September 13, 2013

Dear Public Education Commissioners:

Enclosed is the Final 2013 Charter School Application Final Recommendation and Evaluation for Dream Diné applying for a state charter in Shiprock to open initially with grades K – 2, expand yearly until 5th grade and represented by founder, Gavin Sosa. Please know that the process utilized this year by the Charter Schools Division (CSD) deviated from past years and was designed to reflect the Amended Charter School Act. We feel we created a very rigorous process. Three teams of highly successful and seasoned charter school leaders and business managers scored both the paper application and the capacity interview totaling 333 points for elementary school applications and 342 points for high school applications.

Additionally, the CSD allotted itself 10% of the total points (33 & 34 for ES and HS respectively), available for dispersal called the “CSD Team Synthesis Score”. The rationale is that CSD staff has been involved with the people and the applications since the very beginning and have a perspective that is different from the reviewers and the PEC.

So, in addition to the application and capacity interview score, the “CSD Team Synthesis Score”, which is on the summary score sheet, includes our analysis of whether the applicants: 1) Presented a good idea for a school that is realistic; 2) Explained their idea thoroughly in written and oral forms; 3) Have the requisite capacity to make the school a success; 4) Made a convincing demonstration of capacity, and 5) Have demonstrated sufficient support for the school and whether it will be sustained after the founders move on.

We realize as well that the stated goals in the applications may be refined during the Contract and Performance Frameworks negotiation process that follows at the end of the Planning Year.

Thank you all for your hard work and dedication to ensuring that New Mexico’s Charter Schools represent the best of public school options for parents and students. We are making a difference!

Sincerely,

Tony Gerlicz

Director, Options for Parents: Charter Schools Division

1. **Recommendation**

Approve: x with standard requirements to commence operations, (see below)

1. Obtain standing as an approved Board of Finance

2. Negotiate a contract with the Public Education Commission

3. Secure Appropriate Funding

4. Secure a facility that meets PSFA approval

5. Complete the planning-year checklist

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. The CSD sees this application as a researched-based and innovative model of engaging Navajo youth utilizing Navajo culture and language, which carries a higher probability of success than current models of educating Native American youth. The applicant(s) have the experience, knowledge, and competence to successfully open and operate a charter school, including having an experienced educator already selected as Principal and the beginnings of an exemplary Governing Council.

Approve with Additional 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 recommended below are necessary to correct minor concerns raised by the reviewers.

**Additional Proposed Conditions**

In addition to the above standard conditions, the Applicant will complete the following conditions according to the timelines set forth therein:

**N/A**

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.

**Options For Parents – Charter Schools Division**

By: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 Director of Options for Parents, or Designee

1. **Overall Score Sheet**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Section**  | **Points Received** | **Applicant School’s Possible Points** | **%** |
| Application |  |  |  |
| * School Mission
 | 6 | 6 |  |
| * Education Plan/Academic Framework
 | 63.7 | 81 |  |
| * Organizational Plan and Governance/Organizational Framework
 | 101.3 | 126 |  |
| * Business Plan/ Financial Framework
 | 34.7 | 48 |  |
| * Evidence of Support
 | 21 | 24 |  |
| * Required Appendices
 | 3 | 3 |  |
| Capacity Interview | 43.3 | 45 |  |
| **Sub Score** | 273 | 333 |  |
| CSD Team Synthesis Score - (CSD up to 33 pts available) | 28 |  |  |
| **Overall Score** | 301 | 333 | 90.4% |

**Explanation Regarding Score Sheet**

Legislation creating Charter Schools in New Mexico was initially passed in 1992, and was amended in 1999 and again in 2011.  The intent was to create independent public schools of choice that would enjoy, and be held accountable for, increased autonomy.   Innovation, autonomy, choice and accountability are hallmarks of the charter movement.  In the new charter school application review process, the CSD has done a complete analysis of all evaluation components and then analyzed how those components, and the proposed school in general, would contribute positively to the diverse public school educational landscape in New Mexico and the overarching charter schools movement.

The external review teams considered three categories of each new charter school application: the Academic / Educational Plan, the Organizational Plan, and the Financial Plan.  The Paper Application consisted of 81 questions with some questions weighted more heavily than others, as reflected in the score sheets.  The Capacity Interview consisted of 14 standard questions and one that was uniquely tailored to the school. All questions were weighted equally.  Subsequently, community input hearings took place in the community of the proposed school to ascertain the level of support that the applicant school has in that community.

