



EPISCOPAL
COLLEGIATE SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL
PHILOSOPHY

Our Mission

Preparing students to live principled and fulfilling lives of leadership and service through the pursuit of academic and personal excellence in a challenging and supportive environment.

Our Vision

To inspire life-long learning, citizenship, and excellence.

Our Values

Respect, Reverence, and Responsibility.

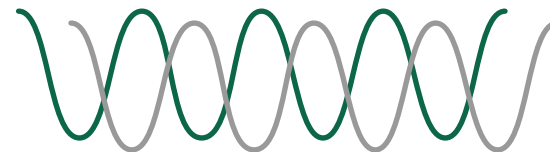
Our Educational Philosophy

TWO GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Episcopal Collegiate School is a dynamic learning environment that cultivates personal excellence. Our educational philosophy is guided by two connected principles: a press towards academic achievement and a culture of care and support.

This powerful combination inspires us to understand how and why we learn, to apply our knowledge and skills across varied disciplines, to make authentic connections with others and the wider world, and develops intrinsic curiosity and motivation that sustains a life-long joy of learning.

ACADEMIC PRESS



CULTURE OF SUPPORT

Murphy, J. (2015). Creating instructional

THE WHOLE CHILD

At Episcopal Collegiate, we educate the whole child. Our programs and curricula help students grow in mind, body, and spirit. Our vibrant fine arts, wellness, and athletic programs empower students, instill an appreciation for healthy living, and reinforce the benefits of teamwork and good sportsmanship. Through regular chapel services, religious curriculum, and a shared commitment to our school's motto, *Respect, Reverence, and Responsibility*, we nurture faithful and compassionate citizenship and leadership.

Principle 1:

ACADEMIC PRESS & ENGAGEMENT

UNDERSTANDING THE STATUS QUO IN EDUCATION

80%

of the day teachers occupy center-stage in classes.

LECTURE AND DISCUSSION

is the disproportionately preferred instructional strategy. Engagement is lowest during the most heavily emphasized instructional formats in school: teacher-centered instruction.

1/3

of the time teachers are teaching what students already know.

STUDENTS ARE ENGAGED
in their classes no more than

50%

of available class time.

The majority of questions posed to students are **LOW-LEVEL** cognitive questions:

60%

recall of facts &

20%

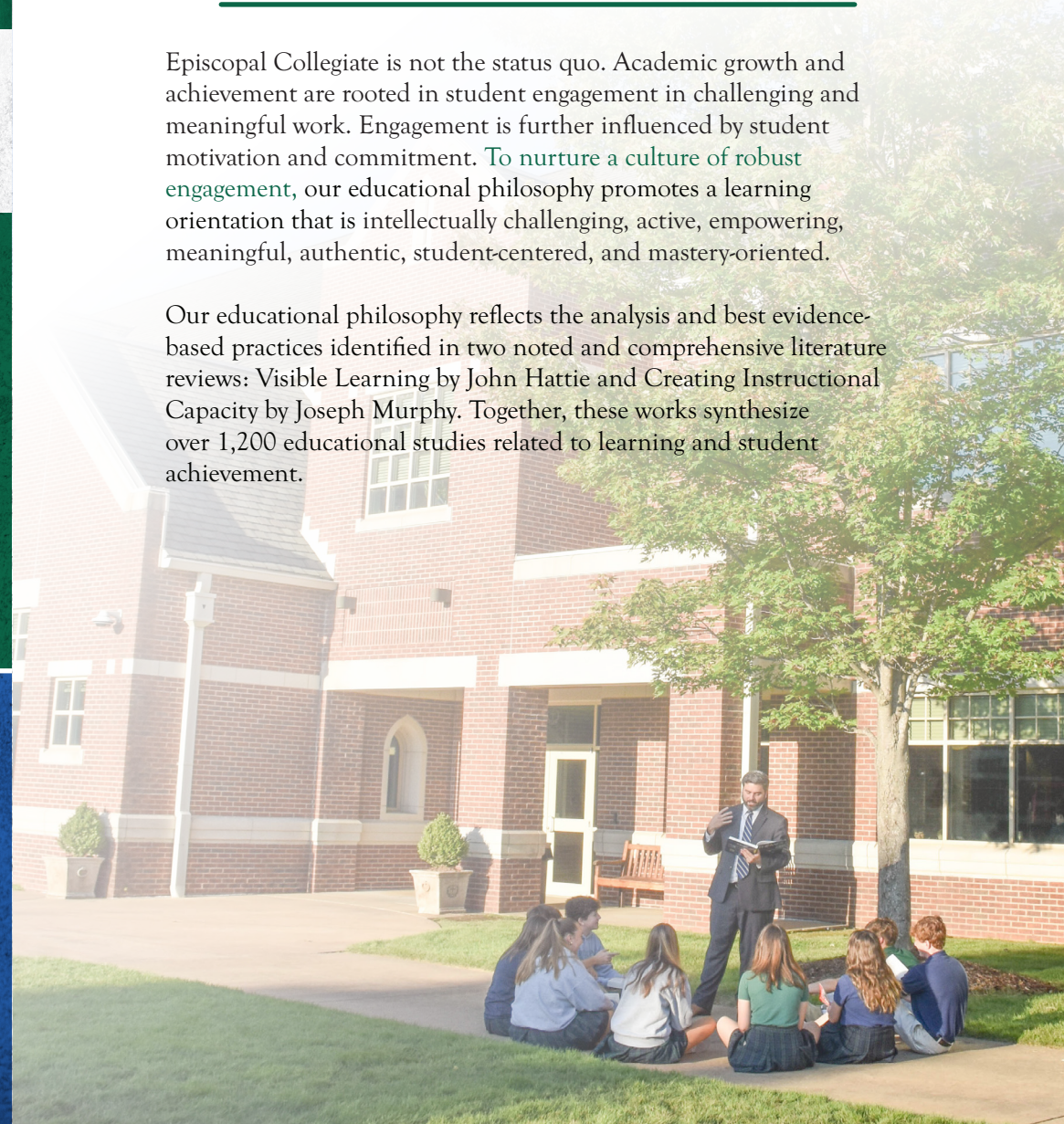
procedural in nature.

