Getting Set

A Guide for Middle School Students
(and their parents/guardians)

MCPS
Montgomery County Public Schools
Rockville, Maryland
A high-quality education is the fundamental right of every child. All children will receive the respect, encouragement, and opportunities they need to build the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be successful, contributing members of a global society.

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Getting Set
A Guide for Middle School Students
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Acknowledgments
We thank all the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) individuals who contributed to the development of this booklet. Their thoughtful comments and suggestions were invaluable.

Contact the School Counseling Services Unit, 301-279-3584, for copies of the booklet.

Montgomery County Public Schools
Office of Special Education and Student Services
Department of Student Services
School Counseling Services Unit
Rockville, Maryland 20850
301-279-3584

This booklet belongs to
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*Note: The image shows a group of students, possibly related to the content of the document.*
The “Team” Concept

Middle schools are organized into teams. Students at each grade level are assigned to a team and usually are taught by the same team of teachers. The team structure ensures a comfortable, nurturing, and challenging environment for the students who comprise each team. In addition to the students, a team leader, also called an interdisciplinary resource teacher (IRT), works closely with the teachers, counselor, and administrator who complete the list of team members.

The student is the most important member of a team. Teachers are focused on the success of each student. Whenever you have a problem or need questions answered, you can always talk to any teacher or the school counselor.

The directory below lists middle school personnel positions. In the spaces provided, write the names of these important people.

Principal
Assistant Principal
Counselors
Teachers
Team Leader
Media Specialist
School Community Health Nurse
Health Technician
Student Service Learning Contact Person
Security Assistants
Secretaries:
  Administrative
  Guidance
  Attendance
  Financial
Head of Building Services
Cafeteria Supervisor
After-school Activities Coordinator

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The “Team” Concept ■ 1
As a middle school student, you are in an age group that is both fascinating and complex. You are no longer a “baby,” but you are not yet an adult. You are experiencing biological, physical, and behavioral and social changes. Relationships with your friends and family take on new meanings. This time period, called adolescence, can be joyful and painful at the same time. However, it is always a time of growth. You will be dealing with more complex intellectual tasks. You will be expected to behave in a more mature manner and you will be held more accountable for your actions. In other words, you are growing up. Use your innate curiosity, imagination, energy, and idealism to make your school an exciting place to learn and play.

As an adolescent, you now have more control over how you apply yourself to your school work and on the kinds of friends you make. As an intelligent and thinking adolescent, be aware of health hazards to avoid such as involvement with drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and sexual activity. This involvement diminishes your quality of life. Be kind and gentle to yourself, seek the advice and wisdom of your parents/guardians regularly, and talk with your teachers and school counselor.

If you use the suggestions listed below, you will be well on your way to “getting set” to succeed in middle school.

- Attend school every day and be on time to class.
- Stay organized, write down all assignments, complete all homework, AND turn the homework in on time.
- Listen carefully, follow directions, and come to class with all the needed materials.
- Schedule time each evening to prepare for the next school day.
- Choose your friends wisely.
- Seek help from your teachers and counselors as soon as you need it, and don’t wait until you are overwhelmed.
- Involve your parents/guardians in your schoolwork and school activities.
- Participate in extracurricular activities.
- Improve your computer skills.

- Show respect and consideration for others.
- Make an appointment to talk with your counselor about school, friends, careers, study skills, or any other topics or concerns.
- Strive to do your personal best!
- READ, READ, READ.

Responsibility

Middle school students are expected to be respectful and considerate of others. You, and you alone, are responsible for your behavior. Think of ways to improve your behavior—

- in your classroom
- in the lunchroom
- on school grounds
- during school activities
- on the school bus
- in your community

If you need assistance in working on ways to improve yourself as a person, contact your counselor. The counselor is trained to help students resolve personal problems.

Safety

Every student has a right to a safe school environment. Each student is expected to behave in a safe manner. If you should ever feel unsafe at anytime, please tell any adult in your school or at home.
Challenge Yourself

Did you know that you can accomplish goals you set for yourself?
Did you know that the more complex and complicated the goal, the more work you need to do?
Did you know that the more work you do to reach your goal, the more knowledgeable you become?
Did you know that the more knowledgeable you are, the easier the task becomes.
Learning can be a really simple and fun experience. All you need are the techniques that help you to succeed.

