



INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES

May, 14, 2008

LEGISLATIVE FILE

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Introduction Date 5-14-08

Enactment No. _____

Enactment Date _____

To: Vincent Matthews, State Administrator/Trustee
Board of Education

From: Mary Buttler, Executive Officer, Instructional Services
Monica Vaughan, Coordinator, Alternative Education

Subject: Annual Evaluation of Alternative High School: Far West School

Action Requested:

Approval of the Annual Evaluation of Far West Alternative High School, per Education code 58510.

Background:

Per Education Code 58510 requires school district operating alternative schools and programs of choice to evaluate these schools and programs annually and to send a report of the evaluation to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Discussion:

The annual evaluation of all alternative school programs of choice established by a local governing board pursuant to Education Code 58500 to 58512 should supply useful information to the governing board and to decision makers in the school district and the school concerned. The information should document how well the alternative school or program of choice is reaching the objectives which have been set for it.

Education Code Section 58510 also requires input into the annual evaluation from the three concerned populations: (1) teachers; (2) students; and (3) parents or guardians. Although the law does not specify a particular method of getting information from the three groups, surveys or questionnaires are commonly used to solicit observations and opinions.

Fiscal Impact:

None.

Recommendation:

The staff is recommending the approval of the Annual Evaluation Report of Far West School and further authorizing the submission to the State Superintendent.

Attachment:

- Evaluation Report Far West School

1. Introductory information

a. **Name of school or program**

Far West School
Alternative High School
CDS: 01 - 61259 - 0110361

2006-07 enrollment: 144 students in grades 9-12

b. **Address and other contact information**

5263 Broadway Terrace
Oakland, CA 94618-1418
Phone (510) 879-1580
Fax (510) 879-1589

c. **Name of school district**

Oakland Unified School District

d. **Date of school or program inception**

September, 2005

e. **Evaluation period (school year)**

2006-07 school year

f. **Name and title of evaluator with contact information**

Monica Vaughan
Coordinator, Alternative Education
4521 Webster Street
Oakland, CA 94609
Phone (510) 879-2140
Fax (510) 879-2146

g. **Name of school principal or program director with contact information**

Principal	Beverly Jarrett Phone (510) 879-1580 Fax (510) 879-1589 beverly.jarrett@ousd.k12.ca.us
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OUSD Alt Ed Program Director	Monica Vaughan Coordinator of Alternative Education
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2. Executive Summary

Far West is a small alternative education high school in the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) that has been in existence since school year 2005-06. The Far West mission is to provide an academic program that builds critical thinkers, self-aware individuals, and positive members of the community who have multiple choices open to them when they graduate from high school.

Like the other OUSD Alternative Education schools, Far West was designed as a small school where at-risk students can have a “second chance” at succeeding. Over time, the school’s student population – and students’ reasons for choosing Far West – have evolved. Today, although Far West still serves a significant number of at-risk students, many students are attracted by the school’s arts focus and integration of arts activities into the overall curriculum. In addition, Far West now attracts students from particular groups – such as biracial and gay and lesbian students – who do not feel socially accepted at OUSD’s larger “mainstream” high schools. Here students can come to school in an inclusive atmosphere where they are accepted, challenged, nurtured, and supported with tough love and real expectations.

With a few exceptions, the school’s students do not come from the upper middle class Rockridge neighborhood where the school is located, but are typically from low-income neighborhoods in East and West Oakland and take one or two buses or BART to attend school. During the 2006-07 school year, Far West’s enrollment was 144 students in grades 9-12: 74 female and 70 male. African-American students make up the largest group (71%), followed by Latino youth (14%), Asian (4%), Filipinos or Pacific Islanders (3%), and whites (2%). Thirty-seven percent of Far West students participate in the USDA’s free-and-reduced-price lunch program. Four percent are English Learners.

Far West offers all the courses required to meet UC a-g requirements. The school has an arts focus and a partnership with California College of the Arts, its neighbor. The arts focus is used to increase student attendance and provide multiple means of learning and of demonstrating learning. From year to year, between 75% and 100% of students go on to college—despite the sub-standard academic skills most students bring to Far West.

In 2006-07, Far West’s specific outcome objectives for student academic achievement were as follows:

Goal 1) English Language Arts

- Objective 1.1 Far West will meet its NCLB Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) for African American students in ELA.
- 1.2 31% of Far West students will score proficient or above on the CST ELA.
- 1.3 70% of 10th grade African American students will pass the ELA section of the CAHSEE.

Goal 2) Mathematics

- 2.1 Far West will meet its AMO in mathematics for African American students.
- 2.2 70% of African American 10th grade students will pass the Mathematics section of the CAHSEE.

Goal 3) School Climate and Attendance

- 3.1 Far West will reduce suspensions compared to the prior year.
- 3.2 Far West will reduce the number of fights to 0.
- 3.3 Attendance among Far West high school students will increase to 98%.

RESULTS

During the 2006-07 school year, Far West did not achieve the objectives under Goals 1, 2, or 3 above. It is notable, however, that Far West outperformed Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) as a whole in 2006-07 in the areas of:

- Academic Performance Index (30 point improvement by Far West compared to +7 by OUSD)
- Percentage of 9th grade students scoring at the Advanced or Proficient levels on the California Standards Test in English Language Arts
- CAHSEE ELA passing rate for 10th graders
- CAHSEE ELA and Math passing rates for 10th grade African American students
- High school graduation rate (88.9% at Far West vs. 64.4 district wide)
- Achieving Adequate Yearly Progress (Far West did so, OUSD did not).

