

**ACS WASC/CDE MID-CYCLE VISIT
VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT**

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

THEODORE BIRD HIGH SCHOOL

**251-A SOUTH BARETTA STREET
SONORA, CA 95370**

FOR

2/19/2020

Visiting Committee Members

Mr. Matt Moran, Chair

Teacher in Charge Career Readiness Academy at Wolfskill High School

**Ms. Maryann Santella, Member
Principal, Stockton High School**

I. Introduction

Include the following:

- **Succinctly describe the school location, type of school, grades served, school programs, demographics, and student performance data, including the California Dashboard indicators, the major implications of the data, the identified student learner needs and the identified school needs.**
- **Synthesize any significant changes and/or developments that have had a major impact on the school and/or specific curricular programs since the last full visit.**
- **Briefly summarize the effectiveness of the stakeholder engagement in the implementation and monitoring of the schoolwide action plan/SPSA and the preparation of the progress report.**

Theodore Bird High School is located in the city of Sonora, the largest city in Tuolumne County. Sonora is a rural community located in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada's with a population of 4,857. The overall population of Tuolumne County is 54,248 with most recent increases being due to retirees moving into the county.

The county's major employees are government, services industry and retail consisting of 80% of the employment. Economic growth in the county continues to be limited, which is often attributed to a lack of readily available natural gas needed by industry. Additionally, technology needs, such as a highly developed infrastructure, are lacking, leading to slow growth of the community.

Tuolumne County is in the lower half of the state for median income which has resulted in many citizens leaving the area. This has led to declining enrollment for many of the schools in the area. 50% of the Theodore Bird students qualify for free or reduced meals with 14% living below the poverty level.

Theodore Bird High School is part of the Sonora Union High School District consisting of a traditional high school, Sonora High School, with an enrollment of 980 students; Dario Cassina High School, with an enrollment of 56 students, and Sonora Adult School, with an enrollment of 25 students. As mentioned above the district has been in declining enrollment since the early 2000's.

Theodore Bird High School is staffed for 50 students. Enrollment has been consistent with minimal need for a waiting list for enrollment. The population of the students is predominantly white with no EL students enrolled.

Most students come to the school as referrals from Sonora High School or transfer from Cassina High School. Additionally, some students enter Theodore Bird High from other schools located within our county.

Students attend the school for a variety of reasons, including family hardships, medical needs, full or part-time employment needs, opportunity for concurrent enrollment with Columbia College and a desire to get away from personal conflicts at the comprehensive high school. Increasingly, there has been an increase in the number of students who also have emotional challenges which prohibit them from being successful in a comprehensive setting.

Students meet on a weekly basis and are taught via the independent study model. Students are to complete a minimum of 20 hours of schoolwork each week to receive full attendance. They meet with their instructor, usually for one hour, at the same time each week. The student, teacher, and parent have the responsibility to ensure that the student attends each meeting. At the meeting, the teacher evaluates past work, gives exams, and assigns new assignments for the following week.

Due to declining enrollment the staff at Theodore Bird was reduced to 2.0 FTE which limits the enrollment to 50 students. Since the last WASC review the only change in staffing has been a new counselor who has been tasked to focus on students needs including post-high school transition, career readiness including concurrent enrollment at Columbia College and CTE classes at Sonora High and social emotional needs of students.

Since the last review, Theodore Bird has also gone through the A-G acceptance process for many of the courses they offer through the APEX system. While refining course options, Theodore Bird is also looking into a new online system Edgenuity which is being piloted within the district.

Although student enrollment numbers have not changed, the school is having an increase in the number of students with IEPs, 504 plans and behavioral issues. The principal Roy Morlan is the case manager for these students since his background is in special education. The school has noted that they have a reduction in the students they feel are college ready which has impacted their enrollment of concurrent students at Columbia College. With the change in student population, the staff have centered discussions around needs of students outside of the school (nutrition, housing) and the impact of trauma on the students. Staff have been attending trainings to address trauma needs and to better support students.

The staff and district have also developed a CTE program called "Tiny House". Students enrolled in the program are building a house from the ground up and it is hoped that this will increase student motivation and help with post-high school employment.

II. Progress on Implementation of the Schoolwide Action Plan/SPSA

- **Based on the school's summary of progress and impact on student learning, evaluate the degree to which the student learner needs, the identified school needs, and the critical areas for follow-up or growth areas for continuous improvement are aligned and evident in the revised schoolwide action plan/SPSA.**

- Based on the VC findings on alignment, evaluate how the school has made progress on the student learner needs and identified school needs in the schoolwide action plan/SPSA to strengthen continuous improvement initiatives (include relevant evidence to support findings.)
- Explain why any critical areas for follow-up or growth areas for continuous improvement have not yet been completely addressed, if applicable. (See the ACS WASC/CDE Focus on Learning schoolwide criteria of the ACS WASC/CDE Focus on Learning manual.)

