

The STANDARD

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEER PARK UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

HIGH SCHOOL SOPHOMORES MEET THE CHALLENGE OF AP Capstone

The 2018-2019 school year featured the debut of a rigorous, challenging new program for the high school's students. A total of 31 sophomores are enrolled in AP Seminar, taught by ENL/ELA teacher Joe Buscarino. The course is part of the College Board's vaunted AP Capstone program, which serves as excellent project-based learning, helping students prepare for a college environment where they will be working not just by themselves, but with a group or team trying to solve a problem.



“As a district, we are always looking to expose our students to opportunities to get college ready,” said Jeanne Kozlowsky, district administrator for secondary curriculum and instruction. “When AP Capstone became available, we came together as an administrative team to look at it and thought it would be a wonderful option for our high school students. We are developing a college-level course for high schoolers that will prepare them in research and methods of identifying proper sources and arguing based on different economic, political or cultural interpretive lenses.”

“It’s really a great chance

for those students who want to challenge themselves, to surpass what they think their limits might be and push the envelope a bit,” said Michelle Kwon, the district’s curriculum associate for ELA, reading and library. “It’s also important that as a district, we support the fact that on college applications, AP Capstone is now a check-off box, so we wanted to give our students the ability to list it.”

Deer Park made the decision to offer Seminar to 10th-graders on the honors track, through the English department, as the first section of the AP Capstone program. In the fall of 2019, the school

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See page 4 for information on the new STEAM lab at May Moore.

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will offer the second Capstone segment, AP Research, to juniors and seniors through the science department.

“I’m glad we decided to offer Seminar to juniors, because it enables them to use those research skills throughout all content areas and gives them time in high school to practice those skills before college,” Kwon said.

Buscarino’s Seminar curriculum analyzes and interprets nonfiction and fiction sources; utilizing T.S. Eliot’s “Notes Toward the Definition of Culture,” the class explores different cultural views of the individual, the group or class, and then the larger society as a whole. The literature corresponds to this organization and reviews different interpretive lenses to expound and

elicit knowledge from the students. To develop the course, Buscarino and Kwon attended a mandatory seminar in Maryland last summer, undergoing extensive training for five days.

“They really gave us the tools to create this course, which isn’t typically set in stone – the teacher develops what they need as far as curriculum goes,” Buscarino said. “They gave us 75 or 76 different skills that need to be taught during the course, and however you get to those skills is up to you.”

“It’s not a traditional classroom setting with a teacher up at the board,” Kozlowsky explained. “The students decide what issues they are passionate about and really want to learn more about. Every time you pass by Mr. Buscarino’s classroom, you see his students working collaboratively, and assessing some challenging topics and real-world issues.”

“The students are very proud that they’re in the class,” Kwon said.

“They always say that their brain hurts when they come out of class, but in a good way. It’s an environment that’s supportive but

challenging at the same time. There’s a formula to the course, but because of student choice, there’s also a lot of

flexibility. In this class, the skills are a priority, so how the students want to use and apply and manipulate those skills is based on student interest. It’s an interesting challenge even for the teacher, because there are moments when they can only give so much support, and it’s up to the students to support and critique each other.”

Buscarino has proven up to the challenge, and continues to hone his vision for the course by collaborating and sharing ideas with a network of other Capstone teachers from around Long Island, as well as with teachers and administrators from all over the country and world.

One major difference between AP Seminar and typical AP courses is that Seminar does not feature just one final exam. Parts of the exam are completed throughout the school year, including a group assignment and presentation, an individual research and essay, and an individual presentation with oral defense. The final portion is just a percentage, affirming the course’s representation of the idea of process and multiple ways of assessing students.

“It’s challenging in that you really have to get the students prepared much earlier than in a traditional AP class, but it really is more than just taking a test,” Kwon said. “It is a truer test of mastery of skill.”

“If I had to rename this course, I’d call it Research 101, just because it’s really taking a look at finding your own sources and then developing or synthesizing ideas based on those sources,” Buscarino said. “It’s critical thinking.”



Brewed to Include

This past fall, life skills students at both the high school and Robert Frost started successful businesses, offering coffee and smiles on Fridays. Gabriella Gilmartin’s class at the high school opened Falcon Fuel, while Rachel Burkel’s class at Frost debuted Burkel’s Brew Club. These initiatives have provided the students with the opportunity to develop meaningful social relationships throughout the school community.

“This project teaches students about entrepreneurship, serving others, functional academics, hygiene, food safety and building communication skills through

work experiences,” Gilmartin said. “It’s really an exciting venture. The students are driven to build their business and meet new people in our building. I am truly in awe of the skills they’ve developed in such a short amount of time, and both students and teachers look forward to their Friday morning coffee.”

“As a district, we are beyond proud of what the students and staff of these two programs have accomplished, and their invaluable contributions to our school community,” David DePrima, the district’s administrator of secondary special education, said.



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- Jeanne Kozlowsky, District Administrator for Secondary Curriculum and Instruction

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Grand Opening Brings Innovation to May Moore

May Moore celebrated the grand opening of its new STEAM lab on Jan. 14, which will focus on science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics lessons. The initiative started in September, when a committee began to work to create a learning space for the students that requires them to think critically and creatively, collaborate and communicate, integrate technology and become global citizens.

“Each and every class will visit the STEAM lab weekly to create, innovate and problem-solve for the future,” Principal Alicia Konecny said.

Guided by music teacher Kristen Lombardo, a group of students sang a special STEAM-themed song, followed by a ribbon cutting. Selected students from each grade and classroom in the building then swarmed the five stations – a light table, an art area, a Lego wall, a tech station with an Osmo game system and Code & Go Robot Mouse, and a magnetism and Keva planks section – to demonstrate various STEAM activities.

“We are thrilled to bring 21st-century learning skills to the primary level,” Assistant Principal Heather Levine said.

