

Focus On Learning Midterm Review

Yosemite High School
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On-Site Review: May 2, 2003

Introduction

General Comments About The School

Yosemite High School is located in the Sierra Nevada foothills in the rural community of Oakhurst, 12 miles from the southern entrance to Yosemite National Park in Central California. The campus is on a 100-acre site graced with pines, oaks, and seasonal streams with views of the High Sierra. The 26-year-old campus is being transformed by a construction project resulting from the passage of an \$11.76 million bond measure in 1998. The project includes a comprehensive library media center, computer labs, science labs, classrooms, a cafeteria/multi-purpose building, athletic facilities, and a performing arts center.

An academic focal point at YHS is the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. IB is a worldwide program, providing a rigorous, standards-based curriculum. YHS is one of only 47 IB schools in California.

The school offers over 30 honors, International Baccalaureate, and Advanced Placement courses. During the 2001-2002 school year YHS increased its AP (Advanced Placement) offerings through a \$75,000 Advanced Placement Grant.

YHS also provides a comprehensive vocational/technical program, which showcases cutting edge technology training in computer networking and multi-media production. Through Digital High School and EAST (Environmental and Spatial Technology) grants, the school has provided access to current technology to all students. The school's strong commitment to technology has resulted in access to over \$1,000,000 in hardware and software for students. There are computers located in every classroom on campus and students have access to six computer labs. The EAST program affords students the opportunity to engage in community service projects using state of the art technology. In addition, over 30 laptop computers were purchased for teacher use.

The school also offers a wide range of other career education and Regional Occupational Programs, which includes automotive technology, welding, wood, drafting, agriculture, home economics, criminal justice, Emergency Medical Technician, desktop publishing, videography, photography and multi-media technology, and careers in education.

There is a comprehensive Fine Arts Program that includes a broad range of offerings, including theater arts, instrumental and choral music, and art.

The school has a highly competitive athletic program and a strong student activities program. Over 67% of students participate in co-curricular activities. The school fields varsity teams in 16 sports and added girls' golf in 2001. The school sponsors over 25 clubs and organizations that offer a wide variety of opportunities for students to get involved.

The resource, SDC, and SED programs provide assistance for those students who qualify for additional help. A Title I program provides assistance for qualifying students through a math or language lab or a Title I tutor. Additional assistance is available to all students through a peer-tutoring program. A peer mediation program and confidential counseling services are available to those students who are in need of other assistance. An Accelerated Math program provides an after school intervention opportunity for students who are in need of assistance in mathematics.

The ethnic breakdown of the student population at YHS is: White, 85%; Hispanic, 7.9%; Native American, 4.5%; Asian, 1.2%; African American, < 1%; Pacific Islander, <1% and Filipino, <1%. There are three Limited English Proficient students and five Fluent English Proficient students. Approximately 17 percent of the students receive free and reduced meals and five percent of the students are from families receiving AFDC. A survey of 2002 graduates showed that 55% planned to attend a two-year college, 25% planned to attend a four-year college, 15% planned to enter the work force, and 5% were joining the military.

Annual student test data has shown high levels of achievement with consistent growth on mean-scaled scores. On the nationally normed 2002 SAT9 test the students scored above the 50th percentile in all areas but one. The school earned an API rating of 710 in 2002. In 2001 the school had an API of 728, ranking 9 on a scale of 10 for the State and 7 on scale of 10 in the similar schools category. In 2000 the school made a 45-point jump in the API from 695 to 740. The school earned the California Distinguished School Award in 2001.

