

July 2009

Workforce Development



Summer Program Introduces Students to Manufacturing Careers

As part of its efforts to recruit a skilled workforce for advanced manufacturing, CCAT recently concluded the first year of an innovative summer program that has introduced over 100 middle-school students to opportunities at the state's technical high schools and future careers in manufacturing.

The program, called the Young Manufacturers Summer Academy, was organized by CCAT's Education Initiative in partnership with the Technical High School System and is funded through a Connecticut State Department of Education Interdistrict Cooperative grant. The program targets seventh, eighth and ninth-grade students and is based at Windham, E.C. Goodwin and W.F. Kaynor Technical High Schools in Willimantic, New Britain and Waterbury, respectively.

The Academy's aim is to showcase different aspects of the manufacturing industry to students and introduce some of the fundamental skills and tools that are needed. Over the course of the program, students learn about manufacturing in fields like aerospace, fuel cells and lasers. They also work with computers and 3D tools, take field trips to local companies, learn more about the state's technical high school system and even attend a mock career fair.

"By introducing young students to careers in advanced manufacturing, the Young Manufacturers Summer Academy addresses a critical need in recruiting a future pipeline of workers for key industries in the region," said Susan Palisano, Director of Education Initiatives at CCAT. "Comprehensive workforce development remains a major thrust for all of CCAT and we're delighted with the response by students."

CCAT's industry partners have recognized the value of programs like the Academy as well. Judi Spreda, Human Resources Manager for Peter Paul Electronics Company, Inc. in New Britain commented after a student group visited her facility, "We commend CCAT for its awareness that we have to reach out to this age group in order to prepare them to be our next generation workforce. If we reached only one child yesterday, our mission was a success."

With the commitment of two years of state grant funding for the program, CCAT will be continuing its strong association with the Technical High Schools, including plans to recruit a new group of middle school students for the program next year.

The Academy is just one of several summer programs conducted by CCAT that targets STEM education and workforce issues. Later this month, CCAT will partner with The Children's Museum and the University of Hartford to offer "Glimpse of the Past, Path to the Future," a Teacher Quality Partnership Program (TQP) aimed at fostering collaboration between upper elementary science teachers and improving instruction techniques in several science-related areas.

In addition, CCAT will also organize the NASA-PLAN Teachers Academy, an annual professional development program for high school teachers that introduces content instruction in advanced technologies such as photonics, lasers, aerospace and nanotechnology.

In related news CCAT's Education Initiative has been invited to give two presentations on informal science education programs and 21st century careers later this year at the annual Connecticut Science Teachers Association conference.

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