




EMPOWER
COLLEGE PREP



Annual Report

2022

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VISION AND MISSION

Vision

All people are empowered with the education, purpose, and character to transform their community, their country, and their world.

Mission

To prepare scholars to succeed in college, solve real-world problems, and maximize their impact in the world.



THE FOUR HALLMARKS



1 RIGOR

2 GIFTS & INTERESTS

3 REAL-WORLD APPLICATION

4 CORE VALUES

CORE VALUES

- » RESPECT & HUMILITY
- » INTEGRITY
- » COMPASSION & EMPATHY
- » OPTIMISM & HOPE
- » STEWARDSHIP & RESTORATION
- » WISDOM & TRUTH
- » PERSEVERANCE & EXCELLENCE



LEADERSHIP TEAM



BRIAN HOLMAN
Founder, Executive
Director & High School
Principal



ANGELA EICH
Director of Finance &
Operations



DAVID DILLMAN
Director of Operations



JENNIFER LANE
Director of Curriculum,
Instruction and
Assessment



BECKY JONES
School Director K-8

GOVERNING BOARD

KEVIN ERICKSON - BOARD CHAIR

BRANDI ADAMS BRESSLER

PATRICIA WELBORN

ADAM BROOKS

CYNTHIA DANIELS

BRIAN HOLMAN - EX OFFICIO



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



Former teacher, scientist, and psychology professor Angela Duckworth defined grit in her 2013 Ted Talk as “sticking with your future not just for the week, not just for the month, but for years, and working really hard to make that future a reality.”

One year prior, Empower College Prep established “perseverance and excellence” as its final core value, which it defined with the statement, “We will become who we were created to be and do what we have been empowered to do in our community and in our world. We will overcome obstacles and exhaust all options to fulfill our commitments at the highest level of quality and demonstrate excellence in all our endeavors. This will require urgent, sustained, hard work. It will require silencing distractions around us and inside of us. It will involve self-discipline and self-control, diligence and determination, tenacity and delayed gratification.”


These concepts of grit, of perseverance, and of excellence indelibly marked the 2021-2022 school year.

When the school year started on August 2nd, nearly 1,000 children were handed face masks as they walked through the bright yellow gate most had not passed since March of 2020. Faces were familiar – more than 80% of teachers had returned again from the previous year and student stability was near the highest in the school’s history. But they were also foreign. Former friends had grown distant while processing in isolation personal pain brought by the pandemic. Children were unsure how to ask about the experiences of others, and unsure if they had the capacity to support others working through their grief and anxiety amidst the weight of their own.

The school had hired a social worker in 2020 who was deeply involved with families and students throughout the pandemic. With all students back on campus, her caseload quickly surpassed 300 students whose needs ranged from anxiety and depression, to food insecurity and homelessness, to suicidal ideation. She developed partnerships with more than 20 community organizations to help meet these needs.

Amidst the social and emotional challenges students were facing, the school also confronted an enormous academic challenge. Kindergartners could neither hold a pencil nor sit in class without wailing for their parents. Freshmen struggled with fractions and concepts of equality typically mastered through middle school work with proportions and ratios, hindering their ability to solve systems of equations. Seniors previously committed to college were no longer sure of their future. These challenges were compounded when the state changed the state test every high school student was required to take to the ACT about a month before school started, requiring the school to pivot from the monitoring systems and benchmarks that had all been aligned to the SAT as teachers were preparing to return to campus for training.

Amidst these challenges, the past school year was marked by extraordinary resilience, grit, perseverance, and excellence.



Empower College Prep leveraged its strategy of casting vision and facilitating reflective conversations to re-invest students in their future. The school visited architecture firms, medical practices, local businesses, a cybersecurity “war room”, and other career sites throughout the valley that require college degrees. It hosted a Career Day on campus, and it returned to university trips as soon as campuses began hosting them.

By the time the Class of 2022 concluded their senior year, they had led their campus to a return to normalcy. After a dip in immediate college enrollment in 2021, the 51 graduates in the Class of 2022 attained an immediate college enrollment rate of 85%, shattering both the national pre-COVID rate of 66% and the rate of students from higher-income high schools of 73%.

Additionally, nearly 90% of seniors completed internships, including several in elementary classrooms helping younger students reacclimate to school.

While the state saw a 3-point jump on the state test in grades 3-8 from 2021 to 2022, Empower scholars jumped 7 points in grades 3-8 and more than 27 points on the new ACT test in high school.


