

# East Mountain High School Strategic Plan

## I. Purpose of Strategic Plan

The purpose of this strategic plan is to guide decisions of East Mountain High School toward achievement of its Mission, Vision, and Goals. This plan is written for the stakeholders of EMHS, which includes students, parents, teachers and staff, and the community at large. If effective, this plan will enhance and extend the influence of East Mountain High School as a force of education reform in New Mexico. The fully developed Strategic Plan will identify goals, priorities when appropriate, actions, individuals or entities responsible, and completion dates as appropriate. The Governing Council will solicit feedback annually from stakeholders on this strategic plan on an annual basis. Annual meetings will assess progress and identify actionable items for the coming year. This plan will be subject to ongoing revision.<sup>1</sup>

## II. Goals

### Mission

As a small regional school, East Mountain High School uses best practices to engage students in curricular programs, involve students in the community, and prepare students for success after graduation, including college and career.

### Guiding Principles

1. College and Career Preparation  
East Mountain High School develops curricular and co-curricular opportunities to support each individual student's college and career path.
2. Individual Talents and Relationships  
East Mountain High School values the relationships developed between students and teachers. EMHS fosters an environment where individual teachers' talents and contributions are integral to school culture.
3. Holistic Education  
East Mountain High School believes in educating the whole student. Character education and lifelong learning represent a core focus of the EMHS experience.
4. Service  
East Mountain High School employs service learning as a strategy to integrate meaningful community service with its instruction to complement academic growth, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen our community.

### Vision

The guiding purpose of East Mountain High School is to achieve the long term goals set out in the EMHS vision statement:

East Mountain High School will be a model college-preparatory school that provides outstanding learning experiences which engage, challenge and inspire each individual to achieve excellence, with the result that

- a. EMHS will have a graduation rate, as defined by state policy, of 90% or higher;
- b. 100% of EMHS graduates who apply will be accepted to a post-secondary education or vocational program of their choice, those choices made with the active support and agreement of the graduate's family, EMHS guidance and faculty team;

- c. By the 2020 graduating class and beyond, EMHS graduates entering four-year colleges will graduate within six years with degrees at a rate five percentage points higher than the national average;
- d. 100% of EMHS graduates will have participated in meaningful projects to serve the community;
- e. By year 2020, EMHS will rank favorably among all schools assessed on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) instrument, used for international comparisons. EMHS will rank in the top 10% compared to all countries for which the results of public high schools measured by that instrument are published, and EMHS will rank in the top 10% of all United States schools sampled with that or an equivalent instrument (as data is available).

### III. Plan to Achieve Increased Growth of Student Learning

Immediate Objective: Academic Excellence

Improved growth in student learning—that is, academic excellence—is the most direct path to achieving the long term goals of the school’s Vision and Mission.

The goal of academic excellence leads directly to a requirement for teaching excellence.

- a. *Develop excellence in teaching, leading to growth in student learning.*  
East Mountain High School’s goal is that each student achieves at least one year’s growth in student learning each year at EMHS, or more, if more is required for a given student to graduate ready for success in college. This is well above current New Mexico expectations.
  - i. Professional Development: EMHS PD involves individuals and departments working together closely and collaboratively, reviewing existing data, and promoting maximum growth and development of each teacher, leading to optimum growth and achievement of each student. EMHS provides financial support for faculty advancing their expertise by gaining additional degrees or pursuing National Board certification.
  - ii. Assessment of Teaching: Careful, multi-factor assessment of teaching is essential, both to inform professional development of teachers and to understand the results. The EMHS assessment of teachers includes the evaluation mandated by the New Mexico Public Education Department, student growth data that is more current and more predictive of college and career readiness, classroom climate including student feedback, and teachers’ professional activities that contribute to improved and effective teaching.
- b. *Recruitment and Retention for Teaching Excellence*  
The goals of East Mountain High School greatly depend on the quality of teaching in the classroom and other supporting activities by both faculty and staff. The most important factor in maximizing each student’s learning is the teacher: no other factor has more impact and none is more important.  
It follows that EMHS seeks to recruit, retain, and develop and recognize those who can meet the unique expectations of EMHS employees. Teachers will receive professional development, recognition, and a compensation plan which recognizes and rewards individual, group, and/or whole faculty excellence.  
Consistent with Guiding Principle 2, individual teachers’ talents and contributions are integral to school culture, including special talents and heading extra-curricular activities.

