

FAQS FOR PHS MAGNET

Updated 10/10/19

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PROGRAM QUESTIONS

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

Ninety students are in each Global Ecology House grade level; sixty students are in each grade of Humanities and SMCS.

2. Do you accept students with 504 plans or IEPs?

Yes, and each house currently includes multiple students with accommodations. However, we do not offer supported sections of magnet classes (a Humanities student could not take supported English, for example). Some of our accepted students have a Resource period, though very few do after ninth grade.

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

Yes, though strong grades characterize most applications.

4. If a student selects a 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, except local students who leave a test-in program to become ISP students.

5. If a student does not start in the program in 9th grade can he or she transfer in a later grade?

No.

6. 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. Students will interact with the entire student body in world 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 and Independent Studies Program (ISP) students. In addition to taking many courses with students

from multiple houses, our students are involved in athletics, clubs, and teams comprised of students from across the school.

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

All Poolesville High School students not invited into Global, Humanities, or SMCS houses are in the ISP house and are ISP students. ISP students may take many of the magnet program courses, particularly in their junior and senior years. In ninth grade, the magnet course electives are reserved for the specific house students.

8. Can strong math students continue a rigorous math course even if they are not in SMCS?

Yes. There is no one SMCS math pathway, as students enter the program taking Magnet Geometry, Pre-Calculus AB, or Functions. Students in the other programs are also taking those courses, which are available to all students. Math teachers at PHS assess all freshmen during the first weeks of the school year to ensure that students are placed where they are challenged and poised for success.

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

Freshman year can be overwhelming, both socially and academically, and particularly for students who are facing real challenge for the first time in their school careers. Our first step would be to collaborate with the family and the resources at school – counseling services, tutoring, a support plan- to help the student. 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.

10. What types of expenses related to the field trips and projects should I expect?

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 some activities, if a family cannot afford the cost, confidential help is provided. The annual cost of field trips varies by house, grade, and in some cases, which trips a student selects.

For example, Global families are assessed an annual fee of \$80.00 to cover the costs of a minimum of 8-10 field trips per year. The funds are used to pay for the substitute coverage that is needed when a teacher leaves the building. There could be additional optional trips offered and even overnight trips, which would have additional transportation, lodging, and food costs.

11. Are the field trips during the school week only?

On rare occasion a field trip may be part of a weekend. For example, in 10th grade the Science, Math, Computer Science students take a four day trip to Wallops Island which runs into the entire day on Saturday.

12. Is there a non-extended day option available in SMCS?

No. In order to attain the SMCS Certificate at graduation, students must take eight periods all four years at PHS.

13. Do students in the test-in programs participate in sports or music?

Many students participate in sports as well as other extra-curriculars such as clubs, band, and drama. Practices do not start until after the 8th period so that SMCS students are not forced to choose between sports

and the program. Music is different from a sport or a club in that it is both a class and an extra-curricular activity. As a magnet student, your priority will be your magnet academic program, which must take priority over any schedule conflicts during the school day.

14. 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 guide students to real-world application of subject matter. Richard Montgomery issues an IB Diploma that is recognized around the world. The prescribed IB 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.

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

When the high school transcript is sent to a college, a program description for each house is included which lists specific SAT and AP data for that house, indicating the overall rigor and expectations of the program, not only the designation of some classes as AP level. At PHS we also offer courses which are beyond AP, including Thermodynamics, Analytical Chemistry, Physical Chemistry, Optics, Introduction to Genetic Analysis, Linear Algebra, Vector Calculus, Writing Mobile Apps for Android Devices, Robotics, Quantum Physics, Vector Calculus, Cellular Physiology and Biochemistry.

16. 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 students have their entire undergraduate college careers to prepare for whatever endeavor they wish to pursue.

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

Students whose home high school is PHS who are not in 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 or Project Lead The Way. ISP students will be recognized at graduation with a notation in the graduation program and receive a special tassel recognizing their hard work. ISP students are also eligible to be Falcon Ambassadors. You may visit the following website for more information.

<http://montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/poolesvillehs/magnet/>

18. If we start the SMCS program at PHS, but relocate our residence to the Wootton cluster, where do we go to school in the 10th grade.

For the SMCS program, once accepted, if you live in the upper county area you would attend Poolesville, but if you move out of the area serviced by Poolesville you would attend the SMCS program at Montgomery Blair. Poolesville is the only school offering a Humanities House, so if you move to the down county area you may attend your home high school or you may apply for a Change of School Assignment (COSA) but would be expected to provide your own transportation to PHS. The Global Ecology program is open to students living in all of Montgomery County. The busing is limited in the down-county area.

