

# **Western Association of Schools and Colleges**

## **Visiting Committee Report**

**For**

### **Mills High School**

**San Mateo Union School District  
400 Murchison Drive  
Millbrae, California 94588**

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## Chapter I

### Student/Community Profile

Mills High School, established in 1958, is one of six comprehensive high schools in the San Mateo Unified High School District. Mills High School is located in the community of Millbrae; the enrollment of this culturally diverse school is 1562, and has grown by nine percent since 2000. The school is clean and safe with adequate certificated and classified staff and district support. The school is undergoing a major plant renovation, the first of two phases completed, with the second phase scheduled for completion in 2006. The demographics of its student population have changed over the past decade. The current composition of the student body is 51% Asian, 25% White, 13% Latino, 7% Filipino, 2% Pacific Islander, 1% African American and 1% other.

Eligibility for participation in the free and reduced lunch program includes .06% of all students. The percentage of the student population identified as English Language Learners (ELL) is .06%. Native speakers of other languages, most notably Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean and Spanish constitute 38% of the school population. Students who fall under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) equal 07% of the student population; students in the Gifted and Talented Program (GATE) equal 17% of the student population. The breakdown of the GATE population shows the following: White and Asian/Pacific Islander students comprise 15%, and Hispanic students .007%. There is one African American student at Mills identified as a GATE student.

Mobility rates are low; the approximate percentage of the student body that begins and ends the school year is 91%. The actual daily attendance rate is 97.5%. The four-year dropout rate is 2.0%, while the one-year dropout rate is .05%. Suspension rates have continued to drop over the past three years, from 229 in 2002-2003 to 117 in 2004-2005. Expulsion rates have remained low, with 4 expulsions in 2002-2003/2003-2004 school years, and 3 expulsions in 2004-2005.

There are many indicators of student achievement. For example, last year the school's Academic Performance Index (API) showed substantial gains were made including a schoolwide growth of 39 points.

<b>2002</b>	<b>2002 Base API 759</b>	<b>2003 Growth API 788</b>	<b>2002-2003 Growth 29</b>
<b>2003</b>	<b>2003 Base API 795</b>	<b>2004 Growth API 793</b>	<b>2003-2004 Growth -2</b>
<b>2004</b>	<b>2004 Base API 832</b>	<b>2005 Growth API 793</b>	<b>2004-2005 Growth 39</b>

This year schoolwide API target goals were met; there were significant gains made by Asians and Whites in meeting their sub-group growth targets. The school has met all the criteria including significant subgroups for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for 2004 and 2005.

Scores on statewide testing show several issues related to student performance. The 2005 CAT6 testing results indicated high achievement levels of Asians in Math, Social Sciences, English and Science, followed by Whites and Hispanics. Pacific Islanders and African American students were too small of a subgroup to be recorded. Socioeconomically disadvantaged students scored the lowest of all subgroups except in the areas of United States History, Biology, and Algebra II, where Hispanics and Whites scored lower. California Standards Test (CST) scores for 2004 showed approximately 36% of students proficient or above in English Language Arts at all grade levels, which was an increase at all grade levels from the previous year. Math scores showed approximately 34% proficient or above, science approximately 25%, and social studies, approximately 29% proficient or above. In the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), as more students were tested in 2004–2005, the percent passing both exams increased slightly from 2003–2004 (94% in English and 96% in math) to 2004–2005 (98% in English and 98% in math). It should be noted that Hispanic CAHSEE pass rates were exceptional, with 95% of the students passing both sections.

The SAT verbal scores have increased over the last three years from 516 to 540, math from 565 to 589; the number of seniors that took the most recent SAT test was 69%. The results were above the district and statewide averages. Achievement levels for the last three years are as follows:

SAT	Mills			San Mateo U.H.S.D.			California		
	2002	2003	2004	2002	2003	2004	2002	2003	2004
<b>Math</b>	565	579	589	554	561	529	516	518	496
<b>Verbal</b>	516	521	540	511	523	567	490	494	519
<b>% of Seniors Taking Exam</b>	71.6	75.1	69.9	56.7	57.7	53.5	37.3	36.7	35.2

The number of students taking the PSAT/NMSQT for the past three years has been 313 in 2003; 382 in 2004, and 369 in 2005. In addition, the percentage of students who are taking the most rigorous course of study is increasing. Fifty three percent (53%) of Mills students are choosing to take advance placement classes and the number of AP test takers has grown from 310 in 2001 to 559 in 2005. The number of students scoring a “3” or better on Advanced Placement exams has increased from 213/310 in 2001 to 365/559 in 2005.

Overall the school recognizes that it must increase reading, writing, and math proficiencies across all areas and must involve students in more challenging learning experiences that involve critical thinking skills and application. Students re-designated from Limited English Proficient to Fluent English Speakers are 301 (19%). The percentage of seniors completing the UC “a-g” requirements has fluctuated over the last three years; the percentages are as follows:

- 63% Class of 2003
- 68% Class of 2004
- 56% Class of 2005

The decline in 2005 was due to a higher number of twelfth grade students earning D or F marks in the second semester of 2005. In the 2004-2005 school year, all high schools in the SMUHSD began a program revision to establish a core curriculum for ninth and tenth grade students, which will prepare students for upper division work and provide them with a foundation for meeting the UC/CSU entry requirements.

Seventy-two percent (72%) of the certificated staff of 75 have been educators for 6 or more years, with 33% of the staff members holding a Master's Degree or higher. Eighty-five percent (85%) of the classroom teachers have second language certification while 9% hold a special education certificate. All teachers are credentialed; over 20% of the staff has been at the school for five years or less. 98.1% of all certificated teachers at Mills are NCLB compliant. The certificated staff is 76% White, 8% Hispanic, 6% Asian, 2% African-American and 8% other, which is not reflective of the student population, especially in the percentage of Hispanic and Asian teachers.

There are many new standards-based textbooks and other materials, with new textbooks adopted every seven years. Textbooks from the following courses have been purchased since 2003: AP Microeconomics, AP Government, AP Biology, AP Calculus AB & BC, AP Physics B & C, Contemporary World Studies, and English 1-2 anthologies. The school also has additional staff focused on improving the instructional program and lowering the ratio of students to staff members. Currently there are fourteen classes that have a student/teacher ratio of 20:1 or less. The district supplies three counselors and a full time Librarian to augment the school's staff. In addition, a school safety advocate refers at risk students for additional services. The health aide reviews student health records to insure that all students' medical needs are addressed. The college and career advisor provides students with written, digital, and online information regarding future opportunities. Students take advantage of two support groups run by the North Peninsula Family Alternatives program.

Over 70% of students participate in extracurricular activities, with over 500 students participating in athletic programs, as well as student involvement in Thirty-Four clubs, Music performances and Drama productions.

Community involvement includes informal and formal partnerships. Official organizations include the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), Athletic Boosters, Mills Musical Arts Group, Mills Drama Guild, Theater Renovation Committee and Friends of the Mills Library. Informally the school receives support from parents as volunteers for field trips and other school events. Community members have formed a Millbrae Sports and Recreation Foundation to support a major athletic facility upgrades at Mills High School. This project is a collaborative effort of the district and the City of Millbrae Parks and Recreation Department.

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## **Chapter II**

### **Progress Report**

#### **Major Changes Since Last Full Self Study**

Several significant changes have occurred at Mills High School since the last self study (2000). One of the most significant has been the turnover of the administrative team. Mills has had two new principals, a new assistant principal for administrative services, a new dean, and four different assistant principals for instructional services through the 2005 school year. The former assistant principal of curriculum and instruction is the acting interim principal for the 2005-2006 school year. One of the Assistant Principals currently at Mills will become the new Principal for the 2006-2007 school year. School and district-wide efforts have focused on becoming standards-based with the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) and California Standards Test (CST).

Another significant development since 2000 has been the application and implementation of the Digital High School grant (DHS). The grant focused on securing necessary technology equipment, promoting student achievement through instructional technology, and providing teacher training. The development of rubrics guided and assessed the attainment of these goals. Goals for the school included:

- Students will be proficient and creative users of technology in their academic classes;
- Students will be effective communicators through reading, writing, listening and speaking;
- Students will be able to demonstrate effective collection, analysis, and synthesis of information.

Significant building and renovation is taking place in the form of renovation of classrooms and facilities for the much of the school plant, which has been achieved largely through the district's passage of bond measures.

In 1988 and 1996, Mills High School was recognized as a California Distinguished School and in 1998 was a National Blue Ribbon Finalist.

