

Submitted by:

Al Mijares  
Vice President, Western Region  
The College Board  
2099 Gateway Place, Suite 550  
San Jose, CA 95110  
408-367-1451  
[amijares@collegeboard.org](mailto:amijares@collegeboard.org)

Topic Covered:

Use of academic rigor to close the achievement gap with emphasis on equity and advocacy.

Main contacts:

Al Mijares, 408-367-1451, [amijares@collegeboard.org](mailto:amijares@collegeboard.org)  
(assistant: Susan Shanahan, 408-367-1421, [sshanahan@collegeboard.org](mailto:sshanahan@collegeboard.org))

## Defining College Readiness

The future prosperity of California is inextricably linked to its capacity for providing the highest quality education for all its students. There is a clear need for a strong education agenda that works toward these goals: increasing high school graduation rates by cutting the state's dropout rate, making significant progress toward closing the achievement gap, and boosting college enrollment and success. It is increasingly recognized that the core skills deemed essential for college readiness are similar to the skills necessary for career readiness. As noted in a recent WestEd study (*Rethinking High School*, 2005) "Should every student pursue higher education? Not necessarily. Should every student be prepared for and have the choice to attend college or pursue other types of post-high-school education? Absolutely." The College Board fully supports the goal of college readiness and its definition underscores the need to offer all students the skills needed for college and career success—regardless of the paths they choose after high school graduation. Further, the College Board has developed a "College Readiness System." Beginning in middle school and continuing through the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, the System is aimed at putting all students on the path to college enrollment and success. This report focuses on the Board's definition of college success and then highlights a key element of the Board's College Readiness System, the Advanced Placement Program.

### A Definition of College Readiness

Students are "college ready" when they have the **knowledge, skills, and behaviors** to complete a college course of study successfully, without remediation.

College readiness can be identified through multiple measures:

- 1. Academic knowledge and skills evidenced by successful completion of a rigorous high school core curriculum** (4 years of mathematics, including algebra II; 4 years of English language arts; 3 or more years of science; 3 or more years of social sciences/history)
- 2. Success in college-prep and college-level courses taken in high school that require in-depth subject-area knowledge, higher-order thinking skills, and strong study and research skills**, e.g., as evidenced by achievement of a grade of 3 or higher on at least one AP examination.
- 3. Advanced academic skills, such as reasoning, problem solving, analysis, and writing abilities**, e.g., as demonstrated by successful performance on the SAT (a score of 1020 in critical reading and mathematical reasoning corresponds to a 90% probability of a Freshman GPA of C or higher and a 50% probability of a B or higher).
- 4. College planning skills, as demonstrated by an understanding of college and career options and the college admissions and financing process.**

The College Board believes school districts and states can take specific steps to ensure that significantly more students are “college ready” upon graduation from California high schools.

**1. Establish a statewide curriculum based on college readiness standards**

- Align the state’s curriculum to college readiness standards;
- Vertically align grades 6-12 curriculum across schools, engaging students in rigorous coursework early in middle school; and
- Offer multiple college prep and college-level courses in all high schools in the state.

**2. Ensure participation in rigorous academic courses in every high school**

- Proactively place students in college prep and college-level courses;
  - Connect under-represented students to challenging courses and provide the support they need to succeed; and
- Elevate teachers’ knowledge and skill level through training and coaching.

**3. Monitor student progress**

- Offer in-class formative and benchmark assessments to diagnose strengths and weaknesses and improve instruction; and
- Administer national, standardized exams to assess student progress using a common objective measure.

**4. Facilitate college, career and financial planning**

- Increase students’ college awareness and provide college planning tools;
- Support scholarship and admissions opportunities; and
- Ensure that counselors and teachers guide all students to follow a college readiness path.

The College Board has developed its own College Readiness System to help states, districts and schools ensure that more students are college ready. The components of the System are comprised of the following programs and services—categorized under the four broad activities outlined above.

• **Establish a curriculum based on college readiness standards**

- *The College Board Standards for College Success*: A detailed document describing the array of knowledge, skills and abilities required for college readiness;
- *SpringBoard*: A program of curriculum, instruction, assessment and professional development for grades 6-12 English language arts and mathematics aligned to college success standards; provides preparation for success in AP; and
- *Advanced Placement Program*: 37 rigorous college-level courses and examinations in 22 subject areas.

