

## [Southwood offers new magnet curriculum](#)

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Rising ninth-graders who win entry to Southwood High School's new biotechnology magnet program face an intensive curriculum. Every core class in English, math, science and social studies is honors or advanced placement. Honors courses generally provide more depth and require students to do more work beyond homework and tests. Advanced placement classes offer simultaneous high school and college credit.

"This was not designed to be for everyone," said Misty Davis, the program coordinator. Southwood's program joins a host of others in Caddo Parish. Magnet offerings range from Caddo Magnet High's enriched curriculum to job- and interest-based programs like hospitality and cosmetology.

The biotechnology program aims to open with 60 students – about two classes' worth – in August. The students will attend almost every class together their first three years. As seniors they'll pursue separate paths during a half-day senior project or internship. They can opt to prepare for a training that leads to a job as a lab technician or for a college degree in biotechnology.

"Clearly, this will allow our students to prepare for and become a part of this economic growth industry in our community", said Ken Wood, Southwood principal. Students who start as freshman but decide the program isn't for them can return to their neighborhood high school. If they live in Southwood's attendance district, they can move to regular classes at the school. Those who don't meet grade, attendance or behavior requirements after entering the program will get a semester of academic probation to improve.

But organizers hope to retain and attract more students, building the program to 240 participants in four years. It's rare to have a high school biotechnology program in the south, said Jeff Roberts. Roberts coordinates math, science and technology offerings for a cluster of southwest Caddo Parish schools that includes Southwood. The program, known as MST, tries to hook middle school students on math and science through hands-on robotics classes. Southwood debuted robotics this year and is in the third year of a computer lab that teaches students to tackle real-world skills like mapping.

"Our ultimate vision and goal is to compete on the national level (with biotechnology programs)," Roberts said.