BEFORE THE PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION STATE OF NEW MEXICO

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS
COMMUNITY INPUT HEARING
EQIP ACADEMY OF NEW MEXICO
July 9, 2024
1:00 p.m.
New Mexico Activities Association
6600 Palomas Avenue, Northeast
Albuquerque, New Mexico
-andZoom Webinar Video-Teleconference

REPORTED BY: Cynthia C. Chapman, RMR-CRR, NM CCR #219 Bean & Associates, Inc. Professional Court Reporting Service 201 Third Street, NW, Suite 1630 Albuquerque, New Mexico 87102

JOB NO.: 9240N (CC)

2 (Pages 2 to 5)

	2 (Pages 2 to 3)
2	4
1 APPEARANCES	1 THE CHAIR: All right. Good afternoon,
2 COMMISSIONERS:	2 everyone. And thanks for your patience while we get
3 PATRICIA GIPSON, Chair	this all set up.
STEVEN J. CARRILLO, Vice Chair 4 TIMOTHY E. BECK, Secretary	So I am going to call to order the PEC
4 TIMOTHY E. BECK, Secretary MELISSA ARMIJO, Member	
5 REBEKKA BURT, Member	J 1 8 37
STEWART INGHAM, Member	6 July 9th, 2024, and it is 1:12 p.m. Oh, I'm sorry.
6 K.T. MANIS, Member 7 STAFF:	7 It's Thursday it's Tuesday. No, Thursday is
8 CORINA CHAVEZ Director	8 July 11th. I'm getting ahead of myself, because I'm
Charter School/Options for	9 looking at this agenda. Because I'm looking at the
9 Parents and Families Division	back of the agenda.
10 LUCY VALENZUELA Technical Assistance and Training Specialist	So thank you very much for bearing with us
11 Charter School/Options for Parents	12 once again.
and Families Division	So I'm going to call this meeting to
12	order, and I'm going to ask Commissioner Beck to
MELISSA BROWN Technical Assistance and Support 13 (MISSY) and Training Administrator	15 please call roll.
Charter School/Options for	16 (Commissioner Beck inaudible.)
14 Parents and Families Division	17 SECRETARY BECK: Commissioner Burt.
15 16	18 COMMISSIONER BURT: Here.
17	19 SECRETARY BECK: Commissioner Ingham.
18	20 COMMISSIONER INGHAM: Here.
19	21 SECRETARY BECK: Commissioner Manis.
20 21	22 COMMISSIONER MANIS: Here.
22	23 SECRETARY BECK: Chair Gipson.
23	24 THE CHAIR: Here.
24 25	25 SECRETARY BECK: Vice Chair Carrillo.
1 INDEX TO PROCEEDINGS 2 PAGE	VICE CHAIR CARRILLO: Here. SECRETARY BECK: Secretary Beck, here.
3 1 Call to Order 4	That means that we currently have six.
Roll Call 4 Pledge of Allegiance	THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. And I'm
Salute to the New Mexico Flag	5 just going to remind folks with the mics. Once you
5	6 finish speaking, if you could turn the mic off,
2 Approval of the Agenda 5	because there's some challenges with the with the
3 Community Input Hearing for 6	8 sound if there's multiple mics that are open; okay?
7 Equip Academy of New Mexico Application and Peer Review Report	9 So I'm now going to ask everyone to stand
Application and Peer Review Report 8	for the Pledge of Allegiance and the Salute to the
4 Recess 141	10 for the Pledge of Allegiance and the Salute to the 11 New Mexico Flag.
9 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE 142	_
REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE 142	12 (Pledge of Allegiance and Salute to the 13 New Mexico Flag conducted.)
ATTACHMENTS:	14 THE CHAIR: We are on to Item No. 2, which
11 1 List of Attendees	
1 List of Attendees 12 2 Script for Interpreter	 is the Approval of the Agenda. VICE CHAIR CARRILLO: Motion to approve.
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14 15	esiminasisi Ere Bereit. Beech.
16	,
17	Commissioner Carrillo and a second by Commissioner
18 19	20 Burt.
20	21 All in favor? 22 (Commissioners so indicate.)
21	(Commissioners to mulcust)
22 23	23 THE CHAIR: Hearing opposed? 24 (No response.)
	24 (No response.)
24	1 /
	25 THE CHAIR: Hearing no opposition, the

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motion passes.

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Before we begin, there is an interpreter here. So we've asked her to do a brief introduction and let folks know that she is available if individuals are more comfortable communicating through the interpreter.

VICE CHAIR CARRILLO: And for those standing, there's a lot of seats right up here if you want a place to sit down, and in the front on the other side.

THE CHAIR: So as we -- for everyone, as we begin, because we do have a court reporter doing the minutes of this, she's on Zoom. So we are asking people to please make sure that you introduce yourself. Those at the table, once you've done it the first time. But if you also spell your last name for the record, we appreciate it.

So thank you.

(Interpreter presents introductory comments in Spanish.) (See Attachment 2)

THE CHAIR: So we are on to Item No. 3, which is the Community Input Hearing -- and I want to make sure I've got the name completely correct -for Equip Academy of New Mexico.

We have 26 people that have signed up for

charter schools in the country. And I'm committed to bringing a high-performing charter option to the west side of Albuquerque, with a fuller founding team. Thank you.

DR. RENEE DELGADO-RILEY: Madam Chair, Commissioners, my name is Renee Delgado-Riley. D-e-l-g-a-d-o hyphen R-i-l-e-y.

I've worked in higher education for 16 years, leading equity-centered assessments, strategic planning, and helping people use data for decision-making.

I'm excited to serve as the proposed board chair, because, as a Native New Mexican, somebody who grew up on the Albuquerque west side, and a parent of a child with complex learning abilities and mental health issues, I saw firsthand the challenges in public education.

I can't wait to share my expertise in this role, as well as to the academic and governance committees.

MS. SARA FITZGERALD: Madam Chair, Commissioners, my name is Sara Fitzgerald. F-i-t-z-g-e-r-a-l-d.

I'm a public policy and communications professional. I'm also our proposed vice chair.

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public comment when we get to that. So we're going to ask people to do your best to try to stay to two minutes or under for this so that we can get

everyone in. We want to make sure that everyone is

heard.

But we do have -- we want to be considerate of everyone's time as well. So if -- we do just ask that -- we do have a timer. You'll get a reminder when you're getting close to that time.

So letter B is the presentation by the applicant, which you have 20 minutes to use as you so choose. So welcome --

(Chair consults with Vice Chair Carrillo.)

So welcome, once again. And reminder, if you could, each individual that's going to speak up from the team, introduce yourself and then spell your last name for the record.

MS. MERCY HERRERA: Madam Commissioner, Madam Chair, thank you.

My name is Mercy Herrera, H-e-r-r-e-r-a. And I'm lead founder of the proposed -- I'm lead founder and proposed head of school of Equip Academy of New Mexico.

And I've spent the past decade teaching and leading in some of the highest performing

I bring years of experience in state education policy and community engagement, which I will contribute to our audit and governance committees.

MS. ALEJANDRA GRIJALVA: Madam Chair, Commissioners, my name is Alejandra Grijalva, G-r-i-j-a-l-v-a.

I'm a first-generation graduate, an English Language Learner, a Native New Mexican, and the parent of a two-year-old. And, as such, I'm excited to contribute my knowledge and nearly ten years of experience in the nonprofit sectors, serving underserved communities in the state, and also education policy and budgeting experience from the New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee, as I serve as the proposed board secretary, academic committee lead, and a finance committee member.

Thank you.

MS. JANET LEUNG: Madam Chair, Commissioners, my name is Janet Leung. L-e-u-n-g. I'm the director of business development for UNM Hospitals.

Growing up in Mississippi, I struggled to read. And if it weren't for a couple of public school teachers who made sure I could read and

understand The Three Billy Goats Gruff, I don't think I would be as successful as I am today.

I would love for more New Mexican students to have the same great early education experience that I had. I bring over 13 years of finance and accounting experience as the proposed treasurer, finance committee lead, and academics committee member for Equip Academy.

MS. MARY JONES: Madam Chair and committee members, my name is Mary Jones. J-o-n-e-s. I'm a partner at a law firm here in town and a lawyer of about ten years. I'm also the parent of a three-year-old, who is learning to read right now.

And as we all know -- I grew up in
New Mexico -- reading is important. There's no
other way to do what we do or succeed in life if you
can't effectively communicate with the people you're
working with.

As the proposed audit committee lead, I will bring a decade of legal experience and expertise to every aspect of this organization, making sure we are in compliance with all regulations and all policies and procedures.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.
MR. DANIEL IVEY-SOTO: Madam Chair,

Equip Academy of New Mexico.

I would love to start by grounding us in

the "why." Why academ--- why Equip? Why the west

side? And why now? I'm sorry.

I just want to thank everyone for being here that's been really, really supportive, from us.

So it's really a painful reality on what's happening with the proficiencies for students on the west side and across the west side in comparison to proficiency levels across Albuquerque, New Mexico.

We know as a team that this is unacceptable. And because statistics show that a lack of foundational skills limits the probabilities of life and limits the possibilities of success, like you all, we have a firm belief, and we know our children are far capable of achieving more.

And at Equip Academy, we know firsthand the power of education through our program. It really equips students with the knowledge and skills to take on any life goal that they set their mind to.

DR. RENEE DELGADO-RILEY: Every child has the opportunity to live out their greatness. Our commitment is to equip them to do so.

Our educational approach is joyful,

Commissioners, my name is Daniel Ivey-Soto, I-v as in "Victor" -e-y dash capital S-o-t-o.

I'm been volunteering as general counsel to the proposed school and the proposed board. I am a person who learned English as a Second Language and someone who actually never finished high school. And, as a result, I understand very much the importance of a school that focuses on the reading skills in the early years and the difference that that can make the rest of someone's life.

And I'm very excited to be involved with this school. Thank you.

MS. REBEKAH RUNYAN: Madam Chair and Commissioners, my name is Rebekah Runyan. It's R-u-n-y-a-n.

I'm the co-founder and co-CEO of K12 Accounting. We serve over 30 charter schools and school districts in the state of New Mexico. And I have 15 years' experience both auditing public schools in New Mexico and working as a business official in New Mexico.

THE CHAIR: So whenever you're ready, your time will start as soon as you begin.

MS. MERCY HERRERA: Thank you, Madam Chair. Missy, we're ready.

engaging, celebrates student curiosity, community, and really imagines what a literacy-rich,

K-through-5 school can and should be.

Our mission is by providing a top-tier, inquiry-based, college preparatory education.

Equip Academy New Mexico ensures our K-through-5 students master the knowledge and skills to dream audaciously, engage deeply, and pursue a life of purpose.

As you can see, every one of us joined this team because we stand behind our mission to transform academic achievement.

Our mission strategically anchors our educational model and is actualized in five key ways.

Next slide, please.

MS. MERCY HERRERA: So our school design is -- can really be described in five ways:

The first way is our inquiry-based approach. And this really deploys strategies that center student learning. They're the ones doing the thinking, the sense-making, the debating, and, through discourse, ultimately putting the ownership of learning on them.

The second element to our school design is

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our comprehensive literacy and language acquisition program, which is intentionally designed to meet the needs of all students, ensuring that they build strong, successful, and foundational reading skills.

Our -- our third design is that -- is educator excellence.

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So we believe firmly that for every student to learn, each teacher should be trained, coached, and supported, with a heavy focus on curriculum internalization, data analysis, and intentional action planning to support every student.

Our fourth element is our college preparatory culture. We believe every child has what it takes to earn a place of their choosing in college, regardless of where they come from, regardless what they look like, and regardless what their families have done.

We provide early college exposure and track college readiness indicators for students.

Lastly, is our rigorous curriculum.

DR. RENEE DELGADO-RILEY: Our evidence-based curriculum is nationally -- evidence that it shows successful rates in similar demography that we're going to be supporting. And we believe

ensuring that students are receiving necessary supports and timely interventions to support their learning.

Additionally, our tailored classroom supports include having a lead teacher and an instructional assistant with the appropriate credentials in the classroom in grades K through 2, and special education-focused, shared instructional assistants, in grades 3 through 5.

This is all done under our inclusion philosophy, ensuring that our teachers, student assistants, and students are working together to provide appropriate and necessary supports to students with disabilities.

Next slide, please.

We know what our demographic needs. 31 percent of our target population is made up of households that speak a language other than English. So ensuring that our school is prepared with a supportive and comprehensive EL -- or English language -- learning program is a priority of our school design.

And this starts with accurate identification of our EL students through a language usage survey and State-mandated assessments, such a

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in setting high expectations so every student can see themselves in the curriculum, from cultural background to a diverse array of experiences. So we're instituting a really rigorous curriculum to make sure that they're reading by December.

Kindergarteners will read to their families by December, and we believe strongly in that.

MS. ALEJANDRA GRIJALVA: So Equip Academy's school design prioritizes providing a highly supportive and inclusive learning environment for all of our students, every single student that walks through our doors.

Our intentional school design and commitment to inclusion ensure that every student receives the individualized support they need to the thrive academically and socially.

Our special education model is designed to serve our students with special needs within a general education setting as much as possible, while providing a multilayered system of support, or MLSS, as appropriate.

A highlight of our model is our dedicated Student Assistance Team, that will be responsible for weekly progress monitoring, IEP development, and the WIDA ACCESS Test.

The cornerstone of our program is our multilayered system of support that will provide regular progress monitoring that will inform data-driven instruction, and ensure appropriate support based on the student's actual needs and early -- and identifying early interventions when necessary.

Additionally, we are committed to cultural responsiveness through our culturally responsive curriculum and appropriate materials that reflect our student demographic and the philosophy that celebrates our students' diversity as their biggest strength.

DR. RENEE DELGADO-RILEY: So to ensure we're meeting the diversities of our students and being held accountable to the communities we serve, our tailored assessment design can help us accurately identify early learning gaps that can help drive instruction, monitor student progress, and set overall goals for the school.

So we're going to do this in a couple of ways, specifically through our Mission-Specific Goals, highly focused on the academic excellence.

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70 percent of our students will advance two or more reading levels in one academic year, as measured by Fountas & Pinnell Reading Assessment, which is grounded in the Science of Reading.

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For mathematical problem-solving, we expect 70 percent of our students will solve complex grade-level number stories accurately.

As a place of educator excellence, we're going to hold ourselves to high-quality instruction. And to do that we're going to have 190 hours annually of teacher professional development. There's going to be ongoing coaching and observations led by our proposed heads of school, and as well as quarterly data studies to ensure that teachers know how to use the data to not only drive instruction, but, ultimately, impact student learning.

