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Contact: Charlene Briner 651-582-1145

Minnesota Seniors Make Gains in the Number of High School Students Taking AP Courses

Scores still hover below national average; Commissioner Cassellius calls for more rigor for more students

Roseville, MN – The number of Minnesota seniors taking Advanced Placement courses and exams during the 2009-2010 school year increased slightly over the previous year. Even so, the state’s participation continues to hover below the national average.

In Minnesota, 15,354 seniors (26.4 percent) from the Class of 2010 took at least one AP exam during high school. Of those, 9,797 students, (16.8 percent of all seniors and 63.8 percent of those who took the exam) passed with a score of 3 or higher, which is the score typically needed to qualify for college-level credit at many colleges and universities number. Both numbers reflect a 1 percent increase over 2008-2009. Nationally, 16.9 percent of seniors scored 3 or above.

“Minnesota’s workforce of the future is learning in a Minnesota classroom today,” said Dr. Brenda Cassellius, Minnesota Commissioner of Education. “I would like to commend Minnesota schools and districts for focusing on AP course work, and especially for increasing access so that more students – including students of color and those in rural areas - can take rigorous classes that prepare them for college and a career.

Ethnicity	No. of Seniors Participating in AP courses	No. of seniors scoring a 3 or higher
White	12,776	8,456
Asian/Pacific Islander	1,022	569
Black	448	155
Hispanic	318	157
American Indian	55	24

“As Minnesotans, we all have a stake in making sure every child is well prepared and achieving at a high level,” Cassellius said. “The good news is many Minnesota seniors are tackling challenging course content and succeeding. Now we must continue to build on our good work by increasing access for even more students to take challenging course content. That means doing a better job of eliminating entrance criteria that present barriers for some students, and doing more to support and encourage students who are looking for the extra challenge that will open the door to future success in college and the workplace.”

“We know that students who enter college having been exposed to challenging course work, such as Advanced Placement in high school, are vastly better prepared for college-level work than those who did not pursue such opportunities,” said Dr. Sheila Wright, director for the Minnesota Office of Higher Education. “Students will invariably rise to the occasion if given an opportunity to excel in a challenging course with the right support systems in place.”

AP Report to the Nation – Minnesota overview:

Since 2001, the number of Minnesota seniors leaving high school having taken an AP exam at any point during high school are:

- Black/African American: 341 more seniors
- Hispanic: 222 more seniors
- American Indian: 24 more seniors
- Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander: 552 more seniors
- White: 5,443 more seniors

Since 2001, the number of Minnesota seniors scoring a 3 or higher on an AP exam at any point during high school are:

- Black/African American: 112 more seniors
- Hispanic: 105 more seniors
- American Indian: 10 more seniors
- Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander: 320 more seniors
- White: 4,171 more seniors

Access to AP courses throughout Minnesota’s rural areas is inadequate. Large segments of rural Minnesota have less than 1 percent of their graduating class participating in AP during high school.