



# Accrediting Commission for Schools

533 Airport Boulevard, Suite 200

Burlingame, California 94010

(650) 696-1060 • Fax (650) 696-1867

E-mail: [frivette@acsWSC.org](mailto:frivette@acsWSC.org) • Website: [www.acsWSC.org](http://www.acsWSC.org)

DAVID E. BROWN, PH.D.  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MARILYN S. GEORGE, ED.D.  
ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

GEORGE BRONSON, ED.D.  
ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
OPERATIONS

## INITIAL VISIT VISITING COMMITTEE REPORT — CALIFORNIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

This form is to be used in conjunction with the *WASC Initial Visit Procedures Manual for California Public Schools* and is to be used for all California Public and California Charter Schools. Note: Criteria A7 and A8 pertain only to California Charter Schools.

### Part I

**Name of School:** Magnolia Science Academy 5

**School Address:** 1530 North Wilton Place  
Hollywood, CA 90028

**Grades Reviewed** 6-8

**School Type:** Charter School

**Initial Visit Chair:** Dr. Gary Davis  
Superintendent (Retired)  
Oxnard Union High School District

Past Commissioner and Commission Chairperson  
Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC

**Date of Visit:** Wednesday, June 2, 2010

**IMPORTANT: This recommendation is CONFIDENTIAL. It should NOT to be given to the school.**

## Introduction

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

Magnolia Science Academy-5, Hollywood (MSA-5) is located in Hollywood, California in the Los Angeles Unified School District. The school opened in the August of 2008 with 67 students in grades 6 and 7. Right now the school has grades 6 through 8 with 118 students in total. The school will be opening one more grade level every year, until we reach 12th grade, in four years. 85% of MSA-5 students receive free or reduced lunch.

MSA-5 is one of the charter schools under Magnolia Educational & Research Foundation, which specializes in math, science and technology education. Currently Magnolia Foundation has 9 schools; 7 locally approved charter schools and 2 state-approved charter schools.

MSA-5 is located in the eastern residential neighborhood of Hollywood in the city of Los Angeles. As of the 2000 census, there were 210,777 people residing in the Community Plan Area of Hollywood. The ethnic makeup of the community was 59.84% White (47.27% White Non-Hispanic), 9.44% Asian, 0.13% Pacific Islander, 4.28% African American, 0.62% Native American, 19.10% from other races, and 6.59% from two or more races. 34.51% of the population was Hispanic of any race. 49.63% of the population was foreign born; of this, 46.24% came from Latin America, 32.73% from Asia, 17.80% from Europe and 3.23% from other parts of the world.

Hollywood is world famous for being the center of American movie studios and stars. Its name is synonymous with American cinema. Although much of the movie industry has dispersed into surrounding areas such as the Westside neighborhood, significant auxiliary industries, such as editing, effects, props, post-production and lighting companies, remain in Hollywood.

The school opened its doors in its current location at 1530 N. Wilton Pl. Hollywood where the school site is shared with Grant Elementary school. The school site is provided by Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) under Education Code §47614 (A.K.A. Prop 39). The school has requested a facility for the 2010-2011 school year and its request has been approved by the district for 225 students. MSA-5 is aiming to stay in its current location for the upcoming school year.

MSA-5 has 46 6th grade students in two classes, 51 7th grade students in two classes and 21 8th grade students in one class. The average student per class is 23.6 and the average student per teacher is 11.8.

The ethnic distribution of the school is made up with 72% Hispanic, 10% White, 2% African American, 2% Asian and 14% other ethnicities. This is slightly different than the ethnic makeup of Hollywood but still there is no big gap in between the ethnicities.

The student population is in balance in gender at 49.2% female and 50.2% male.

22 of MSA-5 students, 18%, are English learners.

MSA-5 is not providing transportation to its students. It is the responsibility of the guardians to bring their student to school. Although some students take public transportation and some of them walk to school, most of the students are dropped and picked up by their parents.

In its short time open, MSA-5 had achieved significant academic record.

**IMPORTANT: This sheet is NOT to be given to the school. Please submit it to WASC.**

**Visiting Committee comments:**

- The school principal served as the primary author of the Initial Visit application, but solicited and received much input from teachers on the faculty. The application was subdivided into sections and given to teachers during their various staff meetings to provide their input and responses. However, there was no parent or student input in the preparation of the Initial Application. For the school's preparation of the Self-Study, it will be desirable for a faculty member to be appointed as the Self-Study Coordinator, and for input to be solicited from the school's key stakeholders, including teachers, support staff, and representative parents and students. It would also be very beneficial for the principal and the Self-Study Coordinator to attend WASC training for schools preparing their first Self-Study and, if possible, for the principal and Self-Study Coordinator to serve on a WASC Visiting Committee to a like charter school.
- The school's charter petition included the intention for the school to seek WASC accreditation. Also, the school's leadership believes that WASC accreditation will be an important sign to the school community and families that the school is meeting its objectives and providing a quality education for its students. The school's leadership is committed to WASC accreditation and following up on recommendations in order to continue its affiliation with WASC.
- Since 12-30-09, the date the Initial Visit Application was finished, the school has hired two part time teachers—one as a replacement teacher and one to strengthen its math program. No other significant changes in school operations occurred since then.
- The second year of operation has been very positive for the school, with students demonstrating very good discipline, strict enforcement of the school uniform policy, and the addition of the intervention programs. For 2009-10, Grade 8 was added to the school.
- At the time of the Initial Visit, the school was staffed by seven (7) FTE teachers plus the outsourced, part time teacher for Special Education. For the current school year, there is only one new teacher, and thus far all teachers have indicated that they intend to stay at the school for the 2010-11 school year. The principal believes that the school has a very strong teaching staff.
- At the time of the Initial Visit, the school enrolled 115 students: 47 in Grade 6, 47 in Grade 7, and 21 in Grade 8. The enrollment included 8 Special Education/Resource Specialist Program students and 18 English Language Learners.
- As the school increases in enrollment for 2010-11, it is expected that the ethnic composition of the student body will remain approximately the same, with about 70% Hispanic, 10% Anglo, 2% African American, 2% Asian, and 16% other ethnicities.
- For 2010-11, the school intends to add Grade 9 and additional enrollment, giving the school a projected enrollment of 180-185. The school leadership is to notify WASC of the addition of the high school grade and will expect a Substantive Change Visit from WASC during 2010-11 to ensure that the school has the staff, facilities, budget, and curriculum to accommodate the needs of Grade 9 students.
- The current school site is one shared with Grant Elementary School of the LAUSD. Campus conditions for MSA 5 are very crowded even for the current school size. The addition of Grade 9 students next year on this same campus will present a significant challenge. The school will probably move to a new and, hopefully, permanent larger campus location in the Hollywood area for 2011-12.

