

New Mexico Public Education Commission



2023 New Charter School Application Kit

Part B

Executive Summary

Charter Schools Division
Public Education Department
300 Don Gaspar Ave.
Santa Fe, NM 87501
(505) 827-6909
charter.schools@ped.nm.gov

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Instructions

The executive summary should be no more than two to three pages long and should address, in a narrative form, the following points:

- The 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 the whose geographic boundaries where 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 the proposed charter school a school of this nature in the area 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, curriculum and assessment, etc.)
- How the proposed 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 that supports this assumption.
- The founders or applicant team of the proposed school, their background, expertise, and what drives them to engage in this endeavor.
- If different from the list provided above, the proposed governing board and their vision of charter school governance, and how the proposed school will benefit the community.

Applicant Response

Name of Proposed Charter School
Virtual Preparatory Academy of New Mexico (VPA of New Mexico)

New Charter Application Executive Summary
Prosperity in New Mexico begins with individuals who have a comprehensive personalized educational foundation to pursue their goals, dreams, and passions. This is critical to meet the needs of every student. Virtual Preparatory Academy (VPA) of New Mexico will serve students virtually in grades K-12 who live across the state of New Mexico. The Career Readiness emphasis of the school model is focused on providing an educational choice that creates an opportunity for students to succeed academically within the state's public school system and prepare for career and/or college.

As one potential parent stated during a community meeting, “I like the flexibility that online learning provides my family,” and another parent added, “We need to prepare students for work and whatever comes after high school for them. Some will go to college, but many will not. All of them need a program that prepares them for work beyond high school.”

Futurist Joel Barker conducted a meta-analysis of research trying to understand how to predict the future success of students. He found that the best predictor of a student’s success in life was whether or not they had **a positive image of their future.**

Students attending VPA of New Mexico will be able to develop that positive image while also attaining the knowledge, skills, and disposition needed for success following their graduation, whether they plan to enter directly into the workforce, attend a training program, a two-year degree program or a four-year university program.

OUR STUDENTS

Since the school is serving students statewide, we anticipate the demographics to be similar to the overall state averages. We anticipate the racial/ethnic breakdown to be as follows: Black/African-American: <5%, American Indian/Alaskan Native: 10%, Asian/Pacific Islander: <1%, Caucasian: 23%, Hispanic: 62%, Multi-Racial: <5%. We anticipate the following breakdown of enrollment by student group: Economically Disadvantaged: 73%, English Learner: 16%, Students with Disabilities: 15%, Homeless: 3%.

VPA of New Mexico also anticipates that the academic proficiency and attendance rates of new students will initially be similar to the statewide averages. According to the most recent data, the reading proficiency of New Mexico students is 34%, math proficiency is 21%, and science proficiency is 40%. New Mexico had a regular attendance rate of 83% in 2022. **One of the key outcomes of VPA of New Mexico is to build upon and grow the skills, performance and readiness for every enrolled student.**

Students who will attend VPA of New Mexico will come from a variety of sources. They will include students new to the state, those already attending a public online school and are seeking the career readiness focus, students who are currently homeschooled, students in private schools, students in public schools and kindergartners new to school altogether.

THE NEED IS PRESENT

There is a clear need in the state for schools focused on career readiness. According to the New Mexico Chamber of Commerce, the business community across the state is struggling to find workers able to meet the current and future needs of employers in the state. This includes a wide range of career pathways from skilled positions to certified/licensed roles, and two-year and four-year degrees.

There has been declining enrollment in New Mexico public schools in recent years and the same is true in higher education. The founding board believes that increased high quality choice options like VPA of New Mexico can have an impact on both.

Families have indicated they want VPA of New Mexico to open. In an early outreach effort, 209 families from 29 of 33 counties indicated their interest in the school. In addition, over 120 meetings have been held across the state. Parents, businesses, leaders and educators alike have expressed support for the school.

INNOVATION

VPA of New Mexico is an innovative program many ways. There are 6 key areas of distinction. They are outlined below.

