

SELF-STUDY VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT

**ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS,
WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES
CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
FOR**

El Capitan High School

100 Farmland Ave.

Merced, California 95340

Merced Union High School District

March 20-22, 2023

Visiting Committee Members

David Brown, Chair

Consultant

Chris Ostermann, Asst. Principal
Sherman E. Burroughs High School

Jean Nakaguchi, Teacher
Theodore Roosevelt High School

Veronica Vas Dinis, Learning Director
Ceres High School

Preface

El Capitan High School began a thorough process of self-review in September of 2022. Based on information provided by the school, it appears that virtually all stakeholders had an opportunity to participate in the Self-Study. The report itself is thorough and clear and effectively meets all the criteria associated with a productive self-analysis of expectations for student learning, organizational and other support measures that support the school's mission.

The involvement and collaboration of stakeholders in the self-study reflects a thorough, accurate description and analysis of what currently exists at the school, as well as aligned schoolwide prioritized areas of strength and growth.

Visiting Committee Rating (select one): **Highly Effective** Effective Somewhat Effective Ineffective

Narrative Rationale:

Meetings with students, parents, teachers, and the school's leadership team made it abundantly clear that the participation of virtually all stakeholders was involved in the development of the Self-Study. The VC found no significant discrepancies that would suggest the Self-Study did not involve a broad cross-section of ECHS stakeholders.

Chapter 1: Progress Report

There have been several significant changes at El Capitan High School since the initial WASC visit in 2016. At the time of that visit, ECHS was only serving 9th and 10th grade students. With the addition of grades 11 and 12, the subsequent increase in enrollment was accompanied by 52 additional teachers. The school's administrative staff has also changed and includes four new administrators that began their tenure at ECHS at the beginning of the 2022-23 school year.

The school has aligned their primary goals with the Merced Unified's LCAP objectives, which connect in large part with the School Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA) and the WASC Action Plan.

Recommendations from the previous visit focused on three specific areas of operation:

- **More comprehensive support for EL and Special Needs students** - A Spanish speaking liaison is now onsite to facilitate issues between staff and students and through a co-teaching model and some time to collaborate. As a result Special Education staff are now better supported

- **Teachers encouraged to collaboratively integrate technology in order to create more visible and viable student engagement** - Whiteboards, new strategies designed to “check for understanding,” and some professional development focused on Thinking Classrooms are new to ECHS and seem to be making a positive difference.
- **The administration and staff continue to seek ways to engage parents in school activities despite issues of transportation** - Although attendance at events designed for parents continues to be a challenge, more and better communication with homes is occurring through an upgraded social media presence for ECHS, and Parent Square

The use of prior accreditation findings and other pertinent data to ensure high achievement of all students and drive school improvement.

Visiting Committee Rating (select one): Highly Effective **Effective** Somewhat Effective Ineffective

Narrative Rationale:

The development of the Self-Study included thorough reflection on previous accreditation findings

Chapter 2: School and Student Profile and Supporting Data

El Capitan High School is one of six comprehensive high schools located in Merced County. Opened in 2014th and the school’s first graduating class completed their studies in 2016. Built as the district’s first “Web School,” ECHS students can either bring their own devices or utilize school-supplied Google Chromebooks for work in all academic classrooms.

Mission/Vision/Purpose

The school’s purpose/vision statement is defined under the heading of Learn, Love, Lead, and Leave a Legacy. Students are expected to “Learn” by engaging and exploring with open minds. They Love by understanding and including others, and they Lead by supporting each other and their community. ECHS Schoolwide Learning outcomes for all students are also threefold - 1. Demonstrate integrity, honor, and compassion; 2. Achieve academic and technical excellence through innovation and critical thinking; and 3. Reach college and career goals and become responsible and productive digital natives.

Staff and Students

The school staff of 145 includes 88 certificated and 57 classified employees. Student enrollment of 1,911 students are fairly equally distributed both in number and gender through the four 9-12 grade classes. The most recent review of ethnicities of ECHS students indicates the following: 1142 Hispanic; 290 White; 10 Native American; 11 Pacific Islander; 214 Asian; 28 Filipino; 65 Black; and 15 Multi-Ethnic. Of these students, over half are identified as Socio-Economically Disadvantaged. The school is vigilant in making efforts to mitigate economic differences. Also, in 2022-23 the school services 38 Special Day Students, 116 Resource Students; and 6 Severely Handicapped Students.

Counselors are in place at ECHS to support Migrant Ed and Foster Youth, as well as some who identify as homeless. And, a significant majority of the school’s student population are considered to be proficient in English.

ECHS strives to get all students involved in activities, athletics, and/or clubs, recognizing that students who are involved generally experience more consistent academic success. Discipline has been a concern which the school is addressing with additional counseling support hoping to enable students to more effectively manage anger and avoid drugs.

Facilities

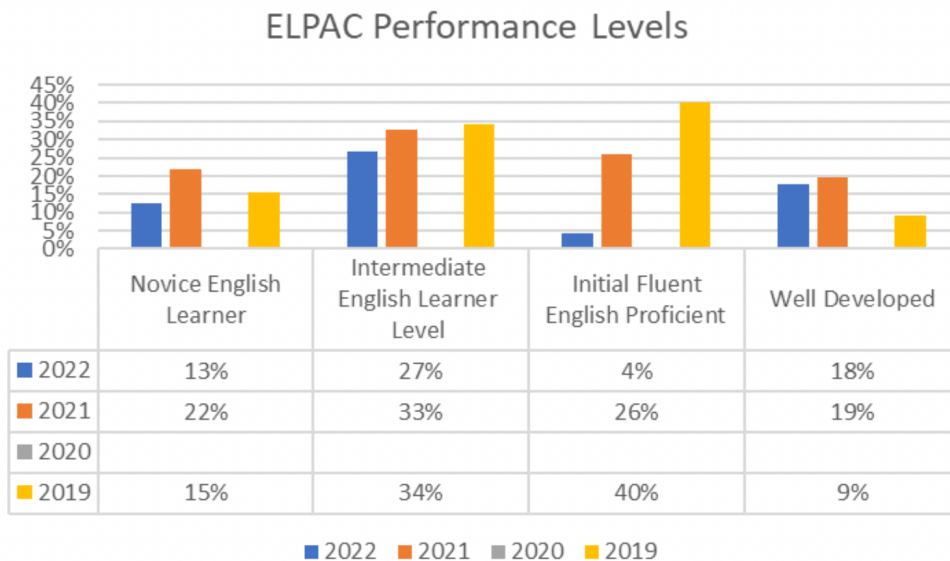
The school is committed to providing safe and clean facilities. Although the school is relatively new, distracting noise was experienced with the failure of brick veneer on a number of classrooms, the school’s gymnasium, and other buildings. Work has been ongoing to rectify the veneer issues, which is anticipated to be completed in May of 2023.

