Chapter 3
Progress Report

William Howard Taft
High School

2013 WASC Accreditation
Focus on Learning
Recommendations from the last visiting committee

ONE: Develop a long term, systematic professional development plan
Taft has a standing professional development committee that works to create systematic professional development throughout the year. The professional development committee is composed of the principal, lead teacher, and coordinated program advisor. The committee receives input for staff development from the Instructional Leadership Team, District advisors, and the School Site Council.

A large part of our PD has focused on accessing and interpreting data in order to modify instruction. In this area we have instructed teachers on how to use the LAUSD’s data sources “MyData,” “CORE K 12 Education” as well as District diagnostic assessments, the Performance Meter, discipline data, and the Academic Growth over Time charts. We have also looked at State sources such as CST and CAHSEE scores, AP scores, and our grades analysis tables. We have given departments time to address the findings of these data so that they can develop department-wide strategies to improve instruction. The District has also mandated professional development in areas such as EL instruction, special education instruction, common core, and intervention for at risk students (Response to Intervention²).

As stated in Chapter 1, due to the loss of “Buy Back” days and pupil free PD days, as well as fewer banked time hours, we have experienced a severe decline in overall PD hours – from 45 hours in 2007 to 14 hours in 2010. With the possible move to an affiliated charter Taft will be have more control over its PD, be able to schedule more PD, make the PD more relevant to staff, and readjust the PD schedule.

Beginning with the 2008-09 school year, all professional development efforts have been aligned to a multi-tiered framework called Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²). RtI² is student-centered, data-based and promotes the practice of providing high-quality, effective instruction to all students across all arenas - academic, social-emotional, and behavioral. There is district-wide emphasis on the problem-solving model that utilizes and builds on

- the work of educators who team together to increase student engagement, motivation, and achievement;
- standards-based content knowledge and access strategies to support the achievement of diverse learners - EL and Standard English Learner (SEL) students, Gifted/High Achieving students, and Students with Disabilities (SWD);
- the analysis of multiple sources of data; and
- standards and evidence-based instruction and intervention matched to student need.

TWO: Develop additional small learning communities to reach the needs and interests of more students
While Taft maintains several SLCs, their ability to grow has been severely affected by economic cutbacks, larger class sizes, reduced course offerings, mandated double block
intervention, and the large SAS program. The result of these conditions has been that pure SLC classes for students and scheduling common planning time for teachers have become difficult. This has led Taft to question the efficacy of the SLC model at the school.

Taft will need to make some important decisions regarding SLCs in the near future. The critical questions are as follows:

1. Is the SLC model the best model for addressing the needs and interests of students, or should we consider other models?
2. If Taft is to continue with SLCs, what modifications to the SLC model need to be made given the limitations mentioned above?
3. Whether Taft continues as a full SLC school or not, how can Taft find additional ways to address the goals of the SLCs: a school where students do not feel lost and insignificant in the largeness of the school, where student interests are addressed in a cross-curricular environment that stimulates learning, and where teachers can meet to discuss the educational and emotional needs of shared students?

THREE: Inclusion of underrepresented minorities in enrichment and advanced programs continues to be a concern, particularly among populations that cannot advocate on their own behalf.

Taft recognizes that the traditional model of selecting students for honors and AP classes may not be effective in encouraging underrepresented minorities to take these classes. Taft teachers and counselors actively identify underrepresented minority students who have the potential to take these classes and urge them to consider taking advanced classes. Many of these students have met the requirements to take these classes, but feel intimidated by the workload. Other students may technically not meet the requirements but have exhibited behavior that may lead the teachers to believe that they possess the ability to be successful. In either case, personal contact is an important factor in reaching these students.

Addressing the school culture is another important step in bringing underrepresented minority students into enrichment and advanced programs. Students are encouraged to join clubs such as the California Scholarship Federation and the SAT club. These groups will inspire them to take more AP and honors classes. The college office peer college advisors meet with students about college and discuss with them the advantages of taking AP and honors classes. The AVID program, which works with the average performing student, is designed to encourage students to challenge themselves by moving to the next level. These students keep weekly progress reports and have goal setting worksheets that help them realize their potential as honors or AP students. AP and honors teachers are trained on how to meet the special needs of underrepresented minorities in GATE classes. Taft also has academically enriched classes (AE) that serve as a bridge between AP and honors classes.

