

English 4 Course Proposal

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Position: Director of English

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Vision

J. Sterling Morton High School District 201 educates all students to meet or exceed the standards of learning by providing educational experiences that challenge, engage, and empower them to be productive members of the global community.

Mission

Every Student Succeeds

Goals: (Select all that apply)

1. Increase Student Learning
2. Improve all student performance in reading, math, and science
3. Enhance student social, emotional, and behavior development
4. Operate with fiscal integrity, efficiency, and effectiveness
5. Increase family and community support

Plan

What needs to be improved? How will you measure the improvement?

Currently, senior English course offerings include two AP options (AP Literature and AP Language), the year-long College Preparatory English and Journalism courses, and six stand-alone semester electives (Contemporary Literature, Creative Writing, Humanities, Latin American Literature, Multicultural Themes, and Science Fiction). Because the six electives operate as separate courses with different curricula, pacing, and assessments, the department does not have a single guaranteed set of priority standards or common assessment data for seniors who complete their graduation requirement through these electives. The separate course codes can also create scheduling constraints when student requests, section availability, and other senior-year requirements must be balanced.

This structure limits the department's ability to monitor Grade 12 learning consistently across sections, calibrate expectations through one PLT, and determine whether all students have demonstrated the same essential senior-level reading, writing, language, and speaking/listening outcomes before graduation. The proposed redesign is intended to create greater consistency in essential learning and assessment without eliminating the variety of genres, perspectives, and writing experiences represented in the current electives.

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Improvement Goal: Establish English 4 as a single year-long senior English course that incorporates the strongest content and learning experiences from the six existing semester electives into a coherent sequence of thematic units. All English 4 sections will use the same priority standards, shared pacing expectations, common assessments, and district rubrics while preserving variety in texts, genres, perspectives, and modes of expression. Reading, writing, language, and speaking/listening tasks will be intentionally scaffolded across the year toward common Grade 12 exit expectations.

Measurement:

- Reduction in senior English scheduling conflicts, section changes, and seat-mismatch issues reported by counselors after implementation
- Percentage of eligible non-AP seniors successfully scheduled into and completing the year-long English 4 course
- Student performance and growth on common English 4 assessments aligned to the identified priority standards
 - Reading and literary/informational text analysis tasks
 - Argumentative, analytical, and creative writing; speaking/listening tasks
- Senior writing portfolio performance using a common district rubric
 - Completion and performance on a common research-based senior task or project
 - Cross-section calibration of common rubric scores through PLT review
 - Consistency of grading and proficiency determinations across English 4 sections
 - PLT common-assessment reviews documenting reteaching, intervention, and enrichment decisions
 - Student survey data on confidence and preparedness in reading, writing, research, and oral communication
 - Performance on common English 4 assessments disaggregated by student group, including EL and students with IEPs
 - Enrollment, completion, and success rates by student group to monitor equitable access and outcomes
- Teacher and counselor feedback on curriculum coherence, scheduling flexibility, and implementation
- Master schedule and enrollment reports used to compare pre- and post-implementation scheduling patterns

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What is the current condition and data that supports the need for improvement?

- **Current condition:** Six stand-alone semester electives (0.5 credit each) currently serve as a primary non-AP senior English pathway, with separate course codes, curricula, pacing, and assessments. As a result, the department does not currently collect common Grade 12 assessment data across these elective pathways or have a single set of essential outcomes that every student in this pathway is expected to demonstrate. Counselors must also balance elective requests with section availability and other graduation requirements. District ACT data from the cohort's junior year should be included here, when finalized, as contextual evidence of college-readiness needs; ACT results should not be presented as a direct measure of the proposed Grade 12 course.

What specific outcomes need to occur?

- All students enrolled in English 4 receive instruction and assessment on the same identified priority reading, writing, language, and speaking/listening standards through a coherent year-long sequence.
- Counselors can schedule eligible seniors through one year-long English 4 course code, reducing dependence on matching two separate semester-elective seats while preserving AP, College Preparatory English, and Journalism as separate pathways.

Who are the direct customers of the improvement and how will this benefit them?

Seniors who complete their English graduation requirement through the current semester-elective pathway will benefit from a coherent year-long experience with common essential outcomes and assessments, regardless of section assignment.

