

Wheatland Union High School

Focus on Learning



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**Western Association of Schools and Colleges
and
The California Department of Education**

Accreditation Report

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CHAPTER 1---STUDENT/COMMUNITY PROFILE

Wheatland, one of only two incorporated cities in Yuba County, is located at the gateway of California's "Mother Lode" gold rush country, nestled at the northeastern edge of California's vast central Sacramento Valley. In contrast, Yuba County is one of the poorest counties in the state. Thirty-five percent of students at the high school qualify for free and reduced lunch. Beale Air Force Base is located a few miles to the east and is considered part of the Wheatland Union High School District. With tenuous personnel plans for Beale Air Force Base, the area's booming housing market, and possible planned growth within Wheatland itself, the school is challenged to prepare for an increase in population of several hundred students over the next few years. Although WHS has yet to see a significant increase in students to date, the city of Wheatland and the high school welcome the anticipated growth, but struggle with how to expand the infrastructure during hard economic times. The school is in year four of a Critical Hardship Construction grant.

WHS is the only comprehensive high school in the Wheatland Union High School district, which also includes a charter school. WHS was established in 1907, and has been located at its present site since 1960. As of January 2005, WHS had an enrollment of 623 in grades nine through twelve. Of these, approximately 40% are from the local community, 35% from Beale Air Force Base and 25% from surrounding communities on inter-district transfers. A significant percentage of minority students are connected with the base.

API

WHS's API results show that the growth target was met in the 2002-2003 school year, but was not met in the 2003-04 school year. After a gain of 47 points, there was a decline for the next two years. In 2003-04, targets for the white and the socio-economically disadvantaged students were not met. These declines are not addressed in the self study since the 2003-04 data was not available until March.

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND (NCLB)

Highly Qualified Teachers

Every teacher at WHS is highly qualified in his/her subject matter. Most teachers received their highly qualified status by HOUSEE. The average number of years teaching is 15.6 with the average number of years in the district being 11.9.

Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO)

The performance of 10th graders on the California Standards Tests (CST) and the CAHSEE far exceed the targets set by NCLB. The school-wide percentage

of students at proficient or above for 2003-04 is 56.3% in Language Arts and 55.5% in Math. The current graduation rate is at 99.2%, which exceeds the state target of 82.8%

Title III Accountability

The Title III Accountability indicates the status of each LEA in meeting the three Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives. This data has recently been tracked in compliance with NCLB. Although the percentage of students meeting AMAO 1 and 2 did not meet the established target, the application of a confidence interval table was applied since the school had fewer than 50 valid scores in the AMAO cohort.

CAT-6 AND CALIFORNIA CONTENT STANDARDS TESTS (CST)

There were substantial gains in the CAT6 in the 2003 school year and subsequent declines in 2004. Significant declines were seen in the 11th grade, especially in the Latino and SES subgroups. In the CST tests, the decline was also seen in the 11th grade. Math saw the most significant declines. Although the narrative in Chapter I does not address the declines, the importance of doing so is indirectly confirmed in later chapters by the selection of the Critical Areas of Academic Need and Action Plan 1, 2, and 3.

CALIFORNIA HIGH SCHOOL EXIT EXAM(CAHSEE)

In general, annually since 2001, an average of 59% of students passed the math portion of the CAHSEE and an average of 77% of students passed the English portion of the CAHSEE.

SAT AND ACT

Since 1999, average SAT scores have increased from 982 to 1061. The number of students taking SAT and ACT are similar. Scores are improving on both, but WHS still needs to increase the number of students taking the tests. WHS has purchased SAT preparation software to be used in the 2004-05 school year.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT (AP) AND A-G REQUIREMENTS

The financial crunch of the last two years has made supporting small classes on-site more difficult. Starting in 2004, WHS AP classes have been offered online, decreasing enrollment in onsite AP courses. WHS has chosen to emphasize the AVID program as a way to build the AP program. In addition, a relatively small percentage of students are completing A-G requirements.

Although the CAHSEE and STAR test results reveal that WHS is usually at or above state average in the areas of reading, writing and math, there is

widespread agreement that these areas remain the “critical areas of academic need” for the following reasons:

1. Competence in these areas is vital to ensure student success in higher education
2. Employers indicate that too many employees are lacking in these skill areas
3. NCLB dictates that there must be improvement in these areas
4. Analysis of student work by departments indicates that most students could/should improve their reading, writing and math skills

Using the analyzed profile data, the following critical areas of academic need were chosen:

- Reading Across the Curriculum
- Writing at grade level
- Math skills necessary to meet the graduation requirement

CHAPTER 2---PROGRESS REPORT

Since the last full visit, the following have had a major impact on the school or specific curricular programs:

1. Changes in administration. The frequent changes in administration that WHS experienced in the 1990s continued into the new millennium. Since the last WASC visitation, they have had a different principal and four different assistant principals. These frequent changes have had a significant impact on stability and continuity. For example, under some administrators, Site Council had no role other than to approve funding for School Improvement Plan (SIP) requests. At other times, Site Council has played an advisory role in many additional curricular and policy areas. The current administration recognizes the need for consistency and structure in regard to school policy and program.

