

School Support and Readiness Assessment Monitoring Visit Summary Report

School: Los Puentes Charter High School	LEA: Albuquerque Public Schools
School Leader: Anna Phillips	LEA Leader: Joseph Escobedo
SSRA Team Leader: Lizette Ridgeway	Date: May 9, 2024
School Successes and Celebrations	
<p>Los Puentes Charter High School has experienced significant successes and celebrations in various aspects of its operations. Meeting the proficiency targets outlined in the turnaround plan and charter agreement with Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) reflects their commitment to supporting students. Despite challenges, student achievement is rising, with improvements across various performance indicators, except math proficiency. The school takes pride in its commitment to tracking student data and adjusting instruction accordingly, a practice that was not consistently implemented in the past. The ongoing enhancements to the grounds and facilities, including new cafeteria tables and planned bathroom remodels, underscore the school's dedication to creating a conducive learning environment that fosters student success.</p> <p>Los Puentes has seen positive trends in testing participation, with a 100% participation rate on the most recent SAT exam administration. This achievement is a significant improvement compared to previous years and reflects the school's efforts to prioritize graduation progress and students' next steps. There has also been an increase in attendance, with current rates now at 70%, a significant improvement from 53% when Ms. Phillips assumed leadership. The positive shift in classroom culture and environment, as reported by the school administration, indicates a marked improvement in student engagement and academic focus. The increased engagement of students participating in online-only credit recovery has improved. Previously, students who disengaged completely from the learning program would choose to move to an online-only format but did little to no work and did not complete courses. Today, over 70% of students are completing courses and moving on with the rest of their credits.</p>	
Progress Toward Next Steps Identified in SSRA Summary	
<p>SSRA Summary Next Step #1: Director Phillips plans to incorporate specific expectations into outside service contracts to meet all ancillary requirements.</p> <p>Director Phillips reported progress and is taking proactive steps to enhance the coordination of ancillary services. Despite challenges, such as decreasing student membership and losing the special education coordinator allocation due to budget decreases, the school is making strides in improving its special education systems. Both certified in special education, Ms. Phillips and the dean have been diligently working to rebalance responsibilities and address compliance issues. Additionally, the school has contracted with someone to assist with Individualized</p>	

Education Programs (IEPs), reflecting a commitment to ensuring the needs of all students are met. An APS site visit regarding special education systems has provided valuable feedback, with anticipated improved scores indicating progress in this area.

SSRA Summary Next Step #2: Director Phillips plans to continue to develop and strengthen the leadership team and its communication process.

Under Director Phillips's leadership, Los Puentes Charter High School has undergone significant cultural and systemic changes, with plans to focus on the ongoing development and strengthening of the leadership team and communication processes. Despite turnover and the need to rebuild the administrative team, the core leadership team has shown commitment by attending all School Improvement Team (SIT) sessions, including weekend offerings. While it took some time to establish roles and responsibilities within the team, communication has improved significantly, facilitated by introducing and utilizing new tools. This enhanced communication has enabled the school to effectively convey expectations and goals for implementing new strategic priorities in the upcoming academic year.

SSRA Summary Next Step #3: The leadership team is developing a plan to continue the school's academic and social-emotional strategies without dependence on individual staff members.

Under Director Phillips's guidance, Los Puentes Charter High School has made significant progress in implementing strategies to ensure that expectations are met on campus, fostering a culture of accountability and collaboration. Despite initial challenges with programs like Dynamic Mindfulness, the school has invested in comprehensive training programs, such as the year-long Instructional Leadership Program (ILP), to equip staff with the necessary skills to drive student improvement. Teachers now lead their own Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), allowing for focused student growth and development discussions. Director Phillips commends the staff for their willingness to take on new roles and certifications, demonstrating a commitment to meeting the evolving needs of students.

Los Puentes has also leveraged community partnerships to enhance the social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum, providing students with additional support to overcome obstacles. Despite the unique challenges posed by the pandemic, the school has prioritized building strong relationships with students, utilizing tools like Google Drive, and fostering a sense of teamwork to drive continuous improvement. As the school faces increasing demands and limited resources, the culture of self-management and ownership among staff has proven effective in maintaining high expectations for student success. Los Puentes remains dedicated to empowering teachers and students alike, ensuring that every member of the school community can thrive.

SSRA Summary Next Step #4: Director Phillips and the school leadership team will continue working with staff to balance their compassion with firm student expectations.

