

WASC Three-Year Term Revisit Visiting Committee Report  
**THREE-YEAR-TERM REVISIT  
VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT**

**WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES**

**MIT ACADEMY  
THREE-YEAR TERM PROGRESS  
REPORT**

**2 Positive Place**

**Vallejo, California 94589**

**March 10 – March 11, 2014**

**Visiting Committee Members**

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## I. Introduction

### General Comments and Significant Changes/Developments

In 1999, Mare Island Technology Academy (MIT), an independent, public charter middle school, was founded through the Vallejo City Unified School District, the chartering agency, and the school began with 167 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders. Two years later, MIT Academy High School (MIT) was chartered with 61 students. MIT was initially accredited with the maximum 3 years allowable for new schools, followed by a 6 year accreditation in 2006, and was subsequently designated as a “distinguished school” in 2008. MIT has a somewhat unique structure in that a grassy knoll separates the high school campus from the middle school campus, which is named Mare Island Technology Academy. Although each school has its own charter, they are governed by the same Board of Directors and share site administration, teachers, and staff; middle school students also have access to high school classes.

MIT Academy has made significant gains in the last 3 years in every measure of student achievement. For example, since the last WASC visit,

- The API has increased 74 points to 775 (state average = 757; similar schools = 759)
- The graduation rate has fluctuated, but is currently 15 percentile points higher than in 2011.
- The UC/CSU eligibility rate has increased from 55% to 67% (State average = 38.3%)
- CST scores moved from 9%  $\geq$ state average to 55%  $\geq$ state average
- CAHSEE scores increased from 75% average to 91% average (State average = 84%)
- And these gains reflected solid increases in achievement by the significant subgroups and a decrease in the achievement gap.
  - MIT met the API growth targets for every subgroup in 2013;
  - The achievement gap for Hispanics was decreased by 21.9% in the last year
  - The achievement gap for African Americans was reduced by 28.1% in the last year
  - The achievement gap for English Learners was decreased by 12.3% in the last year
  - The achievement gap for SED students was decreased by 60% in the last year
  - On the CAHSEE, SED students scored as well as the general population, and RFEP students scored higher

It is also important to note that these significant academic gains—for both the general population and significant subgroups—were achieved at the same time that the SED/poverty/free and reduced eligibility rate jumped from 55.1% to 65.1%.

The school has also developed goals in the strategic plan addressing Academic Achievement; Student Services and Support; Technology and Facilities; and Parent and Community Relations. The plan is thorough and incorporates data points currently being tracked as well as new data points which reflect the implementation of Common Core State Standards, College Readiness and Differentiated Instruction.

There have been a multitude of significant changes and developments at MIT since the last WASC visit. Some have been driven by external forces (e.g., funding restraints in prior years, shift to CCSS), but most are reflective of change driven by internal design and intent to institute continuous improvement. They are: strategic planning; formative assessments and RtI; pyramid

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and recognitions; CCSS and CAPP; staffing.

- **Strategic planning:** The strategic planning process was initiated and evaluated in 2012, improved and evaluated in 2013, and improved again at the recently held update session on 1/25/14. The process results in identification of major goals for a 5-year plan; currently the plan is 2012 through 2017. Administration and faculty then work together to identify SMART goals to identify indicators of success and timelines. The goals and SMART goals are then presented to the Board, and, upon approval constitute the Strategic Plan for the next year. The Strategic Plan goals and indicators additionally become a part of the Board's evaluation of the Director. The document itself is published annually on the school website and summarized in the monthly newsletter.
- **Formative assessments and RtI:** Between 2012 and 2014, the system for formative assessments and RtI has been implemented, evaluated, and improved each year.
- **Pyramid and recognitions:** The Pyramid is designed to support students to be successful—both students who need additional academic coaching to understand concepts and students who need additional structure to complete their work. The recognitions program is aptly named to recognize students who are doing well in a variety of areas. It was initiated formally in 2012 in response to the WASC recommendation.
- **CCSS and CAPP:** MIT is a participant in their most recent grant program, the CAPP Demonstration Partnership: Enhancing Instruction that Leads to Student Readiness for Higher Education through Full Implementation of Common Core State Standards.
- **Staffing:** At the recommendation of the Director, the Board approved the phase-out of non-credentialed instructional staff in 2012. The school has a partnership with CALTeach Berkeley, and has hired four credentialed teachers through this program in the three years.