2. New staff. Retirements, transfers, new programs, and increased ADA have led to significant changes in staffing. Only about half the current staff were here for the last self-study. These additions are viewed positively by all concerned and are allowing WHS to offer a much richer and varied curriculum to students. However, the challenges caused by the reduction of available in-service days have been amplified by the need to assist new staff in understanding school goals and school culture.

3. Critical Hardship Grant. Work related to a Critical Hardship Grant received in 1998-99, is having a very visible impact on the WHS campus. New parking lots, new air conditioners, electrical rewiring, and asbestos removal have been the primary areas of focus. Unfortunately, major complications with the contractor have delayed completion of some parts of this grant. At this time, attempts to obtain state reimbursement for monies already spent and a lawsuit against the architect, have occupied a great deal of administrative and staff time.

4. Technology. A major commitment of staff and money has been made to upgrade and expand the technology programs and equipment throughout the school site. In 1999, WHS received a Digital Grant award. Money from this source, supplemented with funds from Site Council, AB 2882, and the general fund allowed many upgrades.

5. Changes in curriculum. The following courses/certifications have been added to the curriculum since the last WASC visit:

- AP on-site classes in U.S. History, Statistics, Spanish and Civics (if enrollment is sufficient). AP on-line classes are also offered

- PRIDE Reading
- A Special Day class
- Three AVID classes
- A CADD Program
- Honors English I and II
- A Pre-Algebra math lab
- Algebra A and B, changing to Alg IA and Alg IB in spring of 2005
- ELD
- CISCO
- High School Exit Exam Review—English and math
- Advanced Welding Certification

6. Graduation requirements. Beginning with the class of 2004, WHS added Algebra I and a fourth year of English to the graduation requirements. Students must pass a computer class that covers the components of the Technology ESLR or successfully challenge this class. In addition, beginning with the class of 2005, students will need 240 credits (rather than the previous 230 credits) to graduate.

7. Scope and Sequence. One major focus of staff time since the last WASC visitation has been the development of a Scope and Sequence for every course. Each Scope and Sequence delineates both ESLRs and State Standards covered in the class.

8. New Positions. Since the last self study, the following positions have been established:

A. Director of Educational Technology and Media Services This person is responsible for maintaining and upgrading all computer equipment, as well as being responsible for the technology program.

B. Testing Coordinator As school-wide testing takes on an even more significant role at WHS, it is vital that the school has someone who can coordinate the entire testing program.

C. Data Analyst The Data Analyst is charged with keeping track of the huge amount of data that needs to be continually updated and analyzed to ensure that teachers address the needs of the students. This person works closely with the Testing Coordinator.

- D. Curriculum/WASC Coordinator This position, established in the Spring of 2001, will help coordinate a curriculum that meets the needs of a wide variety of students and ensures that the WASC Action Plan is addressed.
 - E. BTSA Support Provider This position provides support for newly credentialed teachers.
 - F. PAR Consulting Teacher. This position provides support for all other new teachers to the District, teachers who volunteer, and any teachers referred administratively to the PAR program.
 - G. Special Projects Director In January of 2005, this job was created to merge the Data Analyst's job with someone who also keeps track of NCLB, ELD and CELDT compliance, and professional development of the staff.
9. **Link Crew.** Parents and teachers noted that some junior high students experience difficulty in adjusting to a high school culture. In an effort to facilitate this transition, Link Crew was established in the fall of 2001. This program links an upperclassman to each new student, and assists students transferring from other high schools. Incoming freshmen are provided orientation, academic and social follow-ups, and one-on-one support from student leaders.
10. **Advisory.** A teacher returning from an exchange program in Great Britain first introduced the idea of an Advisory program to the staff. At the same time, other teachers were discussing the desirability of having sustained silent reading time in the school program. Shortly thereafter, a number of suicide scares energized the staff to brainstorm new ways to address the emotional, social and academic needs of students. The staff at WHS developed an Advisory Program that incorporates a time for sustained silent reading as well as assistance with academic and social issues. The administration and school board have supported the Advisory program.
11. **Unification.** In 2004, one of two feeder school districts applied to the state for permission to become its own K-12 district. If approved, state regulations would then require that WHS unify with the one remaining feeder district. Doing so would lead to the loss of a significant amount of federal impact aid money and the loss of necessary small school funding. Both districts and the community have been involved in numerous meetings and studies to determine the desirability of asking the state for a waiver of the requirement to unify. Both districts have passed waiver requests to prevent unification. In addition, agreements are being negotiated with the seceding district to educate their

students until their high school is built. The possibility of unification has consumed a great deal of staff and administrative time.

Using the analyzed profile data, the following critical areas of academic need were chosen:

- Reading Across the Curriculum
- Writing at grade level
- Math skills necessary to meet the graduation requirement

The WHS Action Plan was developed for the last full self-study in the spring of 1999. The Action Plan outlines five Growth Needs. Each Growth Need is broken down into goals, and the specific steps to meet those goals.

GROWTH NEED #1: DECISION-MAKING

While the system of decision-making seems to be clearer, there is difficulty finding time to effectively implement the decision-making system. Efforts to improve the communication of decisions seems to be on-going. Key people have been given the task of dissemination of information, but staff feels the communication from the administration is not direct.

GROWTH NEED #2: RE-EXAMINE ESLRs

Once a review of the ESLRs was completed, the stakeholders agreed to add a reading ESLR. Critical areas of academic need have been identified in reading, writing, and higher level thinking skills. Staff has also examined more efficient ways to measure ESLRs and have developed a number of measurement tools.

