



Hanna Skandera  
Secretary-Designate

New Mexico  
Public Education Department  
300 Don Gaspar  
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501-2786  
[www.ped.state.nm.us](http://www.ped.state.nm.us)

Larry Behrens  
Public Information Officer  
505-476-0393  
[Larry.Behrens2@state.nm.us](mailto:Larry.Behrens2@state.nm.us)

# NEWS RELEASE

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## Public Education Department Announces Initial Findings in Audit of 28 Charter Schools

**SANTA FE** – In keeping with the commitment to protect classroom dollars, the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) on Friday announced the initial findings of an audit conducted in 28 charter schools. Over the last year, the number of new students in New Mexico schools has increased by about 1%, while the funding units have increased about 116%.

In April, NMPED conducted an audit of 34 school districts in an effort to verify the increased funding units. As part of the commitment, NMPED also identified 28 charter schools that increased significantly in the areas of Special Education along with Training and Experience. Both areas represented nearly 58% of the increase in new units.

“We promised a new era of transparency and accountability in New Mexico,” said NMPED Secretary-designate Hanna Skandera. “That standard applies to all of our schools, including charter schools. We must make sure every taxpayer dollar is spent and accounted for to be certain that every student is getting the services they deserve.”

### ***Charter Schools Cleared through the Department’s Audit (9 Charters):***

Based on a review of records and additional accountability measures established by the Department’s auditing team, nine charter schools were cleared of all issues regarding special education, special education services and expenses for teacher training and experience. In the majority of cases, these charters exhibited exemplary data quality, accurate record keeping, strong accountability and no compliance infractions. These charters include:

#### **Special Education:**

- El Camino Real Academy
- Amy Biehl
- Taos Academy
- Vista Grande High School
- Cottonwood Classical Prep
- Media Arts Collaborative Charter
- Public Academy for Performing Arts
- School for Integrated Academies and Technologies

**Training & Experience:**

- Rio Gallinas Charter School

***Charter Schools Cited for Minor Compliance Issues (13 Charters):***

Based on a review of records and additional accountability measures established by the Department's auditing team, thirteen charter schools were cited for minor compliance issues not consistent with state or federal laws. Minor compliance issues identified include poor data quality, inaccurate or delayed record keeping, discrepancies between data submitted to the Department and data included in a student's Individualized Education Program and potential additional questions regarding the level of services provided to a special education student. The Department will follow up with these charters within the next two weeks outlining specific remedies and a timeline for coming into compliance. In many cases, this may be as simple as correcting unintentional technical errors. The charters identified include:

**Special Education:**

- Montessori of the Rio Grande
- Mountain Mahogany
- Las Montañas
- Southwest Intermediate Learning Center
- Corrales International
- Native American Community Academy
- School of Dreams

**Training & Experience:**

- Anansi Charter
- Horizon Academy West
- School of Dreams Academy
- Southwest Intermediate Learning Center
- Sidney Gutierrez Middle
- Deming Ceasar Chavez
- Nuestros Valores

***Charter Schools Cited for Major Compliance Issues (9 Charters):***

Based on a review of records and additional accountability measures established by the Department's auditing team, nine charter schools were cited for major compliance issues not consistent with state or federal laws. In addition to minor compliance issues, these charters showed unusually high rates of ancillary services provided or failed to provide services to children despite receiving dollars for these services from the state. The Department will follow up with these charters within the next two weeks outlining specific remedies and a timeline for coming into compliance with state and federal laws. These charters include:

**Special Education:**

- Robert F. Kennedy
- La Promesa
- Anansi Charter
- ABQ Talent Development Center
- Middle College High School
- Cariños de los Niños

**Training & Experience:**

- Robert F. Kennedy

- Las Montañas
- Southwest Primary Learning Center
- Southwest Secondary Learning Center
- Middle College High School

***Charter Schools Selected for Additional Audit Measures Based on Initial Findings (1 Charter):***

Based on a review of records and additional accountability measures established by the Department's auditing team, one charter school was identified as needing a more intensive and expansive audit to determine the extent of their infractions. In addition to the major compliance issues identified above, this charter exhibited severe data quality issues or could not verify data reported to the Department, could not validate records and provider service logs, could not verify students were receiving services and showed unusual trends needing additional review. This charter school is:

**Special Education:**

- Nuestro Valores

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