

Propelling AP Participation with English 10: AP Seminar

Introducing AP® Seminar as our districtwide English 10 course has been instrumental in addressing gaps in advanced coursework and promoting equitable college and career programming for all our students. By integrating AP Seminar into the English curriculum, Red Clay has not only advanced its equity and academic excellence goals. It's also empowering students with critical research, collaboration, and communication skills that prepare them for future success.

IDENTIFYING THE OPPORTUNITY

As Delaware's largest school district, Red Clay always looks for ways to enable our students to explore academic opportunities, achieve excellence, and prepare for the real world. Our district's vision is to "provide equitable experiences and meaningful opportunities for tomorrow's leaders." We challenge our 16,000 students to stretch themselves at all grade levels through innovative and enriching classes.

In 2017 at one of our magnet schools, Conrad Schools of Science, we took advantage of the chance to pair AP Seminar with English 10 as an option for sophomores to fulfill their English requirement. We noticed AP participation increased schoolwide—a bonus we hadn't necessarily anticipated but welcomed.

When we introduced AP Seminar, we also added Pre-AP® English 1 to build student readiness. It serves as our Honors English 9. The reading, argument analysis, and evidence-based writing provided an excellent foundation for English 10: AP Seminar. We found that Pre-AP English ensured a seamless transition for students to meet the demands of AP Seminar.

In 2023 during the development of our strategic plan, community members told us they wanted priority placed on student growth, success, equitable outcomes, and family engagement, among others. Therefore, we reevaluated AP Seminar's districtwide adoption timeline.

TURNING OPPORTUNITY INTO ACTION

The positive growing impact of AP Seminar at a single high school in a few years gave us great confidence to expand offering the course throughout all our high schools. We found it offered an accessible gateway to rigorous coursework, helped us close achievement gaps, and provided opportunities for historically underrepresented groups, including low-income, minority, and female students.

AP Seminar is just one of the AP courses we provide to support our goal of helping all students build confidence and create pathways to success. By offering AP African American Studies and AP Precalculus, among other courses, we've been able to motivate more students to engage in advanced coursework. For many, these courses represent their first experience with an AP class.



LOCATION

New Castle County, DE

DEMOGRAPHICS

15,061

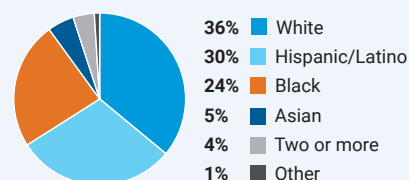
Total district enrollment

3,593

Grades 9–12 enrollment

28%

Low income



AP PROGRAM

3,069

Total enrollments in AP classes

1,106

Individual student enrollments
in AP classes

35

Number of AP courses offered

31%

Grades 9–12 students enrolled
in AP classes

302

English 10: AP Seminar enrollment

43%

First-time AP students enrolled
in English 10: AP Seminar

EVALUATING THE OUTCOMES

The expansion of the English 10: AP Seminar program districtwide led to noteworthy year-over-year growth from the 2022-23 school year to the 2023-24 school year including:

- **79%** increase in English 10: AP Seminar participation.
- **52%** increase in AP scores of 3 or higher.
- **13%** increase in students taking at least 1 college-level course.

We put multiple efforts in place to spur growth in college-level coursework, but we primarily attribute our success to expanding AP Seminar access to all 10th graders.

Director of Secondary Education Mark Pruitt noted, “Many students encountered obstacles and experienced productive struggle for the first time. They learned the importance of time management, project planning, and perseverance, often finding that their struggles temporarily disrupted their plans. However, these experiences ultimately taught them to be independent and responsible for their own success, leaving them better prepared for future academic and professional endeavors.”

AP Seminar even challenged our own teaching methods. Teachers discovered that a common workplace practice, “Management by Walking Around,” allowed them to more intentionally observe their students at work and the integrity of that work. This, coupled with the QUEST framework for self-directed student study, allowed teachers to become facilitators as students embarked on their learning expeditions. Students benefited from the freedom, including productive struggle leading to true learning.

The student feedback on their experience validated our belief in the value of English 10: AP Seminar. Angel Swartz told us, “I liked how I was forced to get out of my comfort zone to present in front of people on multiple different occasions.” Kara Kramer discovered, “it was less of an actual class, and it was more like a big project every time.” Carter Geffe appreciated “the open-endedness and how we could pick a topic that we liked.” Carter added, “I learned how to find credible sources and how to skim them to see if they apply to my research.”

We especially enjoy celebrating the class’s evolution. It truly becomes a community—a community of confident, independent, intellectually curious students.

PRACTICAL POINTERS

- **Consider an Instructional Coach:** A coach provides hands-on support for students having difficulty, help grade presentations, create scaffolded assignments, and foster collaboration among AP Seminar teachers.
- **Build In Professional Development Workdays:** Schedule dedicated professional development days where English 10: AP Seminar teachers can plan collaboratively, share resources, and discuss effective teaching strategies.
- **Model Success:** By curating and sharing past samples of high-scoring student work, students can understand the standards for success.

EDUCATOR PERSPECTIVES



Mark Pruitt
Director of Secondary
Education

“What excites me most about AP Seminar is seeing students grow into confident, empowered scholars. Each year, we witness students take on complex issues that matter to them. AP Seminar isn’t about simply passing a test; it’s about developing critical thinking, fostering intellectual curiosity, and encouraging students to find their own voices.”



Anthony Gray-Bolden
Dean
Cab Calloway School of the Arts

“These courses strengthen the school’s position as a leader in innovative and rigorous education. By offering these courses, we celebrate the diverse talents of our students and provide them with opportunities to grow academically, creatively, and socially”



Jeffrey Haycraft
English Teacher/ELA
Department Chairperson
Cab Calloway School of the Arts

“All students have the ability to succeed. The growth that students show from the beginning of the year to the end gives them such a feeling of accomplishment on an academic task at a very high level of rigor, and it helps to build confidence.”



Learn more about AP courses designed for a broader range of students at cb.org/powerofap