

FAQS FOR PHS MAGNET

Updated 2.27.09

For ease in navigation to a particular question you may have, the following frequently asked questions are arranged in several different categories:

- **Program Questions**
- **Transportation Questions**
- **Applications Questions**
- **Screening & Selection**
- **Testing Day Questions**
- **Extended Day & Study Time Questions**
- **Extra-Curricular Activities Questions**
- **General School Questions**

PROGRAM QUESTIONS

1. How many students are admitted?

There are three programs at PHS, the Global Ecology House (GEH), the Humanities House (HH) and the Science, Math, Computer Science House (SMCSH). Fifty out-of-the-area students are accepted into each of the three programs for a total of 150 out-of-the-area students. Local John Poole Middle School (JPMS) students do not count against the 150. JPMS students are admitted based on the decision of the selection committee which is made up of about 20 local and central office staff.

2. What is the ratio of boys to girls in each of the programs?

In the Global Ecology House the ratio is just about 50-50 boys to girls. In the Humanities House there are more girls than boys. In the Science, Math, Computer Science House there are more boys than girls.

3. How do we identify on the application form which school we want to apply to?

*On page one of the application you are to check off whether you are applying to Montgomery Blair High School, Richard Montgomery High School and/or Poolesville High School. If you are applying to more than one high school the criteria for application is listed on page one of the application booklet under the heading Overview. **Each high school needs its own application.** If you are applying to more than one program at Poolesville High School **only one application is needed** but an essay for each program (i.e. Global Ecology House; Humanities House; Science, Math, Computer Science House) is required. The essay pages are located in Section IV of the application.*

4. How do students interact with the entire student body?

Each instructional house (i.e. Global Ecology House; Humanities House; Science, Math, Computer Science House) has core courses that are required and sometimes linked. These courses are kept pure by the application/selection process. Students will interact with the entire student body in Foreign Language

courses, physical education courses and many other courses. For example, students from the Science, Math, Computer Science House will be in an Honors English class with Global Ecology students as well as Independent Studies Program (ISP) students.

5. How do the magnet kids interact with non-magnet students?

Poolesville High School is the first Whole School Magnet in Montgomery County Public Schools. As a result, all students are considered magnet students. The Whole School magnet model engages and challenges students selected through an application/screening process, as well as local school students interested in the magnet focus areas. Local students who did not go through the application/screening process benefit from an Independent Studies Program (ISP) during their 9th and 10th grade years. When choosing courses for their junior year, students select a house focus from: Biological and Physical Science, Cultural and Political Studies, Music/Arts/Media Studies, Technology and Math Studies and Original Studies. These students may also earn an ISP Certificate of Achievement based on the courses that they select as juniors and seniors. Please see the Poolesville High School magnet website for further details. <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/poolesvillehs/departments/magnet/magnet.html>

6. If you are a Poolesville resident and don't get invited into the magnet program can you still take the magnet courses?

Poolesville residents benefit from an Independent Studies Program (ISP) during their 9th and 10th grade years. When choosing courses for their junior year, students select a house focus from: Biological and Physical Science, Cultural and Political Studies, Music/Arts/Media Studies, Technology and Math Studies and Original Studies. These students may also earn an ISP Certificate of Achievement based on the courses that they select as juniors and seniors. Please see the Poolesville High School magnet website for further details. In the junior and senior years there are many courses that are open to all students. <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/poolesvillehs/departments/magnet/magnet.html>

7. My child loves science and wants to apply to the Science, Math, Computer Science House. They do not like programming. Will they be successful?

So much of the correct answer to this question depends on the child and their past programming experience. If the experience was bad it may have been the teacher or the expectations for the child. A child who does not like programming at all needs to really consider perhaps entering the Global Ecology House which is a highly rigorous program as well. The first computer class in the Science, Math, Computer Science House is not really a programming class. It is entitled Fundamentals of Computer Science and teaches independent computer science units using computers as tools for science and engineering fields. The second class is entitled Algorithms and Data Structures and does deal with computer programming.

8. What happens if the courses are just too hard for my child?

Students who do not find success at PHS for whatever reason may always return to their home high school at any point during the four years.

