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Accrediting Commission for Schools

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MARILYN S. GEORGE, ED.D.
ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

April 1, 2014

Mrs. Trudell J. Skinner
Principal
Blair High School
1201 S. Marengo Avenue
Pasadena, CA 91106

Dear Mrs. Skinner:

ACS WASC has completed its review of the On-site Mid-cycle Visiting Committee Report for Blair High School. I am pleased to inform you that the report indicated that your school has given appropriate attention to the critical areas for follow-up noted by the previous visiting committee. Blair High School's accreditation is now reaffirmed through the end of the six-year cycle ending in June 2017.

I want to express my appreciation on behalf of the Commission for your efforts and congratulate you for continuing to provide quality education for all students.

Sincerely,

Fred Van Leuven, Ed.D.
Executive Director

cc: Review Committee Chair
Superintendent

**MID –CYCLE VISIT
VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT**

Western Association of Schools and Colleges

FOR

**Blair High School
1202 S. Marengo Ave.
Pasadena, California 91106**

Pasadena Unified School District

Date of Original Self Study: March 2011

Date of Visit March 12, 2014

Visiting Committee members

Mary Jo Flood
Chairperson
Educator
Royal High School

Mrs. Jodi Consten
Committee member
Coordinator, Curriculum and Instruction
Hesperia Unified School District

I. Introduction

• General comments about the school and its setting and the school's analysis of student achievement data

Blair School is an International Baccalaureate located in Pasadena. Its cultural ethnicity is made up of the following: 54.1% Hispanic, 28% African American, 7% White, 3% Asian and 9% other. 78% of the families are socio-economically disadvantaged, 26.9% are English Language Learners and 11.8% are Special Education. As of January the enrollment is 972 students; there are 56 teachers, 3 counselors, 55 support personnel, 3 administrators, one librarian, 2 part-time IB coordinators and one College and Career counselor. The school follows a traditional six period day. Blair earned a six year accreditation in 2011, with a one day revisit in 2014.

Since the last full WASC visit, Blair's API has declined from 754 in 2010 to 710 in 2013. Blair's API did increase slightly from 707 (2012) to 710 (2013). Students with disabilities became a significant subgroup in 2012. Blair's CAHSEE pass rate has shown an overall decrease in the last three years. All subgroups on the CAHSEE showed increases with the exception of English Language Learners (ELL). This is interesting to note as ELL had the greatest increase in API for 2013. Attendance has had a slight increase from 95.6% to 97% in one year.

• Significant changes or developments that have affected the school since the last visit

There have been several changes in Blair administration since the last full WASC. An assistant principal of curriculum and instruction has been replaced. An assistant principal of testing and safety has been promoted and replaced.

Beginning in 2011, Pasadena Unified School District began advanced planning and preparation for Common Core implementation. Curriculum Resource Workshops were established. This team developed units and assessments aligned to the Common Core standards. Seven out of ten ELA teachers were involved in this process. The superintendent has shown his support for Common Core implementation numerous times.

In 2011-2012 SDC classes were added to the middle school and in 2012-2013 two moderate to severe classes were added. One was added to the middle school and one to the high school campus. As a result, Blair's special Education students became a significant subgroup.

In 2011 – 2012 Blair went through an IB Middle Years Programme Self Study, similar to a WASC. It was recommended that the master schedule be rearranged to meet all requirements of the IB programme, specifically Arts and Language B (Spanish). This has been accomplished. The staff is currently working to develop and align IB assessments that come from Common Core. In 2006 43 IB exams were administered and in 2013 152 exams were administered. A total of 20 IB diplomas have been awarded since 2006.

• Follow-up Progress and Report Development Process

(Including a description of the committee that has been responsible for overseeing the progress of the school's action plan and the visit preparation).

The current staff met in groups during time provided during their Monday "A" schedule. They met to evaluate the progress of the critical areas for follow-up cited by the March 2011 WASC. Each group commented on how they have implemented the necessary changes to improve the school.

Documentation from each group was analyzed and incorporated into the mid-cycle report. Department Chairs and teacher leads helped to write portions. In February of 2014, the Leadership team evaluated a draft of the document offering the WASC coordinator feedback. In March 2014, the entire staff read the report during a staff meeting and the report was sent to them via email.

- **A description of the process to prepare the progress report, including to what extent stakeholders were involved in the preparation of the report.**

Blair's School Plan for Student Achievement and WASC's School-wide Action Plan are two separate documents. To evaluate the critical areas for follow-up, current staff met and commented on changes since the last visit which are incorporated into Sections II, IV and V of this mid-cycle report. The WASC Coordinator wrote the report, the Instructional Leadership Team evaluated a draft and offered feedback. In March, the document was read and emailed. The Single Plan is reviewed and revised by the Instructional leadership Team annually. Faculty reviews test scores, previous goals, and modifies as necessary. Once the Leadership Team finalizes the plan, Blair's School Site Council approves the document and is responsible to monitor progress.

- **A description of the process to present the report to the Governing Board.**

There is no mention of pre-visitation Board presentation or impact for follow-up on student achievement. However, there is a plan to present the visiting committee mid-cycle report to the Board upon receipt.

II. School's Progress on Critical Areas for follow-up within the Action Plan

A. Summary of Progress:

Focus on Rigor:

"A" meeting Mondays are dedicated to strategies-based professional development all centered on an increase in rigor and engagement. Teachers are teaching bell to bell and students are not wandering the halls.

The school is linked to an online grading program called AERIES.

Pasadena Unified has been a leader in the movement to the Common Core and English, math and science departments are developing lessons to share school wide.

The IB Learning Profile traits are discussed staff wide during Monday meetings.

