

Gorman Learning Center

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Focus on Learning Visiting Committee Report Mar 21-23, 2011

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Chapter 1: Student/Community Profile

Summary of the most critical information from the student/community profile that impacts the school

Students and Community

The Gorman Learning Center is an Independent Study Program, founded in November 1999 by the one2one California Learning Foundation, a management company focused on operating independent study and distance learning charter schools. The Gorman Elementary School District approved the charter. The charter school incorporated as a not-for-profit public benefit corporation in February, 2,000. The Independent Study Program serves K-12 students. Gorman Learning Center offers UC approved curriculum choices and College Preparatory courses for the college bound student, as well as courses for the student who will be entering the workforce.

In 2007, following six years of growth, the school experienced a major crisis. A financial audit conducted by MGT found mismanagement and misappropriation of funds, miscalculation of expenditures, and inappropriate purchases. Under pressure from the school community, top members of the administration resigned. More than half of enrolled students withdrew from the program before the next school year. The next Board election resulted in the incumbents losing their seats to new members.

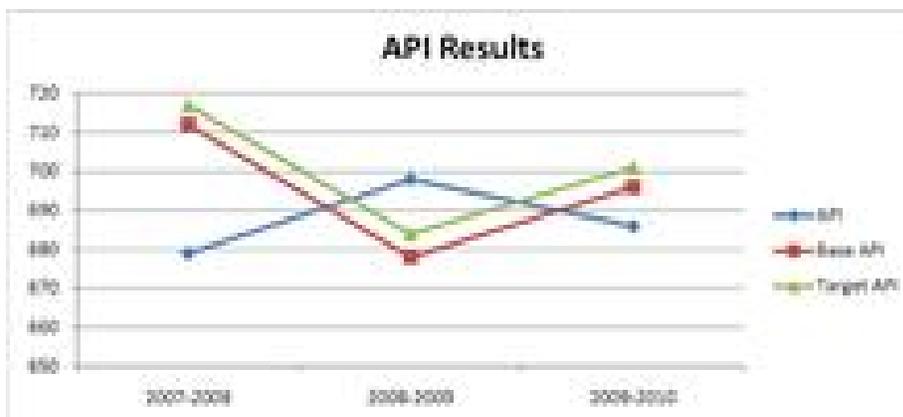
The newly-elected Board made fundamental changes to the administration and organizational structure of the school, creating three Director positions and improving transparency and accountability. Parent attendance at Board meetings increased, and the school began broadcasting the meetings online. The Board expanded from three members to seven. Following the audit, necessary reductions decreased staff size and temporarily eliminated learning centers. Last year, additional non-instructional staff and teacher positions were added to reflect an increase in enrollment, while the school restarted two learning centers in 2008-2009. The school continues to seek ways to expand its learning center services. Enrollment remains lower than the heights before the audit, but continues to grow.

The Gorman Learning Center program consists of:

- Individualized Learning in an Independent Study environment
- State Credentialed Teachers
- Challenging Courses based on State Standards
- Lesson plans constructed by credentialed teachers, designed or selected for each student by the Independent Study Teacher
- California Standards Testing and Performance Benchmark Assessment

The school provides high school counseling, special education services and

Title I tutoring. Parents and students meet formally with an Independent Study Teacher (IST) a minimum of once every twenty school days. Tutoring and supplemental instruction is available to meet student instructional needs. Parents and students have opportunities to participate in the following organized learning activities: Regional Learning Centers, online learning, tutoring and vendor course instruction, field trips, and parent workshops.



Chapter 11: Progress Report

Comments on the school's major changes and follow-up process since the last Self-Study.

Gorman Learning Center received a six-year term of accreditation in 2005 and had a revisit three years later. In 2005, four major areas for growth were identified.

1. Ongoing development, improvement, and increased support and programs for all grade level reading and writing skills, concentrating first on high school students and at-risk students.

The school has implemented and discontinued using various reading programs. Since 2008, GLC has added Reading Eggs, a comprehensive, online

supplemental literacy program for early learners ages 5 through 8. Reading Eggs builds on and reinforces the five key reading pillars: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. The school uses Scantron assessments three times a year as benchmarks. Starting in 2011-2012, GLC will Beta-test the Scantron assessments for Kindergarten and first grade. At the elementary and middle school levels, the school has revised all Boxed Curriculum.

2. Ongoing development, improvement, and increased support and programs for mathematics assessment and placement starting with pre-algebra through the higher level math courses.

GLC recognizes that Math remains a critical area. Student performance data indicates low and falling math scores. Tutoring offered at learning centers was helping to address this problem, but when learning centers were closed, families in those areas lost that option. Now with two operating learning centers that have math tutoring, math classes, and CAHSEE prep classes, the school is shoring up its math support services with ALEKS Math, Title I and VCI tutors, walk-in tutoring in Redlands, Mathnasium, Study Island, and curriculum choices aimed at individual students struggling in this area, such as Teaching Textbooks and Math-U-See. GLC has discontinued BrainX and moved instead into Study Island and new test prep intensives. The school's future plans are to expand learning centers, offer more online math courses with teacher support, continue providing access to the Math department chair, use Teaching Textbooks, and take advantage of Scantron worksheets that address missed standards following student assessment.

3. Ongoing development, improvement, and increased support and programs for science courses and labs starting at grade 6 through high school level. Science support including site-based courses and labs for grades 6-12.

