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Abstract

This research provides an additional predictive study with regard to AP exam scores. This study correlates the following criteria with AP European History exam scores: cumulative high school Grade Point Average (GPA); average grade (%) in European History; Iowa Test of Educational Development (ITED) Reading and Vocabulary scores; Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) Writing, Reading (Verbal) and Math scores; ACT Reading and English scores; average minutes per day studied; and average days per week studied. The research uses the student's AP score as the criterion variable and the variables listed above as the predictor variables. The need for an additional predictive study is related to the *AP Potential* program recently launched by the College Board. The attempt of this study is to not only to evaluate the predictor variables used by the College Board in their *AP Potential* program, but also to provide additional predictor variables for students. In addition, this study will also help evaluate the legitimacy of grades earned in my European History class as well as assess the role of study habits and final AP European History Exam scores. It is hypothesized that strong correlations will exist with three of the predictor variables - reading/vocabulary scores, average days/minutes studied outside of class time, and average grade (%) in European History- and their AP scores. The sample size for this study was 32 students from a two year time period who had available the entire list of predictor variables mentioned above. The results indicate that strong correlations exist between AP scores and average grades (%) in European History and ACT English scores.

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Action Research Report Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Education

Advanced Placement European History Exam Potentiality

by

Russell W. Herman

B.A. Northwestern College, 1995

Action Research Report
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Education

Department of Education
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February 2007

AP European History Exam Potentiality

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Abstract

This research provides an additional predictive study with regard to AP exam scores. This study correlates the following criteria with AP European History exam scores: cumulative high school Grade Point Average (GPA); average grade (%) in European History; Iowa Test of Educational Development (ITED) Reading and Vocabulary scores; Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) Writing, Reading (Verbal) and Math scores; ACT Reading and English scores; average minutes per day studied; and average days per week studied. The research uses the student's AP score as the criterion variable and the variables listed above as the predictor variables. The need for an additional predictive study is related to the *AP Potential* program recently launched by the College Board. The attempt of this study is to not only to evaluate the predictor variables used by the College Board in their *AP Potential* program, but also to provide additional predictor variables for students. In addition, this study will also help evaluate the legitimacy of grades earned in my European History class as well as assess the role of study habits and final AP European History Exam scores. It is hypothesized that strong correlations will exist with three of the predictor variables – reading/vocabulary scores, average days/minutes studied outside of class time, and average grade (%) in European History– and their AP scores. The sample size for this study was 32 students from a two year time period who had available the entire list of predictor variables mentioned above. The results indicate that strong correlations exist between AP scores and average grades (%) in European History and ACT English scores.

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship that exists between multiple academic indicators and scores of former students on the Advanced Placement (AP) European History Exam. The study was designed to provide benefits for individual students, myself, and other teachers of AP courses. The benefit to students is to provide a tool to help students assess their readiness for the AP European History Exam and their potential for success on the exam. This might be especially useful for encouraging capable but reluctant students to take the test. The benefit for me is to provide a tool to assess, at least in part, whether the coursework and expectations I have for my students are a true reflection of the expectations the College Board has for the students on the AP European History Exam. Finally, the benefit to other teachers is it provides an additional study on the relationship between various academic indicators and student success on the AP European History Exam.

The College Entrance Examination Board (College Board) initiated the Advanced Placement (AP) program in the early 1950s. The program consists of high school courses that are structured on the curriculum of introductory college courses. These courses are designed to provide college level instruction and expectations for high school students as well as provide the opportunity to take a relatively difficult, standardized post test called the Advanced Placement (AP) Exam in order to determine if the student has satisfactorily demonstrated proficiency at the college level (Furry & Hecsh, 2001). As a teacher of Advanced Placement European History, most of my students take the AP European History exam at the end of the course. Each student receives a score from the College Board after taking the AP exam. Each student is given a score that ranges from 1 to 5. AP grading standards are set so that AP Exam grades of 5 are comparable to college

