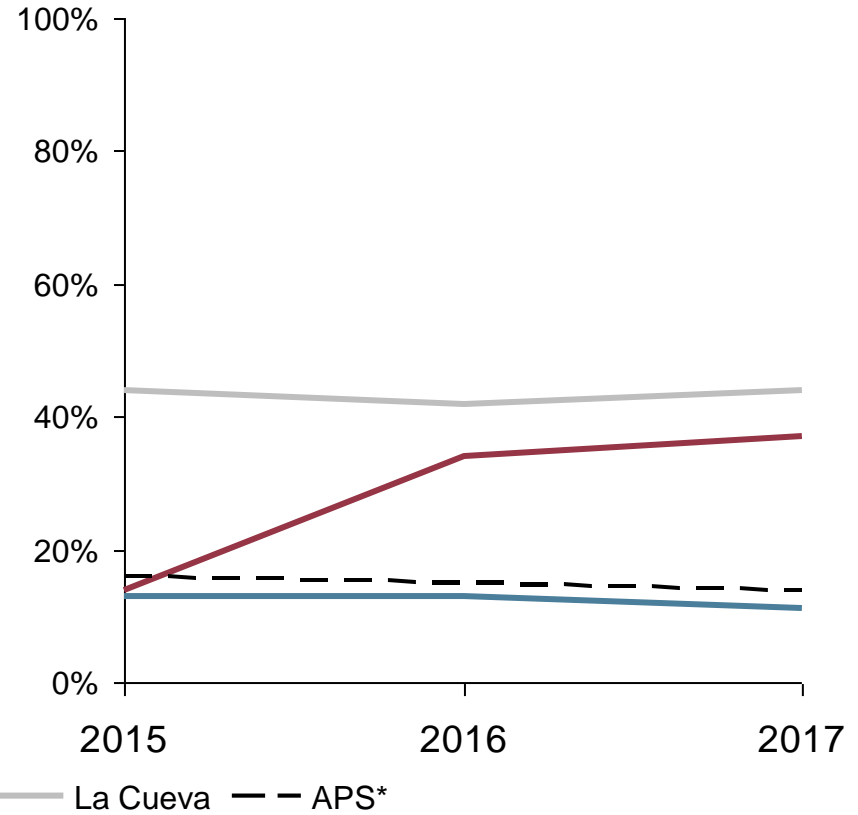
Source: Student demographics, PED Albuquerque Public Schools Report Card (2017); 2017 US News & World Report School Overview – Del North & La Cueva
 *APS data reflect grades K-12

Explore's student proficiency rates have increased and outperformed local peers', whose are flat/ decreasing since 2015

% students who rate Proficient/ Advanced in reading by local school



% students who rate Proficient/ Advanced in math by local school



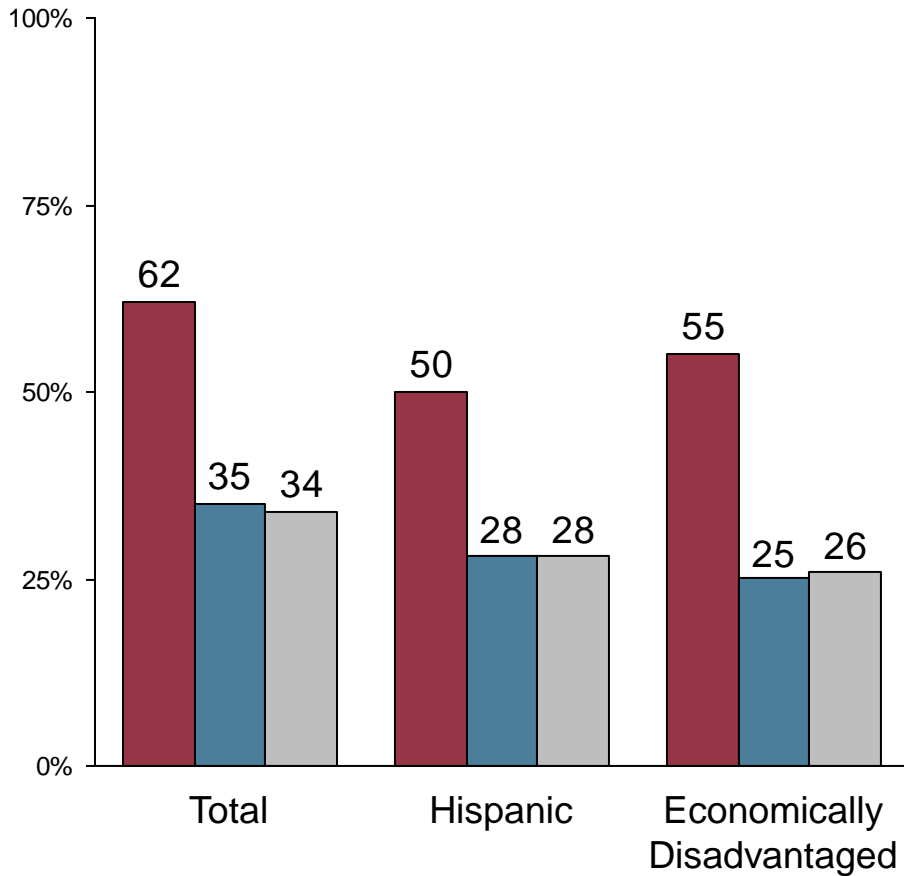
Students who score Proficient or Advanced are considered to perform at grade level.