GLC continues to take advantage of Science in a Nutshell Lab Kits. Students who take high school science courses have the lab component available to them via Aventa Learning. Additional lab support resources GLC offers include: E Science, National University online virtual labs, Odyssey (which has actual projects that students can do from home), and Learning Center science classes with full labs. However, the non-uniform nature of the school's science lab support may lead to inconsistent results in student performance. The school continues to investigate lab kits to adopt for each science subject. Leadership's goal is to cover all science courses, and is still looking for single subject specialists in Physics and Chemistry. The learning centers will be expanding lab classes, with specific parts of their operating facilities dedicated to labs only. Any new learning centers that are launched must operate in a place where lab support is possible to provide.

4. Increase communication among all stakeholders (Parent/student workshops, open house/ training/community connections).

Increasing communication with parents remains an area of need for the school, which continues to struggle with the geographical distance between members of the school community. However, parents have become more involved, notably in the addition of two GLC parents to the governing board, and also at the field level, where some ISTs lead local parent groups. The school's Directors release monthly mini-newsletters ("GLC Notes") which ISTs then forward on and share with parents. The school relies on experienced home school parents to conduct parent workshops and share best practices. With two learning centers well-established, school leaders and staff make periodic visits to provide training, respond to local area concerns and issues, and offer workshops. The school's efforts to construct an email address database have fallen through, although a great deal of additional contact information including email addresses has been collected and added to the Student Information System. This information is more useful in situations where individual students or families need to be contacted than as a school wide method for contacting all families.

Chapter III: Self-Study Process

The Gorman Learning Center has five ESLRs:

1. Effective Language and Communication Skills

- Each student demonstrates effective verbal and written communication skills: at a level expected in an entry-level business setting.
- Student can read and comprehend written instruction, information, and leisure materials.
- Student can effectively communicate ideas in writing, using appropriate grammar, and tone.
- Student can separate fact from opinion and respect differing opinions.
- Student can follow as well as articulate effective verbal instructions.
- Student can verbally communicate ideas to groups and individuals in a manner appropriate to audiences.

2. Effective Mathematical Skills

- Student demonstrates ability to analyze data and make logical conclusions.
- Student demonstrates use of math skills to function in the world of business, home finance, and effective consumers.
- Student demonstrates use of basic geometry skills and the underlying principles in problem solving.
- Student demonstrates basic algebra
- Student demonstrates working knowledge of basic statistics and probability

- Student will use basic problem solving strategies in solving life/business related problems

3. Effective Social Science Skills

- Student demonstrates understanding and responsibility in political process in the context of local, regional, national, and international setting.
- Student identifies the course of history that formed our current form of government and other differences in other major forms of government
- Student demonstrates basic understandings of cultural diversity, its causes, and how diversity affects interpersonal relationships.

4. Effective Science and Technology Skills

- Student demonstrates the effective use of technology and appropriate applications in the home and world of business
- Student demonstrates understanding the process of scientific investigations in developing hypothesis and testing theories and providing conclusions
- Student recognizes the effects of the sciences, technologies and societies on one another and on the environment.
- Student demonstrates basic understanding of life and physical sciences.

5. Effective Personal Skills

- Student demonstrates an ability to set goals and actualize those goals.
- Student identifies the benefits of maintaining health: good nutrition, exercise and life choices.
- Student can identify his or her individual strengths/weaknesses and seek methods to develop them.
- Student demonstrates skills and processes needed to seek employment and higher education.
- Student demonstrates honesty, respect and discipline.

Involvement and collaboration of stakeholders to support student achievement

Students and parents are responsible for monitoring student progress, and their roles in the independent study model carry significant responsibility for and influence on student progress. Teachers develop a close working relationship with students and parents due to the small class size assignments and regular personal contact among the three parties. Parents accept a critical portion of the educational component by agreeing to oversee student work at home. The Gorman Learning Center requires all students to participate in Standardize testing (STAR). All students and parents are informed about State testing and must agree to participate by signing the Master Agreement. Even though there are parent waiver requests and other emergency situations, the participation rates have met the required target.

Clarification and measurement of what students should do through the ESLRs

and academic standards

The goals for the school, as established by the Board of Directors, are based on identified academic needs--improved performance in the areas of Language Arts and Mathematics--which in turn are based on yearly improved performance in the areas of test data (CST and CAHSEE as well as school wide benchmarks). Teachers collect evidence of student learning and parent survey results. Input from teachers, parents, students and administrators are given to the Board. The school's budget reflects the Board's goals.

Gathering and analyzing data about student achievement

Student progress is monitored on a monthly basis, using work samples and informal assessments, on a weekly basis in the case of students using college prep curriculum, on a weekly or twice-weekly basis in the case of students working regularly with a tutor, and semester-by-semester with the use of the benchmarks and final examinations. Assessment results, and a clear understanding of their implications, are essential to the school's efforts to address the critical academic needs. The results of the different assessments for each student are generally consistent (student performance levels are identified fairly similarly from one assessment to the next), and that consistency allows teachers and school leaders to focus efforts on groups of students who would benefit the most from additional support. However, the programs, resources and services that the school applies once student needs are identified could be made to work in a more integrated way.

Assessment of school program and its impact on student learning

Measurable academic performance provides a profile of a school with identifiable academic struggles, which has, in recent years, declined on several significant indicators of performance. Gorman Learning Center consistently underperforms on Mathematics assessments, including the CSTs and the CAHSEE, compared to schools across the state. In Language Arts, the school's performance levels are stagnant and beginning to be overtaken by statewide averages. Graduation rates are sliding. The degree to which the graduation rates and dropout represent failures to track students who withdraw from GLC is not known. There is a fundamental deficit in the attention paid by the school to following through with all students who leave, either to transfer or upon graduation. In addition, only a very slight number of students enroll in challenging AP courses or take the AP, SAT or ACT exams.

