

Why Utah Mountain School is Seeking to Amend the Location of the School

Procurement of a suitable property within the confines of Ogden City has proven to be an impediment to Utah Mountain School (UMS) moving forward with establishment of a location in a timely manner. The search for property has been expanded into surrounding communities that demonstrate similar demographics to those cited in the approved and amended Charter Agreement Exhibit A. Suitable properties that are conducive to the mission and philosophy of Utah Mountain School, as well as the target demographic of the approved charter, have been located in Harrisville, within Weber School District. UMS has met with the Weber District Superintendent to discuss our charter, and he was helpful and supportive. UMS is working with other charter schools in the area to establish articulation agreements to better serve the needs of students and their families throughout the local communities. The approved and amended Charter Agreement Exhibit A cites that Utah Mountain School will be located in Ogden City, Pleasant View, or North Ogden, and we are seeking to amend our Exhibit A *to include* the community of Harrisville, as identified by our Location Committee. The following information has been researched regarding Harrisville to establish the need for the Utah Mountain School model of education:

Utah Mountain School will be in Weber County in one of the aforementioned locales. The school will serve students from Ogden, Weber, and Box Elder School Districts. UMS has received inquiries from families in Roy, North Ogden, Pleasant View, Harrisville, and Ogden. We will work with Utah Transit Authority (UTA) to provide UTA passes for our students who may be traveling from the surrounding communities.

The locations we are vetting are within close proximity to Greenwood Charter. The Greenwood Charter Board and Director are aware of our desire to establish UMS near their school, and we are finalizing paperwork to form a partnership with Greenwood Charter. We will also be working with Venture Academy to establish an articulation agreement with them to help with fluidity of student movement between UMS, Greenwood, and Venture.

The first location would entail purchasing some land from Greenwood Charter, contingent on the ability to procure access to the property from a means other than Highway 89. Our developer is working with the owners of the property to the northeast of Greenwood's property to secure said access. This location is 4.0 miles from North Ogden Jr High, 4.5 miles from Wahlquist Jr. High, and 2.2 miles from Orion Jr. High, all within the Weber School District. It is 3.7 miles from Venture Academy.

The second location is 4.3 miles from North Ogden Jr High, 5.1 miles from Wahlquist Jr. High, and 2.8 miles from Orion Jr. High, all within the Weber School District. It is 3.2 miles from Venture Academy and 0.5 miles from Greenwood Charter.

Research indicates there is a need for another junior high within the target area, as current junior high schools are reported to be overcrowded or have substantial waitlists. More information is explained in detail in the

Market Analysis.

What Utah Mountain School Will Offer to the Community

According to the 2017-2018 school year SAGE scores as reported by the Utah State Board of Education's Data Gateway (pictured in the table below), there is a strong indication that the SES (Socioeconomic Status) achievement gap is severe among students in many areas throughout Weber County and surrounding communities. The disparity in achievement based on SES can be seen when comparing SAGE testing results for the following local schools:

- North Ogden Junior High (27% low SES student population)
- Wahlquist (17% low SES student population)
- Orion Junior High (27% low SES student population)
- Greenwood (53% low SES student population)
- Venture (33% low SES student population)

Weber County & Surrounding Areas Junior High Proficiency (2018-2019)

Testing	N. Ogden	Orion	Venture	Greenwood	Wahlquist
Standard SAGE ELA	44.1%	40%	39.6%	34%	34.1%
Low SES ELA	26.8%	17.6%	20-29%	23%	18.9%
Standard SAGE Math	27.9%	43.3%	31.3%	24%	47%
Low SES Math	31.4%	28.6%	10-19%	15%	35.3%

**Scores obtained from the USBE Data Gateway and RISE Aspire Demographic 2018*

<https://www.schools.utah.gov/data/reports>

Given the severe socio-economic student (SES) achievement gap among Weber County and surrounding community students, the fact that it has not been improving through conventional interventions, it would suggest that more targeted interventions are necessary. Utah Mountain School (UMS) proposes considering the outdoor classroom. The performance of students in Ogden and Weber Districts generally follows student SES. While graduation rates of low SES students rose 8 percent between 2016 and 2017, a significant achievement gap in test scores and graduation rates persists. Based on the most current and available statistics, there are approximately 9,939 junior high students (grades 7-9) attending the Ogden and Weber school district area. UMS has set its school size at 450 students, which would account for just 4.5% of the surrounding student population. The seven closest schools to our proposed location currently serve 2,383 students who have been identified as coming from low SES households.

