

**ACS WASC/CDE MID-CYCLE VISIT  
VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT**

**ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS  
WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES**

**FOR**

**LA SIERRA HIGH SCHOOL**

**4145 La Sierra Avenue  
Riverside, CA 92505**

**January 13-14, 2020**

**Visiting Committee Members**

Dr. Anna Corral, Chairperson  
Principal, Workman High School

Mrs. Michele Loza  
ELA Specialist, Temecula USD

Mr. Luis Vazquez  
Math Teacher, Monrovia High School

## **I. School Information**

La Sierra High School was built in 1969, and it is one of three comprehensive high schools in the Alvord Unified School District. The district serves a thirty square mile area including the western portion of the City of Riverside and a small area of eastern Corona. The district manages fourteen elementary schools (K-5), four middle schools (6-8), three comprehensive high schools (9-12), one continuation high school and an alternative learning center for high school students. La Sierra High School was designated a Title I school for the 2018-2019 school year.

Alvord Unified School District is a declining enrollment district affecting La Sierra High School staffing and student population. With an improving economy, several factors beyond the opening of a new school, Hillcrest, in 2012 have contributed to this trend. Although the boundaries for La Sierra have not changed, other factors, such as sports and specialized programs offered on other campuses, have also contributed to the decline in enrollment.

Student enrollment at La Sierra has dropped over the course of the last 5 years. 2018-2019 enrollment at La Sierra was approximately 1723. Approximately 77% of our students are Hispanic. White (non-Hispanic) enrollment is approximately 9%. The remaining 12% of the population is diverse with regards to ethnicity. In the 2018-2019 school year, approximately 79% of our students were identified as Socio-Economically Disadvantaged.

### **Data:**

In 2017-2018, 97.3% of 11th grade students took the SBAC assessment, this was an increase from the prior school year. 12.5% of students exceeded the standards, 25.5% met the standard, and 30.25% did not meet the standard. In reading, writing, and listening, students performing above standard and at- or near-standard decreased in percentage. An increase was seen in the percentage of students below the standard. In 2018-2019, the percent of students who met or exceeded the standard went up by 7.2% from the previous year. With scores declining in 2017-2018, all subgroups dropped significantly. However, in 2018-2019 the increase brought subgroups back to the same levels as in 2016-2017. It is important to note that 28 fewer students tested in 2018-2019, than in the previous year.

In 2017-2018, 98% of 11th grade students participated in the Math assessment. 3.5% of students exceeded the standard, 13% met the standard, and 58.75% did not meet the standard. In Concepts and Procedures, Problem Solving and Modeling Data Analysis, and Communicating Reasoning, students performing above standard and at- or near-standard decreased in percentage. An increase was seen in the percentage of students below the standard. In 2018-2019, the percentage of students who met or exceeded the standard increased by 7.3% from the previous year. As in ELA scores, after a decline in scores in 2017-2018, the scores in 2018-2019 increased more than 1% above the prior high scores in 2016-2017. In 2018-2019, the hispanic students, which make up

the majority of students at La Sierra, did increase their scores from the 2017-2018 level; however, there was not an increase from 2016-2017 scores. La Sierra High School students SBAC Math scores were 2% higher than the district average in 2018-2019.

La Sierra's central focus on school reform is to implement various strategies that provide opportunities for all children to achieve academically and social emotionally. The calendar allows for one early release day per week for PLC collaboration and staff/professional development. Additional teacher release time is allocated to grade-level or subject teams to evaluate data from common assessments and design interventions for under-performing students, as needed. Also, there is designated release time for the sheltered teachers. Professional development for all staff is focused on engaging the disengaged, utilizing technology, reading and writing across the curriculum, AVID strategies, and embedded interventions for our students struggling academically. In 2019, LSHS implemented the Capturing Kids Hearts Program to help foster positive interactions between students and staff.

Due to the high failure rate in Integrated Math 1 and the lower math scores on SBAC, in 2018-2019 La Sierra offered an Integrated Math 1 restart class. During the second semester, the restart class offered select freshman students an opportunity to improve their first semester grades, while remediating basic skills to help the students pass the second semester of their math class. Students were selected who were only failing their Integrated Math 1 class. With twenty-six students enrolled, fifteen passed the restart class, with eleven failing. Of the twenty-six, eleven passed the second semester of IM 1, with three being students who failed the restart. While this class may not have been successful for all students, it was able to help eight students brush up on basic skills and pass both courses. This class allowed the teacher to recognize a specific student was lacking in understanding of basic skills, and the student was placed on an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) as a result.

