Hanover, J. Sargeant team up on degree

Social sciences program added to county schools' dual-enrollment options

BY LAURA KEBEDE
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Hanover County students will have the opportunity to graduate high school with an associate's degree through a dual-enrollment program set to begin in the 2016 to 2017 school year.

The Hanover School Board on Tuesday unanimously approved the $230 per year student fee and authorized school staff to enter into a memorandum of understanding with J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College to begin the Advanced College Academy housed at Lee Davis High School in the county's east and Patrick Henry High School in the west.

The school division would cover transportation for students of Atlee and Hanover high schools to the program sites every other day, student activity fees and textbooks. It will also cover two summer courses at full price since those classes, unlike the ones during the school year, would be taught by Reynolds staff. Exact costs to the division will be determined when the memorandum of understanding is finalized this spring, said Mike Gill, assistant superintendent for instructional leadership and chief academic officer for the school division.

The first cohort of students will be 50 freshmen and sophomores at each of the sites for a total of 100 students division-wide that will participate in the program. A new freshman cohort will be added the next two years until the program has reached 200 students.

Students will earn 60 credit hours for a social sciences associate's degree and pay a $250 annual fee in the four-year program, totaling $1,000. Based on the community college's $147.60 per credit hour, the same degree there would cost $8,866, not including textbooks.

The General Assembly passed a bill in 2012 for school divisions to develop community college partnerships for high school students to earn associate's degrees while earning their high school diplomas, which spurred the creation of the program. Del. Jennifer L. McClellan, D-Richmond, was one of the patrons of the bill.

Hanover has two other college credit partnerships, including dual-enrollment English classes at all four high schools and an economics and personal finance program with Longwood University, Gill said. Expanded certification and college credit options are on the horizon for career and technical education, he said.

"We want to offer as much value as we possibly can and offer as much savings as we possibly can," he said in an interview. "We want to give them as many experiences in high school as possible."

Richmond and Henrico and Chesterfield counties have similar programs. Goochland and Powhatan counties are developing their own.

Gill said Hanover school officials did not want a central location but instead wanted traveling students to remain students at their home school for sports and other purposes.

Hanover teachers will be required to have a master's degree in their teaching subject area or any master's degree plus 18 credit hours in the subject area, Gill said. Student and teacher eligibility requirements will be finalized before the summer break. Student recruitment will begin in the fall.

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