New Mexico Public Education Commission

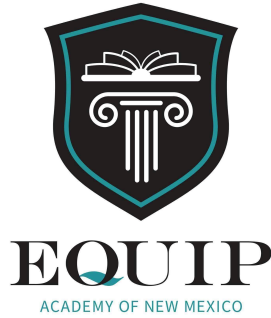# 2024 New Charter School Application Kit

Part C

Written Responses

Charter Schools Division
Public Education Department
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Approved by the Public Education Commission: December 15, 2023

Applicant Information

Name of Proposed Charter School: Equip Academy of New Mexico
School Address (if known): TBD
School Location (City/Town): Albuquerque, NM
School District within which the proposed school will be located: 1, 2, 3, 5
Grades to be served: K-5
Requested Enrollment Cap: 450

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I. Academic Framework

A. Mission and Vision

A. (1) MISSION
State the mission of the proposed school . (NMSA 22-8B-8A)

A. (1) 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.

Our research-based curriculum, data-driven approach, and inquiry-based instructional model are specifically designed to measurably accelerate the academic achievement of a historically under-served and under-performing student population. Our joyful, college preparatory school community prioritizes powerful and measurable academic learning, celebrates student curiosity, and champions determined young minds and spirits as we work with our community, engage with our families, and grow with our students in reimagining what a successful, literacy-rich, and inclusive K-5 school can be.

Discuss the importance of the mission to your proposed community.

MISSION IMPORTANCE 1 - Increasing Access to School Choice on Albuquerque's Westside

Equip Academy of New Mexico ("Equip Academy") is dedicated to serving students from the Westside of Albuquerque, which encompasses neighborhoods west of the Rio Grande and south of Paseo. According to a telephone survey of New Mexican adults conducted by Research & Polling, Inc. in 2022, "Overall, statewide residents are pessimistic about the direction public education in New Mexico is headed, as six-in-ten (61%) residents say public education in the state has gotten off track, compared to just 26% who say it is headed in the right direction"; 82% of residents either somewhat agree or strongly agree that parents need more free public school choices in their community where they can send their children; and 75% strongly support or somewhat support New Mexico opening more public charter schools. Furthermore, "all demographic subgroups, regardless of party affiliation, age, gender, household income, educational attainment level, union household status, etc., support developing and opening more charter schools in the state and oppose a state law that would stop the opening of new charter schools in New Mexico."[1]

Equip Academy's founding team has met with more than 245 people across the Albuquerque community (including 1:1 meetings, focus groups, and surveys) about the proposed school; the consistent response has been excitement about Equip Academy and the value of this unique, high-quality option for Westside families. Through our conversations with local families and community leaders, a consistent concern has been expressed: families residing on the Westside and beyond want greater access to a high-quality elementary school option - one which will provide preparation for college and economic success starting in the elementary years.

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

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[1] h[ttps://censusreporter.org/](https://censusreporter.org/).

a Community Input Survey and when asked about the perceived benefits of a new, high-quality elementary school option on the Westside, 97% of respondents rated it as "extremely important" or "important."We asked community respondents to prioritize the specific elements of our proposed school design; 97% responded that two key elements are extremely important to them: (1) Strong Emphasis on Reading and Language Development and (2) Excellent, Well-Supported Teachers. Addressing the elements of High-quality Curriculum, College Preparatory Culture, and Inquiry-based Instruction, the majority responded that these were "extremely important," with remaining respondents indicating these were "important."

The founding team conducted family focus groups on March 19, April 8, April 9, and April 22, 2024, in Westside non-profit community centers, with our final focus group being virtual to gain additional insight into the needs and wishes of the local community. We had a total of 80 participants for our focus groups and we have secured 134 letters of support. Key themes that emerged from community feedback were that families want (1) their children to be successful in all aspects of school, particularly reading, (2) more high-quality school options in the Westside, and (3) schools where teachers are well prepared to teach their kids. (Please refer to **Section IV** for a comprehensive analysis of qualitative and quantitative community data collected and the perceived value of a school like Equip Academy.)

Families are experiencing chronic struggles with their children not being prepared for basic levels of academic comprehension and understanding in elementary, middle, and high school, and not being on track to a life of purpose, opportunity, and economic freedom afforded by school success. Students in the Westside communities of Albuquerque are averaging far below grade-level academic performance as measured by state testing in core subject areas. This under-performance in the elementary grades leads to persistent learning gaps as evidenced by student achievement outcomes in the target 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 proficiency rates are 26% in reading and 4% in math. The root cause of these challenges lies in the foundational elementary years.

Local families are themselves experiencing the life challenges that a limited education provides, and they want more for their children and grandchildren**. FIGURE 1** cites the economic and educational levels of the target local community that wants more choices for the next generation, as compared to those levels across Albuquerque; **FIGURE 2** gives current demographic data of local students**; FIGURE 3** outlines those demographics in comparison to academic proficiency rates.

FIGURE 1 - Economics, Demographics, and Education – Comparative Analysis[2]

Demographics	Zip code 87105	Zip code 87121	Albuquerque
Median Family Income	$21,689	$21,520	$56,366
% Hispanic	79%	83%	49.8%
High School Graduates	78.7%	81.1%	90.9%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	15.4%	13.2%	37.4%

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[2] (U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Albuquerque city, New Mexico).

FIGURE 2 - Student Population of Target Geographical Area[3]

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 3 - Student Demographics and Proficiency Rates in Proposed Community[4]

Student Subgroup	ELA/Reading Proficiency in Target Area Schools	APS ELA/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%**

MISSION IMPORTANCE 2 - Increasing Student Academic Success, Closing Outcomes Gaps for Historically Under-Performing Students, and Providing Access To Life's Opportunities

Equip Academy seeks to increase student access to high-quality educational opportunities in Albuquerque. In our target area of Albuquerque's Westside, the average ELA proficiency percentage rate on the New Mexico Measures of Student Success and Achievement (NM-MSSA) for 2023 was 26.1%, and the math proficiency percentage was 14.3%. For our families, income averages $21,604 per year. Our families know what it means to work hard *and* to have limited educational and career choices - and they want more for their children. Local middle schools know what it means to matriculate sixth graders without the reading and writing skills needed for more advanced learning, and without the aspirations to set their vision for a life of opportunity for themselves and their families.

Through a locally-responsive and nationally-proven model delivered under the leadership of a successful educator with extensive experience in high-achieving schools with a similar mission and demographics, Equip Academy is proposed in response to this current educational reality in our

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[3] New Mexico Public Education Department 2022-23 Enrollment Subgroup Percentages.
[4] Workbook: NM-MSSA Results (tableau.com).

community. (For more detail on our proposed Head of School, please see **Appendix I** to view her resume.)

Like successful schools across the country that demonstrate what is possible in communities with similar demographics (for more detail on these schools' outcomes, please see **Appendix J**), Equip Academy's approach to education is one in which students attain success because they experience the support needed to meet the rigors of a high-quality K-5 education, fully aligned to New Mexico's educational standards. Equip Academy is designed to close the outcome gaps for historically under-performing students as evidenced by students demonstrating academic proficiency on our internal assessment system and on external assessments including iStation, Fountas & Pinnell Reading Assessments, and NM-MSSA in all tested content areas.

As in these successful schools serving high-need communities, the type of education our students will experience is one that is highly engaging and thought-provoking: students will regularly and frequently answer open-ended questions and engage in turn-and-talks throughout all components of the school day; students will agree with, disagree with, and add-on to their classmates' observations, claims, evidence, procedures, and findings; students will elaborate, evaluate, and prove their ideas, providing evidence and showing work products.

Our curriculum has been nationally vetted, aligns with the nationally recognized *Teach Like a Champion's* Engaging Academics methods, and aligns with New Mexico's Instructional Scope: K-5 English Language Development Standards; ELA Essential Elements for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities; K-5 Math Common Core State Standards; Math Essential Elements for Students with Significant Disabilities; K-5 Physical Education Standards; K-4 Health Education Standards; K-5 New Mexico STEM Ready! Science Standards; K-5 Science Essential Elements for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities; and K-5 Social Studies Standards.

FIGURE 3, seen above, details the most recent, currently-available academic results in Albuquerque and illustrates the chronic nature of the challenges faced throughout our state, particularly within our target community. **FIGURE 4**, provided below, gives details on academic achievement results over a four-year period, as measured by state assessments, specifically within Albuquerque.

FIGURE 4 - Average Proficiency Rates 2019-2023 in grades K-5 in Albuquerque Public Schools

	2022-2023[5]	**2021-2022**[6]	**2021-2020**[7]	**2019-2021**[8]
ELA Proficiency	40.0%	35.4%	23%	34%
Math Proficiency	25.7%	25.5%	.06%	20%

While there has been some progress, on average, 60% of Albuquerque students still cannot read and write on grade level, and nearly 75% have not mastered grade-level skills in mathematics. We are committed - and our proposed school program is explicitly designed - to dramatically improve these achievement outcomes for our students, demonstrating what is possible for *all* children when they have access to a rigorous, supportive, research-based educational experience.

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[5] Workbook: NM-MSSA Results (tableau.com).
[6] Workbook: NM-MSSA Results (tableau.com).
[7] DLM-ESSA-2021.xlsx (live.com).
[8] Webfiles-2019-Proficiencies-All-by-State-by-District-by-School.xlsx (live.com).

In response to the needs of our community, in alignment with our mission, and in alignment with New Mexico's priorities and goals, we have incorporated Five Innovative Approaches within our school design to ensure that all Equip Academy students receive a top-tier K-5 education.

INNOVATIVE APPROACH 1 - SCHOOLWIDE INQUIRY-BASED, ENGAGING INSTRUCTION

Students will experience inquiry-based, engaging instruction in all of their classrooms, ensuring that they are doing the thinking, talking, debating, and sense-making. Comprehensively, 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 - and so that cumulatively they can gain a higher level of understanding in each core academic area as required by our state's academic standards, and as aligned with our state's and our families' ambitious goals for the future.

Our engaging approach inspires intellectual curiosity and a love of learning, and our inquiry-based approach equips students to become critical, independent thinkers. Extensive research demonstrates both the need and efficacy of this approach: "Inquiry-based teaching requires careful attention to creating learning environments and experiences where students can confront new ideas, deepen their understandings, and learn to think logically and critically about the world around them."[9] This supports students to internalize content and take ownership over their learning. Overall, we believe that authentic engagement is at the heart of true and lasting learning. In addition to songs, chants, and cheers that engage cultural pride and regional identities, Equip Academy will use engaging methods outlined within the nationally respected text *Teach Like a Champion* and as used by the highest achieving charter schools across the nation; these include Habits of Attention and Habits of Discussion that are cross-content and normed throughout instruction (Turn-and-Talk, Wait Time, Cold Call, Everybody Writes - all described further in **Section F**). Our inquiry-based, engaging approach creates a sense of belonging within the classroom, which then allows students to take intellectual risks because psychological safety has been prioritized and secured. Our model is further informed by the text *Reconnect*, which demonstrates that inquiry-based classrooms "prioritize learning - more than the average classroom, arguably - and yet students still feel connected and belonging throughout. In many cases those feelings come about *because* of the learning they are doing" (emphasis added).[10] These engaging techniques foster community, belonging, and powerful, measurable learning. As outlined in the *Opportunity Myth*, "[c]lassrooms with higher levels of engagement gained about two-and-a-half months of learning [beyond anticipated growth].... The relationships between the resources and student outcomes were even stronger in classrooms where students started the year off behind. When students who started the year behind grade level had access to stronger instruction, for example, they closed gaps with their peers by six months; in classrooms with more grade-appropriate assignments, those gaps closed by more than seven months."[11]

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 and will visit college campuses across the state. We have prioritized taking

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[9] Inquiry and the National Science Education Standards: A Guide for Teaching and Learning. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. https://doi.org/10.17226/9596.
[10] Lemov, Doug, et al. "Reconnect: Building School Culture for Meaning, Purpose, and Belonging." Jossey-Bass, 2022. pg. 76.
[11] TNTP_The-Opportunity-Myth_Web.pdf.

each grade annually on field studies[12] to visit various college campuses across Albuquerque and, in higher grades, across the state (i.e., Central New Mexico Community College, University of New Mexico, Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, New Mexico Tech, St. John's College), with invitations for our families to join us in these dream-affirming experiences. Field study funds are allocated in our budget in the following way: Year 1: $4,000.00, Year 2: $6,000.00, Year 3, $8,000.00 Year 4: $10,000.00 and Year 5: $12,000.00 for Student Travel.[13]

Each year, we will expose students to the plethora of options for education and career paths so that they can find their interests and passions – starting in elementary school - in order to nurture the connection between students' life dreams and school success. Monthly, Equip Academy will conduct whole-school Community Circles (8 in total), to which the community will be invited, which will include student-led college cheers, pageantry with college flags, joy with college mascots, and Equip Academy Value Awards. This innovative approach was developed in response to talking with and learning from our families throughout dozens of meetings across the community as well as their survey responses: college-bound is what families on the Westside consistently state that they want - and they want a school designed to work with them in partnership towards this goal.

INNOVATIVE APPROACH 3 – PRIORITIZED, COMPREHENSIVE, SYSTEMATIC EDUCATOR TRAINING

Equip Academy intends to serve as an institute of educator excellence. For every student to learn, every teacher must be trained, coached, and supported at a high level. We believe that increasing student achievement must start with school leaders, who then coach teachers, who then, most critically, facilitate effective teaching and learning for students. Therefore, prioritized, comprehensive, and systematic job-embedded cycles of professional development are a required and unique hallmark of our school design. Our proposed Head of School, Mercy L. Herrera, has experienced and led deep professional development as part of other successful school communities, and she intends to incorporate that level of training at Equip Academy, incorporating such programs as: Teach Like a Champion - Academic Systems and Routines; Teach Like a Champion - Engaging Academics; Number Stories Training Intensive; Success for All - Engaging Students through Literacy; Fountas & Pinnell Reading Assessment Training; Centering Belonging and Centering Student Voice; Close Reading Training Intensive; and Guided Reading Training Intensive. Ms. Herrera will facilitate internal professional development training, provide access to external trainings, bring experts to the school, and provide leadership in these areas continuously throughout each school year. As proposed school leader, she will continue to access national leadership trainings and development as well through organizations including: The Management Center, The Together Group, Diverse Charter Schools Coalition, Excellent Schools New Mexico, Leadership Albuquerque, Teach Like a Champion, and the New Mexico Public Education Department in order to stay abreast of national best practices and successfully lead the school. Funds to support these professional development priorities have been allocated in our 5-Year Budget plan as follows: Year 0: $5,000, Year 1, $19,842.00, Year 2, $35,800.00, Year 3 $51,200.00, Year 4 $61,600.00, Year 5 $72,000.00.[14] Totals

For our staff, in addition to our 15-day Summer Excellence in Teaching Institute, we will provide targeted weekly professional development sessions (2.5 hours per week), and we will grow every teacher through weekly individualized observations and live coaching sessions, tied tightly to our feedback cycle. This means that Equip Academy teachers will engage in more than 200 hours of

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[12] Appendix-G-5-Year-Budget-Plan: Line Item 58, Fund 11000, Function 1000, Object 55817. Allocation Plan: Year 1: $4,000.00, Year 2: $6,000.00, Year 3, $8,000.00 Year 4: $10,000.00 and Year 5: $12,000.00 for Student Travel
[13] Ibid.
[14] Appendix-G-5-Year-Budget-Plan: Function 2200 and Object 53330.

annual professional development, compared to teachers in local public schools who, on average, are required to attend 8 hours of professional development annually .[15]

As Equip Academy grows and expands its team of administrators (ultimately consisting of Head of School, Assistant Principal in Residence (APIR), Assistant Principal (AP) and Manager of Operations), instructional leaders will go through 57 hours of rigorous annual training on how to support, coach, train and inspire teachers to success in the classroom. Training will be conducted by the Head of School, the Teach Like a Champion organization, and Success for All Foundation[16]. Instructional leaders will receive coaching throughout the year from the Head of School, and together they will analyze instructional effectiveness and progress toward goals weekly.

Teacher professional development (PD) will ensure that all teachers internalize and can effectively implement our curriculum and inquiry-based instructional approach and have strong classroom systems and routines. Further, every teacher will be trained in the use of data for instructional planning and accelerating student growth, as we believe that "collaboration among teachers in each step of the data-based inquiry process can maximize the benefits of data use by helping teachers share effective practices, adopt collective expectations for students' performance, gain a deeper understanding of students' needs, and develop effective strategies to better serve students."[17] Every leader and teacher will apply a data-driven approach to instructional planning to drive student outcomes, and every teacher will receive ongoing feedback and coaching to continually improve their practice and grow student achievement.

Equip Academy will consistently and directly address the educational causes for chronic poor reading outcomes as noted in The Science of Reading for Emergent Bilinguals in New Mexico: "'Low reading proficiency in the United States may reflect limited teacher knowledge of the Science Of Reading (SOR).' (Aro & Björn, 2016; Fielding-Barnsley, 2010; Hurry et al., 2005; Moats, 2009) This suggests that Science of Reading for Emergent Bilinguals teacher preparation programs do not provide preservice teachers with in-depth knowledge of the SOR (Castles et al., 2018) and do not adequately prepare them to teach reading (Buckingham et al., 2013; Castles et al., 2018; Seidenberg, 2017). Poor outcomes may also reflect lack of effective and efficient instruction, including inadequate time for phonics and comprehension instruction, opportunities to practice, or failure to use a scope and sequence (Duke & Mesmer, 2019)."[18] In addition to vertically-aligned, comprehensive, multi-pronged English Language Arts curricula rooted in the Science of Reading, our unique, comprehensive, and systematic commitment to ensuring teacher excellence through ongoing training and support is a key element of our school design.

Equip Academy understands the importance of teacher training to ensure student growth and success. Our unique and robust approach to Educator Excellence is an innovative element of our academic program, and can be seen in our proposed daily, weekly, monthly and annual schedules. As outlined in **FIGURE 5**, on average, we have 34 more individualized teacher observation/live coaching/feedback cycles per year and 10 more days of PD than provided within the local public schools in our target community.

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[15] Professional Development — Albuquerque Public Schools (aps.edu)

[16] **Appendix-G-5-Year-Budget-Plan**: Function 2200 and Object 53330.

[17] Student_Data_0.pdf (naesp.org).

[18] The-Science-of-Reading-for-Emergent-Bilinguals-in-New-Mexico_Jan-2022-.pdf (state.nm.us).

FIGURE 5 - Comparative Time Analysis of Teacher Professional Development

Developing Teacher Excellence		
	Equip Academy	District Schools (Average)[19]
Annually - Professional Training Hours	209	8
Annually - Professional Observations and Feedback Cycles	40	3

INNOVATIVE APPROACH 4 - COMPREHENSIVE LITERACY AND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION PROGRAMS

Equip Academy will provide all students with an intensive and extensive literacy focus currently unavailable to the same degree in local elementary schools, and ensure that the program is aligned with the Structured Literacy Initiative in New Mexico: "In 2020, the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) used the SOR evidence base for changes in literacy practices by launching a statewide literacy initiative, Structured Literacy New Mexico, based on the science of teaching reading approach. This initiative is focused on identifying struggling readers before they fail and supporting teachers through the SOR and Structured Literacy (NMPED, n.d.). The goal is to increase the number of students reading at or above grade level and reduce the number of students requiring reading intervention or special education services. The initiative centers reading instruction in Structured Literacy (IDA, 2014), a SOR approach to instruction with a strong research base."[20] Given the deep reading deficits that have remained chronic in our community (for specific data, please see **FIGURE 3**), we will devote expansive and extended time and bring a multi-modal approach to Literacy instruction, with a total of four to five blocks for Read Aloud/Close Reading, Small Group Reading, Writing, Phonemic Awareness and Phonics, and Independent/Independent Reading each day, depending on grade level. This approach will be critical for our students who are English Learners (ELs) and those with disabilities, and is appropriate for our entire school community given the current academic challenges our community faces and the ambitious goals our families want us to pursue with them. Our approach follows The Science of Reading, which is research- and evidence-based, with years of demonstrating that it works. These components encompass phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. As outlined in **FIGURE 6,** on average, Equip Academy students will have 120 minutes of daily literacy instruction. Therefore, on average, we will uniquely provide 600 weekly minutes of literacy instruction and 22,320 annual minutes. (For more details on our Literacy program, please see **Section C**.) Due to publicly unavailable data on the number of instructional minutes in local public elementary school options devoted solely to literacy instruction daily, weekly, and annually for all learners, we cannot provide a comparison of Equip Academy literacy minutes with those of Westside schools. However, the Albuquerque Public Schools Board's research notes inconsistencies in literacy instructional minutes across the district. In their Goal 1 Presentation from February 21, 2024, the APS Board stated that "[s]chools across the district need to allot the same amount of time for ELA instruction – too many inconsistencies now."[21] Further, in the Albuquerque Public Schools Monitoring Report from February 21, 2024, the Board notes "inequitable blocks of ELA time in different schools throughout the district."[22] Due to our vertically aligned, rigorous, and supportive curriculum, Equip Academy will be able to remain consistent across classes within each grade as well as with our daily schedules to ensure we are offering a minimum of 120 minutes per

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[19] Professional Development — Albuquerque Public Schools (aps.edu).
[20] The-Science-of-Reading-for-Emergent-Bilinguals-in-New-Mexico_Jan-2022-.pdf (state.nm.us).
[21] Goal 1 02-21-23 - Google Drive.
[22] Ibid.

day, which does not include intervention supports for identified students, which will be additional time to support students not yet on grade level.

FIGURE 6 - Comparative Analysis of Literacy Instructional Minute

Time Spent on Literacy		
	Equip Academy	**APS**
Total Daily Minutes	120	Literacy minute inconsistencies and Inequitable blocks of ELA time across schools
Total Weekly Minutes	600	
Total Annual Minutes	22,320	

Community-Wide Love And Celebration Of Literacy

We intend to be a school *of* and *for* the community, and literacy will be a rich and affirming part of how we engage with our community through all years that children attend our school. The plan for that engagement is outlined in **FIGURE 7**, and is discussed in more detail in **Section C.**

FIGURE 7 - Promoting and Celebrating Literacy Examples

SCHOOL FOCUS	ALIGNED FAMILY ACTIVITY
D.E.A.R. Drop Everything And Read (K-5)[23]	Love of Literacy (LOL)
Hispanic Heritage Celebration	Legacy Showcasing: Family Gallery Walk
Sight Word Initiative (K-3)	Achievement Ceremony #1
Indian Pueblo Culture Field Study	Local Native Storyteller/Dancer
Story Elements: Fictional Text	Publishing Party & Author Awards #1
Favorite Book Character Day	Family Author Contest
Informational Text (Non-fiction)	Publishing Party & Author Awards #2
Sight Word Push (K-3)	Achievement Ceremony #2
Library Revamp	Community Summer Book Drive

At Equip Academy, we intend to bring families into the love of literacy taking place in school. With our school value of Partnership (please see **Section A2** for a detailed description of our values), we know that the trifecta of success is when families + students + teachers work together to support students to reach their full potential. (Please see **Appendix U English/Spanish Flyer Samples** for an enrollment example.)

We will host quarterly literacy-rich events for families to celebrate the learning that is happening at home and school. In Quarter 1, we will kick off our series with our Love of Literacy (LOL) Night. Here, families will (1) get a direct view into what our literacy curriculum is, (2) learn about our sight word initiative, (3) and see how they can support their student(s) at home. Through our read aloud/close reading and literacy-rich social studies curriculum, students will learn about and celebrate Hispanic Heritage. Students will learn about leaders from Hispanic/Latino communities and create a visual presentation of a legacy of their choosing. Families will be invited to participate in a gallery walk that showcases students' presentations. We will host our first Award Ceremony for those families whose students have mastered their grade level sight words (and beyond). Through our read aloud/close reading and literacy-rich social studies curriculum, students will also learn about and celebrate Native American Culture and Indigenous Peoples and during the unit, students will visit the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center. We will host a student-led Fictional Text Publishing Party; families will have the opportunity to be audience members where students host a live book reading of the fictional text they have authored and illustrated. We will end the evening with Author Awards, and we will give families an opportunity to write and illustrate a fictional text of their choosing. There will be prizes for the most creative and unique entries. In Quarter 3, students will host a live informational text book

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[23] D.E.A.R. will kick-off in Quarter 1, and be a key part of a child's school day all year, every year.

reading during which they will showcase the research they have completed, with accurate facts, captions, photographs, evidence, and citations. Students and families will have a second opportunity to celebrate students attaining grade-level benchmarks for sight words with our Sight Word Award Ceremony. We will close out the school with a Library Revamp. All books which students have taken home are returned and made ready for the next school year, and families can opt to participate in a community book drive. We will be a literacy-rich institution in which students and families will have ritualized opportunities to partner in our goal of instilling a love of literacy in all students.

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 all core academic components, including English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. We know that access to quality content is critical to student success. Therefore, our curriculum is thought-provoking, engaging, hands-on, and infused with joy. We are inspired by and modeled upon the key findings outlined in the *Opportunity Myth* national study which notes that "[w]hen students did have the chance to work on content that was appropriate for their grade, they rose to the occasion more often than not. Those chances paid off: In classrooms where students had greater access to grade-appropriate assignments, they gained nearly two months of additional learning compared to their peers."[24] Simply stated, the quality of academic content is crucial to student growth. Because our mission is focused on every student, we are further intentional and specific in knowing where students are academically regarding each standard so that we can ensure they get the full benefit of a rigorous curriculum as we support them in reaching their next level of understanding through individualized, small group, and one-to-one instruction. Implementation of the Success for All program's close reading and read aloud curricula have yielded measurable impact on reading growth at many schools, including Success Academy. Small group guided reading, close reading and number stories have proven their deep impact at Success Academy, South Bronx Classical, Harlem Village Academy and Ascend – all schools at which our proposed Head of School worked and led others in the implementation of these curricula. (For more background on these schools and their results, please see **Section C**.)

TYING 5 UNIQUE ELEMENTS TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE 1 UNIFIED GOAL – STUDENT SUCCESS

We will implement quarterly cycles of assessments in English Language Arts and Mathematics to benchmark student progress, inform instructional action plans and teacher coaching, and evaluate the effectiveness of our academic model in consistently achieving ambitious student outcomes. These cycles will be important opportunities to keep families informed about their children's academic progress and to foster partnership with them to support student growth and success throughout the school year. We invest in the development of students' personal growth by creating and presenting class, small group, and individualized goals, and by meeting frequently to discuss progress towards goals. Our approach to data and progress monitoring will be informed by the national expertise of Paul Bambrick-Santoyo, whose *Driven By Data* (Jossey-Bass, 2010) prescribes four key steps.

STEP 1 – Assessments. Equip Academy will implement a reliable and pre-planned assessment cycle to monitor students' academic progress and ensure leaders and teachers proactively address learning needs and gaps. In addition to implementing required state assessments, we will administer quarterly internal math and English Language Arts Interim Assessments (IAs), quarterly Fountas & Pinnell reading check points, regular End-of-Unit Quizzes, problem solving quizzes and assessments, weekly Exit Tickets (ETs), and daily skill trackers. We will use all data to ensure that every student is on track, and to intervene and adjust when they are not. We will utilize the Five Core Drivers for Analysis of Assessment Results from *Driven By Data* (Jossey-Bass, 2010): (1) User-Friendly Reports, (2) Analysis

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[24] TNTP_The-Opportunity-Myth_Web.pdf.

with Test in Hand, (3) Deep Analysis, (4) Analysis Turned Around Immediately, and (5) Continuing Effective Analysis Meetings.

STEP 2 - Data Analysis. We will use our assessment data to conduct quarterly school-wide and monthly grade-level cycles of analysis of student learning. (Please see all dates in our proposed school calendar in **Section F**.) This will give us the information we need to identify learning trends and needs and to continuously train and support teachers in reaching and succeeding with every learner. Our Action Plans will bring us full circle in terms of maximum support for teachers and all students - including ELs and students with disabilities. During this data analysis phase, we will also use *Driven By Data's* Five Core Drivers for Action Planning and Execution: (1) Action Plan, (2 and 3) Successful Implementation and Ongoing Assessment, (4) Accountability, and (5) Engaging Students.

STEP 3 - Action Plan. The data analysis process will enable us to create action plans, inclusive of grade-level, class-level, and individual student goals and strategies to address individual, small group, and whole class learning needs. For example, one of the three first grade classes may have more students below proficiency in math according to our standards- and curriculum-aligned Interim Math Assessment. As a team, we will dive deep into that classroom's test results to find trends in student errors or trends among groups of students. This deep analysis can quickly surface gaps and needs upon which the teacher can then act. In response, and with the support of school leadership, the teacher will create a plan of action such as re-writing and unpacking objectives, creating quick 5-10 minute "Do Nows" for more "at-bats" with concepts where students need support, and creating a differentiation plan (such as a schedule for small group or one-on-one support, homework redesign, or increasing lesson rigor). Based on the action plan, the leadership team will conduct observations and provide feedback and coaching to ensure effective follow-through and gauge the impact on student learning.

STEP 4 - Feedback and Coaching. As noted in the third unique element of our school design, Equip Academy is intended to be a learning institute for educator excellence; therefore, we will conduct weekly feedback and coaching for leaders and teachers to support effective implementation of our instructional model and data-based action plans. For example, a teacher's action plan in kindergarten might focus on differentiation, and the teacher may need guidance to determine who will be supported in small groups, what will be taught, and how progress monitoring for growth targets can most effectively and efficiently be accomplished. When observing and supporting this teacher, the leader "look-fors" might include: (a) identified students are regularly receiving small-group instruction, (b) content matches the goals set for students, (c) teacher is effectively tracking student outputs as a way to monitor progress, and (d) students are making demonstrable progress. A second-grade teacher's data might show a trend that students are scoring low on inferential thinking questions and may need to focus the action plan towards increasing rigor throughout the lesson, providing "think alouds" during which the teacher narrates how she goes about building inferences from her reading, followed by multiple guided practices, followed by independent practice on the same skill. The teacher might get support around purposeful lesson planning, execution, and modeling inferential thinking. When observing this teacher, the leader "look-fors" might include a well-planned lesson with a specific road map of inferential questions and a planned-out means of participation (please see more detail in **Section F.**), as well as how the teacher is tracking student responses and student growth.

BRINGING THE MISSION TO LIFE - WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS, SOUNDS, AND FEELS LIKE

1. Schoolwide Inquiry-Based, Engaging Instruction. Equip Academy will use highly effective engagement techniques that are used nationally and are drawn from critically-recognized work such as *Teach Like a Champion*. These engagement strategies bring students into the center of learning. In addition to Call-and-Response, Songs, Cheers, and Chants, *Teach Like a Champion* offers schools

techniques to deepen learning by enhancing lessons from start to finish. These include, but are not limited to, planned Turn-and-Talks, Wait Time, Cold Call, and Everybody Writes (all described further in **Section F)** along with our discussion of cross-content Habits of Attention and Habits of Discussion). At its core, an inquiry-based, engaging approach is truly student-centered, prioritizing the measurable development of student thinking and voice. In practice, this means that students are talking more than teachers – and that their talking is shaped through a series of questions that propel student thinking and ownership of grade-level standards, skills, and content. When students are doing the academic talking, they are doing the thinking and learning - doing what educators in the highest achieving schools call the "intellectual lift." Walking through the halls of Equip Academy, you will hear students answering factual and analytical questions, thoughtfully agreeing, respectfully disagreeing, and building onto the thoughts and ideas of other students - with a teacher facilitating the progression of that discussion while transferring ownership to students. You will hear and feel joy – all emanating from the student thinking and student work. For example, when discussing the development of a character's feelings and perspective within a piece of literature (a key ELA standard in all grades K-12) and one kindergarten student infers that the character is feeling excited, another student can signal with the "add-on" gesture which they have learned as part of our engaging classroom routines. This signal is a clear indication to the class that the student agrees and wants to build onto their classmate's thought; that student might be heard saying, "I agree that the character is excited because you can hear the excitement in their voice when the character says, 'I can't wait to go!' with an exclamation point." Students will have multiple daily opportunities to engage in such learning within their small and focused working groups that will average in size from 6-8 students.

2. College Preparatory Culture. A staple of Equip Academy's mission is student exposure to higher education and career opportunities. We do this by starting the conversation early in kindergarten. Families want us to normalize the idea of attending college starting in elementary school. According to one recent national study, "For Black, Latino and male seniors, the expectation to attend community college diminished further for each group individually. Since 2019, Black students' expectations dropped from 25% to 17% in 2023; 23% to 18% for males and 34% to 27% for Latino students."[25] Overall, this seminal study showed that "[t]he large themes were students, particularly Black and Hispanic ... wanting more end-to-end support through the process of understanding how college works, how to choose college — not just the application process .... They need the whole system demystified."[26] We intend to provide that support, starting in grades K-5. We will do this in various ways, such as naming classes after colleges and engaging in weekly academic celebrations - including college cheers led by student leaders and attended by families and community members. Each class will study the college for which their classroom is named - they will learn about its mascot and colors (very engaging for the youngest students) and famous alumni, and increasingly as students mature they will learn about the college's majors, experiences, and opportunities as they move into the upper grades. Collectively, this approach creates exposure to various colleges as well as joy and community within the classroom. Built into our school calendar are visits to local colleges such as CNM and UNM. Inspired by our families' dreams for their children, and the college-going culture of successful elementary schools across the nation, we believe that it is never too early to take students on college campus tours. Early exposure to college life normalizes college and fosters a college-bound mindset. Parents will have the opportunity to chaperone and join these annual trips.

3. Prioritized, Comprehensive, Sequenced Educator Training. Informed and supported through comprehensive, sequenced, and prioritized professional development and individual coaching, all teachers will consistently implement standards-based lesson plans from our school-wide curricula that outline (a) learning expectations from start to finish and (b) specific instructional moves to

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[25] Fewer Black, Latino and male students want to go to college, survey shows (nbcnews.com).
[26] Ibid.

ensure all students are progressing toward mastery. This will include a roadmap of high-leverage, open-ended questions that push students' thinking. For example, this roadmap might include such sequenced questions as: What's happening in this story problem? What information do we know? What are we trying to figure out? Based on what we know, will there be more or less than…? What in the problem tells you that? Additionally, all teachers will implement a common tracking system to indicate who is and who is not demonstrating understanding of specific content and skills, which will inform the next day's and week's instructional plans, and as based on whole group, sub-group, and/or individual needs. Charts and reference tools will be visible and accessible to support students through a scaffolded approach, including but not limited to, word walls, teacher models, student examples, and step-by-step directions when needed.

4. Comprehensive Literacy and Language Acquisition Programs. Informed by The Science of Reading and strongly aligned with The Science of Reading for Emergent Bilinguals in New Mexico, this researched- and evidence-based approach has years of demonstrating that it works. "The research evidence is clear that the SOR is effective for English literacy for all students, including emergent bilinguals …. Although there is widespread understanding of the predictive relationship between oral language development and reading comprehension, implementation of explicit and systematic use of strategies to improve oral language and vocabulary needs to be incorporated into daily instruction for emergent bilinguals."[27] Our multiple modality reading instructional components unite the core principles of learning to read - phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension - as students engage in various activities throughout our robust literacy blocks: Phonics and Phonemic Awareness, Independent Reading, Small Group Reading, Writing, and Read Aloud. After a 20-minute Opening Circle during which students build connections and community, students engage in three 30-minute rotations of Phonics / Phonemic Awareness, Independent Reading, and Small Group guided instruction (6-8 students per group). Using Success for All, phonics will be taught in small groups through direct instruction. Our K-1 phonics activities expose students to letter-sounds connections, blending, segmenting, and concepts of print. During Independent Reading, or pleasure reading, students read their just-right, leveled books that are self-selected (with teacher guidance regarding level selections) based on each student's unique interests. During Small Group instruction, a total of 6-8 students practice applying reading skills and receive guided support one level above their independent reading level based on the Fountas & Pinnell reading assessment. During Writing, students participate in a mini-lesson from their teacher on such standards as narrative writing to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, descriptive details, and clear event sequences for grades K-2, demonstrating competency in the skills and strategies of the writing process while describing actions, thoughts or feelings.[28] In grades 3-5, students will conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic, identifying and working with a source related to a research project topic. Then, students will dive into their own books as authors, writing fiction and non-fiction texts throughout the year. During Read Aloud and Close reading, students will develop their comprehension skills, with an emphasis on vocabulary development and oral language that includes both a focus on contextual clues and word etymology. Finally, a love of literacy will ripple beyond the school doors as we bring families into the learning fold through **Community-Wide Celebrations of Literacy** throughout the year. (Please see **FIGURES 7, 8, 9,** and **10.)**

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. Our bar is high because we know that New Mexican students can meet the demands of a rigorous curriculum. Across each grade, regardless of individual

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[27] The-Science-of-Reading-for-Emergent-Bilinguals-in-New-Mexico_Jan-2022-.pdf (state.nm.us).
[28] CCEGBE-New-Mexico-Extended-Common-Core-Standards-ELA.pdf (state.nm.us).

classroom, all teachers will be teaching the same core content using the same, proven pedagogical strategies, using our normed curricula. Access to quality, grade-level content is critical to student success and our goal for students is for them to experience their highest potential. Our curriculum (detailed in **Section C**) is thought-provoking, engaging, hands-on, and infused with joy.

In math, for example, the youngest students may be seen using manipulatives or drawing pictures to solve an ambitious, standards-aligned word problem, while older students might be seen efficiently skip-counting and using sophisticated algorithmic strategies. In each case, teachers will be observing to identify three pre-prioritized ways of solving the problem as seen in students' authentic work, and then showcase those three different strategies as students do the explaining and their peers discuss why each particular strategy was effective. Then, students will have an opportunity to revise their own work and push their learning forward. During read alouds and close reading, students will dive into text above their grade-level; *Reading Reconsidered* and national research is clear that "[t]eachers reading texts - especially the most challenging texts - aloud to students allows them to bring a text to life in all its beauty. It allows teachers to model how the words of a great writer should sound. And it allows students to engage with texts above the level they can read on their own, thus exposing them to greater amounts of complex and inspiring vocabulary, sentence craft, and story craft."[29] Teachers will pose high leverage questions and students will engage in what educators refer to as "productive struggle" during which students are doing the thinking and discussing, all while referring back to the text for evidence and to prove their ideas. According to the *International Journal of Education's Inquiry Method in the Teaching and Learning Process*, "Students will also try to get relevant information about a study or event when they first become interested in it. They will search for evidence, gather evidence, types of evidence, find relevant information, and eventually make generalizations. The importance of the inquiry method is to encourage students to use logical minds on issues, problems, or knowledge and apply the knowledge with the present situation." (Abdul Rahim Abdul Rashid, 1989: 148)[30] Mission-aligned and community-responsive, these curricular resources and approaches will measurably grow student academic achievement in the youngest grades and allow students to dream audaciously and pursue a life of purpose.

A. (2) VISION STATEMENT
State the vision, or the driving force, that guides this school proposal.

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.

The Team's Reasoning and Purpose

Collectively, we have a firm belief that passion, purpose, and pursuit of dreams begin in kindergarten. Therefore, as a school community, we empower students to dream audaciously. We intend for students to internalize the idea that they can become anything they want to be in life - anything is possible for them with hard work, deep curiosity, and a never-ending quest to learn and grow. As a school, and as a team of mission-driven educators, it is our job to equip all students academically to meet the demands and promises of our community's and our students' goals and desires - and to work closely with our families on behalf of their children's measurable successes.

Why Our Team is Committed to Providing a Public Education Platform for Our Proposed Community

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[29] Reading-Reconsidered-Curriculum-Guide-Plus.pdf (teachlikeachampion.org.
[30] (EJ1256067.pdf (ed.gov).

Our team is committed to providing a top-tier education for students on the Westside of Albuquerque because this community currently has limited high-quality public school options. Specifically, Equip Academy is focused on serving the Westside of Albuquerque given the dearth of *high-performing* elementary schools in the area: on the Westside overall, 26.1% of students (approximately 1 in 4) are reading proficiently and 14.3% (approximately 1 in 7) are proficient in math.

Lead founder and proposed Head of School Mercy L. Herrera is a native New Mexican with a fierce commitment to equipping historically-underserved students to find their passion, pursue their dreams, and live out their potential. Over the past decade, Ms. Herrera has taught and led in some of the highest-performing charter schools in the nation. Despite the fact that these schools are in communities serving predominantly low-income families of color, they are outperforming other public schools and even many private schools. For more detail on Ms. Herrera's experiences and these schools' results, please see **Appendices I** and **J**. Now, she intends to bring those experiences and approaches back to her home state to found and lead an exceptional school in Albuquerque. Ms. Herrera has a firm belief that the color of your skin, where you were born and raised, or your family's economic status do not need to determine your potential for success – the quality of your education can and does. Dedicated to and experienced in delivering academic success for all students, Ms. Herrera earned her Master of Science for Teachers degree from the Progressive Education Institute through Pace University. She also earned a Master of Arts in Religion and Disability Studies from Yale University and a Signed Language Interpreting degree from The University of New Mexico.

With the Founding Team which will transition into the Governing Board, Ms. Herrera is dedicated to fostering a holistic approach to learning, ensuring that all students are constantly growing, consistently striving to close achievement gaps, and creating an environment where deeper learning is constantly accelerating. She knows from experience that quality education is rooted in educator excellence and deep engagement with rigorous curricula, inquiry-based instruction, and aligned pedagogy. She is passionate about and experienced in coaching and supporting teachers to reach their personal and professional goals. Through comprehensive, sequenced, dynamic and well-executed professional development, Ms. Herrera has empowered teachers with job-embedded professional skill-building and practical application to planning and instruction. Her 12 years of training led to student achievement rates on state assessments that consistently surpassed those of local schools. For more detail on those performance results, please see **Appendix J**. A specialist in team development, Ms. Herrera has facilitated group learning experiences that leave colleagues inspired and energized, with renewed vision, purpose, and immediately implementable instructional skills. Combined with a data-driven and child-centered approach, this has led to continuous improvement in student outcomes in the schools where she has worked. Ms. Herrera's bottom-line is the same as that of the Founding Team and Governing Board: ensuring students are prepared academically so that they can find their passion, pursue their dreams, and live out their potential.

Proposed Founding Board Members

Vaadra Chavez is a human resources expert with nearly 30 years of experience. Ms. Chavez has a proven track record of success in scaling and operationalizing start-ups and is an expert at program/project/team management, operational frameworks, and diversity. She currently serves as the Chief Human Resource Officer for Securin, an Albuquerque-headquartered cybersecurity start up. Prior to joining Securin, she served in several key leadership roles, including Personnel Officer of First Choice Community Healthcare, Director of Human Resources at RiskSense, and Director of Human Resources at Lavu Inc. In addition, Ms. Chavez spent 20+ years in various Corporate HR Roles with Intel Corporation. She has lived on Albuquerque's Westside for 25+ years and is deeply committed to serving her community. She has been appointed by the Governor of New Mexico to serve on the Board of Directors of the National Hispanic Cultural Center Foundation, where she currently holds the

position of Vice-President; additionally, she serves on the Central New Mexico Workforce Board, and is on the Advisory Board of the Hispanic Scholarship Fund. She is prior President of the Hispano Philanthropic Society of United Way of Central NM and served for multiple years as the New Mexico Site Intel Latino Network President and as U.S Cross Site Chair for the Intel Latino Network. In recognition for her commitment to community and her professional accomplishments, Ms. Chavez has been named a finalist for the 2024 Oncon Global 'Top 100 Human Resource Professional' and was named a '2015 Woman of Influence' by *Albuquerque Business First* magazine.

Dr. Renee Delgado-Riley, born and raised New Mexican, is the Director of Assessment & Research, Division of Student Life at the University of Oregon, and she is passionate about leveraging reliable data based on equitable assessments. Throughout her career in Student Affairs, she has spearheaded Assessment & Research initiatives, leading projects aimed at uncovering and addressing early obstacles to student success, as well as evaluating the impact of interventions. This critical work informs best practices for engaging with students, inspired by her own journey as a first-generation native New Mexican student overcoming challenges accessing higher education. Her expertise lies in facilitating culturally responsive assessment and research with the goal of bridging historic achievement gaps among traditionally marginalized student populations. Dr. Delgado-Riley employs a comprehensive approach, utilizing diverse methodologies to enact systemic changes that lead to actionable improvements and equitable outcomes. She earned her Ph.D. in Educational Psychology from the University of New Mexico, where her dissertation research identified strategies to bridge historical achievement gaps in Albuquerque's elementary schools through growth modeling. She holds an MA in Educational Psychology and BA in Psychology from the University of New Mexico. Dr. Delgado-Riley joined the Founding Board driven by her commitment to narrowing the achievement gap, especially among Hispanic students, and advocacy for students with learning disabilities—a cause close to her heart, given her personal experiences with her child's complex learning challenges in local public schools.

Sara Fitzgerald is a collaborative problem-solver who revels in the details. She currently serves as the Senior Vice President of Communications and Education Policy at the Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce. Her experience is extensive - from Director of External Affairs at Mission Achievement and Success Charter School to Legislative Analyst for the NM House Education Committee and Cabinet Director for the Office of Governor Martinez. She holds a BA in Foreign Affairs and French Language and Literature from the University of Virginia. Ms. Fitzgerald has witnessed first-hand both the inequalities of education within our state and what a successful charter school is capable of accomplishing with and for its students. She is eager to share her expertise as a Founding Board member and push the envelope to show what is possible within New Mexico.

M. Alejandra Grijalva-Becerra is a proud first-generation American and native New Mexican who brings a wealth of passion and expertise to the Founding Board. Raised with the values of hard work and education instilled by immigrant parents, she embarked on a path of academic excellence, culminating in a BS in Finance and International Management with a minor in Spanish and an MS in Public Policy with a concentration in Education Policy, both from the University of New Mexico. During her tenure with the NM Legislative Finance Committee, focusing on the education sector, she honed her skills in program evaluation, data analysis, and project management. Fluent in English and Spanish, Ms. Grijalva-Becerra excels in fostering effective communication and translating complex information. Currently serving as Business Intelligence Analyst for the local non-profit Centro Sávila, she has demonstrated expertise in fundraising, grant writing, and communications, combining academic rigor with practical experience to drive impactful change. Her dedication to advocating for community voices in policy decisions is evident in the 25 youths who have successfully completed Centro Sávila's Youth Advocacy Program under her direction over the past two years. With deep roots

in the Westside community, Ms. Grijalva-Becerra is committed to leveraging her expertise for the betterment of education, aligning seamlessly with the mission of Equip Academy of New Mexico.

Janet Leung is the Director of Business Development at UNM Hospitals. She manages financial strategy for the hospitals, and, as a member of the executive team, ensures the financial viability of the institution's future needs. Originally from Mississippi, Ms. Leung believes that a great education and early reading can drastically change a child's life for the better and has worked in various finance roles while volunteering on weeknights and weekends to mentor and tutor children. Ms. Leung holds a Bachelor of Business Administration in Financial Consulting and a Bachelor of Science in Economics from Southern Methodist University. She is also a founding member of the Southern Methodist University Asian Pacific Islander Alumni Board.

How the Team Intends to Interact with Proposed Community to Provide Their Children with Better Academic Outcomes

Equip Academy holds five educational principles as the defining pillars of our community: Excellence; Questioning; Urgency; Independence; and Partnership. (For more detail, please see **FIGURE 12** and **FIGURE 13**.) One of our values, Partnership – is rooted in our belief that the triangle of school success lies between teachers, students, and families. With our powers combined, possibilities for student potential become endless. Therefore, in Partnership, we have a comprehensive, four-part plan to maximize opportunities for family involvement that will contribute to strong academic outcomes for every student.

1. Communication and Community For Student Success.   At Equip Academy, we know that a "partnership is a two-way street. Teachers must be competent and committed to educating every child. Schools must commit to keeping parents in the loop and respecting the views and values of the families they serve."[31] Our families have expressed the view that they want to know how their students are doing, and they want a school that challenges and supports their students at the highest levels. We ensure that all families are up-to-date on all school-related and student-specific details. We believe in a multitude of communication options because we are passionate about increased family involvement**. Daily**, we will use an app such as ClassDojo (a phone/computer based application where parents and teachers can communicate directly, school can send information, parents can respond and schedule meetings). ClassDojo is a particularly effective resource for our community which has approximately 36 home languages because it automatically translates to the family's home language. **Weekly**, we will use homework, flyers, posters and in-person reminders on such items as school events, conference times, and assessment days. We will also send home weekly updates to keep families informed on how their student is doing. **Monthly**, there will be a calendar provided in our families' home languages that shows what is in store for students and families (i.e., literacy celebrations, school events, assessments, conferences). **Quarterly,** we will send out report cards and host family academic conferences to keep parents informed on students' progress. **Annually**, we will have consistent family events; please see details below and our proposed school calendar in **Section F**. We will frequently and clearly communicate all events and our specific focus areas detailed below.

2. Building Community, Fostering Belonging and Celebrating Success

We are dedicated to centering communities for students, families, and teachers. We will have various events throughout the year to come together. Our goal is to infuse joy through learning and celebrate student achievement and success.

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[31] [Rethinking The Parent-School Compact After The Pandemic (forbes.com)](.).

(a) Community Circles. Key to cultivating joy, community, and a sense of belonging among students and staff, we will meet as a school to celebrate things such as academic growth, school values, and school spirit. We will host a total of eight Community Circles annually - all centered on the students and their growth and success, and families will be invited to attend. During Community Circles, we will launch our focused school values - excellence, questioning, urgency, independence, partnership, and perseverance - as well as others such as kindness, integrity, and agency. We will also provide awards based on who has been exuding the focused school value. During Community Circles, there might be a brief presentation on an important topic such as Hispanic History month, Black History month, Indigenous Peoples Day, or respond to anything relevant happening in the community that could impact students.

(b) Spirit Days. Our 10 Spirit Days are a time to build community by having fun and being silly. For example, students will be able to participate in crazy sock day, book character day, crazy hair/hat day, ugly sweater day, 100 days of learning celebration, college day, jersey/sports day, heritage day, fancy schmancy day, and pajama day. This collectiveness makes students happy and brings joy to our school community. Please see a sample list of additional community events in **FIGURE 8** and **FIGURE 9.**

(c) Celebrating Community and Literacy. At Equip Academy, students work hard and we want to celebrate that hard work. There will be multiple opportunities for students to be celebrated for their learning and their effort. For example, we will have three Sight Word Achievement Ceremonies and two Publishing Parties with Author Awards Ceremonies, as our authors (students) share final drafts for their writing pieces. One child in first grade might present informational text about an ocean life animal and another in fifth grade might present informational text on a historical figure**.** We will have an opportunity for families to write a fictional book, submit it, and earn family awards. We will have a "drop everything and read" event as a way to emphasize the importance and joy of reading. We will hold specific family events, focused on our schoolwide priority for and in celebration of literacy; for details, please see **FIGURE 7**; for our calendar, please see **Section F**; for English/Spanish Flyer Community Event Samples see **Appendix U.**

(d) Educator Excellence Celebrations. Students at Equip Academy have teachers serving as pillars for them, motivating them, inspiring them, and guiding them to do their best. Teachers work extremely hard, are prepared at a high level, and continuously build their toolbox to ensure student growth. We know that one of the greatest drivers of success is the teaching staff, because student success is predicated on teacher success. We are dedicated to celebrating teachers; the teacher celebration plan will be more fully fleshed out pending charter approval during the planning year as we continue to establish community partnerships and solicit input and resources for opportunities to recognize our teachers. In addition to events such as Teacher Appreciation Week, teachers will have the autonomy to propose and teach a passion project. Teachers will submit proposals for a plan of execution and will have a showcase opportunity at the end of the school year.

FIGURE 8 - Ways we Will Build Community, Foster Belonging, and Celebrate Success

Community Circles, Spirit Days, and Celebrating Success
August 27 - Love of Literacy Night Family Event 1
September 10 - Whole School Community Circle 1 & Crazy Sock Day
September 24 - Literacy Night Family Event 2: Legacy Showcasing & Sight Word Achievement Ceremony 1
October 8 - Whole School Community Circle 2: Class Cheer Showcase
October 31 - Book Character Day

November 26 - Whole School Community Circle 3 and Crazy Hair/Hat Day
November 26 - Family Events: Thanksgiving Dinner / Sight Word Ceremony 2
December 17 - Whole School Community Circle 4 and Ugly Sweater Day
January 12 - 100 Days of Learning Celebration
January 21 - Fictional Publishing Party and Author Awards
February 13 - Drop Everything And Read
February 18 - Whole School Community Circle 5 and College Day
March 11 - Whole School Community Circle 6 and Jersey/Sports Day
April 9 - Family Author Awards
April 15 - Whole School Community Circle 7 and Heritage Day
April 15 - Informational Text Publishing Party and Author/Sight Word Ceremony 3
May 13 - Whole School Community Circle 8, Fancy Schmancy Day, and School Dance
May 26 - Library Revamp
May 27 - Teacher Passion Project Showcase

3. Academic Performance Focused on Student Success. We will keep parents up-to-date on student academic performance through regular homework notes organized within personalized student folders, phone conversations between teachers and parents (tracked by teachers and monitored by school leadership), four formal report cards, and a minimum of three in-person parent-teacher conferences. Teachers and administrators will consistently be aware of students' academic progress and will communicate with families regarding ways to support their child at home.

(a) **Family Information Sessions.** To ensure parents are aware of our academic focus, we will host multiple information sessions to inform families about our curriculum design and how best to support their students. A month prior to school starting, we will host registration and materials pick-up days for enrolled students to ensure readiness for day one. We will provide supportive materials for students to practice before the year starts, such as letter identification and name writing, as well as logistical items such as who their class teacher is. We will also host a love of literacy night to give parents insight into our literacy curriculum and instructional design, demonstrating what our curriculum is like in an interactive way. For example, a family of a student in kindergarten would experience a phonics and sight word night while a family of a student in third grade might experience a novel study night. These meetings will outline what we are doing for each of these curricular components and how families can best support students at home. For instance, a family of a first grade student might learn how to read fiction vs. non-fiction texts with and to students and would be given a short list of encouraged-to-ask, genre-based questions with their student at home. We will launch our sight word program and inform families about our awards ceremonies. We will host a family's mathematician walking tour so that they can see our math program in action, with a debrief session and deeper dive into our math curriculum - all great opportunities for parents to ask questions and learn how we are specifically supporting their students' success.

(b) **Family Conferences.** We will host three full conferences for all students and one additional conference for students who are potentially at risk for not satisfying grade-level requirements and thus at risk of not earning promotion. Promotion in Doubt (PID) students or students who are struggling will be given more intensive instruction, with frequent assessment to see how we can best adjust our practice and focus to meet their needs.

(c) **Assessments.** While not a complete list of our assessments (please see **Section H** for full details), our mission's specific goals are literacy-focused and inquiry-based. Therefore, we will outline for families when their students will be assessed for reading, using the Fountas &

Pinnell reading assessment, and math, with our Cognitive Guided Instruction assessment. There will be three full reading assessments for all students and an additional assessment cycle for students not meeting benchmarks and who received more MLSS, 2-3 level intervention support.

(d) **Data Studies.** We will conduct four in-depth data studies each year. While not an exhaustive list of data studies (as we will conduct smaller, and more focused data studies for assessments throughout the year) this major data analysis series will look at reading and math assessments, standards-based data, and other critical assessments that align near this time frame. For an exhaustive list of assessments, please see **Section H.**

FIGURE 9 - Academic Transparency and Success Accountability

Academic Family Updates, Assessments & Data Studies
July 1-4 - Registration and Materials Pick-up for Enrolled Students
August 1 - Mandatory Family Orientation and Meet the Teacher
August 27 - Love of Literacy Night Family Event 1
September 11-12 - Number Stories (CGI) Math Assessment 1
September 15-30 - Reading Assessment Cycle 1
September 24 - Literacy Night Family Event #2: Legacy Showcasing & Sight Word Achievement Ceremony 1
October 1 - 2 - Reading Assessment Cycle 1 (continued)
October 8 - Data Study 1
October 9 - Family Conference and Report Cards 1
October 22 - Family Mathematician Walking Tour
November 26 - Family Events: Thanksgiving Dinner/Sight Word Ceremony 2
December 1-12 - Reading Assessment Cycle 2
December 17 - Data Study 2
December 18 - Family Conferences and Report Cards 2
January 21 - Fictional Publishing Party & Author Awards
February 18- 27 - Reading Assessment Cycle 2+ (PID students only)
March 10 - Report Card 3 Distribution
March 11 - Data Study 3
March 12 - PID Family Conferences and Report Cards 3 (for identified students)
April 14 - 16 Number Stories (CGI) Math Assessment 2
April 23 - 30 - Reading Assessment Cycle 3
May 1-8 - Reading Assessment 3 (continued)
May 13 - Data Study 4
May 15 - Family Conferences and Report Cards 4

4. Community Partnerships for Student Success. We have built and will continue to build strong community partnerships to continuously support, strengthen, and celebrate student success as outlined in **FIGURE 10.**

(a) **College Visits**. We are partnering with colleges and universities such as Central New Mexico (CNM), University of New Mexico (UNM), and New Mexico State University (NMSU) for field study visits.

(b) Culture and Community Field Studies.[32] Students will attend Field Studies to the Hispanic Cultural Center and Indian Cultural Center, and we will work to establish partnerships with other arts and culture centers of NM as a way for students to gain awareness of the beauty and richness of our state and connect to their culture and identity**;** we will also partner with Bosque School during science units to study native wildlife in its natural habitat in the Bosque. Equip Academy will bring the community into the school as well. We will bring in community speakers to share their stories about what they are passionate about and give them purpose during our Purpose and Passion opening and closing series of the year.

(c) Before/After-School Programming. We look forward to partnering with a local after school care program such as Atrisco Companies to provide after school care for students. We know that families' work schedules go beyond the school day and we intend to offer a place where students are safe and supported.[33]

(d) Saturday Library Visits. One major resource that will support students in their reading is their use of local public libraries. We visit local libraries as a community Library Field Study after the first reading assessment and the last reading assessment .

FIGURE 10 - Sample of Community Partnerships

Culture and Community Partnerships Calendar
August 29 - Purpose and Passion Guest Speaker 1
September 30 - Hispanic Cultural Center Field Study
October 4 - Saturday Library Visit 1
November 21 - Indian Pueblo Cultural Center Field Study
February 6 - CNM Campus Visit
March 6 - UNM Campus Visit
April 3 - Bosque School Field Study
May 9 - Saturday Library Visit 2
May 22 - Passion and Purpose Guest Speaker 2

Equip Academy's Program Will Serve the Proposed Community in Unique and Innovative Ways

Currently, families in the proposed communities on the Westside do not have access to a high performing elementary school; student proficiency rates are far lower than the Albuquerque Public Schools average as depicted in **FIGURE 11**.

FIGURE 11 - Student Demographics and Proficiency Rates in Proposed Community[34]

Student Subgroup	ELA/Reading Proficiency in Target Area Schools	APS ELA/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%

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[32] **Appendix-G-5-Year-Budget-Plan**: Line Item 58, Fund 11000, Function 1000, Object 55817. Allocation Plan: Year 1: $4,000.00, Year 2: $6,000.00, Year 3, $8,000.00 Year 4: $10,000.00 and Year 5: $12,000.00 for Student Travel.

[33] Ms. Herrera met with Atrisco Companies' Business Development Manager, Crystal Garcia on Tuesday, April 2, 2024; Ms. Garcia expressed excitement about a potential partnership.

[34] Workbook: NM-MSSA Results (tableau.com).

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%**

In our proposed school community, on average, 26.1% of elementary students are proficient in reading and 14.3% are proficient in math. This means that 74% of students are going to middle school behind in reading and 86% behind in math. In this community, student proficiency rates are 14% below their district-wide counterparts in reading and 11% below in math. When students have not achieved reading and math proficiency by the time they enter middle school, they continue to fall further and further behind, struggling in high school or not graduating at all. On average, 14% of adult residents from our proposed school community have a bachelor's degree or higher, far below the national average of 37%. Equip Academy is designed to address this challenge in unique, innovative, and proven ways.

1. Nationally Experienced Educational Leader. Equip Academy's proposed Head of School, Mercy L. Herrera, was born and raised in New Mexico and comes with a great deal of national educational experience in some of the highest achieving charter schools serving high-needs communities. Trained in these high-performing charter schools, 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. From this professional work, Ms. Herrera brings experience with a wide range of curriculum and is deeply experienced with what is most supportive for our target community here in Albuquerque. Ms. Herrera 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 by providing them with valuable teaching strategies to support all learners. Ms. Herrera has a fierce commitment to equipping historically-underserved students to find their passion, pursue their dreams, and live out their potential. She knows first-hand what our children are up against academically and that they *can* achieve. Please see **Appendix K** for recommendations from past employers that speak to Ms. Herrera's educational leadership expertise and relentless drive and passion for students and student achievement.

2. Robust Commitment to Educator Excellence. Teachers work hard to prepare themselves to serve their students at Equip Academy. Each year, our teachers will take part in our three-week Summer Institute for Educator Excellence (totaling 97.5 hours of professional development). Quarterly, teachers will attend 2.5 hours of data study that aligns with our assessment calendar to know exactly where their students are and then use the data to inform their instructional decisions and practices going forward. Weekly, teachers will attend 2.5 hours of professional development which includes: analyzing instructional units and internalizing lesson plans, training and deliberate practice with core instructional and classroom culture techniques, analyzing student work, and grade-level planning meetings. (see **Section II, D4** for full PD description). Weekly, teachers are observed and live-coached to ensure that they are teaching from an engaging and inquiry-based approach and curriculum is being executed with fidelity, accumulating to 40 observation and feedback cycles per year per teacher.

3. Literacy and Language Focus. Equip Academy is committed to ensuring far more than 26% of students are proficient in reading. For our literacy focused, mission specific goal, please see **Section 1B.** As detailed in **Section C** above, our approach to curriculum selection, academic scheduling, and multiple modality instructional blocks are all research-based and practice-proven. Further, with a

leveled and themed library in every classroom[35], students can "bookshop" on their reading level weekly for books to take home to read for homework and to read during daily independent reading. During read aloud, close reading and writing, students are exposed to a wide variety of genres, high-level vocabulary, and opportunities to build their oral language skills.

4. High Expectations for All. We have a deep belief that all students can meet the demands of the curriculum; our job is to equip them to do so. We have a high bar for students and achievement, and our school values reflect that.

FIGURE 12 - EQUIP Core Values

E	Excellence	**We strive for excellence in *all* we do.** We have high-quality lessons and we do high-quality work. A quality education inspires ownership of one's learning. Through meaningful experiences, joyfulness, community and collaboration, we meet the demands of the high bar set before us.
Q	Questioning	**We question until we understand**. We ensure engagement in every classroom, every day. Authentic engagement is at the heart of learning. We are not afraid to ask questions. Dialogue and debate provide opportunities to actively listen, develop new ways of thinking, self-reflect, and take intellectual risks, ultimately attaining a higher level of understanding.
U	Urgency	**We move with urgency.** Every minute counts and we don't get distracted when it comes to our learning time. Everything we do is with purpose and intention.
I	Independence	**We are independent.** Independent thinking is essential to self-discovery, creativity, and growth. We foster meaningful, independent thinking through engagement with high-quality curriculum and by focusing on evidence-based learning, reasoning, and evaluation. Ultimately, we are aiming for student independence.
P	Partnership & Perseverance	**We learn and grow together.** We believe in the trifecta of success: Teachers + Students + Families = maximum student potential. We believe that with our powers combined, possibilities for success become endless. AND **We don't give up**. We embody perseverance by adopting a growth mindset and can-do attitude. When faced with difficulties, we keep trying, we learn from our mistakes, and we intentionally work to find new solutions.

For a description of these values for each essential community member, please see below; for more detail on the implementation of these principles, please see **Section A3.**

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[35] **Appendix-G-5-Year-Budget-Plan**: Object Codes: 56111, 56112, 56113, 56118 as well as throughout the budget.

FIGURE 13 -EQUIP Core Values Meaning for Teachers, Families and Students

TEACHERS	FAMILIES	STUDENTS
EXCELLENCE		
As educators, we show up every day prepared at a high level to ensure we provide the highest quality education that will inspire students to take ownership of their learning and do their very best. We hold *all* students to a high standard because we know they can achieve the demands set before them. We know that professionalism is key to our success and growth. We are kind, thoughtful, and considerate to others.	**As families,** we know that our children are held to a high standard at Equip Academy. We strive for 100% on-time daily attendance. We do our part to ensure our children show up every day and on time in order to give them the opportunity to do their very best and reach their highest potential. We demonstrate excellence in our actions towards all members of the school community by being kind, thoughtful, and collaborative.	**As students,** we show up every day and on time because in order for us to learn and grow, we must be present. We try our very best in all things we do and we work hard in all of our classes. We know that sometimes learning is difficult but we will not give up. We demonstrate excellence in our actions towards all members of our school community by being kind, thoughtful and collaborative.
QUESTIONING		
As educators, we question until we understand. We know that teaching is not easy, so we ask questions when we are unsure. We foster engagement in every classroom, every day because authentic engagement is at the heart of learning. We are not afraid to ask questions. Dialogue and debate provide opportunities to actively listen, develop new ways of thinking, self-reflect, and take intellectual risks, ultimately attaining a higher level of understanding.	**As families**, we know that our children will be asked questions throughout the school day, that they will be expected to answer to the best of their ability, and that they will always get help from their teachers and peers to grow and learn as they are doing serious and important grade-level work. We encourage our children to be curious learners, and we ask questions at home as well. We also question how our students are doing academically, socially, and emotionally.	**As students,** with our teachers guiding us through big and small questions, we use our brains all day to do work that puts us on the road to a bright future. We participate actively every day. We know that we may not understand right away, so we ask questions until we understand. We always take time to think about our answers fully, and we respectfully agree or disagree with one another, add on to each other's responses, and are eager to share our work and ideas. We work to find and develop strong answers that include evidence to prove and show our best thinking.
URGENCY		
As educators, we value the time with our students and aim to make every minute count. Everything we do is with purpose and intention. We remain on track with our scope-and-sequence. We adhere to the schedule and utilize resources like timers and countdowns to stick to our daily	**As families,** we know that our children are held to a high standard. Our goal is to support our children through this process so that they do their very best. We do this by encouraging our students to move with intention and purpose, to remain focused on nightly homework, show up on	**As students,** we move with purpose and intention. We want to learn and grow, and in order to do that, we must remain focused and on task. We monitor our actions and our work to ensure it is of the utmost quality. We do not rush but move quickly and diligently in order to get the best

schedule to remain on task. We actively monitor ourselves and students to hold accountability and work hard with urgency for growth.	time, and work productively with support in getting all assignments and projects in on time.	out of our education. We also move urgently to complete our tasks and assignments on time.
INDEPENDENCE		
As educators, we know that independent thinking is essential to students' self-discovery, creativity, and growth. We foster meaningful participation through high-quality curriculum and by focusing on ensuring that students are building critical reading and thinking skills through evidence-based learning, reasoning, and evaluation. We are proactive and grow our skills in order to find new solutions. We engage in data analysis and action planning so that we know where our students are academically and what more they need to continue growing.	**As families,** we help our children when they need help with homework and reading. We do not give them the answer; instead, we ask them questions based on supportive resources that the school has provided. We support our children's success by encouraging them to come up with answers on their own, doing the work of true learning.	**As students,** we take pride in our learning by actively listening, thinking about what is being said by our teachers and our peers, and sharing our thoughts and opinions. We participate by listening, evaluating, agreeing and disagreeing, explaining and proving our ideas. We do this by raising our hand, adding on to our peers' ideas as well as expanding ideas and providing thoughtful evidence. We strive to ultimately do things on our own so that we become critical, independent thinkers.
PARTNERSHIP		
For us as educators, we maintain open, frequent communication with students to ensure that they are aware of what they are doing well and what they can work on to make needed growth. We also maintain open, frequent communication with families about how students are doing and how they can be supported at home. We work together as a team to share best practices and support one another to achieve shared goals for all our students.	**For us as families,** we bring our children to school daily and on time to ensure they are not missing any learning time. We are aware of how our children are doing academically and socially. We ensure homework is completed thoughtfully and fully each night. We make sure our children read every day at home. We engage in regular communication with our children's teachers and participate in school celebrations and events.	**For us as students,** we wake up on time to go to school every day. We come prepared with all the materials for the day. With our teachers' help, we try our best. We work on our goals, and we help our community and friends every day. We complete our homework and reading logs every night independently or with our family's help.

As educators, we embody perseverance by adopting a growth mindset and can-do attitude. When faced with difficulties, we keep trying, we learn from our mistakes, and we intentionally work to build our teacher toolbox and not give up when it gets hard. We embrace professional development, observations, feedback, and coaching.	**As families,** we know that learning is a process. Every day, we help our children to the very best of our ability. We help our children to stay focused on their school success, encouraging them to take on any goal they set. We know that if they do not get something right away, they can and will. If we get off track with attendance and on-time arrival, we actively work to course correct for the success of our children.	**As students,** we embody perseverance by adopting a growth mindset and can-do attitude. When faced with difficulties, we keep trying, learn from our mistakes, and intentionally work to find new solutions. We know that learning is an active process and that sometimes we might understand and sometimes we might not, and that is okay, because we never give up. We try our best every day, and we work on our goals, and get extra help to learn and grow. We don't give up!

A. (3) UNIQUENESS AND INNOVATION

Provide **clear evidence** demonstrating the **uniqueness, innovation,** and significant contribution that the educational program will bring to public education. (NMSA 22-8B-3)

Unique and Innovative ways Equip Academy Contributes to Local NM Public Education Environment

According to the *U.S. News and World Report*, New Mexico public education is ranked 50th nationally, below all 49 other states.[36] Proficiency in reading among New Mexico's 3rd-5th graders is currently 40%, and their math proficiency is currently 25.7%.[37] These percentages are far below national percentages and represent a chronic crisis for our students, families, and state.

Our school is designed to measurably accelerate the achievement of an historically under-served, under-performing student population in a sustainable way. 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 accomplish. Our five core innovative approaches have been developed specifically to address the needs of the local NM public education environment and change the outcomes for students who need and deserve access to a high-quality educational experience that will transform their life options and equip them to pursue a life of promise and purpose.

Inquiry-Based, Engaging Instruction

Students 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 - and so that they can 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

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[36] https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/rankings/education.
[37] Workbook: NM-MSSA Results (tableau.com).

spaces for collaborative and authentic learning. When students think independently, they start to think critically, instilling a natural love of learning.

Expanded Time for Literacy and Language Acquisition

We ensure an intensive, extensive, and expanded 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. We intend 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 and chronic reading deficits in our community, we devote extended time to 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 critical for all learners, particularly English Learners and students with disabilities.

Rigorous Curriculum with National Record of Success

We offer state-of-the art, evidence-based, nationally-normed, and vertically-aligned curriculum for English Language Arts, 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 joy-infused. Mission-aligned and community-responsive, these resources and approaches measurably grow academic achievement and allow students to dream audaciously and pursue a life of purpose.

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 is introduced to careers and universities; we prioritize taking each grade level on annual field studies[38] to various college campuses across the region, with invitations for our families to join. To nurture the connection between life dreams and school success, each year we expose students to the plethora of options for education and career paths so they can find and pursue their interests and passions.

Comprehensive, Systematic, Educator Training

For every student to learn, every teacher must be trained, coached, and supported. We believe that increasing student achievement must start with leaders supporting teachers to facilitate high-impact learning experiences in order to generate student success. Therefore, comprehensive, systematic job-embedded cycles of professional development are a unique hallmark of our design. Teacher professional development ensures that all teachers internalize and implement our curriculum and inquiry-based instructional approach and have strong classroom systems and routines. All teachers and leaders are trained in the use of data for instructional planning and accelerating student growth; all teachers receive feedback and coaching.

A School Design that Responds to the Needs of Our Community

The needs of our community are most apparent in three places: (1) the chronically low academic achievement in the community, (2) the generational impact of that academic underachievement on the educational levels and economic stressors on the adult community, and (3) the overwhelming voices of our community saying that they want more and better for their children.

(1) Chronically Low Academic Achievement. **FIGURE 14** details academic achievement results over a four-year period, as measured by NM-MSSA state assessments, and specifically within Albuquerque.

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[38] **Appendix-G-5-Year-Budget-Plan**: Line Item 58, Fund 11000, Function 1000, Object 55817. Allocation Plan: Year 1: $4,000.00, Year 2: $6,000.00, Year 3, $8,000.00 Year 4: $10,000.00 and Year 5: $12,000.00 for Student Travel.

FIGURE 14 - Average Proficiency Rates 2019-2023 for K-5 Students in Albuquerque Public Schools

	2022-2023[39]	2021-2022[40]	2021-2020[41]	2019-2021[42]
ELA Proficiency	40.0%	35.4%	23%	34%
Math Proficiency	25.7%	25.5%	.06%	20%

Albuquerque Public Schools saw a 4.6% increase in ELA proficiency in 2023, however students continue to underperform, with less than half of students (40%) demonstrating proficiency in reading according to MSSA results. This heavily contributes to school failure in the upper grades and lack of readiness for college or career by senior year. For example, John Adams Middle School's proficiency rates are 19% in reading and 6% in math; West Mesa High School's proficiency rates are 26% in reading and 4% in math. The roots of these challenges lie in the foundational elementary years.

According to the New Mexico Association for Education of Young Children (NMAEYC), "A national report on child well-being ranks New Mexico last in the country again — sunk, in part, by deteriorating academic outcomes in reading and math.... [t]he report's bottom line remained dismal for New Mexico — a No. 50 ranking among states, just behind Louisiana at 49 and Mississippi at 48."[43] Our inquiry-based model, expanded time for literacy, high-quality curriculum, college-prep culture, and teacher training and support will transform achievement outcomes for students; our model allows us to (a) always know how students are doing academically and in direct response to state standards and national reading standards, (b) inform how we will support all students, including ELs and students with disabilities, to meet their academic goals, and (c) ensure that we focus consistently on student mastery of the knowledge and skills needed to reach their academic and life goals.

(2) Generational Impact of Academic Underachievement. Students who are not reading and doing mathematics at grade level are less likely to have meaningful access to or pursue higher education. Further, the connection between a state's economic health and the status of its education across its citizenry is clear: "States can build a strong foundation for economic success and shared prosperity by investing in education. Providing expanded access to high quality education will not only expand economic opportunity for residents, but also likely do more to strengthen the overall state economy than anything else a state government can do. . . . The connection between education and income is strong. A high school diploma, technical college certificate, or college degree not only increases one's skills and productivity, but signals to employers that the individual is motivated and completes tasks. A more educated individual is more likely to participate in the job market, to have a job, to work more hours, and to be paid more, and less likely to be unemployed (French and Fisher 2009). But the benefits of education go beyond the economic returns. Higher levels of education also correspond to improved health and lower rates of mortality, and lower rates of crime (Grossman and Kaestner 1997; Lleras-Muney 2005; Lochner and Moretti 2004)."[44]

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[39] Workbook: NM-MSSA Results (tableau.com).
[40] Workbook: NM-MSSA Results (tableau.com).
[41] DLM-ESSA-2021.xlsx (live.com).
[42] Webfiles-2019-Proficiencies-All-by-State-by-District-by-School.xlsx (live.com).
[43] Garcia, Michelle. "Worst for child well-being: New Mexico 50th in annual Kids Count report." 15 June 2023.
[44] Berger, Noah, and Peter Fisher. "A Well-Educated Workforce Is Key to State Prosperity Report." 22 August 22 2013. Economic Analysis Network.

Confronting and Overcoming Academic Risk Factors

FIGURE 15 - Adverse Child Experiences, NM and US, 2021

Adverse Child Experiences, NM and US, 2021
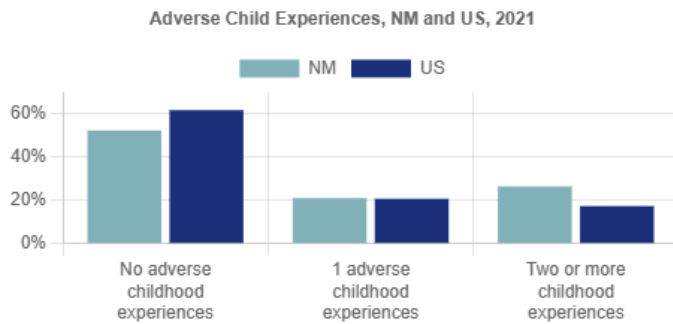
To reach our ambitious goals, we first recognize and then design a program to address the needs of our school community. "Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are potentially traumatic experiences faced by children in the household, including abuse and neglect, divorce, substance abuse, domestic violence, and bullying. The experience of ACEs can have long-term negative impacts, including lower educational success; higher rates of physical and psychological illness and developmental problems; higher health care costs; higher rates of risk behaviors including depression, obesity and smoking; and more interactions with the criminal justice system. New Mexico children experience higher rates of ACEs than the general U.S. population. In New Mexico 21.1% of children ages 0 to 17 have experienced one ACE, and more than one-quarter (26.5%) have experienced two or more ACEs, compared to 17.4% of children, nationwide."[45] Our goal at Equip Academy is to support students to overcome these risk factors, as seen in the next element of our school design (below).

Equip Academy's Values and Community Events Support Students Through Belonging and Agency

One of our values is Partnership, and through Partnership we will foster a culture of community. Our definition of community can be categorized in three ways: school, family, and our broader community, as we center communities for students, families, and teachers within our school model. With events throughout the year to come together, we will infuse joy through learning and celebrate student achievement, foster community and belonging, and celebrate success. We will do this through eight (8) **Community Circles**, key for bringing joy, community, and belonging among students and staff. We will meet as a school to celebrate academic growth, reinforce school values, and celebrate school spirit. We will also host ten (10) **Spirit Days** to have fun and be silly in appropriate and affirming ways for elementary school students. For example, students participate in crazy sock day, book character day, crazy hair/ hat day, ugly sweater day, 100 days of learning celebration, college jersey/sports day, heritage day, fancy schmancy day and pajama day. This collectiveness truly makes students happy and brings joy to learning. **Celebrating Community and Literacy** – at Equip Academy students work hard and we celebrate that hard work (for English/Spanish Flyer Enrollment Samples see **Appendix U)** enrollment pamphlet examples). There will be multiple opportunities for students to be celebrated for their learning and their hard work. For example, we will have three (3) sight word achievement ceremonies. We host publishing parties in grades K-5 twice per year, as our authors (students) share their final writing drafts. We will engage in a "drop everything and read" event to emphasize the importance of reading throughout our lives. Additionally, we will use our five (5) values to support and build student agency.

Building Agency through EQUIP Values

- **Excellence**. We strive for excellence in all we do. We have high quality lessons and do high quality work. A quality education inspires ownership of one's learning. Through meaningful experiences, joyfulness, community, and collaboration, we meet the demands of the high bar set before us.

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[45] [Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) - Children's Cabinet NM](#).

- **Questioning.** We question until we understand. We ensure engagement in every classroom, every day. Authentic engagement is at the heart of learning. We are not afraid to ask questions. Dialogue and debate provide opportunities to actively listen, develop new ways of thinking, self-reflect, and take intellectual risks, ultimately attaining a higher level of understanding.
- **Urgency.** We move with urgency. Every minute counts and we don't mess-around when it comes to our learning time. Everything we do is with purpose and intention.
- **Independence.** We are independent. Independent thinking is essential to self-discovery, creativity and growth. We foster independent thinking through meaningful engagement in high quality curriculum and by focusing on evidence-based learning, reasoning, and evaluation. Ultimately, we are aiming for student independence.
- **Partnership AND Perseverance.** We learn and grow together. We believe in the trifecta of success: Teachers + Students + Families = maximum student potential. We believe that with our powers combined, possibilities for success become endless. AND We don't give up. We embody perseverance by adopting a growth mindset and can-do attitude. When faced with difficulties, we keep trying, we learn from our mistakes, and we intentionally work to find new solutions.

(4) Responding to the Overwhelming Voices of Our Community
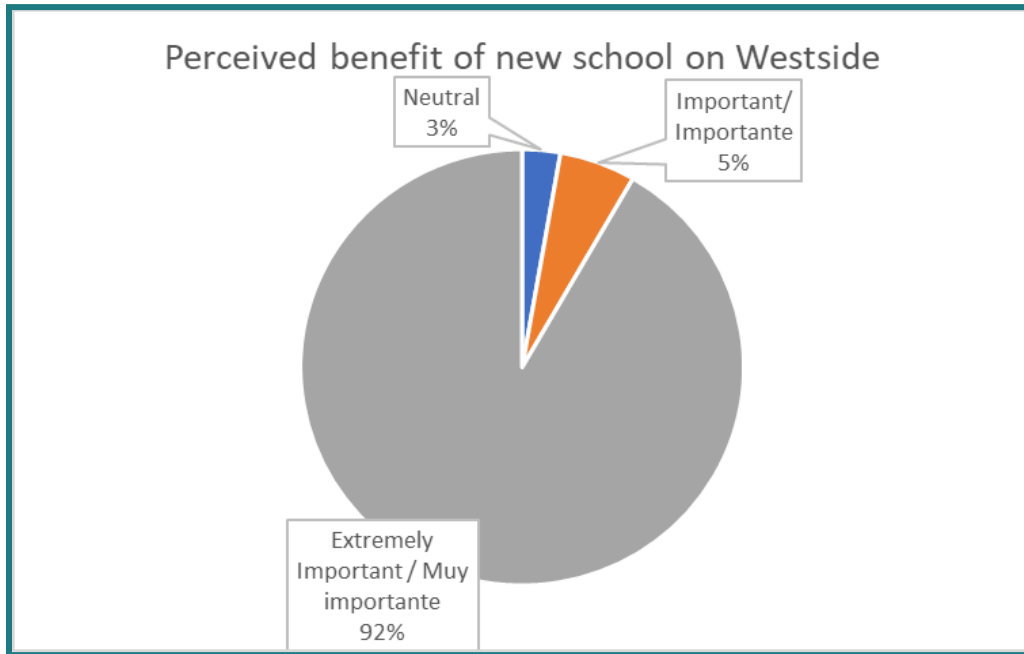
There is overwhelming evidence of community demand for our proposed K-5 educational design. The founding team has visited dozens of organizations on Albuquerque's Westside, including daycares, Head Starts, community programs, and religious organizations, as well as various local businesses. The response 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. In response, our Founding Team is committed to providing a high-quality K-5 public educational choice platform within the Westside community.

We began intentional outreach on the Westside of Albuquerque starting in September 2024 for community input into our design process. Outreach has consisted of 128 individual and group meetings, the collection of 36 responses to a School Input Survey that gauged interest in features of our proposed model, creation of a web-based presence, and holding four (4) focus group meetings to solicit input and opinions on the creation of a new K-5 public charter with a college preparatory culture and an inquiry-based instructional approach. Below are highlights of the data and information collected through our community outreach activities. The consistent response has been excitement about Equip Academy and the value of this new high-quality option for Westside families.

Evidence of Compelling Demand for Proposed School

School Input Survey. We distributed a Community Input Survey, and when asked if the Westside would benefit from a new, high-quality, elementary school option, 92% of respondents answered "Extremely Important/Muy Importante." We asked community respondents to prioritize the specific elements of our proposed school design and 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. With regard to 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."

FIGURE 16 - Benefit of a new school on the Westside (n = 36)

Perceived benefit of new school on Westside

Neutral 3%
Important/ Importante 5%
Extremely Important / Muy importante 92%

Community members on the Westside indicated that it is underserved in terms of educational resources, especially outside of the Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) system. This shortage of resources disproportionately affects children who lack resources to realize their full potential. Community members have endorsed the importance of Equip Academy's key educational approaches: (1) Reading and Language Development, (2) High Quality Curriculum, (3) Teacher Support, (4) College Preparatory Culture (5) Inquiry-Based Learning, and (6) Joyful Learning**.**

Focus Group Data

Beginning in March 2024, after having engaged in 128 community meetings, our Founding Team conducted four (4) Focus Groups to gather feedback on components of our proposed model, including our Mission, Vision and Innovative Approaches; 80 individuals attended across all four events.

