

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The name of the proposed charter school is Columbus Community School (CCS). Students to be served are 7th through 12th grades living in southern Luna County. This includes students in Columbus, as well as American citizen students living in Palomas, Chihuahua, Mexico. All 7th through 12th grades students are presently being bussed to Deming, New Mexico. The round trip is over 60 miles and takes over two hours daily. Classes will be phased in starting with grades 7, 8, 9, and 10 the first year with an additional grade added each following year. Enrollment projections for the first year is 75 students in grade 7 and 15 students each in grades 8, 9, and 10. We will add grade 11 in our second year and grade 12 in our third year. Our intent is to admit as many students entering grade 7 as wish to attend CCS. Our enrollment will be capped at a maximum of 395 students.

We have chosen to start with the 7th grade because Deming Public Schools District has an elementary school in Columbus, which includes pre-K through the 6th grade. Students will be able to go from the 6th grade into the 7th grade of Columbus Community School. By starting with the 7th grade, we would not be interrupting the study plans of those students already attending classes in Deming. However, a number of parents have requested that we provide high school classes as they want their high school children closer to home under their supervision.

Columbus, New Mexico is a small, incorporated border town of 1664 residents, with a divided ethnic mixture of 85.9% Hispanic and 14.1% White. However, over 99% of all students from Columbus area are Hispanic (<http://nces.ed.gov>).

- Eighty percent of the residents speak Spanish at home. Thirty four percent of residents were born in Mexico.
 - 40% of residents over 25 years of age had graduated from high school as compared to 84.6% nationwide (U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2005-2009).
 - Many of the residents are low-income recent Mexican immigrant families. 59.2% of families with related children under 18 years of age earn below the US poverty level. 100% of families with only children under 5 years of age earn below the poverty level. (U.S. Census, 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates).
 - Over ninety-six percent of Columbus students are eligible for the free lunch program (PED).
 - The principle source of employment for Columbus residents is seasonal work in agriculture. However, once the harvest is over, sometime in December, the only source of income is that of unemployment checks until late spring when agricultural work begins again.
 - The family's unemployment check is supplemented by food stamps and agricultural surplus commodities which are distributed by a local non-profit organization.
 - The remainder of residents are mainly white retired blue and white-collar workers from other states with no school age children. We plan to recruit this segment of the population for after-hours tutoring and mentoring of ELL students and students who may be having difficulties in English, math, and reading.
1. AYP statistics for the 2010 -2011 school year indicate that 20.14% of Red Mountain Middle School Hispanic students are proficient in math as compared to 34.02% proficiency for Caucasian students. Hence, Caucasian students at Red Mountain Middle School are 1.69 times more proficient in math than Hispanic students.
 2. In reading, 33.86% of Hispanic students at Red Mountain Middle School are proficient as compared to 54.64% proficiency for Caucasian students. Hence, Caucasian students are 1.84 times more proficient in reading than Hispanic students.

3. AYP statistics show that 15.02% of Deming High School Hispanic students are proficient in math as compared to the 25.49% proficiency for Caucasian students. Hence, Caucasian students from the same school are 1.70 times more proficient in math than Hispanic students.
4. Caucasian students are 1.92 times more proficient in reading than Hispanic students at the Deming High School.
5. Although state wide test scores consistently show Hispanic students trailing Caucasian students, however, not nearly to the degree as in Deming.
6. In fact, statewide ratios for middle schools show Caucasian students are 1.56 more proficient than Hispanic students in math as compared to Deming's 1.69 times; and 1.39 more proficient in reading as compared to Deming's 1.84 times.
7. At the high school level, state wide ratios show Caucasian students are 1.55 more proficient in math as compared to Deming's 1.70 times more proficient and 1.40 more proficient in reading as compared to Deming's 1.92 times as proficient.
8. Parents will choose to send their children to the Columbus Community School because they can be more involved with their children's education and will have direct access to their children's teachers. The majority of our students are US citizens from Mexico, many whose parents are Mexican citizens and are not able to go to Deming. Deming is thirty miles away and a US visitor visa only allows one to travel 25 miles into the US.
9. The PED, Habitually Truant School Type Report, School Year: 2009-2010 shows Deming's middle school with a habitually truant rate of 27.7%; and at the high school, the rate was 51.9%. We think that a school based in our community will lead to closer parent and community supervision to resolve this truancy problem.

