



# DRIPPING SPRINGS ISD MIDDLE SCHOOL PRE-ADVANCED PLACEMENT (PRE-AP) FAQS



## **What are Pre-Advanced Placement (Pre-AP) courses?**

Pre-AP courses are on-grade level academically advanced courses designed to challenge motivated students to understand rigorous content. The coursework requires students to engage in independent and analytical assignments and to complete a substantial amount of work outside of class. The curricula for the courses are built on the core academic curriculum following the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) expectations for each course. Pre-AP middle school courses are designed to prepare students for high school Pre-AP and Advanced Placement (AP) courses. AP courses are college-level courses taught in a high school setting. At the end of each AP course an AP Exam is given. Qualifying scores on the AP exams can enable students to receive college credit and/or advanced standing at a university or college.

## **Why should a student enroll in Pre-AP?**

Enrolling in Pre-AP is based on the belief that we can prepare every student for higher intellectual engagement by starting the development of skills and acquisition of knowledge as early as possible. Pre-AP strategies and tools engage the students in active, high-level learning, thereby ensuring that every middle and high school student develops the skills, habits of mind, and concepts they need to succeed in college.

## **What does open-enrollment mean?**

Open enrollment refers to courses open to any student who wishes to take on the additional challenge of this rigorous curriculum. This statement is based on the profound hope that all students can perform at rigorous academic levels. The second premise upon which Pre-AP is based is the belief that we can prepare every student for higher intellectual engagement by starting the development of skills and acquisition of knowledge as early as possible.

## **Are there any special qualifications for taking a Pre-AP course?**

No. Dripping Springs ISD offers open enrollment for Pre-AP courses. Any student with the guidance of parent, teacher and counselor can enter a Pre-AP course. Students who experience success in Pre-AP courses typically exhibit the following personal and academic characteristics.

### **Personal Characteristics:**

- Excellent study and organizational skills
- Ability to work well with others
- Persistence in pursuing goals
- A strong sense of responsibility
- Ability to become an independent learner
- A desire to be academically successful
- Reading on or above grade level
- Proficient oral and written communication skills

### **Academic Characteristics:**

- Grade of 85 or higher in a related academic content area course
- Scores at the commended level on the most recent TAKS test closely related to the Pre-AP course being considered

## **Can ELL students enroll in Pre-AP courses?**

This program is open enrollment and all students are advised to seek counselor and parental input before enrolling.

**May students with disabilities enroll in Pre-AP?**

Careful guidance should be used in course selection. ARD committee accommodations are permissible, but shall not change expectations or course content.

**Can my student make a schedule change if he/she determines that a Pre-AP course is too difficult?**

There are specific guidelines for discretionary and mandatory exit from a Pre-AP class. Students and parents must carefully review the requirements and procedures for schedule changes prior to enrolling in a Pre-AP class.

**If a student is enrolled in a Pre-AP class, can the student still be in GT?**

Some Pre-AP classes are designated as Pre-AP/GT courses and GT cluster groups will be included in the Pre-AP courses.

**What qualifications will a teacher need to teach Pre-AP?**

Teachers will be trained in subject specific Pre-AP workshops to provide strategies and tools to engage their students in high-level learning. This Pre-AP training is required prior to teaching these courses.

**Is there any limit to the number of Pre-AP courses a student may take?**

A student may take as many Pre-AP courses that fit his/her schedule. Careful consideration should be given to the instructional needs of the individual student.

**How many Pre-AP courses should a student take?**

Students are encouraged to take Pre-AP courses that are appropriate to their interests and academic strengths. The number of Pre-AP courses also varies with students' motivation, self-discipline, and available time outside of class. Students are not expected to enroll in Pre-AP courses in all core subject areas.

**Do advanced classes have more homework than standard academic classes?**

Pre-AP and GT classes may have more homework than standard courses. They typically require more reading, more writing, and more independent practice with the goal of developing advanced skills in those courses. GT and Pre-AP courses have similar amounts of homework.

**What classes are offered in each grade level?**

The courses for Pre-AP will be offered in the core subject areas: Science, Social Studies, English, Math. Pre-AP English will be offered in 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades beginning in the fall of 2009. Pre-AP Algebra will continue to be offered in 8<sup>th</sup> grade for students who have met the entrance requirements. A new accelerated Pre-AP math program will be phased in beginning with 6<sup>th</sup> grade students in the fall of 2009. A Pre-AP social studies program will begin in 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades in the fall of 2010 and Pre-AP science will begin in the fall of 2011.

**How does Pre-AP differ from AP?**

Pre-AP courses are embedded with strategies that specifically target middle and high school students providing knowledge, concepts, and skills needed to engage in a higher level of learning that prepares them for the rigor of college level work. These classes prepare a student for the rigorous coursework of AP. The AP program offers college level instruction to the academically successful student while in high school with the option of taking the advanced placement examination to possibly qualify for college credit.

**Who chooses a student's courses for Pre-AP?**

A decision about placement ultimately rests with the student and their parent. The school can provide powerful input through teacher recommendation, counselor input and communication regarding the challenges of the Pre-AP curriculum and information about indicators of student success.

**What do colleges think of Pre-AP?**

Research has found that an intermediate and secondary school curriculum of high intensity and quality, such as that found in Pre-AP and AP courses has the strongest correlation to bachelor's degree completion, while class rank/GPA hold comparatively weak relationships to bachelor's degree completion.

**Must a student take Pre-AP courses in order to be prepared for college?**

All academic courses in DSISD offer appropriate instruction to prepare students for college or university work. Many DSISD students without Pre-AP and AP coursework successfully complete college educations.

**How does Pre-AP affect AP?**

Since Pre-AP teacher professional development explicitly supports the goal of college as an option for every student, it is important to have a recognized standard for college-level academic work. Pre-AP is a strategic method used in classrooms, by teachers who are highly trained to help all students reach their potential. It will enhance the desire of those students who wish to pursue a more rigorous course of study such as AP. However, Pre-AP is not required as a prerequisite to AP courses.

**If a student fails a Pre-AP class will that student automatically be exited from GT?**

The conditions for exiting GT have not changed. If at any time the student's performance is not satisfactory, the teacher will conference with the student and his parents to develop a plan for improvement.

**Will a student have time for after school activities if enrolled in Pre-AP courses?**

As in any coursework where there will be additional challenge, students who choose to enroll should be prepared for the added academic rigor of the course.

**Does enrollment in Pre-AP classes affect the UIL "No Pass No Play" rule?**

There are special "No Pass No Play" rules designed to encourage participation in Pre-AP. Students are exempted from the rule under the following conditions:

- A student must have a minimum grade of 60 in any UIL exempt course to be eligible
- A student may be exempt for more than one course during a regular grading period.
- A student may use an exemption only one time for each course during each semester.
- A student shall not be exempted for a grade earned on any interim grade report.

**How might taking advanced academic courses affect my student's grades?**

Advanced courses may have an effect on grades because the standards of excellence are set very high in these courses. However, remember that participation in advanced courses has been a better predictor of future success than grades or even high school GPA. We encourage parents to focus on what students are learning rather than the occasional B or C grades they may encounter in the journey.