

**MT. WHITNEY HIGH SCHOOL  
VISITATION COMMITTEE REPORT**

*FOCUS ON LEARNING*

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FOCUS ON LEARNING VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT  
FOR MT. WHITNEY HIGH SCHOOL

**Chapter I: Student/Community Profile**

- *Include School's Student/Community Profile - (attached)*
- *Comments on significant findings of the profile and other items not included in the profile*

**Mt. Whitney** is a comprehensive high school striving to meet the needs of a wide range of students. While about 74% of the school's graduates enter a community college, four-year college or university, trade/technical school, or other post-secondary institution, almost 18% move directly into the workforce. As a result, the school provides both a college prep curriculum and a diverse vocational program. According to the Student Survey, a majority of students believe that their classes are preparing them for the future and that they are learning skills that can be used in the job force. Those same beliefs are revealed in the Parent Survey. A majority of students also believe that it is possible for them to bridge from skill level classes to college prep classes.

**Mt. Whitney's** special population students include Limited English Proficient, Migrant, Resource Specialist, Special Day, and GATE. About 65% of the student body is Anglo and almost 30% is Hispanic; the next largest groups are Asian (2.45%) and African American (1.9%). A majority of students feel that cultural diversity is accepted on campus. One consequence of Tulare County's stalled economy is that 15% of **Mt. Whitney's** students are on the free lunch program. The AFDC rate for Tulare is one of the highest in the nation.

A major change in school culture has been the recent adoption of a "zero tolerance" discipline policy. Covering major Ed Code violations, the policy has increased the number of school suspensions and expulsions. About half of the student body believe that the campus is safe although a majority also feel that the discipline policy as well as the dress code are not fairly and equally enforced.

Standardized test scores indicate that **Mt. Whitney** students perform at state and national norms on both the SAT and the ACT. Although not quantified in test data summaries, Hispanic success rates are reported in the profile to be below norms. Since profile information on Advanced Placement scores does not include previous years, it is unclear whether the number of tests taken and the percentage of passing

scores have increased. Similarly, Golden State Exam information does not reveal what percentage of students who are enrolled in the target subject areas are actually taking the examinations. As **Mt. Whitney High School** transitions from a norm-referenced standardized test approach to a more authentic method of assessment, it will be necessary for the staff to develop and implement an effective way of collecting and presenting this student performance information to parents and community members. For example, as each freshman at **Mt. Whitney** presents a portfolio as part of English class, it will be important to incorporate and interpret results as part of either the profile or the school report card.

About 85% of the student body responded to the Student Survey. Overall, about 90% of the respondents feel that getting a good education is important to them. Students also believe that teachers are fair and helpful and that homework reinforces what is learned in class. Student areas of concern include exclusion from important decisionmaking processes, lack of familiarity with the school's new constitution, Vision Statement, and Expected Schoolwide Learning Results, lack of information regarding scholarships from counselors, and the belief that counselors and teachers are unfamiliar with students' future plans and career goals.

About 40% of **Mt. Whitney** parents responded to the Parent Survey and a majority believe that they are regularly notified of their students' academic progress, that their students have opportunities to be involved in extra-curricular activities, that freshman orientation is helpful, and that the school's atmosphere encourages learning. Parents also believe that the skills of writing, listening, reading, problem solving, calculating, and creative thinking are stressed and practiced in their students' classes. Parents are concerned that counselors do not notify students of scholarship information, that teachers do not take enough time to help students who do not fully understand concepts, and that health services are inadequate. A large percentage indicated that they did not know whether the campus was safe, a fact which suggests the need for stronger public relations and communication.

**Mt. Whitney** is composed of a largely veteran teaching staff. Most of the faculty are certificated to teach in the subject areas where they are assigned, and only nine teachers are placed outside of their credentialed areas. Professional development is determined jointly by district priorities and staff needs; individual teachers have participated in a wide variety of programs/opportunities including CSLA, the School-to-Career initiative, and visits to other schools. The profile does not specify how budget decisions relate to staff development priorities.

Several sections in the profile would be strengthened by further analysis. The graduate survey indicates the numbers of students who enter college but does not provide follow-up data on success rates. Although test data covers the major standardized tests, it does not break down performance among the various ethnic sub-groups. A similar sub-group breakdown of post graduation data would better clarify overall performance patterns. An ongoing challenge for **Mt. Whitney** will be to collect and analyze measurement data on the mastery of the Expected

## Chapter II: Progress Report

- *Comments on the school's major changes and follow-up process since the last self-study*

**Mt. Whitney High School's** process for addressing previous WASC recommendations is manifested in its organizational structure and in the School Site Council and library improvement plans. The school has implemented a shared decisionmaking model and has strengthened communication among and between the various stakeholders. Although the school plans reflect general goals and objectives, the administration and staff intend to use the Focus on Learning Action Plans and the Visiting Committee's feedback as the basis for specific annual school goals. Additionally, the school needs to develop a formalized plan for monitoring and evaluating those goals. Staff development in instructional strategies and school-to-career planning has enriched curriculum and support services; the school is currently working to assure uniform implementation of reform efforts by all departments and by all support personnel.

Since the last accreditation, a school leadership team has been developed whose membership includes administration, department chairs, and elected members of the School Site Council. As "keepers of the vision," this group will provide leadership in guiding and monitoring the school's direction in the years ahead.

- *Discussion of the progress made on all recommendations from the last full visit*

The previous major recommendations from the 1993 WASC Pursuing Excellence Visiting Committee have been addressed. Six major recommendations dealt with articulation between departments and with feeder schools, career paths, the development/implementation/monitoring of school goals, integrated learning skills, programs for non-college bound students, and instructional strategies. A seventh major recommendation directed the school to aggressively address recommendations made by the 1986 Visiting Committee (the broad-based, collaborative setting and evaluating of school goals, guidance, staff development, communication).

Listed below are summaries of the specific progress made in these key areas.

- Established in 1993, **Mt. Whitney's** School Site Council creates a yearly plan that by law is formally submitted to the Board of Education. A school philosophy and vision statement along with a library improvement plan have also been generated. In addition to the expected schoolwide learning results, **Mt. Whitney High School** has also identified five basic skill goals as instructional objectives. As these various plans and goals are coordinated into one comprehensive statement of yearly goals, a specific formal plan of evaluation (to include the mastery of ESLRs) needs to be developed.

- SB 1882 funds have facilitated staff participation in professional development opportunities and programs including the San Joaquin Valley Writing, Literature, Math, and Foreign Language Projects, the UCLA Writing Project, subject area conferences and workshops, California School Leadership Academy, CLAD training, and CPM Mathematics and Math A and B summer workshops. Information and strategies are shared through mentor teacher publications, inservice presentations and staff meetings. The school has identified the need to involve more staff members in the Pioneer All-School Study Skills (PASS) Program, which is designed to enable students and parents to stay regularly informed of assignments, tests, projects for all classes.
- Every sophomore student at **Mt. Whitney High School** now meets with a counselor to create a three-year academic plan. Parents are invited and encouraged to attend these sessions and explanatory letters are mailed home. Additional guidance services include Freshmen Orientation, substance abuse/divorce support groups, College Night, 504 accommodations, the student study team, crisis intervention teams, college and career counseling and Independent Study programs.
- Communication among stakeholders has been improved through period staff meetings, formation of a school leadership team, assigning an administrative liaison to each department, articulation meetings with feeder schools (largely department based) and the open meetings of School Site Council. Opening more informal lines of communication and publishing a summary of the period meetings have been suggested by some staff members as ways to further refine communication.
- Career education operates on several levels at **Mt. Whitney High School**. A career technician helps students with career exploration through informational computer software, job shadowing, the annual Career Fair, career planning folders and some placement services. Retail Sales and Entrepreneurship classes provide jobs while English classes offer a career unit and some English and math requirements are met through Business English, Recordkeeping and Accounting classes. A comprehensive and coordinated plan linking services, curriculum and personnel has not yet been implemented.
- Integrated skills are taught through cross-curricular journal writing, portfolio assignments in various departments, product-oriented projects and a Portfolio Day presentation coordinated by the English Department for each freshman.
- Additional focus has been placed on the non-college bound student through a Freshman Core Curriculum and a Sophomore Core Curriculum. Teams of teachers share the same students in order to provide support, integrated instruction, guidance and motivating enrichment activities. Tutorial centers are available to students throughout the community, and the school is

beginning an AVID program. Mt. Whitney High School also maintains 2 plus 2 agreements with the College of the Sequoias and has received a state partnership grant.

- Teachers have received training in sheltered instruction, collaborative learning, the use of technology and various teaching strategies designed to actively involve students in powerful learning. The degree of implementation varies across the total curricular program.

Similarly, schoolwide and departmental recommendations have also been addressed. Areas of change include the following:

- Arranging for students to take classes at the College of the Sequoias
- Implementing a Multi-Cultural Council to foster cultural harmony among students
- Revising the ASB Constitution to strengthen cultural diversity programs
- Using Agriculture Incentive Grant money to purchase scientific equipment
- Developing a Business Technology Core Curriculum aligned with state and national standards
- Developing Career Path Programs in Child Development and in Nutrition
- Hiring new computer technicians to maintain and upgrade existing technology
- Expanding student enrichment opportunities within the GATE program
- Implementing a training program for teachers leading to CLAD certification
- Revising math course offerings to promote heterogeneous grouping of students
- Recruiting community members for various career related advisory councils

### **Chapter III: Self-Study Process**

- *Include a copy of the school's expected schoolwide learning results - (attached)*
- *Comments on the school's self-study process with respect to the key outcomes and accuracy -- observable evidence representative of what ALL students are doing and producing and supportive of the identified schoolwide growth areas*

#### *Accomplishment of the Seven Key Outcomes and Accuracy*

The self-study process has established a new model of collaborative planning for Mt.

