

SELF-STUDY VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT

WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

FOR

SOUTH SUTTER CHARTER SCHOOL

2452 El Centro Blvd.

East Nicolas, CA 95659

Marcum-Illinois Union Elementary School District

March 8th through March 10th, 2010

Visiting Committee Members

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Chapter I: Student/Community Profile (2 pages)

South Sutter Charter School (SSCS) opened its doors as a California Charter School on August 29th of 2005. It was chartered to provide a vehicle for parents to have the ability to make choices related to the education of their children in collaboration with their credentialed teacher. SSCS is sponsored by the Marcum-Illinois Union Elementary School District, located in East Nicolaus, California. Innovative Education Management Inc. (IEM) manages the business services for the school. SSCS currently serves independent study students from the cities, suburbs, and rural areas of Butte, Sutter, Colusa, Yolo, Sacramento, Placer, and Yuba Counties.

In the spring of 2007, the school went through its initial WASC visit, and received interim accreditation for the period through June, 2010. In the first year of operation the high school enrollment was 295, and by 2009 the enrollment was up to 467 students. The school has a significant population of English Language Learners, predominately Russian and Ukrainian speaking students, who provide a challenge to the school as they are mostly newcomers of high school with limited proficiency who have a difficult time passing the English portion of the California High School Exit Exam. Overall percentage for language proficiency for 2009 is approximately 32%. SSCS has applied for and received Title 3 grants money for identified EL students. 31% of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch status.

The administration are concerned about the mobility rate, which ranges from 92% for first year students to a low of 27% for students who attend four years.

With its relatively quick growth in enrollment, South Sutter hired 21 new Education Specialists in 2009, resulting in a staff of 70 highly qualified teachers with 1 to 22 years experience. There are many opportunities for teacher training in place at SSCS. Professional Development is provided in small or large groups or on-line, and is ongoing. All teachers are HQT and appear to be working within NCLB requirements.

Since 2005, the percentage of South Sutter students passing both portions of the California High School Exit Exam by the end of 12th grade increased from 19% to 68%. Furthermore, participation in the California Standards Tests has increased, though the number of students testing at the proficient level remains relatively low at 28% in math and 52% in English/Language Arts. In 2009, the school had 96% STAR participation, which is the best they had in the four years of operation. The CST scores indicate that English-Language Arts is definitely the stronger of the two areas, but they did not reach proficiency for all students and/or subgroups. The math scores indicate much work is needed either on basics or on review work before the test dates. SSCS has a major challenge with independent high school students not coming to high school prepared with a solid basic understanding of Algebra 1.

In the four-year time period, the school's graduation rate increased from 7% to 68%, and the school reports other students completed a Certificate of Completion, having passed their course requirements for graduation but failed to pass the CAHSEE.

South Sutter API Chart				
	2006	2007	2008	2009
API	609	543	609	661
Growth Target	N/A	619	556	615
Target Met School-Wide	N/A	No	Yes	Yes
Target Met Sub-Groups (White)	N/A	N/A	No	Yes
State Rank	N/A	1	1	1
Similar School	N/A	1	1	1

The school's Academic Performance Index, at 661 and state rank of 1 is of concern to the staff because they wish to do their best for their students, and also because that fact could have hampered their request for renewal of the charter. For that reason the school took advantage of a one-time opportunity to renew before the end of the fourth year of operation.

Chapter II: Progress Report (2 pages)

Since the last self-study:

- Comments on the school's major changes and follow-up process.
- Discuss how the school through its action plan has accomplished each of the critical areas for follow-up, including the impact on student learning.

Critical Areas for Follow-up from Dec 11, 2007 WASC team visit

1. *The staff needs to implement strategies that will result in greater assurance that students are learning grade level standards and that the expectations are consistent from one educational specialist to another. The school needs to more strongly demonstrate how it ensures that students are participating in a rigorous educational program.*

The teachers at South Placer are trained to individualize, to create an individual learning plan for each of their students based upon their SANTRON/WRAT assessment results, individual learning style, and student interests. At the beginning of each school year, teachers provide a copy of the CDE Parent standards to the parents to be used in this individual plan. SSCS purchased a school van primarily to transport their economically disadvantaged students to their local STAR and CAHSEE testing sites, resulting in an increased participation rate.

Teachers (ESs) document progress towards the state standards each month on every student's individual learning record in our school database. At these monthly meetings between the ES and the parent and student, work is assessed and students are encouraged and challenged to complete their best work towards standards still not met for the year. ESs report they closely monitor student progress, and, if it appears there is a lack of parent supervision or student work completion, the appointment schedule is modified to include greater supervision on the part of the teacher.

2. *Professional development needs to have a greater emphasis on the development of subject matter and instructional methodology expertise.*

All teachers all participate in a Professional Development plan that complies with Ed Code 44277. At the beginning of each school year, every teacher chooses 3 or more PG goals from the California Standards for the Teaching Profession The teachers are encouraged to choose goals that will enable them to better serve their specific population of students regardless of their abilities (above average, below average, learning challenged, etc). The school makes local outside opportunities available for the teachers to attend, and they track the PG trainings over the course of the year in the school database for reference.

The teachers attend required monthly trainings provided by the school, plus optionally choose from among school created topical Webex trainings and outside conferences and trainings geared to their individual teacher PG goals. The school purchased an online Learning Styles training program for every teacher to enable them to serve their students most effectively.

The Special Education director provides training for teachers at the first All ES meeting at the start of each school year, plus sends additional topical trainings for teachers throughout the school year and training articles for parents that are posted in online newsletters.

3. *The school's website and links need to be updated.*

Since the last WASC team visit, the school hired a curriculum coordinator, assessment coordinator, and a guidance counselor who have all worked to update the weblinks in their area to make the website user friendly for parents/students. Observation of the website indicates a comprehensive, well-thought out and user-friendly website.

4. *The staff does need to develop and implement an annual single plan for student achievement.*

Staff indicate in their self-study that they understand that Chapter 5 of this report will become our “single plan” when it is completed. However, it appears they do not fully understand all facets of an SPSA, and when asked, some staff felt they were not required to produce one. At the advice of the Visiting Team, a Director called the California Department of Education, Charter School Section, and was notified they are not required to produce a Single Plan for Student Achievement, and that in fact the School-Wide Action Plan will suffice.

5. *The staff does need to begin measuring student achievement of expected schoolwide learning results.*

Since the last WASC visit:

Teachers (ESs) have been trained yearly on the school data results and how it relates to the school goals/ESLRs.

The school administrative staff has done an extensive review of the Dataquest results to help create ESLRs and critical school goals each year.

