School Support and Readiness Assessment
Summary Report

School: Ruidoso Middle School	**LEA:** Ruidoso
School Leader: Cecily Hooker	**LEA Leader:** George Bickert
SSRA Team Leader: Celeste Murray	**Date:** September 20, 2023

School Description

Ruidoso Middle School serves sixth to eighth-grade students, with enrollment typically between 380 and 400. Roughly 15% of students are classified as English language learners (EL). The dedicated work of the educators at Ruidoso is geared towards the following:

Ruidoso Middle School seeks to provide an environment where students will thrive and succeed in a rigorous academic curriculum to prepare for college and career readiness. RMS provides an environment where students persevere, strive for excellence, and contribute positively to our school and the community.

School Successes and Celebrations

The staff at Ruidoso Middle School are collectively engaged in using data to drive instruction; systems are in place to empower students to track their data, and classroom data is displayed around the school site. EL sixth-grade students have grown in English language arts (ELA) and math; seventh-grade EL students have grown in ELA.

A sense of positivity at Ruidoso is palpable. PBIS initiatives have reduced referrals and increased recognition of positive behaviors from students.

DOMAIN 1: CULTURE & EQUITY
To what degree has the school established equitable practices that ensure ALL students and staff have an opportunity to reach their full potential?

Promising Practices:

While there are many essential aspects of a school culture, a focus on equity is paramount to ensuring that all students have access to material that challenges them academically. The leadership team at Ruidoso Middle is focused on equity practices that assist in leveraging academic resources to address student needs.

Another aspect of the positive culture found at Ruidoso Middle is a culture of high performance. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) among the educator leaders are focused on data conversations and collaboration to push students to and beyond proficiency.

Throughout the interview process, it was clear that the educators were comfortable advocating for resources to support their students, such as replacing interims with the iReady assessment.

Students owning their data is a large part of the culture at Ruidoso. The hallways outside each classroom are decorated with content-related materials and data walls where students place themselves on target—demonstrating a connection with their learning. During parent-teacher conferences, students will lead conversations about their data.

Opportunities for Growth:

While a culture of achievement is evident at the school site, a lack of student voice is felt in the atmosphere. During lunch, students are required to face forward and are not encouraged to engage in social interactions with one another. PBIS rewards are determined by adult staff without student input. The SSRA team observed that the typical noises found in a middle school, such as talking in the hallways, talking at lunch, and collaborative noise coming out of classrooms, were absent. Through interviews, students communicated that they feel physically safe, a hallmark of positive culture, but also stated that they sometimes did not feel they could be themselves for fear of being judged.

Potential Next Steps:

The leadership team has a clear opportunity to lead staff in a pioneering effort to champion student voices. For students to excel, they must be empowered through social-emotional learning (SEL) practices and data-driven instruction.

DOMAIN 2: LEADERSHIP
To what degree does school leadership establish, communicate, support, and monitor schoolwide priorities?

Promising Practices:

Research demonstrates that effective leadership is leadership engaged at all levels of a systemic process. Principal Hooker and the leadership team at Ruidoso Middle School are actively involved in teacher-level PLCs where data is the center of the conversation. Teachers are empowered and feel validated by the opportunity to lead their colleagues in PLC work. There can be significant results when educators work together towards a common goal—student achievement.

Opportunities for Growth:

While there is a clear focus on, and a demonstrated deep understanding of, the student data, interviews surfaced a need to develop a more robust version of sheltering strategies among the educators at Ruidoso. All students are empowered to grow by centering instructional strategies

that support ELs, such as the C6 Biliteracy Framework or the Universal Design for Learning.

Potential Next Steps:

Prioritizing exposure to EL-focused professional development could be helpful for both the leadership team and the teacher leaders at the school. Throughout interviews, a wide variety of instructional strategies were evident. However, these strategies were teacher-selected and varied even within grade levels. Unifying grade-level teams behind a specific, intentionally selected set of instructional strategies can ensure a uniform expectation of achievement throughout the school.