As stated in Chapter 1, Taft has seen limited success in its efforts to increase minority enrollment in AP classes. There is a disparity between the percentage of Black and Hispanic students enrolled in AP courses as compared to the larger percentage of White, Asian, and Filipino students. The percentage of Black and Hispanic students in AP sections has, however, seen a slow rise over the last four years. In the 2009 school year only 3.8% of Black students and 8.3% of Hispanic students were in AP classes. In 2012, those numbers inched up to 8.3% of Black students, and 10.6% of Hispanic students in AP sections.
FOUR: Powerful teaching in all content areas
Teachers at Taft are continuing to move away from lecture-oriented classes to classroom environments that are more engaging and relevant for students. In the World Languages department, group work and projects are frequently used to provide students with opportunities to interact with their peers learning from one another as well as teaching one another. The Humanitas SLC focuses on interdisciplinary activities. In addition, many of the Visual and Performing Arts classes and elective classes provide real world experiences where students utilize information and skill learned in their core classes. For example, the fashion and design department runs a boutique, L’Atelier, where students use their math and English skills to sell clothes that they have designed, produced, and marketed.

In many classes, including AVID, health, drama, music, social studies, and fashion and design, guest speakers are brought in to provide instruction and to talk about real life experiences. Partnerships with local business, Non-Profit Organizations, and educational institutions are also used to make learning more relevant to students. For example, Whole Foods is a sponsor of the fashion and design department’s L’Atelier, and Pacific Ballet Dance Theatre, a local ballet company, helps choreograph the musicals and works with drama students. Taft’s IH program works with Pierce College to provide college classes with college credit for IH students. The health department coordinates with UCLA’s Art and Culture program to address the needs of students. Taft also has students attending the West Valley Occupational Center, which also works with the Fashion and Design department.

To the extent possible, Taft teachers have utilized technology to make learning more relevant to students. For example, in the music department, not only are PowerPoint presentations presented in the music history class, but those presentations are then uploaded to Google Docs, modified to add relevant YouTube content, and then imported into a Google Sites webpage that can be accessed by students at home. In the World Languages department document readers, videos, and PowerPoint presentations are used to enhance the learning experience. In the math department, tablet PCs, smartboards, and class websites are used to make learning more interesting and accessible to students. Math students also have access to hotmath.com through a school site license. Skype and video are used by the Humanitas SLC. Some teachers are also exploring ways that smartphones can be used effectively in the classroom.

Despite these examples of using technology to enhance learning, Taft is facing some serious technological issues. Many of the computers are aging and will need to be replaced soon. Others are slow and unable to adequately run current software. In addition, teachers and students feel limited by the lack of certain technologies. For example, there is no computer lab that a teacher can bring a class to, and many teachers do not have adequate access to media projectors. Finally, with extremely tight budgets, replacing technology expendables, such as printer cartridges and media projector bulbs, has become more problematic.

FIVE: Expand parental information meetings
Taft’s new principal continued the tradition of “Coffee with the Principal.” These are bi-weekly meetings held before school to discuss parents’ concerns and to share new information with parents. These meetings have been so successful that the principal has added “Lunch with the Principal” where students can meet with the principal to discuss issues pertinent to them. Parents also are able to receive school information through the website, email blasts from the parent center, automated phone messages, Booster Club and PTSA meetings, SSC/Governance meetings, Blackboard Connect (a District automated
phone messaging system for teachers to connect to the parents of the students in their classes) and general meetings held at Back to School Night and Open House. Several departments also have parent meetings where the expectations of their classes are explained. Taft is also working with the Booster Club to implement the Jupiter grading system. Under this system, parents would be able to login to a website and see updated information about their children's class progress. While this system is currently available under the District's ISIS grading program, most parents (and many teachers) find ISIS difficult to navigate and use.

**SIX: Documentation data**
The Taft School Site Council/Governance Council meetings are open to the public. The meeting dates and agendas are posted on the website. Minutes for the last meeting are available in the main office, and all minutes for the last five years may be accessed from the Taft website. In addition, information from council meetings is shared with parents at “Coffee with the Principal,” with students at “Lunch with the Principal” and at Associated Student Body and SPIRIT meetings, and with teachers at the Instructional Leadership Team meetings and at faculty meetings.

