



West County Community High School

# Educational Directors Report

July 2009

## Moving past survival and just plain moving.

At the end of our second year, we can start to see the progress that we've made. We begin to notice what makes us unique and where we are going as a school. Perhaps, for me, the greatest measure in how we are doing is in how much I miss our students when I'm away from the school. WCCHS isn't for everyone. It is an experiment in education and it is a community in the making, but those who have shown up for this project are, in my opinion, the best of the best.

The biggest news, of course, is our new facility. The new site offers bigger classrooms and a full-sized gym, and much of the credit for the move goes to one parent, Tim Banuelos, although, he would be the first to recognize that our entire board, entire staff, and many many many parents helped with the move. In particular, Kevin Purdy personally moved most the school and has been at the new site almost everyday setting things up. I will describe our new site at the end of this report.

Although a great deal of effort has gone into the move, our focus this summer is on academics. The community spoke loud and clear that, more than Sports, more than, believe it or not, lockers, we want a more rigorous academic education and we want to see our students go on to college, so, in this report, we look to see in what ways academics are improving so we know what practices to continue, and we look to see where we need to make changes. One thing is certain, it will take our entire community, working in unison, to meet this goal.

Although this is an "Educational Director's" report, everyone at the school knows that it is our Administrative Director, Kristin Kirkman, who keeps us going and gifts us with her energy, wisdom, and leadership. She, too, is very responsible for us moving to the new location and she has managed to guide us to expansion in a recession economy when everyone else is pulling back.

I also want to recognize, on the outset, our incredible teachers who go far beyond simply preparing lessons and grading homework. They form deep relationships with all their students, create programs that are the fabric of our school and are involved in every single decision. In this coming year, teachers will have an even greater level of leadership at the school as we transition to the vision of the Charter where every teacher is also an administrator.

At the end of our second year, with a strong team, dedicated parents led with passion and conviction by Board President Victoria Purdy, and wonderful students, I am confident that we will succeed.

## Accomplishments for the second year.

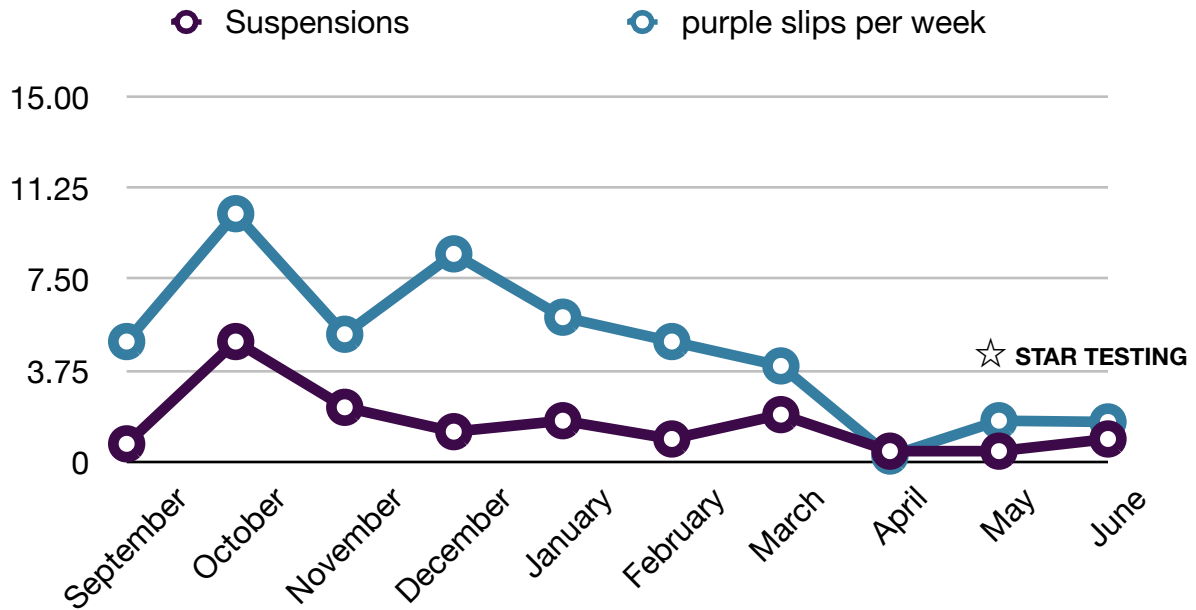
The second year brought us greater stability and academic success. We offered more interesting electives, more rigorous curriculum, greater student involvement, greater parent involvement, and stricter discipline standards

### Changes and Improvements that occurred our second year:

30 new policies and procedures to create stability	3 dances
talent show	first drama performance
\$20,000 raised in fundraising	Meditation class
Web Design and Social Justice classes	Onsite therapist

## Discipline Report

One way that we can tell that our system of community and connection works is by watching the rates at which students break rules that require leaving the classroom or being suspended. As you can see in the chart below, there was considerable testing of these policies and student unrest in the early part of the year, but, as the year progressed, our approach to student behavior clearly had an impact as discipline incidents steadily declined.