Alignment of Action Plan to school's critical area and monitoring system

The school's Action Plan contains six major goals focused on improving student academic outcomes and are based on school wide data analysis. The six critical areas address improvements in the content subjects of: Math, Language Arts, and Science. The remaining three goals address post high school education, reestablishing discontinued learning centers, and hiring instructional leaders to support the core curriculum.

The three school directors are ultimately responsible for the monitoring,

implementation and evaluation of the Action Plan. At this point, final decisions regarding some of the goals in the Action Plan are pending the results of feasibility studies. Administration is interested in additional assurance that the goals listed are realistic.

Chapter IV: Quality of the School's Program

Part A: What Currently Exists

Vision and Purpose

A1. The school has a clearly stated vision based on its student needs, current educational research and belief that all students can achieve at high levels.

The purpose of the school is defined through its Mission Statement, Vision Statement, and Motto , and guides GLC in its search to find “ ...what student needs are and how they should be met...”. Continuous improvement occurs through a “...consistent review of the school purpose during teacher meetings”. A typical meeting proceeding apparently would find directors leading teachers in discussion as to current and future purpose of the school. Electronic communication prior to these discussions assists stakeholders in arriving at the final agenda for each meeting.

The school reports a lack of uniformity of opinion emerging in regard to the purpose of the school. Further, it identifies increasing the level of parent involvement as an area of need. The entire community seems to have found kindred ship in the understanding that the school must serve students “...who are better off with individualized instruction and a high degree of parent choice.”

The WASC self-study is the identified process by which development and refinement of the school's vision/ESLRS took place. Regular review and revision of school goals is not an institutionalized process at GLC, and only occurs as a part of informal discussions during monthly teacher meetings or during school WASC meetings.

Governance

A2. The governing authority (a) adopts policies which are consistent with the school purpose and support the achievement of the expected schoolwide learning results for the school, (b) delegates implementation of these policies to the professional staff, and (c) monitors results.

An organic process of electing school board members has been designed to ensure that a portion of the seats on the board are placed before the voters each year. The intention of this staggered rotation is “...to ensure greater parent and community participation. Newly-elected members are trained in the Brown Act and district protocols, duties, responsibilities, and timelines.

The Board sets policies which guide the review and revision process, and the annually reviews the school's vision and purpose. An organizational chart and published Board Policy establish the relationship between the Board and the school's professional staff. Teachers have been added to the Board as non-voting members in order to expand access and communication between the Board and staff.

The Board evaluates the academic performance of the school via state test results and local assessment, student participation, and achievement in the various instructional programs offered by the site. It monitors school data and operational expenditures, PARs, and accounting statements on a "regular" basis. The school does seek a revamped policy review process that includes staff in the review and in the subsequent implementation.

Protocols are established under the requirements of the Uniform Complaint Procedures whereby complainants have access to the Board should their attempts to address an issue not conclude satisfactorily within the outlined process.

School Leadership

A3. The school leadership (a) makes decisions to facilitate actions that focus the energies of the school on student achievement of the expected schoolwide learning results (b) empowers the staff, and (c) encourages commitment, participation and shared accountability for student learning.

Parents are active in their student's education via the home school model, and feel that they are well-supported by the Independent Study Teacher (IST) assigned to their child. Parents voiced an interest in playing a more active role, not necessarily in the leadership and planning process of the school, but in the community of the school at large. They feel the need to become more proactive in the needs of other parents involved in this institution.

GLC's expected schoolwide learning results are not firmly incorporated into its process for informing critical academic needs, and its Single Plan for Student Achievement may need revision and alignment with current needs. Student performance is gauged primarily in terms of mastery of California Standards via STAR results and local assessment scores.

ELA and mathematics are identified as an "academic need" via data returns generated from State testing and local assessments, parent survey results, and input from multiple stakeholders. Parents have voiced a keen interest in seeing increased rigor in the school's writing program. Resources have been budgeted in out years (e.g. ALEKS, Study Island) to continue the interventions that are in current use.

Growth in open communication between the BOE and site leadership has

improved, and site leadership has in turn expanded its communication with and response to ISTs.

Staff

A4. The school leadership and staff are qualified for their assigned responsibilities, are committed to the school's purpose and engage in ongoing professional development that promotes student learning.

Employment policies/practices align with BOE Policy, and the simplistic nature of the policy is due to GLC's unique status as an LEA. Timelines have been established in progress toward meeting NCLB "Highly Qualified" status of all teachers. The Verification Process in Special settings (VPSS) is planned for staff members not HQT at this time. All future hires must provide documentation of their qualifications in order to be granted an interview. Staff is assigned to work in a capacity that maximizes their qualifications, talents, and experience by Directors.

Documents have been created that define responsibilities and policies, including operational practices as outlined in the Business Services Manual. Staff communicates via traditional and electronic means, while leadership maintains an open door policy. Planning occurs in a process whereby both leadership decision-making and IST needs are incorporated, and ISTs play a role in what eventuates in professional development ("PD") for the staff. The current yearlong PD focus is "learning styles-based curriculum choices".

Mentorship has been institutionalized with every new teacher being assigned a mentor in their first year. Leadership leads monthly "Best Practices" discussions. Teachers are allowed to present in their "areas of expertise", coaching is supported and practiced in the school. The BTSA program is also in full force in the school district.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of school policies occurs in agenda-based discussions between leadership and teaching staff during monthly meetings. Parent surveys have been instituted, and while parent response has been muted, the opportunity to evaluate current planning and progress is available to parents.

