

**MID-CYCLE VISIT
VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT**

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

FOR

URBAN DISCOVERY ACADEMY

840 14th Street

San Diego, CA 92101

San Diego Unified School District

January 10th, 2018

Visiting Committee Members

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Introduction

School & Demographic Overview

Urban Discovery Academy (UDA) is a TK-12 charter school that began operations in August, 2008. UDA operates two sites located at 840 14th Street, and 232 West Ash Street, San Diego. Authorized by the San Diego Unified School District, UDA is organized as an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation and is directly funded by the State, operating under a separate charter with its own CDS number.

The School's schoolwide learner outcomes were developed during the 2014-15 school year through a collaborative process that included representation from all stakeholders and have been utilized to drive student learning. The TK-12 mission and vision have also been reviewed and revised through the charter renewal process during the 2017-18 school year; the school would like to reevaluate the existing learner outcomes following the revision of the mission and vision.

Mission

The mission of Urban Discovery Academy schools is to develop community-minded students who are active, creative, empathetic, confident, and ready to lead our global society.

Vision

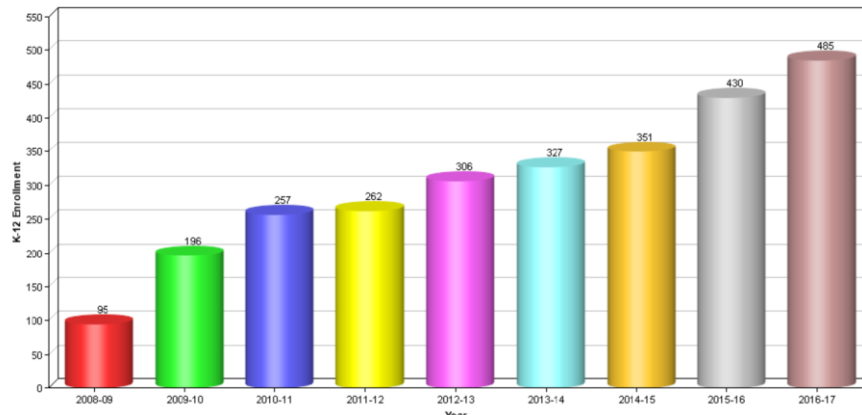
Our vision is to graduate innovative leaders empowered to address the biggest issues facing our community.

Schoolwide Learner Outcomes

UDA students will be:

- Scholars: who research, analyze, and evaluate to solve problems
- Athletes: who demonstrate positive sportsmanship and teamwork
- Artists: who express themselves positively and creatively
- Innovators: who question, listen, think, explore, and create
- Communicators: who reflect, communicate and articulate in different ways
- Collaborators: who work well with others and use resources effectively
- Contributors: who support their schoolmates and their community

Students are drawn primarily from within the district boundaries, and nearly all students reside within a 15 mile radius of the school. During the last three years, enrollment has continued to increase across all grade levels. Demand for enrollment is steady with nearly 600 students on the enrollment waitlist for the 2016-17 and 2017-18 school years. Currently, total student enrollment is 614 and disaggregated by grade level reveals a relatively even distribution: TK/K-72, 1st grade-52, 2nd grade-52, 3rd grade-56, 4th grade-60, 5th grade-60, 6th grade-58, 7th grade-59, 8th grade-60, 9th grade-55, 10th grade-27.



Enrollment by ethnicity groups has remained relatively stable over the last three years. Enrollment by ethnicity for the 2016-17 year is 46.8% White, 35.5% Hispanic, 7.8% Multi-Racial, 5.8% African American, 2.3% Asian (non-Filipino), 0.8% unknown, 0.6% Filipino, and 0.4% Pacific Islander. Demographics by subgroup also remained relatively stable during the last three years. For the 2016-17 year, subgroup enrollments were 8.0% English Learners, 28% Economically Disadvantaged, 8.0% Students with Disabilities, and 0.6% Foster Youth.

For the 2017-18 school year, UDA has a full-time equivalent (FTE) staff of 49.2, which includes 33.4 certificated teachers, 8 instructional aides, 1.4 counselor/psychologists, 3.4 classified staff, and 3 certificated administrators. Ethnic breakdown of staff is 39.8 Caucasian, 3.35 African American, 3.0 Filipino, and 1.4 Asian.

