



Office of Innovation and School Choice

APS Authorized Charter Schools

Scott Elder  
Interim Superintendent

Mark Garcia  
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Senior Director

**2023 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 on January 10, 2023, **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.

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

- Electronically to: [charter.schools@state.nm.us](mailto: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

Notice to the Superintendent of Albuquerque Public Schools should be delivered electronically to the APS Office of Innovation and School Choice through the Senior Director, Dr. Joseph Escobedo at [Escobedo\\_j@aps.edu](mailto:Escobedo_j@aps.edu)

The NOI is intended to provide the Public Education Commission and the APS Office of Innovation and School Choice 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 innovations, etc. (not to exceed 7 pages).

1. General Information

- Name of Proposed School

Academy of Relational Learning

- Grade levels to be offered and enrollment projections
  - The school will include grade level configurations that include grades 6-8.  Yes  No

Grade Levels to be offered	Projected Total Enrollment
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Three classes each, K-2. Add a grade level each year until K-5 is reached.	180 the first year, to increase by 60 each year until 360 is reached. This is the initial plan, however, we will assess the need after the first few years.
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- The school, if approved, anticipates opening August, 2023?  Yes  No
  - If yes, provide a timeline that includes benchmarks demonstrating 18-24 months of application development.

We originally submitted a proposal to Bernalillo County in 2018 to open a school. We were not awarded the contract, however, in our interview for the proposal we were told about the Charter School Application process. Based on the information received we submitted our first NOI in Jan 2022. We withdrew that application as we struggled to find a site and needed to learn more about funding. This is the second NOI being submitted, January 2023. Curriculum and focus of student population to be served draft finalized June 2022. We are still in the process of looking at sites, however, we are open to collaborating with an APS school to occupy a part of their building to start. If approved, recruitment of staff will start March 2023.

- Primary Point of Contact

Name	Terry L. Morris PhD., LMHC				
Mailing Address	1025 Hermosa Dr SE				
City	Albuquerque	State	NM	Zip	87108
Phone	Office (505) 237-0061; Mobile (505) 206-4554				
Email	terry@nrguide.com				

- 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
Terry L. Morris	Co-Founder	Education: PhD -Elementary Education, MA- Counselor Education Employment: Family Therapist, Attachment Healing Center Experience: UNM Instructor 2011-2018, Teacher Education Department. Taught elementary school in underserved inner-city communities in Dallas and Chicago. Awarded four awards in 12 years including Golden Apple in Chicago, and Excellence in Teaching in Dallas. Taught internationally in the Netherlands for one year.
Michele Coleman	Co-Founder	Education: PhD - Counselor Education; MS - Human Development Employment: Founder Attachment Healing Center, a division of Inner Guidance, LC. Experience: Developed a model of treatment based on Structural Family Systems and Neuroscience to help families support their children's healing of past trauma. 80% of the children and families served successfully discharged within 2 years. Contracted with CYFD to serve the most severe youth. Train throughout the State on the treatment approach she developed to bring about lasting change for children who don't respond to traditional therapy
Carol Felley	Art Director	Education: MA - Counseling, BA- Fine Arts, Carnegie Mellon University Employment: Trauma Director, Attachment Healing Center Experience: Trained in Sand Tray, Play Therapy, Trauma Resiliency, Polyvagal informed treatment, EMDR. Her professional trainings and certifications are used in supporting children and their families in healing deep seated trauma wounding, including attachment trauma.

