

# Planning Your Freshman Year Curriculum

Welcome to the Upper School,  
PCDS Class of 2025!

# A Unique Upper School Experience

Every student has his or her own mix of talents and interests. The PCDS Upper School curriculum provides an environment that nurtures these individual qualities through rigorous study in a broad range of subjects. Your choices for which classes to take will grow each year so that no two students will follow the same path through the Upper School.

# Advisory & Course Selections

Each spring, Upper School students work with their advisors to select their courses for the following year, striving for balance in workload and extracurricular commitments, while keeping an eye on graduation requirements.

# PCDS Graduation Requirements

To ensure that students reach a level of mastery in each of the academic departments, the PCDS graduation requirements are:

English (4 years)

History (3 years)

Math (1 course beyond Algebra II)

Science (Biology, Chemistry, Physics)

World and Classical Languages (3 years of the same language in the Upper School)

Visual and/or Performing Arts (2 years/4 semesters)

# Physical Education Requirement

Ninth graders must do some kind of physical activity in at least two of the three athletic seasons by either playing on a PCDS team or participating in an approved activity\* outside of the school day.

\*Approval is granted by the Director of Athletics. Examples include: club sports, a fitness regimen, yoga, martial arts. Be thinking about your interests and available options, and we'll provide you more information when the school year begins.

# Freshman Course Load

Each student in the Upper School takes a minimum of five courses, most students take six courses. The typical freshman course list is:

1. English I
2. The Ancient World (fall) and Medieval Empires (spring)
3. Biology
4. Math
5. Language
6. Fine Art (choice of visual/media art or performing art)

# Math Placement

For students coming from PCDS Middle School, math placement recommendations are made by the 8th grade math teachers and the PCDS Math Department.

Students new to PCDS will have their math placement determined by a review of recommendations from current teachers, current class performance, standardized testing results, and performance on the admissions test. In some cases, a placement test will be scheduled at the end of the school year to ensure proper placement.

You will receive an email about your specific math placement in the next several days.

# A Typical Math Sequence

8th Grade **Geometry** is followed by **Algebra II Plus** in 9th grade.

8th Grade **Algebra I** (or **Algebra IB**) is followed by **Geometry** in 9th grade.

8th Grade **Algebra I Honors** (or **Algebra IB+**) is followed by **Geometry Plus** in 9th grade.

8th Grade **PreAlgebra** (or **Intro to Algebra**) is followed by **Algebra I** in 9th grade.



# Language Course

Rising Freshmen: you will receive a survey allowing you to indicate your preference for language study.

The Head of the Language Department, Robin Anderson, will then determine the section placement depending on whether you are new to the language (in which case you will be placed in Level I) or whether you have studied the language in middle school (in which case placement will be determined by recommendations from current teachers, current class performance, and a placement test if needed.)

# Fine Art Electives

Rising Freshmen: that same survey will allow you to indicate your preferences for fine arts electives.

That survey will list the available fine art classes in both fall and spring semesters. You will be asked to indicate your top three choices for fall and your top three choices for spring.

The following slides show the choices for each semester.

# Fall Semester Fine Arts Choices

Anatomical Illustration

Coding as Art I

Digital Filmmaking Intro

Drawing I

Painting I

Physical Computing

Printmaking

Sculpture I

Sound Design I

Chamber Ensemble

Jazz, World, and Popular Music Ensemble

Vocal Ensemble

Musical Theater Dance

Stagecraft

Theater Arts

# Spring Semester Fine Arts Choices

Anatomical Illustration II

Coding as Art I

Coding as Art II

Drawing I

Drawing II

Experimental Materials I

Graphic Design Intro

Painting II

Sculpture II

Sound Design I

Sound Design II

Chamber Ensemble

Jazz, World, and Popular Music Ensemble

Vocal Ensemble

Musical Theater Dance

Musical Theater Workshop

Stagecraft

Stagecraft II

Theater Arts

# Real World and Study Halls

All ninth graders take an un-graded counseling course called Real World that meets once every seven school days.

Free periods in a freshman schedule are filled with a supervised study hall.

# PCDS Online Course Catalog

For a full description of all courses and more information about Graduation Requirements, refer to the online course catalog:

[Course Catalog](#)

# 9th Grade Transition Information



## Phoenix Country Day School

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### Ninth-Grade Transition Information

Welcome to the Phoenix Country Day School Upper School. You will find that the Upper School experience at PCDS is enjoyable, challenging, and rewarding on a number of levels. Our students possess a wide array of interests and passions, strengths and points of challenge, and our goal as an institution is to help them become the best versions of themselves that they can be.

It is important to note that life for students in the PCDS Upper School is very different from a typical middle school experience. Along with greater challenges, there is also an assumption of more responsibility, student initiative, and connectedness within this very tightly knit community. While many of these differences may be subtle, here are a few tips that may help in the transition to life as a PCDS Upper School student.

#### Daily Schedules

The PCDS Upper School runs on a daily schedule with a seven-day rotation. Students have four class periods per day, separated by a 50-minute Community Time/Break period in the morning, an hour-long lunch midday, and a 20-minute break in the afternoon. (Exception: On Fridays, the Community Time period is replaced by two 15-minute breaks following a student's first and second classes, and lunch is 40-minutes following the students' third class, in order to preserve a 2:05 dismissal time.)

#### Monday-Thursday

Block 1	7:50-9:05
Community Time	9:05-9:35
Break	9:35-9:55
Block 2	9:55-11:10
Lunch	11:10-12:10
Block 3	12:10-1:25
Break	1:25-1:45
Block 4	1:45-3:00

#### Friday

Block 1	7:50-9:05
Break	9:05-9:25
Block 2	9:25-10:40
Break	10:40-10:55
Block 3	10:55-12:10
Lunch	12:10-12:50
Block 4	12:50-2:05

#### Community Times

Community Times serve a multitude of functions in the PCDS Upper School. In a typical week, community times may look like this:

# Next Steps

If you have any questions about selecting your courses, please email Mrs. Cherilla ([jennifer.cherilla@pcds.org](mailto:jennifer.cherilla@pcds.org)) to set up a meeting.

Watch your email for the course selection survey.