

Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Commission San Mateo County, California

Hillcrest School Inspection Report 2019

School Inspection

Date of this Inspection: May 22, 2019

Date of Last Inspection: May 23, 2018

Facility Name: Hillcrest School

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Executive Summary

This year's inspection focused on YSC educational compliance with the updates to Title 15 which went into effect January 1, 2019.

Rather than a Hillcrest-only focus, this school inspection includes Probation's role as a partner in, and provider of, youth education to reflect the Title 15 updates.

Note that we are limited in interpreting the new Title 15 requirements. The law outlines mandates, but does not provide a rubric for evaluation or examples of what policies, procedures, and programs would or would not be considered compliant. This report largely reflects our interpretation as representative of the public's expectations.

Hillcrest School has been identified for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act effective this past year due to the number of students performing below grade level. Hillcrest will receive increased funding, which the SMCOE will apply to teacher and staff professional development trainings targeted to support all student learning including English Language Learners (ELL) services. The school continues to ever-better serve its students.

Commendations

There is a **high degree of commitment** by the SMCOE, the school leadership, and the teaching staff to innovate. This year, the school introduced a **6th period class** to enrich the extra-curriculars, a **book club, credit recovery time, and IEP/ELL related assistance**. The counselor organized an Associated Student Body (**ASB**) which planned **student-led assemblies**. **Next year, the SMCOE will be investing in additional staff:** an ELL coordinator and a head teacher in charge of school assemblies. In the last few years, they have implemented the CARE class, the 3-day orientation, and the use of restorative justice and trauma informed techniques. They continue to offer Project Change.

The school has had **multi-year leadership** in the roles of principal, assistant principal, and head teachers. While the current assistant principal is leaving at the end of the year, they have promoted

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the staff member who provides the Bridge to College, Credit Recovery, Directed Studies programs to this position. Having continuity in leadership has enabled the creation of programs that better serve the students. We expect the school to have full capacity to continue in this effort.

The school does a good job at providing youth information and support on what is required to **graduate, recover credits, and go to college** through its 3-day orientation program and transition support for all students.

Title 15 requirements offer opportunities for creative problem-solving on the part of the school, YSC, and in the interaction between the school and YSC. A **positive, productive relationship exists between the school and YSC**. The CARE class is an example of working through complex issues and we believe these areas can be addressed in a similar manner.

We are pleased by the Title 15 compliance efforts the SMOE and the school have made thus far, and by their awareness of areas yet to be addressed.

Title 15 Recommendations

Because the educational section of Title 15 includes Probation, we have divided our comments by area of responsibility (with BSCC's assist).

School Responsibilities

Digital Literacy: Because students have access to technology, the school has the opportunity to develop students' digital literacy. This is necessary preparation for college and vocational opportunities in Silicon Valley. It is especially important for students with long or repeated detentions as they only have this opportunity to learn these skills. While students do use learning apps in 6th period and while there are laptops available for use in classrooms, core classes (other than Math) do not use or learn the applications essential in workplace or school settings, like Word. We encourage computer use in the classroom to develop "real world" skills.

School and Probation Responsibilities

Access to Technology: Per Title 15 requirements, the school and YSCs must provide students with opportunities to use technology for learning in class and on-unit. There is no technology used on-unit. The school should consider expanding access to technology to all core classes.

Vocational Education: The school and the YSCs must provide vocational education. Both are aware of the need to provide this under Title 15. One solution is online vocational programs.

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Probation Responsibilities

Access to Education for All Youth Regardless of Security Concerns: All students must be educated daily even when a unit is on lock-down.

Expanded Re-Entry Planning: Probation is developing a new approach to educational re-entry planning.

Other Recommendations:

Time in Library: Based on student interviews during the Inspection, we recommend students be given more time to look at books while in the library. It appears that most of the time is used by the librarian talking about books with limited browsing time.

