

FOCUS ON LEARNING

MIDTERM VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT

Junipero Serra High School
5156 Santo Road
San Diego, CA 92124
San Diego Unified School District

Original Visitation Dates: February 23-25, 2004
Midterm Review Visitation Date: April 20, 2007

WASC Midterm Visiting Committee

Mrs. Nancy V. Kellogg, Chair
Teacher, Brawley, CA

Dr. Frank. M. Nishimura, Member
Principal, Los Angeles, CA

I. Introduction

General Comments about the School

Junipero Serra High School (Serra) is one of sixteen traditional comprehensive high schools in the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD). SDUSD is the second largest in California, eighth in the country, serving approximately 133,000 students. Dr. Carl Cohn was appointed superintendent in October 2005.

Serra sits on a 110-acre parcel at the western edge of the middle to upper middle class community of Tierrasanta in San Diego. The school has approximately 2100 students, who come from three groups roughly equal in size: one group includes the local Tierrasanta community; another includes students from the nearby Murphy Canyon Naval Housing Community, which houses nearly 2,500 military families; and the third group of the students is bused to the school through the SDUSD’s Voluntary Ethnic Enrollment Program (VEEP). Many of the students at Serra through the VEEP program arrive from less affluent parts of San Diego and tend to be of Hispanic and African-American heritage.

A fairly conventional and comprehensive course of study is offered at Serra, which operates on a traditional school year. The Navy JROTC program is thriving at Serra.

| Ethnic/Racial Background | | % | Serra High School CST Total Scores, Percentage of Students Scoring Proficient or Above | | | | API Base | Met AYP? |
|---------------------------------|--|----------|---|-------------|-----------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | | | ELA | Math | Sci-ence | H-SS | | |
| African-American | | 17 | 44 | 16 | 16 | 33 | 685 | Yes, all |
| Asian | | 10 | 43 | 13 | 13 | 36 | 709 | Yes, all |
| Hispanic | | 35 | 40 | 8 | 6 | 32 | 667 | Yes, all |
| White (non Hispanic) | | 32 | | | | | 694 | Yes, all |
| Other | | 6 | | | | | | |

| Other Demographic Data | % |
|--|----------|
| Students Participating in Free and Reduced Lunch Program | 43 |
| Students Participating in Gifted and Talented Education | 21 |
| Students Designated as English Learners | 14 |
| Truancy Rate, 2005-06 | 3.79 |

| Year | Total Enrollment | % English Learners | Grade 12 Enrollment | Grade 12 Graduates | % of Graduates meeting UC/CSU entrance requirements |
|-------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| 2004-05 | 2001 | 8.8 | 351 | 319 | 41 |
| 2003-04 | 2034 | 6.1 | 381 | 340 | 43 |
| 2002-03 | 1946 | 8.4 | 371 | 352 | 44 |

| Year | Attendance % | Truancy per 100 students | Suspensions per 100 students | Retention per 100 students |
|-------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2004-05 | 94.78 | 22.9 | 26.14 | |
| 2003-04 | 94.21 | 21.3 | 18.04 | 1.6 |
| 2002-03 | 94.46 | 23.5 | 14.13 | 1.0 |

(All data shown in the tables above includes the most recent data available from the school or California Department of Education online.)

Significant changes affecting the school since the previous visit

The 2005-06 school year brought SDSUD administrative turnover with the appointment of Dr. Cohn. According to Serra's principal, the previous administration actions were more top-down than the current administration, and Dr. Cohn's style is collaborative. More decisions are being made on site, although schools work closely with their assistant superintendents. Budget cuts are eliminating some professional development that the district previously provided, and a district content administrator is no longer available.

The school's weekly schedule has been modified so that Tuesdays start ninety minutes later than other days for students, providing time for faculty to work collaboratively in departments or their Small Learning Communities (SLCs), which consist of four core area teachers who share students and usually have a common prep.

Mr. Michael Jimenez, formerly a Serra Vice Principal, is in his first year as school principal, following Mrs. Donna Somerville, who was at the helm during the 2004 WASC visit.

Description of the Follow-Up Process

Committee responsible for overseeing progress on the school's Action Plan: Prior to the 2006-07 school year, Serra's resource teacher, principal (Mrs. Somerville), vice principals and ASB advisor addressed various Action Plan components. During the current year, with the transition to a new principal, there has been no specific attention paid to the Action Plan. Mr. Jimenez indicated he would like to revisit Action Plan components with his Leadership Team.

