

New Mexico Quality Charter School Authorizing Summative Report

December 2021

I. Purpose

The New Mexico Charter Schools Act was enacted in 1993. Therefore, while charter school authorizing and the presence of charter schools is not new to New Mexico, there is a fresh vision emerging from existing authorizers and other invested stakeholders that focuses on truly supporting the success of mission-focused charter schools and on prioritizing an equity lens in all actions and decisions. This renewed vision is a result of multiple colliding factors, including the landmark 2018 *Martinez and Yazzie* decision, changes in state and authorizer leadership, and a global pandemic that has dramatically upended life and shifted expectations for teaching and learning. These principles and influences are driving a renewed look at the content of New Mexico-specific Principles and Standards for high quality authorizing as well as additional authorizer tools and supports that can be provided statewide.

Accountability in exchange for autonomy has long been touted as a slogan for charter authorizing. That said, accountability and autonomy alone will not drive long-term achievement for all students. Authorizing requires a thoughtful approach to how accountability is structured and what supports and outreach is also layered to facilitate the desired outcomes. Common accountability measures of the past now require additional scrutiny and supplementation – not to reduce the bar for quality, but to enhance how and in what ways quality is measured to better reflect holistic success and community advancement. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this push as state testing halted and how student progress was demonstrated required rethinking and new perspective. And establishing and reporting on accountability expectations is not where the authorizer’s role starts and stops – there are additional thoughtful ways to influence positive change while still respecting autonomy, including convenings, technical questions, listening sessions, resource sharing, etc.

To the priority of equity, the landmark *Martinez and Yazzie* decision in 2018 affirmed the state’s constitutional failure to provide an adequate, sufficient education to all students, and particularly with respect to students who are low-income, Native American, English language learners, and students with disabilities. The decision not only spurred new financial investment in schools, but also important conversations and requirements around the components of an effective and equitable system of programming and supports. What it means to be an authorizer in light of this decision also required scrutiny and re-prioritization – what questions are asked of and evidence is required of applicants, what systems of oversight are prioritized, how quality and effectiveness is measured, and where the emphasis is placed during intervention and renewal decisions.

The COVID-19 pandemic further magnified existing racial and socioeconomic disparities – lack of access to high quality and affordable health care, nutrition and food stability, education, housing, etc. Families of color disproportionately lost and continue to lose their lives and livelihoods to the COVID-19 crisis.

These immense challenges deeply influence authorizing, particularly how charter schools connect with and support their families and how authorizers oversee and influence effective supports for families and students. Throughout the pandemic, these supports stretched beyond computers and internet access for remote learning and into health needs, food and child care access, etc. Authorizers recognized that their priorities for school quality required reprioritization and expansion to better understand how students and families are holistically supported. COVID-19 made it glaringly clear that basic foundational needs must be met in order to achieve long-term, sustained well-being and success.

At the heart of this work is relationship-building – between authorizers and their charter schools, authorizers and their boards, and amongst authorizers statewide. For authorizers and their schools, this looks like holding a mirror up to the hard questions around purpose, expectations, and outcomes while recognizing that success isn't achieved with just an accountability hammer, but also a listening ear and a willingness to support and connect to resources. For authorizers and their boards, this looks like ongoing conversation about the role of authorizing in ensuring all students succeed – embracing authorizing as a means to strive towards the vision and legal mandates of *Martinez and Yazzie*. It also means educating board members on expectations for high quality authorizing so that important decisions within their purview are made in the best interest of the community and students. Amongst authorizers statewide, this entails embracing the hard work of authorizing and setting and implementing goals related to authorizing standards, regardless of portfolio size, because every student in a district or charter school deserves the highest quality education.

These foundational purposes – balancing support and accountability, prioritizing equity, and building productive relationships – are why this project is meaningful and why the tools created can positively impact how authorizers set plans for and conduct their work. The hope is that through a continued commitment to using the new tools and building a statewide authorizing community, new systems of support, a deep commitment to equity, and strong relationships will ultimately positively impact the lifelong trajectory of thousands of New Mexico students, particularly those historically failed by the educational system.

