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

# INITIAL VISIT
# VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT —
# CALIFORNIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

This form is to be used in conjunction with the *ACS WASC Initial Visit Procedures Manual for California Public Schools* and is to be used for <u>all California Public and California Charter Schools</u>. Note: Criterion A6 pertains only to California Charter Schools.

# Part I

**Name of School:**   Epiphany Prep Charter School - Escondido

**School Address:**   725 N. Escondido Blvd., Escondido, CA 92015

**Grades Reviewed:**   TK-6

**School Type(s):**   Charter School

**Comprehensive, Community Day School, Alternative Education/Continuation, Independent Study, Charter School, Home Study, Online Distance Learning, etc. (if more than one school type, list approximate percentages)**

**Initial Visit Chair:**   Dr. Mary L. Lawlor        619-518-3015        lawlormary@aol.com
**Name**                        **Phone**                    **Email**

**Initial Visit Team Member(s):**   Ms. Alexandra Torres Galancid

**Date of Visit:**   4/25/18

# Introduction

Write a paragraph summarizing the important information found in Part I and II of the *Initial Visit Application/School Description for California Public Schools*.

In August 2016, Epiphany Prep Charter School, Escondido (referred to as "Epiphany Prep") opened and currently serves 445 students in grades TK-6 from the Escondido Union School District (EUSD) attendance area. The school will add a grade level each year until the full enrollment of 700 students in TK-8 is reached in 2020.

Epiphany Prep offers a Dual-language 50/50 Model (Spanish/English), STEM-based (Science,Technology, Engineering & Mathematics) rigorous academic program through a Project-Based Learning (PBL) and Blended Learning (BL) environment. Utilizing various instructional strategies such as Inquiry Based Questions (e.g. Habits of Mind). Epiphany Prep adopted the California Common Core State Standards and integrates English Language Arts curriculum with History content. Every student in TK-6 engages in an enriching curriculum integrating core concepts from both content areas through reading, writing, and speaking skills.

Students use ST Math, Lexia and Achieve 3000 as part of a blended learning educational model. These three programs provide differentiated and personalized instruction and the embedded assessments and reports are used to address the learning gaps of each student. ST Math, Lexia and Achieve 3000 are used in combination with classroom instruction.

In order to effectively implement a successful 50/50 dual-language model, a school needs to start with a Transitional Kindergarten & Kindergarten cohort. Now students in Transitional Kindergarten through grade 1, receive dual-language (DL) instruction (Spanish/English); while grades 2-8 receive English-only (EO) instruction. Annually, the program expands by one grade level.. It is anticipated that the entire TK-8 program will be dual language by Fall 2025.

Student demographics include: 93% Hispanic, 4% two or more races, 2% African American and 1% Caucasian. Additional demographics include 10% Students with Disabilities; 72% English Language Learners (ELL); 7% Homeless, and 90% who qualify for free/reduced lunch.

Epiphany Prep provides instructional minutes that far exceed the state's requirements ranging from over twice as many instructional minutes in Kindergarten to 15,010 extra minutes in grades 4-6.

The Visiting Committee reminded the principal that Epiphany Prep will need to follow the ACS WASC Substantive Changes policy when additional grade levels are added.

# Category A:
# Organization

**A1. Vision and Purpose Criterion**: The school has a clearly stated vision and mission (purpose) based on its student needs, current educational research, the district Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP), and the belief that all students can achieve at high academic levels. Supported by the governing board and the district LCAP, the school's purpose is defined further by schoolwide learner outcomes and the academic standards.

**Selected statements from the school application (optional):**

The mission of Epiphany Prep is to deliver entrepreneurial and innovative educational opportunities that transform the learning potential of marginalized students by strengthening the whole child: intellect, character and spirit.
The vision of Epiphany Prep is to transform inner-city students for college, career and life.
• College: Our vision is to transform the learning potential of marginalized students by strengthening the whole child: intellect (academic achievement), character (moral traits), and spirit (resiliency capacity).
• Career: Our vision is to get students thinking globally: become globally relevant; globally connected; globally competitive; and globally valued. .
• Life: Our vision is to have students embracing virtues: excellence, by having a core set of values; responsibility, by working hard to reach very ambitious goals; wisdom, by always seeking knowledge and growth; and respect, by happily lending a hand to serve others.