Because UMS is eager to work with low SES students using the outdoor classroom model, a location in Harrisville is ideal to serve low SES students, as approximately 84% of the student population in surrounding community schools has been identified as coming from low SES homes. Utah Mountain School offers a solution for the SES achievement gap through constant access to aerobic exercise, access to green spaces, community involvement, and a commitment to project-based learning.

Junior High Student Population in Ogden and Weber School Districts

(Based on 2016-2017 Enrollment Data)

District/Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade	9th Grade	Total
Ogden	821	807	793	2,421
Weber	2,419	2,418	2,340	7,177
Area Charters	72	68	40	180
Total Per Grade	3,842	3,855	3,703	11,400

Research has shown that the SES achievement gap can be attributed to two primary factors: Selective attention deficits due to both chronic and acute poverty-related stress, and negative attitudes toward school stemming from a lack of parental and community support (Kuo, 2001; Tine, 2014; Brown, Seyler, Knorr, Garnett, & Laurenceau, 2016; Lai, Stevens, Martinez, & Ye, 2015). The outdoor classroom is a natural choice to combat poverty-related selective attention deficits because access to exercise and green spaces are two of the most thoroughly proven strategies (Kuo, 2001; Hartig, Evans, Jamner, Davis, & Garling, 2003; Shin, 2010). UMS will serve to increase community involvement through curriculum and instruction which will change student attitudes toward school (see Community Participation Table). This type of project-based learning, while meeting learning targets, will feature the use of non-academic skills that will allow for increased volunteerism, and bonding between the school and community.

Utah Mountain School will be an institution that promotes rigorous physical activity as a consistent component within all core and elective subjects. Students will have the opportunity to participate in project-based learning with an experiential mindset daily. UMS will utilize open and green spaces in and around the Ogden Valley, as well as our outdoor classrooms. While our goal will be to help close the low SES gap, our curriculum and school will benefit any student who attends.

Our founding board has been active in collaborating with community liaisons working with both nonprofit and private Weber County organizations that seek to provide students with hands-on learning experiences. Since being approved in January 2019, Utah Mountain School has begun an active social media visibility campaign to make parents and community stakeholders aware of our charter authorization to help build enrollment. Because our board member, Dr. Betty Sawyer, has spent decades working with various non-profit organizations in the area, NPOs that are focused primarily on connecting community and promoting equity for youth, the UMS founding board and the UMS Director will have numerous grassroots allies waiting to help advertise our pending opening.

Utah Mountain School was born, largely, out of long conversations with community members who felt that their children were not being served by a traditional classroom model. Our marketing model, therefore, will include recruitment of parents and community members to spearhead a grassroots, word of mouth campaign, as well as digital marketing, targeting parents of children who are not thriving in the traditional school model.

Community Trends and Shifts: The target area currently has two state-authorized charter schools: Greenwood Charter and Venture Academy. Other schools in the UMS target market area are 2 to 5 miles away. In this area, there are currently thousands of students who are at-risk, falling through the cracks, and in need of more from our educational system. UMS currently has the opportunity to offer a new choice for our targeted geographic population.

Size of School and Grades Serviced: Within two years of operation, UMS plans to have a maximum of 450 students being serviced in grades 7-9. The board made the specific decision to serve students through the 9th grade due to both Ogden and Weber School District's junior high school model. Allowing students to stay with UMS through the 9th grade makes the transition to high school in the 10th-grade easier. With over 9,900 junior high students living within Ogden and Weber school districts, the maximum enrollment of UMS would represent less than 4.5% of the students in the proposed area. These numbers are in-line with state charter school enrollment projections. Further, the Governor's Office of Budget and Planning predicts that the number of school-aged children in Utah will grow by nearly 100,000 students in less than ten years. This growth in the student population will necessitate the construction of new traditional schools as well as new charter schools.

