

features PLANNING FOR AP

Take a look at the benefits and downsides of AP classes

Landon Durm//landon.durm2007@gmail.com
Max Habel//maxwellwhabel@icloud.com

You stare down the long list of To-Do's, wondering just where to start. Your phone buzzes, startling you, but it's just your friends: "Where are you? Are you coming?" they ask. You sigh, knowing that they'll have to go on without you, and the world continues on while you look back toward the long list full of AP course-work.

As students are beginning to build their schedules, many are considering Advanced Placement classes for the coming year. Experienced students have formed their own opinion on the topic of AP courses and the amount of time and effort they require. But what about underclassmen who have not taken an AP course yet? Is an AP class right for you? These courses provide many advantages, but along with these benefits come downsides that could be a determining factor in your decision.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF TAKING AN AP COURSE?

GPA BOOST - Delaney Heckman (NHS senior): Even with the extra work, the GPA boost makes AP classes worth it.

FINANCIAL HELP - Anthony Crist (AP Spanish teacher): If a student has the intention of going to college, then yes the course is worth it from a financial perspective.

SELF-IMPROVEMENT - Hannah Dwyer (AP World History teacher): I challenge students to think about it as a way to improve a weakness or even challenge a strength they may already have.

COLLEGE CREDIT - Jackson Umthum (NHS sophomore): AP classes are a great way to expand your knowledge and get good college level courses for experience. I believe the college credit and GPA boost outweighs the workload with an appropriate dose.

PREPARING FOR COLLEGE - Leslie Ringle (AP US History teacher): AP courses provide students with critical thinking skills and improve reading and writing skills. AP course work prepares students for the rigor of college courses and what the workload may be like. They also give students an idea of what time management skills will be necessary to succeed in college.

THE STATISTICS

(Percentage of students who scored a 3 or higher on their respective AP exams. All AP exams grade on a scale of 1-5. A score of three or higher on an AP exam earns you college credit at most colleges and is usually considered an above average score.)

Calculus AB	- 55.4%
Calculus BC	- 76.9%
Statistics	- 59.9%
Spanish (Lang)	- 82.0%
English (Lang)	- 55.5%
English (Lit)	- 77.8%
World History	- 58.1%
US History	- 48.2%
Physics 1 (Alg. Based)	- 42.3%
Chemistry	- 52.7%
Biology	- 67.8%
Environmental Science	- 53.9%
Princ. Computer Science	- 68.6%
Art History	- 54.6%
Drawing	- 88.5%

WHAT ARE THE DOWNSIDES OF TAKING AN AP COURSE?

AP TESTS - Elly Uggen (NHS senior): AP courses have a test in early May. The AP exam can definitely be intimidating. It's a very long test where each section is timed and has its own rules. It's like a final but it is less about knowing vocab and specific content, it's a lot more about being able to apply that content to bigger examples which can be challenging.

