

# **Mid-cycle Visiting Committee Summary Report**

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

**FOR**

## **PASADENA HIGH SCHOOL**

**2925 E. Sierra Madre Blvd**

**Pasadena, CA 91107**

**Pasadena USD**

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**Visiting Committee Members**

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Pasadena High School, founded in 1884 and located at its current site since 1960, is one of four comprehensive high schools in the Pasadena Unified School District. The school serves students from Pasadena, Altadena, and Sierra Madre. With a history of academic continuity, the school provides a range of programs designed to meet the needs of a diverse student population. These programs reflect a commitment to preparing students for future academic and career opportunities through structured curricular pathways and support systems.

The academic structure includes three College and Career Pathways: Creative Arts, Media, and Design (CAMAD); Law and Public Service (LPS); and the App Academy, which emphasizes computer science and information technology. Students enrolled in these pathways complete related coursework and participate in experiential learning through community and university site visits. The school also offers French and Mandarin Dual Language Immersion Programs and a Math Academy that begins in fifth grade and advances through high school, preparing students for college-level mathematics. The curriculum is supported by Advanced Placement courses and a broad selection of extracurricular programs.

The staff includes 94 certificated members, such as administrators, counselors, psychologists, a librarian, a nurse, and classroom teachers, with more than half holding master's degrees. Professional development occurs monthly and is shaped by the Instructional Lead Team. Through the California Community Schools Partnership Program, Pasadena High School has integrated services such as truancy and substance abuse prevention, senior advocacy, expanded tutoring, and an eSports program. These additions reflect a focus on student well-being, academic progress, and community engagement.

Over the past three years, Pasadena Unified School District has experienced a series of leadership transitions at the central office level, including changes in the roles of Superintendent, Chief Human Resources Officer, Chief Business Officer, and Chief Academic Officer. These transitions, though challenging, were managed through a combination of interim appointments and eventual permanent hires, allowing for sustained operation and support across school sites. These changes have shaped district-level priorities and impacted site-based decision-making structures, including those at Pasadena High School. At the school level, leadership transitions have also been significant. The role of principal changed multiple times, with a new principal appointed in 2024. This change marked a shift in the school's focus, with increased attention placed on school culture, collaboration, and student engagement. The leadership team has since worked to unify staff and enhance safety protocols to support a productive school environment.

Within the assistant principal team, several changes occurred from 2021 to 2024. One assistant principal served through 2021–2022 before transitioning out, and another began during that year and continues in the role. A long-serving assistant principal who joined in 2021 briefly took on the leadership of the Special Education Department before returning to the administrative team, contributing to overall continuity. In 2024–2025, another assistant principal was added to fill a temporary vacancy, and a new assistant principal was appointed to support the school's expanding needs. Collectively, the administrative team has prioritized strengthening discipline systems, providing instructional support, and maintaining campus safety. In the area of athletics, leadership has remained more consistent. Athletic Director I transitioned twice between 2021 and 2024, while Athletic Director II remained in place throughout the period, ensuring stability

in athletic programming and maintaining support for student-athletes. These administrative shifts reflect an ongoing commitment to supporting academic progress, operational efficiency, and student well-being.

The impact of the Eaton Fire in 2024–2025 created significant challenges for the Pasadena High School community. More than 130 students and over 20 staff members from Pasadena, Altadena, and Sierra Madre experienced the loss of their homes or were displaced. This crisis led to heightened emotional and logistical difficulties for students and their families. In response, Pasadena High School and the district responded with increased socio-emotional support, bringing in additional psychologists and counselors to meet the growing need. Assistance was also provided by external organizations, including the Los Angeles County Office of Education and the Sacramento County Office of Education, which contributed staff and services. Community support played a crucial role in helping students recover. The PTSA organized a “Backpacks and More” event to distribute essential school supplies, and Mission Oak High School in Tulare County organized a gift card drive to provide financial assistance. In a show of external support, actor Steve Carell, through a partnership with Alice’s Kids, sponsored prom tickets for all Pasadena High School seniors, ensuring access to a memorable experience during a time of disruption.

Pasadena High School maintains a collaborative and ongoing process for continuous school improvement through the development and monitoring of the Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA). This plan aligns with the Pasadena Unified School District's Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) and is revised annually to respond to schoolwide priorities. Input is collected regularly from the School Site Council (SSC) and the English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC), which meet monthly to review spending practices and provide feedback. Their contributions informed the modification of the 2024–2025 SPSA, including the revision of goals and adjustments to resource allocation. The district supplements this process through informational sessions at DAC, DLAC, and LCAP meetings, supporting alignment between school and district goals. Additional feedback is gathered through the California Healthy Kids Survey, departmental material and technology requests, and feedback collected during staff meetings and instructional planning sessions. The Instructional Leadership Team meets periodically to identify needs and facilitate dialogue across departments. Resources are reallocated accordingly using Title I or general funds to address student needs, with oversight by the school board to ensure alignment with broader district goals. The counseling department also contributes to this process by identifying areas where additional academic and wellness interventions may be necessary to support student success.

