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**A. SUMMARY ANALYSIS**

***Provide an analysis of the academic achievement and culture of the proposed PSC school.***

At the first Vista Middle School (Vista) PSC Community Meeting, Maria, a mother of five, approached our principal and implored: “I clean houses all day long, and my husband is a gardener. Please help my children. Give them what they need to go to college and get good jobs, so they can have nice lives and never be poor again.”

This parent’s heartfelt plea echoes throughout our community. As we formulated this PSC plan, we listened to many parents like Maria, evaluated our program, did our research, and then designed a plan that would match our school’s needs with the best corresponding educational practices. Unlike others, this plan begins with a tale of redemption, a story about a struggling school that in 2010 pulled itself together, and earned a 52 point gain on the API. Now, ready to build upon that success, we offer a forward-thinking plan that weds innovation with accountability, and fosters an unequivocal capacity to promote teacher effectiveness and increased student achievement.

Our Vista plan isn’t just about a typical middle school operating in isolation. It is smarter than that. The concepts put forth capitalize on establishing a strategically integrated Local District 1 collaboration among Vista, our new VRES#13 feeder school, Panorama High School, and Cal Burke Continuation High School. Our four schools will be connecting, collaborating, creating and sharing ideas, strategies and resources in ways that will support a continuum of educational opportunities to benefit all of our students and their families. Once the partnership structures and strategies are established, the other elementary schools in our area will become part of the school complex collaboration and new community partnership.

Another powerful component of our multi-school collaboration is the establishment of the Panorama City Community Partnership (PCCP) that will bring our community together to achieve success through what we call E<sup>3</sup> - education, empowerment and engagement. By joining the forces of government officials, businesses, churches, law enforcement, mental health and medical services agencies with our complex of schools, we will unite people of all interests and ages, working together to achieve success for our families...our schools...our town.

***Mission and Vision: Describe the mission, vision, and core beliefs, as well as the school’s values about teaching and learning.***

*Our mission is to provide a challenging, college preparatory educational experience where our students obtain and demonstrate the measurable content knowledge, skills and motivation needed to be personally and professionally successful citizens.*

*Vista’s vision focuses on collaborating with all stakeholders and other schools in our community as we create and maintain a safe and caring environment that fosters the social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development of all students and adults. By systematically aligning all our services and resources, we will implement an instructional program that prioritizes standards-based curriculum enhanced by project-based learning and writing across the*

*curriculum. Within this context, students will develop key 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills as they explore the career themes of: Technology, Environment, Arts, Media, Science/Math (T.E.A.M.S.) through learning experiences that focus on meeting the challenges of daily life and the future.*

At Vista, we believe that knowledge is power, and this power is our students' passport to success. We have identified four principles that define our values of teaching and learning and will guide our instructional program:

1. Setting high academic expectations and creating a supportive climate of encouragement that includes frequent assessment and expanded time and learning opportunities for students who need extra assistance to become successful.
2. Implementing an accelerated and rich core curriculum that includes topics in algebra and geometry, laboratory-based science, weekly writing in all classes, and extensive reading of all types of materials in all classes.
3. Engaging students in challenging, hands-on assignments that require them to practice new skills, incorporate their interests, and relate to their culture and life outside of school.
4. Providing continuity of care across the school day, school years, and between the school, home and the community.

### **School Data Analysis**

***Provide an objective, critical analysis of the data by describing the major strengths and opportunities for improvement at the school. See the attached Performance Plan (Attachment P).***

In 2009-10, student test scores, as measured by the Academic Performance Index (API), had decreased by 13 points from the previous year. On the California Standards Test (CST) for English-Language Arts only 23% of Vista's students scored proficient or advanced compared to the 40% LAUSD average. This percentage was 2% less than the previous year. However, math scores showed a 7.5% increase over the previous year with 29.5% of Vista students scoring proficient or advanced compared to the 35% District average. Across the grade levels in ELA, 6<sup>th</sup> grade scored 18.3%, 7<sup>th</sup> - 24.8% and 8<sup>th</sup> - 22.5% proficient or advanced. In math, 6<sup>th</sup> grade scored 17.1%, 7<sup>th</sup> - 14.6% and 8<sup>th</sup> - 38.5% proficient or advanced in Algebra, and 91% in Geometry.

Major differences in student performance existed for our English Learners and Students with Disabilities. Of the English Learners only 1.5% scored proficient or advanced in ELA, and only 4% in math. Only 3% of Students with Disabilities scored proficient or advanced in ELA, and only 5% in math. Only 22% of Economically Disadvantaged students scored proficient or advanced in ELA and 18% in math. Of the high percentage of English Learners, 36% scored proficient on the California English Language Arts Test (CELDT), compared to the 39% district average.

These scores fell very short of expectations for our students and caused us to realize that if we were going to offer a good education to all of our students, we had to revamp our school

structure, curriculum, interventions, and teaching methods. In addition to test scores, we looked at data from parent, teacher and student surveys and interviews. We examined research to learn about the most effective practices with student populations similar to ours, and we sought the staff coaching aide of Local District 1. Based on this needs assessment in 2010, we initiated the Vista transformation and our efforts paid off! Our CST scores improved with the school-wide percentage of students scoring proficient or advance increasing from 22% to 30% in English Language Arts, and from 18% to 23% in math. Our daily attendance and graduation rates were among the highest in the district.

How did we redeem our school? Our implementation of new structures and research-based strategies, a focus on teaching to the standards, and frequent analysis of student data proved to be a solid beginning for improving learning at Vista. Data led us to seize the opportunity to focus on writing skills, literary response and analysis, and critical thinking skills. This PSC plan builds on these successful strategies and raises the bar at Vista in several ways.

Relying on research and positive results, our plan projects a sense of purpose that calls for:

1. An integrated, standards-based curriculum that focuses on the needs of our students by developing 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, project-based learning and Writing Across the Curriculum. Reading and writing are emphasized in all curricular areas.
2. A systematic model for connecting all assessment and evaluation, intervention and enrichment, and professional development in a way that each component must correlate in function to enhance increased measurable results.
3. Articulation with our feeder elementary school, VRES#13 (and others later), Panorama HS and Cal Burke Continuation school to create a vertically aligned curriculum and use of vertical data analysis to ease transitions and improve learning K-12.
4. Further refinement of our grade-level houses to intensify our school's personalization through designated Core Teams of teachers, working with small groups of students and the continuation of our advisory period linked to these same teams.
5. An emphasis on improving teacher effectiveness through collaboration in the Houses.
6. Addition of an Access to Core, Title III coach to our Leadership Team, who will work specifically with our English Language Learners, in conjunction with our ELD coordinator and teachers, to increase our reclassification rate.
7. A Cycle of Continuous Improvement that allows teachers to constantly review, reflect and revise instruction, based on data from multiple criteria. Professional development will be designed around the results of this process to make certain the instructional strategies and curriculum are differentiated and support the needs of all students.
8. A focus on student success that includes creation of a college-going culture to encourage students to complete post-secondary education; assures academic preparation for A-G requirements; and assists parents in learning about college and financial options.
9. Creation of a new Panorama City Community Partnership (PCCP) that will link local businesses, churches, service agencies, mental health and medical services providers, political offices, etc. with the schools in a single organization that will promote success for everyone in the community. This partnership will be supplemented by our own onsite parent centers and effective parent engagement programs.
10. Adoption of the ESBMM school governance model to permit more flexibility in instructional, budgetary and staffing decisions.

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***Provide evidence of the team's ability to successfully manage the academic operations of a school. Applicant History Data Sheet (Appendix F) is attached in the appendix.***

Vista has moved through an intense journey of self-reflection and change. The data does not lie. The measurable increases in student performance evidence that, working collaboratively, the Leadership Team, staff, parents and students have the capacity and determination to improve.

This current Leadership Team is largely responsible for the diligent efforts to remedy the causes of failure that previously plagued Vista including the following:

- Based on data, students were grouped in grade-level advisory classes by their academic needs. The 55-minute advisory class time was used for targeted intervention or academic enrichment; teachers received assistance with curriculum, progress monitoring tools and other guidance from our coaches, coordinators, and administrators.
- Students received intervention and counseling for attendance and behavior issues.
- The RTI problem-solving model was used to assess both sub-group and individual student needs and progress was measured in the advisory setting.
- Assistance was given to students during Saturday school, after-school intervention classes, personal counseling sessions, and mentoring. In addition to our internal staff, students received tutoring and assistance with homework from university interns.
- We initiated professional development, which included meaningful analysis of student data and strategies that assured access to the curriculum for English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities.
- We used motivational opportunities and our rewards program, "Vista Bucks" to encourage and inspire our students. We met regularly with select groups, shared data so they could take ownership of their current status, set goals for academic improvement, and then students tracked their own progress.

Our team consists of individuals that possess a broad-breath of teaching skills and administrative experience. Among the administrators, teachers, coordinators, and instructional coaches, there is consensus around a philosophy that students come first.

The current Leadership Team has been successful in directing the effective transformation at Vista through:

- a commitment to all of our students and their families
- knowledge of current researched-based instructional practices for our population
- consistent maintenance of a safe and nurturing school culture
- the capacity to equip students with the knowledge and skills to be successful
- an ability to communicate effectively with colleagues, students, and parents
- diligence in monitoring student progress to address students' needs
- the enforcement of constructive discipline policies

Mrs. Nidia Castro, current principal at Vista, has 22 years experience with LAUSD. She has served as a secondary teacher, counselor, assistant principal and is beginning her third year as our principal. While working as a paraprofessional, teacher, counselor and administrator, Mrs. Castro established a proven track record of accelerating student achievement with similar populations. Mrs. Castro possesses the instructional and operational leadership expertise to work

with stakeholders to transform the school culture and improve academic achievement. She is actively involved in all aspects of Vista reform, particularly as it pertains to supervision of instruction, professional development, and all aspects of intervention. She accomplishes this by constantly monitoring classroom practice. Mrs. Castro is very visible and accessible to students, teachers and parents at Vista; she participates in all student motivational assemblies.

Mrs. Connie Gervasoni brings 25 years of experience as a professional educator. She has worked at five schools with populations similar to Vista. Her roles have included teacher, EL coordinator, gifted coordinator, grade-level advisor, and for the past 11 years she has served as an assistant principal. Mrs. Gervasoni has extensive background working with English Language Learners and is instrumental in guiding teachers to use SDAIE strategies in each classroom. She regularly participates in motivational assemblies.

Mrs. Cornelia Romey is the current assistant principal of student counseling services and has been with LAUSD for 18 years. Her experiences have included: teaching both middle school and high school students in the areas of health education and science, served as a master teacher for new and struggling teachers, served as a middle school counselor, and is now in her seventh year as an assistant principal. She skillfully organizes the core academic advisory teams by grade level. She prepares attendance data for advisory teachers and is instrumental in selecting appropriate materials for CST prep.

Mrs. Lauren Burman-Hamilton has 16 years of experience with LAUSD and is one of the instructional coaches, as well as a member of the Coordination of Services Team (COST) team, the professional development committee, and School Site Council. She has served as the Bridge coordinator, counselor, Impact coordinator, resource teacher and department chair. She assists and guides special education and regular education teachers, counsels students on IEP goals, and delivers professional development for the staff on modifying curriculum and adapting instruction for special needs students.

Mr. Carlos Valdovinos has been a math and ESL teacher, a dean of discipline, an EL coordinator, Title I coordinator and, for the last three years, he has been an assistant principal. His experience includes working in four schools in two different communities, similar to Vista. Mr. Valdovinos works with our after school intervention classes, as well as motivational programs and activities. He is responsible for enforcing our discipline policy and maintaining a safe school culture. He has initiated positive student behavior intervention programs on campus.

Mrs. Alma Fernandez has been an ELD teacher for ten years, and three of those years have been as a National Board Certified Teacher. She has been ESL Department Chair, ELD coach, a member of the school advisory councils, School Site Council and professional development committee. Mrs. Fernandez brings expertise in working with parents, students and staff to meet the needs of the EL students. She also oversees the new teacher development program at Vista.

Mrs. Ivania Holodnak has 10 years of experience in LAUSD. She is currently serving as the Title I coordinator, intervention coordinator, 8<sup>th</sup> grade instructional coach, lead teacher of nutrition network, president of the PTSA, and has served as an active member of ELAC and CEAC for 6 Years. She is also a member of the School Leadership Council. She works closely with parents to

help them understand how to better assist their children as learners. She maintains our categorical funded budgets. She coordinates our positive behavior rewards program.

Ms. Hali Metelak has taught English in LAUSD for the past ten years. She is currently a member of Vista's School Based Leadership Team (SBLT) and the English department chair. She was named Walmart Teacher of the Year and was also chosen as the 2009-10 Teacher of the Year for both the Los Angeles Unified School District and Los Angeles County. In 2010, she received her National Board Certification. Ms. Metelak has extensive experience in providing mentoring and professional development to staff members, as well as bringing many fresh and new ideas to both the instructional and cultural program here at Vista. She maintains a model classroom for teacher observation, and teaches our highly effective Tier III intervention, *Language!*

Ms. Karla West has 29 years of experience with LAUSD. Ms. West is a social studies teacher and has served as intervention coordinator, dean, High Priority School grant coordinator, Title I coordinator, School Improvement grant coordinator, UTLA Chapter Chair, and a member of the School Leadership Council. Ms. West has demonstrated fiscal leadership through the maintenance of categorical and grant-funded budgets. Ms. West led the restructuring for our advisory classes, and supported the teachers by providing curriculum resources. She selects and distributes classroom libraries for all advisories and also facilitates our Saturday school program.

Ms. Neysa Madison has 13 years of experience with LAUSD. She is currently an English Learner coordinator, Gifted Coordinator, 8<sup>th</sup> grade instructional coach, and has served on ELAC for the past seven years. Her leadership has been demonstrated through the maintenance of categorical programs by successfully preparing the school for the State categorical program and the Office of Civil Rights visits.

Mr. David Feldman has eight years experience teaching social studies in LAUSD, and is our UTLA Chapter Chair. He is also a member of both the School Site Council and the School Leadership Council. Mr. Feldman works very closely with the principal to build consensus within the staff as we make changes in both school culture and the instructional program.

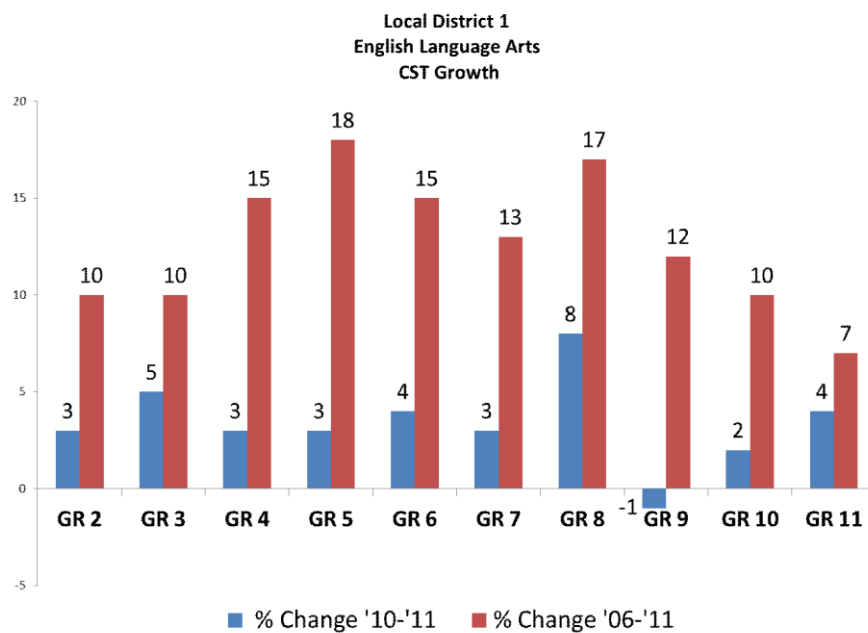
Mrs. Denise Harper has been a special education teacher for 13 years. She is a member of the School Site Council and professional development committee, as well as the technology and discipline committees. She is the department chair for special education and has been a member of the School Leadership Team.

***Local district teams should also provide evidence of the team's capacity to successfully manage the academic operations at multiple schools.***

LD1 is a family of 134 San Fernando Valley schools in which more than 5,000 teachers and administrators deliver services to approximately 88,000 students. LD1, its collaborative team of teachers and administrators, and United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA), has many years of experience in serving the instructional needs of the typical resident student populations in our feeder elementary schools and high schools. LD1's level of assistance and resources are an area of strength and can't be replicated by any other District educational organization. Outstanding characteristics that qualify LD1 to join in the management of Vista include:

- a proven track record of working with English Learners, students from low-socioeconomic and disadvantaged neighborhoods, gifted and talented students and students with disabilities
- an established presence and success working with families in our other area feeder schools
- extensive data information from the LD1 staff that enables teachers and administrators to analyze the progress of students, target needs and prescribe focused interventions
- seamless communication among the elementary, middle and high schools in the Panorama City complex area to promote smooth transitions and teacher collaboration
- key community partnerships in place to assist Vista and LD1 expertise in cultivating new relationships and partnerships for the school’s individual instructional programs
- proven success in which students with disabilities have met the Modified Consent Decree’s (MCD) Outcomes 2 and 3

The chart below demonstrates the consistent achievement gains in LD1 schools 2006-2011.



***(1) What does it take to be successful in either a turnaround or a new school environment?***

We learned that in order to transform a chronically failing school into a center of success it pays to heed the sage advice of Stephen Covey: “Begin with the end in mind.” Clearly expressed vision and mission statements identify what, in the end, students must learn and be able to do. The formulation of these targets must be a collaborative process, requiring all stakeholders to commit and embrace needed change as an opportunity, not a threat.

“There are virtually no documented instances of troubled schools being turned around in the absence of intervention by talented leaders. While other factors contribute to turnarounds,



leadership is the catalyst.” (Leithwood *et al*, 2004). The leadership team for a struggling school must include a group of talented, practical idealists who acknowledge the shortcomings and successes of the status quo, move past blame to acceptance of responsibility, and then exercise due diligence in designing and implementing a cohesive plan that will have the highest potential impact on increasing teacher effectiveness and improving learning for all students.

The journey to success begins with recognizing your starting point by conducting a diligent needs analysis for the school – an evaluation of the performance levels of students, teachers, staff, administrators and parents, all of whom play critical roles in transforming a school into a better learning place. The analysis must go beyond test scores and examine the effectiveness of the overall instructional program, decision making processes, professional development, interventions, and the distribution of responsibility for running the school.

A school does not operate in isolation from the community, hence the needs analysis must consider the external factors that impact the lives of students and their ability to learn. Likewise, the community must be engaged in the reform. An examination of the school culture and student support mechanisms must determine if enough is being done to meet the needs of all students. The allocation of resources must be carefully assessed to determine if spending is needs-aligned, and budgeting is truly results-driven and targeted for greatest impact.

After the analysis, the second phase of the journey to success starts when all stakeholders agree to “rethink possible.” Everything goes on the table, and the process of organized abandonment begins – which means the school stops doing what isn’t working, does more of what is working, and tries new things that, based on evidence, will improve the school. According to Bill Gates, the process of organizational improvement relies on prioritizing and then systematizing the use of resources such as: time, talent, money and facilities to optimize results. The leadership team and staff must reconsider how they use these resources and then redirect them to meet the desired end. Needless to say, in terms of talent, it would be ideal to hand-pick the staff of a school – with that not being possible, attention must be directed to strategies and structures that will engage as many staff members as possible to improve the overall effectiveness of the program.

Once an initial school plan has been completed, phase three of the transformational journey begins. Implementation, driven by the Cycle of Continuous Improvement, will constantly measure the effectiveness of everything that you are doing to improve the school. Success in turning a school like Vista around is not an event, it is a renewable process, one that evolves as the needs of the school and the people change. Altering the culture of a dysfunctional school can only be accomplished if all stakeholders agree to continually review, reflect and revise the programs and the allocation of resources to ascertain that what takes place always reinforces the starting point – where you began with the end in mind – providing the best possible education for students.

## ***(2) Why is your team well positioned to do this work?***

The Vista transformation that began in 2010-2011, along with the development of this plan, are evidence of what can happen when shared intent turns into action. Vista and LD1 are best positioned to do this work, because they have already put into place many new structures and

methodologies that have proven to be successful. The task now is to build on that success and carefully monitor student progress, so this path of improvement will be continuous and consistent school-wide.

Based on student and parent surveys, Vista has established a reputation for being a school that welcomes and assists students and their families. Once they arrive at our school, students feel safe and believe that their teachers care about them as individuals. Local District 1 also holds a highly respected position in Panorama City because of their strong historical presence throughout this complex of schools. With our K-12 collaboration model, Vista will function as the hub, generating a seamless transition between schools for our students and their parents. Because our families have students in multiple grade levels in different schools, having the schools linked together will help our parents become more familiar with our entire K-12 system.