Source: NM PED Letter grade for Explore, Del Norte, La Cueva, and APS (SY16-17)

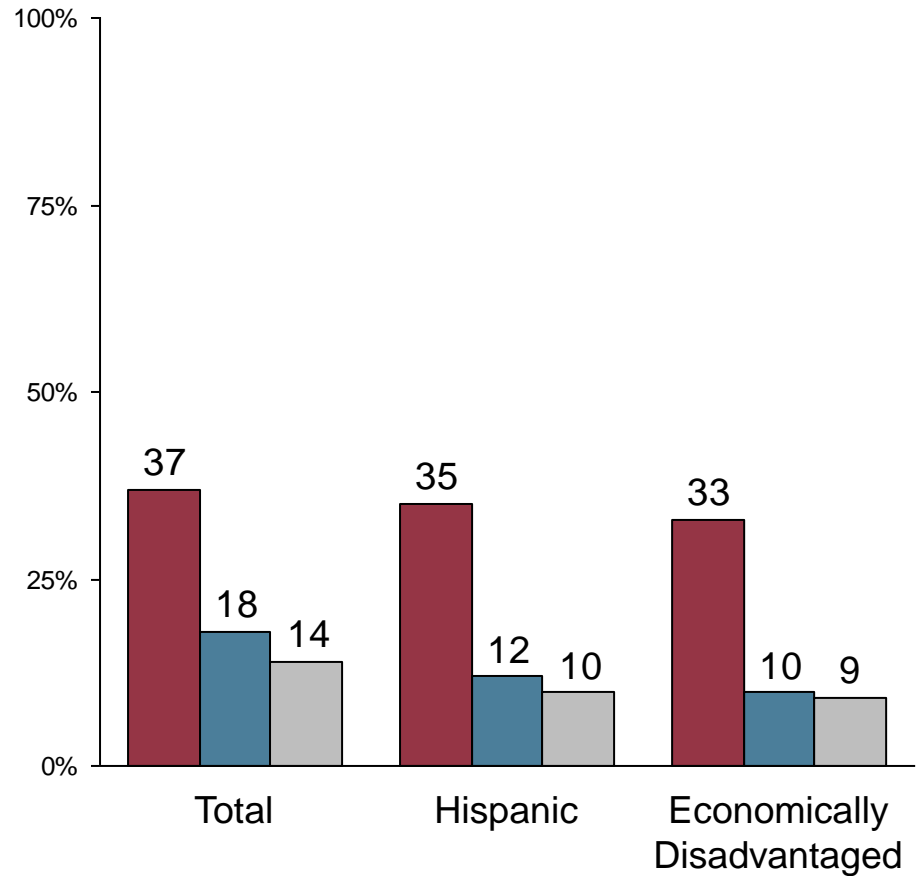
*APS reflects 11th grade proficiency rate

Disadvantaged students at Explore also outperform respective subgroups across APS and the state in ELA/ math proficiency

Comparative ELA proficiency rates



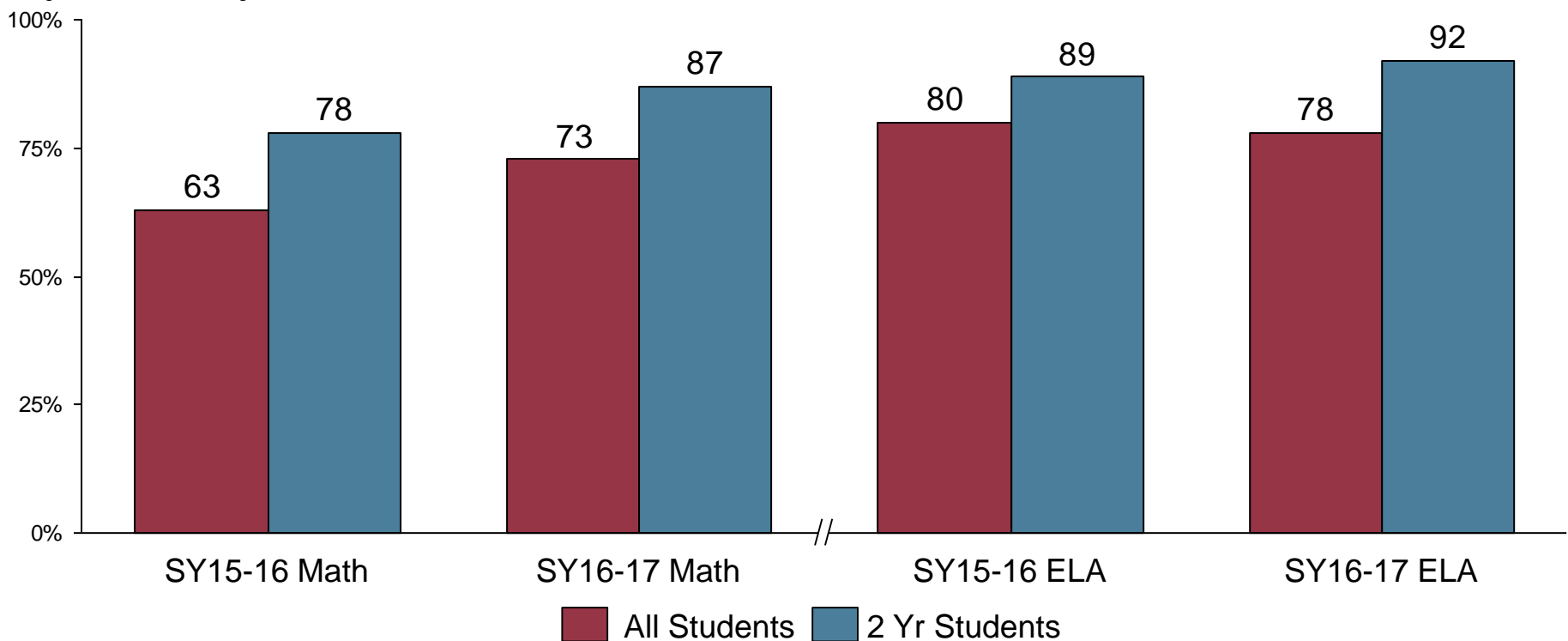
Comparative Math proficiency rates



Explore APS New Mexico

Students enrolled at Explore for 2+ years have higher proficiency %s than those enrolled for less time

% Explore students who meet PARCC grade level* by year and subject



Above analysis considers % Explore students who **meet grade level expectations** on PARCC assessments, while analyses on slides 8-9 consider % who score **proficient or advanced** on the assessments; as such, the rates differ.