Since the last WASC accreditation visit, Pasadena High School has made steady progress toward the implementation of its Schoolwide Action Plan, with focused efforts to improve academic performance, strengthen school culture, and build college and career readiness. The first priority has centered on enhancing student knowledge and proficiency in core academic subjects, particularly English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics, as measured by the CAASPP assessments. A specific focus has been placed on historically underserved student populations, including English Learners, African American and Latinx students, students with disabilities, and those from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. Targeted interventions have included the implementation of a lunchtime Math Tutoring Program, led by former math teachers and

instructional coaches, and supported by outreach to English Learner families through ELD classes. A bilingual instructional aide has been integrated into core content classes to offer language support, and peer tutoring has been embedded during advisory periods and after school to provide accessible academic assistance across subject areas.

Instructional practices have also evolved across departments to meet the needs of diverse learners. Social Studies teachers have increased the use of nonfiction texts, vocabulary development activities, structured writing tasks, and note-taking strategies to strengthen literacy. In Mathematics, instruction has focused on reinforcing foundational skills and promoting higher-order thinking through problem-solving. Special Education staff have continued to collaborate with general education teachers to scaffold instruction and differentiate materials. The adoption of McGraw Hill curriculum for Mathematics and Social Studies has contributed to a more consistent instructional framework. Technology-based tools such as Read Theory and IXL have supported targeted instruction in English Language Arts by reinforcing reading comprehension, grammar, and vocabulary development. StudySync implementation is ongoing, with efforts to better align it with district instructional goals and classroom practices.

Assessment data supports the effectiveness of these academic initiatives. In Mathematics, the 2024 CAASPP results showed a schoolwide gain of 12.2 points. Significant subgroup improvements were observed among African American students, who increased by 45.4 points, students with disabilities with a 16.1-point increase, Hispanic students with a 5.9-point increase, and white students with a 27.4-point gain. However, socioeconomically disadvantaged students experienced a decline of 3.1 points, suggesting the need for continued targeted supports. In English Language Arts, the 2024 CAASPP scores showed an overall schoolwide gain of 24.8 points. All subgroups demonstrated progress, with African American students gaining 88.5 points, students with disabilities improving by 60.1 points, Hispanic students by 12 points, socioeconomically disadvantaged students by 14.7 points, and white students by 37.5 points. These gains indicate broad instructional effectiveness, while also highlighting areas where additional intervention and resources are required to address persistent achievement gaps.

Pasadena High School has also prioritized the creation of a safe, inclusive, and supportive school environment. A key development has been the launch of the Collaboration of Services Team (COST), which brings together academic coaches, mental health professionals, administrators, counselors, and community advocates to coordinate responses to student needs. Weekly COST meetings provide a structured forum for identifying and supporting students facing academic or socio-emotional challenges. Wellness and Well-Being Centers have been established on campus to offer mental health services, restorative practices, and spaces for students to decompress during the school day. Classroom staff have adopted community-building strategies and implemented restorative interventions that promote positive peer relationships and classroom climates. Increased adult presence during unstructured times—such as lunch supervision by counselors and restroom monitoring—has contributed to a heightened sense of safety.

Campus-wide efforts to celebrate diversity and promote belonging have gained momentum. Cultural clubs such as the Black Student Union (BSU) and Latin American Student Association (LASA) have collaborated on student trips and events that enhance cross-cultural understanding. The Puente program has expanded to include students from varied backgrounds. The annual

Brotherhood Assembly continues to serve as a space for students to share cultural identity and experience. A network of “safe spaces” has been created by staff volunteers who offer their classrooms and offices as inclusive environments. All staff have participated in anti-racism professional development to reflect on personal biases and develop equitable practices. Despite these advances, staff have identified the need to improve campus security protocols, particularly regarding visitor check-in procedures, to further ensure student safety.

Efforts to prepare students for post-secondary success have intensified through expanded Advanced Placement and dual enrollment opportunities. In 2024, 58.4% of seniors were identified as “Prepared” on the College and Career Indicator (CCI), representing a 4.9% increase from the previous year. Plans for the 2025–2026 academic year include expanding AP offerings from 21 to 23 courses with the addition of AP Cybersecurity and AP Research. Dual enrollment opportunities will increase as courses are offered both during and after school. The Spanish Department, in collaboration with instructional leadership, developed a clearer academic pathway for native speakers to transition from intermediate to advanced Spanish language courses. Additional support for college readiness is provided through programs such as the Early Academic Outreach Program (EAOP), College Access Plan (CAP), Upward Bound, Puente, BSU, and LASA. These programs offer resources for college applications, financial aid, and scholarship access. Counselors have maintained a schedule of academic check-ins and provided credit recovery to ensure all students are supported in meeting graduation and college entry requirements.

Family engagement has also improved through multiple digital and in-person strategies. Platforms such as Smore, Canvas, Aeries, and Parentlink provide parents with regular updates on school events, academic progress, attendance, and safety alerts. Teachers have adopted tools such as Remind and weekly newsletters to ensure consistent two-way communication. The PTSA has expanded from a small leadership core to a full 12-member board and has played an active role in supporting school activities and outreach. The Weekly Bulletin has been redesigned to be ADA-compliant and more searchable. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram now serve as key channels for school updates. The school responded proactively to the Eaton Fire by coordinating with community partners and offering direct assistance to displaced families. The Visiting Committee has recommended strengthening stakeholder engagement in the WASC self-study process. In response, Pasadena High School established focus groups and dedicated professional development time for collaborative dialogue and reflection, though progress was delayed by the emergency response to the fire.