**SEVEN: Develop additional formative assessments school-wide.**
The LAUSD has developed quarterly formative assessments for the core subject areas. All Taft students take these assessments in their core classes. These assessments are designed to ensure that students are on track to meet the content standards in their core courses. The assessments are also a good way for students to adjust to CST tests. Teachers have access to the results of the assessments so that they can modify instruction to meet the needs of their students.

On occasion, Taft has developed its own core assessments to further target areas of student need. In addition, non-core teachers have created formative assessments so that they can target instruction.

The formative assessments may have been a contributing factor in the rise of the API, which has increased from 746 to 790 in the past year.

**Implementation and monitoring of the school-wide action plan**
The Taft School Site Council/Governance Council approves the Single Plan for Student Achievement Action Plan and regularly monitors Taft's progress in meeting its goals (see Taft’s SSC minutes). The council also reviews the WASC action plan and works to implement its goals. In addition, the Taft Instructional Leadership Team meets bi-monthly to review data and determine the progress achieved in implementing our action plans. The team implements changes at the department and SLC level, suggests PD, and makes policy recommendations to the SSC. Parents are also informed of the progress at “Coffee of the Principal” meetings and have the opportunity to provide input as well.

The action plan goals of the Single Plan and the WASC accreditation are often similar or the same. For example the WASC goal of developing programs and procedures to ensure students' academic and personal growth is closely aligned to our Single Plan goals of an increase in the graduation rate and of proficiency for all.
The following sections summarize the growth areas as identified by the 2007 WASC action plan. Each growth area is followed by a response that explains how Taft has implemented the action plan recommendations.

**Growth Area I from 2007 WASC report**

**Statement:** Taft needs to develop programs and procedures to ensure students’ academic and personal growth.

**Rationale:** Taft’s students and especially underrepresented minorities need to improve their performance in their academic classes and on standardized exams. The Self Study revealed a close relationship between students’ personal growth and academic performance.

**ESLRs Addressed:** Academic Success, Individual Growth, Social Maturity, Responsible Citizenship.

**Response**

**Support SLCs based on student interest.**

- Taft will decrease the failure percentage rate in each subgroup by 5% per year.
  Taft has not been able to decrease the failure percentage rate in each subgroup by 5% per year.

- Taft will continue to meet its state target for AMO in all subgroups.
  As a school, Taft did not meet its AMO, and the only subgroup that met its 2011 AMO was whites.

See the previous section in this chapter for more information about SLCs.

**Continue to inform parents and students of the variety of intervention options available to insure student progress towards graduation.**

This year Taft had to cut the Diploma Project Counselor due to budget restrictions. The burden of ensuring that students and parents are informed about intervention options has fallen on the regular counselors, the administration, and the classroom teacher.

In general terms of communication, over 85% of parents on Taft’s parent survey agreed or strongly agreed with the statements that teachers did a good job communicating their children’s progress and that school administrators are visible and available to meet with parents. Eighty-two percent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the school regularly informs parents of their children’s progress. Student opinions were neutral regarding the school’s job in communicating graduation requirements. Most felt that Taft did neither a good job nor a bad job in this area. In the area of intervention, most students agreed with the statement, “Taft does a good job of letting me know about tutoring and other out of class programs that can help me improve my learning.” While the specific question of communicating interventions options was not asked of parents, informal interviews have indicated that this is an area in which the school needs to improve.

**Continue communicating the Individualized Graduation Plan with students.**

Taft counselors meet with 100% of all students to review their Individual Graduation Plans. In addition, students are given TR04 reports that show
specifically what classes they have taken, and what requirements they have yet to fulfill.

**Teach students to become active participants in identifying their areas of weakness so that they may work collaboratively with teachers to improve their achievement results.**

Teachers have employed a variety of methods to help students become active participants in identifying their areas of weakness. In the science department, for example, students are often given pre-tests so that they can identify areas in which they need more work. In the World Languages and the English departments students engage in peer editing whereby they are able to receive feedback from their fellow classmates. In some classes students create test questions, thereby becoming actively involved in their learning. Syllabi help students identify what is expected of them in the class. In the Visual and Performing Arts department students are asked to critique their performance both as a performing group and as individual performers to help identify weaknesses. Once these weaknesses are identified, they work with their teachers on ways in which to improve.

