Career and College Connections

A monthly newsletter from Career and Technical Education - Washington

Career and College Connections to return in the fall

We're all ready for summer, and we know that many of you, our readers, will be excited and ready to engage with the new initiatives Career and Technical Education - Washington (CTE) will be pursuing next school year.

Career and College Connections will be on break until September. When we return, we'll continue to bring you stories highlighting student success through CTE and CTE's important contributions to education in Washington.

Our initiatives next year include issuing high-demand career grants to schools, adding new middle school classes in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), and continuing our efforts to strengthen how we help students get ready for career and college.

Keep track of what's new in CTE over the summer, and we'll be back in touch with you in the fall.

Career and Technical Education students shine with their culminating projects

Students graduating from high school in Washington are required to complete a culminating or senior project, and many students are choosing to do their project using skills that they learned in a Career and Technical Education (CTE) class.

"I'd say up to 20 percent of our culminating projects this year were directly or indirectly related to a CTE class that our seniors have taken," said Susan Wolf, the culminating project teacher at Joel E. Ferris High School in Spokane. "Given that 2009 is only the second year that we have required a culminating project, I think this percentage will increase."

Culminating projects involve engaging academic skills -- reading, writing and presenting -- to create an organized, focused, tangible project that is then presented to a panel of teachers.

CTE-driven projects this year at Joel E. Ferris High School included

In the News

WA gov tells teachers union that all are hurt

Gregoire signs billoverhauling education

Math is everywhere, kids learn

College Bound Scholarship offers a lot

AVID learners

Vocational students retooling career plans

Former CTE student pursues her dream job in New York City

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Washington Apprenticeship and Training Council

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Washington Tech Prep

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About us

Career and Technical Education is a planned program of courses and learning experiences that

business plans, teaching lesson plans, parenting, construction, architectural design, organic agriculture, video production and editing, photography, interior design, cooking, fashion/wardrobe and quilting, Wolf said.

Anna DelRiccio, a senior at Shadle Park High School in Spokane, baked and decorated a four-tier cake as her culminating project. She started her cake drawings in 2007, at the beginning of her junior year.

"I got my inspiration from the movie Grease to do a 50s retro cake with four tiers, a bright 50s color, and a checkerboard border topped with edible figurines of hamburgers and a record album," she said. "For the judges I gave a tri-fold presentation and a portfolio recording all project requirements - my sketches, a paper, a learning log and final photos. I think I blew them away."

Anna has earned credits in computer, business, horticulture and culinary arts CTE classes and has applied for restaurant and horticulture jobs for the summer. She plans a career in culinary arts and hospitality once she completes a hospitality and marketing double major degree at Washington State University.

Megan Poppe, a senior at Joel E. Ferris High School and a member of her school soccer team, was going to do her culminating project on the physics of soccer. But then she decided to focus on computer technology since computer engineering is her career goal and she had taken CTE classes in computer applications and computer science.

Megan knew that her school provides step-by-step online tutorials for teachers and students on how to use Microsoft Office 2003 -- Word, PowerPoint and Excel. But she also knew that many school computers, especially those in the CTE computer science class, had been upgraded to Office 2007 and no tutorials were available. Her project involved identifying the major differences between Office 2003 and 2007 and writing 2007 tutorials.

Her project presentation involved walking the review team members through the new tutorials using a PowerPoint presentation that included animation that faded and spun text and images in and out.

"I think they were particularly impressed with the animation tools I used," Megan said.

Megan will attend Washington State University this fall to pursue a major in computer engineering with an emphasis in computer programming.

In Spokane schools, students write their culminating project proposals in the spring of their junior year and projects are declared by the end of October. The projects start with gathering knowledge and expertise and require a flawlessly written research paper. Some students pursue their

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project over the summer to dovetail with other activities. At least 20 hours must be committed to the project.

"I'm with the kids from the beginning," Wolf said. "We explore project possibilities together. I ask them what they like and what their career interests are. Each project has to represent a learning stretch for each student.

"I also support the students as they retool their proposal, research paper and portfolio, and help them to make sure they meet all project criteria," Wolf continued. "We demand excellence. Sometimes, students need to re-do their research paper three or four times. Students who are accustomed to doing average or below-average work finish their project with pride and a sense of accomplishment that they may never have had during their entire high school experience. We invite juniors to watch the seniors present, so they understand the challenge before them.

"This year I had a group of young women create quilts for their projects and then they donated the quilts to local charities for use in fundraising auctions," Wolf concluded. "I also have several young men who did construction projects for their Eagle Scout badges last summer that they used as their culminating projects -- picnic tables for a park, a custom coffee table and turned wooden bowls. It was unbelievable, beautiful work."

Information Technology: Connecting students to the future

Readers note: This is the third in a series of articles featuring the 16 career clusters that organize the Career and Technical Education classes in Washington's middle and high schools, and in the career-focused classes offered by community, technical and four-year colleges.

Information technology (IT) is a field that changes daily. Modern life increasingly relies on the instantaneous exchange of information. Keeping up with that change is precisely what attracts **Jodi Davisson**, 18, a senior at Lewis and Clark High School in Spokane, to the IT field. In fact, she's so interested in her Career and Technical Education (CTE) IT high school classes that she has decided to pursue a career in IT.

"I didn't know what direction to take in school until my brother talked me into taking an IT class," Jodi said. "My IT classes helped me decide what I want to do after high school, and now I'm trying to persuade my sister to take IT classes, too."

Jodi is a student leader in the Spokane Public Schools TEConnections program, which has students overhaul used computers and then give them to low-income students and families. In partnership with the Department of Social and Health Services and Goodwill Industries, TEConnections students distribute the computers and help with installation, training and technical support. Since it was launched in 2005,

TEConnections has distributed more than 1,000 computers.

Nearly 41,000 Washington high school students attended IT classes last year. Among the 16 CTE career clusters, IT enjoys the third-highest enrollment. In 2008, CTE program staff identified IT as one of its three "high-demand, high-growth" disciplines and issued grants to expand and improve IT classes across the state. "We fully expect that IT will continue to offer promising employment opportunities once the recession eases," said Betty Klattenhoff, state CTE director.

IT students explore a variety of careers including computer repair, web design, computer programming and system networking. Students can also test for certification in specific computer disciplines such as Cisco networking, which is required for many jobs in IT.

As Jodi prepares for graduation, she also is studying for the Cisco certification test and working as an intern in the Spokane School District administrative offices, where she provides technical support to teachers and administrators district wide.

"Through IT and TEConnections, I've gained a lot of skills that will help me in any job," said Jodi, who recently learned about motherboard manufacturing during a school trip and was intrigued. "I've taught workshops, delivered customer service and practiced leadership. There is always so much to learn."

Jodi has been accepted by two computer science college programs for this fall and is waiting to hear from a third before she decides which one to pursue.

KREM 2 TV features TEConnections program.