

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

February flew by, and now it's time to order the AP exams. We anticipate that the 31 AAIMS schools will give over 8,400 AP math, science, and English exams this spring.

February was an eventful month, and March has been equally eventful. Two of our Grant Coordinators received awards; one of our Lead Teachers received an award; we hosted the Mock Reading in English, the two-day AP math conference, and 23 Saturday Study sessions all over the state. During these two months we have hosted 43 Saturday Study sessions throughout the state. All of this has occurred as schools have dealt with snow and make-up days.



I have spent quite a bit of my time at the Capitol sitting in the House and Senate Education Committee meetings. I've talked to many folks over the last few weeks, and they all want to know about the AAIMS program, the schools, and their success. It's good to talk about the great things that you are doing.

I appreciate your support as I looked for ways to find the required matching funds. You have been very helpful and supportive.

Sincerely,

Tommie S. Anthony

AAIMS President

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## ENGLISH MOCK READING HELD IN LITTLE ROCK

Commissioner

Seventy-Six AP English Teachers participated in the AP English Mock Reading at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Little Rock. Despite the approach of the first snow storm, the teachers scored 12,945 AP Literature and Language essays written by the 4,315 students in the 31 AAIMS schools. Students took a released AP exam. Part of the Multiple Choice section and 1 essay were given as part of the first semester exam in all schools, and the other two essays were written in early January. AP exam readers and exam table leaders trained the AAIMS teachers to use the actual rubric used by the Educational testing Service to score the exams. Question Leaders back-read exams to insure that exams were being scored accurately.

Teachers reported that the training to become readers of the exams was some of the best professional development they had ever experienced. Teachers will take the exams back and share the results with each student.



AP Literature & Comp Teachers, Barbara Gaulin-Prairie Grove, and Mary Margaret Gray-HarBer High School, observe as AP Lit Consultant, Mary Pruitt, deconstructs the Mock AP Lit Exam with their students at the final Student Study Session before the May exam. Springdale High School,

Saturday, March 12, 2011.

### AAIMS PARTNERS

Thanks to the many generous supporters and partners of AAIMS:

**National Math and Science Initiative  
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### SCHOOLS APPLY TO BECOME AAIMS COHORT 4

### AAIMS STAFF

On February 23, AAIMS conducted a meeting for high schools interested in becoming AAIMS schools. Twenty-one high schools were represented at the meeting. Tommie Sue Anthony, President of AAIMS informed the schools that the AAIMS grant could provide for half of the program cost for the year of 2011-12, twenty-five percent of the program cost in 2012-13 and none of the cost in 2013-14. She told schools that if they wished to become a part of AAIMS that each school would be required to provide the balance of the cost of the program for each year. Ten schools have applied to become a part of AAIMS. They will be visited by AAIMS and NMSI staff to determine if the school qualifies to become a part of the AAIMS program. The ten schools are: Beebe, Bryant, Camden-Fairview, Centerpoint, Dover, Earl, Forrest City, McGhee, Star City, and Texarkana.

Additionally, the National Math and Science Initiative has informed AAIMS that North Pulaski High School may be fully funded as an AAIMS school by the Department of Defense.

**Tommie Sue Anthony**  
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## AP CALCULUS TEACHER WINS AWARD

Lura Sandlin , the AP Calculus teacher and Lead Math teacher at Dumas High School, has been selected by the Mathematics Association of America as the Secondary High School Teacher of the Year for the Arkansas/Oklahoma Region. She will receive her award on April 1 at the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond Oklahoma. AAIMS is very proud of Lura.

## NORTHSIDE COUNSELOR RECEIVES AP AWARD

Colleen Adkins, Northside High School Counselor, has been named the winner of the 2011 Southwestern Region Advanced Placement Award. The prestigious award recognizes an individual who has demonstrated long-term and multifaceted involvement with the Advanced Placement (AP) program.

Adkins, who serves as the school's AP and AAIMS Coordinator, has been instrumental in increasing the number of students enrolled in AP courses. "Colleen's commitment to the AAIMS initiative at Northside has been monumental," said Principal Jim Garvey. "Her leadership during this process to challenge our students to make the leap to Advanced Placement has been pivotal to the continued success of our advanced programs. She is most deserving of this recognition and we all appreciate her efforts."