CONTRIBUTORS TO POSITIVE OUTCOMES

It appears that a number of the components of Far West's academic and overall program contributed positively to students' academic achievement, including:

- Use and expansion of staff *Professional Learning Community* to inform instructional improvements.
- Continuing *integration of writing skills* development throughout the curriculum
- Use of *daily creative arts classes* (e.g., visual and performing) to engage students and to support reading, writing, language, and other core skills
- *CAHSEE test prep* course
- Use of *Cyber High* software to help students polish their skills and make up credits toward graduation
- Use of *Individualized Success Plans* and the *Advisory* strategy for each student
- *Extended-day interventions*, including tutoring, math and science lab, and mental health counseling
- Use of a *school wide conflict mediation program* to improve student behavior and school climate and thereby reduce barriers to learning
- Measures designed specifically to better engage African-American students in their education, including the opening of a research library at the school that reflects African Americans' culture, ethnicity, and artistic/scientific achievements, and faculty professional development focused on cultural competency

IDENTIFIED OBSTACLES

Obstacles Far West faces in achieving our academic performance objectives and, more broadly, enabling all students to meet proficiency standards in core academic skills, include the following:

- The challenge of simultaneously accelerating low-performing, newly-enrolled students academically while enabling them to recover credits toward graduation.

to their educational goals, whether they needed to take college courses, do community service, or other activities, and to discuss other issues that arise. During 2006-07, each advisor received training in career and college planning and in strategies for successfully meeting one-on-one with students. This strategy contributes to a small, familial learning environment; promote communication between the school and parents/guardians; and supports the use of Individualized Success Plans (see below). Overall, Advisory is essential to Far West's culture and the establishment of trusting, supportive relationships between students and teachers.

In 2006-07, we piloted the use of an *Individualized Success Plan* for each student. The student, parent/guardian, and teacher Advisor worked together to create this personalized plan charting what educational goals the student needs to accomplish and an agreed-upon course for how the student will catch up on credits, boost GPA, improve attendance, plan for college and/or career, or even identify and address areas of need concerning mental health issues or even substance abuse. Three times a year, the student, parent/guardian, and Advisor meet to revisit and review the plan to monitor the student's progress, and modify the plan as appropriate. This strategy is designed to support both the student's academic progress as well as his/her broader enrichment and preparation for an independent and successful life outside of school.

Other variables expected to support student learning at Far West include:

- Use of daily creative arts classes (e.g., visual and performing) to engage students and to support reading, writing, language, and other core skills
- CAHSEE test prep course
- Use of Cyber High software to help students polish their skills and make up credits toward graduation
- Extended-day interventions, including tutoring, math and science lab, and mental health counseling
- Use of a school wide conflict mediation program to improve student behavior and school climate and thereby reduce barriers to learning
- Use of parent informational sessions, daily progress reports, regular parent meetings, and frequent communication through multiple channels to promote parents/guardians' active involvement in students' learning and success
- Formalize a student leadership structure to enable students to have greater participation in the redesigning the school's programs

Because a predominance of its students are African American, and because this group has had poorer results in standardized testing and graduation rates, Far West also focused on measures designed to better engage and improve learning outcomes for African American students.

Strategies implemented in 2006-07 for this purpose include:

- Professional development for faculty members in cultural competency
- Opening of a research library at the school that reflects African Americans' culture, ethnicity, and artistic/scientific achievements

c. Intended and completed evaluation steps or procedures in chronological order, with the name of the person responsible and the completion date

- The current emphasis on performance targets under NCLB, because of which test preparation classes too often take precedent, diverting resources from core academic instruction and threatening to make students disengaged from their education.
- The highly transient nature of Far West's student population, making it difficult to provide the consistent, sustained support students need to make significant strides in their academic skills and performance.
- The frequent need for staff to deal with immediate issues that often derail the focus on collaboration around improving teaching and learning
- Chronic under-resourcing and under-staffing to be able to meet the complex and varied needs of our high-risk, generally low-income, and diverse student body and their families' needs.
- Difficulties engaging Far West parents/guardians in support of their children's education—due to factors such as low educational attainment among parents, past unpleasant experiences in the schools, and factors of time and transportation that are further obstacles to parents being involved at the school.

We should note that the infusion of 21st Century grant funds for after school programming beginning in 2007-08 will strengthen Far West's ability to address several of the obstacles just mentioned, as it creates added resources for targeted intervention and other academic support/enrichment activities, and family engagement/family literacy activities in support of youth's and their families' success.