- **Focus Group 1**
  March 18, 2024, 4:45-6:00 pm
  Partnership For Community Action, 722 Isleta Blvd SW, Albuquerque 87105
  (Bilingual Presentation)
  Input and Feedback on Equip Academy's Innovative Approaches and Unique Features

- **Focus Group 2**
  April 8, 2024, 5:45-7:15 pm
  Taylor Ranch Community Center, 4900 Kachina St NW, Albuquerque 87120
  Input and Feedback on Equip Academy's Innovative Approaches and Unique Features
  (Translation available)

- **Focus Group 3**
  April, 9 2024, 5:45-7:15 pm
  West Mesa Community Center, 5500 Glenrio Rd NW, Albuquerque 87105
  Input and Feedback on Equip Academy's Innovative Approaches and Unique Features

(Translation available)

- **Focus Group 4**
  April 22, 2024, 7:00-8:00 pm, Zoom (Virtual)
  Input and Feedback on Equip Academy's Innovative Approaches and Unique Features

The insights and feedback received from our interactions with the Westside community have reinforced our ideas about educator excellence and teachers needing to be prepared at a high level to ensure that all students are learning and achieving. The interactions also reinforced our commitment to an intensive focus on literacy and normed curriculum given that a trending community complaint was that children are not learning to read. These interactions broadened our scope for higher education options visits (i.e., SIP College on the Westside). Families have a deep desire for their children to be college- or career-ready after graduating high school and they want that preparation to start in elementary school. Our model is specifically designed to respond to community demand and contribute to the local NM public education environment in the following ways.

Unique Mission and Vision – Words from our Families

- "Teach a child to dream for themselves for their life. To find purpose in life is what makes a child and adult feel whole. To complete college and put everything into the world and life of purpose."
- "I think it's important to engage at school because maybe they aren't engaging at home, so not only are they learning, but they are also engaging. They can also use the engagement skills they learned in future situations."
- "The part of the mission and vision that is important is the hands-on learning, one-on-one guidance, and self-confidence to believe they are more than capable of doing anything they put their mind to in this world for their future. Great teaching helps all of this come out."

College-Preparatory Culture – Words from our Families

- "Giving kids a look into future college education. Being able to give kids a voice about what their dreams are. I feel it's important to start these things young."

Schoolwide Inquiry-Based, Engaging Instruction – Words from our Families

- "Inquiry-based learning is extremely important for student success because students will learn through doing. Through solving the problem. They are developing far more skills when inquiry-based learning is the form of learning. Kids remember what they physically do rather than the lecture or worksheet that they fill out. Skills like critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaborative learning truly will increase student performance drastically."
- "Personally imparting on a personal level. Listening to their tiny voices."

Prioritized, Comprehensive, Sequenced Educator Training – Words from our Families

- "I believe Educator Excellence is one of the most important key elements for student success because students within the school cannot live up to their full potential if they are not properly led by a highly educated, skilled, and trained teacher. The teacher creates the community within the classroom and it makes a huge impact on how the students learn and perform overall."

Comprehensive Literacy and Language Acquisition – Words from our Families

- "Comprehensive Literacy Instruction (Reading) - I know reading is the foundation of any child that will be successful in life. If you know how to read, you will feel confident in who you are and how much you will learn in life. Reading is key to the mind to unlock the future."

- "Comprehensive Literacy Instruction is another great thing because we lack, I feel, on knowing how to read but also how to pronounce will always be important. I am 27-years-old and I still get confused with the spelling of words due to not having the best teaching."
- "Teaching at the earliest age to become through the basics of correct teaching as well as them learning through reading what they can and may understand."

Rigorous Curriculum with National Record of Success – Words from our Families

- "I believe a Rigorous Curriculum to be a key and important aspect as the students themselves must have the courage and will to pursue academic feats as you simply can't force someone to do something with no reason or justification. We must pique their interest with curriculums capable of being consistent, relative to students, and relatable to students and teachers. This doesn't mean that said students must only learn what is relative to them but in terms of intro lessons, the students have to be familiar with such, then again children across the world are the most curious people ever known to humanity."

Overall Response to School Demand on the Westside – Words from our Families

- "There are fewer resources on the Westside, especially outside APS."
- "When we were looking for schools like this, there were few in Albuquerque and none on the Westside where we live."
- "Current APS Westside schools are not challenging students to academic excellence."
- "We physically moved to the East Side because there are no school choice options on the Westside"
- "You either have to drive all the way to the East Side past the river or all the way South in order to access better school options. Traffic both ways is a nightmare."
- "Although I do not have children of my own, I realize that education is a public good that will benefit the community at large. Having a high-quality elementary school in the Albuquerque Westside will provide the children of that neighborhood with the educational foundation to succeed not just in their academic career but also later in life. That future success is something that will benefit the public."
- "There are bright children that are not getting the support at home or the guidance that is directing them towards a college education. I believe this needs to begin at a young age so that they can start to reach their potential early in their education to develop the foundations to be successful in a college based setting."

B. Mission-Specific Goals

The Amended Charter School Act Requires that new charter applications include: the goals, objectives and student performance outcomes to be achieved by the charter school as well as a description of the charter school's plan for evaluating student performance, the types of assessments that will be used to measure student progress toward achievement of the state's standards and the school's student performance outcomes, the timeline for achievement of the outcomes and the procedures for taking corrective action in the event that student performance falls below the standards (NMSA 22-8B-8(E)

This application requirement prepares the applicant team for the Performance Framework contents, which will be negotiated with the PEC if the proposed charter application is approved. Specifically, the performance framework shall allow for the inclusion of additional rigorous, valid and reliable indicators proposed by a charter school to augment external evaluations of its performance, provided that the chartering authority shall approve the quality and rigor of such proposed indicators and the indicators are consistent with the purposes of the Charter Schools Act (NMSA 22-8B-9.1(C)

Equip Academy is proposed to ensure that families on the Westside of Albuquerque have access to a K-5 public school option that provides a top tier, college preparatory curriculum, implemented through an engaging, inquiry-based approach to ensure that every student develops the cognitive competencies and passion to succeed in school and life and to live their life with purpose.

In elementary school, the path to college starts with strong reading. The Association for School Curriculum and Development (ASCD) agrees: "Sophisticated reading habits are a necessary foundation for college-level writing, research, class participation, and many other college experiences. Yet in one study of first-generation college student experiences, Byrd and MacDonald (2005) found that 'college reading was an area in which participants felt particularly underprepared [especially regarding] vocabulary level and the amount of reading required' (p. 32). Developing strong reader identities and practicing thoughtful, transferable reading skills across the disciplines are important components of any pre-college curriculum, but they are especially crucial for low-income students whose college completion rates are much lower than those of their middle-income peers (Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, 2010; Carey, 2008)."[46]

Researchers have examined the relationship between reading skills developed in the elementary school years and later school and life success, and the evidence is clear. The Annie E. Casey Foundation's *Early Warning* "summarized the early reading research basis for focusing on grade-level reading proficiency as an essential step toward increasing the number of children from low-income families who succeed academically, graduate from high school on time and do well in life and the workforce. The report provided data on the low level of reading skills nationwide, especially among children from low-income families, and highlighted the urgency of getting more children to read proficiently as a way to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty while boosting this country's social equality, economic competitiveness and national security. A follow up to 2010's *Early Warning*, this report underscores the urgency of ensuring that children develop proficient reading skills by the end of third grade, especially those living in poverty or in impoverished communities. This early reading research report supports the link between reading deficiencies and broader social consequences, including how living in poor households and high-poverty neighborhoods contribute to racial disparities in literacy skills in America and how low achievement in reading impacts an individual's future earning potential."[47]

We intend to serve an overwhelmingly first-generation college-bound community, with hard-working families that know the impact of generational poverty. Informed by the dreams that our families have for the next generation, and informed by such research as noted above and the body of broader research that supports it, we know that if students can fluently read and deeply comprehend a rich variety of grade-level fiction and nonfiction texts in their elementary years, then their school, career, and life possibilities are boundless.

MISSION-SPECIFIC GOAL 1

Equip Academy will be guided by mission-specific goals in accordance with the Charter Schools Act and its requirements for inclusivity, reliability, validity, and rigor.

Goal 1 is, of course, focused directly on reading. We will assess every student's reading skills and inform reading instructional priorities using Fountas & Pinnell (F&P), as it will allow teachers to "accurately and reliably identify each child's instructional and independent reading levels . . . .

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[46] "Reading and College Readiness." ASCD. 69.9. 1 June 2012.
[47] "Early Reading Research Confirmed: A Research Update on the Importance of Third-Grade Reading." The Annie E. Casey Foundations. 20 November 2013.

through one-on-one formative and summative assessments." More specifically, " [t]he *Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment Systems*[48] provide teachers with precise tools and texts to observe and quantify specific reading behaviors, and then interpret and use that data to plan meaningful instruction."[49] Further, "[e]ach book was developed under the careful direction and supervision of Fountas & Pinnell according to their strict leveling protocols. To further ensure proper leveling, the books were vetted by a team of experienced classroom teachers, and Heinemann conducted a formal study of the leveling that involved a broad spectrum of students across the U.S."[50] Finally, the Fountas & Pinnell assessment "demonstrated validity in assessing students' reading levels after a two and a half years of editorial development, field testing, and independent data analysis."[51] Using this reading assessment system, our proposed indicators are nationally respected, complement our state assessment system, and align to our mission and vision.

Therefore, in alignment with our mission, and in accordance with state and district reading priorities, Equip Academy will achieve the following mission-specific broad outcomes specified below.

Mission-Specific Goal 1: Reading Academic Performance

At least **70% of students will advance 2 reading levels or more each academic year** as measured by the Fountas & Pinnell Reading Assessment. Furthermore, students will demonstrate, on average, annual reading growth that places them in the upper quartiles for national reading achievement as measured by the F&P Assessment for accuracy and comprehension. Growth in and development of these competencies will ensure that students have the ability to read for grade-level comprehension and meaning. These outcomes will be measured by the growth targets determined by national reading experts (please see **FIGURE 17**). We will administer the F&P Reading Assessment four times per year, ensuring we capture accurate baseline data and enabling universal screening, growth benchmarking, and progress monitoring.

Goal 1 Measures and Rubrics

The results of this nationally recognized assessment will indicate the degree to which we are meeting Goal 1 of at least 70% of students advancing at least 2 reading levels annually, and that students are reading at or above the 50th percentile at end-of-year. This assessment tool sets standards regarding where students' reading levels should be throughout the year, allowing us to track progress at prioritized and consistent points in time, communicate those results proactively with every family, and intervene and support every student throughout the school year. As stated, Equip Academy will assess students' reading progress quarterly (September-October, December, February, April-May – please see calendar details in **Section I Part F(2)**) to measure if students are on track to meet the minimum 2 levels of reading growth. We will track entire grade-level cohorts, subgroups of students, and individual students to ensure that our academic program is serving every student to a high degree of efficacy and impact.

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[48] **Appendix-G-5-Year-Budget-Plan**: Object Codes: 56111, 56112, 56113, 56118 as well as throughout the budget.
[49] What is Benchmark Assessment System (BAS) and how is BAS used? (fountasandpinnell.com).
[50] Benchmark Assessment Efficacy Studies, Research Base and White Papers (fountasandpinnell.com).
[51] Layout 1 (fountasandpinnell.com).

FIGURE 17 - Fountas and Pinnell Grade-Level Reading Benchmarks[52]

Grade	Cycle 1: Baseline September	Cycle 2: December	Cycle 3: February	Cycle 4: April/May
K	A	B	C	D
1	D	E/F	G/H	I/J
2	J	K	L	M
3	M	N	O	P
4	P	Q	R	S
5	S	T	U	V

We will use the rubric in **FIGURE 18** below to identify students' independent and instructional reading levels.

FIGURE 18 - Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment Criteria for Levels A-K[53]
*Key for Determining Independent/Instructional

Levels A-K		Comprehension Score			
	Standard	Excellent	Satisfactory	Limited	Unsatisfactory
Accuracy % Score	Points Received	6-7	5	4	0-3
	95-100%	Independent	Independent	Instructional	Hard
	90-94%	Instructional	Instructional	Hard	Hard
	Below 90%	Hard	Hard	Hard	Hard

FIGURE 19 - Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment Criteria for Levels L-Z[54]
*Key for Determining Independent/Instructional

Levels L-Z		Comprehension Score			
	Standard	Excellent	Satisfactory	Limited	Unsatisfactory
Accuracy % Score	Points Received	9-10	7-8	5-6	0-4
	98–100%	Independent	Independent	Instructional	Hard
	95-97%	Instructional	Instructional	Hard	Hard
	Below 95%	Hard	Hard	Hard	Hard

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[52] Layout 1 (heinemann.com).
[53] Page 4. F&P BAS Handout 11 2019 (sd35.bc.ca).
[54] Page 4. F&P BAS Handout 11 2019 (sd35.bc.ca).

Aligned to the mandate of our mission, our Founding Team will ensure that all students are equipped to be successful readers. By creating SMART-formatted, mission-specific goals, we will have a clear metric for what it means to deliver on the mission-aligned promises we make to our students, families, and community.   All reading data will be tracked by the Head of School and reported to and monitored by the Governing Board and its Achievement Committee at our regularly scheduled public meetings. (For more detail, please see **Section II Part C**.) The Board and its Committee will examine progress towards goals and require school-based action plans that are time-stamped and measurable if data indicates we are not on track to meet our goals.

Specific. Our academic performance mission-specific goal is clear, concise, and specific to the number of levels each student should grow annually. It identifies the research-based national reading assessment tool that we will use to measure specific skills and competencies, all of which are defined as part of the goal statement. It identifies a clear quantitative threshold that we must reach to achieve the goal. Finally, the goal explains what it means to hold high standards for reading aligned to a college preparatory course of study in the elementary grades as measured by a nationally-researched, extensively-vetted assessment system.

Measurable. Equip Academy's mission-specific academic performance goal is measurable because it is based on quantitative levels and rubrics outlined in **FIGURE 17** (reading benchmarks) and **FIGURES 18** and **19** (reading comprehension/accuracy**)**. Our annual goal of at least 2 levels of reading growth is specific for every student - general education, EL students, and students with IEPs.

Attainable. Our Founding Team believes that our mission-specific goals must be reflective of a high-bar, but also be well-informed and attainable. Our academic performance goal is attainable because of the programming, instruction, adult professional development, and differentiated supports we have planned and will implement starting on day one and across all years of the charter term. The specific competency areas identified in the goal are evidence-based and nationally recognized. These grade-level readiness metrics are scaffolded out from kindergarten to adulthood reading readiness levels from A-Z.

Rigorous. The academic performance mission-specific goal is rigorous: it ensures that students acquire the competency to read for meaning and are meeting or exceeding the reading performance of their national peers. By reaching the threshold outlined in the goal, we can ensure that students leave us equipped with a well-developed academic repertoire of tools that contribute to their long-term academic and personal success. Our evidence-based curriculum, inquiry-based instructional approach, and information-rich data cycles strategically and synergistically create critical readers and thinkers who thrive within the challenge of our rigorous curriculum and assessment program. Our well-trained staff members will spend a substantial amount of time planning, preparing, and executing reading lessons within our multiple modality approach so that every student can meet the demands of these ambitious and attainable growth and absolute goals.

Timebound. Equip Academy's academic performance mission-specific goal is based on results for annual, measurable, end-of-year reading achievement. F&P standards are clear regarding where student reading levels should be throughout each academic year based on grade level. As stated, we will assess quarterly (September, December, February, April-May) to measure the degree to which students are on track to achieving at least 2 levels of reading growth annually, including ELs and students with IEPs, whom we expect - and will work tirelessly to ensure - attain commensurate annual progress. This goal is time-bound: it identifies the specific time in which students will be assessed and when data will be collected and used to support students on their instructional level to push for growth.

MISSION-SPECIFIC GOAL 2

Equip Academy will be guided by mission-specific goals in accordance with the Charter Schools Act and its requirements for inclusivity, reliability, validity, and rigor.

Students will develop and apply mathematical problem-solving skills through our inquiry-based learning approach. Our core academic program includes daily problem-solving practice using Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI) techniques and Number Stories. According to the Robertson Center which is rooted in evidence-based and research-proven curriculum, "Number Stories teach students to unpack and solve complex, unfamiliar problems to develop mathematical thinking and problem-solving skills, explain their thinking and construct mathematical arguments, build an understanding of grade-level conjectures and concepts, and apply concepts, strategies, and models learned in math and mini-lessons to novel contexts."[55] To monitor student progress in number sense, numeracy skills, mathematical operations, mathematical thinking, and problem-solving ability, we will facilitate and analyze weekly formative assessments. To measure our attainment of this mission-specific goal, we will administer a formal problem-solving assessment twice per year using Number Stories. Student responses will be scored for accuracy, and student's problem-solving skills will be measured and tracked using a rigorous, normed rubric for each grade level.

Mission-Specific Goal 2: Cognitive Mathematical Problem-Solving Performance

- On average, at least 70% of students will solve complex, standards-based, grade-level Number Stories math problems accurately, and
- At least 80% of students will increase by a total of at least 3 points on their grade-level Cognitively Guided Instruction math problem-solving rubric from the beginning to the end of each academic year, up to a total of 12 possible points.

Goal 2 Measures and Rubrics

FIGURE 20 - Grades K-1 Problem-Solving Rubric

Grades K-1 Problem-Solving Rubric				
Domain	**Fully Present (3)**	**Progressing (2)**	**Limited (1)**	**Not Attempted or Addressed (0)**
Representation: Are the important math concepts represented?	Demonstrates complete understanding of **all mathematical concepts** represented	Demonstrates understanding of **some mathematical concepts** represented	Does not include demonstration of **key mathematical concepts** represented	
Strategies & Reasoning: Is the chosen strategy logical?	Strategies are **accurate** and **logical** for the task	Strategies are **somewhat reasonable** for the task	Strategies are **not accurate** for the task	
Computation & Solution: Are the computations	Computation is **set up correctly** and leads to an **accurate solution**	The computation attempt is accurate (i.e. appropriate equation), but there	Computation **does not relate** to the task	

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[55] Elementary School Number Stories | Robertson Center (successacademies.org).

complete, and is the solution accurate?		are **errors in computation** that do not lead to the correct answer	
Communication (oral and/or written): Did the student explain their reasoning in words?	The explanation includes **each step** taken to solve the problem, **aligns** to the representation and strategies used, and includes **key mathematical terms**	The explanation includes **most steps** taken to solve the problem, generally aligns to the representation and strategies used, and includes **some key mathematical terms**	The explanation **does not include steps** taken to solve the problem, is **unclear**, and/or **does not include key mathematical terms**	

FIGURE 21 - Grades 2-5 Problem-Solving Rubric

Grades 2-5 Problem-Solving Rubric				
Domain	**Fully Present (3)**	**Progressing (2)**	**Limited (1)**	**Not Attempted or Addressed (0)**
Representation: Are the important math concepts represented?	Demonstrates complete understanding of **all mathematical concepts** represented	Demonstrates understanding of **some mathematical concepts** represented	Does not include demonstration of **key mathematical concepts** represented	
Strategies & Reasoning: Is the chosen strategy logical?	Strategies are **accurate** and **logical** for the task	Strategies are **somewhat reasonable** for the task	Strategies are **not accurate** for the task	
Computation & Solution: Are the computations complete, and is the solution accurate?	Computation is **correct**ly **constructed** and leads to an **accurate** solution	The computation attempt is accurate (i.e. appropriate equation), but there are **errors in computation** that do not lead to the correct answer	Computation construction (i.e. equation) **does not correspond** to the task	
Communication (written): Did the student explain their reasoning accurately using appropriate mathematical vocabulary?	The explanation includes **each step** taken to solve the problem, **aligns** to the representation and strategies used, and includes all **key mathematical terms**	The explanation includes **most steps** taken to solve the problem, generally aligns to the representation and strategies used, and includes **some key mathematical terms**	The explanation **does not include steps** taken to solve the problem, is **unclear**, and/or **does not include key mathematical terms**	

Our Founding Team is committed to ensuring assessments are rigorous, measurable and attainable. By creating **SMART**-formatted, mission-specific goals, we have created a clear metric for what it means to deliver on the mission-centric promises we make to our students, families, and community.

Specific. Equip Academy's goals for students' development of mathematical problem-solving abilities are specifically grounded in accuracy and progress on Cognitively Guided Instruction rubrics - aligned to grade-level, standards-aligned math curriculum - and used across all classrooms.

Measurable. Our mission-specific, problem-solving goal is measurable because it is normed and based on mathematical accuracy and a 0-3 point scale rubric for each problem-solving domain. Students will be assessed twice a year which will give us a clear indication of student growth from beginning to end of the year and allow us to monitor progress and make instructional adjustments to meet students' learning needs. This goal is applicable for general education, English Language Learners, and special education students.

Attainable. Our Founding Team believes that our mission-specific goals must be reflective of a high-bar and be well-informed and attainable. Our mathematical problem-solving goal is attainable because of the programming, instructional approach, curriculum, adult development and differentiated supports we have developed. The specific competency areas identified in the goal are evidence-based. This goal is attainable and necessary to ensure the effective implementation of our school design and our students' success. We employ grade-level rubrics and grade-level assessments precisely because achievement of grade-level targets is possible, and that is the appropriate standard to support college and career readiness.

Rigorous. This mission-specific goal is rigorous: it ensures that our students acquire essential numeracy skills, problem-solving abilities, and the competency to be independent, critical thinkers through active engagement in a cognitively-guided approach that puts the cognitive lift on students.

Timebound. Our cognitive mathematical problem solving goal is mission-specific and supported by purposeful daily instruction, ongoing weekly quizzes, and formal assessments. These assessments allow for effective, timebound cycles of data analysis, action planning, feedback, and coaching throughout each academic year. The end-of-year assessment provides a clear indication as to what students can do independently without support. The goal is time-bound as it identifies the specific times when students will be assessed, when data will be collected, and how it will be used to monitor progress and facilitate cycles of improvement throughout each academic year and used to establish baselines for subsequent years.

Monitoring Plans for Goal 1 and Goal 2

To monitor progress towards Goals 1 and 2, the Head of School (and leadership team members in the future as the school grows) will lead the analysis of all relevant assessment data with staff a minimum of eight times each year. Data analysis will include whole-school, grade-level, and individual class data, along with subgroup data specific to our EL students and our students with IEPs. The leadership team will facilitate the development of whole school and grade-specific data-informed action plans; teachers will work on execution details of those action plans at the class level. We all will follow the four-step cycle below.

1. Assessments. Equip Academy will implement a quarterly assessment cycle to consistently and reliably monitor students' progress, effectively communicate and partner with families regarding student growth, and ensure leaders and teachers can strategically and proactively address learning needs and gaps and accelerate learning. In addition to the quarterly cycles of F&P assessments described above, we will administer New Mexico state required assessments, internal math assessments, and content assessments, weekly quizzes, and daily exit tickets to assess student progress toward mastery.

2. Data Analysis. We will use all assessment data to conduct quarterly school-wide and monthly grade-level cycles of analysis of student learning. This will give us the information to identify learning trends and needs across grade levels, subject areas, classrooms, and sub-groups.

3. Action Planning. The data analysis process will enable us to create highly targeted action plans, which will include grade-level, class-level, and individual student goals and strategies to address learning needs. This approach is informed by Paul Bambrick-Santoyo's nationally-recognized work *Driven by Data*, in which he suggests six-week action plans that include whole-class instruction, small groups, reteach, and before/after-school supports. The action plan also includes ongoing professional development including student work analysis, action planning, and deliberate practice around how to teach content.[56] Working within a K-12 network of charter schools that used this approach across all grade levels, Bambrick-Santoyo witnessed a steady increase in proficiency. For example, at the outset of this work in 2007, the schools he supported were achieving an 11% passing rate for Advanced Placement exams; by 2012, the schools reached an 81% passing rate as a result of a data-driven, action-plan approach. We recognize that such outstanding results require a commitment to meaningful assessment, analysis, and planning, and we will systematically implement this approach within our K-5 model.

4. Feedback and Coaching. As stated in our vision, we intend Equip Academy to be a learning institute for educator excellence; therefore, we will conduct three, 20-30 minute observations weekly for all teachers new to the school; as teachers progress in their ability, we will decrease the number of observations but always maintain a minimum of one 30-minute observation per week per teacher, including Instructional Assistants. Feedback will be provided through live, in-the-moment coaching, as well as 1:1 debrief meetings that can range from 20-40 minutes. Coaching and feedback will be informed by our ongoing assessment, analysis, and action planning cycles. Teachers will receive feedback from peers during our weekly half-day professional development as part of "teach-back" sessions when teachers prepare a lesson and live teach it to the group. The rest of the teachers offer specific supportive praise and constructive feedback to the teacher. These cycles of feedback and coaching will support effective implementation of our instructional model and data-based action plans.

Ongoing Academic Progress Monitoring

We will monitor all academic data on (a) annual, (b) quarterly, (c) weekly, and (d) daily cycles through the use of Interim Assessment (IA) Data Days and required NM State Assessment Analysis, as well as ongoing data reviews. This level of monitoring supports us with backwards planning for the next assessment, ensuring students are being supported within their areas of need. For example, we look at exit tickets to ensure students are not falling through the cracks each day. We then give students opportunities to try multiple at-bats (multiple times to try the same standard in different ways) each week, having data to inform how successful our instruction and interventions are and informing any class, small group, or student-specific needs and corresponding interventions. Then, we implement quarterly assessments to monitor student progress of our set goals based on data from the previous cycle. Lastly, our annual goals show us our yearly progress and inform our annual planning needs and decisions. Specifically, the Head of School and leadership team will engage in weekly data check-ins to assess progress toward goals. Following each IA cycle, we will hold full-day professional development sessions for teachers (please see **Calendar** in **Section F**) to analyze student work, discuss trends, set goals, and develop action plans to ensure all students are on track to meeting our goals. Action plans and next steps will be recalibrated and/or retooled to ensure we are on track to meet or exceed all annual goals in service of our mission.

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[56] Bambrick-Santoyo, Paul. (2010). *Driven by Data*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. ---. (2012).

C. Curriculum, Educational Program, Student Performance Standards

C. Provide a description of the proposed school's curriculum. The proposed curriculum must be research-based, reasonable, and clearly align with New Mexico Common Core State Standards and the proposed school's mission. (NMSA 22-8B-A(C))

All of Equip Academy's curricular selections are aligned to the New Mexico Common Core State Standards (NMCCSS). Our curriculum is evidenced- and research-based, and grounded in our mission to equip students with the skills and content knowledge to be critical, independent thinkers, ready for college and beyond. All assessments will be aligned to NMCCSS for every subject in each grade. All quarterly Internal Assessments (IAs) will be cumulative, rigorous, rooted in the inquiry-based model, and meet NMCCSS and national standards. The use of IAs has yielded significant academic growth for multiple schools across the country and in various years of operation, and our approach to the use of IAs is specifically modeled on the work of Success Academy, Harlem Village Academy, South Bronx Classical, and Brooklyn Ascend Charter Schools where the proposed Head of School served in various roles including classroom teacher, learning specialist, education coordinator, director of assessment, instructional coach and assistant principal. These schools consistently outperform district and state averages in ELA and Mathematics and serve high-poverty, high-need communities where the majority of children come from non-English speaking homes. Our curricular and assessment models are also based on the work of high-achieving, award-winning schools across the country that our lead founder and proposed Head of School has visited and studied extensively as part of Excellent Schools New Mexico's Future Schools Fellowship, including charter schools in Arizona, Idaho, Tennessee, and California. These schools serve communities with high populations of English Learners, students with special needs, and students of color and are attaining exceptional outcomes.

Curriculum Choices - Overview

Equip Academy will provide a research-based curriculum, data-driven academic program, and inquiry-based instructional model specifically designed to accelerate the achievement of an historically under-served and under-performing student population and all subgroups, including English Learners (ELs), students with disabilities, Hispanic, Native American, and Black students. We will offer state-of-the art, evidence-based, nationally-normed, and vertically-aligned curriculum for English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics because we know that access to quality content is critical to student success. Our curriculum is thought-provoking, engaging, hands-on and infused with joy. We believe content is crucial to growth.

In advancing our school's mission, we will ensure student mastery of New Mexico Common Core Standards and New Mexico Content Standards. We do this through a curriculum that is robust and supportive of student and teacher development. Our curriculum identification, selection, and development process will ensure that all curriculum is reasonable, research-based, aligned with New Mexico Common Core State Standards and New Mexico Content Standards. Further, our curriculum is aligned to our mission, which is aligned to our state's educational vision: "To build a foundation for college and career readiness, students must read widely and deeply from among a broad range of high-quality, increasingly challenging literary and informational texts. Through extensive reading of stories, dramas, poems, and myths from diverse cultures and different time periods, students gain literary and cultural knowledge as well as familiarity with various text structures and elements."[57] Our approach to curriculum ensures that each grade level, each content area, each student subgroup including ELs and students with disabilities have the curricular materials needed to access rigorous and appropriate learning experiences.

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[57] CCSSI_ELA Standards.indd (state.nm.us).

In our primary grades (K-2), we will build strong academic foundations in all content areas, with a prioritized focus on early literacy and numeracy development. Our curriculum is in alignment with the New Mexico Rising State Plan and "[t]he critical importance of a well-coordinated literacy effort that begins at birth and proceeds persistently and systematically through high school is clear to any New Mexico educator who embraces the idea that every child—regardless of background or zip code—is capable of achieving at the highest levels."[58] As students move into the intermediate grades (3-5), we center teaching and learning around developing conceptual understandings in all content areas.

Across all grade levels, we implement externally validated programs and resources that have withstood the test of time and delivered measurable results for similar communities of students, and internally developed curriculum that aligns with the New Mexico Content Standards, with the overall goal that "[by] reading texts in history/social studies, science, and other disciplines, students build a foundation of knowledge in these fields that will also give them the background to be better readers in all content areas. Students can only gain this foundation when the curriculum is intentionally and coherently structured to develop rich content knowledge within and across grades. Students also acquire the habits of reading independently and closely, which are essential to their future success."[59]

We will use internally created and purchased curriculum to ensure that we are providing students with the high-quality resources necessary to equip them to reach ambitious goals and attend and succeed in middle school, high school, and college. Prior to the start of each upcoming school year, the Head of School will analyze external curricula for alignment to the NMCCSS, proven effectiveness with student demographics similar to our proposed location in Albuquerque, scientifically proven research base, and full adaptability for students with specific learning needs (Special Education, EL, Gifted, etc.). Internally developed curricula will enhance and supplement that which is purchased externally. Our process of assessing validity and effectiveness of curriculum will be based on external research as well as data gathered from internal and state-mandated assessments.

Please see a curricular overview in **FIGURE 22** and **FIGURE 23**, followed by a more detailed narrative.

FIGURE 22 - Subject Area and Instructional Component Overview

Subject Area	Instructional Component
English Language Arts (ELA)	• **Read Alouds**: Teacher reads aloud higher-level book while students listen and engage in discussion of comprehension questions. Component supports with modeled fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, oral language development, and cross-genre (fiction, non-fiction, poetry) content-building. • **Close Reading**: Teacher and students read higher-level short text across multiple days. Students listen, read, and engage in comprehension questions through discourse. Component supports with modeled fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, cross-genre content-building, oral language development, and engagement in response to literature (RTL) in oral and written form. • **Small Group Reading**: Students read with the teacher in small groups of 6-8 students and receive level-specific instruction from the teacher. Component supports with phonics, decoding, word-solving, comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, and cross-genre content-building. • **K-2 Phonics, Phonemic Awareness, and Sight Words:** Fast-paced, heavily guided, direct, and interactive small-group instruction. Component supports phonemic awareness, letter-sound correspondence, word-level blending, word chunking, sight word mastery, fluency, and word-solving.

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[58] NMPED-NM-Statewide-Literacy-Framework-Summer-2020.pdf.
[59] CCSSI_ELA Standards.indd (state.nm.us).

	- **Writers Workshop:** The teacher engages students in a mini-lesson,and then students write, edit, and revise in cross-genre topics. Component supports letter-sound correspondence, sight word mastery, spelling, word-solving, grammar, syntax, oral language development, and writing process - planning, drafting, revising, editing, publishing, and presenting. - **Independent Reading:** Students read trade books from classroom libraries to apply their developing literacy skills independently. Students share their books and reading experiences with one other through discourse. This component supports independence, stamina, word-solving, comprehension, and oral language development.
Mathematics	- **Math Routines**: Designed to build fluency and conceptual understanding of number sense. - **Problem-Solving:** Students engage with word problems in story form (Number Stories). They solve in ways that make sense to them, either with manipulatives, pictures, or numbers with teachers facilitating using the techniques of Cognitively Guided Instruction.[60] - **Math Workshop**: Students explore a range of math concepts. The workshop starts with an interactive lesson, then students receive individual and small-group support as they complete independent practice. - **No Hesitation Math (NHM):** 2-3 minute, grade-appropriate math fact practice to build mathematical fluency and automaticity.
Science	- **Science**: Students acquire science content and develop experimentation skills through an inquiry-based and hands-on approach blending investigations, literacy-rich activities, and interactive digital tools to empower students to think, read, write, and argue like real scientists and engineers.
Social Studies	- **Social Studies** curriculum dives into many topics - civics, economics, geography, history, inquiry and ethnic, cultural and identity studies while integrating reading comprehension, research, and writing skills.
Enrichment	- Our **Dance** and **Physical Education** enrichment classes give students the opportunity to explore a variety of dance forms across cultures, learn and develop healthy habits, and engage in physical fitness activities that support teamwork, collaboration, and their overall well-being. **Spanish** as an enrichment offering has surfaced throughout our focus groups and the founding team meetings with community members, so this may be added as the school grows.
Assessments[61]	- **Fountas & Pinell (F&P) Reading Assessment** (quarterly): Accurate and reliable tools to identify the instructional and independent reading levels of all students and document student progress through one-on-one formative and summative assessments.[62] - **Number Stories Problem-Solving (CGI) Assessment** (twice per year): To monitor student progress in number sense, numeracy skills, mathematical operations, mathematical thinking, and problem-solving ability, we will administer a formal problem-solving assessment twice per year using Number Stories. Student's problem-solving, reasoning, and computational skills will be measured and

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[60] What is Cognitively Guided Instruction? (heinemann.com)

[61] Appendix-G-5-Year-Budget-Plan: Object Codes: 56111, 56112, 56113, 56118 as well as throughout the budget.

[62] Assessment Resources (fountasandpinnell.com).

	tracked using a rigorous, normed rubric. ● **Internal Assessments (IAs)** Math & ELA (quarterly): Assessment created by the school to assess internal goals, track progress, and measure student growth. ● **Sight Word Assessments** (3 times per year): Sight words are high-frequency words that students should recognize without sounding them out. ● **Published Writing** (quarterly): A final piece written independently that was edited, revised, published, and ready to be presented. ● **iStation and NM-MSSA State Required Assessments**: Computer-based Assessments required by the state for reading and math.

FIGURE 23 - Instructional and Curriculum Examples Across Components K-5[63]

The curricula included in the chart below align to New Mexico standards and our instructional model. During the school's planning year, we will continue to vet curricular materials and make final determinations about which to acquire and implement.

Grade	English Language Arts Programming			Math
	Reading and Comprehension	**Social Studies**	**Science**	
		Writing		
Kindergarten	**Success for All (SFA) Kinder Phonics**: Core Reading Programming **Heinemann**: Small Group Reading and Independent Reading **Collaborative Classroom's** *Being A Reader* and Internally Created supplements: Shared Text and Read Aloud	**CKLA** and Internally Created supplements: Social Studies		**LEAP Curriculum** ● Math Workshop ● Cognitive Guided Instruction (CGI) ● Math Routines
1st Grade	**Success for All (SFA) Fast Track Phonics**: Core Reading Programming **Heinemann**: Small Group Reading and Independent Reading	**Collaborative Classroom's** *Being a Writer* and Internally Created supplements: Writing		
2nd Grade	**Collaborative Classroom's** *Being A Reader* and Internally Created supplements: Shared Text and Read Aloud			
3rd Grade	**Heinemann**: Chapter Book Studies and Independent Reading **Collaborative Classroom's** *Being a Reader* and Internally Created supplements: Close Reading and Read Aloud	**Amplify** and Internally Created supplements: Science		

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[63] **Appendix-G-5-Year-Budget-Plan**: Object Codes: 56111, 56112, 56113, 56118 as well as throughout the budget.

4th Grade	**Heinemann**: Novel Studies and Independent Reading		
5th Grade	**Collaborative Classroom's** *Being a Reader* and Internally Created supplements: Close Reading and Read Aloud		

English Language Arts: Phonics, Phonemic Awareness, and Sight Words[64]

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. We know that in order to flourish as confident skilled readers, students must develop strong phonics foundations. Students are equipped with foundational reading and language skills through Success for All (SFA) which addresses ELA foundational skills, as well as writing, speaking and listening, and language standards. SFA is aligned to The Science of Reading focus within New Mexico to help students master essential oral, decoding, and comprehension skills. According to The Science of Reading for Emergent Bilinguals in New Mexico, "Structured Literacy addresses components of oral language including phonology, morphology, semantics, syntax, discourse, and pragmatics at every level of reading development. Pragmatic language includes the ability to use language for different purposes including understanding both the social and academic registers of the language and using language appropriately across many contexts."[65] SFA research shows that "[r]eading teachers at every grade level begin the reading time by reading children's literature to students and engaging them in a discussion of the story to enhance their understanding of the story, listening and speaking vocabulary, and knowledge of story structure. In kindergarten and first grade, the program emphasizes development of basic language skills with the use of Story Telling and Retelling (STaR), which involves the students in listening to, retelling, and dramatizing children's literature. Big books as well as oral and written composing activities allow students to develop concepts of print as they also develop knowledge of story structure. Specific oral language experiences are used to further develop receptive and expressive language."[66] SFA's KinderCorner primarily focuses on oral-language development through phonological awareness and places particular emphasis on teaching thinking skills and helping students acquire background knowledge as well as vocabulary and oral expression. KindeCorner (K) and Fast Track Phonics (1-2) set students up for success to engage deeply through its thematic materials, and includes a teacher's manual with fully scripted lessons to guide teachers through carefully constructed instructional steps (see **Appendix L** for sample lesson) - modeling new content, providing guided practice, offering individualized practice and applying skills. There are 19 full-color Shared Stories with take-home copies for every student. There are 35 short videos to build background knowledge, vocabulary, and common language (please see **Appendix M** for sample shared story and Reading Roots). There are also hundreds of activity cards that include visual picture cards, sight words, and decodable words to support student learning through repetition. KinderCorner has detailed, daily lesson plans, and interactive presentations that together allow teachers to prepare their students to master the knowledge and skills needed to be successful and confident readers.[67]

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[64] For students in K-2, and for older students as needed.
[65] The-Science-of-Reading-for-Emergent-Bilinguals-in-New-Mexico_Jan-2022-.pdf (state.nm.us).
[66] SUCCESS F OR ALL / ROOTS & WINGS.
[67] KinderCorner - Success for All Foundation.

There has been extensive research on curricular resources that best support the success of *all* students. For example, schools who use Success for All are shown to have fewer students assigned to special education and fewer students who must repeat grades.[68] SFA is highly supportive for EL students as well. Studies have shown that EL-specific student needs are met and are successful in increasing their reading levels more than control schools not using SFA.[69] In a series of studies involving more than 6,000 students over 10 years, students were, on average, a full grade level ahead of students in similar control schools by fifth grade.[70] Success for All is supportive of all students, especially economically- and academically-disadvantaged students. Students are able to take home shared stories on their level to practice at home. Success for All is supportive and all-encompassing as it balances teacher-to-student support with students' independent practice. Above all, this inclusive program demonstrates success for students regardless of socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, home language, or learning needs.

Starting in kindergarten, students are exposed to the science of reading in a joyful, engaging, and authentic way because of Successful for All's alignment to the Science of Reading Standards for Word Recognition, Language Comprehension, Reading Comprehension, Writing, Assessment, and Overall Instructional Design.[71] Therefore, this approach and resource directly aligns to NM state standards for print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics, word recognition, and fluency that strongly supports the development of all readers, especially English Language Learners.[72]

FIGURE 24 - Scarborough's Reading Rope [73]
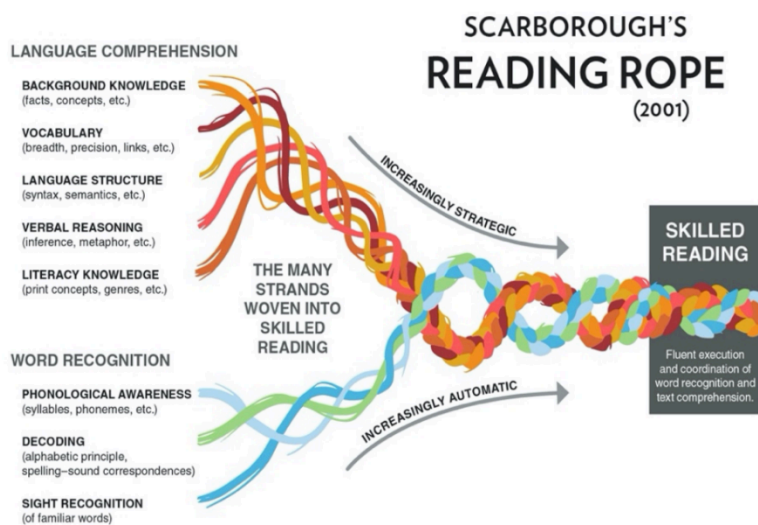
Source: Scarborough, 2001

The following ELA components also support Scarborough's Reading Rope.

Small Group Reading (K-5). Small group reading is a strategic and impactful time for teachers to direct teach as well as lead an inquiry-based learning approach by asking high-leverage, open-ended questions and supporting students to answer fully with evidence. Students will be placed in groups of no more than eight (8) students, based on Fountas & Pinnell (F&P) levels as assessed three times per year along with ongoing teacher observations. F&P is a nationally recognized assessment "based on empirical research on language development, vocabulary expansion, reading acquisition, and reading difficulties. In particular, the F&P Benchmark Assessment System assesses the five elements of reading that are described by the National Reading Panel—phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

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[68] The Long-Term Effects and Cost-Effectiveness of Success for All .
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Alignment to the Science of Reading Standards.
[72] CCSSI_ELA Standards.indd (state.nm.us).
[73] The-Science-of-Reading-for-Emergent-Bilinguals-in-New-Mexico_Jan-2022-.pdf (state.nm.us).

In addition, it addresses issues of student motivation and interest in reading."[74] This data will be used to group students accordingly; teachers will have access to this data and will set individual goals that serve to advance students to the next reading level. Small Reading groups will be readjusted after each assessment cycle as students continue to outgrow their previous group. Specifically, the "F&P Text Level Gradient™ is a defined continuum of characteristics related to the level of support and challenge that a reader meets in a text. Terms such as easy and hard are always relative terms that refer to the individual reader's foundation of background knowledge. At each level (A to Z) texts are analyzed using ten characteristics: (1) genre/form; (2) text structure; (3) content; (4) themes and ideas; (5) language and literary features; (6) sentence complexity; (7) vocabulary; (8) word difficulty; (9) illustrations/graphics; and (10) book and print features."[75] Because it is crucial that we are responsive to the learning that is happening with students along their reading journey, small group instruction is specifically catered to students' needs based on these ten characteristics. Through small group reading instruction, students will read texts on their instructional reading level (books 1-2 levels higher than their independent reading level) and will receive explicit reading instruction using strategies to enhance their reading rate, accuracy, fluency, and comprehension in a small group setting with peers of similar reading levels. Students in the formative grades (K-2) focus both on word-solving strategies as well as comprehension. Our bar is high. We want students to learn to read *and* we want to ensure that they are reading for meaning and reading for understanding all of the time. Small group is both inclusive and supportive for all learners as it centers the student voice in learning. In a group of 6-8, students will engage in rich text-based dialogue and get to ask and answer standards-aligned questions about the text. (Who are the main characters? What is the central problem in the story? How can it be solved? What is the lesson in the story? What evidence can we use to support our idea?) Small group reading is especially supportive for ELs and students with reading challenges. Progress in key skills is tracked daily, and student-specific goals are created based on their bi-weekly progress.

Individual Independent Reading (K-5)

Individual Independent Reading is a time for students to apply skills acquired from Phonics, Small Group Reading, Read Aloud, and Close Reading in order for them to read for meaning independently and confidently. Independent Reading also fosters a love of reading; while the teacher is leading a small guided reading group, other students will be independently reading self-selected books from their personal book-baggies. Students will select these books and "bookshop" from their class library each Friday. Independent Reading is inclusive because these books are selected based on personal interest as well as a student's just-right reading level as indicated by their latest F&P assessment reading results. This is especially supportive to struggling readers: they get books that are on their level to ensure that they feel successful, which then boosts their reading confidence. Students will have 8-10 books from which to select, half of which will be at their reading level and the other half will be 1-2 levels above their reading level. The books on their reading level will support students with reading accuracy and fluency. The other half that are above their level will challenge students in their reading. Teachers will create student-specific, independent goals based on the F&P assessment results as well as informal data taken from small group instruction. Classroom libraries will provide a robust selection of literature for students to select books that pique their interest. This self-sustained reading time will increase students' reading stamina and allow students to practice reading strategies that will in turn help increase fluency, expression, and comprehension.

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[74] Microsoft Word - BenchmarkAssessmentSystem_FINAL_05-12-08_ED.doc (core-docs.s3.amazonaws.com).
[75] Benchmark Assessment Efficacy Studies, Research Base and White Papers (fountasandpinnell.com).

Read Aloud (K-5)

Teachers will read texts aloud to students to model what fluent reading sounds like and to ask text-dependent critical thinking, inferential, and factual questions. This is also where teachers dive into genre. Each Read Aloud will be selected based on alignment to the unit's essential questions and will serve as the anchor text, which will align directly to the specific and appropriate NMCCSS. While students' independent reading levels may lag behind their comprehension or advanced vocabulary and concepts, by hearing more advanced texts read aloud to them and by engaging in rich text-based discussions, students gain access to information that interests them but may be beyond their reading level.[76] Read Aloud is taught through an inquiry-based lens. Books are specifically curated to push student thinking through multiple genres (fiction, non-fiction, fairytale, folktale, biography, poetry), story elements (character, problem, solution, lesson learned) and thinking prompts (i.e., what is the topic, what is the point of view). Comprehensively, teachers are prepared with a road-map of questions, and students have the opportunity to agree, disagree, debate, and revise their answers, with all answers always rooted in evidence. Students will focus on: Key Ideas and Details, Craft and Structure, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity.[77] Our Read Aloud component is aligned and adheres to NM ELA standards. For example, for Comprehension and Collaboration, students will be able to answer and ask questions about key details of texts as well as support their ideas with text evidence. Students will hone their skills around Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas by, for example, stating the big ideas, and restating relevant facts and descriptive details.[78]

Close Reading (K-5)

Close Reading is similar to Read Aloud in that it is heavily inquiry-based and student-centered. Again, teachers are prepared with a road-map of high-leverage, open-ended questions that support student thinking and ground student answers in textual evidence. Teachers will display the text under a document camera while students (starting from K) will have a copy of the text, following along and annotating. Close Reading will be taught in a whole group setting, supporting students to begin to think through complex texts with a focus on the main idea as well as craft and structure, and students will be guided through the text with genre-based questions. Students will learn to annotate their texts in response to this guiding and these questions, developing an internal model of how to meaningfully respond to and interact with a text. After a supported discourse about a text, students will engage in a Response to Literature. This is an inferential or critical thinking question to which students will respond in written form with textual evidence. A powerful check for student understanding, this will provide the teacher with specific insight on how to support each learner. By the end of the year, students will be jotting one-word big ideas, sentences, and main ideas. In the upper grades (2-5), students will use genre-based core questions to assist with comprehension, self-monitor understanding, and conduct a second read for locating important text evidence. Teachers will facilitate and support student learning through robust dialogue and questioning to uncover meanings of complex texts. Students will determine the genre of the text using annotations specific to text genre. Providing engagement in written or oral text analysis, Close Reading is the tool that will allow students to think through texts above their reading level, which will immediately prepare them to think

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[76] Benefits of Reading Aloud to Students. (2018).
https://degree.astate.edu/articles/k-12-education/benefits-of-reading-out-loud.aspx Revised from PEC Application by APS Office of Innovation and School Choice, January 2019.
[77] CCSSI_ELA Standards.indd (state.nm.us).
[78] CCSSI_ELA Standards.indd (state.nm.us).

critically at their grade level and ultimately prepare them for college and beyond.[79] Texts will be curated to reflect New Mexico's community and culture and will be differentiated per grade. Kindergarteners might learn about what the balloon fiesta consists of, whereas fifth graders might learn about the history of the balloon fiesta. These learning experiences will be created during the planning year and in preparation for subsequent academic years. Close Reading is aligned to NM state ELA K-5 standards for Key Ideas and Details, Craft and Structure, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Range of Reading, and Level of Text Complexity as well as College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing such as "Text types and purposes; write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence."[80]

Writing

Collaborative Classroom's *Being a Writer* is a robust K-5 curriculum, and its design and elements align closely with our inquiry-based model. This aspect of our literacy program provides an inclusive, collaborative model in which students engage in discourse and learn from one another while also experiencing a strong teacher model. Students will learn to develop and produce sophisticated genre-based writing pieces; teachers will teach students how to use correct writing conventions when producing opinion, informational, and narrative writing through this curricular component as well as through our social studies units. Starting from kindergarten, students will practice telling their story across five (5) fingers and by the end of the year they will be writing across five (5) pages. Students will demonstrate author skills with an edited, revised, finished and polished piece for their quarterly Publishing Parties. Families will come in and enjoy their students' work via a gallery walk or listen to their students read aloud their book. Our writing curriculum adheres and aligns to College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing, such as Text Types and Purposes where students will "[w]rite informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content"[81] and Production and Distribution of Writing in which students will "[d]evelop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach."[82] Students will Research to Build and Present Knowledge and "[c]onduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation."[83] Students will engage in a range of writing activities over shorter and longer timeframes with a publishing and presenting component.

Equip Academy's lead founder and proposed Head of School, Mercy L. Herrera, is in full alignment with the Public Education Department, Language and Culture division when it comes to providing students with a culturally responsive curriculum. Read Aloud, Close Reading, and Writing are culturally responsive by design. They align with Pathway Objectives I and II. Pathway I Objective: To ensure that the CRP [Culturally Responsive Pedagogy] and CLR [Culturally and Linguistically Responsive] instructional knowledge and practices of administrators align with their local contexts. Pathway II Objectives: 1. To provide learning opportunities that meet the needs of all students from a CLR perspective.[84] For example, social studies will be delivered through our read aloud, close reading and writing components, and will pull from the Indigenous Wisdom curriculum project that provides schools with educational plans for students to learn about Pueblo culture and history. "The curriculum

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[79] Lemov, Doug. (2016). "Three Reasons Why Close Reading is Important."
http://teachlikeachampion.com/blog/three-reasons-close-readingimportant Revised from PEC Application by APS Office of Innovation and School Choice, January 2019.
[80] CCSSI_ELA Standards.indd (state.nm.us).
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.
[84] CLR INSTRUCTION PDs Report 2021 (state.nm.us).

serves as a counter-narrative to the presentation of the history of New Mexico in schools today."[85] (For lesson samples, please see **Appendix N.**) Similarly, we will incorporate lessons from the Hispanic Cultural Center studying topics such as Aztec and Animals and Plants Mythology.[86] (For a lesson sample, please see **Appendix O.**) Final book selections, close reading texts, and writing topics will be curated and created during the planning year. Our goal is to celebrate New Mexico culture and people because we want students to be proud of who they are and where they come from. For example, starting in kindergarten, students will explore the Indian Pueblos and Chicano Studies as well as other cultures by learning about and interacting with the art, food, dance, and history of indigenous peoples of New Mexico and beyond. Our partnerships with organizations such as the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, Hispanic Cultural Center, and National Institute of Flamenco will support these learning experiences.

Mathematics (K-5)

Aligned to our state's educational mission, our goal is to build the bridge from just doing math to creating mathematicians. We will be using Cognitive Guided Instruction (CGI) for Number Stories (problem solving), Math Workshop, Math Routines, and No Hesitation Math (NHM). Number Stories, Math Workshop, and Math Routines are heavily inquiry-based. Through Number Stories, students dig deeply into mathematical concepts, number sense, and logical reasoning to answer one carefully crafted problem or question. To support students with the conceptualization and internalization process, teachers start by launching the problem story in an engaging way and natural way. Then, three (3) students are selected to repeat the question. This supports students with active listening and taking ownership over their learning. The teachers ask open-ended, probing questions to help students think through the problem and potential ways for solving it. Students then head to work on the problem independently, with manipulatives and other appropriate resources. Students are encouraged to answer the question in more than one way, thereby supporting them with the understanding that there are multiple ways of solving problems. Teachers monitor students' problem-solving approaches and select two to four students who worked on the problem using different strategies. Then, all students come back together and the work of the two to four students is shared, with students being the lead in explaining their thinking. (For a sample problem, please see **Appendix P.**) In Math Workshop, students learn by doing math through solving problems, developing conceptual understanding, and discussing and defending their reasoning. Teachers build confidence and facilitate learning to help students make connections between concepts and procedures. Additionally, students explore a range of math concepts. Lessons start with an interactive component, then students get individualized support while doing their independent practice. Number Stories and Math Workshop adhere and align to NM State Math Standards on Operations and Algebraic Thinking, Number and Operations in Base, Measurement and Data, and Geometry.[87] Simultaneously, Math Workshop and Number Stories are aligned to Mathematical Practices, specifically "(1.) Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them; (2.) Reason abstractly and quantitatively; (3.) Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others; (4.) Model with mathematics; and (5.) Use appropriate tools strategically. Math Routines is designed to build fluency and conceptual understanding when it comes to understanding number sense. Math Routines and NHM align with NM State Math Standards Mathematical Practices, especially: (6) Attend to precision; (7.) Look for and make use of structure; and (8.) Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning."[88] (Please note: during the planning year, the administrators will decide between using Achievement First or Illustrative Math K-5 for our core math curriculum.)

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[85] Indigenous Wisdom Curriculum Project | Indian Pueblo Cultural Center.
[86] Lesson Plans - (nhccnm.org).
[87] Math Standards.indb (state.nm.us).
[88] Ibid.

Science

The Amplify Science curriculum blends hands-on investigations, literacy-rich activities, and interactive digital tools to empower students to think, read, write, and argue like real scientists and engineers. As indicated in Ed Reports, this curriculum meets standards for usability and alignment. We will adopt this curriculum because of its inquiry-based and investigative approach as well as its alignment to NMCCS.[89]

Social Studies

In order to ensure students access an array of topics such as civics, economics, geography, history, inquiry and ethnic, cultural and identity studies, we will adopt a social studies curriculum such as CKLA in alignment with in our inquiry-based approach. We will further integrate reading comprehension, research, and writing skills into our Social Studies units.

Comprehensive, Systematic Educator Training

Equip Academy will provide comprehensive, systematic educator training directly connected to curriculum internalization and implementation, with a heavy emphasis on how students should actively engage with content and practice skills. As a data-driven institute for teachers, we bring a prioritized focus on teacher growth, which is the foundation for all student growth and closing the achievement gap for all learners. The curriculum is one aspect of the learning process for our teachers; another is our assessment program. At Equip Academy, we monitor progress for student growth: we must know where any academic holes are and how we can best support our students to fill them. Therefore, we have a robust protocol for training, observing, and providing teacher feedback, that in turn creates master teachers in the education field here in New Mexico. Specifically, our teacher trainings addresses four core areas: (1) Unit Launches, (2) Lesson Planning and Internalization, (3) Deliberate Practice, and (4) Data Analysis/Student Work Analysis.

Together as a team, we engage in **Unit Launches** to ensure that teachers have a clear understanding of what any given unit is like from beginning to the end. We utilize Backwards Design, ensuring teachers start with the end in mind. If we know what the end goal is, we can support students on how to get there. During our Unit Launches, we map out standards, big milestones, quizzes, mid-unit assessments and unit assessments. We gather all necessary materials and think through what students will need to be successful throughout the unit. We also think through misconceptions to ensure we are predicting the need for student supports.

Lessons are scripted for Success for All Phonics, Writing, Science and Math, yet **Lesson Planning and Internalization** are still necessary to ensure that we are catering instruction to the individual needs of the specific students within our classrooms and to our inquiry-based model. Therefore, there are Lesson Planning and Internalization teacher training sessions for scripted curriculum to ensure that we are centering on the needs of all students, including our ELs and those with special needs. Guided Reading, Close Reading, Read Aloud, and Number Stories (CGI) are not scripted. Leaders and teachers will meet weekly to prepare a lesson plan that has high-leverage, critical, inferential thinking questions that promote student thinking, talking, and learning.

During our 3-week Summer Institute for Educator Excellence, teachers engage in Deliberate Practice during which teachers practice teaching the lessons; we will continue this practice throughout the year in response to teachers' presented growth needs. Topics and parts of the lesson will vary based on the needs of the students/teachers and/or data. These are frequent opportunities for teachers to ask questions or raise concerns *before* the unit/lesson is launched. Curriculum, teacher instruction, and student success will constantly be monitored through Data Analysis/Student Work Analysis.

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[89] Explore Reports (edreports.org).

Specifically we will follow the four-step cycle which consists of Assessments, Data Analysis, Action Plan and Feedback and Coaching. This will support effective implementation of our instructional model and data-based action plans (please see **Section IB.** for a more detailed explanation).

Curriculum Development

In accordance with our mission, we will utilize evidence-based curriculum to equip students to master the knowledge and skills to prepare them for college and beyond. Therefore, alongside a strong instructional approach, a critical component of our academic program will be ensuring students have access to research-validated curricula across core content areas and enrichment classes. To adequately prepare our students for the demands of middle school and begin laying the foundations for college and career readiness in the primary grades, one of the first steps we will take is specifically aligning our curriculum to appropriate state standards. We will ensure our ELA and Mathematics curricula are aligned to the New Mexico Common Core State Standards, our Science Curriculum is aligned to the NM STEM Ready! Science Standards, and our Social Studies Curriculum is aligned to the New Mexico Content Standards for Social Studies. The actions and processes that will be used at Equip Academy to create, select, and develop our curricula are described in **FIGURE 25**.

Figure 25 - Standards and Curriculum Alignment Actions, Process, and Timeline

Timeline	Action Steps	Process
Aug. 2024 (annually thereafter)	Study NM MSSA for ELA and Math and NM Assessment of Science Readiness (NMABR) released items for each grade level. Break down state and national standards for each grade level/ subject area	• Select and align assessment items to standards • Break down standards into skills and actions • Create a standards map for each subject area
Aug. - Sept. 2024 (annually thereafter)	Cross reference the state standards with curricula rated green on Ed Reports and determine best options for each subject area. Develop and/or select curriculum-aligned interim assessments	• Ensure alignment between student demonstration of learning and content standards • Develop interim assessments for each grade level/content standard
Sept.- Oct. 2024 (annually thereafter)	Acquire curriculum and align scope and sequence to meet NM state standards	• Align scope and sequence based upon content standards • Combine complementary standards based upon supporting skills and standards
Oct. – Nov. 2024 (annually thereafter)	Ensure Unit Plans for each grade/subject area are standards aligned and plot them on school year calendar	• Using supporting standards, determine the sequence for teaching content/skills • Map a calendar of teaching objectives • Outline activities and scaffolded lessons for mastery progression for assignments

Nov. – Dec. 2024 (annually thereafter)	Analyze unit plans for each grade/subject area to identify core pedagogical strategies that apply an inquiry-based lens	• Using Cognitive Guided Instruction and Collaborative Classroom resources, determine core pedagogical strategies for math and literacy instruction • Delineate key professional development objectives aligned to pedagogical strategies
Dec. 2024 - Jan. 2025 (annually thereafter)	Ensure all unit assessments and rubrics are standard-aligned	• Engage in an assessment and rubric analysis to ensure appropriate rigor and standards alignment • Create an assessment calendar including all end-of-unit assessments, check-points, state tests and quizzes
Jan. 2025 (annually thereafter)	Develop system for monitoring student mastery of core knowledge and standards	• Create monitoring document for student mastery for both students and teachers • Document should span across all assessments • Ensure objectives are in monitoring document • Establish and review expectations for data entry and collection
Jan. - Mar. 2025 (annually thereafter)	Ensure standards-aligned lesson plans that include measurable objectives, inquiry-driven experiences, and scaffolds for the full range of learners	• Develop checks for understanding based upon learning targets • Create exemplars for student work • Determine needed materials for lesson planning • Ensure rigor and alignment between objectives, assessment, and activities • Ensure there is a roadmap of questions and engagement tactics to teach through an inquiry-driven lens
Feb. - May 2025 (annually thereafter)	Develop grade-level texts for Close-Reading	• Accumulate grade-level close reading texts • Create texts where there are gaps • Create a resource document that grounds teachers and students with framing their thinking for Fiction, Non-fiction & Poetry genres

During Equip Academy's planning year (2024-2025), the proposed Head of School will ensure alignment of all curriculum and assessments to NM state standards. Curriculum, assessments, rubrics, and lesson plans will all be vetted to ensure that they are of the highest standards for students using a measure such as earning "Green" on EdReports. Equip Academy will utilize all appropriate New Mexico state standards to inform the development of the scope and sequence for each content area across all grade levels. Each year preceding the roll-out of subsequent grade levels, we will follow a similar timeline and action steps.

The creation and/or adoption of assessments, quizzes, or check-points will be determined by the Head of School. In the summer of 2025 and each summer thereafter, teachers will be provided with all core scope and sequence documents, assessments, units of study, and instructional materials as well as skills development in our inquiry-based pedagogical approach, and aligned training to support the implementation of our high-quality and standards-aligned curricula.

D. Bilingual Multicultural Education, Indian Education, Hispanic Education and Black Education

D.(1) Bilingual Multicultural, Indian Education, Hispanic Education and Black Education

Provide a description of how the proposed school's curriculum will ensure equal education opportunities for students in New Mexico by addressing the goals of the Bilingual Multicultural Education Act (NMSA §22-23-1), the goals of the Indian Education Act (NMSA §22-23A-a1), the goals of the Hispanic Education Act (NMSA §22-23B-2), and the goals of the Black Education Act (HB 43)

Equip Academy will serve traditionally underserved, underrepresented, and underperforming populations and flip the existing narrative. Equip Academy will support *all* students to meet the high educational bar set for them.

Equip Academy is in alignment with Bilingual Multicultural Education Act (NMSA §22-23-1) and will provide students with opportunities to: expand their conceptual and linguistic abilities and increase their potential of success; appreciate the value and beauty of different languages and cultures; and meet or exceed state academic content standards and benchmarks in all subject areas.

Equip Academy is in alignment with Indian Education Act (NMSA §22-23A-1) and aims to: provide equitable and culturally relevant learning environments and culturally relevant instructional materials for American Indian students; provide the study, development, and implementation of educational systems that affect the educational success of American Indian students to close the achievement gap; encourage and foster parental involvement in the education of their children; and provide mechanisms to improve educational opportunities for Native American students for the purpose of closing the achievement gap, which will naturally increase graduation rates and post-secondary enrollment, retention, and completion.

Equip Academy is in alignment with New Mexico's Hispanic Education Act (NMSA §22-23B-2) and aims to: provide for the study, development, and implementation of educational systems that affect the educational success of Hispanic students to close the achievement gap; increase graduation rates; encourage and foster parental involvement in the education of their children; provide mechanisms to improve educational opportunities for Hispanic students for the purpose of closing the achievement gap which will increase graduation rates, and increase postsecondary enrollment, retention, and completion.

Equip Academy is in alignment with New Mexico's Black Education Act (HB 43), and aims to: develop and include anti-racism policies; develop curricula and instructional materials that recognize and teach black culture and anti-racism; implement anti-racism training for teachers and staff; and create opportunities for students to explore one's identity and societal systems that may impact their identity and future.

The narrative below outlines how Equip Academy will execute equal education opportunities as described above.

Closing the Achievement Gap Between Multilingual, American Indian, Hispanic, and Black Students

New Mexico is clear and explicit about closing the achievement gap for our multilingual, American Indian, Hispanic, and Black students. Specifically, all public schools are expected to ensure that these

students, including English language learners (ELs) "are meeting state academic content standards and benchmarks in all subject areas."[90] This means that the first thing that needs to happen is closing the achievement gap between each of these student groups, and given our target community in which 30.9% of families do not speak English as a first language, closing the gap between EL students and non-EL students. Further, there will be professional development for the school's staff focused on "classroom assessments that support academic and language development."[91]

With the high percentage of EL students in our community (30.9%), current comparative achievement results are outlined below.

FIGURE 26 - 2022-2023 New Mexico State Summative Assessment[92] Proficiency Rates

English Learner Status	English/Language Arts	Mathematics
Current EL	18.4%	8.6%
Non-EL	42.2%	29.6%

Based on the 2022-2023 New Mexico State Summative Assessment, there is a 23.8% gap in reading proficiency rates for EL students versus non-EL students. All elements of our school program – curriculum and instruction, student supports, teacher professional development, and family engagement - combine to advance our goal to close these gaps and dramatically accelerate students' learning. Further, through our resource-rich, literacy-rich curriculum, Bilingual/Multicultural students will receive opportunities to expand their conceptual and linguistic abilities which will ultimately allow them to meet grade level academic standards and increase their success.

Resource-Rich, Literacy-Rich Language Acquisition Program[93]

Informed by The Science of Reading and strongly aligned with The Science of Reading for Emergent Bilinguals in New Mexico, our research- and evidence-based approach brings years of demonstrating that it works. Supporting all learners, and specifically supporting EL students, our multiple modality reading instructional components unite the core principles of learning to read - phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension - as students engage in academic activities throughout our purposeful literacy blocks that support language development appropriate to the grade-level through Phonics, Independent Reading, Small Group Reading, Writing, and Read Aloud. Research supports the positive impact that such an approach has for ELs; one study conducted by the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth finds that, "a lot of what works for kids whose first language is English is also effective for kids who speak a different language at home. Instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension—the five components of reading studied in the National Reading Panel a few years earlier—all had 'clear benefits' for ELLs."[94]

At the top of the morning, students engage in three 30-minute rotations of Phonics, Independent Reading, and Small Group Reading instruction (6-8 students per group). Students are grouped based on reading level to ensure students are receiving individualized, student-specific support. During Small Group instruction, a total of 6-8 students receive guided support one level above their independent reading level based on the Fountas & Pinnell reading assessment. This supports multilingual students because, for example, teacher lessons can focus on vocabulary, sight-words, oral retelling, and other

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[90] Article23-BilingualEducationLaw.pdf (state.nm.us).

[91] Ibid.

[92] Workbook: NM-MSSA Results (tableau.com).

[93] **Appendix-G-5-Year-Budget-Plan**: Object Codes: 56111, 56112, 56113, 56118 as well as throughout the budget.

[94] The 'Science of Reading' and English-Language Learners: What the Research Says (edweek.org).

student-specific needs. Leveled, classroom libraries will inform an equitable and culturally relevant learning environment as the books will represent our student demographics. Using Success for All (SFA), phonics will be taught through direct instruction and accompanied with visual cue-cards, video, alphabet songs, sight-word scope and sequence, and decodable books. Our K-1 phonics activities will expose students to letter-sounds connections, blending, segmenting, and concepts of print, and will include a decodable book. This approach will support multilingual learners because of its repetitive nature which ultimately supports students' automaticity and internalization. One Texas study focusing on the reading growth of Hispanic students and ELs "reported an analysis of data from the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), comparing reading gains (from the year schools began to implement Success for All to 1998) by all 111 Success for All schools in the state to those made by students throughout Texas....Analyzing at the school level, their TAAS reading gains were significantly greater (p < .01) than those for Hispanic students in the state as a whole. Hispanic students in the SFA schools and state means for Hispanic students were similar in the year before SFA was introduced. The effect size for school means was +0.28....[An Arizona] study of the ELD [English Language Development] adaptation of Success for All in schools serving many students acquiring English took place in an Arizona school district (Ross, Smith, & Nunnery, 1998). This 1-year study compared first graders in two Success for All schools to those in four schools using locally developed Title I schoolwide projects. Students were pre-tested on the English Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) and then post-tested on the Woodcock Word Identification, Word Attack, and Passage Comprehension scales, and the Durrell Oral Reading Test. Analyses of covariance found that Hispanic Success for All students scored significantly higher than control students on all measures."[95] This approach specifically expands Bilingual and Multicultural students' conceptual and linguistic abilities and increases their academic success.

During Independent Reading, or Pleasure Reading, students read their just-right, leveled books that are self-selected (with teacher guidance regarding level selections) based on each student's unique interests. This supports multilingual learners because students can have books on an AA level which means that they are picture books so that students can practice "reading" or telling the story based on the pictures they see in any language at home. Also, these books are self-selected and based on student interest, which invests and motivates students to take ownership over their learning. During Writing, students get a mini-lesson from their teacher on such standards as narrative writing to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective techniques, descriptive details, and clear event sequences for grades K-2 while developing competency in the skills and strategies of the writing process by describing actions, thoughts, or feelings. This is supportive of Multilingual students, for example, because before students start writing, they get scaffolded support with planning out their story across 5-fingers. Then students practice telling the story verbally, and drawing out their story with pictures. This oral and visualization process supports multilingual students in the planning process because it gives students multiple opportunities to familiarize themselves with their story before they express their story in written format. Students in grades 3-5 might conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic. If Multilingual students need support, teachers will provide scaffolds such as having the opportunity to share information orally and then map it out with a graphic organizer.

During Read Aloud and Close Reading, students develop their comprehension skills, with an emphasis on vocabulary development that includes both a focus on contextual clues and word etymology. Our K-5 literacy-rich, resource-rich programming has 1:1 teacher support for students, including conferencing, coaching, feedback, discourse, and revision. This program is highly supportive for multilingual students and their language development because of its natural ability to lend itself to literary concepts that equip students to master the skills with confidence.

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[95] body (successforall.org).

When addressing academic learning goals for American Indian, Hispanic, and Black students, the first thing that needs to happen is closing the reading and math proficiency achievement gap between white students and students of color. Equip Academy's purpose is aligned with the purpose of: the Hispanic Education Act - "A. provide for the study, development and implementation of educational systems that affect the educational success of Hispanic students to close the achievement gap and increase graduation rates;"[96] the Indian Education Act - "provide for the study, development and implementation of educational systems that positively affect the educational success of American Indian students;"[97] and the Black Education Act, as we intend to provide a program that "[a]ddresses the Black student achievement gap in a holistic and systemic manner that includes clearly articulated measures to improve public education for Black students that results in substantially improved graduation rates, college or career readiness and higher education completion rates at the undergraduate and graduate levels."[98] **FIGURES 27** and **28** outline comparative proficiency rates for each group.

FIGURE 27 - 2022-2023 Albuquerque Public Schools Reading Proficiency Rates[99]

	American Indian	Hispanic	Black	White
English Language Arts	23.6%	26.1%	18.7%	64.8%

FIGURE 28 - 2022-2023 Albuquerque Public Schools Math Proficiency Rates[100]

	American Indian	Hispanic	Black	White
Math	8.8%	13.4%	3.8%	50.0%

FIGURE 29 shows that White students are consistently scoring far above that of students of color, and students of color are consistently failing at the bottom of the scoreboard.

FIGURE 29 - Proficiency Rate Gaps vs. White Students

Proficiency Rate Gaps	American Indian	Hispanic	Black
ELA Achievement Gap	41.2%	38.7%	46.1%
Math Achievement Gap	41.2%	36.6%	46.2%

Equip Academy is purposefully designed to close these gaps, and we are dedicated to changing the reality that students of color achieve at rates far below those of White students. Our academic program ensures that *all* students have their academic needs met and their academic goals realized. We know that it is *not* a student's race, ethnicity, heritage, or language ability that determines a student's academic success; instead, that success is *most* determined by the quality of education the student receives, the expectations held for them, and the belief that they can reach the demands set before them – and then the program and supports to get them there. Indeed, the New Teacher Project in its crucial 2019 findings outlined in "The Opportunity Myth" specified four key levers that led to dramatic student achievement gains: (1) consistent opportunity for students to work on grade-level material; (2) strong instruction when students do most of the thinking in a lesson; (3) deep engagement in what they are learning; and (4) teachers holding high expectations for students because they can meet grade-level standards.[101] Combined with a cultural awareness and respect for

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[96] Hispanic-Education-Act.pdf (state.nm.us).
[97] ARTICLE 23A (state.nm.us).
[98] BEA Curriculum – New Mexico Public Education Department (state.nm.us).
[99] Workbook: NM-MSSA Results (tableau.com).
[100] Workbook: NM-MSSA Results (tableau.com).
[101] TNTP-The-Opportunity-Myth.pdf (edchoice.org).

the community – an understanding of the "broader context of the school system and the pedagogical practices employed are the real methods to dismantling achievement gaps"[102] - these approaches inform every aspect of our school design.

Our **Resource-Rich, Literacy-Rich Curriculum** with intentional culturally relevant instructional materials, along with our **Educator Excellence** programing, **Data-Driven** and **Inquiry-Based Approach** dynamically support the success of American Indian, Hispanic and Black students. These elements of our academic program   have been selected and will be carefully implemented to close these achievement gaps, increase graduation rates for all subgroups of students, and increase postsecondary enrollment, retention, and ultimately, competition so that all students are prepared to live a life of purpose and live their full potential.

Our approach to educator excellence (for more detail, please see **Section A**) and data-driven instruction (for more detail, please see **Section B)** is designed to close the achievement and opportunity gap for every child: "Opportunity gap refers to the fact that the arbitrary circumstances in which people are born—such as their race, ethnicity, ZIP code, and socioeconomic status—determine their opportunities in life, rather than all people having the chance to achieve to the best of their potential."[103] Our Lead Founder and proposed Head of School has a fierce commitment to and brings strong experience of equipping historically-underserved students to meet and exceed academic standards; like all members of our Founding Board, she has a firm belief that students are innately curious and innately want to succeed. This means that we have designed our academic program within which we - leaders and teachers – remain hyper-aware of where students are scoring academically to ensure data-driven instruction and timely interventions so that *all* students' academic needs are met and all students' academic goals are being realized.

We know that for every student to learn, every teacher must be trained, coached, and supported at a high level. As detailed in this application, comprehensive, systematic, and purposeful cycles of professional development are a unique hallmark of our design. (For more detail on our Professional Development program, please see **Section II.E**.) This approach has been shown to be highly successful when serving under-served, underperforming student populations because the school knows exactly where students are in terms of their proficiency which then informs classroom practice and student supports. This includes 15 full days of PD and 40 professional development afternoons held on our abbreviated Wednesday schedule, equating to more than 200 annual PD hours. Teacher professional development will ensure that all teachers internalize and implement our curriculum and inquiry-based instructional approach. Research shows that "[w]hat teachers learn about students should be centralized both in the curriculum (what students have the opportunity to learn) as well as through instruction (how they teach the curriculum)."[104] All teachers and leaders will be trained in the use of data for instructional planning, accelerating student growth and closing achievement gaps.

Teachers will be informed and supported through comprehensive, sequenced, and prioritized professional development and individual coaching, and all teachers will consistently implement standards-based lesson plans from our school-wide curricula that outline (a) learning expectations from start to finish and (b) specific instructional moves to ensure all students are progressing toward mastery. This will include a roadmap of high-leverage, open-ended questions that push students' thinking. All teachers will implement a common tracking system to indicate who is and who is not

[102] Milner, H. R. (2013). "Analyzing Poverty, Learning, and Teaching Through a Critical Race Theory Lens." *Review of Research in Education, 37*(1), 1-53. https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X12459720.

[103] Mooney, T. K. (2021, February 24). Why We Say "Opportunity Gap" Instead of "Achievement Gap." Teach For America. https://www.teachforamerica.org/stories/why-we-say-opportunity-gap-instead-of-achievement-gap.

[104] Ladson-Billings G. (2009). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

demonstrating understanding of and proficiency in specific content and skill, which will inform the next day's and week's instructional plans, based on whole group, sub-group, and/or individual needs. This approach has been shown to exponentially increase academic growth across all learning communities and student subgroups. Indeed, we combine knowing our students' data with knowing them as people. We are guided by the research which concludes that "[t]eachers must be culturally responsive in understanding what strengths students are bringing to the classroom on a daily and weekly basis in order to better understand their challenges and help them overcome inequities and how these might show up in the classroom. Thus, teachers are constantly learning about their students, their families and their communities so they can best support them in how they teach."[105] (For more detail on our curriculum, please see **Section C.**) Professional development will also include anti-racism training for teachers and staff that delve into staff and student identities to support staff in better understanding self and others.

Overall, our approach to data to increase the success of *all* students is informed by the national expertise of Bambrick-Santoyo's *Driven By Data* (Jossey-Bass, 2010) as we follow four key steps.

STEP 1 – Assessments. We will implement reliable, pre-planned assessment cycles to monitor academic progress and ensure leaders and teachers proactively address learning needs and gaps.

STEP 2 - Data Analysis. We will use our assessment data to conduct quarterly school-wide and monthly grade-level cycles of analysis of student learning.

STEP 3 - Action Plan. The data analysis process will enable us to create action plans, inclusive of grade-level, class-level, and individual student goals and strategies to address individual, small group, and whole class learning needs. Here, we will also use *Driven By Data's* Five Core Drivers for Action Planning and Execution: (1) Action Plan, (2 and 3) Successful Implementation and Ongoing Assessment, (4) Accountability, and (5) Engaging Students.

STEP 4 - Feedback and Coaching. We will conduct weekly feedback/coaching for leaders and teachers to support effective implementation of our instructional model and our data-based action plans, ensuring students who need support are receiving it and learning/achievement gaps are being closed.

Our approach is informed deeply by TNTP's "The Opportunity Myth." Partnering with five diverse school systems, TNTP reviewed nearly 5,000 assignments, observed nearly 1,000 lessons, analyzed more than 20,000 student work samples, and collected nearly 30,000 real-time student surveys. From this study, two important factors for students, and especially students of color, became clear: (1) there was a clear disconnect between daily assignment proficiency vs. assessment proficiency, with 71% of students scoring mastery in assignments and 17% scoring mastery on benchmark assessments; and (2) students of color specifically were not receiving grade level materials on their daily assignments, which resulted in chronically widening the achievement gap. As noted above, TNTP found that students spent most of their time in school without access to four key resources: grade-appropriate assignments, strong instruction, deep engagement, and teachers who hold high expectations. The purposeful key elements of our academic program as addressed in this section have been chosen to confront and upturn low achievement among underperforming students and accelerate their growth so they live out their potential.

Equip Academy values parental involvement for the education of Bilingual, American Indian, Hispanic, Black and Multicultural students. We will keep parents up-to-date on student academic performance through regular homework notes organized within personalized student folders, regular phone conversations between teachers and parents (tracked by teachers and monitored by school leadership). We will also host Family Information Sessions to ensure parents are aware of our

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[105] Moll L., Gonzalez N. (2004). "Engaging life: A funds-of-knowledge approach to multicultural education." In Banks J., Banks C. (Eds.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (2nd ed., 699–715). SF, CA: Jossey-Bass.

academic focus and inform them about our curriculum design and how to best support their students. We will host three family conferences for all students and one for families whose students are potentially at risk for not satisfying grade-level requirements and thus not earning promotion. Promotion in Doubt (PID) students and any students who are struggling will be given more intensive instruction, with frequent assessment to see how we can best adjust our practice and focus to meet their needs.

Beyond academics, Equip Academy is dedicated to building community, fostering belonging, and celebrating success. We will have various events throughout the year to come together. Our goal is to infuse joy through learning and celebrate student achievement and success. One way is through our Community Circles – key for cultivating joy, community, and belonging among families, students and staff; we will meet as a school to celebrate things such as academic growth, school values, and school spirit. We will host a total of eight (8) Community Circles to celebrate learning, focus on values, provide presentations on important topics such as Hispanic Heritage month, Black History month, Indigenous Peoples Day, and anything relevant happening in the community that could impact students. One of Equip Academy's values is Partnership. Our goal through partnership is to foster a culture of community. For more information about these partnerships and how we celebrate community, please see **Section 1A.**

D.(2) Equity Plan

Provide a description of how the proposed school will create an effective and equitable system of supports for all students focused on root-cause analysis, equity-focused leadership and continuous improvement, and culturally and linguistically responsive curriculum and pedagogy.

Equity Plan through Our Culture and Equity Council

Equip Academy of New Mexico (Equip Academy) will create and implement an effective and equitable system that supports all students. The Head of School will be overseen by the Governing Board and will work closely with its committees, including its Culture and Equity Council. The Culture and Equity Council, composed of multiple stakeholders (parents, staff, teachers), will review and provide feedback on school policies (such as discipline policies), procedures, and handbooks to ensure that they are equitable and not biased and will advise the Board should they find potential in-equitabilities. They will review annual budgets to ensure that Title I funding is being allocated appropriately. The Culture and Equity Council will meet four (4) times per year to review policy, budget, and academic data as well as any time we may be adopting a new curriculum so that they can review and make recommendations to the team to ensure that there are equitable learning opportunities for all students, including marginalized populations. In collaboration with the Head of School, the Culture and Equity Council will conduct a needs assessment via beginning- and end-of-year surveys in order to determine what supports are needed in school, at home, and in the community in order to better, more authentically support all students to succeed in school.

Through our educator excellence program, we will focus heavily on the implementation of formal and informal assessments and data analysis to ensure that we are focusing on the root cause when it comes to learning gaps. For example, during informal assessments conducted within small group reading, a teacher will have a tracker to notate if a student needs support around fluency, word-solving, and/or comprehension. They will use that data to look for trends with a student and create goals to support the student in their learning. Another example in math might be a teacher tracking student accuracy for Number Stories over the course of a week, and then reviewing how many students are getting correct vs. incorrect answers and where misconceptions in understanding

or inaccuracies in application are happening. As a result, the teacher might check in with specific students first or assign them to a small group for support. Recorded on a uniformly implemented tracking system, informal assessments will occur daily during the interactions between teacher and student and during whole and small group instruction. Teachers and leaders will gather data from student verbal responses, written independent assignments, as well as weekly exit tickets. This approach is highly student-centered, as it considers how a child is achieving with coaching (during work-time) as well as how they are achieving independently (during checks for understanding and assessments).

Various assessments will take place throughout the school year, always followed by data analysis to take measurement of our schoolwide, grade-level, teacher-specific, sub-group, and student-specific academic health. Simply stated, we will look at how the school is doing as a whole, how each grade is doing as a whole, how each class is doing, how each subgroup is doing, and how each student is doing – all vitally important when determining the root causes of learning gaps. As a team, we will identify school-wide trends, as well as grade-specific and class-specific trends, supporting teachers in creating action plans and student-specific goals. With a focus on the root cause within student learning gaps, school leaders will follow up with observations around the teachers' goals as well as students' specific goals to ensure they are being executed at a high level and that students are getting support around there specific learning gap(s) informed by our understanding of the root causes of those gaps. For example, after a work analysis session for first grade Number Stories, we might realize that across all four classes, students are solving the problem twice in the same way and therefore getting the same wrong answer twice. We might set a goal across the whole grade for students to solve each problem by using two different strategies. Or, we might notice students' responses are brief after doing a work analysis for narrative writing in second grade. We might set a grade goal for students to expand their writing by using dialogue. Comprehensively, as a school we will be constantly collecting formal and informal data so that we can reflect and use it to drive instruction and ensure student growth.

As a feedback-driven school dedicated to continuous improvement, our assessment data analysis and action plan execution are cyclical and strategic. Our goal is always to improve our instructional program and academic systems because that is when learning and growth happen for students. Our literacy and language acquisition program is highly supportive because of its resource-rich and reinforcing nature. Students will have a plethora of options for books on their level because of our class leveled libraries,[106] students will receive whole group and small group instruction, and students will experience Read Aloud and Close Reading text above their level through which they will acquire a range of vocabulary and literary concepts. Additionally, Close Reading and Read Aloud instructional materials recognize and teach Black culture and anti-racism through centering belonging and difference. There will also be opportunities to explore one's own identity and by learning about other cultures and through our writing and social studies units. Read Aloud and Close Reading supports students as they are able to hear what strong fluency and text analysis look and sound like, highly associated with the science of reading and encompassing phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension, as well as opportunities to respond to literature.

