

Blair Magnet Program

FAQ from Informational Meeting on October 23, 2025

Eligibility and Application Requirements

Applicant Eligibility and Coursework

Question	Answer
If I took Algebra 1 outside of MCPS at another school, and am taking Honors Geometry in 8th grade, am I eligible?	Yes. Typically, these courses are consistent between MCPS and private schools, so as long as you have completed Algebra 1, you qualify.
Can an 8th grader who normally lives in Silver Spring but is going to school in London through June 2026 and will then move back to Silver Spring still apply?	A student must be an MCPS resident to apply. If the student's legal residence remains within the Blair Magnet's service area (the designated high school clusters) and the family intends to return to that residence, they can generally apply. You would follow the rules for private school students applying to the magnet programs. As this is common with military families, we have worked with families in this situation before.
My child is in an integrated Algebra 1 + Geometry class this year.	This course meets the minimum eligibility requirement of being enrolled in Algebra 1 or higher by Grade 8.

My daughter is taking pre-calculus in 8th grade now. What math class will she take if she goes to the Blair magnet program?	Students are placed into the math sequence based on their prior coursework and the Magnet program's internal placement process. A student who has completed Honor Precalculus in 8th grade would typically be placed in the Magnet Precalculus C course in the first semester of a student's freshman year, as there are topics in this course not covered in the county curriculum. However, this varies and we work with your student to best determine the appropriate starting course.
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Testing and Required Documentation

Question	Answer
Is there a minimum score for MAP to get enrolled? / Is there a requirement or range for the MAP scores recommended for someone to get into the magnet program?	MCPS does not designate a specific minimum MAP score for acceptance, as admissions are based on a review of multiple factors. However, the program is highly competitive. Historically, accepted students demonstrate very high scores, often in the 95th percentile or higher nationally, which indicates readiness for the program's rigor.
Will only MAP M, not MAP R be considered?	Yes, only the MAP-M (Math) scores are considered. While the MAP-R is used for other programs, such as CAP at Blair, the Science, Math and Computer Science Program will not have access to reading scores.
If the magnet is already listed as a choice on ParentVUE, does that mean the MAP testing requirement has been met?	There is no minimum MAP-M RIT score needed to apply. All 8th grade students are eligible to apply and will be considered if they meet the residency, grade level and math course requirements.

<p>Which MAP-M test should my private school child take? Homeschool Boss lists a few - Growth 6+, Algebra 1, Geometry.</p>	<p>In MCPS, the Growth 6+ exam is used.</p>
<p>What exams can be submitted by private school students as part of the application?</p>	<p>The directions for private school students can be found on the MCPS we site. We are allowed to use the following exams:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NWEA MAP • i-Ready • Performance Series • Scantron • Iowa Assessments • CTP • MCAP/PARCC or other state testing • WISC • Woodcock-Johnson • SSAT • CogAT • OLSAT • InView
<p>Do private school students need to submit a 7th grade report card?</p>	<p>Yes, report cards from both 7th and 8th grade should be submitted with the application for private school students.</p>

Does a private school student who was previously enrolled at MCPS need parents to reenroll in ParentVUE or can their prior account be reactivated?	Students who were previously enrolled in MCPS but have since withdrawn generally need to follow the Non-MCPS/Private Student Application Process .
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Admissions, Selection, and Acceptance

Admissions Criteria and Weighting

Question	Answer
Do we know high-level criteria for selection? / How much weight does each of MAP-M score, MAP-R score, school score, and essay carry in the admission decision?	Admission is holistic and highly competitive, focusing on a profile of academic excellence and aptitude in STEM fields. The key criteria considered are: 1) Test Scores (MAP, etc.); 2) Academic Record (grades and rigor of middle school coursework); and 3) Student Written Statement/Essay. There is no formula or fixed percentage weighting for each component, as the committee evaluates the application as a whole.
How is the 250-word essay in the application used in evaluation?	The essay is critical for evaluating the student's communication skills and demonstrated interest in the magnet program. It allows the committee to understand the applicant's unique perspective, passion, and personal experiences beyond their test scores and grades.