FEEDBACK is most often viewed as something teachers provide to students as opposed to something that students provide to teachers.

Achievement & Engagement

Episcopal Collegiate is not the status quo. Academic growth and achievement are rooted in student engagement in challenging and meaningful work. Engagement is further influenced by student motivation and commitment. To nurture a culture of robust engagement, our educational philosophy promotes a learning orientation that is intellectually challenging, active, empowering, meaningful, authentic, student-centered, and mastery-oriented.

Our educational philosophy reflects the analysis and best evidence-based practices identified in two noted and comprehensive literature reviews: Visible Learning by John Hattie and Creating Instructional Capacity by Joseph Murphy. Together, these works synthesize over 1,200 educational studies related to learning and student achievement.



THE CONDITIONS THAT MAXIMIZE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Challenge – Effective classrooms are characterized by academic challenge. Challenge is not a fixed quantity; it can only be understood in the context of students as it is relative to a student’s current performance and understanding. Effective teachers set appropriately challenging goals and then structure instruction and learning experiences so that students can reach those goals.

Active Interaction – Active interaction with course materials and tasks is the source of students’ perception of high engagement. Instruction and learning experiences aim to maximize time in the **Zone of Proximal Development**.

Scan to learn more:



Empowerment – Engagement is heightened when students feel that they have control over their learning. Engaging classrooms generate student feedback, allow for student voice and choice, and develop student agency through projects and application-oriented tasks that are interesting, varied, and meaningful.

Meaningful – Students connect better when they understand the purpose of their work, it is relevant to their world, and adapted to their interests. The more interesting an assignment is, the more likely students are to immerse themselves in the work and stick with it through completion.

Authentic – The ability to match instruction and learning experiences to the ways in which students learn most effectively. Authentic work provides connections to students prior knowledge and experiences, connections to the cultural lives of students, and connections of learning to real life.

Student Centered – Student-centered work underscores the importance of student inquiry and engagement. It reflects a balanced portfolio of teacher-directed and student-focused learning activities. Student-centered instruction bends the material to the students, not the students to the material, recognizing that the student is the key person in the learning equation.

Mastery Oriented – Based on the premise that all students can eventually learn difficult material when provided with clear expectations of what it means to “master” the material. This requires a high level of feedback that is both diagnostic and corrective as students progress. Learning is held constant and time is allowed to vary. Tests on unit objectives are followed by supplementary instruction on objectives not attained.

