

How are students placed into a math class?

There are five criteria used to place students:

- Recommendation from the previous teacher
- Test scores
 - Standardized test scores
 - VCMS' placement exam/final exam scores
- Classroom performance
- The time it takes to master concepts
- Enjoyment of the subject

Initial placement is based upon the first two criteria: Recommendation from the previous teacher and standardized test scores

- Recommendation from the previous teacher - First and foremost we rely on the year-long observation of the student's previous teacher to recommend where the student should be placed for the next school year. The teacher recommendation is used for both incoming students as well as continuing VCMS students.
- Standardized Test Scores - nationally normed tests based on grade level (not age)
 - Students will be considered for advanced coursework if the student scores in the 98th percentile or higher (equivalent to two grade levels or higher than their current grade level).
 - Students will be considered for honors coursework if the student scores in the 90th percentile or higher (equivalent to a grade level or higher than their current grade level).

Nationally normed summative tests used to help determine placement include:

- ACT Aspire - Math
- California Achievement Test (CAT) - Math total
- Iowa Assessments(ITBS, ITED)/Iowa Flex - Math; Math Total
- Otis-Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT 8) - Nonverbal
- Secondary School Admission Test (SSAT) - Math
- Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) - Total Math
- *STS Educational Development Series (ED Series) - Math; Quantitative
- *STS High School Placement Test (HSPT) - Cognitive Skills; Quantitative Skills
- Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement - Math Cluster

*Note: VCMS students take the STS Series fall and spring of sixth and seventh grades; and in the fall of eighth grade. VCMS eighth-grade students take the HSPT in winter.

Tests that do not qualify as tools for placement

- STAR Tests
- MAP Tests

If the student meets the requirement for initial placement in an advanced or honors course, the following three criteria are reviewed to make sure the student has the opportunity to master enough content to have a balance of successes and challenges while learning math.

- Classroom performance (as evidenced by the student's transcripts and final exam scores)
- The time it takes to master concepts (Is the child able to currently keep up with the pacing of the honors or advanced courses. The child may be able to complete the work, but can the child keep up with the class?)
- Enjoyment of the subject (If the child can do the work, and keep up with the pacing, does the child have a balance of successes and opportunities for growth, or is the child concentrating so hard on "getting the answer" that the child has no time to pause and enjoy the content?)

Final Placement Decisions - The final decision is made after watching the student in the math orientation classes. (Math orientation classes are typically held two to three times during the first two weeks of the school year.) This class time allows students, who might be on the cusp of two different levels, an opportunity to showcase their abilities in real time before the final decision is made.

After all considerations are reviewed to find the best overall fit for each student, the students are placed into their presumed math course (for the year).

Math 2024-2025

Math Progression from 6th Grade through 8th Grade

Grade Level	Grade Level	Honors	Advanced
6th Grade -Class -Textbook	6th Grade -Grade Level Math - <i>Big Ideas Math Modeling Real Life (6th Advanced)</i> by Ron Larson	6th Grade -Honors Math - <i>Big Ideas Math Modeling Real Life (6th Advanced)</i> by Ron Larson	6th Grade -Advanced Math - <i>Big Ideas Math Modeling Real Life (7th Advanced)</i> by Ron Larson
7th Grade -Class -Textbook	7th Grade -Grade Level Math - <i>Big Ideas Math Modeling Real Life (7th Advanced)</i> by Ron Larson	7th Grade -Honors Math - <i>Big Ideas Math Modeling Real Life (7th Advanced)</i> by Ron Larson	7th Grade -Advanced Math - <i>Elementary and Intermediate Algebra</i> by Jerome E. Kaufmann and Karen L. Schwitters
8th Grade -Class -Textbook	8th Grade -Grade Level Math - <i>Big Ideas Math Algebra 1</i> by Ron Larson	8th Grade -Honors Math - <i>Elementary and Intermediate Algebra</i> by Jerome E. Kaufmann and Karen L. Schwitters	8th Grade -Advanced Math - <i>Glencoe/McGraw Hill Geometry</i>
Anticipated level of Math in High School (Depending on performance in the other courses)	Students who master Algebra as an eighth grade student should complete: Pre-Calculus or Calculus I	Students who master Honors Algebra as an eighth grade student should complete: AP Calculus I or Calculus I	Students who master Geometry as an eighth grade student should complete: AP Calculus II or Calculus II

*Students who wish to take Geometry in ninth grade must take *and pass* the Algebra Challenge Exam.

