

AP Café: A Lake View HS Recruitment Program for AP



At Lake View High School in Chicago, Melissa Resh, Assistant Principal/STEM Director, along with the schools' Equity Team, introduced a new outreach strategy they called 'AP Café's'. The goal of the AP Café's was to further engage and recruit rising 11th and 12th grade students of color and low-income students in order to boost equitable enrollment in AP classes.

Lake View High School is part of the Chicago Public School system and is currently in the "Experience Success" phase with Equal Opportunity Schools. Last year, the school found and enrolled an additional 70 students of color and low-income students into their first-ever AP course. This year's goal is to find and enroll an additional 50 students above that number.

Studies show that students who take college readiness courses are more likely to graduate from high school and pursue post-secondary education. Through the school's EOS Equity Pathway Report, Resh knew that 86% of students want to go on to college and need the exposure to college readiness courses. With this in mind, Resh and her team designed the cafés with guidance and support from Alison Gazarek, Regional Director of Partnership for Equal Opportunity Schools.

"After reflecting on their AP informational assembly in their first year, the team reflected that a more intimate, student-led environment might have more impact," said Gazarek. "They organized current AP students from all demographics to message to students in small groups, along with staff representatives, about the benefits of AP."

"I heard that we needed to be creative in our outreach process and after some brainstorming, we came up with an idea of these café's, mini assemblies where we could hold meaningful conversations about the advantages and benefits of taking a college readiness course," said Resh.

As part of the process, Resh's team identified a subset of students already on the school's outreach list. This provided more than 200 rising 11th and 12th graders for the initial AP Café invitations who were underrepresented in AP courses. Those not on the initial list were still scheduled for time with their identified trusted adults.

The cafés were designed to be held over a regular class period, for 20 students at a time. Each of the AP Cafés had a student panel where the panelists answered questions before breaking into even more intimate groups. Parents were invited, although none were able to attend, to learn more about the benefits of taking AP and the impact AP has on college, career, and life trajectories.

At the end of all the AP Café's, approximately 75% of those invited attended, and Spring course requests are in line to reach the goal of enrolling an additional 50 students over the previous year. Additionally, the review process helped identify where course gaps occurred, such as in the Sciences, and will now lead to the introduction of new courses. Resh campaigned to expand the AP Capstone program within the district, and now AP Seminar will be offered for the first time in a Chicago Public School in a neighborhood, non-selective enrollment school. Resh was so excited about bringing Capstone to Lake View that she'll be teaching AP Seminar next year.