

# Community Questions about High School for WUSD Board

## Finances, the Decision Making Process, and Communication

1. In the planning phases the board assessed for a specific amount of money to build the school. How much money was estimated to be required?

The original 2009 rough estimates for the cost of land and building were \$110,000,000 – \$115,000,000. Prior to the Measure AA Bond, extensive polling of more than 400 residents was conducted by our bond counsel, Caldwell Flores Winters. According to the survey results, the community would support an additional tax burden at \$87,000,000, which became the amount for Measure AA high school bond. The conservative estimate of an additional \$30,000,000 in state matching funds for land and building costs would provide enough funding for the initial scope of the project. The purchase of land was the supreme concern for the district, as costs for both land and construction escalate each year. There were several scenarios for land costs depending on acreage and a desire to keep the new high school away from the space-impacted residential areas of Wiseburn. Typical high school acreage in the South Bay ranges from 30-40 acres. Centinela Valley high school sites all range between 33 and 34 acres (Hawthorne 34 acres, Lawndale 33.2 acres and Leuzinger 33.5 acres). At current prices, the purchase of that much land would be impractical, so the Board of Trustees considered building vertically on 5 acre, 8 acre, 10 acre and 12-15 acre scenarios. The selected site at 201 Douglas provided a four story building on a 13.7 acre site for a cost of \$46,000,000. Cost escalation over time and a settlement agreement with the City of El Segundo to build a joint-use pool have resulted in additional costs since original estimates were made. The qualification of the Wiseburn High School project for a state match of \$52,700,000 (instead of the conservative estimate of 30,000,000 in state matching funds) through the Charter School Facilities Funding program more than covers cost escalations.

2. What percentage was expected to be raised through local bonds and how much from other funds?

The initial plan was for about 75% raised through local bonds and 25% through state matching funds for building and purchase of land. With the larger 52.7 million funding eligibility through the Charter Schools Facilities program, the percentages are at about 63% through local bonds and 37% through state matching funds. Currently, no other options exist for state matching funds, without an approved state-wide school facilities bond, not available until November 2016 at the earliest. Any reliance on future potential state funding would set back the timeline for the building of Wiseburn High School by at least several years.

3. What caused the shortfall in funds from the original budget?

There never was a shortfall. The so called “shortfall” was more of a fund- timing gap than a money gap. The “shortfall” was the expected state matching funds that were originally projected at \$30,000,000. The last State School Construction Bond was approved by California voters in 2006. That funding was exhausted across the state by 2013, except for a small amount of Charter School Facility money, which Wiseburn and Da Vinci Schools jointly applied for in April of 2014. From this application, Da Vinci Schools received \$52,700,000 of the last facilities matching funds available in California. Without this funding, the construction of the Wiseburn High School facility would have had to wait for state voters to successfully pass another school facilities bond, which could occur no sooner than November 2016 (at best), resulting in at least several years delay in the construction timeline with the accompanying escalation of construction costs. Time is literally money and the total bill for the project would substantially increase. Any future funding would also be subject to changes

in state funding formulas that would likely decrease the amount of funding eligibility for districts like Wiseburn, in favor of lower income districts (similar to the Local Control Funding Formula).

Another factor that increased costs of the project included a CEQA litigation avoidance agreement with the City of El Segundo, resulting in a joint-use pool facility for our students and for El Segundo and Wiseburn residents at 201 Douglas (\$6,000,000). This actually saved our Community millions of dollars in avoidance of prolonged litigation. (also see Question 40 below)

#### 4. How and when was the shortfall explained to the community?

The “shortfall/timing” gap became apparent when Governor Brown rejected a school construction bond for the November 2014 ballot. This was a question that was brought up at Hollyglen and Wiseburn Watch Neighborhood Association meetings throughout 2014 and was very specifically addressed in an open letter to Ethan Kreiswirth on October 24, 2014 that was made available through NextDoor and all of the neighborhood associations. Wiseburn and Da Vinci applied for the Charter School Funding, through board action on April 1 2014.

