

2003-2004 No Child Left Behind—Blue Ribbon Schools Program Cover Sheet

Name of Principal Mr. Allan Mucerino (Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name La Paz Intermediate School (As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 25151 Pradera Drive (If address is P.O. Box, also include street address)

Mission Viejo CA 92691 - 5210 City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

Tel. ( 949 ) 830-1720 Fax (949) 830-3320

Website/URL http://lapaz.svusd.org/ E-mail mucerinoa@svusd.k12.ca.us

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2, and certify that to the best of my knowledge all information is accurate.

(Principal's Signature) Date 2/5/04

Name of Superintendent\* Dr. Jerry Gross (Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Saddleback Valley Unified School District Tel. ( 949 ) 580 - 3200

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2, and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

(Superintendent's Signature) Date

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Ginny Fay Aitkens (Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this package, including the eligibility requirements on page 2, and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature) Date

\*Private Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.

## **PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

**[Include this page in the school's application as page 2.]**

The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school has some configuration that includes grades K-12. (Schools with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The school has not been in school improvement status or been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's adequate yearly progress requirement in the 2003-2004 school year.
3. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, it has foreign language as a part of its core curriculum.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 1998.
5. The nominated school or district is not refusing the OCR access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
6. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if the OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
7. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school, or the school district as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
8. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

All data are the most recent year available.

**DISTRICT** (Questions 1-2 not applicable to private schools)

1. Number of schools in the district:       26   Elementary schools  
    0   Middle schools  
    4   Junior high schools  
    5   High schools  
    1   Other (Briefly explain)  
   36   TOTAL
2. District Per Pupil Expenditure:        \$6,428.00  
     Average State Per Pupil Expenditure: \$7239.00

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city  
 Suburban school with characteristics typical of an urban area  
 **Suburban**  
 Small city or town in a rural area  
 Rural
4.   4   Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school.  
     \_\_\_\_\_ If fewer than three years, how long was the previous principal at this school?
5. Number of students enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total	Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
<b>K</b>				<b>7</b>	343	315	658
<b>1</b>				<b>8</b>	318	311	629
<b>2</b>				<b>9</b>			
<b>3</b>				<b>10</b>			
<b>4</b>				<b>11</b>			
<b>5</b>				<b>12</b>			
<b>6</b>				Other			
<b>TOTAL STUDENTS IN THE APPLYING SCHOOL →</b>							<b>1,287</b>

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the students in the school:
- 75 \_\_\_\_\_ % White
  - 2 \_\_\_\_\_ % Black or African American
  - 14 \_\_\_\_\_ % Hispanic or Latino
  - 8 \_\_\_\_\_ % Asian/Pacific Islander
  - 1 \_\_\_\_\_ % American Indian/Alaskan Native
  - 100% Total**

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the past year: 7.9 %

(This rate includes the total number of students who transferred to or from different schools between October 1 and the end of the school year, divided by the total number of students in the school as of October 1, multiplied by 100.)

(1)	Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	53
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	49
(3)	Subtotal of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	102
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1	1,284
(5)	Subtotal in row (3) divided by total in row (4)	0.079
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	7.9

8. Limited English Proficient students in the school: 0.04 %  
51 Total Number Limited English Proficient

Number of languages represented: 9

Specify languages: Arabic, Japanese, Filipino, Thai, Vietnamese, Farsi, Korean, Spanish, Mandarin

9. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 8.7 %

108 Total Number Students Who Qualify

If this method does not produce a reasonably accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families or the school does not participate in the federally-supported lunch program, specify a more accurate estimate, tell why the school chose it, and explain how it arrived at this estimate.

10. Students receiving special education services: 7.6 %

\_98\_ Total Number of Students Served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

_13_ Autism	_1_ Orthopedic Impairment
_1_ Deafness	_7_ Other Health Impaired
____ Deaf-Blindness	_52_ Specific Learning Disability
_1_ Hearing Impairment	_25_ Speech or Language Impairment
____ Mental Retardation	____ Traumatic Brain Injury
____ Multiple Disabilities	_1_ Visual Impairment Including Blindness

11. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

**Number of Staff**

	<u>Full-time</u>	<u>Part-Time</u>
Administrator(s)	_2_	_____
Classroom teachers	_47_	_____
Special resource teachers/specialists	_4_	_____
Paraprofessionals	_3_	_6_
Support staff	_13_	_____
Total number	_69_	_6_

12. Average school student-“classroom teacher” ratio: 33:1

13. Show the attendance patterns of teachers and students as a percentage. The student dropout rate is defined by the state. The student drop-off rate is the difference between the number of entering students and the number of exiting students from the same cohort. (From the same cohort, subtract the number of exiting students from the number of entering students; divide that number by the number of entering students; multiply by 100 to get the percentage drop-off rate.) Briefly explain in 100 words or fewer any major discrepancy between the dropout rate and the drop-off rate. (Only middle and high schools need to supply dropout rates and only high schools need to supply drop-off rates.)

