RALEIGH, (SGRToday.com) - College Board data shows more North Carolina high school students are taking Advanced Placement tests than ever before.

A total of 67,678 North Carolina students took 125,547 AP exams in 2015, the Board announced. That's an 18.7 percent increase over the number of students who took AP exams in 2014.

The data puts the state ahead of the nation, which saw a 6 percent jump in AP exam takers.

Nationally, the number of AP exam takers was up by 6 percent.

Broadening access to college-level courses for qualified students continues to be a priority of North Carolina public school educators and state lawmakers. This year, lawmakers again provided funding to pay for all students' AP exams in the 2015-16 school year.