

ON-SITE REVIEW COMMITTEE REPORT

**For
Wheatland High School
1010 Wheatland Road
Wheatland CA, 95692**

Date of original visit: April 25-27, 2005

Date of on-site review: April 7, 2008

Committee Chair: Fay Hulbert

Committee Member: Bruce Davidge

I. Introduction

General comments about school and setting

Wheatland High School, situated in Yuba County, is a comprehensive rural high school grades 9-12 with an enrollment of 680 students. Forty-eight percent of the students come from the community of Wheatland while 21% are from the Plumas Lake community, 18% from the surrounding areas on inter-district transfers, and 13% from Beale Air Force Base. The student population is 59% white, 18% Hispanic, 8% Asian, and 8% "other." Forty-five percent of the students at WHS qualify for the free and reduced lunch program, although the number may actually be higher as all who qualify do not apply.

Students are served by 40 certificated personnel, 2½ full time counselors, one full-time assistant principal, one part-time assistant principal, and one superintendent/principal. There are 27 classified staff, 4 confidential staff and one technology coordinator.

ADA growth at Wheatland High School has led to increases in special needs programs. In 2004, WHS served 35 special resource/special day students with two teachers. Today there are 82 students in those programs served by four teachers. The EL population grew from 9 students in 2004 to 31 in 2007-2008. Because of increasing student population over several years, WHS was also able to increase the number of AVID, AP and other elective courses. However, recent decline in ADA and the recent state budget cuts will clearly present challenges for WHS.

Wheatland High School has consistently tested 98% of its students on STAR and was disappointed in the 2006-2007 API score, failing to meet its growth target by -10. However, its median API growth score of 725 compares favorably with the similar school median API growth of 722. Scores on the CAHSEE have remained in the 80-82% range for both ELA and math over the last three years. The socio-economically disadvantaged sub-group (SED), the largest sub-group in the WHS population aside from Caucasian, presents an overall decline in CAHSEE pass rates. CST percentages of students proficient or at the advanced level in ELA have improved for 9th and 10th graders. Eleventh graders' percentages have declined. Staff's analysis of CST mathematics data has led to concern for that subject area, especially the performance of 11th graders in Algebra II, and also reveals an across-the-board CST decline at the 11th grade level. The number of 12th graders taking the SAT has increased. The attendance rate (ADA) for 2005-

2006 is 94.88%. Graduation rates have been 99-100% over the past three years – significantly higher than California average rate.

Significant changes or developments that have affected the school since the last visit

Since the last WASC study in 2004, there have been many changes in staff, especially those in key leadership positions. This attrition is a relatively new phenomenon to long-term staff.

- Staffing changes
 - Approximately half the current classified staff were not at WHS during the writing of the 2004-2005 self study
 - In the fall of 2006 the Project Director left for another position.
 - In the fourteen months between June 2006 and August 2007, the following additional staffing changes occurred
 - Addition of a new superintendent/principal
 - Addition of an additional part-time Assistant Principal
 - Addition of a part-time counselor
 - Departure of the Special Education Coordinator
 - Departure of the Pride Reading teacher/coordinator
 - Departure of the Avid teacher

- The growth of the Plumas Elementary School District
 - Almost 22% of this year's students entered from the elementary district (compared with 2% ten years ago).
 - Many of these students formerly attended larger inner-city schools.
 - Because of recent developments related to home loans, the foreclosure rate at Plumas Lake development is high, an obvious impact upon students/families who are part of the Wheatland High School community.

- Of significance to on-going program at the school was the summer 2006 invitation to become a member of Willard Daggett's Successful Practices Network (SPN). As members of SPN, staff members at Wheatland High School are expected to
 - Develop a presentation showcasing some best practices and give this presentation to educators from other schools (fall of 2007).
 - Develop and submit to the Successful Practices Network at least five Quadrant D lesson plans (completed in the spring of 2007).
 - Give the My Voice Student Aspirations Survey to students (completed in the spring of 2007).
 - Select two of the "Four Learning Criteria" and determine which data indicators will measure progress. WHS selected "Core Academic Learning" and "Student Engagement." Work on this is in progress.