II. Legal Grounding

The New Mexico Charter Schools Act, originally enacted in 1993 and subsequently amended several times, is the primary law that sets forth the foundational requirements for charter school authorizing and charter schools in the state. The Charter Schools Act includes a number of stated purposes related to the opportunities and outcomes of different stakeholder groups:

- To provide parents and students with innovative educational alternatives within the public school system;
- To encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods and forms of measuring student learning;
- To address the needs of all students, including those at risk, and improve student achievement;

- To create new professional opportunities for teachers;
- To encourage parental and community involvement;
- To develop and use site-based budgeting; and
- To hold charter schools accountable for educational and fiscal standards.

The emphasis was, and continues to be, placed on innovation and bringing new and different opportunities to students, staff, and families to ultimately benefit *all* students, and particularly students insufficiently served historically in the traditional public school system.

The Charter Schools Act stipulates a host of responsibilities for both chartering authorities and charter schools. For chartering authorities, these include expectations for the charter application process, charter contract, performance framework, ongoing oversight, and renewal and revocation decision making. For charter schools, these include affirming applicable federal and state laws and setting expectations for enrollment procedures, the governing body, finances, and facilities.

Initially, local school boards were given the authority to approve the establishment of a locally chartered charter school within that local school board's district. In 2006, a new section of the Charter Schools Act was added to create the Public Education Commission as a new statewide authorizer, in addition to local school boards. A Charter Schools Division was also created at the New Mexico Public Education Department (Public Education Department or NMPED) to provide staff support to the commission, technical support to all charter schools, and make recommendations to the commission regarding the approval, denial, renewal, and revocation of state-authorized charter schools.

Additional amendments to the Charter Schools Act in 2012 largely focused on expectations for authorizer oversight, including:

- Requiring authorizers to monitor the performance of the charter schools it oversees;
- Permitting authorizers to take corrective actions if a school's performance is unsatisfactory;
- Requiring authorizers to submit an annual report to the charter school division and the department to review said reports; and
- Requiring authorizers to develop processes for suspension, revocation, or nonrenewal of charter schools.

Collectively, the sections of the Charter School Act set a strong foundation for authorizer expectations to incorporate into standards and associated tools for continuous improvement. This strong foundation is enhanced through other more recent legislation and national efforts in authorizing, such as the A-GAME – Advancing Great Authorizing and Modeling Excellence, an effort funded by a U.S. Department of Education dissemination grant to enhance how authorizers evaluate the quality and effectiveness of alternative education campuses.

As noted above, the *Martinez and Yazzie* decision called attention to the state’s failure to provide students—especially low-income students, Native American students, English language learners, and students with disabilities—the programs and services necessary to learn and thrive, and to sufficiently fund these programs and services. Charter schools and charter school authorizers are now accountable stakeholders for ensuring that the strategies, programs, and services prioritized as a result of the decision are implemented with fidelity and progress is monitored. The initial challenge and outcomes resulting from the lawsuit impacted the content of the principles and standards and associated tools created through this project.

III. Authorizing Landscape

According to the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 26,640 students attended 97 charter schools across New Mexico during the 2018-19 school year, representing 8% of the total public school student enrollment statewide.

The 2021-22 New Mexico Charter School Directory from the Public Education Department includes 98 charter schools across 13 authorizers:

- Public Education Commission (53 charter schools)
- Albuquerque Public Schools (31 charter schools)
- Taos Municipal Schools (3 charter schools)
- Carlsbad Municipal Schools (2 charter schools)
- Aztec Municipal Schools (1 charter school)
- Central Consolidated Schools (1 charter school)
- Cimmaron Municipal Schools (1 charter school)
- Deming Public Schools (1 charter school)
- Jemez Valley Public Schools (1 charter school)
- Roswell Independent Schools (1 charter school)
- Santa Fe Public Schools (1 charter school)
- Socorro Consolidated Schools (1 charter school)
- West Las Vegas Public Schools (1 charter school)

The Public Education Commission (PEC) is the largest authorizer, accounting for 54% of charter schools statewide (53 of 98). Across ten Districts within the PEC, each represented by an elected Commissioner, the number of charter schools by District ranges from zero (2 of 10 Districts) to 14 charter schools.

