

**Mt. Helix Academy**  
**School Accountability Report Card**  
**School Year 2017-2018**

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

School Director: Mike Collins

Street: 5955 Severin Drive, La Mesa, CA 91942

Phone Number: 619-243-1400

Email Address: [mcollins@tiee.org](mailto:mcollins@tiee.org)

CDS Code: 37681976927636

**School Description**

Mt. Helix Academy is a private, TK-9, preparatory school that is coeducational 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 190 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 integrated, skill-based academic support services for 17 students who require more intensive programming necessary to acquire basic academic 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 ambiance. 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 high levels
- Regular collection and evaluation of student performance data to make timely instructional decisions for individual students

TIEE is devoted to maintaining a positive ambiance 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 ongoing 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."

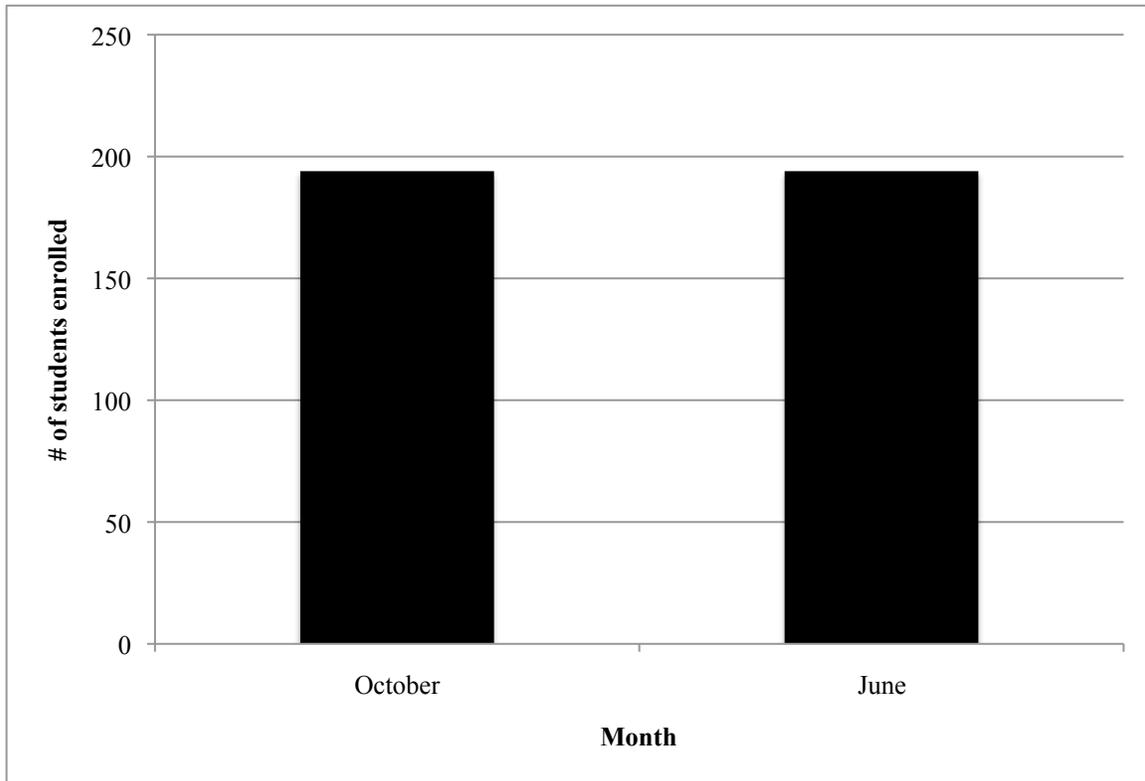
### **Opportunities for Parent Involvement**

Parents are regarded as an essential resource for Mt. Helix Academy, the success of its students, and its development. 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:

