

## **Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Secondary English/Language Arts in the Lake Stevens School District**

### **Q: What options are open for students in secondary English/Language Arts (ELA) at Lake Stevens?**

A: Beginning in 6th grade, there are three pathways a student may follow in ELA. All paths, if completed successfully, could qualify a student for admission to a four-year university.

### **Q: Will there be a huge difference between ELA in the elementary school and ELA at a middle school which would impact a student's success?**

A: There are clearly some differences. Many things, such as homework, are probably more dependent on the individual teacher than the grade level. However, all students will experience these differences:

- ELA instruction at the elementary level typically lasts 90-120 minutes daily. This drops to about 55 minutes in middle school, a significant reduction.
- A student is mainly with one teacher during most of the day in elementary, so there may be more opportunity to give a student additional help in ELA as needed. In middle school, the students see their ELA teacher for only one period during the day and then move on. Additional help would have to come before or after school.
- In addition, the middle school experience is very different from elementary school aside from academics. Students are making many adjustments to a new situation, and this can be challenging for some until they get their feet on the ground. We want each student placed appropriately in courses. They need to feel challenged, but it's not a time to experiment and throw students in "over their heads," so it's important to carefully consider the recommendations made regarding the student's ELA placement.

### **Q: What are the three pathways in secondary ELA?**

A: The attached chart describes suggested pathways through general ELA courses, Challenge-level courses, and Advanced-Challenge-level courses. All courses are aligned to state standards and designed to prepare students for college and careers after high school. General education ELA uses curriculum and standards at students' grade level while differentiating for individual needs and strengths. Beginning in middle school, the Challenge-level ELA courses increase the rigor of coursework by integrating standards (skills) at and above students' grade level. Advanced-Challenge courses focus primarily on standards (skills) one grade level above students' grade level. In 8th and 9th grade, Challenge and Pre-AP ELA courses use the curriculum (texts and assignments) and standards (skills) one grade level above students' grade level. At the high school level, several options are available, including grade level English courses, English electives, two Advanced Placement English courses, and UW English.

### **Q: How does a student qualify for the Challenge and Advanced-Challenge ELA pathways?**

A: Middle school Advanced-Challenge courses are intended for students who have been tested as Highly Capable in literacy. To begin the Challenge ELA pathway, there are no set criteria or a rank-order list which qualifies a student. There are, however, a number of indicators that a student is likely to be successful in Challenge ELA. Students most likely to be successful

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have a combination of high grades, exhibit good work habits, and have exceeded standard on state and/or district assessments. The student's current ELA teacher will also be consulted regarding the most appropriate middle school placement. During the year, a teacher has the unique opportunity to recognize which students "get it" the first time through. This is critical. Students in the Challenge class typically move more rapidly through reading and writing and spend time going deeper into analytical thinking. This pace can become very frustrating for students who just need a little more time to consolidate their learning and practice a concept before moving ahead to something new. Other factors considered by the teacher may be a student's ability to operate at the higher cognitive levels when presented with problem-solving, the willingness to be challenged and persevere when presented with difficult tasks, and dedication to completing work in a timely and organized manner.

### **Q: How will I know if Challenge ELA is the right choice for my student?**

A: Review your student's performance, in terms of both grades earned and assessment scores. Talk with the current teacher. If you're still unsure, talk with the principal at the appropriate middle school and/or the secondary ELA specialist.

### **Q: If a student begins on a Challenge ELA pathway in 6th grade, will he/she necessarily remain in the Challenge ELA pathway in future years?**

A: Every attempt is made to make an accurate 6th grade placement for Challenge ELA, but continuation depends upon the student's performance, and choice, each year. Earning a B- or above in Challenge ELA is the success criteria for continuing in the advanced ELA pathway. A few students see it isn't working for them, and transfer out after a trial period at the start of the year or after the first year. Teachers, counselors or administrators will recommend changes if it's apparent the student has been misplaced. There is flexibility to adjust a student's schedule to fit individual needs.

### **Q: If a student was not originally placed into 6th Challenge ELA but performed exceptionally well during the year, would there be any chance for placement into the program during that year or in 7th grade?**

A: Yes. Just as when students are originally selected into the program, each student can be reassessed at any time to determine the best ELA placement for him/her. The student's current ELA teacher would be the best starting point to determine if such a move would be advisable or not. The teacher can not only evaluate a student's relative performance but also has access to assessments that may be a good indicator of a proper placement.

### **Q: Will a student in the Challenge ELA pathway be expected to take the state assessments above their current grade level?**

A: No. Students in grades six, seven, eight, and ten take the respective grade level Smarter Balanced assessment regardless of the ELA course in which they are enrolled.

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**Q: Will a student in Challenge 8 English (using 9th grade curriculum) earn high school credit for passing this course?**

A: Yes, students can earn high school credit for passing Challenge 8 English. Before students graduate from high school, they must formally request to have the 8th grade Challenge English course grades added to their high school transcript. This credit satisfies the 9th grade English requirement for graduation.

**Q: How many ELA courses are required in secondary education?**

A: Students must have 4 credits of English to graduate from high school.

**Q: Do any high school advanced ELA courses earn college credit?**

A: Passing AP Literature and Composition earns 5 credits through Everett Community College (Course 111: Intro to Literature). Some colleges accept high AP test scores for college credit. Passing UW English both semesters earns two 5-credit classes through University of Washington. Each semester is also worth a full year's high school credit. UW English requires a B+ average, and most students have taken advanced ELA courses previously.

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Grade	Gen Ed	Challenge	Advanced Challenge
6	<b>Language Arts 6</b>	<b>Challenge LA 6</b> (6th and 7th grade standards)	<b>Advanced Challenge LA 6</b> (7th grade standards)
7	<b>Language Arts 7</b>	<b>Challenge LA 7</b> (7th and 8th grade standards)	<b>Advanced Challenge LA 7</b> (8th grade standards)
8	<b>Language Arts 8</b>	<b>Challenge 8</b> (9th grade standards and curriculum)	
9	<b>English 9</b>	<b>Pre-AP 9</b> (10th grade standards and curriculum)	
10	<b>English 10</b>	<i>Choose high school courses each year:</i>	
		<b>English 11</b>	<b>AP Language &amp; Composition</b>
11	<b>English 11</b>	<i>Choose 2:</i> <b>senior English electives</b> (list at left)	<b>AP Literature &amp; Composition</b>
12	<i>Choose 2 senior English electives: <b>Novels, Creative Writing, British Literature, World Literature</b> or opt into <b>AP Lit.</b> or <b>UW English.</b></i>	<i>Choose a different 2:</i> <b>senior English electives</b> (list at left)	<b>UW English</b> (open to seniors with B+ average)