#### 5. When the shortfall was discovered, what options did the WUSD Board consider?

The important role of state matching funds was recognized back in 2010 when Measure AA was proposed at the level of \$87,000,000. At this time, Wiseburn was not a unified school district and its only option was for Da Vinci Science and Da Vinci Design to occupy the high school facility as Wiseburn’s only viable option for its high school students. Each of the construction projects at Anza, Burnett, Cabrillo and Dana had all received a very significant state match. For the Wiseburn High School project, the stakes were even higher because of the need to purchase land, which greatly increased our eligibility levels for funding. The concern about the timeline for receiving matching funds became real when state-wide school construction funds were exhausted in 2013. In fact, the Burnett Multi-Purpose Room project was among the last to receive this funding. In 2014, the Governor refused to support the placement of another state-wide school facilities bond on the November ballot. At that time, the Wiseburn Board of Trustees considered various scenarios of phasing the project over different time spans. They also considered eliminating a floor from the building plans, eliminating the Theatre and the Gymnasium. As a last resort, the board also considered going out for a local bond as a “bridge loan” until match funding came in, The \$52,700,000 eligibility from the Charter Schools Facilities Fund allows the project to move forward, on time and on schedule, without the need for phasing, without the elimination of important programmatic structures, and without the need for an additional local bond.

#### 6. How and when were these options explained to the community?

These options were a part of the discussions at school board meetings, HOA meetings in 2014 and with the Bond Oversight Committees, which are all open to the public.

#### 7. Since there was a shortfall, why did we not adjust the plans to match the available budget for a traditional public high school?

There never was a shortfall. We have not done a single construction project in Wiseburn – not at Anza, Burnett, Cabrillo or Dana, without State Matching Funds. State matching funds have been, and are a concrete reality in all of our construction projects. Wiseburn has some of the most beautiful school facilities in the State of California. We had no intention of building a less than adequate high school facility for our community when we knew that State matching funds would come eventually.

8. We thought the plan was to have the school facility shared between the DV charter schools and the traditional public high school. When was the decision made to eliminate the traditional public high school?

The original charter applications from 2009 stated that, “in the event that the Unification effort is successful, Wiseburn School District reserves the right to “adopt” the Da Vinci Design Charter as the “seed” for a comprehensive Wiseburn High School. The specific timeline and conditions of this addition will be developed collaboratively between Wiseburn School District and Wiseburn 21<sup>st</sup> Century Charters (now known as Da Vinci Schools).” Back in 2009, the realistic prospects for a successful Unification were dismal, at best. During 2012 and 2013, Superintendent Tom Johnstone and then, Chief Business Official Tom Cox, now Da Vinci Schools Chief Financial Officer, began a series of negotiations with surrounding school districts and also secured two separate pieces of legislation that allowed for Wiseburn Unification to proceed forward. After 4 years of persistent pursuit of unification, and concurrently 4 years of well-planned and executed development of the Da Vinci Schools, in spring 2013, the initial successes and favorable operating structures of Da Vinci Science and Da Vinci Design made the board reluctant to dismantle the good work that was in place at Da Vinci Design. The subsequent decision to share the facility between three charter schools was an evolution of thinking that took place between 2013 and 2014. There were a number of factors occurring simultaneously that led the Board of Trustees towards this action. In January of 2013, while the 201 Douglas site was in escrow, the district began developing initial plans for the four-story building. Working with Gensler Architects and David Stephens from New Vista Designs, a committee of 30 stakeholders (Wiseburn staff, Da Vinci Staff, Parents and Community Members) began planning for the new site, exploring options for floor layout and program options. David Stephens had earned a national reputation for designing modern schools and was a key architect in the development of the highly acclaimed High Tech High in San Diego. What resulted from this group was a commitment to building a modern facility for 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning that would engage students while preparing them for college and careers. The facility would include a robust technology infrastructure, a classroom design that would encourage student interaction and project-based learning around the structure of three small learning communities. Equally important to the committee was the establishment of key aspects that had been requested by the Wiseburn Community, through the work of the 2011 Wiseburn Future High School Advisory Committee, which conducted a community-wide survey that received 462 responses from the community and included the development of programs for CIF athletics, music, and visual & performing arts. From this came the concept of having the “Best of Both Worlds” – both large and small. Small Learning Communities (small schools) would be embraced as a successful means for not allowing students to “fall through the cracks” of a large traditional/comprehensive high school. At the same time, students would gain the benefits of a larger school experience through joint activities available to all students at any of the three schools for sports, dances, prom, music, visual and performing arts. These activities would enhance the experience of students through joint-seminars and before/after school offerings, while keeping intact the existing A-G requirements for a college-preparatory course of study. The idea was to provide these additional offerings while not disturbing the structures that were making the Da Vinci high schools so successful. The initial architectural plans for the facility were created with these concepts in mind.

