

# Items to Consider when Choosing Courses

## Minimum College Requirements

- 4 years of English
- 3 years of Math
- 3 years of Science
- 3.5 years of History / Social Studies
- 2 years of a world language
- 1 year of visual or performing arts

Note: These college requirements are **MINIMUM** standards, not recommended coursework.

## Colleges Want Students Who Go Beyond the Minimum

What you find published on a college's website should not serve as your course selection guide because the admissions office will be looking for students who have challenged themselves academically and gone beyond the minimum graduation requirements.

### Here are some better guidelines:

- **English** — 4 years of English with a mix of literature and composition work.
- **Math** — take math every year in high school. (Note that getting an early start by taking Algebra or Geometry in junior high does not mean you can skip math as a junior or senior.) Colleges will expect to see Algebra II at a minimum and some type of math course every year.
- **Science** — 4 years of science. Most colleges expect to see Biology, Chemistry, and Physics.
- **History / Social Studies** — 3-4 years - Most colleges like to see a geography, history, and government class.
- **World Language** — 2 years of the same language is the minimum; 3 is recommended. If you are applying to highly selective schools, you should give serious consideration to 4 years.
- **Visual or Performing Art** - 1 year

Challenging yourself beyond the minimum requirements is one of the easiest ways to distinguish yourself from other applicants. Some high schools require four years of English, math, science, and social studies, so taking that many years of each puts you on par with those students. BSM requires two years of a world language, so by taking a third or fourth year, you will show your willingness to complete challenging academic work.

## High Achievers

The recommendations above apply to all college-bound students, but if you are a high achiever and may consider some of the most highly selective colleges, you need to select courses that will make you competitive with other applicants. BSM offers nine honors courses in English, Math, Science, and Spanish, and 22 AP courses in English, Math, Science, Social Studies, World Language, Studio Art, and Computer Science. We also offer college credit courses through St. Mary's University and the University of Minnesota.

### Here are some high achiever course selection tips:

- Make sure you are on track to take the highest level of math offered. Depending on where you start at BSM, this means taking AP Calculus AB or AP Calculus BC your senior year. AP Calculus is generally seen as more challenging than AP Statistics, so if you can take only one, make it Calculus.
- Four years of the same language is highly recommended.