


Office of the Superintendent of Schools
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland

December 3, 2010

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Jerry D. Weast, Superintendent of Schools 

Subject: 2010 Advanced Placement Exam Participation and Performance for Students in Montgomery County Public Schools, and Public School Students in Maryland and the Nation

The continuing emphasis by Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) on rigorous course taking resulted in MCPS students taking a record-setting 29,854 Advanced Placement (AP) exams in 2010. Additionally, the percentage of AP exams taken by MCPS students that earned scores of 3 or higher (71.7 percent) was 12.1 and 15.9 percentage points higher than the percentages for public school students in Maryland (59.6 percent) and the nation (55.8 percent), respectively (Table 1). In general, MCPS students accounted for 32.8 percent of all AP exams taken by public school students in Maryland in 2010 and 39.4 percent of all AP exam scores of 3 or higher for the same group.

Table 1
2010 AP Exam Participation and Performance for
Public School Students in MCPS,
Maryland, and the Nation

Public School Students	2010 AP Exam Participation and Performance		
	N AP Exams Taken	N AP Exams 3 or Higher	% AP Exams 3 or Higher
MCPS	29,854	21,419	71.7
Maryland	91,145	54,300	59.6
Nation	2,743,994	1,530,351	55.8

Even as AP exam participation climbed to an historic high in 2010, MCPS students of all races and ethnicities set MCPS records for the number of AP exams that earned scores of 3 or higher (Table 2). Particularly noteworthy was the AP exam performance of African American students, with 1,527 exams earning scores of 3 or higher. The percentage of AP exams taken by African American students that earned scores of 3 or higher (46.1 percent) was 18.2 and 21.1 percentage points higher than the percentages for African American public school students in Maryland (27.9 percent) and the nation (25.0 percent), respectively (Table 2). Overall, African American and Hispanic students in MCPS accounted for 38.7 percent and 57.7 percent, respectively, of all AP exam scores of 3 or higher in 2010 compared with their peers in other Maryland public schools.

The AP exam performance of MCPS African American students accounted for nearly 40 percent of all 2010 AP exam scores of 3 or higher earned by African American public school students in Maryland even though MCPS African American students represent only about 10 percent of the Maryland public high school African American population.

Table 2
2010 AP Exam Participation and Performance for Public School Students in
MCPS, Maryland, and the Nation by Race/Ethnicity

	MCPS AP Exams			Maryland AP Exams			Nation AP Exams		
	<i>N</i> Taken in 2010	<i>N</i> 3 or Higher	% 3 or Higher	<i>N</i> Taken in 2010	<i>N</i> 3 or Higher	% 3 or Higher	<i>N</i> Taken in 2010	<i>N</i> 3 or Higher	% 3 or Higher
All Students	29,854	21,419	71.7	91,145	54,300	59.6	2,743,994	1,530,351	55.8
African Am.	3,309	1,527	46.1	14,122	3,942	27.9	196,902	49,172	25.0
Asian Am.	7,940	6,127	77.2	13,784	9,879	71.7	385,010	251,135	65.2
Hispanic	3,111	1,708	54.9	5,683	2,961	52.1	407,283	165,019	40.5
White	15,427	12,015	77.9	50,617	33,774	66.7	1,541,839	952,755	61.8

Note. "All Students" includes students who identified themselves as American Indian or multiracial and students who did not report their race/ethnicity. AP exam results are based on data reported by the College Board as of November 2010.

Also noteworthy was the performance of MCPS AP exam takers compared with their counterparts in Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) (Virginia), another of the largest and most diverse school districts in the nation (Table 3). The data show that MCPS and FCPS had virtually the same number of high school students taking AP exams in 2010—15,425 in MCPS and 15,439 in FCPS despite the fact that FCPS has about 7,500 more students in its high schools. As for results, in 2010, MCPS White and Asian American students exceeded those of their FCPS counterparts in the percentages of AP exams with scores of 3 or higher by 4.1 and 9.1 percentage points, respectively. MCPS African American and Hispanic students earned nearly twice as many AP exam scores of 3 or higher (3,235) as African American and Hispanic students in FCPS (1,626). In fact, MCPS had more scores of 3 or higher among its African American and Hispanic students than Fairfax had total tests taken among these two groups.

Table 3
2010 AP Exam Participation and Performance for Public School Students in
MCPS and Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) (Virginia) by Race/Ethnicity

	MCPS AP Exams			FCPS AP Exams		
	<i>N</i> Taken in 2010	<i>N</i> 3 or Higher	% 3 or Higher	<i>N</i> Taken in 2010	<i>N</i> 3 or Higher	% 3 or Higher
All Students	29,854	21,419	71.7	32,230	22,592	70.1
African American	3,309	1,527	46.1	1,279	609	47.6
Asian American	7,940	6,127	77.2	9,192	6,259	68.1
Hispanic	3,111	1,708	54.9	1,752	1,017	58.0
White	15,427	12,015	77.9	18,416	13,599	73.8

The positive trends in AP exam participation and performance provide evidence of the effectiveness of continuing MCPS' efforts to ensure inclusive and challenging curricular opportunities for students of all races and ethnicities and to prepare all students for college-level work. Our research for the classes of 2001–2004 showed that AP exam participation and performance is associated with a greater likelihood of four postsecondary outcomes: college readiness, college enrollment, college persistence, and college degree completion. The attached tables provide additional information for your review. Tables A1 to A6 provide data on exam taking and performance among groups of students enrolled in MCPS schools, and public school students in Maryland and the nation.

- Table A1 shows the number of AP exams taken and the number and percentage of exams that received scores of 3 or higher by race/ethnicity for MCPS students, and public school students in Maryland and the nation.
- Table A2 shows the number of AP exams taken and the number and percentage of exams that received scores of 3 or higher by MCPS high school and race/ethnicity.
- Tables A3 and A4 show the number of students who took one or more AP exams and the number and percentage of AP exam takers who earned at least one AP score of 3 or higher. Results for MCPS and each MCPS high school are disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, and participation in Free and Reduced-price Meals System, special education, and limited English proficiency services.
- Table A5 shows AP exam taking patterns for 2006 to 2010 disaggregated by the number of AP exams taken per MCPS student and race/ethnicity.
- Table A6 shows AP exam taking patterns in 2010 disaggregated by the number of AP exams taken per MCPS student and high school.

In 2010, the 20 AP exams taken most frequently by students in MCPS were as follows: English Language and Composition, English Literature and Composition, Computer Science A, Calculus AB, Calculus BC, Statistics, European History, Microeconomics, Macroeconomics, Human Geography, Psychology, U.S. Government and Politics, Government and Politics: Comparative, U.S. History, World History, Biology, Chemistry, Environmental Science, Physics, and Spanish Language.

Tables B1 to B22 provide 2010 AP data on student groups and high school participation, and performance by subject.

- Table B1 shows 2010 AP exam score distributions for each of the 20 most frequently taken AP exams for students in MCPS, and public school students in Maryland and the nation.
- Table B2 shows AP exam score distributions for each of the 20 most frequently taken AP exams for students in MCPS by year and race/ethnicity.

- Tables B3 to B22 show 2010 AP exam score distributions for each of the 20 most frequently taken AP exams for students in MCPS high schools.

If you have any questions about AP participation and performance data, please contact Dr. Renee A. Foose, associate superintendent, Office of Shared Accountability, at 301-279-3448.

JDW:cev

Attachment

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Executive Staff