

LTCC, LTUSD paving smooth path for students

By Kathryn Reed

One day it may be possible for students at South Tahoe High School to graduate with a diploma and the first two years of Lake Tahoe Community College work completed.

Tom Greene, vice president of academic affairs and student services at LTCC, said there is a national movement to create such a curriculum. It's for students who learn in nontraditional environments. It would also be a highly structured environment of integrated learning.

The two South Shore education systems are in the early stages of looking into this idea.

This is one example of how LTCC and LTUSD are collaborating. The two boards met together for the first time in more than a decade on Feb. 11. Together the boards, staff and administrators are creating what's called Pathway-20, or P-20 for short. The goal is to create a seamless transition from K-12, through community college and to higher levels of collegiate study.

"We are probably at the first level. We are able to use facilities on both sides. It saves the taxpayers money," LTUSD Superintendent Jim Tarwater said.



Lake Tahoe Community College
and Lake Tahoe Unified
School District boards of
education meet Feb. 11.
Photo/Pat Leonard-Heffner

Instead of having duplicate infrastructure, the entities share resources. A good example is the state-of-the-art digital arts building at STHS that was put in as part of the \$64.5 million facilities bond that was approved a few years ago. The college can use it for classes.

The three areas of study that are linked today are dental assisting, digital media arts-new media, and culinary arts.

Students are the overriding reason to do any of this, according to the educators. It will reduce redundancy in education plans, create a more efficient education system and provide them a road map for life as a student.

Taxpayers benefit by the consolidation of resources. This could also provide more opportunities for students.

With LTCC contemplating a general obligation bond for facilities, it is looking at the possibility of putting lights in at the South Tahoe Middle School field which would benefit LTCC as it grows its sports programs. It has the added benefit of helping LTUSD and the greater community.

The P-20 vision is, "A seamless, efficient educational system that leverages our education, business and community

relationships to ensure all students, particularly those underserved historically, achieve their educational goals and enhance their social mobility.”

Already STMS and STHS share a path with digital media. Within LTUSD, the transition will be introduced between the elementary and middle school levels.

Together the education entities are going to apply for a career pathways grant that would provide seed money to help with planning P-20.

Already in hand is a \$100,000 grant for the next three years for career technical education pathways that will be used on course articulation and faculty collaboration.

Another \$165,000 grant is geared toward adult education. Adult ed fills the needs of those who may have left high school early and need to get their GED, or others who need some help to get into college. The money can be spent on streamlining and leveraging social services, GED-ACT-SAT and other testing services, improved citizenship, English skills, and the creation of short-term CTE training and apprenticeship programs. These are not courses taken for high school or college credit.

The next steps include a formal articulation of career technical education courses, gathering data on students, looking at the cost for high school students to attend LTCC, textbooks, and making the two systems be more aligned.

The expense of textbooks is one of the barriers to college. In college students pay for books, in K-12 they are provided.

In LTUSD almost every student has a netbook. LTCC is not as technologically robust as the K-12. That is a problem that is being addressed.

The idea of selling students the netbook upon graduation has

been broached. The ideal scenario is netbooks would be a relevant device when going to LTCC instead of becoming a dust magnet.

Technology is another area where the two institutions have been working. Talks are under way to develop a regional data center that would host equipment for computer servers. Having staffs work together is already taking place.