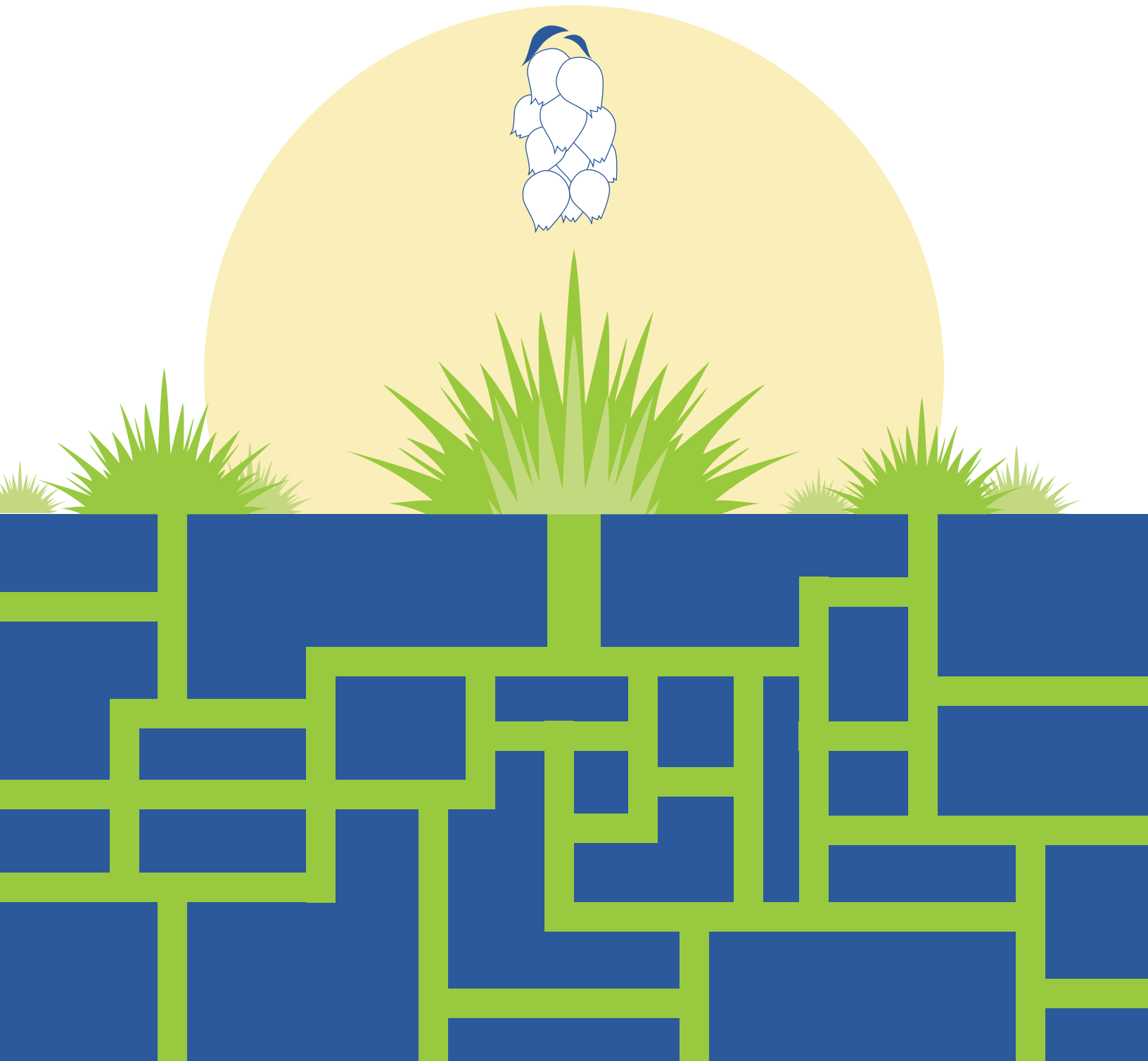
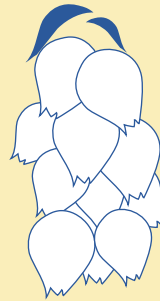
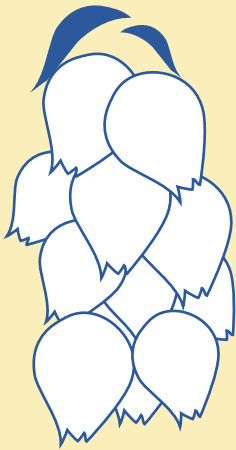


GROWING OUTCOMES THROUGH INNOVATION:



Instruction, Support, and Engagement





TEACH | 
+PLUS



#NMOutcomesThroughInnovation

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

There is a clear need for innovative school systems and practices with the potential to close the opportunity gap and grow outcomes for New Mexico's students. The COVID-19 pandemic created a new sense of urgency for our state, which was already struggling to ensure that our students are achieving the outcomes they deserve. According to [NewMexicoKidsCan](#)'s review of the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results, many more students in New Mexico scored below basic in 2022 than in 2019.¹ More than half of New Mexico's 4th grade students scored below basic in reading. Those numbers are even more stark for New Mexico's low-income students and students of color. Seventy-one percent of Native American students scored below basic in 4th grade reading.

To improve educational outcomes for our students, Teach Plus and Teach Plus teacher leaders believe that we must innovate the system and highlight and disseminate the best strategies and practices that are transforming how students learn. The good news is that in many of New Mexico's districts, schools are already innovating teaching and learning in pursuit of greater learning environments and results for students. These schools are reimagining instruction, creating new support systems for their students, teachers, and families, and broadening the engagement with their school community.

Launched in 2022, Teach Plus's innovation work focuses on holistically understanding our students and communities and listening to the teachers who serve them on a daily basis. For our 2023 report, Teach Plus identified seven public schools in New Mexico whose innovative approaches, rooted in their communities' needs, are generating results. While the innovations we present in this report differ, the schools are united in the centering of teacher, student, and community voice in addressing challenges head-on and improving teaching and learning. Through this project, we are bringing these schools and our education community together to facilitate learning, adoption, and innovation.

We believe that when we learn from the most innovative and best-in-class practices such as these and develop policies for districts to replicate them across more schools and classrooms, more New Mexico students will thrive.

METHODOLOGY

Teach Plus identified innovative schools in three categories: instructional practices; support systems; and family or community engagement. Schools were selected through an open nomination process and evaluated on the following criteria and evidence of impact and replicability. Teach Plus reviewed 31 nominations in total. See Appendix A for a sample rubric.

- + **Innovative instructional practices:** Practices focused on student-centered, individualized instruction designed to increase student engagement and ownership of their learning.
- + **Innovative support systems:** Systems focused on developing effective educators and providing differentiated, targeted support based on teachers' needs.
- + **Innovative family or community engagement practices:** Practices that move beyond opportunities for passive involvement to active and consistent engagement of families and communities in contributing to students' learning and shaping the school community.

Following the selection, Teach Plus conducted interviews to gather additional data about each school's systems and practices. Interview questions can be found in Appendix B. Data included in the results section of each school profile was provided directly from the school.

1

INNOVATIVE INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

- + Gallup High School
- + Loma Linda Elementary
- + VOZ Collegiate Preparatory Charter School

Innovative instructional practices are focused on student-centered, individualized instruction designed to increase student engagement and ownership of their learning.

