



PROFICIENCY OF WRITING (POW) REQUIREMENTS

From pages 50-51 in the Student/Parent Handbook

Each student is required to pass the Proficiency of Writing (POW) exam prior to graduation. The POW test is given to all sophomore students and freshman honors level students. Passing the POW is a requirement for both graduation and for acceptance into honors level courses.

Students are given two opportunities to take the POW in the sophomore year. Students who do not pass the POW at that time are reissued the POW two additional times in their Junior year. Failure to pass the POW by the end of the Junior year will result in the student being required to take the mandatory POW Writing Workshop in the summer. In this special case, receiving a passing grade in the summer course will count as credit for the POW requirement.

The summer POW course is also open to freshman and sophomore students for enrichment and practice. However, in order to receive credit for the POW requirement in these cases, students must also pass the POW test administered at the end of the workshop. Also, students who are trying to meet prerequisites for honors courses may take the summer workshop, but must also pass the POW issued at the end of the course to satisfy this requirement.

The English Department and department chair organize the test by providing prompt questions and accompanying rules. The department also schedules test dates and assists in proctoring and reading of the tests based on a writing rubric. The coordinator collects the tests and reads and judges all the tests for the first or second read. Students pass with one reading with a grade of 70%. A second reading is required if the student has a borderline score of 65-69%. These tests should be kept in the students' individual portfolio so that they are available for reference. A final list of results is given to the academic advisors who then record the results on the student's record. The academic advisor informs the students when this pass result is not on her graduation requirement listing. Students who fail the POW are encouraged to schedule special tutoring and/or assistance in preparation for re-testing. All dates for these tests, including the first, is published by the coordinator in the Parents' Newsletter, Daily Bulletin, and, if necessary, by PA announcement.

The school also established a four-year writing program with writing assessment at all levels at Saint Joseph High School.

Freshman Level:

Before entering high school, incoming freshmen should have been introduced to the four varieties of paragraph writing, i.e. Descriptive, Narrative, Expository, and the Persuasive paragraph. However, all teachers of freshmen will teach and test this skill, and will be especially alert not only to writing mechanics but also organization, unity and coherence.

The teacher will compile a portfolio of writing samples from each freshman every quarter after the teachers have graded the assignment:

1st quarter:	Descriptive Paragraph
2nd quarter:	Narrative Paragraph
3rd quarter:	Expository Paragraph
4th quarter:	Persuasive Paragraph

Toward the end of the 4th quarter, freshmen will be introduced to the multi-paragraph essay. Guidelines for the multi-paragraph essay will be followed. This essay may be descriptive, narrative or expository, but not persuasive. (Students in honors level may do the persuasive.) Freshman level teachers will grade at least one multi-paragraph essay for each student and file the completed essays in their portfolios.

Sophomore Level:

During sophomore year, teachers will continue to teach the multi-paragraph essay so that students are again aware of mechanics, organization, unity, coherence, and logical response to the prompt questions given by the teacher. The essay may be descriptive, narrative or expository. The concluding paragraph will be the wrap type from the thesis statement in the opening paragraph. In the fall semester, students will be given the Proficiency of Writing (POW) timed-writing test based on their summer reading. The prompts will be developed by the department, and will be administered on the same day for the entire sophomore class. If the student does not pass the POW in the Fall, there will be another opportunity in the Spring semester. If the student still does not pass, it will be recommended that the student take the Proficiency of Writing Workshop over summer school. The sophomore level program is also applied to the honors program at the freshman level.

Junior Level:

During the junior year, students will be taught how to conclude their essays with commentary rather than a wrap of the thesis statement. Teachers will stress the persuasive type of essay while continuing to teach the other three types. In the fall semester, students will be given the Proficiency of Writing (POW) timed-writing test based on their summer reading. The prompts will be developed by the department, and will be administered on the same day for the entire junior class. If the student does not pass the POW in the Fall, there will be another opportunity in the Spring semester. If the student still does not pass, juniors are REQUIRED to take the Proficiency of Writing Workshop over summer school. Junior should also complete a research paper during their second semester.

Senior Level:

Seniors must complete a research paper during their second semester. Seniors will continue to practice timed-writing and other forms of writing.