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**Charter Schools Division  
Preliminary Renewal Analysis and Recommendation  
November 1, 2023**

**School Name:** Taos Academy

**School Address:** 110 Paseo del Canon W Taos, NM 87571

**Head Administrator:** Dr. Traci Filiss

**Governing Board Chair:** Dean Caldwell

**Contract Term:** 2019–2024

**Statutory Renewal Requirements**

According to New Mexico Statutes Annotated (NMSA) 1979, Section 22-8B-12 K., a charter may be suspended, revoked, or not renewed by the chartering authority if the chartering authority determines that the charter school:

- (1) committed a material violation of any of the conditions, standards or procedures set forth in the charter contract;
- (2) failed to meet or make substantial progress toward achievement of the department's standards of excellence or student performance standards identified in the charter contract;
- (3) failed to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management;
- (4) for a charter school located on tribal land, failed to comply with ongoing consultations pursuant to the Indian Education Act; or
- (5) violated any provision of law from which the charter school was not specifically exempted.

## Preliminary Renewal Recommendation

The Charter Schools Division (CSD) recommends that Taos Academy (TA) be renewed for a term of five years without condition.

### Part B: Progress Report

The school's narratives in Part B are rated Meets Standard, Demonstrates Substantial Progress, or Failing to Demonstrate Progress according to the rubric on pages 6-7 of the 2023 Charter School Renewal Application.

Part B: Progress Report	
Academic Performance	Rating
1.a. Student Outcomes	Meets the Standards
1.b. Mission-Specific Goals	Meets the Standards
Organizational Performance	
2.a. Educational Program	Meets the Standards
2.b. Financial Compliance	Meets the Standards
2.c. Governance Responsibilities	Meets the Standards
2.d. Equity and Identity	Meets the Standards
2.e. Tribal Consultation	N/A
2.f. Other Performance Framework Indicators	Meets the Standards

#### 1.a. Student Outcomes

Taos Academy (TA) made substantial progress toward achievement of the department's standards of excellence and student performance standards. TA outperformed 77.9% of high schools for a Vistas designation of Spotlight in 2021-22. The school's proficiency rates for reading, math and science were 51%, 26%, and 51% respectively, exceeding statewide proficiencies of 34%, 25% and 33%. The school's 4-year graduation rate of 93% significantly exceeds the state average of 77% for Cohort 2021.

The school has also used NWEA data to assess learning loss and note recent upward trends. To improve outcomes in math the school offers live math classes in addition to what students receive on Edgenuity. The school increased access to math tutoring and during the last years of the current contract, the school has dedicated a significant number of resources to materials and interventions that can help support TA students in math.

The PED is releasing 2022-23 [Vistas](#) data publicly at 5:00 PM on November 1, 2023. The data were provided to CSD the morning of November 1 so it could be incorporated into this report. Overall Vistas score was not available prior to the public release, but the school's 2022-23 proficiency and growth rates, compared with the district where the school is located and statewide data, are:

2022-23 PED Accountability Data	Proficiency			Growth	
	ELA	Math	Science	ELA	Math
Taos Academy	54%	27%	51%	3%	1%
Taos Municipal Schools	43%	26%	42%	4%	3%
New Mexico Statewide	38%	24%	34%	4%	0%

### **1.b. Mission-specific Goals**

The school met or exceeded its mission-specific goals every year that data were collected during the contract term. The school's mission goal is that all students complete at least one credit in a Career and Technology Education course which includes: 21st century classes, dual credit, internship, STEAM institute classes, career prep, and elective and/or honors classes. To exceed the goal, 80% or more of TA students needed to complete a course. In school years 2019-20 and 2022-2023 the school exceeded the goal as written with 82% of students earning a credit in 2019-2020 and with 80% earning a credit in 2022-2023. In school years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 the school met the goal with 71% and 75% earning credits.

### **2.a. Educational Program**

Taos Academy (TA) has a demonstrated record of meeting all standards of the educational program as defined in the performance contract. Students complete core courses in Edgenuity, an online curriculum, at their own pace, either remotely or on campus in the Student Success Lab (SSL) where teachers are available for support. All students can work in the SSL; remote work is permitted only if students are keeping up with required work. If students fall below 70% in any course, they are required to sign an academic contract and do their work on campus until they are back on track.

