From the desk of the Principal:
Thanks for checking in on the fourth Viking Voice issue of the 2017-18 school year! These periodic announcements serve as an information source regarding Sowers Academics, Athletics, Activities, and the Arts.

I wanted to extend my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who completed this year’s annual survey a short while ago. We had great participation from all stakeholders this year as 99.7% of students and 32.4% of families completed the questionnaire. We are delving in the data collected to inform decisions that we will make to strive for continual improvement in the 2018-19 school year. While the survey will highlight areas of strengths and weaknesses, I realize that there are many of you who may not have given your input. As such, I encourage you to reach out to me personally via email, phone, or set up a meeting in person to discuss your thoughts on how we can make Sowers Middle School the best place for 6th, 7th, 8th graders to learn and grow in Orange County. I look forward to hearing from you!

Go Vikings!

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Key Upcoming Dates:
- May 25th: Crazy Sock Day
- May 28th: Memorial Day (No School)
- June 4-5th, 5th Graders Visit (6/4 – Petersen, Hawes; 6/5 – Eader, Moffett)
- June 5th: Placement Criteria Information 2018-19
- June 5th: 5th grade Parent Night in room 402, (“Make Up”; 6/6 @ 9am in the Library Commons)
- June 6th: Viking Awards (6th/7th grades: 5:30-6:30pm; 8th grade – 6:45 – 7:45pm)
- June 14th: PTSA Association Meeting (9-11am, Library Commons)
- June 14th: Yearbook Distribution
- June 15th: 8th Grade Promotion Dance (6-8pm)
- June 20th: 8th Grade Disneyland Field Trip
- June 22nd: Last Day of School
- June 22nd: 8th Grade Promotion (2:30pm @ Edison HS “Bowl”)
Academics

- **HBUHSD STEAM Fair:** Students from two of our great Sowers elective programs, Advanced Culinary and STEM, participated in the HBUHSD STEAM Fair at Fountain Valley High School on Saturday, April 28th. The Advanced Culinary presented a fermentation experiment and brought along some homemade bread while STEM students brought pull-toys where the motion of the wheels caused a secondary action; Alex Ciucu demonstrated the mobile apps he created in Android’s App Inventor; showed cerebral palsy therapy prototypes – intent to help kids with cerebral palsy with therapy. Re-word.

- **CULINARY:** The annual Viking Galley “restaurant event” is well underway. This hands on experience allows students to put their cooking and hospitality skills on full display as they produce a pop-up restaurant on Friday, June 8th in the Library Commons. Scarlett VanderMeer is this year’s restaurant manager and has been on the lookout for Sowers students who are ready to show off their skills and work alongside each other to produce an event that will be “light, fresh, and Mediterranean inspired”!

- **CORE:** At the request of 7th grade students this year, Mrs. Albaugh’s class studied Medieval Japan. During this time period, we saw the rise of a warring class called the samurai, which still influences Japanese culture today. We visited 9 learning stations and at each one added to our knowledge of the samurai warrior. In the end, groups of students created life-sized samurai based on their knowledge. Great job CORE students!

- **6th Grade Science:** All 6th grade students recently worked on a research project and played the role of an Orange County planner. Each student wrote and drew a proposal to build a community park. Items in the proposal included, but were not limited to, building in an area that is safe from landslides, wave erosion, and flooding. Students are currently learning about ecosystems and biomes. In addition, students recently completed the “Too Good For Drugs” program developed by the Mendez Foundation. Students looked at false claims of tobacco advertisements and create a “truth” tobacco ad.

- **7th Grade Science:** The Body Systems Unit was a huge success! Students studied the skeletal and muscular systems with a culminating project: The Mechanical Hand. Students were challenged with engineering a prosthetic hand that could grasp, lift, and release. The hand would need antagonistic pairs of “muscles” to help it function properly. We saw several designs and amazing ideas. Great job 7th grade engineers!

- **CAASPP Testing:** We have just about finished up with the CAASP (California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress) testing window as the final 8th grade students are now completing the state test. Thanks to everyone for their support of this assessment!

