

New Mexico Public Education Commission



2023 Charter School Renewal Application Part B: Progress Report

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Instructions

Please read the entire Charter School Renewal Application Kit before preparing documents. In an effort to help applicants understand the requirements of the Renewal Application, the CSD will hold a minimum of two technical assistance workshops. Applicants will be notified of the dates, times, and locations of the workshops.

Enter applicant responses in boxes below. Answer all questions unless the question indicates that applicants should answer only under certain conditions (e.g., rating on a Performance Framework indicator requires explanation, etc.). Narrative responses should be verifiable through documents submitted or observable evidence at the renewal site visit and will be scored according to the rubric in the main 2022 Charter Renewal Application document.

School Information

Name of School: Middle College High School

Authorizer: New Mexico Public Education Commission

Current Charter Term: July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2024 (currently concluding fourth renewal)

Academic Performance

Student Outcomes

1. Academic Performance

The school reports on its academic performance during the term of the contract, including achieving its goals, student performance outcomes, state standards of excellence and accountability requirements set forth in the Assessment and Accountability Act.

School response:

Middle College High School continues to meet criteria for designation as a New Mexico Spotlight School. Moreover, the school is the state's oldest continuously operating early college high school and maintains a gold star rating amongst its peer group, which now includes 19 other officially-recognized early college high schools. And in U.S. News & World Report's annual rankings of the nation's best high schools, Middle College High School is currently listed amongst the 50 top high schools for the state of New Mexico.

The school participated in the state-mandated high school graduation assessments, which differed from one another in four of the five years covered by the term of the contract. While this made the measure of growth difficult to ascertain due to the incompatibility of these tests, proficiency measures yielded useful information because the school's scores could be readily compared against the state's proficiency ratings.

1.a. Student Outcomes

1.a. How has the school measured student proficiency and growth, including action taken in the absence of state summative assessments in 2019-20 and 2020-21? Describe interim and formative assessments used, and the results of those assessments. Include a detailed narrative that addresses the actions taken to improve student outcomes, and the success of those actions. Schools may take the opportunity to include data in support of the narrative. If providing data to support the school's narrative, provide it in **Appendix A-1 Academic Data**. Implementation of the described improvement actions should be verifiable through evidence at the renewal site visit.

School response:

The school's assessment data for the past five years is as follows:

2018: PARCC results show proficiency ratings of 60% in reading, 19% in math, and 57% in science.

Compared with the state's averages, MCHS was 21% higher in reading, 2% lower in math, and 15% higher in science.

Moreover, compared with local district averages from Gallup-McKinley County Schools, MCHS was 44% higher in reading, 13% higher in math, and 44% higher in science.

2019: Transitional Assessment results show proficiency ratings of 67% in reading, 14% in math, and 26% in science.

Compared with the state's averages, MCHS was 33% higher in reading, 6% lower in math, and 9% lower in science.

Moreover, compared with local district averages from Gallup-McKinley County Schools, MCHS was 40% higher in reading, 7% higher in math, and 15% higher in science. This was the final year that the school's assessment results were reported as a component unit of Gallup-McKinley County Schools (even though at this point, MCHS was no longer locally authorized by that district).

2020: State assessments were waived in the spring of 2020. MCHS shifted to remote instruction through Google Classroom with live Zoom links embedded into daily instruction.

2021: Campuses remained closed through the fall semester with an option to implement a limited model of hybrid instruction for the spring semester. MCHS families were polled to determine their preferences, which resulted in an overwhelming majority of families opting to remain in virtual learning. This was likely the result of two key factors. One, COVID positivity rates remained exceptionally high in McKinley County; and two, all students were internet-enabled to participate in remote instruction through school-issued laptops and the school's provision of mobile hotspots for families who were in need of them.

