

ALBUQUERQUE BUSINESS FIRST

EDUCATION

LIFE IS IN THE TRANSITIONS.

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Transitions. That will be one of the themes in Julianne Puente's upcoming graduation remarks.

It's a fitting subject considering what the entire world has been through over the past two years. And it's especially fitting for Puente who became the head of school at Albuquerque Academy amid Covid-19 in 2020.

She arrived via King's Academy in Madaba-Manja, Jordan, where she worked as the deputy headmaster and dean of students. She was in the Middle East for 11 years.

As she spoke to Albuquerque Business First on March 30, she mentioned how she had started to outline her graduation remarks. Moving, changing jobs and ending relationships are considered three of life's major transitions. Puente laughingly said she did all three in a matter of months when she took the Albuquerque Academy job.

While she might not want to repeat those events any time soon, she is quick to point out the silver lining.

"Life is in the transitions and that's where real growth happens," Puente said.

For Albuquerque Academy, that recent growth has been tangible.

Over the past two years, they revamped student schedules, changed graduation requirements, added 20 courses, redid their hiring practices and implemented a new learning management system.

These changes were not simply interim Covid fixes, but long-term investments.

"While we were managing Covid, we made the decision to move the school forward. ... The reason that was done is that we were already uncomfortable – and already in a different kind of environment," Puente said. "So, to simply wait to make the changes we all knew had to be made when things were stable, it would have just prolonged the discomfort."

She credits her time in the Middle East for helping her to embrace the unknown and to always be curious.

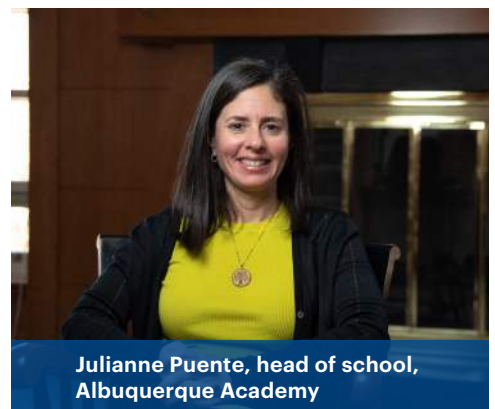


"That enables you to be really creative and innovative in how you approach issues or problems or chart a path forward," Puente said.

In addition to continuing to push forward all of Albuquerque Academy's new systems, policies and procedures, Puente is focused on giving students the space, and time, they need to develop some of the critical learning skills that have suffered in Covid.

As Puente put it, for some students, their development was arrested for two years. As an example, she said they had sixth graders who came into the school (Albuquerque Academy is sixth to 12th grade) who had not been in school for two years. Developmentally, she said, they haven't had the chance to grow up in the same way others would have a few years prior.

"School is not simply about problem solving, critical thinking and learning how to write and read closely, but how do you manage conflicts? ... How do you act and react and respond? And what is your responsibility? And the conversations that come from that and the mistakes that you make – they haven't been able to do that. ... Being patient and gentle is really important in this. And you meet kids where they are and you take them to where they need to be. I think that is really key."



**Julianne Puente, head of school,
Albuquerque Academy**