



Superintendent Board Report

Date: September 23, 2026

Report By: Lauren Laws

Good Things

September provided many opportunities to celebrate student leadership, community connection, and Tiger pride throughout Aztec Municipal School District. Homecoming Week brought students, employees, families, alumni, and community members together through school activities, athletic events, the Homecoming parade, and the football game at Fred Cook Stadium.

Our students demonstrated leadership and school spirit throughout the week by planning activities, participating in longstanding traditions, representing their schools, and welcoming the community into our celebrations. I appreciate the employees, volunteers, families, law-enforcement partners, and community organizations whose work helped provide safe and memorable experiences for our students.

Homecoming also provided an opportunity to recognize the newest members of the Aztec High School Hall of Honor: Jesse Russell, Bill Francis, and J. Jacob Saiz. Each honoree represents an important part of Aztec's history and serves as an example of the lasting impact our schools and community can have on the lives of students.

Events such as Homecoming remind us that schools are about more than academics alone. They create belonging, preserve tradition, develop student leadership, and strengthen the relationships connecting our schools to the community.

Moving From Planning to Progress

With the 2025–2028 Strategic Plan now adopted, district and school leaders are moving from alignment and preparation into implementation. During September, our focus was on establishing baseline data, examining current conditions, and helping schools and departments understand how their work connects to the Board's goals and guardrails.

Rather than providing a brief update on every strategic priority each month, future superintendent reports will generally provide a more focused examination of one goal or guardrail at a time. This approach will allow the Board to receive more meaningful information regarding the evidence being reviewed, the needs being identified, the district's response, and the methods that will be used to monitor progress.

This month's report focuses on Goal 1: Literacy Excellence. Literacy is foundational to success in every subject area and directly influences students' ability to access learning, complete coursework, graduate, and pursue college and career opportunities.

Our True North remains clear: improving outcomes and experiences for every student.

Strategic Plan Monitoring: Goal 1—Literacy Excellence

Strategic Outcome

Goal-By June 2027, the percentage of students meeting or exceeding grade-level literacy will not drop below the previous year's end-of-year data.

For the state reading assessment, the district's current baseline is 39.15% proficient. Therefore, the minimum June 2027 outcome is to maintain or exceed 39.15%, while the district's broader purpose is to increase the number of students meeting grade-level literacy expectations.

Because the Strategic Plan uses multiple literacy measures, progress will be evaluated within each assessment system. NM Vistas proficiency will be compared with the prior state-assessment result, while STAR, iMSSA, and early literacy growth will be compared with their respective beginning-of-year baselines.

NM Vistas Results: Establishing the Prior-Year Baseline

NM Vistas results have recently been released and provide an important measure of district and school performance from the 2025–2026 school year. Because these results reflect the previous school year, they are considered lagging indicators rather than a measure of instruction currently taking place.

District and school leaders are reviewing the NM Vistas results alongside beginning-of-year assessments, classroom evidence, attendance information, and other current data. Together, these measures will help us identify strengths, determine where additional support is needed, and evaluate whether current strategies are aligned with student needs.

At the district level, the literacy results show:

- Overall reading proficiency for students in grades 3–8 and 11 was 39.15%, which is reported as 39%.
- Reading proficiency was 39.12% during the 2024–2025 school year. The rate therefore remained essentially unchanged, increasing by approximately 0.03 percentage points.
- The district's reading growth percentile increased from the 35th percentile in 2024–2025 to the 43rd percentile in 2025–2026. This growth measure applies to students in grades 4–8 and compares their improvement on the MSSA Reading assessment with that of academic peers.
- Lydia Rippey Elementary recorded the district's highest school-level reading proficiency rate at 50% and received a Spotlight designation.
- Park Avenue Elementary demonstrated the greatest year-over-year improvement, increasing from 35% proficient in 2024–2025 to approximately 46% proficient in 2025–2026.
- State assessment participation reached 98.5%, exceeding the required participation rate of 95%.

The improvement in the district's reading growth percentile is encouraging. Moving from the 35th to the 43rd percentile indicates stronger growth relative to academic peers, although the district remains below the 50th percentile, which represents the midpoint of the growth distribution.

School-Level Reading Results

School	2025–2026 reading proficiency	Key finding
Lydia Rippey	50.0%	Highest district result; Spotlight designation
Park Avenue	45.6%	Increased approximately 11 percentage points
McCoy Avenue	42.6%	Above the district average
Koogler	35.5%	Below the district average
Aztec High School	32.9%	Below the district average
Vista Nueva	Suppressed	Small student count

Overall proficiency remained at approximately 39%, leaving approximately 61% of assessed students below proficiency. Although the increase in growth is encouraging, improving the percentage of students meeting reading expectations remains a priority.

