Alpha High School Curriculum Guide

2022-2023

Introduction

The Curriculum Guide is intended to provide information to students and families about the individualized academic pathways available through Alpha. We strive for simplicity and student ownership over academic choices as well as outcomes. No single publication can reliably describe every situation that may arise in the course of a student's time at Alpha. Therefore, students and families are encouraged to use this Curriculum Guide as a resource and communicate with the Alpha High School Guides throughout their time at Alpha.

The Curriculum Guide was developed in collaboration with Alpha Guides, leaders and parents. It is important that everyone in the community reviews the content and familiarizes themselves with how Alpha works.

About Alpha

Alpha High School
612 West 4th Street
Austin, Texas 78701
512-595-0801

Alpha was founded in 2016 as a private day school located in Austin, Texas, serving students from kindergarten through high school. In 2021, Alpha expanded to locations across Texas. Alpha was founded on three pillars that form the basis of our educational philosophy:

- **Students love school.**
  Students succeed when they love school. Everything else (learning, creativity, risk-taking, hard work) follows from love of school. Ultimately, love of school comes from the self-agency and engagement students feel when they truly invest in their school experience.

- **Students learn two times (2x) faster.**
  Alpha utilizes adaptive technology, an innovative schedule, and the self-agency of each student to create an environment where students complete the same amount of content in half the time.

- **Students learn life skills.**
  Alpha students learn practical life skills, such as public speaking, focus and intensity, giving and receiving feedback, personal finance, and entrepreneurship. During workshops, students tackle projects as individuals or with a group of their peers.

Academic Program Overview

Autonomy, accountability and ingenuity are central to Alpha High School. Guides mentor students as they work independently with adaptive apps to advance through their required courses. Students earn the same or more credits compared to traditional high schools, but do so more quickly, leaving time for their true passion – a 4-year AlphaX Masterpiece that ties together multiple disciplines.

Alpha's adaptive learning environment includes Masterpiece projects, highly engaging group workshops that take our students all over the city, and personalized college counseling. While Alpha's high school

experience is anything but traditional, our students are bolstered with in-depth curriculum support, ensuring that core requirements are fulfilled, while deeper interests are explored.

Student-Driven Learning and Contract

Alpha is building an exceptional school. Through self-directed learning and governance, Alpha students have full ownership of their school. To make sure that students understand their responsibilities relative to their education, we ask them to sign a contract each year. The contract is made up of five articles, the most critical articles being the following:

Article I
I am personally accountable for my actions, my time and my work. This means that my school and my parents are not responsible for my education - I own my education. Coming to Alpha is MY choice.

Article III
I will do the hard work required to own my education and accomplish my goals. I will fail sometimes, but I will take setbacks as temporary and bounce back quickly.

Article IV
I have the opportunity to do something real in high school. I will use my time in high school to complete an ambitious, bold and extraordinary project that excites me.

Graduation Requirements

To qualify for an Alpha diploma, a student must earn a minimum of 24 credits. The academic breakdown of credits is as follows:

English	4 credits
Math	4 credits
Science	4 credits *
Social Science	2 credits **
World Languages	2 credits
Student-Driven Electives	3 credits
AlphaX	5 credits

* Includes 1 credit of Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science
** Includes US History

GPA

Alpha does not rank its students. A student's GPA is calculated by multiplying the academic year grade by the weight of the course. Courses are designated as college preparatory or Advanced Placement (AP). The weighted GPA is calculated as follows: +1.0 for AP.

Grading Scale

A+	97 - 100	B+	87 - 89	C+	77 - 79	D+	67 - 69	F	0 - 59
A	93 - 96	B	83 - 86	C	73 - 76	D	63 - 66		
A-	90 - 92	B-	80 - 82	C-	70 - 72	D-	60 - 62		

Quality Points

A+	4.3	B+	3.3	C+	2.3	D+	1.3	F	0
A	4.0	B	3.0	C	2.0	D	1.0		
A-	3.7	B-	2.7	C-	1.7	D-	0.7		

College Counseling

Alpha's goal is to maximize opportunities for each student. While we expect some of our graduates to opt into unique opportunities, like the Thiel Fellowship, acceptance to a top tier university is one way to optimize opportunity.

How do we do this? By creating a clear pathway where the only delta in outcome is based on the input or work ethic of a student.

College Counseling Goals Mirror Alpha Promises**:**
1. Love your college
2. Attend the best college *for you*
3. Learn life skills through the admissions process

Alpha maintains a college readiness timeline that is updated annually. The timeline includes a series of information sessions, independent meetings and objectives that allow Alpha to provide resources, tools and serve the needs of each student. The college admissions process is completely opt-in for students and families.

