

**WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES
CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SELF-STUDY VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT**

FOR

LA VIDA CHARTER SCHOOL

16201 N Hwy 101

Willits CA,

Willits Unified School District

March 2-4, 2010

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Chapter 1: The School Community

La Vida Charter School is located on the Ridgewood Ranch in rural Mendocino County on Highway 101 between Ukiah and Willits. The large geographic county area, 3,878 square miles has a sparse population of 86,000 (23/ sq mi.) Serving the entire county, virtually all of the school community commutes, with Ukiah (15,500 residents) 16 miles to the south and Willits (5,073) 7 miles north and points beyond including Lake and Sonoma counties and occasionally the coast. La Vida is isolated geographically and culturally, the nearest university is a one and a half hour drive away and San Francisco is two and a half hours south on Hwy 101. However Mendocino Community College resides in Ukiah with various satellite centers including Willits and Lake County which has an important impact on the area.

Status of School

La Vida Charter School opened in 2001 and was under the auspices of Ukiah Unified School District for the first five years. In 2006 the school received authorization under Willits Unified School District as the school was determined to be within the Willits District tax roles. Last year, May 2009 Willits renewed the charter for five more years, expiring in June 2014.

The charter school does not accept federal funds, and therefore does not participate in the program improvement ranking under the federal Adequate Yearly Progress, AYP. The charter school meets three of the four criteria for AYP, but not the graduation rate. The small size of the classes and the mobile nature of the population are a handicap with regards to the federal formula for graduation rate.

As a charter school, Willits Unified School District provides oversight and receives regular reporting from the charter school as stipulated in the MOU. The charter school also complies with the regulation to be reviewed by an independent auditor each year. Robertson and Associates has been hired by the school for the past four years with no qualified findings in their audit reports.

Staffing

The table below reflects staffing at the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year.

Certificated Staff total- 11
Core Teachers- 8

Classified Staff total – 7

Demographics

Teachers	Number or Percent
Gender-Male	30%
Gender- Female	70%
Ethnicity: White	70%
Ethnicity: Mixed	20%
Ethnicity- Hispanic	10%

Certificated Staff Qualifications

Teachers	Numbers and Percentages
Teachers HQT NCLB, Core teachers only	100%
Teaching outside Credential*	11% (portion of assignment)
Emergency Permits, Core teachers only	0
CLAD certified or equivalent	22%
BITSA	1
Interns	1
Educational Service in District 1 yr	18%
Educational Service in District 3-5 yrs	55%
Educational Service in District 6-10 yrs	27%
Years in Education Service 1-3 yrs	27%
Years in Education Service 4-10 yrs	9%
Years in Education Service 11-20 yrs	27%
Years in Education Service 21-44 yr	45%
Masters Degrees	3
Master Degree + 30 units	1

As of March 2010, La Vida has 3 full time teachers with the 5 other teachers being employed part time. The office consists of the director and a classified staff of 1 full time secretary/registrar, 2 part time secretaries, a part time business manager and an on call computer technician.

Employment among the teachers ranges from 9 years to 3 month at La Vida with most teachers being at La Vida 3 years or less.

Enrollment Data

The chart shows the enrollment data for the 2008-2009 school year. By gender the enrollment at the school was 39% female and 61% male. The school has been affected by declining enrollment and expects this trend to level out in the 2010-2011 school year.

In and Out

Destinations

On-site/ Off-site

Beginning	76
Gains	28
Losses	33
Ending (May)	71
Total Enrollment	104

In- District Transfer	3
California Public School	18
Private School	2
Dropped out of school	2
Graduated during School Year	6

On-site	57 or 80%
Independ. Study Only	14
On-site K-8	44
On-site 9-12	27
Off-site K-8	5
Off-site 9-12	9

The next chart shows the 2008- 2009 CBEDS by grade.

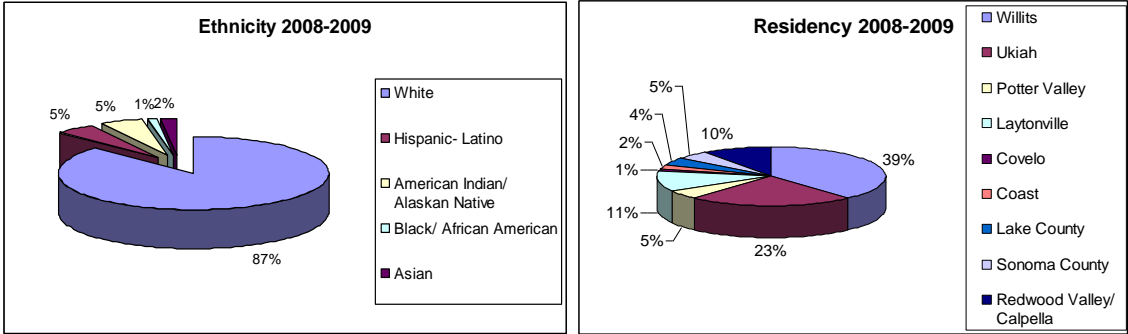
Grade	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Number	7 (9)	7 (8)	6	3 (5)	3 (4)	6 (7)	7 (7)	1 (4)	7 (11)	2	4 (12)	11 (19)	8 (11)

Enrollment as of March 3, 2010:

Grade	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Enrolled	1	7	3	1	6	4	6	4	6	9	6	9	8
Total by group	28						10			32			

K-8- % Onsite-	79%	of K-8
K-8 %Home school only	21%	of K-8
9-12 %Onsite	87%	of 9-12
9-12% Home school only	13%	of 9-12
Total % onsite K-12	83%	of K-12

Demographics



La Vida’s demographics shifted in 2008-2009 reflected by the following changes 87% white up 14 from last year and 23% higher than the District (64%) (County average 80.76%). Hispanic and American Indian are down 12% which is 21% less than the district (County average 21.24%). Asian and African American populations remained the same and are par with the District.

