

## Freshman Course Placement Guide for Incoming Freshmen in 2023-24

### Introduction to the Curriculum

La Salle College High School offers over 170 courses to our students each year. Our liberal arts-based curriculum provides a solid foundation for our students to grow both intellectually and spiritually, develop their critical thinking skills, maximize their learning experience, and pursue particular interests. The freshman year is essentially prescribed in order to provide a firm base in the sciences, humanities, religion, and a variety of skill areas. Some individualization of the academic program is made from the start to accommodate differences in levels of ability in mathematics, science, English, and world language. In the sophomore and junior years, students continue to satisfy requirements in the six core academic areas, but they are eligible for elective courses as well. Senior year is designed to be wide open; the only two required courses are in religion and English.

The progression from a highly prescribed program of study to a program that allows for individual interests and natural curiosity gradually introduces the student to the need for planning, accurate self-assessment, and responsibility. A student's strengths, interests, and future plans factor into the selection of a number of courses in addition to the required courses during his junior and senior years. The student, with guidance from parents and guardians, teachers, and counselors, can elect multiple courses in addition to the required courses in the sophomore, junior and senior years.

Some of those electives might eventually line up to form a "concentration" in our Concentrations Program, a program that connects learning and reinforces and expands it through experiential learning on-campus in clubs and activities, research, and reflection, plus off-campus practical experiences like site visits, interviews, and internships. During sophomore year, students will be invited to think about the pathways they will take at La Salle and if the pursuit of a concentration is of interest. During junior year, students will commit to pursuing a concentration and register for a senior-year seminar that requires an independent capstone project.

Freshmen usually carry a load of 7.5 credits: 6 core academic courses, plus Introduction to Technology and Design. We run a side-by-side block schedule with typically sixty-minute classes that alternate every other day. Seven blocks are filled with the courses above. In addition, there are blocks in the schedule that are filled in with a combination of courses freshman year: Group Advisory, gym/aquatics classes (.5 credit), and a study hall that will be required at least for the first quarter of the year. Of course, we have many freshmen who want to take advantage of our music offerings, are interested in our freshman art class, or are in the David Program. These special elections, along with a lunch period each day, fill in additional slots in the schedule.

More information about course placements will be provided in March at the class of 2027 welcome and academic information session. The required courses and electives and the placement information are assembled below to outline the possibilities.

## Course Descriptions and Details about Placement

<i>Religion (1 credit) – Course Description</i>	<i>Placement information</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Religion 9: Catholic Lasallian Identity</b></li> </ul> <p>This introductory course is designed to explain in detail what it means to be Catholic and Lasallian. The course explores the rich heritage of the Roman Catholic Church and will demonstrate that in and through the Church people encounter the living Body of Jesus Christ today. This Body has both divine and human elements. In this course, students will learn not so much about events in the life of the Church but about the sacred nature of the Church. The course also serves as an introduction to life of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, the Lasallian Mission and Lasallian educational philosophy that is imbued in our school.</p>	All freshmen take this course.

<i>Mathematics (1 credit) – Course Descriptions</i>	<i>Placement information</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Algebra 1</b></li> </ul> <p>This course provides a thorough foundation in elementary algebra by developing an understanding of the central ideas of variable and function, and the ability to use the language and tools of algebraic thinking to describe mathematical relations and analyze problems of many types.</p>	The majority of freshmen will take Algebra 1. <b>There is no placement test for this course.</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Algebra 1 (Y)</b></li> </ul> <p>Algebra 1(Y) is a version of the Algebra 1 course described above that is designed to support students with mathematical learning needs. It is a college preparatory course that is offered to students who will benefit from a different strategic approach to learning math concepts and from four additional half periods of math per eight-day cycle.</p>	Select students will be recommended for this course based on their <b>Entrance Exam</b> score in math.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Algebra 1 Honors*</b></li> </ul> <p>This is an accelerated course in elementary algebra intended for students who have a high degree of ability and interest. The usual topics of algebra are treated with an emphasis on concepts and structure rather than on how to proceed. Most important is that this course introduces the</p>	Students who did not have a full year of Algebra in 8 <sup>th</sup> grade but did have high math scores on the <b>Entrance Exam</b> qualify for this course.