How does selection for the program work? Are students ranked and everyone above a certain line gets in, or are accepted students considered equal and put into a lottery or pool afterward?	The selection process involves multiple levels of review where applicants are evaluated against the established criteria. Students are not selected via a lottery. The committee selects the top-ranked students down to the target number of seats for the incoming class.
Does ranking of the high school by student on application impact the selection to Blair?	No.
Will students in MCPS magnet middle schools have a higher chance to get in the Blair magnet program?	The magnet middle school programs are separate from the Blair High School Magnet program. There is no preferential treatment or "higher chance" for students coming from a middle school magnet. All students apply under the same criteria. However, a student in a middle school magnet may have a stronger overall application due to having taken more rigorous coursework.

Acceptance Rate and Class Data

Question	Answer
What's the acceptance rate?	The program is highly selective. While the exact numbers fluctuate, the Blair Magnet Program typically receives over 800 applications annually for an incoming class of approximately 100 students. This results in an estimated acceptance rate of around 15%.

How many students will be enrolled in the 25-26 Math, Science and Computer Science Magnet program?	The target enrollment for the incoming 9th-grade class is 100 students. The total enrollment for all four grades (9-12) is approximately 400 students.
Could you please share more information on the demographics of the magnet program?	<p>The percentages of enrolled students in the magnet program at the start of the 2025-26 school year are shown below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female - 39% • Male - 61% • • Asian - 55% • Black - 12% • Hispanic - 5% • Multiracial - 7% • White - 21%

Waitlist and Program Choice

Question	Answer
If a student doesn't get an initial acceptance, how does wait pool work? As spaces open, are students selected randomly?	Students placed in the wait pool are not ranked. All students initially placed in the waiting pool are automatically re-reviewed by our program as part of our appeals process. Any spaces that open up are filled by reviewing all candidates in the waiting pool, there is no random selection..

Can my child apply both the math/science/computer magnet program at Blair HS and the engineering magnet program at Wheaton HS or only one program is allowed?	Students are allowed to apply to multiple countywide application programs for which they are eligible (e.g., Blair Magnet, Wheaton Engineering, CAP,...). If a student is accepted to more than one program, the family will be asked to choose and accept the offer from a single program only.
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Program Curriculum and Academics

Course Offerings and Rigor

Question	Answer
What is the difference between the courses offered by Blair with AP Honors courses in other HS such as Churchill?	Many Magnet courses are taught at a level that is more rigorous and accelerated than standard AP/Honors courses offered at other high schools. Magnet courses are often college-level or post-AP, focusing heavily on theory, proof, interdisciplinary connections, and independent research. For example, the Magnet math sequence includes Multivariable Calculus and Differential Equations, which are generally first or second-year college courses, going beyond AP Calculus BC.
What extra courses or college courses do you offer?	Our program's intent is not to replace the college experience. However, we do have a partnership with UMD so that students can sit for an exam after completing Multivariable Calculus in order to get college credit by exam (this is not automatic at other universities). The Magnet program offers advanced courses that are often not available in a standard high school curriculum, such as Quantum Physics, Organic Chemistry, Discrete Mathematics, Computational Linguistics, and Neuroscience. While these courses are not taught in a college setting and do not earn college credit, they are more advanced than seen in other high schools.

For some of the more advanced coursework (i.e., neuroscience), they'll have to take these courses again in college, right?	The purpose of these advanced courses is to provide an in-depth foundation and exposure to college-level material. While the student may choose to take a similar course again in college, having already taken it at Blair gives them a significant advantage.
Are the required accelerated science classes double-period classes?	No, the introductory magnet science courses in 9th and 10th grade are taught in a single period. We use our engineering course to supplement with additional laboratory work, deep conceptual understanding, and the accelerated pace of the curriculum.
How are you incorporating AI in the curriculum?	<p>AI concepts are integrated into the Computer Science and Math sequences, particularly in courses like Analysis of Algorithms and advanced Computer Science electives. We offer a course in AI programming. Specific topics often include machine learning fundamentals, data analysis, and ethical considerations related to AI.</p> <p>Our teachers will typically explain how AI can be used for their classroom as an acceptable educational tool to enhance, not replace, learning.</p>
What are the project students participate in Blair?	A cornerstone of the Magnet experience is independent research. Students often participate in a required long-term research project during their Junior and Senior years, working with professional mentors. This work frequently leads to participation in prestigious science competitions such as the Regeneron Science Talent Search (formerly Intel and Westinghouse). There are many smaller projects that students complete leading up to this independent opportunity.

