



# Academic Expectations and Guide to Success at MSA

## Grade 9

Welcome to ninth grade at the Math and Science Academy! Please read the following academic information and sign the agreement. Math and Science Academy has accelerated curricula, small class sizes, and is a rigorous, college-prep school. Regardless of a child's previous academic scores on tests or grades in school, ALL ninth grade students will be placed in the following classes:

### Ninth Grade Courses

All ninth grade students are registered for the following courses:

Literature & Composition

Physical Education (every other day) with Health 9 (every other day)

Biology

Ancient World History & Geography

Spanish class (see information below)

Math class (see information below)

Freshmen Seminar (new ninth grade students)

Elective – on full year or two semester courses (for returning students)

#### MATH

**New students:** All incoming ninth grade students will be given a math placement exam. The math placement exam will determine if the student will be placed in Integrated Math I, Integrated Math II, or Integrated Math III. Please see the math information included in this guide for ninth grade. There are other options available to advance and graduate from MSA if the student is beginning in Integrated Math I. MSA's math courses are advanced compared to other schools.

**Returning students:** Returning students will follow the math progression courses and be placed accordingly. For example, if a student successfully completed Integrated Math II, the next course the student will take is Integrated Math III.

#### SPANISH

**New students:** All incoming ninth grade students with previous Spanish experience will take a placement test to determine a starting level and follow the flow chart from there. For students who have no previous Spanish courses, the student will be placed in High School Spanish I in 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

**Returning students:** Students returning to MSA for ninth grade who successfully completed their Spanish course will be placed in the next course on the progression chart.

#### SCIENCE

**New students:** New ninth grade students have the option to register for AP Biology if there is room in the class and the incoming ninth grade student meets the following criteria:

- Have A- or better grades on their middle school transcript (this includes all classes listed on their transcript)
- Student was admitted and registration was turned in by August 15

**Returning students:** Returning students have the option to register for AP Biology in December of their 8<sup>th</sup> grade year. No exceptions will be given for students who did not follow the registration process.

## Grading

MSA has two semesters; Semester 1 and Semester 2. Students receive grades for Semester 1, Semester 2, and the Final. Semester 1 grades are finalized and posted on Skyward Family Access the Thursday after the semester end. Semester 2 and Final grades are finalized and posted the Thursday after the last day of school.

Students who receive a **final grade of an F** for the following classes are required to retake the course in high school (see next page for math and Spanish requirements):  
Literature & Composition, Phy Ed 9, Health 9, Ancient World History & Geography  
Biology or AP Biology

## Math Grade Expectations

Below are the math expectations and progression for ninth grade students:

Course	Grade level	Must receive the following grade to progress to next class	Student who receive the below grades for the course in 9 <sup>th</sup> grade must retake the course in 10 <sup>th</sup> grade
Integrated Math II	9	D- or better to progress to Integrated Math III	F ⇒ Repeat Integrated Math II
Integrated Math III	9	C- or better to progress to Pre-calculus	C+ - F ⇒ Repeat Integrated Math III
Pre-calculus	9	B- or better to progress to Calculus or AP Calculus	C+ - F ⇒ Repeat Pre-calculus

## Spanish Grade Expectations

Below are the Spanish expectations and progression for ninth grade students:

Course	Grade level	Must receive the following grade to progress to next class	Student who receive the below grades for the course in 9 <sup>th</sup> grade must retake the course in 10 <sup>th</sup> grade
Spanish III	9	C- or better to progress to Spanish IV	D+ - F ⇒ Repeat Spanish III
Spanish IV	9	B- or better to progress to Spanish III	C+ - F ⇒ Repeat Spanish II
HS Spanish I and Spanish II	9	D- or better to progress to Spanish II or Spanish III	F ⇒ Repeat HS Spanish I or Spa II

## **MSA Graduation Requirements**

Students complete the Minnesota academic standards by taking a core course of student that equips them with the knowledge and skills they need for success in post-secondary education, highly skilled work, and civic life. MSA students must complete the required subject specific requirements as well as a minimum of 21.5 credits to meet Minnesota state requirements. Please reference the graduation requirements located at [mnmsa.org](http://mnmsa.org), Current Families tab, Counseling Department, Graduation Requirements.

## **MSA math options for students who are not on track to graduate**

There are several math options to students who are not on track to graduate. If a ninth grade student begins in Integrated Math I or fails a class and is not on track to graduate, a number of options are available:

### **Integrated Pre-calculus**

This class is an option for students who are taking Integrated Math II as a tenth grade student.

This course is intended for rising 11th grade students who have most recently completed Integrated Math II. Students will learn through a combination of group work, direct instruction, and individual practice. Students will focus on understanding, describing, solving, and applying different types of functions (including linear, quadratic, exponential, logarithmic, polynomial, and rational). Other topics include complex numbers and trigonometry.