<p>student to abstract mathematical thought and to solving non-routine problems. A lot of time is spent on supplementary problems taken from various contests which enhance a student's perception and problem-solving skills. By the end of the year, the students should reach a level of insight and mathematical instinct that will enable them to proceed comfortably through the upper-level advanced courses.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Integrated Algebra 1 and Geometry</b></li> </ul> <p>This is a course in elementary algebra 1 and geometric concepts intended for freshmen who have a strong foundation in some Algebra 1 topics but do not qualify to take Algebra 2. The usual topics of algebra 1 are treated with an emphasis on concepts and structure rather than on how to proceed. Students will end the year with a focus on geometric concepts that are generally not covered in an elementary curriculum that would have been covered in a full-year course at La Salle. Most important is that this course introduces the student to abstract mathematical thought and also to solving problems from algebra 1 concepts. By the end of the year, the students should reach a level of insight and mathematical instinct that will enable them to proceed comfortably through Algebra 2.</p>	<p>Students who did not score well enough on the Algebra 1 <b>placement exam</b> to qualify for Algebra 2 but did demonstrate early knowledge of Algebra 1 qualify for this course. Students' transcripts which may include Algebra and/or Geometry at the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade level will be considered. Students' math scores on the <b>Entrance Exam</b> will also be considered for this course.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Algebra 2</b></li> </ul> <p>This course continues the arithmetic generalizations begun in Algebra 1 and explores more deeply the operations that relate numbers to one another. The student is encouraged to think of algebra as a symbolic language and to use it as a modeling tool to explore other areas of mathematics. He gains an understanding of number systems by examining and using the operations for relating numbers. The use of calculators and computers in the modeling process is stressed. This course is available to freshmen who qualify.</p>	<p>Students who score well on the Algebra 1 <b>placement exam</b> but not well enough to handle the pace of Algebra 2 Honors qualify for this course.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Algebra 2 Honors*</b></li> </ul> <p>This is an accelerated algebra course intended for students who have a high degree of ability and interest. The usual topics of Algebra 2 are treated, along with topics in Probability, Mathematical Modeling, Data Analysis and Matrix Theory. One of the goals of this course is to move students to a more independent learning style. There is emphasis on integrating skills and procedures with the logical thinking needed in solving the more challenging problem. The skills acquired during this course enable the student to advance to Geometry/Precalculus and Advanced Placement Calculus.</p>	<p>Students who score very well on the entrance exam and the Algebra 1 <b>placement exam</b> qualify for this course.</p>

<b>English (1 credit) – Course Descriptions</b>	<b>Placement information</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Introduction to Literature and Composition</b></li> </ul> <p>The purpose of the freshman English course is to enhance and broaden reading, discussion, composition, and vocabulary skills. Students begin their journey to learn critical thinking skills by reading and close textual analyses of appropriate short stories, novels, plays, poetry, and essays. The writing program emphasizes the process of writing, stressing mastery of the concise expository paragraph as the essential component of the complete essay. Vocabulary enrichment comes through the discovery of words in the context of the readings as well as through exercises in a standard vocabulary text. Core works include: <i>Of Mice and Men</i>, <i>Julius Caesar/Romeo and Juliet</i>, <i>The Old Man and the Sea</i>, and <i>The Odyssey</i>, among others.</p>	<p>The majority of freshmen will be placed in this course.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Introduction to Literature and Composition (Y)</b></li> </ul> <p>Introduction to Literature and Composition (Y) is offered to freshmen who, based on the recommendation of the English department, would benefit from a course fortified by extra time and attention to building key skills. The purpose and content of this course do not change from the course description above. This course is designed to enhance and broaden reading, discussion, composition, and vocabulary skills. However, adjustments to classroom pacing are made to aid the students' learning. Students benefit from four additional periods of English per eight-day cycle by meeting for a half period on the "off day".</p>	<p>Select students will be recommended for this course based on their <b>Entrance Exam</b> scores on the Verbal, Language and Reading Comprehension sections.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Introduction to Literature and Composition Honors*</b></li> </ul> <p>A more intensive version of Introduction to Literature and Composition, this honors-level course accelerates the study of writing, while examining literature in a more rigorous and comprehensive manner. Core works include: <i>Of Mice and Men</i>, <i>Julius Caesar/Romeo and Juliet</i>, <i>The Old Man and the Sea</i>, <i>Things Fall Apart</i>, and <i>The Odyssey</i>, among others.</p>	<p>Students who score in the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile or higher on the (1) Verbal section, on the (2) Language section, <b>and</b> on the (3) Reading Comprehension of the <b>Entrance Exam</b> will likely qualify for this course.</p>

