

IOAPA: MIDDLE SCHOOL ELIGIBILITY

About

The **Iowa Online AP® Academy (IOAPA)** provides free online above-level courses to Iowa students who do not have access to on-site versions of such courses. The cost of the courses is covered for Iowa students by the Belin-Blank Center through IOAPA. Middle school students take AP-preparatory courses, intended to equip students with sufficient skills and background knowledge to be prepared for future AP courses in high school.



Casting a Wide Net

Educators decide which of their students participate in IOAPA courses. We recommend that educators take a **universal screening approach**. Include students who have already scored in the top 10 percent of their grade on ISASP compared to other students in their school (not national norms). Include **additional** students through teacher, parent, or self-nomination.



Testing

We recommend above-level testing as a second step. Decades of research inform us that participation in above-level testing (through the Belin-Blank Talent Search, for example) helps educators determine which students need advanced or accelerated courses. Participating in above-level testing **increases** students' aspirations and achievements. We recommend I-Excel or ACT. Schools might select other tests to inform their decisions.



Future Planning With Your Administrators

Middle school teachers and students should consider future courses as they select an IOAPA course. For instance, if an online biology course is counted for high school credit, students may need to substitute a different science course for biology when they reach high school.

Assigning Course Credit



Middle schools can consider IOAPA classes as an **upper-level alternative** to a traditionally available middle school class. We recommend that middle school students be given **high school credit** for these classes, since they are high school-level. In other words, they are not honors-level middle school courses. They are high school courses that we make available to middle school students. Ultimately, schools have local authority to determine how credit is assigned. Please note, teachers may need to work creatively to demonstrate that students are meeting the requirements to pass both courses and teachers may need to provide additional educational experiences to fill in any gaps.

How does participation in IOAPA courses impact graduation requirements? Awarding credit at both the high school and middle school level may answer this question. However, if credit is applied only in middle school, when the student gets to high school, they might be asked to repeat the course. One solution is to include the IOAPA middle school course as a line on the student's high school transcript while giving credit at the middle school level. While the course might not count towards high school graduation requirements, documentation of the course will allow these students to continue within the appropriate course sequence, freeing up their schedule for other advanced opportunities later in high school.

Middle school gifted coordinators should **communicate with administrators at the middle and high school** to ensure that the options available work to best serve the student pursuing advanced coursework throughout their education.

GUIDELINES FOR RECOMMENDATION

| IMPORTANCE | MEASURE | GUIDELINES |
|----------------|---|---|
| Very Important | Any grade-level standardized tests taken within the last year (e.g., ISASP) | 90th percentile or above in the course content area |
| Important | Above-level test (6th grade: I-Excel; 7th-8th grade: ACT) | 50th percentile or above compared to older norm group |
| Important | Teacher/parent confidence in student's readiness for challenging, independent, online, coursework | High confidence |
| Important | Previous relevant coursework within the past two years | Sufficient background knowledge/skills |



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