



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

MARIANA D. PADILLA
SECRETARY DESIGNATE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM
GOVERNOR

**Charter Schools Division
2023-24 Preliminary Annual Report
Revised October 3, 2024**

School Name: Explore Academy, Las Cruces

School Address: 850 N. Telshor Blvd, Las Cruces, NM 88011

Head Administrator: Dr. Toni Hull

Governing Board Chair: Clara Welles Raley

Business Manager: Katie Rarick

Authorized Grade Levels: K-12

Grade Levels Served: 5-10

Authorized Enrollment Cap: 1000

2023-24 120-Day Enrollment: 305

Contract Term: 2021-2026

CAPs or Conditions: none

Notice from 2022-23 Annual Report: Satisfactory performance

Unsatisfactory terms that need to be addressed from 2022-23 Annual Report: the PEC has identified two areas of unsatisfactory performance related to academic growth in math on page 6 of the annual report and finances including the material weakness identified in the FY22 audit finding in indicator 2.b. on page 9 of the annual report.

Waivers: none

Mission: The mission of Explore Academy - Las Cruces (EA-LCS) is to provide all students, regardless of background, with a personalized educational experience through the power of student choice, allowing each student to create a personalized and engaging educational pathway in preparation for college.

Educational Program:

5.1.1 Per its mission, Explore Academy will offer shorter learning modules (seminars) through which students will receive concentrated instruction over a smaller subset of academic standards. At the conclusion of each term, students will take an exit exam in each seminar to determine whether students have reached the required proficiency levels for each standard assessed for that seminar.

5.1.2 The school's choice-based philosophy of education provides students the freedom to choose from a set of seminar-versions. Since seminars are often offered in various versions, taught by different teachers, students will have the choice in the specific theme through which they will receive the instruction over the content of those seminars. Thus, the different versions through which each seminar is offered will be unique in their focus and instructional approach, thus allowing students to choose how they want to learn the content through a set of discrete options. This extends across all core and elective (PE, art) content areas, as well as into the school's unique upper division seminars.

5.1.3 Explore Academy students will have daily academic flex periods, allowing them to complete homework, collaborate, attend tutoring, pursue credit recovery, attend school meetings, visit teachers (and case managers in the case of special education students in compliance with their Individualized Education Plans,), and complete make-up work as needed.

5.1.4 The school's staff will be provided with time for professional collaboration, such as in professional learning communities, to function as a forum for the sharing of best practices/instructional strategies, data analysis from seminar/exit exams, creation/modification of future exit exams, analysis of student satisfaction data, creation/modification of future seminars, etc. This collaborative component will be essential in allowing teachers to work together, share their experiences, and streamline their efforts as they work to implement this innovative form of education.

5.1.5 The school encourages parent involvement in all areas of its operation. The school will communicate with parents through its website and a monthly newsletter for the dissemination of general information, and as needed via phone and/or email for individual student cases (academic, behavioral, etc.). Parents will have the ability to monitor student progress through the parent portal component of the student information system.

Demographics as reported in Nova 2023-24 (120-Day)

Note: demographics by subgroup are not yet available; pending Nova certification.

Academic Performance

Academic Performance Framework Indicators	2022-23 Score (100 points possible)	2023-24 Score (100 points possible)
1: State Accountability System: NMVistas Overall Score	ATSI.FRL 53.5	pending*
2: Subgroup performance: high, middle, and low-performing quartiles	unavailable	unavailable
3: School-specific Goals: if two goals, average of points on each	75	100
Overall Academic Score: average of indicators 1 and 3	64.25	–

*Note: NM Vistas scores are not yet available. Report will be updated when published.

State Accountability System:

State and federal statute mandates accountability for all public schools. This section provides a snapshot of the school’s academic performance according to data collected by the Public Education Department (PED) for the school years 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24 (when available).

