Our Lady of Mercy Academy Course Descriptions 2026-2027

INTEGRATED HUMANITIES MISSION

> *"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."* **- Philippians 4:8**

Knowing that every human person is created in the image and likeness of God and is therefore endowed with an innate desire for **truth, goodness, and beauty**, the Integrated Humanities Program at Our Lady of Mercy Academy seeks to cultivate in students a lifelong capacity for wonder. Rooted in the Catholic Intellectual Tradition and the rich heritage of Classical education, our humanities curriculum invites students to encounter God's revelation through **Theology, English, History, Communication & Rhetoric, World Languages, Visual Arts, and Music**.

While each of these disciplines is taught as its own distinct course with its own objectives, methods, and assessments, they are intentionally aligned to reinforce one another throughout the academic year. Students encounter the same historical periods, great works of literature, theological themes, artistic movements, musical traditions, and enduring questions across multiple courses, allowing them to recognize the unity of knowledge rather than viewing subjects in isolation. This interdisciplinary approach reflects the classical understanding that faith and reason work together in the pursuit of truth.

As students read the Great Books of Western Civilization, study Sacred Scripture and the teachings of the Church, examine the rise and fall of civilizations, contemplate sacred and classical works of art, experience the beauty of music and the human voice, and develop the classical arts of logical reasoning and persuasive communication through Communication & Rhetoric, they explore the perennial questions of humanity: *Who am I? Why was I created? What is true? What is beautiful? What is good? How am I called to live?*

Although a dedicated Latin course is not currently offered, students will intentionally study Latin roots, prefixes, suffixes, and classical terminology across the humanities curriculum. This integrated approach strengthens vocabulary, reading comprehension, writing, and critical thinking while helping students recognize the lasting influence of Latin on English, theology, history, science, and the languages of Western civilization, laying a strong foundation for future Latin study.

Students are challenged to think critically, reason carefully, communicate clearly and charitably, appreciate beauty, engage in respectful dialogue, and pursue wisdom with intellectual humility. Through reading, writing, historical inquiry, artistic expression, discussion, prayer, reflection, research, and public speaking, they develop not only academic excellence but also the virtues necessary for faithful discipleship and joyful leadership.

Ultimately, the Integrated Humanities Program exists to help students know Christ more deeply, love what is true, good, and beautiful, and faithfully proclaim these truths through both word and deed. By intentionally connecting Theology, English, History, Communication & Rhetoric, Visual Arts, and Music, students are formed not merely as scholars, but as wise, articulate, and virtuous men and women prepared to serve the Church and the world with faith, reason, creativity, and courage.

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Theology Course Descriptions:

"What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we looked upon and touched with our hands....what we have seen and heard we proclaim now to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; for our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We are writing this so that our joy may be complete." - 1 John 1:1, 3-4

Aware that the all-good, all-powerful, all-knowing, and ever-present God has created and redeemed every human person and that He passionately yearns to draw each person into an intimate relationship with Himself, and that every soul is likewise called by God to live forever in Heaven in the eternal bliss of His presence, the Theology Department of Our Lady of Mercy Academy exists to invite every student into deeper relationship with God through study, prayer, and authentic community. Through reading, reflection, discussion, and time for quiet dialogue with the Lord, students will grow in their understanding of Sacred Scripture, the Church and her Doctrine, Liturgy and Sacraments, moral theology and social teaching, and the various vocations as deep wells from which they may draw strength and joy as they pursue the God who is always pursuing them.

Sacred Scripture

The goal of this course is to enable students to encounter the God who loves them by introducing them to His Word, which contains the epic story of His creation and redemption of mankind. By prayerfully reading and discussing the Scriptures, students will be given the opportunity to hear the Lord of history and the cosmos personally inviting each of them into a deeper relationship with Him. Learning about concepts such as typology will allow students to trace the narrative arc of salvation history in Sacred Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. Students will also explore the significance of Scripture as Divine Revelation in the modern world by reading Dei Verbum, the seminal constitution of Vatican II.

