

# Profile

2019-2020



Community High School  
of Arts and Academics

[www.communityhigh.net](http://www.communityhigh.net)

# Note for College Admissions Professionals

Community High School is a rigorous, writing-intensive college preparatory environment. We believe it is the privilege and obligation of independent schools to offer independently designed courses, innovative in content and design.

**Community High does not use a grading scale**, either numeric or letter-based, to evaluate our students. All classes are offered Credit/No Credit. More significantly, each student’s acquired knowledge and skills are described *narratively* and in detail for each class, each semester.\*

We hope the additional nuance inherent in our mode of evaluation is more helpful to you than a letter or number, though we do understand the relative difficulty this may present admissions officers whose institutions require comparative quantitative data such as grade point averages. If such information is needed, **please do not hesitate to contact our Registrar, Erin Coogan or our Academic Director, Josh Chapman.**

Though most of our upper level courses are quite difficult, requiring scholarly writing, research, discussion and reading comparable to or exceeding that required in preparatory classes elsewhere, **we generally do not offer AP classes.** There are philosophical reasons for this—it seems foolish to rob good teachers of the central pleasure and obligation of course design—and practical: an AP U.S. History course, for example, requires teachers to speed rapidly and shallowly through the same facts without regards to local history, the interests and personal backgrounds of the students, or the echoes and ramifications of current events. Perhaps most importantly, A.P. courses minimize research and writing—the actual work of scholars—in favor of a single reductive test. The same objections extend to many science, art and humanities disciplines, but not to Calculus, which we do offer.

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\* Admissions officers who’ve worked with our students in the past will note that we have suspended the Credit with Honor of previous years. Credit with Honor was not meant to represent an “A,” but a remarkable effort judged against a student’s individual horizon. Unfortunately, we have found that this designation was too often equated with a grade or expected as a given for the college-bound. The faculty also felt that it was too difficult to distribute fairly among a consistently motivated and small student body. We have therefore opted to dispense with this designation.



## College Counseling Contact Information

### Registrar

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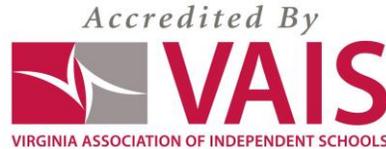
## Description

Founded in 2002, Community High School of Arts and Academics is a secular, independent preparatory high school located in Roanoke, Virginia. Our student body is capped at 65, and our curriculum is rich in arts and seminar-based instruction. Though CHS is not a free school, that remains our long-term goal; our tuition now is only \$5,500.00, a fraction of the actual cost of educating each student. An additional third of our student body receives significant need-based aid. We are fully accredited through The Virginia Association of Independent Schools.

## School Statistical Profile 2019-2020

- Faculty with post-graduate degrees: **72%**
- Demographic draw: **50-mile radius**
- Full time students: **60**
- Approximate full time student-teacher ratio: **4:1**
- Male/female student ratio: **27:33**
- Students on scholarship: **45%**
- Students representing traditionally underserved ethnicities: **7%**
- Students born outside of the U.S.: **1**
- Students who will be first generation college students: **6%**
- Mean ERW SAT (2018) compared to Virginia: **641/567**
- Mean Math SAT (2018) compared to Virginia: **562/550**

*Fully Accredited through The Virginia Association of Independent Schools*



## Graduation Requirements

**Math:** 6 required, 8 recommended

**Foreign Language:** 6 in 1 language or 8 in 2 languages, 8 total recommended

**Fine Arts:** 6 required

**Humanities:** 14 required, 16 recommended

**Elective:** 6 required, 2 of which must be Physical Education

**Science:** 8 required (6 lab), 10 recommended

*Note: With the exception of Lab Sciences, a credit reflects one semester's work.*

Department	Required	Recommended
Science	8 total (6 lab)	10
Math	6	8
Foreign Language	6 in 1 or 8 in 2	8
Fine Art	6	8
Humanities	14	16
Elective	6	6
Total	46(48)	56

## College Counseling

At CHS, we work with each student and family to ensure that the college chosen is appropriate and suited to a student's individual finances, talents and goals. Below is a list showing the range of colleges that have accepted our students in the past four years; institutions where CHS currently matriculate are highlighted.

