
Group A: Vision, Leadership, and Culture

Focus Group Leaders:

Dziuban, Dawn, Science Teacher

Jensen, Chris, Math Teacher

Focus Group Members:

Anderson, Jef, Counselor

Bob, Jackie, Student

Cook, Donna, Clerk

DeShane, Ray, Physical Education Teacher

Emery, Clay, Spanish Teacher

Fernandez, Mayra, Student

Fitzgerald, Christina, English Teacher

Fitzgerald, Matt, Math Teacher

Fulton, Gaylene, Parent

Galle, Cynthia, Special Education Aid

Geiger, Maureen, English Teacher

Goodreau, Jamie, History Teacher

Halvorson, Jodi, English Teacher

Harris, Bruce, Art Teacher

Hickman, Susan, Counselor

Hoover, Dee, Special Education Teacher

Jackson, Troy, Physical Education Teacher

Jennings, Ron, Security/Maintenance

Jones, Cumby, Health Teacher

Jones, Terry, English Teacher

Kafchenool, Michele, Student

Kizzar, Brian, Student

Lamb, Pat, Secretary

McNeal, Sean, Music Teacher

Mineau, Jackie, Custodian

Mortenson, Mike, Spanish Teacher

Olmos, Eddie, Student

Reinhart, Lorri, English Teacher

Rembert, Janita, Parent

Rossall, Patrick, Parent
Ryan, Shelly, Psychology Teacher
St. John, Kathleen, Learning Center Technician
Shepardson, Tom, History Teacher
Solee, Jennifer, Physical Education Teacher
Stowe, Poppi, School Psychologist
Swanson, Linda, Bookkeeper
Watkins, Jimmy, Groundskeeper

Structure and Process

In the month of October of 1998, the focus group leaders were chosen and began work on gathering evidence for Focus on Learning. Focus group leaders and other members of the staff attended WASC training sessions to assist them in this process. On December 2nd, the first official Focus on Learning Group Leader meeting was held and the first group meeting was established for December 10th. Another group meeting was held on January 22nd, 1999, and another on February 18th. Throughout this process, work was conducted on ESLRs and evidence was gathered for the Focus on Learning self-study. In the 1999-2000 year, the focus groups met on September 10th, September 24th, October 8th, October 22nd, December 10th, January 14th, February 25th, and March 10th, prior to the visitation, and are scheduled to meet for follow up work on March 24th, April 28th, May 12th, May 26th, and June 10th for follow-up work after the visitation.

Criterion A1: To what extent does the school have a clearly stated vision based upon its beliefs, student needs and current educational research? To what extent is the vision supported by the governing board and the central administration? To what extent is the school’s purpose defined by the expected schoolwide learning results?

In 1995, one counselor and seven original teachers were hired to work at Lancaster High School. These individuals represented the breadth of the departments and head of counseling. Along with the principal of the school, these eight individuals—then the extent of the school’s staff—formulated the vision of what Lancaster High School should become. They discussed issues of educational research and their vision of their prospective departments, both in terms of instruction and staff to be hired. Based on those discussions, textbooks were ordered and the block schedule was clarified.

Based on this early vision, the school was created with a shared goal of what it meant to succeed and how to get there right from the start. More staff were hired with this vision in mind, and the vision thus grew with the school. In this sense, the school’s vision is as much a part of the school as its mortar and brick. As such, no formal vision was created until 1998, as the school’s vision was universally understood by all who worked at LnHS.

However, within its first school year, Lancaster High School did develop its formal Mission Statement:

The mission of Lancaster High School is to empower students to succeed with the choices and challenges of the twenty-first century. The staff of Lancaster High will work to ensure that all students gain measurable growth in academic achievement, emotional maturity, physical well-being, and social responsibility. The faculty will use instructional strategies and curriculum to assist in providing students with a quality education.

With the start of the WASC self-study process, Lancaster High School decided to formalize its vision statement so that it would encompass the informal vision of the school that has guided it from its very inception, as well as to supplement the school’s formal mission statement and the then proposed ESLRs. A driving force behind the eventual choice of a formal vision stemmed from the desire to give an overall purpose and goal to the ESLRs.

