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Advanced Placement for All?!

Equity and Access within Reach

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Schools aspire
to make students
college and career ready.

Readiness Requires Rigor

Rigor is...

Creating an environment in which each student is expected to learn at high levels, each student is supported so he or she can learn at high levels, **and each student demonstrates learning at high levels.**

Blackburn (2015)

College courses have long represented
the benchmark for rigor.

Access to Collegiate Rigor in High Schools

- Dual Enrollment Courses
- International Baccalaureate
- Advanced Placement

Only AP offers a cost-effective, rigorous, research-validated, and audited program for students in Grades 9-12.

Students—including those with previously low achievement levels—who take more rigorous, academically intense programs in high school enroll and persist in postsecondary education at higher rates than similar students who pursue less challenging courses of study.

Adelman, 2006; Oakes & Saunders, 2007

Rigor and the Equity Gap

Exposure to rigorous courses is a reliable predictor of college success.

2007

Only 30% of high school students earned AP credits before graduating
(Huerta, 2013)

2018

38.9% of the Class of 2018 took an AP Exam
(College Board, 2018)

Impact of AP on college graduation rates

Student Group	AP Exam Grade of 3, 4, 5	AP Exam Grade of 1, 2	Took AP course but not Exam
African American	28% higher	22% higher	16% higher
Hispanic	28% higher	12% higher	10% higher
White	33% higher	22% higher	20% higher
Low-Income	26% higher	17% higher	12% higher
Not Low-Income	34% higher	23% higher	19% higher

The Relationship Between Advanced Placement and College Graduation (National Center for Educational Accountability)

224,300

9th Grade AP Exams in 2018

55.3% pass rate (vs. 59.8%)

Why would a
school choose not
to offer its best
curriculum to
every student?

Early is Better

“9th Grade Shock”

A growing body of research identifies the transition between 8th and 9th as particularly impactful on a student’s postsecondary trajectory and suggests that rigor is best addressed at this point.

(Ascher & McGuire, 2011; Edmunds, 2012)

Long, Conger, and Iatarola (2012) examined the effect of taking a rigorous course on subsequent outcomes for 32,794 grade 9 students in Florida in 2007 and found “the largest effect of taking a rigorous course [occurred] in the first 2 years of high school for students who have taken no rigorous courses.”

Tishman and Clapp (2017) determined that students who find success in the AP classroom build a strong sense of agency, which they define as “a sense that it’s possible to reshape the way things are by directing one’s actions purposefully.”

How does
expanded AP
impact a school?

