

New Mexico Public Education Commission



2023 Charter School Renewal Application

Part B: Progress Report

Explore Academy

PED code 557001

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Instructions

Please read the entire Charter School Renewal Application Kit before preparing documents. In an effort to help applicants understand the requirements of the Renewal Application, the CSD will hold a minimum of two technical assistance workshops. Applicants will be notified of the dates, times, and locations of the workshops.

Enter applicant responses in boxes below. Answer all questions unless the question indicates that applicants should answer only under certain conditions (e.g., rating on a Performance Framework indicator requires explanation, etc.). Narrative responses should be verifiable through documents submitted or observable evidence at the renewal site visit and will be scored according to the rubric in the main 2022 Charter Renewal Application document.

School Information

Name of School: Explore Academy

Authorizer: Public Education Commission

Current Charter Term: 2019-2024

Academic Performance

Student Outcomes

1. Academic Performance

The school reports on its academic performance during the term of the contract, including achieving its goals, student performance outcomes, state standards of excellence and accountability requirements set forth in the Assessment and Accountability Act.

School response:

Per the school's mission and educational model, Explore Academy uses a choice theory model of education, which focuses on turning each student into an active learner who, over time, will increasingly become responsible for their own education. Students are allowed to choose and personalize their own educational pathway from an exceptionally diverse set of course offerings. This creates a more empowered, more successful student population because they are prepared for college, career, and life.

Explore Academy has provided a personalized, choice-based educational experience for its students for all years of its contract term. The school continues to also meet or exceed the mission-specific goal for each year of its contract term. Due to a lack of summative data for SY2019-20 and SY2020-21, the school did not receive a Vistas score, percentile score, or designation. However, Explore Academy earned a spotlight designation from NMPED and ranked above 81.3% of highschools statewide during year 3 of its contract. The school is waiting for the release of embargoed data for year 4.

Explore Academy Student Awards and School Distinction:

Founders Circle Award Film Prize Film Festival, 2023
Film Prize Junior Award, Best of Genre/Best Comedy, 2023
Scholastic Art Awards (seventeen awards in total), 2023
Senior Division Grand Award Winner (first place) CNM STEM Research Challenge and ISEF Finalist, 2023
National History Day competition semifinalists, 2023
United States Air Force Special Senior Award, New Mexico Science and Engineering Fair, 2023
Yale Science and Engineering Association award for CNM STEM Research Challenge, 2022
National Merit Scholarship semifinalists, 2022
National ESEA Distinguished School, 2020

1.a. Student Outcomes

1.a. How has the school measured student proficiency and growth, including action taken in the absence of state summative assessments in 2019-20 and 2020-21? Describe interim and formative assessments used, and the results of those assessments. Include a detailed narrative that addresses the actions taken to improve student outcomes, and the success of those actions. Schools may take the opportunity to include data in support of the narrative. If providing data to support the school's narrative, provide it in **Appendix A-1 Academic Data**. Implementation of the described improvement actions should be verifiable through evidence at the renewal site visit.

School response:

Summative data for SY2021-22, the only year available on NM Vistas at the time of this application, identifies Explore Academy as a **Spotlight School**. There were no designations for SY20 and SY21 but the school was designated as a Spotlight School in SY19 as well. The only summative data available at this time (SY22) is included in Part A.

Due to the lack of summative data, Explore Academy has heavily relied on interim and end-of-course exams to internally track student proficiency and growth in math and reading across grade levels throughout its contract term.

GRADES K-5: At the elementary level, all students take the ISIP Reading and Math, beginning, middle and end-of-year, as the state-required interim assessment. Other BOY, MOY, EOY assessments include the Phonological Awareness Screening Test (PAST) and the LETRS Spelling Screener, both of which are science of reading aligned. Model-specific formative assessments are called core assessments and are administered every quarter. They are standards-based, common to each grade level and drawn from validated assessment sources, including Cognia item banks, Zearn, Achieve the Core, and Illustrative Mathematics. Alternate forms of the assessment are available for students in MLSS and students on IEPs, along with all appropriate individualized modifications and accommodations. Each quarter, teachers also develop flavor-specific project-based assessments that access the highest levels of Bloom's / DOK, including extended thinking through long term writing projects, presentations, experiments, performance assessments, and student reflections.

