Mount Tom Academy
EVERY STUDENT CAN LEARN

Mount Tom Academy at Holyoke Community College is an alternative high school designed to meet the learning needs of students in Hampshire and Hampden counties who have had difficulty in the traditional high school setting. This difficulty may be academic, emotional, or social. Whichever the case, Mount Tom offers a safe, supportive environment where students can excel and work productively towards high school graduation. For students at risk of dropping out of school, Mount Tom Academy has been a place to succeed in finishing high school and graduating.

We believe that every student can succeed when given an opportunity to learn in the right setting

The program offers an open, diverse environment that challenges students while providing a high level of support. It employs self-directed learning methods that engage students in their own process and promote achievement.

Throughout its 15-year history, Mount Tom Academy has provided a safe, flexible environment for learning that has meant the difference between success and high school failure for young men and women from 15 area high schools.
Mount Tom Academy helps students to succeed...

- 9 out of 10 students who have attended Mount Tom since it was founded in 1999 have graduated.
- All students enrolled in the Mount Tom program have passed the MCAS test.
- Approximately 50% of graduates apply to study at the college.
- The majority of students improve their attendance, behavior, and academic performance when compared to previous school performance.

The location provides the opportunity to be part of the Holyoke Community College community

Mount Tom includes activities in community service, enrichment, art, and music. All students receive college identification cards and may be assigned parking privileges. Students share in the full college setting that includes the cafeteria, library, gymnasium, and entry to lecture series, theater performances and presentations. Transportation is provided by the student's family, the student, or the sending school district.

The academic program is matched to the sending school and tailored to the individual student

The pace and schedule is tailored to each student's own learning style, strengths, and unique abilities. Students and teachers work together to build individual learning packets and schedules for the completion of schoolwork which is matched to the sending high school's curriculum.

Qualified teachers in small classes provide instruction and remediation with a low student-teacher ratio and also offer one-on-one help. The program brings a range of resources to students including standard high school textbooks, the online ALEKS learning program, Kahn Academy, and the college level Plato online learning system. The Plato system offers remediation practice, review of material, accelerated learning and methods for credit recovery.

Our curriculum includes:

- English (Grades 9, 10, 11, 12)
- Social Studies
- World Civilization, US History 1, US History 2, Geography
- Biology
- Earth Science, Chemical Science, Biological Science, Physical Science
- General Math Concepts, Algebra 1, Business Math Concepts, Algebra 2, Geometry, Trigonometry

The School-to-Work opportunities offered by the program provide important work and life skills

Mount Tom also offers School-to-Work opportunities that allow students to explore aspects of industry, model workplace behavior, and achieve job skills. Through mentorships, job shadowing, workplace visits, volunteering, and part-time employment, students develop a sense of community and social responsibility that builds self-esteem, respect, and regard for others.

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...and is a place for students to engage in their own success

ETHAN
Graduation Day was a proud and defining moment for Ethan Haskins, who had sometimes wondered whether he would attain a high school diploma.

Ethan attended Mount Tom Academy in his junior and senior years, and received his diploma from his sending school, Hampshire Regional High School. He opted to receive his diploma in a small ceremony with his teachers and peers at Mount Tom.

“The graduation ceremony took place...in a small classroom full of people who were very proud of me... that made me feel really good,” he said.

Due to a learning disability, Ethan said he is often challenged to stay focused. At Mount Tom Academy, he felt that the small 1:6 teacher-student ratio helped him to get the support he needed to progress academically.

The art program at Mount Tom also helped him to stay engaged in his schoolwork. Ethan said that whenever he was frustrated or upset, “I could always paint what I was feeling.”

“I love this school...this little program helped me when other school systems weren’t meant for me,” he said.

JESSICA
Jessica Sheets sought an alternative school because she was challenged by the negative social environment at her high school.

“I've always been a good student...but I didn't fit in. I love it here,” she said. “Whether the issue that brought us to Mount Tom was social or academic, we’re all here for the same reason—to learn.”

She added that the individualized instructional approach encourages students to take ownership of their learning. The lessons are “self-taught and self-paced...you get to work on your own priorities.” At the same time, students appreciate the opportunity to have strong ties with teachers.

Jessica said that the community college setting of Mount Tom Academy encourages students to explore college courses, and to realize they can be successful in higher education. She enrolled in several college courses at HCC which inspired her talent and interest in fashion design; she is now hoping to pursue higher education in the field.

Jessica urges younger students to consider alternatives that can help them be successful. “Kids are our future. We can't let them drop out,” she said.

About Mount Tom Academy
Mount Tom is designed to serve students who have struggled for one reason or another in traditional high school settings and may benefit from alternative placement. The program offers an open, diverse environment that challenges students while providing a high level of support. Mount Tom is located in two recently renovated classrooms on the campus of Holyoke Community College in Holyoke, Massachusetts.

The program began in 1999 through a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and is the result of collaboration among regional high schools seeking a solution to the increasing problem of high school drop outs. Mount Tom has been administered since its inception by the Collaborative for Educational Services (CES), in Northampton, Massachusetts.
Students considering our program should:

- Be between the ages of 16 and 22
- Be unsuccessful in a traditional high school setting, but not have significant behavioral issues
- Have completed at least one year of high school
- Demonstrate maturity and be able to function in a college environment

Mount Tom does not provide special education services. The program will accept students who have IEPs if those services are provided through the district.

**Dual enrollment options**

Qualified high school students may pursue dual enrollment options to earn both high school and college credit. For dual enrollment, students must be in their junior or senior year of high school and have a GPA of 3.0 or better. Students must also take HCC’s Computerized Placement Test. Participation is subject to approval by the college and a “B” average must be maintained to remain eligible for the dual enrollment program. College course costs are the responsibility of the student.

**How does enrollment work?**

Total enrollment in the program is usually between 15 and 20 students, and admission is on a rolling basis and may occur throughout the school year. Mount Tom follows the regular high school calendar and matches vacation schedules. Students remain on the sending high school’s rolls and grades and attendance are reported to schools regularly. Upon completion of Mount Tom Academy, students receive high school diplomas from the sending school.

**Tuition**

Charges to sending school districts are less than the average per pupil expenditure of the district. Direct tuition payment to the Collaborative by families is also accepted.

**Information for parents**

The first step for exploring admission to Mount Tom Academy is to schedule an appointment with the guidance counselor at your student’s high school. Referrals are accepted through the school district. Your child’s ability to participate in Mount Tom will be decided through open communication between the parent, school district and student. For Mount Tom to make the best decision for acceptance into the program, we will need:

- A copy of the high school transcript and a copy of the most current report card
- A copy of any Chapter 766 Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and/or a Section 504 Accommodation Plan, if relevant
- Approval of the principal or director of the sending high school (required if currently enrolled)
- Students who have previously left school must obtain a referral from their high school to be in a diploma program

All acceptance decisions are made on an individual basis considering all the issues surrounding a child’s education.

For more information, contact:

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