



STATE OF NEW MEXICO
PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
300 DON GASPAR
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO 87501-2786
Telephone (505) 827-5800
www.ped.state.nm.us

KURT A. STEINHAUS (DESIGNATE)
SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM
GOVERNOR

Charter Schools Division
Preliminary Analysis of Renewal Application and Site Visit (Revised)
November 2021

School Name: Vista Grande High School

School Address: 213 Paseo Del Cañon E, Taos, NM 87571

Head Administrator: Isabelle St. Onge

Governing Board Chair: Elizabeth Roth

Business Manager: Deanna Mooney

Authorized Grade Levels: 9-12

Authorized Enrollment: 240

Contract Term: July 1, 2016- June 30, 2022

Mission: Provide an authentic and challenging learning experience within a culturally inclusive, supportive environment, which motivates all students to develop to their fullest potential.

Statutory Renewal Requirements

According to New Mexico Statutes Annotated (NMSA) 1979, Section 22-8B-12 K., a charter may be suspended, revoked, or not renewed by the chartering authority if the chartering authority determines that the charter school did any of the following:

- (1) committed a material violation of any of the conditions, standards or procedures set forth in the charter contract;
- (2) failed to meet or make substantial progress toward achievement of the department's standards of excellence or student performance standards identified in the charter contract;
- (3) failed to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management;
- (4) for a charter school located on tribal land, failed to comply with ongoing consultations pursuant to the Indian Education Act; or

(5) violated any provision of law from which the charter school was not specifically exempted.

Renewal Application

Parts A and F of the Renewal Application are provided by the Charter Schools Division (CSD). All other parts of the application are provided by the school.

PART A	Data analysis based on accountability and reporting data from current charter contract term
PART B	Progress report on meeting the academic performance, financial compliance and governance responsibilities of the charter school, including achieving the goals, objectives, student performance outcomes, and accountability requirements set forth in the Assessment and Accountability Act and the charter contract.
PART C	Financial Statement A financial statement that discloses the costs of administration, instruction and other spending categories for the charter school that is understandable to the general public that allows comparison of costs to other schools.
PART D	Petitions in support of the charter renewing its charter status <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Petition signed by at least 65% of the school’s employees, with certified affidavit: 14 of 14 = 100% • Petition signed by at least 75% of the households whose children are enrolled, with certified affidavit: 71 represents 85%
PART E	Description of the Charter School Facilities and Assurances that the facilities are in compliance with the requirements of Section 22-8B-4.2 NMSA 1978 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The facility lease agreement as Appendix D • Narrative description of its facilities, attaching the Facility Master Plan, if available, as Appendix H • The building E Occupancy certificate(s) dated 08/14/2014. Maximum Occupancy (if listed): Not listed • Most recent facility NMCI Score 16.48% indicating that the school meets the requirements of Subsection C of 22-8B-4.2 NMSA 1978 • If the school is relocating or expanding, assurances that the facilities comply with the requirements of Section 22-8B-4.2 NMSA 1978: ___Public (Cert A) ___Private (Cert B) ___Foundation (Cert C)
PART F	Amendment Requests

The CSD team reviewed the school’s Progress Report and conducted a renewal site visit on November 4, 2021. Ratings are based on the rubric provided on page 14 of the [State Charter Renewal Application](#).

Progress Report (Part B) and Site Visit Evaluation		
Section	Indicator	Rating
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE		
1.a	Department’s Standards of Excellence NM System of School Support and Accountability 2020-2021: <i>No data available for schools</i> 2019-2020: <i>No data available for schools</i> 2018-2019: <i>42 Comprehensive Support and Improvement School</i> Overall NM School Grade 2017-2018: <i>C</i>	<i>Meets the Standard</i>
1.b	Mission-Specific Goals <i>The school does not have mission-specific goals in its contract.</i>	<i>Not Applicable</i>
FINANCIAL COMPLIANCE		
2.a	Audit <i>Organizational Performance Framework 2a-2e</i>	<i>Meets the Standard</i>
2.b	Board of Finance <i>The school has maintained a board of finance throughout the charter term.</i>	<i>Meets the Standard</i>

