

DOWNTOWN CYBER ACADEMY

PROGRAM OF STUDY
GRADES 6-8
2024-25

[DC.DASD.ORG](https://dc.dasd.org) | CYBERACADEMY@DASD.ORG



ADMINISTRATORS

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INTRODUCTION

The Downingtown Cyber Academy's (DCA) online curriculum includes a combination of synchronous and asynchronous classwork. Downingtown Area School District (DASD) teachers skilled in online instruction help students master the skills they need to.

One unique aspect of the DCA is the ability for students to create a hybrid schedule, combining DCA courses with face-to-face courses at the Marsh Creek Sixth Grade Center or one of the middle schools to create a flexible, personalized schedule for each student.

The Downingtown Cyber Academy is a program and not a school. Therefore, students are still considered full-time students in their local school even if they choose to attend the DCA full-time. The program allows the students to participate in various activities, music lessons, clubs, and after-school programs.

OUR MISSION

The Downingtown Cyber Academy's mission is to provide a unique online environment to meet the individual needs of our K-12 Downingtown Area School District students. We offer flexible, innovative, and engaging student-centered cyber-learning experiences to help students achieve academic and personal excellence.



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OUR VISION



Academics

- Solid foundation
- Competencies



Student Agency

- Student choice
- Scheduling flexibility



Community

- Prepared graduates
- Leaders

The Downtown Cyber Academy strives to be a nationally recognized leader in K-12 online education. We aim to

- Build a solid academic foundation in our students in all academic areas, including the arts, through meaningful and relevant projects.
- Foster critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity competencies.
- Provide scheduling flexibility for the students throughout the school year through various traditional, blended, and fully online options.
- Embrace more student choice in the pace, place, path, and time of their learning.
- Engage students in learning with innovative technology tools.
- Prepare students for post-secondary education and future employment.
- Challenge our graduates to become problem solvers, innovators, and responsible leaders in their community.
- Create a community of students, families, and staff committed to helping students achieve their full potential.



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ENROLLMENT

The DCA's mission is to provide a unique online environment to meet the individual needs of our K-12 DASD students.

The Downingtown Cyber Academy provides course offerings for students in grades 6-8 that allow more flexibility throughout the week. Teachers will provide asynchronous work that includes both independent and collaborative assignments. All asynchronous coursework is assigned on Monday and is due by Sunday. There are no due dates during the week other than occasional discussion forum posts during the week.

Students will also have required Zooms times each week to meet with their teachers and classmates for direct instruction, group work and community building.

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

All Downingtown Area School District students in grades 6-8 have an option to take middle school cyber courses.

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

All DASD students may consider participating in the Downingtown Cyber Academy. Special Education students who have some of their needs met through specially designed instruction must discuss cyber education at an IEP meeting. The team will determine the supports needed to access the student's study program. The cyber teachers and case managers will ensure compliance with all required modifications and accommodations. The students will continue to have a DASD case manager if they transfer into the cyber program full-time.

PART TIME AND FULL TIME

Students in grades 6-8 are allowed to participate in the DCA as a full-time student or a part-time student.



REGISTRATION

Middle school students register for cyber courses during the course selection period in January and February. Students who wish to participate in the DCA must complete [the enrollment form found on our website.](#)

To thrive in cyber courses, students need to embrace responsibility and the need for increased independence. Engaging in online coursework demands genuine commitment and self-discipline. Students engaging in this cyber program should possess or be willing to cultivate the following traits:

- Self-motivation and self-discipline.
- Enjoyment of independent work.
- Openness to seeking assistance when needed.
- Strong time-management skills.
- Readiness to communicate queries or concerns to teachers.
- Persistence in overcoming challenges without giving up easily.
- Commitment to dedicating at least five hours per week per course.
- Acknowledgment of the increased level of difficulty in online courses compared to face-to-face classes.
- Access to reliable internet connectivity.
- Comfort in navigating technology.
- Willingness to explore and embrace new approaches.

REGISTRATION

Students who wish to be full-time or part-time cyber students can enroll throughout the school year for the start of the next marking period.

START	DEADLINE
FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL	AUGUST 1
MARKING PERIOD 2	2 WEEKS PRIOR TO END OF MARKING PERIOD 1
MARKING PERIOD 3	2 WEEKS PRIOR TO END OF MARKING PERIOD 2



PERSONALIZED LEARNING

At the Downingtown Cyber Academy, we do not believe that one-size-fits-all. We know that sometimes students choose the DCA because of other outside obligations.