Jessica Heintzelman	Training Director	Education: MA- Counselor Education, BA - Psychology Heintzelman Director Employment: Family therapist, Attachment Healing Center. Experience: Family therapist focused on healing attachment trauma. Training Facilitator for Parent's psychoeducational group based on the Neuroscience of Attachment. Substance abuse counselor, working on relapse prevention.
Phil Casady	Community Outreach Director	Education: Masters Social Worker; BA English Employment: Family Therapist, Attachment Healing Center Experience: Managing and maintaining collaborations and professional relationships between nonprofits, supporting collaborative efforts with community schools and community resources, working with families in need with obtaining resources and supporting referral processes towards sustainable assistance, engaging in community and neighborhood meetings to support relationships between nonprofits and institutions, and family therapist trained in healing attachment
Chasity LeBlanc	Parent/ Student Support	Education: Family Parent Peer Support Employment: FPPS Attachment Healing Center Experience: Through her lived experience of adopting and raising two children traumatized from early childhood abuse, decided to serve other parents trying to raise children with attachment trauma by becoming certified as a Family Parent Peer Support.

3. Describe the non-traditional or innovative model of promise of the proposed school:

[The Academy of Relational Learning (ARL) is a proposed school beginning the first year with kindergarten through second grade and adding a proceeding grade each year until we reach fifth. The priority of ARL is addressing the needs of underserved children with trauma and attachment-based trauma in their backgrounds which can cause adverse behavioral disruptions in their ability to thrive academically and socially. Using trauma informed relational techniques, ARL will provide a rigorous academic setting bracketed by the arts, physical activities, instructive social interactions, teachers and therapists with specific trauma informed techniques, and an emphasis on our students developing problem-solving techniques, healthy communication skills, peer and adult collaboration understanding. To all of this we add intense parental cooperation and involvement along with community engagement. With community support those youth in need of our services can be identified.

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**

If YES, describe the entity and the role it will have in the school's operational plan.

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)

Vision: Our students and their families will come to view ARL as an oasis and a trusted partner in the difficult work of healing their children and families, and providing the information, experiences, and tools that lead to a significant and productive future.  
Mission: ARL believes in the provision of excellence in education, a focused training in reading, STEM, and enrichment through a relationship model based upon healing, and resonance with others, for children who have experienced traumatic events in their young lives. ARL will honor the diversity and differences in our children and their challenges while providing trauma informed practices which support excellence in educational, social and familial structures, and enhance opportunities for our students and their families to thrive.

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 and describe why this setting is being proposed.

ARL is dedicated to providing our services to all that apply. Our primary vision is to work within the population of Albuquerque, but we do not envision limiting our outreach to the surrounding communities abutting Albuquerque proper. Albuquerque, as the largest municipal area in the State, can justifiably lay claim to the greatest need according to population density. However, children suffering with trauma induced issues are not consigned according to zip codes and are therefore potential students for our proposed school. Going forward, we envision this school as an entity that can grow into an organization capable of serving an increasing number of students from an expanding metropolitan student population. This will not happen in our first year or even in our second, but it will remain a goal to expand and extend our outreach to communities in need of our services.

- 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.

These students are being educated throughout schools within the APS district, usually through the SES1 and 2 programs. This has been both a help and a hindrance to the development and healing process of our children with attachment trauma. Our children in these programs are separated from their peers and often don't have the opportunity to do pull outs. While the need for this is understandable in a public school setting, it is in fact detrimental to the healing process of a child who needs to be working on their relationship skills. Mentally and emotionally this reinforces for the child that they are "bad" or "unwanted", and in some cases pushes them further into their negative behaviors.

We are open to engaging in conversation around the best geographical location to ensure school choice for that community.

- 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.

One of the innovative features of our school is that we will offer transportation from key locations around the city coordinating with community centers, and organizations as pick up and drop of locations. Our intention is to have bus monitors on the buses with our students so transportation can be supportive as well. We anticipate that parents of children with attachment trauma will welcome the opportunity to have their child in a school that understands their need and is willing to involve the parent in meeting that need. Reducing the transportation barrier will make the choice of attending ARL a more viable option. In order to assist our youth in being academically successful, we believe parents will choose a school that can address the underlying need.

To set our underserved children up for high levels of success, we will focus on language arts, math and science as foundational skills.

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).