Note: If any growth areas for continuous improvement were not included in the school's schoolwide action plan/SPSA, indicate what actions have been taken to address these issue(s), include supporting evidence and impact on student learning.

Theodore Bird's current action plan has identified 3 goals.

GOAL ONE: Student Academic Performance, Increased rigor of curriculum and continued development of individualized curriculum to meet student's individual performance levels.

The staff has implemented the Math curriculum "Big Ideas". Teachers have individualized curriculum levels to match student performance. In addition to already having common benchmark assessments through APEX, staff has developed English course common assessments. Also implemented this year was the MAP assessment system for evaluating student learning and growth. Teachers are working on incorporating more technology including utilizing Google Drive for submitting written work .

GOAL TWO: Develop a comprehensive system to address increasing our community involvement for our students and parents, and knowledge of school community offerings to students.

Theodore Bird has continued to explore ways to increase community involvement. Due to the dynamics of the population in the school district this continues to be a struggle. Administration has been working with the counselor to develop ways to engage students and stakeholders including a school newsletter.

GOAL THREE: Develop a comprehensive system to address the increasing needs of our students.

Theodore Bird has a system in place which begins with administration induction. The counselor meets with all students to establish the needs of the student. Teachers are informed of the reason for transfer and of any special concerns that affect the students learning. Teachers relay any observable concerns in the classroom to the counselor. All teaching staff are participating in ongoing "trauma" training to better understand and support their students.

The Action Plan is aligned to the District LCAP goals and the strategies developed adequately address the goals.

Schoolwide Critical Areas for Follow-Up: (identified, Visitation Report, 2017)

1. The District should explore ways to maintain or increase the counseling position at Theodore Bird High School.

The Sonora High School District has been supportive in maintaining the position of counselor for Theodore Bird. The district has acknowledged the importance of this position in light of the dynamics of the county's overall population. This position has been incorporated into the district LCAP plan and is acknowledged as a need for continued student success.

2. Theodore Bird High School Staff should continue to explore and implement ways to improve parent involvement.

This continues to be a struggle for Theodore Bird as it is for most alternative secondary schools. Staff have implemented a Parent Night, Student of the month recognition as well as recent newsletters. In discussion with staff this is still an area of focus and will be for the foreseeable future.

In addition, the Visiting Committee of 2017 identified these areas that need to be strengthened:

1. District and Theodore Bird School should explore ways to implement using online programs such as Google docs to facilitate instruction.

The team found that Theodore Bird has been utilizing technology to facilitate instruction. The body of instruction is through APEX which is an online program in itself. Staff have had students use google docs when submitting written work. Again due to some students being homeless or not able to access the internet, not all students are in the APEX system.

2. The staff should explore common benchmark assessments to identify and monitor student growth, as well as, assessing and modifying curriculum to meet the needs of students.

Staff utilize the APEX embedded assessments for benchmarks for those courses. They now also utilizing the MAP Assessment System to monitor student growth and needs.

3. Theodore Bird staff, with district's support, should explore ways in which to positively promote the image of the program.

With the changing population of the school, this is still a struggle for the Theodore Bird staff. The staff is good about promoting themselves within the Theodore Bird site but isn't apparent how much they talk about what they do outside of their own site. Staff should celebrate their good work and explore ways to let those outside of the circle know about it too.

III. Schoolwide Areas of Strength and Growth Areas for Continuous Improvement

- List the schoolwide areas of strength identified during the current progress visit. (See the Schoolwide Criteria of the ACS WASC/CDE Focus on Learning manual.)
- List the growth areas for continuous improvement that have not yet been completely addressed, if applicable. (See the ACS WASC/CDE Focus on Learning Schoolwide Criteria.)
- List any additional new growth areas for continuous improvement identified during the current progress visit, if applicable. (See the ACS WASC/CDE Focus on Learning Schoolwide Criteria.)
- Include a copy of the hyperlink to the school's most recent schoolwide action plan/SPSA.
- Identify any new areas of concerns, if applicable.

The Visiting committee identified these ongoing schoolwide areas of strength:

1. Dedication of staff to their students and their individual needs.
2. Counseling support for students academically and in meeting their social-emotional needs
3. Strong site administrative support for staff and students.

Areas of Continuous Growth

The visiting committee felt that with the change in population and the struggles of alternative education that the critical areas of exploring ways to increase parent involvement and the promotion of the program itself should still be a focal point

Additional Concerns and Growth

The visiting team noted a change in the student population at Theodore Bird that recognizes the upswing of students experiencing social and emotional issues. The staff at Theodore Bird have begun professional development/training dealing with students who have experienced trauma. The visiting committee concur that these trainings and professional development opportunities are crucial in order for staff to meet the social/emotional needs of today's student population. In conjunction with the above training, the team feels it is imperative that the district continue its ongoing support of the counseling position at Theodore Bird.