Washoe County School District

Van Gorder Elementary School

2025-2026 School Improvement Plan

Classification: 4 Star School

Mission Statement

We, the staff students, and families of Van Gorder Elementary School, will create a learning community that promotes high academic achievement, personal success, moral responsibility and the fulfillment of higher educational goals for 100% of our students. We Teach Kids!

Vision

As an exemplary school in the Washoe County School District, Van Gorder will be the highest-achieving elementary school in the state of Nevada by providing a safe, engaging, and rigorous environment that will ensure all students reach their highest potential and excel on their educational journey.

Demographics & Performance Information

http://nevadareportcard.nv.gov/DI/nv/washoe/van_gorder_elementary/2025

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Comprehensive Needs Assessment

Student Success

Student Success Areas of Strength

The key strength in the Student Success area is the successful integration of frequent assessment cycles using iReady, which has allowed for timely tracking of both individual and group progress. Weekly reports on iReady usage and student success in lessons have enhanced data-driven decision-making. Teachers now use this data to implement more targeted interventions based on these results, contributing to progress towards meeting at or above standard in Math & ELA on the Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBAC). This past year has shown us that adhering to the prescribed times set forth and following the pathways for children, allows for consistent monitoring and has created a strong foundation for future growth.

Student Success Areas for Growth

This year, Van Gorder Elementary made significant strides in student success when reviewing EOY iReady results. This is due to our focus on teacher development and holding steady to the plan for iReady. In mathematics, the school implemented iReady for frequent assessment and progress monitoring, aiming to have 80% of students in Grades 3-5 meet or exceed SBAC Claim 1 standards. While the data is not yet available to us, early predictors have shown strong progress when reviewing the iReady data. With a new math program implementation (Reveal) and the continued use of additional resources like Fluency Flight and ongoing data tracking, the school plans to continue refining its approach to bridge learning gaps and support students' growth.

Student Success Equity Resource Supports

Student Group	Challenge	Solution
English Learners	• May struggle with language-heavy word problems or academic math vocabulary. • May not fully engage with iReady or Reveal without language scaffolds.	• Incorporate structured academic language supports (sentence stems, bilingual resources, visual supports). • Offer small-group or push-in support with an ELD focus during math. • Use math vocabulary walls and targeted instruction on key terms. • Translate family resources to increase home support and understanding.
Foster/Homeless	• Attendance inconsistency can lead to gaps in understanding and missed iReady diagnostics or math instruction. • May lack access to technology at home to practice or complete online components.	• Provide consistent access to school-based devices and time during the day for iReady usage. • Partner with community services to support stable attendance and basic needs. • Ensure staff are aware of which students are in transition and plan interventions accordingly (e.g., prioritized check-ins, catch-up sessions).
Free and Reduced Lunch	• May experience additional stressors that affect focus and engagement in learning. • Less likely to have access to enrichment outside school.	• Ensure equitable access to interventions, before/after school math help, or clubs. • Build strong family-school connections to share free math practice resources. • Provide targeted, small-group instruction during the school day to reduce the need for external support.
Migrant/Title1-C Eligible	N/A	

Student Group	Challenge	Solution
Racial/Ethnic Minorities	• Implicit bias can affect teacher expectations or how behavior/achievement is interpreted. • Historical underrepresentation in advanced math pathways or enrichment opportunities.	• Provide professional development in culturally responsive teaching and math instruction. • Review data by race/ethnicity to ensure equity in outcomes and identify trends. • Celebrate math achievement among all demographics; use student voice in goal setting.
Students with IEPs	• May not receive sufficient support if iReady or Reveal lessons aren't fully adapted. • Risk of falling behind peers if instruction isn’t aligned with individualized goals.	• Ensure iReady diagnostic accommodations are in place and followed. • Use co-teaching models or paraprofessional support during core math instruction. • Align Reveal and iReady lessons with IEP goals and provide scaffolded support for conceptual understanding.

