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## Garfield 9th Grade Honors for All FAQ Summer 2016

### *Exactly what is the change?*

- All ninth-grade language arts and social studies classes will be honors level.
- This change eliminates the division between the previous "regular" and "honors" tracks.
- The recent *Seattle Times* article about Garfield used the phrase "cut honors history and English," which is an unfortunate misrepresentation of our plan.

### *When is this change happening?*

- The new honors for all class begins this fall, for the 2016-17 school year

### *Why are we making this change right now?*

- We are making the change to address the opportunity gap for all incoming students, allowing them all access to honors in order to promote equity at Garfield High School.
- Because we are already differentiating for a wide variety of learners, it is simply an extension of our current methodology.

### *Is special training required for teachers to teach this curriculum? Have all the teachers been trained to be able to teach to different learning styles and levels?*

- The teachers on this team have 11 advanced degrees; 6 of our teachers have their National Board Certification.
- We are working with a literacy specialist from the UW College of Education, on reading and vocabulary strategies, and on differentiating readings.
- We are taking a 3-day workshop on "complex instruction," a pedagogy that focuses on effective, ethical, and meaningful group work and critical thinking, which will help students work together in a positive and supportive manner.
- We are working with project based learning as an approach that is highly engaging and succeeds at deeper understanding. We have considerable expertise on the team already with project based learning and a proven track record of project-based successes in AP classes based on pass rates on the AP exam.
- We are co-designing the courses and co-planning the lessons, so the courses will reflect our team's best ideas. This close collaboration will allow us to revise and improve the courses for all students as the year progresses. The team, both social studies and ELA, will meet on a weekly basis in order deepen collaboration, provide feedback around lessons successes and improvements, and needed supports for students.

- Several teachers on the team have also studied and visited the New York Performance Standards Consortium, a group of small high schools in New York that focus on performance assessment.
- We will continue to reach out to a variety of experts for support and guidance throughout the school year.

Resources teachers are using to help them plan include (but are not limited to) the following:

- *Detracking for Excellence and Equity* by Carol Corbett Burris and Delia T. Garrity
- *On the Same Track* by Carol Corbett Burris
- *Working for Equity in Heterogeneous Classrooms*, Elizabeth G. Cohen and Rachel A. Lotan, eds
- *Designing Groupwork: Strategies for the Heterogeneous Classroom* by Elizabeth Cohen
- *Differentiation in Practice: A Resource Guide for Differentiating Curriculum, Grades 9-12* by Carol Ann Tomlinson
- *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom* by Thomas Armstrong
- *Multiple Intelligences: New Horizons in Theory and Practice* by Howard Gardner
- *Teaching English by Design* by Peter Smagorinsky
- *Strategic Reading* by Jeffrey D. Wilhelm
- *Academic Language for English Language Learners and Struggling Readers* by Yvonne S. Freeman and David E. Freeman
- *Deeper Reading* by Kelly Gallagher
- *Scaffolding the Academic Success of Adolescent English Language Learners* by Aida Walqui and Leo van Lier
- *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* by Carol Dweck
- ***Social Studies for Secondary Schools: Teaching to Learn, Learning to Teach* by Alan J. Singer**

*Which other schools have made this change?*

- De-tracking classes is not a new change and is not unique to Garfield. It's been done in different ways in SPS, such as Nathan Hale offering only one track for 9th grade classes, or Roosevelt's AP-for-all model with 10th grade human geography.

*Why do you think that this change will benefit all students?*

- We believe in this change because it will allow
  - Enhanced engagement in learning
  - Interaction with peers in meaningful ways
  - Authentic interdependency
  - Greater control over academic products
  - Enhanced critical thinking by solving complex problems in a diverse classroom setting
  - The development of a truly inclusive environment
- Multiple research studies show that all students learn better in heterogeneous classrooms with high-level curriculum. From the book *Detracking for Excellence and Equity*, "Our studies (Burris et al., 2006; Burris et al., 2007) as well as the studies of others (Mosteller, Light, & Sachs, 1996; Slavin, 1990) have found that the achievement of highly talented students either is not affected or actually increases when detracking occurs. The key factor, of course, is ensuring

that the curriculum remains challenging" (Burriss & Garrity, 2008). We are dedicated to making this change benefit *all* students.

