

To the Options for Parents and Families Division and the Public Education Commission

Narrative Response to Preliminary Renewal Report

(This response will be holistic in nature, so as to give an accurate picture of the whole school.)

When Monte del Sol was founded in 2000, its model of a humanistic community empowering both students and staff attracted academics and families. Students called teachers by their first names, rather than their surnames, and the director of the school was the “Head Learner.” Shared governance was, and is, of great importance in the community, and was included in the collective bargaining agreement when the school unionized in 2010. (Monte del Sol is only one of two unionized charter schools in New Mexico.)

From 2000 to 2010 Monte del Sol was relatively unique, and students and families who wanted greater emphasis on the arts, camping trips for students at the start of the school year, and a robust mentorship experience entered the lottery. The demographics at that time were approximately 75% white and 25% Hispanic. With the addition of The Masters Program and New Mexico School of the Arts, as well as the increased stability of the Academy for Technology and the Classics, which rebranded itself as college preparatory, students began to choose those schools between the 9th and 10th grades and leave Monte.

The demographics changed. Today, Monte is approximately 75% Hispano and 25% white. That transition happened over time, but was consolidated around 2015, just prior to the shift in how schools were assessed. Statistics nationwide show the correlation of low rates of proficiency with economically disadvantaged students, as well as those whose home language is not English. However, there are also schools that buck those trends, known as 95/95/95 schools. They are 95% free and reduced lunch, 95% minority, but who also achieve 95% proficiency rates.

That is who Monte del Sol wants to be. We hired an instructional coach in 2017 and implemented a professional development plan centered around analysis of student data. In 2018 Monte invested in a blended learning program to engage in Tier I intervention and established an after school tutoring program (Tier II intervention). We now exceed expectations with our Q1 math students. The Head Learner applied and was accepted into the Principals Pursuing Excellence program run by the Priority Schools Bureau. Successful teaching is a moving target and one can never rest on one’s laurels. In addition, given the shortage of teachers in New Mexico, schools cannot hire themselves into improving instruction. A Leadership Team was created in 2017 under the guidance of the Head Learner’s PPE mentor. Professional Development was reinforced in 17-18 with PD and PLCs on every Tuesday (alternating). In 2018-19 the school established five full days of professional development that fostered greater collaboration among staff. The Leadership Team this year has committed to serve at least two years and participate in workshops with the Santa Fe Center for Transformative Educational Leadership.

We are not there yet, but we are getting better. PARCC Proficiency rates rose between 2016 and 2019 (23->27.4% Reading, 9->16.4% Math). We have a record of student growth among the population that stays with us for two or more years on short-cycle assessments. Our students are graduating at rates

higher than New Mexico and Santa Fe Public School averages (Monte 72%, NM 71%, SF 69%), and more each year are earning the bilingual seal at graduation—nearly a quarter earned it last year.

While we work on improving classroom instruction through greater use of data-driven instruction and project-based learning, we are still excelling in building strong relationships with the whole child. The Mentorship Program matches more than 100 students a year with local professionals—we connect our students with adults in the local community and give them increased opportunities to build bridges. We are working on consolidating our restorative justice program, recognizing the importance of the social and emotional needs of students in all aspects of their success.

We have launched a Sustainable Career and College Readiness program that is rooted in the school's mission of sustainability and community, in concert with the Santa Fe Community College, to create strands in Culinary, Sustainability, Health and Computer Programming. Monte has received nearly \$150,000 worth of grants to develop the program. In 2017 Monte acquired the Naviance program to guide students in the career process and the school counselor began professional development for staff. We are serving all the students who come to Monte del Sol. [A note on our poor CCR score for 2018: We offer three to six AP courses a year (AP Art, AP Spanish Language, AP Spanish Literature, AP English, AP Biology, AP Environmental Science, AP US History, AP World History). That year's data shows that we offered none.]

Monte del Sol is a strong community-based school with parents who have been choosing to send their children for more than a decade. That is not the same as sending your kids because you are zoned for the school. Parents have consciously opted in, year after year, to have their students attend. Schools of choice live in a market. Market discipline means that the product has to be good, or else the consumer elects to buy elsewhere. Yes, some students choose the big high school when they get older. Others choose the school on a college campus. Some choose the school with the private piano tutor. Many, however, choose the school where their big sister or brother went. They can't wait to go to Monte.