	2002-2003	2001-2002	2000-2001	1999-2000	1998-1999
Daily student attendance	96.4%	96.2%	95.7%	95.9%	95.8%
Daily teacher attendance	95%	94%	95%	95%	93%
Teacher turnover rate	9%	17%	16%	28%	11%
Student dropout rate	0	0	0	0	0
Student drop-off rate	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

14. **(High Schools Only)** Show what the students who graduated in Spring 2003 are doing as of September 2003.

Graduating class size	_____
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	_____ %
Enrolled in a community college	_____ %
Enrolled in vocational training	_____ %
Found employment	_____ %
Military service	_____ %
Other (travel, staying home, etc.)	_____ %
Unknown	_____ %
<b>Total</b>	<b>100 %</b>

## **PART III - SUMMARY**

---

La Paz Intermediate is one of 36 schools in the 36,000-student Saddleback Valley Unified School District (SVUSD). The California Distinguished School (1990 and 2003) and former National Blue Ribbon School (1993) is located in the South Orange County city of Mission Viejo and serves about 1,275 racially and socio-economically diverse seventh and eighth grade students from Mission Viejo and the neighboring community of Laguna Hills. La Paz has a 36-year history of success and a reputation of excellence in both the school and education community. La Paz students are offered school choice to attend one of four SVUSD high schools. All four are state recognized and three are nationally recognized schools. We believe that the expectation of success motivates students to learn.

The California Department of Education's (CDE) seminal document *Caught in the Middle* (1987), and its 2001 follow up publication, *Taking Center Stage* (TCS), with its emphasis on rigorous and consistent content and performance standards, and the essential elements of the middle grades philosophy, provide the model for our standards-based policies, programs, and practices. No Child Left Behind (NCLB), with its emphasis on strong accountability, local control, and meeting the needs of all students, provides guidance and inspiration. We believe our methods and materials should utilize a variety of resources and many learning modes to accommodate the individualities of the students. We believe that the curriculum should be built to fit the student. The curriculum should be kept adaptable and flexible at all times, responsive to ongoing evaluations.

To guide our safe school practices, La Paz partners with the University of Oregon's Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice (CECP) to deliver Effective Behavior Support (EBS), a school wide behavioral support program designed to prevent disruptive behavior by all students, including those that exhibit chronic behavior problems. Partnership for Academic and Community Excellence (PACE), a phone messaging program we utilize in conjunction with regular meetings, newsletters, and teacher web sites with grades and assignments on-line, provide an effective and responsive system of outreach communications. Most families subscribe to our list-serve and stay in close touch by receiving our daily bulletin electronically. We believe the educational program should be the shared responsibility of the school, the home and the student.

Each staff member, parent and student plays a significant role in the education program at La Paz.

The organizational structure of La Paz is designed to ensure that students make a smooth transition from elementary school and to high school. To this end, students are grouped heterogeneously in a “school within a school” or “village” structure. Village teams of teachers have common planning time to meet regularly and work together to develop thematic units and monitor student progress. Following the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness (GEAR UP) model of creating a college-going culture, each village enjoys a unique relationship with a local university sponsor. The focus of the relationship is to increase the number of students (particularly low-income and minority students) who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. Another nationally recognized program at La Paz with the same focus is Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID).

Student life extends well beyond the core-content area classrooms. Students have numerous elective options in the fine and performing arts, technology, and communications. La Paz students are annually awarded for their performance in local (Science Fair), state (Geography Bee), national (MathCounts), and international (Knowledge Masters) competitions. SVUSD maintains its own recreation department to provide all students sports and other extra-curricular activities before and after school and during lunch. ELT (Extended Learning Time) provides an organized environment for students who seek extra help before, during, and after school. Students elected to the School Site Council are charged with making far reaching decisions regarding their education. We are committed to empowering and inspiring each student with the certainty of his or her individual importance and competence.

