



## San Marcos High School

### Choosing classes for 9<sup>th</sup> grade: Information and FAQs

#### SMUSD graduation requirements for the Class of 2023

\*indicates requirement is different from those of the classes of 2019 and earlier

Subject	Number of years	Number of credits
English	4 years	40 credits
Math *	3 years (must include Algebra 1 and Geometry)	30 credits
Social Studies * (required in grades 10-12)	3 years (10 <sup>th</sup> grade World History, 11 <sup>th</sup> grade U.S. History and 12 <sup>th</sup> grade Government/Economics)	30 credits
Science	2 years (one life science, one physical science)	20 credits
World Languages *	2 years (OR 1 year of a level 2 course. Successful completion of 10 credits of CTE+ may count for 1 year of WL <u>or</u> VAPA+)	20 credits
Visual/Performing Arts (VAPA) *	1 year (Successful completion of 10 credits of CTE may count for 1 year of WL <u>or</u> VAPA)	10 credits
Physical Education	2 years	20 credits
Electives	Any area of study above the minimum graduation requirements in that subject area	70 credits
		230 credits (grade of D or better required to earn credit for a course)

+ CTE = Career Technical Education

+ VAPA = Visual and Performing Art

#### Minimum A-G requirements for CSU/UC admissions

(Independent/private school requirements vary. Students should consult each university's website)

Students must earn a C or better in these courses

Subject	Number of years	Notes
A – History/Social Science	2 years	SMHS requires 3 years for graduation.
B – English	4 years	Same as SMHS graduation requirement
C- Mathematics	3 years	Geometry and Algebra 2 both required coursework. 4 years highly recommended
D – Laboratory Science	2 years	Two out of three disciplines: Biology, Chemistry and Physics 3-4 years recommended
E – Language other than English	2 years	Must be the same language or equivalent to the 2 <sup>nd</sup> level of HS instruction. 3-4 years recommended
F – Visual and Performing Arts	1 year	Chosen from dance, music, theater or visual arts
G – College-preparatory elective	1 year	SMHS course titles followed by (P), (AP) or (H) are considered college preparatory



**SAN MARCOS HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELING DEPARTMENT**  
**Frequently Asked Questions while choosing courses for 9<sup>th</sup> grade**

Please see the Class of 2023 graduation requirements and  
the University A-G requirements listed in this packet

- **How many classes will my 9<sup>th</sup> grader take?** All 9<sup>th</sup> graders will have six classes. Students in Marching Band will also have a 7<sup>th</sup> period band class. 9<sup>th</sup> graders must take English, math, fulfill the PE requirement (options below), a science (Biology of the Living Earth or Agricultural Biology) and then have two electives (many choose to start their world language requirement and then choose one additional elective or are assigned to Algebra support by their 8<sup>th</sup> grade math teacher.
- **What is this new course “Biology of the Living Earth”? Don’t freshmen take Biology?** California has adopted the Next Generation Science Standards. Biology of the Living Earth explores relationships between the living and nonliving components of Earth’s systems. By using science and engineering practices, cross-cutting disciplinary concepts, and evidence from experiments, research, and observations, students will learn how to formulate questions, evaluate claims, and develop models to make interpretations and investigate the natural world. This course meets the life science requirement for college admissions and graduation.
- **What is the difference between AP/Honors and college prep?** College prep courses meet requirements for four-year university subject area admissions. Honors/AP classes are more advanced, move at a faster pace, and require a more rigorous workload. They attract students who can learn independently and do not require a lot of repetition of new material. More information about each Honors/AP course can be found on the school website as well as the digital course catalog on the counseling page.
- **How can my student learn more about the expectations and content in SMHS AP/Honors courses?**  
Go to the SMHS home page: [www.sanmarcoshigh.org](http://www.sanmarcoshigh.org). On the left side under Site Shortcuts, go to “#CHALLENGEACCEPTED” For each course students can see a sample course syllabus, which provides a course overview and course goals. Then students can click on “Testimonials” for each AP/Honors course. Here you can read how SMHS students rated the course in four key areas:
  1. The Level of Difficulty of this Course
  2. The Time Commitment to this Course Outside of School
  3. The Amount of Academic Supports this Course Provides
  4. The Continued Level of Interest in this CourseYou can also read SMHS students’ comments:
  1. “What I Wish I Knew Before Entering the Course”
  2. “Advice for Future Students”

