

Renewal at La Cumbre Junior High School

A Concept Paper

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Introduction

Complying with state and federal requirements for “Program Improvement” schools should not be allowed to preempt consideration of a wide range of possibilities for renewal at La Cumbre. To be sure, addressing the needs of La Cumbre students who did not make “Adequate Yearly Progress” is both a legal and a moral imperative. But, it is vital that the school attract and retain students across the academic spectrum. La Cumbre should be diverse school in every sense.

This paper explores possibilities for restructuring the way education is provided at La Cumbre. It is less about “best practices” than it is about school organization and school culture. A rather fundamental question is posed. Should La Cumbre should continue as a centralized educational service provider? Or, should at least part of its educational service functions be devolved to smaller learning communities? A small learning communities model is explored in this discussion paper.

According to this model, much instruction would take place within relatively small learning communities on the La Cumbre campus. Most learning communities would be organized around special interests; one would focus on an educational goal. It is well established that small learning communities provide a sense of belonging and a more personal educational experience.

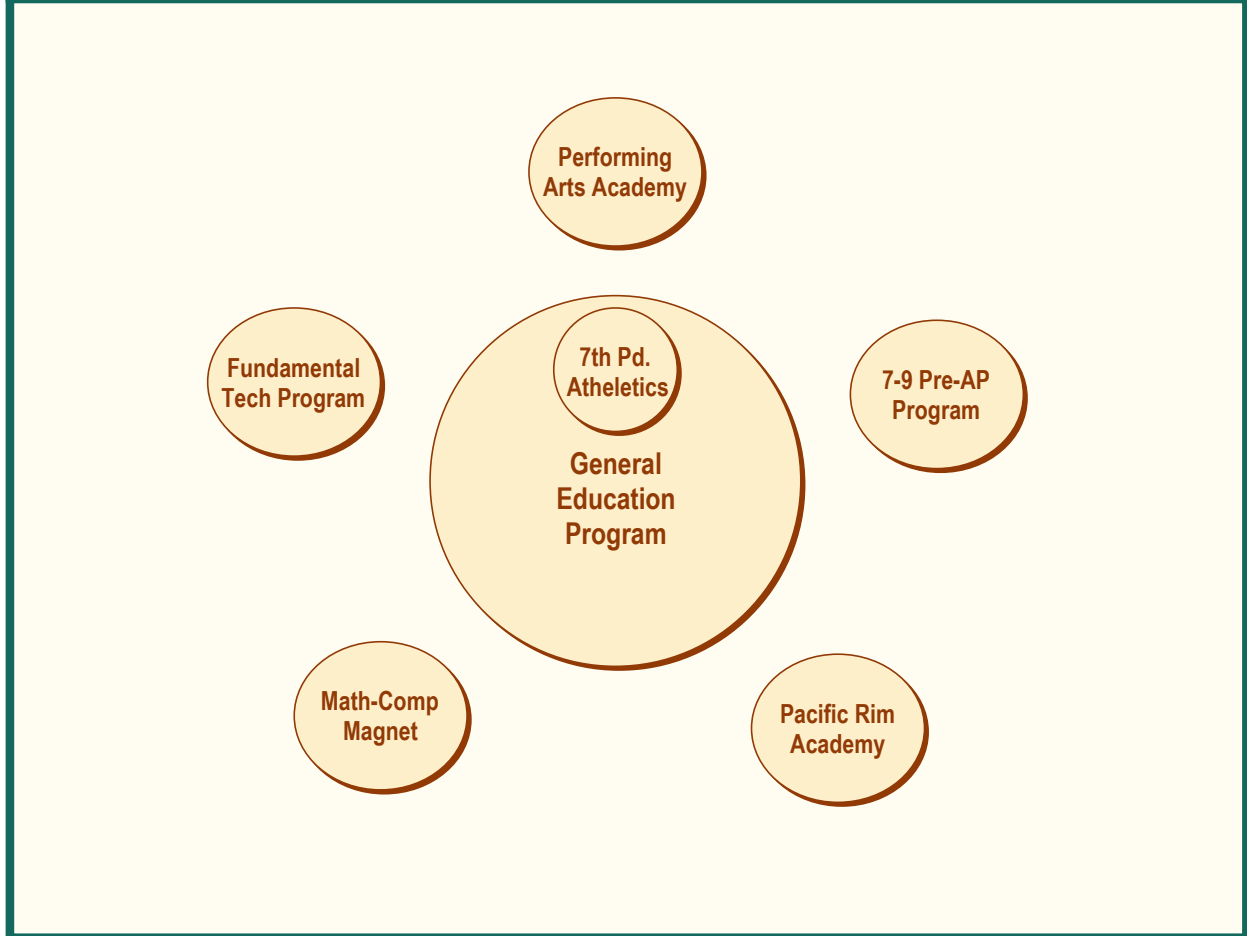
At the same time, there would be conscious efforts to develop and sustain an integrative and pervasive campus culture and ethos. La Cumbre means individualized guidance and instruction. La Cumbre means high expectations and accountability. There are enriching campus-wide activities at La Cumbre. La Cumbre evokes participation and pride.

