JOIN TOGETHER! GET INVOLVED!: A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR IMPROVING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN ADVANCED PLACEMENT PROGRAMS WITHIN AN URBAN CENTRAL FLORIDA HIGH SCHOOL

by

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Course Instructor: Barbara Murray
Executive Summary

Communities, in large part, are historically driven by the success of the local schools who serve them. Those schools serve as both a physical and intangible representation of the partnerships which exist within that community. The purpose of this strategic plan is to improve the parental and communal involvement in advanced courses at a low-income high-needs urban high school in Central Florida.

The program, Join Together! Get Involved! will be designed to integrate the Advanced Studies department of that high school with both the parents of the students it serves as well as the community at large. The intended goal of the program is to improve both minority student participation and performance in advanced coursework by
designing support systems aimed at providing interventions and differentiation of instruction and experience among first-time and veteran students of Advanced Placement courses alike.

Research references are available on p. 8 and all appendices are accessible through the attached resource packet. Questions regarding the implantation of this program can be furnished to timothy.flynn@ocps.net.

Organizational Description

Oak Ridge High School is a public secondary school established in 1956 located in Central Florida and a part of Orange County Public Schools. Currently, there are about 2,700 students enrolled in the school, of which roughly 15% are participating in eleven Advanced Placement courses ranging from English Language and Composition to United States History. Black and Hispanic high school students enroll in Advanced Placement (AP) courses at approximately half the rate of white students (Klopfenstein, 2004). Low income is the single most important factor behind the minority AP participation gap (Klopfenstein, 2004).

A SWOT analysis (Appendix A) was used to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the current Advanced Placement program at Oak Ridge High School and consistently among teachers of AP courses, it was indicated that one of the largest impediments for student performance was the interaction and engagement of parents and the community in the AP courses. Community engagement with a school in both urban and non-urban schools is often correlated to improvements in learning across all levels of students (Blank, et. al, 2012).

The stagnation of parental involvement in the AP program has become the underlying catalyst for the identification of two main goals for the AP program at Oak Ridge High School: 1) Improve early identification systems tasked with introducing non-traditional AP students with AP courses at an earlier age as well as provide those students the guidance and support necessary for success, 2) Improve parental, communal, and university connectedness and engagement in Advanced Placement courses. With those goals in mind, the “Join Together! Get Involved!” a program with the purpose of increasing minority access to rigorous classes with parent and community support, initiative was started.
Mission and Vision Statement

*Oak Ridge High School:*

*Mission:* To develop the support of our families and community as we engage our students to become productive citizens.

*Vision:* To be a producer of students that successfully competes on a national level.

*Join Together! Get Involved!:

*Mission:* To increase both participation and performance of minority students in high-level courses with the support and involvement of parents and the community.

*Vision:* To improve the performance and participation of all students participating in Advanced Placement courses in order that they compete on a national level.

Goals and Action Items

1. Improve early identification systems tasked with introducing non-traditional AP students with AP courses at an earlier age as well as provide those students the guidance and support necessary for success. Action items include:
   a. Use College Board Advanced Placement indicators (see Appendix B) as well as historical standardized assessment data and incoming freshmen grade-point averages to identify those students ready for success in an AP classroom. Those students, regardless of grade, will be enrolled in at least one Advanced Placement course with the purpose of increasing the course load by one with each year of progression (i.e.: incoming freshmen will be enrolled in one AP course, two as a sophomore, three as a junior, and four as a senior ultimately graduating high school with ten Advanced Placement credits).
   b. Remove teacher recommendation requirements from Advanced Placement selection process. Students identified has having the potential to succeed in an AP course will not be required to seek recommendation from any teachers in order to participate.
c. Design safety nets in order to ensure increase motivation and accessibility. Students who are participating in advanced courses for the first time will also be concurrently enrolled in an Advanced Courses Skills course in which learning objectives will be centered on metacognitive strategies such as reading for purpose, note-taking, managing-time, staying organized, and writing for advanced courses.

d. Modify grading expectations to reflect both mastery, effort, and motivation rather than compliance and deference (see Appendix C).

e. Provide individual student interventions based on teacher perceived deficiencies such as missing two or assignments, scoring below a 70% on an assessment, continued instance of absence, and overall grade below a 70% (see Appendix D).

2. Improve parental, communal, and university connectedness and engagement in Advanced Placement courses. Action items include:

   a. On an annual basis, the Advanced Courses Department will host an open forum meeting and invite all students, parents, and teachers to meet and interact with the current teachers and students of Advanced Placement courses. AP teachers will create trifold presentations as well as a consumable product for prospective students and their parents to take with them. Current AP students will be recruited to share their experiences on how advanced courses have improved their understanding of the metacognitive skills necessary of success in college and life after high school. Individualized letters will be sent to students of feeder-schools identified as having met the AP potential indicators for success in an AP class as well as generic letters to parents, students, and community members inviting their participation with the forum.

   b. Design a partnership between the University of Central Florida and Oak Ridge High School with the purpose of providing high-performing students a model and mentor for the skills requisite of a successful AP student. College mentors will be paired with AP students based on their indicated strengths as understood from an application survey filled out by
the potential mentor student. Mentorships will begin on a volunteer basis and have the opportunity to matriculate into a paid position at $12 an hour (see Appendix E).

c. Quarterly, AP teachers will be compensated to open up their classrooms for two hours so that members of the community as well as the parents of current AP students can come in and learn about what is being done in the advanced courses in their community school. Teachers will work with parents in order to improve methods of communication as well as learn the routines and procedures of advanced level course work.

Ongoing Assessments

The overall efficacy of this plan will be susceptible to periodic and scheduled feedback mechanisms and systems. The data gathered from these systems will be used to make future strategic adjustments to the plan itself with the purpose of continually growing and changing goals as they are met.

Budget and Allocations

Join Together! Get Involved! 2014-15 Operating Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost Per Unit</th>
<th>Total Cost</th>
<th>Funding Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Placement Open Forum Night (Annual)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Time</td>
<td>$20/hr x 15</td>
<td>$600</td>
<td>District Operating Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>teachers @ 2hrs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$.50 x 100 (soda and water)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL $1,150 x 1 year</strong></td>
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<td>Advanced Placement Open House (Quarterly)</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL $3,000 x 4 quarters = $12,000</strong></td>
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<td>District Operating Fund/Advanced Studies Budget</td>
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TOTAL $6,000 x 7 months = $42,000

TOTAL ESTIMATED YEARLY ALLOCATION: $55,150
References