GROWTH NEED #3: RUBRIC DEVELOPMENT AND ASSESSMENT

Standards and ESLRs have been the primary focus of the majority of in-service and minimum days since the last self-study. The Scope and Sequence binder is kept in the office and is available to all stakeholders. The Rubric database for standards and ESLRs is on the P Drive, accessible by school personnel. Many teachers post the ESLRs in their rooms and discuss content standards at Back-to-School Night. Information concerning standards and ESLRs are included in the school newsletter and parents can access the state standards through a link on the school website. The ESLRs are reviewed annually at a Site Council meeting which is open to the public.

The understanding by stakeholders of multiple assessments has improved greatly as staff becomes more comfortable and proficient in the use of

technology. Informational reports are developed to help explain the reasoning for the assessments and interpretation of the results.

Scope and Sequence documents have assisted in the development of departmental rubrics. The speech, higher level thinking skills, written communication, and technology components are in place to measure student achievement.

The addition of a reading ESLR was determined to be critical to the progress of student learning at WHS. An Emerging Language Development program has been implemented to focus on the needs of English Language Learners. The AVID program was added, as well as additional honors and AP courses.

GROWTH NEED #4: GUIDANCE SERVICES

There is a need for comprehensive guidance services. A second guidance counselor and a full-time counseling technician have been added since the last WASC visit. The additional staffing provides an increase of services to parents and students. The services of the counseling department are responsive to the needs expressed in parent surveys.

GROWTH NEED #5: CURRICULAR OPTIONS

Since the previous WASC visit, the availability of advanced level courses to address A-G requirements continues to be a challenge. Because enrollment has been low in AP, WHS has chosen to focus on the AVID program. WHS is making progress towards student awareness of courses available to them at the community colleges. There are a number of challenges WHS faces in dealing with these colleges, such as acceptance of AP courses and waiver of placement testing for advanced students.

The needs of students with below standards reading scores have been addressed by the PRIDE Reading Coordinator. Support services such as Math Lab and departmental tutoring also provide support for other struggling students. The staff is in the beginning stages of standards-based assessment and data driven instruction because of the difficulties in the implementation of Edusoft.

CHAPTER 3---SELF STUDY PROCESS

The Wheatland High School ESLRs are:

- **Communicate effectively in speech and writing**
- **Demonstrate a basic technological literacy**
- **Demonstrate higher order thinking skills**
- **Demonstrate the ability to read and comprehend both recreational and instructional material**

Prior to the advent of ESLRs, WHS had nineteen outcomes developed during a series of meetings with parents, students and staff. When ESLRs were introduced in 1997, a committee of teachers met to determine which outcomes should be chosen as ESLRs. They recommended that technology, higher level thinking skills, and communication in speech and writing be adopted. Between 1998 and 2002, teacher meetings were held to develop measurable indicators for the ESLRs. Teachers also met to develop rubrics specific to assignments given in their departments. Each year, the ESLRs are revisited in staff and Site Council meetings and included in the newsletter to ensure ongoing stakeholder support. The reading ESLR was added in 2003, as a result of input from all stakeholder groups.

Work on the Action Plan from the previous self study continued every year with the WASC Coordinator, the Special Projects Director, the Curriculum Council, and the Site Council acting as the principle oversight committee. Work on the self study began in August 2003. The self study process was reviewed at the first staff meeting in August and teachers volunteered for focus groups. These groups met and selected a chair. Each committee analyzed the criteria concepts and questions for that committee.

Several months were devoted to gathering data from the departments and surveys were completed. A representative from each focus group met to begin gathering the information needed for Chapter I. Parent, student and classified staff were solicited to participate in the process. The full committees met in November 2003 to review the self study process and obtain further input.

The majority of the buyback and minimum days during the first semester of the 2004-05 school year were spent working on the WASC report. To accommodate parents, evening meetings were held in October.

A final version of the report was reviewed by the Site Council in January of 2005 and by the Board of Education in early February, 2005.

CHAPTER 4---QUALITY OF THE SCHOOL'S PROGRAM

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

A1.

Although WHS is a small school, the staff attempts to have a rigorous, relevant and coherent standards-based curriculum for all students. Since their last self-study, most departments have completed scope and sequence documents. Appropriate standards and ESLRs for each course are reviewed annually.

Graduation requirements have been increased from 230 to 240 credits by adding a fourth year of English, a year of algebra, and a semester of computer technology. Student expectations are high and teachers hold students to these high standards. Students do projects with real world application utilizing all available resources.

Reading, writing and math have been identified as critical areas of academic need. WHS is continually looking for ways to help students master basic and higher level skills. The school needs to emphasize writing across the curriculum so all teachers can standardize skills at the same level.

Staff and students have expressed a need for more electives to help students access career choices. Foreign language, auto, and home economics are three courses that were mentioned numerous times. Co-planning time is necessary to allow departments to improve articulation between disciplines.

A2.

All courses at WHS are available to all students. Each spring, all students have registration materials that include course descriptions. WHS staff make presentations at the middle school in order to talk directly with the incoming Freshman and answer questions about course offerings.

