



STATE OF NEW MEXICO  
PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT  
300 DON GASPAR  
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO 87501-2786  
Telephone (505) 827-5800  
[www.ped.state.nm.us](http://www.ped.state.nm.us)

KURT STEINHAUS, ED.D.  
SECRETARY OF EDUCATION, DESIGNATE

MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM  
GOVERNOR

---

### 2020 - 2021 Annual Performance Report: New Mexico Connections Academy

---

**School Name:** New Mexico Connections Academy

**School Address:** 4001 Office Court, Suite 201, Santa Fe, NM 87507

**Head Administrator:** Sandy Beery

**Business Manager:** Ashley Woodard

**Authorized Grade Levels:** 4-12

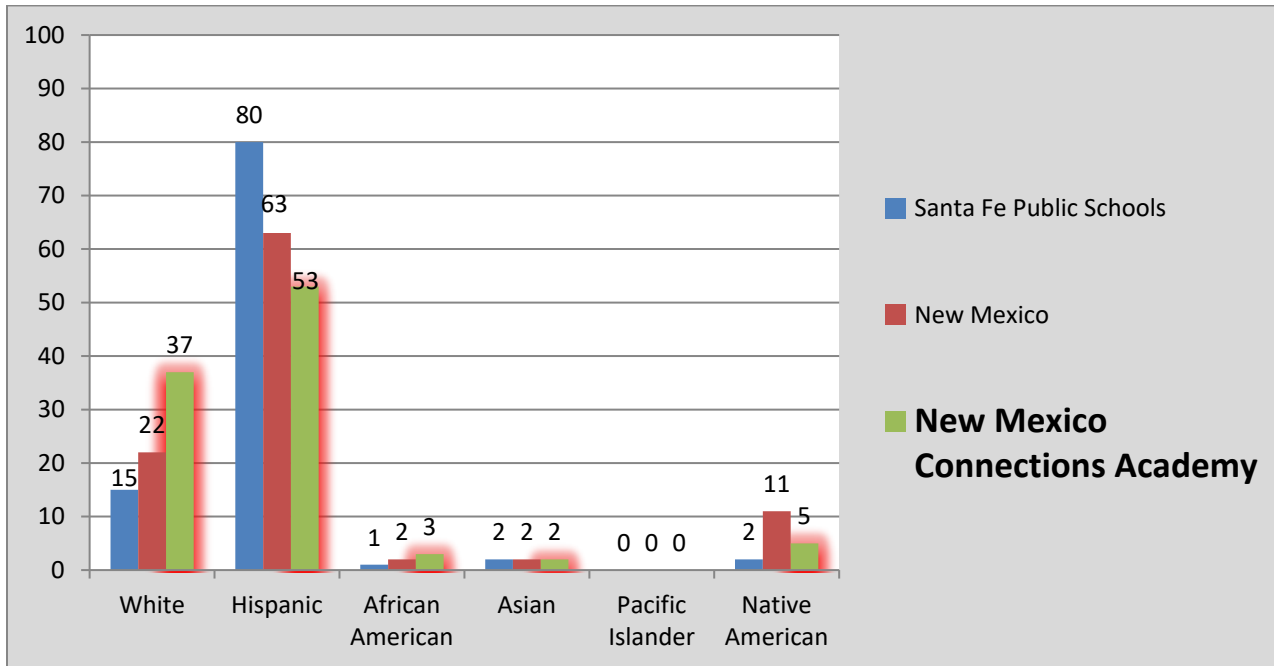
**Authorized Enrollment Cap:** 2,000

**Current Enrollment:** 1280

**Contract Term:** July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2023

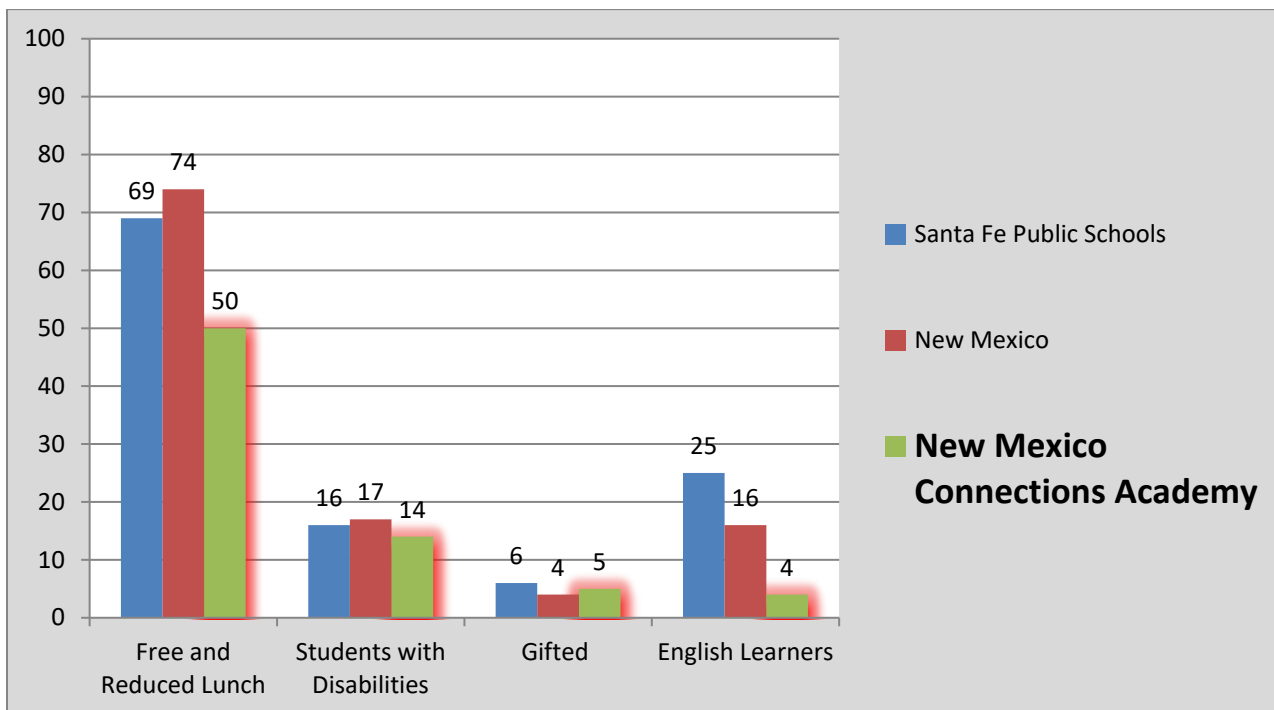
**Mission:** *The mission of New Mexico Connections Academy (NMCA) is to help each 4-12<sup>th</sup> grade student, throughout the state of New Mexico who needs an alternative to the traditional classroom for a particular time period, maximize his or her potential and meet the highest performance standards through a uniquely individualized learning program, access to high quality NM-certified teachers, and high parental involvement. The mission will also include a school-with-in-a-school model with a focus on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).*

**Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity**



Source: STARS District and Location Reports General Reports Enrollment Subgroup Percentages with Averages

