

**Mt. Helix Academy  
School Accountability Report Card  
School-Year 2010-2011**

Information in this School Accountability Report Card is abbreviated and further information concerning the school, its administration and faculty, its program and extra-curricular activities, and its achievements can be found on its website:  
[www.MtHelixAcademy.org](http://www.MtHelixAcademy.org).

**I. General Information**

**Contact Information**

School Name: Mt. Helix Academy  
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**School Description**

Mt. Helix Academy is a private, K - 8, preparatory school that is co-educational and nonsectarian, one of The Institute for Effective Education's family of schools. Located in La Mesa, California, the school building is approximately 30,000 square feet of classroom and activity space situated in a destination shopping center, which includes a large, fenced area for student play. A WASC accredited school, Mt. Helix Academy serves approximately 220 typically developing children. We are a positive, safe, and nurturing school. Our highly skilled teachers use evidence-based methods with the result that our students love learning and our graduates excel in high school and college. Mt. Helix Academy also houses AIM HIGH, which provides pull-out and full-day academic support services for 30 students who require more intensive programming necessary to acquire basic academic skills and social skills. AIM HIGH is also a California Department of Education certified non-public school.

**Mission Statement**

As a member of the family of schools operated by The Institute for Effective Education, Mt. Helix Academy adheres to the same Mission as its parent organization. It is as follows:

“The Institute for Effective Education (TIEE) is dedicated to schooling that is unparalleled in scope of curriculum, effectiveness of instruction, and pervasiveness of positive ambience. To achieve this goal, TIEE is committed to using the principles and methods established by behavioral science research of the highest standard in order to educate children, adolescents, and young adults, whose talents span the full spectrum of ability.

TIEE accepts responsibility for a comprehensive curriculum that embraces the full range of potential for its students. It is a curriculum that fosters high academic achievement, education of character, citizenship, friendship, self- management, and love of learning. The choice of this curriculum underscores TIEE's dual commitment to developing students who not only excel in scholarship, but who also become quality members of the community.

In order to implement its curriculum, TIEE resolves to choose teaching materials that have proved successful with real students in real classrooms or to develop its own materials in accordance with well-established behavioral principles. TIEE is committed to the use of teaching methods that have the weight of scientific evidence, including the following practices:

- Frequent positive consequences for desirable student behavior;
- High rates of student responding to instructionally relevant tasks;
- Direct teaching of the skills, knowledge, and procedures that students must know to achieve at high levels; and
- Regular collection and evaluation of student performance data to make timely instructional decisions for individual students.

TIEE is devoted to maintaining a positive ambience that characterizes its facilities and the interaction of all individuals associated with the organization, including, most importantly, the interaction between staff members and students. To this end, TIEE is committed to teaching what is expected and to "catching 'em being good."

Finally, the dynamic development of TIEE and its schools is fostered by the on-going training of all teaching staff members in those methods and materials that have the weight of scientific evidence. This training is extended to all educators who share our interest as an expression of TIEE's commitment to bring positive, effective schooling to all students, everywhere."

### **Opportunities for Parent Involvement**

Parents are regarded as an essential resource for Mt. Helix Academy, the success of its students, and its development and there are many opportunities for parents to be involved, especially through the school's active Parent-Teacher Group. Some of the ways parents can be involved are the following:

Open houses,  
Participation in seasonal and special events,  
Student performances,  
Website, newsletters,  
Teacher-parent meetings,  
Classroom observations and /or Video views,  
Telephone and email contact, and  
Financial support.



## **II. Demographic Information**

The enrollment at Mt. Helix Academy has remained relatively constant over the past three years, ranging from 219 to 236 students. 219 students were enrolled in June 2011. Eighty-one percent of previously enrolled students re-enrolled for the 2010-2011 school year. In the 2010-2011 school year, 60 percent of the students were male and 40 percent female. Sixty-five percent of the students enrolled at Mt. Helix Academy for the 2010-2011 school year were of Caucasian descent; the remaining 35 percent represented 7 different Federally-based categories of ethnicity.

