

CAMBRIDGE AT WESTWOOD Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the difference between Cambridge and Gifted programming at Westwood?

Both programs offer accelerated learning. The Cambridge classes include reading, language arts, math and science. The gifted class is social studies. Math is also offered at an advanced level for gifted students, if needed. Gifted students can apply for Cambridge, and if accepted, would have five advanced classes instead of one (or two if he or she was in advanced math). The sixth class is an exploratory course (e.g. band, chorus, technology, p.e., or art).

2. Do students have to be in the gifted program to be in Cambridge?

No. The objective is to offer coursework for high achieving students even if he/she isn't identified as gifted.

3. How does a student get into the gifted program?

In Florida, students must be evaluated by a licensed school psychologist, and perform at a superior level on an intelligence test to be eligible for gifted. In addition, students must meet certain pre-referral criteria such as displaying certain characteristics in the classroom as evidenced by a teacher checklist, perform at a high level on standardized test such as FCAT, and demonstrate a need for the program. See your child's school counselor for more information. For private school referrals, contact Alyson Fissenden at the School District offices (352) 955-7300. Allow ample time for referral, evaluation, and placement consideration.

4. Is Cambridge at Westwood a Magnet program?

No. Cambridge is a program for high achieving students zoned to Westwood because of where they live in the school zone, or assigned to Westwood by the zoning office through Controlled School Choice or Zoning Exception. For more information about zoning, contact the zoning office at (352) 955-7700.

5. Do you accept students from out of the Westwood Middle School zone?

Yes. However, these students do need to acquire a zoning exception.

6. Is a Zoning Exception hard to get?

It's hard to answer the question about whether a zoning exception is hard to get because there are a number of factors involved including the number of students the district projects for our school for the upcoming school year, and the circumstances for which the zoning exception is being requested. Keep in mind that the zoning office doesn't grant zoning exceptions for programmatic reasons. In other words, the only allowable reasons are listed on the website which you can find on the zoning website here

<https://fl02219191.schoolwires.net/Domain/92>

A certain number of seats are offered for controlled school choice if you apply early. The information for controlled school choice is available on the zoning website.

7. What if my child doesn't do well in the Cambridge Program?

Students are required to maintain a 3.0 GPA. GPAs are calculated based on semester grades, not nine weeks grades. If students are having difficulty, the first course of action is to contact the child's teachers. Some sixth graders take time to adjust to the change of pace of middle school, and need some extra encouragement to establish a routine that works best for them. These difficulties are usually resolved in the first nine weeks as they learn new expectations. If grades continue to falter, students are put on probation for one semester. When the GPA improves, probation is lifted. If the GPA doesn't improve, the student is placed in the general program for the next school year. A student who is having extreme difficulty can be removed at the parent's request any time.

8. Can students apply for Cambridge in seventh or eighth grade?

Yes. There are often a few seats due to students who move away or elect to withdraw from the program. Decisions for upperclass placements are made in the summer. Students should complete the application for upperclass students available online.

9. How much homework is expected?

Students have more homework than in traditional classes but organized and highly motivated students don't usually have a problem getting it accomplished. The teachers collaborate to avoid conflicting due dates as often as possible.

10. What exploratory courses are offered at Westwood Middle School?

Westwood has several choices for yearlong exploratory courses. Band and chorus is offered for all grade levels. Spanish is offered as a High School credit course for eighth graders. Westwood also has the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) Program. This yearlong exploratory course offers students research, organization and study skills; biweekly content-area tutoring; and supplemental writing. Westwood is also proud to offer the Kids on Patrol at School program (K.O.P.S.) to seventh and eighth graders. KOPS gives students the opportunity to work with the student services office in promoting school safety. Students can also take computer applications as a yearlong course for industry certification and high school credit in eighth grade. Robotics will also be offered as an elective.

We offer semester courses in art, computer applications, and PE. Students not enrolled in a yearlong course are required by Florida statute to take one semester of PE every year.

Exploratory course offerings vary from year to year based on enrollment numbers. This year, our sixth grade students were enrolled in robotics, band, AVID, or one semester of PE paired with one semester of computer applications, art, or musical theatre. Information about exploratory selection will be sent home through your child's elementary school after spring break. We will also conduct a general open house in May where more information about exploratory courses will be available.

11. Where are the classes located on the school campus?

For the most part, our school is separated by grade levels with a sixth, seventh and eighth grade buildings. The Cambridge and gifted classes are spread throughout the school alongside all other classes.

12. Will my child have time for extracurricular activities?

Most of our students are engaged in extracurricular activities. Organization is the key to academic success.

13. What is shadowing like?

Students interested in shadowing are invited to school for a whole day. Parents are asked to complete a shadow application to reserve his/her spot for shadowing. Every effort is made to accommodate the student's first choice. Please complete a shadow form available online. Your child is paired with a student with similar curricular needs and interests such as band or PE, and we try to match them with a student who attended his/her elementary school. Students arrive at 9:00 to meet their host/hostess in the front office and should be picked up at 3:15. Transportation is not available. Students should bring a bag lunch or can eat free school lunch. Your shadow date will be confirmed by email or phone call.

14. Does being in Cambridge guarantee in the high school Cambridge program or IB program?

No. Students must apply for advanced high school programs.

15. Do we have to reapply to Cambridge every year?

No. A Notice to Continue in Cambridge will be sent home every spring for sixth and seventh grade students. Parents need to sign and return the form to continue in the program.

16. How do I apply for Cambridge?

All applicants should complete the electronic application available on the Westwood Middle School webpage. Paper applications are available in the front office as well.

17. What should I do if I cannot complete the application electronically?

Please call the school guidance office if you need any assistance completing the application. A school counselor is available to assist you in completing the electronic application, and accessing school records.

18. How will we be notified as to whether our child was accepted into the Cambridge Program?

Parents and students will be notified electronically via email. A Commitment Letter accompanies the letter. Commitment letters must be returned by the deadline to guarantee your spot.

19. What does it mean to be "out of district" compared to "out of zone"?

Any student that was enrolled in a private school or in a school district other than Alachua County Public Schools is considered "out of district." "Out of zone" students are those students that do not reside in the Westwood Middle School zone.

20. Who should I contact if I have a question?

Our Cambridge Coordinator, Jill Kanji, can answer your questions about Cambridge at Westwood. She can be reached at kanjija@gm.sbac.edu or (352)955-6718.

Our assistant principal for curriculum, Kim Guido, is happy to answer all questions regarding Westwood Middle School. You can reach her at guidokb@gm.sbac.edu or (352)955-6718.