

PALO ALTO HIGH SCHOOL



WASC Report 2015

CHAPTER II

Progress Report

CHAPTER II – PROGRESS REPORT

“We have made a great deal of progress toward some of our goals, but tremendous opportunities for growth remain in others.”

- **Kindel Launer**, Paly English Teacher and 2009 WASC Coordinator

This chapter summarizes Palo Alto High School’s progress toward the revised WASC Action Plans we adopted in 2009, including our first three goals and the visiting committee’s recommendations.

Our administration team and the Ed Council jointly oversee the ongoing WASC improvement work. Since the last full WASC visit, the administration team expanded its membership to include the principal, three assistant principals, the dean of students, a teacher-advisor coordinator, the student activities director, the athletic director and the School Climate TOSA (Teacher on Special Assignment). This administration team meets weekly. Ed Council meets twice a month and includes the administration team, nine Instructional Supervisors (department chairs), a Professional Learning TOSA, a Digital Learning TOSA, the AVID site director, WASC Coordinator/Blended Learning TOSA, the lead school psychologist and the teacher librarian.

Research confirms that a key benchmark of effective school leadership is the daily performance of its professional staff. The Palo Alto High School staff brings a wealth of experience, training and talent to its critical task of educating our young people. Paly’s many successful graduates and awards are a testament to their success. Although leadership transitions and uncertain funding climates can challenge any organization, Palo Alto High School has worked steadily to advance its 2009 goals. The 2014-2015 WASC process has renewed our staff’s commitment to authentically reflect on and improve our daily work towards excellence for all students.

SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS PART 1: CHANGES IN THE ORGANIZATION

Palo Alto High School last undertook a WASC self-study in 2008-2009. The school received a six-year accreditation, with a three-year interim visit and follow-up progress report completed successfully in 2012. Palo Alto High School has now completed the full six years of its 2009 plan.

Several changes in leadership have taken place at our school since 2009. The principal who led the development of our 2009 WASC report resigned unexpectedly in January 2010 and took a position outside of our district at the end of the school year, due in part to several controversial disciplinary cases that provoked tension and conflict within the school community. One assistant principal resigned and another was hospitalized with a short-term medical disability. This created tremendous pressure as we sought to finish the school year. Other administrators and teacher leaders stepped in to help where needed.

After a nationwide search for a new principal, the district promoted an assistant principal from Gunn High School in July of 2010. The 2009 WASC school improvement plan was temporarily suspended in order to give teachers time to focus on and adjust to the newly adopted bell schedule. Schoolwide action teams (known as PLCs) were disbanded. Departments continued to address alignment during collaboration time, but annual progress varied greatly.

In June of 2013, our school community found itself searching for another principal. Our longtime assistant principal, Mrs. Kim Diorio, was promoted to the top leadership position. Mrs. Diorio was the assistant principal responsible for guidance, curriculum and instruction at the time of the 2009 WASC report.

Mrs. Diorio has fostered an environment of emotional safety, collaboration, teacher leadership and continual professional learning. The 2014-2015 WASC self-study served as a further catalyst for growth and stability, as staff came together across the school to discuss what is most important for our students now and for the next six years.

The PAUSD has also seen significant turnover in leadership roles for curriculum and instruction since 2009. Several key leaders retired in June of 2011:

- Associate Superintendent
- Director of Special Education
- Director of Research and Evaluation
- Director of Secondary Education

The Director of Secondary Education position has also changed hands three times since 2009. In 2014 we hired a new Chief Technology Officer after our previous CTO, Ann Dunkin, received a White House appointment to the Environmental Protection Agency. Our superintendent, Dr. Kevin Skelly, resigned in June 2014 after seven years of service and was succeeded by Dr. Glenn “Max” McGee.

Board of Education members have remained relatively unchanged since 2009, with one new member elected in 2012 and two more elected in 2014.

PART 2: CURRICULUM CHANGES

Paly changed its school day schedule in 2010-2011. We moved from two block days per week to a four-day block schedule. We also adjusted school hours to begin and end at the same time each day, with an early release for students on Thursdays. The Tutorial period was moved to Tuesday after students and teachers indicated that tutorial assistance would help students more if held earlier in the week. Weekly staff collaboration time is now on Thursdays following our weekly advisory period.

PAUSD has adopted the University of California and California State University “a-g” entrance requirements as district graduation requirements. The graduating classes of 2016 and 2017 are required to meet most of the “a-g” requirements as a transitional step, and the class of 2018 will be the first required to meet all “a-g” requirements for graduation.

Paly teachers continue to align curriculum and instruction to meet the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), with help from both professional learning days and informal collaborations. We eagerly await the first formal administration of the Smarter Balanced Assessment this spring to measure our progress towards meeting the new standards.

During the 2013-2014 school year, all teachers were asked to adjust at least three lessons to prepare for the 2014-2015 implementation of the CCSS. Many departments, including Mathematics and English, have extensively realigned their curriculums to address the new standards. Our science department has also begun adjusting to meet the new Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), partnering with Foothill Community College to develop innovative course offerings and improve articulation to Foothill Community College in STEM fields.

The district’s new full-inclusion program is designed to improve learning outcomes for *all* students. The program pairs Special Education and regular education teachers to support Special Education students in regular classrooms. Teachers chosen for this program attend district training meetings and receive support from the Instructional Supervisor for Special Education and other district personnel.

Summer school courses were offered free of charge to students in 2014, thanks to an initiative by the Board of Education. Students were previously required to pay for summer school unless there was a demonstrated financial need. While both credit recovery and enrichment courses were offered in past summer school sessions, the emphasis has shifted to credit recovery. Only three enrichment courses are now offered for secondary students: Math Bridge (for incoming ninth graders), Living Skills and Economics.

