Findings from Reinstating High School Honors Classes in English and Social Studies

Executive Summary

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Summary Findings

How did the reinstitution of honors classes impact the rigor levels of classes completed by FCPS students?

♦ Approximately 25 percent more FCPS students opted to take above standard-level classes than had done so before the honors classes were available (37% at Baseline; 63% at Year 3).

♦ All subgroups demonstrated increases in the percentage of students completing higher rigor classes.

♦ The percentage of students completing higher rigor classes grew each year following the reinstitution of honors classes.

♦ The “typical” course rigor experienced by students in different subgroups diverged following the reinstitution of honors classes, with majorities of Asian and White students opting for higher rigor classes, while majorities of Blacks, Hispanics, students living in poverty (FRM), Students with Disabilities (SWD), and English Language Learners (ELL) remained in standard-level classes.

♦ The concentration of students historically in the opportunity gap (students living in poverty, students with disabilities, and ELLs) increased approximately 50 percent in the standard rigor classes (e.g., classrooms teaching standard-level courses shifted from having an average of 15% ELL to 22% ELL).

♦ Reinstating honors classes decreased AP completion rates by almost 15 percent (37% to 32%).

Background

♦ On January 26, 2012, the FCPS School Board voted to expand high school honors courses, reversing previous actions to limit the offering of high school honors courses when standard and AP courses were offered.

♦ By requiring that all FCPS high schools offer five specific honors courses (in English and Social Studies), the School Board addressed stakeholder concerns that the gap between standard-level courses and AP courses was too wide, forcing a choice between courses perceived to be too easy for many students and courses perceived to be too demanding, either because of their content or time requirement.

Report Purpose

♦ This final report describes changes, if any, in course completion and student performance as a result of reinstituting honors classes in five English and Social Studies course sequences by comparing Baseline data from the year prior to the course reinstition (SY 2011-12) to patterns three years (SY 2014-15) after the reinstition.
To what extent did student performance change once honors classes were reinstated?

♦ Performance among students taking AP classes was the same or better in Year Three than at Baseline.

♦ Performance among students taking honors level classes was consistent from year to year and almost as high as that of AP students after honors classes were reinstated.

♦ Performance among students taking standard level classes decreased six percentage points from Baseline to Year Three in SOL pass rates and students earning marks of B or higher.

Conclusions

Successes

♦ Some FCPS high school students who might have chosen AP before are opting for higher rigor (honors) without being overburdened by AP classes.

♦ In the next few years FCPS may see even more students who might have previously opted not to complete a higher rigor class be exposed to higher levels of rigor.

Challenges

♦ FCPS should ensure that all students with similar potential for succeeding in higher level classes are similarly encouraged to participate in higher rigor opportunities.

♦ Teachers of standard-level classes may require more support to effectively instruct the higher proportions of ELL, FRM, and SWD students or more innovative approaches to lessen the burden.

♦ Regardless of who is in standard-level classes, FCPS must ensure that there is differentiated instruction on the standards for students rather than an adjustment of the curricular standards for the students.

The complete Honors Monitoring Report is available at http://www.fcps.edu/pla/ope/docs/honors_final_rpt.pdf.
Fairfax County Public Schools
Honors Monitoring Report – Final Report

Introduction

In most public high schools in the United States, students can pursue different levels of academic rigor and challenge. For instance, high schools may offer standard level, honors level, and Advanced Placement (AP)/International Baccalaureate (IB) level courses in English. Students may take different levels of courses for a variety of reasons including their interests, abilities, availability of time in their schedules for specific courses, cognitive demand of their overall schedules, anticipated postsecondary requirements, and others.

Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) has created choices for its high school students regarding the level of rigor they wish to pursue in courses. These choices include standard, honors, and AP/IB. Over the last several years, FCPS has encouraged all students to take at least one AP or IB course prior to graduation in an effort to ensure college readiness. Towards this end, FCPS high schools began providing greater access for all students to AP and IB courses. According to Instructional Services staff, over time this approach resulted in changes to the honors courses offered by FCPS high schools. As high schools saw fewer students taking honors courses when AP or IB courses were available for the same content, the high schools chose to remove the associated honors courses from their course offerings. Such narrowing of course options is in keeping with research that indicates offering fewer levels of rigor lessens achievement differences among students of different ethnic and socioeconomic subgroups (Lee & Ready, 2009).

During SY 2011-12, the School Board discussed the school division’s removal of honors classes from the list of official FCPS course offerings when an AP/IB offering was available. The central question within the discussion was whether students should be required to choose solely between standard and AP/IB courses when making course selections. In particular, discussion focused on high schools with AP offerings. On January 26, 2012, the FCPS School Board voted to expand high school honors courses, reversing previous actions to limit the offering of high school honors courses when standard and AP courses were offered. The School Board’s decision required FCPS high schools to offer five honors courses (three of which had never been included before as required course offerings) to FCPS students for SY 2012-13 and beyond:

- English 11 Honors;
- English 12 Honors;
- World History and Geography II Honors (10th grade);
- Virginia and United States History Honors (11th grade); and
- Virginia and U.S. Government Honors (12th grade).1

1 During SY 2011-12, two of these courses were offered online (English 11 Honors and World History and Geography II Honors), while three were not available as honors courses in FCPS.
By requiring that all FCPS high schools offer these additional honors courses, the School Board addressed stakeholder concerns that the gap between standard-level courses and AP courses was too wide, forcing a choice between courses perceived to be too easy for many students and courses perceived to be too demanding, either because of their content or time requirement.

Report Purpose

The purpose of this report is to describe changes, if any, in course completion and student performance as a result of reinstating honors classes in the five course sequences. The initial Baseline report focused on high school course completion and achievement patterns. The data in the Baseline report predated the School Board’s reinstatement of honors courses and served as the comparison point to determine whether the addition of the five honors courses had an impact on course completion patterns and student performance in the related courses. The current report will compare the Baseline data to high school course completion and achievement patterns through Year Three to monitor the impact over time of reinstating honors classes. Figures for the division overall are provided within the body of this report, while subgroup data are available in the Appendixes. For additional details on the design of the study, the Honors Monitoring design is provided in Appendix A, and study design details and limitations are provided in Appendix B.

Report Organization

The Honors Monitoring Report – Final Report is organized into two sections:

- **Section 1: Findings** – Provides findings related to the percentage of high school students who completed standard, honors, or AP level classes, as well as the performance of students completing each type of class from Baseline to Year Three.

