

# New Mexico Public Education Commission



## 2024 New Charter School Application Kit

### Part B

### Executive Summary

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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 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



**EQUIP**  
ACADEMY OF NEW MEXICO

Name of Proposed Charter School

**Equip Academy of New Mexico**

New Charter Application Executive Summary

**OUR 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.

**COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS.**

**FIGURE 1 - Student Population of Targeted Geographical Area<sup>1</sup>**

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%

**COMMUNITY NEED.** We intend to serve students from Albuquerque’s Westside, in neighborhoods west of the Rio Grande and south of Paseo. Students are averaging far below grade-level academic performance; under-performance in the elementary grades leads to persistent learning gaps in the upper grades, evidenced by outcomes in the area’s middle and high schools. For example, John Adams MS proficiency rates are 19% in reading and 6% in math; West Mesa HS rates are 26% in reading and 4% in math. The roots of this academic challenge lie in the foundational grades of elementary school.

**FIGURE 2 - Student Demographics and Average Proficiency Rates in Proposed Community<sup>2</sup>**

Student Subgroup	ELA/Reading Proficiency in Target Area	APS ELA/Reading Proficiency	Math Proficiency in Target Area	APS Math Proficiency
Hispanic	26.1%	33.1%	13.4%	18.4%
White	32.4%	64.8%	26.8%	50.0%
American Indian	23.6%	22.5%	8.8%	11.4%
Black	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%
<b>Overall Results</b>	<b>26.1%</b>	<b>40.0%</b>	<b>14.3%</b>	<b>25.7%</b>

<sup>1</sup> [New Mexico Public Education Department 2022-23 Enrollment Subgroup Percentages.](#)

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

**CURRENT OPTIONS.** Prospective elementary students attend: Rudolfo Anaya, Lavaland, Atrisco, Valle Vista, Alamosa, Helen Cordero, Carlos Rey, Edward Gonzales, M. A. Binford, Armijo, Navajo, Painted Sky, Tres Volcanes, Marmon, and Chaparral.

**COMMUNITY CHOICE.** Families are likely to choose Equip Academy because of our (a) Inquiry-Based approach, (b) high expectations and college-preparatory culture, and (c) comprehensive literacy and language development program. Our inquiry-based, engaging approach centers on student thinking and the development of student voice and discourse. Families 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 call the “intellectual lift.” 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.

**COMMUNITY DEMAND.** There is strong evidence of community demand for our proposed K-5 educational design. 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 have engaged with 240 community members through one-on-one meetings, focus groups, and a survey and we have cultivated relationships with a diverse array of organizations. One major theme that emerged across our four focus group with 80 community members, is that literacy serves as the cornerstone of all future successes, laying a critical foundation from which students can thrive academically and personally. By setting high expectations and providing holistic support, we ensure that each student has just the right level of challenge to succeed. The overwhelming response has been excitement about Equip Academy and the value of this new high-quality option for Westside families.

**INNOVATIVE AND UNIQUE PROGRAMMATIC FEATURES.** Informed by current educational research and practice-proven examples of high-achieving schools serving a similar demographic, we provide unique programmatic elements. (1) Students experience **inquiry-based, engaging instruction** in all classrooms, ensuring they are doing the thinking, talking, debating, and sense-making. Our engaging approach inspires intellectual curiosity and a love of learning; our inquiry-based approach equips students to become critical, independent thinkers. (2) We are a **college-preparatory** elementary school. 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. (3) Equip Academy intends to serve as an institute of **educator excellence**. For every student to learn, every teacher will be trained, coached, and supported at a high level. We believe that increasing student achievement must come first from leaders and then be brought to teachers, and then, most critically, to students. (4) Our **comprehensive literacy and language acquisition program** begins at kindergarten. Our multiple-modality approach to reading instruction unites the five 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 daily literacy blocks: Phonics, Independent Reading, Small Group Reading, Writing, Close Reading, and Read Aloud. Students are equipped with foundational reading and language skills through research- and evidence-based Science of Reading and Structured Literacy programming. (5) Through **rigorous curriculum**, we will offer state-of-the art, evidence-based, nationally-normed, and vertically-aligned curriculum for all core academic components, including English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Therefore, our curriculum is thought-provoking, engaging, hands-on, and infused with joy.

**STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT.** Our research-based curriculum, data-driven approach, and inquiry-based instructional model are designed to measurably accelerate the academic achievement of an historically under-served and under-performing student population. We will be more effective in dramatically improving student achievement results due to our scientifically-informed and empirically-proven instructional approaches and our plan to ensure educator excellence within a data-driven culture. Teachers will experience 209 hours of annual professional development (PD): teachers will have three weeks of summer PD (totaling 16 full PD days) 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 instructional practice and grow student 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 with students and families to discuss progress.

**FOUNDING TEAM.** The Founding Team encompasses strong community leadership, with deep ties to and investment within our target community, and the requisite professional skills and personal character needed to lead and oversee a public charter school. **Mery L. Herrera, Lead Founder and proposed Head of School**, was born and raised in New Mexico and comes with national educational experience in some of the highest achieving charter schools serving high-needs communities. Ms. Herrera worked and led in communities with similar demographics and due to the design and leadership of these schools, students' math and reading proficiencies year after year far exceeded those of their counterparts across the city. She brings experience with a wide range of curriculum, earned a master's degree in education, and is dually certified in general education and special education, with broad and proven success supporting and educating a wide range of learners. Ms. Herrera specializes in supporting teachers on their educational journey by providing valuable teaching strategies to support all learners. **Vaadra Chavez**, Chief Human Resources Officer for Securin, brings experiences as a Personnel Officer, Director of Human Resources and Diversity and Inclusion Retention Strategist. Ms. Chavez has lived on Albuquerque's Westside for 25+ years and is deeply committed to giving back and serving her community, specifically around elementary education. **Dr. Renee Delgado-Riley**, Director of Assessment & Research, Division of Student Life at University of Oregon, brings additional experience as a Director of Student Affairs Assessment and Research, NMLI Institutional Lead, Program Planning Officer, and Educational Psychology Instructor. Her expertise lies in facilitating culturally responsive assessment and research with the goal of bridging historic achievement gaps among traditionally marginalized student populations. **Sara Fitzgerald**, SVP Communications and Education Policy at the Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce, brings experience as a Director of External Affairs, Legislative Analyst, NM House Education Committee, and Director of Policy/Cabinet Office of Governor Martinez. Ms. Fitzgerald has witnessed first-hand the inequalities of education within our state and what a successful charter school is capable of accomplishing. **M. Alejandra Grijalva-Becerra**, Business Intelligence Analyst at Centro Savila, brings strong experience as a Fiscal Analyst with the NM Legislative Finance Committee. With deep roots in the Westside community and passion to see her community succeed, Ms. Grijalva-Becerra is committed to leveraging her expertise for the betterment of education, aligning seamlessly with the mission of Equip Academy. **Janet Leung**, Director of Business Development at UNM Hospitals, has worked in various finance roles while volunteering on weeknights and weekends to mentor and tutor children. Ms. Leung believes that a great education and early reading can drastically change a child's life trajectory for the better and is eager to lend her expertise to Equip Academy.