

School Support and Readiness Assessment Summary Report

School: Los Lunas Elementary School	LEA: Los Lunas
School Leader: Matt Pendrak	LEA Leader: Ryan Kettler
SSRA Team Leader: Celeste Murray	Date: September 28, 2023
School Description	
<p>Los Lunas Elementary School is a Title I school serving 464 students, 21 of whom are designated as English language learners, and 10% of students qualify for special education services. The school has seen a significant increase in enrollment this year.</p> <p>At Los Lunas, the mission is <i>to ensure high levels of learning for all.</i></p> <p>The vision is as follows: <i>Los Lunas Elementary is a learning community committed to preparing students both academically and socially.</i></p>	
School Successes and Celebrations	
<p>Leadership and staff at Los Lunas see community involvement as their greatest strength. The school motto is "We are the heart of Los Lunas." The school uses several routes to engage parents, including Fall Fest, Courtyard of Lights, Family Dance, Color Run, Mud Run, Special Olympics, and monthly PBIS assemblies to which parents are invited.</p> <p>Soon, the school will start monthly homework dinners where families are provided dinner and then support in helping students with their classwork. Teachers will be paid to support the effort. Sessions will be 45 minutes, so parents can attend several if they have more than one student at the school. The Title I meeting in November will include a dinner, and data will be presented; the school would like to do it again in the spring to show growth from the beginning to the middle of the year.</p> <p>The school is an Apple school. There are only three in the state of New Mexico. This designation means all staff members are trained to use Apple products and are observed and coached in using technology in the classroom. Each student at Los Lunas is also provided an iPad.</p>	

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:

One of the greatest strengths mentioned in most interviews is the consistency of leadership in hiring Mr. Pendrak as the principal. He was the Assistant Principal (AP) previously, knows the school, and has built trusting relationships with staff and families. His promotion allows the school to remain focused on the growth that started while he was an AP. This continuity has created a sense of a steady helm leading the school. The only concern with this move in leadership is that he will no longer be the AP.

Another promising practice for Los Lunas Elementary is their dedication to creating a culture of connected, collaborative relationships between staff members and the families and community. Those interviewed described the school as a family. Staff care deeply about their students, and the students adore their teachers. The building of this community-based connection is intentional. The school offers families various ways to participate in their children's education, from fun events to opportunities to support student academic growth, such as homework dinners, meetings in which student achievement data is shared, and PBIS assemblies.

There is a feeling of kindness the moment you walk into the building. The office staff ensures families are welcomed into the school, and staff feel the support of the principal checking in on them. As a result, families feel comfortable asking questions and getting involved, and staff reach out to each other to share ideas and ask for support when needed.

Opportunities for Growth:

One opportunity for Los Lunas Elementary is to increase the school's use of data with students. Interviews revealed that teachers use data for grade-level collaboration and to inform their instruction; research indicates that this practice increases student outcomes. There is an opportunity for teachers to help students understand their data, track it, and know what is needed to improve. During walkthroughs, there was evidence that one classroom teacher tracked data and made it visible to students, but students were not monitoring their data. Interviews suggest that some teachers have informal data chats with students, and when asked about having students track data, some interviewees stated, "We used to do that." Research shows student growth increases in schools where data is part of the culture: it is understood by staff, families, and students.

Many who were interviewed addressed the need for reduced classroom teacher-to-student ratios and increased professional development for supporting students with accommodations. Because of the student caseload, the special education department cannot support students with individual education plans (IEPs) in general education classes. Teachers are concerned that this impacts the learning of the student needing the extra support and the class as a whole. Many interviewees spoke to the need for more professional development on meeting the needs of

students with IEPs in the general education setting, particularly in behavior management. The desire for professional development also appeared in interviews with Special Educators. When all teachers increase their mastery of key instructional strategies, all students benefit— instructional supports that help neurodiverse students achieve also support neurotypical students.

