

ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS

Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Report of On-Site Review

Mark Keppel High School  
501 East Hellman Avenue  
Alhambra, CA 91801

Date of Original Visit: March 25-27, 1996

Date of On-Site Review: April 28, 1999

Mr. Joseph F. Kolmel  
Committee Chair

Mrs. JoAnn K. Aguirre  
Committee Member

## I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Mark Keppel High School, built in 1939 is one of three comprehensive high schools in the Alhambra School District. The school primarily serves the students of Monterey Park. The majority of its 2,107 students are Asian (68%). The remainder are Hispanic (26%) and other groups (6%). Over one third of the students are Limited English Proficient.

The average SAT score is 969 (434 verbal, 535 math). The school's Advanced Placement program has grown. Mark Keppel High School had the highest scores in the Alhambra School District on the SAT 9 for 1998 in all areas except one. Students were below the State average in READING. Math was in the 60 percentile and language in the 55 percentile.

- B. Four issues are pending: the school awaits a decision on its digital high school grant; a bond issue is planned to deal with renovation district-wide; class size reduction. Mark Keppel High school may become a Title I school-wide program.

Significant Developments since 1996:

- class size reduction & heterogeneous grouping was passed by the Board
- boundary changes that now have all Monterey Park part of Mark Keppel High School's attendance boundaries
- a larger parent support group that came with the change in boundaries
- significant administrative changes
- elimination of bilingual classes
- the addition of several business partnerships
- an increase in AP and Honors classes
- an improvement in SAT scores and the number of students completing UC and CSU requirements

## II. FOLLOW-UP PROCESS

- A. Although no formal follow-up process was in place, the school seems to have made an on going effort to address the concerns of the 1995-96 visiting team. However, follow-up was part of inservice day discussions and the 1882 and School Site Plans.

During the third year, the school wrote responses to the recommendations through the Steering Committee. Because of a certain amount of turn over, new members joined the group. One of the changes in personnel was a new principal. Prior to the new leadership, the Follow-up Report was completed and shared with the staff, as well as various parent groups.

- B. Nine members of the original Steering Committee, and an Assistant Principal who was at the school for the 1995-96, a new parent, and the Assistant Principal of Instruction comprised the major follow-up committee. Plans and recommendations were shared with the Process, Program, and Resource Committees. The final draft of the report was shared with the entire staff in February; final revisions were then made.

The process was open to any staff member who expressed an interest.

### III. PROGRESS ON PREVIOUS MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee Recommends:

- 1. The school administration develop and implement strategies to allow classified staff, students, and parents greater input regarding school improvement processes so they experience a greater degree of shared ownership.**

A concerted effort has been made to allow for wider representation of all-stake holders. Classified employee representatives are on many committees. Parents and students are on a majority of these committees. Classified staff receives minutes from Instructional Council meetings. The PTSA has become more active overall.

- 2. That the site administration and staff involve the entire school community in an annual evaluation of the school's philosophy, goals and objectives in order to insure total understanding and commitment.**

The vision and goals were re-evaluated. Seven ESLR's were written, and during this current school year ESLR's and the school's philosophy, goals, and objectives were aligned.

- 3. That the district staff and site administration develop a plan for the strengthening of communications with the staff and parents in areas that include support services, priorities for financial considerations, renovation priorities, and maintenance schedules in order to alleviate misunderstandings that exist within the district and school community.**

The site itself appears to be dealing with its needs related to beautification, renovation, and maintenance efforts. The PTSA, the City of Monterey Park, and the Mark Keppel Alliance have worked hard to assist in gardening resources. The site hopes to receive twenty-three million from the District should the bond measure pass. Everyone appears optimistic.

4. **That the counseling and teaching staffs explore teaching strategies and curricula which will encourage under-represented student groups to enroll in and find success in a-f requirement courses.**

The school has made efforts to encourage academic achievement among the under represented areas with programs like SMARTS and AVID, as well as with several tutoring programs. An effort has been made to reach parents. However, the report indicates there still appears to be a need to work with faculty on teaching strategies and increasing general faculty awareness regarding curricular programs available to "all students." The discussion of possibly making Title I school-wide is one way the site/District hope to offer greater support to a larger number of students. Success will be more evident in the next two to three years, as this occurs.

