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Virginia Students Again Rank Third in Nation in Achievement on Advanced Placement Tests

Eight Divisions Recognized for Increasing AP Participation & Achievement

For a fifth consecutive year, Virginia students rank third in the nation in achievement on Advanced Placement (AP) tests. According to the College Board's [2012 AP Report to the Nation](#), better than one in four of Virginia's 2011 public high school graduates demonstrated college-level achievement by earning a grade of three or better on at least one AP examination. Only two states, Maryland and New York, had higher percentages of high school seniors qualifying for college credit on the rigorous tests.

The College Board reports that 25.6 percent of the commonwealth's 2011 graduating seniors earned a qualifying score on at least one AP exam, compared with 18.1 percent for public school students nationwide.

"It is rewarding to see that more than 40 percent of our graduating seniors challenge themselves by enrolling in AP courses," said Superintendent of Public Instruction Patricia I. Wright. "Our students' increasing mastery of college-level studies testifies to the continued effectiveness of the Standards of Learning program and the commitment of Virginia educators to challenging students to higher levels of learning and achievement."

Last year, 20,542 Virginia seniors scored a three or higher on an AP exam at some point during their high school careers. This compares with 2001, when only 17,150 seniors took an AP exam and only 10,900 earned a score of three or higher.

According to the College Board, much of the commonwealth's continued success results from increased participation and achievement of Virginia's traditionally underserved graduates including African American, American Indian, Hispanic/Latino and low-income students.

Eight Virginia school divisions were among the 367 districts recognized by the College Board for simultaneously increasing access to AP courses and raising achievement on the examinations. The Virginia divisions making the College Board's AP honor roll are as follows:

- Albemarle County Public Schools
- Goochland County Public Schools
- King George County Public Schools
- Manassas Park Public Schools
- New Kent County Public Schools
- Roanoke County Public Schools
- Rockbridge County Public School
- Rockingham County Public Schools

Also, Manassas Park was cited for having a 30 percent or greater AP course enrollment of economically disadvantaged, American Indian, African American and Hispanic students.

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Wright praised the contribution of the commonwealth's affiliate of the National Math and Science Initiative (NMSI) in increasing AP achievement during 2011. Virginia is one of six states participating in NMSI which is designed to increase the number of students taking and succeeding in math and science AP exams.

While Virginia's ranking among the states did not change, the number of seniors taking AP tests again increased as did the percentage of students earning a grade of three or higher.

- 32,212 of Virginia's 2011 seniors took at least one AP exam, compared with 30,780 of 2010 graduates.
- 25.6 percent of Virginia's 2011 seniors earned a qualifying score on at least one AP test, compared with 23.7 percent of 2010 graduates.

According to the College Board, students who score a three or higher on AP exams typically have greater academic success in college and are more likely to graduate on time with a degree than comparable non-AP peers.

The number of Hispanic graduates who took at least one AP exam has nearly tripled in ten years. In 2011, the number of Hispanic students who participated in AP exams was 2,220, compared with 759 in 2001. The percentage of participating Hispanic students rose slightly to 6.9 percent in 2011, compared with 6.8 percent in 2010.

The number of African-American seniors graduating from high school having taken an AP exam continues to rise. In 2011, a total of 4,083 black students participated, compared with 1,433 in 2001. This is a percentage increase of more than four points over 10 years — with 12.7 percent participating in 2011, compared with 8.4 percent in 2001. During that same period, the percentage of African-American seniors scoring a three or higher rose 1.6 points to 6.6 percent in 2011 up from 5 percent in 2001.

The number of low-income seniors enrolled in AP courses has more than doubled since 2006 (the first year that information was available), when 1,199 took one or more AP exams in high school compared with 3,117 in 2011. Additionally, the number of low-income students earning a qualifying score in 2011 rose to 6.4 percent, up from 3.7 percent in 2006.

Virginia students may substitute AP examinations for end-of-course SOL tests in the same subject areas. Enrollment in AP courses is among the criteria for recognition under the Virginia Index of Performance awards program created by the Board of Education to encourage advanced learning and achievement. Virginia also promotes AP participation through the Early College Scholars initiative and the Virtual Virginia online-learning program, and uses federal grant money to subsidize test fees for low-income students.

The most popular AP course among Virginia's 2011 seniors was US Government and Politics, followed by US History, English Language and Composition, English Literature and Composition, Psychology, Calculus AB, World History, Biology, Statistics and Environmental Science.

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