

## CHAPTER II: EXPECTED SCHOOLWIDE LEARNING RESULTS: A HISTORY OF DEVELOPMENT, REVISION AND ADAPTATION

### *Preface*

Extensive stakeholder involvement was solicited in the development of the original Expected Schoolwide Learning Results (ESLRs). To date, the Murrieta Valley High School stakeholders believe that the original ESLRs still represent the core body of knowledge and skills that we expect from our students upon graduation. However, a rapidly increasing student population and changing demographic profile, together with new district and state mandates governing student performance and the effort to broaden stakeholder buy-in, necessitated on-going review and some modifications of our original ESLRs.

Below we have summarized the developmental history of our ESLRs as follows:

### *Part A – Development of Original Expected Schoolwide Learning Results*

Development of the original ESLRs began in the fall of 1995 when members of the WASC Leadership Team received training through the California School Leadership Association (CSLA) in student assessment. Faculty members presented input from their respective curricular areas. Samples of student work were chosen at random and evaluated for progress towards what was considered to be specific subject matter competency. To clarify expectations of students, the following “essential questions” were asked:

- *Who are our students?*
- *Who is our community?*
- *What do graduates need in order to compete in our community as well as in the global market?*
- *What do we have in place that addresses these needs?*
- *What needs to be revised, deleted, added to our program?*
- *What is it that we expect from our graduates as a result of our efforts?*
- *Who are the stakeholders who need to be involved in the development of the ESLRs?*

In 1996, focus groups and committees, which included students, school and district staff, parents and community members, were given overview of the process and provided information to clearly define their roles and responsibilities. In May 1996, the staff met to refine the list of “essential questions”. These activities involved staff collaboration and presentations of the findings, which culminated in a vote on how to assess student work. Subsequent meetings saw the format of “essential questions” change to statements that led to the first draft copy of the ESLRs. The parent and student committees were provided with information on the ESLR development. Additions, deletions and wording suggestions were solicited. The ongoing dialogue proved to be productive in the refining of the document as the stakeholders collaborated to develop the ninth and final version of the ESLRs approved by the focus groups in late August 1996.

Copies of the original ESLRs were initially disseminated in the school newsletter. Teachers posted laminated copies in their classrooms to use as a guide for teaching the ESLRs to their students beginning in September 1996. Additional laminated copies were posted at prominent locations throughout the school as constant reminders of our goals for graduates.

***Part B – Revision of Expected Schoolwide Learning Results***

The ESLRs have been reviewed on a regular basis by the WASC Leadership Team and have been revised as deemed appropriate based on the needs of our students. ESLR posters continue to be posted in classrooms and other significant locations throughout the school. Additionally, the ESLRs have been incorporated into the *MV Guide* (our student handbook) and school publications including our parent newsletter, the school newspaper, *The Talon*, and our school website.

The steps of review, input and revision for the original 1996 ESLRs, specifically in preparation for this Self-Study, are listed below:

- For this present Self-Study, the WASC *Focus on Learning* process began in earnest in 1999. Along with changes in community demographics, the timely convergence of several major accountability mandates (federal, state and district) also necessitated modification of our original 1996 ESLRs. We received recognition as a *California Distinguished School*; conducted comprehensive needs assessment to justify the allocation of *Digital High School* and *School-Based Coordinated Plan* funds; transformed our instructional and assessment practices to comply with the *No Child Left Behind* legislation and *Public Schools Accountability Act* mandates; and aligned our curriculum and course outlines with *California Content and Performance Standards* and state frameworks.
- At an August 2000 staff orientation meeting, a WASC *Powerpoint* presentation provided new staff the opportunity to understand the accreditation process and receive an update of school accomplishments. The WASC *Powerpoint* was created by the two new self-study coordinators, Spanish teacher Jared Rogers and Science teacher Steve Ellis, following the departure of the previous self-study coordinator for a promotion in another district. At the meeting, sign-up sheets were distributed to enable staff to choose their preferred focus groups (based on the WASC *Focus on Learning* criteria). The new self-study coordinators attended WASC training sessions to obtain updated information on the process. Our WASC self-study co-coordinators have continuously shared this updated information during staff meetings (1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of each month); WASC focus group meetings (2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month); departmental meetings (3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month) and special meetings (4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of each month or during staff development days).
- Several staff members volunteered to become focus group leaders and were given the initial tasks of answering the following WASC questions in their focus groups:
  1. *How are the students achieving?*
  2. *Is the school doing everything possible to support high achievement for all its students?*

The focus group leaders reported that the two WASC *Focus on Learning* questions were regularly discussed at the monthly focus group meetings. To facilitate analysis of the WASC questions, the discussions required analysis of a variety of student performance measures in focus groups and home groups. To determine how our students were achieving we focused on several measures of student performance, especially the following: Academic Performance Index rankings, Advanced Placement tests and Golden State Examinations, student grade point averages across all grade levels and relatively low incidents of discipline and poor attendance issues. The development of two Critical Academic Needs (now our *MVHS Goals-5*) were borne out of these needs assessment meetings, where focus groups pondered the WASC questions and drew conclusions about student performance data and instructional/assessment practices.

