



Frequently Asked Questions About Placement at Highland Middle School

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Highland Middle School administrators and teachers do an excellent job in preparing students and parents for the transition from elementary to middle school. Important information is provided during an Open House for parents in the spring and students participate in a school tour. Information is also provided in mailings and on the Highland Middle School website. As students progress through their fifth grade year, many parents have questions regarding the coursework at Highland. It is our hope that you find this document helpful in answering many of those questions.

What courses are available for my sixth grader when entering Highland Middle School?

Students entering Highland Middle School (HMS) as incoming sixth graders are placed in the following academic courses: language arts/literature, mathematics, social studies, science, physical education, a rotation that includes a world language, health, and study skills, a fine arts block rotation which includes music, art, drama, consumer education and applied technology. Language arts/literature and mathematics have various courses including regular, accelerated and gifted.

How do language arts/literature and mathematics courses differ from one another?

Regular language arts/literature and mathematics classes are designed for sixth grade students who have completed the fifth grade curriculum and are ready to continue acquiring more complex skills and knowledge. Accelerated language arts/literature and mathematics courses are designed for students who require more rigor and are able to work at an increased pace. The content in accelerated courses is one year above grade level. Often times these students acquire skills and knowledge quickly and were very successful in completing the fifth grade curriculum. Gifted language arts/literature and mathematics courses are designed for students who again require more rigor and are able to work at an increased pace. These students often interact with content and subject matter with increased depth and complexity and have been identified as gifted through an established process.

How is placement determined for sixth grade language arts/literature and mathematics?

All students in fifth grade are administered the STAR Reading and Math assessments in the fall, winter, and spring. Results from the winter STAR Reading and Math assessments are used to determine initial classroom placement at Highland Middle School. When considering placement, analysis of a common writing assessment that is part of the fifth grade curriculum, previous STAR assessment scores, and input from fifth grade teachers are also used to determine if assessment data is consistent with classroom performance. In an effort to not detract from students' fifth grade experience, math and language arts/literature placements are not finalized until the end of the year and are reflected on a letter that will be included in fifth grade students' third trimester report card. Please see the chart on the following page for the data used to assist in making placement decisions.

	Mathematics	Language Arts/Literature
Accelerated	Total Math Score \geq 90 th percentile (winter STAR assessment)	Total English Language Arts Score \geq 90 th percentile (winter STAR assessment)

Can I as a parent, override course placements for my sixth grader?

No. A great deal of consideration has gone into identifying the placement determinants for sixth grade language arts/literature and mathematics. Over time, these qualifiers have proven consistent in determining the success of most students as they participate in various courses. Although in the past, parent overrides were permitted for mathematics, those students often times struggled and experienced a great deal of frustration. On some occasions, based upon a student’s classroom performance, a change in placement will be made. Teachers at Highland Middle School are diligent in monitoring student progress and making those recommendations to Highland Middle School Principal, Mr. Hallmark and Highland Middle School, Assistant Principal, Mrs. Russell when warranted. Should a change in placement be recommended, Mr. Hallmark or Mrs. Russell will conference with parents and the student prior to making a schedule change.

How are students placed in ninth grade?

Parents will receive placement information from Libertyville High School District 128. Course placement for incoming freshman to Libertyville High School District 128 is dependent upon previous coursework, local Libertyville District 70 assessments (STAR), and teacher recommendation. As always, parents will have the opportunity to discuss course recommendations with District 128 during students’ eighth grade school year. Additional information can be found on the following website (<http://lhwildcats.org/content/current-8th-graders>).