

I. District-Level Foundations – Ruidoso Municipal Schools: Where Excellence is Expected

A. District Overview

- i. The district’s motivation/intention is that Ruidoso Municipal School District will be the highest performing (academics) district in the state of New Mexico and that each of our schools will be designated as a “school of excellence,” while each student graduates high school prepared for college and career. An overall conclusion (at the time of our “priority” designations) was that our configuration of personnel and instructional practice did not, and still does not, create a learning environment in which ALL students can be successful and that a dramatic change in environment and shift in culture, i.e. a transformational change, must occur. Our theory of action follows that: If we enhance the leadership capabilities and flexibility of our educational leaders, then they will have the capacity to make transformational change. If our leaders make transformational change, then school conditions for learning will improve. If school conditions for learning are improved, then all students will have expanded opportunities for success. If all students have expanded opportunities for success, then overall dramatic school improvement will be realized. The key district strategies to support our priority schools include providing positive district support in operational and site-based flexibility, leadership capabilities and competencies, and necessary resources for effective school practice.
- ii. The general district approach is to implement with fidelity all 11 components of the “Leadership Innovation” model of school improvement. In terms of effective

school practice, the district has already initiated a set of actions focused on enhancing and improving our curriculum-instruction-assessment-data analysis cycle, where the results of current assessments are analyzed for student-, teacher-, and standard-specific information, which in turn, guides curricular decisions, pacing, and implementation, which in turn, guides instructional practice, which is then assessed again. Repeat. Repeat. The district allows not only site, but grade-level flexibility in using data analysis to drive the curriculum-instruction-assessment engine. This flexibility extends to site and grade level scheduling of time, students, and budgetary decisions. The approach is that better-aligned curriculum and curricular materials will be more effectively delivered (instructional practice) producing substantially improved student achievement outcomes.

- iii. Since our schools either received “F” grades or were deemed “priority” the district has partnered with the Priority Schools Bureau (PSB) in participating in the Principals Pursuing Excellence (PPE) program and can evidence success. Currently, the district, through this School Improvement Grant application, again commits to fully partnering with the PSB. Data will be presented showing some current and relative successes; however, until every child is proficient in reading and math at every grade level, and with current PARCC ELA and MATH proficiencies hovering around 25%, there is opportunity for significant growth and improvement.

B. Operational Autonomies

- i. The district has created operational autonomies for the priority school in this application in the following areas and ways:
 - 1) Staffing – school will not be held to rigid teacher/pupil ratio in determining instructional staffing and support needs.
 - 2) School-based budgeting – compared to non-applying district schools, applicant school will be able to determine how school-site funds are budgeted.
 - 3) Use of time during and after school – as long as the state minimum instructional hours are met, applicant school may site-determine how during school hours are scheduled. Additionally, applicant school with grant funding may self-determine after school hours and programs provided.
 - 4) Program selection – since, according to What Works Clearinghouse, there are no significant positively rated literacy, math, or behavioral programs, applicant school may self-select the literacy, math, behavioral and after school programs to be used, provided a procedure/rubric is in place to rate and justify the selection.
 - 5) Educational partner selection – in addition to participating in all required PSB activities, applicant school may self-select an educational partner provided a procedure/rubric is in place to rate and justify the selection.
- ii. Attached as Appendix S (labeled so as not to be confused with any application-identified appendices) is a Board resolution, formally supporting the applicant school in the School Improvement Grant process.

C. District Accountability and Support

- i. The district will ensure that all federal requirements of the “Leadership Innovation” model (11 components) will be fulfilled by:

