

School Support and Readiness Assessment Summary

School: Armijo Elementary	LEA: Albuquerque Public Schools
School Leader: Angelica Portillo	LEA Leader: Scott Elder
SSRA Team Leader: Celeste Murray	Site Visit Date: 8/29/2023
School Description	
<p>Armijo Elementary is a public school situated in Bernalillo County, in a suburb of Albuquerque. As of April 2022, the enrollment was 270 students in grades pre-kindergarten through 5. Armijo is a Title I school, with 100% of students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch. 96% of the students at Armijo identify as students of color; most are of Hispanic heritage. Armijo employs roughly 20 full-time teachers and follows an extended year calendar.</p>	
School Successes and Celebrations	
<p>Armijo prides itself on teamwork and collaboration. Teachers, families, and the principal all report high levels of communication and engagement with the local community. Attendance interventions show promise for future outcomes. Teachers appreciate high-quality curricular materials and professional development opportunities inside and outside the school. The school utilizes opportunities for teacher leadership and collaboration during contract hours to support teacher development and retention. Observations during the site visit indicated a warm culture of acceptance and a willingness to continue to improve.</p>	
DOMAIN 1: CULTURE & EQUITY	
<p><i>To what degree has the school established equitable practices that ensure ALL students and staff have an opportunity to reach their full potential?</i></p>	
Promising Practices:	
<p>Based on the information gathered during interviews and site visit observations, Armijo Elementary has created a positive culture where staff, students, and parents feel safe and have a sense of belonging. It was evident that the staff and school community promote and value equity. Established morning meetings promote Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and support and allow students to be seen, heard, understood, and valued. Additionally, the staff is implementing a push-in model to increase inclusion so that students with IEPs receive layer one core instruction with their general education peers. There was also evidence of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), where teachers are providing multiple means of engagement, representation, and allowing students to demonstrate their learning in various ways.</p>	

Opportunities for Growth:

Armijo Elementary has an opportunity to significantly increase performance by increasing academic expectations for students. The leadership and staff have done an excellent job of creating a safe and conducive environment for student learning. This was evident in almost every interview. However, the site visit team heard few common messages of high expectations in interviewee responses, and brief school and classroom observations uncovered learning patterns at the recall/remember levels and delivery of instruction below grade level expectations. Now that the school has established a positive environment where students can develop and learn, there is an opportunity to translate the staff's care for their students' mental and physical well-being into explicit care and attention to their academic well-being.

Armijo also has opportunities to increase parent involvement in student academics. Parents are pleased with the school's efforts to provide multiple parental engagement opportunities through fun activities such as popcorn sales on Fridays and parent nights throughout the school year. Adding additional opportunities for parents to support and become more engaged in their student's academic achievement would be highly advantageous.

Potential Next Steps:

Shift the instructional focus from remediation to integrate acceleration practices that allow students to utilize grade-level content. This can be done through thoughtful differentiated planning and instruction and instructional scaffolding. The promising practices described in Domain 3 can support this effort.

As families are engaged in the school already, extend these opportunities for them to become more involved with their child's academics at school and home.

DOMAIN 2: LEADERSHIP

To what degree does school leadership establish, communicate, support, and monitor school-wide priorities?

Promising Practices:

Armijo Elementary excels in communication and has employed multiple means of communicating with families to bolster school-home connections and improve attendance. Both staff and parents mentioned the weekly Sunday Message from the principal as an important source of school information and practical advice. Additionally, the principal and the majority of the staff use ClassDojo for daily communication and feedback on students' positive behaviors during the school day.

Along with frequent, varied, and timely communication, Armijo has created opportunities to recognize student attendance, including an attendance assembly. During this assembly, students with good attendance were entered into a raffle for bikes. Armijo has also communicated the importance of attendance by supporting families with transportation challenges by supplying gift cards for auto care when needed.

