

6-Point Plan for Expanding Advanced Placement

The Advanced Placement (AP) Program helps schools raise standards across grade levels, providing professional development and classroom resources that impact not just the students enrolled in the college-level AP courses, but the entire school's culture. This year, more than 1 million students will participate in AP courses in high schools across the nation. Research shows that helping students succeed in one AP course in high school, before they enroll in a full suite of rigorous courses as college freshmen, is one of the best ways to improve college graduation rates in our country. Studies also show that many more students than currently enrolled can successfully complete AP courses. AP is the only postsecondary curriculum available to students in high school that allows for national norming and quality control in every subject. As such, it is the fundamental, measurable beginning for school change.

Through participation in AP, students can:

- Experience rich curricula in math, science, literature, social studies, foreign language and arts;
- Strengthen their critical reading and writing skills, and sharpen their analytical thinking skills; and
- Develop the study habits necessary for tackling rigorous course work.

State policymakers can take the lead in expanding access to and success in AP courses through a simple and straightforward 6-point plan:

1. **Announce a major commitment to AP expansion.** Use a public event to launch a high-profile campaign to increase student access to and success in AP courses, especially in schools that have not had a high level of participation in the program - typically urban and rural schools. Involve the K-12, higher education, and business communities in the announcement.
2. **Conduct an inventory of current AP offerings and capacity.** Through formal or informal means, survey the state's middle schools and high schools and determine the extent to which AP is currently offered, whether the courses in the pre-AP years (typically grades 6-10) are sufficiently rigorous, and whether teachers have been appropriately trained to teach effectively the AP courses and the challenging courses that lead to AP.
3. **Support teacher professional development for AP and Pre-AP teachers.** Using existing NCLB Title I, Title II, and Title V funds, as well as federal Math-Science Partnership (MSP) funds, offer a wide range of summer institutes and academic-year workshops for teachers in AP and pre-AP. To address rapid increase in AP enrollment occurring where superintendents and principals are enacting expansion plans, support administrators' training by offering hands-on professional development for school and district leaders.
4. **Use *AP Potential* to identify prospective AP students.** Administer the PSAT/NMSQT to all 10th-grade students in the state, and use the free *AP Potential* program to identify those students likely to succeed on an AP exam, based on their PSAT/NMSQT scores. Send a letter from the Chief State School Officer to each identified student encouraging him or her to take at least one AP course. This is an especially important step in encouraging underrepresented students to enroll in AP courses.
5. **Mandate AP course offerings.** Require, through legislation or policy, all high schools to offer AP courses in at least the four core areas: Mathematics, Science, English and Social Studies.
6. **Offset the AP exam fee for low-income students.** Use a combination of federal funds (from the Federal AP Test Fee Reduction Program) and the College Board AP Fee Reduction to make the AP Exams free for all students from low-income families.