

## Chapter IV: Self-Study Findings

### **A: Standards Based Student Learning: Curriculum and Instruction**

Structure and Process of the Focus Group: The Curriculum and Instruction Focus Group members met regularly throughout the past one and one half academic years. Our focus group was comprised of teachers, classified staff, a parent, and a counselor. In November of 2003 we added four students to our group. We spent most of our time together evaluating the four criterion statements that applied to Curriculum and Instruction. We identified Serra's areas of strength, as well as areas for growth, relevant to our criterion statements.

Our meetings were focused around the particular task we wanted to accomplish; analyzing data, studying home group findings, discussing evidence, and applying the criteria rubrics to Serra High School. Two members of our group served as cofacilitators who led us in large group discussions, as well as small group discussions. There were times in which group members shared the evidence and findings they obtained through work prior to our meeting. Group members also participated in online reflections to the criterion statements. All members present at these meetings participated and contributed to this report.

**Criterion A-1: All students participate in a rigorous, relevant, and coherent standards-based curriculum that supports the achievement of the academic standards and the expected schoolwide learning results. Through standards-based learning (i.e. what is taught and how it is taught), the expected schoolwide learning results are accomplished.**

All courses offered at Serra have national, state, or district content standards that are emphasized in the course curriculum. Each teacher is asked to post the daily objective and student outcomes on the board to guide the students through the day's lessons. Daily objectives and outcomes must be linked to the standards. Administrators making informal classroom observations check to see that the daily objectives and outcomes are posted.

Textbook adoptions occur almost every year. Most new textbooks that are adopted by the district have a "standards map" provided to the teachers. In many cases, when new adoptions

are approved, the district provides professional development to help teachers implement the curriculum.

In the World Language Department the Spanish classes are using newly-adopted curricula. To date there has been only one district-sponsored inservice for world language teachers, and one representative from Serra attended that inservice in the spring of 2003. This district training addressed standards and the upcoming textbook adoptions. The standards used by our world language teachers were adopted from the Foreign Language Teachers Association.

Serra's art classes fulfill the requirements for a fine arts credit for admission to most colleges and universities. There are five state content standards for visual arts classes. All art classes at Serra incorporate these standards into all of the activities and projects completed during the year-long courses.

With the exception of psychology, all social studies courses are standards-based. Almost all of the social studies courses are currently using newly-adopted textbooks. Most adoptions have occurred in the past two years. World History and US History teachers use "curriculum pacing calendars" to aid them in planning and to ensure that all content mandated in the standards is covered prior to the state testing period. There are four Advanced Placement (AP) social studies courses offered at Serra, as well as two periods of college-level political science.

In the Business Education Department articulation agreements with various San Diego Community colleges assure that students will be receiving adequate training for entering college and/or for working in the business community. All business courses require students to make oral presentations graded by rubrics. In addition, for each Regional Occupation Program (ROP) course offered at Serra High School an advisory board is responsible for reviewing course outlines and course competencies. Members of these advisory boards may be individuals who work in industry, interested parents from within the field, or former students who are familiar with the program. Once the board makes a recommendation for course content, it is passed on to the San Diego County Board of Education for approval. Serra has never had an advisory board recommendation changed by the County Board of Education.

The Science Department is undergoing many changes as a result of the reform movement in San Diego City Schools. San Diego City Schools has increased the graduation requirement from two years of a laboratory science to three years. Beginning with the class of 2006 all ninth grade students take Physics, then Chemistry, and then Biology. Currently all of Serra's ninth grade students are enrolled in Physics, and all tenth grade students are enrolled in Chemistry. Extensive professional development is conducted both centrally and at the site to prepare science teachers to deliver the new curriculum in Physics and Chemistry. The professional development is focused on content and teaching and learning strategies, using the Active Physics curriculum and Living By Chemistry curriculum, both of which are tightly tied to California Science standards. Currently new materials are being selected centrally that will be used in the Biology courses for the 2004-05 school year. This course will be taught to all 11th grade students who have already completed courses in Physics and

Chemistry. All core science classes are standards-based; those standards are addressed daily. Students know the purpose and the outcome of each lesson as they relate to the standards. AP Physics, AP Chemistry, and Honors Physiology are offered.

Curriculum in English courses is tied to state standards and to Serra's ESLRs. The English Department is working toward mapping a four-year curriculum for all Serra High School students. This curriculum will be geared to ensure that students have the opportunity to achieve grade level proficiency in all of the state standards by the time of graduation.

Most of the mathematics courses offered at Serra are using district-adopted textbooks. There are three more courses up for adoptions this year, so new textbooks will be in place next year. All mathematics courses follow state standards, which are embedded into daily lessons. Students are placed in mathematics classes based on test scores and grades in previous mathematics courses. There are two AP mathematics courses offered at Serra, AP Calculus and AP Statistics.

The Integrated Life Skills (ILS) Program at Serra provides a range of educational services to students with moderate to severe disabilities. Students in the ILS program receive instruction in six core areas of a functional curriculum: language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, health, and physical education. Each student in the ILS program receives an individualized, relevant, and coherent standards-based curriculum aligned with the state framework for students with moderate to severe disabilities.

In addition to the state standards at the heart of each course at Serra, the school's five ESLRs are also addressed. Many content standards fall into the categories of one or more of the ESLRs: Responsible Citizens, Effective Communicators, Academic Achievers, Effective Problem Solvers, or Lifelong Learners. Academic departments have looked at the ESLRs and identified activities, projects, and lessons that coincide with them. For example, problem solving is addressed in mathematics courses every day. Effective communication has been another schoolwide focus this year. All teachers conducted writing exercises in all of the classes in order to obtain a schoolwide writing sample. There were two schoolwide writing samples during the 2003-04 school year. These writing samples will help guide the development of a schoolwide writing rubric for all Serra students.

Effective communication has been evident in many courses at Serra. Some examples include oral presentations, writing assignments, group projects, translating mathematics symbols into words, and completing résumés. Problem solving is exhibited through homework problems, lab activities, group projects, word problems, and hands-on activities. Performance assessments can also be used to evaluate effective communication and problem solving.

Designing curriculum that is challenging, rigorous, and standards-based has been the subject of many site-based professional development sessions over the past few years and continues to be a focus of our efforts. When students meet the challenges they are encouraged to take as many honors and/or AP courses as possible.

**Criterion A-2: All students have access to the school’s entire program and assistance with a personal learning plan to prepare them for the pursuit of their academic, personal, and school-to-career goals.**

In their 8th grade year most students in San Diego City Schools complete a High School Plan. Counselors assist 8th grade students and their families in doing some planning for high school. This plan is designed to show students all of the courses that must be completed in order to meet our district’s high school graduation requirements. The High School Plan is then forwarded to the high school and is kept on file by the student’s high school counselor.

Each year each student meets with his or her assigned counselor to develop a course schedule for the following year. All courses offered at Serra are listed in the course selection booklet, which is now available online. The course selection booklet provides a comprehensive guide to all courses offered at Serra, as well as outlines of high school graduation requirements and college entrance requirements. A wide variety of courses is available to our students. Students are enrolled in classes based on their performance in previous courses, test scores, teacher recommendations, and parent input.

Another way that Serra provides access and assistance to all students and parents is through the Freshman Forum held during the first week of school. Sponsored by the Serra Foundation, the Freshman Forum presents information about clubs, sports, and other activities for freshman and their parents. Tips are given on how to make the most out of high school, how to be successful, and what to expect as a high school student.

In the fall of each school year, parents/guardians of 10th graders are invited to attend the “10th Grade Review Night.” This program is designed to acquaint parents/guardians with the requirements of high school graduation and to update the High School Plan designed in the 8th grade. Test scores, future high school courses, long-range college options, and personal interests and abilities are just some of the important topics covered in the 10th Grade Review. This evening program is followed in the spring by visits to 10th grade English classes and articulation conferences between counselors and all 10th grade students. Students are given the same information their parents received in the fall before working with their counselors to design their programs for the following year.

The 11th Grade College Night is an opportunity for all juniors and their parents/guardians to meet with the counselors at Serra High School to discuss college planning. Post-secondary educational and career goals are discussed, as well as testing, finances, and college athletics. Courses offered at Serra High School that meet the a-g entrance requirements for UC/CSU schools are reviewed with the attending families. Tips for developing a résumé are also discussed.

College Financial Night allows parents and their senior students the opportunity to learn how to apply to the state and federal government for college grants and scholarships. All seniors are invited to attend, and last year attendance was nearly 200.

Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) parents meet once a year in a brief introductory session before the schoolwide open house. The point of this meeting is to outline the courses and services available to GATE students. All teachers of GATE classes are introduced at this meeting, and students are given the opportunity to describe some of the valuable learning that they have received in the program.

Serra is currently seeking to expand and increase opportunities for students to engage in challenging and rigorous course work. We have increased the number of students taking the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) from 272 in 2002-03 to 287 in 2003-04. A new computerized program for use by the site called "AP Potential" will be put into place early in the second semester to identify students for AP courses based on their PSAT results.

Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) preparation courses are made available to junior students at Serra. These courses are offered through different agencies, sometimes through Princeton Review and sometimes through the UCSD Outreach Program. The courses are presented at no cost to the school and at no or minimal cost to the students. Sessions take place on Saturday mornings, usually for a period of a month.

Counselors frequently visit English classes in order to provide information to all students. Counselors visit advanced sophomore English classes and junior English classes to motivate and encourage students to take the first college entrance exam, the PSAT. Counselors visit senior English classes frequently during the first semester of the senior year to relay college information, including testing dates, grades, and the college application process. There is a senior newsletter, *Q-Tips*, which is delivered monthly to each senior regarding all pertinent graduation and college admissions information. In addition, a letter is sent home to parents of seniors twice a year. This letter contains the same kind of information as that in *Q-Tips*, as well as important dates and deadlines.

Serra counselors spend a great deal of time monitoring at-risk students. First, when determining at-risk students' schedules, the counselors look at test scores. Some of these scores, like the Mathematics Diagnostic Testing Project (MDTP) score and the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT) score, determine which courses the student must take. Second, counselors develop a learning contract for every at-risk student. These learning contracts outline appropriate interventions and determine how progress in mathematics and English will be monitored. The contracts are signed by appropriate teachers, the student, and a parent. Next, the counselors print a D/F list every six weeks. Any student who has one or more Ds and/or Fs appears on this list. The D/F notice is sent to the parents, along with various informational handouts, including the schedule of the pink progress reports, attendance policies, the a-g requirements, and the graduation requirements. Finally, the counselors contact the parents/guardians of our D/F students to set up parent conferences. One other intervention that has been put in place is the creation of new courses to provide additional support for struggling students. We have two courses, Geometry 03 and Chemistry 03, in place this year. These courses are reserved for students who are having difficulty in regular Geometry or Chemistry or have failed the previous course. The teachers instructing these courses provide their students high caliber, standards-based instruction, as well as additional support for each individual student.

For students with disabilities, an Individual Transition Plan (ITP) is developed. Transition planning promotes the development of education and career plans based on individual student needs, preferences, and interests. The ITP is outcome-oriented and promotes movement from school to post-high school activities. Employable Counseling Services (ECS) provides a range of career and vocational services for students with disabilities at Serra. Job training programs include Work Incentive (on-campus job training), Workability (community training), and the Student Apprenticeship Program.

In many of their courses students learn skills that will help prepare them for graduation. For example, in English classes students are given the opportunity to research, study, and present nonfiction literature to their peers. All skills and knowledge gained in completion of this project will help the students achieve future goals, including their Senior Exhibition. This is just one example of course work that prepares students for the requirements of the Senior Exhibition, which they must fulfill in order to graduate.

**Criterion A-3: Upon completion of the high school program, all students will be able to meet all the requirements of graduation.**

In order to graduate from Serra High School, students must meet requirements in several areas: coursework, tests, and the Senior Exhibition. Most courses offered at Serra meet the requirements for high school graduation. Students are encouraged to choose their courses carefully so as to meet the San Diego City Schools graduation requirements and, increasingly, the UC/CSU a-g requirements as well. Students can qualify for graduation at three levels: diploma--44 credits, a 2.0 or higher GPA, completed Senior Exhibition, and 25 hours of service learning; certificate--all of the diploma requirements except with a GPA of under 2.0; or letter of recognition--special education students who do not meet either the diploma or certificate requirements, but who do meet all the goals of their Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Students are required to maintain a 2.0 minimum academic GPA in order to earn a diploma from high school in San Diego City Schools. Counselors routinely check the progress of all seniors and make special efforts to intervene for any senior who is in danger of not meeting the 2.0 requirement. Progress reports are available for all students. Students can request a pink progress report every two weeks. These progress reports allow students and parents/guardians to acknowledge progress in their courses prior to the six-week progress reports and semester report cards. Teachers are also encouraged to post grades on the Internet for students to check at any time.

Summer School is offered to students who need to make up credits for courses that were not passed during the school year. Courses offered during Summer School vary year to year, depending on district funding. Another opportunity for students to make up credits they have lost is Serra Success School. Success School meets after school during the school year. There are five sessions of Success School, each six weeks long. Students may make up D or F grades in English, history, mathematics, and/or science. Serra also offers an after-school tutoring program to all students four days a week. Academic support is also provided to

students through Real Connections. These programs help students catch up with their peers in academic areas and get back on track for graduation.

Up until June of 2003 the seniors in the class of 2004 were going to be required to pass the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) in order to graduate. These students had first taken the exam in March of their sophomore year. Those who did not pass the first time were given opportunities to take it again in July, then in November of 2002, and again in March of 2003. Before each administration of the exam after school and/or summer school classes were offered to prepare the students for the test. Counselors carefully identified students each time who still needed to pass the exam and signed them up for these review courses. At each administration of the exam more students passed. Then, in June of 2003, the state legislature postponed the requirement until the year 2006. Therefore, the current sophomores will be the first class to have to meet this requirement. Plans are already underway for the March 2004 administration of the CAHSEE. Counselors are making every attempt to provide a formal and serious setting for the exam, with rented tables and chairs being set up in the gym and a ratio of one adult proctor to every 25 students. Make-up tests will be given in May of 2004 for any student who has missed a test. Most likely, the July and November administrations of the exam for students not passing the first time will resume.

