



Kenmore-Town of Tonawanda Union Free School District

PRESS RELEASE
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Theresa LeClerc, Communications
716-821-7279, tleclerc@e1b.org

Career Academies Program Provides Real World Experience *Local Business Leaders Offer Students Experience and Feedback*

As the school year closes, the Career Academies program at Kenmore-Town of Tonawanda School District celebrates the successful completion of their first year. Four academies were implemented in September 2012 as part of the district's initiative to provide students multiple pathways to graduation.

A key component of the Career Academies program is the partnerships established with local employers. "Our relationships with local business leaders build connections between school and work and offer our students real career experiences while in high school," states Nancy Pray, internship coordinator and curriculum learning specialist – business department at Kenmore East High School. "The knowledge and experience these leaders provide is a valuable piece of the learning process offered through all four career academies."

Michele LiPuma, local accountant from Borelli & LiPuma LLP, is among those serving the Career Academies program. LiPuma is a member of the Virtual Enterprise and Finance Academy advisory board and has been involved with the program since its inception. "We feel it is important to participate in accounting education and our employees look forward to having interns on board. Explaining your job gives you a deeper appreciation of what you do and allows you to reflect on your role through someone else's eyes," says LiPuma. "Internships expose students to a working atmosphere and we try to make it an enriching one."

Experts from business, industry, education and professional organizations serve on advisory boards for each academy to assist in planning their future growth. Board members review curriculum to ensure classroom experiences keep pace with changes in the industry. Board members also provide feedback and guidance through classroom visitations and student project review.

Recently students enrolled in the Virtual Enterprise course presented proposed business plans to a panel of local business leaders. Justin Haeick, a sophomore at Kenmore East High School presented his business plan for "Game Changer" – a field house and sports store where customers can sample product before they buy it. Upon completing his presentation, Haeick stayed after for more feedback from the panel. When asked how he planned to secure the funding for his venture,



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Haeick explained, “I plan to obtain investors by presenting my idea on the show *Shark Tank*.” LiPuma states, “Experienced feedback is important for students to understand how the process of business works. I think students develop a deeper appreciation of what goes into a business plan and what it truly takes to get it done.” Senior Sara Spence from Kenmore East High School shared her idea to open a restaurant/movie theater with a lounge atmosphere. “After the presentation, I was provided a comment sheet with tips on how to improve my plan. I am interested in the field of Human Resources and she (LiPuma) assured me I am on the right career track”.

“Our advisory board members facilitate internships, mentoring experiences and other work-based learning opportunities which provide our students a real world learning environment,” states Joel Maerten, curriculum learning specialist – technology education at Kenmore West High School. “We appreciate the support received by our local business community. Their involvement is crucial to the continued success and growth of the Career Academies program.” Professional community members interested in participating on a Career Academy advisory board should contact jmaerten@kenton.k12.ny.us or npray@kenton.k12.ny.us.

Students interested in learning more about the Computer Networking and Technology Academy, Informational Technology Academy, Pre-Engineering Academy, or the Virtual Enterprise and Finance Academy can visit the website at www.kenton.k12.ny.us/academies or call 716-874-8402.



Caption: Michele LiPuma serves as a member of the Career Academies Advisory Board for Kenmore – Tonawanda Schools.

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