**IMPORTANT: This sheet is NOT to be given to the school. Please submit it to WASC.**

- At the current site, only portable restrooms are available to staff and students; there is no room for “Directed Study” for the Special Education students; office space is very limited; there is no campus parking for staff members; there are limited Physical Education facilities for students; there is no science lab, as such, for students’ science experiments.
- In collaboration with the leadership of Grant Elementary School, MSA 5 does share use of the asphalt playing areas and the Grant School auditorium, which is used for competitions, special presentations, and guest speakers. It would be desirable for MSA 5 to be allowed to use some of the Grant School classrooms which might be unused and available next year.

**IMPORTANT: This sheet is NOT to be given to the school. Please submit it to WASC.**

## Category A: Organization

**A1. Vision and Purpose Criterion:** To what extent does the school have a clearly stated vision or purpose based on its student needs, current educational research, and the belief that all students can achieve at high levels? Supported by the governing board and the central administration, to what extent is the school's purpose further defined by expected schoolwide learning results and the academic standards? To what extent do the expected schoolwide learning results stress attainment of the academic standards?

### Selected statements from the school application:

**Mission:** The mission of Magnolia Science Academy 2 is to serve 6th – 8th grade students (eventually 6th -12th) in the Hollywood area by

- Preparing students to become responsible, educated citizens who have the skills and understanding to participate and work productively in a diverse, multicultural, globally oriented society, and who are ready to carry the torch of knowledge, freedom, and prosperity that has been passed from one generation to another in this great nation.
- Providing a sound educational plan with emphasis on math, science, and technology.
- Providing a rigorous, innovative, challenging enhanced curriculum with focus on preparing students to attend the universities of their choice.

**Vision:** Inspiring students to choose career paths in science and technology.

### Schoolwide Learning Outcomes:

1. All students will work towards grade-level proficiency or above in the areas of language arts (reading, writing and speaking), history, math, science, and foreign language. Proficiency will be determined using state standardized tests and teacher assessments based on state content standards.
2. All students will demonstrate specific leadership skills (building trust, communicating, problem solving, decision making, time management, self management, organizing, and future development) within and outside the school environment.
3. All 6th, 7th and 8th grade students will learn conflict resolution, diversity sensitivity, responsibility, citizenship and honesty through the Get Ready for Life course for one full school year.
4. All students will strengthen their technology skills to enhance lifelong learning and preparation for a modern work force.

The school's purpose is supported by the governing board and central administration through the ongoing encouragement of standards-based curriculum. The administration is flexible and accommodating in regards to innovative teaching strategies posed by teachers. In addition to the in-class curriculum, the school's purpose is supported by a variety of extracurricular activities.

**A2. Governance Criterion:** To what extent does the governing board (a) have policies and bylaws that are aligned with the school’s purpose and support the achievement of the expected schoolwide learning results and academic standards based on data-driven instructional decisions for the school; (b) delegate implementation of these policies to the professional staff; and (c) monitor results regularly and approves the single schoolwide action plan and its relationship to the Local Educational Agency (LEA) plan?

**Selected statements from the school application:**

Magnolia Science Academy – 5 is a public school operated by a California nonprofit corporation, Magnolia Educational & Research Foundation, pursuant to applicable California laws on nonprofit organizations and in accordance with the bylaws duly adopted by the incorporators. MSA-5 is governed in accordance with applicable federal, state, and municipal laws and regulations relating to public agencies and charter schools. The Academy is nonsectarian in all aspects of school administration and does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, disability, or gender. The selection, composition and specific duties of the governing board are responsible for:

- Monitoring general policies of the school related to admissions, personnel, health and safety, curriculum and assessment, facility use, school maintenance etc., and the implementation of these policies by the school administration.
- Developing policies for MSA-5 within the boundaries of the Charter. However, new policies that do not fall within the Charter will be submitted to the LAUSD for review and approval before implementation.
- Approving and monitoring the school budget.

The governing board delegates implementation of policies to professional staff as follows: The Board may select or approve creation of ad hoc committees to delegate some of its powers to these committees in a variety of areas, including, but not limited to, policy and planning, curriculum design, parent-community relations, testing and student performance.

School administrators are responsible to monitor all academic, disciplinary and financial results of the school regularly. They report these results to Magnolia Foundation board. In addition to school board and school administration, MSA-5 has a school site committee made up with one student, one parent, one teacher and one administrator. The purpose of this school site is committee is make recommendations to Magnolia Foundation board on what is needed at MSA-5.

