



*To Graduate Artist-Scholars Prepared to Succeed*

## **Alma d' Arte Charter School Renewal Application and Site Visit Response**

### **Academic Performance**

**1a.** We agree with NMPEC's Part A Summary and Data Report and the renewal site visit observation. Our preliminary insights for the continuous performance improvement is detailed in our Charter Renewal Application.

Alma d' Arte Charter High School earned 2 'C's and 2 'D's during contract period with less than half of the categories for **A-F grading** as satisfactory. Areas for improvement in achievement will be pursued to create verifiable evidence using the School Improvement Plan (SIP) NMDASH platform for the following areas:

- Current Standing
- School Improvement
- Student Achievement (Improvement of Lower Performing Students)
- Graduation

We earned 2 'B's in the years 2014 and 2013 when we were aligned to the mission of our founders for arts integrated classrooms and curriculum.

For improvement of **highest-performing students**, we failed to report data last year and have updated the dashboard and completed course audit syllabi at the College Board to reflect the excellence in offerings of Advanced Placement Art Studio, English Language and Composition, English Language and Literature, and Calculus. Every student enrolled will take AP exit exams. We also have more students prepared to take Dual Enrollment coursework at DACC and NMSU, as we are vertically aligning our curricula for college and career readiness.

Next steps include becoming data-driven. Sophomores took the PSAT and we will use that data (and PARCC scores, short-term assessments, EOC) to drive programming. We are hosting a FAFSA seminar for students and parents and applying for several grants including a Title IV, CenturyLink, and GEAR UP.

**Lowest-Performing Students** are supported by our tutoring program, Zeroes Aren't Possible (ZAP). We hired a third math teacher to remediate and build a bridge to the arts and the math mindset required to be an artist and scholar. Harnessing bilingualism, we have encouraged our faculty to use Spanish as an instructional tool.

### **Contractual, Organizational and Governance**

**3a.** Alma d'arte Charter High School suffered a loss of strategic leadership and vision from the years 2015-2018. One founder retired in 2015 after the direction shifted. The remaining administrator simply did not implement the mission and vision of the school's initial charter agreement. Our student membership plummeted from 199, serving our target audience, to 161 after losing vision. The founders and governance council created a strategic plan in Spring 2018 and then hired a new principal after casting a wide net for a successor.

Under new financial stewardship (SchoolAbility) and principal leadership (a UNM Anderson MBA-Educational Leadership Woodrow Wilson Fellow) who work in symbiosis with our governance, we are in a renaissance. The next school year, 2019-2020, marks our 15<sup>th</sup> year as a public school of choice. We are already dedicating planning to celebration of our turnaround efforts focused on school culture, community engagement, and recruiting artist-scholars who will benefit from arts integration in every classroom. Our goal is to harness the school vision of our founders: *To be a pre-eminent center for artistic and academic excellence in preparing students for postsecondary education and successful living in a global community.* Alma d' Arte provides at least four art strands (visual, performing arts/film, culinary arts, and literary arts) that students choose from year to year.

The Material Terms of the Charter specifies that we offer professional development yearly—*“Alma will provide annual training for teachers in integrating curriculum, including arts with core and the reverse”* (see Section 8.01[a] [iii] entitled “Educational Program of the School” under “Material Terms of the Contract”). We have conducted a workshop on arts integration this year already with the founders of the school and shared resources to reinforce arts integration. We have dedicated \$10,000 Title IV funding for robust arts integration, which includes online Professional Development for our faculty to earn hours in topics such as Creative Mindset, Arts Integration (AI), and creating cross-curricular maps and unit plans.

Data has been collected from faculty and students and we are revisiting earlier workshop and text materials that created our initial foundation. Students are creating 4-year digital portfolios that document arts integration evidence and create wider opportunities for senior apprenticeships.

### **Student-Focused Terms**

Students participate in dual enrollment at DACC and NMSU. Performance arts has been expanded to include starring in and creating student films and industry participation, as we align our courses for college and career readiness. Students participate in the downtown Las Cruces Zombie Walk yearly, learning the Thriller dance, *Dia de Los Muertos* activities, community garden, campus clean up, recruiting actively in local middle schools, catering for community events and making daily breakfast and lunches, among other activities.

