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AP[®] Seminar as English 10: Evidence on State ELA Assessment Performance

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Abstract

As districts seek ways to expand access to high-quality and relevant coursework without compromising accountability outcomes, this brief examines the relationship between enrollment in AP[®] Seminar as an English 10 course and student performance on state English Language Arts (ELA) assessments across multiple state and district contexts. Across 70,000 students in Kentucky, New York, and Texas, spanning diverse high school settings, we compare outcomes for students in AP Seminar with those in Advanced/Honors and On-Level English 10. In Kentucky, multilevel analyses that control for prior academic achievement and student- and school-level characteristics show that AP Seminar is associated with reading performance comparable to Advanced/Honors English 10 and higher than On-Level English 10 across achievement levels, with the magnitude of reading effects varying by students' prior achievement. AP Seminar is also associated with higher writing performance in Kentucky than both comparison courses, with consistent effects across achievement levels. Descriptive analyses from New York and Texas show similar patterns, with AP Seminar students meeting or exceeding state benchmarks at rates comparable to or higher than students in other English 10 courses. The findings suggest districts can expand access to rigorous coursework without compromising accountability outcomes.

Introduction

High schools nationwide are innovating English instruction to reflect how students learn, think, and communicate in today's rapidly changing world, with a focus on analytical reading, evidence-based writing, collaboration, and problem solving, all of which are central to college, career, and civic readiness. AP[®] Seminar supports this shift through an inquiry-based framework that complements and extends ELA standards. The course builds students' proficiency in close reading, analytical and argumentative writing, speaking and listening, and research-based inquiry, while offering teachers the flexibility to incorporate literary analysis and narrative writing. A distinguishing feature of AP Seminar is its emphasis on both individual and collaborative work. Through team-based assignments, students develop the ability to evaluate multiple perspectives and communicate effectively with diverse audiences. The AP Seminar assessment reflects this structure and includes both performance tasks and an end-of-course AP Exam.

Prior research indicates that AP Seminar students demonstrate stronger performance in subsequent AP English Language and AP English Literature courses and experience more positive college outcomes than comparable non-AP students (Jagesic, Ewing, Feng, & Wyatt, 2020).¹ These findings suggest that AP Seminar supports the development of ELA skills foundational to advanced coursework and postsecondary success.

High schools are increasingly adopting AP Seminar as their core English 10 option that fulfills graduation requirements. Between 2022 and 2025, AP Seminar enrollment more than doubled—from 81,831 to 181,204 students—with Grade 10 students now accounting for 67% of total enrollment. Additionally, 90% of states recognize AP Seminar as meeting a core English course graduation requirement.

As AP Seminar is adopted as a replacement for English 10, an important question emerges about student performance on state ELA assessments and English end-of-course (EOC) high school exams: ***Will students continue to perform comparably on state standardized exams if they take AP Seminar in place of a traditional English 10 course?*** This study examines the relationship between AP Seminar participation and student performance on state ELA assessments and English II EOC exams, focusing on whether students who enroll in AP Seminar as English 10 demonstrate performance outcomes comparable to those of students in Advanced/Honors English 10 and On-Level English 10 courses.

Data and Methodology

The analysis uses student-level data collected through partnerships with the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) and Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS), three public school districts in New York, and one public district in Texas. Kentucky represents a statewide implementation context, which launched in 2014, while the New York and Texas sites reflect district-level adoption of AP Seminar as an English 10 option in more recent years. These sites were selected because they have led efforts to implement AP Seminar as an English 10 course, resulting in sample sizes large enough to evaluate this policy change.

Participating sites provided all required data directly to the College Board through secure data exchanges. The primary data elements requested for this study included state ELA assessment scores, English 10

¹ To read full report see: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED603711>

course codes and titles (e.g., AP Seminar, Advanced/Honors English 10, On-Level English 10), and high school grade point average (HSGPA) at the end of 9th grade.² Availability of HSGPA data varied by site. Two New York districts (District A and C) were unable to provide HSGPA data, while the Texas district calculates GPA beginning at the end of Grade 10 and provided that data; therefore, prior GPA was not used at that site. Some sites also provided demographic data, including race and gender. Table 1 provides sample size information by site and course type.

Table 1. Student Analytic Sample by Site and Course Type

Site	AP Seminar (N)	Advanced/Honors English 10 (N)	On-Level English 10 (N)	Total (N)	% with HSGPA
Kentucky (Statewide)	2,168	16,686	45,527	64,381	96.71
New York District A	154	126	443	723	n/a
New York District B	182	257	544	983	94.30
New York District C	191	79	161	431	n/a
Texas District	604	1,204	1,796	3,604	100.00

Note: The Texas district provided Grade 10 GPA, whereas New York District B and Kentucky provided Grade 9 GPA.

These data were supplemented with information from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to obtain high-school–level characteristics, including urbanicity, enrollment size, percent underrepresented minority (URM), and percent eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL). Table 2 summarizes the number of participating high schools at each site, along with their modal location, mean enrollment, mean percent URM, and mean percent FRPL. As shown, sites vary across each of these characteristics, reflecting a diverse set of school contexts that strengthens the breadth and generalizability of the study.

² English course data provided by KYSTATS reflected schools across the entire state and hundreds of unique English course titles. While AP Seminar has a designated state course code, consistent indicators for Advanced/Honors and On-Level courses do not exist within Kentucky’s course system. Therefore, a combination of course code, course name, and honors description variables was used to create the course groupings,

Table 2. Public School Context Characteristics by Site

Site	Number of High Schools	Modal School Location	Mean Enrollment	Mean % URM	Mean % FRPL
Kentucky (Statewide)	265	Rural	734	19.99%	59.25%
New York District A	4	Suburban	801	62.86%	42.43%
New York District B	1	Suburban	2,648	77.45%	55.61%
New York District C	1	Suburban	1,700	7.24%	14.22%
Texas District	5	Suburban	2,001	63.81%	55.59%

Note. Although the Texas district provided data from five schools, the characteristics reported in this table reflect four schools. NCES data were available for only four schools due to the recent opening of one school.

Analyses were conducted separately by state and district because data elements, assessments, and sample sizes varied across sites, and pooled analyses would have been dominated by a single large site. **Table 3** summarizes the assessments used in the analysis, including administration timing, proficiency definitions, score ranges, and years of available data.