We are best positioned to manage Vista because of K-12 articulation around curriculum, instruction, intervention and professional development. We have documented data that proves the consistent performance of LD1 schools. Our Leadership Team has demonstrated a clear capacity and diverse experience to effectively transform Vista. We will become part of a collaborative community of schools, capitalizing on Local District 1 existing partnerships, and developing new ones for the PCCP.

Another important reason Vista and LD1 are well positioned to do this work in our community is due to our existing partnership with Cal State University, Northridge. CSUN will expand this partnership K-12 to include: professional development, teacher mentors, counseling services, summer arts programs, new teacher development, college awareness and financial aid information for students and parents, college visits, opportunities for students and families to attend performing arts, and many other services that will contribute to the success of Vista.

Our team has exercised due diligence in aligning our plan to all the LAUSD priorities and standards. We have carefully embraced the latest in educational research and relied upon a Continuous Cycle of Improvement to monitor progress, as well as promote teacher growth. Awarding our team the continued management of Vista would avoid educational disruption and guarantee the escalation of our already proven success.

**Informational Summaries, both English and Spanish versions are attached in the appendix.**

## **B. INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN**

The Instructional Plan is what will guide your implementation from year to year. This section is divided into three subsections: (1) *Unwavering Focus on Academic Achievement*; (2) *School Culture, Climate and Infrastructure*; and, (3) *Leadership that Supports High Achievement for Students and Staff*.

### **Category One: Unwavering Focus on Academic Achievement**

#### **B-1. Curriculum and Instruction**

- a. *Instructional Program: Provide a thorough description of the proposed instructional framework and the underlying theory that drives it.***

The mandate from our community is to prepare our students for college and the work force. Our mission and vision support meeting this demand by directing us to systematically align our entire instructional program to create educational experiences where our students can obtain and demonstrate the knowledge, skills and motivation they need to become successful.

To accomplish this goal, Vista will implement an instructional program anchored in evidence-based instructional practices and teaching methods. Based on the critical educational needs of our student population, this results-driven plan emphasizes differentiated instruction and intentional applied learning strategies, assuring our diverse learners can master standards-based objectives, relevant content, and the development of essential 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills.

Vista will use the California content standards for California Public Schools as its curricular platform. We will align curriculum, assessment, instruction, intervention, and professional development in order to establish a comprehensive, coherent structure for teaching and learning. This State and District approved curriculum has been deemed to be evidence-based, culturally-relevant and designed to meet the needs of diverse learners in our local population.

In 2010, our API of 596 was 113 points below the LAUSD average, and 171 points below the average for the State of California. As indicated in Section A, Vista test scores revealed that our students, across the grade levels, were particularly deficient in language skills, writing, critical thinking abilities, and in math. Specifically, our English Learners and Students with Disabilities were scoring far below our general population. This is consistent with our feeder school data.

Because our scores did not reflect the high expectations of the Vista community, we had to conduct a complete analysis of our student performance data and instructional practices that were in place. After researching best practices in high performing middle schools, in 2010 we began to restructure our methodologies and professional development to meet the diverse educational needs of our students and teachers. We focused on scaffolding, differentiated learning, and targeted interventions to generate success for all students. Professional development planning became more relevant and aligned to addressing the areas of lowest performance.

The analysis of multiple criteria and various types of data became the driving force for our instructional plan. In addition to data analysis, parent and student surveys, focus groups, classroom observations, determined that our instructional program needed to address:

- instruction that integrated the teaching of basic skills into challenging and engaging activities that promote higher level thinking
- increased academic expectations and heightened academic rigor in the classrooms
- continuity and communication between elementary and middle school, as well as across all grade levels
- effective use of assessment and the analysis of data to measure student learning
- teaching that delivers the proper scaffolding and utilization of differentiated instruction

Also, our student-focused leadership team had an enlightening experience when it met with a group of 7<sup>th</sup> graders to discuss a letter they had sent to the principal, in which they said: “We strongly believe that we deserve more challenging classes.” One student elaborated by stating, “I want to become an attorney, and I know that I have the potential to become one. But, I am not getting the challenges I need at this school.” We realized we needed to have higher expectations, coupled with a rigorous curriculum, to develop the abilities of every student.

The lessons we learned from our data analysis and the insights gained from our students and parents led us to conduct an intensive review of current research on middle schools. In order to best address the areas where we needed improvement, we examined the most current research including: *90/90/90 and Beyond*; *First Things First: A Framework for Successful School Reform*; *Academic Achievement in the Middle Grades: What the Research Tells Us*; and *The National Middle School Association Research on Characteristics of Exemplary Schools for Young Adolescents*. All of these major middle school studies indicated that with the implementation of systematic program reforms and personalized organizational structures, schools with populations like Vista’s, can achieve high levels of academic success.

This research equipped us with the guidance to identify four characteristics of middle schools that have significantly improved academic achievement. These characteristics have become the fundamental guiding principles and program rationale that will continue to reshape our culture and instructional program, transforming Vista into a center for success:

1. *Setting high academic expectations and creating a supportive climate of encouragement that includes frequent assessment, multiple opportunities for improvement, and extra time/help for students who need it.* This will be evidenced in the implementation of Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) strategies, Scaffolding Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE), and using the RTI intervention model.
2. *Providing an accelerated and rich core curriculum that includes topics in algebra and geometry, laboratory-based science, weekly writing in all classes, and extensive reading of all types of materials in all classes for all students.* This will be demonstrated through our use of: standards-based curriculum, Writing Across the Curriculum, and implementation of interdisciplinary curriculum and instruction through the use of project-based learning.

3. *Engaging students in challenging, hands-on assignments that require them to practice new skills, incorporate their interests, and relate to their culture and life outside of school.* This engagement will incorporate the theme of T.E.A.M.S. and be accomplished by the use of project-based learning, Culturally Relevant and Responsive Education (CRRE), service learning, and rigorous assignments that target the development of 21st Century Skills that connect to major career areas. The collective culture of our community will experience equal access to all educational opportunities as preparation to live in a global society.
  
4. *Providing continuity of care across the school day, school years, and between the school, home and the community.* This personalization will be accomplished by the creation of grade-level Houses, Core Teams, advisories, vertical articulation between other schools and the development of a community organization, the Panorama City Community Partnership (PCCP), that we envision will eventually include a one-stop, full-service Parent/Community center.

Instructional strategies known to be effective with our typical Vista student population will be implemented and supported through effective professional development and frequently assessed for effectiveness. These strategies are research-based and will establish equity and access, increase achievement, and assure strong college preparation for all our Vista students. These include, but are not limited to:

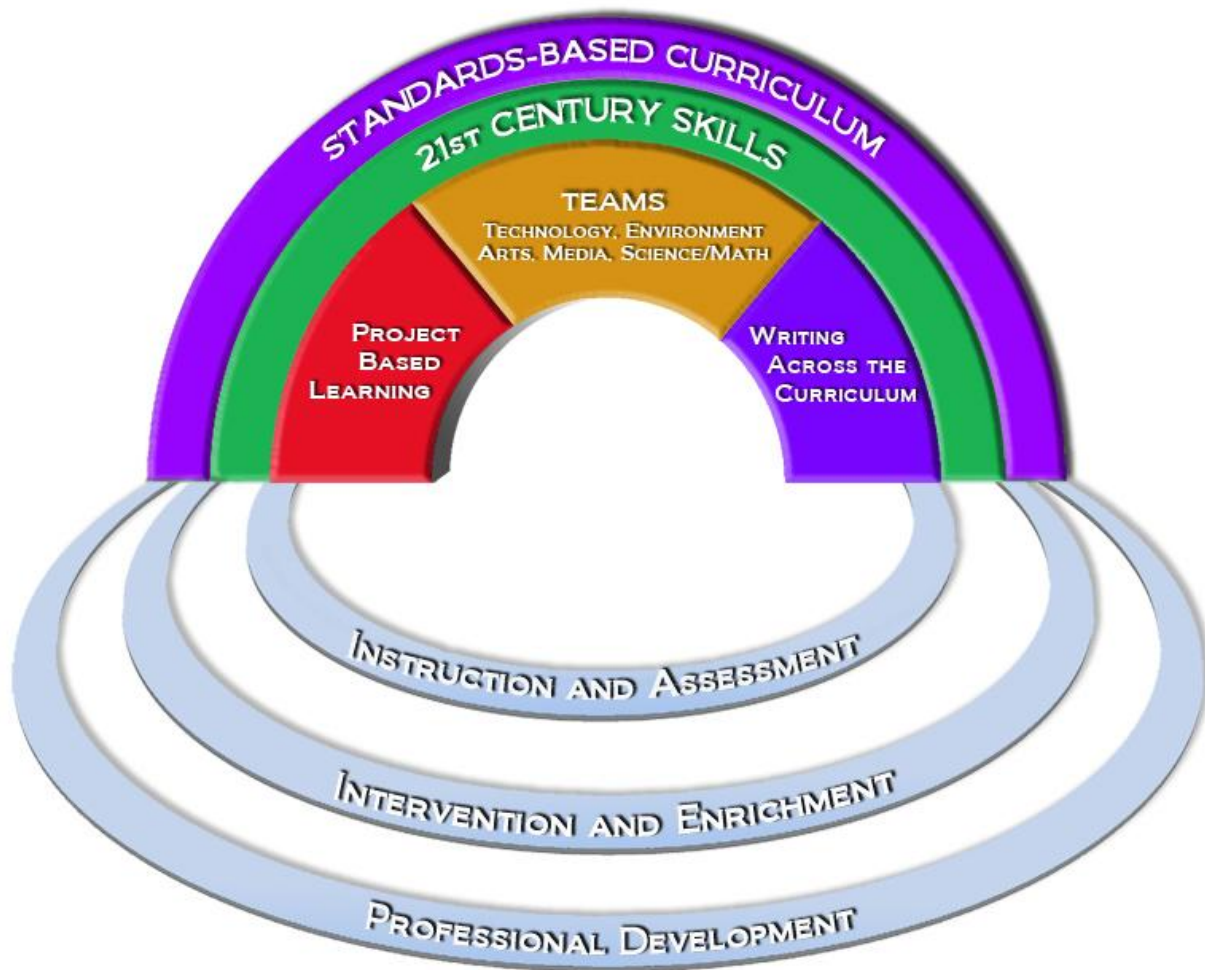
Writing Across the Curriculum	Summer Math and English Bridge Programs
Summer Programs for remedial instruction	Good First Teaching (RTI)
After School Instruction	Sheltered Instruct. Observation Protocol (SIOP)
Digital Portfolios	AVID Strategies
CRRE Pedagogy	Scaffolding
Differentiated Instruction	SDAIE
Tutoring- teacher and peer	Thinking Maps
Project-based Learning	Depth and Complexity

**A Systems Approach for Instruction**

Other significant research (90/90/90, Results Now, Understanding by Design) pointed to the value of a “systems approach” for improving schools with populations like ours. This business-type model intentionally and carefully considers the interaction between and among the operational functions of any school or organization. We learned that by applying a systems approach we could intersect instruction with support systems, thereby simultaneously creating an environment of continuous school improvement. It will be fueled by an instructional framework that emphasizes universal student achievement and is driven by high stakes accountability.

The instructional systems model is supported by the aligned underpinnings of: 1) Instruction and Assessment; 2) Intervention and Enrichment programs; and 3) Professional Development to equip teachers and administrators on how to best accomplish our mission.

**Vista Instructional Model**



Student mastery of a rigorous, standards-based curriculum is one of the most critical outcomes of our teaching and learning process. It is crucial that the instructional strategies used not only enhance mastery, but also initiate multiple opportunities for students to take ownership of their learning. Project-based learning, 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills, Writing Across the Curriculum, infused with T.E.A.M.S. are innovative research-proven teaching strategies that will empower students by employing real world resources and contexts. Professional development, based on defined instructional needs, will prepare teachers to implement the curriculum consistently and correctly.

### **Curriculum Model**

Based on input from our parents and students, and our data-based needs analysis for incoming students, Vista, and VRES#13 have generated an integrated instructional model that supports:

- delivery of a standards-based curriculum, with a focus on the development of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills; integration of learning experiences around career focus areas – Technology, Environment, Arts, Media, Science/Math (T.E.A.M.S.)
- use of project-based learning for applied learning
- implementation of Writing Across the Curriculum

### 21st Century Skills

There is an old saying, “The future isn’t what is used to be, because the present has changed.” Because the changes in the economy, jobs, and businesses are creating new and different skill demands, the first focus area of our curriculum and instructional model is the development of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills.

Whether our graduates plan to enter the workforce directly, or attend vocational schools, community colleges, or universities, it is a requirement for them to be able to think critically, solve problems, communicate, collaborate, find good information quickly, and use technology effectively. “A well-rounded curriculum that differentiates instruction, builds academic literacy for English learners, provides learning opportunities that are rigorous and relevant, and integrates 21st Century Skills into all content areas as an interdisciplinary approach will enable all students from our rich, diverse society to be successful in all future endeavors.” (P.21 California.com). The curriculum is well aligned with the vision, mission and instructional philosophy of the school. The needs identified in the data make this curriculum most appropriate for our student population and will create the greatest opportunities for their success.

The current Partnership for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills research indicates that students today are not prepared for the innovations of the 21st Century. To meet these needs and fulfill our commitment to our students, parents, and community members, the development of six crucial 21st Century Skills will be incorporated into every aspect of learning at Vista. This same curriculum model will be implemented at the new VRES#13 and will be blended into the smaller learning communities now in place at Panorama High School.

21st Century Skills	Focus Themes: T.E.A.M.S.
<p><u>Learning and Innovation Skills</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creativity and Innovation</li> <li>• Critical Thinking and Problem Solving</li> <li>• Communication and Collaboration</li> </ul> <p><u>Information, Media and Technology Skills</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information and Media Literacy</li> <li>• Information, Communications and Technology Literacy</li> </ul> <p><u>Life and Career Skills</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiative, Self-Direction, and Accountability</li> <li>• Leadership and Responsibility</li> <li>• Social and Cross-Cultural Skills</li> </ul>	<p>PBL will embed 21<sup>st</sup> century skills through student projects focused on essential career areas of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology</li> <li>• Environment</li> <li>• Art</li> <li>• Media</li> <li>• Science/Math</li> </ul>

All students and teachers will benefit from a curriculum that is standards-based where the focus themes of Technology, Environment, Arts, Media, Science/Math (T.E.A.M.S) are imbedded in our instructional program. These 21st Century Skills are incorporated into the core academic standards-based curriculum through targeted assignments, project-based learning, Writing Across the Curriculum, and interdisciplinary activities spanning content areas, grade-level Houses and Core Teams.

Common rubrics, criteria charts, and assessments will be developed by our teachers and used to achieve consistent measurement of proficiency. Examples of issues that our students might investigate are:

- environmental concerns
- influence of media on public opinion
- health and wellness issues in their families and community
- 2012 national elections
- immigration laws
- economic growth and job creation
- domestic violence
- gang violence and crime prevention
- media and the arts
- impact of arts on culture

The following chart illustrates how the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills can be integrated into the core subject areas.



Core Subjects and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills

Learning and Innovation Skills		Life and Career Skills		Information, Media, and Tech. Skills
Subject	Creativity and Innovation	Critical Thinking and Problem Solving	Communication	Initiative, Self-Direction, and Accountability, Leadership and Responsibility, Social and Cross-Cultural Skills
<b>English</b>	As the culmination of a fantasy or investigative journalism unit, students write fanfic (stories set in the worlds of the books they read). Each story will introduce a contemporary realistic concern or issue, such as water shortage, vigilantism, or genetic engineering. Students may publish these works on the school website or on fanfic sites approved by the teacher.	Students conduct research to answer the question: How much schooling do you need to get the kind of job you would like to have? After researching salaries, employment outlook, and education/training requirements of a variety of possible careers, students create a chart comparing their top three to five choices and write short personal essays explaining how these choices fit their goals.	After viewing clips of Charlie Chaplin movies, students discuss the conventions of silent film such as brief captions and exaggerated facial expressions that communicate the story. They then create a silent movie version of a suspenseful short story such as an Edgar Allan Poe or Ray Bradbury story.	After working with the teacher to understand the relevant state language arts standards, students rewrite some of these standards into language that is understandable by other adolescents. Students then work to create digital portfolios of self-selected work across the curriculum. Students reflect on progress through the year and evaluate their achievement in relation to the standards.
<b>History</b>	Students choose an historical figure (e.g., Abraham Lincoln, Sojourner Truth) and create an original story, play, poem or piece of art that captures/conveys a key aspect of that person's life history.	Students brainstorm a list of recent and historic natural disasters. In cooperative groups, students research online the government's response to a natural disaster, develop questions, and evaluate the government's response. Each group creates a well-reasoned summary of their findings, posts the results in a school-approved podcast, and debates alternative responses in a school-approved blog.	Students research information on the local implications of a global issue of concern (e.g., child poverty, hunger, homelessness). Students organize their information and a possible solution and write a persuasive letter that is to be proof-read, peer edited, and finally sent via e-mail to a local public official.	Students conduct research using the Internet and electronic library databases to identify and describe the roles of international and multinational humanitarian organizations. Formulate a list of questions about each agency's role in helping children. E-mail the questions to the proper contact person at one of the identified organizations.
<b>Math</b>	Use mathematical understanding and problem-solving processes to identify a community problem (such as using a limited number of buses for an expanding student body). Generate and analyze possible solutions for the community problem	Select and apply appropriate problem-solving strategies in an online group to solve real-life problems involving money, such as using existing e-commerce.	Present written explanation of problem solving process and solution with included diagrams, tables, charts, and graphs as needed.	Formulate questions related to students' physical environment or two populations or cultures, design studies that can answer the questions, and collect appropriate data.

## Project-Based Learning - PBL

*Tell me, and I will forget. Show me, and I may remember. Involve me, and I will understand.*

In addition to 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, the second component of our Vista and VRES#13 instructional focus is project-based learning which is a student-centered, comprehensive, innovative approach to learning where students go through an extended process of inquiry in response to a complex question, problem, or challenge. While allowing for some degree of student "voice and choice," rigorous projects are carefully planned, managed, and assessed to help students learn key academic content, practice 21st Century Skills, and create high-quality, authentic products.



Consistent with our mission and vision, PBL will build workplace skills and lifelong habits of learning. Projects can allow students across grade levels, elementary through high school, to address community issues, explore careers, celebrate cultures, interact with adult mentors, use technology, and present their work to audiences beyond the classroom. Numerous research studies indicate that project-based learning assists diverse learners by: accessing prior knowledge, providing hands-on learning activities designed to achieve content mastery and to develop language skills, creating student-to student interaction, student to teacher interaction, and teacher to student interaction, and developing questioning strategies. It creates varied forms of assessment, allows time for reflection, and encourages investigation of key vocabulary words (Hertzog, 2005, Lauer et al, 2006).

Our teachers know that *how we learn* is just as important as *what we learn*. Therefore, rigorous and in-depth project-based learning will be structured to meet grade-level standards:

- be organized around an open-ended, driving question or challenge

- require inquiry to learn and/or create something new
- involve critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and various forms of communication (21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills)
- incorporate feedback, revision, self-reflection and evaluation
- result in a publicly presented product or performance connected to a T.E.A.M.S. theme

Each year Vista grade-level houses will choose a common theme to emphasize throughout the entire school year. These themes will generate a relevant 21st century focus for all activities. The chosen theme will be the center piece of interdisciplinary project-based learning activities that will be on display for parents and community members during the culminating Core Teams project exhibitions. These overarching themes will allow students to develop a deeper understanding of critical issues of importance in the 21st century, thus making their learning culturally relevant to real world issues.

### **Project-Based Learning: Learning In and With the Community**

The open-ended question for the Fall 7<sup>th</sup> grade House could be, “What are the causes of change in society?” The social studies class will be formulating their answer by studying what factors drive the need for human exploration beyond their own societies to discover a new world. In English, students will be reading works of literature in which recurring themes exemplify the need within the human spirit to make new discoveries and inspire change. In science, students will be learning about environmental changes caused by natural and chemical influences; and in math students will be using mathematical concepts to solve problems related to distance, energy, population changes, etc.

The end of the semester culminating product will be a long-term community-mapping project whereby students, in collaboration with a community partner, Pacoima Beautiful Youth Environmentalist Program (PB-YES), use spatial location instruments such as GPS units, schedule meetings, and manage timelines and deliverables to restore the wash next to Vista to create an ecologically and esthetically pleasing contribution to the community. Students would study the history of the valley and about the site where the wash was built and why. They would observe the environmental impact of the wash, in its present condition, on the school and surrounding community.