- **Taft will decrease the failure percentage rate in each subgroup by 5% per year.**
  Taft has not been able to decrease the failure percentage rate in each subgroup by 5% per year.
- **Taft will continue to meet its state target for AMO in all subgroups.**
  As a school, Taft did not meet its AMO, and the only subgroup that met its 2011 AMO was whites.

**Participate in the Consolidation of Service Team (C.O.S. T.) process, which ensures student access to appropriate services.**

The C.O.S.T. team meets monthly to identify, target, and monitor students who may need special services.

**Develop ongoing and consistent strategies to address effectively student truancy and tardy issues that negatively impact student learning.**

This year Taft has stepped up its efforts to reduce the number of students who are tardy to class. Unlike in the past, tardy sweeps began within the first week of school and have continued throughout the year. This appears to have had the effect of reducing tardies. In addition, the LAUSD has put in place an automated telephone system that notifies parents when their children are tardy or miss a class.

As the table below shows, over 85% of our students have fewer than four tardies or truancies. It is hard to compare this figure to last year because the statistics are cumulative and not broken down by month. By the end of last year, however, only 25% of students had fewer than four tardies or truancies.

For the following data, students are considered truant for being tardy, not having an absence cleared within 10 school days, having an unexcused absence, having a non-compliant excuse, or not having a code entered in the District’s absence field.
For 2010-11 Taft had an attendance rate of just over 94%. The goal as stated in the action plan was 95% for 2013.

Create activities and events that promote school pride and spirit.

Taft has a number of school-wide activities that promote school pride and spirit. Every Friday students are encouraged to wear Taft colors. Students from SPIRIT tally which homeroom has the highest percentage. Many teachers give extra credit to students who attend course-related Taft functions. For example, English teachers give extra credit to students who attend Taft drama productions. There are numerous groups, organizations, and clubs on campus that have their own tee-shirts, sweatshirts, or other apparel. The parent center sells various Taft apparel as well. Several departments have specific activities that promote school pride. The World Languages department creates a student display that celebrates national foreign language month. The American Sign Language teachers stage an annual multimodal holiday show for all students. The art department creates banners, signs, posters, logos, and display cases for the school. There are frequent Friday pep rallies that feature our sports teams, drill team, dance team, and band. Taft holds numerous dances throughout the year including a winter formal and senior prom. The homecoming game is a large affair that features pre-game and after-game activities.

Taft also fosters school pride by taking part in school-wide charitable activities. Groups like ASB and SPIRIT hold several blood drives during the year. Taft holds several fund raising campaigns to benefit charitable organizations and groups such as a “penny war” to raise money for cystic fibrosis. Taft conducts a toy donation contest called “Santa for Students” which brings toys to needy students at Pacoima Elementary School. Taft’s Vocal Ensemble performs at the local senior center. Students are encouraged to have an active voice in policies that affect them. The School Site Council/Governance Council has five student members. The principal conducts “Lunch with the Principal” every month, and representatives from SPIRIT and student government have access to the administration to discuss school policies. In Taft’s student survey, students gave the school high marks in promoting school pride and spirit.

Growth Area II from 2007 WASC report

**Statement:** Taft faculty needs a systematic professional development program that will improve instruction and raise student achievement.

**Rationale:** The Self Study indicated that Taft has a variety of needs that can be addressed through professional development.

**ESLRs Addressed:** Academic Success.
Response

Establish a standing committee for professional development.
Taft currently has a standing PD committee. (See the section earlier in this chapter regarding more information on professional development.)

Create opportunities for teacher collaboration and training on interdisciplinary instruction, project-based learning, differentiated instruction, and data analysis.
A review of our PD logs over the last several years shows that large portion of our PD has focused on data analysis and differentiated instruction. Teachers have been trained on accessing and analyzing the District’s MyData website, detailed information on the CST tests, District diagnostic assessments, and grades analysis. The rise in last year’s API scores shows that these efforts have been successful. Over the last three years, teachers have had special classes on SADIE techniques that have included differentiated instruction strategies. PD has also instructed teachers on implementing differentiated instruction.

The focus on differentiated instruction and data analysis (and modifying instruction based on that analysis) has meant that there has been less time for interdisciplinary instruction and project-based learning. SLC-specific PD has been reduced over the last few years.

