

Making the Connection

Thursday, February 13, 2020

Chippewa Valley Schools



Chippewa Valley Schools celebrates CTE Month



A friendly handshake before competition begins: National 1st and 2nd place champions (now alumni) Matthew Miller, Chippewa Valley HS (left) and Joseph Bednar, Dakota HS (right) at the 2019 Business Professionals of America (BPA) Bank On It Tournament in Anaheim, CA.



Work-based learning and community service come together in this project: CTE Design Technology Senior Noah Zielinski is holding the custom-made cookie molds that he fabricated for the CTE Culinary Arts program. The process started with designing the molds using AutoCAD software; converting the 2-D CAD drawings to 3-D models with Inventor software; creating wood prototypes using Mastercam software; involved several iterations and tweaking; and culminated in metal fabrication using a Haas CNC mill. Culinary Arts students can now make delicious cookies with the Chippewa Valley and Dakota High Schools' logos imprinted in them.



Work-based learning in CTE takes many forms, but the most relevant and in-depth is on-the-job work experience that builds upon classroom learning. Senior Amanda Hofmann is an award-winning, advanced Automotive Technology student, shown working on a tire in the classroom. She also works as a paid intern at Russ Milne Ford under the supervision of Jacob Ernst, Ford Master Technician. Greg Harnden, Service Manager, said they are "so impressed with Amanda that she has been chosen to continue to receive support from Russ Milne Ford as she progresses in her education at Henry Ford College in the Ford ASSET program."



Matt Steger, Dakota High School alumnus (class of 2019) earned the highest award in the MITES state competition last year. After graduation, he was among the select few invited to compete in the AWFS Fair "Fresh Wood" competition in Las Vegas and won Honorable Mention (3rd place)! He designed and built this modern table with waterfall edge from exotic woods in his high school CTE Woodworking & Cabinetmaking program.

By Claire Brisson
Director of Career and Technical Education

February is National Career and Technical Education (CTE) Month and thus it seems fitting to focus on facets of CTE that are at the heart of what we do. Providing students with the best possible career-focused learning experience is truly a collaborative effort that, at its core, begins with a partnership between education and industry.

Let's start with our teachers. One cannot become a CTE teacher without having substantial experience working in the related field in which one teaches. Traditionally, 4,000 hours, or about two years of full time work, has been the minimum expectation. Even with teacher shortages and alternative pathways to becoming a CTE teacher available, some substantial engagement with the related industry is still an expectation for CTE teacher preparation.

That relationship with industry does not stop once an instructor is officially regarded as a CTE teacher. Like all teachers, there are continuing professional development (PD) requirements, but CTE teachers must also be mindful to include industry-specific PD as part of their continuous learning process. Technical and skills-based occupations are continuously changing as new technologies are introduced and evolve. It's no small challenge for CTE teachers to stay abreast of these changes, but some find that the best way to do that is to keep one foot in the world of work outside of education. For example, our Construction teacher, Adam Carr, works on commercial construction projects in the summers. One of our Medical Academy instructors works on Saturdays as a medical lab technician; another works part time as a nurse at McLaren Hospital, while another still practices as a chiropractor.

Equally important, is the relationship that industry has with our students. Did you know that work-based learning (WBL) is a required component for all CTE students? WBL is a continuum of experiences that include career fairs, classroom speakers, and industry tours at one end of the continuum, to actual work via an internship or apprenticeship at the other. In between are things like job shadowing, school-based projects guided by industry professionals, and mentoring. The keys to successful WBL are sustained, high quality interactions that ultimately link and blend educational experiences to career options.

In a similar vein, all CTE students are given the opportunity to develop leadership skills through official career technical student organizations (CTSO) like BPA, DECA, HOSA, and SkillsUSA, and/or through teacher-developed experiences that include competitions, community ser-

vice, and student-led activities. Chippewa Valley Schools participates in all of the above (and then some!) And it is not unusual for some students to earn state and even national acclaim via these many opportunities. Just one fun example: In 2019, two of our BPA (Business Professionals of America) students found themselves competing against each other for the top two national spots in the "Bank On It Tournament." This competitive event is intended to "Test your accounting knowledge in the ultimate BPA tournament!" The result? Matthew Miller from Chippewa Valley High School, and Joseph Bednar from Dakota High School, became the National 1st and 2nd place champions respectively! What a testament to our teachers and industry partners who prepared them so well! That is what CTE is all about, and what we take time to reflect upon and celebrate every February during National CTE Month!

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For more information about CTE, contact
Shannon Williams at 586.228.3488 or swilliams@misd.net



Macomb Intermediate School District
44001 Garfield Road
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