



ADMINISTRATOR INSIGHTS

Rethinking Your English Sequence with AP Seminar



Overview

AP Seminar has organically evolved since its launch in 2014. Districts and schools are taking exciting approaches to implement the course. Today, almost 3,000 schools offer AP Seminar, and the most rapid adoption is taking place within English departments. More than half of participating schools have designated AP Seminar as their English 10 course. This is largely because teachers can meet state English Language Arts standards while providing students with cross-curricular exposure through evidence-based reading, writing, and speaking.

In 2022, the AP Program formalized this implementation approach as a new adoption model, called English 10: AP Seminar. Students who take the course fulfill a core English course requirement and benefit from a seminar style approach that builds skills needed to succeed in high school, college, and career. Students also have more access to AP and the opportunity to earn advanced placement, college credit, or both. As a result of schools merging AP Seminar with English 10, AP Seminar grew by 30% and was the fastest-growing AP subject in 2023. Even with such growth, 85% of AP Seminar students earned scores of 3+.

The accessibility of English 10: AP Seminar allows for broad adoption across grade 10. Here's a look at the variety of approaches schools took to expand opportunities for students to take AP Seminar as an English course, including implementing Pre-AP English 1 in grade 9 to build readiness for English 10: AP Seminar.



Case Studies

ACCESS FOR ALL: ENGLISH SEQUENCE OPTIONS FOR AP SEMINAR PROMOTES EQUITY

BMC Durfee High School offers students the choice between taking Pre-AP English 2 and English 10: AP Seminar their sophomore year. Over the last 5 years, the school increased AP Exam participation of students from low-income backgrounds by 66%, and Hispanic/Latino and Black/African American participation by 92%. This is a direct result of exposing more students to advanced learning and actively preparing more students for AP by having all students participate in Pre-AP or AP Seminar.

ONE SIZE DOESN'T FIT ALL: SCHOOLS DECIDE HOW TO OFFER AP SEMINAR

Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS) displayed their commitment to AP Seminar by expanding the course from 2 to 19 schools. This expansion drove an increase in their overall AP enrollment from 1,654 to 3,115 students in just 4 years. At BCPS, schools have the flexibility to offer AP Seminar as an English 10 course, a stand-alone course accessible to any student, or as part of a 2-year trajectory within the AP Capstone program. This approach allows for tailored and inclusive implementation across the district.



CASE STUDY 1: ACCESS FOR ALL

English Sequence Options for AP Seminar Promotes Equity

The Journey

We noticed that our accelerated students exited our AP® offerings at the end of their junior year because we ran out of AP English course offerings. So, we adopted AP Seminar in the 2017-18 school year as a core English course for 40 students, who were mostly seniors.

In the 2018-19 school year, student interest grew tremendously, and we had 75 students in grades 10 and 11 register to take the course. We came to realize our Honors program wasn't preparing students for AP coursework, so in 2021, we dissolved Honors, which increased AP Seminar enrollment to 175.

We later adopted Pre-AP® English 1 as a replacement for our Honors courses. We knew that adding AP Seminar to our English sequence would engage more students because of its project based assessments and skills-based framework. We also knew that introducing Pre-AP would lead to stronger outcomes for our students who needed more support. We felt confident that the skills in Pre-AP English 1 and 2 would serve as a strong foundation for AP Seminar.

Implementation Process

The process of adopting AP Seminar required a true mindset shift. Before establishing AP Seminar as a flexible English offering, only students from our Gifted and Talented program had the opportunity to take the course. After the transition we shifted our AP enrollment policies, removing barriers like prerequisite grades and teacher recommendations.

Getting our Guidance Department on board with the decision to make AP Seminar a requirement for our Early College program was just the beginning. The decision to replace the Honors track with Pre-AP and allow sophomores to take AP Seminar in lieu of ELA II undoubtedly sparked varied opinions and concerns.

Parents were hesitant to transition their kids from Honors to AP, but over time our teachers were able to help parents see the gains their children made due to the rigorous coursework. Word quickly spread about the expanded

DISTRICT:

Fall River Public Schools

SCHOOL:

BMC Durfee High School

LOCATION:

Fall River, MA

MEET THE ADMINISTRATOR



Tanya Bernier

Dean of English Language Arts

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

access to the course, which also helped our enrollment increase in other AP classes—including AP English Language and AP English Literature. Students reported that they felt more prepared, and the “AP label” was less intimidating.

We also established a dedicated professional learning community for our AP Seminar teachers to plan together. It was important that our teachers discussed how they were aligning the Massachusetts Standards for English language arts in their thematic units for AP Seminar. They also discussed preparation plans for the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), our grade 10 end-of-course exam.

We relocated classrooms so that AP Seminar teachers were physically closer together. We set aside funds for College Board–provided professional learning, the AP Summer Institute at the onset and an additional implementation support series after the launch. We also added AP Seminar to the AP Saturday collaboration session as a way for our teachers to meet and discuss planning with teachers across the district teaching in different schools. Our AP Seminar teachers often facilitate workshops for other teachers (even in other departments) so that they can learn about their methods and apply them to their courses as well.

Our AP Seminar Teachers

Once trained, our teachers truly hit the ground running! They loved teaching the course because of the student-driven framework. Outside of modeling the skills first, our teachers tend to give tons of feedback to their students and help them apply the learned skills to the topics of their choice. So, as a teacher, it became incredibly important to create feedback loops and establish performance-based assessment opportunities where students could feel comfortable taking risks in front of others who were also learning how to apply the skills. Over time in our English department, our narrative became what skills do we need to develop here versus how many books will we get through this year.

