



TO: P-12 Education Committee
FROM: Ken Wagner 
SUBJECT: Access to Advanced Coursework
DATE: September 8, 2014
AUTHORIZATION(S): 
SUMMARY

Item for Discussion

Department staff will present an overview of student access to advanced coursework in New York State high schools.

Background Information

At the June 2014 meeting of the Board, Department staff presented the four-year graduation rate for the 2009 cohort. Data were presented that suggested a key component of the achievement gap among white, black, and Hispanic students was the percentage of students in the cohort who earned the Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation – one of the Department’s aspirational performance measures of college and career readiness. Specifically, while approximately 40% of white students over the past three cohorts earned this credential, only about 10% of black and Hispanic students did so.

The Board directed staff to complete further analyses to determine the extent to which this achievement gap is influenced by access to the advanced coursework necessary to earn the Advanced Designation diploma.

Advanced Coursework in New York State High Schools

Students seeking the Advanced Designation diploma must take advanced coursework, including additional credits in the Arts, Career and Technical Education (CTE), or Languages other than English (LOTE). If the LOTE pathway is selected, students must pass a locally developed proficiency examination. In addition, students must pass additional Regents exams in mathematics and science.

The analysis presented to the Board focused only on the additional Regents Examinations and associated courses that are necessary for the Advanced Designation diploma, including Geometry, Algebra II/Trigonometry, Living Environment, Earth Science, Chemistry, and Physics. Statewide, 94% of the schools that enroll students in grades 9-12 also offer the minimum number of these advanced courses necessary for a student to earn the Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation¹. Results vary by need/resource group, and a smaller percentage of schools offered students a choice of courses in order to meet the diploma requirements.

Statewide, while 94% of students in the 2009 cohort were still enrolled in high school through the beginning of their fourth year of study, only about half of those students participated in one or more of the exams necessary to earn the Advanced Designation diploma. Similar to the analysis based on access to advanced courses, participation in the advanced Regents Exams varied by need/resource group. Results also varied by race/ethnicity and student poverty.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board direct Department staff to generate additional analyses as needed and generate options for how best to support school and district efforts to prepare students for college and career readiness through enrollment in advanced coursework.

¹ Although a diploma can be earned through New York State-approved alternative exams, such as Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) exams, these options were not included in the current analysis.