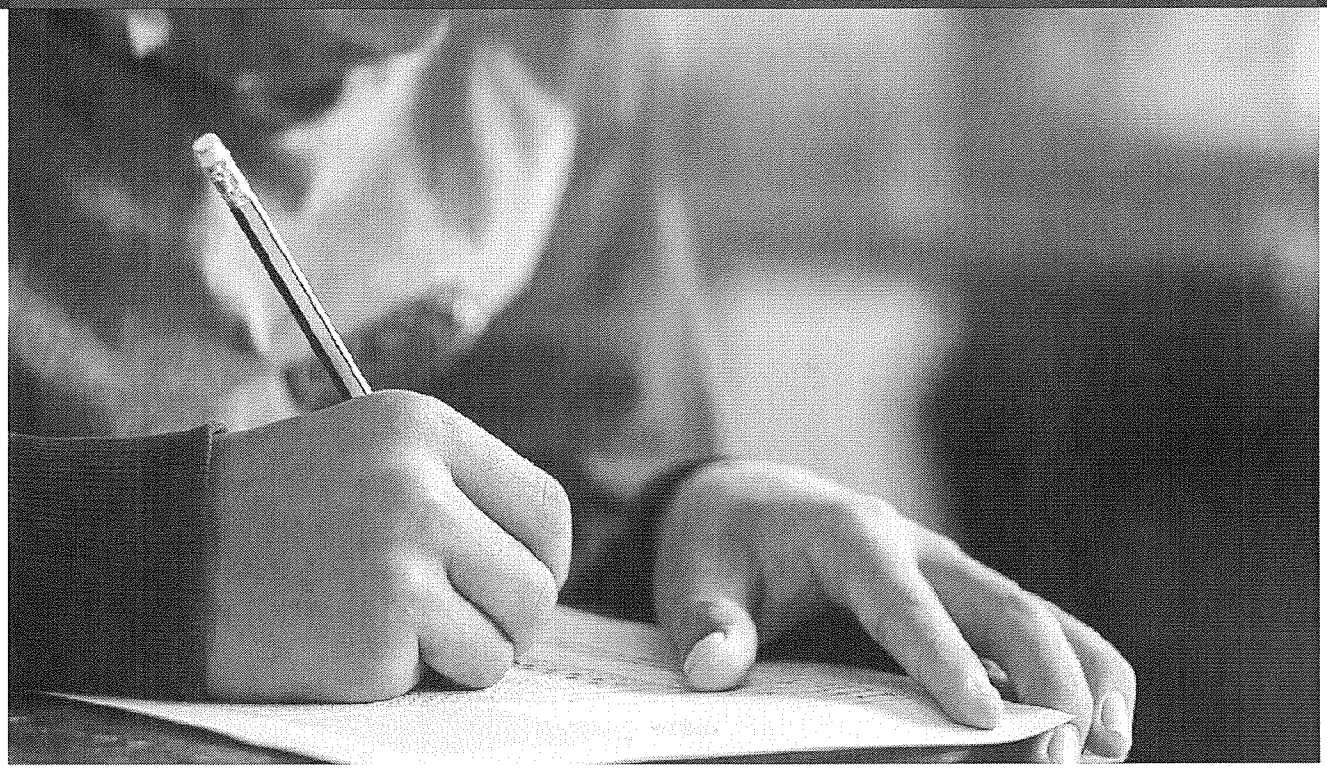
# CCP or AP classes: What should students take?



*The College Credit Plus program and Advanced Placement courses both are excellent options to choose from. However, depending on students' situations and what they have planned for the future, one can be more beneficial than the other.*

*Ambreen Hasan, Mentor EV board member*

To be CCP or to be AP, that is the question. Many high-achieving students ask themselves this in middle and high school. Students need to explore both options to answer this perplexing question.

**What are CCP classes?**
College Credit Plus (CCP) classes allow middle and high school students to take classes at their local college to begin earning college credit while still in school. Students can start taking these classes in the seventh grade to earn college and high school credits simultaneously. Previously called Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO), it then was only an option for students in the 10th, 11th and 12th grades. These classes are typically held at local community colleges; however, some high schools also offer CCP classes in their buildings.

**What are AP classes?**
Advanced Placement (AP) classes allow high school students to take advanced classes at their school to earn college credit. Usually recommended for high performers, they are standardized high school courses organized by the College Board, which also runs the SAT. To earn AP high school and college credit, students have to pass a final exam. Students can receive college credit if they score a three, four or five on the examination, with five being the highest score. Spanning 34 subjects in total, even though not all schools may offer every class, AP classes offer a wide range to explore.