It is also significant that Far West has a WASC visit scheduled for October 2008. In preparing for this visit, Far West will undertake a "Focus on Learning" self-study, to identify its strengths and weaknesses and to devise strategies for improving its instructional and overall program. Preparing for WASC will serve as an excellent driver for accomplishing the work Far West's Professional Learning Community has planned for itself as a school community during the 2007-08 school year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this evaluation, the evaluator makes the following recommendations to Far West's Principal to improve students' academic performance outcomes:

- Strengthen the use of Individualized Success Plan and Advisory approach to optimize each student's use of intervention classes, after school program, and other resources to strengthen academic skills and advance toward graduation.
- Seek to imbed test preparation into the core curriculum to maximize time for core skills instruction.
- Utilize after school programming to expand academic support for students performing below proficient in core skill areas, through supplemental instruction, homework assistance, tutorial support, and writing and math workshops.
- Utilize after school funding and programming to expand supportive services and enrichment activities for students, including mental health services, sports, arts, student leadership opportunities, gang prevention programming, and student clubs.
- Create a summer transition program to orient incoming 9th graders to the Far West program and to impart skills (e.g., study skills, note taking, time management) needed to succeed in high school.

- Explore implementing an AVID program at Far West.
- Seek further ways to facilitate the work of the Professional Learning Community and enable it to focus on strengthening teaching and learning for the benefit of students.
- Engage students in meaningful ways in shaping their educational experience and in the school's educational reform work, via surveys, focus groups, and other leadership development activities.
- Aggressively reach out to enlist parents/guardians in positive ways at Far West, through: participation in the Individualized Success Plan process; use of progress reports; focus groups; workshops on NCLB, testing, other aspects of their children's education at Far West, career planning, and college options and applications; family literacy workshops; and in volunteering in classrooms and other ways at Far West.
- Further develop Far West's relationship with the California College of the Arts.
- Form a "College Going Culture Committee" consisting of different staff members to promote a college-going culture at the school. This Committee would be responsible for planning Advisory activities such as academic planning for college, researching and visiting different colleges, and completing college and scholarship applications.

Far West will require additional support from OUSD and via grants/fundraising pursued by the Office of Alternative Education and the school site itself in the following areas:

- Collaboration with individual OUSD middle schools to identify incoming 9th graders and sign them up for the summer transition program.
- Funding for test prep materials that can be incorporated into the core curriculum.
- Funding to support faculty collaboration and professional development.
- Funding to implement the AVID program.
- Funding to expand Far West's arts focus and activities.
- Resources to sustain and expand availability of mental health services for Far West students—for example, through the Alt Ed Coordinator's work with the County to bring more MediCal EPSDT-funded services to the school.

EVALUATION PROCESS

This evaluation has been undertaken by Monica Vaughan, OUSD Coordinator of Alternative Education, Monica Vaughan, with assistance from Far West's Professional Learning Community (PLC) and Site Council and its Principals: first Linda McCluskey and subsequently Beverly Jarrett, who took over as Principal in 2007-08. The PLC and Site Council gathered the standardized test scores and other student data incorporated into this evaluation as part of its own self-monitoring and its planning for the school's Single Plan for Student Achievement 2007-10. Both the PLC and Site Council have engaged in discussions regarding the variables that have affected student academic achievement (both positively and negatively) and have provided valuable input into the recommendations presented in this report.

3. Annual evaluation design

a. Statement of purpose

Far West is a small alternative education high school in the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) that has been in existence since school year 2005-06 (The campus has also housed an alternative middle school program which we have been phasing out, a process we will complete during the 2007-08 school year with the closing of 8th grade.) The Far West mission is to provide an academic program that builds critical thinkers, self-aware individuals, and positive members of the community who have multiple choices open to them when they graduate from high school.

Like OUSD's other Alternative Education schools, Far West was designed as a small school where at-risk students can have a "second chance" at succeeding. Over time, the school's student population – and students' reasons for choosing Far West – have evolved. Today, although Far West still serves a significant number of at-risk students, many students are attracted by the school's arts focus and integration of arts activities into the overall curriculum. In addition, Far West now attracts students from particular groups – such as biracial and gay and lesbian students – who do not feel socially accepted at OUSD's larger "mainstream" high schools. Here students can come to school in an inclusive atmosphere where they are accepted, challenged, nurtured, and supported with tough love and real expectations.

Students come to Far West School for many reasons. Some prefer it as an alternative to Oakland's traditional and large high schools. Some have fallen behind in earning their credits and want to catch up. Others have dropped out of school for personal reasons and now want to resume their studies. Others are referred by counselors, friends, or their family after not thriving in more "mainstream" schools. Some have had chronic truancy and disciplinary issues. Some attend Far West to get away from gangs and violence in other schools. Almost none are proficient in core academic skills (the majority test at the Far Below Basic or Below Basic on the California Standards Tests), and all are at high risk for dropping out of school and the resulting serious problems.

Far West is open to any student in OUSD. With a few exceptions, its students do not come from the upper middle class Rockridge neighborhood where the school is located, but are typically from low-income neighborhoods in East and West Oakland and take one or two buses or BART to attend school. During the 2006-07 school year, Far West's enrollment was 144 students in grades 9-12: 74 female and 70 male. African-American students make up the largest group (71%), followed by Latino youth (14%), Asian (4%), Filipinos or Pacific Islanders (3%), and whites (2%). Thirty-seven percent of students participate in the USDA's free-and-reduced-price lunch program. Four percent are English Learners.

Far West offers all the courses required to meet UC a-g requirements. The school has an arts focus and a partnership with California College of the Arts, the school's neighbor. The arts focus is used to increase student attendance and provide multiple means of learning and of demonstrating learning. From year to year, between 75% and 100% of Far West graduates go on to college—despite the sub-standard academic skills most students bring to Far West.