## II. Follow-up Process

### The School's Process for Follow-Up on Recommendations

A significant action step embedded in each WASC criteria of its action plan was to refine and implement a broad-based, inclusive strategic planning process, which fully incorporates the WASC Action Plan and the Single Site Plan. Through the yearly strategic planning process, all stakeholders have worked together to monitor the implementation and accomplishment of the WASC Action Plan and the areas for improvement as recommended by the previous visiting committee. During the WASC revisit, teachers, administration, the Board, students and parents confirmed that they had opportunities to participate in providing meaningful input through the strategic planning process. Participants expressed enthusiasm and appreciation for the effective collaborative structure of the strategic planning process.

In preparation for the mid-term revisit, the school's WASC coordinators presented a detailed review of the last WASC visit findings to the staff prior to the beginning of the school year. Groups were formed according to professional learning communities, and these groups provided valuable feedback via shared Google documents. Once all data was collected and analyzed, a self-study report was compiled based on the data gathered. At that point, electronic copies of the draft were sent to all staff and the Board. Once again, faculty met to provide input and to make

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any final adjustments. Further input from stakeholders was added to the report from the yearly Strategic Planning meetings. These meetings are held on a Saturday and secure input from board members, administration, staff, parents and students. Once final adjustments were incorporated into the self-study report, the Director and Assistant Director reviewed the report with a Committee and electronic copies were sent to all staff and the Board.

### **III. School's Progress on the Critical Areas for Follow-up**

#### **Summary of School Progress**

#### **Category A: Organization: Vision and Purpose, Governance, Leadership and Staff, and Resources.**

Since the last visit, MIT has put significant action towards developing a strategic planning process that involves all stakeholders. The strategic planning process occurs yearly and enables all stakeholders to give feedback regarding the progress of the school's goals and input regarding the next steps for implementation. Teachers, parents and administration report that this has been a valuable process for stakeholder inclusion in decision making. The school action plan goals are now embedded in the strategic plan and are monitored through the strategic planning process.

Shortly after the 2011 WASC visit, MIT completed the staff/faculty handbook. Also, the teacher work schedule issue was resolved and settled in the spring of 2011. In addition, MIT has made progress in the following Schoolwide Critical Areas for Follow-up identified in the WASC Visiting Committee Report in 2011.

#### **1. Develop a plan to repair current facilities to make them safer and more conducive to learning.**

*References:* School wide action plan A.1, A.4, A.5; Strategic Plan 3.2

MIT has made substantial repairs and renovations to their current facilities. In the last 3 years, MIT has completed the following:

- Addition of one classroom, Room Z, on the regular campus, now used for technology courses;
- Addition and rehabilitation, through a stakeholder effort, of the almost adjacent "Everest campus" (three classrooms, one learning lab, and restroom facilities) from VCUSD in trade for unused property in MIT's lease, now used for world languages faculty;
- Facility upgrades resulting in all classrooms now having functioning air conditioning and set-back thermostats, roofs surfaced so all are fully weather tight, wireless hubs extended in addition to hard-wire connectivity, flat screens installed for Wii fitness programs, new outside tables with umbrellas, and more/higher quality trash and recycling bins;
- Addition of staff to better maintain grounds and buildings resulting in graffiti being painted over almost immediately, classrooms being vacuumed regularly, grounds being mowed more frequently, etc.;
- Enhanced campus beautification efforts by staff committee, students, and parents resulting in student-planted and maintained gardens, a cleaner campus, more landscaping, etc.; and
- Facility repair through a combined effort of Rebuilding Together—Solano County, Kaiser Hospital, and local dignitaries, including Congressman Mike Thompson, and MIT parents, students, faculty, staff, administrators, and Board members to celebrate Dr.

