

Mountain View High School

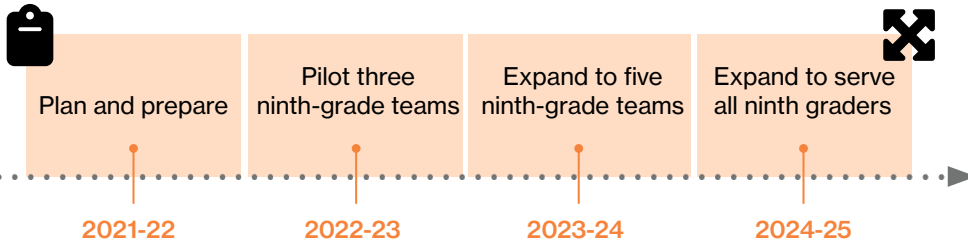
Mesa Public Schools

Spring 2024

Introduction

Mountain View High School, founded in 1976, first piloted educator teams with distributed expertise in 2022-23 with three educator teams. Students served by educator teams reported a greater sense of belonging at school, demonstrated higher passing rates, and showed improved year-over-year performance. Additionally, educator teams were recognized as a powerful way to deliver relevant, meaningful, deeper and more personalized learning.

Given the positive results, the school expanded to five teams serving about half of the ninth-grade students in the 2023-24 school year. For the 2024-25 school year, Mountain View is expanding teaming models to serve all ninth-grade students.



Mesa, Arizona



3,400 students



Grades 9-12



Title 1? NO



Suburban

Teaming vision:

Ensuring every ninth grader feels a sense of belonging, connects with the Mountain View community and engages in relevant, meaningful academic pursuits.

Educator teams

At Mountain View, each core team of educators collectively supports 90 - 120 students. Core teams are composed of three to four educators, each of whom specializes in one or two content areas – typically English language arts, math, science and/or social studies. Some core teams are joined by a Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College (MLFTC) resident who works in partnership with another core team member. All team members are provided both an individual and a team planning period in order to deliver deeper and more personalized learning across disciplines.

Other educators – the extended educator team – support both the core educator team and the students. Their roles vary in size and duration and are filled by a combination of educational leaders, professional educators, paraeducators and community educators. Members of these extended educator teams may include a combination of special education teachers, English Language Development teachers, assistant principals and MLFTC interns.

