Smaller Learning Communities

SLC Design Proposal

Submitted to
Los Angeles Unified School District

I. SLC DESIGN PROPOSAL
RECOMMENDATION SIGN-OFF ROUTING SHEET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Site Council Recommendation to Proceed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of School: South Gate High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Small Learning Community: Media and Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal’s signature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UTLA Chapter Chairperson’s signature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Site Council Chairperson’s signature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Smaller Learning Communities

SLC Design Proposal

II. COVER SHEET

Name of School: South Gate High School
Location Code: 8871

School SLC Contact:
Name: Patrick Moretta
Title: Principal
Mailing Address: 3351 Firestone Blvd.
              South Gate, CA 90280
Telephone #: (323) 568-5600
Fax #: (323) 249-0237
Email: ptm5005@lausd.net

Proposed SLC Name:
Media and Communication Academy

Design Team Leader:
Name: Rowland Santos
Title: Academy Lead Teacher
Mailing Address: 3351 Firestone Blvd.
Telephone #: (323) 567-2333
Fax #: (323) 249-0237
Email: rowlandsantos@yahoo.com
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title/Organization Affiliation</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rowland Santos</td>
<td>Lead Teacher</td>
<td>SGHS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria T. Ayala</td>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>SGHS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candy Quintanilla</td>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>SGHS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Smaller Learning Communities

SLC Design Proposal

III. TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. SLC Design Proposal Routing Sheet ................................................................. 1
II. Cover Sheet ........................................................................................................ 2
III. SLC Advisory Board ..................................................................................... 3
IV. Table of Contents .............................................................................................. 4
V. Letter of Intent .................................................................................................. 5
VI. SLC Technical Assistance Options Checklist .................................................. 6
VII. SLC Design by Attribute ................................................................................ 7
IV. LETTER OF INTENT

When a SLC design team begins initial planning at a school site, they are required to submit a Letter of Intent to their School Site Council with a copy of the Technical Assistance Checklist and a Conflict Resolution Plan. This information will be used to assist the team as appropriate.

Federally-funded SLC schools are not required to submit a Letter of Intent, since their original SLC formation process is past this stage of development.
V. SLC TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CHECKLIST

SLC Design Teams are entitled to receive professional development and technical support. What are the greatest challenges that you can foresee at this time to completing your work? What assistance do you need? Please check all that apply and attach to your letter of intent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foreseeable Challenges</th>
<th>Check All That Apply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attribute analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision creation/identity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student outcomes</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matrix</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School to work transition</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic requirements: A-G</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content integration</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessments/evaluation</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alterations to facilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience building</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth development strategies</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisories</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership roles</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bell schedules</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contract issues/waivers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best practices</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budgets</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community partnerships</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent outreach and involvement</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student outreach and involvement</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School staff Outreach and Involvement</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union (UTLA) agreements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with the Local District</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unifying Vision / Identity

A. Unifying Vision

The vision of the Media and Communication (MAC) academy is to incorporate media and communication skills across the curriculum in order to meet and exceed the California Content Standards so that all students can achieve academic success. We want to prepare our students for life-long learning in a media-influenced society. We promote a creative and rigorous education across our curriculum through the use of media and communication skills. By working together, we instill strong ethics that help students achieve personal and academic goals.

To accomplish the academy’s vision, we will be devoted to the study of the various facets of journalism and communication and their impact on politics, culture, technology and society. Students in this academy will explore experiences in print and broadcast journalism, advertising and public relations. They will learn new judgment, statistics and mathematical data gathering to inform opinions, reporting, the ability to think critically and write effectively under pressure of tight deadlines, print layout and design, and public speaking. Reporting issues will include science and technology, social justice, and review of the arts. Within all areas of media and communication, students will understand media law, ethics and social responsibility. The goal of the academy is to prepare students to apply what they have learned to virtually any field for which they have an interest, ranging from technology to government, from charitable work to entertainment.

