



NEW MEXICO  
SCHOOL FOR THE ARTS



# STATE OF THE SCHOOL



Hello NMSA Families and Friends,

After 14 years, it's clear: what we're doing at New Mexico School for the Arts (NMSA) is working.

Pairing rigorous academics with immersive arts education gives our students an edge, and research has long highlighted what we know and see daily: integrating arts amplifies student achievement. Visiting our classrooms and studios, it's evident – **students from different backgrounds, all driven by their love for the arts, thrive at NMSA.**

NMSA is dedicated to bridging the educational gap, providing support and resources to transform the academic trajectories of our 340 students who join us from over 40 different communities and Pueblos. **Regardless of their starting point, we ensure all NMSA students are equipped to excel and graduate, ready to succeed in the arts and beyond.** Our ArtReach initiative exemplifies this commitment, extending beyond our campus to offer free, inclusive arts workshops statewide. Each year, we collaborate with schools and community partners, reaching out to more than 1,500 students, many of whom have limited access to arts education.

A big step for us this year? The construction of our new residential building right here on campus. **It's more than bricks and mortar—it's a concrete symbol of our commitment to broaden NMSA's reach, offering our exceptional education to emerging artists from every corner of the state.** With our sliding scale fees, we're opening doors for students from varied economic backgrounds to join our residential community without financial constraints. We can't wait for you to see it in January 2024!

And while we are always proud of our achievements, it's the daily wins we cherish: watching academics and arts come together, seeing our students grow not just in talent but as people. **Together, we're shaping a bright future for our state and every student at NMSA.**

Thank you for being with us on this journey. Here's to many more years of dreaming, achieving, and creating together. Let's keep making great things happen.

**Cindy Montoya**  
NMSA Art Institute, President  
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**Eric Crites**  
NMSA, Head of School  
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**P.S.** Please **MARK YOUR CALENDARS** for **ArtSpring 2024** on April 24, 2024. Our opening reception is at the Eldorado Hotel & Spa and we're thrilled to be back on the stage at the Lensic Performing Arts Center! **More details coming soon!**

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## ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS: SETTING NEW BENCHMARKS

**NMSA students experienced a significant 58-point increase in their SAT scores, outpacing both state and national averages.**

This isn't merely a metric of test proficiency. It's proof of our students' dedication and our ability to provide an education that merges academic intensity with arts training.

The integration of arts into education has been proven to enhance cognitive abilities and foster success across disciplines. Our students' remarkable 32-point gain in reading and writing scores, despite a 2-point national decline, not only highlights their mastery of the written word but aligns with findings from the National Endowment for the Arts. The NEA's research indicates that arts education contributes to improved reading and language skills, critical for academic achievement.

Furthermore, our students' commitment to academic excellence shines through in their 26-point surge in math scores. Research reinforces the idea that arts education equips students with essential cognitive and problem-solving skills that transcend artistic endeavors, and studies reveal that students engaged in arts education outperform their peers in standardized tests and display enhanced mathematical and analytical skills. At NMSA, we firmly believe that arts education not only elevates test scores but also shapes individuals. As cited by Dr. Ellen Winner, a professor and researcher in psychology at Boston College, "Arts education nurtures well-rounded, empathetic, and creative citizens who are equipped for a lifetime of learning and success."



### SAT SCORE COMPARISON 2022-2023

GROUP	TOTAL SCORE	READING & WRITING	MATH
<b>NMSA</b>	<b>+58</b>	<b>+32</b>	<b>+26</b>
STATE	-10	0	-10
NATIONAL	-6	-2	-4

2023-2024

## INVESTING IN OUR CAMPUS: NURTURING AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY

In our unwavering commitment to inclusivity, NMSA welcomed our first **Cultural Liaison, Jolene Vigil** (enrolled member from the Pueblo of Pojoaque), whose role is pivotal in cultivating an inclusive environment that nurtures students' social-emotional, and academic and artistic well-being. At the core of our inclusivity efforts lies the **NMSA Cultural Room**, a space designed to welcome all students, with a special emphasis on centering Indigenous, POC, LGBTQ+, and Two-Spirit communities. **The Cultural Room program** is a multi-faceted initiative that prioritizes the well-being of our students, offers support through tailored academic strategies, embraces art as a medium for healing and restoration, and celebrates students' cultural practices. Our commitment to fostering an environment conducive to academic and artistic excellence extends beyond the classroom walls, and Ms. Vigil collaborates with community members and tribal leaders to enrich the range of programming opportunities available on campus.

