

Highway to High School

This document was created to serve as a resource for 8th graders who are about to enter Mountain View High School (MVHS) and their parents. Families whose students plan to attend Los Altos High School should visit the Egan Junior High home page www.eganschool.org, which has a link to the counterpart to this document, also titled *Highway to Highschool*.

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General sources of information:

There are several good sources of information about MVHS that can help incoming freshmen and their families prepare for the year ahead.

MVHS website	Go to www.mv.mvla.net . On the left hand side of the home page, you'll find links to Academic Departments, Athletics, Performing Arts, Calendar, etc. (Try using the Site Map if navigating the site seems daunting.)
MVLA District website	www.mvla.net
E-mail lists	E-lists are the primary way to keep informed about high school news, parent organizations, classes, performing arts, athletic teams, clubs, and volunteer activities for parents. New for the 2008-09 school year, the MVHS PTSA is offering a class of 2012 e-list for incoming 9 th graders and their families. Enrollment in e-lists is not automatic. Each student and family must subscribe to specific e-lists at the school website. Once you subscribe to an e-list, you must also respond to the confirmation e-mail message to be added to the list. To subscribe, go to mvhs.elists.mvla.net
<i>Course Selection Guide</i>	This guide lists details of courses offered, pre-requisites, and UC/CSU requirements. A hard copy is given to students in the spring of their 8 th grade year. The MVHS home page links to a PDF of the document.
<i>Student Handbook</i>	This handbook is distributed to all students during freshman orientation/book pickup before school starts. It is not currently available on the website.
Instrumental music handbooks	These are given to music students at the beginning of the school year. They are also available online. From the MVHS home page, click on Performing Arts in the left hand menu. On the next page, click on Instrumental Music in the left hand menu. This is the instrumental music website, which provides a wealth of information about instrumental music offerings. From here, click on Important Documents in the left hand menu. Scroll down the page and you should find links to PDFs of the <i>Instrumental Music Manual</i> and the <i>Marching Band Manual</i> .

<i>MVHS Athletic Handbook</i>	Students participating in after school sports receive this handbook. It is also available online. From the MVHS home page, click on Athletics in the left hand menu. This takes you to the Athletics website. Scroll down and look under Documents in the left hand menu. Click on Handbook. This will take you to a PDF of the <i>Handbook</i> as well as links to the forms referenced in the <i>Handbook</i> .
<i>The Oracle</i>	There's a link to the latest issue of this student newspaper under Useful Links on the MVHS home page.
<i>News and Views</i>	This is the monthly school newsletter. You can sign up on an e-list to receive <i>News and Views</i> by e-mail instead of hard copy.
Daily Bulletins	Daily Announcements are read over the loudspeaker. The Daily Bulletin is a text version of the announcements. You can sign up on an e-list to receive them by e-mail. There is also a link on the home page (left hand menu: Daily Bulletin)
Student Information System (SIS)	SIS is similar to PowerSchool; teachers post grades and assignments. You can access it from the MVHS home page.
Naviance Family Connection	Naviance is a web-based college & career planning service brought to you by the College and Career Center. You can access it from the MVHS home page.
E-mail firstname.lastname@mvla.net	E-mail is the best way to contact high school teachers and staff. Most of the staff check their e-mail regularly, and respond within a day. All district e-mail addresses follow this format.

Timeline / Important Dates

These events take place every year, although dates vary. This timeline should give you an idea of when to start watching the school newsletters and calendars for events of interest.

October	Begin looking for communication from MVHS about registration
Dec - Feb	Open Enrollment MVLA (intra-district transfers)
January	High School Parent/Student Orientation Night at MVHS
February	Shadowing MVHS students (generally reserved for students new to the area or coming from private school)
February	Band Bash (Blach students rehearse and perform with MVHS Symphonic Band)
February	String Fling (Blach students rehearse and perform with MVHS Orchestra)
February	High school counselors come to Blach to talk with 8 th grade students, answer questions and review course selection sheets.
February	Blach students submit course selection sheets
Spring	MVHS mails course requests to students' homes for confirmation
Early August	Final class schedule is mailed home.
Week before 1 st day	Marching Band and Color Guard go to camp
Week before 1 st day	Fall sports officially begin (some may start practice earlier)
Week before 1 st day	Freshman orientation
Mid-August	First day of classes
Early September	Fall Sports Parent Meeting
Early September	Back to School Night
Early November	Parent/Teacher conferences

What happens over the summer before high school starts?

