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Options for Parents

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SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO 87501-2786  
Telephone (505) 827-5800  
[www.ped.state.nm.us](http://www.ped.state.nm.us)

CHRISTOPHER N. RUSZKOWSKI  
SECRETARY DESIGNATE OF EDUCATION

SUSANA MARTINEZ  
GOVERNOR

**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

Solare Collegiate Charter School
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- Grade levels to be offered and enrollment projections

Grade Levels to be offered	Projected Total Enrollment
Grades 4-8	390

- Primary Point of Contact

Name	Rachael Swards				
Mailing Address	1623 La Vega Dr. SW				
City	Albuquerque	State	New Mexico	Zip	87105
Phone	505-917-6442				
Email	rsewards@solarecollegiate.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
Rachael Swards	Lead Founder; proposed Principal	Education: MA, Teaching Middle Grades; MA, International Affairs; BA, Psychology & Sociology Current Employment: Fellow, Building Excellent Schools – Nationally renowned training program focused on the development of leaders for high-performing charter schools
Norma Binder	Founding Board Member	Education: MA, Education Administration, University of Denver; MBA, Drexel University; BA, Penn State Current Employment: Retired, most recently Deputy Superintendent of Bernalillo Public Schools
Veronica Gonzales-Zamora	Founding Board Member	Education: JD, UNM; BA, University of the Southwest Current Employment: Attorney, Brownstein, Hyatt, Faber, & Schreck, LLC
Janice Honeycutt	Founding Board Member	Education: MA, Organizational Learning & Instructional Technologies, UNM; BBA, UNM Current Employment: Vistage International, Board Chair for Peer Advisory Groups
Subramanian Iyer	Founding Board Member	Education: PhD, Finance, University of Oklahoma; MBA, University of Kerala; BS, Mahatma Gandhi University Current Employment: Assistant Professor, University of New Mexico
Peter Lorenz	Founding Board Member	Education: MBA, Harvard; BA, Middlesex University Current Employment: CEO & President, UNIRAC

Amber Macias-Mayo	Founding Board Member	Education: JD, UNM; BA, UNM Current Employment: Partner, Walther, Bennett, Mayo, Honeycutt, PC.
Luis Olivas	Founding Board Member	Education: BA, Sociology, UNM Current Employment: HR Consultant
Camille Vasquez	Founding Board Member	Education: BA, Chicana Studies, UNM Current Employment: Program Director, ACCESS NM
Michael Wallace	Founding Board Member	Education: MS, Health Administration, UNM; BA, University of Southern California Current Employment: Director of Special Projects, DaVita

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

Solare Collegiate Charter School is a college-preparatory, extended grade middle school (grades 4-8), with an innovative focus on development of student voice and identity. Literacy and connection to one's personal identity is a core part of all curriculum and instructional design.

Solare Collegiate is guided by six core beliefs:

1. Literacy is foundational.
2. Data drives decisions.
3. Character is critical.
4. Instruction is rigorous.
5. Structure supports learning.
6. Voice strengthens identity.

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)

Mission: Through academic rigor, individualized supports, and character development, Solare Collegiate Charter School equips all students in grades four through eight with the academic and personal skills to excel in the high schools and colleges of their choice.

Vision: Solare Collegiate Charter School believes that all students, regardless of race, socio-economic status, or family educational attainment can pursue and succeed on a path towards college enrollment and graduation. To that end, every minute and every decision is one that aligns with preparing students for academic success in high school, admission to and enrollment in college, and attainment of a post-secondary degree. We do so by delivering rigorous, grade-level academics balanced with purposeful interventions and a focus on the development of personal identity and character.

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.

