

Columbus Alternative High School

Columbus Public School District (Franklin County)



2004-2005 School of Promise in Reading & Mathematics	
School Rating	Excellent
Enrollment	610
Grade Levels	9-12
Percent Economically Disadvantaged	43.1%
Percent Racial/Ethnic Minority	66.9%
District Profile 2004-2005	
District Rating	Academic Watch
District Enrollment	59,754

Lesson 1: Providing Rigorous Instruction Aligned to Standards

High Expectations: Columbus Alternative’s high student expectations are written and agreed upon by students and parents. The expectations agreed upon in the “scholars pledge,” include student schedules, assignments, amount of homework, weekly progress sheets, and extracurricular activities. By also signing the pledge, parents must agree to attend parent-teacher conferences, meetings with counselors, maintain contact with the school, and participate in the school’s parent organization.

Academic Rigor: Columbus Alternative High School (CAHS) views the Ohio academic content standards as the minimum requirements for students to meet. The school targets instruction in ninth-grade and tenth-grade to expectations represented by the OGT. After their sophomore year, students must choose between three programs: rigorous coursework, advanced placement courses, or the *International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme*. All eleventh and twelfth-grade students also prepare for college entrance exams.

Interdisciplinary Course: The CAHS Humanities program is an innovative, creative interdisciplinary curriculum that is team-taught by two teachers (English and History). The required course integrates history, geography, culture, and English Language Arts. Ninth grade Humanities focuses on integrating good study skills and extensive writing in academic content. Tenth graders study World Humanities while eleventh-graders focus on American Humanities. Twelfth graders have an independent Humanities study with Ohio Dominion College as an option.

Writing Portfolios: In addition to reading and in-depth writing assignments that are required during the summer, the school’s writing approach cuts across the curriculum. Each student maintains an individual writing portfolio. Freshman students focus on learning to write well and complete assignments. During the senior year, students prepare an exit portfolio in English Literature. The requirements and the process cause students to reflect, link personal experiences to those of literary heroes, integrate their thinking, and draw conclusions based on evidence.

Lesson 2: Providing Leadership That Results in Continuous Improvement

Faculty Organization: Columbus Alternative’s faculty is organized by departments which are led by department chairs and teams (e.g. International Baccalaureate, Urban Systemic Program, and curriculum), and which play to the specific strengths of the faculty. By breaking down some of the responsibility into departments, the school is able to diffuse accountability for maintaining continuous improvement of all teachers.

Lesson 3: Designing Instruction to Ensure Every Student's Success

Using Multiple Strategies: CAHS teachers use a variety of strategies, including Socratic seminars, inquiry-based instruction, writing assignments and essays, projects, portfolios in writing and presentations. Some teachers give short research-based diagnostic tests to assess students' understanding of concepts to be taught prior to and after teaching sessions. Pre-assessment results allow teachers to form heterogeneous student groups and plan lessons on students' strengths. Post-tests allow teachers to determine student gains and to modify future instruction.

Structured Assistance: Instead of a study hall, CAHS has one 40-minute recitation/student conference period per week. During this structured study time, students meet with teachers, receive tutoring, or make up tests or quizzes. Besides giving students access to teachers, the recitation period fosters a more nurturing teacher student relationship.

Lesson 4: Engaging Parents and Community to Support Student Success

Parent Contact: Using federal dollars, CAHS employs two part-time parent consultants who serve as liaisons between families and staff. These two parents work 10 hours a week, using e-mails and phone calls to stay in contact with parents. If a student is absent, teachers and consultants contact the family immediately. They also meet with parents to discuss warning signs for student disengagement, set individual student goals and monitor progress, and help parents transition their children into high school.

Community Internships: A major focus of CAHS community outreach is the volunteer internships for tenth through twelfth graders with various community businesses and organizations (e.g., the Ohio Senate, Nationwide Insurance, and Doctors Hospital West). A full-time community coordinator places and evaluates the interns based on writing assignments, timesheets, and a completed Supervisor Evaluation report from the community organization. Besides allowing the student to earn a half credit per year, the internships provide hands-on work, career exploration, and an extra impetus to pursue a post-secondary education.

Lesson 5: Creating a Culture Where Each Individual Feels Valued

Appreciating Diversity: Because the school draws students from all over the city, the student population is diverse in terms of cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds, race/ethnicity, and religions. In the CAHS Humanities courses, there is a particular focus on appreciation of other cultures. The school climate helps students learn how to be tolerant of the beliefs and values of others. Three of the extracurricular clubs, Black Cultural Awareness Club, Amnesty International, and Gay-Straight Alliance, further support the school's appreciation of student diversity.

Expression through Activities: Faculty and student participation in activities is a trademark of CAHS. These clubs offer opportunities for students to develop personal interests and skills in different areas. All teachers are expected to be involved in these activities. CAHS has 14 different clubs, which range from fine arts, foreign languages, literary, honors, chess, to skiing. While the school does not have varsity sports or a marching band available, students may sign up and participate through their neighborhood schools.

High Expectations: Teachers treat students as scholars with the expectation that all students will go to college. For eleventh-graders, the parent consultants and school counselors hold a "Steps to College" program where students explore colleges and learn about scholarships. Interviewed students reported that the counselors help students with the college application process, the applications for scholarships, and preparation for interviews.