School Information

County: Orange County
District: Anaheim Union High School District
School: Loara High School
Civic Coor: Valencia Davis
Email: Davis_v@auhsd.us
Site Admin: Danny Klatzker
Email: klatzker_d@auhsd.us
Principal: John Briquelet
Email: Briquelet_jo@auhsd.net

Site Validation Team

Date of Visit: April 22, 2016
Team Leader: Michelle Herczog
Signature: ______________________
Agency: Los Angeles County Office of Education
Phone: (562) 922-6908
Member: Rob Vicario, OCDE
Signature: ______________________

Site Validation Team Recommendation

☑ The Site Validation Team has validated information to confirm that high quality civic learning is institutionalized to enable every student to participate in a civic inquiry and investigation at least once during their high school career. The team, therefore, recommends that this school be selected as a California Democracy School.

☐ The Site Validation Team was unable to validate the full implementation of high quality civic learning for all students and cannot recommend that this school be selected as a California Democracy School.
Additional Comments

After examining a great deal of evidence, observing classrooms, and interviewing students, teachers, school administrators, and community stakeholders, it is abundantly clear that Loara High School has established systems and practices to ensure that all students engage in civic inquiry and investigation activities to prepare them for civic life in the 21st century. There is also ample evidence to confirm that the initiative will be sustained in the years to come as a result of intentional capacity building and commitment of the staff and school community.

Members at meeting:
- Danny Klatzker, Asst. Principal
- Valencia Davis, Civic Learning Coordinator and Social Studies Teacher
- Wendy Dotan, English Teacher
- Traci Ghassemi, English Teacher
- John Briquelet, Principal
- Yazmin Neri, School Community Liaison
- Paolo Magcalas, History Teacher
- Paul Chylinski, Activities Director
- Kyle Walker, AP Govt. and Economics Teacher
- Wyle Higger, Govt. and Economics Teacher
- Students
- Parents
- Representative Orange County Human Relations
- School Counselor
- AVID Teacher

Evidence of Institutionalization and Sustainability:
- All 502 seniors have engaged in at least 4 of the 6 proven practices and have completed a civic inquiry and investigation as part of their government/economics course. Government and Economics is a blended, one-year course.
- Explicitly teaching all students in six proven practices in grades 9-12.
- Civic Inquiry and investigations conducted in all Junior US History classes and Senior Government/Economics classes.
- Civic Inquiry and Investigation also occurring in one English class.
- School working to add civic inquiry and investigation in grade 10 history courses.
- By end of 12th grade, ALL students engage in two civic inquiries in which they acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to become civically informed, active and engaged.
- Civic Fair conducted at Open House each year.

Support evidenced in:
- AUHSD Board Resolution
- SARC
- 6 proven practices and civic inquiry and investigation included in Single School Plan; $20,000 budget proposal included to support civic learning at Loara HS
- Creation of Capstone
- Professional development to be continued in 6 proven practices, 5 step civic inquiry process and PBL
- Build into assessment with Capstone reflections twice a year
- Curriculum/Instruction/Learning Environment: PLC process, staff and parent learning walks and trainings to be continued.
• District LCAP will dedicate funding for civic learning.
• Technology resources dedicated to purchase projectors, Chromebook laptop carts and other to support civic learning research in classrooms.

Examples of civic learning:
• Ethnic Studies Class – students went out into the community, attending city council meetings to identify issues of concerns of the community. Air B and B, homelessness, School To Prison Pipeline were among the issues raised. Mayor of Cerritos met with students at school.

Impact on Students:
• Students are thinking about things beyond themselves.
• As an administrator, I have never seen students have the confidence to approach adults on campus to ask legitimate questions about civic awareness before. They are able to use their voice to get the responses and data they need in a very mature way. It really is preparing them outside of high school to be independent.
• The staff is now recognizing that the students now have a voice. That is so significant for community building.
• Principal: What I see happening is I see kids becoming more connected to each other on campus and in their community. They are gaining a sense that they can have a positive impact. They are looking for ways to make improvement. This year I have seen 100 students wanting to talk to me about their projects. I have never seen kids this interested in what we are doing as a community.
• Principal: My view on this topic is not the issue. My job is to support the district policy. My vision is not important.
• The controversial issues raised by students creates a “teachable moment” by getting students to think about how they present ideas to different groups with different views; to be sensitive of how they discuss and explore different perspectives.