In addition to academic success, students are also required to maintain a 2.0 citizenship GPA in order to graduate from high school. Saturday School is offered to allow students a chance to make up some of their missed class time due to absences, tardies, and truancies.

Students must maintain a 2.0 GPA in both academics and citizenship to participate in sports at Serra High School. The Senior Credit Check takes place in October when counselors meet with each senior to review his or her graduation status and future plans.

Counselors frequently check on the graduation status of their senior students. Once a student has been identified as being in jeopardy of not graduating, counselors intervene, making parent contacts and developing a plan for that senior. After each grading period a D and F list is developed. From this list the counselors send out a D/F letter to each home. Plans are being made to expand these “grade checks” to include progress toward the UC/CSU a-g requirements.

Districtwide the Senior Exhibition is an important graduation requirement. The Senior Exhibition project culminates in a ten-minute presentation made before a panel of staff, community members, and junior students. Every senior must fulfill this requirement. At Serra seniors are provided support in their English classes with the written portion of the project and support from the employer outreach specialist in completing their job shadow and service learning requirements. The presentations are judged through the use of a rubric, which is returned, with comments, to the student. Any student whose presentation does not meet the expectations is given a chance to improve and present it again. Since students have had adequate preparation in their coursework throughout their four years to plan, organize, and deliver presentations, the rate of those meeting this requirement is extremely high, usually 100 percent.

Serra High School offers students the opportunity to be a part of the Academy of Information Technology (AoIT). This is a school within a school that places a strong emphasis on technology. Whether heading directly to the workplace or going onto college, all Academy students are prepared with skills that will enable them to be successful in their future. Serra also has many ROP courses available to all students. Multimedia Production is a new ROP course offered this year. Recently the district's changing curriculum goals have meant the elimination of Consumer and Family Studies and Drivers' Education courses. Therefore, these courses are no longer offered to students at Serra High School. One reason for the removal of these courses is that they do not meet the UC/CSU a-g requirements.

**Criterion A-4: To achieve the academic standards and the expected schoolwide learning results, all students are involved in challenging learning experiences. All teachers utilize a variety of strategies and resources, including technology and experiences beyond the textbook and the classroom, that actively engage students, emphasize higher order thinking skills, and help them succeed at high levels.**

All students are exposed to challenging learning experiences throughout their high school career at Serra. On a daily basis teachers tailor their lessons to meet state standards. Objectives for each course are posted on the board for all students and visitors to see. The outcomes of the day are also posted. All teachers are working on making sure these objectives and outcomes are posted daily. More importantly, students need to be aware of these objectives and outcomes, for they guide the learning in the classroom.

Teachers are encouraged to reach beyond the textbook when planning their courses. Real-world applications help the students understand how their classroom learning is useful outside the school's walls. Students are able to experience field trips, job shadows, internships, simulations, guest speakers, research projects, and club-sponsored activities in some of their classes

An example of "real-world" learning is seen in the Business Management and Ownership course. Since the fall of 2001 the students in this course have been operating the Serra High School Student Store, on behalf of the Associated Student Body (ASB). The management agreement for the Student Store states that the Business Management and Ownership students, under the supervision of their instructor, will be responsible for all aspects of the store. This includes the ordering of merchandise, staffing of the store before school and during lunch, and all the daily monetary functions, including the preparation of the daily bank deposits. The advanced accounting students are responsible for the accounting functions, including the processing of accounts payable, payment of said payables, reconciliation of bank statements, and the preparation of monthly financial statements. Serra's Student Store is the only store in the district operating as described above. Since the Business Management and Ownership students took control of the monetary responsibilities, the ASB has nearly doubled its annual profits from the student store. Many students can add this work experience to their résumé and receive community service hours since they are performing most of their work duties during lunch.



The Industrial Technology Department currently includes courses in Transportation Technology, Construction Technology, and Graphic Communications. All courses are electives and students may enroll in introductory through advanced levels. All Industrial Technology courses utilize district-adopted textbooks. One course, Transportation Technology, offers community college level credit for students completing advanced level coursework.

Students have access to technology as a tool for learning in all classes. Computers are located in all classrooms. Students are asked to research topics in many classes. Students are also asked to complete projects on the computers, create and use spreadsheets, give PowerPoint presentations, and create graphic designs. A setback in the efficiency of the computer systems at Serra this school year has presented difficulties in achieving these expectations. A power outage over the summer caused by construction projects and difficulties in getting the system back on line afterwards have meant the loss of many teachers' files and the loss of access for many students. However, it is expected that as soon as the MM project is completed on site, some of the problems may be solved and access restored.

Each academic department at Serra holds monthly department meetings. At times these meetings are used to discuss various teaching strategies. Collaboration among teachers is encouraged. Collaboration is most common within departments, where some vertical and horizontal planning has occurred. More cross-discipline collaboration of the kind that occurs in the Academy of Information Technology could provide even more support for student learning at high levels.

Classroom observations conducted by teachers in the fall of 2002 revealed that a variety of instructional methods are used daily at Serra. Some examples include: lectures, written statements, interviews, reflections, simulations, oral presentations, PowerPoint presentations, debates, Socratic Seminars, and group projects.

Teachers use a variety of strategies in the classroom. One illustration of this is the weekly meetings of the 9th grade Literacy Block teachers to plan and share ideas and strategies. Additionally, all English teachers are involved in the mapping out of units of study for various grade levels. The literacy administrator at Serra meets regularly with the English teachers as part of continued on-site professional development. The meetings are either one-on-one, small group meetings, or entire department meetings. At the meetings teachers have the opportunity to share ideas, solve instructional issues, and learn new pedagogy to improve instructional practice. The Literacy Block classes are taught using the workshop model, which includes a mini-lesson, independent practice, and sharing. Teachers regularly confer with students to monitor their progress throughout the course of the academic year. Students choose their own topics and interests to explore within a given framework. Class instruction is differentiated and scaffolded according to the various entry points of the students. Through the use of Socratic Seminars, students are allowed to explore issues and create meaning independent of the teacher.

Mathematics teachers organize themselves for professional development in small groups according to commonly-taught courses (Algebra teachers, Geometry teachers, etc.).

Emphasis is placed on the 9th and 10th grade mathematics courses. Discovery-based learning and cooperative groups are the main components of the district-adopted curriculum for Algebra and Geometry courses. One of the goals of mathematics teachers is to design ways to help students construct their own meaning for concepts presented in the courses. Another goal for this year is to improve collaboration within the department and to begin to develop common units of study.

In the Science Department Chemistry and Physics teachers hold monthly off-site and on-site professional development. Monthly Science Department meetings also provide a forum for discussion of new curriculum and suggestions for improvement. In Physiology students use computers and outside texts to enrich their understanding of the subject. Students must turn in a bimonthly current event related to human health issues. In Chemistry students use supplementary materials to improve and enhance their understanding of the subject.

In the Social Studies Department World History and US History teachers use common assessments tied to content standards in order to monitor student learning. These assessments evaluate students on their knowledge of content standards. They also help the teachers identify any areas that might need some reteaching.

Students in the ILS program at Serra participate in weekly community-based instructional experiences to learn vocational skills, mobility training, and independent living skills. Instruction takes place in the natural environment where skill acquisition leads to generalization of the desired behavior(s).

#### **Areas of Strength:**

- More and more textbooks have been aligned with standards.
- Professional development provides teachers with opportunities to rewrite curriculum to align with standards.
- Monitoring of student progress, especially for at-risk students, is occurring.
- Professional development is in place to design strategies for student engagement and achievement at high levels.

#### **Areas for Growth:**

- Students are still not meeting the standards in high numbers. Professional development is needed to design strategies for greater student success.
- More supports will need to be in place for at-risk students to meet more and more demanding high school graduation and college entrance requirements.
- More department collaboration, both within and between departments, will be needed in order to promote challenging learning experiences in all classrooms.

## **B. Standards Based Student Learning: Assessment and Accountability**

The Structure and Process of the Focus Group: The Assessment and Accountability Focus Group was formed to analyze Serra High School's assessment processes with specific attention paid to progress towards achieving the Expected Schoolwide Learning Results (ESLRs). Certificated and classified personnel at Serra High School were assigned randomly to groups. The classroom teachers of the Assessment and Accountability Focus Group are representative of the following departments: Language Arts, Fine Arts, Foreign Language, Industrial Technology, Mathematics, Business Education, Science, Social Science, Special Education, and Navy Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (NJROTC).

Classified, counseling, and administrative staff (site operations specialist) make up the remainder of the 27 members. Student and parent attendance was encouraged; however, parents and students were only occasionally able to attend. This focus group met beginning in the second semester of the 2002-03 school year to begin our work. Then, in the 2003-04 school year, we met throughout the fall semester on schoolwide minimum days, release days, and after school.

This focus group identified concepts, reviewed the criteria, and identified where Serra High School stands in the four stages of development, according to the WASC rubric. This evolution led to the formation of essential concepts for each criterion.

Individual focus group members were assigned to collect evidence in a variety of classrooms and from administrative and counseling offices. Evidence was analyzed according to Serra High School's two focus ESLRs for the self-study: Effective Communicators and Effective Problem Solvers. The evidence was also correlated with the focus group's essential concepts for each criterion.

**Criterion B-5: Teachers employ a variety of strategies to evaluate student learning. Students and teachers use assessment results to enhance the educational progress of every student.**

Serra High School teachers employ a variety of assessment strategies, both formally and informally, that target systematic improvement in student performance in reference to standards and ESLRs. The English Department's two-hour workshop course (known as English Literacy Block 9 or 10 in the 2003-04 school year) is designed for students significantly below grade level in reading, based on the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT). Teachers of this course are able to conduct weekly reviews of their instructional programs by consulting with each other and with the literacy administrator. Additionally, daily conferring with students in the English Literacy Block course allows these teachers to assess what students know and need to learn. Individual student charts, notes, and anecdotal records are kept for each student. This assessment of student performance shapes the content of daily mini-lessons.

Formal and informal data on student achievement, including assessment of student performance relative to state-adopted academic standards, is routinely gathered. The school

district provides Serra High School with various reports from the state and district, including Standardized Testing And Reporting/California Achievement Test/6 (STAR-CAT/6), the Physics end-of-the-year test, and the Mathematics Diagnostic Test Project (MDTP). This information provides the tools needed by teachers and counselors to identify areas of strength and need in order to increase student achievement. These diagnostic tests are also used by counselors to facilitate placement of students in the appropriate courses.

For the past year and a half Serra High School has made extensive efforts both to communicate STAR-CAT/6 results to the staff and to use the results to make changes in instruction to improve student achievement. Currently all teachers are required to communicate to their students the daily objectives and outcomes that align to state standards in their curricular area. In addition, the English, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies Departments are mapping curriculum and units of study to align with the state standards and to ensure that all students are exposed to these standards and have opportunities to meet them.

Another districtwide assessment strategy that is used to evaluate student learning is the Physics end-of-the-year test. The test is designed by the district to measure a student's ability to meet the Physics standards. Recent results show that students at Serra High School who have completed the Active and Honors Physics courses have been unsuccessful in meeting the standards as measured by the end-of-the-year test. The department is in the process of evaluating the test results and designing the most efficient ways to address this situation. Teachers are currently reviewing a released version of the end-of-the-year exam to determine how day-to-day instruction should change in order to increase student learning and improve results on the test.

As we began our WASC self-study process last school year, we developed a system whereby all teachers were able to observe and evaluate student learning through classroom visitations. Each teacher signed up for two classroom visitations within his or her department and two outside of his or her own department. Teachers observed classrooms to look for evidence of students working as effective communicators and effective problem solvers. These observations revealed that while ESLRs were clearly integrated into the curriculum, the ESLRs are not always clearly posted in all classrooms. As a result, every teacher was given a large, colorful ESLR poster to be displayed in the classroom. A variety of teaching techniques were seen in the observations which indicated a large number of students are being actively engaged. In numerous observations the teachers were accommodating student differences by modifying curriculum and instruction to enhance learning. One hundred and five observation forms were collected after the visits, and the results show that during the observation period over 71 percent of students were working positively, cooperatively, or collaboratively in diverse groups. The results of these observations, as documented on the Student Learning Observation Forms, are disaggregated and available in our evidence collection.

Many teachers make efforts to embed assessment tasks into instruction in order to assess students' learning and measure students' knowledge and skills. The English/Language Arts Department currently uses assessments to enhance the educational progress of every student.

Essays are evaluated using rubrics to determine areas of strength and weakness. These areas are then targeted, often in the form of mini-lessons on the topic or skill needing to be addressed. The skill is reexamined in the next essay (with the rubric) to determine mastery or improvement. The rigor of the rubric varies depending on the particular instructional focus of the unit: grammar, content, or structure. These variances reflect the needs of the students and are modified as the students grow in skill level. Additionally, periodic reading quizzes allow the teacher to assess the degree to which the student has comprehended the ideas or information in specific texts. The teacher is then able to determine what needs to be retaught or clarified. The results of these quizzes can also help the teacher to modify future instructional strategies.

One of the goals of the English Department collaboration is to develop common forms of assessment for the different units of study. This horizontal alignment in courses is designed to ensure common, quality, standards-based instruction in all sections of English. To this end, unit objectives, rubrics, and unit exams are being developed.

Teachers in the English and Mathematics Departments have been given the results to the California Standards Tests (CST) in order to monitor their current students with regards to their progress towards state standards and ESLRs.

