

## April 2011 News

- **WNY School District continues to accumulate Awards**
- **Cheerleading Competition**

### **Cheerleading Competition**

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## Accumulating awards

*WNY school district and resident receive national recognition*

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Don't let the term "Abbot District" fool you. Yes, the West New York school district was once labeled a little poorer, a little more urban, a little more ethnically diverse. But the district's out to debunk any notions of inferiority, and its steadily growing list of awards will help.



The most recent award – the 2011 Advanced Placement District of the Year award –comes by way of the College Board, who granted only three other districts in the nation the prestigious honor.

The College Board administers the SAT exam, and its website, [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com), has long been a valuable resource for college-bound students.

Recognized in the award citation is the West New York district's excellence in "opening AP classroom doors to a significantly broader pool of students while maintaining or improving the percentage of students earning scores of 3 or higher," according to a press release.

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“[My parents] always told me, ‘you work hard and it’s worth it at the end.’” – Rossara Nunez

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The award also comes with a \$10,000 grant that will be used for staff development and textbooks.

## **Advantages of APs**

According to the College Board, the West New York School District is the nation's leader in small school districts in expanding access to AP classes and improving scores on the end-of-course AP exam.

The other schools to receive the award ranged from the medium-sized Colton Joint Unified School District in Colton, Calif., the Hillsborough County Public Schools in Tampa, Fla., and the much-larger Chicago public school system.

AP courses are more intensive than regular and honors classes offered in high school settings, and help transition students into a college setting. They are known as college preparation courses for their emphasis on intense discussions, collaborative problem solving, and clear and persuasive writing.

In May, students enrolled in AP classes have the option to take corresponding AP exams, which can confer college credit based upon a student's results.

AP Exam scores are scored on a 5-point scale. A "3" score as interpreted as "qualified" – or a passing grade in college terms – and the student are eligible to receive college credit or advanced placement in most of the nation's colleges or universities, in addition to more than 60 universities worldwide.

With these credits upon matriculation, according to the College Board, students also "have the time to move into upper level courses, pursue a double major, or study abroad."

## **District success**

Between 2008 and 2010, the press release says, the West New York School District "increased student participation in AP from 48 to 99 students, a 44 percent increase; increased the percentage of AP students earning scores 3 or higher from 21 percent to 37 percent; and increased the percentage of traditionally underserved minority AP students earning scores of 3 or higher from 23 percent to 36 percent."

As a winner of the award, the district will also serve as a model for the College Board to document and share with others to enhance performance nationwide.

"A common element across these award-winning districts is that they are not focused on AP alone – they use AP's rigor and high standards as a key element of a much larger college readiness system," said Eric Cantor, senior vice president of the College Board's College Readiness division.

Memorial High School has made great strides in offering college-level classes, such as its partnership with Syracuse University to offer college-credit courses to students, and its college credit-seeking Tomorrow's Teachers program.

## **Outside the district, but still in WNY**

West New York does not conform to the stereotype of underperformance commonly pinned on students who are the children of immigrants, or even immigrants themselves.

Standing behind the push for academic excellence in their children are not just the district, but private schools in the area, too, and especially parents like West New York residents Rosa Clara Nunez and Angel Nunez, who are parents of exemplary County Prep High School junior Rossara Nunez.

Rossara, a born Peruvian, has lived in this country for only six years, but already has a page full of awards that she has received since 2007, including a certificate of merit at the National Young Leaders Conference two years ago.

Adding to her already impressive resume, she was selected last month for membership into The National Society of High School Scholars, a membership conferred only upon those regarded as top scholars.

“On behalf of NSHSS, I am honored to recognize the hard work, sacrifice, and commitment that Rossara has demonstrated to achieve this level of academic excellence,” said NSHSS Founder and Chairman Claes Nobel.

Rosarra credits much of her success to her parents, who have continuously motivated her to perform well academically.

“They always told me, ‘you work hard and it’s worth it at the end,’” she said. “I see some accomplishments [that I’ve had so far]... and I think ‘wow.’”

Her parents also put her into a private school to expedite her learning of English. Rossara had been enrolled in an American school in Peru, where she had learned spelling and writing, but speaking it, at that time, had proved a bit more difficult.

Now, Rossara can claim a strong mastery of Spanish and English – and even some French through her studies.

Though languages are an interest, Rossara’s true passion is science. Next year, she will take Physics and AP Biology, and with college on the horizon, Rosarra is already looking into schools with a strong biology program.

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