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Honors Classes

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Middle School Principal

Hello Middle School Parents,

As we begin the 4th quarter, a quick reflection on some recent middle school achievements include our boys' and girls' basketball teams appearing in championship games, members of the swim team finishing the season with a strong performance, six superb performances of the musical *Seussical*, Math Olympics, ACSI Spelling Bee, and much, much more! Spring sports including baseball, soccer, tennis, golf, and track are all underway, and spring break starts at the end of next week. Can you believe we are rapidly approaching the end of the school year?

Getting lost in all the excitement can be the process of selecting the right classes for your student's schedule next year. Even though picking new classes can be an exciting time for students, I know that it can also be a stressful time for parents wanting to know if their student will be in an honors class or not. In middle school we offer accelerated math in the 6th and 7th grades, and in 8th grade we offer honors classes in math, English, science, and history. As a college preparatory school, we are committed to ensuring our students receive a quality, Christ centered education in middle school that best prepares them for the rigors of high school, and likewise in high school for college. The honors classes we offer in middle school help lay the foundation for more rigorous advanced placement and dual enrollment courses in high school, and a review of this year's list of college acceptances by our senior class demonstrates top quality universities and colleges recognize the quality of our graduates.

Maximizing a student's learning potential in middle school is not always met by placing them in honors classes, and not being placed in a middle school honors class does not prevent a student from taking advanced placement and dual enrollment classes in high school. Did you know most our high school students now graduate with one full semester of college credits? As the middle school principal, I want to make sure that each student is appropriately challenged in the classroom. A student that is gifted in math and science and takes honors classes in those two subjects might not be as gifted in English and history and should not be in honors classes in those two subjects. There are a handful of students that are gifted enough to take all the honors

classes offered. There are also students that are appropriately challenged in our traditional college preparatory classes.

One of the main concerns I hear from parents is that their child will be left behind if not placed in an honors classes. In my 12 years of experience working with students in middle and high school, I have never seen this to be the case. A student who is placed in classes properly and does well in those classes and then supplements their time with athletics, fine arts, student leadership, volunteer hours, or club participation are equally ready and qualified for college. A student who is misplaced in honors classes often tends to cut back on co-curricular activities in order to stay on top of their course work. This leaves those students with a transcript of honors classes but little else to show potential colleges. Our middle school faculty and staff work collaboratively to identify those students who, over the course of the school year, have demonstrated consistent performance that warrants placement in an honors class. Some of the criteria we examine include class grades, Terra Nova standardized testing, organization skills, responsibility, behavior, and attitude. We use a holistic approach in this selection process to help maximize students' learning potential by balancing the right level of course rigor with a student's past performance. I look forward to continuing to work with you and your student as we begin to close out this school year.

