



**New Mexico Public Education Commission
Charter Schools Division**

**2021 New Charter School Application Kit
Part B. Executive Summary**



Part B: Executive Summary

This section should be two to three pages long and address, in a narrative form, the following points:

- Your proposed school's name and a description of the charter school's projected students, including key demographic data (academic performance, home languages, special populations), based on the local community or the school district in whose geographic boundaries the charter school applies to operate
- Where the charter school's projected students are most likely being educated currently and why they are expected to choose the proposed charter school for their future educational needs
- Evidence that there is a community need for a school of this nature in the local community or the school district in whose geographic boundaries the charter school applies to operate. Note: NMSA 1978 § 22-8B-6(L)(5) provides, "[a] chartering authority may approve, approve with conditions or deny an application. A chartering authority may deny an application if...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." Evidence of community need is required. Specific data and evidence is required in the application itself. Therefore, specific statistical information does not need to be provided here.
- The key innovative and unique programmatic features the school will implement to accomplish its mission (non-traditional school year, longer school day, partner organizations, etc.)
- How you project that the school will improve student achievement and exceed the academic performance of the existing public schools in the local community or the school district in whose geographic boundaries the charter school applies to operate. Provide a brief summary of any data you have to support this assumption.
- The founders of the proposed school, their background, and expertise
- If different from the list provided above, the proposed founding governing board

To complete the following form, click on the text box and begin to type.

New Charter Application Executive Summary

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 the fine arts. Based on data, RioGAFA has targeted a geographic area in Albuquerque 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 (zip codes 87114, 87120, 87121, and 87124), which lacks a single school devoted to arts-integration for students in grades K-12. In some Westside schools, if arts education exists, it is limited to just music or visual art. Data collected from those zip codes shows a need for a different approach to education to demonstrate student achievement. The range of economically disadvantaged families in the area ranges from 35% to 100% at schools like Carlos Rey Elementary School and George I Sanchez Community School. We will demonstrate throughout the application **(Section I.A.3 and I.F.3)** Academic Performance data within our targeted area and especially in subgroups of Hispanic and English language learners is lower than Albuquerque Public Schools and New Mexico schools. With this type of range in the projected student population, an innovative approach to education is necessary. RioGAFA is committed to engaging all students through their commitment to whole brain learning.

RioGAFA will provide all students a well-rounded 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 and career readiness. We believe that our arts-integrated approach will inspire students to be successfully prepared for higher education and the workforce. Because of this inspiration, we believe that students will be drawn to our school because of the creative approach and ability to address critical thinking skills and artistic capabilities.

Data reveals that New Mexico students who receive four or more years of art and music performed an average of 111 points or more on the SAT¹. According to an Americans for the Arts (AFTA) report, a student involved in the arts is four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement. The same AFTA reports that low-income students who are highly engaged in the arts are more than twice as likely to graduate college as their peers with no arts education². Additionally, multiple studies also reveal that arts education increases attendance rates and decreases dropout rates.

¹ RSCH:PROGRAMS:SAT;DATA:ARCHIVED:CB-SENIORS-2012. (2020, May 28). Retrieved February 13, 2021, from <https://research.collegeboard.org/programs/sat/data/archived/cb-seniors-2012>

² AFTA-Arts-Education-Navigator-Facts-Figures [Pdf]. (2013). Washington DC: Americans for the Arts.

The RioGAFAs team has conducted a survey geofenced to fit our proposed zip codes. This survey asked direct questions from community members to assess if there is a demand and overwhelming support for a fine arts school within Albuquerque’s Westside. Members of the community, political leaders, and families have responded, and we have received positive feedback and support for our school model. RioGAFAs has the community’s support, and with its arts-integrated curriculum, it will provide opportunities for involvement between the student body, faculty, parents, and the community.

The RioGAFAs team will adopt the Kennedy Center’s definition of arts-integration that states it is an approach to teaching. Students construct and demonstrate understanding through an art form, where students engage in a creative process that connects an art form and another subject area. RioGAFAs 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. Our extended school day will include two Artistry Blocks. For elementary students, this will be an opportunity to explore the many art forms available. For middle and high school students, this will be an opportunity to discover a pathway, focus on, and develop their skill sets. We plan to partner with higher education organizations such as CNM and UNM to provide our students access to upper-level fine arts courses within a Dual Credit program. In addition, we will partner with local artists and businesses for internships and community partnerships with our students during their Artistry Block and create a culture of art and provide authentic connections to real-life applications that allow for differentiated instruction and multifaceted assessment opportunities. As a result, this will establish relationships for RioGAFAs students to utilize post-graduation on a career path or higher education within the state of New Mexico.

