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## Advanced Academics: Access and Support

### Educator Objective

Educators will evaluate student access to, and support in, rigorous academic courses at their campuses.

### Overview

All students should have the opportunity to be prepared for college and career success, even if they ultimately choose a different path to follow. The preparation for this success must occur in every grade level and course prior to high school graduation. The foundational aspects of strong relational capacity and student support promote the academic behaviors, cognitive structures, and content knowledge that are necessary for student success in rigorous academic courses, such as Advanced Placement® (AP®), International Baccalaureate® (IB®), Cambridge, or Pre-AP/Honors courses.

In *Rigor is NOT a Four-Letter Word*, Barbara Blackburn (2008) defines rigor as creating an environment in which each student: is expected to learn at high levels, is supported so that he or she can learn at high levels, and demonstrates learning at high levels. With this environment in place, students can thrive in challenging learning situations that require critical thinking, problem solving, and application of skills and content knowledge. Adelman's (2006) research supports the conclusion that "the academic intensity of the student's high school curriculum counts more than anything else in pre-collegiate history in providing momentum toward completing a bachelor's degree."

### Materials/Set-Up

- Educator Resources:
  - 5.4a: Advanced Academics Data
  - 5.4b: Advanced Academics Checklist
- Chart paper or whiteboard

### Instructional Steps

- Introduce this activity with information on the concept of rigor being centered around student thinking and learning at high levels, rather than simply doing more work. Also emphasize the importance of *all* students having the opportunity to participate in rigorous coursework that prepares them for college and career success.
- Display Blackburn's definition of rigor and the following three questions on chart paper or a whiteboard:
  - What are the characteristics of learning at a high level?
  - How can you support all students so they can learn at high levels?
  - How can students demonstrate learning at high levels?
- Explain to educators that they will do a "brain dump" (i.e., rapidly write their thoughts) to each of the questions. Suggest that they use only phrases or terms, rather than full sentences.

This is an excerpt from AVID Culturally Relevant Teaching: A Schoolwide Approach

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- Conduct a whole-group review of the questions by soliciting educator responses to the questions.
- As a follow-up, ask the educators to briefly discuss the following questions in small groups:
  - What courses on your campus are considered rigorous?
  - Do they fit the definition of rigor?
  - Why is it important that all students have access to these courses?
- Briefly discuss the advanced academics courses, such as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), Cambridge, or Pre-AP/Honors, that are often the most rigorous courses that campuses offer. Include the following points:
  - The curricula and exams of AP, IB, and Cambridge set internationally recognized standards for student learning and achievement.
  - A large proportion of colleges and universities grant higher education credit to students for qualifying exam scores and/or view enrollment in these courses as favorable factors in students' high school résumés.
  - Middle school and junior high campuses often offer Pre-AP or Honors courses, which are considered to be their most rigorous courses.
- Ask educators to review the Advanced Academics Data resource and note directly on the page one observation of the data and one question that arises for them from the data.
- Provide educators with a few minutes to share observations and questions as a large group.
- Distribute the Advanced Academics Checklist and request that everyone individually evaluate their campus or district on each of the statements.
- To debrief the activity, ask individuals or groups to complete a 3–2–1 Reflection summary that drafts a general plan of action for presentation to their department, campus, or learning community:
  - 3 substantive points (“why” statements) for presentation of a campus issue or concern
  - 2 possible ways to address the issue
  - 1 step that can be implemented immediately

