

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Proposed School Name: Health Sciences Academy

Proposed School Area: Gadsden Independent School District, Dona Ana County

Description of Targeted School Population - The following demographic characteristics of the school district in which Health Sciences Academy will be located is defined by a number of particularly challenging obstacles to student academic success and high school graduation. When compared with the New Mexico State averages, 97% of the 13,600 students are of Hispanic origin as compared to 59% across the state. Most dramatically, 6,150 students are classified as English Language Learners—that is 44% in the school district compared with 14% statewide. Perhaps most significantly, 100% of the 14,087 students are classified as economically disadvantaged compared to 68% across New Mexico.

In addition, we offer the following economic data with regard to the small towns and unincorporated rural areas in the school district where the charter school will be located:

Dona Ana County is home to 37 designated Colonia Communities more than any other county in the state of New Mexico. The majority of the residents--67% in Dona Ana County are Latinos, primarily of Mexican descent. In Colonia the percentage is much higher. Dona Ana County is the 5th Poorest Metropolitan Statistical Area in the United States and 30% of the county population has completed less than eight years of school. (www.colonias.org)

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS of GISD STUDENTS 2011-2012			
Student Characteristic	# of Students	School District	NM State
Hispanic Students	13,600	97%	59%
Students with disabilities	1,680	12%	14%
Students classified as English Language Learners	6,150	44%	14%
Economically disadvantaged students	14,087	100%	68%

Academic Performance of area students - GISD middle and high schools have reported levels of academic proficiency below state and national norms. In assessing the degree of educational excellence, based on AYP scores, not one of the district's middle schools, and only one of the district's high schools (the exception is Chaparral High School which is in Corrective Action) have met AYP goals in reading; indeed, nor have any middle school nor any of the three district high schools reached AYP goals in math; all other GISD middle and high schools have been classified with an R-2 designation.

Community Need - Although there is neither a hospital, nor a four-year institution of higher learning in the school district, Healthy Futures has approached and secured tentative healthcare partnerships with the nearby El Paso Children's Hospital, La Clinica de Familia, the College of Health Sciences at New Mexico State University (NMSU), as well as local community organizations and civic leaders. To date, four hundred signatures have been collected indicating support of the proposed school.

To confirm the need for such a school, we have also met with elected officials, business and community leaders, educators, parents, students, healthcare providers and social service organizations. All stakeholders support the HFI vision; they look forward to forging cooperative partnerships. When and if approved as a state authorized charter school, The Health Science Academy plans to locate along the US/Mexico border, in a high poverty area of underserved rural families. The Gadsden Independent School District (GISD) data, and demographics of the border region, suggest that our grade 7-12 and adult ELL students will be composed of a high percentage of first generation Hispanic learners.

Unique Program Features – Healthy Futures, Inc. (HFI) represents a newly formed team of educators, business leaders and healthcare professionals who have come together to create Health Science Academy (HSA) in a school district unable to raise achievement, meet AYP in math and reading proficiency assessments, year after year, at nearly every school. Our mission is to offer traditional, ELL and special education students an alternative by sponsoring the first health sciences and career focused charter school in New Mexico.

Health Sciences Academy calls for a maximum student enrollment of 500 Grades 7-12 day and evening students. Students will be offered a curriculum that is rigorous, relevant to student’s health career goals and desire to prepare for competitive college entry, and designed graduate students with “diplomas that matter.” HSA day and evening students will be instructed on why and how to create their own yearly academic and community “portfolio of progress.” Grade 12 graduating classes will be expected to successfully complete HSA’s version of the National Health Standards and Accountability Criteria as a key component in our health science career graduation requirements. Administrators, board members, and health care partners in concert with students and faculty will truly know the meaning of the Health Sciences Academy motto:

“Enroll the student, engage the family”- “Inscribiendo al estudiante-incluyendo a la familia”