



New Mexico Public Education Commission Charter Schools Division

2017 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 charter school's projected students including key demographic data (academic performance, home languages, special populations) based on the local community or the school district in whose geographic boundaries the charter school applies to operate.
- Where the charter school's projected 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 local community or the school district in whose geographic boundaries the charter school applies to operate. 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 charter school's projected students, or the founder(s)' plans to improve student achievement and exceed the academic performance of these existing public schools in the local community or the school district in whose geographic boundaries the charter school applies to operate. 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

Altura Preparatory School is an elementary school proposed to serve students in and near the International District of Albuquerque, New Mexico, in the 87108 zip code. The school intends to serve an intentionally diverse student population through a blend of personalized instruction, a STEAM- based curriculum, and practices designed to develop both academic and non-academic skills, habits, and mindsets to prepare students to succeed both academically and personally in middle school, high school, and post-secondary pursuits. Ultimately, students will leave Altura Prep prepared to be agents of their education: they will seek opportunities, persevere through challenges, and set and achieve their goals.

In the 2015-16 school year (the most recent for which we have data), 34% of students in elementary schools in and near International District were at or above grade level in reading. Just over 8% of students were at or above grade level in mathematics. On average, schools in Southeast Albuquerque serve a population that is 84% economically disadvantaged and 36% English Language Learners. Comparatively, 68.5% of students in Northeast Albuquerque were at or above grade level in reading and 58% in Math. However, the more apt comparison to be made is between similar populations of students attending schools in each area. 30.6% of economically disadvantaged students attending school in Southeast Albuquerque are at or above grade level in reading and 15.9% are at or above grade level in mathematics. For the same subgroup of students attending school in Northeast Albuquerque, 49% are at or above grade level in reading and 34% are at or above grade level in math. An economically disadvantaged student attending school in Northeast Albuquerque is 1.5 times more likely to be at grade level in reading and more than twice as likely to be at grade level in math than a peer attending school in Southeast Albuquerque. 23% of English Language Learners in Southeast Albuquerque elementary schools are on or above grade level in reading, and only 10% in math. By contrast in Northeast Albuquerque, 47.4% of English Language students are at or above grade level in reading and 41.6% in math. Proficiency rates in Northeast Albuquerque are double those of Southeast Albuquerque in reading and more than triple in math. These data highlight a key and alarming difference in the degree to which economically disadvantaged students and students learning English achieve in Albuquerque in comparison to their peers.

In the 87108 zip code, students will be zoned to a D or F rated school for their entire K-12 educational career. While clear that school grades may not articulate *all* the opportunities available to students attending these schools, it *is* clear that students leave D or F schools with academic proficiency rates that effectively limit the options they may have in high school, college, and other post-secondary pursuits. These inequitable outcomes highlight significant challenges in education in Albuquerque, and this is precisely the context in which Altura Prep seeks to provide an excellent, comprehensive, equitable, and inclusive education for all students.

There is a clear and pressing need for a school that focuses on personalized instruction to support students in learning what they need to learn when they most need to learn it, and intentionally provides both academic and non-academic skill development in an environment saturated with high expectations for each child that walks through our doors. Altura Prep proposes to address the clear need in the communities in Southeast Albuquerque by thoughtfully implementing an educational program that operates under 8 core beliefs that form the basis for an innovative program that will deliver exceptional outcomes for the students attending the school.

Quality Teachers Deliver Quality Results: Altura Prep will focus on recruiting, developing and retaining highly effective teachers, and will devote extensive resources (time, funding, and energy) to equipping them with the necessary tools to deliver outstanding outcomes for all students. Altura Preparatory School's calendar features an extended day (8:00am to 4:00pm on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday and 8:00am- 1:00pm on Wednesdays), with time (over 60 minutes) specifically allotted to teacher professional development and collaboration. All teachers meet weekly or biweekly with a school leader who provides action oriented feedback for the teacher's classroom practice that is rooted in observation and student data. This high-leverage focus on adult development actively supports student achievement.

Teacher Specialization Delivers Effective Instruction: The Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards require students to develop deep knowledge and skills related to the content they learn. In order for our teachers to effectively facilitate this deep level of student learning, we allow teachers to focus on one to two core content areas. Teachers specialize in a core subject area, becoming profoundly familiar with the level of rigor required for students to master the concepts and skills *and* with various ways to support all students through differentiation and targeted small group learning. Teacher specialization also supports teacher sustainability, ensuring that Altura Prep teachers are able to remain in the school and leading students to great outcomes for more than just a few years.