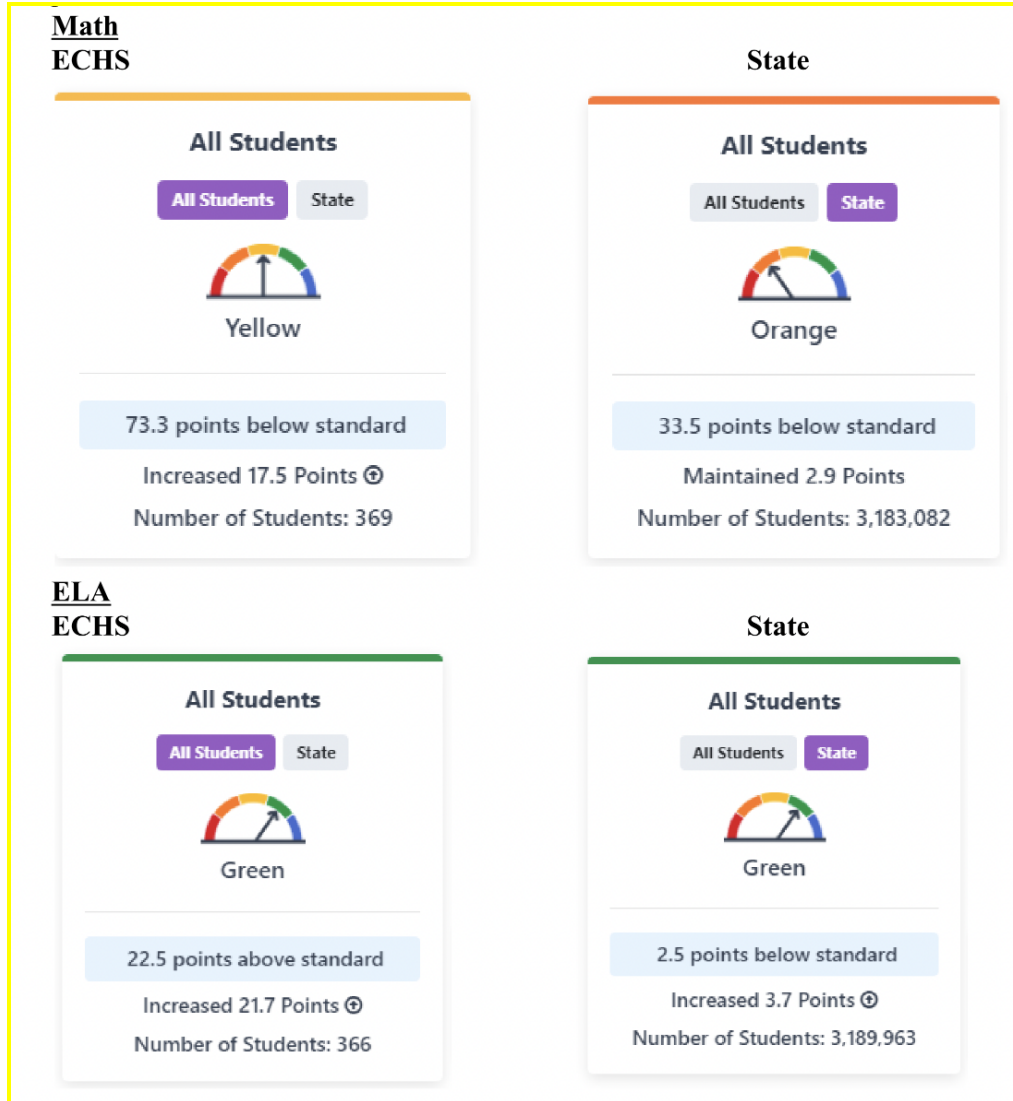
Planning has begun to build a football stadium and groundbreaking for the stadium is anticipated to occur in the fall of 2023.

Parents

As one of the WASC areas for growth, more actively engaging parents has been a primary objective of the school. Although onsite attendance at parent nights and other events remains a challenge, the school has made significant efforts to provide parents with opportunities to serve and better understand school operations. Parents’ education levels reflect the Merced City demographic. Presently, over 40% indicate that they have some college and well over 75% of parents have high school diplomas.

Student Attendance and Performance Data





Based on performance data provided at the end of each school year, the school develops specific professional development focus areas designed to meet major gaps in student learning. The school has employed an instructional coach who meets regularly with teachers to develop strategies that promote higher levels of learning. The school's schedule provides time for collaboration and delivery of professional development during the school day.

Assessment data generally reflects a student population that struggles somewhat with proficient English. Although most ECHS students are identified as English proficient, their relative success with PSAT, AP, and ECHS grading suggests a challenge that the school acknowledges they have to more effectively address. The number and percent of students redesignated as English Proficient understandably dropped during COVID. However, as the school's report suggests, in spite of ECHS students scoring below average on most AP exams, they consistently excel in Student Art 2D and Spanish Language exams. It is also important to note that all students interested in AP coursework and exams are invited to participate and that the number who were involved in AP coursework and exams declined precipitously during the height of COVID.

As to students "on track" to graduate, presently over 98% of senior students graduated in

2021-22 and a similar or higher percent is anticipated in the 2022-23 school year.

School Climate and Perception Data

Although the school's report indicated that student conflicts have occasionally challenged the school's desire to have all students feel safe and protected, student, parent, and staff surveys seem to indicate a fairly high level of appreciation for the efforts of teachers and administration to be responsive to stakeholders and particularly willing to support students with both their emotional and academic needs. Parents appear to strongly appreciate efforts to provide information about their students and to enhance opportunities for parents to be more actively engaged in programs and committees that support students at the school.