In the first year of the K-5 campus, 2021-22, students took ISIP as the K-2 interim and i-Ready as the interim for 3-5. Across the six grade levels and two tested content areas, 10 of 12 demonstrated growth, with significant gains in 5 areas (an increase of 24 or more percentage points proficient from beginning to end of year. Average growth in percent of students scoring at levels 4 and 5 was 16.6%. The only two areas with a decline in proficiency were Kindergarten and first grade reading. With the exception of Kindergarten reading, all grade levels and content areas had greater than 50% of students scoring at levels 4 and 5 by the end of the school year.

Last school year, 2022-2023, students took Istation as their interim for reading and math in grades K-5. The percent of students proficient on the Istation assessment was in most cases lower than the data exhibited on i-Ready. Student proficiency for grades 3-5 on the state summative assessment in 2022 was higher than many of the proficiency levels on Istation, which is an interesting trend to keep track of this year as well. As with the prior year, first grade math was a standout with 41 percent more students proficient by end of year. Multiple other areas demonstrated growth or limited change, however the one area of concern is Kindergarten reading.

Our educators and leaders highlight the continuing gaps in student academic and social-emotional development. Data from interim assessments are analyzed by the school administration, Learning Specialists (interventionists / instructional coaches), and by teachers in grade-level Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). For grades K-5, the Learning Specialists administer the Lexercise assessment, which also informs which students are in need of intervention. Students are placed into small groups and receive Layer 2 intervention from the Learning Specialists in math or reading during their daily Flex period (30 minutes). Teachers use data to inform classroom small groups and intervention within core instruction. All students at Explore Academy have access to the grade-level general education setting to ensure they are being exposed to rigorous instruction. Teachers and interventionists focus on filling gaps in student learning, while also accelerating their progress toward meeting grade level standards. Teachers analyze the results of core assessments to inform future needs for spiraling of prior quarter standards, as well as potential revisions to the scope and sequence. Core assessment is one source of data connected to end-of-quarter student proficiency ratings sent home in report card format.

All Humanities and STEM teachers are engaged in LETRS professional development (PD) in order to bolster their skills in structured literacy instruction cross-curricularly. We are beginning to see stronger practices in the classroom which are resulting in great growth in reading and writing skills. Ongoing, job-embedded PD, PLC and teacher coaching are all focused on meeting individual and group student needs, as well as identifying priorities for future support. Summative performance highlights our success in achieving this on a rigorous standards-based statewide assessment.

GRADES 6-8: Explore Academy began administering iMSSA as its interim assessment for grades 6-8 in SY2020-21, and has used it for all years of its contract term. The school saw a 23% increase in enrollment for grades 6-8 from SY2020-21 to SY2022-23. Explore Academy administered iMSSA during SY2020-21, when interim assessments were optional per NMPED. Historically, the school has seen deficits in student math proficiency, and as a result, has consistently had interventions in place to support math. The school infers the increase in math proficiency, from 66% of students scoring near or on target on the EOY math assessment in SY2020-21 to 80% in SY2022-23, as connected to the implementation of interventions and support pre-pandemic that have continued throughout the contract term.