**A3. Leadership and Staff Criterion:** Based on student achievement data, to what extent does the school leadership and staff make decisions and initiate activities that focus on all students achieving the expected schoolwide learning results and academic standards? To what extent do the school leadership and staff annually monitor and refine the single schoolwide action plan based on analysis of data to ensure alignment with student needs?

**Selected statements from the school application:**

Student achievement data is always readily available to parents/guardians on the MSA-5 website, and is always up to date. MSA-5 is using different ways to collect and disseminate data. There is a central student information system called MagnoXP. In this student information system, student data is gathered together with grades, and discipline notes are stored. Based on the students' progress report, routine checking and academic intervention program, MSA-5 provides Saturday school, and after-school tutoring. In our academic intervention program, the teaching staff of our school meets during the regular staff meetings. Our academic committee provides a form to fill in for teachers. They go over every student to check if the student needs extra tutoring or a student or parent conference. In these meetings every teaching staff member may contribute to the school education. Administration also has parent conferences on a regular basis to discuss how to better improve student success. Students are encouraged to attend after school tutoring and are given an attendance sheet to keep track. MSA 5 also conducts individualized MAP Testing ( Measures of Academic Progress ) are electronically administered and scored achievement tests designed to measure growth in student learning for individual students, classrooms, schools, and districts. The tests provide accurate and immediate scores to help teachers plan instructional programs, place new students in the appropriate courses, and screen students for special programs

The administration and the teaching staff of the school organize a wrap-up meeting at the end of the academic year to evaluate the past year, in addition to many administrative meetings throughout the year. MSA-5 also has in-service week at the beginning of every school year. In that meeting the administration and the teaching staff members get ready for the upcoming school year. Various data is used in these preparations, like CST results, MAP test results, school grades etc.

To be able to develop, maintain and improve the academic program at school, the school established an academic Intervention committee that meets regularly. This committee is made of two teachers, and one administrator. The purpose of this committee is to determine which students need the extra help to be more successful at school. Based on recommendations from teachers and test results which include school grades, MAP test results, CST and other measurable tests the committee directs the students into tutoring sessions and pull out sessions.

**A4. Qualified Staff Criterion:** To what extent does a qualified staff facilitate achievement of the academic standards and the expected schoolwide learning results through a system of preparation, induction, and ongoing professional development?

**Selected statements from the school application:**

The qualified staff facilitates achievement of the academic standards by coming up with an annual plan of the curriculum, which includes the State's content standard. This annual plan is uploaded to the MSA-5 website for all to see at the beginning of the school year. Each teacher is responsible for having a day of tutoring in their core teaching subjects. All staff members prepare lesson plans every week; these plans are submitted to administration for review. Ongoing professional development is ensured through one week of teacher-training at the beginning of every school year. Teachers are exposed to new ideas and research in the field of education. MSA-5 is also utilizing "The Master Teacher Professional Development Program" (<http://www.masterteacher.com/>). Every week, during the regular staff meetings, one of the teaching staff members presents the professional development topic of the week. This stimulates a continuous effort on self improvement. The school also supports professional development with financial assistance to those teachers who would like to attend teacher conferences. The school covers the basic expenses and provides a substitute if the professional development is during school time. MSA Staff are actively encouraged to engage in a wide variety of professional developments that promote the advancement of their degrees and credentials.

Mr. Joseph Compagno is teaching the Get Ready for Life course which is a basic character education course in addition to his regular social studies classes. He has a personal interest in teaching this course where he is more than capable to teach it. We do not have any other teacher teaching a course out of her area.

MSA-5 does not have teaching aids but two of its teachers are teaching less than 25 periods a week. The administration asks them to do pull-outs during elective courses at school. They help those students who have more than acceptable number of missing homework assignments.

MSA-5 parents regularly come to school to serve breakfast and lunch. They also clean the office area and front yard.

student-teacher ratio is 11.8. As of December, there are 118 students and 10 teaching staff members. On October 1<sup>st</sup>, MSA-5 had 120 students.

MSA-5 believes that the quality of the professional staff determines the quality of education offered in the school. There is a continuous staff evaluation in addition to the formal evaluations. Staff evaluation and selection shall be based on:

- Strong academic preparation
- Professional competence
- Intellectual rigor
- Emotional maturity
- Enthusiastic professional attitude
- Knowledge of instructional practices
- Ability to contribute to the furtherance of the school's educational goals

**IMPORTANT: This sheet is NOT to be given to the school. Please submit it to WASC.**

Formal evaluations will be conducted in the second semester of every year. Walk-ins of classes by administrators are informal ways of staff evaluation. Staff must demonstrate that they are aware that children have many different family circumstances, and that they are willing and able to provide the educational support that a diverse student population needs in school.

The MSA-5 teaching staff members must fulfill their individual responsibilities and work in concert with the other members of the teaching team.

**A5. Ongoing Professional Development Criterion:** How does the school ensure that the leadership and staff are involved in ongoing professional development that focuses on identified student learning needs?

**Selected statements from the school application:**

Teachers are encouraged to attend workshops for professional development. Compensation is provided to those interested teachers. In addition to external workshops, MSA-5 is hosting its own teacher development program at its own site. Administration works with teachers to decide on the best approach to cover the needs of the students and the teachers.

Teaching staff are involved in ongoing research or data-based correlated professional development to the following extent: Teachers meet regularly in the academic intervention meeting to discuss common difficulties that their students encounter. These difficulties are determined based on the students' graded work. The feedbacks come to the academic committee, where these suggestions are discussed with school administrators.