All stakeholders are included in monitoring and continually developing the vision of the Media and Communications academy. Academy meetings are held weekly in which teachers within the academy discuss the progression and current status of the academy.
obtaining its vision. Students are included in the monitoring of the academy’s vision through periodic surveys distributed in their homerooms and specific discussions in their classes. Parents are involved in the monitoring of the vision through the involvement of several academy focused activities such as; parent conferences, back to school nights, awards assemblies and our semester academy rewards banquets. The Media and Communications academy will continue to monitor the vision of the academy through quarterly planning meetings in which teachers, students, parents and other various stakeholders will discuss the present state of academy and the future of the academy.

Our budgetary plans are aligned with the academy’s vision, goals, and objectives. The academy has focused on purchasing items that support our elective classes as well as activities that are media and communications focused. For example, we purchased digital cameras and necessary accessories to support South Gate’s first time ever school wide news broadcast program. An ongoing class the academy is responsible for is the campus newspaper. We have used our budget towards the printing of the newspaper and other various needs within our journalism and Mass Media classes.

B. Identity

The Media and Communication academy at South Gate High School has created a vision based on the collaboration of teachers, the academy counselor, an administrator and students. This shared vision guides our academy and the activities and opportunities we offer our students.

We work as a team with guidelines and timelines to efficiently offer services to the students, school and community. The teachers and students in our academy are an integral part of the development of these services by assuming leadership roles and creating partnerships that allow the academy to function at its best.

Our SLC is centrally located in the building that was once known as the Practical Arts Building and in the adjoining bungalows. Because of the need for a functional laboratory, the science courses are offered in a separate building. The physical proximity of the classrooms allows students and teachers to see one another on a daily basis.

The Media and Communication Academy is open to all students and it currently represents a heterogeneous group of approximately 405 students in grades 9 – 12 who chose to form part of the academy. Students in this academy share a similar interest which is displayed through their logo and t-shirts/sweatshirts which they already wear during special academy events. Faculty members have already purchased our polo shirts and we wear them on Fridays to identify ourselves as M.A.C academy members.

The Media and Communications Academy offers a variety of classes that are media and communications focused. Students in the academy are able to take classes such as a mass
media class, journalism, yearbook, debate, public speaking, film, graphic arts, creative writing, and a specialized news broadcast class.

As stated academy meetings are held weekly in which teachers within the academy discuss the progression and current status of the academy obtaining its vision. During these meetings teachers make several decisions regarding the academy collectively. At times we make budgetary decisions, scheduling decisions, disciplinary decisions and other academy needs and decisions are made as needed. Students, parents and other relevant stakeholders are welcome to these meetings and we plan on organizing these meetings in which all stakeholders are represented.

Equity and Access

The academy of Media and Communication is accessible to all students who wish to join. We have open enrollment at the beginning of every school year and welcome any student who wants to explore experiences in print, broadcast journalism, advertising, and public relations. Although students are encouraged to follow their four-year academy plan, the program also allows students equal opportunities to participate in Advanced Placement courses, or electives that are outside of the academy.

To ensure that every student in this academy has access to a rigorous curriculum, the Lead Teacher, Counselor, and administrator work collaboratively to include SLC specific A-G courses in the Master schedule, and ensure that students have access to classes that are aligned with state content and performance standards.

Our inclusive plan accommodates students’ individual needs in the courses we offer. Students with disabilities, English language learners, and GATE students are considered when planning curriculum and incorporating specific teaching strategies for the school year. In meeting their needs, we have adopted instruction within the SLC based upon learning needs within a rigorous culturally relevant curriculum. The heterogeneous groups allow students to support one another in their academic and personal growth.

The academy teachers collectively meet and agree to provide rigorous curriculum that is attainable to all of our students. Discussions about rigor and how it can be identified in the classroom and in student work are held so teachers can adjust their teaching to maximize student success. This planning allows us to create a challenging learning environment that engages and motivates all students to perform at their maximum potential.

This academy is devoted to the study of various facets of journalism and communication and their impact on politics, culture and technology and society. They will learn news judgment, statistics, and mathematical data gathering to inform opinion, reporting, the ability to think critically and write effectively under the pressure of deadlines, print
layout and design and public speaking. These experiences prepare them to perform better academically while getting exposure to diverse cultures. It is important that our students become cognizant of the cultures of the world and understand and respect them so they can properly represent these cultures in their media reports and presentations. Also, the academy plans to implement a tutorial and extended learning program to support struggling students in the core classes in addition to an intervention program that they have already started implementing through the support of Judy Smith, a Professional Learning Community consultant.

