

Towson High School Mission Statement

Located within the seat of Baltimore County Government, Towson High School Law and Public Policy is a diverse suburban high school that prepares students to become life-long learners and productive global citizens. Our mission is to provide a safe, supportive environment that promotes tolerance and respect for diversity. We challenge students to become active learners and critical thinkers, and foster the development of scholarship, leadership, citizenship, and integrity.

“A General Guide to Civility”

Towson High School Law and Public Policy Reading and Writing Initiative 2009-2010

In support of the Towson High School Mission Statement, and working closely with the Towson High School Improvement Team and the Towson High School PTSA, we have chosen to develop our reading list for this year on the topic of Civility. Modeled after college freshman reading seminars, we are asking that all students read a book on this common topic and be prepared to write an essay related to it in the fall of 2009. Furthermore, this will allow us to develop dialogue on this important aspect of what we believe at Towson High School.

The following list of works includes award-winning books, recent titles from college freshmen seminar works, books written by university professors, and best sellers. These books offer a variety of Voices that discuss civility and life experiences and situations, as well as the ways by which individuals deal with these challenges. Each book offers students the opportunity to explore the topic of civility, and to discuss this important topic and the works they are reading with their families. Many of these works are also available on Audiotapes and/or DVD.

During the first quarter in the fall of 2009, students will write a personal essay in their English classes related to the topic of civility. As always, parents are encouraged to preview and review these works (or a work of comparable literary merit or comparable theme) to help students make appropriate choices:

- *Choosing Civility* by P.M. Forni
- *Gifted Hands* by Ben Carson
- *Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance* by Barack Obama
- *Letters to a Young Brother: MANifest Your Destiny* by Hill Harper
- *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens* by Sean Covey
- *Season of Life* by Jeffrey Marx
- *The Last Lecture* by Randy Pausch
- *Tuesdays with Morrie: An Old Man, a Young Man, and Life's Greatest Lesson* by Mitch Albom
- *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint Exupery
- *Letters to a Young Sister: DeFINE Your Destiny* by Hill Harper
- *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* by Robert Persig
- *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* by Richard Bach

Questions and inquiries should be directed to Patricia Brown, English Department Chair, 410-887-3608 or pbrown@bcps.org.

What Is Civility?

“Civility is claiming and caring for one's identity, needs and beliefs without degrading someone else's in the process.”¹
Civility begins with each of us.

Civility is about more than merely being polite, although being polite is an excellent start. Civility fosters a deep self-awareness, even as it is characterized by true respect for others. Civility requires the extremely hard work of staying present even with those with whom we have deep-rooted and perhaps fierce disagreements. It is about constantly being open to hear, to learn, to teach and to change. It seeks common ground as a beginning point for dialogue when differences occur, while at the same time recognizes that differences are enriching. It is patience, grace, and strength of character.

¹[Institute for Civility in Government](#)