

## **ACADEMIC POLICIES**

The language of communication and instruction at Santa Margarita Catholic High School is totally in English with the exception of World Language classes which are taught in the target language.

- ***Curriculum***

Santa Margarita Catholic High School is a college preparatory school with over 200 academic courses available. Students are accepted based on the expectation that they are capable of meeting the academic rigors of the curriculum. While at Santa Margarita, students must maintain a cumulative academic Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.0 or better.

The curriculum at Santa Margarita has been developed by the Department Chairs under the direction of the Assistant Principal of Curriculum and Instruction. The curriculum is multi-layered offering academic classes as well as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and Honors classes for those who qualify. An Interdisciplinary Program is offered throughout all four years of the academic curriculum, and an Auxiliary Studies Program is offered for students with mild learning differences. As our global world changes so must the education of our students. Therefore, as we prepare our students to be involved citizens of the world, we must provide a curriculum that meets those needs. Santa Margarita hires only faculty who are experts in their subject matter and who have appropriate credentials and degrees to teach our students the highly academic curriculum offered.

- ***Courses and Scheduling***

Each student is required to take a course load of seven classes per semester. Counselors, with the assistance of the Assistant Principal of Curriculum and Instruction, will closely monitor a student's choice of courses to avoid the student becoming overloaded in his/her academic curriculum.

A detailed explanation of the courses that are offered can be found in the **Course Description Book** which is published each year in February and posted on the school website. Registration for courses for the following year takes place during the third marking period. Students work with their counselor to prepare their next year's schedule, to review graduation requirements, and to take proper courses for admission to the colleges or universities of their choice.

Incoming Freshmen receive course selection forms and a hard copy of the Course Description Book at the mandatory Incoming Freshman Scheduling Night in the Spring. At this meeting individual Department Chairs and the Assistant Principal of Curriculum and Instruction speak about scheduling options.

- ***Placement in Classes***

***All Students***

After students have selected courses, they are assigned to classes by the computer. Selection of specific teachers is not permitted. Students not initially qualified for Honors classes can earn placement into certain Honors classes by individual department testing or by earning A's both semesters in the academic level class and teacher and counselor recommendation. Students are permitted to change classes only if it is determined by the classroom teacher that they are

misplaced. Generally, this means they were initially placed in the wrong class or additional information has come to light which affects success. The final decision is made by the Assistant Principal of Curriculum and Instruction in consultation with the Counselor, Department Chair, and teacher. Should a class change be needed due to misplacement, the grade the student has earned to that date will be carried to the new class.

### ***Grade Nine***

Students are assigned courses required for graduation based on their Entrance Exam scores, courses taken in middle school, and middle school tests administered in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

### ***Grades Ten - Twelve***

Returning students select courses based on teacher recommendation and approval during the registration process in the spring. Each department has guidelines for the placement of students in advanced courses which can be found in the Course Description Book published annually. In some cases, students are allowed to attempt a class for which prerequisites were not met. In these cases, parents and students must sign a contract clearly identifying the student's responsibility to the course and the teacher. Students who do not have at least a grade of "C" may not use a contract to move into an advanced level.

- ***Changing Classes***

Parents and students should be aware that once schedules are picked up in the Bookstore or when books are purchased no changes will be made to that schedule. The exception to this would be an error made by the school for an incorrect placement in a subject. Should a class change be needed due to misplacement, the grade the student has earned to that date will be carried to the new class. Please note also, that seniors are not permitted to change classes at the beginning of 2<sup>nd</sup> semester. In some cases, seniors have already been accepted to college and wish to lighten their load. Santa Margarita does not permit this as an option.

- ***Requests for Teacher Changes***

All students are assigned to teachers and periods by the computer. The computer balances all class sizes and assigns teachers to students in a random manner. To maintain proper class balance and fairness to all, students/parents may not request a schedule change to accommodate a teacher of their choice.

- ***Withdrawal from a Course after the Semester has Begun***

If a student drops a course prior to the first four weeks of any semester, there will not be a W on his/her report card. These drops would only be approved if the student is misplaced not because the student does not like the class or teacher. However, if a student drops a course after the first four weeks of any semester, a W will appear on the student's report card. In both cases there will be a straight transfer of grades even when dropping levels, i.e. AP/IB/Honors to academics. It is important to note that dropping a class can only occur under very unusual circumstances with the approval of the counselor, teacher, and the Assistant Principal of Curriculum & Instruction.

- **Homework for Student Absences**

Parents/students may request homework during an absence by going to the teacher's website to get the assignments.

