

Building the Foundation for High School and Beyond

A Course Guide for Parents of Eighth Graders

Why Start Now?

You are probably thinking that your child still has one full year left 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.

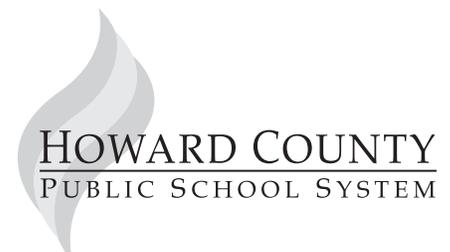
This guide was created to help you and your child learn about each course your child will take next year. The courses are organized by subject and identified by course numbers, which you will find on your child's Middle School Course Registration Form. After reviewing this guide, if you still have questions,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



Eighth Grade Course Descriptions

The following are general guidelines for course placement along with descriptions of Grade 8 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 or special educator. 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 8911

Students read thematic-based texts and construct both written and spoken responses. Short and extended responses address 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. The development and infusion of research skills are integral to the course. (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 8911E

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 8912

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 (ELA) Seminar 8914

Students have opportunities to learn and apply reading, writing, and language-acquisition strategies that connect directly to learning outcomes in English Language Arts 8.

Seminar-C Reading (Comprehension) 8915

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) 8916

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 8917

Decisions

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. In this module, students will raise questions inherent in materials read and issues discussed and will formulate bases for debate by accessing such works as *Summer of the Beautiful White Horse* by William Saroyan.

Economics in Action

The world has become more interconnected than at any time in human history. The economics literacy component of this course develops student understanding of national and global market economies and how people and nations are directly and indirectly affected by these market systems. As students develop their abilities to identify, analyze, and evaluate essential economic principles, they will be able to examine interdependent living within the national and global economy. Students will be able to examine the importance of ascertaining the ability to manage money in a world of online monetary systems as they identify, analyze, and evaluate essential money

management principles.

The Future of Food

The global food system is a complex economic and social network, and the daily food choices students and their families make impact not only their own health but also the health of the environment. In this module students will develop an understanding of modern food systems and the hidden costs and benefits to decisions people make about what foods to buy and eat by identifying and analyzing the economic, social, health and environmental challenges attached to feeding themselves, their communities, and the world and will evaluate possible responses to these challenges.

Advertising

Advertisers use varied methods to influence the purchasing habits of consumers. Since teens are such a large part of the advertisers' target audience, students in this module will examine how advertisements are constructed and teens are targeted. Included in the module is an examination of propaganda techniques and placement of product advertisements in television, print media, and Internet sites.

Planning for High School and Beyond

Eighth graders are preparing for the transition to high school and are facing decisions that will impact their immediate and future academic and career options. Students completing this 9-week module will research and examine the knowledge and skills needed to be successful both in school and at work, accessing campus and HCPSS Academies through virtual tours. Students will prepare for college and careers by developing a career action plan incorporating course work and graduation pathways, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities such as internships and clubs, and involvement outside of school including part-time work and community service. The Big6™ problem-solving framework will be emphasized.

Eighth 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 Pre-Algebra.

Students requiring a deeper understanding of grade level content (Pre-Algebra) will be concurrently enrolled into Common Core Math 8 Seminar.

Students who generally perform above grade level will be enrolled in Algebra/Data Analysis.

Students who were successful in 7th Grade G/T mathematics, as well as 7th grade students who placed into G/T during the school year, will be enrolled in Geometry G/T.

MATHEMATICS COURSES

Pre-Algebra 8921

In this on-grade-level course, students will focus on the mastery of three critical areas: 1) formulating and reasoning about expressions and equations, including modeling an association in bivariate data with a linear equation, and solving linear equations and systems of linear equations; 2) grasping the concept of a function and using functions to describe quantitative relationships; and 3) analyzing two- and three-dimensional space and figures using distance, angle, similarity, and congruence, and understanding and applying the Pythagorean Theorem. (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.)

Algebra/Data Analysis 8922

In this above-grade-level 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.

Geometry G/T 8923

In this gifted-and-talented course, students will develop an understanding of transformational, Euclidean, and coordinate geometry with extensive real-world application. Students will study logic, inductive and deductive reasoning, geometric definitions, postulates, and the proofs of theorems. Other topics include an introduction to trigonometry and vectors. Course requirements are rigorous with an emphasis on mathematical reasoning and communication.

Common Core Math 8 Seminar 8925

In this seminar course, students will deepen their understanding of grade level content (Pre-Algebra Grade 8) while reviewing these two critical areas: 1) developing understanding of and applying proportional relationships; and 2) developing understanding of operations with rational numbers and working with expressions and linear equations. 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 III 8941

Students will study force and motion, energy and waves, and chemistry. 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 physical 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 III G/T 8942

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 continue working an original science research project to be completed by the end of the eighth grade year. Students complete data collection, analyze their results, and present their conclusions during eighth grade.

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.

Eighth Grade Course Descriptions

SOCIAL STUDIES

United States History 8952

Students will study the first part of a two-year program in United States History, focusing on the period from approximately 1763 to 1877. This program provides opportunities for students to develop an understanding of historical thinking skills, concepts, and content related to the history of our nation. (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.)

United States History G/T 8953

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 8974

Students will be engaged in a variety of studio experiences in drawing, painting, printmaking, crafts, and sculpture. There will be a continued emphasis on the development of observational and perception in preparation for the high school art program. Strategies are chosen to address sequential processes and solve problems in a creative and meaningful way. Working independently and in a group, students use master artists' approaches and apply formal qualities in making aesthetic judgments.

Band 8965

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 8964

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) 8975

Eighth graders enrolled in FACS will have the opportunity to apply their knowledge of budgeting, saving, and investing through Junior Achievement Finance Park, an online simulation of the real-life consequences of financial and career decisions. As part of being college and career ready, students will relate careers, education, and income so they can set personal, academic, and career goals. In addition, through the study of international foods and food labs where students prepare dishes from countries across the world, students will discover how culture impacts food choice, food staples, and food customs. Hands-on food labs will emphasize healthy dishes from world cuisines.

Health 8982

The eighth grade health education curriculum will promote health and disciplinary literacy through the study of safety and injury prevention, 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 8976

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 8966

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 8981

The eighth 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 8977

Students will develop understanding of the scope of technology and the iterative nature of technological design and problem-solving processes. Participation in engineering design activities will increase understanding of how criteria, constraints, and processes affect designs. This course gives students a general background on the different types of systems but concentrates more on the connections between systems. Activities and experiences are designed to emphasize science and math applications making this a true STEM course.

World Languages

French 8931

Spanish 8932

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.