- **GATE/Honors:** The next GATE Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) is scheduled for Wednesday, May 30th at 3:30pm in the Clapp Wing at Petersen Elementary School. Come join us!
• **Placement Criteria Information/Night:** Please see the attached documents for information regarding class placement for the 2018-19 school year. A placement criteria information night will be held on Tuesday, June 5th at 4:30pm for next year’s 7th and 8th grade families to help explain the placement process. This information will also be shared with our incoming 6th grade families.

• **High School Math Placement Test:** All Math 8 Advanced students will take the HBUHSD math placement test on Wednesday, June 6th. Testing times are as follows: Mr. Johnson’s 1st period class = 8:50am – 10:30am; Ms. Rosener’s 3rd period class = 10:35am – 12:15pm; Mr. Riley’s 7th period class = 1:15 - 2:55pm. More information will be disseminated to these specific classes at the end of May.

**Athletics**

• **SOCCER:** Congratulations to all of our soccer players and coaches for a great season. The season was capped off with some brilliant play from our 8th Grade Girls team who were Runners Up.

• **TRACK & FIELD:** The athletes working with Coach Hogan, Sohni, and Pearce this season are doing fantastic! There were many strong showings and plenty of Personal Records at the last meet held at Edison High School. All teams have been performing well and we look forward a banner year finish for all of our teams as they head into League Championships with Prelims on Tuesday, May 29th and Finals on Wednesday, May 30th at Corona Del Mar HS.

• **GOLF:** The Sowers Golf Season is underway and the Vikings have been playing great! The team is currently 3-0 (2-0 in league). The league championship will be on Wednesday, May 30th. The Sowers golf team includes Nick Angelici, Hallie Brisco, Jenna Brisco, Ben Crinella, Gavin Fitzpatrick, Conner Giglio, Joseph Kavetsky, Connor Krueger, Blake Krueger, Portland Sydney, Cole Robertson, Jake Rothman, Ryan Rothman, and Joseph Sprowls. Standout performances have come from the following pairings/groups: Ben Crinella/Conner Krueger, Hallie Brisco/Nick Angelici, Blake Krueger/Jake Rothman, and Portland Sydney/Ryan Rothman. Most improved pairings/groups: Cole Robertson/Gavin Fitzpatrick and Conner Giglio/Joseph Sprowls. Great work with the clubs Vikings!

**Activities**

• **2018-19 7th Grade Families:** If your student has not yet received their TDAP booster vaccine, please do so and bring proof to our health office as soon as possible. If your child is not fully immunized BEFORE entering 7th grade, or if your child does not have a medical exemption on file he or she will be unable to pick up their schedules on registration day or start 7th grade without proof on file. Exemptions will be accepted for medical conditions only and a Medical Exemptions Form must be signed by a licensed physician. The exemption forms are available in the Health Office at Sowers. Personal belief exemptions will not be accepted. Please note, TDAP Booster records received after the summer may not get recorded in time for registration day. Avoid lines on registration day.
day and bring your TDAP records in today! If you have any questions, you may contact Kaleen Repsher at the Sowers Health Office.

- **Student Recognition**: It with great pleasure that we share out that Jack Crinella, a 7th grader, has been nominated to receive the Huntington Beach Youth Character Award. Mrs. Blakeman, an amazing classified staff member, nominated Jack for his “awesomeness” and for his amazing leadership as the President of the Sowers MS Best Buddies Club. This club creates opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities to have fun with non-intellectually disabled peers in monthly social interactions. The ceremony will be held this Saturday, May 19th from 10am – Noon at the Senior Center in Central Park. He has a great chance to be inducted into the HB Youth Character Wall of Fame that spotlights young people as role models for their generation. Great job Jack!

- **Fishing**: The Sowers Fishing Club enjoyed a few great hours of fishing on Thursday, April 26th on the Balboa Peninsula. Poles and bait were provided to students that needed them. Mr. Carter, Mr. Sohoni, Miss Campbell, and Mr. Mouw reported that it was a great afternoon and some students even hooked their first fish! For more information about the fishing club see any of the four staff members listed above.

- **Donors Choose**: Ms. Kos was the happy recipient of 20 new Chomebooks for her classroom! This project, valued at $5,000, was funded by Ripple as they donated 29 million dollars to fund every Donors Choose project. The Chomebooks have been received and are now in Ms. Kos’ classroom for student use. Congratulations Ms. Kos!