In the spring of 2013, several important factors coalesced that influenced the thinking about the third school and whether it would be a charter school. Escrow closed on 201 Douglas in April. At about

the same time, the first full graduating classes from Da Vinci Design and Da Vinci Science began receiving their college acceptance notifications at levels that exceeded all expectations. With 78% acceptance to four-year universities at all levels of the university system, and a solid foothold with business partnerships, Da Vinci Schools were providing the type of education that leads to college and career readiness for all students. The Da Vinci Schools had received a Next Generation start-up grant from the Gates and Hewlett foundations to explore the development of what would eventually become Da Vinci Communications. This potential new school would include a focus on technology and communications with general education college units embedded into the system. Also at this time, several years' worth of negotiations and agreements resulted in the approval by the State Board of Education for a "narrow vote" in November of 2013 of only Wiseburn residents for the approval of the re-organization of Wiseburn as a unified school district.

During the months leading up to the unification vote in the fall of 2013, Da Vinci Communications began with a 9<sup>th</sup> grade cohort of 64 students that was set up as an academy within Da Vinci Design at the Isis campus in Del Aire. Beginning with an Open House for the Wiseburn community at 201 Douglas on December 7, 2013, the district began publicly messaging the plans to have Da Vinci Science, Da Vinci Design and Da Vinci Communications become the three charter schools that make up Wiseburn High School. This messaging continued with School News articles and presentations at Homeowners Meetings in Wiseburn, HollyGlen, Del Aire and South Bay 360. The Da Vinci Schools continued to excel, with the Class of 2014 achieving even better college acceptance results, along with statewide, national, and international recognition. Several presentations were made at Wiseburn board meetings about Da Vinci Communications during the six month initial charter authorization process. In May 2014, Wiseburn Board of Trustees took action to approve the charter for Da Vinci Communications, creating the third charter high school in the Wiseburn Family of Schools and solidifying the plans for the 201 Douglas to house all three charter high schools. At about the same time, the Wiseburn Board of Trustees and the Da Vinci Schools Board of Trustees took action to apply for matching state funds for the 201 Douglas facility using Charter Facilities Funding, that was (and currently still is) the only available state funding match for the Wiseburn High School project. Without this funding, the start of construction of Wiseburn High School would have minimally been delayed until the summer of 2017.

#### 9. Why was it not possible to stay with this model?

The Board of Trustees considered staying with two charter schools and one non-charter option. Several factors led to the decision to authorize a third charter high school and not to create a non-charter option. Part of the plan for the new building is to provide opportunities for students for additional programs such as CIF sports, music, visual & performing arts, and student activities that would be available to students in all schools. With two charters already in place, adding a third non-charter had the potential of creating a less cooperative environment between the schools on each floor. Since immediately after the Measure AA vote in November 2010, the Wiseburn Board of Trustees has consistently stated that it was their vision and intent that all of the schools that operate at Wiseburn High School, operate as a single and united school community. The longer teacher year at Da Vinci, which provides for 19-23 staff development days (depending on the school year) that support interdisciplinary project-based, industry and college informed learning within the teaching contract, was seen as an essential piece to running a high quality high school program; this amount of professional development days would not be feasible in the non-charter model. Because the laws affecting charters allow more flexibility, teachers at Da Vinci Schools are "on a year-to-year contract with no tenure and no collective bargaining. To have one of three high schools set up in a non-charter structure appeared problematic. Creating a facility to house three charter schools also

provided an option for increased state matching funds through the Charter Schools Facilities Program and an on-time delivery of the Wiseburn High School construction project.

10. When, how and who made the decision to make this only a charter school?

As noted above, in December of 2013, the Wiseburn Unified School District began sharing plans for Wiseburn High School to include three charter schools: Da Vinci Science, Da Vinci Design and Da Vinci Communications. In May of 2014 the Board of Trustees took action at a public meeting, to approve the Da Vinci Communications Charter with the intention that the school would occupy the third floor of Wiseburn High school.

11. How was this communicated to the community before the decision was made?

An Open House was held at 201 Douglas on December 7, 2013 with over 500 community members participating in tours led by Wiseburn and Da Vinci administrators. The Superintendent updated a community newsletter to include references to plans for all three charter high schools to move into the new facility. Over 1000 of these newsletters were distributed on December 7 and at subsequent community events. On January 15, 2014, a presentation was made to the Wiseburn Watch community group that discussed reasons for pursuing the charter option and to provide information about the Da Vinci Schools. That same month on January 28, a similar presentation was made to the Del Aire Community at Juan de Anza Elementary School. On February 26, 2014, the presentation was made to the Hollyglen Homeowners Association. On May 10, a similar presentation was made to the South Bay 360 Homeowners Association. At public board meetings on January 23, 2014 and February 13, 2014, the principal of Da Vinci Communications gave an update on the progress of DVC and presented the initial proposal for the charter petition. On May 8, 2014, the Wiseburn Board of Trustees took public action, at a regularly scheduled Board Meeting, to approve the Da Vinci Communications High School Charter.