Additionally, the RioGAFAs Founding Team has complementary experiences to create an effective leadership team. All three founders share significant experience looking at student data and working with teachers to close achievement gaps in classrooms. The founding team has recruited six proposed Governing Board members. There will be additional members added as the process of recruitment continues. The following persons were chosen to serve on the governing body because of their passionate commitment and extensive experience in the educational processes and their service to this community in diverse ways and from multiple perspectives and interests.

Founding Team

Name	Qualifications: Education, Employment and Experience
<p>Jordan Franco Founder Proposed Director of Operations</p>	<p>Education: Bachelor of Education in Elementary Education and his Master Degree in Educational Leadership, K-12 Administrative license, and K-12 Level 2 Teaching License Current Employment: Field Director at Public Charter Schools of New Mexico Experience: Assistant Principal and Vice President of Operation at Mission Achievement and Success Charter schools. Taught for 7 years in Albuquerque Public Schools before becoming a Dean of Students. Has a background in dance.</p>

Michele Platis Founder Proposed Director of Academics	Education: BFA and MA in Education, K-12 Administrative license, K-12 Level 3 Teaching License Current Employment: Assistant Principal at Mission Achievement and Success Charter School Experience: Teacher, art teacher, and Fine Arts Programs director at North Valley Academy Charter School for 13 years. Served on the New Mexico Art Education Executive Board as President and Secretary.
Michelle Sanchez-St. Andre Founder Proposed Director of Fine Arts	Education: BFA and MA in Education, K-12 Administrative license, and a 7-12 Level 3 Teaching License Current Employment: Visual Arts Manager, with Albuquerque Public Schools Experience: Taught high school visual arts with a varied range in curriculum for 15 years. Artist background with a focus on graphic design, printmaking, ceramics, and art history. Served on the New Mexico Art Education Executive Board as President, High School Division Director, and Communications Chair.
Christine Mya-San Proposed Governing Board Member	Education: MBA from Saint Louis University's Chaifetz School of Business, focusing on General Business and Marketing, a BS in Biology from Dickinson College. Current Employment: Pharmaceutical Industry as a Distribution Channel Manager Experience: Sales and Negotiations, Prioritization and delegation, Time management, Networking, Maintaining and growing Partnerships, Navigating in matrixed organizations
Dr. Jennifer Pena Proposed Governing Board Member	Education: BS in Biology from Dickinson College in Carlisle, PA, and MA in Special Education from UNM, Ph.D. in Special Education from UNM Current Employment: Serves on the Professional Practices and Standards Council through the New Mexico Public Education Department, part-time faculty at CNM Community College in the Alternative Teacher Licensure Program Experience: 17 years in public and charter Title I schools in New Mexico. Served in many roles, including special education instructor, inclusion co-teacher, general educator, district test coordinator, ELL Coordinator, and Special Education Director.
Dr. Susan McConnell Proposed Governing Board Member	Education: Doctorate in Education - Curriculum & Instruction, Level III Licensed NM Educator, General Education (K-8), Administration (Pre-K-12) Current Employment: Chief Administrator of North Valley Academy Charter School Experience: Assistant Principal at North Valley Academy and Rio Rancho High School Director of Student Activities. New Mexico Charter School Administrator of the Year and New Mexico Advisor of the Year.
Kathy McClendon Proposed Governing Board Member	Education: BS at the University of New Mexico and her Master of Arts in Educational Leadership at California State University Sacramento Current Employment: Retired Experience: Served schools in California and New Mexico in K-12 traditional settings, charter settings, and alternative school settings, including a facility for incarcerated young people. She has been an Assistant Principal at 3 high schools, a Principal at 1 high school, and a teacher at 6 schools.
Lee Baldwin Proposed Governing Board Member	Current Employment: Accounting Director and the owner of Baldwin Accounting & Consulting, LLC, Albuquerque, NM Experience: Founded and owns an accounting practice, where the majority of his experience is auditing. He has audited various governmental entities, including school districts and charter schools
Amer R. Child Proposed Governing Board Member	Education: BS in Technology and Training Current Employment: Sr. Solutions Architect supporting customers on a global scale for RiskSense Experience: Worked as an IT professional for over 20 years, starting as a web developer for Correa Enterprises, a web developer and trainer for BASIS International, and finally at RiskSense
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