

Mid-cycle Visiting Committee Summary Report

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

FOR

MAKING WAVES ACADEMY

**4123 Lakeside Drive
Richmond, CA 94806**

Contra Costa County Office of Education School District

Date of Original Self-Study Visit – March 9-11, 2023

Date of Visit – March 30, 2023

Visiting Committee Members

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Educational Partnerships

SUMMARY

Key information about Making Waves Academy (MWA)

The school was founded as a 5th-8th grade public charter school in the fall of 2007, expanded to include a 9th-12th grade “upper school” division in the fall of 2011 and in operation for 16 years. Current enrollment is 648 middle schoolers (grades 5-8) and 482 high school students. Students attending MWA are called “Wave-Makers.” MWA is based on an earlier entity, the Making Waves Education Program (founded in 1989). Making Waves began as an afterschool and summer program for 5th-12th graders along with providing college coaching and financial support. MWA operates as a 501(c)(3) corporation and receives support from Making Waves Foundation (MWF), also a 501(c)(3).

MWA’s charter is up for renewal next school year; the next charter term will be 2024 to June 2029. The school is in year 6 of 8 of a student enrollment expansion plan, offering enrollment to 168 students for fifth grade (versus 112 students) for the last six school years. However, the school is pausing the enrollment expansion for the next few years, reverting back to accepting 112 fifth graders to better develop and implement school goals to meet student learning needs.

The demographics of MWA are comparable to West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD) serving students in Richmond. The majority of students come from elementary schools with high poverty enrollments in Richmond and surrounding cities. Current school demographics follow:

	A.A. / Black	Asian	Hispan. / Latinx	Native Amer.	Pac. Islidr.	White	Female	Male
<i>MS (5-8) Division</i>	61	17	530	1	7	14	330	318
<i>US (9-12) Division</i>	35	10	423	5	2	7	245	237
<i>Total</i>	96	27	953	6	9	21	575	555

Dashboard Data

- 11th grade showed considerable gains when compared to last year’s data though still in the low performance level, approaching some pre-covid levels, especially in ELA. This wave of students (20th Wave) has shown growth on ELA SBA since 2017.
- Middle school scores declined from last year (with the exception of 7th, which increased in ELA and math, and 5th which had small gains in ELA and larger gains in science). 7th grade students (24th Wave) had the highest percentage of proficient students in the middle school, in both ELA and math, with a notable increase in their 6th grade performance data.
- 2021-22 Reclassification Rate, 11% (internal numbers), 49.8% making progress towards English language proficiency, ELPI up 5 points from 2019 (had been 44.8%)
- College-going rate continues to be a strength of MWA, with over 80% of graduates enrolling in college each year, the majority in 4-year universities and a graduation rate of 87.4% for 2022

Significant Developments

There were leadership transitions during and after the 2021-2022 school year, most of the school leaders transitioned out of MWA, in part due to the return to in-person learning, staff moving to other cities and states, and general concerns about living in the bay area.

Staffing transitions fall into three categories: 1) concerns about COVID before the school year started, 2) the seeming “heavier lift” of school with more restrictions (masks and no large group meetings) and less capacity with more people out on a daily basis with COVID or other health related reasons increasing the need for some leaders and faculty to cover for teachers who were out, and 3) the desire to work in a different environment that allowed for remote work options.

Curricular coherence is unevenly practiced at the school and has been impacted by COVID; curriculum was delivered online during the distance learning year as teachers adapted curriculum to meet students’ needs. Some teachers were adapting the curricular materials so much that they tended to lose the coherence of the standards as well as the pacing needed to ensure students had opportunities to learn the material before being assessed on SBA. Given the school team’s analysis of student and staff needs, changes for 2023-24 are already in motion as they transition to setting a curricular scope and sequence and pacing guide collaboratively developed by teachers and leadership to better assess teacher efficacy and pace with respect to student learning needs, curriculum fidelity aligned with state standards and common assessments. Given the turnover in teachers and the number of new teachers, there is a need to increase instructional and curricular fidelity and vertical and horizontal articulation of content and learning goals.

The adoption of the 90-minute block schedule across the school (classes meeting 2-3 times per week versus 4-5 times per week) is another mitigating factor that has impacted curriculum implementation and coherence. Instructional planning and pacing are different if classes are meeting less often, and instructional pacing impacted a student’s ability to demonstrate mastery and proficiency on end-of-the year state assessments.

The LCAP was developed with input and/or meaningful consultation with families including families that speak languages other than English, and participation from school and central office administrators including special education administrators, faculty, students, school leaders, other educators and staff. At LCAP engagement events community members reviewed metrics, worked on identifying needs, proposed actions to meet those needs and suggested potential revisions to current and proposed LCAP actions from the greater school community.

Progress Since Last Visit

1. Math curriculum is not congruent with California content standards as evidenced by SBA scores. Access to data and student learner outcomes needs to be increased. Standards-based grading practices need to be implemented and AP passing rates need improvement.
 - The school team continues to monitor math instructional priorities given the ongoing impact of COVID on mathematics skill development for many students. The school is now using Smarter Balanced Interim Assessment Blocks (IABs) to better monitor student progress during the school year. Use of formative data continues to be a priority and with teacher turnover and levels of experience, ongoing professional learning has and continues to be a priority along with additional instructional coaching. Standards-based grading practices were moved lower on school priorities given the impact of COVID but are still of interest moving forward. While increasing AP test scores is important to the school team, there is a greater focus on increasing students’ enrollment in AP classes to increase rigor and college going experiences and expectations.
2. Expansion of CTE pathway programs and AP offerings is needed to further support college and career readiness.
 - As a smaller school, CTE options include a Health Sciences Pathway and increased information on the kinds of postsecondary options are available. However, completion of courses meeting A-G requirements continues to be the school priority.
3. There is a lack of fidelity for data-informed instruction observed throughout humanities classrooms, so it is recommended that MWA proactively respond to the assessment data provided. As self-identified in the self-study, the school desires to ground itself in an “instructional philosophy and approach to better align our practices with math instruction.”

