



Somerville Public Schools

Education • Inspiration • Excellence

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 3, 2017

Contact: Susana H. Morgan -- smorgan@k12.somerville.ma.us; (617) 629-5221

Melanie Kessler, College & Career Readiness Director – mkessler@k12.somerville.ma.us

Expanded Access and Support Leads to Impressive Increase in Somerville Public Schools AP Enrollment and Success

Somerville High School AP enrollment more than doubles in two years

Somerville, MA – After implementing a campaign encouraging students to meet with their counselors to consider taking an Advanced Placement (AP) course, Somerville Public Schools saw the number of its students enrolled in AP classes increase by more than 50% in just one year. With nearly three-quarters of the district’s students qualifying for free and reduced-price meals, Somerville also committed to covering 85-95% of the cost of AP Exams, with help from the national nonprofit [Mass Insight Education](#) (MIE). Now in their second year of partnering to increase student participation in AP science, math, and English classes, MIE and Somerville High School are expanding access and opportunities for success.

Superintendent of Schools Mary Skipper attributes the success to a simple formula of student empowerment and consistent support. “The secret to our growth is that we encouraged students to push themselves and also helped them determine which courses were right for them,” she stated. “But our success just wouldn’t be possible without our counselors and dedicated AP teachers, who work so hard to help all students in Somerville reach their potential.”

“By expanding access to all Somerville High School students, more are enjoying the benefits of AP classes, including the confidence to embrace the AP challenge and the resulting greater understanding of the expectations of college,” commented School Committee Chair, Laura Pitone. “This is one of the targeted ways SPS is striving to increase future opportunities for all our students.”

“It is a testament to the Somerville Public School District, its staff, and in particular its teachers that with one small change, they have positively impacted the lives and enriched the futures of so many of our students,” said Mayor Joseph A. Curtatone. “Somerville has been a leader among urban districts in MCAS growth, and that AP class enrollment grew by 50% in just one school year clearly indicates how committed our District and teachers are to ensuring that Somerville’s students have every tool possible in order to succeed.”

Since 2012, both the total number of Somerville High School students taking an AP course and the number of AP courses in which students are enrolled have steadily increased. In 2016, 225 students – about 15% of the SHS student population – were enrolled in a total of 597 AP courses, an increase of more than double in two years. Also on the rise is the percentage of AP exams that SHS students are taking. Of the 597 exams that could have been taken in 2016, 589 were taken (99%). From 2012 to 2016, the number of AP exams taken by Somerville High students more than tripled, providing greater opportunities for students to gain college credit, take more advanced courses in college, and have the experience of a college-level exam. While the percentage of SHS students scoring 3.0 or higher on an AP exam has decreased in the last two years as the number of AP exams taken has more than doubled, it remains consistent with the global percentage (58.2 vs. 60.2). The number of SHS students with scores of 3.0 or higher on an AP exam has increased each year and nearly doubled since 2012. The SHS mean scores for several subjects remain above the national mean.

Among the benefits of AP courses noted in a recent news release by the [College Board](#), are the development of skills that students will need for college and the potential cost- and time-savings gained by earning college



credit. They also cite [research](#) which shows that students who succeed on AP Exams are more likely to earn higher GPAs in college, take more classes in their discipline, and graduate college on time.

Somerville High School students will have more opportunities to participate in AP courses as the SHS AP menu and student supports continue to expand. This year, SHS students had 16 AP courses from which to choose, including AP Italian Language and Culture, which was offered for the first time in 2016-2017. A potential new AP course in the coming year is AP French Language and Culture. Somerville High School will continue to partner with MIE with the goal of providing access to rigorous AP courses for all students, and will look for ways to mirror services for Social Studies and World Language AP courses that MIE provides for English, math and science AP courses.

##