

Pyle Middle School

Counseling Advisory Committee

Course Registration 2023-24: Answers to questions you didn't know to ask

Live presentation on January 26, 2023

Registration for current MCPS 5th thru 7th graders for the 2023-24 school year is open through February 1 (closes at 3:00 pm). Students will submit their elective requests via Google form accessible via their MyMCPS Classroom. Students and parents can view the [Pyle Registration and Course Information](#) on the Pyle Counseling Registration webpage.

Students can choose 2 electives each year they are at Pyle in addition to their core classes. Sixth graders have less options for their electives than do seventh and eighth graders. Seventh and eighth graders have choices in vocal music, instrumental music, theater, visual art, technology, media and world language. Please see the [Pyle Middle School Registration webpage](#) for a list of available electives by grade.

The following notes reference high school course choices and graduation requirements that students and parents may want to consider when selecting courses in middle school. These notes do not encompass all course options at Walt Whitman or other MCPS high schools. Current Walt Whitman High School course choices can be viewed at the [Whitman Counseling Course Registration webpage](#). There you will find the Registration Card for the 2022-23 academic year along with the Walt Whitman High School Course Bulletin.

Below are questions asked by parents during the presentation along with answers. It may be helpful as you are reading them to reference the slide presentation, which appears at the end of this document. They contain valuable pathway illustrations for the major subject areas from middle school through high school.

Who to contact if you have questions

If you have a **rising Whitman freshman** and you have questions regarding registration for next year or would like more information about curriculum pathways, please explore the information available on the [Whitman Counseling Course Registration webpage](#). There are slide presentations for each curriculum area at Whitman and these slides may answer your questions. If you still have questions, please contact a Whitman counselor or Whitman resource teacher for the curriculum for which you have questions. A link to the Whitman staff directory appears on the [Walt Whitman website](#).

If you have a **rising 6th - 8th grader**, you can find information about course offerings by grade as well as course descriptions on the [Pyle Middle School Registration webpage](#). If you still have questions, please contact your Pyle counselor, or the Pyle Counseling office if you are a rising 6th grade parent. You may also contact a resource teacher if you have questions regarding a particular curriculum. The Pyle staff directory can be found on the [Pyle website site](#).

General information

MCPS graduation requirements change from time to time. Even if you have a child in high school currently OR if you had a child in high school, familiarize yourself with the current graduation requirements. They may have changed recently. They may change again before your middle schooler arrives at high school. Current graduation requirements that would approximate requirements for current middle schoolers can be found on the [MCPS website as graduation requirements for the class of 2025](#).

- Whitman course offerings can change from year-to-year depending on student interest during registration. Some courses offered may not have enough enrollment and be dropped from the offerings by the time school starts.
- Course selection in three specific academic areas in middle school can have significant implications to options in high school: Math, World Language and Technology. More information about these follows.
- There are various instrumental music, vocal music, performing arts and visual art classes at Pyle that students can choose. Instrumental music classes at Pyle are a prerequisite to many instrumental music classes at Whitman. The other fine arts courses at Whitman do not require prerequisite coursework at Pyle.
- Pyle offers TV studio and yearbook classes in 7th and 8th grade. The related courses at Whitman do not require students to take these courses at Pyle.
- The grades for high-school credit courses taken in middle school will be included in their high school GPA calculation if they improve the GPA and excluded from the GPA if they would lower it.
- There are resource classes at Whitman that correspond to classes offered at Pyle.

General FAQ

Q: *I understand my student's current teachers will recommend the class/class level in that area of study for next year. Should I question any of those recommendations? Is there an opportunity to register for a different class/class level?*

A: Your student's teachers make recommendations for each student in their academic area for the next academic year, but they do so without knowledge of what the recommendations are in other subject areas. In particular for rising high school freshmen, a student may be ready for honors classes in all subjects individually, but that doesn't always mean they are ready to take all honors classes. It is best to request courses that match your student's level of engagement in each academic area, as well as outside interests. If your student has relied heavily on tutoring or other outside assistance this year in a subject, it may be best to slow the pace in that area. Listen to your student and please contact your student's current teacher and counselor if you think it might be a better fit to take a class/class level other than what was recommended.

