

Dual-enrollment courses suffer from low interest

By Colleen Sikorski

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Agua Fria Union High School District leaders are re-examining a program that allows students to simultaneously earn high school and college credit.

The district is exploring what to do with the dual-enrollment program because it is underused by students compared to similar programs and it may be difficult to boost enrollment, said Superintendent Dennis Runyan.

Dual-enrollment classes are taught by district teachers in district classrooms for high-school credit. The classes are modeled after specific courses taught at Estrella Mountain Community College. When students pass the class, they also receive credit through Estrella Mountain.

The district is exploring its options, including combining dual enrollment classes with Career and Technical Education, as well as encouraging teachers to become certified to teach dual-enrollment classes.

The dual-enrollment program had 243 students for the 2012-2013 school year. During the same school year, the district had 783 students taking Advanced Placement classes at all four schools and 2,688 students taking Career and Technical Education classes at three of its four schools. Enrollment figures for the fourth high school's career and technical classes were not immediately available.

Several issues have made the dual-enrollment program less popular with students, school board members and administrators said at a Wednesday, Sept. 12 meeting.

Few students take dual-enrollment courses because there are relatively few dual-enrollment course offerings throughout the district. Dual-enrollment classes are accepted for credit at only a handful of local colleges. Also, it's difficult to add more classes to the lineup because teachers must pay their own certification costs.

Board clerk Tom Rosztochy had originally requested that the board discuss dual enrollment because he believed stu-

dents at Agua Fria High School had fewer opportunities to take dual-enrollment classes than students at the district's three other high schools.

"Now I realize nobody's getting a fair shot," he said.

Millennium High School is the only

district high school that has consistently offered more than three dual-enrollment classes per semester, according to Melissa Yapo, director of curriculum, assessment and instruction

Currently, the district has no qualified dual-enrollment teachers at Agua Fria or Desert Edge high schools. Millennium has 11 certified teachers, and Verado has three.

District administrators are considering having a community-college representative address district teachers about the benefits of becoming dual-enrollment certified.

The district will also explore partnering with other colleges or universities, in addition to Estrella Mountain Community College, that could offer dual-enrollment courses. The district may also combine Career and Technical Education courses with dual-enrollment courses to boost the number of students taking dual-enrollment classes.

While the district has focused on boosting enrollment in Advanced Placement and Career and Technical Education, increasing the number of dual-enrollment classes has not been a big focus, Runyan said.

Advanced Placement test scores are a national standard, Runyan said, meaning colleges across the country accept college credits students earn based on Advanced Placement test scores. Dual-enrollment courses, that are now run through Estrella Mountain Community College, may be accepted only at one or two local community colleges.

Teachers who want to teach dual-enrollment classes must have a master's degree, among other qualifications, and have to pay for the course that certifies them, which costs \$281.

Board President Maxine Hill cautioned the district shouldn't become too focused on growing the dual-enrollment



program.

"You can wish all you want that our students can take these courses," Hill said. "I just don't want us to get caught up in increasing numbers in dual enrollment when our teachers are caught up in the rigors of Common Core," she said referring to the state's new, tougher education standards.

This school year, instructors are preparing for the new learning standards, which students will be tested on starting in 2015.