



Course of Studies  
2023~2024

# What does the Course of Studies Provide?

- MERHS Graduation Requirements
- Recommendations for Post-Secondary Planning
- Explanation of Special Programs
- Course Descriptions
- Four Year Planning Guide
- Academic Policy

# How the Course of Studies is Developed

- The Course of Studies is a document that has developed over time. Each year it is updated to reflect new course pathways, graduation requirements, and new courses
- In the fall of each year, Department Heads can propose new courses
  - Course Description
  - Budgetary Considerations
- Department Head Team meets to review proposed courses from each department and determine best fit for the upcoming school year. Given the number of new proposals for this upcoming school year, students were provided the opportunity to vote on the two courses that would interest them most. This year's focus was on the addition of one or more interdisciplinary courses
- Teachers develop syllabi, scope and sequence of new courses, and select required materials during spring/summer for implementation in the fall

# Graduation Requirements

- Follow the Massachusetts Guidelines for College and Career Readiness adopted in 2007 and amended in 2018
- Updated in 2018 to require a four-year math requirement in line with MassCORE
- In 2015 moved Biology to Freshman Year class, instead of Introduction to Physics to allow for students to take the STE MCAS in grade 9

# What is voted on by School Committee

- Changes to Graduation Requirements
- The School Committee vote on the Course of Studies is a vote to ensure alignment with district policy, finances, and strategic objectives.

# Student Centered Learning

- Addresses the distinct needs, interests, aspirations, and/or cultural background of individual students
- Students are given opportunities to make choices about their own learning and contribute to the design of the learning experience
- Connecting what students are taught in school to real-world issues, problems and applications

# Professional Development Working Groups

- Groups of interdisciplinary teachers met to discuss and develop plans to consider aspects of the School Improvement Plan
  - Developed Professional Practice Goal related to assigned working group
  - In addition to reporting and discussion at faculty meeting, met on the following dates:
    - 9/21
    - 11/10
    - 12/7
    - 12/20 - faculty feedback

# Professional Development Update – Educator Working Groups

- Portfolio I Group
  - Developed Vision of the Graduate Simple Rubric focused on written feedback
  - Developed Reflection Guides for student upload of work
  - Developed initial expectations for depth of portfolio
- Portfolio II Group
  - Review and agreement upon common protocol for review of student work by teachers and peers
  - Tuning protocol is implemented to assist students with reviewing, evaluating and selecting work to include in portfolios



# Working Groups Update

- Report Card Comments
  - Developed by interdisciplinary team of teachers
  - Review of current report card comments
  - Feedback provided about current and desired comments by School Council
  - Comments reviewed and feedback provided by entire high school faculty
  - Plan to introduce comments to families during Spring 2023
  - Coding changed in Aspen, Summer, 2023
  - Implemented during 2023 - 2024 School Year
  - Review of use mid-year

# Working Group Update

- Interdisciplinary Courses
  - Developed concepts for proposed courses
  - Identified required staffing and budgetary implications
  - Identified specific ties to the Vision of the Graduate
- Courses proposed and voted upon by students
  - Once upon a Crime
  - Green Business - Living in a Material World
  - Cranberry Summer
  - Revolutions and Rebels in Latin America

# Working Group Update

- SCORE – MERHS Internship Program Review
  - Developed four-year plan for preparation of SCORE
    - Grade 9
      - Personality and Career Assessments
      - Introduction to SCORE
      - Goal Setting
    - Grade 10
      - Build understanding of careers and life
      - Communicate effectively across media with professional world
    - Grade 11
      - Present oneself as a viable job applicant (resume building, cover letter, etc)
    - Grade 12
      - Find a mentor and execute SCORE

# Working Group Update

- SCORE
  - Return faculty advisors to the program
    - Review Weekly Updates
      - Prompts for the updates to be provided that are tied to the Vision of the Graduate
    - Grade Research Paper
  - Update topic proposal to include questions directly connected to the Vision of the Graduate
  - Return the research paper to the program (done prior to SCORE experience)
    - Tie questions for the paper to the Vision of the Graduate
    - Develop graphic organizers to scaffold thoughts
  - Update the Internship Supervisor Evaluation to include questions tied to the Vision of the Graduate

# Civic Action Proposal

- A Civic Action Project is required to be completed by all students in Middle School and in High School. It is a DESE requirement that does not require School Committee vote.
- Current Implementation
  - Students complete the Civic Action Program at the end of Grade 11 during the fourth quarter.
    - Reduces time on important 21st century topics
    - Does not connect explicitly connect to Vision of the Graduate
- New Course Advantages
  - Allows for connection from grade 8 to grade 9
  - Meets the attributes of Student-Centered Learning
  - Allows for an authentic introduction to the Vision of the Graduate's skills and dispositions
  - Allows for the introduction of the portfolio concept to students
- The Project
  - Individuals identify a topic of interest (meaningful learning)
  - Research the topic using embedded media literacy skills
  - Create an action plan
  - Implement action steps
  - Complete final project
  - Showcase projects
  - Reflect on development of skill and dispositions of the Vision of the Graduate

# Medial Literacy and Civic Action Logistics

- The Social Studies Department will embed the content of the elective Democracy and the Digital Age into this new course
- Community Partners will be developed in accordance with the projects that students select
- As a graduation requirement, students will have one less elective class available in their schedule during freshman year
- Current staffing allows for implementation of the course as a graduation requirement (.25 FTE)

# Student Choice Course

- Video and Graphic Design
  - Course was removed from the Course of Studies in 2018 to allow for increased sections of AP Photo and to allow for expanded sections of Photo I and Photo II due to enrollment
    - Content was reduced and embedded into Photo I curriculum
  - The teacher proposed re-introducing the course as students reported wanted more content than available as part of Photo I
  - The addition will require one less semester-length Photo I or Photo II section

# Student Choice Courses

- Once Upon a Crime
  - Developed out of an educator working group focused on development interdisciplinary course in response to the NEASC Recommendations and connection to the implementation of the Vision of the Graduate
  - The working group developed four course concepts which were included in the student vote
  - Two sections of a one semester course
  - Opportunity for authentic learning, meaning making and engagement



# Business electives

- Proposing addition of Economics and Sports/Entertainment Marketing
  - Current educator has robust background in both areas and can provide meaningful course work
  - Increased student interest in MERHS business program
  - Each one semester course
  - Shift of .2 FTE from math to business program is a common switch year to year based on student interest and enrollment

# Physics Change

- Physics
  - Overview of physics topics and practices
  - Maybe taken in grades 10, 11, or 12
- Physics II
  - Algebra-based, introductory college-level course
  - Expands knowledge of electricity and wavelengths
  - May be taken during junior or senior year
- AP Physics C: Mechanics
  - Calculus based physics course focused on mechanics
  - Must be taken concurrently with Calculus or AP Calculus
  - May be taken during senior year