The Mathematics Department uses a variety of assessments to evaluate student learning and enhance the educational progress of every student. The MDTP is given at the end of every Algebra class. It is used to determine student placement in mathematics for the following year. Teachers also give tests that are standards-based. The results are used to drive re-teaching or the spiraling of concepts into future chapters. The results of STAR-CAT/6 have been used to create alternate calendars to determine when standards will be taught. District benchmark assessments for Algebra, Geometry, and Unifying Algebra and Geometry are used to assess students' strengths and weaknesses. Teachers use these results to assess and make decisions about student needs. Steps are being taken to meet the needs of students in the Mathematics Department. Three of the Geometry teachers have begun to plan their units together, using common examples and strategies for teaching the material. Common assessments are also being used in this course.

The Special Education Department has various assessments that are used--Woodcock Johnson Cognitive Battery, 3rd Edition (WJ III), SDRT, Wecheler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT), CAT/6, CST, MDTP, Wecheler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC III), Lindemood Auditory Conceptualization (LAC)--to determine each student's skill levels in reading (fluency, comprehension, decoding, vocabulary), written language (fluency, writing mechanics, expression), and mathematics (fluency, calculation, problem solving). These results are used as a baseline/reference to develop academic goals for each student in each of his or her areas of need. These goals are then addressed in the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) and in the classroom. Psycho-educational assessments are also conducted to determine a student's cognitive strengths/deficits (auditory processing, visual processing, visual-motor integration, etc.). This information is used to determine a student's needs for accommodations and modifications in the classroom and to help each student individually progress toward his or her own goals.

Visual and Performing Arts assessments are used to enhance the educational progress of students in a variety of ways. In the performing arts performances that are judged by experts provide opportunity for assessment critiques. Specifically, the Southern California School Band and Orchestra Association provides critically judged critiques both orally (on tape) and also with criterion-referenced judging. The feedback from the judges is used to guide student learning by focusing on improving the weaknesses assessed, as well as through noting and reinforcing students' strengths.

Navy Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps cadets are assessed in areas of academics, physical fitness, military bearing and appearance, citizenship and personal behavior. A variety of assessment techniques are used to ensure the cadets are properly evaluated. Academically, cadet knowledge is assessed using written tests, oral question-and-answer instruction, and observation of physical performance/execution of assignments. Physical fitness standards are measured on a weekly basis through close supervision and instruction (generally one-on-one), and minimum acceptable performance measurements are taken on a scheduled basis. Military bearing, appearance, and execution are all assessed during regularly scheduled drill periods in which one-on-one instruction is provided to each cadet. Additionally, cadets are required to perform their military skills during graded competition. The hallmarks of NJROTC instruction and assessment include close supervision, one-on-one instruction, and day-to-day reinforcement of clearly defined cadet standards and expectations.

The Business Department considers competency to be the successful completion of several tasks selected to demonstrate mastery of a particular technique or skill. Some teachers in the department allow students individual time to revisit or revise their performance after an assessment has been given.

The course sequence in science has undergone a change throughout the entire school district. Physics is now taught to freshmen, most of them taking a course called Active Physics and some taking Honors Physics. Sophomores now take Chemistry, and, beginning next year, juniors will take Biology. New, student-centered curricula are being developed for each course. Science teachers have developed a variety of assessments for these new courses, but have not, as of yet, been able to develop common assessments among teachers.

In Physics, specifically, there has been a tremendous turnover in teaching staff over the last two years. As a result, the department is just beginning to take steps to develop common assessments better aligned to the standards. The goal is to use assessment to drive instruction. In this way the department will be better able to identify the specific areas of weakness of the students and tailor instruction to meet these needs.

Because Chemistry is in the first year of the new curriculum, much of this year is being spent learning the curriculum and assessing its strengths and weaknesses. It is likely that the Chemistry Department will undergo a process similar to the Physics Department in the upcoming years; that is, developing common assessments and using formative assessments to help guide instructional practices.

Counseling consistently uses student assessment results as an ingredient in assisting students in selecting appropriate courses. Counselors guide and monitor students towards the graduation and college entrance requirements.

Some of the formal assessment tools that all departments continue to use are quizzes, tests, essays/research papers, portfolios/journals, labs/reports, presentations, and projects. Forty-nine teachers from a variety of departments participated in the recent Teacher Assessment Survey conducted on September 25, 2003. The results of the survey indicated that Serra teachers use a wide variety of assessment techniques. Very few teachers use only one or two methods of assessment. Almost half of the teachers use observations or anecdotal assessments. Fifty-six percent of teachers use rubrics to grade assignments. Only 19 percent of teachers use tests and quizzes as their primary method of assessment, meaning that they use tests and quizzes more than 60 percent of the time.

**Criterion B-6: The school, district, and community regularly review progress toward achievement of the academic standards and the expected schoolwide learning results and report to the parents and other stakeholders of the community.**

The school assesses its progress in meeting academic standards and the expected schoolwide learning results through examination of a wide variety of student learning: student learning results for individual classes, courses, and subject areas; student performance on standardized tests; and dropout and college entrance rates.

Serra High School, in collaboration with the district and community, periodically shares the accomplishments of its students in meeting the ESLRs and the standards in many formats. The data and analysis of data is shared with stakeholders through the *Serrandipity* (school newspaper), *Serra Spirit* (monthly parent newsletter), *Tierra Times* (community newspaper), *San Diego Union-Tribune*, Serra High School's web site, and the School Accountability Report Card. Data is also analyzed at staff conferences and departments or home group meetings. The staff and community members evaluate the Senior Exhibitions at the end of the year. The rubric for the Senior Exhibition is designed to evaluate the student's ability to demonstrate each ESLR.

Annually various committees and groups review standardized assessment results and make plans to adjust the education programs. The School Site Council (SSC) is charged with monitoring the School Improvement Plan funds and the Single Plan for Student Achievement that guides improvement for students not meeting standards. The SSC reviews data that informs decision making called for in the plan. The Instructional Leadership Team, made up of department chairs and school leaders, also review the data to look for trends and strategize ways to address low performing students. The student group, Principal's Forum, has looked at the Academic Performance Index (API) and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) results and has begun to make plans to educate the entire student body about the importance of these tests, both for the students individually and as a school. The principal regularly shares test results and other performance indicators with groups such as the Parent Teacher Student

Association (PTSA), the Serra Foundation, and at the informal Second Cup of Coffee monthly parent meeting.

API and AYP scores are printed in the *San Diego Union-Tribune*. Access to scores is also linked from the San Diego Unified School District web site at [www.sandi.net](http://www.sandi.net) or to the California Department of Education web site at <http://api.cde.ca.gov/>. Information on the web site includes a breakdown of scores by subgroups and indicates if targets were met. The growth target for Serra High School last school year was 7 points. We surpassed our target and earned a 15 point improvement over the previous year, taking our API from 669 in 2002 to 684 in 2003. All of our student subgroups met their targets, and we are therefore eligible for the Governor's Award Program. Our most substantial growth was seen in our African American subgroup whose target was 6 points, while their actual growth was 38 points. Our Socioeconomically Disadvantaged subgroup, whose target was also 6, improved their performance by earning an actual growth of 27 points. Additionally, Serra met the targets set by the Federal Accountability System mandated through No Child Left Behind. In this, the AYP report, all proficiency and participation targets were met both schoolwide and in all subgroups.

In the spring of 2000 a standards-based system of reform called the *Blueprint for Student Success* was implemented in San Diego City Schools. This reform plan focuses district financial and human resources on instruction and a carefully articulated series of prevention, intervention, and retention strategies. This comprehensive plan serves as a blueprint for changing the organizational structure of district schools and the entire system to support teaching and learning for all students. Serra High School's involvement in this area is reflected in the implementation of English Literacy Block, Algebra Explorations, and Active Physics courses. The English Department's two-hour workshop course (known as English Literacy Block in the 2003-04 school year) is designed to meet the needs of students significantly below grade level in reading based on the SDRT.

Other methods of sharing information on student accomplishment include both the fall and spring open house. At the fall open house, held in the evening, parents are urged to set up an appointment with teachers to discuss their individual student's progress. The spring open house provides parents an opportunity to come on campus during the school day to observe classes at work or to meet with teachers during their prep periods. In addition, departments submit lists of students deserving recognition. The students are honored at end-of-the-year schoolwide assemblies. Each semester the Honor Roll is posted in classrooms and offices. Student-of-the-Month and Principal's 4.0 Assemblies are held throughout the year to honor students who achieved high levels of success in their classes.

Another way that the school shares each student's progress towards achievement of academic standards is by providing four progress reports and two report cards each year. Also, the principal keeps the school and community informed through presentations to parents and staff throughout the school year. The PTSA also meets regularly and reviews student progress based on assessment results. Staff review assessment data at staff conferences, as well as at department meetings. As a part of accreditation requirements, periodic WASC parent meetings and focus group meetings have been held to review data.



Serra's SSC meets monthly. Composed of staff, parents, and students, this group's primary responsibility is to monitor the school plan, now called the Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA), and to make recommendations. The SSC developed the plan and periodically reviews data to determine how successfully the plan is being carried out and whether the goals are being addressed and met. The group also determines annually whether modifications to the plan are necessary. The current SPSA focuses on improving student achievement in mathematics and language arts. The committee analyzes data collected from STAR-CAT/6, California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), SDRT, and MDTP, in addition to evaluating how well the curriculum is meeting the needs of the students based on the assessment results. Although membership on the SSC is strictly determined by state law, the meetings are open to everyone.

The culminating activity that assesses student progress towards accomplishing the ESLRs is Serra's Senior Exhibition Portfolio. The Senior Exhibition requires students to demonstrate how they have met the community service requirement and to describe their achievement and participation in a multitude of school and community activities. The Senior Exhibition Portfolio will in part measure each student's ability to effectively communicate their personal experience and growth at Serra High School. For most students, this will include a demonstration of their ability to use technology as a tool for learning. The portfolio will also include examples of each student's quality work in the form of a Senior Reflection essay. Students will demonstrate that they are effective problem solvers by presenting projects that required cooperation with others to solve problems. They will demonstrate appropriate research to access information and gain knowledge about a problem. Finally, students will demonstrate their ability and willingness to become lifelong learners by describing how they have taken responsibility for their decisions and actions, how they plan to maintain mental and physical health, and what plans they have made for future.

**Criterion B-7: The assessment of student achievement in relation to academic standards and the expected schoolwide learning results drives the school's program development and resource allocation and use. (i.e. The human, material, physical, and financial resources are sufficient and utilized effectively to support students in accomplishing the academic standards and the expected schoolwide learning results.)**

Low levels of student engagement and achievement in high school (both nationally and locally) have led many urban districts, including San Diego Unified, to look for new ideas in high school reform. Thus, San Diego City Schools' High School Reform Initiative has been put in to place to ensure that all students achieve academic success. Through its vision for high school reform, the district has imagined a future that presents high schools with a challenge to do something that we have never done before: graduate all students with skills and qualifications for meeting UC/CSU entrance requirements without the need for remediation in English or mathematics once they reach college. One strategy for accomplishment of this goal is for each high school to analyze its data, such as test scores, enrollment patterns, and graduation rates, and to create a work plan to meet the goals laid out by the district.

Our district leadership realizes that reform efforts at each high school must be responsive to student needs and teacher, principal, parent, and community expectations by improving the rigor of the instructional program, personalizing high school for students, and improving school leadership. During the November 10, 2003 Staff Development Day, the faculty of Serra High School spent time in breakout sessions focusing on our current API, Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), Advanced Placement (AP) test scores, and the goals of the high school reform movement in our district. After viewing and analyzing these assessment results, we are now beginning to create a work plan to guide us in improving our overall scores on these tests and meeting the goals of the Reform Initiative.

Strategies, structures, actions and the allocation of resources grow out of assessments. The school collects the results of its schoolwide assessments of student learning. These analyses guide decisions about many school programs, including English workshop, Algebra Explorations, Advanced Placement, Seminar, and Gifted and Talented Education (GATE).

One example of how assessment drives school programs is the English Literacy Block. In 8th grade students are assessed by the SDRT to determine if they are proficient in reading. Those who score more than one year below grade level are enrolled in English Literacy Block. The class employs the workshop model and offers smaller class sizes, as well as a two-hour block to provide the students with a greater opportunity to become proficient in reading. Similarly, a mathematics assessment is done in 8th grade to determine if a student is ready for Geometry. Students who fail to meet the district's recommended benchmarks for Algebra or Geometry are enrolled in Algebra Explorations. This class also offers a smaller class size, which improves the opportunity for each student to become proficient in Algebra.

At Serra a D or an F in a class indicates that a student has not reached proficiency in that subject. When this occurs, students have two programs that can be used to get themselves back on track for graduation. These are Success School and Summer School. Success School gives these students the opportunity to retake classes in which they earned a D or an F in order to meet the proficiency and gain graduation credit for the class. Success School meets from 2:30 until 5:00 four days a week for six weeks. Summer School offers the same opportunity, but the students meet two hours per day, five days a week for six weeks. Both programs are funded by Extended Learning Opportunities Programs through the district.

Assessment has driven the formation of "03" classes in the areas of Geometry and Chemistry in the 2002-03 school year. The Geometry 03 course was designed for 10th grade students who did poorly in Algebra in the 9th grade, receiving a D or an F and a low MDTP score. Lack of success in Algebra has proven to be an indicator of difficulty in achieving success in Geometry, so the "03" courses provide extra support for students in meeting the demands of this rigorous course, which is now a graduation requirement. In the current school year nearly 60 percent of the students who had received Ds and Fs in Algebra are now receiving a C or higher in Geometry 03. Similarly, 03 Chemistry was developed to provide support for 10th grade students who struggled and earned low grades (D or F) in both Algebra and Physics in their 9th grade year. Figures for this school year indicate that over 60 percent of students in Chemistry 03 are earning a C or higher.

