

# The Creighton Academy: School profile

November 2021

The Creighton Academy serves about 300 students in grades kindergarten through 6. At The Creighton Academy, every student is a member of a covey: a multi-age group of 55-60 students. Students work with both educators specific to their coveys (e.g., each covey has its own literacy teacher and its own math/Spanish teacher) and educators who work across coveys (e.g., small-group teachers, specials teachers). Additionally, MLFTC teacher candidates, paraeducators, reading interventionists, coaches and community educators join teachers in supporting students.

## Introduction

The Creighton Academy (TCA) is a small public school of choice within the Creighton School District, and its program is open to any K-6 student committed to their vision of becoming a leader who takes an active, responsible role in society. They are multi-age, dual-language, project-based and open environment:

- **Multi-age:** Groups of learners work together based on shared interests, shared strengths and shared needs rather than traditional grade-level groupings.
- **Dual-language:** TCA's Spanish immersion model ensures that students are learning to listen, read and write in Spanish and English.
- **Project-based:** Students actively explore real-world problems and challenges and acquire deep knowledge and expertise.
- **Open environment:** The school's open floor plan allows for organic, holistic connections amongst multiple content areas and affords students exposure to authentic learning opportunities.

**Dual-language model:** The Creighton Academy takes three different dual-language approaches.

1. Immersion model: Math is always taught in Spanish. Notably, this means that English Language Learners for whom Spanish is their home language learn this core content in their primary language.
2. Continuous model: During science and social studies instructional time, students will soon alternate days learning and working in English and Spanish.
3. Targeted Spanish support: During targeted Spanish support, students receive intensive language instruction.

## Teams of educators with distributed expertise

### School structure: Homerooms, coveys & houses

At The Creighton Academy, every student is a member of:

- A multi-age homeroom comprising 25-30 students,
- A multi-age covey, comprising two homerooms (50-60 students) and
- A multi-age house, comprising one or two coveys.

## Homerooms

Each homeroom includes 25-30 students. At the start of each year, educator teams meet with the Instructional Coach and Effective Schools Coach to assign homerooms, a process in which they consider students' academic and social-emotional needs. Because homerooms span two grade levels (e.g., kindergarteners and first-graders, second-graders and third-graders), students loop with their homeroom teachers for two years.

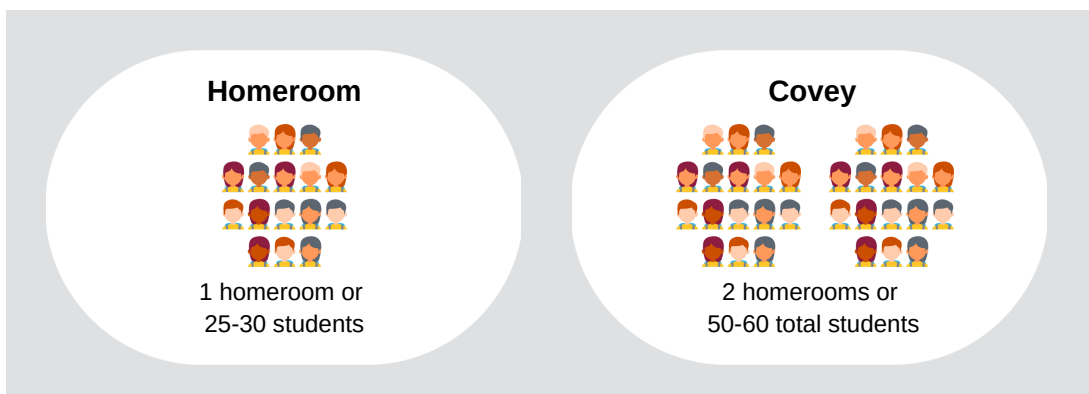
Students are with their homeroom peers at the start of each day for breakfast and family meeting, for social-emotional learning once a week, and at the end of each day for specials and dismissal.

## Coveys

A covey includes two homerooms spanning the same two grades (e.g., two K–1 homerooms, two grades 2–3 homerooms).

Both homerooms (all 50-60 students) come together as a covey at three points during most days: for social centers (K–1), STEM centers (2–3) or Genius Hour (4–6) four days a week; for project-based learning four days a week; and for lunch & recess daily.

