

Bard Sequence Brings Early College to IDEA

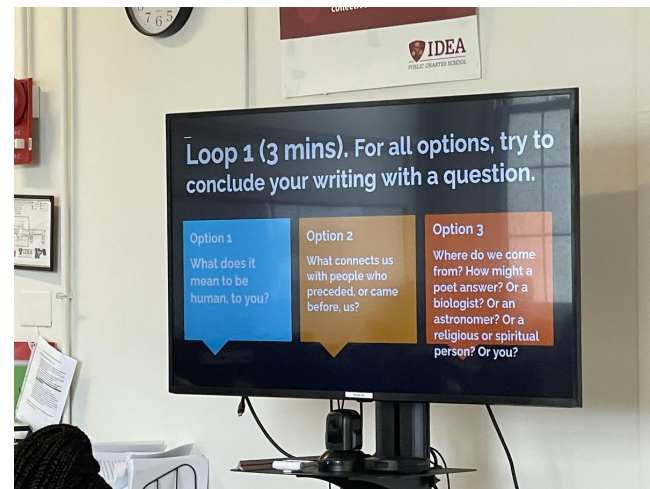
Seventeen juniors and seniors are currently experiencing an intensive college-level English class co-taught by Bard's Dr. Ben Bagocius and IDEA's Terry Sheehan.

From Plato to Nicki Minaj, the Qu'ran to Kanye West, 17 scholars are using a variety of texts and their own writing to answer the questions: Who are we and where do we come from? in the Bard College Sequence course offered at IDEA this year. Bard College professor Dr. Ben Bagocius and IDEA English Teacher Terry Sheehan are teaching the two-year class together. The juniors and seniors enrolled in the class had to apply to take it, and will receive up to 12 transferable college credits when they complete it.

Exceptional high school students have opportunities to take college classes, but for some, the transition can be difficult. "The Bard Early College and the Bard College Sequence are in place to give students in-class and hands-on support as they learn and take on the more challenging curriculum and writing-intensive nature of college-level coursework. Because the nature of college-level critical thinking, as well as independent imaginative thought, is both rigorous and challenging," explained Dr. Bagocius. "In other words, the philosophy of the Bard Early College program is that students do not independently do college. They receive support from both classmates and professors by default, for each class is structured to support students in their learning of challenging texts and creation of papers and projects."

"IDEA is excited to add this on-campus dual enrollment option to its students," said CTE Director Andrea Zimmermann. Bard College joins IDEA's long list of partner colleges and universities. "At IDEA, we push scholars to be both college and career ready. This partnership allows us to offer students the opportunity to earn 12 transferable college credits by the time they graduate and at no cost to them."

Bard College, located in the Hudson Valley in upstate New York, already has years of experience bridging the gap between high school and college. The Bard Early College program, which enrolls thousands of students across seven public high school campuses, enables students to meet high school requirements while taking Bard College courses. At IDEA, students will take the Seminar Sequence, which is the signature humanities experience of the Bard Early College program. The four-semester interdisciplinary Seminar Sequence exposes students to seminal texts from antiquity to modernity, which students engage through critical reading and interpretation.



The rigor and requirements of Bard Sequence classes are serious. “Bard’s model is called writing and thinking,” explained Dr. Bagocius. “Classes are writing intensive. Students bring a notebook and pencil. I give writing prompts. They write and share what they wrote, and then their ideas guide the class. They pick an idea someone else shared and write a response to that. They see that their ideas are legitimate and valid when other students are building on them.”

College-level dialogue demands more of scholars than they may be accustomed to in high school. “Students ask me, ‘what is this book about?’ and I tell them that’s what we’re here to discover, using creative critical thinking. I’m not going to tell you what the book is about. I’m not going to tell you what to think,” Dr. Bagocius said.

“Students are so excited about this class,” said Mr. Sheehan, who is also excited to be co-teaching it. “We have super high expectations and we’re writing a lot more than they’re used to. Dual enrollment is so important for these students. Having success under their belt in a college-level class is huge as they leave high school knowing they can do it and that putting the effort in is worth it.”

Beyond discussing literature and what it can teach us about life, Dr. Bagocius imparts to students the opportunities that await them in college. “There are so many ways to contribute in college,” he said. “Whatever your personality or gifts, there’s a place for you in college. Writing and thinking really values the introverted parts of us. And sharing and discussing show our extroverted sides. There are multiple levels for students to enter the conversation. Every class concludes with a process of making observations. What are you taking away from this class? What did you notice about yourself or classmates? It’s fun to see them affirm each other’s presence.”

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