grades of A or A+, grades of 4 represent a range of college grades from A to B, grades of 3 are comparable to college grades ranging from B to C, and grades of 2 are comparable to college grades ranging from C to D. The scores are used to indicate whether the student has demonstrated proficiency for that particular subject matter (a score of 3 or above is the generally accepted standard for demonstrating proficiency, but each college has the ability to set their own standard). The exam score is based on three sections of a test given on a date (first part of May) set by the College Board. Fifty percent of the score is based on an 80 question multiple choice test. Twenty-five percent of the score is based on two essays written by the students from a list of six possible essays. The last twenty-five percent of the score is based on a document-based question (DBQ) in which students are given a question and then a series of primary sources from which they have to answer the question.

Research Questions

Through the years I have taught hundreds of students who have taken the AP exam; these students have had varied levels of success. All of the students have received the same instruction and have had the same requirements for the course, but have scored differently on the AP exam at the end of the year. This variation in student performance on the AP Exam has always prompted questions in my mind about what factors are connected to either the student's relative success or failure on the AP Exam. My thoughts were further piqued by a program the College Board has recently made available – a service entitled *AP Potential*. In their own words, “*AP Potential* is an innovative, Web-based tool that uses correlations between PSAT/NMSQT scores and AP Exam results to identify students who may be successful in AP courses” (College Board,

2005). The purpose of my research is to ascertain where the greatest correlation exists between students's AP scores and numerous other academic indicators of the students with the end goal of providing another tool for students similar to *AP Potential*. The academic indicators of the students I will correlate with AP scores are as follows:

- Cumulative High School Grade Point Average (GPA)
- Average grade (%) in European History over the course of the year
- Iowa Test of Educational Development (ITED) Reading and Vocabulary Scores
- Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) Writing, Reading (Verbal) and Math Scores
- ACT Reading and English Scores
- Average minutes per day studied
- Average days per week studied

From my research I believe that there will be a strong correlation between students' scores on the AP European History test and their reading/writing/vocabulary scores on standardized tests. Since the study of European History and the AP European History test involves a great deal of reading and writing I would expect there to be strong correlations between these pieces of data. I would also hope that there is a strong correlation between a student's average grade (%) in my class and their AP score. If my class truly mirrors the expectations of the College Board, then this should be reflected in an extremely strong correlation between their grade and their final AP score. In addition, it seems that the more a student spends time (both in minutes and number of days a week) studying AP European History outside of the classroom, the likelihood of them scoring

higher on the AP test should increase; therefore I expect a strong correlation to also exist between their study habits and their final AP score.

The correlations established in this study will help answer the following research questions:

1. What academic characteristics correlate the highest with AP European History Exam scores?
2. Are the grades earned by students in my classroom a good reflection of their ability to perform successfully on the AP European History Exam?
3. What extent do a student's study habits correlate to success on the AP European History Exam?

Definitions

- Grade Point Average (GPA) – This is a system used to evaluate the overall scholastic performance of students. Grade points are determined by first multiplying the number of hours given for a course by the numerical value of the grade and then dividing the sum of all grade points by the total number of hours carried. The numerical values for grades in the school from which the data was collected are: A = 4.0, A- = 3.7, B+ = 3.3, B = 3.0, B- = 2.7, and so on.
- ITED Vocabulary Test – This is a test of general vocabulary development. The words tested represent a cross-section of vocabulary encountered in general communication (reading, writing and listening). All words are presented in the context of short phrases or sentences. The students are asked to choose, from among alternative words or phrases, the one closest in meaning to the tested word.