Provide staff development that teaches faculty how to retrieve, interpret, and utilize data to modify instruction.
As mentioned before, and as evidenced by the PD agendas, Taft has focused on training teachers how to access, interpret, and utilize data to modify instruction. Training has included accessing and navigating the data on the District’s MyData and “Core K 12 Education” databases, and examination and interpretation of the District’s diagnostic assessments, CAHSEE and CST scores, and grades analysis charts. On some staff development days, teachers meet by departments and discuss the data they have gathered and determine areas of weakness and strength so they can change instruction to help student learning.

This strategy of retrieving, spotting areas of weakness, analyzing the causes for failure to learn, and then determining ways of modifying instruction to address student misunderstandings has been especially successful in biology classes and is credited with a dramatic rise in CST biology scores.

Develop more departmental formative assessments in order to modify classroom instruction so that all students are better prepared for the summative assessments.
Last year Taft experimented with creating its own formative assessments to better prepare students for the CST. Taft decided to discontinue the program because District diagnostic assessments improved, and the pulling out students to take the assessments was disruptive.

25% of professional development time will be spent on interdisciplinary instruction, project-based learning, differentiated instruction and data analysis.
Due to District mandated PD Taft did not use 25% of its PD time on interdisciplinary instruction, project-based learning, or differentiated
instruction. The school did, however, spend more than 10% of PD to focus on retrieving, interpreting, and utilizing data to modify instruction.

Growth Area III from 2007 WASC report

Statement: Taft faculty needs a systematic professional development program that will improve instruction and raise student achievement.
Rationale: The Self Study indicated that Taft has a variety of needs that can be addressed through professional development.
ESLRs Addressed: Academic Success.

Response

School Site Council will review the school vision and purpose.
The Taft School Site Council has recently unanimously approved the revised school vision and mission. The vision and mission were presented to the Taft Leadership Team, faculty, parents and students. While there has not been a formal survey of all stakeholders (the goal was 95% acceptance of the vision), the vision and mission have widely been accepted by all stakeholders.

School Site Council members will maintain contact with their respective constituent groups.
The minutes to the School Site Council/Governance council are either emailed or put in the boxes of all teachers. The minutes for the last five years are available on the Taft website for all stakeholders to access. The council publicizes the dates and agendas of its meetings on the online Taft calendar. Student representatives to the council report back to the student cabinet or the SPIRIT class on the activities of the council. Parents are informed of any critical meetings through the parent email system, “Coffee with the Principal,” or the automated phone system.

Conduct parent meetings to interpret standardized test results.
Standardized test results are presented and explained to parents at meetings conducted by the college office, at “Coffee with the Principal,” and by counselors.

Use direct mailings to inform parents of school activities involving parent participation.
The cost of direct mailings along with the wide availability of email and the Internet as well as the use of the automated phone system, have made this option somewhat obsolete. Nevertheless, Taft still sends out information to parents through student handouts. Direct mail is also used for report cards, notices of orientation, Program Improvement letter, and Title I information.

Promote the use of Taft’s website to communicate with parents.
Taft uses a third party content management system to provide parents with an attractive up-to-date website. News, calendar events, and bell schedules are readily available to parents. In addition, parents can reach teachers via the website-based email system. Several teachers also have links from the website to their own class-related web pages.
Seek partnerships with business and industry to provide student internships. 
As mentioned previously in this chapter, Taft has partnerships with Whole Foods, Pacific Ballet Dance Theatre, and Pierce College.

Increase articulation activities with parents. 
As mentioned previously in this chapter and in previous chapters, Taft has several articulation activities with parents including “Coffee with the Principal,” back to school night, open house, and a large email system run by the parent center. In addition, the parent center has several parent informational activities and the College Office holds several meetings for parents to help them learn about colleges and universities.

- **The school will conduct at least 2 school wide meetings to interpret standardized test results.**
  Through several direct mailings Taft informs parents on how to interpret standardized test results. The School Report Card and AGT brochures simplify the data into a format that parents can more easily understand.

- **Taft will increase the percentage of website hits by 10% per year.**
  Taft has experienced a slight drop in website hits over the last year, from 190,335 from October 2010 to October 2011, to 181,759 for the same period in this last year. This can be attributed to a number of reasons including the charter co-location controversy that was very public in 2010-11 to a decline in enrollment.