**Enrollment by Other Subgroups**



Source: STARS District and Location Reports General Reports Enrollment Subgroup Percentages with Averages

## Site Visit Summary: 4/20/2021

---

### Virtual Site Visit Participants

**School:** Sandy Beery: ED; Shannon Vasquez: SPED Director; Chris Eisenberg: AP; Samuel Obenshain: IC; Shawwna Sanchez: Exec Admin Asst; Julene Ortiz: AP; Jerry Shallow: Board Member

**PED:** Corina Chavez; Dylan Wilson; Missy Brown; Missy Wauneka

### Response to COVID Pandemic

[New Mexico Connections Academy \(NMCA\)](#) serves 1,280 students in grades 4-12 all throughout the state. As a virtual school by design, NMCA day-to-day operations were not severely impacted by COVID. In Spring 2020, NMCA focused only on essential standards and adjusted credits required for graduation. In Fall 2020, NMCA saw increased enrollment of approximately 200 students, for a total of nearly 1300 students in grades 4-12. This year, the school opted out of state mandated assessments. The school's typical approach to assessment is to book in-person testing sites around the state. Due to safety concerns with traveling, in person gatherings, and booking testing sites, the school is not planning to do any in-person testing during the 2020-21 school year. This year, NMCA hired 6 dedicated ELA and Math Intervention Staff and 5 Full Time Advisors to monitor students' performance and provide additional support to students and families.

