

IOAPA:

MIDDLE SCHOOL ELIGIBILITY

About

The Iowa Online AP® Academy provides free online above-level courses to Iowa students who do not have access to on-site versions of such courses. Eligible high-ability middle school students can enroll in online, high school-level courses. The cost of the courses is covered for Iowa students by the Belin-Blank Center through the Iowa Online AP® Academy. Middle school courses are not AP courses; rather, they are AP-preparatory, 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 compared to other students in their school (not national norms). Include **additional** students through teacher, parent, or self-nomination.



Testing

Use above-level testing. Decades of research informs us that participation in above-level testing (through the Belin-Blank Exceptional Student Talent Search, [BESTS](#), for example) helps educators determine which students need advanced or accelerated courses such as those provided by IOAPA. Participating in above-level testing actually **increases** students' aspirations and achievements. Because above-level testing is so useful for discovering talented students, the Belin-Blank Center makes it easy and cost-effective for schools to use it.

We recommend that students take I-Excel or ACT. A limited number of I-Excel testing scholarships are available to Iowa 4th - 6th graders. Iowa students can test for free, and we encourage schools to take advantage of this opportunity to discover students who are ready for IOAPA courses.

GUIDELINES FOR RECOMMENDATION

IMPORTANCE	MEASURE	GUIDELINES
Very Important	Any grade-level standardized tests taken within the last year (e.g. Iowa Assessments)	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
Somewhat Important	Additional test scores (e.g. CogAT, IQ)	Well above average



Working With Your Administrators

Middle school teachers and students should consider future courses as they select an IOAPA course. For instance, if the student's online biology course is counted for high school credit, they may need to substitute a different science course for biology when they reach high school. Likewise, students should consider future plans for AP courses in these subject areas.

Assigning Course Credit

Again, teachers may need to work creatively to demonstrate that students are meeting the requirements necessary to pass both courses and teachers may need to provide additional educational experiences to fill in any gaps.

We encourage middle schools to consider these classes as an **upper-level alternative to a traditionally available class**, and we recommend that middle school students be given **high school credit** for these classes, since they are high school-level classes. In other words, they are not honors-level middle school courses. They are actual high school courses that we simply make available to middle school grades. Ultimately, schools have local authority to determine how credit is assigned.

We asked some of our schools how they handle this issue, and we compiled their solutions into this blog post: <https://belinblank.wordpress.com/2015/11/30/middle-school-ioapa-working-out-credit-concerns/>. Hopefully this will be useful for your school in determining how to assign credit.