

Schools

School Board approves new classes

By Ryan Winslett
Times Editor

A number of new classes were approved for Fountain Hills High School during the Dec. 14 School Board meeting, including Live Theatre Performance and Production, AP Environmental Science, Statistics, AP Statistics, AVID and a collection of AP Capstone courses (see related story).

Following approval, the Theatre class will be available this coming spring, with all other set to be available at the start of the 2017-18 academic year.

A partnership with the

Fountain Hills Community Theater, the Live theatre Performance and Production courses will provide students with an opportunity to earn fine arts credits in a unique new way. A certified teacher will be provided by the Fountain Hills Theater, and classes will initially be taught at the Theater itself. Like many fine art and lab classes, this is a fee-based course.

With the statistics and environmental science courses helping round out the school's departmental offerings, AVID is something of a unique program.

AVID stands for Achievement Via Individual Determination, and it is seen as a course that takes achieving students and pushes them to do even more.

The AVID program builds additional support and tutoring into the school day with the goal of building all students toward college readiness.

AzMERIT Math

Joining these courses as a discussion item for the night, the Board took a first look at a proposed AzMERIT Math class for FHHS.

This course is designed

to meet the needs of students entering high school who have not yet passed the AzMERIT math exam. It's planned as an elective course primarily for freshmen who earned a score of 1 on the standardized test, or by teacher recommendation.

Principal Cain Jagodzinski explained that this was another course aimed at "filling in the gaps, providing a year of math fundamentals before the student moves on to Algebra."

This course will be considered for approval during a future meeting.

AP Capstone courses approved for FHHS

By Ryan Winslett
Times Editor

An AP Capstone program was approved for Fountain Hills High School during the Dec. 14 School Board meeting, to be implemented beginning in the fall of 2017.

In short, the AP Capstone Program is a diploma program that focuses on inquiry, research and writing skills crucial for college and career success. FHHS Principal Cain Jagodzinski said the program will challenge the district's brightest students and offer a new higher tier of academic success for the school.

This makes FHHS one of approximately 1,000 approved schools worldwide to implement AP Capstone, which offers a heavy emphasis on research, collaboration and communication. The program consists of two courses taken in sequence: AP Seminar and AP Research. Developed in direct response to feedback from higher education faculty and college admission officers, AP Capstone complements the in-depth, subject-specific study of other Advanced Placement courses and exams.

"This innovative program gets a broader, more diverse student population ready for college and beyond," said Jagodzinski. "The program empowers our teachers to use their professional judgement with curriculum choices so their students can access more challenging coursework and sharpen their reading and writing skills."

The AP Seminar course, typically taken in 10th or 11th grade, equips students with the ability to look at real-world issues from multiple perspectives. Through a variety of materials—articles to research studies to foundational and philosophical texts—students tackle complex questions; understand and evaluate opposing viewpoints; interpret and synthesize information; and construct, communicate,

and defend evidence-based arguments.

Education, innovation, sustainability, and technology are examples of themes or topics covered in AP Seminar. However, Jagodzinski said teachers have the flexibility to choose subject content based on student interests, whether local, regional, national, or global.

In the subsequent AP Research course, students design, plan, and conduct a yearlong research-based investigation on a topic of individual interest, documenting their process with a portfolio. Students build on skills developed in the AP Seminar course by learning how to understand research methodology; employ ethical research practices; and collect, analyze, and synthesize information to build, present, and defend an argument.

"We are proud to offer AP Capstone, which enables students and teachers to focus on topics of their choice in great depth," said Trevor Packer, senior vice president for AP and instruction at the College Board. "This provides terrific opportunities for students to develop the ability to write and present their work effectively, individually and in groups—the very skills college professors want their students to possess."

Students who earn scores of three or higher on AP Seminar and AP Research assessments and on four additional AP Exams of their choosing will earn the AP Capstone Diploma. This signifies their outstanding academic achievement and attainment of college-level academic and research skills. Students who earn scores of three or higher on both AP Seminar and AP Research assessments only (but not on four additional AP Exams) will earn the AP Seminar and Research Certificate.

For more information on the program, contact Fountain Hills High School at 480-664-5500.

Coalition hosts essay contest

The Fountain Hills Coalition is set to kick off the fifth annual essay contest for all local high school students, running from Jan. 3-27.

Entry forms and contest rules will be available in all Fountain Hills High School English classrooms, as well as the Fountain Hills Branch Library. The deadline to drop off entries

is Jan. 27.

Prizes for this year's essay contest include \$1,000 for first place, \$300 for second place and \$100 for third.

Interested students are encouraged to write an essay of 750 words or less on one of the following topics:

*What is one thing you can do to improve how you get along with someone

after resolving a conflict?

*What is one thing that our newly elected U.S. President could do that would benefit people your age?

*What key element is necessary to create a strong friendship?

Awards for this year's contest were funded in part by Gold Level sponsors ONQ Financial-Kent

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School Briefs

FHUSD budget gets revision

The Fountain Hills Unified School District Governing Board approved a revision to the FY17 budget, resulting in a gain of approximately \$870,000 for the local district.

During the Dec. 14 meeting, it was explained that the budget revision was primarily due to changes brought on by the passage of Proposition 123. Budgets are typically built on the average daily membership for the previous school year; in this case, 100 day count from January 2016. However, the alterations required the usage of the

ADM from the previous school year, the 100 day count from January 2015.

The difference in population between those two time periods meant a gain of nearly a million dollars for the local district.

Additional changes to carryforward were also approved as part of this budget revision.

Schools closed for winter break

All sites within the Fountain Hills Unified School District and Fountain Hills Charter School are closed for winter break.

Winter break runs through Monday, Jan. 2.

There will be no classes during this time.

Schools will return to their regular schedules on Tuesday, Jan. 3.

ACDEC students have been named

Fountain Hills High School's Dr. Paul McElligott would like to congratulate the following students who will compete in the coming Regional Academic Decathlon.

Sarah Domin, Paige Despain, Laura Anderson, Kyle Clark, Kolton Coultrap, Brenden Tjeerdsma, Stone Xia, Bailey Billings, Anthony Bonomolo and Casey Shellabarger.

New books being considered

The Fountain Hills Unified School District is currently evaluating the following supplemental reading books for the Fountain Hills High School AP literature class:

"Dracula," by Bram Stoker.

"On Writing, A Memoir of the Craft," by Stephen King.

Both books will be on display at the district office for 60 days. For those with questions, comments or a desire to see a sample of either book, contact the District Office at 480-664-5011 or email jsimmons@fhUSD.org.

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