We agree that "The future of New Mexico and the rest of the nation depends on our children; it is crucial that we ensure Hispanic children receive a culturally and linguistically responsive education that prepares them adequately for college, career, and life. New Mexico is poised to be an example for the nation with the Hispanic Education Act (HEA) of 2010. While the act includes essential items, there are opportunities for grassroots conversations about what Hispanic students and families need."[107] This is crucial since 62% of students are Hispanic in our state.[108] We also understand that

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[106] **Appendix-G-5-Year-Budget-Plan**: Object Codes: 56111, 56112, 56113, 56118 as well as throughout the budget.
[107] Serving-Hispanic-Students-in-New-Mexico-2022.pdf (state.nm.us).
[108] Serving-Hispanic-Students-in-New-Mexico-2022.pdf (state.nm.us).

"Hispanic students descend from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds with lived experiences that are shaped by multiple intersecting social factors, not only race and ethnicity."[109] Equip Academy's purpose is in alignment with that of the Indian Education Act - "[to] ensure equitable and culturally relevant learning environments, educational opportunities and culturally relevant instructional materials for American Indian students enrolled in public schools" - and with the Black Education Act, requiring schools to be dedicated to creating an environment that "[s]ustains equitable and culturally responsive learning environments in the public school system."[110]

Equip Academy will serve multi-lingual, culturally diverse students; our programming, curriculum, and community partnerships will create opportunities for students to learn about themselves and others. As a culturally responsive school, we will ensure that all students feel both psychologically and physically safe. The entire Founding Team, led by our proposed Head of School, has a firm belief that if students do not feel psychologically safe, learning cannot happen.[111] It is crucial that students are able to make mistakes, agree and disagree with peers, change their thinking, and ultimately take academic risks because that is when the learning happens.

We know that a culturally responsive classroom takes a lot of work. Our school day will begin with an Opening Circle where teachers will incorporate social emotional learning. We will do this as a whole school, and teachers will have freedom to respond to needs specific to their classroom. In addition, we will be a co-creating institute which means that we will co-create norms with our classroom starting from kindergarten. Teachers will continue to build on these norms throughout the year. Studies have shown that when you bring students into the decision-making process around norms, they tend to take more ownership over their behavior and their learning. Additionally, representation matters. Students will read their independent books and close reading texts as well as solve math problems with a range of demographics, names, cultures, and locations. This is integral to multicultural learning. Equip Academy will incorporate mirrors and windows, with students both seeing "their self" (people who look like them) and seeing others, broadening their horizons and seeing others.[112]

Culturally Responsive Framework

Equip Academy will incorporate a culturally responsive curriculum, field studies[113], and community events. Our culturally responsive curriculum can be seen in our Science, Social Studies, Read Aloud, Close Reading, Writing, and Math curriculum. Students will be reading books and analyzing close reading texts starting from kindergarten that include a focus on New Mexico's specific culture. Students will learn about various topics, ranging from the Pueblos across New Mexico, New Mexico's landscape, New Mexico's specific foods, New Mexican art, as well as celebrating our community and learning about things like the balloon fiesta and our flamenco dance culture. Students will be able to dig into their own cultural and historical backgrounds and relish their own cultural and racial identities. Specifically, 80% of Westside students are Hispanic and there is a significant population of American Indian students as well. Our students will embark on field studies related to New Mexico and its culture and heritage. Partnerships with the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center,[114] the Hispanic Cultural Center,[115] the National Institute of Flamenco,[116] and Bosque School (see **Appendix Q** for more

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[109] Serving-Hispanic-Students-in-New-Mexico-2022.pdf (state.nm.us).

[110] BEA Curriculum – New Mexico Public Education Department (state.nm.us).

[111] addressing_race_and_trauma_in_the_classroom_educators.pdf (nctsn.org).

[112] The Importance of Windows and Mirrors in Stories | PBS Education.

[113] **Appendix-G-5-Year-Budget-Plan**: Line Item 58, Fund 11000, Function 1000, Object 55817. Allocation Plan: Year 1: $4,000.00, Year 2: $6,000.00, Year 3, $8,000.00 Year 4: $10,000.00 and Year 5: $12,000.00 for Student Travel.

[114] Meeting w/Arianna Chavez, Director of Education, Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, Tuesday, December 19, 2023.

[115] Schedule K-12 school tour through Visit - (nhccnm.org).

[116] Meeting w/Eva Encinias, Founding Director of the National Institute of Flamenco on Friday, February 23, 2024.

detail.)[117] will support all students including, Indian, Hispanic, Black and Multilingual students in gaining an appreciation and deeper understanding about where they live and who they are within the context of their culture. One of our annual community-wide events will be focused on legacy during Hispanic Cultural Month. Additionally, during Close Reading and our fictional study, we will explore multi-cultural folklore and fairy tales from Indian, Hispanic, Black, African, and Chinese cultures. This approach makes students more well-rounded, builds understanding and acceptance and opens windows to self and difference.

Equip Academy is also culturally and linguistically responsive when it comes to pedagogy. Our inquiry-based and engaging structural design is built on centering all students' voices. Oftentimes teachers can quickly call on the students who might "know the answer," however, at Equip Academy, we work and plan to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to voice their opinion and be an active participant in the learning process. We also encourage "productive struggle" because that is where we see the most growth. All students' learning styles and learning profiles are taken into consideration when thinking about curriculum and our instructional approach. We offer whole group and small group instruction as well as scaffolded supports which ease students into the learning process. Equip Academy is also dedicated to culturally and diverse staffing. We believe that our staffing model should reflect that of our demographics. Our plan is to recruit a diverse range of staff and educators, train and prepare them to teach through a culturally responsive lens both relationally, academically and instructionally by centering student voice and belonging. Our plan is to retain quality and diverse teachers by investing in their learning and development and by valuing them and their practice.

We will use the Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Framework Inventory to identify underserved student populations and their communities and the desired outcomes these families and communities have for their child(ren).[118]

The Board will meet monthly with the leadership team to review academic dashboards, with data disaggregated by all student subgroups and all data measured against the school's accountability goals. They discuss the data as a full Board at public meetings. Through its work, the Board will ensure that the school has both the resources and the oversight and accountability needed to reach its goals. Should the school fall short of its goals, or if there are concerns during the school year that the appropriate degree of progress is not being made, the Board will ask leadership for its specific plan of action, and then monitor the success of that plan on a monthly basis.

E. Graduation Requirements

E. Identify the proposed school's requirements for graduation, if applicable, and explain any changes or additional requirements that vary from state mandated minimum requirements.

As a K-5 school, this question is not applicable.

F. Instruction

F. (1) Provide a **clear, comprehensive, and cohesive** overview of the teaching and instructional philosophy

Equip Academy of New Mexico Instructional Philosophy

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[117] Meeting held with Head of School Dr. Jessie Barrie on Tuesday, January 23, 2024.
[118] CLR-Framework-District_School_Charter-School-Inventory_FINAL.docx (live.com).

We know that having a rigorous, vertically-aligned, and standards-driven curriculum is critical to student success. We also know that bringing curriculum to life and inspiring a love of learning is just as critical. Equip Academy has designed each of these elements – curriculum and its implementation - to prepare students to dream audaciously and lead a life of purpose. One way we will equip them to do so is by "experiencing" authentic learning and not "receiving" disengaged learning.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHOD 1: AUTHENTIC ENGAGEMENT

Authentic Engagement is at the Heart of Learning.

We believe that children are innately smart, curious, and want to succeed. Children have the ability to rise to any occasion and meet the demands set before them. Children are naturally curious about the world around them and eager to learn; they have a deep desire to be the best at everything they do. As a school, we equip students with the tools to dream audaciously without limitations. We believe that all students are capable of meeting academic goals before them, including students with disabilities and English Learners. Engagement ensures equity for all students which is why it is directly aligned with our philosophy.

What is Authentic Engagement?

Authentic engagement starts with the teacher. Teachers utilize specific strategies to bring all students into the learning process. These methods keep students engaged and support students in maintaining focus on the task at hand and naturally increase student motivation and maximize achievement. These methods, termed Engaging Academics, are outlined within the nationally known programming from *Teach Like a Champion*. There are more than 60 techniques that can be used to engage students and bring them into the center of learning. Four key Instructional Methods we will use in all classrooms are: Ratio, Wait time, Cold Call, and Everybody Writes. These methods ensure equity for all students. For example, Ratio ensures that teachers are not doing all the talking which innately values student opinion and voice. Wait Time gives an opportunity for think-time for students who may be longer processors. Cold Call ensures equity and diversity of voice because teachers are not just selecting students who raise their hand because these students are often the ones who already know the answer or are the most comfortable and assertive. Everybody Writes is another processing technique that supports students in providing time to think and formulate their individual thoughts without outside contributing factors. These methods are supportive to the historically underperforming Westside population we intend to serve. With the right tools to bring them into the learning process, we will give them opportunity to engage and ultimately know their opinion matters and is of great value.

Ratio. Ratio is particularly important when it comes to engagement and equity in learning. Those who are doing the thinking and talking are the ones doing the learning. There are two terms that must be understood and implemented to ensure success: Participation Ratio and Think Ratio. Participation Ratio (PR) is the percentage of student participation in learning tasks such as speaking, writing, and even academic gestures (i.e., agreeing, disagreeing). Student participation builds buy-in to learning and student confidence, and promotes a sense of community ownership and independent learning. Think Ratio is less tangible but just as critical and measurable. Think Ratio is the amount of thinking students are doing. For example, when answering questions, students are using personal experience, reflecting, changing their answer, expanding their correct answer. When students are doing the thinking, they are able to reach mastery, learn to think independently, and become self-reliant, reflective, and confident in their learning.

How is Authentic Engagement Implemented?

Background Knowledge. Having a high Think Ratio is important to achieve as often as possible, but in the long run, it also requires direct investment in content knowledge so that students have a great

deal of knowledge to access and apply in their thinking. Equip Academy's "[v]ocabulary instruction is systematically taught… Teachers introduce new concepts and words throughout the day, and embed language development in all activities and through high-quality children's books. In the early grades, much of the content of vocabulary instruction is from books and other curriculum materials. As students begin to read on their own and read increasingly complex texts across the content areas, they encounter words that are not a part of their oral vocabulary, and their vocabulary expands more rapidly."[119]   We are informed by research that "defines literacy as the 'ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute and use printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning to enable an individual to achieve his or her goals, to develop his or her knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in the wider society'."[120] Through our educational design components and curriculum, students are able to build their content knowledge, an understanding of the wider world, and how they can engage with it. This will be executed through rigorous materials at each grade level, with exposure to various texts (Close Reading, Read Aloud, Independent Reading, Small-Group Guided Reading, Number Stories, and Math Workshop) as well as our community and cultural partnerships, and as importantly, building on the knowledge that students already have based on their experience with the world.

Academic Methods. Strong systems and routines ensure students complete recurring tasks successfully and with efficiency and equity. They provide the foundation for an orderly, positive, and rigorous classroom so that time spent on learning is maximized. Specifically, academic systems are those that help students complete tasks that directly support learning through Habits of Attention and Habits of Discussion (i.e.., taking notes, Turn and Talk, reading interactively, etc.). Details on four of our key academic methods are detailed below.

1. **Wait Time** means that teachers intentionally wait for students to think about an answer after posing a question. Too often, teachers pose a question and immediately call on the first hand, or the few same students, or even answer the question themselves. Providing wait time after asking a question gives students time to think and reflect on their answer, increases think/participation ratio, and lets students know that everyone should be doing the thinking. It is also equitable for learners who just need more time. This increases the number of hands raised, and students often have more well thought out answers precisely because they were able to take the time to think and formulate their ideas. When implemented successfully, students will request wait time to support thought formulation.

2. **Cold Call** is when students are called on whether or not they have their hand raised. This is a strong accountability tool when it comes to active engagement because students are doing the thinking, knowing that the teacher can call on anyone. Cold Call also ensures that there is equity of voice. For example, students might think that they have the wrong answer or that what they have to say is not as important or as smart as someone else's response. Cold Call brings *all* students into learning. By asking, "What do you think?" to a student who may not otherwise raise their hand lets them know that their opinion matters. In terms of equity of learning, Cold Call supports English Learners as well as students with disabilities. Cold Call is crucial when it comes to checking for understanding. Students who raise their hand first likely know the answer; one way to support students with their understanding and active-listening is to Cold Call students who need extra support and have them restate what the correct answer was or say it in their own words. It is a strategic way to prevent a learning gap before it happens. Lastly, Cold Call increases participation. According to research, "Significantly more students answer questions voluntarily than in classrooms with low-cold calling …. Students'

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[119] NMPED-NM-Statewide-Literacy-Framework-Summer-2020.pdf.
[120] Ibid.

comfort participating in class discussions increases, while classes with low-Cold Calling see no change in students' comfort participating."[121]

3. **Everybody Shows/Writes** is another impactful way to engage students and bring them into learning and gets 100% of students involved in showing what they know. "Showing" can be done with signals or gestures. This is when teachers pose a question and students all provide a response. A prime example of this is with Number Stories (for more details on this curriculum component, please see **Section C).** For example, there may be a "more or less" question posed and all students have to show what they think with a normed "more or less" gesture. This information provides informal data to the teacher about who is understanding and who is not and how the teacher will support them both throughout the discussion and who will be coached during independent practice. Gestures are also highly utilized through all other components of a lesson, allowing students to agree, disagree, and build on each other's thinking without verbal interruption. **Everybody Shows** is another powerful strategy to check-for-understanding. In K-5, whiteboards or notebook writing will be commonly used for students' active participation. Teachers can pose a question and students might have 1-2 minutes to solve, write, and share. This allows students to have a well-thought-out response and provides teachers with data about who they will call on to get the discussion going. This is educational equity and inclusivity in action: it centers all students, regardless of demographic details or learning ability and lets students know that they matter and that we care about their learning. It shows that we believe in them to meet the demands of the curriculum, and it is a powerful way for students to learn from one another.

4. **Songs, Chants, Cheers** make learning engaging and fun. These techniques are also tools to build community, a sense of collectivism and belonging. Songs, chants, and cheers are not only fun but also supported with cognition due to their repetitive nature that can "stamp" key facts. Repetition especially supports English Language and diverse learners with listening, speaking, pronunciation, reading, writing, and even grammar. Songs, chants, and cheers support memorization and retention due to their catchy nature.

Centering student learning organically centers belonging for *all* students. This is what Equip Academy strategically fosters: We want all students to feel like the classroom is theirs and that they can add their ideas, learn from one another, and grow as learners. Further, centering belonging creates a psychologically and emotionally safe environment. When students feel safe, they take learning risks (participate, share ideas, disagree when necessary, change their thinking and grow), develop their thoughts, and learn and grow. These instructional methods will support all students, regardless of their learning profile, and their learning which will prepare them for college and beyond.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHOD 2: INQUIRY-BASED APPROACH

Engagement is at the heart of deep learning and our inquiry-based approach is where the magic happens. Students will experience inquiry-based instruction which ensures that they do the thinking, talking, debating, and sense-making. Teachers are trained facilitators who ask high-leverage, open-ended questions, engaging students in discourse so that they can use evidence to develop their own conclusions and gain a higher level of understanding. This engaging approach inspires a love of learning and the inquiry-based approach equips students to become critical, independent thinkers. These two approaches support students to internalize content and take ownership over their learning.

Why is an Inquiry-Based Approach Important?

Dr. Robin M. Gillies describes the power of an inquiry-based approach in a science classroom, although this is applicable across all classrooms: "Inquiry-based science adopts an investigative

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[121] [1] (PDF) Impact of Cold-Calling on Student Voluntary Participation (researchgate.net).

approach to teaching and learning where students are provided with opportunities to investigate a problem, search for possible solutions, make observations, ask questions, test out ideas, and think creatively and use their intuition. In this sense, inquiry-based science involves students doing science where they have opportunities to explore possible solutions, develop explanations for the phenomena under investigation, elaborate on concepts and processes, and evaluate or assess their understandings in the light of available evidence. This approach to teaching relies on teachers recognizing the importance of presenting problems to students that will challenge their current conceptual understandings so they are forced to reconcile anomalous thinking and construct new understandings."[122] This investigative approach is inquiry-based and dialogue-focused, requiring purposeful planning that centers the whole person within the learning and thinking process. Rather than being the fount of all knowledge, an educator is a facilitator of the learning process that enables students to practice freedom. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire argues that "apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other."[123] We will systematically use the Socratic method in the planning and execution of teaching and train our teachers on execution of that method appropriate for the grade level and specific to the deep learning and standards-based skills and knowledge needed at each grade level. Posing a question or idea and allowing students to think - truly think - through possibilities gives them the agency to become critical thinkers. This emphasis further demonstrates our commitment to creating well-planned classrooms for collaborative learning. This ethos inspires students to learn from one another organically and communally. Finally, the inquiry-based model creates a variety of learning investigation activities that give all students the opportunity to teach each other, which ultimately motivates them to invest in their own learning.

Inquiry-Based Methods - How They Will Be Used

Our instructional methods support our school vision: Every child has the opportunity to live out their greatness; our commitment is to equip them to do so. One primary way we equip students is to provide multiple opportunities for them to do the thinking, answering, and learning. Zaretta Hammond writes in *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*: "Neuroscience reminds us that before we can be motivated to learn what is in front of us, we must pay attention to it . . . . The hallmark of an independent learner is his ability to direct his attention toward his own learning."[124]

Lesson Preparation is crucial for ensuring students are meeting the Ratio Goal for the Think and Participation Ratio. Following a lesson plan entails following a standard-based sequence of events populated with rich content materials. Lesson plans often lay out the "what" that is going to happen and have a beginning, middle, and end. Lesson preparation, however, is the "how" – how content will be acquired and skills will be developed, ensuring that all students are learning. This is when our roadmap of purposeful questioning comes into place. A road map of questions is designed to ensure students are engaging meaningfully in and with the content being taught. This level of preparation requires teachers to know the content well. Teachers will be trained, supported, and required to write out their road map of questions that will lead students to mastery and provide multiple opportunities to check for understanding and provide scaffolded support when needed. *Teach Like a Champion* categorizes it in three ways.

1. **Plan the Exemplar**. Teachers write out the high-level response they expect before, during, or after a lesson. This includes big ideas, important vocabulary, and/or any pertinent evidence.

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[122] [1] What is Inquiry-Based Science? | Smithsonian Science Education Center.

[123] freire-pedagogy-of-the-oppressed.pdf (ucsc.edu).

[124] Hammond, Zaretta. *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2014.

2. **Plan for the Error**. Teachers take into consideration any misconception or errors students might have. Teachers plan back-pocket questions (BPQs) to support students in their potential misunderstandings.
3. **Plan for the Means of Participation**. Teachers script out how they want students to interact with the content for example a Turn-and-Talk, Cold Call, Everybody Writes.

Questioning is when teachers pose a question that students either answer correctly, have a correct, but limited response, answer incorrectly, or choose to not answer at all (i.e., "I don't know"). Questioning is a skill that is mastered over time with lots of practice. However, there are some methods that support teachers throughout their practice and these methods will be a critical part of our robust teacher development program. *Teach Like a Champion* describes three critical methods best - Stretch it, Right is Right, and No Opt Out - and these methods go beyond the road-map of questions. Each is a possible way to respond and support student thinking based on student answers. The Stretch It strategy supports students when they answer correctly and the teacher prompts them to explain, expand, elaborate, and/or provide evidence on their correct answer. The Right is Right strategy supports students to be more precise and accurate. The No Opt Out strategy is used when the student says they "don't know." The teacher might ask a student who knows and have the earlier student repeat or help them work through the correct answer. This lets the student know that they are not alone and the teacher will support them through the answer. Lastly, our inquiry-based culture goes hand-in-hand with creating a Culture of Error. Learning at Equip Academy is not about solely learning the right answer. The process of getting there is deeply important. With this "productive struggle," students learn from their errors, and learning from our mistakes is what helps us grow. We tease out and invite error and misunderstanding, because this leads to deeper understanding. This culture also creates a psychologically safe environment that gives permission for students to make mistakes in their pursuit of true learning and understanding. This ultimately leads to students taking educational risks because they know that they are safe and belong in the community, and that their community will help shepherd them to mastery.

This entire approach ties back to 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. purpose.

Our philosophy directly supports our school mission and the Westside population we intend to serve through inquiry-based instruction. It is a research-proven approach with an established record of success: "Research shows that such inquiry-based teaching is not so much about seeking the right answer but about developing inquiring minds, and it can yield significant benefits. For example, in the 1995 School Restructuring Study, conducted at the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools by Fred Newmann and colleagues at the University of Wisconsin, 2,128 students in twenty-three schools were found to have significantly higher achievement on challenging tasks when they were taught with inquiry-based teaching, showing that involvement leads to understanding. These practices were found to have a more significant impact on student performance than any other variable, including student background and prior achievement."[125] We know the power of an inquiry-based classroom: questions bring students into the learning because questions make students think; when they are doing the thinking and talking, they are doing the learning. Another educator explains the value of this approach and its relationship to teacher planning and training: "This pedagogical framework requires careful prior planning in order to have purposeful execution. To be progressive in practice, one must take time to prepare. Facilitators must understand the material at the deepest level. I often use the Understanding by Design framework because it challenges me to take a birds-eye view and to start with the end in mind. This approach empowers others to craft a

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[125] Powerful Learning: Studies Show Deep Understanding Derives from Collaborative Methods | Edutopia.

clear vision and to devise a strategic plan to lead people to a particular destination, without sacrificing the necessary flexibility and autonomy that must be part of any organizational endeavor."[126] This careful planning sits at the center of our students' learning precisely because it sits at the heart of our work and our mission.

F. (2) Provide a yearly calendar and daily schedule (length of school day, instructional blocks, and breaks) that **completely comply** with **all** state requirements and ensure **effective, successful** implementation of the academic program/curriculum for the proposed age group the school intends to serve. ***If anticipating serving K-5 Students and or an extended day program, please describe and include in a Year 2 calendar.

Equip Academy of New Mexico Annual Calendar at Glance

The Equip Academy calendar provides a window into what life would be like for students, staff, and families. Our goal is to foster community and belonging from our school spirit and community circle days throughout the year and to ensure consistent academic growth, aligned to rigorous state standards and national reading standards. Therefore, we specify on our calendar all specific assessments, data studies, family conferences, and family information sessions. Because one of our values is Excellence, we strive to celebrate the hard work of students and families. There will be multiple celebrations and awards ceremonies to honor student progress and success. Therefore, our calendar and schedules indicate these as well.

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[126] https://www.edutopia.org/inquiry-project-learning-research.

FIGURE 30 - Equip Academy of New Mexico's Annual Calendar

Attachment A: Equip Academy of New Mexico Internal Annual Calendar

2025-2026 | Equip Academy of New Mexico

Summer Institute for Educator Excellence is from 9:00am-4:00pm

12:30 pm Early Dismissal Wednesdays, 1:30-4:00 Educator Institute

July 2025

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	28	29	30	31		

PD Days: 13 (84.5 hours)

August 2025

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

Instructional Days: 18   PD: 28 hrs.

September 2025

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

Instructional Days: 21   PD: 10 hrs.

October 2025

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Instructional Days: 21   PD: 12 hrs. 30 mins.

November 2025

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

Instructional Days: 16   PD: 10 hrs.

December 2025

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

Instructional Days: 15   PD: 7 hrs. 30 mins.

January 2026

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Instructional Days: 18   PD: 16 hrs. 30 mins.

February 2026

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

Instructional Days: 19   PD: 10 hrs.

March 2026

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Instructional Days: 17   PD: 7 hrs. 30 mins.

April 2026

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

Instructional Days: 21   PD: 12 hours 30 minutes

May 2026

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

Instructional Days: 20   PD: 10 hrs.

State Assessment Dates

Gifted Screener will be given as needed

- August 6 - 29 - Screeners (20 days time frame)
- August 11 - Dyslexia Screener (1st Grade within the first 40 Days)
- September 25-30 - BOY iStation K-5 Assessment
- December 8-10 - MOY iStation K-5 Assessment
- January 3 - ACCESS Testing Begins (Likely until February 27th)
- February 27 - ACCESS Complete
- March *TBD - Dynamic Learning Maps Assessment (DLM)
- April TBD - Science Assessment (5th)
- May TBD - NM MSSA ELA/Math (3-5)
- May 11 - 12 - EOY iStation Assessment K-5

Key:

Color	Meaning
	Professional Development
	First/Last Day of School
	Holiday (SCHOOL CLOSED)
	Testing Windows
	Family Conferences/Information Sessions
	Family Events
	School Spirit and Community Events
	End of Grading Period

Number of Days

TOTAL Instructional Days:	186
TOTAL PD Hours:	209
TOTAL Family Conferences:	3.5
TOTAL Family Nights:	6
TOTAL Family Information Sessions:	3
TOTAL Holidays:	26

IMPORTANT DATES: *Field Study dates to be finalized with partners

JULY
- July 1 - 4 - Registration & Materials Pick-up for Enrolled Students
- July 16 - 31 - Summer Institute for Educator Excellence

AUGUST
- August 1 - Mandatory Family Orientation & Meet the Teacher
- August 1 - 5 - Summer Institute for Educator Excellence
- August 6 - 8 - First Days of School (early dismissl days)
- August 27 - Love of Literacy Night Family Event #1
- August 29 - Purpose and Passion Guest Speaker #1

SEPTEMBER
- September 1 - Labor Day (SCHOOL CLOSED)
- September 10 - Whole School Community Circle #1 & Crazy Sock Day
- September 11-12 - Number Stories (CGI) Assessment
- September 15-30 - Reading Assessment Cycle #1
- September 24 - Literacy Night Family Event #2: Legacy Showcasing &
- September 30 - Hispanic Cultural Center Field Study

OCTOBER
- October 1 - 2 - Reading Assessment Cycle #1 Continued
- October 3 - End of Quarter 1
- October 4 - SATURDAY Library Visit #1
- October 8 - Whole School Community Circle #2: Class Cheer
- October 8 - Data Study #1
- October 9 - Family Conference & Report Cards #1
- October 10 - Fall Break (SCHOOL CLOSED)
- October 13 - Indigenous People Day (SCHOOL CLOSED)
- October 22 - Family Mathematician Walking Tour
- October 31 - Book Character Day

NOVEMBER
- November 4 - Election Day (SCHOOL CLOSED)
- November 11 - Veterans Day (SCHOOL CLOSED)
- November 21 - Indian Pueblo Cultural Center Field Study
- November 26 - Whole School Community Circle #3 & Crazy Hair/Hat
- November 26 - Family Events: T'giving Dinner/Sight Word Ceremony
- November 27 - 28 - Thanksgiving Holiday (SCHOOL CLOSED)

DECEMBER
- December 1-12 - Reading Assessment #2
- December 12 - End of Quarter #2
- December 17 - Whole School Community Circle #4 & Ugly Sweater
- December 17 - Data Study #2
- December 18 - Family Conferences & Report Cards #2
- December 22 - 31 - Winter Break (SCHOOL CLOSED)

JANUARY
- January 1-2 - Winter Break (SCHOOL CLOSED)
- January 5 - Staff Development (NO STUDENTS)
- January 12 - 100 Days of Learning Celebration
- January 19 - Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day (SCHOOL CLOSED)
- January 21 - Fictional Publishing Party & Author Awards

FEBRUARY
- February 6 - CNM Campus Visit
- February 13 - Drop Everything And Read
- February 16 - President's Day (SCHOOL CLOSED)
- February 18 - Whole School Community Circle #5 & College Day (or
- February 18- 27 - F&P (PID students only) Testing #3

MARCH
- March 6 - UNM Campus Visit
- March 6 - End of Quarter #3
- March 10 - Report Card Distribution
- March 11 - Whole School Community Circle #6 & Jersey/Sports Day
- March 11 - Data Study #3
- March 12 - PID Family Conferences & Report Cards #3
- March 16-20 - Spring Break (SCHOOL CLOSED)

APRIL
- April 3 - Bosque School Field Study
- April 9 - Family Author Awards (Launch 1/21/24, submit by 4/1/24)
- April 14 - 16 Number Stories (CGI Assessment) #2
- April 15 - Whole School Community Circle #7 & Heritage Day
- April 15 - Informational Text Publishing Party & Author/Sight Word
- April 17 - Vernal Holiday (SCHOOL CLOSED)
- April 23 - 30 - Reading Assessment #4

MAY
- May 1-8 - Reading Assessment #4 Continued
- May 12 - End of Quarter #4
- May 9 - SATURDAY Library Visit #2
- May 11 - 26 - Teacher Passion Projects
- May 13 - Whole School Community Circle #8, Fancy Schmancy Day &
- May 13 - Data Study #4
- May 15 - Family Conferences & Report Cards #4
- May 22 - Passion & Purpose Guest Speaker #2
- May 25 - Memorial Day (SCHOOL CLOSED)
- May 26 - Library Revamp
- May 27 - Teacher Passion Project Showcase
- May 29 - Last Day of School

Equip Academy's Start/End Dates, School Days, and Holidays

Our start date for students will be Wednesday, August 6, 2025; this day, along with August 7 and 8, will be early dismissal days. The end date for students will be Friday, May 29, 2026. For educators and staff, the start day will be Tuesday, July 16, 2025. Staff will attend three (3) weeks of Educator Excellence Institute, where we will focus on team-building, our academic scope and sequence, instructional design, core pedagogical practices, assessments, classroom management and routines, and classroom setup (for more information around plan for professional development, please see **Section II, D4**). The last day for teachers will be Friday, May 29, 2026.

Student instructional days equate to 186 with a total of 1,094 hours of learning. Equip Academy instructional days and learning hours exceed that of the requirements laid out in NMSA 22-2-8.1. NM state requires 180 days and 990 learning hours. Equip students will attend school 104 more learning hours than required, even with our early dismissal days. In terms of calendar days, students will attend six (6) more instructional days than required. Our days and hours support our educational program with increased and extended time for literacy to ensure we are achieving high outcomes for our anticipated student population.

Equip Academy's Teacher Professional Development (PD) Days and Times and Early Dismissal

Teacher PD days will be held for a full three (3) weeks before students begin. The Summer Institute for Educator Excellence will go from Tuesday, July 16, 2025 to Tuesday to August 5, 2025. In addition, there will be another full day of professional development in line with APS, on Monday, January 5, 2026. Equip Academy will have early dismissal on Wednesdays for professional development through our Education Institute. On Wednesdays, students will attend from 7:55 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Teachers will have lunch and then will resume collectively at 1:30pm for professional development, ending at 4:00 p.m. In comparison to the two (2) dedicated APS professional development days, Equip Academy dedicates an additional 14 full PD days as well as 40 PD sessions (2.5 hours each) each week throughout the year. Our calendar supports our proposed school's educational program because of our focus on educator excellence and increased professional development which far exceeds that of surrounding schools. Our Educator Excellence program and increased professional development will improve students' academic success within our target community.

Equip Academy's School-Wide Assessment Periods

School-wide assessment periods, highlighted in green on the calendar, support our program design. We will implement the Fountas & Pinnell reading assessment during these cycles. This is an individualized program that is facilitated one-on-one with each student. This gives teachers a precise understanding and measurement of each student's reading ability which is why the testing period is so long. The calendar also includes the Cognitive Guided Instruction (CGI) analysis dates in order to determine both teacher inputs around curriculum and instruction and student inquiry outputs. Our well-planned, evidence-based assessment program will support improved academic success and higher outcomes for our anticipated student population.

Equip Academy's Family Conferences and Data Studies

As seen in one of our values – Partnership - we value the community, and within our school design we have ensured that there are mission-aligned supports in place for our community. Frequent formal family conferences and data studies outlined in our calendar support the success of our proposed school's educational program. Our scheduled conferences occur after our internal assessments as well as most state and federally mandated assessments to ensure that we are giving families a full picture of how their student is performing academically. Family conference days, highlighted in teal, are held three (3) times for all families and an additional time for the families of our most struggling learners. This approach supports our goal that every student is successful, including historically underperforming students such as ELs, special education students, Hispanic, Indian, and Black

students. For example, our first marking period ends on Friday, October 3, 2025, and 100% of students will have been assessed and all families will have the opportunity to meet with their children's teachers. The second quarter ends on Friday, December 12, 2025, and again, 100% of students will have been assessed and we will meet with their families to update them on their progress during our family conferences. Now that we are halfway through the year, we will use that data to do a deep dive into any underchallenged or underperforming students to advance and support them through their process of learning. Based on the data study, these would be students who have made more growth than expected or those who have yet to make sufficient growth. Students who need more challenge will be given more advanced reading opportunities, and underperforming students will be supported through Tier 2 and 3 MLSS interventions and will receive more day-to-day specific support (small group and/or 1:1). As some students advance more quickly than others and some need more time, students will continue to be monitored with another opportunity for growth with the shorter testing window during the third quarter. The third quarter ends on Friday, March 6, 2026 and the students not yet meeting grade-level benchmarks will have a family conference on Thursday, March 12, 2026. (During this time, 100% of students will receive report cards but only students not meeting benchmarks will have conferences with families.) This will give us a clearer indication on which students might need to go through the SAT process, potentially getting evaluated based on the success rate or lack thereof of the Tier 2 and 3 highly supportive intervention strategies. Our final assessment period ends on Tuesday, May 12, 2026 when all students will be assessed and all students will have family conferences for the final time on May 15, 2026. In preparation for these conferences as for any support systems that will be put in place based on the data studies, we will have four data study days to ensure that we know where each student is performing academically and how we can continue to support them through the partnership of the teachers, the families and the students.

Equip Academy Daily Sample Full Day Schedules

FIGURE 31 – Grades K-2 Full Day Sample Full Day Schedule

Timeframe	Component Block
7:55 - 8:23 am	Breakfast & Morning work
8:25 - 8:45 am	Opening Circle
8:45 - 8:58 am	Math Routines
9:00 - 9:30 am	Literacy Block I
9:30 - 10:00 am	Literacy Block II
10:00 - 10:30 am	Literacy Block III
10:32 - 10:38 am	*Snack Break*
10:40 - 11:15 am	Enrichment Class
11:17 - 11:55 am	Number Stories (CGI)
11:55 am - 12:33 pm	Math Workshop
12:35 - 1:15 pm	*Lunch & Recess*
1:17 - 1:47 pm	Science/Social Studies (integrating close reading and read aloud)
1:47 - 2:17 pm	Writing Workshop
2:20 - 2:55 pm	Enrichment Class
2:57 - 3:04 pm	Math Fluency
3:04 - 3:19 pm	Closing Circle
3:19 - 3:30 pm	Pack -Up & Dismissal

Instructional start time is 7:55 a.m. Upon entering students will have **breakfast** while engaging in **morning work** which is generally math based practice and is also a great time for differentiation and

small-group support. Morning work is purposefully selected and designed. Morning work could be (1) reteach materials that students might benefit from getting another "at-bat" or try with; (2) maintenance work where perhaps on a unit that was taught earlier in the year and the teacher might want maintain that skill; (3) Intervention work, for example, one student might be working on a 0-120 counting chart because they might be working on number formation or sequential counting while everyone else might be working on skip counting; (4) this time could be used for students who need more time to work on work they have yet to complete; or (5) differentiated work for gifted students for example, students might be working on a self-selected projected because they have demonstrated mastery on other assignments, and this is a time to challenge them.

Opening Circle is a time for responsive teaching and community building among the students. During this time students might play games, focus on social and emotional learning, set and monitor class goals within the classroom. Opening Circle may or may not look the same across a grade level. A teacher may choose to focus on specifically what their class needs, while others might notice a trend and want to collaborate on a particular topic such as random acts of kindness. Or there might be a school initiative topic around school values or a deep dive into the college their class is named after. Opening circle could also be a time to bring a community member into the classroom, such as a parent or community organization.

Math Routines are quick hits of foundational math concepts, based on class needs. Teachers might focus on the number of the day, count around the room, one more one less, skip counting, or quantify the question of the day in math terms.

The three **Literacy Blocks** consist of phonics, small group reading and independent reading. K-2 Phonics is a fast-paced curriculum that focuses on Phonemic Awareness and is heavily guided, direct, and interactive instruction. Students in small group reading read with their teacher in small groups of 6-8 students and receive level-specific instruction. This component supports phonics, decoding, word-solving, comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, and cross-genre content-building. If students are not in a small group, they are independently reading self-selected books on and above student leveled books self-selected from their classroom libraries. The goal is for students to apply learned skills in phonics and small groups and develop literacy skills naturally. Students share their books and reading experiences with one other through discourse.

Students will have a healthy **snack** provided by the school or one they brought from home.

Students will then move into **Enrichment** time for students to engage in co-curricular learning. Our **Dance** and **Physical Education** enrichment classes give students the opportunity to explore a variety of dance forms across cultures, learn and develop healthy habits, and engage in physical fitness activities that support teamwork, collaboration, and their overall well-being. **Spanish** as an enrichment offering has surfaced throughout our focus groups and the founding team meetings with community members, so this may be added as the school grows. These classes will be taught by credentialed educators in their respective fields through contracted services, then will move into full time staff positions. This is also a time for teachers to have prep, lesson planning or one-on-one meetings that support their development. Upon return, K-2 students will engage in our math blocks. Number Stories and Math Workshop.

During **Number Stories** teachers will support students in thinking through Cognitive Guided Instruction (CGI) by analyzing one problem and potential ways on how to solve it for example either with manipulatives or pictures, and students will be encouraged to answer the question in more than one way, thereby prompting students with the understanding that there are multiple ways of solving problems.

During **Math Workshop**, students will learn by doing math through developing conceptual understanding and discussing and defending their reasoning in a hands-on approach.

Students will then go to lunch and recess and return to class for **Science** or **Social Studies** (each two days a week) and taught through a literacy-based lens and honing in on students comprehension and cognitive abilities via read aloud and shared/close reading. Depending on the unit, science or social studies might be linked to **Writers Workshop** where teachers engage students in a mini-lesson, students write, edit, and revise in cross-genre topics. This component supports spelling, word-solving, grammar, syntax, and the writing process - planning, drafting, revising, editing, publishing, and presenting.

Students' last full component of the day will be a second enrichment opportunity. Upon return, they will engage in a **Math Fluency** activity, where students practice math-fact automaticity to develop mastery in the ability to quickly recall addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division math facts.

The day concludes with a **Closing Circle**, which is time to reflect on the day, shout out each other, share out what went well or what could have been better. This is a purposeful, responsive time for teachers to meet the needs of their students and class. For more information on what curriculum will be taught during these blocks, see **Section IC**.

FIGURE 32 - Sample Grades 3-5 Full Day Schedule

Timeframe	Component Block
7:55 - 8:23 am	Breakfast & Morning work
8:25 - 8:45 am	Opening Circle
8:45 - 8:58 am	Math Routines
9:00 - 9:30 am	Literacy Block I
9:30 - 10:00 am	Literacy Block II
10:02 - 10:37 am	Enrichment Class
10:39 - 11:17 am	Problem Solving (CGI)
11:19 - 11:59 am	*Recess and Lunch*
12:01 - 12:39 pm	Math Workshop
12:41 - 1:11pm	Social Studies (integrating close reading and read aloud)
1:13 - 1:48 pm	Enrichment Class
1:50 - 1:57 pm	Math Fluency
1:58 - 2:04 pm	Snack Break
2:04 - 2:34 pm	Writers Workshop
2:34 - 3:04 pm	Science
3:04 - 3:19 pm	Closing Circle
3:19-3:30 pm	Pack-up and Dismissal

There is a high degree of consistency between K-2 and 3-5 schedules with some exceptions based on the academic learning needs of upper-elementary students.

All students have **breakfast** while engaging in **morning work** which is generally math-based practice but will also be an opportune time for differentiation. Morning work is purposefully selected and designed and could be: (1) reteaching materials that students might benefit from getting another "at-bat"; (2) doing maintenance work on a unit that was taught earlier in the year and the teacher might want students to maintain that skill; (3) doing intervention work, i.e., one student might be working on solving fractions while everyone else might be working on multiplication and division math

facts; (4) focusing on students who need more time on work they have yet to complete; or (5) differentiating work for gifted students, i.e., students might be working on a self-selected project as they are exceeding all unit work, and thus this is a time to challenge them.

Opening Circle is a time for responsive teaching and community building among students. During this time, students might play games, focus on social and emotional learning, set and monitor class goals within the classroom. Opening Circle may or may not look the same across a grade level. A teacher may choose to focus on specifically what their class needs, while others might notice a trend and want to collaborate on a particular topic such as random acts of kindness. Or there might be a school initiative topic around school values or a deep dive into the college their class is named after. Opening circle could also be a time to bring a community member into the classroom, such as a parent or community organization.

Math Routines is when teachers can preview or review core concepts from Math Workshop and Number Stories.

Grades 3-5 have two **Literacy Blocks** which consist of small group guided reading through novel studies where they read with teacher in small homogeneous groups of 6-8 students and receive level-specific instruction from teacher. Students not in a small group, are independently reading self-selected books on and above student leveled books self-selected from their classroom libraries.

Students will then move into **Enrichment** to engage in co-curricular activities. Our Dance and Physical Education enrichment classes give students the opportunity to explore a variety of dance forms across cultures, learn and develop healthy habits, and engage in physical fitness activities that support teamwork, collaboration, and their overall well-being. Spanish as an enrichment offering has surfaced throughout our focus groups and the founding team meetings with community members, so this may be added as the school grows. These classes will be taught by credentialed educators in their respective fields initially through contracted services, then will move into full time staff positions. This is also a time for teachers to have prep, lesson planning or one-on-one meetings that support their development.

Upon return, grade 3-5 students will engage in **Number Stories**; teachers will support students in thinking through Cognitive Guided Instruction (CGI), analyzing one problem and potential ways on how to solve it; students will be encouraged to answer the question in more than one way, prompting students to understand there are multiple ways of solving problems.

Students will then go to lunch and recess with **Math Workshop** next. Students will learn by doing math through developing conceptual understanding and discussing and defending their reasoning in a hands-on approach.

In grades 3-5, students will have **Social Studies** daily. Students will dive into an array of topics such as civics, economics, geography, history, inquiry and ethnic, cultural and identity studies. and taught through a literacy-based lens and honing in on students comprehension and cognitive abilities via read aloud and shared/close reading.

Students will then attend a second enrichment opportunity and upon return engage in **Math Fluency**, where students practice math-fact automaticity to develop mastery in the ability to quickly recall addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division math facts.

Writers Workshop is where teachers engage students in a mini-lesson, students write, edit, and revise in cross-genre topics. This component supports spelling, word-solving, grammar, and writing process - planning, drafting, revising, editing, publishing, and presenting.

Grade 3-5 students' last full component will be **Science,** also taught daily. Students will engage in hands-on investigations, literacy-rich activities, and interactive digital tools to empower students to think, read, write, and argue like real scientists and engineers.

Students will close out the day with **Closing Circle** which is time to reflect on the day, shout out one another, share out what went well or what could have been better. This is a purposeful responsive time for teachers to meet the needs of their students and class. For more information on what curriculum will be taught during these blocks, see **Section IC**.

Equip Academy Daily Sample Early Dismissal Sample Schedules

FIGURE 33 – Grades K-2 Early Dismissal Sample Schedule

Timeframe	Component Block
7:55 - 8:23 am	Breakfast & Morning work
8:25 - 8:43 am	Opening Circle
8:45 - 9:15 am	Literacy Block I
9:15 - 9:45 am	Literacy Block II
9:45 - 10:15 am	Literacy Block III
10:17 - 10:57 am	*Recess & Lunch*
11:00 - 11:20 am	Problem Solving Quiz
11:20 - 11:55 am	Math Workshop
11:55 am - 12:25 pm	Writing Workshop
12:25 - 12:30 pm	Pack -Up & Dismissal

As seen above in **FIGURES 32** and **33**, we are committed to maintaining consistency for core components around reading and math during early dismissal Wednesdays. The schedule remains largely the same for K-2. Students will have **Breakfast** while engaging in **Morning Work** followed by **Opening Circle** and promptly moving into the **Literacy Blocks**. There will not be enrichment offerings on Wednesdays, but students will be provided with recess and an early lunch. Wednesdays are for data gathering with a **Problem Solving Quiz.** As educators, we want to see how students are doing independently without teacher coaching, feedback, or support. K-2 students will move into **Math Workshop**, and end the day with **Writers Workshop** followed by pack-up and dismissal.

FIGURE 34 – Grades 3-5 Early Dismissal Schedule

Timeframe	Component Block
7:55 - 8:23 am	Breakfast & Morning work
8:25 - 8:43 am	Opening Circle
8:45 - 9:15 am	Literacy Block I
9:15 - 9:45 am	Literacy Block II
9:45 - 10:15 am	Social Studies (integrating close reading and read aloud)
10:17 - 10:37am	Problem Solving Quiz
10:39 - 11:19 am	*Recess & Lunch*
11:20 - 11:55 am	Math Workshop
11:55 am - 12:25pm	Writing Workshop
12:25 - 12:30 pm	Pack -Up & Dismissal

As seen above in **FIGURE 34** , the early dismissal day schedule for grades 3-5 remains similar to that of the full day. Students will have **Breakfast** while engaging in **Morning work** followed by the Opening **Circle,** promptly moving into the **Literacy Blocks** followed by **Social Studies**. There will not be

enrichment offerings on Wednesdays, but students will be provided with recess and lunch. Wednesdays are for data gathering across the school, with our **Problem Solving Quiz.** As educators, we want to see how students are doing independently without teacher coaching, feedback or support. Students will move into **Math Workshop**, and end the day with **Writers Workshop**.

Quantifying Learning Time at Equip Academy of New Mexico

In total, with half days and full days combined, our school's educational program schedule is optimal for achieving high outcomes for students because, in total, we are able to provide 22,320 minutes for ELA reading and writing, 16,134 for math. Inclusive of all content areas as well as enrichment, students will be receiving 65,652 minutes in total of learning time.

FIGURE 35 - K-5 Total Minutes for Full Days and Early Dismissal Days

Full Days (144)	ELA	Math	Total ELA + Math
Daily	120	96	216
Yearly	17,280	13,824	31,104
Early Dismissal (42)	ELA	Math	Total ELA + Math
Daily	120	55	175
Yearly	5,040	2,310	7,350
Total Yearly Minutes	22,320	16,134	38,454

Our carefully designed calendar and school schedules are supported by the proposed budget found in the financial framework in **Section III** of the application.

F. (3) Provide a **clear, comprehensive, and cohesive** explanation of how the educational philosophy, instructional methods, and yearly calendar and daily schedule will be effective with the anticipated student population.

Overview

Equip Academy's educational philosophy and instructional methods, as well as our yearly calendar and daily schedules, are deliberately designed to meet a range of student needs, most specifically the current demographics of the community we intend to serve. As seen below and in **FIGURE 36,** 83% of students in our target community identify as Hispanic, 30.9% are English learners, 21.7% require special education services, and 96.4% are eligible for free and reduced lunch. Data Studies conducted weekly during early dismissal days give us the opportunity to track all of our students, including our MLSS, SAT and EL students to ensure that they are growing and achieving, and not falling behind. (For more information on Equip Academy's plan for Special Population Support, please see **Section G**.) With action plans set in place, student needs will be monitored and met.

FIGURE 36 - Student Population of Targeted Geographical Area[127]

Student Subgroup	Enrollment in Schools in Target Area
Hispanic	83%
White / Caucasian	8.5%
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	3.9%

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[127] New Mexico Public Education Department 2022-23 Enrollment Subgroup Percentages.

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%

As seen below, there are many factors that influence our anticipated student population. In our target area, Albuquerque's Westside, the average ELA proficiency rate for 2023 was 26.1% and the math proficiency rate was 14.3%. Equip Academy's approach to education is one in which students succeed because they have experienced and been supported to meet the rigors of a high-quality K-5 education, fully aligned to New Mexico's educational standards, and in which students show they are successful by demonstrating academic proficiency on our internal assessment system and on external assessments, including iStation, Fountas & Pinnell Reading Assessments, and New Mexico's Measures of Student Success Assessment (NM-MSSA) in all tested content areas. These assessments, as well as data studies, are laid out in our yearly calendar. Across our daily schedules, students experience an extensive amount of English Language Arts instruction (reading and comprehension) ensuring they are accessing rigorous curriculum designed to meet their needs.

Regularly scheduled data study days and early dismissal student-centered professional development days are designed to support teachers to meet the needs of their individual students by providing the support in order to do so.

Students will receive an annual total of 22,320 minutes in literacy, 16,134 minutes in math, and a total of 65,652 minutes in total learning time. State required hours are 990; Equip Academy will provide 104 additional hours (6,252 minutes) of learning time than required. Our regularly scheduled data study days will ensure we know where students are academically, including special education students, EL students, at risk students, and students who are historically underperforming (Native, Hispanic, and Black students). This data will be purposefully used to action plan and inform teacher practice. Our early dismissal days are also highly supportive to track shorter progress increments as opposed to waiting for major assessments. We can use data more frequently, based on student work, to support students throughout the week to effectively address gaps in real-time.

FIGURE 37 - Student Demographics and Proficiency Rates in Proposed Community[128]

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/ 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%

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[128] Workbook: NM-MSSA Results (tableau.com).

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%**

Fundamentally, Equip Academy seeks to increase student access to high-quality educational opportunities through our math, ELA, community, and enrichment programing. Based on the 2022-2023 New Mexico State Summative Assessment, as seen in **FIGURE 37**, **FIGURE 38**, and **FIGURE 39**, there are significant learning gaps among all subgroups of students in our proposed school community. Our instructional model and educator support are specifically designed to accelerate learning for all students, including historically underperforming Native American, Hispanic and Black students.

FIGURE 38 - 2022-2023 NM State Summative Reading Proficiency Results and Achievement Gaps[129]

Students of Color Reading Proficiency % Compared to White Students' 64.8% APS Passing Rate			
	Native American	**Hispanic**	**Black**
English Language Arts	23.6%	26.1%	18.7%
Achievement Gap with White Peers	41.2%	38.7%	46.1%

Our math program is highly supportive to our target student demographics as a tightly aligned assessment system will allow us to constantly measure student progress towards annual state testing requirements and standards; more specifically, our Wednesday math quizzes will allow us to determine how students are progressing independently, without group work or teacher support, so that real data can constantly inform teacher practice, which is ultimately highly supportive for students and their learning, and most especially for our most academically at-risk students.

FIGURE 39 - 2022-2023 New Mexico Summative Math Proficiency Results and Achievement Gaps[130]

Students of Color Math Proficiency Compared to White Students' 50% Passing Rate			
	American Indian	**Hispanic**	**Black**
Math	8.8%	13.4%	3.8%
Achievement Gap with White Peers	41.2%	36.6%	46.2%

As seen in our yearly calendar and daily school schedules, our focus goes beyond academics and includes a continuous and dedicated focus on community-building with students/staff, partnership with families, as well as community-building with external partners. All of these are outlined below and exist to ultimately support academic and holistic student success.

Academic Performance Focused on Student Success

We will keep parents up-to-date on student academic performance through regular homework notes organized within reliable and personalized student folders, regular phone conversations between teachers and parents tracked by teachers and monitored by school leadership, four formal report cards, and 3 to 4 in-person parent-teacher conferences. Teachers and administrators will consistently be aware of students' academic progress and will communicate with families regarding ways they can support their child at home.

[129] Workbook: NM-MSSA Results (tableau.com).
[130] Workbook: NM-MSSA Results (tableau.com).

(a) Family Information Sessions. We will host multiple information sessions annually to inform families of what our curriculum design is like so that they know how to best support their students. A month prior to school starting, we will host registration and materials pick up days for enrolled students to ensure readiness for day one of school and to ensure that students and parents know exactly what to expect on day one. We will also provide supportive academic materials for students to practice before the year starts (i.e., letter identification, name writing, as well as logistical items like who their class teacher is). We will host a love of literacy night to give parents a deep dive into our literacy curriculum and instructional design, demonstrating to parents what our curriculum is like in interactive ways. For example, a family of a student in kindergarten would experience a phonics and sight word night while a family of a student in third grade might experience a novel study night. These meetings will outline what we are doing for each of these curricular components and how families can best support students at home. For instance, a family of a first grade student might learn how to read fiction vs. non-fiction texts with and to students and would be given a short list of encouraged-to-ask, genre-based questions with their student at home. We will also launch our sight word program and inform families about awards ceremonies. Additionally, we will host a family's mathematician walking tour so they can see our math program in action with a debrief session and a deeper dive into our math curriculum. These are great opportunities for parents to ask questions and learn how we are supporting their students specifically.

(b) Family Conferences and Preventative At-risk Planning Built into our Assessment Design. We will host three (3) full conferences for all students and families, and an additional conference for families whose students are potentially "promotion in doubt" (PID). We will give these students more intensive instruction and focus and be able to assess them to see how we can potentially adjust our practice to reach their needs. Our scheduled conferences are held after each internal assessment cycle as well as after most state and federally mandated assessments to ensure that we are giving families a full and current picture of their student's academic performance. Our additional family conference cycle, followed up by individual plans for student success, particularly supports historically underperforming students such as ELs, special education students, Hispanic, American Indian, and Black students. For example, our first marking period ends on Friday, October 3, 2025, and 100% of students will be assessed and have family conferences. The second quarter will end on Friday, December 12, 2025, and again, 100% of students will be assessed and we will meet with their families to update them on their children's progress during our conferences. Now that we are halfway through the year, we will use that data to do a deep dive into any underperforming students to support them through their process of learning. Based on this targeted data study, for students who have yet to make sufficient growth, we will provide Tiers 2 and 3 MLSS interventions and students will receive more day-to-day specific support (small group and/or 1:1). Additionally, struggling students will continue to be supported and monitored with another opportunity for growth with the shorter testing window during the third quarter. Our third quarter will end on Friday, March 6, 2026, and only students not yet meeting benchmarks will have a family conference on Thursday, March 12, 2026. (During this time, 100% of students will receive report cards, but only students not meeting benchmarks will have family conferences.) This will give us a clear indication of which students might need to go through the SAT process and potentially be evaluated based on the success rate (or lack thereof) of the Tiers 2 and 3 intervention strategies. Our last and final assessment period ends Tuesday, May 12, 2026, and all students will have family conferences for the final time on May 15, 2026. In preparation for each of these conferences, as well as preparation for support systems that will be put in place based on the data studies, we will have four data study days

throughout the year to ensure we that know where each student is academically and how we can continue to support them through the partnership of the teachers, families and students.

(c) Assessments. Our mission specific goals are literacy- and inquiry-based and our assessments are as well (for a full list, please see **Section H**). There will be three full reading assessments using Fountas & Pinnell and an additional cycle for those students not meeting benchmarks and those who have received MLSS Tiers 2 and 3 level interventions. The Cognitive Problem Solving assessment will be administered twice per year, once in the beginning and once at the end, to determine growth and inform student supports.

(d) Data Studies. There will be four data study cycles each year, crucial for ensuring we know exactly how all individual students and all identified subgroups are performing in relation to clear standards and goals. Given the academic gaps outlined earlier in this section, this will be crucial for ensuring the success of our American Indian, Hispanic, Black, EL and Special Education students. Data studies will be led by the Head of School and leadership team. A data analysis will be presented to see how we are doing schoolwide, at each grade level, and in every class. Data studies will entail the staff collectively analyzing the data to find trends. For example, how are students performing in terms of meeting, exceeding, or falling below academic goals? There also might be student work analysis accompanied by the data to determine where specifically misconceptions might lie. Data studies also entail action planning. For example, we will examine how the instructional staff is or should be responding to this data. How might students need to be regrouped? Who needs a small group or 1:1 support? Who needs to be recommended for MLSS or who might need to graduate from SAT? What information needs to be retaught as a whole class? How can we leverage parents? Where are our areas of growth? If this is not the first annual assessment, there will be comparative and longitudinal data, allowing us to examine where we are in terms of our goals to ensure student success. This data analysis series will look at reading assessments, problem-solving quizzes, interim assessments, and state-required assessments.

Building Community, Fostering Belonging and Celebrating Success

We intend to bring all constituencies together to grow as a community as well as celebrate student success. Dedicated to centering communities for students, families, and teachers, we will have various community-building events throughout the year to infuse joy through learning and celebrating student achievement and success.

(a) Community Circle is key for cultivating joy, community, and belonging among students and staff. We will meet as a school to celebrate academic growth, school values, and school spirit. We will host a total of eight (8) Community Circles centered on the students, and families will be invited to attend.

(b) There are a total of 10 **Spirit Days** - a time to have fun and be silly. This spirit of collectiveness truly makes students happy and brings joy to learning. See a sample list of events in **Figure 8** for a more detailed narrative of events in **Section A.**

(c) To **Celebrate Community and Literacy**, we have designed multiple opportunities for students to be celebrated for their learning and their hard work. For example, each year we will have three (3) sight word achievement ceremonies and host publishing parties in grades K-5 twice per year, as our authors (students) share their final writing drafts. We will hold a variety of specific events with our families focused on and celebrating growth in our schoolwide priority of literacy; for more details, please see **Section A.**

Community Partnerships for Student Success

We have built and will continue to build strong community partnerships to continuously support, strengthen, and celebrate student success.

(a) **College Visits**. We are partnering with colleges and universities such as Central New Mexico (CNM), University of New Mexico (UNM), and New Mexico State University (NMSU) to host field study visits.

(b) **Culture and Community Partnerships.** We will plan field studies[131] to the Hispanic Cultural Center, Indian Cultural Center and other NM arts and culture centers for students to (1) gain awareness of the beauty and richness that is NM and (2) explore and honor their culture and identity. We will partner with Bosque School[132] to support students' science learning by studying native wildlife in their natural habitats in the Bosque (for more detail, please see **Appendix Q**). We will bring in community speakers to share their story about what they are passionate about and gives them purpose during our Purpose and Passion opening and closing series each year. Field study funds are allocated in our budget in line item 58, fund 11000, function 1000, object 55817 in the following way: Year 1: $4,000.00, Year 2: $6,000.00, Year 3, $8,000.00 Year 4: $10,000.00 and Year 5: $12,000.00 for Student Travel.

(c) **Saturday Library Visits.** One major resource that will support students in their reading is their use of local public libraries. We will visit local libraries as a community as part of Library Field Study after the first reading assessment and the last reading assessment.

G. Special Populations

This includes those with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) English Language Learners (ELLs), Native American Students, Hispanic Students, and Bilingual and Multicultural educational needs to improve student outcomes. Please ensure that you adhere to state obligations as outlined in the consolidated Yazzie and Martinez Lawsuits.

G. (1) Special Education

G. (1a) Provide a **clear, cohesive, and comprehensive** description of how the proposed school will provide required instructional services/supports to students with IEPs.

Overview

At Equip Academy of New Mexico (Equip Academy), we believe that children think and learn differently, and that there are a spectrum of learning styles and learning profiles. We will provide all students, including those with special needs, with a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). Through clear roles and responsibilities and with adherence to all relevant state and federal statutes, including New Mexico State Statute and Administrative Code (NMAC.6.31.2), Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1974 (504), and Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA), we will educate all students in their Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). All teachers will be equipped to welcome, support, and accommodate all students into our inclusive learning community, including students with special needs. We will abide by all federal and state mandates to support any and all students, and we are fully committed to meeting the needs of all students. Our school model is highly

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[131] Appendix-G-5-Year-Budget-Plan: Line Item 58, Fund 11000, Function 1000, Object 55817. Allocation Plan: Year 1: $4,000.00, Year 2: $6,000.00, Year 3, $8,000.00 Year 4: $10,000.00 and Year 5: $12,000.00 for Student Travel
[132] Meeting held with Head of School, Dr. Barrie on January 22, 2024 from 7:45 - 9:00 am.

prepared to support and meet students at their level. We have one Lead Teacher in every classroom, in K-1 there is an Instructional Assistant (IA) in each classroom. For grades 2-5, using Title I and IDEA-B funds, there will be a shared IA. From Years 2-5 there will be two additional IAs to support students based on specific needs.

FAPE, ADA, IDEA, and Section 504

As stated, Equip Academy will provide a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to all students, including those with disabilities.[133] Students will be provided accommodations, modifications, aids, and any other related service free of charge and as outlined in their Individual Education Programs (IEPs). In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), we will educate all students, regardless of their physical or mental disabilities.[134] We will focus on students' capability, regardless of their disability. We will abide by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) by providing special education to students as well as support services and interventions as needed or legally required[135] and we will not discriminate against students with disabilities in accordance with Section 504. Compliance with FAPE, ADA, and IDEA will be evident in our blind-lottery process for admission, and our acceptance and accommodation of students with or without IEPs. Student selection will be done via a random public drawing following all applicable administrative codes and will be designed to provide a fair and equitable process to all prospective students. While students are entrusted in our care, we will support students regardless of need and we will customize our instruction to support them through the utilization of the Multi-Layered Student Support Process described below through a Least Restrictive Environment/approach when identifying and/or supporting students.

Serving Students with IEPs, 504 Plans and Gifted Students

Equip Academy will serve students with IEPs through a collaborative and comprehensive approach to meet each student's unique needs. School responses will be based on each student's IEP that includes specific educational goals and accommodations tailored to a student's individual requirements. We will provide customized plans developed for students with disabilities to ensure that they receive appropriate educational services and support. We will serve students with 504 plans and ensure that they receive appropriate accommodations and modifications to participate fully in all school activities, ensuring that students with disabilities have equal access to all aspects of our educational program. We will serve gifted students in our school through a holistic approach that attends to their unique learning requirements while nurturing their intellectual growth and accommodating based on goals from IEP. By year one, a "Gifted individualized education program team" or "GIEP team" will be established with a designated "Local Education Agency (LEA) to ensure all all requirements and rules of 6.31.3.1 are followed, including efforts the LEA and Equip will make to identify gifted students from all demographic groups, including racially and ethnically diverse students, economically diverse students, culturally diverse students, EL or multi-lingual students, and students with disabilities."[136]

Supporting Neurodiverse Learners[137]

Students' brains can function distinctly from those of their neurotypical peers. These functional differences come in many forms, and may include learning disorders such as Autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome, and ADHD. We will recognize and nurture the wide range of neurocognitive abilities among our students to promote an enriching and inclusive educational environment. In educating all students, Equip Academy will abide by all official and current regulations within the New

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[133] https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/frontpage/pro-students/issues/dis-issue03.html.
[134] Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, As Amended | ADA.gov.
[135] About IDEA - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
[136] https://www.srca.nm.gov/nmac/nmregister/xxxiv/6.31.3.html.
[137] https://childmind.org/article/how-schools-can-support-neurodiverse-students/.

Mexico State Statute and Administrative Code (NMAC.6.31.2) that are written and filed by state agencies to clarify and interpret laws passed by the legislature,[138] including Title II of The Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) which ensures that individuals with disabilities have an equitable chance to derive full benefits from all offered programs, services, and activities at our school. We will follow the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and promote inclusivity and equity for all students with disabilities through individualized and collaborative support. We will adhere to the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA), replacing the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), to promote educational equity and focus on improving academic outcomes for all students. [139]

Multi-Layered System of Support (MLSS) Within a Least Restrictive Environments (LRE)

To effectively educate students with detailed, research-based interventions, Equip Academy will support struggling students through the well-vetted Multi-layered System of Support (MLSS) launched by the NMPED in 2021 and rooted in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), amended by The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).[140] We will implement the Multi-layered System of support by addressing the varied requirements of students, thus fostering academic achievement and social-emotional well-being. Specifically, we will provide immediate support to students who are struggling through our use of layered interventions and progress monitoring.[141] Our model will support students within the Least Restrictive Environments (LRE), giving students the fullest access to the general education curriculum and setting, and thus the opportunity to learn and grow at their own pace and with the necessary supports in place.

FIGURE 40 - MLSS Layers of Support
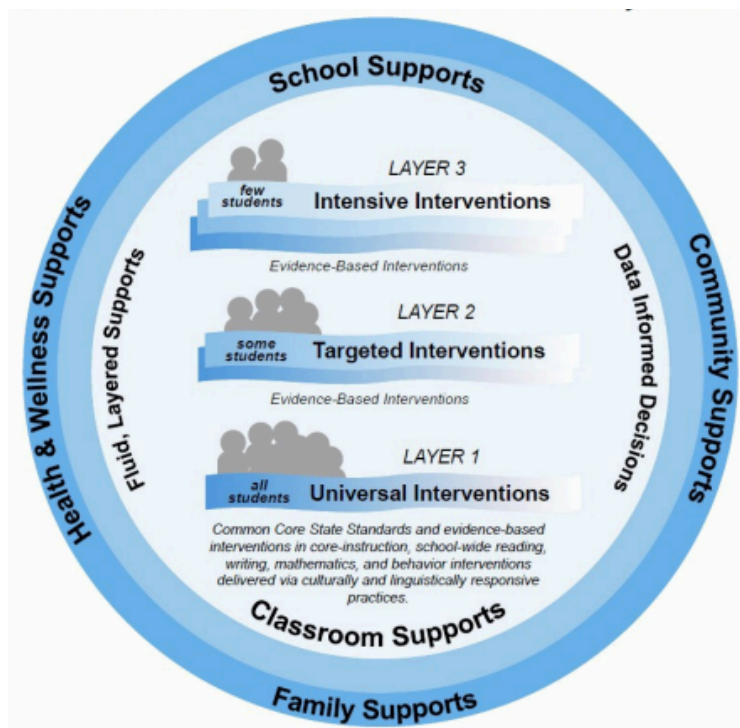
As outlined in **FIGURE 40**, the MLSS layers of support are aligned to Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and adhere to Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Instruction. MLSS is a scaffolded approach to interventions for academics, progress monitoring, and behavioral support. For example, **Layer 1 of MLSS** requires that all students receive high-quality, well-planned, well-executed, and evidence-based curriculum and instructional strategies as well as behavioral supports that are proactive and preventative. Progress monitoring for Layer 1 will occur, at minimum, every 6-8 weeks. **MLSS Layer 2** comes into play when a student's needs are not being met despite Layer 1 interventions and thus may require more targeted support. Students may receive a small group with supplemented time throughout the day. For example,

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[138] https://www.tax.newmexico.gov/all-nm-taxes/new-mexico-administrative-code/.
[139] https://www.ed.gov/essa?src=rn.
[140] Page 81 MLSS_Manual_2020_FINAL.pdf (state.nm.us).
[141] https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/multi-layered-system-of-supports-mlss/.

academic interventions may be used to build students' knowledge and skills around letter identification and letter sounds in the early grades when students are learning the foundations of reading. Behaviorally, students may need small group support under the supervision of a school counselor or social worker. Students receiving **Layer 2** supports will have monthly progress monitoring. **MLSS Layer 3** is the most restrictive support offered to students experiencing an educational crisis. In addition to receiving Layer 1 and Layer 2 interventions, students needing additional support will move into Layer 3, receiving more intensive support such as extended time to complete work, 1:1 student to teacher support, and progress monitoring on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. We will incorporate the MLSS and its three layers, which will inform all aspects of our approach to supporting the success of every student.

Mission Alignment with MLSS and Proposed Head of School Special Education Experience

Our mission is to support students to master the knowledge and skills to dream audaciously, engage deeply, and pursue a life of purpose – special education students included. The school design was built with all students, including those with disabilities, in mind. Proposed Head of School and Lead Founder Mercy L. Herrera brings extensive expertise and experience teaching special education as well as managing teachers who support students with disabilities, and she is dually certified in general education and special education. Ms. Herrera has taught as a: 12:1:1 teacher (12 students and two lead teachers) where 100% of students had an IEP and needed special support services; ICT (integrated co-teaching) teacher where there are two lead teachers where 20%+ of students had IEPs or students were going through the evaluation process; learning specialist where she would push-in to support student not meeting benchmark as well as pull high-performing or gifted students; education coordinator; assessment director where she oversaw the logistics for accommodations for students who needed them; and assistant principal supporting the success of both the general education and special education program. Throughout her career, Ms. Herrera has utilized the three tier system, in some instances referred to as Response to Intervention (RTI), from least to highly restrictive academic and behavioral supports. She brings rich and proven experience utilizing these research-based, highly supportive identification and intervention systems. She has led RTI teams where students successfully transitioned out of the program, due to the successful implementation of interventions; she has also led students through the evaluation process and secured the supports that they needed. Ms. Herrera has witnessed the power of RTI/MLSS and its support in student success. Therefore, she is well positioned and prepared to implement MLSS at the highest degree at Equip Academy, including the more detailed interventions listed below in **FIGURE 41**.

The community we propose to serve wants us to dream big with them on behalf of their children's education and future. This requires that we serve every student in full accordance with their needs so that every child can reach ambitious and measurable goals. This further requires that we have in place a well-developed and targeted teacher development program that positions our teachers to meet our students' needs effectively. Indeed, we have designed our approach to teacher development in full alignment with MLSS: "MLSS identifies the resources educators need to meet their students' needs, including job embedded professional learning, feedback on instructional practices, focused collaboration with colleagues, high-quality instructional materials, and MLSS supportive policies."[142] Equip is committed to providing high-quality, highly informed curriculum design, inclusive instructional approach, educator training including feedback and collaboration.

FIGURE 41 - Examples of Academic and Behavioral Interventions for each Layer

Layer	Intervention Type	Intervention
Layer 1	Academic	High-quality differentiated core instruction
		High-quality differentiated materials
		Differentiating work products to better meet student need
		Smaller group instruction
		More time receiving small group instruction
		More frequent small group instruction
	Behavior	5:1 positive reinforcement to corrective feedback
		Effective anti-bullying policies and messaging
		Positive social interaction with each student each day
		Processes and procedures for common classroom functions
		Social contracts
		Character development curriculum
		Explicit behavior expectations for common areas
In addition to Layer 1 interventions, students may require Layer 2 targeted interventions		
Layer 2	Academic	High-quality supplemental instructional programs or curricula
		Pullout instructional time to remediate students on specific skill deficits based on data
		Extended time to complete assignments
		Push-in staff supports to provide smaller group instruction, more time in small group or more frequent small group instruction
	Behavior	Token economies
		Counseling
		Small groups focused on social issues that may precipitate changes in behavior (e.g. divorce, grief, body image issues, anger management, etc.)
		Self-monitoring
		Daily behavior logs
		Behavior contracts
		Sensory tools
		Organizational tools
In addition to Layer 1 and Layer 2 interventions, students may require Layer 3 intensive interventions		
Layer 3	Academic	Pullout services to meet individualized needs
		Longer, more frequent, smaller group, or otherwise more intensive interventions
	Behavior	Behavioral contract
		Continuous adult supervision
		Social stories
		Individual schedule
		Structured breaks
		Communication log with family
		Proximity control

Educator Excellence and Plan for Execution

Teachers, paraprofessionals, and all other appropriate staff members will attend professional development through our educator excellence program that is based on the needs of our students. Our Lead Founder and Proposed Head of School will lead our educational training program. As needed, we will contract with experts in their field to provide training based on student need, including Diagnostician, School Psychologist, Nurse, Social Worker, Speech Pathologist, Occupational Therapist, Physical/Recreational Therapist, Audiologist, Paraprofessional, etc. (contracted positions within the school given our small size).[143] In all years, we will train and support homeroom teachers, classroom teachers, and instructional support staff to read, internalize, and plan for the instructional needs and appropriate student-specific supports for their students according to the details of their IEPs. Based on each student's IEP, required hours will be identified and provided. In years 1-3 of

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[143] **Appendix-G-5-Year-Budget-Plan**, Function: 2100, Line Items: 112-124.

operation, this will be the responsibility of the Head of School, who will oversee the training of staff, success of students based on informal data (day-to-day interactions) as well as scheduled assessment data and all tiered progress monitoring. Starting year 3, the Head of School will hire and oversee a full time Special Education/Gifted teacher to provide services after contracting service providers for the initial two (2) years. Starting in year 4, the Head of School will hire and oversee the duties of an Education Coordinator who will provide, monitor, and coordinate the specific services according to the needs of each child. Appropriately credentialed paraprofessionals and ancillary service providers (i.e., Speech Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, Social Workers, Counselors) will implement any services as required via contract as needed. The Head of School alongside the Special Education teacher(s) (either contracted or full time) will ensure that all required hours are being met and all services are being provided; this responsibility will shift to the Education Coordinator in year 4 (for more information on Equip Academy's organization make-up, see **Section IID**. Paraprofessionals will attend professional development sessions specific to the students with whom they are working to ensure that they are targeting the specific needs identified within their student caseload. Based on each IEP and the nature of the student's intellectual, physical, or other disability, staff will be trained and supported to best ensure that students are getting the support needed to allow for school success.

We will acquire accurate academic and behavioral data for every enrolling student, including those with IEPs, to ensure we have a full understanding of all student-specific needs. Using data-driven rubrics, we will track the effect of our services through biweekly assessment of every student's progress towards his/her academic, physical, and/or other specific goals, including those students with disabilities. With MLSS informing our daily routines, we will identify students who are not successful with Tier I instruction and teacher supports (interventions occurring within the general education classroom setting) and provide them with additional Tier 2 supports. After six to eight weeks of interventions, if the student is successful, we will continue these supports. If the student is unsuccessful, we will gather more information and determine the next steps for the student.

Step by Step Referral Process – Evaluation and Eligibility

Following New Mexico guidelines, we will frequently, cyclically, and reliably collect and review data on all of our student's academic growth and achievement. We will follow the MLSS layers of support as outlined earlier in this section in **FIGURE 40**, and at each step we will identify and document our interventions and their effects.   According to Section 22-2C NMSA 1978, we will make all retention determinations. After all interventions have been implemented and their success evaluated, and if we suspect that the student may have a disability, we will refer the student to a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) for a special education or gifted evaluation.

Avoiding Over-Identification. It is crucial that students who are English Learners (ELs) are not over-identified as students with disabilities. Students will be tested during the first 40 days of school using WIDA to identify English learner needs. If there is a speech or articulation question, the student will be referred to a bilingual diagnostician to gain more information on their target language needs and identify if it is an English deficiency or a specific need. In our commitment and approach that ensures that we do not over-identify ELs as students with disabilities, we will follow details outlined below, supporting all students, including ELs, within the regular education setting. In each year, our staff will include appropriate numbers of special educators licenses within the State of New Mexico, and we will contract with appropriately licensed and credentialed service providers to meet all ancillary needs. We will use a co-teaching model, and will ensure the appropriately licensed and credentialed teachers in each classroom.

As indicated, Equip Academy will support students with IEPs through our comprehensive annual staff training focused on meeting the needs of our students with IEPs and will include collaboration from

the whole Special Education team. Specifically, we will: (1) present students' levels of academic and functional performance (PLAFPs) and needed accommodations to general education curriculum; (2) follow Child Find procedures of (a) yearly screening in primary age students, (b), teacher recommendations, and (c) progress monitoring; and (3) follows NM's MLSS, informing student supports in response to data. All supports outlined above are to ensure a FAPE for each student as well as in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), Section 504 0f the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (504), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), and New Mexico Administrative Code (6.31.2 NMAC). We will take an "all hands on deck" approach to the responsibility of equipping and supporting students. See Roles and responsibilities below.

FIGURE 42 - Roles and Responsibilities for Supporting Special Education Students

Responsible Parties[144]	Responsibilities
Head of School & Special Education Teacher (yrs. 1-3) Head of School, Education Coordinator & Special Education Teacher(s) (yrs. 4+)	● Educator Institute (EI) ● Oversee, lead: MLSS & SAT Process ● Data Dives and Action Planning ● Observations for teachers and students in MLSS/SAT ● Lead IEP Meetings
Head of School (yrs. 1-2) Education Coordinator & Special Education Teacher(s) (yrs. 4+)	● Request hearing and vision screening ● Set initial meeting ● Develop interventions for each area of concern ● Collect data from students that have entered the SAT process ● Continue cycle of meetings w/data examining intervention results ● Refer to Head of School (later Education Coordinator) if slow or no growth
Classroom Teachers	● Implement MLSS Layered Interventions ● Actively monitor all students, collects and documents data ● Refer to Head of School (later Education Coordinator) if student has consistent Layer 3 interventions and shows little to no growth ● Differentiate instruction for all students (including gifted students) ● Communicate with the parent/guardian
Special Education Teachers	● Implement Layered interventions (Layer 1 all students, Layer 2 some students, Layer 3 fewer students) ● Monitor all students, collects and documents data ● Refer to Education Coordinator if student has consistent Layer 3 interventions and shows little to no growth ● Support with training of differentiated instruction, interventions and appropriate scaffolding ● Provide opportunities for gifted students to excel
HOS/Office Manager/Manager of Operations	● Request for records ● Organization and maintaining student records ● Call and schedule meetings with parent/guardian

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[144] **Appendix-G-5-Year-Budget-Plan,** Salary expenses are budgeted in the object codes starting with 51.

FIGURE 43 - Timeline For Supporting Special Education Students

Progress Monitoring Item	Action Item	Frequency	Responsible Party
Weekly Progress Report	Students with "Weekly Progress Report" Indicator on IEP	Weekly	Teachers, Administrators, Education Coordinator
Progress Toward Goals	Report out for students with IEPs	End of each term	Teachers, Administrators, Education Coordinator
SAT process and MLSS monitoring	Monitoring analysis reporting and recommendations	Monthly	Teachers, Administrators, Education Coordinator
Intermittent Grades	Entering grades	Bi-Monthly	Teachers
Proficiency Data and Report Cards	Student cumulative grades	Quarterly	Teachers (grades input), operations prints report cards, HOS presents data
EL and Special Education Analysis	Report analysis to determine eligibility and growth	Quarterly	Teachers (grades input), HOS/Education Coordinator analysis
Overall Special Populations Program Evaluation	Stop, continue or add items based on analysis	Annually	Governing Board, HOS, Education Coordinator and teachers

Discipline Policies

Equip Academy will ensure there is physical and psychological safety for all students. Our aim is to foster community and belonging with students, staff, families and the community at large. Relationship-building is crucial to the success and behavioral responsiveness of students. We plan to phase in support staff to ensure we are responding to the needs of all children. Our goal is to have a Social Worker (Year 5) and Dean of Culture and Community (Year 6) commensurate with our size and needs. However, sometimes students may need more support around behavioral needs and therefore we will solicit and seek out expert opinions when responding to various behavioral profiles to ensure we are creating a safe learning environment. Post approval and during our planning year, we will create a Special Education Handbook for experts to approve to ensure accuracy as well as legal compliance. The Head of School as well as the SAT team consisting of Assistant Principal in Residence (APIR), Assistant Principal (AP), Education Coordinator, Special Education Teacher(s), Social Worker and when necessary the Manager of Operations will oversee the process of creating a Handbook that is supportive to all. We will ensure the Special Education Handbook and Student Handbook are aligned and include things such as various types of student behavior and logical consequences that are supportive. We will document, monitor and track behavior and support through a teacher referral system. We will utilize BIP (Behavior Intervention Plan) as a resource and follow it through with fidelity. We will work with a special education and law compliance expert to ensure we remain supportive and in compliance related to discipline for special education students including manifestations, behavioral intervention plans, and change of placement protocols. The Student and Special Education Handbook will be completed, reviewed, and approved by the Board no later than May 1, 2025.

Reporting Data to Board

All data pertaining to special populations will be reported to the Board through its Academic Committee. Through the Head of School's monthly reports provided to the Board and reviewed within public monthly meetings, management will present all academic data, disaggregated by subgroup, including, but not limited to, students with IEPs and 504s, including our gifted students. Each year, the school will propose a budget and staffing model to the Board that ensures that we have the requisite roles for our learning community, including, but not limited to, the number and types of special educators and service providers.

G. (1b) Provide a **clear, cohesive, and comprehensive** description of how the proposed school will regularly evaluate and monitor the progress and success of special education students

Evaluating and Monitoring Progress and Success of Special Education Students Towards IEP Goals

If all students are academically growing, that is a clear indication of the school's success. If some students are not making progress, systems and approaches need to be immediately changed in order to meet students where they are, ensuring that all needed support for growth is effectively in place. We will utilize school data as well as MLSS layer and intervention systems to identify, support and monitor progress. Under the IDEA, Equip Academy will evaluate, identify, and support students with disabilities and will follow the NMPED SAT Special Education Process of incorporating the MLSS Tier I, II and III interventions will be overseen by the SAT team consisting of Head of School, Assistant Principal in Residence (APIR), Assistant Principal (AP), Education Coordinator, Special Education Teacher(s), Social Worker and when necessary the Manager of Operations. The SAT meeting will be led by the Head of School, Special Education teacher or Education Coordinator. If tracked data from student specific interventions do not yield student success, an initial evaluation will take place to determine eligibility. Upon eligibility determination, an IEP will be developed, implemented with on-going reviewing and potentially revised based on annual need. Throughout internal-evaluation, there will be an external reevaluation to determine IEP continuation or exit of services. Please see the flow chart in **FIGURE 44** for a visual representation of the process. Ultimately, in support of the child success and in accordance with IDEA, we will, for example, identify student giftedness, cognitive processing ability, intellectual aptitude, creative/divergent thinking, problem solving ability, executive functional ability and/or other physical, emotional, or cognitive placement at any point on a spectrum and provide the proper supports and services that will support them in their educational and development journey.

FIGURE 44 - Special Education Process Flow Chart[145]

The Special Education Process Flow Chart

The NMPED SAT Manual is located on the Website at http://www.ped.state.nm.us/SEB/technical/index.html

Tier I Intervention → Tier II Intervention → Initial Evaluation → Eligibility Determination

Eligibility Determination — NO → Not eligible? Have the SAT (Student Assistance Team) consider an Accommodation Plan for the student.

Eligibility Determination — YES → IEP Development → IEP Implementation → IEP Review & Revision (as needed; at least annually) → Reevaluation (as needed; at least every 3 years) → Eligibility Determination

Eligibility Determination — NO → Exit from Services

Eligibility Determination — YES → Continue Services

Identification of Regular Intervals of Progress Monitoring and Success Evaluation

The IEP Process and progress monitoring is a whole team effort. Evaluating progress must be carefully planned and strategically executed in order to ensure student growth.

FIGURE 45 - Progress Monitoring Frequency

Type of Support	Time & Frequency	Responsible Parties	Action Items
Tier 1-3 Support	Constant	Teachers SPED Teachers Education Coordinator Admin	Deploy the MLSS 3 Layer intervention system
Referral	Anytime	Parents Teachers Admin	Based on observations and success of interventions referral for evaluation
Evaluation and Eligibility	Upon submission to state	Experts in the field	Evaluation assessments, deliberation, and identifying disability
IEP Development	After evaluation and eligibility	SAT Team Admin Teacher(s) Parents	IEP goals, accommodations and modifications to support in learning
Implementing IEP	After meeting	Teachers SAT team	Who, what, and how the supports will be provided based on need

[145]Page. 4 Developing-Quality-IEPs.pdf (state.nm.us).

Review and Revise the IEP	Post IEP Development (dependent on goal date)	Teachers SAT Team	Monitoring and reviewing pieces that (1) IEP is being executed as it should and (2) that it's working for the student
Reevaluation	3 years or as requested by parent	SAT Team	Evaluation and assessment process to determine continued eligibility
SAT Process	Ongoing	SAT Team Admin Teachers	Process above as well as tracking growth and success
IEP Goals: Progress Review	Quarterly	All Teachers	IEP Goal progress reported during grading systems
Layer 2 Caseload Review	Bimonthly	HOS All Teachers SAT Team	Teachers present to SAT and HOS on how Layer 2 case load of students are doing
At Risk/Layer 3 Caseload Review	Weekly	HOS All Teachers SAT team	HOS and SAT, plan and monitor Layer 3 case load students interventions and progress monitor
Grade Generating	Quarterly	All Teachers	Grade input and inform families
Data Dives and Action Planning	After all state assessments, internal assessments	All Staff	Analysis based on state and internal assessments, focus on subgroups including students with IEPs, action plan around goals
Work/Data Analysis and Action Planning	Weekly	All Teachers	Use data to identify trends, the whole grade, class and students; plan for interventions and reteach
Overall Program Evaluation	BOY & EOY	Admin SAT Team	BOY: Goal setting for frequency of meeting, evaluation process, data analysis, MLSS, progress monitoring EOY: Reflect, review and revise based on success of overall evaluation program

Referral. Through the Child Find procedures, students can be referred for evaluation by parents/guardians, teachers, administration, and other staff members. Families can request an evaluation at any time by writing a letter (SS 22-13-32). After careful monitoring with the 3-tier intervention systems and data analysis, teachers, staff, and administration can refer students for an evaluation to determine special education eligibility. Parental consent is required to proceed with a formal evaluation. Referrals can be provided from parent to teacher, from teacher to administration/SAT team, or administration could proceed with the referral after tracked and monitored interventions did not work. The SAT team secures a parent's written consent and submits a referral to the state to begin the evaluation process.