Four Key Areas of Impact

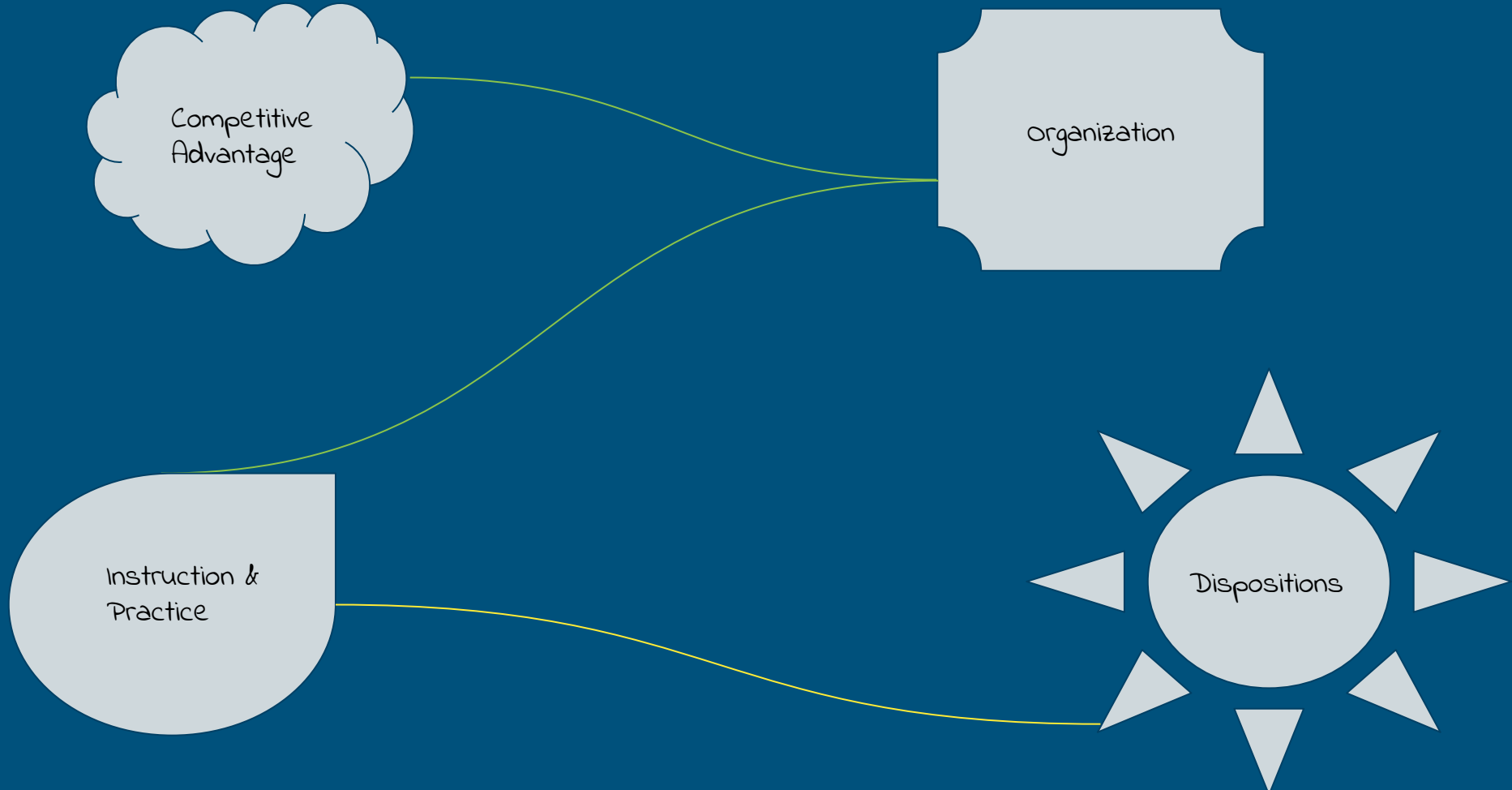
1. Competitive Advantage → Make gains and distinguish from others
2. Organization → Address logistics and confront biases
3. Instruction and Practice → Close skill gaps and emphasize interim successes
4. Dispositions → Transform and develop confidence

Competitive
Advantage

organization

Instruction &
Practice

Dispositions



Competitive Advantage

- Enhanced college readiness
- More competitive student transcripts
- Perceived/Actual impact on school rankings
- Increased appeal to students and parents

Organization

- Logistical challenges
- Admissions criterion
- Personal biases
- Middle school skills gap
- Responsive approach
- Expanded AP program
- High profile teacher selection

Instruction and Practice

- Evolve and align
- Measure individual growth--Culture of Success
- Model best practices (teacher/student)
- Tune instruction and grading
- Address the AP Exam
- Expand pool of "AP capable"

Dispositions

- Belief in the feasibility of the course
- Non-traditional students can achieve success
- Adaptation to rigor (“survive until December”)
- An AP mindset exists and can be developed
- Prepared for more challenges--resilience, confidence
- A Culture of Confidence extends throughout the school

Implications

For Schools:

- ★ Logistics
- ★ Tracking, sequencing, skill alignment
- ★ Rigor and articulation (vert & horiz)
- ★ AP teacher selection/bench
- ★ Administrator training
- ★ Increased AP enrollment

For Students:

- ★ Gains to be made vs. peers
- ★ College readiness skills
- ★ Application/cost advantages
- ★ Unavoidable stress--make it to December
- ★ Resilience and confidence

Implications

For Educators:

- ★ Build a culture of success
- ★ Prioritize skill development over content
- ★ Personalize learning; re-define success
- ★ Evaluate with multiple measures (not just Exam)
- ★ Reflect on teaching and respond
- ★ Scale the rigor of the course
- ★ Model instruction
- ★ Focus on literacy
- ★ Build relationships and trust
- ★ See more students w/ AP potential
- ★ Experience pride and sense of purpose

Transformational Implications

- ❖ Rigor in middle schools
- ❖ Equity and Access
- ❖ Emphasizing student growth
- ❖ What the AP Exam is and is not
- ❖ Developing a Culture of Confidence

Why would a
school choose not
to offer its best
curriculum to
every student?

"Maybe they're afraid.
Maybe it has to do with
a belief in students."

