



School/District Pathway Proposal Template: Accountability Clock Hearing

Overview

Minnequa Elementary is a pre-K through 5th grade school serving approximately 340 students in the Historic Bessemer neighborhood of Pueblo, Colorado. The school is one of seven schools that form Pueblo District 60's innovation zone, which was established in 2016. Although Minnequa moved from a turnaround to priority improvement plan type in 2018, the school is entering the sixth year on the accountability pathway due to consistently low academic achievement and growth across all grade levels and a number of student subgroups.

In addition to continued innovation status (recommended by the 2018 state review panel), the district is proposing the addition of an external manager to direct the leadership and academic systems at the school beginning with the 2019-2020 school year. The district has identified the Relay Graduate School of Education's Regional support partnership to engage in this role. The Regional Support Partnership offered by Relay provides an intensive and detailed level of support for school leaders as they implement best practice school improvement initiatives. Minnequa will also capitalize on a recently received Early Literacy Grant (ELG) to strengthen teacher capacity and student learning in the area of literacy.

The addition of an experienced partner with a track record of supporting academic success will enable Minnequa elementary to analyze root causes of persistent challenges, refine and improve their systems, and ensure short and long term academic achievement and growth measures, allowing the school to move forward and off of the accountability clock within the next two years.

The elements of the proposed pathway are as follows:

Innovation Status:

The school will continue as part of the district's innovation zone, allowing flexibility in curriculum and assessment selection, schedule and calendaring, professional development, and other factors impacting the instructional program. This was the recommendation of the state review panel in 2018, and students who began when the school first received innovation status in 2016 will participate in State assessment testing for the first time in the spring of 2020.

External Management:

Minnequa will engage with Relay GSE via an enhanced regional support partnership commencing in the 2019-20 school year. Relay GSE will serve as the decision-making authority in the areas of Curriculum, Assessment, and Professional Development for leadership and staff. The Relay Coach will provide support, progress monitoring, and oversight via on site (monthly) and virtual coaching (every other week) of school leadership. Additionally, district leadership will receive ongoing coaching support throughout the partnership. In conjunction with the



Executive Director of Continuous Improvement and Innovation, Relay GSE will provide semester updates to the Local Board of Education.

Implementation of the Early Literacy Grant and Mathematics Consulting:

Minnequa will take full advantage of the awarded literacy grant to maximize the impact of its literacy program throughout the school including the hiring of additional literacy coaching support, ongoing professional development for tier one and intervention, and the acquisition of additional literacy diagnostic tools and interventions. Additionally, Minnequa elementary will continue to work with 2 Partner Mathematics Consulting to implement a comprehensive and aligned academic program for Math. This collaboration (which aligns to district initiatives) will provide on site supporting and consultation for the implementation of Math Intervention and tier one instruction.

Details of the proposed pathway are further identified in subsequent sections of this document.

Background

Minnequa Elementary School is a Pre K through 5th-grade Innovation school located in the heart of the Bessemer neighborhood in Pueblo, CO. The rich history in the area is linked to the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company. The school was originally opened in 1902 and continues to serve local students who live within a mile radius of the school. Minnequa Elementary School has a student population of approximately 340 students with a free and reduced lunch percentage of 96.36%. Additionally, many students enter school with a limited vocabulary, social-emotional needs, and are academically below grade level. High student mobility, attendance rates, and staff turnover also impact student learning. Although Minnequa has sought to meet many challenges over the last several years in regards to academic achievement and growth the school is in its sixth year on the accountability clock.

The staff at Minnequa and the surrounding community believe that students are intelligent and capable of meeting rigorous academic learning expectations. Their stated mission is to “engage scholars in authentic learning that empowers them to reach their highest potential in a changing global community.” They believe that by engaging students in rigorous academic curriculum in conjunction with mindful habits, they can create proficient students that are prepared for secondary education and beyond. Their participation in the Innovation Zone allows the school to build upon their current efforts in order to engage in meaningful work around student learning. The additional time, flexibility and resources allow them to prepare students for success in our local and global community.

