

# HIGH SCHOOL ACADEMIC PREPARATION AND COLLEGE READINESS

## KEY POINTS IN THIS SECTION

- High school graduation rates for all racial and ethnic groups increased from 2014 to 2015.
- The high school graduation rate for English language learners and students eligible for free/reduced priced lunch were 19 and 15 percentage points lower than the state graduates respectively, highlighting significant achievement gaps that exist within education.
- The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) results in both Grade 10 reading and Grade 11 math highlight large achievement differences for students of color and students from low income families as indicated by free reduced priced lunch eligibility.
- After 10 years in first place, ACT test-takers in Minnesota no longer posted the highest composite scores in the country.

Higher education institutions are the major post-high school education and training pathway in the state. As such, higher education is impacted in part by the preparation level of high school graduates entering the state's colleges and universities. Students completing more rigorous courses in core academic subjects in high school consistently have higher high school graduation rates, score higher on standardized tests and college entrance assessments, and are more likely to be successful in college.

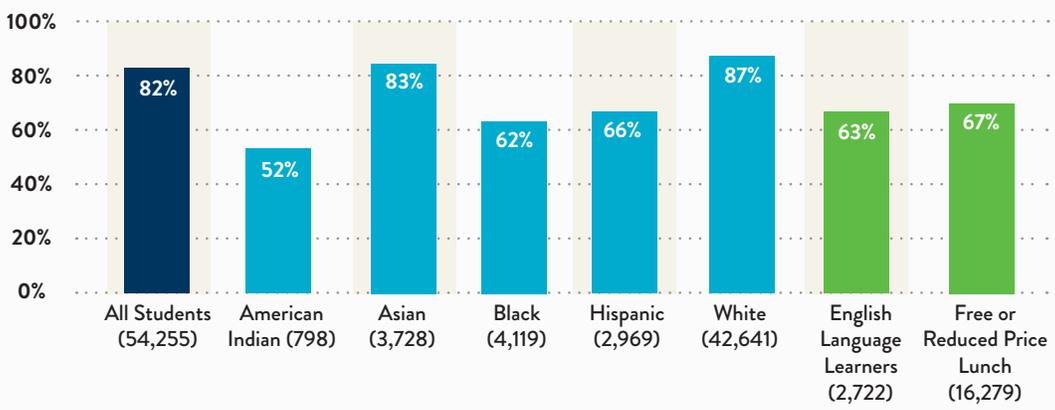
Graduating high school is key to future educational achievement. Minnesota public high school graduation rates were 82 percent in 2015, and have increased each year since 2010. According to the Minnesota Department of Education, graduation rate gaps between White

students and students of color throughout the state have been closing.

### Since 2011 Graduation Rates Have:

- Increased 8 percentage points for American Indian students.
- Increased 16 percentage points for Black students.
- Increased 18 percentage points for Hispanic students.
- Trended upward with nearly every student group, including special education and students in poverty.

Minnesota Public High School 4-Year Graduation Rates Vary by Race/Ethnicity, 2015



SOURCE: Minnesota Department of Education



**DATA SUGGESTS**  
 Graduating high school is key to future educational achievement.

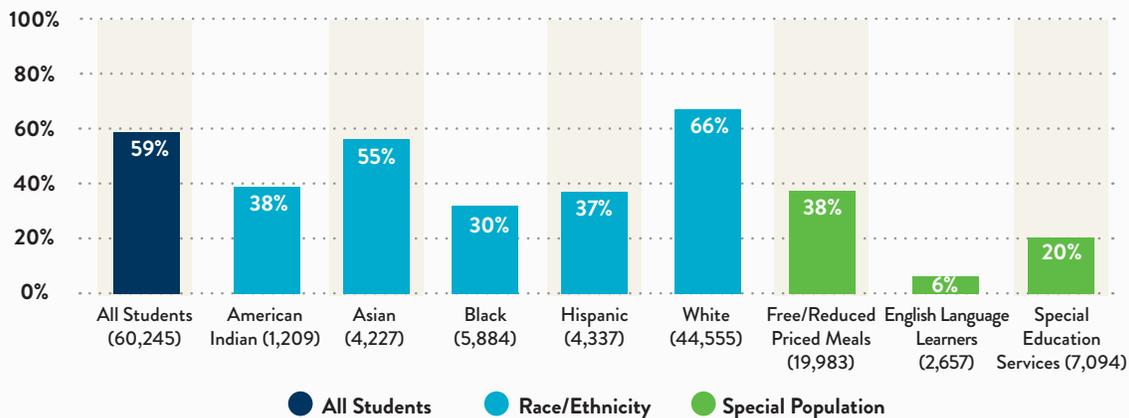
**Measures of Academic Preparation**

In Minnesota there is no one measure of college or career readiness. This report provides several measures to assess academic results of Minnesota high school students: the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA), Advanced Placement test scores and ACT test results.