High-quality instruction, which incorporates rigorous and purposeful curriculum that develops students' critical thinking and communication skills, plays a crucial role in closing the achievement gap. Students must be able to interact with content in ways that build on their previous knowledge, enable them to access learning at every level, and leverage their experiences and real-world examples.² In order to drive meaningful change, schools must adopt high-quality, data-driven, and student-centered instructional practices. Making individualized learning a priority is essential for our educational system to grow and succeed.

Gallup High School, Gallup



Inspiring learning by connecting instruction to students' needs and interests beyond high school

The School

Located in northwestern New Mexico, Gallup High School is part of the Gallup-McKinley School District, serving approximately 780 students. The school has a 97 percent students of color enrollment, largely made up of Native American students. The rural location of the school presents challenges such as educator recruitment and limited access to educational programs and extracurricular activities that are available in more urban districts. Gallup works hard to address these challenges and provide its students with a comprehensive college preparatory and career pathways curriculum for grades 9-12. This includes offering Advanced Placement, dual credit, and elective courses in fine arts, world languages, and vocational career pathways. This effort has brought new and positive learning opportunities for Gallup's students.



The Innovation

Gallup is providing its students with a more meaningful and engaging learning experience by aligning state standards to students' interests and connecting students to real opportunities beyond high school. To this end, Gallup has restructured its school model to a [Linked Learning Pathway](#) design to ensure that all students have access to a comprehensive, meaningful, and aligned career pathway system that matches their college and career interests.³ Gallup integrates four components into its system: rigorous academics that are aligned to admissions requirements for state colleges and universities; career technical education; work-based learning; and comprehensive support services like counseling and supplemental core instruction. To tailor the program to what students need, the school builds local partnerships that offer career pathways to industry certification and work-based learning opportunities. Gallup has also prioritized rigor and support within their building to ensure students have quality options for both college and career.





How This Works

To begin this process, Gallup developed a pathway team that included teachers and administrators. The team first built their own knowledge by touring schools and universities implementing similar programs. They then created action steps for the school to connect its students to both college and career readiness. Working with the Kellogg Foundation, the team implemented a business needs survey and gauged student interest to identify and create pathways in health careers and technical industry skills such as welding,

and digital arts. The health pathway includes a student-run clinic, where teachers and staff can have their vital signs taken and receive a nutritional analysis. On “Medical Mondays,” all teachers and students wear scrubs to practice real-life expectations in the medical field. The school assesses student growth through presentations, typically in small groups, and the presentations are evaluated by a pathway team of teachers and industry partners. Students gain hands-on experience and real-world skills they can use in their future careers.

Teachers at Gallup are able to choose the pathway they want to teach and receive funding for resources and time to collaborate with other teachers to support instructional quality and alignment. Linked teachers, or teacher teams, meet every week during common prep times to discuss shared students, challenges and ideas for support, and activities to support learning across classrooms. At the end of the year, each pathway class completes an end-of-year project developed by the entire team. For example, for a health career pathway organized around a history of a disease, juniors received guidance from their health teacher; their language arts teacher who provided public speaking lessons; and their social studies teacher who worked with the students on the accuracy of the research. Students then presented their research to parents, administrators, teachers, and representatives from local hospitals and clinics.

The Must-Haves:

To create a successful college and career pathway program, Gallup has established the following practices and systems:

- + Understand community needs, especially when it comes to specific careers.
- + Align core curriculum to the selected career pathways.
- + Put in place a team of dedicated and collaborative teachers who facilitate the program’s planning and monitor its implementation.
- + Dedicate space on campus for school clinics or laboratory-like facilities equipped with the necessary tools and equipment to provide students with a real-life experience.
- + Secure strong industry partnerships that provide students with opportunities for internships, mentorship, and job shadowing.
- + Ensure ongoing staff training and support in accordance with the program’s goals.
- + Source support from outside organizations to assist with training and resources for effective program implementation.

The Results

While Gallup's program is only in its second year of implementation, it is already proving effective. Student engagement and attendance rates have increased: Gallup now has one of the highest attendance rates in the district with 88 percent. As the school awaits summative assessment data, 2022-23 interim data from Q1 to Q2 shows growth for 10th and 11th graders in both reading and math. In addition, teacher feedback highlights that students have shown an increased ability to complete lengthy projects while developing essential skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and communication, which are integrated into all career pathway classes.

Loma Linda Elementary, Anthony



Providing individualized student support and enrichment to master learning standards



The School

Loma Linda Elementary is a Title I school in Anthony, serving around 300 students from kindergarten to 6th grade. During the pandemic, students faced challenges in achieving proficiency in reading and math as demonstrated by state assessments. The school is now working on improving instruction, aligning all of its curriculum to state standards, and enhancing student growth through a “reteach and

enrich” model. With this model, educators strategically place their students into groups based on their understanding of the standards taught each week, allowing teachers to deliver effective, data-driven instruction, measure student growth, and develop intentional interventions and enrichment opportunities for all students.

The Innovation

To ensure academic growth and learning opportunities for its students, Loma Linda developed a targeted support plan to differentiate for struggling students and those who have mastered the learning standards. Teachers use data collected from standards-based grading to determine where students are and where they need to improve. A reteach and enrichment model is implemented to ensure students' individualized support is the result of collaborative planning among grade-level teachers, strategic use of staff, and prioritized scheduling. These efforts have created a structured system that can be utilized throughout the year for a variety of learning standards and in multiple subject areas.

How This Works

To begin this process, Loma Linda's Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), including an instructional coach and administrators, guide grade-level teachers in assessing student learning and planning small-group interventions. Reteach and enrichment groups are then assigned to a grade-level peer group based on assessment data and are thoughtfully divided among grade-level teachers and other available staff members specifically dedicated to math and language arts standards.

Using research-proven instructional strategies, the reteach groups provide targeted interventions to students who did not meet the standard. An example of these are sound walls and games that use pictures and words to match various sounds and enhance students' phonemic awareness. This provides opportunities for targeted practice. Teachers then use enrichment activities to expand students' understanding of standards mastered in short cycle assessments. For example, a 2nd grader who has mastered the learning standards related to phonemic awareness may be able to work more independently on task cards to build words. As part of this process, teachers use data-driven conversations with students and families to communicate where students are in mastering the standards and share ideas on how families can continue this individualized support at home. The implementation of these practices requires the collective commitment of the entire school community. As aptly stated by Assistant Principal Eliana Munoz, *"In order for us to be successful, it has to be everyone."*



The Must-Haves

To provide individualized support for students schoolwide, Loma Linda has established the following practices and systems:

- + Align teacher professional development, assessments, and instructional resources directly to standards, removing activities or curriculum initiatives that do not directly address meeting the standard.
- + Ensure data-driven conversations take place in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) including identifying levels of mastery, areas for improvement, and activities to support both reteach and enrichment.
- + Understand how to utilize data to form flexible groups that address gaps in students' mastery of standards, as well as extend their comprehension, tailoring instructional settings, and activities to meet the specific needs of each formed group.
- + Develop school schedules that include time for schoolwide small-group instruction related to reteaching and enrichment each week.
- + Assign additional school staff who are trained to support grade-level teachers with facilitating targeted grouping and interventions or enrichment.

The Results

The schoolwide implementation of the targeted support system at Loma Linda has led to improved student learning data. The school utilizes iStations, iReady Math, and Interim Measure of Student Success and Achievement (iMSSA) testing to track student progress throughout the year. Progress has been as follows:

- + iMSSA, which assesses student learning in reading, writing and language usage, and math for grades 3-8, demonstrated growth for students in all grades. Third grade students grew 26 percent, 4th grade students grew 30 percent, 5th grade students achieved 19 percent growth, and 6th grade students grew 5 percent.
- + iStations is used to track reading skills for grades K-3. At Loma Linda, 50 percent of students are at the highest three levels: satisfactory, proficient, or mastery.
- + iReady Math scores indicate that 66 percent of Loma Linda's students in grades K-6 have achieved typical growth measurements, with 2nd grade achieving 116 percent growth.