Counselors will gain a more flexible scheduling option, and the English department will gain a common PLT structure and comparable Grade 12 data to evaluate student learning and improve instruction.

Which district strategic goal(s) is/are this proposal aligned?

- **College and Career Readiness:** A coherent year-long course provides sustained practice in close reading, evidence-based writing, research, language, and oral communication - skills relevant to postsecondary study, training, and workplace communication.
- **Academic Excellence:** Shared priority standards, common assessments, and collaborative planning establish consistent expectations across English 4 sections while preserving the thematic variety of the current electives.
- **Equity and Access:** A common course reduces differences in essential learning that can result when students are placed into separate electives based partly on schedule availability. Student

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outcomes will be monitored by subgroup to identify and address disparities in access, support, and performance.

What is the general approach to achieving the desired outcome?

- Use the six existing electives as source curricula for a new year-long English 4 course. An English 4 PLT will identify the strongest texts, tasks, and concepts from the existing courses; establish Grade 12 priority standards and common exit expectations; organize content into a coherent unit sequence; and develop a shared pacing guide, common assessments, and common rubrics.

What resources will be needed?

- **Curriculum Development Time:** Time to identify priority standards, map the year-long course, develop/revise units, and create common assessments and rubrics.
- **English 4 PLT Creation:** Collaborative planning time for teachers from East and West, including EL- and special education-informed perspectives.
- **Instructional Resources:** Audit existing elective texts, novels, digital resources, and materials to determine what can be retained and where gaps exist.
- **Scheduling:** Update the master schedule and course-selection materials to replace the six semester-elective codes with one year-long English 4 course for this pathway.
- **Financial:** Any text/resource purchases will be identified through the curriculum audit and brought forward through the normal budgeting process.

Who else is involved?

- **Teachers:** Current elective teachers and other designated Grade 12 teachers forming the English 4 PLT
- **Administration and Student Services:** Building administrators, counselors, and relevant district staff for course approval, scheduling, student placement, and communication
- **NCAA Eligibility Center:** Course documentation reviewed/submitted as needed to maintain NCAA core-course eligibility
- **Students & Parents:** Current and future seniors and their families, who will receive clear communication before SY 2027-28 course selection and registration

How will the program be evaluated?

- **Short-term Evaluation:** Bi-weekly PLT data analysis will provide on-going instructional feedback. At the end of Semester 1, review implementation fidelity, common assessment results, student survey data, and counselor scheduling feedback.

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- **Mid-term Evaluation:** At the end of Year 1, review common assessment and writing-portfolio results, course completion data, subgroup outcomes, and teacher/counselor feedback; identify curriculum revisions for Year 2.
- **Long-term Evaluation:** Track trends in Grade 12 performance, course completion, subgroup outcomes, and postsecondary transition indicators over multiple cohorts. Interpret long-term indicators as contextual evidence because they are influenced by factors beyond English 4.
- Success criteria and baseline values will be finalized before implementation so Year 1 results can be compared with the current senior elective structure.

Do

Actions to Accomplish Plan	Resources	Person Responsible	Results	Action Step Completion Date
Approval to bring English 4 forward for Board Approval	N/A	Megan Delaney	Approval	
Board Approval to proceed with course planning for English 4	N/A	Dr. Sanchez, Jose Gamboa	Board Approval	
Communicate changes to counselors and teachers	N/A	Amanda Torres, Dr. Rzadski Megan Delaney, Brett Rush, Mary O'Donnell	Counselors and English department informed of changes	Nov 9th
Create communication tools to advertise course	ParentSquare	Megan Delaney, Brett Rush, Mary O'Donnell, Fatima Buonicore	Materials available at pre-registration	End of November
Add English 4 course description to the 2027-28	School Links	Nick Battaglia, Dr. Parrie	Course offering book updated-	Prior to end of November

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Course Offering Book			pathway updated School Links updated	
Replace the six elective course codes with English 4 in the course sequence document	School Links	Kim Arthurs, Nick Battaglia, Trisha O'Neill, Dr. Parrie	Added to 2027-2028 English course sequence. Posted in C.O.B. on district website.	Prior to end of November
Communicate changes to students and parents	Administration	Nick Battaglia, Dr. Parrie Megan Delaney, Kim Arthurs, Trisha O'Neill	- Course announced ahead of pre-registration - Course included in registration materials - Counselors communicate change during senior scheduling	Nov-April
Create a common syllabus and pacing guide.	PLT and/or curriculum writing	English 4 PLT (current elective teachers), lead teachers at East & West.	Syllabus and pacing guides added to English Department Curriculum Team.	Prior to Sem 2

