



COMMUNITIES OF EXCELLENCE

IDAHO'S CHARTER SCHOOLS PROGRAM GRANT



APPLICATION DETAILS

School Name: Doral Academy	
Contact Person:	Contact Email: grants@doralidaho.org
Application Type: Start Up	Grant Budget: \$500,000
Grades Served: K-8	New Seats Created: 348
Application Status: Funded	

RUBRIC

A. Grant Project Goals

Identify 3-5 grant project goals and *justify* each goal in terms of its value in supporting the planning and implementation of your proposed school. *All grant spending, including future revisions to your budget, must fit clearly within one of your stated project goals.*

Reviewer Comments – Grant Project Goals

Strengths:

- All stated goals are measurable and the application describes how DAI will know whether they have been successful. Goals include proficiency on the ISAT. All goals appear to be aligned to DAI's arts-oriented mission and vision.
- The project goals align with the mission of the school and will support the school in improving academics, creating strong culture, and recruiting a student population that is more representative of the local community.
- Three goals show value and align with school's mission and vision: provide Arts-integrated Curriculum and Instruction so that 100% of students will increase their grade level equivalency (GLE) in ELA and Math by more than 1.2 each year as measured by iReady and other annual assessments; increase the number of high-quality K-12 seats and deploy a targeted recruitment marketing to serve a student population within 5% of the target community.
- Students attending Doral feel the school culture fosters a safe, inclusive, learning environment.

B. Educational Philosophy, Instructional Practices, and Curriculum

Fully *describe and justify* the design of the academic program in terms of the educational philosophy, instructional practices, and curriculum that will be utilized to meet the school's performance objectives. Be sure to include key design elements, references supporting its validity and alignment to state and federal requirements, and rationale for why this education model was chosen and how it will produce strong outcomes for the unique community and student population the school will be located within.

Reviewer Comments - Educational Philosophy, Instructional Practices, and Curriculum**Strengths:**

- There are nuggets of specificity throughout this portion of the application which start to give an idea about the instructional model. The application discusses how students will give theatrical speeches in order to practice persuasion and argumentation. The curricular choices are clear and justified, though not linked to the arts model described elsewhere in the application.
- The application does describe how technology will be utilized for assessment.
- The school is a replication of successful charter schools in Nevada and Florida and will have a partnership with these existing schools to support alignment of instructional practices.
- The application contains a clear technology plan with computers used to differentiate instruction and administer regular assessments used for monitoring.

Weaknesses:

- The application tends to describe what students will feel and experience without describing what DAI will do to get that result. For example, the application discusses how students will "develop skills such as goal setting, collaboration, flexibility..." without linking these outcomes to specific instructional models or curricula. Too much of the application uses vague terms that don't get to specifics about the instructional model.
- The application does describe which curricula will be used and gives a justification but the justification does not in any way link back to DAI's arts-oriented vision.
- While not a significant factor in terms of grading this application, I do not appreciate that the application asserts that all Doral schools in Florida received an A in Florida's most recent school grades when that is not the case for the Doral International Academy in Miami-Dade.
- The section on technology addresses iReady and grade tracking but says nothing specific about how students will use technology to learn.
- The application does not describe any specific way it will take advantage of flexibilities granted to charter schools (that a traditional public school could not also do).
- The application states that the school utilizes an arts-integrated approach however very minimal details on the instructional methods used were included. There also appears to be no clear connection between the arts and the selected curricula.
- While there is some rationale for selecting the curricula, the application contains no justification for how these programs will meet or exceed state and federal requirements in ELA and math.
- The application states that the school will have a strong culture and clear behavioral expectations and an inclusive environment however no details were provided as to what those expectations are and how this culture will be fostered or maintained.

C. Teaching and Learning

Fully *describe and justify* the design of the instructional strategy in terms of the educational philosophy, instructional practices, and curriculum that will be utilized to meet the school's performance objectives. Be sure to include key design elements, references supporting its validity and alignment to state and federal requirements, and rationale for why this strategy was chosen and how it will produce strong outcomes for the unique community and student population the school will serve.