A different name for the school might more effectively communicate its “big idea.” For example: “**La Cumbre Learning Communities,**” or “**La Cumbre Center for Individualized Education.**” Both of these images have widespread appeal among parents.

The following diagram illustrates the concept of multiple learning communities along with some possibilities regarding particular communities.

La Cumbre Learning Communities

Robert C. Noel 10/30/03



Explanatory Comments

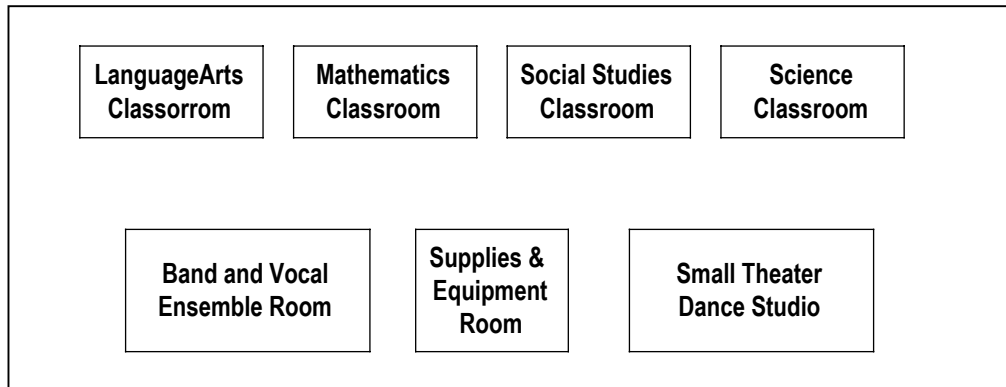
1. Each learning community is conceived as developing a distinct identity within the campus, and part of its identity would be its specialized physical facilities. Depending on enrollments, some communities might qualify for separate core subject classrooms. At 5 classes per teacher and 25-30 students per class, 125-150 students would comprise a self-contained learning community. Smaller communities would have to share core subject classrooms.
2. A seventh period PE option, if I understand correctly, would free up a period during the regular six-period day for students to take an elective. Students exercising that option would still meet the PE requirement. This strategy has staffing implications in that: 1) teachers have to be available for the second electives, and 2) PE teachers have to be available to handle the resulting demand in seventh period.

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Performing Arts Academy

The Performing Arts Academy would be housed in facilities that help build a sense of community among its members. Materials and décor would reflect the thematic elements of the Academy.

Performing Arts Academy Separate Facilities Complex



The curriculum at the Performing Arts Academy would look something like this.

- **Core Curriculum and activities.** Core subjects would be taught in the Academy’s own classrooms. It is hard to imagine that the academy would attract enough students to have its own self-contained core faculty in the first year or so. Core subject teachers who participate would be expected to tailor core course materials to the performing arts context. Time, money and assistance would have to be provided to support their efforts.
 - English Language Arts*
 - Pre-Algebra, Algebra*
 - [* Parallel remedial tutorials required as needed during seventh period.]
 - Life Sciences, Physical Sciences
 - Social Studies- History
 - Physical Education OR Dance (including break-dancing) OR a Seventh Period Option sport
 - Seventh Period Option (4 days weekly): soccer, lacrosse, martial arts, volleyball (including beach volleyball)
- **Performing arts courses and activities**
 - First Elective: Instrumental Music OR Vocal Music OR Theater Arts OR Cinematographic Arts
 - Second Elective (in lieu of PE): Instrumental Music OR Vocal Music OR Theater Arts OR Cinematographic Arts OR a general elective OR an elective from another learning community
 - Zero Period Elective: Instrumental Music OR Vocal Music OR Theater Arts OR Cinematographic Arts
 - Semi-private music lessons after school (at family expense—e.g., 3 students sharing a \$45/hr instructor)
 - **NB:** Semi-private music lessons would continue through at least part of the summer.