Problem Statements Identifying Student Success Needs

Problem Statement 1 (Prioritized): A concern regarding students' performance in meeting or exceeding the standards on the Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBAC) for mathematics remains. While we have been highly focusing on Claim 1, focusing on students' ability to demonstrate proficiency in understanding and applying mathematical concepts. Despite the curriculum's emphasis on mathematical skills, a number of our students do not meet standards. Please note that we will remain committed to this goal as we implement a new math curriculum (Reveal) in SY 25/26.
Critical Root Cause: Resource Constraints: Our school might lack adequate resources, such as SBAC aligned materials, interactive tools, and specialized math intervention programs, necessary to create an environment conducive to improving mathematical proficiency. Teacher Readiness: Disparities in teachers' familiarity with effective math teaching techniques and strategies may lead to inconsistent delivery.

Adult Learning Culture

Adult Learning Culture Areas of Strength

In the Adult Learning Culture area, teachers have shown strong commitment to implementing the *Teacher Clarity Playbook* strategies, focusing on communicating learning intentions and success criteria more effectively. Professional Development (PD) sessions, presented in collaboration with RPDP, have been well-received, with staff actively engaging in the modules. The combination of early-release Wednesdays and dedicated PD days has provided an effective structure for ongoing learning. Additionally, there is a growing culture of collaboration, as teachers express interest in observing peers to strengthen their own practice and application of the Teacher Clarity strategies.

Adult Learning Culture Areas for Growth

In terms of teacher development, the focus was on implementing strategies from the *Teacher Clarity Playbook* to improve communication of learning intentions and success criteria. Professional development sessions were well-received, though teachers felt more time was needed to dive deeper into the modules and collaborate with their peers. Observational learning and further PD will help sustain this growth next year.

Adult Learning Culture Equity Resource Supports

Student Group	Challenge	Solution
English Learners	• Learning intentions and success criteria may be presented in language that is too complex or abstract. • ELLs may not fully grasp what success "looks like" if it's not modeled or made visual.	• train teachers to translate learning intentions into student-friendly, simplified, and visual language. • Provide sentence frames and bilingual scaffolds as part of daily objectives. • Embed opportunities for ELL students to restate objectives in their own words during lessons.

Student Group	Challenge	Solution
Foster/Homeless	• Inconsistent attendance may lead to confusion if learning intentions are not revisited or reinforced regularly. • These students may struggle with connecting lessons to a bigger picture of progress if success criteria are not clearly re-anchored.	• Encourage teachers to display and reference learning goals daily in consistent locations. • Use quick, formative checks aligned to the success criteria to gauge understanding after absences. • Train teachers to embed recap/review routines that benefit mobile learners.
Free and Reduced Lunch	• May benefit less from instruction if the connection between learning objectives and real-world application isn't clear. • If lessons lack clarity, students with fewer academic supports at home may fall behind more easily.	• Encourage PD sessions to emphasize real-world relevance of learning intentions. • Model how to break success criteria into manageable, scaffolded steps. • Train teachers to give explicit feedback based on success criteria to build confidence.
Migrant/Title1-C Eligible	N/A	
Racial/Ethnic Minorities	• Implicit bias may influence how learning intentions and success criteria are communicated or enforced. • Students may not see themselves reflected in examples or learning goals, impacting engagement.	• Include culturally responsive pedagogy in PD—e.g., how to use culturally relevant texts, examples, or visuals when crafting objectives. • Encourage peer observation to reflect on inclusive instructional practices. • Use student work samples from diverse learners to model success criteria.

Student Group	Challenge	Solution
Students with IEPs	• General education teachers may struggle to align lesson objectives with IEP goals or accommodate success criteria effectively. • Students may become discouraged if success criteria are presented at grade level without scaffolds.	• Integrate special education staff into PD to co-develop strategies for aligning learning intentions with IEP accommodations/ modifications. • Provide PD on breaking down objectives and criteria into accessible steps (e.g., visual rubrics, tiered goals). • Model differentiated examples of success in classrooms and PLCs.