- **Should my student take all honors courses?** *It is not necessary to take all honors or AP courses in order to be admitted to a four-year university; however highly selective universities do expect rigorous coursework. SMHS recommends that students take more advanced courses in subject areas in which they have an aptitude or passion. Ideally, a student finds a healthy balance between academics, extracurricular activities, social time and relaxation. Students should take into account their academic strengths and outside activities that will affect their study time. Colleges make the same recommendation.*
- **Now that 9<sup>th</sup> grade history is no longer required for graduation, should my student take it?** *Students who plan to take 10<sup>th</sup> grade AP World History should be enrolled in a 9<sup>th</sup> grade honors history to prepare for the curriculum and learn about the tools and study skills they will need in AP World. Students who enroll in any of these advanced social science courses will not have a lower level course to replace history. It is considered an elective and is year-long. Students will not be able to drop. Please choose carefully and be certain that you can complete this rigorous coursework.*
- **Can a student take 9<sup>th</sup> grade history and then not take World History in 10<sup>th</sup> grade?** *No, 10<sup>th</sup> grade World History is a district graduation requirement (along with 11<sup>th</sup> grade U.S. History and 12<sup>th</sup> grade Government) and must be successfully completed even if a student completed a year of 9<sup>th</sup> grade history.*
- **Can students drop or change courses once school has started?** *SMHS courses are year-long courses. Course changes will not be permitted once school starts because the class periods and teacher staffing will be set based on student requests from the previous spring. As in past years, we anticipate that all electives will be closed/full once school begins. Before choosing AP/Honors courses, please be sure to see the course requirements and information on the school website in order to make an informed decision.*
- **Can we request a specific teacher or class period?** *In order to fairly accommodate a population of approximately 3,600 students, school policy does not allow for teacher requests. Students are scheduled into classes randomly by the computer and in order of grade level (seniors get priority, then juniors, etc.) Due to the limited number of sections we can offer, an elective class may fill so students are not scheduled into their 1<sup>st</sup> choice elective; therefore, all students are asked to provide alternates.*
- **My student is an athlete. Does he/she have to take PE? What about independent study PE (ISPE)?** *SMUSD requires two years of PE, which can be fulfilled with PE, Dance, 4 years of Marching Band, or AFJROTC. Weight Training or Football/Baseball/Basketball Team Sports may be taken beginning in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. ISPE is only for pre-Olympic level athletes who must submit an application and must be approved in the spring. More information about the ISPE program can be found on through the ISPE link on the bottom left side of the Counseling page on the school's website.*
- **How is math placement determined for incoming 9<sup>th</sup> graders?** *9<sup>th</sup> graders are placed in high school math by their 8<sup>th</sup> grade math teacher's recommendation, which is determined by results from the spring MDTP and the student's course grade. Teachers may also recommend an Algebra Support course in place of one of the student's electives. Please visit: <http://smusd.org> → Resources → Secondary Math Standards*

- **What college resources does the counseling office provide for students and parents?**

*The SMHS counseling department offers numerous parent college workshops and seminars. Due to the size of the school, we offer these presentations in a group format. The schedule is posted on the College and Career Center website, the SMHS website and in the counseling newsletter (information below). Counselors conduct classroom presentations, then hold one-on-one meetings with each student during the course selection period in the spring. Counselors also encourage students to attend walk-in office hours at break, lunch and after school.*

- *In senior year, students are invited to attend college application and financial aid workshops (CSU, UC, Common App, community college and FAFSA).*
- *We have a College and Career Center (C3) where students and parents can obtain information on work permits, financial aid, college, jobs, military, scholarships etc. (760) 290- 2226*
- *Our district has partnered with the California College Guidance Initiative (CCGI). Through this partnership, each SMUSD student will have a personalized account on [www.californiacolleges.edu](http://www.californiacolleges.edu). Students can create their four-year plan of study, research their interests, discover potential careers, access financial aid resources and conduct college searches.*
- *Please read our monthly newsletter on the counseling page of the school website: [www.sanmarcoshigh.org](http://www.sanmarcoshigh.org) → Departments → Counseling → SMHS Counseling Department Newsletter.*
- *Please sign up for counseling office text updates via Remind 101: Text @smhscoun to 81010*

- **What do we do if we have questions about what courses to take?** *Counselors will meet one- on-one with every 8<sup>th</sup> grader during course selection*

***San Elijo Middle School: March 28<sup>th</sup>***

***Double Peak School: April 11th***

***San Marcos Middle School: March 27th.***

*This is the best time for your child to ask questions. Students and/or parents can also email the middle school or high school counselor with questions. Due to course selection with current SMHS students, counselors will be unable to meet with families of incoming 9<sup>th</sup> graders. Please see the online course catalog for course descriptions and prerequisites: [www.sanmarcoshigh.org](http://www.sanmarcoshigh.org) →Departments →Counseling*

- **Who is my student's counselor?**

*Due to an increase in enrollment and caseload balancing, the current alpha assignments for counselors may change for the 2019-2020 school year.*

*Current (2018-2019) counselor assignments by last name:*

9<sup>th</sup> Grade Only A – Ki

[erika.yi@smusd.org](mailto:erika.yi@smusd.org)

9<sup>th</sup> Grade Only KI - Z

[kristi.harlig@smusd.org](mailto:kristi.harlig@smusd.org)

10<sup>th</sup>-12 Grade A - Con

[lori.nguyen@smusd.org](mailto:lori.nguyen@smusd.org)

EL Grades 9 – 12/AVID 9th/ 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> Co - Eng

[ruben.escobar@smusd.org](mailto:ruben.escobar@smusd.org)

10<sup>th</sup>-12 Grade Enr – Joh

[leandro.galaz@smusd.org](mailto:leandro.galaz@smusd.org)

10<sup>th</sup>-12 Grade Jon – M

[janet.paul@smusd.org](mailto:janet.paul@smusd.org)

10<sup>th</sup>-12 Grade N - Sca

[laura.perez@smusd.org](mailto:laura.perez@smusd.org)

10<sup>th</sup>-12 Grade Sch - Z

[lisa.berry@smusd.org](mailto:lisa.berry@smusd.org)

