

Name of School: Pacific Grove High School
Address: 615 Sunset Avenue, Pacific Grove, CA 93950
District: Pacific Grove Unified School District
Date of Original Visit: March 5-8, 2006 Date of On-Site Review: February 8, 2009

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Introduction

General Comments about the School

Pacific Grove High School (PGHS), a four-year comprehensive school, serves the city of Pacific Grove and a portion of Pebble Beach. The home of the Breakers, which sits on the tip of the Monterey Peninsula surrounded by the Pacific Ocean and the neighboring town of Monterey, it has been graduating individuals since 1898. Pacific Grove High School is the comprehensive high school of the Pacific Grove Unified School District. In addition to PGHS, the district is comprised of two elementary schools, a middle school, a community high school, and an active adult school.

Homes in the area are of a value where it is difficult for families with children to own homes. Instead, many families rent, but costs force both parents to work full time. The high cost of living has led to a declining enrollment throughout the district.

Significant Changes

- Transition to a new administration including both the principal and assistant principal
- Passage of a \$42 million dollar bond for the district to build new facilities and renovate existing facilities
- Several major renovations begun from new windows to a new stadium, track, and field
- An increased rate of retirement of teachers from PGHS and an influx of new teachers
- Transition to a new superintendent for PGUSD
- Transition of every principal and assistant principal except for one in PGUSD over the past three years through promotion, retirement, or program reduction
- Passage of a parcel tax that continued an existing tax that had expired in 2008
- Significant reorganization of city leadership and subsequent resignation of the city manager

Description of Follow-Up Process

The team that has been responsible for overseeing the WASC action plan has been primarily the School Site Council. The action plan has been delineated out in the Single School Plan for Student Achievement and given funding, as funding was available. The Site Council reviews progress through periodic reports and data review.

The primary writers of the mid-term review report were the librarian, principal, and assistant principal. Input was first gained from the administration cabinet, leadership team (department chairs), and the staff as a whole through staff meetings and email.

Follow-Up Process: Progress on Schoolwide Action Plan

Pacific Grove High School had several growth needs in its schoolwide action plan; these addressed the eight critical areas for follow-up left by the 2006 visiting committee. Following the FOL more closely, stronger communication within the stakeholders, a comprehensive action plan, utilizing data, implementation and utilization of technology, meaningful writing across the curriculum, renovation of the physical plant, and frequent administrative changes were all mentioned as needing attention. The progress that has occurred in each area is shown in the summaries given below.

Growth Need #1:

Pacific Grove High School should fully engage in the Focus on Learning (FOL) process to drive the school's collaboration, communication and school improvement process.

Under the leadership of a new principal and assistant principal, Pacific Grove High School has embraced the FOL and Professional Learning Communities (PLC) processes as tools to discuss and lay the foundation for school improvement. "Embrace learning rather than teaching" has been a header for staff meeting agendas. At every staff meeting and leadership meeting, the tenets of PLC's (What do we want them to learn? How do we know if they learn it? What do we do if they don't? And what do we do if they do?) are brought up as pillars that surround discussions about school improvement.

Growth Need #2:

All stakeholders (superintendent, school board, district and site administration, the school staff, the parents, students, and community) need to develop more effective methods of communication.

Stakeholders have been brought into communication through several methods. A High School Survey of Student Engagement was given in 2007. This was a comprehensive study paid for by the School Site Council. Results were published and this year the Site Council is reviewing the survey again to see if there is data that can still be gleaned and addressed.

Staff has been brought more thoroughly into the communication loop this year. An initial survey of 'what is going well,' 'what needs attention,' and 'where do you think we should be at the end of the year,' was taken and then discussed over two staff meetings. It will come up again after mid-year to note progress. Also, two standing committees – cabinet and leadership were brought into site decision-making and information dissemination in an effort to improve communication. Items such as budget and calendars are discussed alongside expectations of departments, themes for collaboration and professional development. Interviews with school staff reveal that department goals and

assessment will be created and/or refined over the next two years to drive a site comprehensive action plan.

Power School has greatly improved parent communications as far as student academics are concerned and a newly purchased program, Connected, has enabled the administration to send out mass emails and/or phone calls to specific parents or to the whole school. It has been very useful and has received praise from parents.

Continuing efforts will be made to involve the superintendent and school board in the communication process.

Growth Need #3:

A comprehensive action plan (classes, teaching strategies, staff development, and communication/counseling) needs to be researched, discussed, and implemented to provide a rigorous, relevant curriculum for students, especially the midrange learners.