Your student should strive for a balanced course load that allows time for personal interests, family and friends.

Q: *My student is very interested in taking an arts course, a world language and technology courses throughout middle and high school. Is that possible?*

A: In middle school, students have 2 elective periods each year in which to take courses in these areas and high-school level technology courses are not an option until 8th grade. In high school, students can typically take a course in each of these areas in any given year depending on when they decide to take P.E. If your student is keenly interested in pursuing continuous coursework in three elective areas, it may make sense to tentatively map out a pathway and review the feasibility of it with a counselor.

Q: *Can high school freshmen take AP courses?*

A: With the exception of AP National, State and Local Government (AP NSL) and AP Computer Science Principles, freshmen are not eligible to take AP courses. Students typically take AP NSL during their freshman year if they want to take AP US History, typically in their sophomore year. Otherwise, students typically take on-grade-level or Honors US History their freshman year.

Math

- Students must take math each year they are at an MCPS school, regardless of when/if they complete Calculus. They must take a math class each year even if they take 2 math classes in the same academic year or take a full-year math class over the summer.
- Math electives after Calculus/Statistics (Multivariable Calculus (MV Calculus), Linear Algebra) are very challenging college-level courses. Students will not receive college credit for these courses. There is not an “easy” math option after taking Calculus and/or Statistics. You can view current math choices at Whitman in the [Course Bulletin](#).
- Students can repeat a math class to slow their pace on the math pathway, in either middle school or high school, or elect to take Algebra II over 2 years rather than in one year. When taking a class twice, the student gets one credit for that course and the higher grade earned shows on the transcript.
- Pyle students can take Algebra I or Honors Geometry, both of which are high-school credit classes.
- Students can move from Honors to grade-level (within a course or from course-to-course), but it is not advisable to move from grade-level to Honors.

Math FAQ

Q: *What math courses are available for rising 6th graders? What is the difference between Math 6+ and Math 6 AIM? What are the typical math pathways from these 6th grade math course options?*

A: There are two math courses offered to incoming 6th graders at Pyle, Math 6+ and Math 6 AIM. In general, Math 6+ is the next step for students currently taking Grade 5 math and Math 6 AIM is the next step for students currently taking compacted Grade 5/6 math. Typically Math 6+ students will take Math 7 (in 7th grade and Math 8 in 8th grade) or Math 7 Plus (in 7th grade and Algebra 1 in 8th grade). Math 6 AIM students typically take Algebra 1 in 7th grade and Honors Geometry in 8th grade. Descriptions of topics covered in each math class can be found in the [Pyle Registration Booklet](#) on the Pyle website. Note that Algebra is a high school level course.

Q: *Can students register for a class that is different than the course recommended by their current math teacher?*

A: Current math teachers consider a student’s performance, engagement and interest in math when determining the next recommended math class. It is advisable to take the class recommended. If you feel strongly that the recommended class is the wrong one for your child, please contact your child’s teacher about the concerns. If you still disagree with the teacher recommendation, you can send an email to Mr Nardi to request a change.

Q: *Can my child take math in the summer?*

A: MCPS typically offers math courses over the summer as a 6-week course in fulfillment of first time credit for those courses to rising 9th graders and higher. Credit and grades appear on their high school transcript just as it would for school-year courses. These courses are extremely fast-paced and we don’t advise students to take a math class over the summer for

advancement but they can repeat a class for grade replacement. More information about the 2023 MCPS Summer School will be coming out in March and here is a link to the 2022 MCPS Summer School Website.

<https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/extendedhours/summerschool/>

Q: *Will math booster classes be offered by MCPS this summer for students who struggled in their math class this year but want to progress to the next class in the progression for 2023-24?*

A: It is anticipated that MCPS will offer booster classes in math. If you feel your student did not master the concepts learned in their current math class, particularly Algebra or Honors Geometry, it may be wise to repeat the course next year.