The target area for Solare Collegiate will be communities in the 87121 zip code - the fastest growing zip code in the greater Albuquerque area. From 2000 to 2015, the population within this zip code doubled in size to 78,626<sup>1</sup>, with significant additional growth anticipated over the next 10 years, and with the 4,000 acre Santolina affordable housing development approved by Bernalillo County.<sup>2</sup> Currently, 76.85% of local residents identify as Hispanic and 50.4% of residents report that Spanish is the primary language spoken at home. Within this community, 70.72% of adults have a high school diploma and 8.28% of have earned a bachelor's degree. Average adjusted gross income in the 87121 zip code is \$33,370, with an unemployment rate of 11.8%.<sup>3</sup> All of the schools in the 87121 zip code are Title I schools, indicating a high percentage of students who, as determined by household income, are eligible for free or reduced lunch.

- 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.

A key factor in the decision to situate Solare Collegiate in the 87121 zip code is due to the historical and current academic performance of surrounding schools. The proficiency rates for middle school students in Albuquerque Public Schools are lower than the state average, and the average rate of proficiency for middle school students in the 87121 district is lower than state and district averages, as detailed in **Figure 1**.

**Figure 1 - 2017 Middle School PARCC Proficiency Rates<sup>4</sup>**

	Proficient or Higher in ELA	Proficient or Higher in Math
State	29%	21%
Albuquerque Public Schools	27%	19%
87121 (APS)	11%	6%
Economically Disadvantaged in 87121	11%	5%
Students with Special Needs in 87121	7%	6%
English Learners in 87121	7%	3%

In the 87121 zip code, 90.2% of public school students qualify for free or reduced lunch, with 100% of schools in 87121 qualifying as Title I schools. Middle school students identified as “economically disadvantaged” performed similarly on the PARCC assessment, with 11% of students economically disadvantaged students proficient in English Language Arts, and 5% proficient in math.

The academic performance of English Language Learners and students with special needs is even lower than the 87121 zip code as a whole, as referenced in **Figure 1**. Specifically, 17% of elementary students and 24% of middle school students in 87121 were identified as having special needs, while 36% of elementary students and 25% of middle school students in 87121 are classified as English Learners.<sup>5</sup> Spanish is identified as the primary home language for 50.4% of families.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.city-data.com/zips/87121.html>.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.bernco.gov/planning/proposed-santolina-level-a-master-plan.aspx>.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.city-data.com/zips/87121.html>.

<sup>4</sup> New Mexico Public Education Department. (2017). PARCC Proficiencies 2017.

<sup>5</sup> New Mexico Public Education Department. (2017). Inspection of Public Records Request.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.city-data.com/zips/87121.html>.

- 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.

Solare Collegiate proposes to enroll an inaugural cohort of 60 fourth graders and 60 fifth graders in the fall of 2019. We expect that our students are currently enrolled in one of the five elementary schools serving upper elementary in 87121: Alamosa, Carlos Rey, Ed Gonzalez, Maryann Binford, or Rudolfo Anaya. Of these, only Carlos Rey earned a C rating; all others earned a D or F letter grade. We believe that families in our community will attend Solare Collegiate because of our focus on college preparation, through increased literacy and math instruction, as well as the dedicated individualized tutoring component of our school day. Incorporating a small school design desired by many parents, at full capacity, our student-to-teacher ratio will be 15:1.

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).

The applicant team has met with hundreds of community stakeholders, including community leaders and families in the South Valley among others throughout the City of Albuquerque. Solare Collegiate has developed relationships with multiple South Valley community organizations, including ACCESS NM, South Valley Economic Development Center's Taza, the Atrisco Heritage Foundation, and the Rio Grande Educational Collaborative. To date, conversations share a common theme: a pointed concern about the access to quality education for students in the 87121 zip code and surrounding communities and the social and economic implications of this lack of quality education access at scale. Families and stakeholders want a college preparatory option in their community to ensure that children in 87121 have access to a strong middle school education that prepares them for attending the high schools and colleges of their choice.

