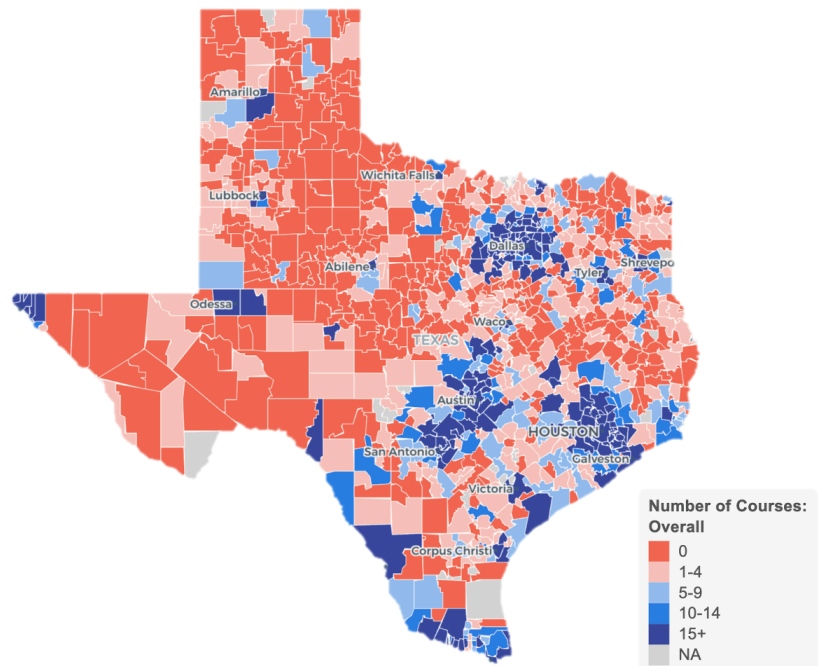


## Inconsistent Access to Advanced Coursework Across Texas School Districts

Access to Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses is a key factor in preparing students for the rigors of college and beyond. However, in Texas, significant disparities exist in the availability of these courses across school districts, particularly disadvantaging students in rural and low-income areas. Many students in these regions are deprived of opportunities that are readily available to their peers in urban and suburban districts, creating an educational opportunity gap that limits their academic potential and future opportunities.

The data indicates substantial variation across the state, with some districts offering robust advanced coursetaking options and others providing few or none. Here are some key findings:

- According to the data, approximately 44.07% (483) of Texas school districts provide no AP or IB courses. For these districts, primarily located in rural and economically disadvantaged areas, students lack access to courses that could significantly enhance their educational and career trajectories.
- 42,787 (5.68%) 11th and 12th graders attend districts that do not offer any advanced courses. 86,913 (11.55%) 11th and 12th graders attend districts that offer 0-4 AB/IB advanced courses. This percentage underscores the broad impact on students who may be left unprepared for college-level expectations due to these gaps.
- Rural students and districts in Texas are particularly underserved. 20% of rural 11th and 12 graders attend districts that offer 0 AP or IB courses. 39% of rural 11th and 12 graders attend districts that offer less than five AP or IB courses.

