



# Hiram W. Johnson High School

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Overall, there is a renewed culture of pride and hope at Johnson. Visitors cannot believe that the same school that was plagued by media attention that spoke of widespread neglect and violence previously, is now much more student, parent, and community friendly. The school has become a draw for community partnerships with local universities, private companies, and public agencies.

All teachers and students have self-selected into eight of the career- or interest- themed Small Learning Communities (SLCs). The four California Partnership Academies have been integrated into SLCs instead of functioning as stand alone academies. This is to ensure that all students can enter an SLC of choice without restriction of admission requirements. One SLC, designed to support low-level English Language Learners, assigns students for placement. These students do have the opportunity to select which SLC they will transition into upon redesignation to English proficiency. In most cases, vice principals and counselors are members of two SLCs.

Students take all core subject area and SLC signature elective classes within the SLC. Advanced, support, and some elective classes are taken outside of the SLC. This allows all students to have access to those classes where there are not enough teachers to support a class in each SLC.

In addition to common planning time, a common prep period for core subject area teachers has been built into a modified block schedule. SLC teachers, counselors and resource administrators voluntarily meet weekly in SLC meetings during their common prep period. Students take PE outside of the SLC to relieve core teachers during the common prep period. While not all teachers share the common prep, these teachers are connected to an SLC by common planning time.

There is less risk of students falling through cracks at Johnson because of continuity of care which includes more targeted student supports, such as a university sponsored CSUS Mentor/Tutor program. Adults know students better through SLCs.

## Johnson by the numbers

- **2,300** total enrollment (Grades 9–12)
- **95%** attendance rate (as of 2-13-04)
- **14%** SpEd
- **61%** ELL
- Ethnicity: **20%** African-American; **25%** Latino; **30%** Asian; **21%** Caucasian; **4%** Other
- Primary languages: **51%** English; **14%** Spanish; **8%** Hmong; **7%** Cantonese; **6%** Mien; **4%** Vietnamese; **2%** Russian; **8%** Other  
Approximately **40** different languages spoken on campus
- **62%** free/reduced lunch

# Hiram W. Johnson High School

## Unique Programs

- Nine Small Learning Communities
  - **Arts, Multimedia, & Entertainment:** Focuses on visual, craft, and performing arts. This pathway includes Computer Graphics and Digital Media Regional Occupational Program (ROP) classes.
  - **Business & Information Technology:** Focuses on business operations, administration, and management; and marketing and sales. This pathway includes the Corporate Academy.
  - **Community Studies:** Focuses on the cultural, historical, and social experience of ethnic groups both nationally and within the Hiram Johnson surrounding community. This SLC is a collaboration with the Ethnic Studies Department of California State University, Sacramento.
  - **Engineering and Transportation Studies:** Focuses on technology necessary to design, develop, install, and maintain electrical, mechanical, and structural systems. This pathway includes the Transportation Academy.
  - **Government and Public Administration:** Focuses on government and public services. This pathway includes Air Force ROTC and partnerships with The Legischool Project via California State University, Sacramento that will provide mentors and access to the college experience, City of Sacramento, and the City Management Academy to provide instruction and exposure to local government.
  - **Health and Medical Services:** Focuses on health, wellness, medicine and human development. This pathway includes the Health Academy.
  - **Human and Legal Services:** Focuses on education, social, legal, and protective services. This pathway includes the Criminal Justice and Community Service Academy.
  - **Humanities, Education and Leadership:** Focuses on the development of critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills.
  - **International Cultural Community:** Serves incoming international students who need English Language Development.
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- Four **California Partnership Academies:** Criminal Justice and Community Service, Corporate Academy, Transportation Academy, Health Academy
- The **Village Project** through the Hiram Johnson Healthy Start Program provides social, emotional and enrichment services to student of Hiram Johnson High School and its feeder schools

# Hiram W. Johnson High School

## SCHOOLS DESIGN

- **Grades 9-12** All SLCs serve all grade levels. The number of students by grade level in each SLC is proportionate to the overall student population by grade level. The largest SLC is just over 300 students. Special Education students is integrated into SLCs.
- **Include All Core Classes** All core classes within the SLCs and a signature elective class in most SLCs. PE, advanced, and some elective classes are offered outside of the SLCs so that all students have access to those classes.
- **Nine Thematic SLCs** Seven SLCs have career themes, one focuses on liberal arts, and the other serves low-level EL student. All SLCs are charged with creating a system that connects students with college, careers and the community.
- **SLC Teams** All SLCs have elected a lead teacher that have 1-2 release periods for SLC duties. The teams consist a counselor, core subject teachers, computer, and signature elective teachers.
- **Common Planning Time** Teachers are given 2 hours weekly for Common Planning time. This gives all teachers an opportunity to plan within their school day rather than after school. All core teachers within a SLC also share a common prep period. They use one prep period a week for their SLC meetings.
- **Governance Teams** SLC teams meet weekly. SLC leaders and department spokespersons meet as a Leadership Team monthly. Youth Congress meets every other week. The Community Advisory Council meets quarterly. The administrative team meets weekly to determine how they can support their respective SLCs. Most Vice Principals supports 2 SLCs.
- **SLC Purity** Our goal is to schedule students and teachers within their SLC with the highest amount of purity. Almost all core classes are scheduled within the SLC.
- **Facilities** Each SLC has secured a distinct location on campus with identifying markers.
- **Block Schedule.** The school has long operated with a modified block schedule. There is a traditional 6 period schedule on Mondays, and 3 alternating blocks Tuesday-Friday.

