



High Ability & Honors Guidebook

2025-2026

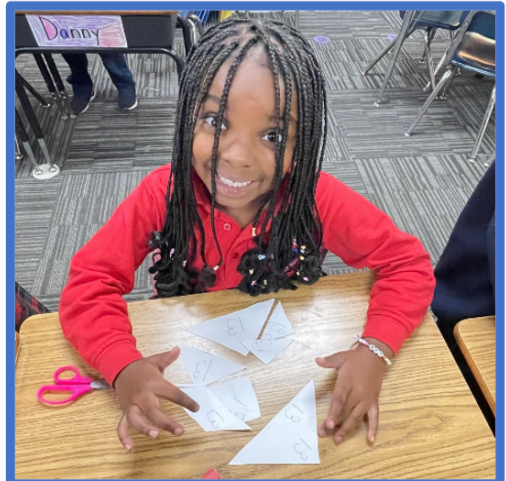
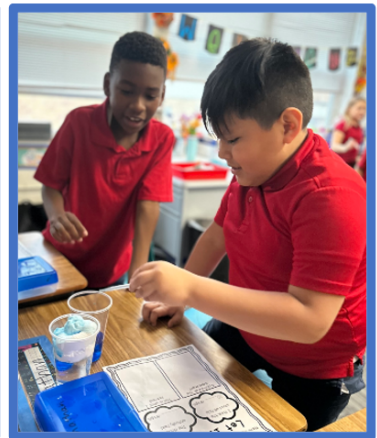




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At Saint Monica School, we are honored for the opportunity to serve your family.

OUR MISSION

St. Monica Catholic School Ministry is a community of families united in values who celebrate differences, form lifelong learners in an academically robust environment, and engage all students and families to grow as disciples of Christ.

OUR VISION

It is the vision of St. Monica Catholic School to support the spiritual, social-emotional, and cultural needs to develop all students in academics, self-discipline, spiritual growth, and service in order to represent visible signs of God's love.

Introduction

This guide includes essential information you need to understand the high ability and honors services and courses at Saint Monica Schools and the process and procedures for entry into the high ability or honors programming.

SMS High Ability & Honors Staff

All staff members are essential and play a crucial role in our high ability & honors program; however, these staff members are the best to contact with any questions or concerns.

Principal: Eric Schommer

Assistant Principal & Support Services Director: Christine Exline

IT Coordinator: Josh Wolff

Testing & Support Services Coordinator: Kelly Young

Social Worker: Lea Anne Einterz

Social Emotional Learning Coach: Allison Boyll

High Ability Teacher, Grades 3, 4, 5, & 6: Lyn Goldsberry

Honors 7/8 Grade English: Olivia Heying

Honors 7/8 Grade Math (Algebra I & II): Ana Adams

High Ability & Honors Education Consultant: Shawnta S. Barnes



High Ability & Honors Program Vision Statement

St. Monica Catholic School aims to offer a comprehensive high ability and honors program that supports students' spiritual, social-emotional, and cultural needs while bringing out the genius in every child.

Key Terms

"**High ability**," "**gifted**," and "**honors**" are terms often used in education to describe students who excel academically. While these terms are related, they are not interchangeable and refer to different concepts.

"**High ability**" generally refers to students who perform well academically in one or more areas, such as math, science, or language arts. These students may have a high IQ or may show exceptional talent in a particular subject or skill.

"**Gifted**" typically refers to students who demonstrate exceptional abilities and potential in one or more areas, such as intellectual, creative, or artistic pursuits. These students may have an IQ in the top 2-3% of their age group or show exceptional promise in a particular field.

"**Honors**" is often used to describe programs or courses that are more challenging and rigorous than standard courses.

At SMS, the term **high ability** will be used for elementary courses (3-6), and **honors** will be used for secondary courses (7 & 8).

High Ability Definition

High ability is the preferred term of the Indiana Department of Education, not gifted.

According to the [Indiana Department of Education \(IDOE\)](#), as defined by Indiana Code 20-36-1, a "**high ability student**" is a student who: performs at, or shows the potential for performing at, an outstanding level of accomplishment in at least one domain when compared to other students of the same age, experience, or environment; and is characterized by exceptional gifts, talents, motivation, or interests.



High Ability & Honors Identification Process

Census Testing

During the second semester, all Saint Monica School students in 2nd grade and 6th grade will take the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) high ability screener.

High Ability & Honors Testing

We use several data pieces at SMS to ensure equitable identification across racial, gender, and socioeconomic groups. Students, starting at grade three, will take the General Abilities Test (GAT) during the second semester based on the following data sources:

- ILEARN (pass +)
- NWEA (70th percentile or higher)
- Academic Performance (B+ or higher in math and English)
- Teacher Recommendation (elementary - classroom teacher; secondary - math or English teacher)

On the CoAgt and GAT, a score at, above, or near the 95th percentile is one of the data pieces used to determine entry into high ability or honors programming.