Reviewer Comments – Teaching and Learning**Strengths:**

- The application contains very detailed and interesting descriptions of specific classroom strategies.
- There is also a thorough discussion of how teachers will use data to drive instruction, including regular Data Days and PLCs.
- The application contains a strong plan for implementing a variety of assessments, providing universal progress monitoring, and delivering a tiered intervention system. In addition, teachers will engage in Data Days every quarter to analyze test scores and Professional Learning Communities bi-weekly to collaborate with other teachers in Doral partner schools. Teachers receive support in planning intervention and enrichment for both academics and behavior.
- Teachers will receive professional development support from mentor teachers at other Doral schools.
- Practices and tools are outlined. Assessments and intervention include iReady, ISAT, RtI; CORE Phonics Assessment; feedback loops with families to communicate student progress towards goals; Data Day; Data Ready chats, PLCs, support; after school tutoring clubs and blended online learning programs provide instructional level interventions.

Weaknesses:

- This section of the application is full of deficit-oriented language as it discusses students that have historically not been well served by traditional public schools. Meanwhile there are few specifics about what DAI will do to ensure those students will be successful other than generally assess and differentiate.
- The application does not describe tier II or tier III interventions or how they incorporate DAI's arts-focused strategies.
- While the application provided examples of a few arts-integrated strategies, it is unclear how a comprehensive school-wide approach will be implemented, especially when coaching and mentoring appears to be done primarily by professionals located in other states. Additionally, few details were provided describing what adjustments to instruction, lessons, and curriculum might occur as a result of use of data and differentiation.

D. Student Academic Achievement Standards

As an independently governed public school, charter schools need to ensure plans, systems, and tools for strong oversight and monitoring in the areas of academic performance. In this section, persuade the reader that your school will have rigorous goals and adequate oversight to ensure quality implementation, operation, and accountability.

Reviewer Comments – Student Academic Achievement Standards

Strengths:

- The application describes several well-known and high quality assessment tools, how they will be used, and by whom. It also discusses how the principal will regularly report student outcomes to DAI's board and that these reports will drive policy and management decisions.
- The application contains a plan for implementing a variety of formative and summative assessments which will be used to inform instruction, personalize learning, and collaboratively problem solve. Data will be used to monitor implementation of curriculum, fine tune instruction, or revise policies as needed.
- It is clear that assessments will be utilized widely, such as NWEA Math Growth, NWEA Reading Growth, NWEA Language Use Growth, and iReady.

Weaknesses:

- Little evidence provided regarding assessment practices that effectively monitor teacher performance.

E. Student Demand and Community/Local Support

Schools funded under the CSP subgrant must ensure they are in tune with their communities' needs and priorities. In this section schools will document their vitality and long-term sustainability through demonstrating their dedication to developing and maintaining community partnerships and connections.

Reviewer Comments – Student Demand and Community/Local Support

Strengths:

- The application shows a strong understanding of the students DAI will serve and describes a sophisticated marketing strategy, including geo targeted social media marketing and a focus on parents searching for school options. DAI plans to have a parent representative always present on the board and describes an inclusive approach to parent involvement.
- The school will implement a variety of media materials and targeted mailers, in addition to partnering with community groups to target at-risk student populations. Additionally, one of the project goals is designed to specifically address the school's need to increase enrollment of targeted subgroups to ensure it serves a comparable student population to the local school's enrollment catchment.
- The school provides a variety of opportunities for parents to engage in the school community, including serving on the Governing Board, joining the Parent Teacher Organization, and attending Coffee with the Principal and Family Nights.
- Budget allocates funds for marketing.