- School leadership and many teachers understand standards ensure better accountability – holding teachers and schools responsible for what goes on in the classrooms. The practice of aligning learning to standards also helps ensure that a higher level of learning is attained, guides teachers in the process of assessment and helps keep them on track. The school team is in a curriculum revision process to better align and implement curricular, instructional, assessment and multi-tiered system goals to increase vertical and horizontal learning, content expectations and student success. Given the teacher turnover, there is an acknowledgement by leadership that revising curricula, implementing a clear scope and sequence and pacing guides across the grades and increasing coaching and professional learning are needed. Multi-tiered support systems are most effective when curricula, instruction and assessment are aligned and implemented with fidelity.

The Leadership Team understands the goal of alignment is to make curricula, instruction, and assessment work toward the same ends, increased student success. Their current and ongoing work emphasizes the interactive nature of curricula, instruction and assessment and their connectedness. For example, in addition to curricula driving instruction and assessment, it is possible that instruction can provide feedback for improving curricula and refining the format of formative assessments. Similarly, assessment can identify weaknesses in instruction that can be corrected and detect gaps in curricula that can be filled. These priorities are guiding the school team's implementation expectations for teachers and staff.

4. The school should also ensure that its grading practices reflect the rigor of the state standards and expectations of statewide assessments.
 - More equitable grading and assessment can be a lever for creating stronger teacher-student relationships and more caring, engaging classrooms, and improve achievement for all students, particularly those historically underserved. The school team understands the value of equity-based grading and its alignment with MWA's holistic approach to educating students through rigorous instruction, academic intervention, meals, access to mental health services, socio-emotional development, and robust college counseling and college access services. Current grading practices and needed revisions continue to be an ongoing conversation across the school.
5. An area of growth for school culture and support for student personal and academic growth is the establishment of an on-site interpreter, whose sole purpose is to support the school with correspondence between families.
 - The school team continues to implement varied strategies to communicate with students and families in multiple languages.
6. The challenge around high turnover rate of teachers is an area that the school leadership needs to address. The school seems to be in the early stages of addressing the issue of teacher turnover as part of a reorganization and the hiring of a senior school director.
 - Leader and teacher turnover continues to challenge the school team. The 2022-23 school year had fewer personnel changes and the school continues to monitor teacher goals for staying at the school along with additional coaching and mentoring to increase their knowledge, skills and sense of belonging. Additionally the school team strives to cultivate a collaborative culture where members of the school community work together effectively and are guided by their common purpose. All members of the community—teachers, administrators, students and their families—share a common vision of what the school should be like.
7. The school should ensure student and teacher culture and practices from the middle and the upper schools are aligned. For example, consistency of enforcing student uniform expectations will help teachers meet their baseline professional expectations.
 - Staff transitions continue to impact this area for growth but consistency of school expectations and a more robust PBIS system is in development.

Schoolwide Strengths

1. The MWA community collectively strives to establish a strong school culture and systems of support that will ultimately promote academic success of all students.
2. Students, parents, administrators, teachers, and support staff are aligned with the mission and vision of the school and work collaboratively to implement common goals.
3. Leadership and teachers use a variety of strategies and resources to create an equity-centered learning environment with active engagement in learning by all students as a school goal.
4. Teachers provide learning opportunities that extend beyond the textbook and classroom, strengthen students' depth of knowledge, and prepare them for college and careers.
5. Curriculum is aligned to the UCOP A-G requirements and career-readiness standards including AP course offerings, a CTE Health pathway and other course offerings.
6. The implementation of an inclusion model that considers the "race, gender, academic achievement, ELD and IEP status" of all students as they are placed in each classroom roster demonstrates how the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion inform decisions.
7. Data analysis practices continue to guide decisions and inform instruction while the school team strives to increase the use of formative assessment strategies across the school.

Growth Areas for Continuous Improvement: The visiting committee concurs with the school's identified areas for growth:

1. Support for All Learners: Develop and refine vertically aligned programs to support all learners.
2. College and Career Readiness: Refine holistic support for college and career readiness that builds all students' capacity for graduation and success beyond high school.
3. Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion: Create a safe, inclusive, and high-performing environment for all students and adults that are informed through the lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Additional Growth Areas for Continuous Improvement identified by the visiting committee:

1. Leadership Team and teachers continue to develop and implement the goals of curricula, instruction, assessment and multi-tiered systems alignment to increase teachers' understanding of how to identify key concepts and skills, highlight important content, reflect on student understandings and misunderstandings, and create lessons to ensure student success at the next level of learning.
2. The school team needs to continue to implement communication strategies across the school community to maintain healthy relationships among the students, teachers and staff, and parents and to continue to increase trust, transparency, and listening to both promote the school mission and goals and to strengthen the collaborative school culture.