- i. Recruit: East Mountain High School will make every effort to recruit the most capable and qualified teachers available and who best fit the EMHS teaching and education model:
    1. Passion to support student growth and learning: Teachers who are driven to support struggling students as well as challenge high achieving students; who see themselves as learners as well as providers of knowledge; who inspire and motivate their students through mentoring relationships.
    2. Passion for knowledge: Teachers who are passionate about their subject matter; who understand their primary role in assuring students' learning and mastery of subject matter and college & career preparatory skills; who are driven to become subject matter experts.
    3. Passion to grow as a teacher: Teachers who have high expectations for self-growth as well as that of each student; teachers who want to be part of a learning community and collaborate with their peers in each of their responsibilities.
    4. Passion for the Mission, Vision, and Guiding Principles of East Mountain High School, including contributions to the school culture in and out of the classroom. These contributions could comprise sponsoring extra-curriculars or athletics and participation on committees.
  - ii. Retain: EMHS is also committed to retaining its most effective teachers through such efforts as creating a supportive environment, developing teacher excellence, developing an encouraging culture, promoting professional collaboration, providing an ongoing mentoring program, and establishing a competitive compensation plan.
  - iii. Develop: See Professional Development plan outlined in section III a i above.
  - iv. Recognize Excellence: The culture of East Mountain High School supports an informal system of recognition. Appreciation for each teacher is showcased in various ways, including peer recognition and formal recognition by the EMHS Governing Council.
- c. *Excellence for Individual Students*
- The result of these initiatives with each student is to achieve the vision goals and reflect the guiding principles stated on page one of this document.

- i. School Culture and Character Development: As outlined in the Guiding Principles on page one, East Mountain High School values academic achievement, but understands that students' ultimate success in college and career is also dependent on their character. Equally in line with academic achievement, EMHS seeks to educate the whole student through individual interactions and through the school culture as a whole. Different facets of the school's culture reflect our dedication to community service and service learning, our commitment to equally valuing the valedictorian and the student struggling to make a C, our focus on instilling a life-long love of learning, and our vision of graduating empathetic, resilient, responsible young people.
- ii. Academic Excellence: As a college preparatory high school, East Mountain teachers hold high expectations for students in acquiring both soft skills and building academic

knowledge. East Mountain students are held to a 70% or above in order to receive a passing grade.

- iii. Academic Opportunities: East Mountain High School values academic opportunities. These include opportunities to challenge students' abilities, such as Honors, Dual Credit, and AP, as well as opportunities to take elective classes and develop skills in music, the visual and performing arts, physical education, advanced language, and more. Consistent with Guiding Principle 2, individual teachers' talents and contributions are integral to school culture.
- iv. Identifying and Supporting Individual Needs: East Mountain High School faculty and staff are trained to identify individual needs (of gifted, academically advanced, and struggling students) and pass recommendations to special education staff and to the Student Assistance Team. Students in the Gifted Program are given opportunity to investigate individual areas of interest or to produce content beyond requirements of the class per Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). Those identified as struggling students or as students with a disability are monitored and supported by special education staff and/or the Student Assistance Team, with various supports available such as structured study halls, tutoring opportunities, and/or Individualized Education Plans.
- v. Intervention: The EMHS Intervention Team creates an academic support network of parents, tutors, and teachers that engages all relevant stakeholders.
- vi. Extracurricular Opportunities: East Mountain High School considers extracurricular activities to be important to holistic education of each student. Consistent with Guiding Principle 3, East Mountain believes in educating the whole student. Every student has the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities and find their favorite way to express themselves, through arts and music, speech & debate, athletics, cheer, service, and more.

d. *Transition to College and Career*

Achieving success in college requires more than qualifying test scores.