**A6. Resources Criterion:** To what extent are the human, material, physical, and financial resources sufficient and utilized effectively to support students in accomplishing the academic standards and the expected schoolwide learning results?

**Selected statements from the school application:**

Various programs at this school help reinforce the academic standards and expected school-wide learning results. Robotics club is for advanced students to get ready to compete in a higher-education competition held between state-wide high schools. Future city club is for students who would design a futuristic city that will solve many urban problems we face in our current cities. After-school tutoring is provided by all staff members at least once a week in all subjects. In addition, volunteers and tutors on weekdays and on weekends on the core subjects.

Every staff member is required to have a teaching credential and/or a certain level of expertise in his/her subject. The employment contracts are on year-to-year basis, and there is a procedure to evaluate every staff member's performance and based on these evaluations, contracts are extended or not renewed. Classes are designed not to exceed twenty five to thirty students per class and the number of educators to be hired is decided on this value. Every year, there is a two week seminar where the academic standards, expected learning results and school's overall goals are discussed and material, physical, and financial needs of every class and program are assessed. Based on the results of these meetings, the list supplies and materials needed for a school year are determined and ordered before school starts. Generally, there are no limitations on acquiring and maintaining instructional materials such as textbooks, other printed material, software, lab supplies, audio-visual technology and computers. Every classroom is supplied with computers, projectors, and one set of textbooks for every student. There is coordination in-and between departments in developing a general list of supplies needed for each department, and a school wide plan for utilizing those resources in the classroom. Volunteers and interns with various backgrounds are available throughout the academic year, helping students with their classes, supervising their projects, preparing students to various national and international Olympiads and assisting with school maintenance. During summer break, classrooms are cleaned, painted and renovated as required.

---

**NOTE: CRITERIA A7 AND A8 APPLY ONLY TO CHARTER SCHOOLS.**

**A7. Resource Planning and Fiscal Health Criterion:** To what extent has the charter school governing authority and the school leadership executed responsible resource planning for the future? Is the charter school fiscally solvent and does it use sound and ethical accounting practices (budgeting/monitoring, internal controls, audits, fiscal health and reporting)?

**Selected statements from the school application:**

MSA-5 has prepared a 5-year budget for planning purposes. The school has carried over a small amount of surplus from its first year of operation and we are projecting to have another small budget surplus at the end of this year too. The school administration regularly reviews and updates the fiscal operations with the business managers of the central office. Our school had its first financial audit In November 2009. We were cleared in the audit with no findings. Our board of directors also regularly checks our budget

**A8. Operational Standards and Procedures Criterion:** To what extent has the charter school developed policies, procedures, and internal controls for managing the financial operations that meet state laws, generally accepted practices, and ethical standards?

**Selected statements from the school application:**

MSA-5 has all its financial procedures in compliance with all state and federal laws that are developed over the time and revised repeatedly in the last eight years since the start of MSA-1. We have booklets of our fiscal procedures, purchasing policies, and accounting procedures that we use as guides for our school.

**IMPORTANT: This sheet is NOT to be given to the school. Please submit it to WASC.**

**Visiting Committee comments:**

- This is the principal's first year in this assignment at MSA 5. He had previously served at Magnolia Science Academy 2 in Reseda, where he had some experience with the WASC accreditation process.
- On the day following the Initial Visit, the school expected the annual audit by the LAUSD. The lead district person for charter schools, Ms. Joyce Johnson, was to visit the school and check on various charter school compliance items.
- The principal uses both informal walk-through classroom observations and a formal evaluation process to evaluate the teaching staff. He tries to give teachers ongoing feedback on their strengths and areas for development. He also regularly checks teachers' lesson plans to ensure that they are standards-based and in alignment with the adopted curriculum.
- The school's enrollment includes approximately 85% of students who qualify for free/reduced lunch benefits. Therefore, the school does receive federal Title I funds.
- The school staff is very proud of the Technology Integrated Education (TIE) program, the Get Ready for Life character/health education class, their participation in Home Visits, the after-school tutoring available to students, and students' participation and successes in many types of academic competitions.
- The Initial Visit Committee supports the principal's intentions to hire the school's own custodial service for 2010-11 rather than rely on the service now provided by the LAUSD.
- The principal appreciates the opportunity to meet weekly with the MSA CEO and fellow principals for updates, expressions of needs and concerns, and for sharing of best practices.
- The statements of Mission and Vision are common to all MSA schools. They were developed with the opening of MSA 1 and are to be reviewed periodically by the MSA Board with principals' input.
- The Schoolwide Learning Outcomes were developed for the opening of MSA 1. Of the four outcomes, the most important one is that which refers to students working toward grade-level proficiency. They were reviewed for MSA 5 along with the development of the Initial Application, and they should be reviewed and revised, as needed, to ensure that they are still appropriate for high school level students and that they are stated in measurable terms, are in fact measured, and that the student outcomes are reported regularly to the school's key stakeholders.
- During the orientation/admissions process, parents are provided a Parent Handbook. There is also an Employee Handbook.
- For the school's first Self-Study, a simplified but complete budget page should be included in that document.
- The staff uses the "Master Teacher Professional Development" brochures as impetus for discussions during each staff meeting. One teacher takes the lead on each topic.
- At the time of the Initial Visit, the school had seven (7) FTE teachers and 115 students, equating to a 16: 1 student: teacher ratio.

