

School Support and Readiness Assessment Summary Report

School: Emerson Elementary School	LEA: Albuquerque Public Schools
School Leader: Renee Gallegos	LEA Leader: Scott Elder
SSRA Team Leader: Celeste Murray	Date: 9/26/23

School Description

Emerson Elementary School serves 302 students in kindergarten through fifth grade. The school serves a variety of student groups, including McKinney-Vento students, students who qualify for special education, students for whom English is an additional language, and dual language students. All students qualify for free or reduced lunch as a Title I school. The school is a TOPS school (Transformational Opportunity Pilot School) and has implemented Genius Hour to support student learning. The school opened in 1952 and has a long history of serving its community.

The Emerson Elementary Motto is:

Emerson Eagles SOAR!
 Safety first
 Organized and responsible
 Acting with compassion
 Respecting our community

School Successes and Celebrations

Principal Gallegos, the school staff, and the families all believe the students at Emerson Elementary are their greatest strength. All indicated that their work matters because the students matter to them. This work includes the intentionality with which the NM School DASH was developed and used to focus improvement efforts last year and the Instructional Council's collaborative efforts to identify six criteria all teacher lesson plans would include. The principal and the leadership team have also worked to improve the use of data to drive instruction. Staff who once shied away from data now engage students in data conversations and use it in their collaboration with peers. As a result, there have been gains in student achievement; particularly notable, students are making and maintaining growth rather than making gains and sliding backward.

It is also notable that families and students feel safe on campus. Staff and students indicated the school's focus on safety protocols and routines that have prepared them to respond to emergencies. Parents said they believed their children's safety and well-being were high priorities for the principal and staff, who recognize the varied needs of their families, the trauma many of them have experienced, and the importance of being a resource in the

community.

The school continues to work with community partners to provide necessities, like clothing, food, hygiene supplies, and housing/job resource assistance through the Eagles' Nest, and chaplains are on-site during the day if needed. Police and fire officials were invited to participate in the community fair they hosted last year. When families drop students off late, the principal reminds them of the importance of getting students to school on time while asking if there are obstacles, such as transportation, that the school can help address.

Additionally, the school has developed strong partnerships with the community, including working with three churches, hosting community resource events, and working with local chaplains to run the family resource room.

DOMAIN 2: LEADERSHIP

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

Promising Practices:

Principal Gallegos and her leadership team have consistently communicated expectations, established look-fors during their walkthroughs, and created accountability structures for feedback and follow-up conversations. The school follows the THRIVE ECLIPSE model when completing Observation, Feedback, and Coaching Cycles (OFCC) and determining teacher support. The team is calendaring eight walkthroughs a week based on need. The OFCC focuses on lesson plan availability and completion and has made notable improvements.

Opportunities for Growth:

Interviewees highlighted the positive impact of making the school's 90-day plan a focus area last year. Principal Gallegos also stated that the 90-day plan has been a focus area for her leadership team. She stated that previous administrators did not utilize the plan in the past, and teachers were unaware of the alignment between school and district goals. However, for various reasons, staff does not feel the same level of effort has been made to help them understand school-level priorities and goals this year. In some interviews, the staff attributed their lack of awareness to the CSI designation and how it may impact the school. In other instances, interviewees cited the lack of training required to implement priorities in the 90-day plan, such as small group instruction and understanding the curriculum maps.

During the site visit, the team heard evidence of frustration, fatigue, and staff burnout. Interviewees spoke of the trauma students and their families have encountered, resulting in increased student needs and, sometimes, inappropriate behavior. This frustration and fatigue seem to create a culture of blame, finger-pointing, and negative perceptions between teachers and leaders at Emerson. Finding a balance between supporting staff and holding them accountable while maintaining a positive and productive culture is challenging for all leaders,

especially in a school that requires transformation.

