

School Support and Readiness Assessment Summary Report

School: New America School	LEA: Albuquerque Public Schools
School Leaders: Executive Director: LaTricia Mathis Principal: Ileana Gallegos	LEA Leader: Scott Elder
SSRA Team Leader: Celeste Murray	Date: October 19, 2023
School Description	
<p>New America School in Albuquerque Public Schools serves around 200 students with Title I funds. About half of the student population speaks a language other than English at home, which means the school is rich in linguistic diversity and potential muliti-lingualism.</p> <p>The school's mission statement reads:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Our mission is to work as an educational community to empower and acknowledge the uniqueness of every learner by creating an individualized pathway to educational and social success.</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>High-Quality Instruction for English Language Learners through an intensive English Language Learner program.</i></p>	
School Successes and Celebrations	
<p>Possibly due to its small size, New America School can offer flexibility where students feel seen and heard. The structures in place to support student success include the following: rapid credit recovery programs for on-time graduation, enrichment classes for students to graduate early, a full range of curriculum courses in all core subjects, early release twice monthly for participation in clubs, free afterschool and Friday tutoring and credit recovery support, and career and college pathways with dual credit agreements.</p> <p>With such support, it is understandable that many are legacy students, meaning family members, often siblings or parents, attended the school. When a community is anchored by the school, pride, commitment, and responsiveness are positive attributes that work toward maintaining the school's best qualities and improving any opportunities for growth.</p>	
DOMAIN 1: CULTURE & EQUITY	
<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>	

Promising Practices:

Interviews described the collegial culture and climate of the school as intuitively nurturing and respectful. Some teachers feel surrounded by colleagues who can read each other well enough to offer support often before it is sought. Teachers are willing to fill in when needed, even if not told. It was repeatedly said that the staff quickly works together, building off one another. There is a strong sense of peer accountability as well. The potential energy is endless when teachers hold each other accountable for best practices, effective teaching, and necessary improvements.

Students at New America School feel seen, heard, valued, and supported by the adults in the school. Interviews celebrated the lack of bullying and how most students know each other. Students reported feeling comfortable to ask questions of the teachers and are not worried about making mistakes in front of peers. Students and teachers embrace a "culture of error" where mistakes are viewed as learning moments, and multiple opportunities are provided for students to get it right. Students indicated they feel seen, listened to, and valued. In classrooms with fewer than 20 students, they get time to work directly with teachers to build strong relationships.

Opportunities for Growth:

Although the commitment of support to each other is a celebration among teachers at New America, some teachers expressed concern that new staff members may need help beyond what their peers can offer. Many teachers would like to meet the needs of their new colleagues better, but they have very little time to do so, as being a teacher is demanding in numerous ways.

Potential Next Steps:

The school leaders are interested in designing an onboarding support system for new staff. One idea they have is to create a handbook to clearly articulate schoolwide expectations, procedures, and systems that are established in the school. Having a quick reference guide for new teachers is a valuable tool for initial questions.

DOMAIN 2: LEADERSHIP

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

Promising Practices:

A graduation specialist was hired to monitor senior progress toward graduation. She is affectionately referred to as the "Seniors' Mom." Having one person track this information is streamlining the process. As time allows, she is also reviewing transcripts and class grades of juniors. When necessary, a letter notifies the students and families that they are in danger of failing. When concerns are identified, the specialist engages students and their families to

reactivate a commitment to graduation, creating an individualized plan. Photos of students in their caps and gowns are posted in the hallways as motivation. The school leaders are often asking themselves how they may be more proactive for students to be on track to graduate.

Additionally, the Graduation Specialist is conducting historical research to identify the post-secondary status of graduated students. The school is looking for information on how they might better support graduates in career and college readiness. The school staff is committed to helping students even after they have graduated.

Lesson plans are due on Monday each week. Principal Gallegos indicated she reviews them to check the progress of the curriculum map and will occasionally provide a teacher feedback.

Opportunities for Growth:

Identifying key aspects of a quality lesson plan is critical for a school serving such a unique population. When teachers design lessons using the expected format and include high-leverage strategies, they must receive feedback about their planning. When teachers feel the need to submit plans is a compliance measure, not an opportunity to improve their planning and delivery, they may not put in the intentionality students need. Feedback from school leaders conveys the importance of planning related to student needs.

As the school already expects lessons to be handed in, there is an additional opportunity to develop instructional priorities schoolwide. Based on the school's data dive and root cause analysis, the school leaders can determine which instructional strategies are needed to provide consistency between classes and grade levels. Few interviewed could identify expectations for all classrooms when asked about instructional strategies and assessment expectations.

There seems to be a disconnect between school systems meant to alleviate additional responsibilities of classroom teachers. Such systems may increase the feeling of being overwhelmed rather than the intent to diminish. For example, a robust communication system is meant to bring clarity and ease in garnering information. However, two different email platforms are causing confusion and extra work for staff. Teachers need to respond to multiple email addresses to reach administrators.

Clear and timely communication was a theme in interviews. To minimize stress and confusion, expectations and necessary actions need to be presented with enough notice for clarification when needed and without creating undue stress.

Potential Next Steps:

The executive director and principal acknowledged there may be some misunderstanding about emails and plan to clarify processes with the staff. The school leaders determined that an IT person can create a direct email to one account for greater ease of communication.

The school leaders of New America are interested in identifying essential instructional strategies that will increase student learning. Hiring an instructional coach will be a critical move toward this goal. Once the instructional priorities are identified, the leaders understand the need to explicitly explain the expectations to the staff and provide professional learning. This intentional improvement to the lesson plan process will allow school leaders to provide meaningful feedback to teachers.

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:

Differentiation to meet student needs and grade-level lessons were observed in most classrooms. For example, in one lesson delivered using Google Classroom, differentiated instructions and texts were provided to various students without others noticing. The differentiation was seamless and practical.

When asked, teachers reported that cell phones were the biggest challenge for effective instruction. A plan to reduce distractions created by cell phone usage was presented to students, who generally showed support. A handful of teachers have already started implementing the initiative before the whole school rollout. During walkthroughs, students were putting phones into the classroom cases without resistance.

Opportunities for Growth:

While Edgenuity is the predominant platform for credit recovery, students shared concerns that it offers limited learning experiences. Specific frustrations about the length of videos, the amount of work, and how they can speed through the modules all result in a lack of learning. Identifying ways to supplement Edgenuity with face-to-face teaching, group work, or project-based learning may be helpful.

Having specific instructional priorities in all classrooms is critical for improving student outcomes. Gradual release of responsibility was briefly mentioned as a strategy teachers should implement. The student focus group and observations indicated most instruction was delivered with predominantly teacher voice and little student involvement, and then students worked independently. Clarity in expectations and professional learning to support the priorities are needed. Additionally, if school leaders initiate consistent classroom walkthroughs, they can look for the articulated instructional priorities to ensure schoolwide implementation and positively impact student learning.

Potential Next Steps:

Support and accountability, talent management, and instructional infrastructure all strengthen

when a system of Observation and Feedback Coaching Cycles (OFCCs) is established. Teachers noted that OFCCs provide teachers constructive feedback on their performance in a similar fashion that teachers provide students feedback. The school recently hired someone to manage student discipline, so the principal has more time in classrooms. This has not yet happened as much as leadership and staff would like. The principal will create a calendar for scheduling feedback sessions, which will require her to observe classrooms.