



## **ASPIRE FOUNDATION & NAVIT PROGRAMS**

Providing next-level opportunity for local students

*Facebook, MHA Foundation, January 11, 2022*

As the saying goes, “A goal without a plan is just a wish.” Jeff Simon, principal of Payson High School, explains that “We know that not everybody is going to go to college, we want to make sure that everyone has a plan for whatever happens after secondary. If they want to go into the world of work, we want to prepare them for that. If they want to go to college, we want to prepare them for that.” Over the years, our schools have effectively built strong community partnerships to help implement outside programming resources to accomplish these goals.

With the help of the MHA Foundation, Payson Unified School District has proactively implemented AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) and Capturing Kids Hearts programs. These proven programs aim to help build student value and connect every student to a post-graduate plan. Not only are Payson High School students provided the opportunity to prepare for college or the workplace, but they also have the means to pay for either path chosen. NAVIT (Northern Arizona Vocational Institute of Technology) is the Career and Technical Education (CTE) side, and the ASPIRE Arizona Foundation covers the cost of dual enrollment college classes. NAVIT boasts more career-oriented hands-on skills for credit, while ASPIRE enables students to take core classes (math, science, english) for high school and college credit. These fantastic organizations fully pay for both paths.

According to their website, [www.navitschool.org](http://www.navitschool.org), “Our enhanced programs allow students to earn high school credit while attending NAVIT. Our students may also earn community college credit

from Northland Pioneer College and Gila Community College in association with Eastern Arizona College.” This program is specific for 11th and 12th-grade students to gain work experience locally in sports medicine, nursing, fire science, and cosmetology. Any student enrolled in the central program has their tuition, books, and fees fully paid for by NAVIT. Many students will graduate high school with a necessary certificate for the field they desire to pursue. This year, Payson has approximately 30 students enrolled in this program, hoping it will grow even more in the years to come.

ASPIRE Arizona Foundation is dedicated to paying for dual credit core classes. While the NAVIT program’s courses are taken on the college campus here in town, the dual enrollment core classes are taken on the high school campus during the student’s regular school schedule. Several teachers at Payson High School have master’s degrees and are qualified to teach these college-level classes. In addition to this, one professor comes from the college to instruct courses on the campus. This program fits seamlessly into the school day, and since 2016 over 400 PUSD students have completed 1,735 college classes in math, science, and English. This has allowed for Payson High School students to earn 5,390 college credits while obtaining high school credits, too, according to [www.aspirearizona.com](http://www.aspirearizona.com). Local students can start college ahead of the game, saving themselves and their families a lot of time and money.

“In our town, our students are profoundly blessed by these organizations that come along beside them and make sure no opportunity is unavailable to them because of finances,” joyfully declares Jennifer Smith, MHA Foundation Executive Board Member. With all this financial support, options in ways to obtain credit, and a caring faculty that wants to assist in making their students’ goals more than just wishes, Payson’s youth have endless opportunities to succeed. This truth furthers the objective that the more we embrace and assist our community, the stronger it will grow.