- In February 2002, all staff attended a schoolwide meeting to review the accreditation process. The focus group leaders participated in a simulation of the “*Weakest Link*” game show with Deputy Principal Mary Walters (who bears a striking resemblance to the television game show hostess) to update the staff on our WASC school improvement efforts in an enjoyable manner. Science teacher Pete Matus won the game show prizes (reams of paper and school supplies) for a very pleased Science Department. The focus groups continued to meet during the semester to receive updates regarding the school’s progress on the WASC *Focus on Learning* criteria and prioritize action steps towards improvement.
- During the Spring Semester of 2002, surveys were distributed to students in their English classes as well as to the teaching staff in their departments. A number of surveys solicited responses about the school schedule, course offerings, and the adequate preparation of students in their pursuit of future goals. With respect to the WASC self-study, the survey results proved disappointing because students indicated they lacked knowledge of the ESLRs and their purpose. The focus group leaders believed that the underlying reason for the lack of WASC information was rooted in the rapidly increasing student enrollment (over 3500 at this stage), staffing changes and concerns about communication issues posed by the demographic changes. Subsequently, the WASC Leadership Team led brainstorming sessions to determine the best strategies for communicating the ESLRs with students.
- Our principal, Renate Jefferson, along with four new administrators, joined the MVHS team in July 2002. Mrs. Jefferson became MVHS principal after Mark Johnson was promoted to MVUSD Alternative Education Director. In addition, Assistant Principals, Dale Velk and Gil Compton, were also promoted to Middle School Principals in and outside of the district. As a result of the administrative promotions and to support the ongoing student population growth, four new administrators and thirty-eight additional new staff members rounded out the MVHS Nighthawk family for the 2002-03 school year. Almost immediately, the new principal spearheaded a series of weekly meetings to promote collaboration among staff members. Staff meetings were held twice a month on Tuesdays to enhance the WASC focus group and departmental meetings on alternate Tuesdays. The meetings

focused on discussions regarding the alignment of academic standards and the ESLRs with teaching practices. All instructional staff members were also immersed in the analysis of student performance information and assessing the impact of their instructional strategies with the student performance data. Daily bulletins were used to promote the academic goals, personal excellence and learning of the ESLRs.

- During the 2002-03 school year, a Student Leadership Committee for the WASC self-study was formed by selecting students from various organizations such as ASB, athletics, Special Education, Link Crew and PALS (peer assistant leaders). The WASC Student Leadership Committee continued to grow as staff and students recommended other students from various ethnic groups and school organizations to participate. During informal interviews, the WASC Student Leadership Committee members discussed the ESLRs with other students. The WASC Student Leadership Committee found that students had difficulty remembering the ESLRs. The students indicated there were too many ESLRs without a unifying mechanism to facilitate familiarization, much less memorization and application.
- The focus groups leaders echoed the students' concerns regarding familiarization. In addition, the focus group leaders suggested that our ESLRs needed to address the current push towards "high stakes accountability" as espoused in the *Public Schools Accountability Act* and California frameworks and content/performance standards. We also wanted to include guidelines delineated in *Aiming High* to ensure that our graduates could demonstrate the highest levels of achievement and skills to go beyond mere "survival skills" in the work place, but become empowered to take "leadership roles" in our changing society.
- With the staff and students, a number of parents were involved in the Self-Study and review of the ESLRs. At MVHS, we have been fortunate to have several parents on our staff. Many have volunteered to help with school activities including the WASC Self-Study. For example, the chairperson of the WASC Parent Committee, MVHS School Bookkeeper Alicia Biagioni (proud of her 2002 MVHS graduate and her 12<sup>th</sup> grade daughter, has carried out that role for over three years. Lisa Nichols (also a proud mother of a 2002 graduate and another son who currently attends MVHS) is an Attendance Clerk and Focus Group Leader for the WASC Leadership/Staff team. In October 2003, Mrs. Nichols received a promotion as Guidance Technician at a district middle school. Principal's Secretary, Debbie Mercer (also a proud mother of a 2002 graduate and a 12<sup>th</sup> grade daughter) has played an instrumental role in developing the WASC School Profile and has been the Lead Classified Staff Member for WASC for over three years. Many other parents/staff members participated in WASC Focus Groups. We are continuing to expand our WASC Parent Committee to obtain more input from non-staff parents as well.
- All of the information and input gathered from the Tuesday meetings and student interviews were used to revise the ESLRs. At the October 2002 staff meeting, all participants were presented with the proposed changes on a ballot. Approximately 80% of the staff voted for the new ESLRs. However, several staff members, who

were present when the original ESLRs were developed in 1996, were reluctant to adopt the proposed ESLRs citing that the original ESLRs already reflected the WASC mantra of “*what students should know, understand and be able to do by graduation*”. Other staff members were concerned that language regarding the “*developmental assets*” and “*academic standards*” were not included in the proposal. During several WASC Leadership Team and focus group meetings, there were numerous discussions on how to appropriately address the proposed revisions.

