

2010 CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION RECOMMENDATION & EVALUATION

Name: Achieve Academy	Projected Grades: 10-12
Projected Enrollment: 100	Proposed location: Albuquerque
Founders: Mike Kivitz and Krista Kelley	
Recommendation: I recommend that the Public Education Commission DENY the application because it is incomplete and inadequate.	

Achieve Academy sought to have a school that would focus on vocational learning particularly with students with special needs. The application mentioned a partnership with Adelante Development Center, Inc. The Adelante Development Center offers programs for people who are physically or mentally disabled, those who have chronic neuromuscular diseases, and those who are disabled simply due to the aging process. The founders should be commended on raising the issues of students with disabilities and how those students' educational and vocational needs could be met using the charter school model. However, the application is incomplete and inadequate and it would require the founders to completely rewrite all areas of their application. I would encourage Adelante to continue their efforts in seeking viable partnerships within the public educational sector to insure that the educational and vocational needs of all disabled students are being served.

The reasons for recommending denial of this application are based on the specific detailed evaluation of each of the sections of the application:

The organizational goals presented in the mission section for the Achieve Academy lack accountability to clear, specific, and measurable operational outcomes.

The educational plan fails to provide some basic curricular information. The applicant selected the E2020 online curriculum but failed to present a plan for its implementation. A clear plan for the development of the course curriculum for students in the career and ability pathways lacked a specific plan for development which included a scope and sequence. The school's student performance goals are ambiguous and lacking in measurability.

The applicant's five-year budget failed to provide necessary information to connect the resources requested to the plan presented. The application's revenue and expenditure assumptions narratives do not give details for how the amounts were determined, present inadequate start-up costs, and demonstrate an uncertainty about other sources of funds the school would be eligible to receive.

The governance section of the application presents a plan for contracting with Adelante, Inc., a not-for-profit service provider which creates a perceived conflict of interest. Additionally, the

application fails to provide a clear description of the lottery and enrollment processes with a timeline for enrollment periods.

Dr. Don Duran, Assistant Secretary of Education
CHARTER SCHOOLS DIVISION

Date: September 2, 2010

CHARTER SCHOOL MISSION AND STATEMENT OF NEED EVALUATION

Inadequate	Approaches	Meets	Exceeds
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Achieve Academy’s mission statement is concise. It proposes to provide a vocational learning environment that “empowers” students of all abilities (particularly special needs students in grades 10-12) to experience successful transition into the workforce through career education. And while “empower” is a compelling term, how the school plans to operationalize this concept of empowerment –and other aspects of the mission—is never clearly defined.

This section does not discuss how the school will know if it has accomplished its mission, though it presents six school-based goals. The goals, although aligned to general educational principles, do not provide clear school-level outcomes that are directly connected to the school’s proposed mission. They are written as process goals that describe general activities of what any public school might do in order to simply exist (e.g., enroll students and provide classes). The time-specific dates of goal accomplishment are not indicated.

The application describes the need for at-risk students with disabilities to receive career education in a work environment as an alternative to dropping out, however, it fails to describe what about the traditional school environment leads to this result, and more importantly, how the proposed school specifically addresses these needs.

This section demonstrates an over-all lack of organizational accountability.

EDUCATIONAL PLAN EVALUATION

Inadequate	Approaches	Meets	Exceeds
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Achieve Academy is seeking to provide a range of instructional environments and curricula to graduate students—mostly with disabilities—via the general, career, and ability pathways. Though the applicant makes assurances to create a continuum of services that accommodate each individual, it does not describe how that will be accomplished across the various components of the educational plan through “inclusive classroom settings.” It does not provide a clear description of what students who attend the school under the career readiness program, standard program of study, or the ability program of study would experience in terms of educational climate, structure, materials, schedule, assessments, and outcomes.

The description of the curriculum and the approach to instruction is incomplete and inadequate as the applicant proposes to use an online core curriculum, but does not provide a meaningful justification for choosing the grades 6-12 courseware when many of the students targeted are likely to need curriculum at a lower level or may lack the skills necessary to be able to work independently. The application does not present a coherent plan as to how the school will utilize only two teachers on staff (in its first year) to effectively facilitate either online

assistance of instruction or providing an appropriate Least Restrictive Environment for the range of students that they project. The superficial description of the inclusion and integrated setting for the delivery of instruction, both online and face-to-face, demonstrates a lack of understanding of the applicant’s responsibility to provide school-specific details about how this inclusion setting will operate.