The most popular summer school course is Living Skills, a semester health class required for graduation. Our core Living Skills teachers are discussing a key issue: some students take Living Skills during summer session to create more space in the regular school year to take other advanced courses. This practice has led to

an unintended “laning” of Living Skills sections between the regular school year and summer school. Our Living Skills teachers are also concerned that the many summer school sections don’t allow for the same academic experience as those given during the regular school year. Our principal would like to see Living Skills offered during the school year only, with curriculum changes that would help parents and students embrace the socio-emotional learning and important life skills gained in the class.

The advisory curriculum is revised and improved constantly. The Teacher Advisor (TA) Coordinator solicits feedback from the TAs after each weekly advisory class, and student feedback is also collected in the form of pre- and post-advisory lesson assessments. Year-end surveys are given to parents, students and TAs. This feedback has led to major changes, such as the addition of embedded individual meeting time between student and TA, three new advisory lessons for post-high school planning, team-building activities for advisory groups, and the restructuring of the October College and Career Awareness Day and the March Career Month.

PART 3: PROGRAM ENHANCEMENTS AND INITIATIVES

Communication

Schoology and Infinite Campus are among the new communication tools added at Paly since the 2009 WASC self-study. Students and teachers now communicate more quickly, and parents can see student grades and attendance information as well as receive messages through Infinite Campus. Paly’s webpage was reorganized in 2013, and it continues to serve as an important information hub for both the Paly and wider Palo Alto communities.

Paly also communicates on social media, ASB Facebook and Twitter (@PalyVikings). Some staff, our principal included, use the text messaging app Remind to communicate directly with students. The Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) publishes a weekly e-newsletter called the Paly Link every Sunday morning. Many parents subscribe to the Paly Link, and in January of 2015 Mrs. Diorio began adding a weekly “Principal’s Message.” With the opening of our new Media Arts Center, our daily broadcast journalism production, *In Focus*, is streamed into classrooms during 3rd and 4th periods. The program’s improved format has been championed by our principal, who expects all classrooms to show the broadcast daily. It is the primary communication tool for our students within the school day.

Additional CTE Pathways

Paly’s newly expanded concept of Career Technical Education now includes pathways for the performing and media arts, social justice, sports careers and computer science. District initiatives such as “Out of the Box” have helped the new social justice and sports career pathways get up and running. Both of these innovative, teacher-created programs have won attention from Paly stakeholders and have been mentioned in student and national publications such as Ed Source and an Ed Weekly webinar.

Paly’s extensive performing arts program has reinvented itself as a CTE pathway by coordinating with Foothill Community College, a premier community college for the arts. Paly’s new Visual and Performing Arts complex is expected to open for the 2016-2017 school year.

Our computer science pathway has been aligned with course offerings from Gunn High School’s successful program. Paly has supported “Hour of Code” and offers the “Girls who Code” club to increase exposure and diversity among computer science students. The local software company Palantir now offers additional computer science education to Paly’s underserved students.

Our principal is committed to increasing and improving our science facilities. She hopes to house a Biomedical Science, Engineering and Computer Science pathway in a future “STEM Academy” learning space (to be built where the current 900 building is located), through a concurrent enrollment partnership with Foothill Community College. Local technology entrepreneurs and experts in the field have already expressed interest in offering support and financial help to establish such a program.

With the addition of *The Viking*, the only high school sports publication of its kind in the nation, Paly has one of the most vigorous student media programs in the state. The media program includes a student newspaper, *Campanile*; two student magazines, *Verde* and the newly-created *C-Mag*; the sports magazine *The Viking*; an online 24-7 news service, *Voice*; and a daily news broadcast, *In Focus*. Students enrolled in these award-winning journalism classes earn CTE graduation credit and develop hands-on experience in all aspects of publishing. Students also learn and practice skills critical to success after high school: cooperation and partnership, meeting deadlines, ethical behavior and innovative thinking. Our Media Arts teachers are considering the development of a structured pathway at Paly that will expand opportunities for students to explore media arts as a career choice.

Guidance

The Teacher Advisor (TA) program continues to grow and evolve as our enrollment grows. Students with IEPs are now fully included in the TA program and have both a TA and a case manager who work with them to reach college and career readiness goals. A TA Steering Committee is made up of TAs, the co-coordinators of the program, guidance counselors, and an administrator; it works on curriculum, issues, and ideas brought up by teacher advisors for the benefit of students and the program. Last year, one community member helped us change the way students and teacher advisors are grouped by designing a computer algorithm that paired students with TAs based on survey answers. The transition this year was smooth and the advisory groups are more balanced than in the past.

Thanks to the generosity of our parents, we have added two guidance counselors since 2009. We now have four guidance counselors who loop with a class and one Outreach Counselor who focuses on underserved and first generation college-bound students. The Outreach Counselor is particularly helpful in making connections with our Spanish-speaking parents by hosting parent nights in Spanish to discuss academic requirements and college readiness. In addition, the college advisors started a first generation college-bound group that meets regularly based on students' graduation date. The 2014-2015 school year marks the second year for the Spanish-speaking parents and First Generation student groups.

The Guidance Department recently renewed the commitment to the AVID system by developing a site team with a designated AVID Coordinator. The principal and the coordinator took the site team to last summer's AVID Summer Institute, and plans are underway to take additional site team members and teachers in the summer of 2015.

The Guidance Department is also working with the District Office and our feeder middle schools (specifically Jordan Middle School and JL Stanford Middle School) to identify students who would benefit from a "head start" in high school. We have developed a supportive program called Summer Bridge where rising ninth grade students come to Paly during summer school to receive additional English, math and guidance instruction. Summer Bridge students then move directly into the AVID program.