- In November of 2002, Social Studies teacher Greg Baird proposed a compromise to end the ESLR challenge. He suggested that we utilize the mnemonic “H-A-W-K-S”. In Mr. Baird’s proposal, all of the original ESLRs could be incorporated into the mnemonic along with the proposed revisions regarding the “*developmental assets*” and “*academic standards*”. The Baird proposal also reflected educational principles espoused in the *No Child Left Behind* legislation and *Aiming High*, the latter document built on the legacy of *Second to None*, California’s guideline for high school reform. The links to changing social and educational perspectives are especially obvious in the final ESLR, *Skilled Users of Technology*, which reflected the need for students to develop *global marketable skills* and be equipped to *face the challenges of the Information Age*.
- The focus group leaders met with their focus groups to review the proposed mnemonic. The WASC Leadership Team collected the focus group suggestions and developed a new ESLR ballot. At the November 2002 staff meeting, the staff achieved consensus on the revision, as indicated by their signed ballots.
- In February of 2003, the WASC Student Leadership Committee was asked to comment on the revised ESLRs. They were asked to give examples of how we can better disseminate the revised ESLRs so students can understand the body of knowledge and skills they are expected to know, acquire and apply upon graduation. Working with the principal and self-study coordinators, the students came up with several strategies:
  - Students (primarily those in art and technology classes) submitted ideas for a new ESLR poster. Art teacher Joanne Donovan took the responsibility for supervising this enterprise. Student David Ragan (Class of 2004), along with three other student runners-up, won the poster competition. The student winners received medals and certificates.
  - Our Art teachers took the ESLR poster to create art murals on canvases, which will be later showcased in the Center Quad.
- The lead teachers spearheaded departmental efforts to continue the alignment of the revised ESLRs with academic standards and their instructional practices. Samples of the alignment efforts were provided in writing to promote collegial sharing and to provide a means to measure students’ attainment of the ESLRs and academic standards.

- Prior to the end of the 2002-03 school year, the newly revised ESLRs were reviewed with all staff and focus groups and presented to parents and students through the school newsletter. The newly revised ESLRs were added to the *MV Guide* for the upcoming 2003-04 school year.
- During the 2002-03 school year, in preparation for this WASC Self-Study and Visitation, the daily bulletin was continually used to explain the purpose of the WASC self-study and to continue to promote the ESLRs. The WASC Student Leadership Committee were appointed to randomly ask students about their knowledge of the ESLRs. In addition, teachers continued peer visitations (within and outside their respective departments) to observe their colleagues create and implement lessons that incorporated discussion or implementation of an ESLR with the academic standards. Since the bulletin and random student interviews have proven to be effective methods of promoting the ESLRs, we will continue the practices through the 2003-04 school year as well.
- Though attainment of all five ESLRs continues to be the primary goal for all stakeholders at MVHS, this current Self-Study (2003-04) examines the successes and needs areas in the achievement of the two most critical ESLRs: ***“Analytical Thinkers”*** and ***“Knowledgeable and Effective Communicators”***.
- Our departments are continuing to align academic standards with the remaining ESLRs and place their findings in the ESLRs/Standards Charts for collegial sharing and on-going assessment. In addition, we are utilizing staff development days to support our students’ efforts to learn ESLRs. As a result of the staff development discussions, listed below are examples of methodology that will be incorporated into lesson design, planning and implementation to facilitate the learning of ESLRs:
  - Increase in more effective questioning strategies to strengthen students’ critical thinking skills/analytical abilities (e.g. Socratic seminars)
  - Implement proven learning strategies (e.g. Cornell note-taking techniques; Advanced Placement review/test-taking strategies; WICR strategies adopted from AVID)
  - Emphasize writing and speaking across the curriculum to enhance students’ communication skills (e.g. Schaeffer’s writing workshop, Foreign Language writing project; joint Language Arts/Social Studies paper)
- As evidenced by staff development activities and on-going instructional practices, all instructional staff will maintain their commitment to consistently integrate the ESLRS with academic standards and further refine their instructional practiced so our students can continue to achieve at the highest levels.

#### ***Attachments***

- ESLR Poster
- ESLR Ballots
- Sample ESLR Contest Posters (submitted by students)
- Sample ESLR/Standards/Instructional Practices Alignment Charts from Core Subjects (Math, Science, English, Social Studies, Health/Practical Arts)