## Dress Code

As part of the school's efforts to bring stability, safety and to reduce drama in our community, we implemented a stricter dress code banning gang apparel and solid reds and blue colors. Many students were confused and upset by the policy and, by the end of the year, a group of students made an excellent presentation to the board requesting a new dress code policy.

A group of parents and students met with me in several meetings over the summer to create a much improved policy to present at the August 4th board meeting.

## Division Promotions

Another sign that our methods are working is the number of students promoted to the higher divisions. At the end of our first year, only 8 students had demonstrated the responsibility and autonomy necessary for the "Choose" division. At the end of this past year, 17 students were in choose and 4 students were promoted to the highest level, "Act".

<i>2009/2010 Division Members</i>	
<b>Notice</b>	129
<b>Choose</b>	17
<b>Act</b>	4

## Standardized Test Scores.

Our first year tests were far below what we ultimately want to see. Our second year results were better, but still far below our goals. Right now, as it stands, we believe that standardized test achievement is an ongoing concern for our school, and we will continue to look for ways to motivate and support our students so that they can achieve better on the tests.

A brief overview of our test results:

**CAHSEE:** 71% of eligible students have passed the English, 58% have passed Math

**STAR:** In 2008: 25% proficient or advanced in English, 2% proficient or advanced in Math  
In 2009: 34% proficient or advanced in English, 4% proficient or advanced in Math

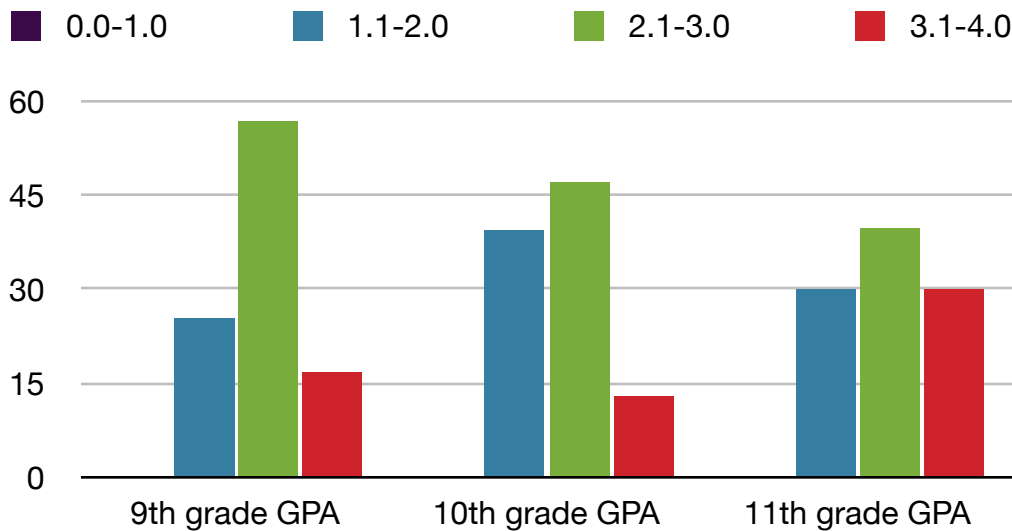
**This coming year, we will have students take the SAT college entrance exam.**

## Academics.

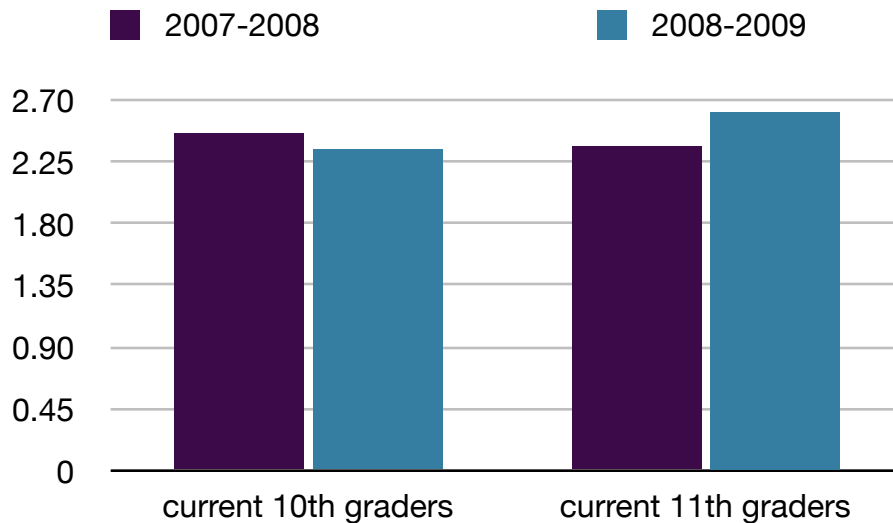
In general, Academics at WCCHS are still far below where we want them to be. While there were many improvements this year in overall student study habits and expectations from teachers in the classroom, more time and effort must be spent towards raising standards and performance at the school.