19. In SMCS, when does a student have time to do an internship?

The internship takes place in the summer between the junior and senior year. It is at least a six week internship. Some student continue the internship during their senior year of high school.

20. Do top universities look more favorably at an average student in a magnet program or a student in the top 5 percentile attending a non-magnet school?

The top three criteria that colleges use are:

1. CGPA – Cumulative Grade Point Average – This is often the first sort that is done.
2. SAT/ACT Scores
3. Strength of Schedule – a thorough examination of the transcript to determine whether or not the student has taken high level classes. This is also reflected in the WGPA – Weighted Grade Point Average

Schools are also looking for students who are good citizens. This translates into the child’s involvement in extra-curricular activities.

21. What is the difference between a magnet class and an honors class?

Some magnet courses are linked to other courses in an interdisciplinary block. The instruction in those classes integrates content and learning with other classes. Magnet Geometry and PreCalc are not taught in a block. Like other magnet courses, they will be faster paced and engage students more deeply in the content than their honors counterparts.

22. What is the difference between the SMCS certificate with research and without research?

Students who do not complete their summer internship successfully do not earn the “with research” distinction on their certificates. Each year, 1-2 SMCS students earns a certificate without research. The vast majority of SMCS students find the internship search and experience and the related work incredibly valuable to achieving their goals for the future.

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APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. What programs can I apply to?

Students from all over Montgomery County may apply to the Global Ecology house. Students whose home high schools are Clarksburg, Damascus, Gaithersburg, Magruder, Northwest, Poolesville, Quince Orchard, Seneca Valley, or Watkins Mill may apply to the Humanities and Science, Math, Computer Science houses. Residency in the home school high school area must be established at the time of application.

2. Do local students have to apply to get into Global Ecology, Humanities, and SMCS?

Yes.

3. Can you apply to two programs?

Students may apply to any and all of the three test-in houses at PHS. The selection committee will invite students, put students in a waiting pool, or say no independent of invitations to other houses or RMHS. The notification letter to students lists the programs extending an invitation. The family decides which program is chosen if more than one invitation is extended.

4. How many teacher recommendations are required?

Four teacher recommendations from the 8th grade teacher are required: English, Math, Science, Social Studies.

5. How many applications do you receive for each house?

Applications vary by year. Over 900 applications were received in 2018. Many students apply to more than one house.

6. If I wasn't in MCPS for middle school, will my transcript be looked at fairly?

Yes. We will contact the school or you if there are questions about the courses or grades listed on your transcript.

7. How do I access the application?

The application is on-line and can be accessed through this link:

<https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/curriculum/specialprograms/>

8. My child is not enrolled in MCPS. How do we apply?

You must pre-enroll your child at your home middle school. Once your child has an MCPS id number, you can apply. Instructions for non-MPCS families are found in the same link above (#7).

9. Do students re-apply each year?

No. Once students are invited to a program and accept a seat, they remain in the program for their four years of high school.

10. What is the name of the private to public school coordinator in MCPS?

Private school families can work with their home middle school counselors to understand MCPS credits, course requirements, program options, etc. Families with students with special needs may contact Anna E Szilagyi-Weichbrod (Anna_E_Szilagyi-Weichbrod@mcmpsmd.org) with questions about special education services.

11. If I'm applying to multiple programs, how do I write the one essay in the application?

The application essay is a 200 word statement about yourself as a student. You do not need to tailor your writing to a particular program. The statement should reveal information about you beyond your interest in any program; applying to the program is an expression of your interest in the program.

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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. Students who have a sibling who attends PHS are not given preferential selection either.

2. What selection criteria are used?

The selection committee is made of 20-30 staff members from PHS and MCPS central office. Every application is read twice. If the student is applying to all three programs the application is read six times. The contents of the application are used as the criteria for selection: the application itself, 7th and 8th grade (first nine weeks) report cards, 4 confidential teacher recommendations, scores from the CogAT test given on the testing day, and a writing sample that was created on the testing day. Additional standardized test scores may be considered as well.

3. For students who took the PSAT or SAT prior to applying, will their scores be considered?

The scores are not a determining factor because most 8th graders do not have these scores.

4. If my child is invited to Poolesville and Richard Montgomery, will she be allowed to select the program she wants to attend?

Yes. It is up to the family which program they choose to accept.

5. How will I know if I got accepted?

Letters of notification will be mailed to students' homes in late January. For each program to which you applied, you will be notified that you have been accepted, not accepted, or put into a wait pool.

6. How many students are in the wait pool for each program?

About 50-75 students are in the wait pool for each of our three programs.

7. What happens if I'm in a wait pool?

Many students who are at PHS on the first day of school were originally in a wait pool. After students accepted to multiple programs have decided which program to join, students in the wait pools are invited to fill open spots. The wait pools are not ranked lists. When a seat becomes open, the entire pool of waiting candidates is considered.

