

November 15, 2022

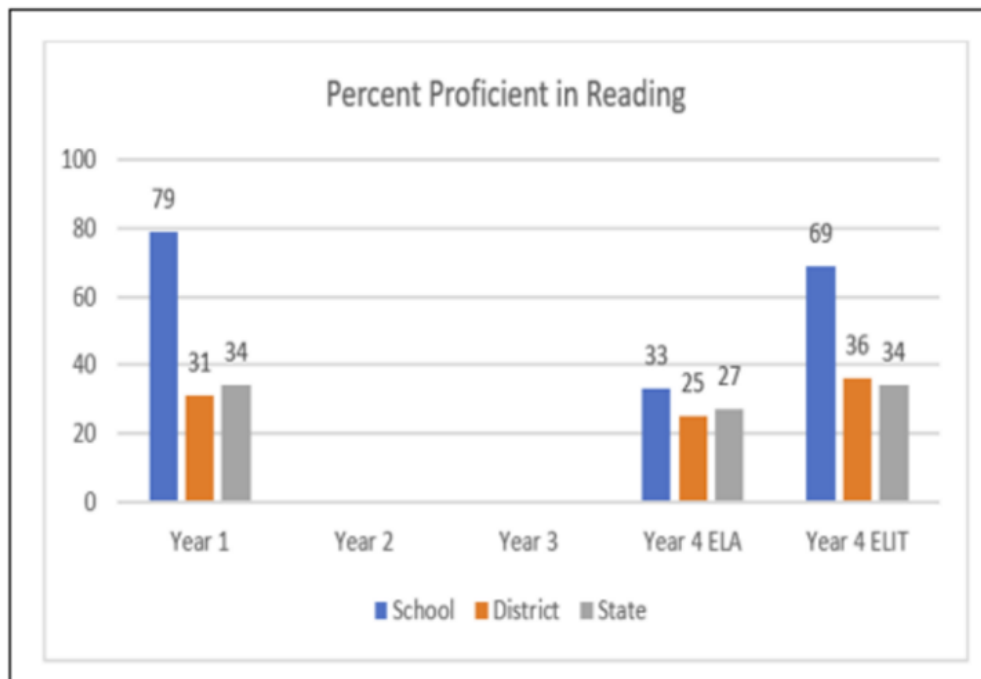
Charter Schools Division
New Mexico Public Education Department
300 Don Gaspar Ave
Santa Fe, NM 87501

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing on behalf of Albuquerque Collegiate Charter School in response to the Preliminary Renewal Analysis provided by the Charter Schools Division. Please see notes below that provide additional information and context to the Preliminary Renewal Analysis.