## NMSA OUTREACH: WHERE COMMUNITY AND CREATIVITY CONVERGE

Over the past year we've proudly hosted community partners, sharing our exceptional facilities and resources for rehearsals, summer camps and community convenings.

- **Earthseed Black Arts Alliance** offered its third annual **Sista Circle Summer Camp** and its first **Bond of Brothers Summer Camp**.
- **Los Alamos National Laboratory** hosted their 2023 **Summer Physics Camp for Young Women** in partnership with **Sandia National Laboratories, New Mexico Consortium** and the **Hawaii Museum of Science and Technology**.
- **Zeitgeist Dance Theatre** hosted rehearsals in our dance studios in the weeks leading up to their premiere at **New Century Dance Project Festival**.

We are also doing more than just teaching in our classrooms and studios—NMSA reaches out across the state. Our **Community Engagement Program** connects with communities, shares resources, and makes arts education accessible to students statewide, including but not limited to: Española, Taos, Taos Pueblo, Pojoaque, Pojoaque Pueblo, Nambé, Questa, Abiquiu, San Ildefonso Pueblo, Albuquerque, Las Cruces, Santa Fe, Los Alamos, and Artesia. Projects through this program include after-school programming, in-school half-day arts workshops, teacher training, and curriculum development in partnership with other school districts.



## A GROUNDBREAKING LEAP: OUR ON-CAMPUS RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM

This year marks another monumental chapter in the NMSA narrative. We proudly broke ground on an expansive 19,500 sq. foot on-campus residential building—a realization of our longstanding vision to continually enhance our reach and impact. This is not just an infrastructure addition; it's a commitment to our students, extending our reach and making NMSA accessible to a broader demographic. By expanding our residential capacity and potentially eliminating the weekly commute for distant students, we're creating a more integrated, inclusive community.



**ISABELLA ALDANA**  
CLASS OF 2015, DANCE

Leading our residential life program is **Isabella Aldana**, a distinguished alumna of NMSA's Dance program and Smith College. Isabella's journey reflects the essence of our school's mission: to empower individuals to excel academically and artistically. She brings a wealth of experience, having worked for Teach for America in South Texas and as a history teacher at NMSA. Isabella is not only the head residential advisor but also a champion of best practices in residential life curriculum. She supports our residential students in their holistic development, ensuring they feel at home and thrive in our vibrant community.

“WE'RE  
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—ISABELLA  
ALDANA

## REFLECTING ON EXCELLENCE

NMSA was designated as a Spotlight School by the New Mexico Public Education Department. NMSA ranked among the top 25% of schools in New Mexico based on factors including school climate, attendance and graduation rates, and traditional metrics around academic proficiency and growth.

- **Class of 2023:** 74 graduates crossed the stage at Santa Fe Convention Center. Our graduates earned over \$8 million in scholarship offers and financial aid to attend universities, colleges, and training programs across the country.
- **Jesse Begay '23** was named as one of the 2023 Santa Fe Youth Poet Laureates and **Joycelyn Shroulote '24** was a finalist.
- **44 NMSA instrumentalists and vocalists** placed at New Mexico Music Educators Association's All-State Conference
- **A record number of Visual Arts and Creative Writing** students' works won at the 2023 Scholastic Art and Writing Awards! Hailed as the nation's longest running, most prestigious recognition program for creative teens, 54 Visual Arts works and 33 Creative Writing works were recognized.

**LAUREN SARKISSIAN**  
CLASS OF 2016, VISUAL ARTS



### *Bridging Art and Science: An NMSA Alumna's Journey in Public Health*

I currently work for the Washington State Department of Health, where I combine my background in design with my training in infectious disease epidemiology. Within the department, I'm part of the zoonotic and vector-borne diseases program, focusing on diseases spread by animals and insects. In this role, I engage the community by crafting culturally relevant communication materials that empower individuals to make informed health decisions. My creative thinking abilities play a crucial role in designing effective tools for health promotion. After graduating from NMSA, I received my Bachelor of Science in Biology at the University of New Mexico and a Master of Public Health in Epidemiology from the University of Washington. Through my education, I have continued to expand my design and communication skills. **For me, art can be a mechanism for improving science literacy and making information more accessible to a wider audience.** Outside of work, I remain actively engaged in my new community of Seattle, WA. I participate in the vibrant art scene by hosting collage nights, zine workshops, and other community engagement activities, many of which focus on public health and environmental justice.