



STATE OF NEW MEXICO
PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
300 DON GASPAR
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO 87501-2786
Telephone (505) 827-5800
www.ped.state.nm.us

HANNA SKANDERA
SECRETARY-DESIGNATE OF EDUCATION

SUSANA MARTINEZ
Governor

September 8, 2014

Dear Public Education Commissioners:

Enclosed is the Final 2014 Charter School Application Final Analysis and Recommendation for SAHQ applying for a state charter in the city of Albuquerque and the Albuquerque Public School District to serve grades 8-12 and represented by founders, Charlotte Rode, Lindsey Kerwin, Edward Baklini, Jr., Mr. George McAfee, Mr. David Kovarik, and Mr. Philip Zuber. The staff at the Charter Schools Division along with a team of independent reviewers gave full consideration to the information gathered in this process.

The CSD has provided evidence and rationale gathered in the team analyses and interviews in this evaluation to fully understand the recommendation. Please give special consideration to section II of this final analysis and recommendation.

Thank you all for your hard work and dedication to ensure that New Mexico's Charter Schools represent the best of alternative and innovative options for parents and students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Matthew Pahl".

Matthew Pahl
Interim Director
Charter Schools Division

I. Recommendation

APPROVE

Overall the application is complete and adequate; and during their Capacity Interview, the applicant(s) demonstrated the capacity to implement the education and governance/management plans as described in the application. Nothing was identified that would indicate the applicant(s) do not have the experience, knowledge, and competence to successfully open and operate a charter school.

APPROVE WITH CONDITIONS

Overall the application is complete and adequate; and during their Capacity Interview, the applicant(s) demonstrated the capacity to implement the education and governance/management plans as described in the application. Nothing was identified that would indicate the applicant(s) do not have the experience, knowledge, and competence to successfully open and operate a charter school; however, the conditions listed below are required by law and must be addressed. If the PEC determines that there are any other conditions that need to be addressed, then those should be negotiated in a contract.

PROPOSED CONDITIONS

The Applicant will negotiate a contract with the Public Education Commission pursuant to 22-8B-9.1:

1. Obtain standing as an approved Board of Finance.
2. Secure a facility that meets PSFA Approval.
3. Complete the planning-year checklist.
4. Provide a detailed scope and sequence for all grade levels and subject matter offered in the first year that align with the charter application.
5. Provide a detailed curriculum for all grade levels and subject matter offered in the first 60 days of instruction aligned with the charter application.
6. Develop a clear plan for the recruitment and selection of GC members.
7. Ensure lottery policy is in alignment with legal requirements of the process.

DENY

Overall the application is either incomplete or inadequate; or during their Capacity Interview, the applicant(s) did not sufficiently demonstrate the experience, knowledge, and competence to successfully open and operate a charter school.

The Charter Schools Act, in paragraph 1 of Subsection L of Section 22-8B-6 NMSA 1978, states that a chartering authority may approve, approve with conditions or deny an application. A chartering authority may deny an application if:

- (1) the application is incomplete or inadequate;

- (2) the application does not propose to offer an educational program consistent with the requirements and purposes of the Charter Schools Act;
- (3) the proposed head administrator or other administrative or fiscal staff was involved with another charter school whose charter was denied or revoked for fiscal management or the proposed head administrator or other administrative or fiscal staff was discharged from a public school for fiscal mismanagement;
- (4) for a proposed state-chartered charter school, it does not request to have the governing body of the charter school designated as a board of finance or the governing body does not qualify as a board of finance; or
- (5) 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.

CHARTER SCHOOLS DIVISION

By: 

Matthew Pahl, Interim Director of Charter Schools Division, or Designee

II. Explanation Regarding Use of the Score Sheet

In the Final Analysis and Recommendation the CSD has considered the overall score in the written application, as well as the score in each individual section and Capacity Interview. For example, while the total possible points in the Business Plan only equals 52 points, it is essential that an applicant school score high in this section and have a sound financial plan. If an applicant school receives a low score in this section then the CSD carefully considers that in their final analysis.