Student perspectives:
• Before I was just looking for the money in life to have a lavish lifestyle but now I want to work to help people. This came about when I learned about homeless people. My mother lost her job and we almost became homeless.
• Before this I never really thought that what I said would change anything. But after working on short-term rentals and speaking before the city council, it opened my eyes to see that there is a problem in the community, I can really change things and have a voice.
• I realize there are things in the city that didn’t exist before. I learned that drunk driving is big problem here. I reached out to Mothers Against Drunk Driving and learned they are doing something to help and I can help too.
• My project is on the People’s Map and it helped change my point of view about how voting does affect me and other people. I want to help raise awareness among students and parent about the importance of voting. Before this project I wanted to become a history teacher but now I want to help students understand what happened in the past and what is happening now.
• My project was to get AP textbooks in the school library. And I found it interesting to learn that other students were just as concerned as I was.
• Now I am going home and talking more with my parents about what I do in school. I tell them about our civics projects and talk to them more about other things I am doing in school.
• Sometimes my parents get nervous about what I am doing. They don’t want me going out at night to do my project but they are glad I am getting involved.

Parent perspectives:
• The project is something powerful and strong. Now only do we get help from the district but we learn so much more about the community. We have become more informed about the resources offered from the district.

• I was amazed at the many different projects students did. To improve their futures to live in this country, the project helps them to be able to live a better life. We live in a well-recognized place and we need to know who we are as human beings. We need to teach our children that they are the future.

• We don’t speak English. My children are learning about life in ways that I couldn’t give them. My children in the school now are feeling much more connected to the school than my older children who went to school here but were not involved in this project. I am seeing more support, more doors open to my children who are here now.

• My daughter is currently in the tenth grade but I have noticed students in other projects and hope my daughter can work on them too. The school is preparing our children to be independent and opens up their minds to different needs of the school and the community to see what others are going through. They learn to work in groups, as a team instead of by themselves. The project is giving them the opportunity to talk to other people, to ask questions, and become more informed and not stay by themselves. I have more communication now with my daughter. They feel more part of the school.

• I have a 25 year old student. When he was here there was not a lot of communication with the Latino parents. When I talked with my son, his impression was that the teachers didn’t understand him. My children in the school now feel they are understood and listened to in school. My daughter has learned so much about herself, her own emotions – things she never realized about herself.

• Sometimes parents get nervous but we continue to learn. I feel comfortable to come to school to learn what they are doing. But when I know they are learning both sides of an issue, I feel better about what they are studying. I like that the school is not putting forth its point of view but letting students look at all the points of view and make up their own minds.

• The school is teaching us how to work together as a team. If families are nervous about the projects their children are working on, they need to come to school to learn more about what they are doing and how they are doing it.

Teacher Perspectives;

• Science teacher: The project is opening the eyes of students on local and global issues.

• It’s important for students to be able to defend both sides of an issue and they are learning how to do that.

• Counselor: I’m no longer telling kids what they can do – we’re talking about real world problems like abortion, teen pregnancy and birth control. We can discuss the legality, the perceptions, the resources available. Kids are taking more ownership for addressing problems and issues. Kids are developing skill sets that they are transferring to their real lives.

• AVID Teacher: The project is creating self-esteem every day; character development is not built at a designated time of the day and week. Teen Court is helping students realize their role as citizens.

• Bridges Program with Human Relations: We work with students to develop leadership skills. Peer mediation program on the campus teaches students to develop communication skills, diplomatic skills.

• The community sees Loara as a great place for students to learn. It’s giving kids the tools to be successful.