

TOP 25 QUESTIONS

Asked by Incoming Freshman Students & Their Families

Q: How do I know which math class to take?

A: Math level is typically determined by the course you took in 8th grade and your success in that course. We do ask that you speak with your current math teacher and get their course recommendation.

Q: What science course should I take? A:

The most common science pathway for students at DM is 9th grade- Physics First or Honors Physics First or Biology or Honors Biology 10th grade- Biology or Chemistry 11th grade: Chemistry, Physics, or Earth and Space. Please also refer to the grade level course sheets. This route allows students to take one of DM's higher-level science courses (Astrophysics, AP Biology, AP Chemistry, HPA) their senior year if they choose. If you have earned a D or F in math during 8th grade, please talk to your counselor about the best science path for you.

Q: What electives should I take? A: We recommend that incoming freshmen take physical education, fine art, and a world language. Students need one year of physical education and one year of fine art (Studio Art, Dance, Choir, Band, Theatre, Piano, Music Appreciation/History of Rock & Roll or Digital Futures) for graduation, so we suggest taking care of those their freshman year. If a student is interested in taking multiple years of an art class, taking a fine art course as a freshman is especially beneficial as it allows them the opportunity to reach the highest level of those courses by their senior year. Taking a world language freshman year can also be beneficial if students are wanting to complete 4 levels to pursue the Seal of biliteracy program. If students are currently taking a world language, continuing with that language instead of taking a gap year also helps with knowledge and skill retention.

Q: What is zero hour and 8th hour? Can I take classes during that time?

A: Zero hour is the hour before the regular school day (6:45-7:39), and 8th hour is after the regular school day (2:25- 3:15) *time can fluctuate depending on the teacher. Students can take select classes during that time including Marching Band, Jazz Band and Color Guard.

Q: What if my first-choice electives are full?

A: You need to have alternatives in case your first choice is not available. Please choose your alternatives thoughtfully. Your first choice is not guaranteed.

Q: What level of world language should I take?

A: If you are currently taking a world language course and doing well (earning an A or a B), we recommend that you move on to the next level. If you are earning a C or lower, it might be wise to retake that level to enhance your foundational skills. You can always speak with your current teacher to get their recommendation.

Q: Can I take something other than Introductory Physical Education for my physical education requirement? A: The only way to earn physical education credit at Desert Mountain is to take Introductory Physical Education in person or online.

Q: Can I take AP or Dual Enrollment courses?

A: Most AP and Dual Enrollment courses are offered at the Junior and Senior level. When you select courses for those years you will have the opportunity to choose those courses if you have the appropriate prerequisites. Honors courses are available your Freshman and Sophomore years.

Q: Should I take honors courses? A: This is a multi-faceted question. Whether or not you should take an honors course is dependent upon your prior success in the subject. If you have earned As and Bs in a particular subject, you may want to select the honors version of the course. Honors classes typically move at a faster pace and have a greater workload including a summer assignment. You will also need to think about whether you are willing to put in the time and energy necessary for an honors course. It's important to think about additional obligations and balance. Freshman year is a transition and will take some adjusting. It's important to keep this in mind while considering the other commitments you have. Lastly, when selecting an honors course you will sign an honors agreement, which commits you to completing at least one semester of the course, so we ask that you make your decision carefully and thoughtfully.

Q: Should I take honors or join the MYP program?

A: Both pathways of study offer phenomenal opportunities for students, and one is not better than the other. They have different philosophies therefore it's important to investigate and decide which of those philosophies mirror your academic work ethic and ability. Please take the time to research both pathways with your parents and discuss the pros and cons of each. You know yourself best, if you feel that one program is a better fit

for you than the other, allow that to guide the decision-making process.

Q: Where can I find course descriptions?

A: The High School Planning Guide (HSPG) will provide you with the descriptions of each course. It is important to note that the HSPG is a District document and not all courses listed are offered at every school in the district. Please use the course selection sheet in conjunction with the HSPG when choosing classes. The HSPG can be found on the District and the DM websites.

Q: How do I change my schedule? A: The answer depends on the situation: **Before the March 31st Deadline:** You can change your schedule before the March 31st deadline by emailing your counselor. Counselor emails can be found on the DM website.

Errors/Misplacement: If your schedule is incorrect due to a staff or computer error, please see your Counselor during registration at the start of the year to make the necessary correction.

Summer School: If you took a summer school class that affects your schedule (i.e., you were registered for PE, but took PE over the summer), please see your Counselor during registration at the start of the year.

Level Change: If you decide that the honors course you selected is too difficult, you can change levels at the semester if there is space available in the regular course. However, you must complete the first semester of the course per the Honors Agreement signed during course selection.

Other Changes: We are not able to accommodate these changes after March 31st. DM has a student driven master schedule and all staffing, class periods, and course offerings are largely determined by your initial course requests. As a result, we are unable to accommodate changes unless we made an error with your schedule, or a summer school course affected your schedule.

Q: Will I be able to select my teacher? A: DM has over 2,000 students making it impossible to accommodate requests for specific teachers. If you struggle with a specific teacher, there is a process for resolving the conflict. Please see your Counselor for assistance.

Q: What's required for graduation? Is that different from what colleges want?