Ecclesiology

In this course, students will encounter the Catholic Church as the Mystical Body of Christ, as His Bride, and as our Mother. Beginning with excerpts from the Catechism of The Catholic Church, the students will then explore various magisterial documents in order to better grasp the doctrinal teachings of Holy Mother Church represented in the Nicene Creed, the nature of her worship in the Liturgy, and her salvific work in the Seven Sacraments. Throughout the year, students will grow in their understanding of the Church as the family of God and the beginning of His Kingdom here on earth - a kingdom and a family in which they each have a unique place.

Moral Theology and Catholic Social Teaching

In this course, students will use the Catechism of the Catholic Church to delve into the Church's moral and social teachings, entering into dialogue with Aquinas on the nature of happiness, the conscience, and moral acts before reading some of the great minds of the Church, including Pope St. John Paul the Great, Pope St. Leo XIII, and our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV. The goal of this course is to equip students to form their own consciences well in light of objective truth in order to pursue the authentic and eternal happiness that is consistent with their human dignity.

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English Course Descriptions:

Heroism in Ancient and Modern Literature

In this course, students will reflect on the essence of heroism, encountering various heroes of both ancient and modern literature. Through Socratic Seminars and various writing assignments, they will examine such diverse works as Sophocles' Antigone and Tolkien's The Hobbit, learning to recognize both the characteristics of a hero or heroine and the temptations to which he or she is prone with the goal of applying these insights to their own lives. Clear, structured writing will be the focus of this year's written assignments, with an emphasis on the creation and development of insightful thesis statements and an introduction to the art of literary analysis.

British Literature

This course will provide students with a meaningful introduction to British literature, beginning with the Dark Ages after the fall of the Roman Empire and ending with seminal works of the nineteenth century. While reading great authors such as Chaucer, Shakespeare, Dickens, and Austen, students will grapple with the concepts of chivalry, integrity, freedom, and love, seeking to develop an authentic understanding of these qualities so that they may integrate them in their own lives. The students will continue to hone their skills in both Socratic discussion and literary analysis this year through various seminars and writing assignments.

American Literature

In this course, students will explore American literature from the Colonial Era through the beginning of the twentieth century. Through Socratic Seminars on authors from Hawthorne to Twain and Cather, they will reflect on topics such as friendship, sin and redemption, racial equality, nature vs. nurture, and the meaning of progress. While continuing to refine their analytical skills, students will also begin to focus on writing and speaking persuasively, with the goal of leading others to some aspect of the truths they have encountered in their reading.

Social Studies/History

World History

World History provides students with a broad understanding of the civilizations, cultures, ideas, and events that have shaped human history from the ancient world through the modern era. Students will explore the rise and fall of civilizations, major world religions, cultural developments, political systems, and global interactions while considering how societies have pursued justice, truth, beauty, and the common good throughout history.

Drawing upon primary source documents, historical literature, maps, and classical texts, students will strengthen their abilities in historical analysis, close reading, discussion, and persuasive writing. The course is intentionally aligned with the corresponding Literature and Visual Arts courses, enabling students to encounter each historical era through its literature, artistic masterpieces, philosophy, architecture, and cultural achievements. By studying these disciplines

together, students gain a richer appreciation for how history shapes, and is shaped by, the arts and the broader human experience.

Grounded in the Catholic Intellectual Tradition, the course invites students to reflect on the human experience, recognize the dignity of every person, and understand history as part of God's unfolding story of salvation while appreciating the rich contributions of diverse cultures and civilizations.

United States History

United States History explores the story of the American people from the nation's founding through the modern era, examining the events, ideas, and individuals that have shaped the United States. Students will study the nation's political, economic, social, and cultural development while considering the enduring principles of liberty, justice, citizenship, and the common good. Through the use of primary source documents, historical speeches, biographies, literature, maps, and other classical texts, students will develop skills in historical inquiry, critical thinking, discussion, and analytical writing.

This course is intentionally integrated with the corresponding American Literature and Visual Arts courses, allowing students to explore the same historical periods through literature, artistic movements, architecture, and cultural developments. This interdisciplinary approach reinforces historical understanding while helping students recognize the connections between history, culture, art, and the human experience.

