

# *SREB States Continue to 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 continue to lead the nation in student participation in Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs. Student success in these challenging high school programs continues to grow — even as the percentages of students participating continue to increase. SREB’s *Challenge to Lead* Goals for Education identify Advanced Placement (AP) and the International Baccalaureate (IB) programs as appropriate ways to involve more students in the advanced course work that leads to greater college readiness. The *Challenge to Lead* goals call for all states to ensure that all groups of students have enrollment and “passing” rates in AP and IB courses that exceed national averages.

## Success in Advanced Placement

The AP program is nationally recognized for its rigorous curricula, and most colleges and universities award course credit to students who score well on AP course exams. Research suggests that students who participate in AP classes and take the accompanying exams are more likely to succeed in college, even if they do not score high enough on the exams to receive college credit.

In 2007, the College Board undertook an extensive course audit, examining the curriculum of approximately 13,000 AP courses in more than 14,000 U.S. high schools in response to growing skepticism among some colleges about the rigor of some courses. More than 800 college faculty members reviewed the courses to ensure that each offered the necessary rigor of college-level work. Two-thirds of the courses were approved on first review, and most of the remaining ones were approved after only minor changes.

The College Board’s *Advanced Placement Report to the Nation 2008* marks the third year the organization has reported the percentage of graduating seniors taking at least one AP exam and the percentage of graduating seniors who earned a score of 3 or higher on at least one AP exam during high school. A score of 3 or higher is considered “passing” because most colleges award course credit to students who achieve this score.

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In SREB states, the percentage of graduating seniors taking at least one AP exam rose 9 percentage points from 2002 to 2007 — topping the national rate of increase by 2 percentage points for the five-year period. Each of the 16 SREB states also increased its participation rate over the five years, and 14 SREB states did so from 2006 to 2007. (See Table 1.)

In 2007, the percentage of seniors who passed at least one AP exam in SREB states matched the national rate for the first time. This is a milestone for SREB states. Three SREB states — Florida, Maryland and Virginia — were in the top five nationally in 2007 in the percentage of graduates who took and passed at least one AP exam in high school. Maryland also recorded the second-greatest increase — 6 percentage points — of graduating seniors scoring a 3 or higher on at least one AP exam from 2002 to 2007. In total, 15 SREB states increased the percentage of graduating seniors scoring a 3 or higher on at least one AP exam since 2002.

Table 1  
**Percentage of Graduating Seniors Who Took and Passed<sup>1</sup>  
 At Least One AP Exam: 2002, 2006 and 2007**

	Percent Who Took At Least One AP Exam			Percent Who Scored 3 or Higher on At Least One AP Exam		
	2002	2006	2007	2002	2006	2007
United States	18	24	25	12	15	15
SREB states	<b>18</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	11	14	<b>15</b>
Alabama	9	10	11	5	6	6
Arkansas	10	30	32	5	10	10
Delaware	15	27	27	9	15	15
Florida	25	36	38	15	20	20
Georgia	20	27	29	11	15	15
Kentucky	13	19	20	7	10	10
Louisiana	4	5	6	2	2	3
Maryland	24	33	35	16	22	22
Mississippi	7	11	12	3	4	4
North Carolina	23	31	32	14	18	18
Oklahoma	14	20	20	7	10	9
South Carolina	21	22	23	13	13	13
Tennessee	12	17	18	7	10	10
Texas	19	26	27	11	15	14
Virginia	27	32	34	17	21	21
West Virginia	11	14	15	5	7	7

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

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

Source: The College Board

Many SREB states have focused on opening access to AP classes to particular student groups underrepresented in these college-level courses. These efforts have resulted in increases in both participation and passing rates for these students.

The rate of participation of Hispanic students in AP courses in most SREB states now equals or exceeds the proportion of Hispanic students in the overall student population of high school graduates. The percentage of Hispanic students who scored a 3 or higher on at least one AP exam increased in all SREB states from 2002 to 2007. In fact, 12 SREB states have closed the gap between the percentage of Hispanic students in the overall high school graduate population and the percentage of Hispanic students who passed at least one AP exam. SREB states continue to lead the nation in access and success of Hispanic students in AP courses. (See Table 2 and Box 1.)

