

**MID-CYCLE VISIT
VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT**

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

FOR

MILPITAS HIGH SCHOOL

1285 Escuela Parkway

Milpitas, CA 95035

Milpitas Unified School District

March 1- March 4, 2015

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Visiting Committee Members

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I. Introduction

Milpitas High School is the Milpitas Unified School District's only comprehensive high school. The school is located in north Milpitas. The traditional program of study offered by the school to its approximately 3,300 students in grades 9-12 is carried out on their original campus, built in 1969, and a shared portion of the nearby San Jose City College Extension Campus, where students take high school classes, and dual and concurrent enrollment college classes. The campus includes many classrooms, a stadium, a swim complex, computer labs, a cafeteria and food court, gymnasiums, athletic facilities, and a theater. The facilities are older, yet well-maintained and clean. The school uses all of its available space in order to offer a wide variety of curricular and extracurricular opportunities for students. The Santa Clara County Office of Education operates 4 classrooms on the MHS site for students with disabilities.

Milpitas High School is staffed by an administrative, teaching, specialized and support staff which has the expertise to meet the academic, language, social/emotional, and safety needs of its students.

The school and district have in place well aligned goals and priorities which are supported by the school's student learner outcomes.

The school's academic day is scheduled in a six period bell schedule with a few optional classes being offered in a zero period. Students may take up to three of the seventeen Advanced Placement courses in a year. Honors is offered in three classes. The school implements specialized learning programs: a four year AVID program, Project-Based Learning(PBL), and three California Partnership Academies.

Milpitas High School included enrollment, demographic, and achievement data in their WASC mid-term report. Three years of data was provided with comments reflecting on the growth and trends shown in the data. Overall, the school shows high levels of literacy, with concerns for the performance of the African American and Latino students who took the SBAC ELA. SBAC Math scores show similar concerns. Graduation rates have improved to 97.4%. UC/a-g completion rates have improved, as has AP enrollment. Milpitas High students who have taken the SAT have performed above the state average in all SAT scoring categories. CELDT scores have remained at the same levels. Attendance and discipline data was included in the report.

Significant Changes

Since the last WASC self-study, Milpitas High School has experienced many changes.

Administrative/Staff/District Turnover

Prior to the 2015 WASC self-study and visit the principal and all but one assistant principal at Milpitas High School left. The school was left with a new administrative team at that time, and since then there have been two new principals, and several new assistant principals. The school started this year with a new principal, and all other administrative staff remaining from the previous year. An additional Teacher on Assignment in charge of student engagement has been added.

The district level administration has changed entirely, with the exception of one position. A new superintendent came on board in the 2016-2017 school year.

Seventy-four of the certificated employees at MHS were hired in the last three years. The special education, English, and Math departments have seen the most change.

Staff and leadership turnover has resulted in some loss of future planning focus and inconsistent follow through with some plans to move the school forward in regards to curriculum planning and schoolwide instructional common strategy implementation.

Curricular Change and New Courses

The high school and middle school art and music departments have worked on vertical alignment and increased rigor of their curriculum, resulting in adding two AP classes.

The English Department has adopted the Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Curriculum. They have aligned the ELD curriculum to CCSS and added courses for ELD students.

The Math Department has continued their progress in transitioning from a traditional math program to Integrated Math. New texts have been adopted and piloted. A math articulation matrix has been developed after articulation with the middle schools. Two sections of Math 1 Connections have been added to assist struggling 9th graders.

Science has added a biotech class, and is now moving all 9th graders into biology. Integration of NGSS is on-going.

The school has begun using a special education “push-in” model in five classes: English, two Biology, Ecology, and Geography. A class for emotionally disturbed students has been added, as well as other supports for students with social skill support needs.

The World Language Department has added several classes and is using performance tasks for assessment rather than multiple choice tests. AP Spanish classes have doubled in size and AP Chinese will be offered next year.

The school has worked hard to adapt or add more classes to the UC/a-g course offerings available in many departments. This has resulted in more access to higher level classes and increased rigor for many more students.