CONTRACTUAL, ORGANIZATIONAL, AND GOVERNANCE		
3.a	Comprehensive Educational Program <i>See the narrative below for detail.</i>	<i>Meets the Standard</i>
3.b	Organizational Performance Framework <i>Organizational Performance Framework 1b-1f, 4a-4e, and 5a-5d</i>	<i>Meets the Standard</i>
3.c	Governance Responsibilities <i>Organizational Performance Framework 3a-3c</i>	<i>Meets the Standard</i>

Academic Performance

NMPED Accountability Data 2018-2019

	Overall	Reading Proficiency	Math Proficiency	Science Proficiency	English Learner Progress
Vista Grande High School	42	19	3	N/A	N/A
Taos Municipal Schools	55	35	19	41	26
Statewide	-	34	21	40	29

Vista Grande High School (VGHS) is an expeditionary based, district charter school with a community school designation, that serves a demographic of students that accurately represents the community it serves in Taos, New Mexico. As of 120-day STARS reporting for SY2020-21, the demographics for Vista Grande High School, when compared to the other two high schools in Taos, is as follows:

Designation	Vista Grande	Taos Academy	Taos High School
Hispanic	48%	54%	70%
Indigenous	31%	2%	9%
Caucasian	19%	42%	20%
English Learners	16%	3%	5%
Students with Disabilities	22%	15%	14%
Eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch	100%	52%	100%
Economically Disadvantaged	53%	0	39%
Homeless	13%	0	3%

As a designated Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) school, VGHS's overall NM Vistas data places them in the bottom 5% of scores for Title 1 schools; and while it is apparent that the school's proficiency scores in reading and math for 2018-19 were lower than Taos Municipal Schools (TMS) and the state, short cycle assessment data suggests that students at VGHS are in fact making growth. With the stability of the school's head administrator, Isabelle St. Onge, who stepped into the role in 2013, VGHS has been on an upward trend in terms of student achievement and growth, and according to the school's previous authorizer, is a school that accepts and works with students who tend to struggle elsewhere.

According to VGHS, the academic growth challenges they face are in part due to the difficulty high schools can face in attempting to close academic achievement gaps with older students. Not only do students enter VGHS with lower proficiency levels, they also often arrive with severe credit recovery needs, and bring with them the impacts of trauma caused by schools that hold lower expectations of their abilities. The data table above shows the disproportionately high percentage students who attend VGHS who are homeless, economically disadvantaged, or designated as English.

MAP Short Cycle Assessment Data for SY2020-21

School Year	Met Proficiency Standard – Math*	Met Proficiency Standard – Reading*
2018-19	67%	64%
2019-20	48%	58%
2020-21	40%	45%

*numbers indicate average percentage of students who met standard

Average percentages for MAP short cycle assessment data for VGHS for the past three school years indicate that the number of students who were making progress towards proficiency before the pandemic was above average. However, leadership at VGHS stated that once the school transitioned into remote learning due to COVID, that students began to struggle as a result, the percentage of students meeting proficiency standards dropped an average of 12.5% from 2018-19 and then dropped an additional 10.5% from 2019-20. It is also important to note that the school’s short cycle assessment data for the past three years is based on consistently low sample sizes, the smallest reflected during the 2020-21 school year. However, the pandemic notwithstanding, disaggregated positive and negative growth data for 2020-21 shows that on an individual level, students who *were* showing growth, did so at an impressive rate, with growth indexes of upwards of 10+ points past their projected RIT score. Vista Grande is cautiously optimistic that, students will continue to show an upward trend in growth this year and in the future.

Ultimately, after the rapid succession of six head administrators within the school’s first nine years of existence, the school attributes its current progress and ability to attain its mission and goals to strategic planning implemented by leadership and its collaboration with community partners, particularly Taos Pueblo, with whom they have an MOU for tribal consultation.

Furthermore, short cycle achievement growth is attributed to overall school stability and incorporating integrative curricular initiatives. For example, science and math lessons are designed to echo one another in a meaningful way. together in integrated way. The school’s instructional coach focuses substantially on math and works closely with the Special Education teacher to ensure student needs are met. VGHS is also working to incorporate cultural ways of teaching core subjects.