Note: analysis does not follow a single cohort/ show gains over time; rather, it shows consistent achievement by long-term students at Explore.

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Building on this track record of success, Explore plans to grow enrollment to serve a greater # of NM students

By SY2022/23, Explore will serve 3 campuses that together will ultimately engage and empower ~1,900 6-12th grade New Mexico students to build the academic and life skills, habits, and mindsets needed to succeed in college by allowing them to choose how they learn while demanding mastery of rigorous academic standards

To realize its intended impact, ELM will implement a series of drivers defined in the theory of action

Theory of Action: *If we...*

- Demand mastery of rigorous academic skills for each standard through systematic support, feedback, and assessments
- Engage and empower students by allowing them to choose how they learn through content “flavors”
- Expand our curriculum and model to grades 6-8
- Enhance community outreach to build awareness/ understanding for our value proposition
- Evolve our systems/ structures to be able to support expanded enrollment

Intended Impact: *...then*

By SY2022/23, ELM will serve 3 campuses that together will ultimately engage and empower ~1,900 6-12th grade New Mexico students to build the academic and life skills, habits, and mindsets needed to succeed in college by allowing them to choose how they learn while demanding mastery of rigorous academic standards

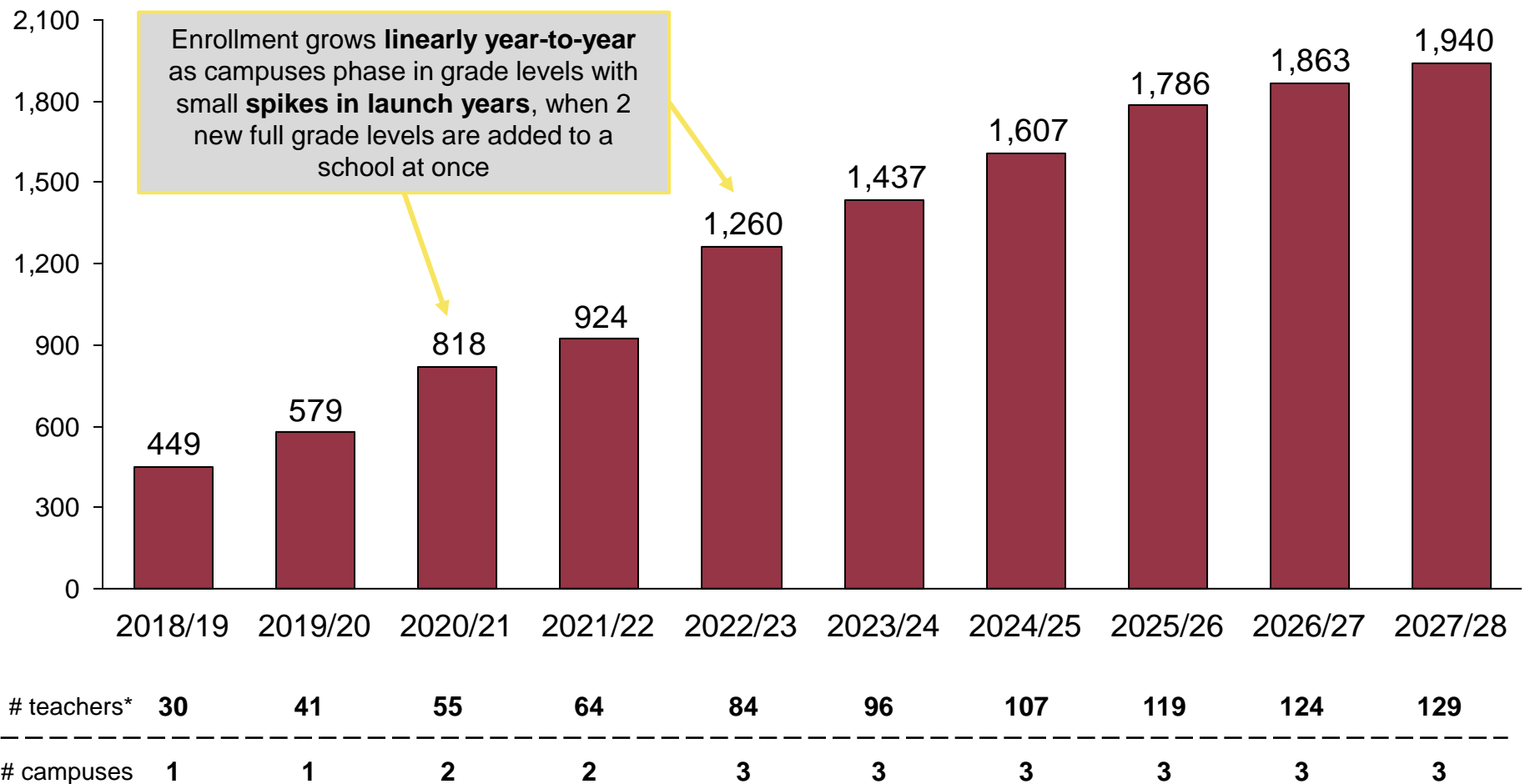
ELM’s theory of action contains drivers that will accelerate impact by both increasing enrollment and evolving current practices to sustainably support growth