College and Career Center

A College and Career Center, managed by a College and Career technician, was created in 2016-2017 and has been used for a variety of speakers, a career week, research, and four year planning for freshmen. This center is seeing more activity by students and provides valuable information for college and career exploration and planning.

AVID

The school’s AVID department has supported some department and schoolwide staff development on effective teaching strategies following participation from each core subject in the AVID Summer Institute in San Diego.

AVID is currently offered in two classes at all four grade levels.

The school is in the beginning stages of using AVID strategies schoolwide, which will benefit students in their critical reading and study skills.

Schoolwide Support of CCSS standards of writing across the curriculum

The school reportedly participates in a common writing assignment at least once a semester. Some departments use a writing assignment, others use a performance task. This assignment is

carried out by all departments and graded on a rubric consistent with the particular department. A common list of academic vocabulary has been collected and disseminated to all staff members. A template and rubric have been developed. The results of the writing tasks are not currently being reviewed to show schoolwide progress and analyzed to identify areas for growth.

Community College-Dual Enrollment

Milpitas High School is offering several dual enrollment courses in a space used at the nearby extension campus of San Jose Community College. Seventy students are earning dual enrollment credit in four courses this year. Students and staff see this as a very valuable opportunity for students.

PSAT

The Milpitas PTSA paid for all tenth graders to take the PSAT on campus in 2016-2017. Results were reviewed with students by their counselors. The funds were not available to give the test this year, but will be in 2018-2019.

Culture

The Milpitas District Office has recognized the impact of staff and leadership change in the school and district and has focused a great deal of in-service time to developing and maintaining a feeling of community, "Culture of We". The National Equity Project trained the staff in diversity and engagement in 2016. Inequity in the classroom, cultural differences, and building community has been a focus of the school discussion since, with follow-up inservice provided in January 2018. The school has developed events and means to communicate which are reportedly improving the levels of trust and value at the school. The district administration plans to survey stakeholders and review data on family engagement, employee satisfaction, and student engagement in order to gauge success in this program. The staff of Milpitas High School suggested that they are gaining trust with their new principal, and feel efforts are being made to boost morale at the school.

Follow-up Process/WASC Action Plan Monitoring/Mid-cycle Report

Milpitas High School has traditionally used their professional learning community (PLC) process for work on goals. This process underwent some disruption due to leadership change in recent years.

After the March 2015 WASC Self-Study and Visit, the school's four action plan items and six recommendations from the 2015 visiting committee were merged into six action plan items. These were embedded into the Single Plan for Student Achievement process at Milpitas High by a school committee in 2015. Since that time, review and work on the action plan has been inconsistent due to changes in leadership at the school.

In November 2017, the Milpitas staff reviewed the WASC Action Plan in preparation for the writing of their mid-term report. After reviewing the action plan as an entire staff, individual action plan items were reviewed by smaller groups made up of members from various departments. The results were shared with the School Site Council and the Parent Teacher Student Association. A WASC mid-cycle report team was developed at the end of November. This group of administrators and teachers wrote the mid-cycle report. A storyboard of the progress was created for display during the mid-cycle visit. The school's report was shared with

district administration and the school board prior to the visit. Plans are being made to rewrite and restructure the action plan following suggestions from the mid-cycle visiting committee.

II. Progress on Critical Areas for Follow-up/Schoolwide Action Plan

Action Item #1- MHS will foster effective teacher and staff collaboration and deliver ongoing, consistent professional development as a way to continuously improve curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

The school has divided this action item into 7 smaller goals which they further subdivided into 11 steps, 8 of which they report as completed or in process: investigating a new bell schedule option, developing new goals for PD, implementing a master schedule to increase collaboration time, providing training and PD time, sharing best practices, achieving vertical articulation with the middle schools. The 3 steps for future focus are: a protocol for colleague-to-colleague observation, revamping protocol for walkthroughs by administration, and PD for specific learning needs.