As a virtual school, NMCA already had a model for virtual learning in place before the pandemic started. The school's intervention and advisory structure for secondary students is unique and allows for regular progress monitoring via the Connexus platform and early intervention when a student is showing a need for increased support. The school's focus on social emotional learning at all grade levels, via the Fisher and Frey *All Learning is Social Emotional Learning*, and the emphasis that all students have caring relationships with adults at the school and feel a sense of belonging, is also an area of success and innovation, which has led to decreased student withdrawals and increased course completion. NMCA's emphasis on continuous improvement is also a success that should be continued.

Challenges during the 2020-21 school year include state mandated assessments, building community among students and family, and closing the performance gap between ELL students and non-ELL students. Although NMCA utilizes several virtual classroom-based assessments, they will not be able to administer any state mandated assessments this year due to pandemic safety concerns. Another challenge is creating a sense of community among parents. NMCA has opportunities for parents to come together for SEL open houses and to participate on the equity council, but it is challenging for parents to build community when their child attends a virtual school. It has also been challenging to maintain an engaged equity council this year, after experiencing turn over from a few engaged parents. The goal for the equity council, moving forward, is to identify supports to increase ELL students' performance. However, NMCA will first need to recruit parents of ELL students onto their equity council.

It has also been a challenge to accept late enrollments to the school (April and beyond) due to the amount of time it can take for families to receive technology devices. Charter School Division staff addressed this issue and stated that, unless the school is at the cap set by the PEC, they must allow students to continue enrolling at any time.

### Teaching, Learning, and Assessment

NMCA primarily utilizes [Pearson Connexus](#) for curriculum, instruction, assessment, and data tracking. During the pandemic, NMCA also integrated new tech tools, such as [Nearpod](#). Teachers utilize synchronous and asynchronous learning tasks and track student performance using the Connexus platform. Teachers also give Curriculum Based Assessments and [STAR Assessments](#). All student/teacher communication, student assignments, and student activity is logged by the Connexus system. Teachers meet at least every other week, primarily in content teams. They set annual goals in school-identified focus areas, engage in continuous improvement, and support one another to learn how to utilize the Connexus platform effectively. Teachers are also supported by the school's instructional coach, who helps clarify expectations and identify supports.

### **Student and Family Support and Engagement**

The NMCA Advisors and teachers work together to prioritize 1-on-1 synchronous outreach to students and families. Elementary students have homeroom teachers and secondary students have Advisors. Advisors work full time to monitor student performance, do outreach and identify supports to ensure student success. When new students enroll, the Advisor welcomes them and makes sure they can get online. Parents (Learning Coaches) log students' attendance daily and have access to student performance data via the Connexus platform. Teachers and Advisors are also very responsive to student and family concerns and questions. NMCA tries to ensure that an adult is always available when a student or family reaches out with questions or concerns.

Over the past 2 years, NMCA has made a concerted effort to embed social emotional learning (SEL) in all its courses. The school draws from [Fisher and Frey's All Learning is Social Emotional](#) learning, which is widely applicable to all grade levels and content areas. Increased 1 on 1, synchronous SEL interactions with students have helped students feel a sense of belonging to the school. Over the course of 2 years, student withdrawals have decreased from 35% to 16% and course completion has increased. SEL Open Houses have been an additional engagement opportunity for sharing SEL resources with families.

## Performance Framework Indicators (school-specific questions)

---

### 1c. Is the school protecting the rights of students with special needs?

CSD: What is the status of the student with an overdue evaluation?

*Parent did not return permission to evaluate in time to meet the IEP deadline. The student is currently scheduled for an evaluation.*

CSD: How does the school meet service requirements for its D-level students with IEPs?

*Two teachers have alternative curriculum and work exclusively with D-level students. D-level students also tend to have multiple ancillary services.*

### 2a-f Financial Indicators

2020-001 Financial Close and Reporting (Other Matters)

*School responded that the business manager will review all payments made in the subsequent fiscal year to ensure all accounts payable accruals are properly identified.*

2020-002 Governing Council Approval of Budget Adjustment Requests (Other Noncompliance)

*A BAR was submitted to OMBS but was not approved by the governing council. The school did this in order to meet a PED deadline. In the future BARs will first be approved by the Governing Council and then submitted to PED.*

2020-003 Internal Control Over Payroll (Other Matters)

This is a repeat finding, due to lack of management oversight.

