



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

KURT A. STEINHAUS (DESIGNATE)
SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM
GOVERNOR

**Charter Schools Division
Preliminary Analysis of Renewal Application and Site Visit
November 2021**

School Name: La Tierra Montessori School of the Arts and Sciences

School Address: 659, Road Runner Road, Española, NM 87532

Head Administrator: Angela Feathers

Governing Board Chair: Ms. Willie Williams

Business Manager: Mike Vigil II

Authorized Grade Levels: K-8

Authorized Enrollment: 160

Contract Term: 2017-2022

Mission: La Tierra Montessori School of the Arts and Sciences will provide students and their families in the Espanola region the opportunity to improve educational outcomes utilizing an integrated approach that includes Montessori, the Arts and the Sciences.

Statutory Renewal Requirements

According to New Mexico Statutes Annotated (NMSA) 1979, Section 22-8B-12 K., a charter may be suspended, revoked, or not renewed by the chartering authority if the chartering authority determines that the charter school did any of the following:

- (1) committed a material violation of any of the conditions, standards or procedures set forth in the charter contract;
- (2) failed to meet or make substantial progress toward achievement of the department's standards of excellence or student performance standards identified in the charter contract;
- (3) failed to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management;
- (4) for a charter school located on tribal land, failed to comply with ongoing consultations pursuant to the Indian Education Act; or

(5) violated any provision of law from which the charter school was not specifically exempted.

Renewal Application

Parts A and F of the Renewal Application are provided by the Charter Schools Division (CSD). All other parts of the application are provided by the school.

PART A	Data analysis based on accountability and reporting data from current charter contract term
PART B	Progress report on meeting the academic performance, financial compliance and governance responsibilities of the charter school, including achieving the goals, objectives, student performance outcomes, and accountability requirements set forth in the Assessment and Accountability Act and the charter contract.
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.
PART D	Petitions in support of the charter renewing its charter status <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Petition signed by at least 65% of the school’s employees, with certified affidavit. Number: 6 of 9 = 67% • Petition signed by at least 75% of the households whose children are enrolled, with certified affidavit. 37 out of 39 = 95% <i>Note: There is an error in the staff petition document; school will provided corrected document.</i>
PART E	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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The facility lease agreement as Appendix D • Narrative description of its facilities, attaching the Facility Master Plan, if available, as Appendix H • The building E Occupancy certificate(s) dated 2/9/2015. Maximum Occupancy: 180 • Most recent facility NMCI Score: 15.31% indicating that the school meets the requirements of Subsection C of 22-8B-4.2 NMSA 1978 • If the school is relocating or expanding, 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

The CSD team reviewed the school’s Progress Report and conducted a renewal site visit on October 29, 2021. Ratings are based on the rubric provided on page 14 of the [State Charter Renewal Application](#).

Progress Report (Part B) and Site Visit Evaluation		
Section	Indicator	Rating
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE		
1.a	Department’s Standards of Excellence NM System of School Support and Accountability 2020-2021: <i>No data available for schools</i> 2019-2020: <i>No data available for schools</i> 2018-2019: <i>Overall score 57, Spotlight, 3 DOEs</i> Overall NM School Grade 2017-2018: <i>C</i>	<i>Meets the Standard</i>
1.b	Mission-Specific Goals <i>The school did not include a mission-specific goal in its charter contract.</i>	<i>Not Applicable</i>
FINANCIAL COMPLIANCE		
2.a	Audit <i>Organizational Performance Framework 2a-2e</i>	<i>Demonstrates Substantial Progress</i>
2.b	Board of Finance <i>The school has maintained a board of finance throughout the charter term.</i>	<i>Meets the Standard</i>
CONTRACTUAL, ORGANIZATIONAL, AND GOVERNANCE		
3.a	Comprehensive Educational Program <i>See the narrative below for detail.</i>	<i>Meets the Standard</i>
3.b	Organizational Performance Framework <i>Organizational Performance Framework 1b-1f, 4a-4e, and 5a-5d</i>	<i>Demonstrates Substantial Progress</i>
3.c	Governance Responsibilities <i>Organizational Performance Framework 3a-3c</i>	<i>Meets the Standard</i>

Academic Performance

NMPED Accountability Data 2018-2019

	Overall	Reading Proficiency	Math Proficiency	Science Proficiency	English Learner Progress
La Tierra Montessori	57	43	23	43	52
Española Public Schools	47	25	10	21	18
Statewide	-	34	21	40	29

* Green shading indicates Spotlight School (overall) or Spotlight Designations of Excellence (other areas).

