Howard County Public School System

Dear Parents/Guardians of Seventh Grade Students:

This letter will help guide you and your child through the selection of a yearlong fine arts class and one additional elective class for the 2024-2025 school year. In Grade 8, students will have two classes in their daily schedule for which they will be able to identify preferences, which will include the selection of a yearlong fine arts class. A more detailed description of the middle school program of study is attached.

We encourage you and your child to have a conversation and make selections based on strengths and interests to ensure a successful transition to Grade 8. **Registration for these courses will be available online during the window of February 1, 2024 - February 14, 2024.**

Middle School Fine Arts Curricular Options
(Students are required to take fine arts each year.)

Dance A & B: This course is designed to introduce students to a basic working knowledge of performance concepts that can be applied to all dance forms. Through collaborative experiences and the study of dance techniques students build confidence through creative movement, social/cultural dance, ballet, modern, jazz, choreography, and composition experiences. Students will learn and apply dance concepts and vocabulary through class discussions, performances, demonstrations, and self-reflections. Students who have successfully completed Dance A may enroll in Dance B.

General Music I & II: General Music provides students with a deeper understanding of the language of music and how it relates to and impacts our lives and cultures through the study of four main strands: keyboard, guitar, world music drumming, and music technology. Students who have successfully completed General Music I may enroll in General Music II.

Music Performance Ensemble: Ensemble options include **band**, **orchestra**, or **chorus**. Coursework focuses on individual instruments and vocal techniques in order to develop musical behaviors, creative thinking, and critical skills, both as individual musicians and in an ensemble setting. As in 6th grade, students who are enrolled in band or orchestra will participate in music sectionals on a rotating schedule and after school performances as part of the class requirements.

Theatre Arts A & B: These courses are designed and articulated to develop and expand students' knowledge of performance and production concepts that can be applied to various theatre forms and genres. Students will actively engage in collaborative experiences and the study of acting techniques building confidence, stimulating imagination, and role-play to refine believability and sensory awareness. Students will refine and apply theatre concepts and vocabulary in class discussions, performances, journal writing, and evaluations of themselves and others. Students who have successfully completed Theatre Arts A may enroll in Theatre Arts B.

Visual Arts Studio A & B: These courses are designed and articulated to develop visual arts skills, knowledge, and understanding of the historical and contemporary visual arts worlds. Through the production and in-depth analysis of artwork, students make personal discoveries that inform and guide their practice, strengthen visual memory, and encourage experimentation, imagination, perseverance, and risk taking. Experiences will include developing and strengthening observational drawing skills, using color and value to create the illusion of form, relief printmaking, using additive and subtractive techniques to construct sculpture or craft forms, and the exploration of alternative and media arts. Students who have successfully completed Visual Arts Studio A may enroll in Visual Arts Studio B.

Additional Middle School Curricular Options

World Language Program (*French, Spanish, Chinese)*: Students have the option to take World Language during middle school, enabling them to pursue World Language study and the Maryland Seal of Biliteracy through the Advanced Placement level during high school. The World Language course is a rigorous academic subject in addition to the four required courses in English, mathematics, science, and social studies. Students will receive high school credit after successfully completing one year of the level 1 World Language course in either Grade 7 or Grade 8. Students who have successfully earned credit for level 1 in Grade 7 may elect to take a level 2 in Grade 8 for additional high school credit. Students' final grade(s) for World Language course(s) taken in middle school will appear on their high school transcript but will not be calculated in the high school GPA.

Exploring Computer Science: This course will give students the opportunity to delve into real-world, relevant computing problems while gaining foundational computer science knowledge. Students will engage in several in-depth projects to demonstrate the real-world applications of computing. Topics include problem solving and computing as well as the design process. Students' final grade(s) for high school technology education course(s) taken in middle school will appear on their high school transcripts but will not be calculated in the high school GPA.

