

PINEY GROVE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Pamela Pajerski

Principal

Mitchell Lesinski

Assistant Administrator

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This letter is intended to provide an overview of the information for the course selection and registration processes for the 2018-2019 school year for students who will be enrolled at Piney Grove Middle School. Should you have additional questions or concerns, please feel free to contact your student's current teachers or any of the counselors or administrators at Piney Grove based on the information provided below.

Our mission at Piney Grove is to "Embrace Opportunities, Unlock Potential and Inspire Excellence" among ALL learners in our school. A great number of those opportunities exist in our academic classrooms, while others may happen in our Connections classes, on the athletic fields or with our extracurricular and co-curricular clubs and activities. While we want our students to embrace those opportunities for which they hold true passions and deep interest, we also want our students to give consideration for balance in their academic, social and personal lives. To support families in making informed decisions about student schedules, including the relative strengths and weaknesses that students hold and the course offerings available to them, we offer the information included in this packet for consideration.

In the attached pages, you will find information including:

- Brief descriptions of our Connections Offerings, including the General Connections courses and those that are available for students to request (Electives).
- Considerations for students wishing to pursue Advanced Studies courses.
- Sample student schedules.
- A course selection worksheet.
- Course recommendations for each student to inform course selection, including Advanced Studies and Elective Classes (Connections).

It is our goal that every student take advantage of their time at Piney Grove Middle School to seek out their interests and passions, and pursue the opportunities to grow as learners. We hope that you will reach out to us should you have any questions or need any support in planning for next year.

PGMS Administrators		PGMS Counseling Staff	
Mrs. Jill Short Rising 6 th Grade	jshort2@forsyth.k12.ga.us Ext. 381511	Mr. Randolph Thrower Students, Last Names A-K rthrower@forsyth.k12.ga.us Ext 381005	Ms. Kristen Johnson Students, Last Names L – Z kljohnson@forsyth.k12.ga.us Ext. 381007
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PGMS Connections Class Descriptions

“Embrace Opportunities, Unlock Potential, Inspire Excellence!”

General Connections Offerings (Grades 6, 7, 8)

Students will be enrolled in the General Connections Classes unless there are specific course requests for the elective courses listed below. Every effort is made for students to be exposed to each of these courses throughout the year and during the three years that students are enrolled at Piney Grove. Each of the General Connections Classes runs for one quarter and fills one period of a student’s schedule.

<u>Art</u>
<u>Business Essentials and Computer Literacy</u>
<u>Health Education</u>
<u>Engineering</u>
<u>Marketing</u>
<u>Physical Education</u>
Students should expect to be scheduled for multiple segments of Phys Ed during the school year.

Connections Offerings - Elective Classes

Elective classes are chosen by students as a part of their course requests. All efforts are made to satisfy requests for these courses, though class size limits and teacher recommendation/placement may impact a student’s ability to enroll in these courses. Courses may be quarter-long, semester-long or year-long.

<u>Band – Year-Long (Grades 6, 7, 8)</u> Students will be placed in band sections based on auditions and/or instrument-alike groupings. Auditions/performance evaluations will be conducted for students joining band after 6 th Grade. Students who successfully complete Beginning Band I (8 th Grade) may earn a High School Credit. Performances outside of the regular school day may count as a portion of the student’s overall grade.
<u>Chorus – Year-Long (Grades 6, 7, 8)</u> Auditions/performance evaluations will be conducted for students joining chorus after 6 th Grade. Students who successfully complete Beg. Mixed Chorus (8 th Grade) may earn a High School Credit. Performances outside of the regular school day may count as a portion of the student’s overall grade.
<u>Drama – Semester-Long (Grades 6, 7)</u> Students in Drama will be introduced to the fundamentals of acting, including stage directions, reviewing scripts, delivering monologues and participating in small group performances. Participation in PGMS stage productions requires additional auditions which are open to all students.
<u>Junior Leadership Core (Peer Leaders) – Quarter-Long (Grades 6, 7, 8)</u> Piney Grove is host to several Specialized Instruction Classrooms, serving students with a wide range of physical and intellectual disabilities. Students who register for Junior Leadership Core will have the opportunity to work with students in our Mild/Moderate Intellectual Disability and Severe/Profound Intellectual Disability classrooms, providing valuable generalization opportunities for those students to work with their grade-level typical peer students. These Peer Leaders are also among the first to attend field trips, including Community Based Instruction and Special Olympics with their peers. This course is a Non-Graded Elective course, and additional parent permission may be required.
<u>Video Production – Semester-Long (Grade 8) – APPLICATION REQUIRED</u> Students in Video Production will work to create daily morning announcements, and should expect to spend time both in front of and behind the camera.
<u>Yearbook – Year-Long (Grades 7, 8) – APPLICATION REQUIRED</u> Students in Yearbook will work to create the PGMS Yearbook for the 2018-19 School Year.
<u>Weight Training – Quarter-Long (Grades 6, 7, 8) – ADDITIONAL PARENT PERMISSION REQUIRED</u> Students in Weight Training will not be scheduled for General Physical Education segments. Students who elect to take Weight Training will be scheduled for multiple segments during the year. Students wishing to play on the PGMS Football team next year are encouraged to register for Weight Training.