La Tierra Montessori School of the Arts and Sciences (LTMS) earned three Designations of Excellence, for growth in reading, growth in mathematics, and English learner proficiency. LTMS ranked in the 66th percentile for reading growth, as compared to the district's 49th percentile. For growth in math LTMS ranked in the 78th percentile compared to the district's 43rd percentile.

The reading proficiency for LTMS's economically disadvantaged students is 27% compared to the district's 25%. English learners' reading proficiency was 26% compared to the district's 9% and EL math proficiency was 14% compared to the district's 5%.

Public Education Commission Performance Framework

La Tierra Montessori	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Category I. Academic Performance Framework				
Indicator 1 Components of School Accountability System	Falls Far Below or Does Not Meet Standard	56.71 Points (Spotlight)		Unable to Review - COVID
Indicator 2 Subgroup Performance	Not Applicable	Pending		Unable to Review - COVID
Indicator 3 Mission Specific Goals	Not Applicable	Not Applicable		Not Applicable
Financial Performance Framework				
Self-Assessment Survey completed and signed by Head Admin, SBO, and Finance Chair	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Not Applicable
Category II. Organizational Performance Framework				
Indicator 1a Educational Program: mission and educational program of approved charter application	Working to Meet Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
Indicator 1b Educational Program: state assessment requirements	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Unable to Review - COVID
Indicator 4a Students & Employees: protecting the rights of all students	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Does Not Meet Standard	ASSURANCES
Indicator 1c Educational Program: protecting the rights of students with disabilities	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Working to Meet Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
Indicator 1d Educational Program: protecting the rights of English Language Learners	Working to Meet Standard	Working to Meet Standard	Does Not Meet Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
Indicator 4b Students & Employees: attendance, retention, and recurrent enrollment	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Working to Meet Standard	Not Applicable	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
Included in Indicator 4b	Working to Meet Standard			
Indicator 2a Financial Mgmt & Oversight: meeting financial reporting and compliance requirements	Working to Meet Standard	Working to Meet Standard	Working to Meet Standard	Working to Meet Standard
Indicator 2b Financial Mgmt & Oversight: following generally accepted accounting principles	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Falls Far Below or Does Not Meet Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Does Not Meet Standard
Indicator 3a Governance & Reporting: complying with governance requirements	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
Included in Indicator 3c	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard			
Indicator 4c Students & Employees: meeting teacher and other staff credentialing requirements	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Falls Far Below or Does Not Meet Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
Indicator 4d Students & Employees: respecting employee rights	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Working to Meet Standard	ASSURANCES
Indicator 4e Students & Employees: completing required background checks / reporting ethical violations	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Working to Meet Standard	ASSURANCES
Indicator 5a School Environment: complying with facilities requirements	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	ASSURANCES
Indicator 5c School Environment: complying with health and safety requirements	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Working to Meet Standard	ASSURANCES
Indicator 5d School Environment: handling information appropriately	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	ASSURANCES
OTHER				
School specific conditions in the Charter Contract, if any	Not Applicable			
Indicator 1e Educational Program: meeting program requirements for all PED and federal grant programs		Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	ASSURANCES
Indicator 1f Educational Program: NM DASH Plan		Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Unable to Review - COVID
Indicator 2c Financial Mgmt & Oversight: responsive to audit findings		Working to Meet Standard	Working to Meet Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
Indicator 2d Financial Mgmt & Oversight: managing grant funds responsibility		Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
Indicator 2e Financial Mgmt & Oversight: staffing to ensure proper fiscal management		Working to Meet Standard	Working to Meet Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
Indicator 2f Financial Mgmt & Oversight: meeting obligations timely / appropriate internal controls				
Indicator 3b Governance & Reporting: complying with nepotism and conflict of interest requirements		Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	ASSURANCES
Indicator 3c Governance & Reporting: meeting obligations timely / appropriate internal controls		Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	ASSURANCES
Indicator 5b School Environment: complying with transportation requirements		Not Applicable	Not Applicable	ASSURANCES

Organizational Performance

Over time, LTMS has been able to maintain a low number of *Does Not Meet* indicator ratings, never more than two in any year of the current contract. In the most recent year, LTMS received one rating of *Does Not Meet* for indicator 2.b. (following accepted accounting practices). The school has contracted with the

Vigil Group this final year of their contract. The school leadership has been assured by the Vigil Group that they will be able to meet financial reporting and compliance requirements moving forward.