The school has reviewed the average percentage of students in grades 6-8 who have scored near or on target on the EOY reading assessment and the data do not indicate significant learning loss. In SY2020-21, the average percentage of students who earned near or on target was 86%. In SY2021-22, the average percentage of students scoring near or on target dropped to 77%, with the most notable drop in 8th-grade proficiency. The school spent the year collecting data to evaluate how to best serve students during this time, particularly given that EOY scores indicated a deficit in reading. This was something the school had never seen before; previous data indicate that students excelled in reading. Given the dip in reading assessment data, in SY2022-23, the school adjusted its approach to how it taught reading standards and carefully focused its effort to scaffold material and build back basic skills lost during the pandemic. During this year, the school also experienced its highest level of absenteeism, which posed challenges to student learning recovery. However, in spite of its challenges, the average percentage of students who scored on or near target stayed at 77% in grades 7 and 8 for those who have been with the school more than one year, showing an increase in scores from the previous year. The data show 6th graders in most need of support. The school is looking at the curriculum alignment from 5th to 6th because these students spent COVID years as 4th and 5th-grade students. Based on need indicated in the previous year, the school has added a full-time instructional coach who works with teachers to support better instruction and helps teachers to cultivate best practice. The instructional coach collects survey data, regularly observes classroom instruction, and monitors student performance. The instructional coach also works in conjunction with the student support coordinator, also known as the "academic coach," who works directly with students who are struggling in their seminars or who are identified as in need of support based on their weekly progress report. The school has also restructured core content department roles so that each department has its own PLC chair that is specifically there to support the work necessary to develop curriculum, instruction, and analyze and interpret student data. The instructional coach, academic coach, and PLC chairs work closely with one another to support teachers in how they triangulate effective student support. As a result of student assessment data, Explore Academy has also subscribed to iXL Learning, a standards aligned curriculum, which is used as an intervention tool for any student struggling in any core content area. This provides leveled intervention to address skill gaps.

GRADES 6-12: Explore Academy also has a comprehensive MLSS (Multi-Level System of Support) program. The school has revamped its weekly progress report sent home to parents so that it includes any MLSS measures taken to ensure that stakeholders have a wrap-around view of the support students need and receive while at school. The progress report also includes a detailed and quantifiable report to help target students' specific needs and support. There is an MLSS coordinator for K-5 and 6-12, who

helps to monitor MLSS tiered intervention progress and supports the teachers and students with interventions and progress monitoring.

In addition to interim assessment data, exit exam scores for all seminars are tracked and monitored and are the basis for the school's mission goal. Students in grades 6-7 take 20 seminars per school year (five seminars per term for four terms/quarters). Students in grades 8-12 take 40 seminars per school year (five seminars per term for eight terms). The school has met or exceeded its mission goal for each year of its contract term.

1.b. Mission-specific or School-Specific Goals

Report on the school's performance in relation to the school- or mission-specific goals in the negotiated performance framework. Performance reports related to school or mission specific goals should be supported by raw data (masked to protect PII) and provided in **Appendix A-2 Mission Goal Data**. The school should report on the performance in each year of the contract term.

Schools that have not met their school- or mission-specific goals in each year of the contract term should provide a narrative that addresses the improvement actions taken and the success of those actions. The purpose of the narrative is to demonstrate substantial progress toward meeting the school or mission specific goals and maintaining that performance level. Implementation of the described improvement actions should be verifiable through evidence at the renewal site visit.

School response:

Mission Goal: At the end of each term, at least 70% of students, enrolled at both the 40th and 120th day, will pass* 80% of the standards-based exit exams administered as a measure of proficiency on each seminar's specific required standards and skills.

Mission goals were not rated for SY2019-20 due to the pandemic. However, since then, Explore Academy has earned a rating of "**Meets or Exceeds Standards**" for all years, SY2020-21, SY2021-22, and SY2022-23.

Please see Appendix A-2a for the Mission Goal Analyses and Appendix A-2b for the raw data (redacted for FERPA). Please note that Appendix A-2b is 688 pages long; this data was provided to CSD when the original analyses were submitted and the CSD rated the mission goals.

2. Organizational Performance

2.a. Educational Program

How is the school implementing the distinctive educational program described in its contract (Performance Framework Indicator 1.a.)? The response should address the ways in which the school is implementing the family, teacher, and student-focused terms of its contract. Please discuss any innovations the school has implemented in support of its mission and educational program.

