



Archived Information

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND



Expanding the Advanced Placement Incentive Program

February 2006

Expanding access to advanced placement programs would provide more disadvantaged high school students the opportunity to take challenging courses so that they will enter college or the global marketplace ready to excel.

– U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings

America remains the most innovative and creative nation on earth -- but other nations and their students are catching up fast, especially in the future-friendly fields of mathematics and science.

- American 15-year-olds ranked 24th out of 29 developed nations in mathematics literacy and problem-solving on the most recent Program for International Student Assessment [PISA] test.
- Only 7 % of America's 4th- and 8th-graders reached the "advanced" level on the 2003 Trends in International Math and Science Study [TIMSS] test; by contrast, 38 % of Singaporean 4th-graders and 44 % of 8th-graders did.
- Performance on international tests is closely linked to strength and rigor of coursework.

Other nations also have an edge in foreign language instruction, a key to improved national security and global understanding.

- While only 44 % of U.S. high school students studied a foreign language in 2002, learning a second or third foreign language is compulsory for students in the European Union and elsewhere.
- More than 200 million children in China study English – while only 24,000 elementary and secondary school children in the U.S. study Chinese.
- Less than 1 percent of American high school students study the critical foreign languages of Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, Japanese, Korean, Russian, or Urdu – combined.
- Less than 8 percent of undergraduates in American universities take foreign language courses.

To remain a global leader in this highly competitive world, U.S. colleges and universities need freshmen students ready to learn math and science from day one. And U.S. employers, whether filling "white collar" or "blue collar" positions, need workers with "pocket-protector" skills – practical problem-solvers fluent in today's technology.

- 90 % of the fastest-growing jobs will require some post-secondary education. (U.S. Department of Labor)
- If current trends continue, by 2012 over 40 % of factory jobs will require postsecondary education. (National Association of Manufacturers)
- Fewer than half of high school graduates in 2005 were ready for college-level math and science courses. (ACT)
- An applicant for a production associate's job at a modern automobile plant must have math skills equivalent to the most basic achievement level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test – a threshold that almost half of our 17-year-olds do not meet.

Our high schools must prepare graduates to compete and succeed in the workforce or higher education. And they must offer more rigorous coursework to all students. Advanced Placement (AP) students are more competitive internationally than their peers and are more likely to succeed in higher education.

- AP Calculus students ranked first in the world on the TIMSS test; U.S. students overall ranked second to last.
- Students who take two or more Advanced Placement classes are twice as likely to graduate from college in four years or less than students who do not take any AP classes. (CollegeBoard)
- Sixty percent of college students who took Algebra II and other high-level math courses in high school say they felt well-prepared for college, compared to 26 % of students who did not take them. (Achieve, Inc.)
- "One of the best standard predictors of academic success at Harvard is performance on Advanced Placement examinations." – Bill Fitzsimmons, dean of Admissions and Financial Aid, Harvard University

For more information, please visit www.ed.gov

As part of the new American Competitiveness Initiative, and to strengthen high schools and prepare students for college or the workforce, President Bush and Secretary Spellings are committed to expanding Advanced Placement-International Baccalaureate (AP-IB) programs.

- Over 40 percent of our nation's high schools do not offer any AP courses. Many of these schools serve predominantly low-income and minority students.
- The expansion of AP-IB programs will not only benefit students passing the AP exams, but will also serve as a mechanism to upgrade the entire high school curriculum so that other students benefit.

The Advanced Placement Incentive Program would be expanded, with an emphasis on math, science, and critical languages (such as Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese). The goals are to:

- Increase the teacher corps with 70,000 newly trained math, science and critical language teachers over the next five years;
- Increase the number of students taking AP-IB math, science and critical language tests from 380,000 to 1,500,000 by 2012, giving them the opportunity to earn college credits; and
- Triple the number of students passing AP-IB tests to 700,000 by 2012.

This three-year competitive grant program would continue to be offered to all 50 State educational agencies as well as local educational agencies and nonprofits with expertise in providing AP services. The program would:

- Increase rigor in high schools by providing incentives to students, teachers, and schools to take and pass AP/IB courses and examinations;
- Provide incentives for current math, science and critical language teachers to complete content-focused preparation courses; and
- Support summer institutes for teachers to participate in AP-IB training courses.

To encourage strong public-private partnerships, grantees must match funds two-to-one.

- For example, a State receiving the AP Incentive grant could implement a program in which one-third of funding is from the Federal government, one-third is from the State, and one-third is from foundations or the business community.
- In addition to AP Incentive grants, the AP Test Fee Program would continue to enable States to cover test fees of low-income students enrolled in AP-IB classes and planning on taking an AP-IB tests.

The expansion of the Advanced Placement Incentive Program is based upon a proven model of results backed by data, and is immediately scalable on a national level.

- Expanding access to advanced placement courses would allow the country to reduce the deficit in math, science, and critical languages in the short term.
- Research shows that nearly 500,000 more students could be expected to score 3 or higher on the AP Calculus exam if they had taken or had access to the course, and over 640,000 more students could be expected to score 3 or higher on the AP Biology exam if they had taken or had access to the course.