

# Spartanburg School District Two Chesnee, South Carolina



The EOS partnership has allowed our school and district to take a look at our AP programs and deeply analyze how we are best meeting the needs of our students, especially for those who have potential yet are unsure of their abilities to be successful at such a rigorous level.

In addition, this conversation has led to other conversations such as taking a closer look at our feeder courses and ensuring that those rising students are aware of the AP opportunities that are available for them. Having these conversations forces me to expound upon the possibilities available to serve more non-traditional AP students in the future.

Below are a few of the comments students have made regarding their enrollment in AP classes:

"I want to major in Biology, so I will be going into AP Biology, which is a really good choice because you get to learn more. I really like the smaller class size ... better prepares you for college."

"You kind of get a good idea of how the material is. It is not like any honors material. It's more involved and more deep and more conversation in classes."

"This year I decided to take AP English because all of my friends were taking it and I wanted to challenge myself. I wanted to become better because I had been a surface-level reader all of my life."



## Our Reason for Tackling AP/IB Equity Work

The Equal Opportunity Schools Lead Higher Initiative supports one of our district goals to provide accelerated learning opportunities to promote student success in post-graduation endeavors. Each year, our students earn record numbers of college credits (4,039 college credits earned in 2017) and over 33% of seniors have taken at least one college course before graduating. Boiling Springs High School is the 4th largest high school in South Carolina. Despite its size, the school earned a 90.4% graduation rate, record highs in scholarships, and a 94% pass rate on AP tests in 2017!

So, what compelled us to tackle the AP equity work with Equal Opportunity Schools? Research tells us that students who complete college credit while in high school are more likely to go on to post-secondary endeavors. In addition, we believe that a rigorous curriculum is important for all students. At Boiling Springs High School, we only offer coursework at the college-prep level in our core curriculum and advanced classes because we believe rigorous curriculum is important for all students in order to prepare them for college, careers, and life; however, when we reviewed the Lead Higher data, we realized there was a huge need to serve more of our low-income students and students of color in our AP courses.

## The Most Inspiring Aspect of the Work

The most inspirational and life-changing aspect of the work has been providing more students with the opportunities to take AP classes. The identified students would not consider themselves as having "AP Potential," nor were they aware of their abilities to take a higher-lever course. All these students needed was a little encouragement! Since we have begun our partnership with EOS, we have increased our AP enrollment from 90 students to 148 students as of December 2017, up 64.4%. We expect our numbers to continue to increase as we continue our path to providing more students equitable access to AP courses over the next several years.

## Who Benefits Most

The students who have benefited the most are those who have been given opportunities to learn about AP courses and explore course options. We recently polled AP new students, and many of them are enjoying their experiences. The students wanted to challenge themselves and be perceived as being more academically competitive on college applications, while other students took AP classes to prepare themselves for life after high school.

## Advice

The work is strenuous and challenging, but it is worthwhile, especially when students benefit from the opportunities that have been established. It is also important to understand that educational leaders are providing and paving the way for students to not only experience challenging learning opportunities, but also gain the needed skills to be successful at the collegiate level. Therefore, it will be necessary to implement the needed AP skills in other classes along the way to give students more confidence in taking challenging courses such as an AP course.

