



News Release

45 Columbus Avenue, New York, NY 10023-6992 T 212-713-8052 F 212-713-8184 www.collegeboard.org

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Media Inquiries:

College Board Communications

212-713-8052/communications@collegeboard.org

Class of 2012 Advanced Placement® Results Announced:

While Participation and Performance Increased Compared to the Class of 2011, Many High School Students with Potential for Success in College-Level AP® Courses Still Lack Access

NEW YORK — Ensuring that all academically prepared high school students have access to rigorous college-level course work that will enable them to persist in and graduate from college is critical for the United States to remain competitive in a global economy — particularly in crucial STEM-related disciplines. Educators are increasingly adopting the rigorous standards found within the Advanced Placement Program® (AP®) to help the nation’s high school students develop the critical thinking, reasoning and communication skills that are essential for college success.

Data released today by the College Board as part of *The 9th Annual AP Report to the Nation* revealed that more high school graduates are participating — and succeeding — in college-level AP courses and exams than ever before. Succeeding in AP is defined as achieving a score of 3 or higher on the five-point AP Exam scale, which is the score needed for credit, advanced placement or both at the majority of colleges and universities.

Increased AP Participation & Success

954,070 public school students in the class of 2012 took at least one AP Exam during high school.

19.5% of public school graduates in the class of 2012 scored a 3 or higher on at least one AP Exam during high school.

“By exposing students to college-level work while still in high school, Advanced Placement dramatically improves college completion rates,” said David Coleman, President of the College Board. “Today we applaud those educators who have worked tirelessly to bring the power of AP to more communities and more students than ever before. But we must not forget the hundreds of thousands of students with the potential to succeed in Advanced Placement who don’t even have access to its coursework. If we hope to achieve our long-term college completion goals, we must ensure that every student has access to a rigorous education.”

Among the class of 2012:

- The number of high school graduates taking AP Exams increased to 954,070, (32.4%), up from 904,794 (30.2%) among the class of 2011 and 471,404 (18.0%) in 2002 among the class of 2002.
- The number of high school graduates scoring a 3 or higher increased to 573,472 (19.5%), up from 541,000 (18.1%) among the class of 2011 and 305,098 (11.6%) among the class of 2002.

Current research on AP course work confirms AP’s comparability to introductory college courses in content, skills and learning outcomes. Research consistently shows that students earning placement into advanced course

work based on AP Exam scores perform as well as — or better than — students who have completed the introductory course at a college or university. In fact, students who succeed on an AP Exam during high school typically experience greater overall academic success in college, and are more likely than their non-AP peers to graduate from college and to graduate on time, experiencing lower college costs than the majority of American college students.

However, this is not the full story. Data from *The 9th Annual AP Report to the Nation* also indicate that hundreds of thousands of academically prepared students with the potential to succeed in AP — including a disproportionately large percentage of underserved minority students — are graduating from high school without having participated in AP.

A Right to Rigor: Fulfilling Student Potential

All students who are academically prepared for the intellectual demands of college-level AP course work during high school — no matter their location, background or socioeconomic status — have a right to fulfill that potential.

Among the class of 2012, more than 300,000 students identified as having a high likelihood of success in AP did not take any recommended AP Exam. Such “AP potential” is defined as a 60 percent or greater probability of scoring a 3 or higher on an AP Exam based on a student’s performance on specific sections of the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®). These data revealed significant inequities in AP participation along racial/ethnic lines, with underserved minority students who demonstrated readiness for AP much less likely than their similarly prepared white and Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander peers to experience AP course work.

Among the contributing factors, a significant cause for this disparity is the lower availability of a variety of AP courses in schools with higher numbers of low-income and traditionally underserved minority students.

“Several states have implemented policies to ensure AP course availability in every public high school,” said Trevor Packer, senior vice president responsible for the Advanced Placement Program. “We encourage continued efforts across the nation to ensure that students have equal access to AP courses, regardless of their socioeconomic, geographic or racial/ethnic background.”

Collaborating to Promote STEM Education

While the challenge to improve equity and access applies to all AP courses, its importance is amplified among the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) disciplines. Research shows that students who took college-level AP math or science exams during high school were more likely than non-AP students to earn degrees in physical science, engineering and life science disciplines — the fields leading to some of the careers essential for the nation’s future prosperity.

