

SVUSD Strategic Plan: 2013-2016
Teaching, Learning, and Partnering for Excellence

Dear Sonoma Valley Parents, Students, Educators, and Community Members,

It is my pleasure to provide you with the SVUSD 2013-2016 Strategic Plan: *Teaching, Learning and Partnering for Excellence*. This document describes our strategic priorities for the next three years. We will assess progress each year and will update the plan on an annual basis. Once we feel we have made significant progress on these important priorities, we will continue to expand our thinking to new areas. For now, however, we think it is imperative for everyone involved in SVUSD to focus on the critical steps that will promote student success.

Many of you have participated in the process in some way. Whether you served on our Strategic Planning Steering Committee (SPSC), attended a focus group discussion, completed a survey, commented on preliminary findings, or simply made your views known to us, your voices were important, and they were heard. The SPSC agreed early on that the plan would be “clear and concise,” and that every district stakeholder – students, parents, teachers, principals, district personnel and community members – would understand the role he or she would be asked to play in meeting the plan’s goals. We hope this plan meets those important criteria.

Our district demography has changed significantly over the last decade, and at the same time expectations of our students and teachers have become more complex. We are about to embark upon a new chapter of teaching excellence in the SVUSD by placing a high priority on excellence in classroom instruction. We will provide guidance and professional development for our principals and classroom teachers so that every educator has the tools he or she needs to succeed. The advent of Common Core State Standards gives us a unique and timely opportunity to re-think about *what* and *how* we teach, ensuring *all* our students have the skills they need to succeed in the 21st Century. We understand and embrace the critical importance of parent engagement, and will do our best to be sure every family knows how to help their children thrive as they progress from pre-school to high school graduation. We will rely on the generous support of the Sonoma Valley community to supplement state and federal funding in order to create excellent schools. Perhaps most importantly, we will collectively embrace a standard of high-achievement for all our children, and we will report back to the community on our progress.

You will quickly see that our three-year priorities center on *people*: principals, teachers, classified staff, students, parents, community members. We know that school facilities are important, and we will certainly not ignore their upkeep or opportunities for modest,

affordable improvements during the life of this plan. Similarly, in the area of technology, our intention is to invest in new technologies selectively, as needed to meet Common Core State Standards, or to enable more effective instruction. Once we make significant progress on the goals articulated in this plan, we will be able to turn our attention to our physical plant and other capital projects.

Our Vision for the Sonoma Valley School District is bold: *“All children in the SVUSD will have the opportunity to reach their full potential in the classroom and beyond. Within every school there will be a consistent commitment to teaching excellence, a culture of high expectations, and an emphasis on student engagement. An active partnership between students, parents and teachers will be an essential component of student success. Our community will proudly support our schools with time, talent and resources.”*

We are committed to this Vision and to fulfill it, we will need everyone’s help. As a first step, we hope you will read this short plan. Then, if you are a parent or a community member, we hope you will be on the lookout over the coming months and years for ways you, too, can be part of our childrens’ success.

Thank you for all you do. I know we can do this, if we do it together.

Louann Carlomagno
SVUSD Superintendent

Important Background Information

The SVUSD enrolls approximately 4,600 students each year, down from a peak of about 5,300 in 1997-98. The demography of the district has changed dramatically over the same period. In 1997, English Language Learners comprised about 15% of students; by 2011 that number grew to 33%. Today, the District is 55% Hispanic/Latino, 40% White, and 5% other. Perhaps most significantly, while in 2000-01 only 30% of students qualified for free and reduced lunch (a surrogate measure for poverty), this year the number stands at 56%. The District projects that by 2015 over 65% of students will meet that standard. Average API* for the district is 737 (v. state average of 791), but there are significant gaps among various demographic groups. Average Hispanic/Latino API is 676; average White API is 811; average API for socio-economically disadvantaged is 676 and average API for English Language Learners is 658.