Far West students get along well with each other and express pride in their school and in the safe and cooperative school climate. Culturally the students are definitely the hip-hop generation. Beautiful graffiti pieces adorn the school's small permanent portables, and spoken word is a favorite class.

b. Identification of the variables expected to facilitate student achievement

Far West students are provided a college preparatory education through an accelerated curriculum that is designed to support, nurture, and move them quickly toward receiving a diploma. The school offers all the courses required to meet UC a-g requirements and an arts focus, in partnership with California College of the Arts, the school's neighbor. The arts focus is used to increase student attendance and provide multiple means of learning and of demonstrating learning.

Far West has taken various measures to promote and accelerate student learning. Strategies implemented in 2006-07 to strengthen teaching and learning across the curriculum include the following.

The Far West faculty and staff expanded the use of its Professional Learning Community (PLC) (begun in 2005-06) to inform instructional improvements. The PLC met for shared planning time three Wednesday afternoons a month to discuss the learning needs of individual students and students, to analyze student work and test data¹ to guide classroom measures for accelerating learning, and to collaborate across subject areas and grade levels. Teachers observed each other in classrooms and used defined protocols to discuss their work in order to promote cross-disciplinary and college-preparatory lessons and instructional consistency. Another focus of the PLC was the continuing integration of writing skills development throughout the curriculum.

Specific efforts to improve Far West students' mathematics skills implemented in 2006-07 included implementation of an AVID program at Far West, with an AVID-trained teacher assigned to help accelerate 9th grade students who scored below the "Basic" level in math. In addition, math teachers devoted considerable time to evaluating and strengthening the effectiveness of the school's College Preparatory Mathematics curriculum.²

Another important approach used to support student achievement is Far West's *Advisory* strategy—in which each student is assigned to a teacher who serves as a combination counselor, teacher, and mentor. The purpose of this strategy is for the student to develop a close relationship with the Advisor—a positive experience many of our students have never had in a school setting. Scheduling changes in 2006-07 made it possible for students to meet with their Advisors more than once a week throughout the school year to discuss how they were doing in school in relation

¹ Teachers disaggregate the data from CST, CAHSEE, STAR Math Assessment (from Renaissance Learning), Holt, High Point, a departmental math assessment, and CELDT, to identify skill areas needing reinforcement and to inform instructional approaches.

² With specific focus on the content strands of operations/linear equations, graphing linear equations, quadratics, functions for pre-algebra and algebra courses, geometric proofs, formulas (volume, area), angles and lines, and trigonometric functions.

Completed work plan and timeline for Street Academy Evaluation		
Task	Date completed	Person responsible
Gather student achievement data relevant to 2006-07 objectives	August 2007	Principal, AltEd Coordinator, Network Executive Officer (NExO)
Review of achievement data and discussions of factors that have contributed (positively/negatively) to results	August 2007	Principal; Alt Ed Coordinator; NExO
Discussion with evaluator regarding school performance and relevant factors	September 2007	Principal, Alt Ed Coordinator, NExO
Evaluation report drafted	September/October 2007	Alt Ed Coordinator
Site Council review draft and suggest revisions	November 2007	Principal
Final draft completed	November 2007	Alt Coordinator

d. Expected outcomes

Goal 1) English Language Arts.

Although Far West as a whole met its AYP goals in 2005-06, African American students, the school's largest subgroup, did not meet the NCLB Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) in English Language Arts. This group's percentage proficient rate on the CST in ELA was 6%, 5% lower than the rate for the student body as a whole. Moreover, only 42% of African-American 10th grade students passed the ELA section of the CAHSEE, compared to 68% of 10th grade students overall. Specific outcome objectives for student performance in ELA in 2006-07 were as follows:

- Objective 1.1 Far West will meet its AMO for African American students in ELA.
- 1.2 31% of Far West students will score proficient or above on the CST ELA.
- 1.3 70% of 10th grade African American students will pass the ELA section of the CAHSEE.

Goal 2) Mathematics. As in ELA, in Mathematics Far West African American students did not meet their NCLB AMO in 2005-06. In addition, 53% of African American 10th graders passed the Mathematics section of the CAHSEE, compared to 67% of the overall student body. Specific outcome objectives for student performance in Mathematics in 2006-07 were as follows:

- 2.1 Far West will meet its AMO in mathematics for African American students.

2.2 70% of African American 10th grade students will pass the Mathematics section of the CAHSEE.

Goal 3) School Climate and Attendance. In 2005-06, there were a high number of office referrals and suspensions from 9th grade classes. Staff, students, and parents observed the existence of inconsistent enforcement of discipline policy and classroom procedures. Regarding attendance rates, the rate for the high school grades at Far West was 87%, 7% below the District minimum. Far West's outcome objectives vis-à-vis school climate and attendance in 2006-07 were as follows:

- 3.1 Far West will reduce suspensions compared to the prior year.
- 3.2 Far West will reduce the number of fights to 0.
- 3.3 Attendance among Far West high school students will increase to 98%.

4. Evaluation outcomes

a. Comparative data from test(s) of basic skills

Goal 1) English Language Arts.

Objective 1.1 Far West will meet its AMO for African American students in ELA.

