

**Oak Crest Middle School**  
**Honors English Program: A Guide for Parents and Students**  
**8th 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, we **do 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. Students 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 8th 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 8th 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.

- ☐ How to synthesize multiple texts in a multi-paragraph, thesis-based essay.
- ☐ How to identify and state the function of the 8 parts of speech in sentences.
- ☐ How to identify and state the function of a subject and a predicate in a sentence.
- ☐ Describe the impact literary devices have in a work of literature.
- ☐ Advance beyond summary and analyze the deeper meaning of a passage by making connections between a passage and historical events, current events, and personal experiences.
- ☐ Discover common and recurring themes across texts.
- ☐ Recognize the elements that contribute to an author's style

**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:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Is strong academically in English.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Is hard working and self-motivated.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Learns best with thorough instruction and practice of new concepts.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Appreciates challenges, but also benefits from assistance and practice with complex, critical-thinking and non-routine strategies.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Thrives with structured guidance when learning applying, and extending new concepts.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Actively participates in the learning process.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Independently reads various genres.</li></ul> <p><b>Disclaimer:</b> If your child does not exhibit many of the qualities above, don't worry. The goal of the College Prep English class is to get all students to these levels.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> English is one of his/her gifts or passions.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Has an exceptional work ethic, is highly self-motivated, and works well independently.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Masters concepts quickly without the need for much repetition; requires faster-paced, rigorous curriculum.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Values the challenges of complex, critical-thinking opportunities; can achieve this with minimal assistance and often takes ideas to a higher level.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Seeks out and actively contributes to classroom discussions</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Enjoys reading higher level, complex texts in a variety of genres.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Enjoys the writing process and understands the need for multiple revisions.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Is inquiry-driven, which is demonstrated by thinking critically about world issues related to the assigned reading and writings (goes beyond surface meanings, makes connections and inferences)</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Manages time well (able to juggle school work, family obligations, and extra-curricular activities).</li></ul>

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