



**For Immediate Release**      February 9, 2011

**Contact:**                      Charles Pyle, Director of Communications (804) 371-2420  
   Julie C. Grimes Communications Manager (804) 225-2775

## **Virginia Students Again Rank Third in Nation in Achievement on Advanced Placement Tests**

For a fourth consecutive year, Virginia students rank third in the nation in achievement on Advanced Placement (AP) tests. While the commonwealth's national ranking in the College Board's seventh annual AP Report to the Nation didn't change, the participation and performance of Virginia students in the college-level AP program again increased.

Nearly one in four of Virginia's 2010 public high school graduates demonstrated college-level achievement by earning a grade of three or better on at least one AP examination. Only two states, Maryland and New York, had higher percentages of high school seniors qualifying for college credit on the rigorous tests.

According to the College Board report, 23.7 percent of the commonwealth's 2010 high school seniors earned a grade of three or better on at least one AP exam, compared with 16.9 percent for public school students nationwide.

"Almost twice as many Virginia high school seniors now earn college credit on AP exams as took the tests ten years ago," said Superintendent of Public Instruction Patricia I. Wright. "Our students' increasing mastery of college-level studies testifies to the continued effectiveness of the Standards of Learning program and the commitment of Virginia educators to challenging students to higher levels of learning and achievement."

Last year, 19,162 Virginia seniors scored a three or higher on an AP exam at some point during their high school careers. This compares with 2001, when only 17,150 seniors took an AP exam and only 10,900 earned a score of three or higher.

While Virginia's ranking among the states did not change, the number of seniors taking AP tests again increased as did the percentage of students earning a grade of three or higher.

- 30,781 of Virginia's 2010 seniors took at least one AP exam, compared with 29,537 of 2009 graduates
- 23.7 percent of Virginia's 2010 seniors earned a qualifying score on at least one AP test, compared with 22.9 percent of 2009 graduates

According to the College Board, students who score a three or higher on AP exams typically have greater academic success in college and are more likely to graduate on time with a degree than comparable non-AP peers.

Virginia is one of 14 states that have eliminated the "equity and excellence" gap for Hispanic students, according to the College Board report. Hispanic students made up 6.8 percent of the class of 2010 and accounted for 6.9 percent of seniors earning a score of three or higher on at least one AP test.

*(more)*

The number of African-American seniors graduating from high school having taken an AP exam has more than doubled in the last five years. In 2005, 1,995 black high school seniors participated in AP exams compared with 3,842 in 2010 — an increase of more than 3 points, from 9.4 percent in 2005 to 12.5 percent in 2010. Additionally, the percentage of African-American seniors scoring a three or higher rose 1.7 points, from 5.2 percent in 2005 to 6.9 percent in 2010.

The number of low-income seniors participating in AP courses has more than doubled since 2006 (the first year that information was available), when 1,199 took one or more AP exams in high school compared with 2,478 in 2010.

Virginia students may substitute AP examinations for end-of-course SOL tests in the same subject areas. Enrollment in AP courses is among the criteria for recognition under the Virginia Index of Performance awards program created by the Board of Education to encourage advanced learning and achievement. Virginia also promotes AP participation through the Early College Scholars initiative and the Virtual Virginia online-learning program, and uses federal grant money to subsidize test fees for low-income students.

Wright praised the contribution of the commonwealth's affiliate of the National Math and Science Initiative (NMSI) in increasing AP achievement during 2010. The Virginia NMSI affiliate provided training and support for teachers and incentives for students in 25 high schools with traditionally low participation rates. Last year, 2,791 seniors in the participating schools earned a grade of three or better on at least one AP test.

The schools are as follows:

- Amelia County — Amelia County High
- Bedford County — Jefferson Forest High, Liberty High and Staunton River High
- Buena Vista — Parry McCluer High
- Charlotte County — Randolph Henry High
- Chesterfield County — Cosby High, LC Byrd High, Matoaca High and Monacan High
- Franklin County — Franklin County High
- Halifax County — Halifax County High
- Henrico County — Deep Run High, Hermitage High, JR Tucker High and Varina High
- Martinsville — Martinsville High
- Pittsylvania County — Gretna High
- Prince Edward County — Prince Edward County High
- Richmond — Richmond Community High and Thomas Jefferson High
- Roanoke — Patrick Henry High
- Smyth County — Marion Senior High
- Washington County — Patrick Henry High
- Roanoke Valley Governor's School

U.S. Government and Politics was the most popular AP course among Virginia's 2010 seniors, followed by U.S. History, English Language and Composition, English Literature and Composition, Psychology, Calculus AB, World History, Statistics, Environmental Science and Biology.

###