Based on diagnostic testing and progress monitoring, students mix across their homerooms for small group instruction (English Language Arts and Math/Spanish). Importantly, the rosters for small groups change quarterly based on diagnostic testing and progress monitoring.



## Houses

Two coveys serving students in grades K–1 compose the early-years house, one covey serving students in grades 2–3 stands alone as the intermediate house, and two coveys serving students in grades 4–6 (one serving fourth and fifth-graders and the other serving fifth and sixth-graders) compose the upper house.

Students do not typically come together as a house; however, house-level educators co-plan and co-create procedures together.

## Educator teams

### The core educator team

Each covey has a core team of dedicated educators. At minimum, a literacy teacher and a math/Spanish teacher are joined by volunteers from the families of students within that covey. Core educator teams supporting early years coveys are larger and typically include one or more dedicated MLFTC residents and a dedicated paraeducator.

#### Dedicated educators per covey



1 literacy teacher



1 math/Spanish teacher

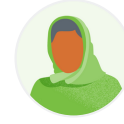


Family volunteers

#### Additional educators dedicated to early years coveys



1 MLFTC resident



1 para

Importantly, one literacy or math teacher from each house also serves as the house's lead teacher; this educator helps the team to determine how best to distribute their expertise and facilitates monthly covey meetings during which educators discuss students' strengths and needs.

### The extended educator team

Students are also supported by educators who work across coveys.

- **Small-group instructors** and **project-based-learning community educators** work across multiple coveys but typically focus either on the early years or intermediate coveys.
- **An instructional coach** and **an effective schools coach** support students' small-group learning.
- **Specials teachers** teach all students in the school.
- **Part-time reading interventionists** support kindergarten through third-graders in small groups.
- **A child justice paraeducator** supports students' social-emotional learning and is in the process of launching a peer mediation program.
- **Additional community educators** engage with both small and large groups of students that may cross-cut coveys.