- ***Goal 1:** Increase professional development opportunities for all staff. Focus on the development of a cohesive and coherent professional learning plan that provides teachers with the tools to engage students from diverse backgrounds (WASC 2015 VC Recommendation #4)*

There have been many opportunities for professional development over the last few years and many teachers and departments have attended them, though the impact on curriculum is not easily measured and is reported to be “in progress.” School wide PD has been focused on equity through student engagement (i.e. EOS training) and building “The Culture of We,” the Superintendent’s district-wide focus. Most Departmental Professional Development has been teachers attending subject specific seminars and conferences, such as AP training, CTE Conference, SVMi Math Coaching Institute, etc. Teachers from all core departments attended AVID Summer Institute and then shared what they learned with their departments. This process of dissemination of strategies learned at PD is in the early stages. It is difficult for the VC to assess exactly how that PD manifests in classrooms.

- ***Goal 2:** Increase opportunities for teacher-driven collaboration across departments.*

The school has collaboration time on Wednesday afternoons. Each month, one Wednesday is dedicated to department collaboration, one is administration-led, one is teacher collaboration through PLC’s, and one used for individual teachers to use as they like. These last two allow time for cross department collaboration, but as there is no system of accountability for work done in these collaborations, it is not clear how much cross department collaboration is actually taking place.

- ***Goal 3:** Teachers continue to build effective instructional strategies specific to their subject areas.*

Department meetings and PLC time provide opportunities for teachers to meet within their subject areas to share best practices and discuss student performance. Teachers report that time has been used to work on developing constructed response assignments

and rubrics, developing Common Core curriculum, sharing close reading strategies. There is evidence of scores entered in Illuminate but not of how that data is used to inform instruction.

- **Goal 4** - *All teachers will apply Common Core Standards in their subject areas.*

In monthly PLC's teachers of similar courses or levels work together with focus on developing Common Core aligned assignments. Teachers report using this time to work on creating written tasks that are suitable for their subject, such as constructed response and justification papers, performance tasks and assessments.

- **Goal 5** - *Continue to refine and improve the effectiveness of PLC's.*

All teachers are asked to be part of a PLC each year. Within departments at MHS, PLC's are formed "in an effort to address the evolving needs of our students as well as giving teachers a choice in what areas they would like to focus and grow." However, as reported in discussions with teacher and admin panels, in practice these groups are formed around a commonality such as course level (i.e. English I or Math I) or a recognized need within a department (i.e. to establish common grading practices), or a school wide directive (i.e. gathering, entering, and analyzing assessment data or developing writing assessments) rather than a student-driven learning need. And since these common needs may change each year and teachers are allowed to change PLC's each year, the groups may not be following an ongoing cycle of inquiry or a focus on results that drives new instruction. Therefore, the MHS conception of the purpose of PLC's does not align with the purpose of PLC's in the eyes of the Visiting Committee.

- **Goal 6** - *Utilize support from the Central Office leadership to address vertical and horizontal articulation in relation to instruction and student middle to high school transition (WASC 2015 VC Recommendation #5)*

MUSD has developed a district-wide math articulation committee to better align math courses to ease transition from elementary to middle and middle to high school. The next phase will focus on vertical alignment of science courses. Summit Personalized Learning, which provides computer activities allowing students to learn at their own pace is currently used in elementary and middle school students. High school teachers have received training and have established a pilot program at MHS.

In order to support student transition from middle school to high school, eighth grade students visit MHS in the spring and summer before they enter as freshmen and receive tours and welcoming activities from Leadership students. Counselors visit 8th grade middle school math classes and host incoming parent meeting in the Spring before their freshman year. The MHS Special Education staff works with middle school staff and meets all incoming 8th graders to discuss course enrollment for high school.

- **Goal 7:** *Increase the quality and frequency of instructional supervision to increase feedback/communication between administration and teachers, identify patterns in student achievement/instruction, and inform site leadership of professional learning needs. (WASC VC Recommendation #6)*

Frequent administrative changes (i.e. 3 new principals over the last 4 years) have resulted in division between teachers and administrators that the school is working to repair. MHS

recognizes this as an area of growth. MHS feels that administration is severely understaffed. Over the last 15 years, student population has grown by about 600 while number of administrators has remained the same making it difficult for administrators to conduct walkthroughs and classroom visitations.