**Students who wish to take Algebra 2 in ninth grade must take *and pass* the Algebra Challenge Exam. They must ALSO take *and pass* the Geometry Challenge Exam.

What is available for extra support? Struggling Students

Students who are struggling:

There are several opportunities for students who are struggling with a math concept, chapter, or unit.

Send an email: Let the teacher know you are struggling. Be as specific as you can and make sure to complete as much of the work as you can on your own. (Do not give up after the first difficult problem. Check them all and do the ones you can).

Ask for help in class: During class time, let the teacher know you have a question or are struggling, and be as specific as possible so you can use every minute of available time. However, remember the teacher needs to divide their time between all of the students in class, so be prepared to put in extra time if you are still struggling with concepts.

Ask for help during your teacher's office hours: Each teacher has drop-in office hours. For most teachers, office hours are the first few minutes after school or the ten minutes following dismissal.

Attend math study hall: There is a drop in math study hall every morning before school (7:25 - 7:45 a.m.) and after school every day except for early dismissal days.

Ask your parents to schedule a conference with you, your teacher, and with them. A conference allows more time to develop a partnership to help outline areas of need and develop an action plan to address those needs.

Engage the Math Department Head: The Math Department Head is the subject matter expert. Once you have shared your concerns with your teacher, the department head can be an additional math expert with whom you can ask for guidance and additional support materials.

Visit with other support staff - If you have tried to meet with the teacher, attend office hours, or study hall and you are still struggling, feel free to ask the Dean of Counseling or (the Dean of Academics) for help with academic support.

"Math is not a race."

What is available for extra support? Providing a Challenge

Students wanting challenge materials or to move to a higher level math course (who are not yet meeting the placement requirements):

In addition to the options listed above (the same support is available for students who are struggling with content as those who want challenge materials - EXCEPT for receiving help during class time. The teacher will focus on the lessons at hand during classtime, not on providing individualized or challenging materials for any individual student.

Check your expectations: "Math is not a race." The math program is designed to help students discover the richness of math at all levels and to provide a strong foundation with little to no holes in concept retention and application.

Challenge yourself to try problems from national competitions: Problems from previous national competitions are posted online as study guides/prep for the current year. Students can access these to challenge themselves and help grow their math knowledge and application.

Participate in extracurricular math activities:

Extracurricular math activities include the following opportunities:

- The AMC 8 Competition in January (while this is required for some of the math levels, students wanting a challenge can search for previous exams and practice)
- The Purple Comet Math Competition in the spring
- The PCC MathFest in the spring

Enrichment problems: Spend a few hours each week doing some competition problems. Find problems or enrichment classes, that require perseverance and cleverness. Here are two great sources:

North Carolina State Math Exam archives:

<https://sites.google.com/site/statemathcontest/contests/contestdb>

Purple Comet competition:

<https://purplecomet.org/resource/oldcontests>

Both have answers and/or solutions for the problems. A few hours each week would pay huge dividends for future progress.

How are students placed into an English class?

There are five criteria used to place students:

- Recommendation from the previous teacher
- Test scores
 - Standardized test scores
 - VCMS' placement exam/final exam scores
- Classroom performance
- Writing skill proficiency (see below for more information)
- The time it takes to master concepts
- Enjoyment of the subject

Initial placement is based upon the first two criteria: Recommendation from the previous teacher and standardized test scores

- Recommendation from the previous teacher - First and foremost we rely on the year-long observation of the student's previous teacher to recommend where the student should be placed for the next school year. The teacher recommendation is used for both incoming students as well as continuing VCMS students.
- Standardized Test Scores - nationally normed tests based on grade level (not age)
 - Students will be considered for honors coursework if the student scores in the 85th percentile or higher (equivalent of a grade level or higher than their current grade level).

Nationally normed summative tests used to help determine placement include:

- ACT Aspire - Reading
- California Achievement Test (CAT) - Reading total
- Iowa Assessments(ITBS, ITED)/Iowa Flex - Reading or English Language Arts Total
- Otis-Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT 8) - Verbal
- Secondary School Admission Test (SSAT) - Reading
- Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) - Total Reading
- *STS Scholastic Educational Development Series (ED Series) - Verbal or Reading
- *STS Scholastic High School Placement Test (HSPT) - Cognitive Skills, Verbal Skills
- Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement - Reading Cluster

*Note: VCMS students take the STS Series fall and spring of sixth and seventh grades; and in the fall of eighth grade. VCMS eighth-grade students take the HSPT in winter.

