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PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION
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NOTICE OF INTENT TO SUBMIT CHARTER APPLICATION

According to NMSA § 22-8B-6(B) a Notice of Intent to Submit a Charter Application (NOI) must be filed by the organizers of a proposed charter school to the Public Education Commission **and** to the superintendent of the school district in which the charter school is proposed to be located no later than the second Tuesday in January of the year in which the application will be filed.

The NOI must be submitted electronically to charter.schools@ped.nm.gov with a cc to the district superintendent by 5:00 PM Mountain Time on the due date.

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

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

Name of proposed school

Las Cruces International School STEAM (LCISS)

School district where proposed school will be located

Las Cruces Public Schools

Grade levels to be offered and enrollment projections

Grade Levels to be offered	Projected Total Enrollment
K-5	240

Primary point of contact

Name	Julia Rivera-Tapia				
Mailing Address	4744 Powder River Dr.				
City	Las Cruces	State	NM	Zip code	88012
Phone	505-553-6788				
Email	azuqueeta@yahoo.com				

Names, roles, and current employment of all persons on the applicant team, and qualifications of the team members to establish a high-quality charter school

Name	Role on Team	Qualifications: Education, Employment, and Experience
Julia Rivera-Tapia	School Director	<p>Education</p> <p>Walden University /Doctoral Studies in Education. Expected Graduation 2027</p> <p>Columbia University/Masters in Educational Leadership 2009-2012 New York City</p> <p>University of New Mexico /Bachelors in Elementary Education/Bilingual/Spanish 1999-2005 Albuquerque</p> <p>Employment and Experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Level III Professional Administrator License in New Mexico for PreK-12. ● Current Instructional leader and administrator responsible for student behavior, and community relations. ● Extensive leadership experience in both bilingual public and charter schools. ● Instructional Coach, Bilingual Coordinator, and IB Coordinator ● JPTA Equity Council Lead 2022-current ● New Mexico Public Education Department, Hispanic Advisory Board Member 2021-current

		<p>Accolades</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● National Alliance for Public Charter Schools Change Maker of the Year 2024-2025 ● Golden Apple Foundation of New Mexico Nomination for Excellence in Teaching 2019-2020
Jessica Castro-Buelna	Dean of Students	<p>Education</p> <p>Western New Mexico University/Masters in Educational Leadership. 2019-2021, Silver City, New Mexico</p> <p>Western New Mexico University/Masters in Elementary Education 2017-2019 Silver City, New Mexico</p> <p>Western New Mexico University/Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education Bilingual/Spanish 2010-2016 Silver City, New Mexico</p> <p>Employment and Experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Level III Professional Administrator License in New Mexico for PreK-12. ● Level II Pre-K to Grade 3 Early Childhood ● Current Kindergarten Bilingual Educator ● New America Governing Board Member - 2023-Present ● Third Grade Bilingual Educator – 2021-22 ● Previous Fifth Grade Bilingual Educator – 2019-2021 ● Certified Letters Facilitator – 2021 – present ● Safety Care Trained - Present ● SAT Coordinator - Present ● Bridges in Mathematics Administrator 2021 – present ● International Baccalaureate Trained 2019-2021 ● Synergy Trained – 2019-2021 ● Glad trained - 2019 <p>Accolades</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teach Plus Policy Fellow 2024-2026 ● New Mexico Teacher Liaison 2020 – Present ● Phoenix Award Recipient Quarter 1 2023-2024

Model or focus of the proposed school (e.g., performing arts, dual language, college prep, STEM, Montessori, IB)
 The New Mexico Public Education Department's Bilingual Multicultural Education Programs state, "Developing proficiency in two or more languages for New Mexico students has been the commitment of New Mexico

educators, legislators, and other government leaders since the state constitution was approved in 1911. Since then, our state continues to be a leader in the nation.”

Las Cruces International School STEAM (LCISS) will carry on this bilingual legacy by implementing the 80/20 Bilingual Education model. In this dual language immersion (DLI) program, students receive 80% of their instruction in Spanish and 20% in English. This distribution gradually shifts to achieve a 50/50 balance, typically by the third grade.

Additionally, we will emphasize STEAM education—Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics—through an interdisciplinary and inquiry-based approach. This method can significantly enhance the learning experience and outcomes for students. The STEAM learning model encourages children to think critically during the learning process, which increases their understanding. Previous research findings also indicate that the STEAM approach can improve students' comprehension (Jesionkowska & Wild, 2020; Zharylgassova et al., 2021; Vista do, 2025).

Does the school expect to contract with another entity for either management or substantial oversight in the school's operation? Yes No

If YES, describe the entity and the role it will have in the school's operational plan.

Does the applicant team or any members of the team currently operate any other schools? Yes No

Vision/Mission statement (2-3 sentences)

Vision- Las Cruces International School STEAM is committed to fostering a transformative educational journey for our diverse community of learners.

Mission- Centered around rigor and excellence, Las Cruces International School STEAM (LCISS) will cultivate globally minded scholars through Inquiry-Based practices, Bilingualism and STEAM.

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

The targeted geographical area from which we expect to attract a significant number of students is Northeast Las Cruces, New Mexico. According to a recent news report, “KFOX14 spoke with Larry Nichols, the Community Development Director for the city of Las Cruces. Nichols stated that the year 2023 has brought "exponential growth." He mentioned, "We've been building more homes, more commercial buildings, more master plans, more subdivisions, and medical facilities." This growth is expected to continue throughout 2024, particularly in the East Lohman area”.