Action Item #2- MHS will expand community outreach and increase communication with all stakeholders to encourage and facilitate involvement in the school.

The school has divided this action item into 6 goals: improving communication; sharing information about school communication; increasing parent, student, and staff participation; increasing communication with non-English speaking students and parents; increasing collaboration among staff; and increasing and improving articulation. These goals were then broken into 10 steps, 9 of which the school reports as completed or ongoing: adoption of Aeries as a communication tool, hosting parent information nights, organizing PTSA presentations, recruiting stakeholders for school committees, providing transportation services for school events, and creating systems to help students adjust to the school culture. A survey for parents regarding their satisfaction with school communication efforts is planned.

- *Goal 1: Improve the method and effectiveness of communication with all stakeholders including students, parents, and other members of the school community.*

Starting with the 2017-18 school year, MUSD transitioned to Google Sites and MHS transitioned to Aeries for attendance, grading, and data entry. The MHS website has a Parent Resources page that provides important school information and events as does the PTSA website that links to it. Students and parents have access to grades and performance data through Aeries. Some parents reported that they did not receive any training for this system other than to register and create an account upon enrollment. The school hosts many Parent Information nights - incoming freshmen parents, academies, Parent/Athlete meetings- to disseminate important information to parents and students. The Counseling Department hosts grade-level parent nights, financial aid information nights, and AP information nights. Counselors report that these are well attended. Counselors are available for scheduled one-to-one meetings with students, make presentations, and collaborate with feeder middle schools and local community colleges. New students are welcomed and given campus tour by Leadership students upon arrival.

- *Goal 2: Share information about school communication sources with parents and show them how to best monitor student progress.*

Administrators report that during parent nights and registration time, information is available about school communication services, Aeries and Google Classroom, and how to use them. Many teachers maintain classroom websites which are linked to the school website.

- *Goal 3: Increase parent, student, and teacher participation in school activities, programs, and organizations.*

ASB organizes many activities for students, staff, and parents including clubs, dances, food drives, school spirit days, and athletic events. The annual Trojan Olympics is a popular community event each year which brings together students, families, and other stakeholders in a celebration of sportsmanship and inclusivity. Food trucks are brought on campus to encourage attendance at events like Back to School Night. The Sunshine Committee promotes the “Culture of We” on campus by organizing social events for teachers.

- *Goal 4: Improve communication with non-English speaking students and parents in our community.*

Translation services are provided by the Latino Liaison and PFEL Coordinator. MUSD provides a Family and Community Engagement Coordinator who works to provide families in need with services such as housing, legal service referral, transportation, etc. The school has Spanish and Vietnamese translators. The school is not currently holding ELAC meetings or meetings of any type for parents of EL students. The ELD Coordinator stated that the decision to not hold ELAC meetings was made by the previous administration team and expressed frustration that the meetings were not being held this year. The school reported that district DELAC meetings are attended by some parents of high school students.

- *Goal 5: Increase collaboration within and across departments.*

Teachers and administrators report that collaboration occurs through PLC’s, department meetings, staff meetings, in-service days, and monthly teacher collaboration Wednesdays. Special Education and General Education teachers communicate regularly regarding student progress. Teacher in-service has been devoted to teambuilding.

- *Goal 6: Increase and improve articulation between feeder middle schools and high school.*

In order to support student transition from middle school to high school, eighth grade students visit MHS in the spring and summer before they enter as freshmen and receive tours and welcoming activities from Leadership students. Counselors visit 8th grade middle school math classes and host incoming parent meeting in the Spring before their freshman year. The MHS Special Education staff works with middle school staff and meets all incoming 8th graders to discuss course enrollment for high school.

Action Item #3- MHS will continue to expand student and staff access to technology, improve the use of technology as an instructional tool, and increase digital literacy.

