

***FOCUS ON LEARNING***  
**MIDTERM VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT**

**Bonita Vista High School**  
**Chula Vista, California**

**Midterm Visiting Committee Report**

**April 20, 2006**

**Midterm Visiting Committee**

**Patricia Chandler, Committee Chair**  
**Marilyn McDowell, Committee Member**

## **Introduction**

Bonita Vista High School serves students living in Chula Vista, California. The school is part of Sweetwater Union High School District. Student enrollment has decreased by about 400 students as boundary changes were made when the district opened a new high school. The school remains culturally diverse serving mostly middle and upper middle-income students with a growing low-income population. Approximately 92% of students attend college including about 40% attending four-year universities. The school meets the needs of this college bound population by offering college preparatory courses and Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs. With the loss of several experienced AP/IB teachers, the student pass rate for AP exams has declined slightly over the past three years.

The school Academic Performance Index score has grown by 29 points in three years. In each year the school has met both overall and subgroup targets. The school also has met AYP targets although, as a non-Title 1 school, it would not be subject to sanctions if the school failed to meet AYP targets. The California Standards Tests scores show that each year the freshman, sophomore, and junior class have more students scoring proficient and advanced in language arts. A close examination of the scores shows that as students move from ninth to eleventh grade, the number of them who are proficient and advanced declines. Students are also passing the California High School Exit Exam in the mid to upper 80% range upon first taking it. This year, all but 20 students eligible for graduation have passed the CAHSEE as of the most recent testing.

## **Significant Changes**

Significant changes that have affected the school since the last visit include:

1. A new principal began in January 2006 after the former principal became an area superintendent.
2. Three assistant principals and one psychologist are new since the last WASC visit.
3. Thirty-five teachers have either retired or relocated, including several experienced AP/IB teachers.
4. The district superintendent left the district and three area superintendents moved on. The resulting domino effect has caused a loss of continuity for the school.
5. School enrollment has declined by approximately 400 students due to the opening of a new district high school.
6. The district discontinued school leadership teams and the school followed suit. In its place the school uses the Faculty Advisory Committee and the School Site Council to involve staff in site issues.

7. Modernization has occurred in three phases with phase three beginning in spring 2006. Students and staff have been relocated to temporary quarters as classrooms have been remodeled. Students and staff have also contended with the disruption caused by heavy equipment digging trenches for utilities.
8. Through buying back instructional minutes, the staff has created time for minimum days dedicated to collaborative planning. This time complements the five staff development days and the once a month "pro hour days" and provides staff the opportunity to align curriculum and create common assessments. Additionally, staff has established test taking strategies, common assessment practices, and teaching strategies.
9. In 2003-04 and 2004-05 staff participated in professional development using Robert Marzano's *Classroom Instruction that Works* and *What Works in Schools*. Each department selected one of the strategies on which to focus.
10. A new standards based English program was adopted in 2003 for implementation in the 2003-04 school term. Teachers have received one week of training to use the materials and use collaborative time for continued training and focused discussion on implementation.

#### **Description of Follow-Up Process**

Administration and department chairs are responsible for ensuring implementation of the Action Plan. At the beginning of each school year the single school wide action plan is reviewed by each department in their action plan. The principal meets regularly with department chairs to monitor the ongoing site improvement. Each spring action plans are reviewed and revised based upon various data, such as End-of-Course exams and CAHSEE results. The Schoolwide Critical Areas for Improvement are reviewed to ensure that each department's plan addresses them as appropriate.

The District promotes using SMART goal format in site plans. (Strategic, Measurable, Results-based, Attainable goals). This format promotes schoolwide focus on curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessment practices. It also promotes professional dialogue and collaboration across disciplines.

Annual WASC progress reports are prepared and submitted to the school board each year. District staff reviews the reports to further monitor the school's progress.

#### **Follow-up Process: Progress on Schoolwide Action Plans**

The midterm report documents accomplishments of each schoolwide action plan section, noting how the critical areas for follow-up have been addressed through each section.

