



Research Brief

Successfully Teaching AP Courses to Diverse Learners

Question: How can we be more successful teaching AP Courses to diverse students?

Summary of Findings:

The Advanced Placement (AP) program was started by the College Board In 1953 to challenge a small, elite group of capable students at each school involved. In recent years, in an increased effort to raise aspirations and have higher expectations for all students, schools have opened enrollment to more students. Part of the concern for widening enrollment is that minority students are underrepresented in AP classes. One study, focusing on Chicana/Latina students (Solórzano & Ornelas 2002), for example, found that three different patterns emerged around access and availability of AP classes: (1) Chicana/Latina students are disproportionately underrepresented in AP enrollment district-wide; (2) Schools that serve urban, low-income Chicana/Latina communities have low student enrollment in AP classes; (3) Even when Chicana/Latina students attend high schools with high numbers of students enrolled in AP classes, Chicana/Latina students are not equally represented in AP enrollment.

Some worry that increased access will diminish the quality of AP courses, but others point out that quality cannot be equated with small numbers enrolled. Camara, Dorans, Morgan, & Myford (2000) point out that the quality of AP courses depend on course content, the teacher, the student, as well as the exam. They go on to point out:

Increased access will not diminish quality. Instead, increased access exposes students to college-level course material, encourages teachers to expand their knowledge domains, serves as a lever for lifting curriculum rigor, and provides students with the opportunity to experience the challenges associated with advanced placement in college.

It is true that not every child can be successful with AP material. It is also true, however, that teacher attitude (of some teachers) can interfere with a student gaining access to or succeeding in an AP course. It isn't surprising that there are problems when teachers either don't believe certain students belong in an AP class or that there is only one right way to teach an AP class. Tucker, et. al. (2005) point out:

Teachers exert a potent influence over the achievement of all students, low-income culturally diverse students in particular. Although recent research has confirmed that teacher involvement is critical for promoting academic engagement of low-income and ethnically diverse students, other literature suggests that teachers have lower expectations for and fewer interactions with these children. These findings have prompted calls for promoting teacher self-efficacy for working with children from diverse backgrounds.

Teacher efficacy is an interesting phenomenon. It is the extent to which a teacher believes that her students can learn or that she can help them learn. Surprisingly, teachers with a higher teacher efficacy rate are more successful with students than their colleagues with a lower efficacy rating. There are eight dimensions of teacher efficacy: 1. A sense of personal accomplishment; 2. Positive expectations for student behavior and achievement; 3. Personal responsibility for student learning; 4. Strategies for achieving objectives; 5. Positive affect; 6. Sense of control; 7. Sense of common teacher/student goals; and 8. Democratic decision making.

How can school leaders help teachers raise their teachers' sense of efficacy? Hipp (1996) found that three leadership behaviors-- modeling behavior, inspiring group purpose, and providing contingent rewards--were significantly related to general teaching efficacy and that "models behaviors" and "provided contingent rewards" were significantly related to personal teaching efficacy. An implication is that if a strong sense of efficacy motivates teachers to higher levels of competence and success, then an increased focus on this teacher attribute is critical.

Antrop-Gonzalez, Velez, & Garrett (2005) found that one of four success factors for the success of minority students in AP classes was the potential for caring teachers and other school staff to influence high academic achievement. Henderson, Winitzky, & Kauchak (1996) found that more effective AP teachers distributed and asked more questions, had higher engagement rates, had greater feedback on assignments, and had greater participation and success rates. The study also indicated that more effective AP teachers organized their subject knowledge differently, and created a learning environment for their students that encouraged



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greater degrees of participation. Muir (2001) showed that engaged learning happens when students had strong relationships with their teachers and their teachers helped them succeed, when there was variety and hands-on, active work, when there were choices and work was interesting, when students could make connections through synthesis, analysis, evaluation, and creation, and when learning was put into context and had real world connections.

So, school leaders can further help diverse learners succeed in AP courses by setting a clear expectation that AP teachers use engaging teaching strategies, backed up with a show of support, including needed professional development or coaching in such strategies.

Online Resources:

(Note: ERIC documents can be found by going to <http://www.eric.ed.gov/> and entering the ERIC ID#)

A Critical Race Analysis Of Advanced Placement Classes: A Case Of Educational Inequality.

Solórzano, Daniel G., Ornelas, Armida,

Journal of Latinos and Education, Vol 1(4), 2002. pp. 215-229.