All Students Deserve a Personalized Learning Environment: In *The End of Average*, Todd Rose tells the story of the United States Air Force: expensive planes in the 1950s were crashing regularly. Since the state-of-the-art planes they were flying had been meticulously crafted to fit the average pilot, pilot error was the assumed failing. Then, the Air Force investigated how many of the pilots were actually average. Out of thousands of pilots measured, exactly zero fit the “average” measurement. This discovery led to simple solutions, like adjustable seats, that significantly decreased the number of crashes. We know that not every student learns the same way, at the same speed. Accordingly, Altura Prep’s instructional model focuses on small group instruction tailored specifically to the skills that each student needs in order to master the content and skills they need to succeed at the next level. Students work with a teacher and a small group, or independently on exactly what they need in order to reach their goals. During school-wide “Genius Hour” on Fridays, students pursue a project they have selected and are passionate about, tinkering toward an outcome that they will later present to their peers, parents, and community members.

Character Development is Crucial: Robust research suggests that academic skills are necessary but not sufficient for students to succeed in and after school. Drawing on these lessons, Altura Prep will support all students with learning, demonstrating, and living our core values of Responsibility, Empathy, Agency, Curiosity, and Humor/Hard Work (R.E.A.C.H.). Each core value is accompanied by a student-friendly definition, and students learn to shout out their classmates for showing the values on a daily basis. Students will reflect on their behavior daily and weekly through morning meeting, close-out, and weekly Town Hall as well as through core-value lessons during REACH time in the daily schedule.

Families are Our Most Important Partner: We wholeheartedly believe that our families are thoroughly invested in their students’ academic and personal success. Families participate in a myriad of ways at Altura Prep: volunteering, Family “Google University Nights”, Genius Hour Expositions, School Advisory Council, and other traditional ways. More importantly, we know that family participation includes morning drop off and evening pick up, and learning how to talk with their child’s teacher and other staff. We strive to provide all families with tools and opportunities that support their child’s education at and after Altura Prep.

Data Drives All Decisions: At all organizational levels, Altura Prep bases decisions on current, relevant data. Board meetings focus on organizational, financial, and academic dashboards; School Director(s) regularly review grade and teacher level data for trends among classrooms to inform professional development and individual teacher coaching as well as to adjust systems and routines for effective implementation. Teachers review student data weekly to form flexible groups and tailor their instruction to ensure students are making progress. Students review their data as they look at their goals and their progress over the course of the year. If data show something is not working, we look deeper, and create a plan to move forward better than before.

A Diverse Learning Environment Fosters a Strong Community: Altura Prep will create an intentionally diverse student body so that students are prepared for the increasingly global world around them, and so that the school community as a whole is able to benefit from the advantages that diversity brings. New Mexico is a diverse state, and we fundamentally believe that our school should reflect this rich cultural amalgamation. Equity, inclusion, and diversity are hallmarks of a strong community, and our hiring, recruitment, and relationship-building practices reflect these values and lead our school to mirror the community we live in and prepare all of our students for a world in which diversity is the norm.

Structure and Joy Make Achievement Possible: It is imperative that all Altura Prep students feel safe to take academic risks in an environment that celebrates both attempts and achievements. Clear expectations, school-wide routines, and well-defined procedures ensure that students know what to do and how to do it, so that they can focus their minds on the important business of learning. We celebrate student learning daily, highlighting students that grew academically, who demonstrated one of our REACH values, or who persevered through a challenging task. We believe that learning is fun, and create specific structures that help all stakeholders see and celebrate progress.

The academic program designed to support these eight core beliefs has been specifically designed to integrate practices that accelerate student progress for all students, including English Language Learners and economically-disadvantaged students. We strive to create equitable outcomes across subgroups through personalized and scaffolded instruction that keeps expectations high for all students regardless of background. The school data comparisons between Southeast Albuquerque and Northeast Albuquerque serve to highlight the fact that expectations and environment play a significant role in supporting the achievement of historically underserved populations.

