



STATE OF NEW MEXICO
PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
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RYAN STEWART, ED.L.D.
SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM
GOVERNOR

The GREAT Academy Responses

Preliminary Analysis of Renewal Application and Site Visit

School Name: The GREAT Academy

School Address: 6001 San Mateo Blvd NE, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87109

Head Administrator: Jasper Matthews

Business Manager: Charlotte Archuleta

Authorized Grade Levels: 6-12

Authorized Enrollment: 360

Contract Term: July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2021

Mission: *“The GREAT Academy’s mission is to ensure that students’ ‘Gain Real-World Experience through Active Transition’.”*

Summary of Performance

Academic. The school's academic performance has been evaluated under two different accountability systems throughout the term of its contract; A-F School Grading Report in school years 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 & the New Mexico System of School Support and Accountability in school years 2018-2019 and 2019-2020.

The GREAT Academy's (TGA) academic performance evidences a decline in reading and math proficiency rates between school years 2016-17 to 2017-18 and slight improvement between school years 2017-18 to 2018-19. (Reading proficiency rates were 27%, 11%, and 21% consecutively; math proficiency rates were 13%, 7% and 8%.) In 2018-19, TGA demonstrated a 21% reading proficiency compared to the State's 34% overall reading proficiency rate, while the school's math proficiency rate was 8% compared to the State proficiency rate of 21%.

The school's Overall Academic Performance during the contract term was a **C letter grade, D letter grade** (a decrease of 8.91 points), and **Traditional Support School** designation, respectively. The overall points earned in 2018-2019 was 40, placing the school in the lowest 25% of high schools (and of all public schools) in the state.

The school received an overall "*Falls Far Below Standard*" rating on its mission specific goal(s) during the first year of its contract (2016-2017), and an overall "*Does Not Meets Standard*" rating on its mission specific goals in 2017-2018. Though the school earned an overall "*Falls Far Below Standard*" rating on its mission specific goals during the 2018-19 academic year, please note, the school received a "*Meets Standard*" individual rating for its reading growth and proficiency mission-goal and an "*Exceeds Standard*" individual rating for its math growth and proficiency mission-goal.

Pending the charter contract renewal decision, the Charter School Division will recommend that the school be required to implement a rigorous academic improvement plan, approved by the Public Education Commission.

TGA Response to Academic Summary:

Academic Growth

While there was a decline in overall proficiency, note that the growth index for SY19 for Q1 Lowest performing students was 55 in Reading, where the statewide benchmark was 50. TGA student growth surpassed that of the statewide benchmark for Reading. Judging academic performance considers growth along with proficiency. Q2/3 Middle Performing Students had a growth Index of 56 where the state benchmark was 50. The Q4 data was masked due to its small population. In regard to Math, Q1 Low Performing students had a growth index of 52 and Hispanic students in that subgroup had a growth index of 55 where the state benchmark was 50. Q4 students had a growth index of 58 and the state benchmark was 50. This level of growth shows that the instructional efforts at TGA are yielding growth towards proficiency. (Reference **Part A Data Analysis Growth index for Reading FY2019 and Growth Index for Math FY2019**).

Dual Credit

It should also be noted that over the term of the charter, TGA graduates have successfully (with a grade of C or better) completed 1,182 college credits through TGA's dual credit program. This is evidence that TGA's program is preparing students for being successful with college courses and college level rigor.

Financial. Over the course of the contract, the school received 11 audit findings derived from published audited financial statements from 2016-2017 through 2018-2019. The findings consist of two (2) repeat findings, three (3) material weakness, three (3) significant deficiency and five (5) noncompliance/other matter. In the most recent reporting year, 2018-2019, the school received seven (7) audit findings consisting of three (3) material weakness, one (1) significant deficiency and three (3) noncompliance/other matter, two (2) were repeat findings. The school's audit finding results include findings received on behalf of the school's foundation, considered a component unit of the school. In 2018-2019 the foundation is responsible for two (2) of the material weaknesses and one (1) other matter finding as well as one (1) repeat finding mentioned previously.

TGA is on a quarterly reporting schedule with the PED School Budget Bureau. The Business Manager is responsive to requests and reports are submitted in a timely manner. However, School Budget Bureau has advised that there are ongoing concerns related to the lease agreement, which are being reviewed by PED.

TGA has experienced steady decreases in membership throughout the contract. Anticipated membership growth in the current fiscal year has not materialized as evidenced by the first reporting period. This is a concern because the school will likely see funding adjustments to accommodate for this decrease.

The school's operational expenses have exceeded its operational revenue in two of the four years, which has been absorbed by a healthy cash balance. These expenditures may be due to lack of adjustment in response to dropping enrollment. School leadership will need to make changes in spending to prioritize the amount spent on instructional costs to meet legislative requirements (as outlined in HB 002, page 180).