Chapter III: Self-Study Process (1–2 pages)

- The school's expected schoolwide learning results.
 1. *Student reads and writes effectively.*
 2. *Student sufficiently understands and functions in the world around him.*
 3. *Student appreciates the history of mankind in all its diversity.*
 4. *Student comprehends the political process.*
 5. *Student applies mathematical principles and operations to solve problems*
 6. *Student applies scientific concepts and skills to explain his world and find solutions to its problems.*
 7. *Student realizes his own unique educational interests, talents, and abilities.*
- Comment on the school's self-study process with respect to the expected outcomes of the self-study. According to the self-study, “The Expected Schoolwide learning results (ESLRs) are a part of the school charter and are posted for all to view on the school website. As a California charter school, our growth goals are required to be a part of our school charter and the charter development process, and are not changeable without a revision of our school charter. A team of teachers, parents, and administration help develop our charter growth goals.” This was the only direct reference to the ESLRs in the self-study. ESLRs should have more presence in the self study as guiding principles after the mission statement or statement of purpose. *(They were told at their WASC training to use “School Goals” instead as they are referenced as that.)*

SSCS staff states they have accomplished or are working diligently on the five parameters of their self-study:

1. The school hired a curriculum coordinator, assessment coordinator, and a guidance counselor.
2. Teachers are trained to individualize and create an individual learning plan for each of their students based upon their SCANTRON/WRAT assessment results, individual learning style, and student interests. Parents are given the CDE Parent standards to be used in this individual plan.
3. All teachers participate in a Professional Development plan. Each year, teachers choose goals from California Standards for Teachers and then participate in opportunities available to help them meet those goals. Progress on these goals is tracked during the school year. SSCS also provides monthly trainings which are required.
4. Subject matter experts were chosen in core subject areas, and they have developed syllabi for all core subjects that are available to be used by all teacher/parent/students.

The involvement and collaboration of all staff and other stakeholders to support student achievement

Within the framework of the charter, staff report they continually seek input from all stakeholders:

1. The Board of Directors represents the parents to the school administration.
2. At monthly teacher meetings, Education Specialists are given an opportunity to voice their suggestions to better structure and serve the school.
3. The staff surveys the parents yearly to solicit specific input on school processes and how they impact their student.
4. Once a year students are surveyed about their educational program.
5. A survey goes to alumni to ask how they could have been better supported in their career paths.
6. All teachers have been a part of both a home and a focus group where they were involved in discussions of how to take the school goals and vision to their students.

The clarification and measurement of what all students should know, understand, and be able to do through expected schoolwide learning results and academic standards (*note the selected expected schoolwide learning results examined by the school*)

Periodic Scantron/WRAT testing and mandated testing are the staff's stated means of measuring the ESLRs, which are imbedded in the school goals, objectives, and California state standards. Teachers are trained to use assessments and use them to monitor student achievement while modifying curriculum as indicated. Parents may request additional testing using Scantron/WRAT.

ESs reported that they do some assessment at their meetings with families. They note they conduct oral quizzes to confirm students have completed assignments and to check for understanding.

SSCS is concerned about their state mandated testing scores and appears to do a good job at gathering and analyzing data about students and student achievement. Scantron and WRAT are administered annually, but with such high student mobility, it is difficult at best to monitor student growth. It may be advantageous to consider the best times to conduct testing. With such an at-risk population, students may already be far below grade level, but SSCS may be able to show growth during the school year, even though they may still not be up to grade level.

The following implications were drawn from analysis of the data:

1. Due to the high student mobility rate, it is difficult to get a consistent analysis of student needs, since the population can change dramatically from year to year.
2. According to the school's home and focus groups, there is a need to improve student learning in mathematics for all students, especially in Algebra I performance. From the discussions and the evidence gathered, there was an agreement that the school should find a way to help students get more direct instruction from qualified math teachers and tutors, either one-on-one or in small groups.
3. Staff and parents recognize there is a need to improve the English-Language Arts learning for students scoring basic and below on CSTs. South Sutter hired two EL teachers to work exclusively with them.
4. There is a need to improve the number of students who pass both sections of the CAHSEE in 10th grade, especially since data indicates that, if they do not pass these exams in 10th grade, the likelihood that they will pass it later attempts decreases greatly. Some of the students are coming to South Sutter because they have not succeeded in regular high school settings, therefore, while they are not in official special education programs, they are doing remedial work to bring them up to grade level. Diagnosis and finding proper programs is not simple at this level and often takes precedence over CAHSEE test prep. The students who do not pass on the first attempt are tracked and specific intervention programs are required to prepare them for the test.

The alignment of a long-range action plan to the school's areas of need; the development and implementation of an accountability system for monitoring the accomplishment of the plan

The school has clearly identified areas in need of improvement: Increase Algebra I proficiency rates; increase English-Language proficiency; improve CAHSEE pass rates, especially for 10th graders; and increase the graduation rate. Their action plan is comprehensive and thoughtful.

Chapter IV: Quality of the School's Program

Part A: What Currently Exists (10–20 pages)

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

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

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

Upon researching the SSCS website, their Mission/Vision statement is clear: "We believe in educating each of our students for the 21st century by providing individualized learning opportunities in small learning communities that incorporate increased parental participation and involvement." Observations of teaching sessions revealed teachers (ESs) who, utilizing a one-on-one relationship, continually question and prod their students to do their best in all subjects. During the visitation, all teachers, parents, students and administrators reiterated the theme of parental choice.

The South Sutter Charter School council consists of 29 parents, who strongly support the school's goals and objectives/ESLRs. Furthermore the online Parent Handbook supports the school vision and goals. Parents are required to read and sign a copy of the charter upon the first enrollment meeting with their ES to assure they are aware of their child's personal goals and that those goals are based upon state grade-level standards.

The school's Mission was developed with representatives of all shareholder groups. The school/community's Mission for the learning results is acknowledged and supported by the district and the board. A periodic process exists for monitoring and review. The staff's vision of what students should know and be able to do upon exit from high school is consistent with national, state, and local standards, curriculum, frameworks and current educational research and practice.

The Expected Schoolwide learning results (ESLRs) are a part of the school charter and are posted for all to view on the school website. As a California charter school, our growth goals are required to be a part of our school charter and the charter development process, and are not changeable without a revision of our school charter. A team of teachers, parents, and administration help develop our charter growth goals."

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

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

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

The ESLRs are posted in SSCS's Charter per the SSCS website, "The governing board's policy directly supports the school's vision and purpose that ensures student achievement

of the expected schoolwide learning results and academic standards are the focus of the school's efforts. The board is comprised of parents who have enrolled their students in South Sutter Charter School because they embrace the school's vision, which is a commitment to parental choice in education, using the expected outcomes through academic standards as their guide. The members of the board are drawn from this population of parents who work to further these goals.”

It was reported by SSCS school administrators that the Parent Council, also known as the School Council (very confusing term which means many different things in both comprehensive high schools and charter schools), has 29 members who are voted into a 2 year term. The School Council does vote on policy if a quorum is met, though a quorum may be met by teleconferencing. The Brown Act appears to be followed and agendas appear to be posted appropriately.