12. Is there still potential to include a traditional public high school in the Wiseburn High School? If so, what is required to get this back on track?

The Wiseburn Board of Trustees maintains its support for the three charter high school plan that is currently in place for the Wiseburn High School facility. The Board of Trustees does not intend to dismantle or de-authorize any of the Da Vinci Schools, unless those schools are not performing at a good-to-great level. The Board of Trustees is extremely pleased with the progress and performance of Da Vinci students and the outstanding school cultures that have been thoughtfully crafted within each small learning community. Since 2009, the Da Vinci Schools have provided our high school students in Wiseburn with an outstanding educational experience that prepares them for college and a future career. Wiseburn residents have been overwhelmingly making Da Vinci their high school choice with well over 80% of high school resident freshman now attending one of the three schools. Da Vinci Science, Da Vinci Design and Da Vinci Communication have become Wiseburn's high schools by virtue of their success. All three schools are on track to be housed in the state-of-the-art Wiseburn High School facility.

13. There are rumors that the Da Vinci School Board received funding from the Gates Foundation for a third charter school and this somehow played into the decision to replace the traditional high school with an additional charter school in the plans. Please address how these two events are connected.

In May of 2012, The Da Vinci Schools received a prestigious Next Generation grant for \$450,000 from the Gates and Hewlett Foundations, one of eight grants awarded nationally. This funding was received well in advance of the purchase of the building at 201 Douglas and before Unification was back on a successful track. This is an example of funding opportunities that are available to

independent charter schools that are not typically available to school districts. The Next Generation grant provided the seed money to explore options for developing what would eventually become Da Vinci Communications. This funded a planning year and some of the initial outlays for technology and staffing. There are no long-term commitments to either funding organization beyond this grant. In addition to this grant, the Da Vinci Schools subsequently raised other funds to help launch the Communications school including \$427,000 in matching funds from corporate and philanthropic donations from local industry partners and a \$575,000 federal start-up grant available only to independent charter schools. These funds helped launch this program without diluting funding for the work already underway at Da Vinci Science and Da Vinci Design.

14. Many in the community understood the vote to be for a traditional public high school. This news to only be moving forward with the charter schools feels as if our votes only mattered to give the WUSD Board our hard earned money with no accountability. Please explain how the WUSD Board is accountable to the community for our tax dollars.

The Wiseburn Unified School District Board of Trustees takes its fiduciary responsibilities extremely seriously. The Measure AA vote for in 2010 for a high school bond was undertaken by the elementary school district, the only time that has happened in state history. Board members have made use of their financial skills and their knowledge of the building of school facilities to guide the process of selecting a site, purchasing land and developing a sound financial strategy to get the high school facility built. Each step of the way, hundreds of hours of Board members' time have been committed to determining the best financial strategies to "build a modern high school that accommodates all Wiseburn children", as stated in the Measure AA bond language. Unlike many other local area school boards, the Wiseburn Board of Trustees does not receive any compensation for the performance of their duties. The Wiseburn Board of Trustees is committed to continue their work for the residents of the Wiseburn Unified School District.

15-16. This decision to move forward without a traditional public high school has damaged the trust between the community and the WUSD Board. There will be likely be situations in the future where WUSD needs the support of the community. Without the trust and support of the community, how will the WUSD be successful? How will the WUSD Board restore the community's trust?

The Board of Trustees also takes the issue of community trust very seriously. The level of trust that exists between the community and the school district has been a cornerstone of all of our educational programs. This is one of the reasons that that the school district is flooded with requests each year from those who live outside our borders who wish to attend our schools. During the past 20 years, the district has embarked on school facilities building program that has provided the community with four state-of-the-art campuses at Anza, Burnett, Cabrillo and Dana. During the same period, the students in Wiseburn achieved remarkable educational performance results. The exceptional performance of the district has established a long history of trust within the community. The success of the school district has had a real and dramatic effect on real estate demand and valuation growth during this time that far outpaces surrounding areas. The decision to move forward with our Da Vinci charter schools for our high school program is an important milestone that was made with much thought and consideration. It was a process that evolved over several years and was conducted with community outreach and transparency at public meetings. We will continue our ongoing efforts to strive to maintain the trust of the community.