### **Significant Changes and Developments**

La Sierra has a new principal, Celeste Migliaccio who is in her third year. Over a ten year period LSHS has seen eight principals. The current administration team is the most consistent they have seen in many years. It has been a challenge for the school to build systems, structure and culture without consistent leadership.

In December of 2017, Alvord Superintendent Dr. Sid Salazar left his position. There were multiple interim Superintendents appointed while the district began their search for a new Superintendent. It was decided on April 2018 that Allan Mucerino would become the Superintendent of Alvord Unified.

During the 2018-2019 school year, the district offered a Supplemental Executive Retirement Plan (SERP) to certified and classified employees as a money saving move for the district budget. From La Sierra High School, 11 teachers and 13 classified employees retired at the end of 2018-2019 school year. Due to decrease in enrollment, LSHS had four surplus transfers and two voluntary transfers at the end of the 2018-2019 school year. In September 2019, the Alvord's Human Resource office gave LSHS the final Full-Time Employee count. These numbers left multiple certified positions, open from the SERP, not filled.

The reorganization of the district office has eliminated positions that were supporting staff at La Sierra. There were several TOSA (Teacher on Special Assignment) positions with teachers assigned to help develop curriculum and incorporate new teaching strategies to assist teachers in the core subject areas. In 2018-2019, a Math TOSA assisted our Integrated Math 3 teachers to incorporate the Math Vision Project (MVP) math model in classrooms. MVP is designed to have students engage in deeper learning and benefit from gaining a strong conceptual foundation as well as procedural fluency in mathematics through inquiry-based learning. Unfortunately, all TOSA's have been returned to the classroom.

La Sierra High School has been presented with unique challenges associated with downsizing and the loss of several programs. One issue has been trying to maintain the integrity of special programs and offer a sufficient number of courses to meet the needs of a diverse student body. It has also become difficult to offer multiple sections of some classes, thus limiting student choice.

## **Effectiveness of the stakeholder engagement**

### **Parent Involvement**

La Sierra High School welcomes parental involvement on campus. Parents are involved in the School Site Council (SSC) and English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC), which meet regularly throughout the school year. These committees play a vital role in the everyday functions and long-term plans for the school. In addition, La Sierra participates in the Districtwide Action Team for Partnership (ATP). ATP provides structure for implementing successful family engagement strategies that support the school's instructional goals creating a plan for parent and family engagement. In the 2017-2018 school year, the parent groups on campus became one group that is named "Parents Organization Supporting Student Excellence" (POSSE), and which is a non-profit organization working to assist our school in better connecting parents to the school community. Parents volunteer their time as a part of the Copy Cats, a copier service for teachers and staff. Through booster clubs for athletics and for visual and performing arts, parent and community involvement benefit extracurricular activities as well. La Sierra hosts parent-focused events such as AVID Parent Night, Academy Parent Night, and College Night. Through the Gear-Up Grant, a partnership with Parent Institute for Quality

Education educates parents on assisting students in being academically successful in K-12 and post-secondary education.

### **Community Foundation Program**

La Sierra benefits from foundations such as The Alvord Educational Foundation (AEF). AEF is a non-profit, non-political organization dedicated exclusively to the benefit of the students of Alvord Unified School District. Thanks to generous contributions from Alvord staff, from the community, and from company sponsors, AEF has been able to support many school activities through grants for district staff members, helping to realize educational goals for our students. The Alvord Educational Foundation recognizes and promotes excellence within the classroom for teachers, staff, and students.

### **Business and Community Partnerships**

Kaiser Permanente has been a business partner with La Sierra since 1989. As a key partner with La Sierra's Health Career Academy, Kaiser provides guidance on curriculum content, as well as classroom speakers, field trips, mentors, summer employment, and on-site work experience for seniors. A variety of community business partners work with the International Business Academy by serving on the steering committee, by mentoring students, and by serving as guest speakers. Both academies promote academic and vocational curriculum that prepare students for employment and that foster continued interest in post-secondary education. Academies are state funded and can receive up to \$74,700 per year through the California Department of Education.

## **II. Progress on Implementation of the Schoolwide Action Plan/SPSA**

- **Based on the school's summary of progress and impact on student learning, evaluate the degree to which the student learner needs, the identified school needs, and the critical areas for follow-up or growth areas for continuous improvement are aligned and evident in the revised schoolwide action plan/SPSA.**

### **Planned improvements in Student Performance**

Performance Goal 1: Improve overall student performance on the SBAC in English Language Arts and Mathematics. Science and History/Social Studies will directly support improvement on the SBAC (summative assessment) with instructional focus on the ELA claims (reading, writing, research and inquiry, and listening) and Math claims (concepts and procedures, problem solving, communicating reasoning, modeling and data analysis).