Expanded Curriculum for Students with Long Detentions/Recurring Incarcerations: As in previous years' inspections, students note repetition of content, i.e. they are re-reading books in class. Consider adjusting their curriculum. This could include reading an alternate book that is thematically linked to the unit and preparing a project or writing based on this book.

Education for Graduated/High School Equivalency Test Youth: We recommend these youth have ongoing, diverse educational opportunities. Content might include vocational or college study, expanding their general knowledge base, developing life and interpersonal skills, and fostering life-long learning. Pencil-and-paper and online programs exist.

Pre-plan for 2020 Inspection

We recommend that next year's educational inspection team request the following: **MAP Test Results:** Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) test data to assess grade level advancement for students with long enough detentions to provide (at least) two data points. **School Attendance:** We recommend that the inspection team request school attendance data for when and why a unit does not attend the Hillcrest campus and the method of instruction. We are not suggesting that there is a problem with current academic progress or school attendance. Our suggestion is to give next year's team insight not normally available during a short yearly visit.

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§ 1370. Education Program

Number of Full-Time Instructors: 6 Number of Full-Time Instructional Aides: 4

There are also (2) unpaid, volunteer librarians.

Number of Tutors (Paid? Volunteer?): The school does not have tutors. Tutoring is offered in the evenings after school hours on only one unit to students who choose to participate in the Each One Reach One tutoring program.

Frequency of Substitute Teachers: There is the expected frequency found in any school for Fall, Winter, and Spring quarters. Summer quarter relies on substitute teachers.

Number of Youth Attending School: There were 44 students average per day for the week of July 7, 2019. Attendance varies based on bookings and releases.

Average Classroom Size: 10-15 Max Classroom Size: 20

Number of Youth on Independent Study: 0 Reason: NA

Number of Youth Not Attending School: Rare

Reason: They range: one student has a high-profile case; also, students may choose not to attend if they already have a have a diploma or high school equivalency certificate. We could not determine how many students this applies to, but there is at least two.

Describe the general atmosphere of the classrooms: The classrooms look like typical high school classrooms.

Adequate supplies, books, paper, computer? Acceptable Unacceptable: The classrooms are well-stocked.

There are many computers available at Hillcrest - desktops in a computer lab and laptops on a cart that can be brought to classrooms and to the units.

Are youth given access to computers/internet? Yes No

Provide details (when, purpose, supervision): Desktops are used during 6th period and monitored by LAN School software and GS staff. Students use Edgenuity, Khan Academy, Carnegie Learning - Mathia, CA Career Zone, and Rosetta Stone. Computers are also used for state and language proficiency testing. However, computers are not used during core classes or on-unit. Students are not learning essential "real world" digital skills such as Word, how to source information, etc., nor using the computer in ways that might enhance Probation's programming such as providing Distance Education for students who do not attend high school, applying for driver's licenses, researching careers, etc. We do not believe current use is sufficient to comply with Title 15.

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Describe the relationship between school staff and juvenile hall staff: The school and juvenile hall staff have a positive, collaborative relationship. Security is always the primary focus of the facility and the school reports it must abide by this constraint. This means students do not always attend school if there is limited Probation staffing due to absences or professional development training, or a lock-down on unit and classroom teachers come to the unit or the school provides work packets.

Describe the relationship between school staff and students: School staff and students have an excellent relationship. Students mentioned the Social Studies teacher and the school guidance counselor in particular. Students know that the school is dedicated to their well-being. The newly created student ASB; and student-led assembly programming are recent demonstrations of staff-student collaboration and positive relationships.

We visited the school twice. On our first visit, youth were confined to their units and not at school so we did not see typical classes. On a second visit, we observed two classes. The level of engagement and connection between teachers and students varied significantly, depending on the quality of the teaching. Summer classes were in session, so one teacher was a substitute, and another was full-time. The full-time teacher had a great deal of interaction with students, on both a personal and academic level, demonstrated significant care for their well-being, and pushed them to understand the material. The substitute had minimal interaction with students, used a 45-minute documentary as the primary instruction method, and did not engage students in discussion at all. There will be a permanent credentialed Science teacher replacing this substitute.

