School Support and Readiness Assessment
Summary Report

School: Gattis Middle School	**LEA:** Clovis Municipal School District
School Leader: Lori Gammill	**LEA Leader:** Renee Russ
SSRA Team Leader: Celeste Murray	**Date:** October 12, 2023

School Description

Gattis Middle School is a large campus serving approximately 565 students. It has an English Learner population of 41 students and 61 students who qualify for special education services. Gattis also serves a large military student group of 101. The school's principal started as a Safe and Healthy School Coordinator six years ago. After three years, she became an assistant principal for a year and is now in her second year as the principal. Gattis has a highly qualified and motivated staff dedicated to a common vision and committed to excellence with integrity and presence.

The mission of Gattis Middle School is *to build a strong educational foundation for life-long learning through character building and critical thinking, in a technologically rich environment in partnership with family and community*.

The school's motto is *Vision, Integrity, Presence.*

School Successes and Celebrations

Interviews identified the school principal as one of the school's successes and celebrations. Her longevity with the school has allowed her to step into the leadership role with an understanding of the school's strengths, culture, and needs. Transitioning from assistant principal (AP) to principal was described as continuing a steady helm. Staff indicated her leadership holds them to high expectations while helping them feel safe and supported. They feel comfortable admitting the need for support or having questions.

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:

Gattis Middle recently underwent a significant change and has emerged as a cohesive and positive model for inclusion. A 6th-grade academy was created, housed in another building. As a result, some staff moved from Gattis to the academy. At the same time, another middle school was closed, and the 7th and 8th grade students and many of its staff members joined the Gattis

campus. The transition has gone well. Gattis worked to make the new students and staff feel welcome. As a result, most interviews described the staff as working well together and ensuring no one feels they must do this important work alone.

The school uses Capturing Kids' Hearts, a transformational process focused on social-emotional well-being, relationship-driven campus culture, and student connectedness. This curriculum has helped with classroom and school behavior management. Rooms also have social contracts created and signed by students. In addition, the school identifies a word of the week for classrooms to discuss and identify when students are living up to the word, and it uses four questions before students are sent out of a classroom for behavior, which has drastically reduced office referrals.

Opportunities for Growth:

While the culture between adults is a strength, the relationships between some teachers and students and student-to-student present opportunities for growth. Interviews and the focus groups indicated that while physical safety is not an issue, emotional and academic safety are not as well developed. The interviews revealed that some students feel like they should not ask for help or indicate a lack of understanding after teachers provide content through lectures. Some teachers display irritation and frustration when asked for help. There is also fear of being made fun of by peers when mistakes are made. Some interviews also indicated issues with bullying and how teachers attempt to address it (talking with both students about reported incidents) can lead to further bullying; many students choose not to report incidents.

Potential Next Steps:

Principal Gammill plans to address school climate issues through a multi-pronged approach. First, she will structure the school week to include extended time in the 5th period to conduct SEL lessons on Friday. Second, she is working to enhance student leadership, belonging, and voice. A student ambassadors program has been established, and a student council is slated to start later this year. By including students in the decision-making processes at the school and providing a means for them to provide feedback, she can ensure that essential student concerns are identified and addressed.

Principal Gammill takes ownership of the mishandling of student concerns about bullying and plans to educate her staff on more appropriate ways to respond. That is something in their control. Likewise, she plans to directly address teachers who create shame in students for asking questions. She also wants to coach teachers in acknowledging when they make mistakes. While some of this feedback might be challenging for teachers, Principal Gammill has created a safe environment and gained teachers' trust through her long tenure there.

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

Promising Practices:

Research shows that pairing students who need more academic support with experienced, effective teachers increases student outcomes. At Gattis, English Learners are supported by a strong, experienced, nationally board-certified teacher. Interviews spoke to the impact of this choice, and observation data indicated the strength of knowledge and strategies supporting the students.

Opportunities for Growth:

Most interviews with staff indicated a belief that poor attendance by students was significantly impacting student outcomes. While there are cases of chronic absenteeism within the school, and students identified as chronically absent are missing crucial instruction, the data on attendance does not support this theory. The school's percentage of chronically absent students does not equal the percentage of students not meeting proficiency (i.e., the school's percentage of students reaching proficiency is less than 50 percent, but the data indicates that far fewer than 50 percent of students are chronically absent. This mismatch suggests that many students who are present are not meeting grade-level mastery). One might expect these numbers to align more closely if chronic absenteeism were closely linked to poor performance.

