

AGENDA ITEM EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- I. **Public Education Commission Meeting Date:** June 11, 2021
- II. **Item Title:** Amendment Request: Grade Levels Served– La Tierra Montessori
- III. **Executive Summary:**
Discussion and Possible Action on Charter School Amendment, La Tierra Montessori

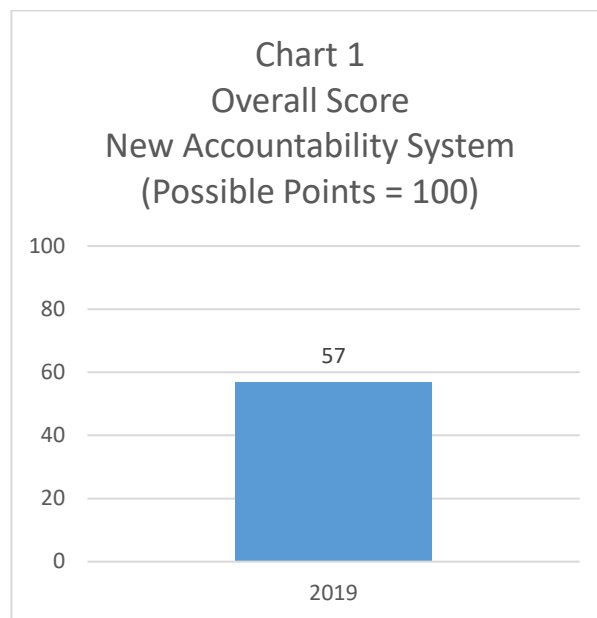
Request

La Tierra Montessori School of the Arts of Sciences is requesting to add grades 7 and 8. The school is currently authorized for grades K-6.

The school's Governing Council voted to remove grades 7 through 8 starting SY2018-2019 because the school faced challenges in staffing, and there was not a strong need for those grade levels based on the enrollment at the time.

Academic Performance

Overall Standing: Chart 1 illustrates the school's overall score (out of 100 possible points).



The school earned a Spotlight Designation for SY 2018-2019

Financial Audits

Audit Year	# of Findings	# of Repeat Findings	# of Material Weaknesses and Significant Deficiencies
FY20	5	0	1
FY19	1	0	0
FY18	2	0	1

Performance Framework

La Tierra Montessori	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Category I. Academic Performance Framework				
Indicator 1 Components of School Accountability System	Falls Far Below (or Does Not Meet) Standard	Falls Far Below (or Does Not Meet) Standard	56.71 Points (Spotlight)	
Indicator 2 Subgroup Performance	Falls Far Below (or Does Not Meet) Standard	Not Applicable	Pending	
Indicator 3 Mission Specific Goals	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	
Financial Performance Framework				
Self-Assessment Survey completed and signed by Head Admin, SBO, and Finance Chair	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
Category II. Organizational Performance Framework				
Indicator 1a Educational Program: mission and educational program of approved charter application	Falls Far Below (or Does Not Meet) Standard	Working to Meet Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
Indicator 1b Educational Program: state assessment requirements	Working to Meet Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
Indicator 4a Students & Employees: protecting the rights of all students	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Does Not Meet Standard
Indicator 1c Educational Program: protecting the rights of students with disabilities	Working to Meet Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Working to Meet Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
Indicator 1d Educational Program: protecting the rights of English Language Learners	Working to Meet Standard	Working to Meet Standard	Working to Meet Standard	Does Not Meet Standard
Indicator 4b Students & Employees: attendance, retention, and recurrent enrollment	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Working to Meet Standard	Not Applicable
<i>Included in Indicator 4b</i>	Working to Meet Standard	Working to Meet Standard		
Indicator 2a Financial Mgmt & Oversight: meeting financial reporting and compliance requirements	Falls Far Below (or Does Not Meet) Standard	Working to Meet Standard	Working to Meet Standard	Working to Meet Standard
Indicator 2b Financial Mgmt & Oversight: following generally accepted accounting principles	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Falls Far Below (or Does Not Meet) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
Indicator 3a Governance & Reporting: complying with governance requirements	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Working to Meet Standard
<i>Included in Indicator 3c</i>	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard		
Indicator 4c Students & Employees: meeting teacher and other staff credentialing requirements	Working to Meet Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Falls Far Below (or Does Not Meet) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
Indicator 4d Students & Employees: respecting employee rights	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Working to Meet Standard
Indicator 4e Students & Employees: completing required background checks / reporting ethical violations	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Working to Meet Standard
Indicator 5a School Environment: complying with facilities requirements	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
Indicator 5c School Environment: complying with health and safety requirements	Working to Meet Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Working to Meet Standard
Indicator 5d School Environment: handling information appropriately	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
OTHER				
School specific conditions in the Charter Contract, if any	Not Applicable	Not Applicable		
Indicator 1e Educational Program: meeting program requirements for all PED and federal grant programs			Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
Indicator 1f Educational Program: NM DASH Plan			Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Indicator 2c Financial Mgmt & Oversight: responsive to audit findings			Working to Meet Standard	Working to Meet Standard
Indicator 2d Financial Mgmt & Oversight: managing grant funds responsibility			Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
Indicator 2e Financial Mgmt & Oversight: staffing to ensure proper fiscal management			Working to Meet Standard	Working to Meet Standard
Indicator 2f Financial Mgmt & Oversight: meeting obligations timely / appropriate internal controls			Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Indicator 3b Governance & Reporting: complying with nepotism and conflict of interest requirements			Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
Indicator 3c Governance & Reporting: meeting obligations timely / appropriate internal controls			Meets (or Exceeds) Standard	Meets (or Exceeds) Standard
Indicator 5b School Environment: complying with transportation requirements			Not Applicable	Not Applicable