Provides an examination of access and availability of Advanced Placement (AP) courses and how they impact educational outcomes for Chicana/Latina students. We examine a school district in California that serves a large population of Chicana/Latina students. Three different patterns emerged around access and availability of AP classes: (1) Chicana/Latina students are disproportionately underrepresented in AP enrollment district-wide. (2) Schools that serve urban, low-income Chicana/Latina communities have low student enrollment in AP classes. (3) Even when Chicana/Latina students attend high schools with high numbers of students enrolled in AP classes, Chicana/Latina students are not equally represented in AP enrollment.

http://www.leaonline.com/doi/abs/10.1207/S1532771XJLE0104_2

Advanced Placement: Access Not Exclusion

Wayne Camara, Neil J. Dorans, Rick Morgan, & Carol Myford
Education Policy Analysis Archives Volume 8 Number 40

Lichten (2000) argues that increased access to AP courses in high schools has led to a decline in AP quality. He uses a mix of actual data, inaccurate data, and fabricated data to support this hypothesis. A logical consequence of his argument is that a reduction in the availability of AP courses will lead to an improvement in AP quality. In this paper, we maintain that his thesis is flawed because he confounds quality with scarcity. In contrast to his narrow conception of quality, quality in the AP context is subject-specific and multifaceted, embracing course content, the teacher, the student as well as the exam. Increased access will not diminish quality. Instead, increased access exposes students to college-level course material, encourages teachers to expand their knowledge domains, serves as a lever for lifting curriculum rigor, and provides students with the opportunity to experience the challenges associated with advanced placement in college.

<http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v8n40.html>

Title: Promoting Teacher Efficacy for Working with Culturally Diverse Students

Tucker, Carolyn M.; Porter, Terrence; Reinke, Wendy M.; Herman, Keith C.; Ivery, Phyllis D.; Mack, Christopher E.; Jackson, Erin S.;

Preventing School Failure; v50 n1 p29 Fall 2005

Teachers exert a potent influence over the achievement of all students, low-income culturally diverse students in particular. Although recent research has confirmed that teacher involvement is critical for promoting academic engagement of low-income and ethnically diverse students, other literature suggests that teachers have lower expectations for and fewer interactions with these children. These findings have prompted calls for promoting teacher self-efficacy for working with children from diverse backgrounds. The purposes of this article are (a) to summarize briefly the literature that examines the effect of teacher efficacy on academic and behavioral outcomes of students, especially culturally diverse students; (b) to disseminate the findings of a teacher-training program designed to promote teacher efficacy in relation to culturally diverse students; and (c) to provide teachers, administrators, and teacher trainers with methods to increase teacher efficacy when working with culturally diverse learners. Information on promoting teacher efficacy for working with culturally diverse students is appended.

ERIC #: EJ726489



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Teacher Efficacy: Influence of Principal Leadership Behavior.

Hipp, Kristine A.;

This paper presents findings of a study that explored the relationships among principals' leadership behaviors and teacher efficacy in Wisconsin middle schools involved in building-level change efforts. An adaptation of Bandura's social cognitive learning theory of self-efficacy (A. Woolfolk and W. Hoy 1993) provided the theoretical framework. The data indicate that three of Leithwood's transformational leadership behaviors--modeling behavior, inspiring group purpose, and providing contingent rewards--were significantly related to general teaching efficacy. "Models behaviors" and "provided contingent rewards" were significantly related to personal teaching efficacy. Qualitative data confirmed these results and suggested eight additional leadership behaviors that reinforce and sustain teacher efficacy. An implication is that if a strong sense of efficacy motivates teachers to higher levels of competence and success, then an increased focus on this teacher attribute is critical.

ERIC #: ED396409

¿Donde Estan los Estudiantes Puertorriquenos/os Exitosos? [Where Are the Academically Successful Puerto Rican Students?]: Success Factors of High-Achieving Puerto Rican High School Students.

Rene Antrop-Gonzalez, William Velez, Tomas Garrett

Journal of Latinos and Education 4:2, 77-94

This article describes the 4 success factors that 10 working class Puerto Rican urban high school students attributed to their high academic achievement. These success factors were (a) the acquisition of social capital through religiosity and participation in school and community-based extracurricular activities, (b) having a strong Puerto Rican identity, (c) the influence of these students' mothers on their academic achievement, and (d) the potential for caring teachers and other school staff to influence high academic achievement. These findings have implications for Latino/a education and recommendations are provided.

http://www.leaonline.com/doi/abs/10.1207/s1532771xjle0402_2

Effective Teaching In Advanced Placement Classrooms.

Henderson, James, Winitzky, Nancy, Kauchak, Don

Journal of Classroom Interaction, Vol 31(1), 1996. pp. 29-35.

Examined teaching practices in 4 high school advanced placement (AP) American History classrooms using case study methodology. Four teachers were identified based on their students past performance on AP tests. The results indicated that more effective AP teachers distributed and asked more questions, had higher engagement rates, had greater feedback on assignments, and had greater participation and success rates. The study also indicated that more effective AP teachers organized their subject knowledge differently, and created a learning environment for their students that encouraged greater degrees of participation.

Journal URL: <http://www.coe.uh.edu/cmcd/coejci/index.htm>

Teacher Efficacy

A model of the teaching/learning process that highlights the importance of teacher expectations for student learning. This model describes the variables or factors of schools and classrooms thought to be under the influence of educators.

<http://chiron.valdosta.edu/whuitt/col/teacher/tcheff.html>

Motivating Underachieving Students

Info about motivating students, including a link to Muir, M. (2001).

<http://www.mcmel.org/workshops/MEL.html>

Submitted Date: 6/12/2006 By: Mike Muir, Maine Center for Meaningful Engaged Learning

<http://www.principalspartnership.com>

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