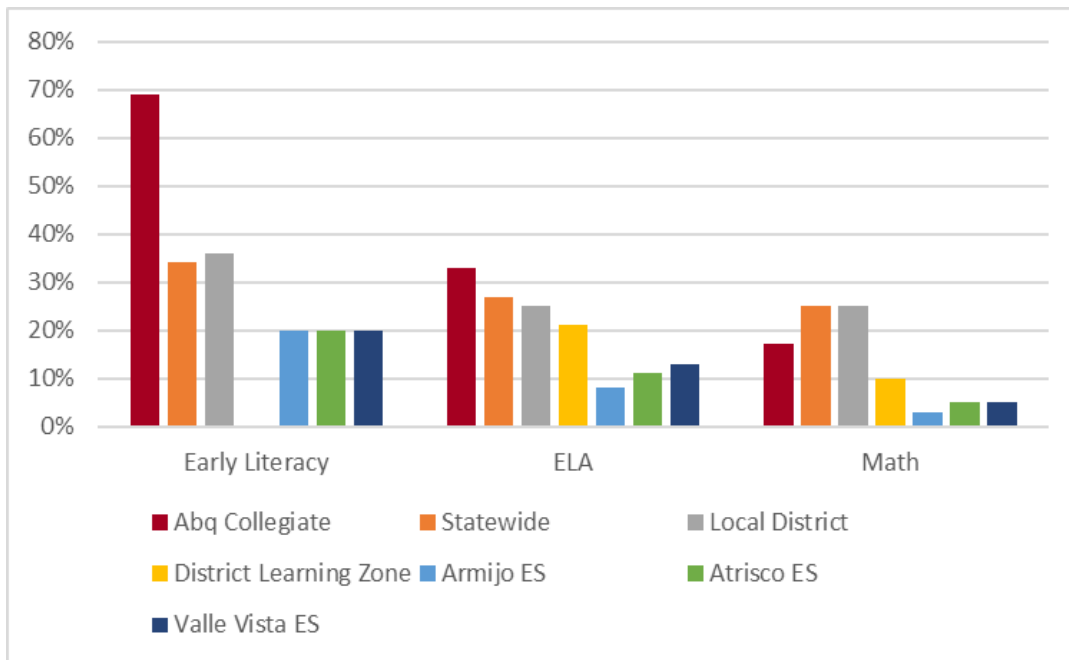
Student Outcomes & Educational Program

In some cases, information in this section is inconsistent and inaccurate. For example, the report states “in the most recent year, ACCS’s proficiency scores were ELA: 33%, Math 17% (both below state and district averages, especially in math), and ELIT 47% (above state and district averages).” However, as evidenced by the provided chart in this same section, Albuquerque Collegiate’s proficiency rate for ELA shows a higher proficiency rate than that of the state (27%) and the district (25%). Additionally, the chart also shows an early literacy (ELIT) proficiency rate of 69%, which is the correct percentage. We are unclear how a 47% proficiency rate for ELIT was gathered.



Page 4 of the document states “The school did not provide comparative data about specific neighborhood schools in their application.” We were not aware that this information was required. However, comparative data for the 2021-2022 school year is included in Appendix A-1 Academic Data (see Figure 14: 21-22 NM-MSSA, Summative Proficiency Achievement, Statewide and Local District Comparative, 3rd & 4th Grade). This table outlines proficiency rates for Albuquerque Collegiate, the state, the local district, as well as the district’s most proximate “learning zone”- the geographical area in which Albuquerque Collegiate is located. In order to provide even more comprehensive information, please see the charts below that illustrate comparative data for Albuquerque Collegiate, the state, the local district, the district learning zone and the three neighboring elementary schools closest to Albuquerque Collegiate, for ELIT, ELA, and Math for the 2021-2022 school year.

	ELIT	ELA	Math
Abq Collegiate	69%	33%	17%
Statewide	34%	27%	25%
Local District	36%	25%	25%
District Learning Zone	N/A	21%	10%
Armijo ES	≤20%	8%	3%
Atrisco ES	≤20%	11%	5%
Valle Vista ES	≤20%	13%	5%



Page 5 of the Preliminary Analysis claims, “ACCS does not have a concrete plan to track students beyond their time spent at ACCS.” However, the immediate next sentence writes, “Both teacher and HA focus groups discussed fifth grade meetings to help students transition from ACCS to a middle school that best fits their individual needs.” This is clearly a plan to track students beyond their time at Albuquerque Collegiate.

Page 6 of the Preliminary Analysis writes, “Both students and parents complimented the school’s administration and staff for making the school environment so welcoming and encouraging *despite the implicit competitive component of posting each child’s STEP level.*” We would request that the italicized section of this sentence be removed if this statement was not explicitly stated and provided by the focus groups, and instead provided by the site visit team. If this statement was not provided by focus groups, we would request to refer the writer(s) of the Preliminary Analysis to the Site Visit Team Code of Conduct, as outlined in the Renewal Site Visit Code of Conduct, specifically the following bullets– “Under no circumstances criticize the work of a teacher or anyone else involved with the school during an observation or focus group” and “Do not offer personal or professional opinions or recommendations, even if solicited by interviewees.”