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

A1. Vision and Purpose Criterion

Developed by active participation of staff, students, and parents, the El Capitan High School Mission and Vision Statements are clear and concise. They focus on helping students "develop into 21st Century leaders, who demonstrate integrity, honor, and compassion as they gain the academic and technological skills needed to achieve excellence in college and career." Their "Learn, Love, and Lead" Vision Statement is well defined by a number of attributes and behaviors that embody the school's purpose. It is important to note that the school's Student Learner Objectives are directly connected to those statements which effectively define the school's values and direction.

The school's report indicated that a committee had more recently reviewed the SLOs and determined that they remain "relevant and in line with the mission and vision statements."

***Vision and Purpose* that supports high achievement for all students and defines the school's vision and purpose through schoolwide learner outcomes/graduate profile and academic standards.**

Visiting Committee Rating (select one): Highly Effective **Effective** Somewhat Effective Ineffective

Narrative Rationale: The school's motto which highlights Learning, Loving, Leading, and Leaving a Legacy is clear and is found throughout classrooms and other facilities on site.

A2. Governance Criterion

As one of the Merced Unified School District's six comprehensive high schools, ECHS regularly receives and redirects to all staff district policies and expectations. Funding support is provided

by the district to ensure participation and engagement of parents in the School Site Council. The ECHS Self-Study outlines the role of the MUHSD Board, which adheres consistently with requirements of the California Education Code. The Board minutes are distributed to all staff members to keep them aware of district wide programs and operations. Staff members are encouraged to attend Board Meetings to provide district staff with updates and feedback regarding ECHS.

The school utilizes online communication options and social media to distribute information to parents regarding school operations and programs. Although parent engagement remains a challenge, a number of committees and organizations encourage parental involvement and information regarding service opportunities for parents is communicated through Parent Square. The school's primary committees that require parent participation are the School Site Council and the English Learners Advisory Committee. Other opportunities exist through FFA, Sport Team Boosters, and Band Boosters.

Governance that supports high achievement for all students.

Visiting Committee Rating (select one): Highly Effective **Effective** Somewhat Effective Ineffective

Narrative Rationale:

The district governing body and district office officials strongly support the school's relatively new leadership, who have had a significant positive impact on the school's culture and environment. Both the district and school site leadership are determined to lift the academic performance of all students.

A3. Leadership: Data-Informed Decision-Making and Continuous School Improvement Criterion

As is evidenced with the development of the school's Self-Study, broad participation in decision-making at ECHS is encouraged from all stakeholder groups. The school consistently demonstrates an approach to continuous improvement by reviewing the effectiveness of student performance data in virtually all groups and committees that function at the school. The school's Administrative Team meets weekly to review organizational needs and student achievement data. Subject level meetings support staff collaboration and monthly department meetings are expected to include discussions about how learning goals are supported by "essential questions, shared instructional strategies and common evaluation of student achievement."

In an effort to support transparency, the school's Principal distributes a Weekly Update to all ECHS staff which is designed to enlist feedback from certificated and classified staff.

A key committee that requires the participation of teachers, students, parents, classified staff and administration is the School Site Council. A major responsibility of the SSC is review of the Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA) and subsequent dissemination of SPSA status to all school stakeholder groups. SPSA objectives are measured by a variety of assessments, including California Standards Tests, California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress, SAT, ACT, Advance Placement results, and attendance data. The school's report acknowledges the need to align SPSA with district plan objectives, but it is important to note that the school's SPSA should also be tightly aligned with the school's WASC Action Plan.

ECHS has recently established a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS), which is expected to both evaluate and respond to students in three areas: Academic Performance; Social-Emotional functioning; and College-Career Readiness. The MTSS, after reviewing student performance data from several sources develops focused support in three levels - Tier 1 - Universal Supports; Tier 2 - Targeted Interventions; and Tier 3 - Intensive Interventions.

The Local Control Action Plan is yet another requirement that requires in California schools the identification of specific plan objectives. The LCAP goals at ECHS are appropriately connected to the school’s mission and vision for students and are fourfold: 1. College and Career Ready; 2. School Climate and Culture; 3. Equitable Access; and 4. Recruit and Retain High Qualified Staff.

The school’s schedule enables daily collaboration for teachers to reflect and “create common lessons and assessments, and reflect on the effectiveness of both lesson delivery and assessment testing data.” ECHS utilizes several additional internal communication opportunities to assist and support teachers with a variety of challenges.

Leadership: *Data-Informed Decision-Making and Continuous School Improvement that supports high achievement for all students.*

Visiting Committee Rating (select one): **Highly Effective** Effective Somewhat Effective Ineffective

Narrative Rationale:

The school’s present leadership is determined to lift the academic performance of students and is encouraging broad participation in decision making that is focused on continuous school improvement.

A4. Staff: Qualified and Professional Development Criterion

Definitions of “highly qualified” staff are outlined in district policies. The school’s report indicates that 95% of present staff meet those definitions. Professional Development opportunities, usually aligned with school Action Plan (ECHS instructional foci) priorities, are regularly provided. In the 2022-23 school year, the school’s identified instructional focus is on UDL, Back to Basics lesson components, Rigor, 4C’s, Checks for understanding, and Closure.

Teachers who don’t possess clear teaching credentials are assigned an induction mentor for up to two years. Much of the support for new teachers is coordinated by the Instructional Coach, who typically observes new teachers once each week. The Instruction Coach conducts each month a prep period referred to as “Hot Topic” for all teachers new to the school.

Evaluations apply to all teaching staff. Permanent designated staff members are evaluated every other year, while all others are evaluated annually. These evaluations include a pre-evaluation meeting, the observation itself, and a post-evaluation meeting with administrative staff.

All staff are provided with information that identifies all Department Chairs as well as the specific operational responsibilities for ECHS Administrators.

Staff: Qualified and Professional Development that supports high achievement for all students.

Visiting Committee Rating (select one): **Highly Effective** Effective Somewhat Effective Ineffective

Narrative Rationale:

Most staff members are well qualified, have been at the school for many years and work tirelessly to lift students of all levels of learning capacity

A5. Resources Criterion

The school has a clearly outlined process for determining annual budget allocations to individual departments. Typically, departments that have high needs students receive additional support. Helping to determine how funds are expended is the School Site Council, which approves funding decisions, including special funding for ELD and AVID programs at the school.

