

Questions and Answers About... Grade 11 English Courses at Thomas A. Stewart SS

1. What changes are happening with the Grade 11 English courses?

Beginning in September 2018, students at Thomas A. Stewart SS will complete *Contemporary Aboriginal Voices* as their mandatory Grade 11 English credit for all levels: 3U/3C/3E.

2. Why are the English courses being changed?

The new courses are being developed as part of our school board's commitment to enhancing our students' experiences with Indigenous education, and in line with provincial and federal priorities. The Ministry of Education is providing funding for the creation of the new courses. As a result, there will be many benefits to our students.

3. What are the benefits to students?

The new Grade 11 English courses will allow students to experience learning through the lens of Indigenous history, culture and perspectives. In addition, students will benefit from smaller class sizes next year, as a result of Ministry funding, and innovative, new approaches to teaching and learning that will promote creativity and critical thinking skills. We are excited to extend this innovative opportunity and know that our students will benefit from these courses by being equally prepared, if not more so, for future educational and life experiences.

4. What will be different about the new courses?

Students will develop the same skills and be subject to the same expectations as all other Grade 11 English courses. The main differences are that the courses will feature the works of a range of Indigenous authors and playwrights, be delivered in an innovative and modern mixed media format, and will include issues-based curriculum. Currently, teachers have the option to choose from a variety of texts and learning opportunities, and as a result, the courses are always a bit different year-to-year and from one teacher to another.

5. How are the courses being developed?

During a consultation with TAS' staff members, the school welcomed the opportunity to participate in the creation of these new courses. Release time and professional development are available for those writing the courses, and for everyone who will be teaching them. The courses are being developed with a variety of people and resources, including support from Trent University, course outlines and experiences from other school boards, and the expertise of elders and Indigenous knowledge keepers.

6. Will other schools also have new English courses?

We are not the first school or school board in Ontario to offer English courses with an Indigenous focus. In some school boards in the province, all secondary schools already have English courses with an Indigenous focus, while in other boards, select schools are participating. In our school board, Thomas A. Stewart is the first school to offer the new courses, with the intention of having them available in all secondary schools in the future.