Freshmen are registered in the evening so students and their parents can meet with counselors individually. During this registration period, counselors explain course connections, course requirements, and post secondary options. At this time students begin to develop their four-year plan. This process is ongoing throughout the year as students are able to explore interests, both academic and career. The career center has a program called "Career Cruising" to help students explore different career options to determine student interest. This program is available to students from home computers as well as the guidance counseling office. During registration, staff make placement recommendations for students in the appropriate courses for their individual learning plans. There

needs to be better coordination between advisory and guidance staff so they can help students achieve their goals and ensure appropriate placement of students.

ROP and Career Education courses are offered on campus. Students may want a career field that does not require a 4-year college program. Seniors have the opportunity to concurrently enroll in community college classes, although this program is limited by these colleges. ROP courses are primarily limited to agricultural as well as some computer courses and do not appear to be sequenced.

Students and staff have welcomed WHS's newly hired chef. Her expertise in food preparation and the high quality of food provided fresh daily exceeds standard school fare. As a result, there is increased interest by both students and staff in the development of a culinary arts program at the school.

To help students be successful, tutoring is available on a regular basis in math and English. Staff is usually available before school, at lunch, and after school to meet with and help students.

The school recently obtained board approval for their ELL Program and is in the process of getting staff the appropriate certification.

A3.

Students have a choice of academic and CTE courses to help them be successful in their career goals. There are partnerships with industry and post secondary institutions to encourage students to continue their education beyond high school. Follow-up with graduating students is challenging and a plan is being developed by the staff.

Various support programs are available for credit recovery. Some of the options available to students are tutoring, taking classes during 1st period (WHS's optional period), concurrent enrollment at the charter/alternative school, or concurrent Adult Ed classes.

A4.

Courses have a Scope and Sequence to ensure alignment with appropriate state standards and the ESLRs. Student progress is assessed using course test data, and various state mandated tests. A more effective use of Edusoft would better facilitate this process.

Teachers use a variety of methods to ensure all students are challenged and are able to meet the academic standards and ESLRs. Writing across the curriculum is addressed in all classes. Critical thinking skills are also addressed across the curriculum. Students must use these skills to develop theses, proofs, or peer evaluations.

Most teachers utilize a variety of methods to engage students in learning. Teachers were observed using interactive presentations, PowerPoint, question/answer formats, group work, peer review, and independent work to reinforce student learning. Technology appears to be used in most disciplines to help teachers teach and students learn. There are a number of courses and activities available to students to explore how to become better citizens and community participants. An excellent example of a support program for student is the PRIDE reading program. Not only do students improve their reading and writing skills, they are exposed to strategies that promote their higher level thinking skills across the curriculum.

Areas of strength:

- The library, including the Career Cove, is open from 7:30am-4:00pm on school days. A variety of resources are available to students for home and school use
- The band program is highly successful and frequently places high in band competitions
- The Academic Decathlon team has been very successful at local and state competitions
- WHS provides exemplary food service which has the potential to expand into a culinary arts program for students
- WHS has a successful PRIDE reading program which provides students reading below grade level the opportunity to increase their reading and vocabulary skills
- The art department displays student work in the foyer of the library. The work is multi-faceted and incorporates cross-curricular activities
- The effort WHS puts into meeting the needs of all students highlights their commitment to educating the whole child

Key Issues:

- Although teachers make recommendations in the spring for fall registration, much misplacement of students in classrooms still occurs. One of the problems appears to be the prerequisites are not being adequately enforced
- Curriculum should be data-driven and staff must be trained in the process
- WHS should continue to expand the variety of instructional strategies and resources, including technology

Evidence about student learning from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and key issues include the following:

- Classroom observations
- Self study documents
- Examples of student work

- Library resources
- Observation of special programs

ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

B-5.

A variety of assessments are utilized (STAR, CAT-6, CAHSEE) to help evaluate student learning. Teachers use assessments such as tests, quizzes, student presentations, labs, class discussions, projects, co-operative learning groups, peer and self review, and teacher observations toward grade level expectations and attainment of the California Standards and WHS's ESLRs.

The results of individual assessments are used as a basis for student placement and program/curriculum development. In response to identified areas of concern, WHS created a reading program (PRIDE) to improve reading skills. An AVID program for students performing below their potential and a self-contained Opportunity program for 9th graders who are experiencing difficulties have been developed. A school-wide advisory period was created to assist students in attaining important information relative to high school and post-secondary planning and for school culture enhancement. Students use assessment results to seek help through tutoring, peer assistance, and requesting additional instructional materials. A student study team is available to help assess the needs of students who perform below expected academic standards.

B-6.

During staff meetings, test data is presented, discussed and analyzed. Parents are informed of their student's progress through reports that are mailed home every 4 to 5 weeks. The length of time it takes for parents to receive this information in the mail is often problematic. WHS is working on online access to remedy this situation. Teachers and parents communicate directly through e-mail, phone or direct conferencing. The school web site, monthly newsletter, and articles in the local newspaper provide information to the parents and community. There is also a fall Back-to-School night, as well as an academic awards ceremony each semester. Once a year, in the spring, there is a Night of Excellence presentation that highlights fine arts, academics and vocational education.

B-7.

Curricular additions have been included in direct response to student needs. Honors English 9 and 10 have been added to challenge students. A 2-year Algebra 1 course is provided for students having difficulty with that level of math.