In this section, I will review the current data that we have on the academic performance of students at WCCHS.

The first indicator of academic performance is in cumulative GPA-- how students are performing, on average, in their classes. The chart below shows, by grade level, what percentage of the class has a cumulative GPA in the 1-2 range (C's and D's), in the 2-3 range (C's and B's) and in the 3-4 range (B's and A's). As you can tell, in each grade, most students perform in the C's and B's range, but colleges look for students in the B's and A's range and, with the exception of our 11th graders, a minority of the students achieve that level of success.



Since the 11th graders have some of the best (and worst) grades, it is natural to wonder if WCCHS students achieve better the longer they are here. Since it is only our 2nd year we only have longitudinal data on our students who started our first year as 9th and 10th graders. The chart below shows how the average of the GPA's of those students changed from their first year to their second year of study with us. As you can see, the students who started with us as ninth graders and who are now tenth graders saw their cumulative average drop by a small amount, while those who were 10th graders in 2008 who performed, as a group, worse than their ninth grade counterparts that year, actually improved their GPAs by 3 tenths of a point.



## Addressing Academic Concerns

Improving the academics at WCCHS will take every member of our community working together and doing their share. Us, as the administration, must make financial decisions which put a priority on academics and a schedule that fulfills UC requirements, teachers must create rigorous curriculum which challenges and engages, parents must stay on top of their students progress and ensure that they study regularly and complete all assignments, and, of course, students must take ownership for their learning.

This summer, and into this coming year, we, as a school will be doing the following to strengthen our academic program:

- Receive a-g approval for all core classes and most electives
- Keep schedule mostly unchanged but add ability to have additional core classes
- Hire high-quality science teacher and make biology and chemistry a priority
- Re-work Learning to Learn class to have less “extra work” and make class applicable to student success in other classes.
- Use Academic Support periods as math and reading tutorials.
- Continue to raise student expectations (no grace period on missed work)
- Create a student handbook which clearly shows what students need to do to graduate
- Alter our school calendar to synchronize with the college calendar allowing for more students to take high-quality college courses.
- Bring a greater college focus to the school and more contact with college counselors

## 09/10 Class Schedule

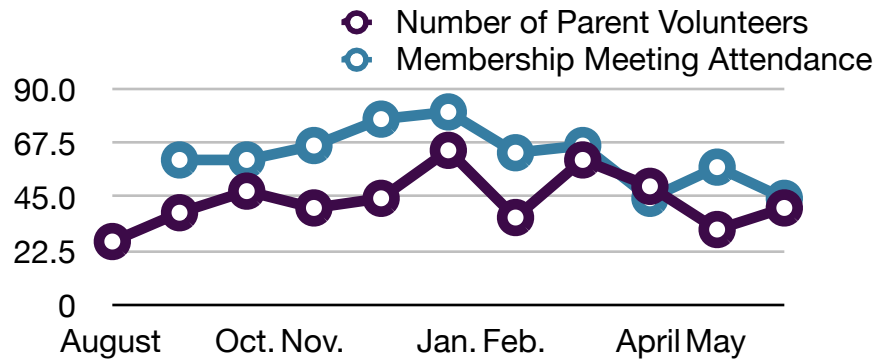
I am very happy to report that the daily schedule will NOT change much from last year to this. Those of you who have been with us since the start have seen radical schedule changes that have been confusing and upsetting. For our next school year, the changes we are making are small, just to address the few problems experienced by last semester's schedule.