#### Educators shared across houses



Small-group instructors



PBL community educators

#### Educators shared across the school



1 instructional coach



1 effective schools coach



Specials teachers



Part-time reading interventionists



1 Child justice para

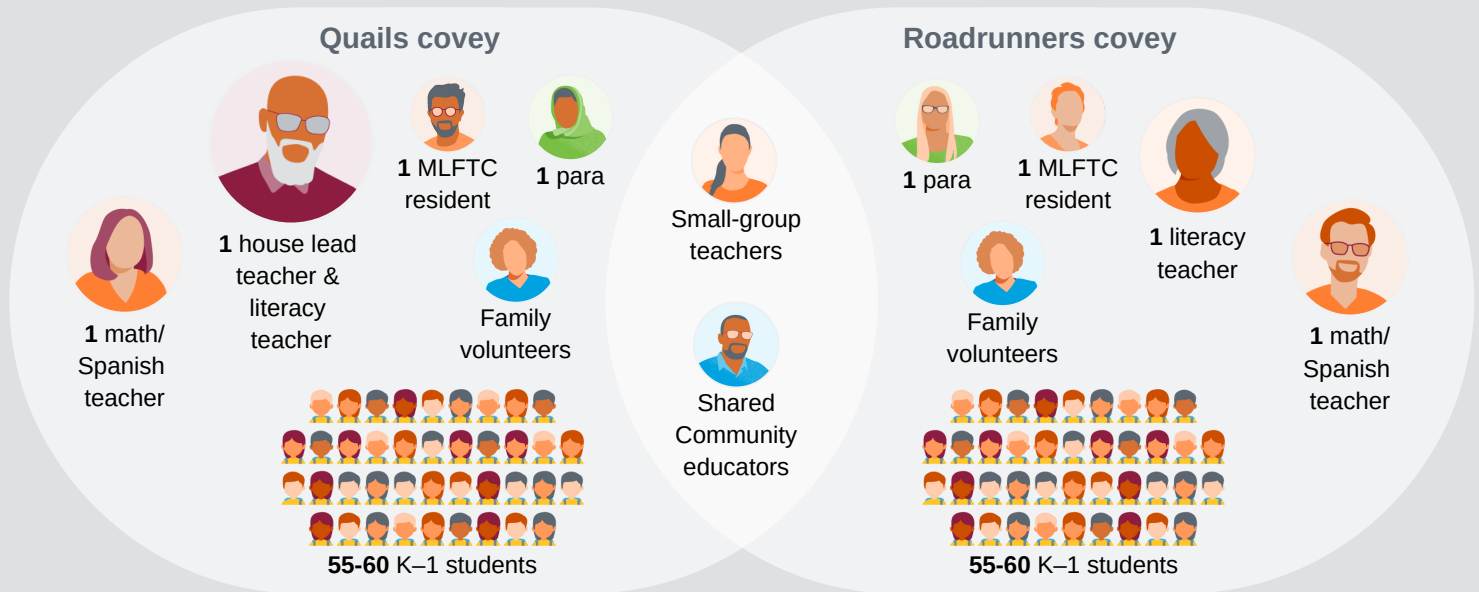


Community educators supporting specific initiatives

## At a glance: An example house

At the Early Years house level, then, the team of educators that wraps around students looks as follows:

### Early Years House



### Educators shared across the school



The Intermediate and Upper Grades Houses look similar, though the Intermediate house comprises only one covey, and MLFTC residents and paras are typically members of Early Years coveys only.

## Distributed expertise at the covey level

Currently, educators predominantly distribute expertise through subject area specialization; however, they are in the early stages of leveraging their [CliftonStrengths](#) to further differentiate their roles.

## Team planning and meeting time

Covey-level teams have common planning time each day. Most days, this time is unstructured, allowing for co-planning and discussion of students and covey-level operations to occur organically.

Additionally, coveys meet monthly to discuss students' strengths and areas of need and to discuss covey-level operations.

## Data analysis & planning for interventions

Once each month, coveys engage in a Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) meeting which takes place during their regularly scheduled common planning time. This meeting is facilitated by the Effective Schools Coach, and the purpose is to plan for the covey's highest-need students, identify new academic and behavioral supports educators might try, and reflect on the effectiveness of those supports currently in place.

Four times a year — in August, November, January and May — the educator team uses a variety of diagnostic testing tools (e.g., [Exact Path](#), [iSTEEP](#)) to gather baseline and benchmark data. They analyze this data collaboratively and leverage their analysis to form targeted small groups for math and literacy instruction. Importantly, these groups are not static. Rather, they shift relative to the learning objectives and based on the results of the team's biweekly progress monitoring.

### At a glance: Planning, meeting, and professional learning

Meeting name	Purpose	Facilitator	Participants	Frequency
<b>Common planning time</b>	Co-plan with covey educators	N/A - Unstructured	Covey educators	Daily (except when MTSS meetings or covey professional learning occurs during this time)
<b>Covey professional learning time</b>	Engage in personalized professional learning	Instructional Coach	Covey educators	Three times per month during common planning time
<b>Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) meeting</b>	Plan for highest-need students	Effective Schools Coach	Covey educators	Monthly during common planning time
<b>Covey professional learning community</b>	Discuss students' strengths and areas of need and covey-level operations	Instructional coach	Covey educators	Monthly
<b>House professional learning community</b>	Refined shared procedures, co-plan Genius Hour and project-based learning	School leader	House educators	Twice monthly, following Wednesday's early dismissal
<b>Content area professional learning community</b>	Deepen educators' understanding of their content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge	Instructional coach	All educators in a given content area, cutting across houses (e.g., all ELA educators)	Twice monthly, following Wednesday's early dismissal
<b>Collaborative data analysis</b>	Analyze data and leverage analysis to form targeted small groups for math and literacy instruction	Instructional coach	Covey educators	Four times per year

## Professional learning

Educator teams at The Creighton Academy engage in three different types of professional learning communities.

Three times monthly, the Instructional Coach facilitates personalized professional learning at the covey level. Topics are typically content area-neutral (e.g., routine and procedures, co-teaching models, effective student assessment). These meetings occur during the team's regularly scheduled common planning time.

