

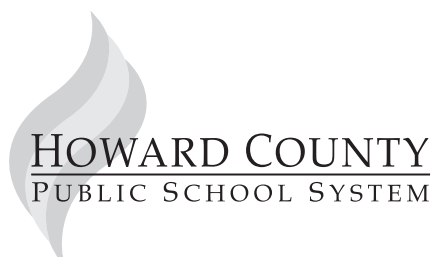
Building the Foundation for High School and Beyond

A Guide for Parents of Middle School Students

Why Start Now?

You are probably thinking that your child is just starting 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 with the preparation to be successful in post-secondary experiences. Most college graduates earn more money during their working years than people who have a high school diploma. Today, most good jobs require more than a high school diploma. Businesses want employees who know how to think and solve problems. In the next few pages, you will learn some very important information that will help you as you work with your child to strive to reach his or her potential.



Course Curriculum and Course Placement in Middle School

The courses your child takes in middle school will determine how well he or she is prepared for high school. The following are the courses your child will take in sixth grade along with some general guidelines for course placement:

READING

- Students who read on grade level in fifth grade will be placed in the sixth grade Reading course. Students who read below grade level in fifth grade will be placed in the sixth grade Reading course with appropriate academic interventions. The sixth grade Reading course will cover the following units of study: Reading Informational Text Strategically, Reading Literary Text Critically, and Pathways to Success.
- Students who read above grade level in fifth grade and score in the advanced area of the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) will be placed in The Advanced Reader course in sixth grade. The Advanced Reader course is a differentiated essential curriculum developed to meet the needs of the highly able reader.

MATHEMATICS

- In grade 6, mathematics is taught in three distinct courses. Although the mathematical content of each course is different, there are five areas of instruction that are the same, and relative to the content of each of the different courses. These five areas are: problem solving, communications, connections, reasoning, and technology.

Students who are:

- Working below grade level in fifth grade enter Middle School Mathematics 1 (MSM1) with appropriate academic interventions.
- Working on grade level in fifth grade enter Middle School Mathematics I (MSMI) in sixth grade.
- Working one grade level above grade level (taking the elementary version of MSMI) in fifth grade enter Middle School Mathematics II (MSMII) in sixth grade.
- Participating in the Elementary Gifted and Talented Program enter Pre-Algebra in sixth grade.

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Tips for Success

- Encourage your child to challenge his or herself by working up to his or her ability in appropriate classes.
- 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. Don't 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.

Course Curriculum and Course

Sample Mathematics Sequence

Grade	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	Precalculus	AP Calculus AB
12	Precalculus	Calculus	AP Calculus C

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

ENGLISH

- All students in sixth grade English will study literature and composition topics including the strategic writer, literary archetypes; recurring patterns in literature, literary forms: biography and autobiography, literary origin: folklore and legends, and grammar.
- Students participating in the sixth grade gifted and talented English course receive a differentiated program. Students in this course are expected to work at an accelerated pace, to read and interpret challenging literature independently, and to formulate their hypotheses about authors' intent and style.

SOCIAL STUDIES

- All students in sixth grade Social Studies will study the first part of a two-year program entitled Geography and World Cultures. Course content includes: the study of physical and human geography, North Africa and the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Asia.
- Students participating in gifted and talented social studies receive a differentiated program. Differentiation occurs when teachers engage their students in high level critical thinking and problem solving activities, as well as through social science research inquiries linked to the curriculum.

SCIENCE

- All students in sixth grade Science will study the following topics: skills and process of science, weather, geologic processes, earth systems, and the solar system.
- Students participating in the gifted and talented program receive a differentiated program. Differentiation occurs when teachers preassess the students' knowledge and use curriculum compacting to accelerate the pace of instruction and increase the depth of learning. In addition, a major goal of the gifted and talented science program is to provide an opportunity for students to learn the skills and

Placement in Middle School, *continued*

SCIENCE, *continued*

processes of authentic science research. Students will participate in various class research projects and activities designed to help students develop the foundation skills to produce an original science project by the end of the 8th grade year.

HEALTH

- All students in sixth grade Health will participate in the study of the following units: tobacco, alcohol and other drugs, safety, first aid and injury prevention, family life and human sexuality, and disease prevention and control.

TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION

- All students in sixth grade Technology Education will study the following topics: exploring technology: nature of technology, impacts of technology, engineering design and development process, core technologies, producers of the goods and services of the designed world.

MUSIC

- All students participating in sixth grade General Music will develop the ability to perceive, perform, and respond to music; demonstrate an understanding of music as an essential aspect of history and human experience; demonstrate the ability to organize musical ideas and sounds creatively; and develop the ability to make aesthetic judgments through experiences with guitar, piano, World Music Drumming, and music technology.

ART

- All students in sixth grade Art will engage in studio experiences in a variety of art disciplines: drawing, painting, printmaking, crafts and sculpture. Activities are designed to develop creative problem-solving skills, perceptual skills through observation, and ways to organize artwork through the use of compositional devices.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- All students in sixth grade Physical Education will participate in the following units of study: the effects of physical activity on the body systems, the relationship between nutrition and physical activity, individual aerobic capacity/cardiorespiratory fitness, solving tactical game problems.

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCE

- All students in sixth grade Family and Consumer Science will study the following topics: family and the community, and food and nutrition, including preparation of healthy snacks and meals.

Academic Behaviors

Academic behaviors are important to school success. As students move through middle and high school, they need to learn to develop independent work habits. The following are four academic behaviors that will help your child achieve success in school:

1. Organization

For many students, academic challenges are related more to a lack of organization than a lack of intellectual ability. Your child may need to learn how to use binders or folders to get organized. Using the assignment book on a regular basis also helps students stay organized.

2. Time Management

Learning to organize time to be productive takes practice and experience. Together, designate a time for nightly homework and help your child stick to this schedule. Your child may also need help breaking down larger assignments into smaller pieces to get them done.

3. Motivation

Most students say they want to do well in school but don't know the steps they need to take to make it happen. The reason is often motivation. Tapping into your child's interests is a great way to get him or her geared up to do well in school. Link your child's interest to academics which will make learning more interesting.

4. Attendance

Attendance plays an important role in academic achievement. Students should learn to wake up to their own alarm clock to get to school on time. If a student is absent from school for a valid reason, he or she should make sure to follow up with the teacher to make up any missed work.

Adapted from www.greatschools.net

HCPSS Graduation Requirements

Courses	Credits
English	4 credits
Mathematics	3 credits*
Social Studies	3 credits
Science	3 credits
Technology Education	1 credit
Fine Arts	1 credit
Health	½ credit
Lifetime Fitness	½ credit
Electives	3-5 credits
One of the following:	
World Language	2 credits
Advanced Technology	2 credits
Career Academy	4 credits
TOTAL	21 credits

High School Assessments

Students must pass assessments in Algebra, Biology, English, and American Government or have a combined score of 1602.

Service Learning

Students must complete 75 hours of service learning. (Most HCPSS students complete this in middle school through a curricular project completed during each of the three years.)

Career Requirement

Students must complete a four year plan, a resume, and a mock interview. This is done during the high school day.

* Consult with the Catalog of Approved High School Courses before your child begins ninth grade for the most current graduation requirements.

What Do I Need To Know About High School?

- While we don't expect sixth graders 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.
- 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.
- Students who take Algebra and/or Geometry in middle school still need to earn three mathematics credits in high school. In fact, we strongly encourage all students to take four years of mathematics in high school in order to be better prepared for college.
- 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.
- The mathematics courses taken in middle school determine 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.

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