

FAQs for English 9

Description of 9th Grade English: This English course is required for all 9th grade students.

- The course includes in-depth study and analysis of multiple genres of reading and a variety of modes of writing and speaking in a class structure that allows students the opportunity to practice skills and strategies daily.
- Students hone their reading skills through frequent and increased engagement with novels, short stories, poetry, nonfiction texts, mentor texts, and book clubs.
- Daily writing in the forms of drafts and revisions based on teacher modeling and timely feedback will lead to skilled final essays which include literary analysis, informational, argumentative, and narrative.
- Class structure, including dedicated in-class time for reading, writing, and speaking, choice, and frequent timely feedback will foster growth in students' reading, writing, and speaking skills.

What impact will this have on my student's weighted GPA?

Because 9th and 10th ELA, including honors, are not Advanced Placement Courses, they do not receive weighted grades. These courses are graded according to the TSD standard four-point grading scale. Only college-level AP courses, which are available in ELA in grades 11 and 12, receive a weighted grade on a 5-point scale, so this new class will not impact their weighted GPA. Colleges will be sent the same weighted GPA as before.

How does not having an honors title in this new course impact my student?

Colleges and universities expect that students will take advantage of higher-level courses that are offered in the district. When English 9 honors is not offered as part of the district curriculum, that is not counted against the student.

How was the course designed?

This course has been built on the foundation of best practices, most current research from Columbia University, and an identification of the skills and strategies necessary for success in the subsequent ELA courses and the AP curriculum. This course was developed so that engagement, rigor, and responsive teaching are at its core; it is a course where all students will be provided an appropriately challenging and supportive environment in which to grow as a reader and a writer. It is an ELA classroom that will be committed to time to practice, choice, rigor, feedback in the moment, critical thinking, and increasing reading and writing volume.

How are teachers preparing for this shift?

For the past two years, teachers have been engaged in targeted PD to meet teacher needs specifically centered around responsive teaching and differentiation. 9th grade teachers are also training to meet the needs of all students and to help students progress in both reading and writing. Teachers are supported with resources including in-district professional learning, common teacher planning time, a dedicated Literacy Coach at each high school to ensure that all students meet their learning goals, and a partnership with Columbia University. Summer learning opportunities with Columbia University and Teachers College are provided. Last year, several teachers attended the "Teaching Writing in High School Institute" and several others participated in the "Creating Teacher Toolkits to Support a Wide-Range of Writers Institute."

How will this class meet the needs of all students?

First and foremost, the workshop structure allows for timely and responsive feedback based on learning progressions and leveled expectations. As students are immersed with completing the work plan that they determined during the mini lesson, the teacher meets with small groups or confers with individual students. In one class, that looked like this:

- Higher level writers: Met as a group with the teacher to think about ways to further enhance their elaboration through the inclusion of small anecdotes that would support their claim.
- Mid-Level Writers: Teacher walked the room to check in with each student about their work plan to make certain they were working on their evidence-or another skill that they determined important based on the writer's checklist and teacher input from a previous day
- Developing Writers: Teacher met with three students as a small group who needed support in creating a stronger claim

As the class is designed to help all students progress in their skill level, the curriculum will include resources to allow teachers to further help both developing and exceeding students meet their goals.

How will this course ready students for Advanced Classes?

In preparing the curriculum, great attention was paid to what students will need to know in subsequent English classes as well as general reading and writing skills for any course. The team, which included Lit and Comp, Honors, and Advanced Placement teachers, worked as a collective to study the pre-AP curriculum to gain insight into the skills necessary for success in AP Language and Composition and AP Literature and Composition. Once these skills were delineated, the Curriculum Development Team focused on how to build the skills beginning in grade 9 and moving to grade 10 so that students will be prepared should they choose AP English in grades 11 and/or 12. Below is a sampling of the skills that are included in the grade 9 course:

- Study of and practice with rhetoric
- Deep analysis of both fiction and nonfiction
- Synthesis practice within many texts
- Dedicated practice with literary analysis of whole class novels, independent reading, short stories, and poetry
- Close reading and annotation of fiction and nonfiction
- Author's purpose and its effect on craft choices
- Revision strategies to improve content and craft
- Narrative, Argument, Information, and Analytical Writing
- Analysis of character, setting, theme, and archetype
- Argumentative nonfiction rhetorical study
- Argument writing with rhetorical strategies, author's craft and research
- Study of intertextuality via whole class drama or novel and nonfiction articles

What have students said about this new course? This year, teachers at both Athens and Troy High piloted the new curriculum; a survey of students revealed positive results about both reading and writing.

Reading Survey:

- 71%: Having choice in what I read is important to me
- 61%: I am getting better at recognizing important details while I am reading
- 55%: I am developing ways to improve my reading comprehension

Writing Survey:

- 67%: My revision includes some of the following: new ideas or information, attention to verb choice and improved sentence structure, detailed description, a more logical sequence of events, improved figurative language
- 66%: I work to revise my writing beyond grammar and mechanics
- 66%: I understand more about authors craft and try to include it in my writing

What type of reading will students engage in?

Because this course is based on researched best practices, students will have ample choice of the texts that they read. While there will be whole class reading experiences, such as *Romeo and Juliet*, often students will be in book clubs where they will work on the skills learned through mentor texts and mini lessons. They will also be reading independently at the beginning of each class. All of this will extend their volume of reading. Summer reading will still be a part of the course, though students will have far more choice in the titles that they choose. The basic tenant of summer reading is that students continue to build their reading muscle during the summer break.

Below is a sample list of books chosen by on class of 9th grade students to read either independently or within a book club setting:

To Kill a Mockingbird	The Great Gatsby	The Book Thief
Navigating Early	Catcher in the Rye	Where the Crawdads Sing
Malibu Rising	Unbroken	Written in the Stars
The Absolutely True Diary of a Parttime Indian	The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night	Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire
Jackpot	The World after the Fall	The Hobbit
The Shining	The Brothers Karamazov	Emma
The Invisible Man	The Hawthorne Legacy	Crime and Punishment
1984	The Help	The Dry