## **III. School Safety and Climate for Learning**

### **School Safety Plan**

As a member of TIEE's family of schools, Mt. Helix Academy operates according to TIEE's comprehensive program of Health, Welfare, and Safety, which involves written policies and procedures that are updated based on actual TIEE incidents, insurance carrier requirements, and information concerning safe practices in schools; initial and ongoing training of its staff members; information dissemination to students, parents, and staff members; site visitations by loss-control experts; a pro-active Safety Committee that meets monthly to review safety practices, to identify hazards, and to perform site evaluations; hazard reporting procedures; follow-up of incidents involving harm or potential harm to students and/or staff members; and budgeted funds for the repair or replacement of facilities or equipment that is deemed hazardous.

The principal items for which safe practices have been identified in TIEE's Health, Welfare, and Safety policies and procedures are the following:

- Floors, walkways, play surfaces and their coverings;
- Stairs and ladders;
- Tools and equipment;
- Electrical power, power cords, and outlets;
- Kitchen appliances and equipment;
- Broken or malfunctioning tools and equipment;
- Heavy objects;
- Chemicals and chemical spills;
- Hazardous particulates;
- Cleaning and maintenance;
- Infestations, infections, and illnesses;
- Visitors and intruders;
- Miscellaneous student activities;
- Miscellaneous personnel activities;
- Immunizations;
- Medication administration as school;
- Severe problem behavior;
- "Safe response" as emergency intervention for severe problem behavior;
- Child abuse reporting;
- Release of students;
- Off-campus travel;

Operating vehicles;  
Fire safety;  
Earthquake safety;  
Sexual harassment and other forms of harassment;  
Blood-borne pathogens; and  
Emergency medical care.

### **School Programs and Practices That Promote a Positive Learning Environment**

In keeping with TIEE's mission to provide "positive environments in which all people learn the skills and knowledge essential to success," Mt. Helix Academy's practices are consistent with those research-validated methods known as Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS). The main practices include (a) teach students all essential classroom and school procedures; (b) provide positive consequences when students perform according to these expectations; (c) provide immediate corrective feedback for errors; and (d) collect data on student performance and use the charted data to alter the program or provide special assistance for students whose behavior continues to require improvement. Finally, the enrollment of students whose behavior is persistently unmanageable or hazardous is terminated. PBIS also includes certain practices related to instruction more generally, including placement of students according to their level in a particular skill area, providing initial instruction that permits students to respond correctly about 80 percent of opportunities, provide high rates of opportunities to respond for all students, correct errors immediately and in the manner most conducive to learning, provide praise and other positive consequences for accurate responding, and use charted student performance data to make instructional decisions. PBIS is Mt. Helix Academy's way of inducing the most disciplined learning for all of its students.

## **IV. School Facilities**

### **School Facility Conditions - General Information**

Health, safety, and welfare of Mt. Helix Academy's students, staff, and visitors is of paramount concern, and have been addressed above. TIEE provides a janitorial/custodial staff to maintain cleanliness and good repair of Mt. Helix Academy's facilities and budgets funds adequate to provide for the day-to-day maintenance and the repair or replacement of worn out or broken equipment. Playground equipment is inspected and maintained according to regulations for such equipment.

## **V. Academic Data**

### **Kindergarten - 2nd Grade Students**

Students in Kindergarten - 2nd Grade are tested in spring using the recently revised version of the Wechsler Individualized Achievement Test (WIAT), which is administered individually by professional staff members who are trained how to properly give the test. The charts below show the results for these students in both reading and math. Each of the dots on the first two charts below reflects the percentile rank of one of our K-2 students. Because the WIAT is a norm-referenced test, the dots would fall on a straight line from the lower left to the upper right of the chart if our students were "average." As the charts clearly show, however, our students score well above average; the line of their achievement is bowed upward.

