

A SYFR PARTNER:

College Board

by Richard Erdmann, CEO and Founder, Syfr Corporation

There are few, if any, specific things that we do in K-12 that influence college success more than Advanced Placement. Taking one Advanced Placement course almost doubles the probability of graduating from college in five years or less. Taking a second course increases the probability by approximately another 20%.

There are two strategies for raising participation in Advanced Placement. The first is to administer an early test in the 9th grade to identify additional students capable of taking an Advanced Placement course. These tests are inexpensive and have a high predictive ability relative to Advanced Placement success. Since few districts identify all of the potential students, most districts will increase Advanced Placement participation by 3 to 6 times within a matter of a few years just by administering the test, training additional teachers, offering more courses and placing additional students in the courses.

The second strategy takes time and involves vertical teaming. By using the Advanced Placement course as the end course of high school and mapping curriculum back through the secondary and middle grades; rigor is introduced into the curriculum that prepares more students for college. This process takes several years to create results but if it is started simultaneously with the early testing, successful Advanced Placement participation should grow from the beginning.

Syfr entered into an agreement with the College Board a few years ago to work in selected metropolitan areas to raise Advanced Placement participation and use those increases to engage the business community in a long-term dialog about school reform. In addition, it is hoped that businesses will assist in funding the expansion of Advanced Placement in the participating school districts. The idea is to engage the business community around a success story and build from that success story. It is my belief that the story needs to be short, succinct, have a high probability of sustained success, involves only modest amounts of money and be easily measured and communicated. Advanced Placement does all of these.

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