Minnequa Elementary School’s Vision: *We will create a culture of learning that develops all scholars into tomorrow’s extraordinary citizens.*

Mission: *We will engage scholars in authentic learning that empowers them to reach their highest potential in a changing global community.*



Approximately 10% of the students at Minnequa are English Language Learners and nearly 17% of the students are students with disabilities. To meet the needs of students with an IEP, Minnequa I supports a Significant Learning Disability (SLD) program, Speech Language, and an Intellectual Disability (ID) program. Approximately 10% of the student population has a documented Response to Intervention plan in place and about 15% of students in Kindergarten through 3rd grade are on a READ plan.

Minnequa Elementary School employs 3 full time reading interventionists, 2 instructional coaches, 1 RtI/GT Coordinator, a full-time counselor, a full-time community advocate, an Assistant Principal, and a full-time ELD teacher. Minnequa currently has two full-day four-year-old preschool programs. There are 3 Kdg. classes, 2 first grade classes, 2-second grade classes, 2 third grade classes, 3 fourth grade classes, and 3 fifth grade classes.

Analysis of student performance

For the last 5 years, Minnequa has scored below both district and state averages on their annual state assessments for both English Language Arts and Mathematics. This is true across the majority of grade levels and subgroups. Additionally, local academic data such as DIBELS indicates that the school has not made significant improvements during the last several years. A review of the last three years of academic data highlights these challenges.

CMAS Assessment Data:

Academic Achievement:

- In English Language Arts, the school did not meet expectations for students at any grade level or for any subgroup between 2016-2018.
- In Mathematics, the school has not met expectations in any category or subgroup during the last 3 years for academic achievement.

Academic Growth:

- In English Language Arts, the school reached an approaching rating overall for Academic Growth between 2016-17, but returned to the “does not meet” category in 2018.
- In 2018, the school moved to a level of “approaching” for Mathematics, but had not met expectations during the previous two years.

DIBELS EOY Benchmark Data:

Minnequa saw a 13% decrease in the overall percentage of students scoring at or above benchmark between the 2014-15 school year and the 2015-16 school year (68% to 55%). End of year benchmark scores in DIBELS have remained relatively flat with students scoring around 55-56% on the end of year composite score.



Root Causes:

Minnequa has identified several root causes that have contributed to the lack of academic achievement and growth over time. These include factors that impact both instruction and the overall school culture. A key root cause impacting student achievement is that high expectations for student learning have not been clearly established. Additionally, the school has not sufficiently aligned and implemented engaging instruction in every content area.

Implementation of practices to create a strong culture of student success are in progress, but not yet fully developed. Minnequa notes that the school lacks a comprehensive system to support students and their families to minimize chronic student absenteeism. The school also notes that their Social Emotional Curriculum has been inconsistent. These factors have had a negative impact on the academic achievement and growth of students.

Improvement Efforts

To address the ongoing challenges at Minnequa, the school has identified a number of improvement strategies in key areas with the goal of positively impacting the academic achievement and growth of students. These strategies form the basis of their 2018-19 school improvement plan.

English Language Arts:

To address challenges related to student progress in English Language Arts, Minnequa is working to implement a system of high quality literacy planning and delivery. To do this, the school will emphasize high quality literacy instruction that utilizes rigorous and engaging curriculum and resources. Teachers are expected to use complex text and write standards-aligned, scaffolded text-dependent questions and responses that translate into text-based discussion and writing—all driving toward key understandings in the text. Teachers will ensure that every lesson is engaging and requires students to do the reading, writing, and discussion.

Teachers will strengthen the reading intervention model by attending Read Strong meetings weekly and by guiding instruction based on student data. DIBELS data will increase at each grade level due to the focus on data and instruction.

The school also utilizes a “Power Hour” to provide small group reading intervention for students at each grade level. During the “Power Hour,” students receive individualized, skill based intervention based on their specific needs. Staff monitor progress during this intervention and adjust student placement into small groups. The school has also added additional literacy intervention supports including utilization of the SIPPS program.

Note: In early 2019, the school was the recipient of a Early Literacy Grant and will implement this as a key part of their pathway strategy for the coming year. The grant will provide consultation, personnel, and resources that will help the school to fully develop and implement an effective literacy program. This will include the opportunity to review and analyze current classroom practices in literacy as well as to drive changes and improvements based on that analysis.

