

## S U M M A R Y

**Admission Possible first-year results****A program to increase college admission among low-income students****Admission Possible program**

Admission Possible's mission is to identify low-income young people with the motivation to go to college and help them attend college. The program focuses on ACT test preparation, guidance in applying for college, and help in obtaining financial resources. Admission Possible operates in nine high schools in Minneapolis and Saint Paul, Minnesota.

The two main program goals are:

- Students enroll in a four-year college that is a good fit for them, with the necessary financial support.
- Students and AmeriCorps staff develop or strengthen an ethic of service to the community.

This report focuses mainly on high school juniors who entered the Admission Possible program in the 2003-04 school year. At the end of this summary, a few measures are also reported for senior students who entered Admission Possible in 2002-03.

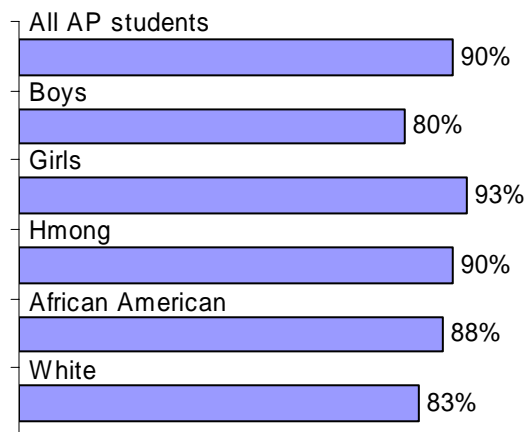
**About the students**

The 263 high school juniors who participated in Admission Possible in 2003-04 are a diverse group. Three-fourths are girls. The majority speak a language other than English as their main language at home. More than half of the students are Hmong, 20 percent are African American (including some who also identified as African immigrants), and 13 percent are White. Other students identified themselves as Hispanic, Somali, American Indian, or another race or ethnicity (less than 10% each). Twenty percent identified as Asian, but there was some overlap with those who also identified as Hmong.

Students in the program come from families whose incomes are below the median for the city they live in, either Minneapolis or St. Paul.

**Attitudes toward college**

Students entering the program are confident, highly motivated, and think college is important, showing Admission Possible is selecting students who fit the program goals.

**Strong belief that college education is important**

Going into their junior year, almost all the students said the following characteristics are “somewhat” or “very” like them:

- Have strong energy and drive to achieve their goals
- Are proud of their accomplishments at school
- Want to do their best on tests and in classes
- Confident that they can graduate from college
- Have people encouraging them to attend college

The girls tended to rate themselves more highly than boys on confidence and academic goals. African American students rated themselves and their future more highly than White students. Hmong students tended to rate themselves highly in general, except for confidence about graduating from college and seeing themselves fitting in on a college campus.

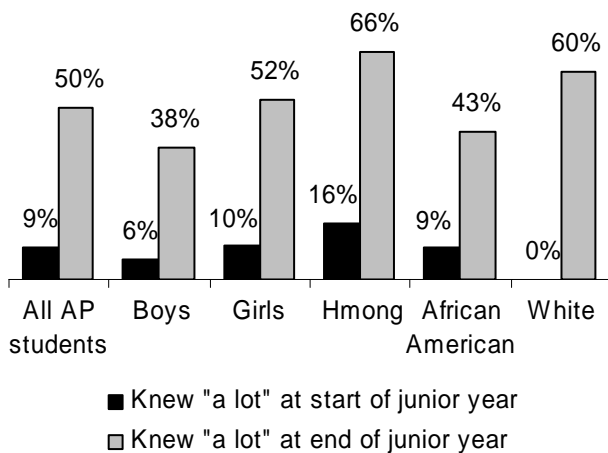
### Knowledge about the college process

When students entered the program they had little knowledge about how to get into college. A large majority said they knew “nothing” or “not much” about how to fill out a high-quality application (79%), line up the financial resources to go to college (73%), and do well on the ACT or SAT test (68%).

Students demonstrated during the year that they see college as a reality, completing practice college applications at high rates and making an average of two college visits per student.

