

## State Scholars Core Courses

### English – 4 Years

English I, English II, English III, English IV

### Mathematics – 3 Years

Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II

### Science – 3 Years

Biology, Chemistry, Physics

### Social Studies – 3 ½ Years

Chosen from U.S. History, World History, World Geography, Economics, Government

### Languages – 2 Years

2 years of a language other than English

## Wyoming P-16 Education Council

P.O. Box 1766  
Laramie, WY 82073



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# Features of Secondary School and Postsecondary Entry-Level Writing Courses

| Feature  | Typical secondary school language arts course   | Typical entry-level postsecondary writing course   |
|--|---|--|
| <b>1. Total number of class sessions</b>               | Year-long classes have about 180 class sessions of 55 minutes each or 90 class sessions of 85-90 minutes each. Semester courses are not as common but have about 90 class sessions of 55 minutes or 45 sessions of 85-90 minutes each.  | Classes have about 45 sessions of 50 minutes each during 15 weeks of a semester (half a school year) with the exact number of sessions depending on the specific course, the student's class schedule, and the institution.  |
| <b>2. Textbook cost to student</b>                     | Students usually pay \$0, but some teachers request that students purchase a key text so it can be marked-up and/or a manual of style for \$20-\$40.  | Students spend about \$40 for a new reader, \$28 for a used reader (if available), \$60 for a handbook (50% if they sell back), and \$42 for a used handbook.  |
| <b>3. Instructional methods</b>                        | With a class size of 20-30, most courses integrate instruction in literature and writing and have a speech component. In a few schools, stand-alone writing classes are offered, especially at the upper level. A mix of individual, small group, and whole class instruction and activities is used as well as lecture, discussion, worksheets and packets. Computer lab time is often used for the writing and research components. | With a class size around 23, a mix of whole-class discussions and questions in smaller groups is used; some classes are taught in computer labs and some in regular classrooms.  |
| <b>4. Homework</b>                                     | While homework assignments vary from none to 50 minutes per class session, depending upon subject and individual teacher, 60 minutes of homework each week is typical. Writing projects typically require three or more hours per week.   | Each class meeting requires 60 to 150 minutes of homework; assignments include reading, writing, and research.   |
| <b>5. Evaluation of homework</b>                       | Major assignments receive detailed responses. Because secondary school writing instruction is typically developmental, not evaluative, use of peer evaluation, examples, evaluative rubrics (state, district and course) are used. Quizzes and short essays are typically used to motivate reading homework and to check for understanding.   | Detailed responses are given for all major assignments; acknowledgement is given that homework was completed for smaller assignments; sample papers may be used for all students to examine during a class session; tests or quizzes are usually not given although they may be given to assess understanding of reading.  |
| <b>6. Assessments to which courses need to respond</b> | Students in grades 9 and 11 take the state writing test (PAWS). Each district has a state-monitored assessment system that requires multiple assessments in grades 9-12; these are typically integrated into course grades.   | Courses are assessed based on university-wide program assessments, student satisfaction surveys, writing program internal assessments, course evaluations, and national tests.   |
| <b>7. Reading</b>                                      | Reading typically occurs in class and covers multiple literary genres. Some schools have honors courses where daily out-of-class reading of about 30 minutes (8-12 pages) is required. The reading is typically short literature passages.  | Reading is required in preparation for most class sessions; reading assignments include extended readings (12-15 pages), usually nonfiction, from a range of disciplines and chapters about writing strategies in a handbook (usually 15 pages).   |
| <b>8. Writing</b>                                      | Most class sessions focus upon discussion of literature with an in-class response that may include writing. Courses focused on writing often incorporate more traditional rhetorical study, including summary, synthesis, and analysis. Use of the opinion paper is more common   | Writing is required for most class sessions. Typical short assignments (2 pages) ask for a summary, synthesis, and analysis. For summaries, the students need to understand the hierarchy of ideas (the main point, the subpoints, and the relationships between these). For syntheses, students need to understand how ideas from different essays relate to and/ |

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| 8. <b>Writing, continued</b>                              | than formal argumentation. Literary analyses, personal narratives, and expository essays are common. Formal writing includes at least one research report in junior and senior years; this paper is often a summary instead of an analysis.  | or complicate each other. Argument papers (about 5 pages each) are also required; students create their own ideas that are supported by outside readings; there is also a longer research paper. Argument papers need to be based on students' use of sources instead of personal experience, and students need to offer an engaged, solution-oriented project, not merely a description.  |
| 9. <b>Extra help in understanding course content</b>      | Teachers typically structure instruction to provide in-class time for individual needs. This often happens during reading or writing time in the instructional session. Many schools have adopted a resource period when students may visit with the teacher during unstructured time. Typically, students do not come in for help outside of school hours. Federally required tutoring programs, peer assistance groups, and after-school programs are offered in some schools. Struggling students are often assigned to several weeks of summer school. | Voluntary attendance at teacher's weekly office hours is encouraged; additional help sessions can be scheduled; often conferences are required by the teachers as well. The student should come with written samples of work and be prepared to ask specific questions. Writing centers are free and excellent resources on most campuses for students to discuss their writing with a consultant.                                     |
| 10. <b>Basis of final grade assigned</b>                  | Though assigning grades varies widely, the following methods are most typical. Assignment of points: each quiz, activity, assignment has a point value matched to importance. The grade is an average of these points. Category assignments: assignments fit into a category such as 40-50% daily work and quizzes; 50-60% writing assignments and exams. Portfolio: the student builds a body of work over the duration of the class, and the last assignment may be used to determine the final grade.   | Final grades are mainly based on papers with more "weight" assigned to final papers; some instructors may consider class attendance and participation; completed homework is often a pre-condition for passing.  |
| 11. <b>Instructor's responsibilities outside of class</b> | Sponsor student organizations and social events; communicate with parents by phone, mail, computer, or at school events; conduct routine school duties such as bus and hall duties, lunch help, teacher leader and team meetings, parent conferences, accreditation tasks, committee work; participate in school and district professional development activities  | Conduct and publish research; guide the research of graduate students and advanced undergraduate students; participate in faculty committee work; participate in the activities of professional organizations; write recommendation letters, attend professional conferences [Note: Many entry-level classes are taught by graduate students who are themselves <b>full-time students</b> taking graduate courses and doing research.] |
| 12. <b>Key Transition Issues</b>                          | Emphasis on expository writing and non-fiction reading assignments in postsecondary course. Homework requirements greater in postsecondary course.   |  |



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