Also please note two additional considerations:

- First, the CSD does not score the community input hearing, but may reference it in this Final Analysis and Recommendation and if pertinent information was offered that contradicts or affirms what was found in the application or the capacity interview.
- Second, if the applicant school did not answer any prompt because that prompt did not apply to the applicant school (e.g., the applicant school will be an elementary school and so did not provide responses to graduation-related prompts), then the CSD adjusted the total possible points in the application section where the non-applicable item(s) is found as well as in the final score. For this reason, you may see varying possible total points from application to application.

III. Overall Score Sheet

Section	Points Received	Applicant School's Possible Points
Application		
• Education Plan/Academic Framework	76	108
• Organizational Plan and Governance/Organizational Framework	90	140
• Business Plan/ Financial Framework	23	52
• Evidence of Support	16	24
• Required Appendices	4	4
Capacity Interview		
	41	60
Overall Score	250	388

IV. Final Analysis

Application Section	Points Received	Applicant School's Possible Points
EDUCATION PLAN/ACADEMIC FRAMEWORK	76	108

Evidence/Statements Supporting Score in this Section:

The review team found the academic framework section to be generally adequate yet lacking in specific detail.

The mission statement of the SAHQ academy presented an innovative approach by bringing education and physical wellness together in their approach to serving students. The vision statement supports the mission with mention of rigor with a team and relationship based approach to supporting students. The mission will attempt to draw upon the students' love of sports to feed a high level of excellence in education. The mission and vision both lacked a clear and concise indication of how these ideas would be supported and ultimately accomplished.

The applicants noted two performance based goals that would meet their proposed mission. One was an indicator related to the physical health of the student and the second is an indicator of progress towards graduation. The measure of Body Mass Index is clear however, how each individual student will be supported in meeting the goal was not clearly articulated. The applicant notes regular testing of the BMI, physical education classes, healthy food options and general health education as a means of meeting this goal. However, it was unclear how school faculty would manage the individuality of such a goal and what support structures and processes would bring students to meet these goals. This goal speaks to the importance of a healthy BMI for overall wellness yet it does not present research to support its role as performance based goal.

The second goal related to student progress towards graduation is presented in a way that could easily be transferred to the classroom and school where the entire school community could participate. The rationale of this goal lacked a detailed plan in section C.2. The applicants identify several facts or areas of research related to the goal but none are appropriately cited. Overall this response is presented in a general manner and the specificity of a step by step plan is lacking.

The applicants indicate that the instructional program is based on a three tiered program: 1) Foundational Knowledge 2) Applied Knowledge and 3) Experiential Knowledge. The educational program concepts/models the founders anticipate utilizing are digital learning, mastery based learning, classroom instruction, STEM (a byproduct of the model of instruction delivery). All of these concepts would be initiated upon a student's "Minimal Acceptable Standard" (measure developed by school staff) identification.

This section presents several research based educational strategies but response does not indicate how these will fuse together. The response did not present a timeline of curriculum development or any mention of a staff member who will develop the curriculum. Additionally the programmatic "how" is missing in the response and more importantly the educational program as presented does not articulate

how it intends to support raising student achievement and a higher graduation rate as indicated in the mission statement and mission specific indicators.

Graduation requirements were clearly outlined and in alignment with the state requirements. Applicants clearly indicate support strategies involving intensive monitoring conducted by faculty over the course of students time with SAHQ, as well as a stakeholder course map and internships. While internships are mentioned, detailed plans of the program are missing. Overall, this section was presented in a clear and satisfactory manner.

Special Education and English Language Learner populations educational support strategies were well outlined in the application. There was a clear presentation of differentiation and intervention practice for Special Education students. The applicants present an understanding for meeting the needs of students with special academic needs and demonstrate how blended learning can be a viable solution for meeting student need. The response given in this section of the application contains proactive strategies and demonstrates a clear understanding of Federal and State Statute, particularly for Special Education. The identification of English Language Learners at the time of enrollment was an area that was not adequately addressed in the application. The application did not present sufficient evidence of the applicant’s understanding of assessment tools and how these tools would be used to guide instruction. Considering the unique use of the proposed Individualized Learning Plans for each student at SAHQ, the school could have spoken to how this approach would support English Language Learners.

In this section of application the founders identified several systems of assessment that would be utilized throughout the year. However, a plan for how each assessment would be used and when was not outlined in clear and comprehensive manner. Clear plans for how and to whom the data would be presented and tracked throughout the term of the potential contract was not clearly presented.