Significant Changes

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

1. Yosemite High School has experienced many successes in the past three years, including selection as a California Distinguished School.
2. With an \$11.76 million bond and approximately \$4 million in state matching funds, nearly all of the original open-space buildings have been converted into conventional classrooms, the library/media center and an administration building. Locker rooms were remodeled and enlarged; a student parking lot was added; preliminary work has begun for a new music classroom building and plans are complete to turn the existing music and drama classrooms into a performing arts center and drama classrooms. Nine new portables were added to the campus to

- house students until the building project is completed. Fencing and security gates added around the perimeter of the campus have had an impact on school safety, along with the installation of security cameras.
3. A new assistant principal/athletic director and a new special education coordinator were hired. Over the past three years fourteen new teachers have been added to the staff, along with a number of classified positions.
 4. Yosemite High School currently has a 4.75:1 student-to-computer ratio. There is at least one computer in every classroom that is available for student use and there are six computer laboratories. There are also computers available for student use in the library/media center. The Board adopted a computer competency requirement for YHS students during the 2001-2002 school year. Those who do not pass the proficiency test are enrolled in a class to learn to use computers.
 5. Individual departments have been modifying curriculum and instruction to address the state content standards. With the implementation of the High School Exit Exam, a strong emphasis has been placed on math and English/language arts. All departments articulate standards, course subject matter, and integrated units across grade levels.
 6. New courses added to the curriculum over the past three years include AP Studio Art, AP Statistics, IB Film, IB Music, NP Physics, Ag Biology, The Bible As Literature, ROP Desktop Publishing, EAST, Music Appreciation, Music Technology, Learning Strategies, and a two-year Algebra course. An AVID (Advancement Through Individual Determination) program was established at the beginning of the 2002-2003 school year.
 7. The special education program was re-organized during the 2002-2003 school year to begin a move towards an inclusion model. Most students are being mainstreamed into regular education classrooms in order to provide access to a rigorous curriculum in the least restrictive environment. Special education teachers and instructional aides continue to provide some services in RSP, SDC, and SED classrooms, and in study halls, but are now striving to provide more support for learning handicapped students in mainstream settings.
 8. An after-school and lunchtime math intervention program was implemented at the beginning of the 2002-03 school year utilizing the Accelerated Math program. Students receive additional assistance from math teachers to review areas they are having difficulty with and re-test on specific standards on a weekly basis.
 9. There has been a positive change in school climate and the culture of the organization over the past three years. There has been a tremendous sense of pride in the school and the community, which has positively affected the school climate. School and community pride in student achievement data, success of students in co-curricular activities, selection as a California Distinguished School, a celebration commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the school, and a visit by State Superintendent Delaine Eastin all have contributed to the creation of a positive feeling on the campus and in the community.
 10. There has been a marked change in graduation ceremonies. Student behavior at graduation had deteriorated to a low point in 1999. As a result of the concern from staff, parents, and the school board, a graduation committee consisting of

students, staff, and parents was formed to shape expectations and establish guidelines for future ceremonies.

11. Over the course of the past three years the school has made significant improvements in the area of student attendance and tardiness. With the addition of campus supervisors, there has been a decrease in the number of students out of class or late to class. Overall student attendance is up.
12. After twenty-five years of open campus, the campus was closed in the fall of 2000. The construction of a new cafeteria and parking lots enabled school administration, working cooperatively with student representatives, to devise a plan to close the campus to all but senior students, who were allowed to maintain senior privileges. Senior students in good standing are allowed to leave campus at lunch, while freshmen, sophomores, and juniors are required to remain on campus during the lunch period.

Description of Follow-Up Process

During the 2000-2001 school year a structure for the implementation of the school plan based on the Effective Schools Model was developed. School improvement teams, based on the Effective Schools research, were formed. Staff engaged in planning for implementation of the school action plan during Friday morning staff development time. Each improvement team developed and worked on tasks, and identified a team leader who participated on the school steering committee. The school steering committee, composed of teachers, administrators, and parent and student representatives from the School Site Council, met monthly to monitor progress on the school plan, develop the school staff development plan, and analyze student achievement data.

Follow-Up Process: Progress on Schoolwide Action Plan

Goal #1: To Focus All Students on Achieving the ESLRs.

A number of steps were taken to inform all stakeholder groups of the Expected Schoolwide Learning Results. Information on the ESLRs was included in the Student/Parent Handbook, on the school web site, in the school and community newspaper, and in brochures and literature about the school and its programs. Information on the ESLRs was also presented at Freshman Orientation and Back to School Night. A copy of the ESLRs is posted in each classroom on the campus. Staff is in-serviced on the ESLRs at beginning of the year meetings and new teacher orientation programs. The ESLRs have been aligned with the District content standards in all curricular areas.