Pending the charter contract renewal decision and results of pending reviews, the Charter School Division will recommend that the school be required to provide updates and address the financial concerns, if so directed by the Public Education Commission.

TGA Response to Financial Summary:

Audit Findings

Only 5 out of 11 of the findings were attributed to The GREAT Academy. During FY 17 and FY 18 the school only received 1 finding per year.

Membership/Enrollment

During the term of our contract, the school has gone through a number of changes. First, a few years ago we rebranded our night program from The Second Chance Program to the Bridge 2 Success Program. We realized that some of The Second Chance students were only interested in receiving a high school diploma. When we analyzed the difference between the night students that completed the program vs the night students that didn't, we discovered that the night students who were enrolled in CNM dual credits classes were more likely to complete his or her high school diploma. Therefore, we rebranded the program to the Bridge 2 Success Program requiring more participation in our CNM dual credit program. After this change we saw a slight drop in enrollment, but we saw a substantial increase in night student graduation. Next, we experienced a slight enrollment decrease after the "Age Cap" legislation (HB5) passed. This was very difficult for some of our over-aged students that returned to school to better their lives and the lives of their families. For example, our oldest night school graduate was 48 years old. He was up for a promotion at his job but could not accept it because it required a high school diploma. He completed his high school diploma in our night school. At the graduation

ceremony he spoke about never giving up and the support he received from TGA teachers. He spoke about the many hurdles that he had to jump in life and said it took him 20 years to get his high school diploma and there was not a dry eye in the building. Lastly, like most of the schools in the state, we saw an enrollment decrease after the Covid-19 school closures. Over the last few months, because of our different program offerings, we have seen an increase in enrollment. And we anticipate that the enrollment trends will increase over the next few years.

Cash Balance

The main reason TGA keeps a healthy cash balance is that we do not want to have to cut personnel and/or programs during enrollment downturns like the one that we are currently experiencing. The school acknowledges that in FY 19 our expenditures exceeded our revenue by 5% and were easily absorbed by our cash balance.

HB2 Requirements

School leadership has already addressed the requirements outlined in HB 2 on prioritizing the amount of instructional spending. Our plan is to cut administrative cost and hire a full-time high school teacher and a full-time special education teacher by January 1st, 2021. Because of the Covid-19 school closures, we felt more comfortable bringing on new teachers after an aggressive fall marketing campaign that should help increase our enrollment.

Organizational. During the most recent year evaluated (2019-20), the school received two (2) “*Falls Far Below Standard*” ratings in the Business Management and Oversight: meeting financial reporting compliance requirements & Business Management and Oversight: following generally accepted accounting principles indicators. In fact, the school has received such rating in the Business Management and Oversight: meeting financial reporting compliance requirements indicator for three (3) of the four (4) academic years evaluated within the contract term, as a result of significant or repeated/multi-year audit finding(s). Further, TGA received seven (7) “*Working to Meet Standard*” ratings for the most recent year evaluated (2019-20); four (4) of which were repeated “*Working to Meet Standard*” ratings from the previous academic year (2018-19).

Though the school’s organizational framework evidences consistent “*Working to Meet Standard*” ratings over the course of the contract term, it should be noted that the school is responsive in addressing compliance concerns that are identified through the annual site visit process.

Pending the charter contract renewal decision, the Charter School Division will recommend that the school be required to implement a rigorous organizational improvement plan approved by the Public Education Commission, including but not limited to addressing the needs of students with disabilities.

TGA Response to Organizational Summary

Business Management and Oversight

The GREAT Academy recognizes a need for improvement in this area. Moving forward, the school will transition back to a fulltime, onsite business manager from an off-site part-time Business Manager. In addition, we will go back to contracting with an outside accounting firm to perform regular internal audits and to have a second set of objective eyes on the school’s financial operations.

PART A:	Data analysis provided by CSD Please see Part A - Summary Data Report based on accountability and reporting data from Current Charter Contract term
PART B:	Progress Report provided by the School Please see Part B for the school’s self-report on the progress of meeting the academic performance, financial compliance and governance responsibilities of the charter school, including achieving the goals, objectives, student performance outcomes, state standards of excellence and other terms of the charter contract, including the accountability requirements set forth in the Assessment and Accountability Act during the Current Charter Term.

The PED team reviewed the school’s Part B (Progress Report) and conducted a renewal site visit on October 13, 2020.
Ratings are based on the rubric provided in the application.