School response:

Explore Academy has earned a rating of "**Meets Standard**" for indicator 1a for all years of its contract term. Explore Academy provides a comprehensive educational program as described below:

Shorter Learning Modules

As outlined in the Explore Academy educational plan, the school utilizes shorter learning modules, called seminars, where the entirety of the academic standards for the State of New Mexico are broken down across various required seminars per core content area. This breakdown of skill and content standards ensures that students are not only exposed to but gain proficiency in the academic standards and graduation requirements set forth by the State of New Mexico (and are provided choice in how this happens). At the end of each seminar, student proficiency is measured by an end of course exam, which is required of all seminars, to demonstrate proficiency across the standards. The shorter academic term allows the school to collect a significant level of data, to include seminar pass rates, pass rates between different flavors of the same seminar, progress monitoring, and regular feedback on teacher performance and flavor evaluation. This data is used to inform instruction, shared in PLCs, and used by teachers, the school's instructional coach, and academic coordinator to measure seminar success and student learning. To be developmentally appropriate, the length of the seminars shortens as the students move up in grade levels. A-D students (Kindergarten and Grade 1) have two teachers, one for STEM and one for humanities, for the entire school year. E-H students (Grades 2-3) switch teachers at semester, for a total of four teachers per year. Seminars for students in grades 4-7 are one-quarter in length. High school (grades 8-12) seminars are approximately 22 days each.

Choice-Based Philosophy

Explore Academy is committed to providing students with the power of a choice-based education. Students are given the freedom to choose from a set of seminar choices, which differentiates each seminar into a group of diverse "flavors" (or themes), created through the interests and passions of the Explore Academy teaching staff, and offered to students to provide them choice in how they learn. Students are given a course catalog which is designed to engage students from a variety of social and cultural backgrounds. The diversity of thematic offerings for each seminar allows our students the truly unique experience of piecing together their own individualized educational pathway while completing their state-mandated academic requirements. The elective nature of all content areas results in high levels of student engagement and interest, and return, outcome.

Academic Flex Periods

Elementary students have one flex period. Middle and High School students have two flex periods, one of which also includes time for lunch. As outlined in the Explore Academy contract, the school utilizes academic flex periods where students can meet with service providers, mentors, case managers, counselors, administrators, Near Peer tutors, teachers, and any other parties who may support them with their academic needs. Flex periods also allow for tutoring, studying, and collaborating, social-emotional learning, and other activities that are essential for all students as they build their academic habits and processes. Students in need of additional support are assigned to structured flex. The goal of structured flex is not only to provide academic tutoring, but also to mentor students as they develop their own independent learning skills. Students can be assigned to structured flex on a weekly or monthly basis, depending on the level of need, in order to receive tutoring, progress monitoring, mentoring, and focused study time.

Professional Collaboration Time for Staff (PLCs)

Explore Academy has developed a collaborative, comprehensive support system for teachers, including ongoing data-driven professional development, detailed staff training materials related to all aspects of the school (such as educational model, technology integration, instructional and grading practices, etc.), and built in collaboration time at regular intervals to promote sharing of best practices and strategies as well as materials and ideas.

PLCs meet weekly, led by teachers who are designated as PLC Chairs. Each content area also has a teacher who is the designated Department Head who manages department schedules, supply ordering, and other logistical tasks. The entire staff meets monthly for training and Term Break Days (two days per month between the school's academic terms) allow for more in-depth time for professional development and data analysis.

