

# Honors/Advanced Program at Tolt Middle School

Academic Services for Highly Capable Students

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## Mission Statement

The primary focus of the **Honors/Advanced Program** at Tolt Middle School is to help academically talented students achieve at their optimal level in their identified talent area(s). Teachers are committed to providing challenging curriculum and to maintaining high expectations for all students. Placements in the Pre-Honors Language Arts and/or Advanced Math courses offer higher level students opportunities for cognitive peer interaction.

## Description of Services for Students

Academically talented students are encouraged to excel in reading, writing, communication, and mathematics as part of their middle school experience. Language Arts Pre-Honors is offered at each grade level and Advanced Math classes vary based on the student's identified talent area(s). All academically talented and highly motivated students are offered these opportunities.

**Academically talented language arts** students may be placed in Pre-Honors Language Arts classes. The placement process occurs at the end of 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, & 7<sup>th</sup> grades to determine class placement.

**Highly capable math** students may be placed in Advanced Math classes. The math placement process occurs at the end of 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, & 7<sup>th</sup> grades to determine class placement.

## How are students identified for Honors/Advanced?

*Pre-Honors Language Arts:* All Riverview students are considered for placement for this program. Students are referred by his/her current teacher using a teacher referral form which includes assessment criteria and a rubric score which describes the student's work habits, ability, and dedication to the pursuit of learning. The following criteria are used annually to determine whether or not a student qualifies for Pre-Honors Language Arts placement:

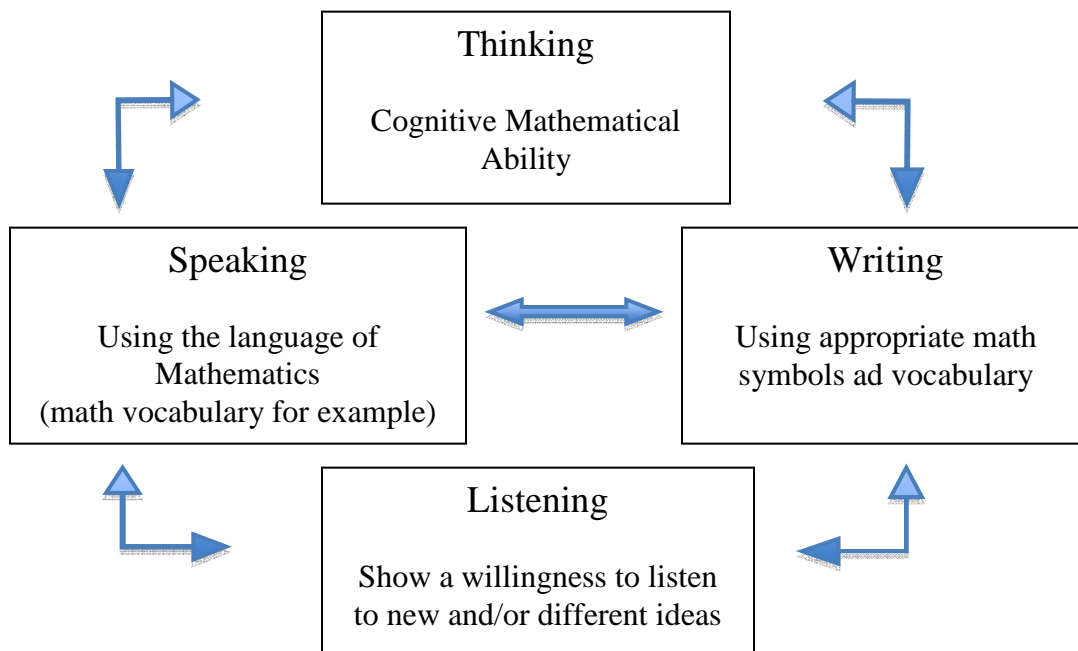
- Scores from an intelligence or abilities test, if available.
- Scores from recent district/state achievement tests (reading and writing scores).
- Current grades in language arts class as applicable (A or B).
- Additional comments/ information from teachers.
- Teacher rating that is heavily emphasized. Referrals are confidential.

*Advanced Math courses:* All Riverview students are considered for placement in Advanced Math classes based on their ability and performance. Incoming 6<sup>th</sup> grade students are referred by his/her current math teacher using a teacher referral form which includes assessment criteria and a rubric score which described the student's mathematical thinking, communication, and work habits. Students currently in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade are reviewed for placement annually. The following criteria are used to determine whether or not a student qualifies for Advanced Math classes:

- Scores from a math placement test (if testing is recommended) or from an intelligence or abilities test
- Scores from recent district/state achievement tests (math)
- Current grades in the math class as applicable (A or B to move on).
- Additional comments/ information from teachers.
- Teacher rating that is heavily emphasized. Referrals are confidential.

### *Advanced Math Placement Philosophy*

“As students progress through the grades, the mathematics about which they communicate should become more complex and abstract. Students’ repertoire of tools and ways of communicating, as well as the mathematical reasoning that supports their communication, should become increasingly sophisticated. Support for students is vital”  
(p: 60 *Principles and Standards for School Mathematics*: National Council of Teachers of Mathematics: 2000.)