**Whitney High School.** Departments have broken through their isolation and have connected with each other to establish and pursue schoolwide goals. After some initial confusion and concerns, staff members began to see the process as a way to honestly analyze the instructional program and to clarify the school's mission and direction. Using inservice days, creative scheduling and many hours of personal time, staff members met frequently to analyze a wide variety of evidence related to the ESLRs, the 16 WASC/CDE criteria, the state frameworks and current educational research. Especially strong was the looping between Focus Groups and departments. In addition, Focus Group members critically read each other's reports in a successful effort to maintain a consistency of format and evaluative method. Stakeholders readily shared information with the Visiting Committee and entered into dialogue eager for suggestions that would help them improve their school. The success of the self study process is demonstrated by the accomplishment of each key outcome.

1. ***The involvement and collaboration of each stakeholder group in the self-study***  
Membership in the Focus Groups reflected the participation of parents, students, support staff and the entire faculty. Student and parent participation in the actual writing and revising of drafts was less extensive than that of staff. The WASC Leadership Team, composed of the principal, assistant principal, self-study coordinator and the Focus Group chairs, guided the process and monitored evidence gathering, analysis revision and consistency. In their additional roles as members of School Site Council, school leadership team, and school administration, the WASC Leadership Team will continue to oversee the implementation of the Action Plans.

Student and Parent Groups constructed the student and community surveys and representatives contributed insights to the Focus Groups. Survey results were incorporated throughout the report.

2. ***A better understanding about the impact of the program on student learning***  
Focus Group members compiled a comprehensive list of school programs, projects and assignments designed to actively involve students in their learning. Some examples of interdisciplinary teaching as well as instances of career connections and technology applications were detailed. Overall this information tended toward cataloguing rather than analysis of what special skills, concepts or performance indicators were demonstrated in the specific student work reviewed and analyzed by a Focus Group (evidence provided on site, however, did include detailed analysis). Similarly, identified areas for improvement in teaching and learning emphasized issues of physical facilities, community involvement and guidance rather than the learning opportunities and assessment directly experienced by students. Nevertheless, the report clearly and continually established that staff is committed to an enriched learning environment for all students.
3. ***The development, clarification, or refinement of expected schoolwide learning results***  
**Mt. Whitney High School's** development of expected schoolwide learning results

was predated by earlier school and district discussions of student performance outcomes. Through a series of student/parent/staff meetings in 1993, the school developed and the School Site Council approved a list known as the Student Outcomes. Staff participation in CSLA and Second to None workshops further refined the outcomes. At approximately the same time, the District Office called a Community Forum attended by about 150 different students and adults for the purpose of discussing what a graduating senior should be able to do. These ideas were synthesized by a writing committee and formally adopted by the Board in 1994 as the List of Agreements. **Mt. Whitney High School's** current ESLRs are a more detailed refinement of this List of Agreements. The ESLRs have been publicized throughout the community. The staff's commitment to the ESLRs is illustrated by the history of outcomes discussion and by the current efforts to implement ways to measure student mastery of the learning results.

4. ***A better understanding of specific disciplines/support programs compared to appropriate curricular references/current educational thinking***

Most departments saw the accreditation process as an opportunity to validate, expand and collaborate on innovative programs they had previously begun. Staff members indicated that they were pleasantly surprised with how well they aligned in many of the criteria areas. Projects like the Freshman Portfolio, Freshman Core Curriculum, Sophomore Core Curriculum, job shadowing, tutorial centers, 2 + 2 articulation agreements and career pathways provide evidence of enriched curriculum and systems of student support. Most stakeholders understand the critical importance of moving forward with a well-coordinated assessment plan for the ESLRs and for individual course standards.

5. ***The assessment of the actual student program and its impact on student learning with respect to the criteria, the guide questions, and the rubrics***

As is the case at most schools, there is a wide range among stakeholders in the degree of familiarity with such school improvement guides as Second to None, SCANS, curriculum frameworks, brain research, authentic assessment research and constructivist theory. Similarly, the use of student-active instructional strategies and real-life connections varies widely from classroom to classroom. Overall, however, each department has honestly analyzed its program in light of the ESLRs and the WASC/CDE criteria. Evidence has been referenced in the Self-Study Report and was provided for the review of the Visiting Committee.

Evidence examined by Visiting Committee members revealed students creating products in metals class, writing about dinner parties with historical figures in social science, collecting and analyzing flowering weeds in biology, describing reasoning projects in geometry, creating literary character charts in English, applying database software in business, completing job shadowing essays for English, designing family trees and writing pen pal letters in foreign language, completing income tax forms in work experience, designing wallpaper in VAPA, and graphing health data in algebra. Additional evidence showed students involved in environmental clean-up, emergency simulations, the formation of classroom



constitutions, foreign language news broadcasts, desktop publishing, photographic essay design and various art projects.

6. ***The development of a schoolwide action plan and correlated discipline/support program action steps to address identified growth needs***

Mt. Whitney's Action Plans address the need for a broader and more collaborative support network for students, the expansion of student-active instructional strategies and interdisciplinary teaching and revision of course standards and assessment practices to more closely align with the ESLRs. The Action Plans grew out of an in-depth reading of the Focus Group reports by all stakeholders, continually looped feedback between departments and Focus Groups, discussion with the Visiting Committee chair and intense analysis by the WASC Leadership Team.

A special feature and strength of the Action Plans is a written statement (included in the Self-Study appendix) from each stakeholder group on how it will specifically support and implement the schoolwide plans. Commitments to staff development, research, experimentation, collaborative planning, networking, grant development, etc. are among the stated areas of support.

7. ***The development and implementation of an accountability system for monitoring the accomplishment of the schoolwide action plan***

Accountability for implementation of the Action Plans resides with the WASC Leadership Team. Although this formal body will not continue beyond the visitation year, the members will be responsible for implementation through their roles on School Site Council, on school leadership team, and within the administrative structure as well as through their participation in study groups attached to each Action Plan area. As part of the follow-up process, the school will continue to more specifically define assessment criteria.

#### **Chapter IV: Quality of the School's Program**

◦ ***Discussion of the school program and the school support for student learning through what currently exists***

A. ***Vision, Leadership, and Culture***

Mt. Whitney High School, in preparation for the WASC Focus on Learning report, solicited the assistance of the School Site Council and an active school leadership team to address and review the school's vision statement. While both groups felt that the school's vision statement was in place, they were strongly challenged to address the third criteria on culture. The school recognizes the need to continue to solicit more input from students, parents and the community at large.

***What currently exists***

A1 ◦ ***Clearly stated school vision or purpose based on 1) beliefs, 2) student***

- *needs, and 3) current educational research*
- *Support of school's vision or purpose by governing authority and the central administration*
- *School's purpose defined by expected schoolwide learning results: what all students should know and be able to do*

The vision statement review process started in 1993 when a series of planning meetings and staff inservices occurred to address the concept of what students should know to prepare them for the world of work. During this process, several instructional themes were identified: communication skills, workplace ethics, setting goals, problem solving abilities, vocational/salable skills and self confidence/self-esteem. In addition, the staff felt strongly that discipline needed improvement and identified the following areas of concern: litter, use of vulgar language, public display of affection and inappropriate dress.

Through the guidance of the school leadership team in 1993 and the need to revise the philosophy statement in preparation for the previous WASC process, five skill areas of instructional focus were refined: basic skills, citizenship, critical thinking, effective communication and life skills. While the school leadership team selected staff members to work on each of the five skill areas identified by the total staff at planning period meetings, under the direction of the new superintendent, representatives from the community and the school were invited to determine what every student graduate must be able to know, do, understand and value to be successful in the real world. The work of the district committee and the **Mt. Whitney High School** staff went hand in hand, although there had been little previous collaboration on the instructional direction of the district and the school.

In 1993, the Board of Education approved the district's List of Agreements leaving **Mt. Whitney High School** the task of rethinking the five skill areas previously identified by the school leadership team. With the assistance of the School Site Council, the process evolved into the ESLRs, which were formally adopted in the spring of 1995.

- A2
- *School leadership decisions and initiation of activities that focus on all students achieving the expected schoolwide learning results*
  - *Leadership empowerment of staff and encouragement of commitment, participation and shared responsibility for student learning*

A decisionmaking flow chart and the composition of the School Site Council were reorganized in accordance with the suggested guidelines of the California Department of Education. In order to ensure that effective communication with the entire staff continue, the school leadership team was established in January of 1994. Each department selected one representative to serve, and elected members of the School Site Council were made automatic members. Publishing and widely distributing agendas, minutes, etc. would strengthen effective communication with all

stakeholders.

As the team reviewed the school's mission, philosophy, and vision, the ESLRs were discussed and formally adopted by the faculty in March, 1995. The Board of Education commended the school for its progress in implementing the District's List of Agreements which is aligned with the school's ESLRs. As a result of the faculty's commitment to improve the educational process at **Mt. Whitney High School**, various programs have been developed such as AVID, Freshman Portfolio Day, Five-Year Library Improvement Plan and Career Education Program.

During the past two years, the school leadership team, accompanied by other staff members, has been visiting statewide programs to generate ideas for programs that will effectively serve the needs of students. These trips were funded by the SB1882 funds and supported by both the district and school site administration. Other visitations by board members and the high school staff are being planned by the school leadership team and the District. In addition, broad staff participation in workshops, conferences, etc., has resulted in a commitment to school change.