- **8th Grade Promotion Dance (6/15, 6-8pm)!!** All 8th grade promoting students are cordially invited to attend a special 8th Grade Only Promotion Dance on June 15th from 6-8pm. This is a brand new opportunity for our promoting students to kick back and celebrate a week before they move on to high school. Tickets will be on sale the week of June 11th with a signed permission slip must be in hand to purchase a ticket. Permission slips will be available on School Loop or in the office during the week of June 7th. Tickets are only $5, instead of the regular ticket price of $10 thanks to the support of the PTSA. Tickets will also be sold at the door. The ticket price includes entry and food.

**The Arts**

- **MUSIC**: Sowers music would like to report another successful outcome at the Music in the Parks festival hosted by Disneyland on Saturday, May 5th. Mixed Melodies Show Choir, Viking Choir, and the Wind Ensemble earned excellent ratings. Uptown Girls Show Choir, String Orchestra, and Concert Orchestra earned Superior ratings and all ensembles ranked high earning 1st and 2nd places in their divisions! Mrs. Ivey has even dyed her hair purple and pink to represent the class colors of String Orchestra and Concert Orchestra, a tradition to motivate the musicians to earn a Superior rating. Go Viking Musicians!! #purplesuperior #thinkpink
• **DISTRICT CHORAL FESTIVAL:** Sowers MS was pleased to host all Sowers elementary feeder schools to show off their musical talents at the HBCSD Choral Festival on April 17th. There were great performances by future Vikings at Eader, Hawes, and Moffett while current musical Vikings brought their talents to the stage as well. It was a packed house and such a great night of music!

• **Drumline:** The Sowers MS Drumline came in 4th place on April 28th at the ADLA State Drumline Finals at Azusa Pacific University’s Felix Event Center. Their show, “The Skeleton Dance” featured thirteen Vikings in skeleton costumes with top hats and canes, dancing and playing drums. They were also featured in the HBUHSD Showcase at Marina HS on Monday, April 30th alongside other drumlines and color guards. Nice job to all of our percussionists!

• **Sowers Annual Spring Musical – Cinderella:** This year’s musical held at the Rose Theater was another fine example of the incredible student talent and parent support that makes this annual event a must see for our school community. All three nights produced memorable experiences for those in the audience. Personally, I was able to bring my two young daughters (6, 4) to their first musical and they were completely awe-struck. Thanks to everyone for their efforts! We can’t wait to see what is in store for 2018-19.

• **ART:** The Sowers Viking artists recently had the opportunity to participate in a new art contest: The Huntington Beach Public Art Alliance Environmental Art Contest. Students created pieces of art that “celebrate our natural environment, oceans, parks, and other open spaces.” Students artwork needed to “encourage people to take care of the aforementioned places that make Huntington Beach such a great place to live, work, and play.” The winners will be selected in May with the award ceremony held in the City Council chambers in June. Winning artwork will be displayed during the summer at both the Surf Museum and the Central Library. Go Vikings artists!
MIDDLE SCHOOL PLACEMENT CRITERIA FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What pathways are available in middle school for CORE and Mathematics?

Students can be placed in an Honors CORE (History/Language Arts) in grades 6, 7, and 8. Accelerated Math is available in grade 7 and 8. All sixth graders are placed in the Mathematics 6 course; struggling mathematics students in sixth grade are clustered together in order for teachers to support their needs.

How does the district determine course placement for the middle school?

Placement in these courses is contingent upon performance-based criteria. For CORE, these include: 1) the Smarter Balanced Assessment in English Language Arts, 2) a reading diagnostic test, and 3) classroom reading grade. For Accelerated Mathematics, these include: 1) the Smarter Balanced Assessment in Mathematics, 2) a grade-level skills diagnostic, and 3) classroom teacher feedback.

What are each of these criteria?