New traditions are being created as a recent NMSU graduate an Alma alumnus comes on board as kitchen manager while we support her CTE pathway to a Level I teacher license. The addition has allowed for new directions for our legacy and the fostering of community engagement like the holiday pumpkin cheesecake fundraiser, monthly catering for the Women’s Club, Lunches and Leashes and Bach’s (Box) Lunch whereby neighbors and community can order a lunch and walk their dog with our students or listen to music from our superior rated choir, guitar, and orchestra. Additionally, all students complete an apprenticeship of 100 hours in their 4<sup>th</sup> year, mentored by area artists and entrepreneurs.

Returning to our original focus on Positive Youth Development, Alma d’arte Charter High School (ADACHS) will:

- *Continue the mission to implement arts integration in all core subjects.*  
**Evidence:** 4-year Portfolios of student work stored on Google Drive, lesson plans, administration and peer observations, Senior Apprenticeship Logs and Projects, as well as underclassmen Essential Question Panel Presentations
- *Present **Winter and Spring showcases**, Love of Art Month activities, and at least one community-based event as part of Apprenticeship.*  
**Evidence:** Alma d’ arte has sought to be on the map for monthly art walks as we have a functional art gallery across from Women’s Pioneer Park, .3 miles from downtown Las Cruces, sign-in sheets for middle school recruiting events. Apprenticeship hours will be logged and monitored by teacher/mentor.

**Evidence:** Students work with area artists in 15th year celebration art projects, i.e., restoring bench and rededication ceremony, sculpture garden,

### Teacher-Focused Terms

- *Will support core subject teachers with arts integration*

**Evidence:** PD hours logged, a technical assistance manual for guidance on arts integration and suggested activities, provide art materials and supplies for all classes, utilize in-house expertise to support fellow teachers and students in exploration and collaboration.

- *Will provide Arts integration (AI) Professional Development under the charter agreement.*

**Evidence:** Provide PD in arts integration at least once per semester, assign a faculty-wide PDP in arts integration, build a professional library on arts integration, and access online training in arts integration through

- *Faculty and administration will continue to re-integrate the arts to a higher level of rigor.*

**Evidence:** PD agendas and PLC planning, displays of student products, teacher lesson plans, and creation of a principal's syllabus for arts integration, working relationships with the following community organizations: Arts and Cultural District Council (City of Las Cruces), Dona Ana Arts Council (Kennedy Center Partnership), City Museum System, (History/Preservation, Fine Arts, Nature and Science, Railroad), Art Forums (For the Love Art Month), The City Art Board (Public Art), the Film Community (Film Las Cruces, NMSU Creative Media Institute, DAAC Creative Media Technology), City literary community (Branigan Library, NMSU writers in schools program, Michael Mandel's open mike program)

### Parent-Focused Terms

Returning to the mission, we have not had a Parent Leadership Team since 2014 and would like increase parent engagement.

- *Alma d' arte Charter High School is returning to our historic foundation of an active Parent Leadership Team to complement the dynamic Student Leadership Team and various Faculty Committees.*

**Evidence:** Active and immediate recruitment of potential PLT members, yearly calendar, agendas and attendance sheets for PLT members

**3b.** Organizational Performance Framework Over a two-year period, 2016-2018, performance on nine indicators fell far below standard:

- **Long-term substitute waiver (remedied)**—last year, our dance classes were taught by a professional flamenco dancer and college dance instructor who did not meet requirements for licensure from NMPED. Next year, this dancer will return (hopefully) as a part-time contractor. *Health course taught by teacher requiring long-term substitute or waiver*

**Evidence:** Rectified through personnel change, Hired Biology/Health teacher who is in licensure process.

**Notice to parents** for positions held by long-term substitutes (rectified)

- Added Level III credentialed teacher for ceramics
- Dance is an enrichment / dual enrollment opportunity with efforts in place to offer dance by NMPED licensed teacher next year

- **English Language Learners (in process)**

**Identification of English Learners:** Included Home Language Survey (HLS) in Registration Packet, sent HLS home in advisory for earlier identification, students are screened using ACCESS during math class. We have two teachers who share duties to administer the ACCESS Test and keep a binder of results with the registrar. However, we struggled to secure Home Language Survey results for incoming students. We understand via email correspondence that the ACCESS administration requires additional training and that we can capture data using STARS to locate EL students who may require service.

