

Dear Students and Parents:

As students get ready to register for fall semester classes, it is important to think about a few things in order to make the best choices. Our goal is to provide the best education for each student based on a core of knowledge and individual strengths and interests. CdM provides a variety of courses to achieve that goal and student academic pathways are as individual as the students themselves. We hope students and their parents will seriously consider the following factors:

1. **Balance** – Students need to have balance in their lives. This should include academics (class time and studying), extracurriculars (athletics, clubs, community service, music, drama, work, etc.), social life (family and friends) and personal time (reading, thinking, relaxing).
2. **Sleep, Food, Exercise** – The average high school student needs eight hours of sleep each night in order to stay healthy, alert and happy. Students should also have at least three healthy meals and some physical activity each day.
3. **Time** – With eight hours of sleep and six to seven hours at school each weekday, students have roughly nine or ten remaining hours for homework and studying, extracurriculars, social life, family activities and personal time.

We hope that students and parents are considering these factors when selecting classes, especially Advanced Placement (AP) and Honors classes. AP classes are considered college level courses and require more extensive reading, homework and studying than a College Prep class. Honors classes are also more rigorous and require more time and effort. Any AP or Honors course should be selected because the student has the academic capability, interest in the class and time for the work required. The ultimate motive for taking an AP or Honors class should be satisfying intellectual curiosity not peer pressure, competition or college admissions.

**Myth #1 – You will not be accepted to a good college unless you have lots of AP and/or Honors classes.**

Colleges always like to see AP and Honors courses on a transcript if the student has earned an A or a B. That said, colleges also prefer fewer rigorous classes done well over a lot of them done average or poorly. Corona del Mar HS offers many AP and Honors classes, but that does not mean students must take them all or even a majority of them to get accepted to college. There are many great colleges that will accept students with one or two AP and/or Honors classes or even none at all.

**Myth #2 – You can easily go from one AP class sophomore year to four AP classes junior year.**

This would be similar to running one mile on Monday and feeling ready to run 10 miles on Tuesday. Yes, there are some natural athletes that can do this without harm. Similarly, we have a very small number of highly capable students that can handle going from one AP to four AP's, but the vast majority of our students can't and shouldn't. Many juniors also have extracurricular activities that put added pressure on

their time and energy. If students are over scheduled and under prepared, they don't do well on much of anything. We want to keep them happy and healthy both physically and mentally.

**Myth #3 – You must take five AP classes senior year to be considered for admission at the highly selective colleges.**

Those colleges want to know that students they accept can meet the academic rigor they require. Extra APs senior year are no guarantee for proving that and, in fact, may work against them with poor mid-year reports. Colleges also have standardized test scores, teacher and counselor recommendations, essays and GPAs to consider. Don't be too busy with academics senior year to spend the needed time on your applications letting the colleges know what an interesting, unique and capable person you are.

**Myth #4 – You can take the rigorous classes (AP and Honors) and get a tutor to survive.**

Students in AP and Honors classes need to be authentic matches for those classes and able to do their own work. To see if a class is a good match, find students with your academic level and extracurricular demands that are currently in those AP or Honors classes and ask for their advice. You can also contact the AP or Honors teacher for information about the academic rigor and time needed for the course.

Please help us in finding the right match and balance in your class schedule and in your life. We want happy, healthy and successful students at Corona del Mar HS.

The CdM High School Counseling Department & College Programs Coordinator