Financial Performance

LTMS is on a quarterly reporting status, which indicates the school’s business manager is responsive to School Budget Bureau requests and reports are submitted in a timely manner. Although the school has experienced school business management change during the contract term, at no time during the contract did the school move from quarterly reporting status.

Student membership at LTMS has experienced an average annual decrease of 15% during the contract term.

The school received nine (9) audit findings during the contract term, with more than half occurring in FY 2020. This prompted the change in school business managers.

Audit Year	Findings	Repeat Findings	Material Weaknesses	Significant Deficiencies
FY 2020	5	0	0	1
FY 2019	1	0	0	0
FY 2018	2	0	0	1
FY 2017	1	0	0	0

Spending in schools with fewer than 100 students tends to be much lower than the desired goal of 68%, but even though the school has experienced a decline in enrollment, LTMS classroom spending percentages are still strong. The 2021 increase in central administration costs is attributed to additional technical support and other contract services which will continue into 2022 as indicated by the operational budget.

General Fund (11000) data as reported in OBMS - Fourth Quarter			Contract Years				
			Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Budgeted
			General Fund - 11000- Amounts (in whole dollars)				
Enrollment			2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	Year 5
120D Student membership			99	73	61	54	54.5
40D program units from final funded run			268,152	250,251	155,721	142,774	117,819
Function	Function Name	Description of Expenditures					
1000	Direct Instruction	Classroom teachers, educational assistants, instructional coaches, textbooks, classroom technology	561,743	435,260	372,802	237,267	390,804
2100	Student Support	Attendance, social worker, guidance, health, psychological, speech & occupational therapy services	115,027	73,194	63,785	55,471	108,667
2200	Instructional Support	Library, instruction related technology	1,297	3,667	2,789	3,870	2,765
2300	Central Administration	Governance council, Office of Superintendent, community relations	125,869	156,836	131,866	184,395	145,308
2400	School Administration	Office of the Principal	53,933	65,294	48,344	20,612	4,000
2500	Central Services	Business management, administrative support, admin technology	95,145	94,713	79,058	107,489	126,766
2600	Maintenance & Operations	Building operations, maintenance, equipment upkeep, security & safety	81,457	78,564	89,458	108,232	81,202
2700-5900	All Other Function Codes	Transportation, food service & capital outlay	96	4,338	13,299	8,175	
Total			1,034,568	911,866	801,399	725,512	859,512
Total State Equalization Guarantee (SEG) Funding			1,081,803	1,027,789	817,699	663,630	673,822
Other Operational Revenue			5,078	4,812	3,970	8,692	
Carryover(Shortfall)			52,313	120,735	20,270	(53,189)	
How Funds Were Spent in Percentages of Total							
Classroom		66%	56%	55%	41%	58%	
Administration		27%	35%	32%	43%	32%	
Other		8%	9%	13%	16%	9%	

The PED Operating Budget Management System (OBMS) showed 85%, approximately \$174,000, of the LTMS grant fund requests for reimbursements (RfRs) were submitted during June and July 2021.

Governance

Despite a great deal of change in board membership during the current contract term, the governing board has been able to maintain a minimum of five (5) members throughout. The board members are receiving Montessori lessons from the head administrator. This enables the board to more fully understand the Montessori Method, the school’s mission and how it is being implemented. The board of LTMS has always worked closely with CSD and been open to guidance. Under board President Hill-Clapp, in FY18, board meeting meetings were improved dramatically after attending CSD trainings. Under President Amy Larsen’s tenure the board has grown eight (8) members who consistently see the required hours as merely a suggested low bar. Finally, current board President Ms. Willie Williams has shown such leadership in the Española Valley community around Equity that CSD asked her to present at the June 2021 Charter Leadership Conference.

The CSD has used the school’s website as an exemplar in trainings for posting the Sunshine Portal in an easy to find place, however, a recent website update has removed the link and the school is working to correct that. The school does need to update their annual Open Meetings Act statement.

Governing Board Training Hours				
Board Member	FY18*	FY19*	FY20	FY21
Steven Lujan	7			
Ron Martinez	8	7	8	
Julie Ann Hill-Clapp	6	8	8	
Amanda Goertz	8			
Amy Larsen	13	8	20	19.5
Tobie Baker Wright		11		
William Clapp		10		
Lynette McLean			16	14.5
Reed Larsen			13	18.5
Willie Williams			13	11.5
Chris Baca				14.5
Isaac Casados				10
Tara Voit				10.5
Alberto Mares				10.5
Nicholas Solarius			13	

Black shading indicates that the member did not serve a full year in that fiscal year; yellow indicates that the member did not complete all required training hours during that fiscal year. Training requirements are 8 hours per year for returning board members, and 10 hours for new members. Exemptions are noted in years marked by an asterisk.