Over the past three years, the district has been monitoring progress on critical benchmarks on the journey from preschool to high school graduation. These critical benchmarks and their current status in the SVUSD are:

- At least one year of high-quality pre-school (*about 50% of SUVSD kindergartners enter kindergarten with no pre-school experience*)
- Reading at grade level by the end of 3rd grade (*43% of third graders are reading at grade level according to nationally normed-benchmark measures*)
- Proficient in English Language and Math by the beginning of 6th grade (*59% of fifth graders are proficient or higher in English Language Arts and 46% of fifth graders are proficient or higher in Math as measured by the California Standards Test*)
- Ready for college prep classes by 9th grade (*48% are proficient in English and 47% are proficient in Algebra or Geometry by the end of 8th grade as measured by the CST*)

Clearly, we have work to do to be sure that *more* students are meeting these indicators for school success.

At the same time, we are pleased to report briefly on some innovative and highly effective programs that exist in our district. These are programs that have been successful because they have either led to greater student achievement or because they have contributed to the student experience in a broader context:

- Our dual-immersion program has been very well received in the community with waiting list each year for program entrance.
- We are piloting an exciting music program called “El Sistema.” El Sistema’s approach to music education emphasizes intensive ensemble participation from the earliest ages, group learning, peer teaching, and a commitment to keeping the joy and fun of musical learning and music making ever-present in the lives of children.

- Our district was the recipient of a Federal *Investing In Innovations* Grant: The Exploratorium Science Project. Close to 100 SVUSD elementary school teachers have been trained in this approach of integrating the teaching of science and language, improving science education, especially for English Language Learners. Every one of our 5 elementary schools are participating in this program, and SVUSD scores on the CSTs for science have improved since teachers have received this training.
- In order to facilitate a successful transition to high school, we have instituted an innovative freshman program. Each 9th grader is assigned to a core group of teachers who work closely with the students to be sure they are integrating academically, socially and emotionally into the high school environment.
- Sonoma Valley High School (SVHS) has a very successful College and Career Counseling Center, so that all students and parents have the support they need as students consider post-secondary options and complete the college application process.
- In April 2013, the SVHS Mock Trial Team came in 8th in the state competing against 300 teams from all over California.

These are a few of the many programs that having a positive effect on student success. We plan to continue these and other effective programs over the next three years and to make improvements based on annual reviews.

Finally, while the California Department of Education reports that 94.4% Sonoma Valley High School (SVHS) seniors graduate, we believe that this number does not tell the whole story. The District loses and gains a number of students every year. For example, the SVHS Class of 2012 started in 2008 with 333 freshman students and by 2012 there were 267 seniors on graduation day, with 12 students dropping out. We recognize that each year there will be student movement in and out of the District due to family circumstances. However, our goal is to keep as many students as possible in the District and create the circumstances where they can thrive.

Each year for the past three years, between 38-42% of seniors in the district were accepted to 4 year colleges, and another 50-55% “self-reported” they will attend community college or other post-secondary education opportunities. In 2011-12, 40.0% of SVUSD seniors completed a-g** requirements compared to a county average of 26.3% and a state average of 38.3%. SVHS is one of only two high schools in the county that presumes all students will pursue a-g requirements unless the student, parents and teachers determine it is best for the student to “opt out” of this requirement.

We are proud that SVHS offers 11 Advanced Placement courses and 8 Honors courses, and that each student is required to complete a Senior Project. For the 2011-12 academic year, 289 students were enrolled in AP classes and 480 AP tests were administered. Sixty-one

percent of tests given received a score of 3 or higher, the standard for college credit in many colleges. Of students who take the SAT, our average scores are 580 Math, 460 Critical Reading, and 491 Writing. We are pleased to report that, in recent years, our SVHS students have been accepted at a wide range of 2 and 4 year colleges and universities, including such highly selective schools as UC Berkeley, Stanford, Dartmouth, Georgetown, Cornell, UCLA, and Yale. *See SVHS website for complete list.*

**Academic Performance Index (API) is a measure of school success based, in part, on student achievement as reflected in California Standards Tests (CSTs).*

