



# LAB SCHOOL



A HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM OF BETHLEHEM CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

## WHO ARE WE?

### PHILOSOPHY & HISTORY

The Bethlehem Central Lab School is a small, rigorous high school program carved out of the larger Bethlehem High School in which it is physically situated. Designed by members of the Bethlehem faculty, administration and community, the Lab School is committed to education through innovation and represents a bold thrust into the 21st century. Lab School students and faculty alike have been characterized as a community of risk-takers, pioneering active modes of learning that frequently involve students in independent research, formal presentations and interdisciplinary projects - all in a context of demanding course work and Regents mandates.



Chartered, in 1992, as a local response to calls from business, government and educational institutions to experiment with new methods of teaching and learning, the Lab School has been featured in the local press, as well as in national professional journals as a model for alternative education.

The Lab School is small and will remain so, this being one of its defining characteristics. The Lab School is committed to innovation as an ongoing endeavor. Student participation in many facets of the program is a major focus in the Lab School as well, based on the premise that the best preparation for citizenship is practice with citizenship responsibilities in school. We are also committed to parental involvement as much as possible and encourage a close relationship with many of our parents.

The Lab School is committed to employing “real-world” forms of assessments to the greatest possible extent. Thus, oral presentations, written research projects, traditional testing, and student internships are all a regular part of student life in the program. Finally, we believe in “mastery learning,” which means each student is expected to achieve competence in all areas studied. The passing grade in the program is 80%. Remediation, the ability to have a student and teacher revisit a project or test to gain greater understanding while also improving a student’s grade, is a regular part of all of our students’ work.

Enrollment in the Lab School is open to all students who have completed the eighth grade. Most students enter at the beginning of ninth grade and remain in the program until graduation at the end of his/her senior year. One of the most important aspects of the program is the opportunity to work with the same teachers over multiple years. If there are openings at other grade levels, students may enter the program in January or September, in that grade level only. The Lab School seeks a cross-section of students and represents all aspects of the Bethlehem student body. When the program is

over subscribed, a lottery is conducted in the spring and a waiting list is created to determine entrance into the program.

Lab School is located within Bethlehem High School itself. Students attend academic and elective classes with other Lab School students. Physical Education classes, music classes and lessons, lunch and all extra curricular activities occur within the larger high school. Lab School students participate in clubs, music organizations, sports teams, theater groups and all other activities our high school offers. For example, the current Lab School student body includes many athletes from the freshmen to varsity level. Lab School students are also active in the BCHS Student Senate, the school newspaper, theatre, yearbook and many other clubs and organizations.

## CURRICULUM

Lab School graduates complete four years of selected units that emphasize math, science, history, English and a second language. Lab School students complete the mandates for New York State Regents exams. In addition, our curriculum demands independent research, a rigorous examination process employing outside evaluators and a senior year project and internship.

### MATH & SCIENCES

Our math program offers five levels of courses designed to address the varied ability levels of the Lab School student body. Level One is equivalent to the Algebra program. Level Two includes topics in Geometry, and Level Three explores topics in Trigonometry with continued focus on mastery of Algebra skills.

Advanced levels of mathematics include Pre-Calculus with an emphasis on functions, and finally Calculus for our most advanced students. The overarching goal of the math program is for students to attain an understanding of the foundations of high school mathematics and to develop analytical and problem solving skills. All Lab School students gain extensive experience using graphing calculators and complete projects linked to science, math and technology.

With Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute's input and the NYS curriculum standards as a guide, the Lab School science program was composed as two, two-year sequences that integrate Biology, Chemistry, Earth Science and Physics.

The first sequence emphasizes the Living World, and at its completion students sit for the NYS Regents exam for Biology. In this sequence, student will have also studied related topics in Earth Science and Chemistry. The second sequence focuses on the Physical World, integrating Earth Science, Chemistry and Physics. At the completion of this sequence students have the option of sitting for the NYS Regents exam for Physics and/or Chemistry.

### HUMANITIES

The Lab School humanities program combines content traditionally studied in college preparatory courses in history and English, with an emphasis on writing and public speaking. Content work in both of these disciplines complements each other whenever possible.

Every student completes a two-year course in Global Studies and sits for the NYS Regents exam. This is followed by a one-year study of United States History and Government and the required NYS Regents exam. Finally, a Lab School student will spend his/her senior year taking a 20-week course in both Economics and Participation in Government. At the end of the Participation in Government course a student will pair up with a classmate to present a 45-minute research-based oral presentation pertaining to a teacher/student selected public policy.

As freshmen and sophomores in the Lab School program, students will read several works of fiction and non-fiction, compose and edit several writing pieces, practice and perform many oral presentations, and begin preparations for the NYS comprehensive English Regents exam. Juniors in the Lab School English program focus on American Literature with intensive preparation for the NYS Regents exam and the SAT at the end of this academic year. Lab School seniors will focus on college preparatory work and a study of contemporary literature and analysis, with a strong emphasis on writing for the college level.

### SECOND LANGUAGE & CULTURE

All Lab School students are required to attend second language classes for three of the four years they are in the program. This commitment ensures that upon graduation every student will have achieved, at least, modest proficiency and, for some, substantial fluency. The Lab School offers only French and Spanish courses at this point. Students will have the option of taking the Comprehensive Regents examination in their junior year.

### ELECTIVE COURSES

Every Lab School student completes two 20-week electives each year during his/her first seven semesters in the program. The electives vary every year and include courses from many disciplines including art, technology, music, humanities and others.

### COLLEGE PREP & SENIOR INTERNSHIP

During the first 20 weeks of the senior year in the Lab School the students will attend a session each day intended to prepare him/her for all facets of the college application and college living experience. Students learn about applications, resumes, letters of recommendations, financial aid, GPA, selecting an appropriate college, options aside from college (military, work, volunteer work, travel abroad etc.), living on campus, leaving home, handling finances, studying techniques and much more. In the second half of the school year Lab School seniors take part in are carefully supervised and scrutinized off-campus internship. The students are required to accrue 130 hours at the internship. At the end of this process the student must compose and submit an 8-10 page research paper and deliver a 45-minute oral presentation about a topic he/she encountered during the internship.

### ENRICHMENT DAYS & FIELDTRIPS

Once every two weeks the Lab School uses an entire academic day for an Enrichment Day. An Enrichment Day replaces the "typical" school day with teacher-led seminars, research seminars in the library, meetings of the entire Lab School community, and guest speakers. On these days a student has the opportunity to mix with other students in the program and to be exposed to curriculum and speakers not available in a regular classroom setting.

Lab School was built on the foundation of learning "outside of the box". Aside from Enrichment Days, the multiple off-campus educational trips that the students and teachers take add enriching opportunities to the Lab School experience. Each school year begins and ends with a three-day retreat to two separate locations on Lake George in the Adirondack Mountains in upstate NY. Each year we take a full day trip to NYC, three trips to Capital Repertory Theatre to view performances and have a dialogue with the actors and director, and a four-day trip to one of the following major U.S. cities: Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Boston or Colonial Williamsburg. Every other year a week-long marine biology trip to Florida is offered to the students. None of these trips is mandatory, and multiple fund raising opportunities are available to the students and families for each trip.

### LAB SCHOOL TEACHING STAFF

Lab School is staffed by nine teachers who bring diverse experience and expertise to the program. Most of our staff teaches both in the traditional Bethlehem High School program and the Lab School. Many of our teachers are coaches, advisors and leaders within the district. All of our teachers show dedication, above and beyond what is expected, to the Lab School philosophy.

CONTACT  
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