

Hi my name is Elijah Stende and i'm a 12th grader at Open World Learning community. Throughout my highschool career I have taken multiple Advanced Placement (AP) as well as Post Secondary Enrollment classes (PSEO), and have been able to succeed and earn over 40 college credits

Taking higher level classes wasn't something I thought I would be capable of, not only because of the added workload but because I have dyslexia. Which had been a massive barrier to my learning in the past. However, with the extra support I received in middle school and countless hours spent learning strategies to cope with dyslexia, I was able to develop more confidence in my academic abilities. This was nurtured by my teachers at open world learning who recognized the hard work I was doing and encouraged me to challenge myself by taking higher level classes.

During middle school my teachers and school staff encouraged us to advocate for ourselves, instilling a sense of independence and self-determination but also knowing how and when to ask for help. For example, one of my AP teachers encouraged us to get contact information for our peers, and to reach out to those peers for help when we needed it. This helped create a sense of community and connection, knowing we had the support not only of our teachers, but of each other. In my experience AP classes that are structured in this way make these sometimes extremely challenging classes a much more welcoming and uplifting environment, for all students regardless if this is their first AP class or their 10th. Self advocacy, community, and connection are vitality important in advancing one's academic career especially when taking AP and PSEO classes.

Taking PSEO and AP classes have made me realize that going to college and doing well is something I'm capable of academically and emotionally. The confidence and independence I've developed made me realize that college won't feel like an alien experience because I've already dipped my toes into that experience.

As of a result I'll be attending the University of MN Twin Cities, where I've been accepted as a direct entry student into the College of Nursing

Thank you