



Lincoln Public Schools

Mary L. Sterling, Ph.D.
Assistant Superintendent of Schools

To: School Committee
From: Mary Sterling
Re: Report on Virtual High School Participation
Date: September 24, 2009

As part of our district's commitment to providing advanced learning opportunities for students in middle school, we have been involved with Virtual High School (VHS) since September, 2008. This report describes our faculty and student participation and offers recommendations for continued involvement.

Virtual High School is a non-profit organization that offers content-rich, credit-bearing high school courses to students across the country and around the world. With headquarters in Maynard, MA, this network of on-line courses has grown substantially since its inception in 1996. The courses are taught by certified secondary school teachers in member districts who receive professional development through VHS to acquire skill in designing and teaching on-line courses. In recent years, VHS has made some of their courses available to middle school students. For more detailed information about VHS, see the organization website: www.govhs.org

For the 2008-09 school year, the use of VHS was first piloted on the Lincoln campus, beginning with the training of a site coordinator, Mark McDonough. Five slots were made available to students for the fall semester and 5 eighth graders enrolled and completed courses as an elective. The site coordinator met with each student once a week to oversee and discuss the on-line work. He also sent progress reports to parents every two weeks. Each course is rigorous and requires as much or more time and effort as the courses these students take in our middle school. All students reported enthusiastic satisfaction with their selected courses and passed the courses with high grades.

In spring, 2009, some of the students who took courses in the fall elected to take another course and a few more eighth graders selected courses. A total of 8 eighth graders completed VHS courses by June – see table below. In addition, 6 seventh graders at Brooks School elected to take courses and received supervision by the site coordinator. At Hanscom, 3 eighth graders and 2 seventh graders participated in the spring semester courses and Monica Albuixech, was trained as a site coordinator for the Hanscom campus.

This fall, 2009, we have contracted with VHS for more students to take courses on both campuses. The table shows the numbers of students and the course titles that have been selected for the fall semester. We anticipate higher enrollment in the spring. Information about the opportunity to take courses is made available to all eighth graders who may take courses during fall and spring semesters. Seventh graders will hear about VHS and the available courses and will be able to sign up for the spring semester.

In addition to providing our students with an opportunity for advanced learning, membership in VHS also offers a professional opportunity for our teachers. We are recruiting teachers to enroll in the professional development course offered by VHS this year in order to learn online pedagogy and methodology while training to teach an existing VHS course. Teaching a VHS course is rigorous: the amount of time and effort is equivalent to a .2 teaching appointment. When a district's teachers are accepted to teach a VHS course, there is a financial arrangement that reduces the tuition for students.

Our decision to offer Virtual High School courses has given Lincoln Public School students worthwhile opportunities to pursue learning that we cannot provide on site. We are committed to continuing our involvement with VHS in the years ahead and we hope that at least one teacher will participate in training and will be accepted to teach an online course next year.

Virtual High School Participation

Lincoln School Fall 2008 - Fall 2009

Semester	# of Students	Grade	Course Title
Fall 2008	3	8	Number Theory
Fall 2008	1	8	Introduction to Government
Fall 2008	1	8	Irish Literature
Spring 2009	1	8	Music Composition: Composing Music based on Western Tonal Harmony
Spring 2009	1	8	Ghoulies, Ghosties, and long-Legged Beasties: Why We Like to Be Scared
Spring 2009	1	8	Screenwriting Fundamentals
Spring 2009	2	8	Young Adult Literature: Tolerance and Diversity
Spring 2009	1	8	Academic Writing
Spring 2009	2	8	Introduction to Chemistry
Spring 2009	2	7	Middle School: Number Theory
Spring 2009	2	7	Middle School: Business Foundations
Spring 2009	1	7	Middle School: The Teenage Brain: What's Going on in There?
Spring 2009	1	7	Middle School: World War II Through the Eyes of Dr. Seuss
Fall 2009	2	8	Middle School: Business Foundations
Fall 2009	1	8	Middle School: The Teenage Brain: What's Going on In there?
Fall 2009	1	8	Introduction to Biology
Fall 2009	1	8	Introduction to Government
Fall 2009	1	8	Music Composition

Hanscom Middle School Spring 2009 - Fall 2009

Semester	# of Students	Grade	Course Title
Spring 2009	1	8	Number Theory
Spring 2009	2	8	Career Awareness for the New Millennium
Spring 2009	1	7	Middle School: The Teenage Brain: What's Going on in There?
Spring 2009	1	7	Middle School: Society and Humanity
Fall 2009	1	8	Algebra II
Fall 2009	1	8	Introduction to English Literature & Composition