Substantial evidence provided in TA's Part B of the renewal application in addition to observable evidence and documentation collected by the Charter Schools Division (CSD) during the renewal site visit on October 12, 2023, verify that TA's Educational Program, as defined in the contract, is being implemented with fidelity.

TA was one of the first charter schools in New Mexico to institute a hybrid learning model. The CSD observed supported digital instruction classes through Edgenuity, Rosetta Stone, and Khan Academy, required Math and Language Arts enrichment classes, and experiential curriculum during the site visit. Specifically, classroom observations during the site visit verified the variety of approaches that TA takes to engage its students. CSD observed students working independently and working collaboratively in a variety of ways and on a plethora of topics including: an ELA enrichment class where paired students discussed Harper Lee's life and

literary themes, a SMART lab class where students worked on various projects including a presentation on social media safety, a college and career prep class where students wrote and discussed cover letters, a cooking class where students prepared authentic New Mexican cuisine for the upcoming open house, and a music class where students of all skill levels practiced solo and group pieces. Parent, teacher, and leadership focus groups verified the individualized instruction as well as the innovative opportunities for students to be involved in the community, to take deep dives into tech and STEAM-based learning, and to acquire 21st Century skills in communication and leadership. During the parent focus group, a guardian of a student with autism stated that the school offered her son just the right amount of socialization. Other parents applauded the importance of the flexible work week as many families live long driving distances from the center of Taos.

The student, teacher, and parent focus groups all verified the flexibility afforded by Edgenuity and online curriculum and the self-motivation that it instilled in students; at the same time, each focus group acknowledged its drawbacks, primarily that it is easy for a student to fall behind in classwork. TA, consistent with the educational program components in its contract, has strategies in place to ensure that students succeed. All focus groups verified the academic advisors as a source of communication and academic support for students. Students, teachers, and leadership focus groups verified the use of Friday School to provide one-on-one support for students who needed more support in online coursework or CTE class offerings.

21<sup>st</sup>-century learning skills such as communication, teamwork, and research were observed in five of the classes visited by the CSD. Direct instruction was observed in a math class on polynomials, guided teaching was observed in a college and career preparation course as well as in an ELA enrichment class, and a constructivist approach was observed in all the SMART labs attended by the CSD. One middle school student practiced leadership skills as he prepared presentations on the upcoming eclipse.

Finally, parent, student, and leadership focus groups verified that TA students are earning college credits. All stakeholders described several opportunities for students to sign up for dual enrollment classes and several individuals underscored the many students who would or had graduated from TA with an Associate's Degree.

## **2.b. Financial Compliance**

The school has had a few audit findings, with no significant deficiency, material weakness, or repeat audit findings in any fiscal year of the contract term.

The school's financial workflow is a well-structured process, with clear procedures and responsibilities. The assistant business manager (on site) works closely with the business manager and the head administrator to ensure procedures are followed. The school is committed to constantly seeking best practices for improvement. These three work with the governing board finance committee to address issues as they arise. Annual audits are used as a tool to enhance internal control effectiveness. The focus is on clarifying roles and responsibilities to enhance performance.

Weekly meetings and yearly strategic planning sessions with the Governing Council help shape the budget and enrollment projections for the coming years. The renewal visit interview demonstrated the school's robust financial management and continuous efforts to improve both financial performance and education outcomes in alignment with its mission. The school's emphasis on accountability and transparency is evident in its well structured financial workflow and reporting processes.

### **2.c. Governance Responsibilities**

The school meets all governance requirements in all contract years. The site visit interview with board members revealed a board that is knowledgeable, well-informed, and active in the school governance.

### **2.d. Equity and Identity**

The school has an established Equity Council that holds monthly meetings. The Equity Council consists of teachers, parents, students, and other staff members who represent students with disabilities, English Learners, students who are economically disadvantaged, and students who are from Native American communities in Taos. Leadership explained that the Council works with the Taos Community Council in order to widen their reach. Leadership at the school discussed the school's goal of improving the school model so that it was more culturally and linguistically responsive.

### **2.e. Tribal Consultation**

The school does not fall under the Indian Education Act (NMSA 22-23A) or the 6.35.2 NMAC definition of a "historically defined Indian-impacted" school.

### **2.f. Other Performance Indicators**

No other indicators had a Does Not Meet Standard or repeated Working to Meet Standard.

Unrated Sections of Application	
Part D: Petitions of Support	Submitted as Required
Part E: Facilities	Submitted as Required
Part F: Change in Authorizer	N/A