

# SKHS English/Language Arts Department Policy on Placement in Honors-Level Courses

2014.2a



9<sup>th</sup> graders at South Kingstown High School take either English 9 or Honors English 9 to fulfill their 9<sup>th</sup> grade English Language Arts requirement. In the winter of 8<sup>th</sup> grade, students take an in-house assessment of their reading and writing skills, which the high school departments use to determine their placement in 9<sup>th</sup> grade English, Social Studies, and Science. Students earn a recommendation for Honors English 9 by demonstrating that both their reading and writing skills are significantly above grade level. To receive a recommendation for Honors English 9, students must meet *all 3* of the following criteria:

- maintain a summative grade of A (93%) or higher in each of the preceding 2 quarters of their current ELA class;
- score a percentile ranking of 85% or higher on the STAR Reading assessment (or comparable standardized assessment of reading skills);
- achieve a composite score of 8 (out of 12) on the SKHS English Language Arts department's text-based writing assessment.

Any students who meet 2 of the 3 criteria above may, *at the discretion of the SKHS English Department*, receive a recommendation for placement into Honors English 9 if their 8<sup>th</sup> Grade ELA teacher requests such a recommendation. 8<sup>th</sup> Grade ELA teachers submit a list of those students they wish to recommend for Honors English 9 to the SKHS ELA Department Head within 5 days of receiving the list of qualifying students.

Students who are already attending SKHS pre-qualify for placement into an ELA Honors-level course if they are currently enrolled in an Honors-level class and have earned a cumulative average of at least 80% (B-) in that class. Students in an ELA Honors class who earn a cumulative average *lower* than 80% may enroll in the following year's Honors course *with their current ELA teacher's recommendation*.

All other students (those not currently enrolled in an ELA Honors course, and those not recommended for Honors by their current ELA teacher) may qualify for placement into Honors by taking the ELA Honors Placement Exam and earning a composite score (the combined scores of two readers, out of a maximum score of 12) of at least 8 (for Honors English 10), 9 (for A.P. English 11) or 10 (for A.P. English 12). Students who have *not* been recommended for ELA Honors placement by their current ELA teacher **must** take the ELA Honors Placement Exam regardless of waiver status.

In addition, to qualify for ELA Honors placement, students must have achieved a percentile ranking (relative to their age group) of at least 85% on the combined score on the STAR Reading assessment (or comparable standardized assessment) administered to 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> graders twice a year, or a percentile ranking of at least 90% on the Gates-McGinitie Reading Assessment (administered to students who transfer to South Kingstown High School).

Students who do not receive a recommendation for Honors placement may still enroll in an Honors-level course if their parent or guardian submits a Placement Waiver form to the Guidance department. A qualifying score on the Honors Placement Exam is not a perfect predictor of success in an Honors class, and students who fall short of the qualifying score may well excel in an Honors class if they consistently and conscientiously apply the necessary effort to succeed in a demanding course of study. This is especially so if the student has satisfied the other criteria for recommendation to Honors, such as a reading test score above the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile.

We would discourage students from overriding the ELA department's recommendation, however, if their Honors Placement Exam score is 2 or more points below the cutoff score for their grade level, as such a score indicates that the student will be at a significant disadvantage in trying to keep up with the rigorous level of writing proficiency expected of students in that course.