- A3
- *School culture characterized by trust, professionalism, high expectations for all students and a focus on continual school improvement*
  - *School safe and orderly place which nurtures learning*

**Mt. Whitney High School** provides a nurturing environment designed to offer all students an opportunity to participate in school activities. Sensitive to cultural understanding, last year the Associated Student Body established a Multicultural Council to develop an awareness of and appreciation for the school's cultural and ethnic diversity. The highlight of their efforts was a celebration of Multi-Cultural Week. Because of its success, this year an entire month will be dedicated to cultural understanding.

Several activities are in place at **Mt. Whitney High School** to incorporate students smoothly into campus life. Pioneer Partners is a service organization which pairs up regular students with Special Education students. Freshmen are welcomed each year with a freshman barbecue during Freshman Orientation while senior students are served at a senior barbecue by their teachers before they attend Grad Night. The staff believe strongly that students' self-esteem, commitment and participation are being addressed.

**Mt. Whitney High School** staff, administration and students are committed to maintaining a safe and nurturing educational environment. The existing discipline code is continually upgraded and revised to reflect staff concerns and higher student behavior expectations. The strict enforcement of a zero tolerance policy approved by the Board along with a number of various school safety programs has enabled the school to maintain a safe campus.

While supportive of the zero tolerance policy, students feel that they were not involved in the implementation of other policies such as dress code and tardy procedures. The day-to-day culture of the school is strongly influenced by third and fourth generation Pioneers and a large number of staff who have chosen to remain at the school along with several alumni who have returned to teach at **Mt. Whitney High School**.

***Areas of Strength*** (if any)

- A sincere desire by stakeholders to address the school's vision and purpose as defined by the schoolwide expected learning results
- An increased awareness by staff of the school's diverse student population
- An increased awareness among stakeholders of the decisionmaking process for the school
- A schoolwide commitment to providing a safe and orderly environment
- An energetic commitment to schoolwide change

***Key Issues*** (if any) **that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students**

- The need to provide support to staff to further enhance student self-esteem, participation and commitment
- The implementation and monitoring of a process to review yearly the school's vision and purpose
- The increased involvement of parents and students in all school issues
- The review of Freshman and Sophomore Core Curriculum
- The need to involve staff in a comprehensive budget decision making process
- The need to translate WASC Action Plans into specific annual school goals

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

- Schoolwide Focus Group conference
- Conferences with students, staff, parents and district/site administration

- Review of Self-Study Report and various school and district documents such as school mission, vision, discipline code, attendance policy
- Conference with school leadership team and School Site Council members
- Student and Parent Survey results
- Review of the response to previous WASC recommendations

## B. *Curricular Paths*

### *What currently exists*

- B1 • *Student participation in a challenging, relevant and coherent curriculum*  
 The report indicates that **Mt. Whitney High School** is progressively responding to the most recent educational practices and offers its students a challenging, relevant and coherent curriculum with evidence of linkages to expected schoolwide learning results. The curriculum is broad as it accommodates the future goals of all students while remaining flexible enough to allow for changing student paths. It is evident that many students think, reason, solve problems, construct meaning, make connections, are creative, productive and communicate well. Curricular examples include occupational-vocational education through TCOVE (ROP), Freshman Core Program, English, Math, Social Science and Science Freshman and Sophomore Cores, sheltered instruction for NES/LES students, Business Department career pathways, California's College Prep Mathematics curriculum and the proposed AVID program. A newly awarded grant allows for the establishment of an Agribusiness Academy over a three year period beginning in the fall of 1996. Technology is being used on a limited basis to support curriculum through the use of non-print electronic information technologies, laser discs and CD-ROMs. Curricular relevance is further defined through the English Department's cross curricular Freshman Portfolio Project, Vocational Education's Advisory Councils, Summer Enrichment Project (involving on-the-job training and inclusive of the business, English and math Departments), social science's mock interviews and training in job hunting skills, visual and performing arts awards and ratings and career-based clubs.
- B2 • *Upon graduation students prepared to enter work force or continue their education in either a technical or academic program*  
**Mt. Whitney High School** provides a curricular foundation that enables its students to pursue varied careers or educational goals. College Prep, Honors, AP and a newly proposed AVID program prepare students for college matriculation. The business, foreign language and industrial technology departments have 2+2 articulation agreements with the College of the Sequoias. TCOVE programs provide for career exploration and a

bridge from school to certain vocational areas or technical schools. The special education student is prepared for independent career or college decisions through a State Department of Rehabilitation Transition Program and counseling efforts.

- B3
- *All students have personal learning plans*
  - *Personal learning plans an educational road map for accomplishing post-high school goals*

Each student at **Mt. Whitney High School** has a three-year personal learning plan. The plan is developed through a process involving a sophomore interview, junior review and a senior review and "final contact" between collaborating parties. The process is facilitated by counselors and career technicians. A flexible scheduling of the initial interview process is designed to accommodate and encourage parental participation. The plan, which is used to schedule courses over three years, remains flexible in order to accommodate modifications based upon changes in interests and goals. Several guidance services are available to students including EUREKA, Stardata, InfoTracker, and the ASVAB test. IEPs are the primary tool used to assist special education students in establishing and monitoring their personal learning plans.

- B4
- *Organizational structure for and school and community commitment to professional development*
  - *Staff use of professional development to facilitate greater achievement of the expected schoolwide learning results*
  - *Staff monitoring and support given to facilitate greater achievement of the expected schoolwide learning results*

Visalia Unified School District and **Mt. Whitney High School** appear to be committed to professional development. Staff development is driven by perceived individual staff needs and is supported by both site and district administration. Staff and departments participate in conferences and seminars pertinent to their individual disciplines, while district-supported seminars address teaching strategies and methodologies. Time was and is being used to develop and refine expected schoolwide learning results and to assess student learning and alignment with those ESLRs. Mentoring and coaching occur predominantly within departments and under the leadership of department chairpersons. While there is no formal staff development plan in place, the staff has identified the need for and is committed to its implementation.

*Areas of Strength (if any)*

- A range and depth of relevant course offerings that provide a viable pathway to post secondary education and/or the work force
- The availability of summer enrichment programs and the proposed

development of FAST (Freshman Academic Skills Training) for at-risk students

- The development for each student of a three-year personal learning plan that is flexible and subject to review and revision if appropriate
- The time commitment of staff to the in-depth discussions leading to the development of ESLRs
- The establishment of Freshman and Sophomore Core Curriculum (currently being tabled for the 1996-97 school year with the implementation of the Agribusiness Academy) and the Freshman Portfolio Project as steps leading to cross-curricular instruction and school-to-career integration
- The dedication of staff to facilitate the personal learning plans

***Key Issues*** (if any) **that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students**

- The review of guidance services provided by each individual counselor and the investigation of alternative means of assisting counselors
- The expansion of the freshman portfolio to lead to a senior project
- The need to develop formal comprehensive curricular paths aligned with state frameworks and ESLRs
- The need to expand and enhance the personal learning plans for each student while insuring that the plans are the results of collaboration of students, parents, teachers and counseling staff
- The implementation of a formal staff development plan

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

- Student interviews and work
- Teacher observations
- Self-Study Report
- Interviews with teachers and support staff, parents and students
- Conferences with Focus Group
- Student and Parent Surveys

**C. *Powerful Teaching and Learning***

A concerted effort was made by the stakeholders of **Mt. Whitney High School** to assess the teaching and learning that take place at this school. There was

significant interaction between administration, faculty, parents, classified staff and students. Several meetings occurred to discuss the degree to which the school is fulfilling the three criteria of Powerful Teaching and Learning as they relate to the expected schoolwide learning results (ESLRs). The school provides its students with a myriad of experiences in the classroom as well as outside the classroom. The use of outside speakers from the community, field trips to other sites on campus as well as off campus and other such activities lend support to the real-world aspect of students' education. It was determined by the PT&L Focus Group that powerful teaching and learning are indeed taking place at **Mt. Whitney High School**.

The school recognizes a need to expand the variety of instructional strategies used in all classrooms and to review several areas that require improvement. Teachers and counselors need to work more closely to help prepare students for post-secondary education and career choices. In addition, the school needs to explore more ways to solicit input from the parents of students as well as the community at large to help enhance the educational process.

### *What currently exists*

- C1
- *Teachers involving students in challenging learning experiences*
  - *Teachers using a variety of strategies that actively engage students and help them succeed at high levels*
- Some teachers at **Mt. Whitney High School** see themselves in the role of facilitator. Science is sequenced by math skills which promote learning from the concrete to the abstract. Although there is a limited amount of technological hardware available, the teaching staff understands the role of up-to-date technology as a means of helping students improve their communication and computational skills. Teaching strategies focus on the process of developing the skills of writing, speaking, listening, reading, problem solving, creative thinking, math, calculating and studying. Some teachers provide their students with varied experiences which depart from the traditional practice of only just delivering information. In addition, there is evidence that faculty are involved in staff development activities which extend to periodic curriculum review and revision.
- C2
- *Students encouraged to do challenging work that integrates higher order thinking skills with applications of new knowledge and skills*
  - *Students experience current, relevant courses which integrate vocational and academic content*
  - *Collaboration occurs among teachers, between teachers and students, and among students*
- With the implementation of the current ESLRs, the school embarked upon the development of its Self-Study. As a part of this process, some teachers are reviewing and revising their courses to have them more closely aligned to the ESLRs. Innovative writing activities have developed from this such



as science department students actively involved with journal writing. Writing exercises are emphasized in physical education classes. In addition, physical education offers an instructional unit that encourages student fitness and promotes the development of a personal fitness plan.

