

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In order to achieve the MPCSD Mission and Vision, grounded in our Core Values, the Board has developed Guiding Principles to further articulate why we do what we do. The intent of these Guiding Principles is to inform decision-making related to the composition, structure and delivery of our educational programs. They establish parameters that enable our professional staff to exercise creativity and innovation, ensuring that MPCSD continues as a leader in educating our students for success in high school, college and career.

Guiding Principle #1: District Academic Program

MPCSD’s District Academic Program encompasses all the curricular areas included in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS): Math, English Language Arts (Reading, Writing, Speaking), Science and Social Science. Additionally, in MPCSD, we also consider physical education, the visual/performing arts, and world language¹ as essential elements of our District Academic Program. Together, all seven of these curricular areas -- math, ELA, science, social science, PE, visual/performing arts, and world language -- comprise MPCSD’s District Academic Program.

For all curricular areas included in our District Academic Program, the District sets the standards² for these programs and intends that each of our schools make programs available to all students that meet or exceed the District’s standards³.

Future changes to the curricular areas included in the District Academic program are normally considered through the District’s strategic planning process and recommended for Board approval.

Guiding Principle #2: Accountability/Testing

In the MPCSD, student testing is about assessing students to enable teaching professionals to be more effective teachers and students to be more effective learners. We test, in appropriate moderation, to assess how we are performing as we continually improve our educational experience for our students, analyze the effectiveness of school and District programs and support our teachers with the skills and tools they need. These test results are taken seriously and are used to inform instruction. We recognize that tests are incomplete and imperfect measures of what we strive to achieve for our students, therefore the tests that we choose to administer, whether state required or locally selected, evolve over time, and test results alone do not drive instruction and decision making.

¹ World Language was added as a District Academic Program by the 2008 Strategic Plan.

² District staff, with Board approval, set the standards for all District Academic Program areas of the curriculum. For curricular areas within the Common Core State Standards, the District may choose to adopt as is, change, or exceed (e.g. math) those standards. For District curriculum areas not covered by the Common Core, the District will establish its own standards. District standards will comply with State and Federal regulations.

³ School site programs in DAP areas may be elective where allowed by the District’s curriculum standards.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES (continued)

Guiding Principle #3: Equity of Access

In order to provide equity of access to a high quality education for all District students, we actively work to meet the needs of all students, including special needs that stem from poverty, ethnicity, language, gender, or learning difference. As a result, there are times when we as a district invest a larger than pro-rata share of District resources into the education of certain students. We make these differential investments to enable all students to access the curriculum in a way that meets their needs and ensures they are appropriately challenged. We also make these investments to reap the benefits that accrue to all students when we improve the learning environment for every child.

Guiding Principle #4: Equity of Opportunity

The District is committed to providing equity of opportunity for all our students in all District Academic Program areas. Individual schools have flexibility regarding the structure and approach they take to delivering their curriculum, and the programs between schools may vary so long as each school meets the District's standards in each curricular area. Within an individual school, all District Academic Programs offered should be available to all students in that school. Whenever an imbalance between supply and demand for a particular District Academic Program occurs⁴ at a school, a plan to bring supply⁵ and demand into balance within a reasonable time period will be established.

⁴ When schools innovate in structuring District Academic Program offerings, an imbalance between supply and demand for a specific program may also occur during a pilot/prototyping phase. The duration of a pilot/prototype phase should be defined along with the metrics that will be used to evaluate the pilot/prototype for potential inclusion as an on-going program.

⁵ The definition of supply takes into account comparable programs within the same curricular area. For example, Band and Orchestra are considered to be comparable programs because, while the instruments taught are different, the programs are designed to get students to a comparable level of musical proficiency.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES (continued)

Guiding Principle #5: Neighborhood Schools

MPCSD schools are intentionally organized as neighborhood⁶, as opposed to choice/magnet, schools. The reason for this is that our community values the unique opportunities that neighborhood schools provide to develop strong relationships and deep roots within the community by fostering friendships with other families who live within reasonable biking and walking distance. Our community also values the fact that neighborhood schools foster healthy bodies and a healthy environment by enabling students to bike and walk to school. Additionally, our District is small and is significantly constrained by the number and location of our school sites such that dedicating any of our school properties as a choice/magnet school at this time would result in depriving a significant portion of our community of the benefits of a neighborhood school. As such, MPCSD gives the first priority for attendance at District schools to District residents who live within each school's attendance boundary⁷, subject to District policy. Intra and Inter-District transfer requests are granted according to District policy on a space available basis.

Guiding Principle #6: Resource Allocation & School Autonomy

Innovation is one of the District's Core Values, and the District's governance structures should support site-based innovation as an essential element in creating the most optimal programs and services for our students⁸. The District's intent is that each school should have significant latitude to determine what will work best for its student population so long as their plans comply with District policies and standards.

The District is committed to promoting the most effective and equitable use of all our community's resources⁹. The District's governance processes should ensure that both the human resources and overall funding available to each school for all activities related to the educational experience of students is equitable. Individual schools can then make choices about the way in which their resources are deployed, in accordance with District policies. The District works to leverage successful site-based innovations for the benefit of all District students by facilitating the sharing of best practices between schools and evolving the District's Curriculum Standards to reflect these learnings.

Board Policy Adopted: December 9, 2014

*Menlo Park City School District
Atherton, CA*

⁶ "Neighborhood" schools are those where first preference for attendance is given to students who reside within each school's defined attendance boundary.

⁷ The District may approve a pilot program to be enrolled on a District-wide basis, with the intent to offer all programs through our neighborhood schools if the pilot is successful and ultimately approved as on-going program.

⁸ See ARs for how the Site Planning process is integral to achieving this.

⁹ See BP 3290 for policy on the use of grants and other charitable donations.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The District’s primary governance structures for decision-making about its academic programs and services are as follows:

Where Decisions Are Made:

Leader (w/ Primary Work Team)

Board Policies:

Board (w/ Superintendent)

Administrative Regulations, Strategic Plan, District Goals, Resource Allocation:

Superintendent (w/ Leadership Team)

District-wide Academic Standards, Curriculum & Instruction Standards, and Assessments:

Directors of C&I and Assessment (w/ Leadership Team)

Site Academic Standards, Site Goals, Site Resource Allocation:

Principal (w/ Site Council)

Representative teachers, parents and other members of the community are regularly invited to interact with each District governance body regarding its work. The work of the District’s governance bodies ultimately comes before the Board for approval, and the Board approval process ensures that all members of the community 1) have visibility into the work of the District, and 2) have the opportunity to provide comment before Board action is taken to approve the recommendations of the governance body.

The Site Plans¹⁰ are the primary vehicle by which the District provides transparency about the total resource allocation choices being made by each school community, and how those choices link to School and District goals. Site plans are ultimately approved by the Board as required by law and this process ensures that all members of the broader community have an opportunity to view and provide comment before the Site Plans are approved.

In order to promote innovation in instructional delivery, the District seeks to avoid mandating specific class sizes and encourages each school to distribute its teaching and support resources in the way that it believes is most effective¹¹. Additionally, the District encourages and supports site-based innovation through block grant funding to its schools.

Administrative Regulation Adopted: December 9, 2014

Menlo Park City School District

¹⁰ The Site Plan template and timelines will be updated in Sept/Oct 2014 to coordinate with LCAP requirements, District budgeting process. Site Plans will include standardized reporting of all human resource allocation as well as all site discretionary spending, including the use by sites of any donated funds for items that affect the educational experience of students.

¹¹ The District negotiates with its employee unions on this subject where required.

Atherton, CA