**Growth Need #1:** Improve student achievement by looking schoolwide at the indicators for the Baron Standards of Excellence (ESLRs) to increase students becoming effective communicators and productive individuals across the curriculum. (*Critical area for follow-up #1*)

The school has implemented the Senior Portfolio and Exhibition that allows students to demonstrate that they are effective communicators and productive individuals. Recently the Board of Education took action to remove the Senior Portfolio and Exhibition as graduation requirement. The school needs to seek alternative methods for students to demonstrate effective communication and productivity across the curriculum. The district required 30 hours of community service also provides an opportunity for students to demonstrate that they are productive members of the community. The results for the class of 2005 show that more than 99% of students complete both these requirements. Continued emphasis should be placed on developing and implanting student achievement goals across the curriculum.

**Growth Need #2:** Implement a standards based instructional program for all students. (*Critical Area for follow-up #2*)

The English department has implemented a new standards based program. Teachers have attended a weeklong professional development program designed to assist with program implementation. Course calendars for English ensure that basic content is covered. The English department also incorporates a Standards Based Portfolio Assessment for grades 9 through 12. Each core subject department administers common semester end of course assessments linked to the content standards. Staff has set aside time to collaborate to review the results of the assessments, examine instructional practices, and develop strategies to enhance student learning.

**Growth Need #3:** Examine instructional methods used in each discipline to determine how these methods afford students the opportunity to learn the standards. (*Critical Area for follow-up #3*).

The school used Robert Marzano's research on instructional strategies that improve student learning. Over the course of two years the staff studied Marzano's research and department by department selected at least one strategy to implement. Staff used available collaboration time to examine instructional practices for various student groups. The new English program, for example, recommends differentiated instruction for various learners (e.g. special education, English learners).

**Growth Need #4:** Using an analysis of multiple indicators of student achievement, target underperforming students with specific support strategies.

Staff has made considerable progress in providing underperforming students specific support strategies. Staff has developed and offered to students CAHSEE preparation modules. These preparation classes are given for 20 hours after regular school hours. Counselors and teachers call families to encourage and gain commitment to participate in after school hours support classes. A course designed to boost student achievement on the CSU entry level English exam has been developed and offered during the regular school year. Two sections are taught this school year.

Two other classes—Reading Essentials and Reader's Workshop—have been developed targeted to both English speaking and non-English speaking students. Math Essentials is a course designed to be taken in addition to a regular math class for students who have yet to pass the

CAHSEE. Additionally, 20 hour CAHSEE prep modules are offered to students after school and on Saturdays. Currently there are very few students still needing to pass CAHSEE for the Class of 2006. Tutoring has become more structured with schedules published for lunch and after school tutoring in mathematics—students are encouraged to attend but not required to. Through the Learning Center CAHSEE prep is offered via the CHARIOT program—a web based tutorial program in math and English. Initially available to students enrolled in the Learning Center, this preparation program has been extended to any student needing the assistance.

**Growth Need #5:** Marshal resources to support school improvement.

Staff has directed available resources to improving student achievement. For example, EL students with special funds are offered intervention programs 4 days a week after school. The same funding source is used to train ELD teachers in language acquisition methodologies and research. By banking time, staff has carved out time to collaborate and plan together to improve student achievement. After initial training, departments have developed ways to share Marzano's instructional strategies with peers. Partnerships with the local community college have provided supplies and equipment as well as instructors to work with students. GATE funding provides training for teachers of AP/IB classes. District workshops supplement these trainings. District resources are shared with this high school even though they are not a Title 1 school.

### **Additional Recommendations**

The review committee makes no additional recommendations. The school has taken seriously its commitment to ensuring all students are prepared for life after high school. Student support for learning has increased significantly since the last visit. Staff collaboration and use of achievement data for improved student achievement has also increased. Research based instructional strategies from Marzano's work have been directly applied in the classroom. There is also an increased number of students participating in the AP/IB program as a result of their inclusive policies. In spite of the turn over in staff, significant progress has been made in accomplishing their action plans. The Revisit team expects that progress will continue.

The staff knows where their work needs to be focused as the action plan serves as a guide. The staff understands the entire focus must be demonstration of greater student achievement. The staff members have focused intensive support for the English learners and special needs students. Given their past track record of "staying the course" the review committee is certain that progress will continue.