• **Ensure participation in rigorous academic courses in every high school**

- *AP Potential*: a research-based tool that uses PSAT/NMSQT scores to help teachers and administrators identify students with the potential for success in AP courses
- *SAT Readiness Program*: helps broaden access to SAT preparation for all students with unlimited practice from any location
- *Teacher professional development*: a suite of face-to-face and online interactive opportunities designed to educate, support, and invigorate new and experienced teachers

• **Monitor student progress**

- *PSAT/NMQST*: National, standardized tests that measure student progress toward college readiness in critical reading, mathematical reasoning, and writing;
- *SAT*: National, standardized test that measures critical reading, mathematical reasoning and writing skills that students need to be successful in college; and
- *SAT Subject Tests*: National, standardized tests that measure high school students’ knowledge and skills in 15 subject areas.

• **Facilitate college, career, and financial planning**

- *College Awareness and Planning Tools*: A suite of courses and comprehensive online tools and information to help students, plan for, apply to, and finance college, including:
  - *CollegeEd*: academic, college, and career planning courses students in grades 7-12 and their families;
  - *My College QuickStart and MyRoad*: Online, personalized college planners and exploration tools that connect student to majors, careers, and colleges; and
  - *Financial Aid EasyPlanner Tools*: includes Scholarship Search, Financial Aid Calculators, and the PROFILE financial aid application.

The College Board believes that the Advanced Placement Program can be a significant driver to promote college readiness in all of California's high schools. AP is a national standard for academic rigor and college readiness, providing millions of students with the opportunity to experience college-level learning and to earn college credit and/or advanced placement during high school. California is among the leaders in AP participation and success, but much more needs to be done to ensure that all students—especially those in the state's urban and rural communities—have access to AP courses and have access to the preparation and support needed to succeed in these challenging courses.

The following are some key data points in relation to AP, illustrating current participation in the program, the benefits of participation in terms of college completion, and the potential for hundreds of thousands of additional California students to enroll and succeed in AP.

- This year more than 1.5 million students will take more than 2.5 million AP Exams; more than two-thirds of the nation's high schools offer AP, but too many urban and rural schools lack the qualified teachers to offer these rigorous courses to their students.
- There are more than 120,000 AP teachers nationwide whose experience and high quality training benefit all students- in both AP and non-AP classes.
- More than 3,000 colleges and universities accept qualifying AP exam grades for credit or placement, thereby giving students and their parents the opportunity to save \$5,000-\$30,000 on college tuition.
- In California last year, more than 38,500 students achieved a 3, 4, or 5 score on AP Calculus and AP English Literature Exams, but data show that more than 72,600 additional students would have a high likelihood of succeeding on those same exams, if given the chance to take the courses.
- For each investment of \$1 million in AP professional development, California could train more than 3,000 AP and pre-AP teachers who could reach 140,000 prospective AP students.

### **Advanced Placement Performance and College Completion**

Students scoring 3 or higher on AP Exams are experiencing much higher college graduation rates than comparable non-AP students.

Increase in Probability of College Completion: AP Students with Scores 3+ as Compared to Non AP Students	
Student Demographic	AP Score of 3 or Higher
African American	21% higher
Hispanic	27% higher
White	19% higher
Low Income	32% higher

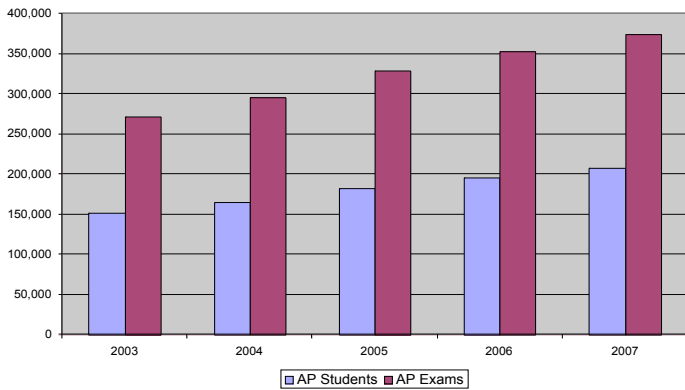
Source: Dougherty, Mellor, and Jian. The Relationship between Advanced Placement and College Graduation, NCEA, 2006

## California and the Advanced Placement Program

### AP Participation and Growth

In 2007, AP provided more than 200,000 California students with the opportunity to experience rigorous college-level learning, an increase of 36% vs. 2003.