- **Section 2: Conclusions and Implications** – Describes strengths and challenges for FCPS related to the impact that offering English and Social Studies honors courses had through Year Three on course completion and student performance.

Section 1: Findings

This investigation explored two questions about the reinstitution of honors courses within the five English and Social Studies course sequences:

- How did the reinstitution of honors classes impact the rigor levels of classes completed\(^2\) by FCPS students?

- To what extent did student performance change once the honors classes were reinstated?

\(^2\) For all courses, completion is defined as a student enrolling and receiving a final grade, regardless of the grade. Completion, rather than enrollment, was used because it is an indicator that the student took advantage of the opportunity. Enrolling does not reflect this benefit.
Findings rely primarily upon comparisons between data at Baseline (before honors classes were reinstituted) with data from Year Three (the third year of requiring all five honors classes to be standard course offerings at FCPS high schools). Data from Years One and Two are also included as a way of determining whether similarities or differences\(^3\) between Baseline and Year Three appear to be stable or show a trend that is likely to continue in subsequent years.

How did the reinstitution of honors classes impact the rigor levels of classes completed by FCPS students?

**Approximately one-quarter more FCPS students opted to take higher level classes than had done so before the honors classes were available.** As shown in Figure 1, 63 percent of FCPS students completed standard-level classes at Baseline, while 37 percent completed standard-level classes at Year Three. This change of 26 percentage points reflects the one-quarter of students who shifted from standard rigor classes to above standard rigor classes once the honors classes were reinstituted. In fact, the percentage of students taking standard and above standard courses had exactly flipped from Baseline to Year 3: 63 percent completed *standard* level courses at Baseline, while 63 percent completed *above standard* courses in Year 3; and 37 percent completed *above standard* courses at Baseline, while 37 percent completed *standard* courses in Year 3. Additional details about completion rates overall are provided in [Appendix C](#).

![Figure 1: Course Completion in the Baseline Year, Year One, Year Two, and Year Three](#)


3 For this report, values considered approximately the same are defined as those within two percentage points of each other, while values that differ by three or more percentage points are considered different from one another.

4 Percentages may total over 100 due to rounding.
All subgroups demonstrated increases in the percentage of students completing higher rigor classes. Appendix D shows that all subgroups had a greater percentage of students taking above standard courses in Year Three than at Baseline. Most subgroups (Asian, Black, Hispanic, White, FRM, and Previous Honors/AP) increased the percentage of students taking above standard-level courses by Year Three by more than 20 percentage points. The other subgroups (ELL and SWD) saw smaller increases in the percentage of students taking courses above the standard level (amounting to less than a 10 percentage point increase).

The percentage of students completing higher rigor classes grew each year following the reinstitution of honors classes. While the biggest increase from Baseline in the percentage of students taking above standard courses occurred in the first year honors courses were offered, each subsequent year continued to show growth in the percentage of students completing higher levels of rigor. This was true overall for the division (Figure 1), as well as for most subgroups (Appendix C).

The “typical” course rigor experienced by students in different subgroups diverged following the reinstitution of honors classes. As shown in Appendix D, at Baseline majorities of students in all subgroups (other than the subgroup who had previously taken honors or AP classes) completed standard rigor courses. By Year Three, majorities of Asian and White students were completing honors or AP classes, while majorities of Black, Hispanic, FRM, SWD and ELL students were still completing standard-level classes.

Concentration of students historically in the opportunity gap increased approximately 50 percent within the standard rigor classes. After the release of the Year 2 report, FCPS leadership expressed concern about the shifting demographics in standard-level classes. Historically, students from some demographic backgrounds have been less likely to participate in more demanding courses (i.e., opportunity gaps). Figure 2 shows the changes in the student population for the English Language Learners (ELL), students living in poverty (FRM), and Students with Disabilities (SWD) subgroups from Baseline to Year Three. At the standard level, the percentages of all three subgroups had increased approximately 50 percent over the Baseline to Year 3 timespan (ELL: 15 to 22 percentage points or 47 percent increase; FRM: 22 to 32 percentage points or 45 percent increase; SWD: 18 to 28 percentage points or 56 percent increase). Smaller ethnic subgroup shifts also occurred from Baseline to Year Three, increasing the proportions of Hispanic and Black students in standard rigor classes and decreasing proportions of Asian and White students (see Appendix C). It is not clear from the data whether more of these students from the opportunity gap subgroups should have taken more honors courses based on their past performance, level of support, and academic goals.
Reinstating honors classes decreased AP completion rates by almost 15 percent over the five course sequences. Figure 1 shows that during the Baseline to Year Three timespan, the percentage of AP completers declined gradually each year. In Year Three, the decline from the Baseline Year had reached five percentage points (Baseline: 37 percent; Year Three: 32 percent), thus representing a 14 percent decline in AP completion since Baseline. Figure 1 also shows that the drop in AP completions partially accounted for the increase in students taking honors. Based on the goal of giving students more choices, as well as continued strong AP performance in Year Three, this shift in percentages may be desirable.

To what extent did student performance change once honors classes were reinstituted?

Performance among students taking AP classes was the same or better in Year Three than at Baseline. On all three performance measures available for students completing AP classes (percentage of students earning A/B marks, SOL pass rates, percentage of students earning college-ready scores on associated AP tests), students completing AP coursework maintained or improved the high level of performance found at Baseline. More specifically, as shown in Figure 3, the percentage of students earning marks of A or B improved five percentage points from Baseline (78 percent) to Year Three (83 percent). The other two measures of performance both remained approximately the same at Year Three as they had been at Baseline (see Figure 4 for SOL pass rates: 100 percent; see Figure 5 for percentage of students earning scores of three or above, which is the threshold typically considered for college credit, on associated AP tests: 72 percent). [Note: The 72 percent of AP students in FCPS who scored above three on these five AP exams in Year Three was over 15 percentage points higher than the percentages in Virginia (55 percent) or the United States (52 percent).]

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5 Values for percentages under three percent are not labeled.
Performance among students taking honors level classes was consistent from year to year after honors classes were reinstated. On both the performance measures available for students taking honors level classes (percentage of students earning A/B marks, SOL pass rates), students performed very similarly through Year Three (and almost as highly as students completing AP classes). More specifically, students
completing honors classes showed a slight increase in the percentage earning marks of A or B (Figure 3) and equivalent SOL pass rates (Figure 4) after honors classes were reinstituted.

