

the condition of education 2003



INDICATOR 24

Trends in English and Foreign Language Coursetaking

The indicator and corresponding tables are taken directly from *The Condition of Education 2003*. Therefore, the page numbers may not be sequential.

Additional information about the survey data and supplementary notes can be found in the full report. For a copy of *The Condition of Education 2003*, visit the NCES web site (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2003067>) or contact ED PUBs at 1-877-4ED-PUBS.

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Coursetaking and Standards

Trends in English and Foreign Language Coursetaking

The percentages of high school graduates who had completed advanced academic levels of English and foreign language study doubled between 1982 and 2000.

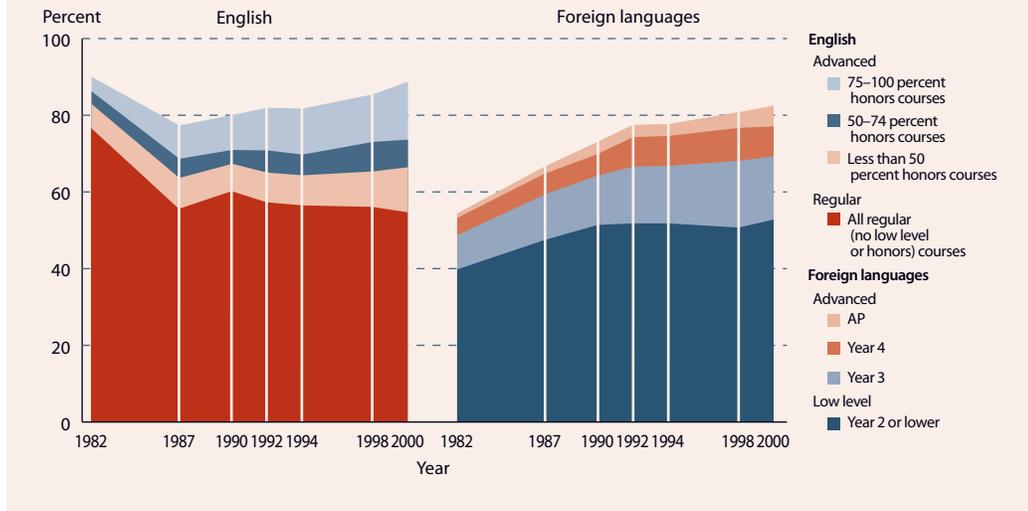
The actual content and instructional methods of high school courses with similar descriptions can vary across classes and schools, as well as over time. Research has shown, however, that student achievement is related to the academic level of coursework that students complete, controlling for various school and background factors (Chaney, Burgdorf, and Atash 1997; Berends, Lucas, and Briggs forthcoming). This indicator shows the trends between 1982 and 2000 in the highest level of English and foreign language coursework that high school graduates completed.

Since the 1980s, when states began to increase the number of required courses to receive a high school diploma (NCES 95–029, table 151), the percentage of high school graduates completing some advanced English courses (i.e., courses classified as “honors”) and advanced foreign language courses (year 3 and higher) has increased. In 1982, 13 percent of high school graduates had completed some advanced English coursework; by 2000, this percentage had risen to 34 percent. Moreover, during this period, the percentage who had com-

pleted 75–100 percent of their English courses at the honors level more than tripled (from 4 to 15 percent). The percentage of graduates who had completed low academic level courses in English (courses classified as “below grade level”) increased for a while and then steadily declined such that no significant differences were found between the rates of completion in 2000 and 1982 (10 and 11 percent, respectively) (see supplemental table 24-1).

The percentage of high school graduates who had completed advanced foreign language courses was greater in 2000 than in 1982. In 1982, 15 percent of graduates had completed some advanced foreign language study; by 2000, this percentage had doubled to 30 percent. In addition, over this period, the percentage of graduates who had completed no foreign language study decreased markedly (from 46 to 17 percent). Yet, in 2000, roughly half of all graduates had completed only low academic levels of foreign language study (year 2 or lower), while 5 percent had completed AP courses (see supplemental table 24-2).

