

# NEWS

Connecticut Department of Education

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **More Connecticut students succeed in Advanced Placement program**

More low-income and minority students in Connecticut are taking Advanced Placement courses and more are succeeding on Advanced Placement exams, according to a report released today by the College Board.

Connecticut's AP program is growing steadily in public schools. The numbers of Connecticut students taking AP classes and succeeding on AP exams are increasing and outpacing national averages. Part of that success during the past five years includes impressive gains by low-income, African-American and Latino students (see Table 1). Since 2000:

- 657 more low-income students, 247 more African-American students and 461 more Latino students have taken AP courses, increases of 222 percent, 74 percent and 112 percent, respectively.
- The number of exams taken by low-income, African-American and Latino students rose by 1,012, 362 and 461, respectively, increases of 209 percent, 79 percent and 123 percent, respectively.
- The number of low-income, African-American and Latino students scoring three or higher on an AP exam rose by 289, 236 and 384, respectively, increases of 102 percent, 149 percent and 106 percent, respectively.

AP exams are scored on a scale of one to five. Success on an AP assessment is defined as a score of three or higher. A minimum score of three is required for college credit.

“This is a perfect example of how students meet our expectations when they have the opportunity to access high-level instruction,” said state education Commissioner Betty Sternberg. “Overall, it’s great news, but we can do better. We need to see more of these increases. We have to keep aggressively including and supporting low-income, African-American and Latino

youngsters in the AP program. For example, in 2004-05, 11 percent of the student population was African-American but only 4 percent of AP examinees were. Similarly, with Latino students, 10 percent of the student population was Latino, but 6.5 percent of AP examinees were Latino. We still have more work to do.”

Contributing to the progress of Connecticut’s students is an Advanced Placement Incentive Grant that was awarded to the State Department of Education in 2004. Called *Project Opening Doors*, the grant targets three measurable goals: (1) increase the number of AP and pre-advanced placement courses offered in our most impoverished districts; (2) increase by 10 percent each year the enrollment of disadvantaged youth in pre-advanced placement and core AP courses of study; and (3) increase by 10 percent each year the passing rate of these students in high-level courses of instruction. Connecticut received \$1,372,397 in federal funding for these grant activities from 2004 to 2006.

### **Great strides**

The overall participation of Connecticut public high school students who took AP exams increased 10.9 percent last year, to 14,243 in 2004-05 from 12,841 in 2003-04. Overall performance also grew. The number of exams that received a three or higher increased by 12.9 percent, to 17,102 in 2004-05 from 15,154 in 2003-04.

The College Board cited Connecticut as one of five states leading the nation in the amount of positive change in the proportion of students who succeed on an AP exam in high school. If current trends continue, Connecticut is poised to have more than 20 percent of its students earn an AP exam grade of three or higher while in high school, perhaps with this year’s Class of 2006.

Comparing Connecticut public high school seniors in the graduating Class of 2000 with seniors in the graduating Class of 2005, the number scoring three or higher on an AP exam grew by 5.5 percent (see Table 2). Nationwide, the average increase was 3.9 percent. At the same time Connecticut was making these gains, the state’s high school population rose 16 percent, to 34,294 in 2005 from 29,610 in 2000.

The five AP exams having the greatest number of test takers during 2004-05 in Connecticut were U.S. history, English literature and composition, English language and composition, calculus AB and biology (see Table 3).

### **The value of Advanced Placement**

The AP program is important because success on AP exams is a strong predictor of a student’s ability to persist in college and earn a bachelor’s degree, according to the College Board. Access to AP classes is important because students who take these courses are more likely to complete their bachelor’s degrees on schedule.

Of students who have taken one AP course, 45 percent are completing their bachelor’s degrees in four years or less. Of students who have taken two or more AP courses, 61 percent are completing their bachelor’s degrees in four years or less. Only 29 percent of students who enroll in college without having taken AP courses are completing their bachelor’s degrees on schedule.

## Conclusion

The state is deeply committed to helping students, particularly underserved minority and low-income students, prepare for college success by taking AP courses and exams. While Connecticut has much to celebrate regarding student participation in and achievement in AP courses, past trends have indicated that not all Connecticut schools have been able to provide access to these high-level courses of study. Minority students in our state have been significantly underrepresented in the pool of AP examinees. Our high schools with significant levels of poverty have not only offered fewer AP courses, but, on average, students in these schools have scored lower on AP exams than their counterparts across the state.

“The 2004-05 data show we are making great strides,” Commissioner Sternberg said. “Connecticut is a national leader in the percentage of students taking AP courses. All the trends for low-income and minority students are headed in the right direction. We are making progress in the number of students enrolled in AP, the number of AP exams taken, and the number of students scoring three or higher. We have to continue our efforts to ensure that these trends are maintained. It is one of the best things we can do for our students’ futures.”

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**Table 1: Connecticut low-income, African-American and Latino public student participation in Advanced Placement**

### Comparison of Low-Income Student AP Participation 2000-05

	2000	2005	Increase
Number of students enrolled in AP	296	953	657
Number of tests taken by AP students	484	1496	1012
Number scoring three or higher	282	571	289

### Comparison of African-American Student AP Participation 2000-05

	2000	2005	Increase
Number of students enrolled in AP	332	579	247
Number of tests taken by AP students	459	821	362
Number scoring three or higher	158	394	236

### Comparison of Latino Student AP Participation 2000-05

	2000	2005	Increase
Number of students enrolled in AP	411	872	461
Number of tests taken by AP students	562	1256	694
Number scoring three or higher	363	747	384

Source: The College Board

**Table 2: AP data for the 2000 and 2005 graduating classes of high school seniors**

	2000	2005	2000	2005	2000	2005
	Number of students	Number of students	Percent of students who took an AP exam in high school	Percent of students who took an AP exam in high school	Percent of students who scored three or higher on an AP exam in high school	Percent of students who scored three or higher on an AP exam in high school
<b>Connecticut</b>	29,610	34,294	19.1	26	13.6	19.1
<b>Nation</b>	2,550,483	2,691,901	15.9	22.7	10.2	14.1

*Source: The College Board***Table 3: Number of AP exams taken in each subject area during 2004-05 in Connecticut public high schools**

Subject	No. of Exams	Subject	No. of Exams
U.S. History	3,660	World history	208
English lit. & composition	2,746	Music theory	190
English lang. & composition	2,301	Computer science A	189
Calculus AB	1,984	Economics micro	182
Biology	1,913	Art: studio drawing	165
Psychology	1,462	Human Geography	163
Statistics	1,197	Art: studio 2-D design	147
Spanish language	1,129	Government & politics: comp.	119
Chemistry	1,101	Physics C: Elec. & Magnet.	109
European history	1,069	Art: history	80
Physics B	859	Spanish literature	76
Government & politics: U.S.	791	Latin: Vergil	74
Calculus BC	490	Latin: literature	47
French: language	415	Computer science AB	35
Environmental Science	411	Art: Art: studio 3-D design	28
Economics macro	226	German: language	21
Physics C: mechanics	219	French: literature	12

*Source: The College Board*