Typically, the following take place for all incoming freshmen **the week before** the first day of school, so plan your vacations accordingly:

- Freshman orientation
- Registration packet pickup -- Registration packets contain general information and forms. Some of the forms must be returned on the first day of school, so be sure to pay attention to the due dates! Packets must be picked up at MVHS. If you are not able to get your packet on “packet pickup day,” you can arrange to get your registration packet from the Administration office.
- Registration
- Textbook pickup
- Student photos and ID cards

You should receive mail from the high school during the summer with specific instructions, times and dates.

If your student signed up for Marching Band, Color Guard, or Fall sports, you should join those e-lists this spring. Those groups start holding practice sessions before school starts so you will want to be in the loop.

The MVHS Marching Band and Color Guard go to Band Camp the week before school, so there will be special registration instructions for those students. Optional marching training days are usually offered to new band students the week before Band Camp. Color Guard typically begins practice before band camp as well.

The fall sports season generally starts the week that school starts. Students should be available the week beforehand for meetings, uniform issue, etc. They must also have all paperwork and physicals completed and ready to turn in on or before the first day of practice. Some sports hold optional practices earlier in the summer (Cross Country starts optional running practice as early as July). Fall sports are:

- Boys: Football, Water polo
- Girls: Tennis, Volleyball, Water polo
- Co-ed: Cross Country

A note about class schedules. You will have the opportunity to confirm the classes your student signed up for before the end of the current school year. However, you will receive the final schedule of classes in the mail just before school starts. It isn't uncommon for students to want to change their schedules to correct an error or to move a free period to a more convenient time. It is a good idea to contact your student's counselor as soon as you know you want to make a change, but don't expect the change to take effect right away. It is difficult (but not impossible) to make changes before the first day of school, even if a mistake was made on the schedule. Because the school must have an accurate headcount on the first day of school, counselors prefer to have your student attend the first day of classes according to the schedule you receive, and then make any necessary changes. Most students' schedules are settled within the first couple of days.

What is open campus?

Open campus means that students are free to come and go anytime they are not assigned to be in class. Students must still be signed in/out by a parent for doctor appointments, etc. The caveat is that the attendance policy is very strict for absences and for tardies. A student going off campus for lunch, for example, needs to be careful to return to the next period without being tardy. MVHS has a cafeteria, and high school students often still bring their own lunches from home.

What is a block schedule?

The daily schedule has zero through 7th period, although most students go to school for fewer periods in the day. Wednesdays and Thursdays have block scheduling: Wednesdays students have only their odd periods and Thursdays their even periods. On Wednesdays, first period starts 50 minutes later than the other days, and on Thursdays students finish 6th period an hour earlier. This block scheduling allows for longer class

sessions on those days, ideal for science labs, etc. Check the home page (**Daily Bell Schedule** under **Useful Links**) for the exact schedule and to coordinate carpools or public bus schedules.

How many years of PE class must my student take (or, what should I know about Athletics)?

MVHS requires 20 units of PE, and PE is required freshman year. The rest of the PE requirement can be fulfilled between the 10th and 12th grades. Health is not integrated with PE. Students must wear a PE uniform, which can be purchased from the bookkeeper at the beginning of the school year. If your student wants to enroll in PE for every quarter of his/her freshman and sophomore years, he or she is "golden." S/he will earn 2.5 credits each quarter, and will complete 20 units by the end of the sophomore year. There are different options if your student a) participates in the Athletics (after-school sports) program, b) plays an instrument in the Marching Band, or c) wants to take a dance class.

Athletics for PE credit: Students (including freshmen) can get out of PE class during the actual time they are involved in a sport. As soon as the sport's season ends, if a student has PE in their schedule s/he once again attends class. Students receive 2.5 credits toward PE for each season of an after-school sport they complete. Students may sign up and try out for any sport, but must maintain a 2.0 GPA, earn a minimum of 20 credits in the previous grading period, and be enrolled in a minimum of 5 classes.