Testing Center

The Testing Center is a valuable resource for students and staff. It was created in 2010-2011 to provide an alternative testing environment for students with IEPs (Individual Education Programs) or for any other student who wants to take exams in a smaller or separate setting. The Special Education department also provides reading and note-taking services by instructional aides for students who require them based on their IEPs. The Testing Center is open from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm daily.

Improved Learning Spaces

New and updated learning spaces have been added at Paly in the past four months. The 800 building houses the Math and History/Social Studies Department. The Media Arts Center (MAC) brings together all six student publications, video production, graphic design and photography, as well as some freshman and sophomore English classes. These English classes were strategically programmed in this facility to provide all students earlier exposure to some of our most innovative course offerings. We are currently building a 580-seat Performing Arts center that we hope will open in August 2016. Our principal is working on updating the furniture and fixtures in many of our classrooms to create more flexible and ergonomic learning environments to meet the needs of our diverse learners.

Library

Enrollment growth and changing curriculum led the library to enact a number of changes. The library added an additional part-time staff member, which allows the library to extend its hours until 5:00 pm every day and give students more time to use books, textbooks and technology and meet to complete group projects.

The library also partnered with the PTSA and student leadership to offer a “Late Hours” program during finals preparation week and finals week. The library is open until 8:00 pm during those two weeks. Food is served to students at 5:30 pm, a cadre of teachers provide extra help, and there are therapy dogs available to reduce stress. The program is very popular, averaging over 200 students each night.

Online research and reading have grown tremendously in all academic environments since 2009. In response, the library’s collection has expanded to include many more virtual offerings. These include a download library for digital and audio books from *Overdrive*, the largest vendor in the digital download business, and a large academic digital book collection from ProQuest/ebrary. iPads and Kindles are also available for checkout. The library expanded its database collection to include the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, Curriculum Video On Demand and other resources. Many have text-to-speech components that make them accessible to a wide range of students.

The library staff continues to work with teachers to improve students’ reading and research knowledge. The PAUSD library program has purchased an online collaboration and research-sharing web design tool called LibGuides. These simply designed websites give teachers and librarians an efficient way to organize a variety of online resources to teach whole subjects or very specific topics. The PAUSD LibGuide site has thousands of hits each month.

California Common Core Standards stress research and critical thinking for all types of media. Toward that end, the library has created LibGuides like “Paly Citation Information” and “High School Research” aimed at helping students find and evaluate information from different sources.

School Climate

Paly is committed to improving our school climate. Here are some of the initiatives and partnerships we’ve created to build a positive and healthy school climate:

- Not In Our Schools (NIOS) - A weeklong celebration at Paly (based on the national organization of the same name) that works to end bullying while creating safe and inclusive schools.
- Camp Everytown/Camp Unity - A four-day leadership retreat for selected students and teachers that builds self-identity and community.
- Unity Day - A national anti-bullying day with a multitude of activities and discussions.
- Challenge Success - A partnership with the Stanford Graduate School of Education, this program works with high-achieving schools like Paly to foster healthy students and identify and eliminate the causes of student stress.
- School Climate Team - Our first school climate team began in the 2014-2015 school year and is comprised of students, a teacher-leader, two administrators and parents. The School Climate Committee participated in a Stanford Design School “School Culture Hack-a-thon” in winter 2014, then implemented a homework discussion and gathered feedback on student struggles around homework and how to better facilitate student / teacher homework discussions.
- School Climate TOSA - This position was established in January of 2014 and provides a dedicated staff member work to build empathy and a more collaborative culture at Paly for all stakeholders: students, parents, support staff, teachers and administration.
- Student Shadowing - Led by the School Climate TOSA, a group of teachers and administrators shadowed students for a day. This activity built empathy while gathering data about student experiences at Paly.
- Restorative Justice Path - Paly is piloting this new alternative restorative justice path for violations in academic honesty during the 2014-2015 school year. This pilot is led by our School Climate TOSA.

School climate and culture have been significant themes for WASC committee work, the districtwide Safe and Welcoming Schools Committee, the district Attendance Committee, and in the discussions of the Challenge Success cohort. Our principal has repeatedly made it clear that she wants every student and staff member on campus to feel “capable, connected and to know they count.” Paly seeks to relieve student stress by examining its roots causes and making positive changes in the lives of students.

Technology Integration

Paly’s technology department has been working hard since 2009 to keep up with classroom demand and the evolution of educational technology. For many years, a Technology Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) helped our two full-time technology specialists and our academic support specialist update, order and coordinate the hardware and software needs on our campus. The district changed student information systems from SASI to Infinite Campus in 2009. The next year, wifi was made available to all students and guests on our campus, and the district adopted Schoology as our Learning Management System (LMS). In 2011, the district introduced limited access to Google Apps for Education (GAFE) in our schools.

Our Technology TOSA position evolved into the role of Digital Learning Specialist in 2014, with a greater focus on training teachers and helping them with technology in their classrooms. With the opening of our new Media Arts center and an overall influx of devices, we added a full-time technology support specialist to our staff. Technology oversight now resides with our Dean of Students, who has a high level of expertise in this area. The district hired a new Chief Technology Officer in 2014, who continues to support our work.

Our principal is a digital leader who uses Twitter, Google +, YouTube and maintains her own webpage, including a blog that she regularly updates with school happenings and events. Early in 2014 she presented to Ed Council her vision for technology integration on our campus in an effort to become a “Bring Your Own Device” (BYOD) school in the near future. She has worked tirelessly to secure funding for additional devices, including a large Chromebook donation from the Brin/Wojcicki Foundation, and is seeking partnerships with others in the technology industry to promote access for all students at school and at home. She wholeheartedly supports the district’s *Future Ready Vision* and has brought this concept to our school. She completed the *Leading Edge Certification for Administrators*, and has attended CUE and the GAFE Summit with teacher teams. Our principal is an excellent model in this area.

