

BVPAGE Meeting
December 4, 2015
High School Opportunities

1. If a child takes an online class as an eighth hour, do they usually take that at home right after school, or anything that evening? In other words, how much extra time is needed for the “eighth” hour?
 - a. (Tracy) An 8th hour online class is done in the student’s free time or home time. As to when, that is totally up to the student and how he/she prefers to work. The same holds true on how the virtual class instructor prefers to structure the class: some instructors set due dates for readings, blogs, assignments over the course of the class timeline, some say all work must be turned in before the last day of the virtual class. Your child will have to work as his/her instructor has set the class up
 - b. How much extra time is needed? Again, depends on the class and the student. Realize that a virtual class is an entire semester class compressed into about 8 weeks – there is the same amount of work as if the student attended the physical class. There is an online textbook, assignments, and quizzes.
 - c. A couple other bits of information – if a virtual class is taken as a 1st or 7th hour class, there is no charge for it. If a virtual class is taken as an 8th hour class or a class over the summer, the current charge is \$250. The student has to have access to a pc to do the class.
 - d. A personal note as a mom of 2 kids who have done virtual classes. Both my kids liked them for different reasons. One of my kids HATES when they are told, “Read up to page 6 and stop so the whole class can catch up” Both my kids liked being able to read an entire chapter/section and then do the work. Setting their own pace for reading and assignments is a HUGE draw for them. Independent working is a must for virtual classes – my son (in his first v.class) waited til the last week to do an entire class’ worth of homework!! Ugh – he got it done but was *way* better at keeping up and not procrastinating for his 2nd v.class.
 - e. There are certain v.classes which are easy to take and free up space in their schedules for other things. Health class and American Government (both required to graduate) are things I suggest. The information in these classes is straightforward and really doesn’t need discussion. These are 2 classes my kids breezed through and were glad they didn’t have to spend 100 hours talking through the material with 30 other kids!
2. How does being in AP benefit class rank?
 - a. (Tracy) Taking an AP class has the potential to benefit both GPA and class rank. As Kristin mentioned, AP classes are given a .7 weighting – an A in the class at the end of the year gives your child a 1.7 score as opposed to a 1 that is used to determine GPA (the average of all class scores). The higher the GPA score, the higher the class ranking. But, a C or a D in an AP class will not benefit the student’s GPA in the same way a C or a D in a regular level class will not benefit them.
 - b. This is all a math equation – if each class has the potential for a 1.0 scale for an A, you have 7 classes and 7 As, then your GPA would be a 1.0 (Average of 7x1.0) If

you have 3 AP classes with an A being worth 1.7 and 4 regular classes where an A is worth 1.0 and you get all As, your GPA is now 1.3 (Average of $((3 \times 1.7) + (4 \times 1.0))$)
Every bump up is good!

- c. Class rank is simple a numbered list of students with highest GPAs to lowest GPAs.
3. Is the AP exam required if take an AP class and it isn't going well?
 - a. (Tracy) No, You do not have to take the AP exam at the end of the year. Some students take an AP class for College Now credit, with that college credit they don't need to take the AP exam – you don't get credit twice for the same class! But the difference is timing: you must register for College Now before the class starts, the AP test is registered for and take at the end of the school year.
 - b. One of my kids is a science/math kid hates to write. He opted not to take an AP test at the end of the school year because he knew he wouldn't do as well as he wanted on a mostly-writing-based test. He still got high school credit for the class, got the required credit in social studies, and got the benefit of with weighted class grade.
4. If multiple AP class exams are desired, does the student take all exams at once?
 - a. (Tracy) As Kristin mentioned, all AP tests for subjects are given on the same day at the same time across the country. The AP tests are given in the same time frame, but no two are scheduled at the exact same time. Some are given during the school day during the week and some on Saturdays. If your child is taking multiple AP tests, that is a rough span of a week!!
5. Is it unheard of for a 7th grader to take 9th grade math... as 6th grader already accelerated in math?
 - a. (Tracy) No, it is not unheard of for a 7th grader to be double accelerated. It is rare though. If this is the situation you are dealing with, I'd recommend you make sure that your high school math teacher be made aware of the situation. He/She may not and probably will not know that your child has been double accelerated.
 - b. This can come into play when there are group assignments, after hours homework and projects, and even in relation to other things going on in the high school building that your child may not be aware of.
6. How do parents advocate academic competitions like Science Olympiad & math counts at school?
 - a. (Tracy) My suggestion here is to get involved. Start by finding out who the sponsor is for the event/group your child wants to get involved with. Offer to help with organizing, registering, or anything they need. Let them know your child is willing to join and participate.
7. What are the opportunities of acceleration in English & math? Is it encouraged?
 - a. (Tracy) A quick overview of acceleration is that it is either whole grade or subject. Whole grade takes a child out of his/her current grade and bumps them up to a higher grade. This is putting them in a different grade & class and changing the kids who are in class with them – skipping from 5th grade to 6th grade. Subject acceleration is bumping the child up one grade for one specific class/subject – putting a 5th grade student in 6th grade math class for one period a day.