Evaluation. A variety of evaluative tools will be used and administered by credentialed/qualified individuals to get at the root cause of the learning challenge, including an English proficiency

assessment as to not over-identify EL students. A gifted assessment will be used as needed. Interviews, observations, and evaluations will consider functional and developmental abilities.

IEP Eligibility. A meeting will be held with the evaluation team to determine eligibility and offer related services. Based on the evaluation, eligibility will be determined under the following categories of intellectual disabilities such as, speech or language impairment, emotional disturbance, autism, traumatic brain injury, health impairment, visual or hearing impairment such as blindness or deafness and/or learning disabilities. Students will be categorized according to their evaluation and cognitive make-up. Then we will move to developing the IEP.

IEP Development. After a determination of one or more disabilities, the IEP will be developed by the SAT team, state representative, school psychologists, related service providers, and parents. During this time, goals (either short-term or long-term), responsible parties, and the reviewing and assessing timeline for mastery will be established. The appropriate and related services will be agreed upon, including the how and the who to ensure clarity for the implementation process.

Implementing the IEP. Based on the developed plan, teachers and support staff will provide direct support services. All staff members involved in the student's educational success will be notified by the Education Coordinator on how the student will be best supported pertaining to student goals.

Review and Revise the IEP: Annually, there will be a revision process to determine success of annual goals set for students.

Reevaluation: A formal evaluation to review progress towards goals and determine continued eligibility will be conducted every three years but parents can request a reevaluation at any time.

Equip Academy's Staff Roles and Responsibilities in Service of Students with IEPs

FIGURE 46 - Staff Roles and Responsibilities[146] [147]

Staff Role	Staff Responsibilities
Head of School (HOS)	A part of the SAT team to support throughout the IEP process from interventions to referral to exiting or continuing services. Reviews all requirements of proposed IEPs and ensures the school is able to provide the program and related services. In collaboration with the Finance Committee and full membership of the Board, ensures that there is adequate funding for special education programs and services. Plans, presents, and/or secures professional development to equip the staff in laws and regulations as well the MLSS process and IEP information, as well as instructionally coach all staff including special education teachers to ensure best practices are being implemented and special education students are being challenged and growing through data.
Education Coordinator	Leads and oversees the MLSS, development of IEP, and IEP meetings, and follows all state guidelines, ensures academic and behavior supports, and monitors student data/progress of goals. Communicates with families to ensure that they are up-to-date on student progress, oversees student support staff / special providers such as speech therapists, social workers, and special education teachers. We plan to hire a full time Education Coordinator in year 4.
Special Education Teachers (SpEd)	Credentialed with a license to support special education students. Will be instructional leads based on required services for students as outlined in IEPs. Work closely with and be model teachers for general and co-curricular teachers to ensure students have access to appropriate accommodations and modifications to achieve annual goals. In conjunction

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[146] **Appendix-G-5-Year-Budget-Plan,** Salary expenses are budgeted in the object codes starting with 51.

[147] **Appendix-G-5-Year-Budget-Plan** for Contracted Support Staff: Function: 2100, Line Items: 112-124.

	with Education Coordinator, lead development of IEPs and facilitate effective communication with parents and families of students on their caseload.
General Education Teachers (GenEd)	Uphold the same standards for special education students as for general education students. Provide the same high-level educational services to special education students as they do general education students but with scaffolded, targeted support to meet their needs. Work with SpEd teachers and Education Coordinator to implement accommodation and modifications, as well as track data and progress around growth and IEP goals.
Instructional Assistants	Work with all teachers to reach goals set by homeroom teachers. Support students by providing accommodations/modifications, tracking data, maintaining family communication, and supporting in a range of ways based on school and student needs
Social Worker	Support the social and emotional health of the school by providing individual or group counseling, work closely with teachers on ways to best support students' emotional and behavioral needs, create positive behavior plans as needed, and maintain open and frequent communication with parents (contracted based on need and will hire a full time staff member during year 5).
Speech Language Pathologist (SLP)	Provide speech and language services to mandated students; work closely with evaluation teams in the identification stage and the review and reevaluation stages. Support teachers and families on strategies they can work on both at home and in school. This will be a contracted service position as determined by our students' IEP required service minutes.
Occupational Therapist (OT)	Provide services for students around fine motor skills and functional independence. OTs support students in developing, improving, or restoring functional independence around student's IEP functional goals. This will be a contracted service position based on the IEP required service minutes.
Physical Therapist (PT)	Provide any physical therapy services that are identified as a related service on a student's IEP goals in support of gross motor functions. This will be a contracted service position based on the IEP required service minutes.
Governing Board	Provides oversight and accountability of the Head of School ensuring the Equip SAT Team, IEP and MLSS process are fully functioning and in compliance with state and federal laws for special education students such as, FAPE, ADA, IDEA, Section 504 ESSA in accordance with the LRE.

FIGURE 47 - Staff Support Based on Enrollment[148]

Year	Enrollment	Staff Support
1	75	HOS, contracted Office Assistant, contracted Special Education Teacher with Gifted Endorsement, Contracted Service Providers as needed, Contracted Business Manager and Assistant Business Manager
2	150	Contracted Special Education Teacher with Gifted Endorsement, Contracted Service Providers as needed

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[148] **Appendix-G-5-Year-Budget-Plan,** Salary expenses are budgeted in the object codes starting with 51.

3	225	1 Special Education Teacher with Gifted Endorsement, Contracted Service Providers as needed
4	300	ADD - 1 Education Coordinator, Special Education Teacher (now 2), Assistant Principal in Residence (APIR), , Contracted Service Providers as needed
5	375	1 Education Coordinator, 2 Special Education Teachers, Contracted Service Providers as needed, Assistant Principal (AP), Manager of Operations
6	450	Dean of Culture and Community

Engaging and Informing Students and Families

One of Equip Academy's values is Partnership, and we believe in the trifecta of success: Families + Students + Teachers = Maximum Potential. Therefore, the Equip Academy community, including teachers and staff, will regularly and meaningfully communicate with families. We will have parent teacher conferences at least three times per year. However, information provided at these conferences will never be a surprise as we will communicate with families regularly throughout the week and across all weeks in various ways. One way we will have open communication is with homework. Parents will have the opportunity to leave notes and ask questions for teachers. We will also require daily and weekly signatures on homework. Teachers will call parents regularly when students are successful and growing and when we can partner together if they need more support. We will have frequent family nights where families will engage in an activity with the school. We will also send work home daily and weekly so that families are able to see how students are doing in class. When it comes to students who need additional support, we will be communicating with families on a more frequent basis. Keeping families up to date, thinking how we can partner together to best serve students, and keeping the family informed on how their student is doing academically and behaviorally. At these more frequent meetings, we will ensure that families are aware of where students are growing and achieving academically based on their grade level benchmark, what we are doing in response as a school, and sharing goals that we have set forth in support of the student. As needed, we will also think through a home action plan that might benefit the student.

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Our Special Education Program

As a reflective and feedback-driven institution, we pride ourselves on our reflection and feedback. Therefore, we will undergo strategic evaluation processes to determine the effectiveness of our special education programming. More specifically, we will look at how successfully the MLSS interventions have worked while taking a deeper look into how effective the three layer interventions have been. We will reflect and measure our compliance with federal and state regulations. Some indicators of success will be a low percentage of students needing Level 2 and Level 3 interventions, the number of students who are graduating out of the MLSS process, and the number of students meeting IEP goals based on intervention supports. We will also analyze the following:

- Comparisons
  - Percentage of students in special education in relation to neighboring schools
  - Comparison data of special education and gifted students, between neighboring schools/APS/state/nation, across all students, special education and EL subgroups
- Tier Numbers
  - Number of referrals to the Student Assistance Team for Tier 2 interventions, and the outcomes from those meetings
  - Number of referrals to Tier 3, and the outcomes from those referrals
- Growth

- Growth of students receiving special services, in comparison to those who are not receiving special services
- Percentage of students meeting IEP goals
- Number of students exited from special education programming
- Most Effective academic and behavioral interventions
  - Types of interventions provided and the effectiveness of the interventions.
- Behavior trends of students with special needs

This reflection process will be done at the beginning of the year to set goals around MLSS, as well as monitor progress, conduct data analysis, and ensure adequate frequency of meetings. The end of year will determine if the goals are met and how the overall program could be revised to ensure our goals are being met and students are learning and growing.

Tracking, Measuring, Ensuring, and Reporting Mission Success with Special Populations

FIGURE 48 Timeline For Supporting Special Education Students

Progress Monitoring Item	Action Item	Frequency	Responsible Party
Weekly Progress Report	Students with "Weekly Progress Report" Indicator on IEP	Weekly	Teachers, Administrators , Education Coordinator
Progress Toward Goals	Report out for students with IEPs	End of each term	Teachers, Administrators, Education Coordinator
SAT process and MLSS monitoring	Monitoring analysis reporting and recommendations	Monthly	Teachers, Administrators, Education Coordinator
Intermittent Grades	Entering grades	Bi-Monthly	Teachers
Proficiency Data and Report Cards	Student cumulative grades	Quarterly	Teachers (grades input), operations prints report cards, HOS presents data
EL and Special Education Analysis	Report analysis to determine eligibility and growth	Quarterly	Teachers (grades input), HOS/Education Coordinator analysis
Overall Special Populations Program Evaluation	Stop, continue or add items based on analysis	Annually	Governing Board, HOS, Education Coordinator and teachers

We believe that all students can master the knowledge and skills needed to engage deeply, dream audaciously, and reach their full potential. This belief system includes students of all learning profiles and cognitive make-ups. All students, including students with IEPs, are assessed with the rest of their peers. All students with IEPs will be evaluated with the same frequency as their peers, and all families will receive progress reports aligned to their IEP goals with the same frequency as progress reports provided to all families. We will abide by all mandated accommodations (i.e., extra time, directions read, frequent breaks). Data will be gathered for the student on an IEP and there will be accommodations made according to their needs. Standards and benchmarks will guide instruction, interventions, supports, and learning. We will gather and examine work samples, implement

checklists and rubrics aligned to IEP goals, and we will evaluate student growth and success in a variety of ways and in accordance with their IEP.

G. (2) English Learners (ELs)

G. (2a) Provide a **clear, comprehensive, and cohesive** description of how the proposed school will provide required curriculum, and instructional services/supports to students identified as ELLs.

Identifying English Learners (ELs)

Equip Academy recognizes that there will be a diverse range of EL needs within our student body and will implement a multi-step identification process to accurately identify and support ELs. Personalized support plans will be developed based on individual language proficiency levels, ensuring that ELs receive appropriate interventions to meet their unique needs. We will adhere to the standardized statewide procedures of The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 that outlines criteria for entry into and exit from EL services. Equip Academy will also follow the Title VI the Civil Rights Act of 1964 Language Usage Surve (LUS) screening process in order to identify and provide services to ELs.

Equip Academy will go through a multi-step process for identifying ELs. (1) When students are going through the registration/enrollment process, families will fill out the Language Usage Survey (LUS). (2) If families note a home language other than English, students will be given the state-approved English Language Proficiency (ELP) such as the WIDA Placement Test (W-APT assessment for entering kindergarteners and WIDA Screener Online for other grades).[149] Specifically, and to support the identification and success of our Els, we will follow the Language Survey Process Flow Chart below.

FIGURE 49 - Language Usage Survey Process Flow Chart[150]
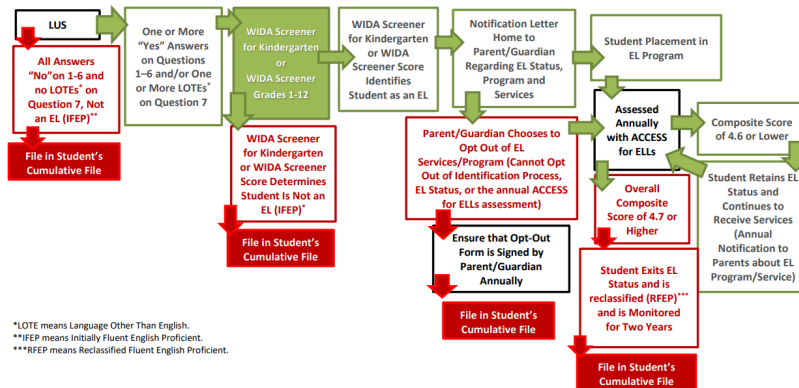
Identification Criteria

Personalized support plans will be developed based on individual language proficiency levels, ensuring that ELs receive appropriate interventions to meet their unique needs. The purpose of the initial WIDA Screener (World-class Instructional Design and Assessment), administered individually and testing for listening and speaking domains, is to identify kindergarten students who may be eligible for EL support. If a student scores < 4.5, s/he will be considered an EL and eligible for support. Placement criteria are detailed below.

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[149] https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/NMLUS_Guidance_Handbook.pdf.
[150] NMLUS_Guidance_Handbook.pdf (state.nm.us).

FIGURE 50 - WIDA Screener for Kindergarten Placement Criteria[151]

GRADE	DOMAINS	WIDA SCREENER FOR KINDERGARTEN: IDENTIFIES STUDENT AS AN EL	WIDA SCREENER FOR KINDERGARTEN: INDICATES STUDENT IS NOT AN EL
Kindergarten student entering in 1st semester	Listening Speaking	Oral Language Composite Score of 4.0 or lower*	Oral Language Composite Score of 4.5 or higher
Kindergarten student entering in 2nd semester	Listening Speaking Reading Writing	Overall Composite Score of 4.0 or lower*	Overall Composite Score of 4.5 or higher

The 1-12 WIDA Screener online will measure students' EL ability in all grades after Kindergarten, through the assessment of listening, speaking, reading and writing domains and will assess eligibility through Social and Instructional Language (SIL), Language of English Language Arts (LoLA), Language of Mathematics (LoMA), Language of Science (LoSC), and Language of Social Studies (LoSS).

FIGURE 51 - WIDA Screener Placement Criteria For 1-12

GRADE	DOMAINS	WIDE SCREENER SCORE: IDENTIFIES STUDENT AS AN EL	WIDA SCREENER SCORE: INDICATES STUDENT IS NOT AN EL
Grades 1-12	Listening Speaking Reading Writing	Overall Composite Score of 4.0 or lower*	Overall Composite Score of 4.5 or higher

*The composite score for WIDA Screeners is reported as integers with 0.5 interval scores.

Logistics and Oversight

The Head of School will own this until the Education Coordinator is brought on, will oversee and manage the identification process from start to finish in partnership with the Manager of Operations, ensuring families receive and return the survey as well as track all survey results via an online data system, indicating who is eligible for screening. The surveys will be submitted within the first week of school; the screenings will be completed within the first 40 days of school (upon enrolling). Screening completion will be tracked in the data system. Families of students who score below 4.5 will be notified of their EL status via a letter and will indicate the support that Equip Academy will offer. We will utilize the English and Spanish versions of the "Sample Parent Notification Letter for a Child's Participation in an English Learner Program and/or Language Support Services."[152] The letter will include student data as well as an indication of how the student will be supported in school. This information will be tracked in the data system by the Manager of Operations. Our school model is highly prepared to support and meet students at their level. We have one Lead Teacher in every classroom, in K-1 there is an Instructional Assistant (IA), then for grades 2-5, using Title I and IDEA-B funds, there will be a shared IA. From Years 2-5 there will be two additional IAs to provide support based on student needs.

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[151] https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/NMLUS_Guidance_Handbook.pdf.
[152] Sample-Initial-Parent-Notification-Letter_English.docx (live.com).

Curriculum and Instructional Services/Supports to ELs; Developing English Language Proficiency & Addressing the Spectrum of EL Needs

FIGURE 52 - SOR Diagram for English Learners

Oral language development is a critical component of instruction for ELs, both in their home language (L1) and English (L2). Our design is highly supportive for EL students with our overall school design, focus on inquiry-based curriculum and instruction, and inquiry-based, engaging approach that 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, which provides EL students with a depth of opportunity to develop their English language skills. Student discourse is shaped through teacher-posed questions that propel cognition, dialogue, and ownership of grade-level standards, skills, and content, ensuring that ELs have access to the full range of our curriculum as they are developing their language skills. Parents, including parents of ELs, want to know that their student is 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." This ultimately inspires a natural love of learning and promotes independent, critical thinking as well as overall English language proficiency. Further, skilled readers are developed through Structured Literacy and Science of Reading (SOR) for ELs. The elements of SOR for English Learners Framework are outlined in **FIGURE 52** and **FIGURE 53** below and include a high level of structured purposeful literacy as well as a strong emphasis on language development including evidence-based practices for L1 and L2 readers. Although Equip Academy is not a dual language school, we strongly encourage biliteracy opportunities like reading in one's native language or being read to in one's home language.
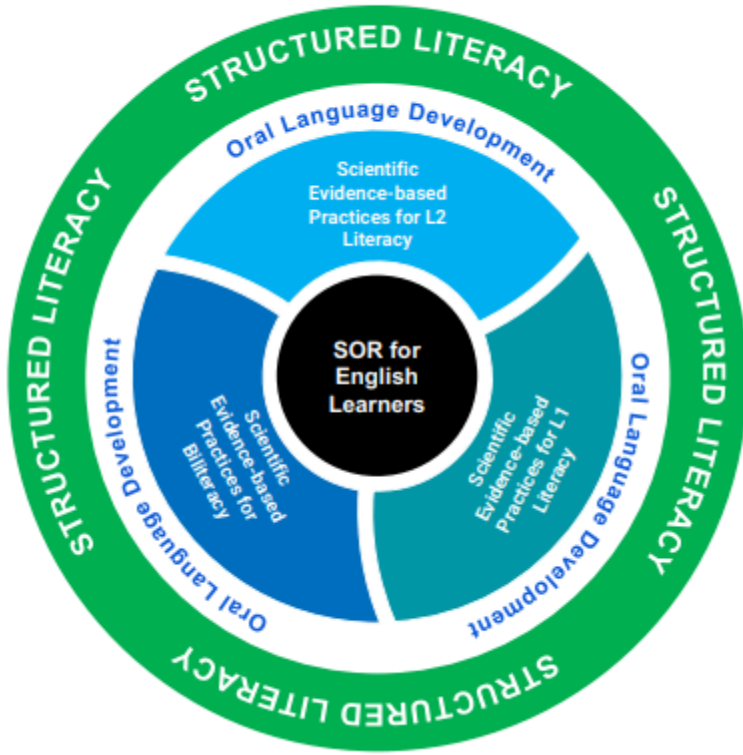
Equip Academy's academic design and curricular program are highly supportive of EL students, specifically with our comprehensive literacy and language development program. Our multiple-modality approach to reading instruction unites the scientifically-based core principles of learning to read - phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension - which is essential for all students and particularly useful for ELs in their development of reading and speaking English. 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 in our community, a significant percentage of whom speak Spanish at home, 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 - and that includes a

strong focus on reading, writing, and speaking in English. You can find a full and detailed description on our curriculum design and instructional model within **Section C**.

FIGURE 53 - Components of Reading[153]

Source: Florida Center for Reading Research

Within our design is a critical component - our phonics and literacy program - which equips EL students to develop literacy skills within English and is aligned with The Science of Reading for Emergent Bilinguals in New Mexico. Based on "A Review for the New Mexico Public Education Department" by Dr. Linda Cavazos, "The research evidence is clear that the SOR is effective for English literacy for all students, including emergent bilinguals (also referred to as English learners or ELs. Although there is widespread understanding of the predictive relationship between oral language development and reading comprehension, implementation of explicit and systematic use of strategies to improve oral language and vocabulary needs to be incorporated into daily instruction for emergent bilinguals."[154] Equip Academy fully agrees and has used this research to inform our instructional services and supports.. We know that structured Literacy and SOR supports a spectrum of needs for ELs. **FIGURE 54** names five essential components of an efficient reader: phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The listening, speaking and thinking aspects of these programs directly support a spectrum of needs for ELs, and SOR's essential five components are all specifically addressed and integrated within our reading and phonics program. For example, phonemic awareness and letter-sound correspondence are taught directly, explicitly, and systematically. Fluency and comprehension are modeled with ample time for student practice as well as frequent review. Success For All (SFA), and our phonics and reading program align with the SOR framework. Oral language, although not one of the five essential components, is included because of its ability to support the development of English language proficiency.

FIGURE 54 - SOR Essential Component and SFA Alignment

SOR 5 Essential Component	SFA Program Alignment
Phonological/Phonemic Awareness	
"The SOR emphasizes explicit instruction of both decoding and comprehension skills. Decoding involves understanding the alphabetic principle and spelling-sound correspondences and the ability to apply sound symbol relationships to read words."[155]	● Recognizes and produces rhymes ● Segments sentences and counts syllables ● Blending and Segmenting ● Understands that words are made of sounds ● Identifies initial, medial, and ending sounds ● Blends and segments auditory sounds ● Phoneme substitution, addition, and deletion

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[153] Page 4 The-Science-of-Reading-for-Emergent-Bilinguals-in-New-Mexico_Jan-2022-.pdf (state.nm.us).

[154] Page 3. The-Science-of-Reading-for-Emergent-Bilinguals-in-New-Mexico_Jan-2022-.pdf (state.nm.us).

[155] Page 9 Microsoft Word - NMPED Biliteracy Guidance_12.4.22.docx (state.nm.us).

Phonics	
"The SOR promotes an explicit phonics approach for teaching letters and sounds to understand how the written code and language contribute to reading development."[156]	• Through explicit instruction, lessons twenty-six letters of the alphabet plus "sh" and "ch" (both upper and lowercase) • Explicitly learn letters shapes and practice writing them • Use stretch and count or stretch and spell strategies to write words • The initial instructional sequence includes a mixture of short vowels and consonants • Learn the new sound through: alliterative phrases, mnemonic pictures, Animated Alphabet clips, Picture Cards and discuss what happens with their mouths • Work with partners in Partner Practice Booklets to read sounds
Fluency	
"Explicitly teach fluency strategies using the gradual release approach. The same fluency strategies can be used in English and Spanish. Teachers should be diagnostic and responsive as they listen to students read to address any fluency issues. Allow ample opportunities for students to develop fluency while simultaneously developing oral language/oracy. Create conditions for increased language use."[157]	• Guided Group Reading: The teacher and students read the story for the first time together in unison • Guided Partner Reading: The teacher guides the class from page to page and stops after each page to clarify difficult words or story content, but students work to read the text with their partners • Partner Reading: Students read the story with their partners. Partners alternate pages, help each other as needed, and reread the page together for fluency practice • Students stay with the same Shared Story for 4 days in total, giving ample time for sutures to practice and increase use of language
Vocabulary	
"ELs bring valuable background knowledge to classrooms. Teachers should begin by becoming familiar with the students' funds of knowledge. They can integrate these funds into instruction and build new knowledge on what students know or fill in gaps in content knowledge; thereby, creating a bridge between what is known and new content."[158]	• Theme Exploration: Students learn 1–3 thematic vocabulary words at the start of each lesson day and emphasized throughout the unit • Words and meanings are taught explicitly, with students taught to use these words in their speech, see them in print (when appropriate) • Vocabulary instruction includes conversations in order to support an understanding of literal and inferential comprehension of word knowledge within text • Background Words: ELs benefit from increased focus on these words because they support with understanding and show up again and again
Comprehension	
"Explicitly teach comprehension strategies. Use the gradual release of responsibility approach to teach	• Referred to as, "Language Comprehension" supports with background knowledge • Shared Stories offer a variety of complex texts, both

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[156] Page 9 Microsoft Word - NMPED Biliteracy Guidance_12.4.22.docx (state.nm.us).
[157] Page 10. Microsoft Word - NMPED Biliteracy Guidance_12.4.22.docx (state.nm.us).
[158] Page 10. Microsoft Word - NMPED Biliteracy Guidance_12.4.22.docx (state.nm.us).

comprehension strategies. Directly explain the strategy, model its use, guide students to use the strategy, and allow students to apply the strategy independently. Allow ample opportunities for students to develop comprehension while simultaneously developing oral language/oracy."[159]	narrative and expository that are often connected to the theme or topic of the text. Opportunities are provided to make connections between a new word or concept and other known words or concepts, relating ideas to experiences ● Students answer a variety of questions after each read. First answering factual questions before jumping to inferential or critical thinking questions, giving opportunity for a gradual release for students to build knowledge
Oral Language	
Oral language plays a central role in reading development regardless of the language. Preschool oral language skills and linguistic backgrounds are associated with reading comprehension in the primary grades. Oral language development should be an integral part of language and literacy instruction for emergent bilinguals. The emphasis should be on student discourse.	● Instruction includes sufficient time for discussion, including teacher modeling of conversational conventions, appropriate tone and rate, and development of full ideas and complete sentences ● One of the most important goals of KinderCorner is to help students develop their oral language skills. Strong oral-language skills help students to feel confident in their ability to communicate their ideas and also provide a solid foundation for reading. Teacher-student/ student-student discourse

SFA does have limitations with vocabulary and comprehension: the SFA vocabulary instructional component is more memory-based, not allowing for rich conversations, definitions, or explanations; the SFA comprehension instructional component is limited in terms of not getting to the rich discourse between students or providing opportunities for students to respond to literature in written form. Our program will address these gaps through our Small Group Reading, Independent Reading, Read Aloud, Close Reading and Writing Workshop blocks. We understand that "[w]ide Reading, independent, shared, and read alouds, with an emphasis on reading informational text contributes to knowledge building and vocabulary development. Teaching ELs to read requires strategically selected high-quality instructional materials and highly qualified, culturally and linguistically responsive teachers who are trained to teach reading in the home language and in second language acquisition for students who are learning to read in a language they are simultaneously developing."[160] ELs will receive individualized support tailored to their language proficiency levels, with small group learning opportunities to facilitate language acquisition. Oral language development will be emphasized through inclusive instructional methods, allowing students to interact with increasingly complex language structures. Our curriculum design focuses on building statistically significant gains in word recognition, oral reading accuracy, comprehension, spelling, and vocabulary for ELs.

English Language Development Standards and Access to Grade-Level Content for Els

To ensure comprehensive language development, we have integrated the five WIDA English Language Development (ELD) standards into our instructional framework, focusing on discourse organization and language precision. Our differentiated literacy blocks (small group, whole group, and 1:1) provide targeted language development instruction with a mastery learning approach, ensuring gradual skill progression. Instructional planning incorporates grade-level ELD standards into content delivery, fostering language development across all subject areas. Our Language Acquisition Program and

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[159]Page 28 Microsoft Word - NMPED Biliteracy Guidance_12.4.22.docx (state.nm.us).
[160] Page 11 Microsoft Word - NMPED Biliteracy Guidance_12.4.22.docx (state.nm.us).

inquiry-based approach prepare students to meet English Language Development Standards for English language learners' proficiency and ability to communicate information, ideas, and concepts necessary for academic success across content areas.[161] Our evidence-based program uses grade-level, age-appropriate curriculum and instruction and supports students to meet or exceed grade-level benchmarks. We will maintain a high academic bar across all subgroups, and with the right curriculum, instructional approach and support, all students including ELs will be able to meet the demands set before them. We will provide grade-level content and students will meet grade level standards across domains. Through differentiated instruction and personalized schedules, ELs will access grade-level content without hindrance. Language supports will be integrated into content delivery, enabling ELs to engage meaningfully with academic material alongside their non-EL peers.

Specific Responsibilities – School Staff and Classroom Teachers

FIGURE 55 - Staff Roles and Responsibilities

Staff Role	Staff Responsibilities
Head of School (HOS)	Develops and supports systems and logistics for identifying, assessing, tracking, and progress monitoring ELs. Oversees the execution of identifying, assessing, tracking, and progress monitoring and reporting to the Governing Board and communicating with families about EL status, support and proficiency. Ensures school communicates and notifies parents about EL status and potential services.
Office Assistant/Office Manager/Manager of Operations	Supports record intake and organization. Documents record-keeping of EL status, identifying and knowing who is EL classified, reclassified, or exited from the program and still in indeed of monitoring. Communicates and notifies parents about EL status and potential services.
Education Coordinator	Acts as stakeholder in oversight and informs decision-making for overall EL services and leads the SAT Team. Supports LTs and IAs with best instructional practices in ELD programing and intervention support. With theOffice Assistant, communicates and notifies parents about EL status and potential services.
Special Education Teachers (SpEd)	Acts as stakeholder in oversight and informs decision-making for overall EL services. Supports LTs and ATs with best instructional practices ELD programing and intervention support.
Lead Teachers (LT)	Upholds the same standards for ELs as for general education students. Provides the same high-level educational services to ELs as with non-ELs but with scaffolded, targeted support to meet ELs' specific needs. Works closely with SpEd teachers and Education Coordinator to implement best practices, as well as track data and progress around growth and EL goals.
Instructional Assistants	Work with all teachers to reach goals set by homeroom teachers. Support students by providing best practices for EL, tracking data, maintaining family communication, and supporting in a range of ways based on school and student need.
Social Worker	Supports the social and emotional health of the school by providing individual or group counseling, working closely with teachers on ways to best support the emotional and behavioral needs of all students, including ELs, creating positive behavior plans as needed, and maintaining open and frequent communication with parents. A Social Worker will be contracted until year 5 when we bring in the position full time.

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[161] Page 9 *WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework, 2020 Edition Kindergarten - Grade 12 (wisc.edu).

Governing Board & Culture and Equity Council	Provides oversight and ensures accountability of the Head of School (HOS) regarding the Equip Language Acquisition Program, record keeping for EL status, and reporting of EL students and their proficiency. The Culture and Equity Council oversees and works closely with HOS on Equip Academy's Culturally and Linguistically Responsive (CLR) program heavily guided by New Mexico Public Education Department's Design Tool and CLR Guidance Handbook (in response to the the findings in the Martinez and Yazzie Lawsuit).

Teacher and Staff Trainings, Professional Development, and Support

One of Equip Academy's pillars is Educator Excellence. Through our Institute for Educator Excellence, teachers will receive each year comprehensive, systematic educator training. Onboarding for teachers will occur during our Educator Institute (EI) three weeks before the school year starts and continuing EI will continue on Wednesdays on our shortened instructional day. Our belief is that 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 (a) internalize and implement our curriculum as well as our inquiry-based and engaging instructional approach, (b) have a strong sense of their students' academic needs and learning profiles, (c) understand and utilize MLSS at the highest level, (d) understand and utilize CLR tools in the classroom for EL and Multilingual students, and (e) have strong classroom systems and routines that inform an effective learning environment. All teachers and leaders will be trained in the use of data for instructional planning and accelerating student growth, and all teachers will be supported based on their self-selected specific needs, and all teachers will have weekly observations, feedback, and coaching. Topics for our comprehensive, systematic educator training will include and continue to circle back to (but not be limited to):

- Inquiry-Based Teaching and Learning
- Growth Mindset and High Expectations for All
- High-Leverage Lesson Planning (standards-based)
- Unit Dives
- Data Dives/Work Analysis and Action Planning
- Deliberate Practice (teachers live-teach to one another)
- ELD Process including, identifying, supporting, exiting and monitoring EL students
- Culturally and Linguistically Responsive (CLR) Teaching & Learning
- MLSS and the 3 Layer Interventions
- Social and Emotional Teaching and Learning
- Sub Populations: Achievement and Success for Indian, Hispanic, Black, EL and Special Education Students

Process for Tracing ELs' Progress and Service and Reporting to the Board

Tracking ELs progress is of the highest importance to our community and to our school. TheOffice Assistant will support record intake and organization, as documentation and record-keeping of EL status is crucial for identifying and knowing who is EL classified, reclassified, or exited the program and still in need of monitoring. Each sub-EL category needs careful tracking and we will utilize a system such as PowerSchool, Illuminate, or Google Drive to track EL students and their status. The selected system will indicate the supports each EL is receiving around to reach proficiency. All data pertaining to special populations will be reported to the Board, through a dashboard presented monthly to its Academic Committee, and then will be reviewed by the full Board at regularly scheduled, public Board meetings. The Head of School's monthly reports, provided to the Board and

reviewed within public monthly meetings, will present all academic data, disaggregated by subgroup, including EL, multilingual and gifted students (including gifted EL).

We believe that all students, regardless of native language or EL status, can master the knowledge and skills needed to engage deeply, dream audaciously, and reach their full potential. This belief system includes students of all learning profiles and language abilities. All students, including students with an EL status, are assessed with the rest of their peers. All ELs will be evaluated with the same frequency as their non-EL peers, and evaluated on their English language development according to all state requirements and all families will be formally notified of their child's EL status after each assessment cycle.. Each year, the school will propose a budget and staffing model to the Board that ensures that we have the requisite roles for our learning community, including, but not limited to, the number and types of teachers and other service providers to meet the needs of our EL students.

G. (2b) Provide a **clear, comprehensive, and cohesive plan** to regularly evaluate and monitor the progress of English learners.

Monitoring Progress of Els Toward English Language Proficiency

Equip Academy will regularly evaluate and monitor the progress of English Learners after they are identified and families agree to services. Identified EL students, regardless as to whether they have opted in or out of services, will be monitored annually with the ACCESS annual assessment; those who opt out of services will be monitored annually for two years; those who opt in to services will be monitored until they reach proficiency. For kindergarten students, ACCESS will be paper-based and administered individually. For all other grades, ACCESS will be computer-based or paper-based and may be administered in groups. Students will be given the ACCESS assessment annually until they reach proficiency (5.0+) at which point students will graduate/exit from the program. When students score 2.0, they will be reclassified as "Reclassified Fluent English Proficient (RFEP)"' we will continue monitoring them, using proficiency levels outlined by ACCESS as our guide for progress monitoring.

FIGURE 56 - ACCESS Proficiency Levels[162]

ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY LEVELS*					
1	2	3	4	5	6
Entering	Emerging	Developing	Expanding	Bridging	Reaching

*Students must achieve an overall score of 5.00 or higher to exit EL status. Any student who transfers from qn out-of-state or BIE school and has already exited EL status will be recognized as having exited EL status.

FIGURE 57 - Assessments, Purpose, Grades, and Timelines

Assessment	Purpose	Grade	Window Dates
English Learner Screening/Identification	English Language	Kindergarten WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT) and WIDA Screener (Grades 1-5)	Within 40 days of the start school OR within two weeks of initial enrollment[163]
ACCESS for ELLs ALTERNATE ACCESS for ELLs	Measures student's overall proficiency and progress towards English proficiency	K-5	Jan - March

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[162] ACCESS for ELLs_082522 (state.nm.us).
[163] Ibid.

	in four domains: Listening, Reading, Speaking, and Writing.[164]		

Specific Responsibilities – School Staff and Teachers

Identification Process. Through the identification process, the Office/Office staff and the HOS (years 1-3), Education Coordinator years 4+ will request and collect LUS survey information to all incoming students upon the enrollment process information.

Screening/Assessing Process. With the supervision of the HOS/Education Coordinator, the Office Assistant/Office Manager/Manager of Operations will report who needs to be screened/assessed for either the WIDA or ACCESS and will create a logistics plan which will include who will be tested, when they will be tested, and will assign testers. The staff administering the tests might be the SAT or teaching staff.

Data Tracking Process. With the supervision of the HOS/Education Coordinator, OPS will store and file all hard copies of surveys/screeners/assessments. All non-EL, identified ELs, exited ELs, RFEP students as well as intervals of progress will be tracked via a data dashboard (PowerSchool, Google Drive etc.).

Parent/Guardian Notification and Communication. Based on EL testing results, a Notification Letter will be generated by OPS and sent home by homeroom teachers. Follow up for written consent for EL services will be the responsibility of the teacher and data will be tracked by OPS and overseen by the HOS. Upon 100% of opt-in or opt-out letters, OPS will report who will be receiving services, and teachers will receive a confirmed list of EL identified students who will receive services. Teachers, OPS and administration all have the ability to inform, follow up, and update parents/guardians as needed. This process and set of responsibilities will be rolled out during staff training.

EL Monitoring Process. Progress monitoring will be done by educational staff under the supervision of the HOS/Education Coordinator. Teachers will provide high-quality instructions with support for ELs. Classroom data will be tracked and monitored weekly during data dives. Teachers will know how all of their students are progressing in terms of their EL status and how they can best be supported. The HOS/Education Coordinator will observe teachers ensuring supports are being implemented effectively.

Regular Intervals for Progress Monitoring

Indicators of success will be witnessed through (1) inquiry-based observations for student-centered dialog, (2) internal and external assessment data analysis, and (3) the ACCESS assessment. With our focus on teacher support and student growth, we will frequently monitor student achievement and success. Observations will be weekly (including feedback and support), monthly, and quarterly to track progress and annually to monitor how students are progressing. The ACCESS assessment will indicate continued status and EL progress. This and other assessments will inform instructional decision-making.

Actions and Reporting to Engage Students and Families

One of Equip Academy's values is partnership, and we believe in the trifecta of success: Families + Students + Teachers = Maximum Potential. Therefore, the Equip Academy community, including teachers and staff, will regularly and meaningfully communicate with families, including families whose students are identified as EL. We will have parent teacher conferences three times per year for all families and students and four times per year for families of students who may be struggling. However, information provided at these conferences will never be a surprise as we will communicate

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[164] Ibid.

with families regularly throughout the week and across all weeks in various ways. One way we will have open communication is with homework. Parents will have the opportunity to leave notes and ask questions for teachers. We will also require daily and weekly signatures on homework. Teachers will also call parents regularly both when students are doing great things and where we can partner together if they need more support. We will have frequent family nights where families will come in and engage in an activity with the school. We will send work home daily and weekly so that families are able to see how students are doing in class. When it comes to students who need additional support, we will be communicating with families on a more frequent basis. Keeping families up to date, thinking how we can partner together to best serve students, and keeping the family informed on how the student is doing academically and behaviorally. At these more frequent meetings, we will ensure that families are aware of where students are placing academically based on their grade level benchmark, what we are doing in response as a school, and sharing goals that we have set forth in support of the student. We will also think through a home action plan that might benefit the student.

Evaluation of EL Program Effectiveness

As a reflective and feedback-driven institution, we will undergo a formal strategic evaluation process three times per year to determine the effectiveness of our special ELD programing. More specifically, we will look at how successful the systems of EL screening/assessing and supporting students as well as how many are exiting the program. We will also reflect and measure our compliance with federal and state regulations. We will also analyze the following:

- Comparisons
  - Percentage of EL students in relation to neighboring schools
  - Comparison of academic data of our EL and gifted students, between neighboring schools/APS/state/nation, across all students and special education and EL subgroups
- Track Percentages
  - % of Exited Students
  - % of amount of time it takes students to exit
  - % of RFEP students
  - % of RFEP that are re-identified ELs after exiting
- Logistics Plan: Assessment process of identification
- Growth
  - Growth of students receiving EL services, in comparison to those who are not receiving special services
- Most Effective academic and EL supports and services
- Behavior trends of EL students
- Family engagement

This reflection process will be done at the beginning of year to set goals around EL students, as well as monitor progress, conduct data analysis, and ensure adequate frequency of meetings. The end of year will determine if the goals are met and how the overall program could be revised to ensure our goals are being met and students are learning and growing.

Monitoring Academic Progress of Exited EL Students

Exiting from EL status is a good indicator of program effectiveness. Upon exiting EL status, students will be closely supported, coached, and monitored so that they continue to progress rather than stagnate or regress. EL students are exited from the program when they score >5.0 on the ACCESS for ELs 2.0 English proficiency assessment, the student will be considered proficient in English. This qualifies them as "Reclassified Fluent English Proficient" (RFEP). As per New Mexico Administrative Code (6.29.5.12), students will continue to receive monitoring for a total of two years post proficiency to ensure that students maintain proficiency. As a school, we will continue to monitor and track

students' progress through all internal and state standardized assessments and during our Data Dive Days. EL and EL-exited student data will be closely monitored throughout these progress monitoring cycles to ensure students are getting the support they need and if they fall behind, we may implement Tier 2 interventions or make an SAT referral. At this point, the screener may be reinstated.

G. (3) Provide a **clear, comprehensive, and cohesive plan** to ensure adherence to ESSA and State statutes in addressing the needs of Native American Students, Hispanic Students, Black Students and Bilingual and Multicultural educational plan to improve educational outcomes. The narrative should include an explanation of the supplemental program or services offered to ensure implementation and ensure policies will be culturally and linguistically responsive.

Developing an Educational Framework: Addressing Educational Needs Within a Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Approach to Learning

Equip Academy will create an equitable and learning environment that represents, reflects, and prioritizes student-specific needs. Equip Academy will maintain an educational setting where students of all cultures, including Native American, Hispanic, Black, Multicultural, and Bilingual students, experience belonging and are an integral part of the educational process. Equip Academy will meet the goals of the Bilingual Multicultural Education Act (NMSA §22-23-1.1), the Indian Education Act (NMSA §22-23A-2), the Hispanic Education Act (NMSA §22-23B-2), and the Black Education Act (HB 43 and NMSA Article 23C). To this end, EA-SFE will address the needs of Native American, Hispanic and Black students and maintain a bilingual and multicultural educational framework through professional development and educator training to ensure curriculum responsiveness, meet the needs of all students, ensure all practices are student-centered and student-driven, and provide a school in which we focus on community and belonging. In addition to the above statutes, Equip Academy will remain culturally and linguistically responsive and celebrate diversity and inclusivity. We project that an estimated 80% of our school community will be Hispanic students, with a high percentage of students who are Multicultural and Bilingual, so the need to ensure equitable and quality education for these students is crucial to the success of the school overall.

FIGURE 58 - CRL Novick Framework

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY TO USE WHEN TEACHING CLD STUDENTS

High Expectations for ALL students

Commitment to learn from and about children

SELF-REFLECTIVE ANALYSIS

Building on the culture children bring to school

Developing schools as a caring community

Giving wider choices and more power to teachers

At Equip Academy, we believe in the uniqueness of every child, including such elements as personal experiences, culture, way of learning, and cognitive makeup. Equip is dedicated to serving all students and will remain in compliance with all regulations, including the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). We agree with Howard Gardner that "[t]he biggest mistake of past centuries on teaching has been to treat all children as if they were variants of the same individual and thus to feel justified in teaching them all the same subjects in the same way."[165] Indeed, we are committed to ensuring that all of our

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[165] Page 6 CLR-Guidance-Handbook-Review.pdf (state.nm.us).

academic programming is culturally and linguistically responsive for *all* students but specifically for historically underperforming students. The Novick Framework from the NMPED's Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Guidance Handbook seamlessly aligns with our programming and philosophy. For example, we hold **high expectations for students** regardless of their cognitive makeup, language, or home origin. We believe that students can meet the demands of any expectation set before them with the right support. **The commitment to learn from and about children** is a key feature of our inquiry-based approach which is founded on the fact that students are innately curious, innately want to learn, and come with a plethora of knowledge and experiences that they can engage with academically. In terms of **building on the culture children bring to the school**, we also acknowledge the beauty and the diversity that is New Mexico and the uniqueness that each child brings. Our philosophy and approach supports the New Mexico Hispanic Education Act, whose purpose is to: provide for the study, development, and implementation of educational systems that affect the educational success of Hispanic students to close the achievement gap and increase graduation rates; encourage and foster parental involvement in the education of their children; and provide mechanisms for parents, community and business organizations, public schools, school districts, charter schools, public postsecondary institutions, the department and state and local policymakers to work together. Culture keeping and culture celebrating is extremely important for us at Equip Academy. For example, students will learn about others from the community and also share about themselves through our writing unit All About Me which provides an opportunity for students to focus on their self-identity which is central to student learning and belonging. This is to support that students are able to have space to talk about who they are, where they come from, and what makes them unique. At Equip Academy, **self-reflection** is a central component of our inquiry-based learning approach. Inquiry-based learning is about bringing learning to life, and a part of that is reflecting on how students might stick with their ideas, change their thinking, or add to their thinking during discourse. The last aspect of the Novak framework is **developing schools as a caring community.** That is at the heart of learning for us during our Opening and Closing Circles when students build community and teachers incorporate social-emotional learning based on the needs of the class. Finally, respect and kindness are embedded in the inquiry-based approach - teaching students that respecting one's thinking and others' way of thinking is who we are as members of the Equip Academy community. Equip Academy's purpose is aligned with the purpose of the Hispanic Education Act - "A. provide for the study, development and implementation of educational systems that affect the educational success of Hispanic students to close the achievement gap and increase graduation rates;"[166] the Indian Education Act - "provide for the study, development and implementation of educational systems that positively affect the educational success of American Indian students;"[167] and the Black Education Act, as we intend to provide a program that "[a]ddresses the Black student achievement gap in a holistic and systemic manner that includes clearly articulated measures to improve public education for Black students that results in substantially improved graduation rates, college or career readiness and higher education completion rates at the undergraduate and graduate levels."[168]

Specific Responsibilities and Professional Development – Staff and Teachers

Equip Academy will provide staff with Culturally Responsive professional development through our Institute for Educator Excellence. All instructional staff will learn pedagogies that use the students' customs, characteristics, experiences, and perspectives as tools for instruction. Our framework aligns with culturally and linguistically affirming practices, framework, and the CLR guidance handbook, *Schooling by Design Tool*, as provided by New Mexico Public Education Department's Language and

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[166] Hispanic-Education-Act.pdf (state.nm.us).
[167] ARTICLE 23A (state.nm.us).
[168] BEA Curriculum – New Mexico Public Education Department (state.nm.us).

Culture Division. This will ensure that students feel welcomed, valued, and are proud to be a part of our community. We know that "[l]eadership grounded in cultural and linguistic responsiveness requires **high expectations** for CLD students just as with students from mainstream culture. Culturally responsive educational systems are oriented around the belief that all students can learn and achieve targeted educational outcomes if they receive **high-quality instruction** and have educational experiences that affirm their cultures, languages, and ethnic backgrounds."[169] For us at Equip Academy, one of our core values is excellence, and to promote excellence for students, teachers themselves first strive for excellence as they prepare to educate their students. We will ensure a high expectation culture both for teachers to be prepared, ready and receptive to feedback which, in turn, will inform and lay the foundation for those same high expectations for students. Believing that students can meet the bar is the first step to achieving high academic scores but it also is the stepping stone for trusting students to think for themselves and become independent and critical thinkers. "Another context for educators to build upon CLR is to instruct students in a way that they can be **critical thinkers**. Critical thinking requires higher order thinking skills that help students to construct their own knowledge systems in light of reflecting on multiple and diverse voices in multicultural society. Research indicates that educators cannot help students to be critical thinkers unless they practice critical thinking themselves."[170] We will provide the Public Education Department (PED) with all Status Report information to include in Native American, Hispanic, Black and bilingual multicultural student data and status report to include, but not limited to: attendance for all grades and student achievement data for all grades for all sub-groups. A high expectation and critical thinking culture is cultivated by prioritizing cognitive, social, cultural and emotional development.

Culturally/Linguistically Responsive Best Practices - Teaching, Mentoring, Counseling, Administration

Equip Academy has developed an educational framework to address the educational needs of Native American, Hispanic, Black, and bilingual, multicultural students within a culturally and linguistically responsive approach to learning. Equip Academy's culture and equity lens aligns with the four areas outlined in the Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Guidance Handbook from the PED Language and Culture Division. Indeed, we believe that education is more than academics. We will support students through high-academic support for Academic Success but also through Cultural Integrity, Critical Consciousness, and Equity. Therefore, in addition to our professional development for Academic Success, teachers will also receive training in Culture Integrity, Critical Consciousness, and Equity, focusing on such topics as culture and identity, SEL, and anti-bias and anti-racist education. A direct result to high-expectations is student growth which will be seen through data.

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[169] Page 21 CLR-Guidance-Handbook-Review.pdf (state.nm.us).
[170] Page 12 CLR-Guidance-Handbook-Review.pdf (state.nm.us).

FIGURE 59 - Four Areas of CLR[171]

Academic Success	Cultural Integrity	Critical Consciousness	Equity
Despite the current social inequalities, students must develop academic skills. The way those skills are developed may vary, but all students need literacy, numeracy, technological, social, and political skills in order to be active participants in our democracy.	Culturally and Linguistically Responsive teaching requires that students maintain cultural integrity as well as academic excellence. CLR teachers utilize students' culture as a vehicle for learning.	CLR does not imply that it is enough for students to choose academic excellence and remain culturally grounded if those skills and abilities represent only individual achievement. Beyond those individual characteristics of academic achievement and cultural competence, students must develop a broader sociopolitical consciousness that allows them to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequalities.	Develop and sustain educational opportunities for all students and create schools and classrooms where all students have a similar chance to learn regardless of their cultural and linguistic background.

The Head of School is responsible for implementing professional development that is equitable and inclusive and leading by example. Our Lead Founder and proposed Head of School, Ms. Herrera, has previously completed an extensive amount of work on diversity, equity and inclusion, including trainings provided by: Diverse Charter Schools Coalition The Management Center, Managing to Change the World: Educational Equity Edition; Reparations and Racial Healing Summit, Accra, Ghana; Dignity for All Students DASA, Decolonizing Education Conference (2 years); and Parent Interaction Training.. In addition, Ms. Herrera published "The Pain of Dismissal" in Yale Divinity School's *Reflections, The Unfinished Business of Race*.[172] For her work around belonging and taking a people-centered approach within education, Ms. Herrera was featured as an education expert within the documentary *RACE to be Human*: "Created for schools, communities and corporations, RACE To Be Human addresses the apprehension and confusion so many of us feel when it comes to talking about race and racism. The film examines micro-aggressions, allyship, and the role of social media. It also shares how we can participate and build empathy through conversations at home, work, and school."[173] Ms. Herrera's leading, teaching and coaching approach is heavily informed from a humanistic perspective, seeing value and leadership in others. Her goal is to develop the fullest capacity of her students because she knows that regardless of socioeconomic status, language, disability, religious association, gender, nationality, orientation, age or ethnicity, teachers and students can rise up to any occasion. She agrees completely that "the comprehension of students' [and teachers] rings of culture is directly linked to the effective practices of validating, affirming, building, and bridging."[174]

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[171] CLR-Guidance-Handbook-Review.pdf (state.nm.us).
[172] The Unfinished Business of Race | Reflections (yale.edu).
[173] Home | RACE to Be Human | iMPACTFUL.
[174] Page 3: CLR-Guidance-Handbook-Review.pdf (state.nm.us).

FIGURE 60 - Rings of Culture[175]

Rings of Culture
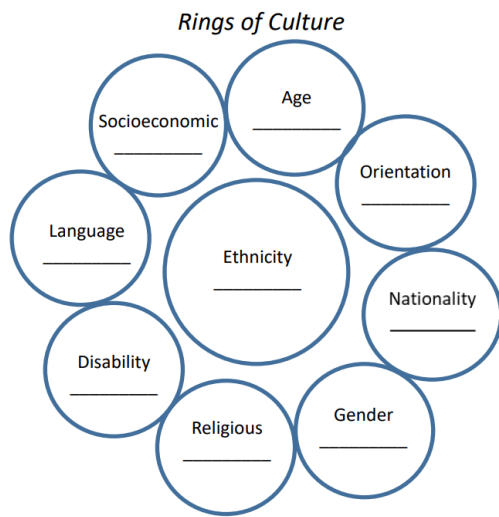
Ensuring Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Policies

Our Culture and Equity Governing Council Committee will undergo training in order to best oversee and evaluate the success of the Head of School on ensuring diverse, equitable, inclusive, and culturally relevant policies are developed, evaluated, and sustainable. The policies will ensure that all relevant constituencies including students, families, staff, and our larger community are treated in equitable ways. The Governing Board and its Culture and Equity Committee will provide feedback regarding programming and curriculum, ensuring they are culturally relevant and responsive. The Committee will ensure that subgroups are centered and elevated within our community, including Hispanic, Black, Native American, Bilingual, and special education students. Some other oversight topics that the Committee will address include: curriculum, professional development, student/teacher/family experiences, and family/community engagement. Because part of a responsive teaching and learning community is creating space for stakeholders to share their input and for administration to reflect upon and respond to that input by filling any gaps and ensuring any needed training and experiences based on identified need, the Head of School will conduct an annual survey in the BOY to solicit teacher needs and EOY reflection on what we can continue, develop further, or stop doing to ensure we are a culturally and linguistically responsive school community.

Developing and Implementing Rigorous, Culturally Meaningful Curricula and Instructional Materials

Equip Academy will incorporate a culturally responsive curriculum, field studies, and community events. Our culturally responsive curriculum can be seen in our Science, Social Studies, Read Aloud, Close Reading, Writing, and Math curriculum. Starting in kindergarten and continuing in all grades, students will be reading books and analyzing close reading texts that focus on New Mexico's specific culture. Students will learn about various topics, ranging from the Pueblos across New Mexico, New Mexico's landscape, New Mexico's specific foods, New Mexican art, as well as celebrating our community and learning about things like our state's balloon fiesta and flamenco dance culture. Students will also be able to dig into their own cultural and historical backgrounds and relish their own cultural and racial identities; 80% of Westside students are Hispanic and there is a significant population of American Indian students as well. Our students will embark on field studies related to New Mexico and its culture and heritage. Field studies will include: Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, the Hispanic Cultural Center, the National Institute of Flamenco, and Bosque School. All of this will support all students, including Indian, Hispanic, Black, and multilingual students, allowing them to gain appreciation for and a deeper understanding of who they are and where they come from. One of our annual community-wide events will be focused on legacy during Hispanic Heritage Month. Additionally, during Close Reading and our fiction studies, we will explore multicultural folk and fairy tales from Indian, Hispanic, Black, African, Chinese, and other cultures. Cumulatively, these approaches will make students more well-rounded, build understanding and acceptance, and open windows to self and difference.

Progress Monitoring Intervals

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[175] CLR-Guidance-Handbook-Review.pdf (state.nm.us).

We believe that for students to learn and grow academically, they must feel like they belong in the community and that they are contributing community members. We will monitor academic success weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annually, and we will monitor our school's cultural health through regular surveys of our stakeholders, asking questions such as: Do teachers feel valued and respected? Do students feel like they belong and when contributing to class discussions and through social experiences? Do families feel like they can go to the teachers or Head of School for issues and concerns? Does the community feel like what they say and do is valued? Progress monitoring for equity in the school and for all constituencies will happen informally throughout the year and also more formally through a community survey answering a version of the questions above and rating how we are doing in terms of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Actions and Reporting to Engage Students and Families

Equip Academy believes in the power of family and school partnership. We will host family engagement nights for both academics and community-building. Communication with families will be open and often. Data, transparency, and communication will be deeply valued. We will consistently and reliably know where students are academically and will inform parents as the information becomes available. Additionally, we will consistently celebrate learning and growth and we will have various times throughout the year when families come in and bear witness to the growth of their students, for example with our annual writing publishing parties. We will also host family holiday events, bringing everyone together to enjoy one another and uplift our entire school community. Written communication will be through the app such as Class DoJo which makes translating easy and efficient. Parents will select their home language and will receive all information in their preferred language.

Evaluating Programmatic Effectiveness in Improving Educational Outcomes

Our programming evaluation will be ongoing; the Head of School and team will conduct an annual survey in the BOY to survey teacher needs and an EOY reflection on what we can continue, further develop, or stop doing. A part of responsive teaching and learning is creating space for stakeholders to point out their experiences and identify any gaps in the school experience, and then the school's administration reflecting on that feedback, filling any gaps, and providing any needed training and resources based on identified needs. Based on the policies established by the Governing Board, our school culture and equity outcomes will be monitored, evaluated, and assessed by the Board on a monthly basis as a standing item on the Board's agenda. Our overall program will be evaluated annually for effectiveness, including recommendations and feedback to improve the quality of our culture and equity program.

Meeting the Specific Requirements of the Black Education Act

All teachers will complete the two webinar series, "Meeting the Moment: Addressing Racism through Recognition & Response" launched by the PED. They will complete all modules in order to get a deeper awareness of racism and how to engage and identify it. We will provide resources for creating a sustainable and culturally responsive learning environment as well as on the following topics:

- Cultivate awareness of their bias
- Work to increase empathy and empathetic communication
- Never place one race above another - the way a child speaks, how they look, their way of learning, etc. are all valued assets brought to a classroom not deficits
- Encourage students to embrace differences in other cultures besides their own[176]

Curriculum a Classroom Instruction

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[176] BEA Professional Development and Training – New Mexico Public Education Department (state.nm.us).

- Black history represented in the classroom
- Valuing Black culture
- Anti-racist curricular tools
- Representation and community partnerships that reflect and celebrate the black community

H. Assessment and Accountability

A charter school application should include a clear plan for evaluating student performance across the curriculum. (NMSA 22-8B-8(E). This plan should align with state performance standards, as well as with the proposed school's student performance goals, and should be presented, along with a clear timeline for achieving these standards/indicators/goals. A clear explanation of the types of assessments and frequency of administration should be included, reflecting thoughtfulness given to tracking student progress. A plan for the use and dissemination of data gathered through assessments should include procedures for how the board will initiate corrective action (both individually and collectively) if pupil performance falls below expected standards.

When developing the assessment plan, consider the following: 1) the appropriateness of assessments to the curriculum; 2) what will serve as baseline for student progress comparisons; 3) the inclusion of school, state, and other assessments to demonstrate appropriate student growth; 4) the ability of the assessment plan to provide for the early detection of students struggling with curriculum content; and 5) the ability of assessments to reflect the use of basic skills at grade-appropriate levels (e.g., reading, writing, problem-solving). Finally, all New Mexico public schools, including charter schools, are subject to a variety of testing requirements, which are aligned with state and federal content standards.

For more information on NM assessment requirements, please see:

https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/assessment/

H. Assessment and Accountability

H.(1) Provide a **clear, comprehensive, and cohesive assessment plan**

Assessment in K-5 is crucial for understanding and supporting the educational development of elementary-aged students. We have designed our curriculum, instruction, and assessments to ensure that students in K-5 acquire the necessary skills to enter middle and high school with the confidence to graduate and pursue college and career opportunities. We recognize the importance of not only adhering to state standards and requirements but also of adopting a student-centered and equitable approach to assessment design. This approach ensures that we accurately gauge each student's learning and growth. By tailoring our assessments to reflect the diverse needs and backgrounds of our students, we commit to providing a truly inclusive educational environment. This method allows us to identify areas where students excel and where they may need additional support, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to succeed and thrive. To make this vision a reality, it is crucial that students have access to engaging, relevant, and rigorous instruction that aligns with the proficiency expectations outlined by the New Mexico State Standards, Common Core State Standards, and New Mexico STEM Ready! Science Standards. The effective use of high-quality assessment data to

understand student progress is key to fulfilling our commitments to families. By doing so, we ensure that our students are on track for success and equipped with the essential knowledge, skills, and deep conceptual understanding they need to excel in their future endeavors.

Our Governing Board, School Administrators, teachers, students, parents, and the Albuquerque Westside community will have access to aggregate assessment data, which provides a clear depiction of our school's student performance outcomes. These outcomes will undergo continuous evaluation by our Governing Board and its subcommittees through analysis of the Head of School's reports and through its ongoing internal data analysis program. Based on these reviews, we will strategically allocate resources and make necessary adjustments to our instructional and curricular approaches. This proactive and responsive strategy ensures that our students are well prepared for success in middle and high school.

The demographic data for our projected student body suggests that many of our students will require substantial support in literacy and numeracy. Approximately 100% of our students are likely to come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and 90% from predominantly Hispanic backgrounds, and we are confident in their strengths and potential. Our educational philosophy emphasizes inquiry-based learning, central to our teaching approach and designed to foster success at every grade level and beyond. Our assessment strategy is an integral part of this approach, aiming to cultivate a deep understanding of key knowledge and skills through:

A rigorous curriculum that highlights essential skills and knowledge for each grade is outlined in **Section IC** and includes:

- Deployment of multiple, high-quality assessments to identify areas of unfinished learning, ensuring that all students meet their grade-level expectations
- Strategic use of data to revisit and refine our scope and sequence, enabling tailored acceleration support that complements, rather than replaces, essential grade-level learning
- Continuous monitoring of student progress in critical areas, allowing for timely adjustments to individual support strategies

This inquiry-based approach addresses immediate academic needs and provides students with the foundational skills necessary for lifelong learning and success. We will use a variety of assessments that include daily, ongoing checks for understanding and learning assessments as well as state mandated assessments for measuring achievement. Per Public Education Framework and Educational Requirements[177], we will administer all state assessments to fulfill the academic framework. This data will be used as part of the process to ensure students are reaching their grade level proficiencies.

Assessment Overview

Equip's annual assessment plan provides a detailed overview of the assessments to be administered, their timelines, purposes, and a concise data analysis strategy. **FIGURE 61** outlines the spectrum of state-mandated assessments for students from kindergarten through 5th grade, covering subjects like English language arts, math, and science, in addition to school-selected assessments across all content areas. Included in the assessment calendar are the specific objectives for each test and a plan for data analysis designed to validate and reinforce learning outcomes, enable deeper assessment, and facilitate more tailored support for our students.

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[177] New Mexico Public Education Commission, Performance Framework (2023). Retrieved from https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/public-education-commission/policies-and-processes/performance-review-and-accountability-system-and-performance-frameworks/.

FIGURE 61 - State Mandated Assessments

Assessment	Testing Time Frame	Purpose	Frequency, Data Analysis to Inform Instruction
Istation Indicators of Student Progress (ISIP) Early Reading	**BOY:** August **MOY:** Within 1st 2 weeks of January **EOY:** Within 1st 2 weeks of May **Regular monitoring**	**Grades: K-3** State mandated, short cycle computer adaptive assessment to assess basic early Literacy skills for reading readiness.[178] • Phonemic awareness • Phonics • Fluency • Comprehension • Vocabulary	**BOY, MOY, EOY, Ongoing Monitoring** Data will be used to identify students who are likely to develop reading difficulties and continually monitor student progress in early grade reading. This assessment also serves to compare student progress school and statewide. Student data will be analyzed over years with multiple time points to understand student growth and development.
Istation Indicators of Student Progress (ISIP) Math	**BOY:** August **MOY:** Within 1st 2 weeks of January **EOY:** Within 1st 2 weeks of May **Regular monitoring**	**Grades: K-2** Short cycle computer adaptive assessment to assess basic early Literacy skills for mastery of mathematical concepts, such as.[179] • Number sense • Geometry • Operations • Measurement • Algebra • Data Analysis	**BOY, MOY, EOY, Ongoing Monitoring** Data will be used to identify students likely to develop math difficulties. This will be used to monitor student progress over years and serves to drive instruction. Student data will be analyzed over years with multiple time points to understand student growth and development.
Interim Measures of Student Success Achievement Math and ELA (MSSA)	**December-January** (within testing window) **April-May** (within testing window)	**Grades: 3-5** Measure student proficiency on common core aligned grade level ELA and math content.	**Twice annually** Data will be used to measure student progress, drive instruction to meet proficiency standards. Data will also be analyzed to determine ELA and Math curricular and instructional effectiveness to support teacher professional development. Student data will be analyzed over years with multiple time points to understand student growth and development.
Student Wellbeing & Competency	**November-December** (within testing window)	**Grades: 3-5** Measures student social emotional learning and	**Once annually** Data will be used to understand how students are growing in the

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[178] Istation Reading. (n.d.). Retrieved March 15, 2024, from https://www.istation.com/Reading.
[179] Istation Math. (n.d.). Retrieved March 15, 2024, from https://www.istation.com/math.

Survey		wellbeing constructs.	social emotional learning space and use this to drive instruction and teacher professional development.
NM-Assessment of Science Readiness (ASR)	**March-May** (within testing window)	**Grades: 5** Used to measure student proficiency on common core aligned grade level science content	**Once annually** Data will be used to measure student progress in science and use this to drive curricular and instructional effectiveness and teacher professional development.

Other Assessment Plans

Teachers will employ a mix of ongoing formative and summative assessments to enhance instruction and learning outcomes. Key components of formative assessment such as daily objectives, pre-assessments, and end of day reflections, which enable more strategic teaching approaches and foster more effective learning experiences. As outlined, our larger assessment program will include:

- Fountas & Pinell (F&P) Reading Assessments (quarterly) - accurate and reliable tools to identify the instructional and independent reading levels of all students and document student progress through one-on-one formative and summative assessments
- Problem-Solving (BOY and EOY) Assessment - monitor student progress in number sense, numeracy skills, mathematical operations, mathematical thinking, and problem-solving ability, we will administer a formal problem-solving assessment twice annually using Number Stories
- Internal Assessments (IAs), Math & ELA (quarterly) Assessments - created by the school to assess internal goals, track progress, and measure student growth
- Sight Word Assessments (3 timers per year) - sight words are words that students should recognize without sounding them out
- Writing Published Piece (quarterly) - piece written independently that was edited, revised, published, and ready to be presented

Through our formative assessments we will be able to:

- Understand individual reading habits through introductory reading session
- Tailor grade-appropriate texts informed by a baseline reading assessment
- Evaluate initial vocabulary knowledge relevant to the curriculum
- Maintain weekly reading journals to observe reading frequency and diversity
- Implement short quizzes to reinforce vocabulary acquisition and key concepts
- Facilitate guided reading sessions to directly assess fluency and comprehension skills
- Utilize readers' notebooks for documenting insights, predictions, and inquiries about the reading material
- Develop creative end-of-unit projects (such as presentations or essays) that encapsulate the unit's thematic elements
- Conduct tests with varied question types (multiple-choice, short answers) focusing on unit content and vocabulary
- Organize structured discussions to evaluate critical thinking and peer interaction skills
- Strengthen independent comprehension tests based on newly introduced passages
- Inform oral reading sessions to gauge fluency and expressive reading capabilities.

Special Population Assessments

In addition to the assessments previously detailed, Equip Academy incorporates state-mandated evaluations specifically tailored for our students with special needs and English Learners as well as identifying these subgroups for gifted services. Details about the annual assessments for these groups are outlined below.

FIGURE 62 - Special Population Assessments

Assessment	Testing Time Frame	Purpose	Frequency, Data Analysis to Inform Instruction
Dyslexia Screener (English screeners: Lexercise; Spanish screeners: Istation (ISIP))	**Before 40th Day**	**Grades: 1** State mandated, screener for dyslexia to identify children who may experience dyslexia. Students will be screened in their primary language.	**Once annually** A student whose screening demonstrates characteristics of dyslexia shall receive targeted structural literacy interventions with ongoing (daily, weekly) monitoring to determine if the student is making adequate progress.
Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM)	**Spring**	**Grades: 3-5** Assessment designed for students with multiple significant cognitive disabilities. Individualized test designed for students to demonstrate their skills.	**Once annually** Data will be analyzed during summer to inform curricular lessons and structure for students with specific IEPs. Students will receive targeted reading interventions, etc. and actively monitor student progress through independent practice.
ACCESS for English Language Learners **And** **WIDA Alternate ACCESS for ELLs**	**By 40th Day** (listening, speaking) **By 120th Day** (reading, writing)	**Grades: K-5** This assessment process includes tools specifically designed to identify potential English Language Learners (ELLs). The WIDA Screener is an English Language Proficiency test administered to incoming students suspected of being ELs. This screener helps determine each student's level of English language proficiency and the specific instructional supports they require. Additionally, students already identified as ELs take the ACCESS test, which measures both their social and academic English language proficiency.	**Once annually** BOY for WIDA Screener placement test. Data will be used to identify potential EL students. **Once annually** MOY for WIDA ACCESS. Provides information to help enhance instruction for ELs, and gives information about the level of readiness of a student to exit English language support programs. EL students will receive targeted reading interventions and actively monitor student progress through independent practice and exit tickets.
Gifted Universal Screening[180]	**Universal screening** will be administered by the **end of grade 3**	**Grades K-3** To advocate for students of underrepresented groups due to cultural or linguistic background, socioeconomic status, or disability conditions, in order to ensure that these students have equal opportunities to benefit from services for gifted students.	**Once, based on assessments** Universal screening assessment results shall be used for referral for further assessment and may include group or individually administered assessments of academic achievement or cognitive ability. Analysis of qualitative and quantitative data from multiple sources to assess areas of strength. Sources shall include: standardized quantitative assessment data; qualitative data

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[180] New Rule (nm.gov).

			from the assessment of student abilities by qualified individuals evaluating evidence such as collections of work, audio and video recordings, interviews, or observations; and if applicable, performance assessments or standardized assessments of artistic ability.

All first-grade students will undergo a dyslexia screening, after which classroom teachers will receive specific instruction and tools for monitoring each student's progress effectively. Every student identified as an English Language Learner (EL) must take the annual WIDA ACCESS test. This assessment evaluates each EL student's proficiency in English across listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. The Administrators will analyze results to set benchmarks, track progress, make decisions about reclassifying students' need for English language support services, and refine instructional planning.

Students identified with significant cognitive disabilities will take part in the Dynamic Learning Maps assessments. These assessments ensure inclusion in state assessment and accountability frameworks. The results will help define each student's performance level, contributing to the development of their Individualized Education Program (IEP), setting instructional goals, identifying strengths and areas for improvement, and guiding classroom instruction.

Data Studies

In addition to the above assessment plan, teachers and leaders will actively monitor student progress on a daily and weekly basis to ensure significant academic gains, employing four data study cycles each year. This monitoring is vital for assessing the performance of all students, including specific subgroups such as Indian, Hispanic, Black, EL, and Special Education students, against established standards and goals. The Head of School will lead these data studies, which include comprehensive schoolwide, grade-level, and class-specific data analysis. The process involves staff collaboration to identify trends and plan actions based on the data, such as adjusting instructional responses, regrouping students, and determining the need for targeted support like small group or one-on-one interventions. Additionally, data studies will address areas requiring reteaching and explore parental involvement opportunities. For subsequent assessments within the year, comparative, longitudinal data will also be analyzed to track progress towards goals using reading and state-required assessments.

H.(2) Provide a **clear, comprehensive, and cohesive** description of the how assessment data will be analyzed

Data Analysis, Reporting, Evaluation and Use to Inform School Design

At Equip Academy, we are committed to the strategic use of assessments to enhance classroom support and boost performance on mandated tests. Our approach is rooted in a robust data-driven strategy that aligns with our mission to equip every student with the skills necessary to succeed. To this end, we will keep all educational stakeholders—students, teachers, parents, and board members—well-informed about our annual assessment plan. This includes the purpose of each assessment and a detailed analysis of our performance on these evaluations. By fostering a culture that emphasizes assessment, we are better positioned to continuously gather data on both individual and group performance. This ongoing data collection is crucial for identifying challenges faced by our institution or by individual students, allowing us to promptly adjust our educational strategies.

Our teachers and students play a proactive role in this process. They regularly collect and analyze data through the inquiry-based model, such as engaging in student-led conferences to discuss achievements and learning strategies. Teachers assign and students complete reflective writing tasks focusing on personal reading experiences and developmental milestones. Teachers and the school also provide regular updates on students' progress and engage parents in the educational process, closely reviewing the results of all formative assessments. (Please see **Section IC.**) for more detail on curriculum). This ongoing assessment helps teachers gain a detailed understanding of students' mastery levels and areas that need improvement, directly informing their instructional planning.

Our annual assessment strategy encompasses a variety of measures, including internally created, state-mandated, and nationally-normed assessments. All interim and end-of-year assessments are developed by the Head of School, in alignment with the course's Scope and Sequence. From the second year onward, the Administrators will also collaborate with grade-level teachers to devise in-class assessments such as quizzes and unit exams. Through these efforts, we ensure that our assessments are both meaningful and effective, providing a clear benchmark for success and facilitating targeted, immediate responses to educational needs.

Each year, we will conduct four comprehensive data studies. While these represent our major analytical efforts, they do not encompass all our data activities; throughout the year, we will also undertake numerous smaller and more targeted data analyses focusing on specific assessments. The primary data studies will rigorously examine reading assessments, standards-based data, and other pivotal assessments that coincide with these periods.

Data Driven Institution

As a data-driven school, we bring a prioritized focus on teacher growth - the foundation for ensuring academic growth for all students and closing the achievement gap for all learners. The curriculum is one significant point of focus within our professional development, training, and support for teachers; others are our assessment program, data analysis, and action planning for student success.

We consistently and reliably progress monitor for student growth: we know where any academic holes are and how we can support our students to fill them. We have designed and will implement a robust protocol for training, observing, and providing teacher feedback on their instructional practices and interventions – all informed by student data - that in turn will systematically create master teachers and dramatically improve student outcomes here in New Mexico.

Specifically, we believe that considering our approach to data must be seen as an integral part of our overall teacher academic training that address four areas: (1) Unit Launches, (2) Lesson Planning and Internalization, (3) Deliberate Practice, and (4) Data Analysis/Student Work Analysis.

With a focus here on element (4) Data Analysis/Student Work Analysis, the other three elements will constantly be informed by our analysis of what students are able to achieve and where they may be struggling, as measured by internal and external assessments.

The Head of School will first ensure that assessments are administered with fidelity, integrity, and equity and then ensure that data collection includes all students, disaggregated for all subgroups.

The Head of School will internalize the data, and prepare a presentation of high-level as well as standard-specific findings - first, with an eye toward finding trends at bird's eye view. The presentation will answer such key questions as: (a) What are similarities across the whole school? (b) How did these schoolwide results occur overall? (c) What is going to be a response to data from a leader lens? Then, continuing to dive into the data in a more granular way, guiding questions will become even more detailed: (a) What are the trends that are occurring within each grade? (b) How did these grade-level results occur? (c) What are the action steps that will be put into place as a

response to data? Then, the Head of School will look at how individual students are doing in each content area, continuing through the cycle until appropriate instructional teams are able to see and analyze how students are doing individually. Looking at the outliers, meaning students on both sides of the spectrum, exceeding expectations and far-below expectations.

Next, the Head of School will create an action plan in response to data, including as needed a plan for professional development to be held during early dismissal Wednesdays, grade level meetings, or one-on-ones with teachers for individual teacher goal-setting and support. The plan will also include targeted observations and actionable, specific feedback based on data-driven goals.

FIGURE 63 - Equip Academy Assessment Programing Snapshot

Assessment Programing
AUGUST
August 6 - 29 - Screeners (20 days time frame)
August 11 - Dyslexia Screener (1st Grade within the first 40 Days)
August 29 - SAT Progress Monitoring Meeting
SEPTEMBER
September 11-12 - Number Stories (CGI) Assessment
September 15-30 - Reading Assessment Cycle #1
September 25-30 - BOY iStation K-5 Assessment
September 26 - SAT Progress Monitoring Meeting
OCTOBER
October 1 - 2 - Reading Assessment Cycle #1 Continued
October 3 - End of Quarter 1
October 8 - Data Study #1
October 30 - SAT Progress Monitoring Meeting
NOVEMBER
November 24 - SAT Progress Monitoring Meeting
DECEMBER
December 1-12 - Reading Assessment #2
December 8-10 - MOY iStation K-5 Assessment
December 12 - End of Quarter #1
December 17 - Data Study #2
December 18 - Family Conferences & Report Cards #2
December 19 - SAT Progress Monitoring Meeting
JANUARY
January 3 - ACCESS Testing Begins (Likely until February 27th)
January 30 SAT Progress Monitoring Meeting
FEBRUARY
February 27 - SAT Progress Monitoring Meeting (Determine DLM)
February 27 - ACCESS Complete
MARCH
*TBD - Dynamic Learning Maps Assessment (DLM)
March 6 - End of Quarter #3
March 10 - Report Card Distribution
March 11 - Data Study #3
March 12 - PID Family Conferences & Report Cards #3
March 27 - SAT Progress Monitoring Meeting
APRIL
TBD - Science Assessment (5th)
April 14 - 16 - Number Stories (CGI) Assessment
April 23 - 30 - Reading Assessment #4
April 24 - SAT Progress Monitoring Meeting
MAY
TBD - NM MSSA ELA/Math (3-5)
May 1-8 - Reading Assessment #4 Continued
May 11 - 12 - EOY iStation Assessment K-5
May 12 - End of Quarter #4
May 13 - Final Data Study #4
May 15 - Family Conferences & Report Cards #4
May 18 - SAT Progress Monitoring Meeting & Program Evaluation

After internalizing the data at all levels, the Head of School will prepare and present the data to staff in an open-ended way for teachers to answer the same questions on behalf of the students around the data. (a) What are the trends that are occurring within my classroom. (b) How did these results occur? (c) What are the action steps that will be put into place as a response to data? Finally, and based on class and student need, teachers might (5) take whole group actions steps to reach whole class goals, create a re-teach plan with an eye toward standard specific gaps, create a small group support plan, and/or create student-specific goals. All goals will be measurable with a timestamp as well as clear steps as to how students will be supported based on need. This is not a comprehensive list of assessments and analysis and the Gifted assessment will be given as needed with the goal being prior to grade 3.

FIGURE 63 provides a snapshot of our assessment programming. It includes all major state-mandated assessments and internal mission-specific assessments. Please note that this is not a comprehensive list of assessments and data studies. Through our robust professional development within our education institute, we will focus on unit assessments as well as bi-monthly quizzes during our early dismissal days dedicated to professional development by diving into student work in order to gain a better understanding of where students are at as a whole. In addition to State mandated assessments as well as mission specific assessments, **FIGURE 63** indicates when progress monitoring will happen - SAT Progress Monitoring Meetings (which occur monthly at minimum). Based on need, we might meet weekly or bi-weekly, as we monitor student achievement and success for our EL, IEP, gifted and 504 students as well as any other at-risk students who are not meeting or exceeding grade level benchmark. The Gifted assessment will be administered based on need and will be a topic of discussion during our SAT Progress Monitoring meetings with a running list of students who need to be gifted-assessed.

Additionally, **FIGURE 63** indicates when data studies will take place post each quarter to get a cumulative analysis as to where students are academically and how as a school we should respond and prepare to meet the needs of all students. Also a part of our programming is parent partnership and this snapshot shows when we are having our parent conferences post our end-of-quarter data studies. This will prepare teachers to ensure that they inform families on how we can partner together to best support students both at home and at school. Our assessment programming also indicates when report cards will be distributed, which is a total of four times per year. Our academic programming concludes with an SAT Progress Monitoring Meeting and an overall program evaluation including a Student Wellbeing and Competency Survey analysis given in early April and encouraged to complete by May 15th (unless an alternate distribution and due date are provided by the state). Here we will look at the success of our programming which is directly correlated to the success of our students. We will think about what we need to continue, start or stop doing based on the success of our programming. Our 4 data analysis and action planning will follow the four-step cycle below.

Data Studies - Assessment and Analysis Overview[181]

STEP 1: Assessments. We will administer all required federal and state-mandated K-5 assessments, surveys, and screeners. We will collect and analyze data as we monitor students' progress, effectively communicate and partner with families regarding student gaps and growth, and ensure leaders and teachers can strategically and proactively address learning needs and gaps to accelerate learning. We will administer all New Mexico state-required assessments and we will progress monitor to ensure students are on track, and throughout the year, we will create and deliver supports for students and teachers in response to reliable and standards-specific data.

STEP 2: Data Analysis. We will use all assessment data to conduct school-wide, grade-level, sub-group, and student-specific cycles of analysis of student outputs. Data will allow us to identify learning trends, achievement gaps, and needs. The Head of School will lead data analysis meetings and will implement teacher-friendly, strategic data sheets and trackers within those meetings. The Head of School will also prepare the data and present it to the Governing Board and its Academic Committee for all mandated K-5 assessments as well as key internal assessments. These Board presentations will take place after STEP 2 (above) and after STEP 3 (below). The school leaders and Board will progress monitor all results and ensure that the school has the resources that it needs to achieve its goals.

Response to Data, Action Plan, and Interventions

STEP 3: Action Plan. The data analysis process will allow us to create highly targeted and measurable action plans. These plans will include time-bound grade, class, and individual student goals and/or strategies to address specific learning needs based on gaps. Corrective remediation and interventions will be planned out based on learning gaps. Our K-1 school design with two teachers in the classroom and grades 2-5 having one supporting teacher per grade allows for more intervention support such as small group intervention or one-on-one support. We recognize that outstanding academic results have their foundation in this approach, and we will systematically implement this approach, starting in the earliest grades within our K-5 model and continuing in all grades across the life of the school.

STEP 4: Feedback and Coaching. As stated in our vision, we intend to be a learning institute for educator excellence; therefore there will be frequent observations, debrief sessions, data studies, grade-team meetings, unit dives, student work analysis deliberate practice. Feedback will be provided through live, in-the-moment coaching, and within 1:1 debrief meetings that can range from 20-30 minutes. Our instructional program is informed by our ongoing data cycles. Additionally, teachers will

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[181] This approach is informed by Bambrick-Santoyo, Paul. *Driven by Data* 2.0: A Practical Guide to Improve Instruction. John Wiley & Sons, 2019.

receive feedback from peers during our half-day professional development each week during teach-back sessions. Teach-backs are when teachers prepare a lesson and live teach it to the group. The rest of the teachers will offer supportive praise and feedback to the teacher. This will support effective implementation of our instructional model and data-based action plans. Lastly, observations and feedback will take place between teacher and student as well. Based on grade and student class goals, the teacher will observe students and offer feedback and support to ensure students are following through based on goal(s).

Corrective Action

Annually, and after each major assessment cycle, the Board will consider the degree to which the school is meeting or on track to meet all schoolwide goals across all subgroups. If there is evidence that we are not meeting or are not on track to meeting our goals, the Board will charge the Head of School with creating and presenting a time-bound, accountable, and measurable corrective action plan to intervene and take the necessary actions to reach all achievement goals. The Board will require the Head of School to present progress on the corrective action plan monthly and to make any course corrections as needed along the way until all goals have been met. The Board will also ensure that the school has the necessary resources to implement details of the corrective action plan.

Associated Costs

All associated costs are reflected in our budget details, specifically within our staffing model details (please Object Codes starting with a 51), our curriculum details (please see Object Codes: 56111, 56112, 56113, 56118), as well as our student support services providers (found in object code 2100).

Alignment to Specific Needs of Projected Population

We expect that the student demographics at our school will mirror those of Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) on Albuquerque's Westside, specifically in zip codes 87105 and 87120. Approximately 90% of the student population in this area is Hispanic and more than 95% qualify for free or reduced lunch. Our assessment plan is designed to cater to the diverse needs of our anticipated student population, including special education students and English Language Learners. Specific assessments for these groups in our plan include the WIDA Access Placement Test, ACCESS for ELLs, and the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLMs). Our curriculum, which integrates the arts, enables all students to engage with ideas and concepts in creative ways, leveraging their unique strengths to express their understanding and knowledge through various forms.

According to the latest data published by the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED)[182] in 2023, students in our target community underperform by on reading and on mathematics achievement proficiency compared to their peers in Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) and the statewide average, as depicted in **FIGURES 64** and **65**, respectively.

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[182]NMPED. Achievement data by year. (2023). Retrieved March 15, 2024, from
https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/accountability/data/.

