



**2010 CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION RECOMMENDATION & EVALUATION**

|  |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| <b>Name: Uplift: a School of Expeditionary Learning</b>  | <b>Projected Grades: K-8</b>     |
| <b>Projected Enrollment: 252</b>   | <b>Proposed location: Gallup</b> |
| <b>Founders: Steve Heil and Cindi Tah</b>  |                                  |
| <b>Recommendation:</b> I recommend that the Public Education Commission <b>Deny</b> the application because it is incomplete and inadequate. |                                  |

Uplift: a School of Expeditionary Learning proposes to use expeditionary learning as a model for the school. Although the mission statement is focused on this approach, the applicant does not clearly articulate an educational plan that will support the mission of the school. The application fails to provide sufficient detail to engender confidence that the school will offer a viable and clear educational plan to insure its success.

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

The educational plan for Uplift School that is centered on Expeditionary Learning fails to provide some basic curricular information. It is not made clear how the expeditionary curriculum will be implemented across the proposed school and specific strategies for special education students are not presented. Although the application developed a plan for the alignment with New Mexico standards and benchmarks, there was no description of how the Expeditionary Learning practices would be facilitated and implemented in the classroom. This basic component of the educational plan was not provided in the application and did not provide a clear picture of what a student at the Uplift School would experience in the way of structure for expeditionary learning.

The fiscal management plan presented does not provide the detail necessary to determine how internal control procedures will be implemented at the school site. There are no clear procedures, other than the reliance on a contracted business manager, presented that demonstrate a clear understanding of the required safeguards that must be implemented at the school site.

The Governance/Management plan does not provide clear roles and responsibilities for governing body members and stakeholders. Additionally, the lottery process is not in compliance with state and federal lottery enrollment guidance.

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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 type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

The mission statement for Uplift: a School of Expeditionary Learning (USEL) is clearly focused on the expeditionary learning, with elaboration on what the school seeks to accomplish.

The application does not explain how the school will know if it is achieving its mission.

The applicant provides an in-depth description of the community demographics and student performance results at Gallup-McKinley County Public Schools (GMCS). USEL makes an argument for the need for improved educational alternatives in the community and proposes a school that would create another educational option for students and families.

## EDUCATIONAL PLAN EVALUATION

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

USEL does not explain the over-all plan for curriculum alignment and some of the curriculum itself. Rather than illustrating how the curricular strategies and Expeditionary Learning core practices would be actualized in the classroom, the application merely lists them.

This section lacks meaningful detail on how the school would provide remediation for students not achieving standards and how it would address the needs of special education populations. The applicant provides assurances of compliance with applicable state and federal law governing the response to intervention and special education but is unable to provide a description of how the school would manage those processes. The application suggests modifications for how the needs of English Language Learners might be met, but does not provide the types of modifications that would be employed to help special education students be successful within the learning expedition framework.

The educational plan lacks meaningful detail especially in regards to the overall educational experience students would have at this proposed school. There is no indication that the applicant understands what structures will need to be in place for the school to provide the kind of educational experiences demanded of an “expeditionary” model.

### FINANCIAL PLAN EVALUATION

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

The school’s reliance on contracted business management services without a clear indication of how the school site itself will maintain necessary controls and appropriate fiscal management procedures does not provide the necessary detail that demonstrate sound fiscal management practices and the appropriate safeguarding of public funds.

### GOVERNANCE / MANAGEMENT PLAN EVALUATION

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

However, plans for the governing body lack detail in regard to the powers and duties of the officer positions and how various stakeholders relate to one another.

The suggested personnel policies do not mention beginning teacher mentorship program, and absence/leave policies. Though the application contains a list of evidence that may be used as part of the staff evaluation process, the description of the evaluation process is vague and does not demonstrate an understanding of the School Personnel Act.

The lottery process is not in compliance with state and federal lottery enrollment guidance. It describes the need for students to complete an application form and attend an in-person meeting prior to being included in the lottery drawing.

The student discipline policies and procedures lack details and alignment with assurances made to be in compliance with the Student Rights and Responsibilities Act.

Overall, this section provides an incomplete description of how the school would be governed and managed. Multiple assurances of compliance do not fully illustrate how this particular school would successfully operate.

## REQUIREMENTS EVALUATION

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

The application does not demonstrate a clear understanding of the need for potential waivers of law or regulation. While the applicant does not identify other waivers not pertaining to PED regulations, the application includes a section entitled “*Other Requirements.*” These paragraphs are inappropriate and seem to be based on the assumption that the school can determine what is considered a **material term** of the charter and what is not. Defining the charter’s material terms is not a decision of the school and these statements are contrary to NMSA 1978 22-8B-9E.