

Beliefs

- We believe each student brings a unique set of characteristics, abilities, and experiences for learning and has the potential to succeed as a lifelong learner.
- We believe the learning environment needs to be positive, safe, caring, and flexible in order to effectively foster growth, development, and positive human relations.
- We believe the curriculum should be child-centered and based around student, societal, and global issues, skills, needs and problems.
- We believe sufficient resources must be provided and utilized in order to ensure quality educational experiences.

Vision

McCombs Middle School is a place where students want to be. We are a learning community where students with unique needs, strengths, interests, and experiences learn and grow into responsible, creative, caring, and critically thinking individuals. In our school, teachers and students have opportunities and resources necessary to develop meaningful and engaging learning experiences that are responsive to the interests and needs of students and are relevant to the society and world in which they live and work. Students acquire and develop proficiencies and knowledge that assist them in making sense of their lives, enable them to function productively in society, and empower them to shape their future and their world. Student growth is demonstrated and assessed through a variety of methods that are sensitive to the needs, abilities, and interests of students. Teachers and students work together to create and maintain a positive, safe, caring, and respectful environment which enables students to acquire and practice the skills, life habits, and attitudes essential for individual and social success.

Schedule and Structure

McCombs Middle School recently reorganized itself around a "house" or "team" concept using a flexible block schedule. Students are generally on teams of approximately 100 students with 4 common teachers using core subjects (including math, science, language arts, social studies, reading) to promote learning. Students also learn through exploratory classes where many fine and applied arts are used.

The benefits of teaming and flexible scheduling have been numerous. The schedule has allowed for more joint planning time to create more engaging, authentic, and integrated curricular activities and experiences for our students. It has afforded us generally smaller class sizes with more opportunities to develop beneficial student-teacher and student-student learning relationships. It has given teachers flexibility in scheduling and grouping practices and allows the teachers to decide when students should switch classes according to their curriculum instead of an arbitrary bell. Hallway traffic and incidents have been greatly reduced due to flexible transition times between classes.

Essential Learnings

The learning community at McCombs will help young persons to grow in their ability to



Curricular "Lens"

Like our vision and essential learnings, the McCombs Lens clarifies and prioritizes the myriad of skills, strategies, goals, and objectives to be learned for life by seeing them through real-world competencies. We believe that our world needs family members, workers, and citizens who can think, communicate, and interact to meet life's challenges in this diverse and rapidly changing era. Thus, our primary focus is to empower young persons by helping them develop their abilities to think, communicate, and interact.

In life, problems and experiences rarely fall within the bounds of only one subject area. Thus for our curriculum to be meaningful and relevant, subjects and skills can no longer be taught in isolation. The Lens functions as an organizational concept which helps to break down the walls between traditional academic subjects (math, science, language arts, social studies, etc.), making connections between them around real-world competencies that are critical for success. Subject matter is still important, but more as a means to develop one's ability to think, communicate, and interact than as an end in itself. This does not destroy the disciplines of knowledge, but rather helps us focus on what is essential to learn from them. We want to focus on learning that which is important for life, not just learning things to learn them.

Grounded in cutting-edge educational research on how children learn and learn best, the Lens establishes simple, yet essential, curricular priorities for students, teachers, parents, and community members to rally around as we weave these common life threads throughout the McCombs experience. The Lens encourages students and teachers to focus on relevant and meaningful real-world learning tasks, experiences, and assessments which improve student involvement and engagement in their own learning. The Lens helps to create a more consistent, continuous, and unifying language among teams and grades in the McCombs community. Finally, the development of this approach reveals our thorough dissatisfaction with "business as usual" and reflects our genuine commitment to making McCombs into a world class school... the best possible educational experience for our young people.

The McCombs Lens

Communicating

the interpretive and expressive arts

- reading
- writing
- speaking
- listening
- viewing
- numeracy
- non-verbal expression
- visual and performing arts
- media and technological literacy

Thinking

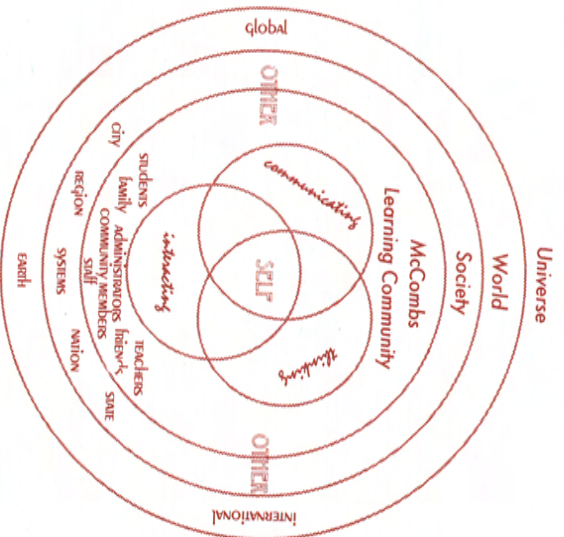
the critical and creative arts

- higher order thinking skills
- information processing
- multiple intelligences
- creative thinking
- problem solving
- decision making
- systems thinking
- applied thinking
- global thinking
- metacognition
- reflection

Interacting

the relational arts of self and other

- respect
- honesty
- caring
- trust
- civility
- integrity
- empathy
- tolerance
- cooperation
- perseverance
- responsibility
- stewardship



McCombs Middle School is a progressive, child-centered school comprised of bright students, caring and reflective teachers and administrators, a dedicated staff, supportive parents and community members who are committed to developing a caring, vibrant, and meaningful learning environment in which young persons, grades 6-8, can grow, develop, and learn to make a quality life.

For further information please contact:

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McCombs Middle School



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