

SREB States Maintain Lead 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.”

One indicator of state progress toward achieving the SREB *Challenge to Lead* Goals for Education

SREB states maintained their lead in the nation in student participation in Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs in 2008. The percentage of seniors in SREB states who passed an AP exam matched the national rate for the second year in a row. SREB’s *Challenge to Lead* Goals for Education recognize these programs as key ways to involve more high school students in rigorous, college-preparatory course work. The *Challenge to Lead* goals call for SREB states to increase enrollment and “passing” rates in AP and IB courses until all groups of students exceed national averages. Recent reports by the College Board and International Baccalaureate North America show progress for many SREB states on these measures.

Continued success in AP

The College Board’s *Fifth Annual AP Report to the Nation* shows the percentages of the public high school graduating class of 2008 who took at least one AP exam and who earned a score of 3 or higher on at least one AP exam while in high school. A score of 3 or higher is considered “passing” because most colleges award course credit to students who achieve this score.

The SREB region’s high school students continued to succeed in academically challenging AP courses even as overall participation rates increased in every SREB state. From 2003 to 2008, the number of seniors in the United States who had taken at least one AP exam in high school increased 47 percent, from just over a half-million students to more than three-quarters of a million. AP participation among these students in SREB states rose at an even faster rate — 56 percent — over the period, from almost 181,000 seniors to more than 282,000.

In SREB states, the percentage of seniors taking at least one AP exam in high school rose 8 percentage points from 2003 to 2008 — topping the national increase by 2 points. Every SREB state increased its participation rate over the five-year period. Two SREB states — Arkansas and Maryland — did so by double digits. (See Table 1.)

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Table 1
**Percentage of Graduating Seniors Who Took and Passed¹
 At Least One AP Exam in High School**

	Took At Least One AP Exam			Passed At Least One AP Exam		
	2003	2007	2008	2003	2007	2008
United States	19	24	25	12	14	15
SREB states	19	25	27	12	14	15
Alabama	9	11	14	5	6	7
Arkansas	11	32	33	6	9	11
Delaware	18	26	27	10	14	14
Florida	26	33	34	15	17	18
Georgia	21	28	30	12	15	16
Kentucky	14	18	20	7	9	10
Louisiana	4	6	8	2	3	4
Maryland	26	35	37	18	23	23
Mississippi	6	11	13	3	3	4
North Carolina	24	28	28	15	16	17
Oklahoma	16	19	20	8	9	10
South Carolina	21	21	23	13	13	14
Tennessee	13	16	16	8	9	9
Texas	20	26	27	12	14	15
Virginia	26	33	34	17	20	21
West Virginia	11	15	15	6	7	7

Percentages that exceeded the national percentage are shown in **bold**.

¹ A score of 3 or higher is considered passing because most colleges award course credit to those who achieve this score.

Source: The College Board.

The number of seniors who passed at least one AP exam increased in the nation and region from 2003 to 2008, although not at the same rate as those who took AP courses during the period. The number of seniors in the nation who passed at least one AP exam in high school increased by almost 130,000 students (39 percent) to about 462,000 over the five-year period. In SREB states, the number who passed at least one AP exam during the period increased by nearly 50,000 seniors (43 percent) to more than 153,000.

The SREB region as a whole continued to match the nation in the percentage of seniors who passed at least one AP exam in high school in 2008. This means that **SREB states are close to meeting the Challenge to Lead goal indicator that calls for students' pass rates on AP exams to exceed national rates**. Five SREB states — Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina and Virginia — met this indicator of progress in 2008. All 16 SREB states increased the percentage of seniors passing at least one AP exam from 2003 to 2008, and Arkansas and Maryland ranked in the top five nationally for the greatest increases over the period.

In fact, in 2008, Maryland topped the nation in pass rates on AP exams, with 23 percent of seniors passing at least one exam while in high school. Virginia also ranked in the top five nationally that year, with 21 percent of seniors passing at least one AP exam while in high school. However, not every state in the region has experienced such high levels of success. In Louisiana and Mississippi, fewer than 4 percent of seniors passed an AP exam in high school. These two states were among 19 in the nation with fewer than 10 percent of seniors passing one AP exam in 2008.

Most colleges and universities award credit to students who score well on AP exams. Research indicates that students are better prepared for college if they participate in AP classes and take the accompanying exams, even if they do not score high enough to earn college credit.

Success in AP by underrepresented populations

The College Board has sought to ensure that underrepresented minority students and students from low-income families participate more fully in AP courses. Many SREB states have opened access to AP classes to students from these underrepresented groups. Statewide efforts to increase participation and passing rates among these students have paid off in recent years.

