

# AP<sup>®</sup> and Dual Enrollment: Options for Schools and Students

Every state and most school districts are exploring ways to raise standards and ensure that all students take challenging courses that prepare them for success in college and in their careers.

## Recent Research Tells Us

- The educational outcomes for AP<sup>®</sup> students are significantly stronger than those for dual enrollment students.
- As a result, the College Board does not support offering dual enrollment in lieu of AP, but instead believes that dual enrollment programs should be offered as supplements—in subject areas that fall outside the suite of AP offerings; or in small schools that do not have sufficient numbers of students interested in a subject to merit training an AP teacher within the school.

The College Board's Advanced Placement Program is recognized as a powerful tool for increasing academic rigor, improving teacher quality and creating a culture of excellence in high schools.

Students who take AP courses assume the intellectual responsibility of thinking for themselves, and they learn how to engage the world critically and analytically—both inside and outside of the classroom. This is an invaluable experience for students as they prepare for college or work upon graduation from high school. Moreover, schools in which AP is widely offered—and accessible to all students—experience the diffusion of higher standards throughout the entire school curriculum.

There are many paths to college preparation and college success, including both AP and dual enrollment. Dual enrollment programs—including courses offered to high school students at two-year and four-year colleges, either on the college campus or in high school—provide valuable opportunities for students to experience academic rigor. The College Board endorses dual enrollment as an opportunity that should be made available to students.

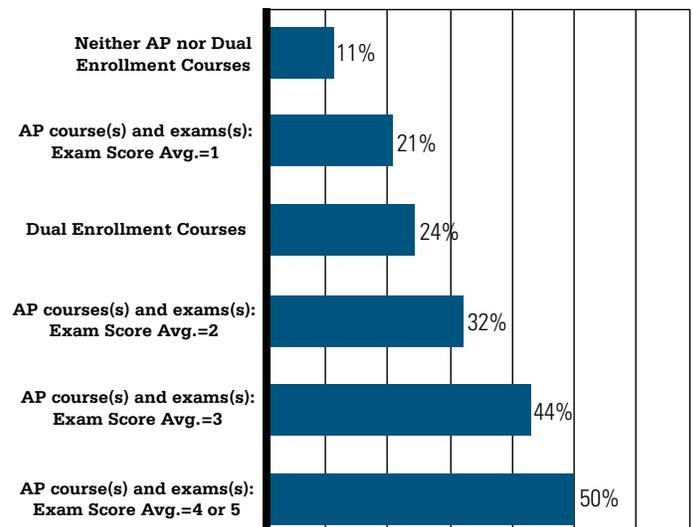
At the same time, we believe that policies that grant credit for both dual enrollment courses and AP courses must be based on research results that demonstrate students' mastery of college-level curricula. Without an external measure of the quality of student learning in dual enrollment and AP, it is not appropriate to grant all participating students college credit and advanced placement.

Two 2008 studies conducted on a large scale in Texas, a state that has significant numbers of students participating in both AP and dual enrollment, have enabled researchers for the first time to compare the educational outcomes of both AP and dual enrollment, by following and contrasting participating students' subsequent college performance.

## Key Finding #1: AP participation has a much more positive impact on college graduation rates than dual enrollment participation.

Researchers from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and the University of Texas at Austin assessed the college success of every Texas public school student who entered a Texas public college or university from 1998 to 2002, following them through their years in higher education. Because of the large sample size and research timeframe, this is the most substantive analysis of the relationship between AP, dual enrollment, and college success that has ever been conducted. At a purely descriptive level, the study reports on the percentage of students who earned a bachelor's degree within 4 years.