# Hiram W. Johnson High School

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Engage Parents in the Community** SLC information sessions have been presented to parents at the school and in the community. The site is working with a local parent agency to increase parent engagement. Parent classes are being offered on site.
- **Shift in ownership within SLCs** Staff members are having meaningful conversations about the direction of their SLCs and are becoming proactive in defining the work of their SLC rather than allowing administration to assign them designs and priorities.
- **Shift in ownership of SLCs across site** Many staff members are beginning to view their duties, roles and systems through the SLC framework. They are beginning to regularly ask, "How will this work within the SLC structure?"
- **CSUS Mentor/Tutor Program** CSUS Ethnic Study students were trained to provide tutoring and mentoring support to students in the areas of English and Math. Tutors are trained through the Community Studies SLC.
- **Youth Congress** Youth Congress was established last year. Each SLC and grade levels voice will be represented to administration pertaining to policies and procedures of the school. This has increased the knowledge of administration and staff to the needs and wants of the students.
- **Student Problem Identification Resolving It Together (SPIRIT)** This program is aimed at providing students with a voice to identify issues and concern on their campus and then creating solutions to solve those problems. This has increased school safety and moral of students and staff.
- **Increased Parent/Community Engagement** The school has been more proactive about making parent and community contacts. There was more parent participation at Back to School Night because of SLC contacts home. There are new and stronger partnerships with external agencies and businesses.
- **Increased Use of Data** More data and assessment are available and being used by SLCs to determine and evaluate SLC and classroom programs.
- **Improved Culture** The culture on campus is now one of hope and increased spirit that is visible to all on campus and visitors alike. The campus feels safer and more caring. Staff members also have a more collegial relationship with one another. There has been and will continue to be an increase in school activities and events on campus.
- **Senior Projects** Several SLCs piloted Senior Projects in the 2003-2004 school year. All SLCs will implement Senior Projects in the 2004-05 school year. This is a graduation requirement for the 2007 graduating class.
- **Professional Development** There is now a district structured, continuous system to provide professional development to SLC Leaders and Instructional coaches. The school and SLCs are also developing trainings that are targeted to teacher needs.
- **Positive Community Image** The school has been experiencing increased positive comments from the community including the local neighborhood and media.

# Hiram W. Johnson High School

## CHALLENGES

- **Balancing of More Limited Resources** This is an overall issue with budget cuts, as well as the move to SLCs. The site is working to realign available resources to meet our priorities.
- **Governance** All personnel are adjusting to the changing governance from a top down to a collaborative system of decision-making.
- **Communication and Inclusion** While there has been a move towards buy-in of SLCs, we will need to continue to work on what and how we communicate to ensure all stakeholders are included in all phases of decision-making. We have found that while distributive leadership, it takes longer to make decisions.
- **Adjusting to New System** Hiram Johnson is dealing with both the implementation of a new system and the addition of new staff. All personnel are adapting to this new system and are aware that the need to create procedures to establish sustainability is essential.
- **Bell Scheduling** The school is exploring a flexible schedule for the 2004-2005 school year that would maintain a modified block schedule while allowing for an eight period or four block day to create a more flexible schedule for teachers and students while lowering student-teacher ratio.
- **More Work** While new leadership has emerged through SLC Leaders; these teachers are working harder and longer than their additional prep period provides for.
- **Freshmen Transition** We are beginning to look at ways to integrate incoming freshmen into the culture of the SLCs and the school. One possible program to be implemented this school year is LINK Crew, a freshmen mentor program and bridge to our feeder middle school(s).
- **SAIT** Hiram Johnson is currently undergoing the State Assistant Intervention Team (SAIT) due to low test scores. Through this three-year process, the school has identified curriculum instruction areas to be improved in order to align with California standards. This will be a challenge due to double blocking of courses and the goal of SLC purity. Students may have to take a double session of English and/ or Math. This may lead students to take a course outside of their assigned SLC.
- **Advisory** Last year, Hiram Johnson implemented advisory four days per week. Students were able to strengthen a personal relationship with one identified teacher. This year, advisory will not be offered through Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD).
- **Sustainability** Some of the changes that have occurred at Hiram Johnson over the past two years have been achievable through grants that were awarded with the goal of implemented a school reform effort, to include the structure of SLCs. These grants are time limited and cover specific categories of funding. Hiram Johnson, as well as the additional comprehensive high schools within the SCUSD, is challenged to develop strategies to sustain the current school reform efforts following the exhaustion of the grant funds.