

# EDUCATION NEWS & NOTES

## Texas Schools Are Making The Grade

(NAPSA)—There is good news for those with an interest in Texas public schools. Students and schools are posting significant gains.

For starters, graduation rates are at historic highs in the state, and in a recent comparison of the states, Texas graduation rates were among the very best in the nation.

And these graduates are not just taking the easiest courses. Participation in Advanced Placement tests by Texas public school students was up by 4 percent in the 2011–12 school year.

In addition, The College Board reports that performance increased for all students by 9.1 percent, with African American and Hispanic students showing the greatest gain in performance at 12 percent and nearly 14 percent, respectively.

### Next Stop—College

The good news doesn't end with graduation. In fact, today's students are increasingly likely to go on to higher education.

For example, the number of Texas students taking the ACT college admissions test reached an all-time high this school year, with Hispanic participation doubling over the past five years. ACT participation in Texas grew by 39 percent between 2008 and 2012, compared to a 17 percent increase nationally.

Even with the rapid rise in ACT participation, the composite test score for Texas rose from 20.7 percent in 2008 to 20.8 today. The score has been stable since 2009, even with higher and higher participation levels.

### Topping National Scores

Texas students in every major ethnic group significantly outscored their peers nationally on the eighth-grade National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) science test, with the state's African American students



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earning the fourth-highest score in the country compared to other African American students. Texas' Hispanic students earned the sixth-highest score and the state's white students ranked eighth among their peers. Overall, Texas students earned a scale score of 153 on the test, besting the national score of 151.

### Stretching Tax Dollars

Texas ranks 44th in per-pupil spending among the states, and because of that relatively low funding, Texas educators have had to learn to stretch a dollar a long way. This past year, the 2012 Financial Accountability Rating System of Texas (FIRST) ratings, which monitor the financial health of districts, showed that 98 percent of school districts met the standards set by the state and more than 87 percent of districts scored the highest of four ratings that districts can earn.

Clearly, students in Texas are succeeding and Texas public schools are better than ever before. Those achievements have been the result of hard work and dedication, but it can all be lost if we fail to support public schools in Texas this year. Now is not the time to abandon them. They are the best investment in our future.