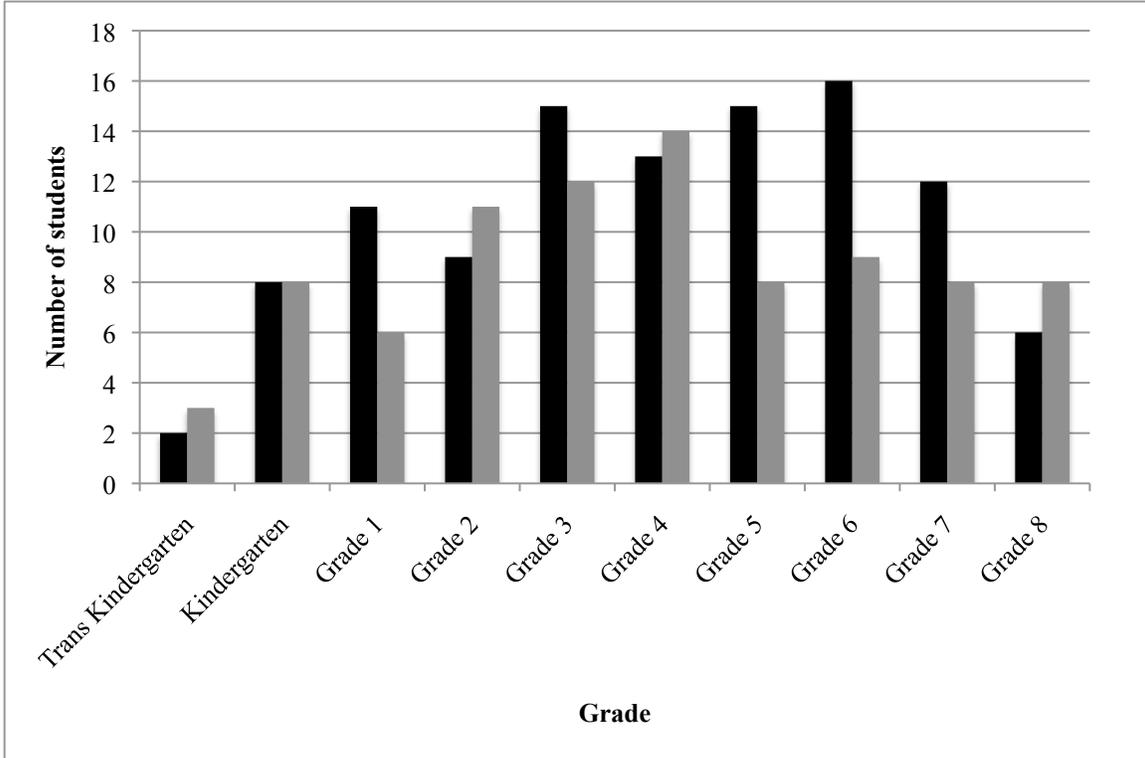
- Open Houses
- Participation in seasonal and special events
- Student performances
- Contributions to our website
- Teacher-Parent Conferences
- Telephone and email contact
- Financial support

## II. Demographic Information

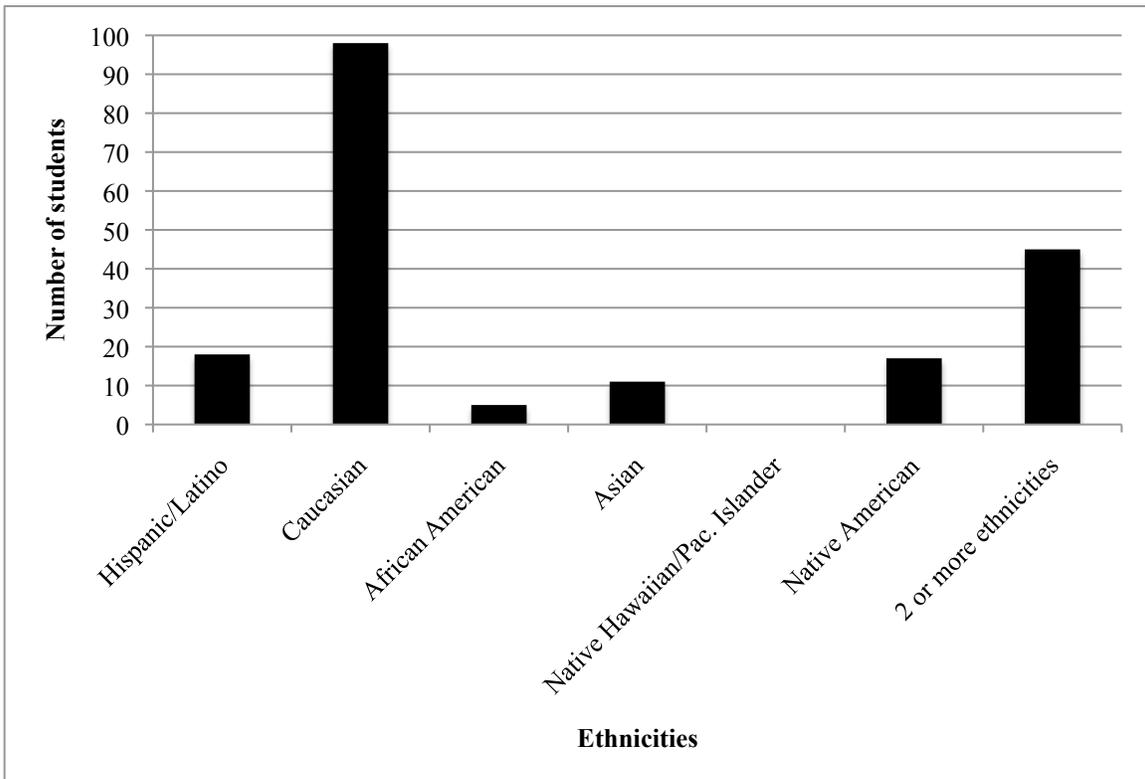
As of October 1, 2017 there were 194 students enrolled at Mt. Helix Academy, and as of June 1, 2018, student enrollment was 194. For the 2017-18 school year, fifty-five percent of the students were male and forty-five percent were female. Fifty-one percent of the students enrolled at Mt. Helix Academy for the 2017-18 school year were of Caucasian decent; the remaining forty-nine percent represented 6 different federally based categories of ethnicity. There were 3 suspensions and 0 expulsions for the 2017-18 school year.