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Before this could be accomplished, of course, the Expected Schoolwide Learning Results needed to be finalized. Lancaster High School began developing its ESLRs by designating focus groups within the five focus areas as identified by WASC. These focus groups consisted of administration, teachers, classified staff, students, and parents. The five groups drafted ESLRs individually, then collaboratively voted for the set of ESLRs they felt best represented a living document which expressed its community’s and student’s needs not just for graduation, but also for life-long success:

Five groups drafted ESLRs individually, then collaboratively voted on the set of ESLRs.

Lancaster High School prepares its graduates to be:

Life-long learners with the ability to

- **Practice self-directed learning**
- **Plan for possible careers**
- **Access needed information and databases**
- **Work both collaboratively and individually**
- **Accept responsibility for their actions**

Effective communicators with the ability to

- **Speak effectively**
- **Read critically**
- **Write clearly**

Analytical thinkers with the ability to

- **Distinguish fact from opinion**
- **Solve problems logically**
- **Utilize information from a variety of sources**
- **Use technology as a tool**

Responsible citizens with the ability to

- **Respect different viewpoints and reasoning processes**
- **Understand the principles of democracy**
- **Work with a diversity of people**
- **Contribute to the betterment of their school and community**

With the ESLRs securely in hand, the Vision, Leadership, and Culture committee in conjunction with administration—both on campus and at the District Office—designed its Vision Statement. Thus, the following vision was adopted:

We work together for excellence through a shared vision of life-long learners aware of their personal and social responsibilities to the community.

Five years after the initial staff met to brainstorm and plan, the benefits of their labor have grown to reveal a true learning community.

Lancaster High School's Vision Statement.

Criterion A2: To what extent does the school leadership make decisions and initiate activities that focus in all students achieving the Expected Schoolwide Learning Results? To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?

School Leadership and ESLRs

Lancaster High School’s administration has undertaken several steps to insure that the school’s Expected Schoolwide Learning Results are both understood and implemented by the staff.

To begin with, the administration arranged for several inservice days during the 1998-1999 school year for the staff to meet and develop the ESLRs themselves. Under the direction of the administration, the stakeholders split up and met in one of five focus groups to help develop the ESLRs as a democratic unit. Once the ESLRs were adopted with the assistance of the entire school community, the administration helped to create, print, and distribute ESLR posters. The posters are now found in all classrooms on the campus and all of the administrative offices as well.

The Comprehensive Guidance Program is also a program that is actively supported by administration which works to provide students with strategies and goals that will see them through to graduation and beyond. Much of what is taught through the CGP directly supports the ESLRs, particularly in the area of life-long learners with the ability to practice self-directed learning, plan for possible careers, access needed information and databases, work both collaboratively and individually, and accept responsibility for their actions.

Within the classroom—and throughout the campus as a whole—the administration believes that all staff members have an independent obligation to initiate activities which promote student achievement of Expected Schoolwide Learning Results. This approach innately empowers the school community and encourages commitment, participation, and shared responsibility for student learning. Nonetheless, the administration has undertaken certain procedures to help ensure that implementation is underway.

As part of the yearly staff evaluation process, the administration requires teachers to regularly revise their lesson plans, goals, and objectives to align with the ESLRs and District standards. The teacher’s Goals and Objectives—

The staff met and developed ESLRs on several inservice days during the 1998-1999 year.

Posters are in all classrooms and all administrative offices.

The CGP directly supports the ESLRs, particularly in the area of life-long learners.

Staff members have an independent obligation to initiate activities which promote student achievement of Expected Schoolwide Learning Results.

a document submitted to administration every year by individual teachers—must specifically state how ESLRs are being implemented into lesson plans. When formal observations are made of teachers, ESLR implementation is part of the evaluator’s checklist.

