



STATE OF NEW MEXICO
PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION
300 DON GASPAR
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO 87501-2786
Telephone (505) 827-6661
www.ped.state.nm.us

ALAN BRAUER, CHAIR
PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION

ARSENIO ROMERO, PhD., SECRETARY
PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Rebekka Burt, Vice-Chair
District 4, Rio Rancho

Melissa Armijo, Secretary
District 1, Albuquerque

Timothy E. Beck, Member
District 2, Albuquerque

Sharon Clahchischillage, Member
District 5, Aztec

Stewart Ingham, Member District 6, Deming

Patricia Gipson, Member District 7, Las Cruces

Michael M. Taylor, Member District 8, Roswell

KT Manis, Ph.D., Member District 9, Hobbs

Steven J. Carrillo, Member District 10, Santa Fe

2024 NOTICE OF INTENT TO SUBMIT CHARTER APPLICATION

According to NMSA § 22-8B-6(B) a 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 **AND** to the superintendent of the school district in which the charter school is proposed to be located no later than the second Tuesday in January of the year in which the application will be filed.

The NOI must be submitted electronically to charter.schools@ped.nm.gov with a cc to the district superintendent by 5:00 PM Mountain Time **January 9, 2024**.

Notices of Intent that are not received by the Public Education Commission **and** the district by the deadline may result in the application being rejected.

The NOI is intended to provide the primary point of contact information of charter developers and preliminary information about the charter proposal. Use the form below to submit the NOI, which should not exceed 5 pages.

General Information

- Name of Proposed School

Equip Academy of New Mexico

- School district where proposed school will be located

Albuquerque Public Schools

- Grade levels to be offered and enrollment projections

Grade Levels to be offered	Projected Total Enrollment
K-5	450

- Primary Point of Contact

Name	Mercy L. Herrera		
Mailing Address	3600 Old Airport Rd. NW 87114		
City	Albuquerque	State	NM
		Zip	87114
Phone	(505) 503-3985		
Email	mercy.herrera@equipnm.org		

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

Name	Role on Team	Qualifications: Education, Employment, and Experience
Mercy L. Herrera	Lead Founder Proposed Head of School	<p><i>Education</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · MST, Elementary Education & Teaching Students with Disabilities (Dual Certified), Pace University · MA, Religion and Disability Studies, Yale University Divinity School · BA, Signed Language Interpreting, UNM <p><i>Employment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Future Schools Fellow, Excellent Schools New Mexico <p><i>Education Experience (12 years)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Asst. Principal, Ascend Public Charter · Dir. of Assessment, Rosalyn Yalow Charter · Learning Specialist, South Bronx Classical · SPED Coordinator, Success Academy · Teacher, Harlem Village Academy, Success Academy Charter Schools
M. Alejandra Grijalva-Becerra	Founding Board Member	<p><i>Education</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · MA, Public Policy, UNM · BA, Finance and International Management, UNM Anderson School of Management <p><i>Employment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Business Intelligence Analyst, Centro Savila <p><i>Experience</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Fiscal Analyst, NM Legislative Finance Committee
Renee Delgado-Riley	Founding Board Member	<p><i>Education</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · PhD, MA, BA, Educational Psychology, UNM

		<i>Employment</i> · Dir. of Assessment & Research, Division of Student Life, Univ. of Oregon <i>Experience</i> · Dir. of Student Affairs Assessment & Research, NMLI Institutional Lead, Program Planning Officer, Educational Psychology Instructor
Sara Fitzgerald	Founding Board Member	<i>Education</i> · BA, Foreign Affairs and French Language & Literature, Univ. of Virginia <i>Employment</i> · SVP Communications and Education Policy, Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce <i>Experience</i> · Dir. of External Affairs, MAS Charter School; Legislative Analyst, NM House Education Committee; Dir. of Policy/Cabinet Dir., Office of Gov. Martinez
Vaadra Chavez	Founding Board Member	<i>Education</i> · BBA, Accounting, UNM Anderson School of Management <i>Employment</i> · Chief Human Resources Officer, Securin <i>Experience</i> · Personnel Officer, Director of Human Resources, Diversity and Inclusion Retention Strategist

3. Model or focus of the proposed school (e.g., performing arts, dual language, college prep, STEM, Montessori, IB)

Equip Academy of New Mexico is a K-5, college-preparatory elementary school with (1) a focus on inquiry-based curriculum and instruction and (2) a comprehensive literacy and language development program.

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

N/A

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)

Mission: By providing a top-tier, inquiry-based, college-preparatory education, Equip Academy of New Mexico ensures K-5 students master the knowledge and skills to dream audaciously, engage deeply, and pursue a life of purpose.

Vision: Every child has the opportunity to live out their greatness; our commitment is to equip them to do so. Our joyful, engaging, high-expectations approach prioritizes measurable academic learning, celebrates student curiosity and community, and reimagines what a successful, literacy-rich K-5 school can be.