Demographically, the charter sector is diverse with variability in who is served by specific school:

2021-22 School-Level Enrollment Data			
	Average	Minimum	Maximum
Special Education %	17.1%	2.1%	58.4%
English Language Learner %	16.0%	0.0%	69.2%
Free/Reduced Lunch %	68.5%	0.0%	100.0%
Black %	2.5%	0.0%	10.6%
Caucasian %	25.8%	0.0%	80.0%
Hispanic %	59.2%	0.0%	97.7%
Indian %	10.8%	0.0%	100.0%

The biggest differences to statewide school-level averages, inclusive of charter schools, are in free/reduced lunch (68.5% in charter sector versus 79.5% statewide) and special education (17.1% in charter sector versus 22.8% statewide).

IV. Project Background

In 2017, the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) awarded the New Mexico Public Education Department \$22.5 million dollars for October 1, 2017, through September 30, 2022. The award is made under Section 4303 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act, Title IV, Part C, to:

- support high-quality charter school development and growth through a competitive subgrant program for a) new charter school start up, b) high quality charter school replication, and c) high quality charter school expansion; and
- build high-quality authorizing practices among the state’s chartering agencies.

At least 7% of grant funds were required for technical assistance to eligible applicants and authorized public chartering agencies, and work with authorized public chartering agencies in the state to improve authorizing quality, including developing capacity for, and conducting, fiscal oversight and auditing of charter schools.

Initial authorizing quality work occurred in 2018 following grant receipt. As part of this initial work, draft New Mexico Principles and Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing were developed, largely modeled off of those established by the National Association of Charter School Authorizers. These draft Principles and Standards were never finalized and served as a foundation for edits and updates in 2021.

In light of the building momentum to reshape the focus of authorizing on accountability and support, equity, and relationship-building as described in Section I. Purpose, revisiting the Principles and Standards and building out other associated tools became a priority. To this end, on January 26, 2021,

Albuquerque Public Schools, in partnership with the Public Education Department, issued [RFP #21-039 RA](#), entitled Quality Charter School Authorizing Initiative Support. The scope of services focused on high quality authorizing activities, as established and approved by the U.S. Department of Education under the Expanding Opportunities Through Quality Charter School Program. The scope included:

- Development of formative authorizer tools, including revised New Mexico Charter School Authorizing Principles and Standards, a new Framework for Charter School Authorizer Self-Evaluation, and a new Annual Report Template;
- Convening of stakeholder input sessions to provide feedback on the draft authorizer tools;
- Development of an online course in the Canvas platform on the use of the authorizer tools;
- Delivery of virtual trainings to authorizers on the authorizer tools; and
- Production of a New Mexico Authorizing Practices Report to summarize key project milestones and next steps in tool implementation.

SchoolWorks, LLC responded to the RFP by the February 16, 2021 due date. The SchoolWorks proposal highlighted the company's qualifications to execute the scope of services, which included accountability and authorizer support services with over 25 districts, state departments of education, and other education entities. Upon selection, the SchoolWorks project manager created a detailed project plan and timeline, aligned with the RFP scope, and connected with the Charter School Program project manager to affirm expectations and establish regular team meetings.

V. Methodology

Through a survey, focus groups, ongoing meetings between SchoolWorks, NMPED, and APS, and an open feedback period on draft documents, a goal was to reach and retrieve feedback from as many districts and invested stakeholders as possible statewide. Collectively, across survey and focus group engagements, nearly 60 instances of feedback were gathered with a handful of individuals participating in both the survey and a focus group. Opportunities built on one another for more meaningful feedback as the survey influenced focus groups, focus groups influenced ongoing team meetings, and ultimately months of verbal conversation and written feedback informed the development of three new statewide authorizing tools.