Application Section	Points Received	Applicant School’s Possible Points
ORGANIZATIONAL PLAN AND GOVERNANCE / ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK	90	140

Evidence/Statements Supporting Score in this Section:

The review team found the Organizational Framework section to be adequate.

The applicants presented an acceptable plan for establishing a governance structure and sufficiently outlined the roles and responsibilities of the Governing Council. The proposed bylaws that were attached were clear and acceptable. There were noted discrepancies in some of the application responses and the attached bylaws. However, the discrepancies were sufficiently addressed by the applicants during the capacity interview.

It appears that the applicants understand the GC responsibility, though there is a slight concern that the proposed GC role in hiring school personnel is overreaching. During the Capacity Interview the applicants did not respond to how members of the GC were/would be identified and recruited to ensure that as a whole, the GC will possess the expertise needed for strong governance and oversight. The applicants did present a list of individuals they have in mind to serve on the board yet did not clarify in their response how those individuals were/would be selected.

The application addressed the need for strong GC training. One area of particular strength in this section of the application was the indication that an orientation will be part of the GC development process. The applicants noted the importance of seeking external expertise in the area of training and evaluation to ensure an effective governing body. The application presented a plan for governance evaluation yet did not explain what tools would be used to evaluate and also how the evaluation data would be used after it had been collected. Overall the application presented sufficient evidence to support the capacity of the founding team to establish, develop and manage the GC.

The application review team found mixed evidence of applicant understanding of the school organizational structure and staff roles. The applicants provided a sufficient explanation of the proposed organizational structure of the school, yet certain aspects lacked clarity. It was not clear how the skills and experience of the head administrator would link to expertise required to support the proposed mission and vision of the school, particularly in the sports science area. Additionally, the organizational chart that was presented in the appendices did not align with the narrative in the application. This organizational chart appeared top-heavy and roles and their relation to one another were not clearly explained. The narrative of staff roles in this application presented sufficient information about how the majority of school functioning would be supported.

The application review team found mixed evidence of applicant ability and understanding of employee management and human capital strategy. The employee section of the application and attached job descriptions lacked specific information regarding roles such as STARS manager, custodial work, and school maintenance. The Special Education teacher role is unclear as it is outlined in the job description and the applicants do not mention teacher assistants/paraprofessional educators. The job descriptions that were attached were sufficient and general in nature and not specifically tailored to the unique programming of the school. Additionally, there is mention of "trainers" in the narrative section of the application but these are not clearly delineated in the ORG chart. Despite lacking clarity in certain areas, the applicants presented sufficient information around staff and policies to indicate they have the capacity to establish, train and support employees.

Overall, the applicants presented sufficient, clear information around student policy, student recruitment and enrollment. The student handbook is missing a reference to PED's Students Rights and Responsibilities and reviewers believe this area could be strengthened by references to state and federal statutes and include a greater focus on special education students. There is concern around the explanation of the lottery process. The applicants note that students would be required to complete a registration packet and meet with school faculty within 10 days of the lottery or risk losing their spot in the school. This is not in alignment with state law nor could it be enforced. The lottery response does not address siblings and does not indicate it will be held in a public venue.

The review team found facilities to be a particular strength of this application. The applicants have been working in a PSFA approved space for over a year. This space was previously used as a school and is

already in process of meeting the proposed program needs.

Application Section	Points Received	Applicant School's Possible Points
BUSINESS PLAN/ FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK	23	52

Evidence/Statements Supporting Score in this Section:

The CSD review team found the Financial Framework Section to present generally adequate information yet lacking some evidence around capacity.

The review team found several areas of concern within the financial section of the application. This section was particularly problematic and while many concerns of the review team were addressed in the Community Input Hearing, the fiscal management capacity of the applicants was not evident. The application includes a 5-year budget, but contains elements that appear inadequate. The most concerning was the high estimate for C level SpEd enrollment, causing revenue to be overstated. Typically, most SpEd students are A-B level and conservative budgeting would put 75% as A-B and 25% as C-D. Small School Adjustment should not include SpEd numbers. These changes would change 1st year SEG to \$1,425,618 instead of \$1,456,803. This concerning reduction was addressed during the capacity interview by the contracted budget manager. While the business manager did explain the numbers and perceived inconsistencies in better detail, this still did not highlight the capacity of the applicants to manage this without the help of the contracted business manager.