### Extension

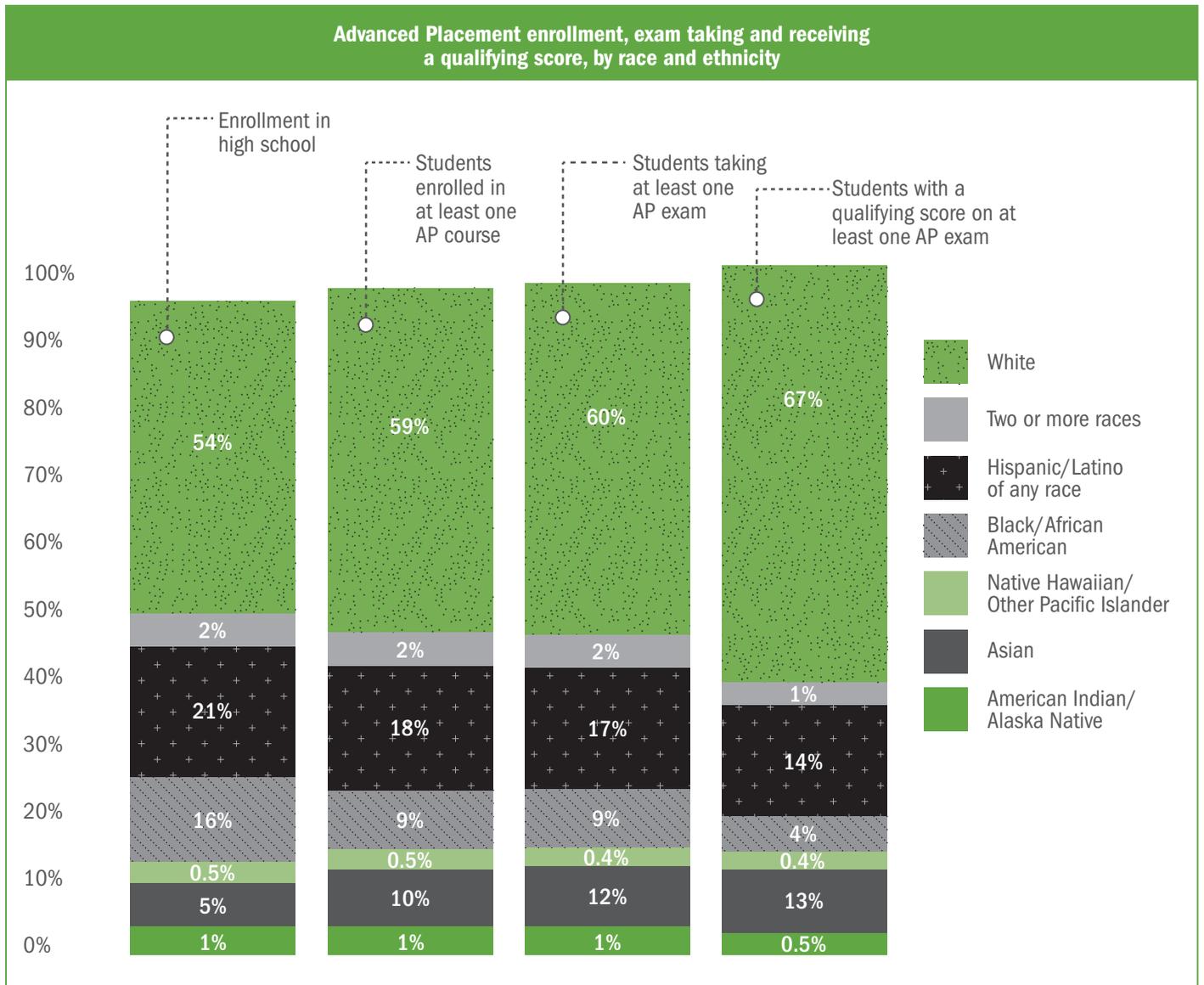
- To extend the learning, and specifically to learn more about AP and IB course information and data, review the College Board (AP) website ([www.collegeboard.org](http://www.collegeboard.org)) or the International Baccalaureate (IB) website ([www.ibo.org](http://www.ibo.org)). Additionally, the website for the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights contains data on aspects of access to, and performance of, various student populations in key courses (e.g., math and science) and other rigorous courses for schools across the nation (<http://ocrdata.ed.gov/Downloads/CRDC-College-and-Career-Readiness-Snapshot.pdf>).

## Advanced Academics Data

The following data for 2013 was collected by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.

### Advanced Placement enrollment and success, by race/ethnicity

Black and Latino students combined represent 37% of high school enrollment, but 27% of students taking AP courses, 26% of students taking AP exams, and 18% of students receiving a qualifying score of 3 or above on one or more AP exams.



Note: Detail may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Data in this chart represents 98.9% of high schools in the CRDC universe. Overall high school enrollment is 16 million students, enrolled in at least one AP course is 2.5 million students, taking at least one AP exam is 1.75 million students, and with a qualifying score on at least one AP exam is 980,000 students. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Civil Rights Data Collection, 2011-12.

## Advanced Academics Checklist

Check the category that indicates the degree to which your campus is in line with the given statement.

	Yes	Sometimes	No
Campus staff members believe that all students should have access to rigorous courses.			
The diversity of the advanced courses at my campus mirrors the diversity of the entire campus.			
Parent information events are held to provide information about advanced courses.			
Students who are typically underrepresented in advanced courses are recruited for the courses.			
Staff members make direct contact with on-level students to identify potential students for AP or Pre-AP			
There is a specific campus plan for supporting students in rigorous courses.			
Campus policies or practices are barriers to rigorous course enrollment for some groups of students.			
There is a formal exit policy for AP/IB or Pre-AP/Honors courses.			
Staff mentors are available for students who struggle in advanced courses.			
Pre-assessments given at the beginning of the school year are used to “weed out” students deemed unready for advanced courses.			
Staff members recognize that rigor is about student <u>thinking</u> , not large amounts of schoolwork.			
Content study groups (AVID tutorial model) are conducted during and outside of class.			
<b>High School Only:</b>			
My campus uses AP Potential® to identify students who have been identified from PSAT results as having potential to succeed in AP courses.			
Departments/learning communities review student data for advanced courses and state exam data to inform plans on increasing enrollment in the courses.			
Summer reading assignments or projects deter some students from enrolling in advanced courses.			