

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
ESPERANZA CHARTER SCHOOL
ESPANOLA PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

Our school's name is "Esperanza," a name that conveys the hope that all students have to achieve in school and to use their education as a platform to succeed in life's endeavors. It also expresses the hope of our teachers that with their education, experience and talents, that they can succeed in touching the lives of their students in a way that will motivate them to succeed and discover those modalities of instruction that will enable any learning barriers to be overcome. And our name represents our Board's sentiment that our mission to increase the graduation rate by reducing the dropout rate in our community can be achieved by reaching out to at-risk students and providing them the opportunity for a learning experience that will meet their needs.

We are looking to provide a quality education to at-risk students. We understand that their backgrounds and conditions may include homelessness, learning disabilities, physical conditions such as Autism. By attracting these children to our school through a curriculum that adapts to their needs and includes the nurturing and instructive presence of animals and agriculture, we intend to keep them in school and interested in their own education. Our recently elected New Mexico Governor has also made the needs of at-risk students a priority in her administration; therefore, the need has been proved from the highest level of our government.

The area we will serve, Rio Arriba County, has one of the lowest percentages of graduation in the state. Our rate of poverty is also above average for the state. We suffer from a very high truancy rate also. These factors taken together can help to account for our present condition. Our region has a high number of Spanish speakers, both as a matter of culture and tradition, and as a result of migrations to our Valley. This also presents challenges and opportunities to our schools. We are blessed to be the home of three ancient Pueblos, and the opportunity to learn from our surroundings and to include their language and culture in our modalities is completely enriching.

Our school will utilize animals and agriculture as a nurturing experience and as a practical laboratory for our students to utilize mathematics, language skills and social opportunities in a unique way. By having daily contact with the animals and selling the results of their labor at the Espanola Farmer's Market, the students will have an experience that is unmatched in any other school. The STEM curriculum will aid in this pursuit. We will also work with and partner with those who provide unique treatments for students with neurologic issues. In particular, Dr. Jason Hao in Santa Fe, who has outstanding success treating children with neurological disorders will assist us in providing acupuncture treatment. Patients fly in from all over the country to have their children treated by Dr. Hao. He is a local treasure.

The students who would choose our school are being educated currently at the public schools in Espanola. But at the same time, just as it is well known that many students from the Valley are enrolled in the public schools in Pojoaque and Los Alamos, we predict that at-risk and special needs students from those districts will enroll in our school.

By devising an entire curriculum around at-risk students, we will be able to serve those students with more attention to each individual student, which is exactly what is needed for them. Our curriculum, the pace with which it will be taught, the interaction among teachers to discuss methodologies of teachings and the actual names and histories of particular students will enable our school to do what an ordinary public school could not afford to have its teachers do. And with limited funds, it is very difficult for public schools to provide the extra level of care that is needed. A secondary benefit for the public schools is that the teachers will have more time and energy to devote to the rest of their students if the at-risk students are attending our school.

The founders of the school are the same members of the board of Carinos Charter School that decided not to renew its charter but instead, to start off fresh with their past experiences to guide them. In this way, they will have more collective experience as actual members of a board of a charter school than almost any other charter school would have. Their backgrounds include education, elected governmental office experience, law, community organizing, and small business operation. We look forward to joining in the Governor's effort to help our at-risk students.