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Rapid growth pace will bring Explore to full enrollment at 3 campuses by SY27/28, with 1,940 students and 129 teachers

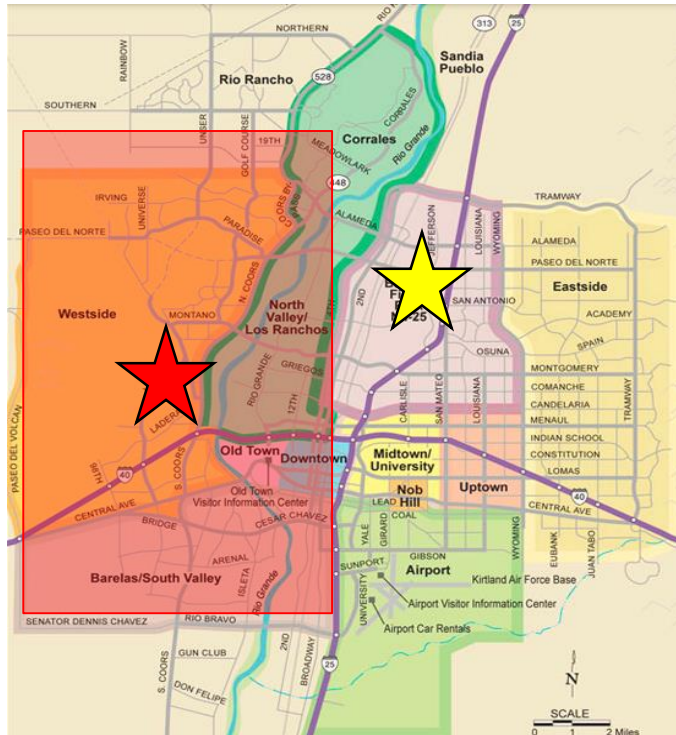
Projected # students by year



*Does not include SPED staff; there will be 2 SPED staff per campus.

ELM could have a second campus in SW Albuquerque, which offers high demand, fit, and feasibility for the org's model

Map of Albuquerque



Current campus location



Target area for future campus

➤ Demand

- South Valley offers a high volume of students, many of whom are from traditionally underserved backgrounds
- Westside also has a sizable student population whose demographics mirror the current campus's

➤ Fit

- Both neighborhoods have growing populations and overcrowded, underperforming public schools
- Families across Albuquerque are familiar and open to charter options

➤ Feasibility

- Remaining within Albuquerque allows Explore to operate up to 3 schools under the current charter
- Explore's reputation in Albuquerque could serve as a "showcase" to support fundraising
- Recruiting/ hiring talent may be easier in a major commercial/ university center

Explore will focus investment of time/ resources in 5 strategic pillars to drive org maturity and support sustainable growth

Strategic Pillars	Initiatives
Engage and empower increased # of NM students to master academic skills and become college ready	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop connections - south valley / west side families and students • Connect with higher ed. for student pipeline and college prep • Develop marketing plan • Search for prospective facilities within both areas around areas of high population density
Adapt and codify instructional model to enable school success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align curriculum from middle school grades with current 9-12 model • 6-12 instructional handbook with procedures, rules, data collection, curriculum, requirements, pedagogy / practices, technology, instructional model, etc. • Develop ACT crosswalk
Evolve human capital approach to ensure systematic approach to engaging and supporting growing team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Codify value proposition and staff expectations and resources • Expand recruitment methods • Enhance teacher mentorship and training programs • Create leadership development, succession, and sustainability plans
Establish clear network model to provide robust support to schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish ELN organization and build out staffing • Define and codify approach, and roles and responsibilities between ELN and schools • Refresh governance structure, board composition and board roles
Deepen community and philanthropic relationships to enable successful growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and maintain professional / community relationships - south valley, west side, Albuquerque metro area • Reach out to local, statewide, regional, and national grant programs to explore additional funding

Appendix

Our assessment highlighted program strength as well as growth opportunities in org roles/ stakeholder engagement

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Dimension	Program	Staff and Org Culture	Organization Roles	Human Capital	Community Organizing and External Relations	Finance	Operations	Governance	Goal Setting
Readiness indicator	Academic performance	Mission, shared goals, commitment	Decision-making and prioritization	Teacher recruitment	Student recruitment and family engagement/organizing	Budgeting	IT	Board structure and composition	Annual planning
	Curriculum and instruction	Community and teamwork	Well-defined school and school support roles	School leadership recruitment/pipeline	Community engagement/organizing and political engagement	Forecasting and projections	Data systems	Board oversight and engagement	Systems for transparency and accountability
	School culture and student engagement	Diversity and inclusion	Systems for org-wide communication	Teacher training, coaching, support	Fundraising capacity	Financial management	Facilities and real estate		
	Special ed supports and interventions	Sustainability		School leader training, coaching, support	Marketing and communications		Day-to-day school operations		
	System for measuring results						Systems for compliance and reporting		

