

Jared Branstetter
Arcadia Valley R-II School District

Enhanced Possibilities

I am a high school senior. It seems like just yesterday I was an elementary kid enjoying my time on the playground and playing with my friends. I never thought that I would be one of those people who would say, "Boy, time sure does fly!" But, here I am thinking those exact words. I graduate in May, and I will move on to the next chapter of my life, which will be full of exciting challenges and daunting obstacles. As I sit back and reflect on my years at Arcadia Valley School District, I am thankful for all of the wonderful teachers and administrators who have helped me get to where I am today. I didn't always appreciate the workload, and I am sure I griped and complained a few times along the way, but I am truly grateful. One of the things that I have learned while in high school is to always look for ways to improve and to make a difference in every situation you find yourself, and I would like to share some of my ideas with the Arcadia Valley School Board.

Arcadia Valley High School is one of the best high schools in the state. Our mission statement declares, "The District will provide varied opportunities to increase skills, broaden knowledge, promote strength of character and develop work habits necessary to successfully: 1) seek and maintain employment; 2) further education through a trade or technical school, and/or; 3) attend an academic college or university." The Arcadia Valley Career Technology Center does a great job of helping prepare those students interested in trade or technical areas meet the first two goals, but I believe our district needs to provide more opportunities for those students who are undecided or who would like to go on to an academic college or university.

Arcadia Valley High School currently does not offer a careers class or an ACT prep class. I realize that the economic climate often dictates which classes can and cannot be offered, but I believe we have a dire need for these classes. A careers class would allow students to explore the wide variety of career options available in the world today and to take interest inventories to help guide their explorations. As part of this type of class, students can also engage in job shadowing experiences and internship opportunities. An ACT prep class will better prepare our students for the ACT. Achieving better ACT scores will open more doors for our students through college admission and scholarships.

Arcadia Valley added Introduction to Chemistry and General Biology as hybrid dual enrollment classes through a partnership with Mineral Area College three years ago. This was made possible by a grant that MAC received. MAC waives a third of students' tuition, AV pays a third of students' tuition, which leaves the students having to pay only a third of the cost of tuition for these classes. It would be beneficial to a majority of students if Arcadia Valley R-II would pay a third of tuition on all dual enrollment and dual credit courses. Mineral Area College has a program in place where they will waive a third of tuition for high school students taking dual courses as long as their high schools will pay a third of the tuition. The dual credit experience will help prepare students for college, while encouraging them to start early on their path while still in high school.

When I graduate in May from Arcadia Valley High School, I will have close to 40 college credit hours. That's just a few credits shy of an associate degree! I've applied and been accepted at a university of my choice, and I am waiting to hear from another one. I am blessed to have parents who have guided me and encouraged me to take dual credit and dual enrollment courses

and who were able to help me pay for those courses. I realize that I am one of the lucky ones, and my dream is that Arcadia Valley School District will help even the playing field for all of their students in their future.