- The Smarter Balanced Assessment is the standards-aligned, grade-level assessment given by the State to determine student performance in ELA. It is administered in the Spring in two subjects: Mathematics and English Language Arts.
- Fifth grade students will be using the Accelerated Reader STAR Diagnostic Test to determine their reading level. The reading level will be converted into a Lexile score, which helps educators determine the grade level where a student is reading. For sixth and seventh grade students, the assessment is called the Scholastic Reading Inventory, which also generates a Lexile score.
- The classroom reading grade (or Language Arts grade in CORE) is reported by the classroom teacher at the end of the second semester (middle school) or third trimester (elementary school).
- The grade-level skills diagnostic for mathematics is the Blue Summative Benchmark Assessment. Teachers have determined specific skills students need to be successful in advanced mathematics and questions on the Blue Assessment that are aligned to those skills will be analyzed for student performance.
- The classroom teacher feedback for mathematics is a survey determining the readiness of students for the accelerated pathway and is based on observed behaviors that contribute to learning.

How and why were those specific criteria selected?

A representative group of fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade teachers met as a committee to discuss and determine the criteria. The group agreed to these specific items. For CORE, an emphasis is placed on reading comprehension because the Honors classes require students to comprehend literature (both fiction and non-fiction) quickly in order to “dive deeper” into the text. For Mathematics, students who have yet to master specific skills that are necessary for success have been found to struggle significantly.
MIDDLE SCHOOL PLACEMENT CRITERIA FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

in the accelerated pathway. Feedback was sought from the teachers again with no significant changes requested.

Where can I get more information about how the criteria are being used?

Please see the companion document “2018-19 Middle School Course and Section Placement Criteria” for more information about how points are assigned in the placement system based on student performance.

Does GATE identification determine placement?

No. The GATE identification process is independent of the course placement process.

What are the “mean” and “standard deviations” referred to in the Placement Criteria?

Standard deviations are a form of statistical analysis that allow for comparisons within a data set by determining the dispersal range of the data. After calculating an average for the data set (“the mean”), student scores will be compared with other HBCSD students at their grade level to gather information about how well students did in comparison to others in the group. Standard deviations above the mean create comparison lines – for example, a student who is one standard deviation above the mean would rank approximately in the 85\(^{th}\) percentile of the data. A student who falls between the mean and the first standard deviation would rank between the 85\(^{th}\) and 50\(^{th}\) percentile and a student one standard deviation below the mean would rank between the 50\(^{th}\) and 35\(^{th}\) percentile.

When will the placement decision be communicated to parents?

Less than one-third of the data required for placement is available before summer vacation. As such, placement decisions are made in July/August after standardized test scores are received by the state. Provisional placement letters will not be provided for the 2018-19 school year. A final placement letter that includes individual student placement data will be provided to students/parents Registration Day.

What if I don’t agree with the decision?

All placements are made on a provisional basis and review of a student’s placement may be warranted on a case-by-case basis. Students can sign up to re-take local assessments one time after Registration Day, with the new score to be factored into their placement data. Please contact site administration to initiate the re-take and review of placement process.

Who can I talk to if I have questions about any of this?

Please contact your site administration or Dr. Pree Bhattacharya at the District Office at 714-378-2034.
2018-19 MIDDLE SCHOOL COURSE AND SECTION PLACEMENT CRITERIA

The Huntington Beach City School District uses multiple measures to determine the appropriate course and section placement for middle school students in CORE and Mathematics. The purpose of the criteria is to ensure that placements are based on the best available information about a student’s skills relative to the curricular challenges they will encounter in the coming year. Students have many diverse gifts that are best cultivated through proper placement, allowing teachers to differentiate instruction for the learners in their classroom.

A representative group of Math and CORE teachers at both middle schools collaborated with district administrators and fifth-grade colleagues to determine criteria that place students in courses that offer suitable levels of rigor. These criteria include local, state, and national measures as well as teacher recommendations based on student abilities by subject area. All placements are made on a provisional basis and review of a student’s placement may be warranted on a case-by-case basis; please see a companion document, “Middle School Placement Criteria Frequently Asked Questions” for further information about the placement process and contact your site administrators regarding a placement review. Students’ placement recommendations will also be reviewed annually. Please contact your school administrators or the District Office at (714) 378-2034 should you have any questions about this document.