Foundations of Technology: This course prepares students to understand and apply technological concepts and processes that are the cornerstone of the high school technology program. Students study the nature and technological issues of the designed world. Group and individual activities engage students in creating ideas, developing innovations, design, fabricating and engineering practical solutions. Technology content, resources, laboratory activities and classroom activities allow students to apply science, mathematics, and other school subjects in authentic situations. Students' final grade(s) for high school technology education course(s) taken in middle school will appear on their high school transcripts but will not be calculated in the high school GPA.

Readers & Writers Workshop: This course assists students in developing a critical eye of their writing and engage in thoughtful discourse about texts. Students will then create their own responses that mirror the mentor text and demonstrate mastery of the writing skills that were analyzed. Using a workshop approach, students will be reading and writing daily so that final products can be constructed and polished throughout the course.

Registration

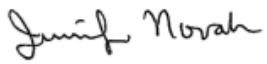
School staff will make every effort to schedule students for their top choices to the greatest extent possible. During the course selection process, parents will choose **two Selected Course Requests.** One of these course requests must meet the fine arts requirements (Band, Chorus, Orchestra, General Music, Dance, Theatre, or Visual Arts Studio). Next, choose **two Selected Alternate Course Requests** in priority order. We are asking for alternate course selections in the event of a scheduling conflict. Note that these are course requests and placement is not guaranteed. Students who are scheduled for an intervention may have fewer options regarding participation. Additionally, particular courses may not be offered if enough interest is not shown through course selection.

To register for courses, parents must register online in HCPSS Connect. Directions for registering online are linked below or can be found at https://www.hcpss.org/connect/guides/. Included on this page is step-by-step video directions.

Online Course Requests – Rising 6th to 8th Grade Students

For questions regarding scheduling, please contact your middle school counseling office.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Novak
Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
Howard County Public Schools
jennifer_novak@hcpss.org

Middle School Schedule in Detail

- The middle school schedule consists of seven periods. All students receive daily instruction aligned to Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards in English, mathematics, science, and social studies.
- Maryland regulations require:
    - All students take Health Education, Physical Education, and a Fine Arts course every year.
    - Students to take the following content one time during middle school:
        - Technology (Grade 6)
        - Financial Literacy (Grade 7)
        - Careers (Grade 8)
- The Grade 8 Schedule at a Glance consists of the following:

Course 1	**English Language Arts**
Course 2	**Mathematics**
Course 3	**Science**
Course 4	**Social Studies**
Course 5	**Physical Education / Health / CTE Careers**
Course 6	**Fine Arts** - Band - Chorus - Dance A - Dance B* - General Music I - General Music II* - Orchestra - Theatre Arts A - Theatre Arts B* - Visual Arts Studio A - Visual Arts Studio B*
Course 7	**Elective Class** - Chinese I - Chinese II* - French I - French II* - Spanish I - Spanish II* - Exploring Computer Science - Foundations of Technology - Readers & Writers Workshop - Additional Fine Arts class

* Level II/B courses are available to students who have completed Level I/A in Grade 7.

If you have questions about any of the courses, please do not hesitate to contact:

- Office of ESOL Programs 410.313.6640 / direct emails to tamisha_sampson@hcpss.org
- Office of Fine Arts-Visual Arts, Theatre, Dance 410.313.6634 / direct emails to gino_molfino@hcpss.org
- Office of Fine Arts-Music 410.313.6885 / direct emails to terry_eberhardt@hcpss.org
- Office of Career and Technology Education 410.313.6769 / direct emails to daniel_rosewag@hcpss.org
- Office of Gifted and Talented 410.313.6670 / direct emails to debbie_blum@hcpss.org
- Office of Health and Physical Education 410.313.7150 / direct emails to eric_bishop@hcpss.org
- Office of Secondary Language Arts 410.313.6623 / direct emails to nancy_czarnecki@hcpss.org
- Office of Secondary Mathematics 410.313.6635 / direct emails to jon_wray@hcpss.org
- Office of Secondary Science 410.313.6616 / direct emails to nate_hall@hcpss.org
- Office of Secondary Social Studies 410.313.6632 / direct emails to christina_bos@hcpss.org
- Office of World Languages 410.313.5663 / direct emails to kimberly_banks@hcpss.org