## Operating Logistics

17. How will the WUSD Board be represented on the Di Vinci Board?

Da Vinci Schools was developed internally out of the Wiseburn School District as a way of serving the high school needs of our Wiseburn residents. Before a student focus group determined the Da Vinci name, the original name was listed as Wiseburn 21<sup>st</sup> Century Charters; this was not an outside group coming in with its own agenda. The seven-member Da Vinci Board has purposely included members that are closely intertwined with Wiseburn. Currently, the Board President, Chet Pipken is a graduate of Dana Middle School and attended K-8 in Wiseburn. The Da Vinci Board Vice-president is Don Brann who attended Wiseburn schools as a K-8 student and came back to serve as Superintendent of Wiseburn School District from 1993-2008. Other Board members include Wiseburn resident and Da Vinci parent, Jennifer Morgan, past-Wiseburn Board member Brian Meath and Cheryl Cook, whose son attended Dana Middle School before attending and graduating from Da Vinci. The Da Vinci Board is rounded out by Northrup Grumman Vice-President Art Lofton and Wiseburn resident Israel Mora who serves on both the Da Vinci and the Wiseburn boards. According to the proposed Memorandum of Understanding, there will always be a minimum of three Da Vinci Board members that are Wiseburn residents, two of which would come from the Wiseburn Unified School District Board of Trustees.

18. Do we, the community, vote for Di Vinci's Board?

The Da Vinci Schools are an independent Charter Management Organization that is set up as a non-profit 501 c (3) organization. Under the proposed Memorandum of Understanding for governance, the Da Vinci Board of Trustees would select new members that would be subsequently confirmed or denied by the Wiseburn Unified Board of Trustees. In other words, the Wiseburn Board of Trustees has a very high degree of oversight and responsibility for the Da Vinci Board and governance.

19. Once in operation, who will control transfers into and out of the district? To help allay some of the community's concerns, can a legally binding agreement with the controlling Board be put in place that will require the district to approve a student's transfer out of the district immediately upon parents formal request (within some specified service level agreement, such as 3 business days)?

Prior to Unification, the Wiseburn School District controlled all K-8 transfers of students into or out of the district. Since July 1, 2014, the Wiseburn Unified School District now also controls transfers out for any students in grades 9-12. Students in grades 9-12 from outside the area cannot receive an inter-district transfer into the charter high schools; they must enter the charter lotteries. An inter-district permit transfer out of the Wiseburn Unified School District can be obtained through the Wiseburn superintendent's office. Wiseburn residents are exempt from the high school lotteries and are assured a space at the Da Vinci schools.

Under the previous situation with the Centinela Valley Union High School District, our Wiseburn families with 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade students were consistently denied by CVUSD the opportunity to transfer out to another school district. This often resulted in contentious appeals by our families to the Los Angeles County Office of Education against CVUSD. In contrast, The Wiseburn School District has never made a final denial of a request by a resident to attend a school in another school district. Before signing such permits, the Wiseburn superintendent has made a practice of personally meeting with families to share information about our programs in Wiseburn and to better understand any reasons they may have for wanting to attend elsewhere. In recent years, fewer and fewer families have been attending schools in other districts, citing achievements at Dana Middle School and improved high school options at the Da Vinci Schools as the primary reasons for wanting to stay. Under Unification, the Wiseburn Unified School District will continue the past-practice of

approving requests by our families for inter-district permits to attend schools in other districts. There is no need for a legally binding agreement, as it has never been our practice to deny permit requests.

20. What advantages for the community's children does a triple charter high school have over a traditional public high school?

The three charter school option provides the "best of both worlds". By maintaining small learning communities, like Wiseburn K-8 schools, where students are known by name and valued for their unique contributions, our kids benefit from a culture where students cannot easily "fall through the cracks." The way in which each Da Vinci charter school is organized allows for the recruitment of high quality high school teachers who deeply care about their students, provides 19-23 days of teacher professional development and ensures that teacher quality will be maintained in the years ahead through the absence of tenure in the independent charter system. By thoughtfully adding programs available to all high school students such as CIF sports, dances/prom, music and visual & performing arts, our students can also receive many of the more traditional high school experiences found at much larger high schools. Most large comprehensive high schools are re-thinking the effectiveness of that structure and are breaking themselves apart into "academies" and "schools within a school". At Da Vinci, our Wiseburn students already have a successful small learning community, and now we are adding additional programs with plans for a state-of-the-art building to house it all.