“Over time in our English department, our narrative became what skills do we need to develop here versus how many books will we get through this year. We believe that AP® Seminar was the foundational course for our English sequence.”

— TANYA BERNIER, DEAN OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS, B.M.C. DURFEE HIGH SCHOOL, MASSACHUSETTS

ADMINISTRATOR TO ADMINISTRATOR

- 1 Be brave:** Fight for your students.
- 2 Be patient:** Encourage your students to stick with it and not switch out of the course during the first semester. Some will be overwhelmed at first, but in time they will feel more comfortable, particularly with the public speaking piece.
- 3 Trust the Process:** Take your teachers’ input into consideration.
- 4 Educate Your Counselors:** Schedule a meeting with your counselors to explain the course and support their conversations with students when they ask to switch out of the course.
- 5 Involve the Parents:** Showcase student presentations with parents.



CASE STUDY 2: ONE SIZE DOESN'T FIT ALL

Schools Decide How to Offer AP Seminar

The Journey

As a former AP teacher (AP U.S. History and AP U.S. Government and Politics), I've long valued the academic rigor and expectations of AP courses. However, as the coordinator of Gifted and Advanced Learning, I've also realized an appreciation for and need of courses that allow students to dive more deeply into areas of their interest and those do not always align to existing AP course topics. The skills learned in AP Seminar are transferable to all content areas and are essential for college and career. Adding AP Seminar in the district has allowed numerous students who did not feel up to the challenge of an AP course to flex their intellectual curiosity in a course that feels more customizable to them and their teachers. AP Seminar remains a course where many first-time AP students feel comfortable and more likely to thrive.

We officially started onboarding AP Seminar as the first course in the **AP Capstone™ program** five years ago. We moved from just 2 schools that elected to adopt AP Seminar on their own to 19 schools, which accounts for two-thirds of our high schools. While the vision was to create pathways for all students to complete the AP Capstone trajectory, it became clear that there was an appeal to sophomores to take the class as a one-off approach. This was because of personal interest as much as scheduling challenges/ opportunities.

Most recently we added English 10: AP Seminar to the mix, meaning we now offer it as either an English 10 course, a stand-alone course accessible to any student, or as part of a 2-year trajectory within the AP Capstone program. Interestingly, one of district's high schools made AP Seminar their required grade 11 course and it seems to fit well in their English sequence progression.

Implementation Process

The process required the establishment of a multiyear AP Program Plan put forth by my office and then supported by executive leadership at the district level. That plan spelled out that AP Capstone was expected to be offered in all high schools by the end of the plan. In addition, the district arranged for our own private AP Summer Institute training. One-on-one conversations were held with each principal as we attempted to help them make purposeful AP course choices for that first year—something we continue to do yearly. We also supplied each AP Seminar classroom with

DISTRICT:
Baltimore City Public Schools

LOCATION:
Baltimore City, MD

MEET THE ADMINISTRATOR



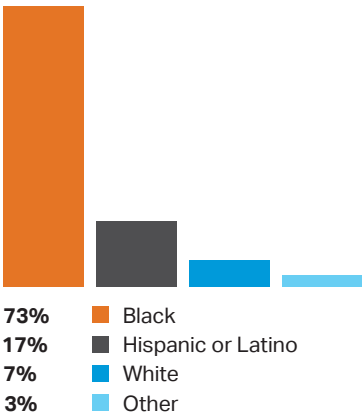
Dennis Jutras
Coordinator of Gifted and Advanced Learning

DISTRICT STATS
19 out of 26
High Schools are Offering AP Seminar

562
Students enrolled in AP Seminar

61%
Low-income Students

BCPS AP enrollment increased from 1,654 students to 3,115 in 4 years, since adding AP Seminar.



books and resources as requested by each teacher to help them successfully launch these new classes.

While every high school principal readily acknowledged the value of AP Seminar, since it did not fulfill a graduation requirement, it fell to elective status and was frequently “bumped” to accommodate graduation required courses. Several schools chose to convert their elective offering to only a core English course, and enrollment has doubled for the 2023-24 school year. This transition has made the course more equitable and accessible to more students. We hope to transition to offering AP Seminar as a core English course for all our students in the future.

Our AP Seminar Teachers

Since the addition of English 10: AP Seminar we’ve seen an increased interest among ELA teachers to teach the course. Many, like their students, are eager to spread their wings and move on from highly scripted instruction and follow their interests and help facilitate that same opportunity for their students.

After initial AP Seminar training, the district provides AP Capstone professional development on all system-wide PD days, which are led by an accomplished AP Seminar/AP Research teacher who share their experiences and resources but also facilitates the sharing among these teachers. This teacher lead has also been available to provide support virtually through emails and video conversations as needed by individual teachers. Again, print materials, digital licenses for publications such as *The New York Times*, and iPads and tripods have been provided to teachers to remove the burden of teaching from a resource deficit position.

ADMINISTRATOR TO ADMINISTRATOR

- 1 Make it Truly Accessible:** Don’t eliminate any students from consideration for this course. Students who may not have been stars in other accelerated courses may end up thriving in AP Seminar because their individuality has a place to be heard now and it can be vitally empowering for both their present as well as their future.
- 2 Consider Everyone:** School librarians/media specialists are some of the best-trained sets of teachers for this type of course but almost any discipline can teach the course.

“Adding AP Seminar in the district has allowed numerous students who did not feel up to the challenge of an AP course to flex their intellectual curiosity in a course that feels more customizable to them and their teachers. AP Seminar is the course where many first-time AP students feel comfortable and more likely to thrive.”

—DENNIS JUTRAS, COORDINATOR OF GIFTED AND ADVANCED LEARNING, BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS