

PALO ALTO HIGH SCHOOL



WASC Self-Study 2014-2015

Palo Alto Senior High School

Self-Study Report
March 1-4, 2015



Source: Paly Alumni

50 Embarcadero Road
Palo Alto, California 94301
Palo Alto Unified School District

WASC/CDE Focus on Learning Accreditation Manual, 2014 Edition



Palo Alto Senior High School

Palo Alto Unified School District

Focus on Learning
WASC Self-Study 2014-2015

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and the

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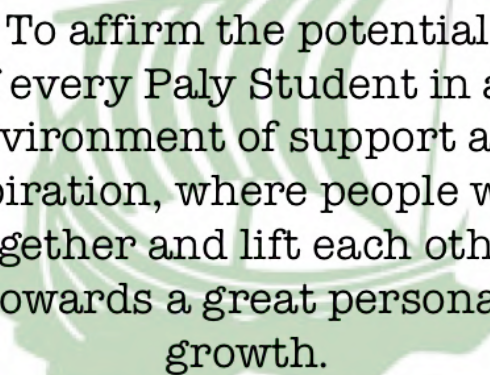
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PALY CORE PURPOSE



To affirm the potential
of every Paly Student in an
environment of support and
inspiration, where people work
together and lift each other
towards a great personal
growth.

PALY CORE VALUES

- **Promoting personal integrity and respect**
- **Providing a nurturing environment characterized by teamwork and collaboration**
- **Caring for and believing in every individual**
- **Encouraging creativity and independent thinking**
- **Understanding growth and learning are an essential part of life**
- **Acknowledging great effort and great fun in work and play**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND RECOGNITIONS

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At Paly:

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All Paly teachers, who inspire, care, and teach with heart everyday.

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And finally, to **all Paly students**, *this important work is for you.*

With sincere thanks and deep appreciation to all,
Emily Garrison
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**Palo Alto Senior High School
Focus on Learning
WASC Self-Study 2014-2015**

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PREFACE

What is the true state of Palo Alto High School? And where should we go next?

That was what we hoped to learn when we began our self-study in August 2013. The process began with teachers and staff meeting for a full professional development day to learn about the WASC process and the required outcomes for the self-study, led by our WASC coordinator, Spanish teacher Emily Garrison. Paly faculty and staff participated in regular one-hour WASC meetings throughout the 2013-2014 school year, generally every other week during the staff collaboration time on Thursday afternoons. At first, staff members met in Home Groups; later, they met in Focus Groups with parents and students.

The student and parent Home Groups were formed in October 2013 and began to meet soon after. Both groups met once a month in November, January, February, March and April. Student meetings were held at lunchtime, with lunch provided by Paly. Parent meeting times rotated between evenings and early mornings to fit parents' schedules. Parents, students and district personnel were also invited to attend Focus Group meetings on Thursday afternoons, and many did.

September 2014 was a busy month, with WASC Focus Group meetings every Thursday afternoon during staff collaboration time. On October 3rd, the WASC Leadership team met for a full-day retreat to identify Paly's critical areas of need and our WASC goals for the next six years. Once our three WASC goals were presented to teachers and staff, individual departments spent the rest of October and November building action plans aligned to them. Our schoolwide action plan was developed during this time, with final edits being made in December and January. We worked to align much of our schoolwide action plan with that of our sister school, Gunn High School, so you'll notice similarities in both reports.

January and February 2015 were used to prepare for the WASC visiting committee. Faculty and staff finalized evidence portfolios, while students and parents met to learn what to expect during the WASC visitation.

During this self-study cycle, Paly staff and other stakeholders reviewed and clarified many key measurements used at Paly and in our school district. Palo Alto Unified School District has a set of districtwide Schoolwide Learner Outcomes (SLOs) used at all its school sites, with a related set of rubrics that measure adherence to those SLOs. (Both SLOs and rubrics can be found on the district website, *pausd.org*, as well as in the Paly Staff WASC folder on our learning management system, Schoology.) Teachers collected student work samples for the self-study and were asked to analyze the work samples against the SLOs. This gave teachers an opportunity to review the district SLOs through a focused activity.

The self-study cycle offered Paly an organized way to review and analyze student data. We implemented a 'cycle of inquiry' data analysis process based on the book *Got Data? Now What?* by Laura Lipton and Bruce Wellman. Key leaders at Paly began studying and practicing the Lipton and Wellman model at a full-day retreat in January 2014. This retreat included all administrators, Instructional Supervisors (IS) and a small number of other teachers.

Instructional Supervisors then trained their individual departments in the process. Paly also received support from the district Director of Research and Evaluation. Finally, we began using this process in all WASC meetings where data were analyzed. Teachers identified some weaknesses with the process, which led to agreement among many staff members that routine data analysis should be better defined and more common at Paly in the future.

Faculty, staff, students and parents all participated actively in the WASC self-study process. We attempted to include all school programs and all significant factors in our study while always focusing on student learning. As our principal frequently reminds us, "Every moment with students is precious." Our community goal has been to create a living document that will be a roadmap for Paly's next six years.

Palo Alto High School is fortunate to be blessed with great talent, resources and motivation. This self-study cycle has confirmed to us that Paly is already an excellent school, but by following this new action plan we intend to become an exceptional public high school. We see the next six years as an opportunity for tremendous growth for our community of learners.

Detailed Outline of WASC Meetings and Major Events

August 2013

- Principal Kim Diorio begins her first school year as principal of Palo Alto High School.
- Emily Garrison, Spanish teacher and Blended Learning TOSA, begins working as the school's WASC Coordinator, with 40% classroom release time.
- Staff meeting - Full-day meeting (PAUSD professional development day) with an overview of WASC process and expected outcomes.