Mathematics:

Although the school saw a slight increase in its academic growth for Mathematics in 2018 moving from does not meet to approaching, the school recognizes that additional work must be done to establish and sustain stronger performance gains over time.

A key component of this strategy is to establish consistent high quality Tier 1 instruction in Mathematics for students at all levels. Working in tandem with the district, the school has implemented daily Number Talks in each classroom to promote student's conceptual understanding and mathematical fluency. Additionally, the school has identified a consistent template for daily lessons, and leaders and coaches work with staff to plan and internalize key aspects of all lessons prior to instructional delivery. Teachers also collect daily formative results via an "Exit Ticket" that is utilized to determine the extent to which students have mastered the content and to plan adjustments to instruction as needed.

Minnequa has also implemented a math intervention model this year to address the needs of students. Working with a regional consultant, the school has established a math intervention that leverages data and resources from their blended learning program. Staff monitor student progress and utilize lessons and supports based on this data to provide a daily intervention for students in Mathematics.

This work, in combination with the oversight and support of Relay GSE will allow staff to dig deeply into their curriculum and lesson planning. The Relay Coach will be able to work alongside the leader and the teachers to make sure that the content of the lessons is clear, and that teachers are able to identify the conceptual understandings and potential misunderstandings that develop for students.

School culture:

As part of their improvement efforts, the school has sought to create a "college ready" culture for students and staff. Minnequa views these efforts as an ongoing initiative and seek ways to improve their systems. This includes increasing student recognition for academic achievements and creating structures so that staff and students can regularly communicate about academic goals and targets. The school continues to implement PBIS strategies and the No Bully program to address aspects of school culture.

Minnequa believes that providing engaging and consistent instruction is essential to improving student attendance. They are also exploring additional incentive systems and supports to reduce the percentage of students demonstrating chronic absenteeism.

These school culture efforts provide a complementary level of support for the school as it works to improve academic achievement and growth outcomes for students. The support of an external manager will provide ongoing progress monitoring of school culture initiatives. This will allow the school to make adjustments based on outcomes.

Developing and sustaining each of the strategies identified is key to developing long term success for the school. These strategies have evolved from previous improvement initiatives and lessons learned by the school. A significant challenge for the school has been the ability to maintain a consistent staff from year to year that allows each initiative to take root. For example, when the school joined as part of the innovation zone in 2016, a number of staff departed. As a result, Minnequa was required to hire a number of new teachers who were unfamiliar with initiatives and programs being utilized. The school again experienced staffing challenges in 2017-18, including the resignation of staff during the year. This instability in the last few years has negatively impacted the school's ability to implement their improvement model to its fullest, and to sustain it from one year to the next.

In an effort to improve the outcomes for students, Minnequa has taken advantage of a number of state and federally funded supports during the last several years. In addition to being identified as a school within a zone of innovation, Minnequa has previously been part of the Colorado Department of Education's turnaround network. Through this partnership, the school has learned how to more effectively organize and implement turnaround strategies. This opportunity has also provided Minnequa's leadership and coaching team with opportunities to grow and support their own practices.

As a school identified for improvement, Minnequa has also been part of the district's ESSA funded initiatives each year. This includes the opportunity for school leaders and coaches to participate in the Relay GSE's principal fellowship, and in their instructional leaders program. As a result, the school now has a number of staff that are trained in key turnaround levers including observation and feedback cycles, data driven instruction, and strong school culture.

Minnequa applied for and received an Early Literacy Grant through the Colorado Department of Education that will allow them to strengthen their core literacy program and their intervention models for students. The school has already begun to work with their literacy consultants on their programming and will further leverage this resource over the next two years.



Pathway identification

Innovation Status, External Management:

While Minnequa has developed systems to promote consistency throughout the building and identified strategies within their UIP, these have not resulted in the necessary improvements academically. The school continues to see low academic achievement and marginal academic growth in their state assessment data. Therefore, it is the district's determination that the school would benefit from continued innovation status and the addition of an external manager.

In the spring of 2018, a State Review Panel recommended that Minnequa elementary continue with Innovation Status. In addition to maintaining this status, the district is proposing the addition of an external management partner that will provide both intensive coaching and support as well as decision-making authority in key areas including curriculum and instruction, assessment, and professional development for leaders and staff.