**Personalization**

Students in the Academy of Media and Communication are not only exposed to other cultures, but they learn about their own. It is imperative that students know their culture so they can identify with others and learning more about themselves.

Approximately 405 students are currently serviced by 12 teachers who will instruct and guide the students throughout their high school career. The students in our academy are also serviced by one counselor, Ms. Ayala who gets to know the students’ needs and assists them in programming their schedule. The counselor provides information and guidance on A-G requirements, academy electives, and exposes them to college requirements and post-secondary options. The counselor also attends the weekly academy meetings to provide support to teachers and gather data the teachers need to make programming decisions and recommendations to the administration. Although the academy is still in the early stages of developing formal advisories that will contribute to the reduction of the drop-out rate and improvement of the attendance rate, for now the academy meets on a weekly basis to discuss intervention for students whom they have identified. Once the advisories are in place, more intervention opportunities will become available for struggling students and/or students with special needs.

Our SLC teachers remain in the academy to provide a nurturing environment that motivates students to raise their own expectations and come to school prepared to work beyond the classroom. Teachers and students work collaboratively to decide on topics for assemblies and discover innovative ways to present the rigorous work they create in their classrooms to all stakeholders. Activities such as the academy’s Coffee Night is a creative way to encourage students to present work such as poems, essays, songs or other written material they have created in their classes. Students manage the planning and set up of presentations to parents, community members and the student body during Open House and Back to School Night. The school newspaper is also generated from our academy where students, with the guidance of teachers, inform the student body on entertainment news, world issues, commentaries, and local events. Our academy is also responsible for the first on-campus student-led news broadcast. This broadcast informs the student body of school information, events, and important dates at South Gate High School. They gather the information, write their scripts, record the broadcast and televise...
it to the entire school, as anchor men and women. Working with others in their academy allows students to identify with our academy and feel committed to and share in the joy of its success.

In an effort to expose the students of our academy to meaningful, adult relationships, academy members will work to create an Intervention Workshop where students in need will be invited to attend study skills and character development classes. These relationships will create more respect towards the teachers and students will feel a sense of belonging when they enter the teachers’ classrooms. To go beyond the classroom, teachers and students created Teacher versus Students athletic activities that take place after school, off campus field trips to media and communication related venues such as a tour at the Los Angeles Times, and visiting the museum of radio, TV, and film. This provides students with the opportunity to interact with their teachers socially, thus creating a more personalized relationship with the teachers.

Mr. Santos continues to improve instruction within the academy through continual professional development. Along with the school wide Cadre and various professional development conferences and workshops Mr. Santos is currently attending a Master in Education and administration program. Mr. Santos along with several other teachers within the academy created an academic strategy team that trains other teachers within the academy in the most updated, researched based teaching strategies at the academy weekly meetings.

Rigorous Standards-Based Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

The Media and Communication Academy has been focusing on providing students a focused standards-based curriculum that includes thinking critically, communicating effectively, and becoming problem-solvers through a rigorous learning environment.

The academy personalizes an instructional environment that supports high academic success through standards driven instruction. The academy provides students with course work necessary to meet graduation requirements and be prepared for post secondary experiences through A-G courses, classes that are aligned with state content and performance standards, and a rigorous academic program that focuses on broadcast journalism, advertising, and public relations. For example, students in the M.A.C academy are encouraged to take AP English Literature and AP English Language along with electives such as mass media, yearbook, journalism, speech, film, photo, graphic arts, and foreign language.

The media and Communications Academy utilizes several forms of student assessments to measure student progress toward meeting and exceeding state content and performance standards. Not only does the academy comply with all of the district’s periodic
assessments but within the academy professional learning communities have been created where a number of formal, informal and authentic assessments have been created to measure student progress. The teachers within the academy are committed to data driven instruction and meeting the needs of all learners. All teachers within the academy are devoted to developing professionally and incorporating the most updated researched based, effective teaching strategies available.