The Mills High School curriculum has been expanded to provide additional learning opportunities for students. These expansions are as follows:

- Art History (District-wide enrollment offered on Saturday)
- Biology
- Calculus AB
- Calculus BC
- Economics
- Government
- Physics

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#### Addition of Electives:

- International Relations
- Engineering Technology
- Contemporary World Studies
- Applied Geometry Statistics
- Theater Technology
- Algebra Support
- Reading Development
- Integrated Science

Another significant addition has been the implementation of the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment program (BTSA) and the Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) revised evaluation system. New teachers in the district have had extensive coaching and professional development activities aligned with the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CTSP). The program has been reduced in the last two years due to budget cuts. At present there are two full-time BTSA support providers. The PAR program has provided assistance to volunteer teachers and referred teachers.

There has been an increased emphasis placed upon the analysis of student achievement data and reporting, and the development by departments of plans for annual Instructional Improvement, which include addressing goals established via an Annual Achievement Report for Mills High School.

#### **Follow-up Process**

The Mills Site Council/Mills Planning Council (MPC) is responsible for overseeing the school's Action Plan. In the spring of 2000, action teams were formed to implement WASC goals:

- Using data effectively
- Improving student achievement
- Encouraging student involvement

Between 2000 and 2002 much was accomplished, due to the work done in connection with the Digital High School plan involving data collection on student achievement of the ESLRs. Action teams were replaced by department collaboration in 2003. The Mills Planning Council (MPC) meets annually to conduct a goal-setting session for the upcoming school year. Staff was involved in preparing the third year progress report, brainstorming ideas and progress on all critical areas of follow-up carried out within the school-wide action plan section. Four of the five original committee chairs from 2000 were involved in writing the report, which was then reviewed by the Mills Planning Council and staff involved in the progress report.

#### **Description of progress of Action Plan**

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**Action Plan: Using Data Effectively: Develop a systematic process of gathering and analyzing schoolwide assessment data for the purpose of guiding curricular decisions, instructional methodologies, programs, services and resource allocation, all of which are designed to improve student learning.**

During the past six years, teachers and staff at Mills High School have used advances in technology, collaboration, and the SMUHSD support to effectively use data to guide instructional practices. The California Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) process, the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) and Edusoft technology are being used to analyze test results and student data, allowing teachers to understand student's strengths and weaknesses, making it easier for teachers to differentiate instruction.

**Action Plan: Improving Student Achievement: Improve the achievement of all students while specifically addressing the needs of students in the lower two quintiles.**

Reading improvement has been central to Mill's efforts for many years. The Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) program was used at three of the district's schools, including Mills. Support for this program came from the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) in the form of donating books, as well as teachers and students building classroom library collections by bringing in their favorite books. The SSR program was ended in May of 2003 by the district.

The Reading Development course was created to address the needs of students reading below grade level. While enrollment has been small, data shows marked improvement in student's English grades to following year. Incoming 8<sup>th</sup> grade students scoring below the 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading level on CAT6 Reading tests are programmed in the Reading Development Class.

The Mills Reading Circle was started in 2002-2003 with support of API funding to work on comprehension skills, practice basic grammar skills and sentence writing techniques. The goal for each student is to improve his or her English grade by a half or whole letter grade by the end of the school year. Other efforts to improve student achievement in the area of reading, writing and math include:

- Well maintained and up-to-date library collection.
- Development of a writing program that emphasizes classical argumentative writing skills through the Social Science Department;
- Creation of an Algebra support class which reviews basic math skills and logic, while teaching algebra course content at a slower pace to accommodate students having difficulty learning algebra in a regularly paced classroom;
- A Digital High School Grant that allowed for the purchase of equipment for an instructional computer lab;

- A Staff Development day to discuss the re-establishment of a study-skills program for students to improve their academic success;
- The purchase of school planners for all freshmen to help improve student's time management skills.

**Action Plan: Encouraging Student Involvement: Engage students as active participants in the learning process and to strengthen the connection between the curriculum, student activities, and their personal lives.**

The counseling Department at Mills has developed a program involving both students and parents to plan a four year course of study that prepares students to attend a four year college. These programs provide a direct connection for students between the work they complete in classes, the quality of their performance, and their possible future acceptance to colleges.

One task in the 2000 Action Plan was to incorporate project based learning into the curriculum. Since 2000, Mills teachers have incorporated project based learning into lessons and have designed specific project based activities in Math, Japanese, Physical Education, Biology, Chemistry, Mock Trial, Leadership, and Technical Theatre.

Mills currently makes connections with the community college programs to provide school to career transitions in Auto Mechanics, Technical Drawing, and Childhood Development. Other District and community programs available to Mills students are:

- Mills Career Day
- Work Experience Program
- Regional Occupation Program (ROP)
- Robotics Team
- Mock Trial
- Food, Education and Service Training (FEAST)
- Biotechnology

Mills offers several venues to build relationships between parents, students, teachers and the community. These groups include:

- Mills Parent Teachers Organization (PTO)
- Athletic Boosters
- Mills Music Association Group (MMAG)
- Latino Parents Nights
- African American students attending the annual Black College Fair
- Back-To-School Night
- Open House Assessment-Fair
- Kids Learning Empathy and Respect (KLEAR)
- Students Organized Against Prejudice (SOAP)

**Critical Needs and Follow-up**

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The previous WASC Visiting Committee provided Critical Areas of Follow-up. Each of these is listed below with a summary of the school's accomplishments and efforts in addressing each of these.

**Critical Need : Alignment of Content/Instructional Objectives with the ESLRs**

Mills High School applied for a Digital High School Grant in the 200-2001 school year. This process required the Mills Faculty and staff develop a plan for students to achieve ESLRs using instructional technology. Mills staff was trained on the use of instructional technology and developed rubrics to measure Digital High School goals that were correlated with the ESLRs. This process was continued through the 2002-2003 school year until the state cancelled the grant due to lack of funds.

The SMUHD and Mills have shifted their focus to standards-based learning to support the California Department of Education's content standards requirement. While Mills' faculty remains committed to the values incorporated in the ESLRs, the efforts at curricular change have been focused on state standards because of the testing program adopted by the state.

**Critical Need: Development of an assessment to determine if the professional development that is being provided is having an impact on supporting students to achieve the ESLRs:**

A variety of assessments are used to determine if professional development is having an impact on supporting achievement of the standards/ESLRs. Standardized tests include the California Standards Test (CST), California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), and the California English Language Development Test (CELDT). Common assessments have been developed in the areas of Math (Algebra, Geometry), English, and Social Science (U.S. History, World History). Digital High School rubrics were developed to measure achievement of ESLRs, with these rubrics used as part of the student observations and interviews that are part of the WASC self study.

**Critical Need: Developing an avenue for more parental, student and community input into the major restructuring or educational decisions to be made in the future:**

The Mills Planning Council (MPC) is one avenue for providing parent, student, and community input into the major restructuring or educational decisions of the school. Other groups include The Facilities Committee, Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), Parent booster organizations in Athletics, Drama and Music and The English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC).

**Critical Need: Helping students, parents, and the community understand the impact that ESLRs and standards may have on student performance and success:**

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Students and parents receive a variety of reports by mail that indicates student performance and success. Individual STAR reports are mailed home, and annual communication through the parent newsletter *The Viking Voice* informs parents about the importance of standards. Teachers reinforce the importance and role of standards through course syllabi, Back to School presentations, Open House/Assessment Faire, and on individual assignment sheets.

**Critical Need: Developing a stronger, more visible Career program that is infused into the whole curriculum:**

The College and Career Center provides students with information and resources to help them realize and achieve their educational and career goals. The center has updated from a paper-based portfolio to an electronic-based portfolio using e-Choices and Choices. Other opportunities for students include the Mills Career Day, job shadowing programs, field trips to large companies and specialty schools, Work Experience and Regional Occupation Programs (ROP.)

**Critical Need: Investigating methods to support and increase enrollment in elective offerings:**

Engineering Technology, Integrated Science, International Relations, and Tech Theater have been added since 2000. Additional course have been added in Math, and English. Advanced Band before the school day accommodates students who otherwise would not be able to participate in music.

Other course options include district electives where students go to other district schools to participate in FEAST (a restaurant management course), Biotechnology, and AP Art History. Some students concurrently enroll in local community colleges where they are allowed to take a wide variety of courses not offered at Mills.

The change to a seven period day would allow students to take more electives, particularly in the visual and performing arts. The district is currently studying the implementation of a seven period day during the 2005-2006 school year.

**Critical Need: Developing more interdisciplinary collaboration:**

Collaboration has occurred between the English and Social Science departments, and between the Math and Science departments. In addition, Action Teams, made up of teachers from other academic areas, met to focus on specific aspects of school culture, such as reading, attendance, and project-based learning. In the 2002-2003 school year, the focus shifted from interdisciplinary action teams to collaborative learning teams within a curricular area. Site-based leadership teams include the Academic Senate and the Mills Planning Council.