**Visiting Committee comments:**

Epiphany Prep has a clear purpose and mission developed and refined over several years of experience by the governing board, staff and members of the school community.  The original Epiphany Prep Charter School in San Diego, now closing, provided the framework that is now being refined at the Escondido location.  Epiphany Prep Escondido has developed a five-year plan based on three goals and a roadmap for to success.  These goals include student achievement, classroom culture, and parental involvement, each listed with four initiatives that outline the policies and practices that all stakeholders will follow and implement at the school.  Some of these include the use of Professional Learning Communities, restorative practices, and building strong school supports such as the school site council (SSC), ELAC committee for second language learner programs and attaining WASC accreditation.  It is apparent that much thought, research, time, investment and practice went into each segment of the recruitment and planning and implementation of the school's mission, vision and purpose.

**A2. Governance Criterion**: The governing board (a) has policies and bylaws that are aligned with the school's purpose and support the achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes and academic, college, and career standards based on data-driven instructional decisions for the school; (b) delegates implementation of these policies to the professional staff; and (c) monitors results regularly and approves the single schoolwide action plan and its relationship to the LCAP.

**Selected statements from the school application (optional):**

Staff, parent and community involvement in the governance of Epiphany Prep is assured by

virtue of participation in its Board of Trustees ("Board"), advisory committee(s), and various subcommittees, ad hoc committees and school committees.

Epiphany Prep is governed by its bylaws. It is managed by its Board, which is led by a Chair and has five to seven members. The District may appoint a representative to sit on the board.

Board Duties: Generally, Board members have a duty of care, which requires a Trustee to act in a reasonable and informed manner and in good faith when participating in Board decisions and oversight, and a duty of loyalty requiring a trustee to act in the best interests of Epiphany Prep, irrespective of other entities or sympathies, and to avoid conflicts, real or potential.

The Board of Directors for Epiphany Prep has Articles of Incorporation and bylaws that were

filed with the California Secretary of State. According to the bylaws, the purpose and objective of Epiphany Prep is to deliver entrepreneurial and innovative education opportunities that transform the learning potential of marginalized students by strengthening their intellect, character and spirit.

Board and committee agendas are posted on the school's website and at the school site, visible to the general public, in accordance to the Brown Act. The Board meetings are held regularly on the Epiphany Prep campus and they are governed by the Roberts' Rules of Order.

The School's Principal presents on the State of the School that include updates on: academic performance of students; Data for LCAP, Accountability, student enrollment/attendance, and upcoming school wide events and issues. The School Principal, Vice President and President recommend policies that support the school's mission, vision and School-wide Learner Outcomes

**Visiting Committee comments:**

Epiphany Prep has an active governing board with agendas that are easily accessible on the website. Policies and bylaws are not currently available on the website and were not reviewed by the Visiting Committee. Information on this information is provided in the report as well the complaint and conflict resolution policies. Epiphany Prep is in the process of remodeling a large building over the next two years due to a 5.5 million dollar loan that was arranged through the governing board. No parents have been selected to the board, but they can act in an advisory capacity through the SSC, ELAC, board subcommittees, and partners. Parents did indicate that they knew that the school posted agendas about about meetings but they were not sure what the meetings were about and none in the group interviewed had attended. CSMC (Charter School Management Corporation) is the back-office manager for the Board. Epiphany Prep School of San Diego Inc. is a 501(c)3 nonprofit associated with the Epiphany Prep organization. The

President is in charge of community, partnerships and giving and the Vice President is in charge of innovation. This board structure has been in place for a number of years and members have received extensive training on many school organizational issues. The principal regularly presents updates at board meetings and often includes students or staff at these meetings.

**A3. Leadership: Empowerment and Continuous Planning and Monitoring Criterion**: Based on student achievement data, the school leadership, parent/community, and staff make decisions and initiate activities that focus on all students achieving the schoolwide learner outcomes, the academic standards, and the college- and career-readiness standards. The school leadership and staff annually monitor and refine the single schoolwide action plan and make recommendations to modify the LCAP based on analysis of data to ensure alignment with student needs.

**Selected statements from the school application (optional):**

All systems are grounded in the spirit of Teacher/Staff Led, Student Centered Professional Learning Community. The use of a Consensus Model of at least 80% approval to implement various practices is employed since the staff is small.

In January 2016, a systems level approach was initiated to move school practices forward such as:

• Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are designed to provide 90 minutes

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday to engage in collaboration and reflection on goals, including 45 minutes for planning and 45 minutes for collaboration.

Additionally, each Wednesday students are released early and staff mrmbers have 3.25 hours to

continue their work. Each year, with 230+ hours, PLC opportunities provide opportunityes to embrace the needs of the community.

• Invest with the San Diego County Office of Education Induction Program by providing financial supports for each teacher in the program.

• Build a strong formative and summative Assessment Calendar, which provides several

tools at the disposal of the staff in reaching students. In the classroom, LEXIA, ST MATH, ACHIEVE 3000, Chromebook and Google Apps for Education are computer assisted programs for students.