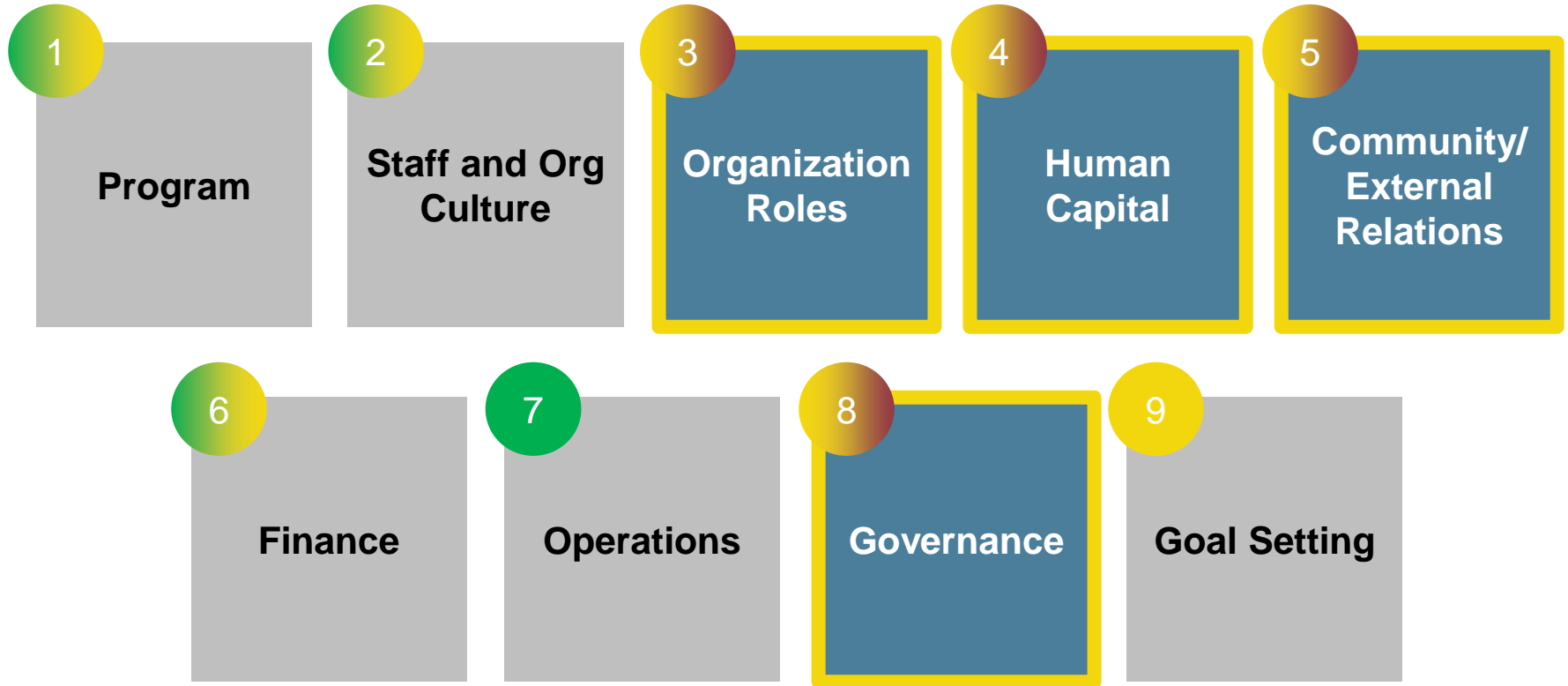
Key

- High readiness
- Some progress needed
- Significant progress needed
- TBD

Staff and Org Culture was also a key strength in Explore's model

1	Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strong academic performance, school culture, and systems for measuring results• High student attrition suggesting not all students are ideal fit for model• Instruction/ SPED support for teachers led by Director and designed for a single site school; may require additional supports as school grows
2	Staff and Org Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teacher commitment to school and collaborative culture leads to high retention• Whole staff collaborates to support individual student and teacher needs
3	Organization Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff wear many hats and decisions are made by consensus, with oversight from Director• Primary staff communication channel is weekly meeting, in addition to email, newsletters, social media, etc.
4	Human Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited advertising and lack of target profiles poses challenge to recruiting teachers• Leaders are identified/ groomed internally without a formal process• Little structured PD for teachers/ leaders makes org reliant on mentorship model• Robust data/ feedback mechanisms help teachers adjust delivery each period
5	Community/ External Rel.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School does not have marketing campaign, limiting enrollment and fundraising potential• First campus isn't fully enrolled, but expect demand/ waitlist to grow with middle school
6	Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Budget projections are accurate and meet PED requirements• Org starting to build cash reserve but doesn't track progress toward other metrics
7	Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consistent/ supported IT and data systems ready to be scaled• Day-to-day operations currently run by Director, with plans to scale to centralized Explore Leadership Network with expansion to multiple sites
8	Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Many members are new to GC and have limited experience with multi-site organizations• Board meets regularly but data reporting processes and decision-making are not formalized• Members personally connected to school but networks outside Albuquerque may be limited
9	Goal Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Little formal goal setting exists for operations/ finance; academic goals/ reports comply with PED requirements

Explore identified several focus areas for org improvement via an assessment of organizational readiness to grow



