

# *SREB States Lead the Nation in Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate Programs*

## SREB

*“All groups of students have enrollment and ‘passing’ rates that exceed national averages in Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses.”*

SREB *Challenge to Lead* Goal

SREB states lead the nation in student participation in Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs. In fact, participation in these challenging high school programs is growing. SREB’s *Challenge to Lead* Goals for Education recognize Advanced Placement (AP) courses and the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum as specific ways that states can engage high school students in more advanced course work. The *Challenge to Lead* goals call for all states to ensure that students’ enrollment and “passing” rates in AP and IB courses exceed national averages.

## Advanced Placement Programs

AP courses continue to receive national recognition for their rigorous curricula, and most colleges and universities award credit to students who score well on end-of-course exams in AP classes. Research suggests that students are better prepared for college if they take these courses and the related exams, even if they do not score high enough on the exam to earn college credit.

For the second year, SREB is reporting on the Advanced Placement program using new statistics. The College Board’s *Advanced Placement Report to the Nation 2007* shows the percentages of graduating seniors who have taken at least one AP exam and the percentages of graduating seniors who earned a score of 3 or higher on at least one AP exam. A score of 3 or higher is considered “passing” because most colleges award credit to students who achieve this score. Before 2006, the College Board reported the percentages of all the exams taken on which students earned passing scores. This measure may have caused schools to discourage those students who were unlikely to pass from taking the exams. To provide trends in student performance, the College Board reevaluated the 2000 data using the new method. The 2007 report includes 2000, 2005 and 2006 test results, using the new measures. (See Table 1.)

In SREB states, the average percentage of graduating seniors who took at least one AP exam increased at a faster rate than in the nation from 2000 to 2006. All SREB states increased their participation rates during this time, and all states increased or maintained their participation rates from 2005 to 2006. The average percentage of students taking AP exams in SREB states rose 10 percent since 2000 and 2 percent since 2005.

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Table 1  
**Percentage of Graduating Seniors Who Took and Passed<sup>1</sup>  
 At Least One AP Exam: 2000, 2005 and 2006**

	Percent Who Took At Least One AP Exam			Percent Who Scored 3 or Higher on At Least One AP Exam		
	2000	2005	2006	2000	2005	2006
United States	16	23	24	10	14	15
SREB states	<b>16</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>26</b>	9	13	14
Alabama	7	10	10	4	5	6
Arkansas	8	<b>24</b>	<b>31</b>	4	8	10
Delaware	13	<b>25</b>	<b>28</b>	8	13	<b>15</b>
Florida	<b>23</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>
Georgia	<b>17</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>
Kentucky	11	17	19	6	8	9
Louisiana	3	5	5	2	3	2
Maryland	<b>20</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>
Mississippi	6	9	11	2	3	4
North Carolina	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>
Oklahoma	10	18	20	5	8	10
South Carolina	<b>18</b>	22	22	<b>10</b>	13	13
Tennessee	10	15	17	6	9	10
Texas	<b>17</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>
Virginia	<b>25</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>21</b>
West Virginia	8	12	14	5	6	6

Percentages in **bold** met or exceeded the national average.

<sup>1</sup> Most colleges award credit to students who score 3 or higher on an AP exam.

Source: The College Board.

Most SREB states increased the percentage of graduating seniors scoring a 3 or higher on at least one AP exam, and more than half have kept pace with or exceeded the national rate of increase since 2000. Florida, Maryland, North Carolina and Virginia maintained their positions in the top 10 nationally in the percentage of graduates who took and passed at least one AP exam in high school in 2006.

Arkansas posted the greatest increase in student participation in the nation for the second consecutive year: 11 percent from 2004 to 2005, and 7 percent from 2005 to 2006. This progress stems from 2004 legislation that required all the state's high schools to offer AP courses. Arkansas also had the greatest one-year gain in the percentage of students scoring a 3 or higher on one or more AP exams from 2005 to 2006, edging out Delaware, Oklahoma and Virginia by a fraction of a percentage point. Other SREB states are considering similar legislation as a way to strengthen their AP programs. Beginning in fall 2007,

Mississippi will require all districts to offer a minimum of four AP courses — at least one in four core areas: English, mathematics, science and social studies. By fall 2008, all West Virginia high schools must offer at least four AP courses — or equivalent IB courses.

Hispanic students continue to take AP exams in most states at a comparable rate to their proportion in the overall student population. Black students, on the other hand, remain substantially underrepresented in AP testing in all SREB states. The gap between the median percentages of black students in the region's school population and in AP testing remained flat from 2005 to 2006, at 13 percent; the national average of 7 percent also was unchanged. Participation gaps from 2005 to 2006 also did not change, but the longer-term trend tells a different story: Nearly all SREB states have experienced narrowing participation gaps since 2000, when the gap between black students participating in AP testing and their representation in the school population was wider — at 16 percentage points — than it was in 2006. (See Table 2 and Box 1.)