Therefore, we offer personalized learning plans for students regarding synchronous learning (Zooms). Students in the DCA and their parents/guardians will have two plans from which to choose.

PERSONALIZED LEARNING PLAN AGREEMENT

Plan 1 (default option): Zoom meetings are required, and students must attend. Attendance will be taken for each Zoom class by the teacher.

Plan 2: Students and parents can sign an agreement with the DCA Administrative team that allows students to optionally attend Zooms as long as they maintain good standing in all their classes. Students can still participate in Zooms if they wish and must watch the recordings if they cannot. Students and parents who are interested in this plan should contact cyberacademy@dasd.org.

Zoom meetings will be required until the DCA Administrative team has approved the application.

We offer flexible, innovative, and engaging student-centered learning experiences to help students achieve academic and personal excellence.



CLASS REQUIREMENTS

Cyber classes are entirely online and include both asynchronous and synchronous components.

SCHOOL CALENDAR

Students in the Downingtown Cyber Academy will follow the Downingtown Area School District school calendar, including vacations, inclement weather days, early dismissals, and holidays.

The Downingtown Cyber Academy will follow DASD's marking period schedule.

WEEKLY WORK

Although students have some freedom to work on material throughout the week at their own pace, they must complete assignments by the end of each week.

PA Code 4.22 requires every student to take classes in language arts, mathematics, science/technology, social studies, health/physical education, information skills, career education, family and consumer science, and the arts every year.

PSSA/KEYSTONE EXAMS

Students in the Downingtown Cyber Academy are still required to take state-mandated tests, such as the PSSAs, at their home buildings.

ATTENDANCE

DCA students must log their attendance in Infinite Campus on any letter day when they have a scheduled DCA course. Attendance will also be taken in Zooms unless students have a Personalized Learning Plan Agreement.

If a student is marked absent, parents must send an excuse note to cyber_attendance@dasd.org within three days.



SCHEDULING

Course Materials

Most course materials are digital, but students may be asked to pick up any necessary textbooks, etc. from their home school.



Laptops

All DCA students will use the laptop provided by the DASD's 1:1 program.

Students who wish to join the DCA or return to the brick-and-mortar from the cyber program will only be allowed to do so at the beginning of a marking period.

PA Code 4.22 requires every student to take classes in language arts, mathematics, science/technology, social studies, health/physical education, information skills, career education, family and consumer science, and the arts every year.

Students should work with their school counselors on their course selections when applicable. Students who want to take a class that is not offered by the DCA can consider taking the class in person at the brick-and-mortar.



TYPICAL PROGRESSIONS

Grade	Core Courses	Encores
Sixth	Literature 6 Writing 6 Math 6 Science 6 Social Studies 6	Physical Education 6 Health 6 General Music 6 Art 6 Engineering Inventions Expeditions (French, German or Spanish)
Seventh	English 7 Literature English 7 Writing Math 7 Science 7 American History 7	Physical Education 7 Health 7 Technology and Engineering Foundations Expeditions (French, German or Spanish) Pick 2: General Music 7, Art 7, or Family Consumer Science 7
Eighth	English 8 Math 8 or Algebra I Science 8 American History 8 French I, German I or Spanish I	Physical Education 8 Health 8 General Music 8 Art 8 Design and Modeling Family Consumer Science 8

ART

Art 6

The Art curriculum provides for sequential growth and development through Art Education. Student production of artwork requires student knowledge of the elements of arts and principles of composition, as well as painting, drawing, digital design, and three-dimensional artwork (sculpture, ceramics, and crafts). Art history education is incorporated throughout the course, encouraging a deeper understanding of the arts and their connection to culture, history, and society. The curriculum is aligned with the PA Academic Standards for Arts and Humanities. Authentic assessment of skills is practiced through student-created artwork, and students are provided opportunities to reflect upon, analyze, and exhibit their work. Creating a supportive atmosphere that allows all students to incorporate problem-solving and information-based decision-making.