California Public School AP Participation: Students and Exams  
2003-2007

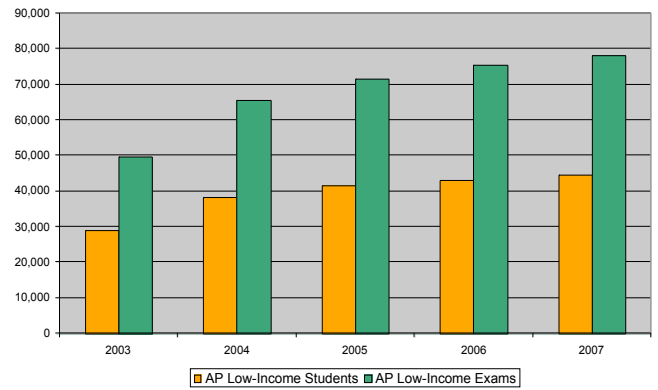


Source: The College Board 2007

### AP Increases for Low Income Students

Each year, a growing number of low-income students participate in the AP Program. In California last year, 44,644 low-income students took more than 78,000 AP Exams, an increase of more than 50% compared to 2003.

California Public School AP Low-Income Participation: Students and Exams  
2003-2007



### Record Numbers of Students Achieve

Over the last five years, 562,475 students in California earned scores of 3 or higher on 924,851 AP Exams, giving them the opportunity to qualify for college credit and/or placement, with

the potential to save thousands in tuition and fees. In 2007, 57% of all AP Exams in California were scored 3 or higher.

California Public Schools: AP Performance		
Year	AP Students 3+	AP Exams 3+
2003	96,275	156,220
2004	104,952	169,57
2005	112,474	184,204
2006	121,723	200,850
2007	127,051	213,990
2003-07	562,475	924,851

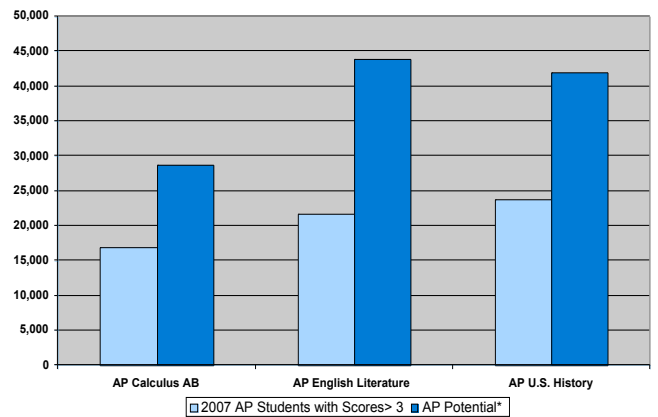
### AP Potential for More Students to Succeed

There is potential for an even greater number of California students to succeed in AP courses and exams.

For example, 23,719 students in California earned a score of 3 or above on AP U.S. History last year, however, AP Potential identified an additional 41,880 students who may have the same likelihood of success, if given access to AP.

The AP Potential diagnostic tool is based on research that shows correlations between PSAT/NMSQT scores and AP Exam results. More students are identified who have the potential to succeed in AP, if given the chance.

California Public Schools: AP Potential 2007



\* Based on student PSAT/NMSQT score range with > 60% probability of scoring 3+

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## **Opportunities to Train More AP Teachers and Reach More Students**

Teachers are critical to preparing all students for college success. Teachers who participate in AP and pre-AP professional development receive the highest quality, most rigorous training offered to middle school and high school teachers—all their students (both AP and non-AP) benefit from their improved teaching skills.

With an investment of \$350,000, California could train 1,000 educators for AP and pre-AP with the potential to reach 47,000 AP students.

