

Spring Branch Academic Institute High School

Spring Branch Academic Institute (SBAI) expanded to 9th grade in the 2018-19 school year. In subsequent years, an additional grade level will be added until SBAI is a full K-12 school. Currently, SBAI ninth graders attend all classes at Stratford High School, with limited differentiation from a regular SHS student. While this is a wonderful partnership, it does not fulfill all of the plans as outlined in the original School for the Highly Gifted proposal and recommendations discussed by the Expansion Committee in 2013, nor does it meet the specific needs of these highly gifted students.

As outlined in the SBAI triangle, the expectation for our students is to develop their ability while contributing to society. This is done via three target areas:

- Academic Acceleration & Individualized Pathways to Higher Education
- Social Appropriateness & Collaborative Skills for the Workplace
- Emotional Balance & Compassionate Perspective of Self and Others

To meet the needs of our students, as well as to stay true to the original proposal, the high school program must address these areas.

Current SBAI-specific services provided include:

- Hand scheduling of courses, working with SHS staff to promote best instructor fit.
- Common advisory (Spartan time) for all SBAI students.
- Collaborative discipline with SBAI/SHS administration.
- Access to SBAI staff for support.
- Profile sheet for SBAI.

A SBAI high school planning committee was formed during the fall semester of 2018. In addition, surveys were conducted for both SBAI students (grades 5-9) and parents (all grades). Based on these surveys, parent and student discussions, and district parameters, the following recommendations are proposed for programming at the high school level:

- **Opportunities to enroll in high school courses taught/facilitated by SBAI staff.**
 - Description: SBAI students enrolling in Geometry, Algebra II, English I or English II at the ninth grade level will have the option of having a SBAI teacher for the course. In addition, SBAI teachers may provide instruction and/or may facilitate advanced level classes, based on student need.
 - Benefits: Individualized, differentiated courses for SBAI students in a smaller learning environment.
 - Challenges: Potential loss of first choice electives. Scheduling to meet student needs, while not overburdening teachers. Master schedule (working with three different school day schedules).

Note: Availability of courses will change each year, depending on enrollment, master schedule, course selections, etc. English II will not be added to the rotation until the 2020-21 school year.

- **Individualized, Hand-scheduling of courses.**
 - Description: SBAI high school students are hand-scheduled into courses that are specific to their individual needs. Advanced courses are provided based on student pathways. For courses taken through SHS, we work with SHS staff to find teachers with the best “fit” for our students. Additional options including internships and college/online classes will be considered.
This aligns with the original proposal outlining internships and college/online courses (pages 8 and 12).
 - Benefits: Rigorous, individualized pathways and courses. Better matches of students with teachers who understand gifted education and SBAI student characteristics.
 - Challenges: Due to electives, available courses/teachers are sometimes limited.

- **AP Capstone expectation.**
 - Description: AP Capstone consists of two yearlong AP courses: AP Seminar and AP Research. These courses develop students’ skills in research, analysis, evidence-based arguments, collaborating, writing, and presenting. In AP Seminar, students investigate real-world issues while learning to research and synthesize information. In AP Research, students explore an academic topic, problem or issue of interest to them. Their year-long research culminates with a paper, presentation, and oral defense.
This is an expectation (not requirement) for all SBAI students. Parents may elect to opt out of this expectation. Students may take the courses either Sophomore/Junior or Junior/Senior years. Eventually, the courses will be taught by a SBAI teacher.
 - Benefits: In discussions with university representatives, colleges are looking for students who have the skills and have completed projects as outlined in AP Capstone. Since the courses will be offered the Sophomore/Junior year, students will have the opportunity to complete their projects prior to beginning the college application process.
 - Challenges: Loss of (2) elective choices.

- **Service learning expectation.**
 - Description: Community service projects are a component of the original proposal (page 14). SBAI will schedule school-wide project days throughout the year. Students will be expected to tie their service learning into the “problem they want to solve,” an area of interest, or Capstone research, with guidance given on appropriate opportunities. Students will provide a portfolio and presentation the end of each year.
Note: Service learning expectations will begin in middle school.
 - Benefits: Contribute to society is one of the key tenets of SBAI. This develops social-emotional intelligence as well as helps to teach compassion for others. In

discussion with university representatives, service learning (vs. community service) is an important piece of the application process.

- **Challenges:** Finding and scheduling impactful, relevant service learning opportunities.
- **Career mentor.**
 - **Description:** Having access to a mentor is part of the original proposal (page 19). A modification will be made so the connection is with an adult in each student's field of choice. This will provide students with opportunities to interact, ask questions, job shadow, etc., as well as have support for their Capstone projects. SBAI parents will be considered first for mentoring opportunities.
Note: Mentors would begin in middle school.
 - **Benefits:** Students will have access to adult who can guide in academic decisions regarding areas of interest.
 - **Challenges:** Finding appropriate mentors in all fields on interest. Maintaining consistency in mentoring meetings, etc.
- **Specific SEL lessons.**
 - **Description:** Social-emotional learning is a critical element for SBAI. Character emotional intelligence development lessons and opportunities will be consistently provided.
 - **Benefits:** Consistency and focus on character education, emotional balance.
 - **Challenges:** At secondary, advisory time is used for many different purposes. Scheduling character ed lessons may be a challenge.
- **Common advisory (Spartan time).**
 - **Description:** At the high school level, SBAI students will all participate in the same advisory period (Spartan time).
 - **Benefits:** SBAI students will have the opportunity to interact with intellectual peers. Character education, service learning, etc., can be addressed during Spartan time.
 - **Challenges:** SBAI staff to monitor advisory period.
- **Collaborative discipline with SBAI/SHS administration.**
 - **Description:** When disciplinary incidents occur, SHS and SBAI administrators collaborate on investigations, consequences, etc. Social Appropriateness is one element of success for SBAI.
 - **Benefits:** Highly gifted students have characteristics that manifest in different ways. By collaborating with SHS staff, we can work together to provide appropriate consequences while also educating students and teachers. The emphasis on social appropriateness can be reinforced.
 - **Challenges:** Maintaining consistency and integrity of both schools continuum of consequences.

- **Access to SBAI staff for support.**
 - Description: When questions, concerns, or celebrations arise, SBAI staff is accessible for assistance and support. In addition, SBAI staff reviews progress reports and report cards and monitors student progress.
 - Benefits: Access to staff who knows the students, as well as characteristics of highly gifted learners.
 - Challenges: Structures for students to access SBAI staff.

- **Profile sheet for SBAI.**
 - Description: As its own school, SBAI will have its own profile sheet. (SBAI is not included in SHS accountability, class rank, score reporting, etc.)
 - Benefits: As a specialized school of choice, having our own profile sheet allows us to focus on the elements that make SBAI unique. In addition, our scores should be higher than a traditional high school.
 - Challenges: As a new high school, we currently have minimal data to report on our profile sheet (no SAT/ACT scores).