



AUDIO (5:04 MIN)

## Setting Your Directions

Shelly Green

September 2012

### Topic HELPING STUDENTS NAVIGATE THE PATH TO COLLEGE

- Highlights**
- » Students in 6th through 12th grade in Albuquerque Public Schools develop Next Step Plans (NSPs) to lay out their plans for high school and beyond.
  - » The school district also holds student-led conferences beginning in grade 8, which include school faculty as well as parents.
  - » Together, these activities allow students in the district to have a significant voice in determining their courses, extracurricular activities, and other supports to ensure they meet their postsecondary goals.
  - » Both activities are part of the district's comprehensive strategy to promote postsecondary access for all students.

### About the Interviewee

As Interim Chief Academic Officer for the Albuquerque Public Schools, Shelly Green is responsible for the instruction and educational programs for a district of 89,000 students in 140 schools, and supervises all instructional and support departments.

Ms. Green began her career in education 30 years ago as a teacher at Rio Grande High School. She went on to teach at Highland High School and was their acting Activities Director. She then served as an assistant principal for three years at Highland High School and at La Cueva High School for more than a decade before moving to Volcano Vista High School as the principal. She has spent years developing and implementing master schedules, analyzing budgets, and implementing district initiatives, policies and procedures to support students, and

strong academic programs as well as reaching out to parents and community members.

Ms. Green is passionate about education and the opportunities it provides to all young people. She believes the work our teachers do every day in the classrooms across the city improves students' lives.

## Full Transcript



🔊 00:04 This is Shelly Green. I'm the interim Chief Academic Officer for the Albuquerque Public Schools in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

🔊 00:11 The Next Step Plans that we use with our students in Albuquerque Public Schools is a document that was actually developed initially by our state and we have adapted that for our own students. It is a living, working document and it is updated on a yearly basis. The purpose of the document itself is to try and give our students and parents more information about what is required for high school graduation, and also to make them start thinking about what they're going to do after high school – whatever their postsecondary plans are.

🔊 00:43 The students begin with the Next Step Plan in eighth grade so that they start thinking about high school at that point. Then we continue and review the document with the students and their parents every year. And the document very clearly states for them what their high school graduation requirements are, but it also talks about what things are recommended for college if that is their career path. We also have information along with the Next Step Plan for career choices. They do an inventory in either eighth or ninth grade and then they choose a career pathway from one of the national career clusters so that this can guide their elective choices throughout high school. And as seniors, they complete a final Next Step Plan which tells us what their plans are—if they plan to go to college, what choices they have made; if they're going to go into the military or if they're going to go straight to work; an associate's degree; trade programs; whatever their choices might be—but that kind of is a final culmination of their high school experience.

🔊 01:51 Our parents are involved with the students, working side by side. We really try to focus on the students setting their goals initially and choosing their courses, but we will have an advisory meeting with the students and parents. So we have a separate parent conference that the student is expected to run. And the student goes through and talks

to their parents about “These are the goals that I’ve set for myself, this is how I plan to achieve them, these are the courses I would like to take along the way, and this will be my final outcome.” And during that discussion we have teachers or advisors that are working with the students throughout the year. And their job really is more to prompt the students, work with the students so that the students do the majority of the presentation to their parents.

 **02:38** We hold our student-led conferences with our students and parents twice a year, and the advisor for the student sets it up with the parents. They usually run about 15-20 minutes for each conference. During the conference the students really are supposed to lead the conference themselves. And all of our students participate, from grades 8 through 12. They talk about what their goals are, they talk.... We try to have them talk about their classwork also and how they’re progressing, what they have noticed that they have learned from one year to the next.

 **03:12** I know of one student [in] particular that had a plan in mind, and he was very focused on the sciences. And one of his elective choices was a community service class. And he participated in this class where he worked with some of the most disabled students in the school, and he did this just because he’d heard that another friend of his had enjoyed it. It really wasn’t part of his path, but in doing so that changed his entire outcome and he decided he wanted to become a teacher.

 **03:42** One of the biggest challenges we faced was allowing the students to lead the conference and giving them the support they needed without taking over, because our teachers, of course, are used to directing instruction in the classroom and students don’t always like to talk about themselves even with their parents. So you have to learn to give them prompts and give them the support they need to be able to do that.

 **04:07** Some of the most important things that we learned were issues around training, because we want our Next Step Plans and our advisories to be manned by teachers and counselors—any staff member in the school. And we use a lot of people so that we can reduce the numbers of students; so that the ratio between the advisors and the students is a little bit better than what you might have in a classroom. The Next Step Plan and the advisories can be structured in different ways, and that’s one of the challenges—is to determine for your individual school

what works best. The advisors can be a student's teacher that they have that particular year, which means they change their advisor every year; or you can set it up so that they have the same advisor for four years, which builds a different kind of relationship. And that really depends on the dynamics of your school.