Problem Statements Identifying Adult Learning Culture Needs

Problem Statement 1 (Prioritized): At Van Gorder, there exists a challenge in effectively conveying learning intentions and success criteria to our students consistently across all content areas. Currently, students often lack a clear understanding of what they are expected to learn and how their progress will be evaluated. This communication gap hinders their ability to engage actively in their learning process.
Critical Root Cause: Insufficient Student Involvement: If students are not given the opportunity to participate in setting their learning goals or reflecting on their progress, they might not feel a sense of ownership over their education. This can lead to a lack of motivation and a disconnect from the learning process. Inconsistent Communication Methods: There might be inconsistency in how they are communicated.

Connectedness

Connectedness Areas of Strength

Despite the rise in chronic absenteeism over the past few years—a trend influenced initially by COVID-related exclusions and now compounded by non-excused absences—our school has demonstrated a strong and consistent commitment to engaging families in conversations about the importance of regular school attendance. Through a multi-tiered communication approach, we ensure families are supported and well-informed.

We utilize Class DoJo as a daily outreach, keeping parents updated and connected to classroom expectations and attendance patterns. Timely attendance letters are issued to notify families of attendance concerns, providing clarity around excused versus unexcused absences. Our team conducts personalized phone calls to discuss concerns directly, offer support, and build relationships. Attendance trackers are actively used to monitor trends, enabling early identification and response to developing patterns. When needed, we facilitate meetings with our school counselor, creating a collaborative space to identify barriers, provide resources, and develop individual attendance plans.

This layered approach reflects our belief that improving attendance requires both accountability and partnership with families. As a result, we continue to strengthen trust and engagement with our community while addressing one of the most persistent challenges in post-COVID education.

Connectedness Areas for Growth

While our school has established effective systems for family communication and support around attendance, we have identified an area for growth in reaching families who have recently joined our community due to district rezoning. Data shows a noticeable increase in chronic absenteeism among these students, suggesting that additional outreach and onboarding efforts may be needed to ensure these families understand attendance expectations, procedures for excusing absences, and the importance of daily engagement.

Many of these families are still building connections with our school culture, and may not yet feel comfortable navigating attendance policies or seeking support. To address this, we are exploring strategies such as targeted welcome resources, early check-ins with newly enrolled students and families, and enhanced collaboration with our school counselor to proactively build relationships and reduce barriers.

Focusing on this subgroup will allow us to extend our strong attendance practices and ensure that all families—regardless of how recently they joined our school—feel informed, supported, and empowered to prioritize regular school attendance.

Connectedness Equity Resource Supports

Student Group	Challenge	Solution
English Learners	• New ELL families may not fully understand school attendance expectations due to language barriers. • Important information may not be accessible if not translated or interpreted effectively.	• Provide translated welcome packets and videos that include key attendance policies and procedures. • Use bilingual family liaisons or interpreters during early check-ins. • Incorporate visual tools and infographics to explain routines and expectations clearly.
Foster/Homeless	• Families experiencing housing instability often struggle with transportation, paperwork, and consistent communication. • May not receive onboarding materials due to address changes or other logistical issues.	• Connect families immediately with the McKinney-Vento liaison and counselor upon enrollment. • Ensure transportation options and attendance waivers are discussed upfront. • Offer flexible communication methods (texts, phone, in-person) and provide immediate access to support services.
Free and Reduced Lunch	• These families may face challenges such as inconsistent transportation, work schedule conflicts, or lack of understanding of excused/ unexcused absences. • May hesitate to engage due to prior negative experiences with institutions or feelings of intimidation.	• Provide proactive, judgment-free communication that explains the *why* behind attendance importance. • Share attendance-friendly tips and supports in non-threatening ways (e.g., newsletters, robocalls, community nights). • Partner with local resources to support families in crisis (e.g., food, clothing, transportation help).
Migrant/Title1-C Eligible	N/A	

Student Group	Challenge	Solution
Racial/Ethnic Minorities	• Families may feel disconnected from school culture if materials and outreach are not culturally relevant or inclusive. • Distrust of institutions due to historical or personal experiences can reduce participation in onboarding or communication efforts.	• Ensure onboarding and outreach reflect cultural diversity and avoid “one-size-fits-all” communication. • Include trusted community members in welcome events and orientation efforts. • Use inclusive language and culturally responsive practices in all family materials and interactions.
Students with IEPs	• Transitions for these students can be especially challenging, and absences may increase if families don’t feel the new environment is supportive. • Families may be unsure how absences impact services or how to communicate special needs early.	• Schedule immediate IEP review meetings for newly enrolled students to align supports quickly. • Ensure onboarding includes a point of contact for special education questions and support. • Provide early outreach from case managers to build trust and open communication lines.