Section	Indicator	Final Rating
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE		
1.a	Department’s Standards of Excellence— Overall NM School Grade 2016-2017: C letter-grade 2017-2018: D letter-grade NM System of School Support and Accountability 2018-2019: <i>Traditional Support School designation (lowest 25% of all schools)</i> 2019-2020: <i>No data available for schools</i>	<i>Failing to Demonstrate Substantial Progress</i>

1.b	<p>Specific Charter Goals Schools that have met all of their school specific goals in each year of the contract term do NOT provide a narrative.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading growth and proficiency: • Math growth and proficiency: 	<p><i>Failing to Demonstrate Substantial Progress</i></p>																																																																																																															
FINANCIAL COMPLIANCE																																																																																																																	
2.a	<p>Audit Schools that have received no material weakness, significant deficiency, or repeat audit findings in each of the annual audits during the term of the contract do NOT complete this Section. <i>[Organizational Performance Framework 2a and 2b]</i> <i>[Organizational Performance Framework 2a-2e]</i></p>	<p><i>Failing to Demonstrate Substantial Progress</i></p>																																																																																																															
2.b	<p>Board of Finance Schools that have maintained all Board of Finance authority during the entire term of the contract do NOT complete this Section. If required to complete this section, provide a narrative explaining the actions taken (improved practices and outcomes).</p>	<p><i>Meets the Standard</i></p>																																																																																																															
2c	<p>Additional Financial Information</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>The GREAT Academy</p> <hr/> <p>MEMBERSHIP</p> <table border="0" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <td style="padding-right: 20px;">Enrollment CAP</td> <td style="text-align: right;">360</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2021 Budgeted MEM</td> <td style="text-align: right;">158</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Actual 400 10-01-2020</td> <td style="text-align: right;">115</td> </tr> </table> <hr/> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px;">Funded Membership</td> <td style="padding: 2px; text-align: center;">223</td> <td style="padding: 2px; text-align: center;">167</td> <td style="padding: 2px; text-align: center;">160</td> <td style="padding: 2px; text-align: center;">182</td> </tr> </table> <hr/> <p>OPERATIONAL EXPENSES vs. OPERATIONAL REVENUE</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto; border-collapse: collapse; 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CONTRACTUAL, ORGANIZATIONAL, AND GOVERNANCE		
3.a	<p>Material Terms</p> <p>All schools must provide a response for this section of the application.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school provides two (2) sessions a day between the hours of 0900 am and 900 pm. 9:00 am -5:00 pm for grades 6th - 10th and 1:00 - 9:00 pm for 11th and 12th graders. • <i>The school provided an adult reengagement program as full time students. However, due to changes in legislation regarding funding for adult learners, the school no longer provides this option.</i> • The school offers all teachers and instructional staff no less than 75 hours of professional development during the school year. • The GREAT Academy will provide a Parent Information Night event at least six (6) times each school year. • The school follows five (5) core principles for day students: virtual learning, academic improvement plans, service learning, leadership/character education and pathways to success. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Virtual learning is done through the on-line curriculum ○ Each student has an academic improvement plan/enrichment plan ○ Every student participates in at least 6 service learning activities ○ Every student that attends both 9th and 10th grade will take the leadership/character education course ○ Every 10th grader selects and follows either a college career pathway or college/career readiness pathway during their time at the school. 	<i>Meets the Standard</i>
3.b	<p>Organizational Performance Framework</p> <p>Schools that do not have any repeated “working to meet” ratings or any “falls far below” ratings on the most recent organizational performance framework evaluation do <u>NOT</u> complete this Section.</p> <p><i>[Organizational Performance Framework 1b-1g, 4a-4c, and 5a-5c]</i> <i>[Organizational Performance Framework 1b-1f, 4a-4e, and 5a-5d]</i></p>	<i>Failing to Demonstrate Substantial Progress</i>
	<p>Any OCR complaints or formal special education complaints, identify those, provide all communication related to those, and describe the current status in an Appendix, referenced in narrative by name.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A formal Special Education Complaint (C1617-01) by a parent, dated July 2016, led to a Corrective Action Plan that was closed 01 MAR 2018. • A letter from the NM Attorney General, dated July 10, 2020, contains two allegations: (1) the school ‘double-billed’ for time of one high-level staff member serving in two capacities simultaneously and (2) inappropriate use of school vehicles for personal use. The letter requested a response on or before July 23, 2020. The school provided a statement and materials, along with a letter from the school’s legal counsel, dated August 13, 2020. According to the office of the NM Attorney General, this matter is still under review, waiting upon a response from the GREAT Academy on follow-up questions. 	
3.c	<p>Governance Responsibilities</p> <p>All schools must provide a response for this section of the application.</p> <p><i>[Organizational Performance Framework 3a and 3b]</i> <i>[Organizational Performance Framework 3a-3c]</i></p>	<i>Meets the Standard</i>

Parts C, D and E were provided by the school.

