



**20 March
2025**

Welcome to FREEPOD, a local news source for everyone in the Freeport area. This weekly podcast is brought to you by a large volunteer group dedicated to providing to objective, unbiased updates on what's happening in our community.

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Introduction

The news this week is brought to you by Freeport High School's Video Production classes to give you the inside scoop on what's going on in the halls of Freeport High School.

SmartPass

First up, a new digital pass system called SmartPass launched at Freeport High School during the spring semester. The system allows students to request a pass from their Chromebooks to a variety of locations within the school. Administrators say this helps lower the amount of students in the hallways and bathrooms while also keeping better track of where students are in the building. Some students feel like they shouldn't be limited to a certain amount of time when going to places like the bathroom.

<Kyle Marcum: At first I was a little bit unsure about it, but now that it's in motion and we've got some experience with it, it's actually been pretty successful. Fewer kids in the hallway and I think most of the students are adjusting to the rules; they're asking permission, they're setting up the passes, hallways seem more clear so... so far, so good.

<Steven Van: I think it's a very smart and well set up system but I just wondering how much it will really help compared to paper passes>

New Math Curriculum

This school year, Freeport High School has gotten a new math curriculum, changing how the math classes work and going back to traditional math away from integrated math. This has been a difficult adjustment for both teachers and students. Teachers are still learning how the

curriculum works and students are also struggling to adapt to the different format and the advanced math skills.

<Radina Brobst: I struggle sometimes because some of the concepts are above grade level and how to best bring it to their level so they understand it better.>

<Richard Eiler: It took a little while to get used to the emphasis, but now that we've been doing it a while, it's pretty second-nature.

<Roman Viveros: The math curriculum starts at a point that is pretty high. We started the year a little rough and we've been working to catch up ever since.>

ACT

Next month, juniors will be taking the ACT instead of the SAT after a law change in Illinois. This change mandated that state testing be switched from the SAT to the ACT. The ACT covers English, math, reading, science, and an optional writing section. While teachers think this helps students become more well-rounded, students feel like they were misled.

<Steven Van: I feel like my whole high school career I've been preparing for the SAT. We took a lot of PSATs my freshman and sophomore year. It just kinda feels like a bait and switch.>

AVID

One specific program at Freeport School District is trying to help students raise their ACT scores and encourage more students to go to college. Advancement Via Individual Determination, or AVID, has been part of the district since the 1990s, but has recently expanded to serve students starting in elementary school. The program teaches students organizational and self-advocacy skills which are crucial for life after high school.

<Britney Janosik: There are AVID principles that every classroom is using, but specifically the AVID elective is setting students up for success whether they plan to go to college or not.>

Culture and Student Support Office

We'd like to showcase a relatively unknown office at Freeport High School – the culture and student support office. Here, Ms. Mia (pronounced MYA) Hilton and Ms. Kiara Martin support primarily the deans and Associate Principal Alecia Leeper, but they also help students with whatever they might need whether that's a listening ear or help them find their classes. Ms. Hilton and Ms. Martin also help Ms. Leeper run the Student Hygiene Closet where students can get free hygiene supplies such as clothes, toothbrushes, and deodorant, among other things.

<Kiara Martin: We impact students based on whatever their needs are in that moment: how they're feeling, how their day is. Something just as simple as just needing something, someone to talk to, not having a very good day. Whatever you need from us is what the Culture and Student Support Office is for.>

Showtime

Showtime is about to hit the stage for its 45th year. Showtime is a musical variety show that features the FHS Varsity Choir and FHS Jazz Band. Director Britney Kieselhorst said the best part of putting together the show is getting to see the students work together. Next week, students will go on tour to Detroit, Michigan. Showtime tickets go on sale this week for the show. The performances will be April 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th at the Jeannette Lloyd Theater.

Girls Winning Basketball Season

Turning now to sports... The Freeport High School Girls Basketball Team had their first winning season in 16 years. The team ended their season tied for 2nd in the NIC-10 conference with a 14-4 conference record. The girls said it took coming together as a team and putting in work in and out of the season. Coming out of a historic season– the girls are already looking ahead to the next season as nearly all their varsity team will be back next year.