**Percentage of Students with Varying AP and Non-AP Experiences Who Earn a Bachelor's Degree Within 4-Years**

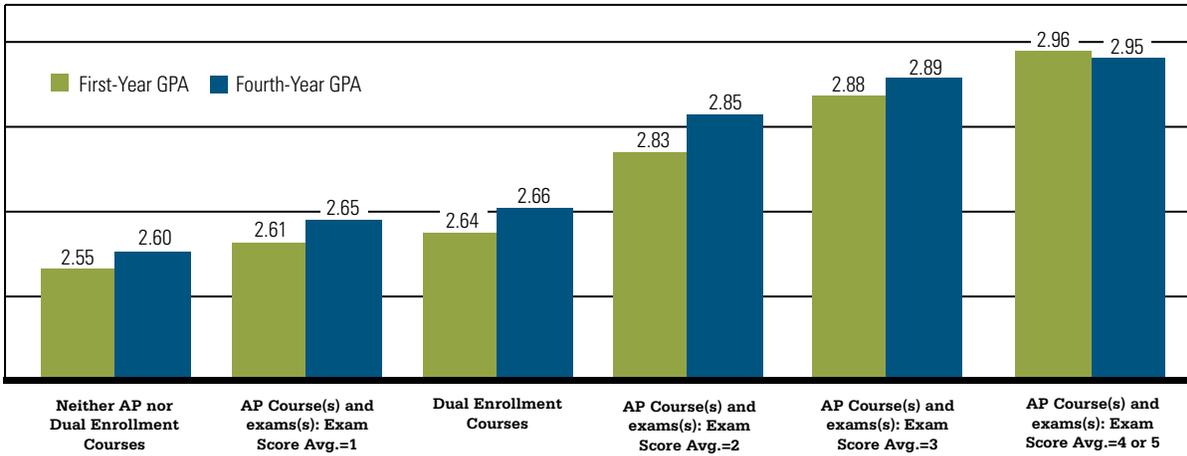


Given the rising costs of college for individual students and their families, as well as for the taxpayers that support public higher education, institutions are measured in relation to the percentage of students who earn their bachelor's degree in the optimal 4 years. On a purely descriptive level, students whose average score on an AP® Exam is 2 or better have a much stronger likelihood of

earning a bachelor's degree in 4 years than students who took dual enrollment courses, students who earned an average score of 1 on an AP Exam, and students who took neither AP nor dual enrollment in high school.

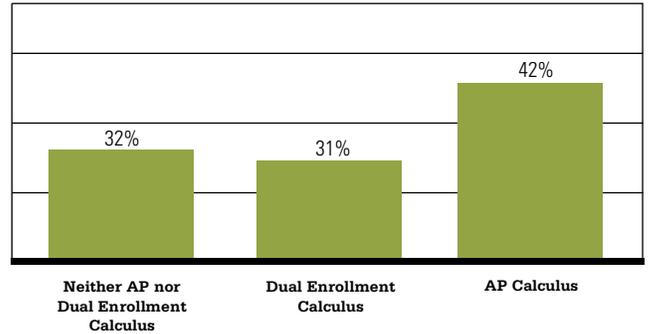
The same pattern was found when examining all of these students' first-year and fourth-year college GPAs:

**First-Year and Fourth-Year Average College GPAs of Students with Varying AP and Non-AP Experiences**

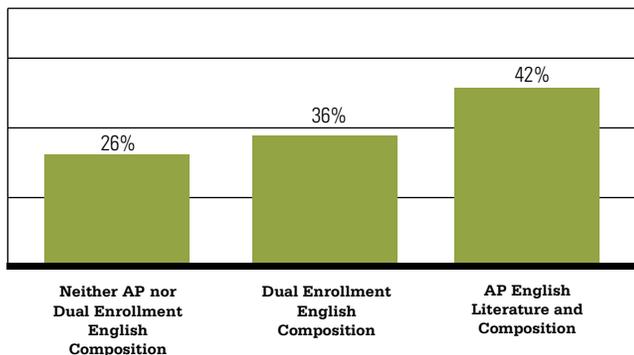


However, the strength of this study is that it doesn't content itself with simply describing the college graduation rates and GPAs of each type of high school student, as some might argue that the strongest students were those who enrolled in AP, and accordingly were the ones with higher rates of college success. So the study proceeded to create matches between each type of student, so that the study only compares students with the same SAT® rank and socioeconomic background. In other words, one would predict that two students from the same socioeconomic background and the same SAT rank would be quite similar in their likelihood of attaining a bachelor's degree in 4 years. There were three subject areas in which the number of dual enrollment students with the same SAT rank as the AP students was large enough to allow comparison of the college graduation rates of "matched" AP and dual enrollment students: Calculus, English Language and English Literature. In each of these subject areas, the graduation rate of the AP students far outpaced the graduation rates of the dual enrollment students as well as the non-AP and non-dual enrollment students who had been matched to the AP students in terms of SAT rank and socioeconomic background:

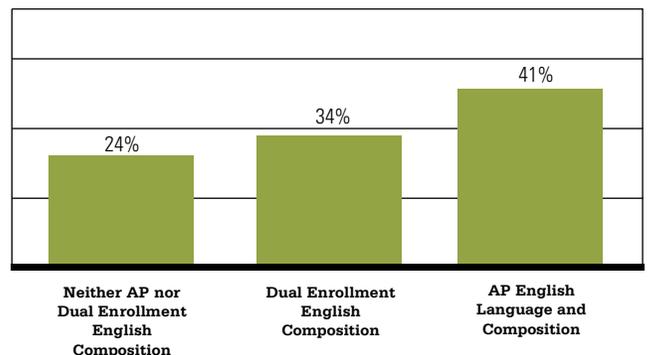
**Percentage of Students Earning A Bachelor's Degree In 4 Years, Comparing Matched Groups Of Students Who Took AP versus Non-AP Calculus Courses In High School**



**Percentage Of Students Earning A Bachelor's Degree In 4 Years, Comparing Matched Groups Of Students Who Took AP versus Non-AP English Literature And Composition Courses In High School**



**Percentage Of Students Earning A Bachelor's Degree In 4 Years, Comparing Matched Groups Of Students Who Took AP versus Non-AP English Language And Composition Courses In High School**



**Key Finding #2: Not all AP® and dual enrollment students deserve college credit; college credit is only warranted by students demonstrating a significant level of content mastery, such as is demonstrated by AP students earning qualifying AP Exam scores.**

Currently, college credit is granted to students who take dual enrollment courses, without regard to an external measure of their content mastery; for AP® students, the College Board only recommends college credit for students with a qualifying score on the AP Exam, and encourages colleges to select the score requirement appropriate for success at their institution.

Another 2008 study, conducted by University of Texas researchers Leslie Keng and Barbara Dodd, compared how well AP and dual enrollment students did in their subsequent college course work after skipping over the introductory college course. Their findings clearly show that in all subject areas, students whose AP Exam scores qualified them for the introductory college course truly deserved

that college credit, as manifested by the significantly higher GPAs they earned in the subsequent courses than their matched peers. The findings also clearly show that in no cases do dual enrollment students, on average, merit the credit and placement they are given, nor do AP students who scored 1s or 2s on the AP Exam. The key issue here, though, is that AP students scoring 1s and 2s are not being given college credit and placement, because the exam score has rightly led the college to make the correct placement decision for the student, whereas dual enrollment students, who receive credit without any external assessment of their readiness to be exempted from the freshman course, are receiving it nonetheless.

Subject-Specific GPA Comparison of AP and Dual Enrollment Students

	Biology	Calculus	Chemistry	Macro-economics	English Language & Composition	English Literature & Composition	U.S. Government and Politics	U.S. History
AP students w/qualifying AP Exam score	3.33	3.60	3.64	3.74	3.63	3.69	3.64	3.61
Dual enrollment students	2.86	2.94	2.75	2.80	3.22	3.29	2.80	2.94
AP students, w/non-qualifying AP Exam score	2.66	3.24	3.12	3.05	3.12	3.12	2.95	3.01
Neither AP nor dual enrollment	2.98	3.26	3.21	3.03	3.35	3.35	3.05	3.06

**As is evident in this study, the only group of students that consistently and significantly performs at a higher level in their subject area and in further studies in that subject area are the students whose AP Exam scores qualify them for credit and placement.**

In each subject area, neither dual enrollment students en masse, nor AP students who failed to earn qualifying scores on the AP Exam, should be placed into higher-level college course work without first taking the standard introductory course offered by the college. This is not to say that no dual enrollment students deserve to be exempted from the introductory course. But, without an external

measure that would identify which dual enrollment students are ready for placement, those who are qualified cannot currently be identified, and the research is clear that in aggregate, these students do not perform nearly as well in subsequent course work as standard students or AP students.

**Conclusions**

Because the educational outcomes for AP® are significantly stronger than those for matched dual enrollment students, the College Board does not support offering dual enrollment in lieu of AP, but instead believes that dual enrollment programs should be offered as supplements—in subject areas that fall outside the suite of AP offerings, or in small schools that do not have sufficient numbers of students interested in a subject to merit training a resident AP teacher.