The New Mexico State Accountability System ([NM Vistas](#)) gives every public school in the state an overall score. NM Vistas scored schools according to the following designations:

<p>Spotlight: Top 25% of schools, excluding schools with designations of CSI, Graduation Rate or TSI/ATSI</p>	<p>Traditional: No other designation</p>	<p>TSI (Targeted Support and Improvement): Multi-year low performing subgroup(s)</p>
		<p>ATSI (Additional Targeted Support and Improvement): TSI in the lowest 5% of schools. Exit from ATSI status requires an increase in subgroup performance in both of the next 2 years.</p>
		<p>CSI (Comprehensive Support): Lowest 5% of all schools; OR 3 years in ATSI; OR 3-year average of 4-Year Graduation rate is below 66.67%</p>
		<p>MRI (More Rigorous Intervention): on CSI for 3 years</p>

Note about 2022-23 NM Vistas Revision: on May 20, 2024, the Accountability, Research, Evaluation, and Assessment (AREA) Division released new figures on NM Vistas for the school year 2022-23. The figures were recalculated because: 1) AREA received a high number of appeals from schools about their data; 2) the Vistas data and designations needed to align with the state’s *Consolidated State Plan* (CSP) that is sent to the U.S. Department of Education as part of the *State ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) Accountability Model*; 3) during the initial release of Vistas 2022-23 reports, a number of schools were prematurely exited from designations of CSI and ATSI. Those schools are on a three-year cycle, some of which started in 2018-19. Because of Covid, two years of accountability reports were waived, so the designation should have continued through 2022-23.

Important: According to the May 20, 2024 NM Vistas revision, the highest **overall** designation a school may receive is “Spotlight,” however, an additional designation/distinction of “Excellence” is assigned to schools scoring above the 90th percentile on specific indicators.

Refer to the [2022-23 Accountability Measures Overview](#) for a summary of indicators included in Vistas calculations. Further details and criteria for each designation are provided in the *Accountability Technical Manual* linked to the [NM Vistas](#) web page.

Note: NM Vistas designations and academic proficiencies are not available at this time. Report will be updated when data are available.

Mission-Specific Goals

Goal: At the end of each term, 70-80% of students will pass* 80% of the standards-based exit exams administered as a measure of proficiency on each seminar’s specific required standards and skills.

Performance Level	Target	Points
Exceeds Standard	At the end of each term, more than 80% of students, enrolled on the 40th and 120th day, will pass* 80% of the standards-based exit exams administered as a measure of proficiency on each seminar’s specific required standards and skills.	100
Meets Standard	At the end of each term, at least 60% of students, enrolled on the 40th and 120th day, will pass* 80% of the standards-based exit exams administered as a measure of proficiency on each seminar’s specific required standards and skills.	75
Does Not Meet Standard	At the end of each term, at least 50% of students, enrolled on the 40th and 120th day, will pass* 80% of the standards-based exit exams administered as a measure of proficiency on each seminar’s specific required standards and skills.	25
Falls Far Below Standard	At the end of each term, less than 50% of students, enrolled on the 40th and 120th day, will pass* 80% of the standards-based exit exams administered as a measure of proficiency on each seminar’s specific required standards and skills.	0

*Pass is ≥80%, or as indicated on the IEP.

Rating: Exceeds Standards- 80% student attainment. **Score: 100**

Organizational and Financial Performance Framework

2023-24 Overall Rating: Does Not Meet

Pursuant to the [PEC Performance Framework and Accountability System](#), schools receive ratings of **Meets Standard**, **Working to Meet Standard**, or **Does Not Meet Standard** for individual indicators in the framework. Explanations for any rating other than Meets Standard are provided below.

The school also receives an overall rating of either **Meets Standard** or **Does Not Meet Standard** for the year. If a school receives a **Does Not Meet Standard** rating for three or more indicators, it will receive an overall rating of **Does Not Meet Standard**.

If a school receives a **Does Not Meet Standard** rating, on any indicator, the CSD and PEC may conduct a closer review the following year on that indicator, and/or the PEC may require the school to submit a corrective action plan in order to specify actions and a timeline to correct the performance deficiency.

