The Los Angeles County Office of Education
California Democracy School

Site Validation Report

School Information

County: Los Angeles County

District: Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District

School: Santa Monica High School

Civic Coor: Jenna Gasparino  Email: jgasparino@smmusd.org

Site Admin: Eva Mayoral  Email: emayoral@smmusd.org

Site Validation Team

Date of Visit: April 12, 2016

Team Leader: Michelle Herczog  Signature: 

Agency: Los Angeles County Office of Education  Phone: (562) 922-6908

Member: Lise Reilly, LACOE  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, parents, and community stakeholders, it is abundantly clear that Santa Monica 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:
- Eva Mayoral, Principal
- Kitaro Webb, Teacher
- Jenna Gasparino, Co-Coordinator
- Martha Chacon, Co-Coordinator
- Carl Hobkirk, Teacher
- Emily Kariya, Teacher
- Jorge Ciera, Teacher
- Lori Whitesell, Teacher
- Tristan Komlos, Asst. Principal
- Meredith McCarthy, Heal the Bay
- Tish Tisherman, Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce
- Leslie Butchko, Parent
- Lori Whitesell, Parent

Evidence of Institutionalization and Sustainability:
- Civic Inquiry and Investigation is implemented in:
  - Freshman Seminar one-semester class required of all students. 11 teachers teach the course. As a result, all students are engaging in civic learning practices and often repeating the exercise in their content courses throughout high school.
  - Freshman Seminar teachers are implementing civic inquiry and investigation in the other classes they teach, hence providing multiple opportunities for students to engage in civic learning.
  - The Freshman Seminar curriculum with civic learning has been approved at the district level.
  - Civic Inquiry and Investigation also occurring in a variety of other curricular courses: government, economics, English
- Capacity building is evident through coaching, development, support, teaching and learning culture. “We are teaching science in order to prepare students to be responsible citizens.”
- The PLC model has established the infrastructure for teachers to engage in professional development and build capacity. Began with social studies evidence-based writing techniques. This led to other subject area teachers adopting the model.
- Civic Learning Award of Merit and other accomplishments of students will be showcased at Santa Monica-Malibu USD Board of Education.
- Student Ten Year Plan – students explore strengths and passions for themselves to envision where they will be and what they will be doing 10 years from now.
- Single Plan for Student Achievement for 2015-16 with sustainability in mind, provided time and resources for Freshman Seminar teachers to integrate and adopt aspects of Facing History and Ourselves, Ethnic Studies and the California Democracy Initiative. $10,000 was dedicated to achieving this goal. The Single Plan also included: Provide Civic Initiative cross-curricular leadership group with collaborative LACOE meeting and planning time to support rollout of authentically meaningful, CCSS aligned, units and lessons.
• SMMUSD Board of Education is very interested in supporting Ethnic Studies and Freshman Seminar. Health is moved out of Freshman Seminar into physical education course to make room for civic learning in Freshman Seminar.
• Santa Monica High School Student Objectives includes:
  o Ethical students who deal honorably with other human beings and the environment; work democratically and collaboratively to improve school, community and society.

Civic Outcomes can be found at https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B6TSwvGDuMOoNzQ3WDQ4VlhzMTg

Parent perspective –
• They’re bringing it home. Everything they do in school is impacting who they are. The questions my kids pose now are different than they have been before. They’re asking me questions about political candidates in ways they never did before.
• My son worked on a project to assist the hearing impaired. Now he thinks he can advocate and change things.
• My son is advocating for more field space for kids to be involved in sports – not for himself but for future generations. He wants to leave SAMO High better than how he found it.

Student perspectives
• The teachers help you and push you to strive academically.
• As a result of civics, we are able to see the world differently.
• We are now more aware.
• After doing this project, it makes me want to fix things. We really have to stop thinking about ourselves and think about how problems are affecting everyone.
• I’ve learned to be more open minded when I meet new people.

Stakeholder perspectives:
• At Career Day, we learned there is a curiosity that is growing among students to get more than the actual curriculum. Kids are hungry about where do they go after high school.
• I am constantly impressed on how the students are willing to do the science, the upfront research. They have changed us as an organization (Heal the Bay) to provide them a better path for investigating issues.
• Santa Monica High School kids recognize that they can make a difference.