If you wish to improve your skills and talents and would like help on how to succeed, contact your teacher(s) and your counselor. They are trained to help you maximize your skills.
The Time Management section (page 7) as well as the Organizational Strategies section below can be used to help practice ways to prepare for success in middle school.

Organizational Strategies

Always be prepared
When you go to school, you should be well prepared. Your homework should be in your binder and your plan book should be in the front of your notebook. Most middle schools provide plan books or assignment books. Using the plan book is an extremely important part of getting your schoolwork organized and can also help you organize your outside activities. If you write your homework assignments down in the plan book on a regular basis, you will always know your assignment for each class. Teachers usually have the assignments posted in the classroom. Develop the habit of writing down all assignments and reviewing and checking when assignments are due; then, get set to reap the positive rewards of being a successful and excellent student.

Suggested checklist for school supplies
Listed below are the basic supplies you may need for school. Perhaps you can think of other things to add to this list.

- Three-ring binder
- Loose-leaf notebook
- Lined notebook paper
- Section dividers for the notebook
- Spiral notebooks and composition books
- Pencils
- Pens (ballpoint or ink pens with blue or black ink)
- Plastic pencil case (attach to the inside of the binder)
- Ruler
- Assignment notebook/plan book

Your notebook
Maintaining a neat and organized notebook can help you do well in school. Here are some tips for planning your binder:

- Keep your plan book in the front of the binder.
- Always write down your homework assignments in the three-ring binder.
- Use dividers to separate your binder sections by subject.
- Keep extra loose-leaf paper in each section for homework and class notes.
- Label your notes with the date and topic discussed.
- At the end of each marking period, remove (but do not destroy) materials that are no longer needed from your three-ring binder. Save the materials for classes that have semester examinations.
**Homework**

Homework is a required part of the instructional program and should be assigned on a regular basis. You can expect to have one or two hours of homework daily. Homework includes not only the assignments your teacher gives you, but you may review past work, practice skills, and read to increase knowledge. It is always good to have the telephone number of a homework buddy in each of your classes so that you can check out questions about assignments.

**Homework tips**

- Some students prefer a quiet place to help them concentrate on their homework, while others find it helpful to work near an adult so they can ask for help when needed.
- Some students find it best to work first on the subject that they like least, while others find it gives them a sense of accomplishment to do their favorite subjects first. The important thing is to find a style that works for YOU and stick with it.
- If, after trying the above suggestions, you still have difficulty getting your homework done, see your teacher and/or counselor for extra help.
- Try to avoid distractions like TV or phone calls while doing your homework.

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**Understanding Your Subjects**

Your class placement is determined in part by your grades in elementary school. Every decision you make helps to determine another aspect of your academic advancement. Making the right decisions about your subjects in middle school will indeed make a difference.

The answers you give to the questions below can help determine the kind of subject choices that will be available to you when you go to high school. The subjects you choose in high school help determine if you meet the qualifications for attending college, getting started on a career, or pursuing other postsecondary options.

How will you answer the following questions?

- Do I need to enroll in a foreign language? Do I already speak another language? Do most colleges require a foreign language? Would a second language be beneficial in the workplace?
- Which levels of English and reading should I take? Have I developed my skills to the point where I can excel in reading, comprehension, vocabulary, and composition? Will I be able to take Honors courses in English? Will the courses I select give me the kind of foundation to take Advanced Placement courses in high school?
- Will I have taken the courses that will enable me to apply to a magnet program or a high school signature program?
- Should I enroll in the arts, instrumental music, or the choral music rotation?
- Which courses will provide the best preparation for careers that interest me?
- Which mathematics courses should I take? Have I developed my skills to the point where I can take Mathematics 7 in Grade 6 or Investigations in Mathematics? If I am in Mathematics 6 in Grade 6, will I be able to take and pass Algebra 1 when I am in Grade 8? (Did you know that Algebra 2 and other advanced mathematics courses are required for admission to many colleges?)