Q: *What are the options if my child wants to slow their pace on the math pathway?*

A: For most students, the best, and really only, option is to take the same class twice or take Algebra II over 2 years instead of 1 year. If a student is struggling in precalculus and does not want to take AP Calculus or AP Statistics, there is an Intro to Statistics option or Calculus with Apps, which has a slower pace than AP Calculus. Students do not have to take Calculus to graduate high school or to be accepted to college, particularly if the student does not intend to pursue a STEM major in college.

Q: *If my student does not feel challenged in their current math class, are there options to speed ahead?*

A: If your student is taking Math 6+ or AIM in 6th grade, they can opt next year to take Math 7+ or Algebra I, respectively. If your student is currently taking Algebra I or higher, they can elect to take honors-level math classes at Whitman for more of a challenge over on-grade-level. There is not an option to skip classes in the high school math sequence.

Q: *What is the highest level of math covered on the SAT and ACT exams?*

A: Algebra II

Q: *What should my student consider when deciding whether to take an on-grade-level vs. honors math class at Whitman?*

A: In most cases, your student's current math teacher has considered your student's performance in math this year and made a recommendation for next year that is consistent with their ability and will challenge them without overwhelming them. However, if your student has relied heavily on tutors or other outside help to maintain their current grade, it may be time to consider taking the on-grade-level option for that math course.

World Language

- MCPS graduation requirements require the completion of one of three "completer" paths. One of the popular completer paths is World Language (including American Sign

Language). When choosing this “completer” path, students must complete 2 years of a World Language in high school in order to graduate. World language classes in middle school are high-school level classes and count toward this requirement. However, we strongly encourage students to take at least 2 years of World Language at the high school level, regardless of them meeting the World Language requirement in middle school.

- Regardless of how many years of a world language a student takes in middle school, colleges want to see at least 2 - 3 years (specific number of years depends on the school) of a world language in high school. For instance, if a student completed Spanish 2 at Pyle, and is interested in attending college, they are expected to take 2 or 3 more years of a world language at Whitman. That would mean Spanish 3, 4 and maybe 5. Another option is to start a different language. Colleges prefer more depth than breadth when it comes to world language.
- MCPS recommends that students who speak a second language at home or have exposure to a second language at home start a different language in school.
- American Sign Language (ASL) satisfies the world language requirement at [many universities](#), but not all universities.
- Whitman High School offers more world language courses than any other MCPS high school. For a list of current world languages, please review the [Registration Bulletin](#).

World Language FAQ:

Q: *Does my child have to take a world language in middle school?*

A: No. Students can fulfill all MCPS graduation requirements and college application world language requirements entirely in high school.

Q: *When can my middle schooler start taking a world language?*

A: Any time during middle school or high school. Consider how far your student might like to go in a language to decide when to start taking a language. Consider college world language requirements (typically 2 - 3 years in high school) and that “gap” years from a language are never advisable when deciding to start a language.

Q: *Once my student has started a world language, can they take a year off and come back to the same language the following year?*

A: No. A lot of knowledge is lost due to lack of frequent practice, so the next course would be far too challenging if there is a gap year in between.

Q: *Can my student take two languages at one time?*

A: With special permission, but it is not advised.

Q: *Does my child have to take the same language in middle school and high school?*

A: No. Students can change from one language to another. Colleges do like to see depth in a language, but if your student really doesn't like the language they started then it may be best to switch to another at any time in middle or high school.

Q: *Do students have to take a world language every year in high school?*

A: No. Colleges like to see students take a world language for 2 - 3 years in high school. Specific requirements vary by college and may vary by program at the college.

Q: *Can my middle schooler complete their work language requirement in middle school?*

A: Yes and no. Students can complete the required two years of a world language (one of the "completer" options) to meet MCPS graduation requirements in middle school. However, if your student plans to attend a 4-year college, colleges require 2 - 3 years of a world language taken during the high school years, regardless of native languages in which they have displayed proficiency.

Q: *Is there advice on which world language may be best for my student?*

A: Not really. You may try exposing your child to various languages through music, movies, television, and friends to see if they have an interest in one versus the others.

