

4 for 2 – A Successful Alternative to PSEO

Long Prairie-Grey Eagle “College in the School” Program is a Big Success

By Paul Weinzierl, Principal

Long Prairie-Grey Eagle High School has formed a partnership with Central Lakes College in Brainerd, Minnesota, to offer college courses along with the option of attaining an Associates Degree while remaining in a high school setting. College-in-the-Schools is a program that many schools are implementing to give students a head start into higher education.

Four years ago, we embarked upon the idea that high school students could, with some planning, complete an Associates in Arts Degree at the same time that they are completing the requirements for a high school diploma.

We are a District that is an hour or more from a college campus. This leaves our students with the unfortunate option of having to choose between a high school career or a college career on a campus that would be a sizable commute each day. By offering this program, we have been able to provide both liberal arts programs simultaneously.

Our Associate in Arts Program called, *4 for 2*, is available to all incoming juniors. Admission into the program follows the same criteria as admission to college. Students must have a 3.0 grade point average and pass minimum requirements on the Accuplacer in math and reading. Students then plan and register with our counselor to earn 60 credits chosen from a curriculum across 10 disciplines in order to complete their degree during their junior and senior years. Last spring, 16 seniors were among our first class to graduate with a diploma and a degree on the same evening. This group of students was able to accomplish this by taking their entire college curriculum on our campus. We offer an entire two-year college curriculum in a school with an enrollment of less than 340 students 9-12. All 16 of those graduates went on to four-year colleges/universities in the fall of 2011.

Our CIS staff is accredited by Central Lakes College to teach at the college level. Some of the courses that we offer are also offered for Advance Placement. Our staff is well supported by the administration and teaching staff at Central Lakes College. The college staff has done an excellent job with mentoring our teaching staff and also with advising parents and students on a regular basis. Because of this successful partnership, 14 students will receive their Associates Degree this spring. Even with declining enrollment, our students still register for this program at a rate of 18-20% per grade level.

We have been able to “close the door” on students leaving for PSEO (only 1 student in 2011-12). College tuition cost savings to our students approaches \$30,000.00 per student in the 4 for 2 program, in a District that averages close to 60% free and reduced price lunches annually.

Our unique partnership with Central Lakes has provided a win-win-win for students, the District and Central Lakes College. The program is proven to be not only obtainable but sustainable for all parties involved.