

School Support and Readiness Assessment Summary Report

School: Robert F. Kennedy Charter School	LEA: Albuquerque Public Schools
School Leader: Robert Baade	LEA Leader: Scott Elder
SSRA Team Leader: Celeste Murray	Date: October 31, 2023
School Description	
<p>Robert F. Kennedy Charter School sits in Albuquerque's south valley. As a community school, it provides three social workers to support students and families, includes a school-based health clinic, and has a child development center. RFK offers a variety of enrichment learning and extracurricular opportunities for the student body of roughly 370, including sports, sewing, welding, and citizenship classes. RFK is a Title I school that also offers a 50/50 bilingual program. 26% of the students at RFK are designated as English language learners, and 30% qualify for special education services.</p> <p>Their vision is as follows: <i>RFK is a school where you can engage in your chosen path toward secondary education or career in an environment that prepares, motivates, and supports you in partnership with your family.</i></p> <p>Their mission is as follows: <i>RFK prepares, motivates, and supports students to achieve their college and career goals in partnership with their families and the community.</i></p>	
School Successes and Celebrations	
<p>The school boasts various achievements and strengths, including providing dual credit opportunities in collaboration with Central New Mexico Community College, facilitating a seamless path to college. These opportunities include a cold metal transfer (CMT) teacher instructing welding on the RFK campus, a film class with rotating instructors to enhance student growth, and a culinary program where students are paid to work at the café and food truck. An early childhood program allows staff to utilize the facilities for just \$15 while students earn early childhood college credits.</p> <p>Furthermore, the school offers a bilingual seal program, with seven students earning this recognition in the previous academic year and fourteen students on track to achieve it in the current year. There are aspirations to extend this opportunity to the middle school in the future.</p> <p>The Guns to Gardens program represents an initiative that addresses the impact of gun violence on the school's community. This program combines healing, community service, and trade skill</p>	

development. Through this initiative, the school acquires unusable guns from various organizations, and students repurpose the parts to create beautiful and functional items, including musical instruments and ornamental pieces.

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:

The school has a robust focus on social-emotional learning (SEL) and relationships. These foci are evident in the school's profile of a graduate below:

Mindsets and Beliefs:

Our holistic health and well-being matters.

We keep trying, even when it's hard.

Everyone deserves and is capable of success.

We can make a difference in our community and the world.

The staff has prioritized understanding their students. They have worked with Dr. Sharoky Hollie for three years on culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and learning. Restorative justice practices, including connection circles, are used. Students have been empowered to initiate and run these practices as well. They also recognize teachers' power to express vulnerability and share passion with students. This work results in a school where respect between teachers, teachers and students, and students is evident everywhere. Additionally, the focus on relationships has manifested in a program wherein each student is assigned an advisor at enrollment. This advisor works with them throughout their time at RFK and will announce them at the graduation ceremony.

Learning is valued no matter when or where it occurs. RFK is a community school, and the community may access services without a student enrolled. Evening and weekend classes are offered. Many of these classes are for anyone in the community and focus on skills that can transfer to jobs, such as paint and bodywork on cars, car mechanical skills, sewing, and preparing for the United States citizenship test. All materials and tools are paid for. The hands-on use of tools encourages cross-curricular learning, supporting students in core academic subjects and adults in continued academic progress.

Opportunities for Growth:

RFK offers a robust suite of resources to the community it serves. There is an opportunity to increase communication with families regarding these resources. The many diverse offerings to the community facilitate a need for various modes of communication. This outreach may look like updating the school website with upcoming information or calendars in electronic and print format with dates of events scheduled and posted in advance. Translation services and bilingual

communication would enhance the reach of these messages and ensure maximum engagement.

One powerful way to engage with parents is to hold orientations or open house events where families are educated on school systems such as PowerSchool and its functions. An event of this type could also facilitate the distribution of an evening course catalog, a school calendar, and more. Some families are unaware of all of the course offerings open to students and community members.

Another potential avenue for family engagement could be volunteering at school events such as a Fall-fest, dances, prom, and sporting events. Many interviewees expressed interest in sports to encourage student attendance and leverage coaches' mentorship to improve academic performance. Enlisting volunteer coaches would enable the school to organize more team sports, such as track or volleyball.

Students want the experiences they could have at a large-comprehensive high school. Sports and sporting events were one request; extra-curriculars such as service learning were another. Students requested to have fundraising events and food drives through which they could distribute food and funds to families in need.

Potential Next Steps:

Principal Baade is open to feedback and appreciates the observations made by the site team, feeling that the school is heading in the right direction. The leadership at RFK plans to utilize multiple communication avenues with families. An Ed Fellows Program individual will start managing radio broadcasts concerning school events. There is a plan to update the school's website; in addition, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) Youth Council is providing feedback to the leadership team at RFK on how to engage with social media as a school. Principal Baade also plans to update and distribute a course catalog.

One way in which Principal Baade facilitates community involvement is by urging students to organize events. The school hosts an art fair and a music festival in the spring. The leadership team also incentivizes family involvement by involving the student body in the leadership and organization process.

Another planned outreach method is beginning a bilingual seal adapted for middle school, which could serve as a feeder program for RFK and continue to build positive engagement with families and uplift the school.

DOMAIN 2: LEADERSHIP

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

Promising Practices:

The leadership team demonstrates an evident ability to build connections with the community and beyond. Some of the opportunities these connections have brought to the school include partnering with the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) to give students a chance to do farm work and understand where food comes from while also growing food that the school hopes to use to feed the community. A partnership with Central New Mexico Community College (CNM) also provides former students with internships and jobs that pay and allow students to earn credits. By working with partners who connect the school with international teachers, the leadership team ensures that students see teachers who look and sound like them.

