

**ACS WASC/CDE PROBATIONARY VISIT
VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT**

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

FOR

Mt. Diablo High School

**2450 Grant St.,
Concord, CA 94520**

March 18-19, 2024

Visiting Committee Members

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I. School Description/Introduction

Mt. Diablo High School (MDHS) is a comprehensive 9-12 high school located in Concord California. It is one of five schools in the Mt. Diablo Unified School District and it serves students who primarily (60%) live in the Pittsburgh/Baypoint area, who are bussed to and from school each day. MDHS has the lowest income demographic in the district, with nearly 70% qualifying for free and reduced lunch. 70% of MDHS students identify as Latinex.

MDHS is a CTE school, offering seven CTE pathways, including Biotech, Culinary Arts, Engineering, Multimedia, Patient Care, Construction Tech, and Software & Systems Development.

MDHS has the following strategies that promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and equitable student access to programs:

- CARES - after school tutoring, study hall, credit recovery, & enrichment
- Mount Diablo Education Foundation - provides funding for after school clubs
- Robust CTE Program with strong community partnerships
- World Academy for newcomers and English language learners
- Illuminate - used to assess learning, identify needs, and drive school improvement
- Special Education, including 4 SDC teachers, 1 mod/severe teacher, and 7 RSP teachers, as well as 11 assistants.
- Diablo Community Center - supports the academic, emotional, and social well-being of students and their families.
- Constructing Meaning - common strategies for scaffolding student academic language

II. Significant Changes and Developments

MDHS has had many significant changes in the past couple of years. These are the ones the visiting committee feel are most impactful.

- Complete changeover of administration
 - The principal and 2 vice principals were new last year, and the third vice principal is new this year, as is the ELL program administrator. The new administration team looked at how the school was running, and immediately stepped in to make significant changes. Teachers report that the new administration is supportive of discipline issues and has focused on getting students into class, which is a positive for student learning. The VC saw that students hurried to class during passing periods and very few students were wandering the campus during class time.
 - 11th and 12th grade students expressed their feelings that the new administration is much too “top down” and doesn’t care about their reasons for tardiness, especially during 1st period, when students are punished for tardiness that they have no control over, like late busses or parent drop-offs. School and district personnel confirm that the priority for

this year was to get students into the classrooms so that they have the opportunity to learn, and that forming close and trusting relationships, while obviously very important, cannot happen when the students are spending most of their time wandering the campus.

- 9th and 10th grade students, conversely, are generally happy with being at the school, feel that the administrators are approachable and trustworthy, and overall had a much more positive view of the school. This contrast can be attributed to the fact that the 11th and 12th graders experienced the changeover from the academies to the current school, while the 9th and 10th graders did not experience that change.
- Removal of California Partnership Academies
 - Since 2012, all students at MDHS were placed into academy “silos” chosen during their 8th grade or freshman year, and they remained in those silos through the remainder of their time at MDHS. Many classes were only offered within a particular academy, and only students within that academy were able to take those classes. All academies were based on one of the CTE tracks, and students were required to complete the CTE pathway of their academy. Additionally, teachers worked with other teachers within their academies, and not generally in departments. This led to a disconnect between course-alike teachers, as well as difficulties with the master schedule and a lack of choice for students. This year the academies were dissolved and students were allowed to freely choose their classes.
 - CTE Courses are being re-written into 2-year pathways, instead of the 3-4 year pathways they had in the academy model. This allows students to choose and complete the CTE pathways as a sophomore or junior, rather than having to make that decision before entering high school, or as a freshman.
 - 11th and 12th grade students report that the dissolving of the academies has destroyed any sense of belonging or culture within the school. They used to know who their teachers were going to be and feel that the teachers were more approachable and cared more about them. Much of their school culture and spirit were tied to their Academy identities, rather than to MDHS as a whole school. They now feel more disconnected from their teachers and that the teachers are less interested in them as people, but focus too much on the academics.
 - District personnel report that the academies had been a common source of complaint from parents for several years, and that the WASC visit 2 years ago was the final straw on having wall-to-wall academies. They are open to schools having 1-2 academies within the school, if that is what they choose to do, but the wall-to-wall structure does not allow for enough student choice.
- New Mission and Vision Statements
 - Upon his arrival, the new principal formed the Design Team, a small group of administrators, teachers, and staff, to study the school and put together a new Mission and Vision Statement. These were shared with staff, then families and students. While these are recently completed (12/2023) and have not been fully implemented as of yet, the hope, communicated within the document as well as from school and district personnel, is that these statements will help guide the school moving forward.

