



# Virtual Advanced Placement (VAP) Program

## Buffalo City School District VAP Program

### Program Overview

Buffalo City School District's (BCSD), *Access to Learning*, is an envisioned approach to the provision of a virtual learning AP program and coursework to the targeted population - a virtual learning pilot program that will allow participating students to take Advanced Placement (AP) classes with both certified BCSD public school teachers and our partnering knowledgeable online pedagogy professors at a local college. Participants will also experience and experiment with digital technologies in a well-constructed mix of face-to-face and online platforms.

### Program Activities

Objectives associated with Access to Learning include delivering sustained, high-quality, technology-enhanced blended/online education that will in turn provide the skills and knowledge that staff and students need for success in the 21st century. The program will:

- Utilize current and emerging online technology to improve student performance in Advanced Placement courses.
- Continue the implementation of core web-based applications for student performance and assessment in AP courses.
- Provide an online/visual learning modality for education in the classroom, media centers, and computer labs.
- Utilize online technology systems to improve professional development for staff.
- Build capacity in data assessment/analysis and data-based action to improve online instructional practices.

Access to Learning begins with the selection of one teacher from each of our core subject areas: Science, Social Studies, Mathematics and Language Arts. Each teacher selected to participate must commit to requirements for multiple-year involvement to assure program consistency.

The Buffalo City School District, in collaboration with Canisius College, has developed a virtual Advanced Placement (VAP) curriculum designed to expand on-line access for the BCSD. A VAP Coordinating Committee comprised of district leaders in Math, Science, Social Studies, English and Technology were joined by online instructional experts from Canisius College to design a blended/online curriculum plan to meet the specialized needs of our low-income students; especially underserved students currently attending BCSD schools identified as "Priority". Priority Schools are low-performing schools, designated as such due to their falling into the bottom 5% of all schools in New York State. These schools demonstrate the greatest need for support and the BCSD intends to provide the strongest commitment of funds to acquire resources to substantially raise the achievement of students. Subject area administrators from BCSD and college professors will craft these online AP courses to both engage and challenge our accelerated AP students and help them with continued achievement. The courses will be implemented as part of a traditional, virtual, or blended learning environment.

## **Repository**

The BCSD program will develop new virtual learning Advanced Placement courses for a repository to be shared statewide.

## **Professional Development**

Every teacher selected for the VAP online course project will have participated in the College Board's professional development "how to teach" an AP course program.

- Access to Learning will provide professional development for teachers to develop, conduct, and support virtual learning Advanced Placement courses.

The Access to Learning program will include comprehensive teacher training in distance education pedagogies and technologies. The participating Priority Schools currently either don't have the staff or resources to offer the number or type of AP courses that would permit increased participation. The VAP model we propose will provide the BCSD a way to purposefully meet student need with more flexibility. There will be four AP teachers working with up to 15 students per teacher. These students will be selected from six of the district's most underserved Priority high schools, thereby increasing access to quality and achievement.

BCSD will begin with the professional development of this core group of BCSD classroom/online instructors by providing the content, pedagogy and especially the technology support they will need to be successful. Once selected, teachers will be registered for a graduate level course with our college partner on "Development of VAP Courses for Delivery to Students".

BCSD will provide the initial and sustained professional development opportunities in the pedagogy of digital learning and online study so that teachers may more effectively use online tools for instruction. Beginning in January 2013, our college partner will provide instruction for four (4) Buffalo teachers - one each from Social Studies, Mathematics, English Language Arts and Science - plus an Instructional Technology Coach through enrollment in a formal, online, accredited course for academic staff as a vehicle for diffusion of staff development in these "new" learning technologies. This course is specially designed to assist and support each participant throughout the process of learning how to teach their respective AP course on-line. A number of frameworks underpin the learning design of these online courses:

- Online staff development should encourage deep learning approaches through a sound motivational structure, well-structured knowledge base, learner activity and interaction with others;
- Online staff development should focus on workplace practices and enable the sharing and pooling of knowledge between academic staff;
- Online staff development should provide authentic contexts for staff development and opportunities for participants to critically reflect on their learning as they progress through course.

## **Program Contact**

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