

APPENDIX 2.2.2: CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

Chicago Prep commits to providing an academically rigorous education that prepares all scholars to succeed in college and positively impact the world. Because an excellent curriculum is necessary for the fulfillment of our mission, Chicago Prep believes in using curriculum that has been proven effective with similar demographics of students.

Achievement First Curriculum

We have chosen to use the free, publicly available, and CCSS-aligned curriculum provided by Achievement First (AF), a high-performing network of charter schools in the Northeast.

Considering the network’s strong student achievement data and the curriculum’s rigor, detail, and clear standards-alignment, we strongly believe that our curricular choices will be a key factor in the growth and achievement of Chicago Prep scholars. In alignment with Chicago Prep, AF uses the CCSS for ELA and math and the NGSS for science. The curriculum is highly rigorous, assuming that students are capable of mastering challenging content while providing ample scaffolding and intervention strategies to support all students in meeting those expectations. Additionally, the curriculum is comprehensive, well-organized, and easy to follow. Each content area includes key resources, outlined in Figure 1. We will use AF curriculum for 5th-8th grade ELA, math, science, art, and physical education.

Figure 1: Resources Included with Achievement First Curriculum

Resource	Description
Program Overview	Provides the overall vision for the content area across grade levels. Includes rationale for the curriculum content, design, and instructional strategies.
Fundamentals of Instruction (FOI)	Provides the purpose and overview of each type of lesson within a content area. ELA includes close reading lessons, reading workout lessons, writing workout lessons, and guided drafting. Math includes cumulative review lessons, conjecture lessons, and exercise lessons. History includes close reading lessons and student investigation lessons. Science includes inquiry-based lessons. The FOI includes a description of each key part of the lesson (e.g., for science, framing, building a body of evidence, explanation, and closing) with why, how long, what happens, and markers of excellence.
Scope & Sequence (SS)	A high-level overview of the academic program for the year for each subject and grade level. The SS includes the names of all units, the number of instructional weeks and number of lessons included, and in some cases the overview of how/when standards will be covered.
Unit Overview	Each grade-level subject area includes multiple units; the unit overviews help teachers and leaders understand the purpose, goals, and timeline of the unit. The unit overview helps teachers to see the connectedness and flow of each lesson within the unit and to plan instruction with the end goals in mind.
Lesson Plan / Classwork	For each daily lesson, there is a detailed lesson plan that includes the objective and aligned standard, materials needed, time stamps, exemplar responses for assessment questions, and strategies for teachers to break down complex tasks, differentiate, and intervene as needed. Additionally, student-facing materials are included: texts, student work packets, graphic organizers, visual aids, guided notes, etc.

ELA Course Description

In alignment with CCSS ELA standards, our ELA curriculum is designed to foster scholars' skills in listening, speaking, reading – skills that are core not only to college graduation and career success, but also to productive engagement as a citizen. ELA lessons include literature lessons, which focus on reading for meaning and analysis; foundational language lessons, which focus on volume of reading and vocabulary/word study with opportunities for small-group tutoring; and composition lessons, which focus on crafting an argument and clarity of communication. Our curriculum prioritizes deep, critical, frequent reading and writing. Scholars learn to break down complex texts by asking and answering rigorous text-dependent questions daily to unlock and analyze meaning. Scholars learn to write clearly and coherently, forming solid arguments backed by evidence and original thinking, with attention to word choice, sentence structure, and conventions. Scholars build broad background knowledge through broad exposure to texts across genres, cultures, and time periods, as well as through explicit vocabulary instruction and nonfiction texts to complement novel study. Finally, our ELA program deepens scholars' curiosity about the world and love of reading as the texts they read and conversations they engage in allow them to make connections and build deeper understandings of themselves, their friends and families, and the world around them.

Math Course Description

In alignment with CCSS Math standards, our math curriculum is designed to build deep conceptual understanding in mathematics, preparing scholars for college, career opportunities, and the many aspects of life that require a solid mathematical foundation. Math classes will develop, as core tenets of the program, conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, strategic competence and adaptive reasoning, productive disposition (tendency to see math as sensible, useful, and worthwhile, and to maintain commitment to diligence and belief in one's capacity), and problem solving. Our program prioritizes depth over breadth and ensures strong alignment across grade levels to maintain coherence for scholars. Lesson types across multiple math periods include guided inquiry in which scholars explore mathematical concepts, exploring a challenging problem and persevering in problem solving through collaboration with peers and guidance from teachers. Some lessons focus on whole-group instruction and individualized procedural practice with previously learned skills, as a strong foundation in basic mathematical procedures is necessary to access higher level math courses in high school and college. And some provide intervention materials for small-group tutoring designed to close scholar gaps.

