

**MID-CYCLE VISIT
VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT**

**ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS
WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES**

FOR

MENDOCINO HIGH SCHOOLS

MHS, MCHS, MSHS, MAS

**10700 Ford Street
Mendocino, CA 95460**

Mendocino Unified School District

Full Self-Study Visit: March 7-9, 2016

Mid-cycle Visit: March 18, 2019

Visiting Committee Members

Amy Zigler, Chairperson
Assistant Principal, Windsor High School

Becky Toback
Teacher, Upper Lake High School

I. Introduction

Include the following:

- **General comments about the school, its setting, and the school's analysis of student achievement data.**
- **Include a description of any significant changes and/or developments, i.e., program additions since the last full visit, changes in student enrollment, staffing changes.**
- **Describe the impact these changes and/or developments have had on the school and/or specific curricular programs.**
- **Briefly comment on the school's follow-up process. Include a description of the committee that has been responsible for overseeing the progress of the school's action plan and the preparation for the visit.**
- **Describe the process used to prepare the progress report.**

School Profile, Setting, and Student Achievement Data

The Mendocino Unified School District encompasses five small coastal communities, one of which is the village of Mendocino where Mendocino High Schools are located. Mendocino High is approximately 125 years old and today serves about 180 students from this district and surrounding areas. The area's population is aging and declining enrollment is occurring throughout the district.

Mendocino High Schools are comprised of four high schools (MHS, MCHS, MSHS, MAS) providing students with diverse secondary options. The schools are in close proximity allowing students to take courses from a number of sites. The school culture is one of safety, respectfulness, responsibility and excellence.

The Mendocino High School (MHS) is the traditional, comprehensive high school offering an A-G college prep program including math, science, world languages, visual and performing arts, and career tech education. All periods meet on Mondays followed with block scheduling on T/Th and W/F. Wednesdays and Fridays include a tutorial period used for academic intervention and advising, as well as for college-career readiness curriculum of *Get Focused, Stay Focused*. Mendocino College typically offers one class per semester on the MHS campus or nearby in Fort Bragg. Academic and service clubs are available to students. All students receive comprehensive academic advising from an Advisor-Teacher through the tutorial period. All seniors meet individually with their Academic Counselor to ensure graduation and post-secondary plans are on track.

The Mendocino Community High School (MCHS) works closely with MHS, following the same bell schedule, and students at both MHS and MCHS have access to all classes in both programs. Experiential education, including a senior project requirement, encourages students to challenge themselves academically and personally. The Senior Project involves 150 hours (10 units) to explore and develop a personal interest, work with a mentor, and share their project in a public event in May. Morning Meeting is an integral part of MCHS where students and staff make deep connections, plan school events, hear guest speakers, and participate in activities. Students frequently use directed or independent studies to earn credit for learning outside of school. Retreats in Fall and Spring focus on building relationships and reflect upon the year's accomplishments, respectively.

Mendocino Sunrise High School (MSHS) is a continuation school with maximum of 15 students and two teachers who share a 1.0 FTE. One of the goals is for students to re-engage in their

education through individualized learning plans and collaborative learning activities. Students at MSHS can earn partial-semester credits, prepare for the California High School Proficiency Exam, and many use this opportunity to get a fresh start at high school. Students may attend MHS/MCHS courses at the end of their MSHS school day, provided the student is in good standing. MSHS credits can be used to complete graduation requirements for any of the Mendocino High Schools. Most subjects offer programmed, self-directed materials for students to work at a personalized rate towards completion. Small class size allows increased personal attention and individualized instruction.

Mendocino Alternative School (MAS) is an independent study program designed for the student who is a self-starter and intrinsically motivated. MAS students check in with their teacher once a week to turn in work and receive new assignments. The coursework is designed to be meaningful and interesting while preparing students to meet district requirements for grade-level advancement and graduation. Students are prepared for community college, technical school, or full-time work. The MAS program does not provide A-G requirements as it lacks lab sciences and world languages. Students in MAS who want to complete their A-G courses are encouraged to take courses at MHS/MCHS, community college, or accredited online programs to complete requirements for four year college admission.

Based at Mendocino High, the special education program serves students in all four of the available programs. Workability and a Transition Partnership Program allow students to prepare for post-secondary options in life and work. Resource teachers and para-professional aides assist students directly in classes whenever possible with a push-in model.