Potential Next Steps:

The leadership team might contact another school/administrative team that does student-led data monitoring well. There is an opportunity to deliver professional development based on requests and concerns from teachers. When educators have choice in the PD, they are more likely to implement what they learn.

DOMAIN 2: LEADERSHIP

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

Promising Practices:

The school's use of The Winning Recipe, a district initiative to support the writing of meaningful learning objectives, is one promising practice that surfaced during the site visit. This format for writing learning objectives ensures that teachers and students are clear on a lesson's outcome. These objectives are posted in student-friendly language, including "I can" or "We can" statements that meet SMART goal criteria. Additionally, Winning Recipe objectives are expected as part of a teacher's lesson plan, ensuring that leadership can offer teachers feedback. In interviews, examples of this expectation were shared. It was clear that the principal maintains accountability and support for teachers to learn how to write more robust Winning Recipe objectives.

The Winning Recipe objective is just one criterion for teachers' lesson plans at Los Lunas Elementary. The school has agreed on specific elements lesson plans must include, and Principal Pendrak has purchased a subscription to online lesson plan support. Teachers are not required to follow a particular template. They are expected to upload their lesson plan into a Google form every Friday. This process allows the principal to review and offer feedback and support. Most teachers interviewed mentioned the positive feedback they received, which is a meaningful way to build a supportive, collaborative community that is more receptive to constructive feedback.

Opportunities for Growth:

An opportunity for growth in this domain may be focusing future professional development sessions on engaging instructional strategies. There is an opportunity to increase the understanding of layered instruction (as associated with MLSS). Most instruction was administered to the whole class during classroom walkthroughs, with a mixture of student

engagement and attention levels. There was a high ratio of teacher talk compared to student talk, and many checks for understanding gathered data with potential high error rate (such as asking students to identify their level of understanding through thumbs up or down).

A pattern emerged from the interviews: teachers feel the need to move quickly, impacting their ability to do a scaffolded release of responsibility—moving from I Do to You Do without the We Do practice. Also, interviews revealed a lack of district-provided professional development that met individual teacher needs. Many shared the sentiment that it's one-size-fits-all and covers things from staff meetings. Helping teachers develop a variety of engagement and checks for understanding strategies will improve instruction. Developing strategies that fit one's teaching style will increase the likelihood that a teacher will use the techniques they learn.

Potential Next Steps:

The leadership team could add engagement and differentiation strategies (such as small group and student-to-student interactions and opportunities for more student talk versus teacher talk) when planning future professional development sessions. These strategies might also be discussed and planned for in professional learning communities (PLCs).

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:

This year, the school has focused on vocabulary to improve student outcomes. Their deep dive into data to uncover a root cause for their NM School DASH plan indicated that students struggle with testing due to the vocabulary used in the questions and the texts. Teachers intentionally increase the direct teaching of specific vocabulary and use it throughout their instruction. For example, teachers found that in questions that asked students to draw conclusions, they did not understand what they were asked to do, even if they understood the word "conclusions." The term "draw" here does not mean to create an image, which is the common meaning most students understand when reading the word. Interviews and walkthroughs found evidence of the focus on vocabulary instruction.

Opportunities for Growth:

Systematizing or refining current systems are potential areas for growth. The school has PLCs and vertical teaming; developing norms or expectations for these collaborative meetings could increase the positive outcomes they create. Likewise, the school is engaging in data analysis currently, but deepening the focus to include daily, formative, or lead indicator data and extending the use of data to students could make this practice part of the culture of the school and strong support for working on goals and improving student achievement. Finally, developing a system of observation, feedback, and coaching, where praise is paired with

opportunities for teacher growth, would build on the collaborative culture developed at this school. Small, bite-sized steps toward improvement in each classroom would create sustainable change that builds upon itself.

Potential Next Steps:

The leadership team might create opportunities or touch points for training general education teachers to support students with IEPs. Building on the success of the school's data-driven culture, they might continue to track the progress of and further refine whole-school initiatives.