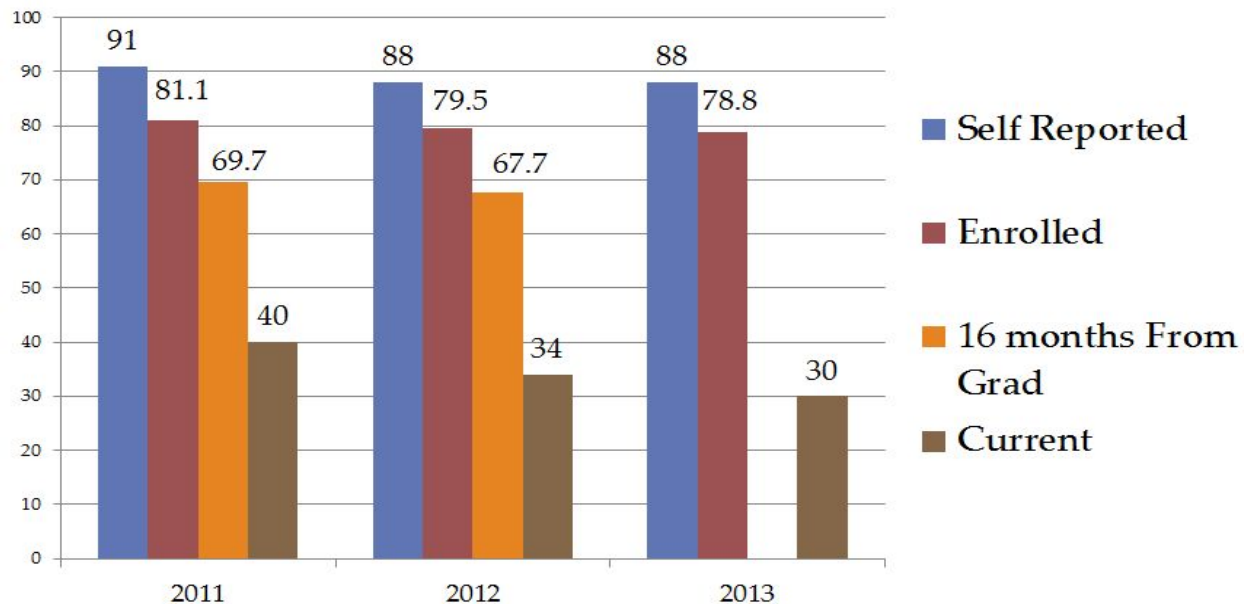
--A Successful AP Teacher

So how can we do it?

It begins with a rationale, followed by a simple philosophy

Another Reason to Expand

What do you see?



**“How do we best
prepare our students
for the
rigors of college?”**

 CollegeBoard  AP

**AP Annual
Conference 2017**

Core Belief #1

***All students should have access to the very best curricula we offer.**

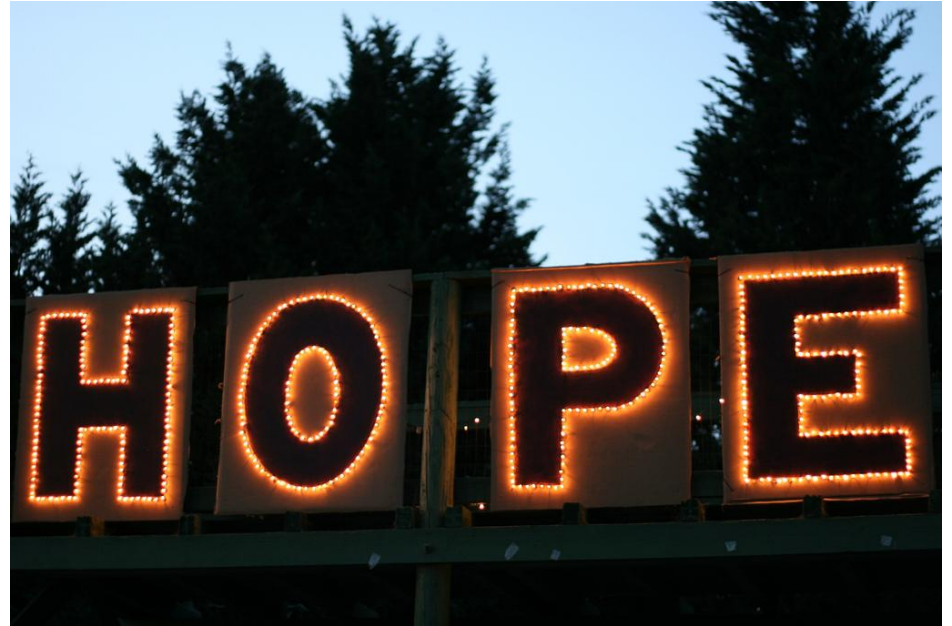
OPEN  ACCESS

 **AP**

**AP Annual
Conference 2017**

Core Belief #2

***Students often undersell themselves (or are undersold) for reasons not directly related to their innate skill or intelligence level.**



