



Opening Doors through a Thoughtful Curriculum

The Importance of Preparation

Rice Memorial High School has a long-established reputation for academic rigor. As part of its stated mission to recognize and encourage the potential of each student, Rice provides opportunities for students to grow, develop deep academic interests, and prepare for college and careers. An emphasis on mastering fundamentals underlies the freshman and sophomore curriculum. Learning those fundamentals early allows students to explore different paths of academic interest junior and senior year. Flexibility also allows students to move between college prep and honors courses depending on their readiness, interests and course load. Impressively for a mid-sized school, Rice offers 15 honors classes and 12 Advanced Placement classes (and growing!), providing diverse options for students to pursue as they fall in love with an academic field.

Laying the Groundwork: The Importance of Course Sequencing

Critically, these more advanced classes prepare students to apply to a wide range of college programs and career paths. Let's take a student who loves math and science. Only by taking upper level math and science courses can he or she apply to a rigorous engineering, science, or math program at a selective college.

In Science and Math

By paying close attention to the sequencing of courses freshman and sophomore year, Rice allows students to reach those upper level classes later in high school. In science, freshmen have the option to start with Biology, allowing them to take Chemistry sophomore year, preparing them for upper level science choices both junior and senior year including AP Physics, AP Biology, and AP Chemistry. Most other Vermont schools require that all freshmen take Earth Science. While important, many students experience Earth Science as redundant, as it covers much of the same curriculum taught in middle school. For students that have mastered these early science concepts, moving on to Biology freshman year keeps them engaged and excited about science. And sequencing in math allows students to choose AP Calculus or pursue AP Statistics senior year.

In the Humanities

Rice similarly has paid close attention to sequencing in the humanities. Honors classes are offered across the spectrum of humanities subjects including world languages and religion. Students have the option to take Honors English both freshman and sophomore years, paving the way for them to choose AP English options *both* junior and senior years. In history, freshmen take honors or college prep World Studies. Doing well in either the honors or college prep track freshman year prepares students to choose AP World History sophomore year, instead of waiting until junior year as is more typical in Vermont schools. By taking AP World History sophomore year, Rice frees up their juniors and seniors to choose among AP Economics, AP US History, AP Government and Politics and AP European History. At most Vermont high schools, Honors English and History are not offered freshman year, nor do most Vermont high schools offer Honors or AP English junior year. This emphasis on rigorous humanities also prepares students well for the AP Capstone Diploma program. Rice is one of only two Vermont high schools offering this prestigious program comparable to the International Baccalaureate program.

Course Selection Process

Rice routinely evaluates its course offerings and introduces new classes based on student interests and what will best serve them in college. For example, this coming fall, Rice will introduce Chinese, a multicultural and exploratory language course (with the potential for future advanced classes), as well as several new music classes. In addition, Rice is exploring the addition of AP Calculus BC, a unique offering for Vermont high schools that will particularly benefit students interested in STEM majors.

Rice is also unique in how we develop our master schedule. Students submit their course requests in the spring of the prior academic year and the master schedule is created around those requests. This student-centered approach means students generally get the classes they want and need to meet their academic goals.

Because of Rice's careful attention to course sequencing and our student-centered scheduling, it is not unusual to see a Rice graduate with 6, 7 or more AP courses on their high school transcript.

Planning for college and the world beyond high school begins freshman year. Rice understands that early courses pave the way for more advanced options, which in turn, opens doors for future endeavors.

Learn more about the Rice curriculum by contacting Rice Admissions and Marketing Specialist Stacy Bessette at bessette@rmhsvt.org or (802) 862-6521 ext. 2246.