The participation in AP courses and pass rates on AP exams for Hispanic students in many SREB states has equaled or exceeded the proportion of Hispanic seniors in the public high school graduating class over the last several years. The College Board considers states to have reached “equity” when the proportion of black or Hispanic seniors who are successful on AP exams in the state equals or exceeds their proportion of the senior class in that state.

From 2003 to 2008, SREB states led the nation in the percentage of seniors who passed at least one AP exam and were Hispanic students. The percentage of Hispanic seniors who passed at least one AP exam increased during this period in all SREB states except one. In fact, 13 SREB states closed the gap in 2008 between the percentage of Hispanic seniors who passed at least one AP exam and the percentage of Hispanic seniors in the high school population — reaching equity for these students. (See Table 2.)

While Hispanic students reached equity in most SREB states, black students did not. From 2003 to 2008, black students continued to be underrepresented in AP courses in every state in the nation. No state reached equity in black seniors passing at least one AP exam while in high school compared with all black seniors during this period. Among SREB states, Alabama saw the largest increase in the percentage of successful AP students who were black, yet a double-digit equity gap still remained.

Table 2
**Percent of Hispanic Seniors Who Passed¹ at Least One AP Exam
 Compared With Percent of Hispanic Students in the Graduating Class**

	Total Graduating Class			Passed At Least One AP Exam			Gap		
	2003	2007	2008	2003	2007	2008	2003	2007	2008
United States	12	15	15	13	14	14	No gap	1	1
SREB states	13	15	15	14	16	16	No gap	No gap	No gap
Alabama	1	2	2	2	2	3	No gap	No gap	No gap
Arkansas	3	5	5	3	6	6	No gap	No gap	No gap
Delaware	4	6	6	3	6	5	1	No gap	1
Florida	17	21	22	26	28	28	No gap	No gap	No gap
Georgia	3	4	5	3	5	6	No gap	No gap	No gap
Kentucky	1	2	2	1	2	3	No gap	No gap	No gap
Louisiana	1	2	2	5	3	3	No gap	No gap	No gap
Maryland	4	5	6	5	7	7	No gap	No gap	No gap
Mississippi	1	1	1	1	2	2	No gap	No gap	No gap
North Carolina	3	5	5	3	4	4	No gap	1	1
Oklahoma ²	4	6	7	5	7	7	No gap	No gap	No gap
South Carolina	1	2	3	2	3	3	No gap	No gap	No gap
Tennessee	1	2	3	2	3	4	No gap	No gap	No gap
Texas	34	37	38	29	33	32	5	4	6
Virginia	4	5	6	5	6	6	No gap	No gap	No gap
West Virginia	0	1	1	1	2	2	No gap	No gap	No gap

Note: "No gap" means no gap exists. The percentage of students who passed at least one AP exam and were Hispanic students equaled or exceeded the percentage of Hispanic students in the total graduating class.

How to read this table: For example, in Alabama in 2008, 2 percent of the graduating class was Hispanic, and 3 percent of all seniors who passed an AP exam in high school was Hispanic. Because the percentage of Hispanic seniors passing at least one AP exam equaled or exceeded the percentage of Hispanic students in the graduating class, no gap existed for Hispanic students and equity was reached.

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

² American Indians in Oklahoma made up 19 percent of the total graduating class and 7 percent of seniors passing an AP exam in 2008.

Source: The College Board.

The gap between the percentages of black seniors in the graduating class and black seniors passing at least one AP exam in high school has been relatively stable at both the national and regional levels since 2003. From 2003 to 2008, four SREB states — Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana and West Virginia — narrowed the gap between the percentage of black seniors and the percentage of black seniors who passed at least one AP exam while in high school. However, no SREB state did so by more than 3 percentage points. (See Table 3.)

Table 3
**Percent of Black Seniors Who Passed¹ at Least One AP Exam
 Compared With Percent of Black Students in the Graduating Class**

	Total Graduating Class			Passed At Least One AP Exam			Gap		
	2003	2007	2008	2003	2007	2008	2003	2007	2008
United States	13	14	14	3	3	4	10	11	10
SREB states	22	23	23	5	6	6	17	17	17
Alabama	31	32	32	5	6	7	26	26	25
Arkansas	21	21	21	3	4	4	18	17	17
Delaware	26	28	28	5	6	6	21	22	22
Florida	20	21	21	6	6	6	14	15	15
Georgia	32	34	34	9	9	11	23	25	23
Kentucky	8	10	10	2	3	3	6	7	7
Louisiana	39	36	35	9	9	8	30	27	27
Maryland	32	34	34	7	8	9	25	26	25
Mississippi	46	48	48	11	12	11	35	36	37
North Carolina	27	29	29	6	6	6	21	23	23
Oklahoma	9	10	10	3	3	4	6	7	6
South Carolina	38	39	39	8	8	8	30	31	31
Tennessee	19	21	21	8	7	8	11	14	13
Texas	13	15	15	3	3	4	10	12	11
Virginia	23	24	24	5	6	6	18	18	18
West Virginia	4	4	4	1	1	2	3	3	2