FIGURE 64 - Elementary School Reading Proficiency
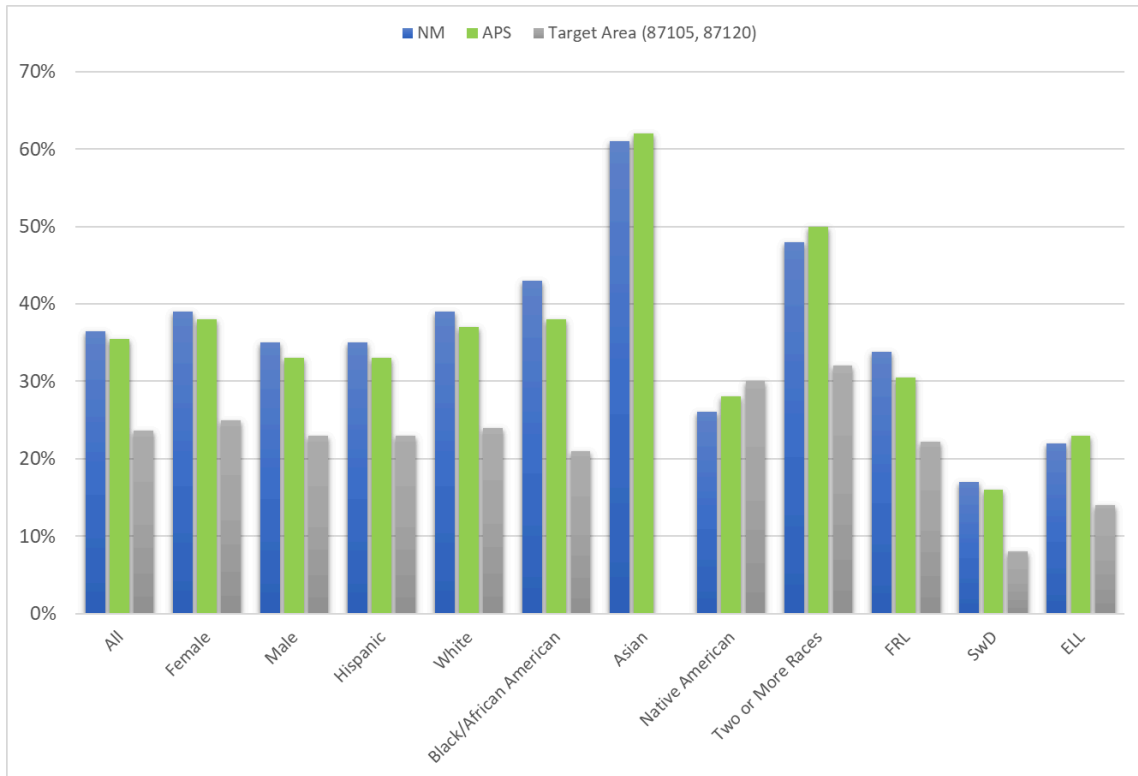
FIGURE 65 - Elementary School Math Proficiency
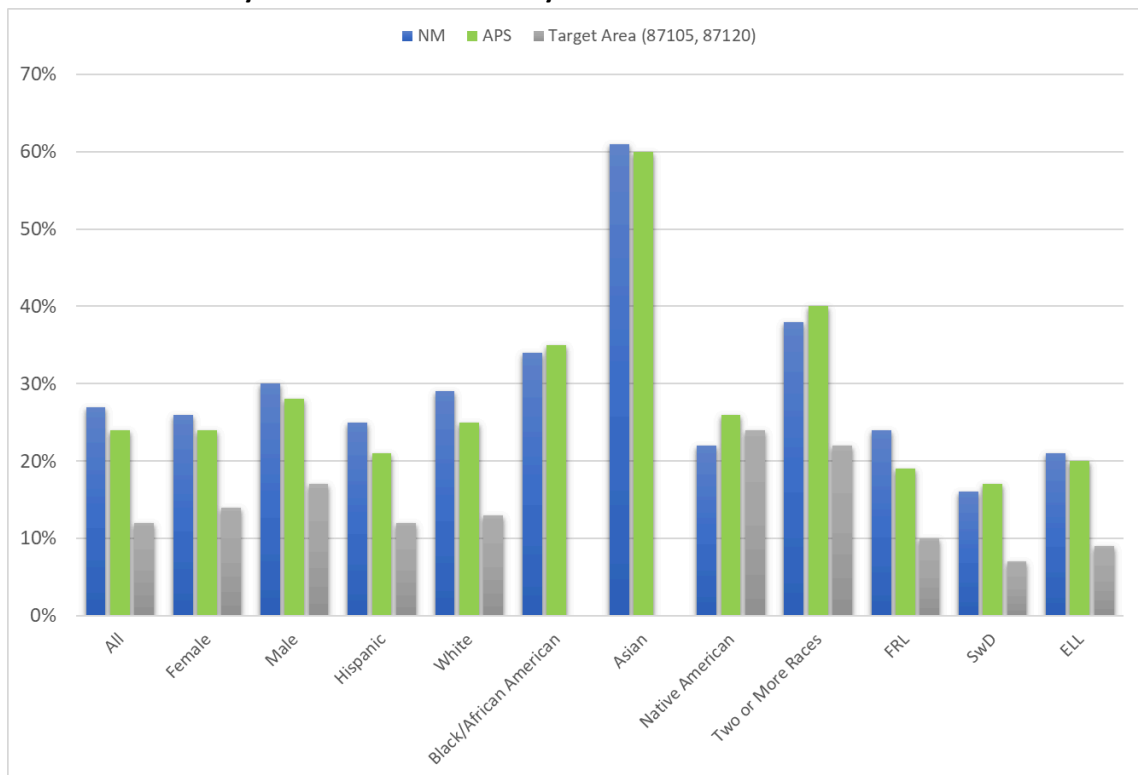
The persistent trend of lower proficiency rates among historically marginalized students is evident from elementary school onward and continues to be a significant concern across our target student population (please see **FIGURE 3** in **Section IA**). In particular, students on Albuquerque's Westside exhibit alarmingly low proficiency rates, underscoring the urgent need for early intervention.

Emphasis on Growth Modeling

Students of color (African American, Hispanic, American Indian, Hawaiian and Pacific Islander), students from low-income families or those who qualified for Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL), and English Language Learners (EL) students fall significantly below the standard when comparing educational outcomes such as assessment scores.[183] There is a persistent achievement gap in the United States, and this gap has been more detrimental for historically marginalized students.[184] Students of color, ELs and those in special education tend to have lower initial levels of academic achievement scores compared to their White peers, thus even if they grow at the same rate or faster, it does not guarantee the gap will close.[185] Besides race/ethnicity alone, students in higher income schools grow at a slower rate over time compared to lower income schools, but the initial level of achievement for students in the lower income schools is much lower, thus students less fortunate have more to grow over time.[186] Students for whom English is a second language in kindergarten are already behind their English peers on initial achievement scores.[187] A focus on time and growth is a critical factor in understanding achievement gaps overtime between student groups, especially on the Albuquerque Westside. Elementary school is a critical point in cognitive development that appears to be a first formal indicator of long-term academic success and gains throughout formal schooling. Longitudinal growth models provide a valuable framework for analyzing and exploring changes in academic disparities and growth at various stages of a student's educational journey. We will continuously collect achievement scores from students throughout their academic time with us. This data will inform a longitudinal growth model aimed at identifying aggregate trends and informing strategies for us to proactively and deliberately address and close historical achievement gaps. This data will be shared with the Governing Board, school leaders, teachers, families, and students to foster a collaborative community relentlessly aimed at identifying and addressing barriers to student success.

H.(3) Provide a **clear, comprehensive, and cohesive** student progress/ achievement communication plan

Provide information that demonstrates the plan is effective in reaching the targeted population and the specific community in which the school plans to locate.

At Equip Academy, students, parents, teachers, staff and the Governing Board will be included in the educational process, each from our specific roles and accompanying responsibilities. As a

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[183] Murphy, J. (2009). Closing achievement gaps: Lessons from the last 15 years. *Bridging gaps in education: Achievement,* 8-12.

[184] Dillon, S. (2009, April 29). *'No child' law is not closing a racial gap.* The New York Times. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.; Duncan, G.T., & Magnuson, K.A. (2005). Can family socioeconomic resources account for racial and ethnic test score gaps? *The Future of Children, 15*(1), 35-54.; Perie, M., Moran, R., & Lutkus, A.D. (2005). NAEP 2004 trends in academic progress three decades of student performance in Reading and Mathematics. *National Center for Education Statistics.* U.S. Department of Education: Institute of Education Sciences REPORT.

[185] D'Agostino, J.V., Borman, G.D., & Hedges, L.V., & Wong, K.K. (1998). Longitudinal achievement and chapter 1 coordination in High-Poverty schools: A multilevel analysis of prospects data. *Journal of Education for Students Place in Risk, 3*(4), 401-420.

[186] Alexander, K.L., Entwisle, D.R., & Olson, L.S. (2001). Schools, achievement, and inequality: A seasonal perspective. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 23*(2), 171-191.

[187] Kieffer, M.J. (2008). Catching up or falling behind? Initial English proficiency, concentrated poverty and the reading growth of language minority learners in the *U.S. Journal of Educational Psychology, 100* (4). 851-868.

results-driven institution, we value accountability, feedback, and data transparency and we have systematized those values into our communication accountability plan detailed below.

FIGURE 66 - Assessment Communication Accountability Plan

Group	Reporting Method
Students	We believe in transparency with students. There will be regular student conferencing during which teachers will give students a reading and math goal. The reading goal will be given by their small group instruction teacher. Based on reading assessments and in class observations, students will receive a just right goal. Students will be aware of their reading level with the aim of meeting the standards for the next level. Similarly with math, students will receive feedback and set a concrete goal to help them become a stronger mathematician on grade-level standards. All teachers will provide students with bite-sized attainable goals that can be reached within a week or two.
Parent(s)/ Guardian(s)	Our trifecta of success includes families, teachers, and students. This means that we will operate in full transparency with families, and specifically regarding student academic progress. Family conferences will take place 3 times per year for all families and 4 times for families whose students are struggling with promotion in doubt (PID), and all families will receive report cards 4 times per year. If progress is stagnant for students, families will be informed much sooner with a plan of action from Tier 2, including a follow-up meeting date that coincides with the student's goal date. The school will host parent/family conferences to ensure that teachers and families meet to discuss student academic progress and goals and how together we can best support steps to their learning success.
Governing Body	At monthly public meetings, the Governing Board and its Academic Committee will discuss data reports after all K-5 state assessments and at the conclusion of each major assessment data cycle. They will be made aware of progress updates that include new assessment data points on proficiency and student growth in math, ELA, reading, inquiry progress and/or other factors/ success indicators as per NM Vistas such as English learner and subgroup performance and growth, attendance, school climate survey data, and community engagement. Data will be disaggregated by grade, content area, and subgroup, and analyzed in light of our academic goals as specified in **Sections B** and **G.**
Authorizer and Community	All required and mandated assessment data, in addition to other measures such as attendance and climate, will be: (1) posted on our school website; (2) referenced in the school's Annual Report (soft and hard copy available); and (3) included in the NMDash Platform. In addition, as a public charter school, we will hold all Board meetings as open meetings – fully open to the public with notice provided on our website and in family newsletters.
Teachers	After all major internal assessments and state-required assessments, the Head of School will plan, facilitate, and execute the professional development for Equip Academy's Institute for Educator Excellence. Data will be presented in a clear way that shows how students are doing in the school, across the grade and in each class. Subgroup data will also be broken down in a clear way. Clarity and accuracy is crucial because teachers will use the data to plan for Tier II and Tier III interventions for students (small group, 1:1 support, whole group reteach, etc.).

Communication Plan for Data, Achievement, and Success

Student data will be purposefully collected and utilized throughout the year. Communicating this data to all necessary constituents is crucial for student growth. Data will be regularly communicated to students, teachers, families, other staff and our Governing Board. Our method of communication will vary based on need. Modes of communication will be phone call, email, text, flyers, newsletter, website, presentations, and other assessment portals and communication tools like Dojo. Our goal is transparency and accountability. We want to ensure all important stakeholders are aware of our outputs. The Head of School will oversee the follow through of this communication plan. All data with student information will be filed in a secure location by the operations team.

FIGURE 67 - Assessment Data Communication Plan

Assessment	Communication Plan
ACCESS for ELLs **ALTERNATE ACCESS for ELLs**	● Teachers, admin, SAT team, and operations ● Most recent ACCESS scores and support plan on file and sent home for families with notification with required signature ● Data analysis and action plan to the Governing Board
Assessment of Science Readiness (ASR)	● Teacher, admin and operations ● Included in report card and communicated by teachers ● Data analysis and action plan to the Governing Board
Indicators of Progress iStation Reading and Mathematics	● Teacher, admin and operations ● Included in report card and communicated by teachers ● Data analysis and action plan to the Governing Board
Measures of Student Success and Achievement (MSSA)	● Teacher, admin and operations ● Included in report card and communicated by teachers ● Data analysis and action plan to the Governing Board
Student Wellbeing and Competency Survey	● Teacher, admin and operations ● Analysis will be sent out via our newsletter and website ● Survey analysis and potential next steps to the Governing Board
Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM)	● SAT team, pertaining teachers ● Family meeting ● List of students who qualify for DLM, data and action plan to the Governing Board
Dyslexia Screening	● SAT team, pertaining teachers ● Family meeting ● List of students who qualify for DLM, data and action plan to the Governing Board
Gifted	● SAT team, pertaining teachers ● Family phone call or meeting ● List of students who qualify for DLM, data and action plan to the Governing Board
English Learner Screening/Identification	● SAT team, pertaining teachers ● Family phone call, meeting with scores and support plan on file and sent home for families with notification with required signature ● List of EL students, data and action plan to the Governing Board
Internal Assessments (IAs)	● Teacher, admin and operations ● Included in report card and communicated by teachers ● Data analysis and action plan to the Governing Board

> **Effectiveness for our Community**
>
> Our overall approach is informed by the mission for our community, the chronic underachievement of many identified subgroups, and our state's clear plan for closing achievement gaps for all students. It is informed by national research[188], much of which is embedded within New Mexico's larger educational plan across the state, as well as the successful work of our proposed Head of School as she worked and led in high-achieving, high-need communities.

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[188] https://tntp.org/publication/the-opportunity-myth/.

II. Organizational Framework

A. Governing Body Creation/Capacity

A charter application shall include a description of the governing body and operation of the charter school, including: (1) how the governing body will be selected; (2) qualification and terms of members, how vacancies on the governing body will be filled and procedures for changing governing body membership; and (3) the nature and extent of parental, professional educator and community involvement in the governance and operation of the school (NMSA 22-8B-8(I)).

> ### A.(1) Summarize and incorporate **all** key components of your governance structure
>
> ### Key Components of Governance Structure
>
> **Membership Structure**
> - 5-11 members
> - Odd number for voting purposes
> - Chair, Vice-chair, Treasurer, Secretary
> - Committees: Governance, Academic, Finance, Audit, Culture and Equity Council
> - Governed by a series of by-laws that informs how the Board will conduct itself
> - Meet monthly under open meeting law code requirements
>
> **Membership Qualifications**
> - Mission-alignment
> - Empowering educational choice for local families
> - Highest ethical standing in the community
> - Professional skill set, including financial expertise, legal expertise, community leadership, non-profit leadership
> - Commitment to sound governance, academic and fiscal accountability, and regulatory oversight
>
> ### Selecting New Governing Members
>
> - Governance Committee leads Board member recruitment and candidate recommendations
> - Governance Committee evaluates qualifications of Board candidates and presents final nominees to the full Board for consideration
> - Vote for membership taken at public Board meeting
> - Approval of two-thirds of sitting Board members needed to seat new Member
> - Upon approval, new Board Member completes, signs, and submits to the Board the Conflict of Interest Policy and Code of Conduct
>
> ### Governing Board's Roles and Responsibilities
>
> The Governing Board is responsible for the academic, fiscal, and regulatory health of the charter school. The Governing Board is responsible for all governance decisions, including but not limited to: approving fiscal and school policies; overseeing the academic program, facilities, and property, fiscal, and legal soundness; strategic planning; and overseeing, supporting, and evaluating the Head of School's performance to ensure the health, longevity, and sustainability of the school. The Governing Board will hire, set compensation for, and evaluate the performance of the Head of School, to whom it will delegate all management decisions and responsibilities and who will hire and oversee all school staff. The Head of School will report to the Board.

Upon authorization from the Public Education Commission, the Founding Board will transition to the Equip Academy of New Mexico Governing Board and will maintain compliance with the New Mexico Open Meetings Act (NMSA 10-15-1). At this time, the Equip Academy of New Mexico Governing Board will also formally elect officers and adopt the Bylaws, Conflict of Interest policy and Board Job Description found in **Appendix A**.

Board Roles and Responsibilities

- **Mission and Vision Alignment.** The Governing Board will ensure that all planning and decision-making related to the school are in alignment with the mission and vision promised to the families, students, and community of Equip Academy. The Governing Board will ensure that the school's values and philosophy are upheld and maintained in all matters.

- **Academic Accountability.** The Governing Body will regularly review student achievement to hold the school and its leadership accountable for fulfillment of the school's mission. The Governing Board will monitor all student performance data on a monthly, quarterly, and annual basis, including all subgroup data, to ensure that Equip Academy is on track for meeting mission-specific proficiency goals.

- **Legal Compliance.** The Governing Body is responsible for ensuring that all Equip Academy policies are in compliance with federal, state, and local laws and regulations. The Governing Board will seek legal counsel for the greater good of the school and will regularly review existing and proposed school policies in light of any legislative or regulatory changes.

- **Fiscal Oversight.** The Governing Board will ensure the school's financial stability through close supervision of and responsibility for all major financial decisions. The Board will review and approve an annual budget each year and will conduct monthly budget reviews to provide the oversight necessary for the short- and long-term fiscal health of Equip Academy.

- **Evaluation of Head of School.** The Governing Board will maintain the Head of School's accountability in relation to student outcomes by an annual rigorous, performance-based evaluation process. The Head of School's performance will be evaluated through a thorough end-of-year review that measures progress toward goals. At the time of this evaluation, the Governing Board will provide feedback and help the Head of School set actionable, attainable and rigorous professional goals that support the success of the students, staff, and school.

- **Strategic Planning.** The Governing Board will be responsible for developing a long-term strategic plan for Equip Academy to prepare it for sustainability, success, and longevity. This will include establishing goals for enrollment growth, facilities, community partnerships, finances, and any other goals it endeavors to reach over the course of more than a single year.

- **Public Transparency.** The Governing Board will maintain transparency and open communication with all community and public constituencies. The Governing Board will address concerns as needed, publish academic results during state-regulated assessment cycles, and create opportunities for the community to make their voice heard.

Equip Academy of New Mexico Membership Structure

Upon charter approval, the Governing Board's first orders of business will include the adoption of Bylaws, selection of officers, and assignment of Board Members to committees where their skills will be most relevant and needed.

The Governing Board will be composed of community members who hold values that align with the mission and vision of Equip Academy, represent a variety of skill sets and areas of expertise, offer diverse perspectives, and are individually professionally qualified to contribute to the educational, financial, and organizational success of the school. The Governing Board will consist of no fewer than

five (5) and no more than eleven (11) members, maintaining an odd number of members for voting purposes where possible. Each year at the Board's August Annual Meeting, the Governing Board will determine the number of Board members for the upcoming year; if Board membership falls below this number - or if a vacancy is anticipated - the Governance Committee will initiate recruitment efforts to secure new Board members.

- **Chair.** The Chair of the Board is responsible for leading the rest of the Board members in fulfilling goals for the school as set by the Governing Board. The Chair also presides over all meetings, in accordance with the Open Meetings Act (NMSA 10-15-1). The Chair will work closely with the Head of School, acting as a liaison with the rest of the Governing Board members. The Chair is responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of the other members in their roles in Board Committees and on the Board. The Chair is also empowered to appoint chairs for committees and oversees the success of these committees.

- **Vice-Chair.** In the event that the Chair is unable to fulfill their duties, the Vice-Chair is ready and available to assume the role of Chair. The Vice-Chair also supports the work of the Chair, as needed, maintaining regular communication with the Chair to ensure the Vice-Chair is prepared to act as Chair at any time; if the seat of the Chair becomes vacant, the Vice-Chair will take that seat and lead the Governing Board accordingly.

- **Treasurer.** The Treasurer spearheads the Board's work to secure the short- and long-term financial health of the school. The Treasurer chairs the Finance Committee of the Board, maintaining transparency and accuracy through monthly reports to the Board on the school's budget. The Treasurer has a bird's eye view of the budget, revenues, and expenditures and works closely with the Head of School with budget creation and maintenance.

- **Secretary.** The Secretary is responsible for the creation and maintenance of all records relating to the Governing Board's activities. This includes: posting meeting agendas; preparing Board meeting minutes; maintaining records of current and emeritus Board membership, policies, procedures, and Bylaws; and ensuring the Board adheres to all Open Meetings Act Requirements (NMSA 10-15-1). Given the Secretary's access to private and confidential information pertaining to Board members and the Head of School, the Secretary will also ensure such records remain confidential.

Governing Board Committee Structure

The Equip Academy Board Committee structure comprises five committees to oversee the school, including all functions required by law, as well as components that support the school's unique mission and vision. Membership of each committee will be determined at the Governing Board's August Annual Meeting.

- **The Governance Committee** is composed of three Governing Board members selected by the Governing Board Chair, who will also serve as the Chair of this committee. This committee will oversee the Governing Board to conduct annual evaluation of its members, verify members have completed state-mandated training, and take the lead on the recruitment and initial vetting of prospective Board members. To ensure continuity and stability for the Board and school, there are no term limits for seated positions.

- **The Academic Committee** will monitor and examine all assessments of, as well as policies and procedures around, school academic performance and progress on a monthly basis. Given Equip Academy's emphasis on academic achievement and success, this committee will be responsible for maintaining high standards for students' academic growth over time, both as a whole school community as well as across student subgroups. The committee will report on a quarterly basis, or more frequently as needed, to the Governing Board on progress made

toward mission-specific goals as well as internal short- and long-term academic goals for all students and student groups, with special attention to closing the achievement gap for historically underperforming students such as Native American, Hispanic, and Black students.

- **The Finance Committee** consists of at least two Board members with finance experience or expertise who oversee school cash flow and budget documentation and records. This committee is led by the Treasurer, who will provide financial updates at each monthly Board meeting to ensure the Governing Board understands the school's financial standing. This committee, in conjunction with school leadership, will also lead the effort to secure facilities for Equip Academy and ensure that the facility adheres to the PSFA requirements through responsible facility maintenance, including relevant renovations. As a required standing committee, the Finance Committee will fulfill the duties in NMSA 22-8-12.3.

- **The Audit Committee** is responsible for preparing the school for its financial audit each year, starting with presenting multiple external auditors or auditing service for the Governing Board to consider and ultimately select. Once an auditor is selected, this committee will then be responsible for communicating with the auditor to support their work, tracking findings, and sharing the audit report with the broader Governing Board (see Fund: 2300, Function: 53411 for designated Audit funds). This committee will also conduct an internal audit of the Governing Board to assess its performance. The Audit Committee will fulfill the duties pertaining to audit committees, per NMSA 22-8-12.3. This committee will consist of two members, neither of whom are a part of the Finance Committee.

- **The Culture and Equity Council** is responsible for evaluating school policies and practices related to equity across all domains, including students, staff, curriculum, instruction, and community partnerships. The committee will be guided by tools such as the Yazzie/Martinez Readiness Assessment to ensure at-risk students are receiving all of the supports available to them. It will monitor the cultural responsiveness of the school and will build and maintain partnerships that enable all students to experience the richness and culture of the greater community. While most of the Council's membership will be other school community members, a Governing Board member with key diversity, equity, and inclusion experience will also have a seat.

Governing Board Seat Procedures

- **Adding Members and Resignations.** While the responsibility of Board member recruitment falls to the Governance Committee, all sitting Board members may seek out potential candidates according to the needs of the Board and submit them for consideration to the rest of the Governing Board, which will vote on the candidate(s); a 2/3 vote of all current sitting members is needed for approval of a new member. Any Board member at any time may resign from their position simply by submitting a written resignation to the Chair of the Governing Board. A 30-day notice for resignation is preferred but not required.

A. (2) Enumerate the qualifications desired for governing body members.

Desired Qualifications for Governing Board Members

The Equip Academy Founding Team has thoughtfully recruited Founding Board whose members: (1) possess a diversity of critical skills, professional experiences, and personal qualities needed for strong governance; (2) hold shared fundamental beliefs about public education for New Mexico's students; and (3) possess personal commitment to and values that align with Equip Academy's mission.

1. Critical Skills and Professional Experience

The Founding Team sought out individuals with experience and skills in the areas of finance, education, governance, human resources recruitment and management, strategic planning, community engagement, legal compliance and regulatory oversight, and fundraising. To ensure adequate experience in these critical areas in the event a Board member must vacate their seat, we took care to ensure that there is overlap in our Board members' areas of expertise.

We identified these areas as most important for the operational health of the school as well as its philosophical direction. Experience in finance is necessary as the Board builds the budget each year and closely tracks expenses and monitors compliance. Experience in education - including awareness of state-level education policy changes and fluency in mission-specific elements of the school's model, like inquiry-based instruction - will hold the Board true to our goal of dramatically growing academic achievement and measuring outcomes using data. Board members with governance experience will give the Board the leadership experience needed to develop and follow meaningful procedures and best practices in governance. Those with HR and management skills will equip the Board to hire, evaluate, and ensure accountability in the Head of School's role and to inform all personnel policies as considered and Board-approved. Strategic planning skills are vital as we put our school on track for long-term success through sound decision-making over the years in areas including facilities planning, sustainable enrollment growth, and the ultimate vision of a full K-5 school. Community engagement along with diversity, equity, and inclusion skills are vital as the Board works to serve all of Equip Academy of New Mexico's students and their families effectively, no matter their income level, preferred language, identity, or area of residence. Experience in ensuring organizational legal and regulatory oversight is critical as we take responsibility for the oversight of a public charter school. Finally, experience in community leadership, engagement, and fundraising will be indispensable as the Board works to build relationships in our Westside community - and beyond - to ensure the school has the resources and support it needs to adequately serve its families. These skill sets will not only serve Board members as they apply their specific expertise in service of the school, but will also equip them with the broader professionalism needed to guide the board with wisdom and integrity.

A diversity of perspectives, cultivated through different backgrounds, ages, cultural identities, and community ties - like longstanding residence or engagement in the Westside community - was also a priority in considering the kind of governing Board membership that can steer the school to success.

2. Fundamental Beliefs

We deliberately recruited founding Board members who hold the following beliefs about education and the students of New Mexico:

- Students are innately curious and want to succeed.
- Demography is not destiny. Our state's low student outcomes are not due to our students' race, ethnicity, language ability, income level, or zip code; limited access to high-quality education opportunities is the problem, and increasing the availability of and access to these opportunities is the answer.
- New Mexico students are full of limitless potential. With the help of a quality education, every student can dream audaciously and live a life of purpose.

3. Mission Alignment

Critical for any Board member is a strong commitment to Equip Academy's specific mission and model. We recruited Founding Board members who believe that the school's emphasis on quality instruction in literacy, college preparation, and an environment where all students can find support and success is what the students of Albuquerque's Westside need. Through preliminary one-on-one

interviews, we evaluated prospective Board candidates' beliefs about education and their motivations for joining the Board; we further affirmed these commonalities in our subsequent Board meetings and regular outings, both to refine our vision for the school and to strengthen the bonds between our Board members as a cohesive and committed team.

In addition to these qualifications, Founding Board and Governing Board members must be prepared and willing to make significant contributions of their time and application of their skills. This includes, but is not limited to: satisfying minimum state requirements for Governing Body training (currently 10 hours for new Board members and 8 for continuing Board members); onboarding at the start of their first term to ensure familiarity with Equip Academy of New Mexico's academic, financial, legal, and strategic circumstances; service on one or more Board Committees; and regular monthly Governing Board meetings and committee meetings throughout the year, which may last for several hours each time. Additional meetings or projects may be necessary from time to time as well. While effort will be made to schedule these onboarding and training sessions efficiently - such as through a day-long Annual Meeting retreat before the start of the school year - and to use the Governing Board's time wisely at committee and full Board meetings, Board membership requires a significant time commitment. Current Founding Board members understand and agree with this demand on their schedules; prospective Board members will also be made aware of these expectations and must commit to their full participation prior to being approved for joining the Board.

FIGURE 68 outlines our proposed Founding Board members with their proposed Board titles, Committee focus, and applicable skills; the following paragraphs provide brief bios for each member that outline the wealth of experience and enthusiasm they bring. Ms. Herrera is our proposed Founding Head of School; all other members intend to serve on the Governing Body.

FIGURE 68 – Founding Board Members

Name	Board Title Committee Focus	Skills
Vaadra Chavez	- Culture and Equity Council Member - Audit Committee Lead - Governance Committee Member	Human Resources Governance Strategic Planning Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion
Dr. Renee Delgado-Riley	**Proposed Board Chair** - Audit Committee Member - Governance Committee Member	Governance Strategic Planning Fundraising Assessment and Data Analysis
Sara Fitzgerald	**Proposed Vice Chair** - Governance Committee - Audit Committee Member	Education Governance Community Engagement Legal Compliance and Regulatory Oversight
M. Alejandra Grijalva-Becerra	**Proposed Secretary** - Academic Committee Lead - Finance Committee Member	Finance Education Non-Profit Management Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion
Janet Leung	**Proposed Treasurer** - Finance Committee Lead - Academic Committee	Finance Governance Community Engagement

Proposed Equip Academy Governing Board Bios

Vaadra Chavez is Chief Human Resource Officer at Securin and a Human Resource expert. She has 20 years of hands-on experience in a variety of HR functions including Pipeline Development and Recruiting, Performance Management, Executive Team Coaching, Diversity & Inclusion, Personnel Development, Communications, and Benefits. When she is not leading a successful team for start-up tech companies, she is devoting time and energy to her New Mexico community. Ms. Chavez holds a BBA in Accounting from the University of New Mexico.

Dr. Renee Delgado-Riley, PhD is Director of Assessment and Research at the University of Oregon. She was born and raised in Albuquerque and grew up on the Westside. She is passionate about leading and implementing culturally responsive assessment and research to address historic achievement gaps for traditionally marginalized students within university systems with the goal of creating systems for actionable change and equitable outcomes. She is an active leader who helps colleagues incorporate equity into their everyday practice. Dr. Delgado-Riley holds a PhD, MA, and BA in Educational Psychology from the University of New Mexico.

Sara Fitzgerald is SVP, Communications and Education Policy at the Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce, where she manages external communications, evaluates local and state policy measures, and assists in coordinating advocacy efforts for realizing the Chamber's policy priorities, especially in the area of education reform. Previously, she was Director of External Affairs at Mission Achievement and Success Charter Schools. There, she cultivated relationships with local leaders and advocated for legislative changes to pave the way for more growth in the charter school sector. Before her time at MAS, she was an education policy advisor to Governor Susana Martinez and later to members of the New Mexico House Education Committee, evaluating policy measures and working closely with education leaders and other stakeholders to improve education outcomes for students – especially low-income and students of color – in New Mexico's public schools. She has experience with legal compliance and regulatory oversight experience in several roles. Ms Fitzgerald holds a bachelor's degree in political science and French from the University of Virginia.

M. Alejandra Grijalva-Becerra is Business Intelligence Analyst at Centro Sávila. Born and raised on the Westside of Albuquerque, she is passionate about impacting policy decisions to ensure that the community's voice is heard. She has worked for the New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee as a Fiscal Analyst and now serves as a Business Intelligence Analyst for the non-profit Centro Sávila. Ms. Grijalva-Becerra holds an MA in Public Policy and BA in Finance and International Management from the University of New Mexico.

Janet Leung is the Director of Business Development at UNM Hospitals. Originally from Mississippi, Ms. Leung believes that a great education and early reading can drastically change a child's life. She has worked in various finance roles while volunteering on weeknights and weekends to mentor and tutor children. Ms. Leung holds a BBA in Financial Consulting and Economics from Southern Methodist University.

Each of these Founding Board members intends to contribute the necessary professional skills and experience for guiding the school in alignment with its charter to serve students' academic and social needs. A process for evaluating the Board's needs in terms of skills and selecting new Board members who bring these skills will be put in place immediately upon charter authorization. Each year thereafter, the Governing Board will systematically evaluate the needs of the Board and prioritize them; all members will be part of the recruitment of new members by leveraging their network to submit recommendations to the Governance Committee. A thorough interview process will then evaluate Board member candidates for fit before they may be voted onto the Governing Board. This process is described in more detail in **Section A3.**

A.(3) Provide a **clear and appropriate process or plan** for selecting new Governing Body members.

Overview

Leadership in governance and management is critical in preparing Equip Academy for day-one readiness as well as long-term student and school success. As such, the Founding Team has taken care in selecting Founding Board members who are both qualified to oversee and govern the school and are fully committed to our mission, vision, and target community. Upon charter authorization, all Founding Board members will remain members of the Governing Board for continuity and stability. The only exception to this transition will be Ms. Herrera, whom the Founding Board intends to select as the school's inaugural Head of School. Going forward, Equip Academy has developed a plan to provide for the recruitment, selection, and evaluation of additional Board members to ensure that the school is always guided by good governance. The Governing Board will be responsible for the thoughtful recruitment, recommendation, and evaluation of new Board Members, who are expected to contribute valuable skills to the Board and to hold themselves and each other to the highest moral and ethical standards as stewards of public resources and leaders of a public school community.

Recruitment of individuals whose beliefs are aligned to the mission of Equip Academy and whose skills would be a meaningful asset to the school community will be an ongoing and deliberate process, where current Board members will leverage their ties to the community and their standing in their field to continually recruit potential candidates. While any vacancies on the Board will be filled with a new Board member with the appropriate skills within 45 days of becoming vacant, it is likely that vacancies will be addressed more quickly, ensuring smooth-running governance even in the face of unexpected Board member departures.

The Board will use the following process to recruit, evaluate, and select new Board members.

Self-Review

The Governance Committee will begin by assessing the skills of the current Governing Board membership to identify areas where a new Board member could strengthen it. A list of these needs will be maintained by the Governance Committee, as will information about current Board members, including gender, age, race, ethnicity, profession, skill sets, and background to maintain an intentionally diverse Board membership, as well as each member's remaining term to anticipate future recruitment needs. This list will be produced in collaboration with the Head of School to create a balanced assessment of the Board's strengths and weaknesses. This list will also rank prioritized needs to ensure more urgent needs are addressed in a timely manner. The Governance Committee will first create this list following charter authorization; the Committee will revise it following any changes to the Board's membership, including resignations and onboardings, and will then share the updated list with the full Governing Board at the next regular Board meeting.

Working Candidate List

Guided by the assessment and list of the Board's needs, the Governance Committee will be responsible for identifying community members who may be good fits for the Governing Board in terms of skill set, reputation, values, and overall mission alignment. The Governance Committee will seek out potential Board candidates using the full spectrum of tools available to them. First, with their diverse personal and professional connections across the community, Governing Board members will be a key part of this recruitment process: they may make referrals to the Governance Committee of potential candidates and a brief explanation of why the community member might be suitable. Second, the Governance Committee will collaborate with school leadership to use school communications, including the Equip Academy newsletter, website, and social media accounts, to

make the public aware that the Board is always recruiting and open to considering potential new candidates. Third, the Governance Committee will utilize other available online platforms to publicize the Board's need for candidates, such as United Way's Center for Nonprofit Excellence, the New Mexico Coalition for Charter Schools page, Groundworks New Mexico's Volunteer Connection page, the Excellent Schools New Mexico's e-newsletter, and other similar resources. Utilization of these far-reaching communications tools will be especially important in times of more active recruitment, as when a Board position may unexpectedly become available. However, employing each of these means of recruitment will enable Equip Academy to build a strong "bench" of Governing Board candidates to ensure Board seats can be filled in a timely and smooth fashion. And, as with the list of Board needs, this working list should also note which candidates possess the most urgently needed skills, qualities, or relationships.

Potential Candidate(s) - Initial Contact

Once a working list of potential candidates has been developed, the Governance Committee will contact candidates to gauge their interest in and availability for joining the Equip Academy Governing Board and request their resume. If the candidate expresses interest, a preliminary meeting with the Governance Committee and Head of School will be arranged to begin to assess alignment with the school's mission and fit with the Governing Board's current needs as outlined in the Governance Committee's list. During this meeting, the Equip Academy team will pose questions to the candidate about their experience, skills, motivations for joining the Board, and other potential competing demands on the candidate's schedule. They will share information about what Board membership entails, including requirements and expectations of individual Board members as well as Board responsibilities and functions; they will also answer any questions the candidate may have about the school or Governing Board. If both the Equip Academy of New Mexico team and the candidate agree to continue the selection process, the candidate will next complete a background check, followed by a one-on-one meeting with at least one other Board member to assess culture fit - ideally a member of the committee on which the candidate would sit, if selected. In the days following these meetings, the Governance Committee or school Administrators may contact the candidate's references for any further information about their background or character.

Advancing Candidate(s) - Board Meeting Attendance

If the Governing Board members who met with the candidate agree that the individual should progress to the next stage of the selection process, the candidate will be invited to attend the next regular Governing Board meeting for a panel interview with its full membership and to observe the Board's work. This will be included as an agenda item posted with the public notice of the Board meeting with a note that members of the school community may participate in the interview. At this meeting, the Governing Board will ask the candidate questions about their skills and experience; the Board will also test the candidate's knowledge of the school's mission and their personal belief in it, and raise any potential issues of conflicts of interest with the candidate to identify possible challenges and how to address them. When the Governing Board has concluded its interview, it will also invite any members of the school community to pose questions of their own to the candidate. During and after this interview, each Governing Board member will complete their own evaluation of the candidate using a standard rubric.

Candidate Evaluation

Each Governing Board member will evaluate the candidate on a standard rubric developed by the Founding Board to ensure consistent and fair evaluation of the candidate's strengths and weaknesses. Board members will discuss their scoring of the candidate, and any reservations they may have or potential issues that could arise if the candidate was selected, including potential conflicts of interest.

Selection of New Board Member

Using these rubrics, the Governing Board will deliberate on the candidate's fitness to join the Board before taking a public vote on whether the candidate should join the Board; a two-thirds vote will formalize the candidate's selection. Following this Board meeting, the selected candidate will be notified verbally and in writing of the Equip Academy of New Mexico Governing Board's decision to make a formal offer of membership. The candidate then will sign a Board Member Agreement and Conflict of Interest form before officially joining the Governing Board. Candidates who are not selected will also be notified of this decision verbally and in writing, and will be tracked for consideration as candidates for future Board seats. The Governance Committee will maintain contact with these candidates and may work with the Head of School to provide opportunities for these candidates to contribute to Equip Academy of New Mexico in other ways. During or following the new Board member's onboarding, the Governance Committee will meet to update the assessment of the Governing Board's strengths and weaknesses in light of the new member's selection, and to identify new priorities in the recruitment of future members.

Board Service Timelines

While Governing Board members should be committed to completing their full three-year term of service, unexpected or sudden departures from the Governing Board may occur. In this event, the Governance Committee, Head of School, and Governing Board members will work closely to replace outgoing Board members as expeditiously as possible, ideally within 45 days of their departure.

Six Step Process of selecting new board members

1. Review Existing Board
2. List of Potentials
3. Make Initial Contact
4. Attending a Board meeting
5. Evaluate
6. Selection of New Board Member

B. Governing Body Training and Evaluation

B.(1) Provide an **ongoing**, **clear, comprehensive, and cohesive plan** for annual Governing Body training.

Overview

The Founding Team of Equip Academy of New Mexico (Equip Academy) values competent, knowledgeable leadership and continuous improvement; as such, the Governing Board is committed to remaining in compliance with state requirements for governance training, both for new Board members and for continuing ones. The Governing Board will be guided by governing body training requirements contained in both New Mexico statutes (NMSA 22-8B5.1) and the Public Education Department rules (NMAC 6.80.5.8), and as they may change from year to year.

Onboarding and New Board Member Training

New Governing Body members are required by PED rule (NMAC 6.80.5.8) to complete 10 hours of training within the first fiscal year of service on the Board. This includes our Founding Board which, upon charter authorization, will transition to the Equip Academy of New Mexico Governing Board; members will immediately begin taking steps to complete this training on time.

These minimums for new Board members include seven hours of training which each Governing Board member must complete being allowed to vote in Governing Board meetings. Per Department rules, these hours of training will include:

- two hours of training on public official/charter school governing body ethics and responsibilities;
- two hours of training on charter school fiscal requirements;
- one hour of training on understanding and evaluating academic data;
- one hour of training on open government, legal, and organizational performance requirements; and
- one hour of training on equity and culturally and linguistically responsive practices.

All mandatory external training will be administered or approved by the Public Education Department. New members will receive this training and additional internal training as a critical part of their Board onboarding process.

Additional Internal Training

Per NMAC 6.80.5.8, in addition to the seven hours of training with the Public Education Department, new Governing Board members will receive three hours of training specific to our school and its model. training will cover the following, as delineated in the Board Handbook, and contingent upon PED approval:

- The Equip Academy of New Mexico charter, with particular emphasis on the school's unique educational model and instructional methods
- The Governing Board Handbook, including Equip Academy Bylaws and job description, the Governing Board Code of Ethics, and the Governing Board Conflict of Interest Policy
- An overview of New Mexico's charter school statutes and the Open Meetings Act
- Governance structure and overview of standing committees
- Equip Academy of New Mexico's strategic plan
- The school's previous year's student achievement data and academic goals for the current school year
- The current fiscal year budget and the previous year's audit and financial statements
- Policies and efforts around diversity, equity, and inclusion

New Board members will be expected to have already reviewed the Governing Board Handbook at the time of this training to ensure they are thoroughly familiar with it upon completion of the training.

With PED approval, the three hours of additional training required by PED rule may be provided internally at the Governing Board's Annual Meeting retreat ahead of each school year. In the event that a new Governing Board member joins after the Annual Meeting retreat has taken place, the Board member may substitute these three hours of Equip Academy-specific internal training with additional PED-facilitated training for the purpose of satisfying state Governing Body training requirements. However, such Board members will also be mentored by the Governance Committee and their fellow Board members to ensure they gain the necessary working knowledge of the school's educational philosophy, model, and strategic plan.

Continuing Board Member Training

Per NMSA 6.80.5.9, all continuing Equip Academy of New Mexico Governing Board members will complete at least eight hours each fiscal year of PED-facilitated training in the following areas:

- one hour of training on public official/charter school governing body ethics and responsibilities;
- three hours of training on charter school fiscal requirements;

- two hours of training on understanding and evaluating academic data;
- one hour of training on open government, legal, organizational performance requirements;
- one hour of training on equity and culturally and linguistically responsive practices.

All Board members may also receive PED-approved training specific to any areas of interest or concern, as identified in the previous year's annual evaluation of the Governing Board.

Annual Meeting Retreat

In addition to state-mandated external training administered by the PED, all returning Board members will participate in the Equip Academy of New Mexico Annual Meeting retreat. This retreat will cover:

- Review of the school's unique educational model and instructional methods
- Equip Academy of New Mexico's strategic plan
- School's previous year's achievement data and academic goals for the current school year
- The current fiscal year budget and the previous year's audit and financial statements
- Policies and efforts around diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Review of current Board training efficacy and any additional needs

Training Team Roles

The Equip Academy Governance Committee is responsible for leading annual training, with the Governing Board Chair responsible for overseeing training facilitation and delegating specific training components to relevant Board members or standing committees. The Treasurer will facilitate the financial components of the Board's training. The school Administrators   will be responsible for the preparation of any training materials the Governing Board may require.

Monitoring and Reporting

The Governing Board Secretary will be responsible for reviewing any changes in Governing Body training requirements ahead of the Annual Meeting to ensure the Governing Board's training requirements are in compliance. The Secretary will monitor board members' attendance and completion of the required hours of training and report this information to the PED by July 1 each year, in accordance with NMAC 6.80.5.10.

Budget

All Board training costs are covered by Equip Academy budget details; we have allocated $2,000 for Governing Board training, training materials, and mileage for Board members when training sessions occur in Santa Fe (see Function: 2300, Object: 55811). The Governance Committee will explore training resources offered by the New Mexico Coalition of Charter Schools, the New Mexico School Board Association, and other PED-approved or -recommended training courses or materials, as many of these resources are high-quality and available at a low or no cost.

B. (2) Provide a **clear, comprehensive, and cohesive plan** for an annual self-evaluation of the Governing Body.

Governing Body Self-Evaluation

As part of its commitment to continuous improvement in serving our school community, meeting the terms of the charter, and reaching our accountability goals, the Governing Board will regularly evaluate its effectiveness, both individually as Board members and collectively as a Governing Board.

Each regular Board meeting will conclude with a brief meeting survey for the Governing Board to reflect on and track their progress as a Board. The survey will be completed electronically using a

Google Form for ease and anonymity; survey data will be reviewed by the Secretary and Board Chair and tracked for trends. If a concern trends across two consecutive meetings, the topic will be brought up as a discussion item on the agenda for the immediately following board meeting.

The survey will include the following questions:

- On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "not at all" and 5 being "exceptionally," how effective was today's Governing Board meeting?
- In which area(s) was our Board most effective, and what made it effective?
- In which area(s) was our Board least effective, and what made it ineffective?
- To what extent are action items, responsible parties, and next steps clear?
- Using the same scale as before, to what extent did you as a Board member feel respected and supported at today's Governing Board meeting?
- Using the same scale, to what extent was Equip Academy mission and vision central to today's Governing Board meeting?
- Do you have any other comments or concerns?

Board members will evaluate themselves as a Board twice each year, both annually at the close of each school year and at a mid-year point. This is to assess the Governing Board's effectiveness over time and progress toward improvement in any self-identified areas of weakness. This evaluation will be conducted using a standard rubric with questions in the following domains:

- Fulfillment of Equip Academy of New Mexico's mission
- Progress toward academic goals
- Financial oversight and compliance
- Legal compliance and oversight
- Leadership
- Community engagement and accountability

A sample self-evaluation rubric is below. The rubric the Governing Board will use annually will be finalized following charter authorization.

FIGURE 69 - Sample Governing Board Self-Evaluation Rubric

Domain 1: Fulfillment of Equip Academy's Mission and Vision	Score (1-5, 1 = not at all; 2 = minimally; 3 = partially; 4 = sufficiently; and 5= exceptionally)	Notes
The Governing Board has a deep understanding of, and commitment to, Equip Academy's mission and vision.		
Equip Academy's mission and vision have been brought up in every Board meeting through discussion of a policy or action in service of it.		
All Governing Board decisions over the last year have served Equip Academy's mission and vision.		
What is an area of improvement for this domain?		

Domain 2: Academic Achievement	Score (1-5, 1 = not at all; 2 = minimally; 3 = partially; 4 = sufficiently; and 5= exceptionally)	Notes
Governing Board members understand this year's Equip Academy academic goals.		
Governing Board members understand how academic performance data is measured and monitored.		
Academic performance data was shared with the Governing Board at each board meeting.		
Governing Board used academic performance data to inform its decision-making in the last year.		
What is an area of improvement for this domain?		

Domain 3: Financial Oversight	Score (1-5, 1 = not at all; 2 = minimally; 3 = partially; 4 = sufficiently; and 5= exceptionally)	Notes
Governing Board members have been trained in their fiscal responsibilities to the school and the school's financial aspects.		
Equip Academy financials were reviewed as an agenda item at each board meeting.		
Governing Board approved a budget this year that serves Equip Academy's mission and vision		
What is an area of improvement for this domain?		

Domain 4: Legal Oversight	Score (1-5, 1 = not at all; 2 = minimally; 3 = partially; 4 = sufficiently; and 5= exceptionally)	Notes
Governing Board members have an adequate working knowledge of the federal and state statutes, PED rules and guidelines, PEC requirements, and charter terms to which they are accountable.		
Governing Board members received training this year on the code of ethics and the conflict of interest policy. They understand Governing Board ethics and responsibilities.		

The Governing Board reviewed the Board's Bylaws this year.		
What is an area of improvement for this domain?		

Domain 5: Organizational Structure	Score (1-5, 1 = not at all; 2 = minimally; 3 = partially; 4 = sufficiently; and 5= exceptionally)	Notes
Governing Board members received training on Governing Body responsibilities and the Equip Academy mission and vision.		
Governing Board understands its role in the oversight of Equip Academy, and how its role is separate from that of the Head of School.		
Governing Board members actively participated in the Board's decision-making processes over the last year.		
What is an area of improvement for this domain?		

Domain 6: Community Engagement	Score (1-5, 1 = not at all; 2 = minimally; 3 = partially; 4 = sufficiently; and 5= exceptionally)	Notes
Governing Board members actively participated in school community events in the last year.		
Governing Board members represented Equip Academy at events in the broader local community in the last year.		
What is an area of improvement for this domain?		

Staff Evaluation

To ensure accountability and responsiveness to Equip Academy's instructional and operations team, the Governing Board will also submit to an annual staff evaluation of its performance. Staff will not be required to complete this evaluation, but they will be encouraged to submit their input. The evaluation will be conducted electronically via a Google Forms survey, both to make completion straightforward, convenient, and anonymous for staff and to make evaluation data easily accessible for Governing Board analysis. The evaluation will assess Board performance across the same domains as the Governing Board's self-evaluation. Staff will have one week to complete the survey, which should take no more than five (5) minutes to complete. The Head of School will share the link to the survey via email with a brief message about the evaluation's importance for healthy governance and strong leadership of Equip Academy; the Head of School or another member of the school Administrators   will send at least one reminder to staff about the survey before its close to encourage

its completion and submission. The survey will take place in mid-April to ensure Governing Board members have time for data analysis and review ahead of their end-of-year board meeting and self-evaluation.

A sample evaluation rubric is below. The rubric staff will use annually to evaluate the Governing Board will be finalized following charter authorization.

FIGURE 70 - Sample Board Evaluation Rubric Completed by School Staff

Domain	Score (1-5, 1 = not at all; 2 = minimally; 3 = partially; 4 = sufficiently; and 5= exceptionally)	Notes
The Equip Academy Governing Board knows the school's mission and vision and takes action to serve it.		
The Governing Board knows the school's academic goals and supports the school in achieving them.		
The Governing Board approved a budget that supports Equip Academy's mission and vision.		
The Governing Board serves as a support for the school when it comes to compliance with laws and regulations.		
Governing Board members hold themselves to high standards.		
Governing Board members were present at school community events and visibly active in the local community.		

School Community Evaluation

To ensure accountability and responsiveness to Equip Academy's families and school community, the Governing Board will also submit to an annual school community evaluation of its performance. Families will not be required to complete this evaluation, but they will be encouraged to submit their input. The evaluation will be conducted electronically via a Google Forms survey, both to make completion straightforward, convenient, and anonymous for parents and caregivers and to make evaluation data easily accessible for Governing Board analysis. The evaluation will assess Board performance across the same domains as the Governing Board's self-evaluation, but framed in a way that relates to and reflects to families' perspectives and experiences. All questions will be written in both English and Spanish to ensure all families have a voice in Governing Board evaluation.

The Head of School will share the link to the survey and a brief message about the evaluation's importance for healthy governance and strong leadership of Equip Academy to families via school electronic newsletter, Equip Academy social media, and other direct means of communication between the Head of School and families. During the course of the survey's duration, the school administrators will send families a reminder at least twice, including once within the final five days of the survey deadline. To accommodate busy parents' and caregivers' schedules, the school community will have four weeks to complete the survey, which should take no more than five (5) minutes to

complete. The survey will take place in mid-March and close in mid-April to ensure Governing Board members have time for data analysis and review ahead of their end-of-year board meeting and self-evaluation.

A sample evaluation rubric is below. The rubric the school community will use annually to evaluate the Governing Board will be finalized following charter authorization.

FIGURE 71 - Sample Board Evaluation Rubric Completed by School Families

Domain	Score (1-5, 1 = not at all; 2 = minimally; 3 = partially; 4 = sufficiently; and 5= exceptionally)	Notes
The Governing Board knows the school's mission and vision and takes action to serve it.		
The Governing Board makes financial decisions that are in the best interest of Equip Academy.		
The Governing Board holds Equip Academy school leadership accountable to high but fair standards.		
Governing Board members are active in our school community.		
Governing Board members are good advocates for the school.		

C. Leadership and Management

C.(1) Provide a **clear, comprehensive, and cohesive plan** for how the governing body will monitor organizational, financial, and academic outcomes.

Overview

Equip Academy's model is rooted in high standards for its students, staff, and overall school performance. Frequent and reliable measurement and monitoring of the school's academic, organization, and financial performance is imperative to ensure that we are (a) fulfilling the charter's promise of high-quality instruction and important supports to its students and its broader school community, (b) implementing operations in full compliance with all federal and state requirements and supportive of our joyful and ambitious schools community, and (c) managing and expending public dollars with unblemished integrity and fully aligned to our mission. To do so, Equip Academy will be guided by the Public Education Commission Performance Review and Accountability System.

Academic Performance Monitoring

At least four times each year, and more frequently as needed, the Governing Board will review student academic performance data in-depth to ensure the school is satisfying all requirements named in the Public Education Commission Performance Review and Accountability System, and delivering on its promises to the Equip Academy school community. This calendar will begin with the Governing Board dedicating prioritized time at its Annual Meeting retreat each July to review last year's academic performance and to set goals and priorities for the next academic year. All student data will be compiled, furnished, and presented by the Head of School and all data will be presented to show longitudinal growth, disaggregated by subgroups, including ELs, students with disabilities, gender, and all other state-identified subgroups.

More specifically, at the end of each quarter of the school year, the Head of School will present data and detailed analysis to the Governing Board on the following:

- Proficiency and Growth
  - Reading and math proficiency rates by grade, as measured by short-cycle, interim, and state-mandated assessments
  - Growth in reading and math proficiency rates by grade, as measured by short-cycle, interim, and state-mandated assessments
  - Note: These data points will be considered not only at face value, but also against goals set for proficiency and growth
- Outcomes for Student Groups
  - Proficiency and growth for student groups including English language learners, special education students, Hispanic students, Native American students, and at-risk students in Multi-Layered System of Supports (MLSS)
- Participation
  - Attendance data to ensure Equip Academy of New Mexico complies with statewide assessment requirements
  - This data will also be evaluated for trends that may demonstrate efficacy of student and family supports and needs
- Education Program Implementation – overview of implementation status of all core academic elements, professional development priorities, and family engagement initiatives

At the end of each academic quarter, the Governing Board will evaluate progress toward academic goals, taking into consideration any recommendation of "course adjustments" from the Head of School.

In addition to reviewing data specific to students' academic performance outcomes, the Governing Board will also monitor other student data. This includes discipline data, including referrals, suspensions and phone calls to parents related to student behavior, attendance, and enrollment data: 40th day, 80th day, and 120th day enrollment numbers, and comparisons to prior years' enrollment. These are also important datasets to review, as they may be indicative of deeper-rooted problems the school must address. Persistent disciplinary issues will be assessed as indicators of the need for different or more intensive interventions, or even the need for a school-wide culture shift if issues become more concerning in frequency or severity. Similarly, declining enrollment over time should prompt reflection and study into whether students or families are being served appropriately.

At each regular Board meeting throughout the year, the Governing Board will review student academic performance data. The Head of School will note any trends or anomalies that may be of concern. If there are concerns, the Board will inquire as to the Head of School's plan of action, ensure that the Head of School has the resources needed to implement the plan's details, and review progress towards goals each month. If there are no such concerns and all data indicates that the school is on target for meeting goals, the Governing Board may hold more in-depth discussion of this

data until the next quarterly review of academic performance to ensure the Board has the time and resources to perform its other necessary oversight activities.

Organizational Performance Monitoring

The Equip Academy Founding Team is committed to healthy organizational leadership to enable (a) accountability to our school community and (b) transparency as stewards of public resources. The Board Chair, through the Governance Committee, will report out the Board's adherence to and completion of all regulatory requirements regarding its membership; the Secretary will ensure and report out that we are adhering to all public meeting requirements. The Head of School will include any time-bound regulatory items as needed within its monthly management reports to the Board. As with academic performance monitoring, the Governing Board will be guided by the Public Education Commission Performance Review and Accountability System in monitoring its organizational performance to evaluate the following:

- **Membership.** Number of Board members is within 5 and 11, as indicated in our Bylaws
- **Training**. All members have completed training as required by state law, PED rule, and PEC
- **Meeting Transparency and Documentation**. Equip Academy is in compliance with all state laws around public body meetings and school board functions, including posting notice of meetings and agendas at least one week in advance
- **Enrollment System**. Equip Academy has an enrollment policy in compliance with all state requirements, including two sections addressing (a) our enrollment and registration process and (b) our lottery form and lottery process
- **Legal Compliance**. Equip Academy is in compliance with its charter contract, all applicable federal and state statutes, and all PED rules and guidelines.

Financial Performance Monitoring

The Equip Academy Finance Committee, chaired by the Board Treasurer, will closely monitor the financial performance of the school and report to the Governing Board at each regular monthly Board meeting. Each Board member will receive and collectively review documentation including a balance sheet, cash flow statement, income and expense statements, and a report of the school's budget versus actual expenditures. The Finance Committee will work with the Head of School, Business Manager, and appropriate members of the school administrators   to ensure all reports are ready for review each month and are timely, accurate, and comprehensive. These reports will be straightforward and easy to understand; we will provide annual training in the area of the school's finances, important to ensure that all Board members, regardless of their area of expertise or role on the Governing Board, understand the school's financial standing and performance and thus are to ensure the school's financial health along with its compliance with laws, rules, and charter terms.

Guided by the Public Education Commission Performance Review and Accountability System, the Governing Board will evaluate the following:

- **Days of Cash on Hand**. Equip Academy has the cash readily available to pay all of its bills that meet or exceed PEC expectations
- **Annual Financial Audit**. Equip Academy meets basic expectations of financial oversight by following the Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP), financial management, and internal controls
- **Financial Reporting and Compliance**. Equip Academy and its Governing Board effectively develop and approve its budget and meet all financial reporting and compliance requirements, demonstrating the ability to oversee public funding designated for New Mexico students

- **Fiscal Oversight**. Equip Academy and its Governing Board effectively provide fiscal oversight by establishing, approving, and monitoring annual budget execution
- **Enrollment Variance**. Budgeted enrollment is based upon accurate enrollment assumptions, requiring only small or no budget revisions, resulting in a sound budget

Agendas and the Annual Board Calendar

The Governing Board will abide by all requirements laid out in the Open Meetings Act relating to the development and publicization of its meeting agendas (NMSA 10-15-1). All regular and special Governing Board meeting agendas will:

- Include a list of specific items the Governing Board will discuss or act upon in the course of the meeting, and clearly describe each of them in plain, straightforward language.
- Except in the case of an emergency meeting, the agenda will be made available to the school community and broader public one week prior to the meeting. The Open Meetings Act requires at least 72 hours; this longer runway is designed to enable families to arrange for childcare, transportation, or other considerations.
- Except in the case of emergency matters, the Governing Board will act upon only those items specifically listed on the agenda one week prior to the meeting.

Regular Board meetings will be scheduled for the Thursday of the third full week of each month at 5:00pm, except where that date may fall on an observed federal holiday or during a holiday break for the school. In these cases, the date may be set for the second or fourth Thursday instead. Upon charter authorization, the Governing Board will formally set the Board meeting schedule for the remainder of the 2024-2025 year. The full year's Board meeting schedule will then be posted on the school's website. Assuming charter approval, below is an example schedule:

- August 22, 2024
- September 19, 2024
- October 24, 2024
- November 14, 2024 *Thanksgiving holiday is third Thursday; this date is the week prior
- December 19, 2024
- January 23, 2025
- February 20, 2025
- March 20, 2025
- April 24, 2025
- May 22, 2025
- June 19, 2025

Upon approval, the Founding Board will meet on August 22, 2024 to make official all set forth initial obligations. At the September 19, 2024 meeting, the Governing Board will set the date for the July 2025 Annual Meeting retreat, where the 2025-2026 year's Board meeting schedule will be set.

In the interest of (a) transparency with and (b) accountability to the school community, the Governing Board will publish quarterly updates to share high-level news and decisions through the school newsletter. These updates will contain news on the Board's activities over the previous 3-4 Board meetings; they will be brief and in plain, straightforward language - without unexplained acronyms or technical terms - to facilitate understanding. These updates will also be readily available in Spanish. Not all families may be able to attend Governing Board meetings, but they should still have the relevant and timely information they need to stay informed on the health and activities of their school.

C. (2) Identify and provide a **clear, comprehensive, and cohesive** plan for hiring a head administrator.

Overview

While the Governing Board's responsibility of high-level oversight of the school is important for its long-term viability, financial health, and organizational effectiveness, Equip Academy of New Mexico's Head of School will be the leader for teachers, students, staff, implementing Board-approved policies and working directly with all stakeholders on a day-to-day basis, reporting to the Board on the status of the school and all progress towards goals. The Head of School must possess a variety of skills that enable them to be a competent instructional and organizational leader and to establish a culture where students and adults alike feel a sense of belonging and can thrive.

Head of School Qualifications

Qualifications
- Bachelor's degree required; Master's degree preferred
- New Mexico Level 3B administrative license or eligibility to apply for and attain one
- 2-3 years of teaching experience as a lead teacher
- 2+ years of development and/or implementation of programs driving academic growth, social emotional learning, and/or culturally and linguistically responsive instruction
- Valid driver's license and ability to pass a criminal background check

Skills and Experience
- Teaching experience with a diversity of students, including low-income students, students of color, and English language learners
- Diverse teaching experience across grades and content areas
- Track record of student achievement as demonstrated by student assessment data
- Experience in data-driven academic decision-making and leadership
- Experience in teacher- or school-leadership

Personal Attributes
- Alignment with Equip Academy of New Mexico's mission
- Highest integrity, trustworthy and ethical in all areas and actions
- Effective, clear, and inspirational communicator
- Leader and motivator of a cohesive team of instructional and operational staff
- High standards for students as learners and for adults as champions for students
- Growth mindset - both in their approach to their own work and in their belief in students' innate ability and desire to learn and grow

These qualifications ensure that the Head of School (a) satisfies state requirements for day-to-day school management, leading teachers, staff, and students, (b) has the personal character needed for a public leadership role, and (c) is in alignment with the school's 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.

The Head of School will be selected by the Governing Board based on the job description (**Appendix B.**). This leader will be responsible for the day-to-day execution of Equip Academy of New Mexico's authorized charter, including financial and organizational management and leadership of academic performance to satisfy requirements contained in the PEC Charter School Performance Framework. As Equip Academy's administrative leader, the Head of School will oversee all instruction and operations, and will be responsible for the recruitment, hiring, training, and retention of faculty and staff to establish and maintain a culture where students learn and thrive. This position will operate on an

annual contract; a contract renewal of a sitting Head of School will be based upon the annual evaluation process. Upon selection for the position, the Head of School will receive an annual contract containing a salary and benefits package. The Head of School will report to the Governing Board.

Proposed Founding Head of School

Mercy Herrera is a member of the Founding Team, bringing rich experience from a diversity of roles across the spectrum of public education - as a classroom teacher, instructional coach, and assistant principal, and through program coordination and management, analysis of assessment data, and development of curriculum and professional development programming. During her 12 years as a classroom teacher, she earned recognition for guiding her students to impressive growth in proficiency - 58% of her students performed at or above grade-level in reading in the 2018-2019 school year, the highest-performing class of the school that year; this commitment to measurement and data is reflected in Equip Academy's instructional model. She has also developed math and phonics curricula, assisted by input from head teachers, that aligned with grade-level standards and anti-bias and social justice standards, critical experience that will inform the development of Equip Academy's curriculum centered on foundational skills and serving the whole child.

Ms. Herrera also has strong experience in developing and implementing professional development trainings designed to support teachers in meeting students' unique needs, especially those from student groups like low-income students and students of color. This experience will be invaluable in serving Equip Academy's emphasis on professional development and support of the school's teachers. Finally, with progressively responsible experience as an instructional coach, teacher-leader, and assistant principal, Ms. Herrera possesses the demonstrated leadership skills required to effectively manage and motivate the future instructional and operational team of Equip Academy.

Ms. Herrera has made deliberate and successful efforts to become a visible and active member of the larger Albuquerque community. Thanks to these efforts, and combined with her membership as a Future Schools Fellow through Excellent Schools New Mexico and the Leadership Albuquerque Class of 2024 through the Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce, she has cultivated a strong network of support both for Equip Academy and for herself as a future community leader. Working with the Founding Team, she has gained their full confidence and respect, working closely with them during the school design, charter application, and community outreach efforts of the last multiple months. Ms. Herrera has led the work of developing Equip Academy's charter application, and the full Founding Team is confident that she has deep knowledge of the school's educational philosophy, instructional model, organizational functions, and the Head of School's role in each of these areas. The Founding Team affirms that, as a charter school independent of any school district, Equip Academy will act as its own Local Educational Agency, with the Head of School taking on the responsibilities of a district superintendent, as outlined in NMSA 22-5-14. Thanks to Ms. Herrera's active role in the development of the charter application, Ms. Herrera is fully acquainted with her proposed leadership role as Head of School and its diverse and unique responsibilities as a charter school.

FIGURE 72 - Outline of Hiring Process for Inaugural Head of School

Timeline	August – September 2024
Responsible Parties	Governing Board
Description	Within one month following PEC authorization, the Board will establish itself, pass its bylaws, elect its officers, and populate its committees. It will then

<table>
<tr><td></td><td>review and approve the Job Description for the Head of School (please see Appendix B), approve the compensation and contractual items for the Head of School position, and present the contract to our identified inaugural Head of School which will be contingent upon all required fingerprints and criminal background checks as required by PED. The Board will secure the necessary fingerprints and ensure completion of the required criminal background checks, maintain them within a secure personnel file for the Head of School position, and with the signed contract, begin working closely with the Head of School to successfully open the school to our inaugural class of students.</td></tr>
</table>

In the event that the Board should need to secure a Head of School at any other point in time after the inaugural period, the Board will use the following process to identify and secure a strong candidate from a diverse, highly qualified slate of candidates.

FIGURE 73 - Outline of Hiring Process for Head of School after the Inaugural Period

Timeline	Responsible Parties	Description
At point of identified need to fill the HOS role	Governance Committee	The Governance Committee will post notice of the open Head of School position and an accompanying job description on the school's website, the school's social media accounts, Indeed.com, National Association of Elementary Principals (NAESP), United Way's Center for Nonprofit Excellence, the New Mexico Coalition for Charter Schools page, and Groundworks New Mexico's Nonprofit Job Listings page.
Within two weeks of posting the notice (typically March on an annual cycle)	Governance Committee	After two weeks of publicizing the job posting, the Governance Committee will collect and begin to review application materials. Only complete applications with a resume, cover letter, and references may be considered. The Governance Committee will disqualify any incomplete applications and any candidates who do not meet the minimum requirements to produce a candidate pool of the strongest applicants.
Within three weeks of posting the notice (typically March on an annual cycle)	Governance Committee	The Governance Committee will begin first-round phone interviews with candidates.
Within four weeks of posting the notice (typically April on an annual cycle)	Governance Committee	The Governance Committee will hold formal in-person interviews with candidates who successfully complete first-round phone interviews to narrow the field to two finalists. Formal interviews will include a school visit; meetings with key school leadership staff; observation of and/or participation in key model components, such as

		instruction, teacher training or coaching, and/or school community events; and meetings with Governing Board members. Finalists may also be encouraged to attend Governing Board meetings to further familiarize themselves with the school's goals and performance.
Within five weeks of posting the role (typically April within an annual cycle)	Governance Committee; Governing Board	The Governance Committee will produce and present a selection recommendation to the Governing Board for the Head of School. The Governing Board will act on the Governance Committee's recommendation to approve or reject the candidate for Head of School at a regular or special Governing Board meeting. The candidate will be notified of the Governing Board's decision verbally and in writing, including an offer letter if the candidate is approved.
Within eight weeks of posting the role (typically May/June within an annual cycle)	Governance Committee; Governing Board	Head of School onboarding.

Candidates not ultimately selected for the Head of School role may still be assets to our school community. Those who are qualified for the role but were not chosen may be cultivated for future leadership opportunities in the school; candidates who were disqualified early on for not possessing the requisite experience will be welcome to stay connected through Equip Academy's communications (i.e., school newsletter, social media accounts) for news about future openings.

Head of School Onboarding

A new Head of School who has received and accepted an offer letter will undergo fingerprinting and a criminal background check. Upon completion of these items, the Head of School will receive a contract that outlines the job description and evaluation process and criteria, as well as compensation and benefits information. To formalize the hiring of the Head of School, the Governing Board and the Head of School will sign the contract. Continuing Heads of School will not be required to resubmit a background check and fingerprints.

Following the signature of their contract, the Head of School will closely review the Equip Academy charter and bylaws, as well as their job description, performance evaluation process and criteria, and the table distinguishing the Head of School's role and responsibilities from those of the Governing Board. The Head of School will affirm in writing that they have reviewed the charter in detail and agree to uphold it in their leadership role. The Head of School may also complete training with the Governance Committee to learn about the school's strategic goals, academic performance, and overall PEC performance framework expectations and its financial, legal, and organizational positions. The Head of School will work closely with the Board as the senior leader of the school, and will be the only role to report to the Board through a monthly management report. The Head of School will be invited to attend the Governing Board's Annual Meeting retreat to benefit from the full scope of trainings on the school's mission and vision, the Board's function and processes, and the school's financial, legal, and organizational positions, including its strategic plan.

Over time, this selection process will enable the Governing Board to identify and equitably select a highly-qualified leader through its widely publicized job posting. In particular, the promotion of the

open role on a variety of professional platforms, including those that specifically serve education jobseekers and others that cater to nonprofits or even more general interests, will yield a variety of qualified candidates with depth and breadth of experience. Additionally, the time-intensive onboarding process will equip the Head of School with valuable historical and current knowledge of the school, its performance, and any concerns it may be in the progress of addressing.

C. (3) Describe how the governing body will convey and distinguish their roles and responsibilities with those of the proposed school's head administrator.

Overview

The Head of School will be responsible for day-to-day school management, including oversight of its personnel, facilities and resources, and educational programming; the Governing Board's purview includes long-term strategic vision, policy decisions, and oversight for accountability purposes, while the Head of School is responsible for all management functions, including the execution of the mission and goals laid out in the charter, as approved. The Board will delegate all management responsibilities and decisions to the Head of School, and the Head of School will be the only school role to report to the Board. As Equip Academy's administrative leader, the Head of School will oversee all instructional and operational elements, and will be responsible for all staff recruitment, hiring, training, and retention to establish and maintain a student-focused culture where students can learn and thrive. The Governing Board will hire, evaluate, and support the Head of School; the Head of School will report to the Governing Board, and is the only school employee to do so.

The Equip Academy Founding Team recognizes this distinction, which will be reinforced by PED-facilitated Governing Board training that outlines Governing Board's roles and responsibilities. The Governing Board will begin taking steps to schedule and complete this state-mandated training immediately upon charter authorization.

Head of School Description

The Head of School (HOS) is the academic and cultural leader of the school. The HOS creates the school-wide vision, drives educational outcomes, and advances educational equity through leading the team and bringing the mission to life, and the HOS is passionate about equipping and rallying the staff to achieve ambitious school goals. Through the intentional creation of a vibrant school community, the HOS inspires staff and students to engage in rigorous and purposeful learning in every classroom, every day. The HOS develops enduring and joyful relationships with students, teachers, parents, and community members, and s/he builds and maintains a strong presence in the local community. This person embodies a deep belief in and powerful ability to lead Equip Academy's innovative approaches and unique school features: inquiry-based, educator excellence, college-preparatory rigorous curriculum, and comprehensive literacy and language acquisition program. The HOS is the most senior and critical leadership role within the school, and is committed to ensuring that our students develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to succeed so that they have the opportunity to live out their full potential. The HOS is hired by, reports to, and works closely with the Governing Board. The HOS Job Description is found in **Appendix B.**

Responsibilities

Educational Leadership. The HOS guides Equip Academy's educational vision to align with current academic standards, accountability goals and metrics, and the unique needs of the student body. The HOS leads, implements, and facilitates our teacher development programs, including hiring, training,

coaching, and inspiring a diverse team of educators who work towards dramatically and measurably growing student learning and achievement.

Curricular Leadership. The HOS leads all curriculum development, adoption, and implementation that is proven to powerfully educate a diverse student community. The HOS ensures that curriculum in every classroom at every grade level is thought-provoking, hands-on, engaging, student-centered and supportive of teacher success in its surrounding resources and training.

Data Leadership. The HOS engages in strategic planning, staff management, and student achievement evaluation to ensure that we demonstrate a record of measurable student achievement, including effective implementation of English Learner and special education strategies, programs, and curricular approaches to eliminating extreme disparities in student outcomes.

Budgetary and Financial Leadership. The HOS manages, monitors, and reports school finances and related activities to ensure that the school remains fiscally responsible and financially healthy in the short- and long-term. The HOS manages complex budget systems, oversees the preparation and maintenance of all purchase orders and other expense records, and approves all expenditures. The HOS ensures that the school reconciles all site records, with monthly reports as required by the PED, and ensures that all expenditures are within budget allowances as approved by the Board for the fiscal year. The HOS works with the Finance Committee of the Board to prepare and present a proposed annual budget for the Governing Board's consideration, review, and approval. The HOS implements the details of the Board-approved annual budget in day-to-day execution of their role.

Cultural and Communication Leadership. The HOS demonstrates effective communication with the PED, Board, Community, Families, Staff, Teachers, and Students, interacting with integrity and efficacy with multiple constituencies to promote our mission and grow student achievement. The HOS brings people together, creates a sense of community, and cultivates a rich learning environment that is positive as well as physically and psychologically safe.

School Operational and Compliance Leadership. The HOS understands educational policies, ensuring compliance with all state and federal laws and regulations. The HOS understands or has experience with maintenance, operations, payroll, food service, and transportation. The HOS understands records and file-keeping, including assessment results, test scores, discipline referrals, medical reports and records, and other student documents. The HOS oversees all day-to-day operations.

The Governing Board and Head of School responsibilities are broadly distinguished in these ways:

FIGURE 74 – Governance and Management Roles and Responsibilities

Governing Board	Head of School
Hires, evaluates, and supports the Head of School.	Hires, evaluates, and supports school personnel to build effective leadership, instructional, and operations teams
Sets long-term strategic vision for the school, and makes decisions to ensure its sustainability, success, and longevity; approves all school-based and fiscal policies.	Implements Governing Board decisions and policies
Monitors the school's fiscal and legal health and compliance	Keeps the Governing Board informed of and furnishes the Board with clear and comprehensive documentation to support board oversight

Regularly reviews student achievement to hold the school and its leadership accountable for its fulfillment of the school's mission	Leads curriculum development, adoption, and implementation, and facilitates teacher development programs to drive student achievement; regularly reports student achievement data to the Board

C. (4) Identify and provide a clear, comprehensive, and cohesive plan for annually evaluating the head administrator.

Overview

The Equip Academy of New Mexico Founding Team firmly believes in the cultivation of a growth mindset and continuous improvement; we also believe in measuring that improvement to assist in accountability for the adults entrusted with our students' learning. To that end, the Head of School will be evaluated each year in May. This evaluation will use competency domains included in the NMTEACH Summative Head of School Evaluation System and the High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation (HOUSSE), Form D[189] to assess the school leader's efficacy in a uniform way that mirrors the way the state evaluates district principals using multiple measures.

Evaluation Process

Each year, the Head of School will begin the school year with self-reflection through a self-evaluation in July, to be reviewed at the Governing Board's Annual Meeting retreat. This self-evaluation will follow the same structure as the evaluation completed by the Governing Board later in the year, aligned with the HOUSSE competencies, but it will be completed by the Head of School to assist them in setting goals and developing their own professional development plan, according to the growth areas they identify. The Governing Board will review goals to offer feedback and support to the Head of School.

At the end of the school year in May, the Governing Board will complete its end-of-year evaluation of the Head of School to again do progress monitoring on the areas of growth the Head of School identified as well as a review of the Head of School's efficacy in light of the school's student performance data. At this time, the Governing Board will make its final decision on whether the Head of School's contract will be renewed.

Evaluation Structure

In July, at the Annual Meeting retreat and ahead of the school year, the Head of School will complete a self-evaluation using the same rubric the Governing Board will use for its evaluation of the Head of School at the end of the year points. This rubric will be aligned to the HOUSSE competencies the PED uses to evaluate district principals, with the addition of a domain relating to the fulfillment of Equip Academy of New Mexico's mission and vision.

A sample evaluation rubric is below. The rubric the Governing Board will use annually will be finalized following charter authorization.

FIGURE 75 – Sample HOS Evaluation Rubric[190]

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[189] HOUSSE-Form-D-Guidance.pdf (state.nm.us).
[190] References to "principal" are synonymous to Head of School for our purposes.

Domain	Evidence of Effectiveness
Instructional Leadership	"The principal promotes the success of all students by maintaining a culture that supports achievement, high quality instruction, and professional development to meet the diverse learning needs of the school community." ● Maintains high expectations for teachers and students ● Relies on student achievement data to inform academic priorities ● Creates and sustains a culture of commitment to a growth mindset for teachers and students
Communication	"The principal uses communication and relationship-building skills to engage the school and larger community in the knowledge of, and advocacy for, equity in meeting the diverse needs of the school community." ● Engages productively, professionally, and respectfully with students, teachers, families, and the broader community ● Communicates with the Governing Board and teachers in a timely and effective way ● Creates an environment where community voices are heard and encouraged
Professional Development	"The principal organizes and coordinates ongoing professional learning opportunities that are aligned with the New Mexico Professional Development Framework and supports the diverse learning needs of the school community." ● Oversees and supports teacher growth, based on career goals and teacher effectiveness, as measured by student achievement ● Sets an annual training calendar that is responsive to staff training needs
Organizational Management	"The principal manages the school campus, budget, and daily operations to equitably meet the diverse learning needs of the school community." ● Complies with all local, state, and federal requirements and laws ● Follows a fiscally responsible school budget ● Maintains facilities that support high-quality instruction
Fulfillment of the Equip Academy Mission and Vision	"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." ● Cultivates a drive for excellence among teachers and students ● Creates opportunities for exposure to the idea of college for all students ● Supports teachers in forging relationships built on trust with their students ● Inspires engagement in the classroom and in the school community

Upon completion of the self-evaluation, The Head of School will identify at least one area of improvement, but no more than three, to focus on throughout the year ahead. The Head of School will also develop a professional development plan for improvement in this area, which may consist of a formal course or curriculum or another thoughtful plan of action. The Head of School will present this area of improvement and the professional development plan to address it along with the presentation of their self-evaluation to the Governing Board at the Annual Meeting retreat in July.

At the midpoint of the school year, the Governing Board may conduct an informal evaluation of the Head of School's performance alongside the second-quarter student performance data, teacher

survey data, and teacher evaluation data. The Governing Board members will be guided by the HOUSSE competencies-aligned rubric and discuss the informal evaluation with the Head of School to cover any areas of concern or recommendations for adjustments as the Head of School progresses toward their goals. Any parent or community member grievances will also be addressed. The Governing Board will also begin to weigh contract renewal for the Head of School.

At the end of the school year in May, the Governing Board will conduct a final summative evaluation of the Head of School. The evaluation will rely on multiple measures to capture the Head of School's efficacy and areas for improvement, with 50% of the evaluation based on student achievement, 25% on teacher observations, and the remaining 25% on HOUSSE and school community feedback. The survey will have a total of 100 points possible and 5 ratings ranging from "Exemplary" to "Ineffective." The Governing Board will use the HOUSSE Form D to share feedback with the Head of School. These results will enable the Governing Board to make a decision on rehiring, and will also inform the Head of School's goals for the upcoming school year, if the contract is renewed.

D. Organizational Structure of the Proposed School

D.(1) Provide a **clear, comprehensive, cohesive, and reasonable** organizational chart and narrative.

Overview

Equip Academy of New Mexico (Equip Academy) is committed to ensuring there is a highly supportive instructional and operational staff to meet the needs of entering students. Our goal from the start is sustainability, support, and growth for all incoming faculty and staff. Because our student enrollment is a staggered model, so too is the administration, faculty, and staff growth model. We see an immense value in teachers and thus invest in them by committing to salaries at least 10% above local salary schedules for lead teachers.[191] Additionally, we aim for sustainability through our Institute for Educator Excellence which will allow us to build talent internally to be the future leaders and fit the growing leadership needs of the school. Below are samples of the faculty and staff organization based on the number and needs of students as well as what is financially feasible for sustainability. All salaried positions are budgeted in **Appendix-G-5-Year-Budget-Plan** and salary expenses are budgeted in the object codes starting with 51. In all years, we intend to contract with an experienced financial back-office services provider to support our financial management needs. They will provide an assigned Business Manager and Assistant Business Manager; these roles will remain contracted service providers.[192]

FIGURE 76 - Year 1 Organizational Chart
K-1 | 75 Students

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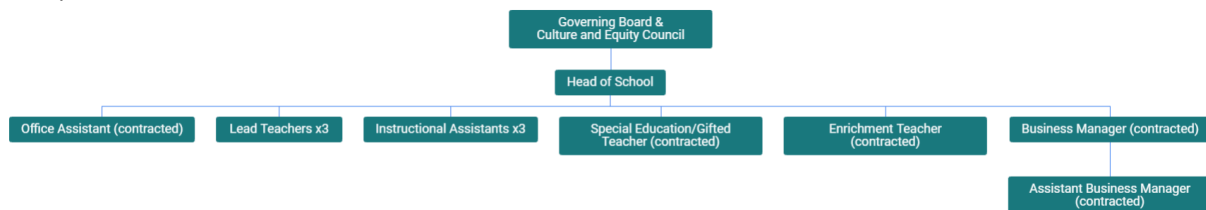
[191] **Appendix-G-5-Year-Budget-Plan**, Object: 51100; Job Class: 1141 and 1143.
[192] **Appendix-G-5-Year-Budget-Plan**, Function: 1000, Object: 55915.

As seen in **FIGURE 76** and the remaining figures below, at the helm of the organization chart is the Governing Board who is the charter holder of the school by holding the school leader accountable for the success of the school and our students. Within the Governing Board are committees which consist of Governance, Academic, Finance and Audit committees. The Culture and Equity Council is also at the top, as it is an advisor to the Head of School to promote and uphold culture, equity, and belonging for all students. Beneath the Governing Board is the Head of School, who holds the senior management position of the school, reports to the Board, and holds decision-making power that is in the best interest of students and staff when it comes to learning in reference to all things learning and growing.

The **Governing Board** is managed by the Board Chair. This position is one of the key required positions of the Board, and requires a number of skills and abilities to execute state Board requirements and uphold the approved charter. This is an exciting role that allows an individual to facilitate collective impact on the educational success of students and connect family and community members through our mission. The Governing Board oversees the Head of School.

The **Culture and Equity Council** is composed of multiple stakeholders (parents, staff, teachers), will do the work of reviewing and providing feedback on school policies (i.e., discipline policies), procedures, and handbooks to ensure that they are equitable and not biased and will advise the Board if they find potential inequities. The Council provides feedback to the Governing Board and Head of School.

The **Head of School** (HOS) is the academic and cultural leader of the school. The HOS creates the school-wide vision, drives educational outcomes, and advances educational equity through leading the team and bringing the mission to life, and the HOS is passionate about equipping and rallying the staff to achieve ambitious school goals. Through the intentional creation of a vibrant school community, the HOS inspires staff and students to engage in rigorous and purposeful learning in every classroom, every day. The HOS manages and oversees the following roles: Office Manager, Lead Teachers, Instructional Assistants, Special Education Teacher and Enrichment Teacher. The HOS works with the financial back office provider to plan the annual budget details which will be reviewed and approved by the Board, and oversee the monthly financial needs of the school.

The **Office Assistant** will initially be hired hourly and as needed. The Office Assistant will provide secretarial and administrative support to the Administration.   The individual in this role will: communicate information to students, parents, staff, and/or other districts or schools; and administrative requirements; and support the broad array of services provided to students, parents, instructional and support employees. For the initial year, this role will be contracted. The following years will be a full-time role.

Lead Teachers are growth-mindset educators who are relentless about perfecting their craft and growing student achievement. Educators spend their time discussing, preparing, practicing, and immersing themselves in rich academic content through an inquiry-based lens. Equip Academy teachers wear the hat of a facilitator, listening to what students are saying, creating a space for students to think their way through to answers, and praising their insights and curiosities along the way. Teachers believe in the power of family and are committed to believing in and constantly helping students succeed to be independent, critical thinkers.

Instructional Assistants (IA) support the learning needs in our classrooms, and are supported to reach master-teacher status with opportunities for in-house, upward professional growth. Educators are valued and invested in through training, daily coaching, and feedback; they spend their time discussing, preparing, practicing, and immersing themselves in rich academic content through an inquiry-based lens. Two of these IAs will support in the classroom full time and the other will be a designated interventionist that supports struggling students. Our school model is highly prepared to

support and meet students at their level. We have one Lead Teacher in every classroom, in K-1 there is an Instructional Assistant (IA), then for grades 2-5, using Title I and IDEA-B funds, there will be a shared IA. From Years 2-5 there will be two additional IAs to support based on need on an as-need basis.

The **Special Education Teacher** (contracted for the initial two (2) years) will play a critical role in ensuring that all of our students with identified special needs (including gifted students) receive a high-quality education and support needed to be successful in their learning. This individual will have a wide scope of knowledge of special education best practice, parent and family engagement, and evidence-based practices for teaching as well as social, emotional, and behavioral support. This individual will also play a key role on the Student Assistance Team (SAT). The Special Education teacher reports to the HOS but will be supervised by the Education Coordinator when hired.

