

ADVANCED COURSES

I. PURPOSE

To outline guidelines for advanced courses such as Honors courses, District advanced courses, technical courses that offer National Industry Certification, Dual Enrollment/Dual Credit courses, Advanced Placement courses, and International Baccalaureate courses.

II. SCOPE

This policy applies to advanced courses within the Shelby County Schools.

III. POLICY STATEMENT

Shelby County Schools believes in the basic principle that academic rigor and the opportunity to accelerate learning are powerful motivators for students to meet intellectual challenges and excel in the academic environment. To that end, the District supports programs that promote academic acceleration such as Honors courses, District advanced courses, technical courses that offer National Industry Certification, Dual Enrollment/Dual Credit courses, Advanced Placement courses, and International Baccalaureate courses.

The District also believes in encouraging student participation in advanced courses through methods such as communicating information about advanced courses to students and parents; district wide identification and counseling of students who might benefit from advanced level courses; and annually reporting on the district progress toward increasing students' readiness and participation for advanced courses.

Requirements for Advanced Courses

The Superintendent or designee(s) shall ensure the development and/or identification of eligibility criteria, criteria for continuation in, procedures for students encountering difficulty and/or wishing to drop advanced courses, and program stipulations for Honors courses, District advanced courses, technical courses that offer National Industry Certification, Dual Enrollment/Dual Credit courses, Advanced Placement courses, and International Baccalaureate courses.

Honors Courses

Framework of Standards for Honors Courses

Honors courses will substantially exceed the content standards, learning expectations, and performance indicators approved by the State Board of Education. Teachers of honors courses will model instructional approaches that facilitate maximum interchange of ideas among students: independent study, self-directed research and learning, and appropriate use of technology. All honors courses must include multiple assessments exemplifying coursework (such as short answer, constructed-response prompts, performance-based tasks, open-ended questions, essays, original or creative interpretations, authentic products, portfolios, and analytical writing). Additionally, an honors course shall include a minimum of five (5) of the following components:

- i. Extended reading assignments that connect with the specified curriculum.
- ii. Research-based writing assignments that address and extend the course curriculum.
- iii. Projects that apply course curriculum to relevant or real-world situations. These may include oral presentations, PowerPoint, or other modes of sharing findings. Connection of the project to the community is encouraged.
- iv. Open-ended investigations in which the student selects the questions and designs the research.
- v. Writing assignments that demonstrate a variety of modes, purposes, and styles.
(I) Examples of mode include narrative, descriptive, persuasive, expository, and expressive.
(II) Examples of purpose include to inform, entertain, and persuade.
(III) Examples of style include formal, informal, literary, analytical, and technical.
- vi. Integration of appropriate technology into the course of study.
- vii. Deeper exploration of the culture, values, and history of the discipline.
- viii. Extensive opportunities for problem-solving experiences through imagination, critical analysis, and application.
- ix. Job shadowing experiences with presentations which connect class study to the world of work.

All course types which meet the above framework will be classified as honors and may be weighted by adding 3 points to all grades used to calculate the semester average.

Note: All high school courses, including honors courses, taken prior to high school enrollment will count as elective credit.

District Advanced Courses

Courses may be determined by the District to be classified as advanced. District advanced courses that are identified by the District as comparable to Honors courses or Advanced Placement courses shall receive additional points in the same manner as the Honors courses or Advanced Placement courses, respectively.

Technical Courses that offer National Industry Certification

Technical courses that offer a National Industry Certification through a nationally recognized examination may be weighted by adding 3 points to all grades used to calculate the semester average.

Dual Enrollment/Dual Credit

Eligible students in grades 9-12 have the opportunity to enroll in college level courses and earn both college credits and credits toward their high school diplomas. All qualifying students may enroll in college level courses that are conducted at the high school during the school day and are taught by a bona fide college professor or a licensed SACS approved adjunct secondary teacher. Courses must be taught in accordance with an agreement between the participating institution of higher learning and Shelby County Schools. In addition, qualifying 11th and 12th grade students may enroll in college level courses that are conducted at an institution of higher education or courses provided online by the postsecondary institution. The institution of higher education must be accredited by the state or by a state-approved accrediting agency.

Dual Enrollment/Dual Credit courses that are identified by the District as comparable to Honors courses or Advanced Placement courses shall receive additional points in the same manner as the Honors courses or Advanced Placement courses, respectively.

Advanced Placement Courses and International Baccalaureate Courses

Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses offered by the District must substantially incorporate the learning objectives and course descriptions as defined by the College Board or International Baccalaureate Organization.

Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses that have end-of-course national examinations qualify for the addition of 5 points to grades used to calculate semester averages.

IV. RESPONSIBILITY

The Superintendent (or designee) is responsible for administering this policy.

Legal Reference:

1. Tennessee State Board of Education Rule § 0520-01-03-.05