

VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT

Western Association of Schools and Colleges

FOCUS ON LEARNING

FOR

Palo Alto High School

Palo Alto, California

Palo Alto Unified School District

March 2 – March 4, 2015

WASC Visitation Committee Members

Ms. Betina Graf
Attendance Case Worker
San Mateo U. H. S. District

Mr. Ignacio Ramirez
Principal
Waterford High School

Mrs. Mary Ann Shapiro
Educational Services
IEM

Mr. Joseph Mahood-Chair
Assistant Principal
Aragon High School

Chapter One

Student/Community Profile and Supporting Data

School Profile

Palo Alto is a community of about 64,000 residents, located 35 miles south of San Francisco and 14 miles north of San Jose in Santa Clara County. Leland Stanford Sr. established the city, when he and his wife Jane founded Stanford University in 1891 in memory of their son. Silicon Valley has its roots in Palo Alto: A large percentage of city residents are professionals in the high tech industry, education, healthcare, retail and service industries. Palo Alto features a mix of business and residential development.

Some demographic highlights:

- Palo Alto's population was 64,403 in the 2010 census
- The mean household income is \$163,661 (2012 CNN data)
- The median home price is \$1,225,000 (2012 CNN data)
- 74% of adults hold a four-year college degree
- 43% of adults over age 25 have at least one graduate degree

Parents in Palo Alto are among the most educated in the United States. More than 70% of parents hold both undergraduate and some type of graduate degree. Palo Alto HS is not in Program Improvement, nor does it receive Title 1 funds.

Palo Alto High School benefits from the strong support and active involvement of parents. Vital Palo Alto HS parent groups range from the Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) to the Parent Advocates for Student Success (PASS). Parents serve on Site Council, the leadership team of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) and on WASC focus groups. Parents are also involved in committees for large all-school functions such as the Club Day, Turkey Feast, Not in Our Schools Week, Spirit Week, Community Service Day, Career Month and Field Day.

Project Safety Net (PSN) is a grassroots network that formed in response to a suicide contagion in the community.

Youth Community Service (YCS) continues to engage youth in meaningful learning through community service. Young people build life skills and gain empathy for the needs of others through service.

Adolescent Counseling Services (ACS) was founded in 1975 with a mission to use counseling and preventive education to help teens and their families realize their emotional and social potential.

ACS also operates *Outlet* to build a safe and accepting community for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning (LGBTQQ) youth.

Palo Alto HS has benefited from several community-based organizations and businesses over the years. **The Brin/Wojcicki Foundation** has made sizeable contributions to the Media Arts Center and recently donated \$260,000 for the purchase of Chromebooks for our 9th and 10th grade classrooms.

Ed Camp Silicon Valley and **Ed Camp Lead Silicon Valley** foster professional learning of Bay Area educators.

TEDx Palo Alto High School (2014). The theme was "The Future of X." Speakers included current students, Palo Alto HS alums and international leaders and thinkers.

Science Research Projects foster student relationships with government agencies, businesses and the academic community in Silicon Valley.

Palo Alto High School Core Purpose and Values

The core purpose and values as our vision and mission statements.

Palo Alto HS Core Purpose: To affirm the potential of every Palo Alto HS student in an environment of support and inspiration, where people work together and lift each other toward great personal growth.

Palo Alto HS Core Values: Everyone values and benefits from our collective effort to grow and promote human potential. Guiding this effort is our belief in these core goals:

- Promote personal integrity and respect
- Provide a nurturing environment characterized by teamwork and collaboration
- Care for and believe in every individual
- Encourage creativity and independent thinking
- Understand that growth and learning are an essential part of life
- Acknowledge great effort and great fun in work and play
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Palo Alto Unified School District Schoolwide Learner Outcomes (SLO)

Teachers incorporate many SLOs in the classroom on a daily basis.

District-based Schoolwide Learner Outcomes:

To achieve our mission, the Board of Education has adopted the following competencies as the basis of what we expect our students to know and be able to do when they are graduated from PAUSD:

SLOs to Be Measured by Report Card Grades:

1. *Demonstrate knowledge of key concepts, principles, process, facts, and skills in the disciplines of language arts, history-social science, mathematics, science, physical education, visual and performing arts, foreign language, career-vocational education, and health / practical living skills.*

SLOs to Be Measured by the Rubrics:

2. *Effective Communication Through Listening, Speaking, and Writing*
3. *Strong Research Skills*
4. *Ability to Integrate Knowledge Among Disciplines*
5. *Reading with Understanding*
6. *Critical and Creative Thinking to Solve Problems*
7. *Effective Use of Technology*

DATA FROM THE SELF STUDY

I. Demographic Information/Student Enrollment/Grade Level Enrollment

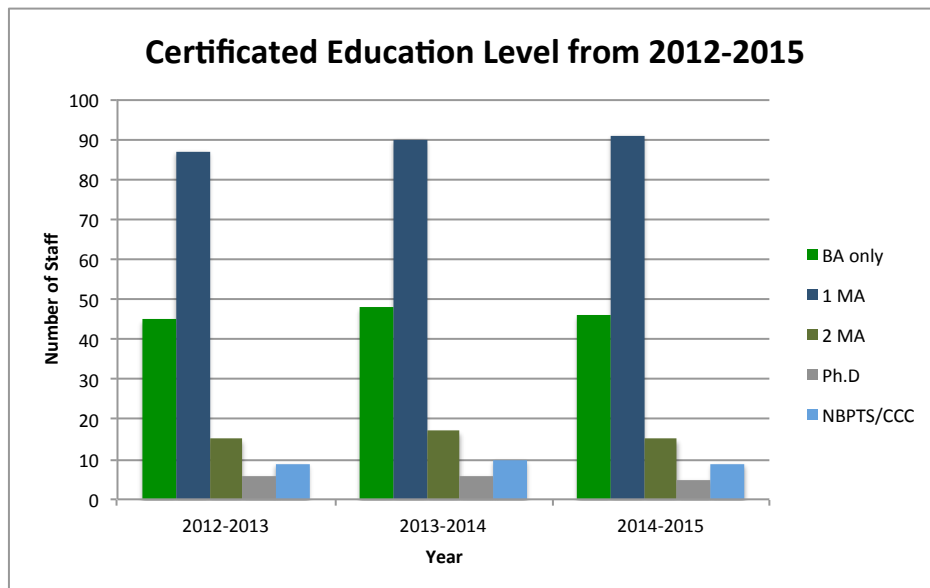
A. Staff Demographics

The Palo Alto High School faculty includes a principal, three assistant principals, one dean of students, an athletic director, a student activities director, two full-time school psychologists, one part-time school psychologist intern, six guidance counselors, a full-time librarian, one full-time library assistant, one part-time library assistant, and 205 teachers and other classified staff members.

Certificated Staff

A total of 138 certificated staff members serve the students of Palo Alto High School.

- 125 are classroom teachers.
- The certificated staff is not yet as diverse as the student population, but the school and district have made hiring underrepresented minority teachers a priority as per our district strategic plan goal C3.3: “Recruit and hire staff that reflects that diversity of our community.”
- The teaching staff is highly qualified, with 100% meeting ESEA requirements in 2014-2015.
- Nine of our staff are National Board Certified Teachers.
- The number of Palo Alto HS teachers over 30 with master’s or doctoral degrees is consistently around 60%, while at the state level this number is consistently around 18%.
- The average daily attendance rate for teachers at Palo Alto HS is 95%. (Source: PAUSD Human Resources Department)
- Palo Alto HS teacher demographics have been about 60% female and 40% male for the last four years.
- Palo Alto HS has made many new hires in recent years, due to staff retirements and a rise in the student population.

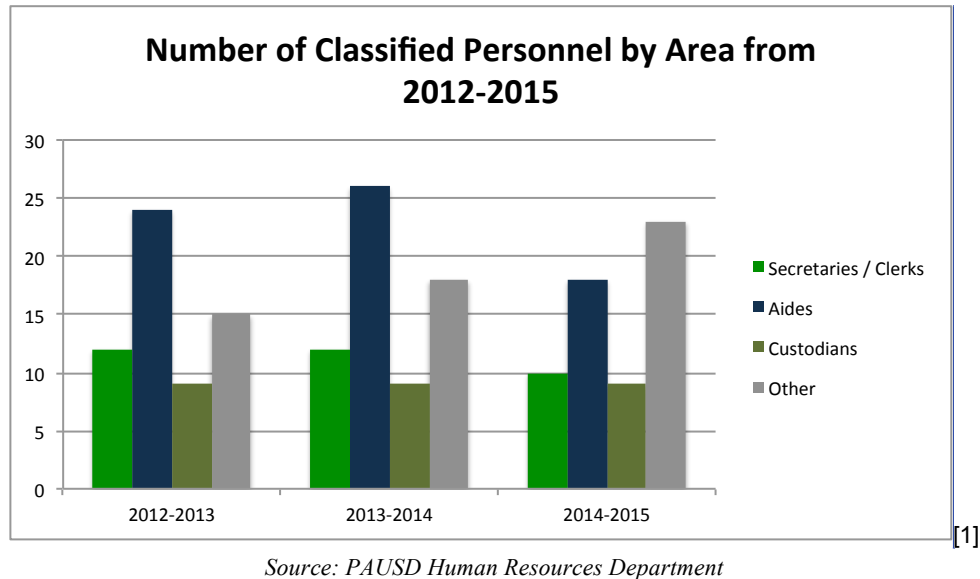


Source: DataQuest

Source: PAUSD Human Resources Office

Classified Staff

The classified staff at Palo Alto HS can be divided into three categories: (1) direct support for classroom teachers; (2) support for administrative functions; and (3) support for guidance services.



Professional Development at Palo Alto HS

Professional development is highly valued and extensive school and district resources have been dedicated to helping our staff learn and grow as professionals.

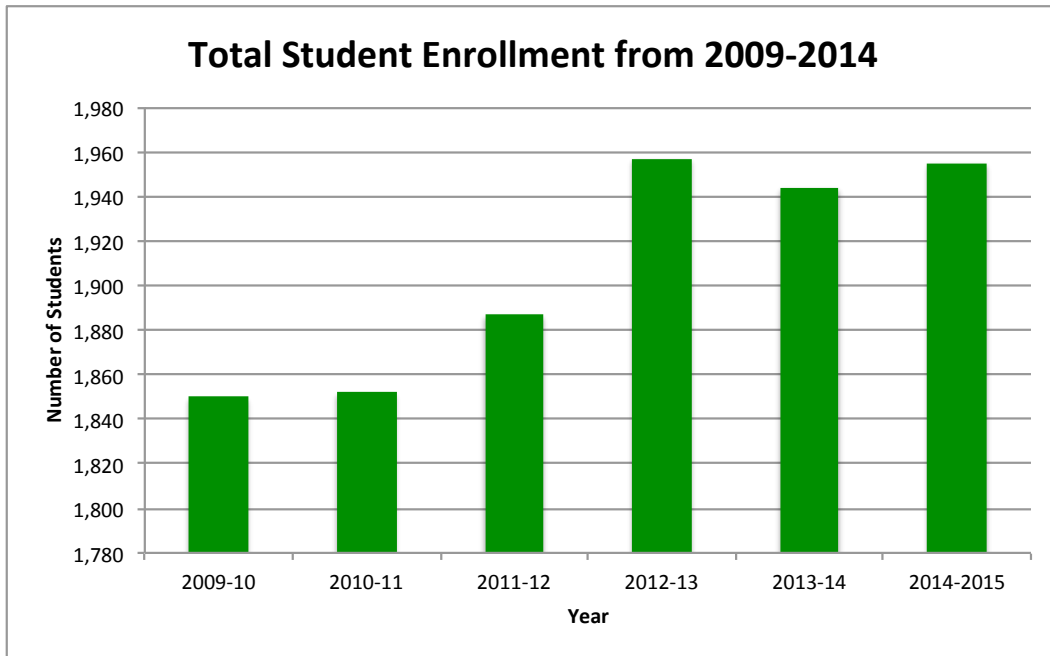
- Teacher initiatives include:
 - Attendance at a wide variety of professional conferences.
 - Teacher-driven staff development activities and presentations.
 - Freshmen English team research and implementation of heterogeneous grouping for all freshmen.
 - Research and implementation of new courses and pathways at Palo Alto HS.
 - Participation in district-sponsored learning opportunities.
 - Collaborative projects and curriculum development.
 - Volunteering to be part of WASC visiting committees.
- Among our schoolwide initiatives:
 - Bell schedule provides one hour of collaboration time per week for staff.
 - All staff are trained in Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR), an emergency protocol for suicide prevention.
 - Professional learning opportunities and ideas are discussed at staff meetings and promoted through all-staff emails.
 - Our administration models professional learning for staff by attending conferences, building partnerships with different organizations, serving on WASC visiting committees, and participating in other activities.
- District-based initiatives:
 - A new professional development policy for all district teachers requires 18 hours every two years to be documented on the website MyLearningPlan.com. Teachers can apply for a stipend for these hours and earn up to \$1,200.

- The district offers a wide variety of professional development opportunities, especially in the area of educational technology. Teachers can sign up for full-day or part-day trainings in areas such as classroom use of Google suite, SmartBoards, iPads, Schoology (LMS), iMovie and 2.0 tools.
- Outside the Box, a district initiative started in 2012, funded substitute teachers so PAUSD teachers could visit area high school with innovative learning pathways and programs. The intention of this initiative was to build similar learning experiences in PAUSD. Both the Social Justice and Sports pathways grew out of this district initiative.
- The district calendar includes two professional development days per school year. One is in the fall (usually site-based) and one in the spring (usually district-based).

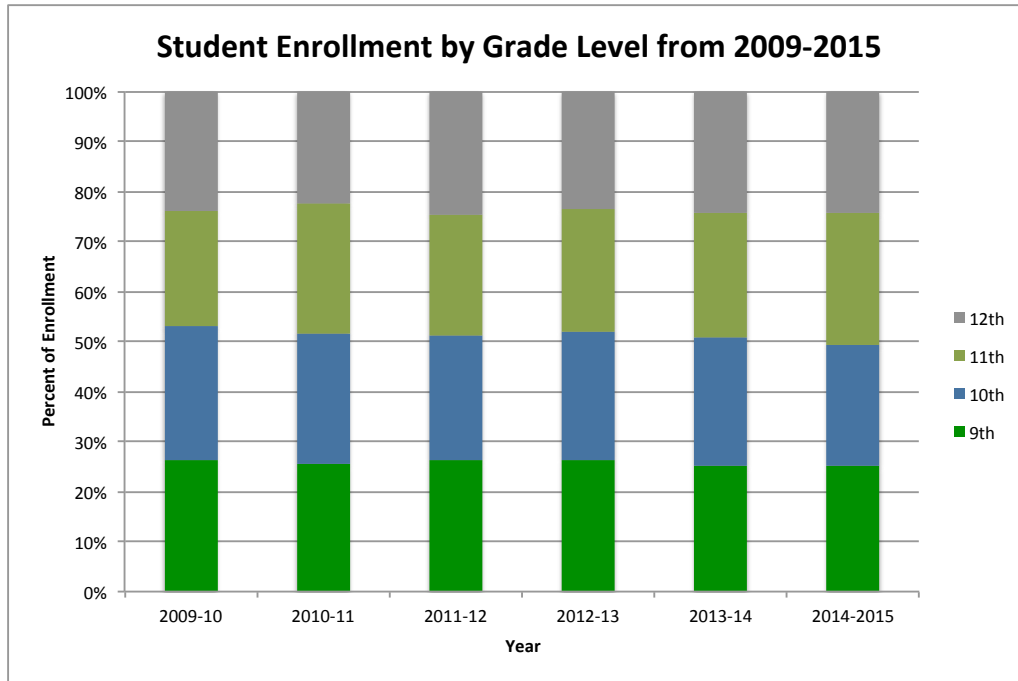
B. STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Enrollment Trends

Palo Alto High School currently enrolls just over 1,962 students in grades 9 through 12. Our enrollment has increased slightly over the previous two years and significantly over the last 15 years.