Professional Development

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

Two days of staff development occur each school year in August and October, and a PD component is added to each monthly staff meeting with the Directors. Staff members feel that they are "...empowered..." to teach with resources and support, and that PD is created in response to their needs.

Teachers are evaluated annually on a formal basis, but monthly “evaluation and supervision” occurs on an informal basis. Directors are responsible for addressing professional issues via a systematic process. Teacher reflection on professional goals is considered a vital component in the effort to assist teachers in improving their practice.

There is no process that determines the “measurable effect of professional development on student performance” other than the use of “anecdotal evidence”. But the effectiveness of IST practice is “...the focus of every monthly teacher meeting.”

Human Resources

A6. The human, material, physical, and financial resources are sufficient and utilized effectively to support students in accomplishing the academic standards and expected schoolwide learning results.

Eighty percent (80%) of expenditures are on instructional needs per the provisions of GLC’s non-classroom based charter. The “educational program” needs are the first consideration during the budgeting process, and “...enriching student’s lives...” is the “...key...focus...”.

School business management processes are the purview of the school itself as GLC functions as its own LEA. “Accounts payable, accounts receivable, purchasing, human resources, attendance, budgeting, and report preparation” are processed via the school’s central location in the chartering agency’s office in Redlands, California. The school has two “...learning centers...and both have their own budgets. Financial controls are the domain of the chartering agency, and all financial activities are reviewed by the Board.

The school operates four facilities, which are used for administration, instructional purposes, and warehousing. Two learning centers are warranted; however, any additional learning center must prove out over a “...three to five year plan” via feasibility studies which are conducted by ISTs and reviewed by the Director of Operations.

Instructional materials and equipment is “...widely recognized by teachers and parents as the most significant problem with the school’s performance...”. Delivery delays coupled with issues relating to the financing of new adoptions has allowed the inventory of instructional materials to age to the point of concern. Storage, inventory systems, and delivery of on-hand materials are not an issue.

The “...hiring and nurturing of a well-qualified staff is the most important funding allocation”, and leadership’s planning for VPSS and PD are evidence in support of this commitment,

Long-range plans, as per the Self-Study, is an area of improvement, but current

discussions relating to the implementation of a Response to Intervention program is indicative that progress is occurring.

Resource Planning

A7. The leadership has executed responsible resource planning for the future and the school is solvent and uses ethical accounting practices.

Regular administration meetings are held in which participants "...review both school and program needs...". This body reviews current needs and those created by projected growth. The non-classroom program is growing, and this growth requires "collaborative planning". The interim financial reports represent the collaboration of educational and business staff members in meeting a necessary goal.

Regular accounting and auditing practices are in accordance with all codified requirements and accepted school business management and procedures. The *Business Services Manual* guides the process, and the staff proactively reviews and updates the practices and procedures therein. In spite of the school's accounting and auditing practices, there is a need to repay apportionment not earned during the financial crisis in 2007. GLC has steadily increased its reserve in order to repay the apportionment owed back to the state or chartering agency.

The budgeting process is transparent via scheduled meetings with BOE and the Charter agency to discuss the charter agreement and the annual renewal of the existing MOU. Further, the timely delivery of interim reports and other required reports is evident.

Staff compensation is paid via Board adopted salary scales or contracts. Current instruction staffing has increased by 2/3 over the last three years and stands at 101. The instructional staff-student ratio is bounded by a policy minimum of 7:1 and a non-classroom based program maximum of 26:1. An identified need for additional non-instructional support staff, particularly in Business Services, is a goal for GLC at this time.

No formal marketing strategy exists, as a formal study of the last marketing effort employed by the school revealed that the strategy did not yield any measurable improvement in enrollment. "Word-of-mouth" has been determined to be the more effective approach, and further allows GLC to focus resources on geographic areas that demographically are most in need of its services.

Stakeholder involvement in the capital planning and allocation process is accommodated via open Board meetings. An open forum is provided for the public during the budget adoption process, and regular interaction with instructional staff has been instituted in order to gauge the need to change, augment, or reduce programs.

All financial reports are prepared for, submitted to, and available to the appropriate agencies and officials. BOE meetings are streamed to <http://www.gormanlc.org> for public access.

Adequate reserves are provided for program support, and an additional amount is protected in order to repay apportionment dollars not earned in previous school years. The administrators present the reserve report for approval (by the BOE) with every budget report. The independent auditor also reviews the reserve level as part of its annual process.

Title 1 monies and a small amount of Title II monies are allocated to increasing student achievement, primarily via tutoring and other interventions. A small amount of Program Improvement apportionments are received and allocated to the needs of sub-group students.

Policies, Procedures and Internal Controls

A8. The school has developed policies, procedures and internal controls for managing the financial operations that meet state laws and ethical standards.

The 4000 section of the BOE Policy references fiscal matters, and the BOE Policy is "...periodically reviewed and updated...". The *Business Services Manual* provides guidance to staff members, and it is currently undergoing the review and revision process.

In accordance with school business management conventions and agreements with the charter granting district, the MOU inclusive, GLC prepares both unaudited actuals and independently audited actuals. The school is also required to produce a "...board-approved policy relating to independent financial audits." GLC's independent auditor directly provides all involved parties with the appropriate financial statements.

The school is prioritizing policies and procedures relating to financial matters, specifically identifying a hierarchy of approvals as an example of improvement. Additional oversight occurs under board review of expenditures.

Signatory authorizations occur annually under the direction of the BOE in its "...annual board approval of signatories". Dual signatures are cited as an oversight check and balance for all payroll checks and checks that exceed the \$2,000 amount. "Currently the authorized contract signers are the board president, vice-president, secretary/treasurer and the three directors, and the authorized cash signatories are the board president, vice-president, secretary/treasurer and the Director of Operations."