During this time, the school administered the Accuplacer college placement assessment in order to determine students' readiness for college English and mathematics courses. In order to do this, MCHS petitioned College Board to be allowed to become a testing site for Accuplacer. It was an unusual request, as colleges serve exclusively as Accuplacer test sites. But because UNM-Gallup's testing center was closed during pandemic, the school's request was granted and MCHS has since been authorized by College Board to serve as an Accuplacer test site. Now that UNM-Gallup's testing center has reopened, MCHS reserves its status as an Accuplacer test site, but is now considered a satellite test site of UNM.

2022: SAT results show proficiency ratings of 45% in reading, 7% in math, and 52% in science.

Compared with the state's averages, MCHS was 11% higher in reading, 9% lower in math, and 19% higher in science.



Summary Observations: As noted from the school's longitudinal assessment data, MCHS regularly outperforms the state's proficiency ratings, with some noted exception in mathematics throughout various years of the contract term. Growth is understandably very difficult to determine based upon the incompatibility of assessments that were administered throughout the course of the five-year term (PARCC, Transition Assessment, SAT, and no assessment). Nonetheless, MCHS identified a need to improve its math scores, which is being accomplished through realignment of math curricula and the

resequencing of dual credit courses. The school also addressed this concern through a change in personnel, ultimately electing to replace its math instructor, in which preliminary results appear promising.

1.b. Mission-specific or School-Specific Goals

Report on the school's performance in relation to the school- or mission-specific goals in the negotiated performance framework. Performance reports related to school or mission specific goals should be supported by raw data (masked to protect PII) and provided in **Appendix A-2 Mission Goal Data**. The school should report on the performance in each year of the contract term.

Schools that have not met their school- or mission-specific goals in each year of the contract term should provide a narrative that addresses the improvement actions taken and the success of those actions. The purpose of the narrative is to demonstrate substantial progress toward meeting the school or mission specific goals and maintaining that performance level. Implementation of the described improvement actions should be verifiable through evidence at the renewal site visit.

School response:

Middle College High School has two mission-specific goals that are designed to measure how well the school is meeting its mission to increase student involvement in postsecondary education. As is also stated, emphasis is given to serving students from underrepresented populations. To help determine whether the school is effectively preparing students for transition into postsecondary environments, the school tracks students' college credit attainment rates during high school, as well as tracking their college matriculation and retention rates following their graduation from the school.

For the first goal, the school sets college credit attainment targets that are based upon student cohort. For students completing their first year at the school (as per the 40th and 120th day counts), 80-90% are expected to earn three or more college credits. Students in their second year are expected to earn at least nine college credits; third year, 18 credits; and fourth year, 36 credits. For a detailed graph of the school's longitudinal performance related to this goal, please refer to *Appendix A-2*.

Beginning with the 2019-2020 school year (the first year of the state charter contract), all cohorts except one have met or exceeded these targets. The sole cohort to not meet all of its targets was the graduating class of 2023. This cohort fell short of the target during both its 10th and 12th grade years. Campus closure happened during their 10th grade year, which is generally when students attending an early college high school begin transitioning into a greater number of courses that are taught by college faculty. Online learning and assistance took the place of on-campus instruction and support, and the school noted a downward trend in college credit attainment during this cohort's fall 2020 semester. It was by design that many of the students in this group did not earn additional college credits as Middle College intentionally kept them in high school-only courses in order to help better support their learning needs during the spring of 2021. In their 11th grade year, 70.8% of this group met its second-year target. The cohort gained some ground in its 11th grade year (with more than 80% of them meeting the 18-credit mark), but not enough to carry them fully across the 36-credit finish line at the conclusion of their 12th grade year, in which 68.4% of them met the four-year target.

