

# The Evolution of Avalon School



## General Background and History '20- '21 WASC Narrative

### Community

Santa Catalina Island is 22 miles off the coast of Los Angeles, California. The resort community of Avalon is part of Los Angeles County. Avalon is the main town (roughly 2.23 square miles) with a year-round population of approximately 3,700 residents. We draw students and staff from all areas of the island. Of the island's 75 square miles, 86% is a natural preserve overseen by the Santa Catalina Island Conservancy.

In its 98th year, Avalon K-12 School was established at its current site as a K-12 campus to replace and expand the prior K-5 school. This meant that secondary students no longer had to travel to the mainland to go to school. Many years later, an additional campus began at Two Harbors, 20 miles NW of Avalon. The Two Harbors school, also known as the Little Red Schoolhouse, was closed in the 2014-15 school year due to low student enrollment, so Two Harbors students must commute 1 hour to Avalon to go to school. Avalon K-12 School is part of the Long Beach Unified School District. Approximately 85% of our students attend Avalon School from kindergarten through high school graduation, creating a family-like atmosphere among our students, families, and staff. Thirteen of thirty-six staff members commute by boat each morning from Long Beach on the mainland to Avalon.

The ethnicity of Avalon School is approximately 80% Hispanic, which is a 5% increase since our last accreditation visit in 2014-15. The remaining ethnicity is 18% White, 1% other, and approximately 1% decline to state among the 487 students (as compared to 626 in 2014-15). Approximately 70% of our student population is classified as socioeconomically disadvantaged and approximately 28% are English Language Learners.

# The Evolution of Avalon School

## The Evolution of Avalon High School

The following is the timeline of Avalon School based upon articles gleaned from The Catalina Islander newspaper as compiled by Donna Sharpe, former Avalon TK-12 School librarian:

- "Annexation for the Public High School," The Catalina Islander, 18 July 1923, p1, c1 quotes letter from Superintendent of Schools, LA County, stating that in order to have an 11th and 12th grade (i.e., an accredited high school), the existing school would need to be annexed by the Los Angeles School District.
- "Catalina District to Have Full High School Course," The Catalina Islander, 5 September 1923, p1, c1—Over 100 Avalon residents signed petition sent to County Board of Supervisors to annex Catalina School District to Long Beach School District. Long Beach superintendent of schools said to approve concept. If annexation occurs, it is said that William Wrigley, Jr., will contribute \$50,000 toward building school.
- "School District Status," The Catalina Islander, 19 September 1923, p2, c3: County Board of Supervisors approved annexation on 11 September 1923. Private Catalina School District was immediately dissolved and all assets transferred to Long Beach City School District, per County Superintendent of Schools.
- "Avalon Schools Grow,," The Catalina Islander, 26 September 1923, p1, c1: School year started, now part of LB City School District, LB school officials visit along with other LB City Officials. Enrollment of first day—high school 25, elementary 104, kindergarten, 15 More expect to enroll soon. High school temporary quarters in Sugar Loaf Casino.
- "Avalon School Association," The Catalina Islander, 28 November 1923, p6, c3: The Avalon School Association, recently formed to promote the interests of Avalon Schools, met to set up committees. Mrs. D.M. Renton was on the membership committee. All residents interested in the schools invited to join. Vote on school bond issue scheduled for December 14.
- "Largely Attended School Association," The Catalina Islander, 12 December 1923, p1, c2: SCI Co (DM Renton) sent letter promising wholehearted support. Association resolved to support upcoming bond issue. Needs of school discussed, including playground for children. Spanish section to be formed.

# The Evolution of Avalon School

- "Spanish-Speaking Branch of School Association," The Catalina Islander, 19 December 1923, p6, c2: Spanish-speaking residents who have interest in school met last week and formed Spanish-speaking branch of Association, elected officers. School Principal Dunkle attended.

The City of Avalon proposed a bond issue to fund a high school building that passed 113 to 1. LBCSD engaged the firm of Webber, Spaulding, and Stanton of Los Angeles to draw up plans which were approved by the district on 8 October 1924, and the project was put out to bid. On behalf of the Santa Catalina Island Company, Vice President and General Manager D.M. Renton bid on the construction project; the contract was awarded to the company on 29 October 1924 as the lowest bidder. Renton was in charge of the project and 5 November 1924, his work crews began pouring the foundations.

- "Masons Lay High School Cornerstone," The Catalina Islander, 10 December 1924, p1, c1-3. The ceremony for the laying of the cornerstone took place on 6 December with an impressive ceremony conducted by a delegation of the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of California in conjunction with the Catalina Lodge. (The Masonic organization has a tradition of formally dedicating school buildings.) School District and City officials and religious dignitaries as well as most of the town attended. According to the Catalina Islander, "...that the cornerstone might be truly of the island soil, a ton of materials had been sent to Pasadena, where it was cast into the beautiful stone which was the object of the afternoon's impressive ceremonies."
- "Formal Opening of New School Building a Mark of Progress," The Catalina Islander, p1, c1-4. The new school was finished, furnished, and filled with students by Easter and a delegation of officials from the Long Beach School District Board of Education visited on 5 May 1925, to formally accept the building. The new building housed grades four through twelve, a total of 250 students. Grades Kindergarten through three were still housed in the old Whitley Avenue building.
- "Avalon High School Commencement," The Catalina Islander, 24 June 1925, p1, c1-4. The first class to graduate from Avalon High School contained 10 students. The graduation ceremony, held in the Greek Amphitheater, was a major event attended by about a thousand islanders.

That summer, the first summer school session was organized, and, in the fall, evening classes continued for the third year. The Parent-Teacher Association remained active and, when the city declined, sponsored a school nurse and arranged, with community support, to take care of children with nose and throat problems as well as dental

# The Evolution of Avalon School

needs; it also sponsored a school lunch program. The PTA then sponsored a petition to the School District asking for the construction of a new elementary school.

- “Two Hundred and Sixteen Members in the Avalon P.T.A.,” *The Catalina Islander*, 27 January 1926, p1, c1. According to *The Islander*, the District reacted by suggesting that a tax be levied on the district with a possible school construction date in 1927 at the earliest. In their formal reply, the district suggested that they would not object if Catalina again became a district by itself. The Board also pointed out that the District was spending \$2,000 a year more on the school than they received from the Island. Apparently, the District was beginning to understand the ramifications of the responsibility they had assumed. The chastened PTA quickly signified that they didn’t want to create a separate district and turned their attention to raising money to stock a school library.

The school continued to grow in enrollment and course offerings. William Wrigley, Jr., had established an athletic fund to allow Avalon teams to travel to the mainland to play other schools, and authorized school use of Wrigley Baseball Field and the golf course.

- “P.T.A. Meeting,” *The Catalina Islander*, 21 April 1926, p3, c1. The District Superintendent attended a meeting and informed the group that construction of an Industrial Arts Building might begin in the fall. Again, Renton bid successfully on the project for the company. The bid was let in November and the building completed and ready for use in the fall of 1927.
- “Interesting P.T.A. Meeting Held Wednesday Evening,” *The Catalina Islander*, 13 April, 1927, p4, c2. “A motion was adopted by which the Avalon Parent-Teacher Association will unite with the Federated Societies.” (Apparently, the Avalon group had already been in touch with the State Federation because a request for Avalon mothers to sing at the State Federation in June was also discussed at the meeting.)

By the end of 1930, with the help of another bond issue, the Avalon campus had expanded to include an elementary school building, gymnasium, auditorium, playgrounds and athletic fields. School children were now being transported by van from Middle Ranch.