In addition, students must have yearly physicals, have medical insurance (school insurance may be purchased at the bookkeeper's office), purchase an ASB (Associated Student Body) card, and pay a \$100.00 transportation fee or obtain a waiver from the Athletic Director. Students must sign up **in advance** for their sport so that the counselors can schedule their classes appropriately. Counselors warn that class schedules will not be adjusted at a later date to accommodate sport participation. Most sports start during 7th period. Teams do make cuts; students are not guaranteed a place on any team, although some sports (e.g., Track) have larger teams that can accommodate more students than others (e.g., Soccer). Many sports hold practices and games over school breaks, so be sure to check the team's calendar before making vacation plans.

MVHS offers an extensive sports program:

Boys: Football, Water Polo, Basketball, Soccer, Wrestling, Tennis, Baseball, Swimming/Diving

Girls: Water Polo, Tennis, Volleyball, Basketball, Soccer, Softball, Swimming/Diving

Co-Ed: Cross Country, Badminton, Golf, Track

The fall sports season runs from August – October, and practices for the fall sports begin prior to the start of school.

The winter sports season runs from November – February, and the spring sports season runs from January – May.

Marching Band PE credit: Sophomores who play an instrument in the Marching Band may receive 2.5 physical education credits and 2.5 Marching Band credits instead of 5 Marching Band credits. Students can only take this option if they are not concurrently enrolled in PE class. Note that Marching Band lasts for two quarters, and the student only receives one quarter's worth of PE credit (the second quarter is counted as a Fine Art). This option only applies to sophomores; freshmen and upperclassmen are not eligible. Color Guard (also known as the "Auxiliary Unit") is considered a Fine Art and does not count toward PE.

Dance PE credit: After Freshman year, students can sign up for dance classes that count as PE electives. If taken Freshman year, dance counts as a Fine Art, not PE.

What kinds of academic help are available for my student?

The high school offers free services at its on-site tutorial center. Many dedicated volunteer tutors (student and adult) assist students throughout the day and after school. Make sure your student is aware of this resource and uses it as needed. In addition, each student is assigned a guidance counselor (the same one for all 4 years) who can help him/her with course selection, progress towards graduation, summer opportunities and more. All students meet with their counselor at least one time per year and parents are encouraged to attend. Additional meetings may be set up if needed.

What does the College and Career Center offer?

College Library & Meeting Room

- Contains college guides, catalogs, videos, scholarship information
- Hosts College Admission representatives visiting MVHS (listed in Family Connection)
- Holds College Open Houses and on-campus Admissions events;

PSAT, SAT & ACT Info

- Registration info; flyers for test prep courses; practice SAT/ACT booklets and prep books

Financial Aid Info

Job Info and Volunteer Opportunities

California Scholarship Federation (honor society) applications

Summer college programs and internships.

How can parents help out at MVHS?

At MVHS, parents have the opportunity to help our kids in many different ways. Here are some of the ways you can get involved:

If you want to see your kid in action, help out with the marching band, drama, or choir. Some sports teams rely on volunteers (for example, the track team needs lots of people to run home meets). Offer to chaperone a field trip if a class is taking one.

The Tutorial Center is always looking for adults willing to tutor students in a wide variety of subjects. If you have a college degree you probably have what it takes to be of assistance. In addition, tutors introduce/reinforce successful study habits as well as being positive role models. Contact George St. Clair, Coordinator, at 940-4624 or george.stclair@mvla.net.

If you prefer to work behind-the-scenes, there are other things you can do that are tremendously meaningful for the students. For example, you can sign up to work in the College and Career Center (CCC), the school library, or the attendance office.

In most cases, the way to sign up to help is through the E-list page on the MVHS website. On the home page, click on **Elists** in the left hand navigation menu. This will take you to a registration page where you enter your name and e-mail address. Then simply check the box next to each e-list you are interested in joining. The staff person or volunteer in charge of the activity will use the e-list to contact members and get things organized.

What is the difference between AP and Honors classes?