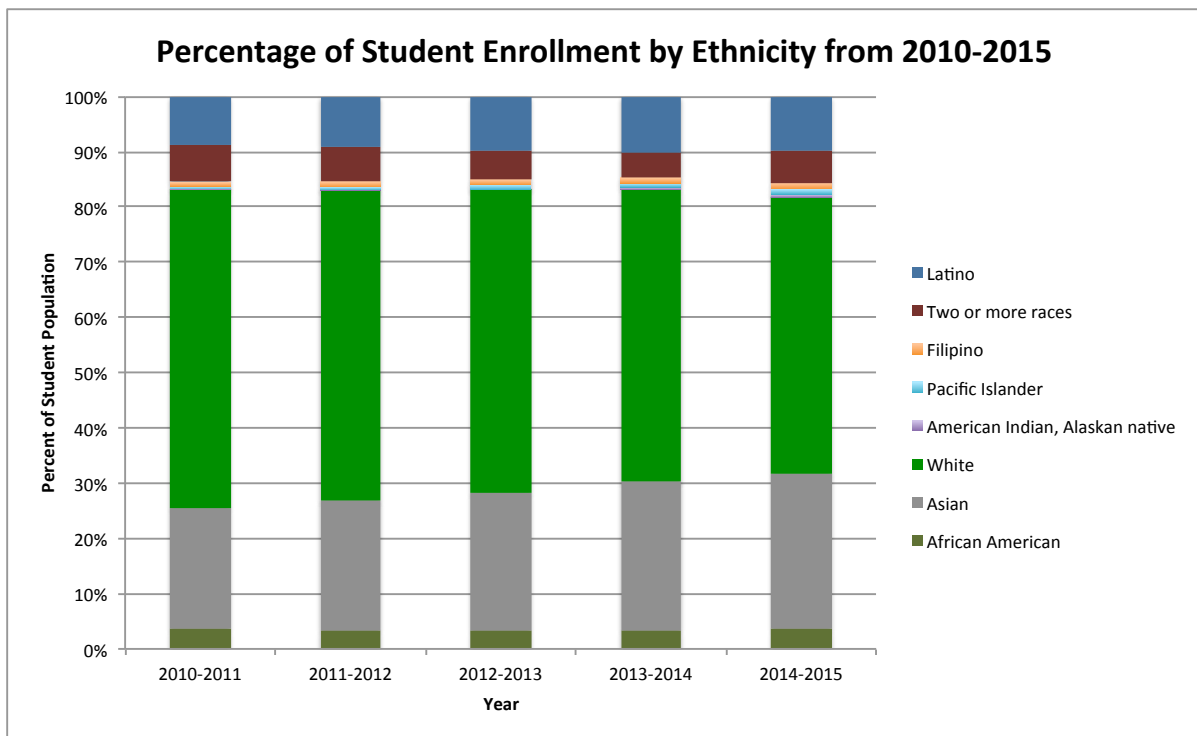


Source: DataQuest



Source: DataQuest

Enrollment by Ethnicity



Source: DataQuest

The school's student demographic data suggest that:

- African American student percentages at Palo Alto HS are higher than the county average, but lower than the state average.
- Latino student percentages are lower at Palo Alto HS than either the county or state average.
- Asian student percentages at Palo Alto HS are similar to the county average, but higher than the state average.
- White student percentages are higher at Palo Alto HS than either the county or state averages.

Significant Student Subgroups

Over the past three school years the school has seen the following trends in these subgroups:

- Voluntary Transfer Students (VTP): Have consistently made up between **6% - 6.5%** of Palo Alto HS's total school population.
- Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Students: Percentages have remained very constant between **7.1%** and **7.2%** of the student population.
- FOS or AVID: Have increased from **1%** of Palo Alto HS's population in 2012 to **2.9%** in 2014.
- Identified Gifted: Have decreased from **8%** in 2012 to **6.4%** of Palo Alto HS's population in 2014.
- Students with a 504 Plan: Have ranged between **7.1%** to **8%** of Palo Alto HS's population.
- Students with an IEP: Have consistently been about **10%** of Palo Alto HS's total school population.
- Special Day Class: Have been a very small number of students at Palo Alto HS, only **0.6% - 0.8%** of our total population.
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English Language Learners

Although a variety of languages are spoken on campus the school has identified a small number of English Language Learners (ELL). The majority of ELL students at Palo Alto HS are identified as fluent English proficient (FEP) or redesignated fluent English proficient (RFEP). The number of English language learners on campus was 2.4% of the Palo Alto HS population in 2011-2012, 3.7% in 2012-2013, and 1.9% in 2013-2014. The main languages spoken by our ELL population have been Spanish, Mandarin, or identified as "other non-English languages."

Student Participation Data in Co-Curricular Activities and Campus Life

Extracurricular activities give students far-reaching life experiences beyond the classroom. Palo Alto HS students participate in athletics, student leadership, the performing arts, an extensive student media program and a variety of student-created, faculty-advised clubs.

There are over 80 chartered clubs each year, with well over 85% of the student body participating in co-curricular activities.

Athletics

Palo Alto HS's is a member of the Santa Clara Valley Athletic League (SCVAL) and offers sports opportunities for girls and boys during all three seasons at the junior varsity and varsity levels. All seasons offer a "no cut" sport.

School Safety and Facilities

School safety is a critically high priority. Palo Alto HS upgrades, reviews, and presents a School Safety Plan to the PTSA, Site Council, the Board of Education and the state each year. At least twice a year, two major

emergency drills are conducted: Code Red (active shooter on campus) and Duck, Cover, and Hold (earthquake/emergency).

Traffic and pedestrian safety is another priority. With the help of the city of Palo Alto, Palo Alto HS administrators plan and communicate safe pedestrian and bike routes to school.

Facilities

First built in the early 1900s, the campus has expanded. In June 2008, the community voted to approve a \$378 million capital bond measure for district facility improvements. The master plan developed by the Facilities Steering Committee in 2009 called for the construction of a new two-story classroom building (800 building), a new Media Arts Center, a new Performing Arts Center, extensive library renovations, infrastructure improvements, and updates to the Tower Building. It also includes athletic facilities including a new stadium, concession stand and improvements to our playing fields.

Facility Needs

Outdated classrooms hamper effective instruction. Inadequate lab space for some science courses affects the quality of student learning.

The Tower Building houses the Guidance Department in what used to be the school library. The open space has been converted into cubicle-filled offices. The increased student support services provided by the College and Career Center have also stretched the seams of the current space. To ensure the emotional safety of our students on campus, we're planning to move the Guidance offices, including the College and Career Center, to the library building when the library renovation project is completed.

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE DATA AND RESULTS

Palo Alto High School has never been in Program Improvement nor have we ever been under any state- or federally-imposed programs of improvement for student achievement. Palo Alto HS does not receive Title I funds.

API Growth

Palo Alto High School has consistently met our schoolwide Academic Performance Index (API) for the last three years. However, we have not met all API student targets. Palo Alto HS's weighted three-year average API score is 903.

API: SCHOOL SUMMARY			
	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
API Base	897	900	906
API Growth	900	905	905
Growth in the API between previous and current year	3	5	-1
Target Met: Schoolwide	Yes	Yes	Yes
Target Met: All Student Groups	No	No	No
Target Met: Both Schoolwide and Subgroups	No	No	No
Statewide Rank	10	10	10
Similar Schools Rank	8	8	7
Program Improvement (PI)	Not receiving Title 1 Funds		

Source: DataQuest

Annual Yearly Progress (AYP)

Palo Alto HS has traditionally performed very well in many of the AYP criteria. However, in the past two years Palo Alto HS did not meet our AYP targets by failing to meet a small number of criteria. The graduation rate for the class of 2010-2011 did not meet AYP graduation rate goals in two groups: Socio-Economically Disadvantaged students, who had a graduation rate of 86.84%, and Students with Disabilities, who had an 89.71% cohort graduation rate. The target graduation rate was 89.75%.

In the 2012-2013 school year, Palo Alto HS's schoolwide math score of students at or above proficient was 87.6%, while the target rate was 88.7%. In 2011-2012 the graduation rate for African-American students, Socioeconomically Disadvantaged students, and Students with Disabilities were at 85%, 79.59% and 82.89%, respectively. While these scores are high, none of these cohort rates met target graduations rates for these three subgroups.

In 2013 Palo Alto HS again failed to meet AYP, but progress was made from previous years. In 2013 Palo Alto HS met our AYP criteria of a 95% participation rate and we also met our graduation rate goal of 90%. The area we were unable to meet was the percentage at or above proficient in English language arts. This year our White students, though they were at a 94.3% rate, did not meet the target of 100% to fulfill the AYP criteria.

Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs)

AMOs - English Language Arts

- Asian and White students regularly score at proficient or above in ELA by **90%** or more.

- African American student performance on the ELA has been very erratic; jumping from lows of **30%** to **40%** at or above proficient, to highs of **62%** to **66%** at or above proficient. The irregularity in this data may be due, in part, to small sample sizes.
- Latino students trended up to about **70%** at or above proficient in 2009-2010. However, since then these students have shown downwards trends in those scores.
- Socioeconomically disadvantaged (SED) students have generally scored between **40% - 60%** proficient or above in the last six years. SED students scored at **50%** proficient or above since 2009 with the exception of one year, 2012, when they scored **40%**.
- English Language Learners have generally scored **50%** proficient and above in the past 8 years. However, in 2011 and 2012 there was a marked drop in scores and only **21.7%** in 2011 and **42.9%** in 2012 were at proficient or above. By 2013, this number had climbed back to **52.2%**.
- Students with disabilities generally score between **30% - 42%** proficient and above. In 2013, **51%** of students with disabilities scored at proficient or above.

AMOs - Mathematics

- African American students have traditionally scored between **30% - 40%** proficient or above on mathematics tests. Two important years that produced outliers to this pattern were 2008 and 2010, when these students scored **58.8%** and **60%** respectively.
- **90%** or more of White and Asian students have scored at proficient or above since 2004 in mathematics.
- Latino students have consistently scored between **50%-60%** proficient and above. In 2012 there was a noticeable drop to **41.9%** in mathematics.
- Between 2007 and 2010, Socioeconomically disadvantaged students showed a general upward trend in proficiency, from **22.7% - 57.9%**. However, in 2013, the number of at or above proficient students dropped again to **47.2%**.
- The percentage of students with disabilities at proficient or above has remained fairly stable between **35%** and **40%**. In 2010 and 2013 these numbers increased to **46.7%** and **49.1%**.
- English language learner students reached a high of **84.9%** proficient and above in 2003 and have averaged around **64%** since. However, in 2012 only **30.4%** of the ELL students were at proficient and above in mathematics.
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Advanced Placement Program

Key AP data points.

- In 2009-2010, the state average for AP scores of 3, 4 or 5 was **58%**. The Palo Alto HS average in the same year was **73%**. The percentage of Palo Alto HS students in who scored a 4 or a 5 was **62%**.
- In 2010-2011, the state average for AP scores of 3, 4, or 5 was **58.2%**. In the same year at Palo Alto HS the average was **95%**. The percentage of Palo Alto HS students who scored a 4 or a 5 was **83%**.
- In 2011-2012, the state average for AP scores of 3, 4, or 5 was **58.9%**. In that same year at Palo Alto HS the average was **94%**. The percentage of Palo Alto HS students who scored a 4 or 5 was **81%**.
- In 2012-2013, the state average for AP scores of 3, 4, or 5 was **58%**. In that same year at Palo Alto HS the average was **95%**. The percentage of Palo Alto HS students who scored a 4 or 5 was **82%**.
- In 2013-2014, the state average for AP scores of 3, 4, or 5 was **59.7%**. In that same year at Palo Alto HS the average was **96%**. The percentage of Palo Alto HS students who scored a 4 or a 5 was **84%**.
- Enrollment in AP courses prepares students for university-level work. 972 students enrolled in AP classes in 2014. The total number of AP tests taken by all Palo Alto HS students was 1,380.

SAT/ACT Results

The percentage of students at Palo Alto HS who take the SAT and ACT is far above the county and state averages. Students also outperform both the county and state averages. During the three school years from 2010-

2011 through 2012-2013, over 92% of Palo Alto HS students who took the SAT scored 1,500 or better. During this same time, over 89% of Palo Alto HS students who took the ACT scored 21 or better.

Palo Alto High School's SAT and ACT results for the class of 2014 were consistent with previous years. Palo Alto HS's mean score for reading on the SAT was 643 (national mean 497), and for math 668 (national mean 513). The writing mean was 646 (national mean 487). On the ACT, the class of 2014 had a composite average of 28.9, compared to the national composite average of 20.9 (*Source: Palo Alto HS 2014-2015 School Profile*).

STUDENT PERFORMANCE DATA (TESTING)

CST – California Standards Test

As they often do on standardized tests, Palo Alto HS students performed very well on past CST exams. Many of our students perform at proficient and advanced levels while very few perform below or far below basic.

English and History

From 2011-2013:

- **80%** or more of Palo Alto HS students scored at proficient and advanced for all grade levels in the English Language Arts (ELA) CST.
- **10%** or less of Palo Alto HS students scored below or far below basic in ELA.
- Participation rates for ELA tests have been high: between **88.3%** and **97.4%**.
- **70%-80%** of Palo Alto HS students scored proficient or above on the CST World History exam.
- **84%-87%** of Palo Alto HS students scored proficient or above on the CST US History exam.