Problem Statements Identifying Connectedness Needs

Problem Statement 1 (Prioritized): At Van Gorder Elementary, chronic absenteeism has increased in recent years. While COVID-related exclusions initially contributed to this rise, data indicate that absenteeism continues at elevated levels, often due to reasons that do not meet the criteria for excused absences (e.g., lack of medical documentation). This suggests a potential disconnect between school expectations and family understanding of attendance policies. Strengthening family connectedness and ensuring clear, supportive communication about attendance procedures and the importance of daily engagement are critical areas for improvement.
Critical Root Cause: Chronic absenteeism at Van Gorder Elementary appears to be driven by a lack of consistent family engagement and understanding regarding the importance of regular school attendance and the requirements for excused absences. Nationally, schools are seeing a troubling rise in chronic absenteeism, with many families increasingly normalizing missed instructional time due to non-urgent issues, family travel, or unclear perceptions of school attendance policies. This mirrors patterns in our own school community, where a growing number of absences do not meet district guidelines for excusal. These trends point to a need for stronger family-school partnerships, clearer communication around attendance expectations, and proactive outreach that supports all families in prioritizing daily student attendance.

Priority Problem Statements

Problem Statement 1: A concern regarding students' performance in meeting or exceeding the standards on the Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBAC) for mathematics remains. While we have been highly focusing on Claim 1, focusing on students' ability to demonstrate proficiency in understanding and applying mathematical concepts. Despite the curriculum's emphasis on mathematical skills, a number of our students do not meet standards. Please note that we will remain committed to this goal as we implement a new math curriculum (Reveal) in SY 25/26.

Critical Root Cause 1: Resource Constraints: Our school might lack adequate resources, such as SBAC aligned materials, interactive tools, and specialized math intervention programs, necessary to create an environment conducive to improving mathematical proficiency. Teacher Readiness: Disparities in teachers' familiarity with effective math teaching techniques and strategies may lead to inconsistent delivery.

Problem Statement 1 Areas: Student Success

Problem Statement 2: At Van Gorder, there exists a challenge in effectively conveying learning intentions and success criteria to our students consistently across all content areas. Currently, students often lack a clear understanding of what they are expected to learn and how their progress will be evaluated. This communication gap hinders their ability to engage actively in their learning process.

Critical Root Cause 2: Insufficient Student Involvement: If students are not given the opportunity to participate in setting their learning goals or reflecting on their progress, they might not feel a sense of ownership over their education. This can lead to a lack of motivation and a disconnect from the learning process. Inconsistent Communication Methods: There might be inconsistency in how they are communicated.

Problem Statement 2 Areas: Adult Learning Culture

Problem Statement 3: At Van Gorder Elementary, chronic absenteeism has increased in recent years. While COVID-related exclusions initially contributed to this rise, data indicate that absenteeism continues at elevated levels, often due to reasons that do not meet the criteria for excused absences (e.g., lack of medical documentation). This suggests a potential disconnect between school expectations and family understanding of attendance policies. Strengthening family connectedness and ensuring clear, supportive communication about attendance procedures and the importance of daily engagement are critical areas for improvement.

Critical Root Cause 3: Chronic absenteeism at Van Gorder Elementary appears to be driven by a lack of consistent family engagement and understanding regarding the importance of regular school attendance and the requirements for excused absences. Nationally, schools are seeing a troubling rise in chronic absenteeism, with many families increasingly normalizing missed instructional time due to non-urgent issues, family travel, or unclear perceptions of school attendance policies. This mirrors patterns in our own school community, where a growing number of absences do not meet district guidelines for excusal. These trends point to a need for stronger family-school partnerships, clearer communication around attendance expectations, and proactive outreach that supports all families in prioritizing daily student attendance.

