

Accreditation Standard #5:

Support Standard: Leadership and Organization

Guiding Principle

The way that a school organizes learning for students, fosters leadership, and engages its members has a profound effect on teaching and learning. The professional culture of the school must be characterized by thoughtful, reflective, and constructive discourse about decision-making and practices that supports student learning and well-being.

The small size of Vancouver School of Arts and Academics allows us many opportunities to demonstrate leadership and organize our school for the maximum amount of student learning. With 31 certified staff members, it is possible to gain whole group consensus on issues of student success and school improvement in an expedient manner. We use a decision making protocol called Fist-to-Five in which staff members show their level of support for any issue.

The principal regularly inspects the organization's effort to move toward excellence. Having been recently trained in the Art of Facilitation, he employs different strategies as needed for the setting of a meeting. The strategic plan in place is actually our year's Plan on A Page. It articulates what our focus is for the year and helps us keep on course.

We have an engaged leadership Team which meets every other Wednesday morning. Our focus this year has been Advocacy and CORE. We utilize our staff meetings to provide training and insight into new pedagogy. 3 times per year, time is provided for Art Form as well as academic educators to meet in the area of expertise. At this time they discuss instructional goals and ways to vertically align curricula. An additional group was created this year ... The Guiding Cohort for PLC's.

Our staff is grouped into two types of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) in order to focus on student learning. In the cross-curricular PLCs (CORE Teams) we focus upon planning, implementing, assessing and/or improving instruction as a whole. In our self-selected PLCs we focus on improving instruction. We are in the beginning stages of this process but we have been witness to quality work. Examples which come to mind: The development of a flow chart describing the use of Intellectual Habits to assist students in their effort to become better students; other PLC groups have visited off-campus, specifically Evergreen State College to explore how they effectively collaborate with one another. Finally, staff are becoming more trusting of their colleagues and welcoming their observations regarding the effectiveness of instruction. The fact that our schedule is organized to give us this valuable time to focus on students and their achievement is an advantage many schools do not have.

We have room to grow at Vancouver School of Arts and Academics specifically with regard to collaboration. The most challenging facet of working on a team is listening to, having discourse about and deciding what's best for students vs. me. We need to continue to address this issue respectfully and invite guest artists into our environment who can offer a seasoned and quality perspective to a seasoned group of educators.

