

**ACS WASC/CDE MID-CYCLE VISIT  
VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT**

**ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS  
WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES**

**FOR**

**NEVADA UNION HIGH SCHOOL**

**11761 Ridge Road  
Grass Valley, CA 95945**

**March 9-10, 2020**

**Visiting Committee Members**

Brent Van Zwaluwenburg, Chairperson  
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**Introduction:**

Nevada Union High School is located between Grass Valley and Nevada City. The school serves the surrounding rural communities of North San Juan, Penn Valley, Alta Sierra, Lake Wildwood, Camptonville and the town of Washington. Nevada Union offers a variety of curricular offerings for students including many CTE pathways, several AP course titles, and multiple additional electives. The current population of Nevada Union is 1,542; although this represents a slight gain in numbers from the previous year, NU has seen a gradual decline in student enrollment over the last several years. Graduation rates at the school have held steady over the last few years at around 94%. 75.94% of students at NU are white; while a majority, there has been a gradual decline of 8% in this category from four years ago. 14.46% are Hispanic/Latino; this population is gradually growing by 4% in the past four years. The other ethnicities of American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, Pacific Islander, Filipino, and African American range from .32% to 1.43%. Nevada Union is currently a targeted assistance school and receives some Title I funding.

Another gradual change that has occurred is a rise in the number of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch; 39% of students qualify for this program. Each year sees a 1% increase in this population. The California dashboard indicates that 42.5% of students were identified as socio-economically disadvantaged in the last school year. 5.45% of students are Spanish-speaking while other identified languages are minimal. Thus, demographic data indicates that the school is gradually becoming more diverse with a growing population of SED students.

**Analysis of Student Achievement Data:**

On the most recent CA dashboard, the VC notes that on the ELA assessment, NU saw its students at 57.4 points above standard, which represents a 17.1% increase from the prior year. The two groups that saw the greatest improvement were Hispanic and SED. In the prior school year, there was a slight dip in scores.

Math scores decreased from the prior year. The scores on this assessment were 38.8 points below standard, representing a decline of 8.2%. Students groups that declined the most were SED students and students with disabilities. It appears from this data that more support is needed for students in Math.

EL progress indicators show that 60% of EL students are making progress towards English language proficiency. 55% of EL students increased at least one ELPI level on the most recent ELPAC. Trends on the ELPAC metric will be noted in the years to come.

The VC found that the College and Career indicators on the California dashboard show that 53.6% of students are prepared. Students groups that declined somewhat were Hispanic, SED and students with disabilities. There has been a three year decline in this indicator.

The conditions and climate indicator on the California Dashboard indicates that 9.7% of students were suspended at least once in the prior school year. This represents an increase of 1.3%. Student groups that had the highest suspension rates were the homeless and SED students. Not far behind were Hispanic and White students.

Overall the data indicate a few critical needs. First, Math scores show a significant decline among most student groups indicating a need for targeted support to improve student achievement. Second, the data show that there is a declining trend in college and career readiness. Finally, climate indicators demonstrate that SED and homeless students are being suspended at higher rates than others.

### **Significant Changes and Developments:**

Since the full self-study, there have been some administrative changes. During the full study, the current principal, Kelly Rhoden, was just promoted to the position. A new assistant principal has been hired since that time.

In an effort to work on schoolwide improvement, the principal implemented Site Community Groups (SCGs). The committees comprising the SCGs are Schedule, Curriculum and Assessment, Safety, Community Involvement, and Mission/Vision. As of the writing of this report, collaboration time is mostly devoted to PLCs with some time set aside for SCGs.

Nevada Union has implemented several strategies and plans to provide appropriate interventions for students both in terms of academics and behavior. The site has continued to progress with MTSS (multi-tiered systems of supports). Most work at the site level has been done, with PLCs as the vehicle, in establishing Tier 1 universal supports. Work is now expanding in providing Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports. The On Campus Intervention (OCI) program, providing Tier 2 support, was made more productive with the temporary hiring of an intervention coordinator to establish protocols for the program. Since this time, OCI is currently being run by three teachers for the full school day. Finally, the school joined a district and county program to assess and address the suspension rate data. Interviews with administration indicate that most of the suspensions in the last school year were due to an increase in vaping among students. The district and school sites have worked on implementing alternatives to suspension to address this issue.

The Get Focused, Stay Focused program was added as a course requirement for all freshmen. This course is designed to help students make long-term goals both in high school and in the years beyond. Students work with teachers and counselors to develop 10-year plans that emphasize a focus on career goals. The staff at NU stated that a future goal of the GFSF program is to increase awareness of, participation in, and completion of CTE pathways. The school plans on continuing with the GFSF modules as students progress through high school.

The Week of Welcome (WOW) was added three years ago to help incoming students navigate the expectations of high school and to become acclimated both academically and socially to Nevada Union. Student and staff interviews indicate that students are introduced to the mission, vision, and SLOs during this time.

