

School Support and Readiness Assessment Summary Report

School: Alma D’Arte Charter High School	LEA: Alma D’Arte
School Leader: Dr. Adam Amador	LEA Leader: Dr. Adam Amador
SSRA Team Leader: Andrea Fletcher	Date: January 23, 2024
School Description	
Alma D’Arte Charter High School serves 140 students with the mission of integrating the visual, performing, literary, media, and culinary arts into academic content areas. The school offers credit recovery and dual credit enrollment with Pima Community College. The school recently received an Innovation Zone grant to provide art internships for students. Dr. Amador joined the school as principal in July 2023.	
School Successes and Celebrations	
Alma D’Arte has faced leadership turnover and turmoil in recent years, and consequently, systems have not been in place to appropriately support English Learners (ELs) or students needing special education. The school has also experienced fiscal deficits. While Dr. Amador recognizes that more progress must be made, he has quickly implemented significant systems to address special education and EL supports and systems to fortify student safety. He has worked to align the mission of the school charter with the student experience, providing students with the opportunity to participate in internships. Coherently aligning the art pathways has also been a priority.	
Students report feeling safe at the school and are passionate about learning and practicing art. Staff members share that they have received practical and relevant professional development this year.	
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:	
Students value their time here. Their artwork is displayed throughout the building, and students can share their work through the school gallery and various shows.	
Principal Amador’s desire to create more art learning opportunities for students has resulted in a dual credit program with Pima Community College to receive an Associate’s Degree in Fine	

Arts.

The school works diligently to identify students' progress toward graduation. Students choose an adult to be their mentor who helps them monitor their progress toward graduation. Weekly pep rallies are held for seniors, and parent conferences are held every four weeks to ensure students are on target and can communicate their progress.

Opportunities for Growth:

Due to previous lapses in instructional leadership, Dr. Amador worked expeditiously to change processes and procedures to ensure state and federal law compliance. The degree of change for staff has been steep and strenuous. Teachers have expressed a desire for more transparency and input into new policies.

Students expressed discomfort with instances of unprofessionalism and disagreements among teaching staff. They feel it hurts the credibility of the school with the community. Students also expressed a need for more social and emotional support.

Potential Next Steps:

During the first few months of his tenure, Dr. Amador acted quickly and decisively to bring the school into compliance. As systems are established and communicated, he recognizes the need to develop collaborative approaches to problem-solving. When teachers understand the root causes behind school policy and practice changes, they are more open to new ideas. When they feel empowered to shape schoolwide initiatives, they have more ownership.

Additional counseling staff would benefit students' social and emotional health. Professional counseling staff may also be able to help facilitate difficult conversations between faculty members. With an impartial mediator, teachers may feel comfortable airing frustrations, processing past challenges, and finding common ground.

DOMAIN 2: LEADERSHIP

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

Promising Practices:

Dr. Amador has created the vision for staff by realigning the school's work with the charter's mission. He has implemented systems that have significantly reduced absenteeism in the first half of the school year. Per state law, he instituted letters and phone calls to notify families of truancy. He also started holding parent meetings to increase attendance.

Dr. Amador has also quickly implemented systems to help students feel connected to staff and prioritize progress toward graduation. Mentor teachers check in with each senior frequently.

The school has hired a person to monitor each student’s completion of coursework and manage credit recovery. Seniors regularly get information about their graduation status.

Special Education and English Language Development instruction have been a primary focus in this first year. In addition to ensuring that students receive the services required by law, these instructional accommodations signal that their success matters to the adults in the building.

Opportunities for Growth:

With a new leadership team and the quick pace of change, teachers expressed a desire for a greater connection to the administrative team. They are eager for face-to-face meetings and consistent observation and feedback cycles. There is an opportunity to enlist teachers in setting, monitoring, and adjusting schoolwide goals.

One potential for these collaborative discussions lies with data cycles and internal assessments. Teachers would benefit from seeing assessments before they are administered and then being given time, space, and coaching in reviewing and analyzing students’ results. Dr. Amador can build teachers’ capacity to collect and analyze classroom-level formative assessments by reframing how these assessments are used. Transparency and coaching through this process will alleviate anxieties associated with past negative experiences and clarify how data is being used.

Potential Next Steps:

As a new administrator in the building, Dr. Amador sees the importance of connections with faculty. He plans to seek ways to build staff relationships, including staff events and informal walkthroughs. He understands the value of specific, timely, face-to-face feedback connected to schoolwide goals and high-leverage instructional practices.

Teachers who have had challenging past experiences with administrators may need time to trust a new leader; by spending more time in teachers’ classrooms, Dr. Amador can rebuild teachers’ confidence, trust, and willingness to take risks. These walkthroughs will also enable him to identify areas of highest need for instructional leadership and coaching. When teachers see that leaders provide support and hold other teachers accountable, they feel more secure and are less likely to experience burnout.

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:

With the administrative team so new to the school, instruction has not been the primary focus, but promising features exist. The dean of students has begun administering Common Formative Assessments (CFAs) through Illuminate, so there is some data for English language arts (ELA)

and math. A system has been implemented to track special education students' accommodations, which are turned in weekly. The administrative team is seeing increases in math and ELA from the beginning to the middle of the year.

Students who speak a language other than English at home expressed gratitude for the new English Language Development (ELD) class that is meeting their needs and helping them succeed.

Opportunities for Growth:

As the school's focus moves to instruction, it would be helpful for teachers to have opportunities to collaboratively analyze data, share expertise, and plan rigorous instruction.

Students have expressed their desire for increased rigor and opportunities. Several spoke of wanting more opportunities for Advanced Placement (AP) classes.

Potential Next Steps:

Dr. Amador plans to create a schedule that allows teachers time for collaboration. This time can be spent creating meaningful assessments, analyzing data, and identifying best practices for students.

It would be helpful to create a student focus group or survey to understand students' perspective of rigor in the classroom. Parents and community members may also have opinions about the course offerings at the school. The partnership with Pima Community College represents a solid first step towards shifting the focus from high school graduation to post-secondary success. There may be opportunities to enhance dual enrollment options through this venue.