

Dear Parent or Guardian of a wonderful rising 9th grader,

I realize that there may be some confusion as to what "Uneveled English 9 entails. I would like to try to clear up any misconceptions or misgivings in this letter and the attached material.

This is my third year teaching this course at CHS. I can honestly say that it has been even better than I had expected. Due to the success of the English 9 Uneveled classes, there will now be Uneveled classes in both the 10th and 11th grades. I recommended *all* of my students for Uneveled 10. This includes students who are working to achieve grade-level skills, students who are reading and writing at a high collegiate level, and everyone inbetween.

Some parents and students have been under the assumption that Uneveled is "Honors Light" - or a class of mid-level difficulty. Others have thought that Uneveled is the perfect class for students who have Honors-level capabilities, but are discipline problems. Though all students are welcome in the class, neither of these assumptions are correct. .

The Uneveled class is taught as an Honors level class. Students have the option to choose Honors credit, and the Honors weighted grade is what will appear on these students' transcripts. The difference is that, in making Honors an option, the class is opened up to a more heterogeneous population. We are actually in the process of changing the name of the Uneveled courses to "Inquiry Based", as "Un" focuses on what the course is *not*, and I would rather make clear to parents and students from the outset what these courses represent as a means of truly differentiated literary study

Does vibrant variety negatively affect the rigor of the class? No, not at all. As I noted previously, the class is taught as an Honors class - meaning that high-level reading and writing challenges are the norm. An inquiry based classroom allows for those challenges to be scaffolded to suit individual student's needs. When creating continuity through questions, a teacher can diversify the materials in which those questions are addressed. For example, Honors level students must read books from the AP book list, a requirement from which non-Honors students are exempt . With a whole-class commitment to regular and rigorous writing, diversity can come in the form of individualized assessment rubrics. This idea is spelled out further in document on the flip side of this letter.

I know that classroom behavior is a concern for some of you. In the past two years, there have been no significant discipline issues in my Uneveled classes. Regular mixed groupings of students - jigsaw discussions around a central question or theme that has been examined through different texts, or groupings based on same-text study - create a community feel. All students are challenged to the top of their abilities, evincing the simple truth that feeling a part of a "smart" and vibrant group is, in itself, an inroad to success.

Addressing another query, I can assure you that the 9th grade Uneveled class will absolutely prepare students for the rigor of Honors work in 10th grade and AP English in the 11th grade. The fact that instruction is differentiated in order to insure the growth of each individual speaks to the success of all students - even the most gifted. A student who is ready to read James Joyce will be reading James Joyce. A student who is mechanically proficient and is ready for more complex writing instruction will be held to high, skill-appropriate expectations.

As the parent of a rising 10th grader, I understand the knee-jerk instinct to choose Honors for my daughter. It seems like it would provide the most challenge - the most prestige; however, knowing what I know about the workings of Inquiry Based classrooms and having spoken with the Uneveled 10 teachers, I am confident in steering her toward this new class. She *will* get Honors credit for the class, and she will be getting individualized instruction in an environment that nurtures curiosity, creativity, self-advocacy, and exploration.

Thank you for your consideration, and please contact me with any questions that you might have.

With hopes that I get to teach your kid,
Jenn Horne