School budgets, including departmental allocations, are controlled by the school district. Only ASB funds are managed locally, and include managing the finances for campus clubs and athletic teams.

Career Technical Education teachers collaborate on the development of a CTE pathway plans which are expected to align with District LCAP expectations.

Being a relatively new school, facilities are safe and support student learning with appropriate wifi, electronic connection, and laboratory facilities. Several buildings have two stories, which results in some students being provided elevator cards to mitigate their inability to climb stairs. The district funds the remodeling of two classrooms each year, usually providing whiteboards and new desks.

As mentioned previously, professional development for teachers is strongly supported by the school and the district. Advanced Placement, and CTE teachers are encouraged to attend summer workshops. Expectations for Agriculture Department staff members include an obligation to participate in at least three Ag related professional development events to stay current with agriculture standards.

Also, the district requires each high school with help from parents and the broader community to establish annual goals and plans to achieve those goals. The five areas of focus include: 1. Strengthen Student Connectedness; 2. Professional Learning; 3. Pupil Learning loss (in large part a consequence of COVID); 4. Technology Connectivity; and 5. Student Meals

Resources that supports high achievement for all students.

Visiting Committee Rating (select one): Highly Effective Effective **Somewhat Effective** Ineffective

Narrative Rationale:

Additional resources are critically needed for facilities, personnel, and materials

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

Areas of Strength for Organization: Vision and Purpose, Governance, Leadership, Staff, and Resources:

- ECHS has a solid understanding of Vision Mission, and the District LCAP goals
- The ECHS Action Plan/SPSA is tightly correlated to Student Learning
- ECHS provide significant resources for personnel and their professional growth
- ECHS has a strong supportive relationship with the Governing Board

Growth Areas for Continuous Improvement for Organization: Vision and Purpose, Governance, Leadership, Staff, and Resources:

- ECHS needs to refine and continue to develop the school's vision, mission, maxims and ensure that they align with the 4Cs and the school's six-year plan
- Facilities conducive to learning remains a growth area as most of the 2022-23 school year has included non-stop construction
- The school needs to strengthen its collective accountability in support of student learning
- The school leadership and teachers need to collaborate in ensuring that the effects of professional development are measurable and make a positive impact on learning

Important evidence from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and growth areas for continuous improvement include the following:

- Self-Study
- Meetings with Focus Groups
- Meetings with the Leadership Team
- Classroom Observations
- Meeting with students

CATEGORY B. CURRICULUM

B.1 Rigorous and relevant Standards-Based Curriculum Criterion

ECHS departments work in collaboration with the Associate Principal in charge of teaching to ensure an effective, coherent and standards-based curriculum supports the schoolwide learner outcomes and academic standards. Supporting evidence includes a variety of learning platforms, assessments and course offerings.

The school's college and career readiness is supported by 12 AP courses and CTE pathways with a variety of workplace certifications. AP and CTE courses offer students the opportunity for Capstone Courses in order to complete the pathways. Additionally, ECHS outsources curriculum to allow alternative ways for some students to succeed and recover credits. El Capitan offers AVID and ASSET programs as well. The variety of pathways allow for students to develop college and career readiness skills while pursuing a high school diploma. Additionally, the counseling department helps students apply for college and complete a senior portfolio. The future implementation of a Senior Seminar based on financial literacy using Economic and Financial Algebra courses further prepares students for life after high school.

ECHS staff collaboration ensures congruence and consistency in curriculum. Utilizing a daily prep period buy back provides some departmental collaboration time. These collaboration meetings allow the staff to create coherent and aligned lessons in order to meet desired schoolwide learner outcomes. At the same time, a site instructional coach helps induction teachers align curriculum and best practices to the departments.

Community and articulation resources are integrated into the curriculum in order to ensure students are on track for graduation. If students fail classes or transfer from a school with different requirements, online Edmentum courses are used for credit and curricular recovery. Additionally a partnership with UC Merced offers a program called Merced Automatic Admission Program. MAAP guarantees undergraduate admission to UC Merced if the MAAP criteria are met by a student. ECHS also articulates curricular programs and expectations with feeder schools through language acquisitions, technology and college preparation. Bussing occurs from the feeder schools allowing on-site participation in activities, career days, and club nights. ECHS utilizes dual enrollment (2+2 credit) from Merced College and UC Merced tutors are provided in AVID and ASSET programs on campus. A college and Career Center with a designated counselor helps guide students' future college and career choices.

Rigorous and Relevant Standards-Based Curriculum that supports high achievement for all students.

Visiting Committee Rating (select one): Highly Effective **Effective** Somewhat Effective Ineffective

Narrative Rationale:

Through the self study, observation and focus group meetings, there was significant evidence of how teachers at El Capitan connect students learning to real world situations, provide opportunities for context and application, and provide learning experiences that help to prepare students to be critical thinkers and for life beyond high school.

B2. Equity and Access to Curriculum Criterion

Teachers at El Capitan High School use a variety of instructional strategies to engage students in the classroom such as flipped classrooms, math 360, online learning platforms and collaborative learning groups. ECHS teachers are offered a prep period buy back in order to provide collaboration time for teachers to align curriculum. This helps to ensure a rigorous, relevant and coherent curriculum is available to all students.

A Freshman Seminar is required of all ninth grade students in order to explore CTE pathways and different career opportunities. Furthermore, students have a number of opportunities for project-based learning in the CTE, dual enrollment, AP and traditional classrooms. ECHS has made a commitment to pathways by incorporating a 20 CTE credit graduation policy. The school has shown a commitment to incorporating technology into the instructional program and students have 1:1 Chromebooks. El Capital also partners with Merced College and MUHSD to provide students with adjunct teachers and College and Career counselors. El Capitan High School aims to prepare students as critical thinkers who can transfer their knowledge to college and career readiness. Students are also encouraged to complete the Gaucho Game Plan allowing their counselors the ability to work on a six year post secondary plan.

Equity and Access to Curriculum that supports high achievement for all students.

Visiting Committee Rating (select one): Highly Effective **Effective** Somewhat Effective Ineffective

Narrative Rationale:

Through the self study, observation and focus group meetings, there was significant evidence of how teachers at El Capitan connect students learning to real world situations, provide opportunities for context and application, and provide learning experiences that help to prepare students to be critical thinkers and for life beyond high school.