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Confirm course meets NCAA core-course requirements, if applicable		Dr. Parrie, Nick Battaglia	Course description and supporting documentation reviewed and submitted through the NCAA High School Portal, as required	Prior to Sem 2
Curriculum Writing	Curriculum-development time; existing elective curricula and resources	Megan Delaney, English 4 PLT from East & West, (EL certified & SpEd certified teachers).	Year-long unit sequence, common assessments, rubrics, and instructional resources developed and ready for implementation	Oct-March
Study				
Will this require additional time, people, and/or money to sustain the course districtwide?	- Curriculum-development time - Professional learning, as needed - Instructional materials identified through the resource audit	Megan Delaney, Eng 4 PLT	Calendar of curriculum writing: task expectations.	

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	Course materials			
Review course completion, common assessment, scheduling, and subgroup data	- School Links Mastery Manager Student/teacher/counselor feedback - Mastery Manager	Megan Delaney, Dr. Rzascki, Amanda Torres, Nick Battaglia, Dr. Parrie	Determine whether implementation goals and success criteria were met; identify needed revisions and report findings/recommendations through the district curriculum review process.	Sem 1 SY 2028

English 4 Course Description:

English 4 replaces the six former stand-alone semester electives (Contemporary Literature, Creative Writing, Humanities, Latin American Literature, Multicultural Themes, and Science Fiction) with a single year-long course for this senior English pathway. AP English courses, College Preparatory English, and Journalism remain separate course offerings.

English 4 is a year-long senior English course organized around thematic units developed from the strongest content and learning experiences in the department's existing electives: Contemporary Literature, Creative Writing, Humanities, Latin American Literature, Multicultural Themes, and Science Fiction. Students will read and analyze literary and informational texts representing varied genres, periods, cultures, and perspectives; examine connections among literature, culture, history, and the arts; and produce analytical, argumentative, research-based, and creative writing. Across all sections, students will work toward a common set of priority reading, writing, language, and speaking/listening standards through a shared pacing framework, common assessments, and common rubrics. The course will be designed to preserve meaningful thematic variety while ensuring consistent Grade 12 expectations and evidence of learning across sections.

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Supporting Research & Comparable District Precedent:

- Comparable district structure: West Chicago Community High School District 94 identifies an English 4 graduation requirement for seniors and uses both year-long and semester-based options to satisfy it. This does not replicate Morton's proposed single-course model, but it provides a nearby example of organizing senior English around an explicit Grade 12 requirement rather than treating all senior offerings as unrelated electives (West Chicago Community High School District 94, 2026-27 Course Description Handbook).
- Recent research on English Learners also shows that course-taking patterns can shape access to advanced academic opportunities. Holzman, Sánchez Salazar, Chukhray, and Guo (published online 2025; journal issue 2026) found that students reclassified from EL status later in school took fewer college-level courses than never-EL students and students reclassified earlier. The study does not evaluate a common senior English course, but it supports monitoring placement and course access so scheduling structures do not unintentionally limit opportunity. (Holzman et al., 2025).
- Curriculum coherence and collaborative assessment: Professional Learning Community scholarship emphasizes identifying essential learning, using common assessments, and collaboratively responding to evidence of student learning. Those principles support the proposed English 4 structure: common priority standards and assessments provide a consistent instructional core while teachers retain professional judgment in texts, scaffolds, and learning experiences (DuFour et al., 2016).

References

- DuFour, R., DuFour, R., Eaker, R., Many, T. W., & Mattos, M. (2016). *Learning by doing: A handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work* (3rd ed.). Solution Tree Press. [Solution Tree](#)
- Holzman, B., Sánchez Salazar, E., Chukhray, I., & Guo, W. (2025). Sorted and tracked: English learners, college-level course-taking in high school, and postsecondary opportunity. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*. <https://doi.org/10.3102/01623737251392299> [Sage Journals](#)
- West Chicago Community High School District 94. (2026). *2026–27 course description booklet*.

