



Personalized learning

The HILL

Hillside Instructional Learning Latitudes

When it comes to personalized learning and innovative solutions that engage learners in effective learning and narrow the elementary school achievement gap, Roswell's Hillside Elementary School is a leader among Fulton County schools. In 2014, Hillside implemented an entirely new scheduling and instructional model based on teacher subject specialization to provide deeper, richer academic experiences for learners.

"We were faced with a question: How do we improve the achievement and satisfaction of both learners and teachers while also meeting the high standards of content excellence set by the Georgia Standards of Excellence?" said Principal Dr. Maisha Otway.

Now three years later, the Hillside Instructional Learning Latitudes ("HILL") is producing results with learners showing significant academic growth.

Why Subject Specialization?

At the heart of HILL is **teacher subject specialization**. Teachers, at most elementary schools, teach all **core content subjects**--math, science, social studies & English/Language Arts (ELA)--to one class all year long.

At Hillside, our teachers focus their efforts on individual areas of content expertise (as identified by advanced specialized degrees or professional development, proven pedagogical strength, etc.) and then teach that subject to three classes. Each teacher, in grades 1st-5th, is assigned a homeroom class and then identified to teach a specific content(s).

Our 1st and 2nd grade teachers focus on being either a STEM or Humanities teacher. This is our learners' first introduction to content specialization.

- ◆ Humanities Teacher (Reading, English/Language Arts (ELA) & Social Studies)

or

- ◆ STEM teacher (Math & Science)

Our 3rd-5th grade teachers focus one of three areas;

- ◆ Reading, English/Language Arts (ELA)
- ◆ Math teacher
- ◆ Science and Social Studies teacher

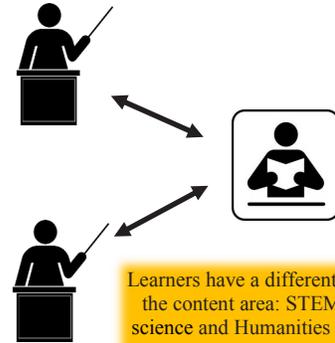
All teachers' content specialization falls within one of two grade-level bands: 1st – 2nd Grade or 3rd–5th Grade. For instance, a 1-2 grade STEM teacher delivers two classes of STEM each day: a 1st grade and a 2nd grade.

A student is placed with a particular teacher according to his or her grade level and his or her **Continuous Achievement Level**, which is a Fulton County Board of Education framework for advancement that allows each child to progress at their optimum pace and depth, expanding and compacting the curriculum as appropriate.

Because a Hillside teacher has expertise in her core content area and has access to the entire continuum of her grade-level band curriculum (1-2 or 3-5), she is in a unique position to identify when a learners may be ready to advance or, conversely, may need to revisit earlier class material.

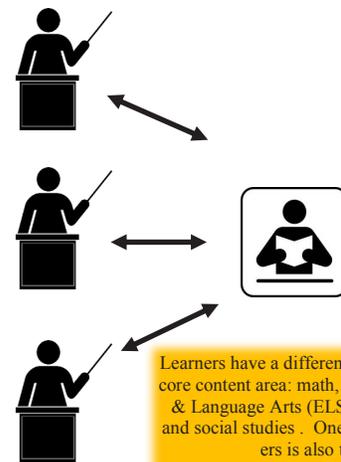
For our Kindergarteners, we believe they benefit from a traditional model during their first year in school. This allows our Kindergarteners to acclimate to the daily structure of school while learning the fundamentals of reading and math.

The HILL for 1st & 2nd



Learners have a different teacher for the content area: STEM (math & science and Humanities (English & Language Arts (ELA) & Social Studies)). One of these teachers is also the learner's homeroom.

The HILL for 3rd, 4th & 5th



Learners have a different teacher for the core content area: math, reading/English & Language Arts (ELS) and science and social studies . One of these teachers is also the learner's homeroom.

How it Affects the School Day?

The most obvious difference for learners and their families is how their day is structured. In the traditional model, the majority of the school's students remained with the same teacher each day, all day with the exception of small groups of students transitioning to different teachers for instructional support. At Hillside, learners move among two or three core classes depending on the grade levels (with the exception of scenarios such as instructional supportive services).

A significant amount of planning went into logistics—especially how learners flow with teacher support from one content class to the next, to lunch/recess and “specials” classes. During the first weeks of school, learners and teachers practice these transitions together to become more familiar with each day’s progression.

Hillside’s classroom layout accommodates the traditional Kindergarten, along with the 1-2 and 3-5 grade level band model. The hallway on the east side of the school houses all K-2 classes, and the hallway on the west side houses all 3-5 classes. This means that our learner’s have their homeroom and core content classes in the same hallway. Not only does this help facilitate the smooth movement of children from one core content class to another across the hall, but it keeps learners of a certain age/grade near each other and collaborative teaching teams near to each other, too.

Are students still part of a “class”?

Building relationships within the classroom is an important part of the learning experience. In addition to sharing a homeroom, a learner also spends lunch and recess with his or her “home” class and attends all his/her “specials” classes (art, music, physical education) with this same group. A strong team dynamic is forged with group activities such as the “Husky Huddle” every morning.

“Building relationships is key for learner’s success. At the beginning of each class, we come together for a quick Husky Huddle. This quick meeting allows the class to discuss topics including sharing a moment from a previous class, building on prior knowledge and make personal connections about everyday life.” said Sonja Beasley, 3-5 Math and PLC Leader.

“Learners may find themselves in content classes with many of the same peers, but we want to make sure the ‘same class’ bond is established in each of their classes” said Dr. Otway.

For our Kindergarteners, their first year occurs in a traditional teaching model. This model allows our new learners to build strong relationships with the teacher, assistant, classmates; in addition to learning independence, school expectations and procedures and becoming self-starters of their learning.

Building Supportive Relationships

All Hillside learners have the best available teachers in core subjects and an opportunity to be challenged by different teachers and different classroom environments—while still benefiting from the security and connection with their “home” class. Learners also have access to multiple adults with whom they can bond and form mentoring relationships.

“... teachers hone in on something that for myself was a strength and now is my passion and we are able to dive deeper into the content..”

*—Lexi Fraser,
STEM Teacher for grades 1-2*

Teachers collaborate to maximize quality instruction and school experiences. They attend weekly content area meetings, as well as

grade level-specific meetings to ensure consistency and reduce overlap. Most importantly, if concerns arise, one teacher can confer with other teachers, who know the child, and collaborate to find innovative ways to help the learner. They all work as a team to develop the whole child through collective responsibility.

What does the personalized look like for students?

“We are confident that The HILL strongly supports personalized learning and has made a significant difference in the way our learners acquire knowledge,” said Dr. Otway.

Personalized learning takes many forms at Hillside such as: small group instruction, inquiry based lessons, adaptive computer programs with targeted practice, and multiple intelligence menu options for assessment are just a few of the instructional strategies we use to incorporate personalized learning.

“We appreciate the support of our school community as we lead with innovative practices and work together to achieve great things,” said Dr. Otway.

Still have questions about Hillside’s The HILL?

Review the complete school plan on our website: <http://bit.ly/2qvKOVD>