**Student Enrollment 2017-18**



**Gender of Students by Grade 2017-18**



**Students by Ethnicity as of October 1**

### **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 actual TIEE incidents, insurance carrier requirements and information concerning safe practices in schools; initial and on-going 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 repair or replacement of facilities or equipment that is deemed hazardous. In addition, monthly fire, earthquake, and safety drills are conducted to insure safe evacuation of the school building.

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 at 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
- Internet safety and monitoring of use of computers by students
- Sexual harassment and other forms of harassment
- Blood-borne pathogens

- 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**

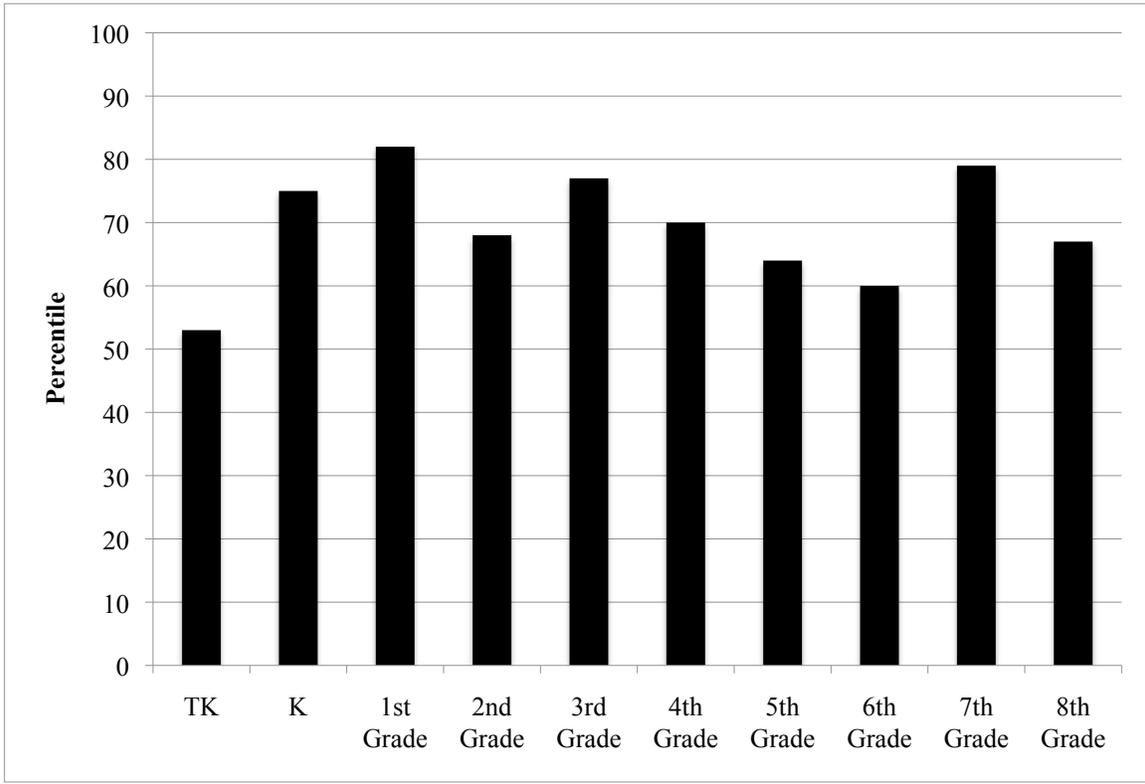
Health, safety, and welfare of Mt. Helix Academy's students, staff, and visitors is of paramount concern, and have been addressed section 3 of this report. TIEE provides a janitorial/custodial staff to maintain cleanliness and good repair of Mt. Helix Academy’s facilities, and budgets funds adequate 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**