The students would explore possibilities for developing a green belt, creating murals that represent the history of Panorama City and execute a city improvement project, working side by side with students across all school grade levels, parents, and volunteers from the greater community. Not only would this be a relevant learning experience, it would be a wonderful opportunity for community engagement and allow adults to appreciate the education taking place in our schools.

## Writing Across the Curriculum

The third component of our curricular focus is Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC). Vista firmly believes, "...writing is the most visible expression, not only of what students know, but, also, how well they have learned it. If schools are to become professional workplaces, writing will have to become integral to teachers' work and their identity as professionals." (*Because Writing Matters*-National Writing Project)

Writing Across the Curriculum is a critical focus for the students at Vista and VRES#13. According to *MyData*, the category of writing strategies is the lowest area of proficiency across all grade levels, 6-8. Students need an opportunity and experience to write in all content areas as a way to both explore their own thoughts and learning, as well as the practice of fine-tuning their writing as an effective means of communication. Writing helps to facilitate all of these 21st Century Skills. If a second language learner has Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency in their native language, it is a lot easier to transfer those skills to a new language.

Our goal is to prepare students to become strong writers, who can express critical thinking, solve problems in and through writing, improve their communication skills, and learn to write collaboratively. They can transfer these skills to other opportunities as the 21st century continues to grow and change technologically. The future implementation of Common Core Standards will emphasize literacy in writing across the content areas.

### Writing in Math

The math content is undergoing the most dramatic change by becoming less algorithmic and even more dependent on interpretation and comprehension to solve complicated word problems. Developing math literacy depends on identifying specific words, phrases, and sentences that promote repeated involvement and writing in different contexts. We have developed a systematic approach to embedding the role of language and writing in mathematical understanding by incorporating translation into our curriculum and instructional practice through the use of word walls, portfolios, and inquiry.

Through the translation of approximately 6,000 phrases, sentences, etc. that have been presented in the textbooks, all students, and the English Learners particularly, will have the tools necessary to navigate through the multiple meanings of words in both, "everyday English" and mathematical language, whether spoken or written.

### Writing in Social Studies

Writing in social studies is used to clarify and communicate historical information to assist students in understanding and analyzing historical events, while making connections with their own lives. Teachers use writing as a formal and informal assessment tool to understand how well students have learned the information that was presented in the classroom. Before the formal writing process takes place, teachers use pre-writing activities. All prewriting strategies, such as brainstorming, mapping and researching are intended to prepare writers for the writing task by helping them formulate and organize ideas and material. The final writing products take the forms of: summaries, journal entries, essays, letters, reports, or diary entries from an imaginary historical figure.

### Writing in English Language Arts

Vista adheres to the Standards Sets created by LAUSD, in an effort to organize the English Language Arts standards into writing genres. The Standards Sets are *Narrative*, *Exposition*, *Response to Literature* and *Persuasion*. The Standards Sets consist of Focus Standards, Support Standards and Access Standards that reinforce the genre being taught within each quarterly time frame.

Students write, in some form, every day, using Reader's /Writer's Notebooks to predict, respond, chart, and reflect to literature and other texts they are reading. Formal essays, reports, poems and stories are generated after the most effective writing strategies, such as charting, graphic organizers, Think-Write-Pair-Share, color-coding, and modeling by the teacher have been used during instruction to bring students to a level of proficiency. Writing is sometimes collaborative, using partners or groups to create a project. In addition, regular writing in advisory classes will give students opportunity to respond, reflect and tell stories. Writing assignments in non-academic classes, such as physical education, will be given periodically (i.e. a biographical report on an Olympic athlete.) Lessons will be developed for staff that is not skilled in the teaching of writing.

### **School Structure**

Evidence indicates that the use of personalized learning environments, where teachers and students develop closer relationships in the middle and high schools, also will enhance performance in the schools. In a 2002 research study, it was found that close relationships with teachers improve GPA and reduce dropout rates, because student anonymity is lessened, and the personalization helps to engage students. Disadvantaged students benefit the most from this strategy. (Balfanz & Letgers, 2006)

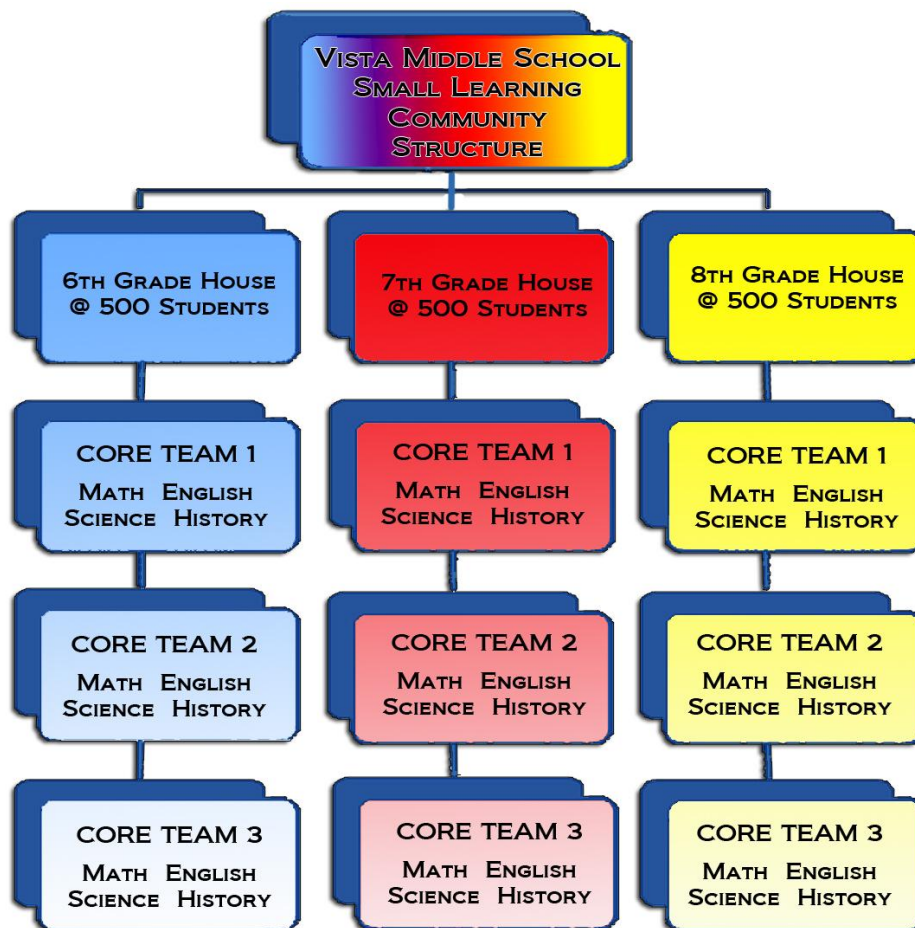
### Houses and Core Teams

Vista is currently organized around grade-level houses. Sixth, seventh, and eighth grade houses are grouped in distinct geographical locations on campus (one grade on each floor of the main buildings) in personalized learning environments within the larger school structure. However, in 2012, Vista will continue the same grade level houses, but will move the Core Teams into contiguous space, allowing teachers to build on the organizational structure currently in place.

Our grade level Houses and Core Teams will follow the 2007 LAUSD Smaller Schools Model. Characteristics/Attributes of Personalized Learning Environments that include: unifying vision/identity, rigorous standards-based curriculum, instruction and assessment, equity and access, personalization, accountability and distributed leadership, collaboration/parent community engagement and professional development.

- Each grade-level House consists of approximately 500 students with 20 teachers. In grades 7 and 8, each Core Team will have four teachers, one in each core subject-English, math, history, and science. Because 6th grade teachers are configured differently, each Core Team will have only one math/science teacher and one English/history teacher.

- Grade-level houses are “wall to wall” where all students, teachers, counselors, instructional coaches, lead teachers and administrators are affiliated with one House. This allows for the personalization of instruction and implementation of interdisciplinary instruction and project- based learning within the structure of the House.
- Grade-level houses and Core Teams allow students to connect more personally with both teachers and peers in ways that enhance learning and increase motivation. This reduction in student anonymity also directly correlates with an increase in safety.
- Grade-level houses will determine how T.E.A.M.S themes will be incorporated into the standards-based curriculum taught across the core curriculum and embedded in the project-based learning.



Advisories

Based on a recommendation from *Taking Center Stage (California Dept. of Education)*, advisories are a means to foster close relationships for accountability and engagement among students and with adults who share extended time through grade-level, subject-area, or interdisciplinary PLEs. A 54-minute advisory class will be an integral part of the school day. Each advisory class will be House specific in that students will be placed in an advisory class with students and teachers from his/her House enabling students to foster close relationships with other House members. To further promote the necessary personal relationships and social

development, each advisory will choose a representative to meet with the lead teachers once a month to discuss grade-level House specific issues. This group will be called the “House of Representatives.”

Advisories will be used to reinforce the T.E.A.M.S. themes instructional model. Cross-curricular activities will be developed to integrate the use of technology, environment, arts, media, and science into the advisory class. These activities will support the standards-based lessons and project-based learning in the core classes, and advisories will achieve valuable time to explore and develop the projects assigned to each grade-level House.

Advisory time will also be used for RTI Tier 2 individual and small group intervention. Students who require additional assistance with reading/writing and math will be pulled out of their advisory classes for a period of six weeks, two times a week to meet with an intervention teacher. In 2010, the advisories were used as a strategic tool for CST preparation and intervention. Using data, students were grouped according to band level and were provided with targeted intervention.

Students will be selected for intervention based on any of the following: teacher recommendation, parent or student requests, class grade of D or F, score of Below Basic or Far Below Basic on standardized testing in ELA or math, or more than three referrals to the dean’s office.

**b. Core Academic Curriculum: *Describe the core academic curriculum and how the proposed curriculum is evidence-based, culturally-relevant, will meet the diverse learning needs of the student population you will serve, and addresses the California State Standards.***

We will use the core curriculum currently approved by the district to implement a rigorous, standards-based, culturally relevant approach to learning. The curriculum will be taught and assessed according to the standards. Then, necessary interventions will be established based on the RTI model of instruction. Professional development will be designed to guarantee that teachers deliver the rigorous curriculum necessary to meet the needs of the diverse learning population and make certain all students develop proficiency in the core academic standards and 21st Century Skills.

In accordance with the needs identified in the Data Summary Analysis, Vista students will have enhanced instruction in reading comprehension, writing across the curriculum, and math problem-solving skills. Early intervention will be given beyond the core classroom in advisory, after-school and Saturday school and various in-school supports. Regular standards-based progress monitoring in core classes will give timely feedback and opportunity for analysis between Periodic Assessments.

Vista Middle School Standards-Based Curriculum

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Grade 6</u>	<u>Grade 7</u>	<u>Grade 8</u>	<u>21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills</u>	<u>Writing Across the Curriculum</u>
Science	Earth Science, Honors Earth Science	Life Science, Honors Life Science	Physical Science, Honors Physical Science	The following six crucial 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Skills will be incorporated across content areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creativity and Innovation</li> <li>• Critical Thinking and Problem Solving</li> <li>• Communication and Collaboration, Social and Cross-Cultural Skills</li> <li>• Information-Media Literacy and Technology Skills</li> <li>• Initiative and Self-Direction, and Accountability</li> </ul>	Writing across the curriculum is a critical focus for the students at VMS. Students need an opportunity to write in all content areas as a way to both explore their own thoughts and learning as well as the experience of fine-tuning their writing as an effective means of communication.
Math	Math 6, Honors Math 6	Math 7, Honors Math 7, Algebra 1A, Honors Algebra 1A	Algebra Readiness, Algebra 1A, Geometry		
English	English 6, Honors English 6	English 7, Honors English 7	English 8, Honors English 8		
History	Ancient Civilizations, Honors Ancient Civilizations	World History and Geography, Honors World History and Geography	US History, Honors US History		
Electives	Creative Expression, Art, Foods, Drama, Creative Writing, Introduction to Computers	AVID, Vista Visions, General Art, Intro to Computers, Music, Battle of the Books, Spanish	AVID, Vista Visions, Leadership, Yearbook, General Art, Advanced Art, Intro to Computers, Music, Battle of the Books, Spanish		
Phys. Ed. Intervention Enrichment	Physical Education 6 <i>Language!</i> , ELS, IMPACT	Physical Education 7 <i>Language!</i> , ELS, IMPACT	Physical Education 8 <i>Language!</i> , ELS, IMPACT		
Advisory	Cross-Curricular TEAMS-based enrichment activities, Tier 2 Intervention	Cross-Curricular TEAMS-based enrichment activities, Tier 2 Intervention	Cross-Curricular TEAMS-based enrichment activities, Tier 2 Intervention		
House Project-based Learning Experience	Each school year, each House will choose a TEAMS-based theme to focus on for the entire year. These themes will run vertically throughout each House, spanning all content areas and grade levels, providing a relevant 21st century focus for all activities. Project-based learning activities will be designed around these themes guaranteeing that students develop a deeper understanding of critical issues of importance in the 21st century, making their learning culturally relevant to real world issues. At the end of each school year, each house will hold a showcase to present their work to parents, teachers, and the community.				



Our curriculum will be enhanced and connect our students and staff to the needs of the community that reinforce 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills. Community work-based, servicing learning opportunities will be designed to include teachers and students across K-12 complex of schools and will be geared to address the diverse cultural needs of the community.

Students may participate in one or more of the following:

- community beautification, environmental recycling projects, community garden areas
- food drives, holiday gift baskets, clothing bank
- peer tutoring, helping with after-school programs at elementary schools
- volunteer activities - visiting senior citizen homes
- performances for the community, family arts festivals and social events
- students sharing computer skills with their parents
- writing letters to military personnel
- career and work-based activities might include career days, guest speakers, job shadowing, Principal for a Day, children contacting professionals such as authors, the mayor, police chiefs, etc. to learn about their careers
- meeting with city officials, attending neighborhood council meetings
- sponsoring health fairs and screenings, nutrition and cooking classes

The following chart illustrates how our curriculum that focuses on the development of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills and project-based learning can easily be articulated across the grade levels from 4<sup>th</sup> grade to 8<sup>th</sup> and then on to high school. Our partner, Cal State University, Northridge, is also intrigued by this design model and would like to incorporate the concept into ways of including the college level students into the curriculum design and lessons that could continue on up to the post-secondary level.

We have scheduled common professional development time, allowing the teachers at the elementary, middle and high schools to come together and design these cross-grade level types of lessons and projects.

This past year, our music teacher took several Vista students to Panorama HS to play in the band with high school students. Our Vista teacher and students found this to be a very exciting and challenging experience and look forward to more such opportunities during the implementation of our PSC plan.

With the development of the PCCP, we will have the support of many different businesses and agencies to help design the cross-grade level and community engagement projects that will place adults and students in the same context of learning and working together to improve their community.

**Standards-based Curriculum and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills  
Vertical Articulation**

21st Century Skills	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	8 <sup>th</sup> Grade	12 <sup>th</sup> Grade
<p><b>Creativity and Innovation</b></p> <p><b>Critical Thinking and Problem Solving</b></p> <p><b>Communication</b></p>	<p>Using electronic drawing tools, re-design the student's state flag, using information from the state's history, geography, arts and/or culture.</p> <p>Complete an inquiry-based WebQuest (<a href="http://www.webquest.org/">www.webquest.org/</a>) asking students to complete activities that exercise content area reading strategies.</p> <p>Compare reading skills used in reading a novel with the skills used in reading a newspaper article, an email, a chat format, a note from a friend, or a chapter in the class science textbook.</p>	<p>Invent a Smart Board game modeled on "Chutes and Ladders" to illustrate progress and backsliding in the search for peace in the Middle East.</p> <p>Complete a collaborative research project that utilizes online research methods.</p> <p>Describe one's own process for reading and evaluating a website or other text containing a variety of embedded links</p>	<p>Study FDR's Fireside Chats, and then script and record one of your own which follows the last of the real ones. Make the recording available for download.</p> <p>Construct a virtual museum exhibit depicting the role of the American Dream in classic texts.</p> <p>Interpret the status of the materials they read, collect, transfer, and use based on the current conventions governing intellectual property, trademark, copyright, Fair Use and plagiarism.</p>
<p><b>Information and Media Literacy</b></p> <p><b>Technology Literacy</b></p>	<p>Small groups of students select a nation from each continent and use online encyclopedias, electronic databases &amp; other websites to study typical families in those nations. Present findings to the class using presentation software. Create a Venn diagram to compare and contrast two communities from around the world using illustrations or information to demonstrate understanding.</p>	<p>Students consult the U.S. Dept. of Energy website to create a spreadsheet and construct a line graph of crude oil prices since the crisis of the early 1970's. They then examine data on selected oil producing &amp; consuming countries from the CIA World Facts database and develop possible explanations for price fluctuations.</p>	<p>Students will examine local, state and tax rates for commonly used goods, such as milk or bread. Students will research what these taxes are used for.</p>
<p><b>Initiative, Self-Direction, and Accountability, Leadership and Responsibility, Social and Cross Cultural Skills</b></p>	<p>Create an age-appropriate portfolio that includes a problem-solving situation related to real life.</p>	<p>Create a test with a variety of concepts, and a written reflection of their problem solving process/thinking.</p>	<p>Create a culminating project that demonstrates knowledge and understanding in at least three content areas; project should demonstrate problem-solving ability and ability to draw connections between mathematics content and real world settings.</p>

***Curriculum Development. (If applicable) Describe the curriculum development Process.***

Vista will use the Content Standards for California Public Schools as its curricular platform.

**ii. Management of Multiple Schools: For network partners and charter schools.  
NOT APPLICABLE**

**c. WASC Accreditation: High schools only. NOT APPLICABLE**

**d. Addressing the Needs of All Students: Explain how the proposed instructional framework will reinforce a commitment to different methods of instruction to meet the needs of all students.**

Vista teachers will collaborate around data analysis discussions and work together to design cross grade-level supports for all students. Besides teacher, counselor and school nurse, coordinator and other school support staff observation, other sources such as, elementary school logs, *MyData*, CELDT, IEP, and MAZE assessment information will identify high-risk students and prescribe interventions. Also, Coordination of Services Team (COST) will be convened to determine strategic interventions. They will be comprised of student, teachers, counselors, parents and support personnel. The feeder elementary schools within the PCCP collaborative team will have articulated to the middle school team the needs of the individual student upon enrollment to assist with an effective transition to middle school. A similar transitional process will occur from Vista to Panorama High School.

The RTI framework is specifically designed to support differentiated instruction by providing good first-teaching within all core classes and using the Problem-Solving Process to regularly identify academic deficits, determine the level of intervention needed for all students, analyze intervention design, and evaluate effectiveness.

**Students with Special Needs**

Many Vista students require a variety of special services in addition to academic interventions, due to negative social/emotional influences that impact their lives outside of school. Some examples are domestic violence, neighborhood crime, homelessness, separation from parents and other stressful circumstances that affect their learning. Support systems in place include: PSA Counselors, PSW Counselors, the Impact Program, the Safe Schools Collaborative, university interns for counseling support, Project Grid (at-risk family case workers), Parent Resource Center and liaisons, Safe Passage, and mentors.

The needs of all students, including students with special needs, students of poverty, students with disabilities, gifted students, English Learners, and Standard English Learners will be met by providing opportunities for differentiation, intervention, and support implemented through the extended daily advisory class, block-scheduling, Houses and Core Teams, and Saturday School CELDT Prep, before, during, and after school tutoring, and Bridge Program.

Interdisciplinary curriculum and collaborative projects will allow multiple opportunities for cooperative learning, known to be effective with diverse learners. T.E.A.M.S. themes will be integrated into the curriculum to bring real-life connections and experiences to the students. In addition, specific, research-based, instructional techniques are integrated into the classroom to support all students in receiving scaffolded and academically rigorous opportunities to learn.

#### Students of Poverty/Low Performing

In addition to the interventions that support student needs, Vista has additional support programs and strategies that increase achievement for at-risk students. Successful strategies in place and others to be developed include: project-based learning, LINK crew of peer supporters, personal advisors/coaches, advisory classes, agenda books, technology training as a teaching and learning tool, PSA Counselors, and PSW Counselors.

#### Gifted and Talented Students

Gifted and talented students will be clustered for instruction with classroom teachers who have extensive required training in the implementation of differentiated, accelerated learning methods. These include: differentiated pace, depth and rate of mastery appropriate to the students' skills; environment that encourages creativity through divergent thinking; originality, fluency, flexibility and elaboration of thought processes and products; inquiry and challenging attitudes toward learning; and the use and application of technology. GATE teachers meet two times a semester to share information on students' performance and best practice.

