

Crossland High School

6901 Temple Hills Road
Temple Hills, MD 20748
Principal: Charles Thomas

Located in Temple Hills, Maryland, Crossland High School is a comprehensive, public secondary school of nearly 1,500 students. The school was founded in the mid-1960s. Beginning in the early 1990s, Principal Charles Thomas led a major school turnaround effort that transformed Crossland from a failing school—1% math proficiency and 38% reading proficiency in 2003—to one that met annual yearly progress for all subjects and subgroups in 2009. Staff at Crossland expects students to excel at a high level of academic achievement and go to college or attain other postsecondary education.

- ◆ High (9–12)
- ◆ 89% Black
- ◆ 8% Hispanic
- ◆ 2% Asian
- ◆ 1% White
- ◆ 65.7% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch
- ◆ 7% English Language Learners
- ◆ 8% Special Education

Establishing a Rigorous College-Going and Career-Ready Academic Program

Crossland High School offers a rigorous, traditional comprehensive high school program that includes a selection of Advanced Placement (AP) classes and a technical academy magnet. The academy is designed to provide students with marketable skills in cosmetology, drafting, welding, nursing, horticulture, masonry, air conditioning/refrigeration, printing, and culinary arts. The school also offers an International Baccalaureate (IB) Program for students who desire additional academic stimulation and intellectual challenges. In 2009, Crossland was named an IB World School.

Crossland identifies its priorities as increasing students' reading proficiency and improving students' basic math skills. To implement these goals, the school emphasizes reading and writing in every class and uses technology-driven math instruction.

The school's rigorous program encourages students to stretch themselves academically. All ninth- and tenth-grade students who read at grade level take at least one honors class. All eleventh- and twelfth-grade students are expected to enroll in at least one AP class. Additionally, eleventh-grade students enroll in an SAT prep class. Students who are not reading at grade level attend a double-block (1.5 hours) of English and math daily, rather than every other day.

Safe and Orderly Environment

As part of the turnaround efforts, Crossland improved its school culture and climate for students to create an environment in which students can focus primarily on academics rather than safety. The school used to have the second highest suspension rate in Prince George's County. But since the 2005 school year, Crossland has worked to foster a safe and orderly environment.

Crossland implements small learning communities with advisories. Each teacher is assigned a small group of students, and they meet during advisory time. Students stay with the same advisory teacher throughout high school. As a result, teachers get to know the students and serve as supportive adults. Crossland also enforces a strict discipline policy and a clear attendance policy for students and teachers. Students are required to wear uniforms and name badges upon entering the school building. Students are also expected to give back to their community, thus, the school has a community service requirement for graduation.

Using Data to Guide Interventions and Ensure Student Success

Crossland uses student achievement data to guide a variety of interventions that are targeted to increase student performance and ensure college and career readiness. School personnel track each student's progress using an Individualized Learning Plan (ILP). The ILP includes student-specific achievement data and college and career goals. The school also uses the ILP to place students in appropriate levels of core courses. Students who are identified as "advanced" by their achievement data are automatically placed into honors and AP-level courses.

All students and parents receive biweekly progress reports of student attendance data and academic progress for each class. These regular progress checks keep parents and students accountable for student achievement and allow the school to quickly intervene if a student is straying off track.

Communication

Communication-based strategies are used as the primary channels of intervention; ongoing communication acts as a continuous intervention. Counselors lead midyear workshops that are designed to help students recalibrate their study skills and improve their grade point averages for the following semester. Additionally, parents are encouraged to become members of the school's Instructional Council, which meets weekly and includes parents, department chairs, teacher coordinators, and school administrators. The principal is also available to conference with parents on a daily basis.

Creating a College-Going Culture

Crossland implements a college-going culture for students and provides supports and encouragement to foster such aspirations.

Students' academic efforts and excellence are rewarded and acknowledged publicly. Crossland recognizes students in quarterly honor roll assemblies, which the school credits with "motivate[ing] and rejuvenat[ing] faculty and students" regarding student achievement. Parents are invited to attend these events. Because the school emphasizes a culture of high academic achievement, students feel that it is "cool" to be smart and recognized at the honor roll assemblies. Students give resounding cheers at the assemblies for classmates who achieve the highest distinction—above a 4.0 grade point average. To encourage a sense of community and pride in achievements, the band, choir, and dance team perform at the assemblies.

Beginning in early ninth grade, counselors delve into discussions with students regarding their future. As in other high schools, counselors discuss basic topics—such as high school orientation, study skills, and student code of conduct—when students

enter the school in ninth grade. However, Crossland's academic counselors also explicitly discuss career exploration, graduation requirements, and post-high school plans and create a four-year plan with each student to encourage and enable their aspirations. These early conversations implant the idea that college is an attainable goal for many students who may not be considering postsecondary education. Counselors continue to foster college aspirations with tenth-grade students by discussing college course requirements, career exploration, and post-high school plans. When students reach eleventh grade, counselors initiate job shadowing opportunities, discuss college visits and college readiness, and explore possible post-high school plans. When students reach twelfth grade, counselors initiate more concrete conversations about the college application process, scholarships, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), letters of recommendation, and graduation from high school.

Counselors and staff at Crossland also organize college fairs for eleventh- and twelfth-grade students. These fairs expose eleventh-grade students to some of their postsecondary options and help twelfth-grade students gather more information about which colleges they may want to attend. By bringing college representatives to the campus, Crossland also makes the notion of attending college more tangible to younger students.

Assisting With the College Entry Process

Counselors and teachers at Crossland directly assist students and their families with applying, being accepted, and transitioning to college. All twelfth-grade students are required to complete the College Summit course—a class that is designed specifically to help students navigate through the college search, application, and funding processes. Throughout the year, the teacher of the College Summit course guides students on how to write a personal statement, take standardized tests, self-advocate, obtain letters of recommendation, visit campuses, meet with college recruiters, submit college applications, apply for financial aid, conduct themselves in an interview, make educated decisions about financial aid offers, decide which college to attend, and notify colleges of this decision. The teacher regularly follows up with students to remind them of upcoming deadlines and stays updated on each student's progress and status. The College Summit course also teaches students how to create a resume, write a cover letter, create a budget, manage money, and prepare for college and life after high school.

Engaging families in the college and financial aid application processes is another key way that Crossland assists its students with college entry. Throughout the year, parents are encouraged to attend evening and weekend workshops, often accompanied by their student. These workshops guide parents through the college search and application processes, assist in finding and applying for financial aid, clarify students' graduation requirements, and interactively present possible career options that students can pursue. Parents are also encouraged to join students on visits to college campuses whenever possible.

Crossland High School has established a college-going culture that is built on high expectations, a strong college-ready curriculum, a safe and personalized learning environment, and direct supports for students and their families with the college entry process. Administrators and staff strive to improve the school and maintain a culture of continuous progress to advance student development and achievement.

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