PGMS Advanced Studies Course Offerings

“Embrace Opportunities, Unlock Potential, Inspire Excellence!”

We are pleased to offer Advanced Studies courses in all subjects (English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies) for the upcoming school year. Students will have the opportunity to enroll in any or all of these courses, based on their interests/passions AND demonstrated abilities in each subject. Consideration should be made for the overall load that students are taking on as a part of their schedule. Additional guidance is available, including the teacher recommendations and sample student schedules provided in this packet.

Should students show signs of social or academic struggle, it may be necessary for students to withdraw from one or more Advanced Studies course. Those determinations can be made by families, with guidance and recommendations made by teachers, within the first quarter of the school year.

At Piney Grove Middle School, students may enroll in Advanced Studies courses based on their passions and interests in the subject matter, as well as their pursuit of additional academic challenge beyond the typical course offerings at the middle school level. This chance to select the academic offering that suits your interest and abilities aligns to the Forsyth County Schools Learner Profile, and our continuing work here at Piney Grove to offer “personalized” learning for our students through course selection.

For students and parents, we would offer the following factors to consider as you make course requests.

- Research suggests that students who pursue and achieve success in a challenging curriculum in middle school, are better prepared as they enter high school, and are more likely to be successful throughout their high school career.
- Pursuing the most academically rigorous course schedule possible may not be beneficial for every student. Be sure to consider...
 - Outside of school interests and commitments, including family and friends?
 - Overall academic ability, maturity and work habits of the individual student?
 - Willingness to pursue challenge if grades start to slump?
 - Increased outside of class load (i.e. homework) and higher expectations for student work (including collaboration with peers and more inquiry-driven learning).
 - What are the ultimate goals that students have for themselves in high school and beyond? How can your middle school courses help to set you up to meet those goals?
- The key factors in student success are individual student motivation, along with appropriate support from parents and teachers based on the student’s academic needs.
 - To provide families with additional information about student readiness, your student’s current teachers have made course recommendations based on information available to them, including but not limited to standardized test data and classroom performance.

In order to support the social and emotional development of our students, we do ask that families have conversations about what the STUDENT wishes to get out of their middle school experience. More and more, we are seeing the benefits of a balanced student schedule, where academic intensity is given equal consideration to the opportunity to have fun, enjoy time with family and friends outside of school, and participate in any number of extracurricular clubs and activities that are offered here at Piney Grove. The sample student schedules provided on the reverse of this page are intended to illustrate different ways that students pursue the schedule that is right for them through annual course selection.

PGMS – Sample Student Schedules (with Schedule Rotation)

Student A – Typical, On-Level Student (*6th Grade Sample*)

Period	Quarter One	Quarter Two	Quarter Three	Quarter Four
GT	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom
1	ELA	Phys Ed	Literacy	ELA
2	Math	Engineering	Social Studies	Math
3	Science	Science	Science	Science
4	Literacy	ELA	Phys Ed	Literacy
5	Social Studies	Math	Health	Social Studies
6	Phys Ed	Literacy	ELA	Phys Ed
7	Art	Social Studies	Math	Marketing

Many students follow a typical, on-level path through middle school, and they will be prepared for high school when they leave PGMS. All courses address the required course standards for each content area.

Student B – Advanced Curriculum Student, Moderate Academic Load (*7th Grade Sample*)

Period	Quarter One	Quarter Two	Quarter Three	Quarter Four
GT	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom
1	Advanced SS	Science	Phys Ed	Advanced SS
2	Math	Literacy	Art	Math
3	Advanced ELA	Advanced ELA	Advanced ELA	Advanced ELA
4	Drama	Advanced SS	Science	Phys Ed
5	Phys Ed	Math	Literacy	Business Ed
6	Science	Drama	Advanced SS	Science
7	Literacy	Phys Ed	Math	Literacy

Many students are interested in pursuing an additional academic load, and they'll elect to enroll in one or more Advanced Studies courses. For Student B, they have passions and interests in ELA and Social Studies, and they have requested to take on more of a challenge in those areas. They may not be as interested in pursuing advanced Math and Science, or they may be balancing their load against commitments that they have outside of school (i.e. Sports, Clubs, Rehearsals, Family commitments).

Student C – Advanced/Accelerated Curriculum, Heavy Academic Load (*8th Grade Sample*)

Period	Quarter One	Quarter Two	Quarter Three	Quarter Four
GT	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom	Homeroom
1	Yearbook	Algebra I*	Physical Science*	Yearbook
2	Art	Advanced SS	Advanced ELA	Marketing
3	Spanish I*	Spanish I*	Spanish I*	Spanish I*
4	Physical Science*	Yearbook	Algebra I*	Physical Science*
5	Advanced ELA	Phys Ed	Advanced SS	Advanced ELA
6	Algebra I*	Physical Science*	Yearbook	Algebra I*
7	Advanced SS	Advanced ELA	Phys Ed	Advanced SS

This academic load is not for every student, and careful consideration should be given before requesting a schedule like the one shown above. It may be that Student C can shoulder this load, but with three High School Credit (*) classes, and the additional time commitments of being on the Yearbook staff, some students may struggle to keep up with their work while maintaining balance outside of school.