The chart on page 5 presents the mathematics sequence students must take based on mathematics background and skills. The more math knowledge you have, the more advanced the math course you should take.
Pathways to Success in Mathematics

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<tr>
<th>Grade K</th>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
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<th>Grade 4</th>
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<th>Grade 6</th>
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<td>Math 7</td>
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<td>Investigations into Mathematics (IM)</td>
<td>Honors Geometry</td>
<td>Honors Algebra 2</td>
<td>Advanced Placement (AP) Statistics</td>
<td>College-Level Math</td>
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<td>Math 6</td>
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<td>Investigations into Mathematics (IM)</td>
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<td>Honors Algebra 2</td>
<td>Calculus with Applications</td>
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<td>Honors Precalculus</td>
<td>Advanced Placement (AP) Statistics</td>
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Pathways are indicated by the arrows. Dark blue arrows represent standard or non-accelerated progression between courses. Broken red arrows represent the accelerated pathways based on proficiency.

This chart shows some of the many options that students have in the progression of mathematics courses from Kindergarten through Grade 12. Courses are presented in columns by grade level, starting with Kindergarten on the far left side of the chart and moving to Grade 12 on the far right.

Acceleration occurs in Kindergarten through Grade 8. Acceleration does not mean that the student "skips" a course. For example, when the broken red arrow shows a path that takes a student from Math 2 in Grade 2 to Math 4 in Grade 3, this means that the student has mastered the content of both Math 2 and Math 3 in Grade 2 before moving into Math 4 in the next grade. It is important for a student to demonstrate proficiency in the content of a course before he/she is moved to the next level. Students have the option to move from an on-level course to Honors or Advanced Placement courses at any time throughout high school.
Plan your time

No one has more time than you. We all have the same amount of time—24 hours each day. Some people use it better than others. Success in school depends on how well you plan and manage your time. Plan your time so that you can get your work done and still participate in outside activities. Your schedule should be balanced to allow time for your academic and social needs.

Do you feel that you don’t have enough time to do all the things you really want or need to do? Make a copy of the Time-Planning Chart on page 8. Use it to keep a record of how you spend your time for one week. At the end of the week, look at the chart and ask yourself these questions:

■ What are the three main ways I spend my time?
■ Do I like the way I am spending my time?
■ What would I like to change?

Now, use the Weekly List of Priorities to plan next week. You can copy the Time-Planning Chart and plan a schedule for all the things you must do and those things you would like to do. Use the five steps for planning your time listed below to help you outline your schedule.

Some weeks are busier than others. Sometimes it is hard to rank activities, all of which are important. By following the plans in this book, you should be able to complete your major tasks.

Steps for planning your time

Step 1 List everything that you have to do for a whole week.

Step 2 Give every job or activity a time and place. Write this on a time chart.

Step 3 Make changes in your schedule as the week passes, if you need to.

Step 4 Check off each item on the schedule after you have completed it.

Step 5 Reward yourself when you finish a very hard task.

Use the chart on page 8 to help you plan your time. Then, review your lists. Use the weekly chart to plan another week. Do you see improvements? Sometimes everything will not fit into your schedule and some activities may need to be postponed. Choose the things that are most important and do those things first. This is called “setting priorities.”

Review your choices and ask yourself if your choices are wise ones. You may wish to review your list and plans with your parents and/or teachers. With good planning, you will be well prepared when a big project must be done.

The information in this section was taken from a booklet titled Blueprint for Study Strategies. There are many other helpful techniques in this booklet. Ask your counselor for a copy.
# Time-Planning Chart

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**Use this sheet to plan.**

1. Make a list of things you always do every week (eating, sleeping, homework).
2. Make a list of additional activities you must do this week (sports and other scheduled activities).
3. Make a list of optional things you would like to do this week, if you have time.

## Weekly List of Priorities

**Things I always do** every week—

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

**Other things I must do** this week—

### For School

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

### For Home

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 

**Optional** things I would like to do if I have time this week—

1. 
2. 
3. 

---

Time Planning Chart
**Look Beyond Middle School**

**Earn high school credits**

You can earn credit for high school courses taken in middle school. To do this you must pass the course and the final exam at the end of the school year.