MISSION STATEMENT:

We support all of our students in building the knowledge and skills to succeed in college, career, and civic life.

VISION STATEMENT:

We will collaborate with our students, colleagues, and families to guide students toward a successful future by:

1. Creating a safe, structured, and respectful environment for all students to learn and grow.
2. Supporting educators' continuous learning, professional development, and collaborative practice to better meet the needs of all students.
3. Providing the resources and strategies needed to support all students in academic, physical, and socioemotional learning through relevant, accessible, and engaging standards-based curriculum.
4. Developing relationships with families to meet the needs of individual students and honor the growth and strengths of our diverse school community.

- **Constructing Meaning**
 - Teachers report that CM is the most consistent thing on campus over the past several years. All teachers have completed the training. It used to be used meaningfully and with fidelity, and this had fallen to the wayside over the years. There has been an effort to revamp and relaunch CM, including eventual ramping up to a deeper implementation. This was heard from both the teachers and district leadership.
- **Removal of modified block schedule and "Peak" intervention periods**
 - MDHS previously had 90ish minute block schedules on Thursday and Friday, followed by intervention periods for all students. These periods were used variously by teachers for making up missed assignments, retaking tests, and other forms of intervention, but there was no set curriculum or requirements. At the end of last year, the teachers voted to get rid of the intervention periods and to return to a regular daily 6-period schedule. This has generally been found to be a loss. Students report that there is now an equity issue, with students who have after-school jobs or who ride the bus being unable to get help or to make up or retake quizzes or labs. School leadership and faculty have formed 2 committees to look at how to both re-introduce intervention time and to make it more consistent and useful to students.
- **Contract with Solution Tree for PLC support**
 - PLCs are still in the early process of developing at this school. Teachers are working to align their curriculum with course-alikes, as well as aligning grading scales and policies. They are also collecting and analyzing formative assessment data, but are still at the beginning stages of using that data to inform teaching. This is a work in progress, and should be continued to strengthen the consistency of course-alikes.
- **Hiring and supporting of new staff**
 - The school is nearly fully staffed this year (there are 3 vacancies in the

science department). New teachers are supported with a veteran mentor teacher and reported that this was very helpful and supportive. Hopefully this will allow for more consistency within the school over the next few years, as staff turnover has definitely affected student learning.

- The vacant science positions are filled with Elevate K-12 online courses taught by credentialed teachers, with a long-term substitute serving as a coach within the classroom.

III. Progress on the Identified Growth Areas and Implementation of the Schoolwide Action Plan/SPSA

Student Profile Data

MDHS has made many huge changes in the past two years, and most of them have not yet had time to show significant data, with a couple of exceptions.

Data shows that the number of daily tardies has dropped to about one third of previous levels. The VC witnessed several “tardy traps”, as well as the fact that students hurried to class and very few students were out of class during the class period.

Additionally, the California School Dashboard shows that both English and Math scores increased between 2022 and 2023.

Growth Area: 9th-grade support systems and intervention strategies need to be revived and enhanced.

Two major changes occurred that affected 9th-grade support systems and intervention strategies: the elimination of the four Academics and a change to a traditional 6 period bell schedule. In place of the academy structures, a traditional comprehensive school master schedule was put into place for all students, including 9th graders. All 9th-grade students enrolled in classes that emphasized college readiness and a choice of electives leading to Career Technical Education pathways.