**Table 2**  
**Percentages of Hispanic Students Scoring a 3 or Higher Compared With the Percentages in the Overall Student Population of High School Graduates**

	Overall Student Population			Passing <sup>1</sup> At Least One AP Exam			Gap		
	2002	2006	2007	2002	2006	2007	2002	2006	2007
United States	12	14	15	12	14	14	None	None	1
SREB states	12	14	15	13	16	16	None	None	None
Alabama	1	1	2	1	2	2	None	None	None
Arkansas	2	5	5	2	5	6	None	None	None
Delaware	4	5	6	1	4	6	3	1	None
Florida	17	21	22	24	28	28	None	None	None
Georgia	2	4	5	3	5	5	None	None	None
Kentucky	1	3	3	1	2	2	None	1	1
Louisiana	1	2	2	4	5	3	None	None	None
Maryland	4	6	6	4	7	7	None	None	None
Mississippi	1	1	1	2	2	2	None	None	None
North Carolina	2	5	5	2	4	4	None	1	1
Oklahoma <sup>2</sup>	4	6	7	4	7	7	None	None	None
South Carolina	1	2	3	2	3	3	None	None	None
Tennessee	1	1	2	2	3	3	None	None	None
Texas	33	36	37	28	32	33	5	4	4
Virginia	4	6	7	5	6	6	None	None	1
West Virginia	0	1	0	1	2	2	None	None	None

Note: "None" means no gap exists. The percentage of Hispanic students who passed at least one AP exam equaled or exceeded the percentage of students in the overall population.

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

<sup>2</sup> American Indians in Oklahoma made up 20 percent of the overall student population and 7 percent of students passing an AP exam in 2007.

Source: The College Board

Box 1

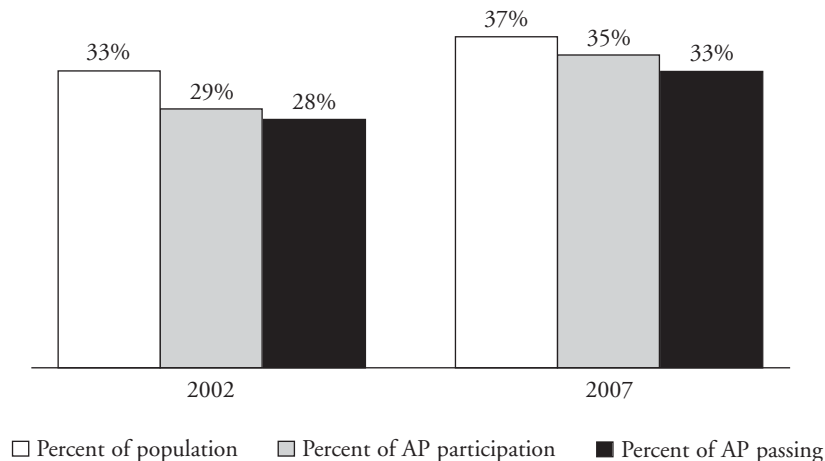
## Closing the Performance Gap for Hispanic Students in Texas *Using a performance pay program to increase participation and success rates for Hispanic students.*

The Advanced Placement Incentive Program (APIP) — enacted by the Texas Legislature in 1993 and intended to increase the participation and success rates for underrepresented populations — has recognized and rewarded Texas students, teachers and schools with pay for performance in AP courses for nearly 15 years. After several years of moderate increases in participation and passing rates, the Legislature increased funding for this program from \$3 million in 1998 to \$34 million in 2002.

In particular, the APIP has helped Texas increase the participation and passing rates of Hispanic students in AP courses since the 2002 funding increase. Texas has the third-largest proportion of Hispanic students in the overall graduating senior population in the nation. The state has experienced a nearly 20 percent increase in the number of these students since 2002. Even with this increase, the growth in the percentages of Hispanic students participating in and passing AP courses in Texas has outpaced the increase in the percentage of Hispanics in the graduating senior population since 2002. Texas claims the greatest Hispanic student participation and success rates in those taking at least one AP exam in the SREB region since 2002.