**Getting set for post-high-school success**

Every year hundreds of MCPS 12th graders earn scholarships to college or enter the workforce prepared to advance in their jobs because they developed their skills and were committed to the idea of academic excellence from an early age.

Following are some of their best tips:

- They have a vision for their future.
- They were serious about school and learning.
- They had an excellent attendance record.
- They had good study skills and participated in their classes.
- They took challenging classes.
- They were avid readers.
- They developed good decision-making skills.
- They set goals for themselves.
- They participated in extracurricular school and community activities.

- They cared enough about themselves to lead healthy lifestyles.
- They were successful in middle school.

If you follow their best tips, you will be “getting set” to receive a college scholarship or obtain a job, and prepared to meet advancement opportunities.

Talk with your parents/guardians, teachers, and counselor about your skills and “getting set” to succeed in your post-high school endeavors.

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**School pays off in your future**

**Average Annual Earnings by Educational Level, 2007**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>Average Annual Earnings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High school diploma</td>
<td>$24,749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s (2-year degree)</td>
<td>$35,337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s (4-year degrees)</td>
<td>$46,496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced (Master’s, Ph.D., etc.)</td>
<td>$70,272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without a high school diploma</td>
<td>$15,812</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

U.S. Census Bureau, March 2007
Looking Ahead: Special Programming in High School

Overview
All MCPS high schools offer a variety of instructional program models to meet the needs of their students. As a middle school student, it is important to become aware of special program options that may be available to you in high school so that you can make the best choices based on your academic talents, interests, needs, and career goals.

Investigation of these programs early is important so that you can be sure you are selecting courses while in middle school that meet any academic eligibility requirements, such as those for International Baccalaureate programs, Advanced Placement courses, or special internships.

Please visit www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/curriculum/specialprograms/ for detailed information on high school special programs, such as those for International Baccalaureate (IB) programs, Advanced Placement (AP) courses, Career and Technology Education (CTE) career pathway programs, or special internships.

Countywide competitive application programs
MCPS currently offers competitive entrance high school programs in the following areas:
- Science, mathematics, and computer science
- Humanities
- Global ecology
- International Baccalaureate (IB).

These programs are designed for students who have a special talent in or passion for a particular area of study, are highly motivated to succeed academically, and enjoy working cooperatively with their peers in rigorous and challenging course work.

Students participate in an application and selection process during the fall and winter of Grade 8. Interested students complete and submit an application and teacher recommendations, and take specialized testing.

Algebra 1 is required by the end of Grade 8 for all programs.

In addition, to be eligible to apply to the competitive-entrance IB program for Grade 9, students, by the end of Grade 8, must have completed Level I of Spanish, French, or Chinese, or be fluent in one of these languages, and have taken two Honors or advanced-level courses.

For more information about the programs, please visit the website or contact the Division of Consortia Choice and Application Program Services at 301-649-8081.

High school consortia Choice programs
MCPS offers two high school consortia:
- The Northeast Consortium (NEC) and
- The Downcounty Consortium (DCC).

Students who reside in these areas participate in a Choice process designed to help them attend a high school that offers special academies or signature programs. These specialized programs enable students to make meaningful connections between their academics, skills, and interests and prepare them for success in college and future careers.

To participate in the NEC Choice process, students must reside in one of the following high school clusters: Blake, Paint Branch, or Springbrook.

To participate in the DCC Choice process, students must reside in one of the following high school clusters: Montgomery Blair, Einstein, Kennedy, Northwood, or Wheaton.

In addition to the programs offered through the Choice process, the DCC also offers two competitive entrance programs for DCC residents:
- The Communication Arts Program (CAP)
- Science, Mathematics and Computer Science Magnet Program
- The Leadership Training Institute (LTI).

Students must complete and submit an application and take specialized testing.

In the fall of Grade 8, Students receive information about the Choice process at their NEC or DCC middle schools from their counselors. For more information about the programs, please visit the website or contact the Division of Consortia Choice and Application Program Services at 301-649-8081.
Additional countywide selective programs

*The Visual Arts Center (VAC)* at Albert Einstein High School is a selective entrance program designed around portfolio development in the visual arts. Criteria used to evaluate candidates include previous art courses completed, review of a student’s work or portfolio, a personal interview, a teacher recommendation, and the student’s transcript.

