College course options expand in Hanover high schools

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Hanover students will now have more chances to get ahead while in high school.

Tuesday night, Michael Gill, assistant superintendent of instruction, said the division will roll out a number of courses, which will be known as “Advance College Academy.”

Under the new initiative, high school students would be able to earn up to 60 hours of college credit by taking 10 Dual Enrollment courses.

“It is my pleasure this evening to come with a proposal for the board’s consideration for an advanced college academy for Hanover County,” Gill said.

Upon completion of the program, students would be able to receive their high school diploma and an associate’s degree.

By 2016, students enrolled in the Advance College Academy would travel every other day to either of the two base locations for the classes — Patrick Henry and Lee-Davis high schools. Atlee and Hanover high school students would travel to one of the other schools in their area of the county to take the college-credit courses.

In the future, if the program grows, Hanover officials can decide whether to add the other two high schools as sites for students to take the courses. Gill said they chose the two specific schools because one is in the far east and the other is in the far west of the county and they felt those locations would accurately serve students’ needs for now.

Students, along with teachers, would apply to be a part of the program.

Gill said roughly 10 Hanover teachers with the correct certification would be needed and ideally, the same group of teachers would instruct at both schools.

Since July of last year, Norman Sulser, Cold Harbor District representative, has led an effort to offer Hanover students more dual enrollment courses.

“This is a major victory,” Sulser said in an interview earlier this week.

He added that this will help parents and students save money on college tuition by spending less, because they’ll be at least a year ahead by the time they attend a university.

Before this initiative, all students could enroll in an English course that would earn them roughly six hours of college credit if they received an “A” or “B,” and in some cases, a “C.” At Hanover High School, more dual enrollment classes were offered such as dentistry and human anatomy, which all students could partake in because of the school’s specialty center. The division also offered 10 to 15 online dual enrollment courses.

The classes are offered through a partnership with J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College and students must prove that they’re ready for college by taking a placement test or demonstrating their ability for a course through their SAT or PSAT courses, said Tracy Banks, dual enrollment coordinator at the college, in a February interview.

As of February, 228 Hanover students were enrolled in at least one dual enrollment course out of the 6,022 total high school pupils in the division, according to school officials.

For the new program, division staff is currently working on finalizing the curriculum and in fall of next year, they will begin recruiting students to participate in the academy. By Fall 2016, 25 freshmen and 25 sophomore students at both locations will begin participating. Then, they’ll continue to increase the class sizes at each site until 200 students in total have enrolled in the program.

“I appreciate the work you put in,” Sulser told Gill Tuesday night.

“It’s a win for parents, it’s a win for students,” he said.
Headlines of the Day

Revised policies proposed after 9/11 film
The viewing of a controversial documentary about the 9-11 attacks by some Hanover high school students in September sparked ample discussion of the division’s policies regarding instructional materials and its list of “sensitive” teaching materials.

Former Ashland doctor pleads guilty in fatal crash
The former Ashland physician accused in the accidental death of an avid long-distance runner pleaded guilty to one charge of involuntary manslaughter today, conceding that he was under the influence of alcohol when his Toyota SUV ran off Route 54 last January, killing Margaret “Meg” Menzies, a mother of three.

Randolph-Macon wins nailbiter in ODAC home opener
Forty minutes of gritty basketball came down to a final 15 seconds. And after a 90-foot prayer wasn’t answered at the buzzer, Randolph-Macon survived their Old Dominion Athletic Conference (ODAC) home opener by just a point.

PH cruises past Vikings in 59-26 win
Patrick Henry Patriots sophomore forward Aryan Taylor led the way with double-digit scoring as she helped the Lady Patriots improve to 2-2 on the season with a 59-26 win over the visiting Thomas Jefferson Vikings Tuesday night.

A healthy way to heal, give back to the community
After her husband and other immediate family members died all within a few months of one another, Veronica Oberdorf of Mechanicsville said she needed help healing during the grieving process. Oberdorf decided that giving back to others and the community was the best way to do that.

Volunteering to ensure law and order
Jimmy Miles always wanted to work in law enforcement, but he didn’t want to leave his full-time job at Dominion Power. To have the best of both worlds, Miles, of Mechanicsville, joined the Hanover County Sheriff’s Office as one of the department’s reserve deputies.

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