

Douglas County students might be able to take college classes during regular school day

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Douglas County School District is considering partnering with Western Nevada College in an expanded dual credit program.

High school students can take WNC classes now, but it has to be after school or in the evenings. The program the district is looking at would be during the regular school day, be just Douglas and/or Whittell high school students, be taught at the Douglas campus of WNC, and include a peer mentor-teacher's assistant in the room who would be provided by WNC.

It could start in the fall with English 101 and Math 126 and then English 102 and Math 127 in spring 2015.

The board unanimously agreed at its meeting Jan. 14 to have Superintendent Lisa Noonan pursue the idea and come back with more specifics, like cost, what to do if students can't afford the class, transportation, opportunities for Whittell students, the fairness of limiting the number of students allowed to enroll and other details.

To take the English and math classes at WNC it costs \$555 a semester. If 25 students were to take the two courses both semesters the cost is \$28,500.

Districts in Nevada are not uniform in how they handle the costs for high school student-community college programs. Some pay it all, some charge the same \$90 fee as an AP class, some

provide transportation.

One thing brought up this week is how students taking WNC classes today pay their way. But they are doing so on their own time and don't get extra support.

The Jump Start College program is being offered by WNC to Carson, Churchill, Mineral and Storey county school districts, too. Those classes would be at the Carson City campus.

John Kinkella, dean of student service at WNC, gave a presentation to the Douglas board Tuesday outlining the benefits:

- The student completes math and English general education college course requirements while still in high school.
- The parent is assured of a supportive initial college experience and a break on tuition and fee costs compared to the university.
- Jump Start College students add to the high school and school district's new performance measures.

"Completions of English 101 is the highest prediction of completing their bachelor's," Kinkella said.

Whittell, with its being on a four-day schedule and having a tiny student body, may present challenges that could not be overcome when it comes to college classes during the regular school day.

Whittell Principal Crespin Esquivel asked about the possibility of distance learning for his students. This will be investigated.

"Overall, I think it's wonderful for kids," Esquivel told the board.

In fall 2008, Whittell had an agreement with WNC. Whittell

teachers taught WNC classes in addition to their regular five periods. One was a section of composition and one of trig/pre-calculus.

Whittell students also used to go to Lake Tahoe Community College on a regular basis. When Nevada did away with the good neighbor policy it meant students in Nevada had to pay out of state tuition even though it's the closest college to them.

LTCC President Kindred Murillo has been working to change that policy.

"We are working on a different strategy. We may kill SB329 and develop a new bill that may be more to the liking of the Senate Education Committee. We are working currently with the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office and the Community College League of California to strategize the best approach," Murillo told *Lake Tahoe News*. "We are not giving up, just trying to find a way to make it beneficial to everyone."