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Dear Parents and Guardians,

Change happens best when it's born from many voices. In 2018, a volunteer committee of LHS English faculty convened to evaluate the use of academic leveling in sophomore and junior English classes. Over the course of an extensive four-year inquiry, this committee partnered with students, staff, and administrators to confirm what classroom experience and decades of education research already suggested: the detriments of ability grouping far outweigh its perceived strengths.

To align our practice with our values, **the LHS English department will shift to an Honors for All model next year, replacing the current system of leveling for 10th and 11th graders.** All students completing the 10th-12th English curriculum will receive an Honors designation on their LHS transcript. This model represents our commitment to providing *all* LHS students an English learning experience that combines high expectations with high support.

As a discipline, English is uniquely positioned to make this change; teaching reading, writing, speaking, and listening already requires highly differentiated instruction. Currently, the 9th and 12th-grade English classes at LHS are unleveled. English teachers and special educators at these grade levels work with heterogeneously grouped students, providing differentiated instruction for a range of learning styles and skill levels within the same classroom. This allows students with different strengths to collaborate and supports holistic academic growth. Running counter to this successful model, 10th and 11th-grade English classes at LHS have been divided into three levels: Honors and College Preparatory 1/2. There are no specific requirements for enrollment at the Honors level, and by junior year, a majority of each graduating class is already learning in Honors classrooms.

By unleveling the small number of remaining 10th and 11th-grade classes, we will continue the progress we have made toward creating a universal English experience. Historically, our leveling practices have interfered with reducing systemic barriers to equity, and [our local data](#) mirrors that of troubling national trends for marginalized groups, including students of color and students with disabilities. Qualitative data supports the urgency for change: in testimonials gathered by the committee, faculty describe the leveling process as “damaging to student-teacher relationships” and students agree that leveling contributes to a fixed mindset and social stigma, as peers begin to self-identify as “good” or “bad” at English, narrowly viewing themselves through the lens of their course’s title.

The new Honors for All approach will close opportunity gaps, reinforce students’ beliefs in their own academic potential, and reduce student stress while preserving a robust curriculum. As educators, we do not undertake this change lightly, and we know that students and families may have questions and concerns. Please share feedback using this [brief form](#), and thank you in advance for your time and engagement. We have also provided answers to some frequently asked questions [here](#).

Sincerely,

and the LHS English Department