Grade Level Change to Contract Amendment Request Form

The Charter Contract, was entered into by and between the New Mexico Public Education Commission and [LA Tierra Montessori School OF THE ARTS AND], hereafter the School, effective [1] of [JULY], [2017]. The School was approved for a [5 YEAR] Charter Contract.

The School's Charter Contract currently states:

AUTHORIZED GRADE LEVELS: K-6

The School requests consideration from the Public Education Commission (PEC) to change the terms of its Charter Contract, Section II _____, as follows:

PROPOSED CHANGE TO GRADE LEVELS SERVED: K-8

EFFECTIVE DATE: AUGUST 1, 2021

GRADE LEVELS SERVED: ☒ INCREASE ☐ DECREASE

The School's Grade Level Change to Contract amendment request is hereby submitted by [ANGELA FEATHERS] on [MAY 13, 2021], and affirms the school meets the following eligibility criteria:

- ☒ The school must confer with the PEC to convert to the 2019 contract template within 30 days of a vote on this request;
- ☒ The school's governing board is in compliance with all reporting requirements; and
- ☒ In the prior three (3) years, the school has:
 - Received no lower than a "C" letter grade on the state report card (applicable for SY18 and prior) AND received no lower than the top 75% academic designation on the NM System of School Support and Accountability (applicable for SY19 and forward);
 - Received an overall academic tier rating of Tier 1 or Tier 2 on the school's PEC approved Academic Performance Framework, for years in which a PEC Tier Level is available;
 - And
 - Has not had its board of finance revoked.
- ☒ If the fiscal year has started or will start prior to the request being considered by the PEC, the amendment request will be effective only in the subsequent fiscal year



Charter School Representative Signature

May 13, 2021

Date

The School's Grade Level Change amendment request was reviewed and voted upon by the Public Education Commission and is hereby:

☐ APPROVED

☐ DENIED

Chair, Public Education Commission
cc: School File

Date



Narrative

- Describe the rationale for this request.

La Tierra Montessori School of the Arts and Sciences would like to add 7th and 8th grade back to our school. A few years ago, the Governing Council voted to remove 7th and 8th grade from the charter. This was a devastating move for LTMAS. The Montessori academic cycle was interrupted, children lost their path to high school, students do not have many options for middle school. The path our school provided in conjunction with Moving Arts Española was lost. Our students can either attend Carlos Vigil Middle School, enter the lottery for McCurdy, or pay tuition (14k) for Camino de Paz, a Montessori Adolescent program. We feel reinstating our proposed program will fulfill our students needs.