In the last decade, the number of students graduating from high school having taken an AP math or science exam has nearly doubled, from 250,465 in the class of 2002 to 497,924 in the class of 2012 (see Figure 8). However, among students with comparable levels of readiness for AP STEM course work, participation rates vary significantly by race/ethnicity and gender. Six in 10 Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander students with a 60 percent or higher likelihood of succeeding on an AP mathematics exam took the exam, compared to 4 in 10 white students, 3 in 10 black/African American students, 3 in 10 Hispanic/Latino students, and 2 in 10 American

Unrealized Potential: AP Mathematics

Among students with high potential for success in math, the ratios of students who actually took an AP math exam were:

- 6 in 10: Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander
- 4 in 10: White
- 3 in 10: Hispanic/Latino
- 3 in 10: Black/African American
- 2 in 10: American Indian/Alaska Native

Indian/Alaska Native students. In most AP STEM subjects, female students participate at lower rates than male students.

To promote participation in AP math and science, the College Board is collaborating with the [National Math and Science Initiative](#) (NMSI), which has successfully implemented a training and incentive program in nine states (Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Texas and Virginia) to increase teacher effectiveness and student achievement in these AP subjects. When NMSI's AP program is implemented in U.S. high schools, it dramatically increases the rate of improvement in AP performance — even after just one year. Since the program's inception, NMSI has trained more than 11,000 teachers in 464 schools.

In December 2012, the College Board announced the creation of the [AP STEM Access program](#) — made possible through a \$5 million Global Impact Award from Google to DonorsChoose.org — to increase the number of traditionally underrepresented minority and female high school students who participate in AP STEM courses. Through this program, 800 public high schools across the country are being invited to start new AP math and science courses, with an emphasis on encouraging traditionally underrepresented minority and female students who demonstrate academic potential to enroll and explore these areas of study and related careers.

Supporting 3 Goals Critical to College Readiness

At its core, AP is a collaboration among college faculty and administrators, states, districts, schools, and teachers working together to provide academically ready students with the access to the rigor they deserve. *The 9th Annual AP Report to the Nation* shows that success stories exist and can be brought to scale. Three critical areas for addressing challenges to access are increasing rigor, promoting equity, and developing critical knowledge and skills.

1. Increasing Rigor

In order for more students to succeed in college, they need preparation for and access to demanding college-level work while still in high school. Since 2002, there has been a 7.9 point increase in the percentage of U.S. public high school graduates scoring a 3 or higher on an AP Exam. ***Among the class of 2012, 19.5 percent of U.S. public high school graduates scored a 3 or higher on an AP Exam during high school, with 17 states exceeding the national average.*** Once again, Maryland led all other states in the percentage of its public high school graduates scoring a 3 or higher on an AP Exam.

Top 10 States in Percentage of 2012 Public High School Graduates Succeeding on AP Exams

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|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Maryland (29.6%) | 6. Connecticut (26.9%) |
| 2. New York (28.0%) | 7. Maine (24.8%) |
| 3. Massachusetts (27.9%) | 8. California (24.7%) |
| 4. Florida (27.3%) | 9. Colorado (24.2%) |
| 5. Virginia (27.2%) | 10. Vermont (22.8%) |

2. Promoting Equity

The AP Program is committed to increasing student diversity in AP classrooms, while simultaneously increasing AP success, to ensure that the demographics of both AP participation and success reflect the demographics of the overall student population. Though challenges remain, progress is being made to close equity gaps in AP participation and success among underserved minority and low-income students. Consider the following:

- 30 states made progress over the past year in closing both AP participation and success gaps among black/African American students (see Figure 6a).
- 17 states and the District of Columbia made progress over the past year in closing both AP participation and success gaps among Hispanic/Latino students (see Figure 6b).
- Low-income graduates accounted for 26.6% of those who took at least one AP Exam in the class of 2012, compared to 11.5% of AP Exam takers in the class of 2003.
- More than 250,000 low-income graduates in the class of 2012 took at least one AP Exam during high school, more than four times as many low-income graduates who took an AP Exam in the class of 2003.