## **PART IV – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

---

(1) The distinguishing feature of California’s Public Schools Accountability Act of 1997 (PSAA - Chapter 3, Statutes of 1999) is its commitment to standards-based education. The distinguishing feature of La Paz Intermediate School is its ongoing commitment to meet those standards for all students. The Academic Performance Index (API) is the cornerstone of California's PSAA. It is a numeric index (or scale) that ranges from a low of 200 to a high of 1000. To calculate the API, individual student scores from the norm-referenced California Achievement Test, Sixth Edition, (CAT6), and the California Standards Tests (CST) are combined into a single number to represent the performance of a school. Its purpose is to measure and compare (rank) the academic performance and growth of schools. The State Board of Education has adopted a statewide API performance target of 800. This target reflects a high level of performance that schools should strive to meet. A school's growth is defined by how well it is moving toward or past that goal, measured in the proportion of students achieving the "proficient" designation in the English/language arts (ELA) and mathematics Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs). To meet the annual API growth target, all numerically significant subgroups at the school must demonstrate comparable improvement. Schools that meet or exceed the proficiency target, and that have at least a 95% participation rate satisfy the state’s requirement for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) criteria, as required by the accountability provision of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The CSTs in English-Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics, designed to be "end-of-course" assessments, are the core of the STAR (State Testing and Reporting) assessment system and carry with it the most weight in the API calculations. La Paz has consistently exceeded the state’s standards of academic success as indicated by an API score of 828 and both a State Rank and Similar School Rank of 10 (out of 10). La Paz is one of only 89 middle schools in California that have met or exceeded growth targets in all categories for three straight years (and one of

only four in Orange County). The mean API of Similar Schools is 793. Of particular significance is the school's API growth of 48, 22, and 20 points from 2000-2003, respectively, in its primary subgroup of Hispanic students, who constitute 15% of the school's population. Since 2001, when test data has been reported as the percentage of student proficiency, La Paz has consistently surpassed state and county averages in all areas. In ELA, 61% of 7th graders and 56% of 8th graders proved proficient or advanced proficient, compared to 36% and 30% statewide and 45% and 38% countywide, in 2003. In math, 68% of 7th graders and 57% of 8th graders proved proficient or advanced proficient, compared to 30% and 24% statewide and 40% and 37% countywide. Previous years reveal a similar pattern, with La Paz students outpacing their peers, state- and county-wide. The school's primary ethnic group, Hispanics, who also represent the majority of the school's socially disadvantaged student population, have also outpaced the state, with 37% of 7th graders and 38% of 8th graders proving proficient or above in ELA and 49% of 7th graders and 34% of 8th graders proving proficient or above in math. Special education students also compared favorably to the state, with 8% of 7th graders and 12% of 8th graders proving proficient or above in ELA compared to 6% and 5% statewide; and 14% and 8% in mathematics, compared to 6% and 7% statewide.

(2) - Each year, members of the faculty, administration, and support staff develop a series of questions to guide the analysis and evaluation of the most current assessment data. Two to three main focus areas are identified and serve as the centerpiece of the school's Single School Plan for Student Achievement (SSPSA). Questions may serve both formative (program improvement) and summative (program continuation) purposes. To begin the process, overarching questions such as "How well did this year's 7th graders do compared to last year's 7th graders (different cohort groups)?" and "How well did this year's 8th graders do compared to when they were 7th graders (same cohort group)?" are originally posed, answered, and reflected upon in large and small groups. Then, within cohort groups, students whose first language is not English, students who are economically disadvantaged, and students who qualify for special education services, are compared. The next series of questions are more specific and develop as a result of identifying any patterns or themes that emerge from the disaggregate data, such as "Why did the same cohort group improve only slightly in reading comprehension from grade seven to eight?" or "Why did this year's student cohort whose first language is not English not do as well as last year's similar cohort group?" The process continues until department and school goals are identified and an action plan is created to address them. On the classroom level, teachers use class sets of individual student CSTs to determine entry points for differentiating curriculum and instruction and to identify a random number of high, middle, and low students for qualitative examination.

(3) - All budgetary expenditures are tied to the data-driven goals outlined in the local SSPSA and are approved by a school site council consisting of administrators, faculty, staff, parents, students, and community members. The data analysis and subsequent action plan is created by the site council with input from all school stakeholders and available as an official school document on site or via the Internet. Assessment data is also published in the newspaper and in the State-mandated School Accountability Report Card. Individual assessment results are mailed home and include each student's level of proficiency in ELA, mathematics, writing, and reading. In addition to printed reports, group assessment data and student performance are discussed at Student Teacher Parent Organization (STPO) meetings, English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC), board meetings, and other discussion forums. Assessment data and school goals are also discussed with students in an assembly presented by the principal twice a year, once for goal setting and the other for examining the progress of these goals.

