

TAKING ADVANCED COURSES

Some districts offer students the opportunity to take Algebra I, Biology I, foreign language, fine arts, and other high school courses in middle school (or junior high). This paves the way for them to take advanced courses in high school that can earn college credits. This lesson encourages students to plan ahead for courses in middle and high school that will help build a sound foundation for college-level work. Research shows that students who take advanced courses have a better chance of completing a college degree later. This lesson includes a video, *Taking Advanced Courses*, followed by a student discussion and a quiz that checks their understanding of this topic.

Suggested Activities

1. Introduce the video *Taking Advanced Courses*, by telling them that the film shows a middle school student, Angie, who has decided she is not interested in taking advanced courses. Her “future self” shows up to convince her to rethink her decision. Ask them to listen closely for the hints “future” Angie passes along.

2. Show the video and debrief these points:

Q: Does Angie go to college in the future?

A: Yes

Q: How do advanced courses help her?

A: Taking these courses will help her get into her dream college and possibly get scholarships to pay for it.

Q: What does Mr. Elliott, the counselor, say about advanced courses?

A: The courses are fast-paced, with more reading, writing and reasoning. Tutoring and other support is available.

Q: Are the courses worth the extra work involved?

A: Yes

Q: What type of advanced courses should she include in her high school graduation plan?

A: Her high school plan could include Pre-AP courses, AP/IB courses and/or dual-credit courses that are good prep for college. These advanced courses provide in-depth study in a specific subject area.

Q: How can this help her in college?

A: She can earn college credits in high school by passing the AP or IB exams or the dual-credit courses. This saves time and money later, and high schools usually provide help in a very supportive atmosphere.

Q: How many hours of college credit is every school required to offer students?

A: By law, they have to make at least 12 credit hours of college credit available. You would not be alone—903,630 students took at least one AP exam last year.

Q: Are colleges looking for these courses on a student’s transcript?

A: Yes, college admissions representatives say advanced courses on a transcript means students are challenging themselves, and this says a lot about college success later. They can also help her get scholarships.



Following the discussion, ask students to work in pairs to complete the *Taking Advanced Courses Quiz* that is included.

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JOURNAL

- Write a ten-word sentence about advanced courses in high school.
- Write an interrogatory sentence about college credits. Write a sentence that answers the question.
- Summarize advice given in the video. Write at least three sentences.

4.

After five minutes, give students the answers and allow them to ask questions about each item.

Answers:

1. True
2. Answers will vary, depending on the school. Usually there are at least two offered.
3. False. These courses require more work, but are worth the effort. Ask what support is available.
4. True. Talk it over and let your parents know that these courses are harder, and your grades may not be all A's, but the coursework is more beneficial for college admission.
5. False. The classes are harder, requiring more reading, writing, reasoning and time.
6. True. Select advanced courses that fit your interests, career aspirations, and skills.
7. True. Taking a few high school courses in middle school can allow you more course choices in high school.
8. False. These courses are options for all students.
9. False. No one is guaranteed a scholarship, but they can help others see that you are serious about your education.
10. True. Talk to your counselor or teachers about what is offered in your high school.

5.

After the quiz, ask students to complete the Journal statements and allow time for them to read a few examples to the class. They can then add this to their college portfolio.



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Research shows that students who take advanced courses have a better chance of completing a college degree later. This lesson should encourage you to plan ahead for courses in middle and high school that will help to build a sound foundation for college-level work. After viewing the video Taking Advanced Courses, take this quiz to determine what you learned. Read each item below and mark T (True) or F (False) for each one.

1. ___ Taking Algebra I, Spanish I and/or Biology I (in 8th grade), along with Geometry (in 9th grade), can help form the foundation for advanced courses in high school.

2. ___ There are several high school courses offered at my middle school or junior high.

3. ___ I will not have to work any harder to pass these courses.

4. ___ I should talk this over with my counselor and parents.

5. ___ These classes are not harder.

6. ___ It makes sense to take advanced courses based on my interests and skills.

7. ___ Taking advanced courses in middle school will allow me to take more electives and/or advanced courses in high school.

8. ___ These courses are just for students who are in the gifted/talented program.

9. ___ These courses will guarantee me a scholarship.

10. ___ My counselor can help me learn more about which advanced courses are offered in high school.

OWN IT!

What courses do you plan to take in middle and high school that will help you get a leg up on college?