Table 3. State Assessment Information by Site

Site	State ELA Assessment Name	Grade Administered	Proficiency Definition	Score Scale Range	Years of Assessment Data
Kentucky (Statewide)	Kentucky Summative Assessment (KSA), Reading	Grade 10, (Spring)	Proficient defined as 513-600	400-600	Spring 2023 & 2024
	Kentucky Summative Assessment (KSA), Writing	Grade 11 (Spring)	Proficient defined as 505-600	400-600	Spring 2024 & 2025
New York District A	New York State Regents Examination, ELA	Grade 11 (Spring)	Proficient defined as ELA score ≥ 65	0-100	Spring 2023 & 2024
New York District B	New York State Regents Examination, ELA	Grade 11 (Spring)	Proficient defined as ELA score ≥ 65	0-100	Spring 2023 & 2024
New York District C	New York State Regents Examination, ELA	Grade 11 (Spring)	Proficient defined as ELA score ≥ 65	0-100	Spring 2024
Texas District	State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR), English II EOC	Grade 10, (Spring)	Proficient defined as ELA score $\geq 44\%$	0-100	Spring 2024 & 2025

Note. The STAAR assessment reports both scale scores and scores reported on a 0–100 percentile scale. The percentile scale was used for all analyses in this report. Percentile scores of 44 or higher correspond to the proficiency threshold.

Across all sites, descriptive analyses were conducted to compare outcomes for students enrolled in AP Seminar as English 10 with those of students enrolled in Advanced/Honors English 10 and On-Level English 10. These analyses examined the proportion of students meeting or exceeding locally defined assessment benchmarks and on average assessment performance.

When available, variation in outcomes was examined after accounting for prior achievement, as measured by HSGPA. At district sites with available HSGPA, analyses involved grouping students into categories based on reported HSGPA and evaluating average assessment performance by course type and HSGPA category. At the statewide site, where a larger sample size permitted more detailed modeling, we estimated multilevel linear regression models to examine differences in average assessment scores by course type, controlling for 9th grade HSGPA as well as other student-level characteristics (gender and race) and school-level characteristics (urbanicity, enrollment size, percent underrepresented minority, and percent eligible for free or reduced-price lunch).

Results

Kentucky

Kentucky is the largest site included in this analysis, comprising 265 public high schools statewide. Schools are predominantly rural, with a mean enrollment of approximately 734 students. On average, approximately 20% of students are from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups, and approximately 59% are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, indicating a student population with diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

In Kentucky, high school students complete two statewide English language arts assessments as part of the Kentucky Summative Assessments (KSA): a reading assessment administered at the end of Grade 10 (KSA Reading) and a writing assessment administered at the end of Grade 11 (KSA Writing). This structure enables examination of how English 10 placement relates to both reading performance in the same academic year and writing performance in the subsequent year. The analyses that follow describe differences in assessment outcomes across English course types, with particular attention to variation by prior academic achievement.

Figure 1 presents the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the ELA state assessment benchmark on KSA Reading and KSA Writing by English 10 course type. For reading, 87% of AP Seminar students met or exceeded the benchmark, compared with 73% of Advanced/Honors English 10 students and 36% of students in On-Level English 10. A similar pattern is observed for writing, where 78% of AP Seminar students met or exceeded the benchmark, compared with 65% of Advanced/Honors English 10 students and 35% of students in On-Level English 10. Across both content areas, students enrolled in AP Seminar as English 10 demonstrate consistently higher benchmark attainment relative to other English 10 placements.

Figure 1: Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding the KSA Reading and Writing Benchmark by Level of English 10 Course (Kentucky)

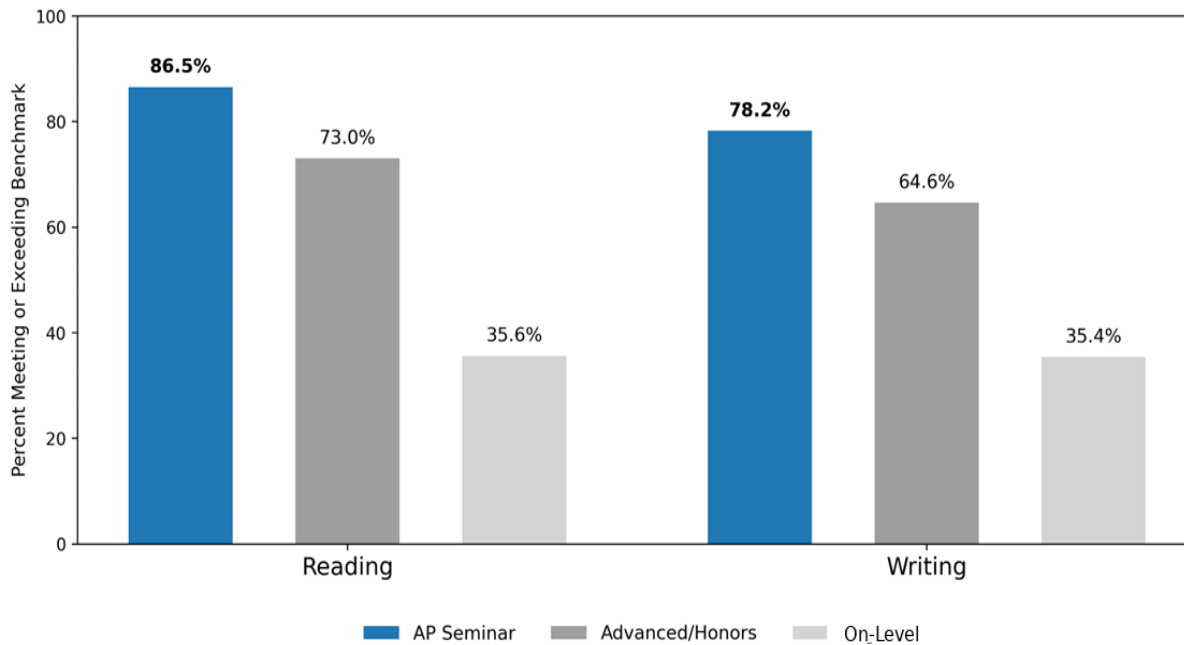
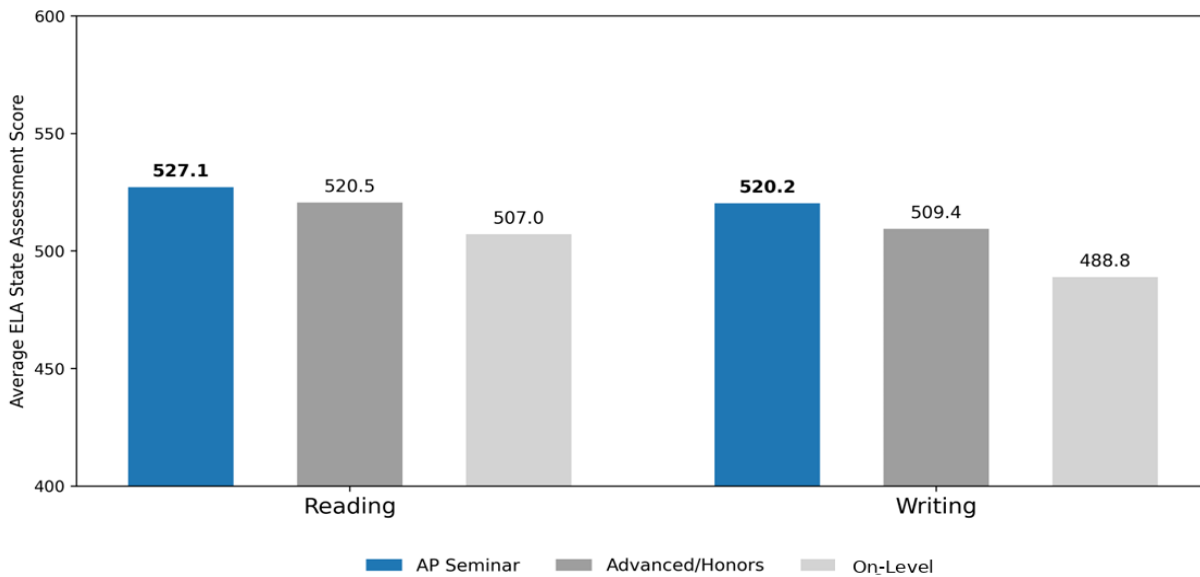