**Performance among students taking standard-level classes decreased six percentage points from Baseline to Year Three.** On both performance measures available for students taking standard-level classes (percentage of students earning A/B marks, SOL pass rates), students demonstrated decreased performance. More specifically, as shown in Figure 3, the percentage of students earning marks of A or B decreased gradually from Baseline (59 percent) to Year Three (53 percent), amounting to a six percentage point difference in the final year of this investigation. Figure 4 depicts a similar six percentage point decrease in SOL pass rates between Baseline (87 percent) and Year Three (81 percent) among students taking standard-level classes. Furthermore, while marks seem to have flattened out at their current levels, SOL pass rates show a pattern of continued gradual decline each year. Additional details on performance overall are provided in Appendix E. Additional details with disaggregation by course level and subgroup are provided for Marks in Appendix F, for SOL performance in Appendix G, and for AP performance in Appendix H.

**Section 2: Conclusions and Implications**

**Successes**

When the honors courses were reinstituted, the School Board not only wanted to offer an opportunity for students who had not tried greater rigor to do so, but also wanted to provide alternative higher rigor options for students who felt overburdened by too many AP classes. Taken from this perspective, the addition of honors courses has been more of a success than not, both in terms of their popularity with students and the performance of students who choose this option. Combined with the continued high performance of students in AP classes already in place, FCPS has demonstrated many benefits from offering the honors courses. Most notably:

- Overall, the reinstitution of honors classes for the five English and Social Studies course sequences resulted in more FCPS high school students completing higher rigor classes than when the honors classes were not available. This boost in rigor was demonstrated not only in the division as a whole but by every subgroup, meaning that higher rigor was accessed by students from all subgroups after the honors classes were made available.

- Furthermore, percentages completing honors in the division and in most subgroups has continued to grow each year since the honors courses were reinstituted and, therefore, does not seem to have hit a stopping point as of last school year. If this pattern continues, over time FCPS could expect even more students who might not have previously completed a higher rigor class to be exposed to higher levels of rigor.

- Although the shift out of AP classes into honors classes has been gradual, by the third year of availability of the honors courses, the percentage of FCPS high school students opting for AP classes in these five course sequences had decreased approximately 15 percent, indicating that students are taking the opportunity for such relief intended by the School Board.
• Offering of honors classes did not negatively impact performance of students taking AP classes. Performance among AP students remained equivalent on SOL and AP tests and improved slightly on marks following the reinstitution of honors courses.

• Students opting to take honors classes, once available, performed at high levels, close to performance demonstrated by students taking AP classes.

Challenges
The challenges for FCPS related to the reinstitution of honors classes involve ripple effects from the benefits described above for students not opting for higher rigor by remaining in standard classes. Furthermore, these unintended impacts may contribute to exacerbating achievement gaps. More specifically:

• Not all subgroups opted into the higher rigor opportunities equally. While this had also been true when only AP classes were offered, the offering of honors classes in these five course sequences seems to have unintentionally expanded these differences so that the average experience for students in some subgroups is now higher rigor classes, while the average experience for students in other subgroups is now standard rigor classes. A caution here is to ensure that all students in FCPS with similar potential for succeeding in higher level classes are similarly encouraged to participate in such higher rigor opportunities.

• On average in standard-level classes, the proportion of students who typically require high levels of support (ELL, FRM, SWD) was 50 percent larger after the reinstitution of honors classes than before these classes became available. While this increase may reflect not only the addition of the honors classes but also shifts in overall division demographics, such a change is likely to place a heavier workload on teachers. As a consequence, teachers may require more support to effectively instruct these students or more innovative approaches to lessen the burden.

• Performance of students in standard-level classes has decreased following the reinstitution of honors classes (and, in the case of SOL pass rates, appears to be on a gradual but continuing downward trend). While this decline may reflect the increased burden of effective differentiation for the students who now comprise a typical standard-level class, it is critical to ensure that students in standard classes are challenged to reach their potential. That is, regardless of who is in standard-level classes, FCPS must ensure that there is differentiated instruction on the standards for the students rather than an adjustment of the curricular standards for the students.
HONORS MONITORING STUDY YEAR THREE REPORT

APPENDIX A

HONORS MONITORING DESIGN
HONORS MONITORING STUDY YEAR THREE REPORT

1. GENERAL PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title: Impact of SY 2012-13 Change in Honors Offerings in FCPS

Projected Start Date: SY 2011-12

Projected Completion Date: SY 2014-15

Expected Deliverables:
- Baseline Report: May 2013
- Year One Report: March 2014
- Year Two Report: January 2015
- Year Three Report: January 2016

Monitoring Team Members:
- Michelle Ferrer, Specialist, OPE
- Janine Lacina, Specialist, OPE
- Noel Klimenko, ISD, Director, PreK-12 Curriculum & Instruction
- Recardo Sockwell, Director, OPE
- Lidi Hruda, Manager, OPE

Source of Request for the Monitoring: Division Superintendent

Background/History:
On January 26, 2012, the Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) School Board voted to expand high school honors courses, reversing a decision by the previous Board to limit the use of high school honors courses where standard and advanced placement (AP) courses were offered. The intent of limiting honors in the past was to encourage students (especially low income and Black and Hispanic students) to take rigorous AP courses. Starting in SY 2012-13, five additional honors courses have been offered to FCPS students: English 11 Honors (11th grade), English 12 Honors (12th grade), World History and Geography II Honors (10th grade), Virginia and United States History Honors (11th grade) and Virginia and U.S. Government Honors (12th grade).

By reinstating these honors courses, the School Board addresses a concern from parents that the gap between standard-level courses and AP courses was too wide. To them, this gap forced a choice between courses that were too easy for many students and courses that were too demanding, either because of their content or time requirement.

Purpose of the Monitoring Report:
The purpose of this report is to provide critical information for the Leadership Team and School Board to monitor the impact of the additional honors courses, both on course completion patterns and student performance in the related courses. Following is an outline of the specific questions and methods that guide the analyses of course completion and performance patterns at high schools in AP and related standard and honors courses. Following the completion of a Baseline Report in December 2012, monitoring reports will be produced annually for three years, beginning with a Fall 2013 report on SY 2012-13 data.

Population for analysis:
All AP students across all high schools and secondary schools (Centreville, Chantilly, Fairfax, Falls Church, Hayfield, Herndon, Lake Braddock, Langley, Madison, McLean, Oakton, South County, West Potomac, West Springfield, Westfield, and Woodson).

