

Liberty High School

DESCRIPTION:

Liberty High School is a nontraditional, safety-net school that serves students who meet any of the following criteria:

- A student who has been in high school at least one year and has fewer than five credits.
- A student who has been in high school one to four years and has fewer than 14 credits.
- A student who has been frequently absent from school.
- A student who has failed four or more classes.
- A student who is at least 16 years old.
- A student who prefers hands-on, collaborative learning.
- A student who prefers a flexible daily/yearly schedule.
- A student who desires a work-based educational component.
- A student with diverse learning preferences whose talents are not being developed.

Students interested in applying to Liberty High School must attend an evening information session (with parent/guardian). Dates for these sessions can be obtained by calling the school. There are four intakes per year (August, October, January, and April). After acceptance into Liberty, all students will attend a mandatory, nine-week, essential life-skills course called Discovery, as well as two other classes. There are four courses per quarter allowing a student to earn eight credits per year. School hours are 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and 8:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on Wednesday. All students participate in service learning on Wednesdays. A balanced calendar provides frequent breaks throughout the year. TARC tickets are provided for transportation to school (no school bus provided).

MISSION AND VISION:

Liberty High School practices *unity through diversity* in a caring, collaborative, reflective learning community, and achieves *success through opportunity* for all learners by addressing the whole person: physical, spiritual, emotional, social, and intellectual.

PROGRAMS:

High School Prep:

The 8th Grade High School Prep Program is designed to transition students every nine weeks to the Discovery Program here at Liberty High School. Students in the program are representatives from all of the middle schools in the Jefferson County District. Once these students have enrolled in the program they must satisfy the AAA (Attendance, Academics and Attitude) criteria of at least 90% attendance, "C" or above in all classes, and positive mental attitude in order to be selected to move to the Discovery Program. In just three years many Prep Program students have experienced not only transition to high school and graduation, but have formed a more positive outlook towards school and their future. Students can apply to this program at an information session held at the school.

Crossroads:

The Crossroads Program is designed for 15 to 16 year-olds who have repeated the ninth grade. Regular students (non-ECE) in the comprehensive program at their high schools may apply to Liberty. Crossroads students may transition into the Discovery Program when recommended by their Crossroad Team teachers.

Service Learning:

Since Service Learning is a requirement at Liberty, all students in Advisor/Advisee perform school or community based service under the direction of their advisor. The purpose/mission of service learning at Liberty High School is to give students the opportunity:

- To benefit the community and their school in positive ways through meaningful service to promote volunteerism;
- To provide real-life, pre-employment opportunities that permit students to apply skills they have learned in Discovery;
- To get in touch with their strengths and gifts which they have to offer to others;
- To expand their school-based learning through the inclusion of facilities, programs, and personnel not available within the school;
- To have time to work as a team with other students and community members to accomplish service goals.

Discovery:

During the first nine weeks of school, students will participate in a program designed to teach life skills and learning habits. Entitled "DISCOVERY", the program aims to:

- 1) Build a strong sense of community in and out of school by developing multiple support systems for students;
- 2) Teach, practice and give feedback on communication and life skills;
- 3) Activate the mission of Liberty by clearly stating and living our expectations of students and practicing consistency and fairness; and
- 4) Use work-based learning to explore personal interests and apply students' newly acquired skills in community building and communication.

Discovery. is based upon a program used in eight other states where it has empowered students at risk to complete successfully their secondary education. Essential components of this program include:

I. Effective Groups and Team-Building:

Each day starts with students "checking in" in a quality circle (advocated by Dr. William Glasser in his Quality School). This opportunity for staff and students to connect and share thoughts and concerns helps students deconstruct some of the "other stuff" that might otherwise clutter their learning and sets a positive tone for the day. The openness and honesty fostered by checking in also strengthens the trust that empowers effective teams. Additional exercises during this first week establish ground rules for productive communication, mutual respect and dignity, and cooperation.

II. Anger Management:

The second phase of Discovery assists students in isolating their anger triggers, recognizing when they are, indeed, angry, making choices as to what to do with their anger, and ruling that anger, instead of being ruled by it. Albert Goldstein, materials from Dr. Jerry Deffenbauckerr of Colorado State University, and the Discovery Institute designed by Eric Larsen base the Anger Management segment of this program (on the model of The Prepare Curriculum by Albert Goldstein).

III. Transactional Analysis (T.A.)

Transactional Analysis will enable students (and their parents and teachers) to examine their communication with other people and identify the voices in which they speak, according to the Harris model of Child, Adult and Parent. Through role-play and written exercises, students will practice making rational and effective communication decisions.

IV. Assertiveness Training

This phase of DISCOVERY trains students to channel confidence and self-awareness into healthy, assertive communication. It draws on skills learned in Transactional Analysis to curb overly aggressive communication and strengthen passive communication so that students can publish their needs in the manner best calculated to having those needs met.

V. Problem-Solving

Problem Solving helps students devise systematic approaches to tackling problems both in and out of the classroom. Reflecting Liberty's concern for process, this phase of DISCOVERY asks students to analyze a problem, brainstorm solutions, make a choice among brainstormed options, act on that choice and evaluate the outcome.

VI. Conflict Resolution

Applying skills practiced in Transactional Analysis, Assertiveness Training and Problem Solving, students learn to distinguish between problems and interpersonal conflict. Role-play, feedback, and outside applications reinforce positive practices for protecting relationships and clearing communication blocks.

VII. Chemical Dependency

Support groups are available based on needs and referral.

VIII. Career Explorations

Preparing students for the work force is a primary objective of Liberty High School. As part of that preparation, students will assess their learning styles and identify strengths and interests that may suggest career possibilities. Job shadowing and a "workforce" mentor will help students investigate those possibilities.