Integration of vocational skills with academic components has been developed and included as part of the curriculum in several instructional areas. As an example, industrial technology and computer publishing classes engage in commercial activities within the community. In addition, student members of the school newspaper and yearbook work collaboratively in conjunction with local business. Students are challenged to excel. This is accomplished by teaching techniques that stress inquiry, the creating of new knowledge by formulating and solving problems, collaborative learning, communication skills and writing.

All students are given the opportunity to participate in school activities. Curricular and extra-curricular activities provide for a collaborative environment which tends to emphasize working together and relying on each other. School clubs are very active at **Mt. Whitney High School**. This has been found to be of particular relevance to at-risk students. Collaboration occurs on the **Mt. Whitney High School** campus among teachers, between teachers and students and between students.

- C3
- *Students routinely use a variety of resources for learning*
  - *Students engage in learning experiences beyond limits of textbook and the classroom*

Teachers encourage students to pursue learning experiences outside the textbook and classroom environment. Some experiences are made available through the rather extensive library facility. Teachers must plan for and schedule the use of the library because of excess schoolwide demand. A variety of resources is available here in addition to books. Some instructional departments provide a rich variety of experiences in which students may participate. More than half of the **Mt. Whitney High School** student body is involved in visual and performing arts activities. Field trips to various areas around the state offer experiences that could not compare with what is available at home. Musical theater in the Los Angeles area, a trip to an aquarium in the Bay Area and the activities of the agriculture department culminating in the annual county fair are but a few of the activities that take place throughout the year. Many students participate in community activities, local and statewide competitions and exhibitions.

*Areas of Strength (if any)*

- A diverse instructional program that provides for the learning needs of students with a variety of academic abilities
- Increasing teacher use of collaborative and cooperative learning, student-

active teaching strategies and technology

- A campus-wide environment that is conducive to learning
- The development of ESLRs by the faculty which has forged a connection between the staff, curriculum and the students served
- Students encouraged to extend their educational experiences beyond the confines of the classroom and/or campus
- Evidence of writing across the curriculum
- Technology as a means of teaching students how to improve their communication and computational skills, to access databases, to apply knowledge, to manipulate data and to work on projects

***Key Issues*** (if any) **that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students**

- The review and adjustment where appropriate of the school schedule for both the regular academic year as well as summer school to more efficiently use instructional time to the benefit of students
- The investigation of and development of ways to more creatively utilize parents and involve the community in supporting the educational enterprise
- The study of ways of altering the school schedule to allow for the inclusion of regular staff planning meetings throughout the school year so that greater collaborative opportunities may occur
- The review of the time required by students in the classroom and the revamping of the job experience program to place students in their job after the school day
- The implementation of an inservice program to elaborate upon new and updated technology that periodically becomes available on campus
- The increased involvement of all students in challenging learning experiences that involve problem solving, collaborative work, meaningful application of knowledge and skills
- The development, implementation and monitoring of a focused staff development program sustained over time that enhances active, challenging learning experiences for students
- The resolution of curricular and instructional issues associated with summer

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

- -Conferences with Focus Group
- Interdepartment and intradepartment collaboration projects that significantly enrich learning experiences for **Mt. Whitney High School** students
- Ongoing review and assessment of the school instructional program as demonstrated in agendas, minutes, etc.
- Self-Study and additional written comments from faculty that reflect changes they have made in course content, materials, and strategies to help students achieve expected schoolwide learning results
- Student work that provided evidence regarding the use of a higher order of thinking skills, active learning, collaborative learning, application of knowledge to real world problems, the use of technology and activities that use both individual and group assignments
- Observed instruction
- Dialogue with students
- Review of school documents including test data, attendance/behavior data, master schedule and minutes of meetings

**D. Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth**

The school has developed and implemented many support services to assure student success. Parents and community members provide additional resources. Parents, students and staff have indicated a need to more fully integrate and articulate existing and planned support services.

*What currently exists*

- D1 • *Support system in place for every student to help ensure academic success*  
Many teachers participate in providing support mechanisms for students to assure access to and success within their academic programs. The science and industrial technology departments, for example, make it a practice to provide students additional assistance after school. The English and business departments staff the computer lab during lunchtime to provide students expanded access time. Additionally, the business, math, and English departments provide a summer enrichment program for at-risk students. It is recognized that while many teachers utilize the Pioneer All-

School Student Skills Program, some teachers do not currently participate in the program.

ESL students receive sheltered instruction in geography, driver's education, world history, U.S. history and health science. While a program of structured collaboration and inclusion for special education students is not in place, special education students are being mainstreamed to the maximum extent possible as stated in their Individual Education Plans. Other students who need special support in meeting the challenges of rigorous courses are encouraged to get tutoring and/or make use of available school or community library facilities and services. The student survey has indicated the school may need to do more advertising and promoting of the tutoring services available for students.

Although a fully integrated and articulated system of academic support services for students is not completely developed, the school has implemented alternative instructional options for identified at-risk freshman and sophomore students. Additional programs, including AVID, are being considered for future implementation. Concerns have been expressed regarding the 60 percent of all freshmen who receive at least one "F" grade at the quarter. Another concern has been expressed about progress reports which sometimes take an additional 2 weeks to process and may arrive too late to help improve students' grades.

D2 • *Students have access to a system of support services, activities and opportunities at the school and within the community*

Many opportunities, services and activities are available for the student to feel connected to the school and supported by it. The extra-curricular program is varied and students are encouraged to take part in the full range of sports and clubs being offered. The fifty-dollar transportation fee may discourage some students although the school has a work program in place for those students with financial needs. The school is making progress in connecting the co-curricular and extra-curricular activities to its expected schoolwide learning results.

Whenever possible, teachers and staff provide encouragement and advice for those students who excel or who are at-risk. The staff uses a formal process for identifying and finding solutions to students' personal, academic and behavioral problems. This process results in students being referred to counseling, special programs or an administrator to receive further assistance. Although the focus of guidance and counseling is primarily on academics, career awareness, scheduling, course selection, graduation requirements and college entrance requirements, counselors do attempt to identify at-risk students. These students and their families are encouraged to utilize school and community social, psychological and health services when needed. The school uses a student study team to match special needs

students with appropriate support services. Although the school makes available many varied resources within the community, parents and students have expressed a concern that they are not made aware of all of the support services.

D3 • *School leadership employment of a wide range of strategies to allow parental and community involvement in the school's support system for students*

• *The resources available to the school are sufficient and effectively used to support students in accomplishing the schoolwide learning results*

The school leadership staff involves parents and community members in various support systems for students. Through their involvement on the School Site Council, school leadership team, Bilingual Advisory Council, parents and community members participate in the problem solving and decision making processes. Community members serve on the agricultural and industrial technology advisory committees. Their involvement provides support for academic and non-academic issues. Community and parents actively participate in Career Day and Portfolio Day. The business community offers the school advice, resources and real-world connections through such opportunities as job-shadowing and mentoring.

The school has added resources to help students meet its expected schoolwide learning results. Improvements to the Career Center and Library Media Center provide additional support for students. Although the school staff, parents and community members are involved in discussions regarding the utilization of resources, there is no ongoing, systematic approach for improving the use of resources.

***Areas of Strength*** (if any)

- The development of an alternative educational option for at-risk freshmen and sophomores
- The establishment of links with parents and community that provide resources and build connections with the school
- A freshman orientation program that helps prepare freshmen for their high school experience
- The establishment of community study centers to provide support services for students
- A positive school climate where students and staff feel safe and secure
- The Career Center's infusion of technology including the Eureka and InfoTracker systems
- The counseling department's focus on academics, scheduling, course selection, graduation requirements, career awareness and college entrance

requirements

- A caring and committed staff: teachers, counselors, administration and classified personnel
- The library media center's dedication to meeting students' and staff's personal, instruction and curricular needs

***Key Issues*** (if any) that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students

- The coordination of the comprehensive student support services provided by various stakeholders to help students achieve expected schoolwide learning results
- The resolution of whether summer school should focus more on remediation classes rather than college preparatory classes
- The development of a communication system that provides teachers with information regarding students' special needs
- The development of a site and district technology plan
- A system to better inform students of scholarship information
- A review of the Pioneer All Schools Study Program to consider its revitalization on a campus wide basis

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

- Results of Student and Parent Surveys
- Focus Group meeting
- Five-year Library Improvement Plan
- List of community services available in the Counseling Office
- Self-Study Report
- List of participants at Career Day and Portfolio Day
- List of advisory committees with community participation and support
- Observation of Eureka and InfoTracker computer systems available to students

**E. Assessment and Accountability**

Through the Self-Study, Mt. Whitney High School staff members have discovered

that they have actually been engaged in a lengthy evolution of the process of assessment and evaluation which has altered some curriculum, instruction, technology, activities and services offered. The school is realizing that assessment at all levels is a key strategy for bringing about significant educational reform. Since the last accreditation staff feel they have made important advances and significant changes in their use of assessment and schoolwide accountability. Their ultimate goal is a continuous feedback loop of the stakeholders, district personnel and the Board of Education. This is the first year for ESLRs and teachers are just now developing means of assessing progress toward their accomplishment.

*What currently exists*

- E1 • *School, district and community regularly review student progress toward accomplishing the expected schoolwide learning results*

When the staff began to look at the full process of schoolwide evaluation, there was a fear they lagged behind in this area and relied too much on traditional methods. They realized that they had been moving in a new direction. They see performance levels for various ESLRs as naturally coming from a variety of courses, activities and assignments depending on the particular nature of the learning experience. The school has identified several assessment activities, community support groups or community exhibits for each one of the ESLRs.

There is a need for all subjects or departments to look at ways to assess the ESLRs for their content field.