In the first quarter, freshman grades were lower than the year before (647/2401 D and F grades for Q1 compared to 527/2964 D and F grades last year for freshmen). At the same time, there was an increase in pre-referral interventions (from 116 to 127), which indicates that there was either an increase in students needing intervention or an increase in staff recognition of students needing intervention, or both. The return of the 6th-period bell schedule resulted in the loss of an intervention period (“Peak Hours”) that may have negatively impacted both grades and one-to-one student support.

Link Crew training for staff is funded and scheduled. Freshman will be supported by Link Crew in the 2024-2025 school year. Support for freshmen is an area of continuous improvement based on the new school structures, bell schedule, and Link Crew initiative.

Growth Area: School-Community Communication, Teachers Need Training

with new family communication tools, and the school in general needs to increase parent outreach

Although Parent Square was adopted in 2021, teachers were not trained on its use and did not embrace its adoption. Voluntary staff training took place in 2022 and mandatory staff training took place in 2023, resulting in increased use in several ways. Parent square metrics confirm an increase this year with administrative communication with staff, parent communication with teachers, and staff communication with parents. There was an increase in overall posts, smart alerts, and direct messages.

Since 2022, the administrative team writes and sends a weekly S'More Newsletter to staff and families. The counseling department, journalism class, ASB Leadership, and athletics have Instagram and Twitter/X feeds. The school website migrated to the ADA-approved format with frequent posts in the summer of 2023. A new school marquee announces holidays, events, sports, and deadlines. In-person events such as "Cafe con los consejeras", ELAC/DELAC, and the African-American Parent Advisory Committee increase options for parent communication. The visiting committee heard glowing reports from parents who are satisfied with current school/home communication.

Growth Area: Staff has indicated there is a need for more clear/transparent communication

Administration has worked hard this year to ensure that teachers and staff know what is going on in the school. In January, staff were surveyed to see if they saw improvement since the previous WASC visit two years ago. Based on the data from the survey, 53% of teachers state that communication is better or much better, with 29% being neutral and only 17% stating that communication has gotten worse. The principal has a weekly newsletter to the entire community. Administrators will continue to work to improve communication within the school.

Growth Area: Students and parents need to be involved in decision making. There is a need for more of their feedback when it comes to learning, teaching, and school culture.

MDHS has struggled to get parent participation with school leadership. This year, after a concerted effort, they have full stakeholder participation on the School Site Council, with 3 parents and 3 students. Additionally, students and families have participated in focus groups and been surveyed and these results have been used in site decision making.

Student perception is that their parents, especially those who are not English-Speaking or who are working long hours, are not heard or given the opportunity to participate in the school. Students also feel that their own voices are not heard sufficiently. That said, the parents that attended the WASC parent meeting were all ELAC members who felt that their voices were being heard and who felt very supported by the school. There is definitely a struggle to get parents involved when the majority of them live on the other side of the hill and do not speak English.

Growth Area: Staff and Data, Initiatives like SEL, PBIS, Peak Hour, Constructing Meaning and school events need to be evaluated with data.

Illuminate data: Staff reviewed Illuminate data in several staff meetings. Staff survey data indicates they believe there's been improvement in the staff's use of Illuminate data at the same time as they believe more time needs to be given to teams to analyze the data. Solution Tree has been hired to assist with improving this process.

SEL data: Three times each year, students are given a survey to evaluate their social-emotional well-being. The 2023-2024 school year is the third year this survey has been conducted. Results are consistent from year to year. Administrators have identified an area of growth around students having trusted adults.

Behavioral data: The new administration made significant changes in behavioral support and expectations, campus climate, and high expectations for tardies and attendance. Tardy and attendance data is known and driving the administration's prioritization of getting students in class. Grade data is being used to promote Honor Roll incentives as well as determine students in need of intervention.

Peak Hour data: teachers voted for a schedule that eliminated Peak Hour intervention time, making the need for Peak Hour data obsolete.