Small group instruction and differentiated instruction were identified as school-wide goals for meeting the needs of all learners, including those who qualify for special education services and gifted education.

Teachers have been provided professional development in these areas, and small group instruction was observed during walk-throughs and commended by parents.

Opportunities for Growth:

Armijo should build on the success of attendance celebrations and interventions by continuing to monitor student attendance. Systems to track and identify root causes of truancy can help the school support families with economic and logistical barriers that prevent them from getting their children to school.

Within the promising practices related to positive school culture described above, students' sense of connectedness may also decrease attendance challenges.

Potential Next Steps:

As students with barriers to attendance are identified, the school and community can continue providing resources to mitigate these challenges and address root causes. Collecting data on these interventions and celebrating successes, as Armijo is adept at doing, will continue to build a school culture in which attendance is valued, resulting in increased student learning.

DOMAIN 3: INSTRUCTIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

To what degree is the school's instructional infrastructure in place, understood, and utilized by school leaders and teachers?

Promising Practices:

Both teachers and the principal reported Armijo has a strong instructional infrastructure in the form of instructional materials, teaching strategies, professional development, and teacher leadership. High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM), as well as strategies learned from Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) and Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD) were cited as supporting student learning.

Teacher leadership is encouraged through the Instructional Council, a group of teachers that meet and provide guidance for developing instructional priorities. Past priorities included vocabulary and writing assessments. Leveraging teacher expertise in this way improves transparency, faculty buy-in, and feelings of efficacy.

Teachers identified high-quality professional development as a source of support, and the principal supports common goals by ensuring new teachers get access to the same professional development as they join the team.

Positive indicators of instructional practices were seen during the site visit. These included student work displayed in the classrooms, positive classroom behavior, and teachers' use of strategies learned through professional development.

Opportunities for Growth:

Armijo is poised to build on their shared sense of mission and strong school community as they raise expectations for students. Students' behavior shows that they are ready for more challenging tasks, and the teachers' willingness to use AVID and GLAD strategies suggests that they, too, are ready to raise the level of instruction.

Potential Next Steps:

Teachers may benefit from support with collecting, analyzing, and responding to assessment data. Using short- and long-term data cycles can provide critical feedback to teachers about the extent to which students are mastering core standards. Established data cycles will allow teachers to adjust instruction immediately.

Leaders and coaches could also conduct observation and feedback instructional coaching around taxonomies (like Bloom's or Depth of Knowledge) as a means for teachers to reflect on current practices and scaffold students to reach mastery of grade-level standards.

DOMAIN 4: TALENT MANAGEMENT

To what degree does the school ensure effective teachers are hired, retained, developed, and leveraged to improve student outcomes?

Promising Practices:

Teachers highlighted Armijo's robust communication systems, weekly meetings, and protected time for collaboration. They meet weekly for strand and grade-level discussions and to engage in professional development opportunities. Shared leadership opportunities allow teachers to shape instructional goals, and the open-door policy established by school leaders is valued and appreciated by staff.

The teachers value site-based professional development opportunities, particularly when they can share best practices. Leveraging teacher expertise for professional development is a practice that values and retains effective teachers.

Opportunities for Growth:

Interview responses demonstrate Armijo's teachers feel comfortable sharing ideas with one another and with school administrators. As the school community continues through this improvement journey, increasing staff confidence and their ability to hold difficult but needed conversations with each other, leadership, and families would build upon these strong relationships to further meet the needs of all learners and raise the expectations for their success. Staff indicated the difficulty of having these conversations and would be open to guidance. Parents indicated that most conversations were warm but rarely included specifics about behaviors or learning. While the principal did not mention any difficult conversations with parents or staff around student learning, the transparency in other aspects of school leadership bodes well for the possibility of these conversations in the future.

Potential Next Steps:

Teachers and administrators may benefit from professional development on conducting difficult conversations and holding staff accountable for student performance. Various books and training are available for educators to learn and practice these skills.