Staff and administration remain committed to maintaining a small learning community and positive school culture. After relocating to the current campus locations in the fall of 2015 (K-8) and the spring of 2017 (IDEATE), staff focused on continuing to strengthen the school community and ensure a safe environment for all students. Student and parent survey results on school safety reveal that 90% or greater of both students and parents feel students are safe in school. Notably, this percentage has increased from the 2015-16 school year to the 2016-17 school year for both groups. The school’s Student Climate Survey reveals that over 90% of students and parents feel welcome, and that students are receiving a safe, challenging, and relevant educational experience.

Student Academic Performance

Students have participated in a variety of State testing including CAASPP, CST, NWEA and CELDT. Administration compares aggregate student achievement data to neighborhood elementary, middle, and K-8 schools as well as against District performance as a whole. The school boundaries with the most dense student population were chosen for analysis and comparison to UDA’s academic performance, along with data from like schools within the geographic area, to allow for appropriate comparisons and analysis.

Analysis of CAASPP data for UDA during the last three years shows that student performance in English Language Arts (ELA) and math remains generally competitive with or higher for most student groups. In ELA, 54% of UDA students met or exceeded proficiency compared to 58% for the district. When compared to similar schools, UDA students performed significantly higher.

CAASPP ELA Comparative Data

Exceeded & Met	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
UDA	52%	57%	54%
Golden Hill K-8	29%	39%	39%
Perkins K-8	28%	28%	26%
Sherman Elementary	42%	57%	49%
Roosevelt International	42%	53%	49%
Washington Elementary	27%	52%	52%
McKinley Elementary	58%	64%	68%
Kimbrough Elementary	23%	25%	26%
Chollas/Mead Elementary	29%	43%	37%
Rowan Elementary	39%	43%	42%
Clark Middle	25%	23%	29%
San Diego Unified	55%	56%	56%

In math achievement, 42% of students met or exceeded proficiency compared to 46% for the district.

Similar to ELA, when compared to similar or like schools in the district, UDA students performed significantly higher.

CAASPP Math Comparative Data

Exceeded & Met	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
UDA	45%	42%	42%
Golden Hill K-8	17%	20%	23%
Perkins K-8	18%	32%	13%
Sherman Elementary	42%	53%	40%
Roosevelt International	42%	33%	31%
Washington Elementary	19%	38%	47%
McKinley Elementary	49%	54%	65%
Kimbrough Elementary	19%	22%	28%
Chollas/Mead Elementary	24%	36%	33%
Rowan Elementary	24%	24%	31%
Clark Middle	19%	16%	20%
San Diego Unified	41%	44%	46%

The data does show that when CAASPP data is disaggregated by subgroups, a few subgroups maintained consistent performance across three years, while most declined in the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the standards for both ELA and Math. Achievement data does reveal improvement in the lowest-scoring students on the CAASPP during the last three years in both ELA and mathematics. The percentage of students scoring in the “not met” category reveals that the lowest scoring students are making steady progress in decreasing the achievement gap. This represents a reassuring reflection of an enhanced focus on the impact of the Response to Intervention (RTI) processes that have been implemented over the last few years.

EL measures align to the new state dashboard metric which will calculate a summative percent of students that either: qualify for reclassification, improve a level on the ELPAC (CELDT) exam, or maintain early/advanced status on the ELPAC (CELDT). To date, EL reclassification rates and CELDT improvement scores show inconsistent results with room to grow.

NWEA performance data for 2015-16 and 2016-17 when compared to the national mean indicates that in general, UDA student performance is comparable to and in some cases slightly outperforms national performance benchmarks. However, administration indicates that results are slightly inconsistent across grade levels and years, specifically in mathematics. Staff and administration verify they are continuing to work on improvements and math and literacy across grade levels, and these initiatives are included in the school’s action plan.

