Oak Crest Middle School Honors English Program: A Guide for Parents and Students 7th Grade

At Oak Crest, each teacher wants every child to achieve his or her personal best, and this is more likely to happen if the child is placed into classes appropriate to the child's needs, abilities, and interests.

We offer two levels of English classes at both the seventh and eighth grade.

- 1). *College prep* classes provide a *rigorous* curriculum that meets the needs of the majority of students.
- 2). *Honors classes* are designed for students who *excel* in English language arts and *require* a *faster-paced*, more *in-depth*, and *challenging* course of study.

Both college prep and honors classes have the following attributes:

- Follow a rigorous curriculum.
- Require students to work toward mastery of the California Common Core State Standards.
- Prepare students for high school English.
- Develop critical thinking skills.
- Require students to write argumentative essays, narratives, responses to literature, and summaries.
- Provide opportunities for students to improve listening and speaking skills through Socratic Seminar and speech delivery.
- Select novels from the same board-approved list of titles.
- Use the same textbook.
- Utilize technology to help improve reading and writing skills.

Honors classes differ from CP in the following ways:

- Greater depth and complexity of study.
- Advance beyond current grade level standards and work on skills in the next grade level standards.
- Students work independent of teacher assistance more often.
- Pacing is quicker.
- Required course reading is more often done as homework outside of class rather than during class.
- Writing is more sophisticated (stronger vocabulary, more complex and varied sentence structure, greater depth of thought and analysis) and more extensively researched.
- Assigned readings may be at a higher level of difficulty.
- Homework typically requires students to think critically and **synthesize** the material that they learned in class that day. As a result, homework generally takes longer.
- Grammar techniques are more sophisticated and complex.

When making your choice, please consider:

- Students can move from Honors to College Prep or College Prep to Honors within the first 4 weeks of the school year.
- After the 4 week deadline, students must remain in their course of choice until the semester ends in January.
- At the semester, an Honors student may move to a College Prep course; however, students may not move from College Prep to Honors mid-year. In order to complete the expectations of second semester in an Honors course, students need the foundational knowledge and skills presented in the first semester. As a result, they will need to wait until the following year to take Honors.
- We have open access. Students **may** take College Prep English in 7th grade and move to Honors in 8th grade, and it's not uncommon for students to take College Prep courses throughout middle school and move to Honors in high school.
- The ultimate goal is for your child to be happy, healthy, and **appropriately** challenged.

Checklist of General Expectations for Students ENTERING 7th Grade Honors Classes

Please use the following charts to determine which level of English is most suitable for your child.

Skills and Knowledge: When students enter a 7th grade Honors class, they are expected to be able to demonstrate 3 or more of the following skills. Please note: This is where students currently are, not where they hope to be. ☐ Write a well-developed, insightful paragraphs using a variety of sentence structures and above grade level vocabulary. ☐ Understand and identify the 8 parts of speech Go beyond the surface of the text to discover a deeper meaning rather than to simply summarize ☐ Discover theme in a passage ☐ Identify figurative language in a passage ☐ Articulate an argument in response to a text Actively read over their writing to enhance and improve it, as well as proofread. Academic Qualities: In addition to demonstrating many of the skills listed in the category above, an Honors English student will be most successful if s/he also demonstrates at least 5 or more of the "Honors English Student" qualities below. College Prep English Student: **Honors English Student:** ☐ Is strong academically in English. ☐ English is one of his/her gifts or passions. ☐ Is hard working and self-motivated. ☐ Has an exceptional work ethic, is highly self-motivated, and works well independently. ☐ Learns best with thorough instruction and ☐ Masters concepts quickly without the need for practice of new concepts. much repetition; requires faster-paced, rigorous Appreciates challenges, but also benefits curriculum. from assistance and practice with complex, critical-thinking and non-routine ☐ Values the challenges of complex, critical-thinking opportunities; can achieve this with minimal strategies. assistance and often takes ideas to a higher level. ☐ Thrives with structured guidance when learning applying, and extending new ☐ Seeks out and actively contributes to classroom discussions concepts. Actively participates in the learning ☐ Enjoys reading higher level, complex texts in a process. variety of genres. ☐ Enjoys the writing process and understands the Independently reads various genres. need for multiple revisions. **Disclaimer:** If your child does not exhibit many of ☐ Is inquiry-driven, which is demonstrated by thinking critically about world issues related to the the qualities above, don't worry. The goal of the College Prep English class is to get all students to assigned reading and writings (goes beyond these levels. surface meanings, makes connections and inferences) ☐ Manages time well (able to juggle school work, family obligations, and extra-curricular activities).