- ITED Reading Comprehension or Verbal Test – This is a test providing information about the kinds of comprehension skills students are expected to come to develop as they proceed through high school. The passages comprising the Reading Test are all taken from previous published materials and each test level has five passages (fiction or narrative passage; an article about a social studies topic; an article about a science topic; another nonfiction passage from a biography, memoir, or essay; and a poem. The passage range in length from 440 to 650 words. The questions associated with each passage require students to demonstrate understanding at three process levels (literal/factual understanding, inference and interpretation, and analysis and generalization). Approximately 70% of the questions from the test measure inference, analysis and generalization.
- PSAT/NMSQT Test – The PSAT/NMSQT is a standardized test that provides firsthand practice for the SAT Reasoning Test. It also gives the student a chance to enter National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) scholarship programs. The PSAT/NMSQT measures critical reading skills, math problem-solving skills and writing skills. These are skills developed over many years, both in and out of school. This test does not require the student to recall specific facts from their classes, but does allow students the opportunity to receive feedback on their strengths and weaknesses on skills necessary for college study. The PSAT/NMSQT score reports provide three different scores on the 20-to-80 scale; one each for critical reading skills, math skills, and writing skills. Score reports also include percentiles, which allow the student to compare their scores with other students in their grade level who have taken the PSAT/NMSQT.

- ACT English Test – This is a test that measures a student’s understanding of the conventions of standard written English (punctuation, grammar and usage, and sentence structure) and of rhetorical skills (strategy, organization, and style). Spelling, vocabulary, and rote recall of rules of grammar are not tested. The test consists of five essays, or passages, each of which is accompanied by a sequence of multiple-choice test questions.
- ACT Reading Test – This is a test that measures a student’s reading comprehension. The test questions ask students to derive meaning from several texts by (1) referring to what is explicitly stated and (2) reasoning to determine implicit meanings. Specifically, questions will ask students to use referring and reasoning skills to determine main ideas; locate and interpret significant details; understand sequences of events; make comparisons; comprehend cause-effect relationships; determine the meaning of context-dependent words, phrases, and statements; draw generalizations; and analyze the author’s or narrator’s voice and method.
- PLAN Test – This is a curriculum-based test administered in the fall of the sophomore year that covers the skills and knowledge commonly taught in the nation's schools and are judged to be important for success in both high school and college. The test is the ACT’s college readiness exam for 10th graders and it covers four areas – English, Mathematics, Science and Reading. The PLAN test is closely tied to that of the achievement tests in the ACT and is also consistent with the content of ACT's EXPLORE program for grades 8 and 9. EXPLORE, PLAN

and the ACT are to be used in combination to focus on meeting academic standards across the entire secondary school core program of studies.

Literature Review

Many quantitative studies have been done on factors that help predict the success of students on the AP exam. Haag (1983) examined the relationship between PSAT/NMSQT test scores and performance on the AP exam. The study revealed a large range of PSAT/NMSQT scores within each AP grade range, which suggested that students with differing levels of academic abilities can take an AP course and perform successfully on the AP exam. The study only dealt with 10 AP exams (there are now 29 different exams) and the sample size was relatively small (less than 500) for each exam. Camara & Millsap (1998) followed up the Haag study on all of the AP exams and then expanded on that study by examining the relationship of other educational factors that also may provide an accurate prediction of performance on AP exams. The fundamental question they sought to answer was “what combination of variables best predicts performance on AP exams” (Camara & Millsap, 1998, p. 1). The study revealed that PSAT/NMSQT scores, total high school grades, subject-related grades, and grades in specific high school courses are all related to performance on AP exams. Overall, correlation of AP exam grades with PSAT/NMSQT scores was consistently higher than correlation with high school grades and courses completed. The best predictor, the PSAT/NMSQT, had an average correlation of .518 compared with a mean correlation of .267 for total high school grades. The number of high school courses taken produced an even lower overall correlation of .10. Specifically on the European History test the correlation between the student’s AP score and the student’s PSAT/NMSQT Reading or

Verbal (V) score was .512. The correlation between their AP score and their PSAT/NMSQT Math (M) score was .4157 and .5282 if you used both their verbal and math score combined. Since this study was published, the PSAT/NMSQT added a writing test. Because of this additional test, there are now three scores reported, verbal, math and writing. Partially due to the change in the format of the PSAT/NMSQT and also because of changes in the AP program (addition of several exams and the large increase of students taking AP tests) Camara and Millsap performed a follow-up study on their 1998 work in 2006. Their findings in their 2006 report show that the correlations between the student's PSAT/NMSQT scores and AP score went up slightly. The correlations of PSAT/NMSQT scores with their AP grades are included in Table 1. The data suggests that the strongest correlation exists