During the visitation it became unclear as to whether the IEM non-profit board must, can, cannot or might review and approve suggestions from the School Council (also known within the report as the school board). There appears to be some confusion within SSCS and IEM administrators as to which board governs SSCS, and which, if any, have approval jurisdiction over which boards. Neither the self study nor the visitation with staff clarified completely the lines of governance, or if the two boards are separate and distinct. As evidence the visitation team was provided with an organizational chart which implies that SSCS must comply with both boards as well as the authorizer's board. Two board members reported that they did vote on a STRS issue and that was passed on the IEM, (IEM management, not the IEM board), they thought.

Administration states school policies are developed by the school directors who base those decisions on school data and survey results as related to the school goals and academic standards. Implementation of policies is achieved through staff meetings, emails, newsletters, and the observation/evaluation process. Responsibilities of the professional staff are listed generally in the School Charter, and specifically in the Education Specialist Resources online on the school webpage, and in their job descriptions. The directors annually create the school-wide action plan, and develop the school budget in order to implement the plan to enhance student performance.

Because this SSCS's first full WASC visit, the school had not, before now, written a formal school-wide action plan. The Directors report to the Marcum-Illinois Board of Trustees on a yearly basis. As a charter school, the sponsoring district (Marcum-Illinois School District) is responsible by law to monitor the performance and fiscal health of the school. Additionally, the Management Company, IEM also monitors the school operations and fiscal health and reports to the school directors on their finding monthly, or more often if needed.

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

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

According to the self-study, a formalized governance system at the school is representative of the broad learning community in which the director serves as leader and facilitator. The school's leadership consists of administrators, faculty, students, staff, and community members who work together to shape and promote the culture of the school; celebrate excellence, improvement, and learning; and make sound decisions and resource allocations to ensure that the established expected schoolwide learning results and academic standards are achieved. The school-wide action plan is compiled by the school directors with input from many stakeholders (IEM; sponsoring district superintendents, staff and board; parents; teachers; students), based on the school data and surveys. The management company, IEM, works collaboration with the school on the financial considerations for our schoolwide action plan, which is submitted to both the school board for their input and the sponsoring district for their input. It was reported by SSCS Directors that about 50% of families chose to have the teacher be in charge of most or all direct teaching. SSCS school administrators reported that other school districts refer their more difficult students (students lacking credits, students with poor attendance) to SSCS, which in turn lowers mandated testing scores. Remediation plans are made for those students who have not passed CAHSEE, which are incorporated into their individual learning plans. There is a data base that keeps track of the materials that students are using to help pass the CAHSEE. A-G classes are offered for more advanced students. The basic plan for student courses follows the CDE minimum course standards for high school graduation.

The school profile is updated annually by the assessment department with the results of all of schoolwide assessments.

The school directors analyze the updated school profile to determine schoolwide critical needs; paying close attention to any low performing subgroups; and any results from prior action steps. The Single Plan for Student Achievement is then built from the review, adding new action plan steps to modify as needed, and the new Schoolwide Action Plan is then reviewed for fiscal accountability. The school budget shows they allocate a large percentage of school funds directly toward student learning needs based on individualized education plan created in collaboration with teacher, student, and parents. Tutor support students with their learning needs, and the school purchased research-based curriculum to directly address those learning needs.

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

Education Specialists are fully qualified for their assignment based on legal requirements, comply with the CA laws concerning DOJ clearance, TB testing, current credential, and have at least one NCLB certificate.

After selection as a teacher candidate, the school provides an online self-paced training in all of our school processes and database that every teacher candidate must "pass" prior to starting work for us.

SSCS is a participant in a BTSA consortium, and there are four different VPSS course providers who provide classes for our teachers who are in process of completing NCLB certifications.

While employed, all credentialed staff is required to select two to three school goals yearly from the California Professional Teacher Standards, and all credentialed staff members are required to complete 36 hours of professional growth annually, of which 23 hours are provided by the school.

SSCS's professional development design focuses on all students' achieving the expected school goals and academic standards.

The school provides opportunities for teachers to collaborate with a local group of teachers once a month and advisors are always available to provide additional expertise as needed.

The teams of Highly Qualified Subject Matter Experts in each of the school core areas are available to provide their expertise as requested in order to maximize the quality of all student's learning.

The Curriculum Coordinator provides regular teacher training and website postings to affect quality student learning.

English Language instructors provide weekly tutoring to each one of our EL students.

The High School Guidance Counselor provides regular teacher training and website postings to affect quality student learning.

Through evidence and reports from Advisors (Tracey Edwards and Lisa Voss) ES's are trained regularly through Webex online, and participate in VPSS and BTSA and become Highly Qualified in every academic area. ESs are also evaluated annually. It appears that every effort to properly train teachers is made. Due to geography and lack of facilities, however, ESs are unable to specialize by grade level. To be conversant with the entire K-12 curriculum may be burdensome to individual teachers and their assigned students.

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

According to the self-study, the schoolwide professional development design is supported with time, personnel, materials, and fiscal resources. Trainings are geared towards equipping ESs to meet their student's individual needs based on achieving the academic standards and the school goals. All staff members engage in both short-term and long-term professional development, based upon their yearly teacher goals and the school goals. The educational staff's annual individual goals are tracked in the school database, and professional development done by the educational staff toward those goals is also tracked in the school database. The professional development program is planned, developed and implemented by the school's educational leadership team. The school

purchased an online WebEx account to be able to offer real-time professional development training sessions to teachers who are located miles apart in various counties served by the school. These trainings are done by the curriculum, assessment, guidance departments, and Advisors. Live trainings are often recorded and posted on our school webpage for later review as desired. The educational staff is trained at a yearly all staff training day. All Education Specialists are required to attend a local monthly teacher professional development training meeting. The school uses Title 2, REAP, and other budget funding to fund Professional Development activities. The school purchased an online Learning Styles Professional Development training account for each of our teachers for the 2010 school year.”

Again, every effort is made, via Webex online and monthly area meetings held for 2 hours to update teachers in new procedures and information and share best practices. Online communication with list serves, email and Webex is a real strength for SSCS. It does not appear, however, that teachers attend professional organization conferences such as the National Science Teachers Conference, but this may be due to the California State budget crisis.

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

Staff members state they follow the SB740 requirement to allocate 80% of the budget to instructional expenses. In addition, they allocate funds per each high school student per year to specific instructional materials to meet the student’s specific learning needs (textbooks, computer, courses, etc). Teachers are involved directly in the choice of appropriate educational materials that will meet the academic standards and school goals. The school receives Title 3 funding which is allocated over and above the per student allocation for curriculum to serve the specific educational needs of EL students. CAHSEE grant funding is allocated to meet the individual needs of 11th and 12th grade students who did not pass CAHSEE in 10th grade.

Parents reported during the visitation that they were very pleased with the allocation they receive for instructional materials, and that they are encouraged to spend the entire amount. The board members and staff report that a database of material previously purchased is stored and available to all ES’s and their students. If a parent chooses to have the ES lead the learning and curriculum, a stipend, is paid to the ES which is taken from the student’s funding allocation, prorated if necessary.

SSCS uses human resources well, given that there is not a central facility for meeting families, etc. Teachers must be very resourceful to meet students within the 20 day limit. Again, electronic communication is used extensively.