AP (Advanced Placement) Courses – College level courses offered in a high school setting using a national curriculum. An AP exam is given in the spring. Students who score 3 or higher (out of 5) pass the exam and may be eligible for college credit. (Colleges have individual policies for awarding full, partial, or no credit for AP courses taken in high school.) AP classes receive weighted credit in a student's weighted GPA.

Honors Courses – Courses that are taught at the high school level but move at a faster pace, cover more material, and require more homework. New in 2008, all Honors classes at MVHS receive weighted credit in a student's weighted GPA.

MVHS has an open enrollment policy for taking AP or Honors classes, meaning that there are no specific grade requirements that students must meet to take Honors/AP classes. Students **may** transfer out of an Honors/AP class if they discover that it is more work than expected, however the window of time to make the transition is limited to a few weeks after the start of the school year, and there are no guarantees that there will be room in the regular college-prep level classes for a given subject. (Students may withdraw from the course later in the year, but the withdrawal will show on their transcript.) Students are encouraged to think carefully about the amount of academic challenge and homework they're prepared to handle before signing up for multiple Honors/AP classes.

Freshmen have limited options in advanced coursework. They can take Geometry Honors, Chemistry Honors, and Spanish II Honors. No AP classes are offered to Freshmen.

What are weighted grades?

MVHS calculates a student's GPA in two ways: unweighted and weighted. Both GPAs appear on the student's official transcript. Weighted classes receive an extra point in the weighted GPA calculation. For example, a "B" in AP English would be worth 3.0 unweighted, 4.0 weighted. UCs consider weighted grades for the sophomore and junior years. Other colleges have their own policies regarding weighted versus unweighted GPAs. Weighted grades do not appear on a student's report card, and they do not alter the actual letter grade earned in a class.

How can students pursue their individual interests in high school?

MVHS offers many different ways for kids to explore their interests and get involved in a variety of activities.

Classes: If your student loves science, she can plunge right into Chemistry Honors in Freshman year. Physics students create contraptions to "walk on water" across the school pool. Bio AP offers the opportunity to perform an optional research project, working with a mentor outside the school. For example, one student worked with a physician at Stanford Hospital researching prostate cancer. Classes offered to young artists include Ceramics, Photography, and Painting. Music aficionados can participate in three levels of choir, Marching Band, Orchestra, or several select instrumental groups. Dancers can join the Color Guard, or take Jazz Dance. There's something for everyone, and a lot to choose from, so encourage your student to spend some time reading the *Course Selection Guide*, which is available online on the MVHS home page.

Athletics: MVHS offers a variety of sports for active students. See the "How many years of PE class must my student take (or, what should I know about Athletics)?" section of this document. You can also look on the web site under **Athletics** for a listing of the sports and for more information.

Clubs: Dozens of extra-curricular clubs complement classes and athletics. There are clubs dedicated to academic interests like French Club and Book Club. There are clubs devoted to sports that are not offered through the athletic program, like Ultimate Frisbee and Dragon Boating. There are community service

clubs like the Key Club (linked to the Kiwanis), the Leos (linked to the Lion's Club), and Unidos (tutoring children whose first language is Spanish). There are some just-for-fun clubs like the Harry Potter club. It is relatively easy to start a club at MVHS, so if your student's passion is not addressed by an existing club, he can start his own. Students are given more information about clubs at the beginning of the school year. Meanwhile, you and your student can look on the web site (click on **Student Activities**, then click on **Clubs**) for a listing of the current year's clubs, since there is some turnover from year to year. You can also look on the e-list page, since many clubs communicate via e-lists.

While students are encouraged to participate, they should be aware of the time commitment associated with the activities they choose. Some classes, notably Honors and AP classes, entail a heavy homework load. Sports and music take on more intensity at the high school level. Try-outs, camps, practices and other mandatory activities for participation can span weekends, later into school nights and also into holiday and vacation periods. Clubs vary widely in the amount of time students spend on them. Some clubs like the *Oracle* and Dance Spectrum meet during class periods as well as after school. Some students may be happy joining just one club, others with good time management skills thrive in multiple activities. Keeping these things in mind, students can take advantage of the many opportunities offered by MVHS to get involved, meet new people, and have a wonderful high school experience.