

8th Grade Honors Course Information

Participation in honors level classes at the junior high level can help students prepare for more rigorous courses in high school. These high school advanced courses, in turn, can prepare students to do better on the ACT, SAT, or other college entrance exams, as well as to succeed in high school and college course work.

Honors English: This is a course rich in discussion, challenging content, and exploration of ideas. Students will read a variety of fiction and informational texts while expanding on argumentative, informative, and narrative writing. Research and collaboration will occur in developing and presenting ideas all while improving conventions of speaking and writing.

Texts read in this class will be complex in content and structure. Texts will be evaluated, discussed, and compared. Each text will be looked at in depth by the students, and the focus will be beyond mere comprehension. Lengthier texts include science fiction, memoir, stage play, historical nonfiction, and realistic contemporary fiction. Shorter texts will be read in the above genres, as well as in informational and nonfiction texts such as articles, opinion pieces, biographical and autobiographical texts, and other works.

Argumentative and informational writing is stressed in this course. The topics tend to be current events and/or related to the class reading at the time of each essay. Students will use the writing process, including peer review, revising, and editing. For argumentative writing, articles of varying stances will be read, evaluated, and discussed in order to formulate strong stances for each student's writing. Additionally, narrative and reflective writing will occur throughout the course.

Honors U.S. History: Students should expect a difficult work load and anticipate many reading and writing opportunities. It is worthy to note that history is more than the study of mere facts; history is subjective. Students will learn that our country's history is built upon the primary documents of the past, and the interpretations of those documents by historians. We will look at these documents and in some cases will come up with our own interpretations. Students will be exposed to various primary and secondary source materials, books, documentaries, movies, music, etc. while using the textbook United States History: Beginnings to 1914, as a road map.

Honors Science: The curriculum for this class is basically the same as the "traditional" science curriculum, but it has a different approach to learning. To be successful in this honors class, students must be comfortable researching ideas and concepts. A discovery approach to concepts and ideas is emphasized in the honors class. Being comfortable with this approach to learning requires a greater level of maturity. Curiosity and a willingness to stretch and push themselves in the learning environment will be important to succeeding in this class. Students need to be willing to apply themselves in the following ways:

- Students work to develop research skills.
- Students read other sources of information, case studies, and current events. They will need to summarize and apply this information.
- Students make connections between ideas and apply their knowledge to new situations.
- Students communicate their observations and knowledge in writing.
- Students recognize the importance of being a responsible member of a team to complete projects and assignments.

Junior High Honors Courses Indicators for Student Success

Please thoughtfully consider the following criteria as you are making a decision about whether or not junior high honors level courses will provide the most appropriate learning environment for your child. Read over this form. Discuss this with your child. Be confident that they can achieve at the level described. An honors student should meet the following criteria:

1. Typically, be performing at a **3 or 4 proficiency level** on the End of Level test in a specific subject area before considering enrolling in an honors level course in that subject area.
2. Consistently earn an “A” or “B” (or a “3” for 6th graders) for the subject in which they desire to take an honors course.
3. Have a **high level of interest** and **strong desire to be challenged** in the subject in which they would like to take an honors course.
4. Consistently exhibit most of the characteristics described below.

Learning/Intellectual Characteristics:

- Enjoys tasks that are more challenging than average
- Has a ready grasp of underlying principles and can quickly make valid generalization about events, people, and things
- Tries to understand complicated material by separating it into its respective parts
- Reasons things out
- Analyzes problems and considers alternatives
- Enjoys complex concepts and processes

Motivational/Affective Characteristics:

- Becomes absorbed and truly involved in certain topics or problems
- Needs little external motivation to follow through in work completion
- Often requires little direction from teachers
- Is highly self-motivated and persistent
- Has high expectations of self and others

When deciding whether or not to enroll a student in a particular subject area honors course, please consider the following subject specific characteristics:

Math/Science:

- Is interested in numerical analysis.
- Has a good memory for storing main features of a problem and its solutions.
- Reasons effectively and efficiently.
- Organizes data and experiments to discover patterns or relationships.
- Is flexible in solving problems.

Social Studies/Language Arts:

- * Has advanced vocabulary for age or grade level.
- * Reads a great deal; does not avoid difficult material.
- * Enjoys language (verbal or written) communication; has advanced communication skills.
- * Organizes ideas and sequences in preparation for speaking and writing.
- * Likes to study and research in areas of interest.