Far West's percent proficient target in ELA for 2006-07 was 22.3%. The school wide outcome (including middle and high school) was 29.3% proficient; thus, Far West did meet its overall Annual Measurable Objective. However, the rate of students in the high school grades (testing administered in grades 9, 10, and 11) who scored proficient or higher was 17%. Among African American students, 33% of those tested in 9th grade, 5% of 10th graders, and 8% of 11th graders scored proficient or above. When aggregated, 19% of African American high school students scored proficient or above on the CST ELA. This was above the overall rate for grades 9-11 but below the 22.3% target. Thus, objective 1.1 was *not achieved*.

1.2 31% of Far West students will score proficient or above on the CST ELA.

14 of the 38 9th graders (27%) who took the CST ELA test scored at the proficient or advanced levels. This was true of 1 of 35 10th graders (3%) and 1 of 20 11th graders (5%) who took the test. The overall rate at proficient or above in these grades was 17%. Thus, objective 1.3 was *not achieved*.

1.3 70% of 10th grade African American students will pass the ELA section of the CAHSEE.

Of the 49 Far West 10th graders who took the ELA section of the CAHSEE, 33 were African American (67%). Of these students, 52% passed this section of the test. Thus, objective 1.2 was *not achieved*. We should note, however, that this 52% pass rate for African American 10th grade students at Far West was higher than the 44% pass rate for this group district wide. Moreover, Far West's overall 10th grade CAHSEE ELA pass rate of 61% exceeded the 60% district wide rate.

Goal 2) Mathematics.

2.1 Far West will meet its AMO in mathematics for African American students.

Far West's percent proficient target in Math for 2006-07 was 20.9%. The school wide outcome (including middle and high school) was 15.8% proficient; thus, Far West did not meet its overall Annual Measurable Objective. The rate of students in the high school grades (testing administered in grades 9, 10, and 11) who scored proficient or higher in Math 9

(combining testing in Algebra 1, Geometry, Algebra 2, and Summative High School Mathematics) was 5%. This includes African American students. Thus, objective 2.1 was *not achieved*.

2.2 70% or African American 10th grade students will pass the Mathematics section of the CAHSEE.

Of the 59 Far West 10th graders who took the Math section of the CAHSEE, 41 were African American (69%). Of these students, 41% passed this section of the test. Thus, objective 2.2 was *not achieved*. We should note, however, that this 41% pass rate for African American 10th grade students at Far West was higher than the 36% pass rate for this group district wide.

Goal 3) School Climate and Attendance.

3.1 Far West will reduce suspensions compared to the prior year.

Far West suspensions	2005-06	2006-07
Number of suspensions	23	62
Number of students suspended	20	38
Percentage of students suspended	10.5%	22.1%
Lost days	75	142
# of suspensions for fighting	6	7
% of suspensions for fighting	26%	11%

Far West's objective for reducing suspensions was *not achieved*, as shown in the table above. One noted area of improvement, however, was the substantial decrease (from 26% to 11%) in the percentage of suspensions because of fighting. It is also notable that this percentage (11%) was lower than the 15% of all OUSD Alt Ed High School suspensions that were due to the fighting in 2006-07 and dramatically lower than the corresponding 32% of all suspensions at OUSD's comprehensive high schools.

3.2 Far West will reduce the number of fights to 0.

We do not have data on the total number of fights at Far West. However, the fact that there were suspensions for fighting indicates that this objectives was *not achieved*.

3.3 Attendance among Far West students will increase to 98%.

Far West attendance in 2006-07 was 93.2%. Therefore, this objective was *not achieved*. However, the 93.2% attendance rate in 2006-07 was a substantial increase over the 87% rate in 2005-06.

- b. Description of student achievement at the alternative school or program of choice compared with achievement at comparable traditional schools in the district

Performance on AYP-related targets—Far West vs. OUSD		
	Far West	OUSD
10 th grade CAHSEE ELA pass rate	61%	60%
10 th grade CAHSEE Math pass rate	44%	61%
2007 API and growth from 2006	548 (+30)	658 (+7)
Graduation rate	88.9 ³	64.4
Made AYP	Yes	No

California Standards Test in English Language Arts % of Students at Advanced or Proficient—Far West vs. OUSD						
	Grade 9		Grade 10		Grade 11	
	Far West	OUSD	Far West	OUSD	Far West	OUSD
Advanced	13%	9%	0%	7%	0%	8%
Proficient	24%	17%	3%	12%	5%	12%
Total	37%	26%	3%	19%	5%	20%

CST in English Language Arts % of Students Scoring at the Lowest Two Levels—Far West vs. OUSD						
	Grade 9		Grade 10		Grade 11	
	Far West	OUSD	Far West	OUSD	Far West	OUSD
Below Basic	24%	29%	26%	28%	45%	22%
Far Below Basic	21%	18%	21%	28%	45%	35%
Total	45%	47%	47%	56%	90%	57%

CST Algebra 1		
	Far West	OUSD
Below Basic or Far Below Basic	88%	69%
Advanced or Proficient	5%	13%

CST Geometry		
	Far West	OUSD
Below Basic or Far Below Basic	90%	75%
Advanced or Proficient	0%	11%

³ This was a 27.6% improvement over Far West's graduation rate of 61.3% in 2005-06. During that same period, OUSD's graduation rate improved by 3.1%.