VOZ Collegiate Preparatory Charter School, Albuquerque



Empowering students for success by cultivating 21st century skills

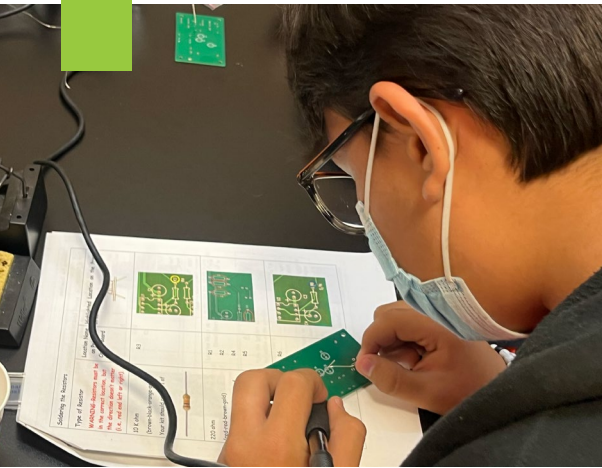


The School

VOZ, also recognized in this report for turning the school community's needs into opportunities through resources and partnerships, is a public charter school serving a 6th-8th grade student population living in the zip code with the state's highest crime rate. For other schools in the area, it is common to have student learning data with single digit proficiency rates. With the understanding of the background and circumstances of its school community, VOZ prioritizes equity, access, and support for their students and families.

The Innovation

VOZ's faculty works to ensure that every student in the school has access to 21st century digital literacy and computer science skills that can prepare them for in-demand, professional careers. All students at VOZ take computer science as a core subject as part of a comprehensive curriculum focused on teaching skills such as project design, software programming, and coding. With these skills, VOZ aims to set its students on a path to success in careers like web or software development. Janessa Player, Dean of Academic Experience at VOZ, emphasizes the urgency of integrating these skills into student learning: *"By promoting computer science in the middle school environment, our scholars are honing their authentic communicative and collaborative skills across subject areas."*



How This Works

The curriculum, which educators at VOZ developed since it's not yet available through traditional resources, includes both subject-specific and general academic skills. The computer science course has a dedicated scope and sequence and students simultaneously develop their academic skills through the course's digital portfolios which measure student growth throughout the year. For example, coded presentations can show a student's understanding of reading concepts, a particular event in history, or an algorithm analysis for math.

Sixth graders at VOZ take a foundational entry-level computing and digital skills pathway; through two additional pathways, 7th and 8th graders in mixed cohorts learn and accelerate at their own pace. In the second pathway, students continue with the development of foundational skills using block-based coding. In the third and more advanced pathway, students use complex coding and programming languages, such as JAVA, Python, and HTML, to build and program microbots. VOZ places students into the second and third pathways by determining their academic level and understanding of computer science skills. Importantly, students remain with the same teacher throughout their pathway progression, allowing them to build relationships, go deeper into the learning, and develop key academic skills along the way.

Community partners such as the Albuquerque Police Department, Air Force Research, and Sandia Labs add to the learning experiences students have at VOZ, in the classroom and out in the field with opportunities for students to learn how to program, build, and fly drones, among others. To build their own skills and to better understand what students need to be successful in these workplaces, teachers at VOZ participate in professional development in the summer and throughout the school year with industry partners and through computer science online programs such as Code.org.

The Must-Haves

To build students' digital literacy and computer science skills, VOZ has established the following practices and systems:

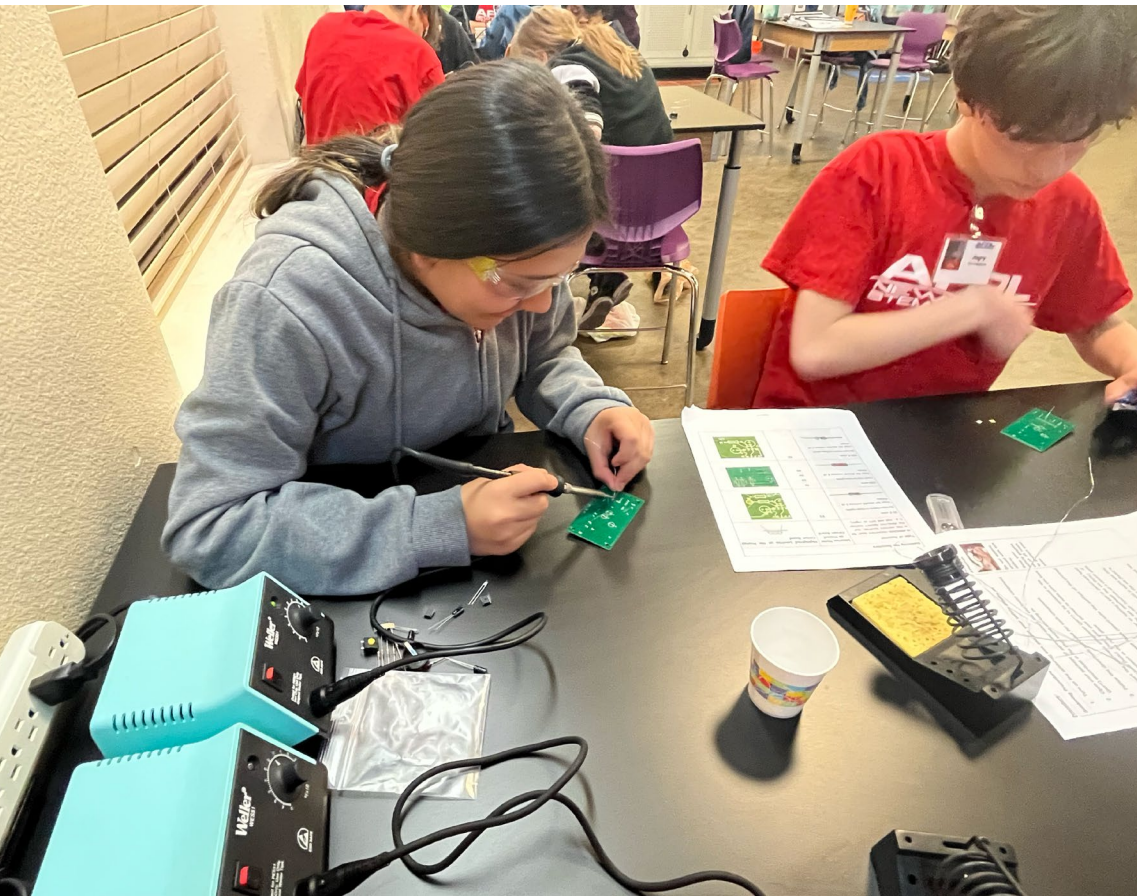
- + Build in the usage of computers and digital tools into daily instruction and provide students and teachers with access to up-to-date technology.
- + Provide teachers with comprehensive professional development on computer science and related applications.
- + Collaborate with industry partners to enhance teacher professional development and student learning through real-world applications.
- + Build a school culture aimed at integrating crucial digital literacy components across core subject areas.

