



THIS SCHOOL ENCOURAGED EVERY STUDENT TO TAKE ADVANCED CLASSES. HERE'S WHAT HAPPENED NEXT.



Like many other schools across America, Hammond High School was facing a problem: Even as the enrollment of low-income students and students of color had grown, the demographics of advanced classes looked largely the same.

So staff at the Columbia, Maryland school tried something new: The lowest-level classes were eliminated. So were prerequisites for high-level courses. And every student was encouraged to take at least one advanced class. Every year.

When some students inevitably struggled, the school implemented supports. Students were invited to take a summer workshop that prepared them for honors, gifted, and Advanced Placement courses. Students learning English got their own homework club. Teachers specializing in English learners and students with disabilities co-taught rigorous classes. And the school created common planning time and professional development where teachers in the same discipline could envision ways to support all learners and enhance cultural proficiency.

At Hammond, collaborative learning and groupwork are the norm, as both have proven to work well in heterogeneous classes.

“In a group you know that others are relying on you, so I do better because I am working not just for myself, but for the group,” 10th grader Naahdia Mundi said. “We are relying on each other for success.”

Since the reforms started in 2010, minority enrollment in advanced classes has increased. Hammond officials also attribute increases in graduation rates to their reforms. Between 2010 and 2016, graduation rates for African American students increased from 80 percent

to 92 percent. Hispanic graduation rates increased from 81 to 95 percent. Graduation rates for students with special needs rose from 56 to 80 percent.

In recognition and appreciation of these and other successes, Hammond was honored as a School of Opportunity. NEPC's Schools of Opportunity project recognizes public high schools that use research-based approaches to close gaps in opportunities to learn by creating learning environments that reach all students.

To learn more about Schools of Opportunity, click [here](#).

Click [here](#) to read a *Washington Post* column about Hammond by NEPC director [Kevin Welner](#), Schools of Opportunity co-director [Linda Molner Kelley](#), and [Kellie Rolstad](#), associate professor in the Department of Teaching, Learning, Policy and Leadership at the University of Maryland's College of Education.

Interested in more information about curricular stratification? Click [here](#) to read *Universal Access to a Quality Education: Research and Recommendations for the Elimination of Curricular Stratification*, an NEPC legislative policy brief.

NEPC Resources on Schools of Opportunity

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