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**Critical Need: Continued training in the use of technology as a teaching and learning tool for both students and staff. Integrating this resource into the program in more innovative ways would enhance the instructional repertoire of the teaching staff:**

As a result of the Digital High School Grant, Fifty laptops for teacher and student use were bought. In order for teachers to obtain these laptops, they had to attend six hours of training. Each school year a teacher must reapply for a laptop by detailing how that equipment will be used to aid instruction. Additional technology purchases have included twenty wireless iBooks, Ten LCD projectors, and a new iMac lab with the capability for video editing. DHS funds were also used to support staffing of the lab full time.

Digital High School funding has provided training for staff in word processing, internet and email, spread sheet, electronic publishing, and training in methods to teach students technology skills. Mills High continues to infuse technology into the curriculum through the use of the computer lab, portable labs, the library media center, and individual classroom equipment. Mills is piloting a program called School Loop, a community networking program that increases communication through technology.

**Critical Need: Training in SDAIE teaching techniques for all teachers that will help them serve English Language Learner students:**

As of January 2005, 85% (61/72) certificated teachers have received their CLAD credential or SB 1969 certification. This training provides teachers with differentiated instructional strategies to meet the needs of EL students. In December 2003, Mills was audited by the SMUHSD Comite De Padres compliance review committee. Mills received a positive review and was recommended by the committee to be in compliance.

**Critical Need: In-Service opportunities for teachers in order that they may expand their knowledge of teaching and learning strategies. To more creatively utilize time made available due to the partial block schedule, focus should be placed on teaching strategies associated with teaching and learning in an extended time period environment:**

Mills has spent time on late start days for collaboration time to assist teachers with developing lesson plans, assessments and activities that promote high achievement during longer teaching periods. Teachers have used these opportunities to share and plan activities that maximize student participation and use of block minutes.

**Critical Need: Develop a better system for gathering and disseminating information regarding student academic achievement and progress and to better gauge student attainment of ESLRs:**

Current methods of relating pertinent student information has improved dramatically since the last WASC report. Disaggregated information regarding student achievement data on the SAT-9, CST's and percentages of students earning D's and F's has been given to the faculty. The STAR (SAT-9 and the California Standards) reports

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are analyzed by teachers at curricular council meetings, faculty meetings, and department meetings in order to gauge student progress. All ninth grade students take the Gates-McGinnitie Reading Assessment, with the results shared by English teachers and used to place students into the Reading Development course.

District-wide common assessments of select courses have been created by the English, Mathematics, Physical Education and Social Science departments. The results of these assessments are shared at both the district and department levels.

Information regarding student achievement is sent home on a regular basis, including progress reports, honor roll students, STAR results, Governor's Scholarship Award recipients, and Golden State Exam achievement award recipients. Currently, most assessment of student achievement is done in the classroom and via college and state testing programs. The school does produce and communicate an Annual Achievement Report as well as the SARC.

Attendance information is provided to parents with the help of an automated phone dialer and school wide attendance system, SASI. Since 2003, teachers have access to all of their student's assessment data, allowing for differentiated instruction and apply appropriate intervention strategies. Teachers also now have access to SASI, enabling teachers to communicate with other teachers and better understand the individual needs of each student.

**Critical Need: Develop stronger alignment between standards and benchmarks associated with approved courses of study and the school's ESLRs:**

In the 2002-2003 school year, research and development time was utilized for increased departmental collaboration on the creation of common unit benchmarks and assessments. Common assessments have been created, assessed, and analyzed in ninth grade English, tenth grade English, Algebra I, Geometry I, Modern World History, U.S. History, Chemistry and Biology.

As a result of the Digital High School Grant, the following benchmarks were achieved:

- 55% of all students will use word processing software to write essays in their English classes
- Complete two (2) Internet based research projects in Social Science classes
- Create spreadsheets in Mathematics classes to analyze data
- Present one project in Science and Foreign Language classes using electronic publishing
- Utilize email in one project for both Physical Education and Health courses
- Use appropriate software one project in Geometry, Biology, and Drafting classes

Rubrics to measure the achievement of ESLRs were developed as part of the grant work.

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**Critical Need: Consider further exploration of alternative master schedule models that will provide greater opportunities for program expansion and enable students to engage in a more diversified elective program. Models should also foster a higher level of integration and inclusion of School-to-Career, Tech Prep and Career Pathways components which can serve as a n alternatives to the college preparatory aspect of the school's instructional program and better serve students:**

Since the last WASC report, The Mills Planning Council and Academic Senate explored alternative time schedules to allow greater collaboration opportunities to improve instruction and to become a standards-based school. Mills now has a schedule that consists of three regular six period days, consisting of 58 minute periods, and two block period days, each day consisting of three 107 minute classes, with brunch and lunch breaks.

**Critical Need: The plant needs updating to implement student learning:**

Since the last WASC report the school district passed Measure D, which has allowed for major plant renovations at Mills High School. Phase One began during the spring of 2004, and was completed in 2005. Phase Two, began in the summer of 2005, with the entire renovation project scheduled for completion at the end of the 2006 school year.

Other plant improvements include:

- Weight Room renovations
- Rock Climbing Wall
- New basketball announcers booth
- Track reconstruction

**Critical Need: Need to implement the student attendance call system:**

In the fall of 2005 the district purchased a new online phone dialer and email messaging system for Mills, enabling the school to send messages to all parents in the school in a relatively short time. It has proven an effective communication tool with parents and teachers regarding their student's attendance.

**Critical Need: Technological support and service needs to be more available when need arises:**

The school district provides funding for technology maintenance. A Mills teacher serves as the site technology coordinator and also serves as the technology representative to the district. The school's website is currently outsourced and funded by the administration. The district funds a computer lab aide, and a computer tech aide has been employed since 2003 to maintain the school's computer equipment. In 2004, the "School Loop" software was introduced so that students and teachers could communicate electronically about class assignments and homework.

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**Critical Need: Specified time for individual teachers to analyze and review student data departmentally:**

The staff at Mills High School has used R & D time on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings for analyzing student data and work as part of the school's commitment to standards. In addition, all departments meet twice a month for R & D. Teachers used collaboration time during the 2002-2003 school year to meet and review student data departmentally. The 2005 between semester buy-back day was organized by curricular areas and devoted part of the day to analyzing data from common assessments that were administered as part of fall semester exams.

**Critical Need: Built in time to critically review assessments and understanding student data to better modify curriculum:**

The faculty at Mills has used department meetings, collaboration time, and staff development days to review assessments and understand student data to better modify curriculum. Teachers analyze data, determine implications of the data, plan courses of action, implement courses of action, and finally review data that assess the effectiveness of selected courses of action.

**Critical Need: Critical review of growth needs achievement and process to address those needs:**

Sharing, reviewing, and analyzing student data has become a regular part of Mills faculty meetings. Both the Mills Planning Council and Academic Senate identify growth needs and set goals for the coming year. Mills High School's Single Plan for Student Achievement in 2003 set forth the goal of improving the overall percentage of graduates meeting the UC/CSU requirements. This plan was modified in 2005 to address low student performance and improve student study skills.

**Critical Need: In order to achieve the established growth needs it is necessary that the site receive all pertinent and specific student data from the district office:**

The Director of Assessment and Professional Development position began four years ago to provide access to pertinent and specific student data for staff. Through SASI, the district's website, and the CDE's website, teacher access to data has increased.

In the fall of 2003, the District created a Student Data Analyst position at Mills High School. Using Edusoft, Dataquest, and other Department of Education sources, most student achievement data can be generated at the school site.

In summary, of the critical areas of need, the school has addressed each area with varying degrees of progress and success in each area. However, additional attention is needed in order to fully address several components of the Critical Areas of Follow-up that were provided by the WASC Visiting Committee in 2000. These are as follows:

- Development and implementation of schoolwide assessment system to determine if all students are reaching achievement of ESLRs at the desired performance level
- Develop and provide professional development for all staff related to ESLR/Standards based upon assessment system
- Completion of the development of schoolwide agreements related to reading, research and writing across the curriculum

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### Chapter III Self Study Process

Mills High School has addressed and met all of the five WASC outcomes in the development of the self study.

Representatives of all stakeholder groups have participated in the process. Particular care was given to include on focus groups a balance of veteran teachers and newcomers, with Parent and students formed into home groups. Parent and student participation and attendance was inconsistent due to the scheduling, but provided a strong source of information and valuable input. In terms of format, a consensus decision was made by focus groups and self study coordinators to utilize all five focus groups of the suggested WSASC format.

