



Where Excellence Is Tradition

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Equity in AP to adapt to a changing economy

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The erosion of the middle class and the premium our economy places on highly skilled workers has placed a new mandate on public schools. First, schools must design programs that provide access to challenging coursework to all students, not just a select cohort. Second, schools must provide increased support for these students to help them succeed in these more demanding courses. Advanced Placement (AP) programs are a good example to look at as a case study for how we can't keep doing what we have always done. Gone should be the days when high schools would sort students into "college-bound" and "non-college bound" tracks. Nationwide, this is a challenge that is largely being unmet – fewer than 1% of high schools in the United States have AP classes that are as diverse as the overall population of their school.

In Glenbard District 87, we acted on the moral urgency to take on this challenge last year by signing on as one of seven school districts in Illinois to partner with the nonprofit organization Equal Opportunity Schools. By using research-based surveys, data analytics and new outreach efforts we were able to drastically increase the proportion of low-income, Latino and African-American students who enrolled in an AP course for next fall.

One way we have increased supports for these students is by expanding our summer school programming to include a course specifically designed to help newcomers to AP courses learn the mindset and skills they will need to be successful in these classes. More than 425 of these first-time AP students signed up for this AP Launch course. It is humbling to witness the commitment exhibited by these students as they give up a week of their summer vacation to put in hard work to succeed in an AP course in their area of interest. Leaders need to honor students' passion by committing to changing our schools to prepare all students for a changing economy.

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