

COURSE SELECTION

The goal of the Math Department is that all students sign up for a class that is both appropriately challenging and gives them the greatest chance for finding success. But of course, this can mean a lot of things to different people. What is an "appropriate challenge?" Some students are willing and/or able to devote more work to their math classes based on things like their interest, their academic load, their activities, or their frustration levels. And how do you define "success?" For some students, it's just a grade, but for others it's the chance to learn from their peers or lead their peers, or just find some joy in working on math problems. If there are times you've struggled or had a bad experience with math, we want to be clear that we believe that everyone can find success. But if you fall into that category, you might define success as being able to keep up in a faster-moving course, or you might define success as coming to class with confidence every day in a slower-moving course and having the opportunity to help your peers and lead discussions. There is no single right way to respond.

During the first week of Spring Break, you and your family will get a letter from the school that includes your teachers' recommendations. They might recommend a regular course or an accelerated course or an honors course, depending on your grade level, or they may suggest two different courses for you to choose between. We want to be very clear about this: these recommendations come from years of experience and sometimes even discussions with advisors or previous teachers, and in most cases we hope that you'll follow our suggestions.

The recommendations are what we think will give you the best shot at success within the guidelines of a reasonable amount of work. They come from a place of compassion and experience and encouragement; they are neither a punishment nor a reward. But we also understand if you want to consider a different course than what we recommend, and if so, we would urge you to talk to your teacher, to Mr. Taff (the Math Placement Coordinator) or to Ms. Randall (the Math Department Chair).