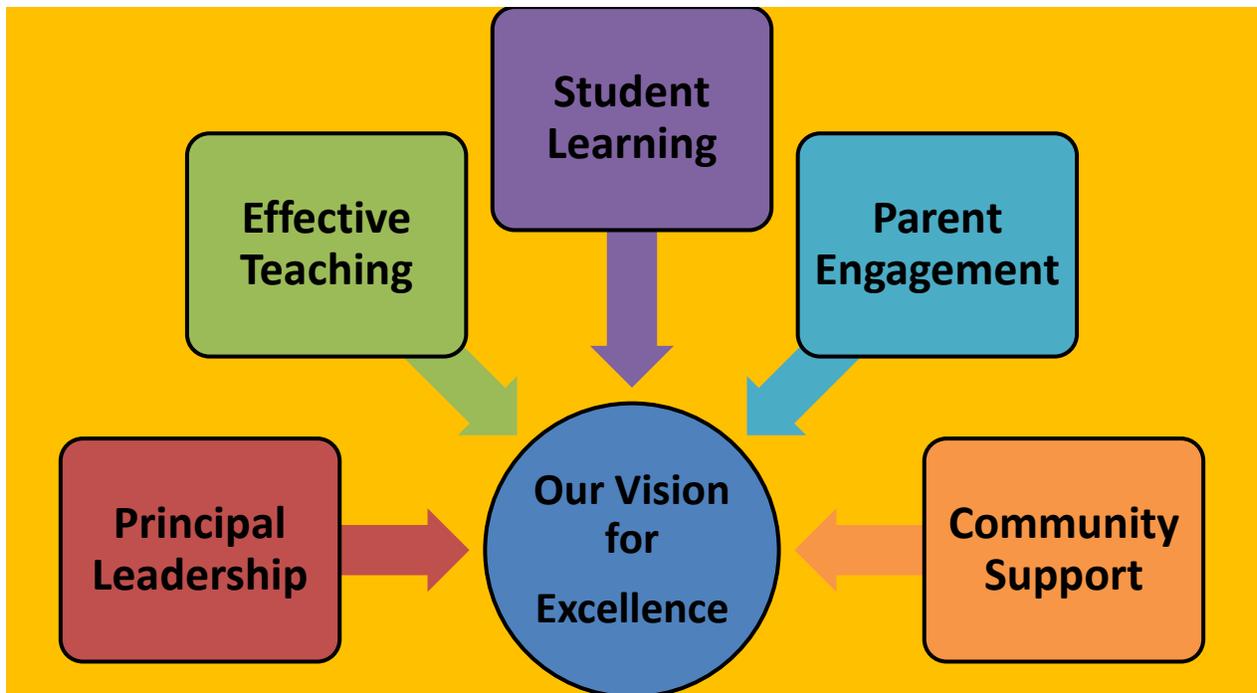
*** a-g requirements refer to courses required by the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) campuses for admission to those schools.*

SVUSD Mission

Together, with the support of parents, teachers, and the community, students will graduate from the SVUSD prepared for success in college, career, and life.

LONG RANGE VISION for SVUSD

All children in the SVUSD will have the opportunity to reach their full potential in the classroom and beyond. Within every school there will be a consistent commitment to teaching excellence, a culture of high expectations, and an emphasis on student engagement. An active partnership between students, parents and teachers will be an essential component of student success. Our community will proudly support our schools with time, talent and resources.



Goal #1: Principals will be the standard bearers for a culture of high expectations, excellent instruction and collaboration within their schools. Principals will lead their schools in the implementation of the Common Core State Standards.

Key Strategies:

- Provide principals with leadership training focused on their role in creating and maintaining a culture of high expectations, instructional excellence, and deep student engagement in their schools.
- Expect principals to spend a majority of their time supporting classroom teachers as they improve their practice and implement Common Core State Standards. This support will take many forms, including classroom coaching, mentoring master teachers, and assisting with professional development goals.
- Expect principals to include specific steps for setting a culture of high-expectations, providing instructional leadership, and finding opportunities for more teacher collaboration in site level plans. Include everyone, both teachers and support staff, in promoting school culture and student success.
- Provide *new* principals and vice-principals with an orientation to familiarize them with District practices as well as to ensure consistent evolution of instructional leadership across the District.
- Provide *first-time* principals with professional development.