The state of California encouraged the SPN to accept additional schools into the program. Wheatland High School was one of ten additional schools invited to join SPN. There were some difficulties as the SPN, the state of California and the ten schools adapted to what was a rather last minute addition to the program. However, the WHS staff was particularly attracted to

Willard Daggett's approach to fostering "Rigor, Relevance and Relationships" in schools. Wheatland High School's obligations as a SPN member became, in effect, another school "Action Plan" on par with the other WASC Action Plans.

Description of Follow-up process

The Leadership Committee is composed of the Superintendent/Principal, the Self-Study Coordinator, and members of the Curriculum Council (department and support service heads and the counseling staff). This committee is charged with ensuring implementation of the Action Plan. The committee meets monthly to discuss and review issues related to the implementation of the Action Plan as well as other curriculum and school policy issues. Because the entire staff is small input/feedback from staff during the monthly staff meetings and buy-back days is easily accessed. The entire staff is both directly and indirectly involved with the implementation of the Action Plan.

The Self-Study Coordinator is assigned one period per year to act as Curriculum Coordinator, serve on the school's Successful Practices network and the AVID teams. One of the assigned functions of the Self-Study Coordinator is to ensure that the Self-study Action Plan is a living document, continually reviewed, revised, and renewed by all stakeholders. The Self-study Coordinator attends one or more Site Council meetings per year to update/obtain information from this key group.

Because the Project Director position is no longer funded and the person in that position has moved on (see Action Plan #3), the present administration realizes that greater effort to gather, analyze and disseminate data to all stakeholders is critical. The Project Director had been designated as the key data coordinator for the Action Plan.

II. Follow-up Process: Progress on Schoolwide Action Plan

Comment on accomplishment of each school wide action plan section, noting how critical areas for follow-up have been addressed in each section.

Wheatland High School's action plan addressed the 9 critical areas of follow-up left by the 2005 WASC visiting committee. Progress has occurred in each area as shown in the summaries noted below.

Growth Area #1 Improve the critical areas of academic need (reading, writing, math skills of students).

Early testing of all incoming students has become a standard part of the first few weeks of school. Staff has been trained in the use of the Edusoft program. The school is continuing to purchase Accelerated Reader (AR) books and tests as finances allow, as well as developing staff in Writing Across the Curriculum. Staff as a whole is still considering adding an extra year of math to the graduation requirements. Staff reviews with student's successful test taking skills and reviews practice questions for the upcoming STAR test. The school is still looking for a teacher qualified to teach math to Special Ed students. The adding of an additional year of math to the graduate requirements will have a definite impact on students graduating so it would be in the schools best interest get the cooperation necessary to help the students.

Growth Area #2 Assessment: Continue to develop and implement assessment tools.

Staff is continuing to develop, implement and share assessment tools to ascertain student progress, to include subject area grade level rubrics and common assessments within subject areas. Both SASI and Edusoft have allowed greater staff access to pertinent individual data as well as disaggregated student data. It appears that standardized test scores have been dropping and the school has had difficulty meeting its growth targets. Several Quadrant D Gold Seal lesson plans for SPN will be published as model lessons. As more staff participates in SPN practices, student achievement should improve.

Growth Area #3 Project Director

When the Project Director left, the counseling department assumed the duties of data collection and coordination. Although the data is available to staff on the schools P (Public) drive no one has been given the specific responsibility to provide analysis of the data. Administration took on the responsibilities of parent involvement, to include notifying parents of school activities via the school newsletter and the parent telephone tree. Other teachers have assumed other responsibilities of the Project Coordinator, such as the leadership class and LINK Crew.

Growth Area #4 Staff Development

The school annually completes a needs assessment, the next occurring in April or May 2008. It appears that with the changes in staff and direction the school has taken with involvement in SPN has delayed other programs they earlier wanted to initiate. This committee would note that a specific step in Growth Area # 4 Staff Development (2005) should be addressed: "Identify needs associated with maintaining a vigorous and useful advisory program" as anecdotal evidence from staff and students during the visit indicates that overall effectiveness of Advisory is uneven.