Additional Considerations:
While schools that offer the International Baccalaureate (IB) program also offer honors courses, these high schools are not included in this analysis. The IB program is designed around the requirements for diploma candidates completing six subject groups, from which they must take three or four subjects at higher level (HL) and the rest at standard level (SL). Because of the special nature of several IB courses and since all HL courses and many SL courses span two years (Grade 11 and Grade 12), there are different course offerings and different sequences of honors courses in IB schools.
## II. HONORS MONITORING DESIGN

<table>
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| COURSE COMPLETION | 1. What were the division patterns of completion in AP and related standard courses prior to the year in which new honors courses were added to the sequence (Fall 2012)? *(Baseline Report data)* | • Aggregate division data  
• Disaggregated division data:  
  o Race and ethnicity  
  o Students with Disabilities (SWD)  
  o FRM (Free/Reduced Meals)  
  o English Language Learner (ELL)  
  o Prior successful completion of an advanced academic course (Previous Honors/AP) | Membership Data  
• SY 2011-12 |
|                  | 2. What is the change in the completion rates in AP and related standard courses once new honors courses were added to the sequence? *(Year One, Year Two, and Year Three reports)* | • Aggregate division data  
• Disaggregated division data:  
  o Race and ethnicity  
  o Students with Disabilities (SWD)  
  o FRM (Free/Reduced Meals)  
  o English Language Learner (ELL)  
  o Prior successful completion of an advanced academic course (Previous Honors/AP) | Membership Data  
• SY 2011-12  
• SY 2012-13  
• SY 2013-14  
• SY 2014-15 |
| STUDENT PERFORMANCE | 3. What were the division patterns of student performance in AP and related standard courses prior to the year in which new honors courses were added to the sequence (Fall 2012)? *(Baseline Report data)* | • Aggregate division data  
• Disaggregated division data:  
  o Race and ethnicity  
  o Students with Disabilities (SWD)  
  o FRM (Free/Reduced Meals)  
  o English Language Learner (ELL)  
  o Prior successful completion of an advanced academic course (Previous Honors/AP) | AP Exam Data  
End-of-Course Data  
• SY 2011-12 |
|                  | 4. What is the change in academic performance patterns in AP and related standard courses once new honors courses were added to the sequence? *(Year One, Year Two, and Year Three reports)* | • Aggregate division data  
• Disaggregated division data:  
  o Race and ethnicity  
  o Students with Disabilities (SWD)  
  o FRM (Free/Reduced Meals)  
  o English Language Learner (ELL)  
  o Prior successful completion of an advanced academic course (Previous Honors/AP) | Marks  
SOL Test Scores  
AP Exam Scores  
• SY 2011-12  
• SY 2012-13  
• SY 2013-14  
• SY 2014-15 |

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1 A course completer is defined as a student who enrolled and completed a course with a final grade, regardless of his/her performance in that particular course.
Study Design and Limitations

Design

The design for this monitoring study reflects collaboration between the Office of Program Evaluation (OPE), Instructional Services (ISD), and Regional Offices. OPE staff collaborated with ISD to identify the specific courses and course codes from the Standard and Optional Course Offerings guide that aligned for each of the five course sequences. Course completion and performance data reported in this document reflect information provided to OPE by the Office of Student Testing and the Department of Information Technology.

The data presented in this report reflect SY 2011-12, which precedes the School Board decision that the honors option for the five course sequences be standard course offerings, and SY 2012-13 and SY 2013-14, which follow the addition of the honors courses into the sequences. The data included in the report reflect performance of students attending AP high schools. The five sets of courses whose data will be presented in the monitoring reports fall within two content areas:

English - Two sets of course options are of interest, reflecting courses students typically take in grades 11 and 12:

- At grade 11, students are offered the choice of English 11 (the standard-level course offering), English 11 Honors, or AP English Language and Composition.
- At grade 12, students choose between English 12, English 12 Honors, or AP English Literature and Composition.

Social Studies - Three sets of course options are of interest, reflecting what students typically take in grades 10, 11, and 12:

- At grade 10, students are offered the choice between World History and Geography II, World History and Geography II Honors, or AP World History.
- At grade 11, students choose Virginia and United States History, Virginia and United States History Honors, or AP United States History.

Data about each of the five course sequences will be used to answer the questions listed on the study design, available in Appendix A, which also provides additional details about data sources and methodology.

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1 Students at IB high schools and secondary schools were excluded from this report because the IB program, which is designed around the requirements of the IB diploma, requires different course offerings and different sequences of honors courses.

2 The vast majority of students enrolled in course sequences identified at a specific grade level will be at that grade level. There will be, however, some students enrolled in these courses who are not in the identified grade level. One of the most common examples of this is English Language Learners (ELL) students who may be enrolled in a Grade 11 English course as high school seniors.
Limitations

In reviewing this report, the reader should be aware of its intended scope:

- Only students at AP high schools and secondary schools were included in this report (Centreville, Chantilly, Fairfax, Falls Church, Hayfield, Herndon, Lake Braddock, Langley, Madison, McLean, Oakton, South County, West Potomac, West Springfield, Westfield, and Woodson).

- Students at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology were not included in this report due to the limited course flexibility in English and Social Studies associated with the school’s focus on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

- Students at IB high schools and secondary schools were excluded from this report because the IB program, which is designed around the requirements of the IB diploma, requires different course offerings and different sequences of honors courses. For example, while AP high schools dropped honors courses of interest here, IB high schools continued to offer World History II Honors and U.S. and Virginia Government Honors because IB diploma candidates take these at ninth and tenth grade, respectively, when IB course options are not available. Furthermore, students at IB schools may have three course options (FCPS standard, IB standard level, IB higher level) available for a particular subject; therefore, adding an honors course option would have added an unnecessary fourth option.

The types of data used to examine student performance have strengths and limitations:

A. Final marks are available for all students who complete a course, allowing comparisons across all of the course sequences. However, the criteria used to assign marks vary considerably by teacher, class, and school. For example, final marks from one classroom may represent a numerical average of quarterly marks; while in another, the final mark may be based on trends or mastery across the school year. So, while all marks are put on a consistent grading scale across FCPS, the meaning behind those marks can differ considerably.

B. SOL test performance is available only for courses that align to the Grade 11 English, World History and Geography II, and Virginia and U.S. History tests. This includes standard, honors, and AP level courses. The SOL test scores provide a sense of how much of the SOL content standards a student has mastered for that particular course.

