

**Mid-cycle Visiting Committee Summary Report**

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

**FOR**

**MOUNTAIN EMPIRE HIGH SCHOOL**



**3305 Buckman Springs Rd  
Pine Valley, CA 91962**

**Mountain Empire Unified School District**

**April 15-18, 2018**

**November 1-2, 2021**

**Visiting Committee Members**

Mark Anderson, PhD, Chairperson  
Executive Director, High Schools; Hacienda La Puente Unified School District

Deanna Keuillian, EdD  
Director, Secondary Curriculum & Instruction; Palm Springs Unified School District

**SUMMARY**

**Include:**

- **General comments about the school, including summary of achievement data**
- **Significant changes and/or developments and their impact on the school**
- **School’s follow-up process and process used to prepare the mid-cycle report**
- **Summary of progress on action plan that addresses student and school needs and critical areas for follow-up (growth areas for continuous improvement) and impact on student learning.**

Mountain Empire High School (MEHS) is a comprehensive school serving the Mountain Empire Unified School District located in a rural area approximately 45 miles east of San Diego. In the 2020 school year, 421 students were enrolled: 67.9% Socioeconomically Disadvantaged (SED), 25% English Learners (EL), 7% Foster Youth, 15% Students with Disabilities (SWD), 58% Hispanic/Latino, and 30.2% White. The mission is to prepare students to engage society with duty, honor, and service. The Schoolwide Learner Outcomes (SLOs) are Duty, Honor, Service.

2019 California School Dashboard Data						
	All Students	Hispanic	White	SED	SWD	EL
English Language Arts	<b>Yellow</b> 44.6 points below standard Increased 12.1 points 82 students	<b>Red</b> 52.8 points below standard Maintained -0.3 points 45 students		<b>Yellow</b> 28.7 points below standard Increased 17.6 points 46 students		
Mathematics	<b>Orange</b> 99.5 points below standard Maintained -2.7 points 82 students	<b>Red</b> 124.4 points below standard Declined 15.5 points 45 students		<b>Yellow</b> 114.7 points below standard Increased 3.3 points 46 students		
Graduation Rate	<b>Blue</b> 98.6 % Increased 2.4% 71 students	<b>Blue</b> 97.8% Maintained 0.6% 45 students		<b>Blue</b> 98.2% Increased 1.4% 56 students		
College/ Career	<b>Green</b> 52.1% prepared Increased 9.4% 71 students	<b>Green</b> 44.4% prepared Increased 4.4% 45 students		<b>Green</b> 46.4% prepared Increased 6.4% 56 students		
Suspension	<b>Yellow</b> 7.8% suspended at least once Declined 4.1% 424 students	<b>Yellow</b> 8.2% suspended at least once Declined 2.9% 243 students	<b>Yellow</b> 7.1% suspended at least once Declined 2.9% 140 students	<b>Yellow</b> 8.1% suspended at least once Declined 4.7% 246 students	<b>Yellow</b> 7.8% suspended at least once Declined 3% 64 students	<b>Orange</b> 10.3% suspended at least once Declined 1% 107 students

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, MEHS shifted to Distance Learning in March 2020 and opened the 2020-2021 school year in distance learning. On October 12, 2020 MEHS returned in a hybrid

model, but shifted back to distance learning on November 5 due to a COVID-19 community surge. On January 11, 2021 MEHS returned in a hybrid model and on April 27, 2021 all students and staff were able to return to school 4 days a week.

Since the 2018 visit, MEHS shifted to a quarter system; students take 4 classes first term and then 4 classes second term. This increased the amount of time per period (from 55 to 90 minutes) and the amount of classes students are able to take in a year (from 6 to 8).

The Math and ELA departments are using the CAASPP IAB interim assessments twice a year as benchmarks. In the 2020-2021 school year, MEHS began using the Renaissance Learning Program (Star Reading and Star Math, in Spanish, too) and Lexia Power Up. MEHS has 8 career pathways in the Agriculture, Technology, and Health Sciences industry sectors.

The Math and Science departments have shifted to the integrated model, ELD is part of dual enrollment with Cuyamaca College, and counseling is now split by alpha and not grade level. MEHS has added the California Cadet Corps, Business English and Financial Math as options for seniors, MRWC (joining the already established ERWC), honors music, AP Studio Art, Advanced Writing, and a Senior Project (beginning with the class of 2024). The community passed Proposition JJ and MEHS anticipates improvements to the physical plant of the school.