Continued innovation status, along with the addition of an external manager will allow the school to enhance and strengthen their current initiatives and systems. Since the establishment of Minnequa as a school of innovation, the school has worked to create systems throughout the building related to instruction and school practices. While these processes have provided more consistency, it is imperative that they are further refined and improved. The proposed partnership will provide Minnequa with expertise analysis to help them identify the “gaps” in their programming that are holding the school back in terms of student achievement and growth in academics. An external manager will support the review, ongoing progress monitoring, and oversight as the school moves forward with its improvement plan. Leaders will receive ongoing feedback related to specific improvement actions, and the manager will make frequent visits to the school throughout the year. The school will also leverage the implementation of its early literacy grant next year to support long term literacy skill development for students.

In selecting this pathway option, the district considered other options. During the spring of 2018, closure was considered as an option for the school. In consideration of this option, the district met with staff and the local board engaged in a listening tour in consideration of this option. It was clear from this process that the Minnequa community was not in support of school closure. After further review and consideration, the Pueblo City Schools Board of Education reviewed the input from the community and determined that it was in the best interest of students that the school remain open. Conversion of Minnequa to a charter school is not considered an option for the school. A charter conversion would result in a major reorganization of the school, and would negatively impact the programs and support that are currently in place.

Both the school and the district believe that while many of the systems and structures at Minnequa are appropriate and aligned to school improvement, additional time, coupled with more intensive external support, will result in moving the school's performance further, resulting



in the school's improvement to a plan type of improvement or performance within the next two years.

School/District Design Plan - See Rubrics for More Details

Innovation Status:

The school will continue as part of the district's innovation zone through June 2022 (the Innovation Plan is subject to review and approval by the local board of Education in June of 2019). Innovation will allow the school flexibility in terms of curriculum and assessment selection, schedule and calendaring, professional development, and other factors impacting the instructional program.

External Management:

Minnequa will engage with the Relay Graduate School of Education via an enhanced regional support partnership commencing in the 2019-20 school year. There are several reasons that the district has identified Relay GSE as a partner for this work. Through their work in leadership development, as well as school based coaching and experience, Relay has an extensive level of experience related to School Turnaround and Improvement. During the 2018-19 school year, they have worked with more than 1,200 school leaders across the country.

Both the school and the district have worked extensively with Relay GSE programs over the last several years. Beginning with the 2014-2015 school year, the district has had leaders attend Relay programs including the National Principals Academy Fellowship, The National Principal Supervisor's Academy, and the Instructional Leadership Development Program. To date, more than 40 leaders (including a number of leaders and coaches at Minnequa) have participated in these programs. By engaging with Relay on an enhanced support partnership, the district is able to leverage the training and experience of our leaders at multiple levels.

The ability to identify and suggest actions at a deep level of detail is key to a successful partnership. In 2017-18, the school worked with Relay as they developed their Regional Support Partnerships, and during the current year, there are two schools in the district working with Relay GSE. Through the ongoing work in two of our schools, we have been impressed with the level of engagement by the Relay Coach with the school as well as the detailed and specific action steps and supports that have been provided. Through the partnership, leaders are receiving actionable, high leverage improvement steps that allow them to drive changes at the classroom and school level. This will be particularly helpful at Minnequa as the school has worked to establish and implement systems and initiatives related to school turnaround, but has not yet seen these translate into improved academic outcomes.

This partnership will provide the following support, progress monitoring, and oversight:



- Relay will serve as the final decision maker in the areas of curriculum selection and implementation, assessment, and professional development. They will be tasked with a review of the school's current practices, and identify the necessary changes and improvement relative to the school. The Relay partner will also work with existing partners in literacy, math, and assessment to ensure that initiatives align with the established needs of the school.
- Ongoing coaching for school leaders (every other week) throughout the 2019-20 school year. As part of this coaching, the Relay partner will work with school leaders to develop and implement a "playbook" that provides specific actions that the leader will implement as part of the coaching cycle. These actions are subsequently reviewed during the next coaching meeting providing a continuous process for improvement.
- Ongoing coaching and support at the district level. The Relay coach will provide guidance to the school supervisor and assistant superintendent related specifically to the improvement actions at Minnequa. This strengthens communication, builds capacity at multiple levels, and ensures ongoing oversight and accountability during the improvement process.
- Monthly on-site visits so that the external manager, district, and school leader(s), along with CDE staff can review the implementation of the "playbook," in order to progress monitor improvement plan initiatives.
- Quarterly updates to the local board of education in conjunction with the Executive Director of Continuous Improvement and Innovation.