ESLRs had been reviewed and revised through a collaborative process as a part of the Third-Year Progress Report. These ESLRs were again revisited to ensure clarification in regard to what students should know, understand and be able to through the achievement of the ESLRs and academic standards. Focus groups worked to clarify and define what all students should know, understand and be able to do via expected schoolwide learning results (ESLRs) and academic standards.

A great deal of student achievement and performance data was gathered and analyzed. There remains a need to further disaggregate data in order to enable a thorough analysis of achievement of various sub-groups in order to clearly identify any achievement gaps that may exist.

The entire school programs have been reviewed and analyzed to identify the impact on student learning as related to ESLRs, academic standards and all WASC/CDE criteria.

As a result of all the analysis and reviewing of student achievement and performance data as well as the entire school program, areas of need were identified and selected to be addressed in the development and implementation of a long range Action Plan. The Action Plan is developed in such a way as to provide for accountability and monitoring success.

The Action Plan is in alignment with existing schoolwide initiatives and will prove to be a “user friendly” part of the overall school program.

In summary, Mills High School has completed the self study process in a coordinated fashion and in doing so has embraced the five specific WASC Self Study outcome criteria.

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## Chapter IV Quality of the School's Program

### Part 1: What Currently Exists

#### A. 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 high levels?**

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

Mills High School has a clearly stated vision that addresses the diverse needs of the Mills High School community. It strives to promote a culture that fosters personal growth for all students. Graduation requirements have been increased based on the belief that all students benefit from a broad academic program. To assist all students in meeting these requirements many support programs have been created.

The Board of Trustees and the San Mateo Union High School District (SMUHSD) is committed to supporting the academic and personal development of all students. This commitment is evident in the district's efforts to fund curriculum and the development of new academic core requirements, hire exemplary staff, implement an open enrollment policy for honors and AP classes, and fund the modernization of the facility.

The ESLRs have been developed thoughtfully, by all the shareholders, with the goal of empowering all students to meet high academic standards, thus providing students with the necessary tools to become life-long learners.

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

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

**To what extent does the governing board regularly monitor results and approve the single schoolwide action and its relationship to the local Education Association plan?**

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As a result of the SMUHSD Board of Trustee's review of the district demographic information, STAR, CAHSEE, AP test results, Physical Best results, suspension and expulsion rates, district reading assessments, and other district common assessments, a Strategic Plan has been developed. The Strategic Plan is designed to increase individual student academic performance and close the gap for certain identified groups, and as a result, curriculum changes have been created and/or implemented. This review, monitoring, and curriculum change is constant and ongoing.

The professional staff, school site council, and the site administration develop and implement short and long-term site based plans that are "governed" by the district's Strategic Plan. Annual goals are encouraged in content or department areas based on analysis of the student outcome data.

Each year the Mills Planning Council reviews the site plan. Any changes in the plan are shared and reviewed by the SMUHSD leadership and board. These reviews provide a monitoring device as to how well the site plan supports the District Strategic Plan.

**A3. To what extent based on student achievement, 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 site plan based on analysis of data to ensure alignment with student needs?**

As a result of the district's purchase of Edusoft a series of reports are made available to teachers. These reports allow a teacher to better understand their students' strengths and weaknesses. Teachers have more immediate access to whether individual students have mastered the assessed criteria. This makes it easier for staff to make decisions regarding a student's achievement of the ESLRs.

The Mills Planning Council, comprised of four teachers, three parents, two students, one administrator, one certificated staff member, and a community member, reviews and revises the Single Site Plan for student achievement annually as a result of analysis of current student data. The Academic Senate and departments also meet regularly to address school needs based on annual goals, the Single Site Plan and identified student needs.

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

The Mills High School staff is highly qualified and actively engaged in professional development. All new teachers participate in BTSA and professional

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development/collaboration time is imbedded into the weekly schedule through block day mornings. This collaborative time is often used by Learning Teams, subject area groups which look at test scores and expected school wide learning results as related to curriculum.

The district allots substitute time to each department to be used as needed by department determination for professional development. Many teachers undertake professional development opportunities on their own time through continuing education and participation in University sponsored workshops.

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

At Mills High School professional development is an integral part of the culture. All of the certificated staff, with the exception of two interns, are fully credentialed and are role models of the value of lifelong learning.

Leadership has encouraged the development of a schedule that provides for built in collaboration time which allows groups to review student data and how it affects individual departments and student learning needs. This collaboration time allows this information to be shared with other staff and administrators, thus enabling departments to evaluate and reallocate instructional time. This resulted in dramatic gains on the 2005 CST results.

At Mills HS, the staff has placed a high priority on Edusoft and the technology training for the school's new web-based communication tool <mhs.schoolloop.com>. Through professional training seminars teachers were afforded the opportunity to learn how to productively use this web-based communication tool. Communication between teachers, parents, and students dramatically increased and the feedback has been positive.

**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?**

Mills teachers are highly qualified and appropriately placed within their credential and degree areas. Teachers also pursue professional development and academic enrichment opportunities to enhance their subject matter expertise. Classified staff is assigned to support student achievement and safety.

Mills High School has many resources as a result of state, district, parental, and community support. Supplemental teacher materials and consumables are readily available. The 2000 bond, Measure D, has provided for the beginning of a much needed

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facility renovation. An additional bond may be needed to fully complete this renovation of all facilities including the theatre, art classrooms and physical education facilities.

The experienced teaching staff, an active and well trained support staff, financial resources, and parent support significantly contribute to the academic and personal success of students.

**Areas of Strength**

- Clear statement of purpose
- District Strategic Plan
- High academic expectations of students
- Allocation of department professional development days
- Modified block schedule providing embedded collaboration time
- Staff development and understanding of a standards-based curriculum
- Entire school community involvement in student learning
- Use of Edusoft to provide teachers with up to date disaggregated student data
- High levels of communication with students and parents through School loop

**Areas for Growth**

- Increased visibility of SMUHSD Board members at school site
- Completion of facility renovation including, theater, art, vocational and physical education facilities
- Continued response to the recognized needs for core support classes
- Professional development on differentiated instruction and motivational tools

**B. Standards-Based Student Learning: Curriculum**

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**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?**

Mills High School has a culture of high academic achievement. Rigorous academic course offerings are added based on enrollment, college requirements, student interest and skills. Recently added courses include: Honors Biology, French and Japanese, Psychology, Architectural Design and Engineering Tech. The AP program at Mills is growing. The staff indicates that open access to AP and Honors classes has promoted this growth. Additional classes added are: Calculus AB and BC, Physics B and C, Biology, Chemistry, Art History, US History, Spanish Language, Government and Policy, Economics. AP Art History is offered on Saturday mornings at Mills. The course is open to all students in the district. However, Asian students make up the majority of the enrollment in AP. To make certain that all students have access an open enrollment policy to AP, AS and Honors classes exists district wide. Mills offers 25 AP classes with a student enrollment of 721 (CBEDS, 12/05/05).

The school analyzed the master schedule to determine the availability and enrollment of rigorous course offerings for all. Most course offerings are driven by student interests and requests within budgetary limitations. Most offerings are UC/CSU “a-g” approved. In 2004 and 2005 Mills graduated 68% and 56% meeting the UC/CSU eligibility respectively. The school has removed some of the entry level courses that are not longer considered high school level courses such as Math A and Life Science and replaced them with Reading Support and Algebra Support. Biology is established as the entry-level science program for 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

MHS reviewed the teacher evaluation system. The school’s administrators observe teachers to evaluate the instructional strategies and curriculum based on the California State Teaching Standards. Using a rubric as a tool, administrators determine the extent of curriculum and instruction that is coherent, relevant and standards based. The rubric shows connections to the ESLRs and levels of satisfactory and unsatisfactory.

The self study indicates that the MHS curriculum is aligned with state content standards and frameworks. The school implemented an Academic Core Curriculum for all 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students. By the end of the tenth grade, all students complete Algebra and Geometry, 2 years of English, one year of a-g approved Science and Modern World History, one semester of either of Area Studies or US History AS, one year of World Language, fine arts (may be taken in the Junior or Senior year) and 1-2 years of Physical Education. All classes have current standards based textbooks.

One focused effort is the Latina Mentor program serving Hispanic students. The after school SOS (Save One Student) program relies upon teacher volunteers to support students. This appears to be a contribution to the very high pass rate indicates a high success for CAHSEE.

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World Language Department focused on benchmark creation and has held to a competency-based requirement for advancement. In some departments, reverse engineering progressed from benchmark definition to assessment design, to instructional design. The mathematics department has utilized Edusoft to do benchmark assessment and analysis.