Table 1

Correlations of PSAT/NMSQT Sections and AP Exam Scores

PSAT/NMSQT Section	Correlation with AP Score
Reading/Verbal (V)	.557
Math (M)	.451
Writing (W)	.503
V + M	.577
V + W	.577
M + W	.537
M + W + V	.586

between a student's composite score on the PSAT/NMSQT and their AP European History score. Camara and Millsap (2006) also found a correlation of .294 between a

students' GPA and their score on the AP European History exam. On a much smaller scale, Palin (2001) studied 73 US History students to examine the extent that PSAT/NMSQT scores and other academic factors predict success on the AP exam in US History. Palin found that PSAT/NMSQT scores, grade point average, and anticipated college majors are all closely related to AP success. In addition to the PSAT/NMSQT, the PLAN test also has been correlated with the AP European History exam (ACT, 2005). The PLAN test is a test offered by the ACT as a way for tenth-grade students to review their progress toward college readiness while there is still time to make necessary interventions. From 1999 to 2002, the ACT took a total of 2,589 student records and correlated them with seven AP Exams. What they found was that there was a .36 correlation between a students' composite PLAN score and AP European History exam score (ACT, 2005). Ammeraal (1997) did another study, which does not directly pertain to the AP European History test, but still is concerned about ascertaining a relationship between success on an AP exam (in this case language exams) and a particular student characteristic. The characteristic Ammeraal looked at in her study was the students' placement scores on the Acorn Book multiple choice test. The Acorn Book, named for the acorn on the cover, is a booklet produced by the College Board for each AP exam that provides information on the content covered in that subject area as well as a practice test for that particular AP exam. What I found interesting from that study was the following statement: "Teachers who use placement criteria usually take a common sense approach and deploy multiple criteria. What is needed are studies isolating these separate criteria to determine the effectiveness of each" (Ammeraal, 1997, p. 2). Ammeraal suggests that it would be useful for AP teachers to have one criterion that they could rely upon for

guidance in trying to predict a student's likely success on the AP test. Ammeraal found that there was a .28 correlation between Acorn placement scores and the actual AP Examination grades. She concludes her study by stating that the "Acorn multiple-choice scores can be used to predict general success levels, but not actual grades" (Ammeraal, 1997, p. 12).

Camara & Millsap (1998) state that "motivation and interest will be key determinants of a student's success in AP courses" but do not provide any research to substantiate this claim (p. 17). In a survey done by Furry (2001), he found that teacher responses included concerns over student preparation and engagement of material. The teachers expressed concerns that the students were not serious about the material, the students did not apply themselves, and that students were not taking AP courses due to desire, but due to other influences. The concern noted in both studies (Camara & Millsap; Furry) is not directed at academic indicators such as scores on standardized tests, but is instead directed at the personal study habits and motivation of the students enrolled in the AP classes.

In the end, we see that there has been work done correlating a small number of academic indicators with scores on AP exams. Many individuals and groups are looking for criteria that will help students have a better understanding of the potential for success on the AP exam. In previous work, much has been done with PSAT/NMSQT scores, but not as much has been done with other standardized tests. In addition, not many studies have been done to try and determine if a connection exists between the study habits of students and their AP scores.

Methods

Participants

During the 2004/2005 school year I had 22 students enrolled in AP European History and in 2005/2006 I had 24 students. Of the 46 students enrolled in those two school years, 40 of the students took the AP Exam in their respective years. Out of the 40 students who earned AP scores after taking the exam, I will include 32 of the students in my research. The 8 students that I am not including in my research are being excluded because these 8 did not take the PSAT/NMSQT test (the PSAT/NMSQT test is an optional test in our school). Of the 32 students being used in my research, all were juniors in high school; 19 were girls; 13 were boys; 31 were Caucasians; and 1 was Hispanic.

