

School Support and Readiness Assessment Monitoring Visit Summary Report

School: The GREAT Academy	LEA: The GREAT Academy Charter
School Leader: Keisha Matthews	LEA Leader: Jasper Matthews
SSRA Team Leader: Lizette Ridgeway	Date: May 16, 2024

School Successes and Celebrations

The Gain Real Experience through Active Transition (GREAT) Academy has noteworthy successes and celebrations. The school progressed in regaining focus and reinvigorating student engagement after a challenging year of shifting priorities. Despite downsizing its staff due to decreasing student enrollment, the school has creatively implemented several hands-on student engagement initiatives. In one such example, the school introduced STEM Day, providing students with invaluable experiential learning opportunities on Fridays. These days were dedicated to interactive activities spanning science, math, and creative writing workshops, fostering student creativity and critical thinking skills.

The GREAT Academy (TGA) has also increased its community engagement efforts. The school has enriched students' perspectives and aspirations by inviting professionals from diverse backgrounds to share their career experiences. Initiatives like the "mystery person" series have addressed specific student needs, such as improving questioning techniques and communication skills. This is particularly evident in the support provided to English learners (ELs).

TGA has made progress in attendance rates, with quarterly improvements reflecting a commitment to engagement; this is evidenced by a rise from 74% in Q1 to 89% in Q3. As the school continues prioritizing hands-on learning, community involvement, and student support initiatives, it remains dedicated to providing an enriching educational experience for all students.

Progress Toward Next Steps Identified in SSRA Summary

SSRA Summary Next Step #1: The school leader plans to work collaboratively with staff to refine the vision and mission of the school and align them with current practices and future priorities.

TGA has been engaging in a period of reflection and realignment with its core goals and mission. As part of this process, the school will undergo a focused effort during summer and back-to-school training sessions to reaffirm its commitment to excellence. TGA is also prepared to welcome new staff members in anticipation of the upcoming academic year, recognizing that the current team composition may change. TGA leadership has conducted three meetings with staff members to instill a sense of urgency and alignment with the school's

priorities. During these sessions, participants have delved into key performance indicators such as math and reading proficiency, graduation rates, attendance records, and short-cycle assessment data. Emphasis has been placed on cultivating a collective responsibility among staff members, shifting the mindset from attributing challenges solely to students or families to recognizing the pivotal role of educators within the school community. By ensuring that all staff members are aligned with TGA's vision and mission, the school aims to foster more student success in the coming year.

SSRA Summary Next Step #2: The school leader will begin more frequent communication with staff by reviewing recent changes and explaining how middle-of-year (MOY) data is used in DASH.

Since the SSRA visit, TGA has taken proactive steps to analyze and evaluate the school's data through three meetings dedicated to this purpose. During these sessions, staff members have been encouraged to provide their insights and perspectives on the adult behaviors observed on campus that foster a positive impact. Additionally, four Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings have emphasized leveraging data to understand student needs better and identify appropriate supports.

As TGA prepares to welcome three new staff members next year, concerted efforts are underway to create a welcoming environment conducive to student engagement and learning. PLC processes will be refined to focus on academic strategies to enhance student learning outcomes. They plan to structure the back-to-school professional development program, emphasizing culturally and linguistically responsive (CLR) practices. Teachers will also undergo training on new English and math instructional materials in preparation for the upcoming academic year.

SSRA Summary Next Step #3: The GREAT Academy is filling the science teacher vacancy. This teacher will implement practices to increase face-to-face learning.

For the 24-25 school year, TGA has successfully hired a technology teacher to fulfill a crucial role within the instructional staff. This new hire will be pivotal in revitalizing the STEM lab and reinstating its functionality within the school curriculum.

SSRA Summary Next Step #4: The school leader is investigating alternative routes to staffing the school's labs, including collaborating with Central New Mexico Community College to have one of their staff or graduate students provide instruction in the audio-visual (A/V) studio lab.

TGA organized two student demonstrations with Central New Mexico Community College (CNM). Approximately 80-85 students actively participated in these sessions, which focused on diverse technology and digital skills areas. One session centered around drones, offering students insights into aerial technology. The other session focused on video editing and web design, providing students with hands-on experience in multimedia production and digital content creation.

SSRA Summary Next Step #5: The school is considering partnerships with community organizations that could offer guest instructors, including Explora and the Water Authority.

The GREAT Academy has actively collaborated with various community organizations through guest instructors to enrich students' learning experiences. One such collaboration involved the Water Authority, which conducted a hands-on activity on water filtration during the first semester. Approximately 110-115 students participated in this session to gain practical insights into water science. The Water Authority will return on May 17 to present to 80-85 middle and high school students to build on the science concepts explored this year.

Explora, a local science center and children's museum, facilitated two interactive activities earlier in the year, catering to approximately 45 middle school students. These activities provided students with immersive experiences in various scientific concepts.

TGA has welcomed numerous community members representing diverse career fields, including Albuquerque and Bernalillo Fire and Rescue representatives, attorneys, web designers, marketers, and STEM-related professionals. These interactions have offered students valuable insights into potential career paths and real-world applications of academic learning.

SSRA Summary Next Step #6: The school leader anticipates the culmination of the transition into a Skills USA school. As an early career preparatory school, they aim to develop a plan to market the school to students seeking career readiness.

Progress in exploring opportunities with Skills USA has been somewhat limited, with ongoing research and consideration of available options and components. Despite this, initial and light marketing efforts signaling an adoption of more of a career readiness focus have begun on social media and community connections.

SSRA Summary Next Step #7: Principal Matthews plans to connect with community organizations to build career pipelines.

While connections and conversations with community members have been initiated to explore options for potential summer activities or for the upcoming academic year, progress in this area is limited. Principal Matthews plans to continue pursuing opportunities for students' enrichment and engagement. A relationship has been established with Albuquerque Fire and Rescue to provide EMS training for students next year, a first step to enhance student learning experiences and future career opportunities.

School Leader's Next Steps

In preparation for the next academic year, Principal Matthews has identified some potential steps for the school's next annual plan. She plans to focus on refining the vision and mission of the school to realign everyone towards a common goal. This effort will involve revisiting and

clarifying the school's overarching objectives, ensuring they are effectively communicated and embraced by all stakeholders.

School leadership plans to rewrite the walkthroughs and observation processes to incorporate more frequent observations and increased rigor, aiming to provide teachers with valuable feedback and support weekly. They plan to revise the existing evaluation processes to support the predominantly new instructional staff more.

In addition, the school aims to introduce a program like Skills USA to enhance students' life skills and offer more opportunities for developing workplace soft skills. By focusing on these critical skills, the school will ensure that students are better prepared for future pursuits.

Efforts to improve attendance rates will remain a priority, and focus will be placed on implementing student engagement strategies and academic interventions. This will require PLC meetings to concentrate on academic improvements and provide targeted professional development in core subjects like English language arts and mathematics. Principal Matthews plans to emphasize a collaborative, team-based approach to academic excellence through ongoing professional development opportunities beginning in the summer and the next school year.