**IMPORTANT: This sheet is NOT to be given to the school. Please submit it to WASC.**

- The Initial Visit Committee supports the principal's intentions to continue professional development opportunities for teachers, especially focusing on classroom management, general teaching effectiveness, enriching the varieties of teaching methodologies, and understanding and using MAP test results for modifying instruction and resource expenditures. As high school grade levels are added, the staff will need inservice training in understanding the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) and how best to prepare students to pass this exam.
- The MSA schools business manager visits the school regularly and provides valued assistance to the principal in reviewing the budget.

**IMPORTANT: This sheet is NOT to be given to the school. Please submit it to WASC.**

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

**B1. Standards-Based Curriculum Criterion:** How does the school ensure that all students participate in a rigorous, relevant, and coherent standards-based curriculum that supports the achievement of the academic standards and the expected schoolwide learning results?

**Selected statements from the school application:**

MSA-5 offers a rigorous educational program aligned to academic standards. The expectations are clearly defined in all core subject areas that the students know what they are learning. Teaching through cross-disciplinary activities, inquiry-based instructions, improving critical thinking skills and collaborative learning are the tools that the teachers use to support the students on achieving MSA-5's standard based rigor curriculum and the expected schoolwide learning results.

**B2. Student Access Criterion:** How does the school ensure that all students have access to the school's entire program and assistance with a personal learning plan to prepare them for the pursuit of their academic, personal, and school-to-career goals?

**Selected statements from the school application:**

In addition to standards-based curriculum, MSA-5 is providing tutoring sessions, weekend school, field trips, competitions and many more opportunities for our students to develop their capabilities. Students can receive tutoring and homework help in all academic areas. Field trips are given to reinforce the curriculum. Staff meetings and academic intervention meetings also play an important role on ensuring the success of all MSA-5 students.

**B3. Graduation Criterion:** How does the school ensure that upon completion of the high school program, students will be able to meet all the requirements of graduation? List (or attach) the graduation requirements of the school.

**Selected statements from the school application:**

Currently MSA-5 does not have a high school, eventually it will. Graduation requirements for an MSA school is attached in Appendix C.

**Visiting Committee comments:**

- The Get Ready for Life curriculum is provided by the Accord Institute and is a required course for middle school students at the MSA schools.
- Students appreciate the many opportunities they have to participate on field trips.

**IMPORTANT: This sheet is NOT to be given to the school. Please submit it to WASC.**

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

**C1. Challenging Learning Experiences Criterion:** To achieve the academic standards and the expected schoolwide learning results, how does the school ensure that all students are involved in challenging learning experiences?

**Selected statements from the school application:**

In order to differentiate between different learning types (English Language Learners, economically disadvantaged, underachieving, average ability, and gifted and talented) the instruction is altered. For gifted students, during instruction, more rigorous assignments are distributed. For the English Language Learners, the teachers use more visual aids that allow them to learn better. For example, they use overhead projectors, LCD projectors (BrainPOP and Discovery Education), manipulative, and other hands on activities.

Students are given many different types of club activities from which to choose to help stimulate their learning experiences. Some of these are: Puzzle club, SimCity club, outside school activities such as Advance Math and Science Program (AMSP), engineering projects (Robotics), and outdoor activities. They are also given several types of assignments within class to focus on their reading, writing, and verbal skills.

**C2. Strategies and Resources Criterion:** To what extent does the school ensure that all teachers use a variety of strategies and resources, including technology and experiences beyond the textbook and the classroom, that actively engage students, emphasize higher order thinking skills, and help them succeed at high levels?

**Selected statements from the school application:**

In the classroom teachers use technology to more actively engage the learner. For example, teachers use power point presentations, games and activities, which increases the students level of motivation. Teachers also use power point presentations when lecturing to make the topic more visually stimulating. The teachers also use grouping strategies that allow students to learn from their peers. Students will model lessons to other students in the class; this allows the students to understand the material better.

Strategies, resources available, and use of technology used at MSA-5 also include:

- Use of multimedia content from web based program, such as, Discovery Education (<http://www.discoveryeducation.com/>) and BrainPOP ([www.brainpop.com](http://www.brainpop.com)).
- Providing web based student information system (SIS) which students can follow their ongoing educational information, for example, MagnoXP.
- Students are able to make digital file submissions and gather necessary class works as well.
- They are provided various materials to do comprehensive experiments.
- Group projects are established which make them work collaboratively.

**IMPORTANT: This sheet is NOT to be given to the school. Please submit it to WASC.**

- MSA-5 can follow student achievement by providing digital testing environments. For example, MAP testing by Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) is administered at MSA-5.

**Visiting Committee comments:**

- As the campus expands or moves to a new location, provisions should be implemented to ensure that students have a science lab in which to do science experiments.
- The school has implement daily Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) procedures with book tests following the students' completion of their readings.
- At the time of the Initial Visit, teachers indicated that they had ample textbooks and supplementary instructional materials and supplies. Especially as the school adds the high school years, it will be beneficial to provide students library access in addition to the classroom libraries now in place.
- A new computer lab has been added to the school. Each classroom has a projector. The school leadership will try to add SMART boards, document cameras/projectors, and instant response tools as finances permit.
- Especially as the school adds the high school grades, staff should implement procedures to identify and serve gifted and talented students.
- Parents feel very comfortable approaching teachers or the principal regarding their children's progress.
- Students and their parents appreciate the individual attention given within small class sizes.
- The Initial Visit Committee supports students' and parents' requests for appropriate Physical Education instructional areas, including changing/locker rooms.
- Teachers and students desire the addition of more fine arts classes, including dance, and music and even more art.
- The school's leadership needs to ensure that the school bells/chimes are audible in all classrooms.

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

**D1. Data Collection and Analysis Criterion:** To what extent does the school use a professionally acceptable assessment process to collect, disaggregate, analyze and report student performance data to the parents and other shareholders of the community?