• Counselors, Deans and/or Liaisons support in modeling PBIS/Restorative Practices.

• Outside the classroom, teachers and staff have the "First Two Weeks in the Community" to establish partnerships that continue throughout the year.

Purposefully planning Parent Involvement for the academic year.

**Visiting Committee comments:**

The Visiting Committee observed first-hand the involvement of the entire staff in leadership and decision making at Epiphany Prep from the daily "Huddle" where staff met to make acknowledgements or thank their peers as well as answer a question and describe their readiness for the day through the review of the day's activities, an awards ceremony that recognized students from each classroom through a minimum day focused on reinforcement where teachers regrouped students and concentrated on buiding their skills until the afternoon PLC sessions where teachers planned for their assessments and reviewed student work and student progress. At the end of the day, the staff again met to review their progress. Teacher leadership is very strong at Epiphany Prep and they freely spoke about their pride in their work and the reasons why they came and stayed at the school. Not one teacher left from year one to year two in the school's brief history.

**A4. Staff: Qualified and Professional Development Criterion**: A qualified staff facilitates achievement of the student academic standards and the schoolwide learner outcomes through a system of preparation, induction, and ongoing professional development. There is a systematic approach to continuous improvement through professional development based on student performance data, student needs, and research.

**Selected statements from the school application (optional):**

**Epiphany Prep adheres to and hires teachers who meet the NCLB Highly-Qualified Teacher requirements and who support our school's mission, vision, and school wide learner outcomes. All teachers hold multiple or single subject credentials (depending on grade level) in addition to CLAD/BCLAD certification. Epiphany Prep Charter School adheres to No Child Left Behind High Quality Teacher requirements. All teachers employed hold multiple-subject credentials, are CLAD certified, and all single subject credentialed teachers teach in the subject area of their major. Epiphany Prep Charter Schools ("Epiphany Prep") is a 501(c)3 nonprofit public benefit corporation that operates two free, open-enrollment, college-preparatory public charter schools.**

**All staff are employed by Epiphany Prep. This Employee Handbook ("Handbook") includes Epiphany Prep's policies and procedures that are unique to our individual campuses. Each of the policies and procedures outlined here apply to all Epiphany Prep employees. A copy of the Handbook is provided to each employee at the time of hiring or during/following orientation, at which time the handbook is reviewed with each employee. As an employee of Epiphany Prep, they are expected to read the Handbook thoroughly and to know and abide by the policies outlined, as updated from time to time, throughout their employment. The Handbook cannot anticipate every situation or answer every question about employment, and it is not an employment contract. Where appropriate and necessary, the Principal or designee will explain additional procedures and policies. Job descriptions are used along with an employment contract when offering the position to all employees.**

**Over 350 hours of professional development opportunities per year for each teacher in the school who participate in groups called "Villages," Including Exploration, TK/K-1, 2-4, 5-6. Each year, $20,000 LCFF S/C from the budget is used to support, out of the classroom, professional development.**

**Visiting Committee comments:**

Staff at Epiphany Prep work an eight-hour day five days a week as part of their contracts and this provides many hours for staff development in a variety of areas. The principal monitors the work of the villages and other forms of professional development are also included. A calendar also alerts staff to upcoming trainings and teacher observations are common. The week before the WASC visit, the staff visited another traditional school in the district to see how other strategies were being used to improve student achievement. Teachers who were interviewed admitted that sometimes the days seem long, but in general, they were engaged in productive

learning activities that helped both themselves and their students.

**A5. Resources Criterion**: The human, material, physical, and financial resources are sufficient and utilized effectively and appropriately in accordance with the legal intent of the program(s) and LCAP to support students in accomplishing the academic standards, the college- and career-readiness standards, and the schoolwide learner outcomes.

**Selected statements from the school application (optional):**

PLC time is used to discuss the various needs of the community. The School Site Council discusses the various uses and plans for the allocations. The leadership team makes the final decisions. Main investment priorities continue to be in building a sustainable amount of employees who are well trained and providing the modified block schedule. Second and third tier of investments continue to be in Social Emotional and Technology improvements to address school needs.

Budgets: Epiphany Prep's Board is responsible for approving fiscal policies and the annual

budget. The administration, Finance Committee and back office support provider (CSMC) are involved in the development of the annual budget, with the Board reviewing the budget monthly. The initial budget reflects a five-year operational proposal. The budget proposal is updated in March with a final budget adopted in June.

Budget Assumptions: Epiphany Prep utilizes conservative assumptions for the LCFF

calculation, such as a 12.62% gap closure and EUSD's 12-13 base rate of $5,003 and 14-15 in lieu of property tax rate as listed on the CDE P2 certification. The Education Protection Account rate is $200 per ADA.

