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Board Report for November 18, 2019

Academics

BCCHS just completed its first Full Self Study Visit for the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, the regional accreditation agency responsible for accrediting schools and colleges in California. The visit was the culmination of an 18 month preparation process that began in May of 2018. The visit was postponed once due to significant climate and culture concerns, originally having been scheduled for April of 2019.

The visiting committee's report was thorough and accurate, citing both areas of considerable accomplishment in the school's first four years of operation as well as significant needs for growth moving forward. A copy of the visiting committee's slide show to the faculty is included in the materials for the board meeting, but two notable areas listed for improvement were:

- 1) The need for alignment in the practice of standards-based grading.
- 2) A clear implementation plan for social-emotional learning for all students.
- 3) Developing a comprehensive plan for improving rates of chronic absenteeism.
- 4) To the extent that it is possible, physical improvements to classrooms to improve moral.

The high school is bringing back the use of Achieve 3000 for all students so as to track ELA progress monthly, specifically reading informational text proficiency as measured by Lexile levels. Given the emphasis on WASC accreditation through the end of October, the implementation of weekly data meetings has been less consistent than the GBF program calls for, but is now becoming a more intentional focus point through both professional development and conferencing.

The board's Academic Excellence Subcommittee was recently given a full assessment of the state of the high school's academic status, including SBAC achievement over time, reclassification rates and rates of co-occurrence of EL students carrying an IEP, reading achievement, SAT performance over time, graduation rates, and college acceptance rates.



The college application season is in full swing, and our new college and career counselor Max Garcia is engaging seniors and their families all day everyday during the school week, as well as both after school and on weekends. His commitment to our students is producing immediate fruit, as 20% of the Class of 2020 has already been admitted to at least 1 four-year university. This is the payoff that we prepare for during the four year journey we spend with our students, and it is amazing to see the way it is impacting how our seniors feel about themselves.

Operations

Attendance at the high school has held steady at 196, up from 181 at the start of the school year. 181 students showed up for school, and there has been a trickle of students either finding our school and joining our organization, or returning to BCCHS. The returners are a particularly joyful cause for celebration as they represent renewed faith in the school's capacity to provide a positive place of learning and growth, especially after a year of unfair negative press by a small group of students and parents. The operations team is constantly working to refine systems for tracking and improving attendance procedures so as to get students to come to school more often, and be in class more regularly.

The high school is currently missing a teacher for English, one of two such positions at the school. The hiring process has not been particularly fruitful. Efforts to recruit on iNdeed have resulted in over 100 candidates, but none who are capable of working with our student population in both a rigorous and inspiring manner. The most attractive candidates have been working in private schools, so lack adequate credentialing. The lack of a team member, as well as the somewhat consistent absence of at least one to two staff members over the course of a week, has felt stretching for the operations team (all out of classroom staff at the school). Just making sure classrooms are covered with substitutes or period by period coverage is, in my opinion, too much a part of a regular week at the school. It may be helpful to study teacher absenteeism over time in our organization as it may be contributing to underperformance by our students. They do not respond well academically or socially when their teachers are gone.

Climate and Culture

The loss of Edwin Cruz as our Climate and Culture Coordinator has placed that responsibility squarely on the shoulders of our operations team. Ms. Fuentes has stepped up in a hero's way to make sure that the climate and culture issues confronting our campus are being addressed with full attention, and Susan Castellon is working with her in tandem to try to get students in classrooms and in uniform. Several students persist in bringing drugs onto campus, resulting in parent meetings and suspensions for students under the influence, as



well as law enforcement activity addressing those identified as actively dealing controlled substances.

A recent meeting with Communities in Schools representatives helped us understand the communication network that exists outside the school regarding several of our students who are associating themselves with gangs, and how the community can assist us to help those students come to school to safely focus on education while they are on campus.

Our other most pressing climate and culture issues revolve around attendance and the consistent use of the school uniform. The team is regularly trying to incentivise timely participation in school, both through PBIS practices (scholar dollars and the scholar dollar store), traditional incentives (free dress) and restrictive choice (loss of privileges).

We are a very small group of support staff now, and the majority of the burden for dealing with student behavior and support issues has fallen to our counselor, our operations coordinator, and our assistant executive administrator. On any given day, our counselor is trying to help students apply to college or apply for financial aid, so pulling him from those duties to address student behavior and/or mental health issues is stretching us “to the max,” as it were. We have greatly appreciated the extra support, on any given day (and especially during the WASC visit) given to us by the LSC staff. Their ownership of our school when they step on campus is both reassuring and truly helpful.

The issue of recurring drug possession and sales at our school is a red-flag. This issue needs to be addressed in a way that brings maximum community partnership leverage to bear, as public knowledge of the use and sale of drugs at our school will act as an immediate deterrent to the parents of students who are looking for a small, safe school as an alternative to a big high school where these problems are expected.

Summary

There are many reasons to celebrate this fall, not the least of which are a reauthorized (without benchmarks) charter and what appears to be full accreditation. Ms. King Berg’s leadership allowed for everyone to work flexibly to make those things happen. PSAT and SAT have already happened for our Juniors and Seniors, and we have seen the highest distribution of 900+ and 1000+ scores since the school opened. Progress is being made.

We need help and change with attendance challenges, drugs on our campus, uniform compliance, and maintaining a highly trained staff for the full year.