

**MID-CYCLE VISIT  
VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT**

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

**FOR**

**APEX ACADEMY**

**1309 North Wilton Place, 3rd Floor  
Los Angeles, CA 90028**

**Los Angeles Unified School District**

**Original Self-Study Visit: March 24-26, 2014  
March 15, 2017**

**Visiting Committee Members**

Mr. Phil Matero, Chairperson  
Founder & CEO, YouthBuild Charter School of California

Mrs. Carol Ledbetter  
Teacher, Retired

## 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.**

The school is set in a three-story shared LAUSD school building, with one floor dedicated to APEX. This setting is an improvement over the past, when the school had classroom on other floors. This new format has allowed APEX to develop a much-improved sense of identity and school culture. The large, shared campus has a sports field and an excellent eating area for lunchtime. The school setting is clean and modern, and students are in a very safe, contained environment.

The school provided a complete analysis of student achievement data, documenting the challenges that the school has faced and the progress they have made in addressing those challenges. The leadership team has a good handle on how to use student achievement data to drive improvements in practice. The school is making progress in nearly all areas of student outcomes.

The school has expanded its leadership team since the last VC visit three years ago. On the suggestion of the last team, the school spent time reflecting on the structure and decided to add the positions of Principal, and Assistant Principal, an Instructional Coach, a PBIS Coordinator, and a data/testing manager. These changes have moved the school from a founder-driven structure, with the two founders wearing many hats, to a more inclusive, sustainable, and effective leadership team approach.

Another significant event since the last visit was the renewal of the school's charter by the LAUSD on October 18, 2016. This new five-year term has increased the school's sense of stability.

The VC met with the entire leadership team, noting that each member of the team had clearly played a significant role in following up on the improvement plans since the last visit. The action plan is a living document at the school that is re-visited regularly by the team. The team worked together to prepare the report.

## 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.**

The school has identified three critical areas for follow-up.

1. Student Achievement--Increase the proficiency, reclassification, and overall academic achievement of English Learner by providing rich, targeted, rigorous and differentiated instruction.

Three years ago, when the first VC conducted its visit, the school had been in a state of decline over the course of the few years leading up to the visit. At that time, in 2014, the percentage of EL students scoring Advanced and/or Early Advanced in the annual CELDT was at only 32%. For this mid-cycle visit, the school provided student outcome data to the VC that demonstrates an overall increase in the percentage of EL students scoring Advanced and/or Early Advanced in the annual CELDT. The percentage for 2015 was 41%, and for 2016 the number was 36%, which is short of the established goal of 38% but shows growth overall in the area of the school's work.

Likewise, reclassification rates have increased over the past few years since that prior visit. It was 13% in 2015 and 15% in 2016. These numbers are also below the target that had been originally set, but the school explained that they are adjusting their goals due to the challenges that they are facing with their EL population. Many of the students enrolling in the school are coming from schools where they have not been receiving the language support they have needed and consequently need a longer period of time than anticipated to make critical gains in their language skills.

CAHSEE passing rates had been a target for student outcomes at the past visit, but of course, those have been dropped since they are no longer applicable. The school also understands that there will be a need to revise the CELDT targets as the new ELPAC replaces CELDT in the next few years. The school is prepared to set new goals as that test is introduced to public schools in the near future.

2. Student Engagement--Increase the overall student academic engagement and attendance rates by strengthening the instructional program in the areas of student engagement, learning authenticity, and instructional differentiation.

At the last VC visit, the team saw attendance rates that were in a state of stagnation, hovering between 88-89% for the prior three years. The school set out to improve those numbers as a goal and have implemented an action plan that has been successful in increasing the attendance rates for the overall student population at APEX. The goal for the follow up year to the visit was to reach 90%, and though the school reached just 89%, in the following year the school increased the attendance rate to 91%, meeting their stated goal for that year. This year, the attendance rate is at 93%, which will surpass the stated goal of 92%, if these numbers hold through June.

The school has implemented a number of engagement activities that has led to these positive

results. The full implementation of the Diploma Plus model, enhanced no doubt by the addition of an instructional coach this year, has created more engagement in the classroom. Students reported to the VC that they like the Diploma Plus model of instruction because it involves the student in the process much more closely than they had been at previous schools. Students reported that they have a better understanding of what it expected in an assignment, and they are motivated to complete projects at higher levels of engagement. Clearly, the Diploma Plus model is increasing student engagement, and even first year teachers reported that they are well supported in the use of Diploma Plus and find it a very effective model for curriculum development.

Additionally, the school has a 1:1 chromebook to student ratio now, which has increased student engagement in the classroom. Students have access to class assignments and materials on their chromebooks, increasing ownership and access to education materials, and improving the students' ability to engage in classwork from their computer at their desk. In addition to the chromebooks, the VC observed a number of effective engagement activities through the creative use of other technologies in the classroom.

3. Parent Engagement- Increase efforts to seek parent input in decision making, promotion of parent participation within the English Learner subgroup, and overall education of our parents of our instructional model.

At the last VC visit, the team saw data indicating a decline in parent participation from 22% to 10%, the absence of a Parent Advisory Council, and low participation by parents in school-sponsored parent workshops. At this mid-cycle visit, a group of parents met with the VC. All parents expressed their satisfaction with the school's leadership, services and communication efforts by staff to keep them informed about their child's progress. And though almost all the parents expressed an interest in participating with a parent advisory group, the formation of a Parent Advisory Council still has not been completed. The school expressed its commitment to complete that goal soon.

Although the parents that the VC met with expressed strong support for the school, the goal of increasing the number of parent participation has been difficult. Parent participation in the School Experience Survey increased two years ago from 10% to 11%. Last year, participation dropped from 11% back to 10%. Most recently, data on this year's survey showed an increase in participation from 10% to almost 20%. Two years ago, parent participation and attendance in parent workshops met the school's growth target range of between 10 and 20 with 14 parents attending; last year this number fell below the growth target range of between 20 and 30 with 17 parents attending.

The school is exploring ways to increase parent participation that involve traveling to parents' homes and away from on-site meetings. The school is currently working with a consultant to develop a survey that will provide data on parent satisfaction and identify family issues in need of assistance. The school is eligible for additional revenue through the Free and Reduced Lunch program and EL subgroups, and with those funds will seek to increase efforts to involve more parents.

Critical areas for follow-up are included in the school's action plan as evidenced by the LCFF State Priorities.

### **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.**

The school's leadership team has expanded significantly since the last VC visit. The founding team of two school leaders have created opportunities for others to take up leadership positions in the school, establishing a strong leadership presence at APEX.

The school's progress on the attendance rates was most significant to the mid-cycle VC. Given the challenges in working with the at-risk population that the school serves, and the current anxieties that immigrant populations are experiencing, this accomplishment is especially noteworthy.

The school continues to maintain its family-like and supportive environment, and demonstrates personal attention and interest in each student even as the school grows in its size and sophistication.

#### **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.**

The parents' advisory council has not yet been developed, and both parents and the school leadership team recognize that this will be an important addition to the success of the school. More parent voice in decision-making would be an asset to the school leadership team and increase participation in activities that would support the EL population at the school.

The VC did not identify any new areas of concern.