Martin Luther King's legacy with a day of service to renovate the Multi-Purpose Room, along with painting, landscaping, and minor carpentry jobs throughout the school; Home Depot has pledged to complete the effort with funds for tiles and volunteers to install new flooring.

Costs for repair/renovation are directly subtracted from funds available to purchase a new facility, which the Board has determined to be the best option for MIT housing and is in the offering for 2014.

While all stakeholders, including the board, administration, teachers, parents and students, agree that the facilities are inadequate, it is clearly understood and appreciated that the school's focus is on providing a rigorous academic program in a small learning community that supports all students learning and active parent involvement. It is understood by all stakeholders that within the next three years either the school will purchase a new site or will need to begin construction on the current site in order to provide a learning facility that better supports the school's mission and vision.

## **2. Continue to pursue the acquisition of a new facility site.**

*References:* School wide action plan A.4, A.5; Strategic Plan 3.2

From the beginning, the Positive Place facilities were considered temporary, with the plan being that state funds would ultimately be secured (and matching funds raised/borrowed) to construct new buildings on the present site or that MIT could secure adequate housing from VCUSD through Prop. 39. According to the board, this plan has proved to be unrealistic.

MIT has applied to VCUSD for facilities through Prop. 39. The District's response has been to offer the two schools on two different campuses across the city from each other, putting the high school on one middle school campus and the middle school on another. On each site, they have offered to erect portable buildings and provide the schools with shared time for the gymnasium, library, and cafeteria facilities. The Board has felt that this structure would significantly erode the culture of the school, cause huge logistical problems, and create an explosive atmosphere for the VCUSD and MIT schools on both campuses.

The acquisition of a new site has and continues to be a primary focus of the Board for the last three years. Working with a number of indicators and fiscal data, the Board determined that the best solution to the housing problem was to co-locate with Solano Community College on one of their new Vallejo sites; purchase and remodel a site from VCUSD, or purchase and remodel a site on the commercial market. The fallback position was to demolish and replace buildings on the current site over an extended period, as funds and financing became available.

The following are recent actions by the Board and Director regarding acquiring an appropriate facility for the schools:

- Discussed the potential for co-location and toured several sites with the President of Solano Community College; none of the sites SCC was interested in were big enough to house both schools and SCC.
- Secured permission from VCUSD and paid for professional appraisal of 3 properties currently owned by the district and below capacity in enrollment: Loma Vista Elementary, adjacent to MIT; Elsa Widenmann Elementary, also adjacent to MIT; and

Springtown Middle, now housing only the small Vallejo Adult School; and have now entered into discussions with VCUSD about potential purchase of one of these properties.

- Contacted commercial real estate brokers and viewed potential properties for sale in the area.

The Board had originally set August 2013 as the date for a decision, but financial uncertainty pushed that date 9 months to June 2014 for a planned move to begin the 15-16 school year on a new or significantly upgraded site. There is a strong commitment on the part of all stakeholders to support either a move to a new facility or a complete reconstruction of the current facility.

## **B. Standards-based Student Learning: Curriculum**

Since the last WASC visit, MIT has expanded the curricular offerings for students in a number of ways. AP classes are now offered in Calculus, Statistics and Spanish and next year, the school is planning to add AP Computer Science and AP Mandarin. By the end of 2014, all teachers will be trained in AVID. Multiple sections of AVID classes are available which prepare students for college. The CAPP grant program is in development which will offer co-enrollment in college math and English classes. MIT has addressed the following critical area of need related to curriculum and technology.

### **Implement ways to increase student engagement using technology to increase higher level thinking.**

*References:* School wide action plan B.1 and B.9; Strategic Plan 3.1

MIT has incorporated a significant number of technology-based programs that increase student engagement and higher-level thinking throughout the curriculum and in the expanded technology pathways. Technology allows students to access information that can be synthesized with other sources, provides individualized learning opportunities for students whose needs or interests are different from the mainstream, and offers interactive formats for learning that are otherwise unavailable.