The 2023 cohort was also the first to complete four full years of high school at Middle College, as the school was not authorized to serve 9th graders until this cohort's freshmen year, 2019-2020. As such, the school learned much from this group of students. For example, the target of 36 college credits is an ambitious goal, and one that is not in line with the PED's *Policy & Procedures Manual for Dual Credit*,

which recommends a standard of 24 college credits to be earned alongside a student's high school diploma (for those who are in attendance at an early college high school). **Middle College is therefore requesting to revise this goal to be in alignment with the PED's Policy & Procedures Manual, such that college credit attainment rates by cohort would respectively reflect 3, 9, 15, and 24 credits.**

For the second goal, the school will match or surpass the nationally normed benchmark of seventy-eight percent (78%) of graduates who matriculate to college upon graduation from an early college high school. Middle College also includes a retention rate as part of its goal, in which at least seventy percent (70%) of the identified cohort demonstrates re-enrollment for a second semester beyond graduation. This is done, in part, to reflect the understanding that the first semester often serves as a litmus test for a student's college readiness. Students accepted into college do not always remain in college. For many of them, the decision to exit postsecondary education occurs at the conclusion of the first semester.

The school tracks its graduates the following spring to identify their postsecondary locations. It is a practice that began three years prior to the school's most recent five-year charter contract. Beginning with the class of 2017, graduates' college re-enrollment rates have exceeded benchmark, ranging from 78.95% to 91.42%. A detailed graph is included in *Appendix A-2*.

2. Organizational Performance

2.a. Educational Program

How is the school implementing the distinctive educational program described in its contract (Performance Framework Indicator 1.a.)? The response should address the ways in which the school is implementing the family, teacher, and student-focused terms of its contract. Please discuss any innovations the school has implemented in support of its mission and educational program.

School response:

Middle College High School conducts a family orientation and campus tour prior to the start of each school year. These activities are designed to help acclimate students and families to the accelerated expectations and opportunities that are present within an early college high school environment. The school's student support structure is highlighted during orientation, including its weekly advisory and tutor time provisions. MCHS also hosts annual open houses, during which families interact with faculty and administration, and observe a variety of student-designed projects, often related to the school's MESA (Mathematics Engineering Science Achievement) or AISES (American Indian Science and Engineering Society) activities.

Additional activities that enhance the school's presence in the community are its job shadow and service-learning requirements. Each student participates in ten hours of observation related to a career interest and delivers a presentation to peers based upon this experience. Community outreach is further enhanced through participation in a service learning class, in which upperclassmen identify a community site for the completion of 30 hours of volunteer service while earning college credit for the associated coursework.

Expanded opportunities exist for students through the services of a Student Success Advisor (funded through the PED's Indian Education Act grant). In addition to teaching a study skills curriculum to incoming freshmen, the Advisor boosts student participation in college summer programs at various campuses in and outside of the state of New Mexico. The Advisor also supports the school's guidance and counseling office in assisting with student scholarship opportunities and parent FAFSA nights.

Also supporting the school's mission, a robust professional development calendar includes weekly PLCs (Professional Learning Communities) in which faculty members propose and lead a series of readings related to salient instructional topics. These sessions foster a horizontally-aligned, collaborative problem-solving structure.

2.b. Financial Compliance

How is the school managing its finances (Performance Framework Indicators 2.a-f.)?

For each year in which the school had a significant deficiency, material weakness, or repeated finding(s) identified in the external audit, the school must provide a narrative explaining the improvement actions made to meet financial compliance requirements and the effectiveness of those actions in improving financial compliance. Success should be identified by specific changes in practice and changes in the audit findings in subsequent years. The purpose of the narrative is to demonstrate substantial progress toward achieving and maintaining financial compliance. Implementation of the described improvement actions should be verifiable through evidence at the site including renewal site visit.

If the school's Board of Finance was suspended at any time during the term of the contract, the school must provide a narrative explaining the actions taken on the school's own initiative to correct financial compliance and regain the Board of Finance Authority and the success of those actions. The school must also describe the current status of the Board of Finance and continuing actions to ensure the same financial challenges do not reoccur. Success should be identified by specific changes in practice. The narrative must be supported by evidence to be reviewed during the renewal site visit.

School response:

MCHS has only received one finding in the last four years, with that finding being a material weakness. The finding was caused by two separate factors:

1. The software used by the accounting team from EdTec, the school's back-office provider in FY22.
2. The transition from FY21 to FY22 with no support from K-12 Accounting during the audit.

