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## THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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**November 8, 2007****New Web Site Lists High Schools That Have Dropped AP**

Love it or hate it, educators can't stop talking about the College Board's ever-expanding [Advanced Placement program](#). Today a high-school counselor unveiled a Web site called [ExcellenceWithoutAP.org](#).

The site lists high schools (mostly private ones) that either have dropped their AP curriculum or never had it, and that do not offer the International Baccalaureate program either. In recent years, some schools have said goodbye to AP after concluding that the curriculum did not allow teachers enough flexibility — and that students reaped few, if any, benefits from AP in college.

Recently the College Board's [audit](#) of AP programs has prompted some schools to consider dropping it, according to the site's creator, Bruce G. Hammond, director of college counseling at Sandia Preparatory School, in Albuquerque, N.M.

The site also lists issues that may arise for such schools. "Parents are the biggest challenge to dropping AP," says the Web site, because they "tend to overestimate how often students actually use AP credit to accelerate their college careers." —*Eric Hoover*

Posted on Thursday November 8, 2007 | [Permalink](#) |**Comments**

1. I don't think that AP classes should be dropped. I think that these classes give students a challenge. Especially students that need a challenge because they are bored with their regular classes.  
— Amanda Nov 8, 03:46 PM <#>
2. Advanced courses in high school are essential, but giving college credit for them is unwise. Students learn at a different level in college than in high school. A high school AP course is no substitute for a college course. Let high school be high school and college be college. They are two different experiences.  
— Bennett Muraskin Nov 8, 04:08 PM <#>
3. So, if possible send them to college if they are bored with High School! Students who have taken AP courses tend to be bored in college, because most of them will have to take those courses over again there. Plus, they know all the answers, but it is my experience that they don't necessarily know how to think. Stressing content areas (my view of what AP does) instead of "habits of mind" or a good understanding of the big ideas, makes for unpleasant attitudes and no better positioning for college success or careers. A huge waste of energy, time and money in my estimation.  
— Sally Nov 8, 04:11 PM <#>
4. I feel it is a bit disingenuous to brag about not having AP when it is obvious that schools have to offer something different in order to defend the exorbitant tuition prices.  
— S Williams Nov 8, 04:11 PM <#>
5. I've had a couple of advisees this year who have used AP to save themselves a semester of

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classes. Students and schools just need to take this seriously.

— Allen Nov 8, 04:33 PM <#>

6. I don't think it's any secret that when the College Board was forced out of the financial aid need analysis business, they replaced this lost income stream with AP test fees. Hence the aggressive AP marketing over the last 10 years or so.

— Dave Nov 8, 04:44 PM <#>

7. The largest problem with AP is that it fosters the idea that high school level instruction is equivalent to university level instruction. This is a dangerous fallacy. There is a large difference between the expertise of high school instructors and university professors. This is particularly true in the sciences. For example, few high schools have the infrastructure to teach laboratory based science in a way that remotely approximates university level instruction. In my 20 or so years of experience as professor teaching freshman in science, without regard to their AP score, none were equivalent to a student who finished our freshman courses in biology. Since I recognize that my experience may not be universal, it would be useful to get actual data on student learning in AP versus college level science classes. If such studies exist I would predict that high school AP science falls far short of university foundation courses.

— Dr. Joseph L Graves Jr Nov 8, 04:48 PM <#>

8. I think that dropping the AP curriculum can be a great move **if** the result is that the bar of expectations is raised across the board, and ALL students are given a higher caliber of instruction and more opportunities to be challenged academically. If the only result is that academic expectations drop to the lowest level for all students, then it seems worse than a mediocre AP program, which at least provides some students the opportunity to be more challenged.

— Erin Nov 8, 04:55 PM <#>

9. My guess is that no one has collected data on comparative performance in subsequent college courses between those who took the college prerequisite and those who took the AP course in high school. In addition, since my school only gives AP credit for a limited number of courses, I find more students getting angry that they can't get credit toward graduation for their dizzying arrays of AP courses upon entry.

