

## Foreign Language Opportunities at Walt Whitman High School

Whitman offers a continuation of the languages offered at Pyle, as well as many other languages. Whitman currently offers programs of study in Arabic, Chinese, French, Italian, Japanese, Russian, and Spanish.

With so many options available at Whitman, some students choose to change their language as 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> graders. With careful planning it is possible to take more than one language at Whitman. Some colleges prefer students have four years of foreign language study in high school, even if studies were begun in middle school. Four years of study in the same language of study is encouraged, but some students may decide to switch and/or add languages during high school in order to find the language(s) that suit their interests.

While colleges are certainly impressed by students who continue with a language through AP, they also look favorably upon students who study the **“critical languages.”** Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Russian were recognized as **“critical languages”** after 9/11 by U.S. federal departments and agencies that recognized the strategic importance of these languages and began funding special programs to promote them. Some important tips when making a decision to study a Critical Language are:

- Colleges look favorably upon a course of study involving a Critical Language. Special programs, such as the National Security Language Initiative, provide significant support and resources to expand the number of Americans mastering Critical Languages.
- Students wishing to study a Critical Language are encouraged to begin in 8th or 9th grade; however, study can begin in any year. Pyle 8th-graders can come to Whitman for Level 1 classes during Whitman’s first period and be transported back to Pyle after class.
- Sequencing of these courses depends upon the student and his or her interests. Students with strong language skills and interest may be able to skip levels during their study of the language with consent of the Foreign Language Department.
- Most of these programs offer unique opportunities for travel and special scholarships. One such program is the National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y) that provides merit-based scholarships for eligible American high school students to learn a critical language in the summer, for a semester, and for an academic year international immersion program. No previous knowledge of the language is necessary for interested students. Intermediate and Advanced Level students are also eligible. More information can be found at [www.NSLIforYouth.org](http://www.NSLIforYouth.org).

A summary of all of the languages and levels that are offered in MCPS can be found in the MCPS Comprehensive Course Offerings booklet. The following is a brief description of the languages that are currently offered at Whitman, including Chinese, but excluding Spanish and French.

## **“Critical Languages”**

### ***Arabic***

*Whitman currently offers Arabic 1, 2, 3H(Honors), and 4H*

The interest in Arabic language in the U.S. has grown recently, specifically for political science and business professionals. Established in 2008 with emphasis on reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills, the Whitman program aims to expose students to the richness and diversity of the Arabic culture, values, and traditions. Please contact instructor Hala Habash (Hala\_Y\_Habash@mcpsmd.org) for more information.

### ***Chinese***

*Whitman offers Chinese 1, 2, 3H (Honors), 4H, and AP Chinese Language.*

The importance of learning Chinese is growing, not only because the size of the Chinese community in the U.S. is increasing, but also because the links between the U.S. and China have expanded in many fields. In China, 22 million high school students study English; in contrast only 66,000 U.S. high school students study Chinese. Established in 2006, the Whitman Chinese program often engages in videoconferencing with high school students in Beijing. American leadership recognizes the need to increase interest in this language among high school students. Please contact instructor Yi Song (Yi\_Song@mcpsmd.org) for more information.

### ***Japanese***

*Whitman offers Japanese 1, 2, 3H(Honors), 4H, 5(Advanced), and AP Japanese Language.*

In the U.S., Japanese Language study offers the highest number of scholarship opportunities. If a student is interested in engineering, science, biology, or technology, adding Japanese is a perfect complement to the math/science coursework. Approximately 15,000 U.S. high school students study Japanese. Established in the 1970s, Whitman’s Japanese classes emphasize use of high-end technology, effective communication, and cultural sensitivity. The program also offers a five-week summer exchange program. Please contact instructor Yukiyo Moorman (Yukiyo\_Moorman@mcpsmd.org) for more information.

### ***Russian***

*Whitman offers Russian 1, 2, 3 (Honors), 4H, 5(Advanced), and AP Russian Language and Culture.*

Russian language skills help students learn other Slavic languages and connect with other nations where Russian is used for professional purposes. Approximately 11,200 U.S. high school students study Russian. Established in 2002, Whitman’s Russian Program offers students opportunities to earn national recognition through writing and speaking competitions. Travel to Russia occurs approximately every two years. Please contact instructor Michelle Quackenbush (Michelle\_M\_Quackenbush@mcpsmd.org) for more information.

## **Other Language Opportunities:**

### ***Italian***

*Whitman offers Italian 1, 2, 3H (Honors), 4H and 5(Advanced)*

Italian is a language that many students enjoy studying for a variety of reasons. There is a large Italian American community in the metropolitan area and quite a few students choose to study Italian as a link to their heritage. Also, students are familiar with the varied elements of Italian culture such as fashion, food, art, design, etc. and wish to expand their knowledge of these areas. In addition to the cultural elements mentioned above, there is a significant interest in learning Italian for students of opera and art history. Many students continue their studies in college and graduate school and spend at least a semester in Italy through many programs offered in universities across the country.