Math and Science

From 2011-2013:

- **81%-86%** of Palo Alto HS 10th grade students scored proficient or above on the CST Life Science exam.
- **86%-92%** of Palo Alto HS 9th grade students scored proficient or above on the CST Biology exam.
- **67%-86%** of Palo Alto HS 10th grade students scored proficient or above on the CST Chemistry exam.
- **68%-76%** of Palo Alto HS 11th grade students scored proficient or above on the CST Physics exam.
- Most students tested in Algebra 1 were 9th graders. Of these students, **64%-73%** tested at proficient or advanced.
- Of 9th grade students who took the Geometry test, **97%-99%** scored at proficient and advanced. Of the 10th grade students, **48%-64%** scored at proficient and advanced.
- The majority of the students who took the summative math test were 10th and 11th graders. Of the 10th graders, **96% - 100%** scored proficient or advanced. Of the 11th grade students, **93%-96%** scored proficient or advanced.
- The majority of the students who took the Algebra 2 exam were 10th and 11th graders. Of the 10th grade students, **92%-95%** scored at proficient or advanced. Of the 11th grade students, **22%-36%** scored below or far below basic.

CAHSEE – California High School Exit Exam

Over the last four years, well over 95% of Palo Alto HS students passed the CAHSEE on the first attempt. The percentage of Latino and African American students who pass the CAHSEE on the first attempt differ slightly from those of Asian and White students.

CELDT Testing

Palo Alto HS had no Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students in the 2003-2004 school year. By 2013-14, 26 Palo Alto HS students were classified LEP and attended Palo Alto HS on a district waiver. The majority of these students scored at the Early Advanced and Advanced levels, but two scored at the Beginning level. These results raise concerns about these students' abilities to engage and successfully participate in the full school curriculum.

Student Behavior and Discipline

The physical and emotional safety of students is a top priority at Palo Alto HS. The school maintains firm guidelines for student behavior on campus and at school events. The site discipline team includes three campus supervisors, three assistant principals, the dean of students and the principal. At the beginning of the school year, each student is provided with a planner that includes the student handbook, which addresses student behavior, school rules and consequences.

Suspensions at Palo Alto HS generally fall in one of three categories: 1) Caused, attempted, or threatened physical injury; 2) Possession, use, sale or furnishing a controlled substance, alcohol, intoxicant; or 3) Disruption and/or defiance.

A review of the suspension and expulsion data for Palo Alto HS reveals the following:

- Expulsions are rare at Palo Alto High School.
- From 2011-2012 to 2012-2013, suspensions decreased by 40%.
- The number of suspensions at Palo Alto HS is low for a comprehensive high school.
- Within this small rate, the suspensions that most concern us are:
 - Physical injury
 - Drugs and alcohol
 - Stealing
 - Defiance

In our 2009 WASC self-study, the school found only one area with an increase in suspension numbers over the last four years: drugs and alcohol. The relatively higher number of suspensions in this area reflected an increase in the number of students who attend school events under the influence of alcohol. In response to this trend, the school initiated the use of breathalyzers in 2007-2008. At first they were used on a case-by-case basis to confirm whether a student had been drinking, but today the school has implemented a policy of breathalyzing every student who enters a Palo Alto High School dance.

2011-2012 EXPULSION / SUSPENSION REPORT			
Year	Expulsion	Number of Students Suspended	Suspension Rate
11-12	0	47	2.4%
12-13	0	29	1.5%
13-14	0	17	0.87%

Source: DataQuest

SUSPENSION DATA BY ETHNICITY			
	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Asian	4	1	2
Black / African American	9	5	1
Latino	7	6	7
Two or More Races	4	2	0
Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander	3	3	0
White	20	11	6
In-School Suspension	0	1	1
TOTAL	47	29	17

Source: Infinite Campus

Attendance

PAUSD is a basic aid district and does not receive state funding based on Average Daily Attendance (ADA); attendance is an educational priority because it influences both the academic success of individual students and classroom instruction as a whole. Palo Alto HS has focused on consistent attendance being taken in all classes, on making sure appropriate consequences exist for students with attendance issues, and on examining the relationship between student attendance and academic achievement. Over the last several years, the school has experienced a rise in selective student truancy – that is, unexcused single-period absences.

While daily attendance numbers remain consistently high, the period truancy rate has risen to where approximately 55% of the student body has single-period unexcused absences in at least three or more classes.

The school has responded in the following ways:

- Teacher-initiated conversation with student.
- Comprehensive use of classroom-based practice to refuse submission of work that is due on the day or period of the selective absence.
- Twice-daily phone call home through Infinite Campus when either a day or period absence is noted.
- Teacher-initiated phone call home to highlight and educate parents about the significance of selective truancy as it relates to stress and skill development.
- Broader use of classroom attendance contracts, with administrative involvement to communicate to students and parents a more complete understanding of the importance of routine daily class attendance.
- Written notification of absenteeism sent home to parents upon the student's third, fourth, and fifth truancy.

- One-on-one conversation between the individual student and the grade-level administrator or guidance counselor upon the third selective truancy.
- Assignment of Saturday School for students who have four unexcused absences in one particular class.
- Online attendance monitoring in the classroom so that teachers provide an immediate response to student truanancies.
- Teacher access to semester and yearlong attendance records through Infinite Campus.

Graduation

The vast majority of Palo Alto HS students graduate and continue on to study at institutions of higher learning. However, from 2011-2013 we noticed a slight downward trend in our cohort graduation rate, from 96.4% - 93.5%. Obviously, this is a concern we must address. The district has also implemented new graduation requirements that mirror the CSU/UC “A-G” college entrance requirements. Palo Alto HS will work to closely monitor student progress towards graduation and to raise our overall cohort graduation rate.

CSU/UC A-G Eligibility

Most Palo Alto HS students meet the CSU/UC “A-G” college entrance requirements upon graduation. Students formally begin to learn about the CSU/UC “A-G” eligibility requirements in their freshman year Advisory classes (although many students now report learning about them in middle school). Students revisit and revise this four-year plan every year in Advisory. Preliminary data from our district office shows overall “A-G” completion rates for 2013-2014 Palo Alto HS graduates at **84.8%**.

Chapter Two Progress Report

WASC Accreditation History

2014-15: Current Self Study

2012: Midterm Report and Visit

2009: Six year Accreditation with a three year review

Our administration team and the Ed Council jointly oversee the ongoing WASC improvement work. Since the last full WASC visit, the administration team expanded its membership to include the principal, three assistant principals, the dean of students, a teacher-advisor coordinator, the student activities director, the athletic director and the School Climate TOSA (Teacher on Special Assignment). This administration team meets weekly. Ed Council meets twice a month and includes the administration team, nine Instructional Supervisors (department chairs), a Professional Learning TOSA, a Digital Learning TOSA, the AVID site director, WASC Coordinator/Blended Learning TOSA, the lead school psychologist and the teacher librarian.

Research confirms that a key benchmark of effective school leadership is the daily performance of its professional staff. The Palo Alto High School staff brings a wealth of experience, training and talent to its critical task of educating our young people. Palo Alto HS's many successful graduates and awards are a testament to their success. Although leadership transitions and uncertain funding climates can challenge any organization, Palo Alto High School has worked steadily to advance its 2009 goals. The 2014-2015 WASC process has renewed our staff's commitment to authentically reflect on and improve our daily work towards excellence for all students.

SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS

PART 1: CHANGES IN THE ORGANIZATION

Several changes in leadership have taken place at our school since 2009. The principal who led the development of our 2009 WASC report resigned unexpectedly in January 2010 and took a position outside of our district at the end of the school year, due in part to several controversial disciplinary cases that provoked tension and conflict within the school community. One assistant principal resigned and another was hospitalized with a short-term medical disability. Other administrators and teacher leaders stepped in to help where needed.

After the district promoted an assistant principal from Gunn High School in July of 2010, the 2009 WASC school improvement plan was temporarily suspended in order to give teachers time to focus on and adjust to the newly adopted bell schedule. Schoolwide action teams (known as PLCs) were disbanded. Departments continued to address alignment during collaboration time, but annual progress varied greatly.

In June of 2013, the school community searched and found a new principal Mrs. Kim Diorio who has fostered an environment of emotional safety, collaboration, teacher leadership and continual professional learning. The 2014-2015 WASC self-study served as a further catalyst for growth and stability, as staff came together across the school to discuss what is most important for our students now and for the next six years.

PART 2: CURRICULUM CHANGES

Palo Alto HS changed its school day schedule in 2010-2011. The school moved from two block days per week to a four-day block schedule. We also adjusted school hours to begin and end at the same time each day, with an early release for students on Thursdays. The Tutorial period was moved to Tuesday after students and teachers indicated that tutorial assistance would help students more if held earlier in the week. Weekly staff collaboration time is now on Thursdays following our weekly advisory period.

Palo Alto HS teachers continue to align curriculum and instruction to meet the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), with help from both professional learning days and informal collaborations.

During the 2013-2014 school year, all teachers were asked to adjust at least three lessons to prepare for the 2014-2015 implementation of the CCSS. Many departments, including Mathematics and English, have extensively realigned their curriculums to address the new standards. The science department has also begun adjusting to meet the new Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), partnering with Foothill Community College to develop innovative course offerings and improve articulation to Foothill Community College in STEM fields.

The district's new full-inclusion program is designed to improve learning outcomes for *all* students. The program pairs Special Education and regular education teachers to support Special Education students in regular classrooms. Teachers chosen for this program attend district training meetings and receive support from the Instructional Supervisor for Special Education and other district personnel.

The advisory curriculum is revised and improved constantly. The Teacher Advisor (TA) Coordinator solicits feedback from the TAs after each weekly advisory class, and student feedback is also collected in the form of pre- and post-advisory lesson assessments. Year-end surveys are given to parents, students and TAs. This feedback has led to major changes, such as the addition of embedded individual meeting time between student and TA, three new advisory lessons for post-high school planning, team-building activities for advisory groups, and the restructuring of the October College and Career Awareness Day and the March Career Month.

PART 3: PROGRAM ENHANCEMENTS AND INITIATIVES

Communication

Schoology and Infinite Campus are among the new communication tools added at Palo Alto HS since the 2009 WASC self-study. Students and teachers now communicate more quickly, and parents can see student grades and attendance information as well as receive messages through Infinite Campus.

Additional CTE Pathways

Palo Alto HS's newly expanded concept of Career Technical Education now includes pathways for the performing and media arts, social justice, sports careers and computer science. District initiatives such as "Out of the Box" have helped the new social justice and sports career pathways get up and running. Both of these innovative, teacher-created programs have won attention from Palo Alto HS stakeholders and have been mentioned in student and national publications such as Ed Source and an Ed Weekly webinar.

Palo Alto HS's extensive performing arts program has reinvented itself as a CTE pathway by coordinating with Foothill Community College, a premier community college for the arts. Palo Alto HS's new Visual and Performing Arts complex is expected to open for the 2016-2017 school year.

Our computer science pathway has been aligned with course offerings from Gunn High School's successful program. Palo Alto HS has supported "Hour of Code" and offers the "Girls who Code" club to increase exposure and diversity among computer science students. The local software company Palantir now offers additional computer science education to Palo Alto HS's underserved students.

Guidance

The Teacher Advisor (TA) program continues to grow and evolve as our enrollment grows. Students with IEPs are now fully included in the TA program and have both a TA and a case manager who work with them to reach college and career readiness goals. A TA Steering Committee is made up of TAs, the co-coordinators of the program, guidance counselors, and an administrator; it works on curriculum, issues, and ideas brought up by teacher advisors for the benefit of students and the program. Last year, one community member helped us change the way students and teacher advisors are grouped by designing a computer algorithm that paired students with

TAs based on survey answers. The transition this year was smooth and the advisory groups are more balanced than in the past.

Funds from the PTSA have added two guidance counselors since 2009. There are four guidance counselors who loop with a class and one Outreach Counselor who focuses on underserved and first generation college-bound students. The Outreach Counselor is particularly helpful in making connections with our Spanish-speaking parents by hosting parent nights in Spanish to discuss academic requirements and college readiness. In addition, the college advisors started a first generation college-bound group that meets regularly based on students' graduation date. The 2014-2015 school year marks the second year for the Spanish-speaking parents and First Generation student groups.

Testing Center

The Testing Center is a valuable resource for students and staff. It was created in 2010-2011 to provide an alternative testing environment for students with IEPs (Individual Education Programs) or for any other student who wants to take exams in a smaller or separate setting. The Special Education department also provides reading and note-taking services by instructional aides for students who require them based on their IEPs.

Improved Learning Spaces

New and updated learning spaces have been added at Palo Alto HS in the past four months. The 800 building houses the Math and History/Social Studies Department. The Media Arts Center (MAC) brings together all six student publications, video production, graphic design and photography, as well as some freshman and sophomore English classes. Currently building is underway to construct a 580-seat Performing Arts center which is hoped to be open in August 2016.

Library

The library added an additional part-time staff member, which allows the library to extend its hours until 5:00 pm every day and give students more time to use books, textbooks and technology and meet to complete group projects.

California Common Core Standards stress research and critical thinking for all types of media. Toward that end, the library has created LibGuides like "Palo Alto HS Citation Information" and "High School Research" aimed at helping students find and evaluate information from different sources.

School Climate

Palo Alto HS is committed to improving school climate and has established initiatives and partnerships to build a positive and healthy school climate:

- Not In Our Schools (NIOS) - A weeklong celebration at Palo Alto HS (based on the national organization of the same name) that works to end bullying while creating safe and inclusive schools.
- Camp Everytown/Camp Unity - A four-day leadership retreat for selected students and teachers that builds self-identity and community.
- Unity Day - A national anti-bullying day with a multitude of activities and discussions.
- Challenge Success - A partnership with the Stanford Graduate School of Education, this program works with high-achieving schools like Palo Alto HS to foster healthy students and identify and eliminate the causes of student stress.
- School Climate Team - Our first school climate team began in the 2014-2015 school year and is comprised of students, a teacher-leader, two administrators and parents. The School Climate Committee participated in a Stanford Design School "School Culture Hack-a-thon" in winter 2014, then implemented a homework discussion and gathered feedback on student struggles around homework and how to better facilitate student / teacher homework discussions.
- School Climate TOSA - This position was established in January of 2014 and provides a dedicated staff member work to build empathy and a more collaborative culture at Palo Alto HS for all stakeholders: students, parents, support staff, teachers and administration.

- Student Shadowing - Lead by the School Climate TOSA, a group of teachers and administrators shadowed students for a day. This activity built empathy while gathering data about student experiences at Palo Alto HS.
- Restorative Justice Path - Palo Alto HS is piloting this new alternative restorative justice path for violations in academic honesty during the 2014-2015 school year. This pilot is led by our School Climate TOSA.

Technology Integration

Palo Alto HS's technology department has been working hard since 2009 to keep up with classroom demand and the evolution of educational technology. For many years, a Technology Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) helped our two full-time technology specialists and our academic support specialist update, order and coordinate the hardware and software needs on our campus. The district changed student information systems from SASI to Infinite Campus in 2009. In 2010, WiFi was made available to all students and guests on our campus, and the district adopted Schoology as our Learning Management System (LMS). In 2011, the district introduced limited access to Google Apps for Education (GAFE) in our schools.