*The school responded that the school and business office will communicate all changes to employee contracts to ensure the contracts align with the amounts processed for payroll. A comprehensive review of contracts and system entry will be performed by NMCA's executive assistant and the business manager to ensure employees are compensated in accordance with their contracts.*

### 2e. Is the school adequately staffed to ensure proper fiscal management?

CSD: NMCA's CPO, Shawna Sanchez, needs to register as soon as possible with the State Purchasing Division and needs to renew certification.

*NMCA indicated that Shawna has tried to sign up for training with the state and has not been able to do so. The charter school division said they would have Sandy follow up with Shawna to get signed up for training.*

### 3a. Is the school complying with governance requirements?

CSD: Is the Board on track to complete all training hour requirements for the year?

*Board members are aware of training requirements and will complete them before the end of May.*

CSD: Kudos for posting agendas, which are required, and minutes, which are recommend. The Board's OMA is available on its website; however, is outdated from 2019. Encourage the Board to revise at next regular meeting and update the website file accordingly.

*A recent updated to the school's website may have caused this file to revert to an old version. NMCA will fix this.*

CSD: Is the latest version of the Bylaws dated 2013? If not, request a copy for CSD files

*The 2013 Bylaws are the most recent version.*

### **3c. Is the School meeting reporting requirements?**

The Charter School Division has not seen any of the required weekly reports for PPE from NMCA. NMCA indicated that they have been doing weekly reporting. NMCA should follow up with Stacy Diller to find out what the discrepancy is between the school's reporting and CSD not seeing any reports on file.

### **4b. Does the school meet attendance, retention, and recurrent enrollment goals for students?**

NMSA mentioned a cutoff on enrollment near the end of the school year, set by the Governing Board; As a public school, NMSA must enroll students any time, unless the enrollment cap is reached, in which case the student should be added to the waitlist. (NMSA 22-1-4 Open Enrollment) This is not allowable.

### **4e. Is the school completing required background checks and reporting ethical violations?**

CSD: Has the school obtained an ORI number for running background checks? If yes, what is the number?

*NMCA has not been able to obtain an ORI number. They have been trying for the past year, with no success.*

CSD: Has a staff member been trained to retrieve those reports? Has a policy been developed for clearing background checks?

*Not yet. The school is still working to obtain the ORI.*

CSD: Is Laura Knickerbocker still employed at NMCA? If so, has the school obtain a cleared background check for her?

*Yes, she is still employed by the school but does not yet have a cleared background check.*

### **Mission-Specific Goals:**

Goal: 80% or more of students in grades 4 through 8, enrolled on both the 40th and 120th day, will complete the grade level AND 70% of students in grades 9 through 12, enrolled on both the 40th and 120th day, will earn a minimum of 6 credits (or, if taking fewer than 6 credits, students will complete all credits in which they are enrolled).

School Response:

Grades 4-8: enrolled on day 40 (10/14/20) and day 120 (2/10/21): 450

Number of above that were promoted: 420

Goal Percentage: 93.3%. EXCEEDS

Grades 9-12: enrolled on day 40 (10/14/20) and day 120 (2/10/21): 734

Number of above that earned at least 6 credits, or all credits attempted: 589

Goal Percentage: 80.2%. EXCEEDS

### **Assurances:**

The school provided the signed assurances document (Appendix B).

### **Overall Financial/Organizational Framework Rating: Meets Standard**

*If a school receives a "Does Not Meet Standard" rating for three or more indicators, the school will receive an overall organizational framework rating of "Does Not Meet Standard" for the year. In addition, if a school receives a "Does Not Meet Standard" rating, on any indicator, the CSD and PEC may conduct a closer review the following year on that indicator, and/or the PEC may require the school to submit a corrective action plan in order to specify actions and a timeline to correct the performance deficiency. See ratings for individual indicators in Appendix A.*

**PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK AND PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION (PEC) TIER LEVEL**

The 2020-21 Performance Monitoring Plan was modified in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Many of the indicators were unmeasurable and the Performance Framework ratings in Appendix A is reflective of this. Rather than identifying evidence of compliance, schools are required to sign an assurance of compliance.

PEC Tier Levels are based on three indicators: (1) NM School System of Support and Accountability, (2) Student Subgroup Performance, and (3) Mission Specific Goals. Again, due to the pandemic and the resulting flexible administration of state assessments, in 2020-21 there is limited academic data, that could be used as an accountability measure. **Therefore, PEC Tier Levels cannot be assigned for the 2020-2021 academic year.**

**Academic Performance:** The school may provide evidence of meeting mission-specific goals to receive a rating on indicator 3 of the Academic Performance, however, if the school was unable to implement the goals due to the pandemic, the school will not be rated in this section.