The Director of Operations has final authority over position control, but Business Services staff works closely with to the educational directors in terms of staffing needs. An administrator checks the payroll journals prior to payment. Two staff members have payroll software permissions, but only one of the two may enter at a time. Private payroll information is restricted to five individuals.

Automatic withdrawals out of the GLC accounts are only authorized for the "...building loan payment...". Bank statements are proved out by a staff member

other than the one authorized to transact.

A policy exists for the use of credit cards. The policy needs to be periodically reviewed. Further no LOCs or debit accounts exist. The school requires that all contracts obtain BOE approval.

Areas of Strength

- The vision and purpose of the school do represent what the school does on a daily basis.
- Both teachers and parents have representation on the Board, and the Board is a broader representation of the school community.
- The structure of the school administration yields high accessibility and much needed shared accountability among the Directors.
- Board policies are created to meet all legal requirements.
- The school is responsive to financial requirements, audit findings, and organizational needs.
- An open communication is dynamic and growing among all stakeholders.
- Leadership is responsive to the needs of ISTs who serve the immediate needs of students and their families.

Key Issues

- Continuing to try various parent involvement strategies.
- Incorporate ELSRs, purpose and vision into school materials, publications, and communications.
- Continuous improvement in understanding of Board policies among all staff members.
- Better delivery of materials and Updated textbook.

Evidence

- BOE Documents and Minutes
- School Website
- Focus Group Discussions
- Sidebar conversations with staff, parents, and students
- Business Services Manual
- Staff meeting agendas and student data

B. Curriculum

What Students Learn

B1. *To what extent do all students participate in a rigorous, relevant, and*

coherent standards-based curriculum that supports the achievement of the academic standards and the expected schoolwide learning results?

Students at Gorman Learning Center participate in a rigorous, relevant and coherent research based curriculum that prepares them to meet the state content standards and school ESLR's. Staff development has focused on many schoolwide research-based practices and content-specific research to inform their practices. The school has defined content standards for every subject area, course and program. Teachers have an option to use Boxed Curriculum, which allows them to expand and enrich individual learning plans according to the students learning style, interest, and other academic pursuits.

All students are assigned curriculum that is deemed effective and appropriate in the judgment of their credentialed teacher and parent.

How Students Learn

B2. To what extent do all students have access to the school's entire program and assistance with a personal learning plan to prepare them for the pursuit of their academic, personal and school-to-career goals?

Students at Gorman Learning Center have access to several programs that assist with their academic, personal, and career goals. Gorman Learning Center requires Vocational Education as part of its high school requirements. Some of the courses are accounting, automotive, computer, drafting, journalism, work experience, and volunteer work.

The school has initiated a four-year project within Vocational Education designed to support students in identifying their career and educational options, their civic and societal responsibilities, and the contributions they may make upon the completion of their education.

At the high school level, students participate in Grad Check meetings with support from the High School Counselor and direct guidance from the teacher. This occurs once at the beginning of freshman year and once before junior year, to ensure that the personal learning plan will result in preparation to proceed toward career and educational goals.

Monthly meetings allow ISTs to monitor student's progress and adjust or change assignments, based on their checking for understanding and review of students work. To help support efforts to make effective changes to assignments based on their checking for understanding and review of students work.

Graduation Requirements

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

Students at the Gorman Center have access to an academic experience based on rigorous standard-based curriculum and are provided opportunities to experience the real world via many courses and programs. The school offers a plethora of rigorous courses and internship programs including but not limited to the Vocational Educational program which provides opportunities for teachers to design and select activities geared toward student educational interest. For example a students who is taking automotive, might re-build an engine or a students interested in being a veterinarian might volunteer at the local vet's office. Real-world applications are not built into curriculum at all levels.

The school has implemented academic support programs to ensure that students are meeting the requirements for the CAHSEE. The school uses Study Island, various test preparation materials, ALEKS, and National University online programs, in addition to one-on-one and small group tutoring to assist students who do not pass the CAHSEE on the first attempt or for students who score low on the CSTs. There is additional academic enrichment and supplemental support provided at Learning Centers. The school wide Benchmarks yield reports identifying learning needs for individual students, enabling teachers to adjust and adapt instruction.

Most of the students have passed the CAHSEE by the time they are senior but if they do not, they can stay enrolled for an additional two years to re-take the exam.

Areas of Strength

- Teachers assign curriculum based on individual needs and goals, in line with learning styles, interests, and other individual factors, and they are able to make changes to curriculum quickly.
- Teachers have vast choices when selecting curriculum; the broad range includes State adopted, National, acclaimed online programs, and supplemental materials.
- Along side the more traditional curriculum, GLC offers various online courses with their own proprietary curriculum. These online curriculum options areas are available for those students with access to the internet. Some of these online course options are university of California approved. Other computer software programs are available for students with computer capabilities but without internet capabilities.
- Students have the option of co-enrollment, allowing them to simultaneously earn an Associate's degree from a 2 year college as well as a high school diploma.
- GLC participates in a relevant, and coherent standard based curriculum that supports the achievement of the academic standards.

Key Issues

- GLC administers Benchmarks three times a year which places students in one of three tracks (Basic, College Prep, or UC) which determines the

rigor of the students' curriculum. Last year only 25 of 750 high school students were identified as UC track students.

- Consistency and dependability of curriculum delivery.
- More updated books and more materials for science labs.
- Better communication between school and parents regarding curriculum choices offered by the school.
- High school students (and parents) would benefit from greater access to a credentialed counselor.