The STARS (Student Assistance and Resource Services) program has greatly expanded with the number of counselors, hours and students served. New interns have been hired and staff have been trained in the referral process. This program helps students with behavioral, socio-emotional, and other mental health issues.

### **School's Follow Up Process**

The action plan has been primarily monitored by the school's Site Council which is composed of representative stakeholder groups. The administration regularly refers to action plan items at most certificated and staff meetings. In preparation for the mid-cycle visit, the school held an action plan summit to assess the extent to which action plan goals were being addressed. As a result of this analysis, it was discovered that SED data needed to be woven into the current action plan as this student group's performance was of specific concern.

The process of creating the current report began 18 months ago with a survey of both classified and certificated staff in terms of what progress had been seen on the Action Plan. A data team was then created to present achievement data to department chairs, all staff, Site Council, and the Nevada Union

Parent Committee (NUPC). Feedback from this data presentation included concerns about declining enrollment, high suspension rates, and the achievement gap between the general population and SED students. The current report was compiled by the leadership team and was reviewed by all stakeholders for feedback.

## **School's Progress on Critical Areas for Follow-up within the Action Plan:**

### **School's self-identified areas of critical need in the Action Plan**

#### **1. Update the vision and mission statements and write updated SLOs**

The report states that in the Spring of 2019, Nevada Union adopted new vision and mission statements which are the following:

**Vision:** We will be a school that shapes life-long learners and thoughtful productive citizens who will make a positive contribution to our global community

**Mission:** Shaping Experiences Today, Guaranteeing Success Tomorrow

The report states that in the Fall of 2018, new SLOs were adopted which are the following:

#### **Nevada Union Miners:**

1. Read, write, and communicate effectively in all content areas
2. Are critical thinkers who evaluate evidence and use appropriate tools to construct viable arguments
3. Are engaged and self-directed learners who welcome and persevere through challenges
4. Work collaboratively and independently to problem-solve and produce new ideas to be successful in school and the workplace
5. Display responsible citizenship by being involved in the community and understanding diverse cultures
6. Are empowered individuals who make sound decisions about physical, emotional, and mental health

In addition to the mission, vision, and SLOs, the staff at NU developed and adopted the following staff collective commitments which are the following:

#### **Staff Collective Commitments**

1. All students will learn at high levels
2. Actively seek ways to build positive relationships
3. Reinforce job skills on a daily basis to help students live independently
4. Support student goals by teaching and modeling productive work ethic

According to the report, the work that still needs to be done in this area is using and implementing the vision, mission, SLOs (and now Staff Collective Commitments) to drive decision making that focuses on student achievement.

Parent and student interviews reveal that there is not full community awareness of the new mission and vision statement, SLOs, and Staff Collective Commitments. Staff interviews indicate that while there is an awareness of these new elements, they have yet to be fully embedded schoolwide.

Progress on this goal is strong.

#### **2. Improve communication between all stakeholders and NU with a consistent online system enabling universal access to relevant student information**

In 2018-2019, the district adopted a new School Information System called Synergy. The school admits there has been a learning curve, and while it was initially anticipated that Schoology and Synergy would interact in a cohesive manner, technical issues at the management level have inhibited integration between the services. Parent and student interviews suggest that there is some continued frustration in terms of access, availability, and consistency in student gradebooks and student grade reporting. Teacher interviews corroborate the need for more seamless interaction between the two systems.

In addition to this new system, NU began to use the 5-Star system in the 2017-2018 school year to track student participation in all activities. Staff interviews indicate that the 5-Star system is being rolled out in order to collect data about student participation in curricular and extracurricular activities; the program has yet to be fully implemented and used to drive changes.

While the VC is encouraged by the adoption of the new SIS system, there is concern about the consistent and timely accessibility of relevant student information to pertinent stakeholders.

### **3. Investigate and implement a school bell schedule to include academic intervention**

The report states that, despite a 2-year process and eventual proposal, an academic intervention period has yet to be implemented. Concerns cited are the student demand for a variety of classes and the district mandate that all high schools have the same schedule. An ad-hoc district committee is currently working on this proposal. District personnel related to the VC that a bell schedule with an intervention period could only be implemented if all comprehensive agreed to the same schedule. In addition, the district cited financial barriers to several proposed options.

Administrative and staff interviews indicate a strong desire to continue to pursue an intervention period despite the aforementioned obstacles. There is general consensus that this intervention period will be used for academic support and enrichment.

The VC supports the school's continued desire to implement an intervention period to further enhance student achievement.

### **4. Continue to develop an accountable PLC process that includes all staff at Nevada Union to ensure equity among students and continue the cycle of improvement**

The report states that the school has worked through the first two pillars of the PLC process. The staff developed the mission, vision, SLOs and finally, the collective commitments. Math and ELA departments have developed Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs) in the last school year. Science and Social Studies began this process during the current school year. Part of this process included the formation of common pacing guides. The report states that English, Math, and Science are working on implementing common formative and summative assessments. 9th grade English and Algebra 1 teams have begun to use the formative assessment process to improve teaching practices. Algebra 1 has begun to use formative assessments to provide targeted interventions for students.

