

# School Support and Readiness Assessment Monitoring Visit Summary Report

<b>School:</b> Escalante Middle & High School	<b>LEA:</b> Chama Valley Independent Schools
<b>School Leader:</b> Lea Leyba	<b>LEA Leader:</b> Anthony Casados
<b>SSRA Team Leader:</b> Phil Valdez	<b>Date:</b> May 13, 2024
<b>School Successes and Celebrations</b>	
<p>Principal Leyba and her Escalante Middle High School (EMHS) staff have much to celebrate since the SSRA Site Visit in February. A concentrated effort to address attendance has improved the school’s attendance to 90%, an increase from 80% a year ago. The staff recognizes a continued need to focus on increasing attendance. While they cannot control the external factors that may cause attendance issues, they can control creating an environment that makes students want to come to school. Increasing engagement has been a contributing factor to the attendance success this year. In conducting a deep dive into their attendance for success plan, they looked at individual student attendance records to identify the students needing support. In addition, they have focused on accelerating learning for students with chronic attendance issues. They call parents consistently and monitor attendance data closely.</p> <p>Increasing community involvement was another priority. Since the site visit, Principal Leyba and her team have welcomed the local law enforcement agency as a community partner. Doing so shows students that it is not always negative when law enforcement is involved in the school community. There has been an increase in law enforcement attending dances, sporting events, and other extracurricular activities. Principal Leyba has fostered communication with the area elementary schools as well. This has created a sense of a larger community and a vision for the feeder schools to EMHS.</p> <p>Escalante staff can also celebrate the success of providing students with more opportunities for electives and extracurricular activities. Escalante had very few electives and extracurricular activities before this school year. They capitalized on staff talents and interests to increase the activities that were offered to students. The staff has been very receptive to leading these enrichment opportunities for students. They include the student senate, MESA, chess, robotics, photography, a middle-school Esports program, and calligraphy/drawing/painting. They are adding a pre-apprentice program for students interested in vocational careers. Escalante has 13 certified staff members, of whom 11 are involved in the extracurricular activities that students participate in.</p>	
<b>Progress Toward Next Steps Identified in SSRA Summary</b>	

**SSRA Summary Next Step #1: Principal Leyba will formalize and communicate the 90 Day plan to all staff members, including details on how the leadership team will revise it, fostering transparency and collective ownership of the school’s strategic agenda.**

As a new principal, Ms. Leyba felt she was “helping” her staff by doing the 90 Day Plan alone. After attending the Student Intervention Team (SIT) training, she realized she had done them a disservice. To correct this and to give her staff ownership of the plan, they analyzed data and identified potential root causes as a leadership team. They also identified specific Professional Learning Community (PLC) days for the first time.

The 90 Day Plan has been set up to provide benchmarks and expectations for each subject and will be discussed in PLC meetings. Principal Leyba has made a great effort to build a collaborative 90 Day Plan by including representation from all departments and specialty areas (truancy, special education, data, etc.). She feels very positive about their 90 Day Plan for next school year and that the staff has built a trusting and collaborative culture at Escalante through this process.

Some progress has been made due to Principal Leyba’s clear communication of instructional expectations. Lesson plans must be engaging, use objectives, and at grade level. These three expectations have been shared verbally, via email, and in PLC meetings throughout the year. The TNTP (The New Teacher Project) walkthrough form has been adjusted to identify these areas in each lesson.

As evidenced by walkthroughs, nine of 15 Escalante teachers post objectives and deliver grade-level content, and six of 15 Escalante teachers provide engaging instruction. Through professional development (PD) and coaching, the goal is for all teachers to achieve all three expectations.

**SSRA Summary Next Step #2: The leadership team also plans to identify pertinent data within the school’s control that can be regularly analyzed to inform decision-making.**

Principal Leyba and her team have recognized the need for a consistent data program to monitor and assess progress. The CORE team utilizes Public Education Department (PED) graduation rates from VISTAS, attendance records, grades from PowerSchool, grade reviews, and the primary datasets to address graduation rates. The data team conducts grade reviews every three weeks with all students, focusing on juniors and seniors to address graduation rates. As a result of the consistent grade review and the support provided to students, all seniors (27 of 27) will be graduating.

