



## Course Selection Information

We encourage students to make the most of their education, to take advantage of the opportunity to study here at MUHS, to challenge themselves to be the best students and people they can become. However, we also recognize that not every course is designed for every student. It is important to help students balance what they are taking. While they may be at the level to take all Honors and AP courses, combined together with outside of school commitments, this may not be the best course of action for some students; for others it may be exactly what they need. Other students may need some encouragement to challenge themselves and not be satisfied with the minimum. We also want students to balance pursuing their interests and continue to try new things. Many students report they wish they took an art class earlier in their time here, but they hesitated thinking they would not like it, and it was just another requirement they had to fulfill.

In the interest of a well-rounded liberal arts education, the ideals of the Grad at Grad, *cura personalis*, and recognizing the unique situation of every student, we have put together a list of guidelines to help students, parents and advisors make the best decisions possible regarding their course selection. This should not be read as a list of requirements or pre-requisites, nor should it be read as a list of rules. Instead, it should be read as a guide to help students discern the best set of courses that challenges them appropriately so that they may continue to pursue the qualities of the Grad at Grad.

The one rule that is in this guide details Graduation requirements. All students must earn 23 credits to graduate. The breakdown of credits required in each discipline is listed in the Course Description book as well as on the transcript.

### Credits and Overloading:

- **7 credits:** Students who have demonstrated the ability to do well with little free time are permitted to take this schedule. Students in AP Biology and AP Chemistry are discouraged from taking 7 credits, since one day a week they will go without any free time during the day (Lab meets during lunch once a week). Generally, students at a 3.6 or better are candidates for this schedule.
- **6.5 credits** – This schedule depends largely on the student as well as the courses selected. Some students do much better if their time is structured and accounted for. Other students need a free period in the day to accomplish some of their homework or to help balance their afterschool commitments. A student who reports that he rarely can complete homework at home is not a good candidate for this schedule. The particular class he wants to add is also important. A student may not be the best student in the academic core classes, but is a great art student or even wants to try something new. He would be a good candidate for this schedule.
- **5.5 credits** – This is a good schedule for a student who struggles academically, particularly if he has two tough classes. For example, a student who struggles with reading comprehension and postponed his World History until Sophomore year, may be a good candidate for this because he will have a heavy reading load with English, Social Studies, and Theology. However, if he only took 5.5 credits as a freshman, be careful to complete a 4-year plan so that he is not leaving so much for junior and senior year that he is not able to handle it.
- **5 credits** – This schedule is reserved for Seniors only. Students have two free periods a day plus lunch, so it should be chosen sparingly. This is generally viewed as a light course load which could have college admissions implications. A student who does better with structure should not take this schedule.

## **Balance**

Students will not grow and learn if they only take the easy way out. Sometimes the need to step up and put forth additional effort is in the best interest of the student. Working to meet the challenges of a tough class rather than simply looking for a way to remove it is important. In doing so, we are teaching him how to maintain his commitments, work through hardship, be resilient, and develop a good work ethic.

- This is part of the philosophy of not allowing students to “change their minds” when classes begin and let them move around their whole schedule.
- However, the reality is that the more they pile on their plates, the less time they have for each of their commitments, including their classes.
- Balance in their lives and in their classes is important; this includes levels of classes.
- It is a good idea for students, especially rising Juniors, to plan out their remaining HS years to spread out their courses.
- While it is often a good idea for a student to stretch himself, doing so in too many areas can be problematic.

## **Academic Core Credits** (English, Math, Science, Social Studies, World Language)

Student should be scheduled for at least 4 of these courses each semester to have a strong transcript. This still leaves space for arts classes, electives, and Theology.

## **Alternate Choices**

- Students must choose their alternate courses wisely and take those choices as seriously as their first choices. While every effort is made to maximize student choices in building the master schedule, it is likely that juniors and seniors will receive at least one alternate course.
- Student need to select different courses for their alternates. We only move to alternate selections when the first one causes a conflict.

## **Honors/AP classes**

- Teachers recommend levels of a course for a student based on his previous academic performance.
- Generally, a student is encouraged to take no more than 3 AP Classes in a semester.
- A student who does not meet a pre-requisite for a course may appeal to take the course by making a request to the chair of the department.

## **World Language**

- Sometimes students desire a change in language after the first year. This poses several challenges for the student, so careful consideration must be made since a student is already  $\frac{1}{2}$  way through the graduation requirement. Language acquisition requires similar skills, regardless of the language.
- Students should consider the implications on their 4-year plan before switching languages or opting out of a third year.
- While MUHS requires only 2 years of a language, some universities like 3 or 4 years. Sometimes that is of the same language; sometimes they are ok with students taking 2 of one language and one of another. Before deciding to drop a language course at the 3<sup>rd</sup> year, a student should consider if and how that might impact college admission.
- For a student who really struggled to make it through the first two years of language, it is far better that he not take a third than try to muddle his way through a 3<sup>rd</sup> year which requires accumulated knowledge.

- General guidelines:
  - To move from 2<sup>nd</sup> year to 3<sup>rd</sup> year, generally a student needs to have earned a C in 2<sup>nd</sup> year.
  - To move from 3<sup>rd</sup> year to 4<sup>th</sup> year, generally a student needs to have earned a B in 3<sup>rd</sup> year.
  - To move to AP Spanish Language, a student should have earned a B in Honors Spanish 3. A student who has earned less than a B is still able to take Spanish 4.
  - To move from Honors Spanish 1 to Honors Spanish 2, a student should have earned a B- or better.
- Generally, we expect students to begin the language they will take both courses in as Freshman or Sophomores. Rarely do students begin their language of choice as Juniors.

### **Science**

- Juniors and Seniors should take classes that meet their interest, not just take an AP level course because he feels he must do so.
- Physics: The best predictor of success in Physics is the math course a student is taking and will be taking. Generally speaking, a junior in Algebra 2 should take Environmental Science or Geology and take Physics as a Senior. Advanced Algebra 2 depends on how much the student struggles with Math.
- AP Physics C: A student in Calculus AB or BC or Multivariable Calc is a good candidate for this class. Students who have successfully completed AP Physics 1 is a good candidate for this class.

### **Theology Electives for Seniors**

- Seniors choose among three courses. Choices should be made according to interest in the topic.

### **Electives and Fine Arts**

- Students should also consider Fine Arts courses, Computer Programming, AP Computer Science, AP Statistics, Physical Fitness and Wellness, and Human Innovations and Technology as they build their schedules.

**\*\*Remember, scheduling is done after all students have submitted their requests. Therefore, students have the same possibility of receiving a course no matter when they complete their course selection, as long as it is within the timeframe.**