



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

**2014 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.

Executive Summary

Dzil Dit Looi School of Empowerment, Action, and Perseverance (DEAP) will exist in the community of Red Lake-Navajo. This community has a long legacy of both greatness and loss. The area was once a thriving farming area with vast natural resources and beautiful landscape. As the Navajo Nation evolved, the community of Navajo also took shape. Navajo is a remote community tucked between gigantic red rock formations and sits at the foot of Dzil Dit Looi (Fuzzy Mountain), a sacred site where ecologically significant healing herbs and ceremonial plants are gathered. Navajo was once a booming milling town under Navajo Forestry Products Industry (NFPI) that harvested lumber from the nearby Chuska Mountains. As NFPI flourished many community resources were established including schools, churches, a recreation center, a swimming pool, gas station, stores and housing. During its prime, Navajo was one of the most innovative and economically stable communities within the Navajo Nation. It attracted both Navajo and non-Navajo families for work. However, as NFPI closed, the town struggled to sustain itself. The sawmills left behind a legacy of contaminated resources along with a slew of abandoned buildings permeating with asbestos. With few opportunities for employment, many community members live in poverty and have limited access to community resources like gyms, recreation sites or relevant education resources.

Despite the many struggles that the community faces, there are many community members that believe their community can be revitalized. The Red Lake Chapter of the Navajo Nation, with concerns for the educational needs of youth, passed a letter of intent for creating a charter school and presented it to their state representative in the New Mexico legislature.

Representative Patricia Lundstrom sponsored House Memorial 43, which was signed during the 2013 session. The memorial called for a work group to be formed with the express purpose of studying the feasibility of having a bi-state charter in the Red Lake-Navajo area. The study group met several times to explore the implications of drawing students from Arizona to a charter school located in New Mexico and to engage stakeholders in the community about the possibility of having a charter school. The work group held monthly meetings between July and December, 2013 which brought together representatives from the Red Lake Chapter, Crystal Chapter, Red Lake-Navajo Community Action Group, Native American Community Academy, Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President, Department of Diné Education, New Mexico Public Education Department's Indian Education Division, Gallup McKinley County Schools, Dream Diné Charter School, New Mexico State University, New Mexico Indian Affairs, Teach For America-New Mexico, Navajo Nation Council Delegates, New Life Ministries, New Mexico Indian Education Committee, New Mexico House of Representatives, Health Education and Human Services Committee and many other community members. As a result, DEAP has

strong support from the Red Lake Chapter and its leaders as well as support from the local grassroots organization, Red Lake-Navajo Community Action Group. DEAP's founders have also worked closely with various agencies within the Navajo Nation including the Department of Diné Education, Office of the Vice President and the Navajo Nation Health and Education committee.

To determine the need and focus of education in Red Lake-Navajo, DEAP founders conducted door knocking interviews and surveys. We found that students from the Red Lake-Navajo community choose to attend public school outside of the community. Although we do not know specifically what our student enrollment may be, our goal is to provide local students with an option to attend a school within their local community, rather than traveling to another community for school. We also hope to entice students beyond our community to attend DEAP through our innovative curriculum and engaging learning experience. Currently, three public schools exist in Navajo, NM. According to the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED), Navajo Elementary School earned an "F" on its 2013 School Report Card; Navajo Middle School also earned an "F" in its 2013 School Report Card. Although Navajo-Pine High School fared better on their 2013 report card with an overall grade of "B" the school earned a "D" in both Graduation and College and Career Readiness. Of its cohort group of 34 similar schools, Navajo-Pine High School ranked 30th in College and Career Readiness, 26th in terms of School Growth, and 20th in Graduation. Several community members expressed their frustration with the existing education options in the community. Much of the dialogue has surrounded the ways education should and could play a vital role in meeting the community's needs. Community members identified the following focus areas they believe could be key in raising both student achievement and community development:

- 1) Opportunities for the community to revitalize its farming culture*
- 2) Skills to become community leaders, planners and service providers in order to initiate economic and community development*
- 3) Access to holistic wellness and health*
- 4) Strengthening community relations and progress through Diné culture and language revitalization*

Community members expressed that by addressing these needs, the community will be able to heal and thrive. With this in mind, members of Red Lake-Navajo CAG began to process to create a school that is driven by the community and its specific needs in order to revitalize and reclaim the community.

Therefore, the mission of DEAP is as follows:

As a result of a DEAP education, students will be able to use their cultural, vocational and academic skills to analyze their surroundings in order to plan the transformation of their community and their world, live a healthy life and use the tools they were taught to achieve holistic wellness, use their understanding of identity, and its impact on local and global communities to promote the restoration and perpetuation of Diné culture, and honor the history and the legacy of the Dził Dit Looi area by consciously balancing the needs of the land with the needs of the people.

In order to achieve its unique mission, DEAP will provide students with a relevant and engaging learning experience. Some of the innovative features DEAP will offer include an Agriculture Science Curriculum, Service Learning and Community Action, Personal Wellness Courses, and purposeful learning experiences designed to revitalize Diné culture and language. In addition, DEAP will focus on experiential learning and build students knowledge of their surroundings. Our ultimate vision is to create students that are fully equipped with the skills and mindsets to become activists for their communities and surroundings. We envision that DEAP's mission fully realized will build sustainable economic and community development.

KAYLA D. BEGAY is an emerging leader and Diné woman from the community of Navajo, NM. She is Tódich'íi'nii born for Táchii'nii. She earned her B.A. in Sociology and Education from Occidental College and is a current M.A. in Elementary Education candidate at UNM. As a product of Navajo, NM, Kayla returned to fulfill the desire of Diné Nation's wish that Navajo students go and get an education and return to make their communities better. Kayla has taught at Navajo Elementary. Her work with the community of Navajo and partnership with NACA to create a charter school based in the community vision speaks volumes to her understanding and deep belief that all students deserve an education that allows them to be firm in their identities and reclaim their rights as Native people on a sovereign land. Kayla is currently a NACA Inspired Schools Network Fellow, W.K. Kellogg Foundation Community Leadership Network Fellow, Teach for America Alumni, and serves on the Red Lake-Navajo Community Action Group council.

PRESTENE GARNENEZ is an community leader and planner from the community of Navajo, NM. She earned her B.S. in Biology and Mathematics and MA in Urban Planning. Prestene has extensive experience in Community and Regional Planning including Environmental Planning and Economic Development at local, tribal, municipal, and county levels. Prestene has knowledge and experience in organizational development, management, and leadership. Other work experience includes management of an environmental laboratory. Prestene currently serves as president of the local grassroots organization, the Red Lake-Navajo Community Action Group.