Agnes Scott College  
**Alfred University**  
American University  
**Bard College**  
Beloit College  
Bennington College  
**Berea College**  
**Brevard College**  
**Bryn Mawr College**  
**Carleton College**  
Christopher Newport University  
Clarkson University  
Colby College  
**College of Wooster**  
College of the Atlantic  
**College of William and Mary**  
Colorado State University  
Connecticut College  
Davidson College  
Dickinson College  
Drexel University  
**Drew University**  
Earlham College  
Eckerd College  
Elon University  
Emerson College  
**Emory & Henry College**  
Fordham University  
**Furman University**

George Mason University  
Gettysburg College  
**Goucher College**  
**Grinnell College**  
**Guilford College**  
Hampton University  
Haverford College  
**Hampshire College**  
Hendrix College  
**Hollins University**  
Ithaca College  
**James Madison University**  
**Jefferson College of Health Sciences**  
**Juniata College**  
Kalamazoo College  
**Macalester College**  
Marlboro College  
Marymount Manhattan  
Marymount University  
**Mary Washington**  
**University Honors College**  
Marquette University  
**McGill University (Canada)**  
**Mount Holyoke**  
The New School  
Oberlin University  
Otterbein University  
ODU School of Engineering

Radford University  
**Randolph College**  
**Randolph-Macon College**  
**Roanoke College**  
Rochester Institute of Technology  
Sarah Lawrence College  
Skidmore College  
**Stevens Institute of Technology**  
St. Mary's College of Maryland  
St. Olaf College  
University of Michigan  
University of North Carolina--Asheville  
**University of Glasgow (Scotland)**  
University of Portland  
**University of Richmond**  
University of St. Andrews (Scotland)  
University of Virginia  
**VCU Honors College**  
**VCU School of the Arts**  
**Virginia Tech**  
**Virginia Tech School of Music**  
Wake Forest University  
**Warren Wilson College**



# Statement of Mission and Philosophy

*Our mission, rewritten by faculty and ratified by our board on our tenth anniversary, is as follows:*

**Community High School** is a small, secular, independent, college preparatory high school grounded in the liberal arts, founded with a commitment to seminar-based classes, and located in Roanoke's city center.

**Our Mission is** to develop creative and independent problem solvers with diverse backgrounds and abilities who will be scientifically and culturally literate, globally conscious, locally engaged citizens.

**Our Pedagogy** is founded upon academic inquiry, which emphasizes how knowledge is learned. Our students' endeavors reflect the nature of intellectual and creative work in each respective field of study. Their efforts are assessed comprehensively and narratively with regard to students' personal growth.

**We Value** trust, humor, empathy, curiosity, respect for the free exchange of ideas, and the acceptance of failure as an inevitable and necessary part of real learning.

**We Approach** the Arts as an essential form of intellectual inquiry and as a foundation of academic, emotional and social development, regardless of a student's eventual academic field of study or career goals.

**We Partner** with area colleges, universities, cultural and civic organizations, and provide cultural programming for the community at large.

**We Respect** our students as scholars, citizens, and individuals, encouraged in their curiosity, active in their own education and responsible for their own achievement, as defined by their particular passions, goals, and circumstances.

**Our Community**, including students, faculty, families, alumni and board members, shares our commitment to compassion, citizenship, scholarship, and the intentional nurturing of place.