Statewide Survey

An initial survey was sent to every superintendent statewide in June 2021, whether they currently authorize charter schools or not, to collect thoughts and feedback related to interest in authorizing and the current state of authorizing where applicable.

Nearly three quarters of respondents did not currently authorize charter schools. Of these respondents, some authorized charter schools in the past and some were interested in learning more about charter

school authorizing, but no respondents were actively interested in authorizing charter schools in the future.

Of current authorizer respondents, reported strengths of their current practice included:

- Defining and allocating authorizing responsibilities to specific positions;
- Having signed contracts that define responsibilities and include a performance framework; and
- Collecting evidence to monitor progress against contract goals.

Current authorizer areas of need cited in the survey included:

- Having a mission, vision, and strategic plan specific to authorizing;
- Engaging in professional development opportunities to build capacity for high quality authorizing;
- Defining and holding schools accountable to academic goals;
- Utilizing an intervention system when schools demonstrate weak academic, organizational, and/or financial performance;
- Offering training or technical assistance to charter school board members and leaders;
- Defining criteria for revocation; and
- Establishing a detailed closure protocol.

Virtual Focus Groups

Four focus groups were conducted in June and July 2021 to retrieve feedback on the draft Principles and Standards and solicit other ideas to inform tool development. The groups engaged included authorizers, school leaders, non-LEA stakeholders, and legislative committee staff. Questions and conversation related to general thoughts on the draft Principles and Standards and more pointed topics within each of the five standard areas (Authoring Infrastructure and Capacity, Application Process and Decision Making, Performance Contracting, Ongoing Oversight and Evaluation, and Revocation and Renewal Decision Making). This included:

- Defining and supporting authorizing responsibilities;
- Conducting application reviews;
- Considering replication and expansion;
- Determining fundamentals and performance expectations for the charter contract;
- Engaging in contract negotiation and modification;
- Defining fundamental components of oversight;
- Determining the frequency and focus of site visits;
- Respecting charter school autonomy and minimizing administrative burdens;
- Determining conditions for non-renewal or revocation; and
- Deciphering why charter schools have closed in New Mexico.

Themes that emerged from these conversations included:

- Authorizer expectations need to be clear, communicated, and consistent over time – no surprises at renewal as annual oversight systems align with renewal criteria;
- Mission-specific goals are valued (in addition to state performance measures);
- Authorizers should know the specific/unique needs that a charter school fills within a community and how prospective applicants immerse themselves within the community;
- School autonomies need to be clarified and respected;
- Site visits should focus more on mission implementation and clarity on overall performance status and less on compliance that can be handled off-site;
- Authorizers should implement differentiated oversight, intervention, and technical assistance based on performance;
- Access and equity should be infused into all aspects of authorizing from application and performance expectations to oversight systems and renewal; and
- Authorizers should explore how to create efficiencies given the smallness of New Mexico (economies of scale).

These themes and the areas of need from the survey informed modifications to the Principles and Standards as well as considerations for the format and process of self-evaluation and annual reporting.

Ongoing Meetings with NMPED and APS

From June through December 2021, core staff from the NMPED Charter Schools Division, APS Charter Schools Team, and SchoolWorks met regularly to plan for and execute the survey and focus groups and, thereafter, update the Principles and Standards and draft the Self-Evaluation and Annual Report tools. SchoolWorks drew on model tools used in other projects nationally and made edits in order to: (1) align with New Mexico-specific priorities and feedback, (2) maximize utility and minimize cumbersome for authorizers, and (3) infuse themes of importance, such as principles and strategies stemming from the Martinez and Yazzie Consolidated Lawsuit.

All current authorizers had a final feedback period to review the draft Principles and Standards, Self-Evaluation tool, and Annual Report tool prior finalization.