Because of our inquiry-based approach, there's ongoing formative assessments that are embedded in the curriculum. So there's ongoing data collection that is very iterative that centers students in their learning.

This data will then drive the development of individual student learning goals that can address gaps, adjust them in realtime, which is, we committee. This is to ensure the most effective use of public and private funds to support the school's mission and to ensure compliance with PED.

We, as a mission, is to equip students with the knowledge and skills to succeed. Therefore, we have budgeted enough financial support for a full-time special education teacher and other needs that students may present upon enrollment.

If other needs arise, we have three grant writers on the board who will also help apply for grants in the future.

We will also have a dedicated fundraising team to develop and implement a fundraising -- a comprehensive fundraising strategy, which will include annual campaigns, major donor cultivation, and special events.

In terms of our long-term priorities, we will support our teachers with robust professional development each year. And we also plan on adding more staff support in the future, which includes instructional assistants, an assistant principal in residence, and an education coordinator.

Our largest long-term priority, however, is a permanent facility in year four on the west side to support our 450 students at max enrollment.

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know, both inclusive and equitable.

And, lastly, we'll rely on standards-based assessments, which are a series of summative assessments that give us a high-level understanding of student proficiency that we can look at overall trends over time, as well as disaggregated by our special populations.

Next slide, please.

MS. JANET LEUNG: In terms of our financial model, we as a proposed governing board, have a responsibility to review fiscal oversight, the management of public and private funds, and long-term priorities.

For oversight, we have a responsibility to ensure that the finances are compliant, especially with PED, our budget must be conservative, balanced, and aligned with public interests.

We all notice that the fiscal health of the school is dependent upon enrollment. We, as the proposed board, as the stewards of public health -stewards of public funds -- will review this metric closely in the planning year. Enrollment is very important. We will make recommendations, as needed.

In terms of our internal controls, we will review finances regularly through the finance

Next slide.

MS. SARA FITZGERALD: Continuous improvement and accountability are really central to the Equip Academy model, and we've designed our governance structure to make sure we're delivering that to our school community, both to the students and families that are part of that.

So to that end, our governing board will be overseeing these areas:

Mission and vision alignment, to make sure that we are making good on the promises that we make in our charter; academic accountability; legal compliance and fiscal health; the selection and evaluation of our head of school; strategic planning for the long-term success of our school; and public transparency, because we are not just stewards of public resources, but we're also community partners.

So to get started, if we're approved, we will immediately transition from a founding board to a governing board, and we'll do that by adopting our bylaws, electing officers and establishing committees, qualifying as a Board of Finance so that we can carry out our fiscal responsibilities, ensuring that we are in full compliance with the Open Meetings Act, and take steps to hire a head of

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production@litsupport.com

Bean & Associates, Inc. 201 Third Street NW, Ste. 1630, Albuquerque New Mexico 87102

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school; so approving that job description and starting to flesh out a contract so that we can make an offer.

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At that point we will also start scheduling our training. We know that State law requires that we complete ten hours of governing body training by the end of that first academic year. We want to make sure we get that done right away.

In terms of our regular board responsibilities, we'll be evaluating our head of school each year, using multiple measures. So 50 percent of that evaluation will be based on student achievement; 25 percent will be based on teacher observations and feedback; and that remaining 25 percent will be based on the PED high, objective, uniform State standards of evaluation, and school community feedback as well.

We'll also undergo an annual board evaluation as a governing body. And so we'll start with a detailed self-evaluation. We do have a rubric in our application to really look at ourselves in six important domains.

And we'll actually do that twice each year. So the second time, at the end of the year,

of respondents revealed the perceived benefit of a high-quality elementary school, like Equip, as important.

Through four focus groups and many one-on-one meetings with over 245 people across the Albuquerque community, they have demanded an overall sentiment and excitement about our school model.

Through our many local organizations and businesses, ranging from Head Starts, daycares, religious organizations, community organizations, businesses, overwhelmingly are endorsing a school like Equip Academy to open on the Albuquerque west side

And, lastly, we received 134 letters of support from families and community members amplifying the importance of having a school like Equip. This visual you see here represents over 16,000 words from community members' voices expressed during our focus groups.

A text-mining, statistical analysis was used to create word associations which refer to the strength and connections between community members' words.

As you can clearly see, community members' voices are amplified and vocalizing Equip's

when we do that, we'll also undergo an evaluation by our staff and by our school community as well through surveys to get their important feedback as well.

And to sustain or board long-term, each one of us will be responsible for leveraging our network to find other community-minded, committed members of our board who might be able to contribute skills and their values to be an asset to us. And we have a thorough vetting system to make sure that they're a good fit.

DR. RENEE DELGADO-RILEY: So strong community support is an indicator of the potential success of our school and reflects the local demand and commitment to our school mission.

Background research a few years ago in New Mexico revealed that over 80 percent of families want more choices in public education. And over 70 percent support opening more public charter schools.

Through extensive outreach, Equip
Academy -- as you can see here, we have lots of
people. But in addition to that, we've learned that
they really support us in a couple of different
ways, the first being our survey, where 97 percent

educational model, from inquiry-based to mission-vision to school design.

Next slide, please.

This visual -- not expecting you to read everything -- but it's a very complex web of connections created with community organizations, businesses, and community groups by the founding Equip team in the last ten months.

So the thicker the line, the more pink and more orange visually represent the intentional strength of that relationship that's going to be directly involved in executing our academic model.

Next slide, please.

Community voices are critical for understanding our community needs and aspirations, especially for the people in our proposed community. We are so grateful to our community for sharing their voice, which has helped inform our school design, and will continue to inform our school design.

And we really appreciate everyone that showed up today. I'd like to take a moment, if you're willing and able, to please stand so that the founding team can recognize your courageousness to share your voice and time with us.

26 1 (People stand.) 1 Encore Enterprises. We are business owners in a 2 2 DR. RENEE DELGADO-RILEY: And I don't want variety of businesses within the real estate, health care, and consumer industries. 3 to read all these quotes. But I just think some of 3 4 4 them are critical. We own and operate dental practices across 5 5 "All New Mexico students deserve access to the country. We own a total of 37 practices in the 6 6 high-quality options now." United States, five of which are in New Mexico and 7 7 "Education can be the tool to impact very close to your community. And in New Mexico, we 8 lives, but the first step is access." Next slide. 8 employ about 101 people at all levels of skill and 9 MS. MERCY HERRERA: We just want to thank 9 education. 10 10 you with three things. The first is our commitment We have dentists, hygienists, treatment 11 to provide a high-achieving academy that fosters 11 coordinators, front desk receptionists, office 12 curiosity to develop independent and critical 12 coordinators, and leaders. thinkers. We center community through partnership 13 13 And while we see labor issues across the 14 and maintain transparency and accountability as an 14 country continue to be a problem for us in terms of 15 institute. 15 staffing post COVID, I will say that staffing and 16 16 We are grateful for you all today taking finding superstar talent in New Mexico continues to 17 the time to engage with us in lending your area of 17 be a challenge. 18 expertise, and we look forward to discussing this 18 And that is why I'm here today to fully 19 possibility with you today. 19 support the Equip Academy founding team's desire to 20 20 THE CHAIR: Thank you. open a charter in the community and to serve the 21 21 Is there anyone here from Albuquerque community of our employees and their families as 22 22 Public Schools? well, because the hope is that kids who are educated 23 23 (No response.) at Equip Academy can grow up to be, in our benefit, 24 24 THE CHAIR: Okay. Is there anyone here selfishly, dentists, or any other professionals that 25 25 from a tribal entity? would encourage a business like Encore, a business 27 29 1 (No response.) 1 that I'm a part of, to continue to expand their 2 2 THE CHAIR: Okay. footprint in Albuquerque and New Mexico. 3 3 We are now on to public comments. I also strongly believe that kids who grow 4 4 MS. MELISSA BROWN: Do you want people in up to be a part of the labor force in New Mexico and 5 5 the room or people on Zoom first? who have ties and deep connections to the state make 6 THE CHAIR: Let's do the Zoom people 6 better overall hires and contribute to the very rich 7 7 first. culture of our community and our local businesses. 8 8 MS. MELISSA BROWN: Okay. So first up on So with that, I hope the committee 9 Zoom we have -- and I apologize for not pronouncing 9 approves Equip's application and proposal today. 10 10 it correctly -- Nili Sangani. Thank you. 11 11 MS. MELISSA BROWN: Next up, we'll have And remember to please spell your first 12 12 and last name for the court reporter. Janice Arnold. I'm just finding you. 13 13 I'm going to give you permission to talk I can't find Janice Arnold. 14 14 I'll go to John Jones. You can unmute in just a second here. 15 15 yourself, John, and I will start the timer when you There you go. 16 FROM THE PUBLIC: Hi. Can everyone hear 16 finish spelling your name. 17 17 me? FROM THE PUBLIC: I'm John Jones, 18 MS. MELISSA BROWN: We can. 18 J-o-n-e-s. Pleased to see the approach this board 19 FROM THE PUBLIC: I'm really happy to be 19 is taking with their goals and objectives to focus 20 20 on reading and math competencies in a dual-language going first. 21 21 My name is Nili Sangani. First name is environment. I would like to hear a little bit 22 N-i-l-i. Last name, S-a-n-g-a-n-i. 22 about the market analysis they've done to establish 23 23 So a little bit about myself. the need for these. 24 24 I think they're on -- they're spot on the I am a board member and a senior mark. I would like to hear some of that data. 25 25 vice president of operations at a business called

Thank you.
 MS. MELISSA BROWN: Thank you. Next we
 have Andrea Hawkins.
 FROM THE PUBLIC: Hi, there. Can you hear

future.

FROM THE PUBLIC: Hi, there. Can you hear me?

MS. MELISSA BROWN: Yes, we can.
FROM THE PUBLIC: Okay. My name is Andrea
Hankins, H-a-n-k-i-n-s. And I'm happy to share why
I think Equip Academy of New Mexico is not only a
welcome addition to Albuquerque's west side. And
having grown up on Albuquerque's west side, I do
believe that it's necessary to our children's

As so many of you know, our academic performance for our children are really low. It's very below par. They're struggling with reading and math. And the proficiency rates in our area are so low, only about 26 percent in reading, and I believe even lower in math, from what I understand.

Equip Academy's unique approach with the strong emphasis on literacy and inquiry-based instruction is -- I believe it's designed to address these issues head on. This will give our kids the foundation that they need too excel academically.

I really like Equip Academy's model, and I

have to pay for this level of education. And I
 truly am excited about the future of our children,
 and I just encourage you to support this incredible
 initiative.

Thank you.

MS. MELISSA BROWN: Thank you. If Janice Arnold is using a different channel's name, you could raise your hand. Otherwise, we could go to the room.

I'm thinking that it's D'Val -- oh, there we go. Sorry. We'll go to Monique. You can speak.

FROM THE PUBLIC: Hi. My name is Monique Diaz. I am really grateful to be here today.

MS. MELISSA BROWN: Can you please spell your name?

FROM THE PUBLIC: Monique, M-o-n-i-q-u-e. Last name, D-i-a-z. I grew up going to school on the west side of Albuquerque. I am really excited to see a school like Equip be started for the children of that community on that side -- or just in Albuquerque, in general. From my experience, it's very much needed.

You know, I was a very lucky kid growing up, knowing, you know, just with the backing of my mom who had been to college, and, looking at the

think what sets them apart is the commitment to teacher excellence. I like the idea that teachers will undergo a rigorous professional development and they'll get ongoing support through regular observations and life coaching. And I really just believe that this gives our children the best of the best.

Early -- Equip's early introduction to the idea of college and career opportunities, I think, is transformative, starting at the kindergarten level. Speaking to kids like, you know, "when you go to college," not "if you go to college." And truly preparing them for that experience, I think, is huge. I think it's crucial to their futures.

I myself am a product of private education here in Albuquerque. And as a parent of a 15-year-old, I have invested in private education for my son for grades kindergarten through the eighth grade.

And I truly do wish that Equip Academy of New Mexico was around during my son's younger years. I think this model gives our children the opportunity to thrive without placing such a financial burden on their parents.

I do think that our community should not

rest of my family, just noticing, like, what a blessing that my mom had that opportunity and to help me groom -- groom me to a way to get myself there as well.

Had I not had something like that, I would have struggled, just like I saw a bunch of my friends in school struggle.

And so I'm very excited to hear about a school that is going to help children get there, despite whether their families have had an experience like that or not, because -- I don't know. My heart is in the children of New Mexico.

I love where I'm from, and I feel like the children there deserve every little bit that this school has to offer. And I'm just really excited to see what comes in it.

So I'll just share a quick experience.

In middle school, I moved from El Paso, Texas, to Rio Rancho. And without any question, I was placed into a program for children who didn't speak English as a first language without even being asked.

My parents were not asked. No one asked. It was just assumed. And I -- after a couple of months, I let my mom know that school seemed really

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She questioned that, because she didn't like that for me. So she did digging and was able to realize that I was in the wrong program.

And so I would really absolutely hate for a student to have to go through something like that long-term and not be challenged to grow and to become everything that they could become because the parents either didn't know or the child didn't know to ask or any of that.

And so I really hope that that is something that can be avoided. And I really feel like with a school like Equip Academy, that can absolutely be avoided.

So thank you for letting me share today. MS. MELISSA BROWN: Okay. In the room, D'Val Westphal.

FROM THE FLOOR: I'm D'Val Westphal. That's D apostrophe V-a-l W-e-s-t-p-h-a-l.

I'm the executive vice president of policy and programs for the Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce, and I'm also a westside resident and the proud parent of a charter school graduate.

And so I'd like to share why approving Equip Academy is a win from both of those

And we were very, very lucky, and we were able to. And it was 100 percent absolutely worth

Our son graduated with 45 college credits. He got his bachelor's and his master's in four years. And now he's got a brand new job, on the Base, as a program manager. And that is in great part because he went to great charter schools, schools where tutoring and support are the norm, schools where every child is given the tools they need to succeed, where failure is simply not an option.

And what the school landscape looks like is one of the first questions businesses ask when they consider New Mexico. It's a question all of us parents ask ourselves every day.

Please, please, please approve this charter and make that an option for more families here.

Thank you.

MS. MELISSA BROWN: Next we have Alyssa Zamora.

FROM THE FLOOR: Hi. My name is Alyssa Zamora. Hold this. I'm a resident teacher at the University of New Mexico.

35

perspectives.

From the charter standpoint, businesses want great schools and great options for their employees. We all know New Mexico school performance measures are not where they should be. And so it's essential to expand the offerings with high-performing charters like Equip, which are both more targeted and more nimble in delivering the education that our student bodies need.

