
Hartford High School Honors Program: Planting the Seeds for Success

The Hartford High School Honors Program was started in 1999 to meet the needs of students who wanted to excel academically in high school.

Throughout that time many of the top students have graduated from the program and gone on to some of the best colleges in America. The qualities that stand out in those students are their *dedication to hard work, persistence and ability to balance the Honors Program requirements and everything else in a busy life.*

Those requirements increase starting in the junior year and the commencement of the thesis or project. Using part of the junior summer is a way to get a large portion of the work completed. Although the thesis component is the hardest requirement it is viewed in retrospect as the most rewarding in helping students be prepared for college.

To understand the Honors Program experience better, we asked some of our 2009 honors graduate candidates to reflect on their Honors Program experience. Here's what they had to say:

Natasha Wood

My thesis question was, "Does involvement in sports cause eating disorders?" I have always been interested in the psychological aspect of sports, and I approached my thesis with the hypothesis that people who were involved in sports had a higher chance of developing an eating disorder. I have presented my finding to the Honor's Program Thesis Committee, and at our presentation for parents and friends.

Writing this thesis has prepared me for long-term projects and lengthy papers in college. The process has taught me patience and time management. The difficulties I encountered were trying to find time to meet with my

advisor (we were both extremely busy, so finding times on a regular basis to meet was a challenge), and also not having the resources to conduct the interviews I originally planned. I planned to interview college-level and perhaps professional athletes, however, it just did not work out the way I wanted.

I would encourage students to join the Honor's Program because the extra things we do are a big reason why I feel so prepared for college. Also the bonds you make with the other honor's program members are very fulfilling. Next year I am attending Lasell College where I am going to major in creative advertising, and play field hockey.



Nikki Annis

My thesis project was, "The Food Pyramid, Health, and Wellness: Their implications on the development of a family fun walk." For this, I organized a public event in my home town to educate my local community on the necessity for good nutrition and exercise.

During this event, I gave a short presentation to the attendees and then led them on a one mile walk on a nature trail. I also gathered donations for prizes and was given a \$50 gift card to the Co-Op to purchase snacks for this event.

I feel like I really benefited from the Honors Program because it helped me to not only become a more organized and advanced student, but I also have become a more confident public speaker and have been able to use my participation in this program to my advantage in college applications.

Probably the largest challenge I faced was taking the first step towards beginning my thesis project. I always knew that I wanted to conduct a project having to do with nutrition and health, but the primary research phases and deadlines were fairly daunting at first.

Incoming juniors should know that it's not as intimidating as it may seem. One is guided on how to put together the paper, very fair deadlines are given, and having an advisor is incredibly helpful. Once past the research phase it is much smoother sailing. Just be sure to select a topic that you are interested in, because it gives you the opportunity to expand your knowledge in a field that you enjoy. Along with this, the writing portion of the thesis is much less painful when written about a topic that interests you.

The best advice I could probably give would be to try to finish your assignments early and get them out of the way. This allows for you to add in any extra tidbits of information and greatly helps reduce stress! Next year, I will be attending the University of New Hampshire and majoring in nursing. Since the nursing program is very competitive, I truly feel that the Honors Program helped to make my application stand out that much more.



Emily Scribner

For my thesis project, I started a mentoring program between Hartford High School and Hartford Middle School, called, "Project Compass". The program pairs a high school sophomore, junior, or senior with a middle school sixth grader for the duration of a school year, throughout which they participate in regular one-on-one and group activities. I presented my project, mainly with a PowerPoint, to the thesis committee, groups of parents, and the school board.

One area that I think the Honors Program helps immensely is with public speaking. The best way to get better at public speaking, and to overcome the fear associated with it, is just to do it. The Honors Program gives you many opportunities to practice speaking in front of a group, and it makes it much more comfortable and easy, simply because it becomes familiar.

One of the best parts of the Honors Program is how proud you feel when you complete all of the requirements and look back at all you have accomplished in your four years. If you join the Honors Program, know that it will be hard at times, but don't get discouraged. Stick with it because some of the best, most rewarding fun comes at the end!

I will attend Connecticut College in the Fall.

Kathryn Latham

Through the thesis process, the Honors Program gave me an opportunity to explore a topic that I may not have otherwise had an opportunity to experience. That topic was the definition of art.

