

Curriculum in Honors/Advanced Courses

Should:

- Be designed to address the needs of advanced/gifted students, unmet in the general classroom
- Compact and/or accelerate the general curriculum to allow for enrichments, extensions and enhancements to topics of interest
- Delve deep into the discipline, requiring students to act as disciplinarians
- Require multi-disciplinary/multi-dimensional perspectives
- Focus on student interests and passions
- Use advanced materials and multiple resources with varying degrees of difficulty
- Encourage self-direction of learning topics beyond the core curriculum
- Explore multiple points of view to examine differing consequences or outcomes
- Include current, relevant and provocative topics
- Use ambiguity of “ill-structured” problems to stimulate critical and reflective thinking
- Focus on depth through conceptual understanding
- Provide opportunities to hone sophisticated levels of skill development
- Place an emphasis on independence in learning, critical thinking, reflective judgement, and creative production
- Cultivate an attitude of inquisitiveness
- Infuse advanced levels of complexity by teaching questioning techniques
- Require integrative research, focused on authentic problems
- Involve the production of authentic products that have value to authentic audiences
- Challenge preconceived notions within all subjects and topics
- Include sustained community and service learning to promote an ethics of care
- Inspire unique career pathways and opportunities
- Avoid additional activities/work/units/chapters/etc. to fill time

All materials from *Differentiating for Gifted Learners: Going Beyond the Basics* by Diane Heacox and Richard Cash, copyright 2020 Free Spirit Publishers, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Instructional Practices in Honors/Advanced Courses

Should:

- Advance at an accelerated pace
- Be student centered
- Develop intellectually autonomous learners
- Hold students accountable for their own learning
- Develop a “mastery approach” in each student
- Promote healthy and reasonable expectations of success
- Challenge student thinking and perceptions
- Develop interpersonal skills through collaboration with various types of individuals
- Directly teach negotiating skills
- Allow for interactive/reciprocal teaching
- Employ coaching and consultation methods
- Shift student to a growth mindset
- Use varied assessment strategies throughout the learning process
- Provide descriptive feedback to increase intrinsic motivation to learn
- Speak “UP” to students by using content and appropriate academic vocabulary
- Encourage students to locate resources, mentors and materials
- Train students to goal-set as a way to achieve success
- Routinely require students to reflect on learning and personal success
- Elicit divergent thinking, critical reasoning and reflective judgement
- Teach the ethics of care
- Promote the scholarly dispositions by being:
 - Open- and fair-minded
 - Inquisitive
 - Flexible in thinking and acting
 - Interested in seeking out reason
 - Immersed in acquiring more information
 - Respectful of and expecting diverse points of view

Learning Environment in Honors/Advanced Courses

Should:

- Allow for purposeful interactive movement
- Stimulate intellectual curiosity
- Provide for small group to large group instruction
- Engage students in group substantive conversations
- Be organized as a laboratory of ideas
- Offer varied levels of materials and resources, including pertinent technologies to the discipline
- Avoid overuse of didactic/direct instructional set-up (such as lecture)
- Offer outlets for those with over-excitabilities/super-sensitivities/twice exceptionalities
- Encourage self-directed autonomous learning
- Inspire empathy and a community of care

Description of Honors/Advanced Courses

Should:

- Be specific to the advanced nature of the course offering
- Be aligned to the general curriculum
- Avoid using ambiguous terms (such as “rigorous”)
- Clearly articulate course expectations, including homework, projects, research, etc.
- Provide examples of the advanced nature of course materials, lessons and/or units
- Offer guidance as to math and/or reading level prerequisites (such as Lexile)
- Define how pacing will be accelerated
- Highlight how students will be working within and across disciplines
- Describe how students, parents, teachers and administration are held accountable in all aspects of the course

Professional Learning Communities Worksheet: What Makes Honors Different?*

| Pace | Regular | Honors |
|---|---------|--------|
| How much time is spent reviewing at the beginning of the year? | | |
| How are homework and assignments differentiated? | | |
| How much time is spent on teacher-directed instruction? | | |
| How much time is spent on student-led questioning? | | |
| How are essential questions used in the class? | | |
| In what ways are materials differentiated? | | |
| Choose at least three representative chapters: How many days are spent on those chapters? | | |
| Choose at least three representative topics: How many teacher-led examples are there before students work independently? | | |

| Complexity | Regular | Honors |
|--|---------|--------|
| Choose a few representative topics: Give specific examples of the most difficult homework assignments on similar topics offered in regular and honors, and discuss how they are differentiated ♦ | | |
| Choose a few representative topics: Give specific examples of problems/questions that show the differing levels of abstraction between regular and honors ♦ | | |

| Depth | Regular | Honors |
|--|---------|--------|
| Choose a few representative topics: Give examples that show to what extent students learn discipline-specific theories and vocabulary . | | |
| Choose a few representative topics: Give examples that demonstrate to what extent students have to apply learning in new situations . | | |

Accountability Chart

| | Strong Evidence | Some Evidence | Little Evidence | No Evidence |
|--|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Course Description: Highlights | | | | |
| The difference between an honors and regular course | | | | |
| The enhanced/enriched learning environment | | | | |
| How the content is extended beyond the core curriculum | | | | |
| The use of advanced levels of independence in learning | | | | |
| The need for sophisticated, advanced levels of thinking, performance, and intellectual | | | | |
| Instruction: Pace is accelerated | | | | |
| More time on higher levels of information | | | | |
| Instruction through big ideas | | | | |
| Use of descriptive feedback | | | | |
| Use of advanced levels of questioning | | | | |
| Less teacher directed and more student directed | | | | |
| Curriculum: Content is deep and complex | | | | |
| Students work as disciplinarians | | | | |
| Students are solving authentic problems | | | | |
| Students are creating authentic products that have value to others | | | | |
| Students are generating further questions beyond those offered by the teacher | | | | |
| Materials are rich in language of the discipline | | | | |
| Classroom discussions go beyond recall of facts to complex analysis of information/arguments or thesis development | | | | |
| Issues are relevant, ambiguous, and provocative | | | | |
| Assessments are authentic and produce products with value to others | | | | |
| Students are encouraged to develop learning | | | | |
| Students are developing advanced levels of self-regulation | | | | |