The establishment of the Academy of Information Technology (AoIT) was motivated by studies that show a smaller learning community with a career-oriented theme improves a student's ability to be successful. Funded by a grant written by Serra teachers, the AoIT provides a school within a school for middle quartile students in grades 10-12 with an interest in information technology. An advisory committee that consists of students, parents, teachers, and community members involved in the technology industry developed the course. Additionally, a teacher committee has been developed to monitor and keep students in the program accountable for their grades and citizenship. AoIT students are held to higher standards in both their academics and citizenship; they must maintain a 2.0 GPA with a C or better and a citizenship GPA of 3.0 in their Academy classes in order to remain in the program. The program provides common teachers who plan their standards-based curricula together, smaller classes, guest speakers, internships, and field trips that are all centered around technology. Along with these components, the students are provided with a social atmosphere of peer support to help them take more ownership in their education.

**Areas of Strength:**

- Efforts have been made in departments to develop common assessments and to study data to determine student needs.
- There are frequent opportunities at staff conferences and department meetings to review data and discuss implications for instruction.
- School leadership allocates resources, through the SPSA, for improving achievement of 9th and 10th grade students in the areas of mathematics and English/language arts.

**Areas for Growth:**

- The Mathematics Department needs to utilize results of the district assessments to improve instruction to better meet the needs of our students.
- There is a great need for collaboration in the Science Department in order to align curriculum with standards and create common assessments.
- Professional development is needed to further create and refine end-of-the-year tests and other assessments in all subject matters, both formative and summative, and then use the results to develop strategies for intervention as needed.
- There is a need to create staff development in the area of technology to retrain teachers in what is available on the network as it currently stands. There is also a need to standardize technological systems and programs used on the network so teachers can use the technology to help drive their practice.
- There is a continued need to examine progress toward high school reform goals and determine what course offerings and support systems need to be added.

## **C: Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth**

The Structure and Process of the Focus Group: The Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth Focus Group was formed to study and evaluate the services that are provided to students at Serra High School, both academically and personally, in order to support them in reaching high levels of achievement and success. In so doing, we considered both the academic standards, most of them mandated by the state, as well as our own ESLRs. Our ESLRs promote academic goals such as effective communication, problem solving, and academic achievement, as well as personal goals such as responsible citizenship and lifelong learning.

The group was formed in the second semester of the 2002-03 school year. In our initial meetings we studied our criteria and the rubrics by which we would measure Serra's status. We began then to gather and examine evidence such as home group responses, student work analyses, test data, counseling office data, student and parent surveys, and data from other support agencies on campus such as the nurse's office and the Healthy Start office (called Serra Real Connections). By the fall of 2003 we were meeting regularly, at least twice a month, along with the other focus groups that met at the same times.

Guided by a facilitator and a cofacilitator, our group consisted of one administrator, the school nurse, a counselor, 14 teachers representing all of the major departments, nine classified personnel, and three parents. In November of 2003 we were joined by three students. Drafts of our report were presented in November, and all members present suggested changes and additions.

### **Criterion C-8: All students receive appropriate support to help ensure academic success.**

Serra has developed, implemented, and, when necessary, revised a variety of academic programs and supports to meet the educational needs of its diverse student population. Both within individual classrooms and throughout the campus, all students have access to supports designed to meet their individual goals and needs. These include district and state programs, as well as programs designed specifically for Serra students.

In placing students in an academic program, the educational needs of each student are addressed first. An individual articulation plan, developed for each student by the counseling office, guides the process which takes students from articulation through placement and then monitors them throughout each year, ensuring that the student achieves academic success. Students are placed into programs according to their needs. Once placed, students are monitored by teachers, counselors, and administrators for academic progress.

Classes are balanced early in the year to ensure maximum exposure and opportunity for both teacher and student to build a relationship. Additionally, teachers receive copies of accommodations and modifications for all students who are Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) or have active Individual Education Plans (IEPs) in order to further facilitate individual student learning. Early in the year professional development for faculty is tied to

monitoring student work to determine each child's needs within the classroom. Each student receives a syllabus for every class which outlines standards for the class and gives an overview of requirements for the class.

All students, whatever their abilities, are continually encouraged to meet the challenges of a standards-based curriculum and literacy in all areas. Serra teachers are encouraged to know their students' learning needs by studying individual student data. A focus of frequent staff development is that teachers will modify lesson plans based on student understanding, use various instructional strategies to tap into the different learning styles and needs of all students, and monitor student progress frequently, as many already do. Ongoing professional development is designed to empower teachers with knowledge of sound practices that can be implemented in all classrooms.

Serra High School uses a variety of methods to communicate information to staff, students, parents, and the community. The primary mode of internal communication is by either voice mail or e-mail. Every staff member has voice mail and an e-mail account. We also make attempts to collect accurate e-mail addresses from parents and use the addresses whenever possible. Teachers are encouraged to maintain communication with parents on a regular basis, especially when the student is at risk. Biweekly progress reports are available in the Counseling Office. These progress reports provide students and parents with an ongoing awareness of their grades and provide intervention for students at risk when needed. Serra publishes a monthly newsletter called the *Serra Spirit*. This newsletter is sent home to all parents. Important test dates are published in the *Serra Spirit*, including Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT), Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), and California Achievement Test/6 (CAT/6) testing dates. We also submit articles to the *Tierra Times*, the local community newspaper, to inform the community about school events. The marquee at the main corner outside the school is another way parents and the community can get information about what is going on at Serra. The Serra web site is a vital part of communications at Serra High School. Through the site staff links, parents and students can access calendars, homework, grades, procedures, e-mail addresses, phone numbers, and more. The fall Open House, usually held during the third week of school, is often the first time staff and parents meet during the year. At that time parents are informed about course content and requirements. They receive a copy of each course syllabus and a tutoring schedule. Parent contact information is gathered and used to enhance ongoing communication between the school and home. In early 2004 staff will be trained in the new student data system, District-Wide Applications (DWA). DWA will provide quicker and more accurate information on a student's attendance, class schedule, grades, and discipline history than we have ever had before. Parents will also be able to access this information for their individual student(s).

Serra is responding to the school district's new high school reform goals. One of those goals is that more students will graduate having successfully completed the UC/CSU a-g requirements. Many supports are already in place to help our students meet that goal. Posters were made for all classrooms showing the a-g requirements, the courses Serra offers that meet the a-g criteria, and the graduation requirements for the San Diego Unified School District. Teachers attended an inservice in which this information was reviewed. Counselors

made a similar presentation to all third period classes. A copy of the a-g requirements was mailed to every Serra family along with students' first progress reports on October 24, 2003.

Senior credit checks take place in October. All seniors meet with their counselor to discuss their final year of school and to make sure all graduation requirements will be met by June. Copies of the credit checks are given to the parent, student, and counselor. An additional copy is placed in the student's cumulative folder. Presentations are made to all senior classes regarding graduation requirements. There are two College Nights held at Serra High School to discuss college admissions procedures and financial aid. The Senior Class College Night is held in October, while the Junior Class College Night takes place in March. All sophomore students and their families are invited to participate in a 10th Grade Review, which involves an evening program for parents in December and a presentation to students in February.

This fall Serra added six new sections of Advanced Placement (AP) classes, with plans to add at least two and perhaps three new AP courses next year. The district now requires each AP student who wishes to receive weighted credit for the class to take the AP test for that class in the spring. All AP teachers have been encouraged to attend institutes, which take place during the school year and in the summer. Many students who have not participated in the AP program before are now being encouraged to take AP classes. More supports have been put into place to help those students "new" to the AP program. Teachers provide after-school tutoring and the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program supports many of our students. During the Standardized Testing And Reporting (STAR)-CAT/6 testing week, the AP students participate in study sessions with their AP teachers. Serra also has a strong Seminar program, which prepares students to be successful in AP courses.

The presence of Mesa College is felt at Serra High School through the Political Science class. Seniors have the option of enrolling in this college level course, which is taught on Serra's campus by a Mesa College professor. If a student passes this course, college credit is granted.

Serra currently has four sections of AVID in place. The mission of AVID is to ensure that under-represented students whose parents are not college graduates will be motivated and prepared to attend college. AVID teaches students how to succeed in a rigorous curriculum, enter mainstream activities of the school, and become educated and responsible participants and leaders in a democratic society. Each AVID class has no more than 23 students per class to maximize student/teacher interaction. AVID meets the needs of students at Serra by providing academic instruction and other support to students to prepare them for eligibility to four-year colleges and universities, providing a variety of writing projects to prepare for college essays, giving students entry-level college skills, increasing student "coping skills," motivating students to seek a college education, and increasing the student's level of career awareness. Beginning this year every AVID 9th or 10th grader must take at least one honors class, while every AVID 11th or 12th grader must take at least one AP class. The AVID class will provide these students the kind of support they will need in order to be successful in these more challenging courses.

Many supports are in place to help students maintain and exceed the 2.0 GPA graduation requirement. Ongoing reminders to staff of the importance of reteaching and offering additional support for struggling students are issued many times throughout the school year during staff development and prep period meetings. Counselors hold conferences with at-risk students to discuss tips for academic success. After-school tutoring is always suggested to students. To help our students stay organized, agendas are distributed to all students in September. Teachers are encouraged to help students use their agendas to write down all assignments and important information. Serra's ESLRs can be found in the agendas, as well as other important school dates and information. An additional AVID class section was opened this school year to support ninth grade students moving from a two-hour Literacy Block to one-hour regular English. All students who have a 3.5 or above are named on the Honor Roll, with special recognition for students with a 4.0 or above in the form of a Principal's Reception. Students with all As and all Es are recognized as Serra Scholars. For students who are not meeting with success, counselors intervene. Notification is mailed to parents of students receiving one or more Ds or Fs on any progress report and/or report card, along with suggestions for assistance and/or remediation. Of particular concern this year is the nearly one-third of freshmen and one-third of sophomores who are receiving at least one D or F as of the second progress report (November 2003). Discussions are ongoing as we seek ways to provide support to these students, and the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) has sought to address the issues in the action plan.

To support academic success, tutoring is provided by Real Connections Monday through Thursday after school. Teachers also conduct individual tutoring for their students on their own schedule. For students needing to make up credits toward graduation, Success School and Summer School are available. Each time that a new session of Success School is about to begin, counselors inform students with D and F grades in core subjects and urge them to sign up. If a student successfully completes a 6-week session of Success School, the new grade will replace the old and provide the student credit for that course.

To ensure that our students are successful in their courses, teachers attend staff development and staff conferences in which effective teaching practices are discussed. The administration has developed a list of Fundamental Teaching Practices, and when informal observations are conducted it is these practices that observers look for. Results of the observations are shared at prep period meetings and staff conferences. With these Fundamental Teaching Practices as a guide, teachers are encouraged to offer clear goals and expectations to students on a daily basis, plan a rigorous, well-defined curriculum aligned with state standards, reteach concepts in order to clarify any student misconceptions, and communicate frequently with the families of our students.

Serra's special education students are placed in classes based on each student's individual needs as prescribed in their IEP or 504. Students are placed in the "least restrictive environment" in which they can function successfully. The majority of special education students are in regular classes for a part of their day. They are supported through collaboration or by the services provided in the Learning Center. Some special education students who cannot function in a regular education program receive specialized instruction for most of their day from trained special education teachers. All special education teachers

manage a caseload of students, which includes conducting IEP meetings and reviews. Our site-based diagnostic resource teacher oversees all matters involving special education students.

There are some classes at Serra that are designed to help our students who are performing below grade level. The one-hour Algebra Explorations and two-hour Literacy Block 9 classes are examples of 9th grade courses designed to improve the skills of students with low mathematics or reading skills. These courses operate with smaller class sizes than regular classes. We offer several classes for 10th grade students who have experienced difficulty in core areas. The two-hour Literacy Block 10 course is a continuation of Literacy Block 9 for students still reading below grade level. Geometry 03 is for 10th grade students who failed Algebra Explorations in the 9th grade, and Chemistry 03 is for 10th graders who failed Physics in the 9th grade. Both 03 courses are standards-based and qualify as a-g courses, but the curriculum is designed to provide additional support for students who need it and are taught by teachers with expertise in motivating hard-to-reach students. Incidentally, the November 2003 progress report data shows that 59 percent of the 10th graders in Geometry 03 are receiving an A, B, or C in the course, while 64 percent of the 10th graders in Chemistry 03 are receiving an A, B, or C in that course. Bearing in mind that these are students who last year had failed or nearly failed their mathematics or science class, it is encouraging to see that large numbers are meeting success this year in their “03” courses.

Serra has a small number of English Language learners. Therefore, there is neither an English as a Second Language course nor any bilingual courses offered. Students designated as English Learners (EL) through administration of the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) are programmed into regular core classes taught by Cultural Language Acquisitions Development (CLAD) or Specially Designed Academic Instruction for English Learners (SDAIE) certified teachers. If appropriate, EL students are enrolled in Literacy Block, Algebra Explorations, or Active Physics courses.

**Criterion C-9: Students have access to a system of personal support services, activities, and opportunities at the school and within the community.**

Serra High School has many opportunities in place to help support all our students. Academic clubs, extracurricular activities, and support groups are just part of Serra’s community. Students have equal access to all services offered at Serra. A major goal at Serra is to make sure everyone feels accepted and welcome as individuals.

So that all students can stay connected and informed, the daily bulletin is televised every day during the Reading Period. A printed version of the bulletin is also posted in the Attendance Office window, the Media Center, the counter in the Counseling Office, and on the Serra website. Serra also holds monthly Senate meetings. All third period classes elect a senator to attend the meeting. When the senators return from the meeting, they share the information with the rest of their third period class. The principal is present at these Student Senate meetings. She has made student communication a priority this year and has designated the senators as student leaders in their classes to make sure information is shared and input is



gathered. The Associated Student Body (ASB), which runs the meetings, is making concerted efforts this year to assure that every 3rd period class is represented.

