

BUY  
PHOTO  
REPRINTS  
ONLINE



**Many Hands**  
NEW ENGLAND'S MAGAZINE FOR HOLISTIC HEALTH

SERVICES DIRECTORY  
HOLISTIC NEWS AND REVIEWS  
COMMUNITY CALENDAR  
ALTERNATIVE CLASSIFIEDS

SUBSCRIBE TO  
THE GAZETTE  
ONLINE  
OR IN PRINT

**GAZETTENET.com**

Daily Hampshire Gazette - Established 1786

Amherst Bulletin

The Recorder

Valley Advocate

Pioneer Valley

Many Hands

Hampshire Life

Sign out

Account

Trouble finding something?

Contact us

Classifieds

news search

Local News State/Region U.S./World Obituaries Sports Business Schools Colleges Politics Opinion Entertainment Health Living Sci/Tech

## Northampton High AP scores spur regional interest

By CATHERINE BAUM  
Staff Writer

Email this page Printer-friendly version

Tuesday, September 15, 2009

**NORTHAMPTON** - Northampton High School leads the region in Advanced Placement test results with a 59 percent increase in the number of AP students who qualified for college credit from last year - nearly 17 times the overall state average.

AP classes completed in high school are eligible for college credit on the condition a student passes the exam for any given AP subject.

"We have a lot of reasons to be proud of Northampton," Mayor Clare Higgins said Monday morning at a kickoff event for the Advanced Placement program at the high school.

Others in attendance Monday praised Northampton students for their confidence in themselves and Northampton teachers for their confidence in their students.

"There is a confidence and a competence in Northampton that you just don't find everywhere," said Charlotte Carlisle, math director for Mass Math and Science Initiative, a division of the Mass Insight Education & Research Institute. The boost in performance is widely credited to the initiative's AP Training and Awards Program, in which Northampton is taking part for the second year.

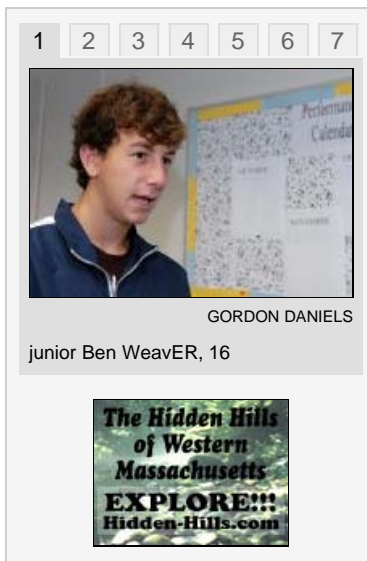
And this year, Easthampton High School will work with Northampton High School in the initiative, which provides teachers with training and expands AP offerings. Easthampton High offered AP calculus and U.S. history last year, and with the new grant in hand, the school has added AP chemistry, Grade 11 AP English and Grade 12 AP English this year.

Enrollment in the Advanced Placement program at Easthampton High is up from 12 seats last year to 63 seats this year. That number represents the number of seats combined in advanced placement offerings, not the number of students, because some students take multiple AP classes.

John Smolenski, director of advising for the initiative, said the program plans to add AP statistics and AP biology to Easthampton High School in the future.

"We think that Easthampton kids are fully capable of doing these courses and they just haven't had that opportunity because not all of the courses are running," Smolenski said. "The results in Easthampton should be similar to the results in Northampton."

In Northampton, participation in the high school's eight AP classes increased from 236 seats to 413 seats. Northampton High School is expected to have a two-year enrollment growth of 75 percent and adds two new sections of AP statistics this year. The trend of students taking up AP classes is increasing, with 53 percent of the entire junior and senior student body enrolled in AP English. Smolenski believes the Advanced Placement program can reach many more students.