CST Algebra II		
	Far West	OUSD
Below Basic or Far Below Basic	95%	71%
Advanced or Proficient	0%	13%

CST World History—Grade 10		
	Far West	OUSD
Mean scaled score	284.0	285.7
Advanced	0 %	3%
Proficient	7 %	7%
Basic	27 %	21%
Below Basic	20 %	24%
Far Below Basic	47 %	46%

CST U.S. History—Grade 11		
	Far West	OUSD
Mean scaled score	278.9	306.5
Advanced	0%	6%
Proficient	0%	14%
Basic	20%	26%
Below Basic	40%	29%
Far Below Basic	40%	25%

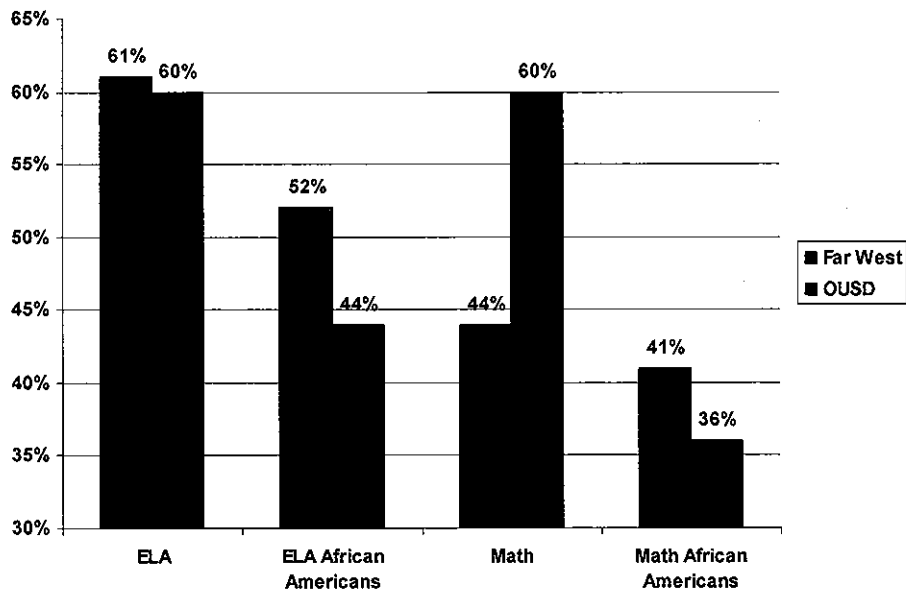
CST Science (10th grade)		
	Far West	OUSD
Mean scaled score	278.9	304.0
Advanced	0 %	8%
Proficient	0 %	11%
Basic	20 %	24%
Below Basic	40 %	25%
Far Below Basic	40 %	32%

CST Biology/Life Sciences (9th – 11th grade)		
	Far West	OUSD
Mean scaled score	295.3	306.2
Advanced	0 %	5%
Proficient	6 %	10%
Basic	33 %	31%
Below Basic	28 %	27%
Far Below Basic	33 %	27%

CAHSEE (10th grade pass rates)		
	Far West	OUSD
English Language Arts (overall)	61%	60%
Mathematics (overall)	44%	61%

Far West has a higher rate of 10th grade students passing the English Language Arts Section of the CAHSEE, compared to the corresponding rate among OUSD 10th graders overall. The same is true vis-à-vis the passing rates on both the ELA and Math sections of the CAHSEE among African American students at Far West, compared to their counterparts district wide. These comparisons are shown in the graph below.

**CAHSEE passing rates
among 10th grade students**



c. Interpretation or explanation of results

Broadly speaking, Far West outperformed OUSD as a whole in a number of key areas of student academic performance. These included:

- Growth on the Academic Performance Index (30 point improvement versus the district's 7 point improvement);
- CAHSEE ELA passing rate for 10th graders (61% at Far West versus 60% for OUSD 10th grade students overall).
- CAHSEE ELA and Mathematics passing rates for 10th grade African American students
- Graduation rate (88.9% of Street 12th graders, versus 64.4% among OUSD seniors overall)
- Achievement of Adequate Yearly Progress (Far West did so; OUSD did not)

As noted earlier, Far West has a higher proportion of students in 9th grade scoring at the Advanced or Proficient levels on the CST ELA compared to performance on this test by 9th graders district wide. It appears that the school's 9th grade class in 2006-07 may have been particularly strong. (The 10th grade class in 2007-08—largely made up of those who were in 9th grade in 2006-07—has performed very well on school and district English benchmark assessments, an indication that it is a very strong group.

Among 10th and 11th graders, however, district wide performance on the ELA is considerably stronger than at Far West. We are uncertain why Far West's 10th graders did poorly in 2006-07. Regarding 11th grade students' low achievement, we should note that Far West's 11th-12th grade English teacher left and was replaced in the middle the school year, which may have affected achievement among our 11th grade class.

Moreover, high school students in general at Far West, and African Americans (the largest group) in particular, did not achieve either the school's self-established performance objectives of its NCLB AMO targets for the percentage of students scoring Proficient or above in ELA or Math. Nor did the school achieve its target for the proportion of 10th grade African-American students who passed the ELA or Math sections of the CAHSEE.