Shared Responsibility

Upon Lancaster High School’s opening, the administration and original staff set the tone for schoolwide collaboration amongst all stakeholders, insisting that all employees are equally respected and honored. What is known on many campuses as a “teachers’ lounge” and “faculty meetings” have always been known at LnHS as the “staff lounge” and “staff meetings,” so that all members of the school community are given equal access and importance within the school. With this philosophy, it is believed that all stakeholders can feel embraced and thus embrace the vision of Lancaster High School so that all staff members readily contribute to the success of the school’s mission. No walls have been erected between administration, certificated staff, and classified staff, creating a unique cohesiveness on the campus.

Indeed, Lancaster High School strives to tear down as many walls as possible. At LnHS, at almost any time at least one available administrator may be found on campus at any particular time for any reason. This open door policy is maintained for all staff members, students, parents, and community members.

On at least one Friday of every month, parents of students in need of extra attention are invited to join their children’s teachers for a roundtable discussion of their child’s school progress. Oftentimes, counselors participate in these discussions, and occasionally the school psychologist, administrators, and/or sports coaches join in as well.

The insights of parents are similarly sought after by the school administration. A Parent Advisory Committee meets once a month with the principal and assistant principal to discuss schoolwide issues such as curriculum standards, schoolwide programs, and other matters; they also serve as a sounding board for the principal regarding new policy issues which he feels would benefit from community input. Similar advisory committees exist for the school’s career academies and the English Language Learner program in the form of the Bilingual Advisory Committee.

The school maintains a Site Leadership Team to maintain a focus on achieving a shared vision. This team is composed primarily of department chairs who work to ensure that the school continues to move along its intended path of success.

A Student Advisory Team meets on occasion with the principal at lunch

Teachers regularly revise their lesson plans, goals, and objectives to align with the ESLRs and District standards.

The administration and original staff set the tone for schoolwide collaboration amongst all stakeholders.

At least one administrator is always available on campus to staff, students, parents, and community.

At Friday conferences parents discuss their child's school progress with teachers.

A Parent Advisory Committee meets once a month with the principal and assistant principal to discuss schoolwide issues.

to discuss campus issues, and a formal Student Safety Committee meets regularly with a vice-principal to discuss safety and student relationships on campus.

Department chairs also wield considerable power within the school. Each department chair is given the opportunity to consult with the assistant principal when master schedules are being constructed. They are also consulted regarding budgetary issues. When staff members are hired, department chairs are included in the interview and hiring process whenever possible.

A Student Advisory Team and Student Safety Committee meets regularly with the principal.

Department chairs consult on master schedules, budgetary issues, and interview and hiring processes.

Criterion A3: To what extent is the staff supported, utilized, and monitored to facilitate student achievement of Expected Schoolwide Learning Results? To what extent are leadership and staff a part of an organized structure committed to professional development?

The primary goal of Lancaster High School is educational excellence. As a result, the staff has developed Expected Schoolwide Learning Results (ESLRs) for all students in order to help maintain this focus in the classroom. The LnHS staff actively embraces Dr. Willard Daggett’s educational philosophy, and that of the International Center for Learning, of providing the new three “Rs” of education: learning experiences which are rigorous, relevant, and reality based. Because of this, Lancaster High School’s ESLRs are based upon a solid philosophical foundation.

Evidence of the staff’s efforts to facilitate achievement of the ESLRs is found in the multitude of ways the staff participates in professional development programs—working in concert with the administration—to develop instructional goals and objectives, conduct research, and seek out, develop, and implement innovative teaching strategies and materials in the classroom.

The staff is provided with numerous opportunities to improve their knowledge and skills through district and site inservice days. Professional development is available through attendance at workshops, visits to other sites, professional collaboration, and memberships in professional organizations. Many teachers continue in university programs and stay abreast of current educational trends through professional journals and state documents.

Lancaster High School teachers possess a great deal of expertise and often serve as facilitators at many of the site inservice sessions. Some of the District’s mentor teachers serve on the Lancaster staff, and they work closely with new teachers. Lancaster currently has four Academic House Leaders and eleven Department Leaders to provide appropriate coordination, leadership, and integration of curriculum. A Site Leadership Team serves to maintain the school’s focus on improved student learning.

