



## **Pinnacle High School**

### **Why Should I Take an Honors or Advanced Placement Course?**

Pinnacle High School is dedicated to creating a learning environment in which education is a priority, especially at the Honors and Advanced Placement (AP) level. Our Honors and AP Courses are designed to prepare students to take the Advanced Placement Examinations.

#### **What are Honors and Advanced Placement Courses?**

- The curricula of these courses are stringent and demanding and prepare students for the rigor of college level classes
- Each course has an extensive college-prep program and some may require a reading/writing assignment that must be completed during the summer prior to the course. Said assignment will count as a significant part of the student's grade. Students in Honors/AP Courses can expect additional homework assignments every night of the week
- The instruction includes a high demand on independent study through homework and in-class work that is often structured in a college style of delivery
- Courses are taught at a faster pace and cover more material in greater depth than regular level classes

#### **Who should take an Honors/AP Course?**

- Students who possess a love for learning and has good time management skills
- Students who are willing to accept the challenge of a rigorous academic curriculum
- Students should take into consideration their interests, motivation, strengths and weaknesses
- Students who are academically ambitious and eager for intellectual inquiry
- Students who have a capacity for abstract thought and an aptitude for analysis
- Students who are self-motivated to engage in classroom discussions and thoroughly complete assignments
- Students who are willing to complete recommended summer readings or studies to prepare for the content of the course
- Students entering into this program need to be aware of the high expectation level of completing their studies
- Students who are willing to use their own time outside of school to complete assignments and prepare for exams, just as they would in college
- Students who understand that these courses do not allow for procrastination or "free days"
- Student must also understand that they are making a year-long commitment

#### **Benefits of Honors/AP Courses**

- Subjects are studied in greater depth
- Students will discover areas of strength and weakness
- Students will prepare for the rigor of college work
- Students will build good study habits
- Students will improve writing skills
- Students are consistently required to think at the highest levels
- Students will develop intellectual and social emotional skills
- An AP Exam Score of 3 or higher may qualify you for college credit or placement at most U.S. colleges and universities
- The courses also carry an extra Grade Point Average (GPA) Point
  - The GPA will be based off a 5.0 Grade Scale instead of the 4.0 Grade Scale
  - An A = 5 Points instead of 4 Points

## What is the Difference of Honors/AP versus Regular Courses?

- Honors and AP Courses are more demanding and AP Courses are similar to first year college courses
- Students are expected to read and write in greater depth and breadth
- Students must learn to evaluate and critically analyze material
- Discussions are intense, probing and demanding
- Students are required to think for themselves, not give answers to please the teacher
- Homework involves independent thinking, expressing ideas and analyzing what was read

## What can you Do and/or Expect?

- The AP Courses you chose to take should be in subjects you enjoy and the ones you feel you can be successful in
- Students should be mindful in reviewing their own schedule to make sure they are not overloaded
  - Be mindful of time if playing sports, other after school activities, and/or working
- Remember there are only 24 hours in a day!
- Complete required summer coursework, if applicable
- If a student registers for an Honors or Advanced Placement course, it is the expectation of Pinnacle High School that he/she will complete the entire course
- It is also an expectation that at the end of each AP Course, students will register for and take the AP Examination

## What looks better an “A” in Regular Course or a lower grade in Honors/AP Courses?

- Whether to play it safe and get the “A” in a regular course or to challenge yourself and take the Honors or AP course, but get a lower grade, such as a B or C. Typically, the most weight given to any high school student’s college application is to their high school transcript. This not only includes their grades, but also the level and rigor of their curriculum. Colleges want to know that the student is actively pushing him/herself, taking the most challenging, yet appropriate, courses that he can. The answer that most colleges will give the student is that it’s better to get an A in the Honors/AP Course. The most highly selective colleges will expect that you do. But in reality, most colleges would rather see a B in an Honors or AP Course. They want to see that the student is truly challenging him/herself, but still mastering the material. If you’re getting C’s or D’s in the course, you clearly aren’t mastering the material, and should rethink your placement in the course

## So, the Big Question - Should You take an Honors/AP Course?

- While it is true that colleges like to see students challenge themselves and take a rigorous course load, you don’t need to be in all honors or AP courses—even for the nation’s top colleges. The general rule of thumb is that if you can get a B+ or higher without struggling, then you should probably be in an honors or AP Course. However, competitive colleges still want to see A’s. So, it doesn’t behoove you to take an abundance of Honors and AP Courses if your grades end up being all B’s. For most students, it’s best to take higher level courses in your areas of strength and regular courses in subject areas that you find more challenging. We recommend that strong students start out with one or two honors courses in 9th grade, see how well they do, and then add one more high level course per year, if they feel that they can handle it.

**Because of scheduling constraints, students who register for the Honors/AP Courses will be expected to remain in these courses for the entire school year.**

In order for you to take and remain in an **Honors or Advanced Placement Course**, your **Honors/AP Teacher** will give you an ***Honors and Advanced Placement Agreement*** the first week of school for you to complete and take home and get signed by your parent/guardian. This agreement signifies your understanding of and your commitment to taking an **Honors or Advanced Placement Course**.