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La Academia Dolores Huerta  
2021 Charter School Non-Renewal Recommendation

**RESPONSE**

During the two-year conditional approval of LADH's charter, LADH focused on those areas in which progress was essential and successfully met those conditions that were developed by the PEC through the Corrective Action Plan (CAP). It has been LADH's understanding and expectation that if the School focused on those areas identified as essential in the CAP that then the School's charter would be considered for renewal on a longer-term basis. While LADH has worked diligently to meet or make substantial progress toward achievement of the PED's minimum educational standards and student performance standards identified in the charter contract, the school does not feel that the two-year conditional approval of its contract provided adequate time to provide enough data on student achievement and on other measures set forth in the contract. This being the case, LADH was presented with an inequitable timeframe to achieve the standards set forth in the contract. Additionally, LADH's growth in academics, student population and parent engagement have been severely hindered by the unforeseen global pandemic.

**Remote Learning Model:**

Currently LADH is providing remote instruction using a modified hybrid model. Teachers provide instruction to one-half of the students on Monday and Tuesday and the other half on Thursday and Friday. On the days when students are not scheduled for Direct Instruction (via Zoom) they are required to log onto their CANVAS Online learning platform to complete daily assignments and enrichment activities. Students who are struggling or have missed a Zoom class are allowed to log onto CANVAS on their off-Zoom days to revisit lessons, learn/relearn any concepts they may have missed, or get clarification. All students are required to log onto Zoom every Wednesday for a 45-minute Advisory check-in. During this time teachers and students discuss concerns/struggles they have, whether academic, Social Emotional or other. All students are also given the option of scheduling extra tutoring opportunities on Wednesdays. LADH is also offering in-person support for all students with IEP's in a 5:1 setting, for two hours each Wednesday. Currently, four (4) students participate regularly.

This model was implemented with the intent to return to in-person instruction as soon as it was allowed. Originally LADH planned to return to in-person instruction at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> nine weeks and felt this would be the least disruptive schedule for a mid-semester change. However, our reentry date was delayed. At the time, the directive given by the Sec. of Ed was that they would be revisiting the ability to open for in-person every two weeks. This kept us from making any schedule changes as we were hoping to be given the green light at any time.

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Other schools had already made the decision to stay remote until at least January and therefore quickly modified their schedules to reflect that decision.

As positive COVID cases increased and more restrictions were put in place, it became clear that returning to in-person instruction during the fall semester was likely not going to happen. However, with less than a month left in the fall semester our staff felt schedule changes would be very disruptive not just to the students, but to their families as many had adjusted their work schedules to allow for students who help with in-home daycare and other household responsibilities to be available at east twice a week for a full day of Zoom classes and giving flexibility on the other days. However, teachers and Admin had already begun discussing changes that would be made to the instructional model starting in January if we are required to continue in a remote setting. Review, discussion and possible approval of the new instructional schedule has already been placed on the December GC agenda.

In late July LADH had developed an assessment plan to have students come in on a staggered 5:1 ratio assigned to classrooms scattered throughout the campus in order to administer the Beginning-of-Year Short Cycle assessment. That plan was quickly sidelined after PED clarified that the 5:1 allowable ratio was only for student's with IEP's. Given the inability to guarantee test security and data validity during remote instruction we have not been able to come up with a suitable plan for administering short cycle assessments. This concern was brought to the PEC throughout the spring and summer and has also been the challenging topic of many school leader bi-weekly communications across the state.

#### **Assessment Data:**

Given the constraints of a two-year charter contract, LADH technically only had one year to show growth via assessment data. It is important to consider that the obtained assessment data would be inconclusive as there would not be any true comparison data available as the state also switched to a new assessment during this time. Additionally, it must be noted that the 2019-2020 academic year was cut short due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, resulting in all state mandated assessments being waived. This left LADH without actual test data for the first year of their two-year contract. However, LADH was placed on a rather rigorous Corrective Action Plan that required growth to be demonstrated via short cycle assessments and was able to do so during the time that school was actually in session.

Although the most recent assessment data used from the 2018-2019 school year states that LADH only had 36 points, just short of the 40-point cutoff, it should also be noted that this was an increase from the 2017-2018 assessment data in which LADH only received 18.33 points. Reflecting just over a 17-point growth. LADH has clearly been making progress towards increasing academic performance and if given the opportunity will continue to do so.