Frequently Asked Questions

1. My student is struggling quite a bit with the Honors 7 assignments and exams. She has always been an A student, and she is seeing grades she has never seen before. Is this the right class for her?

It is very common for the transition from 6th grade to Honors English to be difficult. Often, students have been able to get A's without pushing themselves and/or without studying in elementary school. Our Honors curriculum has been designed to be challenge Honors students, so it is moves faster and goes deeper than what most students experience in elementary school when they are in a multi-level class. Many of the students are used to being big fish in a small pond, and now they're in a big lake with a lot of other big fish, some who have more knowledge about certain concepts than they do, so it can be intimidating. In this course, the majority of the assignments are going to require students to not just show they know information but to take that information and apply it in a new situation, or to make a statement about a character or a theme and then support it with evidence. Also, they will need to truly study for quizzes and tests. After we read a story, the quizzes won't just test basic reading comprehension, but they will have multi-level questions where they will have to apply concepts we're learning to an aspect of the story. For example, a question may ask how a story would be changed if it were written in a different point of view. Some struggle is normal as students adjust to the rigor, but if your student is overwhelmed and seems unable to adapt to the more demanding curriculum, it may not be an appropriate placement.

2. My student is struggling in Honors English, but I don't want to pull him out because then he won't be ready for Honors in high school. What should we do?

Even if a student fits the Honors profile, sometimes he may not be ready to handle Honors in seventh grade. The transition to middle school alone can be stressful and overwhelming, and the well being of the child is always paramount. Sometimes, it just takes an extra year or two for a student to gain some maturity, gain organization skills, or develop his critical thinking skills to the level that will make Honors manageable for him. Often, once a student adjusts to middle school, they are ready to take on the additional challenge of Honors English.

3. What if I think my child can do well in an honors course, but he doesn't want to take it?

We get this question a lot. A general rule of thumb is that if the parent wants it more than the child, usually, the child ends up miserable, and nobody wins. To do well in an honors course, the student must be passionate about English and demonstrate a desire to push him/herself in ways never before experienced. Putting a child in this accelerated course against his or her will is not advisable for seventh graders. The best advice we can give is to give your child time to adjust to middle school, and bring up the topic again as the student is about to enter 8th grade.

4. If we realize that my child is not in the right class, can we make a change?

Absolutely. While it's best to try to get students accurately placed as soon as possible, sometimes students just need a chance to see for themselves where they would best fit. Students are free to move up to Honors or from Honors to College Prep within the first 4 weeks of the school year. After that, students must wait until the end of first semester to move out of Honors. Due to pacing and foundational skills established in the first semester, we do not make moves from College Prep to Honors at the semester. Is is simply not in the best interest of the student as there is a final and culminating portfolio due at the end of the year.

Period 4

December 9, 2013

Individuality

"The quality or character of a particular person or thing that distinguishes them from others of the same kind." This definition of the word individuality helps establish a major theme seen in both <u>The Outsiders</u> by S.E. Hinton and in "On the Sidewalk Bleeding" by Evan Hunter. The theme of individuality is evident, and can be compared and contrasted in both of these well written American realistic fictions literary works. Both Randy from <u>The Outsiders</u> and Andy from "On the Sidewalk Bleeding" realize that individuality is more important than group identity. Both stories tell the tale of individuality from the view of a member of a teenage gang.