In 2010, Northside was recognized for demonstrating the highest percentage gain in students passing the AP exam in the nation. "The success of the Advanced Placement Program at Northside High School is due in large part to the organizational and leadership skills of Colleen Adkins," said Martin Mahan, FSPS Director of Secondary Education. "Her commitment, work ethic and passion for student success provided the foundation for creating and embracing a culture of high expectations."

Adkins will be honored at a ceremony during the College Board's Southwestern Regional Forum in February.

## PRESIDENT ANTHONY RECEIVED AWARD FROM THE COLLEGE BOARD

Tommie Sue Anthony was awarded the Southwest Region of The College Board's Academic Assembly Excellence in Service Award at the region's annual Forum held in Austin, Texas in February. The award recognizes educators who have been exemplary in their advocacy for universal standards of learning. In 2007, the region named Tommie Sue as the first recipient of the Martha H. Salmon Leadership Award for service and leadership at the regional and national levels for access, equity and opportunity to advanced levels of learning for all students.

The Southwest Region of The College Board includes Arkansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas.

## SHEPHERD NAMED NATIONAL ASSISTANT HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR

San Francisco, CA - Michael R. Shepherd, assistant principal of Springdale (AR) Har-Ber High School, has been named the 2011 NASSP/Virco National Assistant Principal of the Year.

A lifelong learner, Shepherd strives for excellence in all that he does and demands the same rigor and dedication from his students and teachers.



To keep his own professional development up to speed, Shepherd recently earned a licensure endorsement in English as a Second Language to help meet the needs of the district's 8,000 English language learners. He also renewed his certification as a National Board Certified teacher to demonstrate his commitment to the teaching process.

"Dr. Shepherd has professional as well as personal standards which far exceed those normally set by others," said Aaron Harris, a fellow assistant principal at Springdale Har-Ber. "[He] is a man of conviction, who never allows barriers in his service to students, parents, or colleagues."

One such example is evident in Shepherd's role as Springdale Har-Ber's AP coordinator. To improve the program, Shepherd helped secure funding to support a lead teacher for the advanced math, English, and science courses. He also opened AP classes to all students and encouraged as many as possible to participate. Since becoming the coordinator, AP participation has jumped from 298 students in 2007 to 663 students in 2010. Minority participation also increased by 40%. In addition, Shepherd led an initiative with the University of Central Arkansas to allow students to earn college credit, free of cost, by completing certain AP courses.

Seeking opportunities wherever they exist, Shepherd has also helped improve the school's technology offerings by obtaining

funding to equip a resources room with 30 laptops, wireless Internet access, and projection units.

NASSP and school furniture manufacturer Virco Inc. annually honor a winner from each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA) schools. Selection criteria are built around collaborative leadership; curriculum, instruction, and assessment; and school personalization-the core areas of the NASSP Breaking Ranks school improvement framework. Three finalists were selected from the pool of state winners, from which Shepherd was identified as the national winner. Each finalist will receive \$1,500 and Shepherd will be awarded \$5,000, which can be used for personal professional development or for a school improvement project.

## LEGISLATIVE NOTEPAD ARTICLE

### Is the Glass Half Empty or Half Full?

There are usually at least two sides to every story or issue. How data regarding performance on most measures are interpreted or how the total picture is viewed will shape how we define success...or failure. The recently reported results on Advanced Placement (AP)<sup>®</sup> tests are good examples of this phenomenon. The General Assembly mandated that all Arkansas high schools offer at least four AP classes when it passed Act 102 in 2003, and since AP testing is required for enhanced grade weights, the issue merits our thoughtful analysis.

For example, a *Wall Street Journal* headline laments the fact that AP test performance has declined. The *WSJ* and most other analysts define success on the College Board AP tests as scoring 3, 4 or 5 on the AP scoring scale of 1-5. This is also the level usually required by institutions of higher education to award college credit for AP classes taken in high school. What the *WSJ* might have missed is the fact that the number of AP test takers nationwide has almost doubled since 2001. Of course there was a decline in the percentage of students who scored 3-5 as the test taking group became less selective.

