

Winthrop Middle School

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Dear Parents and Guardians:

Soon your 8th grade student will be completing course selections for their freshman year at Winthrop High School! As your student prepares for the transition into high school, it is very important that you both understand the course selection process and the graduation requirements. Understanding this information will help you and your student make the right choices when picking his/her classes. Ben Cimmino (9th Grade Counselor) and Taryn O'Neill (Middle School Counselor) will be helping the students with course selection and answering any questions they may have. I wanted to reach out to you and inform you of how the course selection process will go, and hopefully answer some questions you may have as well.

Students entering the 9th grade will be taking 7 courses each semester. They will take English, Math, Science, History, World Language, PE/Health, and an Elective. For freshmen, there are 2 levels for core classes: College Preparatory or Honors. Math is the only subject that also has Accelerated-level courses. Advanced Placement (AP) level courses are also offered at the high school, but not until the student's sophomore year. Descriptions of all courses can be found in the Course Catalog on the Winthrop High School webpage, under the Guidance tab. I highly recommend you sit down with your student to review the descriptions of each course so you know what is expected at each level, and to help decide which elective courses interest him/her.

The first step in course selection is teacher recommendations. Teachers will recommend which level course they feel is the best fit for your student's strengths and weaknesses. Teachers will base their decisions not only on grades, but on the effort they have seen the student put forth so far this year. Please keep in mind that if a student's academic performance or effort changes throughout the remainder of the year, that their recommendation can change as well. This year's MCAS results will also be taken into consideration when reviewing course selections for next year. In short, students should continue to put forth their best effort for the full year, in order to receive the most appropriate placement for next year.

The second step in course selection is student selection. Mr. Cimmino and Ms. O'Neill will meet with the 8th grade class in an assembly to do a brief presentation and answer any questions they may have regarding course selection. Shortly after the presentation counselors will go in to 8th grade classrooms and help the students choose their classes online via iPass. Students will see which level courses were recommended for them by their teachers. If you or your student do not agree with the recommendation made by the teacher, you can appeal the recommendation by filling out a form and setting up an appointment to meet with the teacher and Ms. O'Neill.

Course selections will then be sent over to the high school counselors, and they will work on building student schedules. They will try to give the students their first choice of electives, but scheduling conflicts may lead to students getting their second or third choice. Students should expect to receive their finalized schedules in August during orientation. Please note, even if your student plans on attending another high school, we require that all students complete course selection at WHS in case any changes occur over the summer.

Students who will be taking special education classes next year will have those courses listed in their recommendations, and transition plans for high school will be discussed at their yearly IEP meetings. Any parents who have questions regarding special education classes for next year should reach out to their student's liaison or Ms. O'Neill directly.

Once in high school, students should become very familiar with the graduation requirements. Student not only need to pass their classes, but they need to obtain a certain number of credits to advance to the next grade level as well. This is a major difference than when they were in middle school. For example, if a student failed one class in middle school, he could still move on to the next grade without having to repeat that class. If a student fails any class in high school, he will lose the credits of that class for the year. He may be able to retake the class in summer school or he may have to retake it the following year.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me and I will do my best to answer your questions. I look forward to helping your students through this exciting time of transition!

Best,

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