



Virtual Advanced Placement (VAP) Program

Rochester City School District VAP Program

Program Overview

RCSD will begin its delivery of virtual AP programs with the development of four special interest courses:

- Art History,
- AP Computer Science A,
- AP Psychology, and
- AP Spanish Literature and Culture.

Long-Term Virtual AP Vision. After successfully piloting the virtual delivery of AP courses through this grant, RCSD looks to expand course offerings. A robust collection of AP courses is desired District-wide (20 or more courses), and the number of AP courses available for students at all high schools must be increased. Virtual learning AP will help RCSD accomplish these goals using available District resources. Lessons learned from VAP course development, along with the development of other online initial credit courses, will be applied toward the development of new VAP courses as the RCSD program grows.

Program Activities

Two sections of each course are planned to serve a maximum of 160 students initially. Teachers are accustomed to teaching in person, and transitioning to an online environment can be challenging, requiring mid-career teachers to learn a wide variety of new skills. Enrollment will be capped at 20 per class in order to give teachers the time and space to learn how to teach effectively online. Student recruitment will occur in a targeted fashion from every school. Students will be provided with a laptop with Broadband internet access to complete the online lessons and also have face-to-face and virtual “office hours.”

Universal Design. *BrainHoney* will be used as the electronic Learning Management System (LMS) for the four new VAP courses. *BrainHoney* is particularly accessible to students who do not have internet access because it allows coursework to be downloaded to a portable thumb drive and transported to any computer including one in a classroom for students who are incarcerated, hospitalized, or homebound. *BrainHoney* also supports a read-aloud function should a virtual learner have a vision impairment, dyslexia, or be an English Language Learner who learns advanced vocabulary more easily if text is read aloud.

District-Level Committee. RCSD’s Virtual AP Program will have oversight provided by a steering committee formed of administrators, teachers, parents, and at least one community stakeholder. This committee will study the development of online learning practices and recommend policy study to the Board of Education, should the need arise for policy change.

Parent Communication. Teachers will meet with students and their parents in person as the VAP course begins. Students will be required to bring a parent or guardian, someone in their household who is over

age 18, to the meeting at which students are given the laptops to use for the course. They will learn the capabilities and protections on the laptop and execute a contract that includes an agreement concerning the care of the laptop.

Evaluation of Online Courses. As part of the District's ongoing efforts to ensure that online offerings are aligned to New York State standards, Curricular Directors routinely evaluate all course content and materials and online components are reviewed to ensure effective adherence to current best practices for interactive coursework. As College Board Advanced Placement course syllabi are often subjected to revision to conform to college course requirements, the District will evaluate these proposed new online courses to ensure they meet those parameters annually.

By purchasing online course shells which already have College Board approved syllabi, the equivalency to face-to-face classes will have already been established and the approval process with the College Board's Course Audit system is anticipated to proceed smoothly. The current LMS infrastructure built through the online credit recovery programs allows the District to enroll students in for-credit classes, guide, grade, and award credit for classes taken online. The same system will be used for Virtual AP courses with no change required in RCSD practice or policy.

Teachers will be encouraged to use contact lists of parents' email addresses to stay in routine communication with parents during the class and assure them that their children are learning and making progress. VAP teachers will have office hours, just as college professors do, and these will be accessible to both students and their parents. Parents/ guardians will be invited to a midterm and an end-of-course conference and will be invited to participate in a satisfaction survey about the online learning experience for their child.

Repository

Goal five of the RCSD VAP Program proposal is: *To develop more virtual learning AP courses for a repository to be shared statewide*

RCSD's new VAP courses in Art History, Computer Science A, Psychology, and Spanish Literature and Culture will be shared with NYSED for inclusion in the proposed virtual learning course repository.

Professional Development

The eight (8) virtual AP teachers will participate in training to acquire both the pedagogical skills and content knowledge necessary to teach a virtual Advanced Placement course effectively. Training will occur through:

- College Board's four-day Summer,
- Scoring of national AP exams, and
- Training in virtual instruction delivered through RCSD's Department of Professional Learning.

Program Contact

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