CATEGORY B: CURRICULUM

Areas of Strength for Curriculum:

- A strong college and career reading program offering a variety of CTE, AP and dual enrollment opportunities to students.

- Students are currently taking college courses through dual enrollment courses offered at ECHS or off campus at Merced College allowing students to graduate with advanced certifications or an AA degree.
- Common collaboration time for subject area teachers along with a site instructional coach allows for coherent and aligned curriculum.
- The implementation of the six year plan (Gaucha Gameplan) encourages students to make connections between school and career goals.

Growth Areas for Continuous Improvement for Curriculum:

- School leadership should consider additional counseling staff to improve communication between school, parents, and students to advise for a transition to a post secondary path.
- Departments could benefit from further school wide collaboration to better support integration within and between subject matters and departments.
- AP teaching staff could consider reviewing the level of rigor found in all AP courses in order to meet the needs of all students.

Important evidence from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and growth

- AP, dual enrollment and a robust CTE program provides multiple opportunities for students to participate in project-based career and college learning.
- Teachers at El Capitan engage students and use Canvas, Google Classroom and curriculum specific online learning platforms are utilized for instructional strategies that challenge students' thinking, such as class discussion prompts, video tutorials, digital notebooks.
- Daily departmental collaboration meetings occur allowing the staff to create lessons in order to meet desired schoolwide learner outcomes.
- Partnership with UC Merced offers a program called Merced Automatic Admission Program guarantees undergraduate admission to UC Merced if the MAAP criteria are met.

CATEGORY C. LEARNING AND TEACHING

C1.1 Student Engagement in Challenging and Relevant Learning Experiences Criterion

Students actively participate in collaborative group activities. Digital tools such as Google Classroom and Goformative are used for teachers to quickly observe student work and to provide scaffolding and feedback when and where necessary. In order to provide students with challenging work, teacher created websites are utilized as guides for a "pre-discussion" before a class activity. Google slides templates are used to project daily and weekly agenda items as well as practice problems for students to work on as the teachers monitor progress.

C1.2 Student Understanding of Learning Expectations

Teachers at ECHS teach using the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) as well as Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), California CTE Model Curriculum and College Board Advanced Placement standards. Creative and critical thinking are encouraged as students are given project based learning opportunities in CTE courses such as Agriculture and Welding. Students create models such as graphs and charts as a method of explanation of scientific concepts and principals.

Depth of knowledge and Universal Design is used to address all learners. Teachers are guided by an instructional coach to create assessments based on DOK levels and incorporate project based learning to aim for 100% student engagement. Students understand the standards and expected performance levels for each area by utilization of test correction, make-up and late work policies. Daily objectives are posted for all students in classrooms.. To demonstrate learning and college and career readiness, teachers use rubrics, examples, non-examples, and exit tickets.

Student Engagement in Challenging and Relevant Learning Experiences that supports high achievement for all students.

Visiting Committee Rating (select one): Highly Effective **Effective** Somewhat Effective Ineffective

Narrative Rationale:

Through classroom observations, it was determined that teachers use digital tools consistently to enhance their instruction and provide visual aids. Student collaboration is encouraged through group work and discussions, fostering a cooperative learning environment. Learning expectations of all students via whiteboards and oral communication was observed.

C.2 Student-Centered Instruction through a Variety of Strategies and Resources Criterion

C2.1 Teachers as Facilitators of Learning

In addition to teacher created websites and daily warm ups, students participate in collaborative activities. By using collaboration, students build social skills with guidance from teachers. In CTE courses, industry based technologies are incorporated into lessons and teachers coach teams such as FFA and CTSO teams to guide ECHS students in competitions that replicate real-world

industry scenarios. Some departments collaborate to address necessary content supports, lesson plans, and develop curriculum collaboratively.

C2.2 Creative and Critical Thinking

Creative and critical thinking are encouraged as students are given project based learning opportunities in CTE courses such as Agriculture as well as English and Science. English department teachers instruct students to think, reason and problem solve when completing group projects. ECHS emphasizes the use of industry-based technology in their career and technical education (CTE) programs. ECHS teachers remain up-to-date with the latest trends and practices in CTE by participating in professional development activities. The school prioritizes instruction and the integrated use of technology to support student learning. They stay current with the instructional content taught and research-based instructional methodologies. Overall, the school aims to provide students with relevant, practical skills that prepare them for success in their future careers and in college.

C2.3 Application of Learning

ECHS students in English focus on soft skills, teamwork, career portfolios and interviews to practice skills that are taught in the classroom. For example, resume creation and job applications. Students in CTE use the Real Care Infant simulator to use skills learned in class to care for an infant's needs. Students in world languages apply what they have learned by speaking, reading, listening and writing as they work in collaborative groups and engage in group projects. The school yearbook staff collaborate with professional artists and use skills to give students experience in the design and publication industry.

C2.4 Career Preparedness and Real World Experiences

All students have access to and are engaged in career preparation activities. ECHS World language students practice the vocabulary and grammar they have learned in Spanish to create and sell products they develop to their peers. Science students use a variety of lab techniques to practice skills utilized in the biotechnology industry.

Student-Centered Instruction through a Variety of Strategies and Resources that supports high achievement for all students.

Visiting Committee Rating (select one): Highly Effective **Effective** Somewhat Effective Ineffective

Narrative Rationale:

Students explore their own interests and student choice is also utilized as stated by focus group teachers at ECHS. Teachers use PBL and group work. All students have access to and are engaged in career and college preparation activities. Students are allowed to take multiple CTE classes to explore their personal interests.

CATEGORY C: LEARNING AND TEACHING**Areas of Strength for Learning and Teaching:**

- Campus-wide focus on instruction and academics.
- Teachers communicate the learning expectations to all students by posting learning objectives.
- All students have access to and are engaged in career and college preparation activities.
- Encouragement of students to enroll in Dual Enrollment and AP courses.
- Teachers attend professional development training through the district, site-based PD, and teacher conferences.

Growth Areas for Continuous Improvement for Learning and Teaching:

- Improve instruction by school leadership to integrate more culturally, linguistically and historically responsive instruction.
- Teachers and school leadership collaborate in creating a plan with a specific focus on underperforming students and subgroups to address gaps in learning.
- Use of common rubrics by teachers to measure performance levels within disciplines.
- Consistent effort by school leadership and teachers to foster inter-departmental application of learning across all content areas.