Enrichment Teachers (contracted for the initial (2) years) are passionate and skilled in Dance, Physical Education, or Spanish. Enrichment classes will give students the opportunity to explore a variety of dance forms across cultures, learn and develop healthy habits, and engage in physical fitness activities that support teamwork, collaboration, and their overall well-being. Spanish as an enrichment has surfaced throughout our focus groups and the Founding Team meetings with community members.

Business Manager and Assistant Business Manager: Equip Academy of New Mexico plans to partner with K12 Accounting to help with all accounting responsibilities. K12 Accounting is both an ACES and CES vendor and Equip Academy plans to work with them through one of these procurement entities. The Assigned highly qualified Business Manager and Assistant Business Manager will work with Equip Academy on-site to provide high quality business management services. The Business Manager will be responsible for overseeing the work of the Assistant Business Manager, overseeing the school's budget, and overseeing all grant reporting and funds.

FIGURE 77 - Year 2 Organizational Chart
K-2 | 150 Students
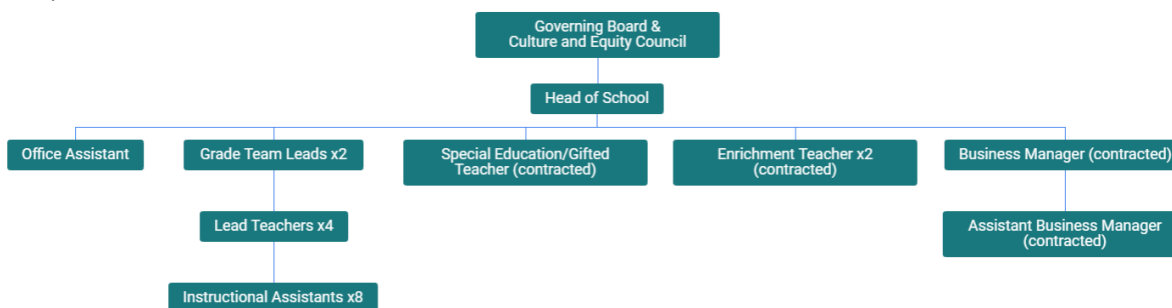
For year 2, the organizational make-up is similar to year one and we maintain the same reporting structures as in year 1. The two major differences are Grade Team Leads are introduced in year two and Lead Teachers, Instructional Assistants, and (now two (2) contracted) Enrichment Teachers have increased in numbers due to the incoming 2nd grade. We will still have a one (1) contracted special education teacher. The Office Assistant will also be brought in full-time.

Grade Team Leads (GTLs) are full-time classroom teachers and NOT additional positions. This is a clear role, however, within our organizational growth. Under the supervision of the HOS, the GTLs will hold a range of responsibilities, including leading planning meetings and whole school/grade Community Circles. They will be coached and mentored by the HOS and will act as a liaison between the grade team and HOS. This is not a supervisory role and LTs or IAs will not report in any way to the GTL, but the GTLs will hold leadership roles that might prepare them to be future Equip Academy leaders. All teachers report to the HOS including the GTL. To learn more about the role of the GTL and the internal application process and management plan, please see **Appendix R**.

Figure 78: Year 3 Organizational Make-up
K-3 | 225 Students
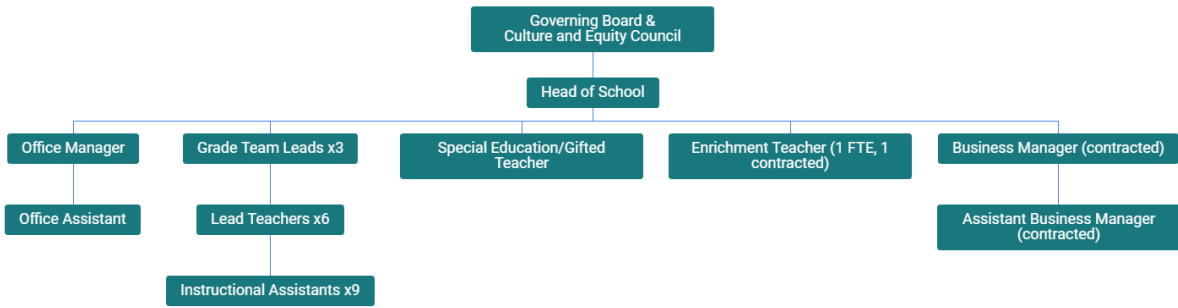
For year 3, the organizational structure continues to grow as students increase. Faculty and staff all maintain the same reporting structures. The major differences are bringing on a full-time Special Education/Gifted Teacher, Enrichment Teacher, and Office Assistant to support our increased needs for 225 projected students. Additionally, in year 3, teaching staff continue to increase in number.

Office Manager will provide secretarial and administrative support to the Administration; communicating information to students, parents, staff, and/or other districts or schools; ensuring compliance with financial, legal, and administrative requirements; and supporting the broad array of services provided to students, parents, instructional and support employees. The Office Assistant will support and report to the new role, Office Manager with a range of tasks.

FIGURE 79 Year 4 Organizational Chart
K-4 | 300 Students
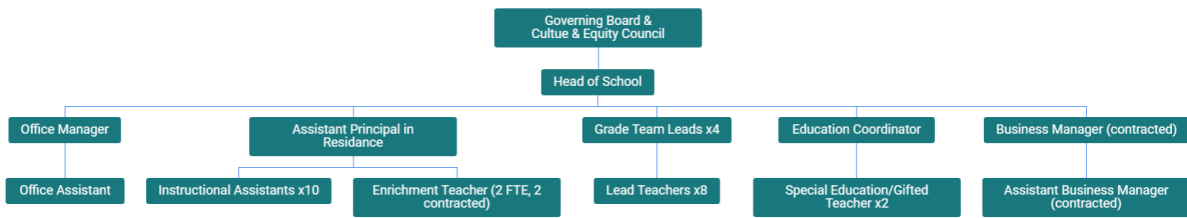
For year 4, Equip Academy anticipates having a budget to increase our thinking about the sustainability of the school; therefore, there will be an increase in leadership and a distribution in leadership roles to offset for the HOS. The HOS will still maintain oversight of staff but it will be imperative that the HOS remains focused on instruction, measurable academic outcomes, and culture and community. We will introduce a full-time Assistant Principal in Residence, increase in full time Enrichment Teachers and special Education Teacher, and an Education Coordinator.

The **Assistant Principal In Residence (APIR)** will be trained, coached, and mentored by the HOS. The APIR will be trained to drive growth, educational outcomes, and advance educational equity through leading the team and bringing the mission to life. Like the HOS, the APIR will equip and rally the staff to set and achieve ambitious school goals. The APIR is a junior leader and plays a critical leadership role within the school, and is committed to ensuring that teachers and students develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to succeed and reach ambitious goals. The APIR supports, coaches, and trains IAs and enrichment teachers and reports to the HOS.

The **Education Coordinator** will play a critical role in advancing our school's Mission by being an effective advocate for students with special needs, including Gifted and English Language Learners, and will work collaboratively with Head of School to think about what students need, including the Diagnostician, School Psychologist, Nurse, Social Worker, Speech Pathologist, Occupational Therapist,

Physical/Recreational Therapists, Audiologists, Paraprofessionals, etc. (contracted positions within the school given our small size).[193] This individual will provide direct services to students with special education services to model best practices. This individual will also support implementation of assessment logistics, execution and data reporting/analysis for all students, including special populations. This individual will also play a key role on the Equip Academy's Student Assistance Team (SAT) and oversee the IEP and MLSS processes for staff and students. Appropriately credentialed Paraprofessionals and ancillary service providers (i.e., Speech Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, Social Workers, Counselors) will implement any services as required via contract as needed or referral out.[194]

FIGURE 80 Year 5 Organizational Chart
K-5 | 375 Students
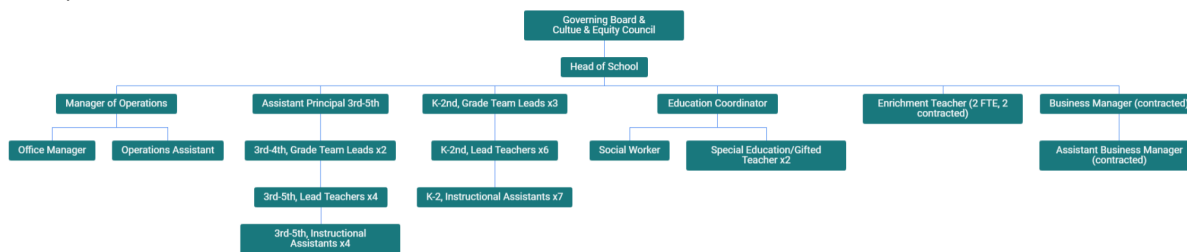
For year 5 with 375 students, the APIR will transition to Assistant Principal, who will oversee grades 3-5 staff and students. There will be an elevated role in operations, the Manager of Operations and here will be a full time Social Worker.

The **Manager of Operations** will assist the Head of School in ensuring that the school is safe and compliant with all local, state and federal rules and guidelines, and that the school systems run efficiently. The Manager of Operations facilities, operations, budget, human resources, student information systems, and family and community engagement. The Manager of Operations supervises the operational staff.

The **Social Worker** provides services to support scholars, families, and staff, including counseling, diagnostic assessment, referrals, and reporting. The Social Worker is deeply committed to changing the lives of our students, and s/he leads weekly sessions that target individualized student growth goals. The Social Worker will administer behavioral rating scales, assist in implementation and support of school-wide social and emotional learning practices, and deliver individual or group service minutes as determined by student IEPs. This individual will play a key role on the Student Assistance Team (SAT) and, when appropriate, support family and community engagement programming. The Social Worker is supervised and will report to the Education Coordinator.

D. (2) Provide **clear, comprehensive, and cohesive** job descriptions for all certified and licensed staff and any other key staff (if your charter requires non-traditional roles or positions, identify and describe here).

Overview

Equip Academy's proposed staffing structure is well thought out to meet the needs of students and their success. This staffing selection will allow us to fulfill our resource- and literacy-rich program

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[193] **Appendix-G-5-Year-Budget-Plan**, Function: 2100, Line Items: 112-124
[194] Ibid.

model that is measurable with highly trained educators. All positions are critical to our academic, cultural, operational, and financial success. This staffing growth plan will meet the needs of our student population on the Westside and the roles identified below are critical to the operation and success of our school and will ensure that we are able to meet the needs of all students.

Why Work at Equip Academy of New Mexico

We firmly believe that access to a quality education is a social justice and equity issue, and we equip underserved populations who have historically underperformed with a transformative K-5 education. With a firm belief that students can rise to the occasion we set before them, excellence is held high for leaders, educators, and students through our supportive and measurable approach. Ensuring that our students have the skills, tools, and confidence they need to thrive today and in the future, we are dedicated to having a workforce that mirrors the diversity seen in our students and community. Providing a community of support and belonging, leaders, teachers, and families collaborate closely and encourage each other to achieve great outcomes. Our school honors, nurtures, and challenges the whole child. We foster critical thinking skills and a love of learning through an engaging, inquiry-based learning approach and data-responsive education. All students benefit from a rich and rigorous curriculum that fosters curiosity about the world and guides them to think critically and independently.

Agreements for Certified and Non-Certified Staff

Below are the foundational roles needed to fulfill the mission and vision of Equip Academy, including a list of key responsibilities, reporting structures, and required certification per staff member. All roles will be mission- and vision-aligned, responsive to feedback, hold high standards for self and students, and believe in the ability and potential of all students. Additionally, as a Founding Team and small charter school, staff members must be willing and able to wear multiple "hats" and take on responsibilities such as, but not limited to, morning procedures, lunch, and dismissal duties. With support from and cross-training alongside the HOS, the Founding Team must also be willing and able to take on multiple roles such as, but not limited to: McCenny Vento Coordinator/Homeless Liaison Officer, Stars Nova Coordinator, State Test Coordinator, Chief Procurement Officer, Inspections of Public Records Act Coordinator (IPPRA), etc. Equip Academy is dedicated to training and supporting staff members to become certified in the areas listed above and any other NM required roles. As an Institute for Excellence, staff members must be: eager to learn, receive, utilize, and implement feedback to improve practice; hold a growth mindset; show grit and determination for self and students; and maintain a relentless drive to set and achieve ambitious goals especially toward closing achievement gaps. All staff must also pass a criminal background clearance. For a comprehensive and more detailed list of all job descriptions, professional responsibilities, minimum qualification requirements and qualification preferences see **Appendix C.**, job descriptions.

FIGURE 81 - Certified Staff 5-Year Plan

Staff Support	Y1 2025-26 75 Students	Y2 2026-27 150 Students	Y3 2027-28 225 Students	Y4 2028-29 300 Students	Y5 2029-30 375 Students
Lead Teachers	3	4	6	8	10
Grade Team Leads		2	3	4	5
SpEd Teacher	1 (contracted)	1 (contracted)	1		
Head of School	1	1	1	1	1
Assistant Principal In				1	

Residence					
Assistant Principal					1
Education Coordinator				1	1
Social Worker					1 (contracted)
Business Manager	1 (contracted)	1 (contracted)	1 (contracted)	1 (contracted)	1 (contracted)

Certified Roles, Key Responsibilities, Reporting Structure and Required Certification

Lead Teachers
Report to HOS or APIR | Bachelor's degree required and State teacher license
- Develop and teach engaging lessons that follow rigorous, Common Core-aligned curriculum
- Actively participate in collaborative planning, professional development (Wednesday afternoons, full day PDs, and three-week Summer Institute for Educator Excellence), and actively work to internalize lessons, incorporate feedback, and be prepared at a high level for every class every day
- Accept ultimate responsibility as the academic and cultural leader of their classroom and ensure academic progress of his or her students and support Associate Teacher (if applicable)
- Use formal and informal assessment data to drive instruction and ensure student mastery of standards
- Build and center community and belonging for all students while simultaneously holding accountability
- Establish and maintain frequent and clear communication to ensure strong relationships with staff, students, and families
- As a founding educator, be able and willing to wear multiple "hats" and roles and responsibilities, such as, but not limited to, morning, lunch, and dismissal duties

Grade Team Lead (GTL)
Reports to HOS or APIR | Bachelor's degree required and State teacher license
- Same responsibilities as above but also include the following:
- Plan and facilitate grade team meetings weekly
  - Ensuring quality and timeliness of lesson plans and materials
  - Communicate what data needs to be entered and by when
  - Know when assessments are happening and ensuring all team members have what they need
- Coordinate morning meeting or advisory planning and community meeting planning across the grade
- Plan, lead, and organize field studies; grade-level academic, attendance, and core values celebrations
- With the support of the Head of School (HOS), propose and plan celebratory and school-wide events that create community

Special Education Teacher
Report to HOS or Education Coordinator | Bachelor's degree, State teacher SpEd license with Gifted endorsement required
- Ensure all identified students with special needs (including gifted students) receive support
- Have a wide scope of knowledge of special education best practices, parent and family engagement, and evidence-based practices for teaching as well as social, emotional, and behavioral support.
- Student Assistance Team (SAT). The Special Education teacher reports to the HOS but will be supervised by the Education Coordinator when hired.

Head of School.
Report to Governing Board | Bachelor's degree, Administrator License required
- Educational Leadership: Leads, implements and facilitates teacher development programs, including hiring, training, coaching, and inspiring a diverse team of educators who work towards dramatically and measurably growing student learning and achievement.
- Curriculum: Leads all curriculum development, adoption, and implementation that represents and is proven to powerfully educate a diverse student community.
- Data: Engages in strategic planning, staff management, and student achievement evaluation to ensure that we demonstrate a record of measurable student achievement, including effective implementation of English Learner and special education strategies, programs, or curricular approaches to eliminating extreme disparities in student outcomes.
- Budget and Finance: Manages, monitors, and reports school finances and related activities to ensure that the school remains fiscally responsible and financially healthy in the short- and long-term. Manages complex budget systems, oversees the preparation and maintenance of all purchase orders and other expense records and approves all expenditures.
- Culture and Communication: Demonstrates effective communication with the PED, Board, Community, Families, Staff, Teachers, and Students, interacting with integrity and efficacy with multiple constituencies to promote our mission and grow student achievement. Brings people together, creates a sense of community, and cultivates a rich learning environment that is positive as well as physically and psychologically safe.
- School Operation and Compliance: Understands educational policies, ensuring compliance with all state and federal laws and regulations. Understands or has experience with maintenance, operations, payroll, food service, and transportation. Understands records and file keeping, including assessment results, test scores, discipline referrals, medical reports and records, and other student documents.

Assistant Principal In Residence (APIR)
Report to HOS | Bachelor's degree required and State teacher license
- Work closely with the HOS by getting trained, coached, and mentored by the HOS.
- Will be trained to drive growth, educational outcomes, and advance educational equity through leading the team and bringing the mission to life.
- Will equip and rally the staff to set and achieve ambitious school goals.
- As a junior leader, plays a critical leadership role within the school, and is committed to ensuring that teachers and students develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to succeed and reach ambitious goals.
- The APIR supports, coaches, and trains IAs and enrichment teachers but reports to the HOS.

Assistant Principal (AP)
Report to HOS | Bachelor's degree required and Administrator License required
- The APIR supports, coaches and trains GTLs, LTs and IAs 3rd - 5th grade educators
- Educational Leadership: Leads, implements and facilitates teacher development programs, including hiring, training, coaching, and inspiring of a diverse team of educators who work towards dramatically and measurably growing student learning and achievement.
- Curriculum: Leads all grade-level 3-5 curriculum development, adoption, and implementation that represents and is proven to powerfully educate a diverse student community.
- Data: Engages in strategic planning, staff management, and student achievement evaluation to ensure that we demonstrate a record of measurable student achievement, including effective implementation of English Learner and special education strategies, programs, or curricular approaches to eliminating extreme disparities in student outcomes.

- **Culture and Communication:** Demonstrates effective communication with the PED, Board, Community, Families, Staff, Teachers, and Students, interacting with integrity and efficacy with multiple constituencies to promote our mission and grow student achievement. Brings people together, creates a sense of community, and cultivates a rich learning environment that is positive as well as physically and psychologically safe.

Education Coordinator
Report to HOS | Bachelor's degree, State teacher SpEd license
- Provide technical assistance on a regular basis to teachers regarding the IEP process, compliance issues, behavior management, teaching strategies, and learning styles
- Provide process-based consultation, training, and technical assistance in the areas of compliance, IEP crafting and implementation, and manifestation determinations
- Assist in the development and implementation of school wide Special Education Professional Development, as well as inform policy and procedure manuals
- Assist in planning, implementing, and monitoring and evaluating individual progress to ensure appropriateness of educational goals and special education services
- Provide direct services to students with special education services to model best practices
- Oversee assessment logistics, execution, and data reporting/analysis of students, including special populations

Social Worker
Report to Education Coordinator | Social Work license
- Conduct functional behavioral assessments and create behavior intervention plans (FBA/BIP) as needed for students
- Participate on the MLSS Team and provide services and interventions as assigned, including FBA/BIPs, parent interviews, and psychosocial histories, student referrals, etc.
- Provide individual and group treatment as indicated on Individual Education Plans (IEP) and document all clinical activity
- Write annual IEP goals and notes monthly progress reports related to IEP goals
- Complete diagnostic assessments to identify student needs and making confidential referrals as appropriate
- Consult with appropriate professional staff, external agencies, and other organizations as appropriate and based on student needs
- Make and deliver staff presentations of accordance with all confidentiality laws and regulations and complete reports as may be required by federal, state, or local agencies, laws, and regulations

Business Manager
Reports to K12 CEOs and HOS | New Mexico School Business Official License
- Conduct monthly, quarterly, and annually duties to ensure all finance and budgetary items are being met and in compliance. These duties include but are not limited to: Purchasing; Accounts; Cash Receipts; Bank Reconciliations; Federal Program and Payable including Travel & Per Diem
- Monitor Cash Flow; Setup new vendors and customer; Maintains federal funds and reviews spending; Calculate indirect costs and enter journal entries; Submits request for Reimbursement; Journal entries as necessary; Record, analyze and report financial transactions in accordance with General Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP);
- Compliance and Reporting. Ensure compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and rules, Ensure compliance with Public Education Department General Administrative Regulations, Provide the Governing Board with timely, accurate and relevant financial information in the form of a Finance Packet and Report during Governing Board meetings

- W-2s. Prepare and submit forms W-2s to employees and W-3 to the Social Security Administration (SSA); 1099s: Prepare and submit form 1099s to vendors and for 1098 to the Internal Revenue Service; Prepare and submit forms 1095 to employees and form 1094 to the Internal Revenue Service.

Non-Certified Roles, Key Responsibilities, Reporting Structure and Required Certification

FIGURE 82 - Non-Certified Staff 5-Year Plan

Staff Support	Y1 2025-26 75 Students	Y2 2026-27 150 Students	Y3 2027-28 225 Students	Y4 2028-29 300 Students	Y5 2029-30 375 Students
Instructional Assistants	3	6	7	8	9
Enrichment Teacher	1 (contracted)	2 (contracted)	2 (contracted)	1 FTE (2 contracted)	2 FTE (2 contracted)
Office Manager	1	1	1	1	
Office Assistant			1	2	2
Manager of Operations					1
Assistant Business Manager	1 (contracted)	1 (contracted)	1 (contracted)	1 (contracted)	1 (contracted)

Instructional Assistants | Reports to HOS, APIR or AP
- Develop and teach engaging lessons that follow a rigorous Common Core-aligned curriculum
- Actively participate in collaborative planning, professional development (Wednesdays, full day PDs, and three-week Summer Institute for Educator Excellence), and actively work to internalize lessons, incorporate feedback, and be prepared at a high level
- Accept ultimate responsibility as the academic and cultural leader of their classroom and ensure academic progress of his or her students and support the Lead Teacher (LT) and students
- Use formal and informal assessment data to drive instruction and ensure student mastery of standards
- Build and center community and belonging for all students and families while simultaneously holding accountability
- Establish and maintain frequent and clear communication to ensure strong relationships with staff, students and families

Enrichment Teacher | Reports to HOS or APIR
- Develop and teach engaging lessons that follow a purposeful scope and sequence
- Passionate and skilled in Dance, Physical Education or Spanish
- Provide the opportunity to explore a variety of dance forms across cultures, learn and develop healthy habits, and/or engage in physical fitness activities that
- Promote teamwork and collaboration for students' overall well-being
- Build and center community and belonging for all students and families while simultaneously holding accountability
- Establish and maintain frequent and clear communication to ensure strong relationships with staff, students and families

Office Manager | Reports to Manager of Operations or HOS

- Serve as building receptionist; answer phone and in-person inquiries from students, staff, parents and the public; screen calls for the Head of School, staff, and students
- Receive and distribute daily mail
- Compile data for enrollment and other reports for state reporting
- Make copies and assist with copies of staff bulletin and school newsletter
- Coordinate work of staff assigned to office; assign and review work; monitor and adjust workload for even distribution
- Coordinate activities of parent volunteers; provide volunteer training; assign and review tasks
- Register incoming students and process enrollment materials; complete data input on computer; coordinate services and information with sending/receiving school and district offices; complete procedures for students withdrawing from the school
- Record maintenance for students and staff attendance, absences
- Support STARS reporting and other require PED reports
- Submit daily lunch count; may generate and print weekly lunch roster
- Assume critical role in Equip Academy Safety and Security, Emergency Response Team
- Communicate with the transportation department concerning transportation arrangements
- Make requisitions and receives, account for and distribute school supplies, textbooks, and materials; take periodic inventory
- Supervise students who come into the office
- Administer first aid and parent-authorized medication to students for the purpose of meeting their immediate health care needs
- Support with all booking filed studies as well as logistics, chaperones and bussing

Office Assistant | Reports to Office Manager, Manager of Operations or HOS
- Perform similar, related duties as assigned, related to the Office Manager
- Serve as building receptionist; answer phone and in-person inquiries from students, staff, parents and the public; screen calls for the Head of School, staff, and students
- Receive and distribute daily mail
- Make copies and assist with copies of staff bulletin and school newsletter
- Register incoming students and process enrollment materials; complete data input on computer; coordinate services and information with sending/receiving school and district offices; complete procedures for students withdrawing from the school
- Record maintenance for students and staff attendance including absences
- Submit daily lunch count; may generate and print weekly lunch roster
- Assume critical role in Equip Academy Safety and Security, Emergency Response Team
- Supervise students who come into the office
- Administer first aid and parent-authorized medication to students for the purpose of meeting their immediate health care needs
- Support with all booking filed studies as well as logistics, chaperones and bussing

Manager of Operations | Report to HOS, Associates Degree Required
- Operations: Data Management (attendance, assessment results, progress/report cards), Serve as Chief Procurement Officer with oversight over ordering office, classroom, technology, custodial, maintenance supplies and record-keeping; Facility Management, Process Improvement such as day-to-day flow; Transportation and Food Service, Family and Community Engagement
- Human Resources: Compliance Maintenance to ensure school-level HR compliance with various employment-related government agencies, maintain personnel files, and administer benefits, Liaison with Public Education Department and business contractor, oversees On/Off Boarding

- Administration: Manage the efforts of all non-instructional staff, including contracted and non-contracted positions, such as office manager, Office Assistant, custodial staff, school nurse, volunteers, and contractors; participate in school community as full member of staff, including, but not limited to, assisting the HOS with leading student and staff recruitment, planning of school-wide events, and participating in all-staff retreats and team-building
- Business and Finance: Budget, Prepare annual budgets, working closely with HOS and financial back office provider (See Function: 1000, Job Class: 1411), and in conjunction with the Governing Board; Review school's monthly financial results with the Governing Board, monitoring spending in relation to annual budget, sharing highlights and concerns with Head of School; Share input with Head of School and Governing Board regarding finance initiatives, including year-end audit and fiscal policy-setting, Business management experience

Assistant Business Manager Professional Responsibilities | Reports to K12 CEOs, Business Manager and HOS

- HR files for all employees; Vendor files for all vendors; Procurement files (as necessary); Payroll records; Budget Adjustment Requests ; Grants & associated Requests for Reimbursement; Governing Board Meeting Packets and record keeping.
- Collecting and entering timecards; Collecting and entering employee leave; Print Payroll checks/upload direct deposit file; Reconcile Payroll Liabilities; and much more.
- Process all Purchase Requisitions; Process order receipts; Enter invoices; Print accounts payable checks.
- Budget development; Financial audit; Fiscal Year End transition.
- Enter cash receipts; Maintain Capital Asset and Inventory records; Scan and upload all documents to cloud storage and support Business Manager as necessary.

D.(3) Provide a **clear, comprehensive, and cohesive** staffing plan that demonstrates an understanding of the proposed school's staffing needs.

Equip Academy is dedicated to enrolling our projected students and hiring outstanding staff in all years. The Governing Board will hire Mercy L. Herrera as Head of School (HOS) during the first Governing Board meeting in August 2024. Post official hiring of the HOS, all hiring activities will commence. Our goal is to meet projected student enrollment and staff recruitment goals outlined in **FIGURES 83** and **84**.

FIGURE 83 - Teaching Staffing Plan Aligned to Budget

Staff Support	Y1 2025-26 75 Students	Y2 2026-27 150 Students	Y3 2027-28 225 Students	Y4 2028-29 300 Students	Y5 2029-30 375 Students
K	2	3	3	3	3
1st	1	2	3	3	3
2nd		1	2	3	3
3rd			1	2	3
4th				1	2
5th					1
Instructional Assistants	3	8	9	10	11
Enrichment	1	2	2	4	4
Total	7	13	18	23	28

FIGURE 84 - Administrative, Operational, and Support Staffing Plan Aligned to Budget[195]

Staff Support	Y1 2025-26 75 Students	Y2 2026-27 150 Students	Y3 2027-28 225 Students	Y4 2028-29 300 Students	Y5 2029-30 375 Students
Head of School	1	1	1	1	1
Office Assistant	1 (contracted)	1	1	1	1
Business Manager	1 (contracted)	1 (contracted)	1 (contracted)	1 (contracted)	1 (contracted)
Assistant Business Manager	1 (contracted)	1 (contracted)	1 (contracted)	1 (contracted)	1 (contracted)
SpEd Teacher	1 (contracted)	1 (contracted)	1	2	2
Office Manager			1	1	1
Education Coordinator				1	1
Assistant Principal In Residence				1	
Assistant Principal					1
Manager of Operations					1
Social Worker					1

Initial Recruiting and Hiring Process

At the highest level, our Initial Hiring process will be comprised of four (4) key steps:

- Establishing hiring committee (school leadership, teachers, community representatives)
- Advertising open positions through various channels, including online job boards, local newspapers, educational institutions, and professional networks
- Conducting thorough interviews and reference checks for all candidates
- Making decisions on qualifications, experience, and alignment with our mission and values

Because Equip Academy is an Institute for Educator Excellence, we plan on coaching up our teachers. Our number one goal is looking for Lead Teachers and Instructional Assistants to coach up and who are relentless about their practice and are extremely responsive to feedback. Mission and vision alignment will be key. We welcome Level I teachers to apply even if experience is limited. We are looking for highly qualified operational and support staff. Thereafter, we will include at least one of our own Equip Academy Teachers on the hiring team. All final hiring decisions will be made by the HOS.

FIGURE 85 - Year 1 Staff Hiring Plan Hiring Process, Timeline and Responsible Parties

#	Action Items	Time Frame and Frequency	Responsible Party
1	Establish Hiring Committee	Post Approval: August 2025	Head of School
2	Develop interview rubric and behavioral interview questions for each position	August - September	Head of School
3	Advertisements all social	Post Approval: August 2025	Head of School and

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[195] Business Manager and Assistant Business Manager will be selected by K12 Accountings CEOs based on fit.

	media outlets and Equip Newsletter with interest form included	and ongoing	Founding Board Member, Dr. Renee Delgado-Riley
4	Website Creation and Job Posting on various sights (Indeed, LinkedIn, Idealist, Alumni Job Boards)	September (until job is fulfilled)	Head of School
5	Cultivating Partnerships with educator preparation programs (UNM, NMSU, CNM, Teach for America)	September 2025 and ongoing	Head of Schooland Founding Board Members
6	Build Connections with avenues for and with potential applicants	October 2025 and ongoing	Head of Schooland Founding Board Members
7	Active Staff Recruitment	October 2025 and ongoing	Head of School and Founding Board Member and HR/Recruiting Expert, Vaadra Chavez
8	Review applications and select mission and vision aligned applicants	November - January 2025 and ongoing	Head of School
9	Phone Interview	February	Head of School
10	Candidate engages in a performance task	February 2026 and ongoing	Head of School
11	In-Person interview	February 2026 and ongoing	Head of School
12	Offer of Employment	Early March and ongoing	Head of School

Staff recruitment efforts will begin in the early phases of our implementation year and continue on an ongoing basis through early May 2025, with a hard deadline of having secured all staff members.

We will diligently seek out mission-aligned individuals for the school's Founding Team. Post-charter approval in August, our team will hit the ground running in August with our first order of business: advertise our approval on all social media outlets including our Equip Academy newsletter. Through these advertisements/announcements, there will be a link to an interest form included for potential applicants to express their interest. We are fortunate to have HR and recruiting expert Vaadra Chavez as a Founding Board member who comes with a wealth of knowledge in recruiting strong applicants throughout her various roles. As a Senior Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) certified Human resource professional, she will leverage her expertise to ensure our processes and plans enable us to find strong applicants who are vision and mission aligned. The proposed Head of School Mercy L. Herrera and Vaadra Chavez will take the lead in recruitment initiatives, and the Head of School will conduct all interviews and make all hiring decisions, recognizing the separation of governance and management roles and responsibilities. As a Founding Team, we have already made

significant connections during our outreach, organizing, and community input-seeking for the design of the school throughout the Albuquerque area, with our emphasis on the Westside.

By mid-September, we will move to creating a strong website where one can learn more about Equip Academy of New Mexico, what is expected of teachers and staff members, and apply to a job posting. This job posting will also take place on job search outlets such as Indeed, LinkedIn, and Idealist as well as alumni job posting boards, and will remain up until all positions are filled.

Starting in October, the Founding Team, including the Head of School and Founding Board members, will begin to cultivate partnerships with educator preparation programs. These will potentially be: The University of New Mexico, New Mexico State University, Central New Mexico Community College, Teach for America, etc. Again, the Head of School and Founding Board members will continue to build connections and seek out local avenues for potential applicants such as word-of-mouth. The inaugural year is one of extensive work, so the support of our Founding Team will be critical, but will consistently recognize the role of the Head of School who is charged with conducting all interviews and making all hiring decisions. We anticipate in future years that the Head of School with the support of a hired staff will be able to leverage and continue to build on these professional networking communities.

As outlined in **FIGURE 85,** action steps 8-12 will be owned by the Head of School; the HOS will review applications as they come in and select the mission- and vision-aligned applicants for a phone interview. Post the phone interview, applicants moving to the second stage will engage in a performance task to be submitted for review to the Head of School. For those who move on, in the third stage, the candidate will be invited for an in-person interview with the Head of School. The strongest applicants who have passed the three rounds will be offered an employment letter. Upon receiving clearance for the background check and proof of appropriate licensure, and after the Head of School follows up with applicants' recommenders, the applicant will be offered a position on the Equip Academy Team.

Ongoing Staffing Plan and Process

As we move forward and enrollment continues to grow, we will follow the same steps as outlined in our initial hiring plan and process, with the key modification to be the inclusion of at least one Equip Academy teacher on the hiring team.

FIGURE 86 Ongoing Staffing Plan

Hiring Cycles	Timeframe and Conformation	Responsible Parties
Identifying Staffing Need	January 15 – February 29 annually and as needed	HOS and Funding Board
Budget Analysis	February 15 - February 29 annually upon budget clearance and as needed	HOS, Business Manager, Finance board chair
Establish Hiring Committee	March 1 - March 15 annually and as needed	HOS, Manager of Operations and staff member
Post Job, Advertise and Recruit	March 15 - March 25 annually, budget allowance, and as needed	Manager of Operations

Interview Process & Candidate selection	March 26- June 10 annually, as qualified candidates arise and as needed	HOS
Onboard Hired Staff	April 1 - July 05 annually or as needed	Operations Team

Key Actions Steps for Ongoing Annual Staffing after Initial Year

- Identify staffing needs annually based on projected enrollment and programmatic requirements
- Develop hiring timeline that aligns with academic calendar, ensuring all positions are filled no later than two weeks prior to start of the school year
- Establish clear responsibilities for each step of hiring process and assign accountable parties
- Regularly review and update hiring process to reflect best practices and address any inefficiencies

Should a Vacancy Occur the Following Steps will be Taken

- Upon notification of vacancy, hiring committee will immediately initiate hiring process
- Update job descriptions as needed; advertise position using same channels as initial process
- Expedite hiring process to minimize disruption to academic program
- Utilize associate and substitute teachers or temporary staff if necessary to maintain continuity in classroom instruction

Adjusting Staffing Plan if Enrollment is Not Met

To ensure we adjust staffing due to differences in projected and actual enrollment, we will conduct periodic reviews of enrollment data to identify any discrepancies between projections and actual enrollment. As discrepancies may be identified, we will modify staffing plans to optimize resource allocation and maintain effective student-teacher ratios. We will prioritize communication of changes to staff and stakeholders to ensure transparency and collaboration in decision-making processes.

Plans to Ensure Highly Qualified Staff are Hired in a Timely Manner Annually and as Needed

To ensure Equip Academy can consistently hire highly qualified staff in a timely manner, the staffing plan and process will employ several strategies:

1. **Early Planning and Forecasting**
   - School will conduct annual review of staffing needs based on projected enrollment numbers, programmatic requirements, and any changes to curriculum or initiatives
   - By starting hiring process early, the school will have ample time to identify suitable candidates and address any unexpected vacancies
2. **Robust Recruitment Efforts**
   - School will implement multi-faceted recruitment strategy to attract highly qualified licensed staff
   - Strategy may include advertising vacancies through various channels (online job boards, educational networks, social media platforms) and partnerships with local colleges and universities
   - Attending job fairs and hosting recruitment events will also provide opportunities to connect with potential candidates
3. **Competitive Compensation and Benefits**:
   - School will offer competitive salaries and benefits packages to attract top talent

- School will provide opportunities for professional growth and advancement, making school an attractive employer for experienced educators

4. **Streamlined Hiring Process**
   - School will establish well-defined hiring process with clear timelines, responsibilities, and accountability
   - Process will involve screening applications, conducting interviews, and checking references efficiently to expedite selection of qualified candidates

5. **Collaborative Decision-Making**
   - Hiring committee comprising school leadership, teachers, and community representatives will be responsible for considering strong candidates
   - Involving stakeholders in the hiring process ensures that candidates are evaluated from different perspectives and aligned with the school's mission and values

6. **Continuous Improvement**
   - School will regularly review and assess its recruitment and hiring practices to identify areas for improvement
   - Feedback from staff members, candidates, and hiring committee members will be solicited to inform adjustments to process and ensure it remains effective/efficient

By implementing these strategies, Equip Academy will be well-equipped to hire highly qualified staff no later than one month prior to the start of Summer Institute for Educator Excellence and fill any vacancies with the utmost urgency. This proactive approach to staffing will contribute to the school's ability to provide a high-quality educational experience for its students.

Plan to Support Effective and Timely Implementation of Academic Program/Curriculum during Planning Year and All Subsequent Years

The staffing plan and process for Equip Academy is designed to be reasonable and adequate to support the effective and timely implementation of the academic program and curriculum, both during the planning year and for all subsequent years.

1. **Staffing Allocation Based on Program Needs**
   - School will allocate staffing resources based on the specific needs of the academic program and curriculum
   - School will determine appropriate teacher-to-student ratios, assigning specialized staff for programs such as special education or English language learners, ensuring adequate support for extracurricular activities and enrichment programs

2. **Early Planning and Forecasting**
   - School will conduct thorough planning and forecasting to anticipate staffing needs well in advance
   - School can proactively adjust staffing levels to meet demand by analyzing enrollment projections, programmatic requirements, and any changes to curriculum

3. **Flexible Staffing Model**
   - Staffing plan will incorporate flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances and evolving program needs
   - School will adjust staffing levels based on enrollment fluctuations, potentially involving cross-training staff members to fulfill multiple roles, hiring temporary or part-time staff as needed

4. **Professional Development and Support**
   - School will prioritize ongoing professional development and support for all staff members

- School will ensure that teachers and support staff are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively implement the curriculum by investing in training opportunities, mentoring programs, and collaborative learning communities

5. **Clear Communication and Collaboration**
   - School will foster a culture of open communication and collaboration among staff members, administrators, and other stakeholders
   - School will facilitate effective coordination and alignment of efforts to support the academic program through regular meetings, feedback sessions, input opportunities

6. **Continuous Improvement**
   - School will regularly evaluate the effectiveness of its staffing plan and process to identify areas for improvement
   - School can make data-informed decisions to optimize staffing arrangements and enhance the implementation of the academic program over time by soliciting feedback from staff members, students, and families

Plan to Align with the Budget and the School's Projected Enrollment

To ensure our staffing plan and process are aligned with the budget and projected enrollment to ensure financial sustainability and efficient resource allocation we will focus on the following items.

1. **Budget Allocation**
   - Staffing plan considers the allocated budget for personnel expenses, including salaries, benefits, professional development, and recruitment costs
   - the school can make informed decisions about staffing levels and compensation packages while maintaining fiscal responsibility by considering budgetary constraints

2. **Cost-Effective Staffing Strategies**
   - School will employ cost-effective staffing strategies, such as hiring a mix of experienced educators and newer professionals, utilizing part-time or temporary staff when appropriate, and maximizing the use of existing resources
   - Approach will optimize the use of budgetary resources while still ensuring high-quality instruction and support services for students

3. **Flexible Staffing Model**
   - Staffing plan incorporates flexibility to adjust staffing levels based on changes in projected enrollment
   - School can avoid overstaffing or understaffing situations that could strain the budget by aligning staffing with student needs

4. **Enrollment Projections**
   - Staffing plan considers projected enrollment figures for each academic year
   - School can anticipate fluctuations in student population and adjust staffing accordingly to maintain appropriate student-to-teacher ratios and support services by analyzing enrollment trends and demographic data

5. **Efficient Resource Allocation**
   - School will prioritize resource allocation to areas that directly impact student learning and academic achievement
   - School will create an optimal learning environment within budgetary constraints, which may include investing in instructional staff, support personnel, instructional materials, technology infrastructure, and facilities maintenance

6. **Regular Budget Review and Adjustment**
   - School will conduct regular reviews of its budget and staffing plan to ensure alignment with projected enrollment and programmatic needs

- School will make adjustments as necessary to address any discrepancies between budget projections and actual expenditures or changes in enrollment patterns

By aligning the staffing plan and process with the budget and projected enrollment, we can effectively manage resources, provide high-quality education, and maintain financial stability over time

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D.(4) Provide a **clear, comprehensive, and compelling** plan for Professional Development.

Overview

At Equip Academy, our number one goal is student growth and achievement. This is accomplished in a multitude of ways, but one of the major drivers of student success is teacher preparedness. Teachers will hone into their practice, build their tool box, and, most importantly, know where all students are academically throughout the school year as a prerequisite to informed classroom instruction.

To ensure educator excellence and a data-driven culture, we will provide significantly 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. See Function: 2200, Object: 53330 for budget allocation from Year 0-5 to professional development and growth through curriculum, instructional, and management-based training. Teachers will be trained in instructional planning that drives student outcomes and they will be observed and receive daily feedback and coaching to continuously 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 whole class, small-group, and individualized goals, and we will meet frequently to discuss school-wide, grade-specific, content-specific, subgroup-specific, and individual student progress. Each of these priorities is designed to measurably accelerate the achievement of the historically under-performing student population we propose to serve. PD has been developed to meet the rules of NMAC 6.65.2.8 around meeting the highest standards for professional development through designing, implementing, and evaluating professional development programs that ensure all students are learning by using student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement. We will also regularly evaluate the success and effectiveness of teacher learning and student growth by tracking data doing an evaluation of our programming in accordance with NMAC 6.65.2.9. In order to continue to learn and grow by contracting experts in the field into our school, we will evaluate our budget and do a cost analysis of programming and allocate funds accordingly in accordance with NMAC 6.65.2.10 requirements.[196]

FIGURE 87 - Equip Academy Sample Professional Development Plan and Timeline

PD Session	Timeline	Responsible Party
Summer Institute for Educator Excellence	7/16-8/5/2025	Head of School, Assistant Principal in Residence, Assistant Principal
Weekly Educator Institute	2.5 hours per week Early Dismissal	Head of School, Assistant Principal in Residence, Assistant Principal
Weekly Observations	30 minutes per week	Head of School, Assistant Principal in Residence, Assistant Principal
Weekly Planning Meetings	35 Minutes	Head of School, Assistant Principal in

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[196] 6.65.2 NMAC.

		Residence and Grade Team Leads, Assistant Principal
Bi-Monthly 1:1 Goal Setting Meetings	30 minus per	Head of School, Assistant Principal in Residence, Assistant Principal
Mid-Year Full Day PD	7 hours January 5	Head of School, Assistant Principal in Residence, Assistant Principal
External Development: Curriculum, State Mandated Requirements	As required, as needed and ongoing	Contracted Vendors or Head of School, NM State Personnel
Mentorship Through Grade Team Lead	Weekly Meetings	Grade Team Leaders
Whole School Data Study	Quarterly	Head of School, Assistant Principal in Residence, Assistant Principal
Book Study	Annually	Head of School, Assistant Principal in Residence, Assistant Principal
Programming Evaluation	Annually	Head of School, Governing Board

Equip Academy has a robust professional development plan and timeline. Our high-level Summer Institute for Educator Excellence sets the tone for the rest of the year's development opportunities. Teachers will come in three (3) weeks prior to school starting to engage in a plethora of learning opportunities. See below for a list of Summer Institute training priorities. Summer Institute will be led by the Head of School and educational experts in the appropriate field(s). Throughout the year, teachers will engage in weekly Educator Institute, held during early dismissal Wednesdays for 2.5 hours. See below for a range of topics included in our Wednesday PD. This will also be led by the Head of School and, when our budget allows, we will contract experts in the field to come present to and inspire teachers. Additionally, teachers will engage in weekly planning meetings with the Head of School or the designated supervisor post weekly observations. Teachers will set bi-monthly one-on-one goals with their supervisor. For the first few years, this will be the Head of School engaging in one-on-ones with staff and as the leadership staff grows will include other roles. Additionally, there will be a full day PD mid-year, currently projected January 5, 2026. There will be learning opportunities from external development, focused curriculum, and New Mexico State mandated requirements. These experts will be brought in and contracted as needed. Assessing the needs of educators and students is crucial and necessary in determining where our budget will be invested, and we are committed to remaining in accordance with NMAC 6.65.2.10. The Head of School will ensure that the needs are met for all staff members and that we have the budget to do so. Because Equip Academy is an institute for educators there are multiple opportunities for mentorship, not only from the leaders in the building such as the Head of School, Assistant Principal in Residence, Assistant Principal and Manager of Operations. There are also designated grade team leads to support on a more frequent basis. Grade team leads will meet with leadership frequently and will take back what they have learned to the team. There will be formal data studies after multiple major accumulative assessments which will give us a bird's eye view on how the students are doing and, in response, what needs to be done, adjust instruction to support students' needs. We will also have a book study annually where all teachers and staff will come together as a way to again learn from experts in the field based on the needs of the school. Lastly, there will be a thorough programming evaluation to ensure that it is being done and executed at a high level and mostly is supported supportive for students, teachers and staff and determine the effectiveness of teacher learning and student growth by tracking data doing an evaluation of our programming in accordance with NMAC 6.65.2.9 requirements for evaluation.

Institute for Educational Excellence: Summer Institute Snapshot

- Summer Institute For Educational Excellence
  - Week 1: The Fundamentals
    - Community and culture building
    - Mission and Vision
    - School design
    - Understanding and internalizing Equip Academy content
    - Equip Academy instructional coaching model
  - Week 2: Prepare and Plan for First 6-Week Routine Goals
    - Create a safe classroom environment
    - Build community and culture
    - Establish routines and procedures
    - Acclimate students to the classroom space and materials
    - Establish strong expectations
    - Reinforce academic expectations
    - Inclusivity and academic engagement
  - Week 3: Preparing the Physical and Academic Space
    - Lesson planning
    - Unit dives
    - Deliberate practice
    - Classroom and library set up

Institute for Educational Excellence: Snapshot of Example Categories and Topics

- Teaching and Learning
  - Culture and Management (positive reinforcements)
  - Inquiry-based and engaging approach
  - Teach Like a Champion Strategies
  - Deliberate practice (including teach-backs and peer feedback)
  - Collective Lesson planning
  - Effective teaming
  - Social-emotional learning
  - Culturally responsive learning
- Curriculum Internalization and Readiness
  - Unit Dives
  - Standards focus
  - Rubric internalization
  - Scope and sequence
  - Understanding assessments and check-points
  - Flexible reading rotations (cross class small groupings)
  - Materials preparations & Strong charting
- Data Dives and Action Planning
  - F&P reading assessment logistics and norming
  - Data Dive
  - Assessment norming
  - Whole school grading norms
  - Sub-group data analysis
  - Action planning
  - Work analysis
  - Accommodations and modifications

- EL assessments and screeners
- Serving All Learners
  - MLSS and SAT process
  - Tier 1-3 interventions
  - Referral process
  - IEP process
  - Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP)
  - Scaffolds, accommodations and modifications
  - EL process (screeners, ACCESS, supports and monitoring)
  - Gifted protocols
  - Special Education Laws
- Operations
  - Enrollment
  - Attendance
  - Safety drills and procedures
  - HR protocols
  - School supplies
  - Progress and report card logistics and reporting
  - School space protocols (how to manage and maintain shared space
  - Parent communication
  - Parent/teacher conferences

Cumulatively, Equip Academy professional development encompasses the four categories below. When meeting with all or a group of teachers, there will be an emphasis on a unit dive, data work analysis, deliberate practice, and/or lesson planning. All of these emphasize the core of a good school - teaching and learning, and always ask: What are the students' needs? What will educators do in response to students' needs and to reach our goals for them?

PD has been developed to meet the requirements of NMAC 6.65.2.8 around meeting the highest standards for professional development through designing, implementing, and evaluating professional development programs that ensure all students are learning by using student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement.

1. **Unit Dives.** Focus on content, grade level, standard alignment, necessary materials and charts, assessments and checkpoints, rubrics, scope and sequence, scaffolds for diverse learners (special education students: IEP, ELs, gifted students), high expectations, inquiry-based lens
2. **Data Analysis and Work Analysis**. Assessments and protocols, accommodations, exceeding/meeting/approaching/below grouping, assessment trends, action planning (reteaching, regrouping, small group focus, 1:1 support), at-risk students, MLSS tier interventions
3. **Deliberate Practice**. Teachers practicing planned lessons, giving and receiving in-the moment feedback, reflect and adjust teacher practice based on feedback
4. **Lesson Planning and Instructional Preparation**. Teaching objective, inquiry-based, grade-level standards alignment, roadmap of questions, back pocket questions, pacing and including diverse learners

Another major aspect of our approach to building educator excellence will be weekly teacher observations and one-on-one debriefs with teachers. Weekly one-on-ones will be for goal-setting around one or more of the four categories above, and each category will be either self-selected or assigned based on classroom observations. Goals will be attainable and measurable with a selected end date, and typically within one to two weeks. When observing in classrooms, school leaders will

observe around the goal as well as provide other feedback that will be most supportive of the teacher's individual needs. When observing, leaders will be looking for strong execution of inquiry-based teaching and learning, teacher to student ratio talking (students should be doing 65 to 75% of the talking and teachers doing the facilitating), strong management and routine systems, while prepared and internalized lessons, supports for diverse learners, and tracking informal data.

Mentorship

As an institute for educators focused on exemplary teaching practice, our goal is to create and coach teacher leaders. With our design for teacher development, teachers will be positioned to reach master teacher status and then be able to support others. The goal for creating strong teachers is so they can become strong leaders. Our team, under the leadership of our proposed Head of School, is planning and designing for teacher longevity and sustainability, starting in year one. Whenever possible, our goal is to promote leaders from within our teaching ranks. Therefore, we will give teachers ample opportunity to become leaders: lead teachers will be supported at a high level so that they can support their associate teacher, and there is opportunity for lead teachers to be grade team leaders (GTLs) who will then support and oversee their grade team with the close oversight of the Head of School.

E. Employees

E. **Clearly describe** the employer/employee relationship and provide **clear terms** and conditions of employment for all classes of employees (administration, professional staff, and administrative staff).

Employment Classifications

Staff will be classified as part-time or full-time, certified or non-certified, and exempt or non-exempt. Other individuals, including contracted employees, temporary employees, or contracted consultants.

- **Full-Time** employees work entire school year, at least 32 hours per week, qualify for benefits
- **Part-Time** employees work less than 32 hours per week, do not qualify for most benefits
- **Certified** employees hold requisite educator's license/certification in specific content and grade level area, as outlined by NM PED Professional Licensure Bureau.
- **Non-Certified** employees do not need to hold a licensure/certification in order to successfully complete requirements of job
- **Exempt** employees do not qualify for overtime pay; as per Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) which determines whether the staff member is considered exempt or nonexempt employee
- **Non-Exempt** employees qualify for overtime pay and FLSA will be used to determine whether an employee is exempt or non-exempt
- **Contracted Consultants** are not employees or qualify for benefits; independent contractors who work under agreed upon terms for a set time and goal
- **Hourly** employees work an agreed upon hourly rate and hours; staff such as office clerks, school aids, lunch staff, and custodial staff are considered hourly

Equip Academy Position Classifications

- **Administration** are full-time, certified, exempt employees
- **Lead Teaching Positions** are full-time, certified, exempt employees
- **Instructional Assistants** are full-time, certified, non-exempt employees
- **Operational Staff and Enrichment Teachers** are either full-time, part-time or contracted employees; they will be considered non-certified and non-exempt employees

Equip Academy of New Mexico Handbook Overview (For full handbook, please see **Appendix S.**)

Section 1: Introduction
- Overview, Mission and Vision, Core Values, Guiding Principles

Section 2: School Policies and Procedures
- At-Will Employment and Non-Licensed Employees, Background Checks, Code of Ethics, Contracts, Discipline of Licensed Employees, Health Insurance, Termination, Payroll Deductions, Professional Development, Salary Schedule, Staff Evaluation, Teacher Evaluation, Retirement, Transcripts and Licensure

Section 3: General Policies
- Agenda of Board Meetings, Assault and Battery on School Employee, Child Abuse-Neglect Reporting, Computer, Network, and Internet, Discipline of Students Policy, Dress Code, Drug and Alcohol Testing Policy Statement, Drug-Free Workplace Statement, Non-Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Disability Accommodations, and Grievance Procedures, Restraint Policy, School-Community Relations

Section 4: Instructional Procedures
- Assessment, Attendance, Copyright Law, Field Trips, Fire Drills, Grade Reporting, Inclusion, Instructional Supplies and Equipment, Lesson Plans, Parent Conferences, Releasing Students from School to Someone Other than a Parent or Guardian, Retention and Promotion of Students, Student Information System, Student Discipline, CODE OF ETHICS (NMAC 6.29.9.8), STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT (NMAC 6.60.9.9)

Employment Requirements

Basic requirements for all employees will include
- Background Check NMSA 22-10A-5
- Department of Justice Fingerprints Clearance
- Signature of Employee Contract NMAC 6.66.2.8
- W-4 form & I-9 Form

Additional Requirements for Administrators , Lead Teachers, and Support Staff
- Bachelor's or master's degree
- Proof of Teaching Licensure NMSA 22-10A-21
- Submission and Verification of College Transcripts
- Eligibility Determination NMSA 28-2-3

Work Schedules: Staff are to report to the building by 7:30 am and stay until 4:15 pm. The number of contract days for all staff categories can be seen below:
- Administration Members - 231 Contract Days
- Operational Support Team Members - 231 Contract Days
- Teaching Staff and Ancillary Team Members -202 Contract Days

Compensation, Pay Terms and Benefits

Teachers are of immense value, and we are committed to compensating staff accordingly. Our goal is to attract and recruit mission- and vision-aligned teachers and invest in them by (1) coaching up to mastery of teaching and (2) providing **compensation** that will reflect our high regard for teachers and teacher growth. We are committed to paying 10% over Albuquerque Public Schools pay scale for lead teachers; compensation will be dependent on years of experience, certifications, and educational credentials (please see **Appendix T** for a detailed description of salary breakdown). The **Pay Terms** for employees will be paid semi-monthly. Checks will be distributed twice per month, once at the beginning of the month and once in the middle of the month, for a total of 24 pay periods across the

year. **Employment Benefits for Full-time Staff** will include: health and life insurance, dental, vision, NM retirement plan, disability coverage, unemployment compensation, and worker's compensation, family and medical leave and Bereavement Leave.

Equip Academy Leave Requests Protocol

All staff will abide by the Leave Protocol and complete all proper forms. Requests will be submitted to the Head of School with a two-week notice. The Head of School may approve leave without pay.

- **Paid Time Off Days**. Each full-time staff member is entitled to either ten (10) or twelve (12) Paid Time Off Days, depending on whether the employee works the school year or the full calendar year. PTO may be used for any purpose, including sick leave.
- **Family Medical Leave Policy**. Eligible employees with unpaid, job-protected leaves of absence to attend to medical and family needs. In alignment with the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (Amended 2008), employees who have worked for Equip Academy for at least twelve (12) months and who have worked at least the equivalent of a full work year in the previous 12 months. FMLA is limited to 12 weeks of unpaid leave per rolling calendar year. Intermittent leave will be addressed according to FMLA Law, www.dol.gov/whd/fmla.
- **Maternity/Paternity Leave**. Equip Academy will offer paid leave for expectant mothers and/or fathers in conjunction with FMLA. To be eligible for parental leave, an employee must have worked for Equip Academy for a minimum of 1 year, per FMLA requirements. Employees may take the first six (6) weeks of maternity/paternity-related FMLA leave as paid maternity/paternity leave of up to 30 days with appropriate medical documentation, and then employees may take the remainder of their FMLA leave as unpaid FMLA leave.
- **Jury Duty**. Employees summoned for jury duty will be granted leave. Employees should inform the Head of School immediately, including proper documentation (i.e., Jury Duty, provided that the teacher attach documentation of summons or subpoena to the leave request). Employees will be expected to return to work on any day or part of a day when released early.
- **Bereavement**. Full-time employees will be entitled to take up to three (3) consecutive days off, with pay, to attend the death of an immediate family member. Two (2) additional days of bereavement leave are provided upon request if the employee has to travel out of the immediate area for a funeral. Family is defined as a spouse, domestic partner, child, parent, sibling, grandparent, or grandchild.
- **Other types of leave.** We are aware that there are other types of leave that may be necessary to grant to employees in the event of extenuating circumstances, such as family illness, military leave, etc. In this event, employees will submit a request to the Head of School, which will be reviewed for approval pursuant to state and federal law.

Equip Academy Employment Conditions

Our first value is excellence. We strive for excellence with all we do and all we say. It is crucial that each staff member is held accountable for their actions in order to ensure that Equip Academy functions at a high level and reaches its goals for students. Some employee actions can compromise the overall outcomes for student success based on individual decisions and actions. Our goal is to create leaders in the community who act in the utmost professional manner. Therefore, Equip Academy holds a high standard for all employees, including but not limited to:

- **Excellence.** Strive for excellence through all actions: attendance, punctually, intellectual preparation, instructional execution, assessment integrity, student accountability
- **Respectful Discourse and Actions.** For all school constituencies: students, families, colleagues, custodial staff, administration

- **Professional Behavior**. Maintain model behavior for students through positive actions and discourse and support in maintaining a healthy work environment
- **Professional Business Attire.** No jeans, leggings, sweats or sweaters, open-toed shoes, no halter tops, spaghetti straps, crop tops, low-cut tops; tops must be short sleeve or longer; no shorts or skirts that when hands are placed by side, fingers may not touch bare skin
- **Meeting Norms.** Co-created and agreed upon by staff; norms should be followed
- **Attendance is Key**. Teachers are to model punctuality by being punctual to work, meetings, community events, and professional development
- **Collaborate**. Collaboration is an important aspect of our school and interactions with one another should be positive, supportive, and uplifting
- **Solutions-Oriented**. Approach conflict or difficult situations with solutions; we are a growth mindset institution, and we can find a solution to any problem
- **Academic Accountability**. Staff should be dedicated to engaging in all professional development and internalizing lessons as a result of these actions is student academic growth

Employee Discipline

We hold high-standards for teachers, and we commit to supporting teachers and staff for the best outcomes in any given situation. However, there are a set of rules that will be followed for the safety and overall health of the school community. When these rules or agreements are compromised, disciplinary actions will be taken. Such comprising actions include, but are not limited to:

- **Unprofessional Behavior**. Vulgar, obscene, threatening, intimidating, or harassing or disrespectful treatment of others (student, parents, staff), or risky behavior that may unintentionally result in harm of others
- **Integrity Breach.** Dishonesty, including any falsifying of employment records, employment information, lack of testing integrity, not discussing conviction of any felony or crime, engaging in conduct that is a conflict of interest
- **Property Breach**. Theft or deliberate or careless damage or destruction of any school property, the property of any employee or student, or unauthorized use of school equipment, time, materials, or facilities
- **Inappropriate Possession.** Any firearms or any other dangerous weapons on school premises at any time; any intoxicant substance, including alcohol or controlled substances (unless such substances are supported by a valid prescription)
- **Insubordination**. Including, but not limited to, failure or refusal to obey the orders or instructions of Head of School or Administration staff
- **Attendance Breach**. Absence without leave, repeated tardiness, or abuse of leave privileges
- **Academic Accountability**: Employee is not participating in professional development, and/or not prepared for lessons, and, as a result, students are not making appropriate growth

Equip Academy Discipline Protocol

In the event that a staff member has compromised Equip Academy employment conditions and acted in a way that results in discipline based on employee habits, performance conduct that is deemed unsatisfactory to the level of our standards may result in disciplinary action from Equip Academy leadership. The discipline protocol will progress as follows. Note: Depending on the egregiousness or safety for others, some of the early responses in the progression may be skipped.

1. **Verbal Reprimand**. With any breach of behavioral/performance standards, employees will first be called into a meeting and receive a verbal warning with clear indications of how said behavior/performance negatively affects school, community, culture, or property. A record will be noted in their file and there will be a follow-up email to restate the issue and how the

individual can course correct. This verbal warning will also indicate that if the behavior continues to occur, there will be a written notice as a reminder of the disciplinary protocol.

2. **Written Reprimand**. If the employee's behavior/ performance continues to negatively impact the community, Equip Academy leadership will hold a meeting and present the employee with a written reprimand, noting their performance/behavior and indicating that they have now entered the second step in the disciplinary protocol; there will be support on how to course correct as well as notification of what's to come if the behavior of the performance continues. The written reprimand will be filed in the staff member's file and there will be a follow-up email to indicate the meeting and next steps.

3. **Suspension without Pay**. If the employee's behavior/performance continues, or if there is behavior that warrants a suspension, a meeting will be held and the employee will be informed of their suspension. There will be a written notice with a narrative describing what warranted the suspension and how it impacted the school community. The suspension letter will indicate the previous verbal warning, written letter, as well as the support offered to course correct. The number of days suspended will be at the discretion of the Head of School. In most instances, the suspension will likely be 2 to 3 business days. There will be a warning as to what could potentially happen next, which would be potential termination of contract or employment. After this meeting, the staff member must gather their things and leave the premises immediately upon suspension.

4. **Termination/Discharge of Employment**. To ensure safety and professionalism at all levels of our school, the fourth step in this four-step process will be the final step, which will include termination/discharge of employment (termination for non-certificated employees and discharge for certificated employees). If an employee cannot meet the standards set for staff around behavior or performance, even with the support and prior warnings, Equip Academy will proceed with termination of employment in accordance with the School Personnel Act, NMSA 22.10A.24. After this meeting, the staff member must gather their things and leave the premises immediately upon a termination or discharge.

Termination/Discharge Protocol

Termination for employees with less than three (3) years of experience at Equip Academy will receive a written notice in accordance with the NMSA 22.10A.24. Termination of employees with three (3) or more years with us are entitled to due process regardless of misconduct to ensure just cause:

1. **Due Process**, including documentation of unsatisfactory performance, attempts at remediation, and other procedures undertaken in order to support the employee to perform his/her role satisfactorily
2. **Written Intent** to terminate the contract
3. **Opportunity to Request a Hearing**, and request the reasons for termination, within five (5) days of receiving the notice of termination
4. **Formal Reasons for Termination** narrative written within five (5) days of written request for reasons of termination, Head of School or Board will supply termination reasons in writing
5. **Employee Statement Request**. If the employee submits a request to make a statement to the Governing Board, the employee may write a statement to contend that the termination decision was made without just cause; this statement must be submitted within ten (10) working days from the day s/he receives the written reasons for termination (not more than 20 days after receiving the first notice of termination, according to the above timeline)
6. **Governing Board Meeting**. The Board will meet to hear the statement submitted in the step above, no less than 5 days and no more than 15 days after receiving the statement; this hearing will follow the requirements as laid out in **Section E.** of NMSA 22-10A-24

7. **Notification**. Within five (5) working days of the meeting, the Governing Board will notify the employee of their decision

Renewal and Termination of Contracts Protocols

Renewal of Contract

1. Each licensed school instructor shall deliver to the Head of School a written acceptance or rejection of re-employment for the ensuing school year within five (5) days from the following:
   a. the date written notice of re-employment is served upon the person; or
   b. the last day of the contract year when no written notice of re-employment or termination is served upon the person on or before the last day of the school year.
2. Delivery of the written acceptance of re-employment by a licensed school instructor creates a binding employment agreement between the licensed school instructor and the Head of School until the parties enter into a written employment contract, which should be executed by the parties no later than the end of the existing contract.

Grievance Policy

Equip Academy's formal Grievance Policy and Procedure for our staff will be represented in both the Personnel Handbook and the Governing Board Policies. The Grievance Policy and Procedure can be found in **Appendix S**. We are dedicated to treating all employees ethically, fairly, and impartially. We value each of our team members and the skills, talents, and commitment they bring to our mission-driven work. We will work to create a professional environment where problems or concerns are intentionally discussed to ensure that our work environment is positive and productive.

Onboarding New and Returning Staff

It is important that there is awareness of and alignment with the Equip Academy Personnel Handbook, including all of its policies and procedures. Once a staff member has received an offer letter and contract has been signed, an onboarding process will be scheduled. The hiring policy will be followed through onboarding. Onboarding is done in the same way for all new and returning staff as a part of the orientation process. Onboarding will consist of learning about and agreeing to: expectations for teachers, all policies and procedures (required days, benefits, pay terms etc.). There will be an annual Handbook and policy dive during our first week together as a staff. Prior to the arrival of our staff in our first year of operation, we will create a detailed scope and sequence for professional development. For year one, all staff will be in attendance for Summer Institute for Educator Excellence. In all years thereafter, new staff will come two (2) weeks earlier than returning staff. The Handbook and policy dive will take place when all staff members are available. Throughout the year the Head of School and school leaders will continue to refer back to the Handbook at their discretion based on staff need.

F. Community/Parent/Employee Involvement in Governance

F(1). Provide a **clear, comprehensive, and cohesive** plan that describes school structures that will provide meaningful parental, professional educator, and community involvement in the governance and operation of the proposed school.

Meaningful Opportunities for Stakeholder Involvement: Operational and Governance Structures

At Equip Academy, we value parent opinion and encourage parent participation. With our school belief in Partnership, we know that the triangle of success is between parents, teachers, and students. As part of our school design, we have created purposeful opportunities for these three partners to collaborate for the achievement and success of students. Similarly, we value feedback from all educational staff and teachers and therefore have designed opportunities for these groups to share input, ask questions, offer feedback, and raise concerns.

Family Input and Participation

- **Family Conferences.** Every school year, we will host three family conferences for all families, and an additional family conference for families whose students are either potentially promotion in doubt (PID) or who are otherwise struggling in school.
- **Family Informational Sessions.** Every school year, we will host multiple information sessions to inform families about our curriculum design and share strategies on how to best support their students. We will host a literacy curriculum night (Love of Literacy) as well as a mathematician walking tour so that parents can see our math program in action, and will include a debrief session and a deeper dive into our math curriculum. Both are strong opportunities for parents to ask questions and learn how we are supporting their students' academic success.
- **End-of-Year Surveys.** At the end of each academic year, we will send a survey out to all families, inquiring about what we should keep doing (What is going well and working), stop doing (What is not working well and should be retired), and what we should start doing (share their input about what would benefit them or their student).

Advancing School Mission Through Family Involvement

- **Values.** Together, we commit to the Equip Academy Principles.

FIGURE 88 - Equip Academy Principles: Bringing Our Vision to Life through Partnership

TEACHERS	FAMILIES	STUDENTS
EXCELLENCE		
As educators, we show up every day prepared at a high level to ensure we provide the highest quality education that will inspire students to take ownership of their learning and do their very best. We hold *all* students to a high standard because we know they can achieve the demands set before them. We know that professionalism is key to our success and growth. We are kind, thoughtful, and considerate to others.	**As families,** we know that our children are held to a high standard at Equip Academy. We strive for 100% on time and daily attendance. We do our part to ensure our children show up every day and on time in order to give them the opportunity to do their very best and reach their highest potential. We are excellent in our actions towards all members of the school community. We are kind, thoughtful, and collaborative.	**As students,** we show up every day and on time because in order for us to learn and grow, we must be present. We try our very best in all things we do, and we work hard in all of our classes. We know that sometimes learning is difficult, but we will not give up. We are excellent in our actions towards all members of our school community. We are kind, thoughtful and collaborative.
QUESTIONING		
As educators, we question until we understand. We know that teaching is not easy, but we ask questions when we are unsure.	**As families,** we know that our children will be asked questions throughout the school day, that they will be expected to answer to	**As students,** with our teachers guiding us through big and small questions, we use our brains all day to do work that puts us on the

We foster engagement in every classroom, every day because authentic engagement is at the heart of learning. We are not afraid to ask questions. Dialogue and debate provide opportunities to actively listen, develop new ways of thinking, self-reflect, and take intellectual risks, ultimately attaining a higher level of understanding.	the best of their ability, and that they will always get help from their teachers and peers to grow and learn as they are doing serious and important grade-level work. We encourage our children to be curious learners, and we ask questions at home as well. We also question how our students are doing academically, socially, and emotionally.	road to a bright future, and we participate actively every day. We know that we may not understand right away, but we ask questions until we understand. We always take time to think about our answers fully, and we respectfully agree or disagree with one another, add on to each other's responses, and be eager to share our work and ideas. We work to find and develop strong answers that include evidence to prove and show our best thinking.

URGENCY

As educators, we value the time with our students and aim to make every minute count. Everything we do is with purpose and intention. We remain on track with set scope-and-sequence. We adhere to the schedule and utilize resources like timers and countdowns to stick to our daily schedule to remain on task. We actively monitor ourselves and students to hold accountability and work hard with urgency for growth.	**As families,** we know that our children are held to a high standard. Our goal is to support our children through this process so that they do their very best. We do this by encouraging our students to move with intention and purpose, to remain focused on nightly homework, show up on time, and work productively with support in getting all assignments and projects in on time.	**As students,** we move with purpose and intention. We want to learn and grow, and in order to do that, we must remain focused and on task. We monitor our actions and work output to ensure it is of the utmost quality. We do not rush, but move quickly and diligently in order to get the best out of our education. We also move urgently to complete our tasks and assignments on time.

INDEPENDENCE

As educators, we know that independent thinking is essential to students' self-discovery, creativity, and growth. We foster meaningful participation through high-quality curriculum and by focusing on ensuring that students are building critical reading and thinking skills through evidence-based learning, reasoning, and evaluation. We are proactive and grow our skills in order to find new solutions. We engage in data analysis and action planning so that we know where our students are academically and what more they need to continue growing.	**As families,** we help our children when they need help with homework and reading. We do not give them the answer; instead, we ask them questions based on supportive resources that the school has provided. We support our children's success by encouraging them to come up with answers on their own, doing the work of true learning.	**As students,** we take pride in our learning by actively listening, thinking about what is being said by our teachers and our peers, and sharing our thoughts and opinions. We participate by listening, evaluating, agreeing and disagreeing, explaining and proving our ideas. We do this by raising our hand, adding on to our peers' ideas, as well as expanding ideas and providing thoughtful evidence. We strive to ultimately do things on our own so that we become critical, independent thinkers.

PARTNERSHIP AND PERSEVERANCE		
As educators, we maintain open, frequent communication with students to ensure that they are aware of what they are doing well and what they can work on to make needed growth. We also maintain open, frequent communication with families about how students are doing and how they can be supported at home. We work together as a team to share best practices and support one another to achieve shared goals for all our students.	**As families,** we bring our children to school daily and on time to ensure they are not missing any learning time. We are aware of how our children are doing academically and socially. We ensure homework is completed thoughtfully and fully each night. We make sure our children read every day at home.	**As students,** we wake up on time to go to school every day. We come prepared with all the materials for the day. With our teachers' help, we try our best. We work on our goals, and we help our community and friends every day. We complete our homework and reading logs every night independently or with our family's help.
As educators, we embody perseverance by adopting a growth mindset and can-do attitude. When faced with difficulties, we keep trying, we learn from our mistakes, and we intentionally work to build our teacher toolbox and not give up when it gets hard. We embrace professional development, observations, feedback, and coaching.	**As families,** we know that learning is a process. Every day, we help our children to the very best of our ability. We help our children to stay focused on their school success, encouraging them to take on any goal they set. We know that if they do not get something right away, they can and will. If we get off track with attendance and on-time arrival, we actively work to course correct for the success of our children.	**As students,** we embody perseverance by adopting a growth mindset and can-do attitude. When faced with difficulties, we keep trying, learn from our mistakes, and intentionally work to find new solutions. We know that learning is an active process and that sometimes we might understand, and sometimes we might not, and that is okay, because we never give up. We try our best every day, and we work on our goals, and get extra help to learn and grow. We don't give up!

- **Celebrating Literacy and School Community.** We will hold specific events with our families, focused on our schoolwide priority for and in celebration of literacy. For example, each year we will hold three sight word ceremonies, two publishing parties with author awards ceremonies. We will also have an opportunity for families to write a fictional book, submit it, and potentially earn a family award. We believe in the importance of fostering community and belonging; one way we will do this will be through our 10 spirit days, many of which will fall on our Community Circle days and families are encouraged to attend. Additionally, all Board Meetings will be posted on the school's website and provided in the family newsletters, and families are always encouraged to attend.

Professional Educator Input and Participation

- **Annual Educator Institute and Weekly Whole School Wednesday Meetings.** Every Wednesday, staff and teachers will attend and participate in interactive weekly meetings. There will be an open time to share input, ask questions, or state requests for clarity on any particular goal or event we are hosting for students. For every major assessment or event, leadership will go through the logistics for the event to ensure that there is clarity for all. As part of every staff meeting, there is an open opportunity for staff to offer feedback for continuous growth and improvement.

- **Weekly Grade Team Lead Meetings.** GTLs will participate in Grade level meetings weekly with a member from leadership. As team leads and representatives for their grade, GTLs might raise a number of topics such as: field studies, assessments, curriculum, grade instructional/management needs, material needs, student spotlights, teacher spotlights, student concerns, teacher concerns, MLSS and SAT recommendations, professional development recommendations.
- **Weekly Leadership Meetings.** The administrators , including our operations lead, will meet weekly to discuss topics that pertain to the overall health of the school around instruction, behavior, field studies, assessments, teacher observations, and meetings.
- **Bi-Monthly One-on-One Meetings / Feedback Sessions.** Teachers and leaders may not feel comfortable to share everything during whole-school or team meetings. Therefore, bi-monthly, one-one meetings are another opportunity for professional educators to ask questions, raise concerns, or offer suggestions. One staple question that will always arise is, what support do you need from leadership to be successful?
- **Two Annual Surveys.** There will be Beginning-of-Year and End-of-year surveys for staff to share their feedback and concerns. BOY will consist of questions about identified needs for support and EOY will be a reflection on the year and how we can improve for the following year.

Community Input and Participation

- **Governing Board Meetings.** Community members will have the opportunity to attend Governing Board meetings. All dates and minutes will be posted on the website. There will be a specified amount of time allotted in each Board meeting for public comment. Per the Open Meetings Act, community members will be invited to give feedback, share ideas, and suggest opportunities for school improvement.
- **Partnerships.** Equip Academy intends to expose students to endless life possibilities. The partnerships we intend to establish will enter into open dialogue that focuses on student specific goals and experiences. We will actively seek out community input at all of our public events and within all of our community relationships, and will provide contact information on our website that allows easy and direct access to the school's administrators and staff members.

Culture and Equity Council

Per the Equity Council and Martinez and Yazzie Consolidated Lawsuit, Letter to District and Charter School Leaders, our Culture and Equity Council will include parents, educators, Board members, and school administrators members. The Culture and Equity Council will review and provide feedback on school policies (such as discipline policies), procedures, and handbooks to ensure they are equitable and unbiased and will advise the Board should they find any potential concerns in equitabilities. They will also review budgets to ensure Title 1 funding is being allocated accordingly. The Culture and Equity Council will meet quarterly, four (4) times per year to review policy, budget, and academic data as well as anytime we are adopting a new curriculum which they can review and then make the recommendations to the team. This Council will meet to assess and create reports in accordance with the Equity Regulations set in place by the Public Education Department.

Assurance from Equip Academy of New Mexico

While Equip Academy knows the power of partnership and strongly encourages family engagement, we provide assurance that family participation is not a factor of enrollment/disenrollment in any capacity. If any family who requests to opt-out of partnership opportunities, their request will be respected. The school will not discriminate against students or families who do not want to engage in

partnerships offered by the school. Families will not experience differentiated treatment from Equip staff. Family involvement, or lack thereof, will be respected.

Additionally, families are not mandated or required to access or accept support offered by Equip Academy. The students of opt-out families will not experience any kind of differentiated treatment. If families do wish to opt out for whatever reason, they will need to simply call or send an email/text to inform the school to either a front office staff person, teacher, OPS person, or school leader. Someone from the administration team will follow up to confirm the opt-out process, and they will be removed from the school's list-serve and there will be no repercussions.

F. (2) Provide a **clear, comprehensive, and cohesive** plan to receive and process concerns and complaints from the community and parents.

Overview

Equip Academy intends to support and partner with students, staff, families and our broader school community as much as possible. As described in **Section F(1)**, we are committed to frequent and meaningful engagement with the community to elicit their opinions and feedback pertaining to school life. We aim for openness and transparency and expect families, students, staff, and our broader community to do the same. However, we know that issues may arise and physical and mental safety are of our top concern as well as accountability; therefore, we have established a Grievance Protocol in compliance with NMAC 6.10.3.

Equip Academy of New Mexico Grievance Protocol

Grievance Initiation. If a community member has a grievance with a member of Equip Academy of New Mexico, the community member should first reach out directly to the specific staff member and express their concerns. If that is not possible, the individual will be encouraged to fill out an informal complaint form that captures the issue(s) at hand and the parties involved. Most grievances should be able to be resolved at this level. However, if a mediator is requested, the initiator and/or the staff member's initial supervisor may be the facilitator simply bear witness. Soft and electronic documents will be filed for safekeeping.

Formal Grievance Process. In the event that the grievance does not conclude in an agreed upon resolution, then the community member may proceed to submitting a formal complaint. Formal complaints regarding discrimination or harassment based on race, ethnicity, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, health, or age at by a staff member should file a written complaint to the Operations Lead staff member. If the complaint being filed is against the Operations Lead member, then it may be filed with the Head of School to include the following elements:

1. The name of the person filing the complaint. If the person who files the complaint is doing so on behalf of a student, then the student's name must also be included.
2. The date of submission must be included.
3. The contact information of the person filing the complaint, including address, phone number, and email address.
4. The date(s) the alleged discrimination and/or harassment took place.
5. The name of the person with whom the grievance is being filed.
6. A detailed description of the alleged incident(s).
7. The names of any witnesses or individuals who may have additional information about the incident.

8. Two-thee potential solutions for solving the issue.

Grievance Timeline. All formal grievances must be filed within 30 days of the original incident.

Formal Complaint Review Process. Upon receiving the formal complaint, the Operations Lead will do the following within 10 business days:

1. Conduct a formal review of the complaint
2. Investigate the complaint by conducting interviews for proper information gathering
3. Come to a conclusion based on review of complaint and investigation evidence (Head of School will co-sign on the conclusion based on presented evidence)
4. Attempt to resolve the complaint with a meeting with the complainant to present corrective or preventive solutions

We acknowledge that some grievances may require additional time to be resolved, however, our goal is to have a written summary of the complaint, review process and resolution within 20 days of the submitted formal complaint.

Appeal to the Governing Board. If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision by the Operations Lead, the final step in the Grievance Process is the appeal to the Governing Board which will review the appeal and respond within 30 days of receiving the appeal with a written response.

Transparency and Accessibility. We will post the grievance process on the Equip Academy website and ensure that any staff, student, family member, or community member will have quick accessibility to a public lead staff directory if an initiation is necessary. Additionally, we will maintain the confidentiality of the person(s) filing the grievance, as well as those who participated as witnesses or providers of information, to the greatest extent possible. Retaliation against a family member or staff member posing a complaint is strictly prohibited and can result in disciplinary action.

Grievance Assurances

McKinney Vento Act. Equip Academy is dedicated to ensuring that all students are welcomed, including students experiencing housing hardships such as, but not limited to: homelessness, children living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, campgrounds, cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations. This includes awaiting foster care placement, children living in emergency transitional shelters, or children sharing housing due to economic hardship and loss of housing will not result in disputes between the school and our families. The McKinney Vento Act requires that schools develop policies that ensure that students experiencing homelessness are able to access enrollment and attendance of schools without barriers. As per the Act, schools shall regularly review and update their policies to support students experiencing homelessness. Equip Academy intends to avoid McKinney Vento grievances through reflective review of our policies and practices around homelessness to ensure enrollment (including immediate admission) which includes attending classes and participating fully in school activities, including all enrichment activities and school programming, receive free school meals for the duration of the school year, receive priority access to the school Homelessness Liaison (the HOS will serve as initial liaison until staff member is selected and cross training is provided). However, if there is a grievance, we will first attempt to resolve the grievance through our standard process outlined above. If the grievance is not resolved, Equip Academy will follow the protocol outlined in NMAC 6.10.3, as outlined by the New Mexico Public Education Department. This process entails completion of the NMPED dispute resolution paperwork and a write-up of the school's response submitted to the NMPED Homeless Liaison within five days of the school's formal decision.

Special Education Grievance Processes. Equip Academy is dedicated to ensuring that all students are welcomed including special education students. We take pride in regular contact through our

partnership and community plan with families of students with special needs. Regular communication and student updates will prevent most grievances. In the case of a grievance that cannot be resolved through our standard grievance process, our special education grievance process will be based on the NMPED Parent and Child Rights in Special Education: Procedural Safeguards Notice. Equip Academy families should first follow the school's standard grievance procedure, or the school and the family may elect to seek out mediation from a trained mediator via the NMPED Special Education Bureau. If the conflict is not resolved with either of these means, the family may seek out local support organizations or advocacy groups, including a Parent Liaison from the NMPED. Finally, families may elect to file a formal complaint or request a due process hearing with the state. This process will follow the deadlines and requirements outlined in NMAC 6.31.2.13.

G. Student Recruitment and Enrollment

G.(1) Provide a **clear, comprehensive, and cohesive** outreach and recruitment plan

Equip Academy is committed to serving the Westside community while simultaneously providing ta

Inaugural Enrollment Task Force Leads

- **Lead Founder and Proposed Head of School**
  - Mercy L. Herrera, Educational expert and advocate for access to high quality education opportunities

- **Equip Academy Ambassadors Committee**
  - Equip Academy currently has a total of ten (10) ambassadors, seven (7) of whom are long-standing Westside residents, two of whom are educators, and all of whom are committed to quality education for their children and the children of Albuquerque.
  - Committed to supporting in the recruiting efforts

- **Founding Governing Board**
  - Vaadra Chavez, Chief Human Resource Officer, Securin
  - Dr. Renee Delgado-Riley, Director of Student Life Assessment & Research, University of Oregon
  - Sara Fitzgerald, Senior Vice President of Communications and Education Policy, Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce
  - M. Alejandra Grijalva-Becerra, Business Intelligence Analyst, Centro Sávila
  - Janet Leung, Director of Business Development, UNM Hospitals

Building Community Through Grassroots Organizing

Pre-Approval (Application Process)

Community Engagement Outreach Committee. During the application writing process, our Lead Founder and proposed Head of School has worked consistently to identify and secure educator advocates for Equip Academy of New Mexico. As a result of that work, she has assembled a number of Equip Academy Ambassadors. These dedicated citizens are concerned about the state of New Mexico's current educational programming on behalf of the students of New Mexico and some are long-standing Westside residents who have children of their own and care about the future of New Mexican children. They have reviewed, discussed, and informed the proposed school design and what we intend to accomplish. Together, they have attended events throughout the community, including at the Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce, Hispano Philanthropic Society, United Way of Central New Mexico, National Institute of Flamenco, New Mexico Kids Can, Westside Business

Associations, Save the Children Action Network, New Mexico Child First Network, Public Education Commission, Hispano Chamber of Commerce, and others and have attended the four (4) Focus Groups held by our Lead Founder and members of our Founding Team.