Parent Involvement

As per the Explore Academy educational program, the school continues to encourage parent involvement in both the classroom and school community. The Explore Academy PTO, originally established in 2014, continues to be active and hosts dances, fundraisers, and events, such as a carnival for spring and fall, arts festival, and a crafts fair. The Parent Advisory Council (PAC) is another voice for the school community at Explore Academy. In 2021, the 6-12 PAC expanded to include grades K-5. Parents and staff have an opportunity to collaborate for school based decision making and to help parents become more involved in the school. PAC has two co-chairs (principals) who work with the council to gain advice on instructional issues or areas that could be improved upon. There is equal membership between staff members and parent members. PAC will also look at coordinating with existing work forces for some of the older grades but also connect the community with the schools and the students. PAC is a voice for the students to help build our school community. The school also has an active Equity Council as mentioned in the response to 2.d. Equity and Identity. In addition to the PTO, PAC, and Equity Council, the school has, on average, about 35 parent volunteers to help support classrooms, lunches, field-trips, prep for school events, chaperoning, and school dances. The school also engages families by soliciting input via quarterly feedback surveys on all aspects of academic and operational aspects which is shared with the board and administration. Explore Academy principals for grades K-5 and 6-12 send out a weekly newsletter; the Wolf Pup Post and The Howl Newsletter, respectively, as a way to communicate and keep families informed in regard to grade-specific school information. The newsletters are also posted on the website to ensure that families have multiple opportunities to access pertinent information. Parents and students also have access to a PowerSchool portal to monitor student progress and grades for both for the current term as well as all previous terms. This allows families to see real time grades as they are updated weekly by teachers. Parents are also encouraged to sign up to receive Google Classroom notifications from all their children's classes so that they have access to weekly summaries, and scores on assignments and formative assessments. Teachers also send out a student-specific weekly progress report to families that include information on performance in the seminar standards, behavior, any interventions in place, and projected proficiency outcome for the seminar.

2.b. Financial Compliance

How is the school managing its finances (Performance Framework Indicators 2.a-f.)?

For each year in which the school had a significant deficiency, material weakness, or repeated finding(s) identified in the external audit, the school must provide a narrative explaining the improvement actions made to meet financial compliance requirements and the effectiveness of those actions in improving financial compliance. Success should be identified by specific changes in practice and changes in the audit findings in subsequent years. The purpose of the narrative is to demonstrate substantial progress toward achieving and maintaining financial compliance. Implementation of the described improvement actions should be verifiable through evidence at the site including renewal site visit.

If the school's Board of Finance was suspended at any time during the term of the contract, the school must provide a narrative explaining the actions taken on the school's own initiative to correct financial compliance and regain the Board of Finance Authority and the success of those actions. The school must also describe the current status of the Board of Finance and continuing actions to ensure the same

financial challenges do not reoccur. Success should be identified by specific changes in practice. The narrative must be supported by evidence to be reviewed during the renewal site visit.

School response:

In FY20, Explore Academy received two audit findings related to internal payroll controls and food services revenue, neither of which were classified as noncompliance or material weaknesses. The food services revenue finding related to proper accounting of student payments for school lunches and activities, and was a recurring finding from 2019. Both FY20 findings were addressed via improved managerial oversight, and neither recurred after FY20.

In FY21, the school received two audit findings related to timing of requests for reimbursement (RfRs) and accounts payable accruals, neither of which were classified as noncompliance or material weaknesses. Improved procedures for processing and submitting RfRs and improved controls for managing accounts payable invoices were put in place, and the finding related to RfRs did not recur.

In FY22, Explore Academy received a single material weakness finding involving multiple issues related to the end-of-year financial close and reporting. This was considered a recurring finding related to the business management controls that resulted in the FY21 accounts payable accrual finding. Improved managerial oversight was implemented and a new business manager was put in place for the FY23 school year to resolve this issue.

2.c. Governance Responsibilities

Describe how the school has met governance responsibilities during the term of the contract (Performance Framework Indicators 3.a.). Specifically, identify any time when membership on the governing body fell below the requirements in their by-laws or the statutory minimum of five members. Identify the amount of time any vacancies were open and identify any board members who did not complete required training hours in any year of the contract term. For any governance requirements the school was unable to meet, provide a narrative describing the improvement actions the school implemented to move toward full compliance. The purpose of the narrative is to demonstrate substantial progress toward meeting all governance requirements. The implementation of such actions must be verifiable through evidence during the renewal site visit.