Complete NM Vistas reports and additional school-level information can be found [here](#).

Student-Group Results

NM Vistas results identify important differences in literacy outcomes among student groups. The most significant gap involves students with disabilities. Districtwide, 15.3% of students with disabilities demonstrated reading proficiency, compared with 45.5% of students without disabilities—a difference of approximately 30.2 percentage points.

Other student-group results include:

Student group	Reading proficiency	Comparison
Students with disabilities	15.3%	45.5% for students without disabilities

English learners	24.1%	40.0% for students who are not English learners
Native American students	26.2%	Below the district average of 39.15%
Economically disadvantaged students	32.0%	49.5% for students who are not economically disadvantaged
Male students	36.7%	41.8% for female students

These differences reinforce the need to examine whether students have consistent access to strong grade-level instruction, appropriate intervention, and specialized supports. District leaders will review current-year results for these student groups and work with school leaders, classroom teachers, interventionists, English learner staff, and Exceptional Programs staff to determine where additional support or instructional adjustments are needed.

This review will be conducted while protecting confidential and suppressed student information. The intent is not to label students or schools, but to ensure that resources and leadership attention are directed toward the students who need them most.

Beginning-of-Year Literacy Data

While NM Vistas provides a prior-year baseline, current assessments help us understand the needs of the students presently enrolled in our schools.

As of September 2026, beginning-of-year literacy results are available across multiple grade levels. These assessments include STAR Reading, iMSSA Reading, iMSSA Language Usage, and Amira ISIP Early Reading.

In grades 3–8, 984 students completed iMSSA Reading and 981 students completed iMSSA Language Usage. Based on the tested students represented in the grade-level reports, approximately 24% were On Target in iMSSA Reading and approximately 25% were On Target in Language Usage.

Initial results indicate:

- 38% of tested students were in the Needs Support category in Reading, while 37% were Near Target.
- 33% of tested students were in the Needs Support category in Language Usage, while 42% were Near Target.
- Fifth grade demonstrated a relative strength, with 30% of tested students On Target in Reading and 42% On Target in Language Usage, the highest percentages among the grades assessed.
- Fourth-grade Reading and eighth-grade Language Usage warrant focused attention, with only 16% and 12% of tested students On Target.
- Third grade also demonstrated substantial need, with 48% of tested students in Needs Support in Reading and 49% in Language Usage.

Secondary reading results reinforce the need for targeted support. At Koogler Middle School, 147 students, representing approximately 34% of students included in the STAR Reading results, scored below the 25th percentile. At Aztec High School, 264 students, representing approximately 47% of students included in the results, scored below the 25th percentile.

These results represent an initial snapshot rather than a final judgment regarding student performance. Beginning-of-year data are most useful when they lead to timely instructional decisions and are followed by consistent progress monitoring throughout the year.

Areas Requiring Additional Attention

The current data identify the following literacy priorities:

- **Priority grade levels:** Fourth-grade Reading and eighth-grade Language Usage, where only 16% and 12% of tested students were On Target on beginning-of-year iMSSA assessments. Third grade also warrants attention, with 48% of tested students in Needs Support in Reading and 49% in Language Usage.
- **Priority literacy skills:** Reading and language usage are broad areas of need. Teams will review skill- and standard-level results alongside classroom evidence to identify the specific instructional priorities within these areas.
- **Student-group achievement gaps:** Students with disabilities demonstrate the largest identified proficiency gap. English learners, Native American students, and economically disadvantaged students also performed below the district average.
- **Schools needing additional support:** Koogler Middle School and Aztec High School warrant focused review of reading supports based on NM Vistas proficiency and beginning-of-year STAR Reading results.
- **Attendance and participation:** State assessment participation was strong at 98.5%. Districtwide beginning-of-year assessment completion and student attendance will continue to be reviewed because missed assessments or instructional time may affect both the interpretation of results and students' literacy progress.

The purpose of identifying these areas is to ensure that resources, instructional support, interventions, and leadership attention are directed where they are most needed. With district reading proficiency remaining at approximately 39%, the focus will be on building upon improved growth while helping more students meet grade-level expectations.