How to read this table: For example, in Alabama in 2008, 32 percent of the graduating class was black, and 7 percent of all seniors who passed an AP exam in high school was black. Because the percentage of black seniors passing at least one AP exam did not equal or exceed the percentage of black students in the graduating class, a gap existed for black students and equity was not reached.

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

Source: The College Board.

In 2008, the College Board reported on participation and passing rates for students from low-income families for the first time. These students have been generally underrepresented in AP programs, and the College Board has encouraged states to increase their participation as a means to provide them access to a rigorous high school curriculum. Focusing on the participation and success rates of students from low-income families is important, yet comparable information for all other students for monitoring gaps is not available. Nevertheless, several improvements are notable.

Table 4
**Percent of Seniors from Low-Income Families
 Who Took and Passed¹ At Least One AP Exam in High School**

	Took At Least One AP Exam			Passed At Least One AP Exam		
	2003	2007	2008	2003	2007	2008
United States	12	16	17	10	13	13
SREB states	11	16	17	9	13	13
Alabama	4	6	9	2	3	4
Arkansas	10	18	20	8	11	14
Delaware	5	9	10	5	8	7
Florida	8	12	14	7	11	13
Georgia	6	12	13	4	8	8
Kentucky	10	14	15	6	9	9
Louisiana	10	23	16	6	19	15
Maryland	6	9	9	5	7	7
Mississippi	16	32	34	8	15	13
North Carolina	7	10	9	5	6	6
Oklahoma	19	24	27	13	18	19
South Carolina	2	13	11	1	10	7
Tennessee	8	13	14	4	7	8
Texas	23	31	31	20	27	26
Virginia	4	5	5	3	4	4
West Virginia	17	9	11	11	7	9

Percentages that exceeded the national percentage are shown in **bold**.

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

Source: The College Board.

In SREB states, the percentage of seniors from low-income families who took at least one AP exam rose 6 percentage points from 2003 to 2008 — exceeding the national rate of increase by 1 point for the period. Every SREB state except one increased the participation rate for students from low-income families during the period, and two SREB states — Arkansas and Mississippi — did so by double digits. Six SREB states — Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina and Texas — were in the top 10 states nationally in growth in the participation rate for these students from 2003 to 2008. (See Table 4.)

The percentage of seniors from low-income families in SREB states who passed at least one AP exam matched the national rate in 2008 for the second consecutive year. Four SREB states — Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Texas — had rates that exceeded the national rate that year. Every SREB state except one increased the percentage of seniors from low-income families who passed at least one AP exam

from 2003 to 2008. In fact, six SREB states ranked in the top 10 nationally for increases in the passing rates of these students during the period: Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, Oklahoma, South Carolina and Texas.

Strong schools make a difference for underrepresented populations. In addition to reporting on overall student participation and success, the College Board recognized 16 schools that led the nation in “helping African American and/or Latino students to succeed in particular AP subjects.” Of these 16 nationally recognized schools, 11 were located in SREB states: Florida (six schools), Georgia (one school), Maryland (two schools), Tennessee (one school) and Texas (one school).

Increasing access to AP programs through state virtual schools

Many SREB states have instituted policies intended to increase student access to and success in AP programs. A popular method for expanding access to AP courses in recent years has been through state virtual (or online) schools. These statewide schools open traditionally unavailable courses to even the smallest number of interested students, regardless of location.

Every SREB state had a state virtual school in 2008, and all but two offered at least one AP course online. Kentucky and West Virginia offered the most AP courses through their state virtual schools, with each offering 23 distinct courses, ranging from art history to physics. SREB states collectively offered 29 of the 37 courses available from the College Board through their virtual schools in 2008.

According to the College Board, 60 percent of all U.S. high schools offered AP courses in 2008. Of these high schools, 17 percent also offered at least one AP course online — an increase of 4 percent in the last three years. Most schools that were surveyed stated that they turned to online offerings when fewer than 10 students showed interest in a given AP course. Here, state virtual schools allow for equal access to rigorous AP courses for any interested student.