MHS has had inconsistent success with implementing effective tech professional development for staff. An example of this is with the implementation of the Aeries system to replace School Loop this school year. Although the district tech director stated that training for Aeries use was made available to all staff at two separate sessions, many staff members stated that they were not offered adequate training and had to figure out the system on their own. Some staff members are happy with Aeries, but others felt they needed more training and were upset that they were not involved nor had any input in the decision to switch from School Loop. Other staff members requested more Aeries training in order to be able to use the system to its full potential. Others

reported that one-on-one assistance with Aeries is available by contacting district tech support. Some teacher peer tech professional development is happening during collaboration time, such as teachers training fellow teachers on creating Google sites and using programs such as Kahoot. MHS has continued to increase the number of Chromebooks available for teacher use. Systems are in place for sharing of Chromebooks among staff, and these systems vary by department but are generally effective. All teachers have a laptop and access to projectors and document cameras, which increases equitable access to tech for staff. Evidence was seen of teachers using a variety of tech tools in classes such as Google Classroom, Kahoot, Quizlet, turnitin.com, and Dropbox. Most or all teachers were observed using this type of tech in their classrooms, and most teachers have a Google website. This is helping to increase digital literacy among all students. However, no documented systematic standard of digital literacy for all students was evident. MHS has the Illuminate system, but most teachers are not accessing it regularly and it was unclear as to how Illuminate was actually being used.

Efforts to increase digital literacy and citizenship were evident in MHS's participation in a district-wide Digital Citizenship project built from curriculum from Common Sense Media. Teachers chose lessons from an extensive curriculum that provides grade-level appropriate lessons on topics such as cyber bullying and staying safe online.

The district has created a Tech Task Force which includes MHS personnel. They have met twice as of now and are looking to address future tech needs proactively. They are working with various Silicon Valley tech and VC companies to look forward to how tech will be used for educational purposes in future years as technological advances continue to happen rapidly. The goal is to identify and meet future tech needs as they come up.

Action Item #4- MHS will provide additional counseling and career/college readiness services to all students in order to better prepare them for postsecondary success.

Milpitas High School's progress towards its goal of providing counseling and career/college readiness services to all students in order to better prepare them for postsecondary success has centered on the creation of a full-time college/career advisor housed in a dedicated college/career center. The center is located in the school's library. The advisor provides a space for materials and guest speakers. She coordinates communication and outreach efforts such as morning announcements and emails to students. Milpitas library staff tracks students accessing the center and their data indicates an increase in traffic from 2015-16 to 2016-17. A district-led proposal to implement NAVIANCE as a school-wide tool to help support students along their college and career pathway is under consideration.

Because progress towards this goal depends on increasing access to counselors, Milpitas High School dedicated a counselor full-time to serving 9th-graders in 2015-16. They have doubled the number of AVID sections as well as increased the number of AP offerings and courses meeting UC/CSU A-G course validation criteria. Through a partnership with neighboring San Jose City College Extension Campus, students in 11th and 12th grade have options to take concurrent community college courses in order to meet graduation and 4-year college eligibility requirements.

Milpitas High School has increased its CTE offerings since the 2015 accreditation by adding a Biotechnology pathway. Existing CTE partnership academies in engineering, hospitality and digital business continue to offer pathways for students. Elective courses in the academies are among those meeting UC/CSU validation criteria. A number of other courses in the Milpitas program provide students with CTE elective opportunities, including foods, computer science, fashion design, photography, and web design.

Efforts to address the goal of managing counselor caseloads led to the reallocation of resources in the assignment of a counseling position dedicated exclusively to ninth grade students. Reports from multiple stakeholder indicate limited accessibility and availability of counselors continues to be an issue.

Action Item #5- MHS will systematically address the appropriate scheduling and support of students from all backgrounds to increase equity in educational opportunities and access to core curriculum.

In order to increase equity in postsecondary opportunities through the completion of a college prep core curriculum, Milpitas High School has identified the need to systematically address the gap between significant subgroups (including English Learners and Students with Disabilities) in accessing its most rigorous academic coursework. The first specific goal within this action item aims for the elimination of tracking at MHS resulting in RSP, Hispanic, and African-American students pursuing college prep curriculum at comparable rate with other subgroups.

MHS has begun efforts to increase the number of special education students accessing core courses through the implementation of “push-in”. Content teachers are paired with an education specialist to collaborate and co-teach. This initiative is in its early stages, with courses in Ecology, Biology, Geography, and English currently piloting co-teaching partnerships.

