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EDUCATION

Different levels of YHS classes include advanced placement

By Earlene Ward - Special to the Sierra Star

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Yosemite Unified School District officials are proud of the variety of programs it offers at the high school level to meet the needs of all students.

Yosemite High School offers students a rigorous academic program that includes the International Baccalaureate program and a small number of Advanced Placement courses. The IB program is a comprehensive academic program which prepares students for the rigors of college or university work and for students who pass the rigorous examinations at the end of their course of study to have courses waived or earn credit at some colleges and universities.



In addition to its sports facilities, Yosemite High School offers a wide range of programs for students.

Photo by David Richards

"We believe that the IB program offers students the opportunity to engage in a rigorous course of study which will prepare them to be successful at the university level," said YHS Principal Steve Raupp.

YHS has placed a heavy emphasis on academic achievement for many, many years, noted Yosemite Unified School District Superintendent Bill McCabe. "Our efforts to have Yosemite High accepted into the full diploma IB program in 1992 is indicative of the importance school officials and board members have always placed on academic excellence," he said.

YHS offers a full diploma program through IB. To earn the IB diploma, students must pass six examinations that are graded on a worldwide standard, they must complete a course in the Theory of Knowledge and present an extended essay of at least 4000 words reflecting independent research and analysis in any area in which IB allows examination. Students must also complete a CAS Project (Creativity, Action, Service) during their two years in the IB program.

IB and AP examinations are not graded at the school level. IB exams may be graded in any of the 40 countries participating in the program. AP exams are graded by a selected group of educators from throughout the country.

Along with these programs, the district offers several avenues to assist students who need additional academic help.

State Academic Content Standards, the California High School Exit Exam, standardized testing, No Child Left Behind requirements and the state requirement that all students must pass algebra to graduate are just some of the challenges students face that may require extra help outside of the classroom.

Federal and state designated funds are available for some of these programs, such as Title I, Title VII and the School Improvement Program (SIP), others are provided through the district's general fund.

"We try to focus use of our categorical funds to provide direct assistance to students. Typically we have used our categorical funds to provide additional support staff that has a direct impact on student learning. Expenditures of categorical funds are built into our school plan for improving student achievement and are reviewed and revised annually," Raupp said.

Among the programs available to give students extra assistance are American Indian Tutorial Program, Title I, Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), Graduate Equivalency Degree (GED), Mountain View High School, SIP tutoring, summer school, math lab, and language lab.

The school also offers a resource program where students spend part of their day in smaller classes with special instruction in English and math. The school emphasizes the inclusion model where these students attend as many classes as possible with the rest of the student population. They may have the services of a tutor in these classes.

YUSD Superintendent Bill McCabe said the programs that offer students extra help are critical to the educational process.

"Most of us have more difficulty with some subjects than with others," he said. "When a student has a difficult time grasping a particular subject it is important that they have help available to assist them. It is frustrating to not understand a subject, but with some extra help the students are almost always able to successfully complete the class."

An intervention program is available where students receive special assistance at lunch or after school with the computer-based Accelerated Math program designed to help students with their particular areas of need.

Beginning with the Class of 2006, all students must have passed the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) to graduate. This consists of an English Language Arts portion and a mathematics portion. Students are given several opportunities to pass the test.

Students who do not pass one or both portions of the CAHSEE can enroll in math lab or an English lab for extra help in those subjects.

Tutoring outside of the school day is also available for students. The SIP tutoring program provides student tutors during lunch every day for students who need assistance in any subject. Students sign up for this program with their counselors.

Through the federal Title VII program, tutoring is available to Native American or Alaskan Native students whose parents have filed the federally required Form 506 with the school district. This form is included in the packets sent home each summer.

The Title VII program also promotes pride in the students' heritage and promotes a better understanding of the Native American culture.

Title VII funds are also used to help fund the AVID program. The program is open to all students. Instruction includes organizational skills, note-taking skills, resume writing and other topics directed at improving college attendance rates. Tutoring is also provided for Native American students.

Title I is another federal program that offers special support to students. This program provides remediation for those students testing below grade level (two years below grade level and seniors who must pass district proficiency requirements). Any student who needs to pass the CAHSEE is also eligible for the program.

Freshmen or sophomores who find themselves having a hard time adjusting to the traditional classroom can voluntarily enroll in Mountain View High School. There are two self-contained classrooms where students spend the majority of each day but they may enroll in up to two elective classes on the YHS campus, which is located adjacent to MVHS.

There are special tutors for English Language Learners at YHS. Assistance is available to these students on an as-needed basis.

Some students, for a variety of reasons, find that attending the district's comprehensive high school, Yosemite High, does not meet their needs. They need an alternative way to pursue their education and the district offers them several choices. Alternative schools in the district are: Ahwahnee High, a continuation school; Evergreen High, independent study; Foothill High, a necessary small school in Yosemite Lakes Park (a necessary small school must be located more than 20 miles from the district's main campus); Glacier High, a charter school; Mountain View High, a continuation school for ninth and 10th grades; and Raymond-Granite High, a necessary small school in Raymond. The district also operates Yosemite Adult Education High School for people over 18 years of age.

"We are continually looking for ways to meet the needs of every student in the district," McCabe said.

He is proud of all of the resources the district offers to its students.

"We know every student has different needs and different ways to learn. We are sensitive to these needs and we do everything we can to help each student succeed."



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