- Provide a detailed staffing plan consistent with each Staffing Chart submitted with this request. Describe how the staffing (administrative, instructional, and non-instructional), enrollment, and target population needs will be addressed by the following processes:

LTMAS is projecting for the 2021-22 school year:

Primary (K) One Teacher

Lower Elementary (6-9) One Teacher, One Assistant

Upper Elementary (9-12) Two Teachers

Adolescent (7-8) One Teacher

- Recruitment, Hiring, Training- We have recruited using the Montessori websites and are also considering sending someone to AMI Adolescent Training if we find the right person and they do not have the credentials. If approved, we would only need to hire one additional teacher, as our ancillary and ELL programs would be able to handle any potential students with those needs.



La Tierra Montessori School of the Arts and Sciences

- Provide a detailed description of how the Charter school will meet the enrollment targets identified in each Enrollment Matrix submitted. Include the following:

LTMAS is projecting for the 2021-22 school year:

Primary (K) 8

Lower Elementary (6-9) 25

Upper Elementary (9-12) 29

Adolescent (7-8) One Teacher 10

- A plan for meeting targets

We would continue to serve our children by using data driven practices (IStation, IXL and IReady). Ensuring that our children are meeting their goals. The Montessori approach uses individualized instruction, therefore our students unique needs after the COVID-19 pandemic will be addressed.

- Necessary advertising and/or promotion to meet the targets

We have significant interest in our own community from former students, to current students at this time we do not feel we would need to advertise or promote the addition of seventh and eighth grade.

- Number of returning students

We currently have 11 students in rolled in six grade all of them have indicated they would like to return for seventh. This includes two students who are enrolled in our final quarter in the hopes that seventh and eighth grade would be added.

- Anticipated new student enrollment.

We have five former students who have indicated they would return to La Tierra should the seventh and eighth grade program be approved.

- Identify the concrete resources, if any, needed for implementation. Consider the changes needed to curriculum, assessment, and instruction to implement this request. Provide the rationale for your response. If the response indicates that resources are not needed to implement the request, explain why.

La Tierra Montessori School had a seventh and eighth grade program as recently as three years ago. The curriculum instructions and assessment plans are still in place. We would utilize the best of the former system and make minor adjustments to improve our proposed program.

- Present clear criteria for promotion from one grade level to the next, to include the level of proficiency that students must obtain to demonstrate mastery of academic core content.

Students must show a mastery of academic core content to be promoted from one grade



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level to the next. Evidence could include test scores, teacher evaluations, mastery of content in the classroom and competency in academic settings. Montessori students work on a skill until it is mastered. We meet the child where they are at and work through a series of materials to help them master the skill. Children move from concrete materials to abstract concepts. In the Adolescent Community (7th and 8th grade) most of the presentations would not be using the materials. However, they are available to the children should they need a review or need extra help with a particular concept. Coming out of a pandemic, we anticipate there will be a need for review and work with concrete materials.

Occupancy Documentation

For the proposed facility, clearly label and provide the following documents:

- Documentation of the capacity load of the facility to document capacity that can sustain projected growth in enrollment. Hand-drawn images will not be accepted.

Please see attached. LTMAS can currently serve 180 students. For the 2021-22 school year we are proposing approximately 75 students.

- If an additional facility will be utilized:

An additional facility will not be utilized we will be able to use our current space.

Additional Information

Attach each of the following documents:

- Enrollment Matrix
 - Detail the current and targeted number of students served per grade for the subsequent three Fiscal Years both in the grade levels currently served and the requested additional grade(s).

