



# Frequently Asked Questions

## **Enrollment**

### **Who can enroll?**

Any school district that is a member of the CAOLA consortium may enroll students in CAOLA online courses. Check with your local Intermediate Unit to see if you are a member.

### **Why was CAOLA created?**

CAOLA addresses the need in Pennsylvania for a challenging and flexible education option for students who want or need something different from traditional schooling but don't want to enroll in a full-time cyber charter school.

### **When can students enroll?**

CAOLA offers flexible, open enrollment. Depending on local school district policy, enrollment for new and returning students can operate on a similar timeline to schools. The student will meet with his/her Guidance Counselor, who will work with the family to create a personal learning plan for the student, which allows them to begin classes as quickly as possible.

### **Can students enroll part-time or full-time?**

Depending on local district policy, students may take some or all of their courses online.

### **How many classes does a full-time student need to take at once?**

Most full-time cyber students take about five courses per semester. However, due to the increased flexibility of CAOLA, districts, schools, and programs determine what is considered "full-time" status.

### **Can families purchase CAOLA Courses as a supplement to their student's current education without enrolling through their local school district?**

No. Families must enroll their student(s) through their local school district's online program. The school district is also responsible for determining student eligibility and online readiness for virtual learning.



## **Technology Requirements**

### **What technology equipment will students need?**

Part-time and Full-time CAOLA students will need access to the following technology equipment:

- PC or laptop, Chromebook, MacBook, or similar
- Wired Headphones with microphone
- High-Speed Internet Access

### **What computer skills do students need?**

All students must have essential computer skills such as:

- Internet navigation
- Microsoft Office/Google Docs
- Email accounts
- Typing skills

Training will be provided to all students and parents in the use of the CAOLA software systems before the start of classes.

### **What if students want to use their personally owned computers?**

Students can access CAOLA courses from any PC laptop, Chromebook, MacBook, or similar. School-issued computers come equipped with software to protect your child's safety while he/she is online. Students who choose to use their personally owned computers will not be able to access technical support services offered through the school.

### **Does CAOLA cover the cost of internet access?**

All students enrolled in CAOLA must have access to a high-speed internet connection. If the student does not have access or his/her family cannot afford access, they should work with their school district to determine a solution.

### **How does CAOLA protect the safety of students online?**

If a student is issued a laptop from CAOLA or the school district, it will include protection software that limits website access to educational content. In the online community, student activity will be closely monitored by instructors to ensure postings are appropriate.



## **Academic Program**

### **Can students earn a High School diploma taking online courses?**

Yes, students can earn a diploma if they meet state graduation requirements and follow all district policies.

### **Can CAOLA accommodate students with special needs, a disability, or English Language Learners?**

Many students with special needs seek out CAOLA because of the flexibility, adaptation, and individualized programs it has available. The school district's certified special-education staff is responsible for collaborating with students, families, and other instructors to develop the student's IEP or 504 Plan and create learning plans that meet student needs. CAOLA courses can be adapted as necessary to assist in meeting student education goals.

### **How do students do lab work for science courses?**

Depending on the course, students can experience science concepts and extend their exploration beyond lessons in a virtual lab environment. Students may also have the opportunity to do hands-on lab work in their local school building or at home.

### **How do students meet Physical Education requirements?**

Physical education has two components, learning about healthy lifestyle and fitness, and doing actual physical activity. Full-time cyber students will learn the concepts in online classes and will perform physical activities which they will record in a fitness journal.

### **Who will students interact with and be supported by the most?**

The key to student academic success (other than the individual student, of course!) is the student's advisor. The advisor's primary goal is to make sure each one of his/her students is making progress and meeting or exceeding their academic goals. If the advisor sees anything getting off track, it will be addressed immediately, with the student, parent, and instructors as necessary. Students are also supported by the online teachers, who help to instruct the students and give feedback on performance. It is the school district's responsibility to provide an advisor for the online students.

### **Are CAOLA Vendor Teachers certified?**

Yes, all Online Instructional Staff are Pennsylvania certified and highly qualified, if appropriate, to teach their subjects.



## **How does CAOLA prevent cheating on assignments or exams?**

Student academic integrity is a core value and a universal expectation at CAOLA and the districts in the consortium. When academic integrity is maintained, students will make decisions based on values that will prepare them to be productive, meaningful, and ethical citizens. CAOLA utilizes technologies to check for authenticity. Consequences will occur when a student knowingly copies, allows others to copy from them, and misuse of internet content. An online instructor and the school district can administer a variety of consequences for failure to maintain academic integrity. These consequences range from a reduced score on an assignment up to receiving a zero on assignments. Incidents involving more than three assignment offenses may have additional penalties at the discretion of the school district. These consequences range from academic probation warning, failure of course, and withdrawal from the school district's online learning program.

## **How does CAOLA know that students are staying on task?**

With our proprietary user tracking software, we can see exactly which contents of lessons were accessed and for how long. Analysis of this data can help to ensure students are using the content properly. Our software tracks scores from daily assessments, which allows advisors/mentors and parents to know immediately if students truly understand the material. A combination of multiple-choice testing and more creative assignments also helps to ensure that students are submitting individual work and are following the course material properly. Some districts may also require the students to take their exams in the school building while being proctored by a school staff person.

## **How does CAOLA report academic progress?**

Progress can be tracked and reported in several ways. On their home page, students, parents, and instructional staff can easily see grades, incomplete assignments, and achievement alerts (when a student falls behind in a given content area). Progress is also discussed between the family and the advisor/mentor regularly to ensure that students are achieving their learning goals.

## **What if students are falling behind?**

At CAOLA, daily assessment means that students, parents, advisors/mentors, and instructors know immediately when a student falls behind. If a student fails to meet proficiency in a given area, an alert is automatically sent to the student and advisor/mentor and is viewable by parents and instructors. The advisor/mentor will work with the student, parents, and instructors to determine the cause of the issue, and assign an appropriate course of action to correct it immediately. When a student falls behind in grades or completion of assignments, students, parents, and instructors can see this directly from their home page, and act to solve the issue.



## **What is the expected role of parents/guardians?**

At CAOLA, we equip parents/guardians to guide, motivate, and monitor their student's progress and make it easy to take an active role by staying informed about the curriculum and student achievement. Parents/guardians receive log-ins for each student, which gives them access to relevant information for their courses. Parents/guardians at CAOLA are not required to provide instruction or tutoring, as they are in some other online programs.

## **What does CAOLA do to prepare cyber students for post-secondary education or a career?**

In addition to meeting minimum graduation requirements, students are encouraged to enroll in college and career elective courses. It is the school district's responsibility to offer career and college counseling to their students.

## **How does CAOLA support gifted and talented students?**

CAOLA is excellent for gifted students because it offers the ability for these students to move through the material at an accelerated pace, attempt more challenging coursework, and give opportunities for students to extend their learning with additional projects. CAOLA is also able to offer students access to challenging courses that may not be available at the local school districts.

## **Does CAOLA offer Honors and AP Courses?**

CAOLA contracts with curriculum vendors to offer courses of varying rigor, and include honors-level courses. AP courses are also available.

## **Are students required to take standardized tests?**

Yes, all students will be required to take the same state-mandated exams through their local schools.

## **Is CAOLA the same as homeschooling?**

No, CAOLA is not the same as homeschooling. CAOLA works with districts, schools, and programs to offer quality online learning for enrolled students.

## **Will there be opportunities for socialization and extracurricular activities?**

Students taking online courses remain enrolled in their local schools, so they are eligible to participate in social and extracurricular activities following school district policies.