*The Thomas Edison High School of Technology (TEHST)* offers half-day professional career and technology education programs. Admission to the programs is by application only. Accepted students attend TEHST for half the school day and attend their co-enrolled comprehensive high school for the remaining half day. For more information, call the counseling office at 301-929-2181.

*Career and Technology Education (CTE)* offers two additional selective entrance programs. Medical Careers at Kennedy, Paint Branch, Sherwood and Watkins Mill high schools. Fire and Rescue Services/Emergency Medical Technician at the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Training Academy. Admission to each of these programs requires an application.

Planning Your Future

**Interest surveys**

It is never too early to start thinking about careers. Most people would agree that a key ingredient in a happy and successful career choice is to have a job where you are involved in performing the types of tasks that you enjoy, in a setting that is most comfortable for you. Some people prefer constant contact with people, while others prefer working alone. For some, the ideal setting is a research laboratory, while for others being on the road and meeting new people on a regular basis is their idea of the perfect setting. There are hundreds of careers from which to choose, and they involve many different tasks, settings, and lifestyles. Why not find the career that best fits you?

To help you make informed, successful decisions, a variety of interest surveys are available for your use. In middle school, your counselor will administer interest inventories that bring about more awareness of your academic interests, communication preferences, lifestyle, and other personality aspects. The results from the interest surveys can help to direct you to career clusters and specific jobs that are related to individual interests.

In middle school you will learn about many different jobs and careers, and you will probably be involved in one or more of the following activities:

- Career and job fairs.
- School/business partnership activities.
- Job shadow day.
- Guest speakers in all subject areas.
- Field trips to Thomas Edison High School of Technology, signature programs, Montgomery College.

Many of your teachers and your counselor will provide additional resources for you to learn about new and interesting careers through any of the following:

- Newsprint and magazine supplements about careers.
- Media/video presentations with a career focus.
- Information on colleges, apprenticeship programs, and other postsecondary options.
- Internet searches and Web pages.
School clubs and activities

Becoming a member of a school club and/or team is a smart move. Joining a club not only gives you the opportunity to do something you enjoy, it enables you to meet others who have the same interest as you, and it can be an opportunity to discover new interests. In addition, your participation makes school a more pleasant and exciting place.

The following are some of the clubs/activities you may join:

- Art Club
- Band
- Choral Group
- Computer Club
- Destination Imagination
- Drama Club
- Intramural Sports
- Math Club
- Newspaper
- Peer Mediation
- Science Fair
- Student Government

List additional clubs in your middle school on the lines below.

Now, place a check mark by each club/activity you are interested in joining. Talk with your counselor, the club sponsor, and your parents/guardians about your interests. Joining a club is easy. Attend the meetings and participate. Your ideas and talents make a difference.

Getting Involved

Student service learning

Student service learning (SSL) is an unpaid, state-required activity that provides service to an individual or group to address a school or community need. Students need to earn 75 hours of SSL to graduate from high school. Thirty of those 75 hours are earned in service-learning experiences infused in the middle school curriculum. That means you will earn hours in your sixth grade science class, seventh grade English class, and eighth grade world studies class.

Students in middle school may earn other SSL hours required for graduation by participating in school-sponsored activities or projects. To find out about these activities and projects, speak with the SSL contact person in your school or your counselor. It is important to obtain the required forms and return them to your school’s SSL representative. You will be surprised at the pleasure you derive from helping others.

Planning ahead

The following are other suggested activities and resources to use in middle school and continue throughout your high school years. Participating in these activities and using the resources will give you a head start on life.

- Participate in school extracurricular activities.
- Consider activities planned by the Montgomery County Department of Recreation, local libraries, and the faith community.
- Attend career presentations sponsored by your school, MCPS, and the business community.

The Seven Keys to College Readiness

The Seven Keys will open the door to college for students. The Seven Keys are a pathway identified by Montgomery County Public Schools that will increase the likelihood of students being ready for college and earning a degree. These Seven Keys are significantly more demanding than the state requirements of earning a high school diploma. This is intentional. Students who only meet state high school graduation requirements may not be prepared to take and do well in college-level classes. They may be required to take and pay for remedial courses at their college before starting college-level work. Students who attain the Seven Keys are less likely to need remedial classes and are more likely to be ready for college and the workplace, where competition for jobs is high.

