

**MIDTERM REVIEW
VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT**

WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

FOR

ARROYO PACIFIC ACADEMY

**41 West Santa Clara Street
Arcadia, CA 91007-3100**

Independent/Private

April 11, 2013

Review Committee Members

Mavis Schutz, Chairperson
Retired Director of Activities/Teacher

Steven Chai
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New Covenant Academy

I. Introduction

General Comments

Arroyo Pacific Academy (AP) is an independent, private, coeducational, comprehensive, college preparatory, four-year secondary school located in Arcadia, California, in the County of Los Angeles which was founded by Philip Clarke in 1998. Mr. Clarke created the school in response to a small group of parents who requested a new private middle school. From 1998 to 2006 a middle school and high school co-existed. However, in 2006, in order to more firmly establish Arroyo Pacific Academy as a college preparatory high school, the middle school program was discontinued after that year's middle school graduation. Arroyo Pacific Academy now welcomes students in grades 9 through 12 of any race, gender, religion, color, racial or ethnic origin. Because they have an open enrollment policy to admit students throughout the year, the enrollment numbers increase as the school year proceeds. The enrollment has increased since the full accreditation, mainly due to the successful International Student Program. The limit to the student population which was one hundred fifty (150) students can now also be raised to two-hundred fifty (250) with the addition of The Clark Center campus and the new facilities.

The City of Arcadia encompasses approximately 11 square miles of land in the westerly portion of the San Gabriel Valley at the base of the San Gabriel Mountains and has experienced a tremendous demographic shift in recent years. A city that was almost uniformly Caucasian thirty (30) years ago is now 53.8% Asian American. Located approximately eighteen (18) miles northeast of downtown Los Angeles, Arcadia is known as the "Community of Homes." In Arcadia, single-family homes outnumber apartments and condos 3 to 1. The majority of the students whom the school serves live outside of Arcadia. Consequently, Arroyo Pacific Academy is a private and independent school and not a "neighborhood" school. The majority of students in Arcadia schools are of Asian ancestry. However, the ethnic composition of Arroyo Pacific Academy closely reflects the composition of the cities along the Interstate 210 Foothill Freeway through the San Gabriel Valley.

Student achievement at Arroyo Pacific is disaggregated and analyzed. As a private high school, Arroyo Pacific Academy does not utilize state standardized testing, but rather SAT and PSAT and AP Exam Data to measure student achievement.

The school boasts above average scores for domestic (non-international) students on the SAT. The school has increased its percentage of passing scores on Advanced Placement exams to 67%, an improvement of 22% over the past three years while simultaneously increasing the overall total number of exams taken from 22 total exams in 2009-2010 to 48 total exams in the 2011-2012 school year. 79 exams are scheduled to be administered in the current school year (2012-2013).

The number of international students at the school has affected schoolwide achievement. International students have shown above average scores in SAT mathematics, but below average in SAT Reading and SAT writing. The school has identified areas of improvement and has implemented programs to address those areas to improve student achievement.

Significant Changes

Since 2009, the domestic student ratio of 90% domestic students to international students of 10% has changed drastically. In the 2012-13 school year there are now 41% domestic students compared to 59% international students. The school has met this new challenge by implementing the English Language Development Program as well as Test Prep and mentoring through homestays; the Review Committee interviewed several international students who reported that the school is very supportive of their education.

In addition, the school completed what the school considers the “greatest accomplishment in the fifteen year history of the school”: the Clarke Center, a 15,000 square foot facility constructed and developed to house a performing arts theatre, an art studio, a dance studio, a music recording suite, a television and media production studio, a music recording and editing lab, a computer editing center, a fitness center, and a lobby. The Clarke Center is a considerable development as it demonstrates the school’s commitment to Visual and Performing Arts, as well as a commitment to improving the school’s overall program. The school also upgraded the existing facility to have improved dining areas as well.

The school also recognized the need for a leadership model that addresses the increased demands of a growing school. The school installed Mr. Joseph Blackman as the new Principal, hired a full time Business Manager, Mrs. Tillie Burke, a new Administrative Secretary and Admissions Officer, Ms. Jennifer Tseng, and promoted Mrs. Leticia Tufenkdjian as the new Assistant Principal. This is a development of interest because it addresses the need for leadership sustainability in a growing school.