1. Demonstrate a willingness to work on assignments outside of school
2. Demonstrate a willingness to learn and use math vocabulary and symbols
3. Demonstrate a willingness to communicate in more-formal mathematical ways
4. Demonstrate an appreciation and willingness to follow classroom procedures

## **Beyond Middle School**

Services for highly capable and academically talented students are also provided at the high school level.

Enrollment in Pre-Honors Language Arts classes at the middle school does not mean the student automatically will continue in future honors classes. During the registration process for high school, students will learn about class offerings for 9<sup>th</sup> grade in spring of their 8<sup>th</sup> grade year. All 8<sup>th</sup> graders can apply and complete the process required by the high school for 9<sup>th</sup> grade Honors Language Arts.

Students in Advanced Math classes or regular Math classes are recommended for the next math course in the sequence that is appropriate for the student based on scores and grades. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade math teacher may confer with the student and/or parent as appropriate.

## **Teacher Support Services**

- Professional development training opportunities for Honors/Advanced program teachers.
- Materials and alternative curriculum are updated and provided.
- Release time is available for planning and for highly capable conferences.

## **Frequently asked questions**

*How are the Honors/Advanced classes different than the regular middle school classes?*

Both Language Arts Pre-Honors and Advance Math classes follow the same core curriculum but with added rigor, additional assignment requirements, acceleration, and higher expectations. Due to the acceleration, courses tend to incorporate additional curriculum such as higher level novels or upper level math resources as appropriate. Students are expected to respond to more open-ended, higher-level questions and go deeper into concepts and application.

*What students are best suited for Honors/Advanced classes?*

High achieving students who are self-motivated, organized, and willing to embrace a challenging curriculum are typically successful in these classes. For language arts, students should be passionate about both reading and writing. For math, students should be enthusiastic about math and mathematical concepts and be operating at levels well above their peer group.

*Is there more homework in Honors/Advanced classes?*

Yes, there can be more homework as a result of increased rigor, but it is manageable for the majority of students in the classes.

*Is Pre-honors Language Arts a prerequisite for honors or AP classes in high school?*

No. While the added rigor and higher expectations can be a good preparation for Honors English or AP classes in high school, students will apply for 9<sup>th</sup> grade Honors English during the spring of the student's 8<sup>th</sup> grade year.

*How does my student apply for Pre-honors Language Arts and/or Advanced Math?*

Students do not apply because students are referred by their current language arts and/or math teacher based on the criteria above.

*How are student placement decisions made?*

A committee representing the specific content area is comprised of middle school teachers and administrators who review the student qualifications (district/state assessments, grades, and teacher ratings) and determine by rank order which students are placed into the program. Once this has been determined, letters are mailed or given to the students and families to notify them that they have been placed in the class. Depending on the number of referrals, a “wait list” may be created.

*How do I find out where my child is on the “wait list”?*

The wait list is an ever-changing list. Students new to the district are placed on the list by their score ranking, thus students’ position on the wait list can change. During the first five days of school if a space becomes available, the counseling office will contact the student and make the placement from the top of the list.

*If the classes have wait list, why doesn’t the district open up more sections?*

The criteria and ranking does an effective job of placing students with the greatest likelihood of success in the program.

*Do I have to request that my student be placed on the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade wait lists?*

No. Placement onto the wait list is done automatically if the student meets the above criteria.

*When does the referral process for Honors/Advanced classes occur?*

Registration for middle school classes start during the end of March with all teacher referrals and/or appropriate testing completed by mid-April. Typically, the decisions regarding which students will be placed into Honors/Advances classes are finalized by late May.

*What if my student didn’t attend the Riverview School District and is new to the district?*

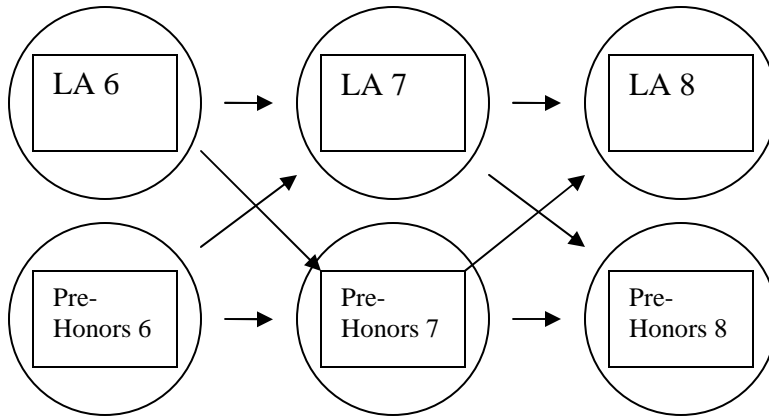
New students who enroll and qualify after placement is completed will go on to the wait list.

*What if my student decides he/she does not want to remain in the program?*

Students should contact their counselor if they decide that they do not want to remain in the program. This is usually done at the end of the school year.

*Can my child enter the Pre-Honors Language Arts or Advanced Math classes in 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade?*

Pre-honors Language Arts: Students are evaluated for Pre-Honors Language Arts classes every year. Students may move to and from regular Language Arts courses to Pre-Honors classes based on how they perform year to year. The flow chart below shows the available progression.



Advance Math: Students are evaluated for Advanced Math classes every year. Students may move to and from regular Math courses to Advanced Math classes based on how they perform year to year. The flow chart below shows the available progression.