Teachers have been working collaboratively to plan and develop a common pacing plan to guide their instruction, as well as common formative and summative assessments in each subject to inform and plan future instruction. Moreover, to continue the focus on assessments and the importance of data, Mr. Santos, as part of the leadership team is studying Schmoker’s book, *Results Now: How We Can Achieve Unprecedented Improvements in Teaching and Learning*, which he will use with the academy to guide them in their collaborative work. As an academy, they will focus on measurable goals, to improve instruction in the higher-order proficiencies (Bloom’s) to improve student achievement, and literacy. Once the academy builds capacity, the rest of the teachers will also focus on data-driven instruction within their content area as well as with the rest of the academy through interdisciplinary work.

Professional development opportunities continue to be offered to teachers to enhance their knowledge of standards-based instruction and strategies they can use to increase student success in their classroom. The Literacy Cadre, which consists of math, science, social science, English, and special education teachers, also meet on a monthly basis to collaboratively participate in lesson study which includes designing effective standards-based curriculum units and learning about research based instructional strategies. Cadre members are expected to share best practices with colleagues and take on leadership roles within their academies and departments. At this time, there are teachers from the Media and Communication academy who participate in the cadre: Ms. Murillo and Ms. Mandzuik, English teachers, a Social Studies teacher, Ms. Benn, and a health teacher, Mr. Santos, who is also the academy lead teacher.

Teachers are also working on interdisciplinary units with a focus on the academy and the California State Standards so that they have culminating tasks and rubrics with rigorous expectations. An academy rubric for Academy Culminating Senior Projects will be created to ensure rigor within the academy classes.

To support the SLC faculty and monitor the implementation of techniques taught, the Media and Communication administrator, Ms. Quintanilla, with the support of other administrators including local district, visit classrooms regularly. The focus is on specific strategies that have been introduced and practiced with the faculty to support literacy and critical thinking. Through established academy goals, teachers are in the beginning stages of monitoring each other’s classroom instruction to learn what strategies are assisting students.
To further support students in the Media and Communication Academy, specific courses and tutorial programs have been established during school hours and after-school. During the school day, all ninth grade students are enrolled in an 87 minute Algebra 1 class that runs from September to June. Although the academy is on the 4X4 block schedule, extra time has been allotted to ensure that students and teachers have time to review and prepare students for meeting the Algebra 1 standards. The goal is to have as many students pass Algebra 1 and continue with Geometry; hence teachers have been working on the common pacing plan and assessments. Since students will soon be expected to complete three years of high school math, the department and academy teachers want to ensure that students have the skills to meet the Algebra 2 curriculum and have a better opportunity to attend a four-year university of their choice.

The English teachers within the academy are also working collaboratively with the English 10 students who, like the ninth grade Algebra 1 students, are enrolled in a year-long English 10 course, where they receive additional literacy support. The focus on literacy not only supports students with passing the CAHSEE, but also supports them in their other courses through the additional focus on literacy and expository writing.

Intervention will also be accessible to all students through the availability of tutorial sessions, Beyond the Bell, and the implementation of Study Hall beginning in the fall 2007.

The academy is also working on strengthening their intervention plan for at-risks students within the day schedule, through the use of a guided study hall, that would be supported by academy teachers. All of the lead teachers collaborated over the summer to establish a pyramid of intervention. The lead teachers of the academies discussed various levels of intervening in order to see success for our 9th and 10th grades. Essentially all students will have a study hall period throughout the week. Teachers of the academy will have the opportunity to tutor students within the academy that are at risk during these study hall periods. Teachers, counselors, and parents work as a team to assist students that are failing or are not succeeding even with the built in study hall schedule. Conferences are held with students that have not succeeded within the study hall and specific tutoring provided by academy teachers. We eventually plan on incorporating this same plan for our 11th and 12th grade students of the academy.

Accountability and Distributed Leadership

The Academy of Media and Communication includes 12 teachers, a counselor and an administrator who have a shared responsibility to realize the vision of the academy for the students who choose to learn with us. We distribute leadership by rotating roles such as secretary, time keeper, and facilitator. The positions are filled through a volunteer and/or voting process when necessary, especially the Lead teacher position. Also, to
better represent students and their needs, the academy is in the process of developing a plan for including students and parents in the academy’s decision-making process.