In The Outsiders", Randy struggles with his desire to be accepted by his peer group and being true to himself. Randy is a member of the Socs gang, who don't always use good judgment, especially when they are consuming alcohol. Randy absolutely doesn't like drinking, but does drink at times, so he is not teased by the rest of his peer group. He soon realizes that he doesn't even want to be a Soc anymore, because he was tired of fighting with the other gang called Greasers and also tired of being someone he wasn't proud of. Chapter 7 finds Randy boldly stating, "Greasers will still be Greasers and Socs will still be Socs....sometimes it's the ones in the middle that are lucky." (Hinton 117) He knows that to be successful in life, he must start thinking for himself and stop being just a Soc. This is when Randy realizes that he wants to

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be an individual. Additionally, Randy wants to let someone know he is tired of being a Soc.

Later in the story Randy pulls up next to Ponyboy and Twobit at the gas station and tells. . Since this is an incomplet Ponyboy that he's tired of being a Soc. Ponyboy recognizes this and says, "He ain't a Soc, just a Sentence guy," (Hinton 118) This proves that Ponyboy has accepted the fact that Randy has changed. The evidence makes the statement that Randy has veered away from his old ways. These two pieces of evidence provide a detailed look at Randy's individuality.

In "On the Sidewalk Bleeding", Andy realizes that he's being held accountable for his gang membership rather than for his individual actions. After being stabbed in the alley, Andy thought," "Had they known he was Andy..." (Hunter 3) The Guardians that stabbed him thought of him as a Royal, and he was stabbed only because he was part of the Royal gang. If the Guardians that had stabbed him thought of him as just Andy, the individual person, it might have saved him. Furthermore, as he laid there on the street, bleeding out on the sidewalk, in the alley suddenly it hit him: "The knife hadn't been plunged in hatred of Andy, it was in hatred of the Jacket...The Jacket was a meaningless thing robbing him of his life," (Hunter 4). This is, once again, a piece of evidence that says Andy wasn't stabbed but that the jacket and the Royals were stabbed. The pride of the jacket had been stabbed, the now meaningless pride of the jacket, and not Andy as a person. This once again proves individuality can be good, and could save your life in some cases.

It is clear to see that Randy from **The Outsiders** and Andy from "On the Sidewalk Bleeding" realize that being recognized for individuality is much better than being recognized with a social group. Andy was not able to escape the blade and died, while Randy was able to recognize that being an individual wasn't bad at all. One would think that the meaning of individuality is shown by both Randy and Andy, because they both show that they don't want to

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only live in a group and just be recognized as a member, but want to be recognized as individuals with different unique traits.

Contumacious Katniss

"Shall I tell you what the real evil is? To cringe to the things that are called evils, to surrender to them our freedom, in defiance of which we ought to face any suffering" (http://mobile.brainyquote.com/quoted/keywords/defiance.html). These are the wise words of the Roman philosopher, Lucius Annaeus Seneca. The true evil is when people give up their freedom and acquiesce to the things people call evil. Katniss Everdeen, the protagonist in Suzanne Collins's science fiction novel, The Hunger Games, has the same attitude toward the Hunger Games. These barbaric games are held annually and involve twenty-four boys and girls from each of the twelve districts of the nation of Panem, being forced to murder each other until only one remains. These games are held by the pitiless Capitol as a source of entertainment for the people of the Capitol, and a reminder to the districts of their complete powerlessness. Katniss Everdeen, a sixteen-year-old girl from District 12, volunteers to take her twelve-year-old sister's place in order to protect her when she is chosen to take part in these tasteless games. Katniss's defiant, determined, and clever qualities epitomize her as a natural leader.