Rooted in the Catholic Intellectual Tradition, this course encourages students to thoughtfully examine history through the lens of virtue, moral responsibility, leadership, and human dignity. Students will engage in meaningful dialogue, projects, presentations, and written analysis as they learn to connect the lessons of the past with the challenges and opportunities of the present.

Communication/Rhetoric Department Course Descriptions:

Foundations of Logic and Rhetoric

The purpose of this course is to cultivate the habits of clear, orderly, and virtuous thinking that are foundational to a Classical Catholic education. Using **Memoria Press's *Material Logic: A Course in How to Think*** as a primary text, students will learn the principles of sound reasoning, logical analysis, and the pursuit of truth. Through the study of logic, students will develop the ability to distinguish fact from opinion, recognize valid and invalid arguments, define terms precisely, classify ideas, and arrive at well-reasoned conclusions.

Students will apply these logical tools across the curriculum as they research, analyze primary sources, engage in thoughtful discussion, and communicate through both written and oral presentations. Emphasis will be placed not only on *what* students think, but on *how* they arrive at their conclusions, fostering intellectual humility, charity in dialogue, and a love of truth. The course also introduces the classical arts of logic and rhetoric, laying a strong foundation for future studies in literature, history, philosophy, theology, and the humanities. In addition, students will develop effective study skills, organization, and academic habits that support success in a rigorous classical curriculum while preparing them to become thoughtful leaders, faithful disciples, and lifelong learners committed to the pursuit of truth, goodness, and beauty.

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Classical Independent Study & Research Seminar (Upperclassmen)

The **Classical Independent Study & Research Seminar** is a year-long capstone experience designed for upperclassmen, providing students with the opportunity to pursue an in-depth investigation of a topic that is both of personal interest and objective significance. Building upon the habits of reasoning developed through **Memoria Press's *Material Logic: A Course in How to Think***, students will apply the classical arts of logic, research, and rhetoric as they seek to answer a compelling essential question through thoughtful scholarship and the pursuit of truth.

Students will propose a research question that intentionally bridges both the **Trivium** (the humanities, including literature, history, philosophy, and theology) and the **Quadrivium** (mathematics and the sciences), reflecting the classical understanding that all truth is interconnected. Each proposal will be reviewed by the OLMA faculty and supported by two faculty mentors, one representing the humanities and one representing mathematics or science. Through regular mentor conferences, students will refine their research, evaluate primary and secondary sources with discernment, synthesize their findings, and develop a persuasive thesis grounded in evidence and sound reasoning.

The seminar culminates in an **8-10 page scholarly research paper**, complete with proper academic citations, and a formal oral defense in which students employ the classical art of rhetoric to present and defend their conclusions before the faculty. Throughout the process, students will cultivate intellectual virtue, academic integrity, independence, and perseverance while learning to communicate truth with both clarity and charity. **All research, writing, and presentations are expected to reflect the student's own original work and are to be completed without the use of artificial intelligence.**

This capstone experience embodies the mission of a Classical Catholic education by inviting students to integrate knowledge across disciplines, pursue wisdom through rigorous inquiry, and deepen their appreciation for the unity of truth, goodness, and beauty as revealed through God's creation.

Visual Arts Course Description:

This course explores the history of visual art through the lens of the Catholic intellectual tradition, helping students discover how art reflects truth, goodness, and beauty throughout history. Students will study major artistic movements from the ancient world through the Renaissance and into the modern era while examining the influence of faith, culture, and civilization on artistic expression.

Alongside art history, students will develop foundational studio skills through drawing, painting, sculpture and/or other creative media. Emphasis is placed on creativity, craftsmanship, visual analysis, and the appreciation of beauty as a reflection of God's creation. Students will create original works inspired by the great masters while growing in their understanding of the artist's
role in serving both faith and culture.

Essential Questions to Consider:
- What is beauty, and why does it matter?
- How does art reveal the truth about God and humanity?
- How have artists shaped civilization?

