

EastSide Charter School Targeted Academic Improvement Plan

Science and Social Studies

EastSide Charter School recognizes that although the academic outcomes of the two primary subjects of Math and Reading have improved substantially over the last three years, our Science and Social Studies performance has lagged well behind. This document describes our targeted plan for improving the outcomes in those subjects.

Assessment and Analysis

We assess our students' progress through rigorous Common Core-aligned interim assessments that challenge our students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding in a variety of ways. Each round of assessments includes a data analysis protocol in which teachers deeply analyze student achievement data, then create instructional action plans that are discussed with an instructional coach, and implemented over the next 6 academic weeks. Un-mastered skills/standards are re-taught while others are reviewed with greater depth to ensure mastery and application. Each Social Studies and Science teacher is held accountable to Interim Assessment, DCAS, and the state's Pre and Post subject test as part of their annual performance evaluation.

Professional Development

All teachers participate in customized professional development throughout the school year. This begins with two weeks of full day training in the summer before the start of the student school year. Professional Development sessions include but are not limited to the following topics:

Student-engaged assessment, Rigorous questioning, close reading strategies, creating high level learning targets, Student-led Checks for understanding, instructional planning, data analysis and action planning, class culture, engaging all learners, and instructional design

Each PD session is conducted by either an internal (school leader) or external expert. Most of the external presenters are from Expeditionary Learning, one of the nation's leading educational organizations focused on an individualized student-driven instructional approach predicated on cross-curricular alignment. Our goal is to develop our teachers into highly effective and competent leaders who confidently design and implement engaging cross-curricular lessons that drive authentic student learning. By committing to this, we hope to strengthen our students' skills around decision making, critical thinking, problem solving, argumentative writing, historical writing, current event analysis, and scholarly article critiques.

Professional Learning Community

Each grade team (consisting of all content-specific teachers who teach the same grade), meet one (Middle School) or two (Lower School) times per week to discuss and/or plan cross-curricular academic units. Each unit spirals previously assessed information to ensure knowledge retention and depth of understanding. Each content-specific teacher also meets monthly with teachers from other grades to discuss related project ideas cross-grade teaching, and science related topics to deepen student understanding of core concepts.

Curriculum

EastSide implements the Delaware recommended curriculum to meet all required Social Studies standards and the Next Generation Science Standards (as a member of the Science Coalition). Our goal is to develop adolescent social scientists who are educated, well-informed, and responsible citizens who are critical thinkers, knowledgeable and aware of issues both domestically and globally.

Social Studies

In addition to the state of Delaware recommended curriculum, each grade will have a unique focus as stated below.

Grade 4

4th grade is the first year that students are assessed for their knowledge in Social Studies and thus will be led to have a basic understanding of the two broadest pillars, History and Geography. Grade 4 primarily dives deep into these two subjects by looking at a variation of topics that students will need to in order to be fully prepared for their remaining four years through middle school at EastSide. Students will gain knowledge in ancient civilizations, native culture and lifestyle before and after European contact, mental revolutions, how people think and why, and finally a look at how to be a functioning citizen, take part in government and economic activity. This will allow for students to create a foundation for the beginning of each respective section.

Geography will also be more of a deep dive into the basics of the five themes of geography: location, place, movement, region, and human-nature interaction. The five themes will be taught with an emphasis on looking at and comparing the US maps with European maps of today and in history. Important topics that need maps to be taught such as the Silk Road, Triangular trade, European exploration routes, and a various amount of topics can be covered during these units. The purpose is for students to figure out their location in the world and how people, items, and ideas (diffusion) can move from location to location throughout time. An added emphasis will be on the technological aspects of these movements. Computers and the growing importance of understanding the internet and all that technology can offer will be a focal point. Lastly, students will look at the lives of different geographic regions and how humans and nature affect each other. Environmental aspects will be covered and a cross curricular opportunity is a great possibility here. To deepen thinking students will need to think in the mind of these cultures and how their mindset has changed because of their living conditions.