From the parent standpoint, we truly won the lottery, not once but twice; first, when my son got into a Montessori charter, again, when he got into a college-prep charter.

That was just the first hurdle, though. Getting him to school every day for twelve years was a huge challenge. We had to drive from far northwest Albuquerque to the center of town every day for five years. And then for the next seven, we had to drive all the way from northwest Albuquerque to the Pit area.

It was a sacrifice many parents just can't make. I had many colleagues at the time tell me they simply just couldn't get their kid across town. They couldn't -- they couldn't afford the gas money; they couldn't make it work.

1 MS. MELISSA BROWN: Could you please spell 2 your name?

FROM THE FLOOR: Oh, sorry.

A-l-y-s-s-a Z-a-m-o-r-a.

I'm a resident teacher at the University of New Mexico, and I will soon be receiving my degree in elementary education.

I have had the opportunity to attend one of Equip's focus groups. And I think that Equip Academy is needed because of its focus on teacher training through educator excellence.

I believe that educator excellence is one of the most important key elements for student success, because students cannot live up to their full potential if they are not properly led by a highly educated, skilled, and trained teacher.

The teacher creates a community within the classroom, and that makes a huge impact on how students learn and perform overall.

Thank you.

MS. MELISSA BROWN: Next we have Mark Vigil. And please remember to spell your name.

FROM THE FLOOR: Hello. My name is Marc Vigil. M-a-r-c. Last name, Vigil. V as in "Victor" -i-g-i-l.

I'm here, CEO of ME Designs, a design company that creates various custom projects. Equip Academy is needed in New Mexico, Equip's inquiry-based model, which helps student thinking, curiosity, and creativity. Creativity is crucial in -- is crucial because it allows individuals to showcase their -- and express their talents and skills in various mediums. This is crucial for tomorrow's learning.

Thank you.

MS. MELISSA BROWN: Next we have Melissa Sanchez.

FROM THE FLOOR: Good afternoon. My name is Melissa, M-e-l-i-s-s-a, Sanchez, S-a-n-c-h-e-z.

I am a westside resident and the CEO of the Albuquerque Westside Business Association, where our mission is to support the educational and economic development of Albuquerque's west side.

And I've had the opportunity to meet with some of the founding members of Equip Academy of New Mexico. I've attended the focus groups, which had great community engagement, and was just quite impressed with, you know, the start and just the willingness to work with community and different organizations.

so I can't read or spell that good. So I like how they will teach them how to read a few more books, higher grades than them, and just learning that overall.

But thank you.

MS. MELISSA BROWN: Bruce Stidworthy. FROM THE FLOOR: I'll hold the mic, too. My name is Bruce Stidworthy. Last name, S-t-i-d-w-o-r-t-h-y.

I am the president and the CEO of Bohannan Huston, a local civil engineering firm. And also relevant to today's discussion, I am the grandparent of two preschoolers here in Albuquerque.

Parents in the Albuquerque community want more options to help their students thrive by finding the right fit for them. And I believe that Equip Academy will help fulfill that need in our community.

As a community member who believes in a bright future for Albuquerque, I want Equip Academy to help our youngest students become strong leaders, critical thinkers, and young people of integrity. That's good for them, good for their families, good for our businesses, who want to hire smart and motivated people, and good for our community.

Our future needs big thinkers and skilled doers. And our company needs them as well.

So thank you for your support, and I encourage you to move this -- this school forward in

its process of approval.
Thank you.

MS. MELISSA BROWN: Next we have Scott Darnell.

FROM THE FLOOR: Good afternoon,
Madam Chair and Commissioners. I'm Scott Darnell.
It's D-a-r-n-e-l-l, the father of two boys who
attend a great public charter school here in
Albuquerque. And their school has meant the world
to our family. It's been the right learning
environment, academic setting for them, and they've
thrived as a result.

We should want this same opportunity for more families across the metro area, simple, basic access to a wide range of high-quality education options. And there just aren't enough of them right now.

We already heard, according to Research & Polling, Inc., nearly eight in ten residents in our community say they want more high-quality public school options.

You know, education is the cornerstone to a community's economic prosperity. And on the west side, due to the increased population growth, we do face challenges and lack of infrastructure. So we do believe that the addition of Equip Academy will definitely benefit families and residents of the west side and Albuquerque as a whole, and I strongly urge that you approve Equip Academy of New Mexico.

Thank you.

MS. MELISSA BROWN: Next we have Isaiah Holtry, I believe.

FROM THE FLOOR: Yeah. It's okay. My name is Isaiah Holtry. I-s-a-i-a-h. And then last name, H-o-l-t-r-y.

And -- but I just want to say about the Equip Academy is -- what I love about Equip Academy is how the kids -- how the kids can -- or how the kids will visit colleges at such a young age, having kids think about the early future or become more comfortable with the idea of college and what they want to become.

I don't have any kids yet. But when I do, I would send them to Equip Academy.

And I really like the part about the reading and stuff. Because I have, like, dyslexia,

2.1

One of the most important questions I think you can ask in deciding whether to authorize a new school is this: Will the school have a dynamic leader with a plan that will work and a heart for the work?

Good leaders set high expectations. They hire well. And they focus on getting results.

I run the Leadership Albuquerque program, which develops knowledgeable and engaged civic leaders in our community and Equip's founder, Mercy, is a standout recent graduate of the program, and I've had a chance to get to know her.

Mercy is someone who taught at and led teachers at high-performing charters in neighborhoods and communities in New York City with high percentages of students living in poverty, not unlike many of the students that she will serve here.

She's proven herself. She knows what she's doing. And, thank the good lord, she decided to bring her talents back home to the place that she grew up.

And when someone comes back home to make a difference here for our kids, they should receive our thanks, our encouragement, and, in this case, an

Having worked in New Mexico, on the East Coast in Baltimore and Northern Virginia, and internationally in Dubai, and in schools both lowand high-performing, there were a few things I noticed in the proposal that I've observed have contributed to great student outcomes.

First and foremost, a joyful and engaging learning environment. We want our students to want to go to school, have joy in their learning.

An intensive focus on reading and literacy.

Extensive professional development for teachers.

Exposure to the larger world of career and university from a young age.

And opportunities to be challenged through the inquiry-based learning.

I'm so impressed with the plans Equip Academy has for students on the west side, and hope one day my own daughter will be able to learn and grow there.

Thank you.

MS. MELISSA BROWN: Ben Cloutier. FROM THE FLOOR: Hi. My name is Ben Cloutier. I'm a resident -- excuse me. My

emphatic yes.

The financing is in place. A strong leadership team, impressive leadership team, is in place. And I strongly urge the PEC to authorize Equip Academy.

Thank you very much.

MS. MELISSA BROWN: Next we have Katrice Grant.

FROM THE FLOOR: Hi. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Katrice Grant. It's K-a-t-r-i-c-e. Grant, G-r-a-n-t.

And I am a new mom to a six-month-old, as well as a school counselor in Bernalillo Public Schools, recently completing my twelfth year in education.

I've had a chance to learn more about Equip Academy by reading through some of the charter application available online, and can say wholeheartedly that I would love for my own child to have the opportunity to go to this school and kindergarten.

As an educator born and raised here in Albuquerque, I am so excited to see high-quality education being prioritized through a school like Equip.

1 spelling, B-e-n C-l-o-u-t-i-e-r.

I'm a resident of the City of Albuquerque, so I'm invested in the outcomes of our students.

I'm also an alumnus of one of our great charter schools in Roswell, shout-out to Sidney Gutierrez Middle School. And I am the director of outreach at Project ECHO, where we support the implementation of best practices for teachers across the state of New Mexico. We support tens of thousands of teachers right now.

And we believe that the model that Equip Academy is planning to implement, especially as it relates to literacy, is really needed at this time. As you all know, we're in a bit of crisis statewide in terms of our literacy rates, and especially the west side. And we need more schools like this across New Mexico.

Thank you.

MS. MELISSA BROWN: I believe it's Louie or Luis Zamora.

FROM THE FLOOR: Hello. My name is Luis Zamora. L-u-i-s Z-a-m-o-r-a. I am the procurement manager of B&D Industries. And I'm here today in support of Equip Academy.

And upon approval and establishment on

Albuquerque's west side, I truly believe the future of our workforce will be benefited, just due to the charter school just instilling just a great work ethic. And just knowing that there is a future of hard work is very proud to be of. Thank you.

MS. MELISSA BROWN: Eva Encinias. FROM THE FLOOR: Good afternoon. My name is Eva Encinias. E-n-c-i-n-i-a-s.

I've been an educator here in New Mexico for 40-plus -- I was with the University of New Mexico for 45 years where I started a flamenco program, and also am the founding director of the National Institute of Flamenco.

We have been in partnership -- our nonprofit, which is the National Institute of Flamenco, has been in partnership with a wonderful charter school, Tierra Adentro of New Mexico, that is a sixth-through twelfth-grade charter school.

However, the greatest challenge that we have found is that the young people coming into the sixth grade are -- have such issues with reading and writing that we spend much of our time back-pedaling, trying to make sure that these kids can communicate well.

And so I was really excited when Mercy

Are we looking for Melissa Garcia? Am I

just butchering -- oh, okay.

I'm not sure of this first name.

Chris- -- Chris- -- Chris Romero.

higher performing elementary school.

Christyn? Christyna? Christyna? Okay. Sorry. FROM THE FLOOR: Hello. My name is

Christyna Romero. C-h-r-i-s-t-y-n-a R-o-m-e-r-o.

And I am a New Mexican resident brought up here and a business owner -- opened my first business here and grew up on the west side. I currently live in Chandler, Arizona, which is out of Phoenix. But I chose to be here in person in full support of the Equip Academy Charter School. I'm definitely happy to be a part of it in support of a

I, firsthand, dealt with having to move my children to Phoenix, Arizona, for a better education when it came to their elementary. And had there been an option like Equip Academy, things might have turned out different.

I particularly am interested in the comprehensive literacy program that Equip is offering. I think that New Mexicans do struggle with the reading. That's pretty apparent. So the fact that they're focusing on that is going to be

Herrera came, who was a student of mine at UNM, to me, saying that she was interested in starting this -- this charter school. Because if we have learned -- and we have learned many things being involved with a charter school -- one of the greatest things is they need a strong foundation that starts K through 5.

And so I know -- I'm totally excited about this school going forward, because we definitely need more of them here in Albuquerque.

I'm glad to see that this is addressing the west side, or is hoping to address the west side. But we need it all across Albuquerque.

Also, the importance and the focus that Mercy Herrera has spoken about in regard to giving the students culturally relevant experiences in the arts I think is hugely important. In my many years at the University, without fail, students would always come to me at the end of a semester and say that the inclusion of dance and music in their lives has made a tremendous improvement in their grade point average and their ability to learn.

So I strongly encourage this, and good luck and -- to your great success.

MS. MELISSA BROWN: Melissa Garcia.

essential for the future of our students.

The Equip team is passionate about bringing this opportunity of a top-tier college performing elementary charter school here. As you can see, their passion definitely spills over and their resume speaks for itself.

I know Mercy is definitely a good leader here, and she has led in some of the top performing charter schools around. And the whole team is committed to bringing that same leadership skills here.

It's imperative that we have the community support. Crucial. So I think all the faces being here today is a testimonial of the support that we have. And I hope that we can get that approval, as I know everyone is just as passionate about it as we are. Thank you.

MS. MELISSA BROWN: Megan DeLaRosa. FROM THE FLOOR: Madam Chair,

Commissioners, I'm Megan DeLaRosa. D-e-l-a-r-o-s-a. I'm representing the Kirtland Partnership

Committee and Sandia Science and Technology Park.

The establishment of a new charter school in Bernalillo County stands to significantly benefit the Kirtland National Security Complex and the

24,000 families residing and working on Kirtland.

Education plays a crucial role for military families, enhancing stability and supporting the growth of children amidst the demands of service life.

School choice provides significant benefits to military families by offering flexibility and options tailored to their unique circumstances. It allows families to select schools that best meet their children's needs, whether based on academic programs, extracurricular activities, or proximity to installations.

The flexibility supports continuity in education, despite frequent relocations, ensuring children receive quality education regardless of where duty calls.

As the Department of Defense increasingly considers quality-of-life factors, including education in basing decisions, the introduction of new schools will not only enrich educational opportunities, but contribute to economic growth in our community.

For these reasons, we ask that you approve Equip Academy.

MS. MELISSA BROWN: I believe it's Jenny

FROM THE FLOOR: Good afternoon,
Madam Chair, members of the Commission. My name is
Isaac Rivas-Savell.

Last name is R-i-v-a-s hyphen S-a-v-e-l-l.

I'm the founder and executive director of Voz Collegiate Preparatory Charter School, the school proudly serving the students and families of the International District here in Albuquerque.

On average, we're finding that our incoming sixth-grade students are reading at an upper second-grade/lower third-grade level. They're computing math at a mid-second-grade level.

And that is why it's essential that proposed schools like Equip Academy be founded so that they can provide a strong academic foundation as our students matriculate into middle school and high school.

From an equity perspective, studies show that students who are exposed to leaders who look like them and are a reflection of their community tend to perform higher from an academic perspective.

Mercy Herrera, unfortunately, in 2024, it is a rarity to find women, specifically women of color, leading and founding successful charter schools here in New Mexico.

Soto.

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FROM THE FLOOR: Hello. My name is Jenny Soto. S-o-t-o. And I am a new mom. I also own Culture Club Salon. And I have a deep commitment to my son's education and future.

As a parent, my goal is to ensure that my son is equipped with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to thrive in today's world.

I am incredibly excited about the possibility of enrolling him in Equip Academy. The school's mission aligns perfectly with my aspirations for my child, emphasizing not only academic excellence, but also the development of well-rounded, prepared individuals.

The west side of Albuquerque is in dire need of educational institutions like Equip Academy. Our community deserves accessible programs that offer high-quality education and foster an environment where children can excel.

I strongly support the establishment of Equip Academy in our community, and I urge you to consider the positive impact it will have on our children's futures.

Thank you.

MS. MELISSA BROWN: Isaac Rivas-Savell.

It's also a rarity to see leaders assembling a governing board that is a reflection, a direct reflection, of the students and families that they intend to serve.

And that's why I speak in support of this school, because we -- our students deserve a chance, especially on the west side, to ensure that they have a solid academic foundation to successfully matriculate and navigate the challenging curricula that they will encounter at the middle- and high-school levels. Thank you.

MS. MELISSA BROWN: So I'm guessing at this one. But Julia -- I believe Julia is your first that. Sylvia? Silva?

FROM THE FLOOR: Silva. Hello. My name is Julia Silva. J-u-l-i-a S-i-l-v-a. I attended all of the focus groups for Equip Academy, listening to how the teachers are going to interact with the children.

