

Alma d'arte Charter High School

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a charter school?

A charter school is a state and nationally recognized educational public school. Each state has a different method of chartering their schools. In New Mexico each school can either be chartered by the local school board or the N.M. Public Education Commission. Charters are accepted for five years but can also be chartered for three years. The Court Youth Center submitted Alma d'arte's first charter and was chartered in December 2003 from the Las Cruces Public Schools.

Alma recently was re-chartered as the first State chartered school in Southern New Mexico. We will work directly with the NM Public Education Department, Charter Schools Bureau as the NM Public Education Commission is our authorizer.

Charter schools can offer different academic curricula than traditional schools. Alma d'arte is an arts-based, art integration program concentrating on positive youth development and high academic standards. Usually, charter schools have a small student body creating a comfortable student to educator ratio. At Alma d'arte we strive for small classroom sizes from 8 to 17 students in a class. The total student body is between 165-170 students in 9th to 12th grade.

Currently, Las Cruces has three charter schools-Alma d'arte High School, Las Montanas High School concentrating on technology and Academic Dolores Huerta Middle School which focuses on a Spanish/English dual-language curriculum.

How is a student accepted into the charter school?

By law, all charter schools have a lottery system. Alma d'arte adheres to the lottery process. Each semester there is a certain number of student spaces/slots available. If the number of students who apply is under the number of spaces available, all those students are accepted for the school year. If the number of applying students is greater than the number of spaces available, then a lottery occurs.

As part of the lottery process, Alma has an application process to get to know the student better academically and artistically. The packet asks for examples of the potential student's arts-learning history, teacher and/or administrator references and other required documentation-birth certification, social security card, etc. The application is also on our website-
www.almadarte.org This packet will be given a number and this number is used if a lottery drawing is necessary.

What about transportation?

Families provide their own transportation. City bus passes are available to students. Families often create car pools. We are a modified closed campus. Only 11th and 12th graders with a 2.5 semester grade average, good attendance and tardy history, and parent permission are allowed off campus.

Who are the educators/artists/staff?

All the academic staff is certified by the mandated guidelines of the NM Public Education Department. In addition, we try to employ educators who understand and integrate arts/creative learning and practice positive youth development. In addition, all other staff are accredited or certified in their respective categories-administration, arts, business, special education, social work, etc.

Alma d'arte allows for on-going staff development in order to keep the charter vision fresh artistically and academically. Our staff has individuals with Ph. D, Master and Bachelor degrees.

AmeriCorps Member Artists assist the school in arts integration, after school classes and arts elective classes, in a partnership with the Court Youth Center. The AmeriCorps Member Artists are usually emerging artists who are interested in creating a career in arts learning and/or arts production. They all have Bachelor or Master Degrees in art, literature, dance, theatre, music, education.

What about sports/PE?

By charter law, the charter schools have access to the Las Cruces Public Schools athletic programs. Alma d'arte students have the opportunity to participate in their home school (Mayfield, Onate, and Las Cruces High) sports programs. If a student is interested in this, the Principal will assist in contacting the LCPS Athletic Department. Currently we are offering dance/ flamenco as our PE credit which was written into the charter.

What is the arts program at Alma d'arte?

Alma d'arte was developed from the successful after school program of the Court Youth Center which incorporates arts and creative learning through the visual, literary, culinary and performing arts. The four art forms are integrated into a strong academic curriculum that meets the academic requirements mandated by the NM Public Education Department. The multi-arts, academic learning philosophy allows students to be prepared in post-secondary opportunities of college, trade schools or career-related settings. Students are required to take Inter-Arts which introduces them to all the four art forms as well as in an introductory class of their choice in the 9th and 10th grades. At the end of the 10th grade they will declare a major in one of the art forms and take advanced classes in the 11th and 12th grades. 11th graders complete an apprenticeship in a career/art experience of their choice. In addition students participate in dual-credit classes at the Dona Ana Community College or New Mexico State University.

Alma d'arte offers the following:

Visual arts-painting, drawing, 3-D work, digital, print-making, ceramics, photography. We offer Advanced Placement classes in visual arts.

Performing arts-musical theatre, acting, voice, guitar. We do not offer the traditional band and orchestra programs. Dance includes flamenco, ballet, hip-hop, modern, ballet folkloric.

Literary arts-literacy is present throughout the academic program. However, we offer classes in creative writing to include poetry, screenwriting, and slam poetry. We offer both honors and Advanced Placement classes in English. Our film program is offered through our literary arts department.

Culinary Arts-Students have the opportunity to create the lunch program for the school in the culinary arts classes. They move into catering and dual-credit courses with the Dona Ana Community College.

In addition the curriculum includes all the required academic subjects of Math, Science, Language Arts, and Social Studies. We offer honors classes in all four core academic subjects.

How about Special Education?

Alma d'arte is an inclusion program open to all students. However, because we are a school of choice with a small school environment, the curriculum may not be appropriate for all students. Students with special needs must speak with the Special Education Director to address placement in the school.