Founding Governing Board. In addition, Ms. Herrera has assembled Founding Board members who are equally committed to ensuring Westside students have access to a high-quality, unique K-5 educational option. This team has worked to gather letters of support, as well as survey respondents and Focus Group attendees. The Founding Board has been engaging in 14 hours of training beginning in December 2023 and which will continue through July 2024. Collectively, the Founding Board has engaged with 245 community members, including but not limited to: Senator "Moe" Maestas; Guiovanna Aguirre, Deputy Director at Centro Savila; Terri Cole, President & CEO of Greater ABQ Chamber; Amanda Aragon, Executive Director at NewMexicoKidsCAN; Karen Perez, Project Manager at Hacia Toward the University Project; Dr. Manuel Montoya Professor, UNM, Anderson School of Management; Adrian Pedroza, National Executive Director, Abriendo Puertas; Peter Sanchez, Atrisco Companies, as well as many others. For a more detailed list of our community outreach, please see **Section IV.** These actions are cumulatively setting the foundation for our inaugural, equitable enrollment, as we are building a network of people and organizations that support the work of Equip Academy on behalf of New Mexican children. By providing training sessions for the committee and Governing Board, we have been consistently setting the foundation to educate advocates on the importance of **Building Relationships with Prospective Families and Engaging in Community Outreach.** Whether it is through participating in school events, sharing positive experiences with prospective families, or representing our school in the community, we continue to demonstrate that community involvement is invaluable to our success. As stated, we have hosted four (4) Focus Groups and have received community input about our school model as well as overall feedback on how to better support the Westside community.

Equip Academy Enrollment and Execution Plan

Post Charter Approval (Planning Year)

The planning year will start as early as August 2024 by clearly communicating enrollment goals with strategies through an Equip Academy Enrollment Plan. In the Budget there has been a substantial amount allocated to marketing, advertising and all other expenses for enrollment. Year 0, the Planning Year, $5,000 will be used to be used specifically for marketing and recruitment efforts during our implementation year and similar dollars during each year's enrollment period (see Fund: 2300, Object: 55400). Years 1-5, $7,500+ will be spent on ensuring we are meeting our enrollment projections (see Function: 2300 and 2500, Object: 55400) see **Appendix G. Five Year Budget Plan for full rollout**. The Lead Founder, Founding Board will work with a team of Equip Ambassadors (a team of volunteers) to join in the Enrollment Plan and all outreach efforts will be done in languages accessible to our community. All Equip Academy Ambassadors will undergo continued training for talking points that highlight equitable access to the school for all students including Els and students with disabilities, frequently asked questions, and a script for community phone calls. Staff recruitment will coincide with our student recruitment and outreach efforts. As the founding teaching team are available, they will be encouraged to join in the student recruitment efforts. Below is the timeline for Lottery Draw and potentially Open Enrollment:

1. Community Outreach and Enrollment Interest Period: Date of Authorization or September 1st through December 31st
2. Lottery Enrollment Period: November 15th through March 15th
3. Lottery Draw: Last Friday in March
4. Open Enrollment Recruitment Plan

FIGURE 89 - Recruitment & Outreach Plan & Timeline and Plan

Responsible Parties	Associated Costs	Timeline
Equip Academy Press Release. Website goes live and paid advertisement through the *Albuquerque Journal*		
Lead Founder	Salary percentage[197]	August 2024
Purposeful Outreach Events. Under the leadership of the Head of School, as a team we will continue to attend networking events through our established connections listed such as West Mesa Community Center, Southwest Creations, Westside Business Association, Hacia Toward the University Project, Taylor Ranch Community Center, Hispano Chamber of Commerce, National Institute of Flamenco, etc.		
Lead Founder, Outreach Committee, Founding Board	No Cost	Ongoing
Westside Physical and Phone Canvassing. A logistics plan will be presented to all Equip Academy Ambassadors. We will do strategic neighborhood and park walks (door-to-door knocking). Canvassing will include Spanish volunteers to support with translation.		
Lead Founder, Outreach Committee, Founding Board, Equip Ambassadors	Flyer costs	#1 August #2 September #3 October
Community Events and Fairs. Equip Academy plans to participate in a multitude of recruitment events around New Mexico as they become available, including the National School Choice Week event that is held annually.		
Lead Founder, Outreach Committee, Equip Ambassadors	Table set up, banner & flyer costs	Annually and as they come available
Advertising. Equip Academy will engage in an ongoing Social Media and Mailing Campaign. We intend to contract with Annette Dominguez through Atomic Creative at KRQE to support us in these efforts. We will also utilize LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram to share 3xs a week to update the community on all relevant Equip Academy information such as the school model information, lottery process and enrollment tips.[198]		
Lead Founder and Founding Board Members, Equip Ambassadors	$500 per month (August – December 2025)	Plan: August Execute: September Ongoing: November-January Advertising: Ongoing
Daycare and Pre-K Outreach. Equip Academy will partner with Early Childhood Centers to offer presentations about school model information, lottery process and enrollment tips and invitations to School Pop-Ups.		
Lead Founder, Outreach Committee, and Founding Board Members	No Cost	As partnerships and agreements arise Goals: Weekly in August, September, October, November, February, March, April
Equip Academy Read Aloud School Pop-Ups and Enrollment Support. Equip Academy will engage in school		

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[197] The Head of School will lead all enrollment efforts; given the wide breadth of responsibilities for this role, we do not intend to infer that the salary expense for this position is solely or even largely in response to enrollment work, however, we do want to indicate the staff member costs, reflected in the budget, who will oversee the work.
[198] Meeting held on 1/3/24 with Annette Dominguez, Marketing Consultant & Strategist at Atomic Creative.

pop-ups at local libraries read alouds through an inquiry-based approach followed by Enrollment and Lottery Workshops.		
Lead Founder, Outreach Committee, and Founding Board	No Cost	As partnerships and agreements arise Goal: August, September, October, November, February, March, April

Open Enrollment Recruitment Plan and Year One of Operation

Through our work, we intend to establish full enrollment; should we not be fully enrolled at the time of our Lottery, we also have a plan after our Lottery Draw held during the last week of March. Cumulatively, we plan on doing the following until fully enrolled:

1. Take an All-Hands-on-Deck approach: Lead Founder, Committee Outreach Team, Founding Board Members, and all staff will support with Saturday outreach initiatives
2. Establish enrollment goals with measurable due dates
3. Host regular team meetings where staff members can share successful recruitment strategies and brainstorm new ideas together; ensure everyone understands the importance of their involvement in recruitment activities
4. Host bi-weekly school tours, open houses, panel discussions
5. Leverage classroom success stories of families, students, and staff for online and in-house recruiting
6. Utilize a dedicated online platform or group chat where staff can easily communicate, share resources, and collaborate on recruitment efforts
7. Organize team-building activities or workshops focused on recruitment skills development to foster a sense of unity and shared purpose among staff members
8. Share regular updates and progress on enrollment goals during staff meetings, reinforcing the importance of recruitment efforts and celebrating successes.
9. We plan to back-fill seats until November 24, 2025

Equip Academy Assurances: Demographics that Represents Local Community and Equal Access

Tuition Free and No Admission Requirements. As per NMSA 22-8B-4-K, Equip Academy will not charge tuition or have admission requirements and will welcome all students who apply and whose name is drawn during the lottery process.

Equal Academy Access. As previously stated, all students will be welcomed and will not be discriminated against. We will maintain compliance with all non-discrimination state and federal laws. We will not discriminate against students or families based on a person's sex, race, religion, national origin, ancestry, pregnancy, marital or parental status, sexual orientation, or physical, mental, emotional or learning disability. All outreach efforts, oral and written, will indicate that we are open to all students, including Els and students with disabilities, and all outreach and communication will be done in English and Spanish, and any other languages as needed to reach all families.

School Body Reflecting Local Community. We have planned for a focus outreach North of Central, South of Paseo, and West of the River. Our intention is to canvas and speak directly to families in communities with lower socioeconomic and communities where Spanish is the primary language, while also ensuring equitable access to all populations.

Effectiveness of Outreach and Recruitment Evaluation

As stated in our enrollment, Equip Academy will advertise and recruit in various ways - through social media platforms, door-to-door outreach, daycare and early childhood center tables and presentations, phone calls, as well as hosting community events like read alouds at libraries. Open to

all students, Equip Academy is dedicated to ensuring that our student population is represented by that of the Westside of Albuquerque, and therefore our recruitment efforts will be strongly localized. A part of our enrollment efforts is door-to-door knocking to inform people who may not have access to readily available social media platforms, where we also intend to recruit and outreach students. In terms of responsiveness, we will have a collection of data and the outreach and recruitment team will evaluate it based on demographics interests. Our goal is to aggregate various types of data, both qualitative and quantitative, and we will monitor and analyze this data with the lens of ensuring our applicant pool reflects the community on the Westside. Based on our reflections, we might boost and target outreach efforts to ensure equal access to the school and attracting a student body that is demographically reflective of the local community. We will evaluate our efforts in real-time to ensure equitable access within that enrollment period, and annually at the end of each enrollment period we will do a comprehensive review to inform any adjustments for future enrollment efforts. The Head of School will lead this review, and report findings and any action steps to the Governing Board.

G. (2) Provide a **complete, comprehensive, and cohesive** plan to implement a lottery admission process.

Overview

Our lottery admission process is highly supportive to individuals who may have never experienced a lottery process before and is equitable and fair. The lottery admission process has three distinct stages: the pre-lottery process, the lottery process, and the post-lottery process. Our goal is to ensure it is supportive and fair for all students and families who wish to attend Equip Academy of New Mexico.

Equip Academy's Supportive, Equitable, and Fair Lottery Processes

Pre-Lottery Process. Throughout our community outreach efforts thus far, it is evident that families of school-age children still are unaware of their school options. For example, one common question that families ask is "What is a charter school?" A part of our presentation during community outreach efforts is to explain the difference between zoned public district and public charter schools, reinforcing that both types of public schools are free, non-selective, and open to all students regardless of home language or ability. Many people assume that charter schools charge tuition. After explaining that charter schools are for everyone and an option provided for them, free of charge, they become more interested. In the same light, explaining the lottery process to families can be confusing, especially for non-English speaking families, and all outreach and communication are provided in English and Spanish. The date, time, and location will be advertised on our website, which also will be in English and Spanish, and all other social media outlets, including detailed information on the process of registration. Local families have requested that we provide to them an outline of the lottery's step-by-step process, which we will provide in all meetings, communications, and on our website. The lottery itself will be publicized and will be open to the public, however, families attendance is not required for enrollment. In response, we have incorporated the following supportive and equitable timeline plan:

- September 01, 2025 – January 01, 2026: Equip Academy accepts Intent to Enroll Forms
- January, 2, 2026 – March 27, 2026: Equip Academy Formal Application Opens (names will be accepted for Lottery Draw)
- March 27, 2026 (7:00pm): Live Lottery Draw for enrollment
- March 30, 2026: Waitlist or Open Enrollment begins until fully enrolled

The Governing Board as well as the Culture and Equity Council will receive monthly updates from the Head of School on the enrollment process and its details and outcomes. Additionally, this plan will be executed by the Head of School and in conjunction with the operational staff, and close, weekly review of enrollment applications from our target community will be done, adjusting any efforts as needed to ensure equity and fairness. This timeline will occur annually unless decided on otherwise.

Lottery Process. The Lottery Draw for our inaugural enrollment will be on the last Friday in March on March 27, 2026, from 7:00pm until all names are read or until enrollment is met and an ordered wait list is established, and on the last Friday of March in all future years. This event will be live. It will be in-person if facilities are ready, at West Mesa Community Center, or will be virtual to ensure fairness and equity. In addition, names will be pulled by a third party in order to remain fair and impartial. As per the New Mexico Statutes and New Mexico Administrative Code, if a student has a sibling or if a founding member or staff member has a child who wishes to enroll (so long as the total number of students allowed under this preference constitutes only a small percentage of the school's total enrollment.), this will be noted, and that child will receive a seat in their respective grade level. The Founding Board Members and the Community Outreach Committee will be in attendance of the live drawing. The families who are there will be able to formally register that day. Families who are not in attendance will be notified of their enrollment selection from March 30 - Friday, April 3, 2026 to confirm their seat by registering. In terms of responsible parties, the Governing Board as well as the Culture and Equity Council will receive monthly updates from the Head of School. Additionally, this plan will be executed by the Head of School and in conjunction with the operational staff to ensure equity and fairness. This timeline will occur annually unless decided on otherwise.

Post-Lottery Process. On March 30, 2026, and onward, if enrollment by registration is full and confirmed, a waitlist will begin. If families reject the enrollment opportunity by (1) a formal decline or (2) do not follow through by finalizing the registration process and, after five attempts, one week post lottery, the seat will be given to the next person on the **waitlist**. The waitlist will be first come first served. Student seats will be filled until we are fully enrolled. If there is no waitlist, we will move into **Open Enrollment**, where students will automatically be given the opportunity to register until we are fully enrolled. We will keep registration open as late as November 24, 2026. The Post-Lottery Process will be executed by the Head of School and in conjunction with the operational staff to ensure equity and fairness. This timeline will occur annually unless decided on otherwise.

Registration Equity and Accessibility

Our registration and enrollment team will ensure our lottery, registration, and enrollment processes are accessible for all families, starting from our recruitment. For example, we will ensure that our materials are translated, we will also provide both digital and hard copies of materials to ensure accessibility as well as supporting with filling out the application as needed (see **Attachment 1** for enrollment flyer examples). The enrollment team, fluent in English and Spanish, will host weekly in-person support at an easily accessible local public location and online office hours to support all interested families as needed. Additionally, in accordance with the McKinney-Vento Act, the Equip Academy Enrollment Team will make efforts to ensure the inclusion of homeless or transient families by working with local agencies that have close relationships with these groups to inform the locations and methods that will be most successful.

H. Legal Compliance

H. Provide a **current, clear, comprehensive, and cohesive** Conflict of Interest Policy.

Governing Body's Conflict of Interest Policy

Equip Academy of New Mexico's Conflict of Interest Policy adheres to and addresses the following provisions outlined in NMSA 22-8B-5.2. All violations of conflicts of interest may result in disciplinary and corrective action, including dismissal from the Board. Please see **Appendix A** for a full Conflict of Interest.

1. **Family Members.** A person shall not serve as a member of a Governing Body of a charter school if the person or an immediate family member of the person is an owner, agent of, contractor with or otherwise has a financial interest in a for-profit or nonprofit entity with which the charter school contracts directly. A person who knowingly violates this subsection may be individually liable to the charter school for any financial damage caused by the violation.

    a. Definition of "Immediate Family Member": A spouse, father, father-in-law, mother, mother-in-law, son, son-in-law, daughter, daughter-in-law, brother, brother-in-law, sister, sister-in-law, or any other relative that is financially supported by the Governing Board Member

2. **Conflict of Interest.** No member of a Governing Body or employee shall participate in selecting, awarding, or administering a contract with the charter school if a conflict of interest exists. A violation of this subsection renders the contract voidable.

3. **Chartering Authority**. Chartering authority members may not serve on charter's governing body. A chartering authority is ineligible to serve on the governing body of the charter school chartered by the chartering authority.

Nepotism Assurance

The Equip Academy of New Mexico Head of School will refrain from hiring immediate family members and Governing Board members will refrain from voting in members or employees who are immediate family members, in adherence to the NMSA 22-8B-10 and all statutory requirements. Should an occasion arise where the best qualified person for a position is an immediate family member, the matter should be immediately referred to the Governing Board for consideration and guidance. If there is not a consensus, the Board Chair will refer to the PEC for guidance.

Timelines

The Governing Body for Equip Academy will review and vote on the Conflict of Interest Policy during the first Board meeting following authorization by the PEC. The Governing Board will review and adapt the policy annually at the start of each fiscal year thereafter.

Sample Disclosure Statements

A written and signed acknowledgment of the Conflict of Interest Policy is required as it serves as an opportunity to identify potential conflicts of interest before signature. The disclosure statements may contain the following to ensure transparency, integrity and accountability for the Governing Board and Head of School:

- Describe any relationships, circumstances, or positions in which you or any immediate family members have that may be in conflict with the Equip Academy of New Mexico Conflict of Interest Policy.

- I have carefully read and reviewed the Conflict of Interest Policy. I ensure that the information stated above is true to the best of my knowledge, as per the most current Equip Academy of New Mexico Conflict of Interest Policy. I will adhere to the policy for the duration of my employment or membership with the school.

Responsible Parties

The responsible parties who will provide oversight for accuracy and fidelity include the Head of School, Board Chair, and the Equip Academy of New Mexico Governing Body. All Conflict of Interest Letters/Agreements will be signed and filed by the Secretary Board Member. The Governing Board will review and adapt the policy annually at the start of each fiscal year and resign thereafter ensuring compliance and integrity.

I. Evidence of Partnership/Contractor relationship (if applicable)

I.(1) If there is /are third party relationship(s) (partner organization, a contractor, foundation) that are essential to the existence of your charter school, governance, key instructional staff, or management functions, identify them (entity, person, contact information etc.).

Equip Academy of New Mexico does not have any third party relationships or partner organizations/contractors/foundations that are essential to the existence of our charter school, governance, key instructional staff, or management functions.

I.(2) If applicable, provide and attach as **Appendix D**, a proposed, **signed, clear, formal** agreement between the applicant and each third party relationship **OR** memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the applicant and each prospective third-party.

Not applicable.

J. Transportation and Food

J. (1) If applicable, state how the proposed school plans to offer transportation to its students.

For further information, please see the following link:
https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/transportation/.

Transportation Plan

Equip Academy has not currently reasonably assumed funds within the budget to supply transportation to the students who will attend the school. However, upon approval, we will be eligible to apply for grants including the Charter School Programs (CSP) grant. With grant funds, we will allocate dedicated revenues to bus students for the start-up year. After year-one, SEG operational funds will be allocated to pay for transportation. We will continue to apply for grants to pay for the difference not being covered by state transportation allocation. During the Planning Year, Equip Academy's Head of School will establish a bus plan by August 15, 2026 and the plan will be finalized by September 29, 2025 post research and agreement negotiations. The plan will include:

- Identifying equipment purchase or contracting needs
- Identifying hiring and or contracting needs
- Hiring or contract to ensure that all requirements under NM 22-8-27 are met by "establishing a systematic program for the purchase of necessary school bus transportation equipment"
- Establishing training needs and inspection process needs to ensure that the following 6.41.2.9 state statutes are met which include but not limited to: Record keeping for bus maintenance ensuring safety with proper audit program, ensuring semi-annual inspections with proof via a record, random inspections (potentially daily with proof of record keeping from contractor, driver inspections for appropriate licensure, etc.
- Establishing travel routes and pick up/drop off points, working directly with the vendor to establish the most efficient and accessible routes for students as per NM 22-16-4 code.
- Establishing transportation policies and practices
- Identifying student transportation needs; transportation plan costs

Should transportation accommodation be included as part of a student's individualized education plan, Equip Academy is committed to accommodating transportation in all years of operation in order to meet the student's IE as per NM 6.41.4.7 code.

Possible Vendors are Herrera School Buses and Coaches[199] (North West Albuquerque) and Albert Sanchez Bus Company (South West Albuquerque). Post-charter approval and as a CSP Grant recipient, we will meet with vendor(s) and negotiate contractual terms for Equip Academy students.

J. (2) If applicable, provide a plan to offer food services to students (e.g., contracting with approved/appropriate food service vendors, providing free and reduced lunch).

Food Services

Equip Academy of New Mexico understands the importance of providing proper nutritional options for all students. With 96.4% of Westside students eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch, we will provide breakfast, snack, and lunch to all of our students. We will provide our students with two full nutritious meals each school day in alignment with federal nutrition guidelines and in order to ensure students are well nurtured and energized while under the supervision and care of Equip Academy.

Accommodations. Students with any religious restrictions will be upheld and accounted for as part of our food services plan. Students with sensitivities and/or food allergy limitations will be upheld and accounted for as part of our food services plan. The Head of School and operational staff will ensure that teachers and lunch staff will be aware of restrictions and these students will be accommodated for and will receive a meal that has the same nutritional value for breakfast, lunch, and snack.

Compliance and Record Keeping. The school will maintain the environment of designated eating areas and ensure health permits are in accordance with both city and state law. The food service staff and custodian will work to ensure that the designated eating area environments are clean and compliant with state laws in maintaining an environment conducive to safe food service and consumption. The school will remain receptive to all food service inspections as required by the food service provider, City of Albuquerque, State of New Mexico, and Public Education Department. In addition, the Head of School will conduct a monthly inspection of the food service environment in accordance with the documented guidelines of the New Mexico Environmental Department. As per our enrollment processes, we will request families notate any and all restrictions to ensure that we can accommodate them. Operational staff will maintain records for safe keeping. Additionally, all

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[199] "Herrera School Buses and Coaches" has no relation to the proposed Head of School, Mercy L. Herrera

food-related medical allergies will be documented and made aware to all appropriate parties to ensure student safety. These records will be saved via hard and soft copies in our selected data system upon approval. Additionally, we will keep all records to comply with all state and federal food standards and regulations. For example, we will maintain the accurate number of breakfasts and lunches that our students receive each day. These records will also include which students qualify for free lunch, reduced, or paid, the types of foods that are distributed, and all Free and Reduced Lunch applications that we have received.

Planning, Budgeting, and Possible Vendors. Equip Academy understands the importance of planning and budgeting for the necessary equipment required to ensure the quality of the food is not compromised. The Head of School and operational staff will work with the Governing Board in creating the Request for Proposals (RFPs) with proposed food service vendors. Through the Association of Charter School Education Services (ACES) with Albuquerque vendors such as Canteen or JMP, our RFP will go out no later than November 1, 2024, with proposals due by December 16, 2024. Decision for the selected food service vendor will be made by January 6, 2025 to ensure there is ample time to purchase and ready equipment such as a food warmer and a refrigerator with double doors, along with a cooler for milk and other perishable beverages. As required, Equip Academy will cover the cost for meal payments until reimbursements for programming from the government are received. The Head of School and operational lead will partner to manage the food service programs with support from the cafeteria staff (contracted staff or Instructional Assistants) that manage the food service environment for students. Additionally, post charter approval, the Head of School and founding Board will begin the application process for the Health Universal School Meals Program offered by PED to cover meal costs for all students as well as potentially, USDA National School Lunch and Breakfast Program (NSLBP) and National School Lunch Program (NSLP) After School Lunch Program. Please see below for the timeline to establish a PED approved food service vendor:

- Fall 2024
  - Research food service provides through ACES (food services that are nutritious and offer various food restrictions)
  - Submit applications for Health Universal School Meals Program, USDA and NSLBP
- Spring 2025
  - Finalize contract with selected food service provider
  - Inspect food service area(s) to ensure prepared (food warmer, utensils station, washing station and proper outlets)
  - Contract food services providers and provide them with proper training
- Summer 2025
  - As students are being enrolled, update student allergies and food restrictions in the student portal. Establish a tracking system for ordering, delivery, inventory check etc.

K. Facilities/ School Environment

Applicants must complete the required Facilities Master Plan Ed. Spec. Checklist form, referenced below as III M. (1), and submit it to the Public Schools Facilities Authority no later than **the published deadline in the month of April**. The Facilities Master Plan/Ed. Spec. Checklist form can be accessed on the PSFA website at:

nmpsfa.org/legacy/pdf/planning/Charter_School_FMPEd_Specs_Renewal_Program_August_2019.pdf

Please see **Appendix E** for our Facilities Master Plan and the Public Schools Facilities Authority (PSFA) approval letter.

K. (2) Provide evidence that you have researched facilities/properties and **identified at least one appropriate, viable facility/property in the targeted geographic location**.

Facilities Task Force

Equip Academy of New Mexico is working closely with Homewise, a local non-profit whose mission is to strengthen New Mexico neighborhoods so that individuals and families can improve their quality of life. One of their initiatives includes responsive community development approaches and supporting charter schools with their facilities' needs. They do this by helping to remove the logistical and economic barriers to securing a purpose-built educational facility. The Equip Academy Facilities Task Force consists of: Mercy L. Herrera, Lead Founder and Proposed Head of School; Jen Mulliniks, Homewise Commercial Development Project Manager; and Paul Aguilar, Budget Support Specialist. Together we are working to identify appropriate facilities that will suit the needs of our educational programming and be financially feasible. Pending the Public Education Commission's authorization of a charter for Equip Academy of New Mexico, and during the planning year of 2024-2025, Equip Academy will rely on the Facilities Task Force to continue the process of identifying potential facilities. The Facilities Task Force will meet regularly to review progress and next steps in the facilities search and acquisition process, and provide facility information and updates to the Governing Board at monthly board meetings. Equip Academy's Proposed Founding Board members include: Vaadra Chavez, Chief Human Resources Officer for Securin; Dr. Renee Delgado-Riley, Director of Assessment & Research, Division of Student Life at Univ. of Oregon; Sara Fitzgerald, SVP Communications and Education Policy at the Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce, M. Alejandra Grijalva-Becerra, Business Intelligence Analyst at Centro Savila; and Janet Leung, Director of Business Development at UNM Hospitals. Desired Location Description: The preferred location for Equip Academy is the Westside of Albuquerque, West of the Rio Grande, South of Paseo del Norte, and North of Central Avenue.

Program of Spaces

As our cap of 450 students will not be reached until year 6 (2030-31), we will aim to phase our facility usage to coincide with enrollment. We may need to lease a smaller site for the school's first years and then relocate to a larger, long-term site as enrollment and operational funding grow. Enrollment will be phased incrementally until we reach our cap. Equip Academy's enrollment is projected to reach our proposed cap of 450 students in year 6. Equip Academy's school design model is to roll out grade by grade every year, with 2 classes of 25 kindergarten students and 1 class of 25 first graders. We will increase kindergarten to 3 classes of 25 for each grade and roll out accordingly each following year.

FIGURE 90 - Phasing of Enrollment Until Cap is Met[200]

Grade	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31
K	50	75	75	75	75	75
1st	25	50	75	75	75	75

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[200] Please note phasing of enrollment was updated from starting with only kindergarten to kindergarten and first grade. This decision was made based on community demand.

2nd		25	50	75	75	75
3rd			25	50	75	75
4th				25	50	75
5th					25	50
Total Students	75	150	225	300	375	450

Facilities Research and Outreach for Potential. We have identified six prospective sites to date. The table below summarizes the status of each.

FIGURE 91 - Building Search/Location Efforts to Date

Building Address	Location	Benefits	Constraints	Next Steps
5200 Sequoia Rd NW Albuquerque, NM, 87120	Within desired location	Available for acquisition immediately; great location; proper zoning; suitable site for a school	Significant tenant improvement needed for e-Occupancy (2 of the 3 buildings would need to be demolished) and educational programming	Schedule feasibility meeting with architect
7445 Pan American Fwy NE Albuquerque, NM, 87109	Outside desired location, but reasonably accessible	First floor available immediately for Tenant Improvements; proper zoning, great visibility and 25k sf	Needs to be brought up to e-Occupancy, not much room for playspace/field	Schedule site tour
2600 American Road NW Albuquerque, NM, 87124	Within desired location	Newer class B office building with modern aesthetic and lots of natural lighting	Site is very small and may be prohibitive for bus access; only 13k sf available in time for Tenant Improvements (TI); Other tenants are occupying some space with long lease terms and space is not ideal for a school	No longer considering because of square footage limitations
1900 Randolph SE Albuquerque, NM, 87106	Outside of desired location	e-Occupancy classification; formerly occupied by a charter school; budget friendly; ready immediately	Likely too far out of desired location; Just 25k sf and little room to grow	Develop property pro forma
1905 Mountain NW, Albuquerque, NM 87104	Downtown Albuquerque (on Mountain, near Rio Grande)	Formerly Alice King Community School; already has e-Occupancy; available immediately; next door to Explora Children's Museum and Learning Center	For lease only with no option to purchase in the future; max 5-year lease; at risk of being leased prior to need	Checking with landlord on lease start date; schedule site tour

5411 Jefferson St. NE, Albuquerque, NM 87109	Off Jefferson between Singer and Pan American Freeway	Well-kept office facility on 4+acres with Centria Autism as a co-tenant; 38k sf available immediately with option to request space as needed; spacious site for buses; light TI needed	Asking price is high; may be too far out of desired area	Need to fine-tune pro forma to understand if this is financially feasible, schedule a site tour

FIGURE 92 - Potential Location at 1905 Mountain NW

Potential Site Specifications:
The potential address location is 1905 Mountain NW, Albuquerque, NM 87104. This facility is a former school and already meets NMAC 6.27.30, e-occupancy. The total square footage: 22,000 SF which meets the needs for the first 3-4 years of operation since we have a slow progression enrollment model. The facility is priced reasonably with $22.50/SF. This location is not west of the river but is aligned with our prioritized location and. This facility is available immediately and has not been leased since 2018. There are lots of student learning opportunities in this location. This facility is steps away from Explora Children's Museum and Learning Center, New Mexico Museum of Natural History Science, The National Institute of Flamenco, Old Town and the Albuquerque Museum which make for great potential partnership and learning opportunities for students at Equip Academy of New Mexico. Some constraints for this location are for lease only with no option to purchase in the future, the max initial lease is 5-year lease and there is a potential of this facilitating being leased prior to approval.

Capital Plan

As our cap of 450 students will not be reached until year 6, we will aim to phase our facility usage to coincide with enrollment. We may need to lease a smaller site for the school's first years and then relocate to a larger, long-term site as enrollment and operational funding grow. In the planning and year one of operations, Equip Academy will utilize start-up funding from Excellent Schools New Mexico (and other potential grant funds) and will use SEG operational funds moving forward to prepare the facility for our programmatic and student needs. Equip Academy's budget assumes a lease assistance reimbursement rate of $815 per student. The budget assumes that the first year will be based on year one's 80th day membership as outlined in 22-24-4 NMSA 1978 and the following years will be based on the prior year's average of 80th and 120th day membership. (See FUND: 31200)

Facilities. Equip Academy is currently searching for a facility that will accommodate a growing model and highly rigorous, literacy rich, and supportive academic program. The school is looking for a commercial building that is a minimum of 18,000 square feet. To build a budget for facilities the school assumed they would find a space of approximately 18,000 square feet. They assumed the cost would be around $15.00/sq ft based on current rental rates for commercial buildings. Equip Academy has assumed a yearly increase of 5% to rent. With the support of Homewise, the school built their budget on the assumption that the landlord would provide all buildout of the building to get it up to state adequacy standards. Equip Academy built the budget with the assumption we would receive lease

assistance in the first year of operations, but also have to supplement the rent from the operational fund until a permanent building is identified. The school assumed in year 4 they would move into a larger building of 30,000 square feet at around $17.00/sq ft. Expenses associated with the lease expense are found in object 54610.

Utilities. Utilities were budgeted with the assumption that they would cost similar to what other charter schools in similar sized buildings were paying for utilities. They also include the assumption that they would increase with the increase of enrollment. Equip Academy budgeted utilities with a yearly increase of 15%. Expenses associated with utilities can be found in object 54411 through 54416.

FIGURE 93 - Current and Future Financial Resources Available or Expected

Year	Students	Type of Funding	Per Student Amount	Total Lease Assistance Funding
2025-26	75	Lease Assistance	$815	$61,125
2026-27	150	Lease Assistance	$815	$122,250
2027-28	225	Lease Assistance	$815	$183,375
2028-29	300	Lease Assistance	$815	$244,500
2029-30	375	Lease Assistance	$815	$305,625

*Note: Initial facility funding will include PSFA lease reimbursement funding as well as other start-up and operational funds. In subsequent years, enrollment growth and associated funding will allow for additional use of operational funds to meet lease and lease-purchase opportunities. The table above reflects lease reimbursement only as additional amounts needed and available will be determined by the facility selected and associated enrollment numbers.

Site Plan

FIGURE 94 - Planning Year and Year 1 Draft Timeline

Year	Month	Action Steps
2024	March	Mid-March: Submission of Facilities Master Plan Continue to Identify potential facilities
	May	Schedule sight visits and obtain contractor/architect assessments Create timeline of projects in conjunction with assessments
	June	Submission of Charter Application Continue to identify just-right facility options
	August	Identify facility for first 3-5+ years of operation
	September	Begin lease negotiations with landlord(s)
	October	Finalize lease terms Plan out school layout for occupancy Determine facilities renovations needed, align contractors and architects

2025	November	Begin facilities renovation projects (to be completed by April 2025)
	January	Mid-process reviews, progress to completion
	February	Continue progress monitoring of facility
	March	Order furniture, ensure adequate technology infrastructure
	April	Goal for facility updates completion, order furniture and technology equipment
	May	Prepare for occupancy (move in furniture, prepare facility student and teacher spaces for occupancy, ensure technology capabilities are in place)
	June	Continue the process to prepare spaces for occupancy, prepare emergency and operations plans, hang building room signs, schedule inspections, etc.
	July	Mid-July: Institute for Educator Excellence begins
	August	Early August: Start of school for students

III. Financial Framework

A. School Size

State the requested enrollment, grade levels to be served, and student/teacher ratio. Please note that this is a projected enrollment. If approved, actual funding will be determined by NMPED School Budget Bureau based on data regarding enrollment membership including, but not limited to, lottery applications submitted, and registrations completed in spring of the implementation year.

FIGURE 95 - Projected Enrollment Year 1-5

Academic Year	# of Students	Grade Levels	Student/Teacher Ratio[201]
Year 1	75	K, 1	1:13
Year 2	150	K, 1, 2	1:11
Year 3	225	K, 1, 2, 3	1:12
Year 4	300	K, 1, 2, 3, 4	1:12
Year 5	375	K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1:13
At Capacity	450	K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1:13

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[201] This number includes both Lead Teachers (LT) and Instructional Assistants (IA) in the Student/Teacher Ratio.

B. Budgets

Please note that the PEC will ask the applicants to respond to questions on the budget during the Community Input Hearing. The applicants may have the personnel with the technical expertise with them at the table (and *should* have these people with them if these people were primarily responsible for drafting a section). However, the applicants themselves should demonstrate knowledge and understanding of all areas of the budget.

> B. (1) Provide, and attach as **Appendix F**, a completed 910B5 State Equalization Guarantee (SEG) Computation Revenue Estimate Worksheet, using appropriate values and computations for each year of the five-year budget plan (use projected unit value and for special education, please budget the local district's percentage of special education unless the school has a sufficient justification for why it will have a larger population). State and federal funds, including but not limited to student funding, shall not be used to pay, compensate or reimburse contract management organization or education management organization, regardless of their organizational or tax-exempt status. Ensure that your worksheet **clearly demonstrates your understanding of, and your capacity to implement,** New Mexico public school funding.

Equip Academy of New Mexico has completed 910B5 SEG Revenue using the FY25 State Equalization Guarantee Computation Revenue Estimate Worksheet. The worksheet is attached as Appendix F.

The worksheet is in compliance with NMSA 22-8-8, which calls for proposed enrollment of more than eight students. In accordance with NMSA 22-8-6.1, our first five years of SEG worksheets were based on the projected enrollment outlined in **Section III A**. The first year was budgeted assuming student membership counts were met and years two through five included the previous year's student membership numbers plus growth for the additional grades and classes being added.

For projected FY2026 unit value, the school used the FY 2025 projected unit value of $6,442.55 and increased it by 3%. The unit value increases a conservative 3% each school year for projection purposes.

Equip Academy of New Mexico used Albuquerque Public Schools' FY 2024 80/120 day average SPED student percentages for determining SPED student counts (A/B 18.07%, C 4.70%, D 5.26%) and ancillary service FTE (.82% of SPED students).

The school used Albuquerque Public School's Teacher Cost Index of 1.074 for the first year and a Teacher Cost Index of 1.0 for years two through five as the school's model is built around hiring brand new teachers.

Equip Academy of New Mexico has included in their budget 16.5 additional days as part of the K12 Plus Program - the school is operating on 186 instructional days and 10 days (60 hours) of allowed professional development under the K12 Plus program guidelines.

The 910B5 SEG Revenue Worksheet is attached as **Appendix F**.

> B.(2) Provide, and attach as **Appendix G**, a proposed five-year budget plan, fully aligned with the 910B5 SEG Revenue Worksheet that clearly supports the proposed school's mission and aligns with the proposed school's five-year growth plan, including staffing, facilities, educational program, and services. State and federal funds, including but not limited to student funding, shall not be used to pay, compensate or reimburse contract management organization or education management organization, regardless of their organizational or tax-exempt status. Ensure that your draft budget

clearly demonstrates the financial capacity and long-term sustainability of the proposed school (consider your growth plan, including staffing, facilities, educational program, mission etc.).

Equip Academy of New Mexico prepared a proposed five-year budget plan based on the projected revenue in **Appendix F** that supported the school's mission and other areas of the application, including enrollment and special education estimates based on the Albuquerque Public Schools' district average. The proposed budget aligns with the school's five-year growth plan. The completed five-year budget plan is included in **Appendix G**.

B.(3) Provide a clear, comprehensive, cohesive, and reasonable budget narrative.

Equip Academy of New Mexico's Budget Assumptions Overview

Equip Academy of New Mexico has developed a five-year budget using the local school district, Albuquerque Public Schools, to make basic assumptions, such as using their current TCI, SPED student count percentages, and At-Risk Index numbers to project their SEG. Equip Academy of New Mexico used the FY 2025 planning unit value and added a conservative increase of 3% per year for projections.

The budget is aligned with the mission of the school and the school design, and together, both heavily influence all budgetary decisions. The 910b5 worksheets align with the school's proposed student enrollment plan as described within this application, with the appropriate growth measures put in for each year's increase in enrollment. While preparing the budget, one of the main priorities of our budget was to be able to support Equip Academy's mission and education program on SEG funding and using federal flow-through funds such as Title I, Title II and IDEA-B to supplement the school's educational program as well as the Student Transportation and the National School Lunch Program. Average revenue funding for federal flow-through funds were projected based on per student amounts other charter schools in the Albuquerque Public Schools area were getting per funding type.

The school will focus on building up cash to move into a more permanent facility. The school has budgeted an increase in building expenses in year four to align with getting into a permanent facility.

Please see **FIGURE 96** for a snapshot of the first 5 (five) fiscal years, including cash carryover in the beginning of year (BOY) and end of year (EOY). The schools cash carryover is being budgeted in function 1000 object 57331.

FIGURE 96 - Financial Overview for Each Fiscal Year (FY)

5 Year Budget	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030
Cash Reserve (BOY)	$0	$38,958	$306,201	$1,027,476	$1,721,993
Revenue	$1,145,510	$2,255,117	$3,531,329	$4,784,730	$6,105,217
Expenditure	$1,106,552	$1,987,874	$2,810,054	$4,090,213	$4,892,481
Excess of Revenue over Expenditures	$38,958	$267,243	$721,275	$694,517	$1,2125,736
Cash Reserve (EOY)	$38,958	$306,201	$1,027,476	$1,721,993	$2,934,729
Percentage of SEG	3%	14%	29%	36%	48%

The goal for Equip Academy is to ensure there is an annual cash reserve in the budget from year-to-year to account for any financial unpredictability. The school budget will allow for yearly increases in the projected ending fund balance to build up a cash reserve and eventually find a permanent facility that will accommodate our full enrollment projections. The school's excess fund balance is being budgeted in function 1000 object 57331.

Revenue Assumptions

The Equip Academy five-year budget used conservative assumptions throughout the revenue budgeting process. The school focused on being able to include priorities of the school's mission and prioritize their resource-rich educational program within the funding obtained by the State Equalization Guarantee. The school also included revenue from IDEA-B, Title I, Title II, the National School Lunch Program, and state transportation. The school is also receiving a start-up grant from Excellent Schools New Mexico which will supplement their program with a total of $350,000 split across the planning year and first year. Equip Academy will start with 75 students (50 in kindergarten and 25 in first grade). Every year thereafter, students will increase in grade level year after year until we reach full enrollment in year 6 (six) totalling 450 students.

Operational Funding

State Equalization Guarantee (SEG): Projected revenue was based on the 910B5 State Equalization Guarantee (SEG) Revenue Workbook provided, while keeping in mind statutory changes that will have phased in by the first year of operations with students. The school conservatively assumed that the unit value would increase by 3% over the five-year period and used the 2024–2025-planning unit value of $6,442.55 plus 3% to start unit value projections forSEG projections. We used Albuquerque Public Schools' FY2025 TCI for year one and have used a conservative estimated TCI of 1.0 for the next four years.

The special education population included in the 910B5 projections is based on the Albuquerque Public Schools' rates. These rates were 18.07% of the total population as A/B Students, 4.70% as level C students, and 5.26% as level D students. We calculated ancillary using an average of 0.029 per SpEd student.

The revenue projections also include 10 days of tier1 K12 Plus funding and 6 days of tier 2 K12 Plus Program funding for all years. Program units increase annually with anticipated enrollment and are reflected for up to five years to represent the total revenue projections for Equip Academy's 5 year budget.

Equip Academy will participate in the Elementary Fine Arts Education Act starting in year one and will participate in Physical Education units in year three when we will have adequate funds to hire a full time Physical Education teacher. Equip Academy will also not participate in funding from bilingual units. All of our projected SEG revenue is net the PED 2% administrative fee being withheld.

Excellent Schools New Mexico Start Up Grant

Equip Academy will utilize the $350,000 grant from Excellent Schools New Mexico across both Year 0 and Year 1. Most of the grant will be allocated for the facility, furniture, curriculum, business office, legal, and the Head of School's salary as outlined in fund 26999. Three of the founding board members are grant writers who will assist the school in applying for additional funding. The school will continue to apply for grants if approved, including the Charter School Program (CSP) grant.

Lease Assistance

Equip Academy's budget assumes a lease assistance reimbursement rate of $815 per student. The budget assumes that the first year will be based on year one's 80th day membership as outlined in

22-24-4 NMSA 1978 and the following years will be based on the prior year's average of 80th and 120th day membership. (See FUND: 31200).

Transportation Funding

Equip Academy will assume the costs of transportation in **Year 1,** including an assumption of $45,000 per school bus and $5,000 for transportation insurance (See FUND: 11000, FUNCTION: 2700) with the intent of applying and acquiring transportation funding in **Year 2**. To calculate the transportation funding for Year 2, the school looked at a recently approved charter school with similar student counts in Year 1 to estimate the amount they would receive in funding.

Staff Expense Assumptions

The budget prioritizes funding for our mission, educational program, staffing, and facility. When looking at the operational budget as a whole, salaries and benefits make-up the majority of the budget in all five years. In years one through three, enrichment teachers are budgeted in contracted services as the school plans to use part-time contracted service providers to provide these classes. In year three the school will have one full-time employee and one contracted service provider and in year four the school will have two full-time enrichment teachers.

Salaries and Benefits

Salary. Equip Academy has placed a priority on ensuring there is support in the classroom for the earlier years for K and first grade with a 1:13 ratio. We are also dedicated to paying certified educators 10% above current salary schedules of APS. Equip Academy is an institute for educators and we plan to invest an ample amount of time in training and coaching staff. We have assumed we would be hiring the majority of Level 1 teachers who will be coached to execute high level, quality instruction. We also assumed that the majority of teachers would continue on with the school over the 5-year period and built in the salary schedule increases for the positions budgeted. Salary schedules were built to be competitive and meet the statutory minimums. Salary expenses are budgeted in the object codes starting with a 51.

Benefits. Equip Academy has created a full time employee benefits budget to include Educational Retirement at 18.15%, Retiree Health Care at 2%, FICA at 6.2% and Medicare at 1.45%. In addition to these mandatory contributions, Equip Academy took into account the current NMPSIA rates with a 6% increase per year. For the purposes of the budget, Equip Academy assumed that all employees would participate in family health, vision, and dental benefits. Equip Academy has budgeted approximately $15,500 - $25,885 per employee for medical, dental, vision, life, and disability benefits in the first year and gradually increased rates in year two through five. Benefits are budgeted in the object codes starting with a 52. These initial estimates are based on the minimal needs of the school at the time of application submission. However, the needs of the staffing structure will be reevaluated annually to ensure that our staffing structure supports the needs of students and the mission of the school. If additional resources become available, the staffing structure will be revisited, always with the focus of supporting the mission of our school. Benefits also include the following: Educational Retirement, ERA - Retiree Health, FICA Payments, Medicare Payments, Health and Medical Premiums, Life, Dental, Vision, Disability, Unemployment Compensation, Workers Compensation Premium, and Workers Compensation Employer's Fee. FICA was not budgeted for the planning year as the school will need to wait for their section 218 agreement to be approved. Health benefits were not budgeted for the planning year as NMPSIA will not cover a school until they have students.

Contract Services

Professional Development. Equip Academy has placed a priority on providing teachers with professional development that will assist them with providing high quality instruction with rigorous,

evidence-based curriculum through an inquiry-based approach. Equip Academy has allotted the entirety of their Title II allocation to go towards professional development. The amounts allocated to professional development are as follows:

Figure 97- Professional Development Five Year Plan for Funds

Fund	Function	Object	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
11000	2200	53330		$5,000	$10,000	$15,000	$15,000	$15,000
24101	2200	53330		$9,442	$15,000	$20,000	$25,000	$30,000
24154	2200	53330		$5,400	$10,800	$16,200	$21,600	$27,000
26999	2200	53330	$5,000					
Totals			**$5,000**	**$19,842.00**	**$35,800**	**$51,200**	**$61,600**	**$72,000**

Professional Services. Equip Academy has allocated money in the five-year budget to go towards professional services. Equip Academy has allocated money to contract legal services, business office services, IT services, ancillary services, enrichment teachers (1000 job class 1411), an external audit, and other miscellaneous charges. The school will use procurement cooperatives, such as ACES and CES, for any professional services vendors whose fee is over $60,000 and any non-professional services over $20,000. If we are not able to use a purchasing cooperative, we will go out for bid.

Food Services. Equip Academy has built the budget on the assumption that the Food Services program will be self-sustaining. We have allocated $20,000 for supply assets to pay for start-up equipment associated with starting a food service program. Equip Academy will utilize a food service contractor and estimates that revenues generated by the National School Lunch Program will cover 100% of the costs of food service. The school will perform monthly analysis on projected revenues for Food Service vs. Actual amounts and adjust the budget as needed. (Please see FUNCTION: 3100.)

Transportation Services: Equip Academy will assume the costs of transportation in **Year 1,** including an assumption of $45,000 per school bus, and $5,000 of insurance for transportation (See Line item: 479, FUND: 11000, FUNCTION: 2700) with the intent of applying and acquiring transportation funding in **Year 2**. To calculate the transportation funding for Year 2, the school looked at a recently approved charter school with similar student counts in Year 1 to estimate the amount they would receive in funding.

Student Support Services. Equip Academy prioritized allocating sufficient funding for special education services (found in object code 2100) and providing Social Emotional Learning (SEL) support to students. To estimate the amount of expenditures, we looked at a new charter school serving a similar student count and estimated the costs of expenditures based on hours used to service their student population.

Instructional Materials and Supplies. Equip Academy has allocated sufficient funds for a literacy-rich and highly supported school design which can be found in object codes 56111, 56112, 56113, 56118 as well as throughout the budget. In total, these revenues will be allocated for the purchase of curriculum, instructional materials, classroom supplies, testing materials, libraries, etc.

Facilities. Equip Academy is currently searching for a facility that will accommodate a growing model and highly rigorous, literacy rich, and supportive academic program. We are looking for a commercial building that is a minimum of 18,000 square feet. To build a budget for facilities, we assumed we would find a space of approximately 18,000 square feet. We assumed the cost would be around $15.00/sq ft based on current rental rates for commercial buildings. Equip Academy has assumed a yearly increase of 5% to rent. With the support of Homewise, we built the budget on the assumption

that the landlord would provide all buildout of the building to get it up to state adequacy standards. We built the budget with the assumption we would receive lease assistance in the first year of operations, but also have to supplement the rent from the operational fund until a permanent building is identified. We assumed in year 4 we would move into a larger building of 30,000 square feet at around $17.00/sq ft. Expenses associated with the lease expense are found in object 54610.

Utilities. Utilities were budgeted with the assumption that they would cost similar to what other charter schools in similar sized buildings were paying for utilities. We also include the assumption that costs would increase with the increase of enrollment. Equip Academy budgeted utilities with a yearly increase of 15%. Expenses associated with utilities can be found in object 54411 through 54416.

Furniture and Computers. For Assets and Supply Assets, we assumed that there would be substantial expenditures during the first year of operations for furniture, technology, and equipment. The school has allocated ESNM funds to pay for these expenses in the planning year and years 1 through 5. Expenses associated with these items are found in object 56119 and throughout the budget.

B. (4) Provide a **clear and meaningful** description of what budget adjustments will be made to meet financial budget and cash-flow challenges, or to address the failure to receive any anticipated funding sources.

Equip Academy of New Mexico Strategic Fiscal Planning Description

Equip Academy of New Mexico has taken all precautions to remain conservative and plan for any unforeseen fiscal circumstances. We want to ensure there is cash-flow to cover costs of budget adjustments, for example, in the event that projected enrollment is not met or if funds cease to exist. The Founding Team has created and sought out advice from experts in the field, such as K12 Accounting, Paul Agular, and our Founding Board member Janet Lung. We proactively planned to ensure that we meet any budgetary issue that we may face. We will tackle these issues head on in three (3) ways because we know that prior preparation prevents poor performance and preparedness is a key to ensuring we have optimal flexibility in our operational funds. Our Head of School will take the lead, alongside the founding Governing Board to: (1) Budget Conservatively and Strategically; (2) Conduct Real-Time Budgetary Reflections and Actions; and (3) Maintain Consistent Cash-flow. All budget adjustments will go before the Governing Board as Budget Adjustment Requests.

Budget Conservatively and Strategically

Our budget includes only the revenues we qualify for based on our academic and supportive programming for our projected student enrolment. We have not budgeted any grants or funds that should not be allocated to Equip Academy. We know SEG is per pupil funding therefore based on current enrollment numbers, our team decided to enroll conservatively with 75 students. Equip Academy will utilize some of the ESNM start-up grant to help fund first year operations and to help provide a buffer for any major unexpected budget impacts. Our model is highly supportive with 1 teacher and one educational assistant (total of 2) per classroom for K-1, 2-5 there is a shared instructional assistant per grade and 1 additional special education instructional assistant which lends itself well to our mission and vision of the school.

The Equip Academy staff will wear multiple hats when necessary and will be distributed evenly and based on staff skillset to avoid burn-out from staff at large. Due to staffing being such a large portion of the budget, Equip Academy will delay hiring staff until the students materialize. Once the school has enrolled students that align with hiring a full-time teacher, they will hire that teacher. Additionally, the school has an Administrative Assistant budgeted at a part-time FTE for year 1. The school will delay hiring this position until we have submitted 40th day student counts and know we

can afford the position. Positions paid from special revenue funds will not be hired until the school has received an award letter from PED.

In our first few years, we will remain supportive, yet conservative because we will not have the funds to pay for full-time salary and benefits for all positions. We will staff accordingly via contracted services through reputable agencies such as ACES and CES as well as recruit and contract internally to ensure FTE, PTE and contracted staff are the right fit for Equip Academy (these positions include, but not limited to, custodial, support, operational, enrichment staff). Additionally, we have allocated state and federal funds conservatively so as to not be fully reliant on the availability of said funds. The school has balanced their budget allowing them to carryover funds each year to build up a reserve that will allow the school to have the cash to provide interfund loans for special revenue funds until they can be reimbursed.

Real-Time Budgetary Reflections and Actions

One of the primary strategies we will continually use in order to maintain a cash-flow and will help us determine how conservative we need to be is to constantly review, monitor, and reflect an action plan based on the fiscal needs of our school in realtime.

In order to do this, we will create a variable budget template that is updated when student enrollment is updated. This model will allow us to only hire and contract for services that they can afford and hold off on any less critical expenditures until student counts are realized. From the start, if our enrollment is low, we will make all necessary instruction support decisions to meet the needs of our students/enrollment.

Throughout the year, the budget will be a standing item for review by the Head of School, the contracted Business Manager, and leadership team when appropriate. The fiscal health of the school will be a standing item for Board meetings and the financial chair will work closely with the Head of School to ensure financial transparency between Board and HOS. The goal is financial awareness, financial reflection to ensure sustainability of Equip Academy. Based on knowledge of Equip Academy's financial position at any given moment, decisions and actions will be purposefully made to ensure there is a cash-flow in real-time. Post approval: (1) the Head of School, Business Manager, and Board Finance Committee, chaired by the Board Treasurer, will began finalizing the budget and the final draft; (2) The draft will be presented to the Board; and (3) the Board will review and approve no later than April 15th with ample time to submit to PED by the deadline.

Maintaining and Managing a Consistent Cash-flow

**FIGURE 98A - BOY Projected Five-Year Cash Flow Chart**

Five Year Cash -Flow (BOY)
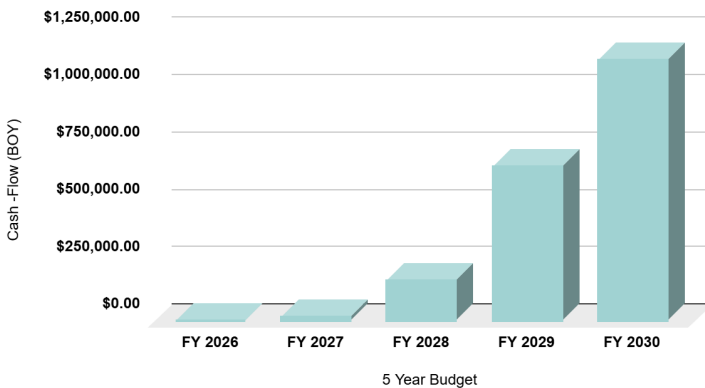
Our goal is to ensure our operational funds remain in "green" (meaning there is a cash-flow balance) which will allow for long-term sustainability. Our budgetary allocations were strategically made to ensure budget lines remain low to ensure such cash-flow. We are also prepared to decrease our budget line items if necessary and to a purposeful rollout of our school design year to year until we unequivocally reach a

sizable cash-flow as seen in **FIGURE 98A**. We project our cash-balance to reflect the following for the beginning of year (BOY): Year 1 (Y1) $0.00, Y2 $38,958, Y3 $306,201; Y4 $1,027,476 and Y5 $1,721,993.

Figure 98B EOY Projected Five-Year Cash Flow Chart

Cash Reserve (EOY) vs. 5 Year Budget
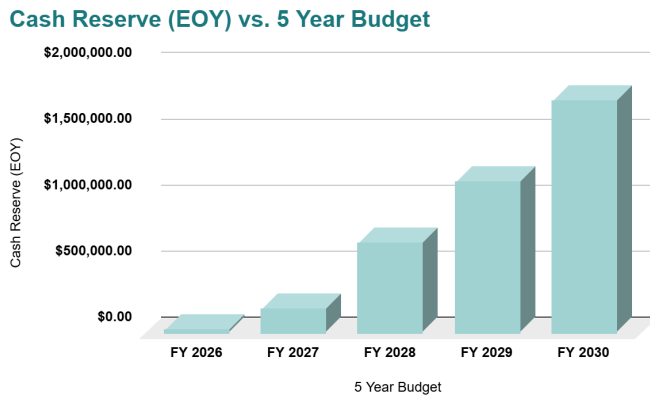
Another budgetary decision we made is to utilize Title I and IDEA-B funds for salary or contracted services to ensure we offer a robust support staff. Additionally, even though our proposed Head of School credentials two masters degrees with 12+ years of educational experience and places her at a much higher salary bracket, she is willing to accept the statutory minimum, $87,500 to ensure a cash-flow and school design is met with fidelity, even if rolled out until funds are acquired. Additionally, with the cash-flow, prior to the first pay period for teaching staff, (anticipated to be the second pay period in the month of August), we will have had two SEG payments (July and August) from which to draw some cash build-up prior to the start of operations and salary obligations to staff members. As seen in **FIGURE 98B**, our cash-flow will be monitored to reach the following by the end of year (EOY): Y1 $38,958; Y2 $306,201, Y3 $1,027,476 Y4 $1,721,993, Y5 $2,934,729.

Special Educational Support

Strategic financial planning is not simply for emergencies. It is also to ensure student services support costs are covered. Equip Academy's fiscal team anticipates the need for special education services but that is all it is, predictions. Until we meet the students who walk through our doors and assess their needs, it is crucial we have initially allocated funds to meet a spectrum of learning profiles. Additionally, we are aware SEG funds for special education will not be provided up-front. We will practice expenditure timing in other areas to ensure special education services are happening timely and when they are needed. We can time their Excellent Schools grant expenditures for Year 1 to fall later in the school year to prioritize having cash to pay for special education services before the 40th day true-up is received through SEG funds. Again, the financial decisions we have made and are prepared to make will ensure there are funds to support the various needs of our student population.

C. Financial Policies, Oversight, Compliance, and Sustainability

C.(1) Provide a description of the internal control procedures.

Fiscal Compliance and and Ethically Sustainable Protocols

Equip Academy of New Mexico procedures were prepared with K12 Accounting and Sen. Daniel Ivy-Soto with an eye toward compliance and sustainability. For the full comprehensive safeguards for compliance and sustainability, please see **Appendix H.**

Internal Control Procedures

Equip Academy's Governing Board will review all financial policies and procedures annually, led by the Finance Committee and with support from K12 Accounting to ensure that our policies and procedures remain orderly and in compliance. Frequent audits by the Finance Committee will be conducted internally ensuring all documentation and approvals are accounted for and on file. The Finance Committee will review, provide feedback, and present recommendations for the improvement to maintain sustainability. The Audit Committee will solicit feedback from the firm conducting our annual audit, and the Governing Board will use any audit findings or expressed concerns as a gauge of the effectiveness of the internal controls. The Equip Academy proposed HOS has been working with our proposed business management service provider, K12 Accounting, and collaboratively built the budget, and in consultation as our financial policies and procedures are established. Equip Academy of New Mexico's Founding Team is taking an "All Hands on Deck" approach when it comes to understanding the Internal Controls. Our proposed **Board Finance Committee** Chair has read, reviewed and internalized the document, and presented the Equip Academy Internal Controls to the rest of the **Founding Board** on Friday, 5/17/24 during a Board training led by the proposed **HOS**. K12 Accounting is located in New Mexico, holding the requisite license for New Mexico school business officials. Additionally, **K12 Accounting services** includes the appointed **Business Manager,** a NM licensed school business official**,** and an **Assistant Business Manager** who will maintain a level of staff to ensure segregation of duties and a substantial review process to support the needs for Equip Academy of New Mexico. K12 Accounting services include but are not limited to: general ledger maintenance and review, payroll, cash reconciliations, accounts payable payments, state and federal reporting, payroll liability reconciliation, and financial statement prep and audit preparation. K12 Accounting is both an ACES and CES vendor and Equip Academy of New Mexico plans to use one of these procurement agencies to contract with them.

Internal Control Procedures

Safeguarding Assets

The proposed Head of School (HOS) will deliberately follow state law and rules surrounding New Mexico Public Schools. The HOS will set an ethical example for other employees, the Founding Board, and contractors to engage in a professional and ethical manner.

Cash Receipts. Segregation of duties ensure a safeguarding of assets. Individuals who handle cash will not have access to the general ledger. All cash will be received and receipted with a triplicate part receipt by the HOS/Office Manager. One receipt will go to the individual making the deposit, one will go to the business office with supporting documentation, and the third will be left in the receipt book. All cash will be counted, verified, and compared to the receipt in the receipt book by the HOS the first two years and the Office Assistant in later years. The deposit will always be verified by someone other than the one who initially took the cash. Once the cash has been verified it will either be locked in a safe or taken to the bank. All deposits will be made within 24 hours of receiving. The deposit slip will go to the business office to reconcile and enter the deposit into the general ledger.

Payroll Processing. Payroll processing will be performed by the Assistant Business Manager (ABM) provided by K12 Accounting and reviewed and approved by both the Business Manager and the Head of School. No new employees will be added to payroll without a valid contract and valid corresponding new hire paperwork. After the ABM has entered all applicable data, they will create a review packet for the Business Manager and HOS, who will both review for accuracy and give their approval. After the HOS has approved the payroll packet, the ABM will upload the direct deposit file and pay corresponding payroll taxes. The Business Manager will review that the upload matches the direct deposit amount indicated in the packet and that payroll taxes paid also match. The ABM will reconcile all payroll liabilities of the school on a monthly basis. Payroll liabilities will be paid on-time

by their individual due dates. The Business Manager and HOS will review all payroll liability reconciliations for accuracy and the HOS will sign off.

Check Disbursements. The HOS and the Board Treasurer will have signatory rights on the school's bank account. None of these individuals will have access to cut checks from the accounting system or make changes to the General Ledger will also have the ability to sign checks. Individuals from K12 Accounting with access to cut checks and make journal entries within the accounting system, will not have signatory authority on Equip Academy's bank accounts. The ABM will prepare a review packet that includes the purchase order, a packing slip or sign off of services, and an invoice. The packet will be reviewed by the Business Manager and the HOS who will review for accuracy and will sign off on the disbursements.

Cash Reconciliations. The bank accounts of the school will be reconciled on a monthly basis within two weeks of month's end by the Business Manager. All bank reconciliations will tie back to the general ledger with zero variances. The HOS will review and sign off on all bank reconciliations. The Finance Committee will review all bank reconciliations monthly.

Compliance with Internal Controls

Equip Academy will hold monthly finance committee meetings in which a detailed packet with the schools' financials will be reviewed and discussed in detail. The school's Finance Committee will randomly select check disbursements and cash receipts to ensure compliance with the school's internal controls. The school will submit the PED Cash Report quarterly to the school's budget analyst at the NMPED. The PED Cash Report will have zero variances to the general ledger.

Operational Efficiency

Equip Academy and K12 Accounting will continue to work as a team to identify areas in which they can approve operational efficiency.

Compliance

The HOS, Business Manager, and the Finance Committee will review business office procedures and internal controls on a yearly basis. As new applicable federal and state statutes, regulations, rule,s or Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) pronouncements become available, procedures and internal controls will be updated if necessary.

The HOS, Business Manager, and Office Manager/Manager of Operations will attend the yearly New Mexico State Audit Rule training, the New Mexico Association of School Business Officials Fall and Spring Conferences annually as well as the yearly Spring Budget Conference put on in conjunction with the New Mexico New Mexico Public Education Department to gain more information on potential changes that may need to be made to procedures or internal controls.

C. (2) Identify the appropriate staff to perform financial tasks.

Equip Academy of New Mexico Finance Support Team

FIGURE 99 - Positions that Hold Financial Responsibilities and Hiring Timeline

Staff Support	Y1 2025-26	Y2 2026-27	Y3 2027-28	Y4 2028-29	Y5 2029-30
Head of School	1	1	1	1	1
AP in Residence				1	

Assistant Principal					1
Manager of Operations					1
Office Manager				1	1
Office Assistant	0.45	1	1	1	1
Business Manager (Contracted)	1	1	1	1	1
Assistant Business Manager (Contracted)	1	1	1	1	1

Job Positions and Descriptions with Financial Responsibilities

Accounting Partnership with K12 Accounting

Equip Academy of New Mexico plans to partner with K12 Accounting to help with all accounting responsibilities. K12 Accounting is both an ACES and CES vendor and Equip Academy plans to work with them through one of these procurement entities. K12 Accounting comes with a wealth of knowledge, experience and expertise when it comes to New Mexico Public School budget and finance. CEOs Rebekah Runyan and Bryan Runyan have a team of over 30 highly qualified school finance professionals that have experience supporting over 30 schools to maintain their finances and budgets. Many of the Business Managers and Assistant Business Managers on the K12 Accounting team have prior experience working as external auditors, hold bachelor's and/or Master of Accountancy degrees, and are licensed Level II School Business Officials. Per our organizational chart and **Section II.D.(1)** of our application, K12 Accounting is a contracted service. K12 Accounting will assign both a highly qualified Business Manager and Assistant Business Manager to work with the Equip Academy on-site to provide high quality business management services. Immediately following the charter approval, the Equip Academy Governing Board will vote on a contract with K12 Accounting to immediately begin providing business management services. As discussed above, this contract will run through either ACES or CES. Qualifications of a Business Manager and Assistant Business Manager responsibilities and qualifications that will meet the needs of the Equip Academy are outlined below.

Business Manager Professional Responsibilities

The Business Manager will be responsible for overseeing the work of the Assistant Business Manager, overseeing the school's budget, and overseeing all grant reporting and funds.

1. Monthly Duties

- **Oversee.** Purchasing; Accounts; Cash Receipts; Bank Reconciliations; Federal Program and Payable including Travel & Per Diem
- **Monitor and Maintain**. Cash Flow; Setup new vendors and customer; Maintains federal funds and reviews spending; Calculate indirect costs and enter journal entries; Submits request for Reimbursement; Journal entries as necessary; Record, analyze and report financial transactions in accordance with General Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP);
- **Compliance and Reporting**. Ensure compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and rules, Ensure compliance with Public Education Department General Administrative Regulations, Provide the Governing Board with timely, accurate and relevant financial information in the form of a Finance Packet and Report during Governing Board meetings
- **Request for Reimbursements**. Prepare requests for reimbursements monthly (every 15 days during the first few years)

2. Quarterly Duties

- **Review, Reporting and Maintain**. Provide *all* financial reporting to the New Mexico Public Education Department and required federal agencies including such as Cash Reports, Review Maintenance of Effort, Medicaid Reimbursement, Review Open PO Listing, Prepare and present all Budget Adjustment Requests, as required.
- **Review.** 941s, Workers Compensation Reporting, SUTA Reporting

3. Annually Duties

- **Grant Support**. Grant applications; Grant amendments; Annual budget preparation; Review federal awards from the prior year that need to be spent by 09/30; Review and create annual vendor contracts; Enter/Import new FY POs for recurrent expenditures; maintain and review reconciliation of all investments, where applicable.
- **Audit Support**. Oversee audit, provide auditors with all necessary materials, and respond to and clear all audit findings; Present budget to school leadership, Governing Board and New Mexico Public Education Department, and respond to any questions as needed; Effectively handle employee and community complaints, problems and questions related to finance.
- **Evaluation and Systems Improving**. Analyze, develop, and implement policies, procedures, and systems that improve the School business operations in efficiency and effectiveness; Review and approve 1099s; 1099 Electronic Submission; ensure semi-Annual Time & Effort Certifications.
- **W-2s.** Prepare and submit forms W-2s to employees and W-3 to the Social Security Administration (SSA).
- **1099s:** Prepare and submit form 1099s to vendors and for 1098 to the Internal Revenue Service.
- **ACA.** Prepare and submit forms 1095 to employees and form 1094 to the Internal Revenue Service.

Minimum Qualifications

- Bachelor's degree in accounting required
- Master's degree in accounting preferred with MBA with CPA
- Proficient using business software (e.g., MS Windows, MS Outlook, MS Word, and MS Excel, Adobe PDF, etc.)
- Proficient using computer equipment and associated peripherals (e.g., computers, laptops, scanners, printers, smart cell phones, etc.)
- Proficient in Cloud computing environment (e.g., MS Office 365, online banking, online storage, etc.)
- Expert knowledge of accounting concepts and terminology.
- Advanced knowledge of Microsoft computer programs (advanced knowledge of Excel, pivot tables, formulas, etc.)
- Knowledge of database structures, data verification methodology, operating systems, standard software applications.
- Advanced knowledge of payroll accounting.
- Advanced knowledge of AptaFund software
- Provide the monthly, quarterly and annually budgetary duties below
- Holds a New Mexico School Business Official License
- Minimum of two (2) years in School Business Office or similar environment and/or a minimum of four (4) years of experience in a supervisory accounting role
- Proficient using business software (e.g., MS Windows, MS Outlook, MS Word, and MS Excel, Adobe PDF, etc.)

- Proficient using computer equipment and associated peripherals (e.g., computers, laptops, scanners, printers, smart cell phones, etc.)
- Ability to pass employment verification and background check

Assistant Business Manager Professional Responsibilities

- **Complaint Records Maintenances**. HR files for all employees; Vendor files for all vendors; Procurement files (as necessary); Payroll records; Budget Adjustment Requests ; Grants & associated Requests for Reimbursement; Governing Board Meeting Packets and record keeping.
- **HR and Payroll.** Collecting and entering timecards; Collecting and entering employee leave; Print Payroll checks/upload direct deposit file; Reconcile Payroll Liabilities; and much more.
- **Purchasing Activities**. Process all Purchase Requisitions; Process order receipts; Enter invoices; Print accounts payable checks.
- **Support the Following Activities as nNecessary**: Budget development; Financial audit; Fiscal Year End transition.
- **Records and Materials:** Enter cash receipts; Maintain Capital Asset and Inventory records; Scan and upload all documents to cloud storage and support Business Manager as necessary.

Minimum Qualifications

- Associates Degree with two semesters of accounting and/or business administration preferred
- Bachelor's Degree in accounting and/or business administration preferred
- One year in School Business Office or similar environment or one year working as an accountant or bookkeeper for CPA or accounting firm (experience requirement waived for new/recent college graduates)
- Proficient using business software (e.g., MS Windows, MS Outlook, MS Word, and MS Excel, Adobe PDF, etc.)
- Proficient using computer equipment and associated peripherals (e.g., computers, laptops, scanners, printers, smart cell phones, etc.)
- Proficient in Cloud computing environment (e.g., MS Office 365, online banking, online storage, etc.)
- Some knowledge of accounting concepts and terminology
- Ability to pass employment verification and background check

The Office Assistant and Office Manager General Job Description

The roles of an Office Manager and Office Assistant are similar, which include: providing secretarial and administrative support to the Administration; communicating information to students, parents, staff, and/or other schools; ensuring compliance with financial, legal, and administrative requirements; and supporting the broad array of services provided to students, parents, instructional and support employees. Below are other descriptions, responsibilities, and minimum qualifications that are related to fiscal management. Please note, this is not a full list of responsibilities and qualifications. For the comprehensive list, see **Appendix C** for all Job Descriptions.

Professional Responsibilities

- Serve as Chief Procurement Manager post training
- Manage the operation of the Equip Academy of New Mexico office
- Serve as building receptionist; answer phone and in-person inquiries from students, staff, parents and the public; screen calls for the Head of School, staff, and students
- Receive and distribute daily mail
- Compile data for enrollment and other reports for state reporting

- Format and type correspondence, forms, memoranda, and reports
- Register incoming students and process enrollment materials; complete data input on computer; coordinate services and information with sending/receiving school offices; complete procedures for students withdrawing from the school
- Maintain student attendance records; alert Head of School to student attendance problems; contact parents to verify absence of students
- Maintain records and files for staff and student information; maintain staff absence records
- Collect monies for various student activities; prepare and maintain bank deposits
- Support STARS reporting and other require PED reports
- Submit daily lunch count; may generate and print weekly lunch roster
- Make requisitions and receives, account for and distribute school supplies, textbooks, and materials; take periodic inventory
- Make non-instructional decisions as needed during the Head of School's absence
- Support with all booking filed studies as well as logistics, chaperones and bussing

Minimum Qualifications

- Excellent organizational, planning, and implementation skills
- Experience in operating a computer, and using school-specific software applications
- High school graduation or equivalent and two years of office experience with increasing responsibility, including records maintenance, bookkeeping, and experience in working with children and the public
- Bachelors or masters preferred
- Previous school office manager/secretary experience (required)
- Knowledge of correct grammar, spelling, and English usage, and ability to accurately perform arithmetic calculations
- Knowledge of general bookkeeping procedures and secretarial procedures
- Proficient in daily use of school software programs
- Skill in operating general office machines
- Ability to attend to detail and follow tasks through to completion
- Ability to establish and maintain positive, effective working relationships with students, parents, staff, and the general public, contract service providers and maintain confidentiality
- Ability to work effectively under pressure, be flexible, and organize and set priorities
- Willing to obtain Chief Procurement certificate and maintain good standing

Manager of Operations Job Description

The Manager of Operations will assist the Head of School in ensuring that the school is safe and compliant with all local, state and federal rules and guidelines, and that the school systems run efficiently. The Director of Operations and Engagement supports facilities, operations, budget, human resources, student information systems, and family and community engagement. The Manager will work in four primary areas to ensure that day-to-day operational activities and community engagement activities of the school are running effectively and successfully. See the professional responsibilities below. Please note, this is not a full list of responsibilities and qualifications. For the comprehensive list, see **Appendix C** for all Job Descriptions.

1. Operations

- **Data Management**. Oversee data collection and maintenance (attendance, assessment results, progress/report cards)
- **Procurement**. Order office, classroom, technology, custodial, maintenance supplies and record-keeping

- **Facility Management**. Manage custodial staff; coordinate and manage renovation/upgrade projects troubleshoot resolving emergent issues on a daily basis
- **Process Improvement**. Improve and implement procedures in front office, cafeteria, and student flow
- **Transportation and Food Service**. Maintain strong and collaborative relationships with food service and transportation contractors to ensure timely, reliable, and safe delivery of services
- **Family and Community Engagement**. Work closely with community partners who provide programming for students and families, including managing communication and logistics

2. Human Resources

- **Liaison**. Manage human resource operations and serve as liaison with Public Education Department
- **Lead Performance Management**. Process for all operations staff at the school level and maintain confidential employee files for performance reviews
- **Compliance Maintenance**. Ensure school-level HR compliance with various employment-related government agencies, maintain personnel files, and administer benefits

3. Administration

- **Liaison**. Support Head of School as school-level point-of-contact with City of Albuquerque; function as school's first point of contact for parents, community, contractors, and suppliers on all non-instructional elements of school operations

4. Business and Finance

- **Budget**. Assist with preparation of annual budgets, working closely with Head of School, in conjunction with the Governing Board and back office business and accounting contracted firm
- **Budget Monitoring**. Review school's monthly financial results with the Governing Board and accounting firm, monitoring spending in relation to annual budget, sharing highlights and concerns with Head of School
- **Procurement and Inventory**. Follow fiscal policies regarding procurement and vendor payments, including appropriate completion of purchase orders and approval of vendor invoices (and credit cards). Serve as Chief Procurement Officer. Keep inventory listing and do yearly inventory counts.
- **Advisory**. Share input with Head of School and Governing Board regarding finance initiatives, including year-end audit and fiscal policy-setting

Minimum Qualifications

- Office experience (1-3 years)
- Excellent organizational, planning, and implementation skills
- Bachelor's degree (preferred)
- 2-5 years of experience in operations, business, human resources, finance/accounting, and/or education administration (required)
- Ability to lead, to manage multiple priorities and to manage the ambiguity inherent in an entrepreneurial environment
- Ability to manage and lead people and provide performance management
- Ability to communicate and interact effectively with multiple constituencies
- Quantitative skills and experience with financial management
- High proficiency in Microsoft Excel, PowerPoint, Word, Outlook required; high proficiency in AptaFund preferred

Head of School (HOS), Assistant Principal in Residence (APIR), and Assistant Principal (AP)

The HOS, APIR, and AP have very similar roles and responsibilities. They are the leaders of the school and manage the overall health of the school. The major difference is the HOS works directly with the Governing Board and holds the ultimate accountability of the school, students, and staff. The design of the APIR will fulfill this role for one year then transition to the AP role the following year. The difference is the APIR will be trained for the listed responsibilities and the AP will hold more responsibilities with continued support from the HOS. Equip Academy's APIR/AP will work closely with the Head of School (HOS). The APIR/AP will be trained, coached, and mentored by the HOS. The APIR/AP will be trained to drive growth, educational outcomes, and advance educational equity through leading the team and bringing the mission to life. Like the HOS, the APIR/AP will equip and rally the staff to set and achieve ambitious school goals. Through the intentional creation of a vibrant school community, the HOS/APIR/AP inspire staff and students to engage in rigorous and purposeful learning in every classroom, every day. The HOS/APIR/AP develops enduring and joyful relationships with students, teachers, parents, and community members, and builds and maintains a strong presence in the local community. These individuals embody a deep belief in and powerful ability to want to lead Equip Academy's innovative approaches and unique school features: inquiry-based, educator excellence, college-preparatory, rigorous curriculum, and comprehensive literacy and language acquisition program. The HOS/APIR/AP play a critical leadership role within the school, and are committed to ensuring that our students develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to succeed so that they have the opportunity to live out their full potential. Please note, this is not a full list of responsibilities and qualifications. For the comprehensive list, please see **Appendix C** for all Job Descriptions.

Professional Responsibilities

- **Educational Leadership.** Guide Equip Academy's educational vision to align with current academic standards, accountability goals and metrics, and the unique needs of the student body. Lead, implement and facilitate teacher development programs, including hiring, training, coaching, and inspiring of a diverse team of educators who work towards dramatically and measurably growing student learning and achievement.
- **Data**. Engages in strategic planning, staff management, and student achievement evaluation to ensure that we demonstrate a record of measurable student achievement, including effective implementation of English Learner and special education strategies, programs, or curricular approaches to eliminating extreme disparities in student outcomes.
- **Budget and Finance**. Manage, monitor, and report school finances and related activities to ensure that the school remains fiscally responsible and financially healthy in the short- and long-term. Manage complex budget systems, oversee the preparation and maintenance of all purchase orders and other expense records, and approve all expenditures. Ensure that the school reconciles all site records, with monthly reports as required by the PED, and ensure that all expenditures are within budget allowances as approved by the Board for the fiscal year.
- **School Operation and Compliance**. Understand educational policies, ensuring compliance with all state and federal laws and regulations. Understand or have experience with maintenance, operations, payroll, food service, and transportation. Understand records and file keeping, including assessment results, test scores, discipline referrals, medical reports and records, and other student documents. Oversee all day-to-day operations, including but not limited to ordering and receiving.
- **Human Resources**.Manage human resource operations and be the point person with the Public Education Department, process all operations staff at the school level, maintain confidential employee files for performance reviews, ensure school-level HR compliance with

various employment-related government agencies, maintain personnel files, and administer benefits including submitting W-2's to the SSA.

- **Chief Procurement Officer**. Will obtain Chief Procurement Officer certificate and re-certification classes every two years. Will register on the NM General Services Department website.

Minimum Qualifications

- 2-3 years of teaching experience as a lead teacher
- Advanced degree in education or applicable field is preferred
- Leadership experience within a similar educational setting is preferred
- Diverse experience across grades and subjects
- Exceptionally high standards for the quality of work and a reflex to improve at every turn
- Agility to adapt in an ever changing environment
- Admin license is required for the HOS

C.(3) Provide a **clear, comprehensive, and cohesive plan for** how the Governing Body will provide proper legal and fiscal oversight.

Governing Board's Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Board is responsible for the academic, fiscal, and regulatory health of the charter school. The Governing Board is responsible for all governance decisions, including but not limited to: approving fiscal and school policies; overseeing the academic program, facilities, and property; ensuring fiscal and legal soundness; strategic planning; and overseeing and supporting the Head of School's performance to ensure the health, longevity, and sustainability of the school. The Governing Board will hire, set compensation for, and evaluate the performance of the Head of School, to whom it will delegate all management decisions and responsibilities and who will hire and oversee all school staff. The Head of School will report to the Board. For more information on governance and administration accountability/evaluation see **Section II A-C**.

Upon authorization from the Public Education Commission, the Founding Board will transition to the Equip Academy of New Mexico Governing Board and maintain compliance with the New Mexico Open Meetings Act (NMSA 10-15-1). At this time, the Equip Academy of New Mexico Governing Board will also elect officers and adopt the Bylaws, Conflict of Interest policy and Board Job Description found in **Appendix A**. In addition to fiscal oversight, the Board also oversees Mission and Vision Alignment; Academic Accountability; and Evaluation of Head of School. Public Transparency (please see **Section II, A-C** for more detail).

- **Legal Compliance.** The Governing Body is responsible for ensuring that all Equip Academy policies are in compliance with federal, state, and local laws and regulations. The Governing Board will seek legal counsel for the greater good of the school and will regularly review existing and proposed school policies in light of any legislative or regulatory changes.

Governing Board Committee Structure

The Equip Academy Board Committee structure comprises five committees (one council) to oversee the school, including all functions required by law as well as components that support the unique mission and vision of the school. Membership of each committee will be determined at the Governing Board's August Annual Meeting. In addition to the fiscal related committees, there is the Governance Committee and Academic Committee (please see **Section II, A & B** for more detail).

- **The Finance Committee** consists of at least two Board members with finance experience or expertise who oversee school cash flow and budget documentation and records. This committee is led by the Treasurer, who will provide financial updates at each monthly Board meeting to ensure the Governing Board understands the school's financial standing. This committee will also lead, in conjunction with school leadership, the effort to secure facilities for Equip Academy and ensure that the facility adheres to the PSFA requirements through responsible facility maintenance, including relevant renovations. As a required standing committee, the Finance Committee will fulfill the duties in NMSA 22-8-12.3.

- **The Audit Committee** is responsible for preparing the school for its financial audit each year, starting with presenting multiple external auditors or auditing service for the Governing Board to consider and ultimately select. Once an auditor is selected, this committee will then be responsible for communicating with the auditor to support their work, tracking findings, and sharing the audit report with the broader Governing Board. This committee will also conduct an internal audit of the Governing Board to assess its performance. The Audit Committee will fulfill the duties pertaining to audit committees, per NMSA 22-8-12.3. This committee will consist of two members, neither of whom are a part of the Finance Committee.

- **The Culture and Equity Council** is responsible for evaluating school policies and practices related to equity across all domains, including students, staff, curriculum, instruction, community partnerships and financial allocation. The committee will be guided by tools such as the Yazzie/Martinez Readiness Assessment to ensure at-risk students are receiving all supports available to them. It will monitor the cultural responsiveness of the school and will build and maintain partnerships that enable all students to experience the richness and culture of the greater community.

Financial Performance Monitoring

The Equip Academy Finance Committee, chaired by the Board Treasurer, will closely monitor the financial performance of the school and report to the Governing Board at each regular monthly Board meeting. The Equip Academy Board will meet regularly with Business Manager and/or Assistant Business Manager to ensure they are abreast of the budgetary and financial health of the school. Each Board member will receive and collectively review documentation including a balance sheet, cash flow statement, income and expense statements, and a report of the school's budget versus actual expenditures. The Finance Committee will work with the Head of School, Business Manager, Assistant Business Manager and appropriate members of the school leadership team to ensure all reports are ready for review each month and are timely, accurate, and comprehensive. These reports will be straightforward and easy to understand; we will provide annual training in the area of the school's finances, important to ensure that all Board members, regardless of their area of expertise or role on the Governing Board, understand the school's financial standing and performance and thus are to ensure the school's financial health along with its compliance with laws, rules, and charter terms.

- **Fiscal Oversight.** The Governing Board will ensure the school's financial stability through close supervision of and responsibility for all major financial decisions. The Board will review and approve an annual budget each year and will conduct monthly budget reviews to provide the oversight necessary for the short- and long-term fiscal health of Equip Academy.

- **Strategic Planning.** The Governing Board will be responsible for developing a long-term strategic plan for Equip Academy to prepare it for sustainability, success, and longevity. This will include establishing goals for enrollment growth, facilities, community partnerships, finances, and any other goals it endeavors to reach over the course of more than a single year.

Guided by the Public Education Commission Performance Review and Accountability System, the Governing Board will evaluate the following:

- **Days of Cash on Hand**. Equip Academy has the cash readily available to pay all of its bills that meet or exceed PEC expectations.
- **Annual Financial Audit**. Equip Academy meets basic expectations of financial oversight by following the Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP), financial management, and internal controls.
- **Financial Reporting and Compliance**. Equip Academy and its Governing Board effectively develop and approve its budget and meet all financial reporting and compliance requirements, demonstrating the ability to oversee public funding designated for New Mexico students.
- **Fiscal Oversight**. Equip Academy and its Governing Board effectively provide fiscal oversight by establishing, approving, and monitoring annual budget execution.

Enrollment Variance. Budgeted enrollment is based upon accurate enrollment assumptions, requiring only small or no budget revisions, resulting in a sound budget.

IV. Evidence of Support

A. Outreach Activities

A. Provide **clear, comprehensive, and cohesive** evidence that you have developed an effective and thoughtful outreach program.

Overview

At Equip Academy of New Mexico (Equip Academy), we plan to deliver an exceptional, inquiry-driven, college-preparatory education that empowers students in grades K-5 to excel academically and to dream boldly. Our students will be equipped to engage meaningfully and pursue a life filled with purpose. Our proposed approach is grounded in research and tailored to significantly enhance the educational outcomes of historically underserved and underperforming students. Together with our community and families, our mission and key educational approaches have been affirmed and bolstered through meaningful outreach and engagement with the Albuquerque community, specifically the Westside.

Since Fall of 2023, the Equip Academy team has been deeply immersed in the community, forging meaningful connections and dialogues across various sectors. Our journey of engagement spans from meetings with Westside community members to interactive discussions with key individuals within Albuquerque local community organizations, businesses, groups, and individuals about the educational landscape for our young children. Leveraging both the professional expertise and personal networks of our Founding Team, we have embarked on a comprehensive mission to encompass the broadest spectrum of community voices in discussions about our school proposal.