LTMAS is projecting for the 2021-22 school year:

Primary (K) 8

Lower Elementary (6-9) 25

Upper Elementary (9-12) 29

Adolescent (7-8) One Teacher 10

LTMAS is projecting for the 2022-23 school year:

Primary (K) 15

Lower Elementary (6-9) 20



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Lower Elementary (6-9) 15

Upper Elementary (9-12) 20

Upper Elementary (9-12) 20

Adolescent (7-8) One Teacher 15

LTMAS is projecting for the 2023-24 school year:

Primary (K) 20

Lower Elementary (6-9) 20

Lower Elementary (6-9) 20

Upper Elementary (9-12) 20

Upper Elementary (9-12) 20

Adolescent (7-8) One Teacher 20

□ Staffing Chart

- Identify the current and anticipated staffing information for the subsequent three Fiscal Years both in the grade levels currently served and the requested additional grade(s).

LTMAS is projecting for the 2021-22 school year:

Primary (K) One Teacher

Lower Elementary (6-9) One Teacher, One Assistant

Upper Elementary (9-12) Two Teachers

Adolescent (7-8) One Teacher

LTMAS is projecting for the 2022-23 school year:

Primary (K) One Teacher

Lower Elementary (6-9) Two Teachers

Upper Elementary (9-12) Two Teachers

Adolescent (7-8) One Teacher



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LTMAS is projecting for the 2023-24 school year:

Primary (K) One Teacher

Lower Elementary (6-9) Two Teachers

Upper Elementary (9-12) Two Teachers

Adolescent (7-8) One Teacher

A typical Montessori model would have approximately 25 to 35 students with one adult and one assistant in each classroom. However, our school and current trends show that the ideal For each classroom would be 20 students with a possible assistant in each classroom or perhaps shared between each level. We believe with our growing popularity and the addition of seventh and eighth grade we would be able to grow our school and serve our community in the best possible way.



La Tierra
Montessori School
of the Arts and
Sciences

Proposal for Reintroducing 7th and 8th Grades

Making a case for an Adolescent Community

In 2018, the La Tierra Montessori School of the Arts and Sciences (LTMAS) Board voted to petition the Public Education Commission to remove 7th and 8th grade from the school's charter.

The renewed mission of LTMAS is to ensure that all middle-grade students, particularly those in marginalized and historically underrepresented communities, have equitable access to an excellent education that prepares them to be successful in high school and beyond.

This document details LTMAS's proposed plan for creating the Montessori middle school it was always intended to have. Slated to be implemented in the fall of 2021, the goal of the plan is to provide families in Northern New Mexico, specifically in Rio Arriba County, with appropriately sized classes to ensure all students have quality academic programs.

The plan responds to ongoing population changes in Rio Arriba County that have increased overall student enrollment in the district, while simultaneously impacting demographic trends. We believe this middle school plan is an important first step in proactively addressing these issues.

The re-opening of the LTMAS middle school program will have far-reaching effects throughout the county, including the clear impacts on area high schools, create new middle school feeder patterns, and focus option programs.

This document provides our rationale for creating the middle school or Montessori Adolescent Community, the approach we used to make our decisions, and the expected outcomes from the proposed changes. It is organized in five sections:

- 1.** Why create middle school: What is the central problem we hope to address by creating the proposed middle school program?
- 2.** Community and district core guiding values: What beliefs and principles did we use to guide our approach to re-creating a new middle school program?
- 3.** Monitoring progress and measuring success: What do we hope to accomplish and how will we review our success?
- 4.** School-level impacts: What do we expect to change at school as a result of the proposed middle school?
- 5.** Next steps: How will we inform the LTMAS community about the proposed addition?

Why (Re)Create a Middle School?

Individualized Instruction

In a Montessori classroom, teachers assess students on a daily basis, using their observations of each child's interactions in the environment and with peers. They develop an individualized learning plan for each child, based on his or her unique interests and abilities. This approach to educating child varies whole from the "one size fits all" approach of traditional education.

By continuing on into the next plane of development, we are fulfilling our promise to our students of a Montessori education. Children currently must leave La Tierra with limited options.

There is only one middle school in the Española Public School system. Carlos F. Vigil Middle School is a 7-8 school that currently serves 525 students. McCurdy also offers middle school, but as a charter school, they also have a lottery system. Our 6th grade students are not guaranteed a spot should they choose to leave.

