



Building a school culture of excellence

Allison Bergeron sees the changes in students as expectations rise

“With Mass Insight, AP coursework has evolved from being a privilege to being an expectation. Our students have truly embraced the challenges of AP.”

Allison Bergeron
AP English Teacher
Drury High School

Allison Bergeron is part of the English Department at Drury High School in North Adams, Massachusetts. With the support of Mass Insight Education, she and Drury's two other AP Teachers (Sara Luczynski and Molly Meczwyor) nearly **doubled** the number of qualifying scores in AP English in just their first year of the program. The school is also experiencing a cultural shift where AP is helping more students, not just the select few, strive to be better and more successful learners.

Allison explained the value of being part of the Mass Insight program not only for her students but for her development.

How do AP courses impact students differently than other English courses?

I feel that AP Language presents a new set of challenges. Because the focus of the course is non-fiction, students find it different, and in some cases more engaging, than a literature based course. The new set of skills, and different methods of examining writing provide a new approach to studying English.

Why do you think English is important to STEM learning?

No matter which path students follow post-high school, communication is vitally important. Being able to read and write effectively for a variety of audiences and purposes is a skill that will serve students well later in life. These literacy skills are an important foundation for STEM because to thrive in STEM students need to be able to access the material, and communicate their findings, and a strong background in English opens the door to greater success in science, technology, English, and math.

What do you enjoy most about being part of the program?

I enjoy the new professional development experiences, which I feel have done a lot to improve my teaching practice in general, not just my AP Language course.

The most important part of our involvement with Mass Insight though is the change I see in our students. Students feel empowered to take more challenging courses, and feel secure in doing so because of all the support provided by the Saturday and after-school sessions. I feel that Mass Insight, and the resources it provides, have played a significant role in the increase of academic rigor, and academic expectations. The tone of our AP program is very different. The attitude used to be “These classes are reserved for the strongest students.” The attitude now is “Take an AP class and we'll help you become a stronger student.” The feedback from recent graduates has been amazing. Even students who did not earn qualifying scores felt they were better prepared for college. Everyone can take AP, Everyone can go to college. That's the message we're sending and I think it's one of the most important initiatives I've been involved in during my career.

Allison Bergeron enables her students to succeed inside and outside her class

Bergeron's AP student Luke Grant doesn't just talk about STEM, he writes about it - and wins a national award!

No doubt, science and math are a language all their own, but many still ask why Mass Insight Education incorporates English into its math and science initiative. We could list the data and point to the research that demonstrates how literacy is foundational for nearly all disciplines, or we can introduce you to Luke Grant, a Drury High School student in the the AP STEM program.

This past winter Luke won first prize and a \$1,000 award for his school in a STEM-based essay contest sponsored by an Irvine, California company called Laguna Tools. They reportedly received several hundred entries from currently enrolled high school, college and university students, who were asked to write about a product they might make using Laguna Tools' "computer numerical control" (CNC) machine. Luke's success on a national scale is a small window into the impact of Mass Insight and the teachers who are shaping the next generation of STEM talent.

Luke credits Keith Davis, the teacher of his favorite class (3D Computer Assisted Drafting - CAD), for sharing the details of the contest with him. Mr. Davis told Laguna Tools that he makes an effort to frequently share interesting and relevant articles with his class. One of those articles triggered Luke's fascination with a solar power car race in Switzerland called the Tour de Sol. Luke took Mr. Davis' suggestion to enter the Laguna Tools contest, specifically focusing his essay on an idea to "create molds that could be used to shape fiber glass or carbon into body panels for an entry in the Tour De Sol solar power vehicle rally."

According to Davis, "I was gratified when Luke volunteered to enter the competition. Win or lose, I thought it would be a good experience for him. But when we received notification that we had won, I was ecstatic for him and our school. I'm looking forward to February's School Committee Agenda, where Luke can receive the further congratulations he has earned."

Luke acknowledges that what he's learned in his AP Language class was a strong base for writing "tactfully" on his chosen topic for the



AP teacher Irene Mahoney and her former AP Biology student Rebecca Torrento celebrate their achievements at Mass Insight's *Partners in Excellence Teacher Awards* at Boston's Museum of Science.

contest. "Learning the use of Ethos Pathos and Logos was a valuable lesson to me," said Luke. "My AP class is the most advanced class I have ever taken, and presents challenges such as writing essays for practice and keeping up with the swift pace of the class. These have been the hardest parts of my class so far."

Allison Bergeron, Luke's AP Language teacher, says "Luke is an incredibly dedicated and hardworking student. He has been very successful in AP Language this year, and I think that success contributed to him feeling that this contest was something he wanted to pursue."

She also points out that the Mass Insight program, and the positive AP atmosphere in the school, encourages students to work harder and become stronger students.

Drury High School partnered with Mass Insight in 2012. In just two years, Drury has increased their enrollment by 167%, and almost doubled their amount of qualifying scores (a score of 3, 4, or 5) on the AP math, science, and English exams. Drury's AP Language teachers, Allison Bergeron and Sara Luczynski, have increased their qualifying scores by 92%.

By undertaking the challenges of AP and

“My AP class is the *most advanced* class I have *ever* taken.”

Luke Grant, Class of 2015



translating his new skills for the essay contest, Luke Grant demonstrated why advanced English skills are an essential foundation to successful STEM learning. In addition to the national recognition, Luke can be proud to know as a result of his success the school will use the award to repair some of the shop equipment used in his favorite 3D CAD class.