

New Mexico Public Education Commission



2024 New Charter School Application Kit

Part B

Executive Summary

Charter Schools Division
Public Education Department
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Instructions

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

- The proposed school's name and a description of the charter school's projected students, including key demographic data (academic performance, home languages, special populations), based on the local community or the school district in whose geographic boundaries where the charter school applies to operate
- Where the charter school's projected students are most likely being educated currently and why they are expected to choose the proposed charter school for their future educational needs
- Evidence that there is a community need for the proposed charter school a school of this nature in the area local community or the school district in whose geographic boundaries the charter school applies to operate. Note: NMSA 1978 § 22-8B-6(L)(5) provides, “[a] chartering authority may approve, approve with conditions, or deny an application. A chartering authority may deny an application if...the application is otherwise contrary to the best interests of the charter school’s projected students, the local community, or the school district in whose geographic boundaries the charter school applies to operate.” Evidence of community need is required. Specific data and evidence is required in the application itself. Therefore, specific statistical information does not need to be provided here.
- The key innovative and unique programmatic features the school will implement to accomplish its mission (non-traditional school year, longer school day, partner organizations, curriculum and assessment, etc.)
- How the proposed school will improve student achievement and exceed the academic performance of the existing public schools in the local community or the school district in whose geographic boundaries the charter school applies to operate. Provide a brief summary of any data that supports this assumption.
- The founders or applicant team of the proposed school, their background, expertise, and what drives them to engage in this endeavor.
- If different from the list provided above, the proposed governing board and their vision of charter school governance, and how the proposed school will benefit the community.

Applicant Response

Name of Proposed Charter School
Sun Mountain Community School (SMCS) SMCS submitted our NOI in January with the placeholder name of Sangre de Cristo Public Waldorf School. Since January, we have conducted a community vote for our charter school name. We received an enthusiastic response from our community, both in terms of suggestions for the school name, and the final vote. We conducted a ranked choice vote for the name. Sun Mountain Community School emerged as the community choice.

New Charter Application Executive Summary
See Attachment 0 - Glossary of Terms The Sun Mountain Community School will welcome students from across Santa Fe County, in the 87501, 87505, 87507, and 87508 zip codes through an equitable lottery process. SMCS proposes to

bring Waldorf-inspired education to a demographic of students that mirrors the demographics of the community it is serving. This means the school would consist, more or less, of 79.6% Hispanic/Latinos, 15.5% Caucasian, 1.6% Asian or Asian/Pacific Islanders, 1% African Americans, and 0.2% American Indian (Santa Fe Public School, 2023). We anticipate 18% Special education students, 16.3% English language learners, approximately 11% of students will be living below the poverty line, and 3.1% will be experiencing homelessness.

Our proposed students are being educated currently throughout the county. Like our survey responses allude to, they are students who, in addition to wanting academic rigor, feel out of balance without an outdoor education program, who crave more artistic expression integrated into their education program, who need a sense of community they haven't yet found elsewhere, who are looking for a more balanced use of technology in the classroom, and who want a challenging, integrated-curriculum.

Our students will come to Sun Mountain Community School because of the reputation of Waldorf education from 40 years of private Waldorf education in the Santa Fe community, and because of the reputation Waldorf education enjoys world-wide. The school would offer our community a unique and innovative approach to education in the public sector and our community survey conveyed that many Santa Fe families are seeking this specifically. In fact, when asked directly, 93.9% of our survey respondents said they would send their child to a tuition free Waldorf-inspired charter school if given the chance.

Sun Mountain Community School will implement key programmatic and content features in a rhythmic method that will be the foundation for student achievement by fostering academically prepared, socially and emotionally healthy, and well-rounded young adults. The first clear advantage to Waldorf education is the holistic approach to education. Holistic means the school focuses on educating the entire child as a human being rather than a subject of education (Barnes, 1990). Public Waldorf education addresses multiple aspects of the developing child including the physical, emotional, intellectual, social, cultural, and moral. This is seen in the content of our educational program, in our instructional philosophy, and in our daily and yearly calendar.

