

A 21st Century Curricular Approach

At AltSchool we select and design curriculum to foster deep learning and prepare students for lifelong learning. Focused on competency in four domains—knowledge, skills, habits, and meta-cognition, or learning how to learn—AltSchool’s curriculum exposes learners to a variety of rich learning experiences that lead to agency, a clear sense of self, and a core set of competencies. These experiences enable learners to develop the skills and agency necessary to shape their journey as changemakers.

Why is it important for learners to develop agency?

AltSchool’s educational approach builds agency in learners, which is the ability to drive their own learning in responsible, constructive ways. The AltSchool learning community nurtures the whole child and incorporates competency-based assessment, appropriate interventions, and project-based learning. As learners take purposeful initiative in their own learning experiences, they develop agency, and become more engaged in and dedicated to learning.

How does AltSchool ensure that students are prepared for high school and beyond?

AltSchool’s comprehensive program prepares students to thrive wherever they continue their education. The breadth and depth of our scope and sequence ensures that our graduates have knowledge of the world, historically, geographically, and culturally. They develop awareness of the wider world and their place in it. Our graduates value diversity and have the skills, habits, and knowledge to take responsible and productive actions as world citizens.

What does it mean to prepare children for the future?

To succeed in an ever-shifting, technology-fueled society, learners must be prepared for the unpredictability of a future in which what they will need to know is also in flux. Therefore, we view learning as a high-priority, lifelong activity. At AltSchool, we nurture the whole child, enabling our learners to develop academic knowledge, social-emotional skills, and critical habits. In addition, our students learn how to learn, which requires that they be able to transfer competencies into a variety of complex roles, tasks, environments, and experiences.



How does AltSchool assess learning?

Throughout the school year, we use standardized testing, performance assessments, and quick assessments such as quizzes and surveys, to ensure that educators, parents, and learners have a holistic understanding of academic progress, strengths, challenges, and growth areas.

Three times a year, we administer age-appropriate standardized tests that are short and adapt to each child's level of knowledge. Learners who read at a second-grade level or above take MAP tests, and younger learners take CPAA. Our educators use the results (available within 48 hours) to help set personalized goals with learners.

In addition to standardized testing, we also assess understanding through performance assessments, which give learners the opportunity to demonstrate academic skills in meaningful ways. Some examples include writing a speech, play, or paper; building a model; constructing an object; creating a work of art; running a small business; or organizing a community event.

How does AltSchool measure competency?

At AltSchool, we measure competency through Milestones. Drawn from common core standards and research about how kids learn best, AltSchool Milestones ensure that all students achieve academic mastery, and acquire the social-emotional skills and critical thinking strategies they need to be successful learners, doers, and citizens, in an ever-changing world.

Milestones aid in the development of student agency in a few ways: setting clear expectations around learning; serving as a tool for appropriate goal-setting; creating a clear way to track student progress; and providing a framework for learners, educators, and parents to discuss progress.