VI. Description of Authorizing Tools

The three new authorizing tools provide an exciting opportunity to advance high quality authorizing practices statewide. In addition to utilizing the thoughtful feedback from different stakeholders across the survey, focus groups, time meetings, and final review period, an important objective in drafting the tools was to minimize the compliance and paperwork burden placed on incredibly busy districts and authorizers and maximize the user-friendliness of the resources. Language was consolidated and requests for information were streamlined wherever possible. The goal was to maximize the utility of

the resources for continuous improvement, rather than simply add to countless state compliance requirements with minimal value and bolster public scrutiny of practices.

The purpose and components of each tool – (1) New Mexico Charter School Authorizing Principles and Standards, (2) New Mexico Charter School Authorizer Self-Evaluation, and (3) New Mexico Charter School Authorizer Annual Report – are discussed in greater detail below.

New Mexico Charter School Authorizing Principles and Standards

The New Mexico Charter School Authorizing Principles and Standards provide a guide for what it means to practice high-quality authorizing in New Mexico. They can aid authorizers in assessing their current practices in relation to best practices to continuously improve on their work. The Principles and Standards are broken down into four components: (1) Statement of Purpose, (2) Values, (3) Principles, and (4) Standards.

Statement of Purpose: The Statement of Purpose provides the **why** for becoming and continuing to be a charter school authorizer - *We, the authorizers of New Mexico, believe that all students should be provided equitable access to unique, high-quality options that prepare them for lifelong success.* The Statement of Purpose roots authorizing in an ultimate aspiration - equitable attainment of academic and holistic success for all NM students. A challenge can be to stay fully rooted in this ultimate purpose amidst a host of day-to-day demands and influences.

Values: Four values provide characteristics for collective responsibility and interaction amongst authorizers throughout the state as authorizers exclusively working in silos will not achieve the Statement of Purpose. The values include equity, celebrating success, accountability, and transparency. Creating and sustaining opportunities for collaboration to fully embrace these values will be a challenge amidst competing demands, but the commitment and potential exists with next steps discussed in VIII. Next Steps in Implementation below.

Principles: Four principles describe a set of beliefs each authorizer should infuse throughout their authorizing practices. Values focus more on the collective, while principles focus on each authorizer's responsibilities with its schools. Principles provide foundational beliefs to infuse into all aspects of authorizing. The four principles include: (1) protect public interests, (2) promote excellence and accountability, (3) ensure access and equity, and (4) uphold school autonomy to foster innovation. Balancing accountability and autonomy can prove particularly challenging in authorizing and the standards seeks to provide greater clarity as to the focus of each.

Standards: The 18 Standards describe each authorizer's core responsibilities across five areas: (1) Agency Commitment and Capacity, (2) Application Process and Decision Making, (3) Performance Contracting, (4) Ongoing Oversight and Evaluation, and (5) Revocation and Renewal Decision Making.

The 18 Standards provide clear expectations for authorizing practices determined to be effective in supporting charter schools that serve all students well and facilitate their academic success. Executing on all expectations with often limited capacity and prioritizing which standards will have the most meaningful impact on schools and students can often prove challenging. This challenge further emphasizes the need for statewide collaboration and support to build economies of scale and share best practices.

Ideally, the Principles and Standards is a living, go-to resource for authorizers that they regularly reference and utilize, in addition to other model resources that become available, to affirm where their practices are fully in line with state standards and where they must adjust or add on. The intent is also to revisit the document as a statewide authorizing community every few years to make updates and additions that best reflect the current landscape and priorities in supporting and propelling innovative and successful charter schools.

New Mexico Charter School Authorizer Self-Evaluation

The New Mexico Charter School Authorizer Self-Evaluation provides a structure for authorizers to self-reflect on their authorizing practices in relation to statewide standards and prioritize areas for continuous improvement. Ultimately, by focusing on where practices can be enhanced and setting action plans in motion, authorizers can have a positive impact on their charter schools and the quality of education for charter school students.

The Self-Evaluation is not intended to be a “high stakes” accountability tool that will be publicly posted or required in full by the state. It will not impact an authorizer’s ability to receive applications and authorize charter schools. Furthermore, only prioritized standards for action planning will be shared with NMPED, without any ratings, to inform statewide technical assistance and collaboration needs.