There will be situations where a student may not attain one Key or several Keys for any number of
reasons. Some students will attain the Keys with the special services and accommodations they receive through their educational plans. Our children are unique, and how quickly or how much they progress will vary. Attaining all Seven Keys does increase the likelihood of a student being ready for college, but missing a Key does not close the doors to college for any student. It is important to look at all of a student’s strengths, as well as the student’s motivation to succeed.

A Miniguide for Parents

Preparing for success in school and life begins early and continues throughout a lifetime. Parents and schools have a stake in the outcome of education for all children. All adults must believe that every child has a place in higher education, and every child must come to believe that the opportunities have been provided for him/her to do so.

College admissions testing programs—SAT, ACT, and ACCUPLACER—assume that a student is able to read with comprehension, write effectively, and demonstrate a strong background in mathematics. For these reasons, the verbal sections of these tests measure knowledge and skills that students have developed over the years as a result of in-school and out-of-school experiences. To answer analogy and sentence-completion questions, students need to be able to think about logical relationships among words and have command of an extensive vocabulary. To answer critical reading questions, students need to be able to read and analyze complex writings. In mathematics, students need to know arithmetic, algebra, and geometry. The more rigorous the courses a student takes in school, the higher the possibility of scoring well on the tests.

What can parents do to improve their child’s performance on any assessment test? The following are tips for parents of middle school students:

- Participate in your child’s education; ask questions and meet regularly with teachers and the counselor.
- Talk to your child about his/her postsecondary education; set high expectations for your child by encouraging postsecondary education or college.
- See that your child is enrolled in the appropriate courses—more rigorous courses will provide excellent preparation for educational development and improve SAT, ACT, and ACCUPLACER scores.
- Insist that homework assignments be completed on time; if no specific homework has been assigned, reviewing materials already covered will help students master the subject matter.
- Expect and support good school discipline.
- See to it that your child has good study skills.
- Help your child set short- and long-term goals.
- Know which courses your child must take now and in high school to gain college admittance or achieve career goals.
- Read and discuss books and articles; have your child read to you.
- Express high and realistic expectations for achievement to your child.
- Show pride in your child’s academic growth and accomplishments.
- Listen to and talk with your child, paying attention to his/her questions and feelings.
- Reinforce the learning that takes place in school.
- Participate in preparing the four-year high school plan required of all eighth graders and attend the articulation programs sponsored by all middle and high schools.
- Monitor your child’s progress through the online Edline option which provides up-to-date grades and assignment information.

Statistics show that 9 out of 10 MCPS graduates go on to postsecondary institutions. The following tips will be useful for parents as they prepare their children to begin high school:

- Have your child take the Preliminary SAT/ National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) given by all high schools.
Repeat and/or take the PSAT/NMSQT in Grade 10.

Take the PSAT/NMSQT in Grade 11 in order to qualify for scholarship programs offered to high-scoring students.

Take the SAT, ACT, and ACCUPLACER when you are best prepared to do so. This may be in the spring of the 11th grade or in the fall in Grade 12. You also may need to take the Subject Tests for some colleges.

Have your child enroll in rigorous classes, if appropriate (i.e., Honors and Advanced Placement courses), and always work diligently.

Don’t hesitate to encourage your child to ask for help from teachers and counselors when selecting courses.

Know the requirements for a high school diploma and the requirements of the colleges; some colleges require more than what is required for a high school diploma.

Plan to have your child complete Algebra 1 no later than Grade 9 and Geometry by Grade 10.

Remember that the best preparation for successful performance on the SAT, ACT, and ACCUPLACER is the continual application of serious study, both in and out of school.

The Suggested College Preparatory Courses chart below will be helpful in completing the four-year plan for your child, as well as serving as a college preparatory curriculum guide. The MCPS High School Course Bulletin provides a listing and description of all courses taught in MCPS. It is published annually.

Increasingly, colleges are requiring four credits in college preparatory mathematics, as well as higher-level and Honors classes in English, science, and social studies. Some colleges and universities may have more stringent or different requirements. Catalogs that provide specific requirements are available in the career center in each high school. The college and career information coordinator is a good resource for college and postsecondary education information.