Development of an MOU with Relay GSE is pending pathway approval by the State Board of Education in June.

Implementation of the Early Literacy Grant and Mathematics Consultation:

Minnequa will take full advantage of the awarded literacy grant to maximize the impact of its literacy program throughout the school, and particularly in the primary grades. This grant provides:

- Hiring of staff to support literacy instruction and intervention.
- Ongoing and embedded professional development in the area of literacy.
- Frequent review of literacy program elements including core literacy instruction and intervention.
- The acquisition of literacy resources and assessments to better diagnose and intervene with students in need of additional reading support.

Additionally, the school will engage in ongoing support using 2 Partner Mathematics Consultations. The continued partnership will include:

A focus on Mathematics Intervention for students in grades 4 and 5 (will consider the addition of 3rd grade as needed).

Ongoing support for the implementation of best practice tier one instruction.

On site and virtual coaching to support the implementation of the Math program during the 2019-20 school year.



Goals & Progress Monitoring Plan

The goal of the proposed accountability pathway will be to ensure that Minnequa Elementary is removed from the accountability pathway by achieving and maintaining a school plan type of improvement or performance within the next two years.

Progress toward school improvement goals will be conducted quarterly utilizing a progress monitoring tool in conjunction with review by the Colorado Department of Education. This tool will measure both implementation benchmarks related to school achievement and improvement targets, along with academic progress measures from interim assessments. This review will take place during one of the regularly scheduled site visits with Relay GSE.

In addition to a number of set targets for various subgroups (see Unified Improvement Plan), Minnequa has identified the following academic targets for the coming two school years in relation to their state assessment results :

Academic Achievement and Growth:

- 2018-2019: Minnequa will increase from a mean scale score of 718.6 to 739.5 for all students on CMAS ELA in 2019.
- 2019-2020: Minnequa will increase from a mean scale score of 739.5 to 755.9 for all students on CMAS ELA in 2020.
- 2018-2019: Minnequa will increase from a mean scale score of 712.3 to 734.3 for all students on CMAS Math in 2019.
- 2019-2020: Minnequa will increase from a mean scale score of 734.3 to 751.9 for all students on CMAS Math in 2020.

Additionally, the school has established targets related to strengthening school culture:

Student Attendance:

- 2018-2019: Minnequa will reduce the percent of chronic absenteeism from 34.27 in 2018 to 17% in 2019 according to Tableau data.
- 2019-2020: Minnequa will reduce the percent of chronic absenteeism from 17% in 2019 to 15% in 2020 according to Tableau data.
- 2018-2019: Minnequa will increase the monthly attendance percentage from 91% in 2018 to 95% in 2019 according to Tableau data.
- 2019-2020: Minnequa will increase the monthly attendance percentage from 95% in 2019 to 97% in 2020 according to Tableau data.

Office Discipline Referrals:



- 2018-2019: Minnequa will reduce the number of office referrals from 176 in 2018 to 100 in 2019 according to Tableau data.
- 2019-2020: Minnequa will reduce the number of office referrals from 100 in 2019 to 75 in 2020 according to Tableau data.
- 2018-2019: Minnequa will reduce the number of out of school suspensions from 79 in 2018 to 30 in 2019 according to Tableau data.
- 2019-2020: Minnequa will reduce the number of out of school suspensions from 30 in 2019 to 15 in 2020 according to Tableau data.

As part of ongoing progress monitoring and review, Relay GSE will also identify additional implementation targets and benchmark data as needed.

Appendices

- Pueblo City Schools [Innovation Zone Plan](#)
- 2018 School Performance [Framework](#)
- Minnequa Elementary 2018-19 [School Improvement Plan](#)
- 2018 State Review Panel [Report](#)