

In the spring of 2010, the Hall County BOE approved a new Program of Choice at Chestnut Mountain Elementary. This program, the Creative School of Inquiry (CSI) began with third, fourth and fifth graders (one class of each). Due to the success and popularity of the program, we are expanding the program to Kindergarten through Fifth grade during the fall of 2011. This program of choice is open to any parent who lives in Hall County. The application process for the 2011-2012 is complete; however applications are being taken for the waiting list.

For Commonly Asked Questions / Answers about CSI, see below:

1- What is the Creative School of Inquiry (CSI)?

CSI is a program of choice for parents who live in Hall County. Students are taught using thematic units of study, based on the Georgia Performance Standards. Students develop questions based on their interest in an area of the standards; they research and discover answers to their questions, and use creative ways to demonstrate their learning.

2- How was the Creative School of Inquiry (CSI) developed?

Over the course of several years, Chestnut Mountain staff members have researched standards-based classrooms. We have visited schools in Atlanta as well as schools in our area, most of which were using the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program. Through these visits, our teachers became interested in inquiry-based instruction and developing thematic units. With a declining enrollment this fall, our staff felt an urgency to attract parents to our community by providing choice in their child's educational experience. We formed study teams to research different teaching models and then shared the "best practices" they found. In addition, our School Council and PTO Board brainstormed ideas of how to meet the community's needs. The idea of creative inquiry was birthed from the "Dream a School" activities completed by teachers, parents and community members.

3- How does the CSI program improve learning for students?

Creative Inquiry provides the opportunity for teachers to tap into the interests of the students and engage them in a deeper level of learning through research. Students are more engaged in their learning when they use technology for research, and to creatively display what they have learned. During the 2010-2011 school year, the majority of students in the CSI program scored in the Exceeding range on the CRCT in Reading and Math.

4- How is the curriculum in the CSI program different from the traditional classroom?

Students in the CSI program experience a less direct instructional model of teaching. Teachers use the Georgia Performance Standards to develop broad thematic units by integrating subjects. Tapping into students' interests, teachers guide students to develop questions about the theme and conduct research to discover answers to their questions. Through questioning, research, and discovery students develop a deeper understanding of the Georgia Performance Standards. Students demonstrate what they have learned in a creative way, such as developing interactive displays, writing and performing a plays, or creating multimedia presentations.

5- How do students get into the CSI program?

Currently, students must apply to be accepted into the CSI program. Applications for the CSI waiting list are currently being accepted for the 2011-2012 school year. If Chestnut Mountain is granted charter status for the 2012-2013 school year, students will be accepted through a lottery (not application).

For more information, please visit our school website (www.hallco.org) to view an informational video.

