

# **Fitch Academy: Frequently Asked Questions**

- **What is Fitch Academy?**

Fitch Academy is an alternate high school program that meets the academic and social-emotional needs of Darien Public Schools students who want or need to learn in a smaller, less traditional, and more nurturing environment. Our mission is to foster not only academic growth and achievement, but also social-emotional wellness and self-knowledge.

Fitch students meet the curricular requirements of Darien High School and receive a Darien High School diploma upon graduation.

- **Where is Fitch?**

Though Fitch is part of Darien High School, and offers the same courses as Darien High School, the school is located at a satellite campus at 6 Thorndal Circle in Darien.

- **Who can go to Fitch?**

Fitch Academy is an option for all high school students (grades 9-12) who live in Darien, but it was designed for students who want or need to learn in a less formal, more community- oriented environment with small class sizes and more personalized instruction than Darien High School can provide.

Perhaps you find the size of DHS too large or its environment too intense; perhaps personal circumstances have made it difficult for you to fully attend to your classes and work at DHS; perhaps you just march to the beat of a different drummer and want a less traditional high school experience. If so, maybe Fitch is for you!

- **How many students go to Fitch?**

Fitch can accommodate up to 24 students at one time. The size of the student body shifts from year to year and semester to semester as students transition from and even back to Darien High.

- **Who teaches at Fitch?**

In addition to a full-time lead teacher (who taught at DHS for more than 20 years), school psychologist, special education teacher, and nurse, the Fitch faculty is made up of teachers who split their time between DHS and Fitch.

- **What classes can I take at Fitch?**

As a part of Darien High School, we offer all of the same core courses DHS students need to take in order to graduate and be prepared for college. We also run a variety of electives based on the credit needs and personal interests of the current student body.

In recent years, we have offered electives in Spanish, drawing and painting, digital photography, media studies, African American history, contemporary issues, art, psychology, guitar, forensics, marine science, and botany. This year we will be offering personal finance and philosophy.

- **I would like to take some honors- or AP-level classes. Can I do that at Fitch?**

While we cannot guarantee that we can offer you a particular course in a given semester or year, we have always done our best to provide honors- and AP-level classes for students when appropriate. Our ability to do so depends on our staffing needs and teacher availability.

- **Is Fitch a special education program?**

It is not. Just like at DHS, we have students who receive special education supports, but Fitch offers regular education 300- and 400-level classes. Students with IEPs are supported in their Learning Center classes.

- **Do Fitch students go on to college?**

YES (if they want to)! Most of our graduates have gone from Fitch to a four-year college. In recent years, Fitch students have attended:

University of Arizona, Berklee College of Music, University of California at San Diego, UConn, Fairfield University, Fordham University, Iona College, Kenyon College, Marist College, University of Michigan, Mount Holyoke College, The New School, Ohio Wesleyan University, Pace University, Quinnipiac University, University of Rhode Island, Sacred Heart University, University of San Francisco, Skidmore College, St. John's College, and more...

- **If I were to come to Fitch, would I stay there until I graduate?**

That's up to you and your family! Some students start 9th grade at Fitch and stay until graduation. Others transfer to Fitch at the beginning of 10th or 11th grade, or midway through a school year, and stay until they graduate. Some spend one or two years and transition back to DHS. Others come for their final year of high school. There's no one way to attend Fitch. The question is, *What's best for you? What do you need?*

- **When can I transition from DHS to Fitch, or from Fitch back to DHS?**

There is no hard-and-fast rule about when a student can start at Fitch, or when a student can transition to DHS. Typically, though, these transitions are best managed at the beginning of the year, semester, or marking period.

- **What is the application process?**

If you are interested in Fitch, the first thing you should do is fill out the application [link] on our website. It is important that you, the student, fill out the brief form yourself.

From there, the lead teacher will reach out to you and schedule a time to meet face to face.

If, after that initial meeting, you are still interested and the lead teacher believes that Fitch is likely a good fit for you, he will invite you to Fitch to tour the space and talk with you and your family. The next step after that would be for you to spend two full school days "shadowing" at Fitch.

At that point, if everyone involved (teachers, student, family, administration) believes that Fitch is a good fit for you, we will extend an offer to have you transfer to Fitch at a date to be determined by the team.

- **If I'm a Fitch student, can I still participate in DHS sports and other extra-curricular activities?**

Absolutely. We can also arrange for transportation from Fitch to DHS at 2:15, if you need a ride.

- **When does the school day begin and end?**

The first class begins at 8:30 and the last class ends at 2:15.