

College Board weighs online science labs

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The College Board is studying whether virtual science labs are acceptable for Advance Placement coursework for U.S. high school science students.

Some high schools use labs offered by Internet-based schools to supplement classroom experiences; while other schools offer lab classes only via the Internet, The New York Times said.

Trevor Packer, the College Board's A.P. director said there was concern about "giving credit to students who have never had any experience in a hands-on lab."

Internet-based educators said their virtual laboratories are educationally sound, noting that their students receive high scores on the standardized Advanced Placement exams, the Times said. They added that online labs often provide the only teaching alternative to study advanced science in some rural or urban schools.

Packer said the College Board named three five-member panels of biology, chemistry and physics professors and online educators to review online labs for A.P. courses. The board's decision will determine whether, starting next school year, high schools can give the A.P. label to online science courses on the transcripts of students applying to college.

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