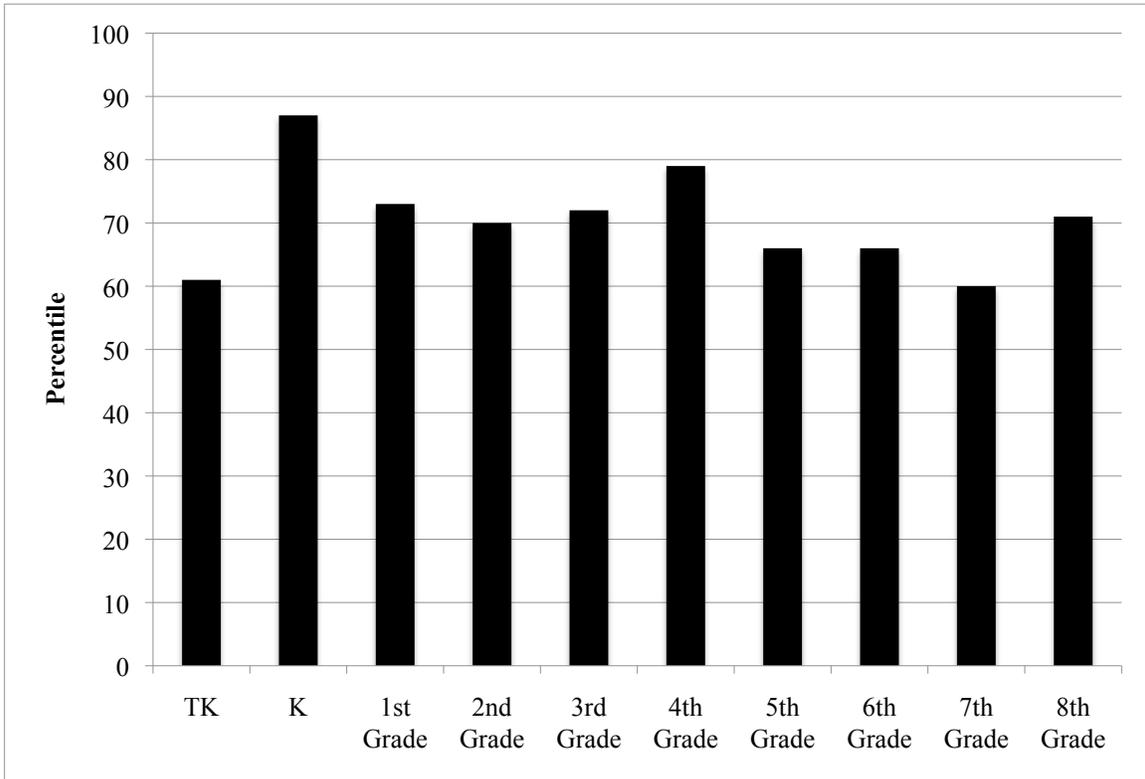
### **Testing Data**

Students in Transitional Kindergarten through Second grade are tested each Spring using the Wechsler Individualized Achievement Test, Third Edition (WIAT-3), which is administered by professional staff members who are trained how to properly give the test. Students in Grades 3 through 8 are given the Stanford Achievement Test-10 (SAT-10) each year in the Spring. The following charts show the median scores by grade in the areas of Reading and Math on the WIAT-3, for Grades TK-2, and SAT-10, for Grades 3-8. Scores higher than the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile represent above-average performance in each

subject area, and as you can see, the median score for each grade and subject is above the 50 percentile.

