Leadership Vision and E-Learning Plan

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Zieger Charter High School (ZCHS) is a small, lottery-based, public charter school in Some City, New Jersey. Established about 20 years ago, the school serves an urban population chosen by lottery. The school population was 440 students for the 2019-2020 academic year, with 73% eligible for free or reduced lunch, and a majority of the students identifying as Black (59%) or Latinx (30%) (NCES, 2019).

As a relatively small school, the courses available to students of ZCHS are limited. For example, Spanish I and II are the only languages offered, and there are just four Advanced Placement (AP courses) available per year for the student population. Because larger schools have more access to AP courses, the limited curricula of ZCHS lead to a deficiency in AP course offerings, which then may reduce students' future college enrollment and likelihood of graduation (Burney, 2010; James et al., 2017). This inequity can be addressed by imperatives Collins and Halverson (2018) summarize as "customization, interaction, and learner control" (p. 109) implemented through a new curriculum, e-learning design for advanced elective courses in ZCHS. These electives are opportunities for high-ability students that will increase their academic preparation and, subsequently, their likelihood of graduating from college. What follows is a clear vision for e-learning at ZCHS and a proposal to address, through e-learning, the inequity posed by limited AP course offerings.

Vision

According to Clark and Mayer (2016), e-learning is "instruction delivered on a digital device (such as a desktop computer, laptop computer, tablet, or smart phone) that is intended to support learning" (p. 8). The general direction of e-learning moves away from traditional substitution and replacement of current technology, uploading PDFs onto a class website, for

example, towards portable – and sometimes informal – education. Globally, learners "are taking their education out of school into homes, libraries, cafés, and workplaces, where they can decide what they want to learn, when they want to learn, and how they want to learn" (Collins & Halverson, 2020), p.3). Rather than training manuals, e-learning is implemented in corporate training through learning management systems, break-out rooms in Zoom, and self-paced modules (Clark & Mayer, 2016). E-learning will no longer be a tool of the classroom, but the classroom itself – built without the barriers of walls or clocks.

With the advent of smartphones and free-wifi, learner-directed education changes the dynamic of formal instruction. As more individuals become accustomed to explainer or instructional videos on YouTube, using Grammarly to check their emails before sending, or apps like Duolingo for learning another language, stakeholders become more open to adopting e-learning in the classroom students in their charge. While this affords opportunities for gamification, and project-based learning, my vision focuses on using non-traditional e-learning methodologies in a brick-and-mortar school environment.

Specifically, this proposal outlines a plan to incorporate a new blended learning model into the current ZCHS curriculum. My vision is to increase the currently limited course offerings, address student interest and goals, increase student exposure to college-level work and AP courses, and improve the school's academic standing. Through the use of equipment ZCHS already possesses, teachers ZCHS already employs and space already available, ZCHS can expand its curricula to include additional AP courses with limited expenditure, thereby increasing equity at a low cost (Collins & Halverson, 2018).

E-Learning Plan

Currently, ZCHS is not able to offer more traditional AP courses for a few reasons. Because the student population is small, though diverse inability, it is difficult to establish viable enrollment for new AP course offerings. With only 50 teachers on staff, it is not economically feasible for teachers to instruct micro-courses. In addition, the building is small; therefore the architecture cannot sustain multiple small classes. These reasons create an equity issue for the mostly Black and Latinx population of ZCHS (James et al., 2007) and a lost opportunity to engage students through their goals and interests (Collins & Halverson, 2018).

One solution to the inequity of limited AP courses is to create multi-content, Enriched Virtual courses. Enriched Virtual courses are similar to fully remote courses in that the coursework is online. However, Enriched Virtual model students attend school for some amount required face-to-face enrichment with a teacher (Horn & Staker, 2014). Students are free to complete their online work at their own pace. According to Palevich and Honeck (2017), online learning is a viable option for gifted students who cannot take advanced courses because of their schedules or limited availability.

With Enriched Virtual courses, content teachers can teach several "online" courses at once with no additional prep time. One classroom might have 20 students with self-paced Khan Academy coursework; 5 students taking AP US Government & Politics, 10 students enrolled in AP US History, and another 5 taking AP World History. As students master sections, they move onto the following section or revisit a problematic area. If the courses are AP certified, the students would have access to AP Central and online AP assessment modules. The students will be able to take the AP courses regardless of whether they are AP certified (College Board, n.d.a) and possibly earn college credit. This proposal budgets for the school board to fund the cost of AP testing for the students.

In another model that could offer the most diversity and, therefore, opportunity for students who seek AP courses is the subject rotation model. Teachers would be assigned a rotating coverage period to facilitate the class and advise the students in the teacher's subject area. Students can work daily at their own pace, and meet with the teacher assigned for the day indicated in the rotation. Teachers are compensated as per the contract rate of $32.50 per class period.

