

# Highlights of Three States' Experiences with Increasing Student Success in AP Courses

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## Florida's Partnership With the College Board

The Florida Partnership is a collaboration between the College Board and the Florida Department of Education. Its goal is to increase the quality, rigor, and consistency of academic experiences for all students—especially underrepresented students—in Florida's middle schools and high schools by offering pre-collegiate assessments for all 10th-graders, college entrance examination readiness for teachers and students, and professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators. A key component of the partnership is integrating student-level data produced by the PSAT/NMSQT (a pre-collegiate assessment) into improvement plans that guide students toward more rigorous high school classes, including the college-level Advanced Placement (AP) classes. All 10th graders may take either the PSAT/NMSQT or PLAN test at state expense.

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The partnership is jointly managed by the College Board's Florida and Southern Regional Offices and the Office of Equity and Access in the Florida Department of Education. The partnership targets its efforts on high-need school districts and low-performing high schools, as identified by the state's accountability system. A principal-appointed coordinator at each of these schools is a liaison to the partnership. As liaisons, school coordinators participate in "train-the-trainer" sessions about how to use skills feedback from the PSAT/NMSQT to improve learning, and use *AP Potential* to help identify students who have the potential to succeed in rigorous high school and college-level courses, such as Advanced Placement (AP). School coordinators also receive training for teaching SAT preparation courses at their schools and for training others to do the same.

Intensive, content-focused professional development workshops are also offered to help teachers prepare students for rigorous academics by providing teachers with instructional strategies for teaching AP courses and bolstering content knowledge. Through the partnership, each summer more than 800 teachers participate in AP Summer Institutes, tuition free. Teachers working in "high-priority" schools have preference in registering for all partnership-sponsored College Board workshops, including the AP Summer Institutes. While teachers benefit from strategies and content, principals and other administrators also take advantage of an AP Summer Institute for Administrators. Topics at the administrators' institute include learning how to create a master schedule that maximizes the impact of AP classes, as well as what content is needed in non-AP courses to help students prepare for success in AP.

The College Board also provides services through various means of outreach, including disseminating materials in several languages for teachers and community organizations to use with students and their families. The partnership also engages community organizations in providing academic support, SAT readiness, and college readiness

particularly for students traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education. In addition to community groups, the partnership is fortunate to have alliances with Florida's state universities, community colleges, and historically black colleges.

Several statewide programs fund the Florida Partnership. The state has typically appropriated \$5.5 million annually for its Partnership for Minority and Underrepresented Student Achievement and \$1.6 million annually for statewide pre-collegiate assessment testing for 10th-graders to include the PSAT/NMSQT administration (per student cost of \$11). The state does not appropriate funds specifically for AP exam fees; however, schools and/or districts pay AP exam fees for their students (exam fee of \$82 per student). Florida statute requires the participating partner to match at least one-third of the annual state allocation in materials and services to the program.

PSAT/NMSQT and AP participation have increased significantly since the start of the initiative, particularly among minority students. Between 1999 and 2003, 10th-grade participation in the PSAT/NMSQT increased 326 percent for minority test takers. Nearly 1 in 5 public school students (19 percent) in Florida's high school class of 2004 left high school more prepared for college, having earned a score of 3 or higher on a college-level AP exam. Florida achieved the largest expansion of any state in the nation in the proportion of students succeeding on an AP Exam in high school (19 percent of the class of 2004 compared to 13 percent of the class of 2000). African American students' participation has increased 133 percent, and Hispanic students' participation increased 138 percent, since 1999. As a result, Latino students are now no longer underrepresented in Florida's AP classrooms.

## Arkansas' Universal Access To Advanced Placement

In 2003, the Arkansas legislature passed a statute that requires all high schools to offer at least four Advanced Placement (AP) classes, one in each of the core areas of English, math, science, and social studies, by the 2008–2009 school year. The impetus for this requirement was a 2002 state Supreme Court decision that mandated an equal curriculum for all students in the state. Before this legislation, there was wide variation in high school course offerings throughout the state. State Senator Jim Argue conducted research and found that of the 50 smallest high schools, only nine offered at least one AP course, while of the 50 largest high schools, 49 offered multiple AP courses. To implement this requirement, high schools must send teachers teaching AP courses to summer training institutes sponsored by the College Board. To prepare students for the challenging AP curriculum, high schools must offer Pre-AP courses, and the Pre- AP teachers also must be trained at an approved College Board workshop.

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A Concurrent Enrollment Course Approval Panel makes recommendations to the department of education and the department of higher education regarding the rules for offering AP and other concurrent enrollment courses provided to high school students. The panel consists of three members appointed by the Arkansas Department of Education and three members appointed by the director of the department of higher education.

During fiscal year 2005, Arkansas appropriated \$1.5 million to pay for students' AP examinations. In addition, the state has provided an annual AP Incentive Appropriation of \$575,000. For instance, schools are awarded \$50 for each student score of a three or better

on an Advanced Placement exam. Schools may apply for a one-time equipment and materials grant for AP courses, and money may be awarded to pay for teachers to attend instate Advanced Placement Summer Institutes.

## Virginia Commonwealth College Course Collaborative

The Commonwealth College Course Collaborative (CCCC) is a group of agreed-upon subjects that any student in Virginia can complete in high school, either through Advanced Placement (AP) or dual-enrollment programs, and receive college degree credit from 62 public and private, two-year and four-year colleges and universities. The subject areas and associated courses were chosen by committees comprised of academic officers from public and private four-year and two-year institutions and staff from the Virginia Department of Education and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia.

The CCCC includes biology, U.S. history, and psychology. By taking specified courses within these subject areas, a high school student can earn credit hours that are accepted by all of the participating Virginia institutions for degree credit. At some high schools, students also may have the option of earning additional degree credit hours. These additional subjects include English, economics, music appreciation, general physics, math, and art history.

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To ensure that students across Virginia have access to CCCC courses, the Virginia Department of Education has expanded its successful Virtual Advanced Placement (AP) School. The Virginia Virtual AP School provides a variety of AP courses, enabling students to earn college credit regardless of their high school's ability to offer college-level courses. Through the commonwealth's established distance learning system, virtual AP courses are transmitted by satellites free to all students. Virginia also maintains an electronic bulletin board to provide students with information about earning college credit in high school. In addition, a statewide coordinator, "virtual" counselors, and school-based career guidance and academic advising software assist participating students.

In-kind contributions include the staff time of college and high school faculty, as well as staff at the State Council for Higher Education of Virginia and the Virginia Community College System. For 2004–06, Virginia has appropriated \$495,000 each year to support the Virtual AP school.

Governor Mark R. Warner signed a CCCC agreement with the president of each institution of higher education participating in the collaborative. No legislative or regulatory changes were made, and no executive order was issued, to create the Commonwealth College Course Collaborative.

Since the CCCC was just ratified by the state's public colleges and universities in September 2004, it is too early to assess how this system improves the number of dual enrollment and AP courses that students transfer for college credit, and whether they complete their college degrees in a shorter amount of time. Initial reports from parents, students, and school divisions suggest that students welcome a uniform and easy to understand approach to the awarding of transfer credit. As part of its ongoing responsibilities, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia will evaluate the CCCC and ensure that information available to students is accurate and current.