#### English Learner (EL) Standard English Learners (SEL)

Our goal is for all English Language students to acquire high levels of English proficiency to meet grade level standards as rapidly as possible. All English Learners are given full universal access to grade level curriculum. Students who do not make adequate progress are given opportunities to receive strategic focused intervention to promote learning and close achievement gaps.

Proficiency levels are aligned to the California English Language Development (ELD) Standards. They form the pathway to the English language Arts Grade- Level Content Standards. In addition, each ELD level builds on the preceding level. Below is an explanation of what students are expected to do at each of the five ELD levels:

ELD 1: Beginning: Students may demonstrate little or no receptive English Skills. Oral and written production is usually limited. Frequent errors make communication difficult.

ELD 2: Early Intermediate: Students continue to develop receptive and productive English skills. Oral and written productions are usually limited to phrases, memorized statements and questions. Frequent errors may interfere with communication.

ELD 3: Intermediate: Students begin to tailor their English language skills to meet communication and learning demands. Oral and written productions have usually expanded sentences, paragraphs, original statements, and questions.

ELD 4: Early Advanced: Students begin to combine the elements of the English language in complex, cognitively demanding situations. Oral and written productions are characterized by more elaborate discourse, fully developed paragraphs, and compositions.

ELD 5: Advanced: Students respond in English using extended vocabulary in social and academic discourse to negotiate meaning and apply knowledge across the content areas.

Students new to the district will be given the Home Language Survey (HLS) upon initial enrollment for identification as a potential English learner. We will inform parents of the Master Plan instructional program options, placement, and their right to request a waiver for an alternative program. The California English Language Development Test (CELDT) is administered within 30 calendar days of enrollment to determine English proficiency and English learner classification. ELs are also assessed in their primary language within 30 calendar days of enrollment. Vista will notify parents of initial CELDT and primary language test results and confirm program placement.

Fifty-eight percent of the English Learners are primarily comprised of Long Term English Learners (LTEL's). LTEL's are students who have been identified for six or more years and have not yet met the criteria to reclassify. Therefore, our instructional program has been designed to meet the needs of this target population, as well as all those who need support for English language development.

Instructional strategies, known to be effective with our student population, will be implemented and supported through professional development. They are all research-based and will assure equity and access, increase achievement, and assure strong college preparation:

- Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP Model)
- SDAIE strategies (Think-Pair-Share, Anticipation Guide, Thinking Maps)
- Context, Comprehensibility, Connections and Interactions Strategy
- Enrichment/ Intervention Learning Lab
- ELD Strategies: Total Physical Response (TPR), slower teacher speech rate, visuals, and primary language support.
- AVID Strategies
- Word Walls
- Good First-Teaching – RTI
- Digital Portfolios
- CRRE pedagogy and CRRE literature and informational text
- Contrastive Analysis (Compare and contrast the linguistic structure of two languages)
- Personal thesaurus of conceptually coded words
- Instructional Conversations
- Small Group Instruction

#### Students with Special Needs & Students with Disabilities

Vista has a block schedule that allows students with special needs the time in their daily schedule to work in a learning lab, if needed. Targeted scaffolding techniques will be used as a regular practice in the Special Day Class and/or the regular education classes to help students succeed in meeting the content area standards. Vista's personalized learning environment will offer students with disabilities key support that will lead them to success. The use of researched-based instructional methodologies involving interdisciplinary project-based learning and performance based assessments will allow these students to demonstrate their learning in a non-traditional and

non-discriminatory way. Vista will: assure equal access to project-based learning opportunities; allow participation in a fully inclusive model; and, mainstream according to their IEP.

Our school is committed to meeting all the outcomes specified in the Modified Consent Decree for students with disabilities and providing student with disabilities participation in rigorous, standards based appropriate curriculum in at least restrictive environment as described in the individualized educational program for each student.

#### RTI – Response to Intervention

All stakeholders will use the Problem-Solving Process used in the RTI framework to establish good first-teaching and appropriate interventions for all students. The process will institute a systematic and timely response to students who experience difficulty in meeting academic and behavioral benchmarks. RTI is a multi-tiered framework that guides the planning and implementation of a coherent system of instruction and interventions matched to student needs.

The continuous monitoring of student response to instruction and intervention is the focus of the RTI approach that determines when a student should move from one tier of intervention to another. Data collected at each tier will be used to measure the efficacy of the interventions, so meaningful decisions are made regarding which interventions should be maintained.

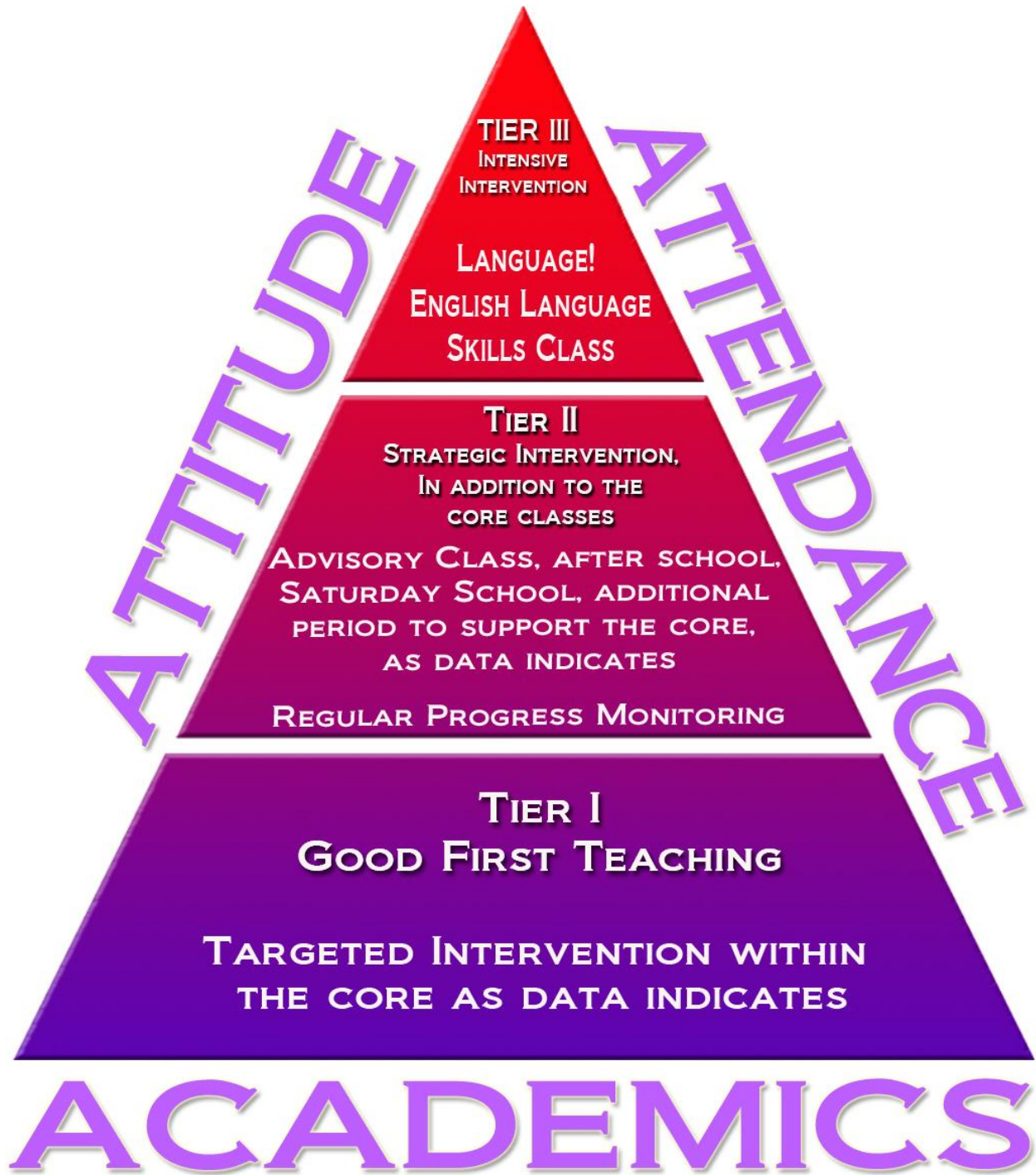
This approach is supported by research. With a multi-tier RTI approach, schools establish a process for:

- determining which students are experiencing difficulties
- selecting intervention strategies or supports and matching these supports to students
- evaluating whether the intervention strategies are effective

“The outcomes of the RTI approach depend on the consistent use of all three strategies and accurate monitoring of student improvement, to refine methods, and make necessary changes. If executed properly there is ample evidence that RTI intervention systems are effective in all student populations.” (Olson, Daly, et al, 2007.)

All stakeholders will work under a shared belief that it is crucial to meet the needs of the whole student (physical, emotional, social, behavioral and cognitive). Through the use of universal screening at the beginning of each year, students who are academically and/or socially/behaviorally at-risk will be identified, assigned appropriate interventions, and monitored for progress.

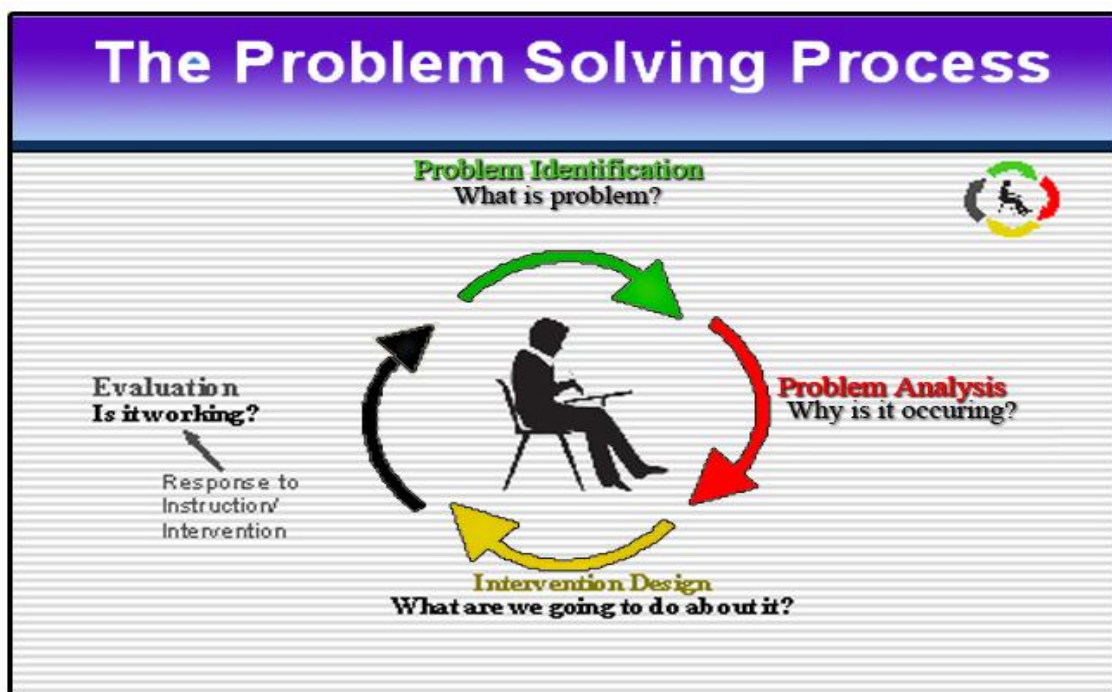
# RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION FRAMEWORK RTI



Teacher teams will meet frequently during common planning time and professional development to review authentic, periodic, performance, and summative student data results and use the Problem-Solving Process to refine instruction and prescribe intervention. Frequent progress monitoring and analysis of the results will show whether the intervention has been successful or needs to be revisited. The higher the level of student need, the more frequent the progress monitoring will occur, verifying that no time is wasted. Intervention groups will be flexible based on identified need obtained from progress monitoring data.

Instruction and intervention will utilize the tenets of the multiple intelligences to teach students in non-traditional ways and will allow for assessment and evaluation to be performance-based and geared toward students' areas of strength. Students will be selected for intervention based on any of the following: 1) teacher recommendation; 2) parent or student request; 3) class grade of D or F; 4) score of Below Basic or Far Below Basic on standardized testing in ELA or math; or, 5) more than three referrals to the dean's office.

Our data team will use various assessments for the progress monitoring that will drive how intervention is supported. Through the results of progress monitoring: if a student is responding well to the intervention, then the instruction being used is a match and the time and frequency of the instruction is enough. If a student is making some progress, the time and frequency of the intervention instruction needs to be increased. If the intervention instruction is having minimal or no impact, then the team will go through the problem-solving cycle again to determine what it is the student needs. All students in the Special Day program will be scheduled to receive services at least one time per week in the learning lab for targeted intervention based on assessed areas of weakness. There is now a considerable body of evidence to indicate that substantial gains in student learning are possible using small-group instruction. (Abrami et al. 2000)





Intervention instruction will be generated a number of times in a variety of ways to make certain that students are able to understand what they are being taught. Intervention may range from a few extra minutes of small group instruction from a teacher during independent work time, to a full period a day. Interventions include:

- block schedule, three periods on alternating days; an extended advisory period that meets four days a week builds time for intervention
- after school programs scheduled tutoring and expanded time to learn
- Learning Center to assist students who need to learn access strategies and organizational techniques as well as targeted skill development
- advisory class for every student that personalizes the student experience by helping students set goals for growth, reviewing each student's academic data (CST scores, periodic assessments, etc.) and providing them with a cohort and a teacher who will know them personally and promote their success.

***d. Vertical Articulation: Discuss how you will partner with neighboring schools in the community, from early childhood through adult education, to ensure the smooth and seamless transition from one grade level to the next.***

*The California Frameworks for Standards Based Instruction* outlines the depth and complexity of standards as they progress across grade levels for each core content area. Vista, in conjunction with our feeder elementary schools and Panorama High School, will meet at regular intervals for specific vertical articulation planning as noted on the Professional Development calendar. The collaboration between schools will allow for longitudinal planning, reflection of practice, and determination of which standards from previous grades need to be spiraled into future grade-level instruction to target deficit areas.

Elementary school case logs will be used to inform the middle school of specific student needs, including academic, attendance and behavior. These logs will be resources in proper intervention placement and accelerated learning for the support for all students. As part of our K-12 articulation, VRES#13 and Vista counselors and teachers will use vertical assessment data analysis to identify high risk students as early as the fourth grade. Research proves the predictors of a high school dropout appear at this early grade level. As needed, these high-risk students will participate in a summer transition program between VRES#13 and Vista and a "jump start" bridge program as they transition from Vista to Panorama HS.

In addition, COST and bridge program staffs will facilitate the transitional students from PreK to K, 5<sup>th</sup> grade to 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade to college by designing targeted interventions needed for success in next grade levels.

The curriculum model for VRES#13 and Vista that focuses on PBL, development of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, and Writing Across the Curriculum will establish a consistency in instructional focus and build familiarity for the students as they transition from grade to grade. Teachers will be collaborating on the design of cross-grade level project-based learning, allowing students opportunities to participate in multi-age group activities, such as community service projects, orchestra, choir, enrichment activities, etc. These types of experiences will ease the transitions to

other school levels, because students will already have been on other school sites, met teachers and students, and become familiar with the surroundings.

In addition to creating an academic “community of schools,” we will become “schools of the community” by developing the Panorama City Community Partnership (PCCP). This capstone feature of our articulation will be a community-wide partnership that will be charged with: organizing social events, family activities, community service projects, creating recreational opportunities across all the various grade level sites (and the entire complex), which will help parents and students become more familiar with the different campuses and their staffs. Parent education classes and job training, health services referrals, etc. offered through the PCCP will be open to parents from all school levels. This opportunity to meet parents from various schools will also support smoother transitions as they meet, learn together, and become familiar with supportive adults from other school sites.

At first, the PCCP will be an “organization.” As it evolves we plan to establish a “one-stop” community service center that will serve multiple needs in the community. Our intention is to converge resources and harness the energy of our schools, businesses, service agencies and political organizations. We will create a new culture in Panorama City based on: E<sup>3</sup> - Education, Empowerment and Engagement.

- e. ***Early Care and Education.***      ***NOT APPLICABLE***
  
- f. ***Special Education: Explain how the proposed school will implement and monitor the special education compliance processes.***

Vista will implement, with fidelity, all of the policies and procedures in the District’s Special Education Policies and Procedures Manual. This will reinforce that all special education students will receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). From a fine-tuned, organized procedure of identifying appropriate students in need, before they fail, to ensuring a timely completion of the evaluation with a committed high-level of targeted service, every special education student at Vista will succeed at the high level expected of all students.

Vista will do its best to meet all outcomes of the Modified Consent Decree: 1) maintain compliance with all special education timelines, and 2) prepare and conduct Individualized Education Programs that accurately reflect students’ strengths and weaknesses and are calculated to maximize educational benefit.

Vista welcomes the collaboration from parents and the community to give all students with disabilities the education necessary for them to become independent, successful members of our society. All special education students will receive supports and services in the least restrictive environment to best meet their needs. Both general and special education teachers will receive ongoing training and professional development in such areas as differentiated instruction, progress monitoring, behavior, interdisciplinary project based learning and social skills, as well as allow for built-in time during the school day for collaborative planning.

The collaborative co-teaching model will be at the heart and programming of what Vista will offer its special education population. The co-teaching model allows general education and special education teachers to work together to teach students with/without disabilities in a shared classroom. Both are responsible for instructional planning and delivery, student achievement, assessment and discipline. Students will receive age-appropriate academics, support services and possibly, modified instruction if needed.

The General Education/Resource Program (RSP) support establishes standards based instruction and services as indicated in the IEP and assigned to the general education classroom for the majority of the school day. The service model is composed of three interrelated and multi-layered special education components, which consist of co-planning, collaborative co-teaching teaming, and Learning Centers. Students with disabilities will be mainstreamed into core content classes with collaborative and co-teaching planned with the Resource Specialist teacher. This will consist of regular reviews of student progress, accommodations and modifications of core material and modeling of instructional practices through collaborative consultation between the special education and general education teachers.

The Special Day Program (SDP) accommodates standards based curriculum and differentiates instruction for students whose disabilities impact their academic progress in general education classes to a degree that a smaller class setting is indicated by their IEP. Special Day Program teachers will implement student centered instruction that includes strategies to access standard-based curriculum according to the individual learning style, yet adhering to District Instructional guidelines with accommodations and modifications as outlined in the IEP.

The use of research-based instructional methodologies involving interdisciplinary curriculum with project-based learning and performance-based assessments will allow students with disabilities to demonstrate their learning in non-traditional and non-discriminatory ways. In this fashion, students with disabilities can show what they know through areas of strength rather than from areas of need. The understanding of multiple intelligences will allow Vista to cater to student learning styles, thus providing instruction that will reach students in ways traditional instruction does not.

Our grade level houses will offer students with disabilities (SWD) the key supports that will lead them to success. Each SWD will be in a personalized, safe and secure school environment that supports them with a personal case manager, counselor and team of teachers who will be able to oversee their social and emotional needs, as well as, their academic growth and progress. Vista will provide SWD a T.E.A.M.S education; academic, interpersonal and social skills; and, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills that will enable them to be successful in college and the workplace.

The grade level Houses and Core Teams, with the use of advisories, will offer mentorship for students with disabilities. This will have the positive effects of reducing dropout rates, improving attendance, improving student engagement, personalizing the school experience, and providing the SWD mentors, who will monitor their progress in school.

Intervention will have a primary role in ensuring that students with disabilities are accessing the curriculum successfully. Through the RTI process, the progress of SWD will be monitored. The

three period block schedule affords students more time for project-based learning and intervention, depending on their need. Special courses and programs like *Language!*, English Language Skills, and the Special Education Learning Center/Enrichment Lab will be used to implement various forms of intervention and enrichment for students with disabilities.

SLD/SDC students will attend the Learning Lab, rotating through various skill centers weekly which will focus on reading and math skills development. SWD will also have access to the Rewards Program, learning centers, and the Why Try Program (Social Skills Program) to master the skills they need to succeed.

All students with disabilities will be instructed using a core instructional program that is research-based and prescribed by State and District guidelines that:

- provide a rigorous standards-based program with differentiated instructional strategies and on-going analysis of academic benchmarks
- protect core instructional minutes from interruption
- embed Culturally Relevant and Responsive Education strategies to assure access to the core for all students
- implement pedagogies that are used in effective first teaching
- require that all staff support initial instruction that is well planned and effective
- establish a common understanding of rigorous instruction with the use of rubrics and clearly defined expectations
- scaffold and sequence instruction as needed to create differentiated instruction so all students can access the curriculum
- design tiered intervention based on student need
- ensure student IEP accommodations will be used regularly in classroom instruction

Vista will implement the District's Discipline Foundation Policy: School-wide Positive Behavior Support. We will utilize positive interventions and means of correction to resolve disciplinary issues. School rules will be positively stated. Student expectations will be explicitly taught, reinforced, advocated, and modeled by all staff. When needed, students will be taught appropriate replacement behaviors. Positive "Behavior Support Plans" will be a part of IEPs when the student's behavior is negatively impacting progress.

