

Building the Foundation for High School and Beyond

A Course Guide for Parents of Seventh Graders

Why Start Now?

You are probably thinking that your child still has two more years of middle school, so you have plenty of time to think about the future. But, according to many research studies, the middle school years are a critical time in your child's life and will set the course for his or her future. Middle school is the time to strengthen study habits, identify interests, and build a foundation for educational success.

Our goal is for every student to graduate from high school prepared to be successful in post-secondary experiences. Most college graduates earn more money during their working years than those who have a high school diploma. Businesses want employees who know how to think and solve problems.

As part of our commitment to provide a customized world-class educational program for each student, the Howard County Public School System is implementing a Middle School Program of Studies designed to be more rigorous and relevant to students' lives to better prepare them for high school, college, and careers.

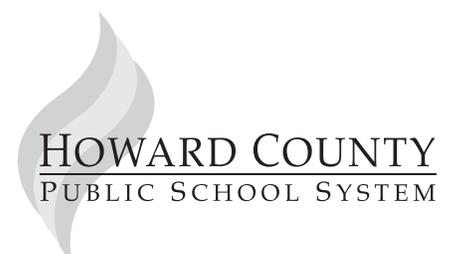
This guide was created to help you and your child learn about each course your child will take next year. The courses are organized by subject and identified by course numbers, which you will find on your child's Middle School Course Registration Form. After reviewing this guide, if you still have questions, please contact your child's School Counselor.

Tips for Success

- Encourage your child to challenge himself or herself by working up to his or her ability.
- Recognize study habits are an important part of academic achievement. Your child will need to learn to organize his or her materials, write down homework assignments, and complete homework assignments independently.
- Encourage your child to take advantage of opportunities to explore interests. Well-rounded students are the happiest students.
- Continue to attend parent conferences and stay involved in your child's academic success. Do not hesitate to contact your child's teachers or school counselor if you have questions or concerns.
- Help your child set short- and long-term goals. Praise your child for successes and provide support when needed.
- Be patient. Adolescence is a time of great growth and change.

What You Should Know About High School

- While seventh graders are not expected to know what courses they want to take in high school, it is important for students and parents to have a general understanding of the course offerings. A full list of high school courses is available at www.hcpss.org under Academics.
- Students must pass High School Assessments in Algebra, Biology, English and Government or have a combined score of 1602.
- The mathematics courses taken in middle school inform the mathematics and science placement in high school.
- High school grade point averages are reported when students apply to college. It is important to find the right balance between course rigor and grades.
- Students must complete 75 hours of service learning. Most HCPSS students complete this requirement in middle school through a curricular project completed during each of the three years.



Seventh Grade Course Descriptions

The following are general guidelines for course placement along with descriptions of Grade 7 courses.

READING PLACEMENT

Students requiring explicit reading instruction to support decoding or comprehension will be placed in a reading course with appropriate academic interventions: Seminar-D (Decoding), Seminar-C (Comprehension), or a class with direct instruction by a reading specialist. Students who may benefit from more instructional time in English Language Arts will be enrolled in English Language Arts (ELA) Seminar that is supplemental to the English Language Arts class.

READING AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS COURSES

English Language Arts 7911

Students read thematic-based texts and construct both written and spoken responses. Students construct short and extended responses to argument, explanatory, and narrative tasks. Students develop analytical and evaluative skills and apply such knowledge when responding to print and non-print texts that represent diverse media and formats. Research is part of the course as well. (The Resource section of this course is designed for students with more significant needs who may be eligible to take the Alternative Maryland School Assessment or who require a self-contained setting for a period of time.)

ESOL English Language Arts 7911E

This course offers entering and emerging English language learners instruction and practice using the four domains of language acquisition through developing linguistic complexity, vocabulary usage, and language control.

English Language Arts G/T 7912

This course is designed for students on the path to taking one of the two College Board English placement examinations (Literature and Composition, Language and Composition). Students address the demands of the English/Language Arts curriculum for seventh graders, as well as specific critical reading, writing, and thinking skills necessary for continued success throughout the high school English GT program. In addition, curriculum

compacting allows motivated students to collapse material and benefit from a more student-facilitated classroom.

English Language Arts Seminar 7914

Students have opportunities to learn and apply reading, writing, and language-acquisition strategies that connect directly to learning outcomes in English Language Arts 7.

Seminar-C Reading (Comprehension) 7915

Comprehension intervention courses are research-based or evidence-based and provide explicit instruction by staff specifically trained to administer the program.

Seminar-D Reading (Decoding) 7916

Decoding intervention courses are research-based or evidence-based and provide explicit instruction by staff specifically trained to administer the program.

Innovation and Inquiry Reading Modules 7917

Opportunities

Using the process of Shared Inquiry™, which leads to a better understanding of literary texts, students engage in higher-order thinking skills and collaborate as they problem solve. This module will focus on literature that examines the ways in which opportunity and choices impact people's lives. Students will research the historical context of various texts such as Harlem (poem) and Harrison Bergeron to gain awareness about the origin of the author's perspective.