A: Students are required to earn 22 credits for graduation (4 English credits, 4 Math credits, 3 Science credits, 1 World History credit, 1 US History credit, 1 Government/Economics credit, 1 PE credit, 1 Fine Art/CTE credit, and 6 Elective credits). In addition to these credits, they must also pass the Civics Exam. Graduation requirements are different from College Admissions requirements. In addition to

the core graduation requirements, students also need at least 2 years of world language. Students must earn C's or better in classes to meet college eligibility requirements and need to reach and complete at least Algebra II and 1 math higher. While there are similarities between college admissions requirements, we always recommend that you research the admission requirements for schools of interest for any nuances/extra requirements.

Q: Are grades important?

A: Grades are very important at the high school level. Students must earn a D or better in a course to receive credit for that course. If you earn an F in a course, you will have to retake it, especially if it is a graduation requirement. As mentioned previously, students who are pursuing 4-Year Universities immediately following high school, need to earn a minimum of a C in their courses, and A's and B's are even better if the student is hoping to earn a scholarship or apply to more selective schools.

Q: What is a transcript?

A: A transcript is a copy of a student's permanent academic record detailing the courses they have taken, when they were taken, and the grades earned. **Every person enrolled in high school has a transcript**, which is regularly updated as courses are completed. While there are ways for students to retake courses and improve their GPA, there is no way to remove a course or grade from a student's transcript as it must be a true and accurate record.

Q: Is attendance important?

A: Attendance is very important in high school, not only so that students get the maximum amount of teaching and curriculum, but because absences can affect credit. A student will be placed on an Attendance Contract after accumulating 10 absences or tardies in one or more class periods per semester. Missing additional class time may result in the loss of credit.

Q: Where do I find information about lunches, bus routes, bell schedules, etc.?

A: All this information and more can be found on the DM webpage. If you can't find what you're looking for, email your counselor.

Q: How will I know what my grades are?

A: DM uses the same system as SUSD's middle schools, StudentVUE and ParentVUE. You will be able to see your grades, attendance, course history, and much more through this system.

Q: What is GPA and how is it calculated?

A: GPA stands for Grade Point Average and is calculated by dividing the total amount of grade points earned by the total amount of credit hours attempted (i.e., This semester a student earns 2 A's, 3 B's,

and a C, their GPA would be 3.16 because the total amount of grade points earned is 19 and they took 6 classes, 19 divided by 6 equals 3.16). On your transcript, you will see that a GPA is calculated for each semester. You also have a cumulative GPA, which is a weighted GPA of all classes on your transcript, an unweighted GPA of all your classes, and an academic GPA, which is a weighted GPA of your core classes.

Q: What is a weighted GPA? What classes receive additional weight? A: It's easier to answer this question by first defining which courses receive additional weight. Honors, AP, and IB courses have weighted grade points. Regular level courses are based on an unweighted 4.0 GPA scale and have unweighted grade points, which means an A=4 points, B=3 points, C=2 points, D=1 point, and a F=0 points. Courses that receive additional GPA weight have a weighted 5.0 scale for grades of a C or better, which means an A=5, B=4, C=3, D=1, and F=0.

No additional weight is given to Ds or Fs. *Grade points are used to calculate GPA as mentioned previously, so if you earn 2 A's, 3 B's, and 1 C, but two B's are from honors courses then your unweighted GPA will still be 3.16 like above because your unweighted grade points will be $(A=4*2) + (B=3*3) + (C=2*1)$ which equals $8+9+2$ or 19 grade points divided by 6 total classes for a unweighted GPA of 3.16. Your weighted GPA however would be slightly higher because your unweighted grade points would be $(A=4*2) + (B=3*1) + (C=2*1)$ and your weighted grade points would be $(B=4*2)$ because two of the Bs you earned were from honors courses, which equals $8+3+2$ unweighted grade points and 8 weighted grade points for a total of 21 total grade points divided by 6 total classes for a weighted GPA of 3.5.*

Q: What if I or my parents want to see the school before next school year?

A: Future Wolves Day will be determined and posted soon. This is an opportunity for current 8th graders in our feeder middle schools to visit DM. There are tours offered each month during the school year for incoming students and their parents. Please see the DM website for more information.

Q: Can I take summer school courses the summer before I start high school?

A: Yes. Typically, we recommend using summer school courses for remediation retaking courses that you have already taken during the school year. If you are wanting to take a summer school course to accelerate, we will caution you in doing so as these 3-week courses do not have the same breadth and depth that a typical 18-week course does, and you may not be prepared for the next step. *Please note: These will be the first courses listed on your high school transcript, so please*

make sure you have the time and focus to complete them.

Q: What if I struggle my freshman year? What interventions are available?

A: If you are struggling in your classes, the best place to start is with your teacher. They will be able to make recommendations based on what they are seeing and their content area. We also have several different academics supports available for students who need extra help including teacher office hours, Math and World Language labs, and tutoring (student/professional, free/paid, etc.). If you are struggling with a non-academic issue, you can see your counselor, and they can offer guidance or resources. Resources are always available on the DM Guidance webpage. If you struggled in middle school, we recommend that you consider setting up interventions going into high school so that you start the year off strong.

Q: How do I get involved with specific programs on campus?

A: It depends on the program:

Athletics: The best place to start is the Athletics page on the DM website. This page will show you all sports offered at DM, their seasons, try-out information, and instructions for becoming eligible.

Clubs: Clubs vary from year to year, but a list of current clubs is available on the DM Guidance webpage. We also encourage students to listen to the daily announcements with club meeting information.

Robotics: This class is offered as an 8th hour and you can sign up during course selection. You will have a total of 7 classes.

STUGO: There's an application process in the Spring. If you are selected for STUGO, your counselor will replace one of your electives with STUGO. For an application, please contact Mr. Richard Norris rnorris@susd.org