Describe access to school for youth confined to their rooms: The CARE class was developed so all students may attend school consistently. When a unit is on lock-down and youth are confined to the unit or to their rooms, the school provides school on-unit with the teachers coming to the unit to teach, or provides work packets.

On our first visit, one unit was on lock-down and students were watching a science movie with the Science teacher. They were not attending school due to a security incident involving a few youth which resulted in staff injuries.

During the same visit, another unit was on total-lockdown with students confined to their rooms. because of a security incident involving approximately 9 youth which resulted in staff injuries. The school had delivered work to this unit, but the GS staff chose, on at least one day, not to give them to the youth.

We placed a call to BSCC clarify the institution's educational responsibility in a lock-down situation. We learned that students must receive daily education regardless of security, and when work packets are given to youth confined in their rooms, they must be given a pencil so as to complete the work packets.

When is school held on the unit instead of in the classroom? When there are security concerns or when a unit is understaffed.

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Title 15 Updates

Are youth immediately enrolled in school upon admittance to Juvenile Hall? Yes No

Explain enrollment, orientation and starting classes: There is a 3-day orientation for all students during which the staff do skills-level MAP testing, explain to the students their graduation requirements and the units they have accrued, create an educational plan that includes how to make-up units, provide college counseling and financial aid information, give students a career interest test (note: this is the only vocational programming currently offered), and train students in restorative justice. Students then enter the classroom.

Immediately upon enrollment, does the school have the youth's records from his/her prior school(s), including, but not limited to, transcripts, Individual Education Program (IEP), 504 Plan, state language assessment scores, immunization records, exit grades, and partial credits. Yes No

Administrative school staff request student records immediately. These records may or may not arrive "immediately upon enrollment" because of the unavoidable lack of advance notice that a youth will be booked. But, enrollment is now immediate per Title 15. Records are secured soon after a student enrolls and used to plan the student's coursework.

Is an educational plan developed within five school days? Yes No

Is the educational plan discussed with youth and modified as needed after discussion? Yes No

Describe how Hillcrest educational records and prior records are forwarded to the next school?

Administrative staff forward all records upon the request of the receiving school. If a student has an IEP, the school requests a transitional IEP meeting with the student's receiving school.

However, there are frequent barriers: parents do not re-enroll their child, families often change location of residency due to instability in the home, and the receiving school may expel students before their Hillcrest records arrive, etc.

Is there a developed re-entry plan for youth's educational transition? Yes No

SMCOE does re-entry planning. Parents/guardians and youth meet in-person with the district's Attendance and Welfare Office to re-enroll and program students at their receiving school. There is also a 90-day check that the student is still enrolled and attending school.

The probation officer provides targeted support to help a family overcome obstacles to re-enrollment and to ensure the student is in compliance with the education requirements of their contract.

However, Probation has not yet defined a pro-active protocol for all students. PREP plans to accomplish broader re-entry planning for students with longer detentions. At this time, Probation has not determined how youth with detentions less than 2-months long will be transitioned.

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We suggest one element of re-entry planning include connecting the student with a staff member at the receiving school to minimize drop-out risk so that the student meets the guidance counselor, finds extracurriculars, knows about on-campus tutoring, etc.

Do teachers use culturally responsive/trauma-informed approaches during instruction? Yes No

Explain: Teachers are trained in and use trauma-informed discipline and restorative justice. Students identified the Social Studies teacher as a stand-out because he always speaks one-on-one with students before involving a GS. However, implementation is not universal and training should be given to long-term substitutes.

The curriculum is culturally responsive in the books used and themes addressed.