Studio Art 7

Studio Art 8

The studio art curriculum will allow students to experience a little bit of everything. The focus will be on producing artwork and interpreting that artwork for meaning, while actively engaging in creative problem-solving and self-expression using a variety of concepts and materials. Students will be exposed to the principles of composition, painting, clay, 3-dimensional sculpture and craft, digital design, self-portraiture, landscape, figure drawing, color theory, and much more. Art history is incorporated throughout, encouraging a deeper understanding of the arts and their connections to culture, history, and society. Students are provided the opportunity to use art to explore personal thoughts and opinions and that of the world around them.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Literature 6

The 6th grade literature curriculum is designed to develop the strategies needed to become a better reader, listener and critical thinker. Students will read for a variety of purposes, including: reading for literary experiences, reading for information and technical reading. Purposeful reading enhances both comprehension and reading skills, helping students to construct meaning by developing a robust vocabulary. Literature study includes fiction (short stories, poetry, drama, and oral traditions); as well as nonfiction (essays, autobiographies and technical readings). In addition to understanding, analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating text, students will develop other critical thinking skills through text interaction. Students will be exposed to a full spectrum of reading genres that are intended to cultivate an interest in life-long reading

Writing 6

The 6th grade writing program provides a variety of opportunities for developing writers. The modes of writing are identified by the Pennsylvania Academic Standards (narrative, informational and persuasive), and are utilized within the curriculum as students write for a variety of purposes. In this course, students will grow in their knowledge of the five characteristics of effective writing (focus, content, organization, style, and conventions). Students will learn techniques to help them write with a clear focus and controlled organization. They will also develop vocabulary appropriate for descriptive word choices (i.e., adjectives, nouns, verbs). Teacher instruction will help students to convey the tone and voice of their writing. Students will utilize different media/technology for self-directed learning. Collaborative writing and research assignments will also be used as instructional methods by the teachers.

English Literature 7

Literature study includes both fiction, such as short stories, poetry, drama, and oral traditions as well as nonfiction pieces encompassing essays, autobiographies and technical readings. As students continue to develop as readers, they will identify and interpret differences in formal and informal languages used in speech, writing and literature. In addition to understanding, analyzing, interpreting and evaluating text, students develop critical thinking skills which are constructed through the intentional interaction between the reader and the text. Students are exposed to a full spectrum of reading genres which are intended to support and cultivate life-long reading.

English Writing 7

In 7th Grade ELA Writing, students engage in a variety of opportunities for developing writers. The modes of writing (narrative, informational and argumentative) are utilized within the curriculum as students write for a variety of purposes. In this course, students will further develop their knowledge of the five characteristics of effective writing (focus, content, organization, style, and conventions). Students will practice techniques to help them write with a clear focus, controlled organization and ultimately develop content appropriate for their specific topic. Specifically, this method puts emphasis on a better understanding of style by using a variety of sentence structures and descriptive word choices (i.e., adjectives, nouns, verbs). Finally, the use of media and technology is integral in students' self-directed learning, group collaborations and research, as well as a vital tool used by teachers to supplement the curriculum.

English 8

The 8th-grade English program is a comprehensive approach nurturing effective communication skills through reading, writing, listening, and speaking. It fosters critical thinking by exploring diverse texts and various writing styles. This program emphasizes both formal and informal language distinctions, aiding students in understanding their usage in speech, writing, and literature. Additionally, it integrates technology and media, serving as a valuable tool for both independent and collaborative learning experiences. Ultimately, it aims to empower students as lifelong learners equipped with the skills to communicate effectively and engage meaningfully with the world around them.

FAMILY CONSUMER SCIENCE

Family/Consumer Science 7

The 7th grade FCS course includes a general introduction to preparing food in the kitchen, kitchen equipment, MyPlate, and superfoods. Kitchen experience is gained through projects completed at home. Laundry care, child development, and an introduction to sewing is also included. Students will leave sewing with not only a hand-made project, but also the skills gained from exercising patience and persistence while learning a process which is new to many students.

Family/Consumer Science 8

The 8th grade FCS course includes units on kitchen safety, the basics of how to follow a recipe, food science, and nutrition. Students will collaborate during food labs and projects (both personal and community service-related), and an emphasis is placed on executing recipes accurately, teamwork, and time management. Other units include sewing basics, measuring & cutting fabric, following pattern directions, and hand sewing skills. An introduction to budgeting and finance is also covered, with an exploration into credit cards, debit cards, earning money from your first job, and consumerism in the 21st Century.

HEALTH

Health 6

Health 6 is a course that focuses on the connection between physical, mental, emotional and social wellness in order to promote a healthy lifestyle. This course meets 2X per cycle. Students will understand and practice a variety of life skills such as communication, anger and stress management, refusal skills, and conflict resolution. Additional topics include, human growth and development, nutrition, and improving self-image.