- What makes sacred art different from other forms of art?
- How can artists glorify God through their work

Great Artists may Include the Following:
(Giotto, Fra Angelico, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael, Caravaggio, Rembrandt, Johannes Vermeer, Jacques-Louis David, Claude Monet, Vincent van Gogh, Georges Rouault, Salvador Dalí (selected works), John Singer Sargent, Norman Rockwell

Resources may Include:
- The Catechism of the Catholic Church (sections on beauty and sacred art)
- Letter to Artists by Pope John Paul II
- The Spirit of the Liturgy by Pope Benedict XVI (selected excerpts)
- Sacred architecture and iconography studies
- Virtual tours of major museums and cathedrals

Music/Voice Course Description:

Music & Voice explores music history, vocal technique, music theory, and choral performance through the study of the great musical traditions of Western civilization and beyond. Students develop both an appreciation for the beauty of music and the practical skills necessary to perform with confidence and excellence.

What We Study

Students journey chronologically through the major musical eras—from the earliest sacred music to contemporary styles—examining how music reflects culture, faith, history, and the human experience. Historical study includes the development of major musical genres and the lives and contributions of influential composers, helping students understand why music sounds as it does and why certain works have endured across generations.

Students study representative composers including Hildegard von Bingen, Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, Johann Sebastian Bach, Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Ludwig van Beethoven, Franz Liszt, Frédéric Chopin, Claude Debussy, George Gershwin, Thomas A. Dorsey, Mahalia Jackson, and Scott Joplin, while also exploring other significant composers within each musical period.

Musical genres explored include Pre-Baroque, Baroque, Classical, Romantic, Modern, Gospel, Jazz & Blues, Early American Roots, Country, Rock, Broadway, and Film/Movie Soundtracks, allowing students to trace the development of music across cultures and centuries.

Alongside historical study, students systematically develop healthy vocal technique through instruction in posture, breath support, resonance, diction, tone production, and expressive performance. Music theory instruction includes melody, harmony, rhythm, form, structure, and music reading, enabling students to become more confident and informed musicians.

Sacred Music & Latin

Throughout the year, students have opportunities to sing for school Masses and other liturgical celebrations. In preparation, they learn traditional Latin chants and responses, exploring both their meaning and their place within the rich

musical heritage of the Catholic Church. This provides meaningful experience with sacred music while reinforcing Latin vocabulary, pronunciation, and an appreciation for the Church's artistic and liturgical tradition.

What Students Gain

By the end of the course, students will sing with greater confidence, demonstrate healthy vocal technique, read music with increasing fluency, understand the historical development of music and its major composers and genres, and recognize how music communicates truth, beauty, and the human experience across time. Students will also gain an appreciation for the enduring role of sacred and secular music within the Catholic intellectual tradition and the broader history of civilization.

All students participate in a working choir. No prior musical experience is required.

Foreign Language Course Descriptions:

French 1

French 1 a beginner French course designed to make language learning fun, meaningful, and connected to real life.

The course is based on the Comprehensible Input (CI) method, which means students acquire French the same way they naturally learn their first language—by hearing and reading understandable French in context. Through stories, visuals, gestures, repetition, and guided interaction, students build understanding without relying on memorization of isolated grammar rules.

Learning is centered around everyday life (les choses de la vie quotidienne). Students explore familiar themes such as school, family, food, weather, shopping, sports, and daily routines. These topics help make the language relevant and immediately useful.

Throughout the year, students also discover the diversity of the French-speaking world through images, short videos, and authentic materials that introduce different cultures and perspectives.

By the end of French 1, students reach a Novice-Mid proficiency level, meaning they can understand and produce simple French, ask and answer basic questions, and communicate about familiar topics with growing confidence.

French 2

French 2 builds on the foundation established in French 1 and helps students become more confident and independent communicators.

Like French 1, the course is based on the Comprehensible Input (CI) method, allowing students to acquire French through meaningful communication rather than memorizing grammar rules. Students learn by hearing and reading understandable French in context, supported by stories, visuals, authentic resources, repetition, and interactive activities.

The course continues to focus on real-life situations (les choses de la vie quotidienne) through themes such as transportation, traveling, technology, household chores, nature, the environment, holidays, and life around the city. These topics help students expand their vocabulary while learning to communicate in increasingly authentic situations.