Secondly, Waldorf educators work with a clear developmental picture and model of child development. The Public Waldorf educational program, including the curriculum, teaching methodologies, and assessment methods, works with this understanding of child development to address the needs of the individual and the class in order to support comprehensive learning and healthy, balanced growth. Our developmental perspective informs how state and federal mandates, including curriculum sequence, and standardized testing, are met.

Furthermore, the curriculum is carefully choreographed so that many specialty subjects such as Spanish, handwork, woodwork, music, and movement, all incorporate the content and the developmental skill sets currently being nurtured in the yearly curriculum. This allows students of various intelligences and learning modalities to enter into the educational content successfully, increasing student's success, self-esteem, and love for learning.

Third, Waldorf education seeks to contribute to the community as a whole. Enduring relationships — and the time needed to develop them — are central to public Waldorf education. The teacher works with each student and class as a whole to support relationship-based learning to the community.

Healthy working relationships with parents, colleagues, and all stakeholders are essential to the well being of the student, class, and school community. Everyone benefits from a community life that

includes festivals, events, adult education, study, and volunteer activities. Public Waldorf education encourages collaboration with other LEAs and charter school collaborations, including the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education and Public Charter Schools of New Mexico.

Sun Mountain Community School will improve student achievement and exceed the academic performance of the existing public schools by cultivating the development of each child with reverence. Profound and trusting relationships between teachers, students, and parents allow the removal of any blocks from the student on their natural path of learning. Engaging in diverse, hands-on, and emotionally rich learning develops a foundation of skills that allow students to catapult into academic excellence at the proper time.

Two extensive studies, done with the same control and experiential groups (local standard public schools and neighboring Waldorf-inspired public schools) found similar results. In the comparison of the students' standardized tests (one was done for math and language arts and the second study just compared language arts scores), Waldorf students excelled in the end in each. However, the trajectory of student excellence was different. The traditional public school performances excelled quickly at first but then began dropping by the 4th and 5th grades. The comparative Waldorf school performances start lower, below their neighbors. The growth in excellence was slow and steady, intersecting with their neighbors scores between 4th and 6th grade (depending on the study and the subject matter) and then excelling in both math and language arts in middle school. (see studies in Section I.A.(3) Uniqueness #2: Developmental Method.

The Founding Team of Sun Mountain Community School is a group of educators and parents who have experienced the health and success of Waldorf schools for themselves, their families, and their communities and want its positive impact to continue in Santa Fe in an accessible and improved way.

They are supported by a broad team of expert contributors and prolific potential school board members including, in part, many former teachers, trustees, and community members from the former Santa Fe Waldorf School. Together, this team holds expertise in business and school finance, school administration, private and state project management, Waldorf education, public education, and Special education, and holds a vision for a new iteration of Waldorf education in Santa Fe.

Founding Team Name & Role, Education, Recent Employment and Professional Experience

Brianna Bassler - Founder and Legal Consultant

Education - BA Political Science and Journalism, University of Houston; JD (law), University of Houston Law Center

Employment - Founding Partner, Bassler Law Firm, LLC

Experience - sixteen years of private law practice spanning specialties including complex commercial litigation, corporate and transactional law, regulatory law, and mission-driven new business models

Jayita Sahni - Founder; Facilities Planning Consultant; Chair, Charter Committee

Education - Bachelor of Architecture, University of Mumbai; Master of Architecture, UNM

Employment - Architectural and Project Advisor, FMD, SoNM

Experience - fifteen years of project management, financial planning, architectural design and planning in the private sector; 9+ years of project management, financial planning, and facilities management in the public sector

Zoe Wilcox - Founder and Application Head Writer
Education - BA, Art History, French, Certified Waldorf Teacher
Recent Employment - Santa Fe Waldorf School
Experience - 13 years in Waldorf education as a teacher, administrator, and Board of Trustee

Jessica Wireman- Founder and Financial Coordinator
Education - BA, Environmental Science & Cultural Anthropology, Connecticut College
Employment - Interim Operations Director, Santa Fe Waldorf School
Experience - eighteen years of small business management, restaurant owner, county commissioners advisory board member

