

World Language Placement Policy

Martha's Vineyard Regional High School

For accurate placement into Honors, College I, or College II within the World Language Department at Martha's Vineyard Regional High School incoming freshmen are placed based on recommendations from 8th grade Spanish teachers/guidance counselors and results of placement tests. Spanish courses at the elementary and junior high levels provide students with valuable language learning skills and an excellent introduction to the basics of how to be successful when learning a second language; for this reason recommendations and the results of the placement test are used to accurately place students into Spanish, French, or Portuguese at the highest level possible to achieve success within our program.

8th Grade Teacher Recommendation

8th grade Spanish teachers make recommendations for their students that include the following:

- Name
- Level Recommendation
- Motivation
- Consistency with work completion
- Ability to work independently
- Average assessment grade for 8th grade Spanish
- Comments

When a student has not taken Spanish in the elementary school they are placed based on the recommendation of their 8th grade guidance counselor. For students that are recommended for Spanish at the College I level, but have not taken Spanish before entering the high school, we do recommend that the student complete online work over the summer in order to familiarize themselves with some basic content and language learning in order to be more successful. This work is optional, and has no bearing on a students' grade, but is recommended to build confidence. For more information and resources see the "Additional Resources" section of our website.

Placement Test

All incoming freshmen that are enrolled in Spanish take a placement test, the results of which are used to place students at the highest level possible to be successful within the World Language Department at Martha's Vineyard Regional High School. The tasks on the exam help to demonstrate language learning skills and what students know and are able to do.

Students are encouraged to take their time, do their best, and not be concerned if something is new or unfamiliar to them.

The average assessment grade for 8th grade Spanish that is submitted with the teacher recommendation demonstrates students' ability in aspects of the language including reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The placement test consists of a grammar section and a vocabulary section each with 100 questions. Junior high Spanish teachers administer the placement test and submit to the high school for grading. Student placement is conveyed to parents and students in a letter from the high school that is distributed by their elementary Spanish teacher before the end of the school year.

Cut-off grades to enter each level are determined based on the overall results, teacher recommendations, and historic placement of how many students are at each level. Due to the wide discrepancy of the elementary school programs, and in order to ensure that each student has the background information necessary to be successful at each level the results of the placement test supersede the teacher recommendation. This means that if a student qualifies for a level higher than the original recommendation they can enroll in the higher level, and if a student qualifies for a level lower than the teacher recommendation they must enroll in the lower level course.

To place into Spanish 2 Honors students must demonstrate a strong mastery and background in the language (based on the exam) and have the ability to master new concepts in the context of a review. At this point, we do not require those students to reach the same level of mastery as our Honors Level I students; if/as elementary programs change/develop we will revisit a philosophy which moves in this direction.

Portuguese speakers that do not place into Honors Spanish 2 can opt-in to Spanish 2C1 based on the recommendation of their Spanish teacher. However, if they wish to study at the Honors level it is recommended to start in Honors Spanish I or retest to place into Honors Spanish 2.

Placement Retest

If a student is interested in qualifying for a higher level than they originally qualified for based on our placement process a retest is offered both at the end of the school year and at the end of the summer. While it is possible to move up a level after the first year, this can be very challenging and we highly recommend taking advantage of the retake opportunity. When a student registers for the retest, they are provided with a study guide and resources that will help to prepare for the retake. Information to register for a retake, including the registration deadlines, is included in the placement letter.

Placement Test Preparation

Each elementary school Spanish program has its own goals, philosophies, and expectations, as such each school prepares for the exam in different ways and to different extents. The high school provides the elementary school Spanish teachers with a variety of resources to provide clarity regarding the content, tasks, and expectations of the placement test and the language program. These materials include:

- Spanish Honors I Syllabus - includes a course overview which outlines the specific conversation topics, vocabulary, and grammatical concepts that are addressed each quarter in Honors Spanish I.
- Grading rubrics and policies
- Placement Exam Topics - outlines specific grammar and vocabulary topics assessed on the exam, as well as the number and format of questions for each topic.
- Sample Placement Exam

The above materials are intended to serve students and/or teachers well in preparing for the exam to whatever extent they choose.

Placement Test Guidelines:

- The test is not timed and can be administered in sections.
- Students must finish whatever section they start in one sitting, and cannot return to work once they have handed it in.
- Teachers can support students by clarifying directions, but cannot offer content-related assistance.
- Students cannot use resources during the test. All relevant posters are to be covered/removed.

Honors II Placement Options

Students that qualify for Spanish II Honors during their freshmen year can choose between three paths:

OPTION I: AP Track - Honors II-AP

Freshmen Year: Honors Spanish II
Sophomore Year: Honors Spanish III
Junior Year: Pre-AP Spanish
Senior Year: AP Spanish

OPTION II: Honors Track II-IV

Freshmen Year: Honors Spanish II
Sophomore Year: Honors Spanish III
Junior Year: Honors Spanish IV
Senior Year: No Spanish course

OPTION III: Traditional Honors I-IV

Freshmen Year: Honors Spanish I
Sophomore Year: Honors Spanish II
Junior Year: Honors Spanish III
Senior Year: Honors Spanish IV

AP Spanish Track

The AP Spanish Language Exam requires students to be nearly fluent to be able to pass the exam. We have designed our curriculum to best serve our students based on their ability and interests and that is why we offer multiple honors tracks. It is important to understand that all three tracks are very rigorous course options.

In making your decision please keep in mind that the AP Track - Honors II-AP is a serious commitment. By signing up for this track a student is dedicating themselves to becoming nearly fluent in Spanish during their high school career. This is a huge commitment that requires dedication, time, and focus. Entering into the AP Language program is much more than signing up for a course, it is dedicating oneself to learning another language. For this reason we ask that students seriously consider their goals and options before selecting a track and that they do not sign up for the AP track to advance their GPA or because it “will look good for college.”

Honors Track II-IV

If a student signs up for the Honors Track II-IV during their freshman year or if they start the AP track, but later decide not to take AP they must understand that there will not be a Spanish course for them to take during their senior year (other than an independent study). This can be a great opportunity for students that want to finish their language courses early and either start taking another language, work on an independent study or explore other course offerings at the high school

Heritage Portuguese

At Martha's Vineyard Regional High School we strive to create curriculum that addresses our students' personal and educational needs. To meet the needs of our students and community, the Portuguese program offers courses in Brazilian Portuguese both as a Foreign Language and as a Heritage Language. These courses provide a wonderful opportunity for students to develop their heritage language in an academic setting.

Entering the Heritage Portuguese track will provide students with four years of language study at the Honors level starting at level 2 and finishing at level 5. The Honors track of our language program involves rigorous courses that require hard work, dedication, and focus. In order to ensure that students are placed into the appropriate course, all Portuguese speaking students that have not taken a Portuguese class at MVRHS will be given a placement test to determine the most appropriate level. This is a separate placement test, but follows the same procedures, guidelines, and retesting options as the Placement Test, please see above for details.

Switching Levels

Placement for incoming freshmen is based on the above policy. If, at any point after the first year a student decides that they would like to move up a level and have scored 90% or higher in the lower level course, they will have the opportunity to take a placement test either at the end of a school year or during the summer to demonstrate they have mastered the curriculum of the higher level. See Switching Levels

We hope that this information has been useful in introducing you to our program and the expectations that we have of our students. For any questions about language placement please contact World Language Department Chair Justine DeOliveira (jdeoliveira@mvyps.org)