All students speak English as a primary language, therefore there is no CELDT /R30 data.

Last year La Vida served 9 students with Individual Education Plans (IEP) with another 9 students having ongoing Student Success Team meetings. Although this concerns 25% of the La Vida student population, no additional funds were requested from the Willits School District per the MOU with the district.

Number of students enrolled in A-G classes and Algebra: Currently out of 35 high school students, 15 or 43% are enrolled in a-g classes.

Algebra: Only four, 4, or 16% are taking Algebra, however only six, 6 math students, or 17% are enrolled in a standards based math curriculum and eight, 8, or 23% are using a modified curriculum. Of the six, 6, 9th grade students, only one is in a standards based algebra, one is advanced to geometry, and four, 4, are in pre-algebra.

Drop Out Rate comparisons

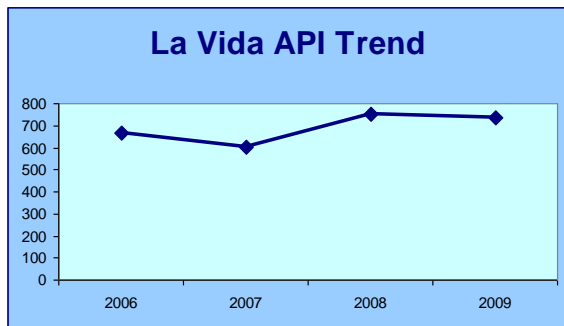
Indicator	School			District			State		
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Dropout Rate (1-year)		13.3	24.3	0.9	3.5	4.8	3.5	4.4	3.9
Graduation Rate	100.0	80.0	U11	95.0	88.1	84.0	83.4	80.6	80.2

Truancy, Tardiness, Suspensions and Expulsions

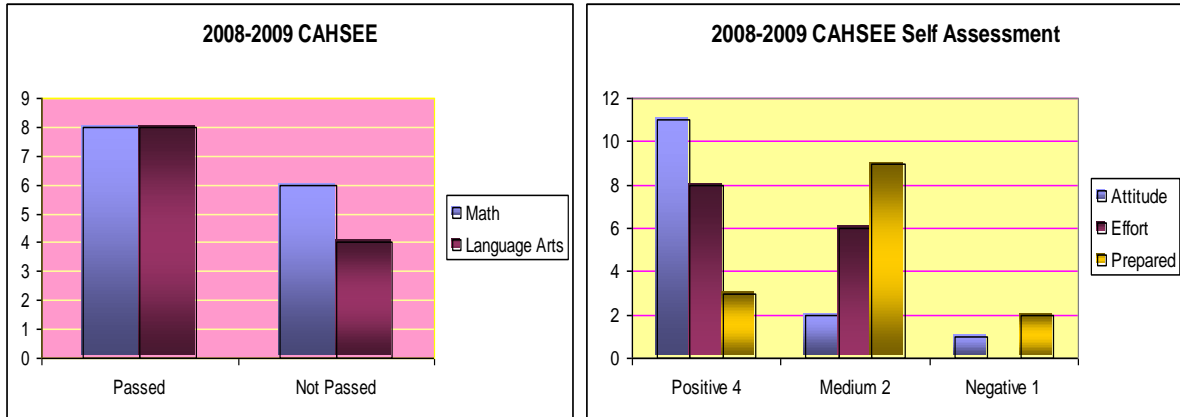
Due to the nature of independent studies programs there were no tardies, suspensions or expulsions. La Vida has a three strike policy for students who do not meet their contract obligations. In 2008-2009 only 1% of the students were disenrolled.

Student Assessment Profile

The Spring 09 API score is 735, 11 points below the expected state goal. Although not meeting the goals the trend for La Vida’s API is to increase 23 points per year or 70 points since 2006.



