Mabank Scholars’ Institute
Mabank High School

Rethinking how we address the advanced academic needs of our students.
We’re rethinking how we address the advanced academic needs of our students.
The way we are beginning to think:
Do we as teachers appreciate the child as an individual?
  ... remember to teach the whole child?
  ... continue to develop expertise?
  ... work to link students and ideas?
  ... strive for joyful learning?
  ... encourage high expectations and provide the ladders to reach them?
  ... help students make sense of their ideas?
  ... share the teaching with the students?
  ... provide opportunities for student independence?
  ... use positive energy and humor?
  ... implement covert rather than overt discipline strategies?

Why is a differentiated advanced academic program needed at Mabank High School?

Mabank High School is looking to meet the areas of compliance within the Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students which applies to many of the students who qualify for this program.

While the Mabank High School graduate generally meets and excels state academic requirements its advanced academic student struggles to be successful in ACT/SAT testing situations and remain handicapped among competitive statewide and national university applicants.

AP courses need consistency in rigor and content in preparatory prerequisites.

Within the current system, students looking to enter four-year universities or who are targeting "ivy league" level institutions of learning may not be receiving the rigor within in the classroom to provide them with the appropriate training.

We want to lessen the student ability spectrum within the classroom so the teaching staff can be effective in meeting the differentiated educational needs of each individual student.

Mabank High School has proven its ability in teaching to our community demographic; however the advanced academic student population needs the additional support in order to realize their potential.
Are our students what the most competitive universities are looking for?

Southern Methodist University: A holistic approach to the admission process
“We carefully consider each application with the goal of adding dimension to our diverse, challenging community of scholars; so we’re likely to be just as interested in you as you are in us. And the strongest applications are not always those with the greatest number of accomplishments, but those that resonate with authenticity and passion. In addition to GPA and SAT or ACT scores, our admission committee weighs many factors during the course of the application process, including classroom performance, rigor of high school curriculum, quality of essays and recommendations, extracurricular activities, talents, character and life experiences.”

Rice University: Unconventional Wisdom
“We want a diverse, exciting student body, consisting of the best and brightest from across the country and around the globe. We do not have a quota for any of our decision plans, so the applicant’s strengths and quality of application is more important than the choice of decision plan. We recommend an admission interview for all freshman applicants as an excellent opportunity to discuss concerns and interests and to find out more about Rice. Students scoring a 4 or 5 on accepted Advanced Placement (AP) exams before matriculation will receive course credit from Rice.”

New York University: An Urban Institution
“We have no set “formulas” that we follow when we review applications, because we actively seek a mix of students who have a variety of interests, talents, and goals. If you are applying for admission to a program that requires an artistic review by our faculty, the results of that review will also be evaluated before an admissions decision is rendered. Admissions officers review every application we receive—there are no cutoffs for admission, and every applicant is considered holistically.”

Stanford University: Academic Excellence, Intellectual Vitality
“The primary criterion for admission to Stanford is academic excellence. We look for your preparation and potential to succeed. We expect you to challenge yourself throughout high school and to do very well. The most important credential that enables us to evaluate your academic record is the high school transcript. Remember, however, that our evaluation of your application goes beyond any numerical formula. We want to see your commitment, dedication and genuine interest in expanding your intellectual horizons; both in what you write about yourself and in what others write on your behalf. We want to see the kind of curiosity and enthusiasm that will allow you to spark a lively discussion in a freshman seminar and continue the conversation at a dinner table. We want to see the energy and depth of commitment you will bring to your endeavors, whether that means in a research lab, while being part of a community organization, during a performance or on an athletic field. We want to see the initiative with which you seek out opportunities that expand your perspective and that will allow you to participate in creating new knowledge.”

Brown University: Brown Gets to Know You
“Brown’s Open Curriculum asks you to consider your personal strengths and passions—and then insists that you actively create your own academic path. While each class you take will demand the rigor you’d expect from an Ivy League education, you’ll be largely freed from the restrictions of core requirements and allowed to follow your interests. Rather than relying solely on a set of quantifiable criteria like grades and test scores, our admission process challenges us to discover how each applicant would contribute to—and benefit from—the lively academic, social, and extracurricular activity here at Brown. We will consider how your unique talents, accomplishments, energy, curiosity, perspective, and identity might weave into the ever-changing tapestry that is Brown University.”

