

District 204 Ready to Fight "Senioritis" with College Courses

by Howard Crouse, Superintendent

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Is there a cure for “senioritis?” The answer may be elusive, but evidence of the “disease” is pervasive, stylized with T- shirts and picnics, and excused by most of us as a coping mechanism while our students race toward graduation and their future. Most of our seniors have enough credits to graduate with only a few requirements left to be met: consumer education, American government, English, physical education, and time. College applications are in the mail and final acceptance is contingent only upon graduation.

At the same time, we have to recognize that our students are not all the same. Some are challenged, some are bored with high school routines, and most want to get on with the next phase of their lives more quickly while still enjoying the social aspects of their last year in high school.

So while our enrollments continue to grow in our senior advanced placement and capstone classes, we still strive to make the senior year more valuable and meaningful for all our twelfth graders.

We have a committed group of staff members looking for ways to enhance the senior year with more opportunities for our students. They have brainstormed an initial list of options and presented it to our juniors. In a letter to their parents, the group summed it up. “While we realize that the vast majority of our students are well served by the traditional senior year in high school, we also understand that as the world evolves, there may be students today with different needs, needs not as well met by the standard twelfth grade year.”

One of the most exciting options may be available for next year's senior class. Working with College of DuPage (COD), we have identified as many as 17 college-level courses that we may be able to offer. These are dual-credit classes, meaning they would count both as high school and college courses. The courses under consideration include Chinese I and II, international business, introduction to education, managerial accounting, and college level speech, history, and humanities.

These classes have the potential for even greater benefit than adding variety to senior year. COD participates in a state-wide program with other Illinois' colleges and universities that designates common courses from each college's catalog that are transferable to any college or university in Illinois. Most of these new offerings meet that standard.

With this new option we are increasingly taking advantage of COD's Rickert Drive facility, located within our district and almost equidistant between our two high schools.

It is my belief that our students should have the opportunity to graduate from high school with at least one semester of college credit in hand if they want to pursue college-level work. It is one way to provide a great transition from high school to college, and also a way to give something back to our taxpaying parents.

COD is but one of our higher-education partners. We also have programs on a smaller scale with North Central College, Aurora University, and Waubesa Community College. All of these offer valuable options for our students.

To inform our juniors, we presented a video look at the options during an Advisory period. It sparked a great deal of conversation, and growing interest. We are

currently surveying both the juniors and their parents about their preferences. Not only will this survey help us with scheduling for next year, but it will also provide us with insight into what other programs might be possible.

We are planning for further options to be available in the future. As our classes become larger, they also become more diverse in the students' interests. Once we break out of the mold, we can reinvent ourselves in many different ways. Stay tuned.

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