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Throughout the year, students continue exploring the diversity of the French-speaking world through authentic texts, videos, interviews, and cultural activities that encourage them to compare cultures, ask questions, and develop a global perspective.

Students also begin expressing themselves in the past by learning the passé composé and the imparfait, while strengthening their reading, listening, speaking, and writing skills through meaningful communicative tasks.

By the end of French 2, students reach a Novice-High proficiency level, enabling them to communicate with greater confidence, describe experiences, narrate simple events in the past, and participate in conversations about familiar topics using connected sentences.

Latin

Although a dedicated Latin course is not currently offered, students will intentionally study Latin roots, prefixes, suffixes, and classical terminology across the humanities curriculum. This integrated approach strengthens vocabulary, reading comprehension, writing, and critical thinking while helping students recognize the lasting influence of Latin on English, theology, history, science, and the languages of Western civilization, laying a strong foundation for future Latin study.

INTEGRATED SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, MATHEMATICS (STEM) MISSION

"Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them." — **Psalm 111:2**

Knowing that every human person is created in the image and likeness of God and endowed with a rational mind capable of discovering the order, harmony, and beauty of the cosmos, the Integrated STEM Program at Our Lady of Mercy Academy seeks to cultivate in students a profound sense of wonder, intellectual curiosity, and moral stewardship. Rooted in the Catholic Intellectual Tradition—which affirms that faith and reason are complementary paths to ultimate truth—our STEM curriculum invites students to encounter the Creator through Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.

While each of these disciplines is taught in distinct courses with their own rigorous objectives, methods, and assessments, they are intentionally aligned to reinforce one another during the academic year and throughout the students' time at OLMA. Students encounter mathematical principles, scientific laws, technological tools, and engineering design processes across multiple subjects, allowing them to recognize the mathematical order and physical intelligible structure of the universe rather than viewing each technical subject in isolation. This approach reflects the classical understanding that the natural world is a coherent creation open to human inquiry.

As students observe natural phenomena, formulate hypotheses, test models, analyze mathematical relationships, design elegant engineering solutions, and are encouraged to utilize technology ethically, they explore the enduring questions of natural revelation: How is the created order structured? How do mathematical and scientific truths reflect eternal order? How can human ingenuity serve the common good? How are we called to steward God’s creation?

Students will intentionally study algorithmic logic, data literacy, and principles of engineering design across the entire STEM curriculum. This integrated approach strengthens spatial reasoning, quantitative problem-solving, abstract thinking, and adaptive resilience, laying a foundation for advanced scientific, mathematical, and technical study in the students' future endeavors.

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Students are challenged to observe carefully, reason mathematically, design thoughtfully, test fearlessly, and solve complex problems. Through hands-on experimentation, mathematical proof, physical prototyping, data analysis, prayerful contemplation of nature, collaborative design, and rigorous inquiry, they develop not only technical proficiency but also the moral virtues necessary for ethical innovation and servant-leadership.

Ultimately, the Integrated STEM Program exists to help students know God through the beauty and order of His creation, love what is true, logical, and well-designed, and faithfully apply their knowledge to serve others. By intentionally connecting Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, students are formed as wise, creative, and virtuous problem-solvers prepared to lead, innovate, and glorify God in an increasingly technological world.

Science Department Course Descriptions:

Biology

This laboratory course explores the study of life from its chemical foundations to the structure and function of living organisms. Areas of study include the Scientific Method, the Chemistry of Life, Ecology, Cell Structure and Function, Photosynthesis and Cellular Respiration, Mitosis and Meiosis, DNA, Genetics, Evolution, and Human Body Systems. Students will develop scientific inquiry skills through laboratory investigations while cultivating an appreciation for the natural world and our responsibility to serve as faithful stewards of God's creation.

Chemistry

This laboratory science course aims to develop students as practicing laboratory scientists who can ask and answer questions of their own about what the world is made of and how and why chemical reactions occur. This course also aims to develop students' conceptual and quantitative understanding of chemical principles. Units of study in this course include the nature of the atom, naming of chemicals and compounds, bonding, the periodic table, reactions and equilibrium, stoichiometry, behavior of gases, acids, bases, and safe laboratory practices.