To promote school attendance, Serra utilizes an auto dialer to call a student's home every time he or she misses one or more periods during the school day. Counselors attempt to reach a parent of students who consistently miss class or arrive late. Counselors also make contact with students who chronically miss class, determining if there is an extenuating reason requiring additional assistance and/or assigning of Saturday School or detention when necessary. Extreme cases are referred to the Student Study Team (SST), nurse, or Serra Real Connections.

Serra Real Connections, the Healthy Start program located on the Serra High School campus, collaborates with the high school, as well as various community agencies, such as Social Advocates for Youth (SAY), to serve the students and families in the Serra community. The focus of Real Connections is youth development through after-school activities, clubs, peer mentoring/leadership, tutoring, and workshops. The program assists students in their emotional well-being through individual case management, conflict resolution, and support groups. Students learn better communication skills, as well as how to cope with stress, low self-esteem, grief, and anger. We also offer a Parent Network, providing referrals and resources for Serra families.

Serra counselors and the staff at Serra Real Connections sometimes refer families to agencies located outside of the immediate Serra community, closer to home for our students who must take the bus to Serra. Some of these referral agencies deal primarily with a particular ethnic or language sub-group of the population. It is important to keep location, access, cost, and language issues in mind when making referrals. Three programs that we refer to are the Barrio Station located in Logan Heights, the Jackie Robinson Family YMCA in Southeast San Diego, and Union of Pan Asian Communities (UPAC) located in Golden Hill. Barrio Station primarily serves Hispanic families with counseling, parenting classes, and youth programs. The services are free. The Jackie Robinson YMCA offers sports, after-school activities, counseling, tutoring, and other recreational and educational activities. UPAC is another resource used for community referrals. Counseling services are provided, along with youth programs.

Link Crew is a student mentorship program at Serra High School in which upperclassmen reach out to all freshmen in an effort to help them feel connected to the high school community at Serra High. Link Crew was first introduced at Serra, with the financial support of the Serra Foundation in collaboration with site funds, during the 2002-03 school year. Selected staff members volunteer to attend a rigorous training seminar in which they learn to teach high school juniors and seniors the particulars of peer mentorship, as well as skills that encourage academic success. It is the Link Leader's (juniors and seniors) responsibility to keep in contact with his/her assigned freshman in an effort to inform him/her of school events and direct any answers to questions that may arise, as well as offer a friendly face in a new environment. Link Crew is as important an experience for the Link Crew Leaders as it is for the freshmen. While freshmen learn to adapt to the culture of Serra High School, Link Crew Leaders learn tools that will ultimately help them become effective members of their

community. Some Link Crew events include Freshmen Orientation, Hawaiian Dance, the first football game, and Camp Mini-town.

The employer outreach specialist at Serra High School provides all students with the resources necessary to research and identify career opportunities. All 9th grade students are given the Career Operational Preference System (COPS) test. This is an in-depth interest inventory designed to guide students to job clusters that match their interests. Serra High School subscribes to COIN3, an on-line service that combines many facets of career exploration. This resource is available to all students. Some students will use this program in conjunction with the follow-up to their COPS testing. Others will use it if they meet with the employer outreach specialist for one-on-one career counseling. This year Serra High School will offer all students in grades 10-12 the opportunity to take the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB). This three-hour test goes a step beyond the COPS testing and gives the students an idea of where their skills lie in addition to their interests. All of these resources combined give the students at Serra High School a strong base of support and guidance to help them determine their career goals.

Students at Serra High School learn the importance of giving back to their community through the thousands of hours spent doing community service and service learning projects. All students are encouraged to volunteer, and many do, especially through on-campus clubs and organizations. All seniors are required to do 25 hours of community service in order to graduate.

The Serra High School Health Program is directed by a full-time registered nurse and a part time health assistant. Our comprehensive program embraces three major areas: Health Services, Healthful and Safe School Environment, and Health Education. The primary purpose of the health program is to help students develop attitudes, make intelligent choices, follow practices that will help them live healthfully and happily, and to assume responsibility for their own health. The health program, broadly interpreted, is the shared responsibility of the teacher, school nurse, and other authorized personnel in contact with students at school.

The nurse's two main goals are to maximize students' health and wellness so they can successfully participate in the district's instructional program and to minimize the classroom instructional time missed due to health and wellness problems. In pursuit of these goals, the nurse's office provides intervention and treatment measures that involve evaluating, treating (where possible), and referring new and existing health and psychosocial problems as they occur. These measures may include some or all of the following: nursing referrals in follow-up of failed health screenings; evaluate, treat (when possible), and refer acute and episodic illnesses, conditions, and injuries as they occur (e.g., fevers, broken bones, severe headaches, symptoms of drug use, etc.); provide services to students with chronic and existing illnesses, disorders, diseases, and/or conditions (e.g., psycho-social and mental health problems, administering medications per physicians' orders, intervening with and educating students and their families regarding particular chronic-illness issues such as asthma, diabetes, etc.); evaluate and treat students with special needs (e.g., providing case management and physical health care procedures); educate and inform students as needed about important health issues such as communicable diseases, substance abuse, sex and HIV/AIDS, and other topics as

needs indicate; collaborate and work with site staff and community agencies to plan and manage treatment of various problems of individual students etc.; and collaborate with site staff/community agencies to plan and implement new programs and services for all students (e.g., school blood drive, Healthy Start Community Collaborative, etc.).

Also offered by the nurse are student screenings, staff surveillance of communicable diseases; immunization compliance review; and staff health prevention education.

The School Psychologist at Serra works full time to assure that the psycho-educational needs of the students are met. She is available to work with any student who needs her services, which include the following: assessment of students with academic, emotional, and social needs; conducting manifestation hearings to determinate zero tolerance status; counseling services and crisis/emergency counseling on a short-term basis until parents give written permission for extended sessions; and consultation services to students, teachers and parents of students who not only attend Serra, but also those who may attend private, nonpublic schools. Our school psychologist has juvenile justice experience and can be called upon to assist in matters involving the court system.

The ASB plans activities for maximum student participation. Students can participate in a variety of lunchtime activities, spirit rallies, and dances, both formal and informal. ASB and various clubs sponsor activities, such as bands and food fairs. The ASB, in conjunction with the Business Regional Occupation Program (ROP) classes, operates the Serra Student Store. The Student Store is open for business before school and during lunch. Additionally, ASB has been able to provide bus transportation to evening dances and sporting events for our Voluntary Ethnic Enrollment Program (VEEP) students. ASB recognizes outstanding Serra students at the monthly Student of the Month awards. Teachers and staff members nominate deserving students to be recognized. During summer registration senior students are paired up with freshmen students, or buddies, as mentors to help the freshmen transition to high school.

Recently the Student Senate, a branch of ASB, was expanded to include a forum for students to meet with and ask questions of the principal, in addition to receiving student activities information. The Senate meets once a month to review the upcoming events and dialogue with the principal. Each class has one representative who reports back information. The Senate has seen student representative participation increase from previous years due in part to the opportunity to discuss student concerns with the principal.

After school students can participate in various school-sponsored activities. Some of these activities include athletics, cheer, band, and Navy Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (NJROTC). Some clubs also meet after school. Success School is run after school, as well as some ROP classes. Bus services are provided for all students who stay after school for any school-related activity, whether it be sports, tutoring, or Success School.

Finally, Serra's student clubs provide opportunities for social activities, support for student growth, and service within the community. There are currently 49 clubs at Serra. Some of them support a particular sport or athletic program, such as the Boys Lacrosse Club or the

Girls Volleyball Club. Other clubs support academics, such as the Academic League, the Serra Math Coalition, or the Theater Club. Still others offer mainly service opportunities. Service clubs such as the Key Club, A Better Community (ABC), Link Crew, and Serra Men of Quality mobilize students to perform some kind of valuable service. Each fall the ASB holds a Club Rush Day on campus during lunch to promote these clubs and to give students opportunities to join up.

**Areas of Strength:**

- There are many fine support opportunities, both academic and personal, provided for students and for parents at Serra High School.

**Areas for Growth:**

- We must continue to develop more programs for supporting student growth so that more students take advantage of the support and raise achievement levels.
- We must continue our efforts to close the achievement gap so that all students are achieving at the highest levels.
- We must continue attempts to help 9th graders, in particular, feel connected with the school and supported in making wise decisions.

## **D. Culture, Vision, and Purpose**

The Structure and Purpose of the Focus Group: The Culture, Vision, and Purpose Focus Group was formed to analyze Serra High School's guiding principles and climate based on the Expected Schoolwide Learning Results (ESLRs). Certificated personnel from every department in the school, as well as classified personnel from widely differing departments, were assigned randomly to the group beginning in the early spring of 2003. In addition, after parents, students, and other members of the community were encouraged to join the group, two parents and four students did join us.

This focus group met on schoolwide minimum days, release days, and after school beginning in January 2003 and continuing through November of 2003. The focus group identified concepts, reviewed the criteria, and identified where Serra High School stands in the four stages of development on the rubric for each of our designated criterion.

Individual focus group members were assigned to collect evidence in a variety of classrooms and departments, as well as from the counseling office and the administration of the school. This evidence was compared with the two elements of the ESLRs that have been the focus of this self-study: Effective Communicators and Effective Problem Solvers. The evidence was also correlated with the focus group's essential concepts for each criterion.

It should be noted that our focus group is called Culture, Vision, and Purpose and covers the criteria categories of D: Culture and F: Vision and Purpose.

**Criterion D-10: The school is a safe, clean, and orderly place that nurtures learning. The culture of the school is characterized by trust, professionalism, high expectations for all students, and a focus on continuous school improvement.**

It is obvious from the survey conducted with both students and their parents that many feel that the students are safe on the Serra campus. Seventy-nine percent of the students and eighty-four percent of the parents agreed or strongly agreed with that statement. Students from San Diego City Schools regularly request assignment to Serra, partly because of the safety of the school. Currently there are over 700 students from other geographical areas in the district who arrive via special enrollment options on the Serra campus each day. Since the last WASC evaluation Serra has been listed in the top three schools each year that are requested by the school Choice program offered by San Diego City Schools. Currently there are 111 students at Serra by Choice, and there would have been more if there had been room. Two late activity buses allow students to participate in athletics, clubs, and tutoring programs after school.

Surveys also reveal that a majority of the parents (54 percent) and students (84 percent) also feel that school rules are applied in a fair and consistent manner and that teachers handle student discipline appropriately. This definitely sets the tone for a safe and orderly campus.

Orderliness is evidenced by a system of rules and regulations that are enforced by the administration and staff. A school handbook is distributed to every student enrolled at Serra

High School. A system is set up to deal with tardiness and/or truancy that includes Saturday School, as well as home contact by the counselors and/or a vice principal. Serra's school policies of Zero Tolerance, the athletic eligibility and participation policy, and the school dance policy are other means by which orderliness is promoted and encouraged. In addition to our excellent staff, outside resources are utilized in order to enhance our environment and teach responsibility. For example, Judge William Mudd of the San Diego Criminal Court system speaks annually to our seniors concerning the legal rights and responsibilities of adulthood which one assumes at the age of 18.

The school environment of Serra High School is safe, secure, clean, and orderly. A caring and nurturing environment is promoted by all staff members in order to encourage enhanced student learning based on high expectations. For example, our ninth grade English Literacy Block classes nurture learning by providing a small community that encourages the students to begin their high school experiences on a positive note. Although this program is aimed at students who need remediation in reading skills, most other core courses also offer tutoring. Our custodial and gardening staffs, despite recent cuts, do their best to maintain a clean and neat campus. Though they may not have the manpower to get the job done as efficiently as in the past, they focus on providing a safe and healthy environment.

A program that provides a valuable service to our community has been our Real Connections program. Sponsored by a grant from the Healthy Start Project, this group of dedicated professionals provides tutoring after school for students wanting one-on-one assistance in their studies or in their personal lives. In addition, five different groups meet at Real Connections to facilitate discussion around such topics as self-esteem and anger management. Approximately 50 students currently are taking advantage of this counseling program, and approximately 25 students per day take advantage of the tutoring provided by Real Connections. Much of the tutoring is done by trained peer counselors who receive volunteer credits for their efforts.

This is the second year for another program sponsored by Real Connections that aims to encourage student success through strong families and strong communities. Student Orientation Leaders (SOL) pairs trained upper-classmen with incoming freshmen who have been identified and referred by the middle school counselors to help them become more familiar with Serra and feel at ease here.

Link Crew is a similar but expanded program initiated as a collaboration in 2002 between the Serra Administration, Real Connections, and several Serra staff members in order to link every incoming freshman with upper class leaders who have been successful at Serra and who are good role models for younger students. The goals of this national program are to encourage students to be responsible members of their community, to be positive role models to fellow students, and to have respect for diverse ideas and personalities; all ideas which are reflected in our school ESLRs.

A Learning Center has been established on campus to deal with special needs students with low reading scores to enable them to succeed in a mainstream classroom. The program is running in conjunction with the Literacy Block classes and is funded by the school district.

Another service provided to Serra students is the Life Skills program. Ninth and tenth grade students receive information about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs, as well as counseling, if needed. Eleventh grade students receive information on date rape from police officers, and the twelfth grade students are informed of issues dealing with drinking and driving, especially during the time close to Prom and the end of the school year.

Serra High School is a clean environment, thanks to the efforts of the custodial crew who clean up graffiti, beautify the campus by regularly picking up trash, and ensure sanitary conditions inside of the restroom through regular maintenance. In addition, Saturday School participants have the opportunity to help beautify the campus.