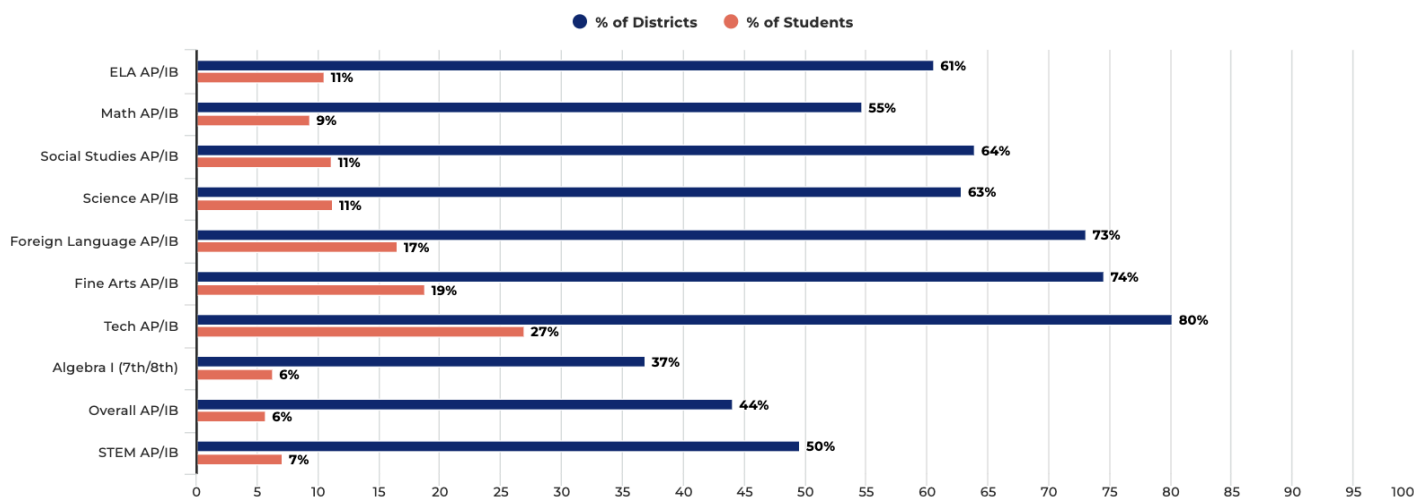


**Specific Findings by Course Type:** Texas 2036’s Advanced Coursetaking Dashboard provides insights into availability by course type. The data reveals that there is a particular lack of course offering in Technology, Fine Arts, and Foreign Language related advanced coursework across the state. The inconsistent access to these courses can create dramatically different learning opportunities for students, simply because of where they live. Texas 2036 is particularly concerned about access gaps in two areas:

- **STEM Courses:** Data reveals that 50% of Texas school districts, impacting 7% of 11th and 12th grades, do not offer any AP/IB STEM courses, leaving a critical gap for students interested in pursuing STEM careers. In addition, 80% of districts have less than five AP/IB STEM courses.

- Math Courses:** The availability of advanced math courses, particularly Algebra I in middle school (7th and 8th grades), varies. Algebra I is a key foundational course that enables students to take higher-level math classes in high school. Senate Bill 2124 (88R) will ensure that every district offers Algebra 1 in 8th grade, closing this significant gap in access to higher level course work. However, as more students take Algebra 1 in 8th grade, the demand and need for higher level math in high school will grow. Currently, 55% of districts across the state, affecting 7% of 11th and 12th graders, do not offer AP/IB math courses at all. 79% of districts offer less than two AP/IB math courses. In addition to general access concerns, there is also a growing concern that districts, particularly rural districts, will struggle to keep up with the need for more qualified math teachers at the higher levels. This is due, in part, to different hiring pools and the increased reliance of uncertified teachers in Texas classrooms.