- i. Post-Secondary Advisement: Preparing graduates and their families for the transition to the right college will include preparation and guidance that start at EMHS. Working together, the student, family, and faculty will research college options and encourage students and families to approach their decision thoughtfully.
- ii. Holistic Education: Holistic education is a philosophy based on the premise that each person finds identity, meaning and purpose in life through connection to the community, to the natural world, and to humanitarian values such as compassion and peace. The purpose of holistic education is to prepare students to meet the challenges of living as well as academics. The most important factors of holistic education are to learn about oneself, develop healthy relationships and positive social behaviors, and develop socially and emotionally.
- iii. Lifelong learning: Consistent with Guiding Principle 3, character education and lifelong learning represent a core drive of the EMHS experience. East Mountain teachers create an environment which supports curiosity, willingness to try and fail, and contemplation of the student's place within the larger world. As a consequence, students leaving EMHS

are curious, reflective, analytic, and ready to continue their learning throughout their lifetime.

- iv. Character: Also known as non-cognitive predictors, character traits drive success in life more reliably than ACT and SAT scores, according to multiple studies. While producing the academic strengths that correspond to college entrance and success, EMHS will also help students develop those life skills that reinforce and augment academic skills and lead to success in college and life beyond. Such skills or qualities include:
  - 1. Integrity: The instinct toward academic and personal honesty, toward consistently treating others fairly and well, and intentional reflection on how one's actions impact other individuals and the surrounding community;
  - 2. Self-Discipline: The ability to set and achieve goals; to defer gratification, to accept responsibility, to persevere, to be willing to take risks and fail, to have a sense of self-direction;
  - 3. Respect for all: The inclination to value diversity, to seek out others' viewpoints, to be empathetic and sympathetic; the openness to new and uncomfortable ideas and ability to discuss differing values; the integrity to be open and honest with everyone;
  - 4. Humility: The knowledge that individual success is dependent on the help and support of many, and the belief that the best way to improve oneself is by serving and learning from others;
  - 5. Curiosity: The desire to expand one's scope of knowledge, to seek out facts and find answers, to reflect on life.

East Mountain High School teaches character through a rigorous curriculum which deconstructs social issues, fosters empathy, and supports risk-taking, both in and out of the classroom; the role of the teacher as exemplar is crucial, and is equal to their role as a bringer of knowledge.

- v. Service: Meaningful community service provides more than just assistance to the community: it pushes students to establish a motivation beyond themselves. Service fosters empathy. Consistent with Guiding Principle 4, East Mountain High School prepares students to serve their communities as adults. Through service, students gain relationships with mentoring adults and develop professional interaction skills, take steps in expanding their identity, and take steps in exploring the world beyond their family, friends, and school. Through service, students gain a sense of civic responsibility through interactions with those in need. Through service, students form bonds with their communities and see themselves as important participants therein. East Mountain High School will create curricula that creates opportunities in and out of the classroom to serve the community and grow in character.
- vi. Self-Advocacy: In order to bring maximum success to a student's ability to create and education and career plan, the student must have the ability to self-advocate: to seek assistance when needed, to speak up for oneself, and to make decisions after weighing advice from different sources. East Mountain High School is committed to supporting students' growing independence. By 12<sup>th</sup> grade, EMHS students are ready to prepare their plans for post-secondary education and careers.

e. *Staff and Administrative Role*

All staff on campus contribute to the culture of the school. Staff and Administration support the Mission, Vision, and Guiding Principles of East Mountain High School. In a tightly collaborative organization, all roles are necessary and important. The school values the contributions of everyone employed at EMHS.