(4) - Through our association with the Orange County Department of Education, the AVID organization, local universities and colleges, a consortium of local middle schools, and our own district middle level Leadership Team, La Paz collaborates with a variety of schools and educators on several topics. La Paz is also a host school for local teacher preparation programs, hosting as many as five student teachers a year. As an AVID school, a cross section of stakeholders regularly host and attend other schools for

demonstrations and dialogue, including an annual regional conference and a number of local conferences, providing an open exchange of ideas and best practices. An annual week long AVID summer institute has been attended by many staff and community members since La Paz became a certified AVID school. As a member of a middle school consortium, La Paz representatives attend monthly meetings to discuss issues and share ideas. A common thread of consortium schools is Taking Center Stage, which acts as a guiding document for middle schools in California. La Paz also sends a site team to the annual California League of Middle Schools (CLMS) conference as presenters and participants.

## **PART V – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

---

(1) The La Paz curriculum revolves around locally adopted standards that are aligned to the rigorous content standards adopted by the California Department of Education (CDE). In addition, all standards assessed by the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) are identified as essential elements in their respective curricular area. CAHSEE has been designated by the CDE as one of the components for judging a high school’s progress towards meeting the requirements of NCLB. Furthermore, the standards are embedded into the curriculum and are thematically interwoven across disciplines. For example, all students participate in a series of cross-curricular on-demand writing prompts, providing benchmark data that is utilized to improve instruction. ELA faculty members work together with cross-curricular groups of teachers to identify the writing topics and train faculty in other subject areas to analyze student work samples using the CDE-adopted 4 point rubric. Both curriculum and instruction in all areas are guided by the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP), which also serve as the criteria for teacher evaluations. Instructional materials are state-approved and adopted using a shared decision-making process. The involvement of all school community stakeholders ensures that all materials meet the special needs of our diverse student population. Support for English language learners and students with special needs in all curricular areas include smaller class sizes, reading specialists, computer assisted instruction, instructional assistants, extended learning time, and participation in cross-curricular activities designed to foster collaboration and engage and motivate reluctant learners.

Consistent with our college-going culture, our foreign language curriculum focuses on preparing all students for the rigorous foreign language requirement necessary to attend most four-year colleges, including California’s State University system. Over 90% of our students in French I and 75% of our students in Spanish I pass with a “B” or better, satisfying one year of their high school foreign language requirement. Foreign language teachers utilize a variety of techniques, including total physical response (TPR). In addition to our emphasis on foreign languages, students may choose from a variety of elective classes such as art, video production, speech and debate, foods, yearbook/journalism, theater production, drama, orchestra, band, and jazz band. Students may explore the variety of elective offerings as trimester programs or study them in depth for multiple trimesters. The art program focuses on artists as explorers. Students in the advanced art setting create a portfolio of various works and write an artist statement that clearly defines their philosophy and attitudes in art.

The core curriculum focuses on grade level standards. In mathematics, students in grade 7 are expected to be proficient in fractions, decimals, percents, integers, integer exponents and their

properties, ratios and proportion. Students study number theory, problem solving, geometry, linear equations and slope, statistics and probability, and write multi-step linear equations. Students whose proficiency is at or above grade level take algebra in the eighth grade, the standard in mathematics statewide. Students basic or below continue in a program that reinforces key concepts by focusing on concrete teaching strategies. Students may access hotmath.com, to find solutions to problems in their textbook.

The English/Language Arts (ELA) curriculum focuses on reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Students maintain ELA portfolios that contain evidence of standards mastery, including on-demand writing in the following domains: narratives, responses to literature, research reports, persuasive compositions, and summaries of reading materials. Through process writing activities, students are expected to produce focused, well-structured paragraphs and essays that reflect appropriate conventions of spelling, vocabulary, grammar and usage.

In 7th grade social science, students receive instruction in geography, economics, sociology, political science, anthropology, archaeology, and world history, from the fall of the Roman Empire in 476 AD to Europe in the 1700s. In the spirit of the International Baccalaureate's Middle Years Program, the social science curriculum is interrelated through universal themes such as cause and effect, growth, and the environment. The 8th grade social science curriculum focuses on American history, including developing an understanding and appreciation of American heritage, a faith in American ideals, and the skills and abilities needed for responsible citizenship. Students study the history of the United States from the colonial period to pre World War 1, with a special emphasis on the Civil War. Social Science curriculum includes projects, web units, and thematic units designed and developed by teachers.