Revenue and Expense: Epiphany Prep projects that SB740 reimbursement will cover 70% of the rent expense. Epiphany Prep offers STRS retirement for its certificated employees and social and social security, and an optional 403b plan, for non-certificated employees.

Cash Flow Sources: Epiphany Prep has built a well-balanced budget for years 1 through 5. Public Charter School Grant Program (PCSGP) start-up funds were earned, and a Charter

School Revolving Loan was acquired. Donors/private support in loans/donations. Public funding support in LCFF (e.g. Title I, Title III) is provided.

**Visiting Committee comments:**

Since this is the second year of operation of Epiphany Prep's existence, many resources have been provided to the school including all facilities, furniture, signage, instructional supplies, computers, playgound areas, fencing, security measures and office supplies. Because the remodeling of the main building will begin this spring, classrooms consist of bungalows located in the front parking lot area. Many spaces must be shared such as the multi-purpose room/cafeteria, workroom, play area and work spaces. Currently all library books and extra stored items are unavailable. The school will remain open during construction and there is limited parking and a dangerous one-way drive for cars. The Main Office is currently located at the back of a building. Many support staff are available for supervision, the before and after school program and for classroom support. Each classroom has a large set of computers for student access and there is also an IT person on staff to assist with technology needs. Since the philosophy of the school is not based on classroom text adoptions but resources to implement their cross-disciplinary and project-based approaches, a limited

amount of texts were available to students in the classrooms.  Exploratory classes such as art were not observed so resources for those classes were not observed.  The school appeared to have sufficient resources to provide an effective program.  The Visiting Committee observed that some classrooms had classroom libraries but there seemed to be a lack of supplementary books in most classrooms.

**NOTE: CRITERION A6 APPLIES TO CHARTER SCHOOLS ONLY.**

**A6. Resources Criterion [Charter Schools Only]**: The governing authority and the school leadership execute responsible resource planning for the future. The school has developed policies, procedures, and internal controls for managing the financial operations that meet state laws, generally accepted practices, and ethical standards. The school is fiscally solvent and uses sound and ethical accounting practices (budgeting/monitoring, internal controls, audits, fiscal health, and reporting).

**Selected statements from the school application (optional)**

**Epiphany Prep Charter School is fiscally solvent. Our school contracts annually with an auditor for a comprehensive fiscal review. All Internal Revenue Service rules and regulations are adhered to. All administrators are apprised of new rules and regulation for form 990. Conflict of Interest and whistleblower policies are adhered to. Governance, board policies and procedures, as well as financial documents, are available for review as needed.**

**Epiphany Prep Charter School adheres to strict accounting policies. The budgeting process at Epiphany Prep Charter School is a transparent system of checks and balances established to obtain the highest level of control in all aspects of management. All reimbursements, purchases and check requests need to be signed off by the President or designee, before being submitted to he back office provider, CSMC. The Finance committee meets bimonthly with CSMC and bimonthly with the governing board to review the school's budget as well as to seek approval of major categorical changes. Epiphany Prep Charter School contracts its back office support with CSMC who provides comprehensive financial services. CSMC works diligently to ensure that expenses are being coded to reflect the programs from which the payments are being made and are able to provide up-to-date financials to the President and governing board to ensure expenses are being monitored. The school adheres to the state and federal guidelines in maintaining a fiscally sound budget with the required annual reserves.**

**At each governing board meeting, the current and future projected budget is discussed in detail. The governing board provides unconditional support and guidance to the charter school. The President, Vice President and Principal receive the school's budget prior to approval and revises it in collaboration with the Finance Committee, and CSMC, based on projected expenditures and revenues for the upcoming school year. The charter school is committed to maximizing its financial resources in its development of a high quality charter school. School-wide conversations have taken place so that all stakeholders are aware of the current economic state and are able to reach a consensus of what items or program areas are negotiable and which are not.**

**Visiting Committee comments:**

**Epiphany Prep is overseen by the Board of Directors who make decisions regarding**

resources but there are also many persons and groups who review the finances and safeguard that all proper procedures are followed.  The President and Vice President are both employed by the school and serve as advisors to the Board. There are a number of checks and balances in place to oversee finances.  The philosophy of the board to to be transparent in its actions.  Epiphany Prep publishes its salary schedules and provides retirement plans for many of its employees.  The Board appoints various subcommittees to oversee aspects of the organization as well.