Evidence

- Draft graduation survey form
- Graduation survey cards
- Vocational Education Curriculum
- "I" Portfolio Project
- Final Graduation Planning form
- Book order forms
- Master Agreement, Acknowledgement of Responsibilities
- Vocational Education logs
- Lesson Plans
- Learning Logs

C. Instruction

Challenging Learning Experiences

C1. To achieve the academic standards and expected schoolwide learning results, all students are involved in challenging learning experiences.

Teachers meet monthly with students and parents to determine the degree to which students are learning. Learning is assessed by Independent Studies Teacher (IST) review of students' learning period's (one month) worth of work, parent awareness as to level of student engagement with the course concepts, and the results of assessments (i.e., curriculum-embedded tests, benchmark assessments, and monthly responses to writing prompts). Student involvement in their learning, absent a classroom setting, is based on the individual factors that affect each student. Curriculum is adjusted to meet student instructional needs. The large geographical area of the school presents a challenge in the collection and disaggregation of non-assessment-based data related to student perception and student involvement with learning outside of their regular contact with their ISTs. This challenge affects the school's ability to determine the effectiveness of its efforts to meet the critical academic needs.

Metacognition of expected schoolwide learning results and content standards need to be emphasized for greater student reflection. Teachers discuss course selection with students at the beginning of the year. It is common practice for teachers to include the standards for a student's grade level with the beginning-of-the-year student binder. Via monthly work packets, students know what they will be learning in their monthly assignments. Personalized learning, inherent in the independent study model, allows the teacher to provide students with different avenues and teaching materials so that all students can learn according to their individual needs. Students understand that they need to learn the standards-based material pertaining to their courses. They understand that the content of the tests they take is standards-based, so it is important to know the material in order to demonstrate competency in the subject matter. They also understand that while it is important as individuals to do their best to learn the material, it affects the good of the school if they do well on their tests. Students know that they have a unique learning environment that allows them to excel beyond the norm, if they so choose. Although students are able to get the help that they need through their Individual Studies Teacher, students who have access to Learning Centers feel it is a privilege to be able to attend classes there to enhance their learning. In general, students are content with the individuality and personal attention they receive in the learning environment at GLC.

Teaching Strategies and Resources

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

The school conducts regular professional development activities in the implementation and maintenance of academic programs (e.g., how to enable students to take advantage of additional instructional services, ways to use assessment, and learning styles evaluation to shape and adjust instructional approaches). The basic nature of the IST-student relationship promotes face-to-face inter-action, dialogue free of time constraints or outside demands, and individualized assessment of learning progress. The nature of this relationship also promotes the use of a variety of teaching strategies and resources, shared with parents. Literature reading and analysis questions, responding to writing prompts, science labs/application and math programs give students the ability to demonstrate reasoning and problem-solving in group activities in a classroom setting and individually. Students can take online courses (high school only) and use technology for enhancements to curriculum. Research papers show the extent to which students are able to use materials beyond the textbook, as they cite sources from books, the Internet, interviews and real-life experiences. Some students have participated in apprenticeships, most of which are initiated by the students or parents, identifying local community members and seeking

information regarding apprenticeships and community projects on their own. The school counts these activities towards Vocational Education. The high school guidance counselor also assists students in participating with ROP (Regional Occupational Program), which provides students with occupational experiences.

Areas of Strength

- Personalized learning environment instruction is adapted to fit individual student learning needs through one-on-one direct guidance of a credentialed teacher.
- Independent Study Teachers continually assess student learning styles and adjust for student need.
- Learning Center, Vendor Course Instruction (VCI), tutors, and other supplemental resources support the core instructional program.
- Some high school students have access to Highly Qualified Teachers in Mathematics, Language Arts, Social Sciences, and Biology.
- Parents are empowered by Independent Study Teachers to teach their own students instructional content.
- Regular professional development meetings with an annual topical focus, implemented system-wide by ISTs

Key Issues

- Greater student reflection on expected schoolwide learning results, as evidenced in student work products.
- All single subjects covered by Highly Qualified Teachers and access by all students.
- Greater Learning Center support for students; additionally, more effective parent communication with LC teachers.
- Additional content instruction support for parents (e.g., parent workshops), who are an essential partner of instruction for students.
- Enhanced awareness and implementation of current educational research.
- Improved uniform approach to data collection and analysis of instructional strategies and their effectiveness (e.g., Which students are using which resources, and how is it affecting their performance?).

Evidence

- Instruction, Parent and Student Focus Group Meetings
- Leadership Team Meetings
- Interviews with individual teachers, students, and parents
- Self-Study Report
- Classroom Observations by the WASC Visiting Team
- Work Products and samples of student work

D. Assessment and Accountability

Assessment Reporting Process

D1. The school uses a professionally acceptable process to collect, disaggregate, analyze and report student performance data to the parents and other stakeholders.

Several professionally acceptable processes and technologies have been employed in use assessment data in order to drive instruction. Edperformance.com” is used to administer benchmark assessments which are used to place students and gauge curriculum/teacher effectiveness. School pathways solutions are used to store student data, attendance data inclusive. A scantron product is used to disaggregate and evaluate student performance data. An area of growth exists in the need to integrate these various data management systems into an unified system. Presently, data generated in these disparate systems exists in isolation, unless a staff member manually effects the transfer of data.

Student work is the “...basis for grading’, while benchmark results, CST performance, and ‘additional assessment’ are the drivers for the measurement of student growth and performance. Learning styles are continuously assessed and monitored, and ISTs communicate findings to the parent in order to increase the potency of the home learning experience.

