

SITE EVALUATION REPORT

Campus Name:	Mater Academy, Bonanza Campus
Grade Levels:	K-8
School Leader:	Amy Gronna
Purpose of Site Evaluation:	This evaluation is focused on academic performance and organizational effectiveness components of the school. It includes classroom observations, focus group results, and detailed data analysis of student achievement.
Conducted Date:	October 29, 2019
Conducted By:	Karen Gordon and Rebecca Feiden

SUMMARY OF SITE EVALUATION

Mission:

The mission of Mater Academy of Nevada is to provide an innovative, challenging multi-cultural education, preparing students to be global citizens and have a competitive edge in the 21st century workforce.

During our Site Evaluation, the team observed the above mission enacted on the campus as evidenced in classroom activities, and during parent, student, administrative, and staff focus groups.

- There was ample evidence of innovative classroom activities. There were unique classroom discussions, student goal setting, teachers modeling their thinking, interesting chants and classroom saying to engage students, unique and hands-on elective classes, a variety of seating arrangements, and different types of word walls and classroom learning tools. It was clear that teachers at this campus have the freedom to implement some of their own ideas within the framework of the school. The “innovative” portion of the mission statement is found throughout the campus.
- Observers noted that there were students representing a variety of ethnic and diverse backgrounds, and the staff mirrored this variety of cultural diversity.
- Although there was a variety of instructional methods observed, many classrooms provided students a challenging curriculum. There was evidence of kindergarten students learning the structure of a paragraph, and lower grade students participating in Math Tasks that involved high levels of thinking, justification, and writing. Both of these items were proudly displayed on a bulletin board in the hallway.

Site Evaluation team members observed instruction in approximately 14 classrooms which included K-8, electives and a specialized science class.

I. CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

Classroom Environment	Evidence Observed	School-wide Rating
<p>Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport</p>	<p>Classroom interactions reflected general warmth and caring. One classroom teacher began the school day by turning on relaxing music, reading a quote from John Lennon and having students think about and then write down 3 goals they would like to accomplish. Students talked comfortably about their goals and responded well to their teacher’s calm and responsive demeanor.</p>	<p>Distinguished Proficient Basic Unsatisfactory Not Observed</p>
<p>Establishing a Culture for Learning</p>	<p>In most classrooms observed, the classroom represented a culture for learning. Clear learning objectives, a variety of learning activities, classroom walls with resources for students to use such as word walls, paragraph structure, and a commitment to the subject by both the teacher and students.</p>	<p>Distinguished Proficient Basic Unsatisfactory Not Observed</p>
<p>Managing Classroom Procedures</p>	<p>Classroom procedures and routines have been established and function smoothly.</p>	<p>Distinguished Proficient Basic Unsatisfactory Not Observed</p>

Managing Student Behavior	In most of the classrooms, teachers were well-aware of student behavior and did respond to student misbehavior in appropriate and respectful ways. In one classroom the students at one table group were talking loudly and yelling out their thoughts. The teacher stopped the class and reminded students about the sound level in the room- which was “whispering”. After this didn’t work the teacher stopped the class again and had students practice the “silent” time in the classroom. She then explained calmly that the class would try out the “silent” time for a few minutes and then she would have them all move to “whispering’	Distinguished Proficient Basic Unsatisfactory Not Observed
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II. INSTRUCTIONAL OBSERVATION

Instructional Observation	Evidence Observed	School-wide Rating
Communicating with Students	Adults, including administrators, support staff, and teachers communicated clearly and accurately with students. In most cases, the teachers provided explanation of content as well as where it is situated in relevance to the student’s background knowledge.	Distinguished Proficient Basic Unsatisfactory Not Observed
Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques	There was a bit of variety in the use of discussion and questioning techniques. In some instances, there were teachers at the distinguished level because students formulated some of the questions. In most cases the teacher used both high level questions and had a good deal of participation from students. A few classrooms observed, did not use high level questions in their interactions with students at that time.	Distinguished Proficient Basic Unsatisfactory Not Observed
Engaging Students in Learning	In many classrooms, students were highly engaged in their learning. The pacing of lessons seemed to take into consideration the age of the student and the time an activity should last. There were a few classrooms which appeared to be less engaging with students working on identical worksheets and others working on the i-pad. It is important to note, however, that these classrooms may have been designed during the Reading Power Hour to provide both focus and direct instructional support for a set of students at this level.	Distinguished Proficient Basic Unsatisfactory Not Observed
Using Assessment in Instruction	The SPCSA team did not observe many instances of summative or interim assessments. There was evidence of formative assessment taking place in about half of the classrooms observed. Some of the formative assessment	Distinguished Proficient Basic