School response:

Membership

The Governing Board membership is within the by-law requirements (5-9 members) and a minimum of five (5) members has been maintained throughout the contract term.

Membership Changes

2021: 9 days of vacancy when Ray Barton resigned effective 8/1/2021 and Patrick Molina was designated on 8/10/2021

2022: 22 days of vacancy when David Kulb and Eva Vigil resigned effective 6/30/2022; Richard Griffith and Dotty McKinney were designated at the next board meeting on 7/22/2022.

2023: 0 days of vacancy when John Garletts resigned effective 8/8/2023 and Aaron Hamilton was designated on that day.

Governance Requirements

Explore Academy Governing Council has not received any repeat "Working to Meet Standard" ratings

and no “Does Not Meet” ratings.

There was a “Working to Meet” standard rating for 2022-2023, indicator 3c Reporting Requirements (“The school complies with reporting deadlines from the PED, PEC, and other state agencies.”) which should have actually been for indicator 3a Governance Requirements (“The governing body notifies PEC of board membership changes within 30 days, with complete documentation, [and] fills all vacancies within 45 days, or 75 days, if extension is requested by school.”) The situation for this rating was that two board members resigned effective 6/30/2022. At the very next meeting, on July 22, 2022, two new board members were designated. All designation and resignation forms were submitted together as soon as all signed and notarized documents were completed and received, 8/11/2022. This all occurred within 45 days of the effective date of the resignation. However, the school apparently missed the deadline of reporting the resignations, separately and alone, by several days since that change was due within 30 days even though the same form with the designated replacements is due in 45 days.

PEC Meeting Date	School Name	•Resignation • Removal • Term Expire • Designation • New Position	Member's Name	Date of Action	PED	Reported	Completed
					Notification Date	Timely	Documentation
9/16/2022	Explore ABQ	Designation	Eila Dott (Dotty) Mckinney	7/22/2022	8/11/2022	Y	Y
9/16/2022	Explore ABQ	Designation	Dr. Richard Griffith	7/22/2022	8/11/2022	Y	Y
9/16/2022	Explore ABQ	Resignation	Eva Vigil	6/30/2022	8/11/2022	N	Y
9/16/2022	Explore ABQ	Resignation	David Kulb	6/30/2022	8/11/2022	N	Y

2.d. Equity and Identity

How is the school protecting the rights of all students (Performance Framework Indicator 4.a.)? How is the school complying with the Martinez-Yazzie mandate to provide culturally and linguistically relevant instruction and to support and validate students’ cultures, identities, and sense of belonging? How is the school complying with the requirements of the Indian Education Act (NMSA § 22-23A), the Hispanic Education Act (NMSA § 22-23B), and the Black Education Act NMSA § 22-23C)? What role does the school’s equity council play in protecting the rights of all students?

School response:

All K-12 teachers at Explore Academy receive ongoing, embedded professional development in culturally responsive instruction. This includes professional development, focused on classroom culture during in-service days at the beginning of each school year that continues throughout the year through formative walkthroughs, coaching cycles, and evaluations. Not only is this best practice in education, it ensures that the school is complying with the Martinez-Yazzie mandate, the Hispanic Education Act, Indian Education Act, and the Black Education Act.

While the school is not required to engage in tribal consultation, it works to ensure equitable and culturally relevant learning environments, educational opportunities, and culturally relevant instructional materials for all students, including Native Americans. The school is also in compliance with all requirements of the Black Education Act, including board policy revisions (reviewed and proposed by the Equity Council) and annual training on anti-racism and racial sensitivity for all staff. The school has implemented NM PED Language and Culture Division mini-grants for two years in a row to purchase culturally relevant literacy materials and pay for teacher / instructional leader professional development.