C. Lastly, AP test scores are available only for those students who opt for this level of rigor. As with SOL tests, the assessments are consistent across all students in ways that final marks are not. Also, AP assessments are aligned to the content standards for the AP courses. The level of rigor in the assessments is commensurate with the level of rigor in the content standards, reflecting a level of challenge one would find in a college-level introductory course. However, these scores do not allow any comparison of performance among students opting for other levels of course rigor.
HONORS MONITORING STUDY YEAR THREE REPORT

APPENDIX C

HONORS COURSE COMPLETION
The data presented in this section describe the changes in course completion patterns between the Baseline Year, when none of the honors courses were offered as traditional classes, and the third year, in which all five of the honors courses of interest were standard course offerings at all high schools. Additionally, this section describes the stability of the data patterns seen from Baseline (SY 2011-12) to Year Three (SY 2014-15).¹

What is the change in the completion rates in AP and related standard courses once new honors courses were added to the sequence?

Summary Finding: From Baseline through Year Three, the percent of students completing a course above the standard level increased by 26 percentage points across all five course sequences. So, although standard-level courses were still the most frequently completed course level in Year Three (37 percent) among the three possible choices (standard, honors, AP), the majority of FCPS students completed courses above the standard level, representing exposure to greater rigor. This was a shift from what had been found at Baseline, when the majority of FCPS students were completing standard-level courses. Students taking the newly reinstituted honors courses appear to have been drawn primarily from among students who would have opted for standard-level classes if the honors courses were not offered: AP course completion has decreased by 5 percentage points, while standard course completion decreased 26 percentage points after the honors courses were reintroduced. All subgroups demonstrated an increase in the percentage of students completing courses above the standard level. Some subgroups (White, Asian, Previous Honors/AP) had the majority of students completing FCPS’ more rigorous courses above the standard level. Other subgroups (Black, Hispanic, FRM, SWD, and ELL) had the majority of students completing courses at the standard level as they had prior to the reinstatement of the honors course. Since the reinstatement of honors courses, the percentage of students completing a course above the standard level has increased each year at the division level and for most subgroups, indicating that the division has not yet hit an equilibrium point that could be expected to continue into the future.

Change in Division Completion Rates

Figure C-1 shows the percentage of students completing each course level from the Baseline Year through Year Three, with years subsequent to baseline representing implementation of the new honors courses. Across all five course sequences studied for this report, there has been an increase in the percentage of students completing courses above the standard level. In fact, the percentage of students taking standard and above standard courses have exactly flipped from Baseline to Year 3: 63 percent completed standard-level courses at Baseline, while 63 percent are now completing above standard courses in Year 3; and 37 percent completed above standard courses at Baseline, while 37 percent are now completing standard courses in Year 3. The percentage of AP completers decreased by five points from Baseline (37 percent) to Year Three (32 percent). Most students who completed honors level courses in Years One through Three appear to be those who would have chosen to take standard-level courses in the Baseline Year. Similar trends are observed for English and Social Studies when completion rates are disaggregated by content area (see Appendix D).

¹ For this report, values considered approximately the same are defined as those within two percentage points of each other, while values that differ by three or more percentage points are considered different from one another.
Change in Subgroup Completion Rates

Additional analyses (see Appendix D for details) reveal that course completion patterns for most subgroups mirrored what was happening in the division as a whole, with the decrease in percentage of standard-level completers almost matching the percentage of students opting for honors level courses during Year Three (reflecting that most students opting for honors were those that would have chosen to take standard-level courses in the past). However, the amount of change and the percentage of students completing courses above the standard level varied by subgroup.

Appendix D also shows that all subgroups had a greater percentage of students taking above standard courses in Year Three than at Baseline. Most subgroups (Asian, Black, Hispanic, White, FRM, and Previous Honors/AP) increased by more than 20 percentage points in the percentage of students taking above standard-level courses by Year Three. The other subgroups (ELL and SWD) saw smaller increases in the percentage of students taking courses above the standard level (amounting to less than a 10 percentage point increase). However, only some subgroups (Asian, White, and Previous Honors/AP) had a majority completing honors or AP in Year Three but most students in the other subgroups (Black, Hispanic, FRM, SWD, and ELL) continued to complete the standard-level courses in Year Three.

One of the concerns expressed by FCPS leadership after the release of the Year 2 report was the shifting demographics in classes teaching at the standard level. Figure C-2 shows the changes in student ethnicity at each course level. At the standard level, the percentage of White students decreased while...
the percentage of Black and Hispanic students increased from Baseline to Year Three\textsuperscript{2}. At the AP level, White students were the largest student group at Baseline and at Year Three and the percentages of other ethnic groups remained similar over time. Figure C-3 shows shifts in the student population for other student groups. At the standard level, the percentages of English Language Learners, students receiving free/reduced price meals, and Students with Disabilities had increased from Baseline to Year 3. At the AP level, the percentage of these students was lower than at the standard level, both at Baseline and in Year Three. At the honors level, the student ethnicity and other demographics were similar to those of students at the AP level.

\textbf{Figure C-2 – Changes in Completers’ Ethnicity from the Baseline Year to Year Three}

\textbf{Percentage of Students- Overall (English and Social Studies)}

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
         & Baseline & Year Three & Baseline & Year Three \\
         & Standard &         & Honors   &        \\
         & (n=26,017) & (n=15,548) & (n=12,797) & (n=15,465) & (n=13,428) \\
\hline
White     & 49       & 42       & 53       & 57       & 55     \\
Black     & 10       & 12       & 8        & 5        & 6      \\
Hispanic  & 18       & 26       & 13       & 7        & 7      \\
Asian     & 16       & 15       & 21       & 23       & 26     \\
Other     & 7        & 5        & 5        & 8        & 6      \\

\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{2} The division demographics in grades 10-12 did shift from the Baseline Year to Year Three but not to the extent seen in the shifts in the standard-level course demographics. For example, the division percentage of Hispanic students increased from 19 percent in the Baseline Year to 21 percent in Year Three, which is lower than the percentage of Hispanic students completing standard-level courses.
Stability of Completion Rates

Figure C-1 shows that the percentage of students completing a course above the standard level is not stable and has continued to increase since the reinstitution of the honors courses from Year One (57 percent) to Year Three (63 percent); after the large increase of 20 percentage points from Baseline (37 percent) to Year One, each subsequent year has continued to see small increases. This result reflects continuing small increases in the percentage of students completing honors courses that outpace the continuing small decreases in the percentage of students completing AP courses. Appendix D shows that the majority of subgroups (Asian, Black, Hispanic, White, and FRM) followed similar patterns. However, SWD and ELL subgroups have been stable in the percentage of students taking courses above the standard level during the three years after the reinstitution of the honors courses, with much smaller percentages of students overall completing either honors or AP level courses. The previous honors/AP subgroup may be the most difficult to pin down in terms of stability as the percentage of students taking honors courses has shifted up and down during Years One through Three and the percentages of students completing AP level courses has demonstrated the largest, continuing decreases.