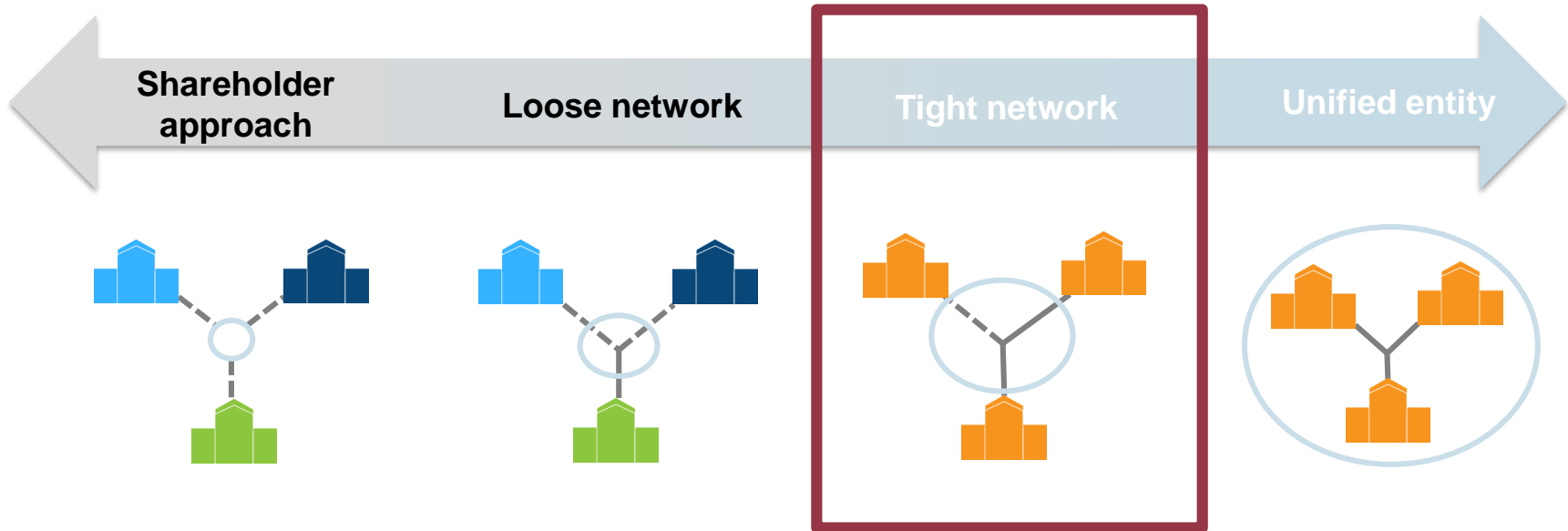
The highlighted dimensions are common focus areas for small organizations looking to scale. More detail can be found in the appendix.

At scale, ELM can serve 3 fully enrolled campuses for grades 6-12 and have seats available for ~1,940 students

SY	2017/18			2018/19			2019/20			2020/21			2021/22			2022/23			2023/24			2024/25			2025/26			2026/27			2027/28			
Campus	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3				
Grade	6				X			X			X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	7				X			X			X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	8							X			X			X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	9	X			X			X			X			X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	10	X			X			X			X			X			X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	11	X			X			X			X			X			X			X	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	12	X			X			X			X			X			X			X			X	X		X	X		X	X		X	X	X
# campus-uses	1			1			1			2			2			3			3			3			3			3			3			

X = grade level offered by Explore

To ensure consistent/ standardized operations/ performance across schools, Explore will run as a tight network



- Critical operational functions, including data analysis, curriculum support, and teacher development, should be managed by a central office/ network to ensure quality/ consistency
- Individual campuses will have flexibility to build culture and building-specific processes organically
- Teachers/ departments at each campus will retain ability to creatively develop and deliver flavors

Expansion locations were evaluated using a defined set of criteria

Demand

- **Volume:** Does the location have the population density of students in grades 6-12 to fill a new school?
- **Demographics:** What % students are disadvantaged?
- **Competition:** Do the local middles high school students have district schools that motivate them and offer rigorous academics?

Fit

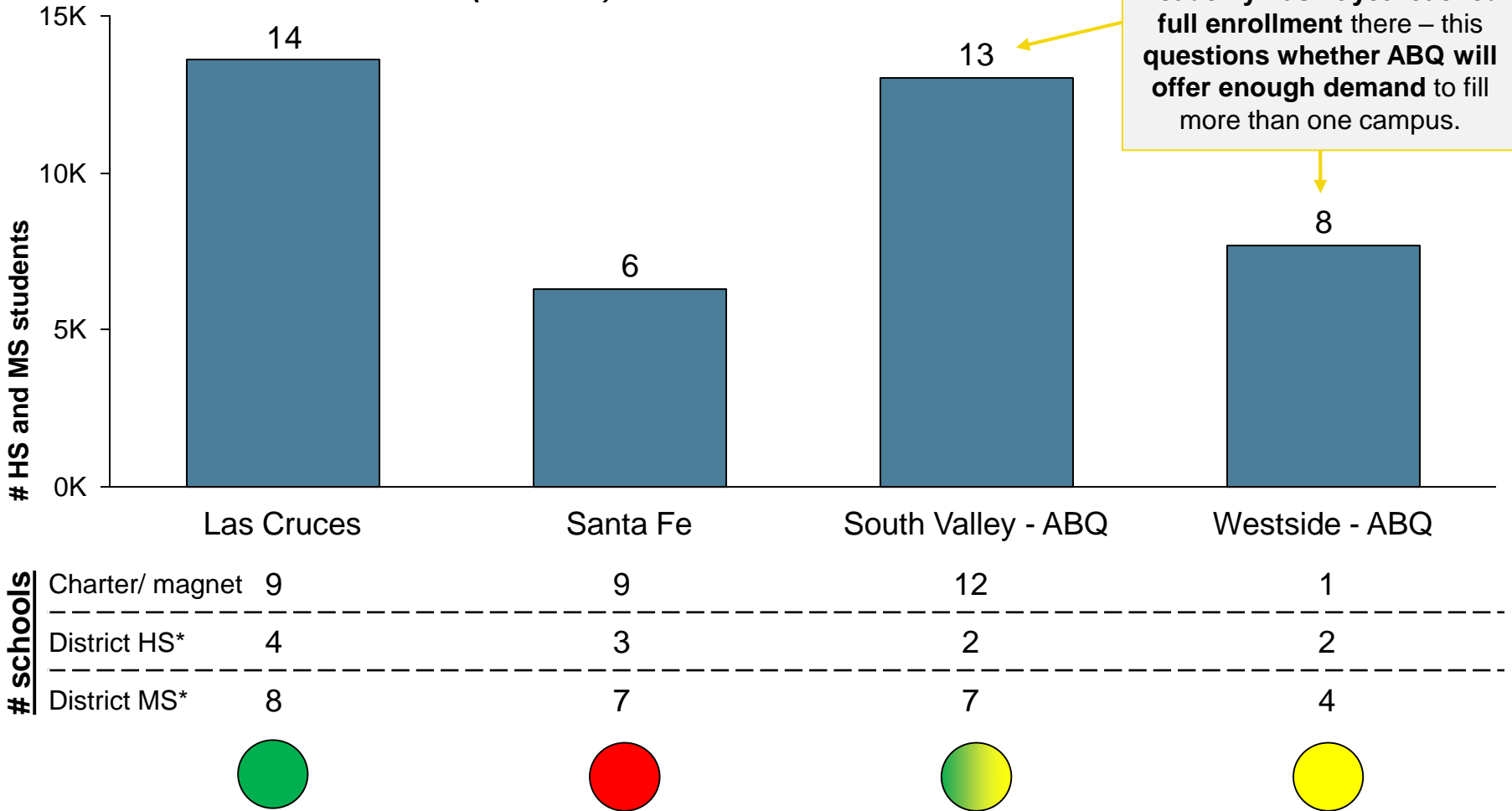
- **Environment:** Does the location have governance/ culture that is supportive of charters?
- **College Readiness Mindset:** What % of the population holds a bachelors degree?