District and School Response

Schools are using literacy data to identify students who need intervention, enrichment, or additional support within classroom instruction. District and school actions include:

- Reviewing assessment results through school and grade-level data meetings to identify priority standards and student needs
- Establishing or adjusting intervention groups and monitoring student progress
- Strengthening classroom instruction through professional learning, classroom walkthroughs, and meaningful instructional feedback
- Reviewing the effectiveness of instructional materials and intervention resources
- Strengthening collaboration among classroom teachers, interventionists, special education staff, English learner staff, and administrators

Elementary Literacy Intervention and Instructional Support

At the elementary level, schools are strengthening their Multi-Layered System of Supports (MLSS) processes to identify student literacy gaps more quickly and accurately. School teams are reviewing assessment results, classroom evidence, and student progress to ensure that students are connected with the appropriate level of support without unnecessary delays.

Each elementary school has established a structured daily 30-minute intervention block. Students identified as needing Layer 2 support receive targeted instruction from classroom teachers during this time. Teachers use small-group instruction with a strong emphasis on foundational literacy skills, including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Students requiring more intensive support may be referred to a reading interventionist for additional instruction. Reading interventionists specialize in using varied instructional approaches and multiple modalities to help students develop the foundational skills necessary to become successful readers.

Elementary administrators are also strengthening the connection between classroom instruction, observation, and feedback. Classroom walkthroughs will maintain a focused emphasis on literacy instruction, allowing administrators to provide teachers with timely feedback regarding foundational skills, student engagement, differentiation, and the use of assessment evidence. Administrators are meeting monthly with individual teachers to reflect on progress toward instructional goals, review data and work to identify strategies that are producing the intended results, and determine what changes or additional support may be needed.

McCoy Elementary is also working to bring back a literacy coach to provide professional development and work directly with staff. This support would help teachers deepen their understanding of effective literacy practices and apply those practices consistently within classroom instruction and intervention.

Schools will use progress-monitoring data to evaluate student response, adjust small groups, and determine whether students require continued, increased, or reduced support. District and school leaders will monitor the consistency of the intervention block, the quality of foundational literacy instruction, and the effectiveness of administrator feedback while continuing to refine MLSS procedures so literacy needs are identified accurately and addressed promptly.

Koogler Middle School Literacy Intervention

At Koogler Middle School, literacy supports include REWARDS intervention for identified sixth- and seventh-grade students and Reading Apprenticeship for All (RA4ALL) for eighth-grade students.

Approximately 60 sixth and seventh grade students currently receive REWARDS instruction across four intervention classes, with approximately 15 students in each class. These students receive an additional reading course in place of one of their two electives, allowing them to retain access to one elective while receiving dedicated literacy support.

An additional 15 eighth-grade students currently participate in RA4ALL.

Students were identified for these supports using MSSA and beginning-of-year iMSSA assessment data. Koogler will use STAR Reading to monitor student progress throughout the intervention period. Sixth and seventh grade students will exit the additional intervention course after completing the REWARDS program, with STAR results providing evidence of the literacy progress made during their participation.

Because these interventions represent a significant investment of student instructional time, district and school leaders will review student progress to determine the programs' effectiveness and identify whether students need additional literacy support following completion.

Aztec High School Literacy Response

Aztec High School is taking a schoolwide, data-driven approach to closing literacy gaps. STAR Reading data is used to identify student needs, establish baseline performance, and monitor growth. Khan Academy provides individualized practice aligned with specific skill gaps identified through student data.

Through the use of high-quality instructional materials, students receive consistent access to standards-aligned instruction and complex texts. Teachers are also implementing Teach Like a Champion strategies to strengthen student engagement, academic discourse, and opportunities for students to think, read, write, and demonstrate their learning.

This approach recognizes that literacy is a shared responsibility across every content area rather than the responsibility of English language arts teachers alone. Aztec High School will continue using STAR results, classroom evidence, and student work to evaluate progress and adjust support. The goal is to ensure that every student develops the literacy skills necessary for success in high school, college, careers, and life.

Literacy Across the Curriculum

Each school's response reflects the age and needs of its students. At the elementary level, particular attention is being given to early literacy and foundational reading skills. At the middle and high school levels, the work includes addressing persistent reading gaps and helping students comprehend increasingly complex informational and academic texts across subject areas.

Literacy is a shared responsibility across the district. Students must be able to read, write, speak, listen, and make meaning in mathematics, science, social studies, Career and Technical Education, and every other area of learning.