< Sophomore Paityn London: It feels really good, coming to a new school has a good adjustment, so I'm glad we could have a winning season this year>

< John O'Bryan: Our team got along the team chemistry from start to end of season , going back to what we built back in the summer, seeing an them come together as on and play hard for each other etc.>

Wrestling Regional Champion

Treyden Diduch recently had his first state run as a freshman wrestler in the 106-pound weight division. Treyden was a regional champion and placed 3rd at sectionals. His coach believes he could be a state champion later in his career. Treyden follows in the footsteps of his older sister Caydance Diduch who was a state champion wrestler all four years of high school.

Mya Ortiz

Senior Mya Ortiz also took home two state titles this speech season after placing top 5 in both Poetry and Special Occasion Speaking. This was Mya's second time down at state after qualifying last year in Dramatic Interpretation.

<Mya Ortiz: It's really a crazy feeling honestly. You never expect it. You put so much work into doing speech and trying to get to the top and then you finally get there and it's a crazy feeling>

Baseball 20-win Season

Turning now to spring sports– the FHS boys baseball team hopes to get their 4th 20-win season this spring. The boys have three returning all-conference players: Noah Summers, Payton Woker, and Zach Matz. The varsity team said growing up together and playing on the same teams has helped them become a well-connected team with good chemistry. The team hopes to be the NIC-10 champs and be playoff bound once again.

Student Athletics App

The Freeport High School athletics department just launched a new free app on the Google Play Store and Apple App Store. The app allows users to view rosters, schedules, and other athletic news.

Athletic Director Brad Pemberton hopes the new app will encourage more people to go to games.

Senior Resource Center

As a couple of reminders... Don't forget that the Senior Resource Center in Freeport is providing free federal and state 1040 tax counseling, preparation, and filing services for low and middle-income senior taxpayers 60 years and older residing in Stephenson and Jo Daviess counties as well as adults with disabilities through April 15th. Appointments are required and can be arranged by calling the Senior Resource Center at 815-235-9777.

Early Voting

Early voting for the April elections for all city and village races is already available in the lower level of the Stewart Centre, 50 West Douglas Street in Freeport from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Cubs Brat Stand

A sure sign Spring has arrived in Freeport is when the Cub Foods Brat Stand opens for business for the season. That day is fast approaching as the smell of brats and burgers returns at 11 am on Friday, March 21. Community nonprofit groups will work the brat stand on Fridays and Saturdays until November to raise money for their various causes. In 2024, the brat stand helped raise almost \$96,000 which the groups used to better their communities. Hours are 11 am to 5 pm each weekend and the menu stays the same with brats, burgers, hot dogs and rib eye sandwiches.

Next week's in-depth interview

Next week, Freepod and TimBeck2 host Tim Connors as he visits with Elisha Walker, Executive Director of Northwestern Illinois Community Action Agency. They talk about the agency's role in helping families find and access federal support in a wide variety of areas from energy assistance to Golden Meals. Their conversation posts at noon on Tuesday, March 25.

In closing...

Thank you for listening to this week's episode of Freepod produced by the Video Production classes at Freeport High School.

Remember...

If you are looking for something to do this week or any week, visit the Greater Freeport Partnership website at www.greaterfreeport.com and click on "weekly events" for a

comprehensive listing of many more entertainment and dining events and activities throughout Stephenson County. You can subscribe to their free weekly newsletter there too, and we have a link to a QR code in the print version of this newscast if you'd like to sign up that way.



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With that, time's up for this week. Tune in again next Thursday at noon for more about what's happening in Freeport, and be sure to subscribe to us on your favorite podcast platform to receive alerts on your as each new pod airs. You can also always click through to our pods through our Facebook page or the website of our National Public Radio partner, WNIJ in DeKalb, at www.northernpublicradio.org.

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Thanks for listening to FREEPOD and join us next week for more about what's happening in the Freeport area!