The Results

Despite only opening its doors two years ago, VOZ ranks in the top half of middle schools in New Mexico. Students at VOZ are applying cross-curricular skills in their learning as they would in real life and are making greater strides toward content mastery compared to many of their peers across the state. In math, an essential component of computer science, 60 percent of 6th graders at VOZ are performing at a proficient or advanced level. Sixty-two percent of VOZ's English language learners are also proficient or advanced in math, compared to only 8.4 percent statewide.

VOZ students have showcased their computer science skills that include bot-building, navigation, and coding for large audiences of families and community partners. The students have received many accolades including acceptance into programs with the local Air Force Research Lab's (AFRL) STEM Outreach Program.

"College and career success begins in 6th grade at VOZ; every class and opportunity mimic the research-based environment of a higher-learning institution. Demographics should not predict our students' destiny." —Isaac Rivas-Savell, Director and Founder Voz Collegiate Preparatory



2

INNOVATIVE SUPPORT SYSTEMS

- + Gilbert Sena Charter High School
- + Mesa Middle School

Innovative support systems are focused on developing effective educators and providing differentiated, targeted support based on teachers' needs.

Low-performing schools often [struggle](#) to close the student achievement gap because they simply can not close their teaching effectiveness gap.⁴ Training and support for educators does not conclude once a new teacher completes an educator preparation program, but is essential throughout their careers. Opportunities for relevant learning is key to educators thriving as professionals and accelerating learning for their students.

Gilbert Sena Charter High School, Albuquerque



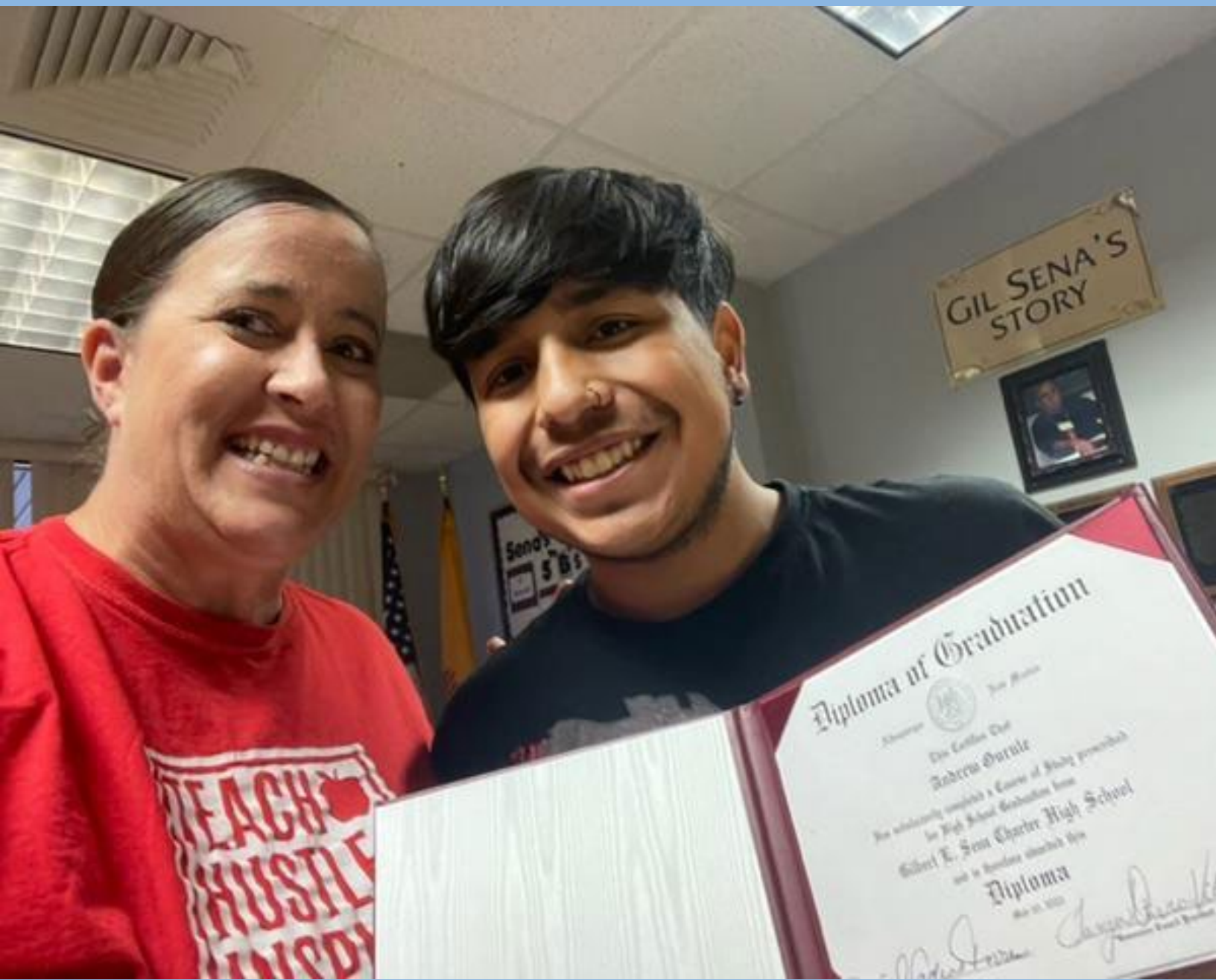
Harnessing teacher voice to transform school culture

The School

Founded in 2007, Gilbert Sena Charter High School serves students who struggle with traditional educational methods. The school's mission is to "engage students and their families in an innovative and supportive environment directed at gaining academic and social skills necessary for personal and career success." To fulfill this mission, Gilbert Sena has first had to address the challenge of retaining both teachers and students at the school. This led to a deliberate shift from guessing what educators needed to explicitly prioritizing their voices and expertise to identify and solve schoolwide challenges.

The Innovation

After realizing that traditional communications methods were ineffective, Gilbert Sena created a system rooted in feedback gathering and collaborative conversation approach. The school launched a quarterly [school climate survey](#) all staff use to share opinions on issues that matter to them. Gilbert Sena uses the survey data to identify key issues and build partnerships around ideas for improvement. The school's system goes beyond the typical survey approach in its focus on evaluating the survey data, highlighting its themes, and creating meaningful opportunities for staff to have conversations based on the data. Through this work, Gilbert Sena centers educators' voices and seeks their expertise on a variety of schoolwide systems and processes.



How This Works

The school's staff take the climate survey at the beginning of the year and then again during each quarter. Gilbert Sena's administrators analyze the survey data to identify common themes which are then presented at an all-staff meeting to begin the process of ongoing improvement. The all-staff meetings are vital for building a shared understanding and providing avenues for input on important issues. At the staff meetings, administrators facilitate collaborative conversations focused on systems, not people, and gather teacher feedback on next steps. The school usually identifies one "larger" challenge that may take additional time and resources and also addresses "smaller" challenges in real time throughout the year. The school community revisits the topics identified in the survey throughout the year, with relevant updates from the quarterly surveys which also serve as indicators of progress. Gilbert Sena's administrators play a vital role in this collaborative system. It is up to them to not only help facilitate the conversations, but coordinate an action plan and follow-through.

As part of this system, Gilbert Sena's teachers and administrators identified the need to improve their teacher evaluation and ensure the system was being used as a tool for teacher professional growth. The school prioritized this as a "larger issue." During the collaborative conversations, the staff shared ideas related to the purpose of an evaluation system, discussed strengths and gaps, and shared ideas for improvement, which were then organized into actions. The school has since developed a new way to evaluate and provide individualized feedback for classroom instruction rooted in a classroom culture rubric which includes specific "look-for's" important for teaching and learning. The administrators now use the rubric as part of bi-weekly classroom walkthroughs to identify goals for improvement in real time, track their progress, and provide additional feedback and support as needed. Teacher evaluations are no longer viewed as a challenge, but are now considered a resource.