* 2 hour exemption in FY18 and 19

Comprehensive Educational Program

The current head administrator is the first fully Montessori certified person to serve in this role at LTMS, and described how Montessori materials were not being used in classrooms when she came to the school. In classroom observations, the team saw that the school now implements the full range of Montessori materials, something that was less evident on previous visits. The renewal site took place the Friday before Halloween. The staff was all dressed as characters from the Wizard of Oz. Even with the students

in costumes and excited about the holiday, the renewal team (led by a Montessori teacher and principal) was still able to observe Montessori practices being implemented with fidelity in classrooms.

One of the upper elementary teachers has introduced Arabic to his class. All of the students have enjoyed the exposure to this different culture, but one student has taken it upon herself to create her own book of Arabic words. She seems to keep her book, a hand decorated construction paper covered reference book, with her at all times. Teachers never know what will spark interest in a student, but Montessori teachers are encouraged and allowed to let a child dive in as deep as their interest takes them. Teach students self-efficacy and give them as much agency as they can is how one teacher described their experience as a teacher at LTMS.

The school uses the Association Montessori International (AMI) website to ensure alignment with NM Common Core State Standards. They also use Transparent Classroom for record keeping which also aligns with NM standards. Orton Gillingham materials are used for students with special needs. The Orton Gillingham approach is a direct, explicit, multisensory, structured, sequential, diagnostic, and prescriptive way to teach literacy.

Observations were made in all of the multi-age classrooms from the kindergarten to adolescents. Children were working independently, in small self-directed groups, and in small groups with teachers and educational assistants. Students were allowed to move about the room as they needed to. In one of the upper elementary (grades 4-6) classes, as the teacher brought the students from self-directed work to a group activity, one of the students was allowed to move quietly until he was able to settle himself. This did not distract the other students, nor the teacher and allowed the student the autonomy to manage his own needs to be able to focus. In the lower elementary (grades 1-3), the room was abuzz with quiet work as children were working on either reading, math, science, or geography. Children wanted to show their work, the book they were reading, their math problem they had solved, and their costumes which the teachers allowed but quickly redirected the students back to their work.

The staff had been working towards Montessori Certification with the Indigenous Montessori Institute at the Keres Children's Learning Center when the global pandemic interrupted them. In the interim, the head administrator has been giving the staff direct instruction on Montessori lessons, as well as teaching her class and running the school. As the school grows there is a plan to contract with someone to help the head with the myriad of State reporting requirements which she recognizes needs to be improved.

Restorative justice plays a role in all the classrooms from the Peace Table in Kinders to upper elementary classrooms to the "court" in the adolescent class. The adolescent focus group described that the students determined the classroom rules and if there is ever discord amongst the classmates, any of them can "call court" where a jury will be chosen, the case will be laid out and action decided.

Students, by class, typically spend part of their day at Moving Arts as part of the school's arts program. Students can walk to Moving Art from the school with their teacher, however, due to a very recent COVID case, there were no classes the day we visited. The PEC recently re-approved LTMS to add grades seven and eight. The return of seventh graders to LTMS has spurred the school to work on re-establishing their relationship with The New Mexico School for the Arts. Another big arts project this school year will be putting on the play *The Wizard of Oz*.

There was not much outdoor agricultural work happening during the site visit, but the garden plots were evident and indoor plants were growing in the STEM classroom. The lunch staff had used school grown pumpkins to make soup for the children's lunch that day. It was explained that the person in charge of the cafeteria uses as much of the school and locally grown produce to create the school lunches. She also works very hard to ensure individual student dietary needs are followed.

LTMS has done a lot over the past few years to engage their wider community, including holding Juneteenth celebrations (before it was recognized nationally). They held a celebration, known as Orange Shirt Day, which is a Canadian National day for truth and reconciliation honoring the Indigenous children who were sent away to residential schools in Canada. Parents and staff spoke of having a strong sense of safety having the school located on the Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo. LTMS is working with the Tribal government in order to bring Tewa instruction to the Pueblo children at the school.

The adolescent students, parents and teacher focus groups all spoke of the diverse, yet familial character of the school. One parent, too ill to come to the focus group in person, called in to speak of about her daughter's experience at LTMS. The child had been dreading school after traumatic experiences in her early life, but had a joyous reaction to her first day at LTMS. Wanting to return to school was a new experience. The adolescent students reported in their focus group that they have agency and input about almost all aspects of the school.