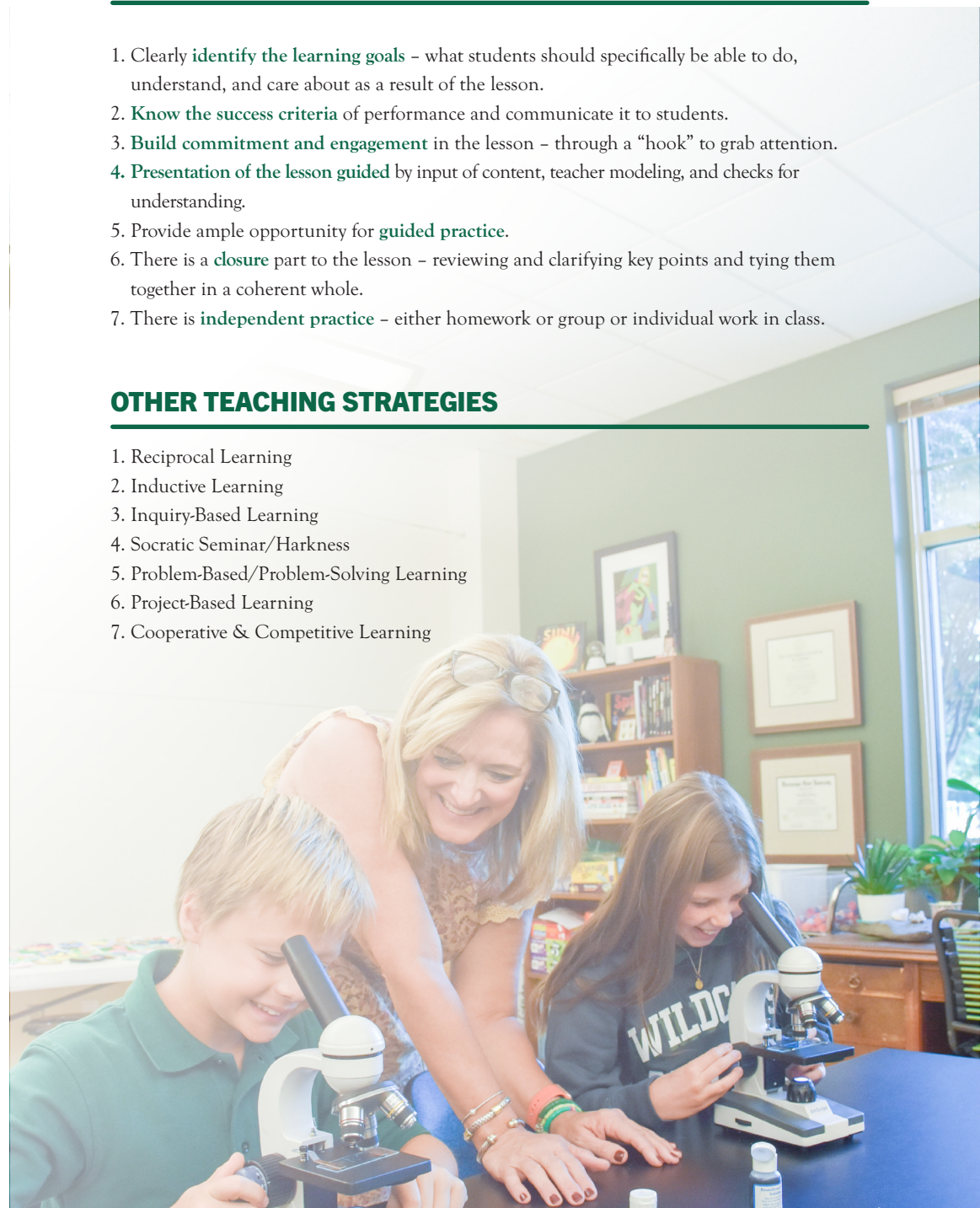
It is important to note that a focus on academic press is NOT an endorsement of a particular teaching strategy. Emphasis on student engagement does NOT mean “constructivism is good, direct instruction is bad.” It is NOT a full-fledged endorsement of project-based or inquiry-based learning. There are many teaching strategies that have an important effect on student learning and effective teachers intentionally employ a variety of them.

7 DISTINCT ELEMENTS OF DIRECT INSTRUCTION

1. Clearly **identify the learning goals** – what students should specifically be able to do, understand, and care about as a result of the lesson.
2. **Know the success criteria** of performance and communicate it to students.
3. **Build commitment and engagement** in the lesson – through a “hook” to grab attention.
4. **Presentation of the lesson guided** by input of content, teacher modeling, and checks for understanding.
5. Provide ample opportunity for **guided practice**.
6. There is a **closure** part to the lesson – reviewing and clarifying key points and tying them together in a coherent whole.
7. There is **independent practice** – either homework or group or individual work in class.

OTHER TEACHING STRATEGIES

1. Reciprocal Learning
2. Inductive Learning
3. Inquiry-Based Learning
4. Socratic Seminar/Harkness
5. Problem-Based/Problem-Solving Learning
6. Project-Based Learning
7. Cooperative & Competitive Learning



Principle 2:

A CULTURE OF CARE & SUPPORT

CARE AND SUPPORT ARE DIRECTLY LINKED TO ENGAGEMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT

Student participation, engagement, commitment, and eventual success are driven by connections and relationships. If students are to build confidence and a willingness to invest themselves, their participation in academic tasks must be accompanied by personal support from teachers.