Too often the funds used to provide one student with dual enrollment credit leave the school system with that student. In contrast, when states or districts invest in AP teacher training, they are investing in improving the quality of education

within the secondary school system for entire classrooms of AP students, an investment that impacts more than the individual college-bound student. And because AP teachers almost always teach “regular” classes as well, even the non-AP students are benefiting from the teachers who participate in the gold standard professional development available to AP teachers. Most states rely upon a network of in-state colleges and universities to provide AP teacher training, so that state investments in AP teacher training remain within the state’s education system. Finally, many argue that the AP model of investing in the school’s capacity to deliver rigorous course work prevents the sort of academic segregation involved in sending the most motivated and

academically-prepared students outside of the secondary school to another site for their course work, and instead fosters academic interchanges among a diversity of students who each deserve the opportunity to experience college-level standards while still in high school.

There are, of course, exceptions to what these 2008 research studies show about AP and dual enrollment programs. There are top-notch dual enrollment and AP courses, just as there are very weak dual enrollment and AP courses. Much depends on the individual instructors and the preparation the school has provided its students in the years prior to AP or dual enrollment. But because policies are set for entire groups, in aggregate, it is essential that such policies be based on the aggregate outcomes for students participating in these programs. The college

success outcomes among the aggregate group of AP students are consistently and significantly stronger than those for the aggregate group of dual enrollment students and the aggregate group of students who participated in neither AP nor dual enrollment, even after controls and matched samples are created to ensure that only academically similar students are compared.

College admissions officers consistently report that AP, for the following reasons, provides a more reliable and consistent indication of rigor on a student's transcript than dual enrollment course work:

<p><b>The AP Exam provides a standard means of comparison between AP courses nationwide, so that colleges and universities can gauge the extent to which participating students have mastered the course content and skills.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dual enrollment programs do not have any external measure, such as a standardized assessment, to measure and ensure consistency in quality. It is, therefore, difficult for admissions officers and college faculty to gauge the quality of any one given dual enrollment course.</li> <li>• Rigorous statistical and psychometric processes are applied to each AP Exam question to ensure that standards are maintained as the AP Program grows and that exam questions do not contain gender, ethnic or regional biases.</li> <li>• Such processes go far beyond what any one teacher or professor can assure within the tests they create for their students, providing a level of fairness for the student and the college essential to decisions about credit and placement.</li> </ul>
<p><b>There is much greater consistency in quality and expectations across AP courses, because AP teachers' syllabi undergo a thorough review by college faculty before being authorized as "AP."</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only syllabi that include the essential college-level curricular and resource requirements are authorized to carry the AP label.</li> <li>• The College Board, as a not-for-profit organization, administers this authorization process at no cost to schools, so that schools can offer AP courses to their students without having to pay any registration or authorization fees.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Unlike other college-credit programs, AP courses and exams are developed by representatives from colleges and universities across the nation, rather than from within just one or a small number of institutions.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chaired by a college faculty member, each AP subject has its own committee responsible for planning, developing and approving exams.</li> <li>• These committees ensure that AP courses and exams align with standards set by some of the nation's most well-respected liberal arts and research institutions.</li> <li>• Additionally, college and university faculty serve as Chief Readers, who are responsible for establishing the criteria used and oversee the scoring process of the exams within their academic disciplines.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Unlike IB exams or dual enrollment teachers' tests, AP Exams are never scored by the students' own teachers.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Therefore, AP Exams provide an external validation of the quality of teaching and learning in a classroom.</li> <li>• AP Exams provide school administrators with a way of demonstrating the rigor and quality of their schools, particularly important for schools seeking to establish a strong academic reputation with colleges and universities.</li> <li>• The College Board engages 12,000 college professors and expert teachers annually to read the AP students' exams, such that each student's exam is read by at least 3 different experts in the field, ensuring that each AP student receives an evaluation of how their work compares to that of college students nationwide, not just at one local college.</li> </ul>

As a result of these key differences between AP and dual enrollment courses, AP credit is much more widely recognized by colleges and universities nationwide than dual enrollment credit. Dual enrollment credit may only be granted at the college that administers the course, and in some cases, students who then transfer to a four-year institution are required to re-take the course. For this reason, some students who take a dual enrollment course still choose to take

an AP Exam at the end of the course, so that they will be able to have more a "portable," widely-recognized credential. This is particularly true for students who plan to attend a college or university outside of their home state or who do not plan to attend the college through which the dual enrollment course is offered.