There seem to be administrative and staff concerns over the fact that not all students in grades 9-11 are enrolled in six classes. A new perspective on use of staffing units needs to take place.

5. **That the site administration, guidance department, and faculty develop and implement career paths in the areas of health and environmental studies, business and international studies, arts and communications, and human and social services to provide students with an interdisciplinary student support system.**

Career Paths have not been developed. There has been an increase in Advanced Placement courses and some work has taken place regarding interdisciplinary courses. The school's industrial technology department appears to be offering several good options to students.

The school is still generally departmentalized, although informally there are teachers offering interdisciplinary options. Options may increase as the staff continues to address its recognized need to have increased sensitivity to the diverse population.

6. **That the school administration, Career Center and counseling staff develop procedures that promote integrated School-to-Career paths for ALL students including the non-college bound pupils.**

Due to various circumstances, no procedures have been put in place that integrate School-to-Career paths for ALL students. It is hoped that once the school begins addressing Focus on Learning, curricular paths will become a priority.

7. **That the site administration, together with department chairpersons, explore more collaborative methods for allocating monies in order to provide greater understanding and participation in the budgetary process.**

Very recently a budget meeting took place to address the need for greater collaboration. There appears to be an increased awareness of how the budget was allocated and a consensus on next year's plan was reached.

## SUMMATION:

Responses to the first three recommendations validate the school's success at involving all stakeholders in campus beautification, as well as participation on school committees and the development of goals, objectives, and ESLR's. The staff, however, still needs to explore ways to insure that all faculty and parents are aware of all "curricular programs available to all students" so that ALL students have equal access to the core curriculum. AVID and other programs are an excellent start. Course offerings and the manner in which FTE's are utilized will also help address the need. The site has made a first positive step toward addressing staff's concern related to budget. The two recommendations related to Career Paths were not addressed.

The review Committee feels that once certain decisions made by the Board of Trustees are thoroughly communicated and better understood, and once the new administration is no longer "new," the school will return to addressing the remaining recommendations.

## CONFIDENTIAL ON-SITE REVIEW JUSTIFICATION STATEMENT

The school had no formal process to address the recommendations from the previous visit. In those three years, however, a number of differences have effected the school's climate. Several administrative changes have taken place; and the new administrative staff has been charged to focus on concerns that had not been fully dealt with in the opinion of the District. The District wishes Title I funds to be distributed school-wide, and the District has removed homogeneous grouping in core courses when the Board adopted class size reduction. These District decisions have caused anxiety with staff, not only in terms of how the education is delivered, but also because the staff feels a vote should be taken on these types of issues.

It is the opinion of the review team that Mark Keppel High School has addressed well those three recommendations related to involving all stakeholders and to communicating with the school community. Processes at the site are in place and parent and classified staff, both feel much more a part of the school's decision making. There still exists the feeling that the site is the District's stepchild. The recommendation, related to more collaboration on the site budget, has been recently addressed. The initial feelings are that this is a positive step toward meeting the budget concern.

While AVID and other programs are now in place to meet the needs of under represented students, it is the feeling that the school itself has really addressed the recommendation related to ALL students accessing the core curriculum. A large step toward meeting this need was the Board's decision related to homogeneous grouping in core subjects. The principal also indicated his philosophy related to utilization of FTE's, which will also provide increased sections for under represented students. These two decisions should cause the school to begin facing the spirit of this recommendation.

The recommendations related to Career Paths and School-to-Work also have not been addressed, but the review team feels, nevertheless, as the school begins "Focus on Learning," curricular paths will become a priority. It is certainly a priority with the principal at this time.

The On-Site review committee, therefore, reaffirms the six year accreditation and no new conditions are imposed.

Joseph F. Kolmel  
Chairperson

April 28, 1999