- A7.** Has the charter school’s governing authority and the school leadership executed responsible resource planning for the future? Is the charter school solvent and does it use sound and ethical accounting practices (budgeting/monitoring, internal controls, audits, fiscal health and reporting)? **[FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS ONLY]**

According to the self-study:

“IEM in cooperation with the school directors, and with input from the parent board, create the long range plan. It is flexible based on our changing student population and school data.”

IEM does appear to have extensive experience managing charter schools in terms of personnel, budget, and writing charters and implementing policy. The long and short-range budget plans are produced by IEM and shared with staff and parents.

According to the SSCS website, the School Council proposes policy, but does not have final authorization. Per the school website, School Council members are to:

“Uphold the mission of the school; develop short and long term goals; monitor school’s performance; monitor own performance; be involved in accreditation process; serve for a 2 year term; plan to attend all council meetings; make suggestions to improve school; Be true to school’s mission, and be positive.”

This would indicate that the School Board is indeed advisory. Also, according to the minutes and agenda for the Student Council, no long range planning is evident by the School Council. It is not immediately evident who prepares long range educational goals.

According to the self study, part A7, IEM and SSCS have had clear independent audit reports since the inception of SSCS. Further, the school used several areas of criterion when making long-range plans. The commitment to parental choice is the driving force behind the school's vision. Each year the school compiles data to assess standards and learning results, as well as other established indicators (e.g., CAHSEE, CST, API, CELDT, SAT/ACT reports), and analyzes these data in relation to the school’s vision. These analyses form the basis of school and community discussions and planning to improve processes and programs to benefit all students and guide future resource allocations. The school cultivates continual input from all stakeholders in order to enhance the long-range planning.

It is also evident that IEM, in cooperation with the school directors and with input from the parent board, creates the long range plan which is flexible based on changing student population and school data. SB740 ensures that independent study charter schools continue to spend 80% of the school budget on instructional materials. The school's budget is audited annually by an outside auditor, which audit is approved by the state and school district.

The charter authorizer is updated monthly with a budget cash flow statement and all applicable financial reports such as the 1st and 2nd Interim. The school maintains the required 5% reserve.

- A8.** Has the charter school developed policies, procedures, and internal controls for managing the financial operations that meet state laws, generally accepted practices, and ethical standards? **[FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS ONLY]**

The finances of the school are handled by contract with Innovative Education Management, which has managed charter schools business services for over 10 years. The SB740 spending requirements are followed in the budget development process. The

annual budget is established based on state charter law and the analysis of school needs. There are many protections against mishandling funds. The budget and accounting practices done by IEM are monitored by the school directors and the sponsoring district.

The school receives a yearly audit according to the yearly audit guide for charter school independent study schools, and has always had a clean audit every year they have been in existence. Staff members state the school has an annual independent financial audit that employs generally accepted accounting principles, including a listing of audit exceptions and deficiencies which the school has resolved to the satisfaction of the charter-granting agency. There are written policies on the scope and responsibilities related to an independent financial audit. The school sends the audit reports to the authorizing agency and other government entities as required by law. All employees operate within their allotted budgets. Grant funding is expended according to the requirements of the grant and are reported as required.

The school has processes and protections for the following: 1) who is authorized to sign contracts, write checks, and release institutional funds; the monitoring of payroll information; the review of bank reconciliations and deposits/withdrawals of all school financial accounts; the policies and procedures for the use of credit cards and other lines of credit.

The school has a contracting process for services, equipment, and materials and accounts for all contracts of \$75,000 or more and their purposes.

Innovative Education Management manages school contracts and they are reported as required in SB740 reporting.

According to the self study, IEM appears to run a fiscally sound non-profit, adhering to State Law and the Ed Code practices.

IN regards to ES pay, during the visitation, it was reported that ES's are paid on a per pupil basis, not to exceed 25 students, although one ES stated that she had 27 pupils. ES's may have a range of ages to facilitate: from K through 12, as part of his/her caseload. Per pupil amounts vary according to age (elementary or secondary) and whether or not the student has an AESS (independent study model used meeting once per week). This is in keeping with the business model for the school.

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

1. Personalized learning for all students, with parent choice for curriculum.
2. Parent School Council made up of twenty-nine parents meeting a minimum of two times per year.
3. School leadership has direct input into SSCS decision making.
4. Clean financial audits.
5. Sound teacher hiring practices and training.

6. SSCS offers a wide variety of Professional Growth opportunities for staff and parents.
7. Each teacher receives an instructional budget based on his/her personal educational goals.
8. Although there are no facilities, SSCS provides a network of Internet communication options. Online communication between staff and parents and between staff and staff, very well thought out and utilized

Key issues for Organization: Vision and Purpose, Governance, Leadership and Staff, and Resources (if any) that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students.

1. No education-oriented facility to provide institutional stability. Due to Ed Code, charter schools may not have facilities in counties which have more students than the county of the authorizing district. SSCS has very few students residing in Sutter County; most student reside in Sacramento County and Placer County, therefore SSCS may not have facilities.
2. Although proficient and experienced in fiscal management, SSCS has more a company feel rather than an innovative entrepreneurial non-profit culture. Having a teacher on the IEM board as well as a couple of teachers on the School Board may be beneficial.
3. The Parent Council should be creating more long term and short term panning as per their duties requirements.
4. According to some parents, word of mouth is the school's best mode of advertising; perhaps the school should reconsider the necessity of the Educational Liaison/marketing position.
5. Clear lines of governance are not in place, or at least, the administrators must agree on the lines of governance and do not appear to do so. The self study is very confusing in this regard, using many different names for presumably the same group, e.g., "School Council", "Parent Board", "Board", etc. Consensus is needed.
6. Although it is understood that the independent study/personalized learning model used and the wide geographic area served, it is very unfortunate that more parents were not involved in the WASC visitation and implies some apathy on the part of the parents.

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

- Discussions with IEM administrator and SSCS administrator.
- School Council meetings and minutes.
- The School Charter.

CATEGORY B. STANDARDS-BASED STUDENT LEARNING: CURRICULUM

- B1.** To what extent do all students participate in a rigorous, relevant, and coherent standards-based curriculum that supports the achievement of the academic standards and the expected schoolwide learning results.

To what extent are the expected schoolwide learning results accomplished through standards-based learning (i.e., what is taught and how it is taught)?

South Sutter Charter School is an independent study program whose curriculum is ultimately chosen by the student's parent/guardian as reported in the **Charter Responsibilities Summary**: "Each parent has the right of approval for all instructional materials and opportunities provided to his / her student." This curriculum could range from the basic Graduation Requirements (available at SCS website) required by the State of California, through a UC/CSU A-G requirements curriculum. The rigor, relevant, and coherent standards-based nature of the curriculum is verified through a Vendor Request procedure used to approve Curriculum available on the School's Vendor list.