— eniaf Nov 8, 05:13 PM <#>

10. When I participated in an AP program 15 years ago (while in high school), it was extremely beneficial to me, for a number of reasons. First, I attended a high school in a low income area, where there were few challenging classes. I glided through most high school classes, with the exception of my AP courses, which were the ONLY ones that truly challenged me. I had excellent AP instructors – I took English, Math and History AP courses, all of which were taught by instructors who were moonlighting as college instructors. I.e, they were full time high school teachers, as well as adjunct faculty members at local colleges and universities. Many of them were writing books or doing outside research in their discipline. I think the important thing, was that the people teaching the AP programs, had a true LOVE for learning and their subject matter. Perhaps AP courses are being forced on people who aren't interested in teaching them. Mediocre teachers = mediocre learning experiences. I attended a well known university, and can honestly say, that I learned more in AP English in high school, than anyone who took freshman English (I was able to skip 6 credits worth of English because of my AP scores). As for Math and History – it gave me the foundation that I needed to succeed in future college courses. I was the first person in my family to pursue a degree, so it was uncharted water. I didn't know all of the answers, but I did understand the difference between college learning and high school learning, by the time I entered college. This concept was important, because in the region where I grew up, college was not a popular topic – you were expected to get a government job, or go directly into the workforce after high school. There were few resources – other than AP courses – open to college bound students. This may sound crazy to some in academia, but I still see this today when I go home, and where I teach now, as a professor. Just my 2 cents...

— Jenn Nov 8, 05:51 PM <#>

11. I suspect many college faculty are kidding themselves if they think college courses taught in 300-student cattle-call classrooms are more effective learning experiences than AP classes. While the College Board's profit-motivated influence on the expansion of AP is fair game for discussion, so, too is the deplorable neglect of general education class quality in large universities. I would also, however, like to voice agreement with the post that advocates utilizing constructivist AP-style instruction in all high school classrooms. This would not

have to preclude award of college credit for college- equivalent learning, whatever that may be...

— Elise Nov 8, 07:12 PM #

12. For several years I was university director of our dual enrollment mathematics program. That program offered qualified high school students the chance to take college mathematics classes in their high schools. The classes were taught by qualified teachers (MS in content area). Upon visiting schools employing our program, I witnessed (measured) variations in quality that, no doubt, exist in AP programs as well. I also witnessed far BETTER teaching and learning (in general) in the high school setting than in college classes of the same content level. There are many reasons for this, among them, graduate students who teach without training, compressed time frames for learning, and traditionally poor teaching techniques in higher education. It is also true that the advanced students have jumped forward in college classes due to their advanced placement; they are NOT in the survey courses! Quite frankly, the advanced high school programs attract the BEST kids in the pool and the BEST teachers in the school. Whether we admit it or not as college educators, the kids we want in our own classes are those that have come through that “advanced” system, whether it is AP or some other dual enrollment program.

— Michael A. Lundin Nov 8, 07:26 PM #

13. Having seen both AP and Dual Credit courses offered in high schools in different school districts let me offer Dual Credit. In partnership with a regionally accredited institution the student knows up front what courses the student is taking. Recommended credit form an AP test that you may or may not score high enough — Welcome to Las Vegas. Who has the odds there? The college/university decides what and how many SCHs it will accept for a given scores given the student’s higher ed institution of choice, major, and campus. The colleges I worked with were on top to ensure the course offerings were matched with the high school courses being replaced and the high schools worked with the students to ensure they had good experiences with teh additional student support services [tutoring/Learning centers] necessary for the students to increase the probability for success.

— JBJones Nov 9, 06:05 AM #

14. I would be curious to know how many students at these schools still opt to take AP exams, even though the schools do not offer officially audited and approved “AP courses” . I know that this is common practice at some of the more selective schools in New York, and I imagine elsewhere too.

