

Date of Hearing: June 26, 2024

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Al Muratsuchi, Chair
SB 1195 (Limón) – As Amended June 17, 2024

SENATE VOTE: 39-0

SUBJECT: Assessments: advanced placement examinations: fall testing date

SUMMARY: Requires the California Department of Education (CDE), on or before February 1, 2025, to request the College Board to provide an alternative testing date at the end of the fall semester for students whose advanced placement (AP) courses conclude in the fall semester, while maintaining the option for those students to take the AP examination for those courses during the spring semester. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires the CDE, on or before February 1, 2025, to request the College Board to provide an alternative testing date at the end of the fall semester for students whose AP courses conclude in the fall semester, while maintaining the option for those students to take the AP examination for those courses during the spring semester, at the discretion of the student.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Authorizes the governing board of a school district that maintains a junior high school or high school to schedule classes so that each pupil attends classes for at least 1,200 minutes during any five-school days period or 2,400 minutes during any 10-school day period. (Education Code (EC) 46160)
- 2) Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to annually update the information on AP available on the CDE's website to include current information on the various means available to school districts to offer or access AP courses, including online courses. Requires the SPI to annually communicate with high schools that offer AP courses in fewer than five subjects, and inform them of the various options for making AP courses and other rigorous courses available to students who may benefit from them. (EC) 52240)
- 3) Requires a testing agency to investigate complaints of inadequate or improper test conditions in AP tests and requires that the school in charge must cooperate with the investigation and provide requested information within five business days. (EC 99160.5)
- 4) Requires the school accountability report card (SARC) to include, but is not limited to, the number of AP courses offered by subject. (EC 33126)
- 5) Authorizes and encourages a school district's governing board to offer a comprehensive educational counseling program for all students enrolled. Suggests this program include guidance on the coursework and experiences needed for each student to meet the A-G admission requirements for admission to the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU). Encourages students in grades 6 to 12 to participate in college preparation programs, such as Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), early college, dual enrollment, AP, and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs. (EC 49600)

- 6) Requires the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) template, adopted by the State Board of Education (SBE), and the LCAP adopted by a school district, county office of education (COE), or charter school, to include as a measure of student achievement the percentage of students who have passed an AP examination with a score of 3 or higher. (EC 52060, 52066)
- 7) Authorizes a school district to help pay for all or part of the costs of one or more AP and IB examinations that are charged to economically disadvantaged students. (EC 52240 and 52922)
- 8) Allocates \$547 million for the A–G Completion Improvement Grant Program. Authorizes, as a use of the grant, AP and IB exam fees for unduplicated (foster youth, low-income, and English learner) students. (EC 41590)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

Need for the bill. According to the author, “The AP exam is designed to allow students to showcase their proficiency in a particular subject and earn college credits based on their performance, with a scoring scale from 1 to 5. The College Board administers the AP exam once a year, during a two-week period in May. Students who take the course in the fall must wait roughly a whole semester before they can complete the May exam, which can lead to an almost 5-month learning loss for students, exacerbating the scoring gap amongst underrepresented students. SB 1195 ensures that all students who take an AP course have the opportunity to take the exam immediately following the completion of their course.”

Advanced Placement. The AP program is overseen by the College Board, a not-for-profit organization that, according to their website, “connects students to college success and opportunity.” According to a 2017 Sage Open article, *Research on the Academic Benefits of the Advanced Placement Program: Taking Stock and Looking Forward*, the AP program provides a framework in which high school teachers can teach introductory college-level courses to high school students. These students then take one of 34 standardized tests at the end of the year, and students who score well on their course’s AP test can receive college credit from the university in which they later enroll.

AP exams and exam schedules. The AP program currently offers 35 exams on the topics of Arts (3), English (2), History and Social Sciences (9), Math and Computer Science (6), Sciences (7), and World Languages and Cultures (8). According to the College Board, the final score for each AP exam is reported on a 5-point scale that offers a recommendation about how qualified exam takers are to receive college credit and placement, however, each college makes its own decisions about what scores it will grant credit or placement for. The AP program conducts studies in all AP subjects to correlate the performance of AP students with that of college students in comparable college courses. These studies inform the “cut points” that determine how AP students’ composite scores are translated into an AP score of 1–5, with a score of 1 being low, and 5 being high. The mean score for the 2022 AP Exams was 2.92. The 2022-23 fee for most exams is \$97. More than 60% of all exams taken earned a score of 3 or higher. Participation in an AP course may add extra points to a student’s grade point average, in accordance with locally developed policies.

Exams come in various structures and contents, but most consist of several questions and last for two to three hours. For every multiple-choice question, students must choose one answer option out of four or five available options. The multiple-choice section of the exam plays a significant role, and the score is based on the number of correctly answered questions. It is important to note that incorrect or unanswered questions will not result in any penalty. Only the correctly answered questions will be awarded points. The second part of the exam usually contains free-response questions requiring students to generate responses. Depending on the exam, it could be an essay, a solution to a problem, or a spoken response. AP exams assess a student's understanding of the content and skills taught in a specific AP course. Most courses have an exam towards the end of the year, but some have alternative assessment methods. For example, students in AP Art and Design submit their portfolios of work for evaluation.