<b>World Languages (1 credit) – Course Descriptions</b>	<b>Placement information</b>
<p><i>Note: Students must complete a three-year sequence of high school-level study in one of the four languages that we offer: Chinese, French, Latin, and Spanish.</i></p>	<p>In order for a freshman to advance to the <b>Level 2</b> or the <b>Level 2 Honors</b> course, he must have had a <b>full year</b> of</p>

	a language course that meets every day and earn a good score on the corresponding placement test.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Chinese 1</b></li> </ul> <p>This is an introductory course for motivated students who are open to a very different language-learning experience of a non-Romance language. The dialect taught is Mandarin as spoken in Beijing, which is accepted worldwide as the standard for Chinese. Students will develop the ability to engage in conversations on every-day topics with emphasis on proper grammar, pronunciation and colloquial expressions. There will be a gradual introduction to reading and writing the Chinese characters. Chinese customs and culture will be explored throughout the course.</p>	(See above.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>French 1</b></li> </ul> <p>This course stresses basic grammar, practical vocabulary, and sentence structure with the aim of communication. The four basic skills are emphasized throughout the year: listening, speaking, reading and writing. The focus of this class is on real-life language use, the integration of French and Francophone culture and language.</p>	(See above.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Latin 1</b></li> </ul> <p>This course offers the students a chance to study a language and culture that has heavily influenced the English language for more than 2000 years. The students will read Latin selections which slowly build their confidence and vocabulary until they are able to read and understand the Latin with a minimum of translation. Additional oral work is given in class to enhance the text, and students learn much about Roman culture and history from their reading. Vocabulary and graded grammar work is stressed and students come away from Latin 1 with a stronger command of English vocabulary through the study of derivatives from Latin.</p>	(See above.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Spanish 1</b></li> </ul> <p>This proficiency-oriented course focuses on developing the language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The principal objectives of the course include practicing learned oral language skills in structured conversation, acquiring a strong foundation in Spanish vocabulary and grammar, and becoming familiar with the varied aspects of Hispanic culture.</p>	(See above.)

<b><i>Science (1 credit) – Course Descriptions</i></b>	<b><i>Placement information</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Integrated Science</b></li> </ul> <p>This course gives freshmen an introduction to scientific study. The class will go into detail about the nature of science with an emphasis on hands-on application of the scientific method. It will also introduce students to keystone concepts of Physics, Chemistry, and Biology. This course is structured to prepare students for the science requirement at La Salle College High School.</p>	Select freshmen will be placed in this course.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Biology</b></li> </ul> <p>This course provides the opportunity for students to study the biochemical basis of life, evolution, animal and plant morphology and systemics, using the scientific method as a mode of investigation. This course uses an introduction to biochemistry to help explain the process of life.</p>	All students who are not recipients of an academic scholarship are eligible to take the <b>Science Placement Test</b> . The score on that test will determine whether a student qualifies for Integrated Science, Biology or Honors Biology.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Honors Biology*</b></li> </ul> <p>This course provides an opportunity for students to study life with a detailed emphasis on the biochemical processes. (An introduction to Biochemistry is used to help explain the processes of life.) Using the scientific method, the students investigate evolution, animal and plant morphology and systemics. Student assessment is determined by tests, lab work and reports, homework, independent and group projects. The student is expected to express himself in detailed essay answers in order to show a higher level of concept recognition. Satisfactory performance demands a minimum daily allotment of 30 minutes study time.</p>	Students who are awarded an academic scholarship (Presidential or Principal; the Leadership scholarships do not automatically apply) based on the <b>Entrance Exam</b> scores automatically qualify for this honors-level course.

<b><i>History and Political Science (1 credit) – Course Descriptions</i></b>	<b><i>Placement information</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>World History 1</b></li> </ul> <p>This is the required course for freshmen. The course surveys the history and cultures of the world from the dawn of civilization to 1800, with attention to major cultural, social, religious, economic, and political trends within each civilization. The course follows the rise of great civilizations across the globe, and analyzes how they flourished, as well as the problems they encountered. The emergence of European civilization is set within a larger framework of civilizations in Africa, Asia,</p>	The majority of freshmen will be placed in this course.