COURSE-TAKING LEVELS: Percentage of high school graduates who completed regular and advanced levels of English and low level and advanced foreign language courses, by highest level of coursetaking completed: Selected years 1982–2000



NOTE: Not displayed are the percentage of graduates who completed no or low academic level English courses and the percentage who completed no foreign language coursework.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, NCES, High School and Beyond Longitudinal Study of 1980 Sophomores, “First Follow-up” (HS&B-So:80/82); National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88/92), “Second Follow-up, High School Transcript Survey, 1992”; and National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1987, 1990, 1994, 1998, and 2000 High School Transcript Studies (HSTS).

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- Supplemental Note 6
- Supplemental Tables 24-1, 24-2
- NCES 95–029, NCES 2003–343
- Chaney, Burgdorf, and Atash 1997
- Berends, Lucas, and Briggs forthcoming



Trends in English and Foreign Language Coursetaking

Table 24-1. Percentage distribution of high school graduates according to the type of English courses completed: Selected years 1982–2000

Year	No English ²	Low academic level ³	Regular English (no low level or honors) courses	Advanced academic level ¹			Total
				Less than 50 percent of courses	50–74 percent of courses	75–100 percent of courses	
1982	0.1	10.0	76.7	6.1	3.3	3.8	13.3
1987	0.7	22.1	55.6	7.9	5.0	8.7	21.5
1990	0.6	19.6	60.2	7.0	3.6	9.1	19.6
1992	0.2	18.0	57.3	7.6	5.8	11.1	24.4
1994	0.8	17.6	56.5	7.7	5.4	12.0	25.1
1998	0.9	13.7	56.1	9.1	7.7	12.4	29.3
2000	0.7	10.7	54.7	11.6	7.2	15.1	33.9

¹“Advanced academic level” courses include English courses classified as “honors.” Students may have completed a general English course classified as “below grade level” if they completed a greater percentage of “honors” courses than “below grade level” courses.

²Indicates that student transcript records did not list any recognized English courses; however, these students may have studied some English. If students took only English as a second language (ESL) courses for credit, they would be listed in this category.

³“Low academic level” courses include all general English courses classified as “below grade level.” Students may have taken a general English course classified as “honors” and be classified in the low academic level if the percentage of “below grade level” courses completed was equal to or greater than the percentage of “honors” courses completed.

NOTE: For each graduate, the percentages of completed courses classified as “below level,” “at grade level,” and “honors” were calculated. (Not all students completed 4 years of English.) After the percentage of graduates at each level had been calculated, the percentage of graduates who fit the category requirements for each level was determined, as explained in *supplemental note 6*. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, NCES, High School and Beyond Longitudinal Study of 1980 Sophomores, “First Follow-up” (HS&B-So:80/82); National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88/92), “Second Follow-up, High School Transcript Survey, 1992”; and National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), 1987, 1990, 1994, 1998, and 2000 High School Transcript Studies (HSTS).

Table 24-2. Percentage distribution of high school graduates according to the highest level of foreign language courses completed: Selected years 1982–2000

Year	Highest level of foreign language coursework completed ¹					Total
	None	Low academic level	Advanced academic level			
			Year 3	Year 4	AP	
1982	45.6	39.8	8.9	4.5	1.2	14.6
1987	33.3	47.5	11.9	5.4	1.9	19.2
1990	26.9	51.4	12.9	5.6	3.2	21.7
1992	22.5	51.8	14.8	7.7	3.2	25.7
1994	22.3	51.8	15.0	7.8	3.1	25.9
1998	19.4	50.7	17.4	8.6	4.1	30.0
2000	17.4	52.8	16.5	7.8	5.4	29.8

¹These figures include only students who studied French, German, Latin, or Spanish because these are the only foreign languages commonly offered in high schools for 4 years or more. Some students in each category also studied more than one foreign language. Only data on the foreign language they studied most are presented.