Board of Education Approved Homework Policy

In November 2011, the district invited interested parents, students and staff to participate in a homework committee that would come up with recommendations for a new district homework policy. Committee members came from elementary, middle and high school levels across the district. The committee met six times between November 2011 and May 2012, with members doing additional work and research between meetings. The recommendations were presented to and approved by the Board of Education on June 6, 2012. According to the approved PAUSD Homework Policy:

“Homework should be designed to:

- *Deepen understanding and encourage a love of learning.*
- *Reflect individual student needs, learning styles, social-emotional health, and abilities in order for students to complete their homework.*
- *Provide timely feedback for students regarding their learning.*
- *Include clear instructions and performance expectations so students can complete the work independently.*
- *Be assigned in reasonable amounts that can be completed within a reasonable time frame.*
- *Provide teachers with feedback to inform instruction.”*

The BOE policy and administrative regulations on homework were presented to our community during the 2012-2013 school year. Many teachers had questions about the guidelines and the proposed time limits, which were discussed at Ed Council. The questions were never fully answered and the conversation was abandoned

by our principal at the time. As a result, our school isn't as familiar with the language and intention of the policy and the administrative regulations as we need to be. This concern has been raised as an area of need through our WASC self-study and will be addressed later in this report.

PART 4: NEW POSITIONS

The following new positions have been created since 2009:

- Outreach Counselor - A specialist for first generation and underrepresented minority students, working closely with the College and Career Center, Guidance department, Teacher Advisors, and AVID students.
- Guidance Counselor - One new counselor has been added, so that a guidance counselor is now assigned to each class: freshman, sophomore, junior, senior.
- Mental Health Staff - Paly added one new school psychologist, for a total of two full time school psychologists. Paly also has an Educationally Related Mental Health Services (ERMHS) therapist on site. Adolescent Counseling Services (ACS) has increased the number of interns on our campus from four to five and continues to play an important role at Paly.
- Dean of Students - This administrative position has been reintroduced at Paly as California's education budget has improved. The position is funded 50% administrative and 50% TOSA (with a need to become a fully administrative position).
- School Climate TOSA - New in 2014, this position is meant to foster communication and positive school climate and culture.
- Two Professional Learning TOSAs - These teachers support other teachers and teacher leaders in improving instructional practice and coaching.
- Digital Learning TOSA - This position helps teachers with the integration of hardware, software and other digital technology.
- Blended Learning TOSA - Funded by the District, the Blended Learning TOSA organizes professional development for teachers new to the program, provides on-site support, and most importantly, recruits new teacher-learners for the blended learning program.
- Classified Support - Paly has increased classified staffing for the library, testing center, writing center, campus supervisor, community service and career advisor offices and our custodial staff.

PART 5: PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

With the weekly collaboration time included in our new school schedule in 2009, and with support from administration and our district, professional learning has been identified as a key element in Paly culture. Many Paly teachers and staff now take part in enhanced professional learning opportunities.

Some of the conferences, workshops or trainings attended by Paly teachers in the past two years:

- Learning Forward Conference - 2013, five teachers attended; 2014, eight teachers attended.
- CUE Conferences (fall and spring) - 2014 eight teachers participated.
- Google Summit - 2014, 20 teachers attended; 2015, 15 teachers participated.
- National Math Teachers Association conference - 2014, four teachers participated.
- National Science Teachers Association conference - 2014, two teachers participated.
- Kagan Cooperative Learning Strategies - 2014, four teachers participated.
- Bay Area Writing Project - 2014, eight teachers participated.
- AVID Summer Institute - 2013, six teachers participated; 2014, four teachers participated.
- RFK Center for Justice and Human Rights "Speak Truth to Power" – 2014, 12 teachers participated.
- Ed Surge - 2013 and 2014, two teachers participated.

- Ed Summit Los Altos School District (K-8) - 2014, three teachers participated.
- Ed Camp Silicon Valley 2013 and 2014 - Paly hosted, 10 teachers participated.
- Ed Camp Silicon Valley Lead 2014 - Four teachers participated.
- Leading Edge Certification/Blended Learning – 17 teachers have received certification.
- Merit/Krause Center for Innovation - Seven Paly teachers have participated in this prestigious summer institute at Foothill College.

In 2014, members of the Ed Council, followed by all teachers, were trained in a model of data analysis for continual school improvement, using the framework presented in Laura Lipton and Bruce Wellman’s book, *Got Data? Now What?* While the math department is skilled in using data to adjust their instruction, other departments benefitted from the professional learning and skills practice. As more teachers learn to analyze student data, we intend to expand the process to include students in conversations about their own performance data.

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE SCHOOLWIDE ACTION PLAN OF THE 2009 WASC SELF-STUDY

Goal 1: Horizontal and Vertical Curricular Alignment - Teachers will work together in the best interest of each and every student at Paly.

Schoolwide Progress

Some departments at Paly have made great progress in this area, while other departments have not yet fully aligned their curriculums to meet this goal. This continues to be an ongoing challenge for our school. The highlights below show the positive steps taken since the last WASC self-study in 2009.

Department Progress

Career Technical Education (CTE)

- Worked on common course requirements and rubrics for presentations.
- Restructured courses in computer science to align with course offerings at Gunn High School.
- Media Arts aligned with middle school programs.