The description of how the career education curriculum will be implemented is inadequate. The application describes the Life Centered Career Education (LCCE) curriculum, but implies that it may be used as a reference only, or that it may just be the Electives curriculum. The applicant superficially describes the types of strategies and methods it would use to implement the curriculum with the few examples lacking significant detail and coherence. Professional development for staff is underdeveloped, a plan for involving parents in the implementation of the curriculum is mentioned, but not explained, and a partnership with Adelante, Inc. for the implementation of the electives curriculum is alluded to, but not clearly defined. Other curricular approaches are mentioned (dance, yoga, etc.), but the application does not explain how the actual curriculum will be written, implemented, and assessed in alignment to the standards.

The application contained six goals which lack specificity, quantitative expectations, clear measures, and timelines for achievement. The plan for evaluating student performance, the proposed remediation plan, and the types of assessments to be utilized do not clearly articulate implementation steps and strategies for the population it seeks to serve. The application presents an inadequate and incomplete description of how it will meet the needs of English Language Learners, merely indicating that it will follow the guidelines in law. The applicant states that these services will be provided through contracts with partner charter schools that employ appropriately certified instructors however, the application presents no specific plan for partnering.

FINANCIAL PLAN EVALUATION

Inadequate	Approaches	Meets	Exceeds
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The budget presented does not support the educational plan. The school’s core curriculum is computer-based and the application does not clarify the actual amount budgeted for computers. The school has only budgeted for two teachers with a projection of 27 special education and 3 regular education students in the start-up year. This small allocation will not support the type of instruction that the application describes (online and face-to-face). In subsequent years the applicant expects a significant number of special education students however, the budget allocations do not anticipate the need for a larger number of teachers.

The fiscal management plan articulates that a Finance Committee of the Governance Council will work with a licensed business manager to ensure fiscal responsibility and lists a few of the fiscal operations. However, the fiscal management plan lacks significant detail and demonstrates a lack of understanding as to how the school will ensure the appropriate safeguarding of public funds. The reliance on their partner organization’s fiscal management

capacity demonstrates a lack of understanding of the fiscal management requirements that are specific to compliance with educational law, regulation, and specific licensure standards. The application does not provide a comprehensive description of the school’s internal control procedures or how they will be appropriately implemented at the school.

GOVERNANCE / MANAGEMENT PLAN EVALUATION

Inadequate	Approaches	Meets	Exceeds
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The application contains the names and bios of five members on the Achieve Academy governing body, but nowhere in the application does it specify the number of members that can sit on the governing body, on-going professional development for the governing body, or the process for selecting the head administrator. The application presents a plan for contracting with Adelante, Inc., a not-for-profit service provider. However, two members of the governing body of the Achieve Academy have a strong connection to Adelante, Inc.—one is a staff member and one is a board member of Adelante, Inc. These relationships present, at minimum, a perceived conflict of interest if not an actual conflict of interest. Members of the governing body of Achieve Academy should not be in a position to recommend contracts be awarded to Adelante, Inc.

Details are missing from the school’s personnel policies and procedures, proposed salary schedules, evaluation process, and staff discipline process. Though the application makes assurances of compliance with rules and regulations, it does not consistently demonstrate how that would actually occur at Achieve Academy. The significant lack of detail in the application for this governance section in other areas such as student and staff disciplinary processes, staff salary schedules, job descriptions, and staffing plans to meet the expected pupil-teacher ratio proposed, also provide an incomplete picture of how the school will both comply with law and regulation and implement the educational plan as presented.

The school’s enrollment policies, procedures, and lottery process also make assurances but do not contain a description of the school’s admissions policies and procedures including timelines for student admissions. The applicant proposes the use of a “transcript review” to determine eligibility for acceptance into the lottery which is contrary to the guidance provided by the Division. The student discipline policy and procedures are incomplete and inadequate in not describing provisions that align with the student rights and responsibilities act.

REQUIREMENTS EVALUATION

Inadequate	Approaches	Meets	Exceeds
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The application does not provide a clear understanding of the legal responsibilities necessary to secure waivers from the Public Education Department. The information provided demonstrates a critical misunderstanding about the need for a particular waiver and its relationship to the proposed educational plan.