

# The Davidson Academy

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW



# Principles that Guide Our Curriculum

What's Different about Our Classes?

# Flexibility

- We have sequential coursework within subject areas, and a defined set of core requirements, but we do not utilize age-based, lockstep grades to create schedules.
- Students are placed in each subject according to their demonstrated academic ability, not their age.



# Student Schedules for three 12-year-olds

1. Adv Chemistry (HS)
2. Chinese III/IV (HS)
3. UNR (HS & university)
4. Calculus I/II (HS)
5. Composition and Analysis (MS)
6. Modern History (MS)

1. American Literature (HS)
2. Study Hall
3. Algebra I (MS)
4. Spanish I (HS)
5. MS Biology (MS)
6. US Government (HS)

1. Environmental Science (MS)
2. Intermediate Algebra (MS)
3. Performance Drama (MS)
4. Study Hall
5. Critical Reading and Writing (MS)
6. Ancient History (MS)

Combinations of coursework are in direct response to the asynchronous ability patterns that emerge in our student population.

# Placement



- We begin estimating placements based on the students' applications and the work they do during Assessment.
- In August, we follow up with optional "placement testing" for math and science.
- Finally, the first three weeks of the school year are our "diagnostic period." During this time, every class is designed to assess specific skills in order to determine whether or not each student is placed correctly in every class. At the end of three weeks, we hold department meeting, review student work, and make placement corrections as needed.

# Maintaining Appropriate Placements

- We move students whenever it makes sense. Since the curriculum is designed for profoundly gifted students, we don't often have to move students once they're placed correctly, but sometimes kids have huge growth spurts that justify a move mid-year.
- We add classes whenever it makes sense. For example, last year we had a group of students progress so quickly that now we're creating a new English class that will meet their needs and move them through the curriculum a year faster so they'll be able to reach our highest English class before graduating.
- We encourage our students to check in with their teachers and/or with the curriculum team to address any academic concerns or ideas.

# Pacing—Two Views

## The “as quickly as possible” view

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Some families believe that all very bright children should be guaranteed an Academy diploma as quickly as they wish. While our graduates tend to be about 16-17 years-old so far, we do not guarantee early graduation. We subscribe to the “as appropriate” view.

## The “as appropriate” view

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This philosophy focuses on the best interests of the students, ensuring that Academy diplomas reflect the work of an exceptional education and making sure students are learning at an appropriate pace and level of challenge.

# Rigor



- As a general guideline, middle school classes at the Academy utilize material that would conventionally be used for high school or early college classes, while our high school classes offer a blend of advanced high school and advanced college level materials.
- So all students start with significantly accelerated content. That said, we provide the level of support and pacing that is age-appropriate for our students.



# Academy Classes and University Classes

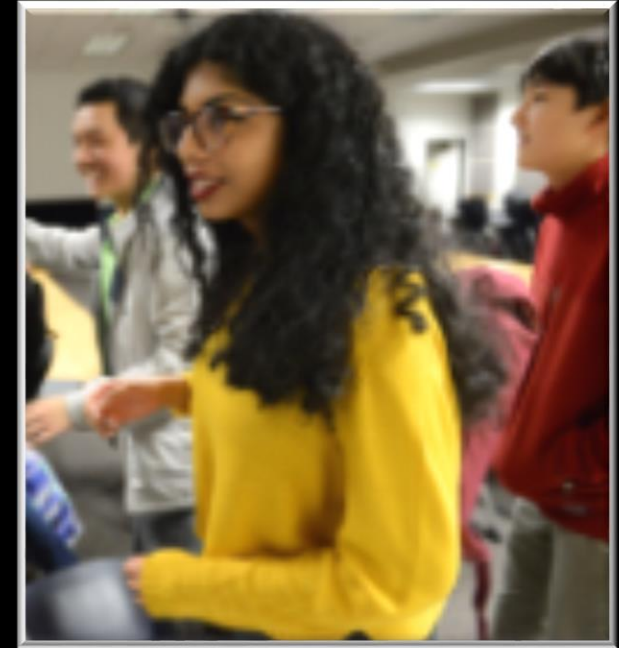
- We expect the majority of the students' core subject coursework to be taken at the Academy. Our classes are smaller than university courses, have age appropriate scaffolding and content, have significantly more teacher contact and assistance, are specifically designed for the needs of our students, and in many cases, are more rigorous than the entry level university coursework.
- However, our students enjoy classes at UNR as well. They take various foreign languages, electives, and 400-level courses in their areas of passion.



# Course Creation

All of our courses are created specifically for this population by our own teachers. Our coursework emphasizes:

- high level thinking skills
- critical and creative engagement with course materials
- academic discussion and collaboration with classmates
- reflective, analytical, and metacognitive writing



# Personalized Learning Plans (PLP)



- The PLP is an adaptable document used to guide students through a rigorous core curriculum and help them make elective decisions based upon their interests and commensurate to their levels of ability, achievement, and motivation.
- Students, with adult guidance, including staff and parents, propose ideas for the personalization process.



# Our Schedule

- We have six periods a day that are each an hour long. Monday-Thursday, we run our core classes: English, science, math, history, and foreign languages. We also run a few electives.
- Fridays are broken into three two-hour blocks with about 15 elective choices for each block.
- Many of our electives are student initiated. If enough students want a certain elective option, we will find someone who can teach it. Some of our electives are even taught by a student.





# Assessment

How we assess prospective students

# About Assessment



- The material used for this assessment has been taken directly from the Davidson Academy curriculum. With the exception of the math and science questions, the work is presented in such a manner as to replicate a relatively typical day at the Academy.
- The assessment is not a “test” in the usual sense of the word. It is more like a series of opportunities to demonstrate how one responds to instruction and might be expected to respond to the materials, teaching methods, environment, and expectations typical of Davidson Academy classrooms.

# Why We Developed Assessment

With the understanding that no single school can be all things to all people, we designed Assessment as one component of the application process with five main goals:

1. To ensure that we are able to serve the students we accept.
2. To give students concrete information about what a “typical” day is like at the Academy.
3. To provide information about where a child is along the path toward graduation in this school.
4. To help us see whole people, not just their standardized test scores.
5. Assessment helps parents and students understand some of the differences between this environment and the one they may be leaving so that they can make informed decisions.

# Sample Schedule

8:00-11:25 (or so)

- Read a short story and respond to open-ended thinking questions
- Discuss the short story and receive direct instruction for writing prompts
- Snack and break
- Write the rough drafts of the papers (with 1:1 assistance)
- Complete the Reading Analysis (if not done the night before at early bird)

11:25ish – 12:00

- Eat lunch

12:00-4:00ish

- Math Assessment
- Outside Break
- Revise and edit the papers from earlier in the day (with teacher feedback and 1:1 assistance)
- Respond to the Science Questions (if not done the night before at early bird)





Questions?