1. The career readiness focus and the plan to develop local, regional and statewide partnerships are a unique area for a statewide online school. According to key conversation with state business leaders, it is aligned with major initiatives and goals in the state.
2. The way we engage and instruct students is based upon each student's needs within a personalized learning model. We teach the whole child with support from the Student Support Team. We have daily live instruction and a customized balance of teacher-led live instruction focused on small groups and individual student goals.
3. The proposed learning ecosystem has all resources for teachers, students and families in one sign-on location. The courses are curated from the best-in-class vendors available. All student data is continually stored in the ecosystem's data warehouse and is easily accessible by teachers and leaders to help inform instruction of the individual child. The ecosystem has support for EL, students with special needs, and assistance in 40 languages. Parents have 24-hour access to track the work that their student is doing and to monitor their performance. We know this is important as data from Learning Heroes indicated that eight of ten parents were not able to track the performance of their children in school.
4. Teachers have the ongoing training, data, and daily tools to maximize their time and effectiveness to teach individual and small groups of students. They participate and have real-time access to an extensive professional development catalog.
5. We plan to build partnerships with colleges and universities, businesses, advocacy groups and nurture relationships with dedicated employees in all regions of the state.
6. We have adults who truly understand teaching the whole child and helping work with students to develop a positive image of the future.

The innovative overall design, the technological backbone, and the highly-trained staff will use their expertise and student data to drive student performance to higher levels than the state current attains. Not only is improving student academic performance one of the goals of our application, it is essential to the overall mission and to helping students develop the crucial positive image of their future. Being able at any given time to drill down to each student's performance on state standards and then being able to apply resources and individual and small group instruction to fortify each student's ability to meet or exceed standards is going to result in increased academic outcomes.

THE FOUNDING BOARD

The founding board is passionate about the mission of the school. Every member of the board has worked in education at some point during their career. In addition to that rich educational background, the board has expertise in school finance, law, community engagement, policy, business, ranching, and governance. Several members have also served on boards of other charter schools. Information about each of the founding members is found below.

The VPA of New Mexico Founding Board is comprised of seven individuals with vast and varied experience in education, finance, law, public affairs and business. **Dr. Kayleigh Carabajal** currently serves as the Founding Board Lead. She has a B.A. in Psychology, M.A. in Teaching and Learning Technology, and a Ph.D. in Organizational Development and Instructional Technology from the University of New Mexico. Dr. Carabajal has years of ranching experience in rural New Mexico, as well as business ownership in Albuquerque and decades of experience in the field of education. As a long-time resident of New Mexico and a firm believer in the power of education, Dr. Carabajal is compelled to engage in fostering online education, a proven approach to increase the academic success and achievement for the culturally and geographically diverse student population of New Mexico.

The Founding Board also includes New Mexico native **Abenicio Baldonado** who currently serves as the Associated Director of community Engagement for the New Mexico Oil and Gas Association. Mr. Baldonado has a B.A. in Political Science and an M.A. in Public Affairs. He previously held roles as Education Reform Director for Think New Mexico, Board Chair of a New Mexico Charter School, Ethics Officer for the Secretary of State, Policy Director for the Lieutenant Governor, and Legislative Liaison and Policy Analyst for the Public Education Department.

Dr. Hilary Noskin is a 13th generation Latina New Mexican with a Ph.D. in Environmental Biology and a JD. Currently working as an attorney and in e-commerce, Dr. Noskin has experience in intellectual property, business, and environmental and regulatory science and law. As a Latina who has worked in the STEM fields, Dr. Noskin has a vested interest in the students of New Mexico and ensuring they have the best possible education no matter where they live.

Several Founding Board Members are long-time New Mexico K-12 educators. **Debbie Vigil** is a teacher with over 26 years of experience in brick and mortar, virtual, public, and private schools. **Elisa Bohannon** is a highly qualified veteran New Mexico educator with three decades of experience serving students in K-12 general education, gifted education, and special education. Her areas of expertise include curriculum development, instruction, and leadership. Ms. Vigil and Ms. Bohannon both see a need for effective virtual school choices in the state of New Mexico, particularly for the students that are not successful in traditional brick and mortar settings. They believe that VPA of New Mexico will provide the students and families of New Mexico with the choice of a quality education program that will meet the individual needs of K-12 students.

Founding Board Member **Gowan Hays** graduated from the University of New Mexico with a Bachelor's degree in business with an emphasis on finance. He currently works with K12 Accounting as the business manager. Previously, he was the business manager for Dora Consolidated School District. Mr. Hays has a passion for school finance in New Mexico education.

Founding Board Member **Freda Daugherty** has 30 years of experience in education. These include being a transportation provider, board member, substitute teacher, teacher, assistant principal, principal, executive director, and superintendent. Her area of expertise is in leadership. She knows that VPA of NM will meet the need of students who need individualized attention and a positive learning environment.

It is anticipated that most of the existing founding board will remain to serve on the governing board when the school is approved. At that time, the governing will seek additional membership.