By the end of their junior year, after participating in Admission Possible, the students reported much more knowledge about how to do well on the ACT, and also about the benefits of going to college and what going to college is really like.

### I know a lot about how to do well on ACT

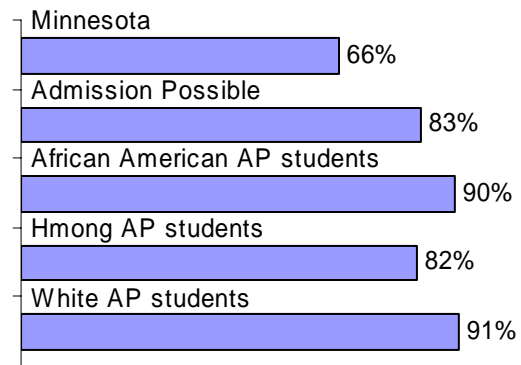


### Preparing and taking the ACT test

The strongest focus of Admission Possible during the junior year is on preparing to take the ACT. Students take an ACT practice test when they enter the program. They attended an average of 17 ACT preparation classes, and took an average of four ACT practice tests during the year. Participation in these training activities varied little by race or gender.

Eighty-two percent of the juniors in Admission Possible took the official ACT test in April 2004, compared to 66 percent of all high school juniors in Minnesota. In Admission Possible, the African American and White students were a little more likely than the Hmong students to take the test (82% of Hmong compared to 90-91% of African American and White students).

### Percent taking ACT



On the baseline ACT test, students’ average composite score was 16. Some started with very low ACT scores (between 9 and 13), including 28 percent of African American students and 9 percent of Hmong students. White students had the highest average baseline score.

### ACT test results

When students took the official ACT test, their average composite score was 18.4 – a substantial rise from the practice test.

Overall, the Admission Possible students’ ACT scores increased an average of 14 percent from students’ baseline scores. This meets the goal of Kaplan (the test preparation company used by Admission Possible) to increase scores by 12 to 14 percent.

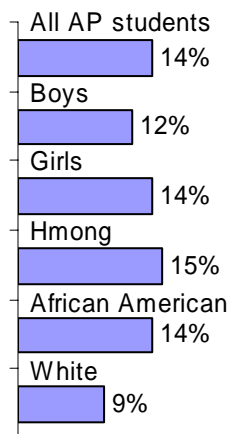
|                    | Average ACT score |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| Minnesota          | 22.2              |
| Minneapolis        | 19.6              |
| Saint Paul         | 19.6              |
| Admission Possible | 18.4              |
| Boys               | 18.0              |
| Girls              | 18.5              |
| African American   | 17.9              |
| Hmong              | 18.0              |
| White              | 21.9              |

Notably, African American students who participated in Admission Possible had higher average ACT scores (17.9) than African Americans in the Minneapolis (15.9) and St. Paul (16.9) school districts.

Although average scores are lower for Admission Possible students than Minnesota or Minneapolis and Saint Paul students, Admission Possible serves a high

percentage of low-income students and students of color. Research evidence consistently shows that income and race/ethnicity have a strong influence on students' educational experience and success, from before kindergarten through higher education. Given the high proportion of Admission Possible students who speak a language other than English at home, it is also possible that limited English proficiency is a factor in ACT scores for some of the students.

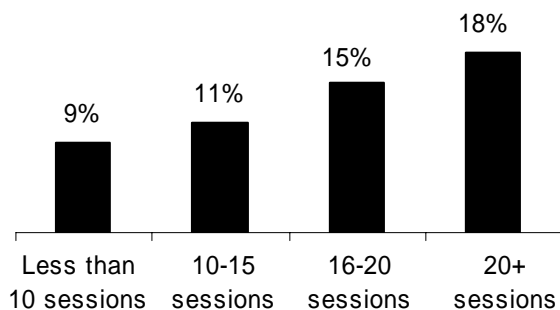
### Improvement on ACT



A majority of students (57%) had an increase of 11 percent or greater in their ACT scores. Eighteen percent showed no improvement; this was more common among White students.

Admission Possible results show a clear link between improved ACT scores and attendance at ACT prep classes. Students who attended more than 20 sessions had significantly greater score increases than those who attended 15 or fewer sessions.