English

- Aligned gradebook categories and weighting of grades.
- Established weekly collaboration teams for each grade level.
- Identified team teacher leaders for each grade level.
- Used Dropbox and Google Drive by grade level/course to share curriculum and instructional materials.
- Calibrated essays at least once per year, more frequently for the ninth grade team, including shared grading practices and discussions.
- Developed common diagnostic exams and rubrics; working on developing appropriate poems and short stories to use in grades nine and ten.
- Created common assessments, common rubrics and pacing guides in grade nine. Tenth grade is in progress.
- Developed a writing pacing guide aligned to CCSS for grade nine, which was shared with all departmental teachers.
- Used Common Core categories for gradebook in grade nine.

- Used release time for grade nine teachers to work on alignment with CCSS.
- Created a Writing Center to support students with their English classes and offer writing help across the curriculum.

Guidance

- Created and refined Advisory lesson plans, scope and sequence of curriculum.
- Increased individual time for conferences between advisees and advisors.
- Collecting pre- and post-assessment data before and after lessons to better inform our instruction.
- Created an Advisory program steering committee.
- Developed the PAUSD Guidance Logic model, outlining guidance services for all students within PAUSD.
- Formal job description for teacher advisors created and approved by district Human Resources.
- Implementation of “Evaluation of Guidance Services” student survey at end of senior year.
- Developed and refined schoolwide College Awareness Day in October.
- Four grade-level counselors now loop with students.
- Increased collaboration between counselors.
- Added more student workshops during tutorial, lunch and after school to help with post-secondary planning.
- Began training and professional learning around Response to Intervention at the high school level and best practices for Tier 2 and Tier 3 levels of support.

History/Social Science

- Aligned curriculum and projects within grade level teams.
- Used collaboration time to share instructional strategies.

Living Skills

- Aligned curriculum with Gunn High School and summer instructors.
- Differentiated assignments to better assure student success.

Library

- Developed the online collaboration resource LibGuides to support assignments and research across all teachers of the same subject.
- Collaborated with teachers to find common online resources that are accessible to students 24/7. For example, ABC-CLIO databases can be used for many assignments in the history/social science department.
- Developed a library orientation for all freshman English students.

Math

- Worked on alignment with science. For example: commonalities when teaching dimensional analysis, use of logs in Alg 1 and Geometry, and use of integrals later in the year in AP Physics.
- Aligned courses with CCSS (Alg 1, Alg 2, Geometry and Pre-Calculus).
- Used release time to work on CCSS curriculum mapping.

Physical Education

- Developed and implemented a common syllabus.
- Developed a common weightlifting exam (summative assessment).
- Aligned all courses to meet the common physical fitness standards.

Science

- Aligned course descriptions with math lanes.
- Developed at least two common assessments/labs in all courses per semester.
- Increased alignment in biology and chemistry.
- Created a list of grade level skills.
- Increased articulation with feeder middle schools and met with Gunn High School teachers to discuss alignment.
- Utilized release time to work on NGSS.

Special Education

- Special Education Academic Support classes are all AVID-based, with emphasis on WICOR strategies to support students (writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization and reading).
- Co-teaching classes have resulted in greater inclusion on campus.
- New special programs and support classes are now offered (Therapeutic Elective Class, Therapeutic Support Service, Academic Communication, Futures, Alternative Pathways, Fundamentals of Writing, Language Arts Lab, Cognitive Planning, Careers).
- Improved communication with general education teachers.
- Greater Special Education and general education teacher collaboration.
- Transition meetings for all incoming ninth graders in the spring improved articulation between high school and middle school teachers.

Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA)

- Updated technology practices to include online assessments.
- Aligned skills-based assessments with Gunn High School and feeder middle schools.
- Alignment with middle schools is regular and well articulated (concerts, shows, festivals, field trips).

World Language

- Increased use of technology in instruction by all teachers.
- Increased the use of authentic resources.

Goal 2: College Readiness and Post-Secondary Planning - Paly will prepare each and every student for college and each and every student will graduate from Paly with a robust and individual plan for his or her education after high school

Schoolwide Progress

Paly was able to complete many schoolwide changes to meet this goal successfully. Special recognition must be given to the Guidance Department for their excellent leadership and willingness to make changes to their program to reflect best practices. While Paly has made great strides with this goal, we still see evidence of the achievement/opportunity gap, a continuing issue of concern.

Department Progress

Career Technical Education

- Instructional Supervisor position created in 2014-2015.
- Developed new courses - Sports Nutrition, Interior Design II.

- Developed new pathways - Media Arts, Performing Arts, Sports Career.
- Common rubrics developed for presentations.

English

- American Classics 11 Honors course now receives weighted credit by the University of California system.
- California State University-approved expository reading and writing class called “Reading Between the Lines” offered to all junior and senior students.
- New course offerings include Comedy of Literature and Escape Literature.
- Collaborated with faculty from other departments to create CTE pathways for Sports Career, Media Arts programs and Social Justice.
- Several English teachers have piloted 20% projects in their classrooms.

Guidance

- Updated the advisory calendar to include more individual teacher-student meeting time, pre- and post-assessment for some advisory topics, and the inclusion of more relevant topics.
- Increased number of guidance counselors from 2.6 FTE to 5.0 FTE.
- One brown bag lunch per month by grade level.
- Created an Outreach Counselor position.
- Refined Advisory lesson plans and the scope/sequence of Advisory curriculum.
- Created Teacher Advisor steering committee.
- Added a formal job description for teacher advisors, leading to greater consistency.
- Increased hours for College and Career Center personnel.
- Inclusion model - Special Ed students attend advisory period.
- Restart classes in math.
- Credit recovery opportunities.
- Blended and online learning courses.
- AVID system implementation.
- First generation support.
- Increased parent nights and parent education events for Spanish-speaking families.
- District adopted “a-g” grad requirements and established an alternative graduation plan.
- All classes are now “a-g” (except PE, some CTE and NCP classes).
- Advocated for additional summer school offerings to meet credit recovery needs.
- Credit recovery programs within the school day.
- Essay workshop and writing center.
- Increased parent workshops and education events (such as College Forum night and Students with Special Needs night).
- Going electronic with Common Application and transcript to improve efficiency.
- Going electronic with course registration to improve efficiency.
- Distribution of student schedules one week prior to the start of school so adjustments can be made, if needed, before the school year starts.