	observed included, teachers looking over assignments and providing feedback, whole group literacy instruction with turn and talk options and teacher listening in to discover the understanding, and sticky notes used to write down a response, and the teacher reading the responses as students posted their notes to the “What sticks with you” spot on the classroom wall.	Unsatisfactory Not Observed
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III. ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Observations	Evidence Observed	School-wide Rating
Mission driven operations	An emphasis on innovation within classrooms, a diverse and multicultural student/teacher population, and challenging activities supports mission-driven operations at this school site.	Distinguished Proficient Basic Unsatisfactory Not Observed
Managing Schoolwide Procedures	Overall, there were clear schoolwide procedures established, implemented, and followed. These include behavioral expectations for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • arrival, departure, lunch time, • recess • behavioral procedures within each classroom. Based on a limited number of hallway transitions observed, there appears to be room for improving the transition expectations and procedures, particularly for middle school students.	Distinguished Proficient Basic Unsatisfactory Not Observed
Maintaining a Safe Environment	A safe level of operations, systems, and school-wide procedures was evident throughout the day. This included arrival, lunch and dismissal. SPCSA staff also noted that students, parents, and family members report feeling safe, both physically and emotionally on this campus.	Distinguished Proficient Basic Unsatisfactory Not Observed

IV. FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

Group	No. of Participants	Duration of Focus Group
Governing Board ¹	3	45 minutes
Parents/Families	5	45 minutes
Students	10	45 minutes
School Leadership	9	30 minutes
Staff	10	45 minutes

Governing Board:

- Board members discussed some of the successes and strengths of the charter including recent improvement in star ratings, collaboration across campuses and with affiliate schools, fidelity to rigorous curriculum, strong leadership that is honest and reflective, and strong student and family investment.
- Board members identified regular discussion topics for board meetings held approximately every six weeks including: principal report containing assessment results, school events and professional development, budget and financial updates, grant applications and policies.
- The board does not currently have any regular committees but has had stable membership for the last few years with five of the members having served four or more years
- The board relies on its bylaws and the support from Academica Nevada to ensure compliance with the Open Meeting Law and has not had any complaints
- The board members stated that they have not received a parent complaint related to the Bonanza Campus in the last three years
- The board members outlined their process for evaluating Academica Nevada through the use of a survey and direct feedback to the staff. Board members expressed that Academica Nevada has been very responsive to any critical feedback and worked to address any concerns.
- The board members generally outlined that the Mater Academy Florida leader helps to evaluate the Mater Academy of Nevada principals. The description was lacking detail regarding the board's role in the principal evaluation.
- The board members articulated a few priorities including the addition of a high school, the need for a board retreat to evaluate progress and chart the course for the next few years, the need to consider differentiated needs of the two Mater campuses and planning to ensure sustainability in the long-term.

Parents/Families

- Parents shared that they appreciate the school and are pleased with the education provided to their children.
- Several family members commented that the school is extremely responsive to parents when concerns are communicated. They added that problems, "get resolved" and they are thankful for this.

¹ Three members of the seven-member board participated. Quorum was not met, and Open Meeting Law was not violated.

- One parent said that over the past two years, the school has communicated system-wide about school-wide events such as sports, parent invites, and important scheduling information to them very well.
- One parent said that her children like coming to school here and that teachers, for the most part, are very supportive.
- When asked about how parents can support their students at this school, one parent stated, “I could do a better job if I knew exactly how my child was doing in class.” She went on to say that the communication between classroom teachers and parents varies quite a bit from teacher to teacher. With one of her children she receives academic and behavioral information frequently per class Dojo; but does not receive much from her other student’s teacher.
- Another parent said she began volunteering at the school and has become increasingly involved in her child’s education by helping and getting to know the school from the inside.

