

Accreditation Standard #2:

Teaching and Learning: Curriculum

Guiding Principle

The curriculum including coursework, co-curricular activities, and other school-approved educational experiences is the school's formal plan to fulfill its mission and expectations for student learning. The curriculum links the school's beliefs, its expectations for student learning, and its instructional practices. The strength of that link is dependent upon the commitment and involvement of the professional staff to a comprehensive, ongoing review of the curriculum.

Our goal is to insure we are challenging students to think creatively, critically and artistically. Indicators of our effectiveness validate our effort because students are engaged, connected to the lessons and for the most part, understanding their relevance.

Integral to our work is a concept developed by Debra Meier, principal of Central Park East Secondary School located in Harlem, NY. The essence of this concept is teaching students a process for thinking. During a visit to Vancouver School of Arts and Academics you most probably will hear a reference to the FQ's ... better known as the Fundamental Questions. Much of our work embeds 6 questions ... Evidence, Perception, Connections, Relevance, Supposition and Transition ... as students are guided toward deeper learning and a higher level of thinking.

Because we believe students learn best when the arts and academics are integrated, our core curriculum, which aligns with State Standards and is supported by our District Curriculum Team, attempts to engage students through that lens. However, CORE ... a focused attempt to integrate the arts and academics, as it relates to a year-long theme, requires the creativity of staff to author, implement and assess student learning. Staff meets weekly to plan and strategize the delivery of content. Each new school year, a different art form guides the staff and holds them accountable to staying the course regarding the theme for the year. To assist, numerous guest artists come through our doors to engage and enlighten our students. We are fortunate to have the resources to support our efforts.

We have professional dialogue regarding how to deliver curriculum more effectively in a variety of venues: Faculty meetings; Color Team Meetings; Key Communicator Meetings; Parent Advisory Meetings and PLC Meetings; Art Form Meetings.

Vancouver School of Arts and Academics is a vibrant, focused learning community where students experience a new curriculum, guided by an art form, alongside the required curriculum. An example of integrating the Theme with District curricula is best emphasized in our AP Literature class. The teacher guided students reading through the novel: *Waiting For Snow*. The setting for the story is Cuba. With our theme being about the music of Cuba, this was an excellent opportunity to bring greater depth to student learning. We have the best of both worlds but are challenged each school day to provide a quality delivery of information.