Escalante graduation rates initially showed 68%, but after working with the data team and PED, the corrected graduation data shows an increase to 88%. An entire cohort was misidentified as being enrolled when they had graduated.

**SSRA Summary Next Step #3: The principal will develop a structured schedule and incorporate explicit feedback and coaching sessions into her calendar at least twice monthly to support each teacher's improvement.**

Principal Leyba has focused on increasing her specific feedback and coaching sessions but has not been as successful as she wants to be in this area. She identified that meeting with staff during school hours was not feasible, so she has begun meeting with teachers after school hours, which is more productive and effective. She hopes to improve this and create a structured schedule for these observation, coaching, and feedback sessions next school year. Principal Leyba feels that she has been effective in the observation piece of the cycle, but the feedback has not been formalized and needs to be improved. While not as far along in this goal as she would like, she does report an increase of approximately 10% in providing feedback to teachers.

**SSRA Summary Next Step #4: Principal Leyba plans to incorporate and foreground conversations about direct instruction (DI) in the feedback cycle with teachers.**

Feedback provided by Principal Leyva focused on how the instructors utilized differentiated instructional strategies. Eleven of 13 teachers routinely did so, as measured by classroom observations, but this continues to be an opportunity for improvement. She feels a consistent PLC schedule and PD in this area will help staff continue to improve.

**SSRA Summary Next Step #5: The school leader plans to work with the leadership team to establish and align the PLC framework structure with the objectives outlined in the 90 Day Plan. This framework will delineate PLC structures by department, including meeting schedules, designated leaders, and specific data to be utilized.**

While Principal Leyba reports no progress, she will continue to work with the leadership team on this next step for the 2024-2025 school year. As a team, they have realized the importance of structured PLC meeting times. The focus will be to create schedules for PLC meetings with set agendas and protocols to bring consistency and alignment in each department. The district has released a new schedule for 2024-2025 that allows for an hour at the end of each school day when students are dismissed, but the staff is still on contract for an hour. She hopes this will help create a structured, consistent PLC schedule.

**School Leader's Next Steps**

Since the SSRA site visit, Principal Leyba and her leadership team have significantly progressed in developing core systems supporting student success. In developing these systems, Principal Leyba will continue strengthening the systems they have been committed to over the last 90 Day Plan. She and her team believe these to be high-leverage actions that will allow for sustainable results.

Principal Leyba will continue her commitment to improving the observation and feedback cycle. While informal feedback is provided frequently, she understands the importance of a structured conversation. Over the summer, she intends to create a walkthrough schedule, share the schedule with staff, and try to schedule the feedback meeting before or after school. She found that when the meeting was scheduled during the teacher's preparation period during the school day, there

were a lot of interruptions that did not allow the meetings to occur. Due to a shortage of substitutes, teachers often cover another class during their scheduled preparation time.

Principal Leyba plans to continue working with the leadership team to establish and align the PLC framework structure with the objectives outlined in the 90 Day Plan. Principal Leyba feels she has made progress in the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) PLCs, where UDL met with departments during different weeks. She has recognized that the staff (including the administrative team) have many informal discussions around students but will benefit from a formalized schedule for PLCs.

Principal Leyba will continue strengthening how the 90 Day plan is developed, communicated, and implemented. There will be a continued emphasis on including all departments and community representation in the development of the 90 Day Plan. The continued expectation for staff will be that each lesson is engaging, uses objectives, and is at grade level. At the start of the 2024-2025 school year, Principal Leyba will meet with the leadership team to establish the PLC schedule for the first nine weeks of the school year. For the upcoming school year, she will establish a walkthrough protocol with teams so that all curriculum teams learn from each other.

While progress has been made in using differentiated instructional strategies, there is still an opportunity to improve. Principal Leyba will continue providing support and PD in differentiation and student cognitive engagement for all staff. Teachers will train other teachers and share how they differentiate in their classrooms to help provide additional ideas and support. This, along with ongoing evaluations, walkthroughs, and regular PLCs, will support differentiated instruction.