NOTE: The distribution of graduates among the various levels of foreign language courses was determined by the level of the most academically advanced course they had completed. Graduates who had completed courses in different languages were counted according to the highest level course completed. Graduates may have completed advanced levels of courses without having taken courses at lower levels. See *supplemental note 6* for more details on these levels. Detail may not sum to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, NCES, High School and Beyond Longitudinal Study of 1980 Sophomores, “First Follow-up” (HS&B-So:80/82); National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88/92), “Second Follow-up, High School Transcript Survey, 1992”; and National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), 1987, 1990, 1994, 1998, and 2000 High School Transcript Studies (HSTS).

Trends in English and Foreign Language Coursetaking

Table S24. Standard errors for the percentage of high school graduates who completed regular and advanced levels of English and low level and advanced foreign language courses, by highest level of coursetaking completed: Selected years 1982–2000

Level of courses	1982	1987	1990	1992	1994	1998	2000
English							
75–100 percent honors courses	0.4	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.9	1.0	1.2
50–74 percent honors courses	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.7	0.5
Less than 50 percent honors courses	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.9
Regular English (no low level or honors) courses	1.0	1.5	1.6	1.1	1.5	1.7	2.0
Foreign language							
AP	0.2	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.8
Year 4	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.7	0.8	0.6	0.5
Year 3	0.5	0.9	0.7	0.8	0.8	1.1	1.0
Year 2 or lower	0.8	1.1	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.2	1.3

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, NCES, High School and Beyond Longitudinal Study of 1980 Sophomores, "First Follow-up" (HS&B-So:80/82); National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88/92), "Second Follow-up, High School Transcript Survey, 1992"; and National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), 1987, 1990, 1994, 1998, and 2000 High School Transcript Studies (HSTS).

Trends in English and Foreign Language Coursetaking

Table S24-1. Standard errors for the percentage distribution of high school graduates according to the type of English courses completed: Selected years 1982–2000

Year	No English	Low academic level	Regular English (no low level or honors) courses	Advanced academic level			Total
				Less than 50 percent of courses	50–74 percent of courses	75–100 percent of courses	
1982	0.03	0.72	1.03	0.52	0.36	0.38	0.80
1987	0.12	1.25	1.51	0.62	0.40	0.77	0.94
1990	0.10	1.36	1.63	0.68	0.33	0.80	1.38
1992	0.07	0.89	1.12	0.45	0.42	0.67	0.92
1994	0.11	1.38	1.54	0.63	0.38	0.90	1.18
1998	0.10	1.45	1.69	0.67	0.67	0.98	1.30
2000	0.11	1.09	1.96	0.89	0.53	1.20	1.70

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, NCES, High School and Beyond Longitudinal Study of 1980 Sophomores, "First Follow-up" (HS&B-So:80/82); National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88/92), "Second Follow-up, High School Transcript Survey, 1992"; and National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), 1987, 1990, 1994, 1998, and 2000 High School Transcript Studies (HSTS).

Table S24-2. Standard errors for the percentage distribution of high school graduates according to the highest level of foreign language courses completed: Selected years 1982–2000

Year	Highest level of foreign language coursework completed						Total
	None	Low academic level	Advanced academic level				
			Year 3	Year 4	AP		
1982	1.04	0.82	0.51	0.34	0.19	0.78	
1987	1.27	1.12	0.87	0.40	0.43	1.34	
1990	1.13	1.04	0.73	0.44	0.51	1.17	
1992	0.90	1.10	0.78	0.68	0.31	1.13	
1994	0.89	1.04	0.82	0.76	0.39	1.17	
1998	0.89	1.20	1.06	0.58	0.50	1.40	
2000	0.90	1.28	0.95	0.46	0.77	1.33	

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, NCES, High School and Beyond Longitudinal Study of 1980 Sophomores, "First Follow-up" (HS&B-So:80/82); National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88/92), "Second Follow-up, High School Transcript Survey, 1992"; and National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), 1987, 1990, 1994, 1998, and 2000 High School Transcript Studies (HSTS).