A survey was sent out to our current and former clients. Based on the surveys and feedback received parents are reporting that they have had to change schools several times due to their child's traumatic acting out behaviors. Parents share that the school personnel do not understand attachment trauma and instead of supporting their child in school, the child is blamed and shamed. The child is handed off to anyone who can 'manage' the child's behaviors. This shame only fuels the expression of the negative behaviors. Additionally, the parents then say that the school looks to the parents as if they have done something wrong and blame the parent for the child's behaviors. The children who are not aggressive in their behaviors but are still manipulative are not redirected either and don't receive the help they need in being academically successful. Parents go on to say that having a school that understands attachment trauma would help the parents feel supported in their child's healing process. This approach would eliminate the stress and anxiety experienced by the parents when they interact with the school on behalf of their children.

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 foundational stance of why we are asking for this school is that children with trauma induced behaviors are atypical learners and are therefore at a disadvantage when exposed to traditional educational methods. The needs of the students we are proposing to work with are specialized in their emotional and social learning styles and must be approached from a particular understanding of how to best meet these needs. We believe that the way to help them to their academic success is to first address the emotional and social dysfunctions that block their best learning opportunities. In order to do this, we will have a team of therapists available from the Attachment Healing Center on a daily basis willing to assist and support the teachers with children who disrupt the academic learning in each classroom. In addition, our teachers will receive on-going training on how to work with children with attachment trauma and shame in their backgrounds, which are the main origins of their academic failures. Most teachers and their schools use an award/punishment-based behavioral modification system to enforce student compliance. For the students we are applying to work with, this has proven to be a nonproductive methodology. From a historical perspective, individuals with attachment trauma backgrounds are often seen as beyond help and usually end up with issues that place them in the judicial system, cause social issues such as substance and sexual abuse, and an inability to form healthy and rewarding relationships. Without early and loving interventions, which call to account the manner in which the adults in the school system interact with them, our students can predictively cause multiple and expensive problems for society at large, and heartache for their families and future loved ones.

Attachment trauma is a relationship-based disorder. The child's trauma occurred within a familiar context. Instead of the adult caregiver being someone who brings safety to the home environment, that same adult is one who brings fear. The child enters the classroom with an adult in charge, in fear because of their experience from the home environment. This scan for danger extends to their classmates as well. Our teaching methodology will include the child learning that the adult in charge in the classroom and in the school, bring safety and that there is nothing to fear. Once their brain can release the fear and scanning for danger, more of their brain capacity is available for learning.

Additionally, in an effort to show that we can improve the educational viability of our relational approach to learning, for the past year the Attachment Healing Center has been investigating a tutoring approach involving a select number of our most academically challenged clients. We have met with great success involving student progress and parental satisfaction. This is just one example of the fluidity ARL will bring to the most difficult students' school experience. We propose approaching our students from a positive perspective. Our students are often the losers in the academic game. Therefore, at this stage in the charter school approval process, we will also offer individual tutoring, small group learning, parental participation through a relationship approach and the openness to self-examine and reflect,

which will open important additions to our ability to help our students and their most important and immediate resource...their families. No school can present themselves as a perfect vehicle to a perfect educational product. We pledge to continue to be the most productive child-centered family school we can develop into.

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.