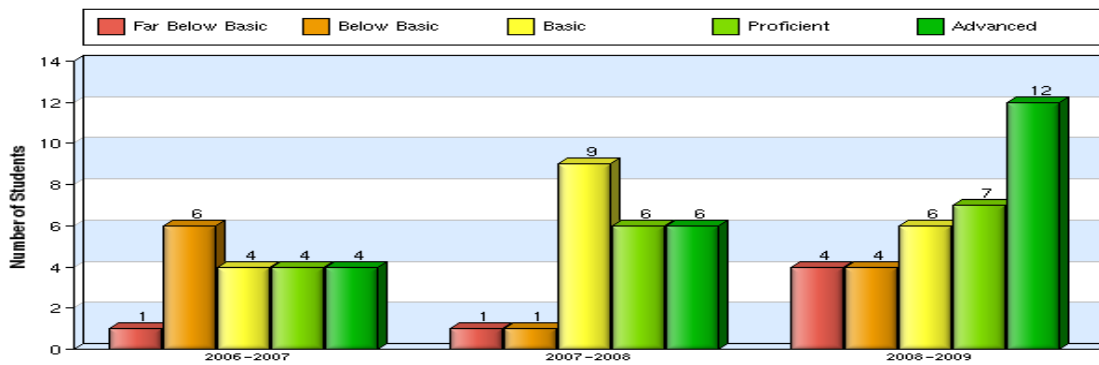
CAHSEE 2008-2009 Results



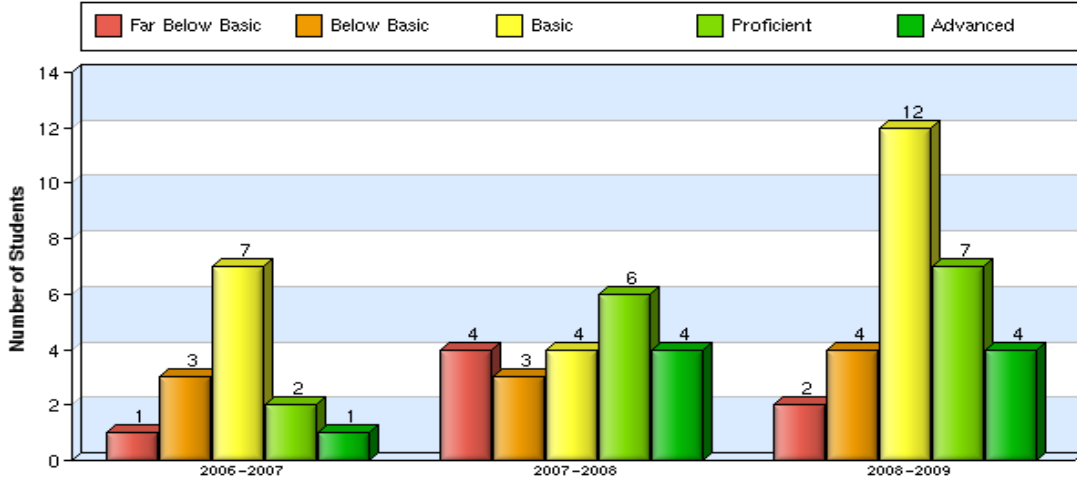
14 students took the Math portion, 8 passed (57%) and 6 did not pass.
 12 took the Language Arts test, 8 passed (67%) and 4 did not.

California Standards Test (CST) Three Year Comparison,

English Language Arts

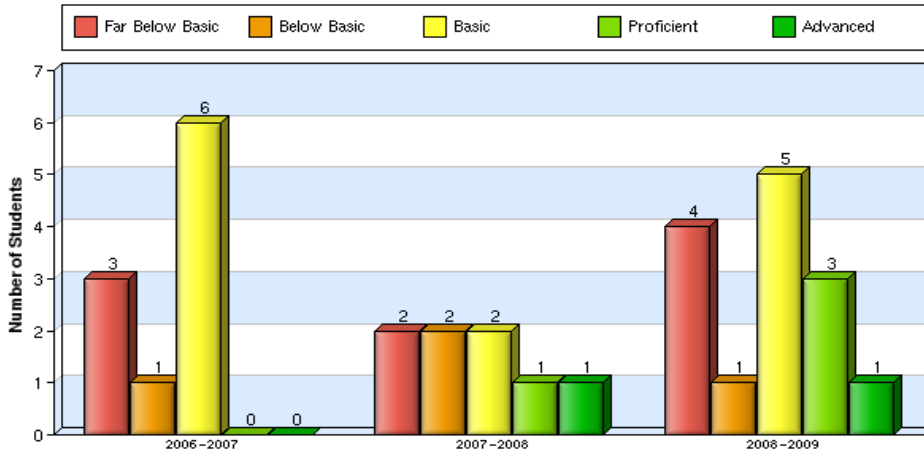


Math

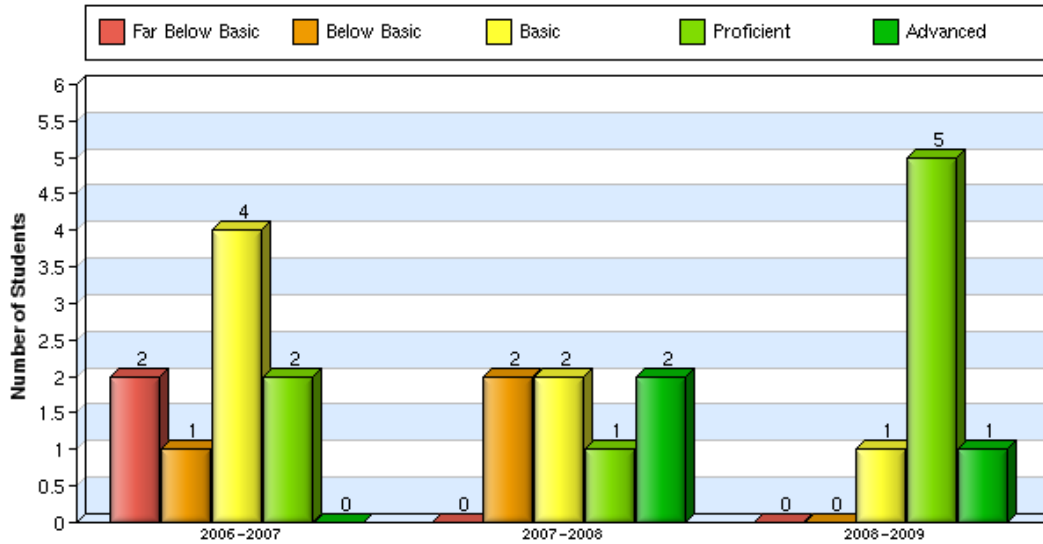


83% of eligible students tested in math in 08-09.

