

Earned Honors at Morristown-Beard School

MBS recognizes that at the core of being an “Honors” student is willingness, commitment, and passion, and that those can only emanate from a student. Accordingly, the MBS “Earned Honors” program gives students the agency and autonomy to decide for themselves whether they view themselves as an “Honors” student in a class or discipline. If they do, they are committing to taking on extra independence in their learning, to dedicating themselves with special patience to the process each discipline demands, and to striving to apply the skills of a discipline with a high level of sophistication.

Rather than tell students that they should view themselves as “honor students,” the Earned Honors program MBS asks students to embrace that identity for themselves, and then holds them accountable to a corresponding set of standards and criteria. The criteria are enumerated in the MBS “Honors Student Profile,” which holds across the school, for all Honors students, even as it finds various interpretations from department to department. It is intended to clarify for students the habits of mind that distinguish learning at an Honors level:

MBS Honors Student Profile

A student earning honors consistently demonstrates:

- *Enhanced investment* in the learning situations of a particular discipline:
- *Patience with struggle during a process* (including readiness to encounter discomfort, ambiguity, and uncertainty):
- *Independent initiative* in applying sophisticated skills to novel, open-ended, and complex problems.

At the end of the semester, students graded for mastery of a discipline regardless of whether they are earning honors. But students earning honors are consistently confronted with learning situations, including assessments, projects, homework, and class activities, demanding enhanced engagement, independent initiative, and patience with struggle during a process. Those learning situations will sometimes involve additional work and sometimes involve greater complexity with less teacher scaffolding.

In Earned Honors courses, students sign a contract committing themselves to earning “Honors” early in the second quarter of the year. During the first quarter of the year, teachers give students the opportunity to attempt assessments at the Honors level, gaining a sense for what earning “Honors” means in a particular class. For the remaining three quarters, they are held to Honors criteria in their work in and out of the classroom.

There is no grade requirement or threshold for students in EH classes. Students earning an H may earn any grade at the end of the year.