

TO: Board of Education
FROM: Randy Squier
SUBJECT: C-A Students Earning College Credit
DATE: September 12, 2013

SUMMARY

Issue for Discussion

The Board of Education has determined one of the district's 3-year goals will be for each student to have earned college credit or a career technical endorsement prior to graduating from Coxsackie-Athens. The Board is asked to consider recommendations for how the district will support students in achieving this goal, created after two public forums regarding this topic.

Reason(s) for Consideration

Part of the mission of the Coxsackie-Athens School District is to develop self-directed college and career ready students who are prepared to succeed in our global society. Students successfully completing more rigorous college and career level work will demonstrate readiness for college and the workforce.

Background

Coxsackie-Athens has offered Advanced Placement (AP) courses, as well as dual enrollment courses eligible for college credit via local colleges and universities. Students enrolled in these courses have been required to pay the exam fee or tuition in order to receive college credit. For AP courses, credit is given through examination. Since 2007 the average score on AP exams has been 2.7. The number of courses offered through local colleges, and other online platforms has increased substantially in the last five years. Each year approximately 20% of the student body is enrolled in either an AP or college credit course.

Current Status

For 2013, the average AP score was 2.55. 4 students (3%) earned a 5. 13 students (12%) earned a 4. 41 students (38%) earned a 3. 29 students (27%) earned a 2. 20 students (19%) earned a 1. The number of students enrolled in college credit classes that registered and paid for and earned college credit was less than 25%.

Currently 199 students are enrolled in 369 seats for the 2013-14 school year in a course that offers college credit either through exam(A.P.) or successful completion of the course.

Two public forums were held where a total of 22 parents and educators participated. The conversations at both forums centered around three topics:

1. Increase awareness and expectations that all students could be successful in college level course work.
2. Communicate the financial benefits of registering and paying for courses offered through agreements with colleges. Tuition costs may be a struggle for many of our families.
3. Improve scores on advanced placement exams.

The recommendations from these forums were:

1. Provide exposure to career fields and education pathways earlier in students' schooling. Communicate to each student through actions that the expectation is they will pursue post-secondary education.
 - Field trips to places of employment
 - Career days
 - Field trips to college campuses
 - Financial aid nights
 - College fairs
2. Communicate often to parents about college credit offerings.
 - Annual meetings with parents and advisors/counselors.
 - Require Parents to approve course selections.
 - Communication in June, August and first week of school for registering for credit.
 - Search for alternatives for earning college credit that may be more cost effective and flexible for the student.
 - Continual access to information on website, flyers, brochures.
3. In regards to advanced placement courses, the merits of taking the exams were discussed. There was general agreement our overall scores are poor as compared to New York State averages. There was consensus that local college courses taken at C-A showed more promise than AP. For students wanting to earn college credit prior to graduation; the A.P. exam success rate would make parents ponder whether that would be the best choice.

Recommendations

1. The administration will implement a variety of opportunities in grades K-12 for students to become aware of regional career fields and the education necessary for being qualified.
2. The district pursues agreements with colleges that provide credit bearing courses relevant to regional career paths as well as courses at lower tuition rates.
3. The district provide online alternatives for students who want to stay on the C-A campus full time while pursuing college credit course work leading to an Associate degree.
4. The implementation, during student planning for the 2014-15 school year, of a communication plan that describes and program that provides coursework pathways for grades 8-12 towards major regional career fields.

Further Discussion Questions

1. Should the district establish benchmarks for success on the Advanced Placement Exams that would determine continuation of these offerings?
2. Should the district provide financial support for enrollees in college credit courses?
3. Should the district pursue in house CTE program offerings in partnership with Questar III?