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**Alturas Submits Application to Open New High School in Idaho Falls**

**Idaho Falls**: The management and board of Alturas International Academy (AIA) have submitted an application to open a new charter high school in Idaho Falls in time for the 2021-22 school year. The proposed school, called Alturas Preparatory Academy, follows the same International Baccalaureate (IB) model that AIA has used to great success in its K-8 school since opening in 2016. Alturas is the only authorized IB World School in Eastern Idaho.

Just like Alturas International Academy, the new Alturas Prep will aim to meet the State of Idaho’s academic standards and requirements, while going further to promote academic distinction and inspire students to think collaboratively, value learning, and recognize their common humanity and shared stewardship of the planet. Alturas students are taught primarily in small groups according to their instructional levels, rather than in large lectures according to grade level. The high school curriculum will include two tracks – one a more traditional diploma program, and the other a more career-oriented program.

Establishment of a high school was always considered a possibility from the outset of the AIA charter, but was not a foregone conclusion. The decision to move forward has been driven largely by internal demand. As the board and management considered the possibility, they surveyed the families of AIA students and the response was overwhelming in favor of expanding operations to include a high school, and in particular to seek to make the IB diploma and career related programs available here in Eastern Idaho.

Also just like AIA, the school will be open to any student living in the boundaries of Idaho Falls School District #91, Bonneville School District #93, or Shelley School District #60 (and others by application), and there will be no charge for admission. The school’s plan has its middle school students (6th through 8th grades) joining the new high school students in a new building for Alturas Prep, including spots for 64 9th graders and 25 10th grade in the first year, and expanding to include 11th and 12th over the two subsequent years. Just as at AIA, enrollment will be determined by a lottery system, with priority given to current AIA students and their siblings, while no preference is given based on academic performance or financial resources. Ultimately, the school’s capacity is expected to reach 96 students per grade.

Alturas leadership is currently exploring their options and looking and multiple properties in Idaho Falls to house the new school. Alturas is working closely with Building Hope, a Washington, DC-based nonprofit dedicated to the development of facilities for charter schools. Alturas also partnered with Building Hope in the development of the O.E. Bell Building on Ridge Ave., which currently houses AIA. Busing will be available at both schools.

Once the new school opens, AIA and its K-5 students will remain at the O.E. Bell Building, and AIA will be able to add several new classes where middle school classrooms are now. This will help satisfy some of the demand for enrollment at AIA, which has increased every year since the school opened in 2016. In the most recent enrollment lottery for prospective students, held in March, 432 students applied for only 15 open spots (excluding kindergarten). Meanwhile, attrition at the school has been very low.

Brian Bingham, the current AIA principal, is expected to become the principal of Alturas Prep once it opens, while current executive director and longtime Idaho Falls educator Michelle Ball will remain in her position as Executive Director over both schools. A current teacher at AIA is expected to take over as AIA principal.

Alturas’s application for the new school was submitted to Idaho’s Public Charter School Commission on May 1. The Commission will work with the school on possible revisions during the summer, with the approval process culminating in a final petition hearing in Boise on August 13.

Contact:

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* Brian Bingham, Principal: 208-680-3350
* Jared Allen, Board Chair: 208-227-6898
* Callie Hatch, Board Member, prepared the charter application: 208-757-2818

About Alturas International Academy: Alturas International Academy is a public K-8 charter school and East Idaho’s first and only International Baccalaureate World School. Alturas works to empower students to be principled, intellectual, and collaborative leaders who can make a genuine impact on their local and global communities. The school is located in the historic O.E. Bell Building near downtown Idaho Falls.

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