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**OPTIONS FOR PARENTS AND FAMILIES DIVISION  
CHARTER SCHOOLS DIVISION**

**2018 NOTICE OF INTENT TO SUBMIT CHARTER APPLICATION**

**INSTRUCTIONS**

According to NMSA § 22-8B-6(B) the Notice of Intent to Submit a Charter Application (“NOI”) must be filed by the organizers of a proposed charter school to the Public Education Commission at the address below **AND** to the superintendent of the school district in which the charter school is proposed to be located. *Failure to notify may result in your application being rejected.*

The NOI must be submitted by 5:00 PM Mountain Time on January 9, 2018, **the second Tuesday of January**. Notices of Intent that are not received by the Public Education Commission and the superintendent of the local school district by the deadline may result in the application being rejected. When you send the NOI to the superintendent of the school district in which your charter is to be located, you are strongly encouraged to send it by certified mail return receipt requested, or request a signed receipt when you deliver the NOI. Contact the local district regarding electronic filing.

Notice to the Public Education Commission should be delivered by one of the following methods:

- Electronically to: [charter.schools@state.nm.us](mailto:charter.schools@state.nm.us)
- By mail or personal delivery: PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION  
c/o New Mexico Public Education Department  
Attn: Options for Parents and Families/Charter Schools Division  
300 Don Gaspar, Room 301  
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

The NOI is intended to provide the Public Education Commission with the primary point of contact among the charter developers, and preliminary information about the charter proposal, such as the school’s mission

statement, the school’s focus, the representative student population in the intended location, enrollment projections, key innovations, etc. (not to exceed 5 pages).

1. General Information

- Name of Proposed School

Catalyst Preparatory Charter School
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- Grade levels to be offered and enrollment projections

Grade Levels to be offered	Projected Total Enrollment
4-8	396

- Primary Point of Contact

Name	Ms. Elisa Cundiff				
Mailing Address	2029 Kiva Road				
City	Santa Fe	State	NM	Zip	87505
Phone	575.649.7694				
Email	elisa.cundiff@catalystprep.org				

2. Names, roles, and current employment of all persons on the applicant team, and qualifications of the team members to establish a high-quality charter school

Names	Role on Team	Qualifications: Education, Employment, and Experience
Elisa Cundiff	Lead Founder	NYU (B.A.), BES Fellow, Computer Science Teacher for Las Cruces Public Schools
Melanie Brennand	Board Member	Harvard (A.B.), Harvard (M.Ed.), UWC Director of Admissions and College Counseling
Connor Browne	Board Member	Princeton (B.A.), Thornburg Investing Management Portfolio Manager
Gil Gallegos	Board Member	UC Davis (BSME), NMSU (Ph.D.), Department Chair of Computer and Mathematical Sciences at Highlands University
Gabrielle Gerholt	Board Member	NMHU (B.S.), Tulane University, (M.S), Temple University (J.D.), Attorney at Concho Industries
Christopher Purvis	Board Member	Hampshire College (B.A.), UNM School of Architecture (M.Arch), Architect at A. Christopher Purvis Architects

3. Model or focus of the proposed school (e.g., performing arts, dual language, college prep, STEM, Montessori, IB):

Catalyst Preparatory Charter School (“Catalyst Prep”) is a proposed, college preparatory, expanded middle school (grades 4-8) providing students with the education necessary to take challenging coursework in high school and ultimately to succeed in college.

Catalyst Prep incorporates proven best practices and relationships from the nation’s most successful public charter schools, New Mexico schools, and local educational initiatives, integrating operational systems, programmatic structures, and instructional strategies to prepare students to thrive in the colleges of their choice.

The Catalyst Prep Founding Team believes that every student can learn and achieve academically. The Founding Team believes that every student in Santa Fe deserves to attend a school that provides the individual support, opportunity, and challenge to reach their highest academic potential while honoring each student’s personal voice.

All academic choices at Catalyst Prep are backwards-planned with college preparedness in mind. This includes all students completing Algebra 1 in the eighth grade so that their senior high school schedule will allow for Calculus or Statistics coursework. Classes are backwards scaffolded to this goal, with additional time and support in literacy and math to ensure that students have the assistance necessary to achieve the high academic expectations required.

Parents are our partners, and we will build mission-aligned relationships with them early, continuously, and proactively. Families will receive information about how each grade level at Catalyst Prep is aligned to high school and college success as we prepare all students for college preparation, admission, enrollment, and persistence beginning in the fourth grade, and we will have frequent events throughout the year to work with our families on behalf of their children’s success.

4. Does the school expect to contract with another entity for either management, or substantial oversight or direction in the school’s operation?  Yes  **No**

If YES, describe the entity and the role it will have in the school’s operational plan.

5. Does the applicant team or any members of the team currently operate any other schools?  Yes  **No**

6. Vision/Mission statement (2-3 sentences)

Through rigorous academics, high-quality instruction, and a values-based community, Catalyst Preparatory Charter School ensures that all fourth through eighth grade students achieve academic success, demonstrate ethical character, and are firmly on the path to the colleges of their choice and lives of opportunity.

7. Student population and geographical setting of the school

- Define the targeted geographical area of the proposed school from which you expect to draw a significant number of your students.

