

New Mexico School for the Arts
Head of School Report: January 2021
Report by Eric Crites

NMSA provides access to a rigorous mastery arts and academic high school education for youth with passion and aptitude in the arts, leading to post-secondary learning, careers in the arts, and lives that contribute to society.

Kudos

- Congratulations to our seniors, who are starting to get more and more acceptances to the colleges of their choice, and to scholarship programs that will support their ability to take advantage of those opportunities. Thank you to Acacia McCombs, our college adviser, for guiding our students to opportunity during this most tumultuous of years to be a senior. Congrats to Zoe Colfax on her admission to Yale, and to Artemisio Romero Y Carver on his full-ride scholarship to Bard.
- Thank you to Paula and Cindy for the work they are doing to secure the funding needed to complete the cafeteria phase (\$1.4 million) during the legislative session. The hope of a beautiful new cafeteria--which is becoming a reality before our eyes--has lifted the spirits of our community during this time when we cannot be in the building.

Remote Mode/Hybrid Mode

- PED has released the secondary reentry guidelines and has indicated they may offer a date for secondary reentry in hybrid mode sooner than later.
- When that date is set, we will follow the same process of decision-making that we used in the fall, with a recommendation to the Governing Council based on public health data and information; logistical supports and requirements being in place; and input from staff, students, and families.
- As we finished semester 1, 8% of students did not earn credit for one or more courses (got an F). This percentage is not much higher than what we usually see at the end of a semester. This is the result of an incredible amount of work on the part of our students, their families, our teachers, and the student support team, led by Chelamia Quintana.
- To quote Mr. Pawlak (math): "During semester 1, I've covered 90% of the topics to 75% of the depth that I am usually able to do." Interim assessment results from semester 1, as well as artistic performances and exhibitions, provide evidence that *our students are learning*. Many have noted that they are even learning things we didn't plan--like independent work skills and organizational skills that will serve them well in college. What students and teachers are accomplishing is remarkable given the circumstances. However, we all recognize that remote learning has had a negative impact on what we are usually able to learn and achieve. All teachers are closely assessing student progress to maximize learning this year and to meet students where they are when we start the upcoming school year.
- In order to uphold our promise of "do no harm" (especially as it relates to future college opportunities) in grading during this pandemic year, when so many things are outside of our students' control, we have applied two flexibilities to our grading:

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- Grades of F have been converted to No Credit/NC on student transcripts. This does two things: it communicates “not yet” (growth mindset); and it keeps an F from being calculated into the GPA. Credit recovery plans for students earning a NC grade are already in place--we are not waiting until next year.
- Students who received a D in a class have an option to convert that grade to a Pass. To do so, they must meet with the teacher to create a success plan for semester 2. This serves the purpose of incentivizing communication and problem-solving initiated by the student; and keeps a D from being calculated into the GPA. To support equity, Mikiko Ellis will reach out to students who do not initiate this process on their own.
- We intend to return to offering small group instruction on campus (5:1 student to teacher ratio) for students with disabilities starting January 27 (we delayed by one week due to concerns about safety downtown on inauguration day).
- We have initiated surveillance testing (at-home saliva COVID tests) in order to be able to bring in students in small groups. 10% of staff who are regularly on campus must test each week--currently two tests per week.
- In partnership with the Albertsons pharmacy, NMSA and Santo Niño school will be hosting a COVID vaccine clinic for our two schools’ staffs on our campus on Friday, January 22. Nearly all NMSA staff have indicated that they will get vaccinated (48 notified Eric that they had preregistered on the state’s vaccine site). The second dose will also be delivered at NMSA in about a month.
- We are beginning a public health campaign among our family community to ensure that as many students and their families as possible elect to get the COVID vaccine once it is available to them.
- The state is applying for waivers from federal mandates for accountability testing, and is recommending that schools “opt in”. NMSA intends to offer the PSAT (grade 10); the SAT (grade 11); and the NM-ASR (grade 11 science test). The data will be used to assess student progress and learning, and to plan for instruction in the coming year. Test data will not influence any accountability measures for the 2020-2021 school year.
- ArtSpring will be presented on May 21 with a best-of-the-best format. Since it is a pre-recorded event, students will have completed their contributions in April. In order to have a culminating event in which all students can participate, we will be having a two-day “Celebration of Creation and Learning” on May 13-14 (instead of classes).

Legislative/PED/PEC

- Charter Schools Division released their preliminary ratings for the 2019-2020 annual monitoring instrument. There are three items requiring follow-up by February 8. After the final ratings are released, they will be presented as a Governing Council agenda item.
- There is a push to pass “hold harmless” legislation in the upcoming session for purposes of determining SEG funding for FY2022.

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- There is an expectation that schools will be required to participate in some form of the Extended School Year program during the 2021-2022 school year.
- The state budget outlook is reported to be far better than had been predicted going into FY2022.

Culturally & Linguistically Responsive Instruction

- Work continues for the Equity Leadership Team's three subcommittees: representation in the curriculum; student-centered initiatives; and grading/homework best practices. Subcommittees will be presenting to the whole staff on Feb. 15.
- We are working with the Western Educational Equity Assistance Center to design a course of training in diversity, equity and inclusion for our whole staff during the second semester.
- IAIA was not able to secure a teacher for the Tewa class at NMSA this semester due to the pandemic, but they are confident they will be able to offer it at our school during the fall semester.

Professional Development

- Denise Hinson has started her participation in an administrative training program through CES.

Safety

- We are closely monitoring protest activity at the Roundhouse to ensure staff safety. We are in communication with SFPD.

Staffing

- We are conducting interviews for a social studies teacher; special education teacher; and special education assistant this month.