



Choosing Among Advanced High School Options

High school students have a plethora of options to customize their learning path. It can be overwhelming at times to decide which options are the best fit. It is important to remember that a gifted student does not need to utilize ALL of them to get a great education. The “best” option or combination of options will be different for each learner. Below is a chart outlining the specifics of multiple opportunities a high school student might pursue. This is helpful when weighing the various choices. Information about accessing the [Eastland-Fairfield Career Center](#) is included. Although not a gifted service, it may be a good fit for gifted learners with specialized interests.

	Honors Courses	Advanced Placement	College Credit Plus	Credit Flexibility	Career Center
<i>Typical length of course</i>	Full year	Full year	Semester (half year)	Varies	1-2 years
<i>Development of curriculum</i>	Created by GJPS staff based on state and national standards	Created by College Board, a national organization, to emulate typical freshmen level university courses	Created by individual universities/ instructors	Outlined by student in alignment with course syllabus for typical course	Created by Eastland-Fairfield Career Center based on various state and national credentials and certifications.
<i>Typical instructor</i>	High school staff member	High school staff member	University instructor	No direct instruction – supervised/ evaluated by high. school staff member	EFCC staff member or industry professional
<i>Training/ certification of instructor</i>	Ohio teaching license, Gifted & Talented professional development	Ohio teaching license, Advanced Placement training, Gifted & Talented professional development	Graduate degree in content area	N/A	Ohio teaching license, industry credentials
<i>Enrollment process</i>	Schedule with school counselor	Schedule with school counselor	Participate in CCP counseling by March 31, letter of intent to school counselor by April 1, follow university application and registration process and timelines	Complete application with counselor. Deadlines vary per semester. See school counselor for details.	Apply online at the EFCC website beginning in December of sophomore year

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<i>Prerequisites for enrollment</i>	Interest and/or advanced academic skills	Interest and/or advanced academic skills	Acceptable score, on college readiness, test designated by college, university acceptance	Preparation of required plan, approval of department	Sophomore, full junior status when courses begin, minimum 4 credits earned toward graduation by fall of sophomore year, competitive GPA, attendance rate >90%, limited discipline history
<i>Location of course</i>	High school	High school	University campus or online	Student's choice	Eastland-Fairfield Career Center or satellite campus
<i>How credit is awarded</i>	High school credit based on successful completion of course	High school credit based on successful completion of course, possible college credit based on score of 3 or greater on official end of course AP exam	High school and college credit based on successful completion of course	High school credit based on fulfilling criteria set in individual plan, no college credit available	High school credit based on successful completion of course, college credit may be available for specific courses (see EFCC for details)
<i>Impact on high school transcript</i>	Listed with grade and credit hours awarded, extra value for high grades, impacts high school GPA	Listed with grade and credit hours awarded, extra value for high grades, impacts high school GPA	Listed with grade and credit hours awarded, extra value for high grades, impacts high school GPA	Listed with grade and credit hours awarded, impacts high school GPA	Listed with grade and credit hours awarded, impacts high school GPA
<i>Impact on college transcript</i>	N/A	Listed with credit hours if test passed, no impact on college GPA	Listed with grade and credit hours awarded, impacts college GPA	N/A	Varies by course if college credit is available (see EFCC for details)
<i>Transferability of credit</i>	N/A	Credit accepted at all state universities and many public/private universities nationally	Most credits from public universities accepted at all state public universities; others vary at discretion of receiving college	N/A	Varies by course if college credit is available (see EFCC for details)

Consider these questions when planning:

1. *Does the student have a career goal in mind? If so, what area(s) of study is considered?*
Implications – A student with a more vague idea of what to study may want to consider educational settings that offer exposure to a range of content matter. Advanced coursework should aim to prepare for and/or complete freshman level prerequisites that would apply to a variety of majors. A student with a very specific idea of future pursuits may want to try out courses that align to that field of study to ensure that is really what will satisfy him/her as a career field in the future.
2. *What type of high school experience does the student envision? Consider the academic, social, and extracurricular experiences desired.*
Implications – A student desiring a more traditional high school experience may want to focus on opportunities offered on site at the high school or online in order to remain at the school location and maximize involvement in school activities. A student with a strong desire to make the most of multiple athletics or other extracurricular options will want to consider those things when scheduling advanced course options. If the student is focused primarily on academics and nurtures friendships primarily outside of the school setting, off-site options may be more reasonable.
3. *How does each option align to the student's academic skills and need for challenge?*
Implications – Students who are gifted do not possess a universal readiness for all advanced courses. Every student has their own profile of strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, not all advanced courses have the same level of rigor built in. Students who are particularly strong in a subject area may find the thinking skills embedded in AP courses more aligned to their readiness and learning needs than an entry level college course. Other students with passion in a very specific domain may find CCP courses or a career pathway offer the best options aligned to that interest. Similarly, students may need advanced course options for some subjects in their area of strength and traditional high school courses for those subjects in which the student may not be as advanced.
5. *Does the student have a future college or other school in mind? If so, what are their policies for transfer credit?*
Implications – The state of Ohio requires publicly-funded state universities and colleges to accept credit earned with qualifying scores on AP tests or earned through CCP. However, the same does not apply to private colleges or out of state schools. Be sure to check with admissions offices of schools of interest to see what types of credit they will accept for transfer and the ability of those credits to count toward degree requirements. (Some schools will accept the credits as electives but not count them toward a degree.)
6. *What is the student's level of maturity and independence?*
Implications – A student who needs more direction and guidance will likely benefit from options offered within the middle or high school as opposed to those off-site. Consider also the length of courses (semester versus year-long) in terms of timeframe for mastering content and gaining teacher support. Students who are very independent problem solvers and are able to manage their work and time efficiently may be successful with programs that are not embedded within the school.
7. *What is the family's desired level of involvement?*
Implications – Family members who want to be more involved in their child's academic pursuits and have interactions with instructors may be more comfortable in traditional educational settings than in off-site programs or those managed by universities.

8. *Is the student expecting to participate in college athletics in the future?*

Implications – Students can earn college credit as high schoolers and still engage in collegiate sports, but the number of credits may impact eligibility throughout the college years. Families will need to weigh the need for advanced coursework against the likelihood and importance of collegiate athletics.

9. *If the goal is to earn college credit early, what is the plan for the “bought time” during the college years?*

Implications – Utilizing college credit bearing options should have a purpose for the future, as well as meet a present need. Maybe the goal is to get pre-requisites out of the way to allow time for a student with many interests to explore different majors within the traditional 4-year time span. Maybe the goal is to finish an undergraduate degree early to move on to graduate school. If there is no plan, consider what options may be realistic following an early college graduation given the student's age and maturity.

Things to keep in mind:

- What is right for one student may not be the right thing for another. This applies to siblings, friends, neighbors, and the “I heard about someone who....”
- Just because something IS an option doesn't mean it is the right option. Some students will benefit more from utilizing one as opposed to trying to use it all.
- There are always tradeoffs to any choice made, as it is not possible to choose everything and have it all work together perfectly. Consider the non-negotiables and determine what the student and family are willing to give up to gain the benefits of a different option.
- When planning the schedule, be sure to balance the student's need for academic challenge, academic support, personal interests and goals, social-emotional wellness, and physical health. Learning to find life balance now will help the student lead a healthy and balanced life after high school.