

Questions and Answers about Honors and AP Courses at ECA

What is the difference between an Honors and AP class?

HONORS COURSES are developed locally by teachers to meet the needs of talented students. An Honors class parallels the curriculum offered in the corresponding regular class, but may cover additional topics or some topics in greater depth. Honors courses may be organized as separate classes, or as extra projects or seminars supplementing a regular course.

An *AP (ADVANCED PLACEMENT) class* is a course designed to prepare students to take the College Board-sponsored Advanced Placement (AP) exam. These national curricula are developed by both high school and college teachers under the auspices of the College Board. Most universities award college credit based on AP exam scores.

During late May of each year, placement exams and/or recommendations will be used in screening students for AP/Honors classes. Students will be notified if they are accepted into an AP/Honors course for the following year before they leave school in June.

Due to the rigorous nature of AP and Honors classes, ECA awards a weighted grade point (A=5.0) for honors classes and a weighted grade point (A=6.0) for AP classes. These added grade points will tend to boost a student's GPA.

What courses are available at ECA with Honors and AP distinctions?

Honors

English 11

English 12

American Government (Civics)

Comparative Government

Physics

AP

English 11

Spanish Literature

Calculus AB

What are the admissions criteria and prerequisites for AP and Honors classes?

Honors and AP courses are offered at ECA on a staff available basis. We cannot guarantee that each of the following courses will be offered every year. If we cannot offer the course and it is not a required course, you may opt to take the course (at an additional cost) via Sevenstar Academy, an online school with whom we are partnering.

Each AP and Honors class has its own different prerequisites and criteria for enrollment. The following is a brief description for each of the various disciplines.

AP CALCULUS

- Pre-Calculus Teacher Recommendation
- C or better in Pre-Calculus required
- Placement Exam?

HONORS AND AP ENGLISH 11

- Previous English Teacher's Recommendation
- Students must maintain B or better in their previous regular course.
- Students should have a minimum grade equivalent of 11.0 in total reading, reading vocabulary, and reading comprehension scores on standardized tests
- 2 essays demonstrating strong composition skills: one done independently, one done in class with time limitations

HONORS ENGLISH 12

- Previous English Teacher's Recommendation
- Students must maintain B or better in their previous regular course.
- 2 essays from required AP preparation list (may be completed over the summer)

HONORS AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT

- Previous Teacher Recommendation
- Students who would like to take Honors Comparative Government must maintain at least a B average in American Government the previous semester.

AP SPANISH LITERATURE

- A minimum of a B- average in Spanish IV
- Teacher recommendation
- A minimum of a 4 on the Spanish Language AP

HONORS PHYSICS

- Chemistry Teacher's Recommendation
- Students must maintain B or better in their previous regular course.

What are the pros and cons of AP/Honors classes?

PRO:

- Students have the opportunity to challenge themselves in a more demanding class.
- AP/Honors classes expose students to information that they might otherwise not encounter in high school.
- Students who pass Advanced Placement exams may earn advanced standing or college credit when they enroll in a university.
- College and university admissions departments usually look favorably on students who take more challenging programs.

CON:

- AP and Honors classes have a significantly heavier work load and may increase student stress and minimize time for other activities. Students should expect at least ONE hour of homework for an honors class and up to TWO hours of homework for an AP class for each hour of class time.
- Taking multiple AP/Honors classes at the same time while engaging in extracurricular activities is not recommended.

What is necessary to be successful in an Honors or AP course?

In order to be successful in an Honors/AP course, the student must be an independent worker as well as an independent thinker who is highly motivated, self-sufficient, and responsible to turn in work promptly. Time management skills are essential. As students enter high school, there are increased demands on the students' time both academically and socially. The time involved in extra-curricular activities must also be taken into consideration. The addition of each Honors/AP class increases the overall intellectual and emotional demand on the student. **Completion of summer assignments prior to school starting may be required.**

How many Honors/AP classes should a student attempt at one time?

We advise students to take no more than *two* Honors or AP classes simultaneously. If students are involved in athletics or another extracurricular activity, less than two advanced courses may be appropriate.

Is it better to take an AP/Honors class and earn a lower grade or take the regular class and earn a higher grade?

This is a difficult question which has no single answer. When colleges make admissions decisions, they look at a variety of factors including grades, rigor of classes taken, test scores, extracurricular activities, teacher recommendations and student essays. Various institutions weigh each of the factors somewhat differently.

When making a decision about which particular class to take, students need to approach the decision on a case-by-case basis. Careful consideration of all the advice above and an appointment with the school counselor together are the best ways to answer this question.