Figure 2 displays average KSA Reading and KSA Writing scores by English 10 course type. Mean scores follow the same ordering observed in benchmark attainment. In reading, AP Seminar students earned the highest average score (527), followed by Advanced/Honors English 10 students (521) and On-Level English 10 (507). In writing, average scores were again highest for AP Seminar students (520), followed by Advanced/Honors English 10 (509) and On-Level English 10 (489). Differences between course types are evident in both content areas, with AP Seminar students scoring approximately 7–11 points higher than Advanced/Honors students and 20–31 points higher than students in other English courses, depending on subject area. These descriptive results indicate a consistent association between enrollment in AP Seminar as English 10 and higher assessment performance relative to other English 10 placements.

Figure 2: Average KSA Reading and Writing Scores by Level of English 10 Course (Kentucky)



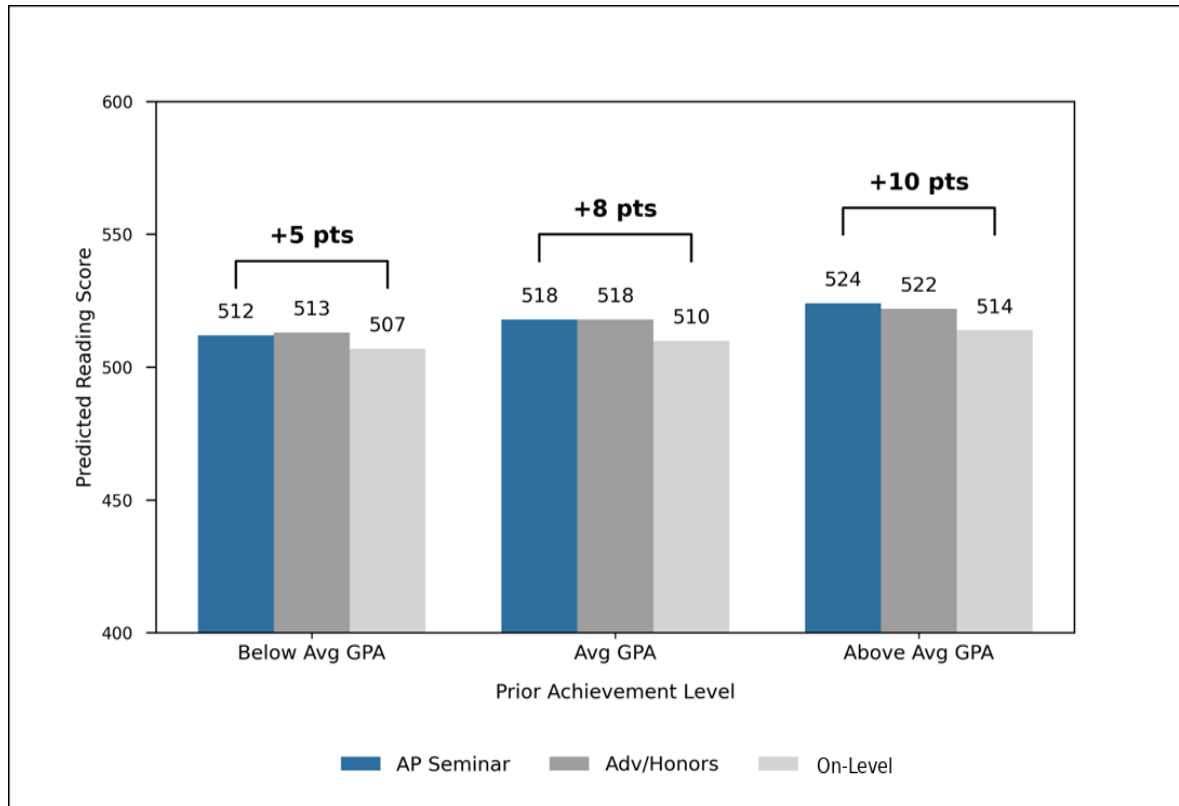
For the state site, we estimated multilevel linear regression models to examine differences in average assessment scores by course type, controlling for 9th grade HSGPA and student- and school-level characteristics. We also tested whether associations between course enrollment and assessment performance varied by students' incoming achievement levels. Results indicate that the relationship between course type and reading performance differed significantly by prior GPA.³ In other words, differences in predicted reading scores across course types were not uniform across students with different levels of prior achievement.

To facilitate interpretation of the model results, we calculated predicted KSA Reading scores for students enrolled in each English 10 course type at below-average, average, and above-average levels of prior academic achievement. **Figure 3** presents these predicted scores by course type across levels of HSGPA. As the figure shows, AP Seminar and Advanced/Honors English 10 have very similar predicted scores across the GPA distribution, differing by only one to two points.