- **Missing Final Exams**

All final semester exams must be taken at the regularly scheduled times. Students who miss a regularly scheduled semester exam without an excused absence may receive an "F" grade for that exam. Semester exams represent 20% of the semester grade.

If for some valid reason (as determined by the Administration) a student must miss a final exam, the parent must submit a written request for the reason to the Assistant Principal of Curriculum and Instruction. The Assistant Principal of Curriculum and Instruction will review the request and consult with the student's teacher(s) before making a final decision. Teachers may not reschedule final exams without administrative approval. No second semester exam may be taken after the last day of teacher attendance.

- **Attendance and Academics**

Regular attendance at school is essential for academic success at Santa Margarita. A student's grade may be affected by excessive absences since it becomes extremely difficult to make up missed assignments while continuing to move forward with new work. When it becomes necessary for a student to miss a segment of school beyond two weeks for medical or other reasons, the school recommends the student withdraw from Santa Margarita for the remainder of that semester and enroll in another accredited school while they are recuperating. This will allow the student to return to Santa Margarita with a transcript from the accredited school at the end of that semester and resume his/her regular classes without the worry or concern about making up weeks of missed work, including test and homework, while trying to keep up in seven classes. A meeting should be scheduled with the Attendance Office and Academic Office to begin the process should this occur.

- **Classroom Policies**

All teachers distribute classroom policies at the beginning of each school year or semester. Parents and students should read these classroom policies very carefully before signing them. Students will be held responsible for the content of these classroom policies and regulations throughout the school year. Contact the teacher with questions on individual classroom policies.

- **Observing Classrooms**

Occasionally, the Academic Office receives requests from parents to observe a teacher's classroom. **These requests to observe a particular teacher's class cannot be approved.** We strongly encourage parents to contact the teacher first when there are concerns about a class. Please review the Santa Margarita Catholic High School Communication Policy on page 23 for any questions about the proper chain of communication.

- **Grading Scale**

*The school grading scale is:*

A+	99-100%
A	92-98%
A-	90-91%
B+	88-89%
B	82-87%
B-	80-81%
C+	78-79%
C	72-77%
C-	70-71%
D+	68-69%
D	62-67%
D-	60-61%
F	59% and below

- **Grades and Attendance**

Regular attendance in class is directly related to strong academic performance. Students who miss class for any reason may find their grades affected by these absences. Every teacher has an absence policy for their individual class. Parents and students should be sure to familiarize themselves with their teachers' policies regarding absence from class.

- **Aeries Program**

Students and parents who wish to monitor academic progress on a regular basis can access Aeries, the official school grading program which allows parents and students to review assignments and test scores online 24 hours a day from any computer. In addition, it allows parents and students to review the official school records for discipline, attendance, and grades at set grading periods. All teachers are required to use Aeries and to update it at least once in each 2-week period.

The Aeries User Name and Password are mailed to incoming Freshmen families at the beginning of the school year. If the code is misplaced, you may email [helpdesk@smhs.org](mailto:helpdesk@smhs.org) and a new copy will be provided to you.

- **Report Cards**

Report cards are mailed home four times during the school year: at the end of the first marking period, first semester, third marking period, and second semester. **SANTA MARGARITACATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL no longer does progress reports at mid quarter. Parents and students are encouraged to review grades on Aeries (the school's online grading program) regularly to keep track of student academic progress throughout grading periods.**

**Grades Mailed to Parents and Available for Viewing on Aeries**

- November 5, 2010 First Mark Grades
- January 28, 2011 First Semester Grades
- April 8, 2011 ..... Third Mark Grades
- June 8, 2011 (Seniors Only) Second Semester Grades
- June 17, 2011 (Grades 9-11) Second Semester Grades

- ***Request for Review of a Semester Exam Grade***

At the end of the second semester, there are occasional requests from parents and students to review the semester exam. Since the 80% of the semester grade is posted the Friday before the beginning of semester exams, any questions relating to this portion of the grade must be taken care of before teachers leave in June. Parents or students wishing to review the second semester exam may request a SEMESTER EXAM REVIEW FORM from the Academic Office. Forms must be completed and turned in no later than June 30<sup>th</sup>. The purpose of this semester exam grade review is twofold. One, to provide an opportunity for the semester exam to be reviewed, and two, to see if possibly a mistake in the grading of the exam has occurred. It is not the purpose of this review to dispute answers on the test or otherwise try to persuade the teacher to change the grade.