Far West's results in all of the other California Standards Tests—Algebra 1, Geometry, Algebra 2, U.S. History (10th grade), World History (11th grade), Science (10th grade), Biology/Life Sciences (9th-11th grades)—are poorer than those achieved by OUSD overall, both vis-à-vis the proportion of students scoring at the Advanced or Proficient levels and the proportions scoring at the Below Basic or Far Below Basic levels.

Overall, Far West is falling short in efforts to enable all students to develop proficiency-level skills. Particularly in grades 10 and 11, the great majority of Far West students continue to be under-performing in core skill areas, and their skills need considerable attention and improvement. During the current school year (2007-08), Far West's professional learning community (PLC) is analyzing student work and performance on an ongoing basis to inform improvements in instructional practices to enable higher numbers of students to achieve grade level proficiency in core skill areas. In addition, among other strategies, Far West has implemented an after school program, which includes various activities (supplemental instruction, tutoring, homework assistance, writing and math workshops, CAHSEE Test Prep) to help accelerate students' skill development.

Far West did not meet its objective for reducing suspensions; on the contrary, the number of suspensions nearly tripled, and the number of students who were suspended nearly doubled. However, it is worth highlighting that the number of suspensions for fighting did not increase significantly. Regarding the objective for student attendance, Far West's attendance rate improved considerably, from 87% in 2005-06 to 93.2% in 2006-07, although attendance was still well short of the school's ambitious goal of 98%.

d. Identification of the variables that affected student academic achievement

Variables that contributed positively to Far West students' academic achievement include the following:

- Use and expansion of staff Professional Learning Community (PLC) to inform instructional improvements.
- Continuing integration of writing skills development throughout the curriculum
- Use of daily creative arts classes (e.g., visual and performing) to engage students and to support reading, writing, language, and other core skills
- CAHSEE test prep course
- Use of Cyber High software to help students polish their skills and make up credits toward graduation
- Use of Individualized Success Plans and the "Advisory" strategy for each student
- Extended-day interventions, including tutoring, math and science lab, and mental health counseling

- Use of a school wide conflict mediation program to improve student behavior and school climate and thereby reduce barriers to learning
- Measures designed specifically to better engage African-American students in their education, including the opening of a research library at the school that reflects African Americans' culture, ethnicity, and artistic/scientific achievements, and faculty professional development focused on cultural competency

In addition, in 2006-07, Street Academy paid particular attention to engaging parents/guardians to support their children's education. Efforts undertaken in this area included:

- Development of a comprehensive School Parent Involvement Policy, and distribution of information about this policy to families
- Parent orientation meetings at the beginning of the school year, to inform parents about the school's educational and other programs, AYP/API and other accountability standards
- Involvement of parents in developing, monitoring, and refining students' Individualized Learning Plans
- Use of daily progress reports in which school staff and parents/guardians shared information relevant to the students' schoolwork, learning, behavior, and progress

e. Information collected from

i. Students—findings, with comments

No student surveys or focus groups conducted in 2006-07.

ii. Parents—findings, with comments

No parent surveys or focus groups conducted in 2006-07.

iii. Teachers—findings, with comments

No parent surveys or focus groups conducted in 2006-07.

f. Summary of findings, including statement of positive outcomes and statement of identified obstacles

Performance on AYP-related targets—Far West vs. OUSD		
	Far West	OUSD
10 th grade CAHSEE ELA pass rate	61%	60%
10 th grade CAHSEE Math pass rate	44%	61%
2007 API and growth from 2006	548 (+30)	658 (+7)
Graduation rate	88.9 ⁴	64.4
Made AYP	Yes	No

⁴ This was a 27.6% improvement over Far West's graduation rate of 61.3% in 2005-06. During that same period, OUSD's graduation rate improved by 3.1%.

Far West High's positive outcomes in 2006-07 are as follows:

- Made Adequate Yearly Progress under NCLB—for all identified subgroups and school wide.
- Exceeded API growth target of 14 points, with API increasing by 30 points (from 518 to 548).
- Improved graduation rate from 61.3% in 2005-06 to 88.9% in 2006-07.
- Outperformed OUSD as a whole vis-à-vis 10th graders passing CAHSEE ELA pass rate, graduation rate, API growth, and achieving AYP.
- Exceed district wide rates for African-American students passing both the ELA and Mathematics sections of the CAHSEE
- Piloted use of Individualized Learning Plans
- Successfully applied for funding for an after school program—derived from the California Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Center program. This funding will strengthen Far West's ability to support students' academic success, safety, enrichment, graduation prospects, and preparation for life after high school.

Areas where Far West's performance fell short of the school's stated 2006-07 objectives include:

- Percentage of students overall who scored Proficient or above on the California Standards Test in English Language Arts
- Percentage of African American students scoring Proficient or above on the CST in English Language Arts and Mathematics
- Percentage of African American 10th grade students passing the CAHSEE in ELA and Math
- As an aggregate, although 11th graders improved their mean scaled score on the CST in U.S. History compared to in 2006 – there was an increase in the proportion of students at the Below Basic or Far Below Basic level.
- Nor did students' scores on the CST in World History improve compared to in 2006.
- It is also notable that despite the active involvement of a core group of parents in supporting the school program, parent participation levels in general remain low at Street Academy – as reflected in the very low number of parents/guardians who completed the "Use Your Voice" survey.

