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How Telepresence Technology Can Improve Access to Advanced, High School Courses

Jennifer Darling-Aduana, Vanderbilt University
Carolyn J. Heinrich, Vanderbilt University

Telepresence technologies, such as videoconferencing equipment and educational tools like Google Classroom, facilitate distance learning and collaboration. Newer telepresence learning systems utilize high-end videoconferencing to mimic traditional classroom experiences and facilitate two-way communication in real-time. School districts can leverage this technology to increase student access to courses that would not otherwise be available to them, particularly Advanced Placement (AP) and other advanced or elective courses. Access to these courses, made possible by these technologies, can expand student access to rich learning experiences and to opportunities to earn college credit.

This study highlights students' learning outcomes and experiences when enrolled in one or more telepresence courses within a large, urban school district that has been working to implement telepresence learning over the last three years. Based on the analysis of student and teacher surveys, classroom observations, and student record data, it is evident that students enrolled in telepresence courses, on average, took more AP courses, were absent less frequently, and scored higher on the ACT. The initial challenges and successes experienced in the district we studied provide a roadmap for school districts and policymakers interested in leveraging technology to expand learning opportunities for students attending schools with limited resources.