



STATE OF NEW MEXICO
PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION
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OPTIONS FOR PARENTS AND FAMILIES DIVISION - CHARTER SCHOOLS

Year: 2021

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NOTICE OF INTENT TO SUBMIT CHARTER APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

According to NMSA § 22-8B-6(B) the Notice of Intent to Submit a Charter Application (“NOI”) must be filed by the organizers of a proposed charter school to the Public Education Commission at the address below **AND** to the superintendent of the school district in which the charter school is proposed to be located. *Failure to notify may result in your application being rejected.*

The NOI must be submitted by 5:00 PM Mountain Time by **the second Tuesday of January**. Notices of Intent that are not received by the Public Education Commission **and** the superintendent of the local school district by the deadline may result in the application being rejected. When you send the NOI to the superintendent of the school district in which your charter is to be located, you are strongly encouraged to send it by certified mail return receipt requested, or request a signed receipt when you deliver the NOI. Contact the local district regarding electronic filing.

Notice to the Public Education Commission should be delivered by one of the following methods:

- Electronically to: charter.schools@state.nm.us
- By mail or personal delivery: PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION
c/o New Mexico Public Education Department
Attn: Options for Parents and Families/Charter Schools Division 300 Don Gaspar, Room 301
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

The NOI is intended to provide the Public Education Commission with the primary point of contact among the charter developers, and preliminary information about the charter proposal, such as the school’s mission statement, the school’s focus, the representative student population in the intended location, enrollment projections, key innovation, etc. (not to exceed 5 pages).

1. General Information

- Name of Proposed School
 - Rio Grande Academy of Fine Arts
- Grade levels to be offered and enrollment projections

Grade Levels to be offered	Projected Total Enrollment
K-12	1,144

- Primary Point of Contact

Name	Jordan Franco				
Mailing Address	10901 Broeas Dr. NW				
City	Albuquerque	State	NM	Zip	87114
Phone	505-681-3536				
Email	Jordanfranco1990@gmail.com				

2. Names, roles, and current employment of all persons on the applicant team, and qualifications of the team members to establish a high-quality charter school

Names	Role on Team	Qualifications: Education, Employment, and Experience
Michele Platis	Founder/Academics	Current Assistant Principal 2 years Fine Arts Director 6 years 14 years education Bachelor's in Fine Arts (BFA) Master's in Education (MEd) Administrative License
Jordan Franco	Founder/Operations	Previous Vice President of Operations Current Field Director Master's degree in Educational Leadership (MEd) Licensed School Administrator 4 years of experience in school administration 12 years in education total.
Michelle Sanchez-St. Andre	Founder/Academics	Bachelor's in Fine Arts (BFA) Master of Arts in Education (MAEd) Licensed in Principal Administration, Teacher, 15 years in education
Bruce Langston	Board Member	Current Board Chairman 10 years in education Current Head Football Coach
Kathy McClendon	Board Member	Licensed School Administrator Previous School Assistant Principal of 4 years Previous School Principal of 2 years
Jenn Pena	Board Member	Licensed School Administrator Previous Special Education Director Current Special Education Consultant
Dr. Susan McConnell	Board Member	Over 30 years in education Over 25 years as an administrator 15 years working in charter schools as an administrator 7 years as a Principal of charter school

