

Certification Report Advanced Learning Posted January 2004

School Eckstein Middle School

Program Spectrum

At Eckstein Middle School we are “creating a community of lifelong learners.” This quest for lifelong learning extends to students, staff and families. Lifelong learners have the passion to seek out knowledge and understanding, have the reading, writing, and reasoning skills necessary to assess and synthesize ideas and information contained in texts of many genres, and they have the confidence to ask difficult high level questions and live with the uncertainty that often accompanies deeper inquiry. The Eckstein staff seeks promote lifelong learning in their students by providing rigorous, high-level reading, writing, and reasoning challenges in each class, at each grade level. The school also offers experiences in music, art, and world language programs. Another focus is the creation of frameworks of cultural competence across all curricular areas and the instructional practices in classrooms.

Eckstein provides a rigorous curriculum for all students. Weekly “learning walks” performed by the Principal and Assistant Principals focus on gathering data around four primary questions: 1) To what extent is the curriculum organized around complex, interrelated concepts? 2) To what extent does the curriculum arouse strong feelings? 3) To what extent is the curriculum concerned with central problems in the discipline that challenge students’ previous concepts? and 4) To what extent does the curriculum focus on symbols and images packed with multiple meanings? All students are given the opportunity to refine their thinking skills with graphic organizers and other learning tools, and all students create a complex, interdisciplinary project at each grade level. In the sixth grade, students create a science fair project. In the seventh grade, all students complete a REACH (respecting ethnic and cultural heritage) project, and in the eighth grade all students participate in a research project dealing with a relevant social issue.

The Spectrum program focuses on language arts or language arts/social studies block instruction. Eligible Spectrum students are taught as a cohort for these courses. Spectrum-eligible students participate in heterogeneously grouped courses for the remainder of the school day.

Strengths/Commendations

Clearly articulated program/schedule for Spectrum students
History of serving Spectrum students
Robust Spectrum numbers
Strong understanding of rigor and its integration across the curriculum

Areas to be Strengthened

Enhanced articulation of the use of accelerated standards across the curriculum