Constructing Meaning administrative walk-through data: Administrative walk-throughs support Constructing Meaning. During the 1st semester of the 23-24 school year, 59% of the teachers were posting CM learning goals. Structured student talk routines were observed 16% of the time.

Instructional rounds data: In November 2023, 61 of 67 total teachers participated in Instructional Rounds due to the hiring of substitute teachers to support rounding. There were a total of 122 classroom visits of 15 minutes each. In January 2024, 100% of the teachers on campus participated in instructional rounds. Results of rounds were debriefed at staff meetings.

District benchmark data: the district assessment department gathered input from a number of concentrated focus groups from the different schools in the district to create their own benchmark assessments. These are given as both pre- and post-assessments. Funding in the SPSA supported teacher pay for focus groups to review this data at department, grade level, and course-alike groups. One Math and one English teacher participated in the focus groups. Full implementation of the semi-annual assessment began in the 2023-2024 school year.

Grading practices data: With the elimination of academies, grading policies and standards were prioritized. Teacher grades were broken down and compared across similar courses. There were still a large number of teachers in the same course that had grades that were very different. Work continues in this area using grade data.

Science department data: In addition to reviewing generalized data at staff meetings (Illuminate, SEL, behavioral, Instructional Rounds data), the department provided

past formative assessment data and meeting notes as evidence of standard-based outcomes. The science department is revising its formative assessment rubrics this school year.

English and Math department data: In addition to participating in general data review at staff meetings (Illuminate, SEL, behavioral, Instructional Rounds data), the department provided portfolio evidence to the committee as evidence of standard-based outcomes. In addition to District semi-annual data, the Math and English teachers assess student progress quarterly to ensure formative assessment data is gathered 4 times per year.

Counseling data: The counselors meet with Spanish-speaking families monthly to gain input. The team found that counseling processes are emerging to support students given the new school structure.

CTE data: The CTE staff reviewed broad student data at staff meetings (Illuminate, SEL, behavioral, and Instructional Rounds data). The department is early in the process of using data to inform its decision-making because this is the first year of implementing the CTE structure from the Academy structure.

World languages data: In addition to data review at staff meetings (Illuminate, SEL, behavioral, Instructional Rounds data), the department provided portfolio evidence of the use of formative assessment in Spanish as evidence of data-based decision-making.

VAPA data: The VAPA department participated in general student data review at staff meetings (Illuminate, SEL, behavioral, Instructional Rounds data), and provided portfolio evidence of standards-based student outcomes.

Growth Area: Professional development needs to be more regular and focused.

Most PD on campus is for Constructing Meaning to support students in academic language development and usage. Additionally, school leadership has been working with Solution Tree to implement PLCs. Data collection and analysis are at the early stages in this process. Future plans are to focus professional development time on enhancing the PLC process.

Growth Area: Students need to get to and stay in class

This was the primary focus of administration this year, as all other goals are dependent on the students being in class. The first step was to increase student accountability for being on time to class. This started this year with random tardy sweeps, where an announcement is made for teachers to lock their doors and all students who are “caught” in the tardy sweep to make their way to the quad to get a pass, followed by an announcement to unlock doors and accept students with a specific-colored pass. Students who are caught in 3 hall sweeps are assigned lunch detention, with further disciplinary action (such as after-school campus beautification) happening with further tardies. Both school data and VC experience show that this process has been highly successful. Students hurried to class in order to avoid hall sweeps (which happen randomly about twice daily), and very few

students were seen out of classrooms after the bell rang.

Once students were in class, the next challenge was to keep them in class and to keep them engaged. It was found that most students who were out of class were meeting up with their friends in the bathrooms, which was arranged with the use of cell phones. The school has adopted Minga in order to track students who are out of class for whatever reason, and is planning on adopting Yondr bags starting in the 2024-25 school year. The use of Yondr bags will hopefully not only get rid of the issue of students using their cell phones to plan “excursions” from class, but will also encourage students to be more engaged with their lessons and with each other within the classroom.

