



February 13, 2019

Mr. Dave Machado  
Director, Office of Charter Schools  
Department of Public Instruction  
301 N. Wilmington Street  
Raleigh, NC 27601-2825

Dear Mr. Machado,

It is a privilege to submit The Exploris School Letter of Intent for the NC ACCESS Expansion Subgrant. Funding from this grant would allow us to substantially increase the number of educationally disadvantaged Students (EDS) that we serve from 97 to 220, over a five- year plan, which represents an increase from 22% to 32% of total enrollment. We welcome the opportunity to participate in the NC Access Fellowship with other charter school leaders in order to develop and implement best practices in serving EDS and foster collaboration with traditional public schools. The Exploris School has been serving students in the downtown Raleigh community for over 20 years. We have maintained consistently strong academic, financial, and operational performance, as determined by NCDPI throughout our history. The Exploris School has achieved a “B” or higher School Performance grade (SPG) since the inception of the NC School Report Card grading system and we have met or exceeded growth for two of the last three years as required by the grant.

The Exploris Board, staff, students, and families have a desire and commitment to improve equity and diversity by serving EDS. Through these efforts, the school has received approval from the State Board of Education for a weighted lottery giving priority for economically disadvantaged students. We have implemented a weighted lottery which will go into effect for the 2019-2020 school year. Funding from this grant will allow us to further increase priority access for economically disadvantaged students from 45 to 170 as we expand enrollment over the five-year plan.

In alignment with The Exploris School’s strategic plan and mission, we will increase our enrollment of EDS through three primary strategies: recruitment, removing barriers, and providing needed supports. In addition to our weighted lottery, we will expand our recruitment initiatives through our primary outreach partner, Communities in Schools of Wake County (CIS Wake). CIS Wake will provide statistics related to school-aged students who reside in downtown Raleigh housing authority neighborhoods near their community-based learning centers. This student housing data will be used to develop recruitment strategies and community events.

This grant will also help remove barriers that could impede EDS families from attending The Exploris School. We will develop a community transportation plan, and a free and reduced lunch program accessible to all who qualify to eliminate barriers. We will expand our scholarship programs and before and after care programs to meet EDS family needs. Language barriers will be removed by offering translation services as needed and recruiting bilingual staff.



The NC ACCESS Expansion Subgrant will allow The Exploris School to provide additional support for EDS by increasing partnerships, resources, and access to academic and social-emotional opportunities. We will introduce a summer readiness camp for incoming kindergartners and 6th graders, a mentoring program, tutoring support, and expand our literacy curriculum to close the word and achievement gaps. Introducing family literacy nights, math challenges, and STEM events will bridge the home-school connection and further support EDS and families. This grant will expand resources in the areas of computer technology, instructional equipment, and furniture to better meet EDS needs. Research shows that social and emotional development for EDS can be extended outside of the classroom by adding needed equipment to the school playground.

Professional development for staff is at the core of any systematic growth or improvement plan. Specific to providing support for EDS, we will offer professional development on topics such as culturally responsive teaching, MTSS, Responsive Classroom, Autism, ADHD, school readiness, literacy, and STEM strategies. This work will include helping staff create or adjust curriculum, establishing culturally responsive classroom libraries, designing learning experiences, and interacting with students and their families. We hope to further improve our school's climate of respect for all students through these initiatives.

One of The Exploris School's goals is to become a model for other charter schools and traditional public schools. We hope to demonstrate how innovative instructional strategies implemented through a relationship-based education can foster academic, social, and emotional success for EDS. Using grant funding, Exploris will lead and facilitate professional development for teachers throughout North Carolina to expand our impact and support for EDS and their families.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of our Letter of Intent to apply for the NC ACCESS Expansion Subgrant. I would be happy to meet with your team if you have any questions and look forward to the opportunity to further meet the needs of educationally disadvantaged students in North Carolina.

Sincerely yours,

Ellie Schollmeyer  
Executive Director