Leadership also demonstrates persistence and a heart of service for the community. The executive director has 44 years of educational assistance to this community. He was part of the early alternative school efforts that evolved into RFK. He has been with RFK for 24 years and was a teacher for the first 17. He has institutional knowledge that allows the school to run and grow almost seamlessly, and he has built a leadership team that believes in the school's mission and vision.

Opportunities for Growth:

Opportunities for the school's leadership revolve around enhancing communication with staff in multiple formats. Currently, a weekly newsletter called Cobra News serves as the primary means of disseminating information to all staff, providing a wide variety of comprehensive details and forecasts. Establishing and communicating an expectation among staff to digest this communication will enhance cohesion across the school site.

There is also an opportunity to develop cohesion among the people handling disciplinary actions. This cohesion would alleviate current inconsistencies in discipline management and positively impact students' daily lives.

Uniformity is crucial to leadership and management, and accountability within the school's vision is vital. Principal Baade has an opportunity to drive a growth-mindset shift among the staff, similar to the one encouraged in students, seeing observations and data conversations not as punitive but as opportunities for development. This open door to development conversations will help address classroom inconsistencies concerning rigor, discipline, and flexibility.

It may be impactful for the leadership to find and clearly define a balance between providing beneficial grace that enables student success and fostering productive accountability that aids in developing executive function skills. There is disagreement about holding students to deadlines, with some faculty wanting to provide more flexibility with late work and others arguing that this does not prepare students for college and careers. Both opinions come from a place of caring – dialogue and common expectations would support teachers and students in preparing for the future.

Potential Next Steps:

Principal Baade and the leadership team are focused on program sustainability as the transition process unfolds. Principal Baade switched from email-centric communication to more relational, in-person interactions. Key meetings, such as the Management Team Meeting and the Student Solutions Meeting, occur every third week to address school-site concerns and student-initiated ideas, like organizing dances. There is a plan to acclimate new staff to this style of communication.

The leadership team has identified a need to unify staff through more robust communication. Currently, staff meetings and Cobra Mail are the primary modes of communication. A reduction in professional development (PD) days from five to one before the start of the year has adversely impacted schoolwide communication. The school aims to follow the APS calendar for families, but the limited PD time, especially for new teachers, remains a concern and focus of the leadership team. To address this need, administrators plan to enhance classroom engagement and foster accountability using observations as an uplifting, rather than disciplinary, force. Principal Baade acknowledges that building relationships takes time, and this shift towards greater responsibility takes both relationships and a willingness to continue monitoring progress and responding appropriately.

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 school has prioritized tracking progress toward graduation using the new Advisory program. This focus is evident in the NM School DASH plan, with data team meetings addressing attendance, behaviors, and credit acquisition. All teachers and students have implemented a credit grid, and online portfolios track cohort and graduation progress.

A notable strength of the school is its provision of differentiated opportunities for learning, as well as earning and making up credits. The curriculum includes hands-on courses like early child development, welding, auto body, culinary, and filmmaking. Students can engage in dual-credit classes and attend CNM courses paid for by the school. Credit recovery is available, with mathematics and English language arts credits recovered in classrooms. Future Algebra classes will bolster high-intensity mathematics education, and tutoring will be accessible before and after school, including evening classes.

The school has taken a collective approach to instruction, with staff collaborating to identify and adopt ten instructional best practices as their priorities. These strategies are now integral to classroom walkthroughs and the ensuing feedback process, reflecting the school's commitment to reflective practices that improve teaching and learning.

Opportunities for Growth:

There is an opportunity to elevate lesson expectations and instruction by fostering accountability and closely monitoring the implementation of the ten instructional best practices identified and selected by staff. This accountability will assist the leadership team in ensuring rigorous instruction occurs in every classroom. There is an opportunity to support teachers in understanding rigor in complexity and pacing. Using these practices to drive instruction beyond Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels 1 & 2 will facilitate positive growth for students and educator practice.

The use of student data to drive instruction is happening in pockets around the school, though this is a complex process that must be carried out with fidelity. There is an opportunity to use formative data more thoughtfully – exit tickets are a schoolwide expectation that has been partially implemented. As the school works to use data to drive instruction, these more frequent, context-embedded checks will aid teachers in responding to students' learning needs.

Empowering students to actively track their data and growth through meaningful conversations with their teachers is one domain ready to be leveraged by the leadership and staff at RFK. A data tracker with a reflection document has been implemented this school year. While some may initially view this tool as a compliance measure, there is a powerful opportunity to shift mindsets and the focus toward making meaning out of the data.

Potential Next Steps:

Principal Baade intends to maintain focus on academic progress tracking. Utilizing the ten best practices as defined by the staff will support grade-level instruction for students. A collective effort from the leadership and staff will help teachers dissect data and align practices with the received feedback. Ensuring that initial layer one instruction adheres to grade-level standards was one priority identified during the development of the 90-day plan.

Principal Baade acknowledges that teachers may need to provide scaffolding for students reading below grade level to help them access the complexity of grade-level standards. There is a potential for cognitive dissonance as expectations are raised, and Principal Baade plans to be proactive about this possibility.

The leadership plans to collaborate with teachers to formulate effective exit ticket templates. This standardization will formalize the process and provide teachers with a resource that has the potential to offer valuable insight into daily best practices. Initial results of exit tickets have been eye-opening, and Principal Baade plans to continue to support teachers in learning to decipher data into actionable next steps. When teachers see connections between learning tasks and immediate student outcomes, it bolsters their continued reflection and modification of lessons to meet student needs. This data also supports collaborative efforts to raise the level of rigor schoolwide.