9. What types of expenses are there related to the field trips and projects?

Cost should never be a consideration in determining whether or not to be part of the magnet programs at PHS. While there are fees associated with activities, funds are available for students who cannot afford to pay.

10. How many students applied to each house last year?

Almost 650 applications were received last year. For the SMCSH there were about 400 applications, for the GEH about 400 applications and for HH a little under 350 applications. Realize that these numbers do not add up to 650 because students may apply to more than one house.

11. Why did you not take questions from the floor on Information Night?

The sheer number of people in the audience made it impossible to ask and answer questions. Many times people ask questions that are so specific to their situation that it is a waste of time for others. It is truly out of respect for my staff, parents and the students in the audience that we do not entertain questions during the presentations on Information Night. The questions are collected and then answered on the web.

12. Are there people currently in the program who did not have straight A's?

Yes. Please review question 2 in the Selection Process section for further information about the criteria for selection in the Screening and Selection Process.

13. If a student selects as specific house in ninth grade are they able to switch later?

No. Students are not allowed to switch houses during their four year stay at PHS.

14. If your child does not start in the program in 9th grade can he or she transfer in a higher grade?

No.

15. What information will be given out on at the application workshop?

The application workshop at Gaithersburg High School is really for families who do not have easy command of the English language. Interpreters will be present in the following languages: Spanish, French, Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese

16. Do students in the three magnet programs participate in sports?

Many students participate in sports as well as other extra-curriculars such as clubs, band, and drama.

17. Apparent contradiction between Montgomery County Website and the information presented on October 25. The website states you apply to only one program. Information night says all three programs.

The correct information is that students may apply to all three programs at PHS: Global Ecology House; Humanities House; Science, Math Computer Science House. A note to the person who wrote this question: Please email or call me to tell me exactly where you read this information. I looked at our local website and the MCPS website to try to find this statement. I could not find it. Please call or email the web address so that this can be fixed. Thanks. Billie_J_Bradshaw@mcpsmd.org or 301-972-7976.

18. How many students came from the middle school magnet program, Roberto Clemente?

28% - Roberto Clemente

25% - John Poole Middle School

47% - 19 other middle schools

19. What is the difference between PHS and the IB program at Richard Montgomery?

The interdisciplinary method of teaching is the main difference between PHS and RM. PHS integrates/blends subjects to be able to get real world application to the subjects that are taught. Richard Montgomery will be able to issue an IB Diploma that is recognized around the world. The prescribed path of courses offers little flexibility. The PHS students will receive a Maryland diploma with a Certificate of Achievement from their chosen path of study. PHS students have more opportunities for course selection based on their interest.

20. How much time is spent on homework each night?

The average time spent on homework each night is about 3 hours. Students who procrastinate may be looking at 6 hours on some nights. This question is always hard to answer because students work at different rates.

21. What advantage are these programs over just an aggressive load of AP class when it comes to applying to college?

The difference would be the magnet designation which implies a higher level of scrutiny than just an AP class.

22. Are there any other schools in upper Montgomery County being considered for this type of program?

PHS is the only magnet high school for upper Montgomery County just as Montgomery Blair is the only magnet high school for lower Montgomery County. Students from all of Montgomery County may apply to Richard Montgomery's IB program.

23. Are Science, Math, Computer Science students getting any college credits?

As juniors and seniors the SMCSH students have many choices of courses available to them. Some will offer AP credit. The SMCSH elective classes are considered beyond AP in scope and sequence.

24. Are the field trips during the school week or does it involve weekends too?

On rare occasion a field trip may be part of a weekend. For example we just took 7 SMCS students to Fairfax, VA for the National Consortium of Secondary Specialized Schools for Science, Math and Technology (NCSSSMST) student conference.

25. What are the differences between the Poolesville Media Component of Humanities and the Media class at Roberto Clemente's Magnet Program?