### Improvement in ACT score by prep session attendance



Ensuring that all Admission Possible students attend at least 20 ACT prep sessions could help bring average scores closer to those of the state and school districts where the program operates, even with students who start at a lower baseline score on the practice test.

### Students' ethic of service

While many students entered Admission Possible with a fairly high commitment to service, it appears that some developed or increased an ethic of service during the year. At the start of the program, 45 percent said it is "very important" to be part of making their community a better place. By the end of the junior year, 61 percent said the same.

Boys in the program made the greatest gains over the year, increasing from 26 percent saying "very important" to 57 percent. African American students also showed growth in this area; at the beginning, 22 percent said it was only "a little" or "not at all" important, and at the end of the year just 7 percent felt that way.

Most of the youth were already doing volunteer work at the start of the program, but still this increased from 68 percent to 76 percent. The most striking increase was among the boys (62 percent to 81 percent).

### Students' views about program staff

Juniors in the Admission Possible program gave high marks to the AmeriCorps staff who worked with the program during the year.

During the 2003-04 school year, Admission Possible employed two types of staff at each high school:

- Coaches worked with groups of students, teaching the Kaplan prep classes and helping them prepare for college in other ways.
- Site coordinators organized the overall Admission Possible program activities at each school.

Nearly all the students said they respect their coach and their coach respects them "a lot." At least eight out of 10 said the same about their site coordinators.

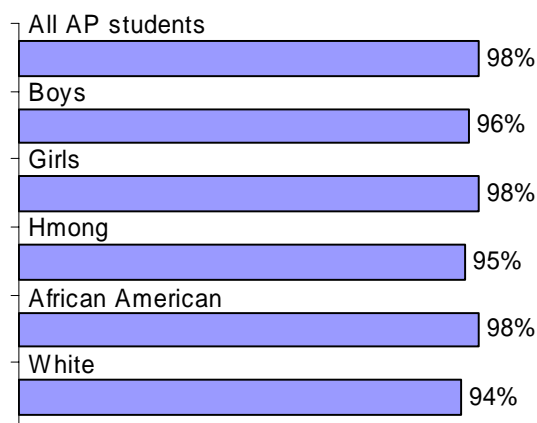
Eighty-five percent agreed strongly that their coach gives them useful information and that they trust their coach.

Site coordinators' slightly lower ratings could be related to the fact that they spend less time directly with the students. They were more highly rated for their knowledge than for their relationships with the students, especially their knowledge related to getting into college.

### Preliminary results for the seniors

Judging from preliminary information, the 167 high school seniors who were in their second year of Admission Possible in 2003-04 had some excellent results. Virtually all the seniors for whom information is available were accepted at a college (98%), with little variation by race or gender.

#### College acceptance



Thirty-four percent of the high school seniors in Admission Possible are Hmong, followed by 27 percent African American and 11 percent White. Two-thirds are girls.

Preliminary records for the seniors also show that 82 percent completed FAFSA applications (Free Application for Federal Student Aid), and 48 percent

of students were awarded scholarships. Ninety-five percent of African American students completed the FAFSA, compared to 77 percent each of Hmong and White students, according to records available at the time of this report.

Students who applied for scholarships tried for an average of six. Hmong youth applied for the most, with 43 percent applying for nine or more.

African Americans' scholarship applications were most fruitful, with 54 percent receiving scholarships compared to 45 percent of Hmong and 35 percent of White students.

Overall, seniors were awarded an average of two scholarships. African American students had the highest number of scholarships awarded, with an average of five, while Hmong received an average of two and Whites one.

### Staff's ethic of service

Admission Possible staff rated their own ethic of service on surveys they completed at the end of the program year. Generally, their responses reflect a very high ethic of service and interest in choosing a career in the education field.

All the program coaches said it is "very" or "somewhat" important for them to be part of making the community a better place, with 91 percent saying very important.

Most of the staff (82%) have performed community service in the past year outside their involvement with Admission Possible.

Seventy-one percent said they are likely to choose a career as a teacher or guidance counselor (39 percent "very likely" and 32 percent "somewhat likely").

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#### For more information

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