At the house level, educators meet monthly in service of refining shared procedures; co-planning Social Centers, STEM Centers or Genius Hour; and co-planning project-based learning. These meetings are facilitated by the school leader.

Content areas (e.g., all ELA educators) meet four times per quarter for the purpose of deepening educators' understanding of their content knowledge and their pedagogical content knowledge. These meetings are facilitated by the Instructional coach.

## Deeper and personalized learning

The Creighton Academy educators deepen and personal student learning in a number of ways, among them:

- Social Centers, STEM Centers and Genius hour
- Reader's and Writer's Workshop
- Broader outcomes for student mastery

Below, read about each approach.

### Social Centers, STEM Centers and Genius Hour

Each day, students engage with Social Centers (Early Years House), STEM Centers (Intermediate House) or Genius Hour (Upper Grades House).

In the Early Years House, students engage with Social Centers, a structure adapted from [Tools of the Mind](#). During this time, students come up with a "play plan," play, and clean up. The process for creating the plans themselves changes over the course of the year. At first, educators take dictation from students, and students illustrate their plans; but as the year progresses, students attempt more of the writing themselves. At the close of Social Centers, students engage in whole-group reflection.

Students in the Intermediate House engage with STEM Centers in lieu of Social Centers. This time follows a structure that is similar to Social Centers' structure, only centers are STEM-aligned and reflection is independent. Students make a plan; implement the plan by exploring, building, creating or inquiring; then engage in reflection.

In the Upper Grades House, students engage in Genius Hour rather than Social Centers or STEM Centers. During this time, students choose a topic about which they are passionate and create a strategy to learn and share about it. Most students complete a full cycle of learning and sharing in about 4-6 weeks' time.

### Reader's & Writer's Workshop

For literacy instruction, the team leverages a workshop model. During Reader's Workshop, educators focus on learners becoming readers and frame learning around skills that "good readers" use. Students select their own books that match both their interests and their reading levels, which helps to ensure decoding and fluency

skills aren't barriers to reading comprehension. Writer's Workshop units are framed around overarching, authentic themes like crafting true stories or writing a non-fiction book to teach others about a topic of interest. During this time, educators take the complex task of writing and break it down into smaller skills so that students are able to build incrementally toward completion of a larger-scale writing project.

Additionally, all ELA teachers are taking LETRS, a two-year science of reading training. Early Years and Intermediate Years Houses implement explicit, systematic phonemic awareness, phonics, and morphology instruction daily. All students work on specific decoding skills and language comprehension skills in their small groups.

## Broader outcomes for student mastery

Students at TCA have multiple and iterative opportunities to understand academic content, solve problems, apply knowledge, and make connections within and across disciplines.

Students use ExactPath to learn foundational skills in reading, language and mathematics at a self-directed pace and show mastery of these skills through digital lessons and assessments. They take quarterly diagnostic and benchmark assessments to show their growth in the areas of phonics, oral reading fluency, number sense and writing. Students then demonstrate their mastery of concepts through performance-based assessments, either individually with educators or recorded through their digital portfolios (portfolios that comprise items students select from their centers work time).

Students receive both narrative progress reports and report cards that share what specific strengths students have in each academic area, as well as their habits as learners. Students, teachers, and families meet quarterly to set goals for students' growth in the coming quarter. Students also receive standards-based report cards that share students' progress towards mastery of grade-level standards, regardless of the skills students are working on at the time, in order to maintain transparency with families and students.

## Specializations and advancement pathways

The Creighton Academy is in the process of building clear pathways for educators interested in educational leadership. For example, covey lead teachers lead other educators by facilitating monthly meetings during which the educator team discusses students' strengths and needs and covey operations. Lead teachers also meet together monthly for targeted professional development around educational leadership competencies.

All educators participate in deeper and personalized professional learning. Educators not only participate in three-times-monthly professional learning facilitated by the school's Instructional Coach (described above) but also benefit from regular collegial coaching that takes place at a school-wide level. Educators begin by observing peers; then observe themselves teaching on video; then begin being observed by peers and receiving specific, positive feedback only; and finally move toward being observed by peers and receiving specific, positive and adjusting feedback. The scaffolded nature of this ongoing experience builds trust and rapport among educators at the house level.