In district personnel interviews, it was indicated that the PLCs are a top priority among all comprehensive high schools. Staff indicate the new Assistant Principal Luke Browning has been instrumental in providing leadership and guidance through the PLC process. In addition, principal Kelly Rhoden has provided a clear and consistent vision of PLCs as a top priority at Nevada Union. All staff interviewed mentioned that forward progress is evident across all PLCs.

Progress on this goal is strong.

### **5. Develop a cycle of continuous feedback from all stakeholders regarding both curricular and extracurricular activities**

The Site Council evaluated the school's website and made recommendations for improvement which are being currently implemented. Parents are informed of school events by the principal with a weekly Principal Message. School messages are regularly e-mailed to parents and community members regarding important events.

Systems have been put in place to gather data regarding curricular and extracurricular feedback. The school has implemented the 5-star system which gathers data on student activities. In addition, the school has implemented multiple ways to increase communication with stakeholders. However, the report states that a systematic feedback system is not yet in place.

The VC was impressed with the multiple ways that NU communicates information with its stakeholders and engages with the community. Administration expressed some frustration with the low number of parents who provide consistent feedback regarding the school program, as well as a desire to explore ways in which to solicit feedback from a more diverse body of stakeholders.

**Visiting Committee's additional recommended critical areas for follow in the Action Plan:**

**1. In conjunction with the PLC process, develop a professional development plan which includes current and innovative instructional strategies and technology in the classroom**

The VC was provided a current draft of a professional development plan which focuses on PLC implementation and student engagement. In particular, student engagement training has centered on trauma-informed practice and restorative practices. The school identifies effective instructional strategies as the next focus for professional development.

Until last year, the district provided a Tech TOSA to assist teachers with technology in the classroom. The district provided teachers with six hours of technology training in the current school year.

Interviews with staff and administration indicate that the PLC process will be used to inform improvements in instructional strategies. The school notes that the focus of the current collaboration time has been on the development of Essential Learning Outcomes and common pacing guides. The school believes that these elements will lay the foundation for the exploration of instructional strategies which support student achievement.

Classroom observations by the VC revealed a variety of uses of technology by teachers and students. Students and staff both state the one-to-one devices have enhanced access to a wider variety of educational resources. Staff and students note a continued desire to refine their use of technology.

Progress in this area is ongoing.

**2. Continue to develop multiple pathways for students to ensure all students are college and career ready as identified by appropriate state and national standards**

In the past two years, two Community Roundtable meetings were held in which, among other things, community and government leaders expressed what types of skills are necessary for the workforce. In addition to the District CTE Advisory meetings, other CTE advisory committees are currently forming. A new district CTE Director has been hired to promote outreach, modification, and marketing of the current CTE pathways. The GFSF class includes information about all paths available to students. Internships for students are currently offered in Sports Medicine, Agriculture, and Automotive.

The current data show a gradual decline in students who are college and career ready as measured by the California Dashboard. Counselors note that many students choose to explore multiple CTE pathways rather than choosing to complete a specific sequence, which may affect this indicator.

Counselor interviews indicate that more emphasis is now being placed on making sure that all students have a path that reflects student goals. GFSF will be one tool in helping students identify and chart long-term plans. Administration notes that the district will be using Clearinghouse to track students' post-secondary choices.

Student interviews show that a variety of options are available to accommodate the interests of an increasingly diverse student population. Some students indicated lack of awareness of all the offerings.

The VC is encouraged that, in addition to the school offering a variety of pathways, students are now given increased awareness of college and career options through the Get Focused, Stay Focused program.

### **III. Schoolwide Areas of Strength and Growth Areas for Continuous Improvement**

#### **Commendations:**

The school is commended for the following:

1. Updating the vision and mission statements and writing updated SLOs
2. Continuing to develop an accountable PLC process that includes all staff at Nevada Union to ensure equity among students and continue the cycle of improvement
3. Communicating to all stakeholders regarding curricular and extracurricular activities
4. Developing diverse pathways for all students to prepare for career and college
5. Continuing to advocate for an intervention period to enhance student achievement

#### **Recommendations:**

The committee recommends the following:

1. That the school, with appropriate district support, continue to improve communication between all stakeholders and NU with the current online system enabling universal access to relevant student information
2. That the school continue to explore ways to expand feedback from an increasingly diverse population of stakeholders
3. That the school continue refinement of the professional development plan as informed by the PLC process, effective instructional strategies, and technology

The VC is confident that the revised action plan addresses the critical areas of need. The VC is also confident that the current administration and staff have the will and capacity to effectively follow through with the action plan to further enhance student achievement.

**Link to school's action plan: [NUHS WASC](#)**