It is important to first realize that the teachers from PHS are in close contact with the teachers from RCMS. Likewise Sarah Menke-Fish, Professor at American University, is helping with the course design. The structure of this class is a continuation of what the students have studied in middle school. The content will also be accessible to students who did not come from RCMS. There might be some overlap, but it is important to recognize that there is greater depth of analysis compared to what can be accomplished in middle school. It is important to recognize that the cognitive aptitude that a 6th grader brings to a discussion of media is very different than that of a 10th grader. A few of the objectives from units are:

Students will be able to:

- *Analyze the use and meaning of symbols and images in visual media*
- *Analyze the basic elements of advertising in visual media (e.g. sales approaches and techniques aimed at children)*
- *Evaluate the ways in which the deregulation of media ownership shape the media landscape and the content of media products*
- *Evaluate how media concentration affects consumer control and consumer choice*
- *Evaluate the role of the media as the "fourth estate" in a democracy*
- *Analyze the relationship between advertising, media concentration and journalistic freedom*
- *Analyze the role of media in addressing social and cultural issues and/or creating or promoting values such as the UN, military action, election of political candidates, use of media to achieve governmental, societal and cultural goals*
- *Define and identify strategies to analyze stereotypes in visual media*
- *Evaluate the use of stereotype and biases in visual media*
- *Assess bias in the media in race, class, and gender*
- *Examine the role of media and violence*
- *Analyze the role of media in the creation of a celebrity*
- *Research on the reliability of the media*
- *Analyze media in business and entertainment (e.g. who controls media and who does media control?)*

26. Currently how many students are in each house for the ninth grade?

In the Global Ecology House there are currently around 83, which translate into three classes. In Humanities House there are around 56 students or two classes of students. In Science, Math, Computer Science there are 54 students therefore two classes of students.

27. Do kids in Global Ecology get to take electives from the other houses?

There are many classes that are open to all students at PHS in the junior and senior year.

28. If my child gets into the Humanities Program, but wants to be a medical doctor will he be adequately prepared?

There will be many opportunities for Humanities students to take rigorous science classes. It is also important to recognize that your child has his entire undergraduate college career to prepare for whatever endeavor they wish to pursue.

29. How many students are in the programs have a 504 or an IEP?

Currently there are 3-5 students in each house for the ninth grade who have special accommodations.

30. What is the Independent Studies Program (ISP) program?

Students whose home high school is PHS who have not “tested-in” to the Global House, Humanities House or Science, Math, Computer Science House are in the Independent Studies Program. These students may choose a focused plan of study in their junior and senior year. They may also earn a certificate of recognition in Biological and Physical Sciences, Cultural and Political Studies, Music/Arts/Media Studies or Original Studies. ISP students will be recognized at graduation with a notation in the graduation program and receive a special tassel recognizing their hard work. You may visit the following website for more information.

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/poolesvillehs/departments/magnet/magnet.html>

31. Can you apply to two programs? Do you have to decide at the time of testing?

Students may apply to any and all of the programs at PHS. The selection committee will invite students, put students in a waiting pool or say no. When parents and students receive the notification letter it will list the programs that the students are invited to. There is a return form that must be mailed to the school with a parent signature indicating which of the programs the child has chosen. The family decides which program is chosen if more than one invitation is extended by the selection committee.

On the day of the test students are asked to rank their order of preference of programs but this information is not used in making a decision about whether or not a child is invited to a program.

32. What is the difference between the Communication and Arts Program at Montgomery Blair and the Humanities House at Poolesville?

Selection is one of the main differences in the programs. The selection process for the Humanities House at PHS is very rigorous using the same selection criteria as for the IB program at Richard Montgomery. The Humanities House does not have drama as a main component of the course selection. Drama and theatre may be taken as an elective, but these courses are not required.

33. My son is GTLD – gifted, talented, learning disabled and has an IEP. Should I discourage him from applying to the Global Ecology House?

We currently have students with IEPs in the Global House who have had great success. Because of the number of field trips it is important to recognize that the students must make up all work from classes that are missed because of a trip. I would not discourage a child who is GTLD from applying, but I would make it clear that while the program is a field based program it is a program for highly-able students. The program is not a work/study program.

34. What are the foreign language needs for students coming from the middle schools?

Most of our students in every house come to PHS with at least one year of foreign language taken in middle school. If your child has not completed the first year of foreign language it does not exempt them from being chosen.