An increased level of student engagement through the use of technology was evident through classroom observations and input provided by parents, students, and staff. Teachers were observed using Smartboards and document cameras to engage students in classroom instruction. Students were engaged in classrooms with computers available for every student while they researched, created, and completed projects that engaged them in higher order thinking skills. Study Island software is included in all English and science courses, as well as CAHSEE and SAT prep courses. Griffin TV engages students in learning about video production as well as connects students to what is happening schoolwide.

Additionally in the last three years, the following technology-based options have also been incorporated in MIT's classrooms:

- Brain Pop and Zingy software, currently included in science courses
- College Preparatory Mathematics (CPM) software, currently included in all high school math courses
- ST Math software, currently included in Math Workshop classes
- Geometer's Sketchpad software, currently included in Geometry classes
- Naviance software, currently included in all high school advisory class
- History Alive
- Google docs

- Promethean clickers
- Online student portfolios
- Digital textbooks

Currently, there is an AVID pathway underway, with over one hundred students in the pathway, and this year, approximately will complete the pathway. MIT has taken major steps to expand and improve the technology pathways available. Three technology pathways have been developed and are in the process of being implemented. These pathways are Digital Arts, Robotics, and Programming. Full implementation of all three pathways is expected for 2016-17.

Both teachers and parents shared that the significant improvements in the use of technology in the classrooms has contributed tremendously to the growth in test scores and the increase in student engagement demonstrated across the last three years. Students are excited about the technological opportunities available to them and value the role of technology in supporting their education.

### **C. Standards -based Student Learning Instruction**

Since the last WASC visit, MIT has promoted communication, collaboration, and trust among administration and faculty and between faculty in order to support the instructional environment. A significant piece of instruction is the professional development provided for staff. The following is how MIT has addressed this area of critical need.

#### **1. Develop a comprehensive professional development plan that supports the goals and objectives in the action plan with input from staff.**

*References:* School wide action plan A.7, C.1, C.2; Strategic Plan 1.1.d, 1.2.b, 1.5.b

MIT provides both external and internal professional development in support of the Strategic Plan. The administration and faculty identify appropriate external training, and the administration approves enrollment. Internal professional development is provided annually, primarily in the four days prior to the start of school.

In 2012, in consultation with the faculty, the school established three priorities for external professional development for teachers: AVID, PLC, CCSS. Currently all faculty have participated in some training in all three areas; by the end of 2014, 100% will have completed formal AVID and Common Core training. Internal professional development supports and extends the knowledge and skills teachers have learned in the external professional development. New teachers also attend at least two days of PLC and RTI training before school begins. Through ongoing “book clubs” during the school year, faculty meet to discuss key elements of important works in education, including *Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap* (Blankenship), *Mindsets in the Classroom* (Ricci), and *Results Now* (Schmoker).

Specific professional development needs related to CCSS were identified through a staff assessment facilitated by the Teacher Leadership Team. All staff agreed that the most beneficial content training would be in writing across the curriculum. This year, five English teachers are completing a four-day workshop, “Writing in the Common Core and Content Areas.” The other departments will attend the basic two-day training, probably offered at the school. Additionally staff identified a need for training in the development and grading of learning tasks like those in the California Assessment of Student Progress.

In terms of pedagogy, the Teacher Leadership Team has determined to focus on a few, research-based strategies that can be taught, supported, monitored, and improved upon each year. In addition to the AVID strategies, McREL's original 9 high-yield strategies (Marzano, 2001) will be a focus. The Teacher Leadership Team and the Principal will meet prior to Strategic Planning annually to choose the pedagogical focus for each year. Then the PD Plan section of the Strategic Plan will reflect the chosen strategies, as well as review of previous strategies. The Team identified a need for a systematic method for indoctrinating new teachers in pedagogical expectations.

