Meeting Student Learning Needs in 2018

Information for parents and caregivers regarding class allocations in Year 7 to Year 10

At Chevalier College, we recognise that relationships are the foundation of learning and teaching. As the MSC Vision of Education states: ‘In the spirit of a loving and supportive family, members help one another grow in knowledge, faith and service.’ This understanding explains the College’s commitment to the importance of relationships in the classroom, and research suggests that learning occurs best in ‘a trustful, mutually respectful environment’ where teachers and students can give and receive feedback and focus on growing in skill and understanding.

This position, based in our charism and supported by educational research, explains our commitment to essentially ‘mixed-ability’ classes in Years 7 to 10. The College strives to ensure that, in home room and in every subject, our students encounter children from diverse backgrounds and abilities, with many interests, learning from each other, celebrating success and sharing in challenging situations. In Year 7, for instance, we ensure that students spend a year with a small number of core teachers for much of the day, and that they have a home classroom in which they can keep and display their work. For many students, home room becomes their ‘family at school’.

Boosting and Building Literacy Skills, new Pathways in Mathematics

The State Government’s new proposals for the HSC, present some challenges for all schools in New South Wales. Chevalier College’s responses to these changes are detailed elsewhere on the website. Data from the NAPLAN program and the Progressive Achievement Tests have been used to identify students who would benefit from particular intervention in the area of Literacy. This process is already in place in Mathematics through the pathways in Stage 5, and we have now sought to apply this to students who may need longer or greater intervention to achieve the required standard in Reading and Writing before they sit the HSC examinations. In a similar fashion, students who are potentially gifted will be identified and have opportunities for extension and enrichment.

The effect of this will not result in the streaming of students or limiting the opportunities to achieve at the highest level. Students will continue to be taught the same programs and assessed with the same tasks in all courses; but for some students, their literacy needs will be more effectively addressed through classroom grouping. Each year group will be using data from testing to ensure that each student’s needs are targeted and that our teaching practices are effective in meeting those needs.
Arrangements for 2018

In Year 7, there will be no change to our grouping processes; but students with literacy and numeracy needs will be identified by class teachers in consultation with the Leader of Learning – Diverse Learning (Fiona McEvoy), and specific targeted intervention in class will take place. This is a process that has been immensely beneficial in the past and results in significant academic growth for targeted students.

In Mathematics, students will make substantial use of Maths Pathways, a commercial online program that acts as a personalised textbook for each student, based on the level of Mathematics that a student is currently working on. Student learning includes access to diagnostic tests, which not only determine the level at which they are working, but also identify any gaps in the knowledge they may have from prior learning. Students from a number of different levels will work in the same classroom.

In Year 8 2018, students whose testing results indicate that they need additional intervention may be directed into one of a number of classes where writing becomes an additional focus. These classes, which we like to call ‘boost’ classes, are intended to provide students with the literacy skills to qualify for the HSC. Other students will work to further develop their skills in ‘build’ classes. In Mathematics and Science, some topics will provide students with the opportunity to seek reinforcement or extension according to need. Students in Maths and Science will continue to work in mixed ability groups, with Mathematics continuing to use Maths Pathways.

In Year 9 2018, English and Humanities classes will also be formed into boost and build groups, based on the level of need in Literacy. Mathematics students will move into the most appropriate pathway from the syllabus: 5.1, 5.2 or 5.3. At the end of Year 9, the progress of each student will be evaluated and, where appropriate, changes will be made before the student enters Year 10. Year 10 English and Humanities classes will be mixed ability except for a literacy boost class and a Gifted group.

At Chevalier College, we reject any approach that involves ‘teaching to the test’ and we strive to ensure that the needs of students of all abilities and interests are met. However, we believe that using data intelligently and supporting teachers in targeting the needs of each student can assist us in building their knowledge and skills to give them the best possible start in the world beyond school. Not every student can finish the HSC with marks in the maximum range, but the College’s goal for each student is personal excellence and the greatest possible growth and progress.

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