Additionally, we plan to offer bus transportation for children from any part of the city who wish to enroll in our school, as long as there is available space in our building.

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

The following compilation of schools provides a detailed overview of their student demographics, encompassing critical data points such as academic performance, prevalent home languages, the population of English Learners, and the participation rates of students in special education programs. This information

has been systematically reported by U.S. News & World Report and serves to illuminate the diverse educational landscapes and the specific challenges encountered by these institutions.

- **Sonoma Elementary**
 - Student Population: 748 (serving PK-5)
 - Proficiency:
 - 40% of students proficient in math
 - 51% of students proficient in reading
 - Minority Enrollment: 79%
 - Gender Distribution: 52% female, 48% male
 - Economically Disadvantaged Students: 100%

- **Desert Hills Elementary**
 - Student Population: 559 (serving PK-5)
 - Proficiency:
 - 34% of students proficient in math
 - 56% of students proficient in reading
 - Minority Enrollment: 72%
 - Gender Distribution: 51% female, 49% male
 - Economically Disadvantaged Students: 100%

- **Jornada Elementary**
 - Student Population: 490 (serving PK-5)
 - Proficiency:
 - 28% of students proficient in math
 - 41% of students proficient in reading
 - Minority Enrollment: 88%
 - Gender Distribution: 45% female, 55% male
 - Economically Disadvantaged Students: 100%

- **Loma Heights Elementary**
 - Student Population: 505 (serving PK-5)
 - Proficiency:
 - 21% of students proficient in math
 - 30% of students proficient in reading
 - Minority Enrollment: 90%
 - Gender Distribution: 45% female, 55% male
 - Economically Disadvantaged Students: 100%

*Las Cruces Public Schools page reports providing special education services to approximately 5,400 students.

Identify where these students are most likely being educated currently and why they are expected to choose the proposed charter school for their future educational needs.

The students we intend to serve currently attend the following schools: Sonoma Elementary, Desert Hills Elementary, Jornada Elementary, and Loma Heights Elementary.

Families will be encouraged to choose Las Cruces International School for their children's educational journey due to our robust second language program integrated throughout the curriculum, which emphasizes STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) education. With minority students making up 72-90% of the local population, our school serves as a beacon of opportunity for families who wish to preserve their native language or learn a second one.

Our students will become biliterate and bicultural, experiencing consistent exposure to STEAM fields during their formative years. This exposure will introduce them to career paths they may not have previously considered. Additionally, the slightly larger female demographic in this area will benefit from early exposure to STEAM disciplines, positioning them for future success in these critical fields. Data indicates that women are less likely to pursue careers in STEAM, and LCISS has the potential to significantly change that narrative.

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

As a stakeholder in the community, I believe that the educational programs available to my children in the Northeast Las Cruces area are lacking in access to accelerated opportunities, particularly in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) and bilingual education. In my search for a quality education, my children attended five schools that advertised having some form of Spanish programs. While two of those schools provided a solid academic education, their Spanish instruction was inadequate, leading to a decline in my children's bilingual skills. As a result, they now lack the necessary academic and linguistic foundation.

This experience has fueled my passion to pursue the opening of a charter school that will provide a free, quality public education for families seeking STEAM and biliteracy opportunities. The co-founder and I have engaged in in-depth discussions with numerous parents about the potential for a bilingual educational program in the Northeast area of the city. These conversations have revealed a strong interest in incorporating a STEAM focus within this educational model. The enthusiasm expressed by parents indicates a considerable demand for a school like LCISS, which offers a unique combination of bilingual education and a robust STEAM curriculum.

We will continue to conduct community outreach at the upcoming Charter School Fair in February in Las Cruces and utilize our social media platforms to gather data demonstrating the community's need for a school of our caliber.

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

Bilingual Education, STEAM Education, and Inquiry-Based Teaching are the key features that will set LCISS apart. These carefully researched and evidence-based teaching methods are designed specifically for teaching children effectively. We are committed to ensuring that every moment of our students' time is utilized wisely, steering clear of unproven, flashy approaches that may appear innovative yet lack substantial research or positive outcomes.

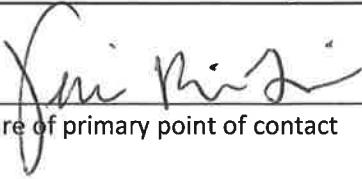
Instead, we will focus on establishing strong foundational principles that will equip our children not only for their future educational endeavors but also for the evolving demands of our society. By prioritizing proven strategies, we are dedicated to fostering an environment that nurtures their growth and prepares them for a successful future in an ever-changing world.

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

Las Cruces International School for STEAM aims to significantly improve academic outcomes for its targeted student population by implementing a series of strategic measures that address the specific needs of students, particularly those from low-income, minority, and rural backgrounds, as highlighted in the Yazzie-Martinez lawsuit.

LCISS will hire additional staff, including intervention specialists, tutors, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals, to provide targeted support to students who need additional support in subjects such as math, reading, and writing. By offering additional academic support, the school ensures that all students, including those with learning disabilities or language barriers, receive the necessary tools to succeed.

Focusing on personalized, bilingual education, STEAM, dedicated support staff, and strong community and parental involvement, LCISS will create an enriched environment that exceeds the current academic achievements of schools serving the same demographic.



Signature of primary point of contact

1.13.2025

Date

References

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