Health 7

Health 8

All students must take health in 7th and 8th grades. The General Health curriculum is offered in 7th and 8th grades. It is important during these formative years that students acquire a knowledge base to make healthy lifestyle decisions. Students will view health as a state of physical, mental, intellectual and social well-being. The course content is designed to meet the following state standards: concepts of health, healthful living and safety and injury prevention. Topics included in the middle school health program are: life skills, systems of the body, human growth and development, chemical substances, alcohol and tobacco, dental hygiene, mental health, diseases, eating disorders, anger management, and self-esteem. It is the intent that the student will acquire or further develop worthwhile habits, knowledge, skills and attitudes that will last a lifetime. Parents have the right to opt their child out of the Human Growth and Development unit 11 by completing and returning the letter sent to each family. Students who opt out will be assigned an alternate health unit of study.

MATH

Math 6

6th Grade Mathematics focuses on developing advanced, multi-step problem-solving skills that require critical thinking. This course includes Pre-Algebra concepts and conceptual and abstract representations of mathematics. This course prepares students for Pre-Algebra or Algebra I in 7th grade.

Math 7

Grade 7 Math emphasizes problem solving in the categories of rational numbers, expressions & equations, geometry, ratios & proportional relationships, and probability & statistics. A focus on the Standards of Mathematical Practices encourages students to use the skills of perseverance, abstract & quantitative reasoning, communication, modeling, strategic use of tools, attending to precision, and making use of structure to deepen their understanding of mathematical concepts.

Math 8

Grade 8 Math introduces students to important concepts that are essential for success at the next level. In this course there will be an emphasis on expressions and equations, including problem solving with radicals and integer exponents, analyzing linear relationships between variables using slope, and writing, solving, graphing linear equations. Students will work with rational and irrational numbers, explore functions, apply properties of geometry, and investigate and understand bivariate data. A focus on the Standards of Mathematical Practices encourages students to use the skills of perseverance, abstract & quantitative reasoning, communication, modeling, strategic use of tools, attending to precision, and making use of structure to deepen their understanding of mathematical concepts.

Algebra I

Middle school students can take Algebra I if they have successfully demonstrated understanding of all Math 7 and Math 8 concepts. Please see the high school catalog for a course description.

MUSIC

General Music 6

This course gives the students an opportunity to experience music through listening, creating original compositions, and performing on instruments while utilizing current music technology. Elements of music included in the course are: theory, styles, technology, cultures, instruments and current trends in music.

General Music 7

General Music 8

General Music focuses on giving students experiences in music through the use of technology: listening, creating original compositions and performing on instruments (piano, ukulele, world percussion). Elements of music included in the course are: theory, styles, technology, cultures, history, instruments and current trends in music.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical Education 6

Physical Education 7

Physical Education 8

All students are required to take physical education in 6-8th grades. The Physical Education program is designed to meet the physical, mental, emotional and social needs of the middle school student through vigorous physical exercise. Flexibility, strength, coordination, and cardio-vascular endurance are the ultimate goals of the total fitness-based program. Activities are designed to meet state standards: safety and injury prevention, physical activities that promote fitness, effects of regular participation in physical activity, response of the body systems to physical activity, physical activity preferences, motor skill improvement, physical activity and group interaction, and concepts, principles, and strategies of movement. It is our intent that students acquire or further develop healthy habits, knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will last a lifetime.

SCIENCE

Science 6

Sixth grade Science focuses on the topics of Earth Science and Environmental Science. Topics include water, the atmosphere, weather, plate tectonics, rocks, minerals, erosion, wetlands and watersheds.

Science 7

7th Grade Science is set up in 6 units of study. The first three units dwell on concepts and phenomena of chemistry. The last three units focus on concepts and phenomena of Ecology. All the units guide students in the process of science investigation, experimentation, discovery, and informational communication. The units have open ended text that allows students to record information as they become aware of new ideas. All units have open ended assessments. Students are all able to use course notebooks and course materials and resources to assist with all assignments and assessments. The units of study are Chemical Reactions and Matter, Chemical Reactions and Energy, Metabolic Reactions, Matter Cycling and Photosynthesis, Ecosystem Dynamics and Biodiversity, and Earth Resources and Human Impact.

