

School Improvement and Transformation Monitoring Visit Summary Beginning of Year (SITM-BOY)

School: Las Montañas Charter High School	LEA: State Charter
School Leader: Caz Martinez	LEA Leader: Caz Martinez
SITM Team Leader: Andrea Fletcher	Date: October 9, 2024
School Description	
<p>Las Montañas Charter High School (LMCHS) is a one-school state charter with a current enrollment of 207 students, up from 164 last year. It is a re-engagement school for students in grades nine through 12 who have not been successful in traditional high schools. The average student age is 18.25 with 8.69 credits. Most students are one to two years behind when they enroll.</p> <p>The school prioritizes re-engaging students and providing them with many opportunities. The school focuses on a holistic student approach and offers individual support for all students to meet their basic needs. Las Montañas' philosophy is that many students come to school with challenges that can hinder 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 and integrate state standards along with career skills into their six career pathways.</p>	
School Successes and Celebrations	
<p>The school is committed to ensuring that when students graduate, not only do they have a diploma, but they also have skills that make them employable in jobs with living wages. They have taken aggressive action to make learning relevant to students by moving towards a project-based learning model in connection with career and technical education (CTE) pathways schoolwide. This transition will allow content material to be taught in a relevant way to student-selected CTE pathways. LMCHS has elected to make this transition to increase student engagement and graduation through relevant real-world learning. The pathways will lead to industry certifications and prepare students for post-secondary endeavors.</p> <p>Students in the construction pathway are building a house from the ground up in partnership with the Las Cruces Home Building Association. Students in the education pathway take child development coursework and are paid as tutors for elementary students. Students pursuing cosmetology can complete one year of cosmetology school for free in partnership with Glitz.</p> <p>Students are encouraged to be active in the communities. Last spring, five students went to Washington, D.C., to present to legislators about Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs and their impact on student well-being. A group of students has presented to the Las Cruces City Council twice to advocate for a crosswalk in front of the school.</p>	

NM DASH Development and Implementation

The school leadership team recognized the school's low graduation and term pass rates. A root cause analysis determined that a lack of engagement through academic relevance was the leading cause for the low rates. The passing rate was significantly higher in CTE courses because students could see the relevance of the content to their own lives. For instance, students in the construction class had a 14% higher pass rate overall than regular academic classes last year. Last year, the school ran a standard English class and a CTE pathway English class, with a 24% higher pass rate in the latter.

Knowing that higher pass rates lead to higher graduation rates, the school has boldly shifted to implement CTE-relevant project-based learning schoolwide. They brought in a consultant to assist teachers in planning a unit and ensuring that industry and rigorous academic standards were built into the projects. The DASH team then identified adult actions necessary to make this transition successful. Once this was done, the team agreed to use term pass rates and observations to measure the effectiveness of the adult actions. These goals and actions were broken down and designed to be obtainable and beneficial in the 90-day window.

The school has set a graduation goal of increasing graduation from 28% to 47% by increasing course pass rates with students participating in rigorous, cross-curricular projects with immediate relevance to students. The administration will closely monitor lesson plans and complete walkthroughs using a template they created in partnership with the The New Teacher Project that looks for evidence of lessons aligned with state and industry standards.

School Progress

Trend Data

4-year Graduation Rates:

- 2019 48.5%
- 2020 38.5%
- 2021 35.6%
- 2022 28%

2024-2025 Goal = 47%

The school has implemented project-based learning, with all teachers creating cross-curricular projects for the six CTE pathways. The school operates on eight terms a year. For the first two terms of this year, each student rotated through courses in each of the pathways, and then the administration met with each student and allowed them to choose a pathway to pursue.

In the new term that began October 7th, students are now in one two-hour cross-curricular project class daily. In January, students will transition to completing all coursework in a project format.

The school does not currently have an interim assessment but is seeking approval to use ACT Work Keys as an interim for each student.

To monitor that this bold new approach of project-based learning is creating an impact that will lead to higher graduation rates, the school hopes to see the following progress:

- Passing rates will increase from 38% at the End of Year (EOY) last year to 55% at Middle of Year (MOY) this year.
- To ensure the engagement of students, which impacts attendance and passing rates, they will conduct walk-throughs of CTE instruction with the expectation that phones are only being used off-task by students less than 10% of the time.
- To ensure students are actively participating, the administration will review lesson plans. When a lesson is supposed to be student-led, the expectation is that in walkthroughs, those lessons will be truly student-led 75% of the time.
- Establish a MOY baseline using the new interim assessment.
- Establish a system to get feedback on the new projects from staff and students, with 100% of staff participating in a reflective activity and 80% of students participating in a feedback survey.
- Attendance on the day of the site visit in the project class was 64.2%. The school will continue to monitor attendance for the projects with the expectation that by MOY, the attendance will be 70%.
- The school will monitor each project's attendance and pass rates at the end of term three.