

RECAP FROM 2/28/14 PTO MEETING ON 2014-2015 COURSE SELECTIONS:

On Friday, 2/28, three department heads: Nancy Cali, department head of Mathematics, Kate Mahoney, head of Guidance, and Tim Eagan, department head of Classical & Foreign Languages (for both WMS and WHS) presented on the nuances of the Wellesley curriculum and the course selection process of for 6th, 7th and 8th graders.

Math levels:

Nancy Cali (pronounced Ca-Lee for those who have not met her) shared her thoughts on how parents can make the choice for entering 8th graders who have the opportunity to select a leveled class in math their 8th grade year. Mirroring the High School structure, three levels of math are offered. Approximately 50% of the class takes Algebra 8, which mirrors the track at WHS known as Advanced College Prep; a small number of students take Concepts in Algebra, whose pace mirrors the College Prep track and the remainder of students take Algebra 8R - the honors level course. When considering Honors, Ms. Cali suggested it is best suited for those students who are self motivated, comfortable in groups and working alone, proficient in computational skills and abstract thinking, and willing to work on problems that have no clear answer. Typically these students consider math an enjoyable challenge. She also shared that math teachers will be suggesting a level and that recommendation will be circled on the course selection sheet. Parents may choose a different option than the recommendation but switching from that selection may disrupt other courses that the student takes.

Course transition timing for all grades, and to WHS

Kate Mahoney gave a [detailed presentation](#) describing the selection process and course options for 6th-8th graders.

She has shared an [overview sheet](#) for 8th graders to review when selecting their WHS course of study. It was noted that all of these options assume passage of the budget override - some electives and language options may be curtailed in the case of a "no" vote where staff positions will then be eliminated at both WMS and WHS. All three department heads suggested that parents with concerns or questions speak to their child's teacher(s) and guidance counselors. In the case of 8th graders, each student will meet one on one with their guidance counselor - it might be helpful for the student to have this meeting prior to parents calling guidance with specific questions.

March 3 is the deadline for 6th grade course selection (extensions are available, contact your child's guidance counselor); March 25 is the deadline for 7th and for 8th graders to submit their selections. 8th grade selections will now be submitted online - detailed instructions will come home with your student.

Classical & Foreign Language presentation by Tim Eagan

Key points:

- Choices are French, Spanish, Latin, German, and Mandarin Chinese.
- WMS language in 7/8 grade is the equivalent of 1 yr of HS language.
- If you are entering 9th you should select level 2H (note the H signifies that it gets counted toward honors status in the GPA but it is not at the same level of complexity that other honors level courses are in 9th grade)
- The focus of the modern languages curriculum is spoken, cultural and written proficiency - so the more years you take one language the better off you will be. Latin has also become more focused on cultural proficiency but has less emphasis on conversation - this may help in decision making for students and families.
- Heritage speakers are able to take their heritage language at a more advanced level in HS - the language department offers placement tests.
- Many students take 2 languages once in HS.
- Colleges have different language requirements but the minimum tends to be 2 years in addition to the middle school years
- There is a beginning Spanish option for entering 9 graders who did not take a language at WMS.

Link to Tim Eagan's presentation coming.