Academic Program Changes
For 2020 - 2021

Just like we ask our students to regularly reflect on their learning, so must we model that regular reflection and growth in our curriculum and pedagogy. The faculty has spent time identifying the three central principles that are guiding curriculum revision in the coming years: intellectual flexibility, a sense of purpose & community, and an understanding of equity & justice.

Emma Willard School strives to educate a generation of learners ready and able to address and lead in the most pressing issues of their time. We are constantly engaged in shaping a curriculum that balances breadth, depth, and a multidisciplinary understanding of learning. To this end, we believe that:

- During their time at Emma, students should develop the intellectual flexibility to consider big questions and work to solve big problems.
- Fundamental to personal wellbeing is the life-long exploration of one’s self and one’s contribution to the world. The Emma curriculum should foster a sense of purpose in each student by emphasizing relevance, impact and community connection.
- Living and learning in a global and inclusive community should require persistent and purposeful practice, exposure to and understanding of the global community, and the skills necessary to build and sustain equity and justice in the world.

We recognize that the world is changing, and our students are changing with it. Our program must equip our students to meet the extraordinary opportunities and challenges of their time. Our students deserve a program that is focused on what matters most in learning - relevance, enduring understanding, and multidisciplinary connection. Our program should support each Emma Willard student as she writes her own unique, personal definition of what success will look like in her life. Using the program pillars as a guide, the Emma Willard School faculty are working to develop unique advanced course offerings that challenge students to think deeply and fuel students' love of learning. Over the next three years, Emma Willard School will phase out and replace AP™ course offerings with these unique, Emma Willard School developed advanced courses.

As we work to realize our goal to design a unique advanced curriculum for Emma Willard School, we will continue to offer a full catalog of AP™ courses in the 2020-21 school year, with progressively fewer AP™ courses offered in the subsequent two years in our effort to allow students to follow their interests and explore their personal definitions of success, we have implemented an AP enrollment cap for the classes of 2022 and 2023. The AP enrollment cap is designed to relieve the pressure students feel to choose an AP course over pursuing an area of deep interest. The class of 2024 will
be the first to fully benefit from our new advanced curriculum that will fully replace AP™ courses by the 2023-24 school year.

In considering these changes, we spoke with peer schools and colleges. Colleges shared with us that Emma Willard School’s reputation is strong and unwavering. So long as we are able to clearly articulate on our transcript, school profile, and college recommendation our unique advanced learning courses, colleges see no detrimental impact on Emma Willard School’s reputation or consideration of our graduates. Peer institutions shared with us the overwhelmingly positive impact they have seen since developing their own advanced curriculum. They report that the applied, relevant coursework developed by faculty is exciting to teachers and students alike.

Read more about our Academic Pillars (pdf)