Locally, the *Arkansas Democrat Gazette* reported that "More in State Take AP Tests, but scores lag US" and correctly noted even more dramatic growth in the number of test takers--actually a 355% increase--with an increase in 3-5 scores of only 205%. The 2003 legislation has definitely had its effect and is getting results as students who might not have had AP opportunities previously are taking the rigorous curriculum. But...the new test takers are not scoring high enough.

What should our analysis tell us? First, the goal of making the standardized and rigorous AP curriculum available has been met. Second, Arkansas students who would have never before been encouraged to enroll in AP classes are studying a more challenging curriculum. Common practice in many schools of the past was to encourage only those students thought to possess the exceptional academic talents which would give

them ready success to pursue AP classes. In many cases this encouragement did not extend to minority students or those from less affluent backgrounds. These very students frequently do not have parents who help them chart a rigorous course toward college enrollment. They were losing on both counts.

Even better evidence of how AP classes change adult and student behavior is seen in the results from the Arkansas Advanced Initiative for Math and Science (AAIMS) which now involves 31 Arkansas high schools. AAIMS is supported by the National Math and Science Initiative with major support from Exxon Mobil, the Gates Foundation and the Dell Foundation. Arkansas partners are the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, the Walton Family Foundation, the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation and the Arkansas Department of Education. The participating schools pledged to significantly increase AP participation in Math, Science and English while also providing teacher training, incentives for performance and increasing the number of 3-5 student scores. The data since 2008 are dramatic indeed.

AAIMS schools raced forward as they accounted for 71% of the state's increase in test takers and 64% of the state's increase in scores of 3-5 during 2009-2010. The results for minority students were even more impressive as 75% of Arkansas' increase in minority scores of 3-5 was from AAIMS schools. All the while, AAIMS schools represent only eight percent of Arkansas' public high schools. These schools have proven that focus by educators and students as well as high expectations get results.

As Governor Beebe and members of the Arkansas General Assembly study ways to advance Arkansas from its abysmal ranking in the percentage of adult citizens who hold college degrees and lament the levels of entering college students who require costly remedial courses, a solution may lie in investing in an enhanced AP curriculum. The 2003 mandate was a good start. Challenge Scholarships are another positive component. Increased rigor for those who are planning college attendance is the logical next step. Students who previously would not have considered college, but who scored below a 3 on the AP exam are decidedly better prepared than had they not pursued the AP curriculum. The students and Arkansas still win.

Funding school programs involves choices. Targeted remediation for poverty laden schools is important. Equally important to reverse decades of low postsecondary education attainment is a focused and rigorous Advanced Placement curriculum. Resources invested in this arena can yield great results which will address college readiness, college completion and economic development with high skill jobs simultaneously.

Is the glass half empty or half full? You can decide. However, the data show that the glass is filling rapidly with AAIMS schools leading the way.

-Benny Gooden

Ft. Smith Public Schools

## 2010 ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AP REPORT

LITTLE ROCK: Today, the College Board announced in its 2010 AP Report to the Nation that approximately one third of the 10,635 students in Arkansas's class of 2010 taking Advanced Placement (AP) examinations scored a three or higher on a five-point scale. Once again, Arkansas's percentage of graduating students who take the exam - 34 percent - is higher than the national average of 28.3 percent.

Twelve point five (12.5) percent of Arkansas's graduating seniors scored a three or higher, up from 11 percent in 2009. "The increase in students scoring well in Arkansas is great news, but the scores alone are not what's important," said Arkansas Education Commissioner Tom Kimbrell. "It's about more students taking AP and other rigorous courses. Students who take a more rigorous course of study are better prepared for the reality of college and career expectations. They develop a stamina for work and rigor - a critical piece for student success."

Arkansas has focused on expanding access to Advanced Placement courses and the subsequent examinations. Through on-going professional development, the state is shifting the emphasis to increasing performance as well as access. In addition, the Arkansas Advanced Initiative for Math and Science program, which is operating with a \$13.2 million grant through the National Math and Science Initiative, is working with participating high schools throughout the state to increase both participation and scores, especially in the areas of math, science and English.

All information from the College Board regarding the 2010 AP Report to the Nation can be found online at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com).