The Must-Haves

To create a collaborative school culture that empowers the voices of teachers in shaping the school community, Gilbert Sena has established the following practices and systems:

- + Value teacher voice and create a system for shared accountability.
- + Establish school goals related to quality communication and feedback and collaborative action.
- + Ensure staff meetings are valuable for all participants and are focused on continuous improvement through partnership.
- + Prioritize systems for feedback, facilitated conversations related to the data, and accountability for action.
- + Provide training and support for school leaders to facilitate quality systems of communication with staff.



The Results

By valuing teachers' voices and empowering staff to provide input, Gilbert Sena has made significant strides in both improving student outcomes and retaining its staff. Credit recovery provides students who have previously failed a course with the opportunity to fulfill graduation requirements. After implementing the collaborative communications system, Gilbert Sena saw its student credit recovery for courses increase from 46 percent to 80 percent. The school is projecting retention of more than 90 percent of its current educators this year and little to no enrollment drops for next year. According to Jen Prye, executive director and principal, *"Innovation in education begins with supporting teachers and empowering their voice."* As a next step, Gilbert Sena will be replicating a similar communications and feedback strategy to use with their students in order to support them in taking an active role in their own learning.

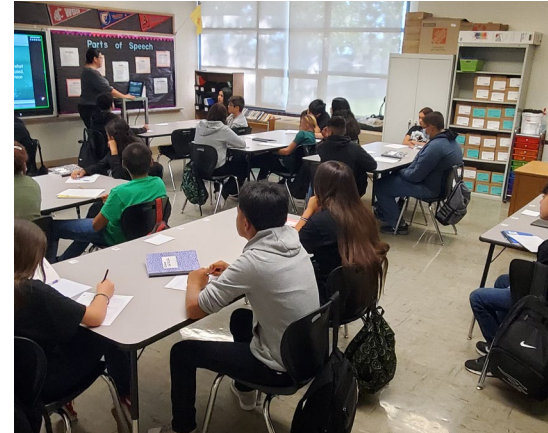
Mesa Middle School, Roswell



Improving student outcomes through differentiated support for teachers

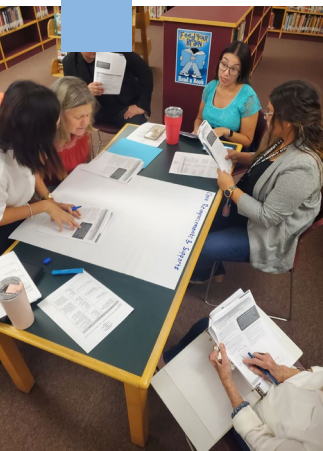
The School

Mesa Middle School is a traditional public school in Roswell that serves just over 400 6th-8th graders in one of the oldest neighborhoods in the city. Mesa is the smallest traditional middle school in the district and its teaching staff has varying levels of experience, from novice and first-year teachers to educators with 20-plus years in the classroom. By using a system of continuous learning and differentiated support for its educators, Mesa is improving teacher retention and ensuring more students have access to a certified and experienced teacher.



The Innovation

Mesa's differentiated support utilizes a variety of indicators such as each teacher's experience, effectiveness, and personal goals to develop a strategy that moves away from equal to individualized support. Mesa also differentiates how often and to what degree teachers meet with administrators and instructional coaches. The model, which includes observation, feedback, professional development, and coaching sessions, is based on the "Get Better Faster" coaching protocol: Go granular, plan, practice, follow up, and repeat.



How This Works

After an initial one-on-one conversation between the teacher and an administrator early in the school year the pair works to identify goals for the upcoming year. A member of the team, including the principal, vice principal, and instructional coach conduct a non-evaluative classroom walkthrough and hold a session to identify areas for improvement and create actionable steps toward achieving goals. These are important steps to help determine the level of support needed through this differentiated system. As part of the system, the coach and the teacher design an individualized plan of action with a timeline and artifacts to measure progress. A new science teacher might receive ongoing access to professional development outside the school setting to support them with student engagement, while a more senior math teacher might get more in-school coaching sessions focused on using data for classroom interventions.

Mesa's system builds a more effective educator workforce by identifying areas of support for each educator and building on their specific skill sets, which in turn empowers teachers to continuously improve their practice and commit to employment long term within the walls of Mesa. As one teacher shared, *"If I don't have success, I am able to discuss my issues [with my coach or administrator] and receive support."*

The Must-Haves

To create a system of support that works for a variety of educators, Mesa has established the following practices and systems:

- + Build a shared understanding that all educators can and should continue to learn and grow within the profession.
- + Create a team with the knowledge and time to support a higher number of staff observations and coaching.
- + Implement flexible scheduling with time within the school day to support one-on-one feedback sessions.
- + Create tools to document individual teacher goals, action plans, and steps toward progress.

The Results

By creating a culture that is more focused on improving professional outcomes for all teachers in the school, Mesa has seen an increase in teacher retention from 20 percent in previous years to 98 percent in the current year. While this differentiated teacher support system is a new practice in the school, Mesa will likely see an improvement in student data, because research indicates that when schools are able to retain quality staff, student learning increases. Student grades have already improved schoolwide: This year, Mesa has seen a 12 percent decrease in the number of students receiving failing grades.

3

INNOVATIVE FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES

- + Amy Biehl High School
- + Chaparral Elementary
- + VOZ Collegiate Preparatory Charter School

Innovative family and community engagement practices move beyond opportunities for passive involvement to active and consistent engagement of families and communities in contributing to students' learning and shaping the school community.

Family and community involvement is critically important to student learning and achievement.⁵ Many New Mexico students are not raised in a nuclear family structure and schools therefore must provide innovative options for communication, engagement, and support so that students can have access to involved adults at school, at home, and in the community. Increasing family and community engagement is key to increasing student achievement for the short term and into the future.

Amy Biehl High School, Albuquerque



Enhanced student learning through community outreach

The School

Amy Biehl High School is a public charter school founded in 1999 by two educators dedicated to helping students achieve academic success in high school and beyond. Since its founding, Amy Biehl has led the way with an innovative approach to education that blends service, college and career preparation, and restorative justice. Amy Biehl was the first high school in the state to require students to pass two dual-credit college courses prior to graduation. This approach has since been adopted statewide. More recently, school leaders and staff have identified new solutions to enhance community engagement and improve educational outcomes.



The Innovation

Students at Amy Biehl partner with community organizations to learn about the community's needs through a social justice lens while engaging in a rigorous academic curriculum throughout their four years of high school. Community partnerships and projects include work with local homeless shelters, JROTC school programs, soup and meal assistance pantries, and harm reduction services for women.

How This Works

Students begin learning about the issues in their community in their freshman year. They work with their peers and community agencies to choose a social justice issue they're passionate about, such as alleviating homelessness or providing support for battered women. Once they've selected their issue, students join an advisory group of peers and community members. They continue focusing on this issue throughout their sophomore year with ongoing learning. In their junior year, students develop a detailed plan for their senior projects. Students complete their community project in their senior year, including 100 hours of community service.

