

Fauquier County Public Schools Media Release

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Karen Parkinson, Coordinator of School and Community Information

Phone (540) 351-1031

kparkinson@fcps1.org



SCHOOL DIVISION HOSTS FIRST SUMMER ACADEMY FOR POTENTIAL AP STUDENTS

Advanced Placement or "AP" courses. The very reference may send a shiver down the spine of a wary high school student.

AP courses are tough. They're intense, difficult, and rigorous. These college-level courses challenge high school students beyond their typical curriculum and level of performance.

Their reputation for difficulty precedes them, affecting some students not a whit while scaring away other students who simply aren't sure they can handle the higher-level challenge.

It is this group that was the focus of an innovative three-day academy offered this summer by Fauquier County Public Schools.

Out of approximately 100 students who were invited, 30 opted to attend the school division's first "AP Potential Summer Academy" held July 26-28 at Fauquier High School. Students were invited based on their scores on the PSAT, which was administered last October to all sophomores at Fauquier and Liberty High Schools. The PSAT is a preliminary to the College Board's SAT, which is a benchmark for college acceptance. Last year was the first year all FCPS sophomores were required to take the PSAT, a requirement which in itself was a new initiative toward increasing interest in AP classes and higher education.



"We want to encourage more students to take AP classes," explained Cheri Mangrum, instructional coordinator for FCPS. "The intent of the academy is to help students feel confident in their ability and to give them strategies so they know they'll be successful."

Students invited to participate in the academy had been identified as students who may not have taken as difficult classes as they could but who have the potential for succeeding in them. The College Board, which administers the PSAT and SAT, not only identified students who have potential for AP courses and but also suggested specific AP courses for those students.

Mrs. Mangrum said that last spring she and other instructional coordinators met with the students who were identified as potential AP students and encouraged them to enroll in the higher-level classes. The academy was a follow-up geared toward student success.

"Most of these students will take AP courses in the future," Mrs. Mangrum said. "We wanted to give them a confidence booster, to give them strategies for succeeding in the AP classes."

AP classes require students to cover material quickly and analyze what they're reading quickly. They must be able to discuss the material, write about it and take a test at the end of year that will determine whether or not they will receive college credit for the course.

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(Also more photos on next three pages)



“There has been reluctance on the part of some students to take AP classes because it’s quite challenging,” said Mrs. Mangrum. “We used the academy as an enticement to show them they are very capable of being successful in an AP environment.”

This environment of success wasn’t the only enticement. The school division agreed to pay the SAT or ACT testing fee for any student who completed all three days of the academy, an offer that evoked the interest of student Michael Rowand, a junior at Fauquier High School.

“It’s good that they’ll pay for my SAT,” he said, describing the academy as “sort of fun” and “a good head start” to the new school year. Michael took AP World History as a sophomore and plans to take AP US History this year.

Fauquier County Public Schools offers a total of 17 AP courses. Last year 465 FCPS students took at least one AP course (299 at Fauquier High School and 166 at Liberty High School). Students took a total of 796 AP exams, 511 at FHS and 285 at LHS. The two most popular AP classes are US Government and English Literature and the two least popular are Chemistry and Language and Composition.

“Not many students sign up for Chemistry and Language and Composition, but many students were identified as having the potential to take these courses,” said Mrs. Mangrum. Those two areas were a natural to become the focus of the AP Potential Summer Academy.

To set the tone for the power-packed academy, Eric Dalton, the school division’s instructional coordinator for science and physical education, kicked off the academy using sleight of hand to demonstrate several examples of overcoming inertia, including his finale of yanking a tablecloth out from under a table setting without disturbing the china, silver, lighted candle or vase with flowers in water. He gave tips to the students who might want to try the feat at home.

On Tuesday and Thursday, students attended various half-hour sessions which introduced them to higher-level thinking in both chemistry and composition. Under the supervision of Mr. Dalton, they conducted five laboratory experiments which led them to draw conclusions about various chemical reactions. Under the tutelage of Eileen Burgwyn, the school division’s instructional coordinator for English and reading, they reacted to styles of rhetoric, determining whether specific examples appealed to emotion, logic or character of the speaker. They read nonfiction passages and analyzed their reading, which is a skill required in all AP classes regardless of subject area.

On Wednesday the students took a field trip to the University of Mary Washington where they received information on the admissions process and toured the campus.

Alison Atkins, a junior at Liberty High School, said the field trip was “a cool way to look at Mary Washington.” She described the summer academy as “helpful.”

“It helps you get back into the swing of things before school starts,” she said. Alison, who has taken classes for gifted and talented students, said she will likely try an AP class this coming year.

Caroline Weir, a junior at Fauquier High School who took AP History last year, is certain that AP classes are in her future. Next on her horizon are AP Chemistry and AP English this coming



Eileen Burgwyn (above) explains rhetorical styles prior to students’ discussing which style is used in various magazine advertisements (top left).

year. Caroline said she especially appreciated the trip to Mary Washington and the jump start to her junior year.

"This is when we need to start looking at colleges anyway so that was good," she said. "Plus this [the in-school portion] was good so you don't completely lose it all over the summer. It was a good review session for next year."

Organizers of the Potential AP Summer Academy plan to offer the academy again next year as they continue to track student participation in the rigorous courses.

AP POTENTIAL



Students discuss rhetoric with Eileen Burgwyn.



Eric Dalton, left, looks on as a student readies an inertia experiment.



(Above) A student prepares for a chemical reaction rate experiment. (Center, top) Two students demonstrate for classmates the results of their experiment. (Above right) The Simpsons become an example in the students' discussion of rhetoric. (Center) Students work in a small group during the AP Potential Summer Academy.



Mrs. Burgwyn leads students in a reaction to rhetoric.

(At left) A student places a coin atop a hoop for an inertia demonstration.

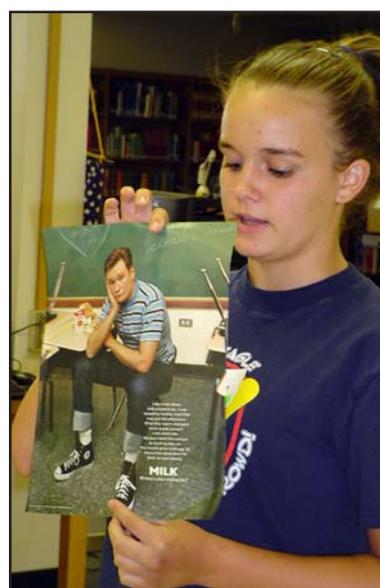
(See next page for more photos)



(Top left) Inertia rules as the table setting remains in tact when Mr. Dalton yanks the "table cloth" away.

(Top right) A student balances a pen on top of a hoop which is balanced on top of a soda bottle. When Mr. Dalton quickly removes the hoop (at left), the pen drops into the bottle.

(Above) Students focus on instructions
(At right) Mrs. Burgwyn and a student review an advertisement.
(Below) Classmates look on as two students demonstrate an experiment.



(At left) During a discussion of rhetoric styles, a spokesman for a small group explains how the appeal of this magazine advertisement is based on the character of the well-known comedian featured in the ad.