Materials

The materials used to conduct the research in this paper came from three sources. The first source for the information used was data from school records. The students' GPA, percentage in the class, ITED scores, ACT score, and PSAT/NMSQT scores all are part of official school records. Permission was obtained from the students, their parents and my school principal to use this data. The second source of information was the calendars the students filled out on a daily basis on which they recorded the minutes they studied each night. Each student was given a calendar for the months of February through April and each day in class we would take a minute to record the number of minutes they studied the previous day (or days if on a Monday). The final source of information used was the AP scores of each of the students. After the students take the

AP tests, their tests are scored and then I am sent a list of each student's score in the first part of July.

Procedure

To begin my research, I informed my students of what I intended to study, their role in the research, and the data I would need from them in order to complete my research. Most of the data used in my research was information available through official school records and did not actively involve my students. The one piece of material that did pertain to my students was the calendars on which they recorded the number of minutes they studied on a daily basis. Each day of class the students would take out their calendars that I provided them and record the number of minutes they had studied the previous day. The students recorded this data from February thru April and then I took this data and found the average number of days each week the students studied AP European History outside of the classroom and the average number of minutes they studied each day. After finding this data, I placed it in a spreadsheet with all of the other pieces of academic indicators I had collected from school records (cumulative GPA, average percentage in AP European History for the four quarters of study, ITED scores, ACT scores, and PSAT/NMSQT scores).

Results

After collecting the data, Pearson product-moment coefficients were computed for each of the separate academic indicators and the student's AP European History exam scores. The bivariate correlations are presented in Table 2. By using bivariate correlations, I performed a prediction study with the student's AP European History score as the criterion variable and the other variables as the predictor variables. I performed

these calculations in order to duplicate the same service the College Board was providing through their *AP Potential* program.

Table 2

Correlations of AP European Exam Scores with Selected Student Data

Student Data	Correlation with AP Score
High School GPA	.5633
Average % in AP European Class	.7989
ITED Reading Score	.3838
ITED Vocabulary Score	.4787
ACT Reading Score	.4177
ACT English Score	.6078
PSAT/NMSQT Writing (W) Score	.3553
PSAT/NMSQT Reading/Verbal (V) Score	.2734
PSAT/NMSQT Math (M) Score	.4428
PSAT/NMSQT W + R Score	.3689
PSAT/NMSQT W + M Score	.4323
PSAT/NMSQT V + M Score	.4549
PSAT/NMSQT V + M + W Score	.4396
Average Minutes Studied Per Day	-.4503
Average Days Per Week Students Studied	-.2040

Discussion

Summary

In my research I set out to find correlations that existed between various student characteristics and a student's score on the AP European History test. These correlations were sought for three reasons. The first reason was to determine where the highest correlations existed. This was done, at least in part, in order to determine whether the College Board's use of only PSAT/NMSQT scores in their *AP Potential* program is adequate. The second reason was to determine if the grades earned by my students in my classroom were a good reflection of their ability to perform successfully on the AP European History exam. The final reason was to encourage students to spend more time (both in minutes and days) studying outside of class.

I hypothesized that the highest correlations would exist between a student's scores on standardized tests (ITED, ACT, or PSAT/NMSQT) pertaining to reading, writing and vocabulary and their AP score. In addition, I had hoped for a strong correlation between their class grade (%) and their final AP score. Lastly, I thought that the amount of time a student spent outside of class and the number of contact days outside of class would translate into higher AP scores. My research did not always confirm my expectations. It is true that a strong correlation exists between ACT English scores and AP scores ($r = .6078$), but there was no substantial difference between the rest of their PSAT/NMSQT reading/vocabulary/writing scores and the correlation that exists between their PSAT/NMSQT math score and their AP score. In fact, most of the lowest correlations existed specifically between their PSAT/NMSQT reading/verbal scores and their AP score. The negative correlations that existed between their self-reported average minutes

per week in study and their average days per week they studied also was a surprise. To combine this piece of data with the high correlation that does exist between their average grade (%) in AP European History and their AP score ($r = .7989$) it seems that the time spent in study does not matter as much as the student's ability to perform in the class. In other words, a student that performs well in my course, regardless of the amount of time/days they spend on average on their studies, should be expected to perform the best on the AP European History exam at the end of the school year.

