

A background image showing several students sitting at wooden desks in a classroom, focused on their work. The students are diverse in age and appearance. The text is overlaid on this image.

Expanding Access to Advanced Placement

Rigorous Curriculum & Engaging Instruction



The Big Idea:



Advanced Placement (AP) courses increase a student's success in college. It is critical that these courses are accessible to all students who are interested in taking them, regardless of socio-economic background.

What are AP courses?

For over 70 years, Advanced Placement (AP) courses have been designed by the College Board to give students the opportunity to engage with college-level curriculum while in a high school setting. Courses on a wide variety of subjects ranging from English Language Arts to Computer Science to U.S. History are designed to be challenging, and each culminates in an optional AP exam. If a student achieves a qualifying score of three or higher out of five, they have the potential to earn college credit. Earning college credit in high school can save students money on credits in their college endeavors.

Every student can achieve at high levels when they are held to high expectations and receive rigorous instruction and support. To prepare students for life after high school, whether they go to college or begin their careers, they must have access to a rigorous curriculum in the classroom that prepares them for the real world.

How do AP courses help students?

Research shows that taking just one AP course in high school can increase college success for students because of exposure to a college-level curriculum. In fact, even students who do not earn a qualifying score on their end-of-course AP exams are more likely to succeed in and graduate from college. In spring 2025, Alabama students took 53,940 AP exams and earned 33,312 qualifying scores. AP courses help students save money in college through credit earned from AP tests. It is estimated that Alabama students have saved approximately \$450 million in college tuition since 2009 by taking AP courses. In 2025, students in Alabama who took AP courses saved an estimated \$40 million in college tuition costs.

College and Career Readiness in Alabama

The Alabama Department of Education does not currently require schools to offer AP courses, nor do students have to take AP courses to graduate. Regardless, starting in the 2025-2026 school year, students will be required to demonstrate College and Career Readiness through one of nine indicators. Receiving a qualifying score on an AP exam is one way that students can indicate their readiness. In 2024, 7,000 graduating students earned a College and Career Readiness indicator by passing at least one AP exam.

A+ Policy Priorities

Increase the number of schools offering AP courses: 33% of Alabama's high schools, or 150 schools, do not offer AP courses, limiting their students' opportunities.

Increase the course options within schools: Of the schools in Alabama that offer AP courses, 40 schools only give students one option. English Language and Composition is the most popular offering, followed by Computer Science Principles. There are 42 total AP courses schools could offer.

Implement Joint Dual Enrollment and AP courses: As of March 2024, the State Department of Education (ALSDE) is allowing students to complete a joint course that includes an Advanced Placement course, participate in the corresponding Advanced Placement Exam, and earn college credit from the Alabama Community College System through the corresponding Dual Credit course. For example, students can take one course and receive college credit for both AP Language and English 101. So now, students can earn college credit from the AP exam and the Alabama Community College System simultaneously to provide them with more opportunities from a single course.

Offer Stipends for AP Exam Fees: Each AP exam currently costs Alabama families about \$99. Alabama provides funding for test stipends to make AP exams free for low-income students. The state has also begun providing funding for all students to take certain AP courses free of charge, such as AP Computer Science Principles and AP Precalculus. This should be expanded to cover the cost of all AP exams over time.