The first chart shows percentile ranks for K-2 students on the reading subtest of the WIAT. Note that 41 of the 57 K-2 students (72%) scored in the top quartile. Only 16 students would be expected to score in the top quartile in an "average" school. Twenty-two of our K-2 stu-

dents scored in the top decile compared to six that would be expected. Finally, out of 57 students, none would be expected to score at or above the 99th percentile. Three of our students did so.

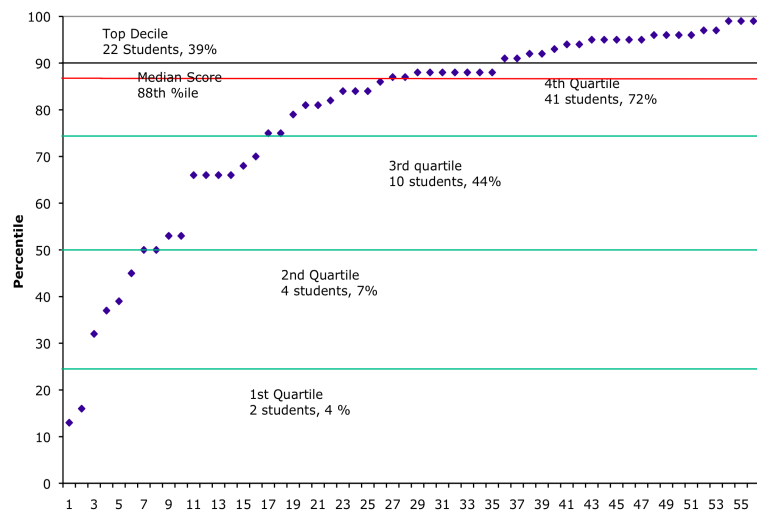
The next chart shows the results on the WIAT Math subtest. Thirty-six of our 57 K-2 students (63%) scored in the top quartile compared to 14 that would be expected. Twenty-three of our students scored in the top decile compared to six that would be expected. Finally, five of our students scored at or above the 99th percentile compared to less than one that would be expected. All in all, Mt. Helix Academy K-2 students performed exceptionally well on the WIAT.

The bottom chart on this page is a histogram showing the median percentile ranking of K-2 students in Reading, Math and Spelling for each of the past four years. There is remarkable consistency of achievement even though the actual students tested each year include new enrollees as well as returning students. These results point up the tremendous value of the curriculum and instruction in place at Mt. Helix Academy.

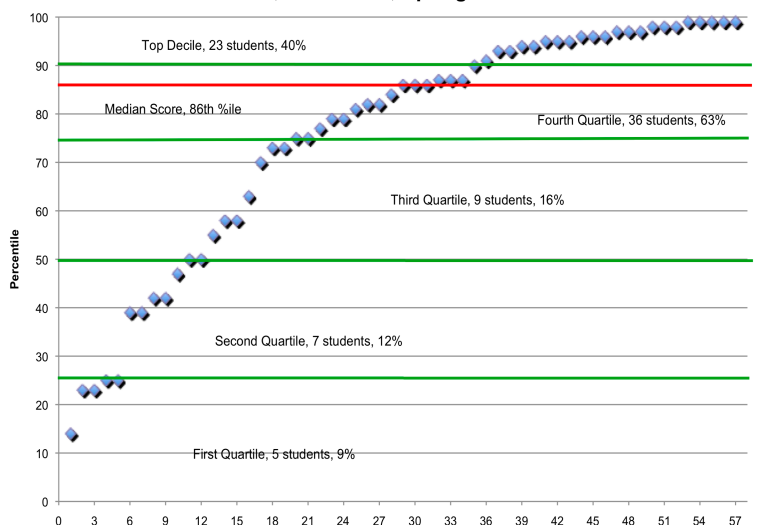
### Grade 3 -5 students

Beginning in 3rd grade, students are given the Stanford Achievement Test-10 (SAT-10) each year. The next chart, shown on the following page, is a histogram of the median percentile ranks for our 3rd - 5th Graders in Reading, Math, Language, and Spelling for each of the past three years. Nearly 70 percent of Mt. Helix Academy students scored in the top quartile on one or more subtests. The high level of performance has been consistently maintained from year to year.