Arroyo Pacific Academy has also developed a number of extra-curricular and counseling programs over the past three years and looks to continue to make improvements. The Review Committee also saw the space that the school will be converting into a college and career center. Sports, arts, music programs, and international trips and cultural experience opportunities have greatly expanded as well.

Lastly, the school has shown considerable changes regarding professional development and curricular design. The school has hired 22 teachers for 160 students, a ratio better than 8:1, and has committed financial resources for the development of teachers including AP workshops, conferences, and further professional certificates and degrees.

Description of the Follow-Up Process

The school has taken care to craft an action plan that has addressed each area of growth left by the 2010 Visiting Committee. The administration, faculty, staff, students and parents/guardians have spent time discussing, analyzing and assessing all aspects of Arroyo Pacific Academy in light of the parameters of the action plan and critical areas for follow up.

All stakeholders remain dedicated to the WASC Self-Study process of continuous school improvement as a part of creating a constant improvement process.

II. Action Plan and Critical Areas for Follow-Up Accomplishments

Arroyo Pacific Academy's leadership worked to address the critical areas for follow up left by the WASC Visiting Committee. The school's dedication to improvement is evident in the steps the school has made to address each area with care and diligence.

- Critical Area for Follow-Up #1: The creation and development of rubrics and benchmark assessments for each one of the ESLRs for each grade level

The school has committed to raising the expectations for all students in preparation for college/university and a successful life thereafter. Towards that end, the school has identified rubrics and benchmark assessments for each ESLR for each grade level. The school has held cross-curricular meetings for departments to collaborate on articulation and identification of ESLRs and benchmark assessments and the school has develop common rubrics for identified skill expectations in each academic department.

- Critical Area for Follow-Up #2: Further develop the use of a variety of summative external (PSAT, SAT, PLAN, AP exams), authentic (Portfolio, Rubric), and formative (Benchmark) assessments for the purpose of evaluating student achievement

The school has implemented a system of administering and disaggregating standardized tests to measure student achievement. The use of AP exams as summative, criterion-based assessments has grown; teachers report using assessment data to improve instruction annually. AP Teachers have used AP Exam results to adjust assignments and instruction and other teachers have used PSAT and SAT Exam results to recommend students for after-school and in-school remediation classes and workshops. International students have been recommended for writing tutorials based on their assessment results.

The Review Committee observed the use of authentic assessments (portfolios) for evaluating student achievement, and has implemented department-adopted benchmark assessments and rubrics to assess student achievement.

- Critical Area for Follow-Up #3: Encourage all teachers utilize in their teaching multiple intelligences/modalities and best practices of classroom management

The school has engaged faculty in promoting ongoing best practices to assure excellence in teaching to include research-based professional development in differentiated instruction and classroom management.

Friday faculty meetings are used to develop and share best practices. Mr. Walley, the Dean of Studies, conducts faculty meetings and the Review Committee observed notes from those meetings.

- Critical Area for Follow-Up #4: Further develop a formalized and comprehensive teacher evaluation process

Arroyo Pacific Academy is in the process of establishing criteria for a formalized and comprehensive evaluation process. The new Assistant Principal, Mrs. Leticia Tufenkdjian, has been charged with development of that process, and is in the process of adopting a formalized method of teacher evaluation. Teacher Self-Evaluation forms have been created and used, and formal evaluations will take place once a year. Administrators regularly visit classrooms to support student achievement.

As of the Committee's visit, no formal evaluation has been adopted for faculty reviews. However, various instruments are being evaluated by the administration. A formal instrument is expected to be adopted by the Fall of 2013.

- Critical Area for Follow-Up #5: Create a systematic plan for teachers to formalize and document professional development programs on individualized learning

The school has made considerable progress in the area of professional development. Self reflection forms were used to set individualized professional goals for each teacher, and the school has committed resources, both financial and institutional, to meet goals for each teacher. The faculty reports feeling extremely supported by the school's leadership to pursue both professional and personal goals.

The school has adopted a number of research based Professional Development tools including various instruments from ASCD. The pursuit of advanced degrees and certificates has been supported financially by the school's leadership.

In conclusion, the school has made substantial progress in all the areas of follow-up from the 2010 Visiting Committee.

III. Recommendations

The Review Committee makes no additional recommendations. The school has taken seriously its commitment to the action plan and the self-study process. The school has gone above and beyond to address the 2010 Visiting Committee's critical areas.

The Review Committee is confident that the school leadership is poised to lead the school to continued progress on its Action Plan over the next accreditation period.