

AP exam results bode well for school curriculum

There are many statistics that compare countries to countries, provinces to provinces and schools to schools when it comes to the academic ability of high school students.

But what about high school students completing university level courses (and yes, this is possible)?

The program is called Advanced Placement (AP) and it allows high-achieving high school students the opportunity to complete courses at the post-secondary level while still in high school.

At Okanagan College, high school students who complete AP courses in

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biology, chemistry, computer science, economics, English, French, History, mathematics, physics and psychology are usually granted credit for equivalent courses at the College.

Depending on the AP courses students complete, they are often able to bypass first-year college courses and

go directly into second year courses.

So how many students participate and how well do they do when they tackle university level courses when they are still in Grades 12 or 11?

This past year, more than 5,000 B.C. high school students wrote about 8,000 AP exams. B.C. students wrote more exams and in more disciplines than any other province.

This means more B.C. students have the academic ability and support

from their schools to enrol in AP courses. And according to the B.C. Ministry of Education, B.C. high school students placed the highest in Advanced Placement exam scores.

B.C. high school students' average score was 3.67 which was higher than the Canadian average at 3.44 and the United States at 2.88.

On top of this, 81.3 per cent of B.C. students scored three out of five or higher on exams.

When assessing the academic success of a program, all schools (whether they are high schools, colleges or universities) look at the outcomes of their students.

How well did they learn and how well were they able to apply their learning through examinations and final projects or papers?

If many students are unable to apply the learning they received in class

and transpose this learning during an examination, this may indicate to the school and the faculty that problems may exist with the curriculum or the teaching method.

On the flip side, if students do very well, this in turn indicates that the curriculum is appropriate and the teachers are doing a good job.

So with B.C. students receiving such high scores on their AP exams, it is their teachers who deserve the credit for getting them prepared to write the exams and even the ministry of education for making sure our B.C. high school curriculum is sound enough to prepare students for university study.

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Barry Gerding's column will return next week.