At the K-5 level, culturally and linguistically responsive (CLR) instruction is also paired with social-emotional and academic development focused on the whole child. The students' many facets of culture and human development is considered and time is reserved each day and each week for holistic practices. Each day begins with a Morning Meeting and ends with a Closing Circle, evidence-based Responsive Classroom practices. On Fridays, there is dedicated time for social and emotional learning lessons, as well as a whole school assembly to celebrate community members, clubs held during the school day which include cultural dance and Spanish language options, and self-directed / cooperative research projects through a Genius Hour-like structure. Intentional community-building builds relationships among and between teachers and students, establishing a strong foundation for academic and social emotional development.

At the 6-12 level, CLR professional development has been introduced to campus leaders by way of Equity Council training using Dr. Sharroky Hollie's textbook, *Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching and Learning – Classroom Practices for Student Success, Grades K-12* (2nd Edition). PLC leaders are using the materials in team meetings and with students. Principals are using PED equity-based observation tools and training/supporting staff to perform the following from the "innovating" column:

- Strategies for students to interact with each other and offer feedback to peers;
- Grade-level appropriate scaffolds that support students' language and academic proficiency levels and IEP goals for content and explanation of academic tasks;
- Ensuring understanding of idioms and figurative language by clarifying and re-phrasing when necessary;
- Opportunities for students to lead and direct lesson components; and/or
- Intentionally creating connections to students' cultural and linguistic background knowledge.

PLCs work with the two Assistant Principals to create and share best practices to make these goals a reality in all Explore classrooms. One strong example of where Explore Academy is set up for success is "opportunities for students to lead and direct lesson components." This is one of the main tenets of Explore that we call "seminar." Seminar means that students are teaching 50% of the course with the teacher, to each other, and for each other. Teachers are extensively trained in this model and almost half of the Explore Academy model teacher observation requires peers leading the learning. We believe in this method of delivery wholeheartedly in order for students to see and hear each other and develop their own voice and agency. CLR and equity training include the understanding and appreciation of our diverse students, home and community importance and influence, and the many cultural facets that all students bring to school.

Students in grades 6-12 attend a weekly advisory period that includes CLR and equity training and practice. Advisory groups are multi-age peers in an inclusive setting that fosters SEL and community strengthening lessons and activities. Our FLEX program also offers opportunities for peer tutoring and support in either a structured or open environment. Our Activities Program and Friday Clubs provide multiple, weekly opportunities for students to work together at lunch and flex time to play and get to know peers. Play is a huge part of understanding others at Explore Academy. Students can be seen working on team activities, dancing, playing games, working on school projects, and bonding during these regularly scheduled times.

Students' rights are protected and encouraged in all classrooms by vetting teacher tools, assessments, and projects. The Director of Secondary Instruction and a small team of teacher test-writers carefully craft and review all 6-12 Core Exit Exams. Each final exam is then modified into two more tiers (B and C) for students with written modifications. Cultural and regional relevance and sensitivity is a lens through which exams are made. Lexile levels are checked for written passages to ensure their appropriateness and accessibility. Flavor Assessments are continuously shared and examined each month in a seminar model session. Teachers must run their content and projects through a Flavor Assessment Teacher

rubric, explain their standard-based goals with the content team, and receive approval from the PLC and Instructional Coach.

2.e. Tribal Consultation

Pursuant to the Indian Education Act, NMSA 22-23A-1 et. seq, and Subsections C and D of the Charter School Act, NMSA 22-8B-12.2, if the school is located on tribal land or serves a high percentage of Native American students, describe how the school complied with the requirements of ongoing consultations with tribal authorities.

School response: Not applicable for Explore Academy

2.f. Other Performance Framework Indicators

For any Performance Framework indicator for which a school received a “Does Not Meet Standard” or a repeated “Working to Meet Standard” rating over the term of the contract, the school should provide a narrative to address improvement actions it has made to correct those findings. The purpose of the narrative is to demonstrate substantial progress toward meeting organizational performance expectations. Implementation of the described improvement actions should be verifiable through evidence at the renewal site visit.