Mabank Scholars’ Institute 2017-2018 Entrance Criteria

In order to enroll in classes within the Mabank Scholars’ Institute, you must have qualified under predetermined academic criteria in STEM, Humanities, or BOTH:

**STEM**

- **LEVEL 1 – PSAT SCORE ONLY**
  - Top 10% PSAT TOTAL SCORE (990) AND Math - score of 500 or higher

- **LEVEL 2 – PSAT SCORE AND STAAR RECORD**
  - Top 25% PSAT TOTAL SCORE (920) AND Math - score of 470 or higher AND
  - 2017 STAAR Math (8th) Masters level performance

- **LEVEL 3 – STAAR RECORD ONLY**
  - 2015, 2016 & 2017 STAAR Math Meets level performance

**HUMANITIES**

- **LEVEL 1 – PSAT SCORE ONLY**
  - Top 10% PSAT TOTAL SCORE (990) AND ERW - score of 500 or higher

- **LEVEL 2 – PSAT SCORE AND STAAR RECORD**
  - Top 25% PSAT TOTAL SCORE (920) AND ERW - score of 460 or higher AND
  - 2017 7th grade STAAR Reading Masters level performance + STAAR Writing Meets level performance

- **LEVEL 3 – STAAR RECORD ONLY**
  - 2015, 2016, & 2017 STAAR Reading Masters level performance at least 2 of the 3 years with a minimum of Meets level performance for the 3rd year

- **LEVEL 4 – GT ALTERNATIVE: SUBJECT AREA IDENTIFICATION**
  - 2017 7th grade STAAR Writing Masters level performance + 2015, 2016, & 2017 STAAR Reading Meets level performance or higher

Aaron Williams – March 5, 2014
What do the students of the Mabank Scholars’ Institute have in common?

We’re grouping together kids that are diverse in background but have some important things in common:

- They need an accelerated pace of study
- They desire a rigorous curriculum
- They are highly intellectual and deep-thinkers.

What does the curriculum involve within the Mabank Scholars’ Institute?

The instructional framework of the Mabank Scholars Institute is a flexible system of viable service options that provide a research-based learning continuum, developed to meet the needs and reinforce the strengths and interests of its students.

The students' needs will be addressed by modifying the depth, complexity, and pacing of the curriculum and instruction ordinarily provided by the school per the guidelines set forth in the Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students.

Overall program goals for enhancing student learning experience.

- Gain a solid grounding in literature, history, art, politics, and culture of the western world.
- Develop an understanding of the life and physical sciences.
- Develop the ability to write and speak intelligently about many subjects.
- Gain a better understanding of mathematics.
- Get involved in student organizations, athletics, and volunteer opportunities.

Mabank Scholars’ Institute curriculum is designed so that it aligns with state standards and required EOC's but with added built-in content area connectors to promote higher-levels of understanding by relating topics class to class and maintaining the flexibility of the course of study.

Customized academic course progression.

The academic course progression is designed to promote depth of learning and understanding through the connectivity of content areas, cross-curriculum planning and horizontal alignment in STEM and Humanities. Teachers within the Humanities area will meet to coordinate lessons when applicable and plan to reinforce each other's objectives course to course. The same will apply within the STEM area. For example:

- Humanities: Courses in Reading/Writing and Social Studies will be designed so that you are reading and writing pieces of World Literature while studying that era of World History and vice a versa when applicable.
- STEM: Courses in Mathematics and Sciences are connected through the skill set and formulas they share when applicable.

This enables us to offer additional AP level courses thus providing additional learning opportunities and avenues for our students.

- This integration enables Mabank High School to perform on the "exemplary" level of the Texas Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students in service design.
- Provides opportunities for students that are comprehensive, structured, sequenced, and appropriately challenging, including options in the four foundation curricular areas, arts, leadership and creativity.

Additionally, all teachers facilitating the Scholars’ program will be AP Certified within their own content area. Students participating in the Mabank Scholars’ Institute should seek additional Fine Arts, Physical Education and Elective opportunities from within the ordinary course schedule.

What does the classroom look like in the Mabank Scholars’ Institute?

The average classroom in the Mabank Scholars’ Institute will consist of a carefully selected cross-section of students to maintain class diversity in experiences, interest and academic pursuit. The commonality between the students is their general need for an accelerated pace of study, desire for rigorous academic curricula, and a demonstrated level of intellectual and deep thinking. **Student selection will be addressed later in the presentation.**

- Most learning environments are structured socratically, featuring a student-led teaching environment within a seminar style class.
- Students can expect to take multiple classes with a single teacher to develop relationships and further connect courses horizontally.
- Target class-size will remain between 15 and 20 to maintain a smaller student to faculty ratio.
- Classrooms are vibrant in appearance, inspire the thought process and promote questioning.
- Students will be assessed annually ASPIRE/ACT and PSAT/SAT standardized test to measure growth.

Texts and materials within all classes are to be presented electronically if possible.

- Technology integration must remain an essential theme within the program.

A specialized learning environment.

