



Weighted Courses

Grades are assigned quality points, used as the basis for calculating a student's grade point average (GPA). In an unweighted class, an A earns 4.0 points. However, weighted courses add an additional .5 quality point for an honors course and a full 1.0 quality point for Advanced Placement (AP) courses. (Therefore, an A in an honors course would earn 4.5 points, and an A in an AP class would earn 5.0.) The fundamental rationale for weighting courses is to convey a higher level of rigor than a non-weighted course.

Students who wish to earn the highest possible weighted GPA recognize that they should take as many honors and AP classes as possible. It is impossible to take all-weighted classes because for VDOE graduation requirements, students must take some classes that are unweighted (such as Economics and Personal Finance, for example). In addition to these state requirements, students are aware that elective classes – such as the fine arts – are not presently weighted at CHS. This creates a tension for certain students who wish not only to attain the highest possible GPA but also to take classes that are interesting and rewarding.

According to Laura Thomas, Thomas Dale High School in Chesterfield offers weighted fine arts courses through their specialty center.

Some school divisions have an application process and criteria for designating courses as weighted. The department requesting the weighted courses must demonstrate the additional rigor of the course and how the course is different from an unweighted course.

Another approach is unleveled courses, which are becoming popular at CHS. In unleveled courses, students have the option of working for the higher weight. Additional assignments at a higher level of thinking as well as differentiated assessment items increase the course rigor. Students who complete the "honors" assignments and assessments earn the honors designation and an additional .5 point.

We are a flagship fine arts school division with a national and international reputation. We need to acknowledge that standing and offer weighted electives to students who want to pursue the additional rigor.