

Make AP/IB and industry credentialing exams free for low-income students

Proposal: Ensure that Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and industry credentialing exams are provided at no cost to low-income students.

Background: AP and IB programs have offered high-achieving students the opportunity to take rigorous coursework while in high school. Their assessment programs also open opportunities for students to earn college credit before matriculating. In 2016, about 2.5 million U.S. students took AP exams in subjects such as biology, calculus, and English. The exams, however, are not inexpensive—about \$100 per test—and students typically pay out of pocket to sit for them. For low-income students seeking to prove their knowledge and abilities on these exams—and potentially earn college credit—the assessment costs might prove prohibitive. To provide assistance, the College Board discounts AP exam prices for low-income students, and the federal government previously further defrayed exam fees for low-income pupils. However, Congress eliminated this program in 2016, leaving it unclear whether low-income students would continue to receive this form of financial assistance (districts could still use their federal dollars to provide help but are not required to do so). To its credit, the ODE stepped in for 2017–18 and covered most of the testing costs for low-income students. Despite these efforts, it's not certain moving forward whether low-income students will continue to receive the financial assistance needed to take these exams. Although public attention is often focused on AP exams and fees, several of Ohio's industry credentialing programs, such as the programs for becoming a certified logistics technician and physical therapy aide, require students to pass standardized assessments that charge testing fees.

Proposal rationale: AP and IB courses and exams are widely respected for their rigorous academic content, are critical for building competitive college applications, and offer an opportunity to earn credit while in high school. To fully take advantage of AP or IB programs, students should have the opportunity to take the summative assessments, regardless of family income. Although this proposal cannot solve all problems with access to AP/IB courses, covering the full exam costs would be a step forward in supporting advanced opportunities for Ohio's most able low-income students. Likewise, assessment fees should not discourage low-income students from pursuing industry credentials that could open career opportunities.

Cost: The state should allocate \$5 million per year to fund this cost-reimbursement program. This amount should cover AP/IB and credentialing testing fees for low-income students (after any test providers' discounts are applied).

Resources: For discussion on expanding access to AP and IB programs, see Christina Theokas and Reid Saaris' [Finding America's Missing AP and IB Students](#), published by Education Trust (2013); for more on Ohio's current policy for reimbursing exam costs, see ODE's "[Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate Test Fee Reimbursement](#)"; and for other states' reimbursement policies on AP exams, see College Board's "[Changes to AP Federal Funding Under ESSA](#)."