7. Student population and geographical setting of the school

- Define the targeted geographical area from which the proposed school is expected to draw a significant number of its students

We intend to serve students from the Westside of Albuquerque, which encompasses neighborhoods west of the Rio Grande and south of Paseo. Students in the Westside communities of Albuquerque are averaging far below grade-level academic performance as measured by state testing in the core subjects. This under-performance in the elementary

grades leads to persistent learning gaps as evidenced by the student achievement outcomes in the area's middle and high schools: for example, John Adams Middle School's proficiency rates are 19% in reading and 6% in math; West Mesa High School's are 26% in reading and 4% in math.

Describe the student population including key demographic data (academic performance, home languages, English Learners, and special education populations).

FIGURE 1: Student Population of Targeted Geographical Area¹

Student Subgroup	Enrollment in Schools in Target Area
Hispanic	83%
White / Caucasian	8.5%
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	3.9%
Black / African American	2.1%
Two or More Races	1.3%
Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch	96.4%
English Learners	30.9%
Special Education	21.7%

FIGURE 2: Student Demographics and Proficiency Rates in Proposed Community²

Student Subgroup	Reading Proficiency in Target Area Schools	APS Reading Proficiency	Math Proficiency in Target Area Schools	APS Math Proficiency
Hispanic	26.1%	33.1%	13.4%	18.4%
White/ Caucasian	32.4%	64.8%	26.8%	50.0%
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	23.6%	22.5%	8.8%	11.4%
Black/African American	18.7%	30.1%	3.8%	15.6%
Two or More Races	27.5%	51.5%	13.7%	38.4%
Free/Reduced Lunch	25.6%	28.8%	13.6%	15.4%
English Learners	18.4%	17.1%	8.6%	8.9%
Special Education	5.4%	10.1%	3.8%	5.7%
Overall Results	26.1%	40.0%	14.3%	25.7%

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

Prospective elementary students currently attend the following schools: Rudolfo Anaya, Laland, Atrisco, Valle Vista, Alamosa, Helen Cordero, Carlos Rey, Edward Gonzales, M. A. Binford, Armijo, Navajo, Painted Sky, Tres Volcanes, Marmon, and Chaparral. Families are likely to choose Equip Academy of New Mexico because of (a) our Inquiry-Based approach to teaching and learning (b) our high expectations and college-preparatory culture, and (c) our Comprehensive Literacy and Language Development Program. Our inquiry-based, engaging approach centers on student thinking and the development of student voice and discourse: students are talking more than teachers, which means students are doing the thinking and developing language skills. Student discourse is shaped through a series of teacher-posed questions that propel cognition, dialogue, and ownership of grade-level standards, skills, and content. Parents want to know that students are gaining mastery at their grade level by doing the thinking and learning that is required - doing what educators in the highest-achieving schools

¹ [New Mexico Public Education Department 2022-23 Enrollment Subgroup Percentages](#)

² [Workbook: NM-MSSA Results \(tableau.com\)](#).

call the “intellectual lift.” This ultimately inspires a natural love of learning and promotes independent, critical thinking. Our multiple-modality approach to reading instruction unites the scientifically-based core principles of learning to read - phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Students engage in critical language and literacy development experiences throughout our robust literacy blocks: Phonics, Independent Reading, Small Group Reading, Writing, Close Reading and Read Aloud. Families are eager for a school that will propel their children’s success in core academic subjects, instill a love of reading, and lay the foundation for access to a life of opportunity and purpose.

8. Provide evidence that the applicant team has assessed community need for the type of school proposed (e.g., objective surveys or other measures of local demand for the educational program)

There is overwhelming evidence of community demand for our proposed K-5 educational design. The founding team has visited dozens of organizations on Albuquerque’s Westside, including daycares, Head Starts, community programs, and religious organizations, as well as various local businesses. The response trend has consistently revealed a desire for more school choice options across the Westside. Nonprofit leaders with the closest relationships to local families expressed that many residents drive to the East Side or further South to take their children to higher-performing schools. We distributed a Community Input Survey, and when asked if the Westside would benefit from a new, high-quality, elementary school option, 90% of respondents answered “yes.” We asked community respondents to prioritize the specific elements of our proposed school design; 100% responded that two key elements are extremely important to them: (1) Strong Emphasis on Reading and Language Development and (2) Excellent, Well-supported Teachers. Per High-quality Curriculum, College Preparatory Culture, and Inquiry-based Instruction, the majority responded that these were “extremely important” to them, with remaining respondents indicating that these elements were “important.” As of December 28, 2023, the Lead Founder and proposed Head of School for Equip Academy of New Mexico has met with 145 Albuquerque community members about this proposed school; the overwhelming response has been excitement about Equip Academy of New Mexico and the value of this new high-quality option for Westside families.