In contrast, AP Seminar is associated with higher predicted KSA Reading scores than On-Level English 10 across all levels of prior achievement. While students with below-average GPAs show positive predicted differences in AP Seminar relative to On-Level English 10, these differences are smaller than those observed among students with average and above-average GPAs. As prior achievement increases, the magnitude of the predicted difference between AP Seminar and On-Level English 10 also increases, indicating larger gains among higher-achieving students. Overall, these results suggest that students across the GPA distribution are predicted to perform better on KSA Reading when enrolled in AP Seminar than when enrolled in On-Level English 10, controlling for student- and school-level characteristics.

³ Significant interactions were observed between prior GPA and Advanced English ($b = -2.76, p = .001$) and between prior GPA and on-level ($b = -4.37, p < .001$), indicating that differences in predicted reading performance for these course types, relative to AP Seminar, varied as a function of students' prior academic achievement.

Figure 3: Predicted KSA Reading Scores by Course Type and Student Achievement Level (Kentucky)



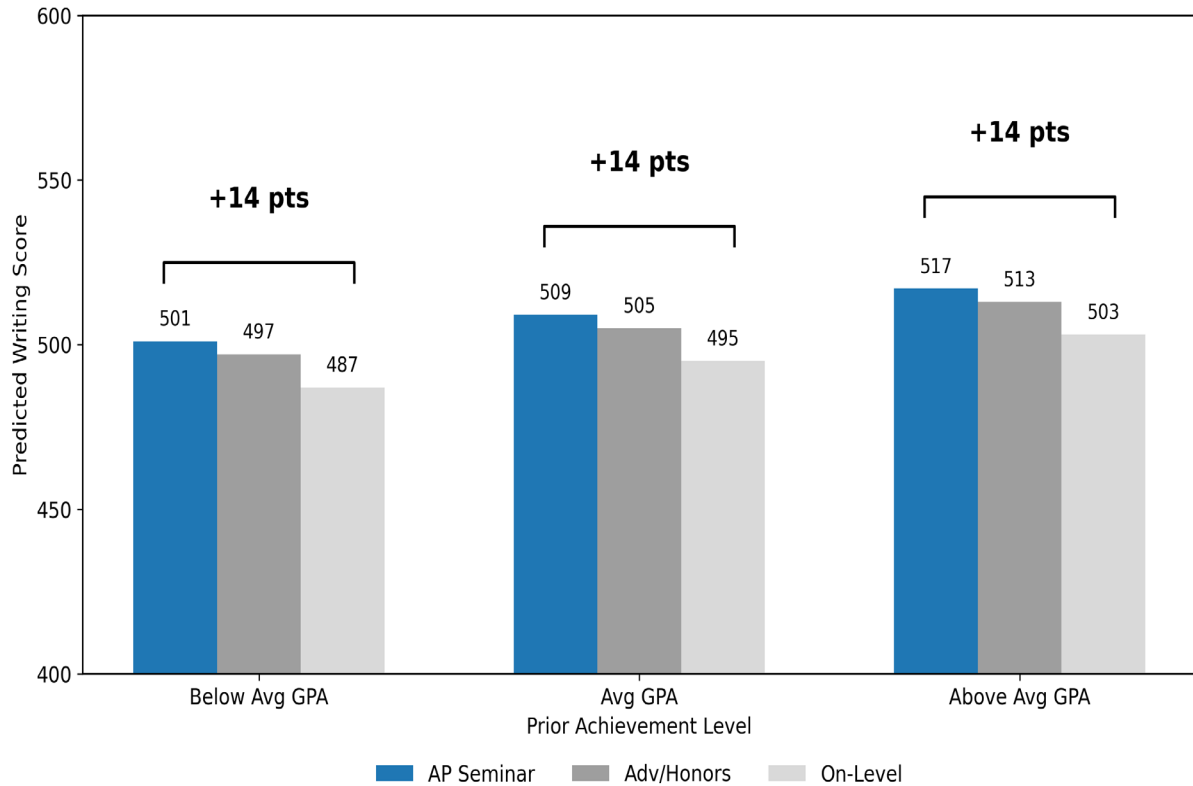
Note. Bars represent predicted KSA Reading scores from multilevel models that include interactions between centered HSGPA and course type and control for student demographics and school-level characteristics.

KSA Writing scores were also examined using a multilevel regression model that controlled for prior academic achievement and relevant student- and school-level characteristics. As in the KSA Reading model, we examined differences in writing performance across English course types. We first tested whether the relationship between course type and writing scores varied across levels of prior achievement by including an interaction between 9th grade HSGPA and course type. Unlike the results for KSA Reading, this interaction was not statistically significant and was subsequently excluded from the final model in favor of a more parsimonious specification.

Consistent with the absence of a significant interaction, results from the final model, as shown in **Figure 4**, indicate that AP Seminar students earned higher predicted KSA Writing scores than both students in Advanced/Honors English 10 and On-Level English 10 course types regardless of prior achievement. While AP Seminar students scored modestly higher than Advanced/Honors English 10, AP Seminar students scored substantially higher (14 points) than students in On-Level English 10 courses, after accounting for HSGPA and other covariates. In addition, these findings reinforce the conclusion that the writing advantage

associated with AP Seminar is consistent across levels of prior achievement rather than concentrated among higher- or lower-performing students.

Figure 4: Predicted KSA Writing Scores by Course Type and Student Achievement Level (Kentucky)