Science 8

8th Grade Science: 8th Grade Science is set up in 6 units of study presented in a storyline format (a logical sequence of lessons that are motivated by students' questions) that integrates science and engineering practices and involves cross-curricular concepts. Interesting phenomena are the key to the storyline approach. Ultimately, every storyline is a journey to figuring out a phenomenon that defies easy explanation. Each unit has open ended text and opportunities that engage students in critical thinking and problem-solving. Units of study include Contact Forces, Sound Waves, Forces at a Distance (magnetism), Earth in Space, Genetics, and Natural Selections & Common Ancestry. Students will engage in content through questioning, investigating, and building understanding that is anchored in the students' own experiences and questions.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Social Studies 6

The Social Studies curriculum picks up the history of the United States from the study of pre-Columbian Indigenous Peoples in 5th grade. After a unit revolving around important concepts in Geography and Civics, students will investigate the European exploration and colonization of the North American Continent. They will examine what life was like in the American Colonies, and conclude with an in-depth study of the American Revolution. Students will study the five themes of geography, history and present-day culture of Mexico and Canada. Students will also study the American Revolution - beginning with the causes and ending with the Treaty of Paris.

American History 7

7th Grade looks at the history of the United States, American Revolution to the Civil War. Units of study include creating a new nation, the Articles of Confederation, the Constitution, the New Republic, and United States expansion across the North American continent. Common Summative Assessments include written tests, quizzes, projects and journals.

American History 8

8th Grade looks at the history of the United States (1850-1918). Units of study include the Civil War, Reconstruction, Progressivism, United States Imperialism and World War I. Common Summative Assessment of learning encompasses a variety of formats and may include: projects, written tests, quizzes and student presentations. Writing is incorporated into the 8th grade Social Studies curriculum through multiple means

including essays, personal responses and journals.

TECHNOLOGY AND ENGINEERING

Engineering Inventions 6

While it is important that students have the math and science background to do well in the engineering field, it is just as important that they understand the big ideas and principles behind engineering. Engineering Inventions is an inquiry-based, hands-on course that asks students to design and invent devices - using the principles of engineering - to solve real world problems. Students will study Bio- Engineering, Aerospace Engineering, Energy, Construction, Manufacturing and Robotics.

Technology and Engineering Foundations (7th or 8th grade)

Technology and Engineering Foundations prepares students to understand and apply technological concepts and engineering processes, the cornerstones of our technology and engineering programs. Through both individual and collaborative activities, students will actively create ideas, develop innovations, and devise practical solutions. The technology and engineering content, resources, and hands-on lab/classroom activities will enable students to apply their knowledge of science, mathematics, and other subjects to real-world situations. Students will use industry-standard tools and software to solve problems and design projects while developing critical thinking, communication, and teamwork abilities. By the end of the course, students will have built a strong foundation in core engineering and technology skills. This course is a mandatory course while in middle school.

Design and Modeling (8th grade)

In this course students begin to recognize the value of an engineering notebook to document and capture their ideas. They are introduced to and use the design process to solve problems and understand the influence that creative and innovative design has on our lives. Students use industry standard 3D modeling software to create a virtual image of their designs and produce a portfolio to showcase their creative solutions. Prerequisite: Technology and Engineering Foundations.

WORLD LANGUAGES

French Expeditions 6

German Expeditions 6

Spanish Expeditions 6

The World Language courses provide a functional approach that emphasizes communication skills. Students are engaged in motivating activities that develop their ability to use the language authentically through extended sequential study. The program depicts everyday life and social customs in the countries and the cultures of the target languages. A variety of activities, designed to emphasize everyday situations, enable students to become skilled in interpersonal, interpretive and presentational communication. As the emphasis on instruction is on communication and understanding - using fun and engaging methods—students will be expected to take chances and learn a world language the same way they learned their native language: through immersion.

French Expeditions 7

German Expeditions 7

Spanish Expeditions 7

The curriculum aims to offer a gateway to a deeper comprehension and appreciation of the language through the exploration of the vibrant cultures linked to it.

- Foster immersive and engaging experiences that utilize the new language and enrich cultural understanding.
- Cultivate effective communication skills for real-world scenarios.
- Encourage positive and inclusive attitudes towards individuals from diverse cultures.
- Inspire students with the motivation to pursue ongoing language learning journeys.

French I (8th grade)

German I (8th grade)

Spanish I (8th grade)

Level I language courses are introductory programs designed to cultivate fundamental communication skills in the target language, encompassing reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The curriculum places a strong emphasis on mastering elementary grammar structures and acquiring essential vocabulary, laying a solid foundation for effective communication. Throughout the course, students embark on a journey to explore and appreciate the rich cultures and customs of the countries where the language is spoken, fostering both linguistic and cultural awareness.