Important evidence from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and growth areas for continuous improvement include the following:

- Self-Study lesson links
- Meeting with Focus Group C
- Individual conversations with teachers and school support staff
- Meetings with students, parents, and representatives of the school district and board members
- Classroom observations

CATEGORY D. ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

D1. Reporting and Accountability Process Criterion

A variety of data collection methods are used to share information with all stakeholders. Performance results are analyzed during collaboration, faculty meetings, as well as department meetings. Not all departments use common scales, although some departments chose to use common policies as well as common scales. Some of those departments include math, science, and PE. Grades, graduation status, state testing, CTE, and pathway sequencing are monitored using a variation of tools and by a variety of staff members. As a comprehensive high school, ECHS focuses on striving for college and career readiness for all. Staff monitors learning levels and provides support for those who qualify for IEPs and 504s. Not only are academics assessed, the importance of social/emotional progress is also monitored and led by the School Counselors in a Multi Tiered support system. Aeries analytics is frequently used to monitor student growth, scheduling, and guidance for academic success. Counselors attend meetings and trainings to ensure the alignment of curriculum that supports the availability of college preparation for all students. Professional development trainings are provided to all staff to ensure that students and families have access to the most recent forms of education to support student success.

Using Assessment to Analyze and Report Student Progress that supports high achievement for all students.

Visiting Committee Rating (select one): Highly Effective **Effective** Somewhat Effective Ineffective

Narrative Rationale:

The rating of Effective is justified through the ongoing goal of college and career readiness for all. Multi-Tiered systems are in place to ensure the student's academic, as well as social and emotional wellbeing, are monitored and supported.

D2. Using Student Assessment Strategies to Monitor and Modify Learning in the Classroom Criterion

Teachers utilize visual learning tools and activities like whiteboards, posters, critique groups, Math 360, as well as Physics 360 to gain and demonstrate a deeper understanding, in real time, of a student's academics. They also use various programs like Mathia, Delta Math, Google Classroom, Canvas, Kahoot, Quizizz, and Edulastic to provide immediate feedback. Teachers can evaluate as they walk around during group activities. Quick feedback is manageable through management systems such as Canvas and Google Classroom. This process is used on assignments, quizzes, and rubric functions to help students identify areas for improvement. Stakeholders, including parents, have access to the teacher's assessment gradebook category available through Aries. All of the grades are accessible throughout the semester.

Using Student Assessment Strategies to Monitor and Modify Learning in the Classroom that supports high achievement for all students.

Visiting Committee Rating (select one): Highly Effective **Effective** Somewhat Effective Ineffective

Narrative Rationale:

The rating of Effective is justified based on the self assessment report. During class observations, it is clear that multiple teaching styles and programs are being provided in order to help students achieve high level learning. Parents receive open communication from the school, and have access to the student's academic standings.

CATEGORY D: ASSESSMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Areas of Strength for Assessment and Accountability:

- Based on the site's findings, a variety of assessments are completed to assess the student's continued progress.
- Assessments appear to be effective in conducting proper student placements to help students meet graduation requirements and post secondary enrollment.
- Stakeholders receive communication through multiple systems, which include Parent Square, as well as support through the program Aeries.
- All students are exposed to and participate in career pathways and CTE, as part of the district's high school diploma requirements.

Growth Areas for Continuous Improvement for Assessment and Accountability:

- It is recommended that school leadership evaluates class sizing and strives to balance numbers, during master scheduling. This would be most specifically for lower level Math classes, Science classes that require labs, as well as English classes that have a high number of EL students.
- School leadership would benefit from having a step by step procedure to address student phone use during class time.
- It is recommended that school leadership and EL staff work together to ensure that families are being communicated with in their home language. Communicating with families in their home language would be beneficial to the site, families, as well as all other stakeholders.

Important evidence about student learning from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and growth areas for continuous improvement include the following:

- Self-Study
- Meeting staff and personnel of Focus Group D
- Meetings with parents, students, representatives of the Board, and District Office
- Classroom observations

- Individual conversations with teachers and school support staff

CATEGORY E. SCHOOL CULTURE AND SUPPORT FOR STUDENT PERSONAL, SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL, AND ACADEMIC GROWTH

E1. Parent and Community Engagement Criterion

Parents have a multitude of opportunities to serve and become more connected to both the learning and activities of their children. Some of the options include Back to School Night, LCAP Awards Night, “Gauchoween,” Senior Orientation Night, FAFSA Night, and Coffee with the Principal. Two additional committees require parent participation and they are the School Site Council and the English Learners Advisory Committee. The School Site Council includes parents, teachers, and students and is responsible for tracking both the school’s expenditures associated with Categorical Funding and monitoring the progress with the Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA). The School Site Council is also tasked with the responsibility of confirming that expenditures are well aligned with a focus on student achievement.

Other options for parents to serve students in extra-curricular areas include a number of Booster Groups that support athletics and Fine Arts. An additional active booster group strongly supports students who participate in the Agriculture program at ECHS. The Ag Booster Group involves parents, but also includes college professors who are active in Agriculture Education. These “industry professionals help guide the school in the Ag program and ensure that instruction continues to maintain industry practice in ECHS classrooms.

The school’s report indicates that the ECHS maintains a significant social media presence, which supports communications to parents as well as the broader community.

For parents whose primary language is other than English, the school provides translation services in Spanish. Since the school has a number of families who speak Hmong and Farsi, the school is intent on finding translation services for those families as well.

Parents can become engaged with and aware of student academic progress through the Google Classroom resource.

Parent and Community Engagement that supports high achievement for all students.

Visiting Committee Rating (select one): Highly Effective **Effective** Somewhat Effective Ineffective

Narrative Rationale:

The rating of Effective is justified, because although the school provides a multitude of opportunities for parents to be involved at the school, the school reports that having a significant percentage of high school parents involved in their student’s academic and extra-curricular activities remains a challenge.