Is the learning environment physically, emotionally, and intellectually safe? Yes No

Intellectually: Participation and open dialogue is encouraged by teachers. Their orientation is towards any type of participation vs. students being closed off and quiet. As a result, intellectually, students are in an environment that is very open and tolerant of their thoughts and ideas.

Physically: GS staff is always present to make sure students are physically safe, and precautions are taken, e.g. monitoring pencil use to prevent sharpened pencils from being used as a weapon.

Emotionally: Based on our interviews of 13 students, students do not perceive equal treatment and report that some students are picked-on and more readily punished by some teachers. On the other hand, some teachers are quite caring and connect personally and emotionally with students.

Are the youth prepared for high school graduation, career entry, and post-secondary education?
 Yes No

Students are prepared for graduation and well-oriented towards college opportunities through the 3-day orientation, transition plan, and academic counseling.

There is not enough exposure to or preparation for vocational options. Career entry education is only addressed during the 3-day orientation during which youth use ca.careerzone.org and do a career interests inventory. The school acknowledges that it needs to develop a more robust career entry program. Youth need to explore what they can do on the other side of 18.

Is positive behavior management used to reduce the need for disciplinary actions? Yes No

Explain: The school's written discipline policy and philosophy emphasizes positive behavior management for typical classroom management challenges. Teachers are trained to do this.

The full-time teacher we observed was quite encouraging and positive with students, interacting with significant care to which her students responded well. She was clear with them as to their learning goals, led them to achieving their goals with positive encouragement, and then rewarded them at the end of class with some fun and a little prize.

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Are the High School Equivalency Tests available to youth? Yes No

Are youth who do not demonstrate sufficient progress towards grade-level standards given supplemental instruction? Yes No

Explain: Title 15 states "Supplemental instruction shall be afforded to youth who do not demonstrate sufficient progress towards grade level standards." Because almost all students are below grade-level, the school is attempting to progress students within the mainstream classroom by 1. placing ELL and ILP aides in class, and 2. teaching techniques that make information available to all students regardless of skill-level. Teachers scaffold curriculum that is taught during the course period.

We wonder if this approach fulfills the intention of Title 15. BSCC could not offer guidance. As lay-people, we interpret "supplemental instruction" as instruction in addition to normal class-time.

Because the intent of this clause is to progress students towards grade-level standards, we suggest using MAP results to track student skill advancement over time. This is the basis for our recommendation to collect this data prior to next year's inspection. This will allow all to evaluate whether the current approach is effective.

Are all youth treated equally, and are they free from discriminatory actions? Yes No

Based on interviews by Commissioner Gibbs and Commissioner Winters, students do not perceive equal treatment and report that other students are picked-on and more readily punished by teachers.

Does staff refer to transgender/intersex youth by their preferred name and gender? Yes No

Is education available to youth regardless of classification, housing, or security/disciplinary/separation status, including room confinement? Yes No All students receive educational services.

When a unit is on lock-down due to security or staffing, teachers rotate between units to teach.

When a unit is on lock-down and students are confined to their rooms, the school appropriately provides educational materials. However, youth do not always receive the packets the school prepares and do not have pencils in order to do the work. This is non-compliant with Title 15 (per BSCC).

Are youth informed of post-secondary education and vocational opportunities? Yes No

Explain: As mentioned previously, the school does a commendable job informing youth about post-secondary college information and the opportunity to participate in Project Change through the College of San Mateo while detained and after release. There is need to expand vocational education and build greater awareness with the youth. This is something the school, SMCOE, and institutions plan to address.

Is there collaboration with post-secondary education providers to facilitate access to educational and vocational opportunities for youth using technology? Yes No

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Explain: Youth do not have access to technology associated with a post-secondary program. In the 2017-18 school year, an online course was piloted through Project Change.

Does this include access to technology for educational purposes on unit? Yes No

Explain: There is no access to technology on the units. The school has a mobile cart with laptops that would allow technology to be used on-unit, however YSCs cites a lack of staffing to supervise computer use.