Weaknesses:

- This did not impact the overall score, however this section was riddled with spelling, grammar, and formatting errors.
- The school's actual 20-21 demographics are comparable to the local community for many individual subgroups, however the combined percentage of targeted subgroups is not within 5% and is well below for students qualifying for Title I services and English Language Learners.
- The application states that parents will be invited to review data with teachers and provide insight to instructional activities however no details on when or how this process occurs was provided. Additionally, strategies to engage the community were not included.
- No mention of multi-language marketing to reach non-English speaking families.
- Community and family engagement strategies are unclear. While community and family opportunities are described, the actual strategy as to how they will engage meaningfully is vague.

F. Effectively Serving All Students

Charter schools are obligated to take specific actions to ensure an open, fair, non-selective method of attracting and enrolling students, and all charter schools need to be ready to serve the group of students that choose to attend. In this section, describe your plan to offer a continuum of services for all types of students, including those that are educationally disadvantaged (such as low-income, special education, English learners, homeless, migrant and other at-risk students) and gifted and talented.

Reviewer Comments – Effectively Serving All Students**Strengths:**

- Deficit language notwithstanding, the application describes high expectations for all students and acknowledges DAI's commitment to serving those students effectively. The RtI process described is sufficient and in line with standard best practice.
- Transportation and meal provision are appropriately addressed.
- The application describes solid areas of emphasis for professional development.
- The application states a commitment to serving all students and closing achievement gaps for at-risk student populations. Teachers will utilize data portfolios to monitor student progress and implement an RtI system, along with the support of a Student Study Team.
- The school will train all teachers on the use of Arts-integrated instruction, RtI, culture, PBIS, curriculum, assessment, classroom management, and digital literacy.
- While the school was unable to contract with a bus company in its first year, it supported the transportation needs of students through free bus passes, ride sharing and carpooling options.
- This section included strong evidence that DAI will ensure an open, fair, non-selective method of attracting and enrolling students, and the plans show they are ready to serve the group of students that choose to attend.

Weaknesses:

- Some points were deducted because the application does not describe if and how its tier II and III interventions incorporate its arts-focused approach. The description of behavioral intervention strategies and special education approach could match any school regardless of arts-oriented instruction.
- The application states that curriculum, daily schedule, instructional strategies, and resources can be differentiated based on student need however no detail on how these adjustments will be made was provided. Additionally, the application attests that an arts-integrated model creates a strong school culture but no information on how this is achieved or maintained was included.



G. Staffing and Professional Development Plan

Describe the approach to staffing, inclusive of ratios, positions, etc. required for effective implementation of the chosen education model. Further, describe the process in which all staff will be supported in their ongoing professional development.

Reviewer Comments – Staffing and Professional Development Plan

Strengths:

- DAI seems to have recruited a strong leader and the application describes a competitive salary and incentive structure for staff.
- The professional development described is thorough and seems aligned with the DAI's vision and the rest of the application.
- It is encouraging that DAI plans on leveraging existing campuses in Nevada for continuous improvement and coaching.
- The application outlines a strong staff recruitment and retention plan that includes the use of pay-for-performance and various bonuses for eligible staff.
- Teachers at DAI have ample opportunities to engage in professional development from outside partners, other Doral campuses, virtual mentoring and PLCs, as well as subsidized college course tuition.
- The school has a sound plan for supporting and encouraging innovation and continuous improvement within the classroom.

Weaknesses:

- The application would be strengthened by including a detailed plan for consistent teaching observations and coaching from DAI staff.
- The first section focused on the administrator, Mrs. Turley, as the individual responsible for hiring; however, staffing structure and recruitment were not explained in detail. The staffing plan as written does not seem sufficient enough to achieve the school's staffing goals.

H. Financial Management and Monitoring Plan

As independently governed public schools, charters are fully responsible for ensuring quality financial management practices and ongoing financial stability. In this section, explain your school's plan to be compliant, strategic, and responsible with finances and business services.

Reviewer Comments – Financial Management and Monitoring Plan

Strengths:

- The information presented in DAI's financial plan documents seems to align with the activities described in the application and its budget narrative.
- The application demonstrates thorough knowledge of the facilities available, investments required, and revenue sources.
- The application contains a strong plan for project goal implementation and explains additional funding that the school has received to date, and expects to receive in upcoming fiscal years.
- The school is currently leasing a facility with the option to purchase and all-in facility costs range from 16-20% of total expenses. The facility contains adequate classroom space but few details on other aspects of the facility were provided.