<p>and Latin America and interactions between or among civilizations are emphasized. Special topics include exploring cultural diversity, technological achievements, competition for supremacy, and the influence of religion among different civilizations in the ancient world. By the end of freshmen year each student should have a strong sense of how civilizations developed and flourished as people from different civilizations interacted through migration, conquest and trade. The student will also gain an understanding of human, cultural, social, economic, intellectual, religious and political development of world civilizations.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>Advanced Placement Human Geography*</b> <p>This course is an elective course for selected freshmen as an introduction to the study of Human Geography. The course prepares the students to take the Advanced Placement Human Geography exam in the spring. AP Human Geography introduces students to the systematic study of patterns and processes that have shaped human use, understanding, and alteration of Earth’s surface. Students employ spatial concepts and landscape analysis to examine human social organization and its environmental consequences. They also learn about the methods and tools geographers use in their science and practice. The course goals include the use and analysis of maps and spatial data, recognizing and interpreting the relationships among patterns and processes in multiple scales, defining regions and evaluating the regionalization process, and characterizing and analyzing changing interconnections among places. The course seeks to accomplish these goals while blending the academic rigor and challenge of an introductory college course at a pace and academic maturity level for advanced high school freshmen.</p> </li> </ul>	<p>Students who are awarded an academic scholarship based on the <b>Entrance Exam</b> (Presidential or Principal; the Leadership scholarships do not automatically apply) automatically qualify for this college-level course.</p> <p>Space in this course is limited, but additional select students who score in the 90’s (national composite) on the <b>Entrance Exam</b> may also be eligible for this course.</p>

<b><i>Innovation and Design (.5 credit) – Course Description</i></b>	<b><i>Placement information</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>Introduction to Technology and Design</b> <p>The overall goal of this revamped course is to develop familiarity with digital and media resources available to the students, to increase competence in foundational computer skills, and promote awareness of ethical use of technology. The course begins with an introduction to digital and academic resources at La Salle College High School and an exploration of the ethics and responsibility of using digital and social media. Next, this course aims to integrate in-depth instruction and specific lessons on Microsoft’s Office 365 – Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook and OneNote. This course will incorporate an interdisciplinary approach that will prompt students to</p> </li> </ul>	<p>All freshmen are placed in this course.</p>

make practical and relevant applications of their skills in Microsoft Office in assignments and assessments in other courses.	
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<b><i>Physical Education/Aquatics (.5 credit) – Course Description</i></b>	<b><i>Placement information</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Physical Education/Aquatics 1</b> – Freshman – .5 credit/full year</li> </ul> <p>These courses provide students with the proper techniques for physical development. These courses take into account the needs of both the individual and the group, and as such, permit each student to progress to his own level of ability. Students take one semester of gym and one semester of aquatics.</p>	All freshmen are placed in this course.

<b><i>Group Advisory (.1 credit) – Course Description</i></b>	<b><i>Placement information</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Group Advisory</b></li> </ul> <p>Freshman Group Advisory meets once per cycle and mainly focuses on helping students adjust to life in high school. The Grade Level Counselor facilitates these lessons and throughout the year guest speakers interact with the students to cover relevant topics. The speakers include the Dean of Students, the School Nurse, the Director of Diversity, and the Director of Strength and Conditioning. Major topics include study skills, preparation for and interpretation of standardized testing, academic and social adjustment, peer relationships, health, mental health, drugs and alcohol, fitness, healthy choices, sophomore-year course selections, and student/teacher relationships.</p>	All freshmen are placed in this course.

\* **Note:** Students who qualify for multiple honors-level/Advanced Placement courses are not required to register for all of them.

In addition to the core courses above, some electives are available to freshmen. While an elective or multiple electives complicate a student’s schedule, more often than not we are able to meet a student’s requests. Having said that, naturally, there are logistical limitations inherent to the master schedule. Here are some typical scenarios regarding adding electives:



- Students who enroll in Instrumental Music receive private instruction for one period per cycle. Scheduling this course is typically not problematic.
- Students who are in the David Program will be scheduled for Academic Support and will meet their learning specialist essentially on a daily basis. Combining any special course, e.g. Algebra Y, or an elective with the David Center can be complicated, but is usually doable.