## **Credentials and Teacher Quality**

21. What type of accreditations do the DV schools hold?

Da Vinci Science and Da Vinci Design each hold the longest term (6 year) accreditation from the Western Association Schools and Colleges (WASC). Dr. David Brown, the former Executive Director of WASC, said, "Da Vinci Schools are among the very finest I've seen. Congratulations to all of you. You remain one of my most impressive examples of a system that 'gets it.'" Each of the Da Vinci Schools have been designated a high-performing school by the national Schools That Can organization for the seven keys to quality education (high quality instructional practices, data driven culture, rigorous and relevant curriculum, meeting all learners' needs, safe and supportive school culture, real world learning for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and management and organizational capacity). Da Vinci Schools serve as a demonstration site for school leaders from around the world looking for model programs that engage students. Da Vinci Science is one of six schools in California to be designated as a Project Lead the Way Certified School. Da Vinci Schools was invited by LAUSD to serve as a best practice demonstration site for establishing a regional real world learning model as part of a \$15 million Career Pathways grant from the state's Department of Education for programs linking learning and career and technical education. Da Vinci is a finalist for a California Career Pathways grant in round two of funding.

22. What credentials are required for DV teachers? How are they different from that of traditional public schools?

Da Vinci teachers have the same rules for teacher credentials as the Wiseburn Unified School District.

23. Are the DV teachers unionized? If so, what union are they members?

Da Vinci teachers are not unionized.

24. If the teachers are non-union, how does DV compete to hire and retain quality teachers?

During the six hiring seasons of Da Vinci's existence, hundreds of applications and resumes have been reviewed for each position. There is a high level of interest from potential teachers to work in high school cultures that value student needs above all else and provide the level of professional development that promotes personal growth. Da Vinci Schools attracts and retains outstanding teachers.

25. How does the compensation for a teacher in the DV Schools compare to the surrounding districts?

Pay levels for Da Vinci teachers are commensurate with surrounding districts and Wiseburn Unified School District. With the 19-23 days of professional development each year, Da Vinci teachers work a longer 200 day school year. Da Vinci teachers work on a year-to-year contract.

26. What are the nonfinancial incentives for a teacher to choose to work in the DV schools compared to the surrounding districts?

Twice each year, Da Vinci teachers complete a survey to give their input about the teaching experience at Da Vinci. Da Vinci teachers consistently express a very high level of job satisfaction related to the professional culture that exists at the Da Vinci Schools.

## **DV Curriculum**

27. Can you briefly explain the Da Vinci teaching philosophy?

The main focus at the Da Vinci high schools is college and career readiness for all students. The high schools' culture of small learning communities, personalization, engaging curriculum, and outstanding college and career-ready results are a continuation of the exceptional work taking place at Anza, Burnett, Cabrillo and Dana.

28. What is project based learning?

Project-based learning (PBL) is learn-by-doing curriculum that integrates core subjects with real-life problems to be solved. Teachers work in teams with one another to identify key Common Core content standards and skills that need to be addressed at the grade-level. Then, teachers work backwards to plan their curriculum, striving to create engaging, interdisciplinary projects that center on a big idea and a real-world connection that is rigorous, relevant and meaningful to students' lives. Industry partners play a vital role by helping to align Da Vinci projects to industry expertise and standards.

29. How are the skills learned at DV going to translate to help a student succeed at a "traditional college"?

Innovation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has reshaped the world of work and society. At Da Vinci, students receive direct instruction in the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills of problem-solving, collaboration, critical thinking, communication, creativity, and more. Success in college, career and life can be found in these competencies. More than 4 million jobs remain unfilled in the U.S. because workers do not have the skills employers need. K-12 schools and colleges are responding by graduating students with significantly more preparation in 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Da Vinci graduates are finding success at a wide variety of colleges and universities, including those that are thought to be more traditional.

30. What credible university has kids working on projects on a daily basis? How is my Daughter/son going to succeed at a college where students they study on their own and take finals on their own like UCLA?

Da Vinci students work on projects both independently and in teams. They also regularly take traditional tests and quizzes, and teachers lecture in Da Vinci classrooms. Da Vinci students are also required to make individual Presentations of Learning as a culminating activity for each semester which deepens their content knowledge and builds public speaking and presentation skills. Current research demonstrates that students engaged in project-based learning obtain a deeper knowledge of subject matter, have increased motivation, improved problem solving skills, teamwork and presentation skills. Project-based learning is occurring in all Wiseburn schools to some degree. There are many prestigious universities engaged in project-based learning, including Stanford, UC Berkeley, Cal Poly, MIT, Boston University, and others. Beyond college, workplaces use project based approaches and skills as a primary source of learning and executing on company objectives.