Lastly in this section, we wish to respond with additional information, reiterated in the school’s application. The preliminary analysis writes, “ACCS’s math results do not reveal a demonstrated record of meeting all standards in each of the years in the contract term; however, Part B describes the implementation of targeted and individualized math instruction.” In Part B of the application we wrote that it is always our goal to provide an educational environment that exceeds the performance of the state, local district, and particularly our neighboring schools. We know this is of particular importance as students in our south valley community have been historically and generationally underserved, so it is one of our 2022 key priorities to reset the trajectory of our scholars’ academic performance and outcomes. The Albuquerque Collegiate team humbly acknowledges that iMSSA and NM-MSSA results for the 2021-2022 school year fell short of our goals for this year. A number of critical actions have been identified by our team to improve mathematics outcomes for scholars. We are working to better prioritize more targeted and individualized math instruction for kindergarten to second grade scholars, using our very successful K-2 small group literacy model as a guide. Our team appreciates the rigor of the NM-MSSA assessment, and is concentrating on aligning the level of rigor and challenge seen in NM-MSSA to our daily instruction and formative assessments of student learning. We believe we can achieve vastly improved results by the end of this school year through implementation of these critical actions, among others that have yielded successful results for our scholars and educators.

Financial Compliance

The financial compliance section of the Preliminary Analysis writes, “In its first years, the school received multiple audit findings, including one material weakness finding each year and two repeat findings one year. These findings resulted in fine tuning internal control policies and process improvements, the success of which is reflected in the school’s most recent audit report.” Our team would like to clarify that the material weakness findings were for separate issues: capital assets in FY19 and fund balance for FY20. In FY19 and FY20, Albuquerque Collegiate

received a Budgetary Reporting and Compliance finding, which was listed as a repeat finding but the cause of this finding was different in each fiscal year. FY19's finding was an error in the cash report and in FY20 the finding was due to a misallocation of expenses by function. Furthermore, we would like it noted that audit findings were addressed and corrected for each year following a finding. In addition, the Albuquerque Collegiate team is excited to share the results of the most recent 2021-2022 audit when this becomes publicly available.

Equity and Identity

The Albuquerque Collegiate team wishes to reiterate that the school has met or exceeded all elements as outlined in section 4a of the performance framework, with the exception of the school's first year of operation, 2018-2019, which was rated "working to meet standard". Albuquerque Collegiate is deeply committed to providing all scholars a high-quality education that embeds culturally- and linguistically-relevant instruction, and is affirming and validating of students' cultures, identities, and sense of belonging. The school team has addressed this work through a multi-pronged approach including but not limited to: establishment of an Equity Council; a commitment to hiring practices that prioritize diversity, equity and inclusion; improved systems of support through MLSS (multi-layered system of support); curriculum analysis to ensure culturally and linguistically responsive instructional materials and practices; policy engagement; and data analysis that engages key stakeholders to identify opportunity gaps for at-risk subgroups and establish plans to address said gaps.

Paragraph 2 of this section from the Preliminary Analysis writes,

"The school's application states that school leaders planned to better support ELs through additional interventions and small group instruction, however proficiency rates for this subgroup were lower than that of their peers. It appears in the schedule that the school does not have a dedicated English Language Development block to target support for EL students' proficiency in Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing in English as well as intentional instructional strategies for identified ELs; however, Part B of the school's application does state that upon an increase in the school's EL population, the leadership team created a plan to better support EL students through "additional intervention and small group instruction, aligned to the MLSS Tier 2 supports."

We would like it noted that proficiency rates for English Learners are almost always lower than that of their English-Proficient peers. In fact, the proficiency rate and gap for English Learners at Albuquerque Collegiate is less pronounced than that of state and local district (Ex- ACCS EL proficiency on Istation is 62%, compared to the state and district which are both $\leq 20\%$).