Vista's "Discipline Foundation Plan" and "Behavior Support Programs for Students with Disabilities" are based on proactive prevention and a three-tiered model approach. For example, a proactive prevention for all SDC students will require participation in the "Why Try? Program" through their advisories, as outlined in LAUSD Bulletin 3638.0.

The three tiers of prevention are:

Tier 1 - Prevention Plan-Misconduct that requires classroom supports

Tier 2- Prevention Plan-Misconduct that requires a "Collaborative Team" response

Tier 3- Intervention Plan-Serious offenses requiring an IEP Team review or modification to the current behavior support plan or, if needed, development of a behavior support plan (A Behavior Support Plan is required for students with ED/AUT eligibility.)

Extended School Year (ESY) will be available for all special education students as determined by their IEP. The ESY program will be designed to prevent significant regression corresponding with limited recoupment of previously achieved skill and the loss of critical skills for students accessing the alternate curriculum. It will also be implemented for special circumstances or factors that indicate the need for ESY. Vista will follow the guidelines indicated in Reference Guide 5276.0. Vista will employ and frequently monitor the following processes:

- implement IEP goals and modify when necessary
- assess student progress using MCD indicators to measure growth
- adhere to timelines
- include parents as integral to the educational process
- measure the success in meeting the MCD outcomes
- utilize the LAUSD data systems to track student progress and identified services (Welligent, ISIS, My Data, CORE K-12, ODR, Periodic Assessments, ELD Portfolios, CELDT, MAZE)

**See Appendix for Special Education Plan**

## **B-2. Professional Development (PD)**

### **a. Professional Culture: Describe the professional culture you envision at the school.**

“At the heart of a learning organization is a shift of mind.... from seeing problems as caused by someone or something “out there” to seeing how our actions create the problems we experience. A proactive learning organization is a place where we continually discover how we create our reality and focus on how to change it.” (Peter Senge. *The Fifth Discipline*)

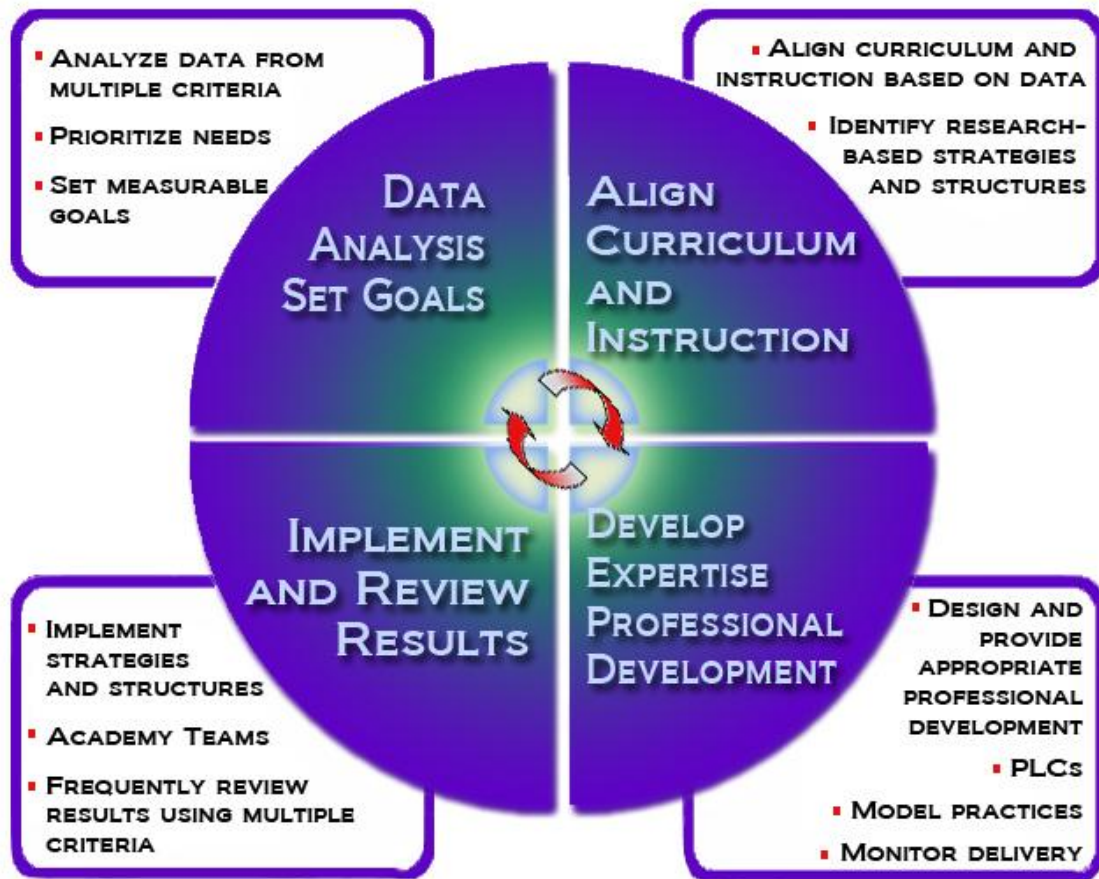
Vista’s culture has experienced this shift of mind in that “everyone is viewed a learner.” Our professional development plan will reinforce the ideas of using results to discover our realities and then focusing on the best methods to change things in ways that are better for our students. We will promote high staff performance and collaboration through the formation of PLEs and Core Teams within the houses. In addition, instruction that aligns to standards, growing in depth and complexity, will result from collaboration with elementary and high schools in the Panorama Complex. Professional development will be data-driven and the responsibility of all. The leadership team that will facilitate the sessions will be comprised of administrators, instructional coaches, coordinators, department chairs, and lead teachers. It will also include every teacher participating in instructional conversations that reflect on personal and interdisciplinary pedagogy within the House, as well as the Core Teams. Vista’s new progressive mindset will promote collaboration and opportunities for growth. Professional development sessions will adopt the following norms: E – Early arrival; A- Active participation; R – Respectful of presenter and colleagues; and S – Safe environment to share.

Vista has adopted the Continuous Cycle of Improvement strategies to drive professional development and promote a professional culture of high expectations. This will empower teachers to restructure teaching practices with the goal to increase student engagement and achievement. This cycle includes the following components:

- analyze data /set goals
- align curriculum and instruction
- develop expertise through professional development
- implement and review results

The instructional program also empowers the students by setting high expectations for learning, providing real world context for learning, and incorporating 21st Century Skills into the core academic curriculum.

**Vista Cycle of Continuous Improvement**



Vista chose the Continuous Cycle of Improvement as the most effective model because of the research-based strategies incorporated into each component. In the past year, Vista’s teachers were trained to use many of these strategies in their effort to improve student achievement. This refined model will systemize their ability to analyze data, align curriculum and instruction, create purposeful professional development and reflect on practice as they implement strategies and

structures. The training for the Continuous Cycle of Improvement will take place in August, prior at the start of the school year, in order that it can be used to guide instructional conversations at all professional development sessions. The enhanced K-12 articulation will allow for a more informed planning of student and school needs.

The PD plan is based on a fundamental professional policy that all teachers are learners. Teachers are students of education, as well as of the continuous, recursive cycle of learning and teaching. In order to guarantee equitable educational opportunity to all Vista students, all teachers will participate in a Personal Learning Environment (PLE) that will build their knowledge base and expertise as teachers. "Professional policy" holds a profession accountable for developing shared expertise among all of its members, rather than imposing standardized prescriptions for practice that would fail to meet clients' different needs." (Darling-Hammond, 2008, *Securing the Right to Learn*).

- b. Professional Development: Describe what effective PD will look like at your school. In the appendix, attach a tentative PD schedule that illustrates your allocation of time for PD activities throughout the year.**

The professional development goals and strategies are aligned to Vista's vision, mission and instructional program. The high standards of Vista's Performance Plan dictate the design and implementation of our professional development program by using baseline data to establish initial performance levels and set Performance Meter goals. Each professional development offers opportunities for teachers to review data on learning results, reflect on current practices, and revise curriculum and instruction to meet targeted student outcomes.

In terms of strategies for improving teacher effectiveness, research has shown that teacher retention rates and job satisfaction improve when teachers collaborate either in teams or work in professional learning communities. (Fishman et al, 2003). In this same study, it was proven that teachers learn best through observing, being observed, teaching, planning for classroom implementation, sharing ideas, and reviewing student work.

Our professional development sessions will take place every Tuesday afternoon and will alternate between the following groups and topics according to the differentiated needs of the school.

- grade-level houses – plan and implement project-based learning
- grade-level Core Teams –develop cross-curricular, interdisciplinary instruction
- departments - analyze data, plan instruction based on what the data reveals and develop progress monitoring assessments (*My Data*, K-12 Core, etc.)
- district and school initiatives – professionally develop our understanding of RTI, SDAIE, CREE, AGT, PBL, 21st Century Skills, Writing Across the Curriculum and data analysis
- articulation with VRES#13 and Panorama HS – plan articulated and scaffolded PBL, Writing Across the Curriculum, and bridge opportunities

The Core Teams within each House will have a common conference period, as well as a professional development Tuesday allotted each month. This has already been implemented for the 2011-2012 school year. Professional development time has also been scheduled for houses to plan for project-based learning. Accordingly, departments, K-12 articulation, and District and school initiative groups will have an opportunity to meet on a professional development Tuesday. The meetings for each grouping will be strategically scheduled, based on the needs of the school, as determined, using the Cycle of Continuous Improvement Model.

We will work toward strengthening the district-mandated professional development, such as SDAIE, CREE, as well as differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all learners, including GATE, Special Ed, and English Learners. Along with our Cycle of Continuous Improvement, we will build the capacity of our teachers by providing them with information and specific strategies linked to our overarching themes of T.E.A.M.S. and the integration of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills.

In an effort to align the PD calendar with the critical needs of each Core Team, House or department, and the roles teachers play, the District calendar, daily schedule and Periodic Assessment dates will be taken into consideration. For example, the department meetings will be strategically placed following the published results of the periodic assessments data. Due to the daily interaction, teachers in the core have with their students, team meetings will be given more professional Tuesdays. The houses will be allotted time for the completion of projects for each grade level. K-12 articulation meetings will be scheduled in order to plan and reinforce the common focus areas of PBL, WAC, and T.E.A.M.S.

Vista's professional development plan affords teachers the opportunity to improve their skills in becoming facilitators of inquiry-based learning through the planning of project-based learning experiences for all our students. Our researched based instructional program incorporates standards-based curriculum, Writing Across the Curriculum and the development of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills along with project-based learning that will empower every student with the knowledge to succeed.

We will establish a peer mentoring system, at various stages of their career, to include: coaching, demonstration lessons, peer observation, learning walks, administrator consultation and support, etc. Based on the adoption of new District policy around the development of teacher leadership, we will establish professional development and on-the-job experience for teachers seeking career advancement.

***i. Management of Multiple Schools: Discuss the role of the organization in providing professional development for schools/campuses across the portfolio.***

LD1 will generate on-going support for the teachers, support staff and administration in the Panorama Community Complex. Each school will have an RTI expert assigned to provide support in best first teaching practices. In addition, experts will train teachers and staff in CORE K-12 and *MyData* in order that student data can be accessed for evaluation and analysis on an on-going basis.



LD1 will also deliver comprehensive trainings for designated Cohort School-Based Leadership Teams in the RTI Framework for Instruction and Intervention, including the Problem-Solving Process. Cohort schools will regularly meet with their designated RTI expert and support will be given to assure implementation and fidelity to the framework.

The LD1 ELD/Access to Core staff will facilitate trainings for teachers in effective classroom practices, including “Thinking Maps” and “SDAIE Techniques” to meet the needs of all students, especially English Language Learners.

The Panorama City Community Partnership (PCCP) will meet for articulated professional development to examine data and determine strengths and deficits regarding specific content standards. Local District staff will facilitate professional development as needed, working closely with school leadership to assist with instructional and technical support.

Support Unit North will implement on-going support trainings for counselors, teachers, aides and other personnel on a bi-monthly basis. In addition, other on-going support training is available on an as-needed basis during the year on various topics related to special education student needs. Specialists and support personnel will conduct site visits to assist with observations, student modifications (academic and behavior), analyzing student data within the context of the IEP to establish learning goals, planning/implementation of professional development, and assisting with placement concerns.

***c. Teacher Orientation: Describe the orientation program for new and existing teachers.***

Prior to the school year, Vista will hold a five-day orientation for teachers that will be differentiated to meet the needs of new and existing teachers. Teachers who are new to our school will be made familiar with our mission, vision and culture. All teachers will review our curricular foci on Writing Across the Curriculum, 21st Century Skills, and project-based learning, along with best practices to enhance their instructional practice.

This orientation will also include a tour of the community, led by various faculty members, giving teachers an opportunity to learn, or be reminded of, the conditions of our community. Data only tells part of the story. Our staff needs to see the extreme, high density housing conditions; the lack of safe, public play areas; street litter; and the gang graffiti that tarnishes our community image.

Orienting new faculty and staff to Vista will not end with the one-day orientation. On-going new teacher meetings, led by an administrator and staff mentors, will be held after school each month.

***d. PD Program Evaluation: Describe how the PD program will be evaluated to assess its success and effectiveness on an ongoing basis.***

Professional Development is planned strategically. The Continuous Cycle of Improvement Model allows for analysis of effective practice, and consistent review of data will determine if our practice is effective. We will rely on data, not opinion, to determine our needs. Each professional development session, small or large group, will require a written survey evaluation

by the participants. This evaluation will assist the leadership team in determining next steps. Instructional conversations, regarding student preparedness and proficiency as students move to the next school, will be held at PCCP articulation professional development sessions in order that professional training is adequate in meeting the needs of students moving to higher grades.

### **B-3. Assessments and School-wide Data**

#### **a. *Student Assessment Plan: Describe the school-wide assessment plan for the school.***

According to Albert Einstein, “Not everything that counts, get counted; and, not everything that gets counted, counts.” At Vista we want to make sure that everything that gets counted is used to inform and improve our instructional program. Our diverse assessment model (aligned to our mission and goals) will maximize student learning, because it gives students many avenues to demonstrate their learning and accomplishments. Our Cycle of Continuous Improvement (described in the previous Professional Development section) creates the culture for constant review of student performance information and the application of findings for immediate program adjustments. The purpose of this ambitious evaluation system goes beyond PSC requirements and affords actionable feedback to our school with recommendations that are practical and will dictate changes needed to maximize results and meet or exceed the stated annual goals.

The foundation of our assessment philosophy is to move from assessment **OF** learning to assessment **FOR** learning. (Stiggins, 2005) To accomplish our mission the Vista assessment system is designed to: 1) consistently monitor student achievement by utilizing our Cycle of Continuous Improvement; 2) create collaborative analysis of data using common planning time for Core Teams; and 3) effectively communicate student progress toward meeting goals to all stakeholders.

Our 21<sup>st</sup> Century Assessment model supports a balance of assessments including high-quality standardized testing along with effective classroom formative and summative assessments that:

- emphasize useful feedback on student performance that drives instruction
- require a balance of technology-enhanced, formative and summative assessments that measure student mastery of 21st Century Skills.
- enable development of portfolios of student work that demonstrate mastery of 21st Century Skills to educators and prospective employers

Formative assessment is a consistent part of the instructional process. When incorporated into classroom practice, it creates the information needed to adjust teaching and learning instantly. Formative assessments will include: learning logs, teacher observations, discussions, tickets-out-the-door, quick writes, graphic organizers, peer and self-assessments, think-pair-share, oral interviews, story or text retelling, writing samples, projects/exhibitions, experiments, demonstrations, constructed-response items, teacher observations, and digital portfolios.

Summative assessment is defined as a means to gauge, at a particular point in time, student learning relative to content standards. Our summative assessments will include: California

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Standards Tests, Periodic Assessments, California English Language Development Test (CELDT), and end of unit tests. There is a wide variety of highly valid and reliable data that generates a clear picture of the performance of our students. The District *MyData* system offers current and past data, enabling staff to keep abreast of individual, grade level, and school-wide student progress. Also, we will be continually accessing CORE K-12 for periodic assessment data and progress monitoring.

Both formative and summative assessments will generate student, classroom, and subject matter data. Critical standards and skills will be identified through the examination of data, allowing teachers to spiral standards instruction and skills practice, while moving ahead with the curriculum time-frame. The RTI process will allow for targeted intervention and enrichment, whether for whole-class, small group, or individual student.

Through the Cycle of Continuous Improvement teachers will be reviewing results, reflecting on pedagogy, and revising instruction accordingly. The professional development will then be aligned to enhance the instructional practice by applying assessment data results and sharing best practices to improve instruction. Vista teachers will be trained in this systematic process to manage student assessment data that will accomplish the following:

- collect and review additional assessment data from multiple sources
- compare and contrast current assessment data with new data
- adjust instructional decisions based on conclusions of data assessment and analysis
- plan and design in Core Teams to refine instruction
- collaborate with administration on student progress

Vista will use the required LAUSD and State formative assessments. The rationale for this is that these align with the pacing plans for each content area and give valuable data to drive the instructional program. In addition, all data for these assessments is readily available through *MyData* and Core K-12 for immediate analysis by Core Teams and grade-level houses. It is also available to share with parents and students. Authentic assessments, such as PBL presentations, are scheduled at the end of each semester to allow for the overarching questions to be examined, studied, and researched in alignment with the standards-based content curriculum. Evaluative tests (CELDT, CST, Star Writing) fall within the State mandated calendar.

The first year will only offer one official student-led conference in April as well as the House Project Exhibitions in June. After the first year of implementation, however, the goal is to have student led conferences in the Fall and the Spring Semesters, preceding House Project Exhibitions at the end of both the Fall and the Spring semester. Projects and presentations will be assessed by a pre-established rubric that aligns to the standards-based curriculum and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills.

During the first year, the staff will develop authentic assessments to include a rubric for evaluating the multi-discipline project based learning. Core Team teachers will determine the

number of standards-based projects that will be developed. Each project will embed 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills and the T.E.A.M.S. themes. Students will conduct their projects incorporating the following elements:

- application of learning to complex problems
- development of products that require written and oral expression
- utilization of research strategies
- analysis and synthesis of information
- planning, organization, and presentation of data

**Vista Middle School  
2012-13 Assessment Plan**

Assessment	Dates (approximate)
Annual CELDT window	September 10 – October 19, 2012
Periodic Assessment – Math	October 26 – November 1, 2012
Periodic Assessment - English	October 31 – November 02, 2012
Periodic Assessment – Science (grades 6 and 8)	December 03 – December 07, 2012
Periodic Assessment – Science (grade 7)	December 10 – December 14, 2012
Periodic Assessment – History/Social Studies	December 12 – December 19, 2012
Periodic Assessment – Math	January 18 – January 24, 2013
Periodic Assessment – English	January 21 – January 25, 2013
House and Team Project Exhibitions	January 28 – February 1, 2013
Fitness Gram – grade 7	February 4 – April 26, 2013
STAR Writing Assessment – grade 7	March 5 – 6, 2013
Periodic Assessment – Science (grades 6 and 8)	March 11 – March 15, 2013
Periodic Assessment – History/Social Studies	March 18 – March 22, 2013
Student Led Conferences	April 8 – April 12, 2013
Periodic Assessment – Math	April 12 – April 18, 2013
Periodic Assessment – English	April 15 – April 19, 2013
CST/CAPA Testing Window	May 06 – May 24, 2013
Periodic Assessment – Science (grade 7)	May 6 – May 10, 2013
Periodic Assessment – Science (grades 6 and 8)	June 10 – June 14, 2013
Periodic Assessment – History/Social Studies	June 10 – June 14, 2013
House and Team Project Exhibitions	June 10 – June 14, 2013

b. ***Graduation Requirements: Describe the graduation requirements.***

Vista will follow the policy of middle school culmination, as described in BUL 3815.0, which states that students "will receive a District approved certificate if they meet minimum requirements for grades six through eight." Requirements include: passing all courses; having no more than two U's in Cooperation and Work Habits during the eighth grade year; having an attendance rate of 95% for grades six through eight, excluding a serious, chronic or major illness; and abiding by school and District policies, with respect for student conduct and school property.