An Evening of Excellence awards students showing significant improvement or continual excellence in the Accelerated Reader Program.

Two Laptop carts have been made available via a grant from AV Davis and Betchel for the science department. The science department has moved away from multiple choice and towards more writing to support the Next Generation Science Standards. The Physical Education Department is participating in the Active Learning and Living Physical Education Program Project.

The math leadership team determined that they would focus on Standard 1 from the CCSS this school year. English Language Learners and Special Education places students in classes tailored to their needs. Lexia is a personalized reading program that focuses on foundational reading skills. In spring of 2104, the master schedule was changed to offer a CAHSEE English support course. To provide ninth grade students with an understanding of rigor, a presentation is given by the Counselors regarding A-G requirements. A SAT preparation class is offered to juniors. Honors classes have been added in the areas of Social Science, Science, and English on the middle school level. College and career options are discussed year long. Student achievement is recognized throughout the school year.

Focus on Instructional Strategies

Teachers have presented literacy strategies focused on increasing rigor and meeting Common Core to the entire staff. The IB Program is a strong part of the Blair community especially with the Common Core Standards and Blair's Curriculum Revision Workshops. Project Based learning is a vehicle to teach Common Core. Other strategies used include SDAIE, Proactive Classroom Management Strategies, RtI, tardy sweeps, Teaching American History (TAH) which incorporates primary and secondary sources in the classroom, a Common Core essential. Small group and whole group instructional strategies have been included to build all literacy skills.

Focus on Literacy

Accelerated Reader has been established to improve reading comprehension, rigor and fluency and accounts for 20% of an ELA student's grade.

Summer Reading has been revamped to include Common Core standards.

The English Department teachers participated in a Smarter Balanced mock assessment to examine where students might struggle, how to adequately prepare them and what new strategies will be needed to help students be successful. The Math department has included vocabulary building into their lessons, as well as thinking maps and written reflection questions. Teachers have attended professional development seminars that focus on the needs of the underperforming subgroups.

Focus on English Language Development

Long-term English Learners are a Major Focus at Blair. They are monitored according to their language proficiency depending on CELDT and CST scores. Students participate in SSTs to determine why they are not making appropriate progress and an intervention plan is developed. Students receive support to pass the CAHSEE and achieve all EL academic goals. An International Academy exists to support all students who have been in this country less than 12 months. Students then transition to a Secondary Structured English Immersion Program. Read 180 and System 44 are programs designed to help the EL students.

Focus on Data Analysis

Teachers are implementing a school-wide continuous cycle of instruction, assessment, analysis and re-teaching as needed. Checks for understanding strategies are used and after school re-teaching and re-testing are available. Counselors discuss test data, CELDT, CST and Accelerated Reader during parent conferences. The EL program strives to improve the reclassification, intervention and enrichment procedures to ensure that EL Students are able to reach R-FEP status. The Math department uses the UCLA Math Diagnostic testing Program in each math subject. It helps teachers to decide which strands to focus on and who needs personalized intervention. The Math Department also uses formative assessment to help students' mathematical reasoning and computation in arriving at a solution. The Social Science Department agreed to use DBQs to align with the literacy and writing standards of Common Core during the 2013-2014 year.

Students with chronic attendance problems are identified and monitored. SART conferences are held. School counselors meet with students who received below basic and far below basic on their CST tests. "B" meeting time has been used to develop rubrics.

Focus on Instructional Time

"Viking Days" are done to prepare students for the first days of school and to ensure that teachers are able to teach bell to bell. Students and parents are informed about emergency information, ID Photos, class schedules, textbooks, P.E. clothes, the Dress Code, athletics, PTSA, social aspects of the school year, the Blair web-site, e-blasts, IB, and the Safety Plan. Blair has designated school resource officers. More students are in class and engaged and not roaming the halls.

Focus on Professional Development

Professional development has been offered to all staff to aid in the goal of increasing students' reading comprehension and fluency. "A" Monday staff meetings have been used for instructional strategies based professional development to increase rigor and engagement in the classroom as well as offer support to ELD teachers. The Frostig Center led a seminar discussing adolescent brain development, with follow-up classroom visits. The Center is a support to teachers with significant subgroups. All IBDP teachers have attended authorized training. Common Core training has been offered to all staff. Curriculum Revision Workshops have been provided to Blair's Teacher Leaders in Social Science, Science, Math and ELA.

Focus on Resources

Resources are used to support the Schoolwide Single Plan for Achievement and improve the WASC critical areas as they are connected. PSUD has funded all Blair tenth grade students to take the PSAT. The school purchased an IB data management system which allows IBDP teachers to report student progress. IB trainings are funded through TIIG. Teachers write grants to support educational needs in their classroom.

III. Commendations

- a. The IB program and IBMYP are a draw to the school and area in a time of declining enrollment statewide.
- b. There is a new emphasis on rigor and writing across the curriculum.
- c. Parents are positive and involved.
- d. There is a District focus on professional development and Blair High School has eleven teachers involved in presentations and development.
- e. Common Core is a focus school wide.
- f. Students are engaged in Common Core roll-out.

Recommendations

- a. Continue to focus and strengthen the development of IBMYP (International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program), with less emphasis on the Advanced Placement Program.
- b. Increase visibility of the IB program with targeted marketing and a public relations campaign with the goal of retention of middle school students and recruitment of high school students.
- c. Continue to focus on a rigorous educational day as Common Core is implemented
- d. Increase the Student / Parent Portal access school wide.
- e. Consider that with the new building plan being started at the end of this school year (2014), that the needs of the EL program to integrate the Read 180 and System 44 are taken into consideration.