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TEST QUESTIONS

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

Yes, the same test is used at all three sites, the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) and an essay. The CogAT and essay will be administered via Chromebook.

2. What is the total length of the test?

The entire test is approximately three hours. There are three 30 minute CogAT sections and a 30 minute essay. The testing window will be longer than the two hours of actual testing due to set up time and breaks.

3. What can I do to prepare for the test?

The CogAT is a test of reasoning and critical thinking ability. There is no penalty for incorrect answers. Information about the CogAT and sample questions can be found through simple Internet searches. The best preparation for test day is a good night's sleep and a good breakfast.

4. When is the test?

For most students, the test is at 8am on December 7, 2019. For students with documented testing accommodations (IEP, 504, ELL, RELL plans), testing will take place at 8am on December 8 at Richard Montgomery High School. The magnet office will contact the families of all students with testing accommodations to confirm the accommodations and testing date.

5. Where do I take the test?

Test locations for this year are still being determined. If you apply to a program requiring the test, you will receive an email from MCPS on or around November 11 with testing information.

6. What if I cannot test on December 7?

December 8 is the first make-up test date. Contact your assigned testing school (you will know what it is through email on or around November 11) about testing on a make-up date.

7. What if my child has testing accommodations?

MCPS students with testing accommodations documented with an IEP, 504 plan, ELL or RELL plan will have their accommodations met for the magnet test. The exception is that the Cogat does not allow calculator use for any test taker. Communication will be made with the family about testing accommodations prior to the test date. All students with testing accommodations will take the test on December 8 at 8:00am.

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CAN MY CHILD SHADOW?

A plan is being formulated to allow accepted students to shadow program(s) in the spring. Details will be given to all accepted students after they have been invited to one or more programs.

TRANSPORTATION QUESTIONS

1. How do students get to school? Where are the bus stops?

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

2. What are the routes for the 4:30 buses?

The 4:30 routes are similar to the 2:30 routes, with fewer drop off locations. You can find the routes on the PHS website; check the Quick Links section of the main page.

3. Is there public transportation in Poolesville?

Many students use the Ride On bus for transportation. There is a bus stop adjacent to the school grounds. The route is #76 and the most up to date information about it is on the Montgomery County government website.

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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 (SMCS) an extra course is 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 as well. (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 – 7:45 AM – 2:30 PM
- Local and out-of-the-area buses depart at 2:30 PM
- An extended instruction period is added from 2:40 – 3:25 PM
- Students who can provide their own transportation may leave the school at 3:25 PM
- Students who participate in extracurricular activities join their groups at 3:25 PM
- A Study Hall with adult supervision is provided between 3:30 – 4:20 PM
- Local and out-of-the-area buses depart at 4:30 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 offered during the extended day instructional period?

Extended day classes change each year to meet the needs of SMCS students. For the 2019-2020 school year eight classes were offered during the extended period: Advanced Science 1 & 2, AP US History, AP NSL, Magnet Pre-calculus C/D, AP US History, Research Design/Research Project A, Robotics/Material Science, and Research B/Health.

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 3:25pm. Depending on the sport, some students will not have the exact same amount of practice time as a result of their academic class. The expectation for the coaches is that the academic class comes first and then practice. SMCS students have been the quarterback of the football team, starters on the basketball team and soccer teams. The house designation does not limit the playing time of the athlete.

7. Can non-SMCS student take a class 8th period?

Only SMCS students should ever plan for an 8th period class. Occasionally, other students have been permitted to take an 8th period class, but the needs of the SMCS program and SMCS students are our first priority.

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EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

1. What sports are available at PHS?

PHS offers all sports that are available to secondary schools in Montgomery County Public Schools except gymnastics.

2. 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.

3. Are students allowed to participate in sports or extracurricular activities if they are part of an extended day program?

Yes, in fact, we encourage all students to participate in at least one extracurricular activity. Coaches and club sponsors will adjust schedules to accept students arriving at 3:25 pm.

4. When do tryouts occur for sports? What sports do you offer?

All other fall sports practices begin around the second week in August. Students must have a health form filled out by a doctor before they can begin practice. Parents register their child for a sport through the Parent Portal. Check the Athletics tab on the Poolesville High School website for more information.