News Reporting

Students will discover how and why news reporting has impacted and continues to impact everyone's lives. In addition, students will examine various types of news reporting (newspaper, television, radio, other print and electronic media), the structure of news and feature stories, and criteria for judging the credibility of a news source.

The Citizen in Action

In a democratic society, citizens' awareness of the government and processes that change, enforce, and develop public policy is crucial. The Citizen in Action course develops students' ability to express their own opinions about a personally relevant problem. Students will build and work in a community to research and propose a change.

Digital Citizenship

People in the 21st century live in a technology and media-suffused environment, marked by various characteristics, including: 1) access to an abundance of information, 2) rapid changes in technology tools, and 3) the ability to collaborate and make individual contributions on an unprecedented scale. To be effective in the 21st century, citizens and workers must be able to exhibit a range of functional and critical thinking skills related to information, media and technology.

Creating a Career Fit

While seventh grade is too early for most students to choose a specific career, it is an ideal time for students to develop an understanding of the relationship between an individual and the ever-changing world of work. During this 9-week module students will prepare for college and careers by assessing their own interests, strengths, skills, and values in order to identify, research, and evaluate career options. Students will design a strategy and product for communicating those personal characteristics that reflect their unique identity. The Big6™ problem-solving framework will be emphasized.

Most high school courses in the core subjects have an honors and gifted and talented level. In most cases, students do not take a formal test to enroll in honors or gifted and talented courses in high school. Initial course placement is based on teacher recommendation. Input from parents is always welcome.

Seventh Grade Course Descriptions

Sample Mathematics Sequence

Gr.	On Grade Level	Above Grade Level	Gifted and Talented
6	MSM I	MSM II	Pre-Algebra
7	MSM II	Pre-Algebra	Algebra I
8	Pre-Algebra	Algebra I	Geometry
9	Algebra I	Geometry	Algebra II
10	Geometry	Algebra II	Precalculus
11	Algebra II	Math Analysis/ Trigonometry	AP Calculus AB
12	Math Analysis/ Trigonometry	Business Calculus	AP Calculus C

Students who take Algebra and/or Geometry in middle school still need to earn three mathematics credits in high school. In fact, all students are strongly encouraged to take four years of mathematics in high school to be better prepared for college.

Opportunities to accelerate through the math sequence are provided in high school through scheduling, summer school, and dual enrollment options.

MATHEMATICS PLACEMENT

Students who generally perform on grade level will be enrolled in MSM II.

Students requiring a deeper understanding of grade level content (MSM II) will be concurrently enrolled into Common Core Math 7 Seminar.

Students who generally perform above grade level will be enrolled in Pre-Algebra.

Students who were successful in 6th Grade Pre-Algebra G/T mathematics, as well as 6th grade students who placed into G/T during the school year, will be enrolled in Algebra I/Data Analysis G/T.

MATHEMATICS COURSES

Middle School Mathematics II (MSM II) 7921

In this on-grade-level course, students will focus on the mastery of four critical areas: 1) developing understanding of and applying proportional relationships; 2) developing understanding of operations with rational numbers and working with expressions and linear equations; 3) solving problems involving scale drawings and informal geometric constructions, and working with two- and three-dimensional shapes to solve problems involving area, surface area, and volume; and 4) drawing inferences about populations based on samples. (The Resource section of this course is designed for students with more significant needs who may be eligible to take the Alternative Maryland School Assessment or who require a self-contained setting for a period of time.)

Pre-Algebra 7922

In this above-grade-level course, students will receive an accelerated curriculum designed to prepare students for completion of Algebra I by the end of grade 8. Students will focus on the mastery of four critical areas: 1) developing understanding and applying rational numbers and exponents; 2) developing understanding of proportionality and linear relationships; 3) engaging in an introduction to sampling inference through random sampling and the investigation of chance; and 4) creating, comparing, and analyzing geometric figures.

Algebra I/Data Analysis G/T 7923

In this gifted-and-talented course, students will focus on the mastery of five critical areas: 1) developing understanding and investigating relationships between quantities and reasoning with equations; 2) developing understanding and applying linear and exponential relationships; 3) investigating trends and modeling with descriptive statistics; 4) performing arithmetic operations on polynomial expressions, solving equations, inequalities, and systems of equations; and 5) using properties of rational and irrational numbers to develop an understanding of quadratic functions.

Common Core Math 7 Seminar (taken concurrently with MSM II Grade 7) 7925

In this seminar course, students will deepen their understanding of grade level content (MSMII) while reviewing these two critical areas: 1) connecting ratio and rate to whole number multiplication and division and using concepts of ratio and rate to solve problems; and 2) completing understanding of division of fractions and extending the notion of number to the system of rational

numbers, which includes negative numbers. This course focuses on the application of mathematics, strategies for problem solving, the development of the Standards for Mathematical Practices, and Disciplinary Literacy.