Public Education Commission Performance Framework

Because VGHS is chartered by TMS, they have not been evaluated under the PEC performance framework.

Organizational Performance

There are no previous authorizer reports for this school. This was confirmed by Dr. Lillian Torrez, superintendent of TMS, the school’s current authorizer. However, when asked by CSD if the school is implementing the material terms of its contract, Dr. Torrez unequivocally said, “yes.” Dr. Torrez stated the school is in good standing and is quick to fix any issues that arise.

CSD noticed that the school currently has multiple versions of its mission statement. However, what is consistent throughout each version of the school’s stated mission is VGHS’s belief in providing a holistic, culturally relevant education that supports community involvement and the development of a student’s full potential. The school appears to be successfully implementing its stated mission(s). When CSD inquired about the school’s mission, leadership stated that they are currently in the process of evaluating

their mission and if renewed by the PEC, are prepared to create mission-specific goals that clearly align to their stated mission.

VGHS is showing growth/strength in the following areas that align to the PEC’s organizational framework:

1c: VGHS follows special education requirements. Differentiation is a part of the material terms of their contract with TMS and the school uses a full inclusion model. The special education coordinator meets with teachers to pre-plan to accommodate student needs.

1d: The school has no complains and is following EL requirements. This has been confirmed by NMPED LCD.

4a: VGHS has received no complaints about lottery or unfair enrollment practices.

Financial Performance

Vista Grande High School (VGHS) is on a quarterly reporting status, which indicates the school’s Business Manager is responsive to School Budget Bureau requests and reports are submitted in a timely manner. The school’s business management consists of an on-site business office support person and a contract finance manager and at no time in the previous four (4) years has the school moved from quarterly reporting status.

Since 2018 VGHS experienced a student enrollment reduction at an average of 5% a year, however the school optimistically budgeted for enrollment growth in the current year.

The school received three (3) audit findings from 2018 to 2020, all of which were deemed by the auditors to be non-compliance in nature.

Audit Year	Findings	Repeat Findings	Material Weaknesses	Significant Deficiencies
FY 2020	0	0	0	0
FY 2019	2	0	0	0
FY 2018	1	0	0	0

Classroom spending in schools with less than 100 students tends to be much lower than the desired goal of 68%, and nearly impossible to achieve, and apart from 2020, the school was able to reduce administrative costs. From 2018 through 2021, the average operational fund classroom spending is 55%.

General Fund (11000) data as reported in OBMS - Fourth Quarter			Contract Years				
			Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Budgeted
			General Fund - 11000- Amounts (in whole dollars)				
			2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	BUDGET 2022
Enrollment							
	120D Student membership		92	95	84	78	77
	40D program units from final funded run		259,26	282,289	260,835	219,313	254,319
Function	Function Name	Description of Expenditures					
1000	Direct Instruction	Classroom teachers, educational assistants, instructional coaches, textbooks, classroom technology	581,741	597,752	593,702	355,101	626,658
2100	Student Support	Attendance, social worker, guidance, health, psychological, speech & occupational therapy services	35,901	36,616	70,366	26,486	49,115
2200	Instructional Support	Library, instruction related technology	943	2,788	1,688	1,688	1,600
2300	Central Administration	Governance council, Office of Superintendent, community relations	128,818	131,584	140,653	144,154	273,931
2400	School Administration	Office of the Principal	20,047	24,244	25,682	23,220	43,945
2500	Central Services	Business management, administrative support, admin technology	220,834	208,991	210,776	185,871	232,062
2600	Maintenance & Operations	Building operations, maintenance, equipment upkeep, security & safety	83,160	79,271	95,222	92,185	233,158
2700-5900	All Other Function Codes	Transportation, food service & capital outlay	16,608	12,169	9,316	2,017	16,008
Total			1,088,053	1,093,415	1,147,405	830,722	1,476,477
Total State Equalization Guarantee (SEG) Funding:			1,045,930	1,161,834	1,176,424	975,069	1,189,015
Other Operational Revenue			4,720	3,549	27,223	34,855	
Carryover(Shortfall)			(37,403)	71,968	56,243	179,201	
How Funds Were Spent in Percentages of Total							
	Classroom		57%	58%	58%	46%	46%
	Administration		34%	33%	33%	43%	37%
	Other		9%	8%	9%	11%	17%

The PED Operating Budget Management System (OBMS) showed 97%, just over \$600,000, of the school's grant fund requests for reimbursements (RfRs) were submitted during June and July 2021.