**Table 2**  
**Percentages of Black Students Taking AP Exams Compared With Percentages in Overall Student Populations in Public Schools: 2000, 2005 and 2006**

	Overall Student Population			AP Examinees			Gap		
	2000	2005	2006	2000	2005	2006	2000	2005	2006
United States	13	13	14	6	6	7	7	7	7
SREB Median	25	26	26	9	13	13	16	13	13
Alabama	33	32	32	9	15	15	24	17	17
Arkansas	21	21	21	6	13	13	15	8	8
Delaware	25	28	27	9	11	11	16	17	16
Florida <sup>1</sup>	20	20	20	9	10	11	11	10	9
Georgia	33	32	33	18	20	20	15	12	13
Kentucky	8	9	9	2	5	4	6	4	5
Louisiana	39	40	44	17	16	16	22	24	28
Maryland	32	33	34	11	14	14	21	19	20
Mississippi	47	46	46	20	32	33	27	14	13
North Carolina	27	27	27	10	13	13	17	14	14
Oklahoma <sup>2</sup>	8	9	10	5	5	6	3	4	4
South Carolina	39	38	38	16	16	16	23	22	22
Tennessee	18	20	21	12	14	16	6	6	5
Texas <sup>3</sup>	13	14	14	5	7	7	8	7	7
Virginia	24	25	24	8	9	10	16	16	14
West Virginia	4	4	4	2	2	2	2	2	2

<sup>1</sup> Hispanics in Florida accounted for 21 percent of the overall population and 24 percent of AP students in 2006.

<sup>2</sup> American Indians in Oklahoma made up 19 percent of the overall student population and 9 percent of AP students in 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Hispanics in Texas accounted for 36 percent of the overall population and 34 percent of AP students in 2006.

Source: The College Board.

Box 1

The Florida Achievement

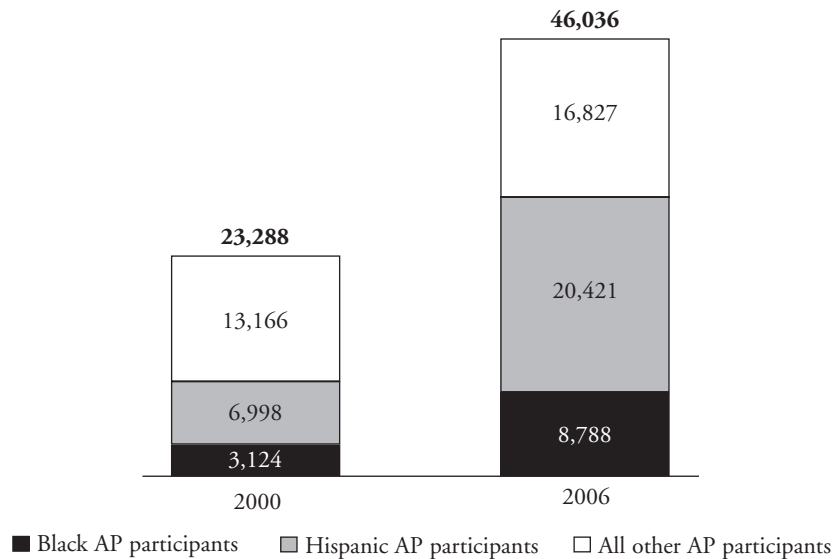
*More than half of the state's Hispanic students participated in AP courses in 2006.*

Landmark legislation in Florida in 2004 — the Florida Partnership for Minority and Under-represented Student Achievement Act — helped usher in dramatic gains in AP programs for black and Hispanic students in 2006. The Act launched a partnership of the College Board, the Florida Department of Education and the state's public high schools that helps school districts provide professional development for teachers, cover the cost for 10th-graders to take the Preliminary SAT (so school officials can identify those who have the potential to benefit from AP courses), and reward schools and teachers for each student who scores a 3 or higher on an AP exam.

From 2005 to 2006, Florida experienced the greatest increase in the number of public school AP examinees of any state in the nation, including the greatest number of black public school AP examinees and the second-greatest increase in the number of Hispanic public school AP examinees. Since 2000, the number of black public school students in Florida who took AP exams increased 181 percent — from about 3,000 students to nearly 9,000. Similarly, the number of Hispanic students who took AP exams increased 192 percent — from nearly 7,000 students to more than 20,000.

The success of Hispanic students in Florida is particularly impressive: More than half of Hispanic students in Florida in 2006 participated in AP courses.

Participation of Students by Racial and Ethnic Groups in Florida, 2000 to 2006



Source: The College Board.

**Strong schools make a difference.** In addition to reporting on student participation and performance, the College Board recognizes public and private schools that “achieved the tremendous success of helping a larger proportion of their total school population succeed on a particular AP exam than any other school in the nation.” For each AP exam subject, the College Board selects schools by size (small, medium and large) for this distinction and highlights a few additional schools with significant minority racial/ethnic populations that have helped more students succeed on the courses and exams.

In 2006 and 2007, the College Board cited 119 schools of distinction nationally — and half were in SREB states. Public schools in nine SREB states — Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia — represented nearly 60 percent of the schools in the SREB region that were recognized.

