



STATE OF NEW MEXICO PUBLIC
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May 1, 2023

Ms. Katharina Sandoval, Director
Mr. Bob Walton
AIMS@UNM
933 Bradbury SE
Albuquerque, NM 87106

Dear Director Sandoval and Board Leader Walton:

Thank you for welcoming the Charter Schools Division Team to your school for the annual site visit on Friday, April 21, 2023. We appreciate the visit and documented many innovative components of your charter school. There is much to celebrate at AIMS@UNM!

This letter is to inform you that the Charter Schools Division still has concerns regarding your lottery policy and process and the general accessibility of your school. We are also concerned about information regarding the AIMS' governing council to the public. In August of 2021 the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) received a letter from Pegasus (a legal firm for children) highlighting several New Mexico Charter Schools that were using discriminatory admission practices. Public charter schools have been specifically directed to limit requested information required to complete the lottery application to the minimum necessary to identify student, grade, and basic contact information. Once a student has been notified of admissions, the school can seek additional information to register and place students in the school. See: <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/FAQ-Lottery1.pdf>

The Charter Schools Division notified AIMS' leadership of concerns regarding the lottery policies and procedures during the 2020-2021 & 2021-2022 site visits. As explained in the 2021 Lottery FAQ sheet (link above), the charter school should clearly distinguish the "lottery/admission" process from the "enrollment/registration" process. AIMS application contains both the lottery application requests and the registration requests in **one document** which can easily confuse the

families who are interested in AIMS as a school option. While the document does state that “Enrollment Packet” is “To be filled out after students are pulled from the lottery,” the separation of necessary lottery application materials is unclear. This was confirmed during the most recent site visit when students in focus groups explained that they had to write an essay to get into the school. Public charter schools cannot require applicants to write an essay for admission, nor can they be requested to provide copies of test scores, transcripts, or “IEP or 504 files” prior to confirming admissions. The CSD also notes that much of the language and processes in AIMS “application” could steer a variety of families away from the school. For example: (1) the lottery application must be hand-delivered or delivered by postal mail; (2) the lottery is held in November and December; and (3) families only have three days to accept the lottery invitation and to turn in all the other items requested.

In addition to concerns regarding the lottery policies and practices, the Charter Schools Division also underscores the need for AIMS to ensure that Governing Council information, including contact information, be readily available to the public through the website. As a public school, it is important that NM charter schools be accessible to all students and easily accessible to the public. These items should be addressed immediately. The CSD recommends revising the AIMS website and separating the lottery application from the registration packet. The CSD also recommends that AIMS include all important Board information on the website, including contact information.

If you have any questions or need assistance in the requested improvements, please do not hesitate to reach out to your site visit lead, Martica Davis or directly to me.

Sincerely,

Corina Chavez
Director, Charter Schools Division

Cc: Martica Davis, Educational Administrator, NMPED