

JUNE 2021  
ISSUE 1

# CHARTERING INNOVATIVE PATHS IN EDUCATION

*Nevada State Public Charter School Authority*



## Student Engagement

*By Cesar Tiu, Principal, Somerset Academy Lone Mountain Campus*

### Somerset Academy Lone Mountain Demographics

Somerset Academy Lone Mountain is one of the seven Somerset charter schools that is sponsored by the Nevada State Public Charter School Authority. The school serves 996 students in Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Somerset Academy Lone Mountain's mission is LEAD (Love learning, Excel in all we do, Achieve goals together, and Do what is right). Student enrollment is made up of 3.1% Asian, 37.6% Hispanic, 43.7% White, 7.6% African American, 6.9% Two or more races, .8% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, .3% American Indian/Alaska Native. Approximately 23.3% qualify for FRL (Free and Reduced Lunch), 10.9% IEP (Individualized Education Plan), and 5.1% EL (English Learners).

### House System

The school's house system plays an important role in increasing the level of student engagement. Students have the opportunity to earn house points and teachers track the points using Ron Clark Academy's house point tracking app. Student are aware that they can earn points for going above and beyond with their behavior or classwork. Teachers hold healthy competitions in the classroom such as 4 corners house cleaning, house spelling practice, house math fluency, and many others. Students do not only earn house points inside the classroom but outside as well.

### Student Engagement in a Virtual Setting

Technology is a vital tool that can be used to foster student engagement through active learning tasks. When the school transitioned into distance education because of the pandemic, the

*A College Prep School*

### FEATURED CHARTER SCHOOL

**Somerset Academy of Las Vegas  
Lone Mountain Campus**

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*Elementary & Middle School*

teachers took the challenge of exploring their creativity by looking for ways to engage their students virtually. The school's leadership team gave the teachers the opportunity to explore ways on how to increase student engagement in classrooms and to consider to try new things to help students maintain high levels of engagement. The virtual classroom walkthroughs gave the school leaders the chance to offer support to the teachers by giving them specific feedback on how to support student engagement, especially that they teachers were synchronized teaching.

### Student Leadership

Students are taught and are encouraged to be Leaders in the classroom and throughout lessons. This includes them reviewing Conversation, Help, Activity, Movement, Participation (CHAMPs) with each class for every lesson, greeting visitors at the door and informing them of the standard they are currently learning, and being able to explain what their reading and math goals are. In addition to this, students are taught to Stand and Deliver. With this, the expectation of each student, Kinder- 8<sup>th</sup> grade is to respond to teachers' questions and/or to one another's comments by confidently standing, giving eye contact, and projecting their responses loud and clear. Students are encouraged to "piggy back" off one another's' responses, which adds to the depth of conversations. The biggest component of student engagement here at Somerset Lone Mountain is that students are encouraged to celebrate one another. Students actively cheering each other on whether they've answered a question right or wrong, it's important that all students feel that their efforts are appreciated;

with this, they are more apt to want to share again.

Somerset Academy Lone Mountain thrives on student engagement. It is a vital factor to our success and high levels of student achievement. Hands down, student engagement has become a part of our culture and what makes us so unique. Our teachers understand that they must keep their students' interest and attention to be successful- that is creating situations that encourage students to be engaged in lessons. Engaged students are those who are actively learning. They are not passively listening, but are instead actively constructing, analyzing, collaborating, and reflecting upon information and ideas presented to them. At Somerset Academy Lone Mountain, our goal is for students to take pride in their educational

journeys; this starts with high levels of engagement.

### [Ron Clark House System](#)

Ron Clark Academy's House System, see link above, has been a big influence in promoting academic excellence and fostering leadership at Somerset Academy Lone Mountain. A few of the teachers have been sent to RCA to engage in a vibrant professional development by observing best practices in action. The school's *Wildcat Ways* were derived from RCA's *Dragon Scales*. Adjustments were made to suit the needs of the school. The creativity of the staff enabled the school to intertwine Leader in Me and the house system keeping in mind the main goal which is student achievement.



### 2021 VIRTUAL LEADERSHIP DAY

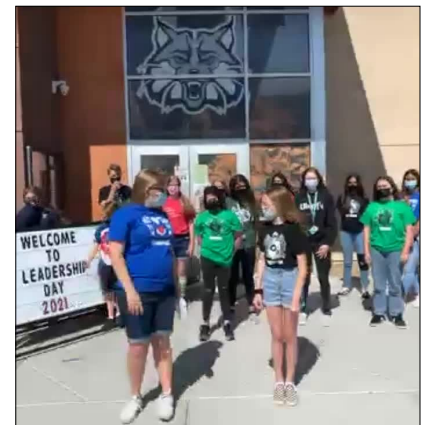
SALM's very first virtual Leadership Day! Enjoy a tour of the school, performance from our orchestra, classroom visits, and student panel discussion, all while learning all about the 7 Habits!

*Click picture to the right to view the video.*



**Context for this Newsletter**

The SPCSA staff conducting site evaluations have noticed that where one school has a school challenge, another school shines. Several SPCSA charter school leaders have requested examples, models, and suggestions to improve and strengthen their schools. Charter school leaders have asked for resources, best practice research, and the opportunity to visit other charter schools to see best practices in action. The SPCSA team believes that if this can be provided, the work of site evaluations and the words within the reports will take on greater value. For this reason, a Best Practices Working Group was formed in February of 2021. There are four Charter School leaders, three people from the SPCSA Authorizing Team, and five content, program experts from the Nevada Department of Education. The Best Practices group, (see members below) has chosen to share best practices and “show-off” the amazing things happening with charter schools by publishing this newsletter every other month. Enjoy! ■



**Additional Information**

If you’d like to learn more or see these strategies in action at the Somerset Lone Mountain Campus, please contact Cesar Tiu using the information below.

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