

Northridge, Greeley Central have gains in AP test-takers

By Tyler Silvy

tsilvy@greeleytribune.com

Northridge and Greeley Central high schools have nearly doubled the number of students taking Advanced Placement courses since 2008, and those schools' gains have come largely thanks to their ability to close the gap with student populations that are traditionally underrepresented in AP courses.

Northridge and Greeley Central combined to boast a 75 percent increase in female students earning qualifying scores on AP math and science tests, and the schools boosted students of color participation by 106 percent, according to a Colorado Education Initiative news release.

Northridge Principal Insoon Olson said the gains are significant, and important.

"I think part of it is to get away from the negative stereotype that only certain types of kids are successful in AP courses," said Olson, who added that Northridge teachers are having more conversations with students to help push them toward AP courses.

The Colorado Education Initiative announced Thursday that 10 Colorado schools, including Northridge

» Advanced Placement Courses

Advanced Placement courses are college-level classes in a wide variety of subjects students can take while still in high school. The nonprofit College Board develops course guidelines for high schools across the country. The courses offer students a greater challenge, and a taste of what college classes are like. Students who score well enough on AP exams may earn college credit, depending on the course and the student's choice of college or university.

and Greeley Central, that began implementation of the Colorado Legacy Schools initiative in the 2013-14 school year combined to hit a near-75 percent increase in the number of students taking AP tests.

The Colorado Education Initiative provides grants to schools to help increase participation in AP classes and increase performance on those AP tests. The grants tend to serve demographically diverse high schools. For Northridge and Greeley Central, that means \$10,000 per year, as well as the opportunity for professional de-

velopment for AP teachers and cash incentives for teachers and students in return for strong test scores, Greeley-Evans School District 6 spokeswoman Theresa Myers said.

The results have followed a larger trend for District 6. In addition to the percentage increases at Northridge and Greeley Central recently, the district has seen the total number of AP students nearly double, from 608 in 2008-09 to 1,057 in 2013-14, Myers said.

Greeley Central Principal Mark Cousins said he's happy with the increase, but added Greeley Central has work to do in order to reach its goal of every student in the school taking an AP class and passing the test.

Cousins said pushing student populations who don't traditionally take AP courses to take them is about more than numbers. It's a way to instill confidence.

"A lot of them don't come from a college-going culture," Cousins said. "Their parents didn't go to college. Because of that, they don't have that confidence. Those kids taking that test and being successful, they develop that confidence that they can be successful in those post-secondary opportunities."