

In order to meet the individual needs of a wide range of students, Weston High School offers a variety of courses, some taught at different levels. **All** our academic courses are designed to prepare students for success at college. Electives provide an outlet for students to experience different subjects, explore new ideas, and develop skills in areas of strong interest.

### **Important to Remember...**

*See the Program of Studies for details about high school graduation requirements and curriculum levels to keep in mind when selecting courses. You can access the Program of Studies through the Weston High School website – Academics page.*

Selecting courses for next year should be a thoughtful process with the ultimate goal to create an appropriately balanced educational experience for each student. There are some important things to keep in mind when selecting courses:

- You should be challenged by your courses, but not overwhelmed. It is more important to be **successful** in a level than to take the highest one offered.
- Choose courses that keep you on track for meeting graduation requirements and the recommended years of study for college admissions.
- Take into account everything you do, remembering that you need to balance homework time with sports, theater, or other extracurricular activities and time to relax with friends and family.
- While there are 40 blocks in the 8-day rotation, electives and required courses don't always fit "neatly" together within that structure. As a general rule you should request between 33.5 and 36 credits. This also builds in some unscheduled times for studying, working on projects, and meeting with teachers. However, to avoid numerous (5-9) free blocks/study halls in one semester, students should request at least 35.5 credits.
- Use your best judgment in selecting the right courses for you; while it may be difficult, do not let the classes your friends take influence your choices.

*Turn this sheet over for simple considerations to help in assessing levels.*

Leveled courses are designated CP (College Preparatory) and H (Honors). In addition, there are eighteen AP (Advanced Placement) courses offered in a range of subjects that are the equivalent of college-level courses. Based on the grade achieved on the AP exam and the college you attend, the school may award credit and/or placement out of prerequisites.

### **"What looks better?"**

Many students and parents ask questions that start this way. It's important to remember that your courses belong to **you**, and your goal should be to create a personally rewarding experience of learning – avoid basing your choices solely on what you think colleges want.

### **The Process**

*Teachers are usually the best judges of appropriate levels – many of the students who overrode levels this year returned to the recommended level.*

The steps for selecting courses is fairly simple, and is outlined below. But if you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact your counselor.

1. The Program of Studies is available online so that you have time to review the course offerings for next year and discuss options with teachers, parents/guardians, and counselors before sitting down to enter course requests in February.
2. Families will be notified by early February when recommendations for your next year's leveled courses are available in students' Infinite Campus "Backpack." The email will include the **Course Request Form** – forms and course selection information are also available on the Guidance website. Note that a parent/guardian needs to sign the form.
3. In February, you will meet with your counselor to review your academic plan and enter your course requests. Eighth grade students will be meeting with the counselor they will have throughout high school.
4. Course requests are entered during the meeting with your counselor. If you or your parent/guardian disagrees with a teacher's level recommendation, we strongly encourage discussing it with the teacher in order to gain insight as to why that recommendation was made.
5. To initiate a request for a course in which you were not recommended, follow the process on the Override Request Form found on the Guidance website. ***The process should be completed by Friday 2/17.***

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## Level Selection Considerations

Most WHS students take a mix of levels. It is important to find the best course fit for each of your academic subjects. However, remember that you also need to look at the whole picture to ensure that the load will not be too great. Even if individual teachers each suggest Honors, for example, you may decide that a course load of multiple Honors classes will be overwhelming and choose to take the class in which you have less interest or is most difficult at a College Preparatory level.

*Department heads have established subject-specific guidelines to help you determine the best course level. See the Program of Studies and WHS department websites for helpful information.*

The best means of determining your course level next year is to gauge how you are doing *this* year.

- If you have effective reading and writing skills but understand concepts better when teachers provide some structure to help in understanding, College Preparatory levels may be a good fit.
- If you like to learn independently, enjoy open-ended analysis, have strong communication and conceptual skills, are extremely motivated and can organize time well to manage a lot of homework, an Honors course can work for you.
- **Please remember**, if the current work in an honors level class has been too hard, you've needed a lot of support of the teacher or a tutor, you have trouble organizing concepts and/or you struggle to complete homework along with everything else in your day, you might want to consider taking a CP level next year. (Homework is expected in every class, but keep in mind that Honors and AP classes generally have significantly more homework than CP classes.)

## Frequently Asked Questions

*How will having only an unweighted GPA affect me?*

An unweighted GPA will be calculated and reported for all students. We believe that this encourages students to take courses of interest to them, at whatever level, without the worry of lowering their GPA. The unweighted GPA will reflect the grades you earn in all of your courses. Most colleges recalculate their own GPAs, and those that don't will assess students within the context of their school. Colleges focus on the information on the transcript (courses and grades) rather than a single number.

*How many Honors and AP courses do colleges want to see?*

Colleges want to see challenging coursework, yet it is not as simple as counting courses. They want to see a balanced and successful schedule.

*From the college's point of view, isn't it better to get a C in Honors than be in a CP class?*

There are consequences for shooting too high. **Taking** a course isn't the same as **succeeding** in a course. It is likely that you may do much better in the course level more appropriate for you. Colleges take into account **the courses you take, the levels of the courses, and grades you earn** – they want to see you challenge yourself AND do well.

*Isn't it better to enroll in Honors classes now, since I can always move to the CP level later?*

There are several problems with this strategy. First, you will not be able to change levels if CP sections are full. Second, if you are able to find an open section, it may require you to change other classes in your schedule, change teachers or drop electives in which you are already enrolled.

*How many years of a language should you take?*

Some students come to high school with years of language study under their belt and continue with the same language, whereas others decide to begin studying a new language. While WHS's graduation requirement is two years of the same world language, many colleges will recommend or require three to four years. *Students who attain high levels of proficiency in both English and a world language may be eligible to earn a Seal of Biliteracy from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts upon graduation. See the Program of Studies for details.*

*Which language is best to take for college?*

The language itself doesn't matter. What does matter is that you take one that interests you.

*If I'm not at the top of the class, I won't get into a "good" college.*

With over 3,500 colleges in U.S. alone, this isn't an accurate statement. Students at every level at WHS get into the right colleges **for them** – colleges in which they can grow and succeed.

*Will I get all the classes that I sign up for?*

It is important to understand that sometimes the courses students request cannot be accommodated in their schedules. For example, courses listed in the Program of Studies may not run for a variety of reasons, courses may conflict with each other, or sections might be full. It is important to provide alternate courses for electives.