

WINTERS HIGH SCHOOL SYNOPSIS

VISION

All Winters High School graduates will be prepared academically and socially to their fullest potential for the transition to adult life and for participation in modern society.

"Proud Past, Promising Future," the motto of Winters High School, is truly the defining value that shapes the culture of this school. Established in 1891 as the first public high school in Yolo County, Winters High takes tremendous pride in its rich and diverse agrarian past, while looking ever forward to meet the challenges of a constantly changing world.

Winters High School earned its first accreditation in 1909, which demonstrates its long-standing commitment to academic excellence. Like most schools in California, however, the measurement of student achievement was ambiguous at best in the late 1990's, as there were no state standards or uniform measures of student learning. With California's adoption of academic standards and the STAR program, Winters High was presented with some disappointing realities in terms of student achievement as measured by the new assessment instruments. All students, but most markedly our Latino and low SES students, were performing below average compared to others in the state. In order to help address these shortcomings, the administration applied for participation in the Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program in 1999. The school was selected and the process of continuous improvement was set in motion.

The primary focus for improvement became the implementation of a standards-based instructional program. This represented a significant paradigm shift for the staff, students and parents, as everything from academic expectations, to assessments, to grades was redefined. Instruction no longer looked or felt as it had before. Winters High School had implemented a block schedule in 1998, so change was not entirely new. This focus, however, caused the faculty to concentrate on essential learning outcomes. After creating structural opportunities for staff collaboration, integrating input from parents and other stakeholders, and addressing areas for growth identified by the data and the external evaluator, Winters High School had an improvement plan to guide the next three years. This plan proved to be successful as student achievement rose consistently, and the school was exited from II/USP on schedule in 2003.

While somewhat painful, the II/USP process and program was an enlightening experience for the staff of Winters High School. This faculty is a proud and cohesive group who did not accept the "underperforming" label lightly. The experience brought about a serious self analysis on both the individual teacher and whole faculty levels. We have been and remain a small, caring and proud staff, committed to excellence for ourselves and our students. Accordingly, we have also instituted a component of continuous self evaluation and improvement of instructional practices and the resulting student achievement. The commitment to and internalization of a standards based approach to student learning has resulted in an improved school culture where expectations are clearly defined and student achievement is the primary focus. The results speak for themselves. API has increased steadily, the achievement gap between groups is shrinking, CaHSEE passage rates have risen and graduation rates have remained well above state averages. Winters High School is succeeding at raising academic performance for all students and better preparing its graduates for life after high school.