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

In the WASC faculty survey, 81% of teachers indicated that they use the results of assessments to modify objectives and approaches. Seventy percent of the teachers indicated that they use lecture techniques at least 2 days per week while 16 use it less than once per month. Eighty-five percent of teachers involve students in hands on learning and 85% use cooperative learning techniques at least once per week. Thirty-eight percent of teachers indicated that they collaborate at least once a week and an equal number indicate that they never use collaborative teaching.

**B.2 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 the analysis of the school's program, MHS indicated that all students have access to the school's entire program. The SMUHSD has a policy of open enrollment to all honors and AP courses. In 2005, 721 students were enrolled in 25 AP courses. In 2003, 2004 and 2005 students took 424, 546 and 559 exams respectively.

To support access to the curriculum, MHS provides a number of support classes in reading and algebra. Students are also supported by mentoring groups and after-school tutoring. High pass rate on CAHSEE gives evidence to standards-aligned preparation.

The ESLRs have been redefined to provide targeting of instruction in all curricular areas. For example, evidence folders in mathematics included well-defined matrices matching ESLRs, critical academic needs, and content standards. Teachers have used their R& D time effectively to coordinate the department to build a scope of work that includes project work, effective writing exercises in mathematics exploration, individual and group assessments, and lab activities.

MHS has 3 academic counselors providing services to all students. Each counselor serves 500 students. Students begin the development of their personal learning plan as incoming freshman or transfer students. These students are invited to participate in academic planning with their counselors in the spring semester prior to enrollment. With their counselor, students develop a 4 year plan that requires a parent's signature. Counselors monitor student's four-year planning guide periodically via individual and group sessions. Coordinated activities couple students and parents with counselors and

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teachers to assist in careful selection of courses. Counseling also targets students that are under-represented.

The counseling and administration provide teachers pertinent data about student performance to encourage articulation with students and parents. This includes D-F lists and matrices to encourage teachers in contacting students and parents and linking them to support systems. *School loop* is rapidly establishing itself as a popular means of communication and collaboration between teachers, students, and parents. The reporting from each of the component groups of the school community indicates that this tool is often replacing email, voicemail and direct communication. Another device of support is the weekly progress report that may be requested directly by the parent, or a result of the SST. Special education works with departments to establish and measure student progress and define appropriate accommodations.

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

Mills High School boasts high graduation rates. Ninety-one percent of the class of 2005 met the graduation requirements. Students must complete 220 credits to fulfill the graduation requirements. The staff reviewed and analyzed the graduation requirements. Graduation requirements are designed to place all students on a path to the completion of the a-g requirements to be UC/CSU eligible. To ensure that all students have access to course offerings and support to meet graduation requirements, MHS has an academic core program for 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders.

All freshmen take Biology and can receive additional Biology tutoring. There are additional support classes that students can enroll in for English and Algebra. Freshmen and sophomores can attend summer school to repeat core courses if they receive a D or F. MHS sets the sophomore year as the target to be sure all students are on the college/university path.

Parents and students are apprised of student progress via grade and progress reports, School Loop, and IEPs. The faculty uses the SASI database, CST results, CELDT tests, California Fitness Test and IEPs to review students' progress toward graduation.

The Principal sends personal letters to the parents of these students who are not on track. This letter invites parents to enroll their students in after school tutoring.

The school offers a rich academic program with support in reading development, algebra and CAHSEE support to ensure completion of graduation requirements. Ninety-eight percent of all students passed the CAHSEE for the 2006 graduation. The school reports that 69% of graduates complete the A-G requirements for UC/CSU.

Mills High School provides students with a number of ways to access the curriculum and complete graduation requirements. The school has a 6 period day with a

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modified block schedule. There are discussions about adding one period to change the schedule to a 7 period day. The average class size is 29:1. All teachers are fully credentialed and have access to professional development with a concentration on collaboration, curriculum alignment with state standards, and the use of block scheduling. MHS offers a higher number of instructional minutes than required by the state.

Career opportunities are addressed via work experience, ROP offerings, community college linked programs, and a middle college program. Elective-Selective Day showcases and introduces programs to all students and allows targeting to under-represented groups.

### **Areas of Strength:**

- Alignment of all courses with the State standards and frameworks
- Students have access to a rigorous, relevant and coherent standards-based curriculum that incorporates a variety of instructional strategies
- Use of a web based program (School Loop) designed to communicate student progress and curricular information with parents and guardians
- Use of various forms of disaggregated data to inform instruction and identify students for interventions
- Identification of the need for a school-wide approach to the teaching of writing and study skills
- District adopted open access policy to Honors and AP classes
- Additional AP and Honors classes to accommodate larger numbers of student requests
- Academic Core Program for 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders
- Academic interventions include Algebra and English support classes
- Current standards based textbooks for all students
- Staff use of data to inform program development

### **Areas for Growth**

- Ensure students participate in a variety of instructional strategies that provide rigorous, relevant and coherent standards based instruction
- Ensure that all students have a personal learning plan to prepare them for the pursuit of their academic, personal and career goals
- Renew the focus on professional development based upon a review of student achievement data and current research

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### **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 school-wide learning results?**

The district has implemented a shift in graduation requirements that establishes the UC A-G requirements as the standard. Honors and AP level programs are available to all students. Below grade level courses such as Math A and Life Science are no longer offered, and have been supplemented with Reading and Algebra Support courses. A strong grade 9-10 core course of study has built in the base for leading students to achieve the UC A-G requirements. World Language has been added as a requirement to align with the UC A-G requirements.

Extensive work has been done in the last few years to insure that content standards alignment has taken place in language arts, mathematics, and social sciences. Unfortunately the staff development effort fell short of completing the process for science. Science has made individual efforts to formalize content standards, but clear linkage to benchmarks is incomplete. The positive models defined by the first three content areas have influenced science, world languages, fine arts, physical education, and vocational arts.

Significant work has also been done to build the Teacher's skills in identifying and accommodating the diverse learning modalities of the students. Home Economics (Nutrition) has integrated cultural linkages and across-the-curriculum integration of instructional strategies. Student recognition of their modalities of learning has extended the multimodal means of knowledge expression. SDAIE is a district requirement for all teachers to extend the cultural sensitivity in this diverse community and appears to be having positive effects in student performance.

Instructional strategies have focused upon a more global approach to writing in all content areas, and the social sciences have contributed to the departments in developing consistent strategies for correction of student writing. Study Skills include both Algebra and Reading support classes, as well as after school tutoring .

**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?**

Project based learning, technology-infused instructional strategies, and critical thinking assignments provide some of the variety of strategies and resources. Students have access and are encouraged to use technology to explore process, analyze and present

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findings about their learning. Three school labs provide limited access for the 1500 student population. The vestiges of DHS resources are only recently beginning to be replaced by district-funded equipment. An aging laptop lab has been distributed to science classrooms for in class workstations. Word processing is a required means of developing student writing in special education. A web-page development course has been eliminated from the course offerings. World language courses in Japanese use video to create children storytelling and for the purpose of creating personal introductions to the sister school in Japan which participates in an exchange program each spring. Powerpoint projects are used in 10<sup>th</sup> grade English (English 3-4) to present research projects on famous Americans. Japanese language class uses video to make children's stories to teach components of the Japanese language. Physics programs extend into Robotic competitions, including creation of clay-mation animation, field trip videography, probe-ware real-time data collection in chemistry and physics, and use of LCD projection to enhance classroom delivery of student presentations. School Loop provides extension of communication and collaboration between teachers, students and parents for homework posting and addressing progress and content questions.

Socratic seminars, fishbowls, debates, and hot-seat activities are offered as examples that promote higher order thinking skills. All departments demonstrated strong collaborative and group activities. Activities rich in research, writing, problem solving, interpretation and analysis are described across the curriculum. Critical Thinking rubrics developed during DHS projects have been resurrected as a means of developing powerful learning activities. This has resulted in systemic implementation has resulted in implementing the rubrics with all projects and assignments.

Time is structured to improve the opportunity for in-depth instruction through block schedule. An alternating block schedule provides extended instructional time on Tuesdays and Thursdays. A late start for instruction on these days also provides a 35-minute period for collaboration and meeting time (R&D time). The district is preparing to extend the instructional day to a 7 period schedule, which will increase the number of elective offerings for students.

Strategies such as project-based instruction, writing across the curriculum, and a variety of questioning and discussion strategies engage students in higher order thinking skills. Math teachers use the "Big Idea" as a unit summary, math labs, and projects to extend and broaden math concepts into analysis and real-life examples. The social science department's efforts to standardize on MLA writing format has also manifested standardized correction schemes that have caught on across other departments. The student's recognition of SAT focus on persuasive argument in writing has resulted in a common rubric for social science to address that skill. Nutrition (formerly Home Economics) has developed written evaluation on class projects, and individual and group presentations, and reflective writings. World Language is developing story writing about family. Modern World History has developed play writing and student performance on the classic themes of history.