In Year 2 the budget includes additional ancillary staff so SEG would be \$2,108,286 instead of the noted \$2,126,909. Year 3 SEG would be \$2,440,740 instead of \$2,452,540. Year 4 SEG would be \$2,043,686 instead of \$2,035,442, and year 5 SEG would be \$2,043,686 instead of \$2,035,442. The SEG differences are significant and speak to the concerns the reviewers had about the applicant ability to manage the budget. There is an additional concern that the average salary is \$37,500. Further, the budget accounts for 40 staff, though the staffing plan calls for a staff of 41. The application suggests a plan for merit pay. In the budget this is reflected in the generally higher than normal salaries for teachers. However, nowhere in the budget or the application does it mention that the high salary is at this level to account for the merit pay. From the information provided one could assume the starting salary is high and merit pay would be in addition to that. Lastly, the budget narrative does not appear to acknowledge that Federal stimulus funds are not available.

While the business manager who is contracted by the school did account for some of the issues in the budget, the applicants did not exhibit their own ability to address these issues in the budget. The review team found two major concerns: what appears to be inadequate staffing to provide appropriate separation of duties, and the lack of clarity (plan) on how the governing body will exercise its fiscal oversight. The lack of clear and compelling responses to the prompts in these two critical areas could set the stage for an inadequate fiscal accountability environment.

Application Section	Points Received	Applicant School's Possible Points
EVIDENCE OF SUPPORT	16	24
Evidence/Statements Supporting Score in this Section:		
<p>The review team found the application evidence of support clear, comprehensive, and cohesive.</p> <p>The response notes a plan to use social media, information sessions and will open the school as a location for the student enrollment process. This is reiterated throughout the application and relates to the mission of the school. The applicants have been volunteering in the SAHQ tutoring center for the last two years and working with the surrounding community. In the application the specific request for quantitative data was not responded to and instead qualitative data was supplied. The application lacks information about a targeted community, number of individuals interested in the program or number of outreach activities the applicants have participated in. However, letters of support and interest were provided along with the application and public support was evident during the community input hearing.</p>		

Application Section	Points Received	Applicant School's Possible Points
REQUIRED APPENDICES	4	4
Evidence/Statements Supporting Score in this Section:		
<p>The review team found the appendices clear, comprehensive, and cohesive.</p> <p>The majority of the required appendices were included. A school year calendar was not included. However, all required pieces of information were presented to the reviewing team.</p>		

Section	Points Received	Applicant School's Possible Points
CAPACITY INTERVIEW	41	60
Evidence/Statements Supporting Score in this Section:		
<p>During the capacity interview the applicants presented a unique model of education and physical wellness that would incorporate several learning strategies with strong staff support to increase student success. The proposed founding team has extensive experience in the classroom and with various educational programs. They explained their desire to take what has worked in all their combined years of experience and strive towards an excellent model of education, using principles of teamwork and</p>		

physical wellness. While the passion and dedication was clear, how specific educational strategies would fuse together and how plans related to governance and student performance assessment would ultimately tie back to support the mission statement was not clearly articulated.

In regards to the various instructional strategies the applicants propose to incorporate, they did not clarify how these pieces would fit together to drive their mission forward. Much of what was stated in the application was re-presented during the capacity interview. Curriculum was noted to be a focus during the planning year.

The review team addressed several concerns related to the Governing Council recruitment and selection. The applicants adequately addressed the necessary skills and expertise needed among the Governing Council. However, the applicants did not clarify how members would be identified and recruited to ensure that as a whole, the GC will possess the expertise needed for strong governance and oversight. They presented a list of individuals they have in mind to serve on the board yet did not clarify in their response in what way those individuals would be selected.

The review team felt it necessary to focus on the several areas of concern around the budget and finance section. The contracted business manager did respond to each concern sufficiently. The concern that still lingers is that the founding team did not demonstrate their own ability to understand and manage the school budget without this particular contractor. Many of the responses given by the business manager lead the review team to believe the applicants would be able to manage the fiscal responsibilities only with the help of that specific business manager.

As in the application, the capacity interview proved the facilities responses were strong, with the school well on its way to a strong start.