

**THREE-YEAR-TERM REVISIT
VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT**

WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

FOR

GRACE M. DAVIS HIGH SCHOOL

**1200 W. Rumble Road
Modesto, CA 95350**

Modesto City Schools

March 2 – March 3, 2015

Visiting Committee Members

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I. Introduction

Grace M. Davis High School is located in the California Central Valley. Modesto's economy has been historically dependent upon agriculture as its base. With the San Francisco Bay area only 90 miles to the west, there has been an influx of commuters who moved into Modesto. This resulted in an 8% population increase over the last 15 years and affected growth and diversification of students' socioeconomic levels. The median price of homes in Modesto continued to increase until early 2009. The downturn in the economy then caused local housing market values to plummet and unemployment and poverty rates to rise dramatically. Modesto offers many of the cultural opportunities and urban resources of a metropolitan city while struggling to maintain an atmosphere of small town charm and hospitality. The recent economic upturn has resulted in improved conditions, but Modesto and the Central Valley haven't benefited economically as have other metropolitan areas in the state.

Grace Davis High School has increased in enrollment by about 100 students this year. For the past 5 years, the school faced a temporary period of rapidly declining enrollment due to the opening of a new school, Gregori High. Boundary lines were adjusted to address the historically overcrowding. Starting with the 2010 year, the freshman and sophomore classes were drastically reduced followed by the junior class in 2011 and finally the senior class in 2012. In addition to the shifting of boundaries and population changes, 2010-11 was the first year that Davis was designated as a Title I school. The 2011-12 year was the first year of Program Improvement, and as such, Davis is no longer designated as a "School of Choice." The school is currently in year 4 of program improvement. At the start of the 2014-15 school year there was an increase in student enrollment. This is in large part due to the boundary changes being solidified, concerted positive public perception endeavors, as well as the transformation to a 1:1 first digital high school in the district. With the introduction of the new LCFF model, the school has been able to reinstate much of what was lost. Instructional days were increased to 180, and six non-instructional days were added back to teacher work calendars. Department chairs have been reinstated, and they have been able to add more counseling services as well as a site instructional coach, a site technology coach, and a site computer technician. Additionally, 15 early-release collaboration days have been added.

SIGNIFICANT CHANGES:

Digital Davis: Every student has been issued an Acer 720p touch screen Chromebook . Students use these devices daily in both the classroom and at home. Technology professional development has been provided to teachers. Though faced with some infrastructure problems at the start of the school year, students and staff report using these devices frequently.

Block Schedule: At the start of the 2014-15 school year, Davis switched their class meeting schedule to a modified block schedule. Periods meet for 102 minutes twice a week and for 49 minutes once a week on Wednesdays. The switch was voted by teachers - who wanted more time in class to work with the new technology and to better implement the changes for Common Core.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS): Teams of teachers, administrators and campus security have been trained in the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) model.

Collaboration: The addition of a comprehensive collaboration plan has been one of the most beneficial changes. Teachers have the opportunity to collaborate during the departmental/PLC group meetings (once a month), staff meetings (once a month), and 15 early-release days (one hour per day).

Leadership Team: Department chair and PLC lead-teacher positions have been restored since the last WASC visit. The leadership team meets monthly to help coordinate school initiatives as

well as bring concerns to the administrative level. The leadership team members are also in charge of facilitating the weekly collaboration meetings.

Club 230: The tracking of the 9th grade failure rate necessitated an intervention for students who were identified as at risk for that grading period. Club 230 was added to address these students.

Spartans 101 - Middle College: For the 2014-15 school year, Davis has solidified a partnership with Modesto Junior College (MJC), to offer MJC classes during the school day. These courses meet general education requirements within the CCC, CSU and UC systems. These courses also count toward high school graduation requirements.

Enrollment: There has been an increase in enrollment – 136 new students, or a 9.6% increase, from the 2013-14 year.

Administration: There is a new Principal, Associate Principal, and the Assistant Principal of Supervision since the last WASC visit. The team has been consistent for the last two years.

