

From <http://vaughncharter.com/html/intro.html>

## **Vaughn Next Century Learning Center in Los Angeles, CA**

### Teaching Environment and School Culture

Our teachers form teams of two or three teachers responsible for up to sixty students. Each team consists of an experienced teacher. He or she is partnered up with a teacher with less experience and/or one emergency-credentialed, beginning teacher. Each team establishes team goals. The focused, targeted collaboration includes frequent communication, weekly planning and a search for common solutions and mutual support so as to reach collective goals.

Our teachers can share full-time positions in various ways including a four-day work week, one semester assignment or a six to ten-week assignment switch between a general and a special education teacher. Two grade-levels share a resource specialist and an Instructional/Administrative Coordinator. This structure strengthens the school wide teamwork.

Paraprofessionals with a teaching career goal are provided with flexible work schedules and better compensation so they can complete their studies in a timely manner. Each year, qualified paraprofessionals are selected to fill vacant teacher positions. Often times, the experienced teachers who trained them become their team leaders. Our preschool and Head Start teachers can apply for elementary teaching positions upon completion of elementary certification requirements. Being a large school and a soon-to-be prekindergarten to 12th grade learning center, teachers have ample opportunities to rotate to other grade levels, other subjects or other school-based positions. In addition, teachers with specific expertise such as special education, technology, English language development can teach university courses at Vaughn. Both UCLA and California State University, Northridge schedule eight different credential classes on campus in the evening and/or during weekends.

The Alliant International University also offers advanced degree programs in educational leadership at Vaughn.

### Teacher Training and Professional Growth

Our teachers have developed and adopted a set of teaching standards related to lesson planning, classroom management, and various subject areas that are linked to the students' learning standards. Levels of performance in each area are clearly described using a 5-point scale, descriptive rubrics. Teachers know and understand the expectations they have established collectively. (Please visit our website for details [www.vaughn.k12.ca.us](http://www.vaughn.k12.ca.us))

We replaced the state teacher evaluation system (Stull) with our Peer Assistance and Review System that takes place three times per year. Our teachers reflect on their own performance and rate themselves using the established teaching standards and scoring rubrics. Selected peer reviewers observe their colleagues and provide feedback as well as assistance. Instructional/Administrative Coordinators also conduct classroom visits and conference with teachers on an ongoing basis. Elected grade-level chairpersons are responsible for ensuring that new teachers are mentored and that teachers understand and focus on grade-level standards. The

Director of Instruction and the Principal monitor progress, especially that of beginning teachers, and focus on school wide goals.

Teachers are provided with differentiated training based on their individual performance review. Training opportunities include small group workshops, individualized conferencing, observing another teacher, participation in seminars, conducting action research, use of technology, and the assignment of a teacher buddy. Our staff development budget is very generous.

Teachers base teaching decisions on solid data rather than on assumptions. Data helps us monitor and assess student performance. The Governor's Professional Development Institute provided results-focused programs for 70,000 teachers this year (AB 1116). We captured the opportunity and all our teachers participated in UCLA's "Focusing on Results".

### Teacher Compensation

The single-salary pay plan does not support standards-based instruction and does not work for Vaughn. In an effort to recruit and retain quality teachers, we developed a performance pay plan in 1998. In addition to a base pay and extra compensation for certification and advance degrees, we pay teachers the following:

Skills and knowledge pay - Level 1 skills include literacy, language arts, mathematics, working with special education students in an inclusive setting, classroom management, and lesson planning. A score of 2.5 or higher in the performance review of Level I earns \$4,500. In Level II an overall score of 3.0 in other subject matters (social studies, science, arts, English language learning, physical education) earns another \$5,300. Finally, any fully credentialed teacher whose average in all of the areas is 3.5 or higher earns an additional \$4,500. The maximum in bonuses that a teacher can earn by getting top scores on every part of the knowledge and skills review is \$16,800.

Contingency-based awards - A teacher can earn a total of \$2,000 a year for achieving certain goals in the areas of student attendance, discipline, parental involvement, and for working in teams.

Schoolwide student achievement bonus - All teachers and administrators get an annual bonus of \$2,000 if the school as a whole meets the Academic Performance Index goal (API) set by the state regardless of how much the state provides. Noncertificated staff and part time staff members also earn a prorated amount.

Expertise compensation - Teachers in leadership roles including grade level chairs, committee chairs, peer reviewers and faculty representatives receive additional stipends. A teacher who sponsors after school clubs or teaches intersession is compensated with \$3,500 - \$4,000.

Added benefits - To provide a further sense of security, we have purchased a long-term disability insurance policy for every teacher which provides 60% of their full pay till age 65. In addition, we have set up an account with \$600,000 in the California Credit Union to guarantee health benefits after retirement. We are in the

process of developing further benefits for teachers including college and maternity subsidies and cash reimbursement for out-of-pocket purchases for classroom use.