

School Support and Readiness Assessment Summary Report

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| School: Sweeney Elementary School | LEA: Santa Fe Public Schools |
| School Leader: Melissa Kovac | LEA Leader: Hilario Chavez |
| SSRA Team Leader: Celeste Murray | Date: January 30, 2024 |
| School Description | |
| <p>Sweeney Elementary School is located on the south side of Santa Fe, New Mexico. It serves an area with a mix of single-family homes, mobile homes, and apartments, where independently-owned Mexican food trucks, restaurants, and grocery stores sit next to some of America's most prolific chain restaurants and stores.</p> <p>Sweeney serves 296 students, 187 of whom participate in the bilingual program. Many students in the bilingual program are new to the United States. The bilingual program begins in Kindergarten with an 80/20 model, shifts to 70/30 in first grade and 60/40 in second grade, and then becomes a 50/50 model in third grade.</p> <p>Nine of Sweeney's 13 classrooms serve more than one grade level, and the campus houses three classrooms that focus on behavioral programs. Sweeney offers academic programs such as Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), GLAD (Guided Language Acquisition Development), and after-school enrichment. Professional partnerships include LANL (Los Alamos National Laboratory). Sweeney offers a variety of programs and activities such as the 21st-Century Program, guitar, band, after-school tutoring, National Dance Institute (NDI), basketball, and Cooking with Kids.</p> <p>Sweeney's mission statement is as follows: <i>At Sweeney Elementary, our mission is to provide a holistic education that empowers students to become compassionate, critical thinkers and responsible global citizens. We strive to create an inclusive and diverse community where each student's unique strengths and talents are recognized and nurtured.</i></p> <p>The Core Values of Sweeney are as follows: <i>Excellence: We are committed to achieving the highest standards of academic, artistic, and athletic achievement. Integrity: We promote honesty, respect, and ethical behavior in all aspects of life. Collaboration: We value teamwork, cooperation, and open communication among students, parents, and staff. Innovation: We encourage creativity, curiosity, and adaptability to prepare students for an ever-changing world.</i></p> | |
| School Successes and Celebrations | |

Sweeney Elementary has a variety of successes and celebrations. The bilingual program is thriving at the school. Part of its success is due to the diverse backgrounds of the instructors. Six teachers within the program are from other countries, including Honduras, Mexico, and Spain. Because of the expanded Spanish-speaking cultural perspectives the teachers bring, Spanish-speaking students' sense of cultural pride shines throughout the school.

This year, the school has increased its focus on data analysis, creating a room dedicated to data with monthly reading, math, and Spanish updates. The school's new interventionist deeply supports this work. Students are showing small but continual growth in their Istation data.

The school has implemented Professional Learning Community meetings (PLCs) as a routine this year. They have established collaborative agreements and shared goals, and teams meet every Thursday to discuss data. Based on the data analysis, teams adjust upcoming instruction. The staff has widely accepted the process; many expressed optimism for team progress and student scores. Additionally, the school is implementing standards-based grading this year.

Finally, a new interim assessment was implemented this year, and growth in English from the beginning of the year (BOY) to the middle of the year (MOY) is very promising. 52% of 5th, 28% of 4th, and 25% of 3rd increased at least one grade level. 77% of 5th have made progress towards annual growth. Already, 42% of students reached their target, and 15% reached their stretch target.

DOMAIN 2: LEADERSHIP

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

Promising Practices:

The school is beginning to create systems for collaboration, data analysis, and lesson planning. This year, teachers meet weekly in PLCs, and the PLC updates the data once a month. A data room has been created where every teacher and student is represented. Students are moved with each change in their data, keeping teachers and the school focused on student progress and seeing data as students rather than numbers. The interventionist hired just before the administration change supports this work. Throughout interviews, the PLC and data work were identified as positive for the school and adding to the sense of hopefulness.

Likewise, Principal Kovac has pushed teachers to be more consistent in lesson planning. Teachers submit plans to a Canvas platform. A template has been provided, but teachers can choose their own. Principal Kovac has communicated that while specific items are needed to meet the four domains, her biggest goal is to make the plans meaningful and improve classroom instruction.

Another promising practice is the working relationship between the principal, interventionist, and counselor. Teachers indicated feeling unified, aligned, and supported by all three. Though there is trepidation around turnover based on previous leadership changes, staff favor the new

leadership team and hope for their direction.

Opportunities for Growth:

One opportunity for growth is for clear, communicated expectations of non-negotiables. When asked about school priorities, expectations, and non-negotiables, interviews provided differing answers, indicating no clear and communicated expectations. Lesson plan submission was the only item consistently identified as a requirement, though some staff shared an opportunity for increased accountability in this area. Instructional strategies (Second Step, PAX, popsicle sticks, small groups) were mentioned as sporadically employed, varying between teachers and grade levels.