Finally, the Teacher Leadership Team determined the need for job-embedded PD that will help hone newly acquired skills. Of the "Options for Quality Professional Learning" summarized in *Leading the Common Core State Standards (LCCSS)*, MIT currently uses study groups, PLCs, and, to some extent, data teams. Some teachers are particularly interested in Instructional Coaching and/or Peer Observations. Others are enticed by Action Research and the Lesson Study approach. The Curriculum Committee recently approved the concept of hiring an instructional coach—either internal or external—to help improve the implementation of research based instructional strategies, particularly AVID and Marzano-identified strategies, and this recommendation will be forwarded to the Board upon refinement of the concept. The Teacher Leadership Team will continue to work with the Director and Chief Academic Officer to implement agreed-upon approaches.

## **2. Develop a process to evaluate the effectiveness of professional development on student learning.**

*References:* School wide action plan A.8, C.1; Strategic Plan C1, C2

The school has begun to develop a process to evaluate the effectiveness of professional development on student learning. A baseline benchmark analysis of student knowledge at the beginning of the year allows the opportunity to monitor how students progress throughout the year. In-class assessments, standardized test scores, grades, and other opportunities to measure student success can evaluate the effectiveness of professional development on student learning. The Teacher Leadership Team and the Chief Academic Officer realize that a more strategic evaluation process is needed and have agendaized this item for review and discussion of potential adjustment to make the process more accurately reflect the relation of professional development to student learning. This continues to be a priority area in the school's Action Plan.

## **D. Standards-based Student Learning: Assessment and Accountability**

Since the last WASC visit, MIT reviewed their grading system, an alphabetical system of A, B, C, F to determine whether the school should consider assigning D's. The staff decided to continue the practice of not assigning D's, believing that a D does not reflect passing a course and does not make a student A-G eligible. The school has added a goal to its action plan to reduce the number of students failing classes and increase the number of students doing well academically.

MIT has become a data driven school where administration and teachers are using assessment data to determine students' academic levels and drive instruction. Teachers utilize formative assessments through Study Island and teacher-made assessments to determine which students need additional instruction. The school has effectively implemented a Response to Intervention (RTI) system called Ban the Zero Pyramid, which utilizes tiers that produce consequences of

increasing severity. A student that has missing work stays for End of Block Response to Intervention (EB-RtI) during the last 15 minutes of class. If the work is not turned in during EB-RtI, students are assigned to study hall during End of Day Response to Intervention (ED-RtI). ED-RtI is the last 30 minutes of school. Concurrently, students are assigned to Academic Recovery after school and on Saturday morning until all missing work is turned in. More interventions are offered in order to meet student needs. Students have access to small group student support during the last 15 of every class (EB-RtI). Every two weeks, teachers administer formative assessments and assign students to small group tutoring during the last 30 minutes of school (ED-RtI) if needed. MIT has also created a peer/cross-age tutoring program in which students work with trained tutors during the last 30 minutes of school. The system is strongly supported by teachers, parents, and administration, and has proven to be extremely effective in creating an academic climate where students have little opportunity to fail.

MIT has utilized graduate feedback in the strategic planning process. Moving forward, through the acquisition of the California Academic Partnership Program (CAPP) grant, MIT will take the next step of tracking post high school graduate data through the Naviance program. The Naviance program, an online repository for many college preparation related surveys and websites, will also be utilized to support high school students in college preparation and planning. This program is currently being implemented in advisory classes; each grade level focuses on utilizing a different aspect of the program.

## **E. School Culture and Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth**

During the WASC visit in 2011, several critical areas of need were identified related to the improvement of school culture and support for student personal and academic growth.

### **1. Develop communication, collaboration and trust amongst all stakeholders.**

*References:* School wide action plan E.1, E.7; Strategic Plan 1.4, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, strategic planning process

During the last WASC Self-Study, the current administrative staff had been in place for less than 8 months. Administration was actively working to address the trust issues that were left from the previous administration. MIT was beginning to shift their focus to create a more academically-focused and rigorous instructional program, which they believed reflected the school's vision, mission and charter. Several faculty/staff members, whose philosophies were not aligned to the new administration, left at the end of that year and several more left in 2012, allowing the school to hire a significant number of new faculty and staff who were highly qualified and in sync with the educational approach reflected in the charter. This significant shift in staffing was considered by staff and administrators to be one of the five most relevant changes since the last visit.