Per last year's inspection, GS staff on the girl's unit would like to use laptops with the girls in order to help them apply for FAFSA or prepare for their driver's licenses, etc. This is a small unit and with staff support, YSCs should look at it being used here, at least, if not in other units.

English Language Learners (ELL)

How are limited English-speaking students identified and served? How soon are these services provided once the student has been identified as non-English proficient?

ELL students are identified through home-school records and CALPADS test scores. Services are provided immediately. An ELL aide works with students in the classroom or during 6th period to build language skills. Rosetta Stone is used during mainstream class-time should the student not comprehend enough English to benefit from a particular mainstream class

Post High School/GED

Are there educational opportunities for youth who have completed high school/GED? Yes No

Describe: The school's responsibility is to educate students up through graduation or the high successful passing of the high school equivalency test. A student may continue to attend Hillcrest after graduation or completing their high school equivalency test. However, this is the student's decision. No new curriculum is available and, as a result, students report there is no reason to attend.

Educational opportunities are offered through Project Change which is an elective program for college credit. Project Change offered three courses this year: Keys to Success was offered twice this year as an 8-week course for 1 hour each session. Creative Writing was offered once this year as an 8-week course and was held twice a week for 3 hours each time. Psychology was offered twice this year as an 8-week course and was held twice a week for 3 hours each time the class met. Approximately 15-20 students from Hillcrest and Camp Kemp combined participated in each. These classes are held during the school day.

This averages one hour of class/week assuming a student took each class once.

Are youth given info/counseling on community college and four-year college options? Yes No

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Describe: Youth are well-informed of college opportunities thanks to Hillcrest's robust counseling program which begins during the 3-day orientations and extends through their matriculation. Project Change also establishes a culture that makes the idea of college accessible.

Are youth given information/counseling about financial aid options for college? Yes No

Describe: This is covered during the 3-day orientation and individual help is available.

Are youth able to take courses for college credit online? Yes No

Describe: While many community colleges and trade-schools offer courses online, Hillcrest doesn't have staff to assist students with online community college courses.

Special Education/IEP Programs

Describe how students with possible need for special education (those without previous testing, IEP or 504 plans) are identified? Students are identified for possible testing through multiple methods: teacher referral, a court order by the judge, or a suggestion by the youth's probation officer.

The Youth and Education Law Project (YELP) suggests evaluating previous school failure, MAP testing results, and talking with parents also be used to identify students.

Are all of these students tested? Yes No Yes, all students that are identified as possibly needing special education are tested (if they are at the facility for enough time to complete testing).

Describe any obstacles to testing: Short stays in detention can cause issues, such as in the time required to schedule mental health testing by Behavioral Health and Recovery Services, or a detention transfer to another county. Youth may not want to be tested, but the teachers are usually able to convince them.

Overall, there are fewer obstacles at Hillcrest because the youth consistently attend school, whereas they may not do so when not in detention.

The main obstacle is getting parent permission. Some are more accessible and available than others.

How many youth in the facility have an Individualized Education Program (IEP)? 21 of 43 total

Nationally, typically 40-80% of kids in the juvenile justice system have learning needs, so ~50% is within range.

How many students in the facility have 504 plans? 2 or 3

Are students aware of accommodations and do they receive accommodations? Yes No
The youth are aware of their accommodations because they are at the IEP meetings, and they have input on what supports go into their plans.

Do special education teachers participate in lesson planning/curriculum development? Yes No

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Special education teachers push into classrooms to observe and make suggestions. They consult with general education teachers, and when teachers have questions, the special education teachers assist.

Are regular IEP meetings held? Yes No

Are parents notified of these meetings? Yes No

Are parents permitted to attend these meetings? Yes No

Describe the most common obstacle to IEP compliance: Once a youth is at Hillcrest, the teachers have a good opportunity to make an IEP work because students must attend school. Obstacles include: overdue or fast approaching IEP dates when students arrive, and, with more than 40% of students identified as students who receive special education services, the number of meetings to schedule and students to support at one time can be an obstacle.