Mr. Jimenez prepared the report for the WASC midterm review committee.

II. Follow-up Process

Serra's Action Plan addressed three critical growth areas, while the 2004 WASC report identified five schoolwide critical areas for follow-up. The WASC midterm review committee examined growth in the three schoolwide Action Plan areas as well as all five WASC critical areas.

A. Schoolwide Action Plan Growth Area 1: Increase rigor by aligning core courses to content area standards with common units of instruction, curricular maps, and assessments.

Corresponding WASC Critical Area 2: Ongoing professional development is needed to assist staff to design and implement standards-based curriculum and instruction; to further create and refine beginning and end-of-year tests and other assessments in all subject areas; and to use the results to develop strategies for intervention as needed.

Serra's API scores between 2003 and 2006 have decreased a net 9 points from 694 (2003) to 685 (2006), indicating that standards-based instruction and student achievement are lagging, with the majority of students testing in the Basic to Far Below Basic levels on their CSTs in all subject areas.

Completion of standards-based curriculum, assessments, collaboration, and professional development on effective instructional practices has occurred since the 2004 WASC visit. District and standardized test data are used to develop professional development, place students, and are intended to help drive instruction. The principal's expectation is to see curriculum addressing the needs of students, based on data.

Discussions with Serra staff revealed the need to expand the use of disaggregated data to drive instructional practices. Further discussions indicate a need for the faculty to hold each other accountable for the implementation of effective instructional practices, including those that are being developed in professional development.

B. Schoolwide Action Plan Growth Area 2: Increase school-wide expectations to ensure that all students (including all subpopulations) will be prepared to enter and complete a four-year college or university upon graduation.

Corresponding WASC Critical Area 1: The number of staff utilizing Fundamental Teaching Elements and Expectations for All Classrooms needs to increase in order to continue to close the achievement gap so that all students are achieving at the highest levels. There needs to be the belief that all students can achieve at high levels.

Small Learning Communities (SLCs) have been established for students in grades 9, 10 and 11 (grade 12 to be added in fall 2007) to personalize delivery of instruction and provide the support to enhance the academic performance of all students. Part of the SLC movement has been to provide parents additional support, including translation services and counseling, to encourage student success. This coring of students has allowed for the creation of student success teams. SLC faculty has been using collaboration time to develop common assessments and interdisciplinary assignments.

The Fundamental Teaching Elements and Expectations include a component for active student engagement. In 2005, the school schedule was modified to provide for built-in professional development and collaboration time. Administration emphasizes the need to observe Rigor, Relevance and Relationships in all classrooms.

Beginning in fall 2007, the district will require incoming ninth graders at risk to take summer school prior to entering high school. Furthermore, these students failing more than one class will receive an intervention class in place of an elective course. Serra faculty has identified reading, writing and basic mathematics as the gateway skills to be remediated in this intervention course.

Based on discussions with the Leadership Team, Serra has created an honors track, which raises concerns of equity and access issues to a rigorous and relevant curriculum for students in regular curriculum.

In approximately eighty percent of the classroom observations made by the visiting team, rigor and higher order thinking skills were not employed. Instead, worksheets were almost universally found, and teachers were reviewing problems from the front of the room, sitting at their desks while students worked or finished quizzes, or circulating as students worked on worksheets or

puzzles. Not a single group or hands-on activity was seen in the science classes observed. In nearly every classroom observed, one-fourth to over ninety percent of the students were off task and almost none were actively engaged in meaningful learning. Where quizzes were being given, students finishing before the last student done spent a significant amount of time waiting/chatting for the last student to finish prior to moving on to another activity, if there was one at all. The climate in many classrooms was one of “relax and enjoy” rather than one of “we’re here to learn.”

In spite of the professional development and collaboration provided, many of the effective instructional strategies taught to staff are not being implemented in the classroom.

C. Schoolwide Action Plan Growth Area 3: Design and implement strategies to increase opportunities for all students to connect to Serra High School in personal ways in order to ensure academic success.

Corresponding WASC Critical Area 5: Continue to help ninth graders and other students feel connected with the school and supported in making wise decisions.