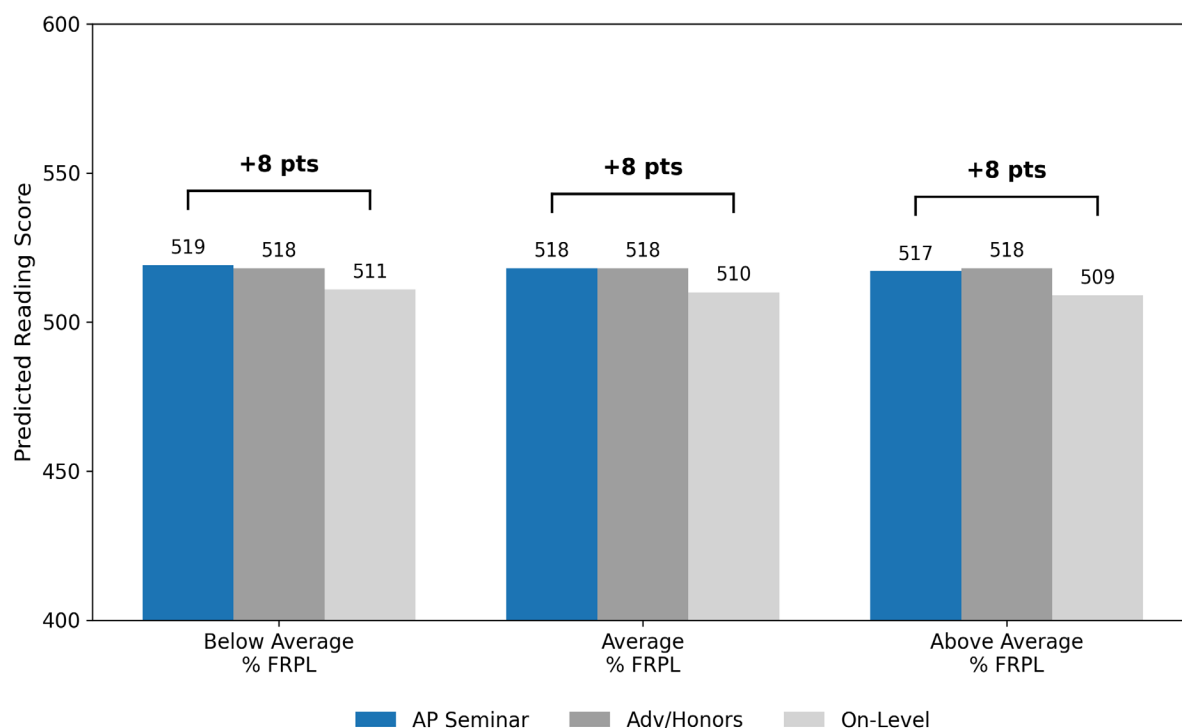


Note. Bars represent predicted KSA Writing scores from multilevel models controlling for student demographics and school-level characteristics. Bracketed values indicate predicted differences between AP Seminar and On-Level English 10; identical differences across GPA levels reflect the absence of a statistically significant interaction between HSGPA and course type.

Finally, we conducted additional analyses to examine whether the association between English 10 course type and KSA outcomes varied across schools with different levels of socioeconomic composition. To examine this question, we extended the multilevel models to include interactions between course type and the school-level percentage of students eligible for FRPL. FRPL eligibility serves as an indicator of school-level socioeconomic composition. Predicted scores were calculated for schools approximately 20 percentage points below the statewide mean FRPL rate, at the mean, and approximately 20 percentage points above the mean.

For KSA Reading, the interaction between course type and school-level FRPL was statistically significant for the comparison between AP Seminar and Advanced/Honors English 10.⁴ However, the magnitude of this interaction was small. Across the full 40-percentage-point range examined, the predicted difference between AP Seminar and Advanced/Honors varied by approximately one point, as **Figure 5** shows. In practical terms, AP Seminar and Advanced/Honors students had nearly identical predicted reading scores at all levels of school FRPL. Predicted differences between AP Seminar and On-Level English 10 were stable, at eight points, across FRPL levels. At below-average, average, and above-average school FRPL, AP Seminar students scored approximately eight points higher than students who took the On-Level English course, holding other variables constant.

Figure 5: Predicted KSA Reading Scores by Course Type and School % FRPL (Kentucky)



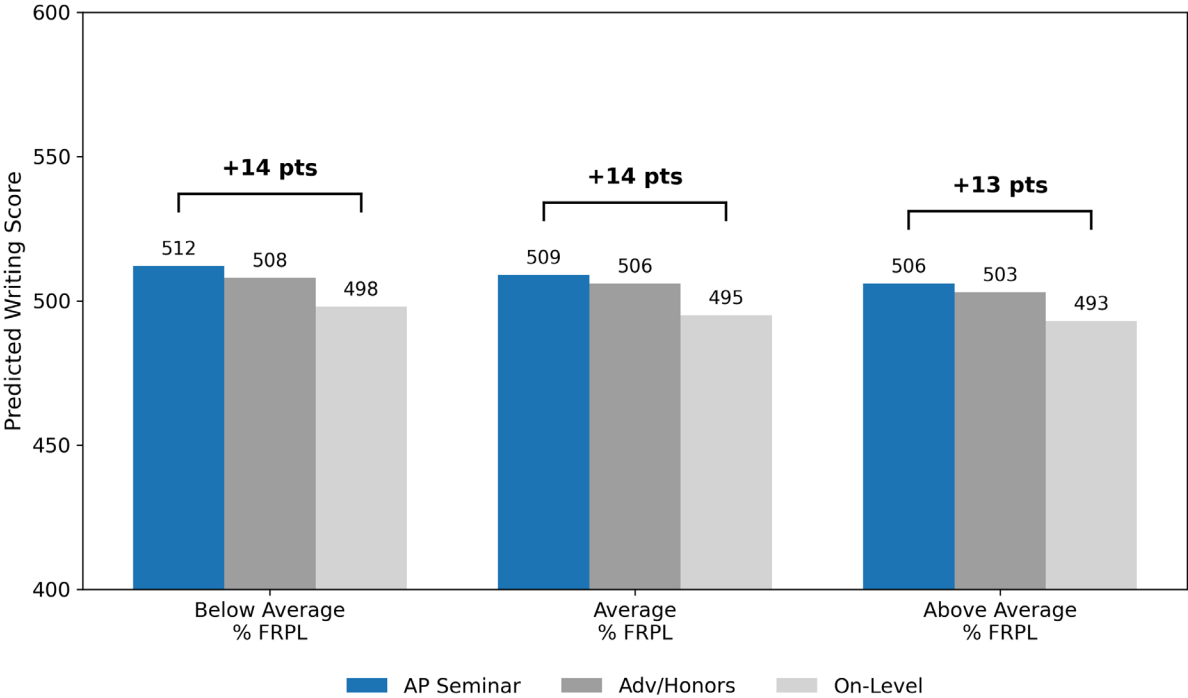
Note. Bars represent predicted scores from multilevel models including interactions between course type and grand-mean centered school-level percentage of students eligible for FRPL. Only the AP Seminar vs. Advanced/Honors English 10 interaction was statistically significant, and its magnitude was small, with at most a 1-point divergence. Bracketed values indicate predicted differences between AP Seminar and On-Level English 10.

For KSA Writing, the interaction between course type and school-level FRPL was not statistically significant indicating differences between course types remain consistent across school-level percent FRPL, as shown in **Figure 6**. At below-average, average, and above-average school FRPL, AP Seminar students score approximately four points higher than Advanced/Honors students and approximately 14 points higher than students who took the On-Level English course. Taken together, adopting AP Seminar as English 10 does not disproportionately benefit students in more advantaged school contexts. Instead, the course-type

⁴ Specifically, the interaction between FRPL and Advanced/Honors English was statistically significant ($b = 0.059, p = .023$), whereas the interaction between FRPL and On-Level English was not ($b = 0.017, p = .496$).

differences appear consistent across schools with different levels of economic disadvantage, taking into account other factors.