Typically, under-enrollment is most pronounced in grades 6-8. Typically, the more students there are per grade, the more full-time staff members there potentially are to lead classrooms. This is the failing traditional school model. A school's ability to provide varied and rich academic programming depends on its student enrollment and staffing. Larger schools typically have more staff members, which allows them to provide course offerings beyond the core program, such as technology or arts. These exploratory courses are especially important for students in grades 7-8, whose developmental needs are beginning to diverge from those of their younger peers.

However, in a Montessori adolescent Community, teachers follow the child's interest. Rather than having multiple staff members for a variety of programming, teachers and students invite experts to lend their expertise in a particular subject. For example, a student may be excelling in Mathematics and want to further explore beyond the classroom. A local professor may be consulted. Perhaps there would be online lectures to audit. With so many possibilities for our students, imagine the unlimited opportunities we could afford them using this model!



Community and District Core Guiding Values

Drawing on valuable input from community members, including families, our principal, teachers, and most importantly, our children, our proposed plan for creating a middle school are grounded in five core values.



Promote equitable access to programs and services. We believe it is our responsibility to provide a baseline of equitable academic programming regardless of students' residence or social background. We have consulted the LTMAS Equity Council in our planning process by identifying ways to improve access to high-quality academic programs and by seeking opportunities to remedy historic boundaries that negatively impacted underserved students.



Prepare for population changes. The proposed middle school transition plan should present long-term solutions to population and demographic shifts in the Rio Arriba County area. The plan must make provisions for anticipated increases in school enrollment.



Retain and strengthen diversity within schools. We believe that diverse school communities offer academic benefits for all students. Diverse learning environments expose students to multiple perspectives and improve their ability to solve problems, think critically, and develop creativity.



Equitably minimize disruptions and maximize benefits. We acknowledge that our proposed options might affect specific families and communities differently. We will seek to avoid an approach in which the primary benefits are felt by families with the most privilege and the primary disruptions are felt by those with the least privilege.



Preserve and expand focus option for dual language immersion. We believe that dual language immersion (DLI) programs are a valuable resource to communities and provide research-proven academic support to students learning English. The proposed middle school transition plan should ensure that communities continue to have access to DLI programs and that students have clear pathways to participating in those programs throughout the K-8 trajectory.

Monitoring Progress and Measuring Success

We have identified multiple goals for applying our cores values in the proposed middle school transition plan. We have also created indicators to describe the anticipated impact of our proposed plan and to assess how well it meets our goals. Targets specify our aspirational outcomes for the future.

Let's take a look at our mission statement:

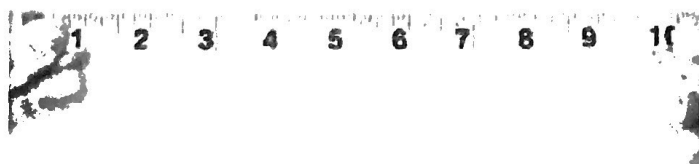
"La Tierra Montessori School of the Arts and Sciences will provide K-8 students and their families in the Española region the opportunity to improve educational outcomes utilizing an integrated approach that includes Montessori, the Arts and the Sciences."

- ✿ By re-introducing 7th and 8th grade we would be moving back to the mission of the school.
- ✿ We would improve the educational outcomes of our students by allowing them to complete their elementary education in the setting their families intended. We would ensure that they are prepared not only for high school, but also for life.
- ✿ We would adhere to the mission by providing Montessori education.
- ✿ We would continue to collaborate with Moving Arts to allow children to pursue, perfect and continue their journey of exploration in all areas of the Arts.
- ✿ We are creating a world class STEM program that we would offer to our middle school students. Having their input and collaboration is not only beneficial to these students, but also for the students who will follow in their footsteps.

How would we measure success?

First, by the happiness and well-being of our students and families. But, that doesn't satisfy requirements. So, we will monitor test scores, academic achievement, and progress throughout the life of the student at LTMAS.

SUCCESS



School Level Impacts

The impact of adding the middle school back to our student body is indisputable.

Siblings would not leave when the oldest child finishes their time at La Tierra. We have seen a trend when 6th graders matriculate, their younger siblings often follow to alleviate family issues with multiple schools.