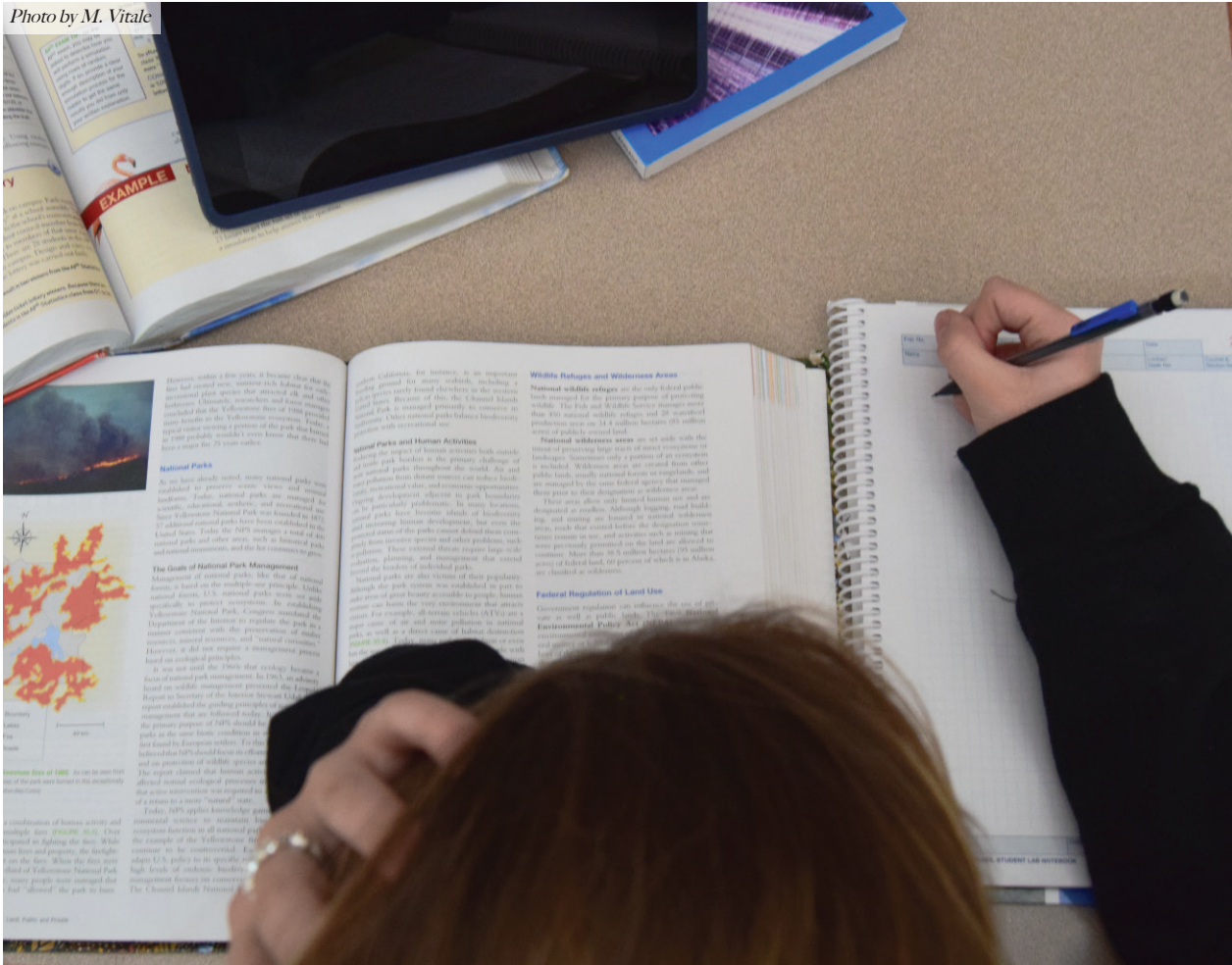
COLLEGE LEVEL MATERIAL - Ringle: AP courses are also structured much like college-level courses so there is more rigor than a regular class. That generally means the workload is more challenging.

MORE TIME DEDICATED TO STUDYING - Heckman: I have to set aside more time to complete work, sometimes missing out on events.

FAST PACED - Thomas Doering (Spanish teacher): You have to move quickly to get to everything that you need to do. Because of that, it makes students reach out for help from their teacher or forces them to find a way to learn it on their own, both of which are real life skills.

MISSING OUT ON HIGH SCHOOL - Uggen: High school is worth more than closely monitoring your grades and GPA every second. Trust me I—did the same thing.

Photo by M. Vitale



Junior Elle Van Kirk stresses out over her heavy AP coursework. Many students, like Van Kirk, find themselves overwhelmed by the requirements of their AP courses.

HOW CAN I BE SUCCESSFUL IN AN AP CLASS?

CONFIDENT SUBJECT – **Josiah Smith (NHS junior):**

Some advice I would give to someone wanting to take an AP class is to take ones that interest you. Don't force yourself to be in an AP class just cause you want the AP credit, take it because you want to and it matches your interest.

WORK ETHIC AND ACCOUNTABILITY

– **Jason Giordano (AB and BC Calculus teacher):**

Be prepared to put in the work in order to succeed. The classes put a lot of emphasis on student accountability and students that have a great work ethic almost always succeed very well.

CONSULT TEACHERS AND COUNSELORS –

Umthum: Freshmen who are interested in taking AP classes should definitely talk with their counselors and teachers for guidance and clarification. Your counselors can give you the rundown and overall description of the class along with some other helpful information regarding workload and past students experiences.

REVIEW YOUR SKILLS – **Uggen:**

I would say to definitely think hard about what is motivating you to take AP classes. You just have to be honest with yourself and list the pros and cons in your head. If it seems like everything is leading back to the grade boost or you are having to convince yourself it's not for the grade boost, then it's probably not your biggest priority to take the AP class.