Both a Site Plan and an SB 1882 Plan are implemented so that staff development is a top priority. The current plan for staff development with SB 1882 funding includes topics of development for academia, continuation of technology training, and integration of instruction. Teachers continue to be trained in areas of cognitive coaching, the Application Model, improved instruction strategies, and the use of technology. Numerous classes are provided through the year for teachers. This year, three extra days of professional development are provided for teachers beyond the 180 days of instruction.

The LnHS staff actively embraces Dr. Willard Daggett’s educational philosophy of learning experiences which are rigorous, relevant, and reality based.

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Four Academic House Leaders and eleven Department Leaders provide appropriate coordination, leadership, and integration of curriculum.

In some of Lancaster High School’s special programs, teachers have shared conference hours. Teachers within each “House” and in the CAMP academy may—in this way—collaborate on students’ progress and on integrated curriculum.

Programs and Staff Support

The Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) program focuses on supporting new teachers through cognitive coaching. Of the sixteen teachers who are new to the Lancaster High School campus, four of the five teachers eligible for the 1999-2000 program volunteered to participate in it. For those teachers who did not qualify for the BTSA program, a mentor teacher is available on campus.

All teachers on staff may select one of two methods of evaluation. Although both involve a series of observations, the newest form (called form B) involves much teacher reflection. The administration supports frequent informal classroom visits, called “snapshots,” where feedback is given about teachers’ activities/interactions. In addition, each teacher has a scheduled goals and objectives conference where a teacher’s professional goals and communication plan are reviewed. Also reviewed are the teacher’s strategies for ensuring achievement of Expected Schoolwide Learning Results. Formal classroom observations and yearly evaluations are also part of the continuing professional evaluation process between administration and teachers. Those teachers who are experiencing varying degrees of difficulties are served in different ways, from recommended help with mentors for classroom organizational issues to formal, detailed plans of assistance.

The Teacher Laptop Program provides teachers with materials, hardware, and intensive training in a multitude of computer-based technologies and teaching materials for the classroom. Participants develop plans and projects and regularly meet with program coordinators to discuss their progress. They are expected to register for and fulfill sixty hours of computer-related training as part of the program. Fifty-four percent of the Lancaster High School teaching staff participates in this program.

The Freshman House Program groups students among common core teachers, facilitating the chart of student progress, the integration of curriculum, the identification of at-risk students, and the communications between teachers and parents. Approximately twenty-five teachers are involved within this program.

Career academies allow students and faculty to focus and integrate teaching in specific areas of interest. The Careers in Arts and Multimedia Production (CAMP) academy is currently offered at Lancaster High School, with a second career academy in Aviation Maintenance under development. LnHS students are similarly welcome to participate in academies offered at other

Special program teachers have shared conference hours for collaboration.

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The Freshman House Program groups students among common core teachers.

school sites through ROP enrollment.

Staff members are also welcome to participate in training sessions within their disciplines, then share the information with their colleagues upon returning from their conferences. Participation requires preregistration, and hours are tracked at the District Office.

With the cooperation of the District’s Professional Resource Center (PRC), Lancaster High School offers on-site inservice training in areas identified to be of specific benefit to LnHS staff and students. Because of the District-restructured professional development program, LnHS offers more specialized meetings after school, rather than student-free days to meet and collaborate with the staff as a whole, as was previously typical of professional development days.

