

Online pilot program at CHS successful so far

21 enrolled in program; some update school committee at last meeting

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COVENTRY — With the Virtual High School (VHS) pilot program underway at Coventry High School, students enrolled gave positive feedback to the School Committee during their last meeting.

Coventry High School Assistant Principal for Student Services Lynne Burke had seven students attend the committee meeting to give an update on the program.

Currently, there are 21 students enrolled in classes at the VHS. There are five year-long classes, which are all Advanced Placement (AP), and seven semester-long courses.

The full year courses include AP offerings in Psychology, Environmental Science, Spanish, French and Biology. The semester-long courses include Pre-Veterinary Medicine, Computational Science and Engineering using Java, Mandarin Chinese Language and Culture, Russian Language and Culture, German Lan-

guage and Culture, Engineering Principles and Video Game Design Using Game Maker.

The virtual classes begin every Wednesday and run until the next Tuesday.

Student Ailen Fernandez is enrolled in AP Psychology and she explained that on Wednesday the "week opens up" and all assignments are posted on the VHS website. She said by midnight on Tuesday all the assignments must be handed in or

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VIRTUAL HIGH SCHOOL

- Coventry HS pilot program offers 12 classes in all to students in an online setting.
- 5 AP classes are offered for a full year, and 7 other classes are offered as one-semester courses.
- Currently 21 students enrolled in program at CHS.
- Virtual High School (VHS) classes begin each Wednesday and run until the following Tuesday.

Program slated for review in June

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points will be deducted.

"It was definitely hard adjusting to not having a teacher tell me 'you have this due on this day,'" she said. "I really have to rely on myself to get everything done on time. I really like that and I really learned about myself as a student."

All tests and quizzes taken by the students are online as well and Burke said the VHS is run on the honor system.

"I don't have the urge to cheat because I feel trusted by the teacher," said Fernandez.

Many of the students enrolled in the VHS are also enrolled in AP and honors classes at the high school.

Senior Jennifer Haley explained that while she is taking AP Environmental Science online, she is also enrolled in three other AP classes at school.

"I can see the difference between an online AP class and one at school," she told the committee. "It's pretty similar in regards to workload: they both have a lot of

work. The best part of the online class was doing projects I wouldn't necessarily get to do at school."

She explained that her online teacher had the students create a biosphere out of water bottles. During this project she was responsible for going out to a pond and collecting snails as well.

Zachary Szymkowitz, who's also enrolled in AP Environmental Science, explained that although the workload is similar between his online class and his in school classes, it's difficult sometimes not having a teacher there.

He said his teacher is from Virginia and his classmates range in locations from Massachusetts to Vietnam.

"We'll be given different assignments where we are put into a group and we'll read an article and go into a group discussion," he said. "We'll share our thoughts on that article and it helps me learn more because you're getting different information and not just straight knowledge from a book."

He said that because of the absence of

the teacher, the students enrolled in his class help each other out more.

School Committee Vice President Nancy Sprengelmeyer asked the students how managing time was different between online classes and regular classes.

"I feel like in this class we rely more on ourselves than our teacher," said Fernandez. "In school I know that if you're overwhelmed you can ask for help but for this class it's dependent on us. If we have a lot going on we have to find a way to make it work. I feel like this prepares you for college, especially when you don't have teachers always there."

Burke said she has also learned a lot by working alongside the students. She said many of the students have tried to teach her the languages they are taking, such as Russian, Mandarin Chinese and German.

She explained that many students have approached her about enrolling in the virtual classes in the upcoming semesters and years. She said once the pilot year is up, the program will be reviewed before it is put into full effect.