# Category B:
# Standards-based Student Learning: Curriculum

**B1. Rigorous and Relevant Standards-based Curriculum Criterion**: All students participate in a rigorous, relevant, and coherent standards-based curriculum that supports the achievement of the academic standards, the college- and career-readiness standards, and the schoolwide learner outcomes. Through standards-based learning (what is taught and how it is taught), these are accomplished.

**Selected statements from the school application (optional):**

Epiphany utilizes a modified block schedule. At Epiphany Prep, teachers engage in a village articulation model with opportunities to calibrate and plan Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Fridays for 90 minutes. As an example of a village, Transitional Kindergarten, Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers are partnered where they have opportunities to have horizontal and vertical articulation sessions.

Professional Development takes place each Wednesday for  PLC themes for at least 3 hours. Blended instruction is a computer-mediated instructional strategy that leverages technology and focuses on the student-teacher relationship to enhance independence, engagement, and achievement. The first component of Blended Learning incorporates online delivery of content and instruction with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace.

Self-paced learning for students had a positive correlation with the following:

1. Quality of student work

2. Interest level of students during instruction

3. General excitement of students during class;

4. Student perseverance.

At Epiphany Prep, Blended Learning occurs in the classroom with 1:1 Chromebooks.

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**Visiting Committee comments:**

Epiphany Prep has a strong written plan to provide access to a standards-driven curriculum that is closely monitored and evaluated through an extended day and school year.  Expected student learner outcomes are known and monitored through a blended learning model that includes computer programs such as Lexia, STMath and Achieve 3000 that students use regularly and enjoy using them and seeing their achievement improve.  The school has a regular cycle of review and their philosophy is flexible so that social/emotional learning is infused throughout the life of the school. Planning is always done with outcomes including college, career and personal development in mind.

**B2. Access to Curriculum Criterion**: All students have equal access to the school's entire program and are provided assistance with a personal learning plan to meet the requirements of graduation and are prepared for the pursuit of their academic, personal, and career goals.

**Selected statements from the school application (optional):**

Students utilize technology on a daily-basis, collaborate with peers, communicate in multiple ways, but most importantly, they are given opportunities to problem-solve and be creative producers. With blended instruction, students share their responsibility for learning with their teacher. Student-centered learning is an approach that targets the essential skills and knowledge that students need while connecting learning to their experiences, strengths, and interests.

• Students take shared responsibility for learning in a variety of settings through authentic challenge projects. Teachers and adult mentors act as coaches to guide student learning;

• Learning becomes the constant and time is the variable;

• Progress is measured by students demonstrating mastery of skills and knowledge;

• Instruction is consistent with evidence-based strategies that demonstrate effective

student engagement and achievement.

**Visiting Committee comments:**

Students not only have academic core classes, but also participate in STEAM activities and exploratory courses that interest them and may be taught by a variety of different instructors. Student work is individualized as much as possible and students may be grouped in different ways throughout the school day. There are many opportunities for students to explore real-world applications and participate in community events. Academic support programs such as special education tutoring, small group instruction and modifications of assignments are common practices used at the school.

# Category C:
# Standards-based Student Learning: Instruction

**C1. Challenging and Relevant Learning Experiences Criterion**: To achieve the academic standards, the college- and career-readiness standards, and the schoolwide learner outcomes, all students are involved in challenging learning experiences.

**Selected statements from the school application (optional):**

Epiphany Prep's philosophy of classroom instruction is counter to the traditional approach of teaching and learning. Teachers engage in professional development via research-based practices that mirror the strategies they need to employ to best engage their students. The instructional delivery models we use are designed to shift the paradigm of teaching from teacher as director to motivate students to take ownership of their learning by creating patterns of learning they can apply to real and authentic assignment opportunities. Students develop as thinkers and become highly involved in the learning process. Teachers facilitate and guide student learning, as opposed to directing it. Teachers at Epiphany Prep, as a result of this new role, act as learning coaches who facilitate a continuum of student learning to our scholars. In addition to the about teaching and learning, the following instructional pedagogies will guide

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**Visiting Committee comments:**

Teachers regularly receive extensive training on the use of a variety of instructional strategies and engage students in a variety of projects, problem solving strategies and engagement with peers. Through the restorative practices program, students learn communication and helping skills that they are asked to apply regularly. Teachers work as coaches to build classroom environments with high expectation for student behavior and.achievement. The school acknowledges and recognizes student success and promote persistence in learning. Students interviewed were very articulate in what they were learning and how they were progressing.

**C2. Student Engagement Criterion**: All teachers use a variety of strategies and resources, including technology and experiences beyond the textbook and the classroom that actively engage students, emphasize higher order thinking skills, and help them succeed at high levels for college, career, and life.