Table 1

Teacher Rotation Schedule for Enriched Virtual AP Classroom

Khan Academy Free Course	Teacher Certification Area	Rotation Day
AP Art History	Art	Monday
AP Biology	Science	Tuesday
AP Calculus AB	Mathematics	Wednesday
AP Calculus BC	Mathematics	Wednesday
AP Chemistry	Science	Tuesday
AP Computer Science Principles	Computer Science	Friday
AP Macroeconomics	Social Studies	Thursday
AP Microeconomics	Social Studies	Thursday
AP Physics 1	Science	Tuesday
AP Physics 2	Science	Tuesday
AP Statistics	Mathematics	Wednesday
AP US Government & Politics	Social Studies	Thursday
AP US History	Social Studies	Thursday

In addition to earning college credits, AP coursework prepares students for college, and an Enriched Virtual modality teaches 21st-century core competencies. These students are more likely to be accepted into college, already have the study skills and time management necessary for college success, and graduate on time (College Board, n.d.b). And, according to Capone et al. (2017), blended learning affords students autonomy, feeds their interests, and develops "foundational literacy, competencies and character qualities required" 21st-century skills.

Change and Organizational Issues

Schools are designed for "just-in-case learning," whereas "technology fosters just-in-time learning" (Collins & Hallverson, 2018, p. 45). This change can be a difficult shift as some may perceive the Enriched Virtual AP courses as lacking in preparation for the future. However, these courses will be providing self-sufficiency and time-management. The AP courses will be elective, and the grade will not have the higher weight of a traditional AP course, such as AP English Language, which can draw a full course load. Students will continue to be responsible for attending class and for completing their coursework. However, they can complete the coursework at their own pace. Finally, because this will begin as one course, teachers need not feel as if the entire curriculum is shifting and may even witness the benefits of the courses.

As for challenges with students, Fenty (2014) reports that most online AP students expressed satisfaction with their e-learning environment. Students may need additional assistance with time-management, which can be given during their weekly check-in.

Leadership Values and Behaviors

Implementation of the Enriched Virtual AP courses is transformational, yet requires a more transparent approach through "Authentic Leadership" style (Northouse, 2013). A shared vision is essential to inspiring others. The administration should understand the benefit of exposing so many students to AP courses that would otherwise not have access. The staff should be aware of the Enriched Virtual AP course offerings and see it as a step towards equity. Administration and department leads, should be open about their perspectives, listen to the perspectives of others, and communicate openly and honestly about the shortcoming of our inability to offer more courses before. Perhaps such transparency will alleviate the concern for those who do not initially see the value. However, for Enriched Virtual AP to succeed, there must be a shared vision and to propel the change.

Funding for Proposal

The cost of implementing the Enriched Virtual AP courses is negligible. Yet the benefits are exorbitant. ZCHS does not need to purchase the equipment as one to one devices were established in 2020. To start, only AP courses available from Khan Academy will be utilized to structure the course more solidly and avoid an overwhelming number of AP choices. Teachers assigned to the rotation, mixed-level content course will need professional development training in AP and Enriched Virtual instruction. Those teachers will also require compensation at the contracted rate of $32.50 per period. As previously mentioned, multiple courses can run simultaneously in the classroom during the same period with only one teacher. Whereas one teacher will require extra compensation as per the contract, it is a cost-saving over an additional teacher salary. To ensure equity, the school should fund the AP exam's cost for each student: $95 for exam with a $33 reduction for students eligible for free or reduced lunch. As more students take the exam, more students will succeed in college and beyond.

Conclusion

While ZCHS is unable to increase its traditional course offerings, incorporating a new curriculum design can be beneficial. Multi-content, Enriched Virtual courses are a reliable option for students who cannot take advanced courses because of limited availability or their schedules. Students can practice autonomy while learning higher-level material at their own pace. Teacher support is available during class to supplement online learning. Finally, this system is cost-effective. The school will provide an enhanced learning experience for all students who show interest, thereby leveling the inequity surrounding AP courses in secondary education.

There are several phases of evaluation of the Enriched Virtual AP model. At the end of the course, students will be able to take and pass the corresponding AP test. During

implementation, the instructors will engage in an online group discussion in the corresponding closed Schoology group to exchange information, encouragement, and discuss success and pitfalls. Teachers will be surveyed to determine their perception of the Enriched Virtual AP class. Students will be surveyed weekly to determine self-perception, perception of the course, current status, and needs. This data will be collected and analyzed for ongoing changes during the course. If a student indicates a need in an academic area, which is prerequisite to the course in which they are enrolled, they engage in additional lessons or participate in face-to-face tutoring. Students who do not already have goo time management skills will get support in acquiring and developing those skills.

At the end of the semester, student perception of preparedness data will be gathered through a final survey. Did the students feel prepared for the exam? What was lacking? What did they wish they had experienced before the test? This data will be analyzed along with the scores for the tests once received from the College Board. An area for future research and evaluation would ask students who participated in the Enriched Virtual AP classes about their perceived college readiness.

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