Although there is a wide choice of curriculum material available to the students, many struggle to pass State mandated tests, especially the California Standards Test in Math in all grades, and increasingly in English as students advance in grade level. According to the Self-Study roughly 64 % of 9th graders, 85 % of 10th graders, and 92 % of 11th graders taking the CST in the various Math courses scored Below or Far Below Basic. In English-Language Arts, the scores range from 35% in the 9th Grade, to 43% in the 10th, to 54 % in the 11th. It should be noted as exceptional that all 3 ninth grade students tested in Algebra II scored Basic or Proficient.

It is evident in the Self-Study and based on many of the interviews with parents, students and staff, there is a kind of inverse bell shaped curve of success with respect to student achievement of academic standards. Students seem to either do very well, or struggle mightily.

The Committee has not seen any evidence of how the ESLRs/school growth area goals are specifically required to be fulfilled by each student's curriculum. During the visit, there were several discussions regarding the clarity of ESLR # 2, "Student sufficiently understands and functions in the world around him" and at least one visiting team member felt this area could easily go unfulfilled by students taking "Life Skills" electives that have no community involvement component. In discussions with the directors, there seem to be accommodations made for parents who, for philosophical reasons, do not want to meet the clear intent of some ESLRs. Though the student record keeping program (F.R.E.D.) is used to track student growth areas (ESLRs) this functionality has been supplanted by the State standards and there is not currently a clear way of tracking the extent to which the ESLRs are accomplished. The directors indicated and team members concurred there is a possible need to revisit and condense / re-write / refine the ESLRs.

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

In reading the Self-Study and interviewing a number of the ESs it is clear to the Visiting Team that the students are privileged to have a supportive system in SSCS to help them with personal planning and preparation toward their goals. ESs, supported by their Advisor, Curriculum Coordinator and various software systems (WebEx, Bridges, Scantron, PRIM), take an active part in the lives of their students, meeting in their homes and working with their parents to provide guidance and direction. SSCS has developed an impressive array of available vendors to help prepare students academically, as well as services such as tutors, ROP options, EL assistance, Special Education assistance and a part time Guidance Counselor to help prepare them with academic, personal and career goals.

In interviews with students and parents, most said that they were quite satisfied that their educational allotment was sufficient to gain access to the portions of the program that they needed, though some said that they were not able to continue to use some of the more expensive resources.

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

Because each student's curriculum is an individualized agreement between CCSC and the parent, there is no single, comprehensive high school program. However, as noted in the Self-Study, each student's Learning Plan must include a graduation goal which, at minimum, would fulfill the California State's graduation requirements.

One of the mandatory requirements is passing both parts of the CAHSEE exam. The Self-Study reports that, at the time a "snapshot" was taken that roughly 68% of the 12th graders at that moment had passed the CAHSEE; up from 19%. However, as noted in the Self-Study and in discussions with SSSC directors there is a high mobility rate among seniors that makes longitudinal comparisons difficult.

In addition to failing CAHSEE, some students do not graduate due to their credit deficient status. In evidence supplied by the Directors, at this time 21 (43%) of this year's 12th graders came into the year with credit deficiencies; this closely mirrors the overall High School's population 208/443 (47%) of credit deficient students.

The evidence shows, and discussions with the directors confirm, that each 12th grader is required to have one or more support resources for each section of the CAHSEE that the student did not pass.

Areas of strength for Standards-Based Student Learning: Curriculum (if any) that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students.

1. A wide selection of standards-based resources is available to each student.

2. Each student has an ES agreeable to the parent(s) who will follow and direct the students' progress throughout each of their years at SSCS. This allows the ES to learn the students' strengths and weakness and suggest methods and materials that might work best for them.
3. SSCS is continuing to grow in support personnel with the addition of EL specialists and a part time Guidance Counselor.
4. The ESs find ways to share materials in order maximize students' Instructional Funds.
5. Mechanisms for communication and dissemination of important information among staff, ESs, parents, students are extensive and helpful.

Key issues for Standards-Based Student Learning: Curriculum (if any) that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students.

1. A correlation and accountability should be established for more clearly connecting the State standards and the Student's Learning Plan.
2. Continued efforts should be made to diagnose and remediate students who are not passing State mandated tests, especially the CST and CAHSEE, and Algebra I classes
3. Continue to work on ways for ESs and the school to share resources as a means for cutting costs for students in order to give them the greatest possible access to instruction and materials..
4. Further refinement should be pursued in gathering data about student achievement that is disaggregated to reflect students who are new to the program and those who have been with them for multiple years in order to make longitudinal comparisons meaningful.
5. Continue to explore ways to help credit deficient students make up their missing credits.

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

- SSCS Self-Study Report
- Interviews with IEM personnel, SSCS staff and instructors, EL specialists, students, parents, and Board Members.
- Observation in one student's home.
- Evidence binders of Criteria B Appendices

CATEGORY C. STANDARDS-BASED STUDENT LEARNING: INSTRUCTION

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

South Sutter Charter School offers an assortment of subject and class choices for students that follow state standards as well as UC/CSU a-g and elective classes. Students have access to a variety of information sources, including locally developed standards, state curriculum frameworks, and other national references, made available on a regular basis and used by most families as resources to define curricular content and instructional activities. Innovative methods that are supported by research and professional

development activities are frequently used by parents and Education Specialists (ESs). Through professional development trainings and other sources, Education Specialists receive specialized, research-based training in adjustment and alignment of curriculum to assist students in meeting or exceeding grade-level standards. Education Specialists provide families and students with information regarding local, statewide, and national learning standards in the form of parent versions of CA state standards and what performance is expected and listed in the school charter. Assignments include use of State-approved Texts, online/internet classes and community college classes including science lab courses that satisfy University of California A-G requirements. Depending on student classification and parent involvement, students may meet with their ES from once per week to the maximum of every 20 days.

Yearly and on-demand Scantron assessments provide detailed standards-based guidance (performance data and suggested objectives) that Education Specialists and parents use as a base for collaborative decision making involving the student's individualized learning plan. If a student is reading far above grade level, Education Specialists, parents, and students can use the Lexile scores provided through the test as a springboard for discussion on higher-level reading books.

Students' quality and quantity of work and their attendance are monitored by their ES. The ES is responsible for monitoring the work completed, assessments and testing with that information entered into the school's student information database. All reports are scrutinized and expected to be submitted in accordance to time line guide lines.

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

South Sutter educational specialists (ESs) utilize individual strategies for each of their students by having computer service and programs for their use. The teachers have monthly collaboration talks via video conference or large training meeting to go over strategies and new learning opportunities that could aid the students to reach their potential, if used by all students. The one-to-one educator/student ratio aids in connecting with the student without classroom peer pressure and classroom confusion. The student has the opportunity to get work accomplished and then learn by activities sponsored by the school or get a job and attain real-world expertise

Use of technology allows students to interact, research and progress in their assigned work. These pathways such as teleconferencing and video conferencing aid in helping student overcome difficulties of understanding in a rapid and efficient process.

Areas of strength for Standards-Based Student Learning: Instruction (if any) that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students.

1. Individualized learning plans based on the assessments of each student.

2. Flexibility to change curriculum and learning approaches immediately upon evaluating monthly student progress.
3. The variety of assessments to analyze the student's achievements.
4. Monthly documentation of students' progress.