Achievement data reviewed includes multi-year CAASPP English and Math, AP pass rates, school climate surveys, behavior intervention, suspension and discipline rates, and attendance patterns. Academic achievement data indicates most performance data is above the state average. CAASPP ELA Writing dropped below the state in 2018. Writing is an area of focus for the district's strategic plan. A revision of tardy corrective practices and the addition of a Behavior Interventionist position have influenced areas of student support that positively affect the school culture. Staff report the behavior interventions as beneficial to implementing more consistent discipline practices and addressing individual needs quickly to get students back into classrooms. Attendance data show Hispanic students and low socio-economic students are chronically absent at higher rates. The district hired a social worker to assist in addressing the needs of these and other students and initiated an on-site food bank available to students to support their families.

MHS seniors self-indicate that 60% will attend a 2-year or 4-year college, a rate that has declined in the last three years from 83%. National Student Clearinghouse data provides information on college enrollment as Freshman and Sophomores. The last year of data available shows Class of 2016 had 70% of graduates enrolled in college the following fall. Of those, 86% returned for a college sophomore year.

Significant Changes/Developments and Their Impacts

The current Principal took over at the helm of Mendocino High Schools in 2016-17, following many years on staff as a teacher and as the Self Study Coordinator in 2016. He is one of several teachers who are alumni of MHS and return to this community. Under this Principal's leadership, there is a data-driven approach to addressing school needs including CTE programs, college and

career readiness, standards-based grading, chronic absenteeism and multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS). Several new staff have been hired in the last three years (Resource, Art, English, Science) and the district added a Social Worker who serves K-12 full time.

In the last three years, CTE tracking of concentrators and completers has taken place. In 2016-17 28% of seniors completed a pathway, in 2017-18 30% of seniors were completers, and in 2018-19 there are 22% of seniors on track for pathway completion. CTE completer earn a cord at graduation. The benefits of a CTE Incentive Grant over the last three years from the California Department of Education allowed the school to increase FTE for CTE instructors and improve equipment in several CTE pathway programs. A one-time college readiness grant assisted the school with AP teacher training, AP exam costs, and 1:1 Chromebook initiative. Other grants helped in addressing absenteeism and counseling. There are district budget concerns in the future due to loss of revenue from District of Choice costs and increasing special education costs and health benefits costs. A bond measure is planned for 2020 which, if successfully passed, will help with the needs of the school and facilities.

Follow up Process and Report Preparation

The Focus on Learning Goals from the MHS Self-Study have been implemented through the Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA), overseen and monitored by the MHS leadership team and the Site Council. The SPSA is reviewed annually, providing oversight and accountability. The majority of MHS staff have been engaged in the implementation of the Action Plan from 2016. Each year new staff are apprised of the SPSA through staff orientations and professional development. Multiple staff meetings in the Fall 2018 have been dedicated to reviewing actions plans, viewing and discussing supporting evidence and identifying potential areas for ongoing improvement.

Implementation continues to be tracked through data collection and review of school climate, discipline and suspension, absenteeism, math readiness on placement and 30-day assessments, student performance on CAASPP English and Math, College and Career Readiness Index, ACT/SAT/AP results, and UC/CSU preparation and college attendance. Both the Leadership Team and the MTSS team use data to provide oversight and evaluate effectiveness of intervention.

The school culture is centered on collaboration, evidence, reflection and accountability. All stakeholders are informed through distribution of school information, including the Principal's weekly staff bulletin "Hilltop Voice" and the stakeholder's weekly email "Cardinal Current." Parents are invited to monthly teas hosted by the principal which occur in both AM and PM; staff feel they can discuss with site leadership when there are issues; students voice they can approach staff who are responsive to considering their ideas.

The Mid-cycle Visiting Committee Report was written by the school's Counselor with support from the Principal. Staff were involved in reviewing data on goals and providing analysis that was incorporated into the report. The Superintendent, Staff, and other Stakeholders were aware of the Visiting Committee one-day visit. During the visit, meetings were held with parents who represented multiple grades of students as well as the Cardinal Club boosters, and MUSE education foundation. The VC also met with the student leadership officers representing all grades during lunch break of the mid-cycle one-day visit.

The Single Plan for Student Achievement addresses the goals set forth by the 2016 Self Study and original Visiting Committee; these goals are carried through each year of the SPSA to the current year. As tasks/actions are accomplished, they are noted and color coded as “implemented”, “in process”, or “not started”. Each year, actions are adapted to the current needs and conditions at the school based on available data.

