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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 20, 2018

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WRHS GRADUATION RATES IMPROVE FROM DIGITAL CURRICULUM



Summer school students at Window Rock High School are currently using Apex Learning Virtual School to get caught up on classes before the school year starts.

FT. DEFIANCE—Apex Learning Virtual School is making a positive impact at Window Rock High School.

The online high school has assisted students with credit recovery for graduation, advanced placement coursework and flexibility in meeting academic standards.

Superintendent Lynnette Michalski lauded the Window Rock Unified School District No. 8 for its decision to integrate digital curriculum into the high school.

“This is another area of achievement for the school district that we are celebrating,” she said during the June 12 Governing Board of Education regular meeting.

She said the school district implemented the use of ALVS

to reduce the dropout rate and improve educational outcomes for students.

ALVS is accredited as a private high school by the Northwest Accreditation Commission, a division of AdvancED. Serving as a full time virtual school for students, ALVS serves more than 15,000 students per year across the U.S.

WRHS Principal William Horsley said ALVS is providing actionable data to inform classroom instruction.

“Most of you know Apex as a credit recovery process. We are much further along, much deeper in the idea of using computer assisted technology with our students,” he said.

ALVS provides stu-

dents with opportunities for advanced placement subject matter, course retakes, academic advancement, and home school lessons.

Arthur Ben, WRHS Assistant Principal, said his experience with digital curriculum began with two charter schools he co-founded in Phoenix – International Commerce Secondary School and Humanities and Sciences Academy Arizona – which offered online credit recovery and other opportunities like concurrent enrollment.

“I also co-founded another charter school in Tsaile at Dine’ College. I did it for 14 years and then closed it down and surrendered the charter,” he said.

The closure was primarily

due to the economic recession and the college’s decision to utilize the building the charter school was occupying.

However, the fact remained: online courses for high school students were an effective weapon against students dropping out.

Bringing this experience to WRUSD, Ben has recommended specific ideas on the use of the online coursework for students. Credit recovery should not be the only focus, he said.

“Here, Apex is making a big time impact,” he said.

Adding elective courses through ALVS is possibly one of the biggest changes and Ben said students have taken to courses with enthusiasm.

The high school has three

computer labs for students to utilize for their ALVS course work, including a number of laptops.

In 2018, WRHS had 127 graduates and of that amount, 109 were in the student cohort that began in 2014. At that time, there were 166 students that started high school.

However, attrition occurred over the four-year period, often the result of transfers.

Seventeen students left to attend school in New Mexico and another 22 students began attending school elsewhere in Arizona. Through ALVS, the district had 18 out-of-cohort 2018 graduates from the Scouts Academy.

Horsley said out-of-cohort students are usually fifth and sixth year seniors utilizing ALVS to attain needed credits to finish high school.

Scouts Academy serves as severe credit recovery for high school students in the district, he said, adding that the program is typically for students with 10 credits and under by the time they are seniors.

ALVS is also utilized for after school tutoring, tutorials and development of specific standards mastery. Other opportunities are also available, like college level courses in civics, history, English, mathematics, foreign language, visual and performing arts, college preparatory electives, and more.

“I believe we are around somewhere between 95-97 percent mastery of the civics test this year. It didn’t hurt students one bit going through Apex Learning. We need to get out of the mindset that Apex is just credit recovery,” Horsley said.

The school district has also utilized ALVS to allow students excelling at school

to spread their wings and ride the winds of academic excellence.

“We had five students who utilized Apex for an extension of their learning because we don’t have advanced placement chemistry. We’re just now getting AP classes,” Horsley said.

In addition to AP chemistry, area students also utilized ALVS for AP calculus, Spanish II, multicultural studies and art appreciation. A total of 262 students were enrolled in ALVS and they completed 901 course enrollments in 2018.

In the 2017, WRHS had 622 course completions. The increase was notable for administrators.

“That was huge. Students had an 81 percent passing grade average. The average for course completion was 58 days. Ninety-seven percent of students who began taking Apex classes finished them,” he said. “We’ve raised the bar.”

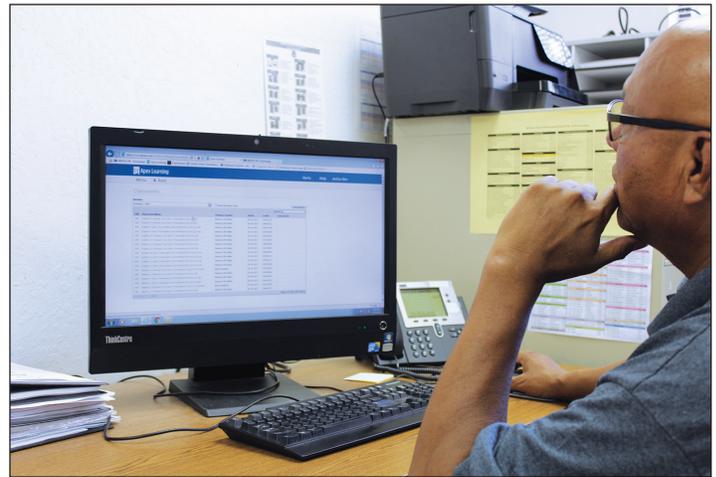
Raising the bar for Apex Learning has equated to an 81 percent quality of work average. Previously, the district required a 60 percent average for students to pass the course work. Today, that standard to pass is now at 70 percent.

For the current school year, WRHS is planning on utilizing tutorials for “Winning Wednesdays,” an afterschool tutoring program. Horsley said the school is also going to incorporate ALVS for SAT, ACT and GED exams.

Parents can expect to see increased active learning and student-centered online classes with appropriate support and feedback for the coming school year.



William Horsley, principal of WRHS, said the Apex Learning Virtual School standards have been raised by administrators and students alike.



Assistant principal Arthur Ben logs into the ALVS and demonstrates the various administrative functions and oversight of the virtual curriculum.



WRHS, Home of the Fighting Scouts, is one of several Navajo Nation schools that utilize ALVS for credit recovery and other specific standards mastery.