Tests that do not qualify as tools for placement

- STAR Tests
- MAP Tests

If the student meets the requirement for initial placement in an honors course, the following three criteria are reviewed to make sure the student has the opportunity to master enough content to have a balance of successes and challenges while learning math.

- Classroom performance (as evidenced by the student’s transcripts and final exam scores)
- The time it takes to master concepts (Is the child able to currently keep up with the pacing of the honors or advanced courses? The child may be able to complete the work, but can the child keep up with the class?)
- Enjoyment of the subject (If the child can do the work, and keep up with the pacing, does the child have a balance of successes and opportunities for growth, or is the child concentrating so hard on “getting the answer” that the child has no time to pause and enjoy the content?)

Final Placement Decisions - The final decision is made after watching the student in the English orientation classes (generally two weeks at the start of the school year). After all of the other considerations are reviewed to find the best overall fit for each student, the students are placed into their initial English course (for the year). This allows students who might be on the cusp of two different levels to showcase their abilities in real-time before the final decision is made.

Writing Expectations by Level

The Portland Archdiocesan standards for 6-8 state that “each year in their writing, students should demonstrate increasing sophistication in all aspects of language use, from vocabulary and syntax to the development and organization of ideas, and they should address increasingly demanding content and sources.”

The tables below outline expectations for each grade level at VCMS. The Honors level expects the proficiency of the next grade level.

- A “mastery” level indicates that the student has mastered the area and can communicate their thinking in a clear, effective manner specific to the individual writing aspect.
- A “proficient” level indicates that the student has had experience in the area, but still may struggle in specific areas as they have not mastered the content. For example, a “proficient” “three-paragraph length essay” suggests that the student is able to communicate ideas effectively in each paragraph, but may still lack the mastery of tying all the paragraphs together in a cohesive or effective manner. They have several opportunities in a school year to practice building towards mastery in the school year.
- An “emerging proficient” level indicates that a student has been exposed to these skills, but is not at a point that they are proficient in the skill. A student at an “emerging proficient” level is working towards a clear, cohesive product.

Writing Piece Length

Writing Length	End of 6 th grade	End of 7 th grade	End of 8 th grade
Paragraph writing	Mastery	Mastery	Mastery
Three paragraph essay	Proficient	Mastery	Mastery
Five paragraph essay	Emerging proficient	Proficient	Mastery
Three or more page essay	N/A	Emerging proficient	Proficient

Writing Skills (General)

Writing Skill	End of 6 th grade	End of 7 th grade	End of 8 th grade
Thesis	Proficient	Mastery	Mastery
Quote Incorporation	Emerging proficient	Proficient	Mastery
Argumentative Rebuttal	N/A	Proficient	Mastery
In-Text Citation	Emerging proficient	Mastery	Mastery

Writing Elements Expected (Paragraph & Multi-Paragraph)

Element of Paragraph	End of 6 th grade	End of 7 th grade	End of 8 th grade
Evidence Use (per paragraph)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Specific Example x2 ● (<i>Argumentative Writing Specific</i>) No acknowledgment of opposing claim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● At least 1 direct quote & 1 specific example ● (<i>Argumentative Writing Specific</i>) Opposing claims acknowledged and addressed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Direct quote x2 ● (<i>Argumentative Writing Specific</i>) Opposing claims are acknowledged and addressed in a manner that strengthens the writer's own claim
Organization (Single Paragraph)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Basic topic sentence ● 2 sentences elaboration per piece of evidence ● Basic transitions between ideas ● Basic conclusion sentence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Topic sentence ● 2-3 sentences elaboration per piece of evidence ● Varied transitions between ideas ● Conclusion sentence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strong topic sentence ● 3-4 sentences of elaboration per piece of evidence ● Skillful and varied transitions between ideas ● Strong conclusion sentence
Organization (Multi-Paragraph, in addition to the previous row)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Basic thesis statement ● Basic transitions between paragraphs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Thesis statement that addresses the claim and main arguments ● Varied transitions between paragraphs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A clear thesis that establishes a strong claim and main argument ● Skillful and varied transitions between paragraphs