



May 4, 2018

Christopher N. Ruskowski
Secretary-Designate
State of New Mexico Public Education Department
300 Don Gaspar
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Re: Hawthorne Elementary School

Dear Secretary-Designate Ruskowski:

APS acknowledges receipt of your April 27, 2018, letter denying the Albuquerque Public Schools' (APS) MRI Plan for Hawthorne Elementary School. Nevertheless, APS intends to implement its Redesign Plan for Hawthorne while also giving school attendance choice options to parents and students as provided in your April 27, 2018, letter.

As you might expect, APS is very disappointed that the substantial effort expended to develop the Restructure and Redesign Plan for Hawthorne Elementary School was not accepted. Even more disappointing is that there was no explanation given for your denial decision.

With regard to the imposition of the "Champion & Provide Choice" contained in your decision letter, APS wants to highlight the arbitrariness of the denial of the Hawthorne Elementary School plan when the virtually identical plan was approved for Los Padillas and Whittier elementary schools. APS learned not by direct communication from you, but from your statement in the April 28 edition of the Albuquerque Journal that you lacked confidence in the ability of APS to implement the virtually identical plans approved by you for Los Padillas and Whittier elementary schools. Interestingly the PED did have confidence that the virtually identical plans could be implemented at Los Padillas and Whittier elementary schools.

With regard to the Hawthorne plan, it must be remembered, that it is the same Board of Education, the same Superintendent, the same Associate Superintendent specifically charged with implementing the plan, a staff of highly effective or exemplary teachers and a seasoned turn-around principal that will implement the plan at Hawthorne as is the case at Whittier. The irony of the denial is not lost on APS and has created a loss of confidence in the Secretary's ability to objectively fulfill his and the PED's commitments set out in the Request for Applications. APS, while remaining hopeful, but being without any level of confidence, is very doubtful that any support will ultimately be forthcoming from the Secretary or the PED for Los Padillas, Whittier and Hawthorne elementary schools. APS, therefore, intends to move forward with its plans for Los Padillas, Whittier and Hawthorne elementary schools with or without support from you or the PED.

It cannot go without noting that all along in this Application process there has been changing PED criteria, which gives APS real concern that its efforts will not be judged objectively. One example of the changing criteria is the following relating to staffing the MRI schools:

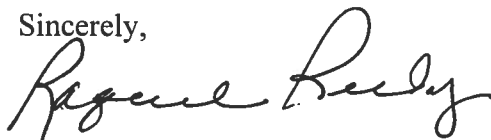
In the initial RFA the requirement was that the MRI schools be staffed by “Effective” “Highly Effective” and “Exemplary” teachers. APS submitted an application that comported with the requested criteria. This application was denied. PED in denying the initial application advised APS that it could submit an updated application that specifically addressed eight areas of focus that the Secretary-Designate identified. One of the eight areas of focus related to staffing of the MRI schools. PED stated that the updated application should provide that the MRI schools would be staffed with “Highly Effective” and “Exemplary” teachers. The Effective classification was deleted. In the spirit of good faith and cooperation, to assure that the MRI school could operate in accordance with the proposed APS plan, APS agreed to recruit aggressively to staff the MRI schools with Highly Effective and Exemplary teachers. APS, relying on the statement that PED would assist in achieving the MRI plans, requested assistance from PED in identifying teachers statewide who had the required status, because this information was only available to PED. This request was met with silence from PED. The deafening silence from PED made it clear to APS that it would be left to its own devices to recruit teachers with the required status of Highly Effective and Exemplary. APS has begun the hiring process of teachers who meet the qualifications included in the APS updated plan.

On April 27, 2018, in approving conditionally the APS MRI Application for Los Padillas Elementary School and Whittier Elementary School, the Secretary-Designate and PED shifted again the criteria regarding staffing. The new April 27, 2018, criteria requires that the teachers staffing the MRI Schools not only have the designation of Highly Effective or Exemplary, but that these teachers have a “multi-year” track record of having the designation of Highly Effective or Exemplary.

APS is left to only guess what new criteria will be used by the Secretary-Designate and PED in providing the assistance that was originally promised in the RFA. APS, and reasonably informed observers of the process, agree that we are justified in our skepticism and lack of confidence in the Secretary-Designate and PED.

Given the shifting criteria in the staffing area of focus, which is only one of the eight areas, and without detailing changes in criteria in each of the other seven areas of focus, APS believes that its best course of action is to proceed with implementation of its MRI plans for Los Padillas, Whittier and Hawthorne elementary schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Raquel Reedy".

Raquel Reedy, Superintendent