Within public schools, the **Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA)** measure student progress toward Minnesota’s academic standards for K-12 education. All public school students in grades three through eight take reading and mathematics assessments. Students in grade 10 take reading assessments, and students in grade 11 take mathematics assessments.

The statewide MCA results of public high school students in 2016 indicated 59 percent met the reading proficiency standard set by the Minnesota Department of Education and 47 percent met the math standards. The results in both reading and math showed large achievement differences for students of color and students from low income families as indicated by free/reduced priced lunch eligibility.

**Grade 10 Reading Proficiency Varies by Race/Ethnicity and Special Populations**  
 Percent of Minnesota public high school students proficient on reading Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment, 2016

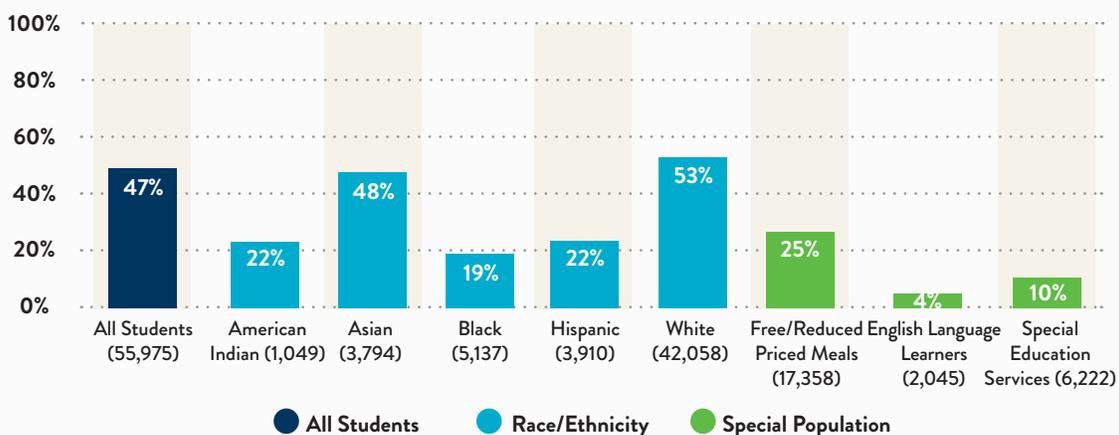


SOURCE: Minnesota Department of Education



**DATA SUGGESTS**  
 Too few students from special populations are attaining proficiency.

**Grade 11 Math Proficiency Varies by Race/Ethnicity and Special Populations**  
 Percent of Minnesota public high school students proficient on math Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment, 2016



SOURCE: Minnesota Department of Education

## Are Minnesota High School Graduates College-Ready?

### ACT COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAM

Results from the ACT college entrance exam provide another indicator of Minnesota high school students' college and career readiness. In Minnesota, the most commonly taken standardized college entrance exam is the ACT.

An estimated 100 percent of Minnesota's 2016 high school graduating class took the assessment.

