

# NEWS

Connecticut Department of Education

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George A. Coleman, Interim Commissioner

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## Success in Advanced Placement program continues for Connecticut

HARTFORD—Connecticut students continued to make significant gains in taking and passing Advanced Placement (AP) examinations in 2006, according to a report issued today by The College Board.

From 2005 to 2006, the number of students taking at least one AP exam increased 6.6 percent, to 15,187 from 14,243. The number of examinations taken by these students increased 6.2 percent to 25,305 from 23,818. The number of exams with passing scores increased 6.4 percent, from 17,102 in 2005 to 18,189 in 2006.

Connecticut also continues to be a national leader in the percentage of graduating seniors who have passed at least one AP exam in high school (a score of 3 out of a possible 5 is required to pass an AP exam). At 19.4 percent, Connecticut ranked eighth in the nation for the class of 2006. Nationally, 14.8 percent of graduating seniors scored 3 or higher on at least one AP exam taken during high school.

In recent years, significantly more Connecticut students have been given access to rigorous preparation courses in their high schools in an increasing range of AP subjects. In 2005-06, there was an enrollment of 31,802 students in AP courses compared with an enrollment of 20,744 students in 2000-01. Also, in the comprehensive high schools that were open in both the 2000-01 and 2005-06 school years, schools administered an average of 10.8 different-subject AP exams per school in 2005-06 compared to 8.8 five years before.

Course participation and the number of exams taken by low-income, black and Hispanic students in Connecticut also increased from 2005 to 2006. In May 2006, 1,228 low-income students took an AP exam, an increase of 28.8 percent over the prior year. Much of that success is directly related to Connecticut's urban districts providing more support and encouragement for greater numbers of students to participate in AP courses and exams.

For example, when compared to the 2005 data, **Hartford** schools doubled the number of students taking AP examinations and the number of students passing AP exams. **New London** schools

doubled the number of students taking AP examinations and tripled the number of students passing. **New Britain** schools increased the number of students taking the examinations by 50 percent and

increased the number of students scoring 3 or better by 67 percent across all AP examinations. **New Haven** schools increased the participation and achievement of students by 10 percent on both measures.

“This is a positive step forward,” said Interim Commissioner of Education George A. Coleman. “To have all groups increase their participation in AP exams while also improving their percentages of passing scores shows true progress in closing the achievement gap.

“We need to move past the perception that AP is only for a small number of high-performing, college-bound students,” Coleman said. “There are a number of children out there who could be taking AP but who are not. Why shouldn’t every college-bound student be expected to take at least one AP or other college-level course? We have to hold the same high expectations for all students. Families also need to be more actively involved in encouraging young people to take these rigorous courses. The benefits last for years to come.”

AP courses are important because not only do they expose high school students to the rigor of college-level work, but they also predict student performance in college. Students who take AP courses are more likely to complete their bachelor’s degrees in four years or less. In addition, since they count as college-level courses, students who take them can save substantial money.

The AP program in Connecticut has been steadily gaining ground for the last 10 years. The state has seen significant and consistent increases in participation rates and the number of students earning passing scores on these exams.

In addition to being a leader in the percentage of graduating seniors who have passed at least one AP exam in high school, Connecticut also outpaced the nation in 2006 in the percentage of students who took an AP exam at some point in their high school career.

“I appreciate the efforts made by all districts and particularly the urban districts in this area and encourage them to continue their efforts,” Coleman said. “What we have in place is good. I believe we can make it even better.”

More information on Connecticut’s AP performance is available at <http://www.collegeboard.com>.

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