

Answers to ELA Open House Questions

Thank you for your feedback. Our team has compiled your questions into categories and answered them to the best of our ability. Please keep the lines of communication open and continue to ask questions as the year progresses. We are so excited about what we have and will be delivering to our students! Thank you again for your attendance at Open House and let's have a great year!

ELA Standards and Standards Based Reporting

- Will the ELA Standards be listed on the IJHS website for future parental reference? **The standards that your child is being assessed by can be found on TeacherEase.**
 - How does NJHS work with Standards Based Reporting?

Eligibility Criteria:

1. Academic

Academic Standards:

- Achieve a *cumulative* grade of 3.0 or above in all courses
- No grade under a 2.0 in any trimester

Learner Characteristics:

- A total of no more than two 2's in a trimester

2. Letter of Intent:

- Prepare a typed personal essay indicating their desire to become an NJHS member, focusing on the five aspects of NJHS: Character, Citizenship, Scholarship, Leadership, and Service. Also, reflecting on personal attributes that make them a good candidate for membership.

3. Community Service:

- New Members: **FIVE HOURS** of documented community service must be completed prior to the NJHS Induction Ceremony.
- Community service is considered anything performed for the benefit of others without receiving compensation.

4. School Commitment:

- New Members: Must commit to at least **ONE**, club, activity, or sport offered by the school.

5. Discipline:

- Receive no out-of school or in-school suspensions
- No office disciplinary issues

6. Attendance:

- Tardies: no more than 3% (this would equal 5 tardies over the course of the year) unexcused tardies in one school year.
- Absences: no more than 5% absences in one school year.

7. Teacher Reference Forms:

- It is the student's responsibility to respectfully ask **TWO** content teachers to complete the reference form on their behalf. Reference forms require teachers to comment on a student's character in the classroom.
- Teachers will give the completed reference forms directly back to NJHS Advisor.

- Will report card standards and what teachers are looking for be given to students ahead of time? **Most assignments have rubrics, which are given to the students before the assessment, that clearly state the standards and what is required to attain a particular score.**
- How much communication has been done with previous grades regarding new standards? **There have been many collaborative meetings within the schools and between the schools to develop a cohesive, logical, and accurate delivery of instruction to meet the Illinois State Standards.**

Ins and Outs of Teaching in a Block/Accommodating All Students Needs and Abilities

- How does a teacher keep track of 25 kids at all different levels; some move on and some don't with each subject area? How will you accommodate levels of learning with the new block scheduling? What is in place for both students who need a challenge and for students who need extra help? **This is completed through pre-assessment, formative assessments, and summative assessments. Even before a unit of study begins, teachers will know what individual students already know about a topic and what they do not know. This enables the teacher to differentiate according to the needs of each student and to cluster students accordingly..**
- How do the students have group discussions (student led) if they are reading different texts? How do they learn literary concepts such as theme, setting, symbolism, conflict, flashback, etc.. if they read different books? **Students are discussing and learning literary concepts using mentor texts scaffolded by the teacher in interactive workshops and mini-lessons. They will learn these concepts and how to discuss them using the same texts. Then, students will apply these new understandings to books of their choice and participate in higher-thinking-level conversations using compare and contrast, synthesis, and evaluation about how various texts handle these narrative and nonfiction elements.**
- Can you provide examples of what the mini lessons would entail? **Yes, you can look at the examples of what the mini lesson would entail by looking at the teacher's lesson plans which can be found on either TeacherEase or Plan Book.**

Independent Reading/Guided Reading

- Will specific books be assigned or will students pick what they want to read? **Both are being used this year. In ELA, one of the components of Reader's Workshop is independent reading. With independent reading, students have choice and select the**

books that they are interested in reading. At the same time, there are selected mentor texts and novel studies that will be assigned to the students.

- Will there be a Book Club? Is there a required number of books/reports to do this year, or is this all based on individual progress? There is not a “required” number of books to read this year; however, it is expected that students are reading everyday--and therefore--they should be reading many books of different genres. One program that we are implementing--but not grading-- is the Forty Book Challenge where the students are challenged to read forty books of various genres.
- How does a student get a book to read through guided reading? A student will choose a book to read in Independent Reading. They will not “get a book to read through guided reading.” In guided reading, they will get a book based off their Lexile Level to read at their Instructional Level.
- Approximately how much time is allotted for independent reading in the 80 minute block? Generally, the students should have a block of twenty to twenty-five minutes to read a book of their choice independently during the Reader's' Workshop.
- Do you ok the students' choices for reading? Yes, we communicate with the student and know what he or she is reading. Throughout the week, the teacher will generally conference with the student and ask how the student is doing with his or her independent read. The teacher wants to make sure it is a good fit for the student--and if the student does want to abandon the book--why does he or she feel this way?

Assessment and Retake Policy

- Will retakes take place on certain days? Before a retake can take place, the student will need to reflect fully and identify whether they did not read the materials, did not actively participate in discussion, did not pay attention, and or did study but did not do well on the assessment. The student will then have to conference with the teacher--and together--they will come up with a plan of action. The student will have to prepare for the retest and demonstrate that he or she did study and prepare, and then he or she can take the retake.
 - Will the retake form be available online for the summative assessment? Yes, this document is on the IJHS website to download.
 - Are retakes only allowed in this department? No, retakes are allowed in all departments.
 - Explain the retake process.Explained above.
- How will students move forward when they are “retaking” or “rewriting” tests/essays? They need to move forward by learning what their mistakes were and reflecting on what they did that was incorrect. As long as they are learning and making corrections, then they are indeed moving forward in the writing process.

- Every parent hopes their child will do it/get it right the first time, but that's not always the case. Do you feel the retake idea is beneficial? **The retake process is powerful and very beneficial. It is not about the grade, but about what the student learns. Through the retake process, it allows the students to learn and correct what they did not understand. It is a win-win for everyone.**
- How can you remove the "subjectivity" from assessments? Rubrics can also be applied subjectively. **Granted, writing and reading can be subjective depending on what lens of literary analysis you are placing on the piece; however, with an appropriate rubric the student will be assessed fairly and accurately.**

Placements and Homework

- How is it determined that a child will be placed in honors? **Past practice for placing students in honors classes was based off of their previous teacher's recommendation and their NWEA's MAP Reading and Language Arts scores.**
 - How does a "no homework" policy prepare them for HS?

Homework is something that students should expect. The shift to a standards based system of reporting has nothing to do with not providing homework. That is a misconception. It is still essential for students to practice specific skills and standards. To find out more about how much homework a child should expect is a question best directed to individual teachers.

Powerschool vs. TeacherEase

- How frequently will the new reporting system be updated? **Teachers update grades on a regular basis.**
- When will we be able to log into TeacherEase? **The TeacherEase Parent Portal opened Monday, October 3, 2016.**

Supplies and SSR During Lunch

- Whose idea was it to make the kids read during "their" lunch? Why? It seems that the children are not always able to eat their full lunch in the remaining time, especially if they are purchasing their lunch.

This decision was made by a committee of administrators and teachers. Students at IJHS rarely use the whole lunch to finish their lunches chat with friends. During observations during the first trimester, we have observed that his is also true this year. Independence Junior High is providing the opportunity for students to read books/texts of their choice at the beginning of their lunch time because research shows that the more students read the greater their educational growth.

- Why weren't ELA) supplies on the supply list?

The ELA Team met over the summer to evaluate our new curriculum. Changes needed to be made to the supply list in order to adjust to the reading/workshop model