



Garfield High School  
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Dear 9<sup>th</sup> grade parent and student,

There may be some “special” middle school courses that can be placed on your or your student’s high school transcript! There are some positives and negatives that I would like to explain before you make your decision to add or not add them to the student’s high school transcript.

Before I address the positive and negative consequences of this decision, it’s important to verify if any of these “special” courses were taken in middle school. “Special” courses appear on your student’s academic record with a course code that begins with “S”, for “special”! It may be SWL (special world language), SMA (special math), SSC (special science) or SSS (special social studies). If you see one or more of these courses, your student is eligible for high school credit.

The positives include getting an early start on credits for graduation. 20 credits are needed for graduation. Most students earn 24 or more, so the only reason to get an early start is if your student may want to get an “early finish” and graduate early. Another reason to get an early start is to gain early access to Running Start (coursework at the community college, while still in high school - RS). Students must have junior status to enroll in RS. This requires that they have 10 high school credits. Students can only be enrolled in RS for 6 quarters. Early access doesn’t mean more quarters, just the ability to start those quarters a year earlier.

The negatives may be more compelling. Any credit added to a high school transcript is accompanied by a grade that will contribute to the student’s high school grade point average. If they earned anything other than an “A”, you may not want it on their academic record. In addition, if a non-Honors (H) or non-Advanced Placement (AP) course is added, the student may risk having a lower rank in class than another student who chooses not to add middle school coursework. This is because in determining rank, Honors courses contribute an additional .5 of a point and AP courses an additional 1.0 point to the calculation. An “A” in a regular course contributes 4.0, while an “A” in an H course contributes a 4.5 and an “A” in an AP course contributes 5.0. Simply stated, all things being equal, a student will have a higher rank in the graduating class if they have a lower percentage of non-H and non-AP courses. If two students have all A’s but one student has more regular classes than the other, the one with more regular classes will have a lower rank, even if they take the same number of H and AP courses.

Both grade point average and rank have value to colleges during the admissions process. Colleges consider many variables but special attention should be paid to your student’s grade point average. In general, the higher the grade point average, the higher the rank. Selective colleges are looking for higher grade point average and rank.

Please complete and turn into the Counseling Office a copy of the attached form for each “Special” middle school course that you wish to add to your student’s high school academic record (transcript).

Sincerely,

Kenneth R. Courtney  
Counselor  
Garfield High School