Additional metrics of student performance include attendance rates, where UDA students continue to maintain consistent and strong attendance of over 95% during the last three years. Additionally, the school has experienced decreasing rates of chronic absences from 6.09% in 2015-16 to 5.11% in 2016-17. The same is true for suspension rates which have decreased from 5.0% in 2013-14 to 1.6% in 2016-17.

Significant Changes and Developments

Since the last visit, UDA has experienced a number of changes and transitions including organizational and staffing shifts, enrollment growth, location changes, curricular enhancement and technology additions to the teaching and learning experience. These changes have positively impacted the overall student experience, academic performance and instructional strategies and resources to support student learning.

In 2017, UDA began the charter renewal process with San Diego Unified School District, which was successfully renewed in December 2017 until 2023. The Charter renewal process included a comprehensive and inclusive process for all stakeholders as well as a review and revision of the school's mission and vision. These revisions reflect the progress made during the last few years and positions UDA to continue to grow as a k-12 organization. Staff and administration indicate that a collaborative process will commence next year to further review and refine the Schoolwide Learner Outcomes (SLOs) to better align with the revised mission and vision.

In the fall of 2015, the TK-8 program relocated to a new site in the East Village of San Diego through a bond financed facility that underwent renovation and construction. The following year, the 9th grade class was moved to the K-8 facility until a second site could be secured. In the spring of 2017, an additional site was located and secured 1.4 miles from the existing site on Ash Street which houses the high school program.

With the addition of the high school grades, the Board of Directors restructured school leadership from having a K-8 director to a part-time CEO who reports directly to the Board, and two directors who oversee the academics and site management of the K-8 and high school grades. This change allows each director to focus primarily on teaching, learning and student needs, while the CEO focuses on overall strategic alignment, business operations, and providing support to the Directors. Additional staff changes include securing high school faculty, a transitional kindergarten teacher, STEAM teacher, an in-house TK-4 Spanish teacher, additional high school faculty, as well as additional student support staff including educational specialists and special education aides. In 2016, UDA transitioned its back office support services to Ed Tec. This move provided more capacity for the school to support enrollment growth and academic quality for all students.

The school has undergone a transformative process to strengthen school culture and better align practices schoolwide to the project-based learning implementation. This shift in culture aligned with project-based learning has fostered more creative and flexible teaching and learning. Similarly, there has been an increased focus on interdisciplinary collaboration across disciplines and horizontal classrooms, including enrichment classrooms. This shift in teaching and learning to project-based learning is evidenced in the schoolwide exhibitions of student learning, held twice a year for the high school students (semester culmination) and three times per year for the TK-8 students (trimester culmination). During this time, each student presents their trimester/semester projects, which demonstrate the culmination of their learning in humanities, math, science, and enrichment courses.

UDA has fully-adopted the restorative approach to student behavior and development. During the 2015-16 school year, staff and administration laid the foundation and professional development initiatives to support implementation of new shared strategies for building school culture, including morning meetings, classroom charter development, and responses to student behavior.

Since the last visit the school has significantly increased technology resources to support student and learning providing a one-to-one ratio of devices in almost every core classroom. iPads are available in lower grades and Chromebooks in grades 3 through 10. There is also a full class set of laptops available for STEAM programming. The addition of these resources have helped strengthen personalize learning for all students, allowing more capacity and ease for differentiated learning within the classroom, and better support for student research and project-based learning. To support the school's STEAM initiative, staff have secured additional technology resources including 3-D printers, soldering stations, robotics kits, and other technology tools.

Ongoing School Improvement

School stakeholders review student achievement data on an annual basis and review, reflect and assess school progress to help inform progress made on schoolwide goals and related action plans as well as any revisions to goals needed as result of data analysis. Staff and administration review comprehensive achievement data each year to help inform the LCAP review process. The school's WASC Action Plan is strategically aligned to the LCAP annual goals to ensure regular review by multiple stakeholders each year as we engage multiple voices in strengthening our annual plans.