E2. School Culture and Environment Criterion

Safe, Clean, and Orderly Environment

Maintaining safe and clean facilities is a primary responsibility of the school’s seven full-time custodians. With both day and night shifts, all classrooms are wiped down and vacuumed on a

daily basis. The school reports that in the 22-23 school year, an “organizational process” was implemented which is effectively facilitating a systematic approach to fulfilling work orders. A further resource to ensure a safe environment is the school’s 411 Tip Line, which allows both parents and students to communicate facility concerns at the school. Fire Drills and other safety drills are regularly provided so students and teachers know how to respond in the event of any event that threatens the safety of students and staff members.

High Expectations/Concern for All Students

As to student discipline, the school has updated its tardy policy which focuses more on student accountability. They have also begun utilizing a Restorative Justice approach to more serious discipline infractions. Ultimately, the school desires to reinforce its four maxims of “Lead, Learn, Love, and Legacy and provides incentives for behavior that consistently reflects those objectives. Positive behavior is also celebrated in the school’s Awards Night which focuses both on academic and good citizenship achievement. ECHS has mental health support personnel, including a student support manager, and a Sierra Vista Clinician.

Further support for every student’s social and emotional wellness, a challenge exacerbated by COVID, consists first with a Freshman Seminar, provided by the school’s English teachers. The school intends to implement a more formal Linked Crew curriculum, beginning in the fall of 2023. The school’s philosophy is targeted on “creating healthy relationships with all the people in their lives.” To assist students to become successful, the school has developed an afterschool program, Assets for Life that connects to their restorative justice model that focuses on relational, restorative, reflective practices to support both good citizenship and academic performance.

Students are encouraged to participate in athletics and clubs at ECHS. Recruitment for Clubs (Club Rush) is conducted during the first quarter of each year during lunch to acquaint students with the many options that can meet virtually every student’s interests.

Atmosphere of Trust, Respect, and Professionalism

The school regularly provides professional development to build teachers with alternative instructional options that are designed to ensure the school’s “rigorous curriculum standards” are maintained. The focus of the school’s PD is designed to enhance “student engagement, lesson development, and checking for understanding. Teachers collaborate on best practices that have enabled them to ensure higher levels of student learning.

All staff members are provided an outline of each administrator's delegated responsibilities. Also, a selected group of Senior students meet with school administrators to share concerns regarding any issues at the school. Again, the school’s maxims of Learn, Lead, Love, and Legacy promote ECHS’s goal of having staff and students operate in an environment of Trust and Respect.

Personal, social-Emotional, and Academic Student Support

Beginning with its initial opening, ECHS indicates that 100% of all students “receive intervention support tailored to meet individual student needs on a daily basis.” The aforementioned provision of a Freshman Seminar by English Teachers and further support for freshmen from the students involved with Link Crew provides a solid foundation for induction and preparation for success at ECHS. In the freshmen seminar students receive instruction on how to use google with their chromebooks. They are also introduced to the schools six different

CTE pathways including Media; Visual and Design Arts; Agricultural Science, Agriculture Mechanics; Information technology; and Biotechnology\.

Tutorials are in place for students who demonstrate a lack of academic success in primary curricular areas. Similar to resource support for identified Special Needs students, an academic support class is provided to students who are struggling in core curricular areas. This support program is intended to build skills of time management, organization, listening, speaking, reading, writing, note taking, critical thinking and techniques to improve memorization, as well as academic self-esteem to better enable students to experience academic success.

A further level of intervention/support for students who do not experience academic success through the school's primary intervention program includes Read 180 courses, Academic Support and Learning Skills support classes, as well as AVID involvement. AVID is a special program that places "academically average students in more advanced classes with sufficient support to enable them to be successful."

Additional support for students is often the result of an SST referral that lists previous attempts at intervention strategies for individual students. Students also have the opportunity to attend classes in all subjects from 3:15 to 6:00 PM for tutorial support , Even more "intensive interventions" come through the Student Study Team, IEPs, 504s, and the involvement of ECHS student mentors and AVID tutors. Classroom aids support special needs students as well as some students without an IEP who are struggling. The school's report also indicates that in some 13 sections a Special Education teacher is co-teaching with a regular education teacher.

E. School Culture and Support for Student Personal, Social-Emotional, and Academic Growth

School Culture and Environment that supports high achievement for all students.

Visiting Committee Rating (select one): Highly Effective **Effective** Somewhat Effective Ineffective

Narrative Rationale:

The combination of a multitude of tutorial supports and teachers willing to provide direct personal support to struggling students is clearly what has created a culture and environment that supports effective learning. Although academic results are not consistently high, the school does have systems in place to support student learning.

E3. Personal, Social-Emotional, and Academic Student Support Criterion

The school has developed a very effective intervention program that is tailored to the needs of individual students. Students who struggle at any level and in any discipline are provided tutorial options, and opportunities for credit recovery are available for students who fail in courses that are included in graduation requirements. Finally, there is a Study Hall rotation for all students whose GPAs don't exceed 3.0.

The school's report indicated that "an academic support class is typically a supplemental class designed to help with a student's other classes, and for which students can receive credit." Skills taught in the academic support classes focus on time management, organization, and building of academic self-esteem.

Students who require additional support beyond the school's intervention program are guided toward Read 180 E; English Language Development courses; and AVID. AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) is an in-school support program for grades 6-12 that prepares students for a post-secondary education, who are typically first in their families to consider college/university experiences for themselves. AVID students are eligible for tutorial support gtp, students sy UC Merced and/or Merced College, and the focus in AVID coursework teaches students to write their personal statements, exposes them to scholarship opportunities, and provides opportunities to visit schools of higher education throughout California.

The Intervention classroom environment is structured to turn discipline into a "learning opportunity." Restorative Practices includes the provision of reflection time with focus on healthy coping strategies to aggression and/or drugs.

An even broader level of support for students struggling with emotional and mental health issues is supported by a Sierra Vista Counselor and a developing Link-Crew program that will more strongly connect freshmen students with successful seniors for academic and emotional support. Additional support for ninth grade students comes from the school's Freshman Seminar Class, where students learn how to effectively utilize chromebooks and Google applications.

Personal, Social-Emotional, and Academic Student Support that supports high achievement for all students.

Visiting Committee Rating (select one): Highly Effective **Effective** Somewhat Effective Ineffective

Narrative Rationale:

Even prior to COVID, ECHS had provided a system of personal support for students' Social-Emotional needs. The school is fully aware of the impact that online learning has had on students during the COVID years, and continues to focus on strategies and programs that can support all students.