History/Social Science

- Developed benchmark assessments (tests, projects).
- Citation styles taught in all courses.
- Research and writing skills taught in all courses.

Living Skills

- Teachers use equity and social justice when exploring social identity. In Living Skills, teachers strive to illustrate the power that each individual has to positively enhance the lives of others in their own sphere of influence.
- Teachers help their students with reading and writing proficiency, with discussion and dialogue competency, and with knowledge of a variety of topics that will help students in a college setting, from healthy emotional and social choices to comprehensive sexual education.

Math

- Increased the number of students in Advanced and Honors lanes.
- More students are graduating with at least one AP math class.
- In the 2013 math EAP results, 63% of our juniors were already college ready in math (the second-highest rate of all Bay Area schools) and another 24% were conditionally ready.

Physical Education

- Developed a lifelong fitness plan for all students.

Science

- More students have completed three or more years of science.
- Developed the Conceptual Physics class (UC 'D' approved).
- Astronomy course was revised so it is now a UC 'D' approved Astrophysics course.
- All science courses now meet UC "a-g" criteria.

Special Education

- Inclusion model - Special Education students attend advisory.
- Reduced the number of SAI classes.
- Developed alternative pathways program.
- Established a testing center for both Special Education and general education students.

Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA)

- Expanded college and career outreach, with local, national and international artists visiting our classrooms. We visit and host college and career colleagues.
- New course offerings, Theater 4 Honors and Advanced Painting and Drawing, can be taken for CTE credit.
- Development of a Performing Arts pathway.

World Language

- Added course offerings in Spanish for Spanish Speakers level 1 and 2.
- District graduation requirement beginning with the class of 2016 aligns with CSU/UC "a-g" entrance requirements.
- Teachers encourage students to continue their language studies.
- Japanese 1 teacher works collaboratively with Special Education department to support students with IEPs in his classroom.

Goal 3: Support for All Students - The goal that each and every student is supported in his or her personal and academic work.

Schoolwide Progress

We've made great efforts to ensure that Paly is a safe and welcoming school. A cornerstone of our work in this area has been to foster and strengthen community partnerships by working with Camp Everytown, Project Safety Net, the Heard Alliance (Stanford Psychiatry), Outlet and the Palo Alto Medical Foundation. Since our last self-study, our community has been rocked by a suicide contagion, which resulted in greater focus on mental health and the social and emotional well-being of our students. With many students reporting feelings of depression and anxiety, our three-tiered guidance system has been put to the test and we have allocated extra resources to meet the growing mental health needs of our students.

The Special Education department has also undergone a major restructuring to better meet student needs. We have abandoned our "study skills" classes, which acted more like study hall, and fine-tuned the curriculum and instruction in our Academic Support classes to better personalize learning, using the AVID WICOR (Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, Organization, Reading) concepts. We have introduced specialized programs to better meet the emotional and cognitive needs of *all* our students, such as our Therapeutic Elective class, Futures Program and Therapeutic Support Services. Most importantly, we increased partnerships with general education teachers by adopting a more inclusive approach called co-teaching. Special Education teachers have been able to share their knowledge on differentiated instruction to make the curriculum more accessible to a greater number of students.

Finally, we recognize a large opportunity gap given the considerable income disparities of our families. For instance, about 7-9% of our students qualify for Free and Reduced Lunch. We have taken a systemic approach to ensuring equity for all students. We developed a "Scholarships" program, run discreetly through the grade-level guidance counselors, to assist students who need help paying for items such as SAT/ACT fee waivers, college applications, yearbooks, PE uniforms, dance and prom tickets and athletic events tickets. Our Outreach Counselor and main office keep additional snacks on hand for any student in need of food. We've opened up our student center before school and throughout the school day as an additional space for students to informally gather, get a snack and relax. This is important for our students who take public transportation from East Palo Alto; they often arrive around 7:00 am, well before the start of school.

The principal's discretionary money from the PTSA budget pays for additional SAT/AP score reports and college apps for First Generation students. Students enrolled in our AVID classes will be getting Chromebooks to use for all four years at Paly. We have identified about 40 other students who do not have their own device (due to financial constraints) and they, too, will be getting Chromebooks this spring. Paly has eliminated the practice of taking private limos or buses to prom. Now, all students take coach buses, and we have worked to make prom more affordable overall. We have included more students in activities sponsored by our Associated Student Body (ASB), such as spirit week, to reflect our broader student population. Our boosters organizations often cover expenses for students who need financial assistance within their respective programs (athletics, performing arts, media arts, TEAM field trips, and robotics). By law, students are no longer required to pay fees for workbooks or lab equipment, a practice we abandoned four years ago.

While Paly is working to provide an equitable experience, it should be noted that many of our families have the good fortune to be able to hire outside professionals to enhance their student's learning experience. For example, some students will drop a course when they begin to struggle and then attend an outside, WASC-accredited independent study school to complete that same course on their own time. Some of these courses can cost as much as \$5,000 per semester for 5 credits, and in most cases students receive an "A" grade. Other students take online independent study courses through a community college or other University of California-approved online providers. These courses cost anywhere from \$150 to \$1,000 each. As the current Board of Education policy is written, most of these students are in the position to put the grades from outside

institutions on our transcript. This creates a large structural inequality for our students who don't have the financial resources to take outside courses. And while Paly provides free peer tutoring through our Academic Resource center, free teacher tutoring through the Math Resource Center, and extra help in the library (especially around finals time), many students in our school can hire professional tutors. Paly has made some progress to ensure equity in our classrooms, but we acknowledge that there is more work to be done.