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**Areas of Strength:**

- A strongly articulated grades 9-10 core course scope and sequence that builds a base for assisting all students to meet the UC A-G requirements
- Support classes in reading development and algebra, which assists students in successful completion of the language arts and math standards, facilitating high pass rate on the CAHSEE
- An integrated approach to writing across the curriculum, with emphasis to development of M.L.A. standards, and systemic correction strategies through the core content areas
- Extensive alignment of subject area content standards in math, English language arts, and social sciences, and physical education
- Strong development of definition and assessment of benchmarks in math, English Language Arts, Social Sciences and World Languages
- Use of Edusoft as an assessment tool to benchmark, disaggregate and analyze standards accrual in the core content areas mentioned above and use of the Edusoft test item bank for benchmarking Algebra
- Strong development of teaching strategies for teaching to multiple intelligences
- Good integration of technology into instructional activities to promote fundamental skills and promote critical thinking, despite limited access to technology
- Excellent use of technology to promote teacher communication and student acquisition of assignments through the use of email, School Loop, and some teacher websites

**Areas for Growth:**

- Further development of support programs to insure success for all students to meet Three year math requirement
- Further development of articulation of the ESLRs, school goals and content standards and establishment of benchmarks in science instruction and the process out equally in non-core content areas
- Further staff development to teachers to build more complete use of Edusoft as an assessment analysis tool by all core content teachers
- Update equipment, operating systems, and software; and increase access to appropriate technology in all content areas
- Provide staff development and parent support to increase use of School Loop as a tool for communication, instruction, and collaboration

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## **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?**

Mills High School utilizes district and state standardized tests and assessments, including AP exams, CST/reports, CELDT and the CAHSEE, Gates Reading tests, and district and site common assessments. The School Accountability Report Card (SARC) reports items in the following categories: demographic information, school safety and climate for learning, academic data, school completion, class size, teacher and staff information, curriculum and instruction, postsecondary preparation, and fiscal and expenditure data. STAR and CAHSEE results are published in the local newspaper and the Mills' PTO newsletter and the Mills web site report test results. Additionally, EduSoft and SASI programs are used to assist in the collection and evaluation of student performance data. Information about student performance is disseminated to parents and the community when the school administration attends monthly parent group meeting and community functions. Student performance data is disaggregated by ethnicity and grade level.

### **D2. To what extent do students and teachers use assessment results to enhance the educational progress of every student?**

Teachers constantly assess students in class through assignments, quizzes, exams, projects, performance-based assignments, ongoing quick checks, content quizzes and exams, performance assessments, lab-based tests, checks for understanding, homework and class work, written assessments, analytical, expository, and reflective essays, debates, class discussions, one-on-one interviews, written observations, warm-ups, journals, think-writes, research projects and papers, class discussions, seminar analysis papers, and business letter writing.

Teachers are actively and consistently involved in using and evaluating student performance data to modify the curriculum to increase the learning progress and success of students. Individually, teachers constantly reflect upon and evaluate student performance to adapt and modify classroom curriculum to improve student learning and performance.

### **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?**

There is much collaboration at the site and district levels to consistently evaluate curriculum and course offering. At the district level, analysis of performance data is directly linked to allocation of resources and development of academic programs

designed to increase student achievement. All teachers use common rubrics for grading assignments geared towards the ESLRs. The rubrics are used to evaluate critical thinking and writing across the curriculum. The curriculum is aligned with the state standards and teachers meet on a regular basis to discuss and maintain progress in this effort. Mills monitors student progress towards achievement of the academic standards via report cards every six weeks. Disaggregated student achievement data is shared and discussed at school-wide faculty, site council, department heads, department, and learning team meetings.

**D.4 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 Single Plan for Student Achievement which contains a variety of student achievement data, is reviewed by stakeholders in order to plan school improvement. An analysis of this student achievement data identifies areas of low student performance and downward performance trends. The staff then uses the cycle of inquiry to address ways to improve student outcomes.

In order to ensure that textbooks are aligned with the standards, the departments work with district curriculum councils to evaluate and adopt new textbooks. This collaboration improves teaching and learning. Additionally, lower level courses are being phased out and more rigorous courses are being added. There have been support classes in mathematics, reading and CAHSEE preparation added to improve the achievement of underperforming students. Each year, the faculty has a meeting to do a self assessment to determine critical areas of improvement so they can set new goals for the subsequent year and to assess how well they have met previous WASC goals.

**Areas of Strengths:**

- All departments use a variety of performance assessments to evaluate student progress towards ESLRs and standards
- Access to disaggregated school performance data for STAR, CAHSEE, CELDT, SMUHSD common assessments and other district assessments
- The school faculty has numerous evaluation tools available to assess student learning
- Students can choose from a variety of performance assessments to demonstrate mastery of content areas.
- Staff use of Edusoft and SASI to monitor and analyze assessment data of achievement and performance
- Results of assessment data are used to modify instructional practices in order to improve teaching of all students.
- Students and their parents are highly involved in the on-going review process of the achievement of the student

**Areas for Growth:**

- Develop benchmark assessments in all curricular areas
- Conduct deeper analysis of achievement of low performing subgroups
- Focus on gathering evidence from assessments to review how low performing students are learning the content and use the information to modify instruction
- Increase additional assessment opportunities for students who do not demonstrate mastery on initial assessments
- Track and measure student progress towards ESLRs across the curriculum

**E. School Culture and Support for 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?**

Mills' leadership employs numerous strategies to engage parents and the surrounding community to foster students' personal and academic growth. Mills utilizes multiple layers of technology to communicate student expectations, growth and progress, as well as a means to garner parental feedback to facilitate the learning process. Parent and community participation is promoted through a variety of school activities and councils, as well as special events with the objective of creating an essential partnership between the school leadership and parental community.

The school administration continues to seek out means to improve communication with parents and the community through a variety of technologies and forms of written communication. For example, Mills uses the school telephone system and state-of-the-art dialer, email, School Loop, school website, school newspaper, direct mailings such as progress reports, Viking Voice, freshman warning letters, and possible non-graduation letters. In other strategies to garner direct parental and community involvement, the school leadership hosts numerous school councils, activities and events.

The Mills administration and staff play an integral role in supporting a wide range of parent groups and parent community meetings. Examples of leadership participation in parent groups are PTO, Sports Boosters, MMAG, Excellence Fund Committee, and the Theater Renovation Committee.

Parents and community members are involved in school governance as members of the Mills School Site Council. The current chairperson of the Council is a parent.

Parent groups or meetings that directly involve parents in the teaching and learning process include ELAC, Latin American Parents Group, low-achieving 9<sup>th</sup> grade parent nights, and counselor-led grade level parent nights.

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**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 focus on continuous school improvement?**

Mills High School provides a safe, clean and orderly place that nurtures learning. Mills High School staff and students work collaboratively to create a school culture that embraces these expectations. The Mills High School staff is comprised of dedicated, committed and enthusiastic educators and support staff. Working together with students, parents and community, these professionals invest in maintaining the quality that identifies Mills as a high performing academic high school. These collaborative efforts foster trust and respect that encourages students to invest in their own educational and social/emotional development.

Mills High School has several policies and resources in place that ensure a safe, clean and orderly place that nurtures learning. Included is a highly effective tardy policy in which students are expected to be in their seats and ready to work at the beginning of each class period. Mills High School has maintained an attendance rate of approximately ninety-eight percent for the past five years. Mills High School has a closed campus, and the administration and supervision team are highly visible before school, at lunch, and throughout the school day to monitor the campus and maintain a safe school environment.

Campus supervision is supplemented by the Mills High School Student Service Commission made up of Mills students serving under the direction of the dean. The Service Commission also supports our supervision team at sporting events, dances and Back to School Night. The Mills School safety advocate, registered with the Board of Behavioral Sciences of California and a Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT), conducts risk assessments and provides resources for families as well as conducts mediation between students. The school safety advocate coordinates school safety climate activities, provides crisis intervention, mediation, and case management for students referred for anger management. In cooperation with the San Mateo County Juvenile Probation Department, Mills has a probation officer on site two days per week. Due to local budget cuts in 2003, Mills lost regular visits by the Site Resource Police Officer. At the beginning of each school year, the administrative staff presents the Mills Viking Code of Conduct to each class. The Viking Code of Conduct covers the school rules and is signed by each student and placed in the student's cumulative file. Students reflect on safety at school through class discussions, the Healthy Kids Survey, and a safe school survey. In the last four years, Mills has participated in the district-instituted Kids Learning Empathy and Respect (KLEAR) program. Mills High School provides the Alternative to Suspension Program designed to educate students and their parents about the dangers of drugs and alcohol. Students who complete this four-session program serve fewer days for a first time drug/ alcohol related suspension.