Our Technology TOSA position evolved into the role of Digital Learning Specialist in 2014, with a greater focus on training teachers and helping them with technology in their classrooms. With the opening of our new Media Arts center and an overall influx of devices, we added a full-time technology support specialist to our staff. Technology oversight now resides with our Dean of Students, who has a high level of expertise in this area. The district hired a new Chief Technology Officer in 2014, who continues to support our work.

Board of Education Approved Homework Policy

In November 2011, the district invited interested parents, students and staff to participate in a homework committee that would come up with recommendations for a new district homework policy. Committee members came from elementary, middle and high school levels across the district. The committee met six times between November 2011 and May 2012, with members doing additional work and research between meetings. The recommendations were presented to and approved by the Board of Education on June 6, 2012.

PART 4: NEW POSITIONS

The following new positions have been created since 2009:

- Outreach Counselor - A specialist for first generation and underrepresented minority students, working closely with the College and Career Center, Guidance department, Teacher Advisors, and AVID students.
- Guidance Counselor - One new counselor has been added, so that a guidance counselor is now assigned to each class: freshman, sophomore, junior, senior.
- Mental Health Staff - Palo Alto HS added one new school psychologist, for a total of two full time school psychologists. Palo Alto HS also has an Educationally Related Mental Health Services (ERMHS) therapist on site. Adolescent Counseling Services (ACS) has increased the number of interns on our campus from four to five and continues to play an important role at Palo Alto HS.
- Dean of Students - This administrative position has been reintroduced at Palo Alto HS as California's education budget has improved. The position is funded 50% administrative and 50% TOSA (with a need to become a fully administrative position).
- School Climate TOSA - New in 2014, this position is meant to foster communication and positive school climate and culture.
- Two Professional Learning TOSAs - These teachers support other teachers and teacher leaders in improving instructional practice and coaching.
- Digital Learning TOSA - This position helps teachers with the integration of hardware, software and other digital technology.

- Blended Learning TOSA - Funded by the District, the Blended Learning TOSA organizes professional development for teachers new to the program, provides on-site support, and most importantly, recruits new teacher-learners for the blended learning program.
- Classified Support - Palo Alto HS has increased classified staffing for the library, testing center, writing center, campus supervisor, community service and career advisor offices and our custodial staff.

PART 5: PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

With the weekly collaboration time included in our new school schedule in 2009, and with support from administration and our district, professional learning has been identified as a key element in Palo Alto HS culture. Many Palo Alto HS teachers and staff now take part in enhanced professional learning opportunities.

In 2014, members of the Ed Council, followed by all teachers, were trained in a model of data analysis for continual school improvement, using the framework presented in Laura Lipton and Bruce Wellman's book, *Got Data? Now What?* While the math department is skilled in using data to adjust their instruction, other departments benefitted from the professional learning and skills practice. As more teachers learn to analyze student data, we intend to expand the process to include students in conversations about their own performance data.

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE SCHOOLWIDE ACTION PLAN OF THE 2009 WASC SELF-STUDY

Goal 1: Horizontal and Vertical Curricular Alignment - Teachers will work together in the best interest of each and every student at Palo Alto HS.

Schoolwide Progress

Some departments at Palo Alto HS have made great progress in this area, while other departments have not yet fully aligned their curriculums to meet this goal. This continues to be an ongoing challenge for our school. The highlights below show the positive steps taken since the last WASC self-study in 2009.

Department Progress

Career Technical Education (CTE)

- Worked on common course requirements and rubrics for presentations.
- Restructured courses in computer science to align with course offerings at Gunn High School.
- Media Arts aligned with middle school programs.

English

- Aligned gradebook categories and weighting of grades.
- Established weekly collaboration teams for each grade level.
- Identified team teacher leaders for each grade level.
- Used Dropbox and Google Drive by grade level/course to share curriculum and instructional materials.
- Calibrated essays at least once per year, more frequently for the ninth grade team, including shared grading practices and discussions.
- Developed common diagnostic exams and rubrics; working on developing appropriate poems and short stories to use in grades nine and ten.
- Created common assessments, common rubrics and pacing guides in grade nine. Tenth grade is in progress.

- Developed a writing pacing guide aligned to CCSS for grade nine, which was shared with all departmental teachers.
- Used Common Core categories for gradebook in grade nine.
- Used release time for grade nine teachers to work on alignment with CCSS.
- Created a Writing Center to support students with their English classes and offer writing help across the curriculum.

Guidance

- Created and refined Advisory lesson plans, scope and sequence of curriculum.
- Increased individual time for conferences between advisees and advisors.
- Collecting pre- and post-assessment data before and after lessons to better inform our instruction.
- Created an Advisory program steering committee.
- Developed the PAUSD Guidance Logic model, outlining guidance services for all students within PAUSD.
- Formal job description for teacher advisors created and approved by district Human Resources.
- Implementation of “Evaluation of Guidance Services” student survey at end of senior year.
- Developed and refined schoolwide College Awareness Day in October.
- Four grade-level counselors now loop with students.
- Increased collaboration between counselors.
- Added more student workshops during tutorial, lunch and after school to help with post-secondary planning.
- Began training and professional learning around Response to Intervention at the high school level and best practices for Tier 2 and Tier 3 levels of support.

History/Social Science

- Aligned curriculum and projects within grade level teams.
- Used collaboration time to share instructional strategies.

Living Skills

- Aligned curriculum with Gunn High School and summer instructors.
- Differentiated assignments to better assure student success.

Library

- Developed the online collaboration resource LibGuides to support assignments and research across all teachers of the same subject.
- Collaborated with teachers to find common online resources that are accessible to students 24/7. For example, ABC-CLIO databases can be used for many assignments in the history/social science department.
- Developed a library orientation for all freshman English students.

Math

- Worked on alignment with science. For example: commonalities when teaching dimensional analysis, use of logs in Alg 1 and Geometry, and use of integrals later in the year in AP Physics.
- Aligned courses with CCSS (Alg 1, Alg 2, Geometry and Pre-Calculus).
- Used release time to work on CCSS curriculum mapping.

Physical Education

- Developed and implemented a common syllabus.
- Developed a common weightlifting exam (summative assessment).
- Aligned all courses to meet the common physical fitness standards.

Science

- Aligned course descriptions with math lanes.
- Developed at least two common assessments/labs in all courses per semester.
- Increased alignment in biology and chemistry.
- Created a list of grade level skills.
- Increased articulation with feeder middle schools and met with Gunn High School teachers to discuss alignment.
- Utilized release time to work on NGSS.

Special Education

- Special Education Academic Support classes are all AVID-based, with emphasis on WICOR strategies to support students (writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization and reading).
- Co-teaching classes have resulted in greater inclusion on campus.
- New special programs and support classes are now offered (Therapeutic Elective Class, Therapeutic Support Service, Academic Communication, Futures, Alternative Pathways, Fundamentals of Writing, Language Arts Lab, Cognitive Planning, Careers).
- Improved communication with general education teachers.
- Greater Special Education and general education teacher collaboration.
- Transition meetings for all incoming ninth graders in the spring improved articulation between high school and middle school teachers.

Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA)

- Updated technology practices to include online assessments.
- Aligned skills-based assessments with Gunn High School and feeder middle schools.
- Alignment with middle schools is regular and well-articulated (concerts, shows, festivals, field trips).

World Language

- Increased use of technology in instruction by all teachers.
- Increased the use of authentic resources.

Goal 2: College Readiness and Post-Secondary Planning - Palo Alto HS will prepare each and every student for college and each and every student will graduate from Palo Alto HS with a robust and individual plan for his or her education after high school

Schoolwide Progress

Palo Alto HS was able to complete many schoolwide changes to meet this goal successfully. Special recognition must be given to the Guidance Department for their excellent leadership and willingness to make changes to their program to reflect best practices. While Palo Alto HS has made great strides with this goal, we still see evidence of the achievement/opportunity gap, a continuing issue of concern.

Department Progress

Career Technical Education

- Instructional Supervisor position created in 2014-2015.
- Developed new courses - Sports Nutrition, Interior Design II.
- Developed new pathways - Media Arts, Performing Arts, Sports Career.
- Common rubrics developed for presentations.

English

- American Classics 11 Honors course now receives weighted credit by the University of California system.
- California State University-approved expository reading and writing class called “Reading Between the Lines” offered to all junior and senior students.
- New course offerings include Comedy of Literature and Escape Literature.
- Collaborated with faculty from other departments to create CTE pathways for Sports Career, Media Arts programs and Social Justice.
- Several English teachers have piloted 20% projects in their classrooms.

Guidance

- Updated the advisory calendar to include more individual teacher-student meeting time, pre- and post-assessment for some advisory topics, and the inclusion of more relevant topics.
- Increased number of guidance counselors from 2.6 FTE to 5.0 FTE.
- One brown bag lunch per month by grade level.
- Created an Outreach Counselor position.
- Refined Advisory lesson plans and the scope/sequence of Advisory curriculum.
- Created Teacher Advisor steering committee.
- Added a formal job description for teacher advisors, leading to greater consistency.
- Increased hours for College and Career Center personnel.
- Inclusion model - Special Ed students attend advisory period.
- Restart classes in math.
- Credit recovery opportunities.
- Blended and online learning courses.
- AVID system implementation.
- First generation support.
- Increased parent nights and parent education events for Spanish-speaking families.
- District adopted “a-g” grad requirements and established an alternative graduation plan.
- All classes are now “a-g” (except PE, some CTE and NCP classes).
- Advocated for additional summer school offerings to meet credit recovery needs.
- Credit recovery programs within the school day.
- Essay workshop and writing center.
- Increased parent workshops and education events (such as College Forum night and Students with Special Needs night).
- Going electronic with Common Application and transcript to improve efficiency.
- Going electronic with course registration to improve efficiency.
- Distribution of student schedules one week prior to the start of school so adjustments can be made, if needed, before the school year starts.

History/Social Science

- Developed benchmark assessments (tests, projects).
- Citation styles taught in all courses.
- Research and writing skills taught in all courses.

Living Skills

- Teachers use equity and social justice when exploring social identity. In Living Skills, teachers strive to illustrate the power that each individual has to positively enhance the lives of others in their own sphere of influence.
- Teachers help their students with reading and writing proficiency, with discussion and dialogue competency, and with knowledge of a variety of topics that will help students in a college setting, from healthy emotional and social choices to comprehensive sexual education.

Math

- Increased the number of students in Advanced and Honors lanes.
- More students are graduating with at least one AP math class.
- In the 2013 math EAP results, 63% of our juniors were already college ready in math (the second-highest rate of all Bay Area schools) and another 24% were conditionally ready.

Physical Education

- Developed a lifelong fitness plan for all students.

Science

- More students have completed three or more years of science.
- Developed the Conceptual Physics class (UC ‘D’ approved).
- Astronomy course was revised so it is now a UC ‘D’ approved Astrophysics course.
- All science courses now meet UC “a-g” criteria.

Special Education

- Inclusion model - Special Education students attend advisory.
- Reduced the number of SAI classes.
- Developed alternative pathways program.
- Established a testing center for both Special Education and general education students.

Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA)

- Expanded college and career outreach, with local, national and international artists visiting our classrooms. We visit and host college and career colleagues.
- New course offerings, Theater 4 Honors and Advanced Painting and Drawing, can be taken for CTE credit.
- Development of a Performing Arts pathway.

World Language

- Added course offerings in Spanish for Spanish Speakers level 1 and 2.
- District graduation requirement beginning with the class of 2016 aligns with CSU/UC “a-g” entrance requirements.
- Teachers encourage students to continue their language studies.
- Japanese 1 teacher works collaboratively with Special Education department to support students with IEPs in his classroom.

Goal 3: Support for All Students - The goal that each and every student is supported in his or her personal and academic work.

Schoolwide Progress

Palo Alto HS is a safe and welcoming school. A cornerstone of their work in this area has been to foster and strengthen community partnerships by working with Camp Everytown, Project Safety Net, the Heard Alliance (Stanford Psychiatry), Outlet and the Palo Alto Medical Foundation. Since the last self-study, the community has been rocked by a suicide contagion, which resulted in greater focus on mental health and the social and emotional well-being of the students. With many students reporting feelings of depression and anxiety, a three-tiered guidance system has been put to the test and has allocated extra resources to meet the growing mental health needs of all students.

The Special Education department has also undergone a major restructuring to better meet student needs. The abandoned our “study skills” classes, which acted more like study hall, and fine-tuned the curriculum and instruction in our Academic Support classes to better personalize learning, using the AVID WICOR (Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, Organization, Reading) concepts. We have introduced specialized programs to better meet the emotional and cognitive needs of *all* our students, such as our Therapeutic Elective class, Futures Program and Therapeutic Support Services. Most importantly, we increased partnerships with general education teachers by adopting a more inclusive approach called co-teaching. Special Education teachers have been able to share their knowledge on differentiated instruction to make the curriculum more accessible to a greater number of students.

The school recognizes a large opportunity gap given the considerable income disparities of our families. For instance, about 7-9% of our students qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch. We have taken a systemic approach to ensuring equity for all students. We developed a “Scholarships” program, run discreetly through the grade-level guidance counselors, to assist students who need help paying for items such as SAT/ACT fee waivers, college applications, yearbooks, PE uniforms, dance and prom tickets and athletic events tickets. Our Outreach Counselor and main office keep additional snacks on hand for any student in need of food.

While Palo Alto HS is working to provide an equitable experience, it should be noted that many of our families have the good fortune to be able to hire outside professionals to enhance their student’s learning experience. As the current Board of Education policy is written, most of these students are in the position to put the grades from outside institutions on our transcript. This creates a large structural inequality for the students who don’t have the financial resources to take outside courses. And while Palo Alto HS provides free peer tutoring through the Academic Resource center, free teacher tutoring through the Math Resource Center, and extra help in the library (especially around finals time), many students in our school can hire professional tutors. Palo Alto HS has made some progress to ensure equity in our classrooms, but we acknowledge that there is more work to be done.

We have increased the number of courses that are “a-g” approved on campus and taken some measures to open access to rigorous curriculum, particularly within the English department. The school has developed ways to improve credit recovery and to advocate for improvement within our summer school program to better meet student needs.

2012 MIDTERM VISITING COMMITTEE IDENTIFIED AREAS OF GROWTH

The following recommendations were given to Palo Alto HS by the midterm visiting committee in 2012.

- All Palo Alto HS courses should be open to all students, and more students should complete the “a-g” requirements. There is a significant gap between Asian and white students on the one hand and African-American and Latino on the other.
- The English department needs to continue its discussion on alignment and to use professional development time to seek ways to differentiate instruction, with the goal of “de-laning” its classes in ninth and tenth grades.