Students who experience acceptance, or a sense of belonging, who develop strong relationships, are more highly motivated and engaged in learning. We need all students to feel that their teachers are taking a special interest in them.

The major purpose of a supportive learning community is to positively influence students' willingness to engage and learn. **Student support, in all its forms, is central to outstanding outcomes.**

THE NORMS OF CARE AND SUPPORT

Teachers Working to the Best of Their Ability and Appropriately Challenging Students

- Consistently bringing their “A-game” to the classroom – motivating and challenging students to do their best work.
- Orchestrating a **structured classroom** – clear goals, maps, and benchmarks.
- Strong knowledge of subject matter and instructional methods – demonstrating passion for both content and teaching.
- Timely grading of assessments, posting of homework, being organized, etc.

Knowing Students Well

- Learning about students and knowing or expressing concern for what is unfolding in their lives. **Understanding their commitments in and outside of school.**
- Being cognizant of the cultural worlds in which students live.
- **Investing time and energy** to develop and maintain personal relationships.
- Approaching challenges from a position of concern about students.
- Observing and supporting students in their extracurricular endeavors.

Taking Interest In and Valuing Students

- Accepting students as individuals. Acknowledging students for who they are and their potential.
- Seeing students positively, not as problems. Avoiding blaming students when things go wrong.
- Emphasizing higher order demands and greater depth of understanding. Expecting students to be active interpreters of knowledge. Removing the possibility for passive involvement.
- Upholding a commitment to help students succeed. **Pushing and pulling students toward success.**

Being Accessible

- Demonstrating willingness to help. Active listening and responsiveness.
- Making time available and not exiting in the face of student resistance.
- **Maintaining beliefs in students through hardships.**



Treating Students with Respect

- Avoiding actions that demean or belittle. (Caution in use of sarcasm.)
- Demonstrating reliability, consistency, and being equitable in dealing with students.
- Providing opportunities for students to experience success and competence and acknowledging that competence.

Providing Support

- Providing students with assistance through formal and informal counseling.
- Providing “safety nets” to prevent students from falling through the cracks.
- Actively monitoring students’ academic, social, and emotional well-being.
- Advocating for students to ensure they are getting the aid they require from teachers and the school.

Education is fundamentally interpersonal in nature. **Relationships are at the heart of our work.** Students typically evaluate their school year in terms of their experience with their teachers. Nurturing a culture of care and support is directly linked to enhancing student motivation, engagement, and ultimately achievement.

Episcopal Collegiate School Principles of Teaching

Teacher effectiveness is the most critical factor in explaining student learning. The values, knowledge and skills that educators bring to teaching are key to school and student success. Just as we educate the whole child, our faculty, staff and administration **evaluate their work through a comprehensive lens and commit to strong performance and ongoing development in four areas:**

1. **Scholarship** – Possess and continue to develop robust content knowledge and leverage instructional strategies to employ it well.
2. **Creativity** – Employ a variety of instructional strategies responsive to the needs of students, “live beyond the textbook,” and unearth multiple pathways to accomplishing learning goals.
3. **Compassion** – Take interest and invest in students, employ caring relationships to foster the development of powerful academic norms, instill a sense of confidence in students that they can be successful, challenge appropriately, and push or pull students to succeed.
4. **Professionalism** – Maintain an appealing temperament and communicate well with all constituents, comply with school policies and procedures, engage in the school community, maintain norms of confidentiality, and be punctual with school schedules and deadlines.

Translating Philosophy to Practice - Understanding by Design

Understanding by Design (UbD) is a planning framework that emphasizes the importance of “backwards design” for lessons, units, and courses.

There are three stages to the backward design process:



1. Identify the Desired Results (goals, learning outcomes, transfer)

- Established goals and learning outcomes
- Essential questions to be considered
- Desired understandings
- Key knowledge and skills acquired from the learning experience

2. Determine Acceptable Evidence (success criteria)

- Identify the evidence that students have obtained the desired result. (Consider performance tasks: explanation, interpretation, application, perspective, empathy, transfer, and self knowledge)
- Identify forms and use of assessment (diagnostic, formative, and summative)

3. Plan Instruction and Learning Experiences

- Key knowledge and skills acquired from the learning experience
- Design the instructional approaches, resources, and experience that are required to obtain the required results and performance targets
- Employ a variety of learning and teaching strategies aimed at developing both knowledge and skills
- Consider the Acronym WHERETO
 - Where is it going?
 - Hook the students
 - Explore and equip
 - Rethink and revise
 - Exhibit and evaluate
 - Tailor to student needs and interests
 - Organize for maximum engagement

Note that within this framework, the specifics about employed instructional methods, sequence of lessons, identified resources, etc. are selected only *after* the desired results have been clearly identified and *after* it has been determined how student progress and success will be demonstrated and assessed.





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