Empower College Prep also leveraged the technology developed during the pandemic to launch its first extended campus in a nearby church. Students engage with live, remote teachers for classes. Learning guides facilitate community-building and development of social-emotional competencies. The students participate in sports and other clubs with peers on the main campus after school and use the same transportation to and from school as all other students do. A For Arizona provided funding at the end of the year for the school to expand this model, which makes it much easier to serve more students more quickly that may not fit in the existing facility or be close enough to get to it.

A For Arizona also funded the school’s launch of its own transportation operation. Its \$600,000 grant allowed the school to provide more reliable transportation on shorter routes with Empower staff while benefitting from 20% savings.

The year ended with the school hosting the largest summer camp in its zip code for students throughout the community to re-engage with peers and recover some of the learning loss associated with COVID.

Looking Forward to the Future

As students and staff embrace a new normal, the Empower College Prep community looks forward to impacting more students more deeply. Despite the pandemic, the school’s graduating class has grown by more than 50% since 2020 when the first Empower alumni entered college. The school is building a preschool that is expected to open next year and prevent the achievement gap rather than waiting to close it in K-12 education. And after a decade of growth in central Phoenix, Empower College Prep is developing its strategic plan to expand and replicate to serve more children in low-income communities who deserve the opportunity to go to college and change the world!



Brian Holman



TRIPS AND EXPLORATION

UNIVERSITY TRIPS

After a two-year hiatus on university trips due to the pandemic, Empower's K-8 scholars were excited to return to Grand Canyon University and Northern Arizona University last year, and are hoping to get back to the University of Arizona, Arizona State University, UCLA, and USC in the near future. The university trip program provides a tangible experience for students to realize they are progressing toward their goal of going to college and changing the world.



WASHINGTON DC TRIP

This summer, ten students from Empower College Prep were chosen to participate in the Civics Matter program created by Governor Ducey and Cardinals owner Michael Bidwell. These students were chosen based on a rigorous essay competition and their achievements in US History and Government classes.

Along with the Social Studies Department Chair, Jake Richardson, the ECP contingent were flown on the Cardinals team jet to Washington, D.C. where they enjoyed a dinner with Governor Ducey who spoke about "living a life in service of others." The next three days were filled with tours of the Lincoln, Jefferson, FDR, Vietnam, MLK, and WWII memorials, among others. Students visited several Smithsonian Museums and took pictures on Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House. The trip closed with a beautiful dinner cruise on the Potomac. Each night students would engage in thoughtful discussion with each other and their tour guide to expound upon what they had seen that day. The trip was one the scholars will never forget!

Contributed by: Jake Richardson, Social Studies Department Chair

SPAIN TRIP

During Spring Break, a group of Empower students and staff traveled to Spain as part of the school's Spanish Language and Culture program, which traditionally attains the highest number of college credits of any department by passing the College Board's Advanced Placement Exam each year. The purpose is to immerse students into the culture and language they have been learning while dramatically enhancing students' global experiences and appreciation of the world and cultures beyond their borders.

Over eleven days, our scholars got to visit the Alhambra in Granada, climb La Giralda in Sevilla, marvel at La Mezquita in Cordoba, explore El Prado Museum in Madrid, and walk Las Ramblas in Barcelona – all while building community and memories that are sure to last a lifetime, particularly for those who were traveling outside of the United States for the first time! As we arrived in Europe, our flight got delayed in London, giving us the opportunity to explore the city for a night. This little adventure opened their appetite for further travel. Upon the students' request, we hope to expand our travels beyond the Spanish-speaking world beginning next year. In partnership with the World History department, we plan to visit England, France, and Spain as part of a senior trip for students each year!

We are grateful and inspired by the ability to provide our students with opportunities to experience history and foreign languages that empower them to go to college and change the world!

Contributed by: Sarahi Chavez, Founding High School Teacher, Spanish Department Chair



EXPANSION AND INNOVATION



Transportation

For the first 9 ½ years, getting students to and from school was the most unreliable, costly, and educationally disruptive aspect of the school day. Buses often lacked air conditioning for weeks during sweltering summer commutes. The Operations team received calls on multiple mornings stating students would not be picked up due to insufficient drivers. Students fell asleep on the 2-hour commutes and missed stops, and neither the school nor parents had a reliable way to quickly contact the bus company to find missing students. The bus company was not responsive to update routes and provide transportation for new students desperate to enter the school. Despite enduring unreliable service, transportation costs soared to nearly \$500,000 each year in 2022 eating up funds



that were desperately needed in classrooms as students returned from the pandemic with exacerbated learning gaps and social-emotional needs. Drivers even confessed taking longer routes back to the yard to increase their compensation, and another company required payment of daily rates even while buses sat unused during the pandemic. Due to a \$600,000 grant from A For Arizona and some extraordinary innovation by Dave Dillman, the school's Director of Operations, Empower

