

SHS Counseling 2023-24 Course Selection Student Handout

Important Dates and Timeline Overview

Program of Studies available in January

Teachers discuss course options with students

Teacher recommendations will be available **February 13**

Students pre-register for courses in PowerSchool **February 13-17**

Individual course selection meetings:

Grade 11: February 28– March 3

Grade 10: March 6-10

Grade 9: March 13-17



March 31, 2023: Deadline for course changes and overrides

Be sure to check your email from SHS Counseling for more course selection information.

Transcripts

- Complete school record including final grades and credit in completed courses and cumulative GPAs
- Used for college admissions, job applications, discounts such as car insurance, and scholarships

GPA

- Numerical average of letter grades earned throughout high school that measures overall performance
- Used for college applications and scholarship applications
- Updated based on final grades in completed courses only
- Two Cumulative GPAs:
 - **Unweighted:** graded coursework in all subject areas; all levels have equal value
 - **Weighted:** graded coursework in all subject areas; honors and AP courses have a higher value

Course Levels

AP (Advanced Placement): college level; course designed for students seeking to earn college credit or take a more challenging course

H (Honors): accelerated course; increased depth of abstract, critical, and original thinking and independent work; course designed to serve students whose ability requires additional challenge

A (Advanced College Preparatory): challenges students' ability to exert purposeful effort in order to develop as a critical thinker

B (College Preparatory): provides support to assist students in developing as learners

C (Career Preparatory): smallest class sizes; scaffolded to provide structure and support to students who require more assistance

Policies

As you plan your courses, know that it is expected that schedules remain firm and students are committed to their scheduled courses for the full school year. All course selection, schedule change, and grading policies and procedures are listed in the *Program of Studies* and *Student Handbook*.

Quotes From Recent Staples High School Graduates

"I would just wish I had a better perspective of what high school is for. I would have picked my classes according to what I was most interested in, rather than what would look good on my transcript."

"If I were to change one thing about my experience at Staples I think I would try to involve myself in new things that I wouldn't normally do. I wish I pushed myself more out of my comfort zone and took classes or joined clubs that I was hesitant about. While I definitely involved myself in the community at Staples, I wish I tried to explore other interests of mine and maybe took a class I knew nothing about."

"I would worry less of what others think of me... Also I wish I took more classes geared towards what I want to do later in life."

"I wouldn't work myself so hard and get so stressed over everything. I probably would have ended up in the same place anyways."

"Being more open to new experiences and classes. People should take more classes they may not think they like. I would also like to see less talk about class levels, people judged me when I took B-level classes. I am not going to take an AP for the sake of taking an AP class."

Considerations

In planning their course of studies, students are encouraged to focus on their own individual strengths, challenges, interests, and post-HS goals and consider the following:

- Successes and difficulties in current courses and courses previously taken
- Course and level recommendations made by teachers
- Input from school counselor and other knowledgeable school staff (ex. PPT/504 team)
- Graduation requirements
- Course descriptions, prerequisites, and guidelines found in the *Program of Studies*
- Knowledge and skills expected within potential career choices
- NCAA eligibility core-course requirements
- Subject area requirements for prospective colleges and universities
- Feelings of pressure experienced around grades and achievement
- Capacity to cope with stress and problem solve through challenging situations
- Genuine personal interests and opportunities for enrichment and enjoyment
- Out of school commitments, time management skills, and level of independent work habits to balance various demands

FAQ's Around Scheduling

How much should I push myself to take a demanding course load?

It's important to feel confident in the courses you choose to take. Remember to consider your own overall health and well-being. You need time to sleep, relax, have fun with your friends, and connect with your family (over things besides school). We encourage you to be honest with yourself as well as work with your school counselor to ensure appropriate choices are made. You should be challenged by your courses but not overwhelmed. It is more important to be successful in a level than to take the highest one offered.

Will I be in over my head if I override my teacher's recommendation?