- b. In Blue Valley, there is a procedure for Math Acceleration. It is the most common type of acceleration there is. There is a team at each school to evaluate math acceleration for students.
 - c. English Acceleration? There is a hot topic from BVPAGE parents! Currently English acceleration is virtually unheard of – very very very very rare. To many of us, me being an outspoken parent on this subject, this oversight needs to be addressed! In plain speaking, there is not acceleration in English. Now – there are individual teachers who recognize their “word & reading” students. We personally have had amazing teachers who went out of their way to adjust reading and writing assignments for our gifted students with a passion for words.
 - d. At the high school level there are no “accelerated” classes per se. There are already built in levels of classes: regular, Honors, and AP (Advanced Placement). Students register for whatever level of class fits them best.
 - e. One last thing about acceleration in high school, a student that has been accelerated at lower grade levels will still have classes to take in high school. A math class was specifically designed for those students who skipped a math grade previously and otherwise would have run out of higher level math by their senior year.
 - f. Is acceleration encouraged? Wow – that is a huge topic and open for discussion. My simplest answer is it depends on your child. There are benefits to acceleration: earlier access to harder topics and material, skipping easier grades and material they already know, etc. But there are also considerations: switching out of grade with friends, being a year younger than new peers, maturity levels, etc. It really is something each family needs to weigh on their own with input from school administrators and teachers.
8. Can students request specific teachers?
- a. (Tracy) Simple answer is No. At no school or grade level are specifically named teacher requests accepted.
 - b. Now as a parent who has been in the BV school system quite a while I have a personal opinion on this. First and foremost – develop a reputation as someone who works well with teachers, do what you can to help the school, develop a good relationship with the counselors or principal. If you have concerns about not getting or wanting a specific teacher here is what I recommend. MAKE A PRIVATE APPOINTMENT with the principal. Explain that your child is strong/weak/passionate/fearful of whatever subject. Describe the *kind* of teacher who has worked well or not worked well for your child. Describe the *attributes* of the teacher you want or don’t want for the next year. Here is an example of what I have said, “AJ is an empathetic student and she is upset when teachers talk down to or make fun of students. She needs a teacher who is energetic, excited about teaching, and wants to connect with her students via praise and challenge. AJ is a people pleaser and will do anything for a teacher who shows she cares about her students and her subject matter.” I described the teacher we wanted – not the one who had the reputation for teaching via intimidation.
9. What are the advanced technologies being implemented at BV schools?

- a. (Tracy) This is wide open question!! There is a great deal of technology imbedded in the curriculum and everyday teaching and classes. It, obviously, varies by school level and age of the students.
 - b. Some of the things off the top of my head are: digital bridge classes (not enough students in your school to warrant a teacher, a class can use the digital bridge/live broadcast to hear/see/interact with teacher in another school conducting the class real time), virtual classes are offered as online options to sitting in a classroom and are done on the student's own time, library/media center resources are linked via computer so students can request materials not available in their own buildings, class sets of iPads are used for specific units in subjects, and interactive Q&A is used for in class reviews and quizzes. There are lots and lots and lots of technological used that happen on a daily basis!
10. I'm interested in the impact of honors/AP courses on GPA and the impact of GPA/class rank on college admissions. I've seen BV students reports GPA/weighted GPA and class rank/weighted class rank. What does all that mean in practical terms?
- a. (Tracy) Taking an AP or Honors class has the *potential* to benefit both GPA and class rank. As Kristin mentioned, AP classes are given a .7 weighting – an A in the class at the end of the year gives your child a 1.7 score as opposed to a 1 that is used to determine GPA (the average of all class scores). The higher the GPA score, the higher the class ranking. But, a C or a D in an AP or Honors class will not benefit the student's GPA in the same way a C or a D in a regular level class will not benefit them.
 - b. The thought process behind GPA and class rank is a simple one. Colleges are looking at a mathematical way to see who is at the top of their class and who is at the bottom. Someone ranked #3 in their class obviously did better in classes than someone who is ranked #587. Rank also applies in the % questions. Some colleges want to know if you are in the top 50%, top 25%, or top 10% of your class.
 - c. Personal note from Tracy – every college asks for and looks at different things but they all need somewhere to start and that where GPA and class rank come in. Neither GPA or class rank is going to be the only reason to accept a student into a college or university. As Kristi Dixon (counselor) mentioned, their activities and 'resume' should spark some interest or conversation. GPA may open the door, but your child's whole academic scores, interests, & activities is what will get them to step through.