

Ambassadors for AP

Pflugerville High School (Pflugerville, Texas)

Pflugerville High School's underserved AP students increased their 3+ scores from 20% to 28% from 2006 to 2009.



Positive Peer Pressure

Despite their open enrollment policy for AP classes, teachers at Pflugerville High School found that underserved students still were not choosing AP courses. An AP lead teacher in mathematics and an AP lead teacher in English combined forces to address the issue by convening a focus group of students and asking what prevented them from taking AP classes. Students responded by saying that they didn't often see teens or teachers like themselves in AP and that they hadn't always received the necessary encouragement.

The inception of the Ambassadors for AP Program began with a simple request from these two AP lead teachers: Would the students from their focus group be willing to travel to middle schools during registration time to talk to students like themselves about their AP experience? It quickly became obvious that underserved students were much more interested in hearing from their peers than from teachers. These new ambassadors could provide information, hope and inspiration in a way that their teachers could not.

Ambassadors' T-shirts are not only cool, but raise ambassadors' visibility on campus and when traveling to represent their AP program to other audiences. Ambassadors influence both parents and students when they speak at parent information nights. At Pflugerville, the ambassadors also perform skits about the benefits of AP in order to demystify the program for students and their parents.

Follow Me Through AP

A simple but strong strategy for gaining involvement from underrepresented groups, the Ambassadors for AP Program is easy to replicate or adapt to fit the needs of a particular school or community. Students can also track the time they devote to being an ambassador because, as they apply for college, it is a wonderful indication of their commitment to academic achievement, not just for themselves but for the entire school community.



"Like all good student groups, our first order of business was to design a cool T-shirt. Ours is a bright blue with white lettering. We have the Ambassadors for AP logo over the left breast pocket and the back says in large lettering, 'ASK ME ABOUT MY AP CLASSES.'"

— Dixie Ross, AP Lead Math Teacher

What you need:

- Older students who have had a successful AP experience and who can speak to groups of students you are trying to reach in your community.
- Teachers or counselors to chaperone this organized student response to the equity issue.
- Incentives (pizza, T-shirts, group activities) to build identity and solidify group membership.

What you need to know:

The driving success behind the Ambassadors for AP Program depends largely on the students' recruitment of their peers. As a teacher, you can only do so much; closing the equity and achievement gap is largely dependent on getting students and their parents to choose academically challenging course work.

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Demographics

Pflugerville High School
Pflugerville, Texas