## Curriculum

Community High was founded by university faculty trained in the liberal arts tradition; our mission and curriculum reflect those origins. At CHS, we hire teachers whom we presume to be wise, humble and curious, and trust them to develop and pilot their own courses as professors in liberal arts colleges do. And just as most liberal arts colleges allow students to exceed minimal requirements in areas where they have special interest or talent, so do we strive to allow students to take more classes than would be typical in math, science, art, language or the humanities.

We offer our students a college preparatory **Humanities** curriculum in a format different from that of other schools in our region. Our courses are generally offered by semester, and conducted in small, multi-age seminars. The dominant model is that of college. Instead of English 9, 10, 11, and 12, for example, this year a student may take classes on Timbuktu, Tokugawa Japan, Beowulf, and so on. Like many preparatory schools, we require all students

to take two semesters focusing on American history<sup>2</sup>, and we often offer courses in Geopolitics or academic writing focused on the developmental needs of underclassmen. Most classes, however, are likely to contain both literary and social science content, so that students are required to approach an individual course's content focus from a variety of curricular perspectives. Critical and creative writing, independent research, seminar discussion and close reading are all emphasized.

Students select courses investigating the literature, art, political and social history of several cultural regions (among them, specifically, the United States, Latin America, the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, Arabia, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Eastern Asia, Southern Asia) and eras (which divide by region). No class could reasonably contain all modes of inquiry—archaeology is more applicable in some courses, political science in others, for example—but over the course of their time at the school, students will be exposed to the research methodologies of a wide variety of social sciences. Similarly, students will be exposed to a wide variety of literary forms, presented in their appropriate historical, formal, and cultural contexts, aspects of literature too often neglected in English classes.

Classes are small, capped at 16 and rarely exceeding 12 students; the lion's share of teachers' work is therefore concentrated in editing, coaching and continuing scholarship.

Though content perforce varies in Humanities classes, evaluation of performance and academic growth is typically clustered around progress in consistent areas. These include: *academic writing, problem solving and critical thought, test performance (including, but not limited to, memorization, extemporaneous argument and deductive reasoning), independent research, participation and seminar discussion, formal presentation, and academic reading*. Faculty discuss expectations in each of these areas with students and among themselves with the goal of graduating students who are prepared to excel in college-level scholarship and assessment.

Our **Math** courses are yearlong, and more closely align with those offered in peer institutions. As noted above, we do not generally offer AP courses at CHS, as we value the ability to develop responsive and independent curricula; our math department is an exception, as we do offer AB and BC Calculus courses for students who are prepared to pursue them. We also offer Statistics as an advanced course, with the recognition that for many professions and fields of study, grounding in statistical analysis is more valuable than Calculus. For students who take longer to master mathematical concepts, or whose pre-high school preparation prevented them from progressing to either Statistics or Calculus by the time of graduation, we provide necessary interim courses, such as F.S.T. (Functions, Statistics and Trigonometry). Occasionally, as appropriate, we also have offered terminal courses in practical applied mathematics in personal finance and related fields for students whose IEP's indicate that a more conventional preparatory path in higher mathematics is unwise.

The modes of assessment in mathematics center around testing, as one might expect, but our small class sizes allow teachers to observe students engaging in mathematical work every day. Class participation is therefore not merely a measure of quiet, respectful citizenship, but

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<sup>2</sup> In addition to this, we ask all students to undertake one of a variety of courses offered focusing on targeted historical themes and literatures of post-WWII America.

of creative quantitative analysis. Our primary goal is not the mastery of process, but the nurturing of independent abstract reasoning.

Our **Science** curriculum contains relatively conventional high school survey courses in Chemistry, Physics, Environmental Science and Biology. (We do occasionally offer an AP Biology option as well.) Such courses are often multi-age, though Chemistry and Physics have a minimal math requirement, and can be taken in any sequence. All of our teachers have experience teaching on other campuses, including colleges, public and independent schools, and design their classes to meet or exceed normal college preparatory expectations in content knowledge. We do, however, in consonance with our mission, take special care to focus not only on knowledge mastery, but also on how science works, on how knowledge is learned. We require that all students pursue two of their three Science Courses with an additional Lab class and credit, so that they may actively engage in experimentation throughout their time at CHS. Assessment of students is therefore based on thorough and engaged participation in the laboratory process, as well as in testing, academic writing, research and formal presentation.