CORE

HBCSD recognizes the importance of appropriate English Language Arts and History course placement for students during their middle school educational experience. This content is delivered in the double-block CORE course at the middle school level. To qualify for the Honors level of grade-level CORE classes, students must meet certain criteria that indicate giftedness specifically in language arts and literacy. These courses include added rigor, including further vocabulary development and exposure to literature. Students who receive 10 points based on the following criteria will receive the District recommendation for Honors CORE placement at their grade level:

- Smarter Balanced Assessment English Language Arts score (SBAC):
  Between mean and one standard deviation above the mean = 1 pt
  At least ONE standard deviation above the mean = 2 pts
  At least TWO standard deviations above the mean = 3 pts

- SBAC Reading Claim Score:
  Below Standard = 0 pts
  At/Near Standard = 4 pts
  Above Standard = 6 pts

- Scholastic Reading Inventory Lexile Score:
  Between mean and one standard deviation above the mean = 1 pt
  At least ONE standard deviation above the mean = 2 pts
  At least TWO standard deviations above the mean = 3 pts

- End of Year Language Arts Classroom Grade:
  D/F* = -1 pts
  B/C = 0 pts
  A = 1 pt

Our teacher committee identified reading skills as the most critical for success in a differentiated Honors CORE course. Students must have an advanced ability to dissect and comprehend complex texts in order to meaningfully engage in a more-rigorous literacy course. The SRI Lexile scores and Reading Claim from the SBAC assessment have been included as criteria in this system to reflect this emphasis on reading skills. The Lexile reader measure is a nationally normed assessment that has proven to be a strong indicator of student reading levels; the scale of the measure is based on a student’s ability to comprehend a variety of text elements and provides teachers with a predictability to the levels of text students will understand. Other assessments, including the District Benchmarks and Articulated Writing Prompt, will be used as validating data measures as well as additional criteria in cases where more data is needed to make a placement recommendation.

*Students who receive a D/F on their final Language Arts Grade will have placement reviewed during first progress reports.

May 8, 2018
Mathematics

Students will be adequately prepared for high school success with completion of the Common Core-aligned Mathematics 6, 7, and 8 courses or with the Accelerated Pathway. These pathways, illustrated below, are in alignment with the California Department of Education Mathematics Framework (Appendix D).

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<tr>
<th>Traditional Pathway</th>
<th>Accelerated Pathway</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Math 6</td>
<td>Math 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Math 7</td>
<td>Math 7 Accelerated</td>
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<tr>
<td>Math 8</td>
<td>Math 8 Accelerated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algebra I (9th Grade)</td>
<td>Geometry (9th Grade)</td>
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All sixth grade students will be placed in the Mathematics 6 course; students will be grouped in sections to support teachers in determining the depth of content instruction to best meet student learning needs. Data analysis and teacher recommendation are used to place students, requiring **5 points** to be earned within a system of criteria for consideration on the Accelerated Pathway. The measures used are:

- **Smarter Balanced Assessment Mathematics scale score (SBAC):**
  - Between mean and one standard deviation above the mean = 1 pt
  - At least ONE standard deviation above the mean = 2 pts
  - At least TWO standard deviations above the mean = 3 pts

- **Key Skills from Summative Assessment:**
  - 70-79% = 1 pt
  - 79-88% = 2 pts
  - 90+% = 3 pts

- **Classroom Observation of Mathematical Learning Behaviors:**
  - Few Observations of Behaviors = 0 pts
  - Several Observations of Behaviors = 1 pt
  - Many Observations of Behaviors = 2 pts

The California Math Frameworks specify that the Common Core Math 8 standards are of significantly higher rigor than the previous Algebra I course that many students took while in 8th grade. Students go further in-depth with their studies of linear relationships and equations in addition to exploring irrational numbers and a more formal treatment of functions. The new Algebra I and Geometry courses are correspondingly more advanced than previous courses, requiring recalibration of course sequencing to ensure students are able to master the necessary content.

As such, the State has recommended compacting three years of material into two years rather than two years into one. Our teachers have worked to create Standards Sequence Schedules that have combined Math 7 and Math 8 content into the Math 7 Accelerated course; similarly, Math 8 and Algebra I content has been combined for Math 8 Accelerated, preparing students for Geometry at the high school. The rationale for this pathway design primarily stems from the likelihood that mathematical concepts are likely to be omitted when trying to squeeze two years into one, which must be avoided as the new standards have been developed to carefully define clear learning progressions as students prepare for high school coursework and recently updated college entrance exams.

May 8, 2018