

Report of the  
External Review Team  
for  
Flowing Wells Unified School District  
#8

1556 W Prince Rd  
Tucson  
AZ 85705-3024  
US

**Dr. David Baker**  
Superintendent

**Date: February 5, 2017 - February 8, 2017**



# Conclusion

The External Review Team noted three themes supportive of student success and organizational effectiveness for Flowing Wells Unified School District #8. Team members saw and heard evidence of a strong collaborative culture based on a student centered philosophy. In the Accreditation Report, the system described efforts to "sustain our organizational culture over time through our hiring practices and our professional development program." During interviews, school board members and system staff recognized collaboration as a strength of the system. A community member described the collaborative nature of the system with the statement, "Everybody can talk to everybody." A bulletin board in the board room was designed by an elementary school and featured a tree decorated with leaves which were colorful outlines of the hands of children. This bulletin board captured the collaborative spirit of the system with the caption, "Like branches of a tree, we all grow in different directions, yet our roots remain as one."

A second theme related to student success was the caring culture of family among system staff and the broader community surrounding the system. Representatives of all stakeholder groups referenced the school system as "like a family." The system completed a review of their purpose and direction during the past two years. The system vision statement embodies the goal in the three words of "Potential Finds Opportunity." Staff expressed a shared commitment to this goal during interviews. Also, the system celebrated the success of students who attended well known universities such as Wellesley and the military academies

Finally, the Team identified the stable, effective leadership that includes the Board of Education, central office and local school leaders as a theme that contributed to organizational effectiveness and student success. All five board members were available for stakeholder interviews on Monday despite work and outside responsibilities. Staff, community members and parents described members of the Board as visible, accessible and committed to serving the system with a focus on doing what's best for students. Moreover, the stakeholders expressed deep trust and respect for system leadership at all levels from the superintendent to local schools.

Through interviews and a review of evidence, the External Review Team acknowledged two challenges of the system. Most importantly, the system faced the challenge of developing and implementing formal processes across all grade levels to clearly link instructional practice, system effectiveness and improved student performance. During the Standards Presentation, system staff illustrated the discrepancies between student achievement on the AzMerit state sponsored test and system prepared formative assessments with charts. Developing formal processes across all grade levels to link daily instructional planning with system goals for continuous improvement was noted as a challenge in the system's Accreditation Report. A component of this challenge was also the task of implementing a structure to evaluate the effectiveness of services to meet the social and emotional needs of students. Because of funding constraints, some schools did not have counselors on staff. However, system personnel delivered support for students' social and emotional needs through volunteer efforts and community support.

A second challenge of the system was that of implementing an accessible technology plan and staff training to coordinate and evaluate information resources in support of educational programs throughout the system.

Funding for capital improvements at the state level was reduced by as much as 85%. Consequently, upgrading of emerging technologies was limited. The system pursued and received E-Rate funding to rebuild their outdated network, but the opportunity for the system to purchase and install new equipment was delayed by the slow compliance process that was part of the application for additional funding support.

Flowing Wells Unified School District #8 has fostered a collaborative culture that was student centered. Staff has worked together to extend a spirit of family to the broader community surrounding Flowing Wells. Effective leadership at the system and school levels supported a positive learning environment that celebrated academic, athletic and leadership success for students and staff. Moreover, system staff embodied the vision expressed in the three words "Potential Finds Opportunity." A culture focused on students and effective leadership serve as a strong basis for future actions and continuous improvement.

## **Improvement Priorities**

The institution should use the findings from this review to guide the continuous improvement process. The institution must address the Improvement Priorities listed below:

- Design and implement systematic data-driven processes for all staff and at all levels to clearly link instructional practice, system effectiveness and improved student performance.