

Good morning Chair Manning, Vice-Chair Bird, Ranking Member Robinson, and Members of the House Primary & Secondary Education Committee. My name is Nicole Parker, and I am an Ohio teacher. I am currently in my 30th year of teaching, and I have spent the past 20 years teaching English at New Richmond High School.

I'm so pleased to have the opportunity to speak to you today because I feel quite strongly about the College Credit Plus program in Ohio. While I agree that providing access to free college credit and dual enrollment classes for some of our high school students can be beneficial, I am concerned that we have not given equal consideration to the unintended impacts it can have on a high school.

What I have seen over the past five years at my high school is that more and more students are taking advantage of the College Credit Plus program. They do this for a variety of reasons, one of which is to pad their GPAs because they have found that more often than not, the courses they are taking through the CCP program are less rigorous than AP or even honors classes at our high school.

While I have heard this from many students, I have firsthand experience as well. My daughter chose to take CCP English at our local community college for her junior year. At the time she thought it was a good way to avoid taking English at the high school because she was leery of the teacher -- her mother. She soon discovered that the requirements for the CCP course were in fact much easier than the Honors English III class she was avoiding. She was able to complete the college course with minimal effort, and I am happy to say that she decided to take the leap and enroll in AP English for her senior year. She found that course to be much more challenging.

I hear this over and over from our students: It's easier. The college course doesn't require outside reading. We don't have to do vocabulary lessons. We get a full year's credit in just a semester. There is no exam we have to pass at the end.

I have never had a student tell me that he or she signed up for my AP English class because it's easier than another option. And yet they have been very successful -- in my class, on the exam, and perhaps most importantly, after they graduate.

In fact, research shows students who take AP courses and exams have better college outcomes than their peers. Even if they don't earn scores that qualify them for credit or placement, students who achieve AP Exam scores of 2:

- Are still more likely to attend college and graduate on time (than academically similar students who don't take AP)
- Do significantly better in introductory college classes (compared to academically similar students who don't take that corresponding AP Exam)
- Often earn a higher score on the subsequent AP Exams they take.

Even those students who do not earn credit from an AP class benefit from that class. Still, our AP numbers are dwindling. In 2016 I had 26 students in my AP class. In 2017, I had 19. In 2018, that number dropped to 9. Last year, it was 11.

This year? Well, this year is the first year that we have not offered AP English at my high school since 1989. This is a step backwards for our students. We also canceled Advanced English Composition and British Literature which were our honors-level English courses for seniors. Our students have learned and readily share the knowledge with their friends that taking the CCP class is an easier route and earns them equal weight toward their GPA. Why would they choose the more rigorous, challenging path?

When we take the very best students out of our high schools we are doing both them and their peers a disservice. We have seniors this year who are taking all online classes through the community college and not experiencing all of the privileges and activities that go along with being a senior. They weren't here for the pep rally or spirit week or senior breakfast. They aren't leading the class discussions on *Brave New World* or conducting experiments with their physics lab partner. Equally important, they aren't modeling good behavior and high standards to the new freshmen. We need this group of students to remain a vital part of our high school communities.

A final anecdote. In 2016 when this policy was implemented, the young man at the top of the graduating class was someone who had chosen to take all of his classes in our high school on our campus, including several AP classes and four years of high school band. He was involved in activities like the National Honor Society and the academic team. He was friendly and well-liked, and a great example to the other students in our building. A week or so before graduation he was notified that he would not, in fact, be the valedictorian. Instead, it was a student who had chosen to do full-time CCP for three years, thereby earning only honors credit for every class she took, avoiding those classes in high school such as band or choir or art or physical education or other electives that do not carry the honor's weight. Because of the change in the weighting of AP and CCP grades, that student would be recognized as valedictorian. And on that graduation day when she stood and gave what was a lovely speech, it was to an audience who hadn't seen her since middle school and to teachers she had never met.

Her accomplishment is still an impressive one, and I am thankful that students can benefit from the opportunity for free college credit. For students whose need for this financial boost outweighs their desire to pad their GPA, the experience will remain unchanged and beneficial. And in some cases, perhaps the highest category of grade weighting should include CCP courses. But that is a decision that should be left to the individual districts to make, best serving their students and their communities.

I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.