- E2 • *Teachers' and students' frequent use of assessment and integration of results into the teaching/learning process*  
• *Assessment results serve as the basis for reevaluating and redesigning the 1) curriculum, 2) instructional practices and the 3) students' personal learning plans*

Staff is exploring a variety of assessment to be used throughout the departments in entry standards, exit standards, and certificate programs. Three types of assessment are being used by staff: traditional testing, product-driven assessment measured by quality of a product, and a combination of the two. Each of the departments summarized its assessment; very general descriptions were often used like "evaluation of all types." Assessment results are considered as a typical means of placing students in proper courses of study and directing them through their learning plans. Teacher recommendation and traditional testing methods continue to be a means to regulate class selection. A few departments used other methods (such as samples of student writing in the English department) to guide their students to the next appropriate course selection or level.

There is limited use of assessment for the purpose of re-evaluating current curriculum or redesigning it based on evidence.

- E3 • *Assessment of expected schoolwide learning results drive the school's*

- *program development and resource allocation*  
*Assessment results reported to the entire school community on a regular basis*

Beginning January 16, 1996, the district organized an Assessment Committee composed of representatives from all schools, K-12. The current district Comprehensive Assessment Philosophy Statement will be revised to correspond with and meet the needs of the ESLRs.

Department chairs distribute funds based on perceived needs in their department. There is no formal structure to share information with the staff regarding allocation of all school funds.

Some of the community receives feedback from participating in various departmental assessment activities.

***Areas of Strength*** (if any)

- The recognition that assessment at all levels is a key strategy to bring about significant educational reform
- A variety of assessment means which is being explored within the school at some levels and in some areas
- The perception by students and parents that **Mt. Whitney High School** is preparing students for the future, regardless of their plans after high school
- The staff perception that school-to-career transition is a way to connect with the community
- A Freshman Core Curriculum which has increased learning opportunities for at-risk students
- Those departments (e.g., business, consumer and family studies, English, industrial technology and mathematics) which are assessing their programs based on student performance and which plan to revise curriculum based on student outcomes
- A lower dropout rate as shown in the Student Community Profile

***Key Issues*** (if any) **that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students**

- The development of departmental course standards for content and assessment aligned with district's assessment philosophy



- The development and establishment of a process to evaluate all students' fulfillment of the ESLRs
- The use of assessment to redesign curriculum and instructional practices
- The addressing of student sub-groups scoring at or below norms on some tests
- The development of a way to assess needs and allocate funds based on the best possible learning environment
- The need to explore more ways to involve the community in assessment and accountability

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

- Assessment Committee Focus Group process and timelines
- Conference with Focus Group, district and school staff, school leadership team, School Site Council members
- Review of school documents, master schedule, drop-out rate data, school budgets, course data, ESLRs
- Self-Study Report
- Classroom observations and student work/projects
- Response to previous WASC recommendations
- Conferences with students, parents, staff, district and site administration
- The surveys which reflect the desire by the staff, parents and students to continue the progress toward assessment of the ESLRs
- Standardized test results

*Synthesis of Schoolwide Areas of Strength and Schoolwide Critical Areas for Follow-up*

### *General Comments*

#### *Schoolwide Areas of Strength*

1. The instructional staff's positive involvement in the formulation of ESLRs, a process which has created a sense of empowerment and purpose

2. The instructional staff's proactive approach to addressing identified student needs (e.g., the development of the Freshmen and Sophomore Core Curriculum programs for at-risk freshmen and sophomores)
3. The Career Center's infusion and integration of technology within the school's career guidance program
4. Students' pride in Mt. Whitney programs and their sincere desire to prevent the use of drugs and alcohol and the control of gang activity on the school campus
5. The ability of students to take classes at College of Sequoias
6. The establishment of the Multi-Cultural Committee in recognition of the need to address multicultural awareness and sensitivity to cultural diversity on campus
7. The establishment of evening tutorial centers throughout the community which provide support for academic success
8. A positive school climate where students and staff feel safe and secure
9. A caring and committed staff - teachers, counselors, administrators, and classified personnel
10. The revision by students of the ASB constitution to provide for wider student representation in campus activities and better lines of communication among students and between students and staff
11. The expansion of extracurricular clubs, enrichment programs and lunchtime activities that have involved increased numbers of students in campus life
12. The establishment of community linkages that enhance the learning process for all students

*The Visiting Committee agrees with the major growth areas identified by the school. This list of critical areas for follow-up is a synthesis of growth areas addressed by the school in the action plan, suggestions to strengthen these areas already identified in the action plan sections, and additional areas identified by the Visiting Committee.*

***Schoolwide Critical Areas for Follow-up***

1. The leadership, instructional and support staffs expand the collaborative instructional supplies budget process to develop and implement a comprehensive budget plan that coordinates all funding sources, facilitates ESLRs, aligns with assessment data and involves all stakeholders in planning and monitoring
2. The district and leadership and instructional staffs develop comprehensive course standards and performance indicators for the total curriculum

3. The district and leadership, instructional, and support staffs create and implement a total staff development plan to include goals, budget and evaluation criteria
4. The instructional staff expand its use of technology and varied teaching methodologies
5. Leadership and instructional staffs translate Focus on Learning Action Plans into specific annual school goals
6. The leadership and instructional staffs widely distribute to all stakeholders agendas, minutes and reports of each school decisionmaking group
7. The leadership, instructional and support staffs coordinate the student support services provided by various stakeholders to help students achieve the expected schoolwide learning results
8. The district and leadership and instructional staffs thoroughly analyze and define the purpose of summer school course offerings. This undertaking should compare the schoolwide learning outcomes, support services, and performance assessment of summer school course offerings with those college prep classes during the traditional school year
9. The leadership, instructional and support staffs develop a systematic process to disseminate information about students' special needs so that the appropriate instructional materials and methodologies are used to address those students' identified needs
10. The district and leadership and instructional staffs develop a comprehensive assessment process for each student to assure alignment with ESLRs and school-to-college/career connections
11. The leadership, instructional and support staffs expand parent participation in the development of students' personal learning plans.
12. The district and leadership, instructional and support staffs research and develop a comprehensive district-wide technology plan to maximize alignment with ESLRs

#### ***Chapter V: Ongoing School Improvement***

- *Include a one-page summary of the schoolwide action plan - (attached)*
- *Comments on school improvement issues*

#### ***Schoolwide Action Plan***

- Adequacy
- Addressing the critical areas for follow-up
- Enhancement of student learning

- Feasibility within existing resources
- Degree of commitment schoolwide and system wide

The Visiting Committee agrees that Mt. Whitney High School's Action Plans appropriately address the criteria and the key follow-up areas identified by the Focus-Groups. The growth area themes that have emerged are a broader staff support network to reinforce guidance efforts and to enhance students' self-worth, personal responsibility, career goals and academic success; more staff planning time to implement interdisciplinary curriculum, team teaching approaches, instructional applications of technology and authentic assessment activities; and the development of course standards and a comprehensive assessment system aligned to the ESLRs and frameworks.

The Action Plans are a culmination of the Focus Group/stakeholder group looping process. After reading drafts of each other's reports, the Focus Groups "signed off" on their final drafts. During a full planning day, the WASC Leadership Team re-read final reports and listed recurrent growth area themes. These results were synthesized into three broad areas which became the focus of the Action Plans. The Self-Study Coordinator then checked these ideas with the department chairs, the school leadership team, ASB, and the Visiting Committee Chair. With consensus achieved, the WASC Leadership Team wrote specific plans and attached statements from each stakeholder group on how it will support each goal. The school sees these plans as flexible, "living" documents and realize that greater specificity in terms of accountability, funding and timelines will need to be developed.

The school leadership team (which will be expanded to include the WASC Leadership Team members) will be responsible for monitoring the implementation and evaluation of plans. Stakeholders also will be invited to join study groups centered around each of the plans; these groups will help to plan and implement as well. Both the school and the Visiting Committee agree that major coordination now needs to take place. As the formal site staff development, K-12 technology and K-12 assessment plans are developed, they should be aligned with the Action Plans and the ESLRs. Continual communication (to include wide distribution of agendas and minutes from all decisionmaking groups) will be necessary to keep all stakeholders informed of the "big picture."

The Visiting Committee's support of the Action Plans indicates agreement with the course of change already charted and begun by the school. In many different meetings, Mt. Whitney stakeholders proudly told the Visiting Committee that theirs is "a school on the move." There is a high degree of enthusiasm, commitment, pride and creative thinking. By pursuing their Action Plan objectives, Mt. Whitney staff members will provide for all students broader personal support and powerful learning connected to uniform standards and real-life applications.

*Existing factors that support school improvement*

The staff agrees that their involvement in the Focus on Learning Process has set into motion a schoolwide commitment to positive change. They recognize that much has been accomplished to date, yet, by no means, does the staff feel that their work is done. The WASC Leadership Team will become part of the school leadership team and carry forward the commitment that was exhibited during the WASC Self-Study. All stakeholders have come to understand that they have created a long-range improvement program that will require continued commitment and participation. Of particular note is the level of staff enthusiasm for and support of the improvement process. As a result of their participation in the Focus on Learning Process, the staff feels a greater sense of collaboration and understanding of how each staff member and department contribute to students' academic and personal growth.

The areas that have been identified as priorities can be met if the district, staff and site leadership maintain a high level of commitment to the improvement process. The staff will further identify and allocate resources of time and money to the overall reforms they have identified in their action plans.