One area that has been stressed this year (2003-04) has been the district sponsored Proposition MM that has improved the cleanliness, appearance, and safety of the school. Every room has been painted, the wiring for computers upgraded, new carpet or tile installed, bathrooms renovated, and new furniture added to the Media Center in order to create a comfortable reading area for the students.

The culture of Serra High School is also characterized by trust, professionalism, high expectations for all students, and a focus on continuous school improvement. The faculty and staff of Serra High School make a major attempt at developing trust with students. As early as our pre-service dates in August, our staff's discussions centered on "what it means to be a professional." Instructors are encouraged to cultivate positive relationships with the students in their classrooms and to know them deeply as individual learners.

Our vision to become the best high school in the nation has led us to engage in frequent conversations and reflections about how we might improve our practice. We are a community of learners, and we have a shared vision that we must reflect on our teaching by opening our classrooms and making our practice public. Classroom observations are a daily occurrence, and our site is a frequent host to visitors. Our staff and students are proud to show our professionalism, trust, and commitment to improvement.

We have high expectations for our students, which are evident in our graduation requirements, standards-based instruction, and our focus on high school reform. Our students are asked to take the most challenging curriculum possible, and we have worked tirelessly to support them in their pursuit of academic progress in a rigorous educational setting.

As a staff, we have done much professional reading and dialoguing to "change the culture" from isolationism to shared learning and committing to continuous improvement.

One area that involves teachers in developing strategies for improving their relationships in the classroom and thus their effectiveness with the students is their own professional development training. Serra conducts regular staff development meetings where teachers have a chance to share ideas about curriculum and classroom management. During these training meetings, departments align their curriculum with the California State Standards, discuss vertical teaming, and create intradepartmental standards across grade levels. After-

school workshops and home group meetings are led by highly skilled teachers and administrators in order to further promote quality standards and academic success. English faculty members are currently monitoring individual students in order to improve their academic success.

Serra has created a small learning community titled The Academy of Information and Technology (AoIT) which encourages professionalism and collaboration among staff members. Academy teachers align their curriculum in order to address common goals and standards. There are integrated projects that span four different departments and two different grade levels: English, social studies, mathematics, and technology. The AoIT currently involves about 80 tenth and eleventh graders and six teachers.

Professionalism is further evidenced by the large number of advanced degrees held by Serra staff members. Sixty-four percent of the teachers hold at least a Masters degree and twenty-eight percent are certified to teach Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) classes. A total of six teachers hold either a Ph.D. or a Juris Doctorate, and one teacher is National Board Certified. In addition, 41 percent of the teachers have been at Serra for more than five years and 70 percent have more than five years of teaching experience.

Higher expectations require students to maintain at least a 2.0 GPA for activities such as Associated Student Body (ASB), Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), and athletics. Several honor societies, such as Quill and Scroll and the California Scholarship Federation, require high grades as well. Advanced placement courses, GATE classes, and a Seminar program further enhance and encourage student excellence. Literacy Block, Advanced Placement, and Seminar English teachers regularly collaborate to align curriculum with current state standards, thus affording the students a better chance to excel in state-mandated testing situations and to do well in their future English courses at Serra.

Serra has had national, state, and district essay winners in various contests. Currently the school newspaper (*Serrandipity*) is ranked first in the district and sixth in the county. During the 2003 spring semester eleven journalism students qualified for recognition by the San Diego County Journalism Education Association (SDCJEA) in such fields as writing, photography, and cartooning. These students also placed in state competitions.

In the spring of 2003 one of our students participated in a Life Skills sponsored essay contest on "When Not to Keep a Secret." The student placed third in the state of California and was introduced to the California State Legislature.

In the spring of 2003 the Navy Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (NJROTC) drill team as a whole placed 7th in the nation and the unarmed drill team placed first at the Navy Nationals Field Meet held in Florida. Later in the semester the program received the honor of being named the 13th best drill team in the nation. One NJROTC student is currently serving as the Battalion Commander for the entire school district.

Serra athletes have a proud tradition of competing and winning. In October of 2003 the Men's Water Polo team won the league championship for the first time, and the field hockey



team again placed first in their league. Both teams continued in California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) play, as did our football team.

The school sponsors academically-oriented special programs such as the 11th and 12th grade college nights where the counselors meet students and their parents to discuss financial aid and college entrance requirements. Assemblies are also held each semester to honor students with honor roll grades and outstanding citizenship. In the spring of each year both a senior and an undergraduate recognition program are held where outstanding students are honored for their achievements. Every subject matter area and extracurricular activity has the opportunity to spotlight student excellence.

In addition, the ASB sponsors a program to honor outstanding students on a monthly basis by class period. This is the Student-of-the-Month program.

In 2002-03 our principal initiated several new programs to encourage faculty involvement in the decision-making process. First, all staff had the opportunity to respond online to topics relating to our staff development issues. Secondly, individual teacher conferences with the principal to discuss year-end goals and issues were held on a “drop-in” basis.

Areas that need improvement have to deal with the word “all.” Many teachers and many programs are succeeding, but not all and not all of the time. For example, a small number of students (16 percent) say that they do not feel safe at Serra High School. Some type of intervention needs to be designed to reach these students who are affected and remediate the situation. One possible solution would be the expansion of the Real Connections, Link Crew, or SOL programs to add a sense of security for these students.

Another area of need appears to be in the area of how student discipline is handled. Forty-six percent of students do not think that the rules are applied in a fair and consistent manner, although only 16 percent of parents think they are not. When asked if teachers handle student discipline appropriately, 44 percent of students and 23 percent of parents responded that they do not. One remediation might be a staffwide inservice training in the implementation of the discipline policy that is currently in place. Although the school handbook indicates policies, not all faculty and staff appear to be aware of the ramifications. One area that is in current focus is the implementation of a schoolwide policy on absences and tardies. Training was provided to all staff members in a prep period inservice before the first grading period of the semester.

**Criterion F15: The school has a clearly stated vision or purpose based on its student needs, current educational research, and the belief that all students achieve at high levels. Supported by the governing board (San Diego City Schools Board of Education) and the central administration (San Diego Unified School District), the school’s purpose is defined further by expected schoolwide learning results and the academic standards. The expected schoolwide learning results stress attainment of the academic standards.**

As a working model of our school vision, every classroom in the school has posted the Expected Schoolwide Learning Results (ESLRs) that are discussed on a regular basis with

the students. This information is available to every student because students received a handbook with the ESLRs printed on page 2 during the first week of school.

Serra's Vision statement is found on the ESLRs posters which can be found in all classrooms and offices: "Junipero Serra High School is a learning community dedicated to educating all students in an integrated setting to become responsible, literate, thinking and contributing members of a multicultural society through excellence in teaching and learning." Our ESLRs support that vision, inasmuch as we seek to graduate from Serra young people who are Responsible Citizens, Effective Communicators, Academic Achievers, Effective Problem Solvers, and Lifelong Learners. Certainly, our own Vision Statement and the district's Mission Statement, which is "to improve student achievement by supporting teaching and learning in the classroom," support one another. Beginning this year it is the mission of the High School Reform movement in San Diego City Schools "To graduate all students with the skills and qualifications to meet UC/CSU entrance requirements without needing remediation in English or mathematics." The district's Mission Statement appears on every letter and memo produced by district offices, and the High School Reform mission has been the subject of numerous staff inservices this fall.

A number of stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community) have been involved in the implementation of the vision. Originally, our goals were based on information gathered from polls completed by teachers, students, and parents concerning skills most needed by students upon graduation. One result of the poll was the need for additional opportunities for students to participate in oral activities. This initiated the development of a 10th grade debate unit and a second public speaking class. In addition, the oral element of our required Senior Exhibitions has been encouraged and expanded.

Serra has been consistent in advising parents and others in the school community about school issues by using resources such as *Serra Spirit* (a site-based newsletter); the *Tierra Times* (a local community newspaper); and *Serrandipity* (the school newspaper). In addition, individual conferences, letters home, and frequent e-mail contacts help provide additional information.

Serra is also frequently featured in local broadcast news programs because of its diverse economic and multicultural community that is a microcosm of the larger San Diego metropolitan area. For example, KUSI, a local television station, came to Serra on the first day of school on September 2, 2003, and interviewed students about their expectations for the year.

There is a constant emphasis on using research-based knowledge to guide teaching and learning. For example, since the last WASC accreditation faculty members have been given copies of books to be read and then discussed together. The administration used such books as *The First Day of School* by Harry K. Wong and *Teaching Reading in the Content Areas* by Rachel Billmeyer and Mary Lee Barton as part of our faculty inservices. More recently we have read *Who Moved My Cheese?* by Spencer Johnson and *I Read It But I Don't Get It* by Cris Tovani. Of course, we have studied *Aiming High* and various literacy documents. In addition, a number of readings from current educational publications have been studied and

shared by staff members in training meetings. In the fall of 2003, as we opened the year with discussions of high school reform and creating a college going culture, staff read *Closing the Achievement Gap* by Kati Haycock, *Bridging the Gap Between Standards and Achievement* by Richard Elmore, *The Pedagogy of Poverty Versus Good Teaching* by Martin Haberman, and *Strategies that Close the Gap* by Larry I. Bell.

Recent studies that have been shared with faculty and staff indicate that under-performing students tend to do better in school when they are placed in a high achieving environment with appropriate support such as that available in the AVID program. Thus, every 9th and 10th grader in AVID is required to take at least one honors class, while every 11th and 12th grader in the program takes at least one Advanced Placement (AP) course. The ultimate expectation is that every 11th and 12th grader in the school will take at least one AP course. This is one of the goals of the high school reform movement in the district.

All teachers are expected to involve the required course standards in planning classroom activities. Specific standards and the expected outcomes are expected to be posted daily in each classroom. In addition, the federally mandated No Child Left Behind Act has guided broad expectations, such as requiring schools to have a qualified teacher instructing in his subject matter major in every classroom, as well as requiring schools to score higher on standardized tests each year in every racial and demographic group.

On August 24, 2003, John DeVore, Administrator for High School Reform, was introduced at Serra. He spoke that day of high school reform and challenged us to maintain high standards for student performance and to believe that students could reach them. This belief and the high expectations that accompany it must become a part of the culture of the school. Mr. DeVore has continued to visit the school to observe and encourage the continual improvement of teaching practices.

Informal observations are conducted by administrators, teachers, and Mr. DeVore himself. The purpose of these informal visits, called Focus Walks, is to measure the use of the Fundamental Teaching Practices as observed in Serra classrooms. These Fundamental Teaching Practices cover such classroom practices as the posting of clearly-stated goals tied to standards, active student engagement, writing to enhance understanding, teaching of reading strategies, higher-level questioning, variety of assessments with daily benchmarks, and supportive learning environment in the classroom. Those involved in the Focus Walks look for evidence of one or maybe two of the practices in the classrooms they visit. After each Focus Walk the results are shared with the staff. This is a new procedure at Serra, but preliminary results show that with each Focus Walk more teachers are being observed using the Fundamental Teaching Practices.

The district has encouraged the improvement of student achievement by implementing a number of programs. Most observable has been the Literacy Block program in English/language arts. The district has provided a site-based literacy administrator who has become a member of the administrative team. She works with members of the English Department on designing curriculum that will meet our students' needs in achieving the English/language arts standards. The philosophy of this program is that students' reading abilities must be

improved before they can successfully tackle other academic areas. Two-hour workshop classes have been taught with a reduced class size in order to facilitate these advances.

During the 2002-03 school year there was also a district sponsored mathematics administrator on our campus encouraging the improvement of the mathematics scores. When he left for another assignment, Serra was left without a mathematics administrator and has been unable to fill the position as of this time.

These English and mathematics administrators have conducted training of staff, encouraged the alignment of curriculum to state standards, and set individual grade level expectations.

Also, a one-day Advanced Placement training has been offered at district expense to all teachers who teach an AP course. Another program that the district sponsors is the Specially Designed Academic Instruction for English Learners (SDAIE) training for teachers to be able to successfully teach students with multicultural and multiability differences.

Social issues are also addressed at our school. For example, the Real Connections program at Serra is an agreement between the San Diego Unified School District and the Social Advocates for Youth (SAY). This organization provides counseling, tutoring, employment assistance, health screening, access to mental health services, and other help for both students and their families. In addition, they train our student leaders to problem solve on their own.

Our employer outreach specialist keeps an updated Job Board in the Media Center for all students seeking jobs. In addition, she supervises the service learning program by educating students about opportunities to volunteer, as well as keeping track of volunteer hours required for graduation. Serra High School greatly exceeds the district standard for service. During the school year 2002-03, 456 Serra students provided 18,929 hours of service to the San Diego community.

Since the last WASC evaluation Serra was involved with a state-sponsored Digital High School grant that provided the hardware and infrastructure to put the school at the forefront of technology to help improve the skills of our students and of our teachers.

The ESLRs are posted in every classroom, and students are regularly informed of expected goals and the purposes of the lessons. Two areas of focus recently have been effective communication and effective problem solving.

There are a number of schoolwide academic clubs where students are encouraged to apply their classroom knowledge to the real world. Students participate in formal debate teams, Academic League, Science Olympiad, and the California Scholastic Federation. Two issues that are specifically addressed by these organizations are being effective communicators and effective problem solvers, which are both concerns of our ESLRs. These teams utilize both oral and written communication and serious problem solving. The sponsoring of these teams exemplifies our school's commitment to the ESLRs.

Each semester a special reception is held for students who have achieved honor roll status (3.5 GPA and above). Students may invite their parents or guardians to this event, which also involves the community.

Several clubs on campus require their participants to maintain high academic and citizenship requirements. For example, the school newspaper requires a minimum 3.0 GPA in order to be a member of the staff.

The AoIT has a 2.0 grade requirement in academics and in citizenship, with no less than a C in any Academy class, in order for students to remain as active members. Currently both sophomore and junior students are involved in the program with the expectation that they will continue through a full three-year plan and be able to make a successful transition from the school to their careers, which may of course include college. This unique group of students is currently in its third year of a course of study emphasizing future careers in technology.

