

School Support and Readiness Assessment Summary Report

| | |
|--|--|
| School: Catherine A. Miller Elementary School | LEA: Gallup-McKinley County Schools |
| School Leader: Kristopher Latson | LEA Leader: Mike Hyatt |
| SSRA Team Leader: Bernadette Ellis | Date: October 25, 2023 |
| School Description | |
| <p>Catherine A. Miller Elementary School serves 270 students in grades pre-kindergarten through five. 49% of the students are designated as English language learners, and 7% qualify for special education services. The school has 95% American Indian enrollment, higher than the 79% average of Hispanic and American Indian students in New Mexico. The school employs 15 full-time teachers (two for each core subject) and a dean. The student-teacher ratio of 18:1 is higher than New Mexico's average, which is 14:1.</p> <p>The home language for most of the students at Catherine A. Miller is Navajo. The school supports them in learning their home language and offers a Navajo language and culture class.</p> <p>Principal Latson moved from Dallas, TX, to Gallup, NM, to take the principal position in July 2023. He has 17 years of experience in education. He has been a Special Education teacher, an English Learner Specialist, and a high school Assistant Principal. His areas of specialty include working with students who have autism, students who are English learners, and students who are English learners with disabilities. Principal Latson describes himself as having a growth mindset; he appreciates feedback to improve student success.</p> <p>Catherine A. Miller Elementary School's Vision: <i>Students experience continued success based upon a growth mindset instilled by our effective teachers.</i></p> <p>The School's Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase student achievement utilizing checks for understanding and engagement strategies. ● Utilize the gradual release model (I Do, We Do, You Do) to collect formative data to maximize layer one instruction and corrective teaching. ● Utilize small group instruction and backward planning to support student-centered learning. | |

School Successes and Celebrations

Catherine A. Miller distinguishes itself with an invested faculty and modern facilities. The school has a high teacher retention rate, having only two new teachers this school year. The school provides a good core of instruction that balances the local community; as stated in interviews, "Our teachers can relate to the community because they reflect the students." The facility is new, students have access to technology, and they have common spaces that teachers can use with their students. There are interactive screens and manipulatives available for 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:

Catherine A. Miller benefits from high teacher retention and teacher diversity. Multiple interviews evidenced teachers working at the school for a long time, with only two new teachers this school year. Several teachers represent the students they serve, and there is a diversity of teachers, with teachers from the surrounding Gallup community and teachers from other countries. There is a high degree of respect, rapport, and strong relationships among the teachers, as was evidenced in multiple interviews.

Teachers were observed to be friendly and happy to be in the environment and willing to ask for help and help each other. Additionally, there is support for Navajo language and culture learning; a dedicated class and a fully fluent teacher serve 140 students daily for 45 minutes.

Opportunities for Growth:

There is an opportunity to encourage teacher engagement so that all feel safe, supported, and valued as trained educational professionals. Multiple interviewees cited staff feeling overwhelmed and stressed. Many would like formal and informal opportunities to share feedback with school and district leadership. As district-wide pacing and accountability measures are communicated, there is an opportunity to enlist teachers' expertise in implementing them.

There is an opportunity to reinforce the idea that assessments are built for development rather than judgment. Teachers, like students, benefit from this type of growth mindset. Multiple interviews evidenced teachers who comply with district and school mandates. Teachers want to maintain the joyful parts of learning to enhance student engagement. Coaching them in differentiation strategies and rigorous teaching would support existing engagement strategies.

Potential Next Steps:

Principal Latson plans to convene his leadership team and invite all teachers to participate. He plans to listen to their voices and concerns, trusting that his staff will come to the table with suggestions for making learning fun and engaging. He also knows that his faculty can use data to disaggregate student learning outcomes. His staff will be able to respond to this data by planning rigorous instruction to improve student outcomes.

Change can take time in a school with many long-term teachers and a new leader. Principal Latson is wise to enlist the feedback of his faculty while remaining committed to pacing guides to ensure students have access to grade-level instruction. As the school refines its data-driven assessments and observation and feedback cycles, Principal Latson can build trust and capacity by remaining open to dialogue.

DOMAIN 2: LEADERSHIP

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

Promising Practices:

Principal Latson has taken responsibility for providing leadership for Catherine A. Miller Elementary School, having moved from Dallas, TX, to Gallup, NM, and from the secondary to the elementary level. Multiple interviews evidenced that the principal has a high degree of knowledge and experience and brings a sense of urgency to school improvement.