- 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.

Students are being bussed each day to Deming to attend classes, over a 60-mile and two hour round trip. Parents want their children to attend classes at Columbus Community School in Columbus for the following reasons:

- So that parents can better supervise their children.
- So that children do not have to leave home so early in the morning for school.
- So that children do not get home so late.
- So that children have more time to interact with family.
- So that children can participate more readily in extracurricular activities.
- So that children have more time for home work.
- So that children can receive homework assistance from school staff.
- So that children are less tired at the end of the day.
- So that parents can be more involved with the school and have more interaction with children's teachers.
- So that children can be involved in community service projects as part of their education.

- 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 Section V., therefore, specific statistical information does not need to be provided here.

We live in a Community that has many needs. A Charter School would help to fulfill several of these needs. First and foremost is the educational need. We believe by offering a better education not only to our students but to the parents of our students we will be able to help break the poverty cycle that is in Columbus. Second is Economic, but very much tied to the poverty cycle. The Charter School would be the largest local employer in Columbus and thus be a huge source of Economic Base jobs. It would be our long term goal to only hire people that would live in our community, but, not required. Lastly, we struggle as a community because we do not have a sufficient source of educated leadership. For example, most of the teaching jobs at the Deming Unified School District Elementary school here in Columbus are held by people from Deming. These teachers and administrators do not live here and their children do not go to school here and their community activities are not based here. This does not build an Educational and Economic infrastructure that would help our Community to succeed.

- The key innovative, unique and/or programmatic features the school will implement to accomplish its vision and mission (non-traditional school year, longer school day, partner organizations, etc.)

CCS will function as a year round school. In addition, students will attend school directed programs for seven hours a school day. The school will be open from 8 am to 8 pm. Due to low educational level and language barriers of parents, homework monitors will be available after class hours to assist students with their homework. Integrated STEM project instruction will help provide the needed interest that students must have to excel. Team teaching and learning groups provide additional support for both teachers and students. Learning blocks will be 90 minutes long, giving students time for questions, discussion, and research as they work on their projects. It will give teachers more time to interact with both individual students and with the small groups that are teamed up for projects.

CCS's one way dual language program allows students to utilize their cultural heritage to enhance their learning. It will also strengthen their native Spanish as it strengthens their English language skills.

- How you project that the school will be more effective than the schools currently serving the targeted student population, and/or the founder(s)' plans to improve student achievement and exceed the academic performance of these existing public schools in the targeted service area, and provide a brief summary of any data you have to support this assumption.

Our central theme is for parents to be involved in students' educational process and for students to be involved in the community. Under the present school system, where students must leave their community and be bussed over 30 miles to the schools in Deming, parents cannot be involved in the schools and students cannot be involved in the community. The time and expense for parents to travel to Deming is a prohibiting hurdle. 59.2% of families with school age children fall below Federal poverty guidelines. The importance of parental influence on students' academic achievement is well documented. [(Skandera and Sousa (2003); Hoxby (2001); Houtenville & Conway (2008); Henderson (2002)] We will have ongoing home visits by teachers and staff. We will have community volunteers in our school and class rooms. Our students will be in the community with their learning projects, addressing real community issues and needs. With our integrated STEM

project based learning students will understand why they are learning core subject matter and how it will serve them in their further education and careers. Our one way dual language instruction has proven to be effective for student achievement in border communities where student populations are over whelming Spanish speaking. [Collier and Wayne (2004); Freeman (2004); Genesee (1999); Genesee, *et. Al.* (2006); Genesee & Lindholm-Leary (2010); and Hamayan & Freeman (2006)].

Columbus Community School will be a place where students' culture and language are highly valued and provides a solid knowledge base for academic and social achievement. It will be a place where teachers project the vision that all students can and will learn.