

OFFICE OF MARY C. BARLOW
Kern County Superintendent of Schools
Advocates for Children...

DATE: December 3, 2022

TO: Mary Barlow and Lisa Gilbert
FROM: Cathie Morris, Charter School Consultant
RE: REALMS Charter History and Renewal

The purpose of this memo is to provide background information regarding the REALMS Charter School Petition.

Background:

- First authorized by the Kern County Board of Education in April, 2019 for a two-year term with the intention that REALMS would be subsumed into the Sierra Sands Unified School District upon the next petition renewal scheduled for June 30, 2021.
- In December 2019, after an initial site visit that fall that indicated the charter was losing students due to an ineffective instructional program, KCSOS Superintendent Barlow, in collaboration with Lisa Gilbert, convened an intervention team to support REALMS that was comprised of six staff members with instructional and school management expertise. Each team member visited the school site, observed classrooms, and met with site leadership. The major findings were as follows:

- 1) The school had not yet implemented DIBELS or SIPPS which were two of the early literacy components of the charter petition.
- 2) Daily ELD was not occurring, and was being provided by a paraprofessional.
- 3) Classroom management was an issue and teachers needed professional learning to improve management procedures/practices.
- 4) Teachers were not using data to guide instruction and intervention.

After the initial findings were reviewed, an intervention plan was created to support the charter. The support team worked with the site leadership to address the findings until schools were required to close due to COVID-19.

- According to the charter petition, **expected enrollment for 2019-20 was 420 students** while DataQuest shows **308 students were actually enrolled**.
- In the spring of 2020, KCSOS conducted its annual review (virtually) of all authorized charters, including REALMS. The REALMS Oversight Review Report indicated that REALMS had 21 findings of non-compliance including the lack of Fiscal Policies, lack of appropriate teaching credentials for some teachers, and a lack of mandated trainings, as examples.
- REALMS began in-person instruction again in November, 2020 with **approximately 159 students**.
- On November 10, 2020, the Kern County Board of Education approved a one-year extension of the petition due to the issues surrounding the COVID-19 Pandemic that prevented the

charter and the Sierra Sands School District from solidifying the terms by which the charter would become part of the district. The charter renewal date was extended to June 30, 2022.

- In the spring of 2021, KCSOS conducted its annual Charter Review Site visits. REALMS had improved in its Findings, but still had 10 non-compliance issues.
- In July, 2021 Section 58 of Assembly Bill 130 was passed which provided that all charter schools whose term expired on or between January 1, 2022, and June 30, 2025, inclusive, shall have their term extended by two years. Thus, the REALMS Charter Petition will expire on June 30, 2024 and the charter will be submitting renewal documents during the 2023-24 school year.
- During the 2022 Charter Site Reviews, REALMS was found to be non-compliant in 26 different elements, including items in Governance, Human Resources, Fiscal/business, Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, and Student Services.
- At its September 2022 regular board meeting, the County Board, after hearing the REALMS Site Review Report, which, in addition to the 26 non-compliant Findings, included four incidents of parent complaints, directed KCSOS staff to continue to regularly monitor the REALMS Charter School.
- At the November 2022 board meeting, the County Board was presented an update report in regard to REALMS. Included in that report were several findings stemming from site and classroom visits to REALMS by KCSOS staff since the September board meeting. Some of these findings included issues that were reported in 2019, such as the lack of Designated ELD, ineffective classroom management practices and the continued absence of the SIPPS Program. In addition, classroom instruction was reported to be ineffective in most classrooms.

December, 2022 Unresolved and Continuing Issues

- 4 teachers have expired credentials. The charter began working on addressing these issues after we asked for the information and noted the problems.
- TB clearances: 7 staff and one substitute (certificated and classified) do not have clearances on file. The school is working on these issues now, but these staff members should not have been allowed to work without the clearance.
- 3 staff do not have Child abuse training.