Coping with an Unknown AP Exam Fee for Low Income Students

For the fifth year in a row, schools are beginning their exam registration and AP exam fee collection without knowing how much low income students will be paying for their exams. There are two factors that can reduce the exam cost for low income students: A College Board/School reduction and subsidies from a federal grant. The College Board recently sent coordinators an email communicating that the outcome of the federal grant may not be known until April. This is unfortunately long after most schools have registered students and collected payments for the AP exams. This may be an entire month after schools order by the first deadline in order to receive pre-admin materials in a timely matter.

We need to start our registration process, what do we do?

Schools need time to effectively register students for exams and collect their fees. In order to reduce financial risk, most schools have a policy of only ordering exams for students that have paid for their exams. Since the AP exam fee for low income students is not yet known, schools have three choices on how to proceed.

1. Use a Conservative Exam Fee

Many schools are electing to price exams for low income students using only the College Board/School reduction. In the past the College Board has reduced the exam fee $30.00 and schools have waived their $9.00 portion of the exam fee. This provides a total reduction of $39.00. With the "suggested list price" of $92.00/exam and the $39.00 reduction, low income students would pay a "suggested fee" of $53.00/exam.

Pros

- Students have knowledge of what they are paying before registering.
- Schools can require that all students pay before ordering exams, greatly reducing the financial risk .
- Schools can register students in a timely manner.
- If a refund is issued in the future, families will be appreciative. Nobody gets upset about getting money back.
- If students elect to cancel an exam registration, a cancellation fee can be deducted from the refund to cover the $15.00 "restocking fee" the College Board charges.

Cons

- Schools may have to issue refunds if additional funding becomes available.
- Some low income students may not register for all their exams due to cost.

TOTAL REGISTRATION

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2. Roll Dice and Charge the a Low Exam Fee

Some schools may elect to set the exam fee for low income students at last year's levels with the hope that the federal grant provides the same reduction provided in the past.

Pros

- With a lower fee, students may be likely to register for more exams.

Cons

- Schools will need to collect more money from students or absorb the difference if the federal grant does not provide the same reduction as it has in the past. Earlier, the College Board warned that the grant may not provide the same level of funding that it did in the past.
- Families will feel misled; they were told one price and asked to pay more at a later date.
- Schools are taking greater financial risk of paying for exams that students did not pay for.
- If the funding does not come through, students may elect to cancel their exam registration, causing the school to pay the $15.00 restocking fee to the College Board when the exam is returned un-administered.

3. Wait to Collect Payments From Low Income Students

A few schools may choose to collect payments from low income students only after the exam fee announced by the College Board.

Pros

- Schools will not need to issue refunds to students over paid or try to collect money a second time

Cons

- Students will need to register for exams not knowing how much they will pay.
- Students may cancel their registration when they find out the cost, leaving schools to pay the $15.00 "restocking fee".
- Schools order exams before they have collected all the payments from students, exposing the school to financial risk.

Total Registration's Recommendation

Total Registration believes that the school's portion of the exam fees should cover the costs of registration and exam administration. We advocate that schools run an efficient and organized exam registration and collect all the fees before ordering any exams. With this in mind we are recommending that schools elect the conservative approach as it has the least financial risk.

We acknowledge that it is unfortunate that schools are once again registering students for exams without knowing the cost of exams for low income students. We understand that this causes more work and stress for school staff while making things more confusing for students/families. Total Registration's system can greatly reduce the time staff takes to handle whatever option a school elects.

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Total Registration's online AP exam registration service, www.AP.TotalRegistration.net , greatly simplifies the AP exam registration process by having students register themselves online for the AP exams, removing all staff data entry. Coordinators can then login and run all the reports at the click of a mouse, avoiding complicated spreadsheets.

During the 2012 AP exams, the fee for low income students was changed several times. In 2013 and 2014, the exam fee for low income students was not announced until after most schools had registered students, collected fees and ordered exams. With this in mind, we have implemented a utility that allows schools to easily adjust the fee waiver for low income students within our system, updating the student's balance due. After the adjustment, students will either need a refund or to make an additional payment. When schools use Total Registration's payment processing they can easily record a refund that Total Registration will process or have students pay their balance online. Either way, staff saves an incredible amount of time dealing with the late announcement of the exam fee for low income students.

Please contact Total Registration, info@TotalRegistration.net or 800-974-2187 if you have questions about our acclaimed time-saving service.

About Total Registration's Online AP Exam Registration Service

Total Registration, www.TotalRegistration.net, has been helping high schools simplify the AP exam registration process since 2007. In 2015, more than 290,000 students registered themselves online for over 573,000 AP exams at 710 schools using Total Registration's service.

With Total Registration, students register themselves for their exams online, completely removing time consuming data entry. Coordinators login and run reports at the click of a button, removing cumbersome spreadsheets. Since data is instantly recorded at the time of registration, all reports are always up to date. Schools maintain complete control of the registration process while greatly reducing the time and stress involved in running an efficient and accurate exam registration. Learn more, watch a video overview, try the demo and request pricing at www.AP.TotalRegistration.net.

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