

The Hope Academy Curriculum overview

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Introduction

Approach to Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

The curriculum of The Hope Academy supports an overarching theme: to develop students' understanding, compassion, and care for people, the material world, and the natural environment. This is accomplished in an inclusive, standards-based setting where principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), (Rose & Meyer, 2006) and Backward Design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) are at the core of the curricular planning process. Understandings about learning from the diverse, but converging fields of cognitive science, socio-cultural studies, reader response theory, and composition inform pedagogy.

Through a challenging and responsive curriculum, The Hope Academy seeks to nurture students' curiosity and perseverance. The ultimate goal is for students to become life-long learners who hold *themselves* to high standards in their personal, professional, and civic lives. Curricular engagements are built on the assumption that knowledge construction is socially mediated. Students are welcomed into the ideas, processes, and habits of mind of the language arts, social studies, science, math, technology, health and physical education, the dramatic, musical, and visual arts.

Beyond the big picture planning process used to develop units of study in each discipline, a day-to-day instructional planning framework supports a release of responsibility design. This planning tool ensures that each day, a connection to previous learning is made, explicit instruction is offered through demonstration, definition, explanation, and/or example, and time and opportunity for guided practice and application are provided.

To maximize growth, teachers continually seek to understand what students know and can do with support and with independence. Teachers gain deep knowledge of students by using an integrated and systematic approach to assessment and instruction. With information drawn from on-going observation, curriculum-based performance assessments, and more formal benchmarked assessments, teachers design lessons and other supports responsive to students' needs and intentions.

The following section provides an overview of the language arts, social studies, science, and math curricula. Maps for technology and the unified arts are under construction.

Language Arts

The ELA curriculum is workshop based. The workshop model is inherently differentiated and therefore a good fit for inclusive teaching. For example, in a reading workshop lesson, a teaching point, such as noting the relationships between characters can be introduced to the whole class in the context of a read aloud. This might be done with an explanation of the concept (*What is a relationship? What are possible relationships?*), and a demonstration of a strategy (*sketching to track character connections*). Next, the concept and strategy are made meaningful through guided practice. (*As we read on, let's think about how the new characters we meet in this story are connected. Let's sketch what we learn together.*) Finally, the ideas are made purposeful through independent application with text appropriate for each student. (*Today as you read, track the connections between the characters you meet. When we gather at the end of workshop, we will talk about the characters in your books.*)

Students' understandings are revealed during one-on-one, small group, and whole class conference work. Throughout this sequence, Instruction and assessment are complementary (formative) and teachers provide students with instructional supports particular to their needs.

Reading

Lucy Calkins' curricular models (2011) have greatly influenced our units of study in reading as evidenced by the many borrowed unit titles in our map. (See Appendix A.) Her work, along with the work of other experts in the field (Kempton, 2007; Miller, 2012; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, 2000, 2008; McGregor, 2007) provide an essential organizing vision that invites The Hope Academy's faculty to co-author (along with their students) a comprehensive approach to teaching reading (Calkins, 2000). Beneath the surface of our unit titles are lessons and decisions based on teachers' knowledge of literature, genre study, metacognitive comprehension strategies instruction, vocabulary development, decoding, fluency, and most critically, knowledge of their students.

Writing

Calkins' *Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing, K-5*, (2013) will closely guide the writing curriculum. These units are aligned with the *Common Core State Standards* (CCSS) and are an important resource for developing capacity in teaching the genres the CCSS highlight. As with reading, we expect to use these units as intended by Calkins, a basis for co-authoring a curriculum that reflects the particular needs and interests of the Hope Academy's community of writers.

In addition to the focused genre studies mapped by the CCSS, our writing program offers intentional instruction and a range of opportunity for writing-to-learn. Students and teachers keep writer's notebooks (Fletcher, 1996; Rief, 2007), reader response journals, and scientist's notebooks. The practice of freewriting (Elbow, 1998) in these exploratory contexts

supports the development of writing fluency, risk taking, observation, and reflection (Fulwiler, 1986) - - habits of mind essential for life-long learning and improved writing craft.

Word Study

Word study is differentiated and individualized. In kindergarten, *Foundations* (2012) is one of the instructional tools used to develop phonics, phonemic awareness, and word recognition strategies. First grade teachers will also have access to *Foundations*, but the primary word study tool in grades one through five is the conceptual and pattern awareness approach to spelling and vocabulary offered by *Words Their Way* (Bear, Invernizzi, et al, 2011). (Kindergarten has access to *Words Their Way*, as students’ needs demand). In addition to this systematic approach, word study in all grade levels is integrated throughout the curriculum.

Social Studies

The social studies curricular framework is home grown, designed in collaboration with Dr. Kerri Ullucci, professor of Urban Education at Roger Williams University. Informed by the *R/GSEs for Civics, Government, and History*, the *NCSS National Curriculum Standards*, and The Hope Academy’s mission of inclusion, compassion, and care, units of study are built upon three strands:

1st Trimester	2nd Trimester	3rd Trimester
Local	Global	Social Justice

Each strand in each grade level is framed by an essential question. Whenever possible, community connections and fieldwork are woven into the study with the expectation that students will be positioned in their learning to take an inquiry stance, determine a problem or need, and design and carry out an action.

Here are the topics for the local strand, K-5.

	Local / Now and Then	Global	Social Justice
K	Self and Family	Families around the world	
1	School and Community	Amazon (community)	

Science

Foss kits anchor the science curriculum and provide hands-on experiences in earth, physical, and life sciences. Aligned to the *Next Generation Science Standards*, units of study guide students to deeper understandings of the natural world. As with social studies, whenever

possible, community connections and fieldwork enrich opportunities for inquiry. Topics planned for grades K-5 are as follows:

	1 (9/2 – 12/2)	2 (12/3 – 3/18)	3 (3/19 – 6/19)
	Earth	Physical	Life
K	Trees & Weather (all year)		
		Animals 2 by 2 (to end of year)	
1	Air & Weather	Balance & Motion	Plants & Animals

Math

We are field-testing *EngageNY*, an open source math curriculum created by the Department of Education of the State of New York. All materials are available on the *EngageNY* website. The program is closely aligned to the *Common Core* and represents cutting edge pedagogy in math. Teachers will be provided with professional development contracted through the Eastbay Collaborative.

Resources and References

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