% with no access to advanced courses

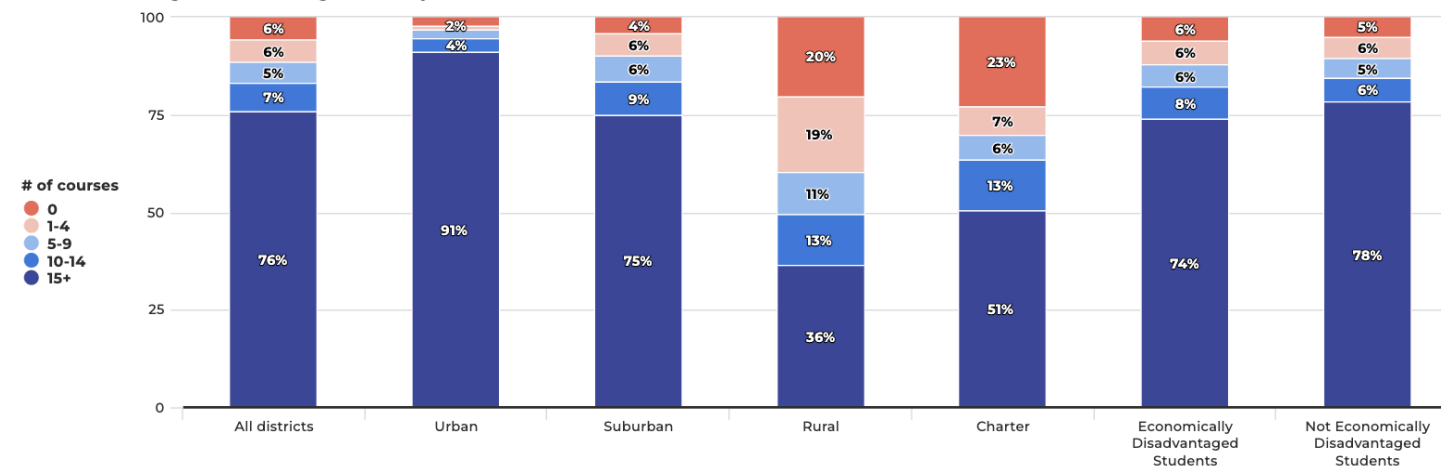


Source: Texas Education Agency. Algebra I reflects 2021-2022 school year. All other course types are for 2022-2023 school year.

## Disparities by District Type

The dashboard also categorizes districts by type—urban, suburban, and rural—and reveals notable differences in access:

% of 11th and 12th graders attending districts by number of advanced courses offered.



Source: Texas Education Agency, 2022-2023 school year. Urban/suburban/rural is a district-level classification that applies to all student in that district. Economically disadvantaged is a student-level characteristic based on a student's family income and program eligibility.

- **Urban and Suburban Districts:** Large urban and suburban districts generally offer a wider variety of AP and IB courses. Only 2% and 4% of Urban and Suburban students, respectively, attend districts that do not offer AP/IB courses. These typically larger districts benefit from greater economies of scale, larger student populations, access to larger teacher application pools, and established programs to support advanced coursetaking.
- **Rural Districts:** Many rural districts, on the other hand, offer fewer or no AP and IB options. This lack of access affects thousands of students, creating an equity gap where rural students are less likely to have access to the college preparatory coursework available to their peers in urban and suburban areas. 20% of rural 11th and 12 graders attend districts that offer zero AP or IB courses. 39% of rural 11th and 12 graders attend districts that offer less than five AP or IB courses.
- **Charter Districts:** Charter districts, in part likely due to economies of scale, are more likely to offer zero AP/IB courses to their students compared to other district types. This is the reality for 23% of 11th and 12th graders enrolled in charter districts across the state.

### **Implications and Recommendations**

The absence of AP and IB courses in many Texas school districts has serious implications. Limited access to these courses deprives students of essential academic opportunities that can prepare them for college and professional careers. Additionally, students who attend schools without advanced courses are at a disadvantage in college admissions, where AP and IB classes are often viewed as a measure of academic rigor.

Addressing these disparities requires a committed, multi-faceted approach from state education leaders, policymakers, and community stakeholders. Texas 2036 urges the committee to consider the following recommendations:

1. **Increase Funding and Resources for Rural and Under-Resourced Districts:** Additional funding could help these districts implement AP and IB programs, making these programs more accessible to underserved students.
2. **Expand Virtual Learning Options:** Virtual AP and IB courses provide a feasible alternative for districts that cannot support in-person programs. Texas should consider partnerships to expand these options, ensuring students from all regions have access to advanced coursework. This could include providing rural districts with reimbursement for the cost of enrolling students in virtual courses.
3. **Invest in Strengthening the Teacher Training and Workforce Pipeline:** A significant barrier to offering AP and IB courses is the lack of certified teachers. Providing financial incentives for educators to obtain certification, investing in teacher quality of life, and investing more in teacher pay and the Teacher Incentive Allotment to keep our best teacher in the classroom could help build the necessary workforce to support these programs statewide.