

Middle School Pre-Advanced Placement Program Frequently Asked Questions

1. What are Pre-Advanced Placement (Pre-AP) courses?

Pre-AP courses are on-grade level academically advanced courses designed to challenge motivated students to understand rigorous content. The coursework requires students to engage in independent and analytical assignments and to complete a substantial amount of work outside of class. McKinney ISD offers Pre-AP courses in English, math, science, and social studies. The curricula for the courses are built on the core academic curriculum following the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) expectations for each course.

Pre-AP middle school courses are designed to prepare students for high school Pre-AP and Advanced Placement (AP) courses. AP courses are college-level courses taught in a high school setting. At the end of each AP course an AP Exam is given. Qualifying scores on the AP exams can enable students to receive college credit and/or advanced standing at a university or college.

2. What Pre-AP courses are available in MISD for the 2008-2009 school year?

6th grade: Math only

7th and 8th grades: English, math, science and social studies

3. Why is math the only Pre-AP course offered for 6th grade students?

Sixth grade students are at an age level where their thinking is still primarily concrete rather than at the abstract, analytical level needed for advanced courses. Inappropriate placement of many sixth grade students in Pre-AP classes has led to their remaining in the Pre-AP program throughout middle school where they were less successful in mastering critical foundational skills because of the depth or pace of the classes. These students often were unsuccessful in high school Pre-AP classes.

The decision to continue to offer a 6th grade Pre-AP math course came about because of necessity, not because it is easier to identify students. The content of each Pre-AP math course is actually different than the content in the on-grade-level math course. In other words, in order to accelerate through the curriculum to take an AP math course in high school, Pre-AP math students must learn more content in middle school. English, science, and social studies courses do not require accelerated (or different) curriculum. Acceleration of content in middle school Pre-AP courses also allows for better correlation of high school science courses with their required math courses.

The committee investigating and proposing the middle school changes also looked at the Pre-AP programs in surrounding districts. Some of those programs are listed below.

Frisco: Only math and ELAR Pre-AP in 6th grade, Math, ELAR and science in 7th and 8th grades

Plano: Only Honors math in 6th grade Math, ELAR, and science in 7th and 8th grades

Allen: 6th grade is still in elementary school—no Pre-AP courses Math, ELAR, science, and social studies in 7th and 8th grades

Richardson: 6th grade is still in elementary school—no Pre-AP courses Math, ELAR, science, and social studies in 7th and 8th grades

4. What provision will be in place for more advanced learners in 6th grade English, science, and social studies courses?

Heterogeneously grouped 6th grade classrooms will allow teachers to develop and implement a rigorous differentiated curriculum for all students. Classroom instruction will concentrate on developing essential foundational skills and concepts. The 6th grade teachers will receive professional development training in differentiation strategies beginning in the spring and summer of 2007.

5. Will the lack of 6th grade Pre-AP English, science, and social studies courses affect students' preparation for high school AP courses in these areas?

There will be no negative impact on students' high school coursework. A strong focus on content skills and concepts will help ensure that all 6th grade students have the critical foundation for advanced classes in middle school and high school.

6. Are there entry criteria for enrolling in Pre-AP courses?

McKinney ISD offers open enrollment for Pre-AP courses. Students who experience success in Pre-AP courses typically exhibit the following personal and academic characteristics.

Personal Characteristics:

- Reading on or above grade level
- Strong study skills and self-motivation
- Proficient oral and written communications skills
- Self-discipline to plan, organize, and carry out tasks to completion
- Interest and self-directedness in a particular subject

Academic Characteristics:

- Successful completion of prerequisite coursework
 - o Grade of 90 or higher in an academic class
 - o Grade of 80 or higher in a Pre-AP class
 - o Report card scores of 3's or 4's for entering 6th grade students
- Successful performance in related content area courses (Example: math and science or English and social studies)
- Teacher recommendation
- Scores at the commended level on the most recent TAKS test closely related to the Pre-AP course being considered

7. How many Pre-AP courses should a student take?

Students are encouraged to take Pre-AP courses that are appropriate to their interests and academic strengths. The number of Pre-AP courses also varies with students' motivation, self-discipline, and available time outside of class. Students are not expected to enroll in Pre-AP courses in all core subject areas.

8. Must a student take Pre-AP courses in order to be prepared for college?

All academic courses in MISD offer appropriate instruction to prepare students for college or university work. Many MISD students without Pre-AP and AP coursework successfully complete college educations.

9. What is the purpose of the contracts for Pre-AP courses?

The contracts describe general course expectations and the entrance and exit guidelines for Pre-AP courses. Signatures of parents and students on the contracts are verification that they are familiar with and agree to follow the standards and general expectations for Pre-AP courses.

10. What are the exit and probation guidelines for Pre-AP courses?

If a student has a class average below 80, he/she is placed on probation for a three-week period, during which time the grade must be brought back up to 80 or the student will be exited from the course. A student whose grade average remains below 80 in a Pre-AP class will benefit more from the academic class in that subject than from the Pre-AP class where the student is falling behind because of the pace or depth of the course content.

Additional information on the middle school Pre-AP program is available from the middle school counselors and administrators.

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