Q: *How do I know which pacing is right for my child taking the first year of a language: 1A (first semester high school course taken over a full year in middle school) or 1AB (full year high school course taken over a full year in middle school)?*

<u>My child would be better placed in 1AB</u>	<u>My child would be better placed in 1A</u>
Catches on quickly to new concepts	Likes extra time to process and practice concepts
Doesn't like spending too much time on one topic	Likes to spend more time on a topic
Has good organizational and study habits	Needs more help with organization and study habits

Q: *Is there a FY 2A and FY 2B option for any of the World Languages at Pyle?*

A: No there is not, because the option to take the second semester of the second year is not an option in high school.

Q: *If my child takes the first year of a language and feels (s)he has selected the wrong pace (taking 1A and would prefer 1AB or vice versa), can (s)he switch after classes have started?*

A: Students can typically move from 1AB to 1A at any time if there is space available in that class. If the 1A class is not offered in the same period as the 1AB class, other classes on your child's schedule may have to be moved around. On the other hand, if a student would like to

move from 1A to 1AB, he /she must make that decision by October, so as not to miss too much instruction.

Q: *What is the difference between on-grade-level and honors world language classes? How will my student know which to take?*

A: Starting in year 3 of most world languages, Whitman students have the option to take on-grade-level or honors level classes in that language. Your student's instructor in the previous year will recommend the right level for your student. The instructor's recommendation is usually a good guide, but if your student is relying heavily on tutors, other supports at home or is spending much more time doing coursework at home than they'd prefer to get the grade they are earning, it might be time to consider taking on-grade-level or repeating a year in the language to ensure mastery.

Q: *My child is a native speaker or has studied significantly in the language (s)he would like to take in middle school. At what level can (s)he start the language at Pyle? Can they receive high school credit if they place at higher than entry level?*

A: If your child is a native or semi-native speaker, we strongly encourage him/her to study a different language. Our world language classes are not designed for students who already speak the language and this is an excellent opportunity to learn a 3rd or 4th language. If students have studied a language previously at another school or an outside program, (s)he can schedule a placement test with our World Language Resource teacher. Students can be placed as follows. Note that they will not receive high school credit for levels (s)he places out of.

6th graders	May only take level 1 courses (Incoming 6th graders may still take a placement test to determine their current level and if they should consider taking a different language)
7th graders	May test into level 2
8th graders	May test into level 2 or 3

If you would like your child to take a placement test in order to determine the current level, please contact Kristen Tessier at Kristen_L_Tessier@mcpsmd.org.

Q: *Can world language coursework completed at private programs count toward MCPS world language requirements?*

A: No, programs completed outside of a student's primary school program cannot be used for MCPS course credit or to meet world language graduation requirements.

Q: *Do all colleges consider American Sign Language (ASL) a world language?*

A: Not all do, but a growing number of universities and colleges do recognize ASL credits as fulfillment of their world language application requirements. The [University of New Mexico](#) maintains a fairly reliable list of colleges that do accept it, but it is a good idea to check directly

with colleges your student may be interested in attending before deciding to take ASL in fulfillment of college world language requirements.

Q: Is there a special graduation certificate for students who complete a certain number of world language classes?

A: MCPS participates in the Seal of Biliteracy program. The seal is added to a student's high school diploma when they have [met the requirements](#) of the program in any of a large number of world languages, including ASL. A minimum score of 4 on a world language AP exam can be used to meet the requirements. Students should contact their Whitman counselor or World Language Resource Teacher for more information.

Q: Can students take Japanese at Pyle?

A: Yes, students can take Japanese 1 in 8th grade at Pyle.

Q: Can a student retake a language class in order to delay the progression to a more difficult level?

A: Yes, students can retake language level or class but will be credited only once for that level. The grade that will appear in the transcript will be the higher of the two grades in that language level.