Key issues for Standards-Based Student Learning: Instruction (if any) that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students.

1. There is a need increase algebra I scores/proficiency
2. The school needs to improve CAHSEE and STAR proficiency and pass rates and help students realize their highest potential.

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

- Discussions with various stakeholders.
- Scantron Test examples and results.
- One-on-one teacher/student connection leading to a pseudo family bonding that leads to trust and respect.

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

- D1.** To what extent does the school use a professionally acceptable assessment process to collect, disaggregate, analyze and report student performance data to the parents and other shareholders of the community?

Scantron is a pre evaluation assessment tool that enables the ES (educational specialist) to begin placement of each student into proper course levels, modifying as necessary during the course of the student's enrollment. Scantron scores can be evaluated at the teaching site by computer internet connection, which helps the ES to begin subject matter learning and give feedback to the parent immediately. Assignments are given depending on the involvement or choice of the parent, from weekly assignments to the maximum of 20 days between visits. Summative and formative testing is given to check for student understanding of each subject being learned. Attendance is checked against work assignments and test days and the parent(s) must also, as teacher, confirm work and participation.

Other means of student assessment include the Assessment and Learning Knowledge Spaces, (ALEKS) which uses adaptive questioning to quickly and accurately determine exactly what a student knows and doesn't know in a course, the curriculum chapter tests, quizzes, foldables, online self-quizzes, unit tests, and chapter reviews, oral discussion, alternative assessments, student projects, and observations.

Student information, including assessment results, is kept in the school's student information system, Filemaker Record Education Data (FRED), updated daily by office staff and ESs. Assignments, grades, transcripts and such are at staff disposal at all times and are regularly reported to parents.

The school requires all students in grades 2-11 to complete the School-Wide Writing Assignment each year. Any 12th grader who has not yet passed the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) English-Language Arts is also required to participate. WebEx School-Wide Writing Assignment training is available to parents.

The personal learning plan is developed collaboratively by the Education Specialist, parent, and student when the student enters high school. It is revisited each semester and each Learning Record (LR) meeting acts as an opportunity to make changes to the personal learning plan in response to changes in the student's educational goals, career interests, and performance levels. Education Specialists are current in the instructional content taught and research-based instructional methodology and are specially trained in innovative methods, supported by research to assist students in adjusting and supplementing their learning path to assure they are on track to meet or exceed their grade level standards. Education Specialists emphasize higher-order thinking skills to help students succeed at high levels and move on to attend post-secondary education. Between 2007 and 2009, the number of students enrolled in a-g courses increased by 308%.

The school provides ample access for learning through technology, such as individual computers and internet service providers if needed, as well as pertinent educational CDs, DVD's and access to online courses and resources. For example, in the area of science, South Sutter Charter School is able to provide students with lab kits to explore and experiment with hands-on learning.

D2. To what extent do teachers employ a variety of strategies to evaluate student learning?

To what extent do students and teachers use assessment results to enhance the educational progress of every student?

Utilizing Scantron, CAHSEE, STAR, oral quizzing, portfolios, informal assessments and observations, the school wide writing test, chapter tests and quizzes, and end-of-unit tests, ESs write monthly learning records, which document student progress toward specific academic standards, list various means of special assessment, and highlight those standards in which they need more improvement. Each ES gives his/her students a "Learning Style" assessment to clarify their interests and in order to find the best curriculum to meet their academic standards.

To what extent do students and teachers use assessment results to enhance the educational progress of every student?

The assessment tools utilized by the school are numerous and varied, beginning with the Kaleidoscope Learning Style Inventory, administered to every student to see where his/her interests lie while finding the best curriculum to meet academic standards. Students maintain personal learning plans, and students and teachers use these to collaborate in the choice of curriculum to meet student needs. Additionally, each ES, working in conjunction with the parents, closely monitors Scantron assessments, informal

assessments and observations during the regularly scheduled student/parent/ES meeting, the school-wide writing test, the CAHSEE and California Standards Tests, student reports, research papers and portfolios, and even student success in community involvement and employment. The staff reports that analysis of student data and modifying teaching approaches is vital to successful student/teacher relationships and ultimately student academic success.

- D3.** To what extent does the school, with the support of the district and community, have an assessment and monitoring system to determine student progress toward achievement of the academic standards and the expected schoolwide learning results?

The school staff reports the process to keep the parents informed about student progress is very effective, and includes the parent listserv, newsletters, and updates from each ES. ESs provide students and parents a listing of the academic standards complete/not completed on a monthly basis during the school year. ESs review results of all school wide assessments with students and parents as results are available. According to the parent survey, parents feel that SSCS staff members are very effective in keeping them informed, and the sponsoring district renewed the school's charter for another five years. SSCS CAHSEE and STAR test scores are improving. 68% of the students passed the CAHSEE by the end of the 12th grade in 2009, compared to 19% in 2006, and the school's API went from a 609 in 2006 to 661 in 2009. The school council is presented with the assessment results at meetings as they are available. The school's annual SARC report is posted on the school website each December, as required by law.

According to DataQuest, the California Department of Education's reporting site, less than 6% of South Sutter's English Learner students participated in the STAR. Yet, the total EL population according to the school's School Accountability Report Card is 12%.

- D4.** To what extent does the assessment of student achievement in relation to the academic standards and the expected schoolwide learning results drive the school's program, its regular evaluation and improvement and usage of resources?

The district and board both provide support to the school in response to the assessment results. The school assesses its progress in meeting the academic standards and the expected schoolwide learning results by analyzing student performance on internal assessments, on standardized tests, and on state measures. Grant funding helps to fund CAHSEE interventions students. The School Wide Writing Assignments are mandatory and are extremely helpful at improving student writing scores, especially to help with the writing portions of the CAHSEE and STAR. Educational Specialists receive monthly training on all skills needed to ensure that a strong, standards-based curriculum is established for each student. Specialized vendor services are used as needed to support student needs, especially with English Learners. Courses are offered for any student that needs extra work in areas where they may be struggling. Rewards are given to students that score Basic or above on the STAR test as an incentive to do their best. Parents and students are informed of this by their ESs and in the school newsletter.

Areas of strength for Standards-Based Student Learning: Assessment and Accountability (if any) that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students.

1. Individualized learning plans are based on the assessment of each individual student.
2. South Sutter has the flexibility to change curriculum and learning approaches immediately upon evaluating monthly student progress.
3. The school offers a variety of formal and informal longitudinal and horizontal assessments to capture the whole child and his/her achievements.
4. Student achievement data are collected monthly to document student growth and is available to all appropriate stakeholders.

Key issues for Standards-Based Student Learning: Assessment and Accountability (if any) that need to be addressed to ensure quality education for all students.