**If a student has a question about a grade during the first semester, the student (or parent) should contact the teacher directly. If the teacher is no longer on campus, the Department Chair for the subject may be contacted. All requests for first semester grade reviews must be made prior to February 15.**

- ***Communication with the School***

When a parent has a concern or question about a student's progress or lack of it, **the teacher should be contacted first**. If the problem in question has not been resolved satisfactorily, the appropriate Department Chair should be contacted to set up a meeting with all parties concerned. **It is important that parents follow this chain of operation before contacting the Principal or Assistant Principal of Curriculum and Instruction.**

We encourage parents to contact teachers as often as necessary to keep abreast of their student's progress. Because teachers do not have access to telephones in their classrooms, it is somewhat difficult to reach a teacher immediately by telephone. Email communication is the preferred method for reaching a teacher. Faculty email links are located on our website on the Academic homepage under the Faculty/Staff Directory. **When following the proper chain of communication, please allow a teacher 24 hours to respond to your message. Also, please be aware that sometimes outside emails get caught in our spam filter; therefore teachers will not receive your email until the next day.**

- ***Community College Classes***

Any student wishing to take a class at a local community college is required by the college to have the signed approval of the Principal or Assistant Principal of Curriculum Instruction or the counselor. Further information on community college classes can be obtained from the Counseling Office.

- ***Repeating a Course***

Any semester grade of "F" must be remediated in summer school. Students are not permitted to retake a class for which they earned a grade of "F." A semester grade of "D" earned in the second semester of a first or second year Math or World Language class must also be remediated in summer school.

Students who wish to earn a diploma from Santa Margarita Catholic High School (this does not apply to transfer students) may not take more than 20 credits from another outside accredited educational institution unless there is an extenuating circumstance which has been previously approved by the Assistant Principal of Curriculum and Instruction and the Counselor. Online classes are permitted on a limited basis only. Written permission from the Counselor must be given before an online class can begin.

- **Summer School**

Any student who receives an "F" grade at the semester in any subject must remediate that "F" in summer school. In addition, a student receiving a "D" grade in the second semester of any Math or World Language course for which a second or third year is required must attend summer school at Santa Margarita to remediate the grade and to prepare for the following year. Students whose academic GPA is below a 2.0 must attend summer school to remediate D's even if they have no "F's", so that they may improve their academic GPA.

Because summer school class time is minimal in comparison with the regular school year, students are not permitted to be absent during summer school. There are **No Excused Absences**. Students, who for any reason, do miss a summer school class will be marked unexcused and will not be able to make up tests or quizzes or turn in any work for the missed day or days. Students who are tardy and miss tests, quizzes or other work due to tardiness will be unable to make that up as well.

- **Graduation Requirements**

In order to graduate from SANTA MARGARITACATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL, a student must successfully complete a minimum of 270 credits of course work. Included within credits completed satisfactorily are the following course requirements:

Religion .....	4 years .....	40 credits
English .....	4 years .....	40 credits
Social Studies...	3 years .....	30 credits
Science .....	3 years .....	30 credits
Mathematics...	3 years.....	30 credits
World Language...	2 years.....	20 credits
Fine Arts .....	1 year .....	10 credits
Health .....	½ year .....	5 credits
Physical Education .....		20 credits
Electives .....		<u>45 credits</u>
		270 credits

**Graduation Policy**

In order to receive a diploma from Santa Margarita Catholic High School, a student must:

- Have successfully completed a minimum of 270 credits of coursework.
- Have no unremediated grades of "F" on his or her transcript.
- Have a cumulative academic GPA of 2.0 or better.
- Be in good standing with the Attendance and Discipline Office.

- Have no outstanding financial obligations with the Business Office.
- Have completed all Christian Service obligations.

A senior who has the misfortune of receiving a grade of “F” on his or her transcript will not receive a diploma from Santa Margarita Catholic High School until the “F” has been remediated. In order for this student to participate in graduation exercises he or she must:

- Have a cumulative academic GPA of 2.0 or better.
- Not have more than 2 “F” grades on the transcript.
- Be in good standing with the Attendance and Discipline Office.
- Have no outstanding financial obligations with the Business Office.

All incomplete work must be turned in by the 80% posting date in order for this work to be calculated into final grades. Any senior who is enrolled in an online class needed to meet graduation requirements must have all work and the final exam completed by May 1<sup>st</sup> with the official transcript received by the counselor no later than May 10<sup>th</sup>. Any student who has a “School Hold” on his or her diploma will not receive the diploma until the hold is removed. Students who have a “School Hold” on their diploma because of incomplete graduation requirements must have those deficiencies completed by August 31<sup>st</sup> of the graduation year. If applicable, a transcript from the community college or university must be submitted to Santa Margarita for the completed work. The date of graduation on the transcript will reflect the year the graduation requirements have been met if not done by August 31<sup>st</sup> of their graduation year.