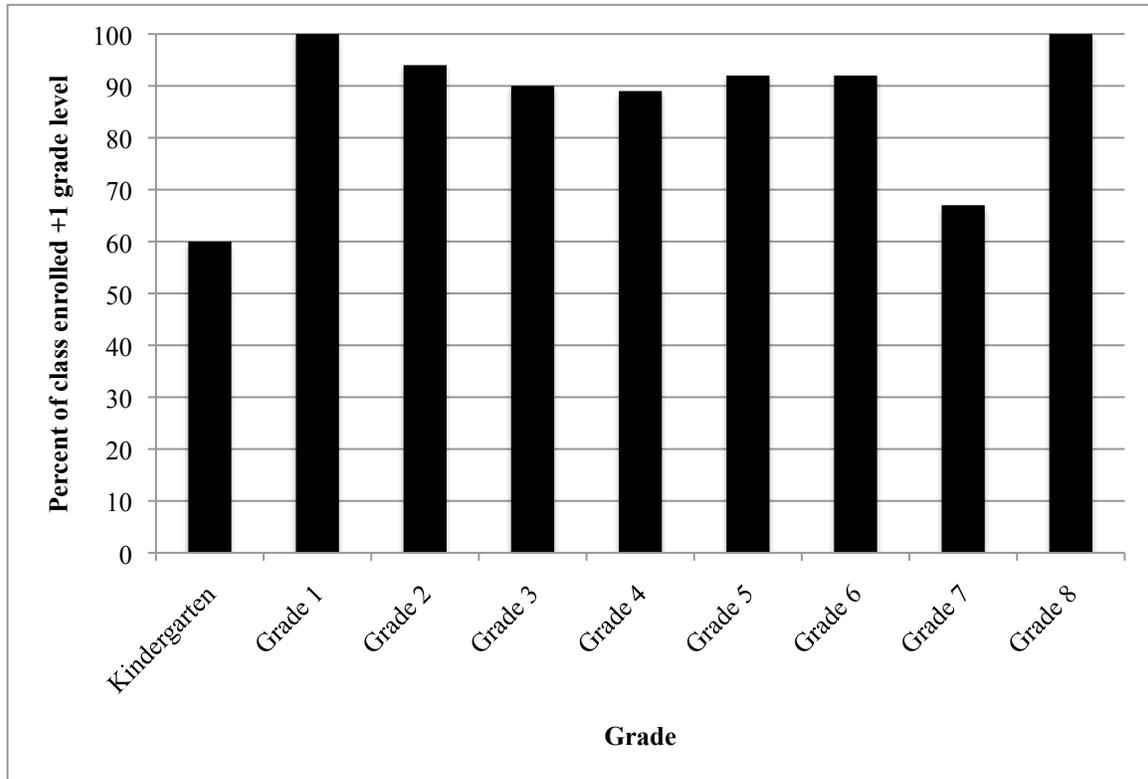


**Median Reading Scores by Grade 2017-18**

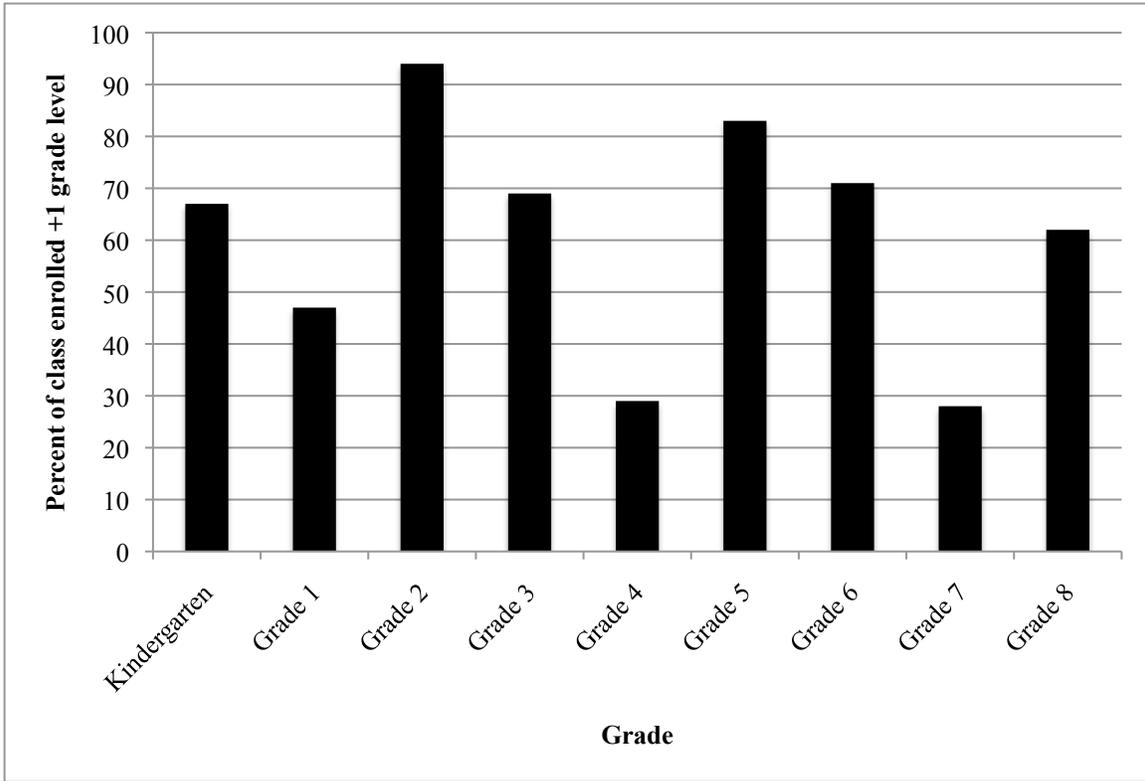


**Median Math Scores by Grade 2016-2017**

Students at Mt. Helix Academy are grouped by skill for their basic skills classes. The charts below show the percentage of students by class who were enrolled in a math or reading class at least one grade level above their enrolled grade. As you can see, many of our students are working well above their grade in basic skills areas.