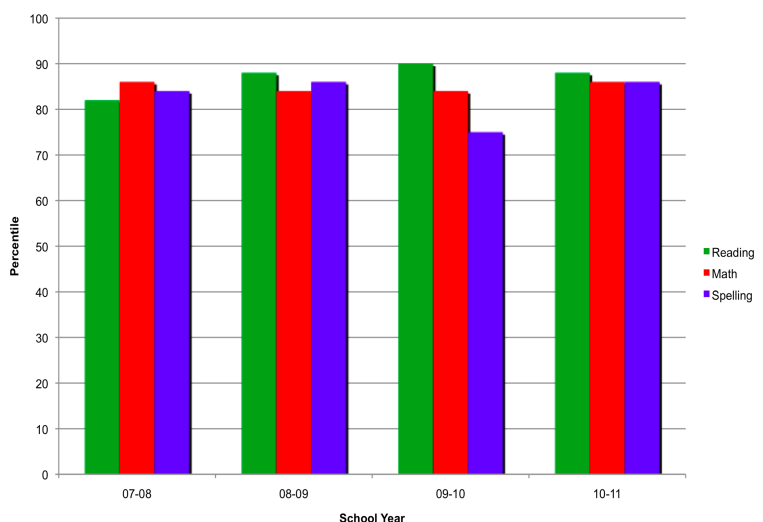
**K - 2, WIAT Reading, Spring 2011**



**K-2, WIAT Math, Spring 2011**

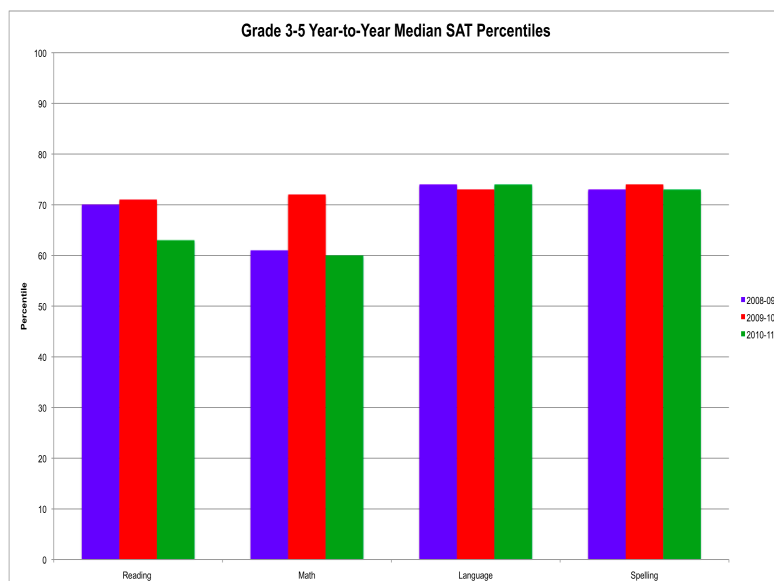


**K-2 Median Year-to-Year WIAT Percentiles**



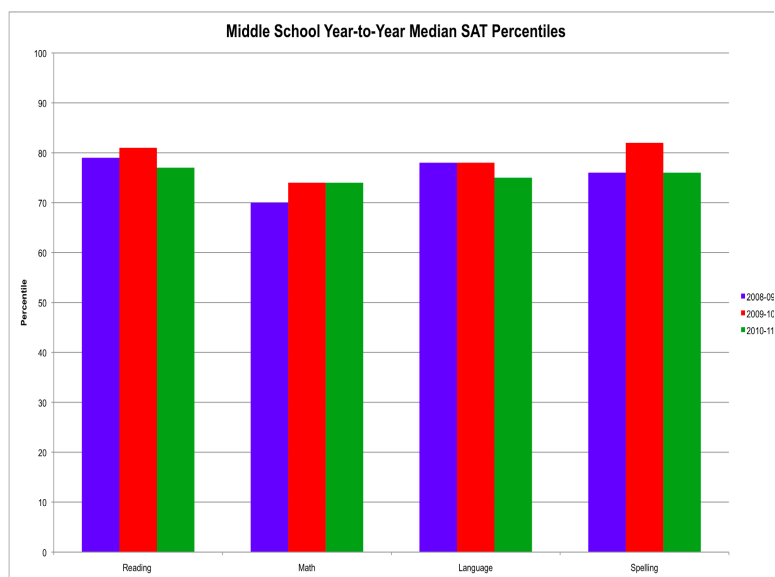
### Middle School students

In recent testing, 52% of our Middle School students, grades 6 - 8, scored in the top quartile of the SAT on at least one subtest; 26% scored in the top decile. The next chart depicts the median percentile scores of students in the Mt. Helix Academy Middle School in Reading, Math, Language and Spelling over the past three years.



### Mt. Helix Academy "lifers"

Students who begin their Mt. Helix Academy education in Grades K-2 and graduate from our Middle School develop extremely strong basic skills, study skills, social skills, and an eagerness to learn. They continue to maintain and strengthen these skills throughout their academic careers into high school and college. These students consistently graduate from Mt. Helix Academy with median percentile scores in the basic skills area of at or above the 80th percentile. Over 90% of them place into honors and advanced placement classes in high school.



### Science

In addition to the basic skills areas, Mt. Helix Academy Middle School students also excel in Science. After receiving instruction in the scientific method and the strategies for completing a science project, our 7th and 8th graders develop their own science fair project and submit it to the Greater San Diego Science and Engineering Fair. Over the past 12 years, all of our 7th and 8th graders have completed a science project and every student who competed in the Science Fair's Junior Division was awarded a prize by the Science Fair's judges. Over the past three years, at least one of our students has also received a professional award and stipend for their science fair project. Given the number of students in its Middle School Module, Mt. Helix Academy is among the most successful schools in the San Diego area in Science Fair competition. In 2011, 55% of eligible students from Mt. Helix Academy were accepted into the Greater San Diego Science and Engineering Fair.