Daniel Wendland - Founder and Outreach Coordinator
Education - BS in Kinesiology, California Teacher Credential Program, Cal Poly Humboldt; NM Level II Professional License Pre-K-12 Specialty Area with endorsements in PE and Health; Level 1 Spatial Dynamic Certification
Employment - THRIVE Community School, Santa Fe Waldorf School
Experience - 21+ years of teaching PE, 19 years in Waldorf Education as a PE teacher, Athletic Director, Coach, and Leadership

Contributing Members Name & Role, Education, Recent Employment and Professional Experience

Matthew Buritt - Contributor
Education - Certified Waldorf HS Math/Science Teacher, B.A. in Liberal Arts, Waldorf Graduate
Employment - Gathering Waters Charter School (Public Waldorf), Santa Fe Waldorf School
Experience - 18 years in Waldorf education as a high school teacher and pedagogical leadership

Peter Goss - Contributor
Education - MBA Finance, UCLA; BA and MA English, University of New Mexico
Employment - Santa Fe Waldorf School; George Stevens Academy, Blue Hill, Maine
Experience -School Administrator; Director of College & Career Guidance; Dean of Students 11-12; English Teacher

Arina M. Pittman - Contributor
Education - MS, MLA, Graduate Certificate Waldorf Teacher Training, NMPED ECE Licensure, NMPED SPED K-12 Licensure.
Employment - Nye Bilingual Early Childhood Center, Santa Fe Waldorf School
Experience - Special education EC inclusion classroom teacher, Early Childhood education, non-profit organization management

Taylor Romens - Contributor
Education - Certified Waldorf HS History & English, BA Trinity University; Waldorf Graduate.
Employment - Freelance writer. Santa Fe Waldorf School.
Experience - Waldorf school teacher 6 years, guidance counselor, writer.

Kathleen Taylor - Contributor
Education - BA in Anthropology, Waldorf Teaching Certificate, MA - Library and Information Science

Employment - New Mexico State, Santa Fe Waldorf School
Experience - 20 years teaching in Waldorf Schools grades 1-8, West Coast Institute for Anthropology Teacher Training instructor- 8 summers, Public School Literacy Specialist.

Elliot Ryan - Contributor
Education - Completed BA in English and Creative Writing (U of A), MA Secondary Education (UNM), Waldorf Administrative Training (Antioch), and currently studying Special Education at SFCC.
Employment - Monte del Sol Charter School, Santa Fe Waldorf School.
Experience - Special Education Coordinator, Monte del Sol. High school humanities teacher (13 yrs) HS Coordinator (2 yrs) and Student Support Coordinator (8 years) at Santa Fe Waldorf. Regular and AP English, history, and social sciences teacher, Monte del Sol and Santa Fe HS (12 yrs). Currently coordinating the Special Education department and overseeing all documentation, delivery of services, and associated compliance tasks at Monte del Sol Charter School.

Potential Board Members Name & Role, Education, Recent Employment and Professional Experience

David Burling
Education - Georgetown University Law Center, JD 1977 Stanford University, BA 1973
Employment - Santa Fe Community College, 1993-present, Virginia Commonwealth University, Dept. of Arts and Crafts 1993 Oregon School of Arts and Crafts 1992 San Francisco City College, Woodworking 1990-91
Experience - Board President, Governance, Non-profit Director, Entrepreneur, Investor, 14 years law practice & finance

Nicholas Stinson
Education -
Employment - Farmer's Market Manager, Restaurateur 15 years
Experience - Finance, Business management, Community outreach

Danielle Mansour
Education - BS Physics, Mathematics and Economics; M.Sc. Development Finance, SOAS University of London
Employment - KBR, Inc., Technical Professional Leader; US Air Force Reserve, Lieutenant Colonel, Lead Cost Analyst
Experience - Finance and Public Sector Budgets

Mary Freitas
Education - BA St. John's College, BA Secondary Education UNM, NM PED Teaching Certification, Waldorf Teacher Training Certification
Employment - New Mexico State, Santa Fe Waldorf School
Experience: Government, Administration, College guidance counselor, Academics

Doug Lynam
Education - Graduate St. John's College, graduate of Marine Corps Officer Candidate School
Employment - LongView Asset Management, Santa Fe Prep
Experience - Director of Educator Retirement Services, Finance, writer, speaker, leader in sustainable investing, math and science teacher 18 years, Math Department Chair