The SLCs are intended to help students feel connected with caring adults. One SLC is devoted to helping freshmen adjust to the high school experience, including developing both academic and social skills for success. There are two programs that match freshmen and seniors as buddies or mentee/mentor to assist freshmen in their transition to high school, and the Student-to-Student program that supports new students entering into Serra.

The school provides multiple opportunities for students to involve themselves in extracurricular opportunities, as was evidenced in our discussions with parents and students.

D. WASC Critical Area 3 (No Action Plan Critical Growth Area): Staff needs to be appropriately firm, fair and consistent in the application of disciplinary practices in order to meet the needs of the students.

School discipline policies are distributed to students and staff. When disciplinary measures must be taken by administrative staff, this discipline may include or be followed by counseling and parent conferences. The principal would like to establish a student group next year to assist with these counseling issues.

There is no professional development or mentoring of teachers needing assistance in classroom management strategies. Based on classroom observations (described in B above), there is a need for teachers to improve their use of instructional time and to actively engage students. Doing so will help improve the learning climate in many classrooms.

E. WASC Critical Area 4 (No Action Plan Critical Growth Area): A broader range of parents, including those of students from outside the Tierrasanta community, need to receive

communication in their primary language using multiple means in order to ensure more involvement in the school to support the success of their students.

From our conversations with parents, who were all from the Tierrasanta community, a wide variety of methods are used to communicate with parents and other stakeholders within the Tierrasanta community, particularly those who are English-speaking and have internet and/or e-mail access, or subscribe to local newspapers. Mass e-mailings, auto dialer audio messages, letters mailed home, phone calls and notices from teachers, advisory committees, booster clubs, an electronic marquee and an online tool from which parents may access student information are among the methods the school uses to communicate with parents.

We were unable to verify the level of communication with parents of students who are bused in from outside the community, who may not be fluent in English, and/or who may not have internet/e-mail or specific newspaper subscriptions. Serra needs to examine whether there is less communication from the school available to these families and remedy the situation. Serra does provide some bilingual (English/Spanish) office staff, translators at IEPs, and a “Facts for Parents” booklet in Spanish, available on request. There appears, however to exist a significant inequity in access to school information by some parents, compared to what is made available to the English-speaking parents of students living in close proximity to the school.

Summary of Significant Progress

- The first-year principal has positive support from the community, he is visible, student-centered and models a welcoming culture, students are parent see him as friendly, knowledgeable and caring;
- Collaboration of departments, SLCs and the use of Tuesday morning professional development time to improve academic achievement has produced significant progress since the previous WASC visit;
- The number of opportunities for students to be involved in school activities, such as sports, clubs, extracurricular events, provides something for anyone who chooses to be involved;
- There is a movement toward SLCs to personalize instruction and support academic achievement for all;
- Structures or systems are in place to hold students accountable (e.g., 2.5 GPÁ assembly, Loss of Privileges tardy control); and
- Positive relationships: staff-students, a caring, nurturing environment

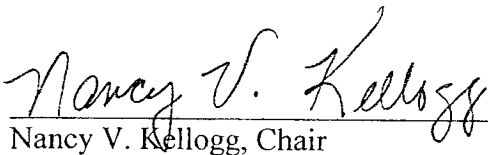
Additional Recommendations

Continue working on the current critical areas of need, with specific focus on the following:

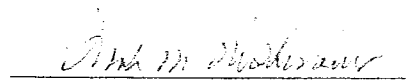
- Use disaggregated data analysis (from standardized, district and department assessments) to drive curriculum and instruction toward improving standardized test scores in all subject areas, particularly for students scoring in the Below Basic and Far Below Basic ranges.
- Ensure that teachers are actively teaching, students are actively engaged, and instructional time is effectively utilized.

- Actively monitor classroom management and provide training, mentoring or other support as appropriate to assist teachers whose classroom management or time management strategies are adversely affecting student achievement.
- Focus on outreach efforts to communicate and involve in school activities parents of students who must be bused to school, parents who are not fluent in English, parents who do not have Internet and e-mail access at home, and parents who do not receive the local papers in which school news and announcements are typically published.
- Construct intervention programs for at-risk students into the school day, so students may retain the opportunity to be involved in sports or clubs, and to accommodate students who are bused to Serra.
- Revise the schoolwide Action Plan to reflect current school needs and goals.

April 20, 2007



Nancy V. Kellogg, Chair



Frank M. Nishimura, Member

