

School Support and Readiness Assessment Summary Report

School: Gallup Central Alternative High School	LEA: Gallup McKinley County Schools
School Leader: Kristi Del Curto	LEA Leader: Mike Hyatt
SSRA Team Leader: Celeste Murray	Date: October 25, 2023
School Description	
<p>Gallup Central High School is Gallup's alternative high school. In total, 120 students attend courses on campus. However, many other high schools in the district send students to the campus for career pathway classes. The enrollment for GCHS is 43 students. Four of these students are identified for receiving special education support, and about 75% are English learners. Most of the school's students are adults aged 18-20. Few freshmen are enrolled; most students attend a comprehensive high school first. The school is a Title I school, with eight teachers on staff, one special education inclusion teacher, and one counselor. Principal Del Curto started with the school last April and has been with the district for four years.</p>	
School Successes and Celebrations	
<p>Gallup Central High School is amid tremendous change. The two career pathways offered, Culinary Arts and Carpentry, will soon have improved spaces to work. The school is working toward opening a competition kitchen and a restaurant. The goal is for culinary students to prepare meals that can be served restaurant-style (where customers place orders) for families with particular housing situations, senior citizens, and veterans, all of whom will receive meals without cost. There are already paid internships for both programs, and students take a business class to understand that aspect of the work. Additionally, students can earn food handling permits and OSHA certificates to aid in applying for jobs in the community.</p> <p>To fund the growth of the programs, the school applied for and was awarded an Innovation Zone Grant, a Community Schools Grant, and School Improvement funds.</p>	
DOMAIN 1: CULTURE & EQUITY	
<p><i>To what degree has the school established equitable practices that ensure ALL students and staff have an opportunity to reach their full potential?</i></p>	
Promising Practices:	
<p>The most significant promising practice surfaced was the welcoming culture students experience at the school, particularly in the career pathway courses. The student focus groups, which included students attending the career classes and those attending all GCHS classes,</p>	

indicated they felt respected, valued, welcomed, and loved on the campus. Interviews with staff made it clear that creating such a learning environment for students was intentional. Building a community of belonging that fosters socioemotional well-being was stressed as the school's primary focus.

Opportunities for Growth:

Students shared a diminished sense of belonging in the core subject classrooms compared to the career pathway courses. Interviewees mentioned that core subjects feel more chaotic. Students felt some teachers allow some students to disrupt the learning of the class, and in interviews with staff, this was corroborated. Some shared examples of asking students to put phones away and students refusing. However, they indicated students usually apologized afterward.

The school has done an excellent job of creating a culture that supports students' social-emotional well-being and has the potential to establish a similar level of support for an academic culture. Several interviewees said this directly, and when asked to expand, examples of lower expectations and a sense that the work was less meaningful or valuable beyond school emerged.

Potential Next Steps:

Principal Del Curto plans to build formal connections between and among career and academic courses through weekly planning and collaboration. School leadership will help remove real or perceived barriers between teachers by providing targeted time and structures for collaboration. When one group knows the expectations and practices of the other group, it helps all teachers communicate similar ideas and use similar language when working with students. This continuity between classes and grade levels contributes to students' feelings of safety, as they know what to expect. This feeling of security can also help prevent disruptive behaviors.

The school also plans to implement academic celebration nights to highlight student achievements. As the school expands its offerings and upgrades its facilities, these events provide an opportunity to showcase positive changes to families and the larger community. Students, teachers, and school leadership can begin to feel a sense of pride that their school is a destination rather than a place of last resort. The fact that they can host students from all different high schools who may not have experienced success in more traditional settings should be a point of pride.

DOMAIN 2: LEADERSHIP

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

Promising Practices:

Principal Del Curto is enthusiastic and excited by the potential future opportunities at the

school. Her district coach supports her in thinking outside the box to support students for whom traditional schooling has not worked, and she is utilizing available resources and finding others that would expand programs. Much of the school is currently in construction to improve the facilities, and Principal Del Curto is the one who sought the increase in funds to support the growth. Principal Del Curto believes the school meets the community's needs and shares this optimism with staff, students, and families.

Opportunities for Growth:

Interviewees revealed the need to strengthen communication structures. Staff who have experienced a high rate of leadership turnover do not feel they have engaged in the deep, meaningful, in-person talks with Principal Del Curto as they would like. The staff has prioritized making students feel respected and seen and is looking for similar implicit and explicit dialogue and a sense of value from their leader.

