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## El Segundo News

### Vistamar earns accreditation

By Dave Eisenstadt

The South Bay's first new high school in decades climbed another rung on the ladder to credibility when it received accreditation from an important education governing body after its first academic year. Vistamar School, the college prep located here, was notified that it had received full accreditation from the Schools Commission of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. Earning the commission's imprimatur is an unofficial requisite for schools that want to send their students to college. In practice, it means that transcripts and advertising from Vistamar can bear a fully accredited seal. Vistamar officials characterized the official blessing as plaudits for the

quality of the school's education. "We are delighted to receive this early validation of the quality of Vistamar's program and organization," said Jim Buckheit, the head of Vistamar. Vistamar School, launched about a year ago, is the brainchild of a group of mostly Manhattan Beach and Hermosa Beach parents seeking to create a rigorous house of learning that offers a more global perspective than the public high schools, they say. The school opened last September with grades nine and 10 and is expected to add grade 11 this year. When the concept for the school emerged a few years ago, it was greeted mostly with skepticism - especially from advocates of public education. Others

wondered why the South Bay, known for its high-caliber schools, needed yet another institution. The answer, according to Vistamar officials, is that the type of education, the student body's size and complexion, and what's emphasized are very different than the area's public schools. "This is a testament to the staff, trustees and students who worked together to make Vistamar's unique philosophy and curriculum a reality from the start," said Romaine Levee, the school's executive board chairwoman. Vistamar is located on Hawaii Street off Aviation Boulevard. The school building is housed in a one-time industrial shoebox that's been revamped from the ground up. The school has had no trouble attracting students, according to officials. Nor is it cheap. Annual tuition is about \$21,000 a year. Buckheit has described his ambition to make the school akin to an "R and D wing" of a local system. He said in a statement that all of the school's grade levels should be accredited by '08.