- ***Valedictorian and Salutatorian***

The Valedictorian award is bestowed upon the senior who has earned the highest academic GPA over seven semesters. The decision is usually made in the early spring by the Assistant Principal of Curriculum & Instruction and the Principal.

The Salutatorian award is bestowed upon the senior who has earned the second highest academic GPA over seven semesters. The decision is usually made in the early spring by the Assistant Principal of Curriculum & Instruction and the Principal.

- ***Transfer Students***

To be accepted as a transfer student to Santa Margarita, a student must have an academic GPA of 2.5. All transfer credits must come from an accredited institution. Students transferring to Santa Margarita from a public high school or other non-Catholic high school must earn 20 credits in Religion. Religion classes are available on line and guidance as to when these classes should be taken will be given by the student’s counselor or the Admissions Director.

- ***International Students and Exchange Students***

Students transferring from an International School as seniors must be able to meet all the graduation requirements of Santa Margarita Catholic High School if they wish to earn a Santa Margarita diploma and participate in graduation exercises. In addition, they must complete two years of required Religion courses. Those courses should be the junior and senior year classes offered at Santa Margarita. The Administration reserves the right to make the final decision

on International students wishing to graduate from Santa Margarita Catholic High School.

International students who come to Santa Margarita after their Freshman year, will have their previous course work sent directly to the colleges and universities to which they are applying. Courses taken and credits earned at International Schools will not be reconciled on the Santa Margarita transcript. It will be necessary for the student to send two transcripts when applying to college...one from the international school, which the student must request, and one from Santa Margarita.

- **Grades and GPA**

Honors classes, AP (Advanced Placement), and IB (International Baccalaureate) courses receive an extra grade point. The scale is as follows (pluses and minuses within each letter grade do not change the scale):

<b>Honors Scale</b>	<b>Academic Scale</b>
A - 5	A - 4
B - 4	B - 3
C - 3	C - 2
D - 1	D - 1
F - 0	F - 0

The semester exam constitutes 20% of the semester grade.

“I” (Incomplete) is used only in very rare cases when a student has missed work/test due to an excused absence at the end of the grading period. If the Incomplete grade is not made up within 2 weeks from the date grades were due, the grade will turn to an “F”.

All 8<sup>th</sup> period classes receive a letter grade and may be used for athletic eligibility.

- **Academic Honesty**

See policy under Ethics in the Attendance and Discipline Section of the Parent Student Handbook or Agenda.

- **Academic Probation**

Santa Margarita is a college preparatory high school. Students are accepted based on the expectation that they are capable of meeting the academic rigors of the curriculum. Therefore, students must maintain a cumulative, as well as semester, academic Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.0 or better. Students are placed on academic probation after the first semester that they perform below 2.0. A second semester of academic work below 2.0 can be reason for dismissal. Freshman students may be asked to withdraw from Santa Margarita if they have both semesters of academic work below 2.0 or if the second semester or cumulative academic GPA falls below 1.50. Having a GPA that low so early in the high school program makes meeting graduation requirements almost impossible.

- **Academic Withdrawal**

When a student has not met the academic requirements of Santa Margarita, the Assistant Principal of Curriculum and Instruction will ask the student to withdraw. Final transcripts are provided to the school/program designated by the parent/guardian at the time of withdrawal. No future academic grades for work completed at another institution or educational program will be posted or added to the Santa Margarita Catholic High School transcript of grades issued at the time of withdrawal. Santa Margarita is under no obligation to continue to facilitate the continuance of the student's education at Santa Margarita or by any agent or representative of Santa Margarita.

- **Withdrawing from School**

If, for any reason, a student is withdrawing to attend another school, the parent must contact the Registrar to sign a **withdrawal form**. Withdrawal grades will be obtained by the Registrar from the teachers and forwarded to the new school if the withdrawal occurs other than at the end of an official grading period.

- **Year-End Review Process**

At the close of first semester and at the end of summer school, the Assistant Principal of Curriculum and Instruction examines the files of any student(s) for whom there is some academic concern and determines an appropriate course of action.

- **Academics and Participation in Athletics**

Students must have a 2.0 total GPA (which includes non-academic classes) in the most recent grading period to be eligible for participation in athletics or specified activities. At semester, the semester grades will be used to determine eligibility. In some cases, activities require a higher GPA for participation. These athletic/activities eligibility GPA's include all courses taken for credit.