In addition to the courses described above, we are also able to offer special topic classes on subjects as diverse as Paleoanthropology and Astrobiology. Such courses are offered in three or four-year rotation, and allow students to explore subjects they wouldn't otherwise be exposed to until college or university.

At Community High, courses in the **Arts** are considered “core” classes, and are required and weighted in the same way as those in languages, humanities, math and sciences. Evaluation is based not on “talent,” a slippery concept in any case, but in progress in creative thinking, in risk-taking, in sustained work ethic, in the full execution of ideas, in discipline and precision in that execution, in collaboration and openness to critique, and in the acquisition of skills relevant to the course.

Given that processual focus, CHS also provides additional relevant coursework focusing on the history and theory of arts disciplines. Since Band class is performance-based, for example, music students must also undertake survey courses in theory. Film Production class teaches camera use, lighting, screenwriting, and so on, while Film Genre and History courses contextualize that applied knowledge. Evaluation here depends on the course, but is mostly done according to the criteria established for the Humanities.

At CHS, we teach four **Foreign Languages** other than English, including Latin, German, French and Spanish. With the exception of Latin, all courses are taught with a greater emphasis on oral and aural fluency than is sometimes typical of high school language instruction. This is the benefit of exceptionally small enrollment, since classes in this division typically range from four to eight. Students are expected to attain vocabulary and grammar skills with the goal of entering college language instruction at a high enough level that fluency at college graduation in an additional language is possible regardless of a student's major. Students who wish to pursue additional languages, from Thai to Hebrew to Modern Greek, are allowed to do so through individual instruction, online instruction or college enrollment.

**Physical Education** exposes students to a variety of fitness programs and sports, with a goal of creating life-long fitness. We have partnered with Roanoke's nearby YMCA so students may augment outdoor sports activities—soccer, hiking, etc.—with programs of personal fitness, yoga and gym literacy. Students who already participate in travel sports or ballet as part of their busy schedules have typically been exempted, though some continue to participate.

Each year, qualified students supplement CHS classes with college courses at Hollins University, Roanoke College and Virginia Western Community College. This option is typically limited to upperclassmen who have exceeded expectations earlier in their high school careers, and are undertaken for full college credit as well as toward high school graduation requirements.

Students with specialized or esoteric interests are also encouraged to pursue internship opportunities at some of the many downtown institutions, ranging from the library's Virginia Room archive of historic documents to the Roanoke Children's Theatre. Such Internships may be pursued for credit, and are evaluated by a sponsoring faculty member to whom the student reports and documents her work.

## **Service and Cultural Outreach at CHS**

Although it is a private school, Community High takes its responsibilities as a citizen organization seriously; we do not wish for our students or our faculty to work or live separately from the community at large.

On our own campus and outside, we host roughly four artist-curated exhibitions a year, with work ranging from local to international, from obscure to academically established in a non-commercial, intimate environment devoted to experimental work which our students would not be able to experience otherwise.

The June M. McBroom Theatre, CHS's on-campus 150 seat flexible theater space, is similarly committed to diverse and public programming. As an acoustically and visually rich performance space in the heart of downtown, it has been a draw for both touring organizations ranging from Bluegrass wizard James King to the American Shakespeare Company, and local arts organizations including theater companies, literary organizations, and medical lecturers.

Service, of course, extends beyond intellectual programming. Our central location allows our students to intern or volunteer at a variety of institutions devoted to refugees, the elderly, social justice, and the environment. Collectively, we have undertaken several projects during devoted campus-wide service days. This year our students have also volunteered at T.A.P., the area's Rescue Mission and at Blue Ridge Literacy.