Curricular Changes: The school has instituted an integrated math model school wide, which includes Secondary Mathematics in levels: Bridge, I, II, III and Honors. In ELA, the school has adopted ERWC modules for use in every grade level, the ERWC course for grade 12, and the use of a district created Writer's Handbook. The Language Institute, which is a "school within a school" designed to assist new non-English speaking, has expanded the use of Read 180: Next Generation, System 44: Next Generation, and Rosetta Stone Online. The Social Science teachers have received training in the Document-Based Question project. The Science teachers' training is also in preparation for the implementation of the Next Generation Science Standards.

Language Institute: Started six years ago, the Language Institute (LI) is an intensive language acquisition program for new immigrant students. The success of the program is being recognized by the State this year. The program coordinator has a 0.2 FTE release to assess incoming students and create individualized plans. An articulation plan exists with the Stanislaus County Office of Education to support ELL students as they transition out of high school.

Student Discipline: The school has seen significant decline in student discipline – 68% decline in total number of incidents since the last WASC visit. There have been no expulsions in the last 2 years. School officials attribute the change to block schedule and PBIS for the change.

II. Follow-up Process

The three-year term progress report was developed by GDHS in collaboration with:

- School Site Council
- English Learner Advisor Committee
- Site Leadership Team
- Student Government
- Administration
- WASC Self-Study coordinator

The school staff reviewed the WASC goals at the beginning of the 2014-15 school year. The WASC team, comprised of the WASC coordinator, instructional coach, the Associate Principal and the Principal completed the progress report. The report was reviewed and approved by major stakeholders.

In 2012-13, the leadership team began evaluation of school needs and added instructional

supports in the form of an instructional coach, collaboration time, and Common Core training. 2013-14 saw further establishment of student supports in the form of Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS), digital instruction training, implementation of the district writer's handbook, and expanded professional development on Common Core.

All areas of follow-up from the previous visiting team have been addressed in the progress report. The leadership team has capacity to monitor the action plan and has provided the visiting committee with actions completed in the three years prior to this visit.

III. School's Progress on the Critical Areas for Follow-up

A. Summary of School Progress:

Critical Area for Follow up #1: The leadership and instructional staff should continue to build upon the systematic use of student performance assessment results in order to monitor the impact of programs, services, instruction, and staff development on student achievement.

Grace Davis has focused on the 9th grade in addressing this area for follow-up. Over the past three years, it has administered the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) and Scholastic Math Inventory (SMI) to 9th graders. Results are used to aid in student placement in classes and intervention programs such as Success Skills and READ 180. Ninth graders with a high D/F rate are "enrolled" into CLUB 230, a small group program that discusses the importance of attendance and positive homework habits. Upper class students who failed their 9th grade year often participate in the discussions. There has been a drop in the D/F rate in every grading period since CLUB 230 was established. The school has not continued to track D/F rates beyond the 9th grade.

All students, 9-12, take quarterly benchmark assessments in core subjects. The school recognizes that systematic protocols still need to be established to use this data to impact instruction. These benchmarks are being revised to better mirror the testing format of CAASPP. One of the reasons Grace Davis adopted a block schedule was to provide more class time to work on CAASPP type performance assessments. The effectiveness of adopting a block schedule with regard to assessment results is yet to be determined.

Grace Davis houses The Language Institute, a program developed to help "newcomers" (defined as students with fewer than four years in the US school system) acquire English. In the past three years, the school has redesigned the curriculum to better meet the needs of the students. The tracking of Lexile data provides more structure to the program and enables mainstreaming students into college prep courses more quickly.

Critical Area for Follow up #2: In an organized and systematic way, staff needs to use data to modify instruction. This includes both the content of what they teach and re-teach, and the strategies that they use to provide relevance and rigor to the students' educational experience, and to improve student performance.

To address this area, Grace Davis established five Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and uses early release days, monthly department and faculty meetings to collaborate on both curriculum and instructional "best practices."

In 2014-2015, GDHS became a pilot school for a 1:1 digital model in which all students were issued a touch screen Chromebook. Schoology was adopted as the learning management system (LMS). This LMS allows teachers to deliver instruction, assign work, collect and grade

assignments. It also allows teachers to dialogue electronically with students regarding the quality of the students' work. Teachers can view data in real time and evaluate what needs to be re-taught or re-structured. With the advent of Chromebooks, the amount of writing across the curriculum has increased. Additional professional development will help the instructional staff maximize the potential of the 1:1 digital model.