3 Values for percentages under three percent are not labeled.
HONORS MONITORING STUDY YEAR THREE REPORT

APPENDIX D

ADDITIONAL DETAILS ON COURSE COMPLETION
Additional Details on Course Completion

Figure D.1 - Course Completion in the Baseline Year, Year One, Year Two, and Year Three

Percent of Students Completing Courses Overall and by Course Content Area

1 Percentages may total over 100 due to rounding.
Figure D.1a - All Five Sequences Course Completion in the Baseline Year, Year One, Year Two, and Year Three

Percent of Students Completing Each Course Level
Overall and by Ethnic Subgroup

Figure D.1b - All Five Sequences Course Completion in the Baseline Year, Year One, Year Two, and Year Three

Percent of Students Completing Each Course Level
Overall and by Ethnic Subgroup

 AP
 Honors
 Standard

---

2 Percentages may total over 100 due to rounding.
Figure D.1c - All Five Sequences Course Completion in the Baseline Year, Year One, Year Two, and Year Three

Percent of Students Completing Each Course Level Overall and by Other Subgroup

Percent completed: Overall and by Other Subgroup

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>(n=42,905)</td>
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<td>Year 1</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRM</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWD</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
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Figure D.1d - All Five Sequences Course Completion in the Baseline Year, Year One, Year Two, and Year Three

Percent of Students Completing Each Course Level Overall and by Other Subgroup

Percent completed: Overall and by Other Subgroup

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<thead>
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<th></th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Year 3</td>
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<td>Prev Honors/AP</td>
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</table>

3 Percentages may total over 100 due to rounding.
HONORS MONITORING STUDY YEAR THREE REPORT

APPENDIX E

HONORS STUDENT PERFORMANCE
Final marks, Standards of Learning (SOL) test performance, and AP test performance were all used to explore student course performance over time in this section of the report. First, changes in the data are described. Then stability of the data patterns is discussed. Five sequences of courses in English or History were involved in the addition of new honors courses. Thus, these sequences went from “standard and AP” course options to “standard, honors, and AP” course options. The following analyses show how performance in standard and AP courses within each sequence changed on three measures (marks, SOL tests, and AP test scores) once the new honors courses were taken by students.

**What was the change in academic performance patterns in AP and related standard courses once new honors courses were added to the sequence?**

**Summary Finding:** For the course sequences in which the honors options were added, student performance overall (marks, SOL scores, AP test scores) showed some change from the Baseline Year through Year Three at the standard level, with little change at the honors and AP level. Generally, when changes occurred, the shift was observed between Baseline and Year One among students in standard-level courses, and then was maintained in Years Two and Three. Subgroup performance patterns typically followed the division overall, especially subgroups taking honors and AP level coursework. However, performance of some subgroups at the standard level varied from division patterns. For example, the Black, Hispanic, FRM, SWD, and ELL subgroups all had a minority of students earning a grade of B or higher at the standard level in comparison to White and Asian subgroups who followed the division pattern.

**Change in Division Performance**

Student performance overall showed little change from Baseline through Year Three, with the majority of students in Year Three receiving final marks of B or higher and passing End-of-Course SOL tests in English and Social Studies. A majority of students taking AP level courses also scored a three or higher on AP exams.

Figure E-1 shows that the majority of students had final marks of a B or higher at Baseline through Year Three regardless of which course rigor taken (standard, honors, AP). However, there was a six percentage point decrease in the percentage of students completing standard-level courses who earned a grade of B or higher once honors courses were re instituted (change from Baseline to Year One), which persisted in Year Two and Year Three. At the honors and AP levels, the percentage of students with final marks of a B or higher showed small upticks over time and remained at high levels. Similar trends are observed for English and Social Studies when marks are disaggregated by content area (see Appendix F).

**Figure E-1 - Student Performance in the Baseline Year, Year One, Year Two, and Year Three**

Percentage of Students Receiving A/B Marks – Overall (English and Social Studies)
Figure E-2 shows that the SOL pass rate percentages showed little change from the Baseline Year through Year Three for honors and AP, although there was increased rigor in the revised English SOL test first administered in Year One. At the standard level, performance decreased by six percentage points from Baseline to Year Three. SOL performance in Year Three was essentially the same for AP level course completers (100 percent) and honors course completers (98 percent), and was lower for standard course completers (81 percent). Similar trends are observed for English and Social Studies when SOL performance is disaggregated by content area (see Appendix G). The percentage of students who achieved a pass advanced score on the SOLs were quite different in Years One through Three from the Baseline Year, which is attributed to increased rigor in the revised English SOL test first administered in Year One.

Figure E-2 - Student Performance in the Baseline Year, Year One, Year Two, and Year Three Percentage of Students Passing End-of-Course SOL Test – Overall (English and Social Studies)

Figure E-3 indicates that AP performance overall showed little change from the Baseline Year through Year Three. A majority (72 percent) of students across all five course sequences scored three or higher on the AP exam, which is the threshold score typically considered for college credit. This was the same as the percentage that had scored a three or higher in the Baseline Year, indicating no change in performance following the offering of the honors courses. Of the students taking AP exams, the percentage of AP exam takers in FCPS who scored above three on these five AP exams in Year Three was at least 15 percentage points higher than the percentage of students scoring above a three in Virginia (55 percent) or the United States (52 percent). Similar patterns were observed when disaggregating AP performance by content area (see Appendix H).
Change in Subgroup Performance

Additional analyses (see Appendix F for details) revealed that the pattern of performance on marks for most subgroups reflected what was happening in the division overall. At the standard level, many subgroups (Asian, Black, Hispanic, White, ELL, Previous Honors/AP) showed decreases of eight or fewer percentage points in the proportion of students receiving a grade of B. Some of these subgroups (White, Asian, and Previous Honors/AP) had a majority of students receive a grade of B or higher at the standard level, while others (Black, Hispanic, FRM, SWD, and ELL) had a minority of students earning a grade of B or higher at the standard level. However, most subgroups at the honors or AP level showed increases in the percentage of students receiving a B or higher (Asian, Black, Hispanic – AP only, White, FRM – AP only, SWD – AP only, Previous Honors/AP – honors only) and had a majority of students receiving grades of B or higher in the Baseline Year as well as Year One through Year Three (all subgroups). The ELL subgroup showed decreases in the percentage of students receiving a B or higher at the standard, honors, and AP level.