CATEGORY E: SCHOOL CULTURE AND SUPPORT FOR STUDENT PERSONAL, SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL, AND ACADEMIC GROWTH

Areas of Strength for School Culture and Support for Student Personal, Social-Emotional, and Academic Growth:

Areas of Strength:

- High Levels of student involvement in athletics/activities

- High academic expectations
- Student/Staff relationships
- Involvement of Staff in the academic and extra-curricular lives of their students

Growth Areas for Continuous Improvement for School Culture and Support for Student Personal, Social-Emotional, and Academic Growth:

Areas of Growth

- School Leadership and teachers should explore ways to meaningfully increase parental involvement
- School Leadership and teachers should collaborate on means to enhance the involvement of special populations of students
- School Leadership and EL Staff should design ways to increase support for Second Language Learners and their families
- School Leadership should ensure greater equity and access to school programs and activities for students who are transported by bus from the south side of Merced

Important evidence about student learning from the self-study and the visit that supports these strengths and growth areas for continuous improvement include the following:

- Self-Study
- Meeting with Focus Group E
- Meetings with parents, students, and representatives of the Board and District Office
- Classroom observations
- Individual conversations with teachers and school support staff

Chapter 4: Synthesis of Schoolwide Strengths and Growth Areas for Continuous Improvement

Schoolwide Strengths

- Counselors and teachers have combined to enable more students to enroll in both onsite AP courses and post-secondary courses at Merced College
- All staff have focused on reducing serious discipline rates, which efforts have resulted in lower numbers in comparison to similar sized schools in the district.
- Teachers, Administrators, support staff, and students have contributed to a positive culture on campus.
- The school's leadership has provided multiple opportunities to certificated staff for targeted professional development
- All staff have supported efforts to ensure graduation rates that are above state and district levels.
- Teachers and support staff involved with Second-Language Learners have helped improve performance of ELL students with language proficiency growth

Schoolwide Growth Areas for Continuous Improvement

The visiting committee concurs with the school's identified growth areas for continuous improvement that are outlined in the schoolwide action plan. The school's growth areas for continuous improvement are explained below:

1. School Leadership should explore more effective ways of encouraging and increasing parent involvement at ECHS by ensuring that the school provides better communication in home languages for students and parents to better appreciate the "why" of their education
2. Teachers can determine means for more rapid reclassification of ELL students, followed by an increase in academic performance in core academic areas for these students, as well as with all segments of the school's special populations.
3. CTE staff and school leadership should focus on better defining CTE pathways
4. School Leadership and staff responsible for Professional Development should focus on PD that provides all staff with heightened levels of cultural awareness with attention to the 4Cs (communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking), and skills for teachers to implement Level I classroom supports and interventions.
5. School Leadership should work with the district to determine how to more effectively meet student needs for counseling, as present ratios are nearly 500 per counselor.
6. School Leadership and District staff should collaborate on the development of equity of access to programs for students transported by bus from the south side of Merced.

Chapter 5: Ongoing School Improvement

The El Capitan High School Action Plan is highlighted by four primary objectives

- Assessment drives instruction
- Identifying and connecting less actively involved students with a club or team to increase engagement on campus
- Enhancing support to EL students with additional paraprofessionals as well as creating opportunities for EL families to more actively engage with the school
- Centering a significant amount of PD time on the 4Cs (communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking)

These objectives are in tight alignment with the areas for growth identified in the school's Self-Study. They represent an effective direction for moving forward with school improvement. Based on the Self-Study and meetings with staff, there appears to be a strong commitment to stay focused on these objectives and to regularly review progress throughout the school year.

These four specific goals are consistent with the schools Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA) and both the district and school site Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP).

Acceptable progress by all students toward clearly defined schoolwide learner outcomes/graduate profile (major student learner needs), academic standards, and other institutional and/or governing authority expectations.

Visiting Committee Rating (select one): Highly Effective **Effective** Ineffective

Narrative Rationale:

Although “acceptable progress by all students” has not been consistently achieved, the school's objectives have clear connections to a goal of continuous improvement and higher academic achievement for all students. In the opinion of the Visiting Committee, El Capitan High School is now moving in an important positive direction.

The alignment of a long-range schoolwide action plan to the school's areas of greatest need to support high achievement for all students.

Visiting Committee Rating (select one): Highly Effective **Effective** Somewhat Effective Ineffective

Narrative Rationale:

As indicated above, there is tight alignment between the school's identified needs for increasing academic performance for all students and their WASC Action Plan.

The capacity to implement and monitor the schoolwide action plan/SPSA.

Visiting Committee Rating (select one): Highly Effective **Effective** Somewhat Effective Ineffective

Narrative Rationale:

Although efforts of the last several years have not demonstrated significant progress, the commitment and progress with their targeted Action Plan/SPSA is present with all El Capitan

High School staff. They have a clear plan for moving forward, for monitoring progress and for celebrating successes.

Accreditation Status Factors Summary

Accreditation Status Factors	Highly Effective	Effective	Somewhat Effective	Ineffective
The involvement and collaboration of stakeholders in the self-study that addresses the self-study outcomes.	X			
The use of prior accreditation findings and other pertinent data to ensure high achievement of all students and drive school improvement.		X		
Vision and Purpose (A1)		X		
Governance (A2)		X		
Leadership: Data-Informed Decision-Making and Continuous School Improvement (A3)	X			
Staff: Qualified and Professional Development (A4)	X			
Resources (A5)			X	
Resources (Charter only) (A6)				
Rigorous and Relevant Standards-Based Curriculum (B1)		X		
Equity and Access to the Curriculum (B2)		X		
Student Engagement in Challenging and Relevant Learning Experiences (C1)		X		
Student-Centered Instruction through a Variety of Strategies and Resources (C2)		X		
Reporting and Accountability Processes (D1)		X		
Using Student Assessment Strategies to Monitor and Modify Learning in the Classroom (D2)		X		
Parent and Community Engagement (E1)		X		
School Culture and Environment (E2)		X		
Personal, Social-Emotional, and Academic Student Support (E3)		X		
Acceptable progress by all students			X	
Alignment of a schoolwide action plan/SPSA to the school's areas of greatest need		X		
Capacity to monitor and implement the schoolwide action plan/SPSA		X		