



ARISE HIGH

Authenticity • Rigor • Inspiration • Success • Empowerment

**ARISE High School
Head of School Evaluation
Karla Gandiaga
FY20-21**

Prepared By: Gabi Netter
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Purpose of Evaluation

It is the Board's responsibility to hire, manage and support the Head of School of the organization. This annual evaluation serves as an important tool in meeting that responsibility. The main purposes of the evaluation are:

1. To provide the Head of School with the opportunity to reflect on her performance over the past year, and to share those reflections in a structured way with the board
2. To provide explicit feedback from staff and Board to the Head of School on her performance, to help her recognize both strengths and areas for improvement.

Methodology

The Head of School completed a self-evaluation and provided evidence to support their rating. This information was shared with the full board and then the full board was asked to complete an online, anonymous survey through BoardOnTrack's Head of School Evaluation Tool.

Evaluation

As the Head of School, Karla Gandiaga is the chief executive of the organization and has ultimate responsibility for academic performance, mission-aligned school culture, and organizational viability. With the Board, the Head of School sets short and long term goals for the organization and assesses the organization's adherence to its mission and charter promises.

The core of this evaluation is provided within this construct, outlining specific measures that the Head of School is responsible for and an evaluation of her performance against those responsibilities. When possible, quantitative data is provided toward progress in these areas.

The other responsibilities are evaluated qualitatively, largely based on Board perspectives, with additional data provided through the Head of School self-evaluation and through input from stakeholders.

Comments from the Board are integrated within the set of responsibilities below.

Executive Summary

Karla's performance over the last year has been incredibly strong. She supported ARISE students, families, and staff through a year with unprecedented challenges, resulting in high levels of satisfaction across all stakeholders.

Most Significant Accomplishments and Strengths Demonstrated this Year

- **Prioritizing community:** Karla did a phenomenal job of supporting the ARISE community through the COVID-19 pandemic this year. Her response to school closure and reopening plans have been truly inclusive of the community. She consistently prioritized student, family, and staff wellbeing. She led with humanity and relationships. This community driven mindset translated into high staff retention as well as high satisfaction among students, families, and staff.
- **Overall leadership:** Karla also demonstrated decisive, proactive leadership in the face of the pandemic. She established clear plans (e.g. remaining in a full distance learning plan for much of the year) that provided certainty for the community in a time of great uncertainty, while gaining buy-in from across the school community. As a result, 100% of staff agree or strongly agree that they trust the A-team to lead ARISE effectively. Karla led across a number of pressing priorities this year, balancing logistical and operational demands with improvement efforts around coaching, academic counseling, and more. Her eye toward continuous improvement while ensuring a strong foundation were key strengths of her leadership this year.

Key Challenges & Priorities to Move the Organization Forward

- 1) **Supporting the ARISE community through change.** The adoption of the 4x4 model and return of students to campus will require Karla to manage a great deal of change. Not only will Karla need to support this transition from an operational standpoint, she will also need to provide emotional support to students, staff, and families as they adjust to this new approach. As the year progresses, ARISE may continue to evolve its model, perhaps with students returning to campus full time at some point. This ongoing evolution will require Karla to continue to build on the strengths she demonstrated this year.
- 2) **Navigating charter renewal.** The charter renewal process will demand a great deal of Karla's time in the coming year. Karla will need to continue to build external relationships and political capital while simultaneously focusing on school improvement.
- 3) **Leading academic improvement efforts.** Karla should focus on improving student outcomes in math and ELA as well as developing a college-going culture. This will require clear goal setting, prioritization, strategic planning, and ongoing focus and refinement. This work will be particularly challenging in the face of potential student learning loss.

Feedback on additional competencies is provided below.

Evaluation

CORE COMPETENCIES

Demonstrates Integrity

Strengths: Karla is deeply invested in ARISE's mission and vision, and leads with the school's values at the center. She is a straightforward communicator and demonstrates transparency in her decision-making. She is a confident, self-directed leader and advocate for ARISE's students and families, and holds integrity as a core value.

