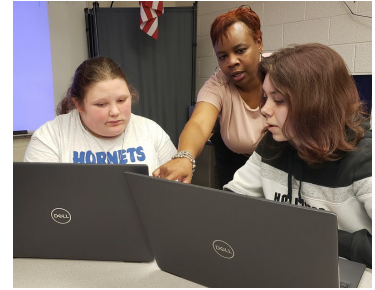


Hawthorne Middle/High School earns national recognition for gender diversity in AP computer program

The College Board, which runs the prestigious international Advanced Placement program (AP), has awarded Hawthorne Middle/High School its Computer Science Female Diversity Award for achieving high female representation in AP Computer Science Principles during the 2021-22 academic year. Only 832 schools nationwide have earned that distinction.



In its notification, the College Board congratulated the school for “preparing your female students for the high-paying, in-demand jobs of the future and giving them the opportunity to help solve some of society’s most challenging problems.”

The College Board established the AP Computer Science Principles course in 2016-17, and according to its news release, the course attracted more students than any other AP course in its first year. This is the third year that Hawthorne Middle/High has offered the course.

Currently there are 27 students taking the course at Hawthorne, and 13 of them are girls. The teacher, Dr. Cheryl Johnson, says female students have jumped at the chance to learn code and have done very well in the class.

“I want them to see that they don’t have to be afraid of computers and that codes are simple,” she said. “I hope that through this class they can keep that desire to learn more about coding and computers and that ultimately we can increase the number of females in what is now a very male-dominated industry.”

Freshman Chloe Thomas is currently taking the course, and says she’s enjoying learning how to build an app of her own. She agrees the field needs more diversity and that courses like this one can help.

“It broadens women’s views on what we can and can’t do,” she said. “It gives us more options when we think about what we want to do in the future.”

AP Computer Science Principles is just one of several AP and Cambridge courses the school has added to its offerings over the last few years. Like AP, Cambridge allows students to tackle college-level work. They can also earn college credit by taking the AP and Cambridge exams.

“We make it a point to have every student take at least one of those rigorous college-level courses while they’re here,” said assistant principal Lisa McLeod. “The teachers are great at working with all levels of students to build their ability and their confidence so they realize they can do it.”

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