



Homestead High School

Ninth Grade Academy Program

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Open House for Eighth Grade Parents

Dear Eighth Grade Parent(s) or Guardian(s),

On Tuesday, January 26, 2010, Homestead's Ninth Grade Academy Program, The Parent Teacher Club, and the ALPHA Parent Group hosted an Open House for eighth grade parents.

We provided the following:

- Counselors presented a curriculum overview.
- New families to the district attended an Orientation.
- Department Supervisors (English, math, science, social studies) were available for general information.
- An AP and Honors Information session was presented.
- Representatives from extra/co-curricular groups and elective courses were available throughout the evening to answer questions about their organization.

IF YOU WERE NOT ABLE TO ATTEND THIS OPEN HOUSE, WE ARE PROVIDING THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION TO YOU:

All eighth grade students will receive a *Ninth Grade Enrollment Guide* and other enrollment materials from the Middle School Counselors prior to scheduling in February. The scheduling meeting will be more meaningful for students if the scheduling materials have been reviewed prior to the meeting.

To help guide you through this process, we have included an overview of the scheduling steps. The ninth grade year is structured with several required courses. By taking the subjects that are required, a student will be on task to pursue any of the diploma tracks. A four-year plan will be developed for each student late in the fall semester of the freshman year.

See the following pages for the Scheduling Process.

The Scheduling Process for Ninth Grade

Structure

The ninth grade year is a fairly structured year. Some students tend to become overwhelmed by the numerous course choices. We hope to reduce this anxiety by noting that their biggest decision is in their choice of elective courses. The school day includes seven (7) periods. All students are required to take English, Math, and Science. Their current eighth grade teachers will make recommendations as to the appropriate course placement in those subject areas. Physical Education and Health are one semester courses that are required for graduation. These may be taken during the freshman year. Students who are currently enrolled in World Language, and took the same World Language in their 7th grade year, may continue to the next level of study. This leaves at least two periods to be selected by the student from the long list of electives offered.

Recommendations

During the selection process the classroom teachers will make recommendations in the core classes and mark them on the selection sheet. These recommendations will be communicated through the Course Selection sheet provided by the middle schools. We encourage you to consider the recommendations seriously. The eighth grade teachers work in collaboration with the ninth grade teachers and understand the course requirements. In making the recommendations the key philosophy is to challenge the student to his/her highest potential. If you question the recommendation, please call your child's teacher to discuss your concerns.

Specific Subjects

Mathematics: Math is sequential, so the course recommended is the next one in order of the listing. A student who receives a C or below in Algebra or Geometry should strongly consider repeating the course as a freshman prior to proceeding to the next course in the Math sequence. If a student chooses to repeat the course, he/she may only get credit for it once. The credit and grade that is earned the second time the course is taken will appear on the transcript and be factored into the overall GPA.

English: English 9A and 9B are the college prep English classes. Students who are in the Alpha class will be recommended for the Honors Block which requires two periods – one of Honors English and one of AP World History. Students who are interested in Honors Block or Honors English, will be placed in these courses or referred to further testing, after looking at their scores on the I-STEP and NWEA. A student with the appropriate scores, desiring placement in Block or Honors English 9 will be required to take the placement exam at his/her middle school sometime after February. A student who takes the Block exam will also be considered for Honors English. The student will be placed in the appropriate course after the results of the exam. **Remember students who are scheduled to take Honors Block or Honors English will have summer reading assignments.**

Physical Education and Health: These courses are required to graduate from high school. Students are encouraged to take them during their freshman year. Both courses may be scheduled after the freshman year. PE is sometimes offered as a summer course. Please keep in mind, however, that summer gym is limited and seating is done on a priority basis. Upperclassmen will have priority over the freshmen. At this time we are uncertain as to whether or not summer gym is going to be taught the summer of 2011.

Electives: Many electives are semester courses. If a student has an interest in certain areas, he/she should begin the courses in the ninth grade.

- A student, who is interested in working on publications such as the Yearbook, Newspaper, or the *Mirador*, should take Journalism 1 and Journalism 2 during ninth grade.

