



Preparing students for college, career

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By Laurie Struna, Mesa Public Schools

Each child is unique and there isn't a one-size-fits-all post-secondary path for every high school student. Mesa Public Schools provides comprehensive education and resources for students and families.

Dr. Michael Garcia, director of opportunity and achievement, says the goal is to ensure students are life ready when they leave high school.

"Life-ready students demonstrate skill sets that include self-management, responsible decision-making and the relationship skills necessary to live happy, healthy and productive lives," he said.

Preparing students for college success

Advancement Via Individual Determination, or AVID, helps teachers shift from delivering content to facilitating learning, resulting in an inquiry-based, student-centric classroom. AVID's mission is to close the achievement gap by preparing all students for post-secondary education. Students set goals and work toward them, so they can attend and succeed in college.

"AVID is a different way of thinking," Garcia said. "It is a belief that our students can achieve at high levels if we push them and support them."

The district initiative #cash4college was created to improve district completion rates for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA. Research shows FAFSA completion directly correlates with students going to college. According to Garcia, the district saw a 45% increase in student college applications in 2018-19. The goal this school year is to increase the FAFSA completion rate to 55%.

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and engineering.

According to Danny Fisher, director of Career and Technical Education, national research shows that students who take CTE courses are more likely to graduate from high school and continue their post-secondary education.

“Last year, more than 16,700 Mesa Public Schools students enrolled in CTE programs,” Fisher said. “The graduation rate for our CTE concentrators is 97%.”

While culinary, welding and automotive are the most popular choices, all programs are growing. Last year, two new programs were added, providing students the opportunity to preview what their future career might look like. In collaboration with Mesa Community College, the district piloted iOS Development curriculum at East Valley Academy and Mesa, Skyline, Superstition and Westwood high schools. The program also provides students the opportunity to earn dual enrollment credits. Skyline High School’s home health aide program is flourishing because students enjoy the hands-on nature of the program.

No matter a student’s future path, Mesa Public Schools provides the education, skills and resources to succeed.

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