

Career building in education

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| School district adds business academy to curriculum

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Editor

Students who are interested in pursuing a career in business will now have the opportunity to get an in-depth look and practice in the field because of a new program being provided in the Kenmore Town of Tonawanda School District.

“It’s common for an individual to pursue a particular career because they think they will enjoy



Melissa Brania, a business teacher at Kenmore West High School, speaks to a group of business leaders, administrators, and government officials during a meeting held May 9 at the Ken-Ton Schools Administrative Building regarding the Kenmore-Town of Tonawanda School District’s new Virtual Enterprise & Finance Academy. Photo by Jim Smerecak

it but then they turn out to hate it because they never had the opportunity to really understand what working in that career would entail,” said Nancy Pray, the curriculum learning specialist in the district’s business department.

The program in the Ken-Ton schools that should change all that is the Virtual Enterprise and Finance Academy

“We are bridging the gap between education and business,” Pray said. “This academy will allow students to explore and get hands-on experience in the business world so that they can make an informed decision about pursuing a career in business.”

Students in the program will participate in a sequence of study developed through a thorough planning process approved by the Board of Education and the state Department of Education.

They begin the program their freshman year by taking their core classes (English, global studies, Earth science, integrated algebra, physical education, an art elective, a language other than English) and the academy's Computer & The Internet course. This computer class combines keyboarding and Microsoft Office 2010.

The students learn keyboard mastery, formatting various business correspondence such as memos, letters, reports and outlines. Student then learn how to create files and manipulate them in Microsoft Word, Excel, Power- Point, Access and Publisher. Internet instruction is always offered in this class.

During the students' sophomore year, they will continue with core classes (replacing Earth science with living environment and integrated algebra with geometry and adding a health class) and participate in the academy's Web Design 1 & 2.

When taking this academy course, the students will learn about basic uses for the Internet and receive introductory instruction as to how to design a Web page using HTML, Microsoft Frontpage and Dreamweaver in addition to using programs such as Macromedia Flash, Fireworks and Microsoft PhotoDraw — all programs that aid in enhancing a Web page.

As a junior, again, core class study is issued along with giving the student an opportunity to substitute a social studies and math credit by taking business law and business math. In addition, they would participate in the academy's Virtual Enterprise and Accounting I courses.

The Virtual Enterprise Course is designed to give students practical, real-life experience of setting up and operating their own business. The course encourages students to think about entrepreneurship and self-employment as a viable career choice, and combines classroom learning with real business experience.

"Students get the opportunity to work with employees who have experience in departments of management, human resources, accounting, marketing and Internet technology," Pray explained. "They will also learn how to use various forms of computer technology because they will be provided with iPad 2s, video cameras and digital cameras."

In Accounting I, students are acclimated to the accounting cycle and basic accounting principles starting with the journal and ending with the basic financial statements,

adjusting and closing entries. It also acts as a refresher course as it deals with mathematical calculations involved in financial accounting.

During the students' senior year in the academy they will take business law and participate in the Career Exploration and Internship Program.

The business law course is intended to provide the student with basic knowledge pertaining to the American legal system and its effects upon the individual in business and personal situations. At the completion of this course, students will be able to demonstrate a basic understanding of law along with an understanding of contract law, sales law and consumer law. They will also be able to identify and explain basic law applications regarding negotiable instruments, insurance, bankruptcy and Internet/ computers.

The Career Exploration and Internship Program pulls the students out of the classroom and into the workforce as they receive 54 hours of on-site mentoring and 27 hours of related coursework at a business.

“The internship program allows students to network with business professionals while also gaining a better understanding into the type of career they would like to pursue. It may even help them secure employment in their field,” said Pray.

Once all their courses are completed with passing grades, graduates of this academy receive a high school diploma endorsement indicating that they are prepared to pursue further education and employment in career fields related to Virtual Enterprise and Finance — for example, accounting, Web design, and business and personal law. In addition to a high school diploma, the student would also earn Regents or Advanced Regents designation.

Virtual Enterprise and Finance Academy students are also eligible to receive integrated credit in mathematics and social studies, participate in work-based learning opportunities, and earn college credit through agreements with post-secondary institutions including Buffalo State College and Erie Community College.

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