The school team demonstrated their progress in this area by sharing the planning for

professional development (PD) in the upcoming academic year. They have been leveraging resources like the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) grant to support students' post-secondary aspirations. As one of the two sites in Albuquerque to receive the GEAR UP grant, the school has provided valuable assistance to low-income students, particularly in navigating the FAFSA process and preparing for careers after high school. Director Phillips emphasizes the importance of intentionally guiding students to track their progress toward graduation and college readiness, a task made possible through the support of GEAR UP. This partnership has been instrumental in transforming the school's culture, shifting towards higher academic standards, and fostering a sense of accountability among students. While acknowledging students' significant obstacles, the school remains committed to maintaining high expectations and ensuring that diplomas are earned through hard work and dedication. As Los Puentes continues to evolve, additional GEAR UP support is a cornerstone in empowering students to pursue their educational goals and succeed beyond high school.

SSRA Summary Next Step #5: A mentorship program is currently being developed to assist students in more effectively and accurately envisioning their post-secondary plans and success.

Los Puentes Charter High School is redesigning its refocus room to support better students needing extra social-emotional learning (SEL) support. With plans to appoint a dedicated staff member as an Early Warning Interventionist to oversee the refocus room and provide student mentorship, the school is addressing the critical need for additional support services. However, funding remains challenging, requiring creative solutions to establish virtual mentorship opportunities for college preparation and post-graduation success.

In addition to these efforts, Los Puentes is focusing on expanding opportunities for students to earn industry apprenticeship certifications, with 13 out of 30 graduates from the class of '24 already achieving this milestone. By collaborating with community organizations and engaging post-secondary instructors, the school aims to expose students to many possibilities beyond high school, empowering them to pursue meaningful career pathways. As Los Puentes switches gears to prioritize mentorship expansion and community engagement, it remains committed to providing comprehensive support to its students.

SSRA Summary Next Step #6: The instructional leadership team plans to monitor and support the execution of learning acceleration practices.

The school continues to progress in prioritizing learning acceleration practices, with at least 60% of classroom walkthroughs demonstrating effective implementation. While progress is evident, the school acknowledges the ongoing need for improvement, with some classrooms requiring more support than others. Teachers are encouraged to create environments where students can actively engage with academic content and grapple with challenges. To further enhance these practices, Los Puentes hopes to continue contracting with an outside vendor to receive support and guidance. The school is committed to providing its students with the tools and resources needed to succeed by remaining dedicated to fostering a culture of academic growth and rigor.

SSRA Summary Next Step #7: The staff at Los Puentes plan to identify and implement high-leverage strategies to assist their student body in meeting graduation requirements.

As part of the charter renewal process, Los Puentes Charter High School has identified a need to address student disengagement around two-thirds of the semester. In response, the school is exploring modifications to the schedule to provide students with increased flexibility and support. The proposed changes include prioritizing core courses at the beginning of the semester and offering exploratory classes afterward to keep students engaged and enrolled. These adjustments are designed to accommodate better students balancing work commitments while pursuing their education. Los Puentes hopes to implement the new schedule for the Fall semester.

In addition to schedule modifications, Los Puentes celebrates significant student growth across various grade levels and subject areas throughout the academic year. Data from Horizon Education shows notable improvements in reading and math proficiency from the beginning of the year (BOY) to the middle of the year (MOY). For instance, 100% of 12th-grade students in reading demonstrated growth, while math proficiency grew from 42% to 100% across different grade levels. These positive outcomes point to the effectiveness of the school's instructional approaches and highlight the dedication of both students and educators toward academic progress and achievement.

School Leader's Next Steps

In the upcoming 24-25 academic year, the school plans to build upon its successes by sustaining effective practices while enhancing expectations for student achievement and preparation for post-secondary pursuits. The administration team is committed to maintaining successful initiatives and increasing expectations, particularly for the graduating class. This could include expecting seniors to complete tasks like filling out the FAFSA, purchasing their graduation gowns, and actively participating in senior meetings.

Los Puentes plans to continue prioritizing learning acceleration strategies and uphold a strong focus on academic rigor to ensure students have access to grade-level materials. Adjustments to graduation requirements are also on the agenda, aimed at better preparing seniors for graduation and post-high school plans. There will also be a concerted effort to explicitly teach essential behaviors and skills for self-management, mindset, and resilience. Director Phillips aims to provide teachers with more targeted tools and resources, especially in social-emotional learning (SEL), to address the specific needs of the student population more effectively. By equipping students with these foundational skills, Los Puentes aims to empower them to navigate challenges effectively and maintain focus on their academic studies.