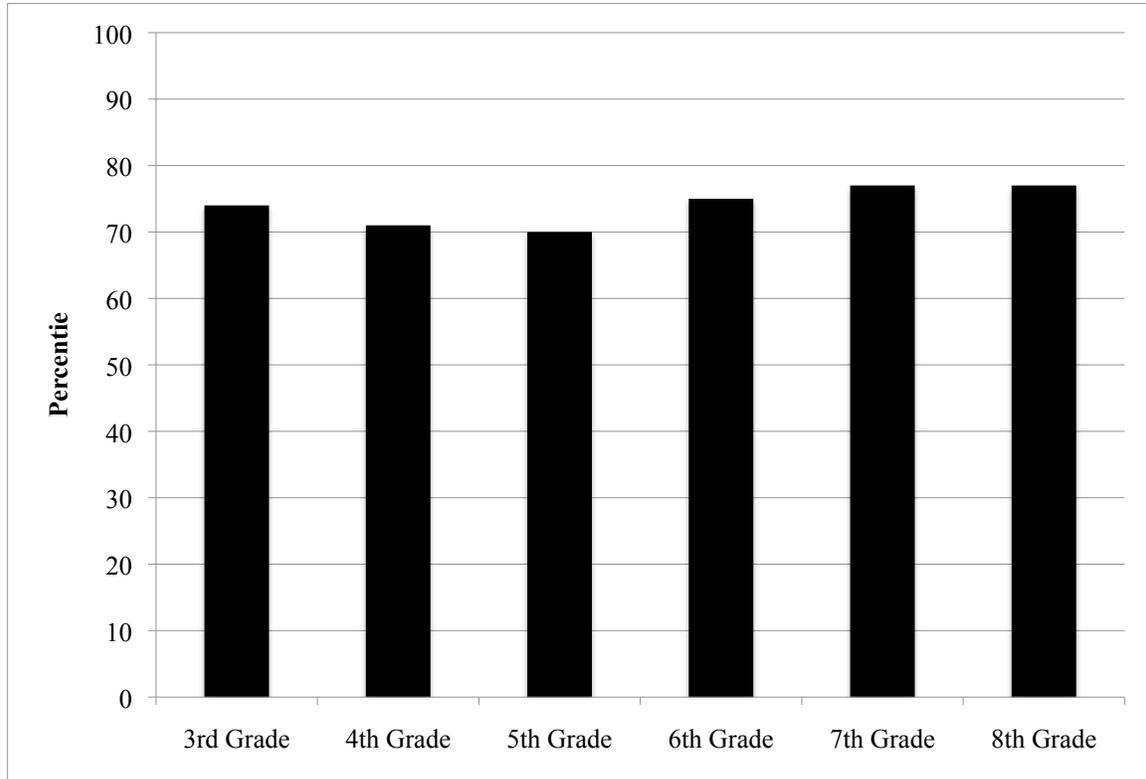
**Percentage of students by grade enrolled in Reading class at least 1 grade level above**



**Percentage of students by grade enrolled in Math class at least 1 grade level above**

**Science**

Our students in Grades 3-8 also demonstrate strong science knowledge as represented by the median scores on the SAT-10 Science subtest. The chart below shows the median score of the Science subtest by grade. Note that the median score for each grade is well above the 50 percentile, which represents above-average performance.



**Median Science SAT-10 Scores by Grade 2017-18**

In addition to the basic skills areas, Mt. Helix Academy's Junior High students also excel in Science. After receiving instruction in the scientific method and strategies for completing a science fair project, each student in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade completes their own science fair project and submits it for entry to the San Diego Science and Engineering Fair.