History

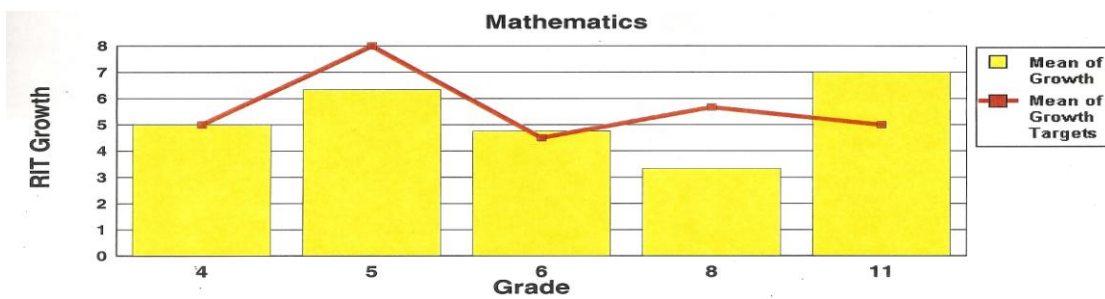
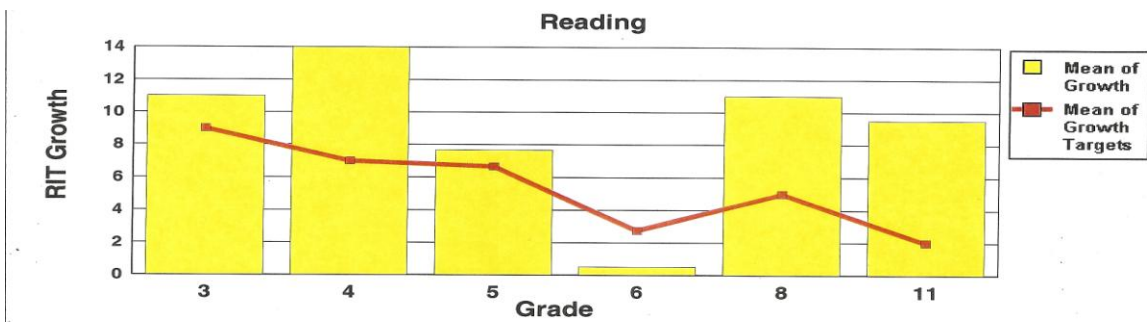


Science



The MAP Test, Measures of Academic Progress

La Vida is a member of the North West Evaluation Association, NWEA, and conducts the MAP test in the Fall and Spring. The MAP is recognized by the state as an alternative to STAR. Of the 53 students who were eligible to take the MAP or STAR, 51 were tested, 96%. 21 took the MAP Reading and 14 Math.



The analysis provided by La Vida showed that there was a strong growth beyond the norm except for grade 6 in the Reading test. It seems there was a prolonged disturbance on the property at the time of testing. Staff had planned on re-offering the test but they did not get the opportunity.

Analysis of the math portion of the test showed that students barely met or were lower than the norm reference targets. Students performed better on the STAR testing than they did on the MAP test.

Last year in 2008-09, out of the 18 who received report cards, 22% received D's or F's in at least one class, but no more than three classes.

Student and Parent Surveys

Student surveys showed that students view their learning at La Vida positively but would like to have more hands on activities on site. Parent surveys showed that parents were pleased with the less stressful aspect of La Vida but hope for more curriculum choices and a larger supply budget.

Chapter II: Progress Report

In 2006 La Vida received authorization under Willits Unified School District as the school was determined to be within the Willits District tax roles. Last year, May 2009 Willits renewed the charter for five more years, expiring in June 2014. La Vida's lease was renewed in 2008 for 6 years which was a change from their previous lease of 3 years.

Due to budgetary considerations La Vida has switched from having teachers meeting with students every week to meeting with students every other week as stipulated in the La Vida Charter. This policy is modified for students who are behind or who need extra help.

La Vida has been fluctuating between being designated as a small elementary school to a small high school which has skewed the school's API. Also their AYP scores have been affected negatively by the small number of drop outs so the school has not been able to receive a positive AYP scores.

La Vida has had teacher turn over that has affected their program. At the beginning of the school year a veteran teacher decided to leave to teach at another school. Later in the year La Vida has had two teachers leave the program due to personal issues and credentialing issues. One of the teachers was the high school lead teacher and also a co-coordinator of the WASC self study.