Attendance

Regular attendance is critical for success at Alpha. Alpha's adaptive software allows for students to work independently, however, the discussions, group activities, and interactions during the school day are key to success at Alpha. Students are expected to be in school daily, on-time and ready to learn.

For students with extenuating circumstances, Alpha Anywhere is available to students who are home due to illness or have a personal situation that requires an extended absence from school. While in Alpha Anywhere, students will have the opportunity to meet with their Guide virtually to set their academic goals and discuss their app progress.

For more information about Alpha Anywhere, parents and students may contact the Head of High School to make arrangements. Guides will be working with students both on-campus and online..

Planning a Course of Study

Students meet with their advisor at the start of their Alpha career. Together, the advisor and the student create a pathway to graduation. The plan may be altered at any time, based on the student's interest. As the student travels through the AlphaX learning plan, courses that complement their passion are added to the pathway to graduation.

AP Testing

Alpha High School provides students with the opportunity to register for and take AP Exams in various subjects of their choosing. AP Exams are standardized exams offered by the College Board. They are designed to measure how well students have mastered advanced high school content in each applicable subject. Scoring well on these exams is beneficial for students' admission to college and students may receive college credit for passing scores. If a student registers for an AP Exam in a particular subject, the student is enrolled in advanced placement coursework within their adaptive learning applications for that subject, and receives additional adaptive learning applications as resources for their AP Exam.

How do students determine which AP Exams to take?

Students may elect to register for AP Exams in the subjects of their choice. This election process occurs at the beginning of the school year. Following conversations with their academic advisor, students indicate which AP Exams they are electing to register for by notifying their advisor. From there, Alpha High School handles student registration and payment for AP tests. Registered students will receive a confirmation email from CollegeBoard. If a student registers for an AP Exam in a particular subject, the expectation is that the student remains current with their coursework in their applications for that subject.

Academic and Testing Accommodations

Classroom and testing accommodations are approved on an individual basis. The deadline to apply for accommodations is January 6, 2023.

Academic Integrity Policy

A core principle of Alpha is for students to take responsibility for their own work, and acknowledging when any work submitted is the result of collaboration. Alpha High School requires that all students be accountable for the integrity of their work. Alpha students should know that Guides utilize software to check for plagiarism. Plagiarism is the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own. This is an offense that takes place each and every day in the United States in an academic and business context and results in serious repercussions.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following:
- Submitting writing in whole or in part that is taken from another student or any other source that is not the person submitting the writing.
- Taking an essay or any other material from the Internet and using it as one's own without citing the source and using quotations.
- Paraphrasing another author's work without citing the source.
- Using the ideas of another author without citing the source.
- Resubmitting work that was originally written for another course.
- Sharing any information about the content of assessments, including quizzes, tests, or exams with one's peers is strictly prohibited.
- Cheating or attempting to cheat on any school work including, but not limited to, app work, lab reports, tests, quizzes, guided notes, major assessments, etc. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, completing work through the use of unauthorized notes, accessing the internet (Google, Wikipedia, etc.) when completing assessments, copying another student's answers, letting someone copy your answers, use of any device to send or receive answers when inappropriate, or in any way giving or receiving answers that are not one's own.
- Completing any assignments (including, but not limited to, app work, quizzes, guided notes, etc.) on behalf of another student or asking/allowing another student to complete such work for you.
- Copying (or sharing) work, assignments, projects or any other assigned work from another person.
- Unauthorized use during an examination of any electronic devices such as cell phones, smart watches, computers or other technologies to retrieve or send information.
- Tampering with grades.

Disciplinary action for academic dishonesty follows these guidelines:

First Offense
Student may fail the assignment and/or lose progress tied to the Alpha motivational model. Guide or Head of High School will notify the student's parents.

Second Offense
Student will fail the assignment. Guide or Head of School will arrange for a conference with parents and the student. Any motivational model points will be lost. Student may receive a home suspension for a minimum of 1 week up to the remainder of the session. Student will be placed on academic probation.

Third Offense
Student will be subject to dismissal. Head of School will schedule a conference with the student and parents.

AlphaX

AlphaX, short for Alpha Expertise, is a multi-year program that every high school student must complete before graduating from Alpha. The mission of the program is to give students the time, structure, and resources to develop expertise and pursue a bold, valuable project in an area of personal interest. As a requirement of AlphaX, each student sets an ambitious, long-term goal. We call this goal a Masterpiece. The name is intentional – the historical definition of a Masterpiece is a work of a high standard produced in order to graduate from apprentice to master.

