



## Herbert Hoover Middle School

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### HONORS PROGRAM AT HOOVER 2012-13

**Context:** Hoover is the most complex of the middle schools in that we have two immersion programs feeding into our school in addition to all the other programs, and student needs that make a larger middle school very complicated. We are at a point of critical mass where we can no longer offer the separate honors program in which only students with the very highest scores in Math and Language Arts go into the 6<sup>th</sup> grade honors program. The way we have done this in the past excludes all immersion students, all students with learning differences and all English Language Learners from the program. We can no longer do this with fidelity due to logistical issues caused by this imbalance, and it is not right to do so because of the exclusionary aspects of the policy. Fully 60 percent of next years incoming 6<sup>th</sup> grade would be ineligible for entrance into our honors program under the old criteria, just because they are in an immersion program, have a learning difference or do not yet have full mastery of English as their second language.

We have been researching this matter and also looking at other middle schools to find solutions to our dilemma. This has been a semester long process that has been accelerated by our need to be transparent with families on our school tours so that they would understand clearly what the changes are. For example during a meeting with the Principal of Giannini, Ms. Leslie Trook, she discussed how she moved the Giannini sixth grade to heterogeneous groupings rather than having an honors and non-honors track. She said that using the 4<sup>th</sup> grade CST individual results was not a viable measure to decide who would get an honors curriculum and that students at 10/ 11 years old are too young to be tracked in honors. Giannini has honors classes –only in Math and Language Arts- in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and we are planning to do the same next year.

We plan to support our more advanced learners, (based on CST results) as follows:

1. Students will be divided into families with common teachers. This will empower teachers to work collaboratively using appropriate data to meet student needs in a sophisticated way. We will deepen our current efforts to use formative assessment data to determine what students need and how best to serve them.
2. Implement a rigorous semester long professional development program during spring 2012, that will give teachers time and support to identify and differentiate essential learnings in a simple and accountable way.
3. Department heads have agreed to be trained this February in a comprehensive Pyramid Response to Intervention approach so that we can create an intervention and acceleration support system to differentiate for students who are substantially above or below the average range in the classroom.
4. Four new computer labs, purchased by the PTA, which offer opportunities for differentiation.
5. In Math the online math curriculum ALEKS gives every student highly individualized instruction both for remediation and acceleration. There is data to show how effective ALEKS has been this year.

**7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Grade:** We will continue to offer the Hoover Honors program in Math and Language Arts. All immersion students, English Language Learners and students with learning differences will have access to the program. For example an English language Learner who is advanced in

Math can have access to the Honors math classes without losing the English language support classes that he or she may need. Similarly some of our students with learning differences who are gifted in language or math will be able to take those honors courses and still get the other supports that they need. Immersion students in seventh grade will also have access to honors classes. All the other supports, including families of common teachers empowered to make placement decisions to enhance heterogeneous groupings, high technology project based learning, ALEKS, and RTI pull out for acceleration and remediation) will be available to all students as needed.

All schools have to work especially hard in these times to cope with budget issues, adapt curriculum to the new common core standards and make sure that all students are challenged in their learning. Hoover is particularly fortunate in having an experienced and highly motivated staff, a supportive community and PTA, and of course a wonderful diverse group of students who are proud of their school and their learning. The SSC and I remain open to all feedback about this plan and any other issues that are of importance to you.

Thomas Graven Principal