This self study was La Vida Charter School's first full self study. The school received candidacy in May/June 2007. Four areas were identified as Major Areas of Need; Curriculum, Achievement Accountability, Retention of Students and Technology

Curriculum

La Vida piloted Buckle Down and Science Assessment which provided students with a California Standards review workbook in math and science. La Vida is evaluating the effectiveness of various curricula including Saxon Math as an ongoing process specifically aligning the curricula to state standards. Although not all students used the material, La Vida's API jumped 149 points. Families of La Vida students are starting to understand the importance of standards based curriculum

La Vida has used the MAP test results to focus on goal strands, differentiating instruction to match the needs of individual students for improvement in Language Arts.

The Implementation of School Pathways Report Writer, a computer based independent study paperwork program, in the last two years has increased the consistency within the curriculum. The program creates master agreements, detailed assignments and report cards. Parents wanting to use other curricula are required to create lesson plans or learning objectives in advance of the lesson. The Educational Coordinator then takes those plans or objectives and input them into the program to create a printed assignment. This process has made parents more aware of the choices they make concerning curriculum. Along with this program, La Vida also implemented an annual curriculum fair to let parents know what choices there are concerning curriculum at La Vida.

Achievement Accountability

La Vida has moved to making diagnostic tests more routine upon entrance into the program to identify students' grade level placements and learning styles. There have been staff trainings in the use of MAP test data to individualize student goal setting.

Two teachers worked with a Mastery Learning Systems consultant to improve math instruction so that La Vida could implement a 90 minute math class which is required for any student who has not passed the math portion of the CHASEE. La Vida has also subscribed to Teacherbot, an online math homework support program and have made more tutoring time available to students. A writing class has also been added to support students who have not passed the English Language Arts portion of the CHASEE.

As mentioned above Report Writer by School Pathways has been implemented which incorporates state standards showing which standards are being address by each assignment.

Retention of Students

Because a majority of the students enrolling have short term plans for attending La Vida, retention is still an issue. Most families enroll students in the high school program in order to provide an alternative to the comprehensive high schools and to catch up. The school is working on communication and networking to leverage a change in this area.

Technology Opportunities

The initial visiting team suggested that La Vida provide A-G course work and Advance Placement courses through online curriculum. La Vida now provides access to Odysseyware, a comprehensive online curriculum which includes diagnostic tests, CAHSEE prep, numerous electives and advanced math and science. Through Aventa Learning, part of the Oak Meadow curriculum utilized by La Vida, Advanced Placement courses are also provided online. Teacherbot, a math tutoring program was offered for two years but was not utilized by the students.

Chapter III: Self-Study Process

Expected School wide Learning Results, ESLRS

Using the Charter and input from the school community, six Expected School wide Learning Results were created by the La Vida leadership team. They are:

1. Information and Communication: (Math)

Students will possess knowledge of and an ability to demonstrate and apply mathematical processes and concepts including basic arithmetic, algebra, and geometry.

Information and Communication: (Language Arts)

Students have knowledge of and the ability to demonstrate skills in reading, writing, listening, speaking and presentation.

2. Thinking and Problem Solving:

Students will possess the ability to think critically, logically, and use the power of imagination for comprehension and to solve problems and make informed decisions.

3. Interpersonal and Self-Directional Skills:

Students will demonstrate self-direction, self motivation and possess self-knowledge; and develop a curiosity to pursue continued and active real life learning.

4. Technology:

High School students will have a basic understanding of technology, including computers, internet and its application in and outside of the classroom.

5. Real World Context:

Through exposure and observations of real world experiences, students will demonstrate knowledge and understanding of all core subjects.

6. Capacity for Empathy:

Students will demonstrate empathetic skills such as respect, compassion, a sensitivity and understanding of real world and cultural differences through various modes of expression (including but not limited to; writing, projects, artwork, drama).

La Vida is a small school that has 3 full time teachers, 5 part time teachers, a director and an office staff. The total staff formed the basic five Focus Groups, so they were involved with the development of each section of the Self-Study. Each staff member had access to all student data and was well aware of the specific needs of each of their students. Parents were invited but few parents became involved at the high school level.

The Director and two teachers went through the *Focus on Learning* process last year. They became the Leadership Team to lead the rest of the staff in the gathering and analyzing the disaggregated data supplied by the district office from the formal STAR and CAHSEE assessments. They collected copies of student work and reviewed the work to see how the work matched against their ESLRs. This analysis of student data indicated the areas of student proficiency and deficiency. With this information the staff developed an action plan that set goals for student achievement. They also conducted a student and parent survey. Student results were more representative of the student population, while the parent response was minimal at the high school level.

The leadership team spent time aligning their ESLR's to the La Vida Charter. The self-study process guided the staff in reviewing the entire school's program in relation to the ESLRs, to the state standards and to the WASC/CDE criteria. The resulting improvement plan was clearly a result of the investigation of student performance on the formal state assessments (STAR, CST, CAHSEE, etc), individual student-teacher conversations, and the regularly held staff meetings

Again, since this is a small school staff, the two teachers took a leadership role while all the staff and board of directors made up the committee of the whole to analyze the areas of strength and areas that needed attention, identifying 3 areas for growth Mathematics, History and the CAHSEE.

These growth areas are addressed in the action plan along with the other recommendations stated by the initial visiting team.

Chapter 4 Part A:

A1.

La Vida has a clear vision based on the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, a published report in 2004, as reflected in their charter and in their ESLRs. The original La Vida Charter was developed by parents, educators and community members. The two revisions were primarily accomplished by the school leadership which includes parent representation on the board. Input to the direction comes through community meetings, faculty discussion and survey data.