The Performing Arts Academy would offer a **summer program**—hopefully it could be self-supporting. The Academy would also offer a variety of **enrichment activities**, including its own performances, visits to high school performances and rehearsals, a visiting artist series, and outreach performances for feeder elementary schools.

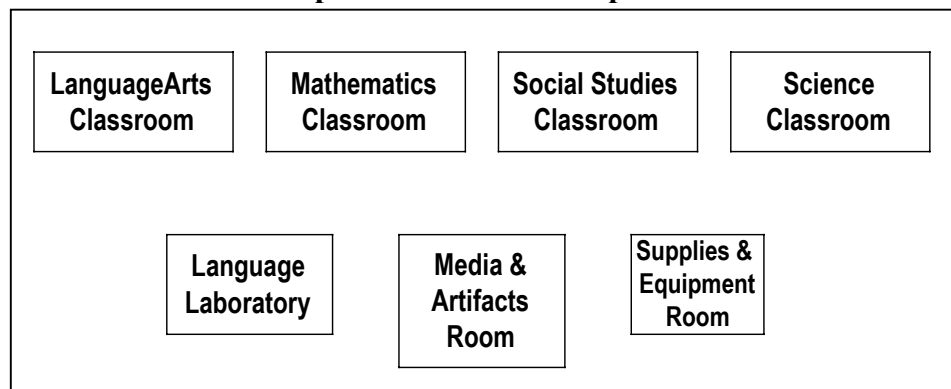
Pre-Multimedia and Design Program

This would be a preparatory program for the Multimedia and Design Academy (MAD) at Santa Barbara High School. Its specialized curriculum would be seamlessly integrated with the MAD's, and curriculum and instruction would be the responsibility of a vertical team comprised of La Cumbre and MAD faculty. The program would focus on the development of skills in multimedia art and technology, including introductions to image processing and animation tools and techniques, desk-top publishing and cinematographic arts. An effort would be made to develop a summer program/camp in MAD's facilities at Santa Barbara High School in collaboration with the Santa Barbara Film Festival.

Pacific Rim Academy

The emphasis in the Pacific Rim Academy would be on languages and contemporary cultures. The Academy would be housed in facilities that help foster identity and community among its members. A Media and Artifacts Room would provide access to international radio, television and webcasts, music, magazines, maps, etc. A Language Laboratory would augment regular classroom instruction in foreign languages.

Pacific Rim Academy Separate Facilities Complex



The curriculum at the Pacific Rim Academy would include the following, more or less.

- **Core Curriculum and activities.** Core subjects would be taught in the Academy's own classrooms. It is doubtful that the academy would attract enough students to have its own self-contained core faculty in the first year or so. Participating core subject teachers would be expected to tailor core course materials to the Pacific Rim context. Time, money and assistance would have to be provided to support their efforts.
 - English Language Arts*

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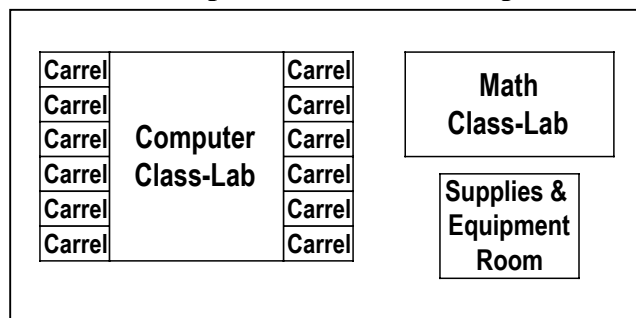
- Pre-Algebra, Algebra*
 - [* Parallel remedial tutorials required as needed during seventh period.]
 - Life Sciences, Physical Sciences
 - Social Studies- History
 - Physical Education OR Dance (including break-dancing) OR Seventh Period Athletics Option
 - Seventh Period Option (4 days weekly): soccer, lacrosse, martial arts, volleyball (including beach volleyball)
- **Pacific Rim courses and activities**
 - First Elective: Spanish OR Chinese
 - Second Elective (in lieu of PE): Spanish OR Chinese OR a general elective OR an elective from another learning community
 - Zero Period Requirement: History and Cultures of the Pacific Rim

The Pacific Rim Academy would offer a **summer program** in language skills-maintenance. Hopefully it would be self-supporting. The Academy would also offer a variety of **enrichment activities**, including festivals, field trips, a visiting artist series, and outreach activities at feeder elementary schools.

The Math-Comp Magnet

The Math-Comp Magnet would be housed in space that facilitates both group projects and individual work. Computer equipment would be state-of-the-art.