Potential Next Steps:

Becoming a school leader and taking the initiative to make much-needed changes and secure resources for a school can be challenging. Sometimes, it can be difficult to keep all the competing priorities straight. As Principal Del Curto broadens her scope of influence, she plans to organize priorities by making lists and developing a master calendar. This master calendar can then be posted so that real-time changes are up to date. There can be an internal version detailing meetings and an external one with community and family events. Sometimes, last-minute requests are unavoidable. As Principal Del Curto becomes more familiar with the rhythms of the school year at GCHS, she will no doubt also become more confident and apt at preparing her staff accordingly. Whenever possible, prioritizing their work-life balance will go a long way in ensuring mutual feelings of respect.

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 students in the focus group communicated that they feel they learn best and retain more of what is learned in the career pathways classes. When asked why, they said the classes are hands-on, result in transferable skills, and offer the opportunity to earn certificates. They also identified that career class teachers make connections to possibilities after high school. These teachers share careers related to the skills they are learning, schools that might offer degrees or certifications, and ways students could improve when working independently.

Opportunities for Growth:

Due to the difference between career classes and core subjects that students and parents described, three growth opportunities developed in Instructional Infrastructure. One is having the school look at ways to differentiate core subject instruction to meet student needs. Most students attending GCHS were not successful in traditional comprehensive high school settings. The same Year at a Glance (YAG) and scripted lessons are used across the district to ensure consistency for students transferring between the schools and equitable access to grade-level standards. At GCHS, students benefit from smaller class sizes, and the student and parent focus groups made it clear that hands-on learning is also highly beneficial. While maintaining fidelity to district and state priorities, teachers at GCHS can scaffold and differentiate their core instruction to meet the diverse needs of the students in their classes.

There was also a straightforward request from the student focus groups for additional pathway courses—suggestions included welding, automotive, cosmetology, and jewelry making. The school offers a heritage Navajo class; jewelry making would support the Diné learning standards.

The parent focus group had an innovative suggestion: Could career pathway instructors be used in a coach-like role? The way students talked about their career classes and teachers was reminiscent of how student-athletes often describe their athletic coaches. Configuring mentoring opportunities for pathway instructors to influence student improvement of core academic classes may be worth exploring.

Potential Next Steps:

Supporting teachers in instructional strategies and scaffolds will benefit all learners at GCHS. There is potential to leverage the success of career pathways by adopting some of the hands-on, applied tactics in core academic classes.

Teachers can begin scaffolding Reading Apprenticeship strategies into their classroom instruction.

The school and district leadership can continue to pursue new pathways for implementing additional course offerings.

There is an opportunity to link career and academic classes more concretely and help students make connections between the two. Collaboration between career and core teachers could strengthen the ties between these classes and enable teachers to use a shared vocabulary. This collaboration would also allow teachers to share strategies that work for specific students. Core classes can support the work of pathways classes, and pathways classes can help students meet grade-level standards.

DOMAIN 5: SUPPORT & ACCOUNTABILITY

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

Promising Practices:

Consistent, clear expectations for high-quality instruction help teachers prepare for their classes and develop new skills. At GCHS, lesson plan processes are established and followed. Interviews spoke to the expectations for what lesson plans must include, when they are due, and follow-up that has occurred during walkthroughs.

Opportunities for Growth:

One possible opportunity this school has is the rebranding of the school. There is a community impression of the school that is not favorable. The school has a history of being where students are sent for remediation. Having Principal Del Curto as the leader of GCHS, with her knowledge of the district and the support of her district coach, offers a chance to create an alternative school that students choose because a traditional high school experience is unfavorable. Rather than finding their way to the school after a frustrating start at a traditional high school, there is an opportunity to make CGHS their desired destination.

During interviews and walkthroughs, it was noted that there are various levels of implementation of the Gradual Release of Responsibility (I Do, We Do, You Do) strategy and structured student interaction. Both techniques were shared as instructional priorities for the school, but it was clear some teachers had not fully embraced or implemented these priorities.

Potential Next Steps:

Principal Del Curto and the instructional coach will continue to monitor instructional priorities through the walkthrough process. As these observations occur, school leaders can point out the positive effects of the instructional strategies to build a compelling rationale for the teachers to commit to adjusting their practice. Observers can be helpful sets of additional eyes in the classroom, recording students' interactions in small groups that teachers may not be privy to. Sometimes, teachers make instructional moves reflexively. Having other professionals collect data on these moves, script conversations, and provide a common language to describe what they are seeing can help new and veteran teachers understand the factors in their classrooms more deeply. Given this support, many teachers become more comfortable trying new strategies.

As the school has started a conversation about the importance of the Gradual Release of Responsibility and increased student interactions, both high-leverage instructional strategies, it is a promising focus to continue. As leaders develop the rationale for the key instructional strategies, provide teachers opportunities to deepen their knowledge, and create accountability measures through classroom walkthroughs, a schoolwide commitment to strong teacher performance will result in solid student performance.