Signature of Commissioner(s) preparing this report

Melissa Wilson Melissa Wilson Date: 12/10/19

Valerie Gibbs /s/ Valerie Gibbs Date: 12/10/19

Doug Winter Doug Winter Date: 12/10/19

Monroe Labouisse Monroe Labouisse Date: 12/10/19

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SCHOOL INTERVIEW RESOURCES

Two commissioners interviewed a total of 13 youth on two separate visits.

Valerie Gibbs interviewed 9 youth selected by Nafeesah Mustafa, the Assistant Principal of the Court and Community Schools and reports the following:

The youth were clean, relaxed and happy to be chosen. They appeared friendly and honest. When asked if they believed they were correctly placed in classes they all replied yes except one who had a lot to say about the subject. He felt that he had already completed his current classes and that he had passed them all. He really wondered why he had to keep repeating classes he had finished.

Those interviewed recognized that there was a new policy regarding the telephone use. They appreciated being able to talk to their families more often. They also mentioned being able to take advantage of the snack bar.

The most talked about discipline method mentioned was the point system. They also report that students can be removed from class, sent back to their unit, have a time out and denied the use of the snack bar. There was a mention of an alternative program that the boys could be put into if they really "messed up" (presumably, the CARE program).

Two of the boys felt that there were favorites. They noticed that some students were picked on by the staff. And these boys were denied privileges that were allowed others. They felt supported by the staff and teachers so didn't speak up.

All but one are involved in credit recovery. They were thankful as they all were behind in credits. The one student who works with Project Change, plans to graduate college and uses the computer for his class work. The other boys are not thinking about attending college, have no access to the computers, nor are they in a college program. All students believed they would learn more and be very productive if they had limited access to computers.

All the boys felt they really received support from their teachers and were provided all that they needed. One wished that he could see his brother who was also in Hillcrest. They like the fact that they have time to reflect and think about changing, even to the point of making amends.

Doug Winters interviewed four youth who report the following:

At the time of the inspection, due to a security issue/lockdown, there was only one classroom on campus open. Students from that class were interviewed. We also attended classes being held on unit and interviewed students on unit. We spoke with four youth in total.

Students generally liked the structure of the schooling. One student noted he likes the ability he has to work on credit recovery. Students felt teachers were mostly engaging and helpful and agreed teachers would help them if they requested assistance.

One concern brought up on multiple occasions was the repetitiveness of the classes. One student stated that the current science experiment they were working on was the third time he was completing the assignment. Students noted that often when new youth enrolled the instructors would have to

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backtrack. One student commented that he felt the history class was doing a good job of “keeping it new”. A youth who has been through the institution multiple times over the years stated the classes were much better now than they were a few years ago.

When asked about technology usage, students stated that they were not using the computers very often. Staff had mentioned that security concerns revolving around monitoring the students on the computers and a recent incident involving a computer being removed from the classroom were the cause of the limited use of the computers. Many students would prefer to use the computers, particularly for math. The newly adopted math curriculum, Carnegie Learning, will give students an opportunity to practice math skills on an online platform.

Without the use of computers, students felt they would either have packets “thrown at them” or a video would be shown. When asked about feedback on the packets, students stated they sometimes got grades back but rarely any feedback or corrective instruction. Students felt math was particularly packet heavy and would like more instructional time.

Students mentioned they did like to check out books from the library, but the current procedure (one student at a time, and a short period of time to select your book) was inhibitive and felt more students would check out books if it were a simpler, more relaxed process.

While one student commented that he felt P.E class was lagging, it was often mentioned as a favorite class. Students also liked a career development presentation that involved them using the computers.

Overall students appeared satisfied with their school environment. A student who has been in the program before mentioned the classes were “much better” and there was “a lot less fighting”. Students agreed they felt listened to and their needs were mostly being met.