The software used by EdTec Inc. during FY22 did not record fund balances correctly. In addition to the software not being able to book fund balances correctly, the EdTec accountant who oversaw the school's accounting did not fully understand how to book cash basis fund balances from the FY21 audit.

The incorrectly coded \$4,000 from PSFA was an oversight during the accounting firm transition between K-12 and EdTec heading into FY22. The original firm refused to complete the audit, so the previous firm left no notes or guidance regarding the reimbursement they had submitted for Erate.

MCHS is no longer working with EdTec and the software now being used to support the school is aligned with New Mexico cash basis accounting standards. Also, the business manager overseeing the financials and working with the software understands how to record and track cash basis fund balances and does so for multiple New Mexico LEAs. Fund balances, cash reports, trial balances, and fund balance roll-forwards have all been prepared prior to July 31st, to ensure they match and everything is accounted for.

2.c. Governance Responsibilities

Describe how the school has met governance responsibilities during the term of the contract (Performance Framework Indicators 3.a.). Specifically, identify any time when membership on the governing body fell below the requirements in their by-laws or the statutory minimum of five members. Identify the amount of time any vacancies were open and identify any board members who did not

complete required training hours in any year of the contract term. For any governance requirements the school was unable to meet, provide a narrative describing the improvement actions the school implemented to move toward full compliance. The purpose of the narrative is to demonstrate substantial progress toward meeting all governance requirements. The implementation of such actions must be verifiable through evidence during the renewal site visit.

School response:

Middle College High School has maintained full membership of its Governing Council during each year of its contract. Moreover, each member has met all required training hours annually.

In addition, the Council's membership has shifted to become more reflective of the school's demographics over the past five years, such that a majority of the present Council (three of five members) are Native American.

2.d. Equity and Identity

How is the school protecting the rights of all students (Performance Framework Indicator 4.a.)? How is the school complying with the Martinez-Yazzie mandate to provide culturally and linguistically relevant instruction and to support and validate students' cultures, identities, and sense of belonging? How is the school complying with the requirements of the Indian Education Act (NMSA § 22-23A), the Hispanic Education Act (NMSA § 22-23B), and the Black Education Act (NMSA § 22-23C)? What role does the school's equity council play in protecting the rights of all students?

School response:

Middle College High School is committed to maintaining its status as a spotlight school, particularly in its mission toward serving students from underrepresented/underserved populations. The school's mission is manifested at multiple levels, as exemplified by the following priorities.

School staff has become more reflective of the school's enrollment demographics over the past five years. During the first year of the present contract term, the school employed one Native American staff member. Presently, the school employs three Native American staff members, an increase from 11% to 33% of the overall total. Native American representation on the school's governance council has likewise tripled over the term of the present contract. Research identifies the efficacy of student learning when students are able to connect with teachers of like backgrounds. MCHS has endeavored to increase these opportunities, wherever feasibly and reasonably possible.

In furtherance of this mission, the school implements a professional development calendar that includes weekly Professional Learning Community (PLC) sessions that focus on salient topics, including titles such as *Culturally Responsive Teaching* and *Grading for Equity*. The calendar is arranged so that each faculty member gets a turn at facilitating a topic of interest over the course of several weeks.

Also related to this mission, instructional materials have expanded to better accommodate and emphasize Native American perspectives and experiences. Indigenous-authored textbooks have been added in the content areas of history and English, with math and science investigating environmental impacts related to the exploitation of uranium, coal, and water. Budget is provided to expand culturally relevant instructional materials across all areas of content.

As indicated in the school's mission specific goals, students in attendance at MCHS participate in dual credit college courses. This enables many first-generation college students to get a head-start in college without the worry of tuition costs and other associated college fees. With 56.6% of the school's enrollment qualifying for free and reduced meals, this provides significant savings to families.

Middle College High School is also awarded a grant through the Indian Education Act, which funds a full-time student success advisor. The advisor works under the direction of the school counselor, and also co-teaches a study skills course. In addition, she meets with identified students individually. The advisor is also instrumental in getting dozens of students involved in summer programs housed at various college campuses. These programs regularly occur in New Mexico and Arizona, but also as far away as Colorado, California, Georgia, and New York.