A2.

Governing board policies support the La Vida charter which in turn supports the school ESLRs. The board is the primary body, along with the school's director, for reviewing and refining the schools vision. Even though the ESLRs were developed through the certificated staff, the ESLRs were honed from the charter document which the board has been intimately involved with refining. In the La Vida charter with the Willits School District the governing board has delegated the implementation of these policies to the director of La Vida.

The board approves and certifies all major financial reports that go to state. Student performance is reviewed over a period of two or three months in the fall as previous years data is available. An end of the year in presented personally by the governing board to the Willits governing board allowing discussion of the elements of the report.

A3.

Both the leadership and faculty of La Vida focus on student growth. The La Vida governing board reviews student data and scores in the fall and three other times during the year when CAHSEE results are released. Faculty reviews data such as the MAP results on regularly basis discussing in their faculty meetings how best to support student academic growth.

La Vida at this time is implementing the Zoom data system to input data and create reports on student achievement. Three teachers and two staff members have attended trainings on how to create the reports and to instruct teachers how to use the data when making instructional decisions.

La Vida has specific goals listed in their charter as 85% growth for students on their MAP test etc. These goals are reviewed annually by the district and school community when the end of the year report is given to the Willits governing board.

A4/A5

The school director monitors the teachers' ongoing professional development in direct response to the students' need. La Vida has sent staff for training in the NWEA MAP programs and Zoom Data programs which are programs designed to assist staff in instructional decisions. This year they are accessing webinars on the use of the Zoom Data program for implementing data driven instruction. Beginning this year, La Vida is also having teachers trained in the KUDER system used to assist students for school to career exploration.

Consultants have been brought in to work with staff on differentiation of instruction and for improvement of CAHSEE math scores. The director has attended the Achievement Gap conference sponsored by the California Superintendent of Education as well as the California Charter School conference. The director brought back materials and ideas to share with the staff from these conferences.

All staff is expected to attend 4 days of in service during the summer which includes paperwork training, training in differentiation of instruction and computer technology training. Also La Vida has monthly in service training for all teachers that are varied.

A6

The human, material, physical, and financial resources are sufficient and utilized effectively and appropriately in accordance with the legal intent of the program(s) to support students in accomplishing the academic standards and the expected school wide learning results.

La Vida has a teaching staff of 3 full time teachers and 5 part time teachers. One teacher has a counseling credential and is available to the school in that capacity. There is also one special education credentialed teacher to serve the needs of students with IEPs. All teachers are 100% highly qualified by NCLB standards. The school has an office staff of 1 director, 1 full time secretary/registrar, 2 part time business secretaries (.40), a business manager (.25), and an on call computer technician.

The school receives 100% funding through the SB740 funding determination process which requires 50% of revenues to be spent on certificated staff, and 80% of allocations to be instructionally related. The school supplies all the required financial reports to the Willits Unified School District and the State of California as stated in their MOU with WUSD.

La Vida projects a budget out three years which is approved by the Willits Unified School District.

A7.

The charter school's governing authority and the school leadership has executed responsible resource planning for the future. The charter school is solvent and uses sound and ethical accounting practices.

The director and business manager create three year financial projections based on ADA and state allocations per student. Their projections are realistic and they make sound budget decisions based on those projections. The MOU has guarantees of reserve of \$35,000.00 and La Vida also meets all other financial provisions of the MOU.

A8.

The charter school has developed policies, procedures, and internal controls for managing the financial operations that meet state laws, generally accepted practices, and ethical standards.

The director and business manager begin planning the budget in June of each year, projecting enrollment and the staffing to meet those projections. They refine the budget in August and adjust the budget during the year as needed. The school finances are reviewed by a professional auditor, Willits Unified School District and the Mendocino County Office of Education. The director and business manager keep abreast of changes within the laws and works to insure that as new laws are passed, the school matches procedures to those changes.

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

- Good working relationship with the District and MCOE
- School has its own non profit tax exempt status.
- Flexibility to adjust to individual learning styles
- Beautiful, safe, family-style setting and facility
- Financially strong
- Financial adaptability,
- SB740 Funding Determination 100%
- State compliant Financial Accounting structures in place.
- State compliant Attendance Accounting programs in place.
- Internal Controls in place.
- Clear audits with no qualifications and minimal findings
- Board overseeing academic and financial accountability.
- Board receives financial training.
- Board has parent and community representation.
- Board and Charter Director duties clearly outlined in the La Vida charter and by laws.
- SASI student accounting system,
- Triangulated Assessment system with NWEA, MAP test, Report Writer System
- ZOOM Data (Data Director) system,

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

- Transient student population
- Lack of parent involvement at committee level work and fundraising
- Need standard formats for program review.
- Follow through on use with the MAP and other assessments.
- Communication from school to broader community

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

- 2008 Revised Charter with Willits Unified School District and Memorandum of Understanding with Willits Unified School District
- Financial records kept by business manager
- Discussion with La Vida director and La Vida Business Manager
- End of Year Report
- EC staff meeting notes

CATEGORY B. STANDARDS-BASED STUDENT LEARNING: CURRICULUM

B1. Most students participate in a rigorous, relevant, and coherent standards-based curriculum that supports the achievement of the academic standards and the expected school wide learning results. La Vida has adopted several curriculum programs and a variety of supplemental materials for student and family use. All curriculum must be approved by the charter school. Upon enrollment, parents may choose to have their students follow Waldorf or California state standards. Although the number choosing Waldorf standards has decreased to a very small number, it is still an option for students.