**Organizational Performance** The assurances document covers the majority of the indicators of organizational performance. Where possible, results of desktop monitoring and bureau/division reports will be considered.

**Financial Performance Framework:** For indicator 2.c, evidence of implementing an Action Plan to prevent further findings will not be collected this year, therefore the school’s rating is solely based on repeat findings.

| <b>New Mexico Connections Academy</b>  | <b>2020-2021</b>            |
|--|-----------------------------|
| <b>Category I. Academic Performance Framework</b>  |                             |
| <b>Indicator 1</b> Components of School Accountability System  | Unable to Review - COVID    |
| <b>Indicator 2</b> Subgroup Performance  | Unable to Review - COVID    |
| <b>Indicator 3</b> Mission Specific Goals  | Meets (or Exceeds) Standard |
| <b>Financial Performance Framework</b>   |                             |
| Self-Assessment Survey completed and signed by Head Admin, SBO, and Finance Chair                              | Not Applicable              |
| <b>Category II. Organizational Performance Framework</b>   |                             |
| <b>Indicator 1a</b> Educational Program: mission and educational program of approved charter application       | Meets (or Exceeds) Standard |
| <b>Indicator 1b</b> Educational Program: state assessment requirements   | Unable to Review - COVID    |
| <b>Indicator 1c</b> Educational Program: protecting the rights of students with disabilities                   | Working to Meet Standard    |
| <b>Indicator 1d</b> Educational Program: protecting the rights of English Language Learners                    | Working to Meet Standard    |
| <b>Indicator 1e</b> Educational Program: meeting program requirements for all PED and federal grant programs   | ASSURANCES                  |
| <b>Indicator 1f</b> Educational Program: NM DASH Plan  | Not Applicable              |
| <b>Indicator 2a</b> Financial Mgmt & Oversight: meeting financial reporting and compliance requirements        | Working to Meet Standard    |
| <b>Indicator 2b</b> Financial Mgmt & Oversight: following generally accepted accounting principles             | Meets (or Exceeds) Standard |
| <b>Indicator 2c</b> Financial Mgmt & Oversight: responsive to audit findings                                   | Meets (or Exceeds) Standard |
| <b>Indicator 2d</b> Financial Mgmt & Oversight: managing grant funds responsibility                            | Meets (or Exceeds) Standard |
| <b>Indicator 2e</b> Financial Mgmt & Oversight: staffing to ensure proper fiscal management                    | Meets (or Exceeds) Standard |
| <b>Indicator 2f</b> Financial Mgmt & Oversight: meeting obligations timely / appropriate internal controls     | Meets (or Exceeds) Standard |
| <b>Indicator 3a</b> Governance & Reporting: complying with governance requirements                             | Working to Meet Standard    |
| <b>Indicator 3b</b> Governance & Reporting: complying with nepotism and conflict of interest requirements      | ASSURANCES                  |
| <b>Indicator 3c</b> Governance & Reporting: meeting obligations timely / appropriate internal controls         | ASSURANCES                  |
| <b>Indicator 4a</b> Students & Employees: protecting the rights of all students                                | ASSURANCES                  |
| <b>Indicator 4b</b> Students & Employees: attendance, retention, and recurrent enrollment                      | Working to Meet Standard    |
| <b>Indicator 4c</b> Students & Employees: meeting teacher and other staff credentialing requirements           | Meets (or Exceeds) Standard |
| <b>Indicator 4d</b> Students & Employees: respecting employee rights   | ASSURANCES                  |
| <b>Indicator 4e</b> Students & Employees: completing required background checks / reporting ethical violations | ASSURANCES                  |
| <b>Indicator 5a</b> School Environment: complying with facilities requirements                                 | ASSURANCES                  |
| <b>Indicator 5b</b> School Environment: complying with transportation requirements                             | ASSURANCES                  |
| <b>Indicator 5c</b> School Environment: complying with health and safety requirements                          | ..                          |
| <b>Indicator 5d</b> School Environment: handling information appropriately                                     | ASSURANCES                  |