AP coordinators inform students about the date and venue for their exams. It is strictly forbidden to take the test early or at a time other than those specified by the College Board. However, certain unforeseen circumstances may force students to take the test after the scheduled date. In such cases, alternate versions of the exam will be provided to maintain the security of the AP exams. All students who take the test later in the same school must take the alternate version of the exam on the scheduled late-testing dates at the designated times. Currently, the College Board does not offer an AP exam schedule for students who may take and complete an AP course in the fall. The 2024 AP Exams will be administered in schools over two weeks in May: May 6–10 and May 13–17.

Block scheduling popular in high schools. According to research on the topic (Rickard, 2005), block scheduling began as a reform initiative in the 1970s to redistribute the allocation of time in secondary schools:

This form of class scheduling in high schools, typically known as block scheduling, has been configured in different formats, including the 4 x 4 and AB formats. Under the AB format, students attend classes for approximately 95 minutes on alternate days, while on the 4 x 4 format students attend the same four blocked classes each day for 90 consecutive days once per year.

According to Rettig and Canady (1999), about one in three high schools has adopted some form of block scheduling, with certain states, such as North Carolina, having as many as 75% of its high schools using block scheduling (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 1999). Proponents of block scheduling claim benefits for students and teachers.

Do block schedules impact performance on AP examinations? According to a 1998 College Board study which examined the impact of block schedules on the performance of students taking AP exams in May, “While [the] results are not uniform across the tests examined, the evidence in this study suggests that students who are taught in compressed schedules score lower on all four AP Examinations than those who receive year-long instruction. For courses on compressed schedules (fall or spring), there is some evidence that higher AP Examination grades may be obtained when testing immediately follows instruction. Finally, there is also some supporting evidence that students obtain higher AP grades when more time is devoted to instruction.”

The study focused on four AP exams - AP Biology, Calculus, History, and English Literature - taken by students in 1997. The sample included students who had taken the Preliminary

Scholastic Aptitude Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) in 1995 or 1996 and attended schools with four different instructional schedules. These schedules were the traditional schedule with 30- to 60-minute sessions each day throughout the school year, the alternating schedule with 61- to 90-minute sessions every day throughout the school year, the semesterized fall block course, and the semesterized spring block course.

Research related to AP. The College Board has conducted a body of research related to the AP program and student outcomes however, until 2004, there was far less independent peer-reviewed research. According to the 2017 Sage Open article, *Research on the Academic Benefits of the Advanced Placement Program: Taking Stock and Looking Forward*, the first non-College Board study that examined the academic impact of AP program participation was Geiser and Santelices's (2004) study of the relationship between students' high school records and their performance at college was prepared as a technical report for the UC System. The authors found that neither AP course participation nor AP exam scores had any predictive power for students' college grade point average (GPA) or for college persistence after controlling for demographic variables, Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores, high school GPA, and other variables, which led to a significant increase in the study of the AP Program. According to a 2011 College Board study, *Advanced Placement Exam-Taking and Performance: Relationships with First-Year Subject Area College Grades*, students' first-year college subject area grade point averages, when controlled for gender, racial or ethnic identity, socioeconomic status, and prior academic ability, increased in relation to their students AP Exam score. According to a 2015 Journal of Educational Research article, *The Impact of Participation in the Advanced Placement Program on Students' College Admissions Test Scores*, "Even when scholars recognize the benefits of AP courses, it is sometimes due to characteristics of the classes, and not the AP program itself. Because these student and teacher characteristics are often shown to be linked to positive academic outcomes, it is possible that any benefits of the AP program may be merely due to more prepared students and more experienced teachers—not the program itself."

Concerns related to racial/ethnic access and participation equity. According to a 2014 American Secondary Education Journal article, *Minority Students in High School Advanced Placement Courses: Opportunity and Equity Denied*, with the exception of Asian and Pacific Islanders, minority students are severely underrepresented in AP programs. Further, the authors found a positive relationship between parents' profession and income and students' enrollment in such programs.

Arguments in support. The Administrators Association, San Diego City Schools writes, "As district leaders, we understand the importance of AP exams for students. Students can earn college credit based on their exam scores, and the passage of SB 1195 will allow students to take AP exams in the fall if their school uses block scheduling and the course concludes in the fall semester. Given the importance of AP exams, the fact that achieving a passing score can allow a student to earn college credit for the course, and the understanding that learning loss can occur if students must wait until the spring semester to take these exams, we support the passage of SB 1195."

Related legislation. AB 2073 (Quirk-Silva) of the 2023-24 Session would authorize a school, if certain conditions are met, to use an alternate schedule to satisfy physical education (P.E.) course requirements for students. The bill would allow a school serving students in grades six to 12 to adopt a policy for an alternate schedule to satisfy P.E. course requirements. Would require these

P.E. programs to adhere to certain requirements, including the use of the state's P.E. framework and that students prepare for and participate in physical performance testing.

SB 915 (Hill), Chapter 245, Statutes of 2014, imposes specified requirements on test agencies and schools when they learn of a complaint or notice of inadequate or improper test conditions in the administration of the AP test.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Administrators Association of San Diego City Schools
Association of California School Administrators
Generation Up
Perk Advocacy

Opposition

None on file

Analysis Prepared by: Marguerite Ries and Tanya Lieberman / ED. / (916) 319-2087