



**New Mexico Public Education Commission  
Charter Schools Division**

**2015 New Charter School Application Kit  
Part B. Executive Summary**



## Part B: Executive Summary

This section should be two to three pages long and address in a narrative form the following points:

- Your proposed school's name and a description of the targeted student population including key demographic data (academic performance, home languages, special populations) and the targeted geographical area of the proposed school.
- Where the targeted students are most likely being educated currently and why they are expected to choose the proposed charter school for their future educational needs.
- Evidence that there is a community need for a school of this nature in the location proposed. Note: NMSA 1978 § 22-8B-6(L)(5) provides, "[a] chartering authority may approve, approve with conditions or deny an application. A chartering authority may deny an application if...the application is otherwise contrary to the best interests of the charter school's projected students, the local community or the school district in whose geographic boundaries the charter school applies to operate." Evidence of community need is required. Specific data and evidence is required in the application itself. Therefore, specific statistical information does not need to be provided here.
- The key innovative and unique programmatic features the school will implement to accomplish its mission (non-traditional school year, longer school day, partner organizations, etc.).
- How you project that the school will be more effective than the schools currently serving the targeted student population, or the founder(s)' plans to improve student achievement and exceed the academic performance of these existing public schools in the targeted service area. Provide a brief summary of any data you have to support this assumption.
- The founders of the proposed school, their background, and expertise.
- If different from the list provided above, the founding governing board.

To complete the following form, click on the text box and begin to type.

New Charter Application Executive Summary

*Gallup, a small city of approximately 22,000 residents, is a border town to tribal nations. The community of Gallup is relatively young compared to the adjacent Navajo Nation, which in turn is younger than the nearby Zuni Pueblo. Today, Gallup is the county seat and the major population center for 60 to 120 miles in any direction. As such, its local citizenry make up only a small portion of the total population served, most of whom reside in the surrounding tribal nations in a rural context. Gallup provides medical services, shopping and leisure, and the headquarters of the local school district, Gallup McKinley County Schools (GMCS), which is one of the largest school districts by area in the country. According to federal data, 77% of students served by GMCS identify as Native American.*

*The troubled history of Indian Education in and around Gallup, whether through the Bureau of Indian Affairs or GMCS, has created many contemporary inequities despite the best efforts of local educators. For example, looking just at schools in Gallup proper, white students scored proficient or advanced on state tests at greater than double the rate of Native students. On math assessments, 59% of Anglo students scored proficient or advanced while 25% of Native students scored the same level. In reading the gap is even more dramatic: 64% to 25%. As other examples of inequity, even though 77% students in GMCS identify as Native American only 47% of students in Gifted and Talented classes are Native, while 85% of suspensions and 90% of expulsions fall on Native students, according to the Federal Office of Civil Rights Data. As a result of those inequities, Anglo students graduate from high school within four years at a rate 15 percentage points higher than their Native peers, and Gallup High School and Miyamura High School have some the highest rates of students needing remediation in college in the whole state. We do not believe that these gaps are the fault of students or families.*

*We came together as a small group of concerned educators and community members last year with the shared belief that charter school policy allowed us the opportunity to re-imagine school for Native youth. In order to hear from our community, we conducted approximately 70 one-on-one meetings with local parents, educators, policy-makers, and non-profit administrators, hosted public planning meetings, and presented and heard feedback at local chapter houses, the Indian Education Committee, and the McKinley County Community Health Alliance, among other organizations. We built early relationships with organizations like the National Indian Youth Leadership Project and the NACA-Inspired Schools Network, which has supported our work. Based on that outreach, we wrote a mission statement for a school committed to ensuring students are on a path to postsecondary opportunities of their choosing, holistically healthy, and actively engaged in their communities.*

*We propose a middle / high school--Six Directions Indigenous School--committed to the philosophies and methodologies of culturally responsive indigenous education. Significant and innovative features include, first, a pedagogy informed by frameworks of Culturally Responsive Teaching in order to improve the effectiveness of classroom learning by deepening relationships, affirming identities, and decreasing the dissonance between home and school. Secondly, we propose a methodology informed by community-based project-based learning in which students apply their learning in local contexts, deepening their knowledge of local history and ecologies. Third, as our mission implies, we propose a commitment to holistic health and wellness and a series of programs that promote holistic wellbeing and positive youth development--advisory structures, health class, and a partnership with the National Indian Youth Leadership Project. Finally, we propose Native language instruction in Zuni and Navajo.*