- Assessment is ongoing and diagnostic to understand how to make instruction more responsive to learner need.
- Focus will be on multiple forms of intelligences.
- Students are frequently guided in making interest-based learning choices.
- Student readiness, interest, and learning profile shape instruction rather than text.
- Use of essential skills to make sense of and understand key concepts and principles is the focus of learning.
- Multi-option assignments are frequently used.
- Multiple perspectives on ideas and events are routinely sought.
- The teacher facilitates students' skills at becoming more self-reliant learners.
- Students help other students and the teacher solve problems.

Cultivating higher-order thinking should remain a goal in education and will be an emphasis within our program. These thinking skills must be taught alongside the curriculum content to ensure successful learning.

- The use of higher-order thinking skills will suffuse the program through and through.
- Training in general skills must be supplemented and supported throughout the curriculum.
- Subject matters within the program will be taught with an eye to developing the thinking methods used by experts in their discipline.

Students will come to think of themselves as able and obligated to engage in critical analysis and problem solving throughout schooling.
Example Foundation Academic Program*  

**Freshmen Year Courses:**
- English I (EOC I) - often taken in 8th grade or English II (EOC)
- World Geography
- Algebra I (EOC) - often taken in 8th grade or Geometry (EOC)
- Biology (EOC)
- Spanish I or II
- Physical Education or Elective
- Fine Art or Elective
- Elective

**Sophomore Year Courses:**
- English II (EOC) or III (EOC)
- World History (EOC)
- Geometry (EOC) or Algebra II (EOC)
- Chemistry (EOC)
- Spanish II or III
- Physical Education or Elective
- Fine Art or Elective
- Elective

**Junior Year Courses:**
- English III (EOC) or IV
- U.S. History
- Algebra II or Pre-Calculus
- Physics
- Spanish III or IV or Elective
- Speech, Sm. 1 and Elective, Sm. 2
- Physical Education or Elective
- Fine Art or Elective

**Senior Year Courses**
- English IV or Elective
- Government, Sm. 1 and Economics, Sm. 2
- Pre-Calculus or Advanced Mathematics Course
- Science IV
- Spanish IV or Elective
- Physical Education or Elective
- Fine Art or Elective
- Elective

*refers to current Texas graduation credit requirements

Example Scholars Institute Program for a student in both STEM and Humanities  

**MSI LEVEL 1 Courses:**
- Advanced English I (English I EOC I)
- Professional Communication and an Introduction to Debate
- AP Human Geography
- Advanced Geometry
- Advanced Chemistry
- P/AP Spanish I
- Physical Education or Elective
- Fine Art or Elective

**MSI LEVEL 2 Courses:**
- Advanced English II (English II EOC)
- AP Seminar (AP Capstone Program – MSI only)
- AP World History
- AP Biology (Biology EOC)
- Advanced Algebra II
- Spanish II
- Physical Education or Elective
- Fine Art or Elective

**MSI LEVEL 3 Courses:**
- AP English Language and Composition*
- AP U.S. History - (United States History EOC)*
- Advanced Pre-Calculus or AP Statistics*
- AP Chemistry or AP Physics 1 – Algebra Based
- Spanish III or Elective*
- Physical Education or Elective or Fine Art*
- Elective

**MSI LEVEL 4 Courses:**
- AP English Literature and Composition*
- Government (AP)*, Sm. 1 and Economics (AP)*, Sm. 2
- AP Calculus* or AP Statistics*
- Spanish IV (AP Spanish Language)
- AP Research (AP Capstone – MSI only)
- AP Physics 1 or AP Chemistry or AP Physics 2 Science
- Elective*
- Physical Education or AP Music Theory or AP Art History*
- Elective* or Fine Art
- Elective* or Fine Art

*refers to opportunities to take courses for dual-credit
Most frequently asked questions.

How much flexibility is there with courses?

Our goal is to provide unified training across all content areas to promote program success. Courses in the first year should train students to be successful as they move up from year to year. We encourage students who participate to follow our core recommendations in the first two years and they will still have the freedom to choose additional courses that appeal to their own interests.

How do advanced coursework affect my GPA?

Taking advanced coursework in high school is always a risk; however, our courses are weighted to give credit for the level of difficulty in the courses and the anticipated demand on students. Freshman entering in the 2017-2018 school year will fall under the new GPA plan adopted in 2015 as seen below.

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**Student potential.**

By years three and four, students should feel like they have the ability to specialize their path according to their own interests. At this level students should partake in additional dual-credit opportunities, as well as CTE programs.

**Additional program benefits.**

Students within the program will have multiple opportunities to visit college and universities.

Students will have multiple opportunities to experience cultural and arts exposure on trips and outings.

Frequent opportunities will be provided for parent involvement and feedback at different areas in the program.

**Notes.**