In addition, our students must complete digital portfolios, prepare and facilitate student-led conferences, and demonstrate proficiency in project-based learning assignments. We will administer a learning environment where students consistently meet and exceed grade-level standards and apply them to new educational situations. They will view each grade-level as an integral part of their personal development, preparing them for the next stage of challenge as they progress through middle school and on to high school. Students and parents will participate in multiple articulated activities with the staff at Vista and Panorama High School, which will establish a seamless transition for students as they culminate to ninth grade.

House counselors have the responsibility to track students' progress toward middle school culmination. This not only establishes that all requirements are met, but that the preparation path to high school, according to the personal data and progress monitoring, is on target. Our goal is that each Vista student will receive the support and intervention needed in the middle school grades and enter high school as confidence learners preparing for college.

c. ***Data Collection and Monitoring: Describe the school-wide data collection and monitoring plan, including what data the school will collect to measure student progress.***

Assessment results show mastery of standards-based curriculum and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills for students, as well as success of instructional practice and applied professional development, for teachers. Data is collected and analyzed in every subject and grade level by individual teachers, departments, faculty and Core Teams in order to reflect on pedagogy, monitor proficiency, and determine the targeted intervention needed.

Students are informed about their assessment results by the content teachers and advisory teachers in their Core Teams. Individually, and by class, students are engaged in the process of looking at their own performance data, setting goals, examining outcomes, and developing action plans in response to the data. By making the learning targets clear to the students, and by involving students in setting their own personal goals through tracking their own progress, students take ownership of their learning and respond more positively to teachers as they adjust instruction to create intervention or challenge curriculum, according to the student needs.

Professional development time is allocated for teachers to reflect on instructional practice as they examine the assessment data. The Vista subject-area departments regularly re-assess pacing plans through the lens of our most current assessment results, and adjust lessons to spiral-in standards and skills that need re-teaching. Our culture is one where all teachers consistently

analyze student data, review student work, research best practices, participate in peer observations, and self-reflect on their lesson plans and delivery.

Adequate time is allotted for data review and analysis to inform instructional planning. Vista's data team, representing teachers, administrators, and support staff, will collect formative and summative data throughout the school year to monitor student achievement. This imbedded process will be part of every monthly meeting. Administrators will work with the data team to review state, district, and classroom data that will be triangulated to make informed decisions about diverse student needs, as well as teacher support and training.

Student-led conferences will offer opportunities for students to present performance data, goals and action plans to parents or mentor adults, discuss desired outcomes, and plan for success together. In addition, student digital portfolios will show tangible growth over time, encouraging students as they become more successful learners.

Parents will receive the district's school report card. The governance council will review all school data at the council meetings twice per year in order to gauge student and school progress. In addition, parents will be encouraged to attend individual parent/teacher conferences to discuss student progress towards school-wide benchmarks. Parents of English Learners will receive mandated communications on reclassification per Title III through annual CELDT testing results.

Parents of students with IEPs will receive reports according to the specific individual student IEP. The school will comply with all state and federal law regarding reporting requirements, including parents' rights to be updated on their child's IEP frequently, as specified within their IEP regarding their child's academic progress.

#### Vertical Analysis of Data

A critical element to lowering the dropout rate, and thereby increasing the graduation rate, is to remember that dropouts do not materialize in high school. Research indicates that reliable predictors of future dropout are present in early grades. The key indicators that several researchers have identified as predictors of who is most likely to drop-out are: poor grades in core subjects, low attendance, failure to be promoted to the next grade, and disengagement in the classroom including behavioral problems.

Balfanz and Herzog, in conjunction with Johns Hopkins University and Talent Development High Schools, studied 14,000 sixth grade students in Philadelphia over a six-year period. They determined, "Most future dropouts may be identified as early as 6<sup>th</sup> grade. More than half of sixth graders with the following three criteria eventually left school: attended school less than 80% of the time; received a low final grade from teachers in behavior; and, failed either Math or English." This was further confirmed in 2006, "Eighth-graders who miss five weeks of school or fail Math or English have at least a 75% chance of dropping out of school." (Neil & Balfanz, 2006)

In order to effectively reduce the LAUSD dropout rate in high school, Vista must continue articulation with our elementary and high schools, and refining our practice of early intervention, based on data, particularly as it pertains to three things:

- communicate with our feeder elementary schools to identify the high-risk students early
- work with these schools to design and monitor the targeted interventions
- coordinate transition supports (Bridge programs, Jump Starts, etc.) from elementary to middle school, and middle to high school.

***i. Management of Multiple Schools: Describe the organization's role in reviewing performance data, and describe how this data is used to drive improvement at the school-, campus-, district-, or network-levels.***

Performance Management is an on-going, systematic approach to improving results through evidence-based decision-making, continuous organizational learning and a focus on accountability for performance through:

- regular and systematic use of performance measures to facilitate organizational accountability, improvement and decision-making
- continuous/ongoing review of data
- commitment to specific action plans
- regular follow-up and monitoring of change over time

LD1 supports the Continued Cycle of Improvement at Vista by providing technical assistance workshops, in order to give staff practice in evaluating the intervention given to students. Topics include the use of the progress monitoring tool through Core K-12, as well as the universal screening literacy and math products. All intervention at the site be carefully monitored to determine its effectiveness, and restructured if desired results are not achieved.

The RTI and Access to Core Instructional support staff are involved in the on-going guidance of school leadership teams as they use the Problem-Solving Process to gather data, determine need, evaluate the effectiveness of the selected intervention, and take necessary steps to respond to the progress monitoring data.

**Category Two: School Culture, Climate, and Infrastructure****B-4. School Culture and Climate**

- a. ***Description of School Culture: Describe the culture and climate envisioned for the school, particularly as it relates to academic achievement, student motivation to succeed, personalization, and safety.***

It is day two of the 2011-2012 school year. Eighty-seven English Language Learners, who have been identified as close to reclassification, are in a CELDT preparation meeting during the Advisory period. The ELL Coordinator, Access to Core Coach, two assistant principals and the principal participate. The students are praised for the good work they did on the CST's and are shown data that explains why they were selected to be part of, not only this meeting, but a special month-long Saturday school to assist them with passing the CELDT. The students are fascinated by the data on the PowerPoint and delighted by their achievement. They sit up straight, are engaged, and motivated by the challenge before them.

This is an example of the Vista culture that sets high academic expectations for all learners, and supports student achievement with tangible structures. Students feel encouraged and positive about attaining goals and trust teachers to give them the skills they need to become successful.

Our school culture is comprised of all students, parents, staff and community members who share the same beliefs, high expectations, cultural values, and respectful habits that are described in our mission and vision statements.

“Raising the bar entails elevating what teachers expect of each student, what each student expects of him or herself and what accountability we attach to those expectations.” (Hank Rubin) In order to raise the bar and improve the culture and climate we envision for Vista, we wanted to measure what students expect from Vista. In Spring 2011, our students participated in a survey to measure their perceptions of our schools. The student responses to this survey were shared with the teachers. We wanted teachers to realize that raising the bar is much more than just raising students' test scores. Of critical importance is working to elevate all students' expectations for themselves, their academic performance, and their intellectual capacity.

We foster a rich learning environment where all students are respected and valued by our faculty. The goal of Vista is to create a safe, supportive, and sustainable environment that promotes student learning, while alleviating negative behavior and maximizing learning. Some of the strategies to accomplish this are:

- utilizing mentoring programs across grade levels
- providing support groups for students who need more assistance
- offering tutoring and enrichment activities after school
- implementing a school-wide anti-bullying program
- utilizing counselors and support staff to create personalized plans and goal setting
- offering parent workshops and summits
- communicating consistently to our students and their parents clear policies
- creating and monitoring safe passages for students



The strategies and structures proposed above shape and reinforce Vista's identity, as well as supporting a PLE for students and staff. The communication, scheduling, and monitoring of the described strategies takes place within each Core Team of teachers, during common planning time and other professional development opportunities. The administrators and coaches use email to communicate daily with teachers, keeping them up to date on any policy changes and announcements. All school news and information is made available in English and Spanish. We use a newsletter, bulletins, Open House, Back to School Night, Student-led conferences, auto-caller and parent meetings to make sure parents are aware of all that is taking place at Vista.

The purpose of creating grade-level houses and Core Teams is to personalize the Vista educational experience. Each core team develops its own identity with names, logos, colors, activities, etc. This personalization affords, teachers and students, the opportunity to develop positive close relationships where "no child can be left unknown."

Due to the extensive vertical articulation with our feeder elementary schools, our students will already feel welcome upon arrival to Vista as sixth graders. The transition from elementary school will become seamless through the overarching culture of the PCCP that exists at the elementary school and continues in middle school. The same occurs as the students progress to high school, and they are prepared to expand the culture and climate that has been part of their entire K-12 experience.

- i. ***Management of Multiple Schools: Include an explanation of whether and how the organization will transfer the culture of the existing school(s)/campus(es) under your management to the PSC school.***

The superintendent directs leadership training for all principals, administrators, and counselors to accomplish a uniform understanding of LD1 expectations. The focus includes:

- data-driven decision making
- strategies to support reclassification of English Language Learners
- culture of direct observation, critical analysis and two-way accountability for improvement of instructional practice and performance
- mentoring
- good first-teaching and differentiation
- articulation among teachers, especially at key transitions (PreK-, K-1<sup>st</sup> Grade, 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> Grade and 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> Grade)
- infusion of four key instructional strategies
- instructional conversations
- graphic organizers
- cooperative learning
- academic vocabulary

The accountability at all schools will be both external and internal, with the expectation that data, both formative and summative, will be skillfully used to target student needs. Special focus will be given to periodic assessment data. Additional support and mentoring for each school will be delivered by the local district, including directors/principal leaders, Access to Core, ELD,

Special Education, and RTI staff, as needed throughout the year, as we collectively strive toward these common foci and culture changes.

**b. *Student Support and Success: Describe exactly what student success will mean at your school. What will you do to ensure students are successful?***

Student success at Vista entails, not only the obvious criteria, such as scoring proficient to advanced on the CSTs, passing all classes, and maintaining eligibility for culmination, but also includes students' demonstration of skills, habits and practices required for personal and professional success in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

To promote student success, all teachers, faculty and staff use data to monitor areas of strength, support areas of opportunity, and view student growth over time. Students are not only members of classes, but also belong to a grade-level House and highly personalized Core Team, with designated teachers that monitor each student during their tenure at Vista. This intense level of consistent contact across classes permits teachers to track students and share information among themselves, in order to quickly identify and address problems with struggling students.

Student success is consistently promoted through the use of evidenced-based instructional strategies and practices aligned to the school vision, culture and climate that take into consideration diverse learning levels and styles, and differentiate instruction accordingly:

- performance-based assessment is an evaluation system that goes beyond standardized tests and typical measurement tools
- all learners, especially students with low English proficiency, are able to demonstrate knowledge using authentic assessments
- project-based learning, inquiry-based instruction, specifically designed academic instruction in English (SDAIE), Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) strategies, and scaffolding, are supported with a tiered response (RTI) to intervention to assure success of all students

**c. *Social and Emotional Needs: Describe the programs, resources, and services (internal and external) that the school will provide in order to meet the social and emotional needs of the students you serve.***

Vista has several internal and external programs, resources and services to meet the social and emotional needs of both our families and our students. Students are identified for services, programs and resources through a variety of channels, depending on the individual needs, which include teacher, administrator, nurse, psychologist, coordinators, counselor, dean, and parent or student request. Special Vista programs include:

The "HEART" Team (Human Efforts Aimed at Relating Together): Selects students who are identified as "Natural Leaders." They meet weekly to discuss school issues relevant to student life. Issues range from school gang issues, drug activity, bullying incidents, etc.

Youth Services and Afterschool All-stars: Offers direct instructional support, with a daily hour of tutoring, in the form of one trained adult to work with 17-20 students on homework. The second component to the program is "Blast-Off," which creates enrichment activities such as Cheer, Gardening, Cooking, Fashion, Folklorico, etc. In addition to these regular workshops, field trip opportunities are also scheduled from time to time.

AYM-Awakening Young Minds: Holds 2-3 day group intervention workshops, with selected students that focus on emotional and inter-personal relationships with school personnel, family, and friends.

OLWEOUS Bully Prevention Program (Los Angeles Department of Mental Health Services): A bully prevention council meets monthly to be proactive in dealing with incidences of bullying.

The IMPACT Program: A social-behavioral program created to support groups of 10-12 students, lead by one teacher, who meet on a weekly basis to discuss themes that include: drug addiction, gang membership, new-comers, suicide, cutters, grief, anger and depression.

In addition to the above programs, we have other student and family support services:

STUDENT SERVICES	FAMILY SERVICES
Why Try? – A strength-based approach to helping youth overcome their challenges in the areas of truancy, behavior and academics.	Parent classes offer a range of literacy and vocational training, as well as parenting support.
Access to counselors, deans, school-based psychologists and social workers meet students’ emotional needs in a more intimate setting.	School-based psychologist and social worker focus on family issues.
School mental health services and clinics provide medical support beyond the school site.	PTSA creates opportunities for parent involvement, volunteerism, fund-raising, and financial support.
Crisis intervention team that gives immediate response to major trauma events at school sites.	Community-based partnerships offer additional recreational, medical and after school supplemental support
Student Success Team is a vehicle for determining the ways to strategies to improve academic and behavioral success.	The IEP process provides individualized learning plans to support special education students in improving academic, emotional and behavioral success.

To increase a sense of personal identity and belonging, over 25 Vista clubs include: Students Run LA, Anti-Bullying, African American Students United, GLA (Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Alliance), Gardening Club, French Club, International Club, Chess Club, Battle of the Books, and others.

Students are monitored by the professionals serving them. The effectiveness of the programs are measured by anecdotal records, observations, ODR behavioral data, student/parent/teacher surveys, and ultimately, by our students’ academic improvement, high student retention and very high middle school student culmination rate.

- d. College and Career Readiness: Describe the specific programs that the school will provide to expose students to college and career opportunities as well as support them to be successful in whichever pathway they choose.**

In the main entrance of our school, we have a banner that reads “Vista Scholars are College Bound!” Our mascot is wearing a graduation cap and holding up a diploma. To support a college-culture, Vista creates specific opportunities for student exposure to college and career pathways including:

- college fair
- advisory class adoption of a college
- career fair
- financial aid planning through the counseling office
- field trips to local college campuses (UCLA, UCSB, Cal Lutheran, LMU, CSUN etc)
- participation in local and LAUSD college fairs
- college awareness program/parent summit.
- website with teacher bios and college history
- college t-shirts days
- college banners in all classrooms and the main hallways

We create the academic foundation students will need to fulfill their A-G requirement courses. Students also have a growing understanding of the many 21<sup>st</sup> Century career pathways available to them. This goal is accomplished through a variety of strategies that include:

- acceleration of supports for incoming 6<sup>th</sup> graders to insure their successful transition into high school through summer bridge programs; early interventions to begin in elementary school
- intensity of interventions for sixth, seventh and eighth grade students who are skill-deficient and have poor grades in English and math
- tracking of student progress through frequent analysis of data and student work to measure the effectiveness of instruction
- refinement of the college counseling process and implementation of “college awareness” programs to inform parents and students as early as elementary school about college access
- development of programs to increase the number of community partners to produce job information, internships, and scholarship support for our students

- e. School Calendar/Schedule: Describe the school calendar and daily schedule.**

Vista will utilize a 180-day calendar with a six period schedule for all students. Under our ESBMM governance model, we will maintain the existing block schedule of 101 minutes, which doubles the instructional minutes per day to enable project-based learning, a deeper understanding of subject matter concepts, and appropriate intervention/enrichment opportunities for all learners within the core. Students will typically participate in 3 classes per day, with the exception of Tuesdays, when they will attend shortened periods including all six subjects. Each day, students will have a 20 minute nutritional break, as well as a 30 minute lunch break. School

begins at 7:56 AM and ends at 3:00 PM, with the exception of Tuesdays, when the faculty participates in professional development and common planning from 1:30 to 3:00 PM.

Students and faculty will be grouped in one of three grade-level houses which are divided into Core Teams of interdisciplinary teachers. Each House is located on a grade-level specific floor of the main buildings, with the House counselor positioned on the same floor. This contiguous configuration allows for more convenient collaboration among the teachers. The physical education and electives teachers work across House and Core Team lines.

As a QEIA school, we use district determined norm charts and available resources to reduce class size. Teacher-student loads will be determined by the number of students assigned to each teacher team within the House.

A School Bell Schedule appears in Appendix. We will be following the LAUSD traditional calendar for middle schools.

**f. *Policies: Describe and/or attach the school's policies as they relate to retention, graduation, and student behavior.***

The policies at Vista that support our school culture are determined by multiple programs to promote a safe campus and a strong instructional program. Some of these policies outline instructional support mechanisms, while others establish a series of steps and interventions for behavior that violates our school rules and policy. The integration of our efforts with District programs and policies has yielded positive results, both socially and academically.

Our discipline program establishes clear expectations and has a progressive, over-arching philosophy: "Implementing Discipline and Consequences with Dignity and Respect." It incorporates the District's Discipline Policies, using the RTI Problem-Solving Model. A progressive and constructive approach is applied before resorting to more traditional methods.

Vista's has a positive behavior support plan. It utilizes the "Vista Bucks" rewards system, where students earn bucks for acts of citizenship, positive attitude, and modeling positive Vaquero spirit. These can be redeemed for school supplies and small prizes.

The Safety and Discipline committee has monthly meetings that focus on school safety and the culture of discipline. This committee consists of teachers, parents, deans, school police, campus aides, administrators and students. This committee oversees that all legal requirements and compliance issues from the District, state and federal governments are met within a timely manner and, more importantly, that they outline procedures and policies regarding discipline, safety, evacuation drills, lockdowns, and other components regarding school safety.

The committee has established alternatives to suspension such as study hall detention, campus beautification projects, in-house or class suspension, and team/parent conferences. While our daily attendance rate matches the average rate for the District, it is still our goal to further reduce absenteeism. This will largely depend upon the efforts of the attendance office and PSA counselor, as well as the classroom teachers, who closely monitor our attendance.

The District's ODR (Office of Discipline Referral) system produces information to better identify patterns of behavior and incidents of both students and teachers. This allows us to differentiate our PD based on teachers' needs in terms of classroom management. Student behavior documents reflecting dean referrals and suspensions are reviewed frequently. This allows for proactive intervention with behavioral issues and reduces the amount of time our students miss classroom instruction.

Policies are clearly communicated regarding: electronic devices, hall passes/vests, tardies, bully prevention, rules of conduct, and the progressive discipline policy. The policies are monitored and supervised by Vista personnel, including teachers, students, dean, campus aides, administration, counselors, PSA counselor, school psychologist, school police, probation officers, and the principal.

The retention and culmination policies reflect high expectations. Vista not only follows the District middle school culmination policy, but has added additional requirements to raise the bar. Students will complete digital portfolios, student-led conferences, and project-based learning assignments.

## **B-5. Parent and Community Engagement**

**a. Background: *Describe the community you will serve. Include an analysis of the strengths, assets, values and critical needs of the community.***

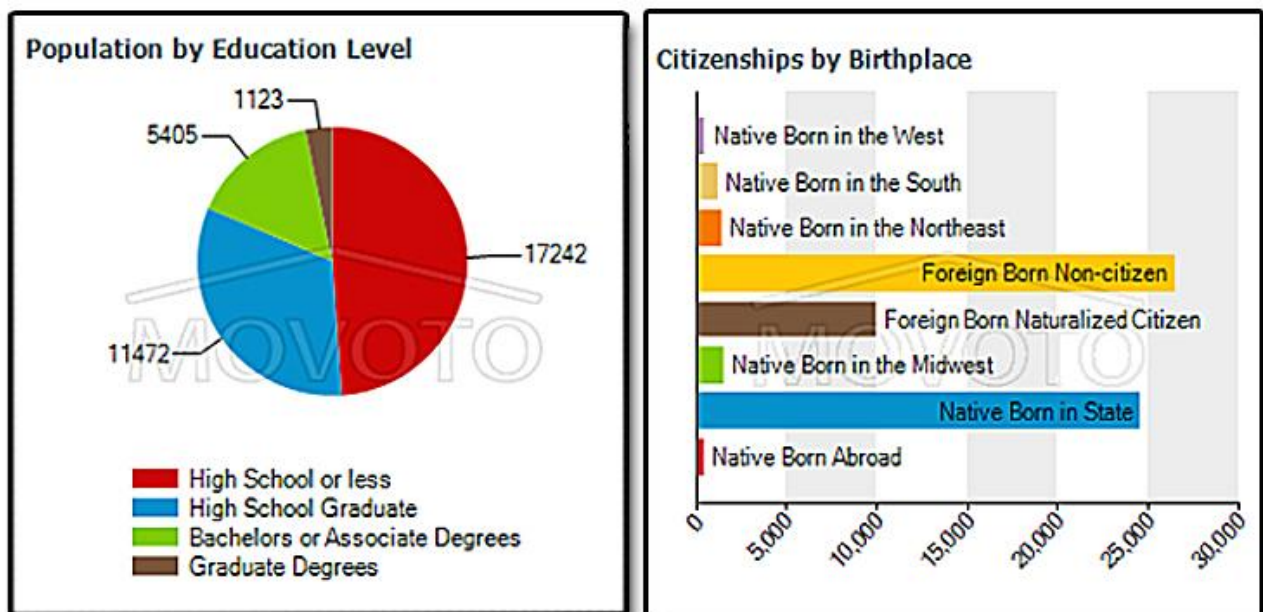
Vista is located in the heart of Panorama City. Shortly after WWII, this area was developed as a planned community by industrialist Henry J. Kaiser. Originally Kaiser and his partners barred non-European Americans from purchasing newly built homes. Integration did not take place until the Community Reinvestment Act of 1977.