The Key Club conducts food drives, cleans beaches, and works at other charity events. In addition, they participate in other community activities, such as placing American flags in standards up and down the median strips in the Tierrasanta community.

The Pan Asian Club works to promote multicultural understanding and a deeper understanding of individual cultural heritages.

Teen Court, sponsored by the Social Studies Department, and a citizenship essay contest, sponsored by the Superior Court of San Diego, encourage our student participants to effectively communicate basic ethical ideas of their community. Students must also be problem solvers, because teen judges and juries must come up with appropriate solutions to real court cases. The most recent essay requested by the Superior Court concerned the responsibilities which come with citizenship.

One of the most significant opportunities offered to students at Serra High School is the privilege of participating in volunteer service to the community. One example is the Spirit of Christmas program that involves hundreds of our students in providing holiday meals, gifts, and comfort to needy families. Students are expected to communicate the needs and goals of the program to potential donors in order to raise the necessary funds for their project and to problem solve in order to more effectively fulfill the needs of their adopted families.

#### **Areas of Strength:**

- We have strong support for our students who are facing personal challenges; i.e., Life Skills programs, Real Connections, Link Crew, etc.
- Vertical and horizontal teaming within several departments has occurred in order to match curricula with State Standards.
- Serra has strong clubs, sports, and extracurricular activities with large numbers of students participating; i.e., NJROTC, Band, Journalism, etc.

- Despite recent cuts in custodial and gardening services, personnel in these two departments still work hard to maintain a clean and attractive campus.
- ESLRs are posted and referred to on a regular basis by most teachers and counselors.
- Serra has unique academic programs such as the Academy of Information Technology and the Seminar program, in addition to a number of highly successful extracurricular activities such as Science Olympiad, public speaking and journalism competitions, and the nationally recognized NJROTC program where students are competing at high levels outside the classroom.

**Areas for Growth:**

- There needs to be an encouragement for staff to complete additional training and professional development; i.e., GATE, Advanced Placement training, National Board Certification, Cultural Language Acquisitions Development (CLAD)/ Bilingual Cultural Language Acquisitions Development (BCLAD), etc.
- We must continue professional development to ensure more teachers use the Fundamental Teaching Practices in their day-to-day instruction.
- We need to provide consistent enforcement of attendance and discipline policies.
- We need to work on the publicizing of the ESLRs with more classroom and community discussion on how they relate to the State Standards.
- We have been challenged to reach high goals in academic areas by our district administration by 2006; i.e., the high school reform goals as outlined in the principal's work plan.
- We need to publicize the aforementioned goals to the entire Serra learning community.
- We need to explore establishing more interdisciplinary programs like AoIT which offer small learning communities with the opportunities for more individualized learning to occur. In order for these programs to maximize success, we need to investigate alternative scheduling such as block, extended-day, 4 x 4 (a form of block scheduling), etc.

## **E: Leadership and Staff**

The Structure and Process of the Focus Group: In the fall of 2002-03 staff members were assigned to focus groups. The Leadership and Staff focus group met monthly during the spring semester of the 2002-03 school year and twice monthly through November of the 2003-04 school year. In addition, members of our group have spent time individually collecting evidence or writing for our Chapter IV report. The Leadership and Staff focus group includes a member of our administrative team and teachers from the English, Science, Mathematics, Special Education, and Physical Education Departments, as well as Navy Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (NJROTC) and Regional Occupation Program (ROP) business instructors. Classified staff on our focus group include office staff, instructional assistants, and supervisory personnel. Our focus group also includes one parent and four students who joined us this year.

We started by focusing on specific criterion statements, examining key elements of the criteria, and looking at practices at Serra that addressed the criterion statements. Individual members sought out evidence to support our statements about Serra's practices. Last year focus group members also filled out online reflections about the criterion statements. As new drafts of our report are created, the team has reviewed them, discussed ideas for revision, and addressed areas where our evidence needs to be stronger.

**Criterion E-11: Based on student achievement data, the school leadership makes decisions and initiates activities that focus on all students achieving the schoolwide learning results and academic standards.**

Serra's leadership team works closely with key members of various stakeholder groups to shape and promote our culture and vision. Input from the school community is valued and considered in the review and revision of administrative and educational policies and procedures.

This fall, as part of San Diego City School's High School Reform Initiative, all high school principals and their administrative teams completed a work plan entitled "Principal Work Plan Design for Student Results." The Work Plan is based on student achievement data and includes growth targets and systemic goals and action plans to meet those targets. The Work Plan also includes sections on monitoring student reading improvement, student supports, and a professional development plan. The administrative team shared the Work Plan with the staff during prep period meetings and at the November 2003 staff development day.

The administration communicates regularly with members of the school community, encourages and celebrates excellence, and makes decisions and allocates resources in order to support student achievement of expected schoolwide learning results and academic standards. Serra's leadership structure includes all members of the school community in consultative decision-making. The Instructional Focus Team (IFT), which includes the principal, vice principals, literacy administrator, site operations specialist, head counselor, and site-based diagnostic resource teacher, meets weekly. Information discussed at IFT is shared at the monthly Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) meetings. The ILT includes

representatives from all departments. The weekly Administrative Council gives staff members a chance to share information in their areas of leadership. In addition, department chairs and student leaders attend the Administrative Council on a rotating basis. To share information with students and to better understand their perspectives on school issues, the principal meets monthly with the Student Senate, which includes student representatives from period three classes who report back to their classmates. The Student Forum also provides the principal an opportunity to dialogue with students. In order to address issues that are important to Serra students, agenda items for the Principal's Forum are solicited in the daily bulletin. The principal also holds a monthly informal lunchtime drop-in session for students.

Serra's School Site Council (SSC) is a state-mandated governing body whose members include the principal, teachers, parents, and students. The California Department of Education requires an SSC at schools that receive School Improvement Program (SIP) funds. Each year the SSC reviews and updates the school's Single Site Plan For Student Achievement, which is based on California Standards Tests (CST) data. This data is used to determine goals for 9th and 10th grade students in English/language arts and mathematics.

To support the school's culture and vision, several committees and forums have been initiated by the administration to improve communication. As part of the district's high school reform effort, the administration is working with key members of various stakeholder groups to collaborate on an innovative reform plan for Serra High School. To gather input from all teachers, at the end of 2002-03 school year the principal met with teachers each period one day to review the year and to discuss plans and "dreams" for the following year. "Second Cup of Coffee" is a monthly opportunity for parents to meet with the principal and share their ideas for improving the school and helping Serra become a better place for their students to learn. Parents are also encouraged to participate in Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) and the Serra Foundation.

One method of encouraging student achievement is the recognition and celebration of excellence. The student honor roll is printed every semester and distributed to teachers to post in their classrooms. The honor roll is also listed in the school newsletter, the *Serra Spirit*, and in the community newspaper, the *Tierra Times*. Students are also recognized at awards assemblies and celebrations. Each month students are chosen by their teachers and are honored at a "Students of the Month" assembly. Each semester there is a "4.0 Celebration" for those students earning a 4.0 or higher academically. Near the end of second semester there are awards assemblies in the evening. One assembly is held for underclassmen and another is held for seniors. Teachers in different content areas present awards, Serra Scholars (4.0 in academics and citizenship) are honored, and scholarship and community service awards that have been granted by community and business organizations are acknowledged.

To help improve student achievement, San Diego City Schools has created the position of secondary school content administrators. Content administrators are placed at school sites, depending on need. Currently Serra has a literacy administrator (the mathematics administrator position is vacant, and we are currently seeking to fill it). The primary role of



the literacy administrator is to lead and supervise instruction in English. The literacy administrator coaches and supports teachers, provides professional development, monitors student progress, and, in concert with the principal, evaluates the job performance of English teachers.

Serra High School has also established a Learning Center to help students in the Special Education Department improve their performance in their core classes. During the 2002-03 school year the focus of Learning Center instruction was reading strategies. During the 2003-04 school year support for mathematics is being added in the Learning Center. Serra's Learning Center for special education students was established during the 2003-03 school year. Prior to its establishment there were only three centrally located Learning Centers in the district. Only a limited number of students could attend the Learning Centers during or after the regular school day. For students attending during the school day, valuable instructional time was lost due to transportation issues. Additionally, Individual Education Plan (IEP) teams frequently had to make decisions about what activities or classes students would forfeit at their home schools to make it possible to attend a Learning Center. In an effort to reach more students and to offer these services to the students in the least restrictive environment, the district implemented a pilot program for the 2002-03 school year. When asked to participate in the pilot program, Serra's principal took the initiative and embraced the challenge of restructuring Serra's Special Education program to better meet the needs of our population. Last year only Serra and San Diego High participated in the pilot program. This year all high schools in the district have been directed to establish Learning Centers. Serra's resource specialists work closely with special education students enrolled in the Serra Learning Center.

The purpose of the Learning Center is to strengthen academic skills and to teach specific learning strategies. Students are taught to generalize these strategies across the content areas so they can successfully access the core curriculum and meet content standards. During the 2002- 03 school year the focus of instruction in the Learning Center was English/reading strategies. After one semester 45 percent of the 65 students for whom reading levels were assessed showed one or more years of growth in their reading level, and 31 percent showed growth of two or more years. According to pre- and post-test results on the Analytical Reading Inventory (ARI) from the 2002-03 school year, 31 percent of the special education students enrolled in the Learning Center made less than one year's growth; 23 percent of the students made one year's growth; and 46 percent of the students made two or more years growth. For the 2003-04 school year approximately 62 students are enrolled in the Learning Center.

Instructional support for resource specialist and special day program students enrolled in general education courses is provided on a daily basis in course sections designated as "collaborative." Accommodations and modifications are implemented according to each student's IEP. Student performance and progress is monitored by a teacher or special education assistant, and assistance is provided as needed. There are currently 28 sections of collaborative classes in order to support the needs of approximately 204 special education students in the general education classroom. The teachers and instructional assistants also work with and support the learning of other students in the collaborative classroom.

San Diego City School's *Blueprint for Student Success* provides structures and strategies to improve student success. They include extended two-hour Literacy Block courses with reduced class sizes for ninth and tenth graders reading below grade level and a one-hour Algebra Explorations courses with reduced class sizes for entering ninth graders who are not ready for Geometry. Last year Literacy Block students showed an average of two and a half years growth on the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test.

Resource specialist students in grades 9 and 10 participate in the Serra Learning Center as part of their two-hour Literacy Block class, while resource specialist students in grades 11 and 12 are enrolled in the Learning Center as an elective.

To offer students additional opportunities to meet academic standards and earn credit for failed classes, extended day classes, known as Success School, are offered. Any student may retake classes for which he or she did not receive credit due to a grade of D or F. Sessions last six weeks. The Counseling Office determines class offerings according to student need and teacher availability. During the 2002-03 school year CAHSEE preparation classes were also offered after school for students who had not yet met this graduation requirement.

To help all students meet academic standards and the ESLRs, the school provides student planners. In student interviews conducted in April 2003, 43 of 86 students (50 percent) found the planners helpful. Other students found other organizational strategies (including electronic planners and teacher-introduced organizational strategies) to be more useful. The planners this year include a site map, a list of important people, school rules, ESLRs, and content-specific information, as well as a planning calendar. Regardless of which method they select, students are encouraged by teachers and counselors to use a planner and/or assignment calendar.

When students are at risk of not meeting academic standards, they may be referred to the Student Study Team (SST). Any teacher or counselor who notices a student's performance falling or a change in behavior may refer a student to SST. The Student Study Team consists of parents, a counselor, teachers, the student, and other school personnel. They review student performance and attitudes and determine if any additional interventions or student services would help the student. A formal process is followed.

To help all students become proficient readers, funding has been allocated through the Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA) to improve classroom libraries. The school day also includes a daily reading period, in addition to the extended time in literacy classes for students in "block" classes, the Learning Center, and after-school programs. Teacher training in best practices and standards-based instruction is also supported through monies allocated in the SPSA.

The leadership at Serra has provided support for student achievement through Real Connections tutoring and Mathematics Department tutoring. In addition, many teachers at Serra are available for tutoring in their classrooms. A 3:30 late bus is available Monday

through Thursday for students who are working with teachers or are involved in extracurricular activities.

To help students understand and meet graduation and college requirements, the counseling staff makes articulation presentations in English classes and holds individual conferences to help students in grades 9–11 make choices for their classes. Counselors also visit the feeder middle schools for articulation presentations. Counselors meet with seniors in the fall to verify students are on schedule to meet graduation requirements in the spring, in time for graduation.

The administration has supported the formation of the Academy of Information Technology (AoIT), a small learning community with a specialized program for students interested in careers in technology. Currently there is a small group of about 80 sophomores and juniors involved in this program. The majority of students in the Academy share at least two classes with Academy teammates. The administration has supported the Academy through common prep periods for most Academy teachers, designating one counselor to deal with all Academy students, authorizing the use of the Media Center for monthly AoIT board meetings, and scheduling students in Academy English and history classes, as well as authorizing regular field trips and guest speakers for the program.

In order to facilitate mutual support for district and site expectations, Serra's principal communicates regularly with district personnel. John DeVore, San Diego City School's Administrator for High School Reform, joins our site administrators monthly to look for evidence in the classrooms of clear expectations and student engagement in a rigorous curriculum. Serra's principal communicates her plan for improving teaching and learning at Serra regularly and, most recently, through sharing elements of the Principal's Work Plan.

Information shared by the high school is used by the district to create the School Accountability Report Card. Administrators also attend monthly meetings to help focus attention on raising student achievement levels and bringing issues common to the district's high schools to light.