We have increased the number of courses that are "a-g" approved on campus and taken some measures to open access to rigorous curriculum, particularly within the English department. In many courses, we use innovative technology to make learning more personal and boost student engagement. We've developed ways to improve credit recovery and to advocate for improvement within our summer school program to better meet student needs. Paly has also improved communication with our parents, particularly our Spanish-speaking parents. Finally, we've made an effort to decrease our class sizes during the 2014-2015 school year, particularly in math and English, to better meet the needs of all students.

Department Progress

Career Technical Education

- Increased course offerings so that more students understand the relevance of their education and their future: Sports Nutrition, Interior Design II and a restructure of the Computer Science courses.

English

- Increased regular communication with parents using improved technology.
- Folded World Classics into World Literature with the intent to offer each student a more comprehensive exposure to the curriculum while decreasing tracking/laning.
- New electives developed to meet students' interests and promote engagement: Literature of Comedy and Escape Literature.
- Writing Center created in the library. This center is staffed after school with credentialed teachers and offers tutorial help. There are plans to expand this important student resource.
- Freshman parent workshops on Saturday mornings were added to promote partnership and community between teachers and parents. Two sessions were held with over 175 parents attending!
- Co-taught classes in ninth and tenth grade in 2014-2015.
- Essay calibration with one feeder middle school in spring of 2014.

Guidance

- Updated the advisory calendar to include more individual time meeting times between teacher and advisor, pre- and post-assessment for some advisory topics, more relevant topics.
- Increased number of staff from 2.6 FTE to 5 FTE Guidance counselors, which includes an Outreach counselor position.
- Added weekly brown bag lunches where grade-level counselors offer a drop-in time for any teacher who is concerned about a student's academic or social-emotional well-being.
- As a result of regular review of quarterly 'D' and 'F' data, restart classes in English, Math, History/Social Studies and Science keep students on the "a-g" graduation path.
- Working with Special Education to support the use of online programs like Plato and Compass for credit recovery opportunities within the Independent Study program. Any student who needs this support may access it.
- Guidance formalized our AVID program and plans to expand it in the coming years.
- Our Outreach Counselor and College Advisor offer a unique First Generation Support program for students; these include informational nights for families.
- Parent nights for all grade levels.

- Refined Advisory lesson plans, scope/sequence of Advisory curriculum.
- Created a Teacher-Advisor steering committee to promote more relevant and timely guidance lessons during Advisory.
- Added a formal job description for Teacher-Advisors for greater consistency.
- Increased staffing for College and Career Center personnel.
- Inclusion model developed where all students with an IEP attend advisory with general education students.
- District adopted “a-g” graduation requirements and established an alternative graduation plan.
- Increased summer school offerings to include core academic courses such as English, World History, United States History, Algebra and Geometry.
- College essay writing workshops are now offered during College Awareness Day and at the Writing Center throughout the first semester.
- Increased parent workshops and education events such as College night, Students with Special Needs night.
- Moved to a digital transcript and college application system, which has increased our efficiency.

History and Social Studies

- Opened enrollment to any student in the following courses: Advanced Placement US History, AP Psychology, and AP Economics.

Living Skills

- Coordinate Camp Everytown, which is important for creating a framework with students for how we create a safe and welcoming school.

Math

- Utilizing Schoology and/or LibGuides to post class notes.
- Created restart classes in Algebra 1 and Geometry.
- Offered Advanced Problem Solving course, and enrollment is growing.
- Opened up co-taught sections of Algebra 1.1, Algebra 1.2, and Geometry.
- Offered Multivariable Calculus class on campus for post-BC Calculus students.
- Offered free after school tutoring for regular lane students available in the Math Resource Center.

Media Arts

- Fostering cross-collaboration between student journalists, student photographers and student videographers with the opening of the new Media Arts Center.

Physical Education

- Created shared curriculum and assessments, and introduced new sports for ninth and tenth grade PE.
- Differentiated eleventh and twelfth grade PE courses.
- Streamlined and clarified the Independent Study Contract.

Science

- Introduced Conceptual Physics, a CSU/UC (d) physical science, to ensure that all Paly students graduate with the required two years of laboratory science.
- Reinvigorated the Senior Science Project course, enabling individual students to drive their science education according to their unique interests and choices.

Special Education

- Added a therapeutic elective class that supports students who have emotional disabilities.
- Added a therapeutic support services classroom that enables students to attend high school and take core classes in a supportive, therapeutic environment.
- Added Academic Communications, a course for students on the autism spectrum, focusing on pragmatic language and social skills.
- Added the Futures Program: functional skills and vocational training for students with moderate to severe disabilities.
- Transition meetings for all rising ninth grade students with IEPs before entering high school.

Visual and Performing Arts

- Built an inclusionary practice; all students are welcomed in all VAPA programs.
- New courses added to our offerings include Theatre 4 and Advanced Painting and Drawing - both also meet a student's CTE graduation requirement.
- Given the nature of the arts, many VAPA students are with their art teachers for all four years, developing a positive support system.

World Languages

- Expanded Spanish for Spanish Speakers to level one and level two.
- Japanese 1 is structured as a blended learning class.
- Increased the use of Kagan cooperative learning strategies in an effort to reach each learner.