Science classes that are not laboratory sciences may not count for college admission.

Colleges and universities generally prefer that the two foreign language credits are in the same language. It is recommended that a student have more than two credits in the same foreign language.

The following Maryland Diploma Requirements table will serve as a handy guide for reviewing subjects you must take to receive a high school diploma. To find out more about the course requirements, ask your counselor for a copy of the MCPS High School Course Bulletin. The bulletin provides a description of each subject and is updated each year.
# Maryland Diploma Requirements

## Graduating Classes of 2009 and Later

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Area</th>
<th>Specific Credit Requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>English</strong></td>
<td>4 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fine Arts</strong></td>
<td>1 credit (Selected courses in art, dance, drama/theater, and music that satisfy the fine arts requirement are marked FA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health Education</strong></td>
<td>0.5 credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mathematics</strong></td>
<td>4 credits** (1 credit algebra, 1 credit geometry.) Students who successfully complete a calculus course may be exempted from this 4 credit requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Education</strong></td>
<td>1 credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Science</strong></td>
<td>3 credits (1 biology credit and 1 physical science credit must be included)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Studies</strong></td>
<td>3 credits (1 U.S. History credit; 1 World History credit; and 1 National, State, and Local Government credit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Technology Education</strong></td>
<td>1 credit (Courses in career and technology education that satisfy the technology education requirement are marked in the High School Course Bulletin.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Courses</strong></td>
<td>2 credits in a foreign language, or 2 credits in advanced technology education  and 2.5 credits in electives OR 4 credits in a state-approved career and technology program and 0.5 credit in general electives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Assessments

| High School Assessments | Students must meet the Maryland High School Assessment (HSA) graduation requirement for English, algebra/data analysis, biology, and government by achieving one of the following: 1. Pass all four HSA tests. 2. Earn a combined score of 1602 or higher. 3. Complete required Bridge Plan project(s). The number of projects a student must complete is based on his or her highest HSA test score. |

[www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/curriculum/coursebulletin/diplomaRequirements.cfm](http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/curriculum/coursebulletin/diplomaRequirements.cfm)
Suggestions for improving report card grades

Every nine weeks during the school year, parents and students eagerly await the arrival of the report card. This report is intended to serve as a means of assessing academic performance. It also reflects the time and effort spent at home preparing for success in school. The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) newsletter will list specific dates on which report cards are distributed to students for them to take home. This information comes from MCPS and the school. Parents may also receive interim reports if the performance of their child falls below a “C” average. The interim report is distributed in time to allow students to improve their performance before the nine-weeks grade is posted.

Parents and students are encouraged to use the suggestions listed below to improve each student’s opportunity for achievement in school. Following these suggestions will help your child bring home a report card that reflects progress and accomplishment.

When the report card arrives

■ Set aside a specific time to discuss the report card with your child. Show that you understand the school’s learning objectives.
■ Give praise and positive feedback for good efforts and for good school attendance.
■ Follow through with teachers and a counselor if there is concern about academic progress.

During the school year

■ Keep up with the child’s assignments and encourage good study habits.
■ Let your child know your expectations for school work, class participation, behavior, and school attendance.
■ If necessary, find out about tutorial help available at the school and in the community.
■ Remember that reading, writing, and arithmetic skills are mastered through practice.
■ Remember that homework is always a regular part of improving academic skills, and there is always homework.
■ Don’t wait for report card time if you are concerned about academic progress. Make an appointment to talk with your child’s teachers or counselor.
■ Monitor your child’s grades using the Edline system.

Throughout the year

■ Help your child set both short- and long-term goals.
■ Make reading a regular part of your child’s life. Visit the library regularly.
■ Encourage your child to participate in extracurricular school and community activities and volunteer experiences.
■ Let your child know that you value her/him as a person.

Other booklets in the series of Guidance Unit publications are available in high schools

■ Getting Started: Career/College Planning Guide for Ninth and Tenth Grade Students
■ Getting Ready: Career/College Planning Guide for Eleventh and Twelfth Grade Students