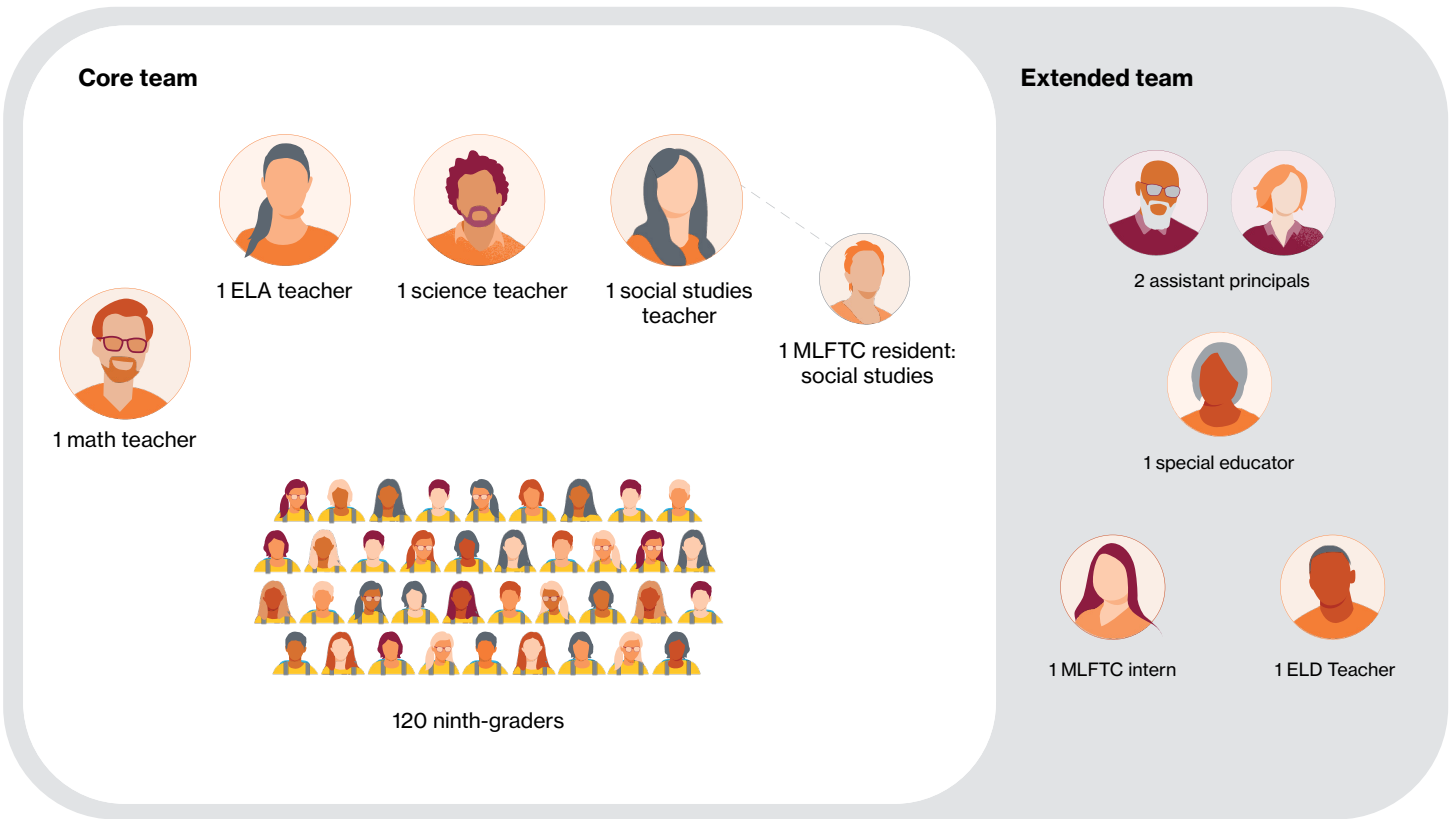
MLFTC residents

Senior-year students engaged in practice-embedded experience, teacher collaboration and family engagement

