



CASE STUDY 1: MAKE IT EQUITABLE AND FLEXIBLE

Students Choose Between Pre-AP English 2 and English 10: AP Seminar

Getting Started with AP Seminar

We adopted AP Seminar in the 2017-18 school year. Our intention was to expand access to AP to ensure that AP course participation reflected the population of our school. At that time, we offered Pre-AP English 2 to sophomores, but we thought that something was missing from our English pathway. Students would take Pre-AP English 1 as first-year students, AP English Language and Composition as sophomores, and AP English Literature and Composition as juniors. They had nowhere to go in their senior year. Over time, AP Seminar became the sophomore year AP course, followed by the two AP English courses, creating a four-year sequence. We then replaced Honors English 1 and 2 with Pre-AP English 1 and 2 to make AP courses more accessible to more students.

English Department Sequence

Our English department offers a wide selection of courses that focus on building literacy skills. All course offerings satisfy a core English requirement at any level. Students have the autonomy to choose and to consult with a teacher and a counselor. Students elect their pathway.

Grade 9 Choices	Grade 10 Choices	Grade 11 Choices	Grade 12 Choices
English 9 College Prep	English 10 College Prep	English 11: AP Seminar	AP English Language
Pre-AP English 1	Pre-AP English 2	AP English Language	AP Research
Pre-AP English 2	English 10: AP Seminar	AP Research	AP English Literature

DISTRICT:

Fall River Public Schools

SCHOOL:

BMC Durfee High School

LOCATION:

Fall River, MA

MEET THE TEACHER



Chris DeLuca

AP Seminar Teacher

SCHOOL STATS

2,460

Students enrolled

217

Students enrolled in AP Seminar

78%

Low income



50% White
 30% Hispanic or Latino
 10% Black
 5% Asian
 5% Other

Durfee High School takes a comprehensive approach, working with students and their parents to determine which course sequence they should take. A standard pathway for a high-achieving student would be Pre-AP English 2, followed by AP Seminar. Then students can choose between AP Research, AP English Language, or AP English Literature. Students appreciate autonomy, and they have guidance from their counselor and teachers to satisfy their English requirements and prepare them for college readiness. Our school has students with varying needs. To ensure we meet our students' needs, we make certain everyone has a chance.

The parents tend to take a "hands off" approach, so parental engagement is a challenge. Parent outreach and events are a big focus this year. We send monthly newsletters to parents and use ParentSquare to regularly communicate. Faculty, including administrators and teachers, make a tremendous effort to create a very welcoming culture for their school community.

AP Seminar as an English Course

The Pre-AP English 1 framework helps students build their skills over time and gain mastery. AP Seminar follows a similar approach: Students must master skills before they can move forward. Because students have experience with this model of learning from Pre-AP, their transition to AP Seminar is easier.

Our department's standards-based curriculum is aligned to the Massachusetts state standards and promotes understanding of classic, contemporary, and multicultural literature, as well as nonfiction. Skills targeted in AP Seminar align with Massachusetts district standards regarding exposure and learning in argument, research, critical reading and writing, and working with different texts. In addition, students learn valuable college and career readiness skills such as presentation, collaboration, problem-solving, and higher-order questioning—all of which are found in high school ELA curriculums. To support state testing requirements, we offer opportunities for students to target ELA skills that may be lacking in AP Seminar, such as literary analysis and narrative writing. Although districts do successfully embed literature and analysis within AP Seminar, our district chooses not to do so. Instead, we hold after-school prep sessions to target narrative writing and literary analysis assessed in the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS).

“I’m proudest when I get students who go through the process from grade level to AP and gain confidence. You see their confidence grow throughout the year.”

— CHRIS DELUCA, AP SEMINAR TEACHER, BMC DURFEE HIGH SCHOOL, MASSACHUSETTS

“I’ve already done college work, and I’ve got this!”

— CURRENT ENGLISH 10: AP SEMINAR STUDENT, BMC DURFEE HIGH SCHOOL, MASSACHUSETTS

Impact of Adopting English 10: AP Seminar

1. Students have a stronger set of prerequisite skills going forward in AP English Language and Composition, AP Literature and Composition, and all other AP courses.
2. Alum report finding their transition to college-level work easier due to their experiences in the AP Capstone™ program.
3. More students have access to AP than ever before at Durfee High School. There's been considerable progress toward equitable AP access in Fall River Public Schools.
 - a. In 2012, 6% of AP Exam takers were Hispanic/Latino and Black/African American.
 - b. In 2022, 32% of AP Exam takers were Hispanic/Latino and Black/African American.

TEACHER TO TEACHER: Tips from Durfee High School for English Teachers New to AP Seminar

- 1 Don't expect to nail it during the first year. It will take time.
- 2 Note that it took me 3 years before I felt comfortable making big adjustments.
- 3 Don't give up. Keep going!
- 4 Partner with guidance. Make sure they understand the program.
- 5 Show administration the overlap with state standards. Administration is looking for consistency. Vertical alignment is important.
- 6 Remember that it's critical to have flexibility.
- 7 Go slow. Don't become discouraged.

“Enjoy your students questioning the world in a way that you would never imagine. (‘What’s the evidence for that?’) It’s nice to see a group of teenagers questioning and understanding the world. Gone are the days of for and against. Arguments have 10 sides.”

— CHRIS DELUCA, AP SEMINAR
TEACHER, BMC DURFEE HIGH SCHOOL,
MASSACHUSETTS