

## School District of New Berlin Expands Post-Secondary Options

New Berlin, Wis. – Last month, the School District of New Berlin hosted an information night for students and their families to explain the wide variety of options available to students who feel ready to explore and/or start their post-secondary plan while still in high school.

In addition to previously available opportunities, the District launched a new program in partnership with UW-Waukesha that allows students to start and/or complete an Associate Degree prior to graduation.

“I have worked with many K-12 schools across the country and I have yet to find a school as committed to preparing their students for postsecondary success as the School District of New Berlin,” said Harry Muir, Special Assistant to the Chancellor, UW Colleges. “Pursuing an Associate Degree before investing in a baccalaureate program allows students to complete all of their general education requirements and complete a post-secondary education credential at a fraction of the cost. With the number of students throughout the state currently unable to complete a degree in six years, this program can be a really nice fit for many students.”

The State of Wisconsin has a variety of different options to earn postsecondary credit while still in high school. Current legislation, however, causes them each to be administered and funded differently, making it difficult for schools, students, and families to efficiently and effectively leverage them. Additionally, existing articulation agreements do not guarantee how credits will transfer to a student’s post-secondary education in the future. “We believe that personalized mentorship, supports, and services are a critical component of the student experience in the SDNB,” Superintendent Joe Garza. “The UW-College in High School Associate Degree Program leverages all of the tools the State of Wisconsin has provided to us to help students explore relevant and rigorous coursework and expedite a student’s time to degree. We remain committed to helping students navigate through perceived barriers in support of their Academic and Career Plans.”

The SDNB currently offers more than 20 Advanced Placement (AP) courses. AP courses were first introduced in the SDNB as way of assessing college readiness. The SDNB provides a weight to a student’s grade as an incentive for trying an advanced class. If a student pays for and takes the AP test with a passing score of 3 or more, they can earn ‘Advanced Standing’ which may or may not transfer to the school and/or program they choose to enroll in after graduation. Seventy-seven percent of all 2016 graduating seniors have taken at least one AP class.

“AP is one of many options to support a student’s personal, social, academic or career goals,” said Kelli Kwiatkowski, SDNB Director of Secondary Teaching and Learning. “We also offer, however, a number of other alternatives to purposefully inform a student’s investment in their post-secondary education and have the opportunity to apply what they are learning. Those who are ready for an additional challenge have the option to explore dual enrollment coursework to get a taste for what college level coursework in a particular area of study really entails and get a jumpstart on their college transcript. These are personal decisions. We ask our students to carefully consider what they want to learn about and why so that we can guide them to the options best suited to their unique interests.”

In addition to AP coursework, SDNB students can take dual enrollment college courses in Math, Communications, Health Care Careers, Heredity, Medical Terminology, Genetics and Genomics, Education, World Language, Accounting, Sales and Marketing, Architecture, Entrepreneurship, etc. without leaving the District. These courses start a student’s college transcript and provide both college and high school credit.

Many of them also satisfy UW College In High School Associate Degree applied and/or resident credit requirements.

Project Lead The Way engineering courses provide an opportunity for 'transcribed credit' following successful completion of the course. SDNB students are also able to take courses on site that lead to an industry certification such as Certified Nursing Assistant, Manufacturing Safety and Quality, and Information Technology.

Students who would like to pursue a degree through the Technical College System have the opportunity to start working on a technical diploma or associate degree at the Waukesha County Technical College through its regional Dual Enrollment Academy. This program provides 18-24 college credits depending on the program of study.

"The Dual Enrollment Academy is a great fit for students who know what they want to do and are ready to start college level coursework," Kwiatkowski added. "While possible to complete an associate degree through WCTC during high school, it is more difficult because of how specialized each program is."

SDNB students who need to access coursework at the District's other high school or through the WCTC Dual Enrollment Program are provided with transportation upon request.

"We want all students to have at least one post-secondary learning experience prior to graduation. Consequently, we will continue to strive to make it as easy as possible for students to take rigorous and relevant coursework in alignment with their personal, social, academic and career goals" Garza added. "If they can't find a fit through the options available on site, they can take courses at local or online colleges or through one of our other education partners."

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