- 1) School leadership: replacing the principal or retaining a principal who can demonstrate improvement, since the “priority” designation.
- 2) Require principal, district level leader, and board member (whenever possible/allowed by PSB) participation in PPE cohort 5 and/or PSB-approved leadership training/support (for previous PPE graduates).
- 3) The district’s Director of Support Services will provide data specific training and analysis for applicant school to establish and monitor rigorous math and reading goals for individual students and subgroups.
- 4) The Superintendent and Systems Instructional Facilitator will annually assess the performance of the principal for continuation at the applicant school by creating a “summative” principal evaluation based on the following factors: performance (fidelity to the NMTEACH protocol and participation in required school improvement grant trainings and activities), attainment of professional goals (identified and captured on the “RMSD Admin Coaching” form), school’s progress on SIG goals, and fidelity of implementation of required 90-day plans.
- 5) The district will provide operational flexibility/autonomies as described above and monitored by staff and stakeholder feedback.
- 6) The district will allocate up to .50 FTE of an Associate Superintendent’s position to serve as a Systems Instructional Facilitator.
- 7) The district’s Director of Support Services will collect, analyze and disseminate formative and assessment data to identify progress in closing

achievement gaps and in evaluating current curricular programs, materials, and instructional strategies.

- 8) While providing operational autonomy, the district will support the applicant school in developing and delivering high-quality, job-embedded, professional development.
 - 9) The district will support the applicant school in developing a quasi-school based health center to meet the socio-emotional needs of students and families. A primary function of this center will be to support family and community engagement and resource allocation. The district will also support the applicant school in developing a comprehensive after school program that focuses on academic and nonacademic support for students.
 - 10) The district will support the applicant school in identifying and developing at least 1-2 individuals to become school leaders by encouraging their participation in PPE (if allowed) and in the district's Executive Leadership Team (ELT) meetings and trainings.
 - 11) The district will support the applicant school's efforts at enhancing family and community engagement activities.
- ii. The superintendent, Dr. George Bickert, will direct and coordinate the district's turnaround efforts. Dr. Bickert has prior successful principal experience in general school turnaround operations (Tohatchi Elementary: 2006-2009) and in School Improvement Grant operations (Crownpoint High School: 2009-2013). Mr. Jason Edmister, Associate Superintendent, successfully completed 2 years of PPE and will assume a .5 FTE role as Systems Instructional Facilitator. Ms.

Corazon Barsana, Director of Support Services, successfully served as Instructional Coach under a School Improvement Grant at Crownpoint High School (2009-2013) and will direct and coordinate all data collection, analysis, disaggregation, and dissemination. Ms. Mary Reeve, Director of Special Education, has successfully supported a School Improvement Grant school [Crownpoint High School (2009-13)] will support instructional practices for students with disabilities, students involved in Student Assistance Team process, Tier II and III services, and accelerated services for Gifted students. Mr. Clint Taylor, Director of Finance, will oversee the site-based budgeting and expending of grant funds. An organizational chart depicting these relationships to the applicant school is attached as Appendix T.

- iii. In order to provide high quality accountability and support, the Systems Instructional Facilitator will have regular and on-going interaction with the applicant school's principal regarding any/all of the 11 components described in section i. The district leadership identified in section ii, will meet weekly (Wednesday mornings) to discuss applicant school's progress and issues. Systems Instructional Facilitator will then be able to meet with the applicant school's principal prior to the school's designated Wednesday afternoon professional development (PD)/professional learning community (PLC) time. Monthly, the applicant school's principal will join the district leadership team meeting.
- iv. Included as part of "iii."

D. Teacher and Leader Pipeline

- i. The district has an aggressive stance (have recently traveled to job fairs in Oregon, Nevada, Arizona and Texas in addition to those in New Mexico) towards recruiting high-quality teachers and commits to prioritizing the principal and staff of the applicant school in upcoming job fairs. The complete set of teacher interview questions is attached as Appendix U.
- ii. The district will prioritize the hiring of new personnel at the applicant school, including hiring the new principal first (if the principal is being replaced), so the new principal may participate in the hiring of other new, additional staff.
- iii. Currently, three of the four district principals have successfully completed the PPE program. The fourth principal was denied admission to the program because his school was not a “priority” school. Moving forward, the district commits to supporting both the applicant school’s principal in PPE, as well as any identified, upcoming leaders. The district has a monthly training opportunity for building administration called ELT, which stands for Executive Leadership Team, at which many of the major components associated with the Leadership Innovation model are incorporated (data analysis and usage, teacher evaluation) [see Appendix V-Leaders]. Additionally, each district administrator participates in monthly, one-on-one administrative coaching sessions with the superintendent. Identified school leaders will have the opportunity to have these regular sessions with the superintendent as well. The cumulative effect/results of these leadership initiatives has been overall school improvement (evidenced by increases in school report cards). The ultimate goal is that all in-place administrators and leaders-in-

development will have the skills and capabilities to successfully lead significant school improvement processes.