Potential Next Steps:

Principal Gallegos is aware of the adverse school culture challenges identified by Emerson’s teachers and leaders and has taken steps to address this challenge. She stated she had implemented trauma-informed practices during staff meetings, such as a warm welcome and optimistic closure. She has also begun emphasizing step one, Praise, in the Six Steps OFCC model. Principal Gallegos has videotaped one of her OFCC conversations and shared it with the THRIVE ECLIPSE facilitator and participants in an OFCC training during the 2022-23 school year. She states this work has improved the school’s teaching practices and data conversations and that students have shown growth. Finding additional opportunities to recognize growth and improvement in teaching in a manner Principal Gallegos feels is aligned with her leadership philosophy and core values would be recommended.

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:

Throughout SSRA interviews, staff cited numerous improvements in Emerson’s instructional infrastructure during the last two years. One major accomplishment was the staff’s collaboration last year to identify six criteria to be included in all lesson plans. These include the standard, objective, scope and sequence, differentiation, student activity, and closure (review or assessment). The team also heard improvements such as using more exit slips and informal evaluations, monthly assessment data used to identify small groups, improved data conversations during collaboration meetings, and increased expectations for English Language Learners and students receiving Special Education services, to name a few.

Opportunities for Growth:

Principal Gallegos and the Emerson staff have made great strides in improving their instructional infrastructure. Moving forward, there seems to be a need to support and address the inappropriate student behaviors preventing teachers from implementing these systems and structures in their classrooms. There is also an opportunity to address adult behaviors negatively impacting progress in this area. This is common in transformation schools, and the school leadership is aware of the challenge.

Potential Next Steps:

Continue efforts to recruit and hire a behavior specialist.

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:

Recently hired a teacher from Spain to support the bilingual program. After formal evaluations, leadership reaches out to the Transformational Coach and others in the school (like Tesol support) to identify teacher needs and initiate support.

Interviews talked about the new hire being a win for the school. Support providers can reach out and support teachers around the areas identified.

Opportunities for Growth:

Many staff members feel that coaching sessions are approached from a directive stance rather than a coaching stance. From an outside perspective, it would be difficult to determine which stance is most appropriate for teachers who were interviewed. We would highlight and remind coaches and administrators to be aware of and utilize the PSB Coaching Continuum offered in the initial THRIVE ECLIPSE convening. This protocol can help guide coaching conversations and ensure coachees receive the required support.

Principal Gallegos also identified the importance and need for differentiating professional development for teachers with various levels of expertise and experience.

Potential Next Steps:

Principal Gallegos understands there is a need for professional development in restorative practices. However, TOPs schools are unable to access the five professional development days other non-TOPs schools receive. She is petitioning the district for this support but has hit many obstacles. In the interim, she plans to offer support at her school but is aware of the challenges extending the school day presents.

DOMAIN 5: SUPPORT & ACCOUNTABILITY

To what degree do school leaders establish and communicate expectations, monitor progress, provide support, and hold staff accountable?

Promising Practices:

School leadership has increased accountability and expectations for teachers this year. Interviewees stated that previous administrators did not hold staff accountable and that higher standards this year have improved instructional expectations, such as data conversations and the availability of lesson plans, to name a few. To ensure effective collaboration time and not a venting session, school leadership requires teams to submit collaboration minutes that can be

reviewed and documented. Additionally, the school has increased expectations for small-group instruction and progress monitoring.

Opportunities for Growth:

Staff noted the need for more professional development and support for small group instruction, a school-level priority in the school’s 90-day plan. There may also be a need for training and support in the use of trauma-informed practices.

Due to challenges such as an extended day for TOPs, a lack of substitute teachers, and information detailing district professional development offerings and times, teachers have struggled to attend district-level professional development opportunities. There seems to be a strong desire for additional support and training, particularly for learning additional strategies for addressing student behaviors in the classroom.

As the leadership team continues to set and monitor school-level expectations, there seems to be an opportunity to increase positive recognition and short-term celebrations for staff. One way to improve in this area could be by ensuring the leadership team provides appropriate “praise” when delivering OFCC feedback. This is the first and one of the most essential steps in the Six-Step Process when planning and providing effective feedback.