It reminded me of one of my teachers, my favorite teacher, the only teacher that made me feel seen, Mr. Sanchez at Eugene Elementary. He would literally come down to my desk level. I didn't know what it was then, but it was coffee breath, and I recognized it, because now I drink coffee.

And I'm like, "Wow, that was his coffee breath."

But he made me feel so special because he came down to my level, to where I was, to speak to me, teach me.

We grew up in most of the poverty areas of Albuquerque, just like pretty much all of New Mexicans. And I didn't get the best education due to moving or whatever.

But one thing that I do remember is Mr. Sanchez made me feel, in that school year, complete, seen, heard. And I was even Student of the Year that year.

And he made an impact. And one thing about a child, and speaking to that child in me now, children know if you care. They don't know how much you know, and they don't care how much you know. They know if you cared.

And even hearing Mercy's expressions and even of tears, shows that she has heart, passion, blood flow, and is going to pour it out onto New Mexico students. And we need it. Thank you.

(Applause.)
MS. MELISSA BROWN: Sabr

MS. MELISSA BROWN: Sabrina Herrera, unless you no longer want to speak. Oh, okay.

Mercy's genuine care for every student in her relentless pursuit of their excellence make her uniquely suited to lead this school.

Excellence is something she embodies, (incomprehensible) on two master's degrees and bachelor's, an Ivy League -- Yale -- graduate, and now founding and leading her own school.

If you give her this opportunity, she will do it to her best and bring the most. She will succeed, and so, too, will New Mexican children.

I say this, and I approve this message as her daughter, who had to grow up with her as -- and had to -- and was forced to teach some students as well, pull some small groups of my own.

So I believe if she could teach her daughter, too, she could also teach New Mexico as well.

MS. MELISSA BROWN: We should have had you go last.

David Soto. And congratulations to Mercy for not crying through that entire thing.

David Soto. Going once.

Dominica Chavez.

24 FROM THE FLOOR: Good afternoon,

Madam Chair and Commissioners. My name is Dominica

FROM THE FLOOR: Hello. Oops. I'll hold

it.
Okay. Hello. Madam Chair, Commissioners, my name is Sabrina Herrera. That's S-a-b-r-i-n-a H-e-r-r-e-r-a.

I'm the proud daughter of Mercy Herrera, the founder. I have witnessed firsthand her unwavering dedication to the success and well-being of every student she encounters.

Her drive and passion extend far beyond the classroom walls, shaping her vision for school -- sorry -- for a school that embodies educational excellence and compassion.

At Equip Academy, evidence-based teaching practices will be central, ensuring that every student receives a high-quality education, regardless of background or circumstances.

Mercy's commitment of promoting students' agency and self-discovery reflects her beliefs in the transformative power of education.

The focus on education excellence underscores Mercy's dedication to supporting teachers through feedback and coaching, recognizing the pivotal role in shaping and learning experiences of students.

Chavez. D-o-m-i-n-i-c-a. Chavez, C-h-a-v-e-z. And I'm the advocacy manager at NewMexicoKidsCAN. We are proud to speak in support of Equip Academy of New Mexico.

As our state grapples with an ongoing education crisis, we know solutions exist. And access to a great school is one solution.

Miss Herrera and the founding board of directors have created a strategic plan for a great school that will deliver exceptional results, advanced educational equity, and eliminate disparities in student outcomes. We strongly believe in Equip Academy's potential to make a difference for our students, families, and the greater Albuquerque community.

Thank you.

MS. MELISSA BROWN: Katrina Sweetland. FROM THE FLOOR: Good afternoon. Buenos tardes. Katrina Sweetland, S-w-e-e-t-l-a-n-d.

I'm here in support of this Equip Academy school. Just like everybody else has been talking about the west side, I do reside on the west side. I'm a proud grandma. So I have three grandchildren that will hopefully be attending the Equip Academy, due to anytime you have to cross the river, there's

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I worked at UNM for about ten years. I actually know Renee Delgado. She is a mentor for one of the departments that I worked for.

I do believe in education. I'm a first-generation college graduate. I'm currently a community member, just looking to see where I can volunteer. And this is one of the things that sparked my interest.

I did reach out to Renee, because I do want to see more of the caliber of school that Ms. Herrera is offering.

So that's what I have for you guys today. I hope that you all consider funding the school here. And I'm so proud that it's an all-women panel. That's amazing. Yeah.

MS. MELISSA BROWN: And, finally, Phillip Benavidez.

FROM THE FLOOR: Hello. My name is Phillip Benavidez. P-h-i-l-l-i-p B-e-n-a-v-i-d-e-z.

Hi. I have a two-year-old and a four-year-old I want to send to Equip Academy because they talk about college starting. Kindergarten teachers never talked to me about opportunity to engage in their own education in a personal and safe environment in their classrooms alongside allowing them to delineate their own future goals, specifically in regards to their college preparatory mindset, could have long-term effects towards the success of the potential students and their own educational futures.

Thank you.

MS. MELISSA BROWN: All right. Somehow I was not handed Page 1. So we've got a few more people.

We're going to start with Veronica Toledo? No Veronica?

How about Andrea -- no. Andrea spoke online.

Oh, gosh. There's more -- these are all Y's; they're not N's. John Bennett from -- John? No?

I apologize for not seeing this. That person's on Zoom. Derrick Adkins?

FROM THE FLOOR: Is it on? Okay. Hello my name is Derrick Adkins. I am going into my twentieth year of education here.

THE CHAIR: I'm sorry. Could you just spell your last name?

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college in elementary, middle school, or high school. It's amazing teachers prepare and believe in kids like they do at Equip Academy. So I really hope you guys fund them.

Thank you.

MS. MELISSA BROWN: I'm sorry. I lied. There's a DeAndre Lucero.

FROM THE FLOOR: Hello, everyone. My name is DeAndre Lucero, L-u-c-e-r-o. The reason for my being here is due to the specialation [ph] of my field, that being psychology, specifically with a discipline in neuropsychology and developmental psychology, and, on a more personal note, someone who suffered with autism as a kid who went most of his academic pathway without being diagnosed.

So when I learned about the potential of an early education pathway such as Equip Academy, I was fascinated in how a literacy-based program could have such a long lasting benefit to the vast demographic of children here in this state, neurodivergent or otherwise, that could find this form of education structure engaging, and both socially and structurally beneficial in the pathway of their development.

In giving our youngest generation

FROM THE FLOOR: My bad. Adkins. Derrick, D-e-r-r-i-c-k A-d-k-i-n-s. I'm going into my 20th year in education here in Albuquerque.

As a dedicated school leader, I strongly support the establishment of Equip Academy as a charter school in Albuquerque.

I did have stuff prepared here to read, but I'm going to speak from the heart.

I met Mercy a few months back at a visit at our school. She shared her school's name, the mission, and the vision. And it really piqued my interest, given that the mission and the vision represents a student-centered approach, inquiry-based, a fully inclusive model that provides a holistic approach to student education, exploring students' curiosity, giving them authenticity, putting them in the driver's seat to dictate their educational journey.

And I began discussing ways, how we can get our students involved with their students' version of community that will nourish and foster future positive contributors to our society and our community.

I truly, truly believe that Equip Academy is poised to become a beacon of excellence,

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fostering academic success and personal growth for young learners in our community.

Thank you for your time and allowing me to speak in support of Equip Academy of New Mexico and Mercy Herrera.

MS. MELISSA BROWN: Jen Mulliniks.

FROM THE FLOOR: Good afternoon. These are tough acts to follow. Some of these presentations, man, everyone's showing up for Equip.

My name is Jen Mulliniks,

11 M-u-l-l-i-n-i-k-s.

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I am the charter school facilities project manager for Homewise. My role is to provide technical support to charter school operators who are trained to secure purpose-built education facilities.

I have been working with Mercy Herrera and her team at Equip Academy since December of 2023. We have evaluated more than 20 facilities with careful consideration to seven of them.

Our site selection process encompasses construction feasibility, financial feasibility, regulatory and zoning compliance.

And I promise you not everyone shares my enthusiasm for the built environment. But Mercy to share that our organization stands in strong support of Equip Academy, lead founder Mercy Herrera, and the school's founding board.

Through our organization's Future Schools Fellowship, I've had the great pleasure and the privilege of working with Mercy over the last year to support her along her journey of launching and leading a high performing school.

And, you know, not just any school -right? -- but a transformative school. We don't need more mediocre schools, or, worse yet, low-performing schools. We need exceptional schools, because every single child in our state deserves access to a high-quality education.

I know that's why we're all here. I myself founded and led a high-performing urban charter school in San Francisco, California, years ago. I know how incredibly difficult this work is. I know what it takes. It takes much more than you bargain for going in.

I confidently believe Mercy and her team have what it takes. I want to reinforce that Excellent Schools in New Mexico has approved a start-up grant to Equip Academy, pending charter authorization, of course, that will pay for planning

Herrera is different. I think the passion that we all witnessed in her presentation this morning, she brings the same amount of passion to her facilities search.

She has learned everything she can and more about E-Occupancy, HVAC systems, fire suppression, ingress, egress, everything. And she's really looking at her facilities, in my opinion, through the lens of someone who has a very sophisticated business acumen. She's not just trying to check the boxes, sign the lease, and be done with it; she's making decisions about her facility that not only impact the programming and performance of her school, but the long-term financial footing of her school.

And for these reasons, I am emphatically in support of Mercy Herrera and her team at Equip Academy.

Thank so you much.

MS. MELISSA BROWN: Jane Henzerling.

FROM THE FLOOR: Madam Chair,

Commissioners, my name is Jane Henzerling. H-e-n-z like "Zebra" -e-r-l-i-n-g.

I am the managing director of programs with Excellent Schools New Mexico. And I just want expenses and first-year expenses and make sure that the school can be financially viable in the early years.

And we'll always be available to support Mercy and her board with questions, connections, and mentorship to ensure that Equip can open successfully and effectively meet its game-changing mission for the students on the west side of Albuquerque. Thank you.

> MS. MELISSA BROWN: DeAndre Lucero. Jackie Baldwin.

FROM THE FLOOR: Good afternoon. Jackie Cornejo, C-o-r-n-e-j-o, Baldwin, B-a-l-d-w-i-n.

Madam Chair, Commissioners, I'm the executive director of Siembra Leadership High School. We proudly serve those young people most in need, 450 students at our school currently.

I've dedicated my entire career working with at-promise youth. And so when I met Mercy and I learned about her school, I told myself I have to come here today. And there's a couple of important reasons.

What Equip Academy and Mercy are setting out to do with regard to teacher supports in the community is critical at a time when teachers are

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leaving the workforce exponentially. This is critical to building the teacher pipeline and force that our kids deserve.

Another piece that I found so beautiful about Equip Academy is their intentional focus on reading is culturally responsive identity development of young people.

So we all know that we're here in New Mexico, a state that's so beautiful and rich in history and culture and language and heritage, but also has so many disparities. And so what Equip is setting out to do with their curriculum and teacher support is to attack that for us.

So thank you, Mercy. Thank you, team. In full support of Equip Academy.

MS. MELISSA BROWN: Shanna Holland Jacobs.

FROM THE FLOOR: Hi. My name is Shanna Holland-Jacobs. That's S-h-a-n-n-a, H-o-l-l-a-n-d hyphen J-a-c-o-b-s. It's okay. Everyone calls me "Shana" when they read it, so you're not alone.

I'm just grateful to be here. Good afternoon, everyone. I am a mother of a 15-year-old son. And he has had some of his own challenges in attending school.

And, you know, I really wish that he had a

for having all of us here. My name is James Abeyta Stevens. J-a-m-e-s A-b-e-y-t-a S-t-e-v-e-n-s.

And I am the program director and chair for the CNM, which is Central New Mexico Community College, Department of Human Services. So that includes social work, therapy, and counseling.

I'm also a licensed therapist in the State of New Mexico, and I retired from human resources after 25 years. I live and reside on the west side and from here as well.

And I wasn't going to speak, because I lost my voice. But I thought I should definitely speak up on behalf of the higher education system.

And what I saw here today directly aligns with higher ed's competency-based education, CBE, that CNM is actually going to.

And what we're doing is we're trying to prepare the students from a lower level to get up to CNM. That way, they can get out and get into the workforce based on what the employers' needs are.

We know, in specifically counseling therapy and social work, we lack in that profession. And we are not getting the skills needed from the education to -- in order to us to pump them out as quick as we need them in -- for the employer side to

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better foundation when he was in elementary school.
He's on the gifted spectrum, so gets bored at
school.

And I think it's so awesome that Equip Academy is engaging those students at a young and early age so that they stay engaged in learning, because learning is so important, and your education is so important for your future.

And as someone who grew up -- when I was younger on the west side, I definitely understand and recognize the need for better schools, especially starting so early. I think that's key.

And I especially love how focused they are on reading. And like the famous Dr. Seuss says, "The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."

So I'm just really in support of Equip Academy and what they're setting out to do, and it's definitely needed here in New Mexico and especially on the westside community. So thanks.

MS. MELISSA BROWN: Okay. So, now, last but not least, James Abeyta Stevens.

FROM THE FLOOR: Hello, everyone,

Madam Chair, and Commissioners. Thank you so much

help with the needs of New Mexico.

So what I saw and what I've heard -- and I do not know her. But from what I've heard, I would definitely say please say yes. This is great. So on behalf of all of us, thank you so much. Muchísimas gracias.

(Applause.)

THE CHAIR: So we're going to take a short ten-minute break before we go into our questions.

VICE CHAIR CARRILLO: Not ten into twenty.

THE CHAIR: Not ten fake minutes.

12 (Recess taken, 2:41 p.m. to 2:54 p.m.)
13 THE CHAIR: So thank you, everyone. And I

just want to say thanks to everyone who spoke passionately about the school. We appreciate all the input, and we take into consideration everything.

So thank you very much.

We are now on to PEC questions.

20 So, Commissioners?

21 Commissioner Beck.

22 SECRETARY BECK: There it goes. Yeah.

23 I really appreciated all the comments.

24 Maybe your daughter's was especially poignant.

Yeah. Exactly.

So I'm going to put on my retired teacher hat here for a second, and I've just got a few questions involved.

The first one, I'd like to just hear what your thoughts are for a culturally responsive, inquiry-based lesson for a first-grader. What would that look like? And a fifth grader. What would that look like?

MS. MERCY HERRERA: Madam Chair, Commissioners, Commissioner Beck. Thank you.

That's such a beautiful question.

So an inquiry-based lesson -- I just want to make sure -- for first -- and culturally responsive for first and fifth. Thank you.