		5 years as an Executive Committee Member of NM Association of Charter School Education Services
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3. Model or focus of the proposed school (e.g., performing arts, dual language, college prep, STEM, Montessori, IB):
 - The Rio Grande Academy of Fine Arts (RioGAFA) will be an arts-integrated school that allows all students to explore and develop their talents through an alternative approach to educational rigor that combines research-based curricula with arts-integration. The RioGAFA will encourage all students to construct and demonstrate understanding through an art form by connecting arts into all core content areas. For clarity, RioGAFA defines the arts as instruction related to visual, literary or performing art mediums.
4. Does the school expect to contract with another entity for either management, or substantial oversight or direction in the school’s operation? Yes No
5. Does the applicant team or any members of the team currently operate any other schools? Yes No
6. Vision/Mission statement (2-3 sentences)
 - The Rio Grande Academy of Fine Arts (RioGAFA) provides high quality, arts-integrated education accessible to all kindergarten through 12th-grade students interested in the arts. RioGAFA provides all students a complete education through an arts-integrated curriculum seeking to connect the creative processes with critical thinking to inspire a love of learning. It is ultimately through this connection of critical and creative problem solving that the students of RioGAFA will become successful in both academics and the arts, leading to a successful future in higher education.
7. Student population and geographical setting of the school
 - Define the targeted geographical area of the proposed school from which you expect to draw a significant number of your students.
 - Geographically, the RioGAFA will serve students in Albuquerque areas with limited access to the arts due to either lack of financial resources or district schools with limited offerings for arts instruction. Our intention is to focus on Albuquerque’s Westside where there is not a single school that is devoted to arts-integration for students grades K-12. Zip codes include but are not limited to 87114, 87120, 87121 and 87124. Data describing these zip codes can be found below from census data of 2017 of recently graduated students (City-Data 2019):

	87114	87120	87121	87124
Percentage of Hispanic/Latino Students	39.50%	48.30%	77.20%	43.20%
Unemployment Rate	4.10%	4.40%	7.50%	4.30%
Percentage of High School Graduation	94.40%	95.00%	74.60%	92.60%
Percentage of Bachelor’s Degrees	36.60%	35.20%	11.90%	27.70%
Percentage of Graduate or Professional Degrees	14.20%	14.20%	3.00%	10.80%

It is the belief of the RioGAFA team that immersion in arts-integrated

curricula will increase the number of scholars that attend higher education organizations and find success. Our approach to education will inspire success in higher education, which will directly impact the poverty rate and percentages of both bachelor and graduate degrees within these areas.

- Describe the student population including key demographic data (academic performance, home languages, English Learners (ELs), and special education populations) in the location in which the school intends to locate.
 - Within the zip codes given, we have pulled data for several schools displayed below from the New Mexico Public Education Department Database:

	Cibola High School	Taylor Middle School	Chamiza Elementary School	Carlos Rey Elementary School	George I Sanchez Community School	Atrisco Heritage Academy High School
Hispanic	52.60%	64.80%	52.50%	81.60%	82%	86.20%
Caucasian/White	28.30%	21.20%	30.20%	7.10%	6.80%	3.90%
Native American	9.50%	8.40%	7.80%	4.60%	3.90%	3.80%
African American	6.03%	3.60%	5.80%	5.80%	5.30%	4.50%
Asian	3.60%		3.70%		1.90%	1.30%
Economically Disadvantaged	36%	63.10%	42.70%	100%	100%	99.60%
English Language Learners	5.40%	16.20%	7.30%	42.20%	20%	21.40%
Students with Disabilities	16.10%	22%	13%	20%	18.60%	18.80%
Math Proficiency	23%	13%	33%	12%	9%	5%
Reading Proficiency	48%	25%	30%	18%	20%	24%

- Identify 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.
 - As can be seen in the table above, the team at RioGafa believes that there is need for a different approach to education. The reading and math proficiencies are indicative of an issue that needs to be addressed. Our belief is that our arts-integrated approach with inspire students to be successful throughout their educational career. Because of this inspiration, we believe that students will be drawn to our school because of its creative approach and ability to address both critical thinking skills and artistic capabilities.

8. Provide evidence that the applicant team has assessed community need for a school of the nature that will be proposed in the application (e.g., objective surveys or other measures of local demand for the Proposed educational program)

- We have used social media as a primary tool to gain interest in our school. We have created a Facebook Page and have begun creating advertisements to begin to interact with families, community members and potential stakeholders. The RioGafa team has

also conducted a survey through social media for families that would be interested in supporting and having their student attend RioGAFa. This survey asked direct questions from community members to assess if there was a demand for a fine arts school within Albuquerque's Westside. Within the day that the survey was conducted on social media, we received over 100 responses of people both supporting and showing interest in sending their student to a fine arts school in Westside Albuquerque. We have also reached out to multiple members of the education community and they have expressed support in the opening of RioGAFa.