Staff support is found through the following programs and specialists:

- Curriculum Specialists
- Technical Supports
- Department Heads
- Mentor Teachers
- Guest Speakers
- Classroom Observations
- Release Time
- Annual Goals and Objectives meetings
- Informational and Technology (email, Internet, School Website, etc.)
- Common Preparation Periods for qualified teachers
- Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) Support Providers

Current Staffing Overview

The LnHS staff endeavors to fill all staffing needs with the best-qualified personnel. To meet the requirement of the California State Commission of Teacher Credentialing, the superintendent and site principal must certify annually that all teachers are properly assigned to classes for which they are credentialed and authorized to teach. Exceptions are granted for temporary positions and for classes taught outside the teaching credential area. The employees must meet the criteria of previous work experience, completed course work, teacher interest, and general teaching skills. Lancaster High School currently has 100 teachers on staff, twenty of whom hold temporary certificates or waivers for their subject area. Only three teachers are currently mis-assigned (one teaches two classes outside of his/her credentialed area,

Career academies allow students and faculty to focus and integrate teaching in specific areas of interest. Staff members who attend conferences share the information with their colleagues.

one teaches three classes outside of his/her area, and one teaches five classes outside of his/her area). Twelve teachers are teaching an extra class period. Six teachers are CLAD credentialed.

Several teachers are involved in special classes:

• SDAIE	(1 teacher)
• GATE/AP/Honors	(13 teachers)
• ROP	(3 teachers on site)
• ELL	(1 teacher)

In an effort to ensure that Lancaster High School continues to acquire and retain the best teachers possible, the new Site Action Plan addresses teacher hiring policies, particularly with regards to recruitment practices. It is always the goal of LnHS to fill all teaching vacancies with the best qualified teachers, and LnHS is reasserting this fact through its Site Action Plan.

Criterion A4: To what extent is the school a safe, clean, and orderly place that nurtures learning? To what extent is the culture of the school characterized by trust, professionalism, high expectations for all students, and a focus on continuous school improvement?

Lancaster High School is a safe, clean, and orderly campus that nurtures learning. Several steps have been taken to ensure that this remains the case.

The Lancaster High School dress code mandates that all students wear only the school colors of red, white, and blue. Primarily, this allows for easy and immediate identification of campus visitors by students, teachers, administration, and security, particularly if the visitor is an unwelcome guest. This mandated dress code specifically prohibits clothes styles which are affiliated with gang members and hate groups, helping to maintain a school atmosphere that is unmarred by the symbols of hatred. Additionally, students and parents have commented that a standardized dress code helps to alleviate many of the issues created by students who concentrate too much on fashion and not enough on their education and respect for others.

A specific discipline policy provides students, parents, and staff with a clear explanation of possible consequences for specific actions taken by students. Disciplinary charts are posted in classrooms, other locations throughout the school, and in the student handbook. Teachers and members of the security staff enforce the discipline policy at its most basic level, while extreme cases are dealt with by the sheriff’s deputy and/or parole officer on campus, along with the help of the security staff and administration.

Lancaster High School also provides students with a peer counseling and conflict resolution program to give students an alternative to resolving problems violently. This helps maintain safety on campus and empowers students to be responsible citizens concerning their own problems. Campus clubs such as Color Me Human also help students in this regard.

The school’s infrastructure also has several design elements which facilitate a safe campus:

- Phones are located in all classrooms and offices on campus and allow for immediate contact with parents, administration, security, and medical personnel in times of crisis. These phones can access numbers both on and off campus. Dialing 767 (SOS) is a direct line to the switchboard for emergency purposes only.
- The visibility of security cameras increases the sense of safety on campus for teachers and students. Continuous video recordings provide both evidence and discouragement against wrongdoers.

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A clear discipline policy provides students, parents, and staff with a clear explanation of possible consequences for specific student actions. Peer counseling and conflict resolution programs give students an alternative to resolving problems violently.

- Monitored gates allow for orderly and supervised entrance and exit from the school, while secure fences—which encompass not only the main campus but also the athletic fields—help to ensure that all visitors are seen and supervised if necessary by school security and staff, even before they have entered the main campus. Similarly, all vehicles located in staff and student parking areas are required to display a Lancaster High School parking permit, allowing for identification of vehicles which do not belong to students or faculty.

