



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

MAKE IT EQUITABLE AND FLEXIBLE

BMC Durfee High School allows students to choose between taking Pre-AP English 2 or 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.

MAKE IT A CORE COURSE

Granada Hills Charter School increased AP Seminar enrollment by embedding AP Seminar in their English sequence. Last year, their school increased AP Seminar participation from 100 to 256 students by converting AP Seminar from an elective to a core English course. Out of a total of 256 students, 90% earned a score of 3 or higher on the AP Exam. This year 374 students requested enrollment in the course.



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



CASE STUDY 2: MAKE IT A CORE COURSE

Converting AP Seminar to English 10: AP Seminar

Getting Started with AP Seminar

Granada Hills Charter School (GHCS) started offering AP Seminar in 2015 as a yearlong academic elective course for their juniors. Students took AP English Language concurrently to reinforce the skills necessary for the course. In 2021, the University of California updated their academic credit designation, which allowed us to offer AP Seminar as an English course. Our biggest challenge was the limited space in the student schedule, so this update was critical to increase enrollment and get more teachers trained in the department.

Shifting from an Elective to a Core English Course

The data and assessment specialist in our English department first explored the alignment of AP Seminar to the California state standards for English Language Arts. He then considered how the course would fit with the typical sophomore English class. The specialist spent time aligning the department benchmarks with the AP Seminar standards and skills and formed an exploratory committee. The department chair and school administrators reviewed the data and rationale for making the switch to a core English course. Then the department reached a consensus. Although there was initial skepticism from other English teachers, the data spoke for itself. Student recruitment took a little time. Two things benefited us: our school policy to pay for all exam fees for any AP course and the fact that we require all students to take the exam.

I found the experience of being an AP Seminar reader and consultant extremely useful. In the summer of 2022, I organized a private AP Summer Institute and trained five teachers. We now have eight teachers certified to teach AP Seminar, and each one has one or two sections. We share the philosophy that if we train more teachers, we can help identify more students that are ready and benefit from the course frameworks.

DISTRICT:
Granada Hills Charter

SCHOOL:
Granada Hills Charter School

LOCATION:
Granada Hills, CA

MEET THE TEACHER

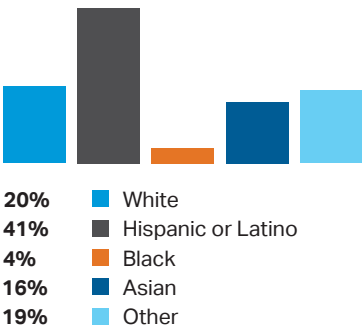


Spencer Wolf
AP Seminar Teacher

SCHOOL STATS
4,800
Students enrolled

246
Students enrolled in AP Seminar

51%
Low income



English Department Sequence

Our English department is flexible. We don't tie AP courses to a specific grade level. Our course offerings focus on cumulative English standards over four years of high school, and we conduct their own assessments to check for standards and performance. In the inaugural year of adding AP Seminar to their offerings, 40% of students were sophomores, 50% of students were juniors, and 10% were seniors.

Grade 9 Choices	Grade 10 Choices	Grade 11 Choices	Grade 12 Choices
College Prep	College Prep	AP English Language and Composition	AP English Language and Composition
Honors English 9	Honors English 10	AP English Literature and Composition	AP English Literature and Composition
—	English 10: AP Seminar	English 11: AP Seminar	English 12: AP Seminar

**Students who take AP Seminar or English 10: AP Seminar before senior year have the option to extend their learning in AP Research, but as an elective.*

To support the transition, we built a strong professional learning community to develop a repository of student supports. We created an instructional technique bank that all teachers can access and adjusted pacing to align with English foundational skills to be more deliberate in instruction. We emphasize foundational skills in the first few months of the year and always make it a point to build in mock exams and after-school support sessions.

Impact of AP Seminar as an English Course

In our inaugural year of AP Seminar as an English course, enrollment increased 156%, from 100 to 256 students, while performance remained steady. Out of a total of 256 students, 90% earned a 3 or higher on the AP Exam. This year there are 374 requests from interested students. We'll offer 11 sections taught by 8 AP Seminar teachers. Recruitment is happening via student word-of-mouth.

The overall AP Seminar student demographics are much more in line with our overall school demographics than they used to be. Before the transition, we had more male students enroll in the sciences than female students, but we had an overrepresentation of female students and underrepresentation of male students in AP English courses. Our AP Seminar was 75% female and 25% male. Last year the proportions were almost equal. More male students chose an AP English course.

“I have two favorite aspects of teaching Seminar. One is the freedom and flexibility to design curriculum around meaningful topics for kids. Also, seeing the wide range of topics that students choose to investigate and really engage in. One of the first students I taught in Seminar is currently in a PhD program, where he’s building on issues he first began exploring in Seminar and later in Research.”

—SPENCER WOLF, AP SEMINAR TEACHER, GRANADA HILLS HIGH SCHOOL

“AP Seminar gives kids a chance to meaningfully engage in skill development on topics that matter to them. Learning becomes less about “doing school” or “taking a test” and more about engaging in actually understanding, evaluating, and responding to perspectives about meaningful things.”

—SPENCER WOLF, AP SEMINAR TEACHER, GRANADA HILLS HIGH SCHOOL

EDUCATOR TO EDUCATOR: Tips from Granada Hills Charter School for Shifting AP Seminar from Elective to a Core English Course

- 1** Create an exploratory committee to engage in long-term planning. Engage the English department. Help observe AP Seminar in action. Students are capable.
- 2** Think about working backward across the 4-year English curriculum to grow the program. This helped build the foundation and change the culture of the department to prepare students. Teachers start seeing more students as capable of succeeding in AP courses. This has paid off the most.
- 3** Align with state standards. Emphasize them in grades 9 and 10. This helps prepare students for AP Seminar. Building the foundation within the department allows us to train more teachers to scale the sections offered.
- 4** Recruit students earlier by asking them about topics that are relevant to them. Use the time after AP Exams to connect with students and recruit them. Encourage them to explore subjects of interest.

“AP Seminar has given me insight into the power of collaboration, and of having kids share their work as authentically as possible. When kids have the chance to speak about a topic they’re excited about and try to communicate their understanding to an audience, they come to life and get excited.”

—SPENCER WOLF, AP SEMINAR TEACHER,
GRANADA HILLS HIGH SCHOOL