Teachers conduct analysis of student achievement data after each performance cycle, specifically with NWEA and CAASPP achievement data. This process includes analysis of scores by grade level, subgroups, and individual student performance. The process includes reflection on the data in teams and individually to help assess progress toward schoolwide goals and to inform enhancements to instructional strategies, classroom goals and needed educational resources supporting learning. School leadership engages the Board of Directors and the School Advisory Council in regular review of performance data. Schoolwide goals and strategies are regularly reviewed throughout the school year by staff, administration and leadership to assess overall effectiveness and impact on student learning. Parents are also provided opportunity for feedback through annual surveys intended to collect feedback on the school's annual goals and action plan.

In preparation for development of the WASC mid-cycle report and visit, the school's WASC leadership team has met regularly each year since the last visit to review progress of the action plan and critical areas for follow-up. To prepare this progress report, a comprehensive review of multifaceted data which includes state test scores, California Dashboard indicators, local assessment data, comparisons to surrounding schools, survey data, other local data, and input from multiple stakeholders, was undertaken to carefully review progress made and consider revisions to the action plan.

II. Progress on Critical Areas for Follow-up/Schoolwide Action Plan

At the 2015 WASC visit, the Visiting Committee identified eight critical areas for follow-up for UDA to focus on which included project-based learning, math curriculum, technology goals, schoolwide rigor, enrichment programs, middle school sustainability, literacy strategies, and social-emotional development. To address these, administration and staff developed four schoolwide goals and included them into the 2015 Action Plan. Since the last visit, staff and administration have made significant progress in working toward completing each of these goals. As part of the school's regular review on progress made, administration and staff condensed two of the goals into one; namely those focused on math and literacy since many of the strategies implemented are aligned and impact both goals. The Visiting Committee concurs that aligning these goals into one is appropriate. A summary of progress made is outlined below.

1) Goal One: Cohesive Curriculum. UDA will strategically align curriculum to our Learner Outcomes and monitor related progress.

The SLOs have helped drive the continued development of curriculum, specifically in the implementation of project-based learning and interdisciplinary curriculum design. Teachers utilize an adopted project-based assessment template to develop their interdisciplinary projects, which outline the driving goals for each trimester or semester. The school has worked on aligning content and skills development throughout the grades, specifically with math and literacy, to ensure clear learning continuum and benchmarked portfolio progress. Collaboration with the high school team helps ensure students are prepared for high school math and literacy demands. The instructional leadership team (ILT), with a math and literacy lead in the middle school grades, has aligned goals and curriculum and the math leadership team has worked

closely with a math professional development consultant and the leadership to develop alignment and shared strategies. Notable achievements toward progress in this area include:

- Adoption of supporting math curriculum and K-12 technology tools for individualized math instruction (Bridges, Connected Math, Math XL, Front Row, and ALEKS)
- Adoption of K-8 technology tool for ELA (Front Row) to support reading, language usage, and English Learner development.
- Development of common math and writing rubrics
- Development of schoolwide instructional plans for use of math block time
- Shared assessment strategies in math for end-of-unit performance tasks
- Family Math Night: a personalized workshop to share our math approach, math strategies and programs to support students in Math at home and at school.
- Adoption of Lucy Caulkins reading guides (this is a work in progress and something we hope to incorporate more into the future)
- Training on the development of reading/talk strategies

All TK-5 core teachers and middle/high school science teachers utilize the Next Generation Science Standards. Specific mapping of the Next Generation Science Standards began with the middle school team during the 2014-15 school year, with all grade levels transitioning to NGSS the following year and refinement of curriculum continuing to develop each subsequent school year.

Since the last WASC visit, middle school schedules have moved away from choice electives to more intentional and sustainable enrichment programming aligning to our school mission, including fine arts, performing arts, and STEAM. Along with this change in approach to enrichment programming, UDA has also added a wide variety of optional partner programs offered on Wednesday afternoons when school is released.

The addition of a TK-8 STEAM course and new technology in the STEAM classroom has provided opportunity to ensure students develop specific technology skills by the time they graduate. Each TK-8th grade student now takes the STEAM course for one trimester during the school year. By the time students graduate 8th grade, they will have learned technology skills which include proficiencies such as computer coding and 3-D printing.