Grades 5 and 6

The role of SS during this period will be dedicated to looking at the entire globe from a cultural scope. Students will work through assignments that have them looking at cultures on the Eastern and Western Hemisphere. This will allow them to gain a more global perspective and understand who they are from a cultural standpoint. This section will allow for students to study all aspects of the world and its history. Culture allows for students to identify what drives humans and from what angle we begin to perceive, manipulate, and look at specific information. An anthropological viewpoint will give students a chance to identify the aspects that build up American culture and the impact of the media, religion, clothing, businesses, government, jobs, and food. Students will look at other countries so that they can identify the uniqueness of our American system. This section also allows for students to identify the areas they may have come from and a rare instance of genealogical study, Ellis Island, how immigration and migration works and most importantly cultural diffusion. The study of diffusion will also bring up past situations such as the Silk Road. The study of culture will span the USA as we look at the subtle differences from region to region and how specific items arrived here from other parts of the world. Overall, anthropological study will allow the students to form an identity of their race, ethnicity, and gender.

7th Grade

Students will learn the ways of our country, governments around the world, and economics. Students will engage in lessons that show them the court system in America, how it works, what rights they have, how to be educated citizens, and how to use, save, and spend money.

Civics will show students the options they have in the world and the best ways for them to get there to be successful members of our society. Lessons will include a study of the history, importance, functions, and important cases in court systems. This will go into developing an idea of the laws of the land and how they were developed and for what purpose. Citizenship will be a big push as it shows students how they can help themselves, their neighbors, the community, and overall their individual impact on the world. Lastly, students

will engage in lessons that has them using fake money and operating stores, banks, to small societies with truly hands on opportunities and many cross curricular possibilities with Math.

8th Grade

Deep focus on History, Geography, Anthropology, Civics, and Psychology, as well as a cross curricular unit entitled Seven Habits of Being a Highly Effective Teen. This series has students looking within themselves to identify the specific cultural and internal barriers that hold them back.

Cross Curricular Connection: ELA

- a. Social Studies will maintain a heavy focus on being a resource and aid to the ELA department. We will have daily lessons that involve close reads, article analysis and utilizing primary and secondary sources. ELA and the Social Studies departments often plan in unison with subjects such as myths and mythology in ancient Rome and Greece, legends in Native American cultures, how to be a historian and use documents for their aid.
- b. The areas that are a heavy focus for Social Studies that branch into ELA are;
 - i. Evidence usage and persuasive writing
 - ii. Argumentative writing
 - iii. Sequencing/Chronological Order with timelines
 - iv. Reading comprehension
 - v. Differencing and drawing conclusions
 - vi. Cause/Effect
 - vii. Historical context
 - viii. Cross curricular skills and strategies

Science

The classes are taught using the STEM philosophy of facilitating scientific learning. STEM incorporates Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math, for students to solve global problems.

Spiraling Curriculum:

Grades 4 and 5

CCSS Focus: Nature and Application of Science, Materials and their Properties, Energy and Its Effects, Earth in Space

NGSS Focus: Spiraling Science and Engineering Practices, Disciplinary Core Ideas (CCSS), and Crosscutting Concepts to lead projects.

Grades 6 and 7

CCSS Focus: Earth's Dynamic Systems, Life Processes, Diversity and Continuity Living Things

NGSS Focus: Spiraling Science and Engineering Practices, Disciplinary Core Ideas (CCSS), and Crosscutting Concepts to lead projects.

Grade 8

CCSS Focus: Ecology

Students will complete one project per trimester that aligns with both CCSS and NGSS.

NGSS Focus: Spiraling Science and Engineering Practices, Disciplinary Core Ideas (CCSS), and Crosscutting Concepts to lead projects.

Supporting Active Learning to Achieve Goal(s):

Science learning requires active participants to fully understand the scientific process. Students will become active learners who facilitate their own discovery learning. The classroom teacher will be gradually taking the role of the class facilitator and stepping back as the lead instructor in order to provide students with the opportunity to create their own learning targets (typically in the form of an “I can” statement), rather than using teacher assigned objectives to monitor their own growth. Students will also lead classroom discussions, research and test and present their own ideas and relate their successes and failure to the ever changing world around us. Students will embody the concept that learning is a process, and that assessments are not the end, but used to self-evaluate and continue learning new issues. The goal is to produce critically thinking, self-motivated problem solvers that can use their fundamental knowledge of Science in order to create solutions to any and all future regional, state or world issues.

Monitoring Student Growth

Students will monitor their own progress by creating their own learning targets and assessing growth towards mastery. Students will use each other as resources to learn through trial and error and exploring their peer’s process to solving the problem. Student reflections on where their level of understanding is with the content knowledge, and what they need to know to better their understanding to meet their learning target is a critical part of the student self-assessment process. Through self-monitoring, students can learn how to be autonomous when using the scientific method to learn STEM processes.