We would attract more families. A drawback to LTMAS is that there is no middle school leaving families having to find a middle and high school option for their children.

We may see a return of families who have departed. When the 7th and 8th grade closed, a lot of families left LTMAS. Some of those families have expressed an interest in returning.

We would see more leadership within our student body. When properly executed, an Adolescent Community is invaluable to a school.

Enrollment would rise. Whether it would be the retention of the 6th grade class, the prevention of siblings departures or renewed interest in LTMAS, no doubt we would increase in size.



Next Steps

This proposal represents a reexamination of how we can deliver a robust and varied educational experience for all middle-grade students throughout LTMAS. We have attempted to address multiple issues associated with the shifting demographics in Northern New Mexico, as well as the larger equity issues that underlie those changes. The proposed middle school addition is an important step toward right-sizing schools, managing long-term enrollment growth, and realizing the school's equity goals.

We have drawn on extensive research, analysis, and stakeholder engagement to propose a middle school community that:

- Improves middle-grade enrollment
- Avoid exceeding building space within the next five years
- Creates efficiencies in the delivery of special programs (for example, dual language immersion, International Baccalaureate, and special education) and improve access for historically under-served students
- Improve enrollment parity across all school levels
- Maximize the number of students who move together from elementary to middle school and from middle to high school
- Improve demographic parity between schools
- Reflect current conditions, instead of relying on historic boundaries

LTMAS requests that the Governing Board adopt the proposed plan for an August 2021 implementation. If approved, LTMAS will immediately shift its efforts to planning for the implementation. We will collaborate with the School Board and the LTMAS community to provide students, families, and schools with the necessary resources to prepare for the transition. This will include:

- Easily accessible information on the school website
- Information sessions for affected school communities
- Continuous support for families throughout the implementation phase
- Outreach to community partners and organizations to share information
- Ongoing community consultations to address emerging concerns, needs, and questions

As we prepare for these important changes, the district will strive to maintain the best practices of respect, transparency, and communication.





La Tierra Montessori School of the Arts and Sciences

MISSION STATEMENT

La Tierra Montessori School of the Arts and Sciences will provide students and their families in the Española region the opportunity to improve educational outcomes utilizing an integrated approach that includes Montessori, Arts and Sciences.

Governing Council SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA

LTMAS GOVERNING COUNCIL MEETING:

Monday April 12, 2021 @ 5:30pm

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83702688470?pwd=ci9NYytYbzFZdTBpQmhHaHdxUVpXdz09>

Meeting ID: 837 0268 8470

Passcode: 425064

Dial by your location

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)

***Open Meetings will be recorded and the recording will be maintained on file. Closed Meetings are not recorded.*

** Action Item(s)*

- I.** Call meeting to order.
- II.** Roll Call:
- III.** Vote on approval of today's Agenda. (ACTION*)
- IV.** Discuss and possibly vote on Pre-K application (ACTION*)
- V.** Discuss and possibly vote on new COVID Policies/Procedures (ACTION*)
- VI.** Update and discussion on school reentry with a possible vote on reentry plan (ACTION*)
- VII.** Public Comment – **(Each guest has 2 minutes)** Please state your name and announce that you wish to make a comment. There was no public comment.
- VIII.** Discuss and possibly vote on Grade Change Request to expand and include grades 7 and 8 (ACTION*)
- XII.** Adjournment (ACTION)*:

CERTIFICATE OF GOVERNING BODY VOTE

This document certifies that on Monday April 12, 2021 at 5:30pm., a meeting of the Governing Body of La Tierra Montessori Charter School of the Arts and Sciences, a New Mexico public charter school, was held Virtually via Zoom. The meeting and all votes were conducted in compliance with the New Mexico Open Meetings Act.

A quorum of the Governing Body's members being present and voting, it was voted 7 in favor and 0 opposed to:

Approve the Grade Change Request to expand and include grades 7 and 8.