Conclusions

When comparing my work specifically to the work of Camara and Millsap (2006) it seems as if I can provide an additional service to my students. The strongest correlation they found was .586 and this was between students' PSAT/NMSQT scores and their AP European History exam score. Since the strongest correlation I found was .7989, I believe students can use their class grades as an additional tool in determining whether taking the AP European History exam is a good option for them or not. Camara and Millsap (2006) also correlated grades with AP Exam scores, but found a low correlation ($r = .303$). This should not be true. There should be a strong correlation between a students' grade (%) in the course and their AP score. I believe it is necessary for me to continue to evaluate this statistic and use it to monitor my effectiveness as a teacher. As long as the class is marketed as an AP course, I have an obligation to design my curriculum in such a way that it matches the expectations of the College Board.

There are several limitations to my research. The first limitation of this research stems from the students being responsible for recording their own minutes and days that they studied outside of the classroom. Students may have many different reasons to

either over or under report the time they spent studying outside of class. Even though I communicated with the students that I was collecting this information merely for the sake of my research and would not look at the data until they were done with the course, they still might be concerned about the impression their data would have on me. This might be especially true since each of the students would have me as their teacher the next year. They may want to impress me and over report their time spent studying outside of class to show me how diligent and responsible they are or they may have under reported their minutes to give me the impression that they are so intelligent that they can perform well in my class without needing to study. Lastly, the minutes might be misreported, not because of an attempt to change my opinion of them as a student, but merely because they may not have paid that much attention to the time when they were studying. The second limitation of this research is the result of the number and scope of those included in my data. Naturally, the limited scope of my research lessens the ability to transfer my findings to a large audience. However, I believe the data can serve my future students. Each year I teach I have students ask about whether they should take the AP test at the end of the course. I naturally desire all my students to take the test, because I am convinced that their final score on the exam is not as important as the process of not only going through the rigor of the course but in preparing for an independent exam that will test their knowledge and skills. The students, however, are truly asking if the money they will need to spend and the time and effort they will need to expend studying for the test are worth it; in other words, will it translate into an AP score of 3 or above. In the past, I had no solid basis for my advice and was left providing merely subjective suggestions to students. The College Board must have also perceived a need to help students answer

this question with data because they developed the *AP Potential* program. This research is my own personalized *AP Potential* program that reflects data from my former students. I believe my future students will care more about how former students from MOC-Floyd Valley High School did based upon my data then they will on the information they receive from *AP Potential*. I also think that this can be a valuable motivator for my students throughout the year. If they know there is a strong correlation between course grades and success on the AP test, they may be more apt to be diligent throughout the year in my course if they perceive it may “help” them when they take the end of the year AP exam. In addition, I can continue to compile this data year after year which should increase the validity of the correlations. Each year I can keep track of my students’ grades and add that to the data I presented in this paper.

My initial tendency was to think in a sacred/spiritual dichotomy and treat the statistical mathematics as something that was merely objective and that had nothing to do with my spiritual life or calling. Donovan Graham (2003) in *Teaching Redemptively* forced me to rethink my position. In his book, Graham talks “of bringing the entire world of academics under the Lordship of Christ” (p. 196). He goes on to say that “God has not created a split-level world in which some dimensions are to be considered sacred and holy while others are relegated to second-class status or given an untouchable independence” (Graham, 2003, p. 196).