35. What dissections (if any) will be done by the students?

Montgomery County Public Schools does not make any dissections mandatory in a classroom. Alternative assignments are given for students who morally have an objection.

TRANSPORTATION QUESTIONS

1. How do students get to school?

MCPS provides transportation for students in and out of the Poolesville area. Out-of-the-area students meet at central locations referred to as localized hubs. Please see the website below for the current bus routes and times. Routes are subject to change for the following school year. Most buses arrive to PHS between 7:00 AM and 7:10 AM. Please visit the website below to see our current bus routes.

<http://montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/poolesvillehs/busroutes/busroutes.html>

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. My daughter is applying to the IB and the Humanities House programs. Just one set of teacher recommendations will do?

Yes. The teacher will print out multiple copies depending on the number of programs that the child is applying to.

2. How many teacher recommendations are required?

Four teacher recommendations are required: English, Math, Science, Social Studies.

SCREENING AND SELECTION

1. Is preference given to applicants that would attend PHS anyway, or to applicants from outside the PHS area?

Preference is not given to one group over another during screening and selection. Students whose home high school is PHS, do not preclude out-of-the-area students from being invited into the programs, nor do out-of-the-area students preclude students whose home high school is PHS from being invited.

2. What selection criteria are used?

The selection committee is made of 20 staff members. Ten of the members come from Central Office and 10 are from PHS. Every folder is read twice. If the student is applying to all three programs the folder is ready six times. The contents of the folder are used as the criteria for selection. The folder contains: the application with an essay for each house that is written at home, 7th and 8th grade (first nine weeks) report cards, 4 confidential teacher recommendations – English, math, social studies, science, scores from the Pearson math and verbal test given on the testing day, and a writing sample that was created on the testing day.

3. For students who took SATs through the Johns Hopkins program, will their scores be considered?

Parents may send in SAT scores but they are not required. The scores will be considered but would never be a determining factor because most 8th graders do not have SAT scores.

4. If a student is in the waiting pool, will they be notified at the beginning of March as well?

Yes, all students who tested will be notified of three possible decisions: no, waiting pool and yes. The waiting pool is open the entire summer.

5. What if you live in Poolesville and don't make it into the programs?

If you live in the Poolesville area and do not make it into the programs you will be eligible for the Independent Studies Program (ISP), which is part of the Whole School Magnet at Poolesville High School. In addition there is Project Lead the Way which is an advanced engineering program. Many students who have graduated from PHS who were not in Global Ecology have gone on to be doctors, dentists, research scientists and attorneys.

TESTING DAY QUESTIONS

1. Do all three high schools, Montgomery Blair, Poolesville High School and Richard Montgomery all use the same test?

Yes, the same test is used at all three sights.

EXTENDED DAY & STUDY TIME

1. Why does PHS need an extended day?

*In order to provide the full program for students in Science, Math, Computer Science House (SMCSH) an extra course is sometimes needed to meet certificate and state requirements. **SMCSH students have an 8 period day for all four years at PHS.** The extended day will allow PHS to offer the additional courses for the certificate and electives. Currently Montgomery Blair High School operates on an extended day schedule for their Science, Math, Computer Science program.. (The Global Ecology House and the Humanities House run on a seven period schedule.)*

2. What is the extended day? study time?

- *The standard instructional day remains the same – 7:25 AM – 2:10 PM*
- *Local and out-of-the-area buses depart at 2:15 PM*
- *An extended instruction period is added from 2:20 – 3:05 PM*
- *Students who may provide their own transportation may leave the school at 3:10 PM*
- *Students who participate in extra-curriculars join their groups at 3:05 PM*
- *A Study Time occurs between 3:15 – 4:10 PM*
- *Local and out-of-the-area buses depart at 4:15 PM*

3. Who is affected?

- *Extended day bus service will be provided for Grade 9-12 students.*
- *Students in the Science, Math, Computer Science House participate in 8 periods day for all four years in order to fulfill the certificate requirements*
- *Global Ecology House students and Humanities House students are not required to stay for the extended day*

4. What classes are being offered during the extended day instructional period?

For the 2008-9 school year seven classes were offered during the extended period: Advanced Science 1 & 2, Honors US History, AP NSL, 10th Honors English, AP World History, Research Design/Research Project A, Software Applications.