Growth Area #5 Student Placement

The school has a plan in place to insure that each student from the 9th grade on has an annually updated 4 year plan. Students are placed in the appropriate classes and recommendations from teachers are required. With the drop in financial support the school has not been able to offer as many AVID and AP classes because student enrollment in each section must be twenty or more. There is currently one section of AP History, 2 sections of AVID, one section of AP Civics, and AP Calculus can be taken on-line.

During the end of the 8th grade year students are brought to the high school for orientation. Students meet with the school staff and administration as well as visiting booths set up by the various departments to see what is offered. Freshmen registration is handled on three different occasions during evening hours so students and parents can come to the school to register.

Growth Area #6 School Policies

Wheatland has held a series of "town meetings" (2005-06) with parents to review school policies which resulted in some changes in the discipline policy. In fall 2007, regular bi-weekly meetings of student advisory representatives were instituted to give students a greater chance to make suggestions, voice concerns, and become informed of reasons for current school policies. Disciplinary and other school policies are reviewed in advisory at the beginning of each school year.

Growth Area #7 Community Participation

The school has made a determined effort to involve the community in the activities of the school. Administration and staff have met with parent groups, which have resulted in improvements to school policies and in the physical appearance of the buildings and grounds. Parents can contact individual teachers via e-mail if they need to and the school can contact parents using the newsletter and the automated telephone system. Other examples include WHS's extensive website and student written articles about the school featured in the local paper features. The free community newspaper devoted a large amount of space to the school widespread parent and community participation in the 100th anniversary of WHS.

Growth Area #8 Mission Statement Review

Staff and parents reviewed the Mission Statement and made the decision to not change it. An annual poster contest is held to showcase the mission statement. The school has worked towards meeting the needs of incoming students from new neighborhoods who may be accustomed to larger urban schools as well as for those students who did not grow up in the area but are from military families or from inter district transfers. Staff is dedicated to making all students feel at home and do all they can to make students feel they are a part of the high school through programs such as Link Crew, Natural Helpers, and PALS, and the Advisory period.

Growth Area #9 Participate in the Successful Practices Network (SPN)

(This growth area was added by the school during the 2006-2007 school year.)

The schools joining the Successful Practices Network have met with many problems dealing with constantly changing deadlines imposed by the Daggett organization and the State of California. Staff is enthusiastic about the motto of "Rigor, Relevance and Relationships" and even with the rocky start is committed to making the program work. Two classes have been added, Computer Repair and Culinary Arts, in an effort to add classes with "real world" relevance and both have been very popular with students. In 2006/07 5 Quadrant D lesson plans were developed and submitted to the state and the school has just signed an agreement allowing the CDE permission to use these lessons as examples statewide.

This committee commends:

- Staff at Wheatland High School for maintaining a high school community where students feel respected and trusted.
- The Wheatland High School community for its on-going commitment to its mission statement
- Wheatland High School's participation School Practices Network as means of better serving all students at the school

III. Recommendations

Write recommendations where additional attention is needed in the action plan regarding previous areas for improvement

- Re-address “Identify needs associated with maintaining a vigorous and useful advisory program,” a specific step of Growth Area # 4 (2005 revised Action Plan) – in order to maximize the effectiveness of the program
- Continue to disaggregate, analyze, and disseminate achievement data to all stakeholders, clarifying responsibility for the process
 - To enhance curriculum and curriculum delivery
 - To improve student learning for all students, especially significant sub-groups, SED and ELL and the
 - Consideration of assigning the responsibility for data analysis to a specific person(s), as per original action plan for Project Coordinator
- Review the breadth and depth of the mathematics program
 - To ascertain the desirability of the three-year math requirement for graduation and reach a decision about its inclusion
 - To better serve all students in acquisition of math skills, including Special Education students
- Continue to improve the communication with students and parents
 - Especially as relating to school policies and procedures by including input from students and parents when implementing new policies or revising old ones.

Identified new concern

- Upgrade the school safety (8/30/01) plan:
 - Include all stakeholders in the development of the plan - staff, parents, community organizations, Site Council, law enforcement, fire, OES.
 - Train staff and administration so FEMA and California OES requirements are satisfied.