



# NEWS

CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

DR. DIANNA R. WENTZELL, COMMISSIONER

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## **Students post gains on Advanced Placement exams** ***Minority Student Participation Increasing***

(HARTFORD, CT)—Connecticut public school students increased performance and participation on Advanced Placement (AP) exams according to AP, PSAT and SAT results published today by the College Board. The report also shows that the participation of black and Hispanic students, traditionally under-represented groups, increased on AP and SAT exams.

“With graduation rates on the rise and more students demonstrating success on college-level material, Connecticut students continue to overcome challenges and be successful. We’re also pleased to see that the opportunity gap continues to close with more traditionally under-represented students participating,” said Governor Dannel P. Malloy. “Today’s global economy demands more of our students than it did of previous generations. Their achievement in college or post-secondary programs is critical to our collective future success—and experiencing rigorous material in high school helps prepare them to meet that challenge.”

"Delivering on our promise to prepare all our students to succeed in college and careers means setting higher expectations for what they should know and be able to do. Access to college-level material, like AP courses, and access to college-entrance exams are important pieces to expanding their opportunities for successful futures," said Commissioner of Education Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell. "We commend our students and teachers on the improvements they've made this year on the AP exams and we are committed to supporting continued success as they gain further experience with more rigorous instruction."

Going forward, AP course participation and AP and SAT exam performance will contribute to a school or district’s overall accountability standing per Connecticut’s next generation accountability model that was recently approved by the U.S. Department of Education.

### **Advanced Placement (AP)**

Connecticut public school students improved performance and increased participation on Advanced Placement exams. AP programs provide students with the opportunity to experience college-level material and earn college credit in the process. Typically, students who score 3 or higher on an AP exam receive better grades, assume larger course loads, and graduate at higher rates from college.

Statewide, 26,789 students (a 5.7 percent increase over 2014) took 48,559 AP tests (a 6.4 percent increase over 2014). Sixty-eight percent of the tests administered (33,245 tests) received a score of 3 or higher, representing a 2.6 percent increase over last year.

Students of color, a traditionally under-represented student population, posted gains in participation: 5.7 percent more black students took an AP exam; 3.7 percent more Hispanic students took an AP exam.

In an effort to improve access and remove barriers for participation for under-represented student populations, for the second year the State Department of Education paid the remainder of fees not covered by the College Board and the U.S. Department of Education for low-income students to take AP exams in spring of 2015. Provided the funding remains intact, the Department intends to continue to cover this cost.

AP:2015 Results	% Increase from 2014-2015		
	# of test takers	# of exams taken	# of tests scored 3-5
All Connecticut Students	5.7%	6.4%	2.6%
Black Students	5.7%	7.6%	-7.0%
Hispanic Students	3.7%	3.8%	-0.2%

### **SAT**

A total of 29,802 public school students, approximately 85 percent of the state’s graduating class of 2015, took the SAT—a 0.4 percent increase over the class of 2014. Notably, black and Hispanic students outpaced the statewide participation increases at 5.8 percent and 11 percent, respectively. Overall, Connecticut students continue to outperform peers around the nation in reading and writing, while missing the national average by three points in mathematics.

SAT:2015 Results	Reading	Mathematics	Writing
	Connecticut Public Schools	494	495
US Public Schools	489	498	475

Math will be a focus in the upcoming academic year. As a starting point, Commissioner Wentzell announced that she will convene educators, industry and business leaders, and experts in math and STEM instruction on a Commissioner’s Council on Mathematics to spearhead the state’s efforts to improve outcomes in math. This group will be charged with identifying best practices, both in Connecticut and across the nation, and to explore promising innovations in the areas of math and science instruction.

Pending ultimate State Board of Education approval, all students in Grade 11 will take the SAT during the normal school day in 2016. Per federal law, the state must administer one statewide assessment that is aligned to the state’s academic standards in Grade 3-8 and once in high school. In August, Governor Malloy announced that the Connecticut received approval from the U.S. Department of Education to administer school-day SAT in Grade 11 for purposes of satisfying this federal requirement.

### **PSAT**

The PSAT is widely considered the most accurate indicator of student potential for success on the AP. In October 2014, the State Department of Education paid the cost to administer the PSAT to nearly 25,500

Grade 10 and 11 students in 30 of the state's chronically struggling districts, also known as the Alliance Districts.

Based on the results of the fall 2014 PSAT exams, the Department sent letters to all students identified as having AP potential in order to expand access to AP courses and other opportunities for rigorous college-level coursework. This is the second year the Department has sent letters and the number of students taking AP exams has increased.

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