The success of Hispanic students in Texas is impressive: Over 10,000 more Hispanic students took at least one AP exam and almost 4,500 more passed at least one AP exam in 2007 than in 2002.

**Percentage of Hispanic Students in the Graduating Senior Population  
Participating in and Passing AP courses in Texas, 2002 and 2007**



Source: The College Board

Many SREB states also increased the participation and passing rates of black students in AP classes from 2002 to 2007. In fact, the percentage of black graduating seniors scoring a 3 or higher on at least one AP exam in the SREB region is twice the national rate. However, participation and success rates for black students remain substantially below the proportion of these students in the overall student population of high school graduates in *all* SREB states. The gap between the percentage of black students in the region's overall high school graduate population and those passing at least one AP exam remained at 17 percent from 2002 to 2007; the national gap increased slightly, to 11 percent. Four SREB states — Arkansas, Delaware, Kentucky and Mississippi — narrowed the gap between the percentage of black students in the population and the percentage passing from 2002 to 2007. (See Table 3.)

**Table 3**  
**Percentages of Black Students Scoring a 3 or Higher Compared With**  
**the Percentages in the Overall Student Population of High School Graduates**

	Overall Student Population			Passing <sup>1</sup> At Least One AP Exam			Gap		
	2002	2006	2007	2002	2006	2007	2002	2006	2007
United States	13	14	14	3	3	3	10	11	11
SREB states	22	23	23	5	5	6	17	18	17
Alabama	32	32	33	6	6	7	26	26	26
Arkansas	21	21	21	3	4	4	18	17	17
Delaware	26	27	26	5	6	6	21	21	20
Florida	20	20	20	6	6	6	14	14	14
Georgia	33	33	34	9	9	9	24	24	25
Kentucky	9	9	9	2	2	3	7	7	6
Louisiana	41	44	43	9	7	9	32	37	34
Maryland	33	34	35	6	7	8	27	27	27
Mississippi	47	46	47	9	10	12	38	36	35
North Carolina	27	27	28	5	6	6	22	21	22
Oklahoma <sup>2</sup>	9	10	10	3	3	3	6	7	7
South Carolina	38	38	38	8	8	8	30	30	30
Tennessee	18	21	22	7	7	7	11	14	15
Texas	13	14	14	3	3	3	10	11	11
Virginia	24	24	25	5	6	6	19	18	19
West Virginia	4	4	4	1	1	1	3	3	3

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

<sup>2</sup> American Indians in Oklahoma made up 20 percent of the overall student population and 7 percent of students passing an AP exam in 2007.

Source: The College Board

## Growth in International Baccalaureate

The IB program continues to grow in most SREB states. IB involves 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 — as well as community service and an independent project. Students participate in end-of-year exams and may receive an IB diploma if they score well on these subject-area exams. Even students who do not receive an IB diploma may receive college credit for individual courses.

The number of IB schools continues to grow throughout the SREB region and the nation. In 2007, 502 U.S. high schools offered the IB curriculum, an increase of 19 percent since 2005. Of these schools, 44 percent — 221 schools in total — were in SREB states. Ten SREB states — Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia — increased the number of schools offering the IB program from 2006 to 2007. SREB states enrolled 20,654 students in IB programs in 2007, accounting for nearly half of the nation's total IB enrollment, and saw a 16 percent regional increase from 2005. (See Table 4.)

In order to report success in the IB program and receive college credit, students request that their transcripts be submitted to the institutions they are interested in attending. Of the top 50 institutions receiving transcripts from IB schools in 2007, 22 are located in SREB states. Seven of the top 10 institutions are in SREB states, with the University of Florida receiving the most transcripts from the IB program of any university in the world.