The CSD then added its 10% ***CSD Team Synthesis Score***. The purpose of the ***CSD Team Synthesis Score*** is to ensure that the CSD brings its perspective to the analysis, in addition to that of the external reviewers as explained above.

1. **Final Analysis**

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| **Application Section** | **Points Received** | **Applicant School’s Possible Points** |
| **Mission** | 6 | 6 |
| **Evidence/Statements Supporting Score in this Section:**The mission is strong, clear and reasonable and will guide the development and focus of the school well. Importantly, the mission, essential to the success of a charter school, is woven throughout the entire charter application. The mission also asserts strong and fundamental connections to the community. |

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| **Application Section** | **Points Received** | **Applicant School’s Possible Points** |
| **Education Plan/Academic Framework** | 70.7 | 81 |
| **Evidence/Statements Supporting Score in this Section:**The application communicates a good understanding of curriculum and instruction, and we find the articulated program and curriculum clear, reasonable and innovative. The curriculum is research-based and includes a scope and sequence that aligns with the educational program and mission of the school. The goals are also reflective of the mission and aligned to it. They are written in SMART format, although the timeframe is somewhat unclear. The application provides a clearly detailed and reasonable timeline for the completion of the curriculum development. The description of the intended instructional strategies and methods is also clear and cohesive. The explanation of effectiveness with targeted populations is clear though somewhat limited. The description of differentiated instruction is both clear and provides specific examples.With respect to Special Populations, the section is clear, comprehensive and cohesive. The discussions regarding Section 504 plans and ELL students are somewhat limited in the description of how student progress will be monitored. This is not deemed to be a significant deficit. Dream Diné application has a clear and cohesive plan for the use of assessments evidenced throughout. As is the case throughout the application, the mission and goals of the school are aligned with these assessments. The school provides a clear, cohesive and comprehensive plan for corrective action if and when students fall short of growth expectations. The school has a clear and well thought out plan for reporting on progress to various stakeholders.  |

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| **Application Section** | **Points Received** | **Applicant School’s Possible Points** |
| **Organizational Plan and Governance/Organizational Framework** | 101.3 | 126 |
| **Evidence/Statements Supporting Score in this Section:**Dream Diné accomplished most of the elements of this section well. The school provided draft By-Laws and although a discussion of how board members will be removed is missing, that can easily be rectified with training. The school has a compelling proposed list of relevant Governing Council members that represent a diversity of experience and expertise including the following: a former Central Consolidated Bilingual Coordinator who was also a Principal in the district; the Medical Director of Shiprock’s Health Education Center and Medical Director of Diabetes Education; a Legislative District Assistant for the Navajo Nation. These are strong community voices poised to contribute to the success of the proposed school, impressive at this stage of a charter applicant’s existence.The application provides a process for selecting new Governing Council members and a clear, cohesive plan for ongoing Governing Council training which is supported by the budget. In addition, the application includes a clear plan for regular self-evaluation of the Governing Council to assess its effectiveness, a plan that indicates that the applicants are already thinking about building the capacity of a sustainable Governing Council. The application clearly demonstrates understanding of and capacity to monitor the organizational and financial operations of the school, as well as the academic progress of the students. The founders have already identified a head administrator and provided an adequate description of the process for evaluating that position. The organizational chart clearly aligns with and supports the mission of the school. There is a clear understanding of the appropriate relationships between governance, administration, staff and external entities. The teacher evaluation process is clear and comprehensive. The staffing plan adequately aligns with the needs of the school based on the projected enrollment for year 1. The job descriptions in Appendix D are somewhat limited. The school calendar complies with state requirements and appears to support the educational program of the school. The Professional Development plan is clear, comprehensive and compelling, is aligned with state requirements and the mission and goals of the school.The Employees section provides adequate information and sufficiently describes the employee/employer relationship. The school provides adequate personnel policies; a staff discipline process, and a grievance process. Appendix E is referenced on page 32 of the charter. The community involvement section provides a clear plan for how the various stakeholders of the school can be involved. The complaint resolution process is clear and cohesive and appears culturally reflective of the Navajo culture.The student discipline policies are clear and cohesive, are in compliance with state law and indicate an understanding about discipline with regards to students with disabilities. The school provides a clear plan for alternative placement for students who are long-term suspended or expelled.The student recruitment process is clear, cohesive and compelling. It provides a clear timeline and specific information about various agencies and groups the school plans to work with to recruit students for the lottery process. The lottery process supports equal access to the school, is complete, comprehensive and cohesive and complies with state law. The enrollment process is adequate, though it does not address the question of re-enrollments.A clear description of how the school will provide transportation and food services is provided. |

