

**STATE OF NEW MEXICO
PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION
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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.

1. General Information

- Name of Proposed School

Growing Roots Learning Academy

- School district where the proposed school will be located

Albuquerque

- Grade levels to be offered and enrollment projections

Grade Levels to be offered	Projected Total Enrollment
Kindergarten -5 th Grade	360 students

- Primary Point of Contact

Name	Rosa Swonger				
Mailing Address	1023 June St NE				
City	Albuquerque	State	NM	Zip	87112
Phone	505-977-1133				
Email	Rosa.swonger@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

Name	Role on Team	Qualifications: Education, Employment, and Experience
Rosa Swonger	Co-Founder	Bachelor's of Science in Elementary Education with a TESOL Endorsement from the University of New Mexico. Masters Degree in Educational Leadership from New Mexico Highlands University. Participant in the Relay National Principal Academy Fellowship Program. 14 years of experience in education, including teaching and administration. 6 years as a School Leader at one of Albuquerque's highest-performing charter schools, Mission Achievement and Success Charter School. Currently, the Elementary School Leader, overseeing grades PreK-4th Grade.
Allysha White	Co-Founder	Currently in the Master's program for Educational Administration at New Mexico State University. Graduated with a Bachelor's in Elementary Education from the University of New Mexico. Has spent 7 years in the charter school space as a teacher, instructional coach, and district curriculum lead overseeing literacy in grades PreK through 4th grade.
Alicia Hedrick	Co-Founder	Bachelors of Science in Education from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, Masters in Educational Leadership from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Masters in Curriculum and

		Instruction from Alverno College. Twenty-seven years of education experience - eight in the classroom and nineteen in leadership). Twenty-five years in Wisconsin Public Schools and two years in New Mexico at Mission Achievement Charter School.
Elizabeth Lopez	Co-Founder	Currently enrolled in a Masters in Curriculum and Instruction program at NMSU. Over a decade of early childhood education experience as a tutor, teacher, and instructional coach in WA, TX, OR, and NM. Volunteered as a Learning Program Coordinator in the Peace Corps. Rated Advanced-High Teacher at IDEA Public Schools.

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

Growing Roots Learning Academy's model focuses on a high-expectation, high-support model regarding teacher development and student academic achievement. We will prioritize proficient literacy skills across all content areas.

Our primary goal is to ensure all students read on grade level using a research-based reading curriculum. Additionally, we will dedicate time to teaching social and emotional skills and fostering well-rounded individuals.

We will prioritize data-driven instruction, offer professional development coaching for teachers, and emphasize 21st-century learning concepts. This model reflects a holistic and student-centered approach to education.

4. Does the school expect to contract with another entity for either management, 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 – At Growing Roots Learning Academy, we are a vibrant educational environment where high literacy instruction serves as the cornerstone of our commitment to student success. By providing personalized support and fostering a strong educational foundation, we prepare students to succeed in every facet of their academic journey and future endeavors.

Mission – At Growing Roots Learning Academy, we are dedicated to providing a high-quality education that ensures all students have exceptional literacy skills. Our mission is to create a safe and inclusive learning environment that promotes curiosity, critical thinking, and a growth mindset. We are committed to equipping our students with the necessary literacy skills to succeed in their academic pursuits and beyond.

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

Area Data	International District (87108)
Latino/Hispanic	49.4%
Average income	\$18,090
Adults with less than a high school degree	35%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	33%
Graduate or professional degree	15%
Unemployed	8.1%

United States Census Bureau. (2021). *Explore census data*. Explore Census Data. <https://data.census.gov/>

87108 zip code (Albuquerque, NM) detailed profile. 87108 Zip Code (Albuquerque, New Mexico) Profile. (2021). <https://www.city-data.com/zips/87108.html>

This table, sourced from the US Census Bureau, unveils facets of the International District (87108). The demographic composition, with a predominant Latino/Hispanic population of 49.4%, is accompanied by an average income of \$18,090. Educational statistics indicate that 35% of adults have less than a high school degree, while 33% hold a Bachelor's Degree or higher, with 15% possessing a graduate or professional degree. Additionally, the unemployment rate stands at 8.1%.

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

	Emerson Elem	La Mesa Elem	Whittier Elem	Zia Elem	Coral Community Charter
Hispanic	69%	75%	60%	42.7%	46.6%
White	9%	8%	13%	38%	32%
Black	8%	10%	12%	5.6%	10%
Native American	11%	6%	13.5%	9%	6.7%
Asian	3%			4.7%	
Economically Disadvantaged	59%	53%	60%	27.6%	30%
English Lang Learners	39%	59%	20.5%	18%	9%
Students with Disabilities	23%	20%	23%	23%	12.6%
Math Proficiency	5.2%	4.7%	10.7%	27.4%	47%
Reading Proficiency	11%	10.5%	23.1%	18.6%	56.6%

NMPED. (2022). *NM-MSSA results*. Tableau Software.

https://public.tableau.com/views/NM-MSSAResults_16879989393850/SchoolResults?%3Alanguage=en-US&publish=yes&%3Adisplay_count

Enrollment Subgroup Percentages. New Mexico Public Education Department. (2023, February 20). <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/information-technology/stars/>

- 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 Growing Roots Learning Academy believes that there is a need for a different approach to education. The reading and math proficiencies are indicative of an issue that needs to be addressed.