Feasibility

- **Authorizing:** Will Explore be able to get a charter there?
- **Funding:** Will donors be willing to support a site in this location?
- **Facilities:** Are facilities available, attainable, and affordable?
- **Workforce:** Is there a pipeline of qualified, motivated teachers?
- **Ease of support:** Will distance from 1st campus be a challenge?

Student population varies significantly across locations, with greatest volume in Las Cruces

Middle and High school student enrollment in district schools across locations* (SY16-17)



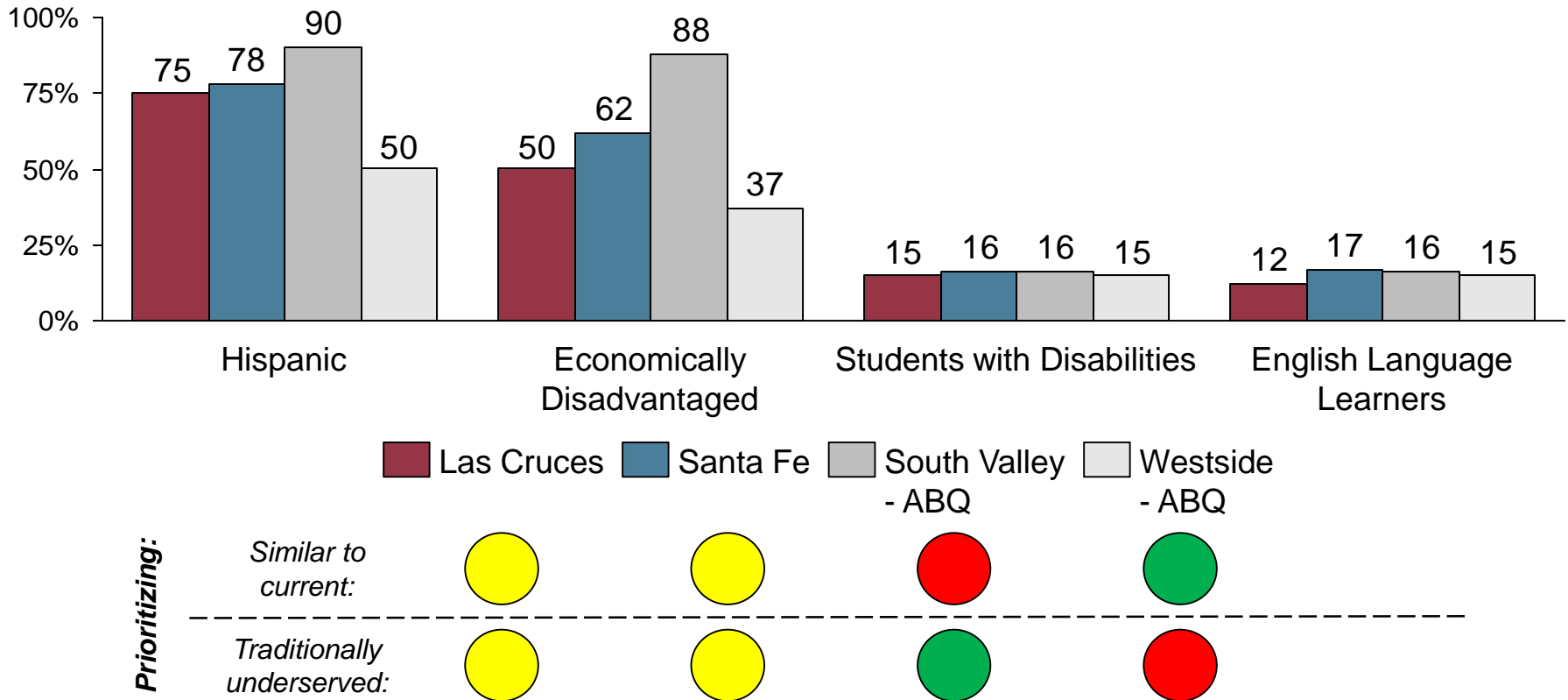
Source: Bellwether – Explore market assessment slides

*Schools that serve middle and high school grades are counted in both categories

● High support for expansion
 ● Mid support for expansion
 ● Low support for expansion

Student demographics also vary; SV has the greatest disadvantaged population and WS the least