**Appendix A: Historical Performance Framework Ratings during Current Charter Contract Term**

| <b>New Mexico Connections Academy</b>  | 2018-2019                        | 2019-2020                   |
|--|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Category I. Academic Performance Framework</b>  |                                  |                             |
| <b>Indicator 1</b> Components of School Accountability System  | <b>35.22 Points (Lowest 25%)</b> |                             |
| <b>Indicator 2</b> Subgroup Performance  | Pending                          |                             |
| <b>Indicator 3</b> Mission Specific Goals  | Not Applicable                   |                             |
| <b>Financial Performance Framework</b>   |                                  |                             |
| Self-Assessment Survey completed and signed by Head Admin, SBO, and Finance Chair                              | Meets (or Exceeds) Standard      | Meets (or Exceeds) Standard |
| <b>Category II. Organizational Performance Framework</b>   |                                  |                             |
| <b>Indicator 1a</b> Educational Program: mission and educational program of approved charter application       | Meets (or Exceeds) Standard      | Meets (or Exceeds) Standard |
| <b>Indicator 1b</b> Educational Program: state assessment requirements   | Meets (or Exceeds) Standard      | Working to Meet Standard    |
| <b>Indicator 1c</b> Educational Program: protecting the rights of students with disabilities                   | Working to Meet Standard         | Working to Meet Standard    |
| <b>Indicator 1d</b> Educational Program: protecting the rights of English Language Learners                    | Working to Meet Standard         | Working to Meet Standard    |
| <b>Indicator 1e</b> Educational Program: meeting program requirements for all PED and federal grant programs   | Meets (or Exceeds) Standard      | Meets (or Exceeds) Standard |
| <b>Indicator 1f</b> Educational Program: NM DASH Plan  | Working to Meet Standard         | Not Applicable              |
| <b>Indicator 2a</b> Financial Mgmt & Oversight: meeting financial reporting and compliance requirements        | Meets (or Exceeds) Standard      | Working to Meet Standard    |
| <b>Indicator 2b</b> Financial Mgmt & Oversight: following generally accepted accounting principles             | Meets (or Exceeds) Standard      | Does Not Meet Standard      |
| <b>Indicator 2c</b> Financial Mgmt & Oversight: responsive to audit findings                                   | Meets (or Exceeds) Standard      | Working to Meet Standard    |
| <b>Indicator 2d</b> Financial Mgmt & Oversight: managing grant funds responsibility                            | Meets (or Exceeds) Standard      | Meets (or Exceeds) Standard |
| <b>Indicator 2e</b> Financial Mgmt & Oversight: staffing to ensure proper fiscal management                    | Working to Meet Standard         | Working to Meet Standard    |
| <b>Indicator 2f</b> Financial Mgmt & Oversight: meeting obligations timely / appropriate internal controls     | Not Applicable                   | Not Applicable              |
| <b>Indicator 3a</b> Governance & Reporting: complying with governance requirements                             | Working to Meet Standard         | Meets (or Exceeds) Standard |
| <b>Indicator 3b</b> Governance & Reporting: complying with nepotism and conflict of interest requirements      | Meets (or Exceeds) Standard      | Meets (or Exceeds) Standard |
| <b>Indicator 3c</b> Governance & Reporting: meeting obligations timely / appropriate internal controls         | Meets (or Exceeds) Standard      | Meets (or Exceeds) Standard |
| <b>Indicator 4a</b> Students & Employees: protecting the rights of all students                                | Does Not Meet Standard           | Working to Meet Standard    |
| <b>Indicator 4b</b> Students & Employees: attendance, retention, and recurrent enrollment                      | Does Not Meet Standard           | Working to Meet Standard    |
| <b>Indicator 4c</b> Students & Employees: meeting teacher and other staff credentialing requirements           | Meets (or Exceeds) Standard      | Meets (or Exceeds) Standard |
| <b>Indicator 4d</b> Students & Employees: respecting employee rights   | Does Not Meet Standard           | Working to Meet Standard    |
| <b>Indicator 4e</b> Students & Employees: completing required background checks / reporting ethical violations | Does Not Meet Standard           | Working to Meet Standard    |
| <b>Indicator 5a</b> School Environment: complying with facilities requirements                                 | Does Not Meet Standard           | Meets (or Exceeds) Standard |
| <b>Indicator 5b</b> School Environment: complying with transportation requirements                             | Not Applicable                   | Not Applicable              |
| <b>Indicator 5c</b> School Environment: complying with health and safety requirements                          | Working to Meet Standard         | Working to Meet Standard    |
| <b>Indicator 5d</b> School Environment: handling information appropriately                                     | Meets (or Exceeds) Standard      | Meets (or Exceeds) Standard |





