

## Gainesville High student earns world's highest score on Cambridge exam

Sterling Reed has come a long way since earning a very low score on the FCAT reading exam back in third grade.

The Gainesville High School senior has earned a "Top of the World" score on the Cambridge AICE (Advanced International Certificate of Education) English Language exam.

Reed is enrolled in GHS' Cambridge magnet program, a demanding, internationally-recognized program of study for academically talented students. The program places a heavy emphasis on effective writing, and the exams require students to write extensive essays in response to a series of prompts.



Reed says he was confident he would pass the exam, although he didn't expect to earn international honors. He credits the preparation he received from Kathleen Solito, his AICE English Language teacher.

"She's a fantastic teacher, and she grilled us really hard," said Reed. "She trained us for much worse than I ended up facing on the exam."

English, and particularly writing, continue to be a challenge for Reed. He suffers from dysgraphia, a learning disability that affects the ability to write and can manifest as poor spelling, handwriting or trouble putting thoughts on paper. In Reed's case, the main problem is handwriting, but his poor performance on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade exam motivated him to work even harder to overcome it.

"I enjoyed reading and writing a lot, but because of the dysgraphia it was always a struggle for me to do well in English class," he said. "But I was determined to write well enough to make up for my handwriting."

Salito says she saw that determination in her class.

"He's an innovative thinker and a naturally gifted writer, but he also worked extremely hard in my class to hone his skills," she said.

This is the eighth straight year that a GHS student has earned a Top of the World score on a Cambridge exam. GHS students continue to have great success in the Cambridge program, with 95% of the seniors enrolled in the program earning Cambridge diplomas, with more than 80% of them earning the 'Merit' or 'Distinction' designation for high performance.

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