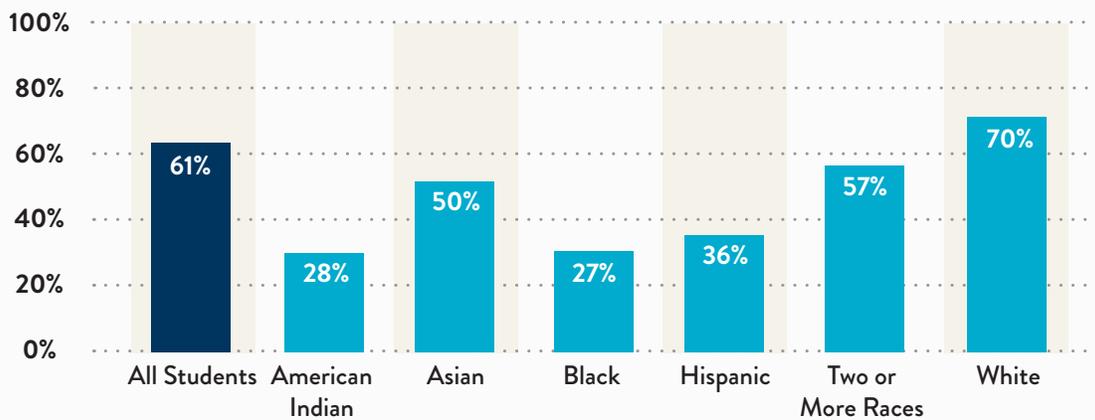


**Minnesota's average composite score of 21.1 was higher than the nation and first among the 18 states in which all college-bound students took the test in 2016.**

The national composite score was 20.8.

While Minnesota had the highest average composite score in the nation, a significant proportion of high school graduates were not prepared for college-level work after high school graduation, according to ACT. ACT developed college readiness benchmarks in each of the four testing areas of its college entrance exams. Based on ACT research, these benchmarks define the score needed to have a 75 percent chance of earning a grade of "C" or better in related college-level courses. Twenty-nine percent of Minnesota's ACT test-takers were academically prepared to succeed in all four subject areas: college-level English, algebra, social science and biology. Minnesota students of color were less college-ready overall than White students, which echoes the achievement gaps seen in high school graduation rates, MCA scores and AP test results.

English College-Readiness of ACT Test-Takers Varies by Race/Ethnicity, 2016



SOURCE: ACT



### DATA SUGGESTS

Not enough Minnesota test takers are academically prepared in basic subject areas.

## Earning College Credit While in High School

Minnesota students have access to a wide variety of college preparatory or dual credit courses. Minnesota high school students can earn college credit while still in high school in a number of ways: Advanced Placement, concurrent enrollment, Postsecondary Enrollment Options and other high school-college agreements. Also the International Baccalaureate (IB) two-year pre-college diploma offered in 20 Minnesota high schools helps prepare students for higher education in the United States and overseas.

### ADVANCED PLACEMENT

A College Board program offering high school students the opportunity to take rigorous, college-level courses and earn college credit while in high school.

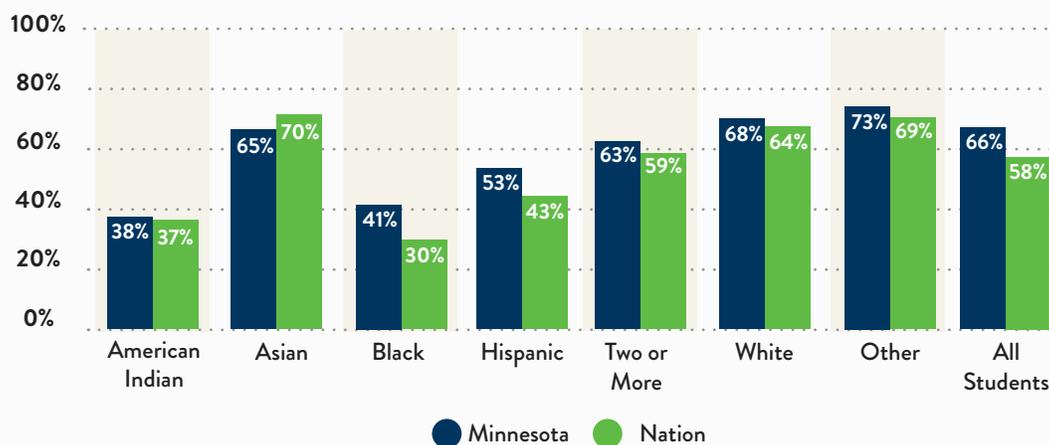
## ADVANCED PLACEMENT (AP)

Not all Minnesota high school students participate in programs; however, the Minnesota Department of Education has provided high schools with supplemental funding to support the delivery of AP courses and reimburse the cost of AP exams for students from lower-income backgrounds.

During the 2015-2016 school year, 43,780 Minnesota high school students took 71,136 AP examinations in 34 subjects. This marks a two percent increase in the number of students taking AP exams and a less than one percent increase in the number of subject exams taken. Although participation has increased across racial/ethnic groups, students of color still take AP exams at lower rates than their White peers.