The Preliminary Analysis states "It appears in the schedule that the school does not have a dedicated English Language Development block to target support for EL students' proficiency in Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing in English as well as intentional instructional strategies for identified ELs". However, the school provides targeted and intentional instructional strategies for ELs through content blocks in literacy, math, science, social studies and writing. Teachers are trained to use ELD standards in tandem with content standards across all subject areas, ensuring appropriately tiered language instruction. Kindergarten-2nd grade students receive designated ELD instruction during one of their three small group literacy blocks. 3rd-5th

grade EL students receive focused ELD instruction via push-in support during ELA instructional rotations.

Throughout this section there appears to be significant emphasis on equity councils and the suggested, but not statutorily required, work conducted by equity councils per the Public Education Department. While our school firmly supports the emphasis on equity-focused work, we would note that nothing in the PEC Performance Framework makes note of or requires equity councils. Albuquerque Collegiate is compliant with all statutory requirements. Furthermore, the Martinez/Yazzie lawsuit does not name equity councils as a requirement of schools. The school team would wish to clarify that the equity council was not dissolved, as written as page 7 of Preliminary Analysis. However, interest from stakeholders has been a bit reluctant, as engaged stakeholders felt the school had already been focusing heavily on diversity, equity and inclusion work, and the establishment of a new equity council was felt to be performative. The Albuquerque Collegiate team would reiterate that diversity, equity, and inclusion are at the core of our work and identities as leaders and educators. Our leaders, teachers, and staff reflect and value the community we serve in the South Valley, with 86% of our staff (22-23 school year) identifying as people of color, compared to 40% of teachers in New Mexico (2017-2018, most recent available data).

Regarding the school's lottery system, we would reaffirm that the school remains compliant with all legal requirements as outlined in the Charter Schools Act. The Preliminary Analysis writes, "The school's lottery process as posted to the school's website contains no non-discriminatory statement, as recommended by the CSD. Rather the school has an online enrollment system that requires a log-in name and password." This statement makes the dangerous and inaccurate implication that the school's enrollment system is discriminatory. In actuality, having an online enrollment system ensures the elimination of human bias and safeguards any potential of tampering with the enrollment process.

Furthermore, as related to the school's enrollment system, we would note the inappropriate and deficient-based statement made by a member of the site visit team regarding "the inability of a single mother of 4 to complete an online application because it requires a login and password". This statement was felt to be highly offensive to our team and we sincerely hope a statement of this nature was not shared with our family focus group. During the site visit, we clarified that families can always submit enrollment applications and registration information in-person, via phone, or through the online system. This actually ensures equitable access to the system for all families at all times. Again, we would request to refer the writer(s) of the Preliminary Analysis to the Site Visit Team Code of Conduct, as outlined in the Renewal Site Visit Code of Conduct.

Areas of Interest for Additional Information provided by PEC Commissioners

In response to questions from the Public Education Commission relating to the school's enrollment, we wish to provide the following information— In the 2020-2021 school year, Albuquerque Collegiate was one of very few schools to offer in-person instruction beginning in September 2020. This option was a direct result of feedback we received from our families and school community. As such, the school saw a great increase in the number of kindergarten applications received. As such, the school opened two cohorts of kindergarten classes, as

opposed to one cohort, as had been the practice in previous years. Moving into the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years, the school team made the decision to move back to one cohort of kindergarten students because of limited facility space. Presently, our facility is at full capacity in terms of classroom utilization and we are unable to grow in the current space. It is the goal of the school to identify a long-term, permanent facility in the next year that will be able to accommodate the full enrollment of the school's charter cap. Our board and school team have outlined geographic non-negotiable requirements that a permanent facility must meet in order to ensure close proximity to the current location. The school remains committed to serving our community and meeting the enrollment cap as outlined in our charter contract.

Please feel free to contact the school's Executive Director directly with any questions via email or phone. The Albuquerque Collegiate team looks forward to continued work with the Charter Schools Division and Public Education Commission through the renewal process and beyond. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Jade Rivera
Founder/Executive Director

CC: Tomas Garcia, Albuquerque Collegiate Board Chair
Dan Hill, Attorney DMH Law
Rebekka Burt, Public Education Commission Chair