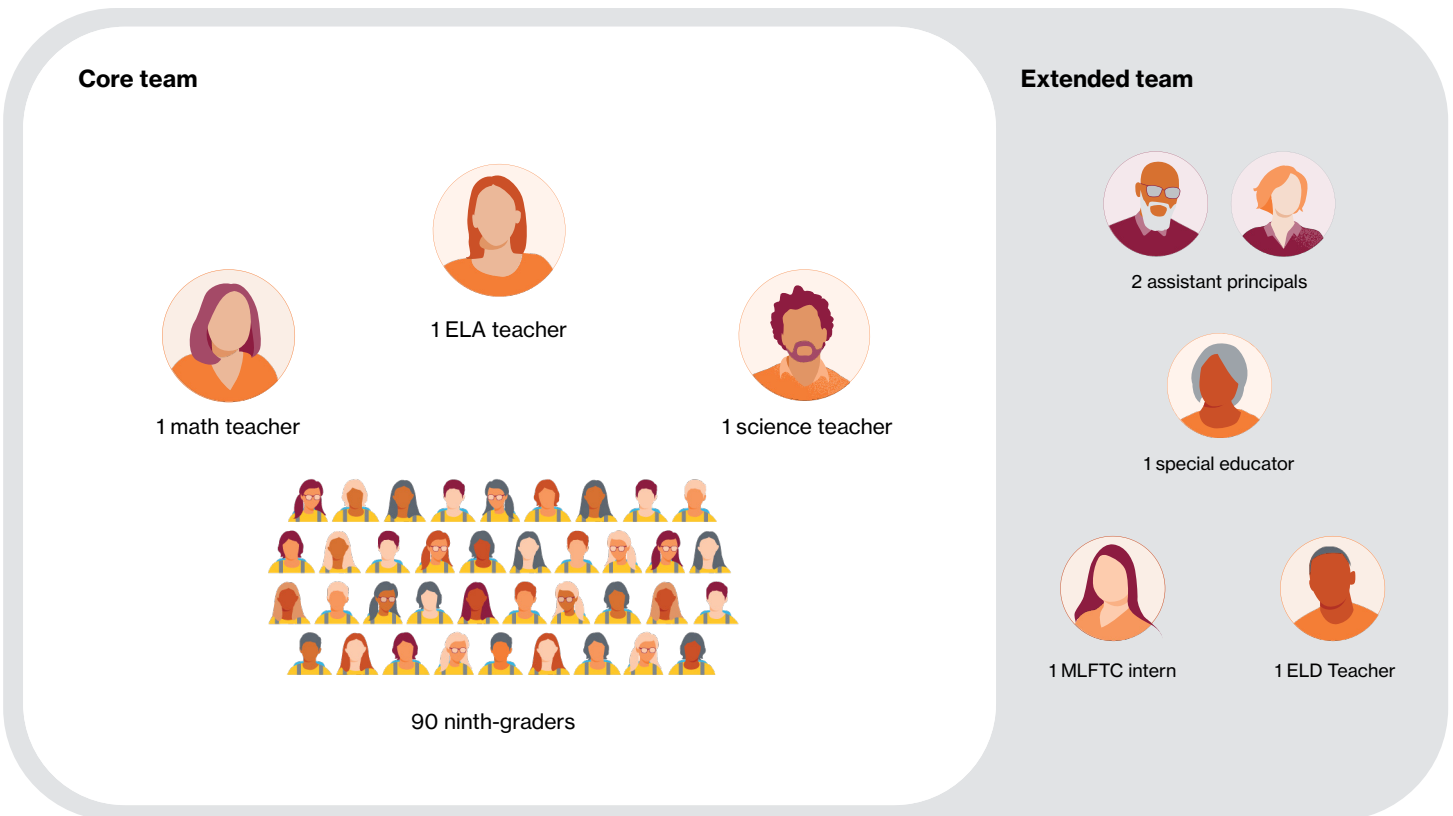
MLFTC interns

Junior-year students who support a team of educators one or two days per week

Example team: Four content areas



Example team: Three content areas



Change management

School leaders collaborate and communicate with students, families, educators and community organizations to create an inclusive vision for team-based models. School leaders know and leverage the strengths of the school community and invest community members in the school's vision. Leaders anticipate and address potential roadblocks to implementing the school's new strategic vision.

Mountain View spent a full year planning its educator teaming pilot. A key component of the planning process involved discovering what students and families wanted from their educational experience and collaborating with the community to build pilot structures that would be responsive to those stated needs.

School leadership continued to prioritize the investment of their school community as they transitioned from pilot to expansion. At the close of the pilot year, Mountain View leaders and counseling staff invested families in the shift to team-based models by presenting the strong, positive results from their pilot year – higher passing rates, improved year-over-year performance and an increased sense of student belonging. As a result of high student and family interest, Mountain View increased the number of educator teams from three to five in their second year of implementation.

Over these first two years, ongoing communication with families revealed an emerging need to more clearly articulate how honors courses and special education services were provided within the teaming model. As Mountain View moves into its third year of teaming, school leadership has elevated these topics to more clearly communicate how educator teams meet these specific student needs.

Mountain View continues to iterate and expand its teaming model, incorporating thought partners from ASU and continuously improving by seeking out models and schools to inform its practice.



[Teams have] been amazing this year. It has made learning so much easier and fun. The teachers are amazing and the way that they teach working together helps me learn much better.”

