



Divided APS board vacates coaching, governance contract. New provider to be selected in fall.

[By Noah Alcala Bach / Journal Staff Writer](#)

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After pushback from some board members, Albuquerque Public Schools won't renew its contract with the **Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS)**, which cost the district around \$50,000 over nearly three years.

CGCS is a Washington, D.C.-based organization that partners with urban districts to improve students' academic performance and assist school boards' governance strategies.

The district will instead put out a request for proposals allowing vendors to apply to provide coaching services and student outcomes-focused governance as APS attempts to turn around academic performance as the largest district in a state that often ranks last in the nation for education.

The district's contract with CGCS will expire June 30 and applications to fill the vacancy are due by Aug. 1. The board will likely vote on a new vendor at its Sept. 17 meeting.

CGCS didn't answer questions or respond to interview requests sent over several weeks but stated Wednesday that it had "no involvement in the school board's decision not to renew its contract."

APS' Board of Education met Wednesday and was initially expected to vote on renewing the contract. However, it was announced May 30 in a memo from APS

Board President Danielle Gonzales that the district would seek a different provider for coaching services.

“This effort to establish community engagement goals was to be transparent, to be clear, and also to hold ourselves accountable to meeting these specific goals,” Gonzales said Wednesday, opening the discussion. “I want to acknowledge that no board had ever done this before, and this was not happening before.”

She also referred to several meetings in which the board unanimously approved topics related to the contract and student governance strategies, dating back to June 2024.

However, one of the contract’s critics, board member Josefina Domínguez, outlined longstanding issues she has had with CGSC in an email sent from her personal address to her APS address. The email — which she told the Journal was a draft — was obtained through an Inspection of Public Records Act request.

Domínguez states that CGCS, “deliberately inserted themselves into the APS Board’s business” and that board leadership interpreted “coaching to suit their needs.”

“Key decisions within the APS Board are made with the knowledge of only four members, leaving the other three members in the dark,” she wrote. “This lack of collaborative governance is evident in our board meetings.”

The split to which she [refers](#) concerns the three board members endorsed by the Albuquerque Teachers Federation union and the four backed by business community entities, such as the [Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce](#) and the local chapter of NAIOP, a commercial real estate organization.

That divide was on display Wednesday as the three union-backed board members present — Domínguez, Heather Benavidez and Ronalda Tome-Warito — discussed the issues they had with CGCS.

Domínguez and Tome-Warito stated that CGCS didn't offer enough to help students who are minorities, specifically Native students, and Benavidez took issue with the divisiveness caused by coaching.

"I would like a coach that is not going to pit board members against each other; that's going to foster cohesion," Benavidez said. "I think that needs to start with the board, the board members. We cannot be productive as a board if we don't get along."

The discussion over the contract dominated the meeting, which took place among the five board members present. Crystal Tapia-Romero, who has now missed the past three meetings, was not in attendance, nor was Janelle Astorga, who is on maternity leave.

The trio of union-backed members successfully pushed for discussions on a few items, including revising the timeline for student-focused outcomes, reflecting on the contract with CGCS and establishing criteria for a new vendor to be presented to the board at its July meeting, but in doing so, earned the ire of the board's vice president, Courtney Jackson.

"I haven't slept for two stinking days because of the headspace and the time and the energy," Jackson said. "I am trying so hard to focus on effective governance, and this has spun so far out of control because of narratives, because of misunderstandings, because of hurt feelings."

She also called CGCS one of "the leading organizations in the nation" and added that the organization has a "proven" record of turning around student academic performance.

“I represent roughly 90,000 constituents. You know what they want me to be focusing on?” Jackson said. “They want to make sure that our kids can read. They want to make sure that our kids can do math. That’s what they want me to do.”