

Alabama Destinations Career Academy



Mobile, Alabama

Year Started: 2019

Students Enrolled:

Total: 1,883

Elementary School: 974

Middle School: 607

High School: 302

FRL: 63%

English Learners: 1%

Instructional Model: Online coursework with physical work-based learning opportunities

Alabama Destinations Career Academy (ALDCA) started in the 2019-20 school year as a program within the Chickasaw City Schools district. ALDCA students can enroll in Chickasaw City Schools as nonresidents and live anywhere in the state. ALDCA students attend Chickasaw Elementary, Middle, and High Schools and take online courses via ALDCA. In 2020–21, ALDCA served 1,883 students in Kindergarten through 10th grade. ALDCA will add 11th grade in 2021–22 and 12th grade in 2022–23.

To do their coursework, students have their own computer or one is provided for them. CTE classes meet twice a week online, while core courses meet every day. Students can meet with their teachers when they need to outside of their regular class meetings. Depending on the pathway, students may have a kit for particular courses that necessitates hands-on components. For example, one of the health science teachers assembles a simple kit for her students that includes a stethoscope. ALDCA Stride Career Learning program exposes

students to careers for Kindergarten through 9th grade as well as basic pathway courses for 9th grade specifically. These opportunities come in the form of virtual and in-person field trips, guest speakers, and a special news-type programming called Careers Across Alabama, where the CRE administrator travels to different places in Alabama to interview professionals about the work they do. Locations this year included Huntsville Hospital regarding their Core Rehabilitation facility, Mercedes, and Lockheed Martin.

Each year is dedicated to providing students more opportunities to explore career pathways:

- During sixth grade, first semester is dedicated to exploring all pathways, while second semester, students explore manufacturing specifically and its three branches, including welding, electronics, and industrial maintenance.
- In seventh grade, they do more exploration in the first semester and then go in-depth into health science, including four branches - nursing assistant, pharmacy technician, billing and coding, and medical assistant.
- Eighth grade focuses on an exploration of the information technology pathway, including the branches of programming, web design, and digital design.
- By the end of their middle school experience, students pick a pathway for high school. At that time, the Counseling Team meets with caregivers/parents and their students to help facilitate the decision-making process and answer questions.

Through the ALDCA dual enrollment program, which enables the program to partner with 20 community colleges across the state, there is a workforce scholarship that allows students to take courses for free. As Dr. Kayleen Marble, ALDCA's Head of School, emphasized, "Students earn college and high school credit, hands-on experience, and based on their pathway, will earn a credential. Really, it's a win-win if we can get students to take advantage of the opportunity of that community college in their area."

To support students, the ALDCA Counseling Team meets regularly with the School District-based Counseling Team to ensure a seamless learning experience for the students. Each student is assigned an Advisor through ALDCA who ensures they are in the right pathway, well supported, and engaged in their learning process. Each year, the state-level Advisory Councils help ALDCA make sure that the programs they are offering meet the needs of the ever-changing industries across the state as well as to keep a finger on the pulse of what these industries have to offer in terms of work-based learning opportunities for students, including apprenticeships, internships, and certifications. The CTE Coordinator sets up work-based learning opportunities, such as apprenticeships and internships, across the state based on each student's location. This coordinator regularly works with business and industry partners as well as the Office of Apprenticeship at the State Department of Education and the regional workforce councils and higher education partners.

Mr. David Wofford, Chickasaw City Schools Superintendent, emphasized,

The goal of Chickasaw City Schools is for every single student to be prepared for the day after graduation. In order to achieve this goal, our students must be career ready with skills to obtain sustainable wage employment. A high value certificate enables our students to enter the workforce and also prepares them for a process of life-long learning. Employers will invest in promising employees by funding continuing education throughout employment. Education to stay ahead of the speed of change never ends. Our students can continue through two, four year or even advanced degrees, or they may choose advanced certifications. Either way, successful employment is always the end goal.