When students perform poorly on year-end assessments, teachers can become frustrated by factors outside their control as educators. Rather than attributing low percentages of students attaining proficiency on year-end assessments solely to attendance, teachers might be better served by reframing the issue.

Potential Next Steps:

Principal Gammill has plans to share the attendance data with staff. For the last three weeks, attendance data has been over 90%. This data directly contradicts many teachers' overattributing of chronic absenteeism to poor proficiency on end-of-year exams. She plans to disrupt the narrative and reframe the issue.

Rather than focusing on chronic absenteeism, teachers can focus on the aspects of school culture that are within their control. As they work to create a more welcoming atmosphere for students to feel safe taking academic risks and asking questions, they might continue to solicit student and parent feedback. Efforts to include students in leadership roles are one step in this direction, as is Principal Gammill's commitment to directly addressing teachers who create an unsafe learning environment.

Most teachers at Gattis are working well together; as Principal Gammill supports teachers in changing their focus from factors outside of their control to instructional practices and SEL check-ins that are within their control, she might also leverage the expertise of teachers who

have created safe, welcoming classroom environments. When teachers share the same students and learn what works in one classroom, they can shift their views of students and refocus on effective strategies.

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:

Issues in staffing led to using a push-in support model for students receiving special education services. As a result, special education students are getting more access to grade-level content. In many ways, this increases equity for special education students.

Additionally, there is an increased focus on data at the school. Teachers participate in bi-weekly data talks, which administrators attend. Teachers are becoming comfortable making their data transparent and using it to reteach needed concepts or adjust upcoming lessons. Students are tracking data and having data chats with their teachers. Students also set goals and do reflections before and after tests.

Opportunities for Growth:

Interviews and walkthroughs noted the struggle English Learners have with practicing speaking. Students were described as timid, particularly for testing and in front of each other. Testing data corroborates students are struggling with speaking.

Potential Next Steps:

While the teachers at Gattis did not all train for an inclusion model, they can be educated in building more opportunities for student talk into their lessons. Some teachers are recording themselves for English learners. While this provides an additional tool for language learners to access the content, there is an identified need for students to produce academic language. As Principal Gammill sets the instructional priorities for the school, focusing on student voice – in and out of the classroom, continues to emerge as a theme.

When students do not speak in class, it is easy to assume that they are "timid," but structured academic conversations – with sentence frames and protocols for equitable conversation time, can help teachers reframe this challenge and support all students in practicing their speaking skills. For language learners, this type of scaffolded speaking support also provides a template for the written production of language. All students are learners of academic language, and they learn through repeated practice in a safe, low-stakes environment.

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:

To better support teachers, leadership uses teacher leaders and model classrooms as a resource. Teachers can go into the two identified classrooms for peer observations, and the teacher leaders are available to share resources and strategies when teachers want support.

Interviews indicated that lesson plans get submitted weekly, and feedback is provided. Administrators also look at lesson plans when they visit classrooms for walkthroughs. Administrators are getting into classrooms for walkthroughs and feedback. Evidence also indicates a system is in place to track when classrooms are visited. They use Google Sheets to track observation frequency, and teachers have been identified for weekly, biweekly, and monthly support.

Opportunities for Growth:

There is an opportunity to improve growing teachers through observation, feedback, and coaching cycles (OFCCs). This year started strong, but due to a member of leadership moving to a position elsewhere in the district, there has been a disruption. Most lesson plan and walkthrough feedback is given as a "wow and a wonder." Still, the wonders were described as suggestive in nature rather than coaching that allows teachers to develop answers for themselves while improving their reflective practice. The principal acknowledges that she would like to be more consistent with calendaring and offering feedback face-to-face.

Potential Next Steps:

The initiative to increase peer observations is new – Principal Gammill just started pushing staff this month to observe teacher leaders as model classrooms. She identified this as her big push this year, and it is part of her goal for face-to-face feedback and coaching. This practice supports and grows teachers while also preparing teacher leaders for leadership roles.

As Gattis continues to integrate the teachers who moved over from the other school site, peer observations increase the frequency of formal and informal collaboration. As Principal Gammill rolls out new instructional priorities to help more students gain proficiency and track their progress on formative assessments, these observations are a tool for peer accountability and peer support. As teachers continue to shape the aspects of classroom culture they control, these observations can be a powerful reminder of what is possible in the same building with the same students. Where one teacher has success, all can learn.