Governance

All VGHS governing board members completed required trainings for FY21:

Governing Board Training Hours				
Board Members	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21*
Willow Lopez	8			
Dennis Hedges	7	8		
Elizabeth Roth	8	8	11	7
Eleanor Romero	7	6	8	9
Shona Mares-Bond			14	9
Harold Cordova			6	6
Mark Goldman			8	9
Sonya Silva-Baca				10

Black shading indicates that the member did not serve a full year in that fiscal year; yellow indicates that the member did not complete all required training hours during that fiscal year. Training requirements are 8 hours per year for returning board members, and 10 hours for new members. Exemptions are noted in years marked by an asterisk.

* 2 hour fiscal exemption for FY21

CSD conducts Governing Board Observations for all state-chartered charters and for district charters upon request. The VGHS governing board requested CSD due one of these observations in FY21. During that

observation, the VGHS governing board requested that CSD conduct a Governing Board Observation for the school and brought in tribal leadership from Taos Pueblo for consultation on which authorizer the school should seek renewal.

The governing board believes that the school has made great improvements over the past few years and that it successfully serves the community at large. Due to the school's small size, the governing board feels privy to the school environment and is kept in the loop on student achievement and success. The board is also seeking training from Kelly Callahan for board meetings and for head administrator evaluation.

Comprehensive Educational Program

VGHS uses a "crew" model, which is an SEL-based homeroom for students. Students enter a crew in 9th-grade and stay with their cohort until their senior year. The school also partners with a community-oriented student success coordinator to implement restorative justice practices as well as work with students on their holistic success.

The school is laser focused on maintaining culturally and linguistically responsive teaching practices (CLRT). Student, family, and staff stakeholder groups all reported that VGHS values inclusivity, diversity of cultural backgrounds, and the general uniqueness and individuality of all its students. For example, VGHS's welcoming environment and its ability to serve special education and students deemed, "out of the box," were a common theme mentioned throughout the site visit, but most candidly during the parent focus group. Furthermore, the school truly takes their community school designation to heart because of the wide range of partnerships they maintain, such as with Taos Land Trust and most notably, the Taos Pueblo, whose tribal leadership consults with VGHS leadership to ensure cultural integrity and representation at the school.

VGHS is currently a part of the Indigenous Education Initiative (IEI) which supports the school's CLRT work, content coaching provided by Native American educators across subject areas and has given the school the opportunity to hire a family navigator responsible for co-creating programming to meet student and family needs. When surveyed, a top priority for indigenous families at Taos Pueblo was student access to language and culture during their traditional school day. As a result, and in partnership with tribal consult, VGHS implemented Tiwa Language and culture classes for Taos Pueblo students. In 2017, the state of New Mexico awarded a student at VGHS a seal of bilingualism in Tiwa, the first time this award was made in the Tiwa language.

The school also works hard to serve all students by offering, in addition to traditional curriculum, classes that reflect the needs of their students, such as practical financial classes, gardening and farming classes that utilize traditional farming practices of northern New Mexico and sustainability, as well as home economics.

Students at VGHS participate in a portfolio/capstone assessment project as an alternative way to demonstrate competency throughout their education. Tenth and 12th-grade students participate in Passage presentations, which include a survey of past expeditions; 12th-grade passages also include an independent study component that includes a full research paper in Modern Language Association (MLA) format. Senior passages are also aligned to a student's internship-mentorship program and is presented to a panel of three community members who conduct an interview. Passages are alternative learning targets, linked to post-HS goals; not all student portfolios are aligned to career clusters but that is the goal. Pueblo elders are always invited to passage presentations, interview students to make sure they have the cultural knowledge a member of Taos Pueblo should have.