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| **Application Section** | **Points Received** | **Applicant School’s Possible Points** |
| **Business Plan/ Financial Framework**  | 34.7 | 48 |
| **Evidence/Statements Supporting Score in this Section:**The business manager member of the external review team called the financial section of the application one of the best she has seen. The 910B5 worksheets are complete and show capacity and understanding of New Mexico Public School Funding. The 5-year budget plan clearly aligns with the mission of the school and adequately demonstrates financial capacity. The budget narrative is clear and demonstrates an understanding of the budget and budgeting process. In case of cash flow challenges, the school provides clear and meaningful information about strategies to address budget pressures. The provided budget control strategies demonstrate a high level of capacity to successfully manage the budget. The proposed salary schedule is clear for all staff positions.The policies and internal controls in the financial oversight section are clear and appear to demonstrate capacity to appropriately manage public funds.  |

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| **Application Section** | **Points Received** | **Applicant School’s Possible Points** |
| **Evidence of Support** | 21 | 24 |
| **Evidence/Statements Supporting Score in this Section:**The founders have significant ties to the local community and provide ample evidence that they clearly understand the community and needs of the students. The leadership of the proposed school comes from the community. It is clear from the application that the school will offer a unique educational opportunity to students in the area, an opportunity that has been well received by tribal leaders. At the community input hearing the Central Consolidated School District indicated that it had not been appropriately notified of the proposed school. The applicants, however, provided the Charter School Division with evidence that they had in fact provided notice as required. One of the school founders is a Kellogg Fellow who has ties to that Foundation. The Kellogg Foundation has a long history of support Native American education initiatives. |

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| **Section** | **Points Received** | **Applicant School’s Possible Points** |
| **Capacity Interview** | 43.3 | 45 |
| **Evidence/Statements Supporting Score in this Section:**The Founders and leadership of the school did an excellent job during the Capacity Interview, not only in explaining the mission and vision of the school but also in explaining the details of how that mission will be implemented. The review team indicated the school received one of the highest scores in recent memory for their understanding of the challenges and how the school will deal with them. Dream Diné’s capacity interview team comprised of the following: the founder (a Master’s Degree recipient from Stanford University’s School of Education); two experienced and retired Diné educators, one of whom will be Principal of the proposed school; a Board member; and Kara Bobroff. This solid lineup of organizational strength made for an impressive interview session. The responses were on target, clear, thoughtful, knowledgeable and demonstrated an aligned and thorough understanding of the application. |

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| **Section** | **Points Received** | **Applicant School’s Possible Points** |
| **CSD Synthesis** | 28 |  |
| **Evidence/Statements Supporting Score in this Section:**The CSD recommends approval of the Dream Diné Charter School application. Dream Diné offers an opportunity to approach the education of Navajo youth in a distinctly unique manner, that is, by focusing on traditional Navajo teachings and language. The capacity and probability to develop and implement such a school and to be successful in its execution is very strong, from the Founder, the Governing Council, the selected leader for the planning year, to the community which supports the plan. The applicants have presented a cogent and holistic model that incorporates Navajo culture into the fabric of teaching and learning on a daily basis. Dream Diné has identified a qualified leader to guide the proposed school in the planning year. In response to comments made at the Community Input Hearing regarding Ms. Rosalie Begay as a disgruntled former employee of Central Consolidated School District (CCSD), the CSD received a letter stating that Ms. Begay was a highly regarded Principal during her tenure with the CCSD. Her commitment places Dream Diné ahead of other charter applicants at this stage of the game for it allows the school to be guided by an experienced leader during its planning year, should it get approved. In addition, CCSD officials made other comments at the community input hearing stating that the applicants failed to provide appropriate notice to them regarding the new charter school application. The CSD confirms that notice had been submitted in January 2013 to the school district in the proper manner.The application was presented and supported ably by the founder, a Teach for America and Stanford University Graduate, Mr. Gavin Sosa; by a strong Governing Council that includes members of the Navajo tribal council leadership; and by the founder of the successful Native American Community Academy (NACA) in Albuquerque, Kara Bobroff, which is touted by Secretary of Education Hanna Skandera for its impressive college admission rate for Native youth. Combined with the strong score from the review team, the strong financial presentation made in the application, the competence the Dream Diné representatives demonstrate, and the connection the school has demonstrated with the Kellogg Foundation, which supports Native American education, the CSD considers the probability of success of this school to be very high.  |