

Upper School Math Placement Information

As we prepare for our students to enroll in math for the upcoming school year, we would like to provide detail about the math placement process at Maret.

Most students will take Geometry, Algebra 2 & Trigonometry, Precalculus, and Calculus. These courses establish a strong foundation for the math courses they will take through their collegiate careers. We also recognize that some of our students need additional enrichment in mathematics and therefore offer other Advanced- and Accelerated-level possibilities. (See: [Mathematics Sequence Chart](#).)

Making appropriate and responsible placement decisions for our students is critical for their future success in mathematics. We evaluate the best fit for each student using several factors through a cooperative, consensus-building approach among the student, the current teacher, the department (including the chair), and the student's family. The math department engages students in the course selection process in order for students to learn how to make informed and appropriate decisions about their education. Yet it is often challenging for students to decide which course is right for them. The teachers in the math department have a strong grasp of the curricular components of each class offering, but they may not be aware of specific factors that influence a student's decision-making process. This is why we believe it is essential for the registration process to be a conversation among teacher, student, and family.

Students are recommended for a math class based on the following criteria:

- Performance in current math class (this includes their overall semester grades and performance on assessments).
- Evidence of consistent homework completion, strong study habits, note-taking, and organizational skills.
- Comfort generating problem-solving strategies and facing novel problems without adult guidance.
- A desire and ability to take on more challenging materials and higher levels of abstraction.

Students may demonstrate competency in one or two of the areas considered for a course but not be a fit based on other factors. For example, a student who receives an A in their current course might not necessarily find the best fit within a higher-level course once other factors are considered (e.g. comfort with more abstract problem-solving challenges, organization, algebraic fluency, balancing workload, etc.).

When making placement decisions, we assess the body of work the student has produced. Placing a student in a math class that does not match the student's demonstrated level of performance, desire to learn independently, and appetite for challenging problem-solving is not an opportunity for challenge and enrichment. Instead, the experience is often one of frustration and discouragement. The Mathematics Department strives for every student to find a deep appreciation and understanding of math. This placement process is one part of how we accomplish that charge.

Therefore, it is important that careful thought is placed when deciding to advocate for a higher-level math course.

While some students are eager to “try out” a course to evaluate if the level is appropriate, the Mathematics Department does not encourage this. Our goal is to ensure that students are registered for the appropriate courses initially. Switching courses and/or levels into the school year is disruptive to the learning process and may require a scheduling change that impacts additional courses or, in some instances, may not be possible at all.

Please direct any questions or concerns about placement to your child’s current teacher and Dr. Alemayehu, Chair of the Mathematics Department (balemayehu@maret.org), and we will be happy to chat with you.