**Selected statements from the school application:**

One of the main ways that the school extends itself to sharing information regarding assessments and students performances is through MagnoXP. This website allows parents and students to monitor their performance on a daily basis. They can receive immediate feedback on test and quizzes. Furthermore, the MAP testing reports the students overall progress to the teacher and administrators. During parent conferences the teachers can discuss results with the parents. The CST scores are also evaluated by all teachers and scores allow teachers to see their students' performance.

The students are assessed on completion of their work, effort, oral presentations, and written assignments. The technology is incorporated in instructions and assessments. For example, [www.brainpop.com](http://www.brainpop.com) and [www.discoveryeducation.com](http://www.discoveryeducation.com) is a commonly used website to review a concept and then students take the quiz about that concept. The student performances are reported by mail and posted on the school's website for faster communication.

**D2. Variety of Assessment Strategies Criterion:** How does the school ensure that all teachers employ a variety of strategies to evaluate student learning? How does the school ensure that the students and teachers use these finding to modify the teaching/learning process for the enhancement of the educational progress of every student?

**Selected statements from the school application:**

How does the school ensure that all teachers employ a variety of strategies to evaluate student learning? How does the school ensure that the students and teachers use these finding to modify the teaching/learning process for the enhancement of the educational progress of every student?

Teachers administer tests on a weekly or every other week basis to evaluate student understanding of the weekly standards. Once a month, cumulative tests are given that allows teachers to have an ongoing assessment students' overall progress. MSA 5 has a daily SSR reading program where students read a book for 25 minutes.

We use the tools as a gauge of the students understanding of the concept being taught. If there is not a high level of comprehension then we will use a different resource to re-teach the concept.

**D3. Review of Student Progress Criterion:** To what extent does the school with the support of the district and community have an assessment and monitoring system to determine student progress toward achievement of the academic standards and the expected schoolwide learning results?

**Selected statements from the school application:**

The most extensive way in which this school monitors students learning levels is through MagnoXP and MAP testing. All parent(s) and students receive a user name and password to monitor their child's ongoing progress. All teachers have their own website, in which parents can view the annual plan, homework assignments, exam dates, and announcements. Furthermore, each annual plan includes the standards in which students will be working on for any given week of the semester.

Based on the previous results and recommendations from every teacher, students are administered California English Language Development Test (CELDT) at the start of the academic year. On top of this, the local district provides the list of students that might need additional help with English Language. English teachers regularly update ESL students' needs. If there is a concern raised by teachers regarding students' ability to understand English the review process is initiated to assess students' English level. This review process is comprehensive and involves student, his or her guardian, all core teachers, and administration.

**D4. Assessment of Student Achievement Criterion:** To what extent does the assessment of student achievement in relation to the academic standards and the expected schoolwide learning results drive the school's program, its regular evaluation and improvement, and the allocation and usage of resources?

**Selected statements from the school application:**

MSA-5 continually assesses students with a powerful assessment tool, MAP, along with the specific-school assessments. The students' progress is measured effectively with respect to the academic standards and schoolwide learning results. The school analyzes a wide variety of indicators of student learning, including student work/performance. The parents, Magnolia Foundation Board and LAUSD is updated about the school's performance throughout the year. New program implementations are made in order to reach better performance results. The resources are made available for enriching the instructional materials and teachers are trained to focus on using innovative strategies in order to reach better student achievement results.

**Visiting Committee comments:**

- The faculty favors the use of the MAP assessment to measure individual student's academic progress over time in language arts (reading and grammar) and mathematics.
- Beginning 2010-11, the school will replace the Magno XP system with one named CoolSIS.

- Under the direction and guidance of the school leadership, the staff needs to identify the major indicators of student achievement and display student outcomes in graphic format, showing at least three-year achievement trends. This data set might include such indicators as the Content Standards Tests (CSTs), students' progress on the MAP tests, student attendance (ADA) rates, annual API scores, competition participation and outcomes, and progress in reading skill development.
- If parents do not have a home computer on which to use the Magno XP system to access students' academic and behavioral records, they can use a school computer or obtain printouts from the school's staff.
- The school's staff should examine student achievement data disaggregated to show the progress of the special population (Special Education, gender, ELLs, Title I, ethnic breakdowns) students.
- The school does keep data on the progress of students' English language acquisition through CELTD test results. This information should be added to the data set of student achievement.

**IMPORTANT: This sheet is NOT to be given to the school. Please submit it to WASC.**

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

**E1. Parental and Community Involvement Criterion:** To what extent does the school leadership employ a wide range of strategies to encourage parental and community involvement, especially with the teaching/learning process?

**Selected statements from the school application:**

At Magnolia Science Academy-5 the school leadership makes extensive effort in ensuring parental and community involvement with student education and success. We have a Parent Task Force (PTF) that meets and discusses school events, fundraising ideas, and student issues (such as the lunch menu). Parents are encouraged to participate in these meetings. Parents are also informed of school activities occurring, such as our annual "Thanksgiving Feast", and are asked to bring items and participate in the event with the teachers and students.

Throughout the school year, teachers make "home visits" and go to student/parent homes to build rapport and discuss student achievement in an environment that is comfortable for the parents. This allows for better communication and for parents to get more involved with their son/daughter's education. This is also a good time for teachers and parents to come together and set goals for the student as a team.

Lastly, a monthly newsletter is sent out to parents to share any upcoming or past events/ news. This allows parents to stay connected, even if they are not able to come to events or host a home visit.