Math-Comp Magnet Separate Facilities Complex



The Accelerated Math-Comp Magnet is envisioned as a small program for promising students with a passion for mathematics and/or computers (30 students max). It would be an accelerated program. To the maximum extent possible, instruction would be self-paced, and students would be encouraged to progress as fast and as far as they can. In math, for example, some students might move from Algebra-1 at the beginning of seventh grade through Pre-Calculus by the end of eighth grade. It depends entirely on the individual student. To avoid subsequent disappointment, only students who are judged likely to succeed in the Magnet would be encouraged to participate.

In pre-computer science, the emphasis would be on programming languages (e.g., Pasqual, C++) and hands-on experience (as distinct from computer literacy and the use of applications programs). There would be eighth-grade hands-on projects in which teams, each with a

programmer-mentor, develop fully functioning programs. In both math and comp-sci, students would work closely with mentors (recruited from UCSB and SBCC).

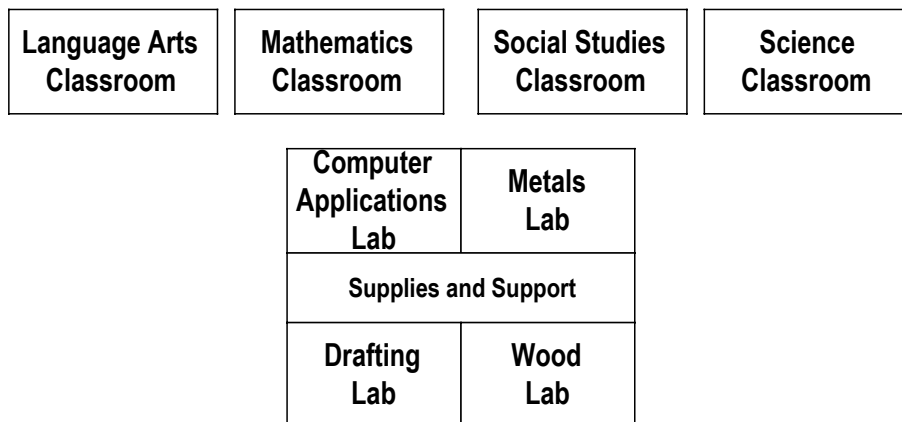
Math-Comp Magnet students would partake in the common curriculum in Language Arts, Science and Social Studies. In math, on the other hand, the curriculum would be highly individualized.

- **Core Curriculum and Activities.** Students would attend classes in core subjects (other than math) in other learning communities.
 - English Language Arts
 - Self-paced instruction in mathematics
 - Life Sciences, Physical Sciences
 - Social Studies- History
 - Physical Education OR Dance (including break-dancing) OR Seventh Period Athletics Option
 - Seventh Period Option (4 days weekly): Open math and computer labs, mentor(s) on hand, OR soccer, lacrosse, martial arts, volleyball (including beach volleyball).
- **Math-Comp courses and activities**
 - First Elective: Self-paced instruction in math or computers
 - Second Elective (in lieu of PE): Self-paced instruction in math or computers OR an elective from another learning community
 - Zero Period: Open math and computer labs, mentor(s) on hand

The Math-Comp Magnet would offer a **summer program** for skills-maintenance. Hopefully it would be self-supporting. The Academy would also offer a variety of **enrichment activities**, including field trips to computer science and math research projects at UCSB and in the private sector and outreach activities at feeder elementary schools.

Fundamental Tech Program

The Fundamental Tech would be centered in La Cumbre's excellent technology complex with nearby classrooms for core courses.



The Fundamental Tech Program would bring together two educational approaches-- a substantive emphasis on industrial technology combined with a fundamental-school culture. Tech components would include materials technologies (metals and wood), design, drawing and drafting,

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and computer applications related to these and other technologies. Elements of the fundamental-school culture would include: uniformly high academic standards and expectations, high standards of student conduct and individual accountability, emphasis on direct instruction, insistence on good study habits, self-discipline and responsibility, emphasis on traditional values of citizenship, respect, courtesy and pride in accomplishment, a fully enforced dress code, parent commitment, communication and involvement, and student-parent-school contracts.

While the nickname would probably become “Fun Tech,” this would be a no-nonsense program. Admission would be open to all, but continuation in the program would be contingent upon high academic achievement in core subjects.

The Fundamental Tech curriculum would look something like the following.