Goal #2: Teachers will learn and adopt teaching practices that enhance student learning and are grounded in the Common Core State Standards. Teachers will welcome a deeper understanding of teaching practices and how to meet the needs of all students.

Key Strategies:

- **Work with the Valley of the Moon Teachers' Association to align teacher development with teacher evaluation.**
- **Adopt a common framework for teaching strategies across the District and use the framework as a teacher development tool.**
- **Provide teachers with both initial and ongoing professional development in the design and delivery of high quality, engaging lessons aligned with Common Core State Standards.**
- **Provide opportunities for teachers to reflect on their practice and continually refine instruction through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), instructional rounds, peer coaching and other professional development strategies.**
- **Help teachers use data more effectively to improve teaching and learning.**
- **Provide new teachers with summer orientation, to familiarize them with district practices, as well as to ensure consistent evolution of teaching practices across the District.**

Goal #3: More students in the SVUSD will meet the benchmarks identified by SVUSD as critical for student achievement. (Pre-school, reading at grade level by the end of 3rd grade, proficient in English and Math by the beginning of 6th grade, ready for college prep classes by 9th grade, prepared for college and career upon graduation.) Students who master the benchmarks will be challenged to reach their full potential. All students will benefit from a breadth of non-academic experiences.

Key Strategies:

- **Provide high-quality pre-school opportunities for socio-economically disadvantaged (SED) and English Learners (ELLs).**
- **Provide students with additional learning time in order to meet critical benchmarks. These "stepping stones" include:**
 - **Before, during and after-school programs, year round**
 - **Summer Reading Academy (3rd graders and expanding to additional grades)**

- MS and HS Summer Scholars Programs (transitional support for students)
- Algebra Boot Camp
- Use the Common Core State Standards to more effectively meet the academic needs of all students in the district.
- Communicate within and outside the District about current programs for accelerated learners; continue to find new ways to meet the needs of this group.
- Continue to support student experiences that develop the whole child, such as performing arts, fine arts, and health and wellness programs. Seek additional support from the community to grow these programs.
- Assess current support services and determine what additional services are needed.
- Build on the success of the dual-immersion program and consider ways to expand dual-immersion opportunities in SVUSD.
- Expand the integration of core subjects with career technical education courses at SVHS, and find ways to introduce “college and career readiness habits” beginning in middle school.

Goal #4: Parents of students in the SVUSD will understand they are integral partners in the education of their children.

Key strategies:

- Prepare grade-by-grade “strategies for school success” for parents.
- Provide principals with workshops to discuss parent engagement strategies.
- Ask principals to assess current parent engagement/support at site level and include changes/improvement in site plans.
- Use California Department of Education Family Engagement Framework (2011) and other resources as templates for parent engagement activities.
- Seek funds to hire a parent engagement coordinator to help sites develop programs, consistent with District standards.

Goal #5: Community members will embrace and support these goals directly as individuals and indirectly through affiliations with other community organizations. The Sonoma Valley Education Foundation will be the primary organization dedicated to fundraising in support of SVUSD.

Key Strategies:

- Create awareness throughout Sonoma Valley about the goals of this three-year plan and how the community can help achieve these goals.