- Any student interested in taking Web Page Design as a sophomore must take either Desktop Publishing or Computer Applications.
- Students wishing to pursue advanced art classes are encouraged to take two introductory art classes, either Intro to 2D Art or Intro to 3D Art which are the required pre-requisites for many art courses.
- Students who desire to work on the radio station should enroll in Radio, TV Broadcasting, Telecommunications: Introduction to Radio/ TV. Students who would also like to work on Homestead's televised morning announcements should take this course.
- Students interested in Technology and pre-engineering should enroll in a two semester course titled Introduction to Engineering (Project Lead the Way) or Design Process (if the student has not complete Algebra yet).
- Students who are interested in the Performing Arts should enroll in Choir, Band, and Dance, as appropriate. Some auditions may be required.
- Students interested in Fashion, Culinary Arts, Teaching, Nutrition, Medicine and Interior Design should enroll in Family Consumer Science as appropriate.

Seminar: Seminar is a 'not for credit' course that is the key component of the Ninth Grade Academy. Although it is not required, all students are strongly urged to enroll in it. It is our goal to assign each student the same seminar that their core area teachers have. Seminar is the feature that personalizes the ninth grade academy and makes it different from the traditional freshman year. It will include a study hall component *for those who need study time*. The following description appears in the Ninth Grade Enrollment Guide:

The seminar course is designed to allow each student time during the school day to do many of the learning activities that would otherwise require students to stay after school. This includes, but is not limited to, meeting with other students for the completion of class projects, using the IMC (library), participating in small group activities, completing course work and lab assignments, retaking or making up tests, attending study sessions for tests, and tutoring. For some student academic enrichment will take place during seminar. The ninth grade guidance activities will be presented to students during seminar period.

Timeline

During the last week of January, the Middle School Guidance Counselors will meet with the eighth grade students to introduce and explain the ninth grade course requirements. After the Middle School Guidance Counselors have met with students, the Ninth Grade Academy Counselors will make visits to both middle schools. During these visits, Ninth Grade Academy Counselors will highlight some scheduling points and answer students' questions. The points covered in this letter will be discussed in more detail, and the elective choices will be reviewed. The students should receive the scheduling forms and a Ninth Grade Course Enrollment Guide prior to this meeting.

During the first couple weeks of February, the students will finalize their choices based on the teacher recommendations in core classes. Students will meet with a guidance counselor and have their course selections entered into the computer.

SUMMIT STUDENTS: January 26th and 28th – Ninth Grade Academy Counselors at **Summit** to review and answer questions about scheduling. **February 4-12-** Proposed dates for the current 8th graders to enter their course selection

WOODSIDE STUDENTS: February 1st and 2nd - Ninth Grade Academy Counselors at **Woodside** to review and answer questions about scheduling. **February 4-12-** Proposed dates for the current 8th graders to enter their course selection.

FAMILIES New to the District: February 16th- The Guidance Secretary will begin contacting parents with students new to the district and transfer students to arrange a meeting with a counselor for scheduling and to answer any additional questions.

Procedure for Changes:

Students desiring to take a course that is not listed on the Ninth Grade Course Selection Sheet, may ask their Guidance Counselor to verify if it is offered to freshmen. For example, Photography is only an option for the Junior and Senior year. Students wishing to choose a core class other than one recommended, should arrange a meeting with the teacher making the recommendation. **February 19** will be the last date to request elective course changes.

Requests for Placement for Honors Courses:

There is no testing required for Honors Biology. However, please obtain the teacher's recommendation for the Honors Biology course. Students who qualify will be informed of the testing date for the Block or Honors English 9 course. If your student is requesting placement for either the Block or the Honors English course, he/she must still mark English 9 A/B on his/her course selection sheet. Once the student has completed either the Block test or the Honors test, his/her schedule will be adjusted accordingly.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Bay, Assistant Principal

Brian Dobias, Ninth Grade Guidance Counselor

Lindsay Lackland, Ninth Grade Guidance Counselor