Dr. Renée Delgado-Riley, the proposed Founding Board Chair, framed this section by leveraging her 16 years of experience in overseeing assessment, research, and evaluation. Her expertise ensured an equity-centered, methodical approach to gathering and analyzing community feedback, which played a crucial role in shaping the school's design and mission. This evidence of support, backed by Dr. Delgado-Riley's expertise, reflects the community's collective voice and their aspiration for a transformative educational option in their area.

Outreach Program

Our clear, comprehensive, and cohesive outreach program has consisted of the following:

1. One-on-One Meetings with Community Members/Organizations/Businesses/Individuals
2. Community Focus Groups
3. Community Perception Survey
4. Online Presence

Our approach to community outreach has been multifaceted and dynamic, encompassing personalized one-on-one meetings, active participation and collaborations with local organizations, facilitation of four (4) community focus groups, fielding a community survey (receiving 36 responses), and strategic digital engagement through social media platforms. Outreach has been critical in helping us understand the northwest quadrant of Albuquerque, allowing us to integrate the community's aspirations and desires for an innovative, inquiry-based, college preparatory K-5 elementary school.

Our team has synthesized and leveraged all data points and feedback to craft and refine the school's curriculum design and Equip Academy's key educational approaches. This iterative process ensures that our educational model not only meets but anticipates the needs and dreams of our community, laying a solid foundation for a future where every child in Albuquerque has access to an empowering and transformative educational journey regardless of their zip code.

One-on-One Meetings

The Equip Academy journey began with a series of one-on-one dialogues aimed at weaving strong connections throughout the Albuquerque area, with a special focus on engaging Westside community members. In these personalized meetings, representatives from Equip Academy shared the school's mission and vision, attentively absorbed community input, and garnering support for the initiative. To date, the Equip Academy Founding Team has conducted over **129** one-one-one meetings, maintaining daily interactions with key community stakeholders, with an average of 16 per month over a 8-month period. These foundational discussions, particularly those initiated by Lead Founder and proposed Head of School Mercy L. Herrera, played a pivotal role in shaping the core of our Founding Board. These early interactions solidified the Board's composition and set the stage for its evolution into a Governing Board representative of the Albuquerque area.

In these discussions, potential team members were engaged with questions designed to evaluate their professional abilities, alignment with our mission, and willingness to commit time to this significant volunteer endeavor. Further conversations explored their professional journeys and how their unique skill sets could drive the development and success of Equip Academy as Governing Board members responsible for the fiscal, academic, and regulatory oversight of the school. It has been important to us that we recruited Founding Board members from Albuquerque and specifically from the northwest region, residing and/or working there currently or in the past, with the goal that we understand the diverse needs of the community. **FIGURES 100 and 101** map the geographic diversity of our meetings with potential Founding Board and proposed Governing Board members.

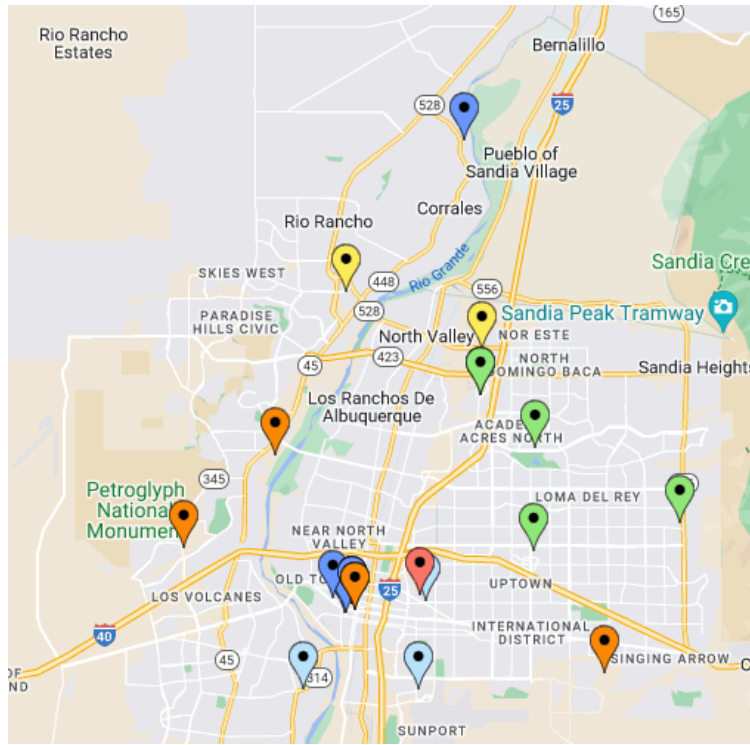**FIGURE 100 - Representation of Potential Board Members (n=24)**

FIGURE 101 - Zip Code Representation of Potential Board Members (n=24)

Zip Code	#s	Geographic Location
87102	6	Southwest
87106	2	Southwest
87109	2	Northeast
87110	2	Northeast
87125	2	Northeast
87048	1	Corrales
87105	1	Westside
87111	1	Northeast
87113	1	Northeast
87114	1	Northeast
87120	1	Westside
87121	1	Westside
87123	1	Northeast
87131	1	Northeast

In addition to building a Governing Board, our one-on-one meetings allowed us to create networking connections with local community organizations, businesses, and individuals. These meetings were strategically designed to cultivate community relationships and foster collaborative support aimed at refining our school's design and maximizing success for our future students and community stakeholders. The primary focus of these meetings was twofold: (1) to solicit feedback that would inform the development of our school's framework and (2) to explore avenues for collaboration and mutual support among key stakeholders. By engaging in open dialogue and a genuine exchange of ideas, we aimed to leverage the collective expertise and resources of our network to create a school environment that is responsive to community needs. We will continue to cultivate a culture of collaboration and shared ownership, where all members of our community are empowered to contribute to the collective success of our school. Through strategic networking and collaborative efforts outlined in **FIGURE 102** and visualized in **FIGURE 103** illustrates the **129** one-one-one meetings with individuals as well as business and community organizations and their representation across our city and state. We are confident in our ability to realize our vision of a school that meets the needs of our students and serves our community. In pursuit of aligning our school's design with the needs of the community, we have undertaken a comprehensive approach to gather feedback. Our commitment to engaging with the community is about creating meaningful opportunities for dialogue and input. Through these various channels, we have captured a diverse range of perspectives, ensuring that the voices of all stakeholders are heard and considered in shaping the vision and direction of our school.

FIGURE 102 - One-on One Meetings with Businesses, Community Organizations and Individuals

Date	Name/Organization	Stakeholder Group
8/31/2023	Jane Henzerling, Managing Director, Excellent Schools New Mexico	Supporter
9/5/2023	Isaiah Holtry, Mover, Anytime Moving Service	Prospective Family
9/5/2023	Julia Silva, Caregiver, Enchanted	Prospective Family
9/5/2023	Julian Sanchez, Mover, Anytime Moving Service	Prospective Family
9/5/2023	Marc Vigil, CEO & Lead Designer, MV Designs	Supporter
9/12/2023	Sean Duncan, Executive Director, Thrive Community School	Supporter
9/13/2023	Scott Hindman, Executive Director, Excellent Schools New Mexico	Supporter
9/22/2023	Matt Paul, Executive Director, PCSNM	Community Organization
9/22/2023	Valery Ratliff-Parker, Deputy Director, PCSNM	Community Organization
9/22/2023	Mike Loftin, Executive Director, Homewise	Supporter
9/22/2023	Isaac Rivas-Savell, Executive Director, Voz Collegiate	Supporter
9/25/2023	Jordan Lucero, Business Administration Management Major, UNM	Prospective Family

9/25/2023	Alyssa Zamora, Education Student, UNM	Supporter
9/25/2023	Luis Zamora, Procurement Manager, B&D Industries, Inc.	Supporter
9/25/2023	Marcella Ursula Herrera, Stay-at-home-grandmother	Supporter
9/27/2023	Dominica Chavez, NM Kids Can (NMCAN)	Community Organization
9/27/2023	Terri L. Cole, President & CEO, Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce	Supporter
9/29/2023	Tim Lucero, Senior Graphic Designer, Art Director at Agenda	Supporter
10/4/2023	Alexis Valdez Darnell, President, Sierra Vista Strategies	Supporter
10/11/2023	Paul Aguilar, School Finance Consultant	Supporter
10/15/2023	Francesca Garcia, Flight Specialist, United Airlines	Supporter
10/15/2023	Joseph Gonzalez, Owner, Discount Towing & Collision	Supporter
10/15/2023	Jenny Warren, Owner, Culture Club	Supporter
10/18/2023	JoAnn Mitchell, Executive Director, MAS	Supporter
10/18/2023	Lissa Hines, Co-Director, Altura Prep	Supporter
10/24/2023	Andrea Talley, Executive Director, Boys and Girls Club	Business
10/24/2023	Jacqueline M. Kakos, Health Education Consultant, NM Poison & Drug Information Center	Supporter
10/25/2023	Mary Ellen Dannenberg, Assistant Principal, Turquoise Trail Charter School	Supporter
11/7/2023	Angel Kopacka, Dance Instructor, Keshet	Supporter
11/7/2023	Dorothy Garcia, Secretary to Senators, NM State Capitol	Supporter
11/10/2023	Jordan Franco, Executive Director, Rio Grande Academy of Fine Arts	Supporter
11/11/2023	Pamela Munoz, New Mexico Senior Associate, SCAN	Community Organization
11/11/2023	Shunnae Love, Counselor, Thrive Counseling	Supporter
11/11/2023	Anne McKinney, Board Member, Child First Network	Supporter
11/11/2023	Jacquelyn Chasteen, Program Manager, Project ECHO	Supporter

|		
11/14/2023	Veronica Toledo, Community Development Organizing Director, Homewise	Supporter
11/17/2023	Dale R. Dekker, Founding Principal/Brand Ambassador, Dekker Perich Sabatini	Supporter
11/24/2023	Elisha Cooper, Paralegal, Westside Law office	Business
11/27/2023	Antonio "Moe" Maestas, Senator, NM State Legislature	Supporter
11/27/2023	Amanda Aragon, Executive Director, NM KidsCAN	Supporter
11/29/2023	Sara Fitzgerald, SVP Communications & Educational Policy, The Greater Albuquerque Chamber	Supporter
11/30/2023	Ed Rivera, President (ret.), United Way of Central New Mexico	Supporter
11/30/2023	Emily Wildau, MPP, Senior Research & Policy Analyst, NM Voices of Children	Supporter
12/1/2023	Paul Jew, Content Marketing Specialist, Moji Cinema	Business
12/4/2023	Alejandra Grijalva, Business Intelligence Analyst, Centro Sávila	Prospective Family
12/4/2023	Alan Bell, Board Chair Excellence schools NM	Supporter
12/4/2023	Maralyn Beck, Founder & CEO, New Mexico Child First Network	Supporter
12/5/2023	Macarena Blevins, Early Childhood Director, Catholic Charities Center for Educational Opportunity	Community Organization
12/5/2023	Karina Burciaga, Executive Support Specialist, Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors	Supporter
12/5/2023	Karen Perez, Project Manager, Hacia Toward the University Project	Supporter
12/5/2023	Flor Lopez, Leadership Development Director, Southwest Creations	Supporter
12/6/2023	Blanca Rosa Hernandez, Account Executive American General Media	Business
12/6/2023	Eduardo De Avila & Luzdel Said, Club Z! Tutoring Services	Business
12/6/2023	Nic Sanchez, Chief Executive Officer, VIP Staffing	Business
12/6/2023	Nicole Abreu, Regional Sales Director, Ardham Technologies	Supporter
12/6/2023	Frank Baca, Attorney at Law, Gaming Commission	Supporter

12/7/2023	Rebecca Brook, Manager Creative Services, Sandia National Laboratories	Supporter
12/8/2023	Megan McMillan, Marketing Director, Financial Mortgage Solutions	Business
12/8/2023	Daniel O. Trujillo, Managing Partner, TKM, LLC	Supporter
12/11/2023	Melissa Sanchez, President & CEO, Westside Business Association	Supporter
12/12/2023	Federico "Kiko" Torres, Kiko & Associates	Business
12/12/2023	Marisa Magallanez, Chief Operating Officer, Albuquerque Community Foundation	Community Organization
12/12/2023	Stephanie Santillanes, Director of Community Engagement, Sandia Laboratory Federal Credit Union	Supporter
12/12/2023	Eliseo "Cheo" Torres, Co-Director, Chicano Studies at UNM	Supporter
12/13/2023	Shakara Lucero, Business Development Coordinator, Nusenda	Business
12/13/2023	Daniel Ivey-Soto, State Senator, New Mexico Legislature	Supporter
12/14/2023	Rachael Sewards, Executive Director, Solare Collegiate	Supporter
12/14/2023	Jen Mulliniks, Commercial Development Project Manager, Homewise	Supporter
12/15/2023	Haley Santistevan, Stay-home-mom, Westside	Prospective Family
12/15/2023	Philip Benavidez, Stay-home-dad, Westside	Prospective Family
12/15/2023	Genevieve Marez, Legal Assistant, Child Support Office	Supporter
12/18/2023	Sean Martinez, Advisor, Bank of the West	Business
12/18/2023	Renee Delgado-Riley, Vida Green Acre Family Farm	Supporter
12/19/2023	Monique Parks, Strategic Planning Manager, Transamerica	Business
12/19/2023	Arianna Chavez, Indian Pueblo Cultural Center	Community Organization
12/28/2023	Vaadra Chavez, Chief Human Resource Officer, Securin	Prospective Family
1/3/2024	Annette Dominguez, Marketing Consultant & Strategist, Atomic Creative	Supporter
1/5/2024	Angelo Gonzales, Executive Director, SWIFT Community Schools	Supporter
1/12/2024	Gabe Gallegos, Strategist, Sunny 505	Supporter

1/17/2024	Theresa Archuleta, Education Administrator Consultant, Dekker Perich Sabatini	Business
1/17/2024	Rikki-Lee G. Chavez, Founder, Capitol Counsel & Consulting	Business
1/17/2024	Deena Duran, MA, Senior Business Analyst and Finance & Administration, UNM Health and Science	Prospective Family
1/19/2024	Catron Allred, Director, Early Childhood Center of Excellence	Community Organization
1/23/2024	Jessie Barrie, Head of School, Bosque School	Community Organization
1/24/2024	Maximilian Sanchez, Commercial Field Account Manager, HP	Supporter
1/25/2024	Becki Henderson, Childrens Leader, First Baptist Church Of West Albuquerque	Community Organization
1/25/2024	Estevan Martinez, Doctor, Gonstead Chiropractic Westside	Supporter
1/29/2024	Rachel Kindell, Owner, Graphic Designer, K&A Customs	Business
2/2/2024	Scott Darnell, Program Advisor, Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce	Supporter
2/6/2024	Julia Rivera-Tapia, Assistant Principal, J. Paul Taylor Academy	Supporter
2/6/2024	Janessa Player, Dean of Academic Experience, Voz Collegiate	Supporter
2/8/2024	Janet Leung, Director of Business Development, UNM Hospitals	Supporter
2/9/2024	Joshua O'Halloran, Agricultural Program Manager, Larry P. Abraham Agri-Nature Center	Business
2/9/2024	Randal Peters, Professor, Drake University (Albuquerque Resident)	Supporter
2/21/2024	Kirk Hartom, Educator, West Mesa High School	Supporter
2/21/2024	Angela Beaman, Physical Therapist, UNMH Inpatient Rehab	Supporter
2/23/2024	Eva Encinias, Director, National Institute of Flamenco	Supporter
2/23/2024	Veronica Torres, Executive Director, Tierra Adentro	Supporter
3/8/2024	Manuel & Tiffany Romero	Prospective Family
3/10/2024	Yvette Calderon, Assistant Property Manager, La Cantera Apartments	Prospective Family
3/13/2024	Jaqlyn Baldwin, Executive Director, Siembra Leadership High School	Supporter

3/15/2024	Christyna Romero, CEO/Credit Specialist, CRT Investment Solutions	Supporter
3/19/2024	Karina Veleta, First Choice Community Health	Prospective Family
3/24/2024	Chris Coche, Collections Driver, City of Albuquerque	Prospective Family
3/26/2024	Smraa Saidi, Associate Director of Business Development and Sales, CNM Ingenuity Inc.	Prospective Family
3/26/2024	Rodney Prunty, President & CEO, United Way of North Central New Mexico	Supporter
3/26/2024	Sylvia Maser, Global Give A Book: Opportunity Through Literacy	Supporter
4/2/2024	Crystal Garcia, Business Development Manager, The Atrisco Companies	Supporter
4/3/2024	Mike Vigil, Co-CEO, The Vigil Group	Business
4/3/2024	Rebekah Runyan, CPA, K12 Accounting	Business
4/5/2024	Natalie Trujillo, Founder & Instructor, NM School of Etiquette	Business
4/5/2024	Omar Serrano, Entrepreneur, Omard	Supporter
4/5/2024	Cilena Trujillo, Founder, Jump in2 School Bash	Supporter
4/5/2024	Raquel Benavidez, Women In Business, Hispano Chamber of Commerce	Supporter
4/9/2024	Kayla Strickler, Co-Executive Director, Rio Grande Food Project	Supporter
4/22/2024	Ian Smith, Mental Health Technician, UNMH	Prospective Family
4/23/2024	Cindy Valenzuela, Regional Recruiting Manager, Yellowstone Landscaping	Prospective Family
4/24/2024	Michael G. Hoffman, Director of Quality and Patient Safety, Lovelace Women's Hospital	Supporter
4/24/2024	Katia Nuñez, Realtor, Enfoque Realty Group	Prospective Family
4/25/2024	Esperanza Arellano, Administrator, The Rock Christian Fellowship	Supporter
5/3/2024	Phil Abeyta, CEO & Director, TEC34	Supporter
5/15/2024	Leah Ariaz, Stay-at-home-mom	Prospective Family

5/15/2024	Joe Valasquez, Network Program Specialist	Prospective Family
5/16/2024	Katrice Grant, School Counselor, Bernalillo Public Schools	Prospective Family
5/16/2024	Yvonne Garcia, Stay-at-home-mom	Prospective Family
5/16/2024	Marcos Gonzalez, Co-Owner, M&M Body Shop	Prospective Family
5/17/2024	Zephorah Diddy, Housekeeper, Self-Employed	Prospective Family
5/17/2024	Linda Varela, Teacher, Truman Middle School	Prospective Family
5/18/2014	Elisa Anaya, Stay-at-home-mom	Prospective Family

FIGURE 103 - Representation of Local Community Organizations, Businesses, and Individuals
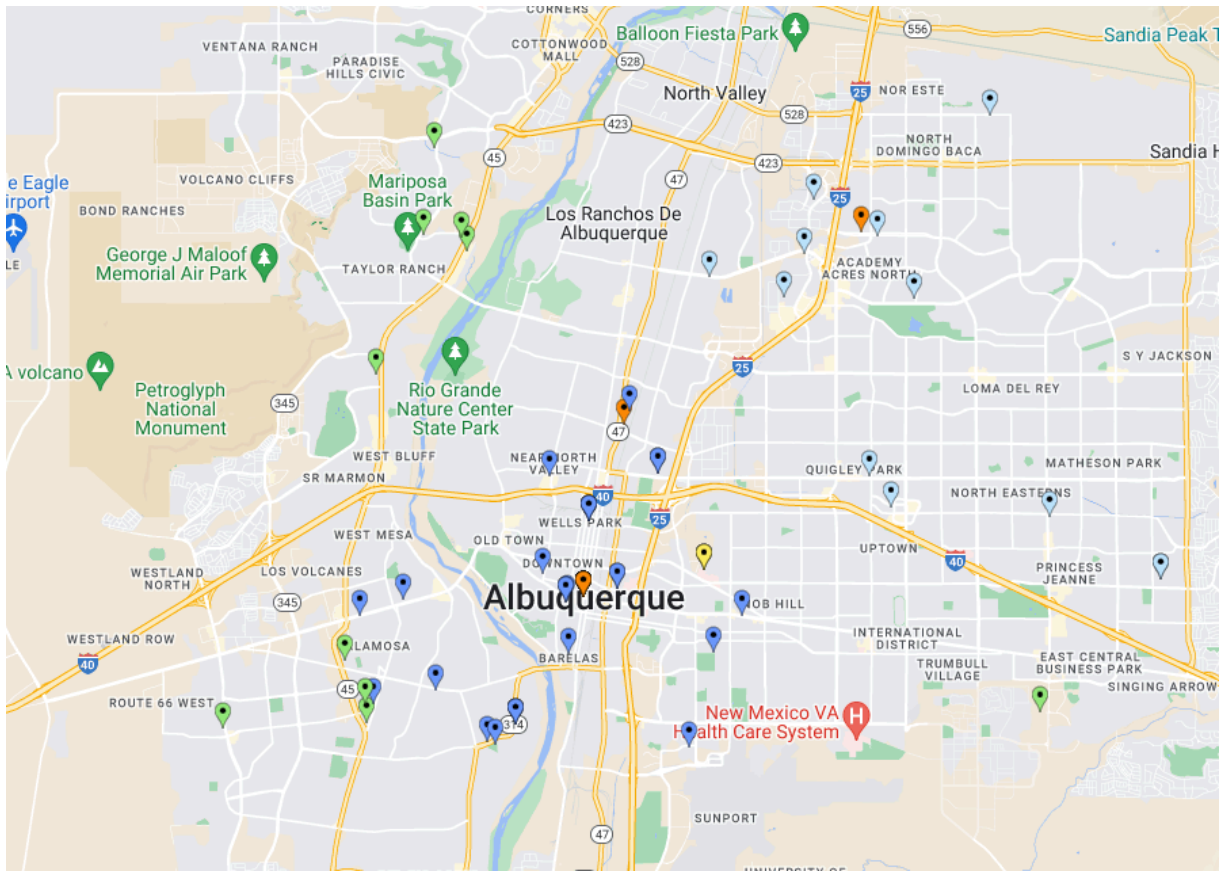
Community Focus Groups

To ensure that community needs are reflected within our school's design, we have conducted focus groups to garner community input and support for Equip Academy for several reasons. (1) Focus groups provide a platform for direct and in-depth engagement with community members, allowing for an understanding of their perspectives, concerns, and aspirations regarding the proposed school design. By soliciting input from diverse stakeholders, including parents, educators, local leaders, and residents, focus groups ensure that the proposed school aligns with the needs and values of the community it seeks to serve. (2) Focus groups offer a valuable opportunity for two-way

communication, fostering dialogue and collaboration between the school development team and the community. Through open and transparent discussions, focus groups empower community members to actively participate in the decision-making process, fostering a sense of ownership and investment in the success of the new school. (3) Focus groups enabled the Equip Academy team to identify and address any potential challenges or misconceptions early in the planning process. By proactively seeking feedback and input from the community, the school can tailor its programming, policies, and outreach efforts to better meet the needs and preferences of its future stakeholders. (4) Conducting focus groups is instrumental in building trust, fostering collaboration, and ultimately securing broad-based support for the new school within the community. By actively engaging with community members through focus groups, the school development team can ensure that the proposed school reflects the aspirations and priorities of the community, laying a solid foundation for its success in the years to come. **FIGURE 104** shows the various focus groups conducted.

FIGURE 104 - Community Focus Groups

Date	Location	# of Attendees (n = 80)
March 19, 2024	Partnership for Community Action; SW Albuquerque (Bilingual Presentation)	18
Monday, April 8, 2024	Taylor Ranch Community Center; NW Albuquerque (Translation available)	22
Tuesday, April 9, 2024	West Mesa Community Center; NW Albuquerque (Translation available)	25
Tuesday, April 22, 2024	Zoom; Virtual	15

Note. Please see **Section IVB** for the summary of results.

Community Input Survey

Fielding a survey of community perceptions was a step in the process of building a new school as it provides invaluable information into the diverse perspectives, priorities, and aspirations of the stakeholders within the community not captured through focus groups. By systematically gathering feedback through a survey, the Equip Academy team gained a comprehensive understanding of the needs and preferences of the community we aim to serve. Our survey was a structured and efficient means of collecting data from a wide cross-section of community members, including parents, students, educators, local leaders, and residents, and was conducted in English and Spanish to be inclusive of the Bilingual and English Language Learners (ELs) in the community. This information informed strategic decisions regarding the proposed school's curriculum, facilities, programming, and outreach efforts, ensuring that the final design reflects the collective vision and priorities of the community. **FIGURES 105** and **106** shows the various survey respondents by geographical area.

FIGURE 105 - Survey Respondents Zip Code Representation and Geographic Location (n=36)

Zip Code	Survey Respondents	Geographic Location
87114	4	Westside
87120	6	Westside
87121	1	Westside
87508	1	Santa Fe
87122	6	Sandia Heights
88201	1	Roswell

87124	3	Rio Rancho
87144	3	Rio Rancho
87043	1	Placitas
87110	1	Northeast
87111	2	Northeast
87123	1	Northeast
87107	1	North Valley
87108	1	North Valley
87113	3	North Valley

FIGURE 106 - Representation of Survey Respondents
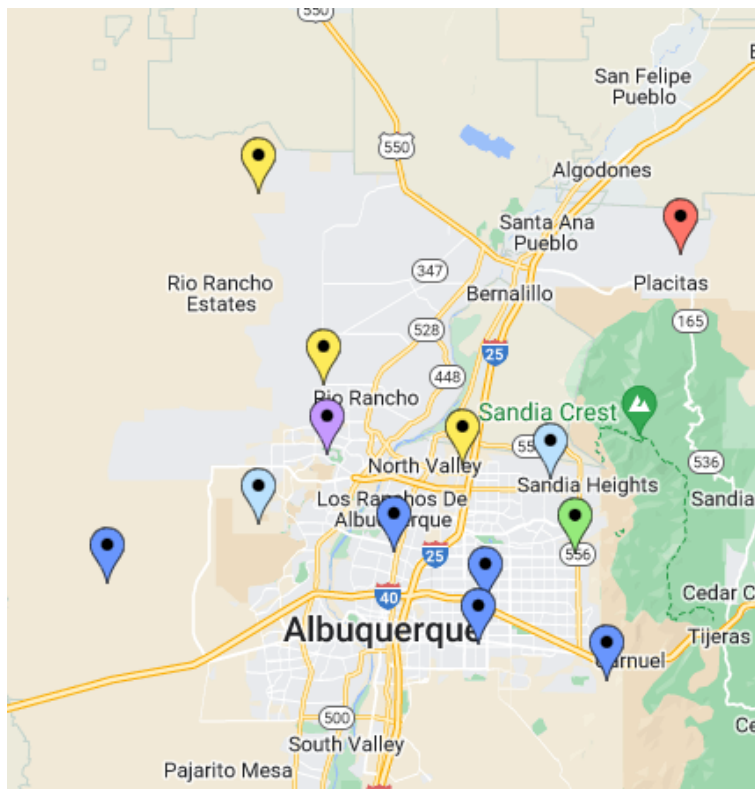
Out of the survey respondents **(n = 36)**, 31% were from the Albuquerque Westside. By incorporating responses from neighboring areas such as Rio Rancho and the North Valley, which share proximity and demographic similarities, this collective accounted for 61% of the total sample. This is a substantial and adequate representation of the communities surrounding the proposed school. The survey effectively captured input from a diverse range of zip codes corresponding to the proposed school's area. This broad geographic coverage ensures that the voices and perspectives of residents from various neighborhoods were well-represented in the data analysis. Please see **Section IVB** for the summary of results.

Online Presence

In addition to our in-person outreach efforts, we have strategically established an online presence to facilitate virtual engagement with our community. Leveraging platforms such as LinkedIn and

Mailchimp, we have created digital spaces that extend our reach and foster meaningful connections and dialogue with a wide audience. We recognize the importance of embracing digital channels as powerful tools for community engagement in today's interconnected world. Through our online platforms, we aim to provide accessible avenues for community members to stay informed, share feedback, and actively participate in shaping the vision and direction of Equip Academy.

Below, please see link to our LinkedIn page:

LinkedIN: https://www.linkedin.com/company/equip-academy-of-new-mexico/

We have created a template and process to involve community members with our Equip Academy newsletter with the goal to continually grow this list. Active participation in our online community is invaluable as we work together to realize our shared goals and aspirations for our school. **FIGURE 107** is the header of our newsletter that will be used as a mechanism to keep the community engaged and updated on the school's progress.

FIGURE 107 - Equip Academy of New Mexico Newsletter Template
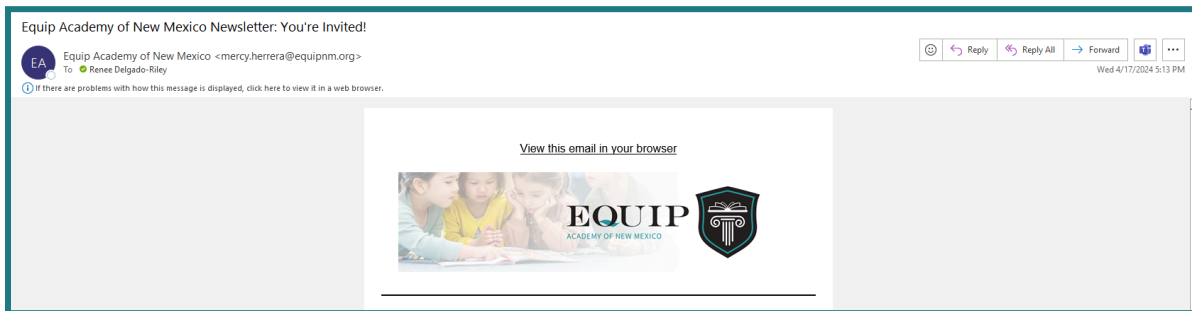
As one of Equip Academy's key educational approaches is inquiry-based instruction, which is focused on centering authentic engagement and the students' voice in learning, it is imperative that we maintain a continued online presence. This online presence will allow for ongoing feedback from the community to ensure that their needs are used to continuously inform and enhance our school's design. Further details on how qualitative and quantitative data are being used to drive the systemic changes within our school design are outlined in **Section IVB**.

B. Community Support

B. Provide **sufficient measurable**, quantifiable, and **qualitative** data-based evidence of abundant, broad-based support for the proposed school among residents in the targeted community. **DO NOT provide names or specific letters of interest from families or students.**

Overview

As a cornerstone of our commitment to community engagement, Equip Academy places immense value on input from the Albuquerque community, specifically the Westside. Our proactive outreach initiatives have fostered meaningful dialogue with a diverse array of stakeholders, including local residents, community organizations, businesses, and families residing within Albuquerque Westside. Through these extensive interactions, it has become clear that there exists a demand for a top-tier, inquiry-based, college preparatory elementary school option on the Westside.

The Equip Academy team has embraced this feedback, recognizing it as a guiding force in shaping our school to best serve the needs and aspirations of our community. Our outreach efforts are outlined in **Sections IV A** and **C** with further detail, but have consisted of one-on-one meetings, hosting focus

groups within the community, a community survey, and social media. We are deeply committed to embodying the spirit and essence of the Albuquerque community in all facets of our educational mission. The information from our community has profoundly influenced the development of our school, notably contributing to the cultivation of our distinctive mission seamlessly integrated into both our academic and organizational frameworks. As we continue to forge ahead, we remain steadfast in our dedication to creating with the community an educational environment that nurtures academic excellence and celebrates the unique cultural essence and aspirations of the Albuquerque community. We are committed to the transformative power of collective input and collaboration, and we are grateful for the ongoing support and partnership of our community stakeholders. Together, we are shaping a brighter future for generations to come.

Overall Community Support

To date, we have engaged with **245** community members through one-on-one meetings, focus groups, and a survey. This concerted effort is exemplified in **FIGURE 108**, which demonstrates the breadth and depth of our community support and engagement initiatives. The Equip Academy team has diligently cultivated relationships with a diverse array of organizations (please see **Section II** for more details). These collaborative alliances are instrumental in bolstering our capacity to effectively realize the academic and organizational objectives of our school.

FIGURE 108 - Community Support & Engagement Initiatives
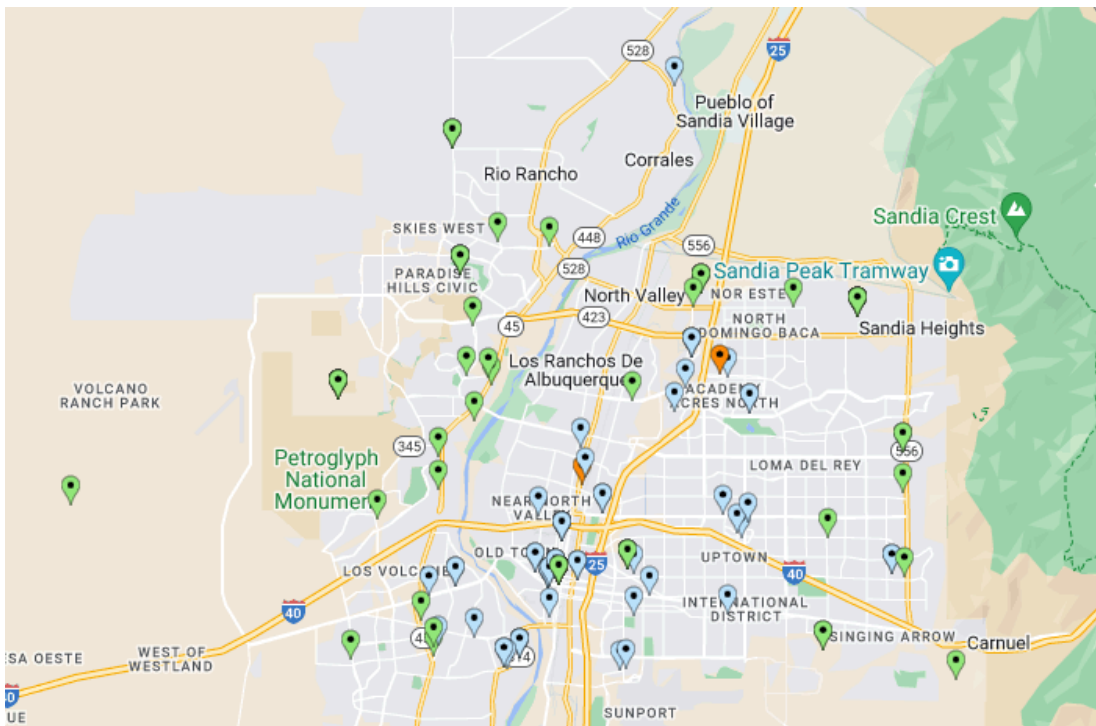
Note. 30 zip codes represented from 167 community members *(geographic locations were not collected from all community members)*

Our LinkedIn has an average of **557** impressions per post, with our most recent post having **1,596** impressions and our newsletter has **67** subscribers and is growing. Through these multifaceted efforts, Equip Academy is building bridges within the community and laying the foundation for an inclusive educational environment that resonates with the aspirations and needs of our community members, especially our family and children we propose to serve.

Local Student Demographics

Based on the proposed geographic location of students to be served through Equip Academy, projected racial/ethnic demographics, English Language Learners and those who qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch as a part of the National School Breakfast and Lunch Program for New Mexico can be seen in **FIGURE 36** in **Section I.F(3)**. This data is from the New Mexico Public Education Department 2022-23 Enrollment Subgroup Percentages. With the goal to be inclusive of other data sources, data on gender and projected enrollment was used from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) filtering by the proposed geographic area. **FIGURE 109** visualizes the gender composition.

FIGURE 109 - **Projected Gender Composition**
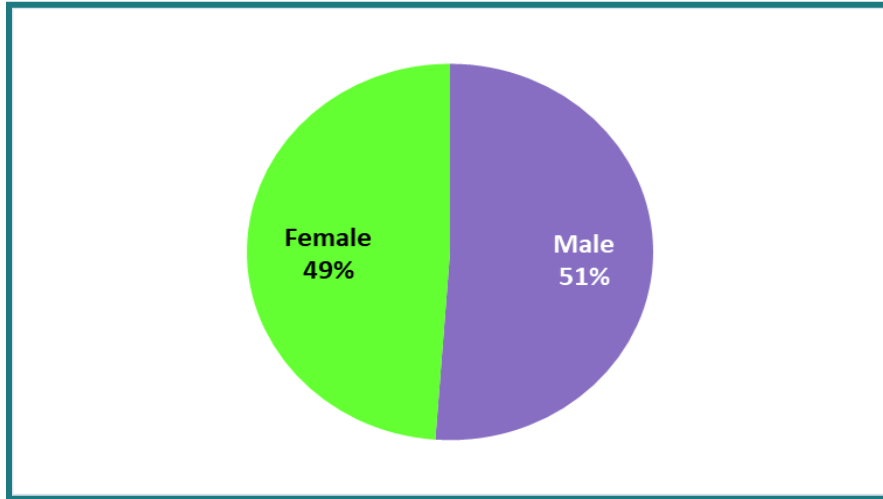
Note. Data from U.S. DOE. *Institute of Education Sciences*, National Center for Education Statistics.

Based on the geographical location that the Equip Academy will serve, using publicly available enrollment data from NCES, **FIGURE 110** shows the projected enrollment by grade level.

FIGURE 110 - Projected Enrollment by Grade
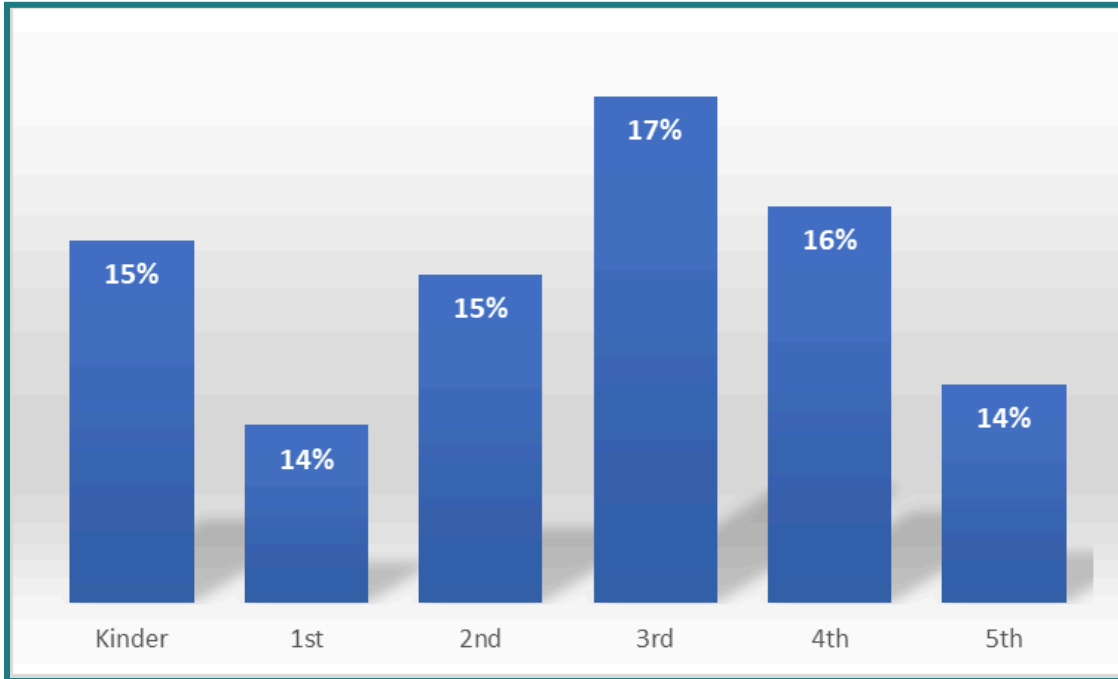
Note. Data from U.S. DOE. *Institute of Education Sciences*, National Center for Education Statistics.

Focus Groups

Overall, five themes emerged and are distilled from our four (4) focus group discussions, amplifying the perspectives and endorsements through qualitative data. Responses were summarized below using Grounded Theory, a qualitative tool used to understand people's experiences by building upon data themes. Our focus was to observe the frequency of words, themes, phrases, and their extensiveness, intensity, specificity, consistency, and participant perception of importance to create categories and themes. Themes were then expanded into descriptive stories representing community members' voices.

FIGURE 111 - Focus Group Themes and Key Voices (n = 80)

Category	Themes
Centering Student Success	Inquiry-based learning empowers each child to actively engage in their education through hands-on experiences. This approach is vital, as it combines direct interaction with materials and personalized guidance from teachers. By involving students, educators, and the community, this method places a strong emphasis on inclusion, ensuring that every learner has the support they need to thrive.
Rigorous Curriculum	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, it ensures that each student encounters just the right level of challenge to succeed. Introducing literacy early in life not only empowers students and their families but also fosters a positive perception of New Mexico's education system. Moreover, discussing college at an early stage is a commendable strategy, as it helps students connect with their educational paths sooner,

	setting a trajectory for their future goals.
Educator Excellence	Supporting teachers is essential for enabling students to reach their full potential. Teachers play a pivotal role in shaping the classroom environment, and with adequate backing, they can provide the necessary infrastructure to facilitate student success. By investing in our educators, we ensure that they have the resources and support needed to cultivate a thriving learning atmosphere.
Community Responsibility	There is a sentiment that the responsibility for children's education should not be left solely to educators but involves the community. This is underscored by the proactive enthusiasm for new educational initiatives, like the opening of a charter school, which is seen as a hopeful solution.
Concern for Future Prospects	People repeatedly expressed concern for the future workforce and economic stability of the young generation due to the public schools in Albuquerque. There is worry that without foundational skills, children will struggle in the job market and in managing personal finances. There's a strong worry about the effectiveness of schools in teaching fundamental skills like reading, particularly highlighted that schools are not adequately preparing students, leading to a perceived failure in meeting educational needs.

There is an invigorating sense of hope and readiness among children on the Westside to embrace academic challenges and fulfilling educational opportunities and Equip Academy is viewed as a significant step toward reversing current shortcomings. The four focus groups with **80** community members revealed that in prioritizing student success, inquiry-based learning is welcome, enabling active learning experiences with personalized guidance from teachers. Engaging students, educators, and the community is central to fostering inclusivity, and this engagement forms a fundamental pillar of Equip Academy's vision and mission. Community members are excited about how this collective involvement supports and enriches our goals. Community members emphasize the importance and enthusiasm around a rigorous curriculum, focusing on literacy as foundational, ensuring holistic student development, and instilling confidence in the education system, particularly in New Mexico. Further, early literacy initiatives and discussions about higher education empower students and families. Supporting educators is crucial, as they shape classroom environments and provide the necessary infrastructure for student achievement. Community members were excited about the prospect of an elementary school offering these key educational approaches. The community expresses support for the public charter school as a necessary measure to attract more people to the state and to better prepare children for future challenges. These themes collectively depict a community that is critical of the current state of public education and hopeful for the potential improvements and educational strategies offered through Equip Academy.

In addition, participants were asked to reflect and write about the importance of Equip Academy's mission/vision, school design, and any other elements on note cards during focus group discussions and using Padlet in the virtual session. These were transcribed and are summarized below.

FIGURE 112- Reflections on Focus Areas

Areas of Importance	Reflection
	1. **Purpose and Ambition:** Participants across all focus groups highlighted the importance of instilling a sense of purpose in students. They believe that recognizing and nurturing individual purpose is crucial for engagement and

Mission and Vision	success. 2. **Confidence and Self-Belief:** Many responses emphasized the need for educational programs that boost students' confidence and self-esteem, empowering them to believe in their capabilities. 3. **Engagement and Inspiration:** Several comments pointed to the importance of keeping students engaged and inspired, which involves showing them potential career paths and involving them in meaningful activities that connect to their futures.
School Design	1. **Inquiry-Based and Hands-On Learning:** There is a strong advocacy for learning methods that involve students more actively. Inquiry-based learning, where students learn through problem-solving and experimentation, was frequently mentioned as beneficial. 2. **Comprehensive Literacy:** Participants consistently mentioned the foundational role of literacy, stating that strong reading skills are critical for overall academic and life success. 3. **Educator Excellence**: The quality of teaching was identified as a key factor in student success. Feedback suggested that well-trained, highly skilled teachers create better learning environments and outcomes. 4. **College Preparatory Focus:** A notable number of responses from the focus groups supported early introduction to college preparatory content, emphasizing the importance of preparing students from a young age for higher education.
Additional Elements	• **Holistic Development:** Responses often discussed the need for programs that support all aspects of a student's development, including emotional and social skills. • **Community and Family Engagement:** The involvement of families and the community in education was seen as vital, with many advocating for more outreach programs and family engagement opportunities. • **Specific Community Needs:** Some comments express dissatisfaction with current educational outcomes in New Mexico, particularly in reading proficiency and overall performance, with a fear of long-term implications for students' futures. It is acknowledged that the area has unique needs such as supporting English-language learners and students from lower economic statuses, pointing out that family support is crucial for children's school performance. • **Hope and Support for New Initiatives:** Amid the critiques, there is a sense of hope and support for initiatives like Equip Academy, which is seen as a solution to the existing gaps in education, especially for the west side community. • **Equity and Advocacy in Education:** Concerns are raised about educational equity, particularly for children from marginalized backgrounds. There is a call for advocacy and action to ensure that all children receive the support they need.

Many community members expressed a need for better educational choices for their children, grandchildren, and the fuller Westside community, highlighting a desire for high-quality schooling that supports community building and offers more to young learners. These themes underline a community-centric approach to education that values individual student growth, active learning methodologies, and comprehensive support from educators and families. These themes collectively

highlight a community's call for enhanced educational options that address equity, community integration, and the holistic development of children, teachers, and families alike.
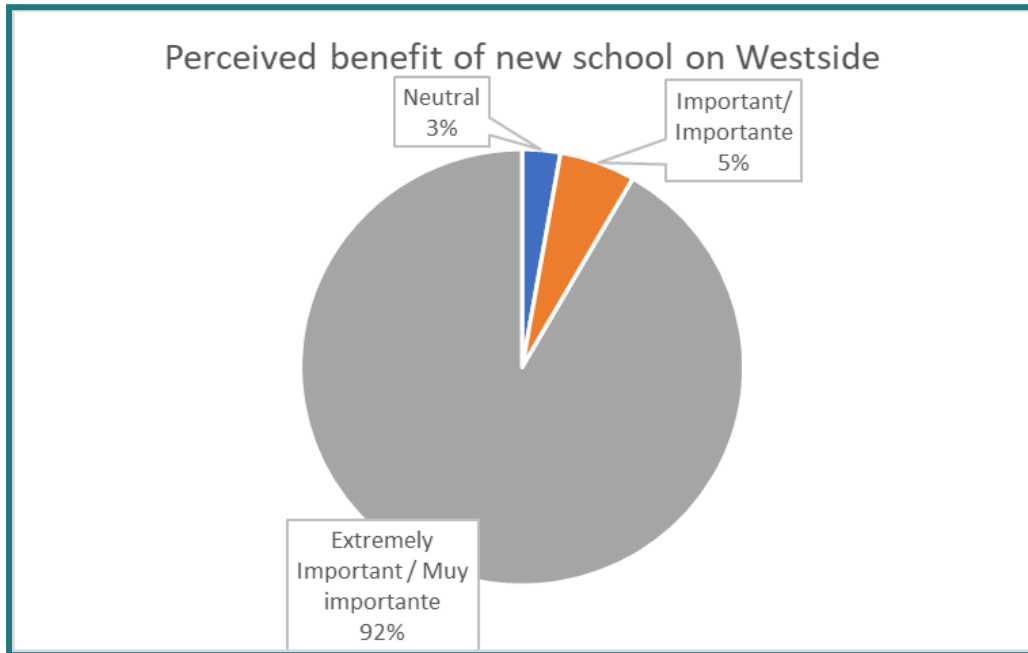
Participant Voices

Below are excerpts from focus group discussions and survey open-ended responses, illuminating the specific facets of Equip Academy's approach that have garnered the most interest and excitement among participants.

- "Literacy changes everything! It improves communication skills that increase possibilities of success in ANY job."

- "When we were looking for schools like this, there were few in Albuquerque and none on the Westside where we live."

- "The Westside community urgently needs more high-quality options for students and families. Every kid deserves to find the right school fit so they can be successful in school and in life!"

- "All NM students deserve access to high quality educational options now. Education can be the tool to impact lives, but the first step is access."

- "The westside of Albuquerque is growing rapidly and New Mexico as a whole is in need of a high-quality educational model, this is a good start."

- "Better education is much needed in our community"

- "This mission gives hope for our future New Mexican education system by setting an example equipping them so they are not alone in this journey of education."

- "Kids should be destined for greatness!"

Community Perception Survey

Survey results from open-ended questions indicate that the Westside is in dire need of high quality schools. The scarcity of educational options in the area highlights a pressing need: public schools are struggling with overcrowding and are unable to meet the current demands of the community's educational needs. The community believes that these options would cater to the immediate academic needs and instill a culture of higher learning from an early age, significantly benefiting the community. Families indicate that they find themselves with limited choices, especially for schools that challenge students toward academic excellence, especially in reading and language development. The community overall expressed that access to a school like the Equip Academy is the first critical step toward cultivating a community where every child, regardless of their zip code, and socioeconomic status has the opportunity to thrive. **FIGURE 113** illustrates how the community perceives that the Equip Academy will benefit the Westside: 97% of community members believe that Equip Academy will positively impact the Westside; 3% responded neutrally, with no negative responses or doubts about Equip Academy's benefits to the area.

FIGURE 113 - Benefit of Equip on the Westside (n = 36)

Perceived benefit of new school on Westside

Neutral 3%

Important/ Importante 5%

Extremely Important / Muy importante 92%

Community members on the Westside indicated that it is underserved in terms of educational resources, especially outside the Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) system. This shortage of resources disproportionately affects children who are unable to realize their full potential. Community members have endorsed the importance of Equip Academy's key educational approaches: (1) Reading and Language Development, (2) High Quality Curriculum, (3) Teacher Support, (4) College Prep, (5) Inquiry-Based Learning, and (6) Joyful Learning. **FIGURE 114** summarizes the community's expressed beliefs in the importance of these educational approaches. A majority of community members find all these approaches *"Extremely Important/Muy Importante."*

FIGURE 114 - Importance of Educational Approaches in School Selection (n = 36)

Importance of Role of Educational Approaches in School Selection

Legend:
- ■ Not at all important / No importante
- ■ No opinion
- ■ Important / Importante
- ■ Extremely Important / Muy importante
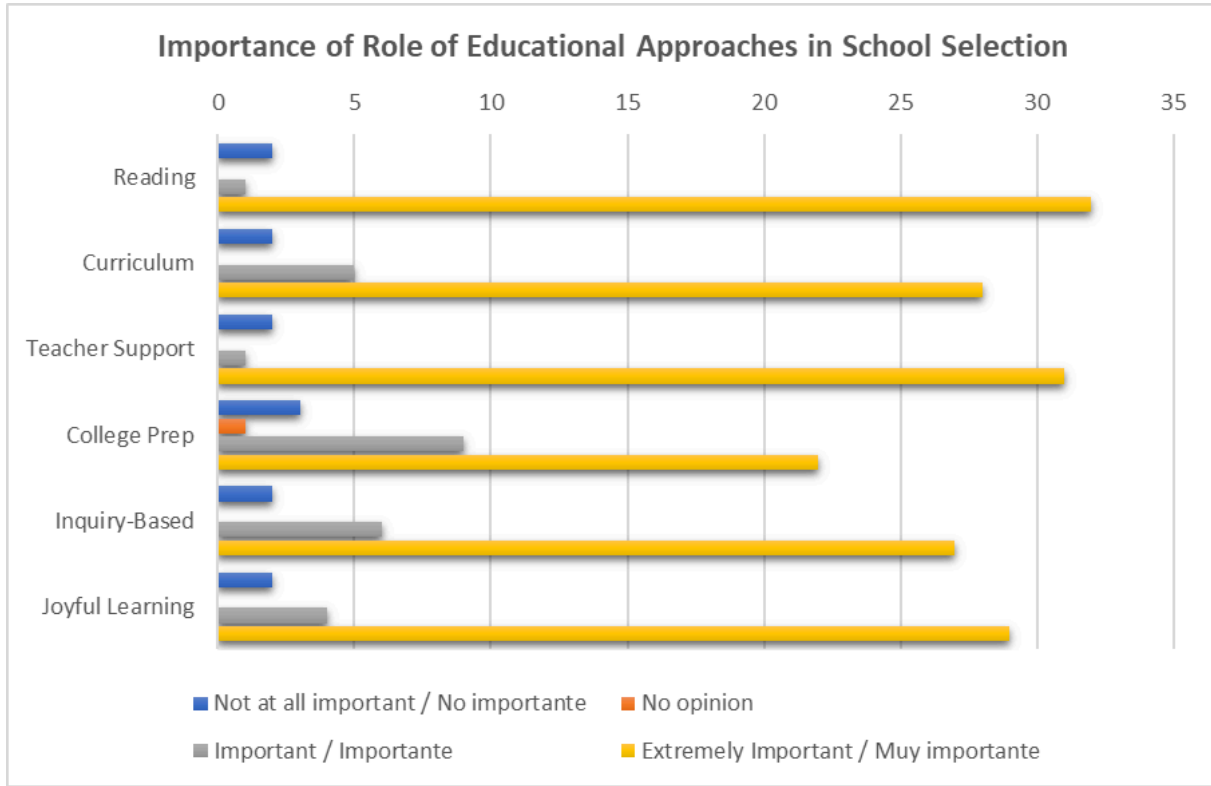
Letters of Support

In addition to fielding qualitative and quantitative community feedback, letters of support specifically from local community members further highlight the critical importance of why a school like Equip Academy is needed on the Albuquerque Westside. **Please see Appendix U for the list of support letters**. Below are excerpts from Letters of Support that highlight the community's enthusiasm and excitement for Equip Academy's innovative design:

- "I am confident that Equip Academy will provide a welcoming and culturally responsive environment where every student feels valued and supported." - Local Community/Family

- "Having more inquiry-based elementary schools on the Westside would provide families with additional choices for their children's education." - Local Community/Family

- "I am also impressed by Equip Academy's emphasis on personalized learning and individualized instruction, which are essential for meeting the diverse needs and learning styles of students." - Local Community/Family

- "The proposed curriculum and teaching methodologies signal a forward-thinking approach that recognizes the importance of preparing students not just for the next grade, but for life." - Local Community/Family

- "As a long-time resident, I am keenly aware of the need for improved public-school options on the Westside." - Local Community/Family

The resounding wave of community endorsement underscores the desire for the presence of Equip Academy within the Albuquerque community. This sentiment is not merely anecdotal, but has been

substantiated by data from both the focus group discussions and survey responses, as well as testimonials within letters of support from families. The community voices championing the establishment of Equip Academy speaks volumes about the demand for educational alternatives tailored to meet the evolving needs and aspirations of our diverse student body. Through the above efforts, the Equip team believes it has fostered sufficient community support not just from the greater Albuquerque area, but also on the Westside. Our team believes strongly in working with and for the community in the design of our school.

C. Community Relationships

C. Clearly demonstrate that you have developed **meaningful and strategic** networking relationships or resource agreements with local community agencies, groups, or individuals. (not including formal partnership agreements that are integral to the proposed school's operations, as described in Section II. I (1) of this application.)

Overview

Equip Academy of New Mexico (Equip Academy) strives to build effective and strong community relationships in the Albuquerque area. The team has spent considerable time establishing relationships with community organizations, businesses, groups and individuals in the community specifically with an emphasis on support for the Westside.

Recognizing the vital role that strong community ties play in fostering a thriving educational ecosystem, our team has dedicated substantial time and effort to nurturing connections with a diverse array of community organizations, businesses, groups, and individuals. This deliberate approach reflects our belief in the power of collaboration and collective action in driving positive change. By forging authentic relationships and engaging in open dialogue with stakeholders across the community spectrum, we have already built a network of support that extends far beyond the walls of our school. Community, business, and organizational connections are crucial for the successful launch of a new school for several reasons:

1. **Resource Support.** Partnerships with businesses and organizations can provide essential resources that might not be otherwise available. This could include technology, equipment, and facilities, which are fundamental for setting up and maintaining school operations.

2. **Expertise and Experience.** Community and business leaders often bring a wealth of knowledge and experience. Their insights into local market conditions, community needs, and organizational management can help shape the school's strategies for curriculum development, student engagement, and overall management of key educational approaches.

3. **Enhanced Learning Opportunities.** Collaborations with local businesses and organizations can lead to unique learning opportunities for students, such as internships, mentorship programs, and hands-on projects that link educational content with real-world applications. This can greatly enrich the educational experience and better prepare students for future careers.

4. **Community Integration and Support.** Schools that are well-integrated into their communities generally see higher levels of student enrollment and parental involvement, which are key indicators of a school's success. Community support can also aid in navigating local governance and compliance requirements more smoothly.

5. **Legitimacy and Credibility.** Strong ties with respected local entities can lend credibility to the new school and help build trust within the community. This is particularly important in

attracting students and convincing parents of the school's commitment to high educational standards and community values.

6. **Sustainability and Growth.** Long-term relationships with local businesses and organizations can ensure ongoing support and opportunities for growth. These connections can evolve into sustainable partnerships that support the school through changing educational landscapes and economic conditions.

By fostering these community relationships, we can leverage the collective strength and support of our community to create a positive educational environment that is well-equipped to meet the needs of our students and the broader community.

We have developed meaningful and strategic relationships with local community organizations, businesses, groups, and individuals. Social Network Analysis (SNA) is a methodological approach used to understand the relationships and interactions within a network of entities—such as individuals, businesses, or community organizations. By analyzing the patterns of relationships, SNA provides insights into the structure and dynamics of social connections, highlighting the most influential entities, identifying clusters or communities, and understanding the flow of information or resources through the network. We used Gephi, an advanced tool for network visualization and analysis, to create a detailed visualization of our authentic relationships. This visualization maps out the complex web of connections between Equip Academy and various local businesses, community organizations, and individuals. **FIGURE 115** serves as an image of our extensive community engagement and as a strategic tool for further enhancing our community outreach. The thickness of lines between nodes (dots)—which represent organizations, businesses, or individuals indicates the strength and frequency of discussions supporting our key educational approaches. Therefore, lines that are darker and thicker signify the most significant areas of support and connections for our school to date, reflecting these strong relationships with community organizations, businesses, and individuals. For further details on what each color represents, please refer to the color legend in **FIGURE 116**.

FIGURE 115– Equip Academy's Social Networks Spring 2024
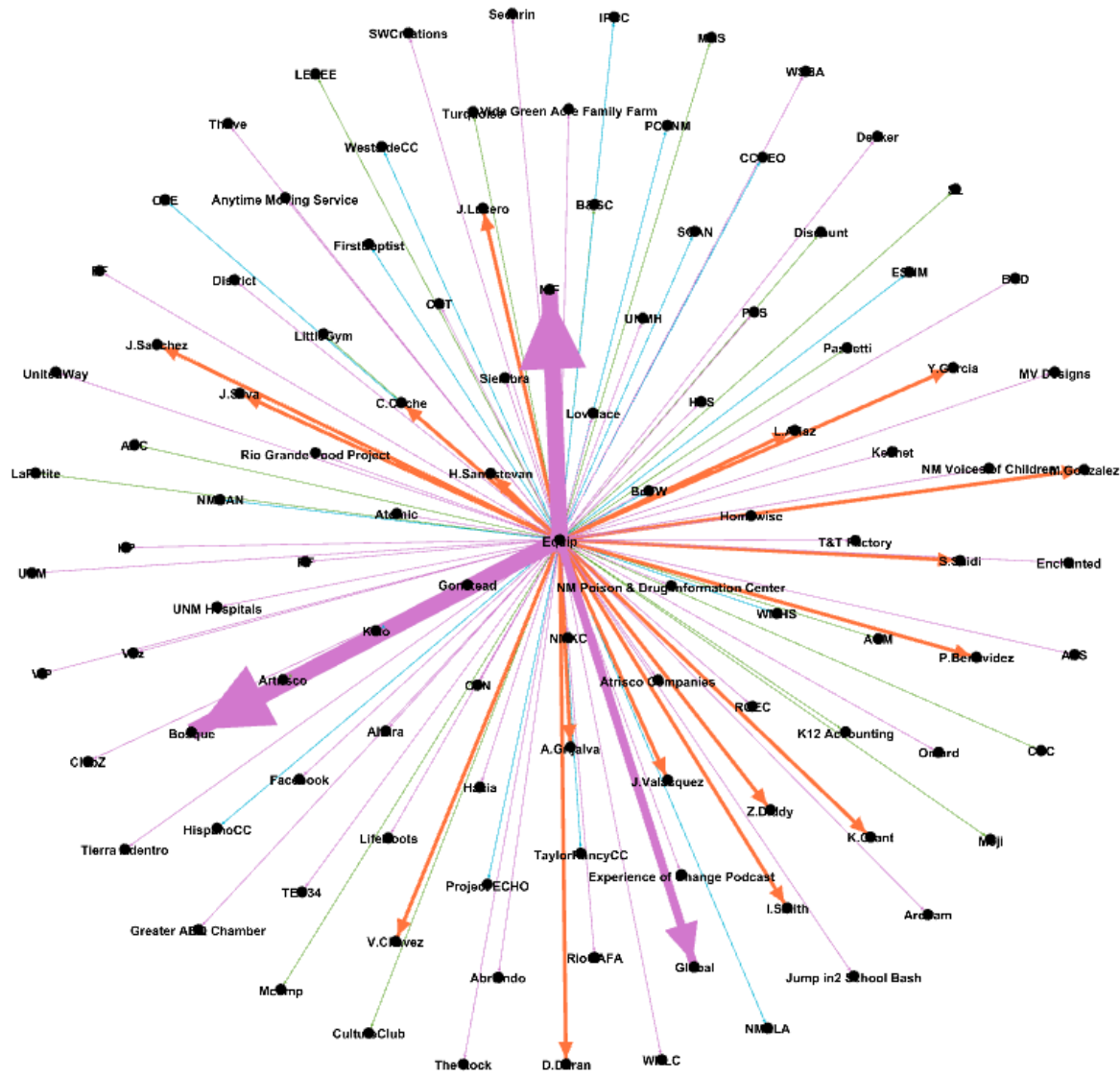
Note. **Color Codes: Supporter**, **Business**, **Prospective Family**, and **Business**. **Label Codes:** ABC = ABC Preschool and Childcare; Abriendo = Abriendo Puertas; AGM = American General Media; Altura = Altura Prep; Anytime Moving Service; APS = Albuquerque Public Schools; Ardham = Ardham Technologies; Bosque = Bosque Prep School; BoTW = Bank of the West; C.Coche = Chris Coche; CCC = Capitol Counsel & Consulting; CCCEO = Catholic Charities Center for Educational Opportunity; ClubZ = Club Z! Tutoring Services; CFN = Child First Network; CRT = CRT Investment Solutions; D.Duran = Deena Duran; Dekker = Dekker Perich Sabatini; DF = Daniel's Fund; Discount = Discount Towing & Collision; Enchanted; Excellent = Excellent Schools of NM; Experience of Change Podcast; Facebook; First Baptist = First Baptist Church of West Albuquerque-Dr. Stephen Baum; District = District 26 Senate; Gonstead = Gonstead Chiropractic Westside; Global = Global Give A Book: Opportunity Through Literacy; Greater ABQ Chamber; HP; Homewise; HPS = Hispanic Philanthropic Society; H.Santistevan = Haley Santistevan; Hacia = Hacia Toward the University; HispanoCC = Hispano Chamber of Commerce; HPS = Hispano Philanthropic Society; IPCC = Indian Pueblo Cultural Center; J.Lucero = Jordan Lucero; J.Sanchez = Julian Sanchez; J.Silva = Julia Silva; J.Valasquez = Joe Valasquez; K.Grant = Katrice Grant; Kiko = Kiko & Associates; LaPetite = La Petite Academy; L.Ariaz = Leah Ariaz; LEAEE = The Learning Experience Academy of Early Education; LifeRoots; Little Gym = Little Gym of Albuquerque; Lovelace = Lovelace Women's Hospital; MV Designs; M.Gonzalez = Marcos Gonzalez; MAS = Mission Achievement and Success; Mcomp = Moving Company; NIF = National Institute of Flamenco; NMCAN = NM Early Learning Academy-Central location-director; NMELA =

NM Early Learning Academy; NMKC = NM Kids Can; NM Poison & Drug Information Center; OLE; Omard; Pascetti = Pascetti Steel; Project ECHO; P.Benavidez = Philip Benavidez; PCS = PCS of NM; PCSNM = Public Charter Schools of New Mexico; RF = Roadrunner Food Bank; RGEC = Rio Grande Educational Collaborative; RioGAFA = Rio Grande Academy of Fine Arts; Securin; Siembra = Siembra Leadership High School; S.Saidi = Smraa Saidi; SCAN = Save the Children Network; SL = Sandia Labs; SWCreations = Southwest Creations Collaborative; T&T Factory = Tint & Trim Factory; TaylorRancyCC = Taylor Ranch Community Center; The Rock = The Rock Christian Fellowship; Thrive = Thrive Charter; Tierra Adentro = Tierra Adentro Arts Charter School; Turquoise = Turquoise Trail Charter School; United Way; Vida Green Acre Family Farm; UNMH = UNMH Inpatient Rehab; UNM = University of New Mexico; UNM = Chicano and Chicano Studies; V.Chavez = Vaadra Chavez; VIP = VIP Staffing; Voz = Voz Collegiate; WestsideCC= Westside Community Center; WHLC = Western Heights Learning Center Inc., WMHS = West Mesa High School; WSBA = Westside Business Association; Y.Garcia = Yvonne Garcia; Z.Diddy = Zephorah Diddy

Throughout these unique 107 community organizations, businesses, groups, and individuals, **FIGURE 116** represents the type of relationship that has been fostered.

FIGURE 116 - Business, Community Organization, and Individual Connection Types

Color	Type of Relationship	Percentage of Organizations Connected to Equip
	Supporter	53%
	Business	16%
	Prospective Family	16%
	Community Organization	15%

Equip Academy has successfully earned the support of numerous local community organizations, businesses, groups, and individuals in Albuquerque. This support is evidenced by the many conversations visually represented above, as well as in the letters of support we have received (see **Appendix U** for a list of support letters received). These organizations recognize the value of our key educational approaches and are committed to contributing to the success of our students. Their testimonials highlight the shared vision of fostering an educational environment that benefits all community members. This broad base of support underscores the community's belief in our mission and enhances our ability to create a lasting impact.

Support Quotes from Community Organizations

- *"Together with a strong founding board of directors, I am confident that Ms. Herrera has put forth a long-term, strategic plan for Equip Academy that will result in exceptional results for the students, their families and the greater Albuquerque community. Ms. Herrera brings with her exceptional experience delivering results for underserved students. She has the tools, experiences and vision to lead a successful school."* – **Amanda Aragon, Executive Director, New Mexico Kids CAN**

- *"For Equip Academy, we are supporting its Founder, Mercy Herrera, with the site selection for her new school. This includes construction feasibility, such as programming, budget, and regulatory compliance, including occupancy, zoning, and parking. Through this collaboration during the site selection process, Mercy has demonstrated unwavering dedication to identifying locations where educational opportunities are scarce and where her innovative*

approach can make a profound impact. It's clear that her charter school will fill a critical need in the areas lacking sufficient education options." – **Mike Loftin, CEO, Homewise**

- *"The Equip Founding Team has dedicated considerable time to partnering with the community in ways that ensure it will have the backing of Albuquerque stakeholders and best serve the needs of the community. This engagement has both affirmed the need for a school that promises educational excellence and enabled Equip Academy to start to build the relationships that will earn it a place in the community."* – **Terri Cole, President & CEO, Greater ABQ Chamber**

- *"In speaking extensively with Mercy, I see that her hopes and plans for this endeavor are well designed. She has spent the better part of adult life learning from some very established educators, considering how she might design curriculum that would speak to our New Mexico communities, and is very invested in making sure she is able to nurture our youth in meaningful, life changing ways."* – **Eva Encinias, Founding Director, National Institute of Flamenco**

- *"We are eager to support Equip Academy of New Mexico's charter school application for many reasons, one being the school Founder and Leadership. Equip Academy of New Mexico's proposed school leader, Mercy Herrera, has taught in and helped lead several of our country's highest-performing charter schools. She has a track record of increasing student achievement, especially for historically underrepresented students. Mercy was born and raised in Albuquerque and comes from a background similar to the students she plans to serve. Finally, Equip Academy's founding board is composed of a local, diverse team with the professional backgrounds and skill sets necessary to ensure effective governance of a high-performing charter school.* – **Scott Hindman, Executive Director, Excellent Schools New Mexico**

- *"Building strong, enduring relationships with our partners is vital to Global Give-A-Book as these collaborations are the cornerstone of our ability to reach and impact diverse communities effectively. We plan to contribute award-winning books to improve literacy rates and foster a love for reading among students, aligning with Equip Academy's mission. Equip Academy is important to the growth and enrichment of the children in New Mexico especially the Westside of Albuquerque."* -- **Sylvia Maser, Founder and CEO, Global Give-A-Book**

- *"One key area of focus for United Way of North Central New Mexico is educational attainment. Our organization recognizes the critical need for a K-5 top-tier, inquiry-based, college-preparatory elementary school. Equip utilizes evidence-based teaching to advance educational equity and the school's innovative approaches will drive academic achievement, eliminate disparities in student outcomes, and promote critical, independent thinking so students can dream audaciously and pursue a life of purpose."* – **Rodney Prunty President & CEO United Way of North Central New Mexico**

- *"We look forward to regularly working with and supporting Equip Academy's students in our Field and Community Science program. Within that program, students from across the Albuquerque metro area participate in actual hands-on, wildlife and habitat research projects along the banks of the Rio Grande and within its riverside forest, the bosque. Furthermore, in addition to the science content we deliver, we also provide standards-aligned activities and materials for participating students, in reading, math, art, and social studies. Currently through grant funding, we annually support between 750 to 1,000 students mostly from Title 1 schools, with our programming. As we envision our relationship with Equip Academy, we*

believe that we will be able to annually provide scaffolding field and science experiences across a student's grade level progression within their school. Equip Academy's commitment to inquiry-based, college preparatory curriculum, perfectly aligns with our own mission, both within our school and our work beyond it." – **Daniel Shaw, Bosque School, Director Field & Community Science Programs**

- *"As a practicing physician in the Albuquerque area, I would not be where I am today without having a strong early childhood education that provided me with the foundation for later scholastic success. I grew up in another state with opportunities not currently available for some of Albuquerque's most vulnerable children. The Equip Academy of New Mexico is a K-5 top-tier, inquiry-based, college-preparatory elementary school in Albuquerque that can provide that strong academic foundation that I was lucky enough to have as a child."* – **Chakri Gavva, Doctor, Presbyterian Hospital**

- *"I would Like to extend my support and recommendation for the approval of Equip Academy of New Mexico. My 9 year old son attends a small Charter school with similar values and innovative approaches here in Albuquerque. I am willing to make a 30 minute commute out of my way every morning in order for him to be in an environment that allows him to fully express himself artistically and reach his full potential academically. Albuquerque needs more schools that prepare their students to live out their greatness and help them discover their purpose in life. I am confident aht families will benefit tremendously from this school."* – **Dr. Estevan Martinez, Gonstead Physical Medicine (Westside)**

- *"MV Designs is a design company that creates various custom projects for customers and their clients. Equip Academy is needed in New Mexico. Equip's inquiry-based model which fosters student thinking, curiosity and creativity. Creativity is crucial because it allows individuals to showcase and express their talents and skills in various mediums. This is crucial for tomorrow's learning"* – **Mark Vigil, CEO & Lead Designer, MV Designs**

- *"The mission of AP/OD is to support parents as leaders of their families and as their child's first and most influential teacher in their child's first school—the home. AP/OD works with partners to implement our evidence- based parent leadership program designed by and for Latino parents with children between the ages of prenatal to five (PN-5) and adopted by diverse communities across the country. AP/OD uses a two-generation approach that builds parent leadership skills and knowledge to promote family wellbeing and positive outcomes for children. Parents can be powerful agents of change in the lives of their children as well as their community. The school design has a lot of great aspects. One of my favorite aspects about Equip Academy is the comprehensive literacy and language acquisition program."* – **Adrian Pedroza, National Executive Director, Abriendo Puertas/Opening Doors**

- *"My academic career has revolved around issues of equity in education and the labor market and I welcome the establishment of a new K-5 top-tier, inquiry-based, college-preparatory elementary charter school. The school design has a lot of great aspects. One of my favorite aspects about Equip Academy is the emphasis on evidence-based approaches to advance educational equity and eliminate disparities in student outcomes."* – **Melissa Binder, Associate Professor & Chair, UNM Department of Economics**

- *"In raising the next generation of leaders, we must continue as a community to find and develop new solutions to long-standing systemic problems that continue to perpetuate cycles of poverty and oppress Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in particular, including the persistence of underperforming schools. New Mexico is unlike any other state or culture and*

requires the deep investment of more born-and-raised locals who are intimately familiar with the current system and not only know what needs to change, but how this change must be cultivated. Equip Academy, led by an exceptionally qualified and exceedingly-credentialed leader in Mercy L. Herrera, has incredible potential to serve as a model for long-anticipated public education transformation." – **Kayla Strickler, Co-Executive Director, Rio Grande Food Project**

- *"My CPA Firm is TKM, LLC, (Formerly Kubiak Melton & Associates, LLC). We have been auditing school districts and charter schools in New Mexico for over 15 years. Professionally and personally, I have seen good charter schools and I have seen bad charter schools. I believe that Equip Academy of New Mexico would be an asset to the community it would serve. I have spoken to the founding team and believe they will be stewards of the public funding to accomplish their mission and serve their community. Having served on multiple charter school boards, I think that the Equip team has all the pieces of the puzzle it would take to serve their community at a high level, while being transparent and accountable to the stakeholders while doing so."* – **Daniel O. Trujillo, Managing Partner, TKM, LLC**

- *"As New Mexico continues to focus on equity in education, it is imperative that school choice be at the forefront of those conversations. Equip Academy will serve as another high-quality option for the students and families of Albuquerque. Albuquerque's students are waiting for a school like Equip Academy. The urgency has never been greater."* – **Isaac Rivas-Savell, Founder and Head of School, Voz Collegiate Preparatory Charter School**

- *"As the parent and stepparent of 6 children who attended public school in Albuquerque, I can attest to the limited options and challenges our family faced accessing high-quality education. One of the children was eventually disenrolled from public school and home-schooled. One was placed on an IEP in Kindergarten and remained in Special Education classes through high school graduation. Despite being inquisitive, he was not supported in building his curiosity toward academic success. He felt like a failure throughout public school and did not move on to a secondary education until he was 30 years old. Today, he is an archaeology student with straight As. I know that a different educational setting as a child could have led to a very different student experience and choice after graduation. As a professional in the pediatric community for almost 16 years, I have encountered many families who also seek nontraditional alternatives to the public education crisis. Often cited is that parents do not want their children to experience the same learning experience they had in the public schools. I find that heartbreaking and unacceptable. The need for Equip Academy is dire."*
– **Mary A. Becker, M.S., CCC-SLP, Director of Early Childhood Services, LifeROOTS, Inc.**

- *"I fully support and recommend the approval of Equip Academy of New Mexico. Behind Equip is tremendous, qualified leadership whose desire to see the beautiful children of New Mexico flourish and find purpose through education."* – **Esperanza Arellano, Administrator, The Rock Christian Fellowship**

- *"As longtime residents of northwest Albuquerque, my family struggled to find the right K-12 fit for our son. There were few choices 15 years ago, and almost none on the West Side... I truly believe we won the lottery the day my son drew for a Montessori elementary charter, and again when he drew for a college prep middle and high school charter… Every Albuquerque-area family deserves the chance to tell a story similar to my family's, that of a great public school education provided by a high quality charter that sets their child up to*

succeed in academics, work and life." – **D'Val Westphal, Executive Vice President of Policy and Programs, Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce**

- *"Small businesses struggle to find the support that we need in all levels of employees from manual labor to proper representation in local government and state legislature. I believe that Equip's utilization of evidence-based teaching to advance educational equity and the school's innovative approaches will drive academic achievement, eliminate disparities in student outcomes, and promote critical, independent thinking. This will allow students to become happy, healthy and successful individuals, returning the investment in our community."* – ***Tammy Walden, Owner, Realty One***

- *"Having worked closely with the community, I understand the pressing need for a top-tier, inquiry-based, college-preparatory elementary school for grades K-5. The vision and mission of Equip Academy are commendable, especially in their dedication to elevating the value of education within an underserved demographic."* – ***Claire Detweiler, Doctor, Presbyterian Hospital***

- *"As a fellow charter school leader and Co-Founder of the Rio Grande Academy of Fine Arts, I believe in school choice. The students of New Mexico need more options to best fit our students, and I believe that Equip Academy will be another great option for students in New Mexico."* – **Jordan Franco, Co-Founder, Rio Grande Academy of Fine Arts**

- *"The Albuquerque Westside Business Association was created to support the educational and economic development of our community. Education is a cornerstone to a community's economic prosperity. After meeting with the Equip Founding Team, I was impressed by how they dedicated considerable time they spent partnering with the community. Albuquerque, particularly the Westside, needs a school that prepares students to live out their greatness and reach their full potential."* – **Melissa A. Sanchez, President & CEO, Albuquerque Westside Business Association**

- *"Currently, many families lack access to quality education options in the area. Opening the charter school Equip Academy will provide access for students as it aims to provide rigorous academics, personalized learning, and innovative programs to bridge the opportunity gap and empower students to succeed in elementary, middle school, high school and beyond."* – **Jaqlyn Baldwin, Executive Director, Siembra Leadership High School**

- *"TEC34 is a New Based company that was started by three persons who have spent the past 15 years in technology in leadership positions. All three are native New Mexicans and are passionate about education and economic development for our state. Phil Abeyta (CEO) and Joshua Fristoe (CTO) also serve on the board of directors for the New Mexico Technology Council. Part of the initiative of the council is to have a strong community and workforce in the tech sector. Part of that is ensuring our children have strong education at an early age and providing jobs to retain talent in the State of New Mexico. We believe that Equip Academy located on the Westside of Albuquerque would focus on children that would benefit from such an organization."* – **Phil Abeyta, CEO, TEC34**

- *"Albuquerque, like many other communities across the nation, faces significant challenges within its education system. We are in desperate need of innovative approaches and dedicated leaders who are genuinely committed to making a tangible difference in the lives of our children. It is evident that Equip Academy of New Mexico embodies these essential qualities and holds the promise of becoming a beacon of excellence within our educational*

landscape. The vision and mission of Equip Academy of New Mexico as outlined in your proposal, resonate deeply with me. Your commitment to fostering a nurturing and inclusive learning environment, coupled with a rigorous academic curriculum, reflects a holistic approach to learning that prioritizes the holistic development of each student. Furthermore, your emphasis on community engagement and collaboration underscores your dedication to fostering meaningful partnerships with families, educators, local businesses, and stakeholders, which are essential for the success of any educational institution. I firmly believe that Equip Academy of New Mexico has the potential to become a catalyst for positive change, not only within our local community but also as a model for educational excellence nationwide. By empowering students with the building blocks, skills, and values necessary to be curious and lead successful lives.” – **Smraa Saidi, Associate Director of Business Development, CNM Ingenuity**

Conclusion of Support

Equip Academy's Section IV. Evidence of Support provides a comprehensive overview of the community's full support, enthusiasm and backing for the proposed school. Through a series of well-planned outreach activities, the founding team engaged with over 245 community members, conducted focus groups, and distributed surveys to gather valuable input. The responses highlighted a strong demand for a high-quality, inquiry-based, college-preparatory elementary school on Albuquerque's Westside. Key elements emphasized by the community included a focus on reading and language development, well-supported teachers, and a high-quality curriculum. Additionally, the support was reinforced through numerous letters from local community members, all of which emphasized the necessity and potential impact of Equip Academy. The Equip Academy of New Mexico Proposed Head of School, Mercy L. Herrera and the founding team are committed to the community and meeting their needs. Upon approval, we plan on continuing to engage with the community and bring them in as they are an asset for our future students. We plan to regularly evaluate our outreach and partnership efforts. We value community opinion and partnership as we recognize the community is an extension of the classroom when it comes to learning. We are committed to success and accountability, so as not to perpetuate lack of growth. Instead, Equip Academy students will soar to new academic heights.

V. Applicant Remarks

Additional Remarks: The applicant team is invited to provide additional remarks, not to exceed 500 words. This section will not be rated by the Peer Review Team.

Proposed Head of School Mercy L. Herrera is proud to call New Mexico home: her roots run as deep as her belief in our children and their limitless potential. As a Founding Team, we are inspired by Ms. Herrera's leadership, grateful for the extraordinary opportunities she has had to learn from and work with national leaders in education reform – individuals who, like all of us, hold an unshakeable belief in the power of education.

Together, we have engaged deeply with community members here in Albuquerque, and what was intended to open a discussion about Equip Academy's design and solicit input quickly became an unequivocal charge to bring academic success to our students. This is a charge we accept with great care, compassion, and accountability.

What we heard from our community, again and again, was the painful fact that simply "struggling to read" was generational. This is a cycle that Equip Academy aims to disrupt. Our state's educational statistics, evidencing our children's struggle, are not here because New Mexican people cannot achieve. New Mexican people have not achieved academic success because of our lack of access to an excellent education. It is crucial that our students and families have a fighting chance to show what they are truly capable of accomplishing. An excellent education is a human right, and Equip Academy is on a mission to provide access to the best education possible.

Throughout her career, our proposed school leader has taken the stance of a learner to develop her skills as an educator. The commitment she made in 2014 – to bring a high-performing school to her home state - is being actualized, and together, as a full Founding Team, we are poised to take on that responsibility. Like so many of us, but not enough of us, Ms. Herrera has personally experienced the power of education, being the first to graduate high school and college, and her success has set her family on a new path. This is what we intend for all of our students and their families.

The design for Equip Academy's logo captures our intentions: The shield represents strength, courage and perseverance, while the pillar of success makes a nod to the Zia rays to the south which represent "mountains we as individuals must climb" – infancy, adolescence, adulthood, elderhood - and the ability to have generational impact through learning and growing via the power of reading and education. The pillar is upholding a book that represents our core belief that "Reading is freedom."

If given the opportunity, we will continue to learn from and work alongside the PED on our shared goal of providing a free, high-quality, well-planned, well-executed, and accountable education to our deserving and hopeful communities.

For our families, Equip Academy is not just a school. It is a call to action. For us, the New Mexican community has what it takes - and more. We are passionate people, full of love and hope. We are doers. Equip us with the right tools, and we can accomplish anything.

VI. Appendices and Attachments

	Appendix Description	File Naming Convention	Attached (Check if Yes)
A	II-A1 Governing Body Bylaws, Conflict of Interest, Board Job Description	A Equip Academy of New Mexico Bylaws, Conflict of Interest, Board Job Description	☑
B	II-C3 Head Administrator Job Description	B Equip Academy of New Mexico Head Admin	☑
C	II-D2 Job Descriptions for Certified, Licensed, and Other Key Staff	C Equip Academy of New Mexico Job Descriptions	☑
D	II-I2 Proposed Agreements Governing Third Party Relationships and Memoranda of Understandings (MOUs) (*Required if applicable*)	D Equip Academy of New Mexico MOUs - *Not applicable*	☐
E	II-L1 PSFA-Approved Projected Facility Plan Documentation	E Equip Academy of New Mexico Facility Plan	☑
F	III-B1 Five Years of 910B5 State Equalization Guarantee (SEG) Computation Revenue Estimate Worksheets	F Equip Academy of New Mexico 910B5	☑
G	III-B2 Five-year Budget Plan	G Equip Academy of New Mexico Budget Plan	☑
H	III-C1 Internal Control Procedures	H Equip Academy of New Mexico Internal Controls	☑

Additional Appendices

	Appendix Title
I	Proposed Head Admin Resume
J	Head Admin Successful Schools Data
K	Head Admin Previous Employer's Recommendations
L	Success For All (SFA) Sample Lesson SFA
M	Shared Story and Reading Roots Sample
N	SCIENCE Pueblo Creation Story- Our Awe Inspiring Cosmos Sample Lesson
O	Mythology in Mundos de Mestizaje Sample Lesson
P	Number Stories Sample
Q	Porcupines Perch, Bosque School Field Study
R	Grade Team Lead Application and Management Plan
S	Staff Handbook
T	Salary Schedules
U	Letters of Support
V	English/Spanish Flyers Samples
W	K12 Accounting Procedures