



SCHOOLS TO WATCH – TAKING CENTER STAGE

MODEL SCHOOL – VISITOR’S GUIDE



Dartmouth Middle School



Designated in 2009

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2009 School Statistics

(Sources: 2008 API Growth Report; 2008 AYP Report)

Community: Large city
Enrollment: 752
Grade Levels: 6-8
School Schedule: Six periods; optional zero period; late-start Wednesdays for common planning time

Student Demographics

- 58% White
- 22% Hispanic/Latino
- 12% Asian
- 5% African American
- 2% Filipino
- 1% Pacific Islander
- 0% American Indian/Alaska Native

- 20% Free/Reduced Lunch
- 10% English Learners

2008 API Base: 850
2009 API Growth: 871 (up 74 points since 1999-00)
2009 AYP: Met 16 of 17 criteria

(Visit <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ar/index.asp> to view this school's data for prior years.)

School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

Academic Excellence

- Instruction focuses on writing across the curriculum, academic vocabulary, literacy, and interdisciplinary instruction.
- Assessment is the focal point of instruction and collaboration, with each department developing its own common assessments.
- Researched strategies for teaching academic vocabulary are used in all classes; the entire school participates in the World of the Week.
- Each class is taught from a standards-based pacing guide and curriculum map that is revised yearly based on test score analysis.
- Cornell note-taking is used schoolwide.
- Teacher teams have common planning time with late-start Wednesdays.
- Intervention classes are held during zero period so that students may take an elective.
- Other support for students includes an after-school homework center sponsored by the city and staffed by Dartmouth teachers.

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Developmental Responsiveness

- Team teachers serve as adult mentors.
- Students are placed in interdisciplinary teams for better teacher-student relationship.
- An opportunity class is available for at-risk students.
- The Lunch Bunch room at lunch time provides a social sanctuary for students having difficulty handling the larger campus.
- The use of Curricular Maps identifies opportunities for teacher teams to present curriculum in an interdisciplinary manner.
- The Go Green program is a campus-wide program with a goal of no waste on campus.
- Parents participate in Art Vistas, a program that organizes units of art instruction such as cave painting, quilting, and political cartooning—all according to California State Standards.
- Electives include Life Skills, Current Events, Speech and Debate, Communications, Exploring Cultures, Building 3-D Structures, Technology, Kitchen Chemistry, Botany, Ecology, and various visual and performing arts.
- The sports program includes track, cross-country, wrestling, soccer, volleyball, basketball, and cheer.

Social Equity

- Special education classes are scheduled to allow students to move between RSP (Resource Specialist Program), SDC (special day class), and mainstream classes as needed.
- Special education students may enroll in Social Cognition—a program researched and developed at Dartmouth to assist students who struggle with social interactions due to Asperger’s Syndrome, Autism, etc.
- Dartmouth Academy provides a four-day orientation to at-risk fifth grade students prior to the first day of school.
- Computer labs are used for a computer math intervention program.
- Some classes have Web sites and workspaces allowing students to interact by posting comments or blogs and to obtain class information online.
- The Girls for a Change program empowers girls to use the school setting as a vehicle for social change and progress.
- The school produces a musical and a fashion show every spring; all students who want to participate are offered a part.

Organizational Support

- Teaming and professional learning communities are the dominant organizational pattern.
- The administration fosters multiple forums for shared leadership around scheduling, curriculum issues, and school climate through team leaders, department meetings, team meetings, and student study teams.
- Self-reflection informed by data analysis is the norm. Staff is committed to continuous improvement and collaboration.
- Staff development is centered on the developmental needs of adolescents and effective instructional strategies for the middle grades.
- The Junior Achievement program is taught by business people in the community.
- The school works closely with universities to find the best personnel for each position on campus.