**E2. Culture Criterion:** To what extent does the school ensure that it is a safe, clean, and orderly place that nurtures learning? To what extent is the culture of the school characterized by trust, professionalism, and high expectations for all students with a focus on continuous school improvement?

**Selected statements from the school application:**

MSA-5 strives to be a safe, comfortable, effective learning environment for all students. To ensure this, Magnolia students adhere to a strict dress code policy. Students are required to come to school in uniform everyday and not exhibit any inappropriate behavior with their clothing or appearance. There are staff members outside during arrival, before school, at nutrition, lunch, and after school to monitor student behavior and show students a strong adult presence.

MSA-5 has a Community Service Club that frequently cleans the school and provides motivational signs and decorations. We also employ a lunch cleanup process for students with detention. In addition, parent volunteers come weekly to clean our bathrooms, sweep the lunch area and ramps to classrooms, and serve/ clean up lunch.

Furthermore, students participated in an anti-bullying campaign during one of their elective classes and made anti-bullying posters that were posted all over campus and inside classrooms.

**IMPORTANT: This sheet is NOT to be given to the school. Please submit it to WASC.**

To what extent is the culture of the school characterized by trust, professionalism, and high expectations for all students with a focus on continuous school improvement?

Students at MSA-5 are held to high academic standards, regardless of past performance. We encourage students to push their academic limits and offer free after school tutoring and clubs. The after school tutoring gives all students access to help that will increase success and student motivation. The clubs help to build trust among students and staff, and promote an environment in which learning is fun. For example, some of the academic clubs offered include AMSP, robotics, and Scrabble.

At MSA-5 we promote professionalism by having teachers participate in weekly staff meetings and a professional development series, The Master Teacher Pd Program. Teachers are also encouraged to observe each other and discuss strategies and activities that work well with students. Teachers engage in Student Intervention meetings that focus on student achievement and needs based on grades and behaviors.

Teachers communicate with parents and students via email and MagnoXP, our electronic grade/discipline database. Parents are kept up to date by instant email anytime their child receives a discipline record. This creates a trust between parents and staff that communication will always be open and small problems will not grow into big problems. Parents know what is happening with their child throughout the day, and the teachers know that the parents are aware of any issues that may arise. This can lead to mutual understanding of an event, and further promote a joint partnership between teacher and parent to address any problems.

The staff has open communication throughout the school day via email. The principal sends daily messages and announcements to staff and students via email, and also frequently visits the classrooms.

**E3. Student Academic Support Criterion:** To what extent do all students receive appropriate support along with an individualized learning plan to help ensure academic success?

**Selected statements from the school application:**

Special Education and RSP teachers hold IEP meetings (annually and by request) to adapt curriculum based on the student's particular needs. These same support personnel collaborate with core subject teachers to provide support during instructional time. The collaborative model is used to help the special education students. MSA5 also provides a speech therapist for students who need speech therapy.

One-on-one, after-school tutoring provides further personalized instruction, leading to greater student understanding and achievement. Core subject concepts are reinforced with further modeling and explanation for the purpose of student comprehension. Along with this, the advanced students in math participate in the next grade level's math course to ensure a challenging and knowledge-enhancing curriculum for all.

**E4. Student Personal Support Criterion:** To what extent do all students have access to a system of personal support services, activities, and opportunities at the school and within the community?

**Selected statements from the school application:**

- Teachers are available for student concerns and personal / academic counseling. Teachers periodically visit students' homes to further develop the relationship between the home and the school.
- In terms of activities, a Community Service club allows increased student involvement in the community. Participation in the club creates responsible global citizens.
- A variety of field trips to places such as Europe, San Diego, San Francisco, and local museums such as The Getty, provide students with access to cultural events and extended learning activities.
- The students are given access to their grades 24 hours a day through the web portal [www.magnoliascience.org/portal](http://www.magnoliascience.org/portal). MagnoXP allows both parents and students to check student grades and homework at their convenience. They may also access the yearly plans and they syllabi of their teachers. Additionally, they can e-mail teachers whenever they have questions or concerns. Through MagnoXP, the students are afforded a hands-on approach to their own learning experience by self-monitoring their grades and assignments.
- 6th through 8th graders have a computer class Monday thru Friday during which they may access the system. The students can check announcements, grades, any class assignments for any of their classes. The students have tutoring 4 days a week (Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday)

**Visiting Committee comments:**

- With the addition of the first high school grade next year, the school's leadership will need to assess the adequacy of counseling and guidance services appropriate for high school students.
- Teachers and parents appreciate their access to students' academic and discipline records through the Magno XP system. A new student information system, CoolSIS, is to be implemented for 2010-11.
- Staff members have conducted 90 Home Visits during the 2009-10 school year, and these are very much appreciated by parents. Teachers are asked to do at least 10 Home Visits each per year.
- The school asks that parents volunteer for at least 10 hours per year, assisting with campus cleanup and serving lunches. It will be desirable to expand the involvement of parents in many other facets of school operations.
- The Parent Task Force includes six (6) parents who meet monthly to examine school needs and decide how they can best assist in the efforts of the faculty. There is also a general parents' meeting held three to four times a year.
- The school has a School Site Council made up of one teacher, one parent, one student, and the school administrator. Recommendations of the SSC are forwarded to the principal and MSA Board. The school leadership needs to ensure that the School Site Council functions according to Education Code provisions.
- It will be desirable to expand parental participation on both the Parent Task Force and School Site Council.

