CASE STUDY

Providing Access to Online AP® Courses for All Students

Iowa Online AP Academy

Challenge
Access to Advanced Placement® courses was uneven in the state.

• In small, rural districts it was hard to justify the cost of hiring a teacher, let alone find a qualified teacher for the few students who wanted to take an AP® course.

• When the district was able to hire a highly qualified teacher, AP course offerings were limited to that teacher’s expertise.

Goal
Use online learning to provide statewide access to AP courses and teachers for students in schools without local AP programs.

Solution
Iowa selected Apex Learning to partner in the implementation of a statewide online AP program. The selection was based on the company’s reputation for developing and delivering high-quality online AP courses and a thorough review of course material.

Results
• During school year 2014–2015, 78% of students taking College Board AP exams scored a 3 or higher, outperforming the national average of 61% by 17 percentage points.

• During school year 2012–2013, 72% of students taking College Board AP exams scored 3 or higher, outperforming the national average of 59% by 13 percentage points.

• During school year 2011–2012, 72% of students scored a 3 or better, outperforming the national average of 59% by 13 percentage points.
Expanding Advanced Placement to All Students

College readiness is a strong driver in the state of Iowa, and the state has a long history of making Advanced Placement courses a priority. Its schools serve nearly half a million students, with the majority of students living in urban areas where AP courses are accessible. Rural students, however, had little or no access to AP courses, a clear disadvantage when applying to college.

Leveling the Playing Field with Online Learning

Access to AP courses was limited for a variety of reasons. Some small high schools or districts didn’t have enough students to justify the cost of offering AP courses, or found it difficult to hire teachers qualified to teach rigorous, college-level AP courses. Determined to provide all students in the state with access to AP courses, the University of Iowa, Belin-Blank Center established the Iowa Online Advanced Placement Academy (IOAPA). Online courses provided through IOAPA allowed students attending small, rural schools access to rigorous, online AP courses.

IOAPA selected Apex Learning to deliver its online AP courses and provide virtual AP instruction. Iowa-certified online teachers engaged one-to-one with each student, using real-time data to monitor each student’s progress and performance. The authorization of Apex Learning online AP courses by the AP Course Audit ensured the courses met College Board requirements, and the online instruction ensured a quality program.

Supporting AP Success

Since the establishment of IOAPA over a decade ago, more than 6,000 students have enrolled in Apex Learning online AP courses. Nearly 70 percent of those students would not have had the opportunity to take an AP course without the efforts provided by IOAPA. But the efforts did not stop there. IOAPA students also had access to AP Exam Review, a comprehensive online study resource from Apex Learning. IOAPA classroom teachers also used Apex Learning digital curriculum to support their instruction in the classroom. This proved particularly valuable for teachers new to the rigor of AP coursework.