Engineering/Technology courses (Project Lead the Way or PLTW)

- All MCPS students must take a Technology Education (TE) course (1 Credit) to fulfill MCPS graduation requirements. Taking a qualifying course in middle or high school is sufficient to fulfill the requirement. Pyle Middle School will offer 2 qualifying courses in the 2023-24 school year: Introduction to Engineering Design (IED) and Foundations of Computer Science (FCS), both offered to 8th graders. Both are high-school level courses and will thus appear on your student's high school transcript.
- Whitman is one of a few MCPS high schools to offer the nationally-recognized technology/engineering pathway called Project Lead the Way (PLTW). Students complete 4 courses in the PLTW pathway. Completion of the pathway satisfies the career-development graduation requirement (one of the 3 "completer" options) for MCPS graduation, and helps students acquire specialized knowledge and skills required for employment and/or college study.
- The first course in the PLTW pathway is IED and can be taken at Pyle Middle School in 8th grade. Students are recommended to either take Gateway to Tech in 7th grade as a prerequisite to IED or take Algebra 1 before or concurrently with IED.
- If students do not take IED at Pyle and want to complete the PLTW pathway, they take two of the 4 PLTW courses in 11th grade.
- There is no college credit for any courses in the PLTW pathway.

Engineering FAQ:

Q: *My middle schooler is interested in the PLTW pathway. Should (s)he take IED in middle school?*

A: It's a very good idea to take IED in middle school! Taking IED in middle school can allow your student more flexibility in high school. If your child decides they are not interested in pursuing the PLTW pathway after taking IED, at least they have taken a course that fills one of the MCPS graduation requirements.

Q: *Is there a pathway similar to PLTW for students interested in Computer Science?*

A: Yes, there is a similar pathway for students interested in Computer Science. Please see the Course Registration Card and Course Bulletin at the [Whitman Counseling Course Registration webpage](#).

Q: *Do students who are interested in pursuing engineering in college need to complete the PLTW or other similar pathway in high school? Do most engineering programs see it as a prerequisite for admission?*

A: No. The PLTW pathway was designed to give interested high school students an opportunity to explore this interest, but is in no way a prerequisite for admissions to a college-level engineering program, nor does it earn your student college credit towards an engineering degree. Students should view participation in the PLTW program as an opportunity to determine if they'd like to pursue engineering study or careers after high school.

Q: Does the IED OR FCS class at Pyle fulfill the Technology Education (TE) MCPS graduation requirement?

A: Yes.

Q: Will the IED OR FCS class at Pyle show on my child's high school transcript?

A: Yes.

Q: Does my child need to take Gateway to Tech before taking IED?

A: No. There is a good bit of math in IED, so it is recommended that students either take Algebra 1 before or concurrently with IED.

Tips of Wisdom from Counselors (who are also MCPS parents)

- As parents, it is important to be the voice of reason with your child in finding a balance between interests in and out of the classroom.
- Every kid is different. Avoid comparing your child to other children.
- Teachers make recommendations for each student in their academic area for the next academic year, but they do so without knowledge of what the recommendations are in other subject areas. A student may be ready for honors classes in all subjects individually, but that doesn't always mean they are ready to take all honors classes. Help your student find a balance between school work, extra-curricular activities and time for self and family. Students may find it helps to challenge themselves at a higher level in the coursework they love by taking on-grade-level classes in their least-favorite subjects.
- Whitman HS has 130+ student-run clubs in addition to dozens of JV and varsity sports teams, vocal and instrumental music ensembles and academic teams. It's important for students' well-being to get involved in activities outside of the classroom to promote healthy balances. Colleges like to see involvement outside of the classroom.
- There is no best college, but there are a number of colleges that are the best choices for your child. The goal is to find that match so that they thrive in college and beyond.
- If your student needs significant parent and/or tutoring support to maintain an A or B in an honors or advanced course, consider this a red flag. This may be a subject where on grade level is the better choice and allow more time for them to excel at the advanced level in another subject.
- Middle school is a great time to take risks. Encourage your child to be flexible when looking at what comes next. Students are constantly remapping their pathways in high school.
- Your student will hit bumps in the road and experience failure. They will also get "B's". This is a sign of an academic risk taker and a great opportunity to learn resiliency. Colleges love resilient kids!
- There are limited course choices in middle school and there are NO choices in English, Social Studies or Science. Be cautious when selecting advanced options in math and

world language as they commit your child to advanced courses throughout high school that may not allow time for advanced coursework in other academic subjects.

- In elementary school and middle school, parents most often ask counselors and teachers how their kid can advance ahead of grade level in math. In high school, parents most often ask counselors how their student can slow down in math.