- The achievement gap continues to be a troubling concern; although Palo Alto HS staff has created some external strategies to address this problem – tutorial, for example - “laning” and the lack of differentiated instruction are still issues that exists within the classroom.
- Resources should be devoted to lowering class size, especially at the ninth and tenth grades.
- Teachers should develop a variety of instructional strategies within each block period to keep students engaged.
- District administration needs to evaluate technology to find an efficient way of communicating with all stakeholders; staff has shown an interest in using SchoolLoop.

Ongoing Follow-up Process

Each year, the Instructional Supervisors conduct evaluations of the departments’ progress on each of the school goals and reporting on that progress to the Site Council. The principal compiles these evaluations into an annual report submitted to the PAUSD School Board. This annual comprehensive evaluation forms the foundation of the Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA) for the following year. For each school goal, three to five tasks are identified. All stakeholders, including the Administration Team, Ed Council, the PTSA Executive Board, and the School Site Council discuss and approve the SPSA before final Board of Education approval and adoption.

In January of 2014, the English department presented to the Board of Education a pilot for opening access to English 9A (advanced) for all incoming ninth grade students. This proposal was a direct follow-up to the 2012 Visiting Committee recommendation. There was some concern in the community that the English pilot was not communicated well to all stakeholders, as parents felt the department was not prepared to meet the needs of all learners.

In the Spring of 2014, the district increased the staffing allocation at both high schools, which allowed us to open up additional sections and lower class sizes. Class sizes have been reduced in courses where students typically benefit from the most support. Courses such as Algebra, Geometry, Algebra 2, Pre-Calculus, Spanish for Spanish Speakers, Conceptual Physics, ninth and tenth grade English, ninth grade World History, AVID and FOS are now below the staffing ratio of 28.5 to 1.

Critical Areas for Follow-up not Currently in the Action Plan

Palo Alto HS has undergone many changes since 2009. There have also been tremendous shifts within the education profession, such as California’s adoption of the Common Core standards. All these changes have created many new issues that were not addressed in the 2009 WASC self-study. Here are some of those critical areas for follow-up.

- Common Core State Standards implementation (in 2009, this was not on the horizon).
- D and F conversations driven by our district office and tied to the updated graduation requirements. Discussion of D and F student grades prompted further conversations about the use of zeros when grading and how to use Infinite Campus gradebook to post student progress more regularly.
- Adoption of our new learning management system (Schoology) and student information system (Infinite Campus).
- Facilities Master Plan - Infrastructure to support our new buildings (MAC and the 800 building), our planned Science addition due to enrollment growth, our new performing arts center, redesign of our library space, and the new athletic complex. The athletic complex has been made possible by a generous donation from a community member.
- Challenges to ongoing student data gathering and support due to changing technology and lack of infrastructure for internal data access.
- Massive expansion of technology infrastructure and integration in the classroom (student wireless network, Chromebooks, smartphone usage, etc.).
- Increased focus on the social and emotional health of students as a result of suicide contagion in our community.

- Challenges with our tutorial period and refinements to the structure of the school day.

Chapter 3 Self-Study Process

PART 1 – OVERALL SUMMARY OF THE DATA

Palo Alto High School has a tradition of academic excellence. The staff and community are well educated and the great majority of our graduates continue their studies in higher education. The district and community support Palo Alto HS with a vast array of resources, so our students have access to programs and experiences not often found in public comprehensive high schools. A review of Palo Alto HS data shows areas for improvement.

API

- Palo Alto HS's **overall** three-year weighted average (2011-2013) is **903**.
- **African American** students have a three-year weighted average of **650**.
- **Asian** students have a three-year weighted average of **966**.
- **Latino** students have a three-year weighted average of **714**.
- **White** students have a three-year weighted average of **921**.
- **Socio-Economically Disadvantaged** students have a three-year weighted average of **688**.
- **English Learners** have a three-year weighted average of **708**.
- **Students With Disabilities** have a three-year weighted average of **627**.

AYP

Palo Alto HS did not meet our AYP target in the 2012-2013 school year because our African American and Socio-Economically Disadvantaged students did not meet their target graduation rate goals.

Advanced Placement Courses

The ethnic makeup of our AP courses does not currently reflect the larger school demographic. Asian and White students make up the vast majority of AP students, while African American and Latino students are underrepresented.

CST

- Overall, Palo Alto HS students score well in all areas of the CST.
- Asian and White students consistently outperform other significant student subgroups.

Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO)

- On the ELA tests in the last five years:
 - **94.1%** or more of Asian and White students scored at proficient or above.
 - **25.0% - 53.3%** of African American students scored at or above proficiency.
 - **41.5% - 71.4%** of Latino students scored at or above proficiency.

- **40.0% - 60.5%** of Socio-Economically Disadvantaged students scored at or above proficiency.
- **35.9% - 51.0%** of Students With Disabilities scored at or above proficiency.
- **21.7% - 64.5%** of English Learner students scored at or above proficiency.
- On the Mathematics test in the last five years:
 - **95.7% - 97.9%** of Asian students scored at or above proficiency.
 - **90.9% - 95.2%** of White students scored at or above proficiency.
 - **33.3% - 60.0%** of African American students scored at or above proficiency.
 - **41.9% - 60.0%** of Latino students scored at or above proficiency.
 - **37.5% - 57.9%** of Socio-Economically Disadvantaged students scored at or above proficiency.
 - **33.3% - 49.1%** of Students With Disabilities scored at or above proficiency.
 - **30.4% - 64.0%** of English Learner students scored at or above proficiency.

CAHSEE

Well over 95% of Palo Alto HS students passed the CAHSEE on the first attempt during the last four years. The percentages of Latino and African American students who pass the CAHSEE on the first attempt are lower than those of Asian and White students, though the actual numbers are still small.

CSU/UC Eligibility

After a statistical analysis of UC “a-g” eligibility in three specific student sub-populations -- ethnicity, Special Education, and Socio-Economically Disadvantaged -- we have found that students in these subpopulations meet “a-g” eligibility less often than other student groups at Palo Alto HS.

Attendance

Absenteeism is a major issue at Palo Alto HS. When full-day absences are analyzed, Palo Alto HS’s truancy rate for students missing three or more days has moved from **3.1%** in 2011-2012 to **9.9%** in 2013-2014. However, during the 2012-2013 school year, students with three or more unexcused period absences yielded a truancy rate of **55.80%**. Students at Palo Alto HS miss a great deal of class time, in many cases missing specific periods, which is otherwise known as “strategic cutting.”

Perception Data

Because many Palo Alto HS students perform well by various metrics, we need to look at perception data to understand our core issues. Ideas and concerns expressed by our stakeholder groups often overlap. Here are some of the key issues brought up in surveys and interviews.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF DATA

Important Questions from Analysis of Performance Data

- What steps were taken to reduce the achievement gap? What must be done in the future to do more?
- Is the school prepared to meet all students’ needs in fulfilling “a-g” requirements?
- How willing is the school to learn more about research-based instructional strategies?
- How can data from standardized testing (SBAC, SAT, PSAT, SAT, ERB and AP) help guide our ongoing curriculum refinement?
- How well is the school incorporating research-based instructional strategies in our classrooms to support student-centered learning and to increase engagement?
- What is the best way to share best instructional practices within departments and across disciplines?

- Are we developing lesson plans that adequately align with CCSS and/or NGSS?
- To what extent have we mapped the new CCSS and/or NGSS standards with our current curriculum in our department?

Important Questions from Analysis of Demographic Data

- Are we able to differentiate instruction and personalize learning in our classrooms to meet the needs and diversity of *all* students?
- How much do we understand Response to Intervention and how Tier 1 strategies can be used in our classrooms to support struggling students?
- How do we improve our students' tardiness, unexcused absences and truancy?

First, perception data shows that stress still exists at Palo Alto HS, and that it's due in part to a lack of consistency within many of our major systems, including individual courses, academic departments and schoolwide policies. This issue has continued at Palo Alto HS since our last WASC report in 2009 and we feel a collective sense of urgency to address it.

Second, performance and demographic data show a significant relationship between some student subgroups at Palo Alto HS not meeting traditional measures of success, such as standardized test scores, CSU/UC "a-g" course completion rates, and underrepresentation of African-American and Latino students in honors and AP course participation. This shows Palo Alto HS's ongoing struggle to close the achievement gap, which has also been an area of concern since our last WASC report. Palo Alto HS staff and parents expressed great concern about the achievement gap in our recent Home and Focus Group meetings. There has been much discussion about how to meet the needs of all students on campus, including "B" students and others who may feel that Palo Alto HS's current culture, with its emphasis on superior academic achievement, doesn't meet their needs.

Third, Palo Alto HS's continued problems with student absenteeism lead us to ask if we are engaging and meeting the needs of our 21st-century learners. We must look at our school culture through the lens of changing global realities. Education must provide the skills students need to succeed in a modern society; we can't fulfill their needs with a 19th-century model. Engaged students who see a connection between authentic learning and future preparedness will also see the importance of being in every class period.

PART 3 – PALO ALTO HS'S 2015-2021 WASC GOALS TO ADDRESS CRITICAL LEARNER NEEDS

After much discussion of the data collected and analyzed during this WASC cycle, the Leadership Team identified three overarching goals for Palo Alto High School. These goals also parallel the Schoolwide Learner Outcomes and our district's recently adopted Strategic Plan.

Goal 1 - Systemic alignment for greater consistency around learning outcomes to reduce undue stress. We need systems that better support governance, curriculum and instruction, data collection and analysis, professional development, and student/parent outreach to ensure future readiness.

Rationale

- Work to align core curricular elements and best instructional practices with the new Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards.
- Use data to guide decision making. Need to setup training and ongoing professional development to achieve this goal.

- Continue to support strategic staff professional development.
- Decreases the lack of consistency among similar courses and the lack of clear schoolwide classroom policies and expectations.
- Staff and teacher stress is caused by misaligned and inconsistent school systems, including the policies for attendance, homework and academic integrity.

Relationship to District Strategic Plan

- **Area A2:** To ensure post-secondary preparation for students, implement the Common Core State Standards, improve feedback for students, and increase consistency in curriculum, grading, and homework across all sites and courses.
- **Area B2:** Ensure a safe and positive school environment for students through partnerships, student engagement and improved procedures.
- **Area E1:** Engender community trust through frequent, varied and transparent communication.
- **Area E2:** Provide a coherent district approach to align sites on key areas (e.g., curriculum, course consistency, safety protocols, impact measurement, special needs support) while continuing to support site innovation.

Goal 2 - Research-based instructional practices that increase engagement for ALL students. Our instructional staff should use research-based strategies and 21st-century tools to prepare our students for the future. Given our achievement gap and the implementation of CCSS and NGSS, our work will focus on writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization and reading throughout the school.

Rationale

- The use of modern educational research to find the best instructional methodologies will help staff professional development and support learning for *all* Palo Alto HS students.
- Use of best instructional practices will support our underperforming student subgroups and others who struggle at Palo Alto HS.
- Best instructional practices will lead to more engaged students who love to learn.
- We must strategically implement and address ongoing developments for CCSS and NGSS.
- Student-centered and project-based instruction will help us differentiate instruction for all students, at all times, while supporting underperforming subgroups.
- Use of current research-based instructional practices will help prepare all students for the future.

Relationship to SLOs

- All SLOs will be better supported when teachers use the best research-based instructional practices.

Relationship to District Strategic Plan

- **Area A1:** Differentiate the educational experience to engage, challenge and ensure mastery for every student.
- **Area A3:** Raise the achievement of historically underserved students by ensuring equal preparation, access and support from Pre-K to 12th grade.
- **Area C1:** Foster a culture of effective professional growth among all staff to develop a community of learners.
- **Area C2:** Encourage teachers to innovate, improve and adapt teaching methods and deepen pedagogical knowledge.

- **Area D3:** Invest strategically in IT to support teaching and learning, promote staff efficiency and effectiveness, and build a robust infrastructure.
- **Area E4:** Build a culture that supports innovation and the use of effective educational strategies.

Goal 3 - Innovative school culture promoting global competencies, creativity and empathy. A shared system of beliefs and priorities should drive the thinking and actions of those in our school community. Everyone on campus should expect all students to graduate future-ready, including ready for college, with global competency skills.

Rationale

- We must prepare students for their future in a rapidly changing global world.
- Helping students understand that the skills they learn in school are relevant to their future will increase engagement.
- Creating an innovative school culture that promotes global competencies, creativity and empathy will engage students and decrease absenteeism.
- Palo Alto HS students will be better prepared for their future when they have a deeper understanding of global competencies like resiliency and can redefine success.

Relationship to District Strategic Plan

- **Area E4:** Promote a culture that innovates and adopts effective educational strategies.

CHAPTER IV: QUALITY OF THE SCHOOL'S PROGRAM

PART A: What Currently Exists.

CATEGORY A. ORGANIZATION: VISION AND PURPOSE, GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND STAFF, AND RESOURCES

A1. To what extent does the school have a clearly stated vision or purpose based on its student needs, current educational research, and the belief that all students can achieve at high levels?

To what extent is the school's purpose supported by the governing board and the central administration and further by expected schoolwide learning results and the academic standards?

Palo Alto High School Core Purpose and Core Values which represent the vision and mission are visible in all classrooms and published in the student handbook and school profile in both hard copy and on the school website. One of Palo Alto HS' major goals is to develop the new vision and mission statement continuing the commitment to academic excellence for all students. Palo Alto HS' plan is to finalize the new vision and mission statement in the 2015-2016 school year. The Leadership Team comprised of all stakeholders met for a full day retreat in the spring of 2014 to begin this work. Feedback from all stakeholder groups was solicited based on seven core questions driving the vision and mission statement. Additional instructional time is implemented at the beginning of the school year during a minimum day schedule to communicate priorities to students as well as review of the student handbook, emergency procedures, school-wide expectations, academic honesty policy, and harassment policy with staff and students. THE Board of Education and central office leaders are committed to helping Paly achieve their goals. A student representative is an active member of the Board. Paly uses School-wide Learner Outcomes (Sloes) developed by the district and the SLO's are visible throughout the campus.

A2. To what extent does the governing board have policies and bylaws that are aligned with the school's purpose and support the achievement of the expected schoolwide learning results and academic standards based on data-driven instructional decisions for the school?

To what extent does the governing board delegate implementation of these policies to the professional staff?

To what extent does the governing board monitor regularly results and approve the single schoolwide action plan and its relationship to the Local Educational Agency (LEA) plan?