During each year of high school, students take courses associated with the AlphaX program, which are outlined in the graphic below. These courses include the following:

- In students' first year at Alpha High School, students take (i) AlphaX Fundamentals, in which students master the fundamental skills they need to plan for and execute a successful Masterpiece; (ii) AlphaX Passion & Purpose, in which students explore the concepts of passion and purpose, their personal passion and purpose, and define their Masterpiece topic; and (iii) AlphaX Lift-Off, in which students strengthen their Masterpiece topic and align it to the Alpha standard. Students' first year of AlphaX culminates in the Masterpiece Defense, during which students defend their Masterpiece topic and their plan for execution of that Masterpiece topic to a panel.
- In students' second year at Alpha High School, students complete the AlphaX Sprint, during which students design an ambitious, 6-8 week plan to transform their Masterpiece idea into concrete, real-world action. Following the Sprint, students enter the Orbit phase of AlphaX, during which students execute their Masterpiece through a goal-setting and goal-execution process that aligns with their Masterpiece timeline. Students also take a Project Management course during their second year of high school, where they learn the fundamentals necessary to manage a long-term, difficult project.
- In students' third and fourth years at Alpha High School, students remain in Orbit, during which they continue to execute their Masterpiece according to their timeline and Masterpiece learning plan. Students' time in Orbit culminates in their completed Masterpiece.

Importantly, we encourage students to find and take additional courses related to their Masterpiece area of expertise. Though these courses are not formally offered as part of the AlphaX program, we may classify these courses as a student-driven elective for which students are able to earn credit.

AlphaX

What is Alphax?

AlphaX, short for Alpha Expertise, is a four-year program that every Level 4 student must complete before graduating from Alpha. The mission of the program is to give students the time, structure, and resources to develop expertise and pursue a bold and valuable project in an area of personal interest.

What are the stages of AlphaX?

The stages of AlphaX are outlined below. Each stage has a Test to Pass which will unlock the next stage for the student. The process is individualized. Each student will be progressing at his or her own pace.* Completion of the Test to Pass associated with a particular stage will unlock the next stage for the student.

Fundamentals
❖ Subject Matter Expertise
❖ Learning to Learn
❖ Presentation Skills

Test to Pass
Learning Plan (Random Topic) + Presentation on Learning Plan

Passion & Purpose
❖ Identifying Passion
❖ Identifying Purpose
❖ Defining Masterpiece Topic

Test to Pass
Learning Plan (Masterpiece) + Presentation on Learning Plan

Lift-Off
❖ Aligning Masterpiece with DELT
  - Desirable
  - Externally Hard & Valuable
  - Love It
  - Time

Test to Pass
Masterpiece Defense + Updated Learning Plan

Spike Sprint
❖ Meeting with Spike Lab
❖ Spike Sprint

Test to Pass
Completion of Spike Sprint

Orbit
❖ Masterpiece Execution

Test to Pass
Completed Masterpiece

Course Offerings

*AP course available

English		**Mathematics**	
	English 9		Algebra I
	English 10		Geometry
	English 11*		Algebra II
	English 12*		Pre-Calculus
			Calculus*
			Statistics*

Science		**Social Science**	
	Biology*		World Geography*
	Chemistry*		World History*
	Physics*		US History*
	Computer Science*		US Government*
	Environmental Systems*		Micro/Macro Economics*

AlphaX

- AlphaX Fundamentals
- AlphaX Passion & Purpose
- AlphaX Lift-Off
- AlphaX Sprint
- AlphaX Orbit 1
- AlphaX Orbit 2
- AlphaX Orbit 3
- AlphaX Project Management
- AlphaX Communication & Public Speaking

World Languages Full suite of courses offered through online provider, Language Bird*

Student-Driven Electives

Alpha has a very liberal approach to electives. Our goal is for electives to be driven by student interest. Therefore, we accept a broad range of third-party courses as electives.

With respect to AlphaX, we encourage students to find and take courses related to their Masterpiece area of expertise. Though these courses are not formally offered as part of the AlphaX program, we may classify these courses as a student-driven elective for which students are able to earn credit.

Course Descriptions

English
- English 9
- English 10
- English 11
- English 12

Mathematics
- Algebra I
- Geometry
- Algebra II
- Pre-Calculus
- Calculus
- Statistics

Science
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Physics
- Computer Science
- Environmental Systems

Social Science
- World Geography
- World History
- US History
- US Government
- Micro/Macro Economics

AlphaX
- AlphaX Fundamentals
- AlphaX Passion & Purpose
- AlphaX Lift-Off
- AlphaX Sprint
- AlphaX Orbit 1
- AlphaX Orbit 2
- AlphaX Orbit 3
- AlphaX Project Management
- AlphaX Communication & Public Speaking

World Languages
- World Language Courses