According to the 2017 Public Education Department School Report Cards, only one school in the 87121 zip code has a grade higher than a C - Helen Cordero Primary, currently serving grades K-2. All middle school options in 87121 were rated D or F for the 2016-2017 school year. Atrisco Heritage and West Mesa High Schools earned school grades of a C, and had 2016 graduation rates of 70% and 67%, respectively. This data reveals that families living in the 87121 zip code do not have easy access to a high performing middle school in their own community, and local discussions continue to demonstrate strong dissatisfaction with local options that do not provide a program tailored to students' needs, families' desires, and aligned with high ambitions for every child's success.

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.).

Innovative components of Solare Collegiate begin with our grade span of fourth through eighth grade as a stand-alone middle school with teacher subject-specialization consistent with traditional middle school models. Our college preparatory design with extended school calendars and intensive focus on math and literacy differentiates Solare Collegiate from the three charter schools in 87121. Solare Collegiate's design replicates evidenced-based practices of high-achieving charter schools educating students from low-income communities nationally.

At Solare Collegiate, it is our mission to prepare students for attending the high schools and colleges of their choice through rigorous academics, individualized supports, and character development. Inherent to that mission is a powerful and comprehensive focus on literacy. All courses will be taught

through the lens of literacy. Oral literacy is a vital component to a balanced literacy program. Therefore, we emphasize the development of student voice—both the literal voice and the internalized voice—as a core belief of Solare Collegiate. Coupled with voice is a purposeful focus on identity. The following elements of identity will be woven into advisories, core classes, and service learning projects: 4<sup>th</sup> grade - self, 5<sup>th</sup> grade - the South Valley, 6<sup>th</sup> grade - New Mexico, 7<sup>th</sup> grade - the United States of America, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade - the World. Students will examine how their own identity is shaped by their participation in each of these increasingly wide communities. Subject area coursework will align to our voice and identity focus, and students will also take a Heritage Spanish and New Mexico Culture course as a part of their regular academic programming. This course is designed to support the unique needs of students in our community, preparing them for advanced study of the Spanish language and New Mexican culture in high school and college.

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.

Solare Collegiate’s Lead Founder and proposed Principal Rachael Swards is a teacher of 10 years, the most recent 7 of which were in New Mexico. Most recently, she was rated Exemplary on the rigorous NMTEACH evaluation system. Additionally, through her work with the Building Excellent Schools (BES) Fellowship, Ms. Swards has visited more than 30 high-poverty, high-achieving charter schools across the country, while also receiving training and support in organizational leadership, school finance, curriculum, and school culture. In January 2018, Ms. Swards will complete a leadership residency at Excel Academy, in Chelsea, MA. Excel Chelsea’s performance on the PARCC assessment ranked the school among the top 15 middle schools in the State of Massachusetts. Excel Chelsea boasted 37% of their students with special needs and 31% of their English Language Learners as proficient on the PARCC assessment, significantly higher than the state average, and higher than the New Mexico average for all students.<sup>7</sup> Solare Collegiate’s design is based on proven methods of school design, as well as partnerships built with high-performing charter schools in New Mexico and across the country, creating a foundation for building a school of high expectations and high support of students and teachers for student in the 87121 zip code, improving the academic expectations and outcomes in our community.

*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):

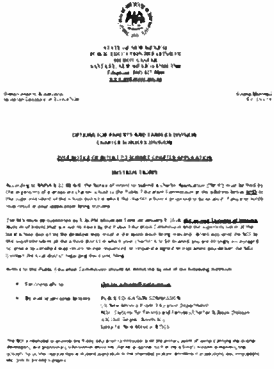
  
Rachael Swards (Jan 4, 2018)

Date: January 4, 2018

Rachael Swards

[PRINT NAME]

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.excelacademy.org/impact/>.







# NOI

Adobe Sign Document History

01/04/2018

Created:	01/04/2018
By:	Rachael Swards (rsewards@buildingexcellentschools.org)
Status:	Signed
Transaction ID:	CBJCHBCAABAAMJjmLG90fhp5q33Oy28J3mRh5XbwWV_j

## "NOI" History

-  Document uploaded by Rachael Swards (rsewards@buildingexcellentschools.org) from Acrobat  
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