Weaknesses:

- The application states that the school has a contingency budget if enrollment does not meet projections however this budget was not included and the narrative did not address what services or staffing would be adjusted order to have a balanced budget.
- The school's budget does not provide staffing or resources to support at-risk student groups including, English Language Learners or gifted students.

I. Board Capacity and Governance Structure

A competent, trained governing board is essential to the success of a public charter school. In this section the school will demonstrate how it has developed a strong governing board with a diverse set of skills. Board members should understand their roles and responsibilities and have in place a transition plan and ongoing professional develop to maintain board strength going forward.

Reviewer Comments – Board Capacity and Governance Structure

Strengths:

- The board composition looks strong and the application sufficiently addresses how it will maintain and strong and capable board.
- The board's role is appropriate and remains at the governance level.
- The board development plan is sufficient.
- The current board contains a variety of skills and expertise and the application addresses gaps in composition and provides a plan to recruit for the vacancies.
- The school's bylaws outline powers and duties, as well as a Conflict of Interest policy and Code of Ethics.
- The board has already participated in governance training and will engage in an annual board retreat to conduct a self-evaluation, create or modify the strategic plan, and set performance goals for the school leader.

J. School Leadership and Management

This section should describe the intended leadership structure of your school and demonstrate a strong leadership and staffing plan that ensures high-quality implementation and sustainability of the school.

Reviewer Comments – School Leadership and Management

Strengths:

- The application describes appropriate leadership and management practices regarding both school staff and DAI's ESP.
- Roles and responsibilities are clearly delineated in the application and appear appropriate.
- Well-defined roles ensure a separation of duties of the school leader, governing board, and Academica and a monitoring process for these three entities will occur on an annual basis.

Weaknesses:

- No material challenges were identified nor was a process described through which no material challenges were found.
- The school is heavily reliant on the ESP and network partnerships from Academic and Doral, Inc. and while a plan to evaluate Academica was included, evaluation of Doral, Inc. was not included.
- Academica will provide back-office and governance support and Doral, Inc. will be primarily responsible for academics, coaching, and professional development of staff. Given the breadth of these relationships, it is unclear if the school's leadership has the ability to operate the school in the absence of these contracts.
- Additionally, the application did not identify any risks or operational challenges that the school has faced or may anticipate.

Overall comments

Reviewer Comments

- This application is most strong in its operations and management sections. It is clear that the applicants have a clear understanding of what it takes to run a charter school and all roles and responsibilities described in the application seem appropriate and strong. The application also includes specifics in regards to curriculum and some aspects of DAI's arts-focused approach (including some in-classroom strategies).
- DAI has a great board composition and a strong, experienced school leader.
- The link between DAI's focus on the arts and the rest of its academic program is weak in the application overall. The arts emphasis is described, the curriculum is described, but there is no link between the two other than a few examples of classroom activities. This is surprising given that this is a replication of an existing model.
- At times it was difficult to find specifics amidst the vague education-ese throughout this application, making it harder to get a firm picture of the academic program. It would have been reassuring the read how students needing behavioral or learning supports would still benefit from the arts focus.
- The school aims to provide an arts-integrated educational option for students who are at-risk of academic failure and has a strong assessment system in place to identify and monitor student progress.
- The school has strong board bylaws and policies in place to annually evaluate the school leader and one of the education service provider partners.
- The school is heavily reliant on outside partners for almost all aspects of the school's academics, operations, and finances and it is unclear how teachers will be supported by on-site leadership to implement the academic program with fidelity.
- Additionally, while arts-integration is named as a key aspect of the instructional design, a clear plan for school-wide implementation was not provided.
- This application includes strong evidence in most areas.
- Details regarding community outreach and engagement strategies were lacking.