Contrary to popular perception of the development of this area as a bedroom community, Panorama City originally included two major employers - General Motors and a massive Schlitz brewery that eventually became Anheuser-Busch. The General Motors factory opened in 1947 and generated thousands of local jobs, but in 1992 the plant was closed. The site was razed in 1998 and a retail and industrial complex, known as "The Plant", resulted on the site. The retail portion is home to 35 retail stores and restaurants. Although nowhere near the number of GM jobs lost, this center creates employment, convenient shopping, and resources for our families.

Vista is surrounded by small business owners, as well as major corporations such as: Anheuser-Busch, Galpin Motors, Wal-Mart and the Panorama Mall with 42 individual stores. Non-profit services and agencies that offer assistance to our families include: Hispanic Community Services, L.A. County Community Services, the S.F. Valley Volunteer Center, Fair Housing Council, *El Proyecto del Barrio*, *Casa Esperanza*, Mission Health Care, Early Intervention Services, and 22 local churches. The Los Angeles County Department of Health Services operates the Pacoima Health Center in nearby Pacoima, which serves Panorama City. The Vista Family Fitness Center serves the students, faculty and surrounding community. The Panorama High School pool acts as a community facility for swimming lessons and junior life saving certification courses.

Over 57% of our parents are not high school graduates. Due to a lack of work, we have a very mobile population creating a student transiency rate of nearly 23%. This creates inconsistency in our students’ educational development. Poverty prevails in our community with 99% of our students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch. Our community is not safe. Within a six month period, Panorama City had 184 violent crimes, 711 property crimes which are 128.5 crimes per 10,000 people. There are several rival gangs that constantly try to recruit our students and mar the area with graffiti. L.A. Police Dept. crime data reveals that our crime rates are six times higher than in surrounding residential communities.

In 2007 the Los Angeles Times Mapping L.A. estimated the population to be over 66,766, with a median household income of \$44,468. Most recent data from 2010 estimates the population to have grown to over 70,000, with a decline in average annual household income from \$44,468 to \$30,000. The racial composition of our Vista community is reported to be: 26% White, 5% African American, 11.60% Asian, 70.12% Hispanic or Latino and other races with Spanish being the dominant language of the community. The majority of our adults are foreign born non-citizens and those who have become citizens. The population attending Vista mirrors the community with over 92% Hispanic/Latino and nearly 80% of our students are English Learners.



Previously in this Community/Culture section, we described all of the family and student services that we offer at Vista. These services generate academic, emotional, health and social services for our students and families, so they will become educated, empowered, and these programs also lead to increased engagement of our parents. Both our instructional program and our school/community culture are aligned to our Vista Mission:

*In collaboration with all stakeholders and other schools in our community, Vista will maintain a safe and caring environment that fosters the social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development of all students and adults. By systematically aligning all our resources, we will implement an instructional program that prioritizes standards-based curriculum utilizing project-based learning and writing across the curriculum. Within this context, students will*

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*develop key 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills as they explore the career themes of: Technology, Environment, Arts, Media, Science/Math (T.E.A.M.S.) through learning experiences that focus on meeting the challenges of daily life and the future. At Vista, we believe that knowledge is power, and this power is our students' passport to success as they continue their education.*

In designing our instructional program, we looked at our demographic data, observed the problems and resources in our community, and listened to our parents who insisted that their top priorities were: 1) for their students to be safe in our schools; and 2) that their children become prepared for the workforce and college. At Vista our instructional program and school culture respond to our community in the following ways:

- With a high population of English Learners a focus on language development and communication skills is essential to our students' future success.
- Curriculum is focused on the development of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills and preparing students for college admission. Promoting college awareness is a top priority for our program.
- English is not the spoken language in most students' homes so Vista must offer help with homework after school through our many enrichment and intervention programs.
- Children are not safe to play in the neighborhood and our school organizes many after-school activities, so they can enjoy safe recreation and relationships on the school site.
- Along with other community agencies, we offer adult education, healthcare referrals, job training, classes in computers, parenting skills and legal referral resources.
- In collaboration with local agencies, we create safe passage for our students and implement many anti-gang programs and other crime prevention educational services

A major aspect of the articulation among the VRES#13, Vista, Panorama High School, and Cal Burke Continuation will be the consolidation of school-based and community services to support all of our families. The idea of forming the Panorama City Community Partnership (PCCP) is to create a "one-stop center" for parents to secure support, resources and information. By engaging the businesses, churches, city and county agencies, non-profits, law enforcement and mental/medical services we will create a more efficient distribution of services.

Another focus of the partnership will be to consolidate information on various school site events, classes, social and entertainment activities for students and families and to maintain a website informational portal for the entire community. In order to truly improve our Vista culture, we have to also change the culture and climate of our entire community.

**b. Strategies: *Describe your team's history and experience serving this or a similar community. .***

Vista was established in 2004 with a small, but committed staff. Over the years, Vista has actively sought professionals to join the staff who live in the surrounding area, those who have worked in communities with similar socio-economic demographics, and particularly teachers and administrators who are bilingual. Not only does this aid in communicating with our students and families, it assures sensitivity to the needs of our families. Annual parent surveys evidence that our parents feel welcome and trust our staff to educate their children. We have a very active



parent group who have made major contributions to this PSC process and support our Vista vision and mission.

A focus on the importance of improving parent engagement and strategies to do so is evidenced in the work of Robert Marzano in which he states, “Schools that involve parent and community members in their day-to-day operations and have outside resources and support to the school, report lower absenteeism, truancy and dropout rates.” (Marzano, 2003) It has been proven that fostering the role of parents in the planning process, design of the instructional program, and school management will increase parents’ roles as advocates for school throughout the community. This leads to higher grades, more students passing classes, better attendance, and better development of social skills, fewer discipline problems and higher graduation rates. Critical to engaging parents is the development of effective parent education models that are culturally relevant. (Henderson & Mapp, 2002)

Our research on effective parent engagement models for communities like ours has led us to the Dr. Joyce Epstein’s (Johns Hopkins University) model framework to encourage parent involvement. These standards for involvement reflect the expectations by parents participating in our school:

- Communication between home and school will be regular, two-way, and meaningful. It will include written correspondence, email, a school website, and the use of ConnectEd. Parent meetings and our Vista Parent Center will provide additional information.
- Parenting skills will be promoted and supported through parent education and engagement activities offered at the school and through the new Panorama City Community Partnership (PCCP.)
- Parents will feel welcome in the school, and their support and assistance will be sought and valued at all types of events and during the school day.
- Parents will be full partners in the decisions that affect children and active members of ESBMM Council and other advisory councils.
- The PCCP resources will be used to strengthen schools, families, and student learning through community collaboration.

Vista’s goal is to make certain that we educate parents to make informed decisions about their child’s educational process. Community input is vital to the success of Vista; engaging affected families, students, and community members into the decision process will be one of our priorities. All stakeholders will be encouraged to play an important roll in Vista’s educational process by having a member of their organization attend monthly meetings to create representation of each group.

As part of our PSC plan, Vista will be part of a full-service Panorama City Community Partnership (PCCP) that will actively collaborate to maintain a one-stop community center that will service the Panorama complex. Our vision is to have a community center that will deliver the following services and use multiple strategies to engage our parents and greater community:

- health referrals
- translation services for parents, teachers, and community members
- information on tutoring, academic intervention, social and emotional counseling

- parent summits for the entire Panorama complex of schools
- parenting classes, job training classes, ESL
- community garden project that will give food to families in need
- Panorama City and school site beautification projects that cross grade levels
- community choirs, orchestras, theatre groups (adult and children)
- gang intervention, crime prevention, and community safety classes
- community entertainment at schools (i.e. movie nights, picnics, holiday parties)
- access to our Vista Family Fitness Center exercise classes, Panorama HS Pool
- coordination of all local volunteer services from community businesses and agencies

Our proactive marketing strategies to communicate with and engage parents will consist of advertising our events and services through: PCCP website, local newspapers, mail, e-mails, phone calls, marquee announcements, passing out flyers through the PCCP, local parent centers, displaying posters near local business and all feeder elementary schools/high schools. All information will be published in English and Spanish.

Parents will be encouraged and trained to assume leadership roles on all of our school management leadership councils. Vista strategies to engage parents in the educational experience include: Open House, Back to School Night, student-led conferences, parent-faculty conferences, college counseling, college and career fairs, and parent support of our many social activities, student performances and special award events. Our parents will be kept closely informed of their students' progress through report cards, progress reports, periodic assessment data, calls from teachers, and the use of the SST, COST and IEP processes. LAUSD has unveiled a new *ISIS* program enabling our Vista parents to interact with the school and view certain information.

At Vista our parent programs are directed and supervised by the Leadership Team, however all teachers are responsible to maintain close communication with our parents and support them in every way possible. Our on-site Vista Parent Center Coordinator is responsible to make information available to parents, help them deal with our student-teacher relations and train parents for leadership roles.

**c. Key Community Partnerships: *Discuss the specific ways in which community members will be included in the ongoing success of the school.***

Vista has developed relationships with key partners over the past seven years and will be developing new partnerships to meet, not just the needs of our school, but those of the entire Panorama City community. Our goals are to support learning in our complex of schools and improve the community, and will be accomplished by creating the Panorama City Community Partnership (PCCP.) The purpose of the PCCP is not just to bring together community members to donate to our schools, but to unite all of the entities in the community so they can communicate and work together in ways to promote safety, and success for everyone. A key role of the PCCP is to act as a central clearing house for information and to ease access to events, information and services throughout the community.



Many of the businesses, such as Walmart, Home Depot and large retailers have organized employee volunteer programs. We will coordinate these volunteer programs and centralize grant solicitation to achieve maximum benefits from these resources. We want our students to work hand in hand with parents and community people on city projects such as clean up, tree planting, creation of murals, etc. In our first year Vista will act as the “hub” to coordinate the formation of the PCCP. Our dream is to secure a site in the community that could house a PCCP center where we could provide many services in addition to those offered at school sites. Each school will continue to maintain individual parent centers working collaboratively with the PCCP.

Over the next five years, our PCCP will develop several new partnerships. Our focus in year one will be to coordinate mental and medical health service agencies and social services across the complex such as *Casa Esperanza*, MEND, S.F. Valley Volunteer Center, Fair Housing Council, LAUSD school site clinics (Kennedy HS and Columbus MS), Northridge Medical Center, Kaiser, and L.A. County Health Services. We will also focus on enlisting our Board Member’s staff, the Panorama City Council, local law enforcement, gang prevention agencies, our Los Angeles city council members and staff from our county supervisor. We will invite partners such as the Mid-valley Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Alliance of the S.F. Valley to be part of PCCP. We will also coordinate with the L.A. Dept. of Parks and Recreation and local YMCA who deliver free and low cost recreation and classes for our families.

In years two through five our focus will be on the 22 local churches, community colleges, and local business partners including all the major retailers, banks and small businesses. We want these businesses to be successful and support education in our schools as well. Businesses that join the PCCP will be recognized for their support with a plaque for their business site, in the PCCP newsletter, on the website, and at events. A few of the business partnerships we will cultivate include: Ross, Walmart, Mission Hospital, Kaiser Permanente, Galpin Ford, Staples, Nutrition Network, and Food4Less.

In addition to the list above we will invite participation from individual small businesses and the 42 retailers in the Panorama City Mall, and those in the Plant retail center.

Teachers, parents and administrators will be responsible to develop and coordinate partnership events throughout the PCCP. Our goal is to fund the PCCP through multiple community grants from our partners allowing us to have full time staff to support the various services. Walmart, Target, Home Depot, Domino's Pizza, Foot Locker, Food4Less, all have grant programs to support agencies to improve communities. Other grants to support our PCCP are available through many local foundations such as the: California Wellness Foundation, California Endowment, the California Community Foundation and the Dwight Stuart Foundation.

All partners in the PCCP will be eligible to be part of the partnership governance/management board. Teachers, parents, and administrators will be responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of each partnership and to constantly explore options for new partnerships. School-based parent center coordinators will also work with the PCCP staff to connect their schools to the PCCP center. Our PCCP Center Liaison will play an important role in disseminating information and keeping all stakeholders well informed on current events. A web-based newsletter and a monthly calendar will be an ideal way to keep all of our partners informed of what is going on throughout the community. All information will be in both English and Spanish.

In terms of accomplishing our mission, one of the most significant partnerships for Vista and our complex of schools is with Cal State University, Northridge. CSUN and Local District 1 have an established partnership in which schools from the elementary to the high school level receive many types of services that support instruction, cultural opportunities and increased college awareness for our students and families. Some of the services include:

- student visitations to the Performing Arts Center rehearsal events
- training for new teachers at various sites
- student participation in CSUN's summer program for visual and performing arts
- professor and graduate students acting as teacher mentors
- information, tours, counseling for parents on college admissions
- professional development in specific discipline areas, i.e. math, science, Writing Across the Curriculum, project-based learning implementation
- counseling services offered by CSUN graduate students

Over the next five years this CSUN partnership with our Panorama City schools will be expanded. We are working with the CSUN liaison and intend to include a calendar of events that take place at CSUN on our PCCP website to inform our families know about opportunities available at CSUN (i.e. plays, musical events, theatre, observatory events, science fairs, health fairs, career days, college visitations, etc.)

Partnerships must be a two way street, a win-win for both parties. Because of their constant quest for excellence in all that they do, CSUN will be frequently evaluating the effectiveness of their programs in our complex of schools. This continuous evaluation cycle will originate valuable feedback to both CSUN and our schools in terms of what types of programs and resources the university can deliver to best support learning and growth for our students and the community over all.

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**Category Three: Leadership that Supports High Achievement for Students and Staff****B-6. School Governance and Oversight**

***a. School Type: Briefly explain the rationale for applying to operate your school as a Traditional, Pilot, Expanded School-Based Management Model (ESBMM), Network Partner, Affiliated Charter or Independent Charter school.***

Vista considered various governance models, knowing that in LD1, autonomy must always be balanced with responsibility, responsiveness, and constant accountability. The ESBMM model is an ideal complement to the mission, vision, and educational plan at Vista, because it permits collaborative decision-making, inclusive participation of all stakeholders, flexible fiscal budgeting, and local allocation of resources to meet the needs of all students and staff.

ESBMM will support these key programmatic elements:

- improve student achievement, maintain flexibility, accountability, and local control
- support our House and Core Team models as well as Advisories within the school
- establish and sustain accountabilities for essential instructional strategies of project-based learning, development of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, and Writing Across the Curriculum

ESBMM allows us to build our specialized instructional program using: block scheduling, the design and implementation of an innovative K-12 project-based learning curriculum, professional development designed around various teacher groupings, and multiple types of assessment strategies that will prepare our students for college and success in life and careers.

The School Leadership Council will adhere to Article XXVII Shared Decision-Making and School Based Management, as described in the LAUSD collective Bargaining Agreements, except for a specific waiver. Oversight will be the responsibility of the council that will be co-chaired by the principal and Chapter Chair. The council will exercise control over:

- funding to the local school site based on the State ADA and categorical funding framework
- financial resources
- selection of administrative, certificated, and classified employees
- curriculum
- professional development
- bell schedules

In September 2011, the entire faculty voted that, beginning September 2012, Vista would convert to an ESBMM governance model. In the spirit of ESBMM collaborative governance, the Leadership Council will be elected. Many of the challenges normally associated with adopting an ESBMM model have been met through this PSC planning process. Required meetings of various advisory committees and school site councils will be scheduled.

While all of the committees have important specific areas of decision making that impact Vista, they overlap in their effects on the general instructional program. The process we will use to create real and meaningful participation in decision-making is that decisions will be made by consensus in each of the committees, and these resolutions will become the ultimate guidance to the School Site Council or Leadership Council, depending on their governance domains.

If we determine that major decisions impacting Vista should have input from broader stakeholder representation, we will gather opinions using written, online, and telephone surveys, focus groups, interviews, principal coffee meetings, and specially scheduled community meetings. On significant policy issues, we would even consider mailing out ballots to Vista parents and community members. We will also maintain a suggestion box in the front office encouraging students, teachers, parents and staff members to drop in their ideas or concerns about what is going on in the academy

***b. School Level Committees: Describe the decision-making bodies and general areas of responsibility for each body that will exist in the school.***

The Vista School Site Council will be formed following Education Code 62002.5 and 52852. The council shall be composed of: the principal; classroom teachers; other school personnel elected by their peers; parents of pupils attending the school and community members elected by parents. Classroom teachers are a majority of the staff representation. Members of the Leadership Council and various committees will also be elected by representatives from all the stakeholder groups.

The responsibilities of the governing council will include the six areas of ESBMM control, previously cited. The council will be an active group that regularly and systematically reviews data, student performance and input from the community and staff. The council will also make recommendations to align vision and practice. All council members will serve for one year; members may run again for the same or other offices in future years.

The governing councils make decisions in specific areas outlined in this proposal. The principal is co-chair along with the UTLA Chapter Chair. Minutes from meetings will be available, and major decisions made within the committees will be shared with each governing body, so there is consistency in the approach to implementing the instructional program

In addition, the English Learners Advisory Council and the Compensatory Education Advisory Councils will be formed, based on the appropriate District, state and federal composition guidelines for each council. These groups are responsible for oversight and accountability for the funds and programs for EL and Title I expenditures. Members of these councils will also be elected by stakeholder representatives.

***c. Governing Council: Pilot schools only. Not Applicable***

**B-7. School Leadership**

- a. *Principal Selection: Describe the criteria for selecting a leader for the school, and explain how these characteristics align with your school's unique mission and vision. A principal job description appears in the Appendix.*

Our principal selection process must mirror our values of collaboration and shared decision making, which means selecting our school administrator, will involve many stakeholders in our learning community. We will also abide by the District and ESBMM rules for this process:

- 1) The principal selection committee will be composed of no more than eight representatives from the following groups: a representative from Local District 1, UTLA Chapter Chair, and selected members from Vista's SLC that included an administrator, two teachers, one classified personnel, a parent of current a Vista student, and a selected community partner.
- 2) The selection committee will submit the names of three candidates to the local district superintendent who will make the final selection.

Any principal candidate will have to meet the requirements for credentials and experience as stated by the District's Department of Human Resources in the Secondary Principal Job Description (See Appendix) Vista's principal will be selected based on the individual's ability to successfully transform Vista's vision and mission into practice. The principal will first and foremost be an instructional leader whose priority is student learning and the maintenance of a challenging learning environment for Vista's student body. The principal will be creative and innovative through the use of current research and data to implement a dynamic, standards-based curriculum that prioritized project-based learning, writing across the curriculum, and the development of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills. The principal will value human resources and be an effective communicator that will collaborate with all stakeholders. The principal will foster communication within our complex of schools and engage parents, businesses, churches and service agencies to create a new educational culture developed around a Panorama City Community Partnership.

Vista's Current Principal

Mrs. Castro has been the principal of Vista for the last two school years. Previously, she was an assistant principal at Cleveland High and instrumental in designing and implementing key instructional change that resulted in a six-year WASC accreditation, and achieving the designation of a California Distinguished School. Since coming to Vista, Mrs. Castro has led the faculty in revamping the instructional program and developing innovative support systems. Teachers were able to voice opinions, hypothesize, and create continuous assessments to improve student outcomes. The result of these changes was a 52 point gain in the API score for 2010-2011.

There are multiple examples of Mrs. Castro's leadership accomplishments that demonstrate her capacity to be an instructional, transformational and cultural leader. She has:

- revived the use of the Instructional Leadership Team
- established an EL lab
- redesigned advisory period for targeted intervention

- created a teacher feedback form for administrators to use during teacher observations
- articulated feeder school professional development
- facilitated peer-observation opportunities

In April 2011, an administrative survey was given to the staff by the Professional Development Committee as a tool for reflection for our administrative team. This survey allowed the staff to express comments anonymously. Mrs. Castro's numerical results were favorable in all categories.

