HTH Design Principle:
Common Intellectual Mission

At High Tech High, every student works to meet the same high standards for what they know and can do, with a special focus on ending the "digital divide" now reflecting ethnic, class, and gender inequities. The school makes no distinction between "college prep" and "technical" education; it expects all students to graduate well prepared for post-secondary work and education in a demanding 21st-century setting. In every learning area, both inside and out of school, all student work relates to High Tech High's school-wide habits of mind. High Tech High commits to demonstrating equivalent academic gains across a student body representative of the school district population. Enrollment is non-selective, except for ensuring authentic student interest in attending the school.

Just as in the world of work, the High Tech High curriculum often joins academic and technical instruction and content around a common theme or project. Some work focuses on students' experiences outside the school, using class or advisory time to prepare for, describe, reflect on, and analyze that learning via journals, work site logs, observations and interviews, and reflections. Other activities use the considerable technology available for students at the school site. Some learning takes place in groups, but students also commonly work on independent projects. The work does not divide students by their prior achievement, but demands collaboration from each at the appropriate level. Bilingual and special needs students receive the supports they need to participate in intellectually demanding tasks.

Student work at High Tech High often cuts across disciplines, so students experience their course of study as a coherent whole rather than a set of unrelated "subjects." Still, their course of study addresses all the high school curriculum areas-math, the sciences, technical studies, the humanities, Spanish language, and the arts-and by graduation, students have met all state and district requirements as well as the University of California entry requirements.

"I feel like all of my classes here make sense... as if there's a line that connects them to a central theme."

Mandy Ross
Grade 10

High Tech High teachers use performance assessments in which students demonstrate their skills and understanding on an ongoing basis, not just through end-of-term or standardized tests. Students articulate their learning through written work, oral presentations, and project exhibitions, demonstrating not only content knowledge but also the school-wide habits of mind. At the end of each two-year Division, as well as for graduation, the student presents a portfolio exhibition. Seniors also present an independent senior project involving research and field work outside the school. Teachers meet regularly to review student work and discuss their common standards and expectations.

To achieve intellectual coherence requires a common language among High Tech High's students and teachers. This develops from school structures like common rubrics for performance assessments, common time in which teachers plan curriculum together, and common rituals by which students demonstrate their learning and progress toward graduation. Most important, all work at every grade level refers to five school-wide "habits of mind" (perspective, evidence , relevance, connection, and supposition). Used by students and teachers alike, these center everyone's thinking on important questions, lend a sense of connection across disciplines, and infuse the school community with the habits of lifelong learning.

Common Intellectual Mission: What It Looks Like

Common core goals across the curriculum, for all students

- all students graduate qualified for four-year college
- learning gains for all students
- no "digital divide" denying high-tech opportunity by ethnicity, class, or gender

Academic courses connect with high-tech field experiences, and vice-versa

- curricular projects relate to authentic problems
- technology resources similar to those in high-tech workplaces
- many teachers have prior careers in industry
- all students complete worksite internships linked to academics
- independent senior project with adult-world connection required

Assessment focuses on demonstrating school-wide habits of mind

- students and teachers use same standards for critical thinking across subject areas
- students show learning via written work, oral presentations, and project exhibitions
- promotion and graduation is linked to performance as demonstrated in portfolios and exhibitions

HTH
LEARNING