The Self-Evaluation is based on the 18 Standards of the New Mexico Charter School Authorizing Principles and Standards. All sub-standards within each standard are included verbatim. Authorizers are to reflect on each bulleted sub-standard and assess the degree to which it is fully established and implemented. The tool includes space for authorizers to check which sub-standards they consider fully implemented.

Thereafter, the Self-Evaluation requests that the authorizer catalogue the tools utilized to fulfill the standard with examples provided. The point of this inclusion is to push authorizers to think about what they actually have documented related to their practices, rather than just knowing what they do or what they intend to do. This section can help authorizers think about how they document and communicate their authorizing practices with both their schools and the public in an effort to promote clarity, consistency, and transparency.

Following tool identification, authorizers select a rating based on the percentage of sub-standards met, then reflect on what is going well and where improvement is needed related to the standard. The open ended nature of this last reflection allows authorizers space to really contemplate all aspects of their practice and where strengths can help address gaps. This flow from checking sub-standards to citing tools to identifying a rating and reflecting on strengths and improvement areas is then repeated across all 18 standards.

Following completion of this process for all 18 standards, there is a prioritization section, which provides authorizers the opportunity to reflect across all 18 standards and identify strengths and three priority areas for goal-setting. For the three standards identified as priorities, goals, action steps, party responsible, and timeframes are established. It is this final prioritization section, or a progress update, that is included in the authorizer annual report (described further below).

Ideally, authorizers complete the self-evaluation every other year to assess progress made and set new goals. Late spring and early summer was identified as a preferred time window for self-evaluation completion given other authorizer demands and completion prior to the annual report. Albuquerque Public Schools and the Public Education Commission are willing to participate in a self-evaluation pilot in spring 2022. Other authorizers are able to fully complete the self-evaluation as well or participate in norming/feedback calls with APS or PEC to help build understanding of expectations and consistency in process and ratings across authorizers. Staff from the NMPED Charter Schools Division will facilitate outreach, planning, and execution of the self-evaluation process moving forward.

Annual Report

Authorizers are required to submit an Annual Report under NMSA 22-8B-12. However, historically, this has not been completed consistently year over year by all authorizers nor has a standard template or expectations been available for use. This tool assists in filling this need by providing consistent expectations for all authorizers statewide. The Annual Report provides an opportunity for authorizers to reflect on the performance of their schools and the outcomes or status of their authorizer practices vis-à-vis the self-evaluation. The report can aid authorizers in assessing whether its schools are fulfilling their purpose and meeting legal obligations and how authorizers can strategically utilize best practices in authorizing and technical assistance to its charter schools to enhance the quality of school options for NM students.

The Annual Report is broken down into four sections:

- 1) Performance framework expectations (by school),
- 2) Performance framework outcomes and analysis (by school),
- 3) Portfolio performance analysis (if more than one school), and
- 4) Self-evaluation prioritization.

In section one, performance framework expectations, the authorizer populates the academic performance, mission-specific, organizational performance, and financial performance goals currently included in a school's charter agreement. This section should be fast to complete, essentially copying and pasting the performance framework terms already established.

In section two, performance framework outcomes and analysis, the authorizer populates school-specific outcomes for the most year in relation to the expectations set forth in section one. This is completed for academic, mission-specific, organizational, and financial expectations with two to four reflection questions following each area related to primary strengths, primary areas for improvement, comparative performance in academic performance (by subgroup and to district of residence), progress in fulfilling mandates of the *Martinez and Yazzie* lawsuit in organizational performance, and whether the school is considered financially sustainable in the short- and long-term in financial performance.

Section one and two are then repeated for any remaining schools in the authorizer's portfolio.

Thereafter, as applicable, in section three – portfolio performance analysis, the authorizer is asked to assess and reflect on trends across schools and respond to questions related to strengths and areas for improvement across the portfolio. Based on these trends, authorizers are asked what areas of their authorizing practices and/or technical assistance to schools will be prioritized for the upcoming school year. This last question will be particularly helpful to NMPED in planning technical assistance opportunities and distributing resources both to authorizers and charter schools statewide.