PAUSD has undergone several highly regarded changes in leadership over the last five years. In addition to a new Superintendent in 2014, there has been turnover in the Assistant Superintendent, Director of Secondary Education, Director of Special Education, Chief Technology Office and the Director of Research and Evaluation positions. Under the current Superintendent's leadership, the district developed a new Strategic Plan, which included a PAUSD Vision and Mission Statement. The Superintendent has effectively communicated his Focused Goals for this current school year. The Board worked closely with the District to implement the new graduation requirement that all students meet the University of California "a-g" entrance requirements. The Principal communicates regularly with district office staff to ensure that PALY is supported in meeting the Core Purpose and Values, SLO's, Board policy and future Vision and Mission statements. The new superintendent has taken active measures to improve communication with the community and has created a Communications Director position to improve communications within the community, increase transparency and report out on work done in behalf of all students. There is a new partnership between the Board, the Superintendent, site administration and other professional staff, which is very supportive. Board members are invited to participate in site and classroom events, are frequent visitors and participate in special events. PAUSD has very defined

Uniform Complaint Procedures posted on its website. PAUSD's Associate Superintendent is also the designated Title IX Officer.

A3. To what extent based on student achievement data, does the school leadership and staff make decisions and initiate activities that focus on all students achieving the expected schoolwide learning results and academic standards?

To what extent do the school leadership and staff annually monitor and refine the single schoolwide action plan based on analysis of data to ensure alignment with student needs?

The hiring of the new principal has facilitated collaboration and support with all stakeholders. Faculty, staff and fellow administrators feel supported and listened to. The students feel the principal is very accessible, supportive and fair and she holds it as a high priority to address students concerns and give them a voice on campus.

Palo Alto HS holds regular Leadership Team meetings which are charged with school decision-making and implementation of school policies and practices that support the school's goals. The implementation of TOSA's (teacher leaders) fulfills special assignments in areas that support the school goals: technology, blended learning, school climate, professional learning and instructional leader support. Ed Council, the major governing body on campus, makes major policy decisions. There are regular department meetings throughout the school year, Site Council meets on a monthly basis to review the SPSA plan and make financial decisions for the site. PTSA meets to discuss site parental concerns and expectations. The SARC, which drives decision-making, captures demographics as well as achievement data such as CST scores. The SPSA which is based on CST's EAP scores CAHSEE, SAT and ACT, AP scores, attendance data, graduation rate and data regarding the number of students meeting CSU/UC "a-g" eligibility.

All Site Council budget money directly supports the SPSA goals. Funds in the PiE budget directly support WASC goals. PiE money supports innovative learning programs such as STEM electives, media and arts, computer science, student guidance and support, social emotional guidance, foster students and can fund College and Career Counseling and resource programs. The principal collaborates with the administrative team on how to best allocate these funds.

A4. To what extent does a qualified staff facilitate achievement of the academic standards and the expected schoolwide learning results through a system of preparation, induction, and ongoing professional development?

All hiring is handled at the district level. IS's and teacher leaders assist in the process of reviewing applications and interview candidates. The Administrative Team and all of the Instructional Supervisors would like to see the district Human Resources office use *Edjoin* to attract greater diversity among applicants. The district is investigating new options for the hiring process. New teacher hires must participate in the district BTSA program if they are new to the teaching profession. Instructional Supervisors and Administrators coach, mentor and support new teachers and provide them with a mentor within their department. Teacher Librarians must hold both a California Teaching Credential and California Library media Credential All Special Education teachers now have autism authorization. All teachers must have the state mandated EL requirements (CLAD or BCLAD). Blended learning teachers must receive blended learning certification. Built in weekly collaboration time allows teachers to work together and support each other. Due to the full inclusion model, highly qualified staff co-teach freshman and sophomore core classes to support students with special needs for college level readiness. For the 2014-2015 school year Paly hired a TOSA to work with the IS's and provide additional mentoring and support. Individual teacher support is provided by the IS's or administrator designee and

there is time allotted for new teachers to observe partner teachers. The school administrative team meets regularly to discuss and review school programs and staff in the context of student learning.

The administrative duty chart is revised each year to reflect roles and duties assigned to each administrator based on their strengths and expertise. Staff receives a copy at the beginning of each school year as a reference. The updated staff handbook includes, teacher expectations, improve school information and links to access important information. The staff handbook is currently being revised and digitized by Palo Alto HS' TOSA for Professional Learning. Emails and monthly staff meetings link staff to pertinent information and policy. Schoology is an internal source for staff and faculty to share and access information. Video announcements are aired every day during 3rd or 4th period by the Broadcast journalism class, *In Focus*. The principal has a weekly update blog.

Each teacher is educated on emergency protocol and has a red folder in their classroom that includes all procedures and expectations for emergencies. There is more fine-tuning that needs to take place in this area.

A5. To what extent are leadership and staff involved in ongoing professional development that focuses on identified student learning needs?

As part of negotiations in 2012-2013 “every teacher must complete at least 19 hours of professional development.” Five professional development days are embedded into each school year. The district offers technology-training opportunities year-round. EdCamp, a collaboration of teachers, administrators, outside educational professional meet in a forum for conversation regarding best practices. The district hosted a Google Summit for teachers to learn the most current teaching tools within Google Apps for Education. In November 2015, the district will host a Future Ready Conference. Annual teacher evaluations require that teachers create two professional learning goals. This is built into the My Learning Plan. (online program). Teacher feedback forms are given to students every semester to provide data related to new practices a teacher may be employing in the classroom after receiving professional development. Paly acknowledges the need for stronger support of data collection by the district and would like to see more professional development training and collaboration time dedicated to data collecting, interpretation and implementation to ensure success for all students.

The teacher evaluation process including the role of the IS continues to be a somewhat unclear when it comes to the professional role of the IS. The concern of the union is that the IS is a certificated position and the responsibility of the IS needs to be well defined. Teachers are requesting more training and input in regards to the role of the IS in the teacher evaluation process.

A6. To what extent is the human, material, physical, and financial resources sufficient and utilized effectively and appropriately in accordance with the legal intent of the program(s) to support students in accomplishing the academic standards and the expected schoolwide learning results?

All expenditures are viewed through the eyes of the school wide learner outcomes. School wide learner outcomes are considered when developing the master schedule. The PAUSD Board of Education adopted new High School Graduation requirements that mirror the CSU/UC “a-g” entrance requirements. Restart classes are part of the master schedule and offer students an opportunity to retake classes in order to stay on track for graduation. Restart classes are: Algebra 1. Geometry, Algebra 2, World History and US Government. Paly hosts a College and Career Awareness Day funded by the PTSA. The weekly advisory class offers resume writing, college applications, financial aid planning, scholarships and 4 year high school planning. PiE (501c3 non-profit school booster organization) funds 3 Guidance Department positions.

Paly has a full-time custodial crew of ten professionals assigned to ensure cleanliness and maintenance of the facilities. Paly has a new Media Art Center and Social Studies/Math 800 building. Both the new

math and science wings have individual offices for each teacher. The departments are self-contained and teachers are very accessible to all students. The district is allocating funds over the next few years to replace and upgrade athletic facilities, and renovate the library building. The performing arts building is currently under construction and will house 600 people. The stage will be equipped with a Full-Fly. Technology resources are funded through the district and the site. The PTSA designates specific funding for technology and Measure A bond annually provided a large amount of money for technology upgrades. The district has added the position of a technology coordinator. Teachers are on a 4-year cycle to receive new laptops. There is a 2.5 FTE classified technology support team on campus. ***Palo Alto HS' technology resources are still below the community's expectations***, although they have noted that there have been recent improvements in technology.- Palo Alto HS' teachers are highly educated and highly qualified. 100% of the teachers are fully credentialed and approximately 57% hold at least one master's degree. Three teachers have a doctorate degree.

Areas of Strength for Organization: Vision and Purpose, Governance, Leadership and Staff, and Resources that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students.

- ❖ There is strong interest and enthusiasm to create a new shared vision and mission statement
- ❖ Paly is strongly committed to continue to build transparency and open communication with the Superintendent and the district
- ❖ Highly valued Professional development opportunities are supported by district and site administration
- ❖ There is continued work on the re-structuring of the academic honesty policy, which utilizes the Restorative Justice philosophy.
- ❖ Site council, PiE and Paly PTSA budgets directly support the SLO's (Single Plan for Student Achievement) based on multiple data results such as CST's EAP scores, CASHEE, AP Scores, ACT and SAT, and attendance data. The SPSA aligns with the District Plan and Focused Goals.
- ❖ Commitment of the community to Paly offers outstanding support both in the way of budget and volunteer time to continue to provide the academic atmosphere to promote success for all students.
- ❖ The implementation of the (IS) Instructional Supervisors and TOSA's (key teacher leaders on campus) demonstrates shared responsibility and leadership in decision-making processes supporting school goals.

Key Issues for Organization: Vision and Purpose, Governance, Leadership and Staff, and Resources that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students.

- ◇ Completion of a new vision and mission statement.
- ◇ Continue to improve communication with district, site administration, faculty and staff, parents and community stakeholders.
- ◇ Develop common assessments and other forms of assessments that can be used to drive student learning.
- ◇ Prioritize Professional Development time for interpretation, analysis and implementation of data.
- ◇ Provide collaboration time to Professional Learning Communities disaggregate data to align with SLO's.

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

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| School Action Plan | Department Chair Meeting Agendas |
| Administration Meeting Agendas | School Newsletters |
| CST, CAHSEE, Benchmark data | Purchase Order forms |
| Evaluation Handbook | Benchmark Action Plans |

CATEGORY B. STANDARDS-BASED STUDENT LERNING: CURRICULUM

B1. *To what extent do all students participate in a rigorous, relevant, and coherent standards-based curriculum that supports the achievement of the academic standards and the expected school wide learning results? That is, through standards-based learning (what is taught and how it is taught), how are the ESLR's accomplished?*

B2: *To what extent do all students have access to the school's entire program and assistance with a personal learning plan to prepare them for the pursuit of their academic, personal, and school-to-career goals?*

B3. *To what extent are students able to meet all the requirements of graduation upon completion of the high school program?*

Palo Alto High School offers students and teachers a block schedule that includes weekly collaboration time for teachers and time for students to receive mentoring and academic advising from assigned advisors. Teachers participate in a variety of professional learning opportunities on the implementation of the Common Core State Standards, the Next Generation Science Standards and integration of technology in instruction. Changes in instructional standards have been communicated to parents via email, website links, and informational night presentations.

The majority of PAHS courses are approved and aligned with the CSU/UC a-g requirements. Efforts are being made to ensure all students have equal access to a rigorous curriculum that includes Honors (H) advanced placement courses (AP). One of the major new developments since the last WASC visit was to eliminate the practice of enrolling some 9th grade students in an advanced 9th grade English class and others in a regular 9th grade class. The current practice is to enroll all students in an advanced English class to build student confidence in their abilities to perform well in advanced courses.

A large percentage of students at PAHS have access and success in AP classes. In 2014, 972 students were enrolled in AP classes and took more than 1,380 AP exams. A high percentage of students take one or more Advanced Placement courses during their high school career. Over 80% of the students score 4 or 5 on the AP exams. However, Hispanic and African-American students are underrepresented in the AP courses. Students have different paths to get to AP classes. In the past, the path to an AP English class started with an Advanced English 9 class. A similar path held true for other AP courses though classes are not labeled as "Advanced" (a student taking Algebra 1 in 9th grade had a very limited AP class options and access by the time the student is a senior). By having all students take Advanced English 9, PAHS is providing all students with access to rigorous curriculum at the 9th grade level and the potential for all students to reach an AP English class during their years at PAHS. Similar efforts in other content areas could provide students with the rigor and access that could lead to an increase in AP enrollment of minority students. At the present time, there is a three-tiered path to AP classes for all students. Students can take AP classes by a) taking the appropriate prerequisite courses, b) by being recommended by a teacher for the class, or c) by signing a waiver to be enrolled in the class.

A level of horizontal and vertical articulation is occurring through Instructional Supervisors (IS) who represent departments at monthly IS meetings. Grades 7-12 articulation occurs once a year to align similar courses and ensure consistency in expectations. Site level articulation occurs on site during the times set aside for collaboration. It appears that teachers at PAHS are investing part of their collaboration time to curriculum alignment and in some instances, interdisciplinary integration. The English and Drama departments have partnered up for interdisciplinary integration, but there are plans to further this to other departments.

The student and parent community at PAHS feels supported by the school. Student surveys submitted at the end of the year indicate that students feel ready for college coursework when they leave PAHS. The majority of students have a college going mentality and the school supports students via multiple tiers of guidance and counseling. There is however a perceived pressure expressed by students and echoed by parents, that students need to take multiple AP courses at a time in order to be competitive and be admitted at a “good” four year university. Students acknowledge that this pressure comes from their own academic ambitions and from possible lack of knowledge as to how AP courses impact their career path.

Areas of Strength for Standards-Based Student Learning: Curriculum that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students.

- ❖ Block schedule supports students by creating an advisory time and a tutorial time for students to receive support and guidance.
- ❖ The availability of elective courses allows students the opportunity to explore their many talents and skills.
- ❖ The enrollment of all 9th grade students in an English 9 advanced course and exploring the instructional shifts necessary to meet the needs of all students is a step in the right direction to make rigorous curriculum accessible to all students.
- ❖ AP course offerings allow students the opportunity to challenge themselves.
- ❖ Alignment of grading policies and curriculum across some departments is a strength.
- ❖ The rigor of the curriculum promotes a college bound mentality.
- ❖ PAHS is providing students with more career/vocational awareness and opportunities.

Key Issues for Standards-Based Student Learning: Curriculum that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students.

- ◇ Increase the opportunities of minorities to access the rigorous curriculum available at PAHS (Honors and AP courses).
- ◇ Increase knowledge and implementation of anchor standards across content areas.
- ◇ Align course curriculums across departments that reflects essential standards.
- ◇ Develop a professional development plan that outlines specific training needs (time, content) of each department in order to expose all students to a rigorous curriculum.
- ◇ Explore additional supports for students that do not have access to resources beyond the school day (i.e. tutoring, technology, etc.).
- ◇ Provide students and parents with specific homework and study time expectations for each class offered.
- ◇ Work with students and parents to determine college/career goals that guide students to take a reasonable number of AP courses that does not create an excessive amount of stress for students.

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

Self-Study Document
Curriculum Focus Group Meeting
Classroom observations
Leadership team meetings
Student Focus group meetings

CATEGORY C: STANDARDS-BASED STUDENT LEARNING: INSTRUCTION

C1. To what extent are all students involved in challenging learning experiences to achieve the academic standards and the expected school wide learning results?

Palo Alto High School gathers information through student observations and by examining student work. This information is used to measure the degree to which all students are engaged in challenging learning. The teachers engage students in learning activities through a variety of instructional methods, such as group activities, multi-media presentations, and lecture. Only some teachers will post daily photos of their whiteboards on Schoology (Palo Alto HS's Learning Management System, LMS), upload PowerPoint presentations, and create video lessons for students. Teachers are using technology to make classroom materials accessible to all students, including students who may have been absent. Some teachers scaffold longer-term projects by using class time and time embedded in the weekly homework assignments. Examples include: project-based instruction; simulations and projects.