Student Nickolas C. completed his senior project at Garfield Middle School assisting with the after-school JROTC program. *"After my first day of assisting, I knew this was right where I needed to be for my senior project,"* Nickolas stated. He assisted with a variety of things including teaching middle schoolers how to create their engineering notebook for the teen area rocket challenge, helping them prepare for various physical challenges, and developing friendly student competitions to build their skills. Nickolas shared, *"I've changed this program in many positive ways."*

Throughout the four years and in partnership with staff, students like Nickolas take carefully planned-out courses to support their work at the partner organization and build their understanding of the issues their community cares about. This provides students with a purposeful cross-curricular approach to learning academic, service learning, and career skills. Students also have the opportunity to enroll in dual credit courses that support what they are learning and doing at these agencies, strengthening their academic skills as well as their knowledge of their chosen social justice topic.



“What I love about Amy Biehl High School is the diversity and support. We have staff that is extremely supportive and helpful in every way. And the school really is a judgment-free place which is hard to find! I think the teachers really make Amy Biehl a safe place with great academics. I love service learning and our involvement with our community. We are *more than just a school!*”
- Celeste
Class of 2021

The Must-Haves

To support the system that provides real-life experiences for students, Amy Biehl has established the following practices and systems:

- + Establish dual credit availability: Dual credit is available to students through Central New Mexico Community College, a close community and school partner. Students are able to tie dual credit courses directly to their senior project.
- + Provide staff with at least 20 days of annual professional development and collaboration time.

- + Ensure staff buy-in: 90 percent of staff members choose to work at Amy Biehl because of the community engagement initiative and the school culture.
- + Clarify staff roles and responsibilities and communicate with staff, community partners, families and students to gauge progress and successful skills development.

The Results

Amy Biehl is measuring the impact of the senior projects through use of their [career readiness rubric](#) that assesses skills related to communication, follow through, and problem solving. Students at Amy Biehl are outperforming students across the state on the 11th grade SAT assessment in ELA, math and science. During the 2021-22 school year, the students demonstrated proficiency at 68 percent in ELA compared to the state average of 33 percent, 27 percent in math compared to 16 percent, and 69 percent in science compared to the state average of 40 percent.

“Amy Biehl High School is intentional about meeting students’ needs while delivering an innovative curriculum that is engaging and prepares students for life beyond high school.” —Aldis Philipbar, Development Director, Amy Biehl High School

Chaparral Elementary, Santa Fe



Bridging the home-to-school gap to foster student well-being and success

The School

Chaparral Elementary is a traditional public school in Santa Fe serving around 200 students, kindergarten through 6th grade. The school is dedicated to creating an inclusive and supportive environment that engages the families and surrounding community as partners to foster academic success for all of its students. The neighborhood surrounding Chaparral has experienced demographic changes, including an increase in grandparents raising children, single fathers, immigrant families, and students from foster and adoptive homes. Chaparral Elementary has worked to adapt quickly to meet the evolving needs of its students and their families.



The Innovation

Chaparral recognizes the importance of engaging its teachers with their students’ families and with each other, especially after months of virtual learning during COVID-19. The school employs a full-time community-school liaison to help lead these efforts and fosters a multi-faceted approach to building meaningful home-to-school connections, including structured conversations around school and family priorities. To minimize



barriers that many students face, Chaparral serves as a community gathering place for families to access resources such as food and clothing. Through this, families are able to build relationships with each other and develop additional support systems for their children. Many families now work together to organize homework help, transport children to and from school, and keep up to date with school events.

“COVID has had a negative effect on school communities. Daily life is more challenging than before and families are working so diligently to keep their heads above water. Family engagement in our school has provided both students and families a safe, supportive haven. Multiple opportunities have clearly let students and families know they are loved, supported, and appreciated.” —Chaparral parent

How This Works

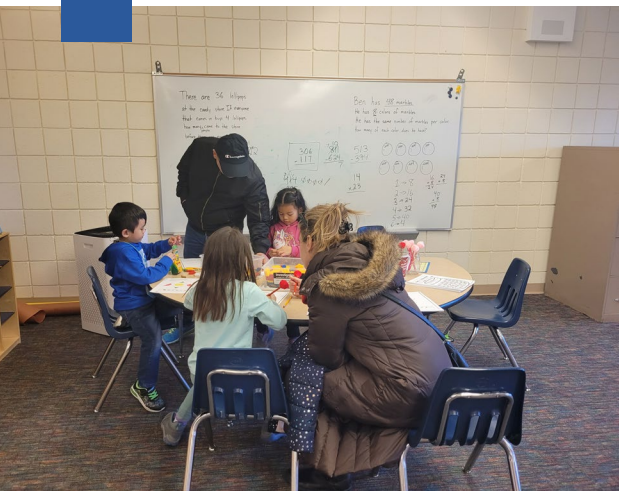
Chaparral's administrators work with teachers to better understand their students' families and create a system of building family connections. Prior to the start of the school year, the school hosts summer events with access to resources like clothing and school supplies. During the school year, events alternate between school-family engagements, such as “coffee with the principal” focused on topics like school safety, and family-to-family connections, such as game nights, arts and crafts, and health and food fairs. Chaparral has improved its system by leaning into the conversations and support needed in order to focus on academics and student growth. In one session, the school focused on how families should talk to students about their mental health and actively encouraged the participants to share their experiences and ideas. In this session and others, families understand that they are not alone in the issues they face. The school offers all events in English and Spanish and continually gauges the events' effectiveness to identify additional needs and support.

The Must-Haves

To bring the school, families, and community together in meaningful ways, Chaparral has established the following practices and systems:

- + Designate a community liaison, counselor, or social worker to provide families with access to necessary resources.
- + Build an understanding of the school community and the families' culture and needs.
- + Form community partnerships around training, activities, and resources for families.
- + Develop an annual calendar of events to enhance community communication and support.
- + Train staff to act as partners to families and the community at-large.





The Results

By expanding beyond the traditional school offerings like parent/teacher conferences and math night, Chaparral has seen an increased involvement of families in its events and activities. During the 2022-2023 school year, over 1,400 adults and children attended Chaparral's events. Because of the schools' emphasis on creating a school community, an annual family cleanup event at the school, held in conjunction with the Great American Cleanup, attracted 150 participants this year, more than double that of last year. An annual survey has indicated that families feel more engaged with the school as partners and have a better relationship with school staff. Student attendance has also increased.

"It's important as a parent to be involved because it creates a bond between teachers, students, and other parents to work together to make the school a safe and great experience for all the kids attending." —Chaparral parent

VOZ Collegiate Preparatory Charter School, Albuquerque



Turning the school community's needs into opportunities through resources and partnerships

The School

VOZ, also recognized in this report for empowering students for success by cultivating 21st Century skills, is a public charter school serving a 6th-8th grade student population living in the zip code with the state's highest crime rate. For other schools in the area, it is common to have student learning data with single digit proficiency rates. With the understanding of the background and circumstances of its school community, VOZ prioritizes equity, access, and support for their students and families.



The Innovation

The community that VOZ serves has unique challenges and needs. Knowing this and understanding that students don't leave these challenges at the school door, VOZ set out to gather in-depth knowledge about its community in order to become a valued and trusted partner. Based on the needs identified by the school's families, such as access to healthcare, VOZ brings in resources and forms partnerships with outside organizations. In addition to these resources and partnerships, VOZ empowers its teachers to serve as resource providers for families, creating an environment of collaboration, trust, and support.

How This Works

To better understand the needs of its families VOZ includes a survey in the enrollment packet. This strategy ensures that all families have a voice in identifying what supports the school should provide. VOZ then commits to monthly family sessions that feature supports aligned with the information the school has learned from the family needs surveys. Examples include a health resource fair and free haircuts for students. In addition to whole family support, VOZ engages with its community partners to connect students with information, resources, and opportunities to which they might not otherwise have access. One example is “lunch bunch,” a Friday lunch session with female students and outside partners, like the district attorney’s office. This event enables the female students on campus to gain access to professionals in the field and learn about different career options. Through this strategic, holistic approach to collecting information and organizing events at the school site, VOZ fills an important resource gap in its school community and empowers student learning and academic success.

