Executive Summary

Willow Springs Academy will be located in Raton, New Mexico. We will operate as Kindergarten through 8th grade the first year, adding 9th the second year, 10th the third year, 11th the fourth year, and 12th the fifth year. We will have a school-wide student cap of 210 students by the 5th year of our charter. We will be open to all students in Raton and the surrounding areas including Maxwell, Springer, and Des Moines. We will also encompass the interested students who are currently being homeschooled in these areas. The highest reading proficiency level in the Raton Public School District is Longfellow Elementary (K-2) with 81.9% proficient. The remaining schools, the middle school (3-6) and the high school (7-12) are below 50%. The goal of Willow Springs Academy is to provide an alternative to traditional education in Raton allowing students to have an individualized education with an emphasis in personal goal setting, technology, and blended instruction.

Our Mission: Willow Springs Academy will create a challenging, interdisciplinary and student centered learning environment where students will work partially in multigrade classrooms. We will utilize a combination of project-based and blended learning models within a competency centered curriculum that involves students in personalized learning plans; where the home-school population, parents and community members are actively involved to support and sustain our community. We will encourage learning anytime, anywhere for all students through technology to create community involved, socially prepared and college ready individuals.

 Willow Springs Academy will be utilizing both Project-Based and Blended Learning strategies. Our curriculum and instruction will allow students to work at their own pace while setting personal goals of achievement, once these goals have been met by the student they set additional goals which will enhance self-awareness and provide students with ownership of their education. This will benefit the students in our area because currently the instruction is broad, and fast paced causing students not to perform to their full potential. We are promoting individualized learning for all students with the opportunity to earn college credits for our upperclassmen through Santa Fe Community College. Our students will also be working with the community creating projects and implementing them as well. These projects could include community gardens, collaborating with local business owners as a community outreach project, and establishing a career and technical organization such as FCCLA for the school. Families will choose WSA for our technology based curriculum, student centered learning environment, flexible classroom structures and hands on learning strategies.

Currently about 980 students are being educated primarily by the Raton Public Schools. About 50-60 students are being homeschooled and more than 50 students commute to Maxwell, NM (15 miles away) and Des Moines, NM, (over 40) miles away to attend school. The Raton Public School district lost many students recently with a consolidation effort led by the superintendent and school board . This closed two schools, merging five schools into just three. Many families left the district due to this consolidation and the students who remain are educated in overcrowded classrooms. The consolidation was proposed to save the district money, yet as a result there is ultimately no savings and the community is disappointed. Willow Springs Academy wants to bring our youth back to Raton and offer parents a choice in education for their children.

Willow Springs Academy will have blended classroom structures and flexibility to promote effective learning. Fridays will be utilized for our Project-Based Learning portion of our curriculum and time will be set aside for students to go into the community and collaborate on pre-approved projects with business owners, and members of our community. Our students will also have Personalized Learning Plans instead of report cards. This will enhance the individualized learning strategy within our Mission and Vision.

The three founding members of Willow Springs Academy all have educational backgrounds and ties to the community of Raton, NM.

Amanda Armacost holds a NM teaching license K-12 education. Amanda began her teaching at the Raton High School in the Science field and the Agriculture/FFA program. She created a superior program for RHS and provided students with an opportunity to participate in a successful program. Amanda currently homeschools her two elementary aged children.

Karyn Hall holds a NM teaching license. She has been an educator for sixteen years. Karyn is a Level III educator with a Master’s Degree in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in Digital Technology. Karyn is from Raton and has two young children.

Marcia Rubio holds a NM teaching license and has been an educator for nine years. Marcia is a Level III educator with a Master’s Degree in Curriculum and Instruction with emphasis in Digital Technology. Marcia has three high school aged children.

The founding members of Willow Springs Academy have a vested interest in our community. There is a desperate need to change and progress in Raton, NM. A charter school in our community would retain families and draw many new families to our community, and would return some vibrance and enthusiasm to our corner of the state. Raton, NM has many attractions to offer families and an academically based education option would clearly be a huge asset to our community.