Although the thesis process was long, it was intriguing and well worth it. When given the offer to spend two years studying the topic of our choice, it was amazing to see the wide variety of topics that our group chose.

After four years in the program, I can honestly attest that it was an enjoyable and

educational experience that offered much preparation for life beyond high school.



Jane Chen

My thesis for the Honors Program was about the societal pressures placed on young girls to dislike math. I researched this topic through surveys, published scientific papers, and the examination popular media, such as movies books, and television shows, and I feel that my original hypothesis turned out to be correct.

I think that experiencing the process of writing a paper of this length and detail has been a really great way to learn how to draft, edit, and produce a complete research paper. All in all, the Honors Program has been a great learning tool for my academic future. The requirement of attending lectures and summarizing them really made me process and analyze what I was hearing, and the requirement for community service is not only a great way to give back, but it is also a great way to meet all sorts of people in the community.

Tana McCoy

My senior thesis project was called, "The Underlying Secrets of Female Bullying". I researched female bullying—what it is the causes, signs, symptoms, and how to help stop and prevent it. Then I took all of my information and presented it to the Hartford High School staff to further educate them on the subject. From here I went to the freshman health classes and presented. Next, I presented for Mr. Hemming's freshman social studies classes and my English class. Today I presented to the students in the Resource Center. Tomorrow I am presenting

to a group of young adults at the community college in Claremont who will become teachers. I gave the Bernice A. Ray School a copy of my thesis and my PowerPoint to review and I will probably be presenting to their faculty sometime soon.

I feel that everyone I have presented to has taken away at least a little something about female bullying. In a thank you note I received from a freshman she wrote, "Your presentation really helped me realize how much we do and say affects people and how wrong it is to be rude to people, so thank you."

A hard part of my project was getting the research going. I learned that if you can get past the boring stuff then eventually you get to the really interesting and fun stuff and that makes up for it all! So good luck to all Honors Program students—you can make it! Just don't give up! It's worth it in the end!

Ava Donaldson

My thesis project was a study on the body language of horses. I lived on a cattle ranch in Montana for two weeks last summer and took black and white photos of the working horses as well as some nearby wild horses, with a focus on herd communication. When I got back home I developed and matted the photos myself and displayed them at the Tip Top Art Gallery in White River. In addition, I gave a short, interactive PowerPoint on horse body language to Mrs. Bishop's 3rd grade class at the Ottaquechee School.

I have really enjoyed being a part of this program. It could be difficult and time-consuming, but it also gave me an opportunity to complete a project that I really loved. The extra work was easily balanced by the fun we had as a group and the time management skills it taught me. I am very pleased with my experience and the work I have produced over the past four years as a result of the Honors Program. I would definitely recommend joining the Honors Program. It provides a multitude of opportunities, helps to compile your

interests into a large project or paper, and teaches valuable skills.

Next year I will be attending Wheaton College in Norton, MA. I have interests in both English and Biology, but I don't yet know what I want to pursue for a career.

Noah Detzer

My thesis project was to create, author, and edit a novella. After researching and preparing for several months, I began work on a murder mystery. The story involves the adventures of Sam Dodger, a reporter for the New York Times, and his discovery of the body of an old acquaintance. The discovery prompts an investigation of the murder, and the revelation that many of the people he works with were somehow involved in the case.

The process took four months to complete the preliminary draft, and then nine months to edit and revise the project to its current, final form. After reading several books on writing, I chose to model a story based on the works of Agatha Christie and my Uncle, John Lescroart.

I began with a 3-page outline of a fifteen chapter work that was quickly whittled down to twelve chapters. I wrote all of the chapters in a several month period and the (very) rough draft of my novella was completed in early March 2008.

This process has greatly increased my desire to pursue English in college and continue writing. The editing process, while the most tedious part, was the most beneficial part of the process because I had never done that with a written work before (and carried it through subsequent drafts). I felt that this project was the perfect outlet for me at a time when I needed to work on a creative fiction piece to expand my knowledge of writing.



For more information about the Hartford High Honors Program, please contact program director Mr. Jonathan Streeter at streeterj@hartfordschools.net or visit the Honors Program webpage at www.hartfordschools.net