MEHS has late start Wednesdays for staff collaboration and tries to make common prep periods for departments. MEHS identifies the common best practices:

- School-wide Implementation of Sentencing Scaffolds and ELL teaching strategies
- Pre-Interventions are widely documented in Aeries
- Added in “lieu of suspensions” that promotes restorative justice using online classes through Edgenuity Education
- More teachers are utilizing proficiency/standards-based grading practices and the Narrative Scoring Scale

MEHS has an agreement with Mending Matters for on-site therapeutic counseling 5 days a week. The school has additional partnerships with Crossroads, Southern Indian Health Council, San Diego Youth Services, Mountain/SanYsidro Health, and Vista Hill to provide support and bring programs, such as SDYS’s Check Your Mood Week, on campus. MEHS has an after school program to support student academics, clubs, and sports.

MEHS reflected and reviewed the recommendations given by the 2018 WASC Visiting Committee, and made adjustments.

1) Increase ELL students’ achievement at all ELPAC and CAASPP levels

MEHS shifted to the quarter system, allowing EL students more access to elective classes. The ELD team has trained with the community college and has ELD as a dual enrollment class with Cuyamaca College. The staff has requested more training and would like to see implementation of school wide EL strategies.

2) Increase the number of students achieving college readiness (UC a-g courses)

MEHS has been granted a-g approval for its Pathways and added the Cadet Corps with a-g approved courses. Some of the CTE classes have eliminated the ‘D’ from their

grading scales. MEHS uses Edgenuity for students to retake a-g classes where they originally received a 'D' or 'F' grade. MEHS desires to develop more discussions around equity-based grading practices and analysis of grade distribution data; and more training around strategies to increase student engagement and higher level thinking and questioning strategies.

3) Develop a process for regular, collaborative, and shared decision-making

MEHS and MEUSD adopted "Late-start Wednesdays" giving the staff one hour each week to meet either as a whole staff or in departments. The master schedule was planned to allow for departments to share common period preparation time to increase collaboration. 7-12 articulation has begun and MEHS desires to continue the vertical articulation and use collaboration time to analyze Renaissance, CAASPP, and ELPAC data, and develop a literacy plan. MEHS put in place benchmark assessments in reading and math at the behest of the Visiting Committee.

4) Continue the work of building a culture of academic achievement and inclusivity

MEHS focuses on the whole student as seen by the commitment to extend a robust After School Program, TRIO, and Mending Matters services on campus, as well as focusing on the data in the Healthy Kids and Student Voice Surveys and reengaging the Freshman Flight program. MEHS has increased the number of club offerings and began the summer leadership camp in 2021.

The Action Plan has 4 Goals. MEHS reports progress and action taken since 2018 in working towards or achieving the goals of the Action Plan.

**Schoolwide Strengths**

- 1 . Students, parents, teachers, and staff shared with the Visiting Committee that they enjoy the strong community feel at MEHS.
2. Both classified and certificated staff shared with the Visiting Committee there are strong relationships and trust, allowing for open dialogue among staff.
- 3 . With a focus on collaborative leadership, MEHS adopted new structures in the bell schedule to build collaboration among staff members, creating open communication among adults sharing best practices.
- 4 . The MEHS teachers have begun the work to create a common equity-based grading system.
5. MEHS leadership and staff used the WASC recommendations to guide their work and School Plan over the last 3 years.

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

- 1 . MEHS will maintain a comprehensive counseling, activities, and after school program to ensure students feel included and valued in the school community.

- 2 . MEHS will increase the number of students achieving college readiness (UC/CSU A-G courses) and increase offerings and cohesion in the CTE program.
3. MEHS will continue to communicate regularly with parents, create a welcoming environment for them, and work toward opportunities for participation.

**Additional Areas for Growth:**

- 1 . MEHS teachers and administrators should deepen critical thinking and rigor in instruction and student output in all content areas across all grade levels.
- 2 . MEHS should grow from being a school of opportunities to a school of guarantees; all students and parents need the same guaranteed access to experiences and information; students report that only those who know what and who to ask receive the resources.
- 3 . MEHS should continue to focus on the academic growth and success of ELL in multiple metrics, including but not limited to, ELPAC, Reclassification rates, Seal of Biliteracy, core academic grades, lexile levels, and student involvement in clubs.
- 4 . MEHS administration should continue to communicate regularly with parents, with an increased focus on inclusivity for Spanish speaking families.