

School District of New Berlin Continues to Broaden Exposure to Tech Industry, Students Earn Industry Certifications

New Berlin, Wis. – The School District of New Berlin has made it a priority to expose as many students as possible to a wide variety of tech careers. Over the past few years, the district has considerably expanded its computer science and programming coursework to make opportunities more accessible. Most recently, the SDNB has added topics such as cybersecurity, artificial intelligence and the Internet of things to their programming to expose students to the technological disruptions that will continue to affect the way we work and the jobs that will be available across industry sectors.

The district also offers the TechKNOW program to supplement and extend the information covered by traditional computer science coursework. All SDNB tech pathways provide the opportunity to earn college credits and/or an industry credential prior to graduation.

“We selected computing as one of our priority areas because it is everywhere,” Superintendent Joe Garza said. “It supports every industry, every potential career, and has a profound impact on our daily lives. We absolutely must help develop students to be more than consumers of technology if we want them to be able to compete in an innovation economy.”

The TechKNOW program was developed by Brandon Kostolni, the district’s Technology Director and a Certified Education Technology Leader. Participation has more than doubled in its second year with 31 high school students in 2016-17, with a projected enrollment of nearly 40 students in 2017-18.

Students enrolled in TechKNOW are engaged in providing high-quality technology support in an enterprise environment. The program provides different opportunities based on the student’s grade level, experience and interests. Students are trained to independently manage a student-run help desk for all technology devices used within the district, such as laptops, Chromebooks, iPads, etc.

Jacqueline DiBella, a district information technology support specialist, coordinates the program at both New Berlin West and New Berlin Eisenhower. She helps students identify areas of interest, set goals, develop technical and leadership skills, connect with service learning opportunities, and pursue an industry certification as part of their Academic and Career Plan.

The following students earned certifications during the 2016-17 school year:

- Microsoft Certified Professional: Zach Godec, junior, West
- PCPro Certification: Tim Becker, senior, West; Nick Brown, senior, West; Nikos Karampelas, junior, West; Kevin Walbrun, senior, West
- NetworkPro Certification: Zack Botic, junior, West

Students who excel in the program are eligible for SDNB internships. Additionally, the Wisconsin Affiliate of the NCWIT Aspirations in Computing program recently recognized Jennifer King, a 2017 West graduate, for her accomplishments.

“Jennifer has been a part of the district’s TechKNOW Student Technology Support Program for the past two years,” DiBella said. “She has displayed continuous growth in both her technical ability and her overall leadership skills. Through her SDNB technology department internship, Jennifer played an integral role in the summer preparation and deployment of 1,200 student Chromebooks.”

Students also are provided with support as needed to secure IT internships at local businesses. One student, Andrew Eng, completed an IT Internship for Weldall Manufacturing and assists in the development, monitoring, maintenance, upgrade and support of IT hardware and software systems.

Student feedback on the program has been extremely positive.

“We are gearing up for another great year in TechKNOW,” Kostolni said. “Students will be applying for specific TechKNOW jobs and roles, such as inventory control, digital signage and website content, but will have opportunities to work in each role throughout the school year. Additionally, we are looking to utilize the unique expertise and perspective of our students through expansion of their involvement with various technology-related projects in our schools.”

Community support is so important to developing and sustaining programs like these. Many organizations have opened their doors to the students to better understand how what they are learning in school applies to the environments they may work in some day. Examples are Northwestern Mutual, EPIC, Direct Supply, PKWARE, Centare, Dedicated Computing, and the Commons @ Ward4.

“We are always looking for organizations who are willing to encourage students to get involved in tech and share their experiences by presenting at our annual career days, hosting a job shadow/industry tour, or offering mentorships and/or internship experiences to students,” said Laura Schmidt, Strategic Advisor to the Superintendent. “We are thrilled to work with others that want to partner to build a strong tech talent pipeline.”

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