**Selected statements from the school application (optional):**

Teachers integrate tasks into their lessons that include the nine instructional experiences that students need to be engaged in to promote and accelerate their learning. These include but are not limited to:

• Setting and articulating clear objectives or learning outcomes;

• Providing feedback on how students are progressing through formative and summative processes and integrating feedback from students on learning choices;

• Addressing student attitudes and beliefs towards learning by modeling and reinforcing effort and providing recognition for demonstrating appropriate learning skills;

• Enhancing learning through peer interactions such as explained above in cooperative/collaborative groups;

• Providing cues, questions, advance graphic organizers that lead students back to what they already know, or allow students to learn using prior knowledge and to organize the information as a bridge to new learning;

• Presenting learning using non-linguistic representations and invoking "mental images" of the learning which align with learning style theory of instructional delivery;

• Allowing students to synthesize the learning through note-taking and summarizing;

• Offering opportunities for practice in the classroom as well as follow-up homework opportunities, preferably through application experiences, only if concepts have already been taught and understood by students;

• Implementing experiences in which students are asked to identify similarities and differences in learning outcomes; and

• Formulating problems in which students can generate and test hypothesis and use metacognition in their mental processes.

**Visiting Committee comments:**

The Visiting Committee observed classrooms where students were working in groups to graph solutions to problems, develop models of mathematical principles, conduct experiments to make predictions of outcomes, reading independently and forming opinions of the topic, and explaining their reasoning  for the answer to a question.  While many of these activities were teacher-lead, many other examples demonstrated students working independently or in small groups.

# Category D:
# Standards-based Student Learning: Assessment and Accountability

**D1. Using Assessment to Analyze Monitoring and Report Student Progress Criterion**: The school uses a professionally acceptable assessment process to collect, disaggregate, analyze and report student performance data to the school staff, students, parents and other stakeholders.

**Selected statements from the school application (optional):**

Epiphany Prep launched a comprehensive assessment calendar to provide formative and summative results to teachers and support staff in order to pivot in our instructional approach. Staff reimagined report cards in the summer of 2016 and began the journey of competency-based grading with integrating the results using the indicators "Innovating" to "Basic" to identify the progress of students' understanding. The report cards were translated to ensure accurate communicate with the community.

**Visiting Committee comments:**

PLC's use a formal process to both gather and analyze date across the grade levels.  They have developed student goals across the grade levels with specific goals in English, Math and Writing and also in the school values or "Pillars" of Excellent, Respectful, Responsible and wise.  Results are posted for parents.  Students also conduct student-lead conferences to demonstrate their learning to parents on a regular basis.  The school strives to provide multiple opportunities to provide interesting and exciting activities to keep students' interests at the forefront of their education.

**D2. Using Assessment to Monitor and Modify Learning in the Classroom Criterion**: Teachers employ a variety of appropriate formative and summative assessment strategies to evaluate student learning. Students and teachers use these findings to modify the learning/teaching practices to improve student learning.

**Selected statements from the school application (optional):**

Using new formative assessments, customized and named EPCS Benchmarks, can further identify the standards that students are mastering and how they align with the teacher's practices. Epiphany Prep has developed and implemented a data-driven culture that includes administering, collecting, disaggregating and analyzing school-wide assessments on an ongoing basis and discussing those results in Professional Learning Communities (PLC) through department, division and school-wide meetings that take place on a daily and weekly basis. Student achievement data is used to identify student strengths and needs, including academic intervention, small group instruction, or a remediation course and/or additional academic tutoring. Assessment data is also used to assess student mastery, adjustments to the master schedule, the efficacy of the delivery of instruction, whether to re-teach content or concepts, or whether the purchase of additional supplemental materials is necessary.

Teachers and staff communicate with students on a regular basis to have the students self-monitor their data for STMath, Lexia and Achieve 3000. Teachers work with students to set personal academic growth goals. Classrooms have visual charts that track the progress made in the programs. Students are aware of the level they need to reach at the end of the school year. Students are able to articulate their progress through the program.

**Visiting Committee comments:**

Students were observed using blended learning with multiple computer programs as well as using hands-on activities with manipulatives in many classes. Literacy strategies including phonics, sight words, learning puzzles and other activities were observed in classrooms. Students indicated that they enjoyed the learning because the teachers helped them and they were recognized for learning and progressing in the class. Parents indicated that they appreciated the variety of classes and opportunities their students received and that they knew how their children were progressing as they could look on the computer student information system and the school staff were very good at communicating with them for any reason.

**D3. Using Assessment to Monitor and Modify the Program Schoolwide Criterion**: The school, with the support of the district and community, has an assessment and monitoring system to determine student progress toward achievement of the academic standards, the college- and career-readiness standards, and the schoolwide learner outcomes. The system drives the school's program to continually improve and to allocate resources to effectively meet student needs.