**CCP or AP: What is right for you?**
Both CCP and AP classes help students earn college credit while in school. They allow students to get a head start on college and help pave the road for their future. Earning college

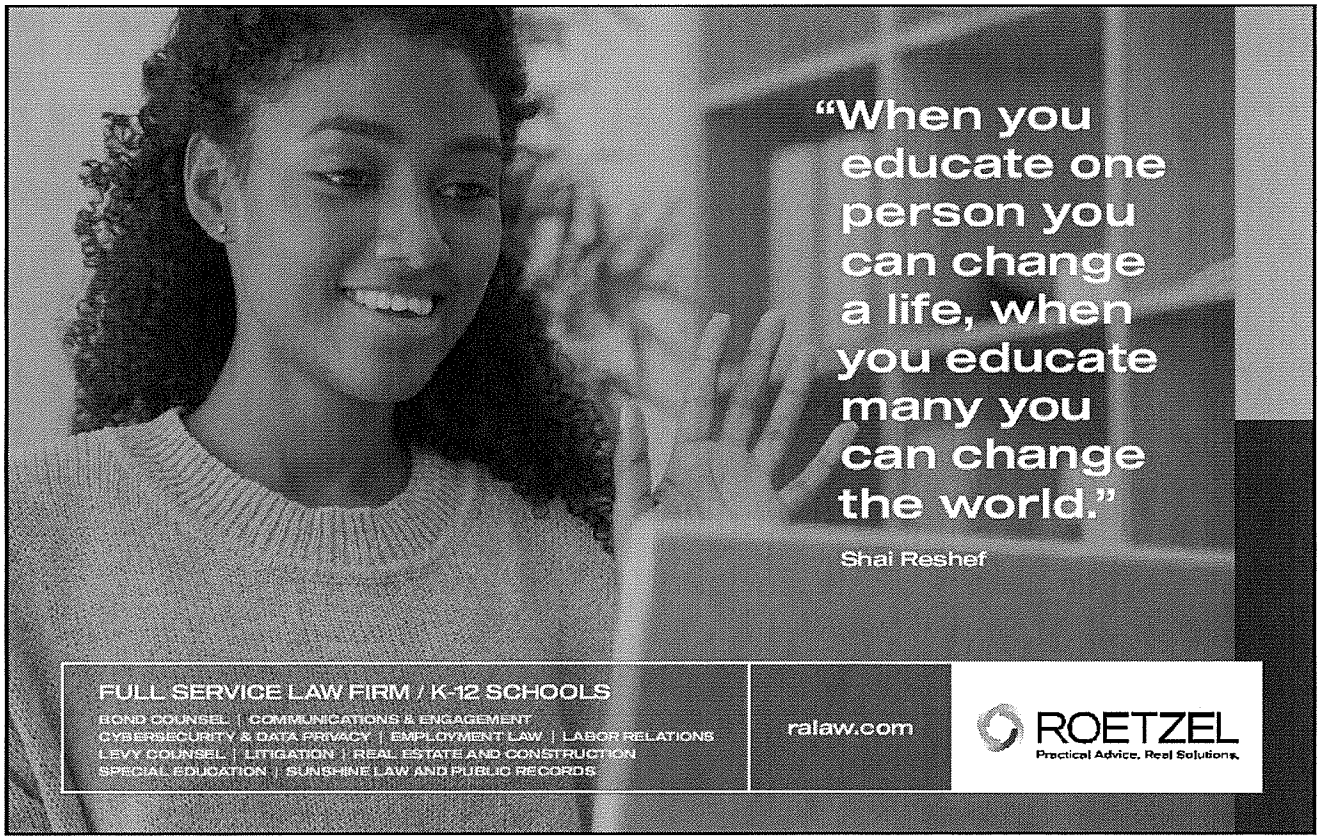
credit in middle and high school can potentially lead them to graduate with a high school diploma and an associate degree concurrently. Both are great additions to a student's transcripts, but they have their own pros and cons. Selecting the right option is the key to the right career path. Since "one size does not fit all," counselors and parents need to sit down with their students to help them decide the right option for them.

**CCP: Pros and cons**

Saving time and money are the two main benefits for students who take CCP classes. When taking a CCP class, students don't have to pay for college expenses, such as tuition, books and supplies; it is typically paid by the state instead. If they take the same course after they graduate from high school, however, they would have to pay the normal tuition. Additionally, students will be saving time if they decide to go to an in-state public institution. The credits will be transferred and less work and energy will be put into earning a degree.

