



Lillian M. Lowery, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Schools

200 West Baltimore Street • Baltimore, MD 21201 • 410-767-0100 • 410-333-6442 TTY/TDD • MarylandPublicSchools.org

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CONTACT: Bill Reinhard, 410-767-0486

AP PARTICIPATION, ACHIEVEMENT CONTINUE TO RISE IN MARYLAND

STATE SAT SCORES DIP AS PARTICIPATION INCREASES; ACT, PSAT SCORES IMPROVE

BALTIMORE (September 26, 2013) – Maryland students recorded continued improvement in both Advanced Placement (AP) assessment participation and success, according to newly released data.

More than 65,000 Maryland students took at least one AP test last year, an increase of 3.6 percent over 2012, and the number of exams taken jumped 5.2 percent to 122,726. In spite of the increase, the number of student test scores reaching the high-achieving scores of 3-5 increased 3.6 percent.

Hitting a score of 3-5 qualifies students to receive credit at many colleges and universities. The data was released today by the College Board, which administers AP and other national programs.

“One of the most important things we can do to strengthen the middle class is to provide every Maryland child with the opportunity to get a great education--that's why we made the choice to invest in education, even in tough times,” said Governor Martin O’Malley. “That investment is paying dividends: we have had the #1 rated public schools in the country for five straight years, and today’s Advanced Placement data shows that we are continuing to make progress on our goal to prepare students for college and career. Congratulations to our students and the educators for making it happen.”

State Superintendent of Schools Lillian M. Lowery said the results indicate that students are taking their future very seriously. “Advanced Placement offers rigorous courses of study from French to physics, providing students with important academic challenges,” Dr. Lowery said. “Maryland students are ready, willing, and very able to meet the high bar of Advanced Placement.”

Maryland student success on the AP exams has ranked first in the nation for the past seven years. The College Board will release its 2013 rankings early in 2014.

Scores on the SAT exam registered a slight decline, although participation increased. Maryland’s composite SAT score fell four points to 1483 on the 2400-point scale. Maryland students scored a 497 in critical reading (even, compared to last year), 500 in mathematics (down 2 points), and 486 in writing (down 2 points).

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Participation in the SAT was up 1.3 percent from 2012 to 2013, as nearly 50,000 students (48,106) took the test in Maryland last year. The State has been working closely with the College Board to increase participation of underrepresented minority group students over the past five years, and that effort has paid off. There was a 2.4 percent increase in African American participation last year, and an 18.25 percent jump in Hispanic student participation.

“Our State has dramatically increased the participation and diversity of students taking the SAT over the past decade, but there remain stubborn gaps in achievement both in Maryland and nationwide,” Dr. Lowery said. “Through the Race to the Top program and our transition to the Common Core State Standards, we are increasing rigor for all students. The result will be better preparation for whatever path our graduates take.”

While Maryland has continued to increase participation in SAT, the nation’s other major college readiness exam—the ACT—has also seen a dramatic increase in Maryland.

The number of Maryland seniors taking the ACT has increased 22.1 percent over the past five years and stood at 21 percent of the State’s graduating class this past spring, compared to 73 percent of seniors taking the SAT. At the same time, according to data released last month, scores on the ACT have risen steadily. Maryland’s ACT composite score rose to 22.3 out of a possible high score of 36 in 2013, compared to 22.1 in 2012, and Maryland student scores jumped in all four tested areas (English, math, reading, and science). At the same time, the national composite declined from 21.1 to 20.9.

Among the other information in the College Board’s report:

- Scores on the PSAT/NMSQT test were up across the board for juniors taking the exam. The mean critical reading score for juniors increased 0.2 points to 47; the mean math score was up 0.2 points to 47.1, and the writing skills mean jumped 0.9 points to 45.8.
- There also was improvement registered by students taking the PSAT as sophomores. While the critical reading mean was flat at 42.4 points, the math mean score improved 0.1 point to 42.1 points, and the writing skills mean was up 0.5 points to 40.5 points.

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- AP participation went up across racial subgroups. African American students tallied an 11 percent increase in participation, and a 12 percent jump in the number of tests taken. Hispanic student participation jumped 16 percent in just one year. Asian participation—which has always been strong—went up another 8.7 percent, while White student participation increased 3.2 percent.
- Success on the AP also was registered across all racial subgroups, according to the College Board data. The number of African American students scoring a 3 or better on an AP exam went up 13 percent in just one year; the number of Hispanic students scoring at this high range jumped 12.6 percent. The number of Asian students reaching a score of 3-5 was up 8.9 percent, while the number of White students hitting that mark rose 4.1 percent.

Maryland continues to work with local school systems to increase the percentage of students involved in the Advanced Placement program. The State’s long-running partnership with the College Board has helped increase the number of students in urban and rural communities involved in both the AP and SAT programs. Every Maryland school system has at least 20 percent of its graduating class participating in a minimum of one AP course.

MSDE is in the final year of a three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education to expand its successful AP Program.

The competitive grant, “Operation ACCESS: Building the STEM Pipeline for College and Career,” addresses the need to increase the successful participation of low-income students in AP courses and exams using six strategies: Acceleration, College and career readiness, Community connections, Enrichment, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) courses, and Student and family support.

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