



**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

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The proposed charter school is to be named The GREAT Jr. Academy.

The target population includes any 6-8th grade students whose parents want them to attend, although we expect that most students will come from the greater Albuquerque area. The GREAT Jr. Academy will accept all students who apply and are selected by the lottery (described below) regardless of academic performance, home language or special education status.

The expected student body is probably being educated in other public schools. This charter school will provide an educational choice that provides on-line learning as well as face-to-face instruction in other areas. We expect that parents will select The GREAT Jr. Academy because of its unique program (described below), excellent facility, ease of access using major streets and available bus transportation, and a desire to provide their students with a small-school and small-class environment that is more likely to attend to their students' individual needs.

Parents of students currently enrolled in The GREAT Academy high school as well as other interested parents have, over the years of The GREAT Academy's existence, repeatedly inquired as to the possibility of opening a middle school program for younger students, particularly siblings of students already enrolled at The GREAT Academy. By establishing a middle school that is similar to The GREAT Academy's current academic program, we hope to satisfy this need and also to provide a "feeder" program for students who wish to continue this mode of education in their high school years. We point out, however, that The GREAT Jr. Academy will be a completely separate school. We do this so that we can assure that the program offered at The GREAT Jr. Academy will prepare students for success in any high school after completing The GREAT Jr. Academy's academic program, without any need or obligation to continue at The GREAT Academy high school. We believe that this arrangement will provide parents with the flexibility needed in our highly mobile society, and make The GREAT Jr. Academy a more attractive choice.

The unique programmatic features of The GREAT Jr. Academy will be those already pioneered by The GREAT Academy high school, but conducted on a middle school level.

Our instructional program will offer students a virtual, student-centered, multi-modal, educational environment with a self-paced, one-on-one interactive curriculum: Edgenuity. Edgenuity (formerly called E2020) is a computer-based curriculum with course offerings that

provide each student with an outcomes-oriented, individualized program, tailored to meet each individual student's needs. The curriculum will engage students with relevant, on-demand information and multi-media instruction to which they can relate at multiple age and maturity levels. Students will also be able to guide their own learning with a variety of student-centered options as necessary to gain mastery, periodic reviews, practice opportunities, and pre and post assessments at the lesson level. Lectures and other instruction are broken down into more manageable pieces for the students to work through as opposed to great amounts of information at one time. The curriculum requires each student to complete a rigorous scope and sequence in all subjects, exercise strong written and verbal communication skills, build critical thinking skills, utilize high tech tools, implement research skills and demonstrate academic skill mastery in each subject. Student progression through the courses is self-directed. Each student is measured for skill development and content understanding in each academic area in a variety of ways and at different points in the learning process. Mastery and demonstration of concept cognition, as well as content mastery is verified by ongoing assessment.

In addition to the virtual learning program, The GREAT Jr. Academy students will participate in four different Smart Labs: Audio & Video Production, Health & Education, Business & Entrepreneurship and Science & Engineering. All of the labs are intended to serve as tools for career exploration. Each of the labs addresses career domains to help students familiarize themselves with a variety of career choices. Through participating in these hands-on, project-based classes, the students will be able to start to explore and develop their own talents.

Another component that makes TGJA very unique is that all students will have Academic Improvement Plans (AIPs). In the traditional setting, it can take several months to a year or more to identify that a student has a particular academic need. Then it takes more time for that need to be addressed. The GREAT Jr. Academy will use a case management model to lessen the chance of students failing and not having their needs addressed. This practice provides the teaching staff with the opportunity to further individualize and differentiate based on the student.

With all of these instructional opportunities available, as well as other features described in the main portion of this application, we believe that parents will be attracted to The GREAT Jr. Academy and apply for admission of their students

Because The GREAT Jr. Academy will accept students from anywhere in Albuquerque or its outlying areas, it is not possible to compare the effectiveness of other specific schools in so large a proposed service area. However, we can offer the fact that The GREAT Academy's high-school level program earned a "B" school grade in 2013 (which was only 0.38 of a point below the grade required for an "A" rating) and that its 3-year average was also a "B" grade, attesting to the effectiveness of the program that will be adapted to middle school needs.

