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**Charter Schools Division  
Final Renewal Recommendation  
November 4, 2024**

**School Name:** Albuquerque Sign Language Academy

**School Address:** 225 Griegos Rd., NW Albuquerque, NM 87107

**Head Administrator:** Raphael (Rafe) Martinez

**Governing Board Chair:** Kimberly Moya

**Contract Term:** 2020–2025

**Statutory Renewal Requirements**

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

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

### Preliminary Renewal Recommendation

The Charter Schools Division (CSD) recommends that Albuquerque Sign Language Academy be renewed with a charter contract term of five years, with the following condition:

The school provides a needs assessment, systemic framework and affirmation of tribal consultation.

#### Part B: Progress Report

The school’s narratives in Part B are rated **Meets the Standards, Demonstrates Substantial Progress**, or **Failing to Demonstrate Progress** according to the rubric on pages 6-7 of the 2024 Charter School Renewal Application.

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

*\* Results from 2023-24 Vistas data, scheduled to be released in November 2024, could change this rating in the final recommendation.*

#### 1.a. Student Outcomes

Albuquerque Sign Language Academy has received the designation of Tradition in both years for which the VISTA designations have been made (2021-22 and 2022-23). Because student proficiencies tend to be lower the school has not met standards through test scores, however, it is evident that the school is working very hard, with the population it serves, to increase student outcomes. The school services a population of 65% or more of students who are identified as high needs. Measuring this population on these exams presents many challenges.

Despite these challenges, there have been numerous adult programmatic and systemic actions taken to increase student outcomes. In the 2023-24 school year the school implemented a new curriculum called “Wit & Wisdom”. This curriculum shift has been helpful to support their unique population and structured literacy, the school adopted a PLC model to help this new initiative roll out. School leadership articulated the need to shift math curriculum and

instruction in order to further support student outcomes. In addition, The school has added many support staff to service student individual needs, analyze student skills and potential gaps, and adapt instruction to increase student outcomes.

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

The school has met their mission specific goal every year of the contract term, which warrants a Meets the Standard.

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

Albuquerque Sign Language Academy offers a unique experience to their students given the school works with a unique student population. The educational program is structured yet adaptable, allowing for responsiveness to community and student needs. With small class sizes, differentiated instruction, and a specialized curriculum and assessment, the school ensures that each student receives the support in accordance with IEPs and student needs. Additionally, strong community partnerships enhance the overall educational experience, fostering a holistic approach to learning and development.

The school has been nationally recognized for the work that they are doing with deaf and high needs students. Albuquerque Sign Language Academy provides small class sizes and low student-teacher ratios. All teachers are dual-certified in general education and Special Education. Another unique aspect of the school is that each classroom has another adult (educational assistant) who provides 1 on 1 support and small group instruction to students who are classified as high needs. All staff also know and use American Sign Language (ASL). The charter schools renewal team witnessed this first hand during their morning meeting.

The school also provides robust social-emotional learning support for students. The school has a full-time Student Support Coordinator who is a licensed social worker plus three additional full-time social workers. These staff work with both students and their families. The social workers at the school employ the Foundational Qualities for Student Success (FQSS) assessment and the Holistic Student Assessment (HSA) to gather and quantify qualitative data regarding student behavior. This comprehensive approach ensures that both academic and social-emotional aspects of student development are prioritized.

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

The finance indicator ratings over the course of the contract term reflect that the school has struggled in this area. The school has had 12 audit findings over the course of the charter term, including five findings in the most recent audit. Leadership recognized the lack of effectiveness in business management and swiftly hired a new business manager. The financial team at the school is currently working closely with the head administrator to correct the practices that resulted in audit findings, as well as to resolve issues with late reporting to PED. In terms of expending grant funds, the school has met the standard each year, and due to the work of the head administrator in securing grant funds from outside entities, the school has many funds to manage and monitor. Because the school had two Working to Meet and one Does Not Meet

rating on the finance indicators during the most recent year, it may appear that the school is failing to demonstrate progress in this area. Because audit indicators lag by a year, however, the process improvement actions the school has put in place, which CSD has confirmed during the renewal visit, are not yet reflected in the annual audit, which will not be released until spring.

**2.c. Governance Responsibilities**

The rating of Meets the Standard for Albuquerque Sign Language Academy is appropriate as the board has remained compliant with all state requirements throughout the contract term.

**2.d. Equity and Identity**

Albuquerque Sign Language Academy has a very active council (16 members) that supports the mission and vision. The school’s unique educational program inherently promotes equity, effectively addressing diverse student needs in an organic way. This commitment to inclusivity fosters a welcoming environment for all students and enhances their educational experience. This also meets the standard.

**2.e. Tribal Consultation**

Albuquerque Sign Language Academy has a 21% Native American student population and they have been working with the New Mexico Public Education Department’s Indian Education Division to obtain tribal consultation. However, as of now, they still need to complete the components of an Indian-impacted LEA: complete a needs assessment, systemic framework, and affirmation of tribal consultation. The school has provided evidence of attempts to conduct tribal consultation without success.

**2.f. Other Performance Indicators**

Although Albuquerque Sign Language Academy has taken systemic actions to address discrepancies by actively engaging in advocacy for their bilingual student population; the school did not address all performance indicators which they received a working to meet or does not meet standard throughout the contract term. Many adult actions have been taken to improve student performance. The school collaborates with various bureaus to help navigate a system that is often not designed to meet the unique needs of these students. By emphasizing adult actions and collaborative efforts, they strive to cultivate a more inclusive and supportive environment that empowers all students to succeed. This approach not only enhances individual learning experiences but also fosters a sense of community and belonging among students and families.

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

**Site Visit Attendees**

September 10, 2024

**CSD Team:** Lucy Valenzuela (lead), Missy Brown, Corina Chavez and Kristen LaVolpa

**CSD Remote Team:** Martica Davis, Ken Norris and Betty Seeley

**School Leadership:** Rafe Martinez (Executive Director), Stephanie Lovato (Director of Curriculum & Instruction), Charlotte Alderrete-Trujillo (High School/TOPS Coordinator), Rachael Mesillas (Community Engagement Coordinator), and Sherri Herrington (Compliance Officer)

**Governing Board:** Kimberly Moya (Chair), Dana Grubestic (Vice-Chair) and Jane Cavanaugh