

Sonoma Valley High School

Smaller Learning Communities through Freshman Teams

At Sonoma Valley High School, we strive to educate all students, regardless of social, economic or educational background and offers support for the significant and social transition from middle school to high school. Our goal is to have every student who earns a diploma to be college and career ready upon graduation. For this year's freshman, the expectation is that all students will participate in a rigorous course of study, which includes completion of a-g courses. In an effort to create the structure that would support both learning and instruction, SVHS has launched smaller learning communities for freshmen. There are three teams, Fuji, Mauna Kea and Olympus. Each team has core teachers in the content areas of English, Mathematics, Science and Physical Education, with resource support for struggling students.

Freshman Seminar, which provides an additional period for every 9th grader, is designed to create access to timely and focused intervention for students requiring additional support in their academic areas. Students can work with content area teachers in a smaller and more focused environment when necessary. For those not requiring extra support, it allows access to a study/work/enrichment period. Team teachers collaboratively plan seminar offerings in response to data collected by the team. The structure is flexible and adaptive; it will continue to evolve to best suit students' needs. In addition, team teachers capitalize on the opportunity to weave curriculum together during seminar meetings.

Raising achievement through our smaller learning communities for all students through our Cornerstones

➤ **Authentic Curriculum**

Curriculum is created and delivered to students that is intellectually challenging, linked to their lives and interests, project-based, demonstrates learning and prepares them for life, career and college.

➤ **Personalization**

An environment is created and maintained that includes supportive, caring relationships between students and teachers, school schedules and structures that enable teachers to know students well, students working in teams and groups, and schedules, activities and curriculum that encourage positive relationships.

➤ **Adaptive Pedagogy**

Students' learning needs are through student-centered learning, multiple instructional strategies, support for developing student skills, extra support through increased learning opportunities outside of class and an active approach to teaching – demonstrating, modeling and explaining.

➤ **High Standards and Performance-Based Assessment**

High standards are created and maintained through common academic expectations, habits and skills across all classes, clearly communicated standards for what ALL students should know and be able to do, multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate learning and show progress and growth and project-based learning and performance-based assessment aligned to standards.

➤ **Collaboration, Planning and Professional Development**

Teachers will work together around shared students, design and lead professional development, meet and plan together across departments and discuss practice and plan curriculum.

Team Mount Fuji was named in honor of the tallest mountain in Japan. Just like the name Fuji means wealth and abundance, we as a team hope to instill a wealth of knowledge and an abundance of opportunities for our students. The most climbed mountain in the world, Mt. Fuji inspires people to climb to incredible heights and overcome challenges. The abundant and high quality groundwater at Mt. Fuji allows for ample agricultural production. Our team hopes to grow together while celebrating our diverse students. Mt. Fuji encourages students to cultivate ambition, curiosity, and independent thinking by nurturing individual strengths. Although Mt. Fuji has not erupted since 1707 it is still considered to be an active volcano. We encourage students to develop their active young minds and become disciplined and honorable individuals just like the citizens of the Japanese culture. Fuji helps students harvest their own creative and intellectual potential, preparing them for life, college and career success.

“Konohana-Sakuahime, causing the blossom to bloom”

Team Mauna Kea is an active volcano located on the island of Hawaii. While most people think of Mount Everest as the “highest mountain in the world,” Mauna Kea actually holds that title if one measures it from its true base on the ocean floor to its lofty summit. We chose this name for our team because it symbolizes the fact that appearances are not always reality. We want to challenge students to look deeply and critically and to question what they see and hear. Like Mauna Kea, we all have hidden potential. In Hawaiian myth, Mauna Kea was a sacred mountain only climbed by the gods. On our team, however, we guide all students to the top.

Team Olympus was named in honor of Mt. Olympus in Greece. The concept of Mount Olympus encompasses all the subject areas we teach; many of the foundational ideas came from Greek mythology or the philosophers of Ancient Greece, whether it is math, science, athletics or language. The Olympians were known to be keen observers of human nature as well as the natural world. We hope members of our Olympus Team will be as well rounded and open-minded as the Ancient Greeks who inspired our name. Reaching the peak will be a difficult journey, but once our students reach the summit, they will have a view of the entire world.

“Olympus was not shaken by winds nor ever wet with rain, nor did snow fall upon it, but the air is outspread clear and cloudless, and over it hovered a radiant whiteness.”