#### **Organizational Performance Framework:**

##### **ELL's:**

As previously addressed in the initial response to the 2019-2020 site visit report, updates to all information provided to Parent's and placed in student's cumulative files have been made to reflect all updated state and federal requirements. Procedures for enrolling and monitoring

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EL's have been updated in conjunction with all updated requirements in order to ensure that all services and opportunities afforded EL's are properly identified, provided and monitored.

It is important to note that there has been some incorrect identification of students within the STARS reporting system that had previously been corrected. Upon switching to a new SIS that error appeared again within the STARS system and has since been corrected. Previously the registrar and Bilingual Coordinator did not have proper access to the STARS reporting system to access the ELL Error Report ahead of the evaluation in order to address these errors in advance. That has now been remedied and both the Registrar and Bilingual Coordinator can run reports at any time in order to identify any errors and address them in a timely manner.

**Financial Indicators:**

Following the initiation of an investigation of LADH's business manager, LADH severed ties and contracted with The Vigil Group. For the past year, LADH administration has worked closely with The Vigil Group correcting many business issues. Although the current Financial Audit has not been finalized, we feel confident that all of these issues have been resolved. Based on positive periodic check-ins with the auditors, LADH does not anticipate the finding of any new or repeating material weaknesses from the current audit. As the audit reporting in essence runs a year behind, it is challenging to present accurate up-to-date information detailing improvements and corrections.

**Operating Budget:**

Concerns regarding the operating budget had already been identified and adjustments made to address these. For example, our Assistant Principal is currently serving as an administrator and Science teacher due budgetary concerns. When our Science teacher had to leave unexpectedly, LADH made the decision not to replace her but instead have our current Science endorsed AP step-in to fill the vacancy. We also identified a dual certified ELA and Social Studies teacher and because of our lower enrollment were able to combine the two positions in to one. We are currently evaluating all operating expenses and working to make adjustments wherever possible that support instruction and the academic advancement of our students.

**Governance:**

All requirements of the GC have been addressed. A copy of the most recent Administrator Evaluation was submitted with the initial Charter Renewal application as well as all required information regarding LADH's Audit Committee and Anti-Nepotism & Conflict of Interest Policies. Although these items may not have fully been in place at the time of the 2019-2020 Site visit all of the areas have been addressed, however, due to the delayed timeline of implementation versus reporting these items aren't always visible during that snapshot of time.

**Substitutes and Endorsement Waivers:**

In reviewing employee information and teaching assignments in STARS an error was identified regarding how an employee was entered into the system based upon incorrect recommendations from our contracted STARS Coordinator. This has now been corrected and

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all credentialing and support services for students have been rectified and verification/communication procedures are being strengthened to avoid any future errors.

Also, in an effort to avoid future errors in reviewing staff credentials and endorsements, Employee Hiring Procedures have been revised and established to ensure that all required employee documents are in each personnel file. A checklist of all required items with a signature and dating system for each item is required to be in all personnel files and verifies that all required documents have been received and placed in the file.

**Student Immunization:**

New procedures have been developed in collaboration with our contracted Nurse to properly record, monitor and store all student immunization records in compliance with confidentiality requirements and with updated immunization requirements.

**Membership:**

Due to the challenges presented with the COVID-19 Pandemic this area has struggled. The previous administration admittedly did not recruit new students under concerns the school might close. This mixed with negative press presented a challenge going into the 19-20 school year. Once LADH learned of their two-year renewal, LADH took part in several community events including but not limited to parades, downtown community nights, radio promotions and interviews. Additionally, LADH increased their presence on social media. However, at the beginning of our most important recruiting time, the Spring when students and families are planning their next steps, everything was brought to a screeching halt as closures were implemented and our ability to go out in the community, shake hands and let people know who we are was no longer an option. Enrollment has been a hot topic across the State as COVID-19 has helped to create a large group of students that aren't attending school anywhere or have been switched to homeschool.

Currently along with our students growing academically and emotionally this is our biggest focus as we are well aware of the financial implications. We are currently working to explore new recruiting avenues and hope that a return to in-person learning as soon as possible will help us to grow our enrollment.

In conclusion, LADH has focused on those areas in which progress was essential and successfully met those conditions that were developed by the PEC through the CAP. In addition, LADH has worked diligently to meet or make substantial progress toward achievement of the PED's minimum educational standards and student performance standards identified in the charter contract, despite the challenges presented with a two-year conditional contract. LADH respectfully requests that the PEC renew the School's contract on a longer-term basis so that LADH can continue to improve and serve the Las Cruces community.