Educator Training and Professional Development			
Educators Trained/Professional Development*	Investment		
	\$350,000	\$500,000	\$1,000,000
AP Teachers	400	600	1,200
Pre-AP Teachers	400	600	1,200
Guidance Counselors	100	150	300
Principals/Administrators	100	150	300
Total Educators	1,000	1,500	3,000
Potential Students Reached	47,000	70,500	140,100

\* AP and Pre-AP workshops, Summer Institutes, Counselor workshops, Leadership

## **The College Board Work with States to Achieve Education Goals**

The College Board has been assisting states in developing comprehensive programs to increase curriculum rigor, raise student achievement, and create a college-going culture for *all* students. States that invest in AP and Pre-AP professional development and require all high schools to offer AP courses have made significant progress toward closing the achievement gap and increasing the number of students, particularly underrepresented minority groups, to successfully enroll and graduate from college. Highlights of these successes in other states include:

### **The College Board Florida Partnership**

Through a far-reaching set of initiatives embodied in the College Board Florida Partnership for Minority and Underrepresented Student Achievement, the state of Florida has dramatically expanded AP participation and performance among African American and Hispanic students, such that the percentage of AP students who are Hispanic exceeds the percentage of non-AP students who are Hispanic. The legislation codifying the Partnership in statute has been hailed as exemplary by both the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Southern Regional Education Board. The Partnership has been in existence since 2000. The Partnership's mission is to increase academic achievement, particularly for underrepresented and disadvantaged students.

Key features of the Florida Partnership are:

- AP Program expansion;
- AP and pre-AP professional development for teachers and counselors: Florida has allocated \$3.2 million for AP and pre-AP teacher training;
- Aligned, sequential middle school curricula leading to rigorous college-level courses, like AP;
- PSAT/NMSQT for all students in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade to evaluate student achievement and help students to begin thinking about college; staff training to use the data from the assessment;
- SAT awareness classes; and
- Expanded opportunity grants for community outreach.

## **Florida AP Students Continue to Excel**

The College Board Florida Partnership has been an unqualified success, with strong achievement and dramatic improvements, especially for underrepresented students.

- From 2001 to 2006, Florida high school graduation rates have increased among all ethnic groups. Community college and university graduation rates for minority students are rising.
- Since 1999, the number of AP Exam takers in Florida public schools has increased 199%. More than half (54%) of Florida AP students took and passed AP Exams.
- For five years in a row, Florida has led the nation in the numbers of African American students taking AP Exams and receiving scores of 3 or higher on those exams.
  - From 1999-2007, the numbers of African American exam takers increased by more than 200%.
- Florida is the national leader in Hispanic AP participation and performance, with large increases in the number of AP students, exams and exams with scores of 3 or higher.
  - Since 1999, the number of Hispanic students in Florida public schools that participate in the AP Program increased 271%.
  - Florida has the greatest number of exams scores of 3 or higher received by Hispanic students compared to all other states.

### **Examples of Other Successful State Policies to Increase College Going and Graduation Rates**

#### **Include Advanced Placement courses in Dual Enrollment Options**

- Ohio and Michigan include AP in their definition of dual enrollment options.

#### **Require AP courses to be offered in every high school**

- Indiana requires each high school to provide at least two AP courses to qualified students; each district must provide math and science AP courses.
- Arkansas requires that all districts offer AP courses in each of the four core areas.
- In Minnesota schools are reimbursed for offering new AP courses. Funds are used for books, lab equipment and materials.

#### **Provide funding for AP and Pre-AP Professional Development**

- Ohio has committed \$750,000 for AP and pre-AP professional development.
- Illinois has \$1.5 million in funding for AP and pre-AP professional development.
- Texas reimburses AP teachers for training costs and provides grants for schools based on the number of students who earn passing scores on AP exams.

#### **Use AP Potential to identify prospective AP students**

- Indiana, Georgia, Rhode Island, Maine, and New Mexico pay for students to take the PSAT/NMSQT.

#### **Provide funds for AP exam fees for low-income students**

- In addition to the Federal AP Test Fee Program, eight states contribute state funds to subsidize all or a portion of AP Exam fees.
- Texas uses state funds to pay a portion of AP Exam fees for eligible students.
- California provides State subsidies for AP Exam fees for low-income students.
- Florida, Arkansas, and South Carolina pay for all AP Exams in the state

The College Board is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) membership association whose mission is to connect students to academic success and opportunity. The College Board's programs and services are designed to prepare students for lifelong learning. The College Board is eager to support California's goal to strengthen the linkage between high school preparation and college and workforce readiness. The College Board looks forward to continuing its efforts with California schools and districts to help advance the concept of a culture of high achievement and college-going in all of the state's middle and high schools.