



# HOW A SMALL SCHOOL GETS BIG AP<sup>®</sup> RESULTS



## A SMALL DISTRICT WITH BIG IDEAS

In the small coal mining communities of Mapletown and Greensboro, Pennsylvania, the Southeastern Greene School District is committed to providing its students with the educational opportunities that will prepare them for life after high school. Although small districts face distinct challenges compared to their larger counterparts, Southeastern Greene discovered that a partnership with the National Math and Science Initiative helped put its students on a more even playing field and increased their confidence.

# DRIVING COLLEGE READINESS BY SHIFTING MINDSETS

In a community with deep roots in coal mining, students and parents can have preconceived notions about the future opportunities that lie before them. That's why the district made a systemic change to broaden students' perceptions of what they can pursue and achieve, with an increased focus on STEM learning through NMSI's Laying the Foundation and College Readiness Program.

School leaders recognized the value of adding Advanced Placement® courses into their high school offerings. They also recognized how critical it is to prepare students well before they can enroll in AP classes. NMSI's Laying the Foundation paved the way, providing teacher training and planning that put students on a path toward success.

In addition to expanding junior high students' access to STEM learning, the high school began building out its honors courses, following a pre-AP model. These days, teachers and administrators often fill multiple roles that can stretch the staff very thin - especially in smaller school systems. NMSI mitigated that potential hurdle by providing the district's educators with access to mentors and materials to beef up their STEM offerings and optimize the benefits of AP classes. "Our teachers have repeatedly said that having a mentor was the biggest benefit. The Leadership Support from NMSI helped lead the way and guide them," Dr. Donley said.

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**Mingling with students from other schools provided a big confidence boost for everyone because it helped them to see that they're as well prepared as the students from larger, wealthier districts.**

**Dr. Bartholomew I. Donley**

Mapletown Junior-Senior High School Principal

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## IMMEDIATE IMPACT

In School Year 2016-17, the year before partnering with NMSI, SEGSD students took eight AP exams. In 2017-18, students took a total of 53 AP exams, with 45 achieving a college readiness score of 2 or above.

## 2018 AP Score Report

**AP Math Science English exam takers: 36 Total**

**83%** received 2+ indicating college-readiness

**50%** received 3+ indicating mastery of college-level content

## 2019 AP Exam Report

AP Math Science English exam takers: 45 Total

**78%** received 2+ indicating college-readiness

**27%** received 3+ indicating mastery of college-level content

AP Math Science Exams: 32 Total

**75%** received 2+ indicating college-readiness

**28%** received 3+ indicating mastery of college-level content

## 2020 AP Exam Report

AP Math Science English exam takers: 40 Total

**55%** received 2+ indicating college-readiness

**20%** received 3+ indicating mastery of college-level content

**In spite of COVID-19 and other challenges faced by a school with a small student population, participation in AP exams continue to exceed the baseline of 8 - participation from a year before NMSI partnership - to a 400% increase!**

## A PERFECTLY TIMED PARTNERSHIP

When the SEGSD team found NMSI, it quickly determined that the College Readiness Program would dovetail nicely with their new AP undertaking. “The support for teachers and students meshed perfectly with our needs,” Dr. Donley explained.

In addition to hands-on training and classroom materials, the educators in Southeastern Greene School District found that the small-group support and access to NMSI-led online peer communities were powerful. “They trained our teachers and gave the students a chance to meet with college-focused students from bigger schools,” Dr. Donley said. “Mingling with others was a big confidence boost for everyone because it helped them see we’re just as prepared as they are.”

## MULTI-FACETED COLLEGE PREPARATION

The district’s combined Mapletown Jr./Sr. High School is quite small, with one recent class having 24 graduates. So, while the *number* of students demonstrating mastery of college-level content on their AP exams isn’t huge, the district has been pleased with the *percentage* of students reaching that milestone – and earning college course credit – through the AP program. Mr. Sinn said that collectively, students who earned qualifying scores (3 or higher on the AP’s 5-point scale) have earned the equivalent of \$100,000 in college credit during the three years of the SEGSD-NMSI partnership.

But it’s not just about the money. Mr. Sinn shared the story of a student working to get into a competitive college program. During the student’s college interview, she explained that the AP program had given her the opportunity to network with other academically motivated students from other schools, which helped her feel more prepared for college than if she hadn’t had those interactions.

And while it wasn’t the only factor in her acceptance, the interviewer later shared that the student’s experience stood out in the interview process. This is among the types of results from NMSI’s College Readiness Program that can’t be quantified but truly matter when it comes to helping students prepare for the next stage of their educational journey.

## SUSTAINABLE TRANSFORMATION

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“In the world of education, the success of an administrator can be measured by what cultural changes and initiatives remain after he or she moves to a new position,” Mr. Sinn explains. “If things fall apart after they’ve left, then people were only doing them because they had to. However, if improvements continue, then their impact was sustainable – and that’s exactly what we’ve found in our partnership with NMSI. Even after our contract with NMSI came to an end, our culture of expanded STEM learning and a commitment to striving for higher achievement remain strong.”

The tools, training and encouragement NMSI provided helped teachers and administrators develop a community and district culture of believing in big things – and they’re just getting started!



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