A number of obstacles may have contributed to Far West Alternative High School's falling short vis-à-vis various academic performance issues, and which, more generally, must be overcome if Far West is to ensure that all students achieve academic proficiency and graduate from high school well prepared to continue their education or to proceed successfully to vocational training and employment.

To begin with, the vast majority of newly-enrolled students test below grade level in both English and math and are also behind on credits. Thus Far West must both accelerate them academically while enabling them to accelerate their accumulation of credits toward graduation. However, because of the current emphasis on performance targets under NCLB, test preparation classes too often take precedent, diverting resources from core academic instruction and threatening to make students disengaged from their education.

Moreover, unfortunately, Far West's student population is highly transient, making it difficult to provide the consistent, sustained support students need to make significant strides in their academic skills and performance. More broadly, the school is serving a very high-risk, generally low-income, minority, and diverse student body. Many students have to help support their families by getting jobs or acting as caregivers for younger siblings. Homework often gets done (when it is done at all) in noisy, crowded conditions that are not conducive to concentrated study. Many students have current or past substance abuse and gang involvement. There are a variety of social, economic, and cultural determinants that affect students, and the school is chronically under-resourced and under-staffed to be able to meet their and their families' needs.

As noted, Far West's teachers are now focusing more on collaboration and the school has designated the creation teacher collaboration time as essential to attaining its goal of better serving its students, particularly the African-American youth who make up a preponderance of its student body. However, the school's small number of faculty, administrative, and support staff are often overburdened with "extra" tasks. Because of the profile of Far West's students, the complexity of the challenges they face, their high rate of transience, and the school's shortage of staffing and other resources, immediate issues sometimes derail the focus on collaboration and divert the school's Professional Learning Community from academics to resolving other problems. Finding a balance between dealing with pressing matters and building solid, well thought out plans for the school's academic program and its future is imperative.

Moreover, despite increasing involvement at Far West by some parents/guardians, it remains difficult to engage a critical mass of families in support of their children's education. Many parents/guardians history of unpleasant experiences, if not outright failure, at school themselves. And all too often parents do not have the educational skills, English literacy, or understanding of the educational system that are needed to provide adequate support for their children's educational advancement. In addition, as noted, most of the school's students commute to school from other neighborhoods in Oakland, which is a further obstacle to parents coming to the school to learn about how to assist their children's education or for other special events and ongoing activities.

The infusion of 21st Century grant funds beginning in 2007-08 is a positive development, as it will strengthen Far West's ability to address several of the obstacles just mentioned, as it creates added resources for targeted intervention and other academic support/enrichment activities, gang prevention programming, and family engagement/family literacy activities in support of youth's and their families' success.

We should also note that Far West has a WASC visit scheduled for April 2008. In preparing for this visit, Far West will undertake a "Focus on Learning" self-study, to identify its strengths and weaknesses and to devise strategies for improving its instructional and overall program. Preparing for WASC will serve as an excellent driver for accomplishing the work Far West's PLC has planned for itself as a school community during the 2007-08 school year.

5. Recommendations to responsible authorities

Recommendations to Far West's Principal regarding continuing and building upon the school's positive academic performance outcomes are as follows:

- Strengthen the use of Individualized Success Plan and Advisory approach to optimize each student's use of intervention classes, after school program, and other resources to strengthen academic skills and advance toward graduation
- Seek to imbed test preparation into the core curriculum to maximize time for core skills instruction
- Utilize after school programming to expand academic support for students performing below proficient in core skill areas, through supplemental instruction, homework assistance, tutorial support, and writing and math workshops
- Utilize after school funding and programming to expand supportive services and enrichment activities for students, including mental health services, sports, arts, student leadership opportunities, gang prevention programming, and student clubs.
- Create a summer transition program to orient incoming 9th graders to the Far West program and to impart skills (e.g., study skills, note taking, time management) needed to succeed in high school
- Explore implementing an AVID program at Far West.
- Seek further ways to facilitate the work of the Professional Learning Community and enable it to focus on strengthening teaching and learning for the benefit of Far West students.
- Engage students in meaningful ways in shaping their educational experience and in the school's educational reform work, via surveys, focus groups, and other leadership development activities.
- Aggressively reach out to enlist parents/guardians in positive ways at Far West, through: participation in the Individualized Success Plan process; use of progress reports; focus groups; workshops on NCLB, testing, other aspects of their children's education at Far West, career planning, and college options and applications; family literacy workshops; and in volunteering in classrooms and other ways at Far West.
- Further develop Far West's relationship with the California College of the Arts.
- Form a "College Going Culture Committee" consisting of different staff members to promote a college-going culture at the school. This Committee would be responsible for planning Advisory activities such as academic planning for college, researching and visiting different colleges, and completing college and scholarship applications.

Far West will require additional support from OUSD and via grants/fundraising pursued by the Office of Alternative Education and the school site itself in the following areas:

- Collaboration with individual OUSD middle schools to identify incoming 9th graders and sign them up for the summer transition program.
- Funding for test prep materials that can be incorporated into the core curriculum.
- Funding to support faculty collaboration and professional development.
- Funding to implement the AVID program.
- Funding to expand Far West's arts focus and activities.

- Resources to sustain and expand availability of mental health services for Far West students—for example, through the Alt Ed Coordinator's work with the County to bring more MediCal EPSDT-funded services to the school.