

D211 POST: DISTRICT 211 NAMED TO COLLEGE BOARD'S 8TH ANNUAL AP DISTRICT HONOR ROLL



Students evaluate the results of an experiment during an AP Physics course.

Township High School District 211 has been named to College Board's annual Advanced Placement (AP) District Honor Roll for the third time in the award's eight-year history for significant gains in student access and success. District 211 is one of only 447 districts throughout the United States and Canada to be honored this year.

To be named to the honor roll, data from the past three years of 38 different AP exams, including world language and culture, was reviewed to ensure districts met key criteria. That criteria includes an increased participation or access to all AP classes by at least 6%, an increased or maintained percentage of minority students scoring 3 or higher on at least one AP exam, and an improved or maintained performance level when comparing the 2017 percentage of students scoring a 3 or higher to the 2015 percentage.

Dr. Daniel Cates, District 211 Superintendent said, "Our staff members have again helped significant numbers of students recognize their potential and experience the reward of giving your best effort, even when it's beyond your comfort zone."



Jeffrey O'Brien, a computer science teacher from Schaumburg High School, helps Senior Arden Mroz work out a programming problem during an AP computer science course at Schaumburg High School.

Currently, more than 4,000 students throughout District 211 have enrolled in AP courses during the 2017-2018 school year. Of those, 540 enrolled for the first time this year. Those students have the opportunity to earn a variety of financial and academic advantages at many colleges and universities that may include earned college credit for the courses. AP courses and exam scores are widely accepted by colleges and universities. Approximately 20 states, including Illinois, award college credits for a score of 3 or higher on an AP exam.

“Our increases in the number of students enrolled in AP courses, especially in the number of our first-time enrollees,” commented Dr. Cates, “highlights the impact that results when we expand the exchange between students and teachers,” added Dr. Cates.

District 211’s AP courses include: Art History, Studio Art 3-D Design, Studio Art 2-D Design, Studio Art Drawing, Music Theory, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Physics 1&2, Physics C, Environmental Science, Calculus AB, Calculus BC, Statistics, Literature and Composition, Language and Composition, Spanish, Spanish Literature and Culture, German, French, Chinese, U.S. History, European History, World History, Human Geography, Microeconomics, Macro-Economics, Psychology, Government and Politics, Seminar, Computer Science Principles, and Computer Science.

“The experience of a student enrolling in the first AP course can change the trajectory of that student’s future,” added Dr. Cates.

DISTRICT 211 AND LEAD HIGHER INITIATIVE TO HELP CLOSE GAP



Throughout the past several years, High School District 211 has focused efforts on bridging the gaps in Advanced Placement (AP) and accelerated courses among students from all race and income backgrounds. District 211 is one of a handful of school districts across the state selected to participate in the Lead Higher Initiative, a partnership between the State and Equal Opportunity Schools (EOS), to expand enrollment to students. In a joint initiative from Governor Bruce Rauner, Secretary of Education Dr. Beth Purvis, and State Superintendent of Education Dr. Tony Smith, Illinois became the first state in

the U.S. to partner with the Lead Higher Initiative in a statewide challenge to close equity gaps for lower-income students and students of color in its high schools' most rigorous courses.

Students' participation in AP courses can significantly impact a student's future by challenging students with more rigor, offering an opportunity to earn guaranteed college credit in Illinois, and enhancing application to competitive colleges. For the class of 2012, 48 percent of all District 211 students were enrolled in at least one AP class by the time they graduated. In the District's class of 2017, 60 percent have enrolled in at least one AP course. Though the number of District 211 students enrolled in AP courses has increased, the percentage of students to earn a score of 3 or higher on the course AP examination has remained around 80 percent. Additionally, public institutions in Illinois accept an AP score of 3 and higher for college credit, which helps many students with the financial burden of college tuition.

"Persistence in freshman to sophomore year of college is a key indicator of student readiness," said Mark Kovack, associate superintendent for student services in District 211. "Over each of the past eight years, more than 90 percent of District 211 graduates who enrolled in college following high school graduation remained enrolled as college sophomores. This compares to a national average of 69 percent and clearly illustrates the District's efforts to help students plan and prepare for college."

In addition to AP courses, various programs and events also have encouraged students to get involved in AP courses. District 211 partners with EOS, which is a proven organization of assisting school districts to identify, enroll and support more students in challenging college-preparatory courses. Successful completion in AP coursework boosts students' academic motivation, achievement, and likelihood of

graduating from college.



Hoffman Estates High School senior Cindy Aguilera-Navarro discusses college applications with her counselor.

For several years, District 211 has provided supports to students through its own Project Excel program. Project Excel identifies incoming freshman and minority students and aims to support and teach them to become resilient, hard-working, engaged learners in accelerated AP courses. Students participate in learning cohorts throughout all four years of high school, which provides an opportunity for students to learn and grow with the same group of students during some of their classes as a support system.

Hoffman Estates High School senior Cindy Aguilera-Navarro said Project Excel is a reason she is now participating in AP-level courses. She never thought it was possible for her to go to college. Cindy, who is an immigrant and the first student in her family applying to a four-year university, faced many obstacles in her personal life that impacted her priorities in school. With the immense amount of support from her teachers, she was encouraged to take honors courses her freshman year and then was encouraged to take AP courses moving forward.