Students

Students expressed a variety of things they like about Mater Bonanza School:

- A student commented, “One of the fun parts (of school) is our peers and also the hands-on learning electives, like taking vital signs and making models.”
- Another child said he liked, “Being able to expand my knowledge about what I can learn; I like how they teach us.”
- A middle school student said, that “At this school, they help you and if they see something from a different class that you don’t understand or wasn’t explained well, they help you understand.”
- A student said that, “In this school we have admin. that can help us with our problems at home and in Middle School you can talk to teachers and get help with problems at home.”

Students were asked if they felt challenged and engaged in school. Most of the responses indicated that students feel very challenged and appreciate the opportunity to move ahead and learn more if they are ready.

- A middle school student responded, “I feel challenged and the work isn’t easy. They try to make it harder and we try to learn more because they want to learn more.”
- A second student said, “I feel like we are challenged, but sometimes it’s easy, but you can help each other learn.”
- A young man said that, “It is challenging, and teachers try to take it one step more in math. The teacher said that if this is too easy, we can start Algebra.
- A middle schooler added that, “In our classes we never do something at your level, it is always above, and I like this.”

Students overwhelmingly communicated feeling safe, both emotionally and physically at this school, quotes included:

- “I can go talk to the counselors and if something is happening at my house, I know I can talk to someone and get help.” There are teachers here who provide us a safe place to talk, like my English teacher, I feel like I can say anything.”
- “This is a very safe area. Nothing happens over here, and the building is secure. We have fire, shelter in place, and lock down drills.
- “On the playground, I feel safe and there are always monitors. Still in 8th grade we go outside to eat but need a pass to play basketball.”

When it comes to family and student ability to track grades and academic performance, students said that there is class Dojo, i-ready, and Infinite Campus. Students said that their parents are socially involved in the school and like to take part in school opportunities such “as data, school web-site and school events.

Students suggested the school make a change to the way “passing periods” are currently conducted. They said,

- “It would be better if the school were bigger. We are crowded in the hallway.”
- “Leaders should figure out something. It would be better if we pass by grades.”
- “With three grades and the middle school, it can be hard to get to classes and I’m tired of getting pushed in the hallway”
- “They need to realize that- 3 grade levels in the hallway is too much.”

Leadership

The leadership team was asked about overcoming challenges at the school:

- One leader said, “One of the biggest things has been having students come in 2-3 levels below their grade.
- Another said, “We can model everything after the other Mater campus, and why not implement and mock what they are doing- it seems to be working. We are getting our school population back to where they need to be.”

In talking specifically about improving student achievement, the team commented,

- We need to look at the data and we track it over the years.
- Intervention is a big factor as well as good people. We need to make sure the students are where they need to be.
- We need to pump them (the students) up. We double dose the instruction and have departmentalized to provide outstanding instruction.
- Good interventions are key, and we use i-ready like a lesson and as a curriculum.
- We have been teaching the teachers how to look at the data. Then we go to small group and hit it more.

School Leaders were proud of the parent involvement at the school and mentioned that they work hard to involve parents.

Staff:

- Staff articulated key components of the school’s mission including “innovative and rigorous curriculum,” ensuring students perform on grade level, and appreciating and showcasing students’ multi-cultural backgrounds.
- When asked about staff morale, responses varied by grade-level and department:
 - **The K-2 team** described working together to meet the needs of students, such as adjusting schedules to implement power hour and juggling power-hour groups across classrooms to make sure each student receives the right supports
 - **The 3-5 team** felt strongly that departmentalization was positive for the morale and described being “tight nit.”
 - **The EL staff** described working to build relationships with all teachers in the best interest of all students. The EL staff mentioned that they really focus on helping all kids.
 - **The Middle School team** described morale as being “kind of low.” In particular staff members mentioned not feeling supported and a belief that there is no plan to deal with discipline issues. Staff articulated a belief that because they did pretty well last year they can “deal with it,” but that when the middle school team has come up with ideas they are “shot down.” Staff believes ideas are being shot down by the affiliates in Florida. The middle school team believes that the leadership team has shuffled around a lot and that leadership roles for the middle school are ambiguous, describing a lack of administrative support and a whole-school dean that does not have time to adequately support the middle school students and staff. Ultimately, the middle school team described a driving concern that they must get students ready for high school.
- Staff described many ways that they not only track student performance but incorporate the data collected into their instructional practices.
- Staff described good instruction as student driven and focused.
- With regard to professional development, staff members stated that some of the development is good, but that they are often not engaging. Staff articulated a desire for more choice in PD and expressed appreciation for PD that is targeted to individual teachers and relevant. In addition, staff appreciated the opportunity to attend specialized conferences regarding PD (ex. springboard curriculum).
- With regard to parent/family communication, staff articulated several different approaches including class dojo, remind and in the case of middle school, home visits. Staff believe parents are relatively engaged at school but expressed some frustration with the need for up-to-date contact information for parents/families.
- Overall, staff expressed appreciation for the school and recognized that the school is relatively new and still growing.