For example: Olivia wants to become a nurse and is interested in earning her nursing degree from Ohio State University. She is confused about whether to opt for CCP or AP classes. For her, CCP may be a better way to go. Not only do her credits transfer, since Ohio State is a public in-state college, she'll be able to graduate early, thus saving a lot of time. By the time she graduates from high school, she may already have completed a majority of the prerequsites, or even half of her bachelor's degree requirements. It will also help her earn her degree at a lower cost.

| CCP classes | |
|---|---|
| **Pros** | **Cons** |
| Earn college credit concurrent with high school credit | Private and out-of-state colleges may not accept the credit |
| Saves money as students don't have to pay for college credit | Bad scores affect both high school and college transcripts |
| Saves time toward earning college degree | Must arrange own transportation since classes held at local colleges |
| | No parent and teacher communication |
| | Age gap with other students in the class |
| | Inappropriate course content |
| | College-like responsibilities |



However, CCP might not be the best option for students who want to attend an Ivy League, other out-of-state universities or private colleges. A majority of prestigious private colleges do not accept CCP credits, and students might have to retake the classes. CCP credits also are not accepted outside of Ohio, even at public institutions. If the student doesn't perform well in the class, resulting in a lowered overall GPA, it will impact both their high school and college transcripts.

In addition, regardless if they're in middle or high school, they still have college-like responsibilities, including arranging rides to the school, meeting professors, talking with counselors and other obligations. Therefore, parents likely never get to meet or see the instructors and are put backstage by default.

Another thing to keep in mind is that most CCP classes are usually held at local community colleges, where a majority of the students are nontraditional, older students. This can be an unfriendly environment and some students may find it uncomfortable sitting next to older students, and some classroom conversations may be inappropriate for them. College-level courses have more mature content as they are developed mainly for college-age students. Therefore, it is important for parents to evaluate if their child is ready for college-level responsibilities and the environment.

**AP: Pros and cons**

If you're planning to go to an Ivy League or other prestigious college or university, AP is your best bet. Around 99% of colleges accept AP credit, which includes private and out-of-state institutions. For example, Jack is inclined toward pursuing an engineering degree from an Ivy League school, preferable Yale University. Will AP classes help him more than CCP classes? Absolutely, but he has to earn a score of four out of five on the final exam. AP courses are the right guide for him, as they are universally transferred.

Students can check universities' websites to see the list of accepted AP credits and grade requirements. Students in Ohio who score at least a three on an AP exam are guaranteed college credit at any Ohio public institution of higher education, according to the Ohio Department of Higher Education's website. They'll be in a class at their own school with other high-achieving students. Consequently, students may be more comfortable in AP classes.

Like CCP classes, AP classes also save time and money. AP classes are free except for the final exam fee, which still makes it cheaper than taking the course equivalent at a college after high school. Additionally, taking AP classes also increases the chances of getting scholarships in the future, resulting in earning a degree with little to no debt. By earning college credits in AP classes, students can work on their degrees while they're still in high school and graduate early.

However, AP classes have their own drawbacks. These classes typically are harder than CCP classes, and it can be more difficult to get the grades required for earning college credits. The passing grade in Ohio is a three out of five. However, many colleges accept only a score of four or five, and not all students always meet the requirements. Some colleges also have limits on how many AP credits they will accept, so not all credits might be put toward the degree, and some might not accept any credits at all. However, credits that aren't applied toward a degree can still be beneficial to a student's transcript because it proves that he or she has the ability to accept new challenges.

| AP classes | |
|---|---|
| **Pros** | **Cons** |
| Earn college credit concurrent with high school credit, contingent on passing the exam | The score must be within the requirement range of the college or else credit will not be given |
| Accepted by 99% of colleges | Some colleges do not accept certain or any AP courses for college credit |
| Courses are free to take | AP exams cost around $100 |
| Can lead to a scholarship | Harder than CCP |

Even though AP courses are free, the exams can cost around $100 and, for a student who takes multiple courses, the expense can add up quickly. AP classes usually start in high school, while CCP classes start in middle school. Therefore, CCP can help students accumulate more credits.

Both CCP and AP are targeted to earn college credits, but it depends on the students and their intended college and major. Both are excellent options to choose from, but to make the most beneficial decision, it all comes down to which one is a better fit. Depending on students' situations and what they have planned for their future, one can be more beneficial than the other.

Parents and counselors need to play an important role to help students decide the best career pathway. Writing down the pros and cons of each also can help students make a better decision. School counselors can be beacons for students and need to be knowledgeable and competent to provide proper guidance related to college credits. They should discuss advantages and disadvantages of each with students to help them make an informed decision. Ultimately, no matter what students choose, if they put their mind and heart into it, their hard work will pay off. ▪

*About the author*: Ambreen Hasan is in her first term as a Mentor EV Board of Education member. She is a business intelligence analyst at Signature Health Inc. and previously served as a research analyst at Lakeland Community College and Wright State University. She also was a contributing writer for the Hindustan Times and The Times of India.