The Must-Haves

To create an environment centered around the support for its school community, VOZ has established the following practices and systems:

- + Enable all school staff to focus on additional needs that must be addressed.
- + Implement a holistic approach to teaching and learning that is part of the educational environment.
- + Put in place a strong communications plan rooted in the understanding that not all families have positive experiences with schools.
- + Adopt a strategic approach to collecting information to ensure it is used to drive decisions around support and is tied to resources.

The Results

The school community at VOZ has grown beyond its walls and daily instruction. In addition to the outside partnerships, VOZ teachers have increased their engagement with the entire school community in the process of better supporting students and their families. For example, teachers are leading family lessons on topics like cooking and art. With a strong partnership between the school, students, and families, student learning is something to celebrate: 62 percent of VOZ’s English language learners are proficient or advanced in math compared to the state’s 8.4 percent. VOZ’s school proficiency rates are double, and even triple that of neighboring schools.

“Establish a mindset that it is safe to take risks.” —Isaac Rivas-Savell, Founder and Head of Schools

RECOMMENDATIONS



Innovative Instructional Strategies:

Innovative instructional strategies are designed to engage students, foster critical thinking, and promote deeper understanding of learning standards. Schools such as Gallup High, Loma Linda Elementary, and VOZ Collegiate Charter are making gains in student performance, engagement, and curricular relevancy. These schools are designing career pathways and integrating industry-specific skills to better prepare students for success beyond high school. They are also focused on aligning teaching practices and analyzing student data to make learning rigorous and tailored to individual student needs. By utilizing these strategies, schools can bridge the gap between the classroom and the professional world for students to better prepare them for the challenges and opportunities beyond high school.

- 1. Integrate industry-specific skills and pathways into the curriculum by aligning educational programs with real-world needs and demands, ensuring all students receive a relevant and future-ready education.**

This approach aligns curriculum with real-world needs and demands by incorporating career pathways through which students are equipped with the knowledge and skills required to thrive in the workforce of the future. Students are equipped with the knowledge and abilities necessary to thrive in their chosen fields, enhancing their employability and contributing to economic growth.

- 2. Establish partnerships with industry professionals and experts to facilitate practical, hands-on learning opportunities for students.**

Through experiences provided by industry experts, students gain opportunities to apply learning standards in industry-specific settings. Such partnerships create valuable opportunities for students to receive mentorship and explore potential career paths, preparing them for success in the professional world. Students gain knowledge of careers available to them after high school, fostering a deeper understanding of the skills and knowledge needed to work in respective fields.



3. Align budget, resources, and staff strategy to annual school goals and monitor progress toward growth.

By allocating budgetary resources strategically, schools can prioritize initiatives that directly impact school objectives and learning goals. Maintaining appropriate staffing levels and professional development aligned with those goals and with grade-level standards also ensures progress toward growth. Ongoing evaluation of progress allows schools to identify areas for improvement and make necessary adjustments going forward.

4. Develop a system to accurately measure student learning and use data to provide differentiated support to students through remediation and acceleration.

By implementing assessments carefully aligned with learning standards, schools and districts can gather data to effectively identify students' strengths and areas requiring improvement. This information enables schools to provide both remediation and acceleration opportunities. Utilizing data-driven differentiation enhances educational outcomes and ensures students receive the personalized support they need to succeed.

Innovative Support Systems:

Innovative support systems are critical for fostering a culture of continuous improvement, enhancing instructional practices, and ultimately improving student achievement. Gilbert Sena and Mesa Middle are implementing tailored support systems based on the specific needs of their teachers, actively seeking feedback from their teachers, and gathering data from multiple sources to identify the areas in need of improvement. By promoting a culture of feedback, data utilization, and action planning, schools can ensure that priority issues are addressed in a systematic and measurable manner.

1. Develop a system to gather staff feedback on their experiences, challenges, and suggestions for improvement.

Seeking feedback from staff on a regular basis enables schools to assess the effectiveness of their systems, curriculum, and culture. This allows schools to target areas for improvement, foster staff buy-in for change, and promote teacher retention. Guidelines should be set to show how to effectively utilize the data from these feedback mechanisms, ensuring that it informs decision-making and drives meaningful changes.

2. Utilize teacher evaluation data, climate surveys, and student assessment data to establish teaching and learning goals that align with schoolwide objectives.

By providing differentiated levels of support for teachers of all levels, schools can ensure continuous professional development and improvement in instructional practices on their campus. Schools should gauge the success of the system by analyzing student assessment data and continue to identify areas for improvement.

3. Develop an action plan that addresses the topics identified through teacher feedback and other data.

This action plan should outline specific strategies, timelines, and resources needed to address issues effectively with measurable indicators of growth and progress. A strong action plan will enable schools to track performance and ensure continuous improvements to the instruction students receive. A key piece of the action plan should be regular reporting of data analysis results to staff.

Innovative Family and Community Engagement Practices:

Innovative family and community engagement practices are essential for fostering a collaborative and supportive learning environment. Amy Biehl High, Chaparral Elementary, and VOZ Collegiate Charter exemplify such practices. By integrating service learning, community involvement, and real-world connections in the learning process, these schools cultivate greater engagement among their students. Through innovative engagement strategies, schools can tap into the diverse resources, expertise, and perspectives of families and the community, enriching the holistic educational experience and enhancing outcomes for all students.

1. Ensure the school's needs assessment encompasses the entire school community and establish mechanisms to connect the identified needs with community partnerships and resources.

Developing a school community needs assessment and tying it to available partnerships and resources fosters collaborative efforts between the school, community, and external partners. This approach also enables schools to meet the identified needs and enhance the students' overall educational experience.

2. Build partnerships with outside organizations to expand the pool of resources and opportunities available to the school community.

Using the information gathered on what the school, students, and families need, schools can grow their pool of resources, expertise, and opportunities for their students. These collaborations enable schools to access additional support services, specialized knowledge, funding opportunities, and unique learning experiences that enhance the educational environment and benefit students, families, and staff.

3. Establish strategic collaborations with community organizations to support service-learning opportunities that address social justice issues and community needs.

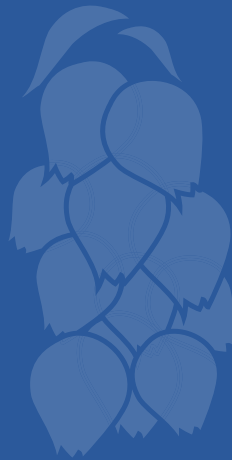
Establishing meaningful collaborations that align with service-learning goals facilitates the development of sustainable and impactful projects that address social justice issues and community needs. This enables students to engage in meaningful experiences while developing essential skills and knowledge for their future.

4. Develop a system for engagement that supports students and their families.

Creating pathways of engagement outside of school time is essential to a holistic approach to education. By recognizing that students' success is influenced by their families' involvement and support, schools can better understand and support individual student needs and create a supportive environment that enhances students' motivation, well-being, and academic achievement, ultimately leading to their long-term educational and personal growth.

CONCLUSION

The narrative of education in New Mexico can and must change because the needs and learning styles of our students have changed. The seven schools highlighted in this report are examples of what is possible when there is strong leadership, a growth mindset, a collaborative environment, and a sense of urgency focused on innovation and improvement. Teach Plus and Teach Plus teacher leaders call on educational leaders at every level to join us to better understand the individual needs of every student and teacher within their schools, enhance instruction, support our educators, and engage our communities—all aimed at improving educational outcomes for our students.