<b><i>ELECTIVE: Foundations Art (1 credit) – Course Description</i></b>	<b><i>Placement information</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Foundations Art</b></li> </ul> <p>This course is offered to students interested in a wide range of art experiences. It emphasizes the fundamentals of two-dimensional and three-dimensional skills involving a variety of materials and techniques. The focus is on design as students gain experience in drawing, painting, sculpting, ceramics, paper construction and printmaking.</p>	<p>All freshmen are <b><i>invited</i></b> to discover, explore, and develop their artistic talents in this course.</p>

<b><i>ELECTIVE: Music – Course Descriptions</i></b>	<b><i>Placement information</i></b>
<p>Note: Placement in music courses varies and is contingent upon participation in a music evaluation in the spring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Introductory Music Performance (1 credit)</b></li> </ul> <p>This course provides the beginning student musician an opportunity to develop his musicianship through ensemble performance of jazz and related idioms. The student rehearses and performs beginners’ arrangements from the stage band repertoire. The course introduces the student to the fundamentals of music theory, jazz improvisation, and the early history of jazz.</p>	<p>A short <b>evaluation</b> is required for placement of any freshman interested in taking this course.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Instrumental Instruction (.5 credit)</b></li> </ul> <p>This course provides the student with individual instruction on the instrument of the student’s choice. No musical experience is necessary. The student is provided with instruction in the techniques specific to his instrument and to his own ability. Instruments offered include trumpet, trombone, French horn, baritone horn, tuba, flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, saxophone, percussion, violin, viola, cello, string bass, electric bass, guitar, and piano. The school can provide many instruments at no cost to the student.</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Freshman Chorus (1 credit)</b></li> </ul> <p>This course is designed specifically to equip the freshman with the musical tools necessary to be an active participant in the musical life of La Salle. Issues covered include the changing voice, reading music, and vocal production in addition to rehearsing and performing as a choral ensemble. No previous experience is required.</p>	
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<b><i>ELECTIVE: Academic Support – David Program (.5 credit) – Course Description</i></b>	<b><i>Placement information</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Academic Support 9</b></li> </ul> <p>The students in the David Program meet with a learning specialist almost daily to focus on compensatory strategies for their learning difference to help them meet academic success. The support will emphasize using the strategies learned for the students’ curriculum. The students will begin the process of identifying and understanding their learning difference and of fostering self-advocacy skills to allow them to become independent learners. Emphasis is given to reading comprehension, writing, and grammar skills. This is a pass/fail course.</p>	<p>Students with <b>documented learning differences</b> are selected for the David Program during the admission process through interviews and by providing documentation of learning differences.</p>

## Contact Information

If you are seeking additional information about placements or auditions after reading the course descriptions and placement details, you should contact the appropriate Department Chairperson.

- Math – Mr. Thomas Lang: [langt@lschs.org](mailto:langt@lschs.org), 215-402-4381
- Science – Mr. Ryan McDowell: [mcdowellr@lschs.org](mailto:mcdowellr@lschs.org), 215-402-4376
- World Language – Mr. Steve Horvath: [horvaths@lschs.org](mailto:horvaths@lschs.org), 215-402-4382
- Fine Arts –
  - Chorus – Mr. Mark Norman: [normanm@lschs.org](mailto:normanm@lschs.org), 215-402-4181
  - Art – Mr. Michael Hearn: [hearnm@lschs.org](mailto:hearnm@lschs.org), 215-402-4167
  - Music – Mr. Chris Mele: [melec@lschs.org](mailto:melec@lschs.org), 215-402-4908
- English – Ms. Meredith Mariani: [marianim@lschs.org](mailto:marianim@lschs.org), 215-402-4141
- History and Political Science – Mr. John Young: [youngj@lschs.org](mailto:youngj@lschs.org), 215-402-4198
- Innovation and Design – Mr. Rob Johnson: [johnsonr@lschs.org](mailto:johnsonr@lschs.org), 215-402-4884
- David Program – Mr. John Keenan: [keenanj@lschs.org](mailto:keenanj@lschs.org), 215-402-4853

Along with the Department Chairperson, next year’s Freshman Guidance Counselor (Mr. William Leahy: [leahyw@lschs.org](mailto:leahyw@lschs.org), 215-402-4850) is a resource for you.