- **Develop and deepen connections with businesses, community groups, other youth organizations, and individuals in Sonoma Valley.**
- **Continue building community engagement in Small Learning Communities (SLCs) at SVHS.**
- **Work closely with the Sonoma Valley Education Foundation (SVEF) as the lead community organization in support of District goals:**
 - **Assist in board building and staff development for SVEF.**
 - **Support SVEF as it takes a leadership role among youth organizations throughout Sonoma Valley and seek ways for these organizations to work together in support of District goals.**
 - **Through SVEF, encourage the community to support the District with financial resources needed to achieve these goals.**

Specific goals and measuring success:

- **By 2016, our most important measure of success will be the increased numbers of students meeting or exceeding the benchmarks identified in Goal #3 which we know are *critical* for students to graduate ready for college, career and life.**
- **The California Standards Tests (CSTs) will be discontinued (by the state) after the 2013-14 school year, and our schools will begin using Smarter Balance assessments which are aligned with Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in 2014-15. For that reason, we recently identified a mix of assessment tools that we will use to measure our progress against these critical benchmarks while we make this transition. *Please feel free to contact the superintendent's office or the district website to see a description of these assessments.* We will use data gathered in spring, 2013 as our baseline, and we will measure progress against these baseline data for the next three years as we migrate to Smarter Balance Assessments. We will also survey teachers, students, and parents at least annually to gather additional evidence of student achievement.**
- **Specifically, our goal is to see the following improvements:**
 - **Increase the number of SVUSD entering kindergartners who have had at least one year of high-quality pre-school from 50% to 80%.**
 - **Increase the number of students who are reading at grade level by the end of 3rd grade from 43% to at least 60%.**
 - **Increase the number of students who are proficient or above in English at the beginning of 6th grade from 46% to at least 60%. New math CCSS assessments are currently being determined to measure student progress.**

- Increase the number of students who enter 9th grade prepared to enroll in college prep classes *as defined by the assessments referenced above.*
- Maintain or increase the number of high school students enrolled in Advanced Placement Classes and increase the number of tests earning a score of 3 or better on the AP exams from 61% to 75%.
- Increase the number of high school students who take the SAT and improve average scores achieved by 10 or more points.
- Increase the percentage of students who graduate SVHS having completed a-g requirements from current level of 40% to 55%.
- Increase the number of students who remain at SVHS all 4 years.
- Building on our success with parent, educator, and community surveys, focus groups and interviews as we prepared this plan, we will increase our use of these feedback tools over the next three years to ascertain:
 - Whether a culture of high-expectations exists in SVUSD schools.
 - Whether educators, parents, and students perceive teaching practices have improved.
 - Whether parents feel engaged as partners in their students' education.
- Similarly, we will survey the community to determine their experiences and perceptions of District progress.
- We will gauge the level of community support for district programs in part through the fundraising support our District receives through the SVEF.

SVUSD Financial Background

Sonoma Valley Unified School District has an annual operating budget of approximately \$38 million. As with all kinds of schools (public, private, charter), the vast majority of expenses (nearly 80%) cover salaries and benefits for employees.

There are four major sources of revenue for SVUSD. Local taxes provide the majority of District income (73%), followed by Local Funds (11%), Other State Income (10%), and Federal Funds (6%).

Income from local taxes is generally unrestricted and is the primary funding source for District payroll. Other State Income includes restricted reimbursements as well as unrestricted Lottery allocations. Federal Funds are mostly restricted to programs for socio-economically disadvantaged students.

Local Funds is a bit of a misnomer. The name implies that these funds are donated to the District. In fact, nearly three-quarters of the funds in this category are funds for Special Education Programs that our district receives from the Sonoma County Office of Education. Local Funds, however, does also include donations individual school sites receive through site-level activities (PTO, Boosters) as well as donations from individual community members or organizations to fund specific programs throughout the district.

A specific goal of this Strategic Plan is to increase the level of voluntary community support for programs we know will improve outcomes for our students. Local giving allows us to design programs that meet the unique needs of our community; we can develop *specific* activities to address *specific* needs. We can decide how we will measure success, track our performance, report back to our donors, and make adjustments as required. We simply will not have the flexibility to build effective, targeted programs without strong community support.

A Word about the Common Core State Standards

Over the next three years, Common Core State Standards will have a dramatic impact on both curriculum and instructional practice in all classrooms. California, along with 42 other states, adopted the Common Core State Standards and requires districts to fully transition both curriculum and instruction by the 2014-15 school year. We began training our teachers for this transition during the 2012-2013 school year, and we will continue and expand that training over the next three years. New standardized assessments will also be in place for the 2014-15 school year replacing the soon-to-be outdated California Standards Test.

