

# Evaluation team says data scanty for Loma Prieta

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SANTA CRUZ — Stung by an outside evaluation that criticized Loma Prieta High School, students, parents and teachers are defending the school's record and the principal's leadership.

"I hate English, but I got into it," said Loma Prieta graduate Mario Capetillo, who plans to go to Cabrillo College.

"Kids learn and they come back," said Melody Skarbeck, breaking into tears of happiness as she explained how her daughter, Kathryn, graduated a year ahead of schedule and is taking classes in hopes of becoming an emergency medical technician.

"We've made tremendous progress in six years," added longtime Loma teacher Mickey Larsen. "I'm a little shocked they found we weren't up to snuff."

Capetillo, Skarbeck and Larsen were among a contingent of 10 people who came to support the school two weeks ago when school district

trustees reviewed a report filed by an accreditation team from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. Colleges and universities consider accreditation, or lack thereof, as a measure of the school's quality.

The team of educators spent four days at Loma in May, but found it difficult to evaluate the school.

"Because of the lack of evidence provided to the visiting team, it is uncertain what and how much students are learning at Loma Prieta," the committee concluded, although they described the campus as "safe, caring and active."

A continuation school, Loma is an alternative to students who feel out of place at the large, traditional high schools. About 200 are enrolled at the campus, located across the street from Harbor High.

Since the last review six years ago, math offerings have doubled and courses in Hispanic literature and Spanish language and culture have been added. About 18 percent of the students are Latino. Students are encouraged to at-



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tend Cabrillo College, and about 10 percent are enrolled while taking classes at Loma. New efforts are being made to meet the needs of gifted students.

Among the information the committee said wasn't available:

- Data on attendance and students passing competency tests, although the graduation rate has doubled in the past three years.

- Schoolwide performance data, including follow-up studies on former graduates.

- Details on staff and student collaboration on decision-making, although "town meetings" open to all students are held weekly.

The committee also recommended hiring more bilingual staff to address changing demographics, although five of the 11 teachers are getting training to deal with students whose native language is not English.

"We got blasted pretty good," said principal Richard Dye, who came to the school three years ago. "I accept full responsibility." He expects Loma will be accred-

ited but the term may not be for the maximum six years, as it was last time. A decision on the accreditation should be available this summer.

Only one instructor, ag teacher Faith Heald, presented the committee with a list of what students in her courses are expected to learn.

While some schools, such as Santa Cruz High, provide a stipend to a teacher to oversee the follow-up report, Dye said he didn't have the money. His discretionary fund is about \$17,000.

Teachers viewed the report requested by the committee as a low priority, according to Dye, and he decided against preparing it himself.

"Frankly, I think we have it all. We just didn't present it the way they wanted," Larsen said of the visiting educators.

Staff plan to return to school early to review the report and consider changes.

"It's a valuable lesson to us to communicate what we do," said school board president Matt Farrell.