II. Progress on Critical Areas for Follow-up/Schoolwide Action Plan

- Provide an analytical summary about the accomplishment of each schoolwide action plan section referencing the critical areas for follow-up addressed through each section.
- Note the evidence supporting the progress made and the impact made on student achievement.
- If any critical areas for follow-up were not included in the school’s action plan, indicate what actions have been taken to address these issue(s) and include supporting evidence.

Note: The school’s schoolwide action plan should have incorporated all the critical areas of follow-up or major recommendations that were stated in the last self-study visiting committee report.

Summary of Accomplishment of Each Action Plan Section

Action Plan 1: Positive Behavior and School Culture
Goal: In order to foster appropriate behavior, increase personal responsibility, and create positive culture, the Mendocino High Schools will utilize Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) and will also work to make the campus more inviting for all members of the school community.

- PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports)

In 2016, MHS began development of a PBIS system that brought uniformity to the process of school discipline including the creation of a predictable, measured, and consistent protocol of response to behavior issues resulting in methods for de-escalating conflict and quicker resolution to student behavior issues. Calibration activities assisted the staff to align themselves with the expectations and responses needed for consistent implementation of such a program. A “matrix of expectations” was developed by a team of administrators, teachers, and students. Each staff member is provided a MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Support) handbook and the students and parents also receive a handbook that contains the matrix of expectations.

Staff members feel that the development and implementation of the new PBIS system greatly improved how discipline issues are handled with greater consistency and results. The creation of a new Behavior Interventionist position has helped to deal with minor infractions, facilitating student examination of expectations and resolution. Staff members use a digital BIF (behavior intervention form) to submit via Aeries that allows the school to quickly respond to issues while providing behavior data for analysis.

- Healthier Lifestyles

MHS uses data gleaned from the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) to set goals of addressing the rise of illegal substance use among their students. In meeting with this Mid-cycle Visiting Committee, students echoed these observations of school staff members, stating that there is a significant nicotine vaping problem that is on the rise amongst teens. MHS has taken steps to address this problem including education of the effects of such practices, increased staff

presence in places on campus where this practice occurs, and counseling for teens with substance abuse issues.

The CHKS also shows a significant rise in feelings of anxiety and depression among students. The Mendocino Unified School District has taken action by hiring a district-wide social worker to help children and families access the resources they need to help alleviate such issues. In 2016 MHS contracted with the Mendocino Coast Youth Project to provide individual and group counseling to students. Additionally, the staff has taken part in various professional development opportunities centering on physical, social, and emotional issues facing students.

- Programs and Clubs:

The expansion of the culinary program at MHS has been a positive move to help children learn about safe food handling, nutrition, and career opportunities in food service and hospitality which is a growing industry sector in the area. Students reach out to the community through community service and campus organizations such as the Interact Club which serve the community through volunteerism. The new formation of clubs, such as the Spectrum Club, give students a voice and a sense of belonging. Students spoke very enthusiastically, stating that they had a strong voice on campus.

- Improve Physical Setting:

The MHS facility (with the exception of the Mendocino Community High School building) is an old facility, with several buildings approaching 70 years old. The district is seeking to have the community pass a bond measure in 2020 to renovate and revitalize the campus. The school has taken steps to modernize and refresh facilities with the addition of new furniture and beautification efforts through various organizations on campus.

- Increase of Collaboration and Communication:

The administration has sought to make an effort to recognize the hard work of staff members and to improve collaboration and communication between all parties. This is evidenced through staff retreats, tokens of appreciation, and the formation of a wellness committee.

The addition of the IRIS student referral program allows staff members to communicate electronically to each other, making sure students are sent during their Advisory period to the appropriate staff member who can help them resolve academic deficiencies, such as missing homework or tests.

Action Plan 2: Academic Expectations and Support

Goal: The Mendocino High Schools will continue to improve the ASPIRE intervention system by developing methods of identification, analysis, implementation, and progress monitoring, as well as by reorganizing existing structures to allow all students timely access to interventions.

- Create Benchmark and Formative Assessments

The administration has lead the way to get all teachers aligning classroom and grading policies. It is the expectation that all teachers keep their gradebooks current, which was a concern voice by parents. A new grading policy with weighted grading categories of formative (20%) and summative (80%) assessments were adopted beginning the 2018-19 school year. The school has technology available to all students with a 1:1 ratio of Chromebooks to students. These students

are allowed to take the Chromebooks home and use them.