So I'd love to talk about how important our inquiry-based programming is and how it brings in and values the student voice. That's number one in terms of our approach and bringing them into the center of learning.

And a prime example of this would be through our what we call "close reading text."

Now, a close reading text is aligned with the Science of Reading for a number of reasons. But one of the main reasons is to prepare students for comprehension. example, of first-grade, culturally responsive text through an inquiry-based approach.

SECRETARY BECK: And the green chile would be the culturally responsive piece.

MS. MERCY HERRERA: The green chile would be -- for example, a culturally responsive piece to New Mexico culture and heritage. And we might think we know everything about green chile. But there's a whole history that comes into place. There's a whole culture. There's a whole regional difference from north and south, a whole difference of how to make enchiladas.

We could go on for days on what that looks like. And so we'll bring them into the -- into showing them how unique and, in particular, our culture is here in New Mexico to be able to really shine that in a culturally responsive way to help them understand their history, that is, of New Mexico.

A fifth-grade culturally responsive text, for example, might be, I think, a higher level, more particular approach. So let's say, for example, the study of flamenco and thinking about where that came from and how pertinent it is to our community.

And I think there's -- flamenco is so

So this close reading text, for example, for a first-grader, would be above two to three levels of their current reading level. And that's because we want to be able to challenge them, not necessarily -- the text that they have before

themselves is on their level, but the text that we would read with them is above their level.

So our close reading text, for example, could be about the history of green chile. And we would talk them through what green chile is, the history of it, and be able to -- the teacher, from an inquiry-based perspective, will have the text in front of her that's pre-planned with her team. They all come together with what they think is the main idea from an adult perspective, and coming up with -- you know, this would be a nonfictional text.

So they'd come up with the main idea and all the stopping points, so, number one, know exactly what question they're going to ask, who they're going to ask it to, and check for understanding.

So it's really important that that process is done through an inquiry-based lens to be able to bring students into the center of learning.

And so that would be an example, for

beautiful. It's so beautiful. If anybody who has seen it, they know they had a visceral reaction to how beautiful and, kind of -- and, kind of, evoking it is.

But a lot of people don't realize there's a lot of sadness and a lot of -- a lot of history in terms of folks having to maintain that heritage and what that looks like. And so we -- we'd up the ante in terms of cognition and support for students for fifth grade, because we know they're able to get there and really engage with it in a dynamic way.

And just, really quickly, in terms of inquiry-based, for a first-grader, everyone will have the text. And we'll be -- again, we want students to be able to independently learn how to engage with the text that might be difficult. So they might have highlighters in their hand highlighting the important things that stand out to them.

Whereas, fifth graders, they themselves are annotating, preparing those first-graders for annotation. And fifth-graders might be annotating on the side of the text on what they think is important, and the teacher giving an opportunity to share what they think and why.

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So that's a couple of examples of our inquiry-based approach and how it responds to culturally responsive learning.

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SECRETARY BECK: Thank you. Thank you.

I've just got two more questions. One of your points was rigorous curriculum. And you said it was nationally-based.

So is your curriculum a nationally-based curriculum? Or is your curriculum organic from your teachers and yourself? Or is it a combination of both?

MS. MERCY HERRERA: Madam Chair, Commissioner Beck, thank you.

It is both. It's primarily -- it's primarily created from these folks who have done an extensive amount of research. And it has proven to work with specific communities that look like ours, for example. And it's proven to be -- to lend itself to our inquiry-based approach.

So the curriculum -- so, for example --I'll just quickly walk you through it -- is Success For All, made by a program.

Amplify for science, which is -- which teaches investigative science and super hands-on.

Being a Reader, Being a Writer, through

1 libraries. And this is crucial for student

2 learning, because students will have access to books

3 on their level. They'll have five on their level 4 and five above their level. We want them to feel

5 successful in reading and we want them to feel

6 challenged in utilizing those goals that they're 7 getting from their teachers.

> So when it comes to teacher reference, everything is going to be printed out, from whatever -- or they might have a book that is supported and helps them -- you know, whatever curriculum it is that we're working from.

But, oftentimes, there will be no -teachers won't be holding an iPad. Students won't be holding iPads.

We will have Reading Resource, which is an online option for families, especially families who don't speak English. So there's things like Reading A-through-Z, which is highly supportive and a great resource that families have benefited from tremendously.

So they'll have that. But that's more for home reading.

SECRETARY BECK: Okay. Last question. We like books. I can't read off those things. I have

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Collaborative Classroom, all of that, we're bringing

CKLA, which focuses on social studies keys from abroad. So, specifically, the close reading text and read-alouds will be incorporated based on the community that will be Equip Academy. So that will be internally created. So I'd say 80 percent, yeah.

SECRETARY BECK: Great. So in terms of your materials the teachers and the students will have, are you doing the one-on-one Chromebooks or whatever -- each student will have their own they can take home and work from individually and all that? Is that how the materials are going to work? Or is going to be book-based?

MS. MERCY HERRERA: Madam Chair, Commissioner Beck, we are at a very interesting place in our society. And I feel like we have a big competitor. And that's the Internet, and that's technology.

As much as I love it and will prepare students from the second grade, for example. They're going to start getting typing classes. But we're going to have good old-fashioned books.

So in every class, there will be leveled

1 to have a book.

> You have 198 hours of professional development for a year, I believe. From my old days of teaching, which was about three years ago, it's about six and a half hours per day for a teacher day, which would mean there's around 30 days of development, professional development.

How does that get integrated into the hours that you're going to have in a year? That seems like a heck of a lot of hours of profession- -- which I'm not against. Don't get me wrong. I'm just wondering how you integrate it into your classroom, the year, the classroom year. How does that get integrated?

MS. MERCY HERRERA: Madam Chair, Commissioner Beck. So professional development is a staple. It sounds like a lot. It sounds like a lot. It's a staple. It sounds like a lot.

But we also have a lot of time in our days. And we're going to utilize it. And we're going to utilize it well.

So I'd like to break it down for you annually, quarterly, and weekly.

So annually, as you said, 198 hours in total. We start very early on with three weeks of

summer educator -- Institute for Summer Educator Excellence.

And, yes, it is time to focus on the curriculum and internalize the criticism and practice different strategies to deploy the inquiry-based approach methods and all of that.

But it's such a beautiful time to build community within our staff. And so -- to feel comfortable, because throughout the year, we're going to be doing what's called "deliberate practice," and that means getting peer-to-peer feedback from one another and support of their own learning.

And I have the most wonderful teacher connections because of how much we leaned on each other for support and for, you know, seeing the strong teacher models.

And that's what I would do.

I would say, "Hey, that teacher is an amazing teacher. I'd like to go and observe her."

So those are some opportunities that teachers might have that don't go into the 198 hours, so let me get back on course.

SECRETARY BECK: You just took 15 days, 30 days, so you're halfway home.

2 SECRETARY BECK: What assessments are you 3 planning to use?

MS. MERCY HERRERA: So internal assessments, we are using Fountas & Pinnell reading assessment, and then Cognitive Guiding Instruction, which is our number stories program.

And so we'll utilize those, and, then, of course, assessments from the State level.

But I -- I'd love -- is that good? Do you want to say anything? Okay.

We're also going to have quizzes, end-of-unit quizzes. And SFA has a ton of basically what I call checkpoints. And so we just want to note, before doing too many letter sounds -- you know, phonemes, all the things, we want to ensure that we're checking for understanding. And so that's a pretty cyclical thing that happens.

SECRETARY BECK: Okay. My last request is when you teach the first-grader about green chile, make sure you tell them how much better ours is than Colorado's.

THE CHAIR: Commissioner Ingham.

COMMISSIONER INGHAM: I guess I've got to ask some -- a hard one. And that is the two issues

goals.

1 of transportation and food service

MS. MERCY HERRERA: That's 15 days. That's where the bulk of it comes. So quarterly -- let me start with weekly.

So weekly, we'll have early dismissal. And so teachers will engage in professional development for several hours after the students leave

And what that looks like is we're doing, again, deliberate practice, unit dives in curriculum internalization. We're focusing on lesson planning, again, making that road map of questions for students.

And then quarterly, what we're doing is we have our data studies. So those data studies are really supportive when it comes to, number one, how are we doing as a school in terms of proficiency for any particular area that we're working on with our students?

And, number two, where can we do better?
And so that's when our data analysis comes into play. And we will create goals and action plans.

So from a leader perspective, we'll do a school -- a school goal, a whole school goal. Then I'll do a grade-level goal, and then we'll do class

of transportation and food service.

And I read through your -- you know, your comments. And part of it was buying buses, and another one was using a contractor.

I -- that's a -- buying your own bus is a huge deal. I was just wondering. Could you clarify that? And just give us an idea what your expectations are with that, because it is a difficult requirement now.

So I'd love your response.

MS. MERCY HERRERA: Madam Chair, Commissioner Ingham, thank you for the opportunity to clarify around our plan for busing.

As a team, we have decided unequivocally that we're going to be providing bus support, because we see busing as an equity issue. And so we want to ensure that kids have access. For those who choose to want to attend Equip Academy, that they have access to bus service.

We will not be buying buses. It will be contracted with the folks who have a well-versed idea of what that looks like.

And in terms of food service, we are utilizing -- do you want to add anything? I'll leave it to Janet to --

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MS. JANET LEUNG: Madam Chair, Commissioners, part of the way we're going to pay for transportation contractors is through that unrestricted grant with Excellent Schools New Mexico, as the funding does not cover that in the first year, which is a struggle for most schools, for charter schools, anyway.

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And for food services, we plan on also contracting those services in the first year. We have applied for some grants. And upon charter approval and approval of the grants, we would prefer to have a full kitchen, eventually, so that we can provide the children with wholesome food.

However, as mentioned, the finances don't allow. We will contract, and we will train the staff appropriately for food-handling services.

MR. IVEY-SOTO: And actually, if I may just real quick, Madam Chair and Commissioner Ingham, one of the interesting things in the statutes right now is that charter schools are allowed to contract with the -- or work with a school district for transportation.

But -- but the statute doesn't allow a charter school to work with another charter school for transportation. And that's something that we

The majority of that is for start-up costs until enrollment, you know, occurs.

So that's how we're going to kick it off the first year. Of course, it's mostly transportation. We're hoping, based on enrollment, that we'll be able to cover the other expenses that may exceed those funds.

However, we have planned it conservatively. And we are using a lot of those start-up funds, aside from transportation, is to have a little setup area for parents and students to view.

From other charter school founders, they have mentioned that it is difficult to ensure higher enrollment without somewhere to touch and feel. So those start-up costs are going to help us have a little waiting area, a classroom, just so parents and students can come and experience that.

We hope that will help increase our enrollment, which will therefore help us be less reliant on grants.

I don't know if K12 -- Rebekah, if you would like to add anything to that.

MS. REBEKAH RUNYAN: (Off mic.) MS. JANET LEUNG: Sorry. If I didn't

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really need to fix, because -- because, really, a lot of times where the alignment is is between different charter schools to be able to provide

enough kids to be able to provide the transportation routes to be able to make that work for those different communities.

COMMISSIONER INGHAM: The last -- you brought up the grant from Excellent Schools. I hear, in a lot of topics, that that's what you're relying on.

And I don't know -- I didn't see a -well, breakdown. Have you budgeted that? Because it does seem like that is the answer to a lot of things. And that's going to -- it's going to run out after a very short time.

It's a significant amount of money. But it's also -- when relied on for a bunch of issues, you're going to run out of money pretty quick.

So I was just wondering what kind of budgeting you've done with that.

MS. JANET LEUNG: Madam Chair, Commissioner Ingham, actually, I have the budget in front of me. But in Fund 26999 is where we budgeted it. And it's mostly across the planning year -it's only in the planning year and the first year.

mention, it's \$350,000.

THE CHAIR: Commissioner Burt.

COMMISSIONER BURT: I know a couple of speakers already said it. But I do want to reiterate, that an education, even though teaching is traditionally more a female-led profession, in leadership, in education leadership, it tends to be much more male-dominated. So it is very -- once again, one of those things I'm proud to say what New Mexico is doing great, in this charter school sector, especially, so having that representation is wildly important.

I know you're up there now, Mr. Ivey-Soto. But to have a panel of the governing board leader, where your girl students are going to see women in leadership, wildly important. So thank you for that.

And then my question is actually mostly just going to be about what your enrollment and recruitment efforts might look like in your implementation year.

I know you have a very clear vision of the students you would like to serve in your school. Knowing that we have an open enrollment, open lottery policy, any student can join your lottery to

your school.

2.

How -- what is your plan in trying to reach those students that are furthest from opportunity and access?

MS. MERCY HERRERA: Madam Chair, Commissioner Burt, thank you.

Yes, we know that our enrollment is key to our success. And so -- and not only that, we want to reach a broad spectrum of students to ensure that they know that we're here and a potential opportunity as a school choice.

So we do have a -- a plan to really support in terms of our recruitment and outreach efforts.

And the first is a social media campaign. And we're going to really utilize all -- all social databases to ensure that folks know that we're out there.

We're also going to hire an advertisement team to really support, in some scientific way, to be able to put grids around certain areas. There's an actually probably sophisticated term for it.

But we're going to ensure that folks -it's -- it's -- it's really targeted to meet the needs of the westside community. So that's one way Aloud Pop-Ups throughout the west side. So again that's cultivating relationships with libraries and

3 continuing our relationships with the westside

community, with the westside community centers, and
 having Pop-Up Read Alongs where they can see what it
 would be like for students to attend Paso Equip

would be like for students to attend Paso Equip Academy and get a book read to them from an

inquiry-based approach.
 VICE CHAIR CARRILLO: Thank you.
 MR. IVEY-SOTO: And just to be clear,

everybody else is leaders. I'm just the support team.

COMMISSIONER BURT: Exactly. Exactly.

The other question I have -- so, actually, is based off of one of the responses you gave. I know -- I mean, I'm conflicted all the time about how much students are on computers while they're at school.

But I do want to just, like, kind of caution keeping it completely out. Because I have had some school leaders that, you know, really stick to, like, "We're closing these up; we're teaching this way."

But then when you take an assessment, they're on the computer. And sometimes the computer

we're going to do it.

Another way we're going to do it is westside canvassing. So we already have, as you can see, a group of support. And we already have a recruitment ambassador team, who have decided that they're going to take time out of their day to come and do door-to-door knocking on the west side.

And as well as we're going to be vigilant about following and monitoring any westside community events and fairs and try to make a presence, again with our community.

And as well as canvassing westside daycares and pre-Ks, ensuring that folks know that we're here and that we're -- we'd potentially be a charter option for them to choose.

And then we're going to continue to lean into our community partnerships, especially those that are particularly the west side.