If the school has received any Office of Civil Rights (OCR) complaints, formal special education complaints or NM Attorney General complaints, the school must identify those, provide all communications (redacted to protect PII) related to those complaints in **Appendix B-1 Complaint Communications**, and describe the current status of the complaint process. If any of those complaints have been resolved and resulted in a finding that the school violated any law, the school must provide a narrative describing the required compensatory and corrective actions required and their status in implementing those actions. The implementation of such actions must be verifiable through evidence during the renewal site visit.

School response:

Indicator 1d Rights of English Learners

The Annual Report indicates that the school received a repeat “Working to Meet Standard” in SY2019-20 and SY2020-21 for this indicator. While those were the ratings assigned to the school by CSD, they are not accurate.

- 2019-2020: The reason for the “Working to Meet” rating was that there “were three 13 potential errors noted on the STARS ELP Error Report, including seven (7) who were coded as IFEP (initially fluent that have prior proficient scores on ELP tests and should be marked as RFEP (reclassified fluent) and three (3) who, more importantly, are marked IFEP but have prior ELP test scores of Not Proficient and may require ELL support and services.” As reported to CSD, the simple coding errors were quickly corrected in PowerSchool with no impact to students or services. Also, all three students that had prior ELP assessments were, in fact, NOT English Learners and the explanations were confirmed by Kirsi Laine of the Language and Culture Bureau and provided to CSD (attached as Appendix G-1 Explore Academy Response to Annual Report SY20).
- 2020-2021: The indicator should have been marked “Meets Standard”. There was no check of ELL during the site visit nor any mention in the Preliminary Report, to which the school is allowed to respond. The school keeps a running spreadsheet of all ELL status investigations and provided that prior to the site visit. This is maintained because the STARS ELP Error Report will continue to list errors that have been resolved due to the fact that errors identified are not corrected in STARS. This was explained in detailed correspondence with CSD (attached as Appendix G-2 Explore Academy Response to Annual Report SY21).

Explore Academy has been commended by the Language and Culture Bureau (now Division) for its detailed efforts and process for properly identifying the English Learner status of all students. The staff not only reviews prior school records, parent responses on the enrollment forms, and Language Usage

Surveys (when new to public school), but also researches program and assessment facts in STARS for every student who enrolls at the school. These methods have been used since the prior contract term.

Indicator 2c Responsive to Audit Findings:

The school received a “Does Not Meet Standard” in SY2020-21 for indicator 2.c. Responsive to Audit Findings. This was due to a repeat finding regarding Food Service Fund Revenues. This finding from SY20 was related to proper accounting of student payments for school lunches and activities and was a recurring finding from FY19. It was not classified as noncompliance or a material weakness. It was addressed via improved managerial oversight and did not recur after FY20.

Indicator 2b Accounting Principles:

The school received a “Does not Meet Standard” in SY2022-23 for indicator 2.b. Accounting Principles due to a Material Weakness audit finding regarding Financial Close and Reporting. The single material weakness finding involved multiple issues related to the end-of-year financial close and reporting in FY22. This finding was related to the business management controls. Improved managerial oversight was implemented and a new business manager was put in place for the FY23 school year to resolve this issue.

Formal Complaints

The school is not aware of any complaints made to the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) or the NM Attorney General. There was one complaint filed with the NMPED Special Education Division that resulted in a corrective action plan. The action steps included an assurance to abide by the Corrective Action Plan (CAP), a meeting with NMPED Special Education Liaisons, a plan for tracking and responding to parental requests, hold an IEP meeting for the student in question as soon as pending evaluations were completed, and provide training to school staff. All steps were completed timely and the CAP was closed on January 19, 2023 by the Special Education Division. Appendix B-1 contains redacted information regarding the complaint communications.