ENDNOTES

- 1 New Mexico Education. (2022). Deeper dive into N.M. NAEP scores reveal troubling truths. Retrieved from: <https://nmeducation.org/deeper-dive-into-n-m-naep-scores-reveals-troubling-truths/>
- 2 ASCD. (2004). What is high-quality instruction? Retrieved from: <https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/what-is-high-quality-instruction>
- 3 Linked Learning Alliance. About the linked learning approach. (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://www.linkedlearning.org/about/linked-learning-approach>
- 4 Barnes, G., & Crowe, E. S. (2006). The cost of teacher turnover in five school districts: A pilot study. National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. Retrieved from: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED497176>
- 5 Hall, Christina M. (2020). The impact of family engagement on student achievement. Retrieved from: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1264345.pdf>

APPENDIX A

Sample rubric used to evaluate nominated schools:

Nominated School:	
Innovative Instructional Practices:	
These practices are focused on student-centered, individualized instruction designed to increase student engagement and ownership in their learning.	
	0- Does not meet 1- Minimally meets expectations 2- Meets expectations 3- Exceeds expectations
School identifies a practice that focuses on student centered, and individualized instruction.	
School's implementation of the practice has produced a measurable increase in student engagement, student learning and/or student performance	
School's identified practice can be replicated in many districts/regions	

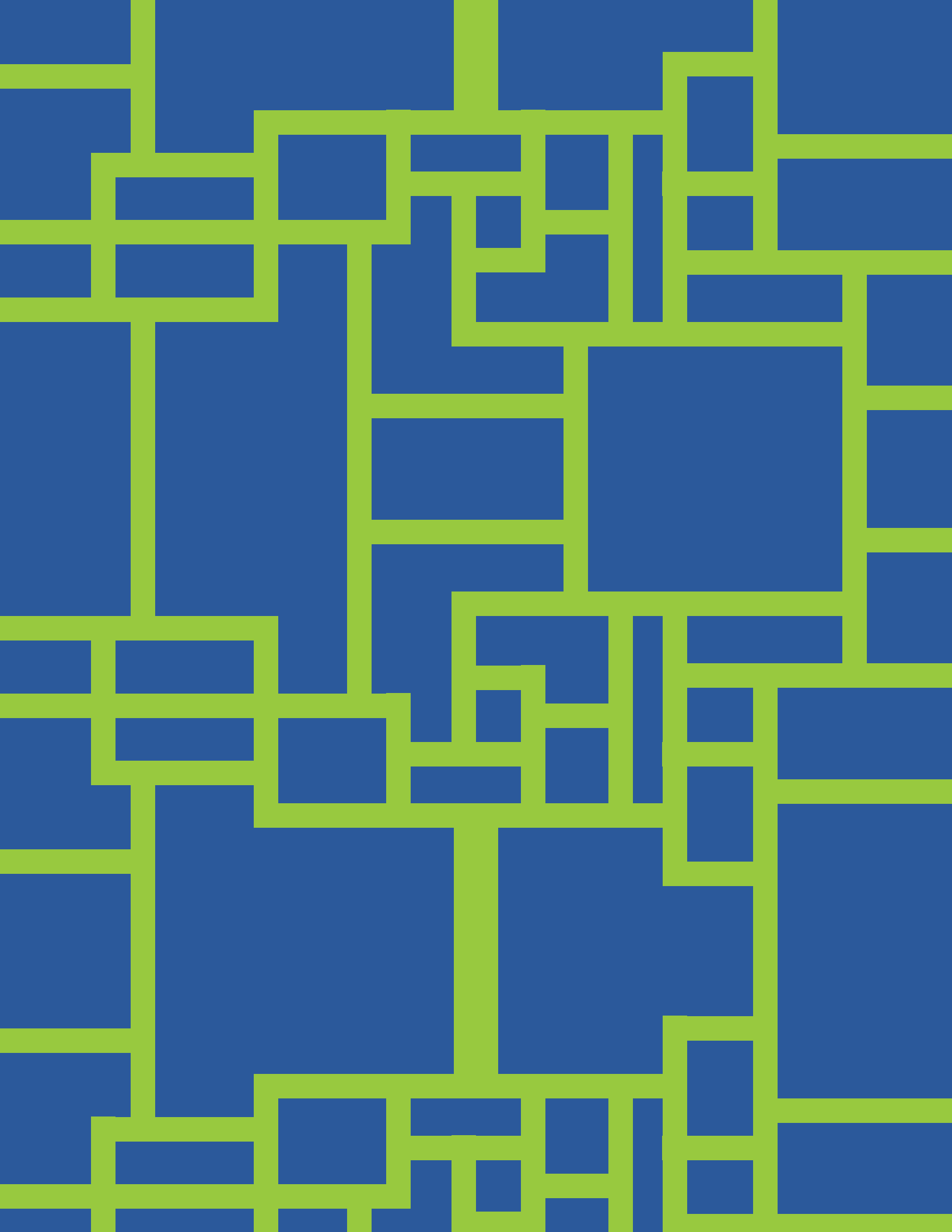
Nominated School:	
Innovative Support Systems: These systems are focused on developing effective educators and on providing differentiated, targeted support based on teacher needs	
	0- Does not meet 1- Minimally meets expectations 2- Meets expectations 3- Exceeds expectations
School provides intensive and effective school-wide support of educators at every level of ability, competency, and experience	
School's system of supporting educators is directly tied to an increase in effectiveness of instructional delivery <u>and</u> student success.	
School's employs a practice that can be replicated in many districts/regions	

Nominated School:	
Innovative Family or Community Engagement Practices: These practices move beyond opportunities for passive involvement to active and consistent engagement of families and communities in contributing to students' learning and shaping the school community.	
	0- Does not meet 1- Minimally meets expectations 2- Meets expectations 3- Exceeds expectations
School employs a practice(s) that consistently engages families/community stakeholders in contributing to student learning and shaping the school community.	
School's practices are inclusive and accessible to all families and community partners	
School's family and community engagement practices can be replicated in many districts/regions	

APPENDIX B

Selected Schools Interview Questions

1. Please tell us more about your school, the population it serves, and any data prior to the implementation of your innovative practice. (Have them submit Number of teacher vacancies, student demographics, student population, and short paragraph about the school community/neighborhood they serve, student outcome data like district or state testing data, school climate data)
2. How did you identify a specific need related to (insert innovation bucket) and how did you determine this practice was needed school wide? (Have them submit pre data/reports)
3. What was the initial process for planning, communicating and implementing X? What resources did you already have or need to obtain in order to implement this plan? How did you create staff buy in? (Ask for examples related to timeline/resources/agendas/examples)
4. What training or PD did you have to implement for staff and/or families to fully implement this system/practices?
5. What improvements have been made as a result of this practice being implemented in your school? (collect data)
6. Are you going to make adjustments to your current plan?
7. What advice do you have for other schools that would try to replicate X?
8. Ask school stakeholders (teacher/student/parent): Why is innovation in education critical to student engagement and success?



ABOUT TEACH PLUS

The mission of Teach Plus is to empower excellent, experienced, and diverse teachers to take leadership over key policy and practice issues that affect their students' success. Since 2009, Teach Plus has developed thousands of teacher leaders across the country to exercise their leadership in shaping education policy and improving teaching and learning, to create an education system driven by access and excellence for all.
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