

MCCURDY CHARTER SCHOOL

*Education rooted in: Academic Excellence and Achievement •
Character Development and Awareness • Community Engagement and Leadership*

November 18, 2021

Response to Preliminary Analysis of Renewal Application and Site Visit

Prepared by: Sarah Tario, MCS Director

Please see the clarifications, additional information, or corrections noted below.

Organizational Performance

In paragraph 1 of page 4, it is stated that the charter has hired a new business manager, which is not correct. As noted on page 5 under Financial Performance, MCS has had the same business management service throughout the term, including a consistent business manager. The school's internal Business Office has had turnover; the school had replaced and added additional business office staff in response to findings. Additional training has also been implemented in response to known deficiencies within the business office. MCS continually works to improve financial reporting and accountability measures.

In paragraph 2 of page 4, it is noted that MCS was placed under a CAP for Special Education in early 2021 and states that the indicator should be changed to "Working to Meet". The CAP is associated with the 2019-20 school year, which is already rated as "Working to Meet". Additionally, it is important to clarify that students were provided with post-secondary goals, however the Special Education Division required a different format or approach to the goal setting for Indicator 13. Special Education staff immediately moved to receive training and clarification from the Special Education Division and began implementing changes and improvements.

Financial Performance

Paragraph 2 of page 5 notes that the school saw an enrollment drop after steady increases. MCS did experience a decrease in enrollment during 2019-20, like many public schools during the pandemic. Our decrease in enrollment was relatively low, as noted in our renewal application, and we returned to pre-pandemic year levels in fall 2021. While we have experienced some variability in 2021, this is very much in line with what other schools are currently experiencing related to school re-entry. Traditionally, MCS retains a high percentage of enrollment year-to-year. Additionally, although some grade levels are not at capacity, others have a waiting list. We expect to continue to see enrollment increase at a steady rate.

In paragraph 3, it is stated that the school received 23 findings from 2017-2020, however fiscal year 2017 is not part of the charter term and we respectfully request that this is not included in the report and that the total number of findings is adjusted to 19 accordingly. Additionally, Indicator 2c on page 4 (responsive to audit findings) is rated as "Does Not Meet Standard", however the FY 2021 audit has not been released by the State Auditor. This rating may inaccurately reflect efforts we have made to respond to the FY 2020 audit, which was only made public in March 2021, or the FY 2021 audit, which is not yet finalized or released.

We also assert that the chart on page 5 of audit findings does not provide a comprehensive understanding of the school's efforts to improve Financial Performance. We note that the total number of findings peaked in FY 2019, and decreased in FY 2020, and that we have not had significant deficiencies since FY 2018. Additionally, material findings decreased from 2 to 1 in FY 2019. Both of these measures demonstrate that the school is responsive and working to resolve procedural and/or reporting errors that contributed to audit findings. These efforts have included additional procedures for cash handling, which

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have contributed to the repeat findings. We additionally will be implementing additional training for all staff and performing quality and compliance checks on reporting forms, cash handling procedures, and payroll. The head administrator and business manager meet weekly and the finance committee meets monthly, and the business manager is making a concerted effort to submit RFRs as soon as possible after money is expended. The school would like to note that we continue to be financially stable and operating within our overall planned and awarded budget each year. We have been able to increase staffing, resources, professional development, and technology on campus. We recognize the critical nature of an unmodified audit with no findings, and we expect that the 2020-21 audit will show significant improvement. We encourage the PED and/or PEC to talk directly with our auditor, Matt Bone, if they have questions about our efforts to demonstrate ongoing, substantial improvement.

In the final paragraph on page 5, we would like to note that the percentage of operational spending in the classroom has increased each year. MCS is a large charter school, one of the largest in the state, and one of only a few K-12 schools to offer athletics. Administrative expenses are necessary and appropriate in order to provide the necessary supports for staff, students, and the community. Additionally, while this is an item of interest and something MCS looks at closely to analyze financial effectiveness, it is not part of the Performance Framework and should not be part of the authorizer's decision.

Comprehensive Educational Program

On page 7, paragraphs 2-3, we would like to add that this Paideia and Socratic Seminar are primarily used at the secondary level and that we intend to expand to inquiry/project based learning, which would include Paideia methodology. Secondary teachers have been engaged in professional development focused on this goal.

In paragraph 4 of page 7, we would like to clarify that Ripple Effects is an online program used to support social/emotional learning. A restorative justice/peer mentoring program is under development for future implementation.

In paragraph 5 of page 7, it states the we are planning to remove the 4 credits of math requirements should the school be renewed. MCS would like to clarify that 4 credits of math will continue to be required, however MCS we will not continue to include it as a **unique** aspect of the Comprehensive Educational Program.

In paragraph 6 of page 7, hybrid is misspelled as "highbred".

In paragraph 1 of page 8, we would like to clarify that while students are not currently required to complete a classroom-based service project each semester, classroom-based projects are taking place and school-wide initiatives are ongoing.

Request for Clarification or Correction

The chart on page 4 includes a "Pending" item for 2018-19, Indicator 2. We ask for clarification or correction of this item.

Summary

MCS has been working diligently to create opportunities for student outcomes and improvement in how we provide support, financial accountability, and positive community impact. We appreciate the opportunity to serve our community and will continue to look for opportunities to innovate and improve. We recognize that there are areas where improvement is required, and we embrace these learning opportunities which demonstrate our dedication to providing an exceptional social, academic, and community school environment for students in northern New Mexico.

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