## **International Baccalaureate Programs**

SREB states continue to expand student access and participation in the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. IB encompasses a comprehensive, two-year curriculum that includes six academic areas: language, second language, individuals and societies, experimental sciences, mathematics and computer science, and the arts — along with community service and an independent project. Students may receive an IB diploma if they score well on subject-area exams, while those who do not still may receive college credit at an institution's discretion. Most colleges award credit to students who earn a score of 4 or higher on IB exams (considered "passing").

IB programs continue to spread rapidly in SREB states and across the nation. In 2006, 462 U.S. high schools offered the IB curriculum; 44 percent of those schools were in SREB states. Six SREB states — Florida, Georgia, Maryland, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia — increased the number of schools offering IB programs from 2005 to 2006. SREB states had 19,285 students enrolled in IB programs in 2006, representing nearly half of the nation's total IB enrollment, and a 7 percent regional increase from 2005. (See Table 3.)

Of the 100 schools offering the greatest number of IB exams in 2006 internationally, 56 were in the United States. Of these, 39 were in SREB states. Florida had the most schools in the region with 23; Virginia had 12.

International Baccalaureate North America reports students' pass rates on IB exams. Beginning in 2006, it discontinued reporting the pass rates in states with five or fewer IB schools in order to protect examinees' privacy. Because of this new policy, its 2006 examination review and data summary did not report the percentages of exams students passed in more than half of SREB states and nearly half of the states in the nation. The report also could not provide a national average for the percentage of exams passed.

## **What can your state do?**

Many SREB states have policies intended to increase the availability of AP and IB courses and to enroll more students. In addition to Arkansas's law regarding AP courses, Mississippi, West Virginia and other states have taken steps to encourage more students to participate in AP and IB. For example, most SREB states continue to provide AP courses to their students in all geographic locations through statewide virtual (online) schools. These schools provide classes for students, even if only a few students want to participate in specific classes. The 14 SREB states with state virtual schools all offered AP courses in 2005. Georgia led SREB states in offering 40 distinct AP courses, ranging from calculus to human geography. In 2005, Florida offered 10 AP courses online and led the region in online AP participation, with 368 students and 685 course enrollments. (Many students take more than one online AP course.)

Table 3  
International Baccalaureate in SREB States, 2005 and 2006

	Number of Schools		Number of Students		Percent of Exams Passed <sup>1</sup>	
	2005	2006	2005	2006	2005	2006
United States	423	462	35,366	40,646	79	— <sup>2</sup>
SREB states	193	203	17,840	19,285	75	— <sup>2</sup>
SREB states as a percent of U.S.	46	44	50	47		
Alabama	5	4	235	238	74	— <sup>2</sup>
Arkansas	3	3	173	184	55	— <sup>2</sup>
Delaware	2	2	86	131	<b>88</b>	— <sup>2</sup>
Florida	40	42	6,206	6,454	<b>85</b>	84
Georgia	18	20	949	1,070	72	68
Kentucky	4	4	319	315	76	— <sup>2</sup>
Louisiana	1	1	46	54	67	— <sup>2</sup>
Maryland	14	15	1,156	1,423	75	80
Mississippi	1	1	79	100	34	— <sup>2</sup>
North Carolina	21	21	1,548	1,544	73	69
Oklahoma	2	2	169	193	74	— <sup>2</sup>
South Carolina	20	22	912	1,016	77	70
Tennessee	5	5	147	241	62	— <sup>2</sup>
Texas	24	27	1,588	1,873	<b>79</b>	79
Virginia	32	33	4,205	4,360	<b>79</b>	79
West Virginia	1	1	22	89	<b>84</b>	— <sup>2</sup>

Percentages in **bold** met or exceeded the national average.

<sup>1</sup> Most colleges award credit to students who score 4 or higher on an IB exam.

<sup>2</sup> The International Baccalaureate North America does not provide state results when fewer than five schools offer IB programs.

Source: International Baccalaureate North America.

Some SREB states have taken other steps to increase participation in AP courses. The College Board commends Delaware for implementing initiatives to prepare low-income students for success in AP courses and Maryland for using a sequential curriculum in grades 6-12 culminating in AP courses. Most SREB states provide funding for professional development opportunities for AP teachers. Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Georgia and South Carolina designate teacher-training funds for teachers to attend an AP-approved summer institute. Other states, including Alabama and Oklahoma, provide competitive grants for teachers to obtain AP instructional materials and equipment.

Policy-makers should continue to monitor the participation and performance rates of all groups of students in these programs, set targets for increasing these rates, and support all students' efforts to take these courses and exams. These steps will help ensure that all students — especially those in underrepresented groups — have opportunities to succeed in a rigorous, college-preparatory high school curriculum. To achieve this goal, some SREB states should consider the following strategies, which are succeeding in other SREB states:

- Make AP and/or IB courses available to every student in every school.
- Offer every student access to more advanced courses through a state virtual school, at no cost to the student.
- Pay students' testing fees, especially those from low-income families.
- Provide funding to train teachers who are eligible to teach these courses.
- Give incentives for schools to expand AP and IB offerings.
- Award bonuses to teachers and schools whose students perform well on these exams.

## References

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