

# VISTA GRANDE HIGH SCHOOL

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INDIGENOUS EDUCATION INITIATIVE

The ideal purpose of education is to find one's face, find one's heart, and search for a foundation – “a truth, a support, a way of life and work through which one can express one's Life.”

Tradition of the Nahuatl-speaking Aztec of Mexico

Cajete, G. (1994)

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The IEI grant at VGHS will result in a land-based Indigenous school design that is replicable and will support all students.

# Vision

A holistic approach to education focused on developing critical and creative thinking, character, and community involvement.

# Mission

Provide an authentic and challenging learning experience within a culturally inclusive, supportive environment which motivates all students to develop to their fullest potential.

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IEI provides the resources to relaunch the VGHS school design created in collaboration with Taos Pueblo for input and approval.

# WHY WAS THE INDIGENOUS EDUCATION INITIATIVE IMPORTANT TO THE TAOS COMMUNITY?

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- Cultural Vitalization
- All students in Taos County will benefit
- Validate and Affirm all students home culture and help them build a bridge to access public education.

Dr. Hollie

# MOTIVATION FOR THE VISTA GRANDE INDIGENOUS EDUCATION INITIATIVE

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- The historical trauma of Spanish and White atrocities, settler colonialism, and systemic and institutional forms of racism
- Indigenous students are struggling in public schools.
- The teaching strategies, the design of the curriculum, the structure of classes and sharing of information, as well as the blatant disregard for Indigenous peoples' ways of knowing.
- Indigenous students downplay who they are in order to fit in with the mainstream white culture. *As Indigenous children enter school, they learn this very quickly.*

The Results increased dropout rates, academic failure, and hopelessness, which leads to depression, substance abuse, and suicidal tendencies.

# YEAR ONE GOALS

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- Internal school review process and assessment
- Community engagement around future school design toward cultural and linguistic relevance and holistic models of education

# YEAR ONE PROGRESS

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- Began the meetings with Taos Pueblo and other community stakeholders to give input on the designs of the school's college and career pathways programs of study and redesign of the educational model provided by VGHS.
- Established Community Wide Councils to create a collaborative process with stakeholders from our various communities.
- The Community Wide Council facilitated the redesign of VGHS, including the VGHS Profile of the Graduate.

# YEAR ONE– FOCUS GROUPS

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- Youth Focus Group
  - Surveys were used to collect youth voices on the VGHS redesign
- Parent Focus Group
  - These focus groups were planned for Spring 2020, were waylaid by COVID
- Community Focus Group
  - Community focus groups were smaller meeting structures for focused and ongoing discourse around three priority areas determined in the Council meeting: relevant curriculum and Tiwa language, CTE programs of study with mentorship and internship opportunities, and community wraparound services.

# YEAR ONE– SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

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- The community events generated a lot of excitement, and the collaborative work was gaining momentum. Positive relationships were becoming more prevalent as students and families were communicating with the school and one another, as was evident when staff needed to continue to communicate with the students through technology and how the students responded when pandemic hit.
- The greatest challenge of the work this year was the COVID pandemic. Focusing priorities on immediate student and teacher needs supplanted the work planned with community stakeholders. Further, the limited technological access for Taos Pueblo residents continues to be problematic.

# YEAR TWO GOALS

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- Design plan based on community-identified priorities
- Curriculum development/revision process
  - The VGHS STEM curriculum reflects the value of diversity and different ways of knowing and learning.
  - The VGHS STEM curriculum fosters the growth in students by validating their home cultures so they can experience *changes* in how they fit into their community, knowledge, belief systems, artistic expression, environmental adaptations, and other customs at home.

# YEAR TWO– HOW WE ARE MEASURING SUCCESS

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- Relevant curriculum development grounded in feedback from Taos Pueblo
  - The Humanities curriculum relevance rubric is modeled on the Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scorecard from NYU Steinhardt Metropolitan Research on Equity and Transformation of Schools
  - The IEI team is creating a STEM-based culturally relevant curriculum rubric grounded in the work of Dr. Gregory Cajete.
  - Rubric review and revision process: site-based and in collaboration with the Taos Pueblo Division of Education and Training
  - Rubric to be used to coach teachers to write relevant, standards-based curriculum.
- CLRT teacher growth as indicated by NMTEACH domain 2 and 3 observations and walkthroughs

# YEAR TWO– HOW WE ARE MEASURING SUCCESS

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If VGHS curriculum is relevant to student lives and teachers' are using culturally and linguistically responsive teaching strategies, then

- attendance rates increase
- quality of student work is enhanced
- graduation rates increase
- more realistic and actionable post-secondary planning and preparation
- a sense of being at home in one's skin

...for all students.

# YEAR THREE GOALS

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- VGHS will re-launch with new vision, based on the community-designed plan that prioritizes academic excellence and cultural relevance in education with new accountability measures as well as support structures for sustainability.











# How the Indian Education Funds are spent

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Coordinators

Curriculum Writer

CLR training

Community Partnerships

Community Engagement

# How the Indian Education Funds are spent

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Tiwa Language and Culture teacher

Technology - hotspots, laptops, other tech needs

Career and College Experiences coordinator maintains database of students served for post-secondary career and college counseling, the skills learned (e.g., applying for financial aid), and follow up notes.

Secrets to Success grade 9-12 differentiated career and college exploration project aligned to the VGHS Profile of a Graduate and annual Next Step Plans

Internships/mentorships