A school may receive a **Working to Meet Standard** rating on multiple indicators and still receive an overall rating of **Meets Standard**. If a school receives this rating across multiple years, the CSD and PEC may conduct a closer review the following year on that indicator, and the school will need to address the issue in its renewal application at the end of its charter term.

Screenshot of Multi-year Performance Framework Ratings

Explore Academy Las Cruces	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Organizational and Financial Performance Ratings			
1a Mission and Educational Program	Meets Standard	Meets Standard	Meets Standard
1b State Assessment Requirements	Meets Standard	Meets Standard	Pending
1c Rights of Students with Disabilities	Meets Standard	Meets Standard	Meets Standard
1d Rights of English Learners	Meets Standard	Meets Standard	Meets Standard
1e Meeting Program Requirements	Meets Standard	Meets Standard	Meets Standard
1f NM DASH Plan	Meets Standard	Meets Standard	Meets Standard
2a Financial Reporting and Compliance	Meets Standard	Working to Meet Standard	Working to Meet Standard
2b Accounting Principles	N/A	Does Not Meet Standard	Does Not Meet Standard
2c Responsive to Audit Findings	Meets Standard	Meets Standard	Does Not Meet Standard
2d Managing Grant Funds	Meets Standard	Meets Standard	Meets Standard
2e Staffing for Fiscal Management	Meets Standard	Working to Meet Standard	Meets Standard
2f Internal Controls	N/A	Meets Standard	Meets Standard
3a Governance Requirements	Meets Standard	Meets Standard	Meets Standard
3b Nepotism, Conflict of Interest	Meets Standard	Meets Standard	Meets Standard
3c Reporting Requirements	Meets Standard	Working to Meet Standard	Meets Standard
4a Rights of All Students	Meets Standard	Meets Standard	Working to Meet Standard
4b Attendance and Retention	Working to Meet Standard	Working to Meet Standard	Pending
4c Staff Credentialing	Meets Standard	Meets Standard	Meets Standard
4d Employee Rights	Meets Standard	Meets Standard	Meets Standard
4e Background Checks, Ethics	Meets Standard	Meets Standard	Meets Standard
5a Facilities	Meets Standard	Meets Standard	Does Not Meet Standard
5b Transportation	Meets Standard	Meets Standard	Meets Standard
5c Health and Safety	Meets Standard	Meets Standard	Meets Standard
5d Handling Information	Meets Standard	Meets Standard	Meets Standard

Explanation of 2023-24 Indicator Ratings

- 1.b. Participation data will be provided in Fall 2024.
- 2.a. FY24 quarter 1 report was submitted late.
- 2.b. Six findings on [FY23 audit](#); one material weakness, two significant deficiencies.
- 2.c. [FY23 audit](#): three repeat findings on audit.
- 4.a. Concerns raised: Most students providing their own Chromebooks is an issue when approx 40% of students are Economically Disadvantaged. The point system leading to removal of student(s) or coaching them out of EXLC is not in alignment with the Attendance for Success Act.
- 4.b. Rating is pending until certified 120D attendance data is available from Nova.
- 5.a. Safety concerns observed at site visit not resolved within 30 days: buildings requiring a key to exit did not meet fire code—risk of being trapped in the building in a fire/emergency. (School informed CSD on 08.06.24 that locks have been changed to meet fire code; LC Fire Department confirmed.) Concrete/asphalt surfacing on the playground does not meet playground safety requirements per [Consumer Product Safety Commission standards](#).

Site Visit Attendees

February 8, 2024

CSD Team: Cheryl Rowe (lead), Dr. Brigette Russell, Lucy Valenzuela and Chris Perea (Ed. Plan Coordinator)

School Leadership: Karen Casedy (head administrator) and Karen Woerner (Director of Compliance)

Governing Board: Jenifer Lichtenfels and Lanell Pahe