Catalyst Preparatory Charter School is designed to address the specific community and academic needs of students and families residing in south Santa Fe. Primarily, the school will provide an

opportunity to those residing near or within the 87507 zip code as well as to students and families residing in the northwestern sections of 87508 and 87505.

- Describe the student population including key demographic data (academic performance, home languages, English Learners (ELs), and special education populations) in the location in which the school intends to locate.

Currently, in south Santa Fe 85% of students identify as Hispanic, 34% identify as English Language Learners, 91% qualify for Free or Reduced Lunch, and 15% have been identified as eligible for Special Education services.

Currently, in south Santa Fe the average 4<sup>th</sup> grade math proficiency is 12.3% and the average 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading proficiency is 16.15%.

- Identify where these students are most likely being educated currently and why they are expected to choose the proposed charter school for their future educational needs.

The following 14 schools are currently enrolling students in south Santa Fe: Ramirez Thomas (PK-5), Cesar Chaves (PK-5), Kearny (PK-6), Salazar (K-6), E.J. Martinez (PK-6), Francis Nava (PK-6), Piñon (PK-6), Sweeney (PK-5), Chaparral (K-6), Salazar (K-6), El Camino Real (K-8), Nina Otero (K-8), Ortiz (6-8), and De Vargas (7-8). Of these schools, 5 achieved a grade of C or higher in the 2016-2017 school year as identified by the NM PED: Piñon( A), Sweeney (B), Chaparral (B), Kearny (C), and Francis Nava (C). The remaining 9 schools have earned a designation of D or F.

Academy of Technology and the Classics, a high-achieving charter school in 87508, currently has a waitlist of 1,400 students or more annually. This waitlist emphasizes the local demand for a high-quality option and indicates that families are eagerly and actively seeking opportunities to enroll their students in a college preparatory middle school.

8. Provide evidence that the applicant team has assessed community need for a school of the nature that will be proposed in the application (e.g., objective surveys or other measures of local demand for the proposed educational program).

Lead Founder Elisa Cundiff and the Founding Board have held over 100 conversations with a variety of community stakeholders; these conversations have consistently indicated a persistent and strong desire for a high-achieving, college preparatory middle school for students in south Santa Fe. High school principals and other professional educational staff have indicated that incoming students frequently lack the academic and character preparation to access and fully engage in challenging high school coursework. Need for a high achieving middle school is additionally evidenced by the 2016 district high school graduation rate of 71.3%.

In conversations with 32 local employers, including but not limited to Sandia Labs and Los Alamos National Labs, industry leaders have expressed their inability to identify local talent for meaningful, high-paying, STEM career pathways. Discussions with both industry professionals and those deeply engaged in higher education have expressed the need for higher academic expectations to best prepare students for college success and to thrive in the local workforce.

As part of our community outreach, the Founding Team has held more than 20 meetings with parents to learn what they are looking for in education for their children. The team will continue to

hold a minimum of two information sessions with families each month to continue to listen to and learn from parents, and what they desire from a local school.

9. Identify significant innovative features that the school will implement in order to help it realize its vision/mission (e.g., non-traditional school year, longer school day, partner organizations, etc.).

The curriculum and instructional strategies of Catalyst Prep are informed directly by scientific research addressing brain development and learning and replicate evidenced-based practices implemented by high-poverty, high-performing charter schools delivering strong outcomes for student populations similar to our target demographic for Catalyst Prep.

Each year, Catalyst Prep will dedicate four weeks of extensive professional development for all staff before students arrive. Over the course of the school year, teachers will engage in weekly coaching and feedback meetings to drive their professional growth, students will benefit from an extended school day, and annual home visits will be made to engage all families in their students' progress and academic success. To compliment an intentional focus on literacy and mathematics, Catalyst Prep will uniquely incorporate computational thinking, digital literacy, and coding into our college preparatory curriculum. We will provide an expanded 4-8 academic program to remediate deficiencies from the early elementary grades and accelerate learning into a full middle school to ensure high school readiness for all students within a seamless school community.

10. Describe how the school will be more effective than the schools currently serving the targeted student population, and/or plans to improve student achievement and exceed the academic performance of existing public schools in the targeted service area and any data you have to support this assumption.

The New Mexico Public Education Department's Equity Plan shows that minority students and low-income students in our state have less access to teachers who earn rankings of "Highly Effective" and "Exemplary" than either their non-minority or non-economically disadvantaged peers.<sup>1</sup>

Catalyst Prep's comprehensive and targeted professional development program ensures that mission-driven, high-capacity, and growth-minded teachers are developed, supported, and retained so that every student has access to a highly effective teacher able to provide rigorous instruction that supports students' academic growth to and beyond grade level proficiency.

Catalyst Prep incorporates a data-driven model that includes standards-based weekly, monthly, and trimester assessments. Upon collecting achievement data, with the support and guidance of school leadership, teachers will analyze and design action plans to ensure that all students' needs are accurately identified and swiftly addressed with intentional and individualized supports.

*Please Note: Should your charter be awarded, the founding governing body could undergo a background check to determine if it qualifies to be a board of public finance in the state of New Mexico.*

Signature of founder(s):

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Date: 01/04/2018

Elisa Cundiff

<sup>1</sup> <http://ped.state.nm.us/ped/PolicyDocs/NM.Educator.Equity.Plan.FINAL.pdf>.