- Furthermore, many employers and colleges are saying that students need more experience problem solving in groups instead of memorizing facts. This curriculum adjustment will help build those "soft skills" employers are looking for.

*Will teachers be given extra help in the classroom so no students are overlooked?*

- Yes. The social studies and language arts department are sharing an AmeriCorps volunteer who will rotate among classes during the day and be available for after school study sessions, 5 days a week along with at least one teacher per day.
- We will continue to use volunteers from local universities and the community.
- Students who arrive at GHS who have not met standard on the reading portion of the MSP will be placed into a reading class, Read 180, in order to provide literacy support. This class will be in addition to their regular English class, which effectively doubles their time with reading instruction.

*Will the classroom makeup be a full range of student abilities or will there be grouping of a range of students and the class size set accordingly?*

- All 9th grade social studies and language arts classrooms will be heterogeneous classrooms. The socio-economic, racial, and ability differences of GHS will be reflected in every classroom.

*Will the students still be prepared for the 10th grade AP World History test?*

- Yes. Our lessons will still be tied to AP learning goals, as they currently are in honors World History. Our teachers have extensive experience with the world history AP requirements, including taking this year's AP Summer Institute for the new World History AP exam design. And by retaining the information better into 10th grade because of scaffolded support and differentiation, the students will actually be better prepared than they have in past years.

*Will students still be prepared to move into AP English in 11th and 12th grade?*

- Yes. We are not changing our standards or objectives. We are preparing all students to feel confident in choosing an AP class later, so we are still asking students to think deeply and engage in the curriculum at a high level.

*Will class sizes be smaller?*

- Yes. The 2016-17 budget allows for 9th grade classes to be smaller in order to better support all students.

*What feedback have you gotten from students?*

- Students are overwhelmingly in support of this change. Many students expressed concern about the *Seattle Times* article that discussed the achievement gap in SPS, which started classroom discussions about tracking. They are aware of the segregation and the subsequent labeling that occur because of the placement tests and tracking, consistently voicing a desire to interact with a wider variety of people.

*Will students need to seek help on their own or will the teacher reach out to struggling students?*

- As is currently the case, teachers will monitor student progress and suggest extra help for students who need it. This could come in many forms and will be addressed with students one-on-one, with parents, with other teachers, with counseling, and/or with administration.

*How will classroom management issues be solved?*

- Disruptive behavior comes in many forms and occurs in every classroom. All classroom management techniques and concerns will be addressed according to school policy. Our goal is to create a classroom environment that is engaging and safe for every student who enters. This environment decreases all types of disruptive behavior.

*How will you measure the success of this change?*

- Teachers will collaborate to develop assessments that measure student growth over time. They will use data from these assessments to guide their decision making.
- Students will also have the chance to give anonymous feedback at the end of each semester which will be reviewed by the team.

*How will teachers keep parents informed about assignments, due dates, and other class happenings?*

- We are committed to using Schoology and continuing our regular pathways of communication with parents, specifically with emails and phone calls.

*How will you keep parents informed about the changes throughout the school year?*

- Teachers will be participating in quarterly check-ins with the PTSA and communicate other changes via the GHS web site.

*What literature would you recommend parents read to help them understand our change?*

- *Detracking for Excellence and Equity* by Carol Corbett Burriss and Delia T. Garrity.
- *Designing Groupwork: Strategies for the Heterogeneous Classroom* by Elizabeth Cohen
- Any of the books on the list of resources provided earlier in this document.

Teachers on the Team

**ELA**

Adam Gish  
Alan Kahn  
Kit McCormick  
Rosa Powers  
Kirsten Otterby  
Andrea Soroko

**Social Studies**

Nathan King  
Jeremy Lugo  
Corey Allan Martin  
Jerry Neufeld-Kaiser  
Nathan Simoneaux