

February 2012

Expanding Underserved Students Taking AP Courses

MMSI successful in involving more students in Advanced Placement (AP) courses

The Massachusetts economy requires more high school students taking rigorous courses in math and science to increase their interest in the subjects and better prepare them to be successful in these fields at the college level. Equally important is that access to these challenging courses be expanded to Black, Hispanic and female students and students from low-income families to reduce the achievement and access gaps that persists. Massachusetts ranks 48th in closing the AP performance gap for Hispanic/Latino students and 17th for Black/African-American students. One program that is demonstrating success in this area is the Mass Math + Science Initiative (MMSI) developed and managed by the nonprofit organization [Mass Insight](#).

MMSI was initiated in 2008 and now is operating in 53 high schools in SY2011-2012. In SY2010-2011, MMSI was active in 45 high schools which represented 15% of all Juniors and Seniors in the state. Of the increase in students earning college credit eligible scores (3/4/5) on AP exams in math, science and English last year, MMSI schools produced:

- 30% of the increase for all students
- 51% for Black and Hispanic students
- 70% for low income students

The MMSI Program

MMSI creates a culture of high expectations and increased participation in AP courses, especially among underserved populations to prepare students for college and career success

in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Key MMSI features are:

- Teachers receive up to 72 hours of training per year with ongoing support
- Students receive a minimum of 18 hours of extra instruction and support through three Saturday study sessions.
- Teachers and students receive cash rewards for qualifying scores on exams.

The MMSI students receive awards of \$100 for scoring 3 or more on each AP test taken. Teachers receive cash awards tied to the number of students in their classes receiving qualifying scores. Funding models for teachers may differ depending on the school situation.

Financial support for this AP initiative started primarily with national foundations but a growing share now comes from Massachusetts foundations and companies such as State Street Corporation, Partners Healthcare, John Hancock, Verizon and Thermo Fisher Scientific.

Boston's Participation

The MMSI program's first year of operation was 2008 and Boston's O'Bryant School of Math & Science was one of the first eight schools to participate. Five Boston high schools joined the program in SY2010-2011 and one more signed on this year. Of Boston's 27 high schools, seven are now participating in the MMSI program.

Next month - Boston's experience with MMSI.