Figure 6: Predicted KSA Writing Scores by Course Type and School % FRPL (Kentucky)



Note. Bars represent predicted scores from multilevel models controlling for student demographics, prior achievement, and school-level characteristics. Bracketed values indicate predicted differences between AP Seminar and On-Level English 10. The absence of statistically significant interactions indicates that course-type differences are consistent across school FRPL levels.

New York

The New York sites include three districts in which suburban schools represent the modal location, with variation in district size and student demographics. Across the districts, the sample includes both multi-school and single-school contexts and reflects substantial variation in school enrollment and student socioeconomic and racial and ethnic composition (see Table 3).

Students in these districts take the New York State Regents Examination in English Language Arts (ELA) in the spring of Grade 11, which contributes to high school graduation requirements. **Figure 7** presents the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the Regents ELA proficiency benchmark by English 10 course type and district. Across all three districts, students enrolled in AP Seminar as English 10 met or exceeded the benchmark at exceptionally high rates, ranging from 99.5% to 100%. These findings provide no evidence of lower performance among students who replace English 10 with AP Seminar relative to other English course types.

Figure 7: Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding Regents ELA Benchmark by English 10 Course Level (New York)

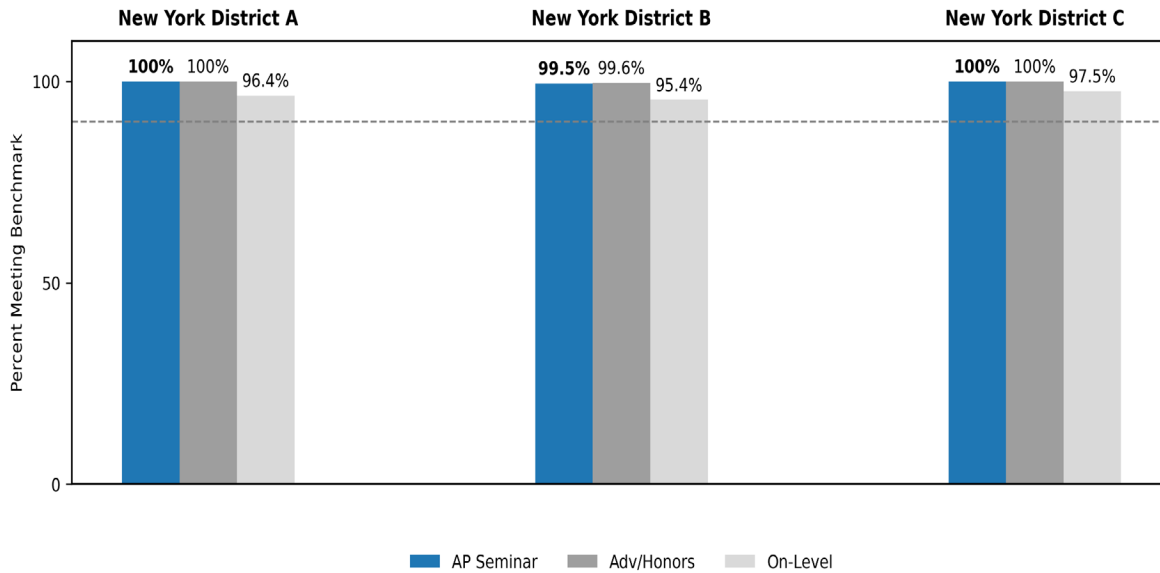
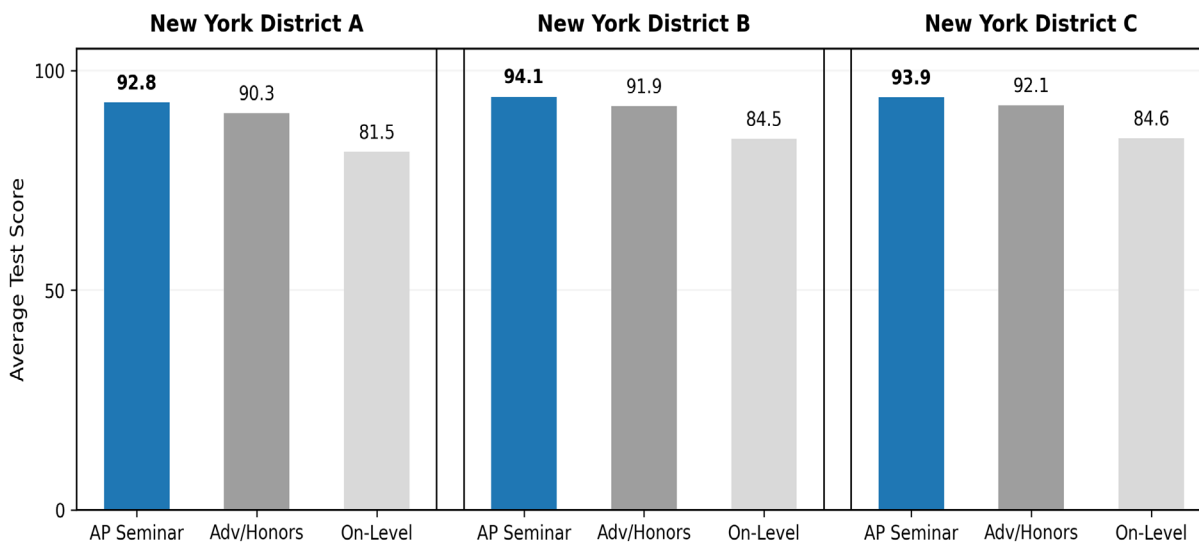


Figure 8 displays average Regents ELA scores by English 10 course type for each district. Differences in average performance by course type are slightly more pronounced in this view. In each district, students enrolled in AP Seminar as English 10 earned higher average Regents ELA scores than students enrolled in Advanced/Honors English 10 and On-Level English 10.

