



Ivy Hill Preparatory Charter School Academic Philosophy

Ivy Hill Prep's instructional design is rooted in the successful practices and research of high performing charter schools across the country. At Ivy Hill Prep, we realize that to drive academic achievement, a rigorous curriculum must be coupled with dynamic execution of instruction. The following strategies and practices are at the core of our academic program:

Strong Emphasis on Differentiated Instruction in Literacy. Our model allows for two groups of 10 scholars to receive direct instruction in phonics and reading comprehension. Scholars will be grouped based on reading levels and literacy proficiency. Teachers will use data to drive instruction and intervention for scholars based on most recent assessment data. This strategic approach allows for increased opportunities for differentiated instruction for all scholars, including our scholars with special needs, ELLs, and those at risk of academic failure. Each scholar will participate in three literacy blocks daily. While one group is receiving direct instruction from one teacher in phonemic awareness, another will receive direct instruction from the other teacher in reading comprehension. Remaining scholars will engage in blended learning, practicing decoding and comprehension skills using a computer-based literacy program. Depending on individual educational development plans, scholars may receive pull-out services for literacy development during time allotted for blended learning.

Word Walls and Anchor Charts will be posted in an organized format by content area, used by scholars in all classrooms. Students will learn the meaning of a resource, and how resources in our world are used to assist us when we do not know certain pieces of information. Across all grades and content areas, resources will be used as an anchor for teacher-to-student prompting, as well as peer-to-peer prompting.

Rap, Rhythm, and Rhyme. Chants, cheers, rhymes, and songs will fill Ivy Hill Prep's hallways. Chanting and rhyming build excitement for learning and play a key role in children remembering concepts across content.

Kinesthetic Learning. Physical activity helps to maintain student engagement, reinforces understanding, and makes learning enjoyable. Scholars will use hand signals to non-verbally communicate with the teacher and one another (i.e. placing one fist on top of another to indicate they are prepared to build off another scholar's response; snapping fingers to show agreement), and reinforce their learning by matching hand signals to key vocabulary.

Taxonomy of Teaching. We will use a variety of academic, behavioral and advanced instructional techniques that reinforce student behavioral and academic expectations, as well as ensuring that teachers constantly build high levels of student engagement. Ivy Hill Prep has adapted many of Doug Lemov's *Teach like a Champion* techniques that allow teachers to maintain structure, teach effectively, check for understanding, and infuse joy simultaneously. Techniques such as Strong Voice, Clear What to Do's, Right is Right, and No Opt Out are present in all classrooms.



Aggressive Monitoring. We will collect data daily from informal and formal assessments. After receiving and analyzing data, teachers will intervene strategically and frequently to close academic gaps as quickly as possible. To ensure teachers are gathering data frequently in the moment, they will be trained to aggressively monitor: a technique used in many high-performing schools across the country. While scholars are independently working, both teachers will have individual zones, or groups of students each is responsible for monitoring. Teachers will evaluate work against an exemplar, using an Aggressive Monitoring Feedback Code to mark each paper and communicate progress to scholars.

Format Matters. Excellence is not an accident, it is purposeful. When scholars respond, orally or in writing, the way they respond is an opportunity to reinforce college readiness skills, such as clarity of language and professionalism. Students will always be encouraged to respond in complete sentences and use correct grammar. The culture will be one of constant growth. Students will become accustomed to being stopped, corrected, and asked to rephrase to practice perfect. By encouraging scholars to *do it again*, they will internalize the corrections and begin to self-correct in the future, when they are writing and when they are speaking.

Ratio. We value a high student talk and think ratio. This means that we prioritize how much teacher talk vs. student talk is present in a classroom. By using different techniques such as choral response, turn and talk, and cold calling, teachers will ensure that scholars' voices are heard. Secondly, we prioritize and value the effectiveness of prompting. When scholars give a partially right or wrong answer, prompting is paramount. Teachers will prompt using universal prompts to push students to the right answer without *giving* them the right answer or just informing them that they are incorrect. As the year progresses and students mature, Ivy Hill Prep teachers will prompt less and less because other scholars will hold their peers accountable by prompting them on a peer-to-peer level. This contributes to the Habits of Discussion and creates a higher student talk *and* think ratio. As scholars mature, not only do we want to hear their voices frequently, we want to ensure students are doing the majority of the cognitive lifting.