5. What kind of clubs do you have?

The following clubs have been recently offered: Acappella, A Helping Hand, A Seat at our Table, American Red Cross , Amnesty International, Anime, Art, Asian Language & Culture Study, Asian Students Association (ASA), Beads for a Cause, Biology , Black Student Union, Bollywood Dance Team, Book, Chemistry, Chess, Christian Youth Fellowship, Cinema, Civil Discourse, Combatting Childhood Cancer, Comic Club, Computer Enthusiast , Computer Team, Concerts for Charity (CFC), Cooking for a Cause, Christian Praise, Dance, Debate, Do It Yourself (DIY), E2, Earth Science, Engineering, Entrepreneur Club Powered by MIT Launch, Equestrian, Falcons in Computer Science, Fellowship of Christian Athletics, Film, FISH and Wildlife, Foundation for International Medical Relief of Children (FIMRC), Finance and Investment, First Robotics, First Technology Challenge (FTCC), Forensics Team, French, Funding the Future, Game Design, Game Design Studio, Gaming/SSB, Gay Straight Alliance, Girls Can Code, Too, Girls in Tech, Girl UP, Go Green, Grace Works, Gun Control Activism, Hackathon, Hat Club, Hero , HIP – The Health Improvement Project, Hispanic Heritage Allocation, Hispanic Heritage Association, History Bee/Bowl Team, Kahoot, Key

Club, Kids for Wish Kids, Knitting & Crocheting, K-Pop, Latin Dance Team, Leo, Ligaya (Living in Grace Among Your Adversity), Linguistics Society, Math Team, Medical Club, Midnight Players, Mock Trial, Model Rocketry, Model UN, Music Composition, Muslim Student Association, National Science Bowl, Odyssey of the Mind, Orchestra (PHSO), Paws for a Cause, Poolesville for Change, Poolesville Bollywood Dance Team, Poolesville Computer Science (PCS), Poolesville's Future Scientists, Poolesville International Society, Poolesville Pals, Republican, Rock Band, Rubik's Cube, Rukundo, SADD, SeaPerch, Science Olympiad, Self-Defense, Shakespeare, SMASH Brothers, 2Connect, TEAMS competition, Technovation, Ted, Teens Cooking for a Cause, Tennis, The Ballerino Club, The Cappies, The Chesapeake Bay Coalition, The Pen Pal Club, The Poolesville Pulse, Turning Point Poolesville, Theoretical Physics, Ukulele Club, Ukulele Ensemble, UNICEF, Ultimate Frisbee, Water Project, Wish Kids, Women in Environmental Engineering, World Bank Book, Woza, Yearbook, Yoga, Volunteers in Science & Technology, and Young Women in Bio. New clubs emerge each year, based on student interest.

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GENERAL SCHOOL QUESTIONS

1. How does Project Lead the Way fit into magnet students' schedules?

Project Lead the Way is a five-course engineering program established at PHS primarily for ISP students to access as an advanced pathway. Many students in ISP, Global, and Humanities take the first class, Introduction to Engineering Design, to complete the graduation requirement for technology. Global students may opt for completion of the program as a way to earn their Global certificate. Humanities students may take PLTW classes, but if there is a scheduling conflict between PLTW and Humanities requirements, Humanities will take precedence. Humanities students only rarely are able to complete the PLTW program. SMCS students do not take PLTW classes; the engineering content within the SMCS courses would make doing so redundant.

2. What levels of foreign language are offered?

At PHS we offer classes in French 1-5 and AP French, and Spanish 1-5 plus AP Spanish Language and AP Spanish Literature.

3. How much time is there between classes?

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

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

Every year, PHS students are accepted to Ivy League and other top academic colleges and universities. The magnet programs are well over a decade old; we have had students attend virtually all well-known, and many lesser-known, higher institutions of learning.

5. Which house should I apply to if I want to go to medical school?

Alumni from every house have successfully entered and exited medical school. Before medical school, you will need an undergraduate degree. You will be well-prepared for college success in any of our houses.

6. What kind of art and music programs do you have?

Currently the following art classes are offered at PHS: AP Studio Art, AP 2D Art, Studio Art 1 & 2, Ceramics & Sculpture 1 & 2, AP 3D Art, Drawing and Design, Photography, AP Art History. We currently

offer Chorus, Guitar, Orchestra at several levels, and AP Music Theory. We have active art and music clubs and a National Art Honor Society chapter at PHS.

7. What is the typical class size at PHS?

Our freshmen magnet classes have 30 students in them. Some classes students take throughout their four years here may be slightly larger or somewhat smaller.

8. When will MCPS rebuild Poolesville High School?

According to the current MCPS Capital Improvements Program, a revitalization/expansion is planned with a completion date of 2023. Our fingers are crossed. *UPDATED: There is currently no plan to improve the facilities at PHS.*

9. Are the PHS magnet programs really moving to Seneca Valley High School?

No.

What if I have another question?

Please feel free to contact the Poolesville High School magnet office at 240-740-2419.

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