



State of Arizona
Department of Education

Date: September 30, 2016

Ajo High School

Visit date: September 23, 2016

ADE –Support and Innovation Unit – Steve Henneberg

Summary of site visit:

The ADE Education Program Specialist (EPS), Steve Henneberg, from the Support and Innovation Unit visited Ajo High School on September 23, 2016. An extensive interview with the principal, superintendent, and school leadership team was conducted. In addition, several classrooms were observed, and a teacher's focus group was conducted.

It is the opinion of ADE that the administrative team is working diligently to introduce and/or maintain necessary structures at Ajo High School as school improvement efforts continue to be a focus and impact current practices and expectations. Administration is cognizant of changes they would like to make to ensure that an excellent environment for learning continues to be established at Ajo High School. In classes that were observed, the students were demonstrating respect for the teacher and fellow classmates. A positive element of rapport has been established.

A review of SCIP action step progress did not occur during this site visit. Action step review will occur with a later site visit.

Notable Aspects of Ajo High School:

- Systems to enhance improvement have been established and are in place, and refinement of those systems is ongoing.
- More intentional teaching has taken place, and teachers have become more adept at identifying individual student needs.
- Met with the new teaching staff members and the support staff in a more directive way.
- There is a greater focus this year on how students are treated.
- There is a greater emphasis on instructional expectations and ensuring that learning objectives are posted.
- Ensuring that teachers have a long term plan for pacing guides.
- AVID has been added.
- Teacher effectiveness has been established as the highest priority for this school year.
- People are part of the school culture, and want to be here.
- The staff has a mindset whereby they want to learn.
- The students are no longer hesitant to say that they want to go to college.
- Many students still don't believe that they can be successful. The younger students are beginning to realize that it can happen.

Identified Challenges:

- Having the money to ensure good staff.
- Getting the students to understand what is required to be successful.
- Effectiveness of teacher capacity and the retention of good teachers is always a challenge.
- Having the resources to do what needs to be done to run the school district given the restrictions we have to deal with.

Teacher Focus Group Revealed

- Teachers in the focus group indicated that they were not aware of the school's improvement plan.
- Accountability of lesson planning is something that is emphasized more this year. There is more consistency this year, and that is good.
- Teachers indicated that the principal spends time conducting class observations, dealing with disciplinary and parental issues, and consulting with those students that are in danger of failing among others.
- When asked if teachers have a role in decision making at the school, it was indicated that they have a minimal role in the decision making process at the school. There are no teachers on the leadership team.
- Regarding barriers to academic improvement, teachers said that student accountability can be a barrier, and ensuring that there are the necessary teachers in critical positions. The ELL issue was also seen as a challenge.
- Teachers in the focus group indicated the following positive aspects of their school:
 - ✓ A good relationship between the community and the school.
 - ✓ Parent participation has been improving.
 - ✓ Technology at the school is very good.
- Teachers considered the following as the Next Steps that should be focused on going forward for this semester/year?
 - ✓ Provide for SEI instruction.
 - ✓ Additional planning support, and
 - ✓ Better communication

Student Focus Group revealed-- Student focus group did not occur during this site visit.

ADE classroom observations are brief, however, they provide a general snapshot of; classroom environment, academic rigor, student engagement, teacher engagement, monitoring of student learning, teacher providing appropriate and specific feedback to students, effective questioning strategies, posted objectives, success criteria, evidence of academic learning (posted high quality work) etc.

Classroom Observations Revealed:

- Objectives for learning was posted in most of the classrooms observed, and were aligned to the students' current work.
- A climate of mutual respect was apparent in all classrooms, teacher interaction and student engagement in all of the classes was positive.
- Classroom environments represented the content of the course – the physical structure of a classroom is a critical variable in learning, building community and morale. A good learning environment existed in the classrooms.
- Student/student conversation about the learning was observed in some of the classrooms.

- Teachers actively monitored student learning in the classes.
- In the classes observed, students were well behaved and met engagement expectations at the time.
- In a couple of the classrooms, the lesson was very basic and traditional..."sit and get."

Next Steps:

- The leadership team needs to determine what is needed for differentiated PD for our teachers.
- Clear communication to the teachers what the expectations are and to see it happening in the classroom..
- Ensure that the teachers have a good understanding of the data.

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