Core Belief #3

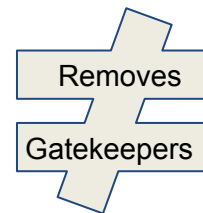
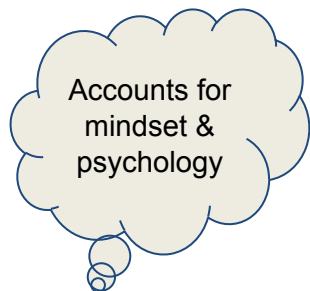
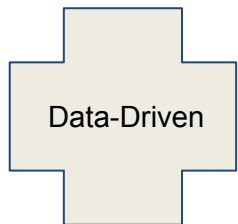
***Students exposed to higher standards (expectations) and better curriculum in high school are more prepared for college.**

CollegeBoard AP

**AP Annual
Conference 2017**



The Process...



Must be data-driven

**Don't expect everyone to
be on-board.**

-
- ▶ Data-driven-- WHY?
 - ▶ Teachers are rational and have the best interests of their students in mind.
 - ▶ Teachers are stressed, spread thin, and acutely aware of the accountability measures that have been thrust upon them

Must account for mindset and psychology

Our desire to emphasize the status of AP may work against us.

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- ▶ Psychological Considerations
 - ▶ Students often fear AP because they have bought into the myth that AP is “for other kids” and is the key point of stress in their friends’ academic lives.
 - ▶ Parents hear horror stories of “overstressed kids” taking extreme measures
 - ▶ Teachers sometimes hold a myopic view of what an “AP Kid” is (and is not).

Must think INCLUSION rather than EXCLUSION

**Believe that AP can be
for EVERY student (and
evaluate your practices).**

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- ▶ Looking to QUALITY data sources
 - ▶ AP Potential report (PSAT 8/9, too!)
 - ▶ Pandora's box (grading practices, qualifying tests, relying solely on standardized tests or classroom grades, etc...).
 - ▶ Does Mom count?



Must SELL the courses

What will motivate a teen to do more work and receive (potentially) a lower grade?

-
- ▶ AP Potential report letters (personally sign them)
 - ▶ School counselor recruiting
 - ▶ Teacher advocates
 - ▶ Class advertising
 - ▶ Current AP students classroom visits
 - ▶ Parent/Student information sessions
 - ▶ Social media, principal's message, website links
 - ▶ Data, data, data
 - ▶ Middle school recruitment

Must address gatekeepers

Some soft-barriers to access are less obvious.

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- ▶ Tracks to nowhere
 - ▶ Entrance tests
 - ▶ Non-skill-aligned courses
 - ▶ Tough-faced teachers
 - ▶ Counter-incentives -- high GPA, NHS entry, ease of work, costs of testing, etc...



Outcome Data

**More tests, better results,
more opportunities for
students**



2011

- 161 Students Enrolled In An AP Course
- 271 Exams Taken
- 36% of Exams Scored At 3 or Higher.

2018

317 Students
564 Exams
51 3 or better

2016

- 277 Students Enrolled In An AP Course
- 432 Exams Taken
- 45% of Exams Scored At 3 or Higher

2017

- 273 Students Enrolled In An AP Course
- 446 Exams Taken
- 51% of Exams Scored At 3 or Higher

Different Challenge, Same Mission

Point Pleasant Beach High School

413 Total Students

Grades 9-12

2016

- 60 AP Students
- 130 AP Seats
- 107 Exams Taken
- 68.3% of Exams Scored At 3+.

2017

- 115 AP Students
- 264 AP Seats
- 210 Exams Taken
- 67.9% of Exams Scored At 3+.

2018

- 237 Students
- 402 Seats
- 356 Exams
- 48% 3+

2019

- 175 Students
- 368 Seats
- 331 Exams
- 47% 3+

Thank You!!

This presentation contains research from “How Ninth-grade AP World History Impacts a School: Rigor and the Culture of Confidence,” ©2019 William T. Smith, Ed. D.

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