

February 13, 2012

Dear Eighth Grade Students and Parents/Guardians:

We are now entering the very exciting time of scheduling our students for Ninth Grade courses at Arlington High School. Each of the students has received a packet that includes this letter, a Course Selection Sheet personalized with course recommendations from your child's teachers, and a hard copy of the Student Course Selection Guide for the 2012-2013 school year. We encourage you to go over this information carefully with your family because there are some important dates to help with the transition that are soon approaching.

I want to thank all who attended the Parent Orientation at the high school on February 9th. I hope that you found the presentation to be helpful and informative. On February 9th and 10th, high school guidance counselors met with each of our Eighth Grade Teams. I will be going into their classrooms to hand out their individualized scheduling packets the week of February 13th. These will be great opportunities for students to ask questions about the programs that are offered.

Please use the Student Course Selection Guide, which is also available online through a link on the Union Vale Middle School webpage, to obtain course descriptions and to find out about prerequisite courses for certain classes. While the Guide contains courses for all four years of high school, please note that the only courses open to prospective Ninth Grade students are the courses listed on the Course Selection Sheet. Classroom teachers have made recommendations for courses based on the criteria established by the departments at Arlington High School and their knowledge of your child. These recommendations are circled in pencil on their sheets.

Please understand that Honors Placement in both English and Global Studies is contingent upon students' successful completion of the courses. Students that do not meet the criteria at the end of the Fourth Marking Period will be placed in Regents level. Please note that there are mandatory summer reading requirements for the students that are registered for Regents and Honors English, as well as Honors Global Studies. During the second week of May, Mrs. Hartman and the English and Social Studies Coordinators from the High School are coming to present the work to the students in the Honors programs. All students will receive the list of summer reading in their English classes. They will all have projects based on their summer reading assigned during the first marking period.

Eighth grade subject teachers made recommendations based on the criteria established by the high school and their knowledge of your child's appropriateness for the level. The criteria that were used by the Eighth Grade teachers are as follows:

English - Requirement for Honors: A final average of 90 or better in Grade 8 English (p. 9)

Science - Recommendation for Honors Biology: A final average of 85 in Regents Earth Science in Grade 8 or 85 on the Regents (p. 49).

Most students may choose either Regents Earth Science or Regents Biology, unless a foundations class is recommended by their Grade 8 Science teacher.

Global Studies - Requirement for Honors: A final average of 90 in Grade 8 Social Studies and required reading assignment (p. 18).

Math - Please see pages 32-36 for recommendations and accurate descriptions of the different levels offered.

The High School has an eight-period day and lunch is scheduled as one period. Most students have two spots left in their schedules for electives. One spot is usually assigned to Year 2 of their foreign language study. Students that successfully pass the district assessment in June may choose to drop the foreign language because they have fulfilled the New York State graduation requirement, since the Arlington district divides Year 1 between grades 7 and 8. Please be aware that the decision to drop foreign language may impact the type of diploma for which they are eligible and affect their college search. Some colleges require students to have completed a three-year foreign language sequence. Depending on their long-term goals, we suggest that students continue their foreign language study during high school.

The remaining period is often used for the completion of the one-year Art or Music requirement. However, students may choose classes in other areas, such as Business, Technology, and Family and Consumer Science. Specific classes within these disciplines may be used to satisfy the one-year Art or Music requirement. Along with the traditional classes in the Art and Music Departments, Studio Computer Graphics, Introduction to Drama, Introduction to Engineering Design, Business of Music, Photo Tech 1 & 2, Jewelry, Fashion for Your Future, and World of Fashion may be used to fulfill the mandatory Art/Music requirement. A class with a "3" meets all year and is worth a full credit, while a "1" meets the first semester and a "2" meets the second semester. Semester courses are worth half credits so two are needed to fill the slot. Please help your child to choose extra electives as alternates in case their first choice classes are filled.

For parents with students in special education programs, please know that staff and faculty are currently still working on the high school programs. Therefore, the recommendations that may appear on your child's Course Selection Sheet are preliminary, pending the CSE Annual Reviews in the late spring. We will make the appropriate changes during the CSE meetings and forward the changes to the high school. Please send in the sheet regardless. I will send a change form to the high school at the conclusion of each CSE meeting.

In addition, students who receive a 2 or lower on the Grade 8 New York State English Language Assessment are required to take a Foundations of Reading and Writing class in Grade 9. Students currently enrolled in Language Art Skills classes at the middle school level are scheduled for the class at high school. All of the students who score a 2 or lower will be screened in the fall by the high school reading specialists to ensure their appropriateness for the class. After the screening is completed, students that do not need the additional support will be able to drop the class.

Parents or guardians must sign the Course Selection Sheets and give them back to students to bring to school. Students must bring them individually to the Guidance Office during homeroom, their study halls or lunch periods so they may ask me any questions regarding their courses. I will begin collecting them on **Thursday, February 16th**. All students will be required to have them signed by parents and into the Guidance Office so we can meet the High School deadline no later than **Friday, March 9th**. I encourage parents to call me with any questions. If you want to speak to me while I review the sheet with your child, please let him or her know and we will call you at that time. Please understand that these time constraints do not allow for individual parent conferences.

Thank you for your support and please contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Marisa Pugliese
Guidance Counselor