### Popular stories

- Midday crash injures two in Northampton
- Surviving tragedy: The death of a child is the ultimate test for families
- City eyes 60-acre farm for sale in Florence
- 3 arrested after Northampton vehicle fire
- Teenager faces charges from July dash in front of Amtrak train

Students seem to think more of their peers will jump on the AP bandwagon, too. Ben Weaver, 16, a junior at Northampton High, said he enrolled in AP modern European history last year because he wanted to challenge himself. An aspiring pre-med student, Weaver took on AP English and AP biology this year. While AP classes often entail difficult concepts, heavy homework and a lot of memorization, Weaver said, one common thread throughout them all is student support for success.

"We're a really close-knit community," Weaver said. "As a community, we drive each other."

Meanwhile, Northampton teachers will lead and support Easthampton teachers this school year, Smolenski said. Because the initiative crosses school district boundaries, it provides teachers with a variety of options in terms of opportunity for growth in subject instruction, he added.

"In most schools, there's only one AP calculus teacher," Smolenski said. "Where do they talk to other AP teachers? They can go on College Board's Web site and read blogs, but now you have teachers from the district next door that have been doing this, that have a proven track record of getting the kids to the finish line. The teacher is not an island - they have a support system."

In periodic meetings and frequent phone conversations, Northampton and Easthampton teachers will share supplies and discuss ideas related to education style, techniques and teaching methods to take back to the classroom, teachers say. Middle and high school teachers in the neighboring school districts will gather four times a year in teams to focus on consistency in middle and high school instruction.

"It's allowing us to mix and meet schools we normally wouldn't and compare notes," said Paul Marcinek, AP calculus teacher at Northampton High School.

The initiative provides teachers with training and classrooms with resources the school wouldn't otherwise be able to afford, Marcinek said. Each professional development session, Marcinek noted, is "completely different," whether the focus is hands-on student activities or strong content-based instruction.

Meanwhile, students have access to three Saturday sessions with a focus on their subjects at local universities. Student taking three AP classes may take up to nine Saturday sessions - three in each subject - to prepare them for the Advanced Placement exam at the end of the school year. Professors are available during the sessions, which give students exposure to the college campus, admissions department and dining areas. Last year, Northampton High School students went to UMass Amherst for Saturday sessions.

Easthampton is one of 12 high schools to join the program this year. The Mass Math & Science Initiative hopes to add more Hampshire County schools to its AP program next year, Smolenski said. The initiative was awarded a \$13.2 million grant in 2007 from the National Math & Science Initiative, primarily funded by ExxonMobil, the Gates Foundation and the Dell Foundation. The initiative's long-term goal is to reach full-program implementation in 90 high schools - benefiting 1,200 teachers and 37,000 students - by 2013.

In the end, the program shows students "taking rigorous courses in high school can impact their ability to do well in college freshman year," Smolenski said.

Catherine Baum can be reached at [cbaum@gazettenet.com](mailto:cbaum@gazettenet.com).

---

Filed Under: [easthampton](#) [local](#) [news](#) [northampton](#) [schools](#)

---

## Comments

---

### Post new comment

**Your name:**

[Catherine Baum](#)

**Subject:**

**Comment: \***

---

### Input format

#### Filtered HTML

- Web page addresses and e-mail addresses turn into links automatically.
- Allowed HTML tags: <a> <b> <i> <strong> <em> <code> <cite> <ul> <ol> <li> <img> <div>
- Lines and paragraphs break automatically.

#### Full HTML

- Web page addresses and e-mail addresses turn into links automatically.
- Lines and paragraphs break automatically.

[More information about formatting options](#)



[Local News](#) | [State/Region](#) | [U.S./World](#) | [Obituaries](#) | [Sports](#) | [Business](#) | [Schools](#) | [Colleges](#) | [Politics](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Health](#) | [Living](#) | [Sci/Tech](#) | [Blogs](#)

[Copyright Notice](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Help Center](#) | [FAQ](#) | [Subscribe to the Gazette](#) | [Advertising](#)

Daily Hampshire Gazette © 2008 All rights reserved