Areas for Improvement: At times, Karla's direct communication style does not land well on others, creating a perception that she is not open to input. Karla has an opportunity to balance her advocacy approach with inquiry, adopting a learning stance and taking in differing points of view.

Cultivates a Culture of Excellence

Strengths: Karla is committed to continuous improvement across all areas of the school. She took on challenge after challenge this year as she led ARISE through the pandemic. She rejected complacency, ensuring she had ongoing systems for gathering data, for instance through instructional rounds and surveys. Armed with this data, she continued to fine-tune ARISE's approach, for example by changing the bell schedule in response to student feedback and creating a participation tracker to boost student engagement.

Areas for Improvement: Karla should continue to cultivate an instructional culture that promotes student achievement and college preparation for all students. Karla is aware of this area of growth and has already demonstrated a commitment to addressing it through her planned priorities and financial investments for the 2021-2022 school year. Her leadership through the pandemic and prior focus on more operational aspects of the school have created the enabling conditions for this new focus on academic excellence.

Drives Academic Excellence/Student Performance

Strengths: Under Karla's leadership, ARISE is outperforming OUSD in ELA results (ARISE: 67% proficient; OUSD: 33% proficient) and 4-year graduation rates (In 19-20, ARISE: 94%; OUSD: 75%). Attendance is strong (97.95% in 20-21, 95.03% in 19-20), as is A-G requirement completion (a four year average of 97% of students completing). Karla has put systems in place to support improvements in student achievement, such as tutoring for struggling students, and plans to continue to make investments in this area in 21-22.

Areas for Improvement: Improving student performance is Karla's biggest focus area for the coming school year, particularly in math and college-going rates. In math, 8% of students were proficient in math in 18-19. In both ELA and math, student proficiency on SBAC has decreased from 16-17 to 18-19. On NWEA MAP for math, fewer students were on grade level in the winter of the 20-21 school year than in the fall, with only 35.9% on grade level. Despite high A-G completion, college-going rates at ARISE are lower than the OUSD average, and systems are lacking to track and monitor college enrollment and persistence trends.

Karla has begun to engage in strategic planning around this priority for 21-22 and plans to make financial investments to support these priorities. As she does so, she should set clear, rigorous goals that reflect accelerating student growth and building a college going culture at ARISE. With board support, she should also establish simple, focused progress monitoring systems.

ROLE SPECIFIC COMPETENCIES

Leads the Educational Program

Strengths: Karla is thoughtful in her educational leadership, and her contributions in this area are viewed positively by her A-team and staff. Standards-based curriculum and data-driven pedagogy are in place in some areas. Karla prioritized support for exceptional learners this year, for example by prioritizing bringing them back to campus for additional support this spring.

Areas for Improvement: While standards-based curriculum and data-driven approaches to instruction are in place for some teachers, these resources and practices are inconsistent. Karla is already planning to address this area, for instance through the adoption of a new, standards aligned math curriculum for 21-22. Karla should also continue to support staff in serving exceptional learners and other subgroups. In a fall survey, 36.1% of staff reported wanting additional support in this area (spring data is not yet available).

Develops and Leads Staff

Strengths: Developing and leading staff is one of Karla's biggest strengths. She has achieved incredibly high staff retention this year, with only one staff member leaving. This is a significant change from ARISE's turnover in prior years. Staff shared a high level of satisfaction in fall focus groups and in a staff survey. For instance, 97% of staff agree or strongly agree that they have an effective working relationship with Karla. Staff members also report feeling highly connected to ARISE's mission. Karla has focused on professional development throughout the year, and staff performance on instructional rounds has increased. In the coming year, Karla should tie staff development efforts to her 21-22 priorities, leveraging best practices and maintaining a laser-like focus, even in the face of other needs.

Areas for Improvement: N/A

Manages Organizational Compliance and Administration

Strengths: Karla has been very thoughtful about compliance and administration in this challenging year. Student safety and wellbeing were top priorities as she adapted to the challenges of COVID-19. She consistently ensured that ARISE is in

compliance with state and federal laws and mandates. She also prioritized enrollment for the coming year.

