



JANUARY 7, 2022

# HIGH SCHOOL COMMUNICATIONS

High School Families,

Happy Friday and Happy New Year!! We had a successful (and snowy) return to school this week. By all accounts it appears that we've hit the ground running and we picked up where we left off back in December. I know that I speak for all staff in saying that we were excited to see everyone after our two week break.

With our Pathways / Course Registration meetings for the upcoming school year set to start next week I want to make you all aware of a new opportunity we are planning to offer in regards to our Honors courses.

## **Blended Honors Pilot Program**

We are excited to announce a new approach to offering honors programming at The Academy starting in the 2022-23 school year! Beginning this fall, we will move away from the traditional structure of creating separate honors sections for relevant courses in favor of a more flexible, inclusive structure that builds the opportunity to engage in an honors-level experience into all sections of those courses.

### How It Works

Students will be able to register for the same range of courses as always via their Pathways Course Selection Meetings. Instead of needing to register separately for a standard vs. honors section of applicable courses, though, they will just register for the core course (e.g. English 9). Throughout the course, students will have an opportunity to indicate whether or not they intend to qualify for an Honors Designation. An Honors Designation can be earned by collaborating with the teacher to extend the standard course of study deeper and/or broader. Currently, our Honors courses cover the same topics as the standard classes, but sometimes move at a slightly faster pace and dive deeper into the content. Oftentimes, more difficult or complex assignments are given. In our new model all students will have access to the Honors material and the teacher will differentiate instruction to accommodate all levels of students.

We will treat the 22-23 school year as a pilot run for this program, which will allow us flexibility to craft and modify procedures that benefit all students. Much work will be completed this Spring to finalize the criteria, but the following will be taken into consideration for students choosing to earn the Honors Designation:

- Overall Engagement & Participation
- Culminating Project and/or completion of additional enrichment assignments
- Demonstration of Mastery of course standards

*\*More specific guidelines will be provided at the start of the 22-23 school year. There may be differences in expectations based on the content of the class.\**

HS Teachers will work with students to provide additional support throughout the course and monitor whether or not they stay on track to earn an Honors Designation by the end of the course. Any student who completes the honors level work throughout the semester will have an Honors Designation reflected on their official transcript (e.g., English 9 Honors).

More information regarding the “Why” behind this change:

- All courses that previously had an honors option will continue to have an honors option
- The master scheduling process will be more flexible, allowing for:
- Increased student options for creating their first-choice schedule
- More evenly distributed class sizes
- Better opportunities to balance teacher workload
- Courses will more easily fit into student schedules where obstacles may have existed in the past
- Students who may not have otherwise selected an honors course will have the opportunity to opt into an Honors Designation
- Students who may have desired to attain an Honors Designation but are feeling overwhelmed with the coursework will not have to rearrange their schedules to take the standard level course
- We have offered blended honors in Trig/Pre-Calc for the last two years and have seen success with this model for all learners

I acknowledge that this is a large change to how we've run these courses in the past but truly believe that this will be a positive change for all students. Please feel free to ask questions about this program when you have your Pathways Meeting. I'd also be happy to discuss any questions you may have as well.

Please be on the lookout for more information regarding these meetings from our Counseling Department.

Stay safe, stay healthy, and GO WILDCATS!!

Cody Clark, HS Principal