### **PSEO courses**

We can accept passing grades in PSEO courses in place of our core math courses. Most of the PSEO schools offer both Pre-calculus and Calculus as semester long courses. Some of them offer summer courses too. Students must test into the PSEO course in the first place from the college the student is enrolling. Many of the PSEO schools use the Accuplacer test, and no calculator is allowed. Students receiving a passing grade in a PSEO course do not have to take a final with MSA to demonstrate mastery.

### **Home district credit recovery**

Students are allowed to take credit recovery courses in their home districts in place of our core courses, if they are not on track to graduate as a senior. Unfortunately, the districts often do not offer Integrated Math III, Pre-calculus, or Calculus as credit recovery courses since they are not graduation requirements from other schools. All credit recovery courses must be pre-approved by MSA.

### **Other math options**

1. Learning centers and private tutoring. MSA cannot accept learning center or private tutor work in place of our core math courses, this is a Board of Directors policy. Students can use learning centers or private tutors to help them master the topics of a math course.

2. Students do not have to leave MSA once their senior year is finished. Students may remain in high school until the age of 21 in the state of Minnesota. Students may return to MSA after their senior year to take math courses.
3. Students who are not on track to graduate can transfer to another high school. We have had students do this in the past. They have often already met the other school's graduation requirements and can take electives for their final semester of their senior year.

## **Student and Parent/Guardian Expectations**

### **All students are expected to:**

- Expected to be challenged on a daily basis:
  - Students should be committed to moving through materials at a demanding rate and have the ability to advocate for themselves as needed. Students will need to be able to manage their time wisely and be committed to spending a lot of time on their school work, both during school and out of school.
- Complete their assignments daily:
  - Expected amount of daily homework for a **MIDDLE SCHOOL student** is approximately **1½ - 2 hours**.  
*These are estimates that may vary between students for different subjects*
  - Expected amount of daily homework for a **HIGH SCHOOL student** is approximately **2 - 3 hours**.  
*These estimates may vary significantly for high school students who enroll in Advanced Placement (AP) courses.*
- Write assignments in some sort of an organizer.
  - Teachers often instruct students at the beginning of every class to write assignments down.
- Check teacher websites and Google Classroom.
- Be prepared for tests.
  - Students usually know about major tests one to two weeks before the test and need to make sure they study every night for at least 10-15 minutes until the night before the test, when they should study for a longer time.
  - Check the MSA test and community calendar. Problem solve when having trouble with homework.
  - Students should try this progression of steps: Look at their notes, look at the class website, contact the teacher in a timely manner, check in with the teacher during teacher office hours (before or after school), or contact a classmate for help.
- Manage their part in group projects.
  - When completing group projects, students are expected to use in-class time wisely, communicate with their project partners outside of class (phone, email, messaging, etc.), and communicate any problems or concerns promptly with their teacher.
- Pace themselves when working on projects.
  - Teachers usually chunk larger projects into smaller pieces, and students need to stay on top of those smaller pieces so they are not overwhelmed by the final due date.
- To prioritize school work over extra-curricular activities.
  - Schoolwork should come first. Students are expected to complete their assignments, even if they have many activities in one evening.

- Turn in work on time:
  - In middle school, late work receives point reductions/deductions.
  - In high school classes, teachers have discretion on whether to give credit on late work.
- Be respectful to others.
  - Students must take responsibility for their actions, for their community, and must follow the MSA Student Handbook.

**All Parents/Guardians are expected to:**

- **Be aware of the academic challenges at MSA.**
  - If your student struggles with school, you will be expected to help your student with study skills and organization.
- Read the school announcements daily.
- Provide a place for your student to study.
- Read their student’s organizer daily and help their student create a daily schedule to get all of their homework completed in a timely manner.
  - That can be a lot for a younger student to understand, and they need reminders to reinforce the message at home.
- Provide the resources to help students complete their assignments but not to do the work for the students.
  - This includes picking up a computer and turning all forms in before the first day of school.
- Help students balance their activities with their schoolwork by not allowing students to be over-scheduled.
  - Schoolwork should come first. Students are expected to complete their assignments, even if they have many activities in one evening.
- Check Skyward Family Access and class websites as necessary and contact teachers if you have any questions.
  - Parents may set up Skyward notifications if a student earns a grade below a certain level.
- Volunteer at MSA in whatever ways are possible.

**Additional Information**

Visit the MSA website at [mnmsa.org/Current Families/Handbooks and Guides](http://mnmsa.org/Current Families/Handbooks and Guides) to read about the following information:

- MSA Course Guide to see the progression from grade to grade
- Student Handbook

By signing below the parent/guardian and student acknowledge they have read the above Academic Expectations and Guide to Success at MSA:

Parent/guardian signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_