In the same way Seneca has to cope with the sickening gladiatorial games, Katniss must employ her boldly resistant personality to survive the deadly Hunger Games. For example, when she is called to demonstrate her skills for the Gamemakers, the people who control everything that happens in the games, she is enraged with the way they pay more attention to their roasted pig than her shooting, so she finds another way to grab their attention: "Suddenly I am furious, that with my life on the line, they [the Gamemakers] don't even have the decency to pay



attention to me. That I'm being upstaged by a dead pig... Without thinking, I pull an arrow from my quiver and send it straight at the Gamemakers' table... The arrow skewers the apple in the pig's mouth and pins it to the wall behind it... Everyone stares in disbelief. 'Thank you for your consideration,' I say. Then I give a slight bow and walk straight toward the exit without being dismissed" (101-102). Katniss demonstrates her rebellious character by shooting an arrow at the Gamemakers' table and walking away without being dismissed because she knows that these actions may have severe consequences, yet she proceeds without hesitation. Shooting an arrow at a table filled with distracted, careless people is dangerous because it could hit someone and severely injure or kill them. In addition, Katniss takes her defiance up another level by walking away without being dismissed, which is extremely disrespectful. The Gamemakers have strong authority and power during the games, so they could drown her with a flood or electrify her with lightning with the push of a button. Angering the Gamemakers won't help Katniss's chance of survival, yet she doesn't let that hold her back from expressing her beliefs. Katniss's defiance makes her a natural leader because natural leaders aren't afraid to voice their opinions, even if they must sacrifice their safety for speaking out. Through her actions, Katniss conveys a clear message: she is disgusted by the Capitol and they way the Gamemakers won't pay attention to her even when her life depends on the level of the Gamemakers' awareness. In addition to terrifying them for ignoring her, Katniss demonstrates her unsubmissive quality again by defying the Gamemakers and the Capitol once more and challenging a rule change during the games. After being manipulated by the previous rule change, stating there can be two victors, Katniss and Peeta, the boy tribute from her district, feel used. Katniss, however, overcomes this feeling and comes up with an ingenious solution to allow them both to win: "Yes, they [the Gamemakers] have to have a victor. Without a victor, the whole thing would blow up in the Gamemakers' faces. They'd have failed the Capitol... If Peeta and I were to die, or they thought

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we were... My fingers fumble with the pouch on my belt, freeing it... I loosen the top of the pouch and pour a few spoonfuls of [poisonous] berries into his [Peeta's] palm. Then I fill my own... The berries have just passed my lips when the trumpets begin to blare. [Signaling the end of the games]" (344-345). Instead of listening to the rule change and killing Peeta, Katniss finds a way that not only allows them both to win, but also completely humiliates the Capitol and Gamemakers, even though the Capitol has the power to destroy everything she holds dear. Because the Capitol is embarrassed in front of the entire nation, Katniss's actions not only endanger herself but also endanger her family. She is willing to take that risk, however, in order to reach her goal of surviving and proving the Capitol can't control her. Katniss's defiance personifies her as a natural leader because leaders must be able to act quickly and effectively according to their goals. Katniss reaches her goal by threatening to commit a double suicide with Peeta. She and Peeta have nonverbally formed an agreement that they will pressure the Capitol to allow them to live by threatening to eat the poisonous berries because their friendship is so strong. In addition, neither of them would kill each other because that is exactly what the Capitol wants them to do. Katniss is undeniably a natural leader, as evidenced by her shooting an arrow uncomfortably close to the Gamemakers and forcing them to allow her and Peeta to live.

Katniss's defiant, determined, and clever actions indubitably illustrate her as a natural leader. When Lucius Annaeus Seneca announces that the "real evil is to cringe to the things that are called evils," he suggests that the true evil is to cower at what we call evil, including murder, torture, cruelty, inflicting pain, and people who force children to murder each other live on television. Katniss does not cower, cringe or surrender to the evil government that tries to control her. Instead, she challenges, fights, and triumphs over this evil. Not only is Katniss victorious, but throughout her battle she gathers followers who have also been negatively affected by the Capitol and are inspired and look up to her as their guide to freedom, as their leader.