**IV. Other Strategic Goals**

a. *Parental Involvement*

East Mountain High School believes that parents are not only their child's first teachers, but also their lifelong teachers. We believe in partnering with families, and that raising an educated child is a shared responsibility. We therefore rely on the following models of parental involvement:

- i. Parents are asked to volunteer 72 hours a year to East Mountain High School. Whether by attending a field trip, volunteering at concessions for an athletics event, or helping at a speech and debate tournament, EMHS welcomes parents to become involved in the school community. As they say, "it takes a village," and the school benefits every time a community member shares their experiences with the students.
- ii. East Mountain High School encourages parents to interact with their children to create a foundation for education. Parents are in an ideal role to encourage their children to think about and interact with the outside world, through discourses of current events, literature, history and more.
- iii. East Mountain High School believes that a student's ability to self-advocate is paramount. Therefore, successful parental communication is characterized by succinct and effective communication facilitated by the student, among student, teachers, and parent, with the onus on the student to take responsibility for their learning.

b. *Technology*

East Mountain High School integrates technology and education. EMHS acquires the latest and most current technology, including the skills to manipulate hardware and software, and uses said equipment and products to improve the higher order learning of each student. This can include high-level problem solving, project and group learning, and engagement of creativity. The school commits to planning for and bringing cost-effective technology into EMHS and facilitating faculty to use it to improve student achievement and to prepare students for college. The planning for future technology investments at EMHS will include the required infrastructure, hardware, software, presentation of curriculum, budget, and training. The school recognizes that, as technology is a quickly developing field, planning for the future will require special attention to the need for updating technology. EMHS will fully use the technology necessary to assure our graduates' entry into and success while in college.

c. *Financial Planning and Stability*

East Mountain High School is proud of a history with clean audits, adequate reserves, and

healthy financial growth. As a public charter high school, we charge no tuition; the money received from the State of New Mexico and the way it is spent is largely dictated by New Mexico law.

- i. Budget: The Principal, business staff, and Governing Council take an active role in planning and budgeting for current and future school years, and in continuing to build reserve accounts.
- ii. Foundation: A healthy and productive East Mountain High School Foundation is essential for the financial stability of EMHS, as is harmonious collaboration and coordination between the Governing Council and Foundation. The two organizations mutually manage, plan, organize, implement, and assess their efforts to assure the fiscal health of the school.
- iii. Financial Reserve: As good business practice recommends, EMHS has established an adequate financial reserve and a plan for preserving that reserve.
- iv. Grant Awards and Other Income Sources: The ability of EMHS to attract grant awards continues to be an important contributor to the EMHS budget and our successes. Grant income benefits EMHS by supporting various activities and programs in pursuit of EMHS' Vision, Mission, and other parts of this strategic plan.
- v. EMHS Alumni: The continuing involvement of the graduates of East Mountain High School is crucial both to realizing the goals of the school and to the school's intellectual and financial well-being. EMHS enjoys connecting with our graduates via facebook and other social media, class and program reunions, and an email list serve.

d. *Oversight and Leadership*

The Governing Council will fulfill its role of providing exemplary governance for EMHS and overseeing the further development of and progress made toward achieving this strategic plan and the Mission, Vision, and Goals of East Mountain High School. Governing Council committees address the goals in this strategic plan through a collaboration among faculty, school administration, Governing Council members, and Foundation members. All school-affiliated persons and community members are invited to attend monthly Governing Council meetings. In addition, the GC will represent the school in all situations where it deems that Governance involvement is appropriate. Further, the Governing Council maintains that EMHS will be an exemplar of educational reform throughout New Mexico.

e. *Risks to East Mountain High School*

In carrying forward any strategic plan one can anticipate opposition from vested interests, budget dilemmas, and other unwelcome and unplanned adverse situations. East Mountain High School cannot prepare for all unexpected consequences but can account for the most obvious events that would sidetrack our campaign to achieve this plan. The EMHS Governing Council will endeavor to anticipate and analyze potential risks associated with this strategic plan. Risks identified will be mitigated and corrective action will be tasked to the appropriate individuals or group, to the extent possible within the authority of the Governing Council.