**Selected statements from the school application (optional):**

Epiphany Prep administers frequent assessments to monitor the efficacy of the instructional

program and to inform decision-making pertaining to instruction. Exit slips are used to identify students who have not yet gained mastery of the content. Teachers are provided with "real time" data from blended learning programs and benchmark assessments in order to drive instructional decisions and pull individual students or small groups for reteach opportunities. Each month,students Lexile levels (grades 2-8) are reassessed and reported through the Achieve 3000 Program. This information provides teachers with further data on student literacy achievement. Additionally, at the end of each trimester, benchmark assessments in the areas of mathematics and English Language Arts are administered and scored according to rubrics. As indicated, assessment data is used to inform curricular decisions, teacher supports, and professional development needs, as well as identify those standards that need to be re-taught through small group intervention and individualized student supports. Finally, assessment data is used to evaluate the efficacy of the educational program over time, and, as needed, make changes to curriculum sources or instructional strategies used.

Epiphany Prep understands the importance of data collection and analysis in measuring and improving student learning, using both external and internal standards-based assessments to

measure student performance, analyze data closely, and convert results into specific measurable action plans that support strong academic achievement for every student. All core components, language arts, mathematics, science, and social science along with English language development are assessed in a comprehensive and dynamic system.

**Visiting Committee comments:**

The school's staff spend much time on a weekly basis working on assessments, student progress, modifications and support and adapting instruction based on individual needs of students. Teachers assess student progress three times a year formally and the schoolwide plan is adjusted yearly based on formal student outcomes. Teachers are encouraged to develop their curriculum and assessments based on student need and individual teacher strengths. Since they work closely with their peers in villages, multiple communication pathways allow the staff to modify instructions rapidly as needed in the best interests of the students.

# Category E:
# School Culture and Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth

**E1. Parental and Community Involvement Criterion**: The school leadership employs a wide range of strategies to encourage family, business, industry, and community involvement, especially with the learning/teaching process.

**Selected statements from the school application (optional):**

Parent volunteers are the foundation of student based-events. They support the school from Winter Festivals to support in classrooms. Strong partnerships exist with the San Diego Children's Discovery Museum, where they hosted various events for students. Most recently, they donated gently used furniture for a community project. A new partnership with California State University, San Marcos Police and Latino Cultural Center  co-sponsored the first annual Low Rider event on their campus. A Step Beyond, a nonprofit community group provides dance and academic support for students after school. Additionally, several special education students from the local high school provide weekly classroom support.

The purpose of Parents of Epiphany Prep (PEP) is to be the voice of all parents and support the goals of the school/organization, including:

  • Creating a positive, warm and welcoming learning environment

  • Liaisons to various committees (e.g. school board, volunteer, parent academy)

  • Celebrate teacher and support staff to build trust and morale on campus

  • Seek out resources for inside and outside of the classroom activities

Epiphany Prep continues to grow the PEP group and encourage parent volunteerism through continued outreach, monthly meetings and the creation of a Parent University dedicated to instructing parents on the best practices in behavior management, personal motivation, conflict resolution and instructional strategies for literacy development in the home.

**Visiting Committee comments:**

Parents are actively involved in school.  Parents indicated that they heard about Epiphany Prep from friends and by word of mouth so no recruitment was needed.  There are more applicants than spaces for most grade levels.  The Visiting Committee observed an Awards Ceremony where students from each classroom were recognized for exemplifying the values of the school and proudly received a medal that they wore for the rest of the day.  Many parents attended the ceremony.   The school counselor knows every child in the school and is very active in communicating with parents.  In general, all stakeholders at Epiphany Prep are very happy with the school and feel that their children are treated well and learning too.   Parents are often involved in support for students at home as part of the RTI process.  Students with special needs are welcomed at the school and respect and empathy for their needs are apparent in observations and conversations at the school.

**E2. School Environment Criterion**: The school ensures that it is a) a safe, clean, and orderly place that nurtures learning and b) has a culture that is characterized by trust, professionalism, and high expectations for all students with a focus on continuous school improvement.

**Selected statements from the school application (optional):**

PBIS is contrasted with traditional disciplinary models that are focused on reacting to misbehavior after it occurs (e.g., putting out fires). Rather, PBIS focuses on the prevention of behaviors. Staff teach students how to behave and have to set a structure for expectations. PBIS has three focal points:

1. A focus on prevention

2. A focus on the positive

3. A focus on instruction

Epiphany Prep strives to maintain a safe, clean and drug-free environment conducive to student learning. The staff and students exude their campus pride and keep the campus free of graffiti and litter. School staff participate in supervision duties before and after school, during break and lunch. Adult supervision throughout the campus is critical in order to maintain safety and a clean school environment for all students.