31. How will DV accommodate students who are not yet ready to focus on a particular track (STEM/ Art & Design / Communications)?

The main focus at the Da Vinci high schools is college and career readiness for all students. The academic program at Da Vinci Communications, Da Vinci Design, and Da Vinci Science is a great fit for all students regardless if one does not have a specific interest in STEM, art & design, and communications. These are focus areas, but approximately 85% of the curricula are general studies that exceed high school graduation and UC/CSU college admission requirements. Da Vinci students take the same core curricula (math, English, science, history, foreign language, etc.) as students in neighboring school districts. Da Vinci students also have the opportunity to explore their interests and passions through “pathway classes” (engineering, art & design, communications) and through seminars (electives).

32. Describe the grading system used by DV. Are students ranked? How does this system compare to a “traditional public high school”?

Da Vinci high schools utilize a grading system called Mastery-Based Grading. This system for grading is tied to a belief system that students learn mastery of concepts and different rates; the grade reflects that mastery is achieved by the end of the grading period, rather than reflecting how quickly mastery was achieved across the entire grading period. Mastery-Based Grading is a system of grading students based on their demonstrated level of mastery of concepts (“Essential Skills”), rather than just calculating an average based on the total number of “points” they earn in a semester. It measures demonstrated student learning, not speed of learning. Mastery-Based Grading gives students and parents specific feedback about what skills they have and have not learned. It is information that can be used to direct learning and growth. The teacher does not just average a student’s mastery scores, but instead assesses the student’s level of mastery based on the evidence collected. For example, if a student earns evidence rubric scores of 1, 1, 2 and 4 in a particular essential skill, the teacher may assign them a “4” if they determine that the student has mastered the concept – and the student is not penalized for taking longer to achieve mastery. Final letter grades (A,B,C,Incomplete and F) are used for report cards and transcripts at all three Da Vinci high schools.

In a more traditional grading system, assessments are based on a percentage system of work completed and assessments given throughout a semester. Assessments record the average -- not the best -- work. Traditional grading systems often use an uncertain mix of assessment, achievement, effort, and behavior to determine the final grade. Many high schools, both charter and non-charter, are moving towards a mastery-based grading approach.

33. Does DV teach to the common core? If not, why not? How does it ensure all of its students are prepared for future success in college?

Da Vinci's focus on 21<sup>st</sup> century skills is perfectly aligned with the Common Core State Standards. The essential skills that determine mastery at Da Vinci are drawn from Common Core State Standards. Da Vinci has a laser sharp focus on college and career readiness and complex thinking skills –hallmarks of the Common Core curriculum. Da Vinci has been out in front of a national movement in favor of small learning communities, project-based learning, and 21<sup>st</sup> century learning. High schools across the state and nation are struggling with truancy, high dropout rates, low graduation rates, and poor college readiness. Strong leadership, engaged students, personalized attention, caring and dedicated teachers, a rigorous and relevant “learn by doing” curriculum, and a safe learning climate all boost student achievement and ensure Da Vinci students are prepared for success in college, career and life.

## **Special Needs Children**

34 -36. How many of the current DV students have special needs? Can you classify them and provide data on how well they are doing, so those with concerns can gauge how their child will do or what modifications to request, in the same type environment? Does Da Vinci offer social skills groups, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, learning center, adaptive PE? Is there a limit to how many children with special needs the district will accept? How will the needs of the special needs children be accounted for in the charter schools?

Da Vinci is currently serving 111 students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) across the three high schools with 39 students with IEPs at Science, 61 students with IEPs at Design, and 11 students with IEPs at Communications. A total of 9.6% of students are on an IEP, which mirrors the state and local percentages. On average, our Resource Specialists have a caseload of 18 students, which is below the state mandated limit of 28:1. Our students have access to their case managers within their general education classes, in small groups, and individually throughout the school day. Currently 98% of our students with IEPs are diploma bound, and over 80% of our graduating seniors with IEPs have been accepted to 2 year or 4 year colleges, including El Camino Community College, Santa Monica College, Marymount College, CSU Dominguez Hills, and CSU Northridge.

The ranges of services available to students with IEPs are individualized and dependent upon each student's unique needs. Academic support is provided within the general education classes and in small groups through a Learning Center model. Academic accommodations are provided based on each student's present levels and needs. Examples of accommodations that can be provided are extended time to complete assignments or tests, note taking support, books on tape, shortened assignments, and adapted testing materials. In addition to academic supports, students have access to counseling services, social skills groups, occupational therapy, speech and language services, and other specialized services as needed. There is not a limit to the number of special needs students that will be accepted at the Da Vinci high schools and residents are assured a space.