Since the last WASC visit, administration and the Board have worked diligently to develop opportunities for consistent and honest communication, collaboration, and trust-building among and between the faculty, staff, students, parents, administration, and Board. Frequent communications with all stakeholders occur through monthly newsletters sent and posted on the school website, signboard of coming events at school entrance updated weekly, e-blasts of all upcoming events and important announcements sent to parents, staff/faculty, and Board members weekly and duplicated through robo-calls to parents weekly; electronic marquee in MPR updated weekly; daily bulletins read to all staff and students and posted on website; and weekly broadcasts of "Griffin TV" for students, staff, and the Board.

Parents report they appreciate the multiple ways they are able to participate in the school's growth through committees, volunteering and participating in strategic planning. Parents and students are trained to use the Parent Portal and are able to access student grades online. Parents report that teachers are accessible and responsive by email. They feel that the teachers care about their students and will do what it takes for their students to be successful. Student progress is communicated to parents through progress reports, which are mailed to parents every six weeks.

Teachers have a variety of opportunities to collaborate, with their colleagues through PLCs, in department meetings, staff meetings and other committees. The teachers also participate in the strategic planning process. Teachers expressed support for the school initiatives that have increased communication and collaboration. The positive impact of implementing PLCs has resulted in a high level of trust amongst colleagues and an increase in alignment of instructional materials and assessments. Teachers report that this collaboration, in conjunction with the implementation of the RtI end of class and end of day intervention system, is creating a positive impact on increasing student learning.

Students trust their teachers and feel supported in the classrooms. Through student interviews and the student survey, the visiting committee found that most students are invested in the rigorous academic program at MIT. They like the small learning community. They appreciate their teachers' dedication to their learning and the fact that the teachers make sure students do their work. Students have opportunities to collaborate with other stakeholders through the strategic planning process, on and off-site community service opportunities, student council, and senior student body; however, students expressed a desire for greater input regarding such issues as the dress code and the development of school clubs.

## **2. Revisit and rewrite the school rules and discipline policy to be relevant, enforceable, and mutually agreed upon by staff, administration and students.**

*References:* School wide action plan E.3, E.8; Strategic Plan 2.1, 2.3

The school has revised and rewritten the school rules and discipline policies in relation to the Strategic Plan. These now appear in the Student/Parent Handbook and the Code of Conduct, the latter being developed with all teachers and students in advisory classes in September, 2013.

The MIT dress code is a topic of continual focus and dialogue among all stakeholders. While the administration has made it clear that the dress code is not a uniform, both the staff/faculty and parent/student handbooks use the term uniform and dress code in the rules and policies. The dress code has evolved over the course of four years, and the school has put significant attention to making the dress code meaningful to its purpose of creating a safe learning environment that limits distraction. The increasingly strict nature of the dress code, which includes a patch on a particular color, type and brand of shirt and pants, and the changes in dress code policies, including free dress days, has caused some confusion and frustration among students. Student survey results indicate that the dress code is not supported by the majority of students. Parents and teachers interviewed indicated support for the dress code, although some parents and teachers also expressed concern about the expectation of purchasing a particular brand of clothing, particularly due to the cost of the clothing.

While MIT has had a Student Council for several years, the council has become more formalized in the past year. The students on the council have recently developed a Constitution, which will be approved then presented to the student body through the Advisory classes. In the coming

years, MIT has plans to continue to fully implement the School Council, comprised of representative high school students, as an integral student leadership group that will actively participate in improving the school culture. The School Council will continue to develop its role as a communication link between the student body and all stakeholders involved in revision of programs and policies that affect students.

Based on interviews, the mid-term report and supporting information, the visiting committee believes the administration, the Board and the staff, including teachers, are interested in increasing student involvement in leadership and participation in the continued development of a positive school culture. The committee found that many of the initiatives planned by the school are in sync with the students' desires for school improvement, but that the students are not aware that these initiatives are being developed.