Teachers are continuing discussion and planning regarding a sequence of courses to provide students who are failing after the first semester.

A testing coordinator and a data analyst position have been added to provide data necessary to help teachers and parents better understand student performance on state-mandated tests. In the spring of 2005, a Special Projects Director was added to assist in the analysis and monitoring of data and other compliance issues. An Edusoft program was purchased to assist teachers in analyzing student performance and achievement. Additional training is necessary to utilize the program to its fullest extent.

Remedial classes have been developed in English and math to help student pass the CAHSEE. The PRIDE reading program was developed to support those students who are performing below grade level. An Advisory class to support and assist the counseling staff and students was developed in 2003. The advisory teacher assists students in interpreting their transcripts and evaluating their academic progress. Teachers also administer aptitude/interest tests (COPS) to guide students in possible career choices. "Career Cruising" has been posted on the school website to further help students in career investigation. "Too Good for Drugs or Violence" and team building strategies into the advisory class were added in 2004-05.

Areas of Strength:

- Department rubrics have assisted grade level and departmental expectations
- Links on the school website provide parents with important assessment data regarding their students
- There is a wide variety of assessment tools utilized by the teaching staff to monitor student progress.

Key Issues:

- The staff needs to continue to gain understanding regarding state assessment data and how to apply it to student growth
- The staff needs to continue to access existing assessment tools to monitor progress toward achievement of ESLRs and state standards
- The school needs to explore more efficient communication to parents regarding student progress reports and grades since mail is so problematic
- In-coming students need to be assessed in key areas (reading, writing and math) to assure proper placement at WHS
- The staff needs to be properly trained as to the uses of the Edusoft program to utilize its benefits

Important evidence about student learning from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and key issues include the following:

- Self-study document, especially analysis of student achievement data
- Classroom observation
- Dialogue with focus groups and key stakeholders
- Samples of student work
- Changes to program and curriculum since last accreditation visit

SUPPORT FOR STUDENT PERSONAL AND ACADEMIC GROWTH

C-8.

All students have access to tutoring and support services before, during and after school. Through Advisory period all students receive personal assistance in developing and implementing a four-year plan and career path. WHS has added additional curricular support through a two-year Algebra 1 class, AVID, ELD, CAHSEE math and English support courses. Parents receive progress reports every four to five weeks and can contact teachers for updates at anytime. Specialized programs exist to assist minority and economically disadvantaged students prepare for college. Student Study Teams can be convened at any time to develop an action plan to assist struggling students.

C-9.

WHS connects the community, staff and students through clubs, teams, academics, and support systems. Students of all ability levels have opportunities to develop personal interest in the arts, sports, or clubs.

All students in Advisory work with career exploration programs and receive important guidance regarding transcript review and course selection. Advisory teachers are provided in-service support and expertise through the counseling and guidance department.

Students and parents can also receive support through the school website with updates regarding school activities, as well as links to college and financial aide opportunities.

Areas of Strength:

- The Advisory class period can be an academic and social support to all students

- There is a good variety of activities and programs for students to participate in with energy directed toward students who do not initially sign up to be a part of a organized group
- There are several different programs and courses that students can explore to develop skills and interest areas

Key Issues:

- WHS needs to continue to develop a more comprehensive, cross-curricular tutoring program
- The staff should continue to explore the possibility of community service commitment for students
- Staff should search for additional funding for after-school tutorial programs in English and math especially in regard to passage of the CAHSEE
- WHS should develop of tracking system for post-graduation progress of former students

Important evidence about student learning from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and key issues include the following:

- Observation of students in classroom
- Self-study document
- Variety and scope of curriculum, support programs, and activities
- Dialogue with focus groups and key stakeholders

CULTURE

D-10.

WHS is a safe, clean, and orderly place that nurtures learning. WHS has a Safe School Plan and is developing a Crisis Response Plan that will provide direction for stakeholders in emergency situations. WHS has a zero tolerance policy for drugs, alcohol, violence, sexual harassment, and hazing. There is concern that as the student population grows, the staff will need to become even more diligent in consistently enforcing this policy.

In 2003-04, WHS implemented a positive attendance program for seniors. In order to participate in graduation ceremonies and related senior trips at the end of the school year, seniors may not miss more than 18 times in any one class period.

During the 2002-03 school year, a "Safe School Hot Topics" questionnaire was given to students to gauge their feelings about campus safety. The majority of

students felt WHS was a safe campus. More recently, results of a Student and Parent survey show that over 71% of the students and 94% of the parents feel that WHS is a safe, clean, and orderly place that nurtures learning.

The WHS maintenance staff takes pride in the campus and its facilities. Students are encouraged to keep the campus clean and orderly throughout the day.

The small size of the school fosters collaboration of stakeholders to identify and plan programs to help students achieve the ESLRs and academic standards. Teachers and administrators work to identify and solve problems related to teaching and student learning. The Curriculum Council meets monthly to discuss departmental concerns and school-wide issues related to student success. Department chairs who attend these meetings are expected to support and guide their department members in innovating teaching techniques and school-wide communication.

The staff is trusted and encouraged by the administration to try new approaches and is supported in their efforts to improve the culture at WHS. The recently implemented Advisory program is an outstanding example of these accepted innovative approaches. This was an idea that was brought to the administration by a staff member. The concept embraces the school's mission. Because of its relevance to the goals of the school it was accepted and implemented relatively easily and effectively by the staff.