- Restructure of Intervention Programs

Within 30 days, all incoming students, whether transfers or eighth graders transitioning from the local middle school, take a math placement exam to determine the most suitable placement and to track growth. When a student begins to struggle in any subject, the IRIS student referral system is implemented.

The new *Get Focused Stay Focused* college-readiness curriculum first introduced in 2017-18 has helped students explore the various career and college options available to them after high school. The current sophomore class has begun the second year of the GFSF curriculum. In meeting with students, the older students felt less prepared with college-going information while the students who have experienced the GFSF curriculum felt this was not a concern.

A concerted effort has been made by the RSP special education teachers to “push-in” to general education classes to create the least restrictive environments for their students. Some RS students still have Support periods in their schedule which is small group support with their case manager.

Action Plan 3: Relevance and Rigor of Programs

Goal: The Mendocino High School will maintain and expand relevant and engaging programs that meet student needs and meet college and career readiness.

- Relevant Life Skills Classes and Instruction

MHS has added curriculum such as *Get Focused Stay Focused* noted above, the addition of a CTE programs in culinary and media arts, and CPR training in health classes. Dual enrollment opportunities are present for students to receive both high school and college credit through the culinary, horticulture, *Get Focused Stay Focused* courses as well as concurrent enrollment with Mendocino College either on campus or at the Fort Bragg campus which is about 10 minutes away. College classes are not consistently offered on site, making dual enrollment difficult to students without transportation or with schedules not compatible to arrive in Fort Bragg in time for classes.

The Career Technical Education (CTE) program went through a self-evaluation process in 2016-17 that led to the appointment of a CTE coordinator and the reorganizing and consolidation of the CTE pathways. The school offers six pathways.

The *Get Focused Stay Focused* (GFSF) curriculum was introduced to freshmen in the 2017-18 school year and assists students to develop a 10-year plan for their lives that includes college and career exploration and planning. In 2018-19, sophomore level modules were added. The school intends to offer the GFSF curriculum for grades 9-12. The freshman GFSF course offers dual enrollment at Mendocino Community College and serves as their CTE pathways introduction course.

The community profile in the school’s Mid-Cycle Report mentions the industry shift from timber and fishing to more tourism and hospitality. The addition of the culinary program and its articulation with Mendocino Community College in 2017 is evidence of its goal to offer relevant and engaging classes.

Mendocino High School believes that the data collected through the *Get Focused Stay Focused* program, along with the partnership between the Mendocino Unified School District and the

National Student Clearinghouse will improve the quality and volume of data concerning post-high school career and college activities of MHS alumni.

- Technology

In 2016 the “1:1 initiative” began with the goal of supplying every high school student a Chromebook and in 2018-19 that goal was reached. Every student has a Chromebook to use in class and to take home to work on assignments. Teachers use Google Apps for Education and Google Classroom.

Action Plan 4: Communication in School Community and Beyond

Goal: The Mendocino High Schools will improve communication among students, parents, staff and community.

- Clear Expectations

The development of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports handbook for staff was developed in 2017. The MTSS include academic and behavioral expectations of students with the handbook providing protocol for staff to follow when issues arise. The staff participated in MTSS calibration sessions to help the staff respond in a more consistent manner to academic and behavior challenges with students. The principal participated in a MTSS conference during the summer of 2017 and a follow-up series with a team of teachers. The principal formed an MTSS team for the 2018-19 school year with the intent to provide oversight, data analysis, and continued development of services to students. MHS publishes a student and parent handbook that includes the expectations of the school along with other relevant school information. A digitized version of the handbook has been developed. The communication of these expectations to students was accomplished through the distribution of the handbook, during advisory sessions with students, in assemblies, and by the presentations of skits and games.

A new grading practice has been introduced for the 2018-19 school year that uses weighted grading of formative and summative assessments. Grades are calculated based on formative assessments being worth 20% of the student’s grade with summative assessments accounting for 80% of the grade. This grading policy was the result of staff discussions and professional development about grading practices and expectations.

- Increase Collaboration and Communication

At the beginning of each week, the principal publishes for the staff “The Hilltop Voice” that shares information about upcoming events, celebrates successes and encouragement. Monthly site and department meetings occur. CTE teachers have been meeting monthly since 2016-17.

Communication between the school, parents, and the community has improved with the update of the school website in 2017 and the use of social media services such as Facebook and Instagram. The implementation of “Tea with Tobin”, the school’s Principal, has encouraged parents to come to these regular gatherings to discuss specific issues of interest to them. These meetings are scheduled in alternating morning and evening sessions to make attendance possible for most families, including students. The “Cardinal Currents” event and news publication is emailed weekly to families and is also read to the students during their advisory period.