Due to their importance to the SVUSD, it is worthwhile to describe the Common Core State Standards in more detail. The following excerpt is from Something in Common: The Common Core Standards and the Next Chapter in American Education, by Robert Rothman, Harvard Education Press, 2011:

“The Common Core State Standards differ in several different respects from the standards that have been in place in states for years. First, they are aimed at college and career readiness. That is, they are designed to lay out the knowledge and skills students need in order to be prepared to enter first-year courses in colleges, without remediation, or to enter workforce training programs for careers that offer competitive salaries... Second, the standards are internationally benchmarked... Third, the Standards are intended to send clear signals to students, parents, and educators about what is most important to learn at each grade level... Fourth, the standards are intended to be common across states.”

Here in Sonoma Valley we embrace the standards put forth in the Common Core. We are happy to see standards that require our students to become better critical thinkers and problems solvers. We believe these are the skills all students will need for success in the 21st Century. For students who are not at grade level in subjects like Mathematics, we will work with them to be sure they can meet the Standards, and for our high-achieving students, Common Core State Standards will provide challenging, new opportunities to thrive. For our principals and teachers, Common Core State Standards create an opportunity to re-examine classroom instructional practices. You will be hearing us talk about the Common Core a lot over the next three years. To prepare all of you for this conversation, I would like to conclude this section with several important definitions of terms you will hear again and again:

Standards: The *content* or *skills* that students are supposed to master by the end of each year

Assessments: Tests or other kinds of methods for determining if students have met the standards

Curriculum: *What* teachers will teach to meet the Common Core State Standards

Instructional Strategies: *How* teachers teach to meet the needs of a range of students

This Strategic Plan supports of successful implementation of Common Core State Standards.

The Planning Process

In February 2012, a Strategic Planning Steering Committee (SPSC) was formed. The 17 member committee met periodically throughout the last year to evaluate and analyze findings and to determine appropriate next steps. Early in the process we launched three separate surveys among current parents, educators and community members. The surveys were administered in English and Spanish, and we had a total of approximately 1,000 responses. These surveys provided us with quantitative data, which we then explored more deeply in 22 focus groups which were held last spring, also in English and Spanish. In June 2012, the SPSC reviewed and evaluated information from the surveys and the focus groups, as well as from various important readings that were relevant to the key, emergent issues. The SPSC then formed a set of 15 draft recommendations which were vetted during the fall and winter of 2012, first with school leaders and later with any other educators who wished to comment. In March 2013, the District leaders, principals and the SPSC continued to narrow the list of recommendations to a set of clear, manageable, measurable priorities that will guide the District's work over the next 3 years. All district educators were then offered an additional opportunity to provide feedback on the priorities. This plan is the result of that work.

Strategic Planning Steering Committee

Slade Backer, Sonoma Valley High School Development Trust, Board Member

Jean Barnier, Sonoma Valley Education Foundation, Board Member

Louann Carlomagno, Superintendent

Pilar Cruz, Parent, DELAC President

Will Deeths, Altimira Middle School Principal

Gary DeSmet, SVUSD School Board Member

Lynn Fitzpatrick, Director, Curriculum & Instruction

Justin Frese, Deputy Superintendent

Ismael Gonzalez, CSEA, Transportation

Bill Isetta, Sonoma Valley High School Development Trust, Board Member

Helen Marsh, SVUSD School Board Member

Brandy Melendy, VMTA, Dunbar Elementary School Teacher

Esmeralda Sanchez Moseley, Flowery Elementary School Principal

Carrenne Purtell, Sonoma Valley High School Teacher

Julie Ann Ryan, Adele Harrison Middle School Teacher

Tim Wallace, Sonoma Valley High Education Foundation, Board Member

Laura Zimmerman, Sonoma Valley Education Foundation, Executive Director