Although the second and third action plans need greater specificity, there is already action occurring for all three identified areas. For example:

- The Focus Group for student support is already working with staff members, parents, students and community members to further identify and coordinate existing support services which will enhance students' sense of self-worth, personal responsibility, career focus and academic success
- There has been considerable discussion regarding flexible use of instructional time. These discussions have covered cross-curricular planning, team teaching, block scheduling, senior project and senior review, curricular paths and instructional technology

#### *Impediments to school improvement*

The Schoolwide Action Plans incorporate important schoolwide issues and relate them to the concepts of the Focus on Learning criteria. Providing time to explore instructional ideas may require the staff to consider such possibilities as block scheduling and collaboration periods. Block scheduling and collaboration periods may encounter resistance by some staff members who will have to modify their curricular and instructional priorities. Additionally, the specific steps as outlined in Action Plan #2 may not be sufficient for the staff to fully investigate alternative scheduling models. Other impediments to the accomplishment of Action Plan #2 may be contractual or beyond the school's area of influence.

Staff members have indicated that the district's role in helping the site establish course standards and assessment has not been clearly established. The key to successful implementation of Action Plan #3 will be to involve the district and the site in a collaborative process to establish course standards and assessments for all curricular areas. In addition, accurate measurement of the achievement of ESLRs will require alternative assessment instruments.

*Soundness of follow-up process to monitor accomplishment of schoolwide action plan*

Through their involvement in the Focus on Learning Process, all stakeholders participated in a process of reporting and reviewing their Focus Groups' progress. This process of monitoring progress has already been established and can extend to the accomplishment of schoolwide Action Plans.

The reorganized school leadership team will be the central body responsible for monitoring the accomplishment of the schoolwide Action Plans. Their responsibility will extend to the communication to all stakeholders of the progress being made. The school leadership team will establish provisions for informing and involving parents, students, staff members, the community, and the district.

In summary, the school is enthusiastic, committed, and looks forward to continual school improvement and increased student learning and achievement of expected schoolwide learning results. Additionally, all stakeholders conclude that as the schoolwide Action Plans are translated into one coordinated statement of yearly goals, there will be resulting improvement of the educational program and the services provided for the school's diverse student population.

# **ATTACHMENTS**

## **School/Community Profile**

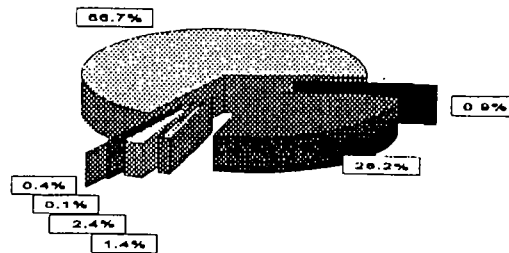
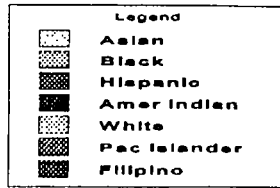
Mt. Whitney High School in Visalia, California, was established in 1950 to meet the needs of a growing student population. Named Visalia Union High School at its inception, Mt. Whitney is one of three traditional comprehensive high schools in the Visalia Unified School District. It draws its students mainly from the southern section of the city, and from Goshen, located along Highway 99 to the west of Visalia.

Visalia has tripled in size in the last 25 years, and will approach the 100,000 population mark before the year 2000. Located in the prime agricultural area of Tulare County, Visalia is by far the largest town between Fresno and Bakersfield. While agriculture continues to be very important, primary sources of employment are also generated in retail merchandising, service industries, light industry, utilities and government services. The Visalia Unified School District is the single largest employer in the city.

Visalia offers continuing education in the form of vocational/technical training and academic pursuits. Besides smaller, specific training sites, such as schools of cosmetology, schools of medical assistance, and the like, Visalia has two major career training possibilities in San Joaquin Valley College and Golden State Business College. Further, a fine community college, College of the Sequoias, is located in Visalia and offers both vocational and academic opportunities for Mt. Whitney students, including those who wish to transfer to four-year institutions. The vast majority of Mt. Whitney graduates have the chance to gain further skills beyond high school graduation. To this end, Mt. Whitney High School works to prepare all students to reach their goals, whether those be direct entry to the work force or entry into post-high school education and training.



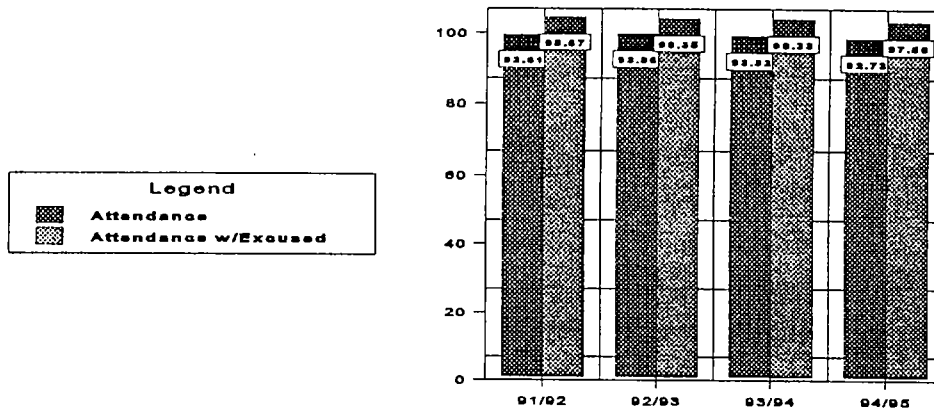
## Ethnic Distribution



### #2. Attendance Patterns

Mt. Whitney has continued to have excellent attendance rates over the past three years. During the 1993-1994 school year, Mt. Whitney 6.7% of its students absent on any given day, with the majority of those being excused absences. In 1992-1993 there were 91 dropouts from Mt. Whitney. That decreased to 46 dropouts in the 1993-1994 school year.

Percent of Actual Attendance & Actual Attendance with Excuse



### #3. School Surveys/Interviews

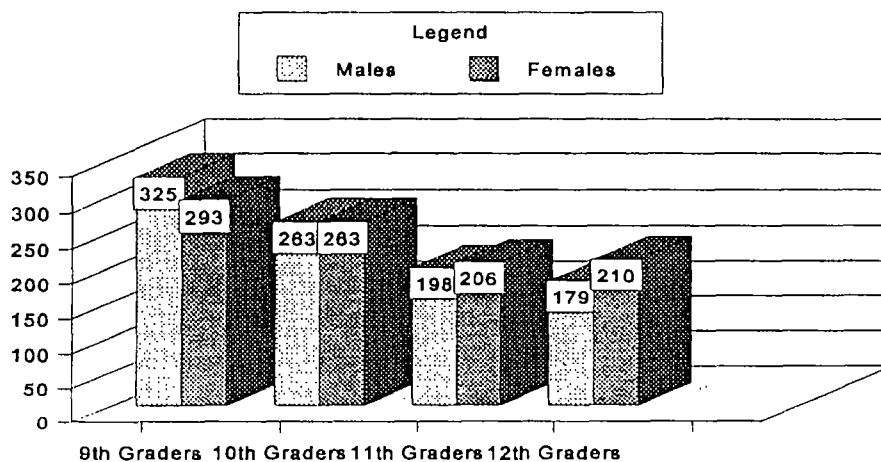
Student and parent groups convened in April and May of 1995 to develop questionnaires related to the school's performance. The student questionnaire was administered at school during a special schedule so that every student present in second period class on that day might have the opportunity to

## Student/Community Profile and Supporting Data

### #1. Student Indicators

Mt. Whitney High School has an end of the year enrollment of 1937 students. This has been consistent over the past three years. We anticipate a slight increase in enrollment, in part due to intra district transfers. 49.6% of the student population is male and 50.4% is female. The Mt. Whitney student body has an ethnic make-up that is 65.5% Anglo, 28.9% Hispanic, 2.45 Asian, 1.9% African American, .9% American Indian, and .5% Pacific Islander/Filipino. 150 students have been identified as LEP, and 84 migrant - numbers that are consistent with the past several years. We have 60 students in resource classes, and beginning in the 1995-1996 school year we will also have special day students. Due to the depressed nature of the Tulare County economy, 15% of our students are on the free lunch program. In 193-1994, we had 264 suspensions. That increased to 471 suspensions in the 1994-1995 school year, due to the district's newly adopted "zero tolerance" policy. During the past year there were 23 expulsions, a slight increase again due to "zero tolerance." No special health issues have come into focus.

### Enrollment Distribution



SAT : National College Board Test

	1995	1994	1993	1992	1991	1990
<b>Mt. Whitney / Verbal</b>	426	409	432	419	423	421
<b>Mt. Whitney / Math</b>	485	467	483	477	483	494
<b>California / Verbal</b>	417	413	415	416	419	419
<b>California / Math</b>	485	482	478	484	482	484
<b>Nation / Verbal</b>	428	423	424	423	422	424
<b>Nation / Math</b>	482	479	484	476	474	476

Mt. Whitney ACT Scores for all Graduates

LOCAL	English	Math	Reading	Science Reason	Composite
1990	19.7	20.9	19.9	19.9	20.2
1991	19.4	20.0	20.7	20.0	20.1
1992	21.7	23.3	21.9	21.7	22.2
1993	21.9	22.3	22.3	22.9	22.5
1994	22.3	23.0	23.3	22.4	22.9

State ACT Scores

STATE	English	Math	Reading	Science Reading	Composite
1990	20.8	21.5	21.6	20.8	21.3
1991	20.6	21.4	21.4	20.8	21.2
1992	20.7	21.5	21.4	21.0	21.3
1993	20.4	21.3	21.4	20.9	21.1
1994	19.9	21.1	21.1	20.8	20.9

