

Advanced Scholar Program

Franklin High School (Portland, Oregon)

Franklin High School's low-income AP students grew from 20% to 37% of its total AP population from 2007 to 2010.



Choosing the Challenge

The teachers at Franklin model a strong commitment to equity and student empowerment. When their school was facing closure because of budget cuts, they fought to stay open. The teachers came together to increase rigor and created the Advanced Scholar Program. Students in all grade levels are welcome to join the program, even ninth- and 10th-graders who are not yet taking AP® classes, but will attend Pre-AP® sessions after school. Students may join the Advanced Scholar Program as late as 11th grade, leaving the option open for students who grow, change and realize that they want to be an Advanced Scholar in their junior year.

Students in the program commit to taking at least four AP classes, or three AP classes and one dual-credit class, during their four years at Franklin. The program also provides each student with a mentor, usually an AP teacher, with whom students must check in for a brief meeting twice a month. In addition to this one-on-one support structure, the Advanced Scholars meet monthly as a group, where they discuss personal organization, the college application process, scholarship essays and personal essays for college. Here, they also build bonds as a group, breaking barriers between the older students and incoming students; sometimes Advanced Scholar alumni will return to talk about their college experiences.

Committed to Achieve


Every student from the class of 2010 who completed Franklin High School's Advanced Scholar Program went on to attend college. More nonwhite students and more students of lower socioeconomic status are now taking AP classes. The younger students develop friendships with older students who model success in AP for them. Additionally, the Advanced Scholar Program influences even students who aren't participating in it; students who do not want to commit to taking four AP classes now more readily take one or two. Advanced Scholars talking about AP classes and their future plans in the halls affects the school's overall college-going culture. As a result, there is more focus on attending college at Franklin than in previous years.

What you need:

- Students to commit to the program and take the initiative to meet with their mentors.
- AP teachers who are available to mentor about 15 students per year, including two 5-minute check-ins per month and one monthly group meeting.
- A teacher or counselor to do administrative tasks, such as reminding students about meetings, ordering pizza, setting up the library for meetings or planning teacher meetings.
- Extrinsic awards, for example, a special stole at graduation or special gold sticker of distinction on a student's diploma that signifies membership in the program. Also, T-shirts, bumper stickers and other items to build identity and solidify group membership.

What you need to know:

At Franklin, teachers are paid for their time (about 2 to 3 hours per month), and the administrative teacher/counselor should receive at least one period of additional prep time to carry out his or her responsibilities. Funding continues to be a challenge. Originally funded through a grant, the Advanced Scholar Program now needs alternative funding. Only students who successfully complete all components of the program will be granted the Advanced Scholar designated diploma upon graduation and have access to special scholarship monies.

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"AP classes are particularly important for nontraditional AP students because these are the students who may be unfamiliar with the expectations of a college or university environment. AP classes provide them with direct preparation, as well as a sense of familiarity with the meaning of college-level work."

— Susan Bartley, Advanced Scholar Coordinator and AP Teacher

Demographics

Franklin High School
Portland, Oregon