### **STEAM Education**

During the 2017-18 school year, we continued implementation of coding/computer programming for all students through the Choreographe program and NAO robots in the upper Elementary and Junior High grades, and I-play robots (Dot & Dash) for our Primary grade students. Students at the primary level learned coding through programs such as Tynker, Blockly, Path and Go. Most primary, and all Elementary and Junior High students completed course work and participated in the Hour of Code using the Code.org website. Students at the Junior High level also explored the use of Scratch and Python when creating code. We also incorporated course work from code.org in our computer literacy classes to foster and promote interest and instruction in the basics of coding. Programming and coding are important concepts to teach as they help students organize their critical thinking in a logical and systematic way. As part of this year's Multicultural Month, many of our students integrated science and technology as they embarked on their study of the country their grade selected.

## **World Languages**

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 required high school world language courses. Ninety-four percent of the students who graduate from Mt. Helix Academy and continue to take Spanish are accelerated into advanced levels in high school.

## **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 and Barnes and Noble of Grossmont Center have both featured installations of artwork by our students, and visitors to our school regularly comment on the extraordinary art that is displayed in our classrooms and hallways. On Artsonia, an online museum of student art, this year our students have received 137 Portfolio awards, 17 Hall of Fame awards, 43 Popular Artist awards, and 22 Rave Reviews. In addition, over 1106 student artworks were published on Artsonia. Fifty-two students in Grades K-6 participated in the Kids Best division at this year's San Diego County Fair. Our students also participated in a several community outreach programs such as entering student artwork the Helix Water Poster contest.

## **Music and Performing Arts**

Mt. Helix Academy students develop skills in and appreciation for both vocal and instrumental music in our excellent Music and Performing Arts programs. 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. In addition, elementary module students study select pieces of work from various composers as a means of preparing for the Hunter Family "Music Memory" competition held annually in San Diego. This year at Music Memory, both our 5<sup>th</sup> grade team and our 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> grade team earned gold level.

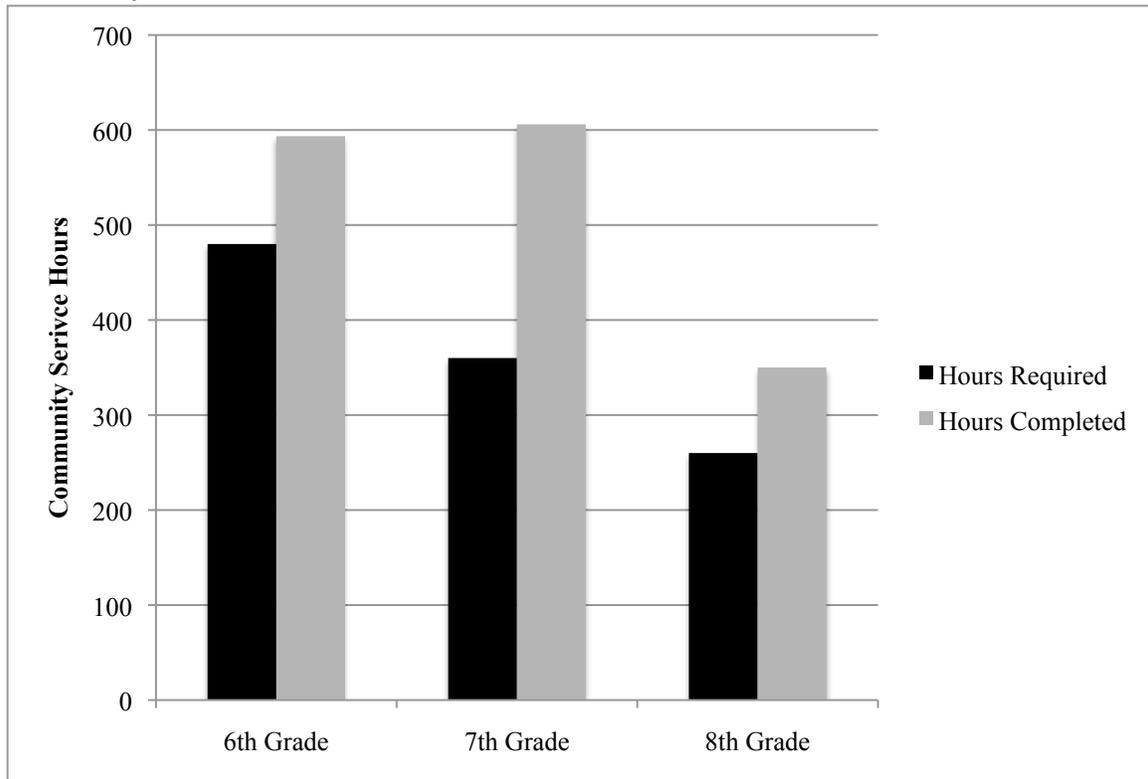
Students are also encouraged to participate in optional instrumental music programs. Private piano and guitar lessons are also available from some of our talented staff members. Each year, students from Mt. Helix Academy display their musical skills at the annual winter and spring concerts, directed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