College Prep was able to take over transportation operations in February and immediately benefit from more than 20% savings. Now, Dave and his team are seeking funding to provide transportation to other schools, use a combination of buses and 15-passenger vans to optimize routes that further drive down costs, and leverage these vehicles to provide transportation to other schools and individuals, which is projected to decrease transportation costs to schools by more than 60%. This would free up hundreds of thousands of dollars to support students and retain the most effective, transformational teachers.

Teacher Pipeline

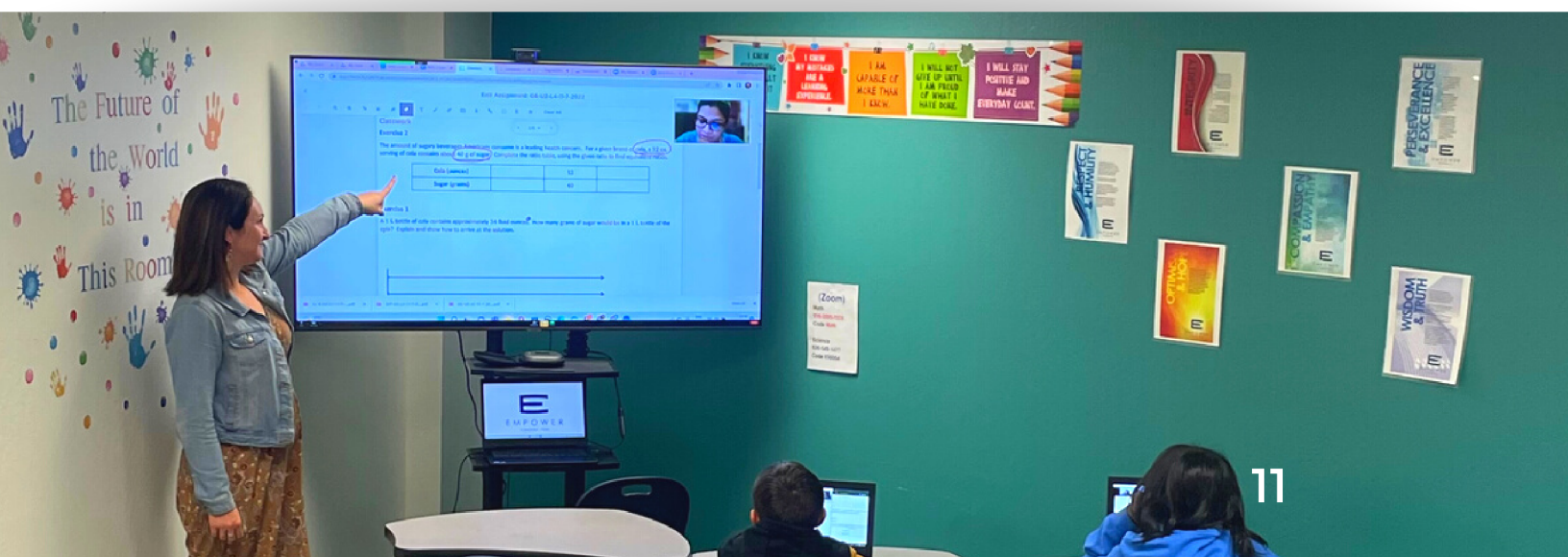
While demand for transformational schools is growing in Arizona, the shortage of highly effective teachers significantly stymies the growth of these schools to open and serve students in more communities. This reality led Empower College Prep to launch its Teacher Associate Program in 2022 in partnership with the Burton Family Foundation.

Currently, first-year teachers are required to be proficient in instructional delivery, classroom management, data analysis, curriculum development, mentoring, and communications to invest students and their families. This challenge is magnified in low-income communities given the range of academic abilities and social-emotional needs students have. The result is high teacher turnover and an equally daunting teacher shortage. The professional learning curve is simply too steep.

To address this, Empower College Prep is hiring education majors during their junior and senior years to lead and build relationships with specific students to master specific objectives with which they have previously struggled. These Teaching Associates receive the training and experience necessary to dramatically impact learning outcomes when they become lead teachers in future Empower College Prep schools.