ARL will be led, in a significant part, by Dr. Terry Morris who not only spent a large portion of his career in the underserved inner-city neighborhoods of Dallas and Chicago, but received four teaching awards in twelve years including the Excellence of Teaching Award in Dallas and the Golden Apple Award in Chicago. Through his innovative techniques and relational approach, Dr. Morris' students not only gained wide-spread recognition for proficiency in academics, but also for their social abilities. These were students raised in an atmosphere of danger and poverty, and all of the behaviors that can accompany such unsafe environments. Dr. Morris, during his classroom career, adopted an investigational approach to his teaching. Practices that worked were further explored and enhanced, practices that did not work were either modified or dropped. One of the advantages of opening a specialty charter school such as we are proposing, is the freedom to incorporate innovative teaching strategies based upon research into best practices, introducing customized school culture to fit specific needs of our students, their parents, and the staff of the school. In-classroom research opportunities will guide the growth of the organization, and the specialized mental health knowledge, skills and training our partnership with the Attachment Healing Center brings. All of the individuals listed in this document have had training in working with children coming from traumatic backgrounds. The ARL founders and contributors to this document have not operated a school, but have certainly worked in other schools as teacher support agents and trainers helping teachers understand and work with children from alternative and unhealthy backgrounds through the Attachment Healing Center (AHC). AHC has served schools in the APS system for over 10 years as a community mental health provider. Additionally, we have been the mental health support for NM CAP Head Start in Valencia and Socorro Counties. Based on our reputation we have also been awarded the mental health contract for the City of Albuquerque Early Head Start. We have trained the teaching staff at School on Wheels for the past three years. We possess the tools necessary to help wounded children thrive academically and socially, particular tools to which many APS teachers do not have reasonable access. Many of the wounded children the Attachment Healing Center has worked with during the fifteen years of operation have learned to not trust the adults in their lives and they generalize this distrust to their teachers once they enter the school environment. A consistent refrain from the parents, foster parents and other care-givers working with traumatized children is that they struggle in school, are labeled as trouble-makers, are often assigned to some form of special education and fail in their academic attainment. This has a negative effect on their feelings of self-worth, reinforces their use of negative attention seeking behaviors and heightens their mistrust of the system. Based on our success serving this underserved population CYFD has awarded us a contract to work with youth who are in State custody to bring about lasting behavioral change. As outlined here, we don't just work with the youth we include the family and community as well. Our teachers at ARL will be trained in the relational skills and attitudes necessary to bridge the boundary of mistrust which thwarts this population of students from living up to their potential.

11. Describe how the school will be in alignment with the economic needs of Albuquerque.

We anticipate our students coming from a variety of families. Some families have adopted or are fostering youth with trauma in their backgrounds. Other families may still be living in challenging

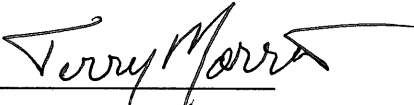
situations. Therefore, we will offer a free and reduced lunch program to our students. We anticipate working with the County and the City to meet the needs of youth and their families who are facing housing insecurity. It is our intention to provide transportation for our students. We are open to working with the APS and school bus transportation contractors as well as working with parents who do not have access to public transportation. Our intention is to have a mental health team working with our teachers and special education teachers throughout the school day. We anticipate meeting with parents and families of our students regularly to provide training on how to support their child's educational and academic success. A meal will be offered to families during these ongoing trainings. As other needs are identified in service of our students and their families we will look to collaborate with the City and the County in meeting those needs.

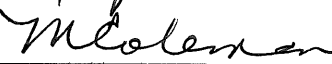
12. Describe how the school will support increasing access to choice in Albuquerque.

We intend to serve youth with trauma in their backgrounds. As such, we anticipate being a school of choice for parents raising such youth. Given the challenges the home schools face in serving youth who have experienced trauma, we are offering a solution to these students. The part of the brain responsible for encoding new information and retrieving information already stored is the hippocampus. In response to their traumatic experiences, the hippocampus of youth who have experienced trauma is offline. As a result, in traditional schools, where the other students are able to encode new information and retrieve what has already been taught, teachers gear their lesson plans towards these students. Unfortunately, our students are left out. At the end of their elementary and middle school career, our youth enter high school unable to read. However, this can be prevented if teachers and support staff know what to do to bring the hippocampus back online for those youth who are currently living in stressful situations or have survived living in stressful situations. Based on our survey of parents of such youth, we are encouraged to bring such a school to serve the needs of traumatized youth in Albuquerque.

*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):

Terry Morris 

Michele Coleman 

[PRINT NAME]

Date: 9 January 2023