2012 MIDTERM VISITING COMMITTEE IDENTIFIED AREAS OF GROWTH

The following recommendations were given to Paly by the midterm visiting committee in 2012.

- All Paly courses should be open to all students, and more students should complete the “a-g” requirements. There is a significant gap between Asian and white students on the one hand and African-American and Latino on the other.
- The English department needs to continue its discussion on alignment and to use professional development time to seek ways to differentiate instruction, with the goal of “de-laning” its classes in ninth and tenth grades.
- The achievement gap continues to be a troubling concern; although Paly staff has created some external strategies to address this problem – tutorial, for example - “laning” and the lack of differentiated instruction are still issues that exists within the classroom.
- Resources should be devoted to lowering class size, especially at the ninth and tenth grades.
- Teachers should develop a variety of instructional strategies within each block period to keep students engaged.
- District administration needs to evaluate technology to find an efficient way of communicating with all stakeholders; staff has shown an interest in using SchoolLoop.

Ongoing Follow-up Process

Each year, the Instructional Supervisors conduct evaluations of the departments' progress on each of the school goals and reporting on that progress to the Site Council. The principal compiles these evaluations into an annual report submitted to the PAUSD School Board. This annual comprehensive evaluation forms the foundation of the Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA) for the following year. For each school goal, three to five tasks are identified. All stakeholders, including the Administration Team, Ed Council, the PTSA Executive Board, and the School Site Council discuss and approve the SPSA before final Board of Education approval and adoption.

To help create greater alignment and consistency among our schools, the state-approved template for the Single Plan for Student Achievement was used by all PAUSD schools for the 2013-2014 school year. This change was led by the district's Director of Research and Evaluation, who helped school leaders develop measurable growth targets and use data to evaluate effectiveness. This shift lends itself nicely to our current WASC self-study and helps us monitor our growth and progress on WASC school goals and action plans.

In January of 2014, the English department presented to the Board of Education a pilot for opening access to English 9A (advanced) for all incoming ninth grade students. This proposal was a direct follow-up to the 2012 Visiting Committee recommendation. There was some concern in the community that the English pilot was not communicated well to all stakeholders, as parents felt the department was not prepared to meet the needs of all learners. As such, the school was asked by our former Superintendent to postpone the pilot and to do additional research and collect more data about opening access to our English courses. As a result, we continued with our previous practice, allowing incoming freshmen the choice to self-select for either English 9 or English 9A. While disappointed with this outcome and the perceived lack of support, the ninth grade English team continued their work of aligning the ninth grade English curriculum to the new standards by developing a common syllabi, common summative assessments, common rubrics and a course pacing guide. To help parents better understand the ninth grade writing program, two Saturday workshops were conducted in October and November of 2014, with over 175 parents participating. The feedback from these workshops is very encouraging and the ninth grade teaching team set an example for the positive impact that successful collaboration can have on student learning outcomes.

In the Spring of 2014, the district increased the staffing allocation at both high schools, which allowed us to open up additional sections and lower class sizes. Class sizes have been reduced in courses where students typically benefit from the most support. Courses such as Algebra, Geometry, Algebra 2, Pre-Calculus, Spanish for Spanish Speakers, Conceptual Physics, ninth and tenth grade English, ninth grade World History, AVID and FOS are now below the staffing ratio of 28.5 to 1. We are happy to report on this progress, which was an area of growth identified by the WASC midterm visiting committee.

Critical Areas for Follow-up not Currently in the Action Plan

Paly has undergone many changes since 2009. There have also been tremendous shifts within our profession, such as California's adoption of the Common Core standards. All these changes have created many new issues that were not addressed in our 2009 WASC self-study. Here is a short list of some of those critical areas for follow-up.

- Common Core State Standards implementation (in 2009, this was not on the horizon).
- D and F conversations driven by our district office and tied to the updated graduation requirements. Discussion of D and F student grades prompted further conversations about the use of zeros when grading and how to use Infinite Campus gradebook to post student progress more regularly.
- Adoption of our new learning management system (Schoology) and student information system (Infinite Campus).
- Facilities Master Plan - Infrastructure to support our new buildings (MAC and the 800 building), our planned Science addition due to enrollment growth, our new performing arts center, redesign of our library space, and the new athletic complex. The athletic complex has been made possible by a generous donation from a community member.
- Challenges to ongoing student data gathering and support due to changing technology and lack of infrastructure for internal data access.
- Massive expansion of technology infrastructure and integration in the classroom (student wireless network, Chromebooks, smartphone usage, etc.).
- Increased focus on the social and emotional health of students as a result of suicide contagion in our community.
- Challenges with our tutorial period and refinements to the structure of the school day.

Final Thoughts on Our Progress

The last six years at Paly have been years of growth despite some difficult circumstances. We experienced turbulent times when staff and faculty lost focus or felt adrift and isolated. Students struggled with the top-down behavior management approach of one former principal. Another principal's tenure was less restrictive but led to blurred boundaries for both students and staff.

In the past two years, Paly has created a healthier learning and work environment. A reinvigorated staff has come to understand anew that all students can learn and all teachers can improve to meet the challenges of a changing industry. Paly now fosters collective responsibility so that we all may work in the best interests of our students while promoting learning for teachers and giving financial support to our most important initiatives. This WASC cycle has helped us look at our program in meaningful ways and build new relationships between people in the Paly community.

Our teachers and staff remain optimistic about the important work we do with our students. We know we have areas of improvement that must be addressed, but we feel an exciting energy and willingness to explore change on our campus. Public education can be a misunderstood profession with an abundance of challenges, but it also offers joys and satisfactions rare in other fields. We believe that we have the staff, teachers, administrators, students, parents and community to make Paly a lighthouse high school.