Progress on Action Plan Goals

The school worked to align the Growth Areas and the WASC Action Plan goals with the SPSA and LCAP and as a result, the SPSA is now the action plan. The school is working on creating a new mission and vision statement, a set of values that reflect the goals of the SPSA.

Goal 1: All students will receive a high-quality education in a safe and welcoming environment with equitable high expectations, access to technology, and instruction in the California State Standards that prepare them for college and/or career.

The school is focusing on improving outcomes for 9th-grade students and students with IEPs with a focus on the implementation of MTSS and Link Crew to improve the 9th graders' onboarding process and address school climate and safety. Both aspects require further development and training for full implementation on campus to affect students' learning and training has been planned. Multiple interventions address students' safety on campus and progressive assertive discipline has increased student's presence in the classroom.

Goal 2. Parents, family, and community will be informed, engaged, and empowered as partners with MDHS to support students' learning.

The use of ParentSquare and other forms of communication has improved communication between the school and the parents: a combination of email, text messages, regular newsletters, and phone calls, with the support of a community liaison keeps the parents and community informed with school and district events and initiatives. As identified in the growth areas, more work can be done to increase the participation of students and families in making changes at school and to provide input at site and district levels, as well as via in-person on-campus events.

Goal 3 High-quality, culturally proficient, and responsive staff will provide engaging instruction respectful of all students' backgrounds to ensure they are college and career ready.

To address the main growth areas the school has been focusing on instructional leadership. Under this goal the school continues to focus on the implementation of CM strategies supporting teachers participation in instructional rounds to develop CM

strategies at higher levels and to support English Language Learners.

The newly started work of the PLCs, under the guidance of Solution Tree, focuses on analyzing data provided by different sources to improve instruction at the department level to support common assessments and targeted intervention strategies that address students' needs. This PLC progress is still in the earliest stages of development, and the VC found that some course-alikes are well-aligned, while others still lack alignment. This process should be continued to increase consistency between classes.

Goal 4 Focus scholars, specifically Black/African American students Foster Youth, and students experiencing homelessness will experience culturally responsive practices and instruction, high expectations, equal access to educational opportunities, within an educational environment that builds trust and inclusive partnerships between the students, families, and staff.

Several external agencies, such as Feet First and Family Purposes, join the DCC on campus to provide SEL and counseling services to the focus scholars at school to support students' achievement. The development of this support system requires simplification and clarity for all parts involved.

The VC was impressed with the supports that are available to students through the Coordinated Care team, but they would benefit from more communication with teachers regarding previous referrals and follow up.

Relationship between Growth Areas and Action Plan Goals

All Growth Areas and Major Student Learner Needs have been addressed by the Action Plan Goals.

Communication and Involvement of Stakeholders/Educational Partners

Communication with Stakeholders and education partners has improved, according to parents and staff. Parents report that ELAC meetings allow communication in both directions between parents and the school. The Site Council has full stakeholder representation, including both parents and students. Additionally, the school uses surveys of families and students to elicit feedback. After this visit, the school has realized that having more focus groups or “jam sessions” with students will allow the students to feel like they are being heard and may help the school to improve the loss of community and culture that happened with the dissolution of the academies.

Schoolwide Strengths and NEW Areas for Growth

Schoolwide Strengths:

- The new administration, with the support of the teaching staff, have successfully gotten students into the classrooms and therefore given them the opportunity to learn.
- Teachers, administrators, and staff are student-focused. Counselors are accessible to students (QR Code for appointments), and there is significant support for student mental and emotional health needs.

NEW Areas for Growth:

- Administration, along with counseling, teachers, and students, need to create and implement a plan to build a culture of belonging and engagement within Mt. Diablo High School.
- Continue to strengthen consistency between classes through the PLC process.

IV: Revised Schoolwide Action Plan

The Action Plan is aligned with the Major Student Learner Needs and Areas for Growth. The VC recommendation that they continue to strengthen PLCs was requested by the administration, and is already written into Goal 3. The need to build a culture of belonging and engagement will be written into Goal 1.