Mrs. Castro's leadership is evident in the innovative way she has matched our school's needs with the exacting budget structures of QEIA, Title I, EL as well as the school's other budgets. By using the funding in this manner she has enabled teachers to have resources, technology, and program support needed to direct student achievement on an upward trajectory.

Another one of our principal's strengths is her ability to connect with the parents and the community. Monthly "Coffee with the Principal" sessions have allowed her to glean information and respond to the desires of parents. The outcomes of these and other meeting have resulted in the following: Parent Summits, opening the library to the community during Saturday school, and ongoing parent education classes. She has modeled positive, respectful interactions with parents, teachers, students, and staff.

It is the third day of the 2011-2012 school year and Mrs. Nidia Castro has visited every advisory class, delivering this personal message to students. They are focused on her every word, smile and sit taller in their seats with her praise, and receive her challenge with respect and anticipation as they begin another year of becoming engaged learners.

"Students, I want to welcome you back to Vista and congratulate you on the wonderful work you did last year to grow our API score by 52 points! We are not done, and we begin today toward this year's goal of a 700 API score. We will work hard, but we will accomplish our goal because you know how important your education is to your future success. Your teachers, administrators and all staff at Vista are going to help you to become successful in all you do!"

***b. Leadership Team: Identify any leadership positions beyond the principal position.***

Our Leadership Team (Instructional Leadership Team-ILT) will consist of the Principal, UTLA Chapter Chair, department chairs, instructional coaches, bridge coordinator, Title 1 coordinator, bilingual coordinator, three parents/community representatives (one from ELAC, one from Title 1, one from SSC appointed by their respective council by majority vote), one classified support staff member and the student body president.

The role and responsibility of the ILT is a continuous evaluation of student progress and performance. Examination of student data and other relevant information is an integral and frequent aspect of every ILT meeting. The ultimate goal of the ILT is to objectively disseminate data and encourage critical thinking to help teachers continually improve their practice



throughout their careers. Also, the ILT exists to make improvements on the school wide instructional plan if necessary, and receive and solicit recommendations from staff and community members as the ILT regularly assesses student and teacher achievement throughout the year. The ILT reviews both summative and formative indicators of achievement, plan and coordinate the dissemination of data to departments, and guide instructional decision-making. All findings and recommendations are reported to SLC and SSC.

A noteworthy study of over 100 schools found that the solution to creating successful schools lies in developing the connection between high quality school leadership, effective instruction, and high student performance. (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2006) The faculty and staff at Vista believe that there is a strong correlation between possessing an effective leadership structure and strong student performance. Enhancing the academic experience for our students is our utmost priority. Assessing and promoting their achievement is accomplished through a collaborative approach to overcome critical problems faced by the staff and student population on campus.

The ILT will foster a cooperative and positive environment where all viewpoints, however differing, are respected and given consideration with the understanding that what unites all members is the advancement and benefit of the students and all those who make up the Vista community. As a result of direct involvement amongst stakeholders, Vista will focus on professional learning which will produce a collegial and collaborative environment. All decisions will be made on a consensus basis. Improved instructional practice is most likely to occur when there is “a common understanding of good teaching.” (Danielson, 2010)

To hone our skills as leaders we will continually welcome training from LD1 and business partners. Selected readings will be required during the year to better our leadership capacity. The ILT must always be prepared to question the status quo and utilize training and data while making decisions and developing improved instructional methods for classroom use. Leadership training will be used to create a culture of accountability with thorough discussion and cooperation from all Vista community members.

The focus for expanding teacher, parent, and administrator leadership skills is to tap the inside resources and capitalize on our existing excellence in other successful Local District 1 schools. Vista leadership professional development support will assist our school leaders in: 1) learning how to make better decisions faster by using data and challenging assumptions; 2) increasing accountability for progress on goals and setting priorities for action items; 3) over-coming isolation by sharing their experiences and perspectives on the tough issues facing these schools; and, 4) focusing on change and school transformation – starting it, managing it, and embracing the community in the all out effort.

## **B-8. Staff Recruitment and Evaluation<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Note that staffing plans must be aligned with District and union agreements regarding staffing, recruitment, and performance reviews. Applicants requesting staffing autonomies must submit waivers for approval (see Part C: Internal Management of the application below).

Vista will implement a hiring committee appointed by the School Leadership Council. The hiring committee will be responsible for interviewing candidates for administrative, certificated, and classified positions. After interviewing such candidates, the hiring committee will make recommendations to the School Leadership Council for the hiring of new employees. The hiring committee will have seven seats and will be constituted as follows:

- the Principal and the UTLA chapter chair will serve as co-chairs
- one parent
- one classified employee
- three teachers from the department in which the position is open

As an existing LAUSD school, all staffing plans will be aligned with District and union agreement regarding staffing, recruitment, and performance review. Vista will recruit, staff, and compensate personnel in all certificated and administrative positions in accordance with the following Articles from the LAUSD/UTLA (certificated) and LAUSD/AALA (administrative) Collective Bargaining Agreements.

Classified employees will be recruited in accordance with standards and evaluation tools set forth in applicable existing collective bargaining agreements.

**a. *Staffing Model. Discuss the academic and non-academic staffing needs of the school from start-up through year three.***

Vista will be implementing interdisciplinary teaming to accomplish the goals of our vision and mission. All students will benefit from interdisciplinary teaming. According to Flowers, “The implementation of teaming is a school accomplishes many things: creating smaller learning communities, enabling teachers to better know students, and eliminating the anonymity at school...an increase of common planning time with interdisciplinary team members is associated with higher student achievement.” A benefit of teaming is a common conference period that allows for teacher to collaborate, identifying student needs, increase parent contact, and promoting a positive work climate for all.

Interdisciplinary teaming facilitates the implementation of Vista’s instructional plan. Project - based learning and Writing Across the Curriculum requires high levels of teacher collaboration. Interdisciplinary teaming assures the opportunity for teachers to design rigorous, well planned, cross-curricular projects infusing 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills that include collaboration, communication and critical thinking.

In order to achieve Vista’s vision and mission, our staffing needs for the next year will include those positions listed below. These numbers are based upon projected student enrollment, funding, and compliance with QEIA grant requirements which stipulate that all core academic classes will be 25:1 with no core academic class at more than 27 students.

- 67 Classroom Teachers (25 to 1 ratio in core classes)
- 8 Special Education Teachers
- 4 Resource Teachers

- 3 Grade Level Counselors
- 1 Dean of Students
- 1 RTI Behavior Coordinator
- 1 Title 1 Coordinator
- 1 Bilingual Coordinator
- 1 Bridge Coordinator
- 3 Instructional Coach
- 1 School Psychologist
- 1 School Nurse
- 1 PSA Counselor
- 1 half-time Psychiatric Social Worker
- 1 Assistant Principal, SCS
- 2 Assistant Principals
- 1 Principal

Depending on the number of Gifted, EL and Special Education students, staff will be hired using the LAUSD staffing guidelines for specialized instruction. All Special Education students will benefit from having highly qualified teachers. Special Day students will incorporate the Learning Center into their weekly lessons, which will allow the resource teacher staff to work with them on targeted skills. Using the collaborative teaching model, two highly qualified teachers will support our resource students in English and math classes. The Bridge coordinator, resource teachers, and the professional development committee will support both special education and general education to make certain all students have access to the general education curriculum.

English Learners students will be taught by highly qualified teachers, additionally students will also benefit from para-professionals assisting in the classroom. EL students will take a weekly session in the ESL Laboratory. This lab will be updated weekly and students will be attended by their teacher, the lab coach and the para-professional allowing for individualized attention. The bilingual coordinator will work with the Professional Development Committee to design strategies which will benefit not only our EL students but all our students.

#### Staffing Year Two

In year two the school will add a full time Psychiatric Social Worker to address the needs of or at risk students who need additional support. Two Parent Center staff will be needed to increase our parent classes and activities. All other staff will remain the same to meet the requirements of the QEIA grant.

#### Staffing Year Three

Year three will continue our QEIA grant ratio. We will hire an additional foreign language teacher, and math teacher to move students towards successful A-G requirements.

- b. *Recruitment and Selection of Teachers. Describe the criteria the school will use to select teachers, and explain how the criteria align with your school's unique mission and vision.***

Vista will look for committed individuals who have the energy and interest to actively support the school's mission, vision and instructional goals. All teacher applicants interviewed will be ranked for potential hiring, not just on the basis of their experience, but also for their enthusiasm, willingness to be part of a real learning community, and be committed to:

- developing and delivering standards-based instruction in a variety of learning modalities (i.e., English Language Learner, Special Education, and Gift and Talented)
- working in interdisciplinary Core Teams
- integrating 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills into the instructional program
- incorporating the use of technology into all assignments
- designing project-based learning
- infusing Writing Across the Curriculum
- using the RTI problem-solving model along with analyzing student data to guide instructional practices
- participating in development of the Panorama City Community Partnership
- creating positive parent-teacher interactions
- implementing the school-site professional development and pursuing professional growth outside of Vista

Staff Selection procedures will follow all District guidelines for ESBMM schools:

- The selection committee will be composed of the House lead teachers, department chairs, administrators, principal, and our UTLA representative.
- Candidates will be given a traditional interview with the selection committee.
- Applicants will submit a professional resume, an application letter explaining why they would like to teach at our school; at least one letter of recommendation from a previous supervisor/principal and at least one letter of recommendation from a community partner/student/teacher with whom they have worked.

The Leadership Team will formulate job descriptions that delineate the specific qualities and responsibilities for each classroom staff position. Teacher staffing will be done in accordance with the LAUSD Bargaining Agreements and norms for student to teacher ratios. At the end of the process, the committee will make the final decisions through consensus.

***c. Performance Reviews. Describe the development, evaluation, and support process for teachers, administrators, and other certificated staff.***

The Teacher Evaluation model will be based on the California Professional Teaching Standards and aligned with the District's union agreements, taking into consideration the newly developing teacher evaluation process. This model aligns with several of the District's recommendations in the Three-Year Strategic Plan for Improving Teacher Effectiveness. In addition to District Staff evaluations, teachers will be encouraged to develop digital professional growth portfolios to share accomplishments (i.e. project-based learning projects and successful lesson plans), continuing professional education (workshops, conferences, and professional reading), contributions beyond the teaching day (club sponsorship, committee participation, etc.), and examples of collaboration. We are striving for a holistic approach to evaluation that touches on all areas of professional performance that impact the success of our students.

A very significant aspect of our teacher evaluation will be to make it a positive learning experience that will help teachers grow and perfect their teaching skills. If teachers need extra help or support, their subject matter peers, House or team colleagues will design whatever assistance is needed to bring the teacher's skills up to the expectation of the group. Professional development will be designed to compensate for the areas in which a teacher or group of teachers may need special training and mentoring.

Key elements we will develop into our evaluation system will be aligned to the District's adopted system for teacher evaluation and values that support our mission, vision and goals and will include:

- multiple measures using various sources of student outcome data, formative and summative
- administrator evaluation of instructional delivery
- administrator review of teacher's portfolio of assessments, assignments, student work and projects
- administrator evaluation on meeting needs of students under the Modified Consent Decree

The School Leadership Council will develop an annual teacher evaluation tool to be used to evaluate administrators' contribution to student outcomes and an establishment of a productive relationship with the school community. The principal, along with all faculty and staff, will be held accountable for results in terms of implementing core values and beliefs as stated in the Vista vision and mission. This includes the support for implementation of rigorous curriculum and best practices in the classroom, ensuring that each and every student gets what is needed to achieve goals and be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The principal will also be held responsible for operational and management services, maintaining the school culture, supervision of the staff, and meeting Adequate Yearly Progress goals, as required under No Child Left Behind.

The local superintendent and director, along with input from teachers and staff, will have the charge of evaluating the principal's over-all performance in the above areas. This process will be aligned with the District and union agreement. The principal will be held accountable to the standards established by LAUSD that describe the roles and duties of an effective principal. A scoring rubric will be used rating the principal's performance. Based on these standards, our administrator will be an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by:

- facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community
- advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth
- ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient and effective learning environment.
- collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interest and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
- modeling a personal code of ethics and developing professional leadership capacity

Classified employees will be evaluated in accordance with standards and evaluation tools set forth in applicable existing collective bargaining agreements.

**B-9. Sharing a Campus Not Applicable****C. INTERNAL MANAGEMENT**

*This section is applicable to internal and Network Partner teams only. Briefly highlight the areas in which autonomies are necessary for the implementation of your Instructional Plan and proposed budget development process.*

**C-1. Waivers. Identify what, if any, waivers from LAUSD Collective Bargaining Agreements are needed to support and ensure the successful implementation of the school.**

**Not Applicable**

**C-2. Budget Development: For Traditional, ESBMM, Pilot and Network Partner Schools.**

Just as in the governance decisions for the school, the spirit of transparency, collaboration, and cooperation will determine how we allocate our District and other supplemental funds. All stakeholders will receive training in the budget development process which will be transparent and clear for all to understand. The budget process will be timely and closely managed at the school level, and shall include and inform all stakeholders on a regular basis. The proposed Leadership Team will advise and/or approve the expenditure of District funds and categorical budgets. Decisions for expenditures are based on analysis of data, identification of achievement goals, and social/emotional needs of students in order to support the operations and instructional programs. Agendas and minutes from the budget development meetings will be maintained to document that the budget was developed collaboratively with all stakeholders and that the budget is appropriately implemented at the school.

The principal and other designees, such as coordinators and the school administrative assistant, will meet at least once a semester with the fiscal specialist to review position control numbers and salaries for all of its employees. The principal will also meet once a month with the school financial manager to review monthly reports and at least once a semester with the school financial manager and the district's coordinating financial manager to assess expenditures for the semester.

Administrators and categorical program coordinators, in conjunction with ELAC, CEAC, and SSC, will collaborate with the district's federal and state education program coordinator to be certain budget adjustment requests, Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA) updates, and equipment inventories are properly executed and in compliance with the State's Categorical Program Monitoring (CPM). Finally, the annual Budget and Justification pages will be aligned to our school's Single Plan and in compliance with all educational codes.

Vista currently receives funding based upon the student average daily attendance, categorical funds such as the state's Quality Education Improvement Act (QEIA) grant, Title I and English Learners. During the 2010-2011 school year, the amount of categorical and grants funds amounted to more than \$ 2.5 million. These monies were used to fund personnel positions that included: 21 teachers to maintain a 25:1 ratio in core academic classes, a counselor, a full time PSW, a full time PSA Counselor, a full time nurse, a full time school psychologist, two office

technicians, four full time campus aides, a full time bridge coordinator, an intervention coordinator, four instructional coaches, and an administrator.

Vista utilizes budget autonomy via transparent budgeting in order that all expenses are aligned with the school’s vision, instructional programs and goals as outlined in the SPSA. Transparent budgeting is achieved through the budget development process that is conducted on an annual basis by the School Site Council (SSC) with the recommendations from parent advisory councils for both the Compensatory Education Advisory Council (CEAC), and the English Learner Advisory Council (ELAC). The principal and the categorical program advisors manage the budgets on a daily basis, while the SLC and SSC monitor them at monthly council meetings. SSC meeting agendas and minutes are posted publicly, providing details of budget expenditures and requests are reported by the principal, categorical advisors and teachers.

Vista’s budgetary priorities from start-up through year three, evidence a commitment to smaller class sizes in the core academic classes, personalization for students via grade level counselors, supplemental instructional resources, interventions resource, and funding to enhance professional development opportunities. Budgetary priorities for the first three years include administrative, clerical, safety and instructional support.

Year	Budget Priorities
2012-2013	<p>All staffing priorities are beyond the norms established by LAUSD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core Academic staff to maintain 25:1 ratio in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades</li> <li>• Core Academic staff to maintain 23:1 ratio in 8<sup>th</sup> grade</li> <li>• Grade level counselors</li> <li>• Social Emotional Support (PSA Counselor, PSW, Psychologist)</li> <li>• Instructional support (Coaches, Specialists, Coordinators)</li> <li>• Campus Aides</li> <li>• Administrators/Temporary Advisors</li> <li>• Classified Support</li> <li>• Safety support (Campus Aides, Deans)</li> <li>• Supplemental instructional and Intervention Resources</li> <li>• Professional Development</li> <li>• Conference Attendance</li> </ul>
2013-2014	<p>All staffing priorities are beyond the norms established by LAUSD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core Academic staff to maintain 25:1 ratio in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades</li> <li>• Core Academic staff to maintain 23:1 ratio in 8<sup>th</sup> grade</li> <li>• Grade level counselors</li> <li>• Social Emotional Support (PSA Counselor, PSW, Psychologist)</li> <li>• Instructional support (Coaches, Specialists, Coordinators)</li> <li>• Campus Aides</li> <li>• Administrators/Temporary Advisors</li> <li>• Classified Support</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety support (Campus Aides, Deans)</li> <li>• Supplemental instructional and Intervention Resources</li> <li>• Professional Development</li> <li>• Conference Attendance</li> </ul>
<b>2014-2015</b>	<p>All staffing priorities are beyond the norms established by LAUSD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core Academic staff to maintain 25:1 ratio in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades</li> <li>• Core Academic staff to maintain 23:1 ratio in 8<sup>th</sup> grade</li> <li>• Grade level counselors</li> <li>• Social Emotional Support (PSA Counselor, PSW, Psychologist)</li> <li>• Instructional support (Coaches, Specialists, Coordinators)</li> <li>• Campus Aides</li> <li>• Administrators/Temporary Advisors</li> <li>• Classified Support</li> <li>• Safety support (Campus Aides, Deans)</li> <li>• Supplemental instructional and Intervention Resources</li> <li>• Professional Development</li> <li>• Conference Attendance</li> </ul>

The SSC is ultimately responsible for the creating and approving the annual school budgets for categorical and grant-funded programs, with recommendations from the CEAC and ELAC parent advisory councils. SSC is comprised of 16 members: principal, five certificated staff, two classified staff/other, five parents/community members and three students.

**D. OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT**

**D-1. Portfolio Development**

- a. *Portfolio Growth. For charter schools and network partners.*      **Not Applicable**
- b. *Operations. For charter schools and network partners.*      **Not Applicable**
- c. *Portfolio Evaluation. For charter schools, network partners, and local districts. Identify the key areas for improvement within your portfolio of schools and discuss how these are being addressed network-wide.*

Local District 1 is dedicated to student achievement and maintains high expectations for all. Our performance in math and ELA remains highest in LAUSD, and we have shown continuous growth over time for all grade levels. However, there remain challenges and critical areas for improvement, specifically within the Panorama City community. High on the list is the need for greater parent involvement. We envision the Panorama City Community Partnership to be the vehicle that will encourage more parent participation in the schools and their children’s education by offering the tangible services needed for families to become empowered and take greater ownership over their mental, emotional and physical circumstances. The PCCP, with



assistance from our community partnerships and local district parent facilitators, will offer classes in parenting, ESL, literacy, and more, as well as educate parents as to how they can improve student learning at home. In addition, the PCCP will provide health clinics, and workshops in: nutritional cooking, exercise, and personal hygiene. The Health Centers at Kennedy High School and, soon to open at Monroe High School, are available to parents and families to address specific medical concerns and offer guidance for dealing with health issues.

Through our active ELAC, CEAC, and Council of Councils organizations, parents will be represented and have a voice in the Local District. For the past three years these councils, in collaboration with the Local District staff, have held Parent Summits twice a year to educate families in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century practices taking place in our school, hear their concerns, and join together for a time of talking, eating, and planning together. Our parents have expressed concerns over community safety and safe-passage to school. The school site parent centers and schools will deliver safety awareness training, bullying prevention education and cooperate with local law enforcement agencies to create a safer neighborhood.

Another area of concern is the need for direct support for new and struggling teachers. LD1 will offer training through our Teacher Institute. Local District staff will also work with school site personnel to make certain that teachers are receiving assistance and guidance to meet the needs of diverse learners.

LD1 will continue to monitor our data and target areas for improvement. We are currently meeting our Performance Meter goals, with the exception of our reclassification rate. In an effort to meet our goals in this area, Access to Core Title III coaches have been assigned to our schools with the greatest need for English Learner support, including Vista. The Access to Core coaches will monitor the progress of the ELL's and work with teachers and students to provide strategic, standards-based instruction and intervention. In addition, LD1 will deliver CELDT preparation packages for all schools, and professional development to assist teachers with on-going instruction of English Language Learners in order to meet the reclassification goals.

**D-2. Organizational Responsibilities and Goals.** *(For charter schools and network partners.)*

**Not Applicable**