With the recent economic downturn affecting overall budgets in many states, administrators and educators are expected to continue to turn to their state virtual schools as a means of offering greater numbers of AP courses to more students at reduced cost — without compromising quality. While research on cost savings provided by online instruction remains scarce, recent analysis shows that using virtual schools to deliver AP courses likely reduces the cost to the state. Based on survey responses from 20 virtual schools nationwide, researchers at the University of Florida concluded that online learning may save nearly \$5,000 per pupil compared with traditional instruction. Researchers at the Hoover Institution found that students who took AP courses through the Florida Virtual School had higher average scores on AP exams compared with all Florida students in 10 distinct AP courses in 2008. In fact, these online AP students outperformed their peers in the nation in several subjects, including calculus, computer science and macroeconomics.

SREB states continue to make progress towards meeting the *Challenge to Lead* goal to exceed the nation in participation and success in rigorous, college-preparatory course work. **SREB states maintained their lead in the nation in student participation in AP courses in 2008, and the SREB pass rate matched the national rate for the second year in a row in these courses.**

Steady growth in IB programs

SREB states continued to expand student access and participation in the International Baccalaureate (IB) program in 2008. IB students follow a comprehensive, two-year curriculum that includes six academic areas of focus: 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 in specific subjects and may receive an IB diploma if they score well. Those who do not still may receive college credit for individual courses. Most colleges award credit to students who earn a score of 4 or higher on IB exams.

The number of IB schools continued to grow across the region and the nation from 2006 to 2008. In 2008, 534 U.S. high schools offered the IB curriculum, an increase of 16 percent since 2006. Holding steady for the last three years, 44 percent of these schools — 234 in total — were located in SREB states. Eight SREB states — Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia — increased the number of schools offering the IB program from 2007 to 2008. Overall, SREB states enrolled 22,214 students in IB programs in 2008, an increase of 15 percent from 2006. SREB states accounted for 45 percent of the nation's total IB enrollment. (See Table 5.)

In order to report success in the IB program and receive college credit, students request that their transcripts be submitted to colleges and universities they are interested in attending. Of the top 50 institutions receiving transcripts from IB students in 2008, 21 were located in SREB states. In fact, all of the top five — and seven of the top 10 — were in SREB states. The University of Florida received the most transcripts from IB programs of any university in the world for the second year in a row.

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

Policy-makers in SREB states should continue to monitor the participation and success rates of all groups of students in these programs, set targets for increasing these rates, and establish programs to increase access and success in these college-preparatory courses. The following strategies used in several SREB states may be useful to policy-makers seeking to achieve this goal:

- Increase access to AP and/or IB programs to all students in all schools.
- Offer all students access to more rigorous courses through a state virtual school at no cost to the student.
- Supplement AP and IB exam fees for students, especially those from low-income families.
- Provide professional development funding to train teachers who teach in AP and IB classrooms.
- Establish incentives — including bonuses for teachers and schools — to improve student performance on AP and/or IB exams.

Table 5
IB Programs in SREB States

	Number of Schools			Number of Students			Percent of Exams Passed ¹		
	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008
United States	462	502	534	40,646	44,773	49,091	—	—	—
SREB states	203	221	234	19,285	20,654	22,214	—	—	—
SREB states as a percent of U.S.	44	44	44	47	46	45	—	—	—
Alabama	4	5	7	238	297	351	—	—	76
Arkansas	3	4	5	184	196	227	—	—	—
Delaware	2	2	2	131	150	170	—	—	—
Florida	42	44	49	6,454	6,693	6,993	84	83	84
Georgia	20	21	20	1,070	1,150	1,303	68	73	72
Kentucky	4	4	5	315	298	306	—	—	—
Louisiana	1	2	3	54	88	142	—	—	—
Maryland	15	19	19	1,423	1,596	1,767	80	77	78
Mississippi	1	1	1	100	80	68	—	—	—
North Carolina	21	23	23	1,544	1,713	1,811	69	68	68
Oklahoma	2	2	2	193	204	205	—	—	—
South Carolina	22	24	25	1,016	1,089	1,126	70	69	71
Tennessee	5	5	5	241	291	284	—	—	—
Texas	27	30	32	1,873	2,108	2,376	79	78	77
Virginia	33	34	35	4,360	4,600	5,028	79	77	78
West Virginia	1	1	1	89	101	57	—	—	—

Note: “—” means no results are available. International Baccalaureate North America does not provide state results when five or fewer schools in the state offer IB programs, in order to protect the privacy of the small number of examinees.

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

Source: International Baccalaureate North America.

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