### **3. Recognize teachers and students through celebrations and incentives.**

*References:* School wide action plan E.6, E.9; Strategic Plan 1.4, 2.2

The school has made a concerted effort in the last three years to recognize teachers, staff, and students. The increase in student recognitions is one of the five most significant changes since the last WASC visit.

Students are recognized for academic achievement through a number of recognitions including: Seal of Biliteracy; AVID sash, Golden State seal; and Valedictorian at graduation and Honor Roll. Exemplary attendance is recognized and a number of certifications for extracurricular activities are presented at graduation. The recent student survey reflects that  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the students strongly agree or agree that MIT students are recognized for academic success. The same survey indicates that only  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the students agree that students are rewarded for good behavior. Students and staff indicate that while the student recognitions for academic success are consistent, the rewards for good behavior are not. One of the most common rewards is a pass for free dress day, although teachers report that these passes are not distributed consistently.

Teacher and staff recognition has also been a priority in the past three years. Two annual events specifically honor teachers and staff for a job well done, including a Faculty/Staff breakfast provided by the Administration in August and an annual Faculty/Staff Recognition Luncheon sponsored by the Board in January. At faculty/staff meetings and other occasions, the Director presents the *Croix de Griffin* (the "Griffin Cross") an award for outstanding service to selected teachers and support staff. Within the past year, 13 Croix de Griffin have been awarded to various certificated and classified individuals. In addition, the school sponsors celebrations for specific events, such as the API celebration in 2013. There are additionally consistent acknowledgements of positive outcomes, such as lowering the "F" rate through e-blasts and the twice-weekly email bulletin to staff and faculty. Administrators also recognize individual teachers for special accomplishments with e-blasts. In interviews with the visiting committee, teachers shared that they appreciate the recognition, and would be interested in recognition for specific achievements that positively impact the school over time.

### **Priority and Additional Areas for Improvement**

MIT Academy has made substantial improvements in addressing all the critical areas of follow-up identified during the previous WASC visit. In addition to addressing the action steps in the WASC Action Plan and the Critical Areas for Follow-up, MIT has, through their strategic planning process, added additional steps to their WASC goals in the areas of:

- Professional Development: A7 and A8
- CCSS; CAPP; Incorporating Technology: B7, B8, B9
- Research-based instructional strategies: C3
- Using accountability to improve performance: D5
- Communication/collaboration; Student rules and Discipline; Recognition: E7;E8;E9
- Parent satisfaction; College-going; Cultural Sensitivity: E10;E11;E12

The administration, teachers and staff have worked hard to increase the academic rigor of the school's instructional program through the effective implementation of PLCs, ongoing professional development and a shared commitment to ensure all students are prepared for college. In addition, an effective assessment system is in place that enables students to receive needed intervention in a timely and organized manner. The student achievement data indicates that the strategies and programs implemented in the past three years are having a positive impact on student achievement. As the school implements the California Common Core Standards, MIT will continue to apply the research based methods and best practice strategies.

Equally notable is the effective refinement of the strategic planning process, which brings together all stakeholders to track the school's progress towards the goals of their WASC action plan, SPSA, charter and technology plan. The process is inclusive and now embedded in the school's improvement process.

MIT has also made outstanding strides in improving the school culture and climate. Meaningful opportunities for input are now available to all stakeholders. Communication has improved and trust has increased between administration and faculty as well as between all stakeholders.

Two areas were identified by the visiting committee to be given priority:

- 1) Continue to pursue either improving facilities in the current location or acquiring new school facilities. While all stakeholders agree that MIT's strong academic program outweighs the substandard facilities, the administration and the Board clearly understand that a facilities plan needs to be developed and decisions made in the coming year.
- 2) Continue to develop opportunities for students to provide meaningful input regarding rules and policies that directly affect them. By doing so, MIT students will have opportunities to develop and apply their problem-solving skills and increase their understanding of citizenship and civic engagement in the community in which they are most active: their school.