Performance Goal 2: Improve student performance on the ELTEL limited English proficient students with the goal to reclassify/redesignate a higher percentage of students each year.

Performance Goal 3: Provide a safe and drug-free environment conducive to learning

### Performance Goal 4: High School Graduation and College Readiness

La Sierra High School addresses student learner needs through the goals of their SPSA. All 4 goals align with the critical areas of need that were listed in the original document from three years past. The current leadership was intentional about including steps to address the areas listed in the WASC document. Funding allocations support classrooms in the way of technology and interventions which are the primary findings from the VC in the critical areas of need. Support has also supported parent growth in the form of the Parent Institute of Quality Education, which graduated 70 parents this year.

- **Based on the VC findings on alignment, evaluate how the school has made progress on the student learner needs and identified school needs in the schoolwide action plan/SPSA to strengthen continuous improvement initiatives (include relevant evidence to support findings.)**

The leadership at LSHS has changed since the last WASC visit bringing a new principal and two new assistant principals. Teacher leadership has also turned over; although there are new stakeholders, the new leadership has been more intentional with addressing the critical areas of need and are making positive strides. To address the needs for more interventions, it was found that there was a need to build positive relationships between students and teachers, as a result, most teachers have received training through “Capturing Kids Hearts”. This training has resulted in students feeling more connected to staff and a genuine caring for their social-emotional well-being. Many of the critical areas identified a need to address at-risk learners, especially English Learners and Special Education populations. After school tutoring has been added in two forms; one is by peers through Academic Assistance Center. The other addition is Saturday Academy which allows students to recuperate attendance and tardy hours while making up academic work.

Turn over has also occurred at the district level, since the last visit, Alvord Unified is on their third superintendent. The district cabinet is also all new to the district. The challenges LSHS has is moving forward with initiatives without consistent support or vision from district leadership. Although LSHS is putting instructional supports in place, funding is not consistent an example exhibited by action taken at the beginning of this school year; four teachers were lost from their roster, leaving La Sierra in a position to remove intervention classes to support core classes. As was suggested in the original report, the VC recommends that for LSHS to continue to move forward that they maintain a consistent administration team and receive support from the district office.

### **III. Schoolwide Areas of Strength and Growth Areas for Continuous Improvement**

- **List the schoolwide areas of strength identified during the current progress visit. (See the schoolwide criteria of the ACS WASC/CDE Focus on Learning manual.)**
- **List the growth areas for continuous improvement that have not yet been completely**

## Visiting Committee's Identified Critical Areas for Follow-up:

1. **Increased support for technology needs in the classroom and on campus.**
  - **Strengths:**LSHS has utilized site funds and increased the quantity of ChromeCarts. Almost every teacher has daily access to a cart. Google Classrooms is being integrated into the daily practices for instructional use.
  - **Areas For Improvement:** The visiting committee observed that Chromecarts are going unused as teachers use whiteboard for lessons/questions/quotes making it difficult for students to see. Students would benefit from more use of Google Classroom. Though teachers seem willing to use technology they are lacking training, especially utilizing anything beyond Google Classroom. The site is still lacking the infrastructure and training to implement this mostly due to lack of district support.
  
2. **Implement intervention and enrichment programs school wide. More opportunities for intervention.**
  - **Strengths:** LSHS is currently attempting intervention within the classroom. OCI is also now geared toward restorative practices over punitive ones. Saturday Academy allows students to make up work and get rid of tardies and absences. LSHS has begun implementation of “Capturing Kids Hearts” to build student/teacher rapport and connection. Saturday Academy and on campus tutoring is also a resource for struggling students.
  - **Areas For Improvement:** Currently there is no system wide intervention plan in place. Classroom teachers could increase the use of collaborative groups and seating in the classroom to foster learning and communication. It is also recommended to vary the use of teaching strategies beyond direct instruction/lecture.
  
3. **Expand special programs and elective offerings.**
  - **Strengths:** Despite declining enrollment the school has held onto programs and offerings such as culinary, health, business, AP offerings, Cadet Corps, AVID, as well as electives and a zero period math offerings. VC had noted that on last visit, there was less open access. Now students report that all programs are accessible.
  