At GRLA, because our focus is on a high-expectation, high-support model regarding teacher development and student academic achievement, we feel families will choose our option over the underperforming schools in the area. This is due to our prioritization of proficient literacy skills across content areas and our overall holistic approach to student and teacher growth.

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)

We have used social media as a primary tool to gain interest in our school. We have created Facebook and Instagram pages and have begun creating advertisements to begin to interact with families, community members, and potential stakeholders. We have also distributed surveys to community members asking specific questions regarding their student's current academic achievement levels and their opinion on the need for an elementary charter school in the community.

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

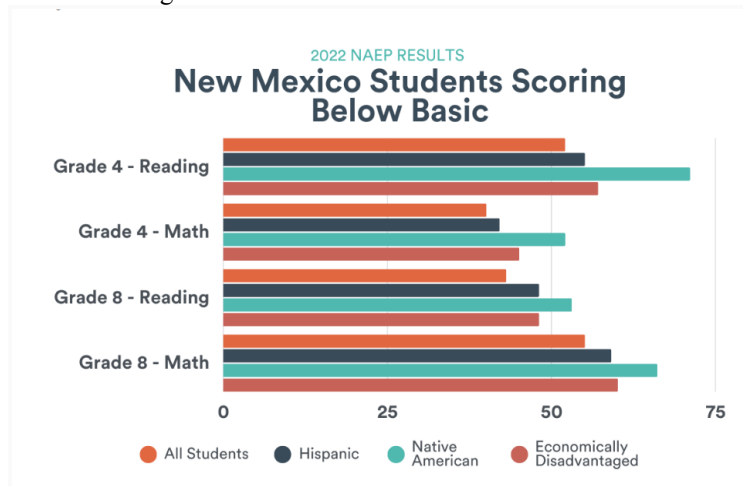
Growing Roots Learning Academy is poised to become a leading school in the region. With our innovative approach to education, it is designed to be more effective than the surrounding schools. One key feature that sets it apart is the use of a real-time coaching feedback cycle. This means that teachers are constantly evaluated and given feedback on improving their teaching techniques. This ensures that students get the best possible instruction and that teachers always improve. The small student-to-teacher ratio is also a major benefit, as it allows for more individualized attention and a more personalized approach to teaching.

Another advantage of GRLA is that it operates on a year-round school year. This allows for more consistent learning and helps to prevent the typical summer learning loss that can occur in traditional schools.

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.

Growing Roots Learning Academy will be more effective in terms of academic achievement than the current schools serving the International District for many reasons. First is our leadership staff. All four of our founders have worked for a successful charter school in Albuquerque. We have experience in teaching, coaching, and planning for early literacy growth in the classroom from our time as teachers and educational leaders within our school experiences. Additionally, we have a strong passion for literacy and believe in a strong literacy foundation for students to be successful in school and life, as the research below supports:

- “If a child is not reading at grade level by fourth grade, they are statistically likely to remain illiterate throughout their life.” (The Lucy Project, 2022)
- Children who enter middle school without strong foundation skills will have difficulty in content areas that require reading, such as English language arts, social studies, science, and math (Zorfass & Urbano, 2008).
- Early literacy plays a key role in enabling the kind of early learning experiences that research shows are linked with academic achievement, reduced grade retention, higher graduation rates, and enhanced productivity in adult life (Strickland & Riley-Ayers, 2023).
- A study by Thum and Kuhfeld (2020) states that students between 3rd and 5th grade lose about 20% of their learning during the summer break.



- The 2022 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) showed a significant increase in the number of New Mexico students scoring below basic, particularly among low-income students and students of color. (New Mexico Education, 2022)

Finally, the model of our school supports our vision and mission of holistic teaching. We believe in a year-round school schedule, inclusion, and teacher support in the classroom.

Overall, Growing Roots Academy is committed to providing a top-notch education to its students. With its unique approach to teaching and learning, it is sure to be a model for other schools in the region.

Signature of founder(s):

Date: January 3, 2024

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Rosa Swonger', with a large, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.

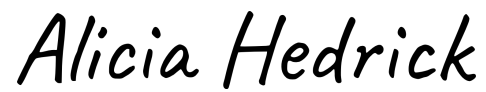
Rosa Swonger

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Allysha White', with a large, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.

Allysha White

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Elizabeth Lopez', written in a cursive style.

Elizabeth Lopez

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Alicia Hedrick', written in a cursive style.

Alicia Hedrick