Essays are a schoolwide requirement yet parents did express the need for a reassessment of the writing program. Portfolios are maintained for backup reporting purposes, and ISTs also maintain student artifacts to inform their practice.

The student work evaluated by teachers is viewed from the perspective of standards achievement. ”Checks for understanding during Learning Period meetings and informal assessment are used to determine mastery. ESLRs represent an area of growth, particularly in reinforcing student metacognition throughout the schoolwide learning process

Use of Assessments to Guide Instruction

D2. Teachers employ a variety of assessment strategies to evaluate student learning. Students and teachers use findings to modify the teaching/learning process to enhance learning.

Standards-based curriculum embedded assessments are used to determine mastery of California ELA and Mathematics standards. Service to ELL students is not an ideal fit in the program, as parents function in the role of home-based teacher. GLC’s Independent Study model provides a conducive environment for student feedback, and this occurs during the learning Period meetings that occur between the IST, student, and parent. Students and parents state that IST response to student concerns and deficiencies is immediate and productive.

Schoolwide data analysis is an area of growth, as ISTs respond to student weakness via local assessment. CST results are the primary driver for PD selection and planning.

Assessment and Monitoring System

D3. The school with the support of the district and community has an assessment and monitoring system to determine student progress toward achievement of the academic standards and expected schoolwide learning results.

As a chartered institution, GLC bears primary responsibility for monitoring the progress of its students. The chartering district assumes no responsibility for monitoring the progress of GLC students, but the school does provide progress reports to "...the District Board and the school's Board receive updates from the Directors of Curriculum, Instruction, and Operations at each board meeting...".

Students and parents are advised of student progress on a monthly basis via face-to-face meetings with student and/or parent. The BOE is updated at board meetings, and the District is apprised of student performance on CAHSEE and CST at its regularly scheduled meetings.

Achievement Data Drives Resources

D4. Assessment results drive the school's program, its regular evaluation and improvement and the allocation and use of resources.

The "learning styles-based curriculum choices" is a modification primarily directed at student modalities, and ISTs have been trained during monthly meetings. ISTs are pleased with the depth that the trainings have added to their instructions, students are pleased that ISTs are responsive to their needs, and parents have noted that success and mastery are more prevalent using this method than any previously encountered. Benchmark assessment data guides student placement, and also gauges student mastery at the end of a year's study.

RTI implementation has begun in response to an unusual distribution of GLC students in the FBB and BB categories after STAR testing. While nascent and budget will not be available until 2011-2012, a pilot program with 10 students is guiding the process forward. The model envisioned is that students emerging from Tier III of RTI will then be referred to a SST.

Areas of Strength

- Schoolwide system of benchmarks whereby teachers can place and measure student growth.
- Standards-based curriculum and test prep materials prepare students for standardized tests.

- Teacher ability to interpret performance results on an individual basis, including evaluation of the impact of student modalities, and determine instructional needs.
- Addition of Response to Intervention program.
- Focused Professional Development Days, increased tutoring resources, colleague discussions, curriculum research and development in response to assessment results.

Key Issues

- Integration of assessment data (CST and benchmark), in-depth and meaningful analysis on individual level as well as schoolwide.
- Parent training in interpreting and using assessment results.
- Increased attention to at-risk students as identified by CST “Far Below Basic” performance, additional resources and demonstratively effective strategies applied.

Evidence

- Focus group discussions
- Data reports
- Sidebar discussions with ISTs, students, and parents

E. Culture and Student Support

School Leadership

E1. To what extent does the school leadership employ a wide range of strategies to encourage parental and community involvement, especially with the teaching/learning process?

Gorman Learning Center serves a unique community of parents and children in that family involvement is mentioned as one of the top reason why parents choose GLC. The school prides itself on being an independent study learning environment. Teachers meet with each parent and student at least every 20 days.

It is the parents’ responsibility to ensure engagement from the student in the educational process and maintaining contact with their Independent Study Teacher (IST) and utilize their expertise as a guide, mentor, and resource. Learning Centers offer Title I supplemental courses through categorical program funds provided by the State and Federal sources. Students are encouraged to attend the Learner Centers 1- 3 times per week depending on their level.

The students like the flexibility of the instructional schedule and they report feeling cared about as well as encouraged to complete their academic goals. They like working at their own pace and are offered resources to match their

learning styles.

The learning environment for the majority of the time is in the home and the school has written guidelines for a good "Work Station" and offer a description of what is expected in the Parent/Student Handbook and the Master Agreement that is signed at the time of enrollment. The model honors individual differences of the students and parents. The Learning Center class size is small, staff is friendly, and a family atmosphere drives the program.

The school does not have a universal approach to community involvement and any student with an interest in community partnerships, must initiate those relationships on their own. The school does not regularly involve professional services, local businesses, or speakers in the support of students.

Safe Clean School

E.2 To what extent is the school a safe, clean, and orderly place that nurtures learning? To what extent is the culture of the school characterized by trust, professionalism, high expectations for all students, and a focus on continuous school improvement?

Parents expressed an interest in establishing a discussion/support group to be a greater resource to the Independent Study Program. Safety policies address bullying and related disciplinary issues. The school leadership conducts regular reviews and evaluations to maintain a safe clean and orderly environment.

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

Individualized Educational Plans are established in the ninth grade with support from the one counselor and direct contact and planning between the Independent Study Teacher, parent and student. Additionally, a career testing inventory is administered by the guidance counselor to help students discover their talents and interests.

School field trips are established via a yearly calendar and students choose which ones they would like to attend. Staff has identified curriculum and age-appropriate field trips for students.