4. **Update facilities, classrooms.**
  - **Strengths:**LSHS has a new administrative building, plans to expand and renovate culinary, safety badge scanning on all doors, and has implemented a schoolwide plan to help custodial purge and clean campus.
  - **Areas For Improvement:** The district is risking the safety of site administration when site admin have to take maintenance issues into their own hands due to district maintenance requests being ignored. LSHS reports that maintenance of site facilities are NOT a district priority. Students cite feeling second to other schools in the district due to

dilapidated buildings and fields. Students felt the school culture is not at a place where students take care of the restrooms, hence dirty restrooms.

**5& 7. More consistency with school policies, administration and parent/community involvement.**

- **Strengths:** LSHS Staff reports increase and improvement with consistency and follow through of school policies with current administration. The blending of the multiparent groups into one has led to unity and inclusion among parents. Student leadership groups also report a better sense of teamwork and consistency thanks to ASB leadership and administrative support. Students report increase with consistency in student discipline and campus security, resulting in a major decrease in students altercations and making them feel very safe on campus. The school provided parent workshops through the Parent Institute of Quality Education (PIQE). Seventy Parents graduated, completing the nine week program, many of whom were parents of EL students. Many athletic organizations report parent support organizations as well as an active ELAC committee.
- **Areas For Improvement:** LSHS is still continues to improve parent participation as reflected in our Sunday meeting where only two parents attended.

**6. Support for writing across the curriculum.**

- **Strengths:** LSHS teachers use of DBQs, IABS, WICOR strategies, and some common curriculum is helping to support writing in cross curriculum areas. Access to Chromecarts and Google Classroom is also a resource for writing in class when used.
- **Areas For Improvement:** Though technology is accessible, it is not used enough when it can be. Students report that most class assignments and essays are handwritten. The VC witnesses many Chromecarts not in use while students struggled to copy from the board and hand write.

**8. Address the needs of the EL population.**

- **Strengths:** LSHS has sheltered classes for EL students with Bilingual aide support as well as PD for sheltered teachers and aides. Students practice the ELPAC during SAT academy to prepare them for the exam which has changed. LSHS is currently working on a new EL plan to address the number of LTELs and to increase the number of reclassified students. Seventy parents graduated from PIQE with training provided by LSHS. Many are parents of EL students.
- **Areas For Improvement:** Students are not being mainstreamed enough in the general ed classroom. There are still a number of LTEL students that need to be reclassified.

**9. Common core/AP textbook adoption.**

- **Areas For Improvement:** Texts are not up to date or do not address all populations. Use of resources such as StudySync are only used at Middle School level for EL. District



support is needed to approve/purchase and implement new texts.

#### **10 &12. AERIES training for parents, teachers and students.**

- **Strengths:** Students report use of AERIES on a daily basis by both themselves and their parents with academics and discipline. Students report that parents and students have the ability to check on their grades, attendance and transcripts. Teachers are keeping grades updated in aeries for student and parent access.
- **Areas For Improvement:** LSHS needs to continue to increase parent outreach and opportunities for staff.

#### **11. Teacher training on assessment data (CFA, PSAT, SAT, SBAC) to inform instruction.**

- **Strengths:** The format is in the process of changing. Teachers have been trained and have access to IO data. There is increased use of IABs in ELA and Math.
- **Areas For Improvement:** LSHS needs to continue to use the data available to them to inform and change instruction to increase student achievement.

#### **13. Address the needs of the special education population.**

- **Strengths:** LSHS has increased professional development and management of IEP's, due to consistency in administrative oversight and implementation of the program. The 504 Coordinator has also streamlined the process for 504 designation and SSTs.
- **Areas For Improvement:** Leadership states that 40-50% of existing suspensions are students on IEPs. LSHS needs to continue to implement strategies and scaffolds listed on IEP's to meet the needs of the growing special education population.

#### **14. Implement a school-wide technology plan; including infrastructure, training, devices and a learning management system**

- **Strengths:** The SPSA supports a plan of the purchase of new technology for student achievement. LSHS has increased the number of devices and would like to move forward with a site plan of using the technology as an instructional tool. There is more access and use of google classroom.
- **Areas For Improvement:** LSHS is lacking infrastructure and support from the district level. The band width does not support the use of new devices. The site needs more support with training on how to integrate technology into the classroom as well as classroom management of the actual devices.

**Include a copy of the hyperlink to the school's most recent schoolwide action plan/SPSA.**

- [https://www.alvordschools.org/cms/lib/CA01900929/Centricity/domain/88/2018-19%20spsa/2018-19\\_SPSA%20LSHS.pdf](https://www.alvordschools.org/cms/lib/CA01900929/Centricity/domain/88/2018-19%20spsa/2018-19_SPSA%20LSHS.pdf)