The final section, self-evaluation prioritization, is where authorizers will provide the prioritization page from a self-evaluation completed within the same calendar year or a status update on action plan goals and action steps from a self-evaluation that occurred prior to the current calendar year. The objective here is to streamline the information requested of authorizers from the self-evaluation and not impose an expectation that the full self-evaluation and ratings must be provided. The prioritization page or status update will provide sufficient information to allow NMPED to aggregate needs across all authorizers and use this information to plan technical assistance and resource sharing opportunities.

VII. Canvas Course and Trainings

To support authorizers in understanding and using the three new tools, a related course was developed in the New Mexico Canvas Resource Center and shared with authorizers in November 2021. The course is entitled "New Mexico Quality Charter School Authorizing Course," and includes three modules associated with each tool:

- 1) New Mexico Charter School Authorizing Principles and Standards,
- 2) New Mexico Charter School Authorizer Self-Evaluation, and
- 3) New Mexico Charter School Authorizer Annual Report.

By module, authorizers have access to the tool itself, a PowerPoint overview document, a recorded presentation discussing the overview document in greater detail, and a reflection worksheet to help spur authorizer’s thinking and next steps on utilizing each tool. The course will be available in perpetuity until updates are made to the tools that require updates to the contents.

In addition to the Canvas course, three 90 minute synchronous trainings, open to all authorizers statewide, occurred between November and December 2021. Similar to the Canvas modules, each training focused on one of the three tools – Principles and Standards, Self-Evaluation, and Annual Report. These trainings afforded additional reflection and insight from leaders of New Mexico’s two largest authorizers as well as time for questions and conversation amongst attendees.

Across the three synchronous trainings, a third of current authorizers were represented by one or more staff/board members. Feedback related to appreciating efforts to build community statewide and share resources and providing, particularly smaller authorizers, with an impetus to better document and build out their authorizing processes. There was collective acknowledgement in the value of building a statewide authorizing community and interest in continuing the momentum into 2022. With additional authorizers starting the Canvas course, six authorizers, accounting for 93% of New Mexico’s charter schools, were represented through either synchronous and/or asynchronous training opportunities.

VIII. Next Steps in Implementation

Collectively, the three new authorizing tools set a vision and expectations for quality authorizing and provide multiple opportunities to reflect on practice in relation to these expectations and set plans in motion to continuously improve – ultimately to foster the strongest charter schools possible and ones that serve ALL students equitably and well. To this end, next steps in 2022 include:

January – March 2022	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Identify which authorizers will complete the self-evaluation process and which will participate in norming; 2) Share authorizing resources statewide (model contracts, performance frameworks, school guidance documents, etc.); and 3) Hold at least one statewide authorizer collaborative convening.
April – July 2022	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Execute the self-evaluation pilot; 2) Retrieve feedback on the self-evaluation pilot to inform modifications moving forward; 3) Finalize the annual report template and prepare for distribution; and 4) Hold at least one statewide authorizer collaborative convening.

August – October 2022	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Update the annual report template with authorizer and school specific data as available and distribute templates to all authorizers; 2) Hold at least one statewide authorizer collaborative convening; and 3) Submit completed annual reports to NMPED.
Nov – December 2022	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Review annual reports and use to assist in completion of the NMPED annual report; and 2) Utilize annual report data to inform further resource sharing and collaboration opportunities in 2023.

The biggest challenge in successfully implementing these next steps and building a statewide authorizing community will be active and ongoing participation amongst all authorizers. While the majority of current authorizers only have one to three charter schools in their districts, the responsibility to meet and continuously improve on the New Mexico Charter School Authorizing Principles and Standards does not change. Therefore, the priority must be on relationship building and a commitment to the standards for supporting charter school quality. This desired outcome can be easier achieved in collaboration than silos. Strong tools are now in place; the excitement comes next with implementation and the long-term influence of expanded high quality authorizing on student well-being and lifelong success.