Science Course Description

Driven by the belief that scholars must approach science as an inquiry-based discipline, our science curriculum is aligned to the Next Generation Science Standards and informed by four core tenets: curiosity through inquiry, depth and coherence, rigor, and STEM Literacy. Science lessons are hands-on and interactive, encouraging scholars to form, investigate, and test hypotheses and in doing so building their curiosity about the world. Scholars will build a broad base of scientific background knowledge and engage deeply with core scientific ideas over the course of years, with content and skills remaining aligned but increasing in rigor as they move through middle school. The curricular foundation we provide ensures that scholars are ready for honors and college-credit science courses in high school and therefore on track for STEM majors in college. Finally, the program builds literacy in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics in recognition of how important these topics are to our society.

Social Studies Course Description

For social studies, we will reference AF curriculum as a resource but will internally create a scope and sequence and aligned unit plans. Our goal is to ensure the social studies program meets all Illinois Learning Standards for Social Science and incorporates the community input we have received through community engagement. For example, we want to ensure that our social studies classes engage deeply with African history, African American history, and Bronzeville history, a desire that we heard expressed by dozens of community stakeholders, to affirm our scholars' identities and deeply invest and engage them in learning. Scholars will learn inquiry skills, such as constructing essential questions, gathering and evaluating sources, developing claims and using evidence, and communicating conclusions. Content will focus on four key domains of the social sciences – civics, geography, economics, and history – and units/lessons will allow for demonstration of standards mastery through the study of culturally relevant, affirming topics and texts. Critical to our social studies program is the analysis of a wide array of rigorous primary and secondary sources. Scholars will engage in thoughtful interrogation of source authorship and reliability, a skill that will serve them well in college and in life. We will design our social studies curriculum to ensure that scholars grow into informed and engaged citizens driven to positively impact the world.

Physical Education Course Description

Aligned with the National PE Standards, the middle school physical education program strives to develop scholars' personal fitness and skill-related abilities. The program reinforces scholars' understanding and application of fitness concepts and motor skills through a variety of movement forms. The program also aims to develop scholars' personal and social responsibility, self-management skills, and ability to make informed choices. The overall goal of this program is to enhance scholars' disposition toward leading a physically active lifestyle. Examples of key topics for study and practice include cardiovascular fitness, muscular strength and endurance, balance, agility, and coordination. To complement the AF physical education curriculum, Chicago Prep will internally create health units and lessons aligned to the National Health Education Standards. In alignment with the PE curriculum, health curriculum aims to equip scholars to live a healthy lifestyle; scholars study topics such as scholars disease prevention, the factors influencing health behaviors, how to access health information and resources, and goal-setting and decision-making skills.

Art Course Description

Our art curriculum comes from AF and is aligned to the Illinois Art Learning Standards Visual Arts Standards, which focus on creating, presenting, responding, and connecting to art. Scholars learn different mediums, styles, and strategies and apply them to create their own creative pieces. Scholars study the presentation of art, such as understanding how what gets displayed (in museums, in public spaces, etc.) reflects values and society, and they will have practice selecting and creatively presenting specific works of art. Additionally, art class builds scholars' interpretation and analysis of art, drawing on and deepening such analysis skills from other content areas. Finally, scholars draw connections, relating artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

Entrepreneurship Course Description

For our entrepreneurship course, we will use the year-long curriculum provided by NFTE, designed to develop scholars' entrepreneurial mindsets as defined by six key domains: initiative and self-reliance, flexibility and adaptability, communication and collaboration, creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, future orientation, opportunity recognition, and comfort with risk. Through entrepreneurship class (also called Money and Business in Action or MBA class) class, scholars will identify a way to improve the world and build an app to serve as part of the solution. Topics include entrepreneurship in health care; entrepreneurship in business and finance; and entrepreneurship in environmental science and conservation.

Financial Literacy Course Description

For financial literacy, we will use Dave Ramsey's Foundations in Personal Finance for Middle School as our core curriculum. The curriculum is aligned to National Standards for Financial Literacy. It includes videos, engaging student materials, and teacher's editions that make it easy to use. We will also complement the Dave Ramsey curriculum with internal resources developed in collaboration with community leaders, including local banks, nonprofits, entrepreneurs, and business owners.