

School Support and Readiness Assessment Summary Report

School: Las Montañas	LEA: Las Montañas
School Leader: Caz Martinez	LEA Leader: Caz Martinez
SSRA Team Leader: Andrea Fletcher	Date: September 18, 2023
School Description	
<p>Las Montañas is a charter high school serving grades 9-12 in Las Cruces. There are 165 students enrolled and 15 teachers on faculty. The school primarily serves students who transfer from local high schools due to the risk of not graduating. Las Montañas's philosophy is that many students come to school with challenges that can be barriers to success in education and life if not effectively addressed. Hence, the school strongly emphasizes social-emotional learning and creating a safe place for students. They maintain an academic focus, as well, and integrate the state standards along with career skills into their five Career Pathways.</p>	
School Successes and Celebrations	
<p>The eight-term school year at Las Montañas allows for rapid progress monitoring and intervention and has helped many students succeed who might not have in traditional settings. The school has multiple systems to monitor progress toward graduation so that students and staff constantly know where students are and what they need to do next. Seniors are closely monitored and supported to ensure they are ready for graduation and beyond. The school has a highly favorable climate where all staff feel supported despite the complicated work.</p>	
DOMAIN 1: CULTURE & EQUITY	
<p><i>To what degree has the school established equitable practices that ensure ALL students and staff have an opportunity to reach their full potential?</i></p>	
Promising Practices:	
<p>Las Montañas has put in place numerous support systems to ensure students are on track for graduation and are developing the skills necessary to be successful in higher education and the workforce. The school tracks multiple data points for every student; this continuous monitoring lets the staff know immediately when a student struggles with academics, attendance, or behavior.</p> <p>Student Learning Communities (SLCs) are held daily for every student with a curriculum supporting soft skills and social and emotional well-being. Once weekly in the SLC, a teacher conferences individually with every student to review progress across multiple indicators and to set goals. Schedules are created for each student to intentionally remove any barriers. Principal</p>	

Martinez has also proactively ensured mental health support by providing an independent therapist for students and staff.

Opportunities for Growth:

The school’s new data dashboard has great potential to support the continued identification of students who need support. However, several staff members felt the old system made it easier to see whole school trends because they could see all students at a glance instead of looking up individual students.

Potential Next Steps:

A return to more whole-school reports might ensure common ownership of the success of every student. School leadership may want to explore ways to run whole-school reports within the current dashboard and provide professional development to support teachers’ continued use of these reports to track interventions at the individual student and whole-school levels. When teachers are given access to this data type, it helps them understand school-wide initiatives and how to collaborate to address challenges.

DOMAIN 2: LEADERSHIP

To what degree does school leadership establish, communicate, support, and monitor schoolwide priorities?

Promising Practices:

The vision of Las Montañas to prepare students to be successful through graduation and beyond is clear to all teachers. During the site visit, they appreciated that the vision is alive and can be seen in all the school's work. Principal Martinez is collaborative and transparent, according to staff.

Las Montañas has established an eight-term school year. Each term allows a student to earn one-sixth of a credit so that there are extra opportunities to begin the next credit in the same school year or to make up a smaller portion of credit if failed. By lowering the stakes for each credit, Las Montañas builds students’ confidence. This significantly empowers students who have not experienced success in other school environments.

Opportunities for Growth:

Las Montañas is relatively small for a high school and has impressive collaborative structures already in place. Within this context, there are opportunities to create a system where all teachers can provide input into the 90-day plan, implement it collectively, and monitor it rigorously. This shared sense of ownership would continue to enhance feelings of collective efficacy and shared vision.

Potential Next Steps:

Create structures and protocols to engage teachers in creating, reflecting on, and making changes to the 90-day plan as needed. Continue to make individual and whole-school data collection and reporting structures accessible to all.

DOMAIN 3: INSTRUCTIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

To what degree is the school's instructional infrastructure in place, understood, and utilized by school leaders and teachers?

Promising Practices:

The school is working towards ensuring the course content is highly relevant to students by combining state standards and career and technical education (CTE) content. The teachers are given time to backward plan and develop their pacing. Principal Martinez observes teachers to provide feedback on the quality of instruction, instructional materials, and assignments.

Opportunities for Growth:

Teachers feel they have a lot of data about progress toward graduation but could benefit from other formative assessments that would allow them to identify skills gaps. They are particularly interested in aligning current focus standards with skills gaps to address prior misunderstandings more fully before teaching new skills. For students from various high schools with varied educational histories, rigorous formative assessments may allow teachers to diagnose students' learning needs and trajectories better, allowing them to target their instruction more accurately.

Potential Next Steps:

Teachers are already in the habit of backward planning; building formative benchmarks into their plans is a natural next step. The school might provide professional development on breaking down standards into skills (and prerequisite skills) and then creating performance tasks that align with CTE skills. The results of these performance tasks would help teachers see which skills transfer and provide actionable data as they plan future whole-class, small-group, and individual interventions and extensions.

Given the positive culture of observation, feedback, and collaboration, formative assessments would provide additional data for Principal Martinez to analyze with teachers to ensure continued instructional efficiency. In much the same way that the school breaks credits down into smaller, bite-sized sixths, breaking large standards into smaller tasks helps everyone understand the next steps and maintain a sense of momentum.