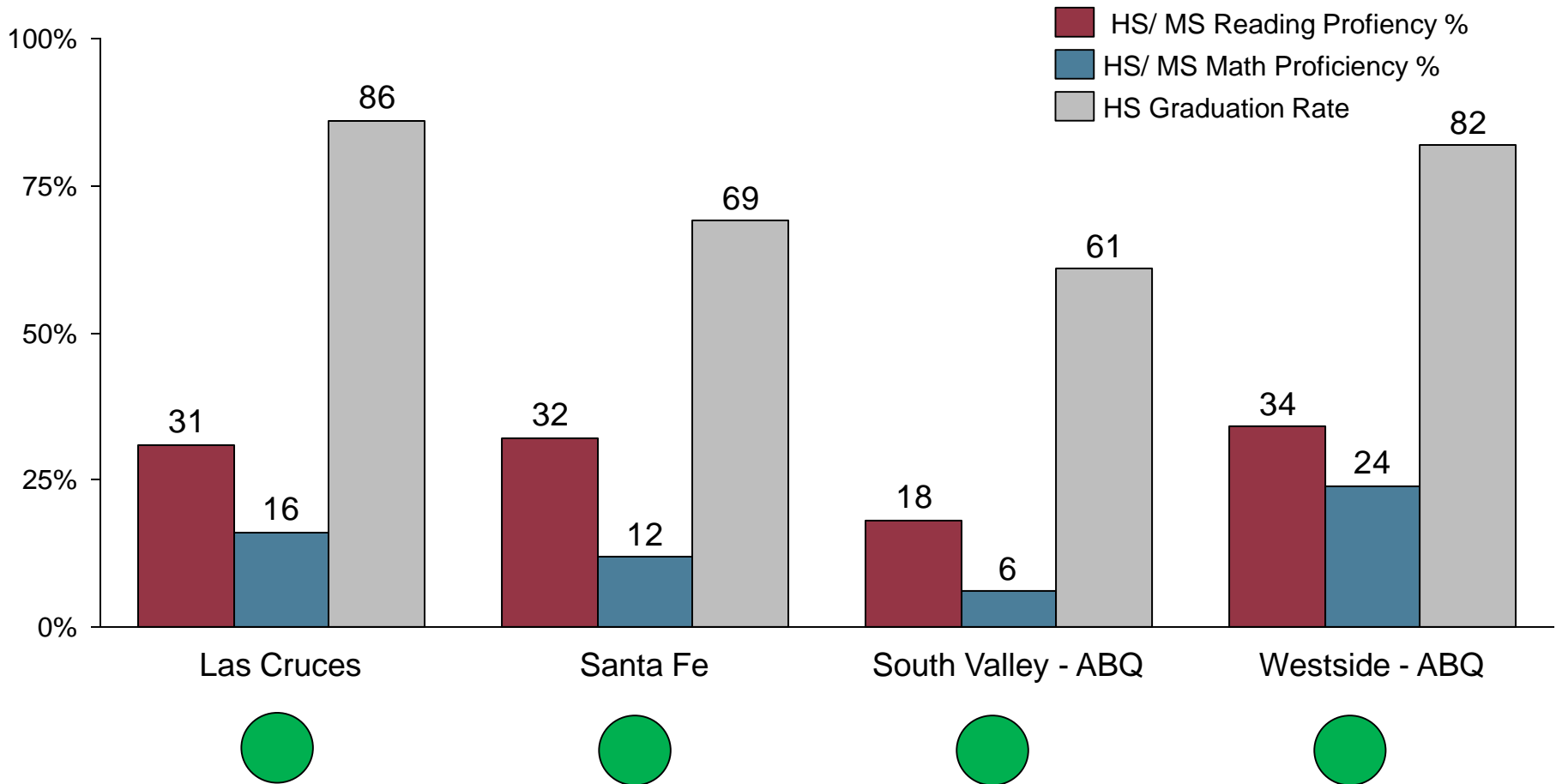
Breakdown of student subgroups across expansion locations (SY16-17)



Rating for this criterion depends on whether Explore prioritizes serving a population similar to the current campus's or the traditionally least well-served student population.

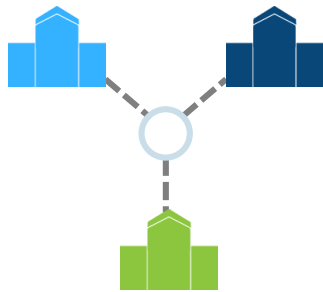
Student proficiency and graduation rates are low across locations; South Valley has the lowest rates overall

Student proficiency across expansion locations for MS and HS (SY16-17)



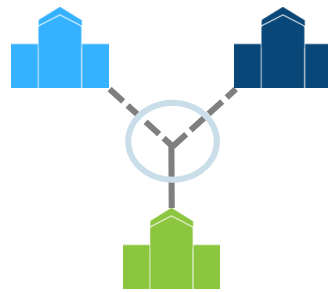
We considered four potential operating models for Explore

Shareholder Approach



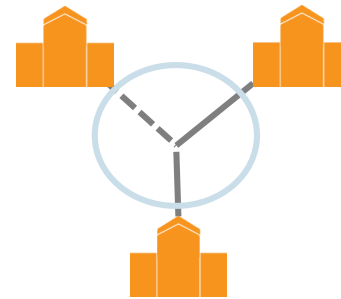
Resources only

Loose Network



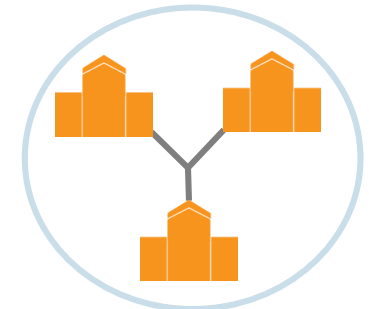
Resources & services

Tight Network



Resources & services

Unified Entity



Resources & services

Central office provides:

----- Type of line indicates **whether network office resources/services are optional** (dotted) vs. **mandatory** (solid) for campuses

○ Size of circle indicates extent to which the central office owns decision rights over the activity

■ Color indicates extent to which services/activities are consistent across schools