The faculty is committed to ensuring that all students achieve the academic standards and the ESLRs. The Special Education staff has printed outcomes in relation to all SSTs and IEPs. The PRIDE reading program has greatly focused student learning in reading techniques and strategies. Since the last self-study, three AVID classes were added. All students are encouraged to take the PSAT and PLAN tests and complete the FAFSA. Community college courses are available to WHS students outside of and during the regular school day. Clubs, sports, and activities offer individual students enrichment opportunities.

In general, the culture of the school is one of comfort and compassion. Students report feeling safe and accepted by peers. They feel respected and appreciated by staff. Teachers care about the students and interact professionally. The school is "one big family." All members support each other to see that they are productive and successful. The number of interdistrict requests is reflective of the positive culture of the school.

Areas of Strength

- There is support and compassion between staff and students
- The campus is clean, orderly and well maintained

- The Advisory program is well developed and is exemplary of the positive, supportive school culture
- The campus is relatively devoid of incidents of harassment or discrimination of any kind after a period only a few years ago when this was prevalent. Students treat each other with respect and appear to be genuinely concerned about each other's well-being

Key Issues

- There is a need to more consistently enforce the Zero Tolerance and other discipline policies by all stakeholders in Wheatland Union High School District

Important evidence about student learning from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and key issues include the following:

- Observation of campus
- Safe School Plan
- Dialogue with focus groups and key stakeholders
- Observation of special programs
- Attendance records
- Discipline records

LEADERSHIP AND STAFF

E-11.

Two key leadership committees at WHS are the Curriculum Council, composed of department and support area chairs and the administration, and Site Council, composed of parents, students, teachers, classified personnel, and administration. The meetings of both committees are open to the public.

The position of a superintendent/principal provides a challenge for WHS. The Superintendent is an outstanding, dedicated and hard working administrator. As a principal, he cares deeply about the staff and students of WHS. He encourages program innovations and mentors staff leadership. Unfortunately, the combining of both positions means that the principal's busy schedule impacts communication with the staff. This sometimes results in staff feeling frustrated and "out of the loop" regarding information and decisions.

The Curriculum Council meets monthly to discuss issues related to student learning, state standards and testing, school policy, school goals and teacher

curriculum concerns and needs. Since the last WASC self-study, Curriculum Council has served as the WASC leadership team. The WASC Coordinator attends all Curriculum Council meetings. Department chairs meet regularly with their department members to discuss issues raised at Curriculum Council and to determine if members have new concerns. The Site Council also meets regularly to discuss school policies, curriculum issues, school goals and WASC. It also allocates funds for school-wide needs.

Issues or concerns raised in Curriculum or Site Council are often brought to the general staff at the monthly faculty meeting. Minimum days are scheduled to allow for more in-depth discussions. Staff meetings provide time for staff to collaborate and team build. All staff is included in these meetings. Yearly, the WHEAT association conducts a staff satisfaction survey regarding leadership at WHS. The WHEAT organization plays an integral role in internal communication and issue resolution.

Staff in all curricular areas collaborate regularly, either formally or informally. Special Education teachers meet regularly with classroom teachers in formal IEP, SST, or staff meetings and informally during lunch, prep periods, or after school to ensure that the needs of all students are being met. The ELD, PRIDE, and ACE teachers also collaborate regularly with the rest of the staff. Virginia School, a school for the severely handicapped, has a classroom on the WHS campus and the students of both schools benefit from the interaction that occurs.

As the amount of data on student achievement has grown, school leadership has attempted to disseminate the information in staff meetings. The Edusoft program was purchased to facilitate data-driven instruction; however, its implementation has proven to be problematic because promised assistance and program revision have not been provided by Edusoft. A Data Analyst position has been established to facilitate this process. To date, this person has met with each of the academic area departments regarding testing data and API/AYP results, as well as giving presentations to the school board and parents.

E-12.

All forty faculty members at WHS have California teaching credentials and are fully qualified to teach in their assigned areas. There are two administrators with appropriate credentials. Years of service range from some brand new teachers to those with 36 years of teaching experience; six have over thirty years with the district. Seven faculty members have Master's Degrees, and one administrator has a Doctorate.

For the past three years, participation in mentoring and job coaching is through PAR, BTSA, and the Formal Evaluation Process. Both have a structured meeting schedule including open dialog with mentor and mentee and also between and with departments.

E-13.

School leadership suggests directions for staff development to the faculty. Results of professional development are often presented during department meetings, in-services days, and faculty meetings. Most professional development, which focuses on students' learning needs, is not district led; rather, they are sought out by individual teachers. According to the results of a staff survey, the faculty is evenly divided concerning the purpose and effectiveness in improving student learning through on-site professional development activities. There appears to be a lack of a comprehensive staff development plan and a model of effective delivery.

E-14.

WHS publishes a monthly newsletter with a variety of information on upcoming events and activities including sports, clubs, rallies, dances, discipline policies, and dress codes. Information about scholarships and college visitations are also distributed in the monthly newsletter. An annual student planner is given to all students to acquaint them and their parents with WHS policies and procedures. There is also a new student orientation day. The Link Crew links each new student with an upperclassman to help facilitate a positive school climate.