— Jane Ross Nov 9, 09:08 AM #

15. I am a product of having taken AP classes in high school and I found them to be extremely beneficial in terms of enhancing my writing and critical thinking skills. My son is now taking AP classes in high school and I am extremely impressed with how the AP system has grown and developed over the years. My son prefers AP courses because they are the classes where the students are committed to learning and they are excited about learning. Gauging from most of the previous comments, it appears that many of you are out of touch with how difficult high school has become over the years — violence, bullying, harassment, and drug deals going down all over the place are typical obstacles talented students must deal with on a day to day basis. Have you ever had to sit in a class as a student where your fellow classmates were throwing spitballs, paper clips, and rubber bands at the teacher? My son had to endure such an environment in one of his regular classes. This is an experience he hopes he never has to repeat. He started losing his language skills because the environment was not conducive to learning. And the school he went to was not an urban public school but a public school located in a small college town. I can only imagine what students must have to deal with on a day to day basis in urban public environments. AP classes become a safe haven for bright and serious students. The classes are smaller than the typical large lecture auditorium style entry level classes offered in college and the teachers are bright, energetic and committed to student learning. The conditions that high school teachers have to work under are less than ideal, but they manage to create a challenging environment for students. I think that AP courses are essential options for students to have, particularly in public school environments. What colleges choose to do with such courses is another separate issue. Gifted students need environments that allow them to be all that they can be. Why eliminate something that is obviously working well for bright, gifted students and talented enthusiastic teachers?

— Colleen Nov 9, 10:18 AM #

16. When I was in high school, I took AP tests without any courses being offered. It was a small rural school (400 total students) that will probably never offer AP classes. Many of us who

took the tests (about a dozen or so students each year) passed and got college credits even w/o the instruction.

— AnnMarie Nov 9, 10:58 AM #

17. As a 13 year veteran teacher of dual enrollment courses I can state unequivocally that students in my high school derive FAR more benefit from the many dual enrollment courses that we off than from the AP courses. The courses we teach are the same curriculum with the same materials as the Freshman level courses on the prominent university campus that we partner with.

We were trained by professors from that university, have regular department meetings with those professors and those professors visit our classrooms. We must submit our syllabi. This ongoing training and support ensures that students are receiving a college level education and the value in that is the challenge and preparation for what awaits them come the following September. It is also true that many of my students are able to use those credits later but that is a minor point from my perspective.

My job as a teacher of Seniors in high school is to challenge them, inform their learning, allow them to become independent thinkers and help them hone skills which will be of use in the future. Courses taught for the primary purpose of success on a standardized test cannot possibly hope to do that. A well organized, professional dual enrollment program is, in my opinion, the best way to challenge students and provide them with a high quality educational experience that prepares them for college.

— bil Nov 9, 11:13 AM #

18. I refused to teach a section of AP Government. I taught Government Honors instead. Why? Because AP is about rote memorization—honors was about ideas and thinking. Where is the morality of pretending that a high school government class could match the kind of controversial thinking that should take place at a college level? At the high school level we're hamstrung by school boards when we discuss politics and the like. I don't want to rob my excellent students of the opportunity to take Poli Sci and think about government in ways that 17-year-old students can't.

— Linda Margulies Nov 9, 05:26 PM #

19. Although some AP courses could be focussed on rote, so could any course. Classes are as good as their teachers. period. In an AP English course, there is no rote memory involved. There's nothing to memorize. Being able to read critically and then write analytically about the author's tone, or rhetorical devices derives from learning how to think and question. On the other hand, using AP credit to avoid a college course, (one that is taught by a native English speaker to a class of a reasonable size) is not always advisable. Most important is the uniform challenge that instructors should be offering in AP classes. If teachers are held accountable, if they are not allowed to teach a class unless their students perform well on the exams, then these courses are some of the few that require the teachers to be held to a universal standard. All in all, i say keep the courses but only have them taught by those who are committed to their subject and their students' successes.

— sherry Nov 9, 05:54 PM #

20. It's a very fuzzy line between "high school" and "college" level work. I attended a high school that DID NOT offer AP classes. My first 2 years were spent at a 2 year branch campus of a large state university in Ohio; the coursework and professors were surprisingly challenging. I finished my BA at a church affiliated school where the professors were a joke and there was more interest in indoctrination with EFCER doctrine than the subject at hand. The rigor of my high school coursework far exceeded any courses I took at this overpriced private college.

— Mark Slutz Nov 11, 02:57 PM #

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