**Evidence:** HLS is filed securely with registrar, ACCESS is administered in math class.

**Serving English Learners:** We are working vigilantly to create next steps once EL students are identified. We want to hire a Spanish Teacher for 2019-2020 and will create more targeted support utilizing two currently TESOL endorsed teachers. Piloting ENLACE currently is a cultural enrichment arts integration program in one 2018-2019 history class.

**Evidence:** We currently employ 2 TESOL Endorsed Teachers, ENLACE data, GLAD lessons and PD. \*All 2017-2018 faculty received SIOP Title 2 Training (same as Las Cruces Public Schools).

➤ **Governance Requirement (remedied)**

- *Maintaining five (5) board members after suffering a deficit of one member in winter 2017 due to illness.*

**Evidence:** Contact list in Part A with information for all five (5) governing council members and all members are in compliance for **required training (3c)**

- *Evaluate head administrator*

**Evidence:** Governing council will conduct evaluation of new administrator.

➤ **Background Checks (remedied)** – one issue that hindered compliance was not using the NMPED ROI resulting in many faculty members completing two background checks, including the current head administrator.

**Evidence:**

- Conducted T and E audit internally and are now in full compliance for all personnel files
- Contracts include background check for all working directly with students (such as the pianist accompanist for Choir) and all expired background checks are current
- No teacher is without requisite endorsement

➤ **Health and Safety (remedied)** -- *Child abuse and neglect safety training to staff was not reported but available on site*

**Evidence:** All teachers required to complete this training in Fall 2017 did complete the trainings but results were in a PD binder and not in the personnel files. We submitted a screenshot as evidence of one faculty member to represent all in compliance. We are in compliance for 2018, also.

➤ **Business Management and Oversight (no issues)** – We have positive results with new business management and oversight having hired a new business manager.

- **Students with Special Needs (remedied)** – We have hired a full time Special Education Coordinator who is implementing corrective actions. We realize that the overhauling of our school has not been without struggles as parents and students believed in the previous model. Students were offered yoga in addition to academic support. Yoga is overseen by a lead teacher and taught by a 2019 senior who is apprenticing for a 200-hour certification at an area studio. The total enrollment is 2 students, including those seniors who had earned no PE credit; other students were offered “teaching assistant” because we had already coded course using STARS and students chose support in areas of IEP need until we could balance the new service model. Ancillary service minutes were maintained.

**Evidence:** Internal SPED Audit that resulted in placing SPED Coordinator on Administrative Leave; Overhauling Service Minutes to increase rigor (Content Mastery/Learning Lab) and support (push-in and pull-out).

- **School Administrator License (remedied)** – We hired a principal who was eligible for and is now officially a 3B licensed educator, having completed coursework and secured MBA-Educational Leadership degree from UNM Anderson and is a Woodrow Wilson Fellow. Licensure was delayed due to wrong background check ROI, program completion, and implementing change.

**Evidence:** NMPED license available online.

**3c.** Alma d’ Arte’s Governance Council is one that is working cohesively and “demonstrates substantial progress,” and is dedicated to changing the culture of the school.

**Conclusion:** The site renewal, annual site visit, and financial audit were all conducted on the same day. The renewal and annual site visit lasted until seven in the evening, from early morning. We regret not showcasing talent through a school performance. However, one site visitor was escorted to the art building to see our gallery and music studio. Our music director is phenomenal--choir secured 4 all-state positions (5 auditioned) while the guitar secured 7 all-state positions (out of 8 who auditioned). We also missed the opportunity for strategically planning stakeholder interviews which we understood as optional. We wanted our site visitors to see the arts integration in every classroom, and the shift in school culture that radiates. Change is hard but our students, faculty, and community are united.

Of the stakeholder interviews, only the Governance Council was preordained. We cannot control the narrative of all stakeholders; yet, we understand the wounds of change. We are a school of choice that integrates the art in every classroom. We are an inclusive school that cares for student success first. We serve a unique population.

Moving forward, one of our artists in residence was named an Excellence in Teaching Awards recipient. And while we do not have theater performance arts (although we staged and performed *Rent* with NMSU theater 2017-2018) this year, our school is right across the street from Las Cruces Film Society and we are expanding and developing a film/performing arts strand. Students interested in musical theater performance are welcomed at neighboring schools.

Our Introduction to Video Production students were extras for *Walking with Herb*, a locally, professionally filmed production. Our students were standouts on location. Students are submitting a short Narrative, Documentary, or Experimental film to *Desert Light Film Festival*; may attend the festival in April in Alamogordo; Otero County Film Liaison will come to Alma and talk directly with students. We participate annually in the *Las Cruces International Film Festival* since 2016 and will again in February 2019. Students screen films and participate in sessions led by film professionals.

Digital Design students are working with Reviver Printing founder, Chris Preciado-Shelton, to mass produce and sell student created T-shirt designs. Students learn screen printing and design from our in-house artists. And all Digital Media benefit from the inclusive DACC board meetings to ensure vertical alignment, offering students dual credit classes in film production led by a teacher credentialed to teach dual credit. We hope to secure Carl Perkins funding to expand.

### Current and Typical Arts Integration

Students contemplate the Essential Question, for which each discipline interprets, and that drives each semester panel projects and presentations. Our faculty and students have work samples of the following arts integration projects predominantly from this year and last year:

- War Song Lyrics Project (US History)
- Mexican Ex-Votive Project (NM History)
- NAFTA Role Play (US History)
- Deconstructing the song "La Persecución de Villa" (NM Mexico History)
- Creating Protest Bills (11/30/2018)
- (10th Grade): Alma students learned about Greek Theater and read *Oedipus* and *Medea*. History faculty teaches and coordinates and co-teaches the Greek gods. Students created Greek Masks with the help of art teacher. What responsibilities did ancient Greek artisans have in the creation of Greek mask?
- (10th Grade Honors): Reconstruct something from literature or the media from a feminist perspective. Students provide a visual to go along with their writing (movie poster, book cover, album cover, etc.).
- (9<sup>th</sup> grade): Alma students read the short story "The Nose" by Nicolai Gogol, a surreal story that acts as a nice introduction to surrealism and the surrealist artist. Students researched a surrealist artist of their choice and wrote up a short essay on the artist. They also had to write what they believed was the artist's responsibilities as an artist. As a class, we created plaster molds of our noses and created surreal sculptures.
- Theater and English: unconventional interpretations and performances of Shakespeare based on the Folger method and the art of stage combat
- Music, History, and English: Hamilton the Musical poetry analysis, in class piano/guitar/rap performances
- Multi-Genre Research Project in English 12 with artifacts that encompass MANY art forms
- Ongoing (Latin Roots) Vocabulary Assignment in all grades: Vocabulary Cartoons
- Creative Writing and Art: Creative, independent book project (we have a state of the art printing press)
- Theater and English: significant Object Monologue Performances
- Dance and Literature: dance teacher taught the Charleston to junior class who read *The Great Gatsby*
- History and Music: Renaissance Music and Renaissance Architecture with fashion, dance and living conditions of the period (guitar students learned and played the period music, teachers taught period customs and dance)
- Digital Media and Music: logo designs; digitizing designs of our Guitar T-shirt for performance
- Geometry and Art: students are building Icosahedrons using origami next week. We do this every year.
- Informational pamphlet about advertising activities at a temple for a particular Greek God
- Building a paper model of the Florence Cathedral
- Attending a concert of Renaissance music
- Creating a poster of Confucius' philosophy using Chinese characters
- Painting an *emaki* (scroll) in the medieval Japanese style

- Making informational posters describing and illustrating the 7 Constitutional principles
- Posters defining the meaning and use of types of responses required for AP Government FRQ's
- Physical Science and Digital Design: Students create a digital infographic about the states of matter (typical collaboration)
- Chemistry/Physical Science and Visual/Literary Art: Essential Question Project "What responsibilities come with the freedom to create (research, discover, invent)? Students create artwork or write a short story or comic strip which explores the intersection of science and ethics
- Chemistry/Physical Science/History and Visual Art: Essential Question Project "What factors encourage people to take creative risks?" Students created a scientifically accurate and artistically pleasing timeline of models of the atom – showing that along the way to the discovery of the correct model of the atom, scientists had to take creative risks.