

Frequently Asked Questions

Exploring the Possibility of Re-authorizing with APS Cien Aguas International School

Background Information

Cien Aguas is scheduled to renew its charter within the next two years. We are currently authorized through the Public Education Commission. The Governing Council and administration are currently studying the pros and cons of reauthorizing with APS or the PEC.

The Governing Council began discussing our reauthorization at our monthly meetings last November. On March 7 there was a governing council study session about this issue. Robert Baade, the director of RFK, and Lawrence Rael, Governing Council president of Montessori on the Rio Grande, answered questions based on their experience being chartered with APS. The administration also has met with a number of APS charter directors to get a sense of how day-to-day operations may be affected if we were authorized through APS.

The governing council wants to make sure that the community understands some of the basic facts and has an opportunity to ask questions and give input. *Please read the FAQs below and attend one of the community meetings (listed on the last page) to be part of this important discussion.*

Frequently Asked Questions

Why are we considering reauthorizing with APS instead of the Public Education Commission?

Over the past 3-4 years APS has proven to work closely with their charter schools and offer support to them that is not available through our current authorizer. By having an authorizer that is local and knows our school, Cien Aguas could take advantage of district services, expertise and purchasing power that could potentially prevent compliance issues and save the school money.

It also makes sense for us to have a closer relationship with APS and their dual language schools who we could potentially work with in the sharing of ideas and training opportunities. At the high school level, the District offers higher level courses and a Bilingual Seal Diploma Program for students who continue with their Spanish in high school.

What is the timeline for applying with APS?

The Governing Council has written a letter to formally notify APS that Cien Aguas is interested in possibly authorizing with the district. No official deadline or timeline has been set for submitting an actual application. There is still need for community input and answer to several questions that we would like clarified before making a final decision. One other charter school has already begun the process of reauthorizing with APS and several others are interested. If we do decide to go this route, it seems that we would have a better chance if we are one of the first to join/rejoin APS.

How long does the re-authorization process take with either APS or the State?

Once a school is included in a renewal cycle, the whole process typically takes one full school year to be completed. We prepare in the fall, submit by January 1st and typically are approved within 2-3 months.

If we reauthorize through APS will we get a five year renewal?

In a typical charter authorization process the renewal period is five years. While an authorizer could determine that they will authorize for fewer years, Cien Aguas would work closely with the district to negotiate and show that our program merits a five year term. To date APS has always approved five year terms.

Would our teachers and our director become APS employees or would APS have any control over them?

The simple answer is NO. As a charter school we do our own hiring and all the employees of Cien Aguas are only employees of Cien Aguas with no ties to the District.

Could APS move our director to another school in need?

The Cien Aguas Governing Council will continue to have authority over our director and our director will continue to have authority over all employees. No one working for Cien Aguas would be considered an APS employee and therefore the district could not in any way transfer any of our staff to the district.

Would Cien Aguas have to follow assessments selected by APS?

No. Short cycle assessments which are conducted several times a year provide teachers with information to gauge student progress throughout the year and adjust instruction based on needs.

Charter schools are given the ability to select their own assessments as long as they meet criteria set by the state.

Would Cien Aguas have to follow curriculum or other mandates from APS?

No. Our charter clearly states our approach to curriculum and instruction. We are accountable to follow our charter. APS does not dictate curriculum or instruction for charter schools any more than our current authorizer could.

Is charter school support dependent on the current APS superintendent?

The climate for charter school support from APS does depend on the school board members and on the Superintendent. South Valley Academy, RFK, Montessori of the Rio Grande, PAPA, and other District charters are able to do a good job and because the District authorizes them and is able to provide support when they ask for it. Over the past 3 years APS has proven to have a much more positive relation with their charter schools. Our current authorizer, the Public Education Commission is not in a position to directly give support to charter schools. They only serve as the authorizing body. Whether we authorize with APS or with the PEC, we always have access to the Charter School Division at the Public Education Department.

Are we sure state capital project money (HB33/ SB9) can follow us if we go to APS?

Yes. The monies that have been allocated to Cien Aguas as a state charter school would continue to be available to the school as a district charter school as well.

If we were to eventually get help with a facility through APS, would they build to our specific needs?

There is never a guarantee that APS will provide a facility for Cien Aguas or any other charter school.

Once APS includes us in their capital master plan (and the goal would be to be included as quickly as possible), the mission, instructional program and needs of our school would be considered and incorporated into any building plans. Besides the basic classroom spaces, intervention and special education needs, this would also include fine arts, multipurpose spaces for performances and gatherings, parking, physical education and our environmental focus.

How does the capital prioritization list for facilities work?

APS undergoes a Capital Master Planning process every 5 years to identify and prioritize capital improvement projects for all schools within the District; this process identifies needs of all APS schools and administrative facilities, including District charter schools. Identified projects and needs include school renovations, new school construction, provision of technology equipment, and facility improvements. Decisions are based on needing to preserve the health and safety of students and staff, providing adequate facilities that enable delivery of educational programs, and addressing school facility needs. Capital projects are funded by GO Bond, SB9, and HB33 taxpayer approved funds.

Would APS be able to make decisions about our school calendar or schedules?

Charter schools are given the flexibility to determine their own instructional calendars and schedules so long as they are meeting their mission and annual goals. Should the authorizer feel that a particular structure in a school's calendar or schedule are proving to be problematic, it is something that would be discussed and negotiated through the annual performance contract. This is true whether a charter is authorized by a district of the Public Education Commission.

How would reauthorizing through APS affect our bus schedules?

The company that currently provides our transportation services will be leaving New Mexico and will be turning over all of their contracts to APS. According to the APS transportation director he does not foresee any changes to our transportation costs or schedules whether we are authorized by the district or not. If we become an APS charter school the only difference is that the funds allocated to our school but would flow directly to the district instead of to Cien Aguas first.

Still have questions, concerns, ideas or opinions?

Please join us for one of the reauthorization discussion meetings.

School administration and representatives from the Cien Aguas

Governing Council will be present.

Light snacks will be provided.

Monday, March 23rd at 2:10pm

Wednesday, March 25th at 8:15am

Monthly Governing Council meeting: April 13th at 5:15pm