Curriculum content changes have focused primarily on aligning with the Common Core State Standards. The Math Department re-designed its curriculum to follow an integrated model school wide. The English Department uses Expository Reading and Writing Course (ERWC) modules at all grade levels and has created an ERWC course for seniors.

Critical Area for Follow up #3: The leadership and instructional staff must strengthen their ability to examine standards and set levels of proficiency and performance using tools such as rubrics and other authentic assessments.

Collaboration time has increased significantly since the last WASC visit. The school leadership team has designated time during monthly department and faculty meetings and the 15 early-release days to review assessment results. Teachers work in PLC or departmental groups to examine student performance data. Quarterly benchmarks continue to be given in all core subject areas and time is set aside in staff meetings to review results. An instructional coach is available to work with individual teachers and PLCs in reviewing assessment results and aligning instruction.

In preparation for the new state standardized testing (CAASPP, SBAC, etc), the school has devoted time to develop new assessment tools to prepare students. Teachers are now able to use technology tools to share common rubrics and assessments with one another, as well as provide greater feedback to students.

The school has identified the need to standardize and align rubrics and formative assessments among teachers and courses as the next step in their process of using student data to guide instruction.

Critical Area for Follow up #4: The school needs to work with the district to provide resources that allow time for 1) systematic and formal faculty collaboration and 2) instructional time in order to accomplish and support the above growth areas. The school should consider developing formalized Professional Learning Community protocols for this work.

The district and the local teachers' union negotiated to add more collaboration time for all teachers in the 2014-15 school year. Collaboration time is provided in the following manner:

1. Monthly Departmental / PLC Group Meeting (1 hour/month)
2. Monthly Staff Meetings (1 hour/month)
3. 15 early-release days (15 hours over the year)

These collaboration opportunities are in addition to summer professional development and full-release days for departmental teams over the last two years. The school has a plan for collaboration for the year that outlines activities and timelines. This plan is however adjusted to meet the needs of the faculty. Given the school's digital initiative of 1-to-1 devices for all students, much of the collaboration time has been spent on learning technology tools to support instruction.

A full time instructional coach and a full time technology coach are available to work with individual teachers, departmental teams, and PLC groups. The school changed to a modified block schedule at the beginning of 2014-15 that has allowed for longer class periods. The shift to block schedule eliminated the double lunch – allowing informal collaboration opportunities as all

teachers have common lunch. Every student and teacher has been issued a Chromebook to utilize digital learning tools.

Critical Area for Follow up #5: The school, in consultation with the district, needs to conscientiously follow the development of the Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA) and review it and the WASC plan in a comprehensive and formal manner on an annual basis. As a first step of this process the school should review its current action plan and align it with the recommendations above.

School administration and some SSC members have received training in developing a Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA) since 2012. The school district provides SPSA goals to each school to align with the district plan.

There are six goals defined in the 2014-15 SPSA – they address student performance on the district benchmarks in ELA & Math; improving attendance and discipline; and increasing performance on the CAHSEE (students scoring proficient). The school should consider updating the SPSA to address the disproportionality in student discipline.

GDHS's SPSA goals align with the WASC goals.

B. Priority and/or Additional Areas for Improvement: Identify and note any areas that need to be given priority for the school's ongoing improvement. (This may also include additional critical areas for follow-up.)

The WASC visiting committee recommends that the school continue to follow the guidelines set by the previous visiting team. Additional attention should be placed on the following:

1. The school should continue to build upon the systematic use of student performance assessment results in order to monitor the impact of programs, services, instruction, and staff development on student achievement for all grade levels.
2. As formative assessment tools are better formalized and calibrated, the school should develop a systematic plan on using student assessment data to drive instruction.
3. The school should continue to offer targeted professional development opportunities to all teachers to better utilize technology tools and to enhance instruction. Emphasis should be placed on increasing the level of rigor to the address the requirements of Common Core.
4. The WASC action plan should be updated annually.