### Spanish Language

The Spanish Language Program at Mt. Helix Academy begins in Kindergarten when children are still young enough to be highly effective language learners. Having progressed through our Spanish Program, Mt. Helix Academy students are positioned for success in their re-

quired high school language courses. Ninety percent of students who graduate from Mt. Helix Academy continue to take Spanish and are accelerated into advanced levels of Spanish in high school. Many of our graduates test into honors classes or Advanced Placement classes.

### **Visual Arts**

Mt. Helix Academy students are successful in our Visual Arts program because they are directly taught the skills they need to build a foundation of artistic competence and fluency. With the fundamental skills in place, students are able to execute work that has dynamic composition, realistic imagery and space, and good craftsmanship. Our students also become fluent in the language of art, enabling them to evaluate art and express critical opinions. Children's Hospital of San Diego has featured lobby installations of artwork by our students and visitors to our school regularly comment on the extraordinary art that is displayed in our rooms and our corridors. Artsonia, the online museum of student art, awarded Mt. Helix Academy fourth place among all California schools that display their artwork on their site, and 124 of our students have received awards for the artwork on Artsonia. In addition, 50 students in Grades K-6 participated in the Creative Youth division and 20 students in Grades 7 & 8 participated in the Student Showcase Art competition at this year's San Diego County Fair.

### **Music and Performing Arts**

Mt. Helix Academy students develop skills in and appreciation for both vocal and instrumental music in our excellent Music & Performing Arts program. Our student performers develop poise and self-confidence as they demonstrate their skills in exceptional music performances each school year. Through twice-weekly music classes, students are taught basic singing skills, as well as the fundamentals of music theory, leading them to proficiency in note and musical symbol identification, and musical terminology. Elementary students are taught to play the recorder and percussive instruments, which serve as tools for learning basic ensemble skills while having fun with sound in the process.

