



Academic Magnet High School School Improvement Council 2023-2024 Report to Parents

Academic Magnet High School Mission

The mission of the Academic Magnet High School is to challenge each student, parent, and teacher with the high expectations of a rigorous curriculum and to provide a learning environment that prepares students for college and future careers. Our students are encouraged to be contributing members of the community, to acquire a sense of global responsibility, and to cultivate and uphold respect for cultural diversity.

Background

Mandated by the state, a School Improvement Council (SIC) serves as a vehicle for teachers, students, parents, administrators, and community representatives to collaborate and help schools across South Carolina reach the goals identified in their five-year school improvement plans (SIPs).

Academic Magnet High School's 2023-2024 SIC built on the strong foundation of previous SICs and worked in conjunction with other AMHS support organizations, including Academic Magnet Foundation, Partners in Education (PIE), and the Athletic Booster Club, to address the needs of the school and support school initiatives to propel Magnet students to even greater heights.

Recent AMHS SIC successes include the Peer Mentoring Program, which recruits and trains over 30 sophomores, juniors, and seniors to work in small groups and one-on-one with entering 9th graders; Juniors Take Flight, a one-day college application planning workshop that takes place each spring; and the reinstatement of class trips and school traditions after COVID.

2023-2024 AMHS Leaders and Council Focus

Jessica Garrett '25 Parent, Chair

Grace Griffin '25, Vice Chair

Keren Collins '24, Secretary

After reviewing the school improvement plan, this year's AMHS SIC selected two primary areas of focus: (1) school climate and (2) college and career counseling. Additionally, SIC decided to review and update AMHS SIC's bylaws to bring them in

compliance with state bylaws. The new Bylaws were approved during the April 8, 2024 SIC meeting.

School Climate

The School Climate sub committee identified two areas of growth based on the Panorama survey: (1) lower teacher responses regarding Social and Emotional Learning Professional Development (PD) relative to the District average; and (2) generally lower responses regarding student well-being and happiness for ninth-graders, particularly on items relating to workload management. In response, the sub committee created a proposal with programs designed to improve response ratings in both areas, including:

- **Encouraging faculty to participate in Social and Emotional Learning PD opportunities**, with a focus on training over the summer that allows teachers to take advantage of exchange day benefits, to better equip them to foster an environment in which they can help meet students' emotional needs.
- **Implementing a “Study Smarter” program** for ninth-grade study halls to develop student study skills that ease the academic shock of transition to Academic Magnet. Offered for 30 minutes a week during the first five weeks of school, this program would be conducted by student mentors and will cover the following topics: note taking skills; agenda keeping methods; “dos” and “don'ts” of communication with teachers; overview of study resources (including apps like Quizlet); and direction/instruction following.

Moving forward, SIC recommends implementing the “Study Smarter” program immediately. To measure the program's effectiveness, SIC recommends surveying students at the conclusion of the program and comparing Panorama survey results with the previous year's results.

NOTE: These are only SIC recommendations. The development and execution of these programs are contingent upon scheduling, interests, and other factors that SIC may/may not have been privy to at the time of the plan creation.

College and Career Counseling

In keeping with goals identified in the SIP and with responses from parents to a survey about post-secondary planning and the college application process, the committee pursued the following projects

- **College Interview Workshop:** To assist those students, whose applicants include an admissions or alumni interview component, AMHS offered mock interviews to students in the fall of 2023.

- **School Profile Guidelines:** In recent years, a school's academic profile has become one of the most important pieces of every student's application package because it provides a context for each student's personal school experience. To ensure the quality and consistency of the profile year over year, the committee drafted guidelines, in keeping with National Association for College Admissions Counseling's best practices, regarding the profile's length, layout, content, along with the data sets (ACT, SAT, AP pass rate, etc).
- **Post-Secondary Planning Handbook:** Designed to complement existing resources and ensure students and parents have a single, comprehensive resource for questions tied to post-secondary planning, this handbook provides grade-specific guidance on the college application process and covers topics including standardized testing, developing a balanced college list, application types and deadlines, campus visits and interviews, essay questions, and financial aid.

In future years the committee recommends adding workshops on college essays and the common application with the goal of eventually developing a writing center through the school's College and Career Center.

All recommendations will be taken into consideration in an effort to help AMHS continue to operate as a premier high school in our city, state, and nation.