The school's leadership is implementing the district's curricular expectations. Principal Latson provides leadership for the school community with the understanding that teachers must stay on pace to ensure that students have access to all academic standards. All interviews, as well as observations of classroom instruction, evidenced the implementation of backward planning through the district-provided Year-at-a-Glance (YAG), school-created Week-at-a-Glance (WAG), Professional Learning Committees, use of weekly formative assessments, and support of Empower consultants. There are structures and systems in place to scaffold teacher practice.

Opportunities for Growth:

Balancing the roles of coach and evaluator can be challenging when implementing district and state expectations. Principal Latson can support school transformation by building positive relationships with staff and the community to facilitate cohesiveness. As mentioned in the first domain, Principal Latson plans to invite teachers to the table to hear their concerns and solicit their ideas for meeting the needs of all learners.

As Principal Latson meets with teachers, they must be heard and respected; some might need affirmation. Beyond these social and emotional supports, some teachers have voiced the need for resources and time. Some staff require additional seating, tables, and chairs; others report budgetary needs; others need time to collaborate with colleagues; and some need time to accomplish requested expectations. Staff would like planning and collaboration time to be prioritized, focused, and protected. Multiple interviews specifically addressed teacher planning

time being impacted by after-school duties and collaboration time being affected by talk time versus task time.

Additionally, there is an opportunity to provide parent and family engagement events and improve communication efforts with parents and the community about school processes and staffing. Interviews emphasized the oral nature of Navajo communication. To fully involve the school community, the school can host more frequent in-person events and meetings.

Potential Next Steps:

Continue to allow uninterrupted time every morning for preparation. Principal Latson changed the weekly schedule recently to give Friday time back. There is also a need to have preparation time that is protected, except for feedback sessions that are held with teachers. Principal Latson will look at ways to provide opportunities for special education, specials (Art, PE), etc., to collaborate with general education and core teachers.

Principal Latson plans to implement a "customer service" action plan. He wants to provide opportunities for staff on Thursdays to allow for relationships, communication, sharing, etc. By normalizing and prioritizing the teachers' voices, Principal Latson may help break down any pre-existing barriers to his tenure. Sometimes, teachers can be wary of new leaders and new initiatives. Communication and open dialogue help reach common ground.

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:

As indicated in multiple interviews, there is a clear focus on providing layer one instruction utilizing the gradual release model at Catherine A. Miller Elementary School. The school and teachers at all levels follow the district-aligned scope and sequence. The school's teachers engage in ongoing, weekly data dives that drive their planning. Multiple interviews evidenced the use of weekly formative assessments, scheduled intervention time, and the expectation for reteaching based on exit tickets. Teachers have a strong foundation and will benefit from continued support in scaffolding formative assessments and providing layer two instruction to meet the needs of their students.

Opportunities for Growth:

Teachers at Catherine A. Miller are mindful of wanting to teach in a culturally and academically responsive way. They are requesting the option to be creative in their lesson planning and respectful of seasonally specific timing of content related to Navajo culture, including some sacred events. As the school implements the district pacing guide, some teachers may need support in transitioning to this model while also including some aspects of

curricula that they have found successful. Ideally, they can do both.

One way to meet all learners' needs is to differentiate intentionally and scaffold lessons. Teachers voiced that some students have faced traumatic events, such as departing family members, and that many are language learners. Culturally affirming materials and attention to social-emotional learning needs are a solid complement to appropriately challenging grade-level content. The formative assessments and data cycles implemented at the school will help teachers identify and isolate the knowledge, skills, and understandings students need to meet grade-level standards. The texts and activities they use to get students to that goal may differ, allowing for greater creativity and autonomy.

As teachers continue to learn the scope and sequence of the pacing guide, they may also benefit from support in understanding the vertical alignment within the state standards. Some standards build toward later skills, and knowing how they build from one year to another can help ensure continuity between classes and grade levels. This knowledge also helps teachers become more confident when choosing texts and activities to accelerate future learning or reinforce prior learning. Opportunities for student choice and autonomy within the scope of grade-level standards will also enhance these efforts.

Potential Next Steps:

Principal Latson plans to bring teachers' concerns to the CLT (Campus Leadership Team). He plans to have meetings to discuss expectations and allow teachers to expand and take ownership of the instructional leadership of their classrooms.

Principal Latson is aware that the way a message is communicated can impact the way it is received and plans to work on delivering expectations thoughtfully. He wants to help teachers feel free to share their feelings and ideas. Regarding grade-level standards and district and state pacing guides, teachers need to be in alignment. This alignment ensures equity of access to grade-level standards and strengthens teachers' collaboration ability.

Principal Latson plans to celebrate Native Heritage in November. As part of this recognition, he will encourage teachers to choose culturally relevant texts that align with the district's Year-at-a-Glance while also honoring students' heritage.