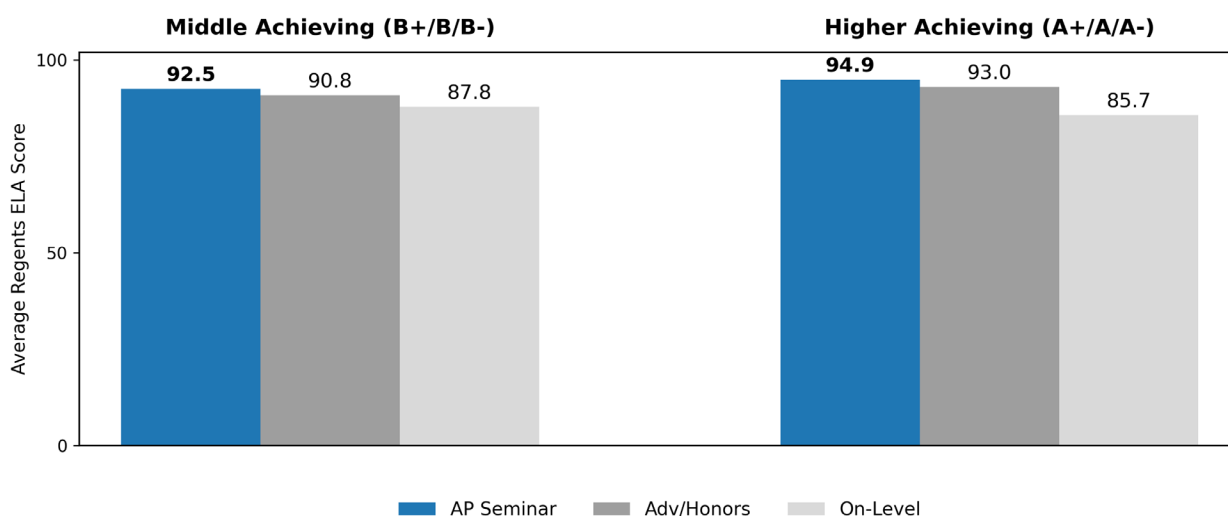
Figure 8: Average Regents ELA Scores by Level of English 10 Course Type (New York)



One district in New York was able to provide student-level high school GPA data, and **Figure 9** presents average Regents ELA scores by course level, grouped by high school GPA bands, to compare performance

among students of similar academic standing who took different English courses. Within GPA bands, students enrolled in AP Seminar as English 10 demonstrated higher Regents ELA performance than peers with comparable GPAs enrolled in Advanced/Honors English 10 and On-Level English 10. While selection effects may still contribute, the findings indicate that these patterns persist within GPA bands. Even when accounting for academic achievement, students enrolled in AP Seminar demonstrate higher performance on the ELA assessment.

Figure 9: Average Regents ELA by Course Type and High School GPA Band (New York District)



Note: In NY

District B, there were only 3 students who both took Seminar and had a "C+/C/C-" GPA band value; therefore, results for that HSGPA band are not shown.

Texas

The Texas district includes five high schools, with suburban schools representing the modal location. On average, schools are relatively large and serve student populations in which more than half of the students are underrepresented minorities, and more than half of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

Students in the district take the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) English II End-of-Course (EOC) Exam in the spring of Grade 10 to fulfill state high school graduation requirements. The STAAR English II EOC Exam assesses students' reading, writing, and language arts skills aligned to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), including analysis of literary and informational texts, evidence-based analytical and argumentative writing, and the use of standard English conventions.

Figure 10 illustrates the percentage of students meeting or exceeding the benchmark on the STAAR English II EOC Exam by English 10 course type. Students who took AP Seminar as their English 10 course met or exceeded the benchmark at a high rate (98.7%). Consistent with findings from other sites, these results provide no evidence that offering AP Seminar as English 10 is associated with a lower likelihood of meeting or exceeding state ELA proficiency standards relative to other English 10 placements.

Figure 10: Percentage of Students Meeting or Exceeding the STAAR English II EOC Benchmark by English 10 Course Type (Texas)

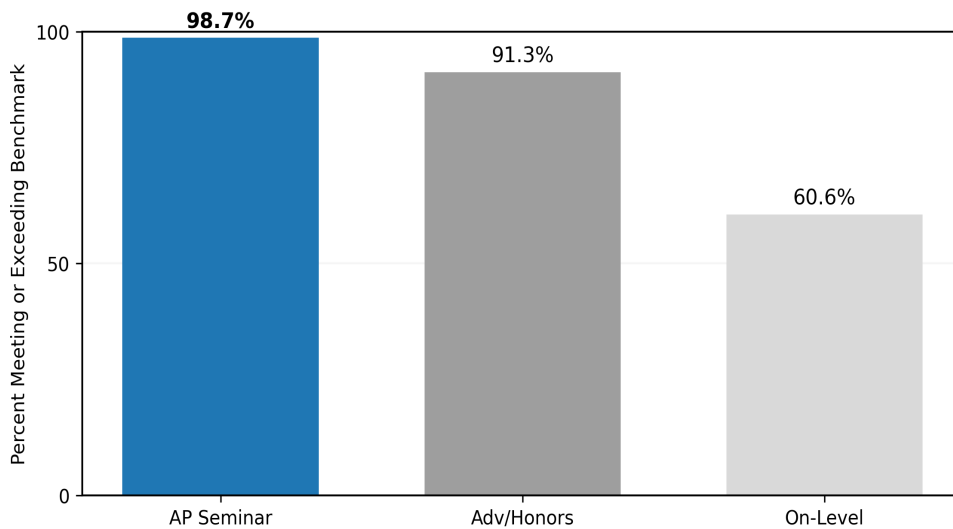
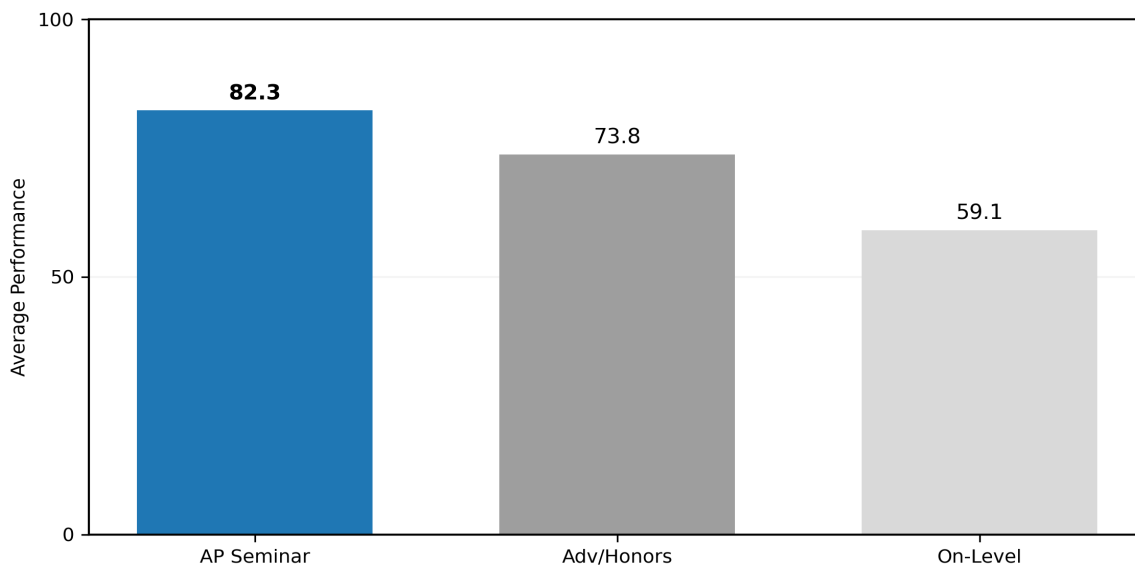


