

FY 2008 QUESTION NUMBER: 32

QUESTION:

The Einstein Cluster testimony states that they continue to find that every school has a different definition of a smaller learning community. Provide a definition of smaller learning communities. Is the definition different among and between middle and high schools?

BUDGET PAGE REFERENCE: N/A

ANSWER:

A small learning community is a group of staff and students with a common focus or theme who work collaboratively over a period of time to increase student achievement through rigorous curriculum, effective instruction, personalization, relationships, and engagement. Each program is uniquely designed to meet the needs of the students and the goals of the programs whether it is in middle or high schools.

Below are examples of small learning communities:

A ninth grade team is a type of small learning community and may include the following characteristics:

- students who are assigned as members to the team; and/or
- teams that focus on the transition to high school, student achievement, and retention.

A middle school team is a type of small learning community and may include the following characteristics:

- composed of English, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies teachers
- students who are in the classes of the teachers in the team.

An academy is another type of small learning community and may include the following characteristics:

- a cohort of students who choose to become members;
- dedicated space in the building that provides opportunities to interact and build relationships;
- multiple pathways of courses and/or program completers;
- authentic learning experiences;
- rigorous coursework that whenever possible should include college-level work;
- capstone experiences such as internships, senior research projects, and college level courses; and
- community partnerships with institutions such as businesses, government agencies, and institutions of higher education.