Unique School Characteristics:

UMS will be the only school servicing this proposed geographic location that will offer a combination of the following cornerstones:

- Cultural Competency
- Movement Breaks
- Outdoor Classrooms
- Project-Based Learning

No other schools offer this wide range of methods designed specifically around the needs of the students in our target area.

Competitive Advantage:

Parents of all types want a great education for their children. If parents of children in Ogden and Weber district areas look at the proficiency rates of their neighborhood schools, they might be surprised to see how many students are simply falling through the cracks. Average proficiencies in Math, Science, and Language Arts are often disappointingly low. Parents want and need another public education choice that will ensure their child is not one of the students who are not performing on grade level. Parents also want their child to be treated as an individual with specific needs. They know that this kind of focused instruction will provide their students with the hands-on skills and exploratory learning they will need to graduate from high school and go on to better their lives.

Distinguishing Characteristics:

- Project-Based Learning
- Data-Driven Instruction
- Ability Based Humanities and STEM Cohorts
- Cultural Competency Curriculum
- Administrators who will spend most of their time focused on the instruction taking place in the school

UMS will provide all students with a needed opportunity to enrich their lives with a greater understanding of all academic subjects through a mastery of the Utah State Common Core with an emphasis on history, language arts, math, and science. UMS will address the needs of these students by providing them with ability-based cohorts with direct instruction and experiential learning to support personal growth partnered with standards-based assessments. Utah Mountain School's instructional methodologies and commitment to academic rigor make it a unique and inviting choice for our targeted population. UMS will also include character development across all grades during our Advisory blocks. This will not only include mindfulness, but will also include increased cultural competence and social-emotional learning that benefits the individual, their families, their community, and their environment.

Marketing Plan The marketing strategies for UMS will take various forms. Most of our marketing strategies will focus on attracting low-income, multicultural students, at-risk students, and any other group of students who are at risk of academic failure. Examples of strategies we may implement include:

- **Open Houses:** The administration and/or the board of directors will hold open houses throughout the community. These open houses will include a presentation on the merits and functions of charter schools and a detailed explanation of the school's mission and philosophy. The open houses will also provide

interested parents and community members the opportunity to ask questions about the school. Due to the anticipated large percentage of Spanish speaking residents, all open houses will likely be presented in both English and Spanish. Several open houses may be translated into alternative languages to accommodate various refugee groups. Open houses will be advertised through our online marketing and print campaign.

- **Website:** [Utah Mountain School](#) UMS has contracted with locally based web designer Frogtummy and UMS has created a comprehensive website aimed at educating the public about the functions of charter schools in general, the curriculum and methods of our school, and information about how to register for the lottery. The site includes a detailed, frequently asked questions page, contact information, and all information required by Utah rule and/or law. The site will include a one-step translation feature that will translate all content into Spanish, with the potential to translate to other languages if the need arises.

- **Social Media:** The school will use the specific skill set of multiple board members who work and manage local businesses and nonprofits that are actively marketing in Weber County and surrounding communities. This will mostly involve creating a content-rich Facebook campaign designed around reaching and engaging our target demographics.

- **Media Outreach:** We may write press releases and send them to any print, television, and radio media sources.

- **Direct Mail:** We have budgeted to send a direct mail flyer to every house in our target population with detailed information about the school, instructions on how to obtain more information, and enrollment directions.

- **Signage:** Once a permanent location has been established, UMS will utilize billboards, signs, banners, and other means to help members of the surrounding communities to determine the location of UMS more easily. Permanent signage, including but not limited to a sign on the building and a street side marquee, will be included upon completion of the facility.

- **Community Involvement:** We will make connections with local churches and community groups, set up informational booths at local events and grocery stores, and take advantage of other community-based marketing opportunities. Inasmuch as our target population is not as familiar with charter schools as other populations throughout the state, we are committed to implementing a robust marketing plan to inform the community of the opportunities available at Utah Mountain School.

- **Volunteer Opportunities:** UMS seeks to be an educational institution that allows parents, community stakeholders, future educators, and outdoor enthusiasts to help enhance every student learning experience.

Volunteers would have the ability to participate in the day-to-day operations of the school with various levels of time commitment. These volunteer opportunities will foster a connection between UMS and the community at large.