3. Developing Critical Knowledge and Skills

AP courses are designed by college and university faculty based on well-defined goals for student learning that give specially trained AP teachers a clear understanding of what students should know and be able to do by the end of the course. AP students develop their knowledge of key concepts and skills at the heart of comparable introductory college courses, including critical analysis and writing skills. Figures 8 and 9 of the report (pages 26–27) show the participation, success and score distributions among the class of 2012 across the three AP discipline groupings: math and science; English, history and social science; and arts and world languages.

AP Course and Exam Redesign

College faculty have played an integral role in the AP Program’s comprehensive course redesign to ensure that each Advanced Placement course and exam deepens the focus on critical thinking and reflects the most recent developments in each discipline. The involvement of university professors ensures that AP courses and exams are directly aligned with the same content and skills learned in introductory college courses.

With agreement among colleges and universities regarding the knowledge and skills that students need to cultivate through AP course work in order to qualify for credit and placement, the AP course redesign is enabling AP teachers and students time to explore key concepts in greater depth by reducing the amount of content coverage required.

AP and Higher Ed

The Advanced Placement Program was created to provide students with the opportunity to place into the college course for which their AP experience best prepared them. Over time, colleges and universities increasingly began to grant credit for introductory-level courses based on AP Exam scores. Last year 3,308 U.S. colleges and universities received AP scores for credit, placement and/or consideration in the admission process,

Equity Gaps in AP Participation & Success

To achieve equity, diversity and performance must increase simultaneously, and the demographics of AP participation and success must mirror the demographics of the overall student population.

Although progress is being made, underserved minority students remain underrepresented in AP classrooms and among those succeeding on AP Exams (see Figure 5):

American Indian/Alaska Native graduates:

- 1.1% of overall student population
- 0.6% of AP Exam taker population
- 0.5% of population scoring 3+

Black/African American graduates:

- 14.5% of overall student population
- 9.2% of AP Exam taker population
- 4.4% of population scoring 3+

Hispanic/Latino graduates:

- 18.3% of overall student population
- 17.8% of AP Exam taker population
- 15.9% of population scoring 3+

with the vast majority of those colleges and universities offering credit in one or more subjects based on successful AP Exam scores.

Large-scale, quantitative research continues to support the use of AP as both a credit and a placement tool at a range of institutions, including highly selective ones. Approximately 5,400 college faculty — including those from Ivy League and other highly selective institutions — are engaged in designing AP courses and exams. These faculty members review each AP teacher’s course syllabus, develop and validate AP curriculum, write and evaluate AP Exam questions, establish standards aligned with college-level performance, and score the AP Exams. The direct involvement of college faculty ensures that AP curriculum is comparable in content to introductory college courses and that the examination standards to which AP students are held are what they expect of their own students in their college classrooms.

Recognizing Achievement in AP Participation and Success

Each year, the College Board honors three districts with an AP District of the Year award, in recognition of their ability to expand access to AP while simultaneously increasing the percentage of students scoring a 3 or higher on AP Exams. These districts can and should serve as models for scalable strategies to increase college readiness.

The 2012-13 recipients of the AP District of the Year awards are North East Independent School District, Texas (large district); Glendale Union High School District, Arizona (medium-sized district); and Chelsea Public School District, Massachusetts (small district). More information about these districts as well as the 2011-12 winners — Polk County Public Schools, Florida (large district); Val Verde Unified School District, California (medium-sized district); and Copiague Public Schools, New York (small district) — can be found in *The 9th Annual AP Report to the Nation*.

The 9th Annual AP Report to the Nation is available at apreport.collegeboard.org.

Follow Trevor Packer on Twitter: @AP_Trevor

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About the College Board

The College Board is a mission-driven not-for-profit organization that connects students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, the College Board was created to expand access to higher education. Today, the membership association is made up of over 6,000 of the world’s leading educational institutions and is dedicated to promoting excellence and equity in education. Each year, the College Board helps more than seven million students prepare for a successful transition to college through programs and services in college readiness and college success — including the SAT[®] and the Advanced Placement Program[®]. The organization also serves the education community through research and advocacy on behalf of students, educators and schools. For further information, visit www.collegeboard.org.