College Credit and Advising

Question	Answer
If the classes aren't AP classes, how does that appear for colleges? Do Blair counselors communicate to colleges how these classes are more intense than APs?	Magnet courses are generally designated as Advanced Level (AL) or similar on the transcript. Blair counselors are highly experienced and provide colleges with a comprehensive School Profile. Students may also include a Magnet Profile that explicitly outlines the rigor of the Magnet curriculum, noting that Magnet courses are often post-AP or equivalent to college-level courses. Colleges are generally well-aware of the caliber of the Blair Magnet Program.
Do most kids take the AP exam anyway, and if so what are the scores?	Students often take the AP exam for the closest corresponding subject (e.g., AP Calculus BC exam after the Magnet Analysis 1 course) to potentially earn college credit, although the Magnet course itself is often more challenging. Blair Magnet students consistently achieve high scores (4s and 5s) on AP exams due to the rigorous curriculum. This being said, most colleges will give their own math/language placement exams and will use those to determine the entry level course.
Have you ever partnered with Montgomery College or others so kids can get college credit?	Not the magnet program. However, MCPS has these sort of partnerships. Our goal is not to replace college as we feel the college experience is important.
Instead of preparing for college, how do you work with kids to figure out what they actually like best or what they are good at, what truly inspires them?	The curriculum is designed to foster deep exploration and independent inquiry. The multi-year research project, a wide variety of advanced electives, extra-curricular activities, and interaction with teaching staff are key components that allow students to identify and pursue their passions, which is arguably the best preparation for a focused and fulfilling college experience.

Scheduling and Graduation Requirements

Question	Draft Answer
Could you please share information about the average number of hours of homework each night ?	The Magnet program is extremely rigorous. Students should expect a significant workload. The estimated homework load typically ranges from 2 to 4 hours per night , depending on the student's courseload and extracurricular involvement.
You mentioned 8th period in your presentation for the magnet program. If my son doesn't get into a magnet and goes to Blair then would he have the option of doing 8th period?	The 8-period day is a specific feature of the Blair Magnet Program and the Communication Arts Program (CAP) to accommodate the required course sequence and the depth of the curriculum. However, if space is available, students in the traditional program at Blair can access the additional class. This is not done frequently, but some magnet electives only run in the extended period, so would be the only option.
You mentioned some students take PE in their senior year. MCPS requires them to take a year of health which they are eligible for after PE, is that correct?	Most students take PE in grade 9 or 10, but those who wish to take Music both years have to leave it for later on. MCPS requires a credit of Health and a credit of Physical Education (PE) for graduation. Students can take health without taking PE. We recommend that health is not taken until students complete their ninth grade year due to the nature of the content. Many students in the program will take health in the summer between grade 9 and grade 10.

Program Logistics and School Life

Transportation

Question	Answer
Does the school provide transportation? How robust is the service to the different areas.	Yes, MCPS provides transportation for Magnet students who live outside of Blair's local attendance boundary. This transportation is provided via Centralized Bus Stops. Students are picked up and dropped off at designated central locations, such as local elementary or middle schools, within their high school cluster (e.g., Walter Johnson, Northeast Consortium). Families are responsible for transporting their child to and from these central stops. Routes for the 2025-26 school year can be found on the MCPS Transportation web site.

Extracurriculars and Scheduling Conflicts

Question	Answer
Are Magnet kids active in sports or afterschool activities? How does the longer day impact their participation? Do magnet students miss a portion of afterschool activities given their later end time for classes?	Yes, Magnet students are highly encouraged and are active participants in Blair's wide array of sports, clubs, and fine arts. All official sports teams start practices after the extended day, so students are able to participate. There are some clubs that meet during the extended period, but these are rare. Most clubs meet during lunch or after the extended day.