**Charter Schools Division**  
**Performance Indicator Assurances**  
**2020-21**

|                            |                                |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Charter School Name</b> | New Mexico Connections Academy |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|

In an effort to support the 2021 modified site visits and ensure compliance with contracts and applicable federal and state law, state-authorized charter schools shall provide assurances of compliance with the performance framework indicators listed below. Please check the box next to the indicator, then date and sign the form. Signatures of school leaders and governing board presidents are required.

**The school protects the rights of students with special needs, by:**

- ✓ Providing services per individual IEP,
- ✓ Maintaining both direct service and ancillary support logs,
- ✓ Including a Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) sheet documenting date, person, and purpose for reviewing student's IEP in all IEP folders.

**The school protects the rights of English Learner (EL) students:**

- ✓ School complies with requirements for English Learners in accordance with federal and state guidance, for identifying, screening, serving, assessing students and providing annual notification to parents.

**The school complies with federal and state grant program requirements.**

**The school meets Governance and reporting requirements:**

- ✓ Governing Board completes and documents (with signatures) an annual evaluation of Head Administrator.
- ✓ School has a governing board-approved Conflict of Interest Policy that complies with NMSA § 22-8B-5.2.
- ✓ School has a governing board-approved Anti-Nepotism Policy that complies with NMSA § 22-8B-10(B).

**The school protects the rights of all students:**

- ✓ School meets all Culturally & Linguistically Responsive Framework requirements.
- ✓ School maintains lottery and enrollment practices as described in NMSA § 22-8B-4.1.
- ✓ School has a Discipline Policy to include the prevention of bullying and cyber-bullying per NMSA § 22-35-1.
- ✓ School follows a board-approved student/parent grievance policy and dispute resolution process per NMSA § 22-8B-9(12)
- ✓ School complies with the McKinney Vento Act, with a board-approved dispute resolution policy that meets ESSA guideline.
- ✓ School is implementing the Multi-Level Systems of Support (MLSS) NMAC 6.30. 17
- ✓ School updates Next Step Plans annually for all high school students.

**The school's attendance policy aligns with the Attendance for Success Act NMSA § 22-12A-1.**

**The school protects employee rights:**

- ✓ Staff files contain signed contracts, official transcripts, and verification of employment forms.
- ✓ School has an employee handbook that includes discipline and grievance policies.
- ✓ School has a salary schedule that complies with minimum teacher salaries.
- ✓ School has a documented mentorship program for first year Level One teachers.
- ✓ School obtains legally compliant background checks per NMSA § 22-10A-5.

**The school complies with facility requirements in NMSA § 22-8B-4.2.**

**The school complies with transportation requirements, including all inspections and insurance, if applicable.**

**The school complies with health and safety requirements:**

- ✓ The school conducts all required emergency drills per [PED memorandum of 3/25/21](#).
- ✓ The school maintains immunization records, including a master immunization log.
- ✓ All staff complete training on reporting child abuse and neglect.
- ✓ The school has a Diabetes Management plan.

**The school handles information appropriately:**

- ✓ School completes all STARS reporting requirements on time.
- ✓ School follows proper security procedures, including keeping student files locked.
- ✓ School follows all FERPA and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) guidelines.
- ✓ School maintains a procedure for the transfer of cumulative files.



By checking the box for each indicator above (on both pages) and signing this document, I affirm that the school complies with the performance framework items listed.

|                            |                                   |      |                |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|------|----------------|
| School Leader Printed Name | Sandra E Beery                    |      |                |
| DocuSigned by:             |                                   |      |                |
| Signature                  | <i>sandy beery</i>                | Date | August 4, 2021 |
|                            | <small>8FABDB8E0BF5401...</small> |      |                |

|                          |                                   |      |                |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|------|----------------|
| Board Chair Printed Name | Mark Boitano                      |      |                |
| DocuSigned by:           |                                   |      |                |
| Signature                | MARK BOITANO                      | Date | August 4, 2021 |
|                          | <small>EC12321B57DF456...</small> |      |                |

X