



Dear Parents of Incoming 9<sup>th</sup> Graders:

This letter serves to inform you of the **procedure for placing students in an honors-level English class next year in District 99.**

As in previous years, students who are interested in the English honors program are evaluated on the following criteria:

- Grades in Language Arts and Reading in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade
- Teacher recommendation from 8<sup>th</sup> grade English teacher
- Standardized test scores (MAP/iReady/STAR)
- An essay

These criteria will be examined holistically, with each component playing a critical role in placement decisions.

In an effort for teachers to gain uniform insight into a student's writing ability and critical thinking skills, students will be asked to write an impromptu essay in a controlled environment. **This is where we need your help.**

Students are asked to report to **one** of the following testing sites to write an essay that will be evaluated by English teachers at the high school. Students may elect to write the essay at either school; they **do not** have to report to the campus they actually will attend. Students **do not** need to pre-register; they should just report to the assigned room on the day they choose. We ask that students bring a writing utensil; paper will be provided.

- Tuesday, December 3 at South High School – 4:30-5:30 p.m. in Room C364
- Wednesday, December 4 at South High School – 6:30-7:30 p.m. in Room C364
- Saturday, December 7 at North High School – 9:00-10:00 a.m. in Room 349

Students will have approximately 50 minutes to write the essay. While teachers are not expecting students' work to be error-free, the essay will provide insight into a student's writing skills and thinking process that may not otherwise surface in the above-mentioned evaluation tools.

**In order to be considered for the honors program, students must attend one of these writing sessions.** Students need not currently be enrolled in an honors class to apply for the program. Once a student attends a writing session, the other information (grades, teacher recommendation, and standardized test scores) will be gathered so that a complete evaluation can be made.

If your student cannot attend one of the writing sessions but is interested in the honors program, please contact the English department chair at the school your son/daughter will attend to see if alternative arrangements might be possible but know, for a variety of factors, this might not be an option. This must be done **prior to the first testing date.**

We look forward to meeting your child and hope that s/he will take advantage of the opportunity to be considered for the English honors program.

Respectfully,

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## District 99 Honors English Program - FAQ

### **1. When and how will we find out if our student was accepted?**

Decisions are made in late January because we don't get 8th-grade teacher recommendations until after the Winter Break. Once decisions are made, a letter will be sent home to ALL students who came to take the writing test informing them of our decision. We respectfully ask that you not reach out to your student's respective department chair during the placement process.

### **2. If decisions are not being made until January, why is my student taking this test in November/early December?**

We have over 600 students who come to take the writing assessment, so getting these writing samples scored is no easy task. Therefore, in order to be ready to make placement decisions in January, we need to test when we do.

### **3. How many spots are open in the honors program?**

The English Honors Program does not predetermine a finite amount of spots. We review each student's file to determine the correct placement. If we believe that the student can be successful in Honors, he or she will be placed in the Program, regardless of how many that total number becomes.

### **4. How is the essay scored?**

A team of current English teachers reviews each writing sample. In doing so, they look at the following criteria: focus & structure, evidence, explanation, grammar & style, complexity & insight. Each essay will receive a whole score on a scale from 4 to 1.

### **5. What other factors are considered when making a placement into Honors?**

Students who are interested in the English Honors Program are evaluated on the following criteria: 7th/8th grade English/LA grades (A's are expected), 8th grade English teacher recommendation, standardized test score(s) (iReady/MAP/STAR), and the written essay. These criteria will be examined holistically with each component playing a critical role in the placement decision.