As represented in Appendix G, SOL performance for subgroups typically followed what was found for the division overall. From the Baseline Year to Year Three, performance decreased for all subgroups but the Previous Honors/AP subgroup at the standard level. For students at the honors and AP level, overall performance was stable for all subgroups across all years of the study. However, there was an increase in the percentage of students scoring at the Pass Advanced level for many subgroups (Asian, White, Previous Honors/AP) from Year One to Year Three.

Performance on the AP exam varied among subgroups (see Appendix H for details). Across the five AP tests, most subgroups showed little change between Baseline and Year Three and the majority of students in most subgroups scored a three or higher, including the White, Black, Asian, and FRM subgroups. The Hispanic subgroup’s AP performance decreased by 3 percentage points between Baseline and Year Three. The SWD subgroup’s AP performance increased by 7 percentage points between Baseline and Year Three. The ELL subgroup’s AP performance decreased 15 percentage points from Baseline to Year Three and remained below 50 percent of students scoring a three or higher on AP exams. The Previous Honors/AP
subgroup’s AP performance decreased by 4 percentage points, but the majority still scored a three or higher on the AP exams in Year Three.

Additional details on marks, SOL, and AP test performance are described more fully in Appendix F, Appendix G, and Appendix H, respectively.

Stability of Student Performance

At the division level, looking across the four years of available data, performance for students at the standard level decreased with smaller percentages of students achieving A/B marks in Year One, after the reinstitution of honors course, but remained stable Year One through Year Three (Figure E-1). Similarly, students taking standard-level courses demonstrated a decrease in SOL performance (Figure E-2) from Baseline to Year One, some of which may be attributed to increased rigor in a revised English 11 SOL test, but remained stable Year One through Year Three. Performance for students above the standard level is increased for the percentage of A/B marks and remained stable for SOL performance and AP performance (Figure E-3).

At the subgroup level, most subgroups follow the division level patterns. For marks at the standard level, many subgroups (Asian, Black, Hispanic, White, ELL, Previous Honors/AP) were not stable and showed decreases in the percentage of students receiving a grade of B or higher. However, most subgroups above the standard level were not stable and showed increases in the percentage of students receiving a B or higher (Asian, Black, Hispanic – AP only, White, FRM – AP only, SWD – AP only, Previous Honors/AP – honors only). The ELL subgroup was not stable at any course level and showed decreases in the percentage of students receiving a B or higher at the standard, honors, and AP level.

For SOL performance at the standard level, from the Baseline Year to Year Three performance was not stable and decreased for all subgroups but the Previous Honors/AP subgroup. For students at the honors and AP level, overall SOL performance was stable for all subgroups across all years of study. However, there was an increase in the percentage of students scoring at the Pass Advanced level for many subgroups (Asian, White, Previous Honors/AP) from Year One to Year Three.

Performance on the AP exam varied among subgroups. Across the five AP tests, most subgroups were stable between Baseline and Year Three (White, Black, Asian, and FRM subgroups). The Hispanic subgroup’s AP performance decreased by 7 percentage points between Baseline and Year Three. The SWD subgroup’s AP performance increased by 7 percentage points between Baseline and Year Three. The ELL subgroup’s AP performance decreased 15 percentage points from Baseline to Year Three. The Previous Honors/AP subgroup’s AP performance decreased by 4 percentage points, but the majority still scored a three or higher on the AP exams in Year Three. (See Appendix F, Appendix G, and Appendix H for additional details).
HONORS MONITORING STUDY YEAR THREE REPORT

APPENDIX F

ADDITIONAL DETAILS ON MARKS
Additional Details on Marks

**Course Final Marks Performance.** Final Marks were used to explore performance for all levels of courses for each course sequence. All students in all levels of courses receive final marks. Prior to determining marks, teachers provide written instructional objectives and assessment measures to students at the beginning of the course. The teacher develops a percentage-based and/or letter-based evaluation design best suited to his or her class for arriving at the quarter grade. This design must explicitly indicate how the quarter grade is determined (e.g., the weighting of tests, assignments, etc.). A copy of this design is placed in the grade book and is also given to students and parents at the beginning of the course. Grades should be based on work performance and class participation as it relates to student achievement. Quizzes, tests, examinations, essays, homework, or papers are evaluated and/or graded, returned, and reviewed promptly with the student. The weighting of each type of work performance can vary by teacher, course, and school. Final grades awarded to students in middle school and high school will be A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, or F and may be based on trends in and mastery of learning rather than based solely on numerical averaging of quarterly grades for the year. Additional details on how final marks are determined are available in the [High School Grading and Reporting Handbook](#). For the purpose of the figures presented here, the + and - grades were grouped with the same letter grade.

*In Year Three, the majority of students who completed standard, honors, and AP English/Social Studies courses had final course marks of B or higher in all three course levels.* The percentage of students with final marks of B or higher was greater for AP level courses than for standard and honor level courses. The percentage of final marks of a D or F was greater in standard-level courses than in AP level courses.
Figure F.1a - Student Performance in the Baseline Year, Year One, Year Two, and Year Three
Percent of Students Receiving Each Mark – Overall (English and Social Studies)\(^1\)

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Baseline (n=26,017)</th>
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<th>Year 2 (n=16,597)</th>
<th>Year 3 (n=15,349)</th>
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<td>Standard</td>
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<td>Baseline</td>
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<td>Year 3</td>
<td>17</td>
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</tr>
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\(^1\) The values for percentages under four percent are not labeled. Percentages may total over 100 due to rounding.
Figure F.1b - Student Performance in the Baseline Year, Year One, Year Two, and Year Three
Percent of Students Receiving Each Mark – English Only

The values for percentages under four percent are not labeled. Percentages may total over 100 due to rounding.
Final Marks Performance by Subgroup. In Year Three, the majority of students who completed standard, honors, and AP courses had final course marks of B or higher in all three course levels. The percentage of students with final marks of B or higher was greater for AP level courses than for standard and honors level courses. The percentage of final marks of a D or F was greater in standard-level courses than in AP level courses. For White students, approximately one-half of students in standard-level English courses and more than three-quarters of students in honors or AP level courses received final marks of B or higher. Asian students' final marks followed a similar pattern to that of White students. For Black students, less than half of all students received final marks of B or higher in standard-level English courses; this percentage rose to approximately two-thirds for final marks of B or higher in honors or AP level courses. Hispanic students' final marks followed a similar pattern to that of Black students as did the final marks for FRM students, ELL students, and SWD. For students who had previously completed an honors or AP level course, more than 80 percent of students received a final mark of B or higher no matter whether they were in standard, honors, or AP level courses. Across all subgroups, the percentage of marks of B or higher decreased for standard courses from the Baseline Year to Year Three while the percentage of marks of B or higher increased for all AP courses and increased from Year One to Year Three for honors courses.