“My teachers, and mostly Project Excel, has influenced me and taught me that nothing is impossible and that I can exceed my expectations,” she said. “Freshman year, I didn’t take AP classes and I was in honors. That is when my teachers pushed me even more because they knew I could handle it. If I didn’t have that support, I don’t think I would have had the courage to take those classes.”

Cindy is now in the process of applying for colleges with interests in studying law, writing, or pre-medicine.



Palatine High School senior Karen Contreras participates in her Project Excel class.

Palatine High School senior Karen Contreras also is a participant in the Project Excel program and said it helped push her to take AP classes when she was unsure of her capabilities. Starting in honors classes, Karen said her teachers encouraged her to take AP classes. She said she was surprised to find the classes were manageable with hard work and effort, and also said it helps to have people around you who show their support.

“I always felt I was not the smartest student, but throughout all my years in high school I have always battled that and challenged myself,” Karen said. “I would tell students coming into high school that they might have preconceived ideas about how they might not be able to do something, but it is always worth it to try.”

Karen is currently applying to attend college, including Swarthmore College and Northwestern University.

To help students with the college application process, District 211 hosts a First-Generation College Symposium in both English and Spanish. The event explains important information for first-generation college students and their families, such as financial aid, differences in collegiate institutions, and what to expect. Incoming freshmen also have the opportunity to enroll in a summer school social studies AP preparation course that specifically focuses on reading and writing in the subject.

Students who have graduated from District 211 and are college-bound have reached out to teachers letting them know how the supports and encouragement to enroll in AP courses changed their lives. In a letter to Conant High School Counselor Adam Leibman, recent class of 2016 graduate Ronak Mehta describes how without Leibman’s help, he would not be where he is today – enrolled in classes at the University of Illinois.

“Due to the time and effort you put in, you managed to change the rest of my high school career,” writes Ronak. “Because of the opportunity that you gave me, I was able to challenge myself on a daily basis, meet new people, and aspire to get into a prestigious college. The most inspiring thing about what you did is not how you just helped me, but how you continue to help hundreds of people like me who want something more with their high school experience.”

Superintendent Dan Cates commented that District 211 officials are “pleased with the positive results of our existing programs, and our partnership in the Lead Higher initiative is the next step to help us reach more students and further narrow existing gaps.”

“POWER OF 15” HIGHLIGHTS BENEFITS OF AP, DUAL-CREDIT COURSES

Students spend four years in high school planning and preparing for their college experience. Research indicates that students who engage in college-level coursework while still in the supportive high school environment have an increased likelihood of being successful in college and graduating from college in four years. High School District 211 students can enroll in rigorous, college-level coursework through both Advanced Placement and Dual Credit courses.

The Northwest Educational Council for Student Success (NECSS) partnership of Districts 211, 214, 220, and Harper College offers high school students a variety of Dual Credit and Advanced Placement courses to encourage all students to earn the equivalent of 15 college credit hours – typically the equivalent of five college classes – prior to high school graduation.

Both Advanced Placement and Dual Credit coursework offers the opportunity for high school students to earn college credit prior to high school graduation. The financial incentive for students and their families, combined with the confidence a student gains from engaging in rigorous coursework prior to entering college, makes for a winning combination.

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A GLANCE IN THE CLASSROOM: SCHAUMBURG HIGH SCHOOL'S AP ART HISTORY COURSE



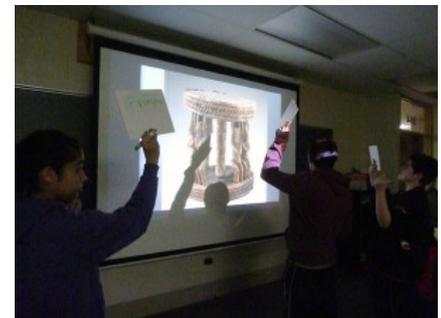
Students play a review game in AP Art History at SHS.

As students in Schaumburg High School's Advanced Placement (AP) Art History class prepare for an upcoming midterm, they had the opportunity to take reviewing into their own hands.

Students in the art class were challenged to show what they know by creating various review games to share with their peers to help prepare for an upcoming midterm, one that will mimic the AP exam.

"Having students create and design review activities allows me to see what methods they find most useful for the exam," said Kimberly Shade, art teacher at Schaumburg High School.

Currently, Schaumburg has the only annual AP Art History course, and Shade said each of her students score high, ranging from a 3 to 5. During the exercise, students were given white boards and were asked review questions based on an image. Students had to write the correct answer on the board first in order to score, and competed in groups during the game. Other games consisted of Monopoly and a quiz game that once completed made an image of the time period being discussed in that unit.



Shade said this AP course is not only valuable in learning arts, but also valued by universities and college. The history behind art allows students to get a head start on collegiate studies, even if they aren't planning on going into art in college.

"The students experience is valuable to universities," Shade said. "It's important not only for arts, but also for humanities and becoming a worldly individual."

Check the D211 Post for more looks into District 211 classrooms.