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The Mills custodial staff maintains the school facility each day. In the past four years the administrative team has been pro-active in monitoring lunch cleanup. The leadership class provides recycling cans to encourage students to recycle cans and bottles and also posts signs around school encouraging students to keep their campus clean.

Mills High School participates in monthly emergency drills including fire, earthquake, and secure the building drills in compliance with district and local safety regulations. The Millbrae Police and Fire Departments are invited to monitor the drills. Mills has participated in several safety task force round table discussions with district, law enforcement, and fire department representatives regarding emergency procedures. Mills has a disaster plan in place and has participated in district-wide disaster drills. Mills is also a designated shelter in cooperation with the Red Cross. Mills High School has updated the evacuation procedures and routes during each phase of renovation starting in 2004 and scheduled to be completed in the 2006-2007 school year. With the support of Mills teachers, administrators, counselors, classified staff, and the school safety advocate, students receive support, caring, and resources that help them with personal issues, which may affect their academic success. The counselors provide academic and social/emotional support for all Mills students. The Mills Conflict Resolution Team (CRT) was instituted in 2000 and is comprised of students trained in conflict mediation by the North Peninsula Family Alternatives (NPFA) organization. In the last two years, Peer Helpers were trained with the CRT under the supervision of the school safety advocate and the peer- helping teacher. The Peer Helpers elective course and club provide training to students in peer counseling, conflict resolution and grief support in time of loss. The Peer Helpers Program won the Kent Award for its annual weekend retreat for the Peer Helpers, at-risk students, and new students.

In 2005-2006, Mills High School is piloting the Support One Student (SOS) program in which twenty-six teachers, counselors, and administrators have volunteered to mentor at-risk ninth grade students for the school year. Also in 2006, Mills High School is instituting Link Crew with approximately eighty upperclassmen trained to mentor ninth grade students, connecting them to high school and supporting them in their academic and social growth. Teams of two Link Crew leaders work with ten ninth grade students for the year. Mills High School has several clubs that focus on caring and inclusiveness for all students, providing a safe place for students to talk and socialize. The Best Buddy club pairs mainstream students with orthopedically-challenged or limited intellectually functioning students with the goal of building genuine friendships and providing opportunity for inclusive social interactions.

Mills High School provides a number of assemblies throughout the school year emphasizing trust and respect for others. Students are involved in creating and facilitating assemblies and presentations on tolerance, trust, and respect for others. Among these student organizations are Students Organizing Against Prejudice (SOAP), and Spectrum Gay-Straight Alliance.

For the past seven years, twenty to thirty Mills students have participated in Sojourn to the Past. This opportunity allows students to experience the Civil Rights

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Movement first-hand by traveling throughout the South, meeting participants in the movement and experiencing the accompanying curriculum. Students participate in student government through Leadership, class councils, and Associated Student Body elections and conferences.

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

To ensure that all students are properly supported and achieve academic success, individualized learning plans are created in conjunction with the counseling department. Mills High School provides counseling services, remediation and tutoring, library and Career Center services, effective communication with parents, and extracurricular academic activities.

The counseling department and the special education teachers, who act as counselors for special education students, offer a wide variety of services to ensure students success. Each student is afforded an individualized learning program according to his or her needs. Counselors meet with the feeder schools to discuss high school expectations of students' skills needed prior to high school entry. In addition, they meet with eighth grade students and parents to prepare an individualized high school program of study, assuring graduation and providing options for future career goals. Students retain the same counselor for the four years at Mills; and counselors continually monitor their progress. The counselors meet periodically to monitor a graduation checklist. Each spring, counselors meet with students to schedule courses for the following year and offer support. Students qualified for IEPs or 504s have their learning plans reviewed yearly and classroom teachers are informed of their special needs.

The ELD Services aide and counselors monitor the progress of all EL students in the school, conduct testing which includes the CELDT, meet with new students to determine the appropriate placement, and meet with each parent semiannually.

Mills offers a wide variety of academic courses meeting the needs of all students. We offer several courses for remediation. For math assistance, Mills offers an algebra support class that works in conjunction with the algebra teachers, and a CAHSEE math section preparation course. A CAHSEE preparation class for the reading and writing portion is also offered. Reading testing is done in the freshman English classes. Students not reading at the required reading level are enrolled in the Reading Development class. The course is designed to increase student's reading levels to grade level before exiting the student from the program. All of these programs offer opportunities for remediation. GATE students' needs are met through honors and advanced placement courses, fine and performing arts classes, elective courses, clubs and extra-curricular activities. The school has a GATE coordinator who plans GATE extra-curricular and lunch activities. The SMUHSD maintains a district GATE program, which provides enrichment activities for GATE students after school and on weekends.

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The library and Career Center are essential resources to ensure academic success for Mills High School students. The certificated librarian assists classroom teachers and students with research assignments, projects and information gathering of books and online sources for all disciplines. The librarian offers book talks for all ages and disciplines and a book club. The library facility is open before school, after school and during lunch. The Career Center is where students gather data for colleges. Computers are available for student use for assignments. In addition, it is a gathering place for students to help one another with coursework

One of the school's top priorities is to improve communication with students and parents to help students academically. Every year the school hosts parent nights by grade level. The agenda for the evening is tailored for the needs of that grade level and helps keep parents informed of the steps needed for academic success, including high school graduation and college requirements. Last year the school started using an online resource called School Loop. School Loop allows teachers to announce assignments and tests online, write and receive email, announce current grades, and publish classroom agendas. This information can be accessed from any computer with internet access at: [www.mhs.schoolloop.com](http://www.mhs.schoolloop.com)

Extracurricular academic opportunities are available to Mills High School students. The GATE program offers enrichment opportunities, which include museum visits, guest speakers and college visits. The reading circle is an evening program that encourages low-level readers to enjoy reading, improve writing skills, and identify grammatical elements in reading. The Latina Mentor program partners a teacher with a female student. The teacher meets with the student once a week to check on academic standing, work as her advocate and offer emotional support. The Support One Student (SOS) program is a one-on-one student/mentor program in which a student has a teacher advisor to support them through their freshman year. Incoming freshmen, who are identified as needing more direction and personalization, are invited to be part of this program. Students have several options to obtain extra help. Classroom teachers offer subject matter assistance outside class hours. The math department offers math tutoring to all Mills students, before and after school.

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

Every Mills student has access to support services through the counselors, other school staff, and campus programs. Three full-time counselors are available to the students. Students have the opportunity to see their counselors on personal, academic, college and career concerns. All ninth grade students develop a four-year academic plan with their counselor. Individual appointments with counselors are available. Teachers, administrators and other school staff identify students who are in need of counseling services. Counselors are available before, during and after school. Counselors schedule meetings with low-performing students to develop interventions and refer the students for other services. The counselors are skilled in evaluating student needs in terms of mental

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health issues and refer students and families to outside agencies and therapists.

Special education teachers provide counseling services to all special education students. Via the IEP process, special education teachers work with students, families, teachers, other school staff, and outside agencies to ensure the students' needs are met.

English learners are supported by an ELD services aide and EL department chairperson. The ELD staff monitors EL academic progress for reclassification and counsels students who are earning D and F marks. The EL department chairperson further monitors the academic progress of EL students and works with mainstream teachers to address ELD issues.

Mills students also receive support services from a variety of other school staff. The school safety advocate counsels and refers students who are at risk of harming themselves or others for additional services. The health aide reviews students' health records to ensure that medical needs are addressed. Students take advantage of two support groups, which are run by the North Peninsula Family Alternatives and meet weekly.

There are a variety of courses, programs and clubs that provide students with support services. The Peer Helping class trains student leaders to promote tolerance, safety and healthy choices. The Peer Helping class participates in retreats, organizes a Freshman Kids Day, and lunchtime activities. The Link Crew is a yearlong high school transition program that welcomes freshmen to high school and makes them feel comfortable throughout the school year. Built on the belief that students can help students succeed, Link Crew trains juniors and seniors to be positive role models, motivators, leaders and teachers who guide freshmen in discovering what it takes to be successful in high school. The Latina Mentor Program's goal is to provide one-on-one support for female students. Originally, the program was designed to assist Latina students and has since expanded to include any and all female students interested in receiving individual support from classified and certificated members of the staff. The assistance students receive includes, but is not limited to, academic support, tutorial, and guidance regarding academic and personal issues. The Best Buddies Club is dedicated to enhancing the lives of Mills LIF students. Best Buddies matches LIF students with other high school students to create friendships.