The Da Vinci Resource Specialists are fully integrated into each school community. Resource Specialists participate in school wide professional development and receive individualized coaching from the Da Vinci Director of Special Education. The Resource Specialists collaborate consistently and effectively with the general education teachers to ensure that all students are supported. The Director of Special Education and leadership teams at each site work closely with one another to make our full inclusion program meaningful for all of our students with special needs.

## **Extracurricular Activities**

37. What kind of extra-curricular activities do the DV schools currently offer?

When Da Vinci Schools first started, there were very limited extra-curricular activities. A variety of opportunities for students have been built around the regular school day schedule through the Seminar program. Students are able to take two Seminar classes each semester that appeal to a variety of interests. The Team 4201 Vitruvian Bots has been making a name for itself for several years by winning awards and competitions in the area of robotics. Based on the desires of students (based on twice-yearly student surveys), the opportunities for extra-curricular activities have grown over the past few years. The addition of CIF sports in 2014-15 has been a big change, with junior varsity offerings for both boys and girls in soccer, volleyball, basketball, track, and cross-country. Also in 2014-15, the addition of music opportunities during seminars and after school has broadened horizons for aspiring musicians. Other extra-curricular activities such as dances, talent shows and proms have been added in recent years.

38. What extracurricular activities will be offered in the new high school?

With the new facility there will be new opportunities to expand in the areas of technology, design fabrication and robotics. In the main building, music and performing arts will be supported through the music rooms and the Theater.

39. What kind of sports will be offered?

2014-15 marked our initial entry into the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) for high school sports. Rather than waiting for the new facility to be built, junior varsity level programs are already underway for boys and girls in soccer, basketball, volleyball, track and cross-country. Through a multi-school agreement, students at Da Vinci Design, Da Vinci Science and Da Vinci Communications all play for the same team, known as Wiseburn-Da Vinci Wolves. The new gymnasium will offer an upgraded facility for basketball and volleyball as those sports expand to the varsity level. The practice field at 201 Douglas will allow for soccer, track, cross-country and potentially softball. Coordinating with County facilities at Del Aire Park, baseball and tennis are also expected in the future. With the addition of the joint-use pool, water polo and swim teams will be developed.

## **Other**

40. It is our understanding that, as part of the negotiations with El Segundo regarding zoning changes to allow for a new school to be built, the agreement was made to build a swimming pool at the facility and allow El Segundo residents to use the pool during non-school hours. Who will pay to maintain and staff the pools during these non-school hours (Wiseburn school district tax payers?). Will Wiseburn school district residents have the same access to the pool during non-school hours as El Segundo residents (without any usage fees)? Since we are essentially supporting the El Segundo Parks & Rec program, through our tax dollars supporting one of the facilities, will we be able to apply for El Segundo Parks & Rec cards?

The pool is part of a joint-use agreement between Wiseburn and the City of El Segundo. Wiseburn has agreed to put \$6,000,000 into the building of a pool complex. The City of El Segundo agreed to staff and maintain the pool and also agreed not to provide a challenge to the CEQA for the 201 Douglas site. The high school program would receive top priority for use of the pool that is

estimated to be 3 hours per day on weekdays and occasional weekend use. Other times will be available for aquatics programming through El Segundo Parks and Recreation. According to the agreement signed by both parties, Wiseburn residents would be served as El Segundo residents under the same rate structures for all programming provided by the City of El Segundo at the pool complex.

41. If after 5 years Da Vinci decides to vacate the site, will it become a unified wiseburn high school or what will happen to the site we purchased?

The site will always belong to the Wiseburn Unified School District. The district is continuing to work with the California Department of Education to clarify the any outstanding issues related to Proposition 39 in the unlikely event that the Da Vinci Schools would vacate the Wiseburn High School site.

42. How many resident students have left Da Vinci after starting in the program?

Over the last two years (2013/14 and 2014/15) a total of 9 resident students have left Da Vinci Design after starting at the school and a total of 16 resident students have left Da Vinci Science after starting at the school. Additionally, a total 17 resident students enrolled but never attended the Da Vinci high schools during 2013/14 and 2014/15. Conversely, in the 2014-15 school year, a total of 35 high school resident students who previously attended schools outside the district returned to Wiseburn to attend the Da Vinci high schools this year. For next year, an additional 30 resident students have returned to Wiseburn to enroll in the Da Vinci high schools for 2015-16.