Mr. Jasper Matthews, M. Ed is one of the founders of The GREAT Jr. Academy. He has over 18 years of experience as an educator and has been an administrator in both traditional schools and charter schools for 10 years, serving as a Special Education Teacher, Dean of Students, Assistant Principal, Director/Principal, and Executive Director. Jasper obtained a BA in both Sociology and African American Studies from the University of New Mexico in 1998. He received a Master's Degree in K-12 Special Education from the College of Santa Fe - Albuquerque in 2002, focusing on charter administration and management. He is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Educational Leadership at Capella University. His research focus is Response to Intervention (RtI), school reform, and closing the achievement gap.

Mr. Matthews is one of the founders of and currently serves as the Executive Director of The GREAT Academy Charter School. The GREAT Academy recently completed its third year in operation. He has served in administrative positions at both charter and traditional public schools. Given these credentials, Mr. Matthews is highly qualified to design and establish an effective charter school.

Keisha Matthews is also a founder of The GREAT Jr. Academy. She obtained a BA in Psychology from the University of Nebraska at Omaha in 2002. She went on to earn an MA in Curriculum/Instructional Leadership from the College of Santa Fe - Albuquerque in 2004. She is a licensed Level III teacher and has endorsements in both Reading and TESOL. She is also a licensed Administrator. As an Instructor/Facilitator for MA and undergraduate level courses at the University of Phoenix, she teaches courses in Reading/Assessment Methods, Linguistics and ELL strategies. Mrs. Matthews is currently working towards a second Master's degree in Educational Leadership. She has been in education for a total of fourteen years. Keisha has served as a Teacher/Special Education Teacher in grades ranging from 3rd - 8th and also served as an Instructional Coach/Reading Specialist at Horizon Academy West for two years. In addition, Keisha is the co-founder of the GREAT Academy – Albuquerque and serves as the Director of Academics there. Her expertise in curriculum, instruction, and assessment will be extremely valuable to promoting a successful governing body for the school.

In addition to Jasper and Keisha Matthews, there are three other founding board members. The first is Mr. Chenyu Liu. Mr. Liu currently works as the Business Manager of The GREAT Academy Charter High School. He received his MBA from the University of New Mexico and holds a Level I school business official's license. Before this position, he spent two and a half years in the finance industry. Mr. Liu has served as a graduate assistant at UNM for two years. Mr. Liu has a deep understanding of New Mexico school finance regulations and is familiar with all aspects of school business office daily operations: daily A/P, payroll, taxation, budget management and state reporting. He is also deeply familiar with the use of APTA and OBMS. In addition, he is familiar with the budget preparation process. He has had very positive results in the 2013-2014

external and internal audits. His level of financial knowledge specific to charter schools would be of a great benefit on this school's board.

Mr. Anthony Fairley is a Level III teacher and certified administrator. He holds four Level III licenses: elementary, secondary, special education and administration. He currently works as a high school English teacher and teaches English at CNM. He has been in education for 17 years and has worked as a Special Education teacher, PE teacher, Dean of Students, Instructional Coordinator, and Principal. He has a Master's degree in Special Education. Mr. Fairley also serves on CNM's Educational Advisory Board. His extensive educational experience in both charter and public schools makes him an excellent candidate for The GREAT Jr. Academy's Board of Directors.

Ms. Helen Brown is a Staff Accountant for Milesosky & Co. CPA's. She has worked in finance since 2001. She holds a degree in finance from NAU and is slated to take her CPA certification by the end of this year. Ms. Brown served as a former board member on The GREAT Academy High School Board of Directors. She has a great deal of experience in the school finance aspect of being a board member. Ms. Brown is also the parent of children ranging in age from 10 months to 22 years. She is a community member that is very interested in the availability of educational options for all families. Her experience and passion for quality education makes her a very viable candidate for The GREAT Jr. Academy Board of Directors.