- Ninth-grade student

Educator autonomy

School leaders empower and entrust educator teams with the collective autonomy necessary to make decisions about daily schedules, learning spaces and instruction in order to meet the school's strategic goals and provide deeper and personalized learning for all students.

Mountain View school leaders give educator teams the autonomy to manipulate daily schedules, learning spaces, and instructional approaches to realize the school's teaming vision: "Ensuring every student feels a sense of belonging, connects with the community and engages in relevant, meaningful academic pursuits." In actualizing the vision, teams are given the autonomy to integrate their standards and instruction in meaningful ways to add relevance, alter the daily schedule to accommodate student learning in extended projects and utilize different spaces around campus to meet the learning needs of students. [Read on to learn just a few ways educators have leveraged this autonomy in their planning and instruction.](#)

Historical battles through research, art and play

One educator team read Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* while examining non-fiction texts describing historical battles. Each student generated a research paper investigating their group's historical battle and created art to illustrate their learning. Their work was then showcased to an authentic audience: family and community members. Finally, students applied their understanding of battle strategy and technique in a joyful outdoor celebration: a Nerf battle. Learning about historical battles is often an exercise in rote memorization soon forgotten, but this approach yielded high-quality creative products, meaningful engagement, community impact and an unforgettable day for students and adults applying their battle strategy through play.

Carnival-style fundraiser for behavioral health service provider

Another educator team created a carnival-style fundraiser to support a local community-based behavioral health service provider. Students created one-page documents that highlighted issues such as housing instability, domestic violence and mental health and presented them alongside ways the service provider could help. They shared these resources at a carnival-style community event that included games and food, the proceeds of which supported the behavioral health service provider. The learning process raised awareness about community issues, connected the community to quality resources and gave students the opportunity to be community contributors.

Board games and the age of exploration

One educator team studied the age of exploration by reading the book *Endurance* and, through a biological lens, explored its impact on the environment. Based on their new knowledge, students created board games and associated rule books and showcased their learning by playing their games with students from other ninth-grade teams. Sharing their projects and engaging in play with students from other teams created connection and camaraderie among students and nurtured a sense of belonging.

Planning and modeling a new community in a unique location

Another educator team designed a cross-curricular culminating project that required students to create a new community on Mars, the Moon or underwater. Using their learning from English, biology and world history, students worked in groups to identify organisms to bioengineer for the benefit of their settlements, find solutions to environmental constraints that would help to keep their community members alive and healthy, choose economic and government systems, write job descriptions for essential workers, create models of their communities and design marketing materials. At the close of the project, students displayed their hard work and creativity in a community showcase.

Team schedules

The core team plans and adjusts schedules to better support students' needs, strengths and interests. The team also leverages scheduling autonomy to enable educators to take planned time off and to better accommodate unplanned absences in ways that cause little disruption to student learning.

Mountain View's schedule gives educator teams the autonomy to dynamically group and regroup students daily during one or more extended team content blocks. Students might spend the full block working on an interdisciplinary small-group project, split the time between content areas, work in skills-based groupings or meet with other students in interest-based groups. Each educator team is trusted to design their extended content block in whatever ways best support students' needs, strengths and interests.

Mountain View's school leadership recognizes that planning for interdisciplinary deeper and personalized learning requires time – time for educators to work independently and time for them to meet together. As a result, both individual and team planning time are protected elements of the Mountain View schedule. Individual planning time can be used in any way educators choose.

In contrast, team planning focuses on achieving three goals:

1. Improving academic and behavioral student support
2. Planning for purposeful and varied dynamic student groupings and
3. Weaving together content area curriculum in meaningful ways.

Team planning time and common instructional blocks allow for educator team members to develop deep familiarity with one another's instructional plans. As a result, when an educator is absent, their fellow team members are able to facilitate student learning seamlessly.

View the schedule

Explore how Mountain View High School educators organize their time with students.