Mills students have numerous opportunities to participate in school activities. Students may participate in student government, join one of Mills' thirty-four school clubs, compete on an athletic team, perform for the Mills theater and music department, or participate in other school-sponsored events. These varied programs provide students with experiences that help them grow personally and intellectually. Mills is particularly proud of the breadth of club offerings that range from cultural organizations to competitive teams, such as mock trial and robotics. Many of these clubs provide community service and interact with people or organizations in the city and county. The Mills annual talent show and international assembly are examples of school-sponsored events that engage and recognize students.

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**Areas of Strength:**

- Wide variety of clubs
- Counseling services, Safety Advocate
- Career Center
- Booster clubs
- PTO; parent and community involvement
- Community service clubs
- Faculty and staff involvement in clubs and programs
- Off-campus activities
- Creating bridges to higher education and the military
- Scholarship offerings
- Wide variety of athletic teams
- Extra-curricular events (assemblies, dances and rallies)
- Targeted programs, such as SOS and Best Buddies, Latina Mentor Program, Link Crew
- Classified staff involvement and support of Students and Faculty

**Areas for Growth:**

- Increase parent attendance at PTO and booster meetings
- Increase number of bilingual (Spanish and Mandarin) staff and administrative personnel
- Increase number of intervention/support classes during the school day for low-performing students (AVID, English support, Biology support, Geometry support)
- Increase after-school academic support programs
- Increased faculty participation in School Loop
- Increased faculty participation in school spirit activities
- Resumption of Vocational Education classes on campus

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## **Part 2: Synthesis of Schoolwide Areas of Strength and Schoolwide Critical Areas for Follow-up**

The stakeholders of Mills High School are commended for the thoroughness in the preparation of the *Focus on Learning* document. All stakeholders assisted the Visiting Committee in the collection and clarification of data that was needed in order to analyze the existing status of the school. The San Mateo Unified High School District administration provided direction, training, and other resources to the school. The Visiting Committee found that students, parents and staff were extremely congenial and appreciative of the efforts made to improve the quality of educational opportunities available to them.

### **Schoolwide Areas of Strength:**

1. The site administrators, students, staff and parents worked collaboratively to develop a self study that accurately describes the school program and provides key insights to school-wide strengths, areas of need, and serves as a guide to develop an Action Plan that addresses identified areas of follow-up.
2. The site administration, staff and school community created a learning environment that is safe, secure, and is characterized by expectations of high quality instruction and high levels of student achievement.
3. Site leadership and staff worked collaboratively to provide student learning experiences that have resulted in high levels of achievement for all students typified by exceptionally high CAHSEE passing rates, high API scores, and high levels of performance on AP exams.
4. The site leadership and staff have partnered with parents to develop strong parent supports that provide valued human resources and fiscal support.
5. The Mills High School Staff is talented, dedicated, and sensitive to meeting student needs and highly committed to continuous improvement.
6. Site leadership and staff have worked collaboratively to develop and provide an array of course offerings designed to meet the needs of a changing student body, including opening Honors/AP programs to all students.
7. The site and district leadership collaborate effectively to provide high levels of support designed to optimize instruction, maximize student learning and personal growth.
8. The staff and site leadership effectively provide an inclusive environment that offers a broad range of student involvement opportunities that meet the wide variety of needs and interests of students and student to school connectedness.

9. The students of Mills High School provide an essential contribution to developing an environment of acceptance, cooperation, trust, respect and high expectations.
10. The Visiting Committee commends all stakeholders of Mills High School for their patience and perseverance through the on-going construction projects.

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

The Visiting Committee provides the following as critical areas of follow-up.

1. There is a need for site and district to collaborate to develop and implement a plan to address on-going technology needs such as:
  - Ongoing effective technology support
  - Related professional development needs
2. Site leadership and staff need to develop and implement a structure that will effectively assess the student achievement of the ESLRs on an ongoing and scheduled basis.
3. The need to develop and implement processes that will ensure maximum opportunities for new students to transition and assimilate successfully as a part of the culture of Mills High School.
4. An on-going emphasis needs to be placed upon the disaggregation of student achievement data in order to identify achievement gaps and learning needs of various identified sub groups.
5. Develop a process for identifying and encouraging students from under-represented groups to enroll in Honors/Advanced Placement/Advanced Standing courses.

Mills' Leadership Team and staff need to give immediate attention to ensure the items cited above and incorporated in to the Action Plan and effect necessary revision to the Action Plan as described in Chapter V (on-going improvement) of the Visiting Committee Report.

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## **Chapter V**

### **Ongoing School Improvement**

#### **Do the Action Plan sections address the critical areas of follow-ups?**

The schoolwide action plan developed by Mills High School is formatted in such a way as to specify Goal Areas, a rationale for selection of the given goal area and ESLRs addressed through this goal area. The Action Plan is closely linked to address identified Critical Areas of Growth and is directly linked to the selected focus ESLRs. The plan includes descriptions of “tasks/specific steps designed to achieve goals, persons responsible, resources needed, means of assessing progress” as well as specified timelines and reporting processes.

#### **Will the Action Plan steps enhance student learning?**

The Action Plan is designed to have a positive impact on student learning and a variety of means are described that will be utilized to assess and measure student progress and achievement. Strategies clearly identify what impact various successfully completed tasks have had on student learning as per cited assessment measures.

#### **Is the Action Plan user friendly?**

The Action Plan is closely aligned with existing schoolwide initiatives and the utilization of Annual Achievement Reports, which is linked to staff development planning.

#### **Is the Action Plan feasible within existing resources?**

Both the school and the District have sufficient resources, both human and fiscal, to ensure feasibility of achievement. The monitoring process for follow-up includes continuing involvement and support by the Leadership Team as well as involvement of the Mills Planning Council.

#### **Is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system wide?**

Given the record of past successes as well as the current obviously apparent level of commitment for continuous improvement, Mills High School has in place a sound follow-up process that will serve well in the process of implementation and monitoring of accomplishments specified in the Action Plan.

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## Strengthening the Action Plan

The Visiting Committee finds that the Action Plans proposed by the Mills High School Leadership Team with the assistance of other staff members are appropriately directed toward improvement of the school's performance with respect to the *Focus on Learning* process. The Action Plan addresses the needs identified by the school's focus groups, the home groups, and the Visiting Committee. These Action Plans will be supplemented and modified as part of the ongoing effort to improve academic achievement of all students, with input from departments and all stakeholders, ongoing review of course offerings, sharing of instructional and assessment techniques and staff participation in on-going technology and instructional strategies staff development.

Discussions with the Leadership Team and the Administration indicate that the Schoolwide Action Plans are viewed as "works in progress". The Mills Planning Council and Administration will be responsible for the allocation of these resources.

The staff at Mills High School is in agreement that improving the school's overall programs and services is an evolving process. Collaboration and communication between students, parents and staff is a key component that will insure quality programs at Mills High School. The staff appears committed to make changes for the benefit of the overall school community. The school administration and staff appears dedicated to implementing assessment activities that will give direction for enhancing curriculum and teaching methodology. The school staff has a history of undertaking and implementing programs designed to improve student learning.

The Action Plan addresses all of the key components cited within the WASC Focus on Learning guide. It also focuses on areas of growth. Mills High School needs to review and revise the plan in order to ensure that schoolwide areas of growth provided by the WASC Visiting Committee are addressed in order to maximize opportunity for success and on-going school improvement.

Finally, the Visiting Committee's concurrence with the Action Plan developed by Mills High School represents a validation of the general direction being promoted at the school. The Visiting Committee is confident that pursuing these recommendations will lead to continued high performance of Mills' students. There is a high degree of enthusiasm, support and commitment by all stakeholders to take these new steps. This commitment includes support of the district and site level administration.

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## Appendix

### Mills High School Expected School-wide Learning Results

#### 1. Effective Communicators Who:

- Demonstrate the ability to convey ideas, opinions, and information through written and oral language skills.
- Use reading and interpersonal skills necessary to receive and interpret information for others.

#### 2. Critical and Creative Thinkers Who:

- Analyze, synthesize, and evaluate significant concepts within a variety of contexts.
- Use logical and effective decision making processes.

#### 3. Self-Directed Learners Who:

- Demonstrate the decision-making and self-management skills to be independent learners.
- Gather, interpret and use information.

#### 4. Responsible and collaborative Workers Who:

- Demonstrate the ability to work effectively and collaboratively with others in a diverse community.