- iv. The district has partnered with Region IX Educational Cooperative to provide high-quality professional development and mentoring for our new teachers. The district has dedicated every Wednesday as an early release day, with release time dedicated to professional development and PLC time (see Appendix V-Teachers). Each school working collaboratively with its union (REA) leadership develops a professional development calendar based on site-specific needs. The district is proposing developing an internal program modeled on the PED's Teachers Pursuing Excellence (TPE) program. The goal would be that teachers develop the capabilities to lead effective classroom and school improvement efforts.
- v. A chart identifying 2016-17 dates, events, delivery agents, expected outcomes and reporting information has been compiled and is attached as Appendix V-Leaders and Appendix V-Teachers.

E. External Partner Recruitment, Screening, and Matching to Priority Schools

- i. Currently, the district does not have any paid external partners providing educational/professional development services (Appendix F). However, the district has formal processes in place for the identifying, screening, selecting, matching, and evaluating of potential external providers. These are included and attached as Appendix F-1. For any and all external educational partnerships, the district will submit and publish a detailed and specific Request For Applications (RFA), in which applicants must address the following: evidence working with a

similar population, evidence of previous partnership in a successful school improvement project. A scoring rubric will be developed so the inclusive school-site scoring/rating team can justify/support the final decision/selection of external partner.

- ii. Applicant school leadership and personnel will meet with district leadership (described previously) early in the school improvement “planning period” (January-February 2017) to identify needs that will need to be met with external providers. RFAs will be developed and advertised as soon as possible after needs identification. Applicant school will have priority and preference over non applicant schools for 2017-18 procurement of these types of services.
- iii. The district will have involvement in the screening/scoring process, but will allow the applicant principal and rating/scoring site-based team to make the final decision (site autonomy). The RFA will be shared with NMPED for help in widespread distribution to assure that quality external providers are reached via the RFA process.
- iv. Not applicable.

F. Enrollment and Retention Policies, Practices, and Strategies

- i. There are no similarities or differences in student populations as all district grade level students attend the same school. All 1st and 2nd graders attend SVP. All 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students attend WME. From the PED-published Parcc 2016 webfiles, the 3rd grade class at WME is the 10th largest in the state, the 4th grade class is the 15th largest in the state and the 5th grade class is the 9th largest in the

state. Additionally, 100% of these students receive free breakfast/lunch, making each class , one of the largest, lower socio-economic classes in the entire state.

- ii. All students at SVP and WME, including SWDs and ELs, have equal access to the same grade level programs and services as non-identified/labeled peers.
- iii. Again, all district grade level students attend the same school so there is no student attendance disproportionality by label and/or category (ex. SWD or EL).

G. District-level Labor and Management Consultation and Collaboration

- i. The district and school level implementation plans as submitted here have been a transparent and collaborative effort involving district leadership, school leadership, district-level union leadership, school-level union reps, and Parent Advisory Committee leaders. Meetings associated with this grant opportunity/application were held on the following dates in September 2016: 2nd, 7th, 13th, 15th, 21st, 26th, 28th, and 29th.
- ii. Appendix C shows district-level and school-level union leadership signatures. Appendix C-1 shows Parent Advisory Committee member signatures. Finally, Appendix C-2 further documents this transparent and collaborative process.

H. Family and Community Engagement

- i. The district will work with and support the applicant school in engaging families and the community in the implementation of interventions on an ongoing basis by providing district-level leadership and participation at applicant school events.
- ii. The district will work with and support the applicant school in engaging parents and family involvement and communication in support student learning by providing district-level leadership and participation at applicant school events and

will help applicant school gauge parent and community satisfaction by providing survey/data collection.

- iii. The district will assure that applicant school events align with Title I requirements for parental involvement as well.

End of district-level foundations