The school staff development plan has included a variety of activities directed at alignment of curriculum, specifically focused on the District content standards and the ESLRs. Math and English departments went through an extensive curriculum mapping process to align content standards with the HSEE and SAT9 tests, identifying power standards and engaging in articulation with feeder schools. Department chairs from both

departments participated in training on development of performance standards and have taken a leadership role in their curricular areas. The math department has developed performance standards for all math courses, which are defined by departmental unit, semester, and final exams in all math courses. The math department is currently working on development of more frequent benchmark assessments to monitor student progress. The English department has defined performance standards through a writing portfolio, which includes a rubric and anchor papers, and is aligned to content standards. The portfolio is used at every grade level to assess District writing proficiency requirements for all students. Science and social science departments have begun work on development of performance standards with a goal of completing this task by the end of the school year.

Through the evaluation process, teachers are required to show alignment of instruction to the district content standards in course syllabi. Individual teachers, and in some cases departments, have developed a syllabus for each course which makes a clear connection between instruction and District content standards and the ESLRs. As new courses are developed they include a clear alignment with content standards and ESLRs. As part of the evaluation process teachers demonstrate alignment of daily lesson with the content standards and ESLRs. Evidence of instruction focused on attainment of the content standards and the ESLRS can be found in observation of classes and examination of lesson plans.

The school has made an effort to allocate resources toward student attainment of the ESLRs. A new site budgeting process was developed and implemented during the 2000-2001 school year, which includes a focus on the goals established in the school plan. Allocation of resources is more clearly focused on student achievement as evidenced by expenditures such as the Accelerated Math program. The Site Council uses the school plan as a template for approving all expenditures.

Goal #2: To Provide Support for At-Risk Students Achieving the ESLRs.

The school has a clear focus on providing support for under-achieving students. The Title I plan was revised and approved by the site council to more clearly allocate resources toward remediation of under-achieving students. Early identification of students, hiring a Title I teacher to staff math and language labs, and continued assistance for students through a Title I tutor and the peer tutoring program have provided assistance for students. The Accelerated Math program was implemented in the fall of 2002 and an after-school and lunch intervention program was started to assist students who are having difficulty in mathematics.

The emphasis in the special education program shifted to focus on a higher level of inclusion. More collaboration between regular education staff and RSP teachers and instructional aides has led to higher level of support in a mainstream setting.

Additional counseling services for at-risk students were provided. The addition a school resource officer, campus supervisors, and a peer mediation program has provided

additional support for those students who are at-risk of failure or dropping out. There has been an increase in the use of student study teams to provide an intervention for students who are having difficulty in classes.

A variety of staff development activities have focused on dealing with the needs of at-risk students including training on inclusion, 504 plans, student study teams, drug recognition, and suicide prevention.

Goal #3: To Provide a Positive School Climate, Which Leads to Improved Student Performance.

The new school plan focuses on improving communication, involving stakeholders in decision-making processes, and developing more avenues for parent involvement in the school. A number of new tools for communication were developed and implemented including a school voicemail system, e-mail, an electronic marquee, and a district web site. Input from students, staff and parents is solicited annually through surveys that are used as part of the school planning process. Surveys indicate a relatively high degree of satisfaction with leadership, stakeholder involvement, parent involvement, school climate, and safety. The school has made an effort to increase parent contacts by teachers. Surveys of staff and parents indicate a higher level of communication between teachers and parents.

There has been an increase in community partnerships and in the use of community volunteers on campus. Partnerships with the California Department of Transportation (CalTrans), Yosemite National Park, the Madera County Sheriffs Department, Sierra Telephone, local elementary schools, and others have enhanced educational opportunities for students. A parent volunteer program, organized and operated by a parent volunteer, was begun in 2002. Community members serve as volunteer campus supervisors, chaperones, guest speakers, senior board panel members, career day speakers, post-graduate planning night presenters, and in a variety of extra-curricular capacities.

