

## **Charter Oversight Review Summary 2021-22**

### **The Oversight Review Structure**

- KCSOS review team includes those with expertise in Personnel/HR, Fiscal/Business Services, Curriculum/Instruction/Assessment, Special Education, governance and overall Charter School regulations.
- Site visits were conducted in May 2022, along with substantial document reviews for over 200 items included in the review instrument.
- Collaborative process with each of the Charter School's administrative teams. The process supports and builds upon the good relationship that KCSOS has with each of its authorized charter schools.
- Commend each of the charter schools' administrative team for their positive attitude, cooperation and well-organized documentation. It's difficult in this brief presentation to fully describe the positive impact our authorized charters make in the lives of students in our county.

### **General Comments:**

The Kern County Superintendent of Schools Office (KCSOS) also annually monitors the academic performance of the charter schools which it has authorized. California Education Code 47607 details how charter school performance will be evaluated for renewal purposes, and relies heavily on the California School Dashboard's academic data but also includes a State Board of Education approved list of valid assessments from which charters can select and use. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the state has not released academic Dashboard Data for 2020-21 or 2021-22. Therefore, the KCSOS-authorized Charters identified and KCSOS approved, their use of the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment.

The MAP Assessment provides academic growth data in mathematics and Reading/language arts (ELA) for students individually, as well as averages for schoolwide results. It is a nationally norm-referenced assessment administered three times per year, providing data on student progress to determine if students are making measurable increases in academic achievement. EC 47607.2 states that for charter renewals, authorizers shall "consider clear and convincing evidence" to indicate "the school achieved measurable increases in academic achievement, as defined by at least one year's progress for each year in school."

- For its annual Charter Review Report, KCSOS requested the NWEA Summary Growth Report from each of its charters and the summary for each charter is included in the report for each school.

## **Grow Academy-Arvin**

- 2021-22 was the charter's 11<sup>th</sup> year of operation; served approximately 800 TK-8 students.
- We appreciate GROW Academy's continued commitment to its standard of excellence.
- The Arvin facility is lovely and provides a broad and rich learning environment that includes the edible school garden and kitchen learning lab.

## **Summary of Review:**

- Grow Academy continued to demonstrate its commitment to its standard of excellence, not only in regard to its oversight review, but also in its commitment to serve its students and parents.
- Grow Academy's report includes some minor, items that we're confident will be addressed in short order.
- However, the charter's enrollment data indicates that the school continues to have a much lower enrollment of EL students (21% fewer) than that of the Arvin Union School district. The reason for this disparity is not clear, but the charter has provided evidence that it conducts extensive outreach to the entire community. The charter has indicated that it will continue to study the issue and explore options for outreach activities.
- In regard to the NWEA results, 4 of 8 grade levels met growth targets in math, 1 of 8 in ELA, and
- Average percentage schoolwide of students who met growth targets: 50% math, 42.2% in ELA.

## **Wonderful College Prep Academy—Delano**

- This was the charter school's 13<sup>th</sup> year of operation; it served approximately 1,974 TK-12 students in 2021-22.
- The charter provides a state-of-the-art facility that continues to improve and grow to fulfill the charter's vision, and now includes a wellness center and beautiful gymnasium.

**Summary of Findings:** The charter had a few minor non-compliant findings, as noted in the written report, with the following significant ones:

### **Section 2: Fiscal/Business**

- As noted in Section 6: Human Resources, the charter had 4 teacher misassignments during the year. Charter law (EC 47612.5) states, in effect, that ADA apportionment may only be claimed by appropriately credentialed teachers. KCSOS was not provided documentation that ADA was not claimed for the days in which the misassigned teachers were in the classrooms.

### **Section 3: Educational Program and Assessment**

- The charter did not provide legally mandated trainings or, in some cases, did not provide them in a timely manner.

**Section 6: Human Resources**

- There were several findings related to this section: 1) 15 staff members had expired TB clearances, 2) 142 staff did not complete the mandated Child Abuse and Reporting training, 3) 19 employees did not complete the Sexual Harassment training, 4) already noted: the charter had 4 teachers who were misassigned during the year.

**Academic Progress:**

- 10 of 12 grade levels met growth targets in math, and 9 of 12, in ELA.
- Average percentage, schoolwide of students meeting growth targets: 55% in math, and 60% in ELA.

**Wonderful College Prep Academy—Lost Hills**

- This is the charter’s 5<sup>th</sup> review. The school served approximately 480 students in grades TK-10 in 2021-22.
- The school should once again be commended for its comprehensive layers of “wrap around services” for students and their families, both for physical, as well as mental health.
- This charter also had a few minor findings, with the significant ones listed below.

**Summary of Findings:**

**Section 3: Educational Program and Assessment:**

- The charter did not provide legally mandated training or, in some cases, did not provide it in a timely manner

**Section 6: Human Resources:**

- 9 staff members had expired TB clearances.
- 51 staff members did not complete the mandated Child Abuse Training.
- 13 Employees did not complete the Sexual Harassment Prevention Training.

**Section 7: Student Services:**

- In regard the charter fulfilling its agreement in its MOU to strive to ensure comparable demographic enrollment with that of the Lost Hills School District: Subgroup data was comparable except for that related to Migrant students, where, based on 2021-22 DataQuest data, Lost Hills School District’s enrollment was 46% while the charter’s was 3.5%. This data reflects an improvement from 2021 when the charter reported 0% Migrant students.

**Academic Progress:** 8 of 11 grade levels met growth targets in math and ELA. Average Percentage of students schoolwide meeting targets: 58% in math, 53% in ELA.