- Now, periods one through five are for core academic classes and uc-approved electives that meet 4 days a week
- Periods six and seven meet three days a week for upper division courses and electives
- The “Wednesday” schedule is moved to Friday so that school-wide meetings can happen at the end of the week
- A regular schedule with the same academic classes every morning, and the same electives every other day in the afternoon

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>9:00-9:35</b>	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Pd. 1
<b>9:40-10:35</b>	Pd. 1	Pd. 1	Pd. 1	Pd. 1	
<b>10:40-11:35</b>	Pd. 2	Pd. 2	Pd. 2	Pd. 2	Pd. 2
					Pd. 3
<b>11:40-12:35</b>	Pd. 3	Pd. 3	Pd. 3	Pd. 3	Meeting
<b>Lunch 12:35-1:10</b>	lunch	lunch	lunch	lunch	lunch
<b>1:15-2:10</b>	Pd. 4	Pd. 4	Pd. 4	Pd. 4	Pd. 4
<b>2:15-3:10</b>	Pd. 5	Pd. 5	Pd. 5	Pd. 5	Pd. 6
<b>3:15-4:10</b>	Pd. 7	Pd. 7	Pd. 6	Pd. 6	Pd. 7

## Parent Volunteerism

Engrained in our school culture is a spirit of volunteerism where all of us work together and do our part to make the school a success. As the chart to the right shows, the number of volunteers rose steadily from the start of the year, but, unfortunately, dropped off with the new calendar year. There was clearly a parallel between the attendance at membership meetings and school participation.



## Our New Board

Of course, none of our successes would have been possible without our remarkable, volunteer, parent board. This is not a board in name only, the parents on our board are truly involved and make many many personal sacrifices for the benefit of all our kids. The board works long hours, meets regularly, and often makes the hard decisions that others are afraid to make. Their only reward, most of the time, is the criticism and complaints of others. I feel very fortunate to have at our school a board that isn't afraid to **get things done**. Leading the charge, in heart and with passion, is Victoria Purdy, our Board President. Many of the best ideas about community and academics have come from her. I am also personally grateful to her for what the support she has given me.

The WCCHS board for 2009/2010 is:

Victoria Purdy, President	Linda Asher, Secretary	Wendy Kennedy, Treasurer
Tim Banuelos, Facilities	Maria Torres, Volunteer	Tyler Jolley, Student Rep
Masin Persina, Teacher Rep	Steve Olson, Peacekey Rep	DeWanda Joseph, Admissions
Elsie Wiley, Grantwriter	Kristin Kirkman, Admin Director	Gary Einhorn, Education Director

We are currently seeking a Personnel Chair. I also want to recognize the extraordinary hard work and extra effort put in by Linda Asher, who has worked on this project since day zero, Tim Banuelos, who is responsible for our new site, and Katie Hoekstra, who, while not on the board, has come to every meeting and helped out in every endeavor. I am also thrilled by all the contributions made by our newest board member, Wendy Kennedy, in such a short time.

## Dealing with Budget Crisis

You are, no doubt, aware that the State budget crisis has put a huge dent in the amount of money schools will receive. We estimate that we will receive between \$30,000 and \$50,000 less than we were initially budgeted to get. It is unfortunate that this crisis hit in our early years before sufficient cash reserves could be maintained, but all we can do now is tighten our belt, become more creative with resources, and be more aggressive in going after the funding that does exist.

All of our teachers are on strict spending limits, many employees, including myself, have taken on greater responsibilities with lower salaries. More is expected from everyone without additional compensation, and all of us have had to make sacrifices.

When someone comes to you asking to help support the school, please be mindful of the sacrifices the teachers are making for your kids, and help us meet our fundraising goals.

## Our New Site

We are so excited to now be tenants of the Miehn Church and be able to use their wonderful site. With the new location we can expand our enrollment to full-size as well as dramatically improve our program.

The new site features:

- A Full-size Gym
- 10 large classrooms
- A larger Community Space
- A Teacher lounge
- A Student-designed room for upper-division students
- just 3 blocks from San Pablo Ave
- Beautiful view of the Bay



## Summer Plans

The most effort this summer is directed towards getting the new site ready for classes, but much more is happening as well.

- Moving, of course
- Finding intern therapists and student teachers for additional support
- Getting a-g courses approved by UCOP
- Creating a student Handbook
- Revising Dress Code
- Planning Lessons
- Community Fair
- Science Lab
- Hiring New Teachers
- Providing College Counseling and Test Preparation Help for all students
- and more!

***Thank you,  
Volunteer HEROS!***

***Kevin Purdy***

***Steve Huerta***

***John Prado***

## Upcoming Dates/Events

We are all very excited about the coming year, and hope you will join us in creating something very special.

- **Aug. 8 Community Street Fair**
- **August 11th, Back to School Orientation**
- **August 18th, First Day of School!**
- **August 18-21st, Student Orientation Week: 9am-12:35pm**
- **August 24th, First Day of Classes**