In previous years, International Baccalaureate North America reported students' pass rates on IB exams by state. Beginning in 2006, the program stopped reporting this rate in states with five or fewer IB schools in order to protect the privacy of the small number of examinees. Because of this policy, pass rates were reported in 2007 for fewer than half of SREB states and half of all states in the nation. A national average for the percentage of exams passed also is no longer available.

## What can your state do to increase student success in AP and IB programs?

SREB states have developed policies to increase student access to and success in AP and IB courses. Many SREB states have increased the availability of AP courses through statewide virtual (or online) schools. These schools allow even the smallest number of students to participate in classes that are normally not available to them through traditional means. Thirteen of the 14 SREB states with state virtual schools offered AP courses in 2007. West Virginia offered the most, with 29 distinct courses ranging from art history to computer science. Virginia offered 22 courses and led the region in participation, with 1,954 online course enrollments.

SREB states also have taken steps to increase success in AP courses. Florida and Mississippi join Texas in promoting not only participation but also success by all students in AP and IB programs. Mississippi steadily increased the percentage of black students passing at least one AP exam from 9 percent in 2002 to 12 percent in 2007. These results reflect recent legislation that defined the number and type of AP courses each

Table 4  
**International Baccalaureate Programs in SREB States, 2005, 2006 and 2007**

	Number of Schools			Number of Students			Percent of Exams Passed <sup>1</sup>		
	2005	2006	2007	2005	2006	2007	2005	2006 <sup>2</sup>	2007 <sup>2</sup>
United States	423	462	502	35,366	40,646	44,773	79	-	-
SREB states	193	203	221	17,840	19,285	20,654	75	-	-
SREB states as a percent of U.S.	46	44	44	50	47	46	-	-	-
Alabama	5	4	5	235	238	297	74	-	-
Arkansas	3	3	4	173	184	196	55	-	-
Delaware	2	2	2	86	131	150	88	-	-
Florida	40	42	44	6,206	6,454	6,693	85	84	83
Georgia	18	20	21	949	1,070	1,150	72	68	73
Kentucky	4	4	4	319	315	298	76	-	-
Louisiana	1	1	2	46	54	88	67	-	-
Maryland	14	15	19	1,156	1,423	1,596	75	80	77
Mississippi	1	1	1	79	100	80	34	-	-
North Carolina	21	21	23	1,548	1,544	1,713	73	69	68
Oklahoma	2	2	2	169	193	204	74	-	-
South Carolina	20	22	24	912	1,016	1,089	77	70	69
Tennessee	5	5	5	147	241	291	62	-	-
Texas	24	27	30	1,588	1,873	2,108	79	79	78
Virginia	32	33	34	4,205	4,360	4,600	79	79	77
West Virginia	1	1	1	22	89	101	84	-	-

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

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

Source: International Baccalaureate North America

high school must offer, and promoted increased availability of AP preparatory courses. Florida expanded its participation in the EXCEerator program — an AP initiative in urban school districts that requires increased student access and diversity in AP classrooms. Almost half of all current EXCEerator schools are located in Florida. Texas receives funding from state and local governments — as well as from the nonprofit organization Advanced Placement Strategies Inc. — to run its Advanced Placement Incentive Program. Texas' APIP recognizes teachers, students and schools, rewarding each for student performance on AP exams.

Policy-makers should continue to monitor the participation and passing rates of all groups of students in these programs, set targets for increasing participation and passing rates, and establish programs to expand access and better prepare students for success. These steps will help ensure that all students — especially

those in traditionally underrepresented groups — have opportunities to participate and succeed in a rigorous, college-ready high school curriculum. The following strategies used in several SREB states may be useful to policy-makers seeking to achieve these goals:

- Open access to AP and/or IB courses to *every* student in *every* school.
- Offer extra support early and often to motivate students from underrepresented groups to participate and succeed in AP and/or IB courses.
- Use state virtual schools to increase access to more advanced courses at no cost to the student.
- Pay testing fees for students, especially those from low-income families.
- Provide funding to train teachers who are eligible to teach these courses.
- Establish incentives — including bonuses for teachers and schools — to improve AP and IB availability and performance.

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