MHS has partnered with Equal Opportunity Schools (EOS) to identify students who would benefit from structured support and additional counseling services. The mid-cycle report acknowledges the need to systematically collect and analyze data to measure the extent to which efforts to increase access and improve outcomes of traditionally underrepresented subgroups have been successful.

MHS reports on the extent to which departments have been successful in making progress towards this action item. In the English Department, for example, the report cites efforts to align ELD standards with CCSS in order to ensure ELD and SDAIE courses are providing students with rigorous core curriculum. The Science Department is in the process of removing Integrated Science from its program in order to ensure all students are taking a UC/CSU A-G lab science course in their 9th-grade year. Teacher-led programs exist at Milpitas to support underrepresented subgroups, including Horizontes and Dreamkeepers, though the extent to which these programs are active varies from year to year based on the level of staff engagement.

The second goal within this action item calls on MHS to address disproportionate underperformance in achievement, behavior, and attendance for Latino and African-American students. The school now staffs a mediation specialist and a dedicated 9th-grade counselor. A Student Review Team (SRT) now takes referrals for students falling behind in academics,

attendance, and behavior. The tiered approach helps the school monitor the effectiveness of its interventions.

Action Item #6- MHS will focus on increasing the level of rigor, engagement, and critical thinking present in all classes to increase student access to the cognitive expectations outlined in the new state standards and in alignment with the Schoolwide Learner Outcomes.

Through this MHS action item, working with the Student Learner Outcomes (SLOs), students will be information processors who can use a variety of resources and techniques to gather information, adapt to new ideas and technologies, while becoming effective communicators, and complex thinkers. Common Core (CCSC) writing assignments or common performance tasks across departments have been developed and implemented.

It is evident that MHS has focused and is working towards success to increase the level of rigorous courses offered that are A-G approved. Since 2015-16 the site has successfully added 23 course to their offerings, which based on conversations with both parent and student stakeholders, has been seen as beneficial for the future of students' academic paths.

To begin the data collection process for measuring growth they have gathered SBAC data from 2015 for their baseline marker on skills. At this phase MHS will begin to utilize Illuminate to be a central gathering location for scores/proficiencies with the CCSS aligned writing tasks. MHS has self-reported the development of CCSS aligned writing instruction across the disciplines that contain agreed upon universal components (main idea, purpose, etc.) as well as a foundational rubric. The rubric has been adapted to meet specifications within departments. For validating student achievement for all students to accomplish these goals, an intentionality for looking at the data should occur, time spent as a department/PLC. Departments will need to upload data into Illuminate and have purposeful time to critique the changes for students from one semester to the second, as well as growth from year to year.

III. Commendations and Recommendations

Commendations:

- Evidence was observed that steps to address staff morale and reestablish trust between staff and leadership were successful in their initial stages.
- Technology is being used frequently in many classrooms.
- MHS continues to increase the number of Chromebooks each year.
- Successful participation in District-wide Digital Citizenship Project.
- Stakeholder participation in District Tech Task Force.
- Communication has increased for parent stakeholders.
- The addition of AVID, AP, CTE, and UC/CSU A-G courses in the MHS program lays the groundwork for increase equity in access to rigorous academic curriculum for all students.
- The impact of AVID, AP, CTE and other goal-aligned professional development initiatives was observed as having a positive impact on student engagement.

Recommendations:

Progress on previous Action Plan Items

- To increase college/career readiness and ensure academic equity by providing greater access to rigorous academic curriculum, MHS should look at ways to improve student access to counselors and guidance department resources.
- The district and school should continue to promote school site level participation in decisions regarding technology purchases, staffing levels, and training.
- The school should address the purpose of their professional learning community definition and ensure their PLC process and time is used to focus on critical student-centered learning needs.
- Continue to investigate ways to collect and use data in order to strategically drive effective and engaging instruction, curriculum choices, and master schedule priorities.

Additional Recommendation:

- As suggested in the school's Mid-Cycle visiting committee report, the school's Action Plan format should be adjusted in order to continue monitoring and recording progress and changes over time in order to tell the story of growth.