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contact [Crystal Greene](#), 503-947-
5650



NEWS RELEASE

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Many Students With Potential Fail to Take Advanced Placement Exams

Participation and performance continue to increase but large achievement gaps remain

(Salem, Ore.) – According to information released today in the College Board’s annual Advanced Placement Report to the Nation, the number of Oregon students taking, and succeeding in, Advanced Placement (AP) courses and exams continues to increase, but the pace of growth has slowed and large achievement gaps remain between historically underserved student groups and their peers. In addition, the College Board reports that two thirds of students with potential to succeed in AP fail to take the exam. Funding through Oregon’s Strategic Initiatives will help remove financial barriers to taking these exams by providing \$2.6 million over the next two years to help pay for student’s Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate exam costs.

“While we have seen slight increases in both participation and performance on these exams, the results highlight two troubling trends,” said Deputy Superintendent Rob Saxton. “We continue to see lower rates of participation among our students of color and students in poverty and large gaps remain between the students who have demonstrated potential for these courses and those who end up enrolling and taking the exams. All of our students deserve a clear path to college and that starts with ensuring that each and every student has access to rigorous content and the opportunity – and encouragement – to earn college credit while in high school. Making the courses available isn’t enough. We need to do a much better job of identifying students with the potential for these courses, encourage them to enroll, and provide them with the supports they need to succeed.”

Over 8,300 students in Oregon’s 2013 graduating class took at least one Advanced Placement Exam at some point during high school, an increase of 300 students over the prior year. This represents 24% of the graduating class, up from 23% in 2012. However, despite more than doubling overall Advanced Placement participation over the last decade, the state continues see low numbers of historically underserved students participating in these exams. In addition, large achievement gaps still exist in student performance. Last year, 15% of graduates

received a score of three or higher (the score generally associated with receiving college credit) on an AP exam, up from 14.5% of 2012 graduates. But for our Native American, Hispanic, and African American graduates, only 7%, 8%, and 9% respectively received a score of three or higher on an AP exam. Oregon trails the nation in terms of both AP participation and performance with 33% of graduates nationally taking AP exams and 20% receiving a score of three or higher.

The College Board's AP Potential program identifies the specific AP courses students are likely to do well in based on the student's PSAT results. The PSAT is offered free of charge to all Oregon sophomores, making AP Potential data readily available for most Oregon high school students. Based on AP Potential results, only a third of students in the 2013 graduating class with demonstrated potential for Advanced Placement took an AP exam, and these participation rates were even lower for Native American, African American, and Hispanic students. This represents over 6,000 students who demonstrated potential for at least one Advanced Placement subject through their PSAT results but failed to fulfill that potential by enrolling in an AP course and taking the exam. Oregon's AP numbers do not capture information about students taking accelerated coursework through International Baccalaureate (IB) or dual credit programs so these results only paint a partial picture of accelerated learning in our state.

Parents and teachers can help by encouraging students to take AP or other accelerated courses. And thanks to a partnership between the Oregon Virtual School District and Apex Learning, Oregon students have access to a range of tools and resources to help them better prepare to take, and succeed in, their AP exams. These resources are available free of charge to all public schools. [Click here](#) to learn more about the Apex AP exam review resources.

Expanding access to rigorous coursework and the opportunity to earn college credits while in high school will help make college more accessible and affordable for Oregon students and will help to support our state's 40-40-20 goal. In 2013, Oregon high school students took a total of 16,056 Advanced Placement exams that resulted in scores of three or higher. Based on students' opportunity to earn at least three college credits for each AP exam score of three or higher, this represents an estimated 48,168 college credits, or a potential cost savings to Oregon students and families of \$13,816,188.

The Oregon Department of Education is issuing several grants this year designed to better support students on their path to college and career readiness as part of the state's [Strategic Initiatives](#). In addition to the \$2.6 million dedicated to covering AP and IB exam costs in the coming years, there are other targeted investments which should help increase student preparedness for AP and other accelerated content. Additional funding will be available to support mentoring, monitoring, and acceleration for 8th and 9th graders to ensure students stay in school and have the supports to fulfill their potential. The goal with these programs is to increase the number of students who enter tenth grade having earned six or more credits toward graduation and prepared to access accelerated high school content. A separate grant to replicate the Eastern Promise program will encourage innovation and collaboration between schools, higher education institutions, and communities to better support student learning and provide increased opportunities for students to earn college credits while in high school.

Expanding access to AP and other accelerated courses is part of the state's overall effort to increase the number of students prepared for successful entry into college and career.

To learn more about Oregon Advanced Placement results and the College Board's Advanced Placement Report to the Nation, go to: <http://apreport.collegeboard.org/>.

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Rob Saxton, Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction
Crystal Greene, Communications Director, Telephone (503) 947-5650
<http://www.ode.state.or.us>

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