Problem Statement 3 Areas: Connectedness

Comprehensive Needs Assessment Data Documentation

The following data were used to verify the comprehensive needs assessment analysis:

Student Success

- End-of-Unit Assessments
- Smarter Balanced (SBAC)
- Student Climate Survey, Student Voice
- Other
    - i-Ready

Adult Learning Culture

- Administrator evaluation
- Evaluation(s) of professional development implementation and impact
- Professional Development Agendas
- Staff surveys and/or other feedback
- Study of best practices

Connectedness

- Attendance
- Behavior
- Enrollment
- Other
    - Phone Call Logs
    - Climate Survey

Inquiry Areas

Inquiry Area 1: Student Success

SMART Goal 1: The goal is to enhance elementary school students' performance in meeting Claim 1 standards of the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) by implementing a comprehensive approach that involves frequent assessment, data analysis, and the establishment of professional learning communities (PLCs). This initiative aims to improve mathematics, bridging the gaps in students' understanding and application of key concepts. By the end of the academic year, at least 80% of Van Gorder Grades 3-5 students will demonstrate significant progress towards meeting Claim 1 standards in mathematics, as evidenced by scoring "At or Above Standard" on the SBAC assessment and deeper engagement with the subject matter.

Aligns with District Goal

Formative Measures: SBAC, Walkthrough Data, Annual Observation Data on Instruction, Participation in Professional Development around Mathematics

Improvement Strategy 1 Details	Status Checks		
Improvement Strategy 1: iReady/MTSS	**Status Check**		
	Nov	**Feb**	**May**
	No review	No review	No review

Action #	Actions for Implementation	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline
1	Once collected, we will analyze the data to identify specific skill gaps, misconceptions, and patterns of struggle to then utilize and inform instructional decisions and adjust teaching strategies accordingly. Based on data analysis, develop targeted action plans within iReady and MTSS that address the identified skill gaps. Implement differentiated instruction and intervention strategies to support struggling students. Teacher Development: Providing continuous professional development opportunities to teachers, focusing on effective math teaching techniques, differentiated instruction, and strategies to cater to diverse learning needs. Curriculum Enhancement: Reviewing and enhancing the math curriculum to incorporate a variety of engaging materials that align with students' interests and aptitude levels. Math Support Initiatives: Implementing targeted math intervention programs to assist struggling students, offering additional support and personalized attention to enhance their math skills. Parental Engagement: Involving parents through workshops, communication channels, and resources to promote math-related activities at home and foster a supportive learning environment. Technology Integration: Infusing educational technology and digital resources into math education to augment students' interaction with mathematical concepts and create a more immersive learning experience using tools like iReady. Data-Driven Instruction: Regularly evaluating students' mathematical proficiency and using data to tailor teaching approaches to individual requirements and monitor progress over time.	Administration & Teaching Staff	SY 2025-26

Position Responsible: Administration & Teaching Staff

Evidence Level
Level 2: Moderate: MTSS
Level 3: Promising: i-Ready

Problem Statements/Critical Root Cause: Student Success 1

SMART Goal 1 Problem Statements:

Student Success
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Inquiry Area 2: Adult Learning Culture

SMART Goal 1: As a school-wide Professional Development focus, 100% of Van Gorder teachers will implement strategies from the Teacher Clarity Playbook by Douglas Fisher/Nancy Frey to improve the communication of learning intentions and success criteria, resulting in increased student engagement, ownership of learning, and meta-cognitive skills development in meeting the essential learning outcomes.