It happens. Some students override and do well; many do not and find themselves forced to make disruptive schedule changes or stuck in a class that is too difficult for them and unable to move to the level that is truly appropriate for their skills and ability. Taking courses isn't the same as succeeding in a course. Take time to review the Staples High School schedule change and grading policies.

Do colleges prefer to see a B in an honors class or an A in an A-level class?

There's no magic formula and nobody really knows, but many colleges will make general statements that they want to see all A's in high-level classes, even when - according to all of our data and experience—that doesn't accurately represent the academic records of their admitted students. Rarely do we see one single course or grade "make or break" the transcript.

Will I get into a "good" college if I don't take x number of Honors/AP classes?

Yes. For students who plan to attend a four-year college directly after Staples, most institutions consider the strength of a student's curriculum and the student's grades to be the most important factors in the admission process. That being said, the Staples Administration and School Counseling Department advocate for taking an appropriately challenging program that balances a student's academic aspirations with their emotional well-being. Each year we proudly see many students who take no honors or AP courses, perform well academically, maintain healthy balance in their lives, and are accepted to excellent institutions. We are committed to helping all students find the right match for them.

What should I do if I am recommended for more challenging courses than I feel comfortable taking?

Teachers make course recommendations solely based on their subject area. If your teachers recommend you for high level classes in multiple subjects, think carefully about what you can manage. Though you may have the ability to handle each course individually, the work for your overall course load may be too much as a whole. Speak to your counselor about finding the right overall balance for you.

Links to important resources

[2023-24 Program of Studies](#)

[Student Handbook](#)

[School Counseling Department Website](#)

Staples High School Four-Year Course Plan

In order to graduate, students must earn at least 26.0 credits distributed across certain subjects.

<u>Subject Area</u>	<u>Grade 9</u>	<u>Grade 10</u>	<u>Grade 11</u>	<u>Grade 12</u>
<i>Humanities</i> English (4.0) 1.0 English 9 1.0 English 10 2.0 Additional Courses				
<i>Humanities</i> Social Studies (3.0) 1.0 Global Themes 1.0 U.S. History .5 Civics .5 Area Study				
<i>Humanities</i> Visual & Performing Arts (1.0)				
<i>Humanities</i> Open Humanities (1.0) <i>Any additional course(s) in English, Social Studies, Visual & Performing Arts, or World Languages</i>				
<i>STEAM</i> Math (3.0)				
<i>STEAM</i> Science (3.0)				
<i>STEAM</i> Open STEAM (3.0) <i>Any additional courses in Math, Science, Technology Education, Media, or other selected courses</i>				
World Languages (2.0) <i>Any one world language in sequence</i>				
Health & PE (2.5) 1.0 Health 1.5 Physical Education				
Mastery-Based Diploma Requirement (1.0)				
Additional Credits (2.5)				
Total Each Year <i>Total minimum credits required: 26.0 credits</i>				

State Tests Requirement Met: _____ SAT _____ NGSS

The table below can be used to map out your course requests:

Periods	Full Year (1.0 credit)	Sem 1 (.5 credit)	Sem 2 (.5 credit)
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			

Alternate Elective Choices:

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The Open STEAM graduation requirement can be fulfilled through taking any additional courses in Math, Science, Technology Education, Media, or other selected courses listed below:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Advanced Culinary Arts● Advanced Journalism● Anthropology● AP Macro/Microeconomics● AP Music Theory● AP Psychology● Child Psychology (formerly Psychology of Child Development)● Digital Media Arts (Animation, Photography, Graphic/Digital Design)● Environmental Social Studies● Graphic Narratives & Visual Literacies | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Insights & Solutions● Introduction to Economics● Introduction to Psychology (formerly Understanding Psychology)● Lifeguard Training● Music Technology● Popular Music and Diversity in American Society● Science of Movement in Yoga and Dance● Stagecraft● Theater 3: Directing● Wellness Seminar |
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