**IMPORTANT: This sheet is NOT to be given to the school. Please submit it to WASC.**

- The school does have a student government group as well as a Community Service Club. As the school's enrollment includes high school students, the student government should be formalized in order to provide leadership experiences to many students, and so that this group functions as the "voice" of students.
- The school offers students many opportunities for extracurricular activities, including student government, basketball, Community Service Club, Girls Fun (for grades 6-7), the Advanced Math and Science Program, table tennis, robotics, Saturday School and after-school tutoring including both peer and teacher tutorials.
- Teachers indicate that they are provided adequate professional development opportunities, including pre-service and inservice training, as well as opportunities to attend subject-area and job-alike workshops and conferences.
- The school uses a collaborative model of Special Education services, in which the SPED teacher works in the classroom with the regular education teacher.
- The school does have a website with the computer teacher serving as the web master.
- Parent/Guardian Surveys are given annually, and the school is encouraged to continue this practice.
- Students appreciate the strict "no bullying" policy and practices of the school.

## Ongoing School Improvement

### Schoolwide Areas of Strength

The Initial Visit Committee is pleased to cite the following commendations and areas of strength for Magnolia Science Academy 5, which the school should retain and build upon:

- The Initial Visit Committee commends the Magnolia Foundation Board and school staff for requesting WASC accreditation and preparing well for the Initial Visit.
- The school has prepared an acceptable application for consideration of WASC accreditation, which should serve them well when they prepare their first Self-Study. A collaborative process was used to develop the initial Application, which included extensive input from the teaching staff.
- The Committee commends the principal and teachers for being caring and dedicated professionals and for their willingness to help students with their academic and personal issues and challenges.
- Staff members are committed to student success and providing students a caring and nurturing environment for learning.
- Students are very proud of their accomplishments, have high aspirations for higher education and careers, and are appreciative of the efforts of the principal and teachers to provide them a quality education and preparation for high school.
- The Committee commends the principal and teachers for their open communication with parents and responsiveness to parents' requests and concerns.
- The principal and staff have implemented effective procedures to keep students and their parents informed regarding students' academic and behavioral progress.
- There is new technology available for students, and teachers indicated that they integrate the technology into the curriculum in comfortable and meaningful ways.
- The Magnolia Foundation continues to provide staffing that allows for small class sizes and a low student: teacher ratio.
- Magnolia Science Academy 5 has provided students a campus facility which is a safe and secure environment for students and staff.
- The Foundation provides a variety of professional development opportunities for staff members, including pre-service and inservice training.
- Teachers are to be commended for the many hours outside of the regular school day that they give to after-school clubs, activities, competitions, tutoring, Saturday School, and in providing Home Visits.
- Staff and students are to be commended for attaining an Academic Performance Index (API) of 814 for 2008-09, the school's first year of operation.

**IMPORTANT: This sheet is NOT to be given to the school. Please submit it to WASC.**

- The school principal is highly visible on campus and in classrooms and respects the “voice” of the faculty in making major school decisions.
- The school’s leadership is to be commended for trying to establish positive relationships with the host campus staff of Grant Elementary School, which has resulted in many discussions about ways to maximize facilities usage for the benefit of the charter school.
- Being a two-year old school and the first year on the current site, Magnolia Science Academy 5 has accomplished much in a very short time.

### **Critical Areas for Follow-up**

The Initial Visit Committee identified the following areas of need, improvement, and follow up:

1. Under the direction and guidance of the principal, the school’s faculty needs to review all areas of improvement and follow-up noted by the Initial Visit Committee and include the “critical growth needs” in the school’s *Action Plan* or *Single Plan for School Improvement*.
2. Of paramount importance is the need for additional classroom space and support facilities in a permanent location, especially as the school plans to increase its enrollment and add high school grade levels. Considerations needing to be addressed include science lab facilities, staff and student restrooms, Physical Education changing/locker rooms, athletic grounds, a school library, a room appropriate for Special Education “Directed Study,” outside water fountains, staff and visitor parking, and a food services area.
3. Under the direction and guidance of the school’s leadership team, the staff needs to formalize a data set and graphic display of major indicators of student achievement over at least three years, and annually review these data for achievement trends, needs, modification of instruction, and resource allocation. This data set might include student progress on such indicators as the STAR Content Standards Tests (CSTs), MAP test results, numbers or percentages of “D” and “F” grades, attendance (ADA) rates, API scores, CELDT test results, Physical Fitness test results, and other indicators selected by the faculty.
4. Especially as the high school grade levels are added, the staff needs to revisit the adopted Schoolwide Learning Outcomes to ensure that students’ outcomes on each are measurable, measured, and regularly reported to key stakeholders in quantifiable terms.
5. As the school adds high school grades, it will need to assess the adequacy of counseling and guidance services appropriate for secondary school students.
6. The school leadership needs to implement procedures to increase parents’ participation and service on the Parent Task Force and School Site Council.
7. The school leadership needs to seek ways to provide students additional opportunities for elective class enrollment, including additional foreign languages such as Spanish, music and drama.
8. Under the direction and guidance of the school’s principal, the school needs to increase students’ access to recreational and sports activities on campus, including intramural opportunities and selected athletic competition with like schools.

**IMPORTANT: This sheet is NOT to be given to the school. Please submit it to WASC.**

9. Especially as the school adds high school grade levels, the staff will need to address the adequacy of computer access both in labs and in general classrooms, as well as additional technology to meet teachers' and students' needs.
10. The school's leadership needs to collaborate with the staff and plan the timeline of preparation for the school's first WASC Self-Study and next Visiting Committee.
11. The school's principal and future Self-Study Coordinator need to attend appropriate WASC training workshops for schools preparing for their first Self-Study and, if possible, participate on a WASC Visiting Committee to another like charter school.