Administration indicates that there is still room for growth on both NWEA and CAASPP exams in ELA and math, as neither exam has yet to show consistently improving results. It should be noted that the structured efforts to increase performance in this area are a good step in the right direction and administration is confident of positive impact this year. The school also notes their commitment to continue to closely monitor both implementation and progress.

2) Math Proficiency: UDA will increase achievement in mathematics, particularly in the upper grades.

NWEA data reveals that student performance has increased in some grade levels, but there is continued need to focus on ensuring academic achievement improved across all grade levels. This decrease is also evidenced in some grade levels on CAASPP scores, indicating a continued need to improve math academic performance. In response, staff and administration have established the school's Math team along with the Instructional Leadership Team to develop and implement shared practices across the grades, as well as those action steps related to math achievement in the schoolwide action plan.

3) Literacy: UDA will increase literacy performance, particularly in reading, across the upper grades and for English Learners.

NWEA data reveals that student performance has increased in some grade levels, but there is continued need to focus on ensuring academic achievement across all grade levels. This decrease is also evidenced in some grade levels on the CAASPP ELA scores, indicating a continued need to improve overall ELA performance. Administration and staff have created an Instructional Leadership Team to develop shared practices across the grades, as well as other steps outlined in the school's Action Plan.

4) Positive Climate: UDA will incorporate positive behavior strategies to enhance school climate, particularly with regards to student behavior and perceptions.

Overall, administration and staff have made significant progress in managing student behavior, and in improving student behavior and perceptions. Administration developed and implemented a "School Culture" document to reshape the philosophy and approach to developing a positive school culture. The document, and related professional development, includes shared schoolwide strategies for building culture in classrooms, expectations for responding to student behaviors, and other norms for encouraging positive interactions.

Administration has implemented a Restorative Practices approach schoolwide. All staff received training in 2016-17 and incoming staff received training in Fall 2017. Teachers are utilizing morning meetings to build culture and circle discussions to respond to class or group situations that arise. In addition, the Leadership Team responds to student concerns or issues utilizing restorative dialogue and logical consequences. Anecdotally, teachers reflect that this approach has helped build relationships and culture generally, although the school is still fine-tuning expectations and processes.

The school has increased counseling services, adding a full-time counselor to support grades TK-8. A contracted service supports the high school grades and administration plans on adding another counselor for grades 9-12 in the near future. The school counselor helps monitor student behavior, provides individual and group counseling services to benefiting students, and is developing schoolwide approaches to socio-emotional development and positive behavior intervention and supports (PBIS) strategies. The school counselor has developed a plan for pushing in to classes to lead lessons on social and emotional learning throughout the TK-8 classes; this process remains a work in progress for the school.

III. Commendations and Recommendations

Commendations

Staff and administration at Urban Discovery Academy have made progress toward achieving the goals the school outlined in the Action plan and the recommendations left by the last Visiting Committee in 2015. Administration and staff are aware that although progress has been made, there is a need to continue focusing on continually reviewing and conducting needs analysis on each goal and in implementing additional strategies or resources, or refining current strategies to continue to make progress. Administration and staff had demonstrated significant progress of the goals focused 1) strengthening a positive climate, and 2) aligning curriculum to the SLOs and to monitor progress. However, administration and staff are aware of the need to continue to focus on increasing academic performance in math and English Language Arts, and recognize these as a continued priority.

Recommendations

The Visiting Committee concurs that the school should continue to focus efforts on making additional progress on the four goals outlined by the school and in the Action Plan. It should be noted that some progress has been made in the recommendations made by the last Visiting Committee, but staff and administration concur that additional focus should be made during the next three years to make further progress.

The Visiting Committee does not have additional recommendations for the next three years. Administration and staff should continue to focus on the current goals outlined by the prior visit, specifically on Math and Literacy proficiency. Because many of the strategies implemented to address the goals on Math and Literacy, administration and the Visiting Committee discussed combining these into one goal to streamline focus and efficiency.

Review of the school's current Action Plan verifies that the school has outlined additional benchmarks and strategies to support growth in each of the schoolwide goals. The Visiting Committee is confident the school has the resources and capacity to continue to address these goals and is committed to ensuring they remain a priority during the next three years as part of the schoolwide continuous improvement process.