SCIENCE

Science II 7941

Students will study the nature of living things, human biology, genetics, evidence of change, and ecology. The skills and processes of science will be integrated within each unit of study as students focus on building scientific literacy in each of these core ideas of life science. Students will be expected to demonstrate developmentally appropriate fluency in scientific thought and action including the use of science tools. They will regularly engage in laboratory investigations that enhance their understanding of the content, practices, and cross-cutting concepts of science. (The Resource section of this course is designed for students with more significant needs who may be eligible to take the Alternative Maryland School Assessment or who require a self-contained setting for a period of time.)

Science II G/T 7942

Students will engage in an enriched curriculum that provides for increased depth of learning. In addition, a major goal of the gifted and talented science program is to provide an opportunity for students to engage in extended and authentic science research. Students will develop an original science research project to be completed by the end of the eighth grade year. Students may design an experiment and begin to collect data during seventh grade.

Seventh Grade Course Descriptions

SOCIAL STUDIES

Geography and World Cultures 7952

Students will study the second part of a two-year program entitled Geography and World Cultures. Course content includes the study of physical and human geography, Western Europe, Eastern Europe and Eurasia, Latin America, and North America. (The Resource section of this course is designed for students with more significant needs who may be eligible to take the Alternative Maryland School Assessment or who require a self-contained setting for a period of time.)

Geography/World Cultures G/T 7953

Students participating in gifted and talented social studies receive a differentiated program. Teachers engage their students in more rigorous critical thinking and problem-solving activities and through differentiated curriculum objectives which require deeper analysis and understanding. All students complete two social science research investigations linked to the curriculum or engage in activities related to National History Day®.

RELATED ARTS

Art 7974

Students will be engaged in a variety of studio experiences in drawing, painting, printmaking, crafts, and sculpture. Students will continue to use observation along with memory, imagination, and experimentation to solve visual art problems. Through the critical study of visual images, students will make personal discoveries through their artwork, which reflect their relation to peers and their place in the world.

Band 7965

Students perform music representing various styles and genres with an emphasis on developing ensemble skills. Students also meet periodically on a rotating basis during other class times to receive small group instruction to focus on instrument-specific skills and techniques. After-school and evening rehearsals and activities, such as concerts and countywide assessments /adjudications (not to exceed 20 per school year), are integral to the course and grades may reflect such participation.

Chorus 7964

Students perform music representing various styles and genres with an emphasis on developing ensemble skills. Depending on the schedule, students may be able to receive small group instruction periodically on a rotating basis during other class times to focus on vocal skills and techniques. After-school and evening rehearsals and activities, such as concerts and countywide assessments/adjudications (not to exceed 20 per school year), are integral to the course and grades may reflect such participation.

Family and Consumer Science (FACS) 7975

The seventh grade curriculum prepares students to make good decisions as teenagers, as members of families, and as part of their school and community. Through financial literacy instruction, students will examine how spending decisions may impact career choices such as saving for college and getting a job. Students will apply financial management principles, food preparation skills, and knowledge of nutrition to make healthier food choices at home, at school, and when dining out. Hands-on food labs will emphasize preparing and serving fresh fruits and vegetables as well as lean proteins.

Health 7982

The 7th grade health education curriculum will promote health and disciplinary literacy through the study of disease prevention, nutrition, social and emotional health, alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, and human sexuality. Parents may exclude their child from human sexuality instruction with a written request.

General Music 7976

Students experience music through four strands of study: keyboard, guitar, world music drumming, and music technology. Each of the strands provides opportunities for students to participate in music representing various styles and genres from throughout the world.

Orchestra 7966

Students perform music representing various styles and genres with an emphasis on developing ensemble skills. Students also meet periodically on a rotating basis during other class times to receive small group instruction to focus on instrument-specific skills and techniques. After school and evening rehearsals and activities, such as concerts and countywide assessments

/adjudications (not to exceed 20 per school year), are integral to the course and grades may reflect such participation.

Physical Education 7981

The seventh grade physical education curriculum includes a balanced program of individual, dual, team, rhythms, dance, and fitness activities. Students are provided information and resources to live healthy and physically active lives.

Technology Education 7977

Invention and innovation provides students with opportunities to apply the design process in the invention or innovation of a new product, process, or system. Through group and individual activities, students will study the history of inventions and innovations, including their impacts on society. They will learn about the core concepts of technology, about the various approaches to solving problems, including engineering design and experimentation. Activities will allow students to research and examine how various inventions and innovations impact their lives.

World Languages

French 7931

Spanish 7932

Chinese 7933 (only offered at Mount View and Murray Hill middle schools)

All students participating in a world language will develop their ability to read, write, and communicate on a variety of topics. Students will also gain knowledge of other cultures, make connections to other disciplines, and compare the language and culture to their own.

Students who take a world language in middle school and choose this pathway for graduation still need to earn at least two credits of world language in high school.