And I'm grateful for Melissa Sanchez, the Westside Business Association, who's already said that she's going to ensure that our information is sent to her westside networking and newsletter to make sure that folks know from the west side that we're coming.

And, lastly, we're going to be having Read

literacy affects the actual outcome. Like, the students have the literacy, but they don't have the computer literacy to show it on that type of assessment. So just a word of caution for your littles as you go down that pathway.

And can you talk a little bit more about -- I'm very -- I'm interested about, like, your summer institute, your professional development. I -- it seems like -- so I -- have a question. But I also -- I do have a little concern.

I'm interested in how much is very -- is kind of going to be prescriptive for the staff, and how much is, like, based off of what the teachers might be able to choose, if there's any choice available to the teachers themselves.

My concern is that it does seem to be very heavily dependent on you, Ms. Herrera, to do a lot of that professional development, which -- amazing. It sounds like you have the background, the ability to do it.

My concern is if you lose your voice, if -- you know, something happens to where you cannot be the -- the -- the provider, what might be maybe a backup -- or what could possibly happen? Because I get really worried when something is so

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person-based, because if something then happens to that one person, how does that, then -- I don't want it to all crumble around; right?

So can you talk a little bit about what that might look like for teachers, the professional development, their choice, possibly, into it, and also, I mean, understanding they need to be part of the system, and then what that looks like with it being kind of you as the core?

MS. MERCY HERRERA: Madam Chair, Commissioner Burt, thank you. I think that that is a real and valid concern.

And for me, I am -- I always have my eyes open for my predecessor, because sustainability is what is key to ensuring that this continues to potentially go on and -- and have -- be able to fulfill more seats and ensure that students are able to get access to a quality school.

So I'd like to address your first question around prescripted versus -- I would call it -- autonomy.

So our curriculum is -- again, it's created. A lot of it is scripted; some of it is not. And I think there's pros and cons to both.

And so what it does is it creates a

to professional development, we take a broad bird's-eye view approach and then go in.

For one first-grade class, goals might not be different -- are often not the same as another first-grade class. And that's okay, because those are different learners, and the teacher is basing her particular support plan on the needs of her students.

And so, for example, our -- our close reading texts, these are not prescripted. Our number stories, which is a huge part of our programming, is not prescripted. Our opening and closing circles are not prescripted, because they're all responsive, in addition to our writing unit. It's not prescripted.

It's married to social studies. That way we're ensuring there's that culturally responsive piece. It's going to have to be weaved in a way to ensure that it is, again, meeting our student populations and our community here in New Mexico.

So that will be somewhat prescripted, but there's going to be some autonomy there and based on the support that the students need.

In terms of sustainability and what that looks like, my goal is to create leaders. My goal

framework from folks who have done the research and who have lived the experience.

And so this is a -- a kind of a guide to help us support our students.

But -- and so when it comes to, I guess, the high-level content, we want to ensure that students are getting access to that high-quality content.

In addition, there is -- you can't be inquiry based with a superscripted lesson. So there's a lot of supports when it comes to ensuring that our program is -- is really student-centered. Because oftentime prescripted lessons are very directive.

And that's why it takes so much time and energy and efforts to ensure there's internalization of curriculum before teachers stand before their students. We want them to be able to know what they're doing.

But we also have a very responsive -- we also have a very responsive program in terms of what that looks like for each class.

As you know, every class is different; every teacher is different. And there are different needs for every class. And that's why when it comes is to ensure -- so year one, we -- it is going to be me ensuring that teachers feel supported and feel successful in front of their students.

But year two, we're going to elicit and encourage teachers who are being really responsive to the ways in which we educate students at Equip. So we want those teachers to be our grade team leaders. And those grade team leaders will take some of that burden -- I won't call it a burden. Will take some of that workload off.

So we'll have them become leaders in their classroom and within their grade level. And it will also support as a liaison between me and the grade team lead.

Of course, I think as a school leader, and the schools that have been most successful are the leaders that know the ins and outs of every classroom. That's something I want to continue to be strategically a part of.

But at the same time, I want to ensure that these teachers are being developed to grade leaders.

Then we also are going to, year three, hopefully have one of those grade team leaders be ready to be an assistant principal in residence. So

they'll have that training under me, take a couple of class loads, or grade bands. And depending on where they're at, again, it's all responsive to the folks that we get in the -- basically, the call to action here at Equip Academy.

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So we'll have an assistant principal in residence who will then transition to assistant principal the following year. Our plan is sustainability and ensuring that there is -- there is a shared responsibility. Because at the end of the day, it's not just me. It's something I can't do independently. It's something I have to do with a team of people.

So that's kind of the plan for ensuring that there's growth happening inward and upward.

COMMISSIONER BURT: Thank you. I don't have -- my last question is more a comment.

It was just a really easy and very happily surprising mix of folks that you had come to support, you know, from the -- from the business communities, the nonprofit sector, the organizations, the families in the community that came.

And also I also want to say, in your application, I love that you refer to families in

their why and know the ins and outs of the units that they bring.

We're also going to bring in Leap, which is our math curriculum. So we're going to definitely bring in those experts.

So I think, again, when it comes to -that's an absolute must. But when it comes to the approach to how -- to what teaching looks like, that will come from me.

COMMISSIONER ARMIJO: Thank you. And then I wanted to switch over to the literacy and language acquisition, and, you know, bilingual students of whatever the home language is.

I just want to understand a little bit more, maybe, about your approach to that and how to be sure that students don't lose their home language.

MS. MERCY HERRERA: Madam Chair, Commissioner Armijo. So we're committed -- we're committed to serving all students effectively. And that is also seen within -- that includes ELL students. Although we are not a bilingual school, it'll be predominantly in English, we want to ensure, again, that we're valuing student voice and their heritage and where they come from.

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your school, not parents. Because we know that families look a lot different than just parents.

So it feels like your -- the responsiveness to who you know in the community is unmatched. And the obvious work that this team has done in collecting community partners is really impressive.

THE CHAIR: Commissioner Armijo. COMMISSIONER ARMIJO: Thank you. Hello.

So I just want to kind of take you back on the PD. I noticed that you didn't have much budget for PD. So it sounds like you're going to incorporate that. That's what it sounded like to me.

So I just wanted to make -- I guess my question is it sounds like you're not going to be doing too much of outside PD. It's all going to be inside. And that sounds great to me. Is that what I'm hearing, for sure?

MS. MERCY HERRERA: Madam Chair, Commissioner Armijo, we are going to definitely -there is -- there is quite a bit of funds for bringing in experts into the field. So, for example, Success For All, we're bringing them in to ensure that our teachers are well-grounded, based on So I think our ELL program -- and then -- is -- consists in three ways: That's, number one, accurate identification, customized plans on data. And then also providing books in their native language for them to take home.

And our accurate identification, we want to know who these students are so that way we can accurately identify them and be able to support them based on their particular needs.

And so we'll also be able to monitor them through data based on the assessments as well as teacher observations in a very logistical and purposeful way through our SAT team.

And then we'll also have, based on that data, customized plans thinking about how we can support them.

One of those things are, for example, strategic grouping and strategic seating; right? So putting a student who is absolutely new to English with somebody who is -- who knows their language but might have more proficiency. So we'll have that strategic seating as well.

We'll also group them in small groups within their particular level reading band. And so, for example, at an earlier level, we'll ensure that

we're really maximizing the supports that they'll need.

So, for example, phonemic awareness, phonics, letter-sound-letter identification, really providing ample opportunity within that small group for that knowledge development.

I think the last thing is, and what we really, really -- that's kind of like phonics fluency.

But when it comes to comprehension, we really want to encourage families to read in their home language. So that's something that we will support families with and provide books based in their home language.

And again, those will be at a higher level of books. So that way, I want to say part of our homework -- I won't say policy -- but our homework layout -- is students reading independently from their book baggies that they have, but also somebody reading to them.

So that's where we're going to include those Spanish books. Because there's so much power that can happen when it comes to the fluency and the comprehension piece for kids reading books in their language. because there's -- because south of Central, there's -- that's where all the charter schools are mainly populated, from my understanding.

And so, again, we want to go where there's a need. We don't want to -- we don't want to take from other charter organizations and -- or, you know, students.

So we want to ensure that we're at a place -- we're really trying to get central -- central west side in terms of north of Central.

South of Paseo, and working with Jen Mulliniks. She is working day and night, as I am, continuing to drive back and forth to figure out what are some potential opportunities for Equip Academy.

Do you want to add anything? (Voice inaudible.)

So thank you.

COMMISSIONER ARMIJO: And do you have any plans on communicating or collaborating or just talking things over with any of the other charter schools that are there already?

MS. MERCY HERRERA: I'm happy to open that as a conversation. I think that -- it's not in our plan as of right now. But I'm not opposed to it.

There's no -- there's no distance that is maintained

1 COMMISSIONER ARMIJO: Thank for you that.
2 That was one of my things was the books and the
3 language. That's key. Now I'm going to jump a
4 little bit to location.
5 Lbelieve this school is going to be in my

I believe this school is going to be in my district. So that's exciting. I know there's plenty of population in that district.

I didn't see where -- I saw, like, a general area of where you-all were looking. Can you give me more specific area?

And then I also wanted to talk about -- I believe there's at least four or five K-through-5 or K-through-6 charter schools in that district already. And, like, what are your plans to maybe collaborate or communicate with those other schools? And, you know, what is your plan for that?

MS. MERCY HERRERA: So that's location.

Madam Chair, Commissioner Armijo. So we are casting our net wide in terms of -- in terms of the west side. Of course we want to be west of the river; that's number one.

But when it comes to busing, our theory is that we can really kind of go along the whole westside, Coors-Ladera area. So we are looking really south of Paseo and then north of Central, there. But, yeah.

COMMISSIONER ARMIJO: Thank you. And I also -- what is my last thing?

I saw your enrollment cap was 450. If you divide that up by six; right? So it's K through 5. That's about 75 per age, I guess.

And I know you have a plan for that. I'm just -- 450 is a lot. I thought that was a little bit -- but I think you have a plan.

Can you just expand a little bit more on how you intend on getting to that 450?

MS. JANET LEUNG: Madam Chair, Commissioner Armijo, in the first year, we plan on opening enrollment for 50 kindergarteners, 25 first-graders. And then the following year, we're going to add 25 to each grade level and open up second grade. And then in the third year, we're going to add another 25 to each grade level that already exists, and then add a third grade, and on and on. So we won't reach our max cap at 450 until year six actually.

COMMISSIONER ARMIJO: All-righty. Thank you. I think that's all I have.

I do want to echo what Commissioner Burt said and what everybody has said here. It's great

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to see a panel of women of color who are doing such great things. And I appreciate you all. Thank you very much.

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THE CHAIR: Commissioner Carrillo?

VICE CHAIR CARRILLO: Thanks for being here and everyone that came to speak on your behalf. It's a super duper impressive group, varied. With what Commissioner Burt said, it's just fantastic to hear all the different points of view, the business sector coming in especially, and really kind of a common denominator being people in education saying, "You gotta do something, man. When kids get to sixth grade, they're reading at a second-grade level."

And we hear that all the time. It's what charters are trying to working on, especially at the elementary level.

I have categories here, but I'll only touch on a couple and let others -- I'll come back to stuff, because I always have a Columbo moment.

Do you remember Columbo? Thank you.

So the -- I've never seen the Scarborough Reading Rope before. That's, like, the coolest thing ever, integrating all the different types -so that eventually everything integrates together. because everyone's always listening. And I always say, "Honestly, it's the quality of who's in front of the classroom."

Nobody wants to say it out loud, because then they think you're ragging on teachers. And you're not. You're only ragging on teachers that just meet expectations every year, don't grow their kids appropriately.

So I'm really happy to know how committed you are to -- to bringing in teachers that are really educated, but also educating teachers all along, you know? And I'm expecting really big things from Ms. Zamora on how she's going to contribute to this in the future.

So much of -- and this kind of piggybacks a little bit on what Ms. Armijo said. I see a real dependency on parents and families to engage at a much higher level than maybe than is definitely normal. I think a lot of it is going to be new.

So you have these really cool things like the sight word ceremony and just aligned family activities that you're doing. And at least I found, in my experience with Santa Fe Public Schools, parent engagement is a super duper hard piece.

Now, granted, there's a built-in thing on

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1 the charter level, because they're making that 2 decision. But what are you going to do to get them 3

engaged, keep them engaged, hold them accountable if

4 they signed up for this and they're not engaged? 5 MS. MERCY HERRERA: Madam Chair,

6 Commissioner Carrillo, in all the schools that I've 7 worked at, the engagement, regardless -- it was in 8

the South Bronx, Brooklyn, in the lowest

impoverished kind of places that one potentially can be -- families are all in if you give them an

11 opportunity. 12

So it's a part of our school values is partnership. It's parent partnership. It's the "P" in our "Equip." When we believe in -- it's the trifecta to success. That's the parents, the teachers, and the students. I say with our powers combined, anything is possible.

And so we have these events. And parents -- it's just not -- it's really not a concern of mine.

But at the same time, what we're going to do is we're going to provide an opportunity. And then it's so beautiful to see people and families show up for their kids.

And it's actually something that came up

read aloud with the best of them when I was in second or third grade. My comprehension? No. So it was really hard for me. I'm, even

still now, kind of a really slow and deliberative reader. But I just really got a kick out of the learning about the Scarborough Reading Rope.

I didn't have that growing up. I could

You mentioned mentorship for teachers. You used a different term, though, and I can't remember what it was. But it was, just, I'm glad you're building that in, because that's all too often too absent in schools.

And I even -- when I was on the Santa Fe Public Schools board, we actually had somebody on the board that was against having a policy where teachers had to mentor one another. And I was just -- like, I was aghast at that.

I spoke with Alyssa Zamora -- I'm going to call you out over there -- because one of the things she mentioned was the importance of -- of great educators and really focusing on that, which I know you are. Because so often when I'm asked, "Is there a silver bullet, what would you do about schools in Santa Fe," or whatever?

And I always look over my shoulder first,

multiple times in our focus groups that said, "I -- my daughter was in this school, and then I moved to this school. And they had a harvest event. You guys should really do a harvest event."

So families really want to help, and they want to support. But, oftentimes, their experiences within education can prevent them from doing that. So we provide these little small ways to show them how.

For example, our sight word. Students are going to learn 100 sight words a year that are on their grade level. As we know from ELL students and special population students, you can't sort out sight words. You can't do that. You see it; you've got to know it.

So we have a strategy that's embedded within our homework. And we have these opportunities to celebrate their success. We put their pictures on the wall when they're able to get -- the pictures. And the parents take pictures of them on the wall of fame. And then the other parents walk by and say, "What's this? Why isn't your picture here?"

