

SUBJECT: TRANSITION to 6th Grade Course Selections

Dear Parents and Guardians of 5th Grade Students,

Welcome to middle school! At this time, we are asking our incoming 6th grade parents/guardians to discuss with your child/children the course descriptions (included below) for music and world language. Please make one choice for music and one choice for world language, and then complete the "Course Selection Steps" (included below). This process must be completed by Friday, May 22, 2020; changes to your child's music and world language course selection will not be accepted after this date.

Please note, the world language selected for 6th grade will be the same world language for all 3 years of middle school. However, while we recommend enrollment in the same music course for all 3 years of middle school, there is an annual opportunity presented to parents/guardians that allows for a change of music course, with limitations, for the following school year.

BMS will also send a comprehensive introduction to middle school to all 5th grade families. For now, we are requesting these two course selections be made and entered into PowerSchool so our leadership team can proceed with the scheduling and staffing process.

Course Selection Steps ([LINK TO SLIDE PRESENTATION FOR VISUAL INSTRUCTIONS](#))

1. Log into [PowerSchool](#) (for login assistance, please contact the parent help desk at parenthelpdeskwestportps.org)
2. Under the portal navigation menu, click "Class Registration."
3. Next, click the Pencil icon on the right side of the screen associated with music; a pop-up window will appear
4. To select a course or modify an existing selection, place a check mark to the left of the desired course, and then click "Okay."
5. Repeat steps #3 and #4 for entering your world language selection.
6. To ensure you completed the steps above accurately, the red exclamation points next to the Pencil icons should change to green check marks.

SPECIAL NOTE: Due to scheduling and staffing requirements, the window for entering this selection into [PowerSchool](#) is available from Friday, May 1, 2020 through Friday, May 22, 2020; changes will not be possible after this date. Please direct any questions about this process to Jacquelyn Mellin, Assistant Principal at Bedford Middle School via email jmellin@westportps.org

Sincerely,

The BMS Administrative Team

MIDDLE SCHOOL COURSE DESCRIPTIONS FOR MUSIC AND WORLD LANGUAGES

MUSIC COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Band

Students in the Band enjoy studying a wide variety of styles and genres of grade-appropriate pieces and perform at fall and spring concerts. Band instruments may include flute, oboe, trumpet, clarinet, as well as other percussion and wind instruments. Students further develop their musical knowledge and skills, as well as enjoy the aesthetic experience through the musical art in small group lessons and collaborative settings. Small group lessons occur during regularly scheduled class times; small group lessons occur weekly and on a rotating basis so students do not continually miss the same course. Students are expected to alert their teacher that they will be attending a music lesson and also follow-up with their classroom teachers regarding

missed class work after attending each small group lesson.

Orchestra

Students in the Orchestra enjoy studying a wide variety of styles and genres of grade-appropriate pieces and perform at fall and spring concerts. Orchestra instruments may include violin, viola, cello, as well as other string instruments. Students further develop their musical knowledge and skills, as well as enjoy the aesthetic experience through the musical art in small group lessons and collaborative settings. Small group lessons occur during regularly scheduled class times; small group lessons occur weekly and on a rotating basis so students do not continually miss the same course. Students are expected to alert their teacher that they will be attending a music lesson and also follow-up with their classroom teachers regarding missed class work after attending each small group lesson.

Chorus

Students in Chorus enjoy studying a wide variety of styles and genres of grade-appropriate songs and perform at fall and spring concerts. Students further develop their musical knowledge and skills, as well as enjoy the aesthetic experience through the musical art in a mostly collaborative setting.

Music Technology

Students in Music Technology explore the “how” and “why” music sounds the way it does. This is done through further development of musical knowledge and skills, the study of musical history and styles, and applying these to compositional elements and projects through the use of music software. Music Technology is a mostly project-based learning class.

WORLD LANGUAGE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Spanish grades 6-8

Spanish in the Westport middle schools is a vibrant language experience which transitions incoming sixth graders to a more formal path of study while maintaining an advanced conversational and aural component. In sixth grade students will utilize the substantial foundation of knowledge they have acquired in elementary school to expand their vocabulary and speak in whole sentences with greater ease. Theme based topics studied include school subjects, the family, the home, and leisure/sports activities. Students engage the Spanish language through a mixture of games, songs, books, grammar practice, cultural experiences and most importantly, realistic and consistent employment of the concepts they learn in class. The emphasis at all times is on meaningful communication in Spanish, and students speak in the target language everyday in class. In seventh and eighth grades, students move toward a more rigorous study of grammar in preparation for their entrance into the language program at Staples High School. At the middle school level, students studying Spanish will have fun and learn in a safe environment that encourages them to take risks as real-life speakers of the Spanish language, as they develop the language skills necessary for success in the future.

French grades 6-8

Students who begin their study of French in middle school will be immersed in the beauty of the French language and French culture. They will learn conversational French in theme-based units utilizing dialogues, books and studies of people living in French-speaking countries around the world. In sixth grade students will learn the basic skills necessary to communicate with each other and discuss their everyday lives. They will learn speaking skills needed to enjoy ordering in a restaurant, shopping for school, food and clothes, getting around town, and even organizing a trip to French –speaking country. Recitation of poems, participation in skits, songs and games and other readings, listening to music and watching movie clips from authentic French sources will also contribute in enhancing students’ learning in middle school. As students progress in their study of French people, language, and culture, they will also improve their listening and speaking skills. As part of the 8th grade curriculum students use their improving skills to engage in substantial written correspondence with French pen-pals from Westport’s sister city in Marigny, France. French students will work

in a positive and nurturing environment that encourages them to learn this new language, becoming real-life speakers of French, well-equipped with language skills needed for success in the future.

Mandarin Chinese grades 6-8

Mandarin Chinese at the middle school level is a unique opportunity for Westport students to receive an early introduction to this world language in a nurturing and supportive environment. At the 6th grade level, students will gain familiarity with the distinctive tones of Chinese as well as the correct stroke order for writing Chinese characters. Through games, in-class recitations and skits, students will begin to demystify this ancient language, becoming adept at expressing themselves with simple greetings, counting, naming colors, and introducing family members. Within thematic units students develop a level of comfort in reading, writing and speaking simple Chinese. As the pace of the program accelerates in the 7th and 8th grade, students will be introduced to basic grammatical concepts as the focus evolves to a communicative approach with the target language being spoken more often in the classroom. Throughout the three-year sequence, students will gain an appreciation of the vital connections between the Chinese language and Chinese culture as simple poems from the Tang Dynasty, ancient stories with moral lessons and the intricacies of calligraphy appear in the curriculum. With an abundance of cultural opportunities presenting themselves in local venues, there will be opportunities for field trips as well as speakers to visit the middle school classrooms. The middle school Mandarin curriculum will help students develop confidence in their ability to make them understood through verbal and written communication in Mandarin Chinese.