Rigor for mid-range learners is getting increased attention this year. This is being done in conjunction with an administrative directive to create a single philosophy and practice for honors and AP classes. Because the tracks have been completely disparate, there was virtually no way for students to get into honors or AP classes if they were in the regular education classes. This tended to diminish the rigor for the regular education classes since there were no expectations for moving into the honors classes. To that end, the master schedule for the 2009-10 school year is being developed to create equity with the number of honors and AP courses with each grade level and to design curricular expectations that would allow movement from one program to the other. By having the courses set to allow students to move up to honors and AP after a year in the grade level classes, it is hoped that there will be increased rigor in the grade level classes so that they would be more prepared for jumping to higher content standards. It is clear from the data shown on our SAT and AP charts, that our upper level classes are very successful and attempts are being made to address the midrange learners. The AVID class was instated during the 2008 academic year. The teacher has been trained in the summer AVID class and is excited about the class.

Growth Need #4:

There is no district or school academic goals, including the ESLRs that drives assessment, the evaluation of the school's academic program or the improvement in the expenditure of funds. The staff needs to utilize data as an integral part of the decision-making process.

PGUSD and PGHS are continuing to develop academic goals for its student academic performances of state and national tests that measure the effectiveness of the school's instructional program. PGHS core departments are in the process of developing common standards-based assessments that can and will be a measurement of teaching effectiveness.

At this time there is no staff consensus as to what data should be used to measure the school's effectiveness.

Growth Need #5:

While technology is a significant portion of the instructional program, problems still exist with the implementation, upgrading, maintenance, and staffing.

A comprehensive technology plan is being developed that integrates the current state of technology at PGHS with a five-year plan. Internet access and Power School difficulties should be improved in the next month. More than half of the staff has Smart Boards while every teacher has at least one computer in his or her class. The library has a desktop lab as well as a laptop lab enabling two classes to work at once if needed. A music technology class was added in the 2008 academic year. In this class students compose music on computers using industry standard programs and tools. Funding all of this technology and maintaining it takes a large amount of funding that will be a constant struggle given the state of the economy.

Growth Need #6:

Meaningful writing should be increased across the curriculum and that a writing rubric should be developed to assess student work.

The staff has realized the importance of increasing meaningful assignments across the curriculum. Last year, the English department developed a writing rubric as vehicle to assess student writing. This rubric is also useful in planning and instructing students on the elements of writing good papers. Students are able to read and sample anchor papers and discuss the elements of each according to the rubric. As a result of its implementation, student writing across the curriculum has improved. It is a future goal of PGHS to develop meaningful assignments like these across all content areas.

Growth Need #7:

If the future bond is passed, consideration needs to be given to rehabilitation of the classrooms, offices, and other facilities.

A 42 million dollar bond measure (Measure D) was passed in 2006 and allowed the school to undertake an ambitious program of repair, renovation, and construction. Physical education, technology, and science have been the greatest recipients of that funding. Two new PE buildings to accommodate dance and wrestling as well as a completely renovated stadium, track, and field have received approval and construction has begun. The science wing will be completely renovated increasing space by 50% and an upgrade of the labs should begin in the summer of 2009. Bandwidth is being increased from two T-1 lines to a DS-3 line to accommodate the current use of the Internet and the computer education class has initiated a partnership with Microsoft to make the Microsoft Academy part of the graduation requirements. In addition, the art room, photography room, and media room has or will receive significant remodeling and upgrades with gallery space for exhibits. The cafeteria and eating area is being redesigned to make a more pleasant eating area that will hopefully keep more students on campus during lunch.

Growth Need #8:

It is hoped that after a series of administrative changes that stability is realized at the site.

There is a new principal and assistant principal at the site for this year. It appears that during the principal's short tenure, he has established open and friendly lines of communication between most stakeholders at Pacific Grove High School. It is the opinion of the WASC mid-year Visiting Team that their leadership will continue to allow Pacific Grove High School to continue to make substantive progress as it addresses the growth areas of the 2006 WASC report.

Summary of Significant Progress

Pacific Grove High School is proud of the work and accomplishments it has achieved in the three years since the 2006 WASC review. Those areas include a commitment to fully engage all of its stakeholders in the FOL process, efforts to improve communication, development of a five-year comprehensive technology plan, and a successful renovation of the physical plant. Furthermore, the stabilization of the school administration will allow the additional recommendations to be implemented.

Additional Recommendations

The review committee makes no additional recommendations. Pacific Grove High School has taken seriously its commitment to address significant and meaningful initial change since the 2006 WASC visit. Pacific Grove High School administration and staff will address the remaining areas that still need attention, namely a more concerted emphasis on student learning, assessments to measure student learning, and a shared staff, student, and community vision.