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:

The Instructional Infrastructure comprises multiple components, or practices, related to the day-to-day goings on at the school site. It depends on functioning systems such as curriculum mapping, planning, data cycles, and Teacher Action Plans (TAPs). Some recent implementations at Ruidoso Middle School involve establishing routines at the beginning of every class through *Teach Like a Champion* (TLAC) and Kagan strategies.

Opportunities for Growth:

Many instructional strategies were observed throughout the interviews and walkthroughs; however, some educators expressed misunderstandings or a lack of direction concerning appropriate timing and use of specific instructional tools. It is clear that serious work has been done on the part of the leadership team at Ruidoso to implement and follow through on systems for data analysis; the next step is coaching teachers in more rigorous instruction.

Research demonstrates that student talk, particularly content-focused talk among peers, is crucial to classroom development regarding positive culture and academic excellence. With a hungry student body and teams of educators ready to push their students further, Principal Hooker and the leadership team have a real opportunity to capitalize on the existing systems to drive Ruidoso toward higher achievement.

Potential Next Steps:

It may be beneficial for teacher teams at the school to come together during PLC time to consider vertical alignment practices and scaffolded instruction. It is evident through the presence of math practice at the beginning of every class that there is communication and expectation from the leadership team regarding what occurs daily. With careful facilitation

from school leaders, conversations can occur regarding a deeper level of rigor for the student body at Ruidoso, whether that comes from teacher PD, prioritizing critical grade-level standards, or foregrounding a specific instructional practice.

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:

Uniting around a common goal and rallying behind a shared vision are ways to build unity and cohesion in a team. The staff at Ruidoso are engaged in yearly book studies. These studies aim to assist educators in developing their practice, unifying vision, and promoting collaborative conversations focused on positive practice.

Talent management is crucial in a school setting, especially in areas with high teacher turnover. Ruidoso Middle School's leadership team has effectively established a low turnover rate by promoting teacher leadership in PLCs and other settings. Additionally, school leaders must be able to identify and obtain the resources that schools need, namely staff. Recently, Ruidoso hired an educator from Mexico for the school's heritage program.

Opportunities for Growth:

Robust data systems for student growth tracking are only one piece of the puzzle regarding an effectively functioning school site. A leadership team must have a strong command of all systems. At Ruidoso, leaders might continue examining, developing, and uplifting teachers' instructional practices to promote more rigorous and differentiated instruction.

Potential Next Steps:

It may seem counterintuitive, but once a strong basis of trust is formed between a leader and an educator, courageous conversations can go a long way toward improving that educator's practice and the outcomes of their students. Because school days tend to be hectic, many school administrators find scheduling feedback sessions with teachers a few days in advance helpful. This protected time facilitates a one-on-one space where relationships can be built and leveraged for student growth and achievement.

DOMAIN 5: SUPPORT & ACCOUNTABILITY
To what degree do school leaders establish and communicate expectations, monitor progress, provide support, and hold staff accountable?

Promising Practices:

When a staff member feels supported and valued, it manifests through their attitude in the classroom and the general atmosphere in the school site. It was clear that the staff at Ruidoso Middle felt valued and supported. Throughout the interview process, it was demonstrated that when a teacher had a request, the leadership team worked toward a positive manifestation of that request. Systems of positive recognition, staff meals, and opportunities for shared leadership have resulted in a low turnover rate at the school site.

Opportunities for Growth:

The need to build upon an existing system does not mean the system in place is negative. No project or development can be followed through without the first steps. Teachers at Ruidoso Middle submit lesson plans regularly. School leadership might provide feedback on lesson plans not tied to formal or pop-in observation; this would continue to help staff feel supported and noticed.

Potential Next Steps:

There are many ways to increase engagement with teacher development of their practice. A consistent OFCC (Observation and Feedback Coaching Cycle) is the most explicit and effective support system. Feedback and implementation in the past have been based on the 90-day plan, and Principal Hooker has expressed a desire to return to this practice.