Areas for Improvement: N/A

Builds and Maintains Family Satisfaction

Strengths: Family satisfaction at ARISE is high. On a fall survey, 98.1% of families reported feeling supported or very supported by ARISE (spring survey data not yet available). Karla deeply engaged with families and centered their input in her decision making, for example in deciding to keep the campus closed in response to family concerns about COVID-19.

Areas for Improvement: Karla has shared that there is a mismatch between perceptions of family involvement at ARISE and the degree to which families are actually engaged. Karla should continue to develop opportunities for authentic and meaningful family involvement, for example supporting families' familiarity with the college application process so they can better support their children

Manages Financial Performance

Strengths: ARISE's financial management has been greatly improved under Karla's leadership. Reporting is transparent, the rationale for budgeting decisions is clear, and the school's financial health is strong. In partnership with EdTec, Karla established clear systems for capturing and analyzing financial data to improve performance and identified cost-cutting measures. She has an eye toward future financial resources needed to support ARISE's mission. She also has a good working relationship with the EdTec team.

Areas for Improvement: N/A

Actively Promotes the Organization and Ensures Adequate Resources

Strengths: Karla has established an extensive set of partnerships with community organizations, more than quadrupling the number of partnerships since she came on board. These contribute to the student experience in a number of ways (internships, CCARP, and more).

Areas for Improvement: Karla has not prioritized fundraising, nor does the Board have a development committee. However, this is not a priority at this time.

Given ARISE's many partnerships, Karla should ensure the partnerships are strategic and aligned with ARISE's 21-22 priorities.

Ensures Adequate Facilities

Strengths: With the building closed for most of the year, facilities were not a focus in conversations with the Board this year. Discussions around the facility centered on campus reopening, and Karla demonstrated a high level of attention to all local, state, and federal codes and the CDC's recommendations.

Areas for Improvement: ARISE's rent for its facility is high. While not a priority this year, in the future Karla might consider pursuing solutions to decreasing the amount of annual rent.

Partners with the Board

Strengths: Karla has demonstrated increasing leadership in her engagement with the Board. She acts as a liaison to ensure the flow of critical information between the Board and the school community. She shares plans and policies for board consideration and has facilitated board committee structures. She has begun to establish systems and structures for the Board to know whether we are successful relative to goals.

Areas for Improvement: Karla should develop a long-term strategy and progress monitoring systems for ARISE with input from the Board. Her recent work on priority plans for 21-22 are a strong example of this. She should work with the board to fulfill its governance functions and maximize the Board's ability to provide strategic support.

At times, there have been moments of underlying tension between Karla and board members that have not been explicitly named or addressed. Karla should continue to strengthen relationships with individual Board members and build trust across the Board in order to create a culture in which issues can be surfaced.

Engages the Community

Strengths: This is a true strength of Karla's. Her belief in community connection and skill in building strong relationships help strengthen ARISE's connection to the Fruitvale and broader Oakland community. She maintains relationships with local and state officials, including recent efforts to connect with OUSD board members in advance of renewal. She listens and responds to concerns from various stakeholders and serves as the chief spokesperson for ARISE. As mentioned above, she has more than quadrupled the number of community partnerships.

Areas for Improvement: While the number of partnerships are notable, it will be important for Karla to evaluate their impact and ensure they are aligned with the school's 21-22 priorities.

Overall Leadership and Performance

Strengths: Karla has been a strong leader for ARISE this year. She leads by example and is resourceful, efficient, and proactive. She fosters positive and productive relationships across the organization and community. She has led ARISE through an incredibly difficult time while remaining thoughtful and strategically prioritizing based on what's best for students and families. She balanced multiple priorities and achieved high levels of satisfaction across students, staff, and families.

Areas for Improvement: N/A

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Key Challenges & priorities to move the organization forward

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Final Remarks

Karla has been an incredibly strong leader for ARISE this year amidst unprecedented challenges. The Board is deeply grateful for her leadership, her commitment to ARISE, and her openness to continued growth as a leader. We look forward to continuing our continued partnership!