

MOUNTLAKE TERRACE HIGH SCHOOL DEFINITIONS FOR RFP

Equity between SLCs

A conscious attention to ensuring that all students regardless of the smaller learning community that they are in have an equal opportunity for a rich educational experience; this process will also ensure that we will avoid an educational imbalance between the SLCs. We will consider factors such as gender, free and reduced lunch, ethnicity, ESL populations, and IEP status in maintaining an ideal balance.

Autonomy

The ability of a group of staff members to make a decision in the best interest of students and staff and to implement that decision in a timely manner. This is considered by many people as the most important factor in establishing smaller learning communities. As one person in an autonomous small school said, "We can make a decision on Monday and have it implemented by Thursday." Ideally, each SLC will be able to have as much autonomy as possible in staffing, scheduling, budget, curriculum, assessment, and pedagogy.

Rigor (also referred to as academic press)

The press for high achievement for all students. The school is anchored on and organized around a clearly defined "learning imperative" referenced to clear and public standards that are frequently and authentically assessed.

Personalization

Programs and facilities are organized in ways that encourage the development of healthy student-adult relationships. The school is small or feels small for every student in the building. These continuous relationships create a web of support, a unified community, and challenges students and teachers alike. The goal of this is to build a supportive school organization to help students learn more.

Enduring understanding/Intellectual focus

Staff and students are focused on a few important goals. The focus is competence, not coverage. Students struggle with complex problems, explore core concepts to develop deep understanding; and apply knowledge in real world contexts. Students then show evidence of understanding in performance assessment tasks that allow students to exhibit higher order thinking and helps teachers and students set learning goals and to monitor progress.

Performance assessment/authentic assessment

These assessments are intellectual accomplishments that are worthwhile, significant, and meaningful, such as those undertaken by successful adults in the work world. They mirror the issues and problems faced by adults (thus they are authentic) and require the student to construct knowledge, demonstrate in-depth understanding rather than superficial awareness, and to rely on complex forms of communication.