High Ability & Honors Services

Elementary High Ability (3rd-6th Grade)

To support the unique cognitive and social developmental needs of high ability students, SMS will:

- Provide differentiated content instruction in English & math with an emphasis on critical thinking, analysis, and inquiry
- Provide professional development to support staff in using the best instructional practices
- Provide socio-emotional support to help students adjust to the curriculum

Secondary Honors (7th & 8th Grade)

To support the unique cognitive and social developmental needs of honors students, SMS will:

- Provide differentiated content instruction in honors English & Algebra I with an emphasis on critical thinking, analysis, and inquiry



- Provide professional development to support staff in using the best instructional practices
- Provide socio-emotional support to help students adjust to the curriculum

Appeals Process

If a student is not granted entry into the high ability or honors program, an appeal can be submitted. The appeals form, included in the appendices section of this guidebook, should be completed **within 30 days** after acceptance is not granted.

Transfer Policy

If a student is currently enrolled in a high ability program or honors classes at a previous school and has maintained grades of B or higher, in all subject areas (elementary) or classes (middle school), the student will be allowed to participate in our programming.

If the student is not currently enrolled in a high ability program or honors classes and parents would like the student to participate in those classes, the student will be tested when we conduct our census testing.

Exit Procedures

Although we try to ensure every student's success, the general education setting might best fit some students.

If a teacher, administrator, parent, or student believes the program is no longer the best fit, a request to complete the exit form (see appendices) will be granted. The following procedures will be followed:

1. Exit form is completed.
2. Exit form is reviewed by the Supports Services Director.
3. Student, teachers, and parents are interviewed.
4. Meeting is scheduled with parents and the student where the final determination will be shared.
5. If the student exits the programming, the student's schedule will be adjusted.
6. The Supports Services Director will create a support plan if the student continues in high ability programming or honors classes.



7. If continuing in the programming, the support plan will be monitored to determine if adjustments to the plan are needed, if the support plan is no longer needed, or if revisiting exiting the program is necessary.

Program Monitoring

Our High Ability and Honors program will be reviewed annually. This review will include:

- Monitoring of student identification to ensure an equitable process
- Evaluating the quality and effectiveness of high ability professional development for teachers
- Tracking data of students in the program to ensure students continue to do well academically and are being appropriately supported emotionally
- Reviewing course curricula

Appendices

Appendix A: High Ability and Honors Appeal Form

Appendix B: High Ability and Honors Exit Form

Appendix C: High Ability Entrance Letter

Appendix D: Honors Entrance Letter

Appendix E: High Ability and Honors General Education Letter



High Ability and Honors Exit Form

Student's Name: _____

Student's Grade: _____

Person Completing this Form: _____

Please complete and return this form to the front office.

State your reasons for requesting a reconsideration of the high ability or honors placement.

Please attach any additional documentation you would like us to consider.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Signature: _____ Date: _____



High Ability Entrance Letter

Dear Parent/Caregiver:

Your child _____ has qualified for high ability services for: *(Please select all that apply.)*

Reading
Math
Both

Students selected for our high ability program qualified based on several pieces of data.

At St. Monica School, we implement clustering for our high ability programming. This means your child will be supported within the general education classroom. In addition, your child will receive additional support from our 3-6 high ability teacher.

We aim for all high ability students to reach their fullest potential while also supporting their social and emotional needs.

Please contact our Support Services Director if you have questions or would prefer your child not to participate in the high ability program.

Sincerely,

Eric Schommer

Principal

e.schommer@smsindy.org

Christine Exline

Assistant Principal & Support Services Director

c.exline@smsindy.org



Honors Entrance Letter

Dear Parent/Caregiver:

Your child _____ has qualified for honors course(s): *(Please select all that apply.)*

7th Grade	8th Grade
Honors English	Honors English
Algebra I	Algebra II

Students selected for our honors courses qualified based on several pieces of data.

At St. Monica School, we implement a rigorous curriculum focused on critical thinking, analysis, and inquiry.

We aim for all honors students to reach their fullest potential while supporting their social and emotional needs.

Please contact our Support Services Director if you have questions or prefer your child not to participate in honors courses.

Sincerely,

Eric Schommer

Principal

e.schommer@smsindy.org

Christine Exline

Assistant Principal & Support Services Director

c.exline@smsindy.org



High Ability and Honors General Education Letter

Dear Parent/Caregiver:

Your child did not qualify, at this time, high ability services or honors courses. Students selected for our high ability program and honors courses qualified based on several pieces of data.

At St. Monica School, we provide differentiated instruction for all students. We believe your child will be best supported in the general education setting.

Please contact our Support Services Director if you have questions or would like to appeal this decision.

Sincerely,

Eric Schommer

Principal

e.schommer@smsindy.org

Christine Exline

Assistant Principal & Support Services Director

c.exline@smsindy.org