The Aeries Student Information System allows students and parents to access grade information,

transcripts, and attendance. Teachers are asked to keep gradebooks up-to-date on a bi-weekly basis. The school has promoted Aeries training to staff members each year. This training has made it possible for the school to offer online re-registration to parents since the 2017-18 school year.

Departments such as Media and Science use social media to reach out to the community to let them know about special events and celebrations at the high school, such as the annual science fair, CTE Showcase, and senior project night. The use of email listservs target specific class member parents with specific class information. The production arts classes has a YouTube channel that live-streams and records MHS athletic events, making them available to the public. The school radio station, KAKX, is also a point of contact between the school and the community.

Parents suggested that it would be helpful to receive a grade-level-specific newsletter telling them of key activities and tasks that happen at that grade level as well as college preparation tasks that were relevant for that high school year. This parent suggestion was well received when relayed to the Principal and Counselor.

Evidence of Progress and Impact on Student Achievement

Progress is evident by reviewing the Mid-cycle Report prepared by the school, reading the Single Plan for Student Achievement from 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19, visiting classrooms and meeting with students, parents, leadership team, and site and district Administration. Particularly in each SPSA, the school addresses the written goals set forth, reflects on data to determine what has been accomplished, and adds or continues any action/tasks that provides further progress on the goal. This VC Report represents information validated in discussions by this Mid-cycle Visiting Committee with staff, leadership, parents and students. During this visit, the VC met with the Principal, Counselor, Superintendent, and stakeholders to confirm that making progress on these goals remains supported and valued. The goals are written in a format that includes strategies to accomplish the goals, tasks/actions to be done, and evidence sources to verify outcomes. This VC recommended that specificity be added to include time-measurements (when the task/action will be accomplished) and the position responsible for follow-through in order to increase accountability for a measurable outcome.

Critical Areas (if any) Not included in School's Action Plan, Follow-up and Evidence on These Issues

The school has been and continues to address the relevant Action Plan items and goals identified in the 2016 Self-Study and Visiting Committee report. There are not concerns by this Mid-Cycle Committee that the school has omitted from its annual SPSA Action Plan any critical areas from the 2016 visit nor any newly identified concerns. Evidence of SPSA reports and review of state testing and indicators, UC/CSU completion, AP results, attendance data, and surveys indicate the school reviews evidence on key issues and uses these to plan next-steps in its progress.

III. Commendations and Recommendations

Commendations:

- **Comment on significant progress the school has made in responding to the critical areas for follow-up and in carrying out the related action plan.**
1. PBIS system was developed and implemented including a matrix of expectations developed collaboratively, hiring a Behavior Interventionist in 2017, and using Aeries student data system to track behavior interventions. A MTSS handbook was developed for staff in 2017.
 2. District full-time social worker hired in 2017 along with staff trainings on trauma-informed practices, then in 2018 adding a site training in mental health first aid.
 3. Discussion of grading protocols with in-service on grading practices, followed by a 2018-19 pilot towards adopting a site-agreed formative/summative (20%/80%) scale.
 4. Reflective restructuring of intervention time to include *Get Focused Stay Focused* curriculum for all 9th graders starting in 2017-18 and continuing to add follow-up modules each grade thereafter.
 5. Visible and articulated sense of community among the students and staff and other stakeholders.
 6. Active involvement by the Administration in seeking grant funds to enhance and expand Career Tech Education pathways.
 7. Clear focus in the school's SPSA to continue progress on the Self-Study identified goals including realistic tasks/actions and color-coded progress indicators.
 8. Implementation of 1:1 Chromebooks addressing equity issues in student access to technology.

Recommendations:

- **Comment on any critical areas for follow-up/action plan sections that have not yet been completely addressed, if applicable.**
 - **Identify any new areas of concerns, if applicable.**
1. Continue to implement stakeholder communication to keep parents informed, including grade-level college/career planning information for students and parents as well as the timely update of gradebook student performance.
 2. Add specificity on SPSA tasks to include specific time-measurements (when the task/action will be accomplished) and the position responsible for follow-through in order to increase accountability for a measurable outcome.
 3. Explore vertical articulation (a) with the middle school grades for alignment of academic transition from 8th to 9th grade, and (b) with Mendocino College for dual enrollment and CTE articulation agreements.