



Woodland Hills Academy

How They Got From There To Here



History 2005-2006

- 800 Students (was almost 1,500 in 2000) Enrollment dropping
- Losing faculty - three teachers, music and other educational programs (before most of us knew what a “RIF” was)
- Morale was low
- Low API Score
- The West San Fernando Valley was overlooked and under-appreciated.

Problems

- Apathetic school administrators vs. motivated teachers.
- Central office did not think the West SF Valley had problems.
- Painfully close to independent charters and the Las Virgenes school district.
- Campus looked like a prison. Parents actually told us they wouldn't send their kids there because of how the school looked.
- Losing the availability to offer exciting choices of classes. Electives were disappearing.
- Within a couple of miles of two high performing LAUSD middle schools.

Teachers Wanted to Solve the Problem

- Community Outreach
- Save programs and change instructional programs
- Needed administrators who shared our vision
- We needed LAUSD to notice us!
- Fight off charter schools from taking our students
- We needed an attractive campus!
- Create meaningful electives
- TAKE BACK OUR SCHOOL!

Our Action

- After attempting to salvage the music program and increase enrollment with LAUSD (they weren't listening), we took action!

Our Response

- Filed Charter application (Nov. 15, 2005) as a UTLA teacher led independent charter school.

Why we Filed Charter Application

- OUR REACTION TO THE DISTRICT'S INFLEXIBILITY IN SOLVING OUR PROBLEMS
- More local control
- Escape the district bureaucracy
- Direct funding to school site
- Chance for more community involvement...
- Chance to restructure educational programs

Why we Filed Charter Application

- TO TRULY FIT THE NEEDS OF OUR DIVERSE STUDENT POPULATION



LAUSD Reaction

- Total Shock
- “That renegade Valley school”
- Their intent was to kill the charter movement
- We discovered at the time LAUSD was very anti independent charter. I wish we knew!

What Happened: UTLA Reaction

- The UTLA President was very supportive of our desire to change and reform our school
- UTLA worked with Parkman (now Woodland Hills Academy) to facilitate the reform
- Negotiating meetings held with teacher leadership and local district superintendent and director
- LAUSD was taking interest in what we wanted to do. FINALLY they were listening!

Outcome

- UTLA / ESBMM - Expanded School Based Management Model
- Small changes - Name change, upgraded landscaping, painting (budget was different then)

Major Changes

- Administrators moved on to other schools
- Allowance of right to hire administration by local leadership council
- Restructured educational programs by the local leadership council
- Three additional teaching positions outside the norm to help rebuild our school...

(again a different budget then)

Major Changes

- Revamped bell schedule - block schedule
- More community involvement - Concerts in the Park, wine and cheese events, open house visits to feeder elementary schools and others
- Invitations to speak from elementary schools outside our area
- Administration to teach classes...

Major Changes

- Enrollment for 2011-2012 school year was almost 1,300 - including students from surrounding private schools, charter schools, and from Las Virgenes school district
- API scores up almost 100 points since 2005
- Continued right to hire staff - After three years our Principal retired, and we hired his replacement
- Philosophy of “ownership” of our campus..

Major Changes

- New elective choices - cooking, photography, zoology, marine biology, Spanish for 6th grade, economics for middle schoolers, body movement, mythology, drama
- Return of our instrumental music program and added chorus to it. Attracted veteran music teachers from the district
- Expanded AVID Program
- Lunchtime clubs began. Now over a dozen offerings. (2011-2012)

Key Ingredient

- We kicked and screamed?
- We stood together, we fought together, we stayed together as a collaboration with LAUSD and AALA. UTLA union teachers with a 98% buy-in!
- Thank you to UTLA, LAUSD and AALA for their continued support!