September 2013

- Staff meeting - Develop Norms to be used throughout WASC process.
- Home Group meeting - Review of past WASC work: 2009 Action Plan and 2012 Midterm Report.
- Classified Home Group meeting - Overview of WASC process, invitation to attend all WASC meetings and participate in Focus Group meetings (held after the work day for most classified employees).
- Individual meetings between WASC Coordinator and two school board members to discuss WASC process and progress.

October 2013

- Home Group meeting - Discussion of progress made during the last WASC cycle.
- Parent Home Group meeting - Overview of the WASC process and Norms.
- WASC Coordinator presents to Site Council - Overview of the WASC process.
- One-on-one meetings between WASC Coordinator and school board members to discuss WASC process and progress.
- Principal, one assistant principal and WASC Coordinator attend full-day WASC training (#1).

November 2013

- Student Home Group meeting - Overview of WASC process and Norms.
- Home Groups spend more time identifying progress made during the last WASC cycle.

December 2013

- Meeting with all stakeholder groups - Department share-outs of progress made during last WASC cycle.

January 2014

- Staff meeting - "Brown bag" style; teachers share concerns about specific students (data gathering).
- Parent Home Group meeting - Parent participants are introduced to the purpose of Focus Groups. Members for Leadership team identified. Discussion of a group glossary for the educational terminology used during the WASC process.
- Student Home Group meeting - Student participants learn about Focus Groups. Members for Leadership team identified. Discussion of a group glossary for the educational terminology used during the WASC process.
- WASC retreat #1 - Full-day meeting on campus with key staff leaders; discussion of WASC data analysis process.

- Home Group meeting – Introduction to and training in the WASC data process.
- Presentation and progress report to the Board of Education by WASC Coordinator and principal.

February 2014

- Focus Group leader meeting - Preparation for next Focus Group meeting.
- Staff meeting – Full-day meeting exploring the creation of new Vision and Mission statements for Paly. These meetings also provided valuable perception data for our WASC self-study.
- Parent Home Group meeting - Focus Groups chosen based on personal interest. Discussion about Paly to gain perception data (group interview).
- Student Home Group meeting - Focus Groups chosen based on personal interest. Discussion about Paly to gain perception data (group interview).
- Home Group meeting - Further synthesis of Vision and Mission work.

March 2014

- Focus Group leader meetings (2) - Preparation for next Focus Group meetings.
- Focus Group meeting - Exploration of WASC criteria and indicators/prompts.
- Focus Group meeting - Further work with WASC criteria.
- Parent Home Group meeting - Activities and input for the new Vision and Mission.
- Paly WASC Common Core team (14 teachers) meet with district CCSS expert to discuss major elements of CCSS during a half-day retreat. This team was asked to focus on Common Core elements during all WASC meetings and work.
- Principal, one assistant principal and WASC Coordinator attend another full-day WASC training (#2).

April 2014

- Focus Group leader meeting - Preparation for next Focus Group meeting.
- Focus Group meeting - Data analysis.
- Parent Home Group Meeting - Discussion of Focus Group work, WASC summer reading LibGuide website (<http://libguides.pausd.org/content.php?pid=590579&sid=4868982>).

May 2014

- Focus Group meeting - Data analysis.
- WASC retreat #2 - Full-day meeting with WASC leadership team. Analysis and discussion of all data from Vision/Mission work. Consensus was not yet reached on the new Vision and Mission statements. This important work will be finalized in the future.

Summer 2014

- Focus Group leaders collect and analyze data, discuss major issues, and start writing reports.

September 2014

- Focus Group leader meeting - Preparation for next Focus Group meeting.
- Focus Group meeting - Review of draft writing, chapter 4 and further discussion of WASC criteria.
- Focus Group meeting - Analysis of perception data.
- Focus Group meeting - Student work analysis and further data analysis.
- Focus Group meeting - Areas of strength and growth for the Focus Group and the school as a whole.
- Full-day WASC data retreat. Final analysis, revision and major trends identified by the WASC data team, a small group of teachers and parents.

October 2014

- WASC retreat #3 - Full-day meeting with WASC leadership team. Exploration of Focus Group findings, data analysis, and agreement on Paly's critical areas of need and WASC goals.
- Staff meeting - Full-day meeting (PAUSD professional development day) with presentation of WASC goals identified by the leadership team, readings related to those goals, discussion of "Thought Provoking Questions" and further brainstorm of WASC goals, Home Group meeting to begin work on Action Plan.
- Parent Home Group meeting - Presentation of WASC goals.
- Student Home Group meeting - Presentation of WASC goals.
- WASC Coordinator presents WASC goals to Site Council.

November 2014

- Home Group meetings - Development of Department Action Plans.
- WASC report editing.

December 2014

- Home Group meetings - Development of Department Action Plans.
- Development of Schoolwide Action Plan.
- WASC report editing.

January 2015

- WASC report is finalized.
- Presentation of Schoolwide Action Plan.
- Staff meeting - Teachers begin compiling evidence binders.
- Staff meeting - Time to read finalized report.
- Parent Home Group meeting - Presentation of WASC report.
- Student Home Group meeting - Presentation of WASC report.

February 2015

- Staff meeting - Time to read finalized report.
- Staff meeting - Final preparations for WASC visit.
- Parent Home Group meeting - Final preparations for WASC visit.
- Student Home Group meeting - Final preparations for WASC visit.

March 2015

- WASC visit – Sunday, March 1 through Wednesday, March 4.