Is orchestra at Blair available to the student while in the magnet at Blair? Would it be possible for a student to attend this program, attend orchestra and a language, and a Sport each year?	Yes, students can enroll in elective courses like Orchestra and a World Language given that they will be taking 8 classes. We have students that will also participate in school athletics after school.
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Program Policies

Question	Answer
If the student is accepted to the magnet and accepts but later after a year or two finds the program too rigorous, can they stay at Blair in the general population or do they need to return to their home school?	If a student voluntarily withdraws from the Magnet program, they will return to their home-clustered high school for the remainder of their high school career. They cannot remain at Blair in the general population unless Blair is their assigned home school.
Can students who are not a part of the magnet program (but are part of the general population at Blair) take magnet classes? For example, can a student who has completed geometry in 8th grade take (some of) the accelerated math classes offered through the magnet even if they are not enrolled in the magnet program?	All upper level elective courses in the magnet program are open to all Blair students who have met the prerequisites. The core classes in grade 9-10 are blocked or taught in a different sequence, so can not be taken individually and are only available to students in the program. We occasionally have students in our math sequence and we have a summer program that can help us determine if the sequence is the correct one for a student. This is rare.

<p>How does the program prepare kids socio-emotionally?</p>	<p>The program strives to create a supportive, collaborative cohort environment. There is a dedicated Magnet Coordinator who helps facilitate this. Our counseling department provides academic and socio-emotional support. The cohort structure ensures students share similar academic pressures, fostering a strong peer support network.</p>
<p>Do we have additional fees?</p>	<p>We run a summer program before grade nine that has a fee, but scholarships are available through the generosity of the Magnet Foundation. There will also be field trips, but again, we will typically have scholarship funds available for course-related trips.</p>
<p>Does the Blair magnet program have an annual science fair, or facilitate student participation in national science fairs?</p>	<p>We have an annual Senior Research convention to share research done by our graduating class. Students will have the option of entering science competitions, but this is their choice. Students from Blair are routinely recognized by the larger competitions such as the Regeneron Science Talent Search, ISEF or JSHS.</p>

School Environment and Future Changes

School Safety and Environment

Question	Answer
Can you share insights into the safety of the students at the school? Is Blair in a safe area?	Montgomery Blair High School is in a well-established area of Silver Spring. We are at the corner of two very busy roads, so have a closed campus during the school day. As with any high school, safety is a constant priority for our staff. School safety data , including any major incidents, is publicly available through the MCPS website in official reports..

Program/School Continuity

Question	Answer
What will happen in 2027-28? Will there be teacher attrition as teachers move to other schools?	MCPS has proposed a Regional Program Model to begin in the 2027-2028 school year, which may convert countywide magnet programs like Blair's into regional ones. Students entering the Blair Magnet Program in the 2026-27 school year will be allowed to remain in the program. The goal is to expand, not eliminate, rigorous programs, though the nature of the program or teacher assignments may evolve. Specific information on teacher attrition is speculative, but MCPS aims to maintain highly qualified staff across all programs. Based on divisions about program size, there may not be the need in our proposed region for the number of staff that we currently have.

If you're currently eligible to attend based on living within the Walter Johnson cluster, but your home school changes to the Woodward cluster in 2027-28, can you continue attending at Blair?	Yes, if your student is accepted and enrolled in the Blair Magnet Program, they are grandfathered in and will continue to attend the Magnet Program at Blair as long as they still reside in Montgomery County.
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Information Requests

Question	Answer
Can you send the PowerPoint?	The presentation slides for the Information Session are available on the Blair website for download. If you cannot locate them, please contact the Magnet Coordinator.
Would it be possible to have a shadow day?	Due to the application timeline and the size of the applicant pool, individual shadow days for applicants are generally not offered until after the screening process is complete. For students who are accepted to the program, we make every effort to provide shadowing opportunities before the deadline for students to accept the program invitation.
What are previous years' questions?	Last year's FAQ is available on the Blair web site.