

Fairfax Collegiate  
2026 Summer Program  
TJHSST Admissions Prep Course Syllabus  
Rising Grades 7-8



Course Description

Prepare for TJHSST admissions.

Practice writing personal statements and problem-solving essays for TJHSST admissions.

Learn a framework for efficient, organized, informative, and correct writing under time constraints.

Find out about TJHSST from TJHSST insiders.

Students prepare for the TJ admissions process and gain structured guidance and practice with the essays they will need to write. Students think critically, write clearly, and explain their problem-solving skills with confidence. With focused instruction and feedback, students develop effective strategies for each essay type.

Students practice personal statements and problem-solving essays with timed responses while learning how to analyze prompts and organize ideas. They explore narrative writing, formula-based responses, and revision techniques tailored to TJ's expectations. Peer review and simulated assessments help students track progress.

Students leave with stronger writing strategies, clearer self-presentation, and greater confidence approaching the TJ application process.

Learning Objectives

Course Goals	<p><b>TJ Admissions Process:</b> Students learn about the details and deadlines for each component of the admissions process.</p> <p><b>Personal Statements:</b> Students invest significant time practicing personal statements and writing about their interest and experience in math, science, technology, engineering, and TJ.</p> <p><b>Problem-Solving Essays:</b> Students invest time practicing multi-variable problem-solving essays, with an emphasis on organization strategies and explaining their mathematical/scientific thoughts and skills through writing.</p> <p><b>Timed Essay-Exam Preparation:</b> Students learn how to efficiently work under time constraints and</p>
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	<p>write organized, grammatical, informative essays.</p> <p><b>Life at TJ:</b> Students learn about what it's like to be a student at TJ, including detailed information about opportunities, school culture, extracurriculars, and any other topic of interest.</p>
<b>Course Topics</b>	<p><b>Holistic Review Overview:</b> Students learn about the evaluative criteria assessed by the TJ Admissions process.</p> <p><b>Essay Types:</b> Students review different types of essays that they could be called to write, and how to convey ideas properly in each type.</p> <p><b>Writing Prompt Analysis:</b> Students learn how to narrow down the topic of a prompt to an idea that can be explained in the time they are given.</p> <p><b>SPS Response Planning:</b> Students learn about what TJ is looking for in personal statements and plan how they will respond to particular types of prompts.</p> <p><b>Problem-Solving Response Planning:</b> Students learn about past problem-solving prompts and what TJ is looking for in their written solutions, and they plan how they will respond to particular types of prompts.</p> <p><b>Personal Statements (1):</b> Students strategize how to write effective and flattering personal statements, and learn about what topics they may be asked to write about.</p> <p><b>Essay Structure:</b> Students work on developing an engaging introduction, persuasive supporting paragraphs, and a strong conclusion.</p> <p><b>Formulaic Writing:</b> Students learn about the benefits of writing with a formula and apply it to their personal statements.</p> <p><b>Sentence Variety:</b> Students work on varying their sentences to improve the quality of their essays. Students also work on improving diction and effective word choice.</p> <p><b>Revision:</b> Students learn how to look back over their writing to find mistakes and correct them efficiently.</p>