The science curriculum accents student involvement with hands-on investigations and experimentations. Students analyze ideas, issues and interests that make up our contemporary understanding of science and technology. Our science program includes the teaching of investigation and experimentation skills along with direct instruction and reading. Seventh grade students study life sciences: cells and cell structure, genetics, and physical and biological changes over time. Eighth grade students study the physical sciences: forces, motion, interactions and structure and composition of matter.

Our health curriculum integrates science and physical education, stressing the benefits of maintaining good health and well-being, making healthy food choices, developing a personal fitness plan for a healthy body, maintaining good mental and emotional health, and preventing disease.

2) - The English/Language Arts (ELA) curriculum is not the sole domain of the English department. Instead, it is the shared responsibility of the entire faculty to support the CDE's English Language standards. Every staff member bears a responsibility to teach their students to read, write, listen, and speak effectively. Elective classes, such as yearbook, literary magazine, video production, English Language Development, drama, speech/debate, study skills, and even foods and music, strive to meet a minimum of one ELA standard. In ELA classes, standards-based textbooks that focus on differentiating curriculum and instruction to meet the needs of all learners are adopted using a shared decision-making process involving all stakeholders. Supplementary materials such as Heinemann's Word Work, Stenhouse's Words, Words, Words,

and Merrill/Prentice Hall's Words Their Way are utilized to integrate phonics, vocabulary, spelling, and critical thinking skills. A weekly spelling program supports and teaches spelling rules. Choosing from a library of over 1,000 titles, students self-select fiction and nonfiction works utilizing Scholastic's Reading Counts program, designed to build literacy, increase comprehension skills, and develop lifelong readers. ELA teachers augment their regular meeting schedule with release time to develop and establish objectives and discuss and share strategies to create high interest lesson plans. A humanities core integrates English and American history, affording students blocks of time to study topics in depth. ELA teachers collaborate regularly and work closely with English Language Development teachers to adapt the curriculum to help English language learners progress through levels of mastery. The California English Language Development Test (CELDT) is administered in October for the purpose of monitoring growth and redesignation. Our school-wide emphasis on fluency has greatly reduced the percentage of students requiring support services and remediation. Ninety-four percent of our students scored above the 25th percentile on the norm-referenced CAT6 - seventy-three percent scored above the 75th percentile. Students who do fail to meet that standard are provided extended learning time before and after school. English Language Learners and students with special needs receive additional support in the form of study skills classes and instructional aides to support their inclusion in mainstreamed classes. ELL students also have access to Rosetta Stone, an interactive translation computer program that teaches English. All students have access to numerous computer-based instructional programs. Teachers of students with Individual Education Plans (IEP) and 504 plans collaborate with the school's Guidance Specialist to identify specific learning disabilities or special needs and modify the curriculum accordingly. Student Study Teams (SST) work closely together to accommodate struggling students and students with special needs. Resource Specialist (RSP) and Special Day Classes (SDC) are available for students whose scores indicate a need for a higher level of support and more individualized instruction. The school library and computer lab is a resource for students who may find it difficult to access books, reference materials, and computers elsewhere. On line grades, teacher web pages, and teacher email encourage parents to communicate with their students' teachers and take an active role in their students' education.

(3) - Our belief in the dignity of the individual and the mutual respect of human rights guides our classroom policies and practices. Our mathematics program is constructed around the principle that the most accurate predictor of algebra success is academic preparation. We strive, therefore, to provide each and every student a rich, challenging, and engaging curriculum, appropriate for their mastery level. Access to algebra is the goal for all students at La Paz. The eighth grade standard in California is algebra. Students must master its most basic concepts to pass the California High School Exit Examination. To ensure our students have both access to and success in algebra, we monitor student success one standard at a time. Believing that the probability of success motivates students to learn, we create positive learning environments by grouping students heterogeneously and differentiating curriculum (content), instruction (process) and assessment (product) to meet each individual student's needs. Drawing from a variety of resources and methodologies, teachers help students to bridge the gap between concrete and abstract thought, focusing on thinking beyond immediate concretes. Computer assisted learning tools such as Riverdeep, ALEKS, and the Orange County Department of Education's Essential Math, PowerPoint presentations of lessons using a projector, flexible grouping, and active teacher websites all augment our standards-based textbook and textbook resources to provide our students and their families every opportunity to succeed. Mathematics support is offered before and after

school and on Saturdays throughout the school year. Summer programs focus on remediation and enrichment. We believe in the dignity of the individual and the mutual respect of human rights – it bears repeating.

