

Rate of advanced placement (AP) exam taking among AP-enrolled students:
A study of New Jersey High Schools
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The primary purpose of this study was to explore the phenomenon of AP exam taking among AP enrolled students in the 309 New Jersey public high schools that had at least one AP course enrollment in 2001-02. New Jersey was chosen because its School Report Card, available on the New Jersey Department of Education web site as a downloadable data file, contains an unusual amount of course-level AP data along with a rich assortment of other school-level information. A second data source was a survey mailed to the 2001-02 AP schools that asked principals whether their school required AP-enrolled students to take the AP exam and whether it paid the exam fee. A total of 256 schools (83%) responded.

The major findings were the following. 1. Approximately 30% of schools required AP-enrolled students to take the AP exam. 2. The percentage of schools that required students to take the exam was greatest for schools in districts with the lowest socioeconomic status and decreased as the socioeconomic status of districts increased. 3. The same pattern was observed for the percentage of schools that paid the exam fee. 4. There was a strong linkage between requiring students to take the AP exam and paying the exam fee. Among schools that paid the exam fee, approximately 82% required students to take the exam. Conversely, among schools that required the exam, approximately 63% also paid the exam fee. 5. Schools that required AP-enrolled students to take the AP exam had lower AP enrollments per 100 11th and 12th grader, SAT scores, and percentages of graduates going to four year colleges as well as a lower percentage of students scoring Advanced on the state-wide High School Proficiency Assessment Math and Language Arts sections.

The findings suggest a possible equity issue in that schools in which students are required to take the AP exam tend to be those that have lower academic achievement and socioeconomic status than schools in which students are not required to take the exam.