



Contact: Madison Fantozzi
863.298.6872/954.594.9808
mfantozzi@polk.edu
polk.edu

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Polk State's three collegiate high schools earn A grades for 2024-2025

Tuesday, July 8, 2025 — For the first time in Polk State College history, all three of its collegiate high schools have simultaneously achieved A grades from the Florida Department of Education, and not for a lack of academic achievement in the past.

Polk State Lakeland Gateway to College Collegiate High School traditionally received a school improvement rating due to differences in its charter and mission. In 2023-2024, Gateway updated its charter and began receiving school grades with its first being a B. This year, Gateway joins its sister schools, Polk State Chain of Lakes Collegiate and Polk State Lakeland Collegiate, proudly earning an A for the 2024-2025 Academic Year.

"This is an exciting time for our collegiate high school as we continue our standard of excellence and expand opportunities for our students," said Gateway Principal Meesha Downing-Townsend. "This year's school grade is the first of two consecutive A grades needed for Gateway to add a 10th-grade cohort in 2026-2027."

Polk State's Chain of Lakes and Lakeland collegiate high schools enrolled their first 10th-grade classes in August 2024 and [reported high rates of success](#), as well as student and parent satisfaction.

"We are hearing from more students and more parents that they wish they could start their collegiate high school journeys even sooner," Chain of Lakes Collegiate Principal Patrice Bryant-Thigpen said. "We are thrilled to see our school grade reflect the monumental efforts of our faculty and support staff and success of not only our first 10th-grade class but also our students and school as a whole."

Polk State Lakeland Gateway to College Collegiate High School's year was no short of success either, with [the College's youngest student graduating](#) with her Associate in Arts degree at 15 and another – her sister – [achieving her Bachelor of Applied Science in Supervision and Management degree](#) alongside two Chain of Lakes Collegiate high schoolers.

Students of all three charter high schools complete college credits simultaneously with requirements for their high school diplomas. The majority graduate with their college degrees at no cost to them.

"Our students excel not only in their academics but in the unique and college-level environment we provide here at our collegiate high schools," Lakeland Collegiate Principal Rick Jeffries explained. "They have the benefit of being on college campuses with expert faculty without losing out on student life opportunities including prom, clubs and athletics."

Gateway is located on the Lakeland Campus and serves 11th and 12th graders with at least 11 high school credits who are no older than 21. In 2024, [nearly half of Gateway's 136-member class received an AA](#). The class earned about \$1.3 million in scholarships and completed nearly 15,000 hours of community service.

Lakeland Collegiate and Chain of Lakes Collegiate serve 10th, 11th and 12th graders. Previously recognized as the [top public high school in Polk County by U.S. News & World Report](#), Lakeland Collegiate is housed on the Lakeland Campus. Located on the Winter Haven Campus, [Chain of Lakes has received an A grade from the Florida Department of Education each year](#) since 2015.

Currently, waitlist applications are being accepted for Chain of Lakes and Lakeland Collegiate high schools. The application for Gateway remains open throughout the school year. More information is available at polk.edu/charter-high-schools.



Contact: Madison Fantozzi
863.298.6872/954.594.9808
mfantozzi@polk.edu
polk.edu

About Polk State College

Located in Polk County, Florida, and established in 1964, Polk State College is a multi-campus institution serving more than 14,000 students with Bachelor of Applied Science, Bachelor of Science, Associate in Arts, and Associate in Science degrees, as well as 9,000 individuals in a wide range of certificate and workforce training programs. The College also operates three charter high schools.

Polk State's advantages include small class sizes; hands-on learning; dedicated faculty; day and night classes; online options; affordable tuition; excellent financial aid; and a diverse community and vibrant student life, including fine arts opportunities, clubs, and intercollegiate athletics.