Professional development has been an area of both growth and opportunity. Training sessions have included topics such as community building, anti-racism, and new curriculum implementation. Feedback from staff has indicated a need for more targeted time to address both academic instruction and social-emotional learning. Learning Walks were introduced in 2024–2025 as part of a strategy to build instructional capacity and shared reflection. These walks included volunteer teachers, coaches, and administrators who observed classrooms and recommended next steps related to formative assessment and student engagement strategies. Plans for 2025–2026 include monthly Learning Walks involving all instructional staff. These observations will guide professional development delivered during Monday planning sessions. Pasadena High School has also committed to maximizing the impact of Professional Learning

Communities (PLCs), with departments following a three-week cycle focused on student data analysis and instructional planning. Common assessments have been adopted in several departments, and iReady and AP Classroom data are used to monitor progress and identify learning gaps. Although progress is evident, teachers have expressed the need for increased time to conduct deeper data analysis and strengthen cross-curricular alignment.

To align all efforts, Pasadena High School revised its Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA) for the 2025–2026 school year. The plan was developed collaboratively with input from faculty, classified staff, parents, and school committees. The total number of goals was reduced from seven to four to streamline priorities and ensure measurable outcomes. The academic goals for English and Math were consolidated into a single goal and expanded to include performance on CAST and AP exams. The goal focused on English Learners was broadened to emphasize long-term English Learners (LTELs). School culture goals were unified to address discipline, attendance, and student engagement through increased access to extracurricular activities and positive behavior supports. A new MTSS Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) was hired to coordinate efforts in Tier I instruction and behavior intervention. The parent engagement goal was revised to include student and parent workshops focused on college readiness and leadership development. The updated SPSA reflects a commitment to using data to guide improvement and to maintaining structures that support academic achievement, school culture, and meaningful engagement of all stakeholders.

## Schoolwide Strengths

### 1. **Academic Growth Across Student Subgroups:**

Pasadena High School has demonstrated measurable academic improvement on CAASPP assessments in both English Language Arts and Mathematics, particularly among historically underserved student groups. Data from 2024 shows significant gains among African American students, students with disabilities, and Hispanic students. The intentional use of targeted interventions, integration of technology-based learning platforms, and collaborative instructional practices across departments have contributed to increased proficiency and academic engagement.

### 2. **Commitment to Student Wellness and Campus Safety:**

The development and implementation of the Collaboration of Services Team (COST), the expansion of wellness centers, and restorative practices reflect a schoolwide commitment to supporting students' social-emotional needs. Increased adult supervision, proactive mental health services, and inclusive community-building efforts have helped establish a safe and supportive environment where students feel valued and connected.

### 3. **Expanded College and Career Readiness Opportunities:**

The school has increased the number of students achieving “Prepared” status on the College and Career Indicator through the expansion of Advanced Placement offerings, dual enrollment opportunities, and post-secondary access programs. Initiatives such as intentional course pathways for native Spanish speakers and partnerships with programs like EAOP, CAP, and Upward Bound have provided students with the tools and support needed to prepare for college and career success.

**4. Improved Stakeholder Communication and Family Engagement:**

The use of multiple digital communication platforms, including Smore, Aeries, and Parentlink, has improved transparency and two-way communication between the school and families. The PTSA has grown significantly, and the school has used social media effectively to share timely information. Efforts to support displaced families after the Eaton Fire further illustrate the school’s commitment to maintaining strong relationships with its parent and guardian community.

**5. Stabilization of Leadership and Renewed Focus on Collaborative School**

**Improvement:**

Since the appointment of the current principal in 2024, the administrative team has demonstrated a clear commitment to unifying staff, improving safety, and re-engaging the school community in meaningful dialogue. The leadership team has prioritized instructional support, inclusive stakeholder engagement, and professional development planning aligned with schoolwide goals. The reorganization of the WASC self-study process, expansion of the SPSA, and implementation of Learning Walks reflect strategic leadership focused on continuous improvement and collaborative decision-making.

**Growth Areas for Continuous Improvement**

**The visiting committee concurs with the school’s identified areas for growth as identified in the SPSA:**

1. Students will increase academic achievement as demonstrated by increased CAASPP scores in ELA and Math, increased CAST scores in Science and increased passage of AP tests.
2. EL students will increase academic achievement as evidenced by improvement in ELA CAASPP scores, ELPAC scores, increased reclassification rates and reduction of LTELS.
3. Students will be positively engaged in school and demonstrate consistent attendance, involvement in a variety of electives and extracurricular activities, respectful behavior, low disciplinary incidents and on track to graduate.
4. Provide students and families with tools and activities they can apply toward college readiness that will lead to increases in a-g completion, reclassification rates, FAFSA completion, and increased attendance at parent meetings.