Results

V. OVERALL STRENGTHS OF PROGRAM

1. Strong relationships across stakeholders and clear evidence of productive collaboration exists. Evidence included:
 - Authentic rapport between teachers and students
Teachers discussed how strong professional relationships among the staff are creating a positive staff culture and enabling peer-to-peer learning
 - Special Education and EL staff described their efforts to build trust with students to enable maximum student growth
 - Parents described high levels of approval and involvement with school staff

2. Data Driven Environment. There was consistent use of data to inform decisions at every level.
 - Administration described the use of student data binders
 - We saw how Smarter Balanced assessment data has been disaggregated and is being used to group students
 - We observed the use of iReady and heard staff describe how this is used both to identify specific student skill gaps and to provide individualized targeted instruction
 - Student achievement data is shared via i-ready, Infinite Campus, Class DoJo, and through data chats with all stakeholders
 - Commitment to Rigorous Curriculum. The school has chosen to use rigorous curriculum and has clearly invested in making sure they are using it with fidelity.
 - Use of common curriculum was observed both within grade levels (horizontally) and transitioned vertically between grades. This curriculum was observed in lesson plans, classroom observations and highlighted as a school strength in multiple focus groups.
 - Special Education and EL teachers articulated how they are supporting the students they work with to access the on- grade level content through the curriculum.
 - Teachers commented on the amount of training they have received on key curricular components.
 - Intentional instruction for English Learners and Special Education Students.
 - Strong collaboration between EL and Special Education staff, including several special educators also having TESOL endorsement
 - EL and Special education teams articulated systematic approach to working with teachers to enable all students to access the curriculum through modifications and supports

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommended items are provided so charters may increase their school-wide ratings as well as their overall success. SPCSA School Support Team members will follow up on each listed recommendation.

- Increase consistency within instruction and grade-levels in the following ways:
- Teacher-parent communication: Set expectations for all teachers to communicate regularly with parent via appropriate platform (ex. Class Dojo, Remind)
- Power Hour: Ensure that power hour is high-impact by strengthening plans, instructional practices, and evidence of student learning during the power hour, especially for staff who are not lead teachers.
- Student Engagement in Learning: Continue to share best practices, model high quality instruction, showcase your Master Teachers, and provide clear specific feedback after classroom observations to ensure that students are consistently held to high standards and challenged. Please note: Some classroom teachers were facilitating student learning and requiring them to think critically and explain, while other teachers did the bulk of the thinking and explaining for the class.
- Develop a plan to systematically support Middle School staff on a more consistent basis.
- Continue to train and support teachers during the transition to using more Restorative Justice practices.
- Work to understand and address concerns from Middle School Staff regarding feeling of low morale
- Consider adjustment to class transitions to be more efficient and less crowded, particularly in context of reaching full grade scale.
- Consider plans to lessen the number of students in the hallways at one time by being creative and more strategic when implementing passing period time frames.

- DEFICIENCIES

There were no deficiencies for the Mater Academy -Bonanza Campus during this evaluation.



PUPIL ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

Name of School: **Mater Academy-Bonanza Campus**

School Year **2018-2019** Nevada School Performance Framework Rating(s) (NSPF)

ELA Proficiency (CRT New NV Standards)		Math Proficiency (CRT New NV Standards)	
36.7%	41.2%	31.5%	24.5%
Elementary	Middle	Elementary	Middle

High School Data

Graduation Rate: N/A	Average ACT Composite: N/A
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