

Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District, Cleveland, Ohio



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Our Reason for Tackling AP/IB Equity Work

When we met with our Strategic Planning Committee two years ago, our community members were adamant that our plan address equity issues within the school district. As a result, Goal 2 of our new Strategic Plan centers on equity and our educational approach to empower all students. We want to provide an excellent education to each student in every district school and classroom. Paramount to this is access to rigorous courses, especially at the high school level. It is our goal to ensure that all students have equitable access to Advanced Placement and high level courses. We know that many of our students are capable of handling the rigor of AP courses but need encouragement and additional support.

Essential Equity Training

The CH-UH school district worked diligently to implement equitable practices and policy for our students, staff, and parents. The work included developing an Equity Task Force (ETF), which consists of high school teachers, elementary teachers, principals and community members. The ETF provided training for over 400 staff members. The practice is intentional and strategic. Our ETF members facilitated presentations to address Stereotype Threat, Microaggressions, The History of Marginalization in our country for students of color and worked collectively to help staff understand how our identity is based on experiences that impact inferences and mental mindsets. Often these experiences unknowingly have unintended consequences impacting student access to Advanced Placement and Honors courses. The ETF work is on-going and is required training as part of our district negotiated contract between our administration and union. Ensuring we have equitable representation and eliminating disproportionality is critical to CH-UH student success.

The Most Inspiring Aspect of the Work

CH-UH has fully committed to implementing equitable practices throughout the school district, which we anticipate to be life-changing for many of our students.

In August 2016, the CH-UH Board of Education approved the district's Educational Equity Policy. The concept of educational equity goes beyond general principles of equality—where all students are treated the same—to fostering a barrier-free environment where all students, regardless of their race, class or other personal characteristics have the opportunity to benefit equally from their education.

Closing this achievement gap, while raising achievement for all students, is a top priority of the Board of Education, the Superintendent and all District staff. Race must cease to be a predictor of student achievement and success. Disparities between white students and students of color on state assessments are directly at odds with our belief that all students can achieve. Rather than perpetuate disparities, the District has chosen to address and overcome this institutional inequity by providing all students with the support and opportunity to succeed.

Who Benefits Most

CH-UH is a founding member of MSAN (Minority Student Achievement Network), which is an important part of the District's EOS partnership. MSAN students D'Angelo Carter and Alisha Brown volunteered last year to provide peer to peer information about AP courses and encouraged others to consider enrolling.

"AP courses are definitely harder but I know that I will be better prepared for college," said D'Angelo. He took AP Chemistry and AP Calculus/AB in 2015-2016 and is interested in studying engineering or economics in college.

Alisha took the AP Chemistry and AP Statistics courses and definitely sees the academic advantage to enrolling in the AP courses. However, she was telling students about the opportunity for another important reason.

"When more minority students are in the AP classes, it is just more comfortable for us," she said.



EQUAL OPPORTUNITY SCHOOLS