There is an active Site Council, which meets regularly on campus. The group acts in an advisory capacity to review policies, programs, and procedures that will involve students. The WHS Booster Club helps to provide a link between the school and the community by gathering local resources and communicating needs.

WHS's website is very effective in sharing information with parents, students, and staff. Through the website, one can see a daily calendar of events, as well as a long term calendar. The site is up-to-date with academic and sports information. In addition, a staff directory including e-mail addresses and voice-mail phone numbers can be located on the home page. Overall, the WHS website is a effective method of communication.

Outreach to parents who do not understand what information is available from the school might enhance the parent involvement in the school.

Strengths:

- A well organized and regularly held Curriculum Council and School Site Council builds capacity for school leadership
- WHS has a highly qualified teaching staff and administration
- The Link Crew welcomes new students and develops student leaders
- Both the newsletter and the website provide regularly updated information to parents and the community

Key Issues:

- The Superintendent/Principal position is problematic to ongoing and timely communication with staff
- Edusoft has been problematic in its implementation. Ongoing training and support are critical to the development of data-driven instruction
- A plan for staff development needs to be developed, along with the possible position of a continuing education coordinator
- Outreach to parents who do not understand what information is available from the school might enhance the parent involvement in the school

Important evidence about student learning from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and key issues include the following:

- Curriculum Council, Site Council and Staff Meeting minutes
- Website
- Dialogue with focus groups and key stakeholders
- Classroom observations
- Survey results
- Monthly newsletters
- Self study document

VISION AND PURPOSE

F-15.

WHS developed a mission statement in 1992 with the input of the stakeholders. The school's mission is to develop "R.I.C.H. Productive Students" who are **R**esponsible, **I**nformed, **C**apable of Success in the 21st century, and **H**ealthy. Although it was intended to be a guide to give direction to the decision-making process, it is not evident that the mission statement consciously drives the decision-making process. An informal survey of administration, parents, staff, and students indicates that the mission statement is a "mystery" to many of those stakeholders. However, most decisions are congruent with the school's ESLRs under the assumption of doing "what's best for kids". An informal teacher survey confirms that the staff is passionate about developing the whole child, developing a sense of family on campus, and teaching students to think for themselves. Integration of the Advisory program, availability of AP classes online, and the AVID program are examples of the commitment to supporting student achievement.

F-16.

WHS purpose is defined by its ESLRs and academic standards. Curriculum is aligned with State standards and blends components of the four ESLRs. The

school's ESLRs help students master the subject matter standards, assist Wheatland students in becoming responsible participants in a democratic society, and guide development of conceptual thinking abilities and problem-solving skills.

Work on ESLRs occurs during in-service opportunities and on minimum days. Programmatic changes reflect incorporation of the ESLRs into the school's curriculum and student support programs. Measurable indicators have been developed to help monitor student achievement in areas covered by each of the four ESLRs.

ESLRs are re-examined annually by staff. Feedback is solicited at Site Council, staff, and School Board meetings. Information is also included in the school newsletter and on the WHS website to ensure ongoing stakeholder support. The ESLRs are presented to the School Board for approval. Each department's Scope and Sequence reflects teacher support of the ESLRs.

F-17.

WHS has worked to integrate the school-wide ESLRs into the academic standards for all courses. For example, the English and Social Studies departments have worked together to develop an essay component on U.S. History exams that is scored using the Golden State Exam scoring rubric. The essay prompts are tied directly to the state content standards. Juniors are instructed in the fundamentals of successful presentations and given the opportunity to speak in front of their classmates. Topics for these presentations are taken directly from the content-specific state standards.

Higher order thinking is stressed across the curriculum. Costa's Model of Intellectual Functioning is used to generate content specific learning objectives that are included on course syllabi and departmental scope and sequences.

Technology is integrated into many aspects of Wheatland's curriculum. Advanced Placement (AP) online courses and Computer Assisted Design and Drafting (CADD) are offered; digital video editing and Power Point presentations are utilized; a technology component has been added to the graduation requirements; all students must show competency in Access, Excel, Word, and PowerPoint; and, the school is exploring a future MOUS certification for students who choose to attain an advanced level of proficiency in technology.

The staff's concern regarding low reading levels is evident in the addition of a reading ESLR. PRIDE, a specialized program designed to raise the lowest-level readers to grade level, has proven to be an excellent remedial class. All English teachers are encouraged to integrate the Accelerated Reader

Program into the curriculum. In addition, the Advisory program provides further reading opportunities.

Strengths:

- WHS teachers deliver the spirit of the mission statement to students through instruction and programs directed to develop and nurture the whole child
- Students feel they are valued, can be successful, have access to all programs and activities, and have adults they can go to for help
- The Advisory period, AVID, and Peer Counseling programs are reflections of the focus to educate the whole child
- The PRIDE program and the advisory program support the reading ESLR
- ESLRs are aligned with CAHSEE, and incorporated into graduation requirements, course offerings, and assessment rubrics across the curriculum

Key Issues:

- A clearly defined vision is not engrained in the infrastructure of the school.
- The school's mission statement does not appear to drive the decision-making process
- Integration of the mission statement into the school culture is not evident

Important evidence about student learning from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and key issues include the following:

- Advisory period
- PRIDE reading program
- Individual and peer counseling through Link Crew and Natural helpers
- Tutoring schedule
- Self study documents
- Classroom observation
- Focus group dialogue
- Scope and Sequence document
- Academic standards for each subject area

SCHOOLWIDE AREAS OF STRENGTH AND WEAKNESSES

The stakeholders are to be commended for their efforts in the preparation of the *Focus on Learning* document. A wide variety of stakeholders was involved and willingly assisted the visiting committee in gathering and clarifying data needed to validate the self-study. Students were very supportive of the efforts of the visiting committee to improve the quality of the school's programs.