As a Christian in a public school I must work under certain guidelines that place restrictions on the sharing of my faith. I agree with Harro Van Brummelen (1994) that it is “morally indefensible for a Christian teacher to use the public school classroom as a forum for evangelism” (p. 262). He says that public school teachers must provide

instruction that is suitable for all children. But even though you cannot design a curriculum that encourages a commitment to a certain religious perspective, Van Brummelen does argue that you can design a curriculum that fosters “a certain view of life, a certain set of values, certain dispositions and commitments” (p. 262). This is what I have attempted to do in AP European History and it would be part of what is sometimes referred to as a teacher’s “hidden curriculum”. In this course, I try and expose students to those things in the past that have shaped and continue to shape culture. This includes both the positive and negative aspects of the past. Once we determine the forces, people and events that are shaping culture, both good and bad, I then try and force the students to think about the implications of what is happening in the history we are studying. I am trying to get my students to hear the wisdom that history tries to speak from the past so that they can live their lives in the present in a way that is closer to the design of their Creator. Naturally I cannot use those phraseologies in my room, but I can use the framework. If, however, I only attempted to use history as a means to develop a students moral compass but did not adequately prepare them with the necessary skills and knowledge to be successful on the AP exam I believe I would lose credibility with my students. I believe providing solid instruction in the content area that stretches their thinking also allows me the privilege to be heard with regard to the larger lessons of history that I attempt to teach in my classroom. In some regards, it is not only my students that are being evaluated by the AP exam in May, it is also evaluating my teaching and my credibility.

Stronks and Blomberg (1993) in *A Vision with a Task* provide keen insight to the purposes of evaluations. I believe that their list corresponds nicely with the ideas in the

previous paragraph. The following purposes are offered by Stronks and Blomberg for evaluations:

(1) Evaluations should encourage and improve student learning. Evaluations should enable teachers and students to assess the extent to which they have met the learning goals they have established. (2) Evaluations must provide guidance for improving instruction. Teachers need information about student learning to help identify strengths and weaknesses in order to design their teaching in ways that best meet those needs. Instead of teaching to the test, teachers should be concerned with assessing student learning and on that basis evaluate their teaching. (3)

Evaluations are necessary to account for the learning that occurs in schools to those responsible for the operation of the school. Appropriate authorities such as parents, schools boards, and governments need information regarding the extent to which a school meets the goals and standards which they have set (p. 275).

After they provide this list, Stronks and Blomberg make the statement that “learning is not for its own sake, but for the sake of being more effective servants of the Lord Jesus Christ” (p. 276). To have any hope in achieving this goal in a public school, I must continue to utilize the data from my students’ performance on the AP exam to evaluate my teaching in order to modify and adjust instruction to meet the needs of my students. If I utilize the AP exam in the way that Stronks and Blomberg describe above, this, hopefully, will provide the platform for any “hidden” curriculum goals that I also seek to implement within my teaching and classroom. In the end, this may lead those under my care not only to score well on the AP test, but to catch also a glimpse of the higher lessons that the study of history has to offer.

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Appendix A

Parent Approval Form

I, Mr. Russell Herman, am writing my Master's Thesis on the correlation between numerous factors and the score students receive on the AP European History Exam. In order to complete my paper I need to have access to some school data of your son/daughter. The data I would like to use is your child's Cumulative Grade Point Average, several Iowa Test of Educational Development (ITED) scores (reading and vocabulary), PSAT/NMSQT writing and reading scores, AP European History score, grade in AP European History (%), and the number of hours studied during a several month time period for AP European History. All of the information will be kept confidential (at no time in my paper will I make reference to individual data – I am only using the data in a collective way). In addition, my paper will be available to you if you would like to see the results of my research. Please sign below if you are willing to let me have access to your child's school files.

Sincerely,

Russell Herman

Mr. Russell Herman has my permission to use my child's student data in his Master's Thesis.

Printed name of student

Parent/Guardian Signature

Department of Education

Dordt College

Sioux Center, Iowa

VITA

Name: Russell W. Herman

Date of Birth: January 2, 1972

Home Address: 215 3rd St. NE, Orange City, IA 51041

Undergraduate Institution: Northwestern College (1990-1995)

Degree & Majors: B.A. – Mathematics and Social Studies