



Every student, every day: Expanding access to Advanced Placement courses for students

One of the goals set by the board of education has been to increase access to courses for all students. I am proud to report that more Laguna Beach High School (LBHS) students are taking--and passing--Advanced Placement (AP) exams than ever before. This year, LBHS has 391 students taking 780 AP exams. The number of students enrolled in AP courses has increased by over 130 students since 2016. Consequently, the total number of exams has increased by almost 300 during that same time, all while maintaining a pass rate above 90 percent.

Our continued success and growth in enrollment are due in large part to our dedicated LBHS staff who, committed to our goals of every student, every day and continuous improvement, work to open doors of opportunity for our students. In the last three years, LBHS has added four additional AP courses including Art History, Computer Science A, Computer Science Principles, and Statistics. In conjunction with the PTA, the site has paid for every student to take the PSAT 9, PreACT, and PSAT/NMSQT in 9-11th grade. The information gained from individual student scores from the PSAT 9 allows our counseling staff to identify the students who may have the potential to succeed in specific AP courses based on the strengths identified in their results. The ability to use this data to help grow our AP enrollment for all students is vital to our school's ongoing success.

Advanced Placement courses are opportunities for students to explore subjects they love, immersive experiences that encourage students to make real-world connections providing for them an avenue to identify their place in the world. They are challenging, and at times stressful, but in the process, students develop a sense of confidence as they discover what they're capable of accomplishing when they work hard in an area they're passionate about.

The key to our success has been to identify courses in areas that interest our students, beyond the traditional, elective classes. With the introduction of AP Statistics, AP Computer Science Principles, AP Computer Science A, and AP Art History, LBHS currently offers a total of 21 Advanced Placement courses.

Throughout the first two full weeks in May, 52 percent of students in grades 10 through 12 will be taking AP exams. Among those, are students that for the first time, in AP Computer Science or AP Art History, have found a subject-area that they are passionate about, including students that have been classified as special education

students. In increasing access to Advanced Placement courses, we have sought to increase opportunities for students that have not traditionally fallen under the umbrella of the adjective term, “the AP student.”

In the graduating class of 2018, 51 percent of students had taken and passed an AP exam. That means that more than half of the seniors that crossed the platform into the real-world left with an experience of the rigor of college coursework under their belt.

Our hope, as we continue to focus on improving in this area, is that we redefine “the AP student.” That by the time our students graduate they have, at least once in their high school experience, come in contact with a course that inspires them, a course that gives them a glimpse at a future they are excited and optimistic about but most importantly, that they leave with the self-awareness, self-advocacy skills, and self-confidence to successfully navigate the next chapter.

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