

New Mexico School for the Arts
Head of School Report: September 2020
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

- The NMSA Parent Association continues to offer emergency assistance gift cards to NMSA families in need of additional support.
<https://www.mightycause.com/story/Lxguff>
- Kudos to Cindy and the Art Institute on the completion of Phase 1, as marked by the ceremony to name the campus Thornburg Center.
- A big thank you to Paula Tackett for her dedication (and many hours of time) to making the incredible progress we have seen in the demolition and cafeteria construction project.
- Maya Peña (class of 2018, visual arts) has recently completed an incredible mural of Rudolfo Anaya at the Española public library in partnership with the City of Española.



- Yang Toledo (class of 2020, visual arts) and her new venture selling t-shirts, totes, hats, and more, were recently featured in the *New Mexican*.
New Mexican article:
https://www.santafenewmexican.com/life/teen/santa-fe-girls-who-mean-business/article_d33f3d02-e63a-11ea-912f-c7374a6987c1.html
Indigenous Icon Company: <https://indigenousiconcompany.com/>



Remote Mode/Hybrid Mode

- We have launched the school year in Remote mode with a model designed to be able to successfully transition to a Hybrid mode.

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- Secretary Stewart has been stating in weekly conference calls that the medical team is advising a minimum of 4-6 weeks between the openings of elementary, middle, and high schools. This has not been distributed as written guidance. If this holds, it would put us in mid-November or mid-December as the earliest date that high schools would be approved for Hybrid reentry.
- As we gain clarity from PED about when a Hybrid reentry for high schools might be possible (but not before the end of the first quarter), we will review the feasibility of and make recommendations about moving into Hybrid mode by continuing to look at health data and public health orders; students, staff, and parent input; and the logistical and infrastructure system (rapid response teams, etc.) considerations necessary to open safely.
- Three challenges that have arisen from PED guidance for schools trying to reopen:
 - Requirement to use MERV-13 filters (see Facilities below).
 - Requirement that no class exceed 50% of rostered students (possible in elementary school, impossible in high school with two cohorts).
 - NMPSIA memo stating that they would deny liability coverage arising from claims where the school was out of compliance with PED or other state guidelines and requirements.
- Some students and parents have expressed concern about length of the school day and screen time, particularly Zoom time. A survey was distributed to students last week; another will be distributed to parents/families this coming week. The topics were also discussed during a Student Advisory Board meeting and the Parent Association meeting. Teachers are working to reduce the screen/Zoom time and homework/workload in classes as we calibrate to find the right balance. We continue to be guided by the goal of balancing rigor and wellness. We may consider adjustments to schedule, if necessary and if current efforts at calibration are insufficient, after we complete the first quarter.
- Chelamia Quintana and the student services and support teams are ensuring that all students, including students with IEPs, 504 plans, or who are identified as English learners, are receiving services and support.
- The operations team is meeting weekly to plan and implement the details of preparations for moving into Hybrid mode (PPE, safety procedures, instructional program logistics, technology, etc.).
- The USDA has renewed the waivers allowing the distribution of free breakfast and lunch to all children 18 or under at any school meal site in New Mexico. This means that all NMSA students can access free meals in their local neighborhood or district. We have provided a list of statewide meal site information to families. Gayle and Pilar worked together to send food kits from Amazon to families who participate in the free and reduced lunch program in the meantime.
- Student Council, Student Advisory Board, and other student organizations are planning social and supportive engagement opportunities for students, including an NMSA night at Motorama drive-in.
- Cecile Hemez, Brandy Avila, Pilar Jaehn, Gayle McGuinness, Ruben Desangles, Chelamia Quintana, and the arts chairs/faculty executed the herculean task of ensuring that students received the technology, textbooks, and other supplies needed to learn from home. Gwen-Marie Lerch drove up and down the Rio Grande valley to deliver musical instruments.

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Legislative/PED/PEC

- Revisions to the previously submitted remote learning plan were provided to Charter Schools Division on August 28 as requested.
- Eric and Chelamia took the certification training to provide evaluations in the state's revised Elevate NM teacher evaluation system. The new system uses a revision of the former NMTeach rubric (based on Charlotte Danielson's rubric) that reduces the number of score levels from five to four.
- Eric participated in the Rapid Response point of contact training. The responsibility for contact tracing will fall on the schools.
- Gayle McGuinness participated in the PPE point of contact training.
- Chelamia Quintana has been participating in trainings regarding the changes required in Title IX.

Culturally & Linguistically Responsive Instruction

- The Equity Leadership Team is engaging the Women of Color Collective, the NM Dream Team, and the Queer-Straight Alliance in developing a list of equity priorities. Faculty on the ELT are researching and planning PLC's to implement equitable grading practices.
- The Equity Council will continue to meet.

Professional Development

- Nick Martino continues to provide follow-up coaching.
- Denise Hinson will be providing coaching and workshops on online/blended learning best practices as well as project-based learning.

Facilities

- There was a vandalism incident in September, which substantially destroyed one of the gate card reader stations and the pick-up truck the Art Institute was in the process of transferring to the school. We are working with the NMPSIA insurance provider on a claim; we may need to replace the pick-up truck.
- Henry Baca is working with Mechanical Concepts to switch our HVAC filters from MERV-8 to MERV-13 (as required by PED for Hybrid reentry). Once we resume operations, the cost of using MERV-13 filters (which have to be changed monthly) will be over \$3,000 per month. We will use capital outlay funds to cover this cost. Henry is also learning how to adjust the air intake mechanisms on the HVAC units to allow for increased fresh air circulation in the building.