- **Common courses.** Core subjects would be taught in the program’s own classrooms and labs that would be appropriately furnished and equipped. Materials and décor would reflect the thematic elements of the program.
 - English Language Arts
 - Mathematics: Continuation in the Fundamental Tech Program would be contingent upon successful work in Algebra-1 in 8th grade.
 - Life Sciences, Physical Sciences
 - Social Studies- History
 - Physical Education OR Dance (including break-dancing) OR Seventh Period Athletics Option
 - Seventh Period Option (4 days weekly): soccer, lacrosse, martial arts, volleyball (including beach volleyball)
- **Differentiating courses and activities**
 - First Elective: Metals Lab OR Wood Lab OR Drafting OR Computer Applications
 - Second Elective (in lieu of PE): Metals Lab OR Wood Lab OR Drafting OR Computer Applications OR a general elective OR an elective from another learning community
 - Zero Period Elective: Metals Lab OR Wood Lab OR Drafting OR Computer Applications

Fundamental Tech would operate a **summer practicum**, in which students would apply tech skills to specific projects. To help with funding, each student would be expected to prepare a project proposal for his/her project and to attempt to find a community sponsor.

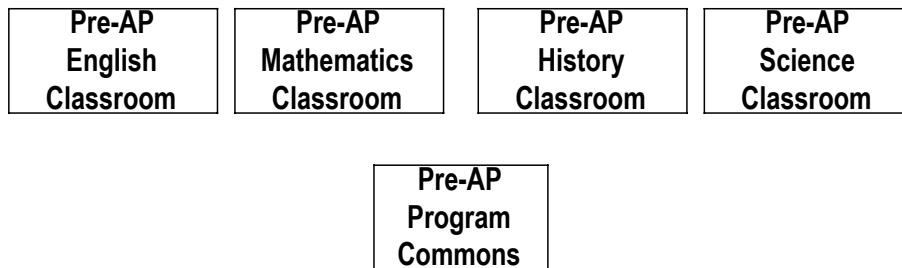
7-9 Pre-AP Program

“7-9 Pre-AP” would be a collaborative program with San Marcos High School, intended to prepare students for success in Advanced Placement courses at 10th through 12th grade levels. Courses in the program would be articulated with corresponding AP courses. Vertical teams are the heart of the concept— the teams consisting of high school AP teachers and junior high school teachers. The idea is that 7-9 Pre-AP instruction would be seamless—the same teachers being involved on each team for all three grades. While junior high teachers would teach the 7th and 8th grade components, students would also get to know the high school member(s) of each course team. And, though high school AP teachers would teach the 9th grade components, the corresponding junior high teachers would continue to be involved in order to smooth the transition. Craig Morgan

(Principal, San Marcos High School) and I jointly developed the concept. He is eager to see it implemented at San Marcos.

While pre-AP programs arose out of the need to increase AP enrollments from under-represented groups, the 7-9 Pre-AP Program would be open to all students. For students whose “academic English” may be weak, mentoring will be provided in domain-specific English vocabularies, syntax and idioms.

Physical facilities for the 7-9 Pre-AP Program could reflect the following functional diagram.



The curriculum in the 7-9 Pre-AP Program would look something like this.

- **Common courses and activities.** Core subjects would be taught in the program’s own in classrooms that are appropriately furnished and equipped.
 - English Language Arts
 - Pre-Algebra, Algebra
 - Life Sciences, Physical Sciences
 - Social Studies- History
 - Physical Education OR Dance (including break-dancing) OR a Seventh Period Option sport
 - Seventh Period Option (4 days weekly): soccer, lacrosse, martial arts, volleyball (including beach volleyball)
- } Each core course would be designed by its vertical team.
- **Differentiating courses and activities**
 - First Elective: Pre-AP Spanish or Pre-AP French (designed by vertical teams)
 - Second Elective (in lieu of PE): Any generally available elective or one from another learning community

La Cumbre Universals

Differentiation must be complemented by parallel integration. Among the many possibilities for building a common campus culture and reinforcing campus-wide cohesiveness are the following.

- A Personalized Educational Plan (PEP) for every student.
- Regular Monitoring and Guidance sessions along the lines of the New Trier model.
- Concerted efforts to ensure diversity within learning communities.

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- Shared elective classes (e.g., Spanish, French, art, computer literacy, etc.) and selective access to electives in specific learning communities.
- A seventh period campus-wide program of elective athletics, which would provide an option from regular PE and free up a period during the 6-period day for an elective. This program would focus on sports that are not widely offered in junior high schools.
- Core course content and in-class testing aligned with CA Content Standards.
- A system for monitoring the completion of homework assignments and reporting to parents.
- A system to encourage and to facilitate the mid-year acceleration of students from lower track classes to higher track classes.
- A variety of campus-wide activities designed to ensure part-whole balance between the learning communities and the La Cumbre campus culture.