3 The values for percentages under four percent are not labeled. Percentages may total over 100 due to rounding.
Figure F.2a - Student Performance in the Baseline Year, Year One, Year Two, and Year Three

Percent of Students Receiving Each Mark
Overall and by Ethnic Subgroup

The values for percentages under three percent are not labeled. Percentages may total over 100 due to rounding.
Figure f.2b - Student Performance in the Baseline Year, Year One, Year Two, and Year Three

Percent of Students Receiving Each Mark
Overall and by Ethnic Subgroup

5 The values for percentages under three percent are not labeled. Percentages may total over 100 due to rounding.

Fairfax County Public Schools, Office of Program Evaluation
November 2015

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The values for percentages under three percent are not labeled. Percentages may total over 100 due to rounding.
Figure F.2d - Student Performance in the Baseline Year, Year One, Year Two, and Year Three

Percent of Students Receiving Each Mark
Overall and by Other Subgroup

7 The values for percentages under three percent are not labeled. Percentages may total over 100 due to rounding.
HONORS MONITORING STUDY YEAR THREE REPORT

APPENDIX G

ADDITIONAL DETAILS ON END-OF-COURSE SOL TEST PERFORMANCE
Additional Details on End-of-Course SOL Test Performance

**Standards of Learning Test Performance.** End-of-Course Standards of Learning (SOL) tests were used to explore performance for Grade 11 English, World History and Geography II, and Virginia and United States History. Students in standard, honors and AP level courses are assessed with the respective SOL test that is aligned to their courses. End-of-Course SOL tests do not exist for Grade 12 English or Virginia and United States Government. FCPS aligns each high school course to a specific SOL test, and those alignments are confirmed by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE). This includes those at the standard, honors, and AP level. The VDOE accepts that the AP curriculum standards sufficiently cover the relevant SOL standards for each respective test to which the course has been aligned. The data presented in this section present the SOL test performance of students who completed standard and AP level courses aligned to three specific SOL tests - Grade 11 English, World History II, and Virginia and United States History.

*In Year Three, the majority of students who completed standard, honors, and AP courses passed their End-of-Course SOL tests.* The SOL pass rates for students who completed AP courses were higher than the pass rates for students in standard and honor level courses, with a greater percentage of students passing at the advanced level, as well. The English End-of-Course test was revised and a more rigorous version was first implemented in SY 2012-13. The change in the proportion of students scoring in Pass Proficient versus Pass Advanced is a pattern observed divisionwide and statewide.
Figure G.1a – English SOL Performance Only in the Baseline Year, Year One, Year Two, and Year Three
Percent of Students Passing Proficient and Passing Advanced End-of-Course SOL Test Overall

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</table>

- Pass Advanced
- Pass Proficient
SOL Performance by Subgroup. In Year Three, the majority of students who completed standard, honors, and AP courses passed their End-of-Course SOL tests. The SOL pass rates for students who completed AP courses were higher than the pass rates for students in standard and honor level courses, with a greater percentage of students passing at the advanced level, as well.

In Year Three, the difference in pass rates for White students in standard and AP or honors level courses was ten percentage points. For Asian students, the difference in pass rates for students in standard and AP or honors courses was 16 percentage points. A difference in pass rates for Black and Hispanic students in standard and honors courses was 27 and 29 percentage points, respectively. The difference in pass rates for SWD in standard and honors courses was 34 percentage points, and 36 percentage points for AP level courses. For students who had previously completed an honors or AP level course, the pass rates for students in either standard, honors, or AP level courses approached 100 percent.
Figure G.1c – Student Performance in the Baseline Year, Year One, Year Two, and Year Three
Percent of Students Passing Proficient and Passing Advanced
End-of-Course SOL Test Overall and by Ethnic Subgroup

Figure G.1d – Student Performance in the Baseline Year, Year One, Year Two, and Year Three
Percent of Students Passing Proficient and Passing Advanced
End-of-Course SOL Test Overall and by Ethnic Subgroup

1 Of the five sequences in the study, only three (English 11, World History 2, and USVA History) have SOL tests associated with the course.
Of the five sequences in the study, only three (English 11, World History 2, and USVA History) have SOL tests associated with the course.
APPENDIX H

ADDITIONAL DETAILS ON END-OF-COURSE AP TEST PERFORMANCE
Additional Details on End-of-Course AP Test Performance

**AP Test Performance.** AP Test Scores were used to explore performance for AP courses for each sequence. Individual teachers develop their own curriculum based on established course requirements and AP standards that must be approved by the College Board as part of the AP Course Audit process. In addition, AP evaluates its courses and exams regularly and revises them to focus on critical thinking skills and to incorporate the most recent developments in each discipline. University professors review the course syllabi for rigor and content to match college standards. Typically, only students enrolled in AP level courses participate in AP tests. Therefore, the data below represents the performance of students who completed AP level courses.

**Figure H.1a - Student Performance Across all Five AP tests**
During the Baseline Year, Year One, Year Two, and Year Three
Percent of Students Scoring Three or Higher on AP Exams Overall and by Subgroup
**AP English.** In Year Three, the majority of students completing AP English courses scored a three or higher on their respective AP tests. The percentage of students scoring a three or higher was comparable in Year Three as compared to the Baseline Year for most subgroups, with the exception of the ELL subgroup whose performance decreased by 28 percentage points, the Black subgroup whose performance increased by 3 percentage points and the SWD subgroup whose performance increased by 15 percentage points.
AP Social Studies. In Year Three, the majority of students completing AP social studies courses scored a three or higher on their respective AP tests. The percentage of students scoring a three or higher was comparable in Year Three as compared to the Baseline Year for most subgroups, with the exception of the Hispanic subgroup whose performance decreased by four percentage points, the ELL subgroup whose performance decreased by 11 percentage points, the SWD subgroup whose performance increased by three percentage points, and the Previous Honors/AP subgroup whose performance decreased by six percentage points.
Figure H.3b - Student Performance in AP History
During the Baseline Year, Year One, Year Two, and Year Three
Percent of Students Scoring Three or Higher on AP Exams Overall and by Subgroup