Significant progress has been made in the areas of tardiness and attendance, but inconsistent enforcement of the school dress code continued to be a major area of concern. Enforcement of the dress code was established as a major priority at the beginning of the 2002-2003 school year and a plan for enforcement was developed and implemented.

Goal #4: To Develop an Assessment System That Leads to Improved Student Performance.

On a school wide basis, an annual review of student achievement data is conducted by the Steering Committee. This includes a review of all test data, API ranking, attendance performance, and survey results. An annual report of goals is developed which is shared with staff, Site Council, and the Board of Trustees. Staff received training on accessing and interpreting tests data on individual students for the purpose of identifying under achieving students. Teachers, for the purpose of targeting instruction, review High School

Exit Exam, STAR, IB and AP test data for each curricular area. Annual goals related to the school plan are developed and articulated to staff, Site Council, and the Board. Annual results of student achievement data are reported to the community through the local newspaper.

Departments have developed, or are developing, assessment tools to determine student attainment of the ESLRs and the content standards. Exit exams in math and social studies, writing portfolios and rubrics in English, and authentic forms of assessment in fine arts, vocational education, and other classes are examples of this. The senior project portfolio was developed to serve as an assessment of student attainment of the ESLRs.

Staff annually reviews student achievement data and develops strategies for improving student performance on a departmental or individual student basis.

Goal #5: To Provide Pathways That Meet The Post-Secondary Needs of All Students.

A number of new curricular offerings have been developed to provide opportunities for students to pursue their educational goals. New courses developed include: learning strategies, internetworking, ag biology, EAST, videography, math lab, language lab, music technology, music appreciation, IB music, IB film studies, ROP desktop publishing, AP studio art, AP statistics, and a two-year algebra course.

Departmental career fairs were implemented during the 2002-03 school year, which focus on careers centered on a particular curricular area. The first, centered on science, was held in November, with additional fairs scheduled throughout the school year.

Goal #6: To Ensure That All Students Are Technologically Proficient.

Technology courses were expanded to include computer technology, EAST, desktop publishing, and videography. A technology proficiency with a corresponding assessment tool was added to graduation requirements. Staff has been provided with a variety of trainings including Internet use, Power Point, Word, and Web Page Design. Teachers have developed a variety of lessons that utilize technology in instruction or require students to use technology.

Goal #7: Develop a School Wide Staff Development Plan.

An annual assessment of staff development needs is included in staff surveys. The steering committee uses this information along with student achievement data and the school plan to develop an annual staff development plan for a two-day in-service prior to the start of school and for Friday mornings. Staff participate in a variety of additional professional growth activities which may include school sponsored activities held outside the school day, during the day with substitutes provided, or through participation in conferences and workshops paid for by the district. Each individual teacher is required to complete a personal growth plan as part of the evaluation process.

The district started Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) and a Peer Assistance Review (PAR) programs to support professional growth of teachers. A new teacher orientation program was developed to provide training for new staff members who are hired into the district.

Goal #8: Annual Assessment.

An annual assessment of student achievement data is completed each year, the results reported to staff, Site Council, and the board, and annual school goals are developed.

Summary of Significant Progress

Yosemite High School has methodically and deliberately considered each of the goals established during the 2000 accreditation process; the result has been a concerted effort in improvement of an already robust and progressive educational program, faculty and staff, and facility. They have accomplished the following:

- Integrated the ESLRs into curriculum alignment and development, into remediation and resource processes, and into a wide variety of informational sources.
- Improved school climate through improving communication venues, providing access and participation by all stakeholder groups, and creating partnerships with community groups and organizations.
- Formalized a collection and review of assessment data.
- Enriched the curriculum, providing greater connection to post-secondary goals by students.
- Increased the use, availability and proficiency with technology as an educational tool.
- Created a methodical approach to staff development.
- Developed an annual review process of student achievement, tied to annual school goals.

Additional Recommendations

The review committee makes no additional recommendations. The school has taken its commitment to ensuring all students are prepared for life after high school, as well as providing an excellent opportunity to participate as part of the greater community as students at Yosemite High School.

It should be noted that Yosemite High School has already, at this writing, gone well beyond the progress noted in their mid-term report and verified in this report. This is a school committed to the self-improvement process.