Figure 11 presents average STAAR English II EOC scores by English 10 course type. Students enrolled in AP Seminar as English 10 earned average scores approximately 10 points higher than students enrolled in Advanced/Honors English 10 and approximately 23 points higher than students enrolled in On-Level English 10.

Figure 11: Average STAAR English II EOC Exam Scores by English 10 Course Type (Texas)

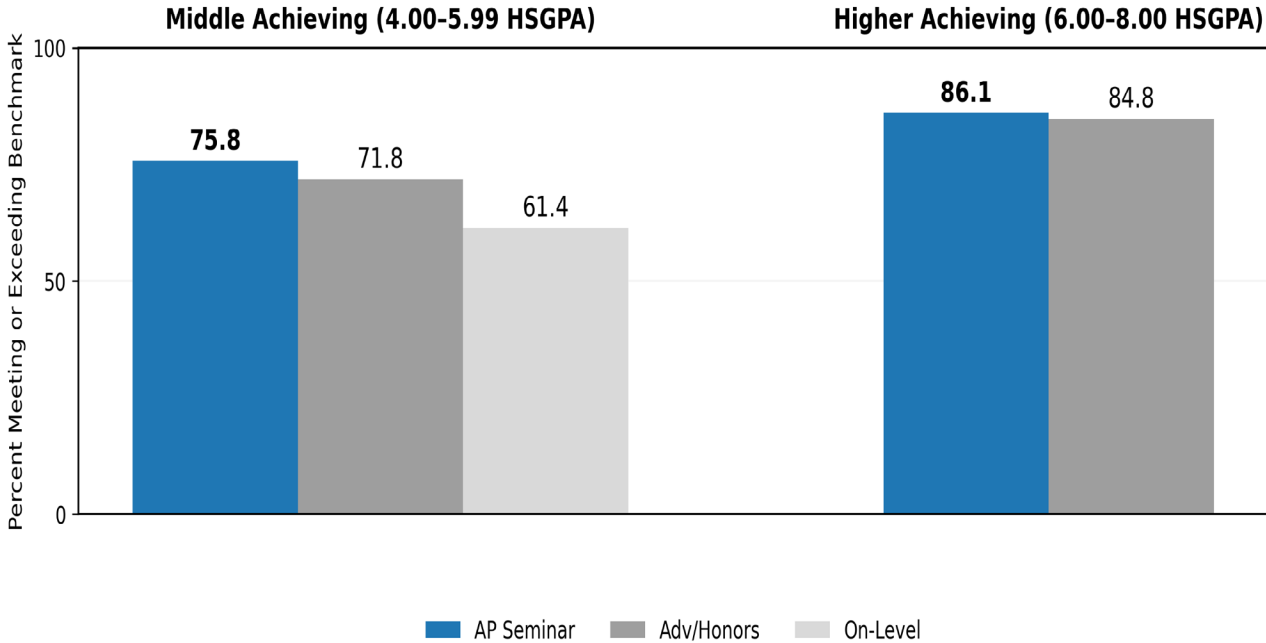


The Texas district provided high school GPA data on an eight-point scale, calculated at the end of Grade 10, which is the point at which the district begins reporting GPA. We used this variable to group students

into HSGPA bands. Because GPA in the Texas district is calculated at the conclusion of 10th grade, it does not fully precede the STAAR English II assessment and therefore functions as a general achievement indicator rather than a pure measure of prior performance.

Figure 12 presents average STAAR English II EOC Exam scores by English course type within GPA bands, allowing for comparisons among students in similar achievement groupings who enrolled in different English courses. AP Seminar students performed better on the STAAR English II EOC Exam than their peers with comparable GPAs who took Advanced/Honors English 10 or On-Level English 10.

Figure 12: Average STAAR English II EOC Exam Scores by Course Level and High School GPA Band



Note: Only nine students in the highest HSGPA category enrolled in the On-Level English 10 course. Results for this group are not shown due to the minimum reporting threshold of 15 students.

As **Figure 12** shows, among students in the middle GPA range (4.00–5.99), those enrolled in AP Seminar earned higher average STAAR English II EOC Exam scores than peers with similar GPAs who took On-Level English 10 or Advanced/Honors English 10. The pattern indicates that AP Seminar students in this GPA band performed better than academically similar peers in other English 10 courses. In contrast, high-achieving students performed at comparable levels regardless of course type (86 on average in Seminar compared to 85 on average in Advanced/Honors). Taken together, these results suggest that the relative advantage associated with AP Seminar is most pronounced among middle-achieving students in this district.

Conclusion

Across Kentucky, three New York districts, and one Texas district, students who took AP Seminar as English 10 met or exceeded state ELA benchmarks at rates comparable to, and often higher than, students enrolled in Advanced/Honors English 10 and On-Level English 10. Average scores showed the same pattern across sites.

In Kentucky, where sample sizes supported multilevel models that accounted for HSGPA and student- and school-level characteristics, AP Seminar was associated with reading performance comparable to Advanced/Honors English 10 and higher than On-Level English 10 across achievement levels, with effects that vary by students' incoming achievement. For writing, AP Seminar students demonstrated uniformly higher predicted performance than students in both comparison courses regardless of prior achievement.

The consistency of results across diverse implementation contexts provides strong evidence that offering AP Seminar as an English 10 replacement does not undermine performance on state ELA assessments and may support stronger outcomes. While the Kentucky analyses adjust for observed student and school characteristics and the New York and Texas analyses account for achievement levels, when possible, differences in unmeasured factors such as student motivation may also contribute to observed patterns.

Introducing AP coursework earlier in high school can expand access to rigorous, college-level instruction while maintaining performance on state accountability measures. Taken together, these findings provide meaningful evidence for states and districts considering AP Seminar as an English 10 option and may inform local decision-making about course adoption and implementation.

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