

Giving High School Students Expanded Opportunities to Earn College Credits



**Orange County
Public Schools**

Using CLEP® Exams to Help AP® Students Earn Credit for Their Work

Hilary Buckridge, senior director of high school and advanced studies, and Marjorie Ceballos, senior administrator of advanced studies, at Orange County Public Schools (OCPS) in Florida know their students and know that high school opportunities to earn college credit can make a real difference in those students' future choices. When Buckridge and Ceballos observed that some students in their district were not earning scores of 3 or higher on their AP® Exams, they believed that these learners could benefit from a chance to earn college credit for their work in another way. They began their program by choosing three subject areas: U.S. history, English, and psychology. They invited students to come in at no cost to participate in a subject-area refresher, and then register for CLEP® exams, take a practice test and, finally, take the actual CLEP exam in their high school testing center.

These two educational leaders had their work cut out for them, because in addition to developing the program for students, they also needed to open test centers in the district's high schools rapidly, sometimes in just a three-week time frame. Today, OCPS operates five testing centers, serving students across the district's large geographic service area.



We've just added the Spanish Language exam to our CLEP program. We reached out to students who scored a 2 on their AP Spanish Language and Culture Exam and gave them the opportunity to review materials and participate in a tutorial. Everyone who took the CLEP exam passed and the scores were phenomenal, in the mid to high 60s."

Marjorie Ceballos
Orange County Public Schools

A Summer Launch Established Program Foundations

Buckridge explained, “We used the summer before school started and that helped because we were able to test our model of providing instruction and practice, and then assessment — one after the other. We had the luxury of summer schedules, so we didn’t have school day conflicts for students or teachers. We worked closely with core subject teachers, the people who instructed these students for 180 days during the prior school year. These teachers felt that students would have a good shot at earning credit for their AP classes even though they did not score high enough initially on their AP Exams. These teachers believed that if they had the opportunity to review content with their students, the students would have scored higher. For the first CLEP administration program, we provided practice materials and conducted a “boot camp” to cover and review content with students. For the second administration, we provided practice materials only, but no structured review. In the third administration, we offered one Saturday of tutoring and the scores went up slightly in U.S. History.”

Educator Collaboration: An Essential Ingredient for Success

Over the summer, OCPS Advanced Placement® teachers devoted some planning time with other teachers in their disciplines. Together, they reviewed the available CLEP preparation materials along with materials from their own courses taught previously. Based on those resources, teachers put materials together for CLEP preparation and review that were part of the support for the first CLEP administration. Teachers noted that for U.S. history, psychology, and English, the CLEP preparation materials, and the exams themselves, the level of rigor was excellent. Educators noted that AP U.S. History is divided into two courses, while the CLEP exam covers all of U.S. history in one exam, requiring new content for the CLEP review in U.S. history. Educators took great pride in giving students a second opportunity through CLEP testing to earn dual enrollment course credit at the university level.

“As other districts look to implement a program like this, one of the things that worked well for us is that we have a very committed cohort of teachers who have started with us in the summer, and have continued with us throughout our other test administrations because they have a lot of faith in the program. And then, once they saw the students be successful, that’s when they really became even more committed. Teachers often email me saying, ‘Are we going to do this again? I want to be there.’”

Another piece of advice is to start small and then build on the program so teachers can become acclimated to the different demands of the CLEP program. It is computer-based testing and that’s different from the way many districts deploy standardized assessments. We also discovered it’s important to coordinate with the technology team to make sure the necessary connections, computers, and support are in place for the practice and actual test administration.”

Marjorie Ceballos
Orange County Public Schools

Student and Family Outreach Are Critical Components of Success

The OCPS team began the program in the summer of 2014 by sending a form letter describing the opportunity for every student who had just taken AP Exams in U.S. history, psychology, and English and scored below a 3. From that list, they issued approximately 1,300 requests, reminding families that the CLEP opportunity was available. In their first round, 120 students took CLEP exams, 113 took exams in the second round, and 42 took exams in the last administration. More than 90 percent have passed the exams.

Both Buckridge and Ceballos noted that it's critically important to educate students, their families, and their school counselors about what the CLEP opportunity represents in terms of earning credit, saving money once they get to college, and having a head start on their postsecondary plans. They will continue to offer the program during summer months and, perhaps, in the very beginning of the school year to accommodate students who may not have been able to participate in a summer program.

Orange County Public Schools Best Practices at a Glance

- Focus on specific cohorts of students who will benefit from another chance to earn college credits for their advanced high school course work.
- Consider testing the program on a small scale over the summer to establish successful policies and procedures.
- Collaborate closely with subject-area teachers and technology staff members to ensure adequate student preparation and technology access.

For more information, visit clep.collegeboard.org.