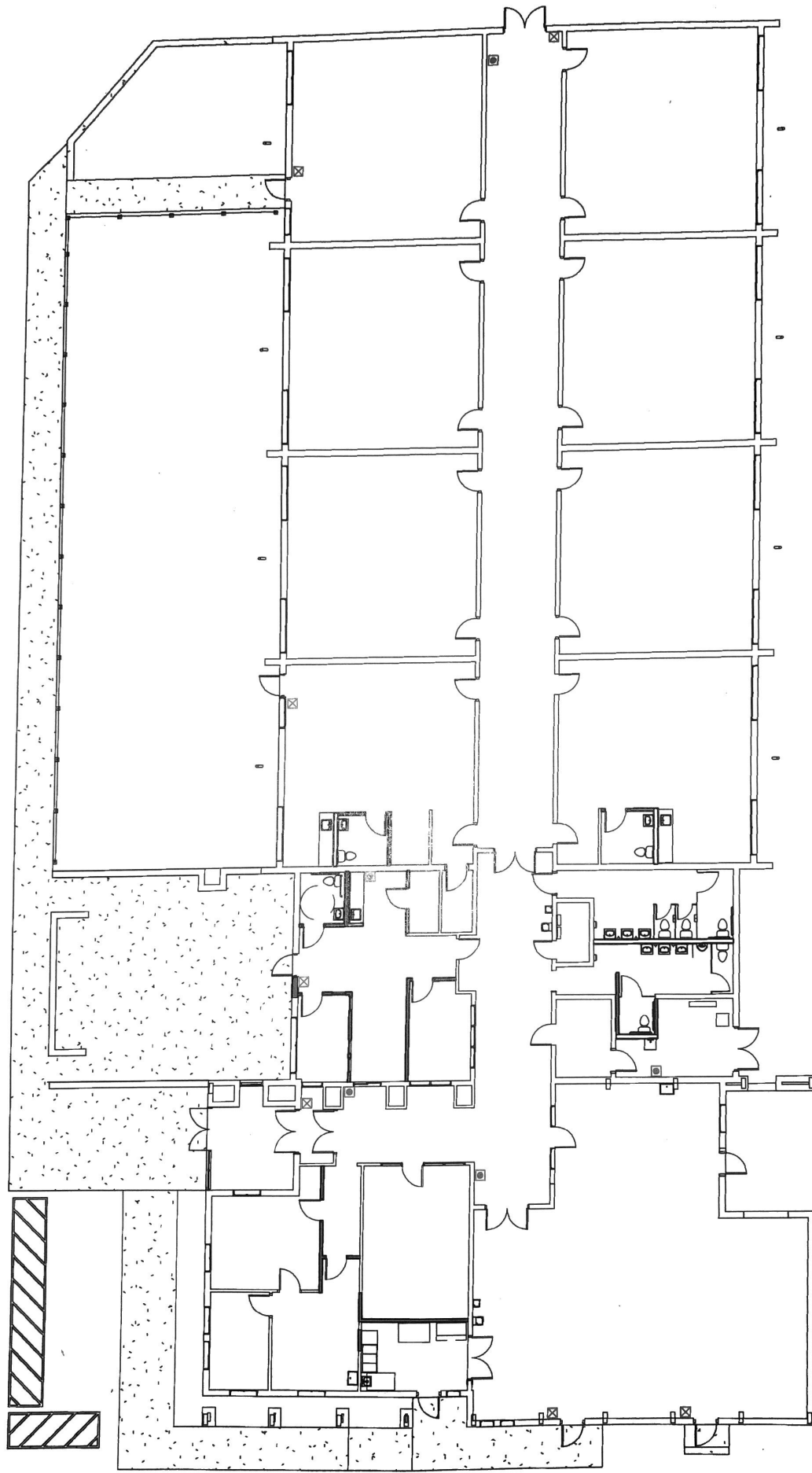
The members voting in favor were: Isaac Casados, Willie Williams, Lynne McLean, Tara Voit, Chris Baca, Alberto Mares, Reed Larsen, Amy Larsen

The members voting in opposition were: None in opposition.

I, the undersigned, certify that this is a true copy.


Reed Larsen Jr., Secretary

Date: 4/13/2021



KEY



FIRE EXTINGUISHER

PULL BOX



YOU ARE HERE

--- EVACUATION ROUTE