

What Works Clearinghouse



June 2008

WWC Quick Review of the Manuscript “A Little Now for a Lot Later: A Look at a Texas Advanced Placement Incentive Program”[†]

What is this study about?

This study examined whether the Advanced Placement Incentive Program (APIP) affects students’ SAT/ACT scores and college attendance.

The study analyzed information on 57 Texas high schools that have implemented APIP since 1996.

The study measured the effect of APIP by comparing schools that had implemented the program with schools that had not yet done so and by examining changes in schools that occurred after APIP implementation.

The study used data from 1994 to 2005 drawn from statewide databases.

Features of the Advanced Placement Incentive Program

Students and their teachers receive bonuses of \$100-\$500 for AP scores of 3 and above

College Board trains teachers

Teachers compensated for additional work associated with the program

Curricular reforms prepare students in earlier grades for AP courses

Program funded by private donors and managed by AP Strategies, a non-profit based in Dallas

WWC Rating

The research described in this manuscript is consistent with WWC evidence standards with reservations

Strengths: Used differences in the timing of APIP implementation across schools to estimate effects

Cautions: The study compared schools that had implemented APIP to those that had not yet done so. It also examined whether a school’s outcomes improved after APIP implementation. Schools implementing APIP early and later in the study period may have differed in ways not controlled for in the analysis. In addition, APIP may have been more likely to be implemented in schools that were about to improve anyway—because of new school leadership, for example. If so, the study might have produced misleading results.

What did the study author report?

APIP increased the number of students scoring above 1100 on the SAT or above 24 on the ACT by 20 to 30 percent. It did not increase the number of students taking these tests. APIP also increased the number of students going to a Texas college by 7 to 9 percent.

The WWC has reservations about these results because schools may have been different from each other in ways not controlled for in the analysis.

[†]Jackson, J. (2007). *A little now for a lot later: A look at a Texas advanced placement incentive program* (Working Paper 107). Ithaca, NY: Cornell Higher Education Research Institute (CHERI).