How Progress Will Be Monitored

The district will use multiple measures to determine whether current strategies are producing the intended results. These measures will include:

- STAR Reading growth
- iMSSA Reading and Language Usage performance
- Amira ISIP Early Reading and other early literacy indicators
- State assessment proficiency and growth
- Student participation in and response to intervention
- Classroom walkthrough evidence
- Student work
- Course performance and completion, when applicable
- Disaggregated student-group results

The Board will receive its next focused literacy update in February 2027, following the district's middle-of-year assessment cycle. Elementary Amira and iMSSA assessments will be administered during December, Koogler's iMSSA assessment will be completed December 15–16, and Aztec High School's

STAR Reading assessment will be administered January 13–14. Koogler and Vista Nueva’s middle-of-year STAR dates are still being finalized.

The February update will compare middle-of-year results with beginning-of-year baselines, examine progress among identified student groups, and evaluate the implementation and early effectiveness of literacy interventions. This timeline will provide district and school teams with an opportunity to validate the results, identify trends, and make instructional adjustments before reporting progress to the Board.

Our measure of success will be whether more students are making meaningful progress toward, and ultimately meeting, grade-level literacy expectations.

Enrollment

Aztec Municipal School District

Student Totals As of 09/22/2026

Aztec High School

Grade	Female		Males	Non-Binary	Active Students
9th	75		92	0	167
10th	88		77	0	165
11th	58		79	0	137
12th	76		80	0	156
			AHS Total		625

Vista Nueva High School

9th	5		3	0	8
10th	4		9	1	14
11th	16		17	0	33
12th	8		10	0	18
			VNHS Total		73

Koogler Middle School

6th	75		75	0	150
7th	79		73	1	153
8th	90		70	0	160
			KMS Total		463

Park Avenue Elementary School

3rd	1		0	0	1
4th	64		72	0	136
5th	72		84	0	156
			PAES Total		293

Lydia Rippey Elementary School

PK3	12		5	0	17
PK4	15		18	0	33
K	34		30	0	64
1st	32		25	0	57
2nd	28		37	0	65
3rd	44		36	0	80
			LRES Total		316

McCoy Elementary School				
PK3	3	14	0	17
PK4	13	17	0	30
K	31	32	0	63
1st	27	22	0	49
2nd	30	23	0	53
3rd	35	28	0	63
			MCES Total	275
				2045
District Total				
Grade	Active Students		Grade	Active Students
PK3	34		5th	156
PK4	63		6th	150
K	127		7th	153
1st	106		8th	160
2nd	118		9th	175
3rd	144		10th	179
4th	136		11th	170
			12th	174
			District Total	2045

Fundraisers Approved

In accordance with district procedures, the following fundraisers have been reviewed and approved since our last Board Meeting. These activities support school programs while ensuring compliance with district guidelines and student safety expectations.

Date Approved	Date of Fundraiser	Estimated Amount Projected	Requesting Organization	Description	Intended Use of Funds
9/4/26	10/2/26	\$4,900.00	FFA/AHS	Aztec FFA members will sell food products through DJ's Fundraising. Proceeds will support FFA leadership, career development, and educational activities.	Profits will help cover student expenses for FFA conferences, competitions, leadership events, and other educational activities.
9/4/26	9/8/26	\$1,000	AHS/Key Club	Key Club will sell roses at school and community events throughout the year, including concerts and AHS graduation.	Funds will support the March District Convention trip, service projects, and Key Club T-shirts.

9/4/26	10/2/26	\$4,900.00	FFA/AHS	Aztec FFA members will sell fresh fruit through Seitz Fundraising. Profits will support FFA leadership, competitions, career development, and educational activities.	Profits will help cover travel, lodging, meals, registration, and other student expenses for FFA conferences, competitions, leadership events, and educational activities.
9/4/26	10/2/26	\$4,900.00	FFA/AHS	Aztec FFA members will sell desserts and snacks through Seitz Fundraising. Profits will support FFA leadership, competitions, career development, and educational activities.	Profits will help cover travel, lodging, meals, registration, and other student expenses for FFA conferences, competitions, leadership events, and educational activities.
9/16/27	1/15/27	\$1,200	KMS	Selling Pickles, Popcorn, Pickle Juice and Frozen Pickle Juice - Until Supplies run out-	This fundraiser will replenish our Student Activity Fund, supporting student events, family engagement, academic and behavioral incentives, and staff appreciation. These efforts will strengthen school morale, community involvement, and meaningful opportunities for students and staff.
9/16/26	9/22/26	\$2,000	AHS/FFA	Aztec FFA requests approval to partner with Cowpuncher Coffee for a QR-code fundraiser. Cowpuncher Coffee will manage all orders, payments, inventory, and shipping and donate \$5 to Aztec FFA for each qualifying purchase.	Profits will help cover student travel, meals, lodging, registration, and other approved FFA activity expenses, reducing costs for families and expanding access to leadership, career, and educational opportunities.