

IT'S COMPLICATED: Grade Bumps 101 (and How They Affect Student GPAs at SWWHS)

It's easy to get confused about grade bumps, transcripts, and grade point average (GPA) calculation at School Without Walls High School because the process for the two groups of SWWHS students—traditional and GWECP—is different in the junior and senior years. This document seeks to clarify the process.

Note: *During the first two years at SWWHS—before GWECP begins in the junior year—the process is identical for all students, because all underclass students are essentially “traditional” students.*

Which courses qualify for a grade bump?

All SWWHS students are eligible to enroll in specific courses designated by DCPS as demanding enough to be considered college level. These courses receive a grade bump (for a definition, see the sidebar).

- For **traditional students**, the only courses that get a bump are Advanced Placement (AP) courses.
- For **GWECP students**, the only courses that get a bump are the GWU equivalent of courses required by DCPS for high school graduation.* These courses are included in a list compiled for each school year by DCPS (referred to hereafter as the “DCPS-approved list”). Any GWU course taken that is not on this list cannot get a bump.

RECAP

Traditional students get bumps only for AP courses, while GWECP students get bumps only for courses that appear on a DCPS-approved list of GWU courses equivalent to DCPS courses required for graduation.

What are the two transcript systems?

All Walls students have DCPS transcripts with grades for all DCPS-approved courses they take during their four years of high school. In the 9th and 10th grades the process is identical for all SWWHS students. The GWECP begins junior year, and from then on there are significant differences between transcript systems for the two groups.

- **Traditional students** have a single transcript—the official DCPS transcript—which includes grades for all courses, both bumped and unbumped. Their transcripts do not include optional college-level courses taken at GWU (as part of the GW Exposure Program) or elsewhere.
- **GWECP students** also have a DCPS transcript that contains all grades for courses required for graduation. Only courses from the DCPS-approved list appear on the DCPS transcript, which means—in contrast to a traditional student’s transcript—that every grade that appears on the DCPS transcripts receives a bump.** Any courses GWECP students take at GWU that are not on the DCPS-approved list will not appear on the DCPS transcript; GWU issues its own transcript that includes all courses GWECP students take at the university, including courses that do not satisfy DCPS graduation requirements and are therefore not on the DCPS transcript.

RECAP

All grades—bumped and unbumped—earned by traditional students go on the DCPS transcript. In contrast, the DCPS transcript for GWECP students contains only courses from the DCPS-approved list, all of which are bumped.**

USEFUL TERMS

What is a grade bump?

A grade bump—more formally known as “weighted grading” or “value-added grading”—increases a student’s numeric grade by a full point for courses designated by DCPS/OSSE as advanced or college level. For example, if a student gets an A in an eligible course, the numeric grade received is not the standard 4.0 but a 5.0; for a B, the student receives a 4.0, not the standard 3.0; and so on. These bumped grades can significantly increase a student’s grade point average (GPA).

What is the GPA?

GPA stands for grade point average, which is the cumulative average of numeric grades for courses taken over the four years of high school.

Who are “traditional” students at SWWHS?

The majority of students at SWWHS; they take all of their required courses at SWWHS but may also choose to take optional courses at GWU or other local universities.

Who are GWECP students at SWWHS?

These are students who have been accepted into the George Washington Early College Program (GWECP) for their junior and senior years. They graduate with both a SWWHS diploma and a GWU Associate of Arts (AA) degree. They take all of their courses during those two years at GWU.**

How is the GPA calculated?

Because of the two different transcript systems, calculating the cumulative GPA is also a different process for traditional and GWECP students. (Again, keep in mind that, for their freshman and sophomore years, SWWHS students who later enter the GWECP are “traditional” students, so those two years of grades work the same way for them as for students who follow a traditional academic path at SWWHS.)

- For **traditional students**, the GPA is based on all courses taken during their four high school years, both bumped and unbumped, as reported on the DCPS transcript.
- For **GWECP students**, the GPA is similarly based on grades reported on the DCPS transcript, but only bumped courses go on those transcripts, as described above.** Any course taken at GWU that is not on the DCPS-approved list (and therefore does not get a bump) appears only on a separate GWU transcript and is not calculated into the GPA.

RECAP

The DCPS transcript alone is used to calculate GPA for both traditional and GWECP students. For traditional students, this means that all high school courses they’ve taken, both bumped and unbumped, are included in the GPA. In contrast, for GWECP students, only bumped courses**—those required by DCPS for graduation that appear on the DCPS-approved list—are calculated into the GPA during their junior and senior years.

* This includes the required .5-credit course DC History, which is bumped for GWECP students but not bumped for traditional students.

** The only exceptions to the rule that only bumped courses go on the DCPS transcripts for GWECP students are courses that satisfy DCPS’ art and physical education requirements. This is because there are no equivalent GWU courses for these two subjects, so GWECP students must come back to SWWHS to take them, if they haven’t already during their first two years. Once again, because these two courses aren’t on the DCPS-approved list of GWU courses, they do not get bumps, even though they go on the DCPS transcript.