If a student athlete falls below a 2.0 total GPA at any official grading period (i.e. 1<sup>st</sup> mark, 1<sup>st</sup> semester, 3<sup>rd</sup> mark, 2<sup>nd</sup> semester), he/she may not represent Santa Margarita in athletic competition. Should an athlete fall below a 2.0 total GPA, a request for a **one-time** Waiver for Eligibility to participate in athletic competition may be made by the coach. **Students or parents who wish to receive a Waiver for Eligibility should present their individual case to the student's coach for the particular sport in which the student is participating.** The coach in turn will petition the Assistant Principal of Curriculum and Instruction for approval. **The request for a waiver must come directly from the student's coach. The Assistant Principal of Curriculum and Instruction will not consider the request for a waiver that comes directly from a student or parent.** A Waiver for Eligibility is given only ONE TIME during the student's high school years. The Monday after grades are submitted, students become either eligible or ineligible. A waiver is generally reserved for varsity athletes. Freshmen are generally not given this option. A Waiver for Eligibility is effective for one grading period only. If a student receives a progress report during the grading period, the waiver may be revoked.

- **Physical Education Policy**

All students at Santa Margarita Catholic High School are required to complete two (2) years (20 credits) of Physical Education in order to graduate. This requirement can be met in the following ways:

**Regular P.E. Classes**

- Completion of 2 years (20 credits) in a Physical Education class at Santa Margarita Catholic High School, either during the regular seven period day, (first priority given to seniors), or during summer school (space permitting and first priority given to seniors). Summer school classes must have a minimum of 20 students and will count as 5 credits per semester or summer session. Students may take summer school P.E. both sessions if space is available and can earn a total of 10 credits for both sessions.
- Students may earn 5 P.E. credits per semester by being a Student Athletic Trainer. Space is limited in this semester long course, and students must be recommended by the school's athletic trainer before signing up.
- Students may earn up to 20 P.E. credits for 2 years participation in Beginning, Intermediate and/or Advanced Dance. Freshmen may only take Beginning Dance for Fine Art credit.

**CIF-Sanctioned Sports**

- Participation in a CIF-Sanctioned Sport offered at Santa Margarita Catholic High School. Only those CIF-sanctioned sports that are offered on our campus will be approved for credit. This includes the following sports: Baseball, Basketball, Lacrosse, Cross Country, Football, Golf, Soccer, Softball, Swimming and Diving, Tennis, Track and Field, Volleyball, Water Polo and Wrestling.
  - **Two years** of continuous participation in a **year round sport** will satisfy the full 20 credit requirement for graduation. CIF-sanctioned year round Santa Margarita Catholic High School sports include: Boys Baseball, Boys Basketball, Girls Basketball and Football. If a student fails to complete the 2 year commitment, 5 credits per semester will be earned.
  - **Four years** of continuous participation in a **seasonal or semester sport** will satisfy the full 20 credit requirement for graduation. CIF-sanctioned seasonal Santa Margarita Catholic High School sports include: Cross Country, Golf, Lacrosse, Soccer, Softball, Swimming and Diving, Tennis, Track and Field, Volleyball, Water Polo, and Wrestling. If a student fails to complete the 4 year commitment, 5 credits per season will be earned.

Santa Margarita Catholic High School-affiliated activities such as Equestrian and Roller Hockey will receive a maximum of 5 credits per year. These activities must have a minimum of 90 hours per year in order to receive 5 units of credit.

A maximum of 10 credits per year may be earned through participation in the CIF-sanctioned sport. **If a student is dropped or withdraws from the sport before meeting the 2 or 4 year commitment (stated above), he or she must earn the additional credits needed to total 20 prior to graduation.** These additional

credits may not be earned off campus; the remaining P.E. credits needed for graduation must be earned on the Santa Margarita Catholic High School campus.

**Other Options**

- Marching Band – 2 years of continuous participation (1 semester per year) will satisfy 10 credit credits of P.E.
- Color Guard – 2 years of continuous participation (2 semesters per year) will satisfy 20 credits of P.E.
- Dance Production Team – 2 years (4 semesters) of continuous participation on the Dance Production Team will satisfy the 20 credit requirement for graduation. If a student fails to complete the 2 year commitment, he or she will be required to earn an additional 10 credits of P.E. on the Santa Margarita Catholic High School campus.
- Cheerleading – 2 years (4 semesters) of continuous participation in Cheerleading will satisfy the 20 credit requirement for graduation. If a student fails to complete the 2 year commitment, he or she will be required to earn an additional 10 credits of P.E. on the Santa Margarita Catholic High School campus.

***Under no circumstance will participation in athletic activities outside of school count towards the 20 credit requirement for graduation from Santa Margarita Catholic High School. Only those sports and activities listed above fall within our policy.***