5. What happens during the study time period?

The study time period allows students to have time to do homework and extended computer time. Students who are involved in extra-curricular activities do not attend study time on days when those activities meet. Students who can provide their own transportation home do not have to attend study time.

6. How will extended day affect sports and after school activities?

Coaches and club sponsors will adjust schedules to accept students arriving at 3:15 PM on an individual basis.

7. Will the Global Program change to an extended day before 2012?

I currently do not see any trend in this fashion. Central office staff for Montgomery County Public Schools will make those types of decisions. It is not a school based decision.

8. How does transportation work for extended day?

Every day there are two bus runs. One is at 2:15 PM and one is at 4:15 PM. Please review the answer to question 2 above for additional information.

EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

1. Are students allowed to participate in sports or extra-curricular activities if they are part of an extended day program?

Coaches and club sponsors will adjust schedules to accept students arriving at 3:15 PM on an individual basis.

GENERAL SCHOOL QUESTIONS

1. What sports and music are available at PHS?

PHS offers all sports that are available to secondary school in Montgomery County Public Schools. For the 2007-8 school year the following music courses were offered: guitar, chorus 1, concert band, jazz band.

2. What levels of foreign language are offered?

Spanish 1 and 2 are offered as well as Honors Spanish 3 and 4 and AP Spanish Language. Pending student participation AP Spanish Literature may be offered next year.

French 2 is offered as well as Honors French 3,4, and 5.

3. When will the building construction be completed?

PHS is slated for a 7.8 million dollar science wing edition to be completed the fall of 2009.

4. When will the learning cottages be eliminated?

I don't foresee a time when the learning cottages will be eliminated until an entire new school is built which is slated for 2020.

5. What classes are taught in the learning cottages?

For the 2008-9 school year the following subjects are taught in the learning cottages: Foreign Language, Social Studies, English, Science, Math.

6. Are there plays put on at Poolesville?

Yes, in the fall there is a drama play and in the spring a musical. The productions involve over 100 students for each performance with dual casts to involve even more students.

7. Do any of the Poolesville science classes teach about genetics?

Genetics is taught in biology classes routinely. A special class called Genetics for juniors and seniors will be offered next year especially for students in the Science, Math, Computer Science House.

8. How much time is there between classes?

There are five minutes of passing time between classes at PHS.

9. What schools have PHS students gotten into in the past?

We have had students from PHS at the following schools: University of Maryland, UMBC, UCLA, Harvard, Cooper Union, The University of Pennsylvania, West Point, Coast Guard Academy, Naval Academy, MIT, Duke, Frostburg, Salisbury, West Virginia University, Clemson, Elon, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Towson, Oberlin College, Emerson College, University of Delaware, Marshall University, Case Western Reserve University, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Boston University, Juniata College, Bucknell University, Lehigh University, North Carolina State University, James Madison University, Georgia Institute of Technology, Mount Saint Mary's University, College of William and Mary, Colorado State University, Pittsburg State University, University of Miami, The Ohio State University, McDaniel College, Utah State University, High Point University, Catholic University, Drexel University, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, University of Minnesota, Wake Forest University, Vanderbilt University, Rochester University of Technology the list goes on and on.

10. What kind of clubs do you have?

The following clubs are available for the 2008-9 school year: Art Club, Debate, It's Academic, Crafts, SADD, Fellowship of Christian Athletes,, Green Schools (energy savings), Leo's, Asian American, Independent Film, Matheletes, Mock Trial, Roots and Shoots, Gay-Straight Alliance, Equestrian, Midnight Players, Animal Rights, Expanding the Boundaries, Drumline, Improv, Chemistry, Poolesville Student Scholars of Color, Asian American Club, African American Club, Hispanic American Club

11. What kind of Art Programs do you have?

Currently the following art classes are offered at PHS: AP Studio Art, Studio Art 1 & 2, Ceramics & Sculpture 1 & 2, Drawing and Design, Photography