

# Collier County Public Schools

## Closing the Gap in AP® Enrollments

### The Story

Collier County, Florida, is known for its beautiful beaches and resort communities. In recent years, however, the economic downturn hit the area especially hard. As a result, the school district experienced a growth in its migrant population as well as increased student mobility, and homelessness. Faced with these new challenges, district leaders applied for and received an Advanced Placement Program® initiative grant. The grant's goal: to raise student achievement and increase college readiness and enrollments in AP® programs for all students.

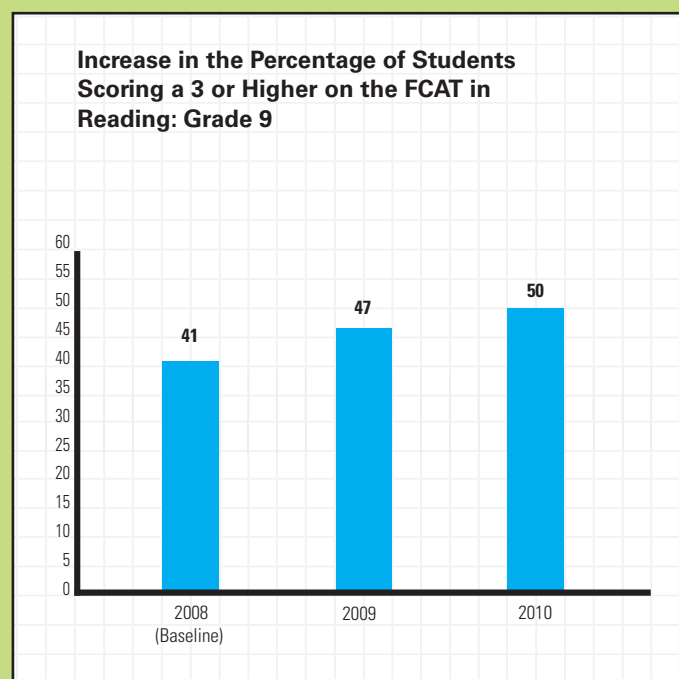
### Collier County, Florida

#### District Demographics

Students:	42,100
Economically Disadvantaged:	61%
Minority:	58%
Non-English Speaking:	46%
Hispanic:	43%
Special Education:	13%
Gifted:	6%

### The Results

The major goal of Collier County's AP initiative grant was to increase enrollments in AP classes. As part of that goal, the district was determined to add more AP opportunities for ninth-grade students. That meant more ninth-grade students must enter high school with strong critical reading skills. Based on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) Reading results, a substantially larger percentage of students met the goal after at least one year of SpringBoard® English Language Arts (ELA) while in middle school.



#### A Convincing, Supportive Model Supports Effective Implementation

According to Irene Benfatti, director of advanced students and gifted learners for the school district, a key to Collier County's successful implementation is having all the right people at the table and providing substantial ongoing support, professional development and formative monitoring.

To ensure that teachers and administrators were supported with the new program, the district designated Kristal Ayres as their official SpringBoard facilitator. With their own College Board-certified national SpringBoard trainer for both teachers and administrators, Collier County benefits from having a local, on-site expert to guide all phases of implementation.

When asked what other districts could do to achieve similar success, Benfatti emphasized the following key points:

1. 100 percent attendance at recommended SpringBoard professional development offerings
2. Identify a high-performing SpringBoard coordinator to guide day-to-day SpringBoard-related activities
3. Select a lead teacher at each school to serve as the point SpringBoard educator for his/her school
4. Develop administrator capacity for having meaningful SpringBoard conversations with teachers
5. Use the SpringBoard Classroom Walkthrough Guide as a formative monitoring tool
6. Involve teachers in curriculum mapping projects
7. Provide ongoing professional development, newsletters and video demonstrations to support continuous improvement

# SpringBoard® Success Story

## SpringBoard® is a cornerstone in preparing students for AP.

Collier County curriculum leaders understood that increasing enrollments in AP courses required intensive academic support for students and a shift in instructional practice for teachers. SpringBoard provided both. Teachers and administrators recognized that its engaging curriculum not only met but exceeded Florida's state standards. Educators particularly appreciated the integrated learning strategies that promote students' ownership of their learning. SpringBoard also meshed well with the district's professional learning communities initiative. Using the SpringBoard Embedded Assessments as a focus point, teachers can engage in using student work as a guide to improving instructional practices and learning outcomes.

During the 2006-07 school year, district officials mapped out a multiyear plan for implementing SpringBoard. By the beginning of the 2010 school year, all middle and high schools, five elementary schools with sixth-grade classes, and six alternative schools were using SpringBoard English Language Arts as their core curriculum in grades 6 through 10.



Irene Benfatti and Kristal Ayres

“Changing a paradigm is not an easy thing, but when you give students hope and support, and arm them with a powerful curriculum, wonderful things happen.”

— **Kristal Ayres,**  
**SpringBoard Facilitator/Trainer**  
**Collier County Public Schools**

### What Teachers and Students Are Reporting:

- ▶ “As a teacher, I enjoy the shift from being a top down instructor to a facilitator of instruction.”
- ▶ “SpringBoard allows my students to explore and ask questions of one another in order to gain knowledge.”
- ▶ “Collaboration among peers encourages students to be accountable and conscientious for their learning outcomes.”
- ▶ “I love being able to create projects that display the information I know instead of always taking a test for a grade.”
- ▶ “Using technology such as PowerPoint and my inspiration to create multimedia presentations is a fun way to demonstrate my learning.”

## Notable Results: AP Enrollments Among Grade 9 Students Soar for All Groups

As Collier County expands its AP opportunities, district leaders are committed to closing the enrollment gap among all their subgroups. Historically, minority students had been seriously underenrolled in the district's most challenging programs. Between 2005 and 2010, AP participation rates have skyrocketed:

- ▶ The AP participation rate for Collier County seniors has jumped from 68 percent to 93 percent.
- ▶ The challenge index (total number of exams divided by the total number of seniors) increased from 1.20 to 1.73.

Clearly, the district's AP initiative has had a huge impact on course-taking patterns. District officials cite SpringBoard as a major contributor to this success. As more students enter high school with higher critical reading levels, the schools are able to offer more AP courses for entering freshmen. In particular, enrollments among underrepresented grade 9 groups have increased dramatically: 316 percent increase for economically disadvantaged students and 183 percent increase for Hispanic students.

A review of the data indicate that not only are ninth-grade students taking AP courses earlier in their high school careers than their predecessors, but the number of students scoring a 3 and higher has substantially increased.

**Comparison of Grade 9 AP Results Before SpringBoard Implementation and After Students Had at Least One Year of SpringBoard in Middle School**