Consistency of leadership is another opportunity for Sweeney. School leadership and staff turnover have left many staff and family members distrustful of the longevity of initiatives. Even those excited about the school's new direction indicated a lack of faith that it would continue if leadership changed again.

Many teachers voiced a desire for increased behavioral support from the district for the school's behavioral classes. Behavior issues are often addressed in the hallway, exposing students in other classrooms to inappropriate language and disrespect toward teachers. Principal Kovac is spending a disproportionate amount of time attending to these disruptions, which sometimes prevents her from attending to other aspects of instructional leadership.

Potential Next Steps:

To clarify expectations, Principal Kovac plans to build on the success of a recent behavioral plan the school implemented. To engage teachers in this process, she worked first with the leadership team to develop the plan. Then, she went to a PLC Day to remind teachers about student behavior expectations and the next steps when inappropriate behaviors occur. Principal Kovac acknowledges that she needs to be better at being transparent and communicating and plans to use her daily newsletter to remind teachers of the expectations.

To address some doubts about her longevity and ability to effect lasting change at Sweeney, Principal Kovac plans to develop leaders on the team so that initiatives can carry on no matter who leads the school.

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:

Strong student engagement is evident at Sweeney in classroom observations and based on interviews with teachers. Students were seen using high-quality instructional materials

(HQIM) and involved with hands-on learning opportunities. Walkthroughs indicated that work was grade-level appropriate, and there was evidence of beginning steps toward small-group differentiated instruction.

Opportunities for Growth:

One opportunity for growth is in developing shared leadership practices when creating the school's DASH plan. A core team analyzing the schoolwide data to determine school priorities that align with district priorities and are differentiated for Sweeney's specific needs could enhance the plan's effectiveness. In addition, because it would be co-created, there would be more ownership of the goals and actions.

Principal Kovac creates the plan based on district initiatives and then shares it with her leadership team for feedback. Interviews indicated a sense of distance from the plan—that it was handed down to them rather than created by them. Interviews also found that those not on the leadership team did not have a strong sense of what was in the plan or the school's priorities, though they believed a high-level overview of the plan was shared in a staff meeting. Having the staff understand the plan—the why, the what, the how—will lead to more aligned efforts and likely better progress toward goals.

Multiple concerns about the combination classes and the small student population in English-only classes were voiced. In the combination class, not all grade-level standards are being learned. Teachers prioritize fewer standards or choose one grade level's standards to modify for the other grade. They are sometimes trying to plan multiple lessons—spreading them thin. In English-only classes, students are together from Kindergarten until the fifth grade, which has led to behavioral issues.

Potential Next Steps:

Principal Kovac plans to involve the leadership team in developing the spring plan. She wants their insight and opinions on critical actions and monitoring. She will share with every team member through PLCs or feedback meetings. She will build their leadership capacity and buy-in by ensuring that all team members feel involved in the process.

Principal Kovac will work with the district to coordinate school initiatives with district requirements and to secure more behavioral support.

DOMAIN 4: TALENT MANAGEMENT

To what degree does the school ensure effective teachers are hired, retained, developed, and leveraged to improve student outcomes?

Promising Practices:

Two new promising practices at Sweeney are more consistent PLCs and more comprehensive use of data. A data room has been created and is being updated regularly. Data is part of every

PLC discussion, and teachers are encouraged to plan together. There is buy-in by most staff, and significant progress has been made in implementing data practices with teachers and students. Teachers are keeping a document that tracks student data, and students are being made aware of both the success criteria and where they are in their progress toward that goal.

Opportunities for Growth:

A significant opportunity for Sweeney Elementary School is implementing scheduled, consistent observation and feedback coaching cycles (OFCCs). There is a lot of excitement about the new school leader and her wealth of experience. The staff has tremendous hope that this will be shared with them, helping them grow and refine their instructional practices. However, though the principal pops into classrooms at least weekly, it has not been with specific look-fors in mind and rarely includes feedback or follow-up due to building management issues. Principal Kovac believes in the power of observation and feedback but feels the demands of the school pulling her in other directions.

Additionally, there is an opportunity to align district-organized professional development more closely with school-specific needs.

Potential Next Steps:

Principal Kovac has already prioritized walkthroughs by scheduling them on her calendar. She visits various halls daily, trying to pop into multiple classrooms so students see her, and she has a sense of what is being taught. She sees an opportunity to follow up with feedback. She plans to conduct observations more consistently by protecting the time to get into classrooms. To help her meet this goal, she intends to differentiate support based on teacher needs—getting into some classes weekly and others monthly.