Extended Campus

Recent research and analysis of parent preferences point to a need for small schools with close-knit, familial communities. School economics, driven largely by facility costs, drive schools to serve large learning communities that strain the personal connections and social-emotional well-being of students. This year, Empower College Prep partnered with A For Arizona and First Christian Church to build an “extended campus” model in which students receive live, remote instruction from Empower College Prep teachers and social-emotional support from Learning Guides who serve as Homeroom teachers and build communities with the students.



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



As Empower College Prep's scholars and community continue to grow, so do the number and complexity of challenges we collectively face, which has made the need for collaborative partnerships much more evident. Each year, the school conducts a needs assessment to better understand how Empower can meet families where they are and address the needs of the individuals we serve. In the most recent assessment, families indicated needing access to food, clothing, mental health supports, continuing education programs, and legal and family supports.

Over the past year, Empower College Prep was able to provide over 600 food boxes to families, connect over 100 families to community services, and support scholars to access the proper medical/behavioral care through community partnerships.

In June 2022, Empower College Prep held its first community resource fair to provide families the ability to fill their toolboxes with resources and contact information to utilize when needed. Over 15 community partners were present and ready to meet the needs of our families and empower them to advocate for a healthy future.

Empower College Prep has been privileged to partner with agencies such as Terros, St. Mary's Food Bank, Chicanos Por La Causa, Fresh Start Women's Foundation, Keogh Health, and many more. As our school continues to grow, we look forward to deepening these partnerships that are so critical to the well-being of each individual in our community.

Contributed by: Natalina Masad, Licensed Master Social Worker and Family Advocate



SUMMER CAMP



Empower College Prep's first Summer Camp benefited both its current students and the surrounding community.

With financial support from an AZ On Track grant, Empower offered its first Summer Camp. The school provided a free, safe, and educational space to over 400 students this summer.

Many of these students were not previously enrolled in Empower, but after having such a great experience they decided to enroll for the 2022-2023 school year. The Camp Staff included several Empower Alumni, some who had attended the school since fourth grade. Summer Camp was offered to children as young as

preschool and as old as 12th grade to recover learning loss from the pandemic, build social-emotional competencies, and recover credits toward graduation. For most of the preschool attendees, this was their first time in a school environment and they loved it! Camp counselors used IXL as a guide for academic instruction and supplemented it with arts and crafts, hands-on activities, and weekly field trips.

Each week had a theme from "Under the Sea" to "Outer Space." While older campers went on field trips to places like the Odyssey Aquarium, the Science Center, the Phoenix Zoo, and more, younger campers enjoyed themed celebrations like laser dance parties, water days, and farm animal fun on the Empower campus.

This camp not only provided academic learning and exploration for campers, but it also provided well-paying jobs for Empower students, staff, and other community members. One recent graduate, Elizama Perez, was able to save up money so she could get through her first semester at GCU without working. An educator from another school district was able to avoid eviction due to having stable employment all summer. The school was also able to purchase new technology, sports equipment, and art supplies.

The camp ended with a "clean up" day for camp staff to clean and prepare the classrooms for teachers' arrival for the upcoming school year and one last hurrah for the campers - a field trip to Hurricane Harbor waterpark.

EDUCATION BY THE NUMBERS



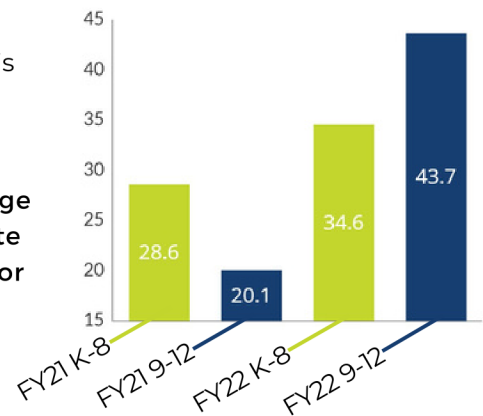
Empower College Prep graduates maintained an immediate college enrollment rate that shattered the state and national average this past year, with 85% of graduates going to college.

This is especially remarkable given more than 90% of our students qualify for free or reduced lunch, more than 35% are English Learners, more than 15% have special needs, and more than 10% are refugees.

