

FIT Is for Freshmen!

EHS freshmen participate in the Freshman Interdisciplinary Team (FIT) program, designed by EHS teachers in 1997 to engage students personally and prepare them academically. FIT establishes the building blocks of critical thinking, analytical reading, and effective writing and communication. Socially, FIT ensures students make a connection with a consistent group of classmates and, by rotating class groupings through freshman year, allows them to meet most of the other freshmen as well. Finally, the FIT program allows teachers and counselors to collaborate, keeping an eye out for challenges any students may be experiencing. Teachers meet to discuss both curriculum and student adjustment, so student needs are met in a timely manner.

Easing the Transition

EHS draws its freshman class from more than 35 public and private middle schools every year, so even before school starts, Edgewood hosts activities for freshmen and their parents to get to know one another. On the first day of school, freshmen have a thorough orientation. A trained and selected group of upperclassmen, the "LINK Crew," help with the transition. Freshmen meet their FIT teachers, tour, learn what to expect, and receive tips for success. The orientation is designed to help students feel at ease both with one another and with teachers. Freshmen receive further information about procedures in the first several days of FIT classes, as well as in a regular Group Guidance class led by counselors.

How FIT Works

FIT incorporates concepts across the disciplines of Biology, English, U.S. History, Religion, Enrichment and Guidance. FIT teachers use research, logic, interpretation, critical analysis, essay writing and debates to help freshmen acquire skills that will be useful in their future endeavors. Enrichment activities build on discipline-specific material, engaging students in interdisciplinary activities, projects to supplement class material and other complementary opportunities that enhance the academic and social experience.

FIT classes take place during Mods 3-5. Students attend Math, Physical Education and Religion, along with other classes, which may include Art, Music, a Language, elective courses, study hall or lunch, during Mods 1-2 and Mods 6-9.

Other Benefits of FIT

Frequent communication about students' needs among teachers, counselors, students and parents helps address small issues before they become big problems. While the freshmen are in one of their other classes, FIT teachers meet once a cycle with counselors to discuss how the students are doing, as a group and as individuals. This allows parents to be notified as soon as possible if their freshman needs help, and allows students to get a good, solid start in high school.

Library, research and resource skills are built into the projects and curriculum so that students learn to find and access information through the use of online library databases. The school librarian also instructs them in how to critically evaluate information and choose appropriate resources for personal and research needs.

Students love the group activities that help cement the bonds among class members, including orientation, community day, retreat, guest speakers and teambuilding events.

Cross-disciplinary FIT Topic Example

Biology: Students learned what a Genetically Modified Organism (GMO) is and discussed some of the positives, negatives and misconceptions that surround their creation and use. The discussion mainly focused on the use of GMOs in the agricultural and medical industry. Students were then given the task to "design" their own GMO.

History: Students watched a portion of the movie *King Corn* and connected the ideas from the film to what they learned about GMOs in Biology class. They also discussed the unintended consequences of genetically modified corn.

English: Students analyzed cartoons about GMOs and then were given the task of drawing a cartoon based on their own proposed GMO from Biology class.

Religion: Students reflected on the ethical implications of the GMOs they "designed" and the potential results or consequences.

Co-Curricular Participation Is Encouraged

Studies have repeatedly shown that students who participate in co-curricular activities broaden their interests, feel more integrated into the school community, learn time management skills, and generally perform better academically. EHS offers 26 boys' and girls' sports and about 30 clubs and activities. There is a no-cut policy for most freshman athletic teams, and yes, freshmen are encouraged to join clubs and activities that interest them, including enrolling in music courses and auditioning for or working on the crews of dramatic and musical productions. An amazing 95% of our students do participate in one or more activities or sports during the course of a year.