1. The extent to which district and board are involved in the review process
2. The extent to which school staff is involved in the review process
3. The extent to which students and parents are involved in the ongoing review process about student performance and the means by which student progress toward achieving the academic standards and the expected schoolwide learning results is reported to the community (e.g., forums, newsletters)
4. The extent to which parents and district and school board members are kept informed about the assessment results
5. The school needs to identify a way to increase Algebra 1 math scores for High School students.
6. Staff should place greater emphasis on helping students reach proficiency levels in English/Language Arts and in preparing students to perform better on standardized assessments.
7. Improvement in CAHSEE and STAR scores would improve the overall High School graduation rate.
8. The school needs to increase the number of English Learner students participating in standardized assessments such as the STAR in order to better monitor growth and success.

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

1. South Sutter API scores improved from 2008 to 2009 but still below the state average.
2. Lists of students who scored below basic or far below basic on the 2009 California Standards Tests.
3. The CASHEE pass rates in math and English.
4. CELDT test scores.
5. South Sutter Charter's data from the SCANTRON results.
6. South Sutter concurrent college enrolment numbers.

CATEGORY E. SCHOOL CULTURE AND SUPPORT FOR STUDENT PERSONAL AND ACADEMIC GROWTH

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

According to the school's mission statement, SSCS is parent-driven, and many of the parents choose the school because of their desire to participate actively in their children's education. The school defines itself as one which values parental choice in education. According to the self study, the parents play a crucial role in the teaching of the students, while as reported by administrators and advisors, it is difficult to get parents to run for board seats. Involvement of parents is not problematic; rather, it is required. School leadership allows Education Specialists and other professionals to support and involve parents in curriculum decisions and other functions. Parents have a voice in how much they will participate in decisions about curriculum and learning activities. Parents work with Education Specialists and can choose from differing levels of involvement regarding their child's learning and their teaching process.

Although there is no facility for parents or students to meet with teachers and other staff or to take classes, SSCS has made a great effort to provide communication through electronic means to families. According to the self study, there is on-going communication between the school and parents through monthly face-to-face meetings with an Education Specialist, newsletters, list-serve (Yahoo Groups), mailings, park days, and surveys. SSCS provides their non-English speaking parents some information with either an interpreter or appropriate materials in their language. According to the self study, SSCS provides curriculum and teaching options that help parents of English Learners support their children's education. A Russian language and cultural support vendor is available to the students. Other vendors offer tutoring to EL students who speak different languages. Some school messages go out to parents in languages other than English.

- E2.** To what extent is the school a safe, clean, and orderly place that nurtures learning?

To what extent is the culture of the school characterized by trust, professionalism, high expectations for all students, and a focus on continuous school improvement?

Since there are no educational facilities, any space that is rented or leased is viewed initially by SSCS staff, then approved by an IEM operations staff person. According to the self-study, all South Sutter Charter School STAR and CAHSEE testing occurs at approved sites. The STAR Site Coordinators and Educational Liaisons visit the sites prior to sending students there to ensure it is a safe, clean, orderly environment. During these activities, students are supervised by school administrative staff and teachers and other fingerprinted individuals. This also includes all vendors on the vendor list.

Teachers meet with students either at their homes or at a neutral facility such as the public library, community center or a coffee shop. According to the self study, if the Education Specialist senses that a child is neglected or abused, he/she is required by law to report it to Child Protection Services immediately. Families must assure the school staff that they will not use school-purchased computers and internet service for inappropriate nor unsafe activities. Families must sign a school acceptable use agreement in order to have a computer/ internet service place in their home for educational usage.

To provide relationships that are trusting, professional, and include high expectations for students, parents must sign that they understand the charter's mission and adhere to the policies and procedures necessary for the student's education. It was reported that at least 50% of the parents request full teacher intervention for their students. ES's are to respond to their families within 24 hours to any request, and are evaluated on this annually.

According to the self study, the school is open to exploring the addition of new vendors, curriculum choices, and educational services to providing increasing, more individualized for support for student needs and to promote high expectations. The school offers a variety of curriculum choices, classes, college preparatory courses from internet based vendors, ROP, and access to community college courses to foster our students' learning abilities and styles.

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

All students have an individualized education plan written in collaboration between the parent, teacher and student. The teacher collaboration is dependent on how much assistance the parents want from their ES. According to the self study and observations in the field, the relationship ESs develop with the families/ students is unique in that it is far more holistic than a traditional classroom setting. Although academic and career counseling is the prime responsibility of the ESS, teacher/parents can facilitate the referral of students to a variety of support services through the school's extensive vendor list and other community programs.

SSCS also provides a high school guidance counselor, a relatively new employee shared between charters under the IEM umbrella. An online program called "Bridges" is given to all high school students to help them with career exploration and planning. Due to the wide geographic areas served, the counselor "meets" most often with students via the Internet. According to the self study and reported by the SSCS administration and the guidance counselor, all students and families have access to our school Guidance Counselor for individual support and advice as needed. Professional development sessions (inservice training opportunities created by our school's Advisors) have been held on career counseling and the college admission process. A High School Handbook was recently written to describe the wide variety of educational choices is given to all students in grades 9-12 so that they can better plan for high school courses, college admissions, and career goals.

As reported in Section A, ES personnel have regular training sessions through Webex, given by the IEM curriculum coordinator as well as other IEM staff. According to the self study, ESs are trained to consult with their Advisor when issues of personal counseling arise with students. The school has an extensive network of vendors from which parents can choose depending upon the individual needs of their child. South Sutter Charter School offers a generous level of academic counseling that primarily occurs in the individual monthly meetings with each student. Further, the school has a special education department and utilizes the SST process to support students' needs as needed. Students with IEPs are provided services by special education teachers. As reported in various meetings during the visitation, if students are not succeeding in the program they are given notices to that effect and are dropped from the program.

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

According to the self study and reported at the visitation, South Sutter Charter School has a large vendor list with includes multiple community resources and services through school vendors that support students' learning/ movement toward achieve academic excellence and meeting the academic standards.

The Special Education team appears particularly qualified, and even though most contact is done through teleconferencing, it appears that student needs are being met. As reported by the Special Education administrators, it appears that all State and Federal laws and regulations for Special Education are being met.

An SSCS administrator states that students who do not pass one or both portions of the CAHSEE are provided with remediation plans from grant funding sources.

According to the self study, their school budget shows financial support by the funding of a guidance counselor, Special Education, EL instructors, and various outside service vendors. Also according to the self study, South Sutter Charter School students who need support in meeting the rigorous demands of curriculum have a network of student support services including: individual and small group tutoring, support services, and a wide variety of curriculum options available. Teachers know their students well enough as individuals to personalize instruction. The school provides access to personalized, standards-based learning and alternative instructional options for every student.

As mentioned previously in the visitation report, students meet at least every 20 days with their ES for their individualized course of study. Students and parents may also contact their ES more often for questions and clarification, and high school students and their parents may opt for more teacher time with an AESS plan A, B or C, which indicates how often the meetings are held and the depth of support to the parent/teacher. Parents and students may also have face to face meetings with Subject Matter Experts as appointed by the school administration. EL students and parents are assisted by the EL teachers, who are generally assigned the appropriate EL student to their caseload, as reported in the visitation.