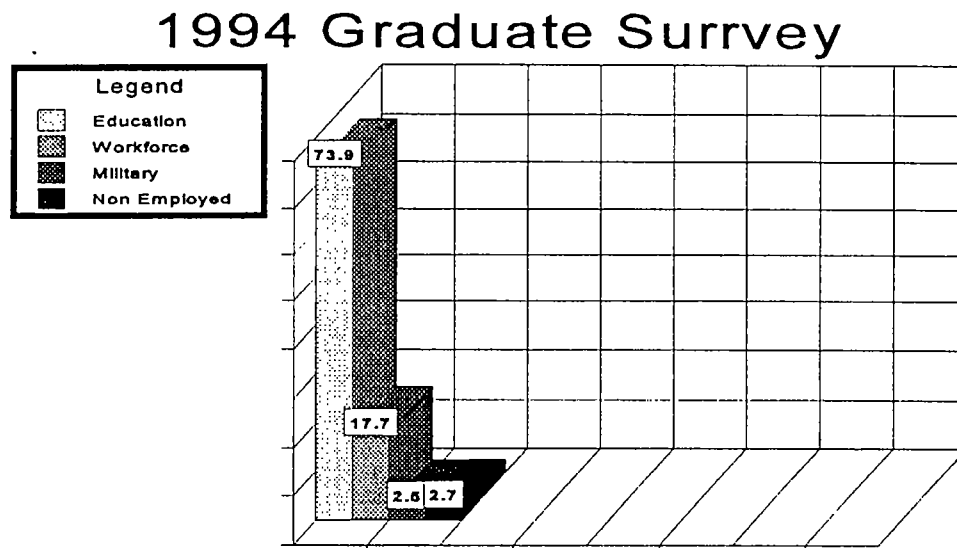
complete the survey. As a result, 85% of the student body responded. Parent surveys were sent home with students. Surveys for Spanish speaking parents were translated into Spanish and mailed to their homes. Forty percent of parents responded to the survey. Both parents and the student body indicated that they believe the Mt. Whitney is preparing students for the future, regardless of their plans after high school. They also agreed that students are developing the skills of writing, speaking, listening, reading, problem solving and creative thinking, math and calculating, and studying. Students and parents feel that the teachers are fair, helpful, and that homework reinforces what is learned in class. Freshman orientation and the opportunity for participation in extracurricular activities were viewed as strengths, as were the acceptance of cultural diversity on campus, the safety of the campus, and the frequency with which the school notifies parents of academic progress. Student areas of concern included the dress code and a lack of familiarity with the school's new constitution, Vision Statement, and Expected Schoolwide Learning Results. In general, many students felt left out of important decision making processes. They also believe that counselors and teachers are unfamiliar with their future plans and career objectives. Students and parents agreed that counselors failed to notify them of scholarships or opportunities for academic advancement. They also agreed that school Health services are inadequate. Both groups believe that the community does not take an active enough role in the school.

#### **#4. Student Performance**

Our students continue to perform at or above district and state norms on such standardized tests as the ACT, CLAS, SAT, and AP. Mt. Whitney High School has a success rate of 42% of seniors completing A-F requirements. Our students have also qualified as National merit Scholars and have gained entrance to numerous prestigious universities such as Stanford, Harvard, Princeton, USC and the military academies. In the area of academic competitions, Mt. Whitney High School students have performed well. For the past several years, our Science Olympiad team has qualified to compete at the state level. The Music program has been repeatedly recognized for its excellence in statewide and national competition. This year's yearbook was chosen among the top ten books out of 12,000 printed by the Jostens Corporation in order to take part in an international competition. Sub population data shows Hispanic students scoring below norms. In an attempt to improve these results, we are participating in the UC Academic Outreach Program, the Talent Search through CSU Fresno, and have begun to send staff for training with the AVID program.

## #5. Trends of Student Performance After Graduation

The 1994 graduate survey indicates that 73.9% of our students went on to further their education, either to a community college, four year college or university, trade/technical school, or other post-secondary institution. 17.7 % went straight into the workforce, 2.5% went into the military, and 2.7% were not employed. Because of the large number of students who must be ready with job skills at the conclusion of high school, the School-to-Career transition is becoming a focus for Mt. Whitney High School.



## #6. Staff

Mt. Whitney High School is composed of 93 certificated staff members. The ethnic breakdown is 89% white, 8% Hispanic, 2% Asian/Filipino and 1% Black. Ours is a very stable staff with a low transiency rate. Thirty-one of the faculty have been with the district for at least twenty years. Most of the faculty are certificated to teach in the subject areas to which they are assigned. Only nine are teaching outside of their certificated subject areas.

Nation ACT Scores

NATION	English	Math	Reading	Science Reading	Composite
1990	20.3	20.0	21.2	20.7	20.5
1991	20.2	20.0	21.1	20.7	20.6
1992	20.3	20.1	21.2	20.8	20.7
1993	20.3	20.2	21.2	20.9	20.8
1994	20.2	20.2	21.3	21.0	20.8

GOLDEN STATE EXAMINATION: MAY 1995 Golden State Scholars

Mt. Whitney	School recognition	Honors	High Honors	Total Tested
First Year Algebra	9	5	1	147
Geometry	26	33	28	219

ADVANCED PLACEMENT PROGRAM: Candidate Grade Report

AP Grade	U.S. History	Chem	Comp Science	Eng. Lang.	Eng. Lit.	Latin	Calculus	Spanish Lang	Total Reported
5	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	11	14
4	1	0	0	3	1	0	1	9	15
3	2	0	1	10	2	1	2	5	23
2	12	0	0	18	9	0	1	5	45
1	8	1	0	1	0	0	2	1	13
Total	23	1	2	33	13	1	6	31	110

## Class Offerings

Department	No. Of Student Contacts	No. Of Periods	Average No. Of Student / Periods	FTE
Agriculture	285	12	23.8	2.4
Business	556	25	22.2	5
English	1940	69	28.1	13.8
Foreign Lang.	940	33	28.5	6.6
Home Econ	186	6	31	1.2
Ind. Arts	502	19	26.4	3.8
Math	1663	58	28.7	11.6
P.E.	883	23	38.4	4.6
Science	1107	38	29.1	7.6
Soc. Studies	1345	45	29.9	9
VAPA/Art	619	20	31	4
VAPA/Music	622	10	62.2	2
Special Ed.	243	22	11	4.4
ROP	22	8	4	1.6

### #8. School/District Growth Needs

Visalia Unified School District is in a period of steady growth which was preceded by years of rapid growth. As a result, a very large population of students is beginning to reach the district's high schools, creating an increase in class size. The school district is in need of a fourth high school campus to deal with the problem.

**Certificated Staff**

	<b>White</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Asian/Filipino</b>	<b>Black</b>
<b>Percent</b>	89.0	8.0	2.0	1.0

<b>Years of Service</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Counselors</b>	<b>Administration</b>	<b>Total</b>
1	1	0	0	1
2	2	0	0	2
3	1	0	0	1
4	2	0	0	2
5-9	12	1	0	13
10-14	11	0	0	11
15-19	14	1	1	16
20+ more	40	4	4	48
<b>Master Degree</b>	30	5	5	40

**#7. Staff/Pupil Ratio**

Our average class size is 31 students per teacher. For the past four years we have participated in class size reduction which lowered class size in Freshman English to a ratio of 20:1. In the 1995-1996 school year we will lose this funding because of the lack of classroom space at another high school in the district.



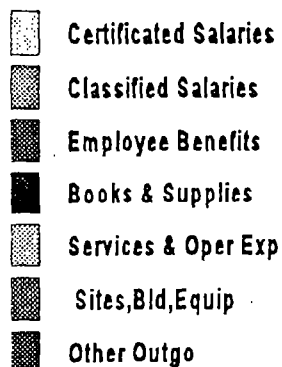
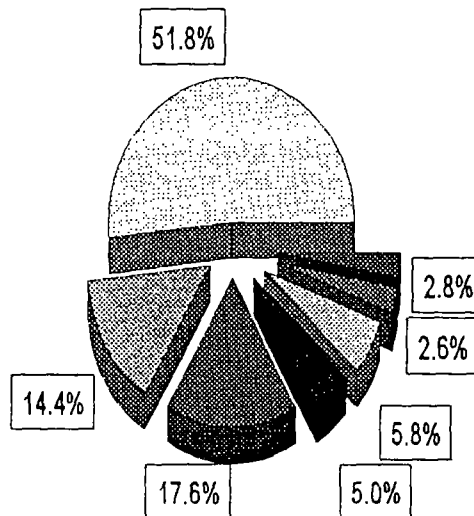
## **#10. External Factors**

Our participation in the California High School Network Partnership, and the California League of High Schools has provided opportunities to work with other schools who are focused on the concepts of Second to None. New programs introduced in the last 3 years include CSLA, partnership with the Workforce Coalition and Private Industry Council of Tulare County, the Business Certificate Program, and partnership in the Governor's forum on the School-to-Career initiative. Each of these programs promotes ties to the business community.

## #9. District Policies/School Financial Support

Like all school districts in California, Visalia Unified School District has had to make major financial adjustments over the past several years. As a result of decreasing funds, we have experienced reductions in teaching, administrative, custodial, clerical, instructional assistant and extra-duty staffing. Other reductions have also taken place in general fund expenditures. The VUSD has continued to take a firm stand in the area of discipline and has adopted a "zero tolerance" policy for serious violations of the Education Code. Although this results in a higher suspension and expulsion rate, it provides a safe, orderly environment that is conducive to learning.