*We believe this model to be effective because of the outcomes and data associated with previous examples of culturally responsive schooling in Indian Country. The examples of effective schools for Native youth are few, but they begin near Gallup with Rough Rock Demonstration School on the Arizona side of the Navajo Nation during the last century. More contemporarily, Hawaiian Immersion schools have led the way in innovating for Native youth. Collected data about the successes of those schools and similar programs is listed in our application. Today, we have local examples of the potential when schools choose to provide culturally responsive schooling. Students at Puente de Hozho in Flagstaff, AZ, which utilizes a Navajo language immersion program, have performed higher than their native peers on Arizona state tests, which are given in English. And our mentor school, the Native American Community Academy, in Albuquerque, has produced consistent results. Just this week, in the Legislative Finance Committee's report, "Performance, Programming, and Cost of Middle Schools in New Mexico," NACA was recognized as a "School Beating the Odds," citing their focus on wellness, culture, and language as reasons for their higher than expected academic performance. The same report recommends middle schools "provide programming and resources to promote motivational and social-emotional behavior conducive to engagement and academic growth." SDIS's plan dovetails with those recommendations in our proposal to include an advisory program designed through positive youth development and resources on goal setting and resiliency from the Thrive Foundation, as well as our proposal to provide social workers and counselors full-time at school.*

*We believe that youth of color, and specifically Native youth in and around Gallup, deserve a school created with their identities and success in mind. We find that Native youth in Gallup deserve a school designed with holistic wellness and positive youth development in mind in response to the different forms of trauma that our youth experience. And evidence tells us that schools designed in such a way have the potential to produce better results than other current options, especially higher attendance rates, test scores, graduation rates, and college*

*readiness rates. In 2014, each of the middle schools in Gallup earned D ratings while each high school earned a C rating. There is room to make significant improvements upon their performance.*

*Six Directions Indigenous School has been designed with the input of many community members, and has been led in particular by Lane Towery, Masika Sweetwyne, and Ben Soce. In addition to Masika and Ben, our founding Governing Council will be comprised of Philmer Bluehouse, Madeline Leyba, and Susan Estrada, whose qualifications are enumerated in the Organizational Management section of the application.*

*Lane Towery: Lane has served as the lead organizer for the Six Directions Indigenous School for the last year. He is currently a School Leadership Fellow with the NACA-Inspired Schools Network. Previously, Lane has been both a teacher and a coach for new teachers in Gallup and on the Navajo Nation. Lane holds a Level I New Mexico Teaching License, has a BA from Duke University in Political Science, and a Masters Degree in Education from UNM.*

*Masika Sweetwyne: Masika is an enrolled member of the Zuni Tribe; bilingual in Zuni and English. She currently teaches at Gallup High School and has 6 years teaching experience in parochial and public schools on and off reservation. Masika is a licensed teacher in NM in Secondary and Middle Education with endorsements in English and Visual Arts. She received her Bachelor's in English and Bachelor's in Visual Art from Fort Lewis College and her Masters in Teaching English from Teachers College at Columbia University. She is also a founder of IndiGenius Exchange, an organization focused on designing curricula with indigenous communities.*

*Ben Soce: Ben is an enrolled citizen of the Navajo Nation and bilingual in English and Dine'. Ben is an Experiential and Outdoor Educator for the National Indian Youth Leadership Project. He received his Bachelor's in Liberal Arts from the University of New Mexico in 2013 and has been with NIYLP since 2000. Throughout his NIYLP career, Ben has been Lead Facilitator and Coordinator for various positive youth development programs. He has worked with Elementary, Middle, and High School students. More recently, he expanded his proficiency with working with high risk youth in residential treatment centers and juvenile justice systems. His main area of expertise is incorporating and infusing culture and holistic health into his work with area young people.*