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

School: Rio Grande Preparatory Institute	**LEA**: Las Cruces Public Schools
School Leader: Julie Maestes	**LEA Leader**: Ignacio Ruiz
SITM Team Leader: Andrea Fletcher	**Date**: October 14, 2024

School Description

Rio Grande Preparatory Institute (RGPI) is an alternative high school serving ninth through twelfth-grade students. It is focused on career-connected, project-based learning and provides unique opportunities for hands-on, rigorous, and work-centered learning. The school currently has approximately 50 students.

The school's mission is to *"build student skills, knowledge, and confidence to navigate the world beyond the classroom so they may pursue their ambitions with purpose, determination, and perseverance."*

The school's vision is for students to *"reach their full potential through exploring educational and career choices by participating in project-based learning and career pathways."*

School Successes and Celebrations

Principal Maestes is in her second year and feels she has built trust with staff and improved the culture. One indicator of this is that while teacher turnover was a significant issue in the past, they only lost one teacher at the end of last year. Parent participation in student conferences was higher than in the past, showing better relationships with families.

There has been a shift to higher expectations for both staff and students. The school is working with Marzano to help improve the quality of layer one instruction so that students have the skills they need to succeed. RGPI has also successfully changed the model from credit recovery to building academic and soft skills for students. Attendance has improved dramatically. Last year, 79% of the students were considered chronically absent. That rate has decreased to 43% this year.

To help students prepare for employment, the school has created two courses that include co-teaching project-based learning so students can understand concepts in a real work context. One course is Algebra I and Construction, and the other is English language arts and Hospitality, Restaurant, and Tourism Management (HRTM). These two Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs are now fully staffed.

NM DASH Development and Implementation

Completing the 90-Day Plan began with analyzing district data and the NM Vista designation, breaking down that data, and looking for areas to support staff and students further. A group of lead teachers and the administration identified root causes. The school also had district support in refining the plan.

The school has set a four-year graduation goal of 75% for the 2025 cohort. Currently, 22 students are on track to graduate this year. Two of those students will be five-year graduates, but the remaining 20 have the potential to graduate on time.

RGPI felt that there was a need to engage students better, and initially, the 90-Day Plan had a desired outcome for graduation that all teachers would create project-based learning lessons to increase student engagement. While teachers still do projects in each class, the administration has realized that teachers need additional support in developing effective projects and layer one instruction. This semester's focus will be more on lesson planning with rigorous activities aligned to state standards, which is being addressed through the Marzano training and coaching. In January, the school will provide additional professional development and coaching on project-based learning.

Attendance has improved as RGPI has developed a better system to monitor and intervene with students earlier. This year, each teacher is assigned as a case manager to three or four students, and they check in immediately with students who are absent or tardy and record interactions in a spreadsheet with all students. The school also works closely with the district social worker, who visits weekly to work with students who need support the most.

School Progress

Graduation Trends:
2020- 65.3%
2021- 46.8%
2022- 46%

Root Cause Analysis Summary:
The school believes insufficient engagement of students is a factor in choronic absenteeism, which affects the low graduation rate. Another factor is that staff are not effectively using data to drive instruction.

Actions to Meet Goals:
To improve graduation rates and the quality of instruction, the school has established the following points to monitor by the Middle of Year (MOY):
- Monitor daily attendance with the expectation it will rise from daily attendance was 83% present, 17% absence on October 15th to average daily attendance rate of 100% of our students to be at least 85% for the 2nd quarter of this school year.
- The principal will collect lesson plans and provide weekly feedback, expecting that she will see the seven required elements 90% of the time by the MOY.

- Of 22 students currently on track to graduate, the goal is to have 20 still on track for graduation MOY.
- Establish baseline data for students with Ds or Fs. The instructional model has become much more rigorous this year, so comparing previous D/F data to the current year is not meaningful. Having data on where students are struggling will be helpful for next year.
- 100% of teachers' activities will match the rigor of standards by MOY, as observed in classroom walkthroughs 50% of the time.