Grade 7 Reading List

All students will read at least three selections from the following:

The Giver by Lois Lowry

The Outsiders by S.E. Hinton

Redwall by Brian Jacques

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer by Mark Twain

The Pearl by John Steinbeck

Dragonsong by Anne McCaffrey

The Uglies by Scott Westerfeld

The Children's Story by James Clavell

Animal Farm by George Orwell

Stargirl by Jerry Spinelli

Gathering Blue by Lois Lowry

The Messenger by Lois Lowry

Kind of Shadows by Susan Cooper

Freak the Mighty by Rodman Philbrick

Downriver by Will Hobbs

The Pigman by Paul Zindel

Out of the Dust by Karen Hesse

Lightning Thief by Rick Riordan

A Mango Shaped Space by Wendy Mass

The Circuit by Francisco Jimenez

Where the Red Fern Grows by Wilson Rawls

Treasure Island by Robert Lois Stevenson

Bearstone by Will Hobbs

Old Yeller by Fred Gipson

The Hobbit by J.R.R. Tolkien

A Midsummer Night's Dream by William Shakespeare

Monsters are Due on Maple Street by Rod Serling

The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins

All students will read <u>short stories</u>, <u>poetry</u>, and <u>expository texts</u> from the 7th grade literature book and other sources as needed.

Grade 8 Reading List

All students will read at least three selections from the following:

To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry by Mildred D. Taylor

Touching Spirit Bear by Ben Mikaelsen

Milkweed by Jerry Spinelli

Call of the Wild by Jack London

Habibi by Naomi Shihab Nye

Holes by Louis Sacher

The Book Thief by Markus Zusak

Witness by Karen Hesse

All But My Life by Gerda Weissman

Night by Elie Wiesel

Red Scarf Girl by Ji-Li Jiang

The Diary of a Young Girl by Anne Frank

Twelfth Night by William Shakespeare

Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare

The Diary of Anne Frank (play), Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett

All students will read <u>short stories</u>, <u>poetry</u>, and <u>expository texts</u> from the 8th grade literature book and other sources as needed.

Grade 9 SDUHSD Reading list

All Students will read one of the following:

SDUHSD Nonfiction Reader – argument/persuasive exposition I know Why the Caged Bird Sings, Maya Angelou Black Boy, Richard Wright – biography/biographical exposition An American Childhood. Annie Dillard supplemental Tuesdays with Morrie, Mitch Albom Hiroshima, John Hersey Freedom Writers Diary

All students will read at least one novel or epic poem from the following list:

The Lord of the Flies, William Golding
The Bean Trees, Barbra Kingsolver
A Separate Peace, John Knowles
The Secret Life of Bees, Sue Monk Kidd
A Tale of Two Cities, Charles Dickens
Of Mice and Men, John Steinbeck
Great Expectations, Charles Dickens
The Red Badge of CourageStephen Crane
The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time, Mark Haddon

All Students will read at least one play from the following list:

Romeo and Juliet, William Shakespeare

Antigone, Sophocles

The Piano Lesson, August Wilson

Grade 10 SDUHSD Reading List

All students will read nonfiction from the following:

SDUHSD Nonfiction Reader – argument/persuasive exposition On Writing, Stephen King

All students will read at least one work of fiction from the following list:

The Catcher in the Rye, J.D. Salinger The Kite Runner, Khaled Hosseini

The Stranger, Albert Camus The Heart is a Lonely Hunter, McCullers

Crime and Punishment, Fyodor Dostoevsky- Pevlear/Vol. translation

Maus, Art Spiegelman The Metamorphosis, Franz Kafka

The Perks of Being a Wallflower, Stephen Chbosky

The House of the Spirits, Isabella Allende

Obasan, Joy Kogawa

Interpreter of Maladies, Jhumpa Lahiri

All students will read at least one play from the following list:

Oedipus Rex, Sophocles

Cyrano de Bergerac, Edmond Rostand

The Taming of the Shrew, William Shakespeare

Much Ado About Nothing, William Shakespeare

Waiting for Godot, Samuel Beckett

A Raisin in the Sun, Lorraine Hansberry

All students will read short stories from at least one of the following texts:

The Eye of the Heart World Writers Today

World Literature

All students will read one or more of the following works in a seminar:

Bless Me Ultima, Rudolfo Anaya

The Power of One, Bryce Courtenay

Life and Death in Shanghai, Nien Chen

One Hundred Years of Solitude, Gabriel Garcia Marquez

A River Sutra, Gita Mehta

Life of PI, Yann Martel

Sister of My Heart, Chitra Divakaruni

Anna Karenia, Leo Tolstoy

Free the Children, Craig Kielburger

Game of Thrones, George R. Martin

Grade 11 SDUHSD Reading List

All students will read nonfiction from the following:

SDUHSD Nonfiction Reader – argument/persuasive exposition

Black Elk Speaks

High Tide in Tucson

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass (1st Edition)

Nickel and Dimed Barbara Ehrenreich

Walden & Civil Disobedience, Henry David Thoreau

In Cold Blood, Truman Capote

Fast Food Nation, Eric Schlosser

All students will read one novel from the following list:

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Mark Twain

The Great Gatsby, F. Scott Fitzgerald

Their Eyes Were Watching God, Zora Neale Hurston

The Awakening, Kate Chopin

The Grapes of Wrath, John Steinbeck

The Sound and the Fury, William Faulkner

Invisible Man, Ralph Ellison

The Scarlet Letter, Nathaniel Hawthorne

The Sun Also Rises, Ernest Hemingway

Once Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, Ken Kessey

The Things They Carried, Tim O'Brien

The Tortilla Curtain, T.C. Boyle

The Color Purple, Alice Walker

Giovanni's Room, James Baldwin

All students will read at least one of the following works, or a work from the list above, in a seminar:

Catch 22, Joseph Heller On the Road, Jack Kerouac

Saint Maybe, Anne Tyler Snow Falling on Cedars, David Guterson

Rain of Gold, Victor Villasenor The Joy Luck Club, Amy Tan

Stranger in a Strange Land, Robert A. Heinlein

A Prayer for Owen Meany, John Irving

Summer, Edith Wharton

All students will read one play from the following list:

The Crucible, Arthur Miller

Fences, August Wilson

Death of a Salesman, Arthur Miller

The Laramie Project, Moises Kaufman

Grade 12 SDUHSD Reading List

All students will read nonfiction from one of the following:

SDUHSD Nonfiction Reader – argument/persuasive exposition

Into the Wild. Jon Krakauer

How to Read Literature Like a Professor, Thomas C. Foster

Man's Search for Meaning, Victor Frankl The Color of Water, James McBride A Room of One's Own, Virgina Woolf Terror in the Name of God. Jessica Stern

All students will read at least one work of fiction from the following list:

The Secret Sharer, Conrad A Town like Alice, Shute Heart of Darkness, Conrad Frankenstein, Shelley

Cry, The Beloved Country, Paton 1984, Orwell

Wuthering Heights, Bronte My Brilliant Career, Franklin Childhood's End, Clarke The Handmaid's Tale, Atwood

A Room with a View, Forster Dubliners, James Joyce

Pride and Prejudice, Austen

V for Vendetta, James McTeigue

Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Hardy

Going After Cachiatto, Tim O'Brien

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Joyce

Jane Eyre, Bronte The Dispossessed, Ursula K. Le Guin

The Picture of Dorian Gray, Oscar Wilde

Brave New World, Aldous Huxley Siddartha, Herman Hesse

Ishmael, Daniel Quinn Never Let me Go, Kazuo Ishiguro

All students will read at least one play from the following list:

The Tragedy of Macbeth, Shakespeare

The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, Shakespeare

The Tragedy of King Lear, Shakespeare

Othello, Shakespeare

Titus Andronicus, Shakespeare

Pygmalion, Shaw

The Importance of Being Earnest, Oscar Wilde