Assisting with oversight of these priorities, the school's equity council examines student outcomes and proposes policy and professional development considerations. For example, the school's annual Indian Policies and Procedures are reviewed by the council, as well as drafts of presentations that are shared with tribal stakeholders during consultation meetings. The council receives data from administration regarding course-specific passing rates and student numbers for credit recovery. This data informs professional development priorities, such as grading for equity, as well as schoolwide extended learning calendars. Moreover, the council proposes specific policy for board consideration. Most recently, this has been related to schoolwide grading, in which MCHS has replaced D and F letter grades with a grade of I (for Incomplete). Students with a grade of 'incomplete' are afforded additional time and direct instructional support to replace the grade.

2.e. Tribal Consultation

Pursuant to the Indian Education Act, NMSA 22-23A-1 et. seq, and Subsections C and D of the Charter School Act, NMSA 22-8B-12.2, if the school is located on tribal land or serves a high percentage of Native American students, describe how the school complied with the requirements of ongoing consultations with tribal authorities.

School response:

Middle College High School initiates and participates in biannual consultation with the Navajo Nation. Throughout the current term of contract, the school has met in turn with the Navajo Nation Council's Health, Education, and Human Services Committee (HEHSC) and the Department of Diné Education (DODE). In addition, school administration annually participates in the state's government-to-government summits and has met with local tribal chapters, including Baahaali, Rock Springs, Manuelito, Chichiltah, and Tsayatoh. Such meetings increase Middle College High School's exposure to the Native community and subsequently expands access to the school for Native students and families, such that the enrollment of tribally affiliated students has quadrupled over the span of the current contract term (from 19% to 76%). Middle College High School was honored to host Navajo Nation President, Dr. Buu Nygren, as the school's commencement speaker for the graduating class of 2023.

Consultation meetings have yielded important insights that have informed a number of the school's key priorities. For example, ensuring full internet connectivity for all students and providing healthy school meals are two such accomplishments. For students without home internet, the school purchases mobile hotspots and covers all costs related to activation and monthly service fees, utilizing two separate vendors (Verizon and T-Mobile), dependent upon the students' geographic area of coverage. And when the Gallup-McKinley County School District began utilizing UNM-Gallup's serving kitchen to provide a meal service exclusive to only its own early college high school students, MCHS entered into a collaborative RFP with Hozho Academy in order to ensure that students would continue receiving meals. Each of these priorities, internet connectivity and on-site meal service, are affirmed through tribal consultation. Other concerns that have been identified, though not yet resolved, are enrollment reciprocity and school bus transportation. In a meeting with Navajo Nation Council Delegates, the school was asked about the possibility of giving enrollment reciprocity to students who reside just across the Arizona border, much as its host institution (UNM-Gallup) provides. As per the PED, the statute that allows LEAs to enter into out-of-district transfer agreements does not extend to charter schools. For the

past five years the school has also sought to acquire bus transportation for its students, but has encountered numerous obstacles and setbacks in the acquisition of this service.

2.f. Other Performance Framework Indicators

For any Performance Framework indicator for which a school received a “Does Not Meet Standard” or a repeated “Working to Meet Standard” rating over the term of the contract, the school should provide a narrative to address improvement actions it has made to correct those findings. The purpose of the narrative is to demonstrate substantial progress toward meeting organizational performance expectations. Implementation of the described improvement actions should be verifiable through evidence at the renewal site visit.

If the school has received any Office of Civil Rights (OCR) complaints, formal special education complaints or NM Attorney General complaints, the school must identify those, provide all communications (redacted to protect PII) related to those complaints in **Appendix B-1 Complaint Communications**, and describe the current status of the complaint process. If any of those complaints have been resolved and resulted in a finding that the school violated any law, the school must provide a narrative describing the required compensatory and corrective actions required and their status in implementing those actions. The implementation of such actions must be verifiable through evidence during the renewal site visit.

School response: