

In Defense Of SFUSD's AP Programs

Last February I wrote a humble plea to SFUSD to save our district's AP program.

As times have been so contentious, before I began my letter, I made it clear that I was a teacher at Lowell- a school community that is a lightning rod for controversy as much as the school board members who were recalled- a recall that I was very much against. As much as I would like to think that I am very aware of the meaning of privilege and equity, I know I am still learning, and want to keep learning.

That said, I desperately hoped for a reversal for the decision about the cuts to AP programs for the following reasons:

- *AP courses prepare students for college, and, our district's AP program is open to any student who wants to take an AP class.

- *Taking an AP class can deepen a student's appreciation for the subject, and, build their confidence.

- * AP courses help students build their skills, and prepares them for college.

- * Scoring well on the AP exam gives students college credit. I began UC Davis in 1991- even then it became a running joke how students took five years to graduate because sometimes students course offerings sometimes did not allow students to take the courses that they needed. I remember how many of my peers, especially those from low income backgrounds, *needed* their AP exam scores in order to have the financial aid to finish their degrees. It is even harder now. Granted, students do not need an AP course to take the AP exam. However, state- wide, and even globally, SFUSD students outperform other students because SFUSD offers AP courses. AND those AP courses are open to any student regardless of their grades or test scores.

- *Students should never have to go outside of their own campus for college level courses. Community colleges are already strapped in terms of offerings. And, high school students taking courses at community colleges will not increase funding. Outsourcing students to community colleges, will mean students will have to compete for spots with adults and will take opportunities from adults who need these classes and are paying out of pocket for them.

In February we learned that our school was going hit with \$3.5 million cuts to our budget, and over 20% of our teaching staff would be let go. Long have I felt like public education has been like the reality television show Survivor, and it is not right. In order to save the jobs some of us elected to reduce to a .8 position to support our colleagues, and, ultimately, our students.

Not every teacher at Lowell teaches in the same way. Not every teacher at Lowell holds the same beliefs about learning. However, one thing that we are unified about is how much we love the subjects that we teach, and believe that education can make a difference in someone's life.