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## Course Schedule

<b>Class Meeting 1</b>	<p><b>SPS Diagnostic Pre-Test:</b> Students take a preliminary diagnostic to check strengths and weaknesses before instruction begins.</p> <p><b>PSE Diagnostic Pre-Test:</b> Students take a preliminary diagnostic to check strengths and weaknesses before instruction begins.</p> <p><b>Icebreaker:</b> Students get to know each other by comparing their expectations for TJ and gaining valuable insights from their instructor.</p> <p><b>Course Introduction:</b> Students are introduced to the course and align their expectations with the course goals and aims.</p>
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	<p><b>TJ Introduction:</b> Students are introduced to the mission, aims, opportunities, and culture of TJ.</p> <p><b>Admissions Process Introduction:</b> Students are introduced to the "Holistic Admissions Process" and gain more insight to the requirements and purpose of the Student Portrait Sheet + Problem-Solver Essay.</p> <p><b>Day 1 Review:</b> Students reflect on the plethora of information they've learned on the first day of class, and look ahead to the rest of the course.</p>
<b>Class Meeting 2</b>	<p><b>Seeing Yourself at TJ:</b> Students think critically about the appeal of TJ, conducting research into the school and its opportunities, and aligning what they find with their own interests.</p> <p><b>Warm-Up 1:</b> Students take a moment to consider why they are pursuing a TJ education.</p> <p><b>Thinking for Yourself 1:</b> Students think critically about their interests before conducting research into the opportunities at TJ which align with those interests.</p> <p><b>TJ Research:</b> Students conduct individual research into the courses and opportunities that TJ has to offer, pinpointing opportunities that interest them.</p> <p><b>Share and Compare: TJ Research:</b> Students collaborate and compare their notes with classmates to further explore TJ opportunities.</p> <p><b>Putting Research Into Practice:</b> Students use the research they've done to develop their responses to practice SPS personal questions.</p> <p><b>Introduction to the Problem-Solver Essay:</b> Students are introduced to the scope and purpose of TJ's Problem-Solver Essay.</p> <p><b>Understanding the Rubric:</b> Students learn about the criteria of evaluation used in this class, and how it approximates TJ's admissions team.</p>
<b>Class Meeting 3</b>	<p><b>Writing About Yourself:</b> Students think critically about their own strengths that they would like to present to TJ before developing a strategy to confidently present their strengths and interests to a variety of prompts.</p> <p><b>Warm-Up 2:</b> Students take a moment to list accomplishments and experiences they are most proud of before developing confidence in writing about themselves.</p> <p><b>Review: "Seeing Yourself at TJ" and Diagnostic:</b> Students take a moment to reflect on what they've done before plunging ahead.</p> <p><b>Learning and Developing the Idea:</b> Students reflect on the things that make them unique and develop their ideas of writing confidently about themselves.</p> <p><b>Sharing Your Thoughts 4:</b> Students gain a greater perspective of their own uniqueness and "best self" by sharing their interests, accomplishments, and experiences with classmates.</p> <p><b>Personal Writing Practice:</b> Students develop their personal writing through a series of practice prompts.</p> <p><b>Problem-Solver Essay Practice:</b> Students are provided with Problem-Solver Essay prompts and some simple strategies for completing them before they try to answer them on their own.</p>
<b>Class</b>	<p><b>Parsing Through Prompts:</b> Students develop their ability to interpret challenging, complex</p>

<b>Meeting 4</b>	<p>prompts and apply that to a number of Problem-Solver Essay examples.</p> <p><b>Warm-Up 3:</b> Students attempt a simplified problem-solver to prepare for the challenges ahead.</p> <p><b>PSE Practice Review:</b> Students take a moment to review the problem-solver prompts they have already attempted before learning the day's lesson.</p> <p><b>Learning and Practicing the Idea 1:</b> Students learn strategies to develop their comprehension of complex prompts, then put it into practice with a challenging prompt.</p> <p><b>Sharing Your Thoughts 3:</b> Students compare their interpretations of the difficult prompt and learn where reasonable differences in solutions may occur.</p> <p><b>Parsing PSE Practice:</b> Students put it all together by practicing full responses to some Problem-Solver Essay prompts.</p> <p><b>Parsing Personal Writing Practice:</b> Students develop their personal writing through a series of practice prompts.</p>
<b>Class Meeting 5</b>	<p><b>Analyzing Hypotheticals:</b> Students learn about the types of hypothetical questions that are likely to appear on the SPS and learn how to analyze what is being asked and sought for in them.</p> <p><b>Warm-Up 4:</b> Students consider a time that they made a difficult decision.</p> <p><b>Learning and Practicing the Idea 2:</b> Students learn to analyze hypothetical prompts to fully understand the situation and what is being asked.</p> <p><b>Sharing Your Thoughts 1:</b> Students share a difficult decision they've made and get classmates' perspectives on other possible choices and outcomes.</p> <p><b>Hypotheticals Response Practice 1:</b> Students put into practice the strategy of having a clear understanding of hypothetical prompts and what they are asking by responding to a variety of prompts.</p> <p><b>Mid-Session Complete SPS+PSE Progress Test:</b> Students put what they've learned to this point into practice by completing a timed simulation of the SPS+Essay.</p>
<b>Class Meeting 6</b>	<p><b>Writing to Show Your Strengths:</b> Students learn how to incorporate personal details into narrative writing to make their responses more engaging to readers while meeting their goals of writing a "portrait in words" on the Student Portrait Sheet.</p> <p><b>Warm-Up 5:</b> Students revisit an experience they've already written about with the aim of describing it in a narrative mode.</p> <p><b>Lesson on Narrative Writing:</b> Students learn more about the advantages and strategy of narrative writing before incorporating it into their strategic responses to personal questions.</p> <p><b>Thinking for Yourself 2:</b> Students practice using narrative mode while learning of the qualities and skills that TJ looks for in their responses.</p> <p><b>Sharing Your Thoughts:</b> Students use their classmates as a test audience for their informative narratives and use classmate feedback to strengthen their responses.</p> <p><b>PSE Student Response Scoring:</b> Students collaboratively review the exemplary responses to the prompts on the PSE Pre-Test, which is followed by them using the PSE rubric to score previous</p>