B2. All students have access to the school's entire program and assistance with a personal learning plan to prepare them for the pursuit of their academic, personal, and school-to-career goals. Students work individually with their ECs and parents to determine curriculum and course of study. All students, including those with special needs are offered appropriate, sometimes modified curriculum to meet their education goals.

B3. All students are able to meet the requirements of graduation upon completion of the high school program.

- Student transcript reviewed by staff to ensure graduation requirements met
- Options for graduation are college preparation diploma, general education diploma or work readiness certificate
- CAHSEE classes required for general math students and those who have not passed
- 90 hours of Community Service required
- Economics project and interview with School Board for seniors before graduation

La Vida believes that while students are given multiple opportunities to meet all the graduation requirements, including those requirements beyond core course work, not all students avail themselves to those opportunities.

Areas of strength for Standards-Based Student Learning: Curriculum

- Individual curriculum for each student based on formal and informal assessment
- Variety of real world experiences and authentic learning opportunities for all students

Key issues for Standards-Based Student Learning: Curriculum

- Limited standards aligned curriculum options exist for high school courses

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

- Review of curriculum
- Student engagement in authentic learning experiences
- Interviews with students, ECs and school director
- Self study document

CATEGORY C. STANDARDS-BASED STUDENT LEARNING: INSTRUCTION

C1. Most students are involved in challenging learning experiences to achieve the academic standards and the ESLR's by the following:

- Most coursework is standards based,
- A variety of teaching methods and strategies are used in all classrooms
- Independent study assignments are data driven by using the Pathways Report Writer to cover standards within different curriculums for each growth areas.
- Differentiation is paramount for each student and is vital to accommodate a wide range of needs and abilities

Areas of strength for Standards-Based Student Learning: Instruction

- Personalized education through integration of the Waldorf program and standards based instruction
- Various influences and expertise from the community are presented to the students.

Key issues for Standards-Based Student Learning: Instruction

- High school math instruction needs to include additional, curriculum using appropriate and multi-level California state standards curriculum, especially in the required Algebra I coursework.
- A qualified math teacher is needed to assist with standards based curriculum.

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

- Observation of the classroom activities.
- Interviews with students and EC's and Director.
- Observation of instruction at the high school level.

C2. All teachers use a variety of strategies and resources, including technology and experiences beyond the text book and the class room that actively engage students, emphasize higher order thinking skills and help them succeed at high levels by the following:

- CAHSEE Math class
- Community service/graduation requirements
- Math consultant is provided for teachers to learn strategies for math classes and independent studies.
- Online Odysseyware is available for students who might succeed better through computer course work.
-

Areas of strength

- Strong participation by the ECs on site to develop math teaching skills.,
- Diversification of teaching techniques through classes and various curriculum.

Key issues

- Lack of updated computers and hardware for student use on site

Address the availability and resources for technological advancement through grants, etc.

Evidence

- Self-study document
- Classroom observation
- Conversations with focus groups
- Displays of student work
- Observation of outdated computer lab for students.

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

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

- Teachers and administrators can disaggregate student achievement data for CSTs, CAHSEE, STAR and MAP.
- All students take the MAP at the beginning of each year to help determine placement and progress
- Staff meets monthly at staff meetings where time is devoted to analyzing the disaggregated data that is prepared by their district data analyst.
- Report cards are done each semester and mailed to parents.
- ECs communicate regularly during meetings with parents about their students' progress

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

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

- Learning records are completed using Report Writer every 10 days for high school students
- Other assessment tools used are quizzes and chapter review tests, both oral and written, portfolios, student self assessments, performances and open houses.
- Implementation of KUDER school to career software

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

The school, with the support of the district and community, has an assessment and monitoring system to determine student progress towards achievement of the academic standards and ESLR's. SASI

student information system monitors student attendance and Report Writer monitors student assignments and progress towards goals.

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

Based on student achievement data, an hour and a half long CAHSEE math preparation class was added this year and is required for students in general math and those who have not yet passed the CAHSEE. A math consultant works regularly with teachers on developing teaching skills using his Master Learning Systems program.

Areas of strength for Standards-Based Student Learning: Assessment and Accountability .

- Regular assessment of students using MAP
- Teachers use of data from ZOOM data and STAR tests to drive instruction and content
- Use of KUDER software for school to career

Key issues for Standards-Based Student Learning: Assessment and Accountability

- Appropriate standards aligned high school core subject area and supplemental resources available for all students

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

- Teacher and student conversations and observations
- Self study document

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

E1.

School leadership employs a wide range of strategies to encourage parental and community involvement, especially with the teaching/learning process.

La Vida actively seeks communication between school and homes in order to support students and families in their schooling. The success of the school is based in large part on a strong parent body dedicated to helping the school meet its objectives in all areas. La Vida gives every student's family a copy of the La Vida Charter School Family handbook which delineates the expected participation of the parent in their child's education. Due to the nature of independent studies teachers are in contact with parents every 10 days reporting on student progress.