Aligns with District Goal

Formative Measures: Walkthrough Data, PLC Meetings with Data Review, Annual Observation Data

Improvement Strategy 1 Details	Status Checks		
Improvement Strategy 1: PLCs	**Status Check**		
	Nov	**Feb**	**May**
	No review	No review	No review

Action #	Actions for Implementation	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline
1	Implement structured weekly PLC meetings with explicit agendas to discuss instructional practices, student data, and components of The Teacher Clarity Playbook. Analyze and dissect grade level subject standards to determine appropriate rigor of instruction. Within PLC meeting, teachers will collaborate to define clear learning intentions for daily lessons across all subject areas, aligned with curriculum standards and student needs. Lesson plans will identify formative assessments that will be used to inform and adjust instruction. Implement peer observation and feedback protocols and share observation takeaways during PLC meetings to promote continuous improvement.	Administration	SY 2025-26

Position Responsible: Administration

Evidence Level
Level 2: Moderate: PLC

Problem Statements/Critical Root Cause: Adult Learning Culture 1

SMART Goal 1 Problem Statements:

Adult Learning Culture
Problem Statement 1: At Van Gorder, there exists a challenge in effectively conveying learning intentions and success criteria to our students consistently across all content areas. Currently, students often lack a clear understanding of what they are expected to learn and how their progress will be evaluated. This communication gap hinders their ability to engage actively in their learning process. **Critical Root Cause**: Insufficient Student Involvement: If students are not given the opportunity to participate in setting their learning goals or reflecting on their progress, they might not feel a sense of ownership over their education. This can lead to a lack of motivation and a disconnect from the learning process. Inconsistent Communication Methods: There might be inconsistency in how they are communicated.

Inquiry Area 3: Connectedness

SMART Goal 1: The percentage of students identified as chronically absent in the 25-26 school year will decrease by 3% when compared to the 24-25 SY percent identified as chronically absent. From 9% to 6% for SY 25/26.

Aligns with District Goal

Formative Measures: Daily Attendance Reports, BIG, MTSS Meetings.

Improvement Strategy 1 Details	Status Checks		
Improvement Strategy 1: Family Engagement	**Status Check**		
	Nov	**Feb**	**May**
	No review	No review	No review

Action #	Actions for Implementation	Person(s) Responsible	Timeline
1	Communication Strategy: Utilize email, newsletters, phone calls, and social media to consistently inform families about the importance of regular attendance and the negative impact of chronic absenteeism. Individualized Attendance Plans: Collaborate with families to create tailored attendance plans for students at risk of chronic absenteeism, offering personalized support. Incentives & Recognition: Implement a system to recognize and reward students and families who show significant improvement or maintain good attendance. Community Involvement: Encourage parents and guardians to engage in the school community through volunteering, fostering stronger school-family connections.	None	SY 2025-26

Position Responsible: None

Evidence Level
Level 3: Promising: Family Engagement

Problem Statements/Critical Root Cause: Connectedness 1

SMART Goal 1 Problem Statements:

Connectedness
Problem Statement 1: At Van Gorder Elementary, chronic absenteeism has increased in recent years. While COVID-related exclusions initially contributed to this rise, data indicate that absenteeism continues at elevated levels, often due to reasons that do not meet the criteria for excused absences (e.g., lack of medical documentation). This suggests a potential disconnect between school expectations and family understanding of attendance policies. Strengthening family connectedness and ensuring clear, supportive communication about attendance procedures and the importance of daily engagement are critical areas for improvement. **Critical Root Cause**: Chronic absenteeism at Van Gorder Elementary appears to be driven by a lack of consistent family engagement and understanding regarding the importance of regular school attendance and the requirements for excused absences. Nationally, schools are seeing a troubling rise in chronic absenteeism, with many families increasingly normalizing missed instructional time due to non-urgent issues, family travel, or unclear perceptions of school attendance policies. This mirrors patterns in our own school community, where a growing number of absences do not meet district guidelines for excusal. These trends point to a need for stronger family-school partnerships, clearer communication around attendance expectations, and proactive outreach that supports all families in prioritizing daily student attendance.

Community Outreach Activities

Activity	Date	Lesson Learned
Back to School Meet & Greet	8/8/2025	
Family Classroom Visits	8/26/25 & 8/27/25	
Parent Teacher Conferences	10/24 - 10/30/2025	
STEM Family & SNJ Night	02/24/2026	
4th Grade Westerward Movement PerFormances	05/13/26 & 05/14/26	