## **REALMS (Ridgecrest Elementary Academy of Language, Music and Science)**

- The charter was originally authorized for two years beginning in 2019-20. A one-year extension of that charter term was approved in November, 2020. However, due to the pandemic, the California State board of Education extended petition terms for two years for all charters due for renewal in 2022. Therefore, the petition is automatically authorized until June 30, 2024. This is the third review of the charter by KCSOS as the authorizer.
- In 2021 REALMS had several significant non-compliant findings, and unfortunately repeated that trend in 2022.

### **Summary of Review:**

**Section 1: General Requirements** and to the question as to whether the charter has complied with the terms of the current Memorandum of Understanding. There are two issues with the MOU:

- 1) The MOU requires a material revision if the charter's enrollment increases or decreases by 25% of that outlined in the charter's petition. The charter's enrollment in 2021-22 was approximately 168, with a projected enrollment of 427.
- 2) The MOU requires a material revision if there are changes in the governance structure. The petition states that the charter will have at least one parent on the governing board, but the charter has been without such representation for two years. Due to the pandemic, and the charter's difficulty in finding a parent willing to serve on the board last year, KCSOS did not include it as a finding at that time. Although the charter made assurances throughout 2021-22 that it was addressing the issue, a parent was not added to the board during the year.

### **Section 2: Fiscal and Business Operations:** Two issues

- 1) First, the charter, as described in Section 6 (Human Resources) had misassigned teachers in some classrooms for varying periods of time. Charters, based on EC 47612.5, may only claim ADA apportionment for appropriately credentialed teachers. KCSOS was not provided documentation that ADA was not claimed for the days in which the misassigned teachers were in the classrooms.
- 2) At the time of the review, multi-year budget projections indicated substantial general fund operating deficits (approx. \$471,000) in 2021-22. We have been provided verbal assurance that the budget has since been revised for subsequent fiscal years to avoid deficit spending and KCSOS looks forward to having documentation of those revisions, approved by the charter's board.

### **Section 3: Educational Program and Assessment**

- The REALMS petition included descriptions of rigorous and innovative programs in, not only the Common Core State Standards, but also Language, music and science. According to its Petition, language instruction was to teach students to “speak, read, and write in Spanish”, but it is not clear that the Rosetta Stone computer program fully meets that criteria, nor does the charter have a scope/sequence with assessments to monitor student growth in regard to speaking, reading and writing in Spanish. In addition, the scope/sequence and assessment issues are the same for the music and Project Lead the Way STEM curriculum.
- In regard to its special education program, the charter was found to have 3 late IEPs “without cause”. The KCSOS SELPA staff is working with REALMS to put IEP compliance practices in place.
- Other “findings” in **Section 3** included issues related to: 1) the charter not having a plan on how it would provide transportation, if necessary, for a SWD (This was also a finding from the 2021 review), 2) the charter either did not provide mandated/required trainings to staff, or did not provide the training within required timelines, 3) the charter did not send out all disenrollment letters to districts within the 30-day limit, 4) the NWEA data provided by the charter indicates low student academic performance.

### **Section 4: Facilities**

- The charter’s Facilities Inspection Report (FIT) indicated that the facilities were 100% compliant with all of the descriptions included therein. While conducting the site visit, it was noted that paint was severely peeling off of some buildings where students either are housed or where they congregate. The charter needs to ensure that the purpose and intent of the FIT Report is followed each year.

### **Section 5: Governance**

- There was a non-compliance finding regarding the charter board’s composition and its lack of parent representation, as outlined in the petition and MOU.
- Additional findings in Section 5 were: 1) The charter did not provide a SPSA, as charters and Single School Districts are allowed to use their LCAPs as their SPSA IF the LCAP includes the federal (Title I) funding and expenditures. The charter’s LCAP only detailed LCFF funds and actions. This is the second year it was out of compliance with this item,

### **Section 6: Human Resources**

- Several issues in regard to this section, including: 1) lack of fingerprint clearance for two employees, 2) 6 staff members had expired TB clearances, 3) several staff did not

participate in mandated trainings, 4) three staff members either did not have appropriate certification or had substituted in classrooms longer than allowed by law.

### **Section 7: Student Services**

- Several staff members had not participated in required health/safety trainings.
- The charter did not provide evidence that students were screened for sight and hearing, as required by law. This was also a finding in 2021.
- The Title IX website posting was missing several components, including a complaint form and the policy.
- The charter did not have required elements of EC 234 posted in a prominent location on its website.

Around the same time that the KCSOS Senior Cabinet became aware of the numerous non-compliant issues found during the REALMS review, it also was informed that the charter's board had a meeting in June to discuss whether the charter should be closed due to deficit spending and other issues. The motion to close the charter was moved and seconded, but after hearing from parents of charter students, the vote was 3 to 1 to remain open, with one board member not present to vote.

KCSOS staff felt that the issues surrounding the charter were so pervasive and severe that it drafted a letter to the charter's board outlining its concerns, with the recommendation that the board close the school and the notice that the office would be reviewing options for a charter revocation if the board declined to close it. Initially, Dr. Barlow requested a response from the board within 5 days of receipt of the letter.

Subsequent to the delivery of the letter to the REALMS board and CEO, KCSOS learned that the charter board was not properly composed, as all of the members, except the KCSOS representative, were serving on the board with expired terms. The board was to have convened a nomination committee in May and have elections per the Bylaws. However, since the process in the Bylaws was not being followed, and KCSOS felt that it was imperative to have a properly seated/elected board of directors, the 5-day response directive was extended. KCSOS staff and legal counsel have been working with REALMS to conduct a board election according to the Bylaws, with the exception of the May timeline, which the sitting board voted to amend for this year.

Once the new board has been sworn in and has elected its officers, it will respond to the KCSOS letter of concern. At this time, I'd like to read that letter.