PART C:	Financial Statement A financial statement that discloses the costs of administration, instruction and other spending categories for the charter school that is understandable to the general public that allows comparison of costs to other schools or comparable organizations and that is in a format required by the department.
PART D	Petitions 1. A petition in support of the charter school renewing its charter status signed by not less than sixty-five percent of the employees in the charter school, with certified affidavit. Number: <u>14 out of 14</u> Percentage: <u>100%</u> 2. A petition in support of the charter school renewing its charter status signed by at least seventy-five percent of the households whose children are enrolled in the charter school, with certified affidavit. Number: <u>113</u> Percentage: <u>86%</u>
PART E:	Description of the Charter School Facilities and Assurances A description of the charter school facilities and assurances that the facilities are in compliance with the requirements of Section 22-8B-4.2 NMSA 1978. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A copy of the facility lease agreement as Appendix D 2. A narrative description of its facilities and attach the school's Facility Master Plan, if available, as Appendix H 3. Attach a copy of the building E Occupancy certificate(s) Dated: <u>11 AUG 2011</u> Maximum Occupancy (if listed): <u>Not noted on certificate</u> 4. Most recent facility NMCI Score <u>10.53%</u> indicating that the school meets the requirements of Subsection C of 22-8B-4.2 NMSA 1978 5. If the charter school is relocating or expanding, provide assurances that the facilities comply with the requirements of Section 22-8B-4.2 NMSA 1978 ___ Public (Cert A) ___ Private (Cert B) ___ Foundation (Cert C)
PART F:	Amendment Requests No amendment requests for the current contract term.

The GREAT Academy Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder interviews were conducted on October 13, 2020 via the Zoom Meeting platform. The participants included six (6) parents, six (6) students, two (2) Governing Council members, and four (4) staff members.

The parents were drawn to TGA for different reasons: two sets of parents student was bullied at pervious schools, one set of parent's student has health issues and did not feel the school was providing adequate services for their student, and another parent had just moved in from another state and TGA was chosen by referral. The parents all had high praises for the administration and teachers alike. Comments such as "the staff and teachers go above and beyond all expectations" and "it's a given that every student gets the attention that they need" were all mutually agreed upon by the parents. The parents like the no-nonsense approach the school implements as well as the Edgenuity program, where most of the students are "ahead" on their studies. Communication by administration and teachers with parents was another area of which parents sung praises. It was agreed that the communication was high functioning and there were no complaints in that area. Overall, parents felt that they were welcome and encouraged to be involved in their students' academics, and felt very connected with the school and staff.

Students stated that the mission of the school was real-world experience through active transitions and they felt that the mission is active in their school. The students expressed that the teachers understand them, give them a different perspective, and that they receive individualized attention from their teachers. The students feel a sense of community at their school. While no concerns about the school were announced by the students, if they could change one thing, some responses were: sports or something involving exercise, more elective choices, and a couple of students did not like the long days. One student stated they would not change a thing. Bullying is not an issue at the school, and they feel like they are treated equally as students. The students stated that they are informed weekly of their academic progress, or lack thereof, and they are provided with information and assistance to help them get where they need to be.

The board president discussed how they provide fiscal oversight. The Finance Committee provides a review for the full board at their monthly meetings. The board members spoke of the board's role in ensuring they are fiscally responsible. They described their board as having complimentary skill sets that enable them to bring different perspectives to school oversight with an overall goal of working for the students of the school. The board members are aware that the school's academic outcomes have not been up to their usual standards. They believe that the school's main strength is the staff and the Matthews' leadership. The board president provides the lion's share of the Head Administrator's assessments, working to provide positive guidance. Neither member interviewed had any concerns about the school and spoke of being in favor of the overall direction. They would, however, like to expand their relationship with CNM and perhaps pursue one with UNM. In discussing what they would like to see in regards to changes, the board president spoke of looking at individual students more dynamically and proactively to ensure the success of all students.

The teachers showed enthusiasm for teaching and for the students themselves, they also expressed enjoying working in a smaller school setting. Teachers acknowledged that they work with amazing staff, have a great supportive community at the school, and are successful in how they work together in spite of the current circumstances of the pandemic. Teachers enjoy the purposefully engaging monthly professional development sessions held by the school, where everyone must intentionally be engaged. Students are highly involved in the results of their short cycle testing, wherein students are taught how to understand their scores, are involved in creating an academic improvement plan from the results of their scores, and ultimately the students then set realistic goals for themselves. While teachers state that the strengths of the school are the hard-work and dedication by the staff, they also feel that support and dedication of the administration is unlike any they have ever see before. The teachers expressed that there is always room for improvement, and though some students have issues at home, they can always find innovative ways to reach students. Genuine concern was expressed for student accountability during these times teaching remotely as opposed to teaching in-person. However, there is no lack in communication on their part with families.