

FAQ:

Honors, AP, GATE & Advanced Math in SFUSD

Q: Will my child be eligible for competitive colleges and universities if he/she attends an SF public school?

A: SFUSD provides the courses necessary for admission to competitive colleges and universities. All SFUSD students must complete a sequence of a-g approved courses, those courses identified by the University of California (UC) as meeting the requirements for entry to a UC or California State University. High achievement in these courses -- along with SAT and ACT scores and a well-rounded application that demonstrates leadership, creativity and other skills and dispositions sought after by colleges -- SFUSD students are getting into a range of colleges, including the most selective colleges and universities. Over the last five years, 63 percent of SFUSD graduates have been accepted to college, including Harvard, Princeton, and Stanford.

Q: Are high school students able to take Advanced Placement classes?

A: SFUSD continues to offer a large number of AP classes.

Approximately 31 percent of SFUSD high school students took an AP exam in 2014-15, compared with approximately 17 percent of high school students nationwide.

A total of 68.8 percent of 2015 AP exams taken by SFUSD students earned a qualifying score of 3, 4, or 5, compared with 57.9 percent of exams taken by students nationwide.

Further, as currently configured, AP classes are offered at a considerable cost to the district as SFUSD provides assistance to all students to pay for AP exams and subsidizes an additional prep for every AP teacher at an annual expense of about \$5.4 million. (Neither is required by local, state or federal policies.)

Q: What is happening with “Honors” track classes?

A: There are no middle school honors tracks. With Common Core, SFUSD is transforming teaching and learning in every classroom, not just some classrooms, and not just for some students. Our new core curriculum provides rich content and rigor.

In the past, honors classes never had a different curriculum than other classes and there were no consistent criteria across SFUSD for honors vs. non-honors classes. Putting students in segregated classrooms didn't mean they were getting better instruction. Our students are in heterogeneous classrooms where teachers can provide personalized learning as well as group

learning that alternates between homogenous and heterogeneous ability grouping depending on the lesson.

Some high schools continue to offer Honors sections of English Language Arts. Currently, only one high school (RASOTA) offers an Honors version of English 9, and several other high schools offer an Honors version of English 10. Starting just this year, the UC/CSU system will permit Grade 10 Honors courses to count in students' GPA calculations once courses are reviewed and approved by UC.

Q: What is happening to the Gifted and Talented (GATE) program?

A: GATE is not a mandatory program, and the district receives no funds from the state that are earmarked for this purpose. When the CST was suspended (the major source of data to identify a student as GATE) the district also suspended new GATE identifications and has been analyzing how to best identify and serve its gifted students. SFUSD staff recently presented to the Curriculum Committee an additional set of GATE-related concepts, including different methods for identification and different services models.

Q: Why is Algebra 1 no longer offered in middle school?

A: The new math sequence replaces Algebra 1 in all middle schools with a Common Core aligned Math 8 class. The class contains many of the concepts included in the previous Algebra course.

When transitioning to Common Core, SFUSD offered students the opportunity to demonstrate their mathematical understanding of the content in Math 8 and Algebra 1 by offering a one-time Grade 9 math placement test to permit qualifying ninth graders to take Geometry. This test was only administered in 2015 to account for the change in course sequence and will not be administered again.

Q: Will my child be able to take Advanced Placement Calculus?

A: In SFUSD's Math Course Sequence, students may take AP Calculus after they have successfully completed the Algebra 2/Precalculus compression in Grade 11. In addition, some students are choosing to "double-up" on math by taking Geometry simultaneously with an Algebra course during their freshman year of high school. This is permissible within this new course sequence. These students will be able to take AP Calculus earlier than their senior year.

Q: Will my child be able to take Advanced Placement Physics?

A: SFUSD has made no decision related to AP Physics, or the high school science course sequence.

Currently, a Response and Development (R&D) team made up of about 40 teachers has been working this year to consider the question of Grade 9 science. Right now, schools make their own decisions about the Grade 9 science course it offers: Biology, Conceptual Physics, Earth Science, Physiology, and Biotech 1 are all offered as freshman science, depending on the school.