Mathematics Department Course Descriptions:

Algebra I

This is a traditional course in elementary algebra with an emphasis on solving problems. The course falls into five basic parts: 1) the four operations on real numbers and their use in the solution of simple equations and related problems; 2) linear equations, inequalities, functions and relations, and systems of open sentences; 3) irrational numbers and exponents; 4) exposure to rational, exponential and quadratic functions and equations; 5) polynomials and factoring, leading to the solution of more complicated problems. A scientific calculator is required for the course. A Texas Instruments TI-83 or TI-84 series graphing calculator is recommended.

Geometry

This course is an in-depth exploration of the concepts of Euclidean plane and 3-dimensional geometry. The course emphasizes deductive reasoning and rigorous proof which are the foundations of higher mathematics. Students are required to understand and use the vocabulary and concepts of geometry which are explored from the postulate and theorem level. Students will develop deductive and inductive reasoning skills through the writing of proofs, problem solving, and an exposure to technical drawing methods to solve problems visually. Students will practice solving problems and work on various cooperative and independent exercises and projects in their day-to-day work. A scientific calculator is required for the course. A Texas Instruments TI-83 or TI-84 series graphing calculator is recommended.

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Physical Education/Health Course Descriptions:

Physical Education I

Grades 9, 10, 11 • .5 credit - Semester
Physical education encourages the ability, confidence, and desire to be physically active for life. Physical education principles and concepts are introduced and practiced throughout the semester. The physical education curriculum is designed with the intent of improving the many aspects of wellness including, cardiovascular fitness, muscular strength, endurance, and flexibility. Physical education allows students the opportunity to establish their own fitness goals based on specific fitness testing at the start of the semester and repeated at the conclusion of the course. The objective of this course is to help students gain self-discipline, accept personal challenges, experience personal accomplishment, and make fitness a life-long goal. This course is given Pass/Fail and is not calculated in a student's GPA.

Directed Physical Education

Levels available: Open Grades 9, 10, 11, 12 • .5 credit - Semester In accordance with OLMA graduation requirements, students may receive their required 0.5 Physical Education credit for participation in an approved physical activity or sport. Students must participate in a full season, defined as attending approximately 80% of practices and/or competitions/classes. The total number of hours must be at least 60 in a 90-school day period. Students must complete a special form (Request for Directed Physical Education Credit – see the OLMA website under Resources) prior to the start of the season. Students may be required to complete written assignments as determined by the OLMA Athletic Director. This course is given Pass/Fail and is not counted towards GPA.

Health

Levels available: Open Grades 9, 10, 11, 12 • .5 credit - Semester
This course will help students acquire an understanding of health concepts and skills to apply when making healthy decisions to recognize, improve, sustain, and promote personal, family, and community health with a study of health-related careers. The goal is to increase health literacy in order to apply knowledge and skills to enhance personal health and the health of others. A skills-based approach is the practice for this course. The class includes a study of Theology of the Body as the foundation from which all other topics will flow, including nutrition, fitness, relationships, and human development with a study of the human body and its systems. Additionally, topics, include mental health, substance abuse, consumer health, and suicide prevention will be explored in this comprehensive curriculum. The objective of this course is to empower students to make decisions regarding mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual health to impact their lives in a positive way.

Honors Differentiation Course Placement

Our lady of Mercy Academy is able to differentiate Honors courses for Literature, Math and Science at this time and potentially Social Studies. Honors course placement is based on a student's demonstrated academic readiness and ability to be successful with the increased pace, depth, and expectations of Honors-level work. For students who are new to Our Lady of Mercy Academy, particularly incoming ninth graders whom our teachers have not yet had the opportunity to teach, an initial evaluation period may be used at the beginning of the school year to ensure the Honors placement is the best fit.

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For students already known to our faculty, teachers may recommend placement in Honors from the start of the year based on prior classroom performance. Because we want each student to be appropriately challenged while also positioned for success, Honors placement may be adjusted during the school year if needed. Students may move into or out of an Honors course as teachers monitor academic progress, ensuring that each student is in the learning environment where they can thrive.