"Come sit down. Let me show you how. This is what you got to do. Listen. We have this end of that, we also know and -- speaking from experience -- is sometimes families won't come to their -- to events. And we're still going to support that student.

We know that it's our job as an education system to educate these students. And so we're going to provide them with every opportunity to learn and grow.

And I've done that before, where families couldn't help their kids with the sight words. So I pulled this one kid, as an assistant principal, every day for five minutes. That's all it takes. It takes five minutes.

And they were able to pass, by the end of the year, their 100 sight words, and they were so excited. So it's both/and. We want to provide lots of opportunities. But we know it's our job as an entity to know we're educating those students.

VICE CHAIR CARRILLO: So there's two kinds of follow-ups on that.

One is when you talked about sight words, like, for instance, the word sight; right? I mean, there's c-i-t-e, s-i-t-e, s-i-g-h-t. I mean, English is so quirky.

It made me think of flashcards. When I

event. Come and support your children."

And, oftentimes, we will oscillate between having them during school hours and during after-school hours, because sometimes it's really difficult for people to come during school hours. So we'll also have opportunities for them to come in person.

And one strategy that we -- that we use is, from the start, attendance is crucial to success of students. And so that's why our two-adult model is extremely important; right? Having a lead teacher who's credentialed to be leading the teaching in their classroom. And at 8:00 a.m., little Luis hasn't come yet. We have that education teacher calling at 8:00 a.m.

That's an actual thing that we do every single day, relentlessly, to say, "Hey, we care about little Luis, and we want to make sure that he's learning. In order for him to do that, he has to be in class. Is everything okay?"

Unless they've called and have said something has happened. We don't want to bombard them.

We want to make a presence known that their partnership is really needed. And at the same

was growing up with math, most of us on the Commission, we can just look at numbers and add them up, because we grew up with flashcards. And it's just embedded.

So that's what I think about when I think about sight words. Because I was privileged to be in a K-3 behaviorally challenged class, elementary, as a permanent sub for a year. That's why I'm here. It was a life-changing experience to be with these kids. They learned really well. They just crack you up.

But -- so because you just -- you mentioned something relative to attendance and calendar. Just a note to jot down, that anybody being out for religious observances, that's not counted as an absence. We had to develop that as a policy for Santa Fe, because with our Jewish population -- and I'm Jewish -- all these kids in different schools, it was counted against perfect attendance.

And that's just not right. Just something to jot down.

Math. So I -- first off -- and I'm sure others will talk about literacy. It's the cornerstone of absolutely everything, and I'm not

even going to go there for the literacy part.

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What about the math part? There are at least, when you look at, just, whatever, probably -- well, probably, like, 50 -- even as probably as high as 100 schools, where math proficiency is less than 15

And we have schools where math proficiency is less than 5.

And so, yes, we have to learn to read. But what are your plans on the math side, to make sure that when they get into sixth grade, that they're not on a second-grade math, third-grade math level -- not that I'm ever saying you would even let that happen.

But what's your plan for math? And in that, one of the things that we learned -- or that I learned -- is that kids are math-phobic, sometimes, in today's culture. How are you going to address that, so in the same way you're making literacy relevant, making math relevant and fun?

It actually was fun for me, math, growing up. And it was the teacher, Ms. Loftus, that made it that way, so something that I really enjoyed. So tell me about math.

MS. MERCY HERRERA: Madam Chair,

approach, where the teacher and -- teachers come to the rug for a lesson. Then students go and do things independently. And then we support them around their learning through math workshop.

It's very -- it's very staple and as-is, based on whatever is particular focused for math workshop.

But we also have number stories. And our number stories is where we really see mathematical thinking, development taking place, because through number stories -- it's called "cognitive guided instruction," and that's what one of our Mission-Specific Goals.

So, basically, what students do is they work on one problem for the entirety of the lesson. And the teacher -- it's called the number story. So the teacher tells it in a very fun way. We don't even say the problem. It's a story.

And then three students stand up, strategically selected, to restate the problem in their -- in their -- in their own words.

And then that practice really helps with understanding what's happening in the story and helps a student and helps the teacher know who might need more support in terms of figuring out what is

Commissioner Carrillo, yes. Yes to it all.

Our math program here in New Mexico, too, it's -- there are stark percentages, and there is definitely a need for ensuring that we have a strong math program and that we do.

Just, we have 120 minutes dedicated to ELA, and we have 120 minutes dedicated to math. So we want to ensure that students are just as well versed in their math abilities that they are in their reading ability.

We believe reading ability is the cornerstone that will be a domino to all other components.

Our math program is really supportive. It's done in four ways.

So we have what we call "math workshop."

Then we have number stories, which is our problem-solving program.

And then we have math routines and math facts, which are "NHM," "No Hesitation Math."

Math workshop. For example, students are learning grade-level, standard-aligned concepts. So, like algebra, geometry, operations, data measurement, whatever is particular to each grade.

And so that's done from a workshop

happening in the story, because once those three students restate that question, then they really delve into what do we know, what don't we know, and what is the question asking?

Then they're able to go back, and from an inquiry-based approach solve the best way that they see fit.

For example, they might solve with pictures, manipulatives, in numeric form. And then the teacher is circulating, supporting students and thinking about who is going to share, because then the students become the teachers at that point and they're so invested in wanting to share.

One thing I'd want you to know about number stories is it's really a culture of error. So we're learning about the process of learning. And that's what math is and I think where you get that kind of -- that phobia.

But we -- don't have a culture -- we really try to move away from that culture of right and wrong, and more of, like, a learning process. So that's where it's really supported for students in their mathematical development.

And it's really engaging, because they get to go and lead. All the teacher is doing is

transcribing what they did. And then students get to sit down and notice what are the similarities and differences in how they solved.

And there's an opportunity for them to revise. Students who may not have got it the first time -- and that's okay -- they go back to their seat, and they're able to revise based on what they see. And they can use a new strategy or they can try one of their friends' strategies who just presented.

So that's really supportive when it comes again to the mathematical thinking.

Then our other two is our math routines. So math routines is just 15 minutes that we really focus on throughout the day. That is, again, honing in on those skills they're learning for math workshop, because math workshop is something that is quickly going and quickly moving.

We want to make sure that students have things -- for example, have a good number sense. And so, for example, we might do plus one, minus one; plus ten, minus one. Start at this number. Stop here, really breaking -- for a kindergarten, they might be breaking down the word 15 -- right? -- number of the day.

level.

It sounds like the plan, like, everything else, just knocks it out of the park, and you have a way to do so.

On the leadership side -- and I'm going to leave some categories to others until -- and I have to go back.

We've seen, as a Commission, schools struggle because there's an absence of real leadership; right? So then what happens is maybe you have staff just running amok in a way. That doesn't serve anybody. There's not focus.

So we've heard a lot about you,
Ms. Herrera, about what an exceptional person you
are, what a great leader you've been. And I told
myself after some of these conferences that we go to
that I was going to ask questions of you, and then
also of -- I got your last name totally wrong,
Renee.

But because you're going to be the board chair, that's a leadership role, right? And we've seen things go really south with -- all of us can think of a couple of people, board leaders; right?

So what would you say your management style is? Because you're going to have a large

For third grade, they might be breaking down the number 1,015. So it's really supportive in finding fun and unique ways to solve math -- to really internalize the -- the math -- math competencies.

And then we have No Hesitation Math, which is essentially the sight words of math; right? -- being able to look at those and know automatically.

And I just want to make a quick note, is, like, we create note cards for students weekly, based on -- within their homework packet. And all families have to do is cut them out and then practice.

So that's a resource we provide for them; also, a resource we provide for grade-level number stories, math facts, as well, in their homework. That's a way that families support us, so that way, we can get to the content of learning, and these things become automatized.

VICE CHAIR CARRILLO: Thank you. That was an excellent explanation. And when we see, you know, math scores down the road, you know, in the three-year, four-year mark, I'll be just really -- I'll still be on this Commission and really interested to see how you guys are doing on that

staff to manage, both in hiring and firing, because I think -- and in speaking with what Ms. Zamora and I talked about, all too often, people are kept on -- we love accountability until we're the ones held accountable.

But what about the consequence piece? What about when someone isn't meeting the norms that you've set out for them? How are you going to coach them, and how are you going to fire them if that's necessary? And how long do you keep someone on like that, because it's the kids that are just suffering?

So you, as a manager, tell me about you.
DR. RENEE DELGADO-RILEY: Madam Chair,
Commissioner Carrillo, I appreciate that. I think
leadership is very important. I'll let Mercy talk
about the day-to-day management, and be clear that
as a proposed board, we have four key areas that
we're going to focus on.

The first is monitoring the success of our academic program, the fiscal accountability, being held accountable to our community, and the latter is hiring our awesome head of school who will be able to do the day-to-day things.

But I just want to emphasize a little about our leadership. Coming back to New Mexico

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after being gone for a long time, I had a little bit of PTSD about working in New Mexico, because I didn't have a very positive experience in my last university.

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But I've got to say this group of women, we've all come together. We're so passionate. And this is above and beyond. We're not getting paid for this. And we're all very busy. And it's just been very exciting and invigorating to come together on a single thing.

And every time Mercy calls or texts me, I take it, no matter what hour of the night, because I'm very passionate about this program.

So I think from our leadership style, we're here to make sure we have a great head of school. Obviously, you've heard today that she's the perfect candidate. And I'm excited about that as someone who's passionate and grew up in the area.

For me, someone who grew up in the area, my mom sacrificed a lot for me to go to a private school. I would have gone to a high failing school if she didn't do that for me. And I truly believe I would not be where I am today if it were not for that opportunity.

For me, I'm also very passionate about the

If we're seeing truancy and attendance issues, we want Mercy to be able to bring that to us so that we can talk about it.

As you can see -- I'm a numbers person -- 107 partnerships with the community. And we want to rely on them as well to be empowered to come to our board meetings and speak up and feel free to be able to do that and feel agency in that process. Because we know from the research, in a lot of marginalized communities, people feel afraid to speak up.

And we know that speaking up and family engagement, as we alluded to earlier, is critical for that process.

So I think providing the space to be able to do that. We have so many talented people on our board that I feel ready to do this. I think I was ready ten years ago. But Mercy came to me, and basically, I'm just happy to be part of this process.

VICE CHAIR CARRILLO: Great. I love that you said "ongoing monitoring." Because if that's not done, that's the beginning of the end, because you don't even know what problems are even happening.

Ms. Herrera.

students. Because I grew up there, I think about Lavaland and John Adams, where I went to school.

For me, I'm passionate about bringing my expertise on everything that I do. I studied child development. I have a degree in educational psychology. So I'm really passionate about the underpinnings and research.

And when I read through the charter I'm so impressed about all of these evidence-based pieces.

But I think in terms of our leadership, we all have our specialties, but we're all interdisciplinary at the same time.

And I think, as a successful board, it is our obligation not only to hire a great head of school, but to provide adequate space at every one of our board meetings to make sure we're meeting our Mission-Specific Goals, specifically, in this academic achievement, because that is so critical in the area of that we're going to serve.

And so just making sure that we're monitoring student progress on a regular basis. We're not just relying on a summative assessment from the State, but that we have this ongoing assessment that Mercy is bringing to us so that we can discuss this.

MS. MERCY HERRERA: Madam Chair, Commissioner Carrillo. Our -- so when I think about supporting teachers and helping them become their best selves in front of students and be able to internalize everything, it's not an easy task.

But my -- I have two strategies. We have a very specific model. We have folks who want to -if you want to apply to Equip Academy, it's going to be a different process.

We want folks, number one, who appreciate that model and want to take part in that.

But I really do -- I do two things. And the first is I support through asset-based coaching. And, so, basically, what that means is I think about what are my teachers' strengths and how can I leverage those to support their weaknesses.

And -- and sometimes I shy away from using the word "weaknesses," because I think -- I think there's growth -- there's opportunity for growth in every area of -- of educating and teachers. And we not only create a culture of error for students, which means that they feel comfortable making mistakes; I create a culture of error for my teachers as well.

So the goal is for them to say, "Hey.

Okay. Set goals, set expectations, show models on what it's supposed to look like, and invest them in the why. Why are we doing this? We're not just doing this because so-and-so said to; it's because it works."

And we always stay student-centered.

So when it comes to thinking about the growth of the teachers, it really is going to be reflective of the growth of the students. And so it's a -- it's a pretty clear line that's indicated on who needs support and how they need support. And so who needs more, you know, monitoring rather than others.

And from my experience, if there is, for example, 21 teachers that I oversee, I may not be seeing half of them weekly. I might be seeing them once every two weeks or once every three weeks.

Whereas, I want to ensure that teachers who are needing more support are getting those measurable goals, something that they can -- something that is reasonably -- reasonable that they could -- that would benefit their class in terms of the support and growth. And then monitor with an actual date and say, "Okay, this was our goal. This was our end date. How are we feeling about it? Did

established school is that you've got folks who have been there for a long time, whose attitude is, "I was here before you," the principal, "showed up, and I'll be here after you leave."

And -- and the advantage of -- of Mercy starting the school and growing the school from a couple of grades and then growing out is that she's going to have a really good handle on the pulse of what's happening in each classroom, so that, as we build out the staff, people who are outliers, we're going to know that, and we're going to be able to intervene, first, in a constructive way, to -- as she was talking about, to see if we can build that teacher and build the capacity of that teacher, and if that's just not there, to try to help that person find a career somewhere else.

VICE CHAIR CARRILLO: Thank you for that. And just a side note, on-boarding. If you get teachers -- I mean, if I was a teacher and I was coming to New Mexico, this would excite me. Or if I wanted to look for something in New Mexico, this would excite me.

And then in the on-boarding process, getting integrated into their community, I think it was the Pauhegan [ph] district in Wisconsin.

we meet it, or did we not?"

And I think that, continuing to, again, utilize data, think about student -- teachers as, you know, entities of learners is from the learning perspective.

And -- and -- and sometimes teachers do really, really well, and they're able to meet those goals, like, graduate from that kind of more one-to-one support within their classroom. And sometimes we can see pretty quickly that it might not be the best fit, maybe not -- not the best fit, I'm not saying for teaching, but the best fit for Equip Academy.

So that's something I think remaining student-centered and focusing on growth, I think, like, again, transparency and accountability, is key to student success. So those are two things that we monitor regularly and incorporate.

MR. IVEY-SOTO: And if I may real quick, Madam Chair and Commissioner Carrillo. Let me give you an exact answer to your question.

No more than two years minus one day, in terms of how long.