Adequate performance on AP exams is indicated by receiving a score of 3 to 5, which is considered to be an indicator of students' ability to successfully perform college-level work. Some Minnesota colleges and universities offer college credit for scores 3 to 5. Minnesota AP test-takers received scores 3 to 5 on 46,866 exams or 66 percent of the total.

AP Participation by Race/Ethnicity in Minnesota 2016



SOURCE: College Board

\*An AP score of at least 3, on a scale of 1 to 5, is an indicator of ability to successfully perform work at most colleges

## DUAL CREDIT VIA POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT OPTIONS & CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT

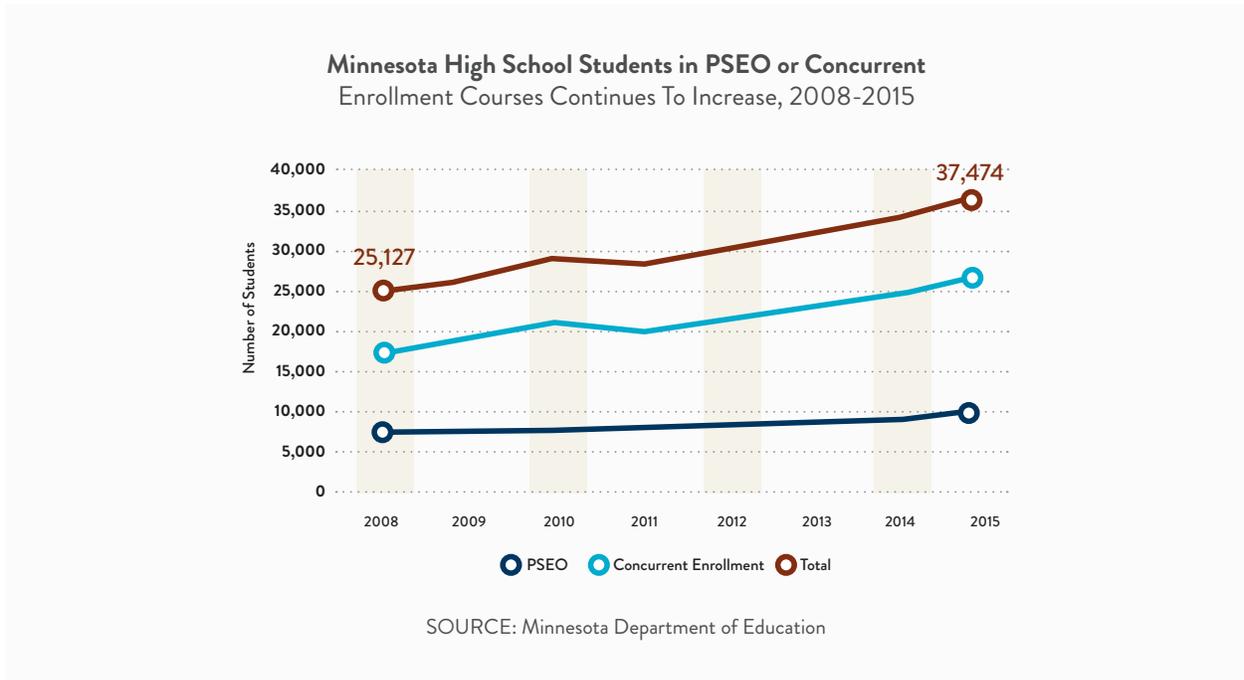
Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) allow high school juniors and seniors in Minnesota to enroll in college-level courses while still in high school. Legislation (Minn. Stat. § 124D.09) was passed in 2012 allowing eligible grade 10 students to enroll in Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses as identified by the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System.

High school students can participate in PSEO by taking courses taught by a college instructor either physically at a postsecondary institution or through online courses offered by a college

or university. PSEO provides students with a wide variety of college-level course offerings and the opportunity to experience challenging coursework in a college environment.

By contrast, concurrent enrollment courses are a college or university course offered through a secondary school and taught by a high school teacher. The number of high school students enrolled in college-level courses through PSEO or concurrent enrollment has increased from 25,127 to 37,474 in the past eight years.

In addition to PSEO and concurrent enrollment, a high school may enter into an agreement with a college to provide additional dual credits courses. Little is known about the number of courses offered in this manner.



**DATA SUGGESTS**  
Dual credit enrollment has nearly doubled in eight years.