We have also created four committees to ensure the completion of tasks and activities proposed by students and teachers. The committees are as follows:

- **Academic Excellence** – Works with counselor to identify students who are performing well in their courses.
- **Prevention** – Works with counselor to identify areas of growth for students and discusses different strategies to help students succeed in their courses.
- **Rewards Banquet** – Assists with the awards assemblies and organizes the end of the year banquet for to recognize academy students for various accomplishments.
- **Student Identity** – develop and organizes activities such as Coffee Night and assemblies that provide students with the opportunity to participate and become more involved with the academy.

To ensure tasks are completed, we set timelines and deadlines. We also evaluate the efficiency of our work through these deadlines and work together to accomplish tasks. Also, we realize that in order to plan the next steps and the use of future resources needed to complete the development and implementation of the SLC, we plan to use the self-assessment rubric each year. With the rubric, we will be able to assess the current plans and progress in regards to the seven LAUSD attributes. The data will then guide us in the collaborative decision-making process when addressing academy needs and growth.

Currently, some of the faculty members also contribute to the design-making process and in schoolwide matters by participating as members of the Leadership team and as department chairpersons. The academy plans to ensure that all SLC stakeholders are represented in schoolwide councils/committees so that their representatives voice the opinions and needs of the SLC.

**Collaboration / Parent and Community Engagement**

The Academy of Media and Communication at South Gate High School communicates their information and shares its success through avenues such as Open House, Back to School Night, School Newspaper, and Coffee Night. We make an effort to extend the number of participants and attendees to parents and the community. We want to be more proactive in encouraging participation through increased communication via flyers, calls home, community bulletins and marquee announcements.
We will create partnerships with local newspapers and other media outlets such as the Los Angeles Times and Adelphia Cable to create internships for our students. This collaboration between the school and community will open more doors to the students in our academy as well as expose them to the careers in media and communication. Students are influential voices in the decision-making of our academy and we welcome parents to participate not only in activities, but in the curriculum discussions and needs assessments of our students.

We also plan to improve communication with South Gate Middle School. Although the academy already participates in the articulation process with the middle school, more communication needs to occur to determine which support systems exist or need to be implemented at the middle school through Local District 6 support.

**Professional Development**

The Media and Communication Academy understands that in order for reform to be effective, it needs to be a cohesive, collaborative effort that responds to the identified needs and characteristics of the academy, involves all stakeholders, and has commitment from those expected to carry out the change. For that reason, the professional development designed for last year and this current year focused on the identified needs of students as determined through data analysis and the needs for specific instructional strategies related to their identified academic needs, as mentioned by the WASC visiting committee. We participated in school-wide professional development by preparing for the WASC three-year progress report. We also met in both home groups and focus groups to review the 2003-2004 self-study report and the critical areas for follow-up provided by the visitation team. Discussions were held and input was taken from all to determine the school’s progress based on the school-wide critical areas for follow up.

To address the identified needs and characteristics of the SLC population, instructional coaches, through the Literacy Cadre, provide monthly training for each of the core content areas: language arts, mathematics, social studies and science, utilizing the coaching model. This model includes expert training, demonstration lessons, co-teaching, and opportunities for collaborative feedback and planning. In addition, the coaches facilitate lesson study which is teacher collaboration in designing standards-based lessons and introduce specific research-based instructional strategies. Overall, focus has been expository writing across all content areas, scaffolding to support literacy and critical thinking, higher Bloom’s taxonomy to provide rigor, and accountable talk.

The master schedule also supports professional development through implementation of the common conference period. Teachers from the core departments have the opportunity to work on interdisciplinary lessons, share research-based practices, and look at student work. Although most of the work on interdisciplinary thematic lessons is in the beginning stages, the academy is working towards the development of these lessons.
The academy lead teacher also meets on a monthly basis with the Leadership Team to discuss school developments, such as the creation of the learning of Professional Learning Communities. To deepen the learning on establishing professional learning communities within the academy, the academy lead, Rowland Santos, attended an institute led by Rick DuFour in June 2007 and will continue to attend upcoming learning institutes. The main goal is to align the academy practices to improve student learning through collaborative teams and systematic processes.