

# Through the Looking Glass

A look at Cab from the perspective of a Charter student

By Patrick Taylor

For the average Cab student, interactions with Charter are kept to a minimum. It's a foreign land filled with math and hexagon-embroidered polo shirts. Upstairs, many Charter Students feel the same separation. However, some students cross the divide, taking classes on the other side. As one of these students myself, I have a unique perspective on how the two schools differ.

The most obvious difference between Cab and Charter is the class structure and system. On the surface, one might think that Cab is more restrictive due to the major system. In actuality, the

Charter system is severely more limiting. Course prerequisites are an absolute must. No amount of work could get me to skip past programming and algorithms to take embedded systems at the same time, despite my junior research project being an embedded systems project. In contrast, I got into Digital Media without any issue (on the Cab side, at least). At Charter, one test decides your placement in the math program for the rest of your time at the school. Any and all sort of challenge tests have been removed. Where you get placed is where you are stuck. On the other hand, Cab offers challenge tests and even allows people to take summer courses.

The difference can be traced back to each school's administrative system. At

Charter, guidance counselors can offer only that: guidance. They have little to no power or actual say. Every time I have interacted with mine, she acts as a glorified direction kiosk to show me what teachers and administrators I need to talk to get permission from. Her voice carries absolutely zero weight in any decisions made about me. From my understanding, Cab's guidance department provides much more service to their students.

Classes and teachers are very different at Cab than at Charter. In Charter, the school culture pushes relentlessly for working as hard as you can, perpetually. Feeling sick? Too bad, miss that ICE and you'll have to give up your re-write attempt to make it up. God forbid you miss that math test, because you won't be allowed to make corrections if you take it late. Down at Cab, life is easier. Missing

a day isn't so bad. Unexpectedly, Charter has study halls while Cab does not. This has always struck me as odd, considering how lax Cab seems overall. Despite how much more relaxed Cab is, the students seem just as hardworking and committed as any Charter student.

However, motivation for Cab students is very different. Charter students are pushed by a desire for good grades, a feeling often endowed by parents, instead of coming from within. The 'perfect student' atmosphere even affects those without overbearing parents, feeling the pressure to fit in, and pushing oneself as a result. At Cab, motivation seems much more intrinsic. Within their majors, most students seem like they want to be there, being passionate about what they do. The administration reflects what people care about, as well. At Charter, fail one core class and you're out. At Cab, fail your major and the same thing happens. The extracurricular atmosphere is also very different. Cab activities, such as marching band and TSA, require full commitment and a desire to work. However at Charter, there are myriad clubs



that exist only for the sake of college applications, set up to make students look 'well rounded'. Many of these clubs achieve little to nothing over the course of the year.

Kids at Cab seem to have closer relationships with their teachers than Charter kids do. I couldn't imagine talking to some of my teachers for anything but academics. Have you met Mr. Stover before?

Downstairs, having a teaparty with Ms. Sullivan during activity period is a regular occurrence. I feel this with my Cab teachers as well. I spend much more time speaking with Mr. Tharp and Mr. Greider than with my Charter teachers. In addition, I feel like they are more involved in my education on an individual level. The difference is likely due to class size. The current size of the junior class at Cab is around 130. In contrast, the current junior class at Charter has just under 250 students currently enrolled.

The class size affects the intimacy between students as well. There are many people in my grade I've never met or don't know the name of, even though I consider myself to be pretty social. Down at Cab it seems like everyone knows each other. I guess that's what happens when the class is half as big.

Overall, Cab is much more intimate and lenient than Charter. A large part of me wishes I went to Cab and took Charter classes, instead of vice versa, as I do now. Cab and Charter have a



Mr. Tharp is well acquainted with dealing with Cab and Charter students alike.

unique synergy, something very few other schools can claim. At the end of the day, Cab and Charter work together beautifully, despite differences.

