Portland High School

The City Is Our Campus
Thanks to our prime location in the heart of the city, Portland High School students have easy access to all that Portland has to offer: City Hall, media outlets, architectural firms, law offices, social service agencies, arts organizations, hotels and restaurants, banks, and businesses large and small. Through our robust community-based learning initiatives, we match students with their interests and help ignite their passions.

Founded in 1821, Portland High School (PHS) is the second oldest continuously operating public high school in the United States. We are proud of our heritage and of how well PHS has always adapted to the changing times. This year, we are celebrating a milestone: 150 years at our current site on Cumberland Avenue. We serve 900 students, representing 43 countries of origin and 36 languages. This rich diversity gives our students an experience that will prepare them well for living in a global society.

Preparing Students for the Future

At Portland High School, we are continuing to emphasize the solid academic foundation of a comprehensive high school experience while adding new components that will prepare our graduates for life after high school. Three themes guide our work:

Personalization:
At PHS, staff and students develop strong personal relationships. These personal relationships are at the heart of creating a personalized learning plan for each student. The learning plan allows each student to pursue his or her own unique interests through course selection, job shadows, and internships.

Preparation:
At PHS, students are being prepared for post-secondary and career opportunities and global competencies through a rigorous course load that weaves together content with “21st century skills,” such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-solving. High school success begins with the Freshman Academy.

Pathways:
In Grades 10-12, job shadows and internships prepare students to make choices about their own future. A growing network of community partners, many within walking distance of the school, gives students a wide variety of career pathways to explore.

“...A school in downtown Portland is a valuable resource. The connection our children have to our great city can never be overstated.”

Parent of PHS student
Making the Transition: The 9th Grade Academy

A transition from middle school to high school means a bigger building, more students, more challenging work, and a more complex schedule, which add up to a big change for freshmen. That’s why we established the 9th Grade Academy. The Academy supports all freshmen with counselors, social workers, and interdisciplinary teams of teachers who work with the same students throughout the school year. These teams focus on creating a welcoming atmosphere with high expectations, along with intensive academic and social support for students.

All 9th graders take Freshman Seminar, where they learn note taking, time management and study skills, sharpen their understanding of technology and social relationships, and begin to explore college and career opportunities.

Keeping Them Connected: Grades 10-12

Research has shown that a traditional high school schedule leaves many young people feeling bored, largely because they see little connection between school and the outside world. In grades 10-12, students have the opportunity to make those connections by thinking about what they want to do after they graduate. Courses such as Introduction to Engineering, Principles of Engineering, and Law and Public Policy allow students to gain insight into careers they might pursue in the years ahead. They can also choose from an array of rigorous courses, such as honors, offered in every discipline, and dual enrollment classes that earn college credit while in high school. We also offer 11 Advanced Placement courses: Biology, Calculus AB, Calculus BC, English Literature, English Language & Composition, Statistics, Latin, Spanish, Psychology, US History, and Studio Art. Students can also take AP courses online in Chemistry, Economics, and American Government.

Extended Learning Opportunities

Extended Learning Opportunities are another way to expand students’ horizons.

» Guest speakers help connect classroom learning with the real world.

» Job shadows give students a chance to experience the working world, by spending 3-4 hours “shadowing” employees of a business or organization.

» Internships offer authentic work experience, either for credit, or in a less formal, non-credit bearing arrangement.

“Being involved in an internship has opened my eyes to the fact that there are thousands of interesting jobs I never knew about. Not only am I learning about the profession I am helping with, but I am learning communication, time management, interviewing, and teamwork skills. Being an intern has helped me recognize that the information I am learning in school is most definitely applicable to the real world, and has also introduced to me what exactly the real world consists of. It is a great chance to get involved in the community, meet new people, and grow as a person as you are introduced to new situations.”

Madison Bolduc, Junior

Highlights:

Dozens of co-curricular activities and clubs, numerous leadership opportunities, courses for college credit, Advanced Placement, honors courses, academic support, peer tutoring, ESOL classes, IEP placements, access to classes at the Portland Arts and Technology High School, Jobs for Maine Graduates Senior School-to-Work Program.

Famous alumni:

Thomas B. Reed, Speaker of the United States House of Representatives; Admiral Robert E. Peary, who discovered the North Pole; and John Ford, movie director.
Our Curriculum

PHS students participate in a demanding, college preparatory curriculum. Our block schedule gives students and teachers ample time together for deep learning. Each day, students attend four blocks or classes that are each 75 minutes long. Students may take up to eight blocks or classes.

In addition to English Language Arts, Social Studies and History, Science and Technology, Math and numerous electives, we also recommend that students take a minimum of two years of a foreign language. Portland High School students may take up to four credits of independent study that count as elective credits toward graduation.

From 9th to 12th grade, students' interests evolve. Our curriculum is geared to this reality; students are never locked into a particular path. Working with our faculty, students are empowered to become independent thinkers who take charge of their own education.

Our Educational Partners

PHS is working closely with the Johns Hopkins Talent Development Center, a nationally recognized research-based model that has served tens of thousands of students in schools across the country. Educational consultants from Johns Hopkins are regularly on site at PHS, guiding our progress and helping us build systems and structures that will sustain our work for years to come. Johns Hopkins is also the lead provider of professional development for our faculty, who are working in teams and learning a variety of new instructional methods.

Our partnership with Johns Hopkins is supported by a generous grant from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, the largest private foundation in New England devoted exclusively to education. The Foundation's grants support school districts that are engaged in meaningful educational change efforts.

Some of our Community Partners

- Maine Medical Center
- Mercy Hospital
- Orthopedic Associates of Portland
- The Greater Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce
- The Telling Room
- Portland Stage
- Portland Museum of Art
- Portland Ovations
- Portland Symphony
- Children’s Museum of Maine
- IDEXX
- UNUM
- Cianbro Corp
- Wright Express (WEX)
- Portland Fire Department
- Portland Police Department
- Office of the City Manager
- Office of US Senator Angus King
- Key Bank
- Homeland Security
- FBI
- WCSH TV
- WGME TV
- Portland Press Herald
- Bath Iron Works
- The Manufacturers Association of Maine
- Southern Maine Community College
- University of Southern Maine
- University of New England
- Maine College of Art
- The University of Maine
- University of New England’s Simulation Lab
- Portland Culture Club, a coalition of fine arts entities
- Children’s Museum of Maine
- East End School
- LiveVital, a local physical therapy and performance training facility
- Moody’s Collision Center
- American Red Cross
- Reiche School
- Bracket Street Veterinary Clinic
- Thaxter Company
- Portland Sea Dogs
- Growing Portland
- Rock Coast Personnel
- Opportunity Alliance
- Learning Works
- AT&T

“Portland High School is a place where academics, athletics, sociability, and diversity help produce a student ready to face the world.”

Rocco Frenzilli, Science Teacher