



Dear Potential Applicant,

Thank you for your interest in Thoreau Middle School! As an overview to our school and its beliefs, we feel it is important that candidates be given a realistic view of our expectations for teaching and learning, so you can make a fair assessment as to whether Thoreau is an environment in which you can work and grow professionally. Without a doubt, Thoreau is a place of “Excellence in Action,” and we expect nothing short of excellence from our staff and students.

First and foremost, Thoreau Middle School is a Professional Learning Community (PLC) made up of Collaborative Learning Teams (CLT). Each and every member of our faculty is equally responsible for the academic success of our students, not just those who are assigned to their roster. In essence, teachers work in subject-specific learning teams to unpack the Standards of Learning, create a shared syllabus, and maintain a common pacing and curriculum guide. Furthermore, CLTs create common formative assessments on a regular basis, and each member of the CLT shares the results of these assessments with other members on the team. In working together in this collaborative environment for the benefit of **all** students, our teams feel empowered to develop **shared** interventions and strategies and target groups of students who share common learning deficits. Our CLTs meet two to three times per week with a set agenda and clearly defined outcomes as the focus of their collaborative work.

A central part of our philosophy at Thoreau is that all students can and will learn at high levels; thus, Honors curriculum is accessible to all students. What this means is that targeted intervention has to be timely and data-driven, so challenging content and the expectations that are paired with it can continuously be delivered with academic rigor while still ensuring all students are successful.

Thoreau Middle School prides itself on remaining ahead of the curve: One example is our grading and homework policy. At Thoreau, we have a “Zero-Is-Not-an-Option” philosophy and mandatory re-tests for students who struggle. Teachers are expected to use the myriad of interventions available to guarantee students’ mastery of every standard.

Thoreau’s administration prides itself on finding or creating resources to help our teachers maintain the level of excellence that is expected, so technology must be a central component of your teaching responsibilities. The CLTs create common formative assessments (at least two per quarter), and we expect each member of the Team to deliver them via Horizon, our online formative assessment system. This database can easily identify strands in which students are struggling, so CLTs can quickly develop and deliver targeted intervention. Also, Thoreau’s teachers are expected to actively maintain and update their Blackboard account: Blackboard is a system in which teachers post daily assignments, course syllabi, worksheets, lessons and announcements.

Time to Soar (TTS) is a remediation period in the middle of the school day. During this thirty minute block, teachers are expected to deliver targeted remediation to their struggling students and provide an opportunity for students to retake/make-up assessments upon which they were not successful. For students who are in good academic standing, our TTS program allows students to choose from a variety of activities on grade-level specific days. Soaring provides students the opportunity to socialize in a

supervised environment, get help from their teachers, and get a jump start on their homework. Soaring also allows smaller class sizes to teachers who need to remediate students.

We believe the process of hiring a teacher candidate at Thoreau is a two-way street. Not only are we seeking the best match for our needs, but we expect candidates to know what they are getting into and to be energized about coming to a place like Thoreau. We ask all our candidates to reflect on these essential questions that are a part of our culture and philosophy.

Will you...

believe that ALL students can learn at high levels and help each child reach their potential?

care about all students at Thoreau?

be committed to the behavior that we are about student learning, not just covering the material?

be committed to collective inquiry and seek out best practices and sage advice from colleagues?

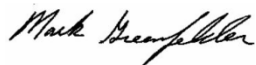
participate actively in book talks with your colleagues?

be a team player and work interdependently with your colleagues?

These are some tough but straightforward questions that applicants must ask themselves about their beliefs and values.

Thoreau Middle School is a learning-focused, results-oriented environment that is built by a community of educators dedicated to continuous school improvement. As a collective group of dedicated professionals, we are continuously working to stay well-versed in Best Practices and maintain the academic rigor and relevance that has made our school so successful. Thoreau's community has great expectations for our school, and we continue to seek, hire and retain professionals who maintain that same level of commitment to their Practice. Working at Thoreau is not easy...but as most things in life...nothing worthwhile ever is.

Sincerely,



Mark Greenfelder
Principal