The school is proposed by a team that includes two proposed co-School Directors and a founding Board of Trustees with extensive backgrounds in leading schools and developing programs that have led to strong outcomes for students in underserved communities. The track record of the founding School Directors, combined with the expertise and support from the founding Board of Trustees, suggests that the ambitious outcomes that Altura Prep strives to achieve are possible.

Proposed School Directors: Lissa Hines and Meaghan Stern

Lissa Hines has ten years of instructional experience in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She began her career in a Kindergarten classroom at La Mesa Elementary in the heart of the International District. She also has eleven years of experience as a leader in Oakland Public Schools, most recently leading Hillcrest School to a 2016 Blue Ribbon Award from the United States Department of Education. She also led Achieve Academy (a charter school in the high-need Fruitvale district of Oakland) to a 220- point increase in API (Achievement Performance Index), from 600 to 820. Lissa holds an Administrative License in both California and New Mexico, and a Masters' Degree in Multicultural Special Education from the College of Santa Fe.

Meaghan Stern is an Albuquerque native, and recently returned home. She was the founding Assistant Principal of Wooddale Middle School, Green Dot Public School's first turnaround middle school in Memphis, Tennessee. Prior to her work in Tennessee, she was the Academic Director of Cornerstone Academy Preparatory School in San Jose, California. While she was there, the school was named one of California's Top Schools for "beating the odds" in student performance of English Language Learners and Latino/a students as well as a California Distinguished School. Meaghan is a former bilingual teacher, and was a finalist for the West Contra Costa Unified School District Teacher of the Year. She holds a New Mexico Administrative License and a Masters' Degree in Education Policy, Organization, and Leadership Studies from Stanford University.

Proposed Founding Board of Trustees: Patrick Barnes, Jacqueline Cusimano, Casey Anglada Deraad, Chamiza Pacheco de Alas, Christine Sargent, Pamela Scanlon, Robert Wilson

The founding board brings expertise from a wide array of sectors, all with a strong passion for creating a great school that leads to exceptional outcomes for all students it serves. The team has a background in education, law, finance, community outreach, medicine, technology, science, engineering, public works, art, and human resources.

Patrick Barnes is a Senior Mechanical Engineer at Sandia National Laboratories, leading design and test efforts in support of National Security Interests. Patrick is a native of Albuquerque and believes all students deserve access to a great education that prepares them to take ownership of their futures and advantage of all opportunities available to them.

Jacqueline Cusimano has a wealth of experience throughout New Mexico's educational system. She has been a teacher in Albuquerque Public Schools and a state charter school after beginning her career as a tutor in a teen

shelter in the International District. Jackie teaches a specialized work-study and life skills course for students with disabilities and has a strong background in and passion for Special Education.

Casey Anglada Deraad is the Special Assistant to the Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center Executive Director for Academic, Industry and Community Engagement. She supports the Kirtland Air Force Base with outreach to support the community with taking advantage of \$3.8B/annual economic impact of KAFB to the state of New Mexico. She has extensive background in the intersections of technology, industry and government, and believes that schools can play a significant role in improving educational and economic outcomes for the state.

Chamiza Pacheco de Alas is an Executive Project Director in the Office of the Chancellor at the UNM Health Sciences Center, supporting the formulation and implementation of the vision of the Health Sciences Center and community outreach. She graduated from the Albuquerque Academy, the University of New Mexico with a Bachelor of Arts and from Yale Law School with a J.D. Since graduating law school, Ms. Pacheco de Alas has focused her practice on education and health law. She firmly believes that all students deserve a high-quality, rigorous education in a kind and loving environment.

Pamela Scanlon is a member of the financial and administrative management team at Albuquerque Academy. She oversees budget, risk management, facilities operations, and human resources, and manages the school's financial assistance program that allows promising students to enroll regardless of economic status. Pam has an MBA from the University of New Mexico and a deep passion for ensuring that all families have access to wonderful educational opportunities for their children.

Robert Wilson is recently retired from his orthopedic medical practice in Albuquerque. Prior to his 25-year career at New Mexico Orthopedics, he worked for eight years at the Indian Health Service at Zuni PHS Hospital in general medicine and as the Director of the Zuni Diabetes Project and Zuni Wellness Center. Dr. Wilson is an artist and sculptor, and believes that all students should have access to opportunities that allow them to follow their passions in both their careers and in their leisure time.

This founding team is both dedicated to creating and qualified to lead a high-performing, innovative school in Albuquerque.