### General Fund Actual Expense



**MT. WHITNEY HIGH SCHOOL  
ACTION PLAN #1**

**Growth Need/Area for Improvement**

**In order to reinforce the efforts of the Counseling and Guidance Department staff, the Mt. Whitney staff will develop a support network involving the collective efforts of teachers, counselors, administrators, parents, and students. The goal of this team effort will be to enhance students' sense of self worth, personal responsibility, career focus, and academic success.**

**Rationale for Growth Need**

The student load for each counselor at Mt. Whitney has steadily increased over the last few years. Our changing student population requires more individualized support, personal attention, and academic and vocational counseling. Sixty percent of all freshman have at least one F grade at the quarter, a situation that requires immediate attention. The staff at Mt. Whitney is eager to find a system that will provide students with additional adult contacts in order to allow for a smoother transition from middle school to high school for freshmen, and to provide the personal and academic support needed by all students. At this time groups of teachers have visited various schools, including Del Oro and Westminster High Schools to explore the concept of a Freshman House program. The staff is exploring other possibilities for the restructuring of support services, such as a tutorial period for all students, cross-curricular teaming, and block scheduling. Our plan will lead us from the exploratory first steps to the implementation of a system that will provide support for all students.

**Expected Schoolwide Learning Result(s) Addresses**

# 2,3,4,5,6,7

**Specific Steps**

1. Form study group to investigate and bring back several options to the staff.

**Means to Report Progress to All Stakeholders**

Counseling end-of-year report  
School newspaper  
Principal's letter home to parents  
The Pioneer News

2. Inservice time devoted to dissemination of information and teacher response.
3. Further study to match school needs to programs available
4. Final presentation to staff for acceptable level of consensus
5. Implementation

### **Timeline**

Spring 1996	Establish study group
Spring - Fall 1996	Study group gathers information
Winter 1996	Communicate ideas to staff
Spring 1997	Refine plan -- final presentation
Fall 1997	Implementation

### **Persons Responsible**

Study group comprised of some members of the School Leadership Team, administrators and other staff members.

### **Resources**

Staff development time  
 S.B.1882 funds  
 District staff development days

### **Ways of Assessing Progress**

Evidence of:  
 Lower freshmen failure rate  
 Increased student/teacher contact for the purpose of counseling  
 Repeat of 1995 Student Survey regarding counseling and individualized learning plan.  
 Higher number of students will have developed a five-year personalized learning plan.  
 Questionnaire that has students evaluate their annual progress.

**MT. WHITNEY HIGH SCHOOL  
ACTION PLAN #2**

**Growth Need/Area for Improvement**

We need to provide time to explore instructional ideas that support the Vision of Mt. Whitney. The ideas could include cross-curricular planning, team teaching, senior project and senior review, curricular paths, and instructional technology.

**Rationale for Growth Need**

The Focus on Learning accreditation process has allowed the Mt. Whitney staff the opportunity to meet and discuss what works and what needs improvement in every aspect of our instructional and extracurricular program. This process took place under a six-period-a-day structure, with preparation periods for teachers scattered throughout the day. The staff found time for meetings outside of class hours and came to realize the value of having consistent time to meet and to share ideas and concerns. Time to meet in a systematic, consistent way would provide the staff the opportunity to discuss, research, and implement the restructuring ideas that have come into focus. The senior project and senior review, staff inservice, cross curricular unit and lesson planning are only a few of the topics that would be developed and implemented if enough time could be provided for these ideas to come to fruition. Teams of staff members are researching and exploring such possibilities as block scheduling and the banking of instructional minutes in order to provide the needed time for ideas to flourish.

**Expected Schoolwide Learning Results Addressed**

All

**Specific Steps**

1. Study groups to investigate and bring back several options to the staff.
2. Inservice time devoted to the dissemination of information and teacher response.
3. Further study to match school needs to programs available.

**MT. WHITNEY HIGH SCHOOL  
ACTION PLAN #3**

**Growth Needs/Area for Improvement**

**Each department needs to review course standards for content and assessment based on the ESLRs to ensure parity of knowledge and ability.**

**Rationale for Growth Need**

At this time some course content standards are not uniform from teacher to teacher and have not been articulated across all content areas. The ESLRs are not, as yet, a conscious goal for every student in every subject matter. Methods for a schoolwide assessment system, both for content and for the ESLRs, have not been fully developed. The school will use as a model the standards and assessment guidelines developed by the Visalia Comprehensive Assessment Committee (VCAS). This Committee is currently meeting and will publish its results in 1996.

**Expected Schoolwide Learning Result(s) Addressed**

All

**Specific Steps**

1. Establish minimum standards for content and ESLRs.
2. Review course content and measure against the standards for conformity.
3. Verify presence of ESLR component
4. Implement the missing ESLRs within courses.
5. Develop assessment tools to ensure that content standards and ELSRs are addressed within courses and individual classrooms.

**Timeline**

Fall 1996/Spring 1997  
Fall 1997/Spring 1998

Establish standards for each course  
Review and revise course content to meet established standards and ESLRs.

4. Final presentation to staff for acceptable level of consensus.
5. Implementation

### **Timeline**

Spring 1996	Establish study group
Spring/Fall 1996	Study group gather information
Winter 1996	Communicate ideas to staff
Spring 1997	Refine plan -- final presentation
Fall 1997	Implementation

### **Persons Responsible**

Study group comprised of some members of School Leadership Team, administration, and other staff members

### **Resources**

Staff development time  
S.B. 1882 funds  
District staff development days

### **Ways of Assessing Progress**

Evidence of:  
Has the structure of the school changed to allow more time for teacher to explore instructional ideas.  
Employ a communication system to determine the success of restructuring.

### **Means to Report Progress to All Stakeholders**

Self evident



## THE FOLLOW-UP PROCESS

The WASC "Focus on Learning" Process at Mt. Whitney High School involved all stakeholders in a comprehensive self-study. The involvement of the Mt. Whitney staff in this process has produced a realistic awareness of the strengths of our school and of areas which are in need of improvement. An action plan has been developed in response those needs and all departments and stakeholder groups reviewed and approved the developed plan.

The School Leadership Team, composed of representatives from all departments, members of the School Site Council, the WASC Leadership team and the administration, will be the "watch dog" for overseeing the follow-up process. Committees formed for the purpose of implementing the plan will be formed with volunteers from the entire staff and led by members of the School Leadership Team. A network of involvement will be developed to include all stakeholders in committees and subcommittees formed to address each identified goal.

The School Leadership Team meets monthly and the School Site Council meets quarterly. A permanent item on the agenda of each group will be a report on the progress of the implementation of the Schoolwide Action Plan. The School Site Council will ensure the melding of the School Site Plan and the WASC Focus on Learning Schoolwide Action Plan. By joining these two plans, a first step will be taken to guarantee the successful completion of the goals identified in the Focus on Learning Schoolwide Action Plan. By doing so, funds and inservice time will become available for needs identified in the WASC Schoolwide Plan.

The principal will be responsible for reporting to the Superintendent and the Board of Trustees, ensuring that all are kept apprised of our progress. Publications such as the PTO newsletter, the principal's monthly letter to the Superintendent, The Pioneer, the end of the year Assessment and Progress Report by the School Site Council, The Report Card will regularly report to our school community on the progress made in the implementation of the action plan.

We fully expect restructuring at Mt. Whitney will result from the WASC self-study, and that the Schoolwide Action Plan will serve as a living document to guide changes. Our follow-up process will ensure and facilitate ongoing implementation of the Focus On Learning Schoolwide Action Plan, and will keep all stakeholders apprised of its progress.

Fall 1998/ Spring 1999	Explore assessment tools and develop assessment system to measure course content and ESLR within all subjects.
Fall 1999	Full implementation of revised courses which reflect established course standards and ESLRs.
Spring 2000	Evidence of Schoolwide implementation of assessment component within each content area.

**Persons Responsible**

Department chairs under the supervision of the Assistant Principal for Curriculum and Instruction and in connection with the Visalia Comprehensive Assessment Committee (VCAS).

**Resources**

SB 1882  
 District Funds  
 Staff development time

**Ways of Assessment**

Evidence of:  
 Established standards for each course  
 Reviewed revised courses  
 Assessment tools  
 Implementation

**Ways to Report Progress to All Stakeholders**

Regular staff meetings  
 PTO Newsletter  
 Principal's monthly newsletter to Superintendent  
 The Pioneer News

# Mt. Whitney High School

## Expected Schoolwide Learning Results

1. **Communicate effectively**
  - Demonstrate the ability to read, write, speak, and listen
  - Apply appropriate technology as a tool of communication
  - Demonstrate literacy in the students' curricular area
2. **Be respectful of self and others**
  - Demonstrate the ability to recognize personal strengths and weaknesses
  - Show honesty and integrity through their behavior
  - Demonstrate respect for the needs, ideas, opinions, and property of others
3. **Be life-long learners**
  - Demonstrate an understanding of the need for continuing physical, intellectual, and technical skills
  - Demonstrate the ability for self-assessment
  - Demonstrate personal growth (i.e., classroom, extra-curricular, and co-curricular activities)
4. **Be effective problem solvers and decision makers**
  - Demonstrate knowledge of problem-solving methods appropriate to subject matter
  - Demonstrate the ability to reason and to critically evaluate situations
  - Demonstrate the ability to integrate mathematics, where appropriate, as a problem-solving tool
5. **Be effective goal setters**
  - Acquire a knowledge base that allows for multiple goal-setting options
  - Construct both long and short term goals
  - Create, develop, and evaluate a career plan
6. **Demonstrate effective interpersonal skills**
  - Demonstrate the ability to present oneself in a manner acceptable to the workplace
  - Apply acceptable conflict resolution strategies
  - Demonstrate an open-minded and courteous approach when interacting with others
7. **Demonstrate personal, civic, and global responsibility**
  - Apply the life skills necessary to be self-supporting and successful in the workforce
  - Exhibit an awareness of environmental problems and solutions
  - Exhibit an awareness of world issues
  - Demonstrate and understand the rights and responsibilities of a contributing member of a democratic society