School-wide Areas of Strength

1. Staff is committed to improving student academic achievement, as well as meeting state standards and the school's ESLRs
2. The development of new programs to improve math and language arts scores is driven by student assessment data
3. The Advisory period and PRIDE reading program are examples of exemplary programs recently implemented by staff and supported by administration
4. Staff, students, and parents have a sense of safety and belonging; staff and students foster a safe and nurturing atmosphere
5. The campus is orderly, clean, and well-maintained.
6. A variety of activities and programs incorporate all students into the school culture
7. Staff willingly wear a variety of hats, including leadership roles, to ensure school and student needs are met
8. Technology has been incorporated throughout the curriculum
9. Stakeholders have access to the school information via a well-developed and maintained website
10. The spirit of the mission statement is incorporated into the instructional program directed to develop Responsible, Informed, Capable, and Healthy students

School-wide Critical Areas for Follow-up

The visiting committee agrees with the school's identified areas of growth, outlined in the school-wide action plan as summarized below:

1. Train staff in gathering and using data to ensure the curriculum is rigorous, relevant, and coherent
2. Plan and implement a comprehensive site-based staff development program that addresses academic needs, ESLRs, and NCLB performance goals
3. Develop student placement programs to ensure all students have access to services which focus on meeting students' personal, academic and career needs, interests, and goals

In addition, the visiting committee has identified the following areas that need to be strengthened:

1. All teachers need to expand the use of a variety of strategies and resources, including technology and experiences beyond the textbook and classroom, that actively engage students that provide challenging learning experiences
2. Staff, students, and administration need to work collaboratively to evaluate the effective and consistent application of school policies
3. Develop an infrastructure that will support the combined Superintendent/Principal position
4. Develop and broaden parental and community participation in school activities
5. The school's mission statement should be regularly reviewed to ensure that a clear, relevant, and easily understood vision statement is developed. Administration and leadership need to guide and inculcate the vision into the infrastructure of the school.

CHAPTER 5---ONGOING SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

WHS has developed an action plan to address the following critical areas:

- **Academic need**---taking steps to improve the reading, writing and math skills of all NCLB subgroups scoring below proficiency on related areas of the STAR test
- **Assessment**---continuing the development and implementation of assessment tools
- **Project Director**---the establishment of an ongoing position of Project Director
- **Staff Development**---planning and implementation of a comprehensive site-based staff development program that addresses best practices in the WHS critical areas of academic need, ESLRs and NCLB performance goals, as well as other areas of need identified by the staff
- **Student Placement**---the development of a student placement process to ensure that every student is placed in classes that are commensurate with his/her abilities and appropriate for their four-year plan

The Visiting Team recommends the following additions to the existing plans:

- **Academic Need**---provide more detail in the areas of writing and mathematics
- **Assessment**---address Edusoft and staff training in using data to drive instruction
- **Project Director**---expand the plan to include job responsibilities of this person to move WHS's plan forward
- **Student Placement**---address the need to develop strategies for expansion of course offerings for students

The action plan sections address the critical areas for followup. The Action Plan rationales are based upon student learning and the steps, if accomplished, will enhance student learning. The plans address course placement and the development of instructional strategies so that students are more able to meet state standards and appropriate levels of proficiency. The staff development component addresses teacher skills in data-driven instruction, involving students in active learning and meeting the needs of all students.

The Action Plan is feasible in that the steps are funded through existing resources. The plan continues steps already begun and currently funded. It redirects existing resources to meet the needs of other plan components. Finally, it utilizes available time and staff resources to meet those needs. It calls for no actions that are dependent upon the efforts or resources outside of the school community.

In discussions with the Leadership Team and the Focus Groups, the Visiting Committee has been assured that the needs identified by the school itself are authentic and critical, and that the staff is committed to addressing them at the school level. The Visiting Committee feels that it is vital that the Board of Education support the school in its Action Plan efforts if the plan is to be accomplished.

The fact that the school has already begun serious work to improve student performance shows that the school has the will to make significant change. The school has a history of activities, resources and commitment to effect needed changes. Additional time for collaboration would benefit this process.

The uncertainty of the future of WHS's ADA is problematic in long range planning. This fluctuation impacts staffing, financial resources to the school and the course offerings available to students. In addition, having a Superintendent/Principal impacts the time available to the principal for providing instructional leadership and directing school change.

The follow-up process to monitor accomplishment of the Action Plan was discussed with the school WASC chairperson. The WASC Chair, Superintendent/Principal and the Data Analyst/Program Director will serve as the coordinators of this process. Regular updates will be provided and reviewed by the Curriculum Council and the School Site Council. This follow-up process will be more clearly delineated and submitted with the revised action plan.