

Graduation with Distinction: OHS's Distinctive Honors Program - an Introduction for Eighth and Ninth Grades

There are six components to becoming an OHS Graduate of Distinction:

1. At Graduation, your GPA must be 90 or higher.
2. You must have completed a minimum of 2 AP classes.
3. You must have completed nine honors credits (that is, taken enough honors classes to gain nine credits of honors classes)
4. You must have completed three years of high school foreign language in the **same** foreign language (for Wabanaki language-takers we develop a plan to accommodate this, because there is no Wabanaki III).

So far, so straightforward...here comes the hard part. As colleges and universities want independently motivated undergraduates who can follow through on long term objectives, you have four multi-month projects to complete. Do this under your own steam and you've prepared yourself for the rigors of college—and we will tell them so.

5. You must have fulfilled the requirements to pass two Honors Forums, one in your sophomore or junior year, one in your senior year.
6. You must have fulfilled the requirements to pass two Honors Extensions, also called P5s, at any point in your high school career before December of your senior year.

Key rewards of the program:

You develop independent academic and motivation skills.

You can attest to colleges and universities that you have completed the most rigorous academic options available to you at this high school (OHS sends all colleges you apply to an official school description of all our programs, which says that GwD is our most academically challenging honors program).

In your application package to colleges, OHS places an official letter affirming your success in GwD and the activities you have pursued to become a graduate of distinction. (Note: **every** college to which **any** OHS student applies is told about Graduation with Distinction – thus every college knows to look at your application to see if you have undertaken the program).

Automatic acceptance to the Honors College of UMaine, once you are admitted to UMaine.

A nifty gold, embossed seal on your graduation diploma.

The program rewards thinkers who possess follow-through and independence. You need energy and motivation to complete this. You are not chased down by me; I leave you to manage your own time. If you don't complete, that's because you have not completed – it's that straight-forward. In practice, what this means is that many students who drop out do so

because they live and die by last-minute deadlines. Deadlines for this program exist, but typically, they are already too late...we'll know already that you have not got going independently.

Honors Forums

You spend the fall and early winter devising a question, discussing it, researching it, and refining your findings. You are not required to write anything except an annotated bibliography. You are not required to find some correct answer. In fact, your question should be open-ended so that you end up with more questions that you could follow-up on. You then present your findings in a twenty minute presentation to a three-person jury in UMaine's Honors College. Here are some samples:

- What purpose, from an evolutionary standpoint, do dreams serve?**
- Why do we, as humans, create restrictions and protocols for the way men and women look?**
- Why does a person choose to stay out of, or become involved in, a social movement?**
- Is the publicity gained through slacktivism on social media worth the loss of traditional activism?**
- How and to what extent does language affect our perception of space?**
- Will globalization eventually destroy the cultural identity of Amazonian Indian tribes?**
- Is it ethical for humans to use robots to do work for them?**
- How will a changing climate affect biological rhythms in animals?**

P5s

(= Presentation, Publication, Performance, Professional Application, or Product)

We hope you get involved in many activities and pursuits outside of school. You may have interests, or be involved with groups or purposes of many sorts. At it's best, a P5 gives such pursuits a little more structure, and the opportunity to show colleges how you can follow through with turning an interest into an independently managed project.

Some examples: creating coaching videos; building a web-site for selling lobster; engaging in summer science research internships at UMaine; participating in National Write a Novel Month by writing a 50,000 word manuscript; developing a nutritional menu, cooking and delivering it to the Bangor Homeless Shelter; preparing, researching, and presenting a business plan for OHS to create sister school relationships in France; auditioning for, rehearsing and performing with the Robinson Ballet in *The Nutcracker*...etc.

You write a proposal and submit it to the Honors Committee which meets three times a year (September, January, and May). Once your proposal is accepted, and *not all are*, you begin your P5. It's up to you to follow-through and complete this independently. If you complete it,

you then bring the evidence (the performance, product, professional application, presentation, or publication to the attention of your supervising teacher, who checks it against your plan and either accepts it or sends it back for more until it is acceptable.

At any time, come and see me with questions, or email me (jbulteel@rsu26.org). However, remember, you are expected to use your own initiative. Keep a reminder handy, and make progress on a steady, not a last-minute, basis.