**Criterion E-12: A qualified staff facilitates achievement of the academic standards and the expected schoolwide learning results through a system of preparation, induction, and ongoing professional development.**

**and**

**Criterion E-13: Leadership and staff are involved in ongoing professional development that focuses on identified student learning needs.**

In most cases Serra teachers are fully qualified and credentialed to teach in the areas to which they have been assigned. In assigning staff, the administration makes every attempt to have teachers fully qualified for their assigned areas. Of the 69 teachers at Serra who responded to the Staff Survey in the fall of 2003, 65 (94 percent) are teaching in an area for which they are fully credentialed. However, four of our Physics teachers have credentials in other fields. The

district is offering support in the way of courses for these teachers to earn their physics credentials, and these teachers have all attended professional development for the Active Physics curriculum. Teachers who are teaching subjects in which they have a minor or a board waiver because of units they accumulated in a particular area are being advised to take the subject area test in that academic area by the end of this school year. This has become more urgent as No Child Left Behind Act requires that there is a highly qualified teacher in each classroom by 2005-06.

Teacher assignments are based on professional and personal strengths which best meet identified student needs. For example, English classes for students reading significantly below grade level are taught by teachers trained in strategies for supporting struggling readers and writers. The same is true for mathematics, where courses are taught by teachers who have been trained in proven mathematics methodologies.

To help teachers new to the profession, the state provides resources to them in the form of the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) program. Each new teacher at Serra is paired with a Support Provider who has been trained in the California Formative Assessment and Support System for Teachers (CFASST). New teachers meet at least once a month with their Support Provider. California Standards for the Teaching Profession are reviewed, new teachers are introduced to the school and district structure, and support is provided to help new teachers reflect on and improve their practice.

Teacher monitoring includes formal evaluations, as well as ongoing informal observations. This includes formal evaluations (Stull) every two years for tenured teachers and every year for probationary teachers. After a formal observation the administrator confers with the teacher, and the teacher receives a written evaluation or observation notes.

Last year the principal and literacy and mathematics administrators visited classrooms almost daily. This year the vice principals are visiting classrooms regularly, as well. This fall the administrative team provided all teachers with a written copy of the Fundamental Teaching Practices and expectations for all classrooms. Once a month the administrative team conducts a "Focus Walk" where they visit classrooms and focus their observations on one of the Fundamental Teaching Practices. The administration has invited classroom teachers to participate in Focus Walks to gain insight into the process. The purpose of informal observations and Focus Walks is not to evaluate teachers, but to provide coaching and to inform professional development planning. Feedback from observations may be offered individually or, in the case of the Focus Walks, to the whole staff in summary form. Our goal is to improve student learning by engaging students in a rigorous and challenging curriculum, and, with feedback, we're attempting to improve our classroom practices.

Staff development at Serra fosters a community of learners. The focus is on building knowledge, skills, attitudes, and leadership, all of which empower students to achieve. Serra's Professional Development Plan, which is part of the Principal's Work Plan, has been developed based upon identified needs, schoolwide data, and current research. Teachers analyze data (CST scores, student work, etc.) in department meetings, in focus groups, and as

an entire staff. This year teachers are keeping professional portfolios of their work, which includes analysis of both their teaching practices and student work samples.

Each year the administrative team develops an over-all Professional Development Plan based on student achievement data and teachers' knowledge and skill levels. Schoolwide professional development occurs on staff development days, minimum days, and after-school staff conferences. This year schoolwide professional development has focused on Serra's Fundamental Teaching Practices, analyzing student writing, and introducing Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) methodologies (writing across the curriculum, reciprocal teaching and inquiry).

In response to student achievement data in mathematics and science, the district has increased opportunities for professional development in these two areas. In addition to offering professional development for newly adopted texts, the district has continued to provide inservices for teachers new to curriculum (specifically, Algebra Explorations) and is funding professional development for continuing teachers in existing curricula. This year 9 of our 12 mathematics teachers have attended or will attend district professional development to support specific curricula. All eight of our Physics and Chemistry teachers are also attending professional development for their curricula this year. These inservices provide classroom strategies to implement the curriculum and engage students, opportunities for discourse among teachers about classroom concerns, and opportunities to assess student learning using district-developed testing instruments. In addition, suggested pacing guides and benchmark tests are being developed by the district to ensure that students throughout the district receive equal opportunities for learning.

Department professional development plans are developed by the responsible vice principal, with input from department leadership. Teachers are given time to work together based on their teaching assignments. For example, during a Mathematics Department meeting Algebra Explorations teachers may work together on curriculum mapping, and Geometry teachers may work together on techniques for helping students to understand concepts associated with proof.

The literacy administrator provides onsite professional development for English teachers that includes coaching in the classroom, weekly study groups, and monthly grade-level release days. Last year during this time teachers studied the workshop model, teaching and learning theory, and best practices. They also began to plan units of instruction based on standards. This year several teachers will work with the literacy consultant, Chris Thornley, on how to explicitly teach reading strategies to help struggling students access grade-level texts.

This year, on grade level release days, English teachers are working together to analyze a variety of assessment data about students, to create grade-level standards maps, to create a monitoring system to assess student learning, to plan common units of study, to participate in student work protocols, and to read professional articles.

Teachers in all areas will be working on writing meaningful standards-based objectives and outcomes and building professional portfolios. In the Mathematics Department teachers will

also work on collaborative grouping in the classroom and Serra's Effective Fundamental Teaching Practices. History teachers will be working on curriculum mapping and reciprocal teaching. Science teachers will work on curriculum mapping and collaborative planning in monthly meetings and district training.

The district has also offered training for counselors that helps all students meet standards and ESLRs. Counselors have attended training in "Positive Behavior Support." This philosophy is committed to providing educational programs that promote human dignity, respect, individual choices, and social interaction with all students, in turn promoting academic success. Counselors also had the opportunity to attend a school-to-career conference, which focused on helping students become responsible citizens and effective communicators.

**Criterion E-14: The school leadership employs a wide range of strategies to encourage parental and community involvement.**

Serra's system for communicating with parents and the community includes the Serra website and the *Serra Spirit*, the school newsletter, which is mailed out ten times each year. Important dates, such as Open House and registration dates, are published in the *Tierra Times*, the community newspaper. Important dates and events are also posted on the school marquee on the corner of Santo Road and Tierrasanta Boulevard, arguably the busiest intersection in the community of Tierrasanta. This year for Open House the Counseling Center sent out a mass e-mail to remind parents and invite them to attend. Student success is recognized in the *Tierra Times* and the *Serra Spirit*. This recognition includes listing students on the honor roll, recognition of individuals selected for special honors, and recognition of student athletes and teams.

Student progress reports are sent home with students each grading period and are periodically sent home through the mail. The school has adopted MicroGrade as the school grading program. Teachers post grades in the classroom, e-mail grades to students and parents, post grades on [eclassinfo.com](http://eclassinfo.com), and send regular reports home with students, or some combination of the above. Beginning in the spring of 2004 the new District-Wide Applications (DWA) data system will greatly improve the speed and the accuracy with which student records will be accessed by both teachers and parents.

In student interviews in April 2003, students indicated that the daily bulletin, the Serra website, and Serra's school newspaper, *Serrandipity*, were the main sources students use to learn about what's happening at Serra. The majority of students felt that mailings home and the monthly newsletter (the *Serra Spirit*) were helpful for parents. However, students expressed concern that teachers do not consistently turn on the TV to broadcast the bulletin during the Reading Period. This year class senators are encouraged to remind 3rd period teachers to share the bulletin. The bulletin is also printed in the office so student monitors, lacking access to a TV during period 3, can access the information in the bulletin.

Teachers communicate expectations with students through posting of the standards, objectives, and assignments in their classrooms. Students are given planners at the beginning of the year to keep track of assignments in their classes. Some teachers also produce work

calendars or assignment sheets to help make students and parents aware of classroom assignments. A small number of teachers post assignments and grades on the Internet.

Since attendance is crucial to student achievement, Serra makes efforts to communicate with parents about student absences and tardies. Serra's automated system makes calls each night to parents of students with unexcused absences. The staff in the Attendance Office also calls homes to communicate with parents. Incidentally, a number of personnel in the Front Office are fluent Spanish speakers. Another speaks Korean. This year Serra's counseling team is increasing efforts to improve student attendance and is making additional calls to communicate with parents regarding absences and tardies. Serra's policy regarding tardies has changed this year, so teachers are expected to call home the second time a student has an unexcused tardy in their classes. The administration and advisory committee have instituted a new tardy policy to discourage tardies.

To encourage parental involvement in college planning, the Counseling Office sponsors an Eleventh Grade College Night in the spring and a Senior College Night in October. Invitations are extended to parents in the *Serra Spirit* newsletter. Counselors visit classrooms to encourage students to attend and bring their parents. Notices are posted, College Night is announced in the student bulletin, and parent invitations are sent home through the mail. UC/CSU a-g requirements, testing, and finances are some of the topics covered. Last March parents representing over 90 eleventh grade students attended. A senior college newsletter, *Q-Tips* is also printed and distributed to all senior students, helping inform them of application requirements and deadlines for many colleges. The *Q-Tips* are distributed in English classes once a month for the first six months of the school year.

For parents of 10th grade students, the Tenth Grade Review is held one night in the fall semester to make sure students are on track for meeting high school graduation requirements. Counselors share information on California's public colleges and universities, and inform parents about Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) and Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), as well as Advanced Placement (AP) exams and courses offered at Serra. UC/CSU a-g requirements are discussed. The evening program is followed up in the spring when counselors visit tenth graders in their English classes to design their schedules for the last two years of high school.

The Real Connections Office helps many of our students from military families become aware of resources available to them. This includes Military Outreach, which helps mainly spouses of deployed servicemen with day-to-day problems; Fleet and Family Support Center; and medical resources such as Tricare.

Letters from the district superintendent and other communication from the district is included in the *Serra Spirit*, sent home with students or mailed directly home. District communication is automatically printed in both English and Spanish. The district can also translate materials into other languages when necessary. Translators are provided, as needed, for IEP meetings. IEPs are also translated into home languages.

To increase communication with parents, the principal has introduced "Second Cup of Coffee," a forum to discuss any concerns and issues parents may have, as well as an opportunity for the principal to share Serra's successes and explain programs and services available to students. Parents are invited at random to attend the monthly Second Cup of Coffee, and others may call in to reserve a spot if one is open.

Parents participate in the Serra community in other ways, as well. PTSA and the Serra Foundation are two organizations that support Serra programs. Parents volunteer in the PTSA, Serra Foundation, SSC and the WASC focus groups to improve programs at Serra. Parents support different activities, from volunteering at athletic events and dances to participating in the Band Boosters Club.

When students were interviewed in April 2003, they were asked what activities their parents were most likely to participate in. The most common responses were Open House, College Night, and Financial Aid Night. Student responses also indicated that a number of parents also participate by joining the Serra Foundation and/or PTSA, attending sporting events, supporting fundraisers and 4.0 assemblies, and volunteering in other capacities. Other responses included parent conferences, participating in IEP meetings, and checking student attendance in the Attendance Office.

Serra's School Site Council involves representatives from all stakeholder groups. The members of the SSC review data to help inform the development of the Single Plan for Student Achievement. SSC members are elected by their respective stakeholder group. The SSC includes teachers and other staff, parents, and students, in addition to members of the administrative team.

The Serra Foundation functions primarily as a fundraising group that supports academic and athletic programs. The mission of the Serra Foundation is to improve the community through enhancing academic and athletic programs at Serra High School. The Serra Foundation has raised over \$800,000 in its 14 years of existence, with about 50 percent going to academic programs and 50 percent going to athletic programs. Funds are raised through concessions at athletic events, Foundation dues, and special fundraising events like the Serra Foundation's spring dinner and auction. The Foundation, in addition to providing funding for athletic and academic programs, organizes a freshman orientation night for incoming freshman parents, sponsors three sports recognition nights to honor student athletes, and extends scholarships to deserving seniors.

The Academy of Information Technology is governed by a board made up of teachers, parents of Academy students, and local industry professionals. Communication with parents of academy students is accomplished through newsletters and other mailings.

There are many parent groups to support student activities. One such group is the Band Boosters Club. Band Boosters attend band events, carry heavy equipment, provide supervision assistance, serve as an advisory board, and help the band director make decisions about fundraising and events the band will attend.



Community members have the opportunity to serve on advisory committees focusing on providing resources and support for both academic and nonacademic programs. Parents may participate on district committees, such as District Advisory Committee (DAC), the Special Education Community Advisory Committee, a Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) parent committee, and textbook adoption committees. For this year's new chemistry textbook adoption, the district held a parent textbook review night. Flyers were sent home with all Biology and Physics students.

Serra's senior exhibitions are a graduation requirement. Community members and parents participate on the exhibition panels, evaluating student exhibitions and giving seniors feedback on their performance. Invitations to participate go out to parents in the *Serra Spirit*.

There are many strengths at Serra. We have programs like the Learning Center and English Literacy Block classes to help students meet standards. The Single Plan for Student Achievement allocates resources for curriculum and materials development, as well as professional development for English and mathematics. The district and the site leadership have increased opportunities for professional growth, and our teachers display subject area expertise.

At Serra there is a strong system of communication, but we need to ensure that people know how to access additional resources, such as translation services, when needed. At Serra we try to involve parents in advisory, support, and/or decision-making opportunities, and we do have parent participation in many activities. However, this is an area we are always trying to improve.

**Areas of Strength:**

- There is a strong teacher subject area expertise.
- There has been an increase in both formal and informal observations and feedback.
- Focused, standards-based professional development is provided, especially in core curricular areas.
- Communication of goals and expectations to staff, parents, and students is achieved through a variety of means.

**Areas for Growth:**

- More crosscurricular, interdepartmental collaboration among teachers would strengthen the educational program at Serra.
- Continued attempts must be made to involve a broader range of parents, including those of students from outside the Tierrasanta community.