To help maintain the cleanliness of its facility, Lancaster High School employs a no food or drink in the classrooms policy, and a no gum policy spans the entire campus. This policy promotes a cleaner school environment, and one that is less distracting, which allows students the increased opportunity to learn. By extension, security oversees an on-campus suspension, after-school, and Saturday work program wherein students contribute to the cleaning of the school as part of the school’s discipline policy.

Personal and Social Responsibility (PSR) classes are offered as an elective course to students who need extra help in their lives regarding behavior. Within a PSR class, students learn how to take responsibility for their actions and thus gain control of their lives by learning how to evaluate the consequences for their actions. In this way, students gain personal power and learn to display the hallmarks of caring citizens.

Trust, professionalism, and high expectations are encouraged in students as part of the school culture. The school teaches and uses the Antelope Valley Business Consortium’s “Reality Check” of Work Ethics Words: Trustworthy, Responsible, Respectful, and Fair. Within the classroom, teachers adhere to the District’s Course Goals and Objectives for their respective courses. Additionally, all core area teachers attended several workshops to help them understand and implement the MCAD Instructional Guides in their areas of concentration.

The faculty is a group characterized by enthusiasm. Lancaster High School’s instructors are known throughout the District for innovation and diligence. LnHS is alone in the district with its block schedule—providing more “seat time” instructional minutes for students than other schools. Students are required to dress for school as evidenced by the school’s enhanced dress code; it is hoped that the dress code helps to remind students of their responsibilities for both learning and conduct while on campus.

High Expectations and a focus on continuous school improvement is evidenced by activities such as Club Eaglet, eighth grade transition, and the current implementation of the Senior Project. Other committees have been and currently are used for reviewing and updating activities, plans, and vari-

PSR classes teach students how to take responsibility for their actions and gain control of their lives.

The school teaches the Antelope Valley Business Consortium’s “Reality Check” of Work Ethics Words: Trustworthy, Responsible, Respectful, and Fair.

ous projects. An example is the Comprehensive Guidance Program steering committee that was started in 1996 to help support and develop the current program. This committee is now inactive, but members are frequently called and asked for opinions. When changes in the program are discussed, the committee will reconvene. LnHS continues to research and implement educational strategies that support continuous school and student improvement.

To create a true learning community requires a caring group of mentors and a receptive audience. Lancaster High School believes that a stable, visible instructional leadership—unafraid to model appropriate dress and learning—and an enthusiastic staff provide the groundwork for high achievement expected of students.

Room for Improvement

In recent years, the Antelope Valley has come under criticism for its concentration of hate groups. There have been several widely reported instances of hate crimes within the area, and this trend is not absent on its school campuses.

Lancaster High School has encountered racially motivated acts of violence, with similar attacks being made against homosexuals. In many instances, these situations are tied to gang activity. Parents have raised this issue with teachers and administrators, and parent surveys have reflected this concern as well.

While there is no easy solution to this sociological problem, Lancaster High School takes this issue seriously. In an effort to curb this trend, LnHS has devoted a major portion of its Site Action Plan to dealing with the issues of racial and gang tensions, as well as to sexual harassment issues.

Currently, Lancaster High School attempts to address these issues through the Comprehensive Guidance Program’s ninth and tenth grade standards, including lessons on communication, conflict resolution, and other personal and social developmental issues. Solutions to these issues are also explored through the Student Safety Committee and WASC Student Committee, which gathers information from students to pinpoint the basis of the problem and the solutions that students feel will work.

Similarly, the administration has visited all freshman classes to talk about the consequences of negative actions and how to be proactive when issues of race and harassment arise among friends and fellow students; the District maintains a zero tolerance for hate crimes and racial intolerance policy, utilizing punitive action in its enforcement. Other proactive approaches are being investigated.

LnHS’s block schedule provides more “seat time” instructional minutes for students than other schools.

LnHS has devoted a major portion of its Site Action Plan to dealing with the issues of racial/gang tensions and sexual harassment issues.

A variety of clubs, such as Color Me Human and the Leo Club, address these issues as well. Furthermore, the Conflict Resolution Coordinator trains students and staff every year in the provision of conflict resolution services.

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