9. Identify significant innovative features that the school will implement in order to help it realize its vision/mission (e.g., non-traditional school year, longer school day, partner organizations, etc.).
 - The RioGAFa team will adopt the Kennedy Center's definition of arts-integration that states that arts integration is an approach to teaching in which students construct and demonstrate understanding through an art form where students engage in a creative process which connects an art form and another subject area. It is through this definition that RioGAFa is committed to whole brain learning. We currently live in a conceptual world where both critical thinking and creativity development is imperative to education. RioGAFa students will experience the arts through daily instruction, integration, and exposure to the art forms (drama, music, media arts, visual arts and literary arts) while simultaneously accessing research-based, rigorous curricula. RioGAFa will strive to create student engagement that is grounded in arts-based and hands-on learning experiences. These experiences will provide authentic connections to real-life applications that allow for differentiated instruction and multifaceted assessment opportunities to achieve student achievement in education.

We plan to partner with higher education organizations such as CNM and UNM to provide our students access to higher education courses and university fine arts programs. In addition, we plan to approach and partner with local artists and businesses for internships and partnerships with our students and create a culture of art for our students to connect to.

10. Describe how the school will be more effective than the schools currently serving the targeted student population, and/or plans to improve student achievement and exceed the academic performance of existing public schools in the targeted service area and any data you have to support this assumption.
 - Primarily, the RioGAFa team feels that the three founding leaders have complimentary experiences to create an effective leadership team. Both Michele Platis and Michelle Sanchez-St. Andre have both served on the New Mexico Art Education Executive Board as President. Through that experience, both have played a role in advocating for and bettering arts education in New Mexico and the United States. Jordan Franco also has a background in dance and advocated for the arts through his time in education. All three founders have an administrative license and have significant experience looking at student data and working with teachers to close achievement gaps in classrooms.

With our arts-integrated approach, we know that student success will improve for the populations we are hoping to serve. Throughout our time brainstorming our goal to open a charter school, we have found numerous studies that support that an arts education is key to creativity and learning the creative process. The creative process serves for inspiration and by design allows for collaboration and innovation. The creative process develops critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Both of which are essential to success in college and a career. Therefore, an arts education is critical to a student's future success. A few findings from our research can be seen below:

- 21% of students of low socioeconomic status who had studied music scored higher in math versus just 11% of those who had not. By senior year, these figures grew to 33% and 16%. (Wignall, A., 2020)
- A new study found a link between arts elective courses in music, dance, visual art and drama, and better grades in middle school. Winsler said his research found that, when all variables are accounted for, enrolling in the arts seems to be linked to better academic performance, in the same year and later years. (George Mason University, 2019)
- Third-grade reading gain scores were reliably higher for students whose teachers integrated the arts into English/reading lessons. For each unit increase in the use of arts integration, students' gain scores increased by 1.02 points. The relationship between arts integration was strongest for low SES students (those in the free- and reduced-price lunch program) and ELL students. (Ingram, D., & Riedel, E., 2003)
- In a well-documented national study using a federal database of over 25,000 middle and high school students, researchers from the University of California at Los Angeles found students with high arts involvement performed better on standardized achievement tests than students with low arts involvement. (Gazzaniga, 2008)
- One of the study's major findings was that children motivated in the arts develop attention skills and memory retrieval that also apply to other subject areas. (Gazzaniga, 2008)
- "9th grade students in the Chicago Arts Partnership in Education (CAPE) program, which integrates arts education with more traditional academic studies, were reading one full grade level ahead of their peers who were not involved in the program." (Gazzaniga, 2008)

In order for Arts-Integrated Curriculum to result in deep student understanding in both the art form and the other content area, teacher professional development is essential and will be required in order to grasp both the arts standards as well as the other core content areas they will teach. Teachers will engage in professional development during the summer and on a weekly basis, thus creating stronger teachers with more developed methods of instruction.

Please Note: Should your charter be awarded, the founding governing body could undergo a background check to determine if it qualifies to be a board of public finance in the state of New Mexico.

Signature of founder(s):

Jordan Franco

Date: January 5th, 2021

Print Name: Jordan Franco

Michele Platis

Print Name: Michele Platis

Michelle Sanchez St. Andre

Print Name: Michelle Sanchez St. Andre