But this is the advantage, really, of starting a school. The problem that happens with an

They did a presentation on on-boarding, just things they did to bring everybody together, but also people that weren't from the community to -- and other businesses chipped in.

Everyone was invested in teacher retention and making sure that they felt they were a part of things if they were coming from outside, because in so many ways, we're very insular.

But that's all for now, and I reserve my Columbo moments, and there you go.

THE CHAIR: The building has officially closed.

VICE CHAIR CARRILLO: This one has? No way. Seriously?

THE CHAIR: So, thanks. I just have a couple of quick things.

And I appreciate the comments about asset-based management.

But are you looking at any peer coaching opportunities within -- within the school? Because aspirationally, you're sitting here as a potential head administrator, and the first day of school hasn't started. And you become the transportation coordinator and the lunch coordinator and the everything else, because you have a small budget.

So to be able -- considering that you're spending a lot of thoughtful time in hiring individuals, using those assets of those individuals to be -- for the opportunity for peer coaching.

So I was just wondering if there was anything that you were considering. I didn't see anything necessarily that would -- and we don't -- we look at calendars. We don't necessarily look at what the day looks like.

So the opportunities for the staff -- albeit tiny when it's first starting, but it's going to grow -- to be able to engage with each other and grow with each other.

MS. MERCY HERRERA: Madam Chair, thank you.

So one thing I neglected to state was that our teacher preparation is very inquiry-based and formed. And so what that looks like is it's not me telling them what they're doing wrong; it's me creating a precedence and showing them -- again, grounding them in the why we're doing what we're doing, and then how we do it that best supports students.

Sure, I might start with a model. But post that, I will continue to think about what

really great results. And their class becomes what we call a lab site. So we're able to go and observe within that classroom.

That's a common thing that'll happen among the -- among the particular grade. That doesn't mean that we can't -- just because somebody who isn't a grade team lead, we can't go and utilize their amazing skills that they've really incorporated based on the feedback and the internalization of whatever component it is that we're working on.

So it's really helpful when that happens.

I also know in charter worlds, folks wear lots of hats. So when it comes to our operational staff, they'll be cross-trained. We want to ensure that there's always somebody who knows how to do and respond to things in the moment.

Cross-training is really important for folks to ensure that students are supported at a high level, because things do happen; right? We're having a field trip, and somebody who knows exactly what's supposed to happen about the day is gone. Well, we're going to have what's called a logistics meeting. That's why we have so many hours -- it's, like, everything will have a logistics meeting.

teacher can really model this at a high level, and then, "Let's go ahead and share around the room. What are some -- notice things. What are some things that they did really well, and what's

something that they can work on?"

So that peer-to-peer feedback is a staple within our program when it comes to professional development. And it's really -- again, it's really helpful.

And we also have other opportunities for folks to say, "Oh, wow."

And, again, there's always strengths that one teacher has that the other hasn't. And that is -- that's shared; it's celebrated within our staff. And there's opportunity for staff to go and observe in other folks' classrooms.

And so that becomes really helpful for teachers to be a -- to shine in one particular area where they might be doing really well.

And so that peer-to-peer feedback and that peer-to-peer coaching is really supportive, and it really comes into play when the grade team leads take that role of supporting their grade at a grade level and providing that mentorship.

It's usually a teacher who is having

Who's going to doing what? What does it look like? What time does it start? And who are the back-ups? They're not actual subs, but they're going to sub for folks who aren't in there.

So that's what we call pre-mortems; right? We're planning for a problem and thinking about, "Okay, if this is a potential problem, what are the solutions?"

And, oftentimes, that's very supportive when we're looking at the logistics. Education is far more than just educating and teaching. There's lots of things that go in between in terms of setting everything up for assessments.

We're going to have a logistics meeting.
Who's going to the bathroom when? When they should be -- to that minute level, we'll get to ensure that folks are really supported and know who's going to be doing what.

Because sometimes it could be, like, "Oh, so-and-so is out as a teacher, she has something going on, and she was depending on that person."

Well, we have a second. We're going to support. That's the one thing that is really important when it comes to Equip Academy is having those logistics sheets, but also the peer-to-peer

opportunities.

THE CHAIR: So just for clarity. So built into the schedule of the day would be time committed to -- for peer interaction.

MS. MERCY HERRERA: Madam Chair, thank for you this opportunity to clarify.

So weekly, they'll have the opportunity. And it depends on what we're doing. So, for example, if we are starting a new unit, we're going to spend lots of time delving into that unit. What does happen is sometimes a unit is massive.

So each teacher might take on a piece and come and present it to the rest of the team. That's sometimes an approach that we'll take. But depending on what the unit is, we might come with the entire thing kind of laid out based on the teacher's understanding.

But let's say, for example, we're focusing on deliberate practice that Wednesday. That's when the peer to peer is going to happen. And it's -- okay, we've been focusing on number stories, practicing our launch and getting kids excited about this story. So so-and-so is going to go and -- and practice her launch based on, you know, the things that we've really identified that are key

and they handle it very differently.

Or is it just you've bought into this program, and this is what it takes?

MS. JANET LEUNG: Madam Chair, we have accounted for that in the budget. Per the APS salary bands, we have allocated an additional 10 percent for those teachers to account for the extra days that they will be there.

THE CHAIR: And just one last thing.

When I was looking at your budget -- and I'm not the -- I'm not the person to often look at budgets accurately. So I just have a -- a question. It didn't look like the first year, you had budgeted for a diagnostician or most of the SpEd servicing.

And I may have looked at it incorrectly, because there's multiple -- you know, spaces sometimes. But it did not look like there was an allocation or a contemplation for the -- for the need for that.

MS. JANET LEUNG: Madam Chair. So in our peer review response, we did decide to reallocate the budget so that we could have a full-time special education teacher to support those students. And then depending on what students present upon enrollment, we have a plan to submit budget

contributors to success when it comes to learning a particular problem.

Let's give them feedback. What did they do really well? And what's one thing they can work on moving forward? Sometimes there's nothing. They did a great job and we can move on. Great. Next person; right?

So that's a really great opportunity for teachers to get that peer-to-peer feedback. It's not always going to be me. I don't want that job, to just always tell folks what they're doing wrong. It's an asset-based approach, and it's really supportive because it's collective.

Oftentimes teachers have other kids' (verbatim) students. So we take it all very seriously when it comes to teaching and leading our school.

So it is kind of like a -- the goal is to have a one mindset, like, culture.

THE CHAIR: Thanks. And speaking of professional development, with that allotted time in July, the two and a half weeks or whatever it is, have you been able to adjust salaries for individuals for that additional time? Or is that just -- and we have a lot of schools that do this,

adjustment requests for what's needed and pull some of those positions forward. Because not every student might need a social worker or a counselor; right? Like, but they might need a diagnostician. And we will adjust as needed.

The budget was planned conservatively. So we have plans to, like, if enrollment numbers are not met, we can decrease the administrative position by another .2, and other places in the budget that we can adjust to account for that.

THE CHAIR: (Off-mic.)

MS. REBEKAH RUNYAN: So the school did budget for diagnosticians and other special ed services. It's a (inaudible) 2100 function.

THE CHAIR: Okay. I'll look at it later. Thank you. Commissioners?

SECRETARY BECK: One comment. I really like the idea that you're taking your time with your school. I think that's wonderful. You know, you're not just going in K through 5, here we go, and, you know, a big organizational chart and all that stuff.

I like the process of the next five years.

I think it's really thought out and very thoughtful.

VICE CHAIR CARRILLO: So -- I'm sorry. I'll echo that, because oftentimes people have a

school they start K-1-5-6. It sounds to me like for you to reach your goals by having students go into sixth grade being super proficient at fifth, you have to grow your own. You can't bring them in.

2.

So where is art going to fit in to what you're doing at your school to build these little creative minds?

And while we're on that, science.

MS. MERCY HERRERA: Madam Chair, Commissioner Carrillo. So our enrichment program, we want to ensure is really supported to our student populations and their particular needs.

So we're really excited to partner with National Institute of Flamenco. And they are -we're committed to trying to bring them into -during our in-school hours during enrichment time.

So that's one thing that I'm really excited about Eva's support about Equip Academy of New Mexico, because we're a firm believer in creativity and that being really supportive when it comes to inquiry-based learning, but also to give students another outlet for expressing themselves.

So our enrichment, we're really hoping to contract and ensure that there is appropriate -- well, we have appropriate credentialed staff for

So it's really -- it's really fun and exciting. And so we want to make sure that those two aspects are not just being looked over for Equip Academy and for the students.

VICE CHAIR CARRILLO: Cool. Thank you.

Ms. Renee -- I know Renee, your first name. But I learned that when I was in elementary school -
"Mr. Steve."

So you have five board members right now. What are you looking for -- you're probably going to have at least seven so you can have subcommittees not have to notice everything.

What are you going to be looking for in the two people you bring on? Right now, you've got this incredibly great, diverse team. So what are you going to be looking for in the next two?

DR. RENEE DELGADO-RILEY: Madam Chair, Commissioner Carrillo, that's a great question -right? -- because we want to make sure we have representation.

Mercy has done a lot of work. I want to give her due credit where credit is due in pulling us all together.

So we have a lot of great skill set already. But I think the one area we want to hone

enrichment to be able to provide flamenco to the students, starting from K.

And then we also have a -- a -- really supportive partnerships again with our community. We don't see just learning happening in the classroom. We see the community as an extension of learning.

And so we're really looking forward to partnering with the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, which has a lot of art-based programming that students can attend annually.

We'll also partner with the Hispanic Cultural Center for students to engage in art programming that way.

And then, in terms of science, we're going to use, again, Amplify, and then internally created materials as it is representative to New Mexico.

And we also have a partnership with Bosque School, where, annually, students will be bussed. And they're going to be able to take a habitat preview of the -- of the -- the wildlife there and be able to track wildlife.

And before that, we're going to learn about wildlife, particularly as it pertains to New Mexico, in addition to outside New Mexico.

in on is communications, that design piece, that creative piece. I think there's a lot of opportunity there to have somebody strategically think about the pieces around communication and marketing and areas of that, especially in the local community.

So that's an area that all of us will lean into our networks. A lot of us are from here. A lot of us have a lot of great networks. So we're going to lean in to try to recruit that.

I can give it over to Sara to talk a little bit more about recruitment.

That's an area we're looking into. We've got a lawyer, Mary Jones. So that's really great.

So I think those are some areas -- oh, yeah. And honor to one of our board members who wasn't able to make it today due to health reasons.

She has an HR background in a tech company. So that's been really great to have that on. But I think additional- -- twenty years. That's impressive.

This is a great group. If you add up all our history, it's awesome to see that in practice.

Communication and marketing, I think is an area of need. And, specifically, maybe a little bit

more about HR.

2.

But a lot of us have interdisciplinary experience. So even though Janet is our finance guru, we all have finance experience. We all have done grant writing. So we have interdisciplinary with our skill set. So that's exciting to see.

MS. SARA FITZGERALD: So, Madam Chair, Commissioner Carrillo, if I could just add to that as well.

You know, we really have a process of trying to be as strategic as we can in how we reach out to these folks. So Renee has alluded to that in trying to identify weaknesses -- or deficiencies -- maybe too strong of a word -- what are the skill sets and assets we need represented on the board?

And Renee did a great job of, yes, marketing. Definitely, we want to prioritize that. I also say -- I'll speak for myself. I have been surprised at how intensive this has been.

I don't regret a minute of it. But it has been a -- a tremendous learning process.

And so I think one of the things that we absolutely need to prioritize, perhaps above all else, is the willingness to commit to the time and the effort, and are you willing to contribute your

THE CHAIR: So I want to thank you.

Regardless of however anything turns out, I fully understand the time, the commitment, the energy that it's taken to gather all these people here, reaching out.

You know, we had an applicant one time turn to us in the middle of the input hearing and say, "Do you know what you're asking me to have to do all this stuff?"

And it's, like, actually, we do, because do you know what you're asking us to allow you to do?

So it's -- it's a commitment on both sides. It truly is.

And we do a lot of work throughout the year. And this is a lot of just intensive work that's packed into here with, obviously, a lot of passion.

So I truly do appreciate everything that you've done.

And we will be in recess until tomorrow morning at 9:00 a.m. at Mabry Hall.

And we will see you all in August.

So thank you.

25 Actually, in case there's any confusion,

skills?

This is -- in an ordinary year, once we're up and running, maybe the commitment is only ten hours a month. We're not there right now.

And so I think being really open in those conversations and really targeting the kind of people that we know have the capacity and have the willingness to contribute that, I think is something that we'll absolutely put first, I think, in those conversations.

VICE CHAIR CARRILLO: People often don't know what they're getting into when they get on a charter board. It's a lot of work. Everything is a lot of work. It's not just a show-up-and-feel-good moment, all the stuff that you're mentioning.

And I know that, just based on everything that you've said already today, there's going to be -- parents are going to feel that your board is approachable; that's a huge piece. And there's going to be a lot of transparency in your work. That way, everyone feels good about what you're doing.

Thank you very much. Very impressive group. This is -- that's for sure. Yeah. I'm done. They're going to close the building; right?

during our work session portion of our meeting on Friday, because we're condensing our work session and our regular meeting, we will be discussing if Commissioners -- especially because we have a number of Commissioners who were not able to be here, if there's any additional questions they have of the school -- and there will be a letter populated that will come from me probably Tuesday a week from now that will have those questions, so that the school -- the applicant would be prepared with those responses at the August meeting.

So there's no need to be -- you're welcome to listen in. But there's no -- you're not going to be able to offer any input in that conversation at the work session. All right?

So thank you. We really do appreciate it. VICE CHAIR CARRILLO: Thanks very much. (Proceedings in recess at 4:27 p.m.)

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	BEFORE THE PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION STATE OF NEW MEXICO
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5	REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE
6	I, Cynthia C. Chapman, RMR, CCR #219, Certified
7	Court Reporter in the State of New Mexico, do hereby
8	certify that the foregoing pages constitute a true
9	transcript of proceedings had before the said NEW
10	MEXICO PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION, held in the State
11 12	of New Mexico, in the matter therein stated. In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my
13	hand on July 18, 2024.
14	nand on July 16, 2024.
15	
16	
	Cynthia C. Chapman, RMR-CRR, NM CCR #219
17	BEAN & ASSOCIATES, INC.
	201 Third Street, NW, Suite 1630
18	Albuquerque, New Mexico 87102
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7	Court Reporter in the State of New Mexico, do hereby
8	certify that the foregoing pages constitute a true
9	transcript of proceedings had before the said NEW
10	MEXICO PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION, held in the State
11	of New Mexico, in the matter therein stated.
12	In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my
13	hand on July 18, 2024.
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