9. Identify significant innovative features that the school will implement to help realize the school’s vision/mission.

Our innovative features are designed to measurably accelerate the achievement of an historically under-served, under-performing student population. We prioritize powerful and measurable academic learning, celebrate student curiosity, and champion determined young minds and spirits as we work with our community and engage with our families to reimagine what a data-driven, student-centered school can do.

INNOVATIVE APPROACH 1 - INQUIRY-BASED, ENGAGING INSTRUCTION. Students will experience inquiry-based instruction in all core subjects, ensuring that students do the thinking, talking, debating, and sense-making. We will: (a) teach and expect active listening; (b) ask high-leverage, pre-planned and responsive open-ended questions; and (c) engage students in academic discourse so that they can use evidence to develop deeper understandings and make well-reasoned conclusions. This approach will ensure students gain a higher level of understanding in each core subject as required by our state’s academic standards and as aligned with families’ ambitious goals for their children’s future. This instructional approach stands upon our firm commitment to creating spaces for collaborative and authentic learning.

INNOVATIVE APPROACH 2 - COLLEGE PREPARATORY CULTURE. We believe that every New Mexican has what it takes to earn a place in the college or career of their choosing, and that every child deserves the academic foundation to engage deeply, dream audaciously, and pursue a life of purpose. Starting in Kindergarten, every student will be introduced to careers and universities; in our budget, we have prioritized taking each grade level on annual field trips to various college campuses across the region, with invitations for our families to join us. Each year, to nurture the connection between life dreams and school success, we will expose students to the plethora of options for education and career paths so they can find and pursue their interests and passions.

INNOVATIVE APPROACH 3 - COMPREHENSIVE, SYSTEMATIC EDUCATOR TRAINING. For every student to learn, every teacher must be trained, coached, and supported at a high level. We believe that increasing student achievement must come from the top - from leaders – and then be brought to teachers, and ultimately to students. Therefore, comprehensive and systematic job-embedded cycles of professional development are a unique hallmark of our design. Teacher professional

development will ensure that all teachers internalize and implement our curriculum and inquiry-based instructional approach and have strong classroom systems and routines. All teachers and leaders will be trained in the use of data for instructional planning and accelerating student growth, and all teachers will receive daily feedback and coaching.

INNOVATIVE APPROACH 4 - COMPREHENSIVE LITERACY AND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION PROGRAMS. We will ensure an intensive and extensive literacy focus, aligned with the Structured Literacy Initiative in New Mexico. We follow the research- and evidence-based Science of Reading, with daily instructional time devoted to phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. The goal is to dramatically increase the number of students reading at or above grade level and reduce the number of students requiring reading intervention or special education services. Given the deep reading deficits that have persisted in our community, we will devote extended time to providing a multi-modal approach to Literacy instruction, with a total of five blocks for Read Aloud, Small Group Reading, Writing, Phonics, and Independent Reading each day - each shown to be critical for all learners, particularly English Learners (ELs) and students with disabilities.

INNOVATIVE APPROACH 5 - RIGOROUS CURRICULUM WITH NATIONAL RECORD OF SUCCESS. We will offer state-of-the art, evidence-based, nationally-normed, and vertically-aligned curriculum for English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. As access to high-quality grade-level content is critical to student success, our curriculum is thought-provoking, engaging, hands-on, and infused with joy. Mission-aligned and community-responsive, these curricular resources and approaches will measurably grow academic achievement and ultimately equip students to dream audaciously and pursue a life of purpose.

10. Describe how the school will be more effective in terms of academic achievement than the schools currently serving the targeted student population. Provide any data you have to support this assumption.

We will be more effective due to our scientifically-informed and empirically-proven instructional approaches detailed above as well as our plan to ensure educator excellence and a data-driven culture. We will provide more professional development (PD) opportunities for teachers than the average school; teachers will have three weeks of summer PD and weekly PD half-days throughout the academic year. Teachers will be trained in instructional planning that drives student outcomes and they will be observed and receive daily feedback and coaching to continually improve practice and grow achievement. We will root decisions in student data to ensure students are progressing throughout the year and across all school years. We will implement quarterly assessment cycles in ELA and Mathematics to benchmark student progress, inform instructional plans and teacher coaching, and evaluate our effectiveness. We will invest students in their own growth by establishing and pursuing class, small-group, and individualized goals, and meet frequently to discuss progress. Each of these priorities is designed to measurably accelerate the achievement of the historically under-performing student population Equip Academy of New Mexico exists to serve.

Signatures of founder(s):

Mercy L. Herrera Date: 1/4/24

Sara Fitzgerald Date: 1/4/24

M. Alejandra Grijalva-Becerra Date: 01/04/2024

Vaadra Chavez Date: 1/4/24

Renee Delgado-Riley Date: 1/4/24