A few parent workshops are offered throughout the year. Additionally, parents would like gather and serve as a resource to each other and to the school.

Access to Systemic Support Services

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

All high school students complete an "I"portfolio. The project is intended to help

students become more self-reflective and grow in confidence and assurance. Activities can help them identify family contributions and cultural background influences. Students can increase their self-awareness while reflecting on their talents, skills and abilities.

Parents have found staff to be available, supportive and professional. The school offers health and psychological counseling guidance and referral, as appropriate.

Areas of Strength

- Passion and commitment on all levels to the Vision and Mission.
- Portfolio Project for high school students.
- Career Inventory.
- Parent interest in being an active resource.
- Flexibility of instructional schedules and teaching modalities.
- Appreciation of Individualized learning styles.

Key Issues

- Writing assignments and writing skills incorporated into the curriculum.
- Graduation checks and Academic Advisement counselor on site
- Parent discussion/support groups
- College prep classes
- A systematic program for community service

Evidence

- Self-Study
- Classroom and campus observations
- Student, parent, and staff Interviews

Part B: School wide Strengths and Critical Areas for Follow-up.

The school had four previous critical areas for follow-up related to improving student achievement and enhancing communication among all stakeholders. The three areas related to achievement were Math, Language Arts and Science with a particular focus on high school and at-risk students. The school recognizes that these critical areas remain a challenge as academic achievement is on a sliding

trend. The school attempted to construct an email address database that fell through.

School wide Areas of Strength

1. A responsible and accountable organizational structure that provides clear direction, expectations and a sense of mission.
2. A highly personalized learning environment that addresses the individual academic needs of each learner and readily adjusts and responds to personal changing needs.
3. A passion and commitment, from all stakeholders, toward student success
4. Exceptional flexibility and adaptability on the part of the Independent Study Teachers (IST) that goes beyond the call of duty.
5. Use of data to drive decisions supporting school programs and services.
6. The school wide commitment to modify instruction to match the preferred learning modality of students.
7. The high level of collaboration among the Independent Study Teachers (IST) and other stakeholders for the purpose of improving instructional practices and enhancing student learning.

School wide Critical Areas for Follow-Up

1. Ensure that parents are aware of services available from the counselor and increase direct counseling services to students in career preparation and college readiness.
2. Increase integration of assessment data and in-depth analysis at the individual level and school wide.
3. Provide a forum for groups of interested parents to collaborate regularly with staff for the purpose of improving programs and services.
4. Increase opportunities for students to improve their writing skills.
5. Provide greater learning opportunities for students to reflect more deeply upon their understanding and achievement of the ESLRs.
6. Modify the Action Plan to increase the likelihood of achieving the stated

academic goals by providing semi-annual progress reports to the Governing Board and placing greater emphasis on formative assessment of specific steps toward goal achievement.

Chapter V: Ongoing School Improvement

Summary of Schoolwide Action Plan

The Visiting Team concurs with the school's need to strengthen its core academic program and improve student outcomes, as outlined in the schoolwide Action Plan. From their analysis of data, the school will continue their quest to improve academic achievement specifically in the areas of Math, Language Arts and Science. These same critical areas have challenged the school before and it is imperative that staff is very intentional about its plan to achieve success. Ongoing formative systemic assessment of the school's progress is critical. While staff has decided on the specific subject areas (the what) of focus, it must still determine the most effective means (the how) to ensure success. The remaining three goals include improvement of school-to-career or secondary-to-higher education strategies, re-establishment of discontinued Learning Centers, and re-instatement of instructional leaders to provide further instructional support. Staff needs to be clear about how instructional leaders will significantly enhance student academic progress.

Adequacy of Schoolwide Action Plan

Staff has created a plan with specific steps, timeline, resources, progress assessment and reporting. There will be a need for greater financial resources, if the school determines that additional purchases of materials or programs become necessary as well as staff development to support the priority areas. The question remains as to what is different about this plan to achieve success over prior plans. That may require the Board and administrative leadership to have some serious discussions about the school's operations, goals and strategies.

Existing factors that support school improvement

The school is beginning to show signs of recovering from its 2007 major crisis which included mismanagement and misappropriation of funds, miscalculation of expenditures and inappropriate purchases. The results included administrative resignations and a severe loss of student enrollment. With an expanded Board, including parents of GLC students, student enrollment is growing and Learning Centers that were shut down after the 2007 crisis are being activated. School Board members are dedicated to running a responsible and viable program. They understand their own role and relationship with administration. The three school directors share responsibility for the overall implementation and success of the Action Plan, although one of the directors has been designated by the School Board as the school's point person.

Impediments to school improvement

The school needs to develop a clearer sense of how to improve student achievement. At this point, it has not decisively determined that re-establishing Learning Centers or re-instating Instructional Leaders will cause student learning to improve. It also needs to be very discriminate about the type of additional academic services and online resources that will produce improved learning in Math, Language Arts and Science. The school finds has found it difficult to determine “which of its efforts to meet the critical academic needs is or is not effective.”

Soundness of follow-up process to monitor accomplishments of Schoolwide Action Plan

The Action Plan indicates personnel responsible for the attainment of specific steps, but needs greater specificity as to who is ultimately responsible for monitoring the accomplishment of it goals. Additionally, many of the measures to assess progress depend on annual assessments without sufficient ongoing formative assessments to inform staff as to whether their efforts are on target or need to be adjusted. It is recommended that staff delineate a timeline for reporting progress, on a regular bases, to the Governing Board and other stakeholders. It is further recommended that staff uses academic student outcomes to measure success.