Students are also encouraged to participate in optional instrumental music programs, including band, violin, and woodwind ensembles. Private piano and guitar lessons are also available from some of our talented staff members. Each year, students from Mt. Helix Academy display their musical skills in the annual winter and Spring Concerts, and directed by Ms. Tanya Sussilleaux.

Mt. Helix Academy is also recognized for its excellent musical theater program. Our sixth annual musical production, *The Sound of Music*, received rave reviews from the many people who attended performances at the Salvation Army Ray and Joan Kroc Performing Arts Center this past May. Over 77 Mt. Helix Academy students participated in the play. In previous years, productions were staged of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Annie*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *Aladdin*.

## **VI. School Completion**

The item is not relevant because Mt. Helix Academy serves children only up through Grade 8. However, it is worth noting that all students entering Grade 8 graduated at year's end.

## VII. Class Size

### Teacher to student ratios

Mt. Helix Academy maintains a very low student: teacher ratio. Grades K - 2 are staffed at an average of one staff member for each group of 8 students for all basic skills areas. Grades 3 - 5 are staffed at an average of 1:12, and the Middle School staffed at an average of 1:15.

### Teacher Evaluations

TIEE maintains an intensive program of professional and paraprofessional staff training, supervision, and evaluation, centered around a set of 128 behavioral competencies. Most of these competencies pertain to staff-student interactions and are derived from the literature on research-validated "best" educational practices. Others have to do with such matters as maintaining a safe environment, reporting, developing Individualized Education Programs, and so on. The main areas of competence are the following: maintain safety / minimize hazards; teaches during student led activities; teaches structured lessons; teaches highly structured lessons; multiple teaching contingencies; employs prompts; fades prompts; consequence management; performs data based decision making functions; plans instruction; plans supervision; plans for self; interacts appropriately with colleagues; displays problem solving strategies; works as a member of the team; creates a pro-social school environment; performs reporting and communication functions; engages in professional development activities; promotes science in education; and supervises paraprofessionals. The first formal evaluation occurs after 30 days of employment and includes the supervisor's scoring of the individual's performance on 80 of the 128 areas of competence. The next evaluation is at six months and every six months thereafter for paraprofessionals and every year after the first year for professionals.

### Substitute teachers

Unfortunately, in California, "qualified" does not imply that teachers implement research-based "best" practices or even know what they are. This means that the qualified substitute teacher market consists of precious few individuals who are likely to be successful in teaching students who attend a TIEE school program. Having experienced this problem for over two decades, TIEE has developed and implemented an alternative, three-part, strategy for ensuring proper coverage as well as quality instruction during the absence of its professional teaching staff. First, most of TIEE's professional training and senior administration staff members are credentialed teachers with extensive successful teaching experience in TIEE programs. Several spend a substantial portion of each school day in one or more of TIEE's programs coaching the students' teacher or actually teaching the students in order to learn how to improve a program. These individuals are the most highly qualified individuals available anywhere to substitute in the event of teacher absence. Second, from time to time, TIEE staff members leave the organization to enter into a full-time teacher-training program. As such, they are likely to qualify for a California Substitute Credential. If they obtain it and have a record of skilled performance working at TIEE, they will be asked to substitute in the event of teacher absence. Finally, it is common for TIEE to hire individuals as paraprofessionals whose educational record qualifies them for obtaining a California Substitute Credential. If they have a record of skilled performance at TIEE and obtain the proper credential, they are asked to serve as substitute teachers in the event of the absences of credentialed teachers. Together, all three options provide more satisfactory solutions to the problems of "qualified" coverage and quality instruction for the students attending TIEE school programs than are generally available in the San Diego area substitute pool.

## IX Curriculum and Instruction

**Curriculum**

See website.

**Instruction**

Instruction at Mt. Helix Academy is guided by evidence-based practices, derived especially from behavior analysis, Direct Instruction, data-based instructional decision making, Positive School Support, social skills instruction, Behavior Intervention Planning, and so on. For additional information, please see our website.