	<p>student responses.</p> <p><b>Mid-Session Practice Review:</b> Students collaboratively review their responses to the prompts on the Mid-Session Complete SPS + Essay Practice.</p> <p><b>SPS Student Response Scoring:</b> Students collaboratively review the exemplary responses to the prompts on the SPS Pre-Test, which is followed by them using the SPS rubric to score previous student responses.</p>
<b>Class Meeting 7</b>	<p><b>Writing With a Formula:</b> Students learn the benefits of a formulaic approach to the Problem-Solver Essay.</p> <p><b>Warm-Up 6:</b> Students warm up to the day's activity with a simplified Problem-Solver Essay.</p> <p><b>Learning the Idea 1:</b> Students learn the benefits of a formulaic response to the problem-solver essay.</p> <p><b>PSE Formulaic Response Practice:</b> Students put the prior lesson into practice by revising an earlier response and answering a new sample prompt.</p> <p><b>Peer Evaluation:</b> Students evaluate each other's responses using provided rubrics, gaining insight into ways their classmates respond differently and ways they can improve.</p> <p><b>Illuminate Your Reasoning:</b> Students learn how to strengthen their formulaic responses to PSE prompts.</p> <p><b>Transitional Warm-Up:</b> Students solve a simplified PSE prompt without providing an essay explanation.</p> <p><b>Learning the Lesson:</b> Students gain a better understanding of the formulaic approach to PSE responses.</p> <p><b>PSE Practice Prompt:</b> Students put the day's lessons into practice with a sample prompt.</p>
<b>Class Meeting 8</b>	<p><b>Considering the Why:</b> Students learn and practice the art of weighing outcomes and repercussions before making and explaining their decisions through challenging hypothetical prompts.</p> <p><b>Warm-Up 7:</b> Students warm up to the day's lesson by considering the pros and cons of a hypothetical situation.</p> <p><b>Learning and Practicing the Idea:</b> Students learn to explore possible consequences of a decision beyond the immediate outcomes in a given hypothetical situation.</p> <p><b>Sharing Your Thoughts 2:</b> Students discuss their response to a given hypothetical situation to gain greater understanding of the different ways that complex situations might be approached.</p> <p><b>Hypotheticals Response Practice 2:</b> Students put into practice the strategy of considering possible outcomes through a variety of prompts.</p> <p><b>Using Examples:</b> Students learn the value of grounding their responses in reality through the use of examples.</p> <p><b>Warm-Up 8:</b> Students prepare for the day's activities by reflecting on a past experience that relates to a previously-given hypothetical scenario.</p> <p><b>Learning the Idea 2:</b> Students learn the value of exemplification.</p>

	<p><b>Thinking for Yourself 3:</b> Students take a moment to consider and record examples of their experiences, influences, inspirations, and aspirations.</p> <p><b>Sharing Your Thoughts 5:</b> Students share examples of the things that inspire them to prepare for using some of these examples in written responses.</p> <p><b>Personal Questions and Hypotheticals Practice:</b> Students practice incorporating examples into their SPS responses through a variety of prompts.</p>
<b>Class Meeting 9</b>	<p><b>From Solving to Creating and Back:</b> Students create word problems similar to PSE prompts and challenge their classmates to respond.</p> <p><b>Make It Yourself:</b> Students create new prompts to challenge their classmates with and simulate what they might see on TJ's PSE.</p> <p><b>Peer-to-Peer PSE Practice:</b> Students practice for the PSE portion of TJ's application process by responding to 3 peer-created prompts.</p> <p><b>SPS Strategizing Session:</b> Students review and solidify strategies for SPS question types in a group activity.</p> <p><b>SPS Practice Prompts:</b> Students get some final practice before the post-test with a variety of prompts.</p>
<b>Class Meeting 10</b>	<p><b>Complete SPS + PSE Post-Test:</b> Students put what they've learned into practice by completing a timed simulation of the SPS+Essay.</p> <p><b>Peer- or Self- Review:</b> Students peer- or self-evaluate their responses to the post-test SPS questions.</p> <p><b>End-Session Review:</b> Students have a final opportunity to discuss the SPS + Essay and address any lingering notes, questions, comments, or concerns.</p>