La Vida is active in gaining community support which includes but not limited to:

- community members teaching enrichment classes such as art,

- presentations by the sheriff department,
- students required to complete 90 hours of community service

E2.

La Vida is a safe, clean, and orderly place that nurtures learning through a school culture of trust, respect and high expectations for all students.

La Vida is a safe campus supported by the administrator and staff. La Vida's small size and small population allows for teachers and faculty to develop strong relationships with students that permit them to notice when conflicts are arising or anything is amiss. La Vida annually updates their Safety Plan and first aid kits that guides and supports the systems for creating and maintaining a safe campus as well as a plan for natural disaster or other major emergency situations. Monthly fire drills and practice allow students and faculty to be prepared for such emergencies.

The school culture is one of acceptance and non-judgement by staff and students. Students are expected to treat each other fairly, equally and with respect. La Vida is safe not only in a physical way but also emotionally for all students.

E3.

All students receive appropriate support along with an individualized learning plan to help ensure academic success.

Since La Vida is an independent studies charter school, individualized learning plans are inherent in the process. The director of La Vida emphasizes differentiation of instruction among staff through staff development and staff mentoring.

E4.

Students have access to support services, activities and opportunities at the school and within the community.

Through frequent EC meetings and activities the staff have been able to discuss with students their understanding and awareness of the student support services available at La Vida. Once a week students have the opportunity to meet with a counselor on site. Staff is prepared to refer students or families to the appropriate services if needed.

La Vida staff organizes an orientation at the beginning of each year to provide information about the school and services. The school has a variety of field trips that are designed to create a sense of community and support among the students. These field trips create positive interaction among students of various grade levels and among the families of the students.

In fall, La Vida holds a Thankfulness Feast where student work is shared and the heritage of the students and their families are celebrated. At the end of the year a carnival/field day is held again to promote positive interaction among the students.

- **Areas of strength for School Culture and Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth**

- Community involvement and curricular/co-curricular activities
- Personalized education
- Safe/Clean Environment
- Pastoral setting
- Students and parents feel safe
- Qualified, caring and dedicated teachers and administrative staff
- Inspiring environment surrounded by nature with an historical backdrop
- Alternative curriculum
- Blended approach to education: Waldorf/home school/classroom/outings

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

- Orientation for new teachers
- Lack of financial resources for supplies and equipment

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

- **Self Study document**
- **Interview with governing board**
- **Interview with parents**
- **Interview with students**
- **Observation**
- **Parent/Family Handbook**

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

The Visiting Committee concurs that La Vida has a well-defined mission statement and clear expectations for students. The Governing Board, Community, and Staff support student success. The school has taken seriously the recommendations of the previous Visiting Committee and acted appropriately.

The Visiting Committee commends the school staff for the thoroughness and competent preparation of the Self-Study. All stakeholders assisted the VC in the collection and clarification of the data that was needed in order to analyze the existing status of the school. The Visiting Committee found the staff and board to be dedicated and along with the students to be accommodating and congenial. They were always open and forthcoming.

School wide Areas of Strength

1. Clean, safe environment in a historical and pastoral setting
2. A strong culture of respect where students feel safe and not judged
3. Individualized planning for each student.
4. The blending of the Waldorf method of teaching with standards based curriculum.
5. The strong vision of education of the director and the governing board.

School wide Critical Areas for Follow-Up

Although the visiting team concurs with some of the goals set in La Vida's action plan, the VC felt that a shift in focus on those goals would better serve the school. The Visiting Committee recommends that:

1. The school explores strategies to hire and retain quality teachers.
2. The school continues to bring all curriculum and course work in line with the state standards.
3. The school clarifies and expands the ESLR's to reflect the school culture .

In addition the team recommends that La Vida

4. Explores grant opportunities for purchasing or gaining technology for student use.
5. Revise their action plan so that the goals and actions are clearly correlated, expanded the timelines to show incremental steps.

Chapter V: Ongoing School Improvement

La Vida identified 6 goals for their Action Plan based on their findings in the self study .

1. Goal: To establish a stable core community of families and staff.
2. Goal: To show 85% growth for students through the MAP.

3. Goal: To help students achieve success accomplishing all High School requirements with a California High School Diploma as an outcome.
4. Goal: To help students develop skills to succeed with their abilities in Mathematics, enabling them to achieve in life.
5. Goal: To help students understand cause and effect, where we come from and where we are going as individuals, as families, as communities, as a country and as a planet.
6. Goal: That teachers embrace and accomplish the school's vision in providing a Waldorf inspired and standards based education to all K-12 students; and that they find joy in their personal and professional development in accomplishing these goals

The action plan lacked a correlation between the six goals and the twenty-six actions that followed the goals. Without the correlation, the visiting committee found it difficult to determine if the actions meet the goals. With that in mind, the Visiting Committee felt that the school wide action plan will need to be revised to address the critical needs for follow up. The actions listed are all feasible and would enhance student learning but may not be the most important areas of growth for La Vida.

With such a committed staff and director there shouldn't be any difficulties implementing a revised action plan. Accordingly the timelines are also feasible but implementation time as well as deadlines should be considered. The assessments for the existing action plan are sound and can easily be modified to conform to a revised plan. The staff is committed to the self improvement process and La Vida has the resources to implement a plan.