January 14, 2021

Dear Honorable Governor Medina, Lieutenant Governor Shije, and other Pueblo of Zia Leaders,

First of all, thank you to Pueblo of Zia Tribal Administration and Education Department staff for your advocacy for the needs of Zia students and families in Albuquerque Public Schools and the efforts you have made to improve communication and strengthen the partnership between the Pueblo of Zia and Albuquerque Public Schools.

From our first meeting together on February 3, 2020 through the monthly IPP work sessions that ran from July through October, as well as our meetings together in November and December of 2020, the input provided by Pueblo of Zia leadership has been instrumental in strengthening the policy and procedural guidance that governs education for Native American students in Albuquerque Public Schools. Along the way there has also been Zia’s efforts to include APS among the schools and school districts invited to the February 2020 Jemez-Zia Retreat as well as the multi-district student parent meeting that occurred in March 5, 2020 at the Pueblo of Zia.

Following from the Fall Tribal Summit that occurred on November 6, 2020 and our subsequent meeting with Governor Medina and his leadership team on November 11, 2020 the revisions that have been incorporated over the past 10 months into the APS Indian Policies and Procedures were reviewed. The IPP then went to the APS attorney for review. The IPP with the attorney’s minor edits was then sent to the Governor Medina, Lt. Governor Shije and Tribal Administrator Lucero on November 20, 2020 with request for signature from the Governor. Final APS School Board approval for the IPP along with additional minor edits occurred on December 1, 2020.

In the Governor’s phone call with me on December 15, 2020, in our meeting with Pueblo of Zia leadership on December 16, 2020 as well in Pueblo of Zia’s December 21, 2020 formal letter the concern has been expressed that approval at this late date in the annual cycle by the APS School Board does not provide adequate time for review by the Pueblo of Zia prior to the deadline for submission of the IPP along with the APS Impact Aid application.

This process also led to the raising of other concerns by the Pueblo of Zia:

1. The agreement is a binding document between Albuquerque Public Schools and the impacted tribes, not between the Board of Education and impacted tribes, therefore the manner in which this document is finalized needs to change to better reflect this.

2. The IPP needs to clarify APS Board of Education’s Indian Policy IH9 and the APS Procedural Directives as they relate to Indian Education. As it is, the relationship between the Indian Policies and Procedures document and district overall policy as it governs Indian education and relationships with impacted tribal communities is not clear.

3. A need to ensure there is transparency, consistency and reassurance, so the community understands how informed decisions are made, and that applying the same values and principles will define us as a community.

4. There also needs to be clarification on who the Indian Education and Indian Parent Committees are to
ensure there is consensus among all stakeholders regarding language written in the IPP. How will it be supported in the planning and development of educational priorities and activities by all?
5. The IPP references only those tribal communities in the surrounding area, how are other Native American students outside the tribal entities represented and supported on an equal basis?

In response to issues of process and finalization, APS senior leadership is in agreement that the timeline followed this year needs to be adjusted so that finalization occurs somewhere closer to September or October, thus ensuring time for well-considered review. Further, it is agreed that an approach to finalization be undertaken that enables all parties to finalize the document more or less simultaneously. Likewise, it is agreed that the relationship between the Indian Policies and Procedures, the IH9 Indian Education policy and the roles of the various groups that develop, approve and are impacted by these policies and procedures needs to be clarified so as to ensure equity of representation and support for Native American students and families served by Albuquerque Public Schools.

As was agreed upon in our December 16, 2020 meeting, we request as a next step to meet with the Governor, Lieutenant Governor and Pueblo of Zia leadership team to begin the process of review for the APS IH9 Indian Education Policy and the clarification of its relationship with the APS Indian Policies and Procedures document. As you may be aware of, the IH9 is the district’s procedural directive and any proposed changes to it will need to be led by the district department responsible for the development of the directive. So as we proceed our department will also invite the district department responsible for changes to procedural directives. We are available to meet any morning in January from January 19th until the end of the month. Please let us know a date and time that works for the Pueblo of Zia for a virtual meeting via Zoom.

We look forward to meeting with you soon.

With regards,

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