According to the self study, specific programs such as GATE, AVID, and MESA are not available to South Sutter charter school; however, a variety of available materials,

services and resources help support the special needs of students. Children with extreme special needs cannot be accommodated by the school and are not enrolled.

The needs of high functioning students are addressed through curriculum and learning activities that can address their special needs. Students can participate in offerings such as programs offered by Stanford University, take rigorous/ challenging above-grade level coursework, and attend community college courses. The school offers UC/CSU approved courses and includes support for Advanced Placement test preparation.

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

1. Personalized learning options utilizing student interest.
2. A large number of varied vendors in the area.
3. Website, list serves, and various communication outlets for students and parents, including parent in-services available via Webex.
4. Community college courses, ROP, online curriculum available to students. Community service and other community career options can be explored
5. Inservices are held for parents.

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

1. ESL family homes that may be remote or generally not in the same area as the EL teachers that may hinder effective communication for families.

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

1. Discussions with students, staff, and parents.
2. Observations of ES/Student meetings.

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

- Briefly comment about the previously identified schoolwide strengths and critical areas for follow-up.

General Comments:

South Sutter Charter School staff, students, and parents have much to be proud of. Students enroll in courses based on their interests and skill level following a fairly extensive and ongoing battery of assessments. Each teacher is allowed funding for his/her assigned students and works with parents to select appropriate textbooks, resource materials, class supplies, and school related activities. Parents have maximum flexibility to participate in the student's education. Though the parents are expected to be the primary teachers, an Educational Specialist comes to the home or nearby location at least once every twenty days to review assignment completion and assign new work for the following period. The system seems to work well for all concerned. The school makes extensive use of technology to communicate student progress, vendor advertisements, activities, and training opportunities between and among parents, students, and staff, and, as a result, the problem of distance has for the most part been overcome. As one parent stated, "my biggest problem is there aren't enough hours in the week to participate in all the learning opportunities offered through South Sutter." The school program works wonderfully for responsible students and motivated parents, and the staff is looking for ways to better serve the struggling students who may lack basic skills, motivation, or whose parents are unable or unwilling to be intimately involved in their child's schooling. Furthermore, it is suggested the staff members pay special attention to the English Language Learner population; South Sutter has a significant population of English Language Learners. These students provide a challenge to the school as they are mostly newcomers of high school age with limited proficiency who have much difficulty passing the English portion of the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE).

Schoolwide Areas of Strength (list numerically)

1. Personalized learning based on the assessments of each student for all students, with parent choice for curriculum, and a wide selection of standards-based resources is available to each student.
2. Parent School Council made up of twenty-nine parents meeting a minimum of two times per year.
3. Clean financial audits.
4. Sound teacher hiring practices and training.
5. Each teacher receives an instructional budget to serve each of their student's educational needs based on his/her personal educational goals.
6. Mechanisms for communication and dissemination of important information are extensive and helpful.
7. Individualized student learning plans based on the assessment and interest, with immediate modification upon evaluating monthly student progress.
8. Website, listserves, webinars, and staff and parent professional growth opportunities via technology.

Schoolwide Critical Areas for Follow-Up (list numerically)

1. The Parent Council should participate in more long term and short term planning.
2. Clear lines of governance are not in place, or at least, the administrators must agree on the lines of governance.
3. A correlation and accountability should be established for more clearly connecting State standards and the Student's Learning Plan.
4. Continued efforts should be made to diagnose and remediate students who are not passing State mandated tests, especially the CST and CAHSEE, and Algebra I classes.
5. The school should continue to focus on English Learner students participating in standardized assessments such as the STAR in order to better monitor growth and success.
6. Continue to work on ways for ESs and the school to share resources as a means for cutting costs for students in order to give them the greatest possible access to instruction and materials.
7. Further refinement should be pursued in gathering data about student achievement that is disaggregated to reflect students who are new to the program and those who have been enrolled for multiple years, to make longitudinal comparisons meaningful.
8. Continue to explore ways to help credit deficient students make up their missing credits.
9. The school should explore ways to best serve EL students and their families, including those that may not live in the same area as the EL teachers.

Chapter V: Ongoing School Improvement (1–2 pages)

- Include a brief summary of the schoolwide action plan

The school acknowledges the need for ongoing improvement in the areas of student academic success, the challenges that some students face that impede their learning, and the resultant impact on the school's Academic Performance Index including the similar schools score, both of which are surprising low. Staff attributes much of the problem to student mobility; however they also recognize the need to initiate a systematic method for addressing student individual learning results in mathematics, reading, and Language Arts while simultaneously looking at collective disaggregated assessment data.

Adequacy of the schoolwide action plan in addressing the identified critical areas for follow-up

- ♦ Do the action plan sections address the critical areas for follow-up?
- ♦ Will the action plan steps enhance student learning?
- ♦ Is the action plan feasible within existing resources?
- ♦ Is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, schoolwide and system-wide?

There are four components to the Action Plan: Increase student proficiency in Algebra 1; Increase STAR English/Language Arts proficiency; Improve the number of students who pass

both the English/language arts and Mathematics portion of the California High School Exit Exam in the 10th grade; and Increase the graduation rate.

Much of the plan includes parent training and access to resource materials. In a “Home School” such as South Sutter, this is a reasonable objective. Additionally, the staff plans to continue to assess students early and often to assure they are well prepared and making growth toward the overarching goal of High School graduation. The staff has made the commitment to assure involvement and collaboration of all shareholders to support this goal.

Based on the self-study concern that 70% of the EL students do not graduate because they do not pass both portions of the CAHSEE, the action, “EL Instructors/resource specialists work with all EL students on a weekly basis” is definitely a critical objective.

It is felt the action plan steps will enhance student learning, and the plan is feasible within the school’s existing resources. In conversations with all shareholders, it is apparent there is sufficient commitment to the action plan.

- ✓ Existing factors that will support school improvement
- ✓ Impediments to improvement that the school will need to overcome
- ✓ Soundness of the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishment of the schoolwide action plan.

The commitment of the school personnel is agreed to be the most important factor supporting the school’s improvement. All shareholders from the Directors, Education Specialists, Curriculum Coordinators, English Language Resource Specialists, Guidance Counselors, and parent/teachers recognize the need for continual improvement, and are willing and able to address the areas of concern. Furthermore, resources have been allocated and projected to support the action plan.

South Sutter recognizes impediments to school improvement including distance between the ES and the student home, culture and language barriers, and mobility of a student population that often includes students who enroll having not been successful in other schools and therefore lacking critical skills and course credits. The school has therefore initiated more frequent examination of student growth in courses, especially English/Language Arts and mathematics/Algebra. Furthermore, the student-centered curriculum and opportunities offered through the myriad of vendors is constantly monitored to assure quality of application to the curriculum.

The Visiting Team feels confident the South Sutter Directors and Advisors, as well as the parents and the School Council will utilize appropriate data to assure the follow-up process is sound and that they will use all available means for monitoring the accomplishment of the schoolwide action plan.