(4) - La Paz integrated the AVID program into the curriculum at the beginning of the 2001-02 school year. AVID, - Advancement Via Individual Determination - is designed to increase school-wide learning and performance by ensuring that the least served students in the middle are given access to a rigorous curriculum that will allow them opportunity and success in completing a college path. AVID student selection focuses on students with a 2.0-3.5 G.P.A., academic potential, desire and determination and who would benefit from AVID support to improve their academic record. AVID elective classes are available within the regular academic school day. Classes follow implementation essentials by providing a rigorous course of study, a strong, relevant writing curriculum, information about colleges and careers, opportunities for inquiry and discussion, collaboration with other students, and strategies for success. A wide range of methodologies are incorporated into lessons, such as WIC-R - Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, and Reading, Socratic debate, and the use of Cornell note-taking. AVID trained teachers, college volunteers and paid aides provide academic and social support. The effectiveness of the AVID program exceeded our expectations. AVID methods are currently being applied in all classes. Additionally, all teachers have been trained in AVID methodology and support a campus-wide, college-going culture. The school community works in many ways to improve student learning. At the 7th grade level, teachers team to create interdisciplinary thematic units within their villages. Departments team to plan and organize curriculum, guest speakers and field trips. An interdisciplinary team, led by language arts teachers, has trained the entire faculty to be readers, scorers and rubric developers for the writing domains tested by the STAR writing examination. La Paz teachers articulate with teachers from our feeder elementary and destination high schools to coordinate, clarify and unify curriculum and programs. Curriculum specialists from the District office regularly assemble representative groups to collaborate on standards-based instruction. Recognizing that students come to us with different ability levels, interests and intelligences, our teachers are receiving training in differentiated instruction. Using the Tomlinson model, teachers are learning to adjust content, process and product in response to student readiness, interests, and learning profiles. La Paz teachers are optimistic that differentiated teaching will result in more student participation, more collaboration among students and teachers, flexibility, more effective teaching, and a better education for the student.

(5) - Peer coaching is the centerpiece of our professional development program. In support of the program, our School Site Council, acting on a recommendation from the Technology Committee, committed resources to hire a peer coach to draft and implement a plan to “wire” La Paz and to work with teachers on individual needs. During the 2001-2003 school years, the La Paz staff was first in the district to become proficient and above in CTAP (California Technology Assistance Project) standards, create and maintain interactive classroom websites, and post grades electronically for parents to remain current. (Please visit the La Paz website at <http://lapaz.svusd.org/>). Teacher leaders are committed to professional development and growth, which is reflected in the collegiality and collaboration embedded in the culture of the school. We share successful practices and new ideas, teach one another, and collaborate to solve problems. We identify with teacher leaders, because the faculty responds best to its own. We are fortunate to have available a certificated teacher who provides release time for Peer Coaching opportunities. While all faculty members have access to peer coaching, first and second year teachers also

participate in Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment program (BTSA), which is designed to deliver the California Formative Assessment and Support System for Teachers (CFASST). Mentor and teacher interact using this cognitive coaching model. The mentor coaches the analysis process for lesson and classroom improvement. This analysis becomes the beginning teacher's own assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of each lesson. La Paz plays a big role in building the future of the teaching profession by serving as a training school for local colleges and universities. Student teachers abound in all curriculum areas. Master teachers share their expertise and provide excellent modeling of career-long learning to our student teachers. Student teachers bring out the best in our master teachers and enable potential recruitment of exemplary teachers. At La Paz, professional development makes a difference in all teachers' abilities to help their students reach high standards. To support staff development efforts, we utilize three pupil-free days, six late start days, flexible scheduling, release time, and summer time to provide professional growth. All staff development is tied to teacher goals and objectives, using performance and achievement data, analysis of student work, and an annual survey of staff development needs. Consultants considered experts in their fields introduce us to the latest, research-based techniques in education, making us more affective and effective teachers. Available in our professional library are a variety of journals highlighting educational research, service, leadership, issues and trends. Our weekly Master Teacher pamphlets address specific developmental case studies on a wide range of education topics. We continue to search for professional development tools and techniques. We are committed to continuous improvement.