

## QUESTIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS ABOUT COLLEGE CREDIT IN HIGH SCHOOL

# Advanced Placement<sup>®</sup>: A Proven Record of Delivering Opportunity

With millions of dollars invested annually in advanced coursework, policymakers and program leaders need better methods for implementing these programs to achieve their desired outcomes. A Working Group composed of leaders from K–12 and higher education identified four factors essential to strong college credit in high school (CCHS) programs. The group highlighted key questions for policymakers and identified exemplary schools and programs to promote highly effective coursework. In response, the Advanced Placement Program<sup>®</sup> (AP<sup>®</sup>) answers each question to illustrate how AP is a strong CCHS program.



## PROGRAM QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

### Are programs rigorous, and are there clear accountability structures for student outcomes?

- Each of AP's 38 courses is modeled upon a comparable college course. College and university faculty play a vital role in ensuring that AP courses align with college-level standards.
- The AP Course Audit provides AP teachers and administrators with clear guidelines on curricular and resource requirements that must be in place for AP courses. It gives colleges and universities confidence that AP courses are designed to meet the same articulated college-level criteria across high schools.
- Each AP course concludes with a college-level exam developed and scored by college and university faculty members, as well as experienced AP teachers. Most two- and four-year colleges and universities worldwide recognize AP in the admission process and accept successful exam scores for college credit, placement, or both.



## VALUE FOR TIME AND DOLLARS INVESTED

### Are students, institutions, taxpayers, and the workforce seeing positive outcomes?

- The research shows AP students are better prepared for college than peers who do not take AP.
- *Enrollment:* Students who take AP Exams are more likely to enroll in a four-year college than similar students who don't take AP Exams.
- *Retention:* Students who take AP Exams are, once enrolled in college, more likely to return for a second year at that college than similar students who don't take AP Exams.
- *Performance:* Students who earn a score of 3 or higher on AP Exams have higher overall first-year college GPAs than similar students who don't take AP Exams. Students who have earned a score of 2 or higher on AP Exams in most subject areas are more likely to have higher college grades in those subject areas than similar students who don't take AP Exams. Students who take AP Exams and score well enough to place out of an intro course generally, in the next course, do as well as or better than similar students who don't take AP Exams and who take the intro course on the college campus.

- *Graduation:* Students who take AP Exams are more likely to graduate college on time in four years than similar students who don't take AP Exams.
- In May 2017, U.S. public and private high school students took a total of 2.6 million AP Exams that resulted in scores of 3, 4, or 5. Based on a student's opportunity to earn at least 3 college credits for each AP Exam score of 3 or higher, and the average per credit hour tuition rate in each state, the total potential cost savings for the nation's students and families was approximately \$2.8 billion.



## EQUITY AND ACCESS

### Do all students have access to programs, and are efforts made to help a diverse population of students succeed?

- The College Board works closely with educators to make equitable access a guiding principle by giving all willing and academically prepared students the opportunity to participate in AP. We encourage the elimination of barriers that restrict access to AP for students from ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic groups that have been traditionally underrepresented.
- Starting in the 2019–20 school year, teachers will be able to access new free resources developed by the College Board, in collaboration with AP teachers, to ensure more students can succeed in rigorous coursework, college, and careers.
- AP Potential™ is a free tool that allows schools to generate rosters of students who are likely to score a 3 or higher on a given AP Exam based on their performance on a PSAT-related assessment. AP Potential is designed to increase access to AP and to ensure that no student who has the chance of succeeding in AP is overlooked.
- Recognizing how AP has expanded at a significant scale without sacrificing quality or rigor, an independent researcher from the American Enterprise Institute wrote that "AP might be the single happiest education story of the century."\*



## TRANSPARENCY AROUND CREDIT TRANSFER

### Do students know up front if and how CCHS credits will transfer to a college program, credential, or degree?

- After students take an AP Exam, they can send their score report to specific colleges and universities. The vast majority of colleges and universities accept successful AP Exam scores for credit (usually scores of 3 or higher). Currently 24 states have a statewide or systemwide AP credit policy. Over 3,300 U.S. and international institutions received AP Exam scores for consideration of awarding postsecondary credit to students.
- Students can use the AP Credit Policy Search on the College Board's website and separately confirm the institution's policy.
- AP students are more likely to finish their degrees on time in four years and save the costs of a fifth year of college. A fifth year in college adds, on average, \$20,770 in costs (tuition, fees, room and board) at four-year public in-state colleges, \$36,420 at four-year public out-of-state colleges, and \$46,950 at four-year private colleges or universities. A fifth year in college also costs students forgone earnings of about \$32,000, on average.

\* <https://www.aei.org/publication/criticism-misses-this-century-s-biggest-education-success-story/>