Mt. Helix Academy is also recognized for its excellent musical theater program. Our 13th annual musical production, "The Wizard of Oz.", received excellent reviews from patrons who attended this year's performance. This year's performance showcased the

varied talents of over 60 of our students. In previous years, productions were staged for “Aladdin”, “Beauty and the Beast”, “Annie”, “The Wizard of Oz”, “Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat”, “The Sound of Music”, “Annie Get Your Gun”, and “The Little Mermaid”, “Seussical”, “Peter Pan” and Disney’s “Lion King, Jr.”

### Community Service

One of the Expected Learning Results (ESLR’s) for our students is that they will acquire behavior that is beneficial to others. For the 2017-2018 school year, we conducted a series of school-wide community service projects and individual classrooms also organized community service projects that their students completed. Our school-wide community service projects included a food drive with Feeding America, collecting food items for our local food banks, beach cleanups, donations to the Rady Children’s Hospital, collecting recycle bottles and using the proceeds to benefit one of our local animal shelters. Classroom projects included creating care packages for U.S. military servicemen and servicewomen and their families, making placemats for seniors at our local senior center, “Soctober” sock drive for families in need, a local animal shelter, among others. In the Junior High school grades, students are required to complete 20 hours of community service hours each school year. The chart below shows the required hours by grade as compared to the hours completed. You will note that the hours completed greatly exceed the required hours, showing our students commitment to community service.



**Jr. High Community Service Hours 2017-18**

## **WASC Onsite Visit**

As part of our WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges) accreditation, the faculty and staff of Mt. Helix Academy conducted a year-long self-study focusing on the categories outlined by WASC which culminated with a three day, onsite visit from a WASC Visiting Committee in February 2018. The categories included: Organization for Student Learning; Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment; Support for Student Personal and Academic Growth; and Resource Management and Development. The committee's purpose was to validate the findings for each area in our self-study report, and to recommend a term of accreditation. The outcome was Mt. Helix Academy received another six-year accreditation. The Visiting Committee members listed the following areas of strength:

- Decision-making is based on student performance data to increase student learning.
- TIEE's policies and procedures are clearly defined.
- Teacher professional development is fostered by financial support, annual appraisals, and regularly scheduled observations.
- Expected Student Learning Results (ESLR's) are a focal point for student development.
- The school has a clear mission; ESLR's are closely aligned with that mission and the implemented instructional program.
- Staff development involves both administration and classroom teachers, and is aligned with practices that support student learning.
- Consistent review of student performance data on formative and summative assessments is used by teachers to inform instructional decisions and planning.
- Teachers use a wide range of assessments to determine progress towards academic goals.
- The staff is frequently observed by administration and coaches, with feedback provided to staff.
- Clear communication exists between stakeholders to affirm strengths, raise issues, and to improve the instructional program and student progress.
- Mt. Helix Academy utilizes a very structured curriculum and students are instructed in accordance with academic goals.
- Mt. Helix Academy offers their Aim High program, which provides intensive instruction for students who are performing well-below grade level.
- Due to the academic structure of the school, students are placed according to skill level, not grade level, and must demonstrate mastery.
- Teachers regularly determine current progress of their students and collaborate within and among modules to provide support or placement that best serves the students' needs.
- Resources from other TIEE schools are available and are utilized to support students.
- Parents understand and strongly support the work of the teachers at MHA to meet the academic and social-emotional needs of their students. Parent support is given to both classroom activities and in the provision of instructional activities at home.

- An effective PTG supports the academic and co-curricular activities of the school and also serve as a fundraising support for the instructional needs of the school.
- Mt. Helix Academy is a safe environment for stakeholders.
- The staff is collaborative and compassionate towards the students.
- TIEE's Board of Directors has a shared vision with TIEE and Mt. Helix Academy.
- The budget for the school is sufficient to meet most requests from the school.
- There is transparency from the Board to the general public.

## **VI. School Completion**

Mt. Helix Academy serves students from Transitional Kindergarten through Grade 9. Students who complete Grade 8 graduate at year's end to high school.

## **VII. Class Size**

### **Teacher to student ratios**

Mt. Helix Academy maintains a very low student-teacher ratio. Grades TK - 2 are staffed an average of 1:8 students for all basic skills areas. Grades 3 – 5 are staffed at an average of 1:12, and the Junior High 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 the professional or paraprofessional appraisal. 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.

## **VIII. 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.