

Department Analysis

Secondary Elective Classes

1) How are the department's curriculum and instructional strategies aligned with the school's Desired Learning Results for Student Learning?

Communication:

The secondary elective classes provide many opportunities for students to learn and manifest the school's Desired Results for Student Learning. These opportunities include developing oral expression skills in such classes as speech and debate, and film studies. In almost every class, students complete writing assignments to practice written communication. Spanish class teaches communication in a foreign language. All classes provide opportunities to participate in group work. Internet communication is also part of many elective offerings. The school offers distance education classes which develop students' online communication skills with individuals in other geographic locations. All classes implement multiple learning strategies.

Critical Thinking:

Teachers promote critical thinking through identifying cause and effect, and practicing compare and contrast skills. Many elective classes also offer case study analysis, and reflection on personal experiences.

Technology:

We currently have Smart Boards in two of our classrooms, which are used for several elective classes such as Spanish and Hip Hop. Laptop computers are used to create, research, and edit. Specific programs such as Excel are used for elective classes including accounting which makes use of the spread sheets. A word processing program is used for several electives, and an animation program is used in the Multimedia class.

2) How does each course offering align with the state's core curriculum that prescribes content and course specific intended learning outcomes?

Where curriculum is offered by the state, it is implemented by the teachers. For example, Health uses the state curriculum, as well as Accounting, Financial Literacy, Photography, Sociology, and Film Production. The teachers of these classes use Backwards Design to create their scope and sequence from the state curriculum.

3) To what extent does the department utilize a variety of assessments to monitor student achievement and adjust instructional practices?

The elective classes use a variety tools and methods to assess students achievement, such as individual tests, group tests, projects, discussions, rubrics, and written essays. Assessments are both formative and summative.

4) How does the department collaborate with other departments to create integrated, relevant and authentic learning opportunities for students?

Because we are such as small school everything is naturally integrated. The core teachers are also the elective teachers. Accounting and math work together, science and health are referred to in psychology. Vocabulary building skills are developed in most classes. Grammar skills are taught in both English and Spanish. Photography students work on writing skills and spelling. In Financial Literacy, students practice their Language skills through essay writing.

5) To what extent do department members utilize inclusionary teaching strategies to meet the needs of ALL students (ESL, special education, gifted, etc)?

Because we have a high percentage of students with Individual Education Plans, our classes are naturally inclusive. Teachers have received professional development on such subjects as Autism, to teach inclusionary strategies for classroom use.

For gifted students, often give more information is provided in elective classes to keep students engaged. They are also given more challenging assignments. Ed Net targets higher level learners in the high school grades. In Spanish, the instructor teaches 6th grade through high school students at the same time. To meet the needs of all students in the class, he has the older students assist and mentor the younger students.

We do not have very many ESL students, but when necessary terminology is translated into Spanish, and sometimes teachers ask questions in Spanish when beneficial to the students.

6) To what degree are the department's policies, operational procedures, and allocation and use of resources aligned with the educational agenda of the school?

Not applicable etc.

7) How does the department collaborate and engage in ongoing professional development growth for the purpose of improving student performance?

Department staff attend monthly professional development meetings. Several teachers also serve on committees such as the Student Support Team, and the Faculty Council. Teachers are participating in the accreditation process. Many faculty members have also attended state training workshops. All of these professional development experiences are ultimately for the purpose of improving student performance.

8) How do students have access to additional support beyond the classroom?

Teachers have a school email, through which they can be accessed outside of the classroom. Some teachers have websites which offer additional student support. Extra help is frequently offered during lunch time, or faculty members sometimes provide individual tutoring after school.

9) How do students have access to and utilize technology as a regular part of the instructional program?

In some of the elective classes, specific technology is utilized on a daily basis. For example, the Ed Net program utilizes on-line classes broadcast on a larger flat screen TV. Laptops are used in Computer Technology and keyboarding. HD cameras are used in Multimedia. Other classes use projectors, and 2 rooms have smart boards installed. 20 flip cameras, are used for the Quest classes.

10) How does the current staffing and certification meet current program needs?

Because the school is a small, charter institution, teachers cover a variety of subjects and classes. Between the varied certifications and experiences of the faculty, they are able to meet program needs. The school strives to ensure that all its teachers are highly qualified

11) How is the department collectively addressing the school's current school improvement goals?

Secondary staff work collectively to ensure that the dress code is enforced. They also use the same tardy policy in every class, to improve student attendance. The teachers work together to maintain high standards regarding student behavior.

Areas of Strength:

The department succeeds in offering a huge variety of electives considering how small the school is. There are lots of opportunities for students to experience different areas of study. Classes are frequently specialized to meet student needs and wants. Elective classes at the school provide a safe environment for students to express themselves. Ed Net offers college credit to high school students.

Recommendations for Growth:

Stability and consistency are needed in the elective department. There has been considerable fluidity in classes offered, making it difficult for teachers to prepare with strong curriculum, materials, and resources. A solid foundation of consistent elective classes should be developed, with perhaps only a couple of new ones introduced each year to continue to cater to student wants. It would be beneficial to separate middle and high school students in elective classes, to avoid having such a large span of maturity and ability. There also needs to be careful monitoring of enrollment in elective classes, to make sure that students aren't repeating the same class over and over. It would be helpful for the school to ensure that they have resources necessary to offer a new class, such as books or technology, before they decide to put it in the schedule.