

Dual Credit or Advanced Placement?

Should you take dual credit classes or Advanced Placement (AP) classes? Simply put, there is not a right or wrong answer. This is a very complicated question with many factors such as a student's maturity level, staying in-state or going out of state for college, available finances for college, a student's preparation level, a student's choice of major, and on and on. So the answer will depend on each individual student's situation – below is list of reasons why to possibly take dual credit classes or AP classes along with some possibilities on why dual credit or AP classes may not be the best choice for you.

Our bottom line is that we want to provide more accelerated course options from which students and their parents can choose. Both options provide Ryle students the opportunity to experience the rigor and intellectual challenge of college classes and earn transferable college credits while still in high school. The courses can help develop students' ability and skills to do college-level work and can aid students in gaining confidence for college success. By participating in these programs, students can also save money on their college education. A number of Ryle graduates have started college as a sophomore, saving themselves tens-of-thousands of dollars.

Here are two key findings from research that support accelerating your learning through dual credit classes or Advanced Placement classes:

- Earning college credits while in high school increases the likelihood that a student will complete high school and persist in college.
- Rigorous and meaningful coursework in high school prepares the student for success in college.

Why Consider a Dual Credit Course?

- Dual credit gives students an idea of what college coursework and college campuses will be like. By trying out a few classes while still in high school, a student can get used to a college campus and the academic environment before he or she leaves the comfort and support of home.
- Your child may be able to take classes that aren't offered at Ryle High School.
- College courses can give your student a closer look at his or her area of academic interest. If your child currently loves A.P. History, a college course next year on the Civil War or the Great Depression will help him or her explore that period in greater depth and precision.
- According to collegeboard.com, most students change their majors at least once. Taking a college class as a high school senior can help a student find his or her area of interest before the pressure is on to declare a major.
- Taking a college-level class will help students demonstrate the ability to handle more difficult coursework.
- Perhaps the biggest benefit of dual credit is that students may start accumulating college credits, helping them graduate on time or even early. A student earning dual credit leaves high school already having begun their post-secondary degree, leading to reduced college costs and eliminating duplication of effort for highly capable students.
- All public colleges and universities in Kentucky are required to accept credits from each other. So a dual credit course should transfer within Kentucky. Be advised to always check.

Dual Credit Sounds Great! Is There Any Reason Not to Participate?

- If a course is already available at your child's school, it might be best to take it there. Colleges may wonder why a student has chosen to take an intro class at a community college if there's an AP class in the same subject available at the high school level. (High school AP classes may well

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prove more challenging than an intro-level college course.) If the college course won't give your student something above and beyond what's available at their high school, take a pass.

- Some highly selective colleges and universities will not accept dual-credit classes for college credit.
- If a college class will interfere with a student's regular coursework or extracurricular activities, it may not be a good idea. A college course should enhance a student's resume, but not at the expense of other resume-enhancing activities. When considering scheduling, be sure to take into account not just the normal class schedule but breaks as well; your local high school and college/university may not operate on the same academic calendar. A different holiday schedule could cause conflicts with class trips, family vacations, or out-of-town athletic commitments.
- Earning college credit for a dual credit class is based on a student's final grade in the class, not an exam score such as in AP classes. Note that grading policies of college and universities vary widely. In an AP class, students can earn high school credit for their final grade in the class and potentially earn college credit based on their AP exam score at the college or university they plan to attend.
- A college course in music appreciation is a great resume booster—as long as a student plans to go into music. If he or she is planning a career in chemistry, the music class won't help, and could raise questions about the academic rigor of your child's senior year courses. Carefully consider the academic value of any class your child is considering.
- Dual-credit courses are real college courses for real college credit; the grades will go on the student's permanent college record. Before enrolling, make sure your student is ready for the demanding work a college class will require, or it could hurt his or her chances at college acceptance down the line. Furthermore, if a student fails a dual-credit course, it could mean he or she won't graduate high school on time.
- If your child is considering a dual-credit program for the purpose of earning college credits, be sure of the value of the credits. For each college where a student may apply for admission, check to see how many credits (if any) a dual-credit class would earn. The credit policy will depend on the school.

Why Consider an Advanced Placement Class?

- The College Board reports that AP participation has a much more positive impact on college graduation rates than dual credit classes.
- Not all students taking AP or dual credit courses deserve college credit; college credit is only warranted by students demonstrating a significant level of content mastery, such as is demonstrated by earning qualifying AP exam scores.
- All AP courses must follow the approved AP curriculum for the course and the teacher of AP courses usually receive training specific to teaching the course from the College Board.
- AP provides better preparation for college level work than dual credit; AP courses develop and enhance skills required to be successful at the collegiate level such as time management, critical thinking, and study skills.
- The AP exam provides a standard mean of comparison between AP courses nationwide, so that colleges/universities can gauge the extent to which participating students have mastered the AP course content and skills.
- There is a much greater consistency in quality and expectations across AP courses, because AP teachers' syllabi undergo a thorough review by college faculty before being approved.

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- The academic support provided by the individual teacher and school is usually greater than the support on college campuses.
- AP classes are widely accepted as credit by colleges and universities, however, each school typically has their own criteria for earning credit that may be based several factors, such as the AP exam score earned and the student's major.
- There is no limit on how many AP classes a student may take over their high school career.
- AP classes are free of charge, including the textbook, except for the AP exam. Note that the AP exam fee can be free or reduced depending on a student's socioeconomic status.
- Students who are eligible for free or reduced price lunches during any year of high school and make qualifying scores on AP exams are eligible for KEES scholarship bonus awards based on their exam score. There is no limit to the number of bonus awards a student can receive.
- A student's AP classes will not show on a college transcript until they request credit be applied from the College Board, and it will not affect financial aid.
- Selective colleges and universities like to see AP classes on students' transcripts due to their rigorous nature and nationally known standards.

Advanced Placement Sounds Great! Is There Any Reason Not to Participate?

- In an AP class, possible college credit is performance based. Students must take the AP exam at the end of the year and earn a passing score of 3, 4, or 5 to receive college credit; the score depends on the college or university. However, if you don't pass the exam, no college credit!
- Passing AP classes and the AP exam does not guarantee earning for college credit. Each college or university has their own set of guidelines for accepting AP classes for college credit – some accept any passing score (3,4,5) others are more restrictive and some do not accept any AP classes for college credit.
- Some AP classes are not accessible to as many students based on class prerequisites.
- Sometimes certain AP classes are constrained by classroom space and school schedule limitations. While we always try to meet the schedule requests of all of our students sometimes it is not possible. The number of students requesting to take an AP class affects how many or how few sections are available.
- Not all AP classes are offered by all schools. We currently offer 19 AP classes out the 35 AP classes designed by the College Board.
- Make sure you are ready for the rigor of an AP class so your GPA isn't adversely affected. You should probably have a B+ or better in regular classes to consider an AP class and be careful to not take too many AP classes at once.