

HAMILTON TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Superintendent

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Hamilton Township School District Celebrates Advanced Placement Growth

When it comes to Advanced Placement participation, students in the Hamilton Township School District (HTSD) upped their game significantly over the last four years. The New Jersey Department of Education recently released the *Advanced Placement (AP) Four-Year Growth Statistics* for the years 2016 to 2019. HTSD had a 191% increase in the number of exams taken since 2016. This represents the highest percentage increase in Mercer County. Last year, approximately 1 in 5 of the district's high school students took at least 1 AP course and exam.

The district's growth in the number of exams taken is in the top 1% of the state.

Superintendent Scott Rocco, Ed.D. attributes this soaring growth to a number of factors.

First, the district has dedicated funds for professional development. AP teachers have attended programs yearly to keep the curriculum fresh and current with AP expectations.

Second, in the past, many students would take AP classes, but decline to take the exam. For some, that was a financial consideration. Consequently, the district covers the cost of the exam for students in AP classes. This resulted in students making a serious commitment to take the AP exam, not just the class.

And, third, Dr. Rocco pointed to the efforts of the Curriculum and Instruction Department. Director Anthony Scotto designed *AP Potential Assemblies*, in which Curriculum Supervisors and AP teachers presented to all three high schools and spoke with students regarding the value of taking AP courses in preparation for college. AP teachers provided an overview of courses, answered questions, and encouraged students to take AP classes and exams. This will now be an annual event at all three high schools.

AP Tests are scored on a scale of 1 to 5. A score of 3 is a qualifying score and a score of 5 is extremely qualified. The district saw a 79% growth in the number of students scoring a 3 or higher. A score of 3 or better means a student may earn college credit.

Since 2016, the district has increased the number of available AP classes for students, providing 13 additional AP courses. There are only 3 other districts in New Jersey who added course offerings during that same time period.

Dr. Rocco explains this growth as, "a team effort involving administrators, faculty members, students, and support from the Hamilton Township Board of Education."