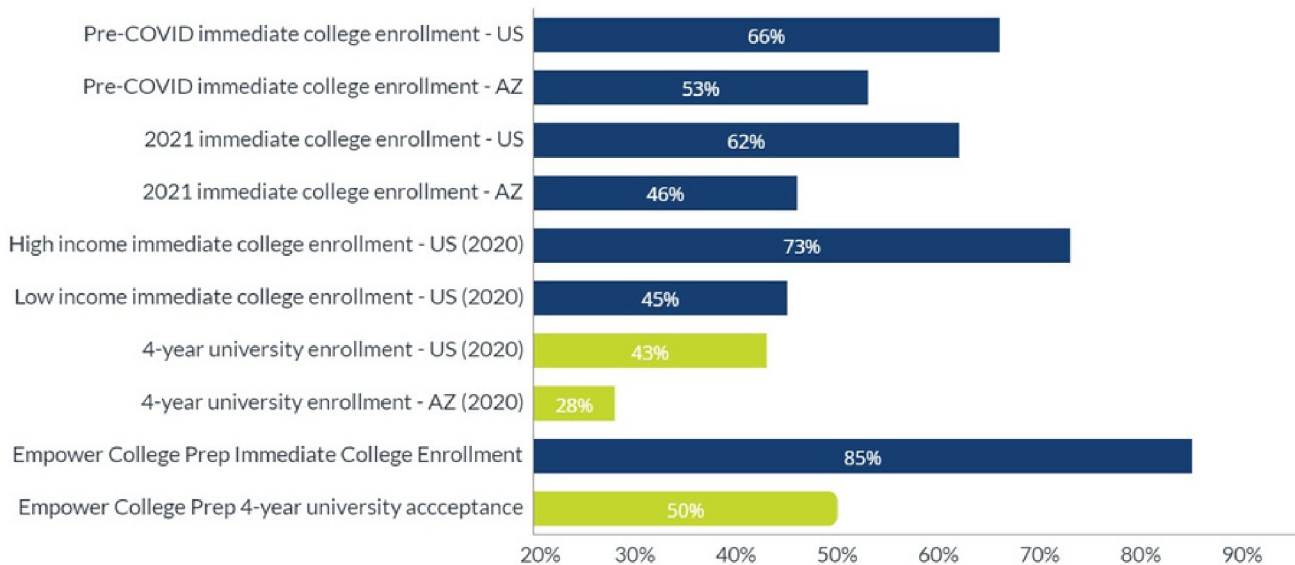
Empower College Prep's students bounced back from the pandemic with extraordinary growth on the state assessment this past school year.

While Arizona schools and low-income schools have a lower percentage of students go to college than the national average for high-income students, Empower College Prep's immediate college enrollment rate is **higher** than the national average for high-income students.

Proficiency Points



College-going rates and all data outside of the school are based on the most recent data available.



DEMOGRAPHICS & STATISTICS

TOTAL STUDENTS: 918



Free-Reduced Lunch: 91%

English Learners: 32%

Special Needs: 18%

Finance & Development

Revenue

Local Income	\$ 872,352
State Income	\$ 9,511,688
Federal Income	\$ 3,896,201
Other Income	\$ 1,529

Total Revenue \$ 14,281,770

Expenses

Regular Education Personnel (Salaries & Benefits)	\$ 4,946,809
Regular Education Supplies & Purchased Services	\$ 1,163,848
Special Education Personnel (Salaries & Benefits)	\$ 539,285
Special Education Supplies & Purchased Services	\$ 290,798
Before- and After-School Program	\$ 260,207
Central Office and Operations (Salaries & Benefits)	\$ 1,198,043
Central Office and Operations Supplies and Purchased Services (Non-Facilities)	\$ 1,101,417
Governing Board	\$ 5,227
Facilities	\$ 1,481,561
Food Service	\$ 536,617
Transportation	\$ 460,552
Depreciation/Amortization	\$ 797,238
Contingency/Reserves	\$ 783

Total Expenses \$ 12,782,386

Net Income \$ 1,499,384

Debt Service Coverage Ratio 2.65

Days Cash on Hand 70.94



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Christine & Daryl Burton
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Marty De Rito
Phil & Nita Francis
Bert Getz

Frank & Betsy Goodyear
Anita Gupta
Michael Hudak
Amy Thurston
Gregg & Sally Tryhus
Fred & Mary Tucker
Mike & Cindy Watts
David Wright
Anonymous

Champions

Kevin & Angie Erickson
Fred Pakis
David & Weezie Reese
Michael & Patricia Welborn
Steve Wheeler

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