The Principal reviews, revises and implements the Comprehensive School Safety Plan with approval from the school site council. Monthly emergency drills take place schoolwide. Also, the annual Facility Inspection (FIT) report is completed and all findings are addressed with the facility partner.

**Visiting Committee comments:**

Interviews with staff indicated that pride in working at Epiphany Prep is evident regardless of the positions held.  There is a sense of family and responsibility for all students by all adults.  All observed interactions with students and staff demonstrated respect, concern for safety and positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior.  The teachers meet before school to prepare for the day and also most afternoons to debrief their PLC or staff development meetings.  Several teachers reported that they had taught in other schools, but they would not go back to a traditional school.  There is a sense of positivity and optimism that permeates the campus.

**E3. Personal and Academic Student Support Criterion**: All students receive appropriate academic support and intervention to help ensure school, college, and career success. Students with special talents and/or needs have access to a system of personal support services, activities, and opportunities at the school. These are enhanced by business, industry, and the community.

**Selected statements from the school application (optional):**

Student Led Conferences began with the "Big Idea" grounded in a Teacher driven, student centered teaching, learning and leadership environment. The Student led conferences model empowers their voice in achieving their academic, personal/social and career/college goals. Best practices are included to bring the voice of students alive in celebrations and challenging them to continue to achieve their goals as shown below:

  • Students will have the opportunity to share, in their voice, their celebrations

  • Students will have the opportunity to share their current and future goals to accomplish

  • Students will be empowered by their homeroom teacher to ensure they are ready to

  share their work

  • Students, teachers, support staff and leadership teams will ensure parents that student

  led conferences are to empower students and encourage them to schedule another

  appointment if a more comprehensive conversation is required

With the professional development out of the San Diego County of Office of Education, staff implemented Restorative Practices, and implemented use of community circles to use as conflict mediation with staff and students.

The school Counselor conducts lessons weekly to ensure students meet their personal/social, college/career and academic goals. Students are also referred to local agencies for additional mental health support. A community partnership with Big Smiles for free dental screenings helps prevent dental problems.

As described with the modified block master schedule, ALL students have the opportunity to engage in Exploration non-core courses from TK-6. All students have universal access to courses such as, but not limited to: Art, STEAM, Dance, Athletics, Music, & Video Production.

**Visiting Committee comments:**

Support at Epiphany Prep is school-wide and includes academic and social/emotional .and other services are available to all students. The school website contains a confidential referral so nay stakeholder can refer a concern to the school to be acted upon. There are many activities and exploratory activities available at the school and community partnerships continue to be developed within the local community. Parents are aware of how they can access all aspects of the school. The Visiting Committee observed that the students were polite and seemed to get along well. The campus, though dominated by asphalt was attractive and inviting with the classrooms arranged around a courtyard with flowers and picnic tables. Even the custodian said the students called him "Don Juan" out of respect and often helped him so he works as hard as he can because all of the children seem like "his" children. Epiphany Prep will be adding two additional grade levels over the next two years along with a new building and additional staff. Part of Epiphany Prep's plan is to adjust to these changes without losing aspects of the close-knit community that currently exists.

# Ongoing School Improvement

## Schoolwide Areas of Strength

1.  Epiphany Prep has a well-developed plan for implementation of a high-performing school over time based on a sound philosophical belief system, strong leadership, educational research, best practices, innovative approaches and a sound financial plan.
2.  Ongoing commitment to staff growth and professional development for all staff including an extended school day and school year and resources to ensure implementation, followup and effectiveness of strategies
3.  Continued development of a positive school culture by all stakeholders that is reflected in policies and procedures implemented at the school.
4.  .Maintaining at least a 97% student attendance rate consistently over time
5.  Strong parent and community involvement and attendance at multiple events and school activities
6.  Incorporating a multi-faceted blended learning program that provides for individualized instruction and allows for continuous assessment of progress

## Critical Areas for Follow-up
1.  Ensuring all students make substantial progress in academic achievement each year using a variety of metrics and providing effective interventions and support for those needing additional assistance
2.  Expand and monitor staff development training and implementation to improve rigorous academic quality of instruction and assessment across the curriculum
3.  Plan for smooth transitions during facility buildout to accommodate growth
4.  Provide consistent and regular counselor support to meet all students' academic, social/emotional and career goals
5.  Investigate and address a balanced literacy approach in all classrooms so teachers have sufficient technology resources as well as classroom libraries at a variety of levels/languages to meet the diverse learning needs of students.