Teachers collect and analyze student work either within their departments or as a unit like TEAM. The Focus Groups were able to identify the presence of all Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) in the student work samples. Most teachers consistently and clearly articulate standards and performance levels for courses, classroom activities, and student work products before students begin a course, lesson, or activity. A new initiative at Palo Alto HS is that all teachers write or display the objectives for the daily lesson with an essential question. While this expectation was clearly communicated at the beginning of the school year, some teachers have not followed-through with this directive.

Palo Alto HS teachers make themselves available to students to answer any questions or clarify performance expectations during class or at other times, such as the weekly tutorial period. Teachers attempt to foster self-advocacy skills in students so that they feel comfortable asking for clarification from teachers.

Communication of course performance levels is an ongoing issue. Specifically, teachers are required to post student grades four weeks into the semester (progress report 1), halfway through the semester (midterm report), four weeks before the semester ends (progress report 2) and then at the end of the semester (semester grade). There are varying levels of technology use in daily content delivery and student assessment. Access to materials and student progress are habitually reinforced through teacher websites, LibGuides, Infinite Campus, and campus wide use of our LMS, Schoology.

The implementation of co-teaching began during the 2011-2012 school year. One of the main goals of this program is for Special Education teachers, experts in differentiation, to work with general education teachers to provide support for all students, including Special Education students. While the goals of this program are excellent, teachers have experienced some difficulties and look forward to more support

from the district and a lead teacher on campus (Inclusion TOSA). Professional learning and training in co-teaching must be provided to all co-teaching participants.

Past graduates report that Palo Alto HS prepares them well for college and career. Some areas of improvement have been identified as writing across the curriculum, lab reports and the desire for more “life-skills” embedded within our curriculum (i.e. banking, self-care, relationship issues, etc.).

C2: To what extent do all teachers use a variety of strategies and resources, including technology and experiences beyond the textbook and the classroom that actively engage students, emphasize higher order thinking skills and help them succeed at high levels?

Teachers use a variety of different multimedia and technology applications to deliver curriculum. All teachers are provided with access to a projector, laptop, Chromebook, or iPad carts. Some teachers have computer carts in their rooms, while other teachers must make a reservation for computer labs or carts. Many classrooms have a Smartboard and/or a document camera for projecting digital or original source materials. Palo Alto HS’ 2014 technology survey determined that additional technology needs. As a result, the school has procured funding to buy Chromebooks so that the school can come closer to its ultimate goal of 1:1 learning environment for all students.

As part of the Teacher Advisory program, students are paired with a teacher who will serve as their long-term advisor for their sophomore, junior, and senior years. This teacher maintains the relationship through monthly, regularly scheduled meetings with advisees, and often assists in the college application process (recommendations, essay coaching, etc.). The teacher advisor may also serve as coach for personal or emotional issues a student might have, or as a trusted adult who can help a student access support.

Palo Alto HS’s library provides students with access to information and resources beyond the textbook, and includes an enticing array of fiction and nonfiction books for pleasure reading, in both print and digital formats. Our library is open all day from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm and is staffed by one full-time teacher librarian, one full-time assistant librarian and one part-time assistant librarian to facilitate our late hour’s program. The PTSA and ASB also pay for and provide “Food for Thought” snacks during those two weeks, so that students have something extra to eat while they study.

Students at Palo Alto HS have access to different real world and professional experiences. The TEAM program takes 90 -100 freshmen to Yosemite and Monterey Bay every year for team-building and cross-curricular English/Science/Social Science lessons, which often include real world applications. The choir program travels each summer to perform at a variety of locations, including the Vatican in Italy, providing students an opportunity to experience what it is like to perform in a professional venue.

Every year, Palo Alto HS hosts a two-week Career Speaker Series where students enjoy a talk and question/answer session with experts from a variety of career fields. During this two-week speaker series, each lunch period provides two different choices of speakers. In all, several hundred students turn out over the course of the event to learn more about areas of passion and future employment. The Career Advisor runs one Community Service Fair in the fall and a well-attended Community Service Day in the spring where students volunteer to work for a day at an organization of their choice.

The Science Research Project is open to 11th and 12th grade students who have excelled in science classes, allows students to work with actual researchers and scientists in various fields, such as medicine, genetics, space science, and geology. Students may participate in a number of activities, from being guided by a mentor, creating their own investigation, to working in the mentor's lab.

Palo Alto HS's Academic Communication course is for students on the autism spectrum. In this class students learn about post-secondary opportunities through class topics, interviewing professionals, creating a personal PowerPoint called, "Dream Job", and on-campus and off-campus vocational training.

In 2014-2015, Palo Alto HS started an Early Childhood and Development course that receives CTE credit. During this class, students attend the district's "Young Fives" and preschool program two days per week for direct, hands-on experience working with children in these classes.

Areas of Strength for Standards-Based Learning: Instruction that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students.

- ❖ Teachers are passionate experts in their respective content areas.
- ❖ There is an awareness of the need to differentiate instruction.
- ❖ Staff realizes they should try new techniques/methods and keep learning to improve instruction.
- ❖ Some teachers have embraced blended learning and are seeing great results.
- ❖ Alumni report having been academically well prepared for college.
- ❖ Availability of technology for instruction
- ❖ Rigorous course content, pacing, and expectations
- ❖ A variety of instructional strategies in some classes
- ❖ Block schedule and collaboration time to discuss instructional practices
- ❖ Project based learning in many departments

Key Issues for Standards-Based Student Learning: Instruction that needs to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students.

- ◇ Differentiated instructional strategies need to be developed to address the learning needs of all students.
- ◇ Decisions on instructional strategies for best practices need to be research based.
- ◇ Collaboration time needs to be expanded.
- ◇ Professional Development around the use of technology with instruction.
- ◇ Develop Professional Learning Communities that will allow in-depth discussions of instructional practice, student learning styles, Blended Learning and collaboration on the Action Plan implementation.
- ◇ Co-teaching needs to be investigated and implemented for Special Education students.

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

Student survey 2010-2014

CST scores

ESLRS

Professional Development agendas

Interviews from the Student Focus on Learning Group

Interviews with administration

CATEGORY D. STANDARDS-BASED STUDENT LEARNING: ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

D-1: *The school uses a professionally acceptable assessment process to collect, disaggregate, analyze and report student performance data to the parents and other shareholders of the community.*

The school uses an acceptable assessment process to collect, disaggregate, analyze, and report student performance data to the school staff, students, parents, and other stakeholders. They demonstrated a creative combination of both formative and summative assessments to get the broadest picture of student's knowledge and mastery of subjects, from online and professionally developed assessment programs to classroom generated assessment pieces such as essays, traditional multiple choice tests, final projects, etc.

The staff demonstrated continual intra-departmental discussions and collaborations to determine the basis of student grades, creating a consistent grading rubric within like sections. They use a variety of assessments to determine students' entry level knowledge and formative knowledge to track progress of students. They used this information to develop strategies to increase student achievement and academic success. Multiple schoolwide supports have been strategically developed over the past few years in order to support students who are not meeting determined performance levels. Some examples are the bell schedule change in 2010, a more reasonable class schedule (the block schedule) to spread out the academic load and create longer class times, facilitating deeper examination and study of the subjects during classes, which includes the Tutorial period, additional assistance is offered with Writing Center staffing, Math Resource Center after school staffing, and extended library hours.

The school has set up two systems whereby parents and students have access to grades and class information: Infinite Campus, an online location where parents and students have access to up to date grades/attendance/discipline/counseling notes, and Schoology, where communication with teachers regarding assignments is available.

Some teachers engage students in complex real world assessments and others use assessments that have real world applications. A small number of English teachers on campus have implemented Google style "20% Projects" to allow students to participate in highly motivating self-selected projects to show academic and personal growth.

They incorporate online learning in their program which progress is closely monitored, with most of the online work completed in class under the supervision of the teacher. The teacher controls access to all summative tests, allowing students to retake the assessment if minimum requirements to prove competence are not met. All online student work and assessments are aligned to state standards and support our SLOs.

Teachers collected and analyzed student work samples. Later, teachers organized these samples into teacher evidence binders. Examples of the many and varied assessments at Paly can be seen in these evidence binders.

Teachers work with EL students to ensure student access and success in courses, as well as prepare for end of course standardized assessments.

D-2: *Teachers employ a variety of strategies to evaluate student learning. Students and teachers use these findings to modify the teaching/learning process for the enhancement of the educational progress of every student.*

The staff uses varied means of assessments strategies to measure student progress. Some teachers use traditional assessments, such as essays and written exams, while other prefer performance based tasks and comprehensive projects. While both formative and summative assessments are used, more teachers

focus on robust summative assessments. There is robust discussion on the use of graded formative assessments due to the anxiety this produces in students as to how this will affect their overall GPA.

Some teachers noted using these measures to drive future instruction. The English Department reported that, while teachers often do this on an individual basis, they are also starting to do this in course-alike teams. Adjusting instruction based on results of summative assessments led to changes in the presentation of classes. These adjustments then led to increased student performance on the quizzes.

The PE Department is in the process of fine-tuning their formative assessment strategies, aligning classes to the academic standards and CCSS. They have currently begun this process in their swimming unit. The use of formative assessments helps guide their next lesson.

The school has consciously worked to provide opportunities for teachers to obtain student feedback to assess student progress towards CCSS and SLOs. Teachers ask for student feedback each semester through a teacher created student survey, which provides for anonymous feedback for the teacher about a course. The school has also built many opportunities into the students' weekly schedule to meet with teachers and share face-to-face feedback on classes.

Parents may provide teacher feedback, however Paly asks that the parent feedback sheet not be anonymous; as a result, some parents report that they do not say anything until after the final grade for a course has been determined. Currently the administration is working hard to shift this culture of fear and find ways to get constructive feedback from parents to improve instructional practice and support student learning.

Paly administers the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) every other year. District staff, the Board of Education, and site leadership review this data and make necessary programming adjustments. In particular, the Guidance Department adjusts Advisory curriculum based on CHKS data.

To help students become successful, teachers, administrators, and counselors use a variety of assessment data, as well as interventions, to make decisions on course placement. Administrators, guidance counselors, and special education teachers use the data for course placement and recommended interventions, as appropriate. Some individual or small groups of teachers on campus collect and analyze data on a regular basis to guide decision-making and changes to curriculum and/or instruction; however, for most of the school, data collection and analysis may be sporadic or informal. Staff members have expressed a strong desire to begin using data in meaningful ways and receive training to successfully use data at Paly. This willingness on the part of many staff members is a positive step toward making important changes regarding data gathering and analysis.

Through the Teacher-Advisory program, Teacher Advisors monitor student progress toward graduation, alerting Guidance Counselors to students who are struggling. The Guidance Department reviews progress notes and schedules necessary follow-up meetings with students and families in order to put supportive measures in place.

Departments are at different stages with alignment of their respective monitoring systems. Science, English, and History/Social Science have course-alike team discussions about grading policies and practices, and may be aligned in grading scales and grade distribution, while the Math Department typically is aligned in grading scales, assessments, grade distribution, and grading weights. Most teachers would like opportunities for collaboration to happen more formally and strategically at Paly.

In addition to these reviews, some teachers and administrators would welcome incorporating classroom instructional strategies that would better support under-performing learners. These instructional practices could include additional formative assessments that are ungraded, and provide students with a better understanding of which areas need improvement.

D-3: *The school with the support of the district and community has an assessment and monitoring system to determine student progress toward achievement of the academic standards and the expected school wide learning results.*

The school, with the support of the district and community, has assessment and monitoring systems to determine student progress toward achievement of the academic standards, the college and career-readiness standards, and the schoolwide learner outcomes. Annually, student achievement data is analyzed and monitored in order to provide the PAUSD Board of Education with updates on student progress. Significant issues regarding curriculum and school planning are approved by the Board. All Board meetings are public and transmitted via television through a public access channel and board minutes and presentations are uploaded to the PAUSD website for the public, parents, and other stakeholder groups to access. Information helpful to the determination of best instructional practices for students' needs are regularly reviewed and shared in Ed Council meetings. Ed Council minutes are now shared with the entire school staff to allow for greater transparency. It is the responsibility of the Instructional Supervisors to share all information with their specific departments via department meetings. The principal presents regular updates to other important leaders within the district at Secondary Principals meetings.

Parents and students have access to grading information, and attendance through our online student information system, Infinite Campus. All students have access to state-mandated testing and are part of the testing results data. Grades or progress notes are formally reported every four to five weeks to students and parents through the online portal, Infinite Campus (IC), which teachers update every three weeks to ensure that students and parents, as well as other staff members, have access to current student academic data. A hard copy is also mailed through the United States Postal Service (USPS) to any parents who have not 'opted out' of that delivery method. Semester and year-end grades, as well as grade distributions, are made available to the district office, site leadership, and Instructional Supervisors.

Some teachers and administrators would prefer an opportunity to review and discuss grade distributions, grading categories, and standards-based grading, in order to create a more uniform understanding of student achievement of academic standards at Paly. Some parents report that they would like more information when it comes to assessments, in terms of what students got wrong and how they can better support their students to learn the material. Often, assessments are not sent home and are only reviewed in class. Some parents also report that some teachers do not review assessment results in any way, which reinforces the concept that students are not in a position to learn from their mistakes. Grades are also reported to the California Interscholastic Federation, Central Coast Section (CIF CCS), in order to establish athletic eligibility for student athletes.

In past alumni surveys, many former Paly students have reported that Palo Alto High School's academic program prepared them well for college.

D-4: *The assessment of student achievement in relation to the academic standards and the expected school wide learning results drives the school's program, its regular evaluation and improvement, and the allocation and usage of resources.*

The assessment of student achievement, either through testing, success in passing classes, or mastery of material has helped direct the resources at Paly for staffing additions and new course offerings have been developed based on student need.

There are ongoing indicators of a high stress level for students due to expectations within the community. The school is participating in Challenge Success, which is charged with guiding students to a reasonable course completion plan and decreasing incidents of academic dishonesty. Current discussions in Ed Council and among departments about the stress due to many tests taking place on

Monday are considering the best solution that would allow for a work-life balance on weekends.

In 2010, the school opened a new Testing Center, which serves as a great resource for students who miss school for health reasons, need to make-up a test or quiz, or provided students on IEPs or 504 plans an alternative testing environment, if appropriate to the individual.

Over the years, there has been considerable concern among teachers for an increasing percentage of students absent on days when teachers are administering a test. Some classes have reported that 30-40% students will be absent from class on the day of the exams. This common practice, often supported by parents, is often seen as a time management technique for students and parents. In some cases, students cut classes to study for tests in other classes. Our data indicates that this practice is common across our school and is often referred to as “strategic cutting.”

Teachers determine their professional development needs based on their understandings of student achievement data and observations of their students, seeking alignment with site and district strategic goals.

The use of zeros in grading practices is another conversation that has begun to take place. Controversy around this practice suggests that we need additional professional learning around equity in grading and assessment. Similar controversy exists in grade determination and distribution. This spring, our College Advisor and 12th Grade Guidance Counselor will present, to all departments, their thoughts on how grade deflation negatively impacts our students.

It is hoped that changes to the school program will create a movement to shift the culture from one of fear of failure, and attempt to instill the love of learning or joy of learning in all of our classrooms, so students are motivated to learn, rather than motivated to simply to receive high grades.

Areas of Strength for Standards-Based Student Learning: Assessment and Accountability that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students.

- ❖ Support networks for students include teachers, Teacher-Advisors, coaches, campus supervisors, guidance office, administrators, and classified staff.
- ❖ Tutorial allows for individual time with teachers.
- ❖ The Testing Center provides a smaller testing environment and additional support for students.
- ❖ There is departmental alignment on assessments in Math and English.
- ❖ Some teachers use formative and many use summative assessments to guide teaching practice.
- ❖ Teachers are interested in learning more about formative assessments and using them more frequently.
- ❖ There is a desire among teachers to learn more about best practices in grading.

Key Issues of Strength for Standards-Based Student Learning: Assessment and Accountability that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students.

- ◇ Address the disparity between a-g compliant students (80%) and those who score College Ready on the EAP (Math 52%, ELA 63% - 2013).
- ◇ Develop horizontal and vertical alignment throughout the school.
- ◇ Develop essential learning and summative assessments in all courses.
- ◇ Develop strategies to reteach or modify instruction based assessment data.
- ◇ Discussion, investigation, and implementation of best practices around grading policies, how to best measure what students have learned, and the role of homework; coming to a shared understanding of the what a grade means and the use of zeros in grading and equity issues.

- ◇ Develop Professional learning around formative and summative assessments and Smarter Balanced results.
- ◇ Reduce “strategic cutting” on test days.
- ◇ Work to increase clear communication with parents, students and other teachers with regard to scheduled assignments and assessments.
- ◇ Investigate opportunities for students of lower socio-economic levels for outside academic support.
- ◇ Allow for anonymous parent feedback on surveys

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

- Action Plan
- Teacher and student dialogue
- Department minutes
- Staff Development trainings
- STAR/CAHSEE/AP/IB scores

Category E: School Culture and Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth

E1. To what extent does the school leadership employ a wide range of strategies to encourage parental and community involvement, especially with the teaching/learning process?

The school implements strategies and processes for the regular involvement of family, business, industry, and the community, including being active partners in the learning/teaching process for all programs. The school involves parents of non-English speaking, special needs and online students. Annual parent activities around receiving academic information include: Incoming freshmen information night, Back to School Night, Grade-level parent nights, Parent network meetings (by grade level), English 9A writing workshops for parents, and Spanish speaking parent education nights.

Parents and students have access to multiple electronic programs to keep them informed and to encourage involvement in academic and extracurricular activities. The *Palo Alto HS Link*, *Palo Alto HS.net*, *Infinite Campus* and *Schoology* are some examples of the access points for parents, students and the community. Parents and community members also watch the daily announcement show, *InFocus*. Palo Alto HS also uses various social media outlets for communication. Various Palo Alto HS organizations and classes, as well as multiple staff members, use Facebook and Twitter.

There are five meetings during the school year to provide additional assistance to Spanish-speaking families. These meetings represent an effort to increase communication with the Spanish-speaking parent community, in response to feedback from these families. Palo Alto HS hosts a VTP-specific back to school night dinner in which an orientation to Palo Alto HS is provided. Information is provided in both Spanish and English.

The Palo Alto HS Career Advisor works with a committee of students and parents each year to identify the interests of students, using a survey through Naviance. Based on the career interest survey results, the committee then contacts specific community members in those fields to invite them to speak at the annual lunchtime speaker series, "Career Month," during the first two weeks of March.

PAUSD has employed two full-time Palo Alto Police Department (PAPD) officers as School Resource Officers (SRO). While their primary responsibilities lie in ensuring the daily safety of the students on campus, the SROs also assist in nurturing a positive relationship between PAUSD and PAPD.

Together Everyone Achieves More (TEAM) (grade 9), a new Social Justice Pathways (grades 9-12), and new Sports Pathway (grades 9-12), are all designed to place students in the community to gain experience and solve real-world problems. All Pathways enlist the help of community members in order to assist students in specific areas of interest.

Teachers are required to update grades four times a semester, an average of every 4.5 weeks. Teacher Advisors, as well as grade-level guidance counselors, call or email parents or guardians if a student has three or more D or F grades in a grading period.

Throughout the school year, the Guidance Department hosts specific grade-level information workshops, at which Guidance and Career and College counselors share information specific to each grade level. This information is shared to explain and discuss issues pertinent to challenges and opportunities of each phase of high school life.

E2. *To what extent is the school a safe, clean, and orderly place that nurtures learning? To what extent is the culture of the school characterized by trust, professionalism, high expectations for all students, and a focus on continuous school improvement?*

Palo Alto High School is one of the oldest high schools in the region and has periodically upgraded its facilities to meet the needs of the educational programs. The campus is a safe, clean and well organized place that is dedicated to student learning.

The district works with the Facilities Steering Committee to create updated and forward-thinking learning spaces. The math/social science building and Media Arts Center (MAC) are newly opened buildings, each thoughtfully furnished in a way that supports a positive and flexible learning environment a plan to systematically provide each building with updated and student-friendly furniture is currently being implemented for the buildings that will not be renovated or reconstructed in the near future.

The school used a half-day to educate students in practices regarding school safety in evacuation procedures and code red drills, peer-to-peer safety with regard to physical and cyber bullying, review of school handbook, and academic honesty. Aside from this day, staff and students participate in safety drills annually (code red, earthquake, fire) to practice and discuss what to do in each scenario. Local police are involved in code red drills in order to provide constructive feedback and to increase communications with these individuals should an emergency ever arise. Each year, the administration assigns all teachers specific roles for emergency evacuation procedures so that we can best ensure student safety in an actual emergency. Faculty input is solicited, feedback and data from the drill is collected, and suggestions are implemented following each schoolwide drill.

The Academic Honesty Policy has been revised, updated and is in its first stages of implementation. Each year, teachers and administrators review the student handbook with students to explicitly identify school expectations. The handbook is also posted on *Palo Alto HS.net*. Maintenance and custodial staff work day and night shifts in order to maintain a safe and clean campus environment.

Students are encouraged by teachers, Teacher Advisors (TA), and Guidance Counselors to sign up for a course schedule that most appropriately meets their individual needs. The three-tiered guidance system allows for students to have honest conversations about their respective high school pathway. Palo Alto HS offers a wide variety of accelerated courses to meet the needs of students. Palo Alto HS offers 19 AP courses and 13 Honors courses. For the 2013-2014 school year, 645 students took 1379 AP exams. 96% scored a three or higher. 54% scored a five.

E3. *To what extent do all students receive appropriate support along with an individualized learning plan to help ensure academic success?*

E4. *To what extent do students have access to a system of personal support services, activities and opportunities at the school and within the community?*

In the summer of 2013, Palo Alto HS College Advisors met to develop a plan to meet with first-generation college-going students to provide extra support during the college application process. Student participants were identified by (1) a report in Infinite Campus, (2) self-reporting via Teacher Advisors in Advisory, and (3) one-on-one appointments with College Advisors in the second semester of junior year and during senior year. Meetings are held at lunch and during Tutorial. There are two parent events during senior year.

Summer Bridge is a program designed to help “bridge” students to high school by easing the transition from middle school. Middle school counselors use a variety of indicators, along with teacher recommendations, to identify students for this program. Summer Bridge includes instruction in study skills, math, reading, and writing.

Palo Alto HS staff recognizes that many students require personalized support during the day. Students with psychological and emotional distress have access to grade-level counselors, School Psychologists, and Adolescent Counseling Services (ACS). The school currently has two full-time school Psychologists who work with our whole school population.

Palo Alto HS also has a Crisis Response Team, whose primary mission is to respond to a student or family in crisis. Members of this team include all guidance counselors, all psychologists, all therapists, and all administrators. The Crisis Response Team follows crisis protocol outlined in our Suicide Prevention Toolkit.

Restart classes, Independent Study and Summer School are three avenues a student can pursue to make-up classes in which they have earned a D or F grade. All options are coordinated through grade-level Guidance Counselors, who help guide the student in choosing which option might be best.

Focus on Success (FOS) is a district-initiated program that provides support and guidance for students who are having difficulties in school. In FOS, students are given academic support as well as lessons in study skills and organization. While some students choose to take FOS to prevent themselves from academic difficulties, others are placed into FOS through the Guidance Department as an intervention for struggling students.

A sixty minute Collaboration time was embedded in the school schedule several years ago. Some collaboration times have had a schoolwide (rather than departmental) focus, in order to identify and support students who are struggling with academics, behavior, social-emotional issues, etc. During this time, the school discussed students identified with multiple D or F grades and develops strategies for helping them succeed, including issuing invitations to Tutorial for classes in which students are performing poorly.

Palo Alto HS students go to college. 80% enroll in a 4-year college, 12.5% enroll in a 2-year college, and 7.5% of students pursue other options immediately following high school.

In an attempt to increase student readiness for higher lane classes, the English department created a heterogeneous 9th grade English curriculum and pacing guide. In the 2013-2014 school year, there was a proposal to create heterogeneous classes in 9th grade English and only offer the English 9A (accelerated) course to our freshman students. Although the Board of Education did not approve the requested proposal, enrollment in the lower lane class plummeted the following year. Current success in the new 9th grade English curriculum has greatly decreased at least one impediment to more broad participation in AP and other high lane classes.

Beginning with the class of 2016, Palo Alto HS will implement its new graduation policy. All students are expected to complete CSU/UC required curriculum “a-g” in order to graduate from Palo Alto HS. Students meet with their Teacher Advisor to review graduation requirements and obtain a more detailed understanding of the “a-g” requirements.

Currently, there are 81 active clubs for the 2014-2015 academic year. ASB maintains and updates an online database of club meeting times, locations, advisors, and officers so that anyone can get involved. An estimate of the number of active club participants at Palo Alto HS is around 600.

Areas of strength for School Culture and Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students.

- ❖ Palo Alto HS has support from the community: financial (PiE, PTSA, Boosters), parent volunteers, classroom and schoolwide speakers, and local business support and connections.
- ❖ Community members expressed that Palo Alto HS has many caring and concerned teachers who make an effort to connect with students and who have an in-depth knowledge of the content they teach.
- ❖ Alumni report that they feel academically well prepared for post-high school education.
- ❖ Palo Alto HS strives to help students make more personal connections on campus.
- ❖ Teacher Advisors help to make student-teacher connections, while Link Crew helps to create more positive student-student connections, especially for new students.
- ❖ The Outreach Counselor has made positive connections with many students and parents from our under-represented groups.
- ❖ Palo Alto HS offers a variety of curricular and extra-curricular choices in and outside of the school day, allowing students to create an experience that is specific to their passions and interests.
- ❖ Students in Focus Groups have stated they feel supported and challenged by their teachers, who are available continuously throughout the school day.
- ❖ Palo Alto HS is a safe and orderly school.

Key issues for School Culture and Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students.

- ◇ Consistency in alignment needs to be developed electronic record keeping, grading policies and homework.
- ◇ Strategies and programs need to be developed to address the academic achievement gap that persists for underrepresented minorities and at-risk students in honors and AP classes.
- ◇ Strategies and programs need to be developed to address the develop of the student's emotionally and socially.
- ◇ Transportation to and from school for students who commute from East Palo Alto needs to address.

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
Dialogue with focus groups
Conversations with parents, students and teachers
Achievement data
Classroom observations
Student work

Part B: Synthesis of Schoolwide Areas of Strength and Schoolwide Critical Areas for Follow-up

The faculty, staff and community of Palo Alto High School is recognized for their preparation of the Self-Study document. All stakeholders assisted the Visiting Committee in the collection and clarification of data that was needed in order to analyze the existing status of Palo Alto High School. The Visiting Committee found that students were extremely congenial and appreciative of the efforts made to improve the quality of educational opportunities available to them. Interviews with other stakeholders in the community reiterated the same sentiment.

Schoolwide Areas of Strength

The Visiting Committee has found the following areas of strength at Palo Alto High School after reviewing the self-study document, data provided by the school and other sources, evidence provided by the school and interviews with Focus Groups, Parent Groups and Stakeholders including students.

1. The Palo Alto High School stakeholders have created an environment of commitment and support for the success of all students.
2. The rigor of the curriculum promotes a college bound mentality.
3. The faculty demonstrates an awareness of and the desire to improve their knowledge of curriculum and assessment to support student learning objectives.
4. Palo Alto High School demonstrates a strong commitment to the use of technology within their curriculum.
5. Palo Alto High School offers a variety of curricular and extra-curricular choices in and outside of the school day, allowing students to create an experience that is specific to their passions and interests.

Schoolwide Critical Areas for Follow-up

The Visiting Committee has identified the listed Critical Areas for follow-up:

1. Increase the opportunities for under-represented sub-groups to access the rigorous curriculum and provide academic support to assure success.
2. Develop a professional development plan that outlines specific training needs that would increase knowledge and implementation of anchor standards across content areas.
3. Strategies and programs need to be developed to address the academic achievement gap that persists for underrepresented minorities and at-risk students in all classes.
4. Develop a consistent schoolwide philosophy around assessment and a consistent use of both formative and summative assessments within all departments.

Chapter V: Ongoing School Improvement

The School-Wide Action Plan was created from evidence including student work, sample assignments and assessments, the school and community profile, and data analysis. Focus groups created a list of the school's strengths and prioritized areas for growth. Shortly thereafter, the Leadership Team, with input from the Focus Group work, drafted an Action Plan with three goals. Feedback was given by the Focus Groups and Parent groups and the Plans were redrafted. New drafts were created and Focus Group members revised the plans once again. These plans are a representation of the Palo Alto High School community. The Action Plan includes plans for implementing, monitoring, and assessing each of its goals. It is understood that as years pass, state and school priorities will change and stakeholders will change, and the annual review will result in a corresponding change. This Action Plan delineates the individuals that will be responsible for the implementation of each goal, timelines, and resources/funding. The most efficacious method for evaluation of each goal needs to be determined.

The Visiting Committee finds that the Action Plans need to be focused and prioritized based on the Schoolwide Critical Areas of Follow-up to meet the identified needs of Palo Alto High School as stated in the school report. The District is committed to providing resources to complete